

**"Singing with the A. E. F.," Described By Amparito Farrar**

Young American Soprano Tells of Her Experiences on Tour for the Overseas Theater League — "Concert Halls" Were "Any Place One Found Men to Sing To"—How She Sang for the Crowds in Paris When the Armistice News Came

By MAY STANLEY

"IF I had to choose between my career and the experiences I've had in the last few months I'd take the latter."

This is the conviction of Amparito Farrar, the young American soprano, who returned last week from a four months' tour of the American camps in France.

Appearing for the Overseas Theater League, Miss Farrar went to France last August, and from that time until a few days before the armistice was signed she was on "active service" well up toward the fighting front.

In fact, Miss Farrar got much closer to the front than military red tape permitted, for one day—through the kindness of a colonel who knew when to turn his back—she made a trip over the Joffre highway through the Vosges country, and looked down for a few breathless moments at the German lines.

"There were their trenches, apparently such a tiny distance away, as we looked down from the highway," she relates, "and over on this side were our men, with the countryside lying as serenely as if war were unknown. It struck me as so unreal, and to heighten this effect there were cows grazing as contentedly as though shrapnel and machine gun bullets were things of another world.

"But that was the exception, I mean the opportunity to have a glimpse of the actual front," Miss Farrar continued. Most of my time was passed in the S. O. S. Perhaps you don't know overseas army language? Well, S. O. S. is the service of supplies, that great area 'back of the front' where all the provisions, guns, ammunition and trucks are handled. One might drive along mile after mile in the S. O. S. area and just go by row after row of warehouses. It made me realize for the first time the extent of our army operations in France.

"In a way my trip was like going back home, for I studied in Paris and knew France rather well. And the first time I was called on to sing was at one of the Paris hospitals, for men from the Chateau-Thierry fight. Of course, you've been told over and over what these boys have done, but the story will bear telling many times more. I have never seen such a fine spirit, such optimism, such splendid courage, as these wounded men displayed. There was no complaining, even among those who were most terribly injured; every one of them was glad to have had the chance to be in the big fight and proud of the opportunity. It made one realize that no sacrifice was too great if one could only minister in some way to their comfort or cheer.

**On Tour with the A. E. F.**

"From Paris mother and I went to the Dijon country. Theoretically I was to sing in the 'Y' huts, but actually I sang everywhere; sometimes I appeared in the huts, or hanging out of the windows of cottages, with the men in a circle below me; sometimes I stood on gun carriages, or on improvised platforms—wherever there was a crowd of boys gathered. What did I sing? Everything. I assure you that if one wants to learn how to give informal programs the best training place in the world is with the A. E. F. Usually I would tell them some stories—generally a funny story about a second lieutenant, for the second lieutenants seemed to be the mark for all camp humor. Then I'd turn the laugh by saying I told these stories because I liked the second lieutenants best. The men adored sentimental songs and used to ask for ever so many things that I didn't know. 'Sing us "Indiana" they would call. Perhaps mother didn't know 'Indiana'; in that event I would



Some Pictorial Glimpses of Amparito Farrar: Upper Left, the Young American Soprano, as Bairnsfather Painted Her; Upper Right, With the American Air Forces in France; Lower Left, Miss Farrar Ready for Her Flight in a French Plane; Lower Right, the Singer Wearing the Alsatian Costume in Which She Appeared in Many Recitals in Alsace-Lorraine.

call for volunteers and up would come a man in khaki to play the accompaniment.

"When I sang 'Somewhere a Voice Is Calling' one could always see some lads steal away from the group—going out in the darkness to furtively wipe away tears that they didn't think befitted men of the United States Army. One of the songs that was an especial favorite was 'We Licked 'em at the Marne.' The men would always sing the chorus with me with great gusto.

**A Recital Given Under Difficulties**

"I had a bad time in Dijon one evening when we were giving a formal recital, with ever so many impressively decorated French generals and other dignitaries present. All the little enlisted chaps that were sitting around down near the stage would, in the most penetrating stage whispers, ask, 'Miss Farrar, sing "We Licked 'em at the Marne.'" 'Hush,' I would answer out one corner of my mouth, smiling at the official audience with the rest of my countenance. In another minute it would come again. 'Miss Farrar, sing "Indiana.'" 'Keep still,' I admonished. 'We'll have those songs when we're just by ourselves.' And so on through the program.

"One evening at a camp in the Dijon country it was unusually wet and cold, and I was standing on a little platform in thin slippers. I was sorry for the boys sitting around in the wet and I said, 'Aren't your feet cold, mine are.' And a voice came out of the darkness, from a chap sitting up in the limb of a

tree, 'Huh, who ever heard of an American with cold feet!'

"Their humor was a never failing source of delight. One day—it was another wet, cold afternoon—I came across a soldier sitting disconsolately in the 'Y' shelter. 'Say,' he said earnestly, 'do you know what? I'd give the Germans this country; yes, ma'am, I would. And more than that, I'd apologize for the condition it's in.'

"All France calls us the 'tout suite Americains,' because 'tout suite' is about the first phrase that the American doughboy learned—although it never did any good, because nothing on earth could make the French hurry—and our rapid-fire methods were a source of never ending amazement to the peasantry."

One of Miss Farrar's difficulties was in explaining her name.

"I got so accustomed to one question that when I went on to sing the first thing I said was, 'No, not Geraldine. No, I am no kin of hers.' In fact, one of the chief troubles of my life is living down my name. I assure you it is a drawback and not an asset to have a name that is so well known in the world of music, for I am continually having to make the same explanations wherever I go. One of the American soldiers in France once asked of me, 'What's your first name, Miss Farrar?' When I told him he looked puzzled for a moment, then he said, 'But I wanted to know your name, not your serial number.'"

The trip she made in a French plane over the German lines is something that

will always be stamped clearly on the singer's memory. "The pilot gave me all the 'stunts' except looping the loop," she relates, 'including that awful side-slide. As we were taking that I remember looking down at the earth and consoling myself with the thought that, anyway, I would be dead when I struck it. But when we were getting back to the ground I saw a group of French officers watching us and knew it was no time for an American girl to show the white feather, so I waved my arm at them with all the nonchalance I could muster. Maybe it wasn't very effective camouflage, but at any rate they cheered me heartily.'

Miss Farrar got back to Paris a few days before the signing of the armistice and had the delight of celebrating that event in the French capital.

"With the typical French regard for conventions, no one began the demonstration until eleven o'clock," she relates. "Then, on the minute that the guns and whistles proclaimed the news, flags burst from every window like magic. And the crowd in the streets went mad. It was not such a celebration as you had, but more of a great thanksgiving, as if a crushing burden had suddenly been lifted from thousands of shoulders. There had been a great heap of captured cannon in the Place de la Concorde, and they were dragged and hauled through the streets in impromptu parades. There were cannon all over Paris the next morning.

"Once during the afternoon I came to