

THE HOME SECTOR

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The Long, Long Trail Rewinds

They Swore They Never Would
Return, But an Army of Former
Yanks is Now Invading France,
Carrying Catalogues Instead of
Full Packs

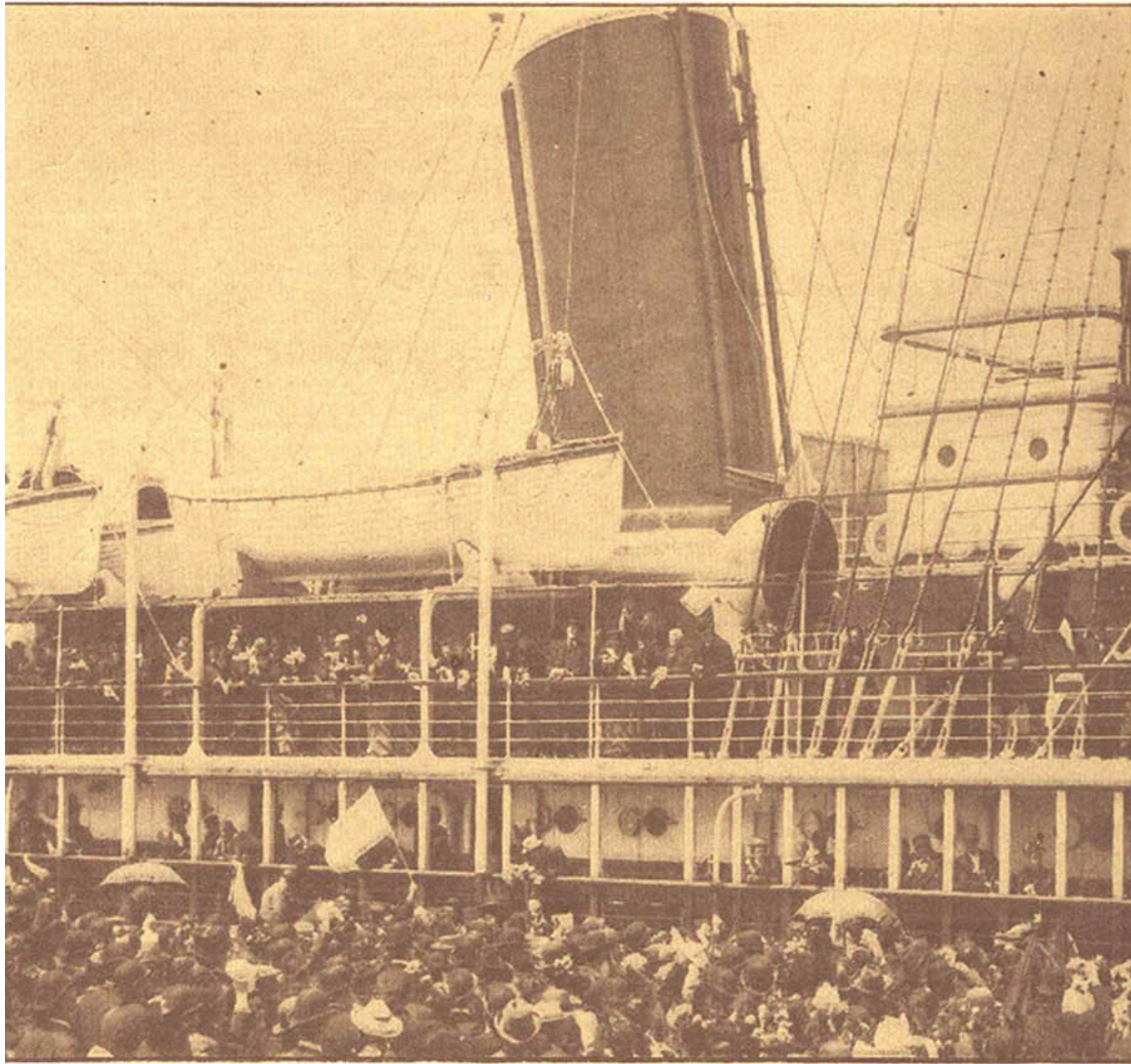
By Philip Von Blon

THE flat wheels of the French railways were singing their good-bye songs to the departing A. E. F. scarcely a year ago. As the coastward bound troop trains sped on their way, drowsy young men listened to the rhythmic pounding of the wheels and heard the echo of their own heart-felt inner voices. "I'm going home," the flat wheels seemed to be saying over and over. And in the case of the overwhelming majority of those khaki-dressed young men the inner voices answered: "And I'm going to stay."

