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Title: Ambulancing on the French front

Author: Edward R. Coyle

Release date: January 27, 2026 [eBook #77797]

Language: English

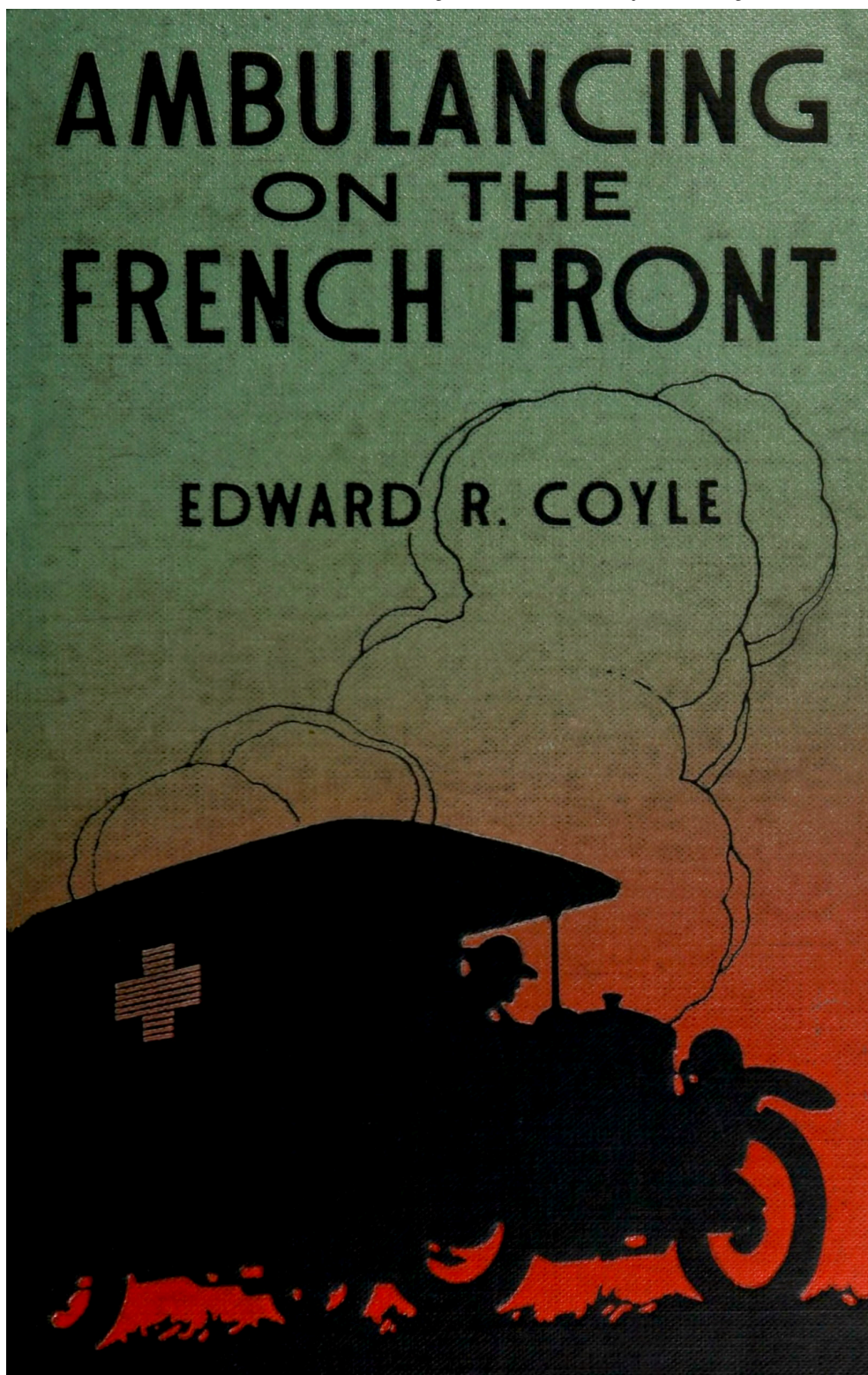
Original publication: New York, NY: Britton Publishing Company, 1918

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TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

Some minor changes to the text are noted at the [end of the book](#).



AMBULANCING ON THE FRENCH FRONT



ON THE JOB, DAY AND NIGHT.

