AMERICANS IN FRANCE WELCOME PEACE

Lieut. Jesse Allen Crafton, '12, Tells How He Acted and How Other Soldiers Received News of Signing of the Armistice.

HOW the news of the signing of the armistice struck American soldiers overseas is related picturesquely by Lieut. Jesse Allen Crafton, '12, in the following letter:

Somewhere in France
November 12, 1918

It is done at last. It doesn't seem much different, there was but little thrill connected with it, and as yet we are not able to fully realize that the world is at peace, while yesterday it was at war. It has seemed as tho the war would be endless, and we have become so used to thinking of war and being in war, that peace is difficult to grasp, all at once. The greatest realization that I have of peace is that I can throw back the window curtains and let the light stream out of the windows without danger.

As operations officer, which I have been for several days, I sent up my patrols yesterday morning as usual. At 9 o'clock, as I was sitting at my desk, an orderly rushed in, saying, "Put every available ship in the sky until 11 o'clock. The armistice is signed and takes effect at eleven." It was a bit too much to grasp, and I proceeded quite calmly to send up the ships. At eleven they came down. The captain (Judge Landis' son) was also trying to figure out just what had happened. "The war's over," he said, "and I'm alive. I haven't a right to be. I should have been killed a dozen times. But I fooled 'em. Now—now I'm going back and get married and begin raising exemptions for the next war."

I got permission and a car and went sightseeing. One of the most interesting little bits I know was to be seen up at the lines. At eleven o'clock firing ceased. The men of both sides began to show themselves—first the Americans, then the Germans. Soon they began to call to one another, then they ventured across no-man's land to get acquainted. In a short time it was a case of "our dear enemies." In the German dugouts were groups of Yanks drinking beer and collecting souvenirs of buttons and helmets and shoulder straps, which the Germans gave gladly for a few cigarets. On the American side, likewise, the grimy, happy Heinies mingled their grey uniforms with our brown, trying to tell the Americans that they didn't hate them, and that they were glad that we entered the war, and got it over with soon. At one place, in a state of happy intoxication, arm in arm, these erstwhile enemies were singing together, or rather, separately, in celebration of the end of the war. (One could think quite a bit about this scene, if one cared to.)

I went into town for dinner. (The town is a large one and one you would recognize if I could name it.) About 1:30 it got the official notification of the armistice. Immediately proclamations were posted, signed by the mayor, and declaring a holiday. Such a change as I saw take place. The dreary streets, always deserted except by a few sad-faced, black-dressed people who had to go out upon them, literally burst into life.

People came from everywhere, they poured into the narrow streets until traffic was well nigh impossible. "Is it over?" "Have they surrendered?" "Is the war finished?" they kept asking, trying to realize that the good news was true, yet fearing to do so. Tricolor ribbons, stickers, bunting and flags began to appear. The flags of France, of England, of America, of Italy and Belgium were hung from the windows, were carried about the streets, were put on the myriad army trucks and autos and on the civilian carts and wagons. "Vive la France! Vivents les Allies!" was shrieked above the loud chatter. You could see, with your own eyes, the terror and hardships of four long years,—with the air of wine and the oft repeated words, "The war is finished—thrown off"; the wrecked buildings were forgotten, and the wild joy of long-imprisoned freedom took possession of the people.

It would take a genius and a book to tell of all I saw. In the back of a cafe a young poilu rushed up to me and cried, "Mon kamerad! C'est finis! Vive l'Amerique!" and he grabbed my hand and almost squeezed it in two. Near the market, a fat and grizzled old woman who sells flowers saw an American truck draw up near her. Partly because she had had too much wine and partly because of her irrepressible joy, she took her whole stock, every flower (and flowers are costly here now) and decorated the truck, meanwhile jabbering away with eyes full of tears and with her wine-scented breath mingling with the fragrance of her flowers. A crowd of French soldiers, just from the trenches, rounded the corner in close, very close, and very uneven formation, and singing their popular war song, "Madelon." Everyone made way for them; everyone cheered them. All at once, some one broke ranks and ran out and grabbed a girl, returning to the formation with her. It made no difference whether the girl objected, or who she was. She was taken along, regardless. Then, when everyone had one or more girls, the procession halted and the girls were embraced, kissed and fondled in general to the soldier's hearts' content. Yanks paired up with poilus and poilus with Tommies and Tommies with wops and Yanks, and away they went, in groups, in pairs, shouting, waving flags and quite occasionally stopping to get another drink before they proceeded on their very merry way.

