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FRIENDS OF FRANCE.

FRIENDS OF FRANCE: The Field Service of the American Ambulance. Described by its Members. (Smith, Elder. 7s. 6d. net.)

Americans and friends of America will read this book with a peculiar pleasure. Whatever may be the verdict of history on America's official attitude during this war, it is certain that thousands of her citizens refuse to identify themselves with that attitude and would bitterly regret that others should so identify them, as, indeed, the introduction to this book plainly intimates. Those who understand the American character—and they are comparatively few—must be puzzled to reconcile its generosity, its readiness to serve, its often Quixotic devotion to ideals, with the official imperturbability, the official deafness and blindness, which many must consider as exceeding the requirements of neutrality. The young men whose services to France are here recorded represent the Young America in which we have believed, and still believe. They have endured severe discomforts and run grave risks in a cause which their chivalry, not their nationality, has made their own, and some have died for that cause. It may be doubted whether any considerable body of men would be found in any country other than America risking their lives in another's quarrel; and modestly though they waive any claims to glory, or even gratitude, it is indeed fitting that their French comrades should have given these young Americans the testimonies of appreciation which are here reproduced.

Though the modesty to which we have alluded has made the work of the American Ambulance appear to be a privilege for the servant, even more than a benefit to the served, the achievements of the corps are set forth with a frankness without which the chief interest of the book would have been lacking. We may illustrate their efficiency by quoting the following passage:—

During the months of May, June, and July the Section, increased in number to twenty cars, broke all records of the American Ambulance. The work was so organized and men brought to such devotion to their duties that it may be said that of all the wounded brought down from daily and nightly fighting not one was kept waiting so much as ten minutes for an ambulance to take him to the hospital. Where before the coming of the American cars ambulances came up to the "postes de secours" only when called, and at night came after a delay occasioned by waking a driver sleeping some miles away, who thereupon drove his car to the place where he was needed, the American Section established a service on the spot, so that the waiting was done by the driver of the ambulance and not by the wounded.

We find here throughout a tale of humanity's courage; of its curious indifference to a danger that has become part of a routine; of its capacity for kindness, when it might seem that the conditions must stamp out gentleness. And then there is the pleasure of meeting the French touch. During the bombardment of Verdun a gendarme, remarking that "it was the heaviest rain we have had for several days," prefaced his comment by "C'est chic, n'est-ce pas?" Some of the difficulties encountered by the ambulance are terrible. Particularly noteworthy is one of "L. C. D.'s" experiences. He had to drive four wounded men down an icy mountain road, an embankment on one side, a ravine 1,000ft. deep on the other. The ambulance slid towards the ravine and two wheels went over; the driver got it back, and at this moment a wagon and four horses began to slide downhill behind it and to push it forward. A timely yell to the wounded of "Vous, jetez vous!" saved them—and left us breathless.