

## Y COLUMN.

## WHEN A MAN'S IN FRANCE.

(M. Madeline Southard.)

"What's the use of trying to keep up a Young People's Branch? The boys are all in the army, three of the best girls are leaving to teach. I hate to have the thing drag along and die on our hands. Let's disband." It was an officers' meeting, and the President, Claire Burney, was speaking.

"I hate to," said Nan reluctantly. "We've had such good times, and it's meant so much to me. But it may be Claire is right. It doesn't seem so necessary in a bone-dry State."

"No," said vivacious Nell. "I loved it when we had to fight, and everything was exciting. But now everybody knows that prohibition is best. It's no fun to work for a thing after it's become popular."

"But there's the nation to be made dry, and the whole world. I think there is a great deal to do yet," came from timid Anne.

"Oh, we can still sign petitions and give some money. But our own young folk aren't in danger any longer. And with all the war work to be done now, I don't think we are justified in taking time for anything not absolutely necessary." There was finality in Claire's tone.

Mrs Robbins, whom the Troy Branch called god-mother, had been listening with a sinking heart. Now she interposed:

"Speaking of war work, girls, I was going to ask you to-day if we couldn't get the addresses of past and present Y.P.B. boys, and write to them."

"I don't think so, Mrs Robbins," came promptly from Claire. "The boys must be bored by so many women and girls fussing over them. Everybody they see wants to write to them, or feed them, or hold their hands adoringly. I think it's rather silly."

This was so like Claire, whose commonsense never gave her sentimental heart a chance to express itself, that Mrs Robbins dropped her eyes to hide their twinkle.

"Nobody will ever accuse you of being silly, Claire, at any rate." Then a vibrant tone came into the god-mother's voice. "That's just it, my dears. Many women and girls are being foolish, and unconsciously

tempting our boys. Some, of course, do it deliberately. It seems to me the good women and girls owe it to these men to steady them with little glimpses of home, reminders of how much they mean to their friends. We are not to forget that they are paying a rather big price to save us from what women in Europe are suffering. We might give a little effort, and a few postage stamps as a thank-offering."

"Oh, I don't mind the work." The quick tears sprang to Claire's eyes, and she could say no more.

"But, Mrs Robbins, some of our younger girls are rather foolish, too. I don't know that it would be wise." Nan taught in the high school, and knew some things.

"I'll tell you," exclaimed Nell. "We'll have a censor just like they do in France—make it a military procedure, and the girls won't mind. And Mrs Robbins will put her seal on each letter that is passed. Some of the most dangerous girls in town are writing freely to the boys. I don't believe we ought to turn it all over to them. Our girls will do the right thing after Mrs Robbins talks with them."

So it was settled, and so it was carried out, with an addition. Anne came to the next meeting with a quantity of kodak pictures. Others got out their old films, and she made many prints that were enclosed loose in the letters.

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Captain Clinton Ramsay was back from a stiff time in the front lines. His left arm was perfectly comfortable in a sling, his healthy young flesh had almost forgotten that a bullet had but recently ploughed through it, his virile young spirit was clamouring to be back sharing the danger with his men.

It was a welcome break in the monotony of convalescence when an invitation was received to spend a social evening in a chateau east of town. When the hour came, Clinton, with several other officers, was ushered into the stately rooms, and met the gracious hospitality of a French home. There was a certain sparkle about everything, from the cut-glass and the liquors served in it, to the eyes of the women and their animated conversation. The effect was exhilarating, and Clinton had an undefined feeling that everything he had known before had been dull and sluggish compared

with this. He thanked his lucky stars that French had been easy for him, and that he had given especial attention to pronunciation.

But if the language gave the young captain no other embarrassment, some other things did. He felt perfectly helpless when he was furnished with a beautiful glass of beautiful wine, and the beautiful girl beside him explained how the hostess had offered this rare vintage when she learned that among her guests was one wounded in defence of their beautiful France. Then, in a moment, one of the American men was expressing their gratitude to these fair ladies, and glasses were lifted at his call. Clinton hesitated until the others began to look toward him, then the horror of seeming discourteous overcame him, and he drank with the rest.

"I was afraid you were going to do queer things there for a minute last night," said another officer next morning. "Jennings would never have forgiven you if you had refused to drink to his toast."

"But Pershing—I thought—"

"Oh, there's rather a high-class minority that think Pershing's a bit of a crank on this. Of course, it wouldn't do to let the men get in the habit of drinking. But our officers are college trained men of self-control. And we have several things to do for America while we are here, besides whip the Hun. We must make the better classes understand that we are not a country of boozers, that we are fit to meet socially. And you can't go in genteel society in Europe and not drink their delicate wines. It's just an incident, nothing to get excited about in the big game we are in."

Clinton found he was not particularly excited about it, any more than over many other innovations that cut squarely across his former thought and habit of life. He told himself he had enough to do to adapt himself to the emergencies of an officer's life without debating small distinctions in conduct that had once seemed important.

This attitude made it easy for him to continue, with rapidly growing intimacy, his acquaintance with an attractive young woman he had met at the chateau. Then the day came that he was to make his final call before going back to the front, and he was thinking with anticipation and appre-