Welcome to the November 19, 2024 Little Voices webinar
with presenter Jill Markham O'Hara!

The webinar will start promptly at 6 p.m.

Thank you for joining us tonight.

THE LITTLE VOICES

A ROMANCE OF THE TUG HILL COUNTRY

BY LEE WASMUTH

THEO & HATTIE WASMUTH MOVE TO PAGE

In 1902, Theodore (Theo) moved his family from Michigan Mills to Page.

Evelyn was 15 when the family moved, her sister Mary 10, Otto 8, Hobart 5 and Leslie 2. Lee was born in 1903, followed by Ellis in 1905.

Our author, Lee, is sitting on Theo's lap.

Thanks to Peter Hayes for restoring this picture.

LEE WASMUTH WRITES THE LITTLE VOICES

1933 - Lee owns his own pharmacy in Turin and is married to Regina Kibby. They have a daughter, Jane.

Lee has finished writing **The Little Voices**.

Lee writes to **The Watertown Daily Times** in hopes of selling his novel to the newspaper.

LEE'S QUERY LETTER TO THE TIMES

DRUGS | HOLDEN DRUG CO. | MEDICINES
LEE WASMUTH, Prop.

Stock Remedies | Paints, Oils, Brushes, Glass | Toilet Articles
School Supplies | Books, Magazines, Stationery | Post Cards
Candies, Etc.

Turin, N. Y. Aug 24, 1933.

Mr. Harold B. Johnson
Watertown, N.Y.

Dear Mr Johnson:

This afternoon I had the audacity to send you the "carbon" of the story I spoke of last spring.

If you think it might have suitable interest to justify your use, you can have it for a very nominal sum.

Of course I am endeavoring to get it [illegible] as a book published. I believe it has sufficient suspense

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to justify a book publication or not is part of the gamble, but if it should, the fact that it has been previously printed in a newspaper should not militate against it.

If you haven't any use for it send it back express collect.

Many thanks.

Yours very truly,
Lee Wasmuth.

P.S. There is nothing so controversial as I will strike in it.

L.W.

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If you think it might have suitable interest to justify your use, you can have it for a nominal sum.

Of course I am ***endeavoring to get it backed by a book publisher****. Whether it has* ***sufficient suspense to justify a publication*** *or not is part of the gamble, but if it should, the fact that it has previously been printed in a newspaper should not mitigate against it. If you haven't any use for it, send it back express collect.*

Many thanks.

Yours very truly,

Lee Wasmuth

WHY WOULD LEE ACCEPT A LOW PRICE FOR HIS STORY?

He felt that publication in a newspaper would help attract the attention of a book publisher.

WHY DID HE WRITE A LOVE STORY?

He believed that a love story would create enough suspense to keep the reader interested in finishing the story. Therefore, he wrote a romance in the form of a love triangle.

i

MR. JOHNSON'S OFFER

August 29, 1933

My dear Mr. Wasmuth,

Relative to your novel: We have looked it over here. Mr. Robert Sewell of our staff has read it very carefully and **thinks well of its possibilities for a serial publication**.

We will be glad to use it but we can pay you only the nominal amount which we pay the syndicates. **We get our serials for $25 apiece**. That will probably seem mighty small to you but **if you care to let us go ahead with serial publication for that amount we will be glad to do so.**

I don’t have Lee’s reply but he did accept Mr. Johnson’s offer.

And again from Mr. Johnson:

September 5, 1933

…. **I am pleased to send you herewith check for $25 . . .**

. . . I have your introductory paragraph and we are using it with the first installment tomorrow . . .

. . . If Bobbs Merrill Company (book publisher) should write me I will be very glad to give our commendation.

With best wishes, I am

Yours very truly,

Editor Johnson

FIRST CHAPTER OF THE LITTLE VOICES

— By —

LEE WASMUTH

A Romance of Tug Hill Country

Don't miss a single installment of "Little Voices." This richly imagined story of life on Tug Hill and in the valley below will appear in daily installments in The Times, the newspaper that has the true stories of Tug Hill and the Black River valley first and most completely.