**A picture of the author, one of the first Americans to serve
as an ambulance man on the French front.**

AMBULANCING ON THE FRENCH FRONT

BY

EDWARD R. COYLE

Illustrated



NEW YORK
BRITTON PUBLISHING COMPANY

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TO MY MOTHER

Whose parting gift was a miniature photograph of her own dear self upon which she had inscribed these words:

My only child who is given to the Cause of Liberty and Freedom. May God guide him safely so that he may help those who are unfortunate.

HIS MOTHER'S PRAYER.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

When I went to France there was no thought in my mind that I should ever write a book on the subject of my experiences over there. On my return, however, many friends besieged me for details of the great war, which had come under my observation while serving in the Ambulance Corps on the French front. It was easy to infer from the eagerness of all that real news was in demand, none seeming to tire of asking questions and listening to what I had to say in reply. From these impromptu conversations occurring day after day, I began to realize how much I had really experienced during my stay abroad. Consequently, when urged to write a book for the benefit of the general public, I consented on the theory that the more we Americans know about true conditions in the War Zone the surer we are to win victory from the most ruthless enemy ever known to mankind. I make no pretense of being a writer, but I know what I saw and I hope to make myself understood on the subject of war as it is to-day on the firing line. Much in the way of rumor has passed for fact in America. Propaganda has confused the public mind. The more fact that leaks through, not calculated to send aid and comfort to the foe, the better for all of us. In this, my first attempt at writing, and possibly my last, I intend to give facts. Matters that should not be disclosed for military reasons will, of course, be reserved for historians of another day.

EDWARD R. COYLE.

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AMBULANCING ON THE FRENCH FRONT

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Ambulancing on the French Front

CHAPTER I

HOW I CAME TO GO

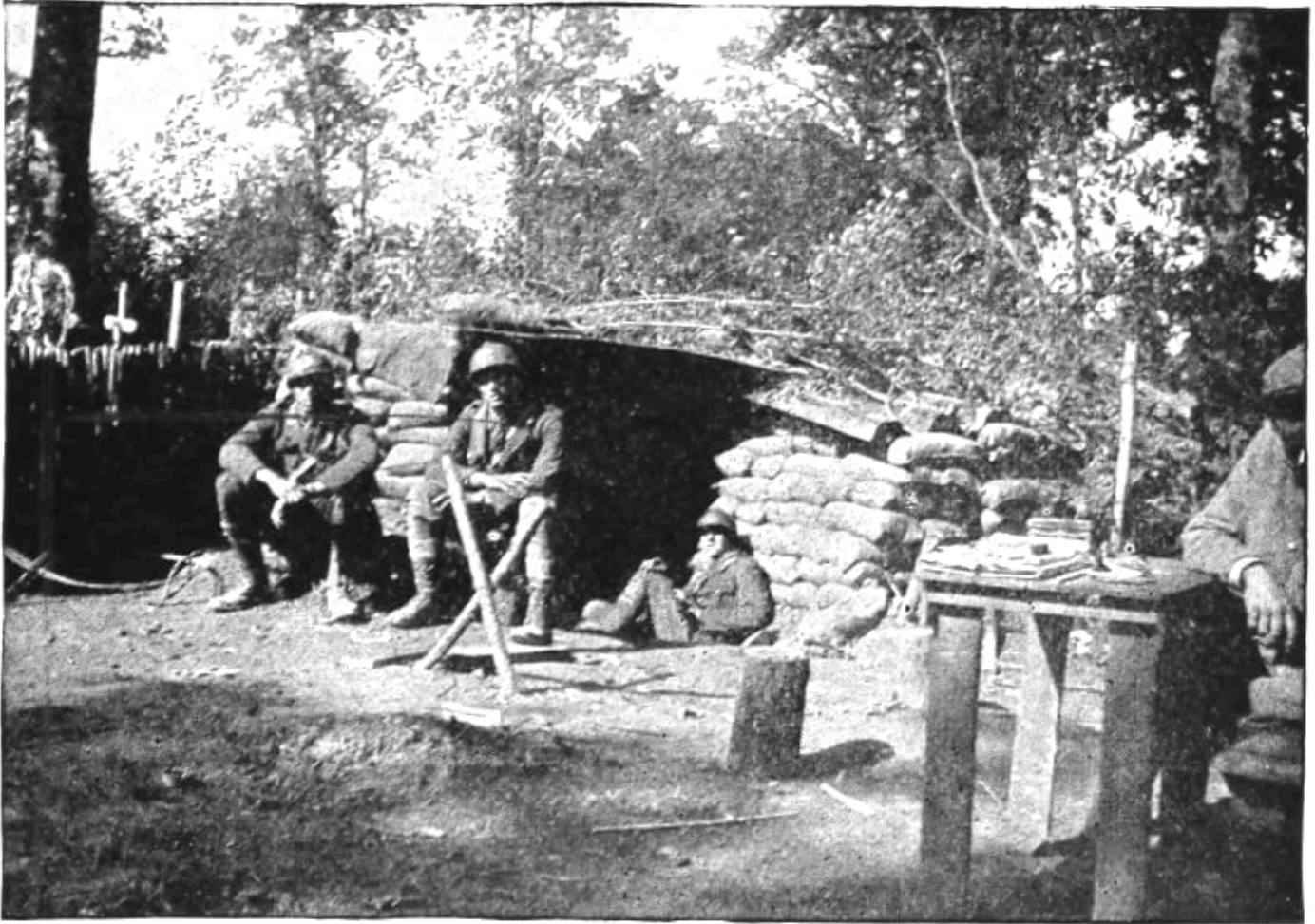
If you like excitement I'd say take a steamer for France—and join the Ambulance Corps on the French front overlooking Verdun. A few steps forward to the front-line trenches and you're in the zone of what the lamented Charles Frohman described as "The Great Adventure."

