

The AMERICAN LEGION *Monthly*

I've got

MY OLD JOB BACK AGAIN

By Elsie Janis



GREETINGS, Gang!

Unless you were spending last July in some "gas" proof abri beyond the lines of communication, you probably ran into that barrage of Janis bunk which swept all fronts. Whiz-bang headlines, registering "Elsie Janis to give away her fortune as reason to go on living."

I hope your reaction was, "What the Hell?"—mine was. I'm definitely a casualty from the backfire, but am now able to lift my nose out of the thousands of letters, asking for everything from an autograph to donations as high as two hundred and fifty thousand bucks, and give the low-down to the only ones I'm sure will understand and believe it—the ex-service men.

All my life I've been very fussy about taking the name of the Almighty in vain, so when I wanted to talk about Him in a letter to my home-town paper, the *Tarrytown News*, I called Him "G. H. Q." Refusing to say anything more in explanation to the New York papers, I had lines put in my mouth which would have left a very bad taste, had I ever used them.

Reversing the potent quotation, "Après moi, le deluge," I say, "Après le deluge, Moi," which (in case any of youse guys have forgotten the French you used to murder so beautifully) reads in English—"After me, the deluge" and in my case, "After the deluge, ME"—'cause I'm still here and rarin' to go.

Despite all depressing rumors, I have literally millions of reasons to live—the same millions I had in 1918, namely, the A. E. F. as it is today. Get out your cellos now, fellahs, while I explain a closer connection between my "G. H. Q." and the A. E. F. than any of us ever felt with the Army G. H. Q., which we all kidded and kicked about in France.

No one had more gags or told more stories about the brass hats than Elsie. No one ever called the gang up front to sit in the high-and-mighty officers' seats, because the brass hats were a little late, but Elsie. No one cracked more bad gags about generals and their chateaux. I knew instinctively that riding them was an exercise the gang would excel at, if permitted. So, I rode in where the gang couldn't, at least not in full voice.

Oh, yes, I had lots of meals with brass hats and lots of fun kidding them, but when the day came that I was arrested by the French and sent back to Paris because they couldn't understand any girl going up to amuse the soldiers, accompanied by her mother, then did I yell for G. H. Q.? I learned that people might laugh, cry, sneer, complain, crab, and criticize, but when magic was to be done, orders had to come from G. H. Q. My own "magic applied for" turned out to be passes, blue, white, and red, signed by General Pershing, which leaped over beards and monocles with equal American surety.

They said I was to go wherever there was "an American soldier." I never kept a date with that one guy mentioned, but our "Gen." was far-seeing enough to make it possible for me to follow the olive drab trail, no matter whose front it led to. To me, the Army G. H. Q. immediately became "divine," because it blessed me with the right to carry on the happiest, and by far the most important, role I had ever played.

Now, eighteen years later, the real "Divine Power" which has always been asked for aid and guidance by me, suddenly becomes "G. H. Q." because I have received definite inspiration (now called "orders") to join up again.

I'm said to have contributed my bit of happiness to the great war, which was supposed to be for Democracy. We found later

Time: 1918; place, the Toul Sector; present, Elsie, her mother and the 101st Infantry Band serenading





Elsie's 1936 act, a high spot of the Cleveland National Convention goings-on

"Democracy" sounded like Greed. I'm now all set to contribute my bit of happiness to the far greater war for Peace, which will eventually have to be spelled "Love"—not the kind that in movies, plays, on the radio, in novels, and newspapers, gets the billing and the dough. The kind that its original Sponsor meant when He said, "Love begets Love."

Here's where the A. E. F. of today enters my future on horseback, on motorcycle, on route march, on wings, and on relief.

"Love begets Love"—I went to you fellows in France for love, and with no thought of any reward. Last year when I was labeled "dying" in Grasslands Hospital after my smash-up, six hundred and ninety-five ex-service organizations wired and wrote me because they loved me, and with no thought of reward. "Love begets Love" but only when it is built on unselfishness.

Thanks for the use of the rostrum, fellahs. You can drop the cellos now and get out your kazocs for a community sing. No foolin'!

When I was left in this spinning and dizzy world, I knew there must be a reason. I started asking my "G. H. Q." for orders. "Where do we go from here, boys?" was still my theme song, but with a change of the last word, and a sincere Amen, in place of the question mark.