Author's Note.

Tug Hill is geographically a relative term. It is actually, to many of us, a spacious domain where the sun seems somehow to shine a little brighter.

The chief of a certain Indian tribe, living near ruins of the Mound Builders, was once asked to explain who it was that had shaped the ancient Curios.

He replied: "Men who were here before us."

It is a rather presumptive undertaking to write of Tug Hill for men who were here before my generation. I am not seeking encouragement in perversity, nor to turn serious folk from their serious way. My story is only the outgrowth of a desire to uplift our own people, a desire probably shared by other doltish fellows who were here before me.

I am indebted in this work to Frank Bates, formerly of the Glenfield & Western railroad; to Mr. Van Brunt of the Keystone Chemical company; to Charles W. Nolan of Rome, now in Honolulu; to Peter McGovern of Lowville; to William D. Holden, Charles Ward, Milo Ward, Evan R. Pritchard and T. D. Mackey of Turin, to the Feb. 9 issue of the Watertown Times for its "Secret Chapter from the World War;" to March's History of The World War; to many patient friends and acquaintances; and especially to former Lieutenant W. Taylor Barr of Pulaski and the 32nd division, A. E. F.

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fears were groundless. Lamis, more at leisure than ever—if it were possible—leaned easily over the counter, a twinkle in his eye.

"Any hairy?" he inquired.

"Nope."

"Well, how would you like a chocolate drop?"

He seemed to be reading my mind, for he sauntered around the merchandise rack and approached the pail. Jackie suddenly lost interest in dolls. Her eyes followed him as hopefully as my own.

Sammy, his black spaniel, lay asleep on the floor; but he opened a near eye, calmly expressing poise and contemptuously superior breeding.

Lamis returned with three chocolates. He laid one in my palm and one in Jackie's. Then he turned to Sammy.

"Speak, Sammy!" He held the candy high.

The dog, restraining himself like a true gentleman, sat back on his haunches, held up his black paws reverently, and spoke.

"How—woof!"

Lamis tossed the chocolate

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"How Allan'll t to."

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EXCERPTS FROM LEE'S AUTHOR NOTES