I was there and I bless my lucky stars that I'm home again for a while with a whole skin and a large and growing appetite that I brought back with me. I served as an ambulance man, a sort of scene-shifter in the wings of the greatest tragedy ever staged. Now, as I write, it is running in its fourth year. My duties required me to bring back from the battlefield the maimed and dying, and deposit them in places of comparative safety. Also to the sheltered huts, further back, where first aid could be given.

If anyone had told me, on January 1, 1917, that in less than sixty days I would be over there on the French front, taking a minor part in the biggest show on earth, I probably would have slammed back at him, "Quit your kidding." Nevertheless, it all happened—I went, and of my own volition, joined the Ambulance section of the French Army, and stayed in the game until my own country took over that service. Then I came home for a visit, having served practically nine months, but I am going back soon, this time with Uncle Sam—I have already enlisted.



A Quick Lunch at the Front



First Aid Dug-Out—Waiting for a Call

Just how I made up my mind to go in the first place is yet something of a mystery. Here I was in New York, holding down a good position at generous pay. New York is always entertaining, and at intervals my work took me out over the country to other cities, under first-class conditions. Therefore, it was not from lack of novelty or interest in my own affairs that I went forth in search of trouble.

As I think back upon it I presume I must have talked myself into going. Notwithstanding that we, over here, were seemingly out of the war, everybody I knew, at home or on my travels, talked war, and I did also.

While dining with a friend one evening in a New York restaurant we got into the war talk game rather earnestly. He was sure he would go over were it not that he couldn't possibly pass the test.

"If it was Uncle Sam that was fighting I might try to go anyway," said he.

It was at this point in our conversation that I heard myself say:

"Well, I think I'll go and help France; she was always good to us."

My voice sounded strange to my own ears as I said this, and the next instant our eyes met. Bing! I realized that I had started something down deep within me. Also that a hand reached forth across the table which I took into my own. It was the hand of James A. Gilmore, "Fighting Jim," as he is affectionately known to millions of baseball fans all over the world.

"Bully for you!" he shouted. "What part of the service will you go in for? Army—Navy—Red Cross?" There was a wistful look in his eyes.

"Red Cross, I think."

I heard myself say this, but, as a matter of fact, I had no thought whatever of what I would do. To tell the honest truth, I felt as if I had jumped off of the Brooklyn Bridge. Not that the idea frightened me. Nothing like that. If I had made a real decision, and I began to feel that I had, it didn't seem to disturb me unduly. There was no reason why I shouldn't go. If there was a reluctant feeling it was on account of my Mother—but I knew her too well to believe that she would hold me back from such a righteous cause. As to my Father,

why he'd boost the game. I was sure of that. Anyhow the conviction grew that I had cast the die, and by the look on the face of my friend I knew that I had committed myself.