Today the same flat wheels are still singing their clanking song of the single bar, which fitted any words and suited any mood. But today many a young American aboard trains pulling out of Le Havre, Bordeaux or Cherbourg listens to the wheels that he knew of old and fancies that they are saying: "I'm back again, I'm back again." The American straightens up in his first-class seat, pulls up the cuffs of his trousers with due regard for the creases, looks out upon the reappearing scenery that he knew of old and reflects that all the oaths he once took to be rid forever of the land of mud and rain were as meaningless as careless profanity.

For despite its almost unanimous vows, testified to by countless rounded phrases in trenches and billets, a good share of the A. E. F. is returning to France. It is almost chasing its own tail in the effort to get back, for it was only a few weeks ago that newspapers everywhere said that the last of the A. E. F. was home. And before the rear guard of the A. E. F. was aboard boats headed westward, the vanguard of the returning A. E. F. was pouring back into France through every port.

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A "premiere cabine" ticket now for C. T. Morgan, ex-second lieutenant with the 54th Pioneers, who came back from France in the hold of the *Leviathan*. Sergeant Charles Anderson, once of the 59th is selling him passage on the *Touraine*

THAT vanguard had only its youth to remind France of its origin, and, whereas France had remembered it dressed in khaki blouses and breeches, hobnailed shoes and rain-in-the-face caps, it wore on its reappearance the last products of American tailors, suits that showed that they more than balanced a \$60 bonus and proved that the pictorial clothing advertisements in the American magazines which doughboys sowed throughout France were more than fantasies.

Such hats! Such shoes—cordovans and tans and blacks to amaze a nation which is frugal with its own leather. Monsieur Doughboy had come back all dressed up. So had Messieurs Le Lieutenant and Le Capitaine who had been known to their friends in Tours and Paris only when arrayed in English whipcords and khaki serges and bound in belt and shoulder harness.

Today, with the first robin just finding his spring legs in Winsted, Connecticut, 2,000,000 replanted civilians in the United States who once wore the American uniform in France seem to have been stirred by a new unrest. Overseas veterans everywhere have been coming out of the winter with that feeling of wanderlust which always returns feverishly to men who have ever been roaming. The France of 1917 and 1918 is beginning to seem a glamorous France. All the hardships, privations, annoyances have sunk out of memory, and only the recollections of the big days are powerful.

The new civilians are in the mood when memories bring longing—the longing

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Captain Van Ranken Stann, surgeon with the Third Division in all its battles, said as he went aboard the *St. Paul* that he was going to revisit the place in France where he was almost shot as a spy. He was born in Holland

which makes France seem carefree, happy, welcoming, beckoning. Those who are not tied down by family or business responsibilities here at home would like to go back. Ask any one of them. Most of them will tell you they would go now if they could. A year ago—six months ago—they would not have told you what they will tell you today. But now they will mostly answer one way.

And it takes only one day in any American port from which boats sail for France to prove that they are going back in numbers. Visit the French passport offices and the American passport offices, the steamship agencies where polite salesmen unfold deck plans showing staterooms and berths which may be yours for from \$100 to \$400, the photographers' shops about the offices of the consuls and steamship offices where all who would go aboard must buy the small photos that are pasted on the passports, and lastly go down to the piers before the sailing hours of *La Touraine*, *La Savoie*, the *Rochambeau* or the *Lafayette* for Le Havre, or the *Philadelphia*, *St. Paul* or the *New York* for Cherbourg.

Ask the passport men, the consuls, the photographers and the men who visé the travelling papers at the piers. They all tell the same story. The former men of the A. E. F. are going over again. Look over the line-up at all the offices and at the piers while the passengers are going aboard. You can reach into almost any group and find a former A. E. F. man with a handful of stamped, crinkly official papers, and in the last minutes at the gangplanks you can find the A. E. F. man with his luggage say-

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H. W. Dietrich, late of the Ordnance Corps, A. E. F., crosses again as an envoy of the Belgian Government, which is sending him to the Congo to help establish a copper plant. He will visit the old battlefields on the way

ing goodbye more than likely to several envying friends of the "old outfit."