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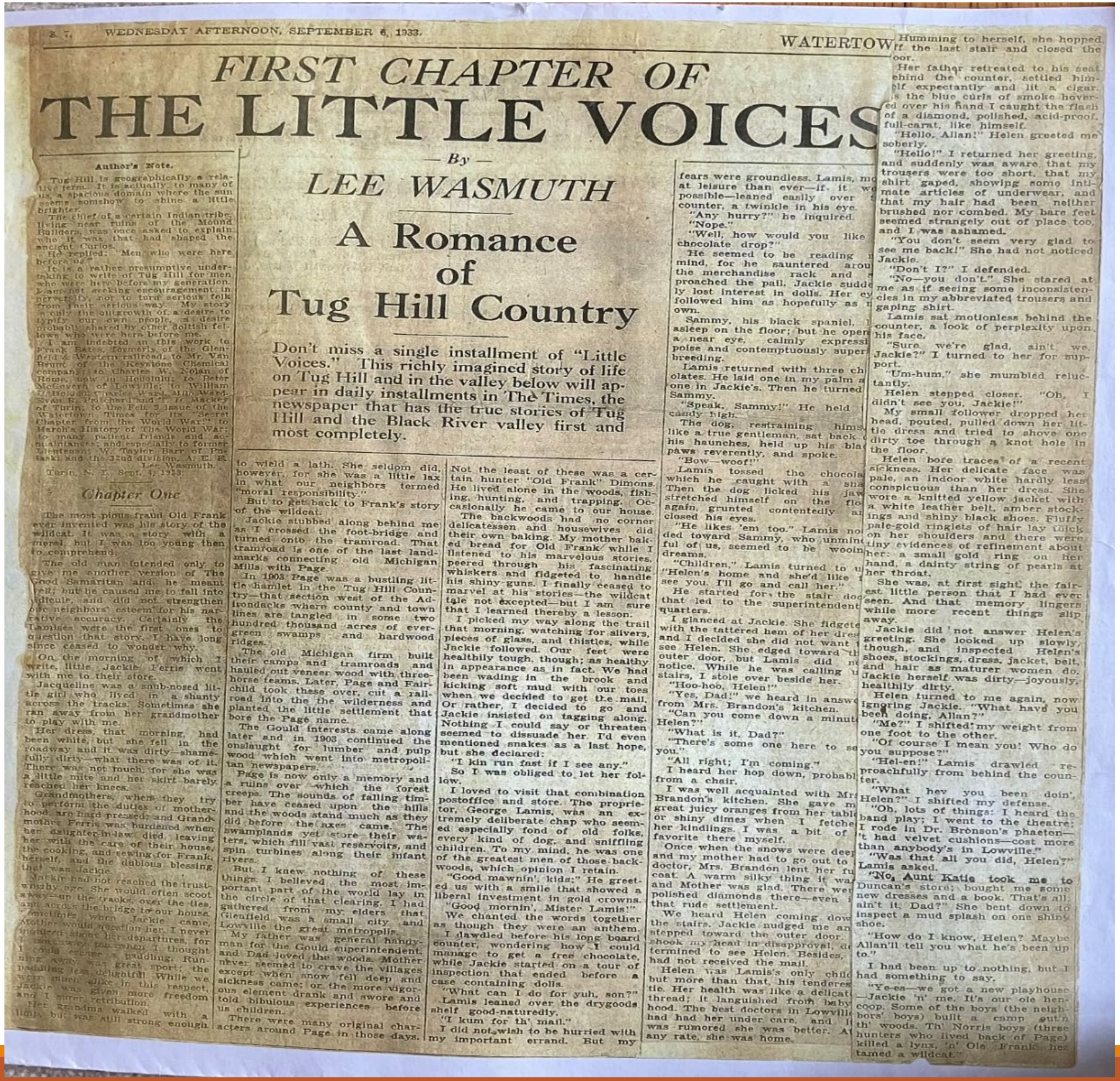
My story is only the outgrowth of a desire to typify our own people.

EVELYN WASMUTH MARKHAM

Cut out each day's segments

Pasted segments into a book

SEPTEMBER 6, 1933



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Lee Wasmuth.

Turin, N. Y., Sept. 4, 1933.

Chapter One

The most pious fraud Old Frank ever invented was his story of the wildcat. It was a story with a moral, but I was too young then to comprehend.

The old man intended only to give me another version of The Good Samaritan and he meant well; but he caused me to fall into ridicule, and did not strengthen our neighbors' esteem for his narrative accuracy. Certainly the Lamises were the first ones to question that story. I have long since ceased to wonder why.

On the morning of which I write, little Jackie Ferris went with me to their store.

Jacqueline was a snub-nosed little girl who lived in a shanty across the tracks. Sometimes she ran away from her grandmother to play with me.

Her dress, that morning, had been white, but she fell in the roadway and it was dirty—shamefully dirty—what there was of it. There was not much, for she was a little mite and her skirt barely reached her knees.

Grandmothers, when they try to perform the duties of motherhood, are hard pressed; and Grandmother Ferris was burdened when her daughter-in-law died, leaving her with the care of their house, the cooking, and sewing for Frank, herself, and the dubious blessing that was Jackie.

Jackie had not reached the trustworthy age. She would often scoot away—up the tracks, over the ties, and across the bridge to our house. Sometimes, when Jackie came, Mother would question her. I never inquired about her departures, for I [illegible] too—when I thought I could escape a paddling. Running away was great sport; the paddling less delightful. While we were much alike in this respect, Jackie was given more freedom and I surer retribution.