For the next half hour I sat quietly munching my food and listening the while to my good friend opposite. It was during this time that he showed his loyalty to the great cause. I was told to outfit myself and spare no expense—he would help foot the bill. A few days later, when I was all but on the point of sailing away toward the great whirlpool of disaster, he and other good friends presented me with an auto-ambulance, fully equipped.

Proud! grateful! I thought I'd drop dead with joy before the day came to walk the gangway of the big ship that was to bear me away from peace to war.

Recalling my sudden decision to enter the war, on many occasions I have asked other Americans why they volunteered. In no instance did any of them give a solid reason right off the reel. I believe the answer¹²⁰¹ given by a young Philadelphian, who was a member of our party on board ship, fairly sums up most cases of volunteer enlistment.

"Damifino," said he, with a shrug of his well-set shoulders and a merry twinkle in his eyes.

Same here—his answer is mine. I don't know why I went, but I am glad I did. I've seen things that horrified me—that terrified me. I have been within arm's length of the Grim Reaper many times, but I got used to it all. It became a part of the day's work, but never to the point where I failed to shoot the gas into my motor in order to get out of reach of the "big ones" that flew my way.

But I'm getting ahead of my story. After making my decision to go I did as everyone else had to do—saw Eliot Norton, a New York lawyer who contributed his time in passing upon the qualifications of the men desiring to enter this branch of service in connection with the Red Cross. He seemed glad to have¹²⁰² me go; therefore, I soon found myself busily engaged in purchasing supplies and equipment generally. I also started to "pulling the strings" for my passport. In fact, I went to Washington in order to get quick action, so that I could sail on a French liner, along with forty other volunteers. My auto was to follow on another boat.

On shipboard all hands fraternized at once. It was a gay party withal, and democratic in spirit. Big family names didn't count for a cent, much to the relief of the fine fellows who bore them. There was a general realization that we were bound on a serious mission and that there was no better time possible in which to get acquainted. Therefore, the time passed quickly enough on our way to the port of Bordeaux, our gateway to Paris. A surprise awaited us there—third-class coaches, instead of luxurious Pullmans, to which we all were accustomed. Bare wooden seats for an all-night ride were not so soft as a feather-bed, but at that we were lucky, for we were told that this long ride was usually made in freight cars. It was a mighty rocky¹²³ ride, though. There was compensation in the fact, however, that we journeyed through the celebrated Jardin de France, the most beautiful landscape in all that beautiful land. But our legs and bodies ached, almost unbearably, as we came to the end of the journey.

Arriving in Paris we went straight to headquarters, No. 7 Rue Francois Premier, French Headquarters of the American Red Cross in Paris. There we signed up for voluntary service with the French Army, and then started out to complete our equipment and obtain uniforms. Four glorious days followed, for Paris is great, even in war times, and we realized that we would not get back there for at least six months.

Then came preliminary training at Sandricourt. This took ten days, and from thence we were hurried forward to our Division assignment for training near the Eastern front. No use to go into detail concerning the red tape necessary to enlistment. It is enough to say that there is plenty of it. After every little thing had¹²³ been attended to I found myself tagged for identification as follows:

VIII Army
9th Corp
17th Division
French Army
Edward R. Coyle.

CHAPTER II

[24]

AMBULANCE WORK

Ambulance work in the French Army comes under the heading of what is known as the Sanitary Service. To each division there is attached a Sanitary Section which serves that division only. Although subject to the orders of the Staff Officers, it is looked upon as a part of the Medical Department, and is directly under the supervision of the Medical Staff. The Service, like everything else in the war to-day, has undergone radical changes.

In the early days of the war, the Sanitary Section of the French Army proved most inefficient. It could not cope with new conditions. Speed in conveying the wounded soldier to the proper hospital was vital; [30] also was the transfer of cases from the front-line trenches and dressing stations to hospitals where complete service and attention could be given. To facilitate development in this all-important work took time and careful thought to determine just which course would meet the increased demands with greatest efficiency.