The majority of the A. E. F. men going back seem to have definite business connections before they start for the gangplank, but it is not only trade or commerce that is taking veterans back to France. They are going on all sorts of missions, some of them to stay a short time and return, others with no plans at all for return; some to live and work in France, others to make the whole of Europe their field; some just to look over their old fighting grounds and live easy lives in the places where once they had known only danger and hardships, others of America's foreign commerce corps to close a big deal quick, to have a round of enjoyment on the strength of it and then to return to settle down.

Then, there are those who have the most personal reasons for going—the benedicks or soon-to-be benedicks whose family arrangements are Franco-American. In some cases A. E. F. husbands who have brought their French wives to the United States are returning with them to live in the French ancestral halls. In other cases former A. E. F. men are returning to marry in France and either to return with their brides or to remain with them as permanent acquisitions to the many-circled French families to which their brides belong.

On one day recently two A. E. F. husbands saw their brides depart for home, and the parting words at the gangplank were of the days soon when hus-

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bands left behind would be coming over. One of the brides was going back to Tours where she had met her husband while he was a first lieutenant in the Q. M. C. storehouse. He had been a Regular Army sergeant before the war and had returned to his rank when the A. E. F. came home. His had been a happy marriage, but the French bride did not become accustomed to American ways—apartment house life and American bread were particularly strange to her—so papa in Tours was waiting for her. And soon the American Army would give her husband his discharge and he would go to Tours to enter father-in-law's business. Not so bad!

The other husband had also been a first lieutenant, in a Prisoner of War Escort Company at St. Sulpice, near Bordeaux, and he, too, had been made a sergeant when he returned home. He, too, was to journey to France when his discharge came through and the plans were all made for the business venture he would go into when he joined his bride on the other side.

The consuls and passport officials say that hardly a day passes without its quota of A. E. F. newlyweds returning to live permanently in France. And there seems to be general agreement and happiness all round at the prospect.

THERE are those who see more than trade and marriage and the ordinary tourists' expectations behind the exodus of former A. E. F. men. At the steamship offices, the consulates and the passport bureaus you will find these who will shrug their shoulders and give you their own idea of what it all means.

"Ah, monsieur!" says the former poilu who stamps the passports at the pier, "It is the great pro-hee-bee-seeong which is the cause. It is that they want to go back where they can get the drink. They have not forgotten what it is like, the French wine. And now they can not get the drink here! Voilà! Men will drink! Some of the men are vair' angree. They say that they seek the liberty." He ends with a great shrugging of shoulders and facial expressions of his own great disgust with it all—although, may it be said, he has friends on the boats which lie at the pier which have lately come from France.

But if you follow lower Broadway to its end and come to the Bowling Green and the Battery you may learn that it is not liquor alone which takes A. E. F. veterans back to France. At the passport bureau in the Custom House the clerks will tell you that it is trade that is taking all Americans to France—and to Germany, Belgium, England, Spain, and even Russia. It all depends on the viewpoint. To the passport men in the Federal building, the line of military-aged men passing in front of them looks 90 percent. commercial. They will tell you of the dozens of overseas trade corporations organized since the war which are now sending skirmish lines of salesmen through Europe. They think of the exodus as a mass movement of men who would find new markets for everything from steam shovels to potted beef.

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Down past the Custom House are the stone buildings of the steamship agencies, the French Line, the Cunard Line, the Scandinavian Line and all the rest, with their wide plate-glass windows hung with imagination-stirring posters of bronze, steamships at full speed on a purple ocean under a light pink sky. In the office of the French line behind a counter spread with deck plans, ticket forms and baggage markers, is Charles T. Morgan, who deserves to rank as an authority on A. E. F. emigration for the reason that he rose from private to lieutenant in the 54th Pioneer Infantry overseas. Since he put on civilian clothes he has sold steamship tickets to hundreds of former A. E. F. men returning to France, and they have told him as buddy to buddy of their plans and hopes.

He remembers the former A. E. F. colonel of Engineers who went back to direct the operation of the railways of the new Yugoslav government. He remembers the two sergeants who spent a full year at Chaumont and went back to open a new department store on Chaumont's main rue. He remembers particularly the number of ex-A. E. F. men from Iowa and Kansas and Nebraska who have disregarded Horace Greeley's onetime wise words and have gone eastward over the ocean in the hope that modern farming methods would reward American pioneers settling on French soil that has been tilled for a thousand years.