Her grandma walked with a limp, but was still strong enough to wield a lath. She seldom did, however, for she was a little lax in what our neighbors termed "moral responsibility."

But to get back to Frank's story of the wildcat.

Jackie stubbed along behind me as I crossed the foot-bridge and turned onto the tramroad. That tramroad is one of the last landmarks connecting old Michigan Mills with Page.

In 1903 Page was a bustling little hamlet in the Tug Hill Country—that section west of the Adirondacks where county and town lines are tangled in some two hundred thousand acres of evergreen swamps and hardwood ridges.

The old Michigan firm built their camps and tramroads and hauled out veneer wood with three-horse teams. Later, Page and Fairchild took these over, cut a railroad into the the wilderness and planted the little settlement that bore the Page name.

The Gould interests came along later and in 1903 continued the onslaught for lumber and pulp wood which went into metropolitan newspapers.

Page is now only a memory and a ruins over which the forest creeps. The sounds of falling timber have ceased upon the hills and the woods stand much as they did before the axes came. The swamplands yet store their waters, which fill vast reservoirs, and spin turbines along their infant rivers.

But I knew nothing of these things. I believed the most important part of the world lay in the circle of that clearing. I had gathered from my elders that Glenfield was a small city and Lowville the great metropolis.

My father was general handyman for the Gould superintendent, and Dad loved the woods. Mother never seemed to crave the villages except when snow fell deep and sickness came; or the more vigorous element drank and swore and told bibulous experiences before us children.

There were many original characters around Page in those days. Not the least of these was a certain hunter "Old Frank" Dimons. He lived alone in the woods, fishing, hunting, and trapping. Occasionally he came to our house.

The backwoods had no corner delicatessen and housewives did their own baking. My mother baked bread for Old Frank while I listened to his marvelous stories, peered through his fascinating whiskers and fidgeted to handle his shiny guns. I finally ceased to marvel at his stories—the wildcat tale not excepted—but I am sure that I learned thereby a lesson.

I picked my way along the trail that morning, watching for slivers, pieces of glass, and thistles, while Jackie followed. Our feet were healthily tough, though; as healthy in appearance as in fact. We had been wading in the brook and kicking soft mud with our toes when we decided to get the mail. Or rather, I decided to go and Jackie insisted on tagging along. Nothing I could say or threaten seemed to dissuade her. I'd even mentioned snakes as a last hope, but she declared:

"I kin run fast if I see any."

So I was obliged to let her follow.

I loved to visit that combination postoffice and store. The proprietor, George Lamis, was an extremely deliberate chap who seemed especially fond of old folks, every kind of dog, and sniffling children. To my mind, he was one of the greatest men of those backwoods, which opinion I retain.

"Good mawnin', kids;" He greeted us with a smile that showed a liberal investment in gold crowns.

"Good mornin', Mister Lamis!"

We chanted the words together as though they were an anthem.

I dawdled before his long board counter, wondering how I could manage to get a free chocolate, while Jackie started on a tour of inspection that ended before a case containing dolls.

"What can I do for yuh, son?" Lamis leaned over the drygoods shelf good-naturedly.

"I kum for th' mail."

I did not wish to be hurried with my important errand. But my fears were groundless. Lamis, mo at leisure than ever—if it wa possible—leaned easily over counter, a twinkle in his eye.

"Any hurry?" he inquired.

"Nope."

"Well, how would you like chocolate drop?"

He seemed to be reading mind, for he sauntered arou the merchandise rack and proached the pail. Jackie sudde ly lost interest in dolls. Her ey followed him as hopefully as own.

Sammy, his black spaniel, asleep on the floor; but he open a near eye, calmly expressi poise and contemptuously super breeding.

Lamis returned with three ch olates. He laid one in my palm a one in Jackie's. Then he turned Sammy.

"Speak, Sammy!" He held candy high.

