

GOOD CHEER FOR OUR WOUNDED SOLDIERS

A LETTER was received yesterday by Mrs. Russell Tyson, chairmgn of the Chicago committee of the American Fund for French Wounded, from Mrs. J. Gordon Wilson of Chicago. Mrs. Wilson, who lives at 5755 Kentwood avenue, went over in June to work with the American fund. It is Mrs. Wilson's second stay in France since the war began.

PARIS, July 16.—We are now very much in the war zone. As I write you I can plainly hear the great thunder of the guns on the front, only a few miles away, punctuated every fifteen minutes by a nearby explosion from Blg Bertha. We are now being bombarded, but all Paris remains calm.

Yesterday evening we heard one very close at hand. We rushed along the street and in a few minutes were on the scene. The shell had burst in the middle of the road, making a hole a foot or two deep and a few yards across, throwing pieces of brick pavement and stones in every direction. No one seemed to have been injured at that place, and we took a look and moved away, but all day long the shells came and must have found many marks.

In looking back now over these days in Paris I think the most lasting impression in my mind was the first sight of American wounded. The hospitals were crowded with them when we arrived, but they are being evacuated fast now to make room for the fresh arrivals we saw pouring into the city yesterday. I don't think any one seeing those splendid troops march off to the battle front can picture the sight of the return of those who have paid the price.

One thing, however, stands out above everything else when you visit them, and that is their splendid spirits and cheerfulness; none are discouraged, all are ready to go back as soon as they are able. They all say the same thing: "Tell them back home that we are not coming back without the victory."

The American Fund for French Wounded has grown enormously in the scope and volume of its work since I was here in 1917. Where before we had perhaps a scant layer of cases on the floor of the theater, we have now pyramids; where we sent out hundreds of bales of supplies to the hospitals we now send out thousands. The value of the work for the French wounded all over France can never be overestimated. The A. F. W. has filled the gaps in a hundred places and has actually made it possible for many small hospitals to continue to exist and save lives.

It has never been possible for France to supply in abundance to hospitals many things that we consider necessities, and after visiting the American hospitals, with their wealth of supplies and comforts for the wounded, the French hospitals seem bare and cheerless by comparison.

We have assisted on the 4th and 14th of July at two most wonderful parties given for the soldiers of the allies. The Red Cross asked the A. F. W. to give the party on the Fourth

at their expense and the personnel of the Alcazar worked hard and whole heartedly to make it a success. We had the entire upper floor of the "Ambassadeurs" restaurant, including the wide balconies overhung with trees. We invited 500 wounded men and prepared to give them a good variety of entertainment, as well as all kinds of things to eat, including white bread sandwiches and cake. The Red Cross furnished the flour and sugar, two items which it would have been impossible to secure otherwise. We had plenty of cigarets and presents for every one. The day was a glorious one, warm and sunny, and so we hoped that all our wounded would be able to come.

Our American boys were the first arrivals. Those of us who stood at the head of the stairs could hardly keep back the tears as we watched those splendid youths being half carried or borne up and put in their places. We put pillows under poor stumps and made room for stiff and bandaged limbs and still the slow procession came up the stairs. French blind and wounded, American boys with bandaged heads and arms, a British Tommy, helpless in a wheeled chair, tenderly borne by an army officer and an American Red Cross man, all coming up into the sunshine with bright faces and high spirits and expectant looks.

It was not long before all the ice was broken and we were the merriest company and the best of friends in the world. I wish you could have heard the shouts of laughter over the antics of the acrobats or the exclamations of delight over the presents. It was a happy afternoon for us all and when the bearers came and told the boys that they had come for them to go back to the hospital again, there was a general wail—"they wanted to stay a little longer," "they were having such a good time." "Best day I've had in France, sister," many a one said as he shook hands at the last and joined the slow procession to the waiting ambulances.

I want to tell you that I have had a talk with the first American boy to be blinded. He is only 19 years old and does not know yet that he will never see. He is able to be up and can get about fairly well with his little cane. He has one glass eye now and the other is under a heavy bandage. He has the brightest face and is just a sweet, winsome lad, feeling himself very far away from his mother. He will soon be sent home, but before he goes he will be taught a little more how to be blind. He is learning Braille and the typewriter and is in gentle, loving hands.

America must continue to help. Over here we realize how hard it is to keep on raising money and sending supplies, but as long as the British fleet can hold the Huns' battleships in their own harbors and American shores are safe from what is taking place here and America's brave sons are making glorious history on the battlefields of France, just so long must help come and sacrifices be made at home so that we can succor the needy and helpless and all the wounded who need our aid. Cordially,

LILIAS GORDON WILSON.