Then there are men like Abraham Ginsburg and Benjamin F. Cohan, formerly buck privates in an American ambulance unit attached to the French—S. S. U. 594—of whom the latter wears a silver Victory Button in his coat lapel. They took an earlier trip to Europe, traveling in the hold and sleeping with life preservers close at hand. When they started back a few days ago, however, to open an import-export house of their own in Paris, they traveled first class in one of the upper stories of the *La France*.

"EVERY day former soldiers go back to get married," says Mr. Morgan. "And every day men go over to sell things. But it is a real surprise to observe the number of men who go to France to become farmers. Many of them are going back to the little towns where they were billeted, and I suppose most of them expect to marry and take over a share of the management of their wives' ancestral acres.

"The rate of exchange may also make land buying in France seem attractive now. The young farming man from the West by transforming his savings into francs can often acquire a sizable estate. In any event, most of them seem to be very confident of what the future holds for them. It seems funny, and I wouldn't attempt to say they have only illusions. Most of them do make cracks about the wine, but I don't think this has much to do with their decisions."

Another former A. E. F. man who is now selling tickets to his fellow overseas veterans in M. R. Gleason in the passenger offices of the International Mercantile Marine Company on lower

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Broadway. Gleason went to France toward the end of 1917 with a group of American casuals known as the British Replacement Draft, composed of telegraph and telephone men and electricians. He was attached to the 51st British Division.

"Most of the ex-soldiers now going back have definite purposes," said Mr. Gleason. "A surprisingly large number seem to feel that they have a grievance here, and they talk a lot about the prohibition amendment. I don't know whether they are really in earnest, or whether it is just the natural reaction of restless men who have found things different than they expected after they got out of the Army."

A. L. Martin, formerly of the 315th Ammunition Train of the 42nd Division, is manager of the United States Photo Co., 31 Broadway, and he testifies that every day this spring an increasingly large number of new civilians have posed for passport photos. Into the shop walked J. H. Sondag of Nicollet, Minnesota, formerly of Ambulance Co. No. 2, First Division, and R. E. Mason of Muskegon, Michigan, formerly of the 53rd Operating Unit. With them was George J. Haag, also of Nicollet, too young to be with the A. E. F. when the fun was on.

"YEP, we're going back," said Mr. Sondag. "You see, Mason and I got to talking things over at Nicollet this winter and Haag was sore at all the things he missed. So we decided we would take him over and show him the scenery. We are going to land at Antwerp, strike out for the Belgian battlefields, follow the old fighting lines into France and see just what things are like now. We aren't worrying on how we are going to do it. We will make our plans after we get there. Maybe we'll buy a flivver in Belgium. If the hotels are full, we won't care. We got along without hotels once, and I guess we can do it again. And I'll bet we'll run across a whole lot of the other boys over there."

That the sentiments which are taking these two A. E. F. veterans from the Great Lakes region back to France are shared by thousands of others is the opinion of Mrs. Frank Baldwin, at the information desk of the Red Cross at 44 E. 23rd Street, New York City. Mrs. Baldwin during the war was a Red Cross worker at Paris and Geneva, Switzerland, and she thinks she understands doughboys. She says that hardly a day passes without its procession of former soldiers seeking means to return—most of them men who can not see their way clear financially. Naturally she does not see the out and out tourists or the commercial agents, so her impression is that the former A. E. F. is impelled to go back by powerful memories—in other words it is homesick for France.

"It is amazing," she said. "Dozens of men come in here with only the vaguest reasons for wishing to go back. They only know they do wish to go over. They now picture an idealistic France—a sort of dream France. They think of the old

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days, of the hospitality of the people, of the lighter things of their military lives, the leaves to Paris and the show places, of the wine. And they think they can go back to it all. They do not realize that they can never see the things they once saw, or feel again as they felt during the stirring days when France was a country exalted by wartime emotions. I am afraid they will find all the glamor gone and only the sober reality of an impoverished country struggling to pay for food and taxes and to get back to the peaceful life of before the war. It won't be thrilling at all.