The dog, restraining hims like a true gentleman, sat back his haunches, held up his bla paws reverently, and spoke.

"Bow—woof!"

Lamis tossed the chocola which he caught with a sna Then the dog licked his jaw stretched himself on the flo again, grunted contentedly a closed his eyes.

"He likes 'em too." Lamis no ded toward Sammy, who unmin ful of us, seemed to be wooin dreams.

"Children," Lamis turned to u "Helen's home and she'd like see you. I'll go and call her."

He started for the stair doo that led to the superintendent quarters.

I glanced at Jackie. She fidgete with the tattered hem of her dres and I decided she did not want see Helen. She edged toward th outer door, but Lamis did n notice. While he was calling u stairs, I stole over beside her.

"Hoo-hoo, Helen!"

"Yes, Dad!" we heard in answ from Mrs. Brandon's kitchen.

"Can you come down a minut Helen?"

"What is it, Dad?"

"There's some one here to se you."

"All right; I'm coming."

I heard her hop down, probabl from a chair.

I was well acquainted with Mr Brandon's kitchen. She gave m great juicy oranges from her tabl or shiny dimes when I fetche her kindlings. I was a bit of favorite there myself.

Once when the snows were deep and my mother had to go out to doctor, Mrs. Brandon lent her fu coat. A warm silky thing it wa and Mother was glad. There wer polished diamonds there—even i that rude settlement.

We heard Helen coming dow the stairs. Jackie nudged me an stepped toward the outer door. shook my head in disapproval, de termined to see Helen. Besides, had not received the mail.

Helen was Lamis's only child but more than that, his tenderes tie. Her health was like a delicat thread; it languished from baby hood. The best doctors in Lowvill had had her under care, and i was rumored she was better. At any rate, she was home.

Humming to herself, she hopped ff the last stair and closed the oor.

Her father retreated to his seat ehind the counter, settled himelf expectantly and lit a cigar. s the blue curls of smoke hovered over his hand I caught the flash of a diamond, polished, acid-proof, full-carat, like himself.

"Hello, Allan!" Helen greeted me soberly.

"Hello!" I returned her greeting, and suddenly was aware that my trousers were too short, that my shirt gaped, showing some intimate articles of underwear, and that my hair had been neither brushed nor combed. My bare feet seemed strangely out of place too, and I was ashamed.

"You don't seem very glad to see me back!" She had not noticed Jackie.

"Don't I?" I defended.

"No—you don't." She stared at me as if seeing some inconsistencies in my abbreviated trousers and gaping shirt.

Lamis sat motionless behind the counter, a look of perplexity upon his face.

"Sure we're glad, ain't we, Jackie?" I turned to her for support.

"Um-hum," she mumbled reluctantly.

Helen stepped closer. "Oh, I didn't see you, Jackie!"

My small follower dropped her head, pouted, pulled down her little dress and tried to shove one dirty toe through a knot hole in the floor.

Helen bore traces of a recent sickness. Her delicate face was pale, an indoor white hardly less conspicuous than her dress. She wore a knitted yellow jacket with a white leather belt, amber stockings and shiny black shoes. Fluffy pale-gold ringlets of hair lay thick on her shoulders and there were tiny evidences of refinement about her: a small gold ring on her hand, a dainty string of pearls at her throat.

She was, at first sight, the fairest little person that I had ever seen. And that memory lingers while more recent things slip away.

Jackie did not answer Helen's greeting. She looked up slowly, though, and inspected Helen's shoes, stockings, dress, jacket, belt, and hair as maturer women do. Jackie herself was dirty—joyously, healthily dirty.

Helen turned to me again, now ignoring Jackie. "What have you been doing, Allan?"

"Me?" I shifted my weight from one foot to the other.

"Of course I mean you! Who do you suppose?"

"Hel-en!" Lamis drawled reproachfully from behind the counter.

"What hev you been doin', Helen?" I shifted my defense.

