

ALLIES PROGRESS DESPITE HEAVY RAINS: ROAD MENDING BIG TASK NOW ...

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ALLIES PROGRESS DESPITE HEAVY RAINS

ROAD MENDING
BIG TASK NOW

Communications and Shelt-
ers for Army Occupy At-
tention of Troops

“FLU” ATTACKS FEW MEN

Hospital Stories of Achieve-
ments by Boys Lately Out
of School

(By PHILIP GIBBS.)
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York Times.)
With the British Armies, Sept. 10.
—Rainstorms, very heavy while they
lasted, between the short spells of
wind-swept sunshine, have fallen
along the front, and our men
are having a wet time on those old
battlefields, which again stretch for
miles behind our lines.
Our recovered ground is good to
us, not because of any beauty there,
for there is none, but because it is
the wide area for which our men
have fought through these years
of war. Their chief labor now
is to mend roads which strike
across that desolation, and to make
easy the lines of communication
which are the arteries of our ma-
terial body of war, and to make
some form of habitation in this wil-
derness, so that men may get some
shelter from the wind, and the
headquarters staffs of divisions
and battalions may have dry places
in which to spread their maps and
write their orders. It is an enor-
mous labor, this, and our engineers
and the pioneers and labor battal-
ions are hard at work in the rain
and mud that is already forming a
sludge over all this ground, making
old dugouts habitable again, drain-
ing old trenches, putting up new
huts in place of those which have
been burned or destroyed by shell-
fire. Here and there the enemy's re-
treat has been too hurried for him
to indulge in elaborate destruction.
We found large numbers of new
German dugouts, very deep and well
timbered, as I have seen them my-
self during recent days, in spite of
orders from their army Generals for-
bidding officers to let their men use
dugouts more than eight steps down,
and instructing them to board up or
otherwise destroy the deeper kind, in
which their men have been too often
trapped by our attacks.
Will Lay the Dust.
The rain that is falling will in-
crease the discomfort of our men in
the open fields, now that we have so
long a distance without villages or
roofs behind us, while the enemy
again has good places for billets be-
hind his own lines; but in another
way it is a blessing, for it will lay
the dust which is a source of evil to
the health of our troops, now that
it comes blowing over battle-
fields strewn with dead horses and
all the corruption that is in the wake
of war.
This, beyond doubt, is the cause
of the internal pains and troubles,
amounting to a mild form of dys-
entery, which has recently affected
some of our troops, and, in a
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ROAD MENDING BIG TASK NOW

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greater degree, because of poorer nourishment, the German infantry.

It is a marvel, due to the perfection of our medical science, that there has been no widespread epidemic this summer of a more serious character than "flu," as the Spanish influenza is called, and other allied fevers of Sicily, especially as the strain on our officers and men has been very severe since the beginning of the German offensive in March.

It is now that the strain has relaxed a little that some of them who carried on so doggedly begin to feel "done in," and to our rest hospitals and casualty clearing stations there come drifting in now and then very tired young men, who, in answer to a most cheery question, "Well, and what's the matter with you?" say nothing very definite. "I feel a bit queer, that's all; found it hard to carry on, somehow."

At School Four Years Ago.

They have erratic pulses, temperatures that zigzag up and down the chart, and a lassitude that keeps them quiet on their beds, as patient as babes, with a thermometer stuck in their mouths, but brightening up toward evening, when they spin yarns to each other across the wards, strange, astounding yarns, as I have heard them for several days past in one such hospital, told by young officers, who were at school four years ago, and who, during the past four years—even during the past four months—have crammed into life a hundred years of intense experience.

Here in one of these wards one hears the inner history of the war, and the revelation of its effects on the mind, and episodes of frightful adventure, told quietly by one man to another, as though they were normal things, or dreams vividly remembered.

One boy of twenty-two and a half had been all through Gallipoli, had been cut off in the horseshoe trench below Achil Baba, had seen some of his comrades go raving mad with thirst jumping over the parapet and running towards the Turkish machine guns, while he had kept sane, chewing a button from his sporran until his tongue was glued to the roof of his mouth, and then in the evening of a burning day he volunteered to go with five others to fetch water from the lines farther back.

They went singly. The first man was shot; the second got through; the third was shot; the fourth got through, and when this boy's turn came he was number five and the odd numbers had been unlucky, but he pushed through and brought back water. That now is an old memory of his.

Through Many Battles.

In the 51st Division he has been through many battles in France, in all of them since those of Arras last year, and on the French front as well as on the British, until this last fighting on the Scarpe a week ago. Then he felt "funny," as he calls it, and fainted for nothing at all, and now lies yawning in the ward with little gusts of laughter at the odd happenings which he remembers. The others carry on.

On the whole the health of the army is magnificent and the spirit of the men high. Outposts are still pushing forward, meeting fiercer resistance from the German rear-guards; fighting here and there no more than patrol actions and small battles which would have been thought big battles as far back as the South African war, and repelling German counter-attacks which are intended to delay our progress until their line of retreat and of main resistance is assured.

So it was yesterday, when the Germans made two determined counter-attacks at Chapel Hill and its neighborhood, near Gouzeaucourt.

Forced to Flight.

These efforts were made by men of the 201st German Division and the 6th Cavalry Division, after what seems to have been a time of friction and dispute between them. According to one story, the 201st Division had been badly mauled, and their survivors were so low-spirited that their officers sent word that a counter-attack by them was out of the question. Then the 6th Cavalry Division said: "If the infantry won't fight, neither will the cavalry," yet they were forced to do so by stern command, and came forward yesterday and gained some ground from our outposts. They were beaten out once, and came back again, and were driven out again, losing fifty prisoners to our men, and suffered

heavy casualties. The New Zealanders, farther north, took seventy prisoners, and this morning the British troops attacked south of Epehy, and pushed back the German rearguard lines, though how much I do not know.

It seems evident that the Germans are still fighting rearguard actions east of Peronne before falling back definitely to the old line of defence before March 21, and that they are not yet on their real line of resistance.

Enemy Must Decide.

For the moment our warfare is restricted to these minor actions, clearing the country of German outpost lines, and driving the enemy back to his new battlelines, where he was established before he plunged into his great adventure in the spring, flung all he had into the issue, and lost his last chance of victory on the Western front. The problem that faces him now is whether he will have enough men to hold this line with any safety during the next four or five months, when his shattered divisions will be largely made up of his boys of the 1920 class, or whether he will be forced to shorten his line still further, and dodge the next blows that are in store for him—the American army not yet having tried its strength—by a retreat on a greater scale. It is an appalling problem for the German Command to settle, with low-spirited troops in the field and a despairing people at home.