

Q. M. C.—Unfailing Provider of the Soldier's Food

Not One Wearer of Uncle Sam's Uniform Has Gone Hungry, Thanks to the Commissary Machine That Toils Day and Night

By WILLIAM H. CRAWFORD.

ANY mother who worries because her boy in the United States Army is not getting good food to eat, and plenty of it, is nourishing a delusion. While his rations may not suit his fastidious taste as well as the pies that mother used to make, it is better suited to preserve his health and physical welfare. Perhaps it is not served as elegantly as on his home table, but he doesn't mind. He's always hungry, and he is ready now to live without frills. He will eat anywhere—on the ground, in the trench, out of pewter pots, with his fingers, if necessary. The life of the army has taught him to depend on the essentials, and he is content if his food is wholesome, well cooked, properly diversified, on time, and in plenty. The Subsistence Bureau of the Quartermaster's Department, under the supervision of Colonel William R. Groves, attends to all these requirements.

Not one single soldier has missed one single meal because Q. M. C.—the Quartermaster Department of the United States Army—didn't have the food ready for him. And the supply has been so carefully selected, the purchasing so nicely adjusted, the transportation so accurately arranged for, that the loss through deterioration or spoiled goods has been only one-half a cent per month per man.

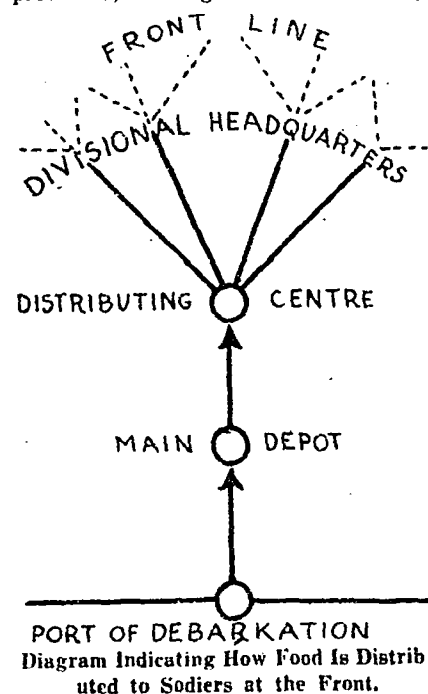
Do you know any housewife who has managed her kitchen so successfully and with so little waste? There is more than that amount of bread thrown in the garbage can every day in every household. As to the quality of the army food furnished by the commissary department, criticism is lacking. There has been some bad meat furnished the army that had to be condemned, but this did not come through the Quartermaster's stores. It was purchased by the Mess Sergeants from outside sources.

Dieticians of the Bureau of Subsistence figured out the proper army ration. They made a list of twenty-seven articles, which included all the essentials of a well-balanced diet. These things were purchased in quantity and shipped to the Camp Commissary, subject to the order of the company mess. For instance, the daily ration per man contains $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of beef, $\frac{1}{4}$ pound bacon, $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of flour, .075 pound of beans, $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of potatoes, &c. The cost of the standard menu amounts to from 41 to 43 cents a day per man, varying according to the location of the camp and the market price of the food. Each company mess is credited with the actual cost value of these supplies. The company, however, is not required to adopt the standard mess arranged by the Quartermaster Department. Each company is a law unto itself regarding its food supply. The men can spend their allotment as they see fit. If they do not like the articles furnished by the Commissary, they can use their allowance to purchase elsewhere. Mess Sergeants, under the direction of the company Captain, can take credit at the Commissary for any unexpended allowance and buy whatever they please, provided it is food.

The amount of food necessary to supply the army is enormous. We cannot grasp billions. Big numbers do not impress themselves upon our mind. We need concrete examples to show their immensity. A clerk in the Subsistence

Bureau did a little calculation on his own hook, with the following results: The War Department, in 1917, purchased 75,000,000 cans of tomatoes. If these were placed end on end they would reach from the Marne to Camp Kearny, California, or from Seattle to New York and back to San Francisco and then to New Orleans—across the United States almost three times. They cost \$10,450,000. They would fill 4,050 freight cars, or seventy-five trains of fifty-four cars each, or make a train twenty-five miles long. If stacked up, they would make four shafts the size of the Washington Monument.

Considering the immense amount of provisions, the long distance which they



must be transported, the delay in transportation on account of war conditions, the number of hands through which shipments must pass, and the shortage of ships, this tremendous enterprise, with practically no waste, is one of the remarkable records of business efficiency.