"Oh, lots of things: I heard the band play; I went to the theatre; I rode in Dr. Bronson's phaeton—'t had velvet cushions—cost more than anybody's in Lowville."

"Was that all you did, Helen?" Lamis asked.

"No, Aunt Katie took me to Duncan's store; bought me some new dresses and a book. That's all, ain't it, Dad?" She bent down to inspect a mud splash on one shiny shoe.

"How do I know, Helen? Maybe Allan'll tell you what he's been up to."

I had been up to nothing, but I had something to say.

"Ye-es—we got a new playhouse—Jackie 'n' me. It's our ole hencoop. Some of the boys (the neighbors' boys) built a camp out'n th' woods. Th' Norris boys (three hunters who lived back of Page) killed a lynx, 'n' Ole Frank hez tamed a wildcat."

The Little Voices

By LEE WASMUTH

A Romance of Tug Hill Country

SYNOPSIS

Jackie Ferris and Allan Hargrave, children of the Tug Hill country, tramp to the village of Page to get the mail. There they met Helen Lamis, recently returned from Louville. The youngsters return to the Hargrave home where Allan's mother sets the table for the children's dinner.

Later Allan is employed by George Lamis, father of Helen, to work in his store.

The store was the great tribunal of the backwoods for the weighing of opinion.

Fully settled after several months of work in the Lamis store, Allan sets out one morning with his schoolmate for the backwoods camp of Frank Dimon. It is a hike of three miles through the snow and woods.

Allan left for Boonville where he entered the store of Herman A. Stile.

Allan left for Buffalo to attend school. At Christmas time he received a letter from Jackie.

Prior to leaving for Honolulu, Allan went to New York city where he proposed to Helen. When she refused, he took her in his arms and kissed her.

Allan decided not to accept the position in Honolulu and left for his home. Feeling discontent, he left for Frank's camp in the woods. Their first evening there, Frank and Allan were joined by Helen's father. Frank asked Allan if Helen had anything to do with his decision not to go to Honolulu.

Prior to enlisting for service in the war, Allan called upon Jackie at her home.

CHAPTER XXII (Continued)

Whatever the training at Spartansburg might be, I could not imagine. I had no notion we were on a picnic, nor did I expect we would be welcomed by the celebrities of that "Tar Heel State." I did, however, have visions of a tented city, the Great Smoky mountains, and vast tobacco factories, but I was disappointed.

We landed at the edge of a wood, in soil that was red sand and clay. We searched in the dusk for a place to pitch our tents and the next day we hauled out stumps with long ropes and much tugging.

For one, I wished I was home. My appetite increased steadily, but the first few days I had to content myself with canned tomatoes and "bully beef," for the commissary had not yet begun to function and some of the boys, for the first time, began to realize they were really in the army.

I had, some time before, come to understand what Frank meant when he informed me about Santa Claus.

At Louville I joined D Company of the First New York Guards, but after a few days in Spartansburg [illegible] berths, 1,400 of us, and the port holes closed.

By morning there was only a strip of land rolling behind us on the horizon. We were now in the enemy's country where torpedo nets went down and the lookout held post with exceeding care.

The third day we rah into a storm. The men were sick and by night my own stomach had an up, down, and crosswise motion. Fiske looked in and asked if there was anything wrong with me.

"No," I choked, "I don't think so. I seem to be heaving just as far as any one."

"Well, cheer up, you guys. The moon will soon be up."

"My God," one fellow groaned, "has that gotta come up too?"

We landed at Brest in April. Loaded into scows, we were, and marched up a long winding road outside the city. A band of urchins in black dresses followed us—three to ten years old, they were—grabbing at us, asking for a sou or a cigaret. I thought as I plodded upward they were orphans whose fathers had fallen asleep at the Marne, at Neuve Chapelle or Verdun.

I was beginning to see that glorious spectacle of princely ambition that upset kingdoms and brought breadlines in countries half the world away.

