disservice when they exist, so that the proper remedies may be applied.

I have therefore established a Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints in the Director General's office at Washington, to which the public is invited to resort.

Aside from letters of complaint and suggestion, the public can render a genuine service by sending letters of commendation of employes who are conspicuously courteous and efficient in the performance of their duties. Nothing promotes the esprit of a great organization more than recognition from time to time of these employes who perform their duties faithfully and commendably.

It is requested that all communications be brief and explicit and that the name and address of the writer be distinctly written.

Also give the time of day or night, the number of the train, the name of the railroad, and, if possible, the name of the employe whose conduct is complained of or whose services are commended, together with such other information as will enable me to take appropriate action.

Please address

W. G. McAdoo,
Director General of Railroads,
Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints,
Washington, D. C.

To deal with the letters which this notice was expected to elicit, five trained men were selected and put under the direction of the writer. They include Ballard Dunn, assistant actuary to the United States Railroad Administration and formerly special representative of president's office, Union Pacific Railroad, Omaha; J. F. Jarrell, formerly editorial writer on Kansas City Times and Topeka Capital, and later with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad as editor of its industrial and agricultural publications and in general charge of publicity matters; T. T. Maxey, formerly of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad as advertising agent; E. H. Lamb, formerly general agent of the Chicago & North Western Railway at Sacramento, Cal.; and Frank F. George, formerly secretary to the actuary to the United States Railroad Administration.

This Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints, which a newspaper man has facetiously dubbed the "bureau of brickbats and bouquets," is Mr. McAdoo's latest application of his motto "The public be pleased." It has now been in existence long enough to make it possible for those in charge of it to draw a cross section of the composite public mind as revealed in the many thousands of letters that have been received.

The writers of these letters unconsciously divide themselves into two classes—one comprising those who are temperamentally censorious, and another which includes the people who believe that praise is a duty and that "criticism is best defined as an emphasis of the desirable."

The rhyme which runs—

"Between the optimist and pessimist the difference is droll,
The optimist the doughnut sees—the pessimist the hole."

finds fresh application in not a few contrasting letters upon the same subject, but between the two extremes there are many who are evidently inspired by a public-spirited desire to improve the service that the railroads are trying to render and a patriotic willingness to subordinate their own convenience and comfort to the primary purpose for which the railroads were taken over, namely, the winning of the war.

That this latter class is in a very large majority is one of the reassuring facts revealed by the experience of the Bureau for Suggestions and Complaints.

Some of the newspaper writers who have been vociferous in proclaiming the discourtesy and indifference of "Uncle Sam's railway employes" would perhaps be surprised at the number of letters of commendation that have been received, and while a few of them are no doubt the result of autosuggestion, it is evident that as a class the men and the increasingly large number of women who compose the "railway army" of the United States are loyal and enthusiastic, anxious and willing to give the best that is in them to the work in which they are enlisted. Perhaps a story written by a newspaper reporter who started out to find the discourteous railway employe and failed describes the experience of not a few disappointed pessimists. This reporter was

named John C. Baskerville, and his story was published in the Des Moines (Iowa) Record. It follows and is reprinted as a spontaneous tribute to the many railroad employes at Des Moines and elsewhere, who deserve a word of praise for their self-control under conditions that are irritating.

YOUNG REPORTER TRIES TO LOCATE DISCOURTEOUS RAILWAY EMPLOYES—SEARCHES TICKET OFFICES AND RAILROAD STATION TO FIND MEN WHO WILL TALK ROUGH TO HIM.

[By John C. Baskerville.]

"Because of so many rumors that railway employes had adopted an attitude of 'the public be damned' since the roads came under Federal control, the young reporter set out to investigate on his own hook.

"He selected the most pretentious-looking ticket office in Des Moines, entered, and approached the bar—beg pardon; desk, I should say—falteringly. He asked for the manager. The clerk smiled, but courteously summoned a businesslike-looking man with rimmed spectacles.

"'What is the best way to get from Des Moines to Skeedunk Hollow, Mo?'" asked the young reporter.

"Although the businesslike agent had never heard of the place, he searched through big volumes and many maps, finally locating the place in question. He located the railroad it was on, looked up the connections, gave the hours trains left Des Moines, and went into detail to the rather dull-appearing youth on the other side of the desk.

NO NEED TO PURCHASE.

"Unlike the clothing salesman or jewelry-store clerk, he did not insist upon an immediate purchase of a ticket, and when the young man turned away, stating that he had heard of that place and wondered how he would get there if he ever wanted to, the agent was still smiling and courteous.