While the reorganization was being evolved in the minds of the men who had these matters in charge for the French Government, the German Armies were most actively engaging the French all along their frontier, and it was necessary, for the time being, to meet the situation in whatever make-shift way it might be possible until the desired perfection in this branch of service could finally be attained.

The French were fortunate with the sanitary sections they had organized up to that time and which formed a regular part of their medical service in connection with the army. In order to take care of a great portion of the extra work that was thrown upon them, it must be acknowledged that, with the equipment they had, [42] they carried on the work in a wonderful way.

In Paris lived many people who were able to render service to the French Government during these days, and among them was Mr. Harjes of Morgan & Harjes Company, Bankers. Quick to see the need of expert ambulance work in connection with the army, he equipped his own automobile and donated it to the French Government.

Through his example other people in Paris were induced to make donations of a similar character, and thus, through the generosity of a small group of Mr. Harjes' immediate friends, Sanitary Section, Unit Five, was formed and became a permanent and famous feature in ambulance work, setting the pace followed later on by the French Government. Mr. Harjes became responsible for the efficiency of this service, spending most of his time in the field personally conducting the operations, and, by his untiring efforts, made it the standard of all other units. About this time Mr. Richard Norton also realized the ever-increasing demand [47] upon the sanitary section service of the French Army. He got into communication with his very close friend, Mr. Arthur Kemp, who was at that time residing in England, and induced him to equip his own private car and bring it over and enter the work with him. Mr. Norton formed Sanitary Section Unit Seven, and himself went into the field as its head. He drove one of the cars himself and lived with the boys at the front, as also did Mr. Kemp.

The wonderful work that was carried on by the volunteer ambulance services quickly attracted the attention of the French authorities. Letters written by the boys of these sections, describing in detail to friends in America the work they were carrying on, resulted in a large number of requests for a chance to serve as volunteers. These enthusiasts proposed not only to donate automobiles equipped for ambulance work, but also to drive them themselves without cost to the French Government. Soon there were enough of [48] these applicants to form Sanitary Section Number Eleven, and, at the termination of the Volunteer Ambulance Work in October, 1917, these volunteer sections constituted the finest and most efficient ambulance service in the world.

By this time recognition had been given to this service from all corners of the globe, and the American Red Cross now became the principal financial support of the service, which enabled it to expand into a vitally important factor of the French Army. Equipment and funds in abundance were placed at the disposal of the organization.

Eliot Norton, a lawyer in New York City, and a brother of Richard Norton, played a large part in the success of that organization. It was he who personally supervised the enlistment of men for service in France

as ambulance drivers. No one was permitted to enter this service without having first satisfied Mr. Norton that he would be unafraid, under any conditions, to carry the work of the American Red Cross to the battlefields of France in a creditable way.

Untiring was his devotion and unerring his judgment. A very high official in the Medical Corps in the English Army is quoted as having said: "I have never seen a cleaner, more intelligent crowd of boys than the ones who are serving with the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps in the French Army."

The organization was now taking on such proportions that it was necessary to establish central headquarters. This was done at No. 7 Rue Francois Premier in Paris. Messrs. Norton, Kemp and Havemeyer were compelled to give up the active work in the field and take charge of the offices. Other sections were equipped and sent out; section leaders and assistants called chef and sous-chef, respectively, were chosen from the older men that had been on active duty in the field.

This organization was now continually attracting prominent people to it, one of these being Mr. Robert Goelet, who turned over his estate at Sandricourt, twenty miles outside of Paris, to be used as a cantonment for the American Red Cross, and as a base for training men. Twenty automobiles were donated to this section, which became known as the "Goelet Section."

CHAPTER III

[31]