That night we pitched pup tents on a hill three miles from the city. Cold it was—a damp cold that chilled through to the marrow. When morning came, I thought we surely would march away to billets, but we went to the railroad. Funny little cars, they were, lettered: "Quarante hommes et huit chevaux"—40 men and eight horses.

We piled into those cars along with stacks of canned goods and some of the singing ceased as we crawled across France. The tension settled down with the knowledge that we were moving up. Once when the cars stopped, I heard, far to the south, a rumble on the breeze—a rumble of man-made origin.

We halted near a base hospital at Abbeville. Here we pitched our tents beside a wood and there on the third night saw our first "Jerrys" come over. In the twilight they circled the hospital, dropping rockets and heavy bombs. Happily for those bed-ridden boys, there were no direct hits and the searchlights and anti-war craft guns drove them away.

I had no money for uniforms, but in Paris I borrowed 400 francs from the Red Cross.

The following afternoon, with Lieutenant Bell, I set out to take my commission. Down a muddy road we went, while the cannonading grew more intense. By mid-afternoon the breeze was wafting us a stench of human corpses.

Professor Pearson had predicted aright.

I do not know all that passed through Bell's mind, but I confess I did consider a retreat. It was easy: there was no one with us. But that was rank cowardice, and dad had said "Cowards die first."

Late in May, the Jerrys in their "Victory Drive" had beaten back our allies for a ten-mile gain that captured Soissons, took 25,000 prisoners, and threatened Rheims. I had heard it back at Abbeville and still the Boches were moving up.

Nevertheless, there was different talk in the air, now. We were informed that our boys had gained at Cantigny, and encouraged by that [illegible] for our allies doubled their ability, they cheered them on to Chateau-Thierry.

Those were dark days before the Americans came. General Nayille, the French commander, had lost some 300,000 men, with little gains. Inadequate support on the field and in the air had harassed their spirit and Painleve himself declared there was a moment when but one resisting division stood between Paris and Soissons.

(To Be Continued)

LITTLE VOICES PLOT

Allan spends his childhood and youth in Page **where he learns to love the forest**.

He is in love with Helen whose father owns the general store. **Helen is aloof and distant**.

Allan goes to high school in Boonville and then on to

pharmaceutical school in Buffalo. Next he enlists, then enters WWI

A combat veteran, Allan returns and is **still in love with Helen.**

THE BRANDETH CAMP

LUNCH TIME AT A LOGGING CAMP

THE HUNTER

THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

The morning school opened I saw white frost upon the marsh grass and cat tails along our brook.

The maples had put forth splashes of canary and scarlet against darker evergreens, and the encircling forest took on colors of a great canvas.

THE ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

.

Page’s school, students and teacher in 1907. From left to right,

First row: Hobart Wasmuth, Avon Brothers, Frances Kaine, Leslie Wasmuth

Back row: Fay Eastman, Mary Wasmuth, Otto Wasmuth, William Brothers, Harry Kaine, Foster Kaine

Teacher, Bessie J. House

THE MILL - 1906

One year later, the back of this postcard reads:

The Page school – 1908 – 1909
Evelyn Wasmuth, teacher
William and Yvonne Brothers, Meade Loomis and Ernestine Lambert, Leslie Wasmuth, Otto Wasmuth, and Hobart Wasmuth

This was the last of the school. People all moved away soon after.

THE WASMUTH BROTHERS IN FRONT OF THE POST OFFICE

Mary and Evelyn Wasmuth posing in front of the Post Office

“Whuts them noises out there?” I pointed across the meadow.

“Them’s peepers, boy. Hear thet whistler? He’s a hermit thrush; ‘n’ th’ hooters, them’s owls. Do yuh like ‘em? I’d ruther hear them **li’l voices** than a consurt ‘n symphony hall. When yer happy, ‘pears t’ me they warble; when yer down ‘n th’ mouth, they’ ll chir yuh up**, ef ye’ll stop ‘n’ lissen.**