

**HOME-THEN WHAT?  
THE MIND OF THE  
DOUGHBOY, A. E. F.**

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Home-then what? The mind of the doughboy, A. E. F. by James Louis Small

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**JAMES LOUIS SMALL**

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**HOME — THEN WHAT?**

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**THE MIND OF THE DOUGHBOY  
BY THE DOUGHBOY HIMSELF**

# HOME—THEN WHAT?

THE MIND OF THE DOUGHBOY, A. E. F.

BY THE DOUGHBOY HIMSELF

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED BY

JAMES LOUIS SMALL

WITH FOREWORD BY

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS



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## FOREWORD

ONE of the questions most frequently asked of me on my return from France in June, 1918, was "What is the American boy thinking about over there?" My stock answer to this was that any man who undertook to write a Baedeker of the Dough-boy's Mind must in the very nature of things be a human Argus, with a million eyes, and every eye an X-ray optic at that, and a thousand hands, each hand holding a pen with a thousand nibs. There were two million of America's sons over there at that time, and while at a distance of fifty yards they all looked alike, and strode along with the same confident step, and seemed rather to be cogs in a great machine than separate entities, soldiering had not made them any the less individual, and whatever had been done to them by their training to reduce or to elevate them to a type, physically their minds, in so far as I was able to get at them, had not ceased to function in the good old independent fashion. There are not wanting signs that a large number of observers who viewed it from coigns of vantage four or five thousand miles away, and others as well who studied the psychology of the doughboy through the large end of a telescope, have conjured up a beautiful vision of our lads rushing to the Front and over



the Top, their hearts ringing with a lyric version of the Fourteen Points of Peace, and other highly concentrated forms of American Ideals, and I would be the last person in the world to slur such a lovely idea; but it is the sad fact that at the time the boys were so gallantly going up and over, the Fourteen Points had not been promulgated, and that their main purpose and thought was to do a particularly disagreeable job as expeditiously as possible, unhampered by historical afterthoughts or purely political abstractions. Nor could I find any traces in their minds, their hearts, or their actions, that the idea of Peace Without Victory possessed any particular allure, but on the contrary, a very decided predilection for the beating up of the Hun in such fashion that the world would be assured against the possibility of ever having to beat him up again.

There were, nevertheless, certain grooves of thought into which their minds seemed to run. The first had to do with HOME, and they thought of that in terms of singular beauty. Some of them who had never before given much thought to HOME found it all on a sudden idealized, and they glorified it as a sort of Eden from which they had been temporarily exiled, and to which they longed to return, but not until they had further glorified it by doing well the thing they had left it to do. As an instance of this, I recall an encounter I had with an American doughboy early one morning in Paris. I was breakfasting in one of those chain-restaurants

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with which that fair city is afflicted, when this glorious lad came into my life. Finding myself somewhat lonely, I hailed him and invited him to join me in a poor, but reasonably honest, platter of indifferent ham and ancient eggs. Some questioning elicited from him the information that, however else Paris might impress others, in his judgment it was "a shine." He considered it "a phony burg," and why anybody should rave over it, believe him, he couldn't see. Whereupon I tried to tell him of some of the things that had made the French capital a Mecca of delight to so many thousands of his compatriots, and he listened with entire respect, but at the end of my disquisition he came back upon me with——

"O H—ll, yes—Paris is all right; but, d—n it, It AIN'T FORT WAYNE!!"

It was a pleasing retort, and I was glad of it, and in a very essential way, for in varying ways it was the sentiment of most, it showed that while in all probability the bulk of our sons overseas had always in the past taken their own country for granted, and had thought little, if at all, on the values of American Citizenship, they were coming back not better Americans perhaps, but more devoted, and more appreciative sons of America than they had ever been before. Which is one of the benefits that, like a lovely flower having its roots in mire, have sprung up out of the chaos of muddy, bloody ruin into which the War has plunged the world.

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Again, they were thinking a lot of "DAD" and "MOTHER," and if DAD and MOTHER do not already know it as well as I do, who saw them face to face with temptations of an insidiously subtle sort, let me record here that the vast majority of them were as true to the ideals their fathers and mothers had set up for them as though DAD and MOTHER were right there with them day and night. I have not had the privilege of studying at close range other armies in the past, but I doubt if there was ever gathered together anywhere in the world a body of men equal in CHARACTER to those sons of ours "over there." They not only seemed obsessed with an urge towards the strictest kind of right conduct, but to it they had allied a stern resolve to keep themselves fit for the business in hand, and I have had them tell me in specific terms, with a light in their eyes that showed that they spoke not mere words, but their very souls, that they would rather cut off their right arms than by indulgence weaken their strength at a time when every ounce of it was needed to carry not only on but through. I was exceedingly glad to find this frame of mind among them for a very special reason. An official, high in authority in the United States Government, had requested me in my talks to the American Soldiers to warn them that "they should not regard going to France as the opportunity for indulgences in Wine and Women," and I had informed him that I would not insult American youth by assuming that they had any such