When I was being put through the old questionnaire, I could hear "G. H. Q." saying, "Who do you really love so that you want to help without any thought of repayment?" My heart hopped in and beat me to the trigger:

"The gang, who love me that same way."

"What's stopping you from doing it?" said "G. H. Q."

"Well, I've got so many things I have to have money for, and I've never saved money like some folks do."

"Why do you want things? Don't you remember those lines you always loved—'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal? And,'" G. H. Q. almost whispered, "'for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'"

Well, I don't have to tell youse guys that with your Army G. H. Q. orders were orders, but with mine—they are blessings. They travel on wings of light and don't specialize in the old "take it or leave it" speed, but once they hit me, all the lights, of all the theaters, in all the countries, rolled into one seemed like a pocket flash in comparison.

The warmth of the light started to burn out my garland of fractures, which had changed my theme song to "From the Top of Your Head to the Tip of Your Toes, You're Out of Action." I had learned what I came out from under that truck for.

While fractures were mending, I sat browsing in retrospect, and realized that our other war had really killed the theater for me. It was never the same. I didn't know why then, but now I do—I was not giving! I was doing a good job, but I was getting paid—and how!

I left the stage and started a new career as a writer in Hollywood, still getting paid—and double how!! I refused as high as ten thousand bucks a week to return to the stage via the picture theater route. I didn't know why I hated the idea so, but I do now!

In fact, you may have gathered that I had to meet death under a truck, dodge it, and face life through seventy-odd yards of hospital bandages, to see what a swell assignment it can be if you ask for "orders," really want them, and then obey them.

As I'm giving you the low-down, and in case any of you are still rookies enough to believe everything (Continued on page 46) you read in the papers, here's the letter I've had to send to over four thousand so far:

My Friend:

I'm so sorry that through unwanted and exaggerated publicity, your hopes have been raised in vain. I literally have no money—only possessions, mortgages, and debts. It is my hope to rid myself of all these, and then start out to try and help people to be happier.

I am living on borrowed money myself until I can rid myself of possessions. Your request is one of hundreds that I have to refuse. I would help if I could, believe me,

Sincerely,

I've read and answered every letter received, myself, so I guess it looks like I muffed some order by talking too much, which you must admit was a common occurrence in the A. E. F.

Here's a real kick for youse guys—out of well over five thousand requests for some of the "fortune" the dailies endowed me with: I can count the letters from ex-service men on one hand. Is that sumptin'? "Love begets Love!"

Immediately after the Janis barrage hit the world-wide lines, I was asked to





explain just what I was going to do, by magazines, agents, radio programs, and—most of all, interested friends, whose mode of query was, "What nut house have you reservations in, darling?"

This is the first time I've explained, and I want you to know that I'm being paid. After my story "Hollow Laughter" made the Monthly, I was to write more tales, but I couldn't settle down to making them up or digging them up. I never needed money more than at the zero hour, waiting for action. When you start to rid yourself of possessions, have a nest egg to sit on while waiting for the buyers to arrive, is my advice.

Anyway, it was suggested that I write something about myself. Poor, shrinking little violet, I hesitated—then heard a distinct, "Tenshun!"

I snapped to it, and heard, "You will have to tell eventually what you are really up to, why not to the Legion Monthly, that can't even be bought by the doubters"?

Well, here it is, Gang! And, when I say, "I'll be seein' you," it really goes this time, because I expect to run around this blessed land, like an epidemic. I'm going to lead Sing-songs, crack gags, whoop it up generally just like I did in France, and for the benefit of whatever ex-service particular outfits may happen to need when I hit town.

At that quiet little get-together out in Cleveland, any doubts about my hearing the correct Orders from "G. H. Q." were dispelled. My hearing is good. My Faith, already complete before the Convention, was given an extra boost when the gang sang me into my dance, which after the smashup, I was never supposed to go into again.

This effusion goes into the Legion Monthly bosses tomorrow. The day after, I start for California. Talk about re-takes—I've found seven hospitals right on my route already. I've warned the poor guys that they will either have to get out, or get Janis. My route as I've planned it is southward and my theme song—

Oh! What has become of Hinky-Dinky
Parlez Vous?
What has become of Little Elsie that
you knew?
She's back again and on the job,
With her cartwheel, too, so help me,
Bob,
Hinky-Dinky Parlez Vous.



*"I gave this show on a couple of tables
in front of headquarters"*