"Wounded men particularly seem to want to go back. They want to find the spots where they fell from shrapnel or bullets. They, too, probably will be disappointed to find only ugly fields from which the war settings that made them picturesque have departed. A good many of these men desire especially to take others back with them to these spots their parents or their brides. I believe that most of these pilgrimages to the battlefields will prove tiresome to brides who cannot be expected to envision what happened on them. They will see nothing but scarred countryside in which spring and summer vegetation and the rains have effaced the signs of fighting. But these wounded men are so much in earnest!"

A**F****T****E****R** all, perhaps, it is the commercial agent or the business man who is most typical of the returning A. E. F. In Paris today there is at least one syndicate composed of former A. E. F. officers who are doing their best to see that American machinery is fitted to France's reconstruction tasks. And every boat that goes over now carries the newly appointed agents of American trading corporations who learned to speak French in A. E. F. camps.

When John Winn, of Boston, formerly a captain of Railway Artillery, arrived



Captain Fisher of the Hedjaz Cavalry returns to Damascus to continue her relief work among Arabian children. Her home is in Santa Barbara, California. She served with the Red Cross in the A. E. F. before going to Syria.

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in Antwerp as the representative of the Liquid Carbonic Company, he may have foreshadowed the day when all Europe will be drinking soda water and eating ice cream under the names of sundaes and dopes. For his business card announces that his company is "Le plus grand fabricant du monde des 'Soda Fountains' et articles pour 'Soda Fountains'." The story has already been told of the Minnesota veterans of the A. E. F. who are now engaged in selling wholesale quantities of ice cream in Paris from their factory on the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, a building once occupied by the Y. M. C. A.

And when R. W. Vance of San Francisco, formerly of the 18th Engineers (Railway), returned to his old stamping ground at Bordeaux to join the "Jambe Americaine," a company which imports artificial arms and wooden legs from America, he was only one of the great peacetime army of graduates from the A. E. F. school of European salesmanship.

At Lyons it is reported that a number of former American soldiers who acquired an insight into the business methods of the large silk factories during the war have returned to make purchases for American concerns which they represent, and in Paris the American buyers, profiting by the favorable exchange rate, are said to be taking large stocks for export from the makers of the fancy soaps and perfumes. All the great lace centers of France are dealing with American exporters. So are the glovemakers of such cities as Grenoble and the other towns of the Basses Alps.

The favorable exchange has resulted in heavy purchases of antique furniture and art of many classes by buyers who learned discrimination and value while wearing the American uniform. Of course, gowns and dress materials are being exported to America in increasing quantities and A. E. F. men are in this export trade.

The moving picture field in France has meant high salaires for a number of former Signal Corps operators and laboratory men who brought American methods with them. The technique of American pictures had long been the envy of French producers, and English producers as well, so that former camera sergeants of the A. E. F. are now busy in both France and England teaching the tricks of the trade that they learned in Los Angeles and New York. A great many of these former Signal Corps men are employed at the Pathé plant near the Castle of Vincennes on the northern outskirts of Paris, which housed the moving picture and "stills" activities of the Signal Corps of the A. E. F. during the war. Several former A. E. F. men are now proprietors of motion picture theaters in French cities.

THIS story should also speak of the former A. E. F. men who are introducing American methods into cafés which they have purchased, most of them in cities and towns which will entertain

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war tourists Several former soldiers, passing through New York in the late winter, announced they expected to open a café in Château-Thierry this summer, preferably near the railway station or one of the bridgeheads where bullet and shell pitted walls tell of one of the A. E. F.'s earliest battles. They were thinking of calling their "new place," "The Belleau Wood Cafe."

If white aprons, free lunch and the rest of the accompaniments of the extinguished American liquor trade are introduced into Château-Thierry, it is possible that that town's fame may rest upon more than the foundation chance gave it as a site of an American battle. Most of the A. E. F. men who have gone into buvette business, however, have done so by the marital process, and some present day garçons are Americans under their black coats. They quit soldiering to become sons-in-law.

French import restrictions have lessened the opportunities for former service men in many lines of trade, but in spite of handicaps ex-A. E. F. men have been developing leads in the automobile business, with agencies for low-priced cars, which may become very profitable eventually.

In fact, there is scarcely a single business or branch of commerce in which former A. E. F. soldiers are not now pioneering in France. The tourist bureaus have employed many of them, and many of them are in Paris in the hope of finding continuous employment as guides independent of the agencies. American engineering companies have employed a limited number of former service men on construction works.

