

Naples . . . Caserta . . . Rome

Sunday, August 19

Arriving at Naples at 11 p.m.—about a 7 hours' flight from Paris—we were met by my brother-in-law, Lieut. Warren Johnson, and an Army conducting officer. Motored to the Parker Hotel, where we found an officer's dance in progress. Had sandwiches and beer, talked of home, and retired early.

Driving through the city, we visited the large assembly depot at the old Naples fair grounds, where our G.I.s are being assembled to be sent home. This depot is the best we have seen; it has swimming pools, large Red Cross installations, immense auditoriums. All of these are ex-Mussolini installations—now used by our Army. Thirty thousand American troops are quartered here.

From the fair grounds we motored to the Naples docks, from which we had a clear view of superb Mt. Vesuvius with a thin trickle of smoke rising from its cone. Turning to the immediate scene, we noted how efficiently the Americans had repaired the port installations.

The Nazis, when they evacuated Naples, sunk all the remaining ships alongside the docks. Our guide, Colonel Retz, told us that because the ships were so sunk, it was simple for our engineers to build a quay site over them. He said that if the Nazis had captured the ships and taken them out into the stream and sunk them, it would have made the use of the basins almost impossible.

After exploring the docks, we motored to Caserta, some 25 miles from Naples, and there visited the famous old palace, where we were greeted by Major General White who commands the Naples area. Along with his associate, Major General Lemnitzer, we lunched in the officer's mess and heard from them intimate accounts of the invasion of Italy, the difficulties with the Russians in Italy, the problems of occupation, and other serious matters.

After lunch we motored north toward Rome through the ex-

quisite but war-torn Italian country. Motoring up the Liri Valley, we stopped at Cassino—the worst demolished place yet seen. Here stood the famous Cassino monastery. The town commands a strategic position at the head of the valley, and one can see why the site was stubbornly fought over for many months.

General Keyes, in Austria, had told us that during the battle of Italy, when they were fighting for Cassino, someone brought in the battle maps and plans of Hannibal's army. In that ancient campaign, the General said, Hannibal was confronted with the same strategic problems our forces were up against.

The famous monastery at Cassino is on a mountain approximately 400 ft. above the city. The town and monastery are located on a bend of the Liri valley—a strategic military spot.

The northward-advancing American Army coming through the valley to the south from Cassino, with mountains on either side, had to pass Cassino to proceed through a widening plain to the approaches of Rome; hence the reason for this place being stubbornly held by the Germans.

Our conducting officer informs us that the entire population of Cassino had moved a few miles to the northwest—where presently a new city will be built. Knowing the habits of people, however, we feel sure the people of Cassino in the future will dig themselves out of the rubble and go back and rebuild their town and original homes.

We talked to persons who were setting up their little businesses in the sea of rubble. They said, "Bye-and-bye, we rebuild."

After leaving Cassino we proceeded northward on the Appian Way to Rome. There was not much damage to the country but every village seemed to have been stubbornly fought for—most of them were in ruins even to the outskirts of Rome.

Arrived in glorious Rome at 7 p.m. and went at once to the famous old Grand Hotel, now conducted as an Army hotel, billeting ranking officers and V.I.P.s. (Dinner, in Army mess, 25c; good Italian wine, 35c per bottle.)