Among the most difficult tasks of Colonel Groves is determining the amount of each article to be purchased and the date on which it must be shipped in order to reach its destination in good condition. Too much must not be purchased, nor enough perishable goods be delivered at any depot commissary to entail a loss by deterioration. Still, a sufficient quantity must always be on hand to meet the requisitions of the company mess. The task would not be so big if a definite ration were issued in America, but as each company may select its own menu and as troops from certain sections may like certain articles of food and as tastes are liable to change, it becomes a complicated proposition. Furthermore, the number of soldiers is constantly changing. The Subsistence Chief must purchase in advance and must determine with accuracy the number of soldiers that are to be fed here and abroad. On the accuracy of his forecast depends the loss or saving of

millions of dollars to the United States Government. He is the biggest buyer of foodstuff in America. He purchases directly from the canners and the growers, and no middle-man profits are allowed.

In order to make sure that the necessary food supplies needed by the various branches of the Government be obtained at reasonable price, a committee has been appointed. On it are a representative of the Food Administration, a member of the Federal Trade Board, a representative of the navy, and Colonel Groves, representing the army. The committee meets weekly to determine the price of foodstuff, its location and priority rights, and to protect the Gov-



Colonel William R. Groves, Chief of Subsistence Bureau, Q. M. C.

ernment from overcharges and profiteering.

The latitude in bill of fare allowed to the boys abroad is not as great as in the home camps, because it is impossible to get from local dealers the necessary things that the Mess Sergeant wants. For this reason the Government determined upon a definite and well-balanced menu, prepared by thoroughly competent dietitians. It is cooked with scientific accuracy so as to conserve the soldier's health and energy. The ingredients necessary are sent directly to France by transport.

"That's all right in theory, but what does he eat?" asks the soldier's mother.

The best evidence that he is well fed is the fact that the average gain of weight of the American boy since entering the service has been twelve pounds, and this despite the fact that they have been doing such strenuous labor. The boys have not eaten things they ought not to. They evidently have

eaten food that makes them healthier, stronger, more muscular.

Here is a menu chosen at random from two successive days in the army, a Sunday and a week-day bill of fare:

SUNDAY			
Breakfast			
Cantaloupes, one-half each	Sugar	Milk	
Oatmeal	Fried Pork Sausage		
	Hot Biscuits	Coffee	
Dinner			
Fresh Vegetable Soup	Diced Bread Toasted		
Boiled Rice	Veal a la Creole	String Beans (Fresh)	
	Lettuce Salad		
Ice Cream		Cake	
Bread		Ice Water	
Supper			
Bread	Potato Salad	Jam	Iced Tea
WEEK DAY			
Breakfast			
Corn Flakes	Sugar	Milk	
Beef Stew	Boiled Potatoes	Coffee	
Toast	Bread		
Dinner			
Boiled Beef, with Dumplings	Young Beets	Pickles	
Spinach	Apple and Peach Pie	Bread	
Iced Tea			
Supper			
Spinach	Young Beets	Pierlex	
Hot Parker House Rolls		Iced Tea	

The helpings are plentiful. There is no Hooverizing in portions for our soldier boys. I recently took several meals with the men in an army camp. The commanding General did not notify the company mess that I was to dine with them until a few minutes before meal time, so no preparation could have been made in advance for visitors. It was no dinner at a New York hotel. The waiters did not wear swallow-tailed coats. The linen was conspicuous by its absence. The boys do not miss the "fix-ins." It reminded me of camping-out days. But it was a first-class meal, and I enjoyed it hugely—everything except washing my own dishes.

As I said before, the food is well cooked. In order to insure this, the Government has established cooking schools under the supervision of some of the country's best chefs, who have volunteered to teach the men how to prepare food. A course in the school prepares first-grade cooks and bakers, and there has been established in every cantonment a community bakery. Immense ovens of the latest design have been put up. Real bread, such as we poor civilians have not had since the war began, is baked for the entire cantonment and supplied to each company mess at absolute cost, without any overhead expense.

The method of supplying the commissary stores for use abroad is interesting. After the definite menus are established, it is necessary to determine the amount of weight for which provision must be made after it is cased for shipping, and the number of cubic feet that such ration will take up, so as to provide the necessary amount of shipping facilities. The food is shipped to a French port of debarcation, where immense storehouses have been built. Thence it is sent to the main depot, about half way between the port and the trenches, to be held subject to orders. The final destination depends upon the movement of the troops. The food goes to the distributing centres near the base of operations, but some distance in the rear. So far the transportation has been by rail. Now automobile lines branch off like the ribs of a fan to each division of the army, and from Division Headquarters the supplies are sent by automobile to each regiment daily. Regardless of bad roads, battles, movement of troops, it is always on time. The system is so complete that the Commissary Department has not yet failed to have the necessary supplies at every camp every night.