Two Colored women with the American Expeditionary Forces

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Two Colored Women With the American Expeditionary Forces

By
ADDIE W. HUNTON
and
KATHRYN M. JOHNSON

Illustrated

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Dedicated to the women of our race, who gave so trustingly and courageously the strongest of their young manhood to suffer and to die for the cause of freedom.

With recognition and thanks to the authors quoted in this volume and to the men of the A. E. F. who have contributed so willingly and largely to the story herein related.
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† By Addie W. Hunton.
* By Kathryn M. Johnson.
Foreword

Remarkable achievements are worthy of remarkable acclaim. This justifies our desire to add still another expression to those already written relative to the career of the colored American soldiers in the late World War. The heroic devotion and sacrifice of that career have won appreciative expressions from those who, from a personal point of view, know but little of the details. How much more then should they who walked side by side with those brave men in France realize the merit of their service and chant their praises. Surely they should be best able to interpret sincerely and sympathetically, lovingly and gratefully for our soldiers, as they may not for themselves, something of the vicissitudes through which they passed as members of the American Expeditionary Forces.

We feel, too, that almost fifteen months of continuous service that carried us practically over all parts of France, and afforded a heart to heart touch with thousands of men, is a guarantee of the knowledge and devotion that has inspired this volume.

Memories will ever crowd the mind and cause the eye to kindle with the light of loving sympathy as we recall our months of service at the base of supplies on the coast of France. For there we were privileged to learn something of the life and spirit of the stevedores, labor battalions and engineers—more than 25,000 of them—who, through all the desolate days of war, never ceased in their efforts to connect America with Chateau Thierry, Verdun, Sedan, St. Miehie and other great battle centers of France. There we beheld combat troops, filled with the spirit of adventure arriving fresh from America to follow the trail to the already warworn front. And there came also those regiments that we called Pioneer Infantries, the imprints of whose deeds of duty and daring are stamped all over France.
We followed our depot companies and engineers through those isolated stretches and wastes where they performed tasks so essential in the plans for victory.

After many months we went away from the confusion of war to beautiful southern France. There we worked to make happy the days of the men who came for rest and recreation to that wonderful Alpine region of Savoie. There in the Leave Area, by the side of shimmering Lake Bourget, we learned something more of the life of our soldiers as they fought or worked on French soil. Every week, for five months or more, a thousand or so men poured into Chambery and Challes-les-Eaux, and we saw in them the gladness or depression of their service.

Far to the North we took our way, over devastated areas, and dwelt midst the loneliness of poppy-covered fields in “No Man’s Land.” In those Cities of the Dead, we beheld our soldiers summoned to the supreme test of their loyalty and patience in the re-burying of the fallen American heroes.

Back again to the coast we went to join in the great “Battle of Brest”—the battle for the morale of the tired, anxious soldier waiting for transportation back to home and native friendships. For six weeks, from early morning to midnight, our huts at Pontanezen echoed to the tread of thousands of feet. During that period it is estimated that fifty thousand colored soldiers passed through the camp. Battle scenes and war adventures were ended, but the memory was yet deeply poignant, and often silences revealed the depths of experiences beyond the power of all words. Because of all this, we strive to humbly recount the heart throbs of our heroes.

Again the authors have written because to them it was given to represent in France the womanhood of our race in America—those fine mothers, wives, sisters and friends who so courageously gave the very flower of their young manhood to face the ravages of war. That we then should make an effort to interpret with womanly comprehension the loyalty and bravery of their men seems not only a slight recompense for all they have given, but an imperative duty.