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HOT COFFEE CHECKS FLU AT ST. NAZAIRE

Colonel, Cooks and K.P.'s Steam Germs Out of Newcomers

It was hot coffee—thousands of gallons of it—that ended the deadly influenza epidemic in the dark autumn days when that disease was working ravages among American troops en route to France.

All summer and fall great hosts of Yanks poured in and out of Camp 1, St. Nazaire. The grippe became noticeable in September.

One week a great fleet of transports arrived at St. Nazaire together, bringing 28,000 men, among whom the disease had made alarming inroads. The germ was everywhere. There were many sick. But there were still more just in the receptive stage. And an American colonel saw at once that the camp weather would aid the disease.

So, when the camp was filled to capacity, he ordered the large kitchen kept open day and night. For two weeks it operated unceasingly, manned by a staff of 75 cooks and assistants. The troops were arriving at all hours of the day and night, and during the first two days of the rush full meals were served continually all day and all night.

At 2 and 3 in the morning there could often be seen long lines of shivering men waiting for the steaming food. When, at the end of the first two days, the men appeared in better shape, the night service was reduced to hot coffee only. This, however, was obtainable at any hour. Seventy-five cans of coffee, it is estimated, were served every night during these tense two weeks.

The men arrived, chilled, damp and slightly coughing. The hot, hearty drink proved the necessary stimulus. It supplied the heat required to offset the flu germs. There was plenty of it. It was served rapidly and generously by willing hands. Thus did St. Nazaire roll back the flu wave.