"From this office the young man forsook the office of Walnut Street and sought one in the vicinity of Seventh Street. Here he inquired how to get to a remote spot in South Dakota. Although there were not as many men in the office to wait upon the public as in the other, he was required to wait his turn. But his questions were answered courteously, and the greatest of care taken to direct

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BEFORE WE GOT THE HUN—MAKING WAY FOR INFANTRY ADVANCE.

Through the marshes of the Belgian front, the pioneers cut the enemy wire entanglements to facilitate the infantry advance. These fellows precede an attack and clear the path. This sort of work entails great risk.

him with regard to all details of the journey.

"He retraced his steps to Walnut and entered another office. He was delayed somewhat by a large, overgrown, superfed human crab, who was vociferously attempting to provoke the genial and accommodating agent to wrath by criticizing railroads in general and expounding upon the way he would run the roads if he were doing it.

GETS INFORMATION CHEERFULLY.

"This time the reporter was interested in Pullman berths from a point outside of Des Moines to the far West. He asked the agent to make the reservations assuming ignorance of the fact that the Director General had prohibited all offices wiring for berths except at the expense of the purchaser.* This fact was explained by the agent, who volunteered, however, to make out the wire, send it over, and telephone results, although the expense would have to be met by the person reserving the berths.

"It so happened that the young reporter had once or twice had occasion to buy Pullman tickets before—not having always been a reporter—but never had he been shown such attention and accommodation.

"So far nothing but failure had rewarded the search for the 'public be damned' attitude among the railway men. But he was not discouraged. He decided to beard the lion in his den, and call upon that high and mighty, the manager of the division.

"He was informed that the manager was out at the time, but—still greater wonder—the chief clerk, generally considered to be more fierce in his natural instincts than the manager himself—volunteered to give what information he could on the subject, calling in the general freight traffic manager to assist.

SEES FAILURE AHEAD.

"What was to be done? Failure stared grotesquely into the face of the young man who had started in pursuit of success. But additional thought brought one more chance to light. That night he would visit the station when it was most crowded and seek more information.

"When the limited trains became due, the reporter took his place in the long line of ticket purchasers before the window at the railway station. When he reached it, his questions and numerous desires put two clerks to work searching records, maps, and rate schedules. There was no complaint from the men behind the window.

"He then went out among the trains and people on the tracks. He selected one brakeman who had been handling hundreds of suit cases and dozens of babies, incidentally answering some thousands of questions, who stood mopping his brow, as the train was almost ready to start. He held a letter, previously prepared, out to the man, asking that he mail it on the fast train at the junction with another line.

"This last card he was certain would give him the necessary data for his story. It would surely be the last straw for the brakeman with the 'public-be-damned' attitude, since he was getting paid by the Government.

"The brakeman took the letter, obligingly agreeing to mail it at the point mentioned.

"Then the young reporter went to the office and wrote a different but better story than he expected to get."

Apropos of the foregoing, it may be appropriate to mention a letter from a man who says that, "I know that many will complain of the discourtesy of railway employes to the public, but I desire to file a complaint in regard to the discourtesy of the public to railway employes," as emphasizing the need of reciprocity in politeness in a way that many travelers would do well to ponder, for it is undoubtedly true that some of the questions that railroad men have to answer and some of the demands made upon them are absurd and exasperating to a degree that even Job would have resented.

Of the letters received probably three-fourths complain of conditions that are presently unavoidable or of regulations the reasonableness of which is not apparent to the casual traveler who fails to

*Since this newspaper story was written arrangements have been made for the free use of railroad wires in making telegraphic reservations of Pullman accommodations for continuous journeys. When thus reserved, however, these reservations must be paid for.

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"OVER THE TOP" TO TREAT 'EM ROUGH.

A French whippet tank going over the top. This is one of the many that took part in the capture of the St. Mihiel Salient by troops under command of General Pershing, snapped as it ploughed its way through a trench and started on its way to "treat 'em rough."

appreciate or understand the complexity of the railroad machine or the necessity of protecting the public against the ignorance, carelessness, and selfishness of some and the dishonesty of others who feel that it is no sin to evade the payment of their fares or "get the best of the railroad."

What may be called the conventional complaints relate chiefly to a few subjects which are dealt with, as follows, in the order in which they seem uppermost in the public mind and have elicited the largest number of letters.

