Camions suddenly began to streak white beams down shell-smashed roads. Someone had ordered the drivers to turn on their headlights.

**LIGHTS!**

The magic word sped like a tongue of flame racing through dry grass. Camions suddenly began to streak white beams down shell-smashed roads—roads whose only night light for years had been that shed by the moon and the stars and the angry flashing mouths of guns.

With a suddenness and force we have not often experienced, we had to square our eyes where but a moment before it had seemed deadly danger to strike a match in the open, someone had now ordered truck drivers to turn on their headlights. This daring signal to the enemy was flaunted although the heavy rumble of artillery fire still rolled back from the front line but a few kilometers away.

There could be but one explanation. The ammunic had come down.

The place was Cunel, war-shattered Argonne village. The time was early evening of November 7, 1918. The word was the Ninth Field Signal Battalion o the Fifth (Red Diamond) Division.

With the switching on of the lights frenzy swept over Cunel. Soldiers on all sides shouted: “The war’s over!” Rifle and pistols were fired into the air to herald the end.

But the war wasn’t over. It was simply the greatest rumble of them all sweeping to the very front. Flashed to all corners of the earth, it aroused mankind to wild outbursts. It brought relief to countless parents, wives and sweethearts and carried a hope of escape to those men in arms who had thus far eluded death.

It was not surprising that the civilian populace, particularly in America, should have been fooled into a premature celebration, since everyone learned an eager and natural channel for the swift dissemination of the false report. What was surprising, however, was that the rumor not only sped up to the front through the undulations of the human mind but that it also influenced someone in authority to issue so radical an order as that which caused those camion headlights to be turned on on that heart-breaking night.

The other day, going through a bundle of wartime letters, I came across one which brought back a sharp memory of that remarkable incident of twenty years ago. Sitting in the wrecked remains of a French villager’s home, I had tapped out to my mother on the ratty portable company typewriter a letter which I thought was filled with momentous news. But the letter was never mailed. Soon
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after writing it I slipped it into my diary, and so it found its way to America with me after the war.
The letter, written in Cuneo on the evening of November 7, 1918, gives an idea how a weary Yank reacted to the news, fake news, which rocked the world.
Here it is:

France, November 7, 1918
7:10 P.M.

Dear Mother:

About an hour ago I heard enough commotion to make one think that the war was over. I was too tired to think about what had happened. For the first time in more than four years the order was given to turn on the lights. Automobile drivers did not realize at first what had happened. It was hard to believe that you could really have lights turned on, and that there were actually a lot of people who were not yelling and laughing and shooting off revolvers and rifles and acting as if they were crazy. We were more or less prepared for the news at the radio office here. We have not at this moment learned anything definite yet, but there must be a temporary armistice on at least. We (Continued on page 52) know that the German mission has gone across the line to either accept or reject the armistice terms. You can accept or reject the terms practically or they would not even come over. They must realize that our terms were very severe.

It seems queer to think that tomorrow the war will be over. No more carrying gas masks but no, not even that, for the lights out at night for fear of air raids, no more looking for dugouts when we move and facemasks in winter. I shall worry except as to when we are going home. Can you imagine that—going home! but suppose we wake up tomorrow and find the boom that the German of the armistice terms? Poor Germany—she certainly will get beat up proper then, for we will be a lot stronger.
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ing of our crack operator—a sturdy Middle-Westerner of German descent. They are not dated, but I recall, and I can tell from their contents, that he picked them out of the air during the first week of November, 1918, when the negotiations began which led to the real Armistice.

One was addressed to Allied G. H. Q. and was picked up from the German headquarters. Its contents follow:

The German artillery, in the sector on both sides of the Fourmies-La Capelle road, had orders to cease firing. Evidently the fire of the ammunition dump near Fourmies, which caused irregular explosions, appeared to be artillery fire.

HY-BP 0214

Evidently the Allies had made some protest to the Germans concerning these explosions. This was doubtless at the time when German plenipotentiaries came through the lines for the discussion of the Armistice terms and there was to be no firing on that section of the front.

The other message is in French and is signed Erzberger. It was he who headed the German group which came through the lines to prepare for the Armistice. The message was apparently sent while he was still behind our lines at the conference. Translated it reads:

German plenipotentiaries go to the German high command, to the Chancellor of the Empire and to the naval high command. Before making any decision, let us await the telegraphic communication in code completing Heldorf’s message of this morning. 2048

Picking these messages out of the air, we of the radio group knew that steps definitely pointing toward an Armistice were being taken. That is why we were in a frame of mind to accept the rumor as genuine when the false report spread up to us. On the other hand, all our hopes were not blasted when the “lights out” order came on the evening of the 7th because we knew that negotiations were in progress.

The next three days we were constantly on the move—forward. The night of the 20th was a horror. The boys on the other side seemed to be trying to get rid of as much ammunition as possible in the last hours of the war. Everything came—incuding box cars. But at last we had something for which to thank the Lord, for also through the telegraph came the real message of hope. Firing would cease at 12 the next morning.

The night passed. Dawn brought a dull gray day—typical Argonne weather. The big moment came and the rumbles of the guns died away—this time for keeps. What is happening now will