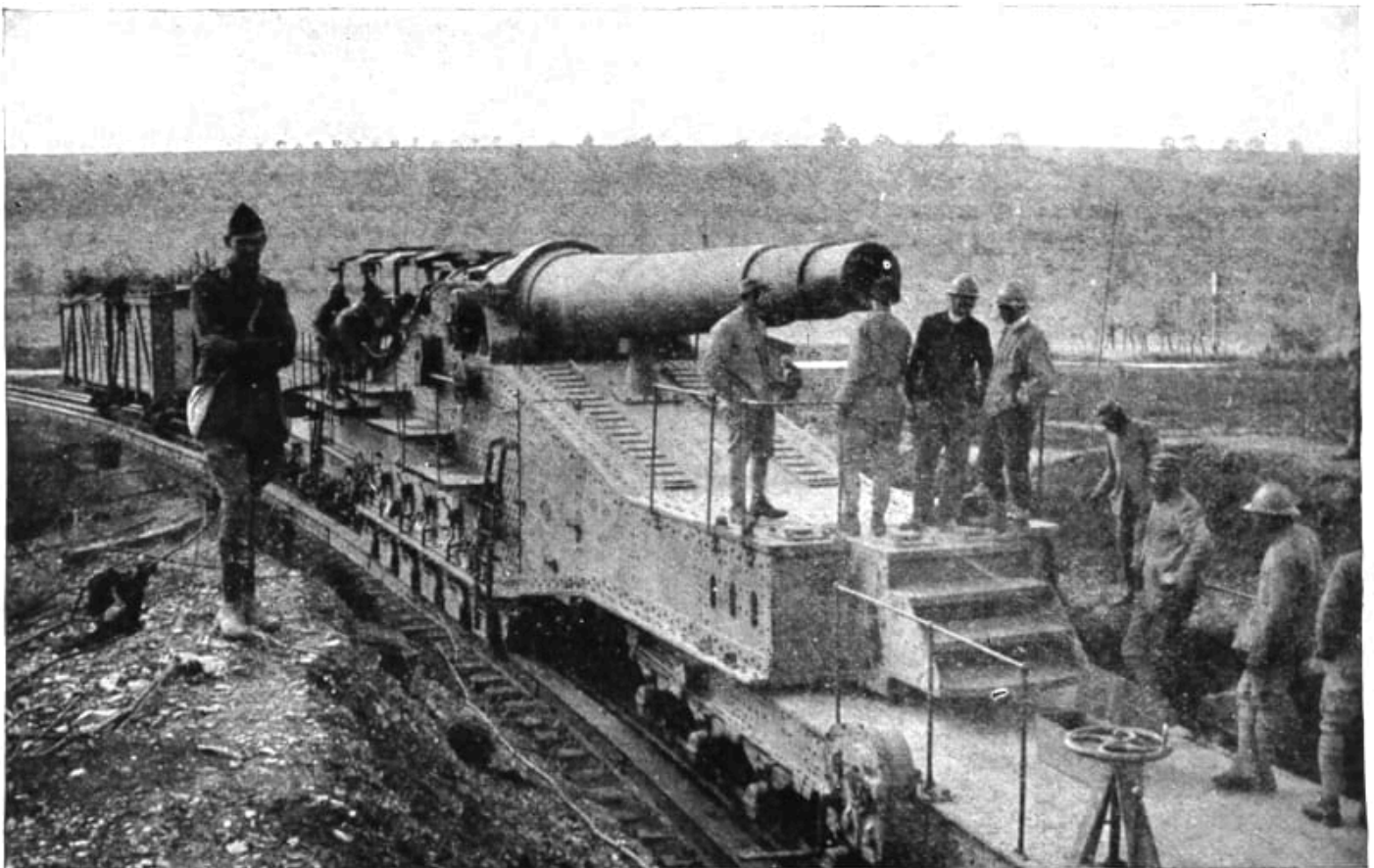
SANDRICOURT

Sandricourt, as a base for training and instructions, was a happy choice, for it became the stepping-stone to efficiency. It must be remembered that all the men who had joined the service were youngsters and of good families, and most of them had had some business experience.

In the French Army there is no such thing as luxury, and it is very hard for a person who has been used to butter, sugar and cream to be deprived of them all at once. In addition to extremely plain food, sleeping out of doors was a very necessary preparation for the hardships to be endured, when one might be called to sleep in any old place and under unknown conditions.

In the meantime, means were found to divert the minds of the weary by such activities as military drills, lectures on the care of cars, instructions on temporary repairs, and the like. In due time there were also established, under Y. M. C. A. supervision, classes in French, a working knowledge of which was very necessary, for at the front the men had to take orders from doctors, who spoke that language exclusively.

When Sandricourt was first taken over it had to undergo a thorough overhauling. Mr. Goelet had not occupied it from the inception of the war and, of course, things were in bad shape. The barns, which had been used for the housing of cattle and stock, were to form the sleeping quarters for the men, and it was necessary to give them a most rigid cleaning before they could be occupied.