That such work appealed especially to service men was shown when a story was printed, through mistake, in a Paris newspaper early in 1919, saying that an American concern at Brest was offering a 250 franc bonus to all soldiers who would accept discharges and sign a contract to work six months in France at \$250 a month. The story related that only eighteen soldiers were willing to take the jobs. But the paper containing the story was hardly in the hands of the A. E. F. before every source of information within and without the Army was flooded by inquiries. "We want that job!" said every inquirer. The Brest correspondent who dug up that story and sent it in without investigation brought down untold imprecations upon his head.

AND it should be emphasized here that a job in France should be nailed down before any A. E. F. man emigrates. Going to France in the hope of getting a job these days is reported to be a poor gamble, and Paris is said to contain many A. E. F. veterans—including those who never came home—who are having a hard time getting enough money to buy daily bread, not to speak of daily vin blanc. The labor market for foreigners in France is a bare one. The Red cross, the United States employment offices and other information agencies are advising all ap-

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plicants not to go across in the hope of getting work, and only to go if they have a job waiting for them. Most of the concerns which are sending A. E. F. men over are selecting those who have had experience in the business which they represent.

In recent weeks THE HOME SECTOR has received inquiries from scores of former A. E. F. men who would like to get jobs in France. Most of them have requested the names of contractors seeking men, and they have expressed their willingness to go to any European country. A locomotive engineer was one of those who wrote, but most of them said they wished any kind of construction work. The French High Commission and the United States War Department both advised that there were no large employment opportunities for Americans in France. Other inquiries showed that the concerns which are sending men over either send former soldiers in their own employ or obtain them by anonymous advertising in which qualifications are rigidly insisted upon, the selections being made from all the applications obtained. The opportunities in foreign trade are available for trained men and the element of luck enters into the problem.

An example of the opportunities which come to the specialist is afforded by H. W. Dietrich of Brooklyn, N. Y., formerly of the Ordnance Corps. Dietrich is an expert lead burner, and acquired valuable experience in the Government munition works at Nitro, West Virginia. Recently he was employed by the Belgian Government to go to the Upper Congo in Africa to take an executive position with a new copper mining plant. He left New York on the Steamer St. Paul in March, expecting to see the battlefields in Belgium and France on his way to Africa.

On the same boat with Dietrich was another former A. E. F. man, Dr. Henry Van Ranken Stann, who was a captain in the Medical Corps attached to the Fourth and 38th Infantry of the Third Division. Dr. Van Ranken Stann was on his way to Monastir to hook up his Army experience to the job of fighting epidemics in the new country of Jugo Slavia. He is a native of Holland and while a captain in France had the distinction of almost being shot as a German spy. A colonel who had never seen him before heard him talking in German to a prisoner whose wounds he was dressing at an advanced post, and under the pressure of battle decided it was safer to have the captain shot and ask questions later. Only the appearance of the colonel commanding Dr. Van Ranken Stann's own unit saved him, according to his own story.

NOT only the Army veterans of the A. E. F., but the Red Cross workers as well are going back. The St. Paul carried a party of former nurses who had served at Base Hospital No. 10 at Treport. They were on their way to Russia with a Red Cross mission. On the same day, the steamship Savoie carried back to France Mrs. A. L. Fisher of Santa Barbara, California, who served

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with the Red Cross in Paris early in the war and later went to Damascus, where Prince Faisal, Prince of Syria and son of the new King of the Hejaz, commissioned her a captain in the Arabian cavalry and furnished her with a horse to match. Mrs. Fisher—that is, Captain Fisher—was returning to Damascus to have charge of the relief work among the children of Damascus. With her were a party of former Red Cross workers returning to France to engage in relief work under the auspices of Miss Ann Morgan's Committee.

Just what will happen in France this summer when the floods of American tourists and traders intermingle is the subject of lively anticipations among French hotel owners and all those who serve travellers for profit. But it is certain that the French people will gain by the phenomenon a broadened appreciation of American characteristics. Instead of billeting officers they will learn to know young messieurs of the catalogues and order books, as well as the present-day successors of the leisurely sightseers of indiscriminating generosity known of old. It will be a mighty clashing of francs and dollars when the Americans seeking profit and the Americans seeking pleasure roam around France in the numbers of the vanished A. E. F., and only the passing months will tell whether the same welcome and hospitality which France extended to the A. E. F. will stand the wear and tear.