I left about 4:30 for camp and supper. At supper I suggested to the other officers that our place was in town and they agreed that the suggestion was good; so away we went back to the town. We arrived a little before nine o'clock. The celebration was now in full swing and in great glory. The street lights had been removed or were unable to do service after about four years of inactivity, but short strings of incandescent lights were hung out, the heavy window blinds were thrown open and the auto lights were not dimmed. So, tho the place was still but imperfectly lighted, it resembled the great white way much more than what it has resembled for the past few years. Crowds still filled the streets, happier and noisier than in the afternoon. One soldier had his war and weather-beaten accordeon, and with it was leading his comrades down the road. Groups of children, released from their long captivity, paraded by, be-ribboned and be-smeared with tri-color stickers, carrying flags and smoking American cigarets and singing shriekily. Autos decorated with flowers and evergreen and autumn leaves, and all bearing one or more of the Allied flags, honked their slow way thru the crowds. For the first time I saw France rejoice and make merry; and she did it in the simplest, most spontaneous manner; everyone was a child; everyone was smiling and giggling and jumping about like a child; except here and there where a black-veiled face looked on at the happiness, unable to share in it because of the thots of him who was gone.

It was in the cafes where life was brightest and noisiest. A few of us went to the Lorraine Hotel and upstairs into a big dining room. The room was full of French officers and their women, with occasionally an Englishman. As we entered the entire roomful arose and cheered us; we were "vive l'Ameriqued" vociferously; and we were given the best champagne in the house During my several months in France I had never heard the famous Marseillaise either sung or played. I was beginning to fear

that I would have to go home without hearing it. But we hadn't been in the cafe long before a handsome, ruddy French colonial got up. He was recognized and immediately a silence fell over the party. Then he sang "The Marseillaise." I will have to live a long, long time and will have to listen to a vast amount of singing before I will hear anything like this again. His voice was a perfect tenor. He sang, steadily, sincerely, and tears were visible in his eyes and in the eyes of his quiet listeners. When he reached the refrain, "to arms, to arms, ye brave," he was joined by every French voice in the room, and the great war-hymn ended in a wild, powerful, impassioned chorus. After it was over and he was seated again, there was considerable more "vive-ing."

Well—I am an actor and I can't help it. I saw my opportunity. There was but one thing to do; there was but one thing that any self-respecting actor could do under such circumstances. I sort of felt that I had a duty to perform. I mounted a chair, and out came "The Star Spangled Banner!" Every Frenchman uncovered and every Frenchman and woman arose. I got thru with it much better than I would have predicted that I would have done. As I finished, four American flags appeared from somewhere and were formed in a canopy above my head. Oh, for a photograph of that supreme moment!

Other cafes were visited. One place, which in its composition rather resembles a Child's restaurant, was packed solid. It is a huge place, and there must have been thousands between its walls. Race, sex and previous condition of servitude were forgotten. I chummed up with a French major, who had on every decoration that much-decorating France has ever bestowed. A private was as good as a general. Here there was more hurrahing and chattering and singing and drinking. A French lieutenant mounted to a precarious position above the mob, and with an American flag, led his French-voiced followers in a song. Not to be outdone, I mounted to a similar position, except I was a little higher, and with a French flag as a baton, I led the Anglo-Saxon population in that choice bit, "Hail, hail, the gang's all here!" This number was highly appreciated by the French, who now know it well. I noticed a small group of Englishmen, sadly out of it because of their inferior numbers, and I feel sure that I won England's lasting good wishes by singing "God Save the Queen," while a British flag was stuck up beside me.

So the night went on. True, there was much drinking and quite a few actions which can't be mentioned. But after all, one can almost excuse such things under such circumstances. And no one's disposition or good spirits seemed disturbed by them. Everyone only became the merrier, except a few Americans who had to have a fight or two among themselves. This is the first war I have ever seen ended; it was a wild and wonderful occasion; and I hope with all my heart that I shall never have to share in the joy of another one. I returned home pretty tired and glad to go to bed.

To-night as I look out over the hills I see lights—lights from the town and from the hillside houses; I hear only the hum of an occasional truck or auto, where before I have been hearing the constant thunder of the guns. And to the east, where I have seen nightly a misty, watery-blood color, there is only quiet darkness. It is over, and we are ready to stage our first pageant—the pageant of praise. After that—what? We will have to wait and see.

Harvard Sends Allard

Harvard college sends to Knox this year on the Harvard exchange a French soldier, scholar and professor of literature—Louis Allard. Professor Allard served with the French reservists early in the war and only returned to America when his government offered him leave of absence to complete his work at Harvard. He is assistant professor of French literature. Professor Allard will come to Knox soon after the new year.

The German Club at Knox has been forgotten but a new Spanish Club has just been formed with a full list of officers and by-laws. There are 17 members.