A French Gun Much Respected by Fritz

Some of the barns were over a hundred years old and in an awful state of repair, but a hundred men of the Ambulance Service were dispatched to start the work and they pitched in with such eagerness that within four weeks' time Mr. Goelet himself would hardly have recognized the place.

As sections left Sandricourt for the front, others came to take their places and carry on the work. During their stay they received instructions in preparation for their own departure for the front.

The fatigue work in our service consists of such tasks as carrying water, chopping wood for the kitchen, and waiting on table. Everyone had to take his turn at these different duties. It was amusing to look in on the various groups of inexperienced boys of the different fatigues. Many of them had never washed a dish in their lives, but no one was exempt, and each day brought different men to duty on different fatigues, in accordance with a well-planned schedule.

Details were dispatched each day to help the farmers in the vicinity with their work, all of which was good for the appetite, and hardened the boys. Army food was so different, it seemed impossible to eat at first, but it had the appearance of a banquet at Delmonico's after one had been out on a haystack all day or feeding a thrasher.

Such was Sandricourt, the tempering forge of the ambulance corp—the place where everyone got down to bed rock and exchanged luxury for the essentials; bloat and fat for muscle, and irregular life for a rigid routine. Complaints flew thick and fast at first, but, after all, these seeming hardships were mild, indeed, compared with what came afterward. When enemy shell fire kept food from coming up, and service demanded that men should sleep in their clothes for days at a time in preparation for an immediate call, I often wondered if there were not a great many fellows who longed for Sandricourt, with its vigorous, enforced rules and discipline.

In preparation for the assignment of a section to a division, forty men were chosen from Sandricourt and placed under the leadership of a chef and sous-chef. Two men on a car and twenty cars constituted a section. This section, when completed, would then be sent out to one of the large automobile parks located somewhere along the front where cars were supplied. Two mechanics were assigned, as well as clerks and cooks. There was a French lieutenant who, with the chef, took command of the section when all the equipment necessary for field duty was supplied. When the section left to join the division it was assigned to whatever position that division then occupied.

After arriving at its destination the first thing the section has to do is to establish a cantonment. This is generally an old barn or a demolished house eight to twelve kilometers behind the line, and it must be central to all the portion of the front that the division is to occupy. In all instances these quarters are within easy range of the enemy cannon, for it would be impractical, for numerous reasons, to have this cantonment or field base too far in the rear. The greater the distance the greater the time required to answer emergency calls. Instant service is the watchword of the ambulance man, for he can never tell what a few minutes' loss or gain may mean in the saving or the losing of a life.

Located at different intervals all along the front, just behind the first-line trenches, are *abris*, in charge of which there is a doctor. When a man is shot or otherwise injured, he is taken to one of these dressing stations where he receives his first treatment. If he is slightly wounded he is kept there until night, in the event that the nature of the terrain does not afford security to an ambulance in coming up to take him to the rear. If he is badly wounded he is put in a cart and wheeled to the nearest point back of the front line where an ambulance can approach without becoming a target for enemy guns. At night it is the duty of the ambulance man to advance under the cover of darkness up to these dressing stations, and convey all wounded men to the hospitals in the rear.

As many cars as there are stations to be served at the front leave the cantonment at noon every day for twenty-four hours' service at the front. The remaining cars then become an Emergency Division. All the clearing must be done at night. No lights are permitted on cars. This prevents them from becoming marks for the enemy guns.

If a road is being shelled it makes passage extremely difficult for cars without light. Shell holes are "hell holes" to get out of, not to speak of the likelihood of a broken axle. It is often necessary for one of the men on the car to get out and walk in front of it with a handkerchief behind his back so the man at the wheel can find his way along what is left of the road, in and out between the shell holes.

Many of the posts or dressing stations where first treatment is given are located as close up as 500 yards from the German front-line trenches, which is within easy range of machine guns, so that, during the day, it is impossible for the ambulances to approach these advanced posts if compelled to go over ground that might be visible to the enemy. But at night this can be done with comparative safety.

It is an erroneous idea that the ambulance man goes into "No Man's Land" to pick up the injured. There have been instances of where the boys have done this sort of thing, but it is not a part of their required work.