They are:

1. *The crowded condition of the stations and cars and the delay encountered in purchasing tickets.*—Under this heading there may be considered practically all the complaints which arise as a result of the unprecedented increase in the passenger traffic of late and the shortage in the ticket-selling forces that is the result of the draft and the high wages which have attracted many experienced railroad men into other positions where they can, for the present at least, earn more than it is possible for the railroads to pay. The enormous increase in passenger traffic with which the railroads are now contending is not perhaps generally appreciated. The complete comparative statistics for June, 1917, and June, 1918, are not yet available, but a statement which includes the passenger traffic of 208,988 miles of railroads out of a total mileage of nearly 300,000 miles shows that 3,621,088,633 passengers were carried 1 mile in June, 1918, as compared with 3,049,803,635 passengers carried 1 mile in June, 1917. The increase of 571,285,028 passengers carried 1 mile is equal to 18.17 per cent, and if it be assumed that the average journey of each passenger was 50 miles,* which is probably an approximation to the fact, we shall be justified in concluding that the railroads reporting had to carry 11,425,700 more persons in June, 1918, than during the same month

*According to the figures of the Interstate Commerce Commission the average journey per passenger in 1916 was 34.73 miles, which figures, if applied to the returns for 1918, would indicate an increase of over 21,000,000 in the number of persons traveling during the month of June, 1918, as compared with June, 1917. Inasmuch, however, as this year's figures include the movement of many troops over long runs, I have preferred to avoid an overestimate by assuming that the length of the average journey was 50 miles.

in the previous year, and that there was an equal increase in the number of tickets sold. As the roads reporting include only about two-thirds, but the most important two-thirds, of the total mileage in the United States, it is not improbable that there was an aggregate increase of 15,000,000 in the number of persons traveling and the number of journeys made throughout the United States in the month of June, 1918, as compared with June, 1917. This means an increase of 750,000 in the number of persons traveling each day. The average passenger car will seat 50 people, and to carry 750,000 persons 15,000 cars filled to capacity would be required. They are not to be had. They could not have been built even if they had been ordered. The labor and material necessary are unobtainable. According to the figures of the Interstate Commerce Commission there were (excluding parlor and sleeping cars) only 40,870 passenger cars of all sorts in the United States in the year 1916, and the necessity of crowding these cars in order to transport those who now desire to travel will at once be apparent even to the statistical tyro.

An average of about 1,100,000 troops a month is now being carried by the railroads on orders from the War and Navy Departments. A great many other soldiers and sailors are traveling on their own account and at their own expense. The mothers, fathers, wives, sweethearts, and friends of these men have also been traveling to visit them at the camps at which they were stationed. The high wages that are being paid in industry generally, and particularly in the shipyards and munition factories, the agricultural prosperity that is the result of $2 wheat and 30-cent cotton have made many of those who were not previously in the habit of traveling feel able to "take a trip," and they have yielded to the impulse. Concurrently the force of ticket sellers has been depleted by draft or resignation to accept other and better-paid positions, and those who were left have had to deal with the unprecedented increases in the passenger traffic that the figures given disclose.

Under the circumstances it is not surprising that sometimes long lines of people are to be found waiting at important ticket offices. It is not possible for untrained men to sell railroad tickets. This work requires a knowledge of routes, rates, time tables, and connections that can only be acquired by experience and an ability to make change promptly and accurately and to be self-controlled when tired or exasperated that can not be learned in a minute. In an effort to meet the public demand the United States Railroad Administration has opened schools in some of the larger cities for the education of women as ticket sellers, and not a few graduates have been passed from these schools into active service, but the number of women who have applied for this instruction is not large, and after making allowances for the drain that will be caused by the pending draft it seems unlikely that the ticket-selling force can be appreciably increased in the near future.

These conditions are frankly stated that the public may have some idea of the situation and refrain from unnecessary travel. The increase in passenger rates seems to have had no effect. Mr. McAdoo has appealed to the public to avoid pleasure traveling, but he seems to have been unheeded. It is not possible for the United States Railroad Administration to put a quart in a pint bottle. It can not carry the soldiers who must be transported comfortably and provide the public with the luxury and accommodations to which they have been previously accustomed. The former is an imperative duty, and this is written that those who complain of the crowded cars and the delays at ticket offices may understand that some discomfort and inconvenience are unavoidable. Universal mileage books, good in the hands of bearer upon any railroad under the control of the Director General, have been devised and are now on sale. Those who use them will avoid the delay usually encountered in the purchase of tickets, but the best method of relieving the situation is to avoid unnecessary travel and preach the gospel of "winning the war by staying at home" among your friends by both precept and example.

2. *The surcharge of one-half cent a mile now made for transportation in parlor or sleeping cars, which charge is in addition to the regular Pullman fare,* is