

I mean, we used shelter halves for a front curtain. We had no foot-lights out used candles in tin reflectors fastened on the front side posts. The whole thing can be put up in 15 minutes and taken down in 10.

And oh that heavenly back curtain! I told you I'd taken a sample in Tours. Well, when I found the thing was really going through, I asked to have the regular weekly shopper get it for me. I dared ask for only 12 meters - that would have made a perfectly straight piece - but I added a little note to Mr. Helas saying I was trying to economize but if he felt it wouldn't be too extravagant 16 meters would help a lot or 20 be perfect, and the sweet lady sent me the whole 30. It was just the color of my dreams, and hung full enough to catch lights and shadows - Oh it was heavenly.

We had a dress rehearsal after the tent emptied, the night before Christmas. My word, it was awful! The costumes were only half done, no one knew the lines, the tent was so cold I was afraid my little angel would get pneumonia - nothing went right. My very best helper, Captain Grant, went to bed that day with the flu (mild case though) and F.T. was so tired she didn't go to supper, and that evening my musician, Hall, told me the only man we'd counted on to sing the carols had simply backed out. There were one or two moments that day when I didn't see how we could get through, but to touch bottom is always an inspiration and I knew we'd do it somehow. We did, too; the rest of the story has only one tale of woe, the weather, and even that didn't spoil things.

I wish you could have seen my room at 9 o'clock Christmas Eve. F.T. ran the canteen and I stayed to work on costumes and receive socks. I'd picked up a few stray soldiers who felt lonesome and put them to work. It was nice, American soldier boys, working a Singer sewing machine borrowed from a French peasant, making angel costumes!

It had poured for several days but on Christmas morning the sun came out. I certainly did rejoice to see it. I got over to the tent by nine o'clock and found it full of rather dreary looking boys all sitting around. My hands were full of paper garlands and my pockets of safety pins. You ought to have seen the boys wake up. They all got busy and in 15 minutes the tent was really lovely - I'd no idea the garlands would be so effective. We strung some in double loops, some in triple so it made them sufficiently irregular to catch your eye with glimpses of unexpected color.

Then the Chaplain held a short service. It is always a penance to stay for his services but I usually do because I don't want an apparent split between the Army church and the Y. After that was over I announced that the tree was ready to be decorated and I wanted volunteers. I guess everybody volunteered. They streamed up to the billet and I filled their hands with toys, then we all marched up the hill to the schoolhouse where our tree was waiting. We collected more volunteers on the way, of course. There was a pretty big crowd by the time we got there. We put the tree on the front steps of the building and then I just said "Go to it" and everybody got busy tying on toys. Again the woolly lambs squeaked and the tin horns blew. The children collected in a crowd outside the gate and they squeaked too - excitedly.

But alas and alack, by that time the clouds had sprung up again and a few minutes after the last present was on and the tree securely fastened, the rain began; not hard - I almost hoped for nearly half an hour, but it was persistent and I knew some of the children had colds, so - "My! now I hated to take that tree down! It meant that only a couple of hundred soldiers could come to it even if they kept moving. But it had to be done. I called for more volunteers and we moved all the movable furniture in the two largest schoolrooms and set the tree there. There were some left over garlands and flags and the boys strung them around and made the room gay.

In the meantime I dashed over to mess - roast duck and mince pie! but I had only about 15 minutes to spare for it. At one o'clock the children and the soldiers began to gather. It sure was some mob! Then I went and got Santa Claus - the real thing - white beard and all - and you ought to have heard the children laugh as he came in.