This branch of the service is done by the brancardier, or stretcher-bearer. In most instances in the French Army this service is made up of musicians. The injured are conveyed back through the trenches and placed in the waiting cars, which take them to the rear.

The trips to the hospital with emergency cases are sometimes very trying to a sensitive driver. A man on a stretcher, shot through the abdomen and suffering unbearable agony, shouting "*tout doucement, mon Dieu, tout doucement!*" ("Go slow, my God, go slow!"), while another man, with both hands off at the wrist, and realizing that only a quick trip can save his life, screams "*Viet, Conducteur, viet,*" meaning "Fast, driver, fast," will tax one's powers and sympathy to the limit. Another screams incoherently from sheer pain. It is the desire, of course, for the man at the wheel to do each man's bidding, but, under such conditions, the pleadings of the unfortunate must be disregarded. This might seem harsh, but when one realizes that he is doing his very best, he becomes, after a while, hardened to the work and automatically carries out his orders.

Each car, as it goes to the front for its twenty-four hours' service, is allotted food enough for the two men, which they cook on any such improvised fireplace as conditions permit; but, of course, during any extensive operation, food and sleep are two things that one learns to do without.

It is necessary for all forms of motor vehicles in the zone of the armies to be supplied with what is known as an *Ordre de Mouvement*, which shows just which position of the front each must occupy, and what towns and *Post du Succors* each must serve. No one is permitted on the road without this order, and, if one is apprehended by a sentinel, the "order" must be produced for identification. It's a case of "show me" or "skedaddle" back for the permit.

If he sees fit, the sentinel can send the driver to the rear under guard. There is seldom any occasion for this procedure, because every man knows it is necessary to have his order and would not think of going up front without it.

During the day, when no runs are to be made, the time is spent at the post, within easy calling distance in case of emergency. If one happens to be stationed where the Boche is shelling, the time is spent in an *abri* or dug-out down underground, and, in all instances, men who have gone through these bombardments are very glad that such places exist.

In the cantonment the men held in reserve are required to make minor repairs to their cars in order to insure their being able to depart for the front at a moment's notice. Otherwise, their time is their own and can be spent as they like, provided it is known at the bureau where they can be reached in the case of an emergency.

While traversing a road that is under shell fire, it is a very strict regulation with the French Government that no car be permitted to stop for any reason whatever as long as it is able to run under its own power. Irrespective of the fact that it might not have a tire left this regulation still holds good and the driver must proceed to a place of safety before any consideration can be given to the matter of changing tires or stopping for minor repairs.

Whenever a road is being shelled it generally gives the men on the car something to think about, and only actual experience under such shell fire enables them to become expert in their judgment as to slowing down or shooting in the gas when this condition is met with. It is not the most pleasant of experiences to be driving along and have a shell break alongside of the road and cover everything with mud. But all conditions are met in a more or less matter-of-fact way when one is continually forced to accept them. Life seems a matter of fate and little attention is paid to bursting shells.

As the cars are relieved at the front at the end of twenty-four hours' service, they return to the base, making calls at the different *Posts du Succor* on the way back, picking up the *mallade* (sick), for everyone carried in ambulances is not always wounded. With large armies in the trenches there are a great many cases of sickness that must be taken back to the hospitals in the rear for treatment.

CHAPTER IV

[43]

MEDICAL CARE

When a man is wounded he receives the very best care, for experience has taught France that for the conservation of man power this is of the highest importance. No matter how slight an injury may be, it is mandatory that a man receive the proper medical or surgical treatment, for it is the small and seemingly inconsequential wounds that develop blood poisoning, which means the amputation of arms and legs or even death itself. Consequently, the moment a man is injured he must present himself to the doctor for examination, thereby eliminating, as far as possible, any chance of complications.

The small percentage of infections in the army is surprising, in view of the conditions that exist, which are not always the very cleanest and best. These small wounds, to men who live in damp dug-outs, stand watch in wet trenches, suffer from irregularity of meals, insufficient rest and exposure, are all things that tend to lessen their resisting power and render them just that much more susceptible to the development of infection.

During the first year of the war the frequency of infection from deep wounds was alarmingly high and all efforts of the medical staff to cut it down seemed in vain. At this time Doctor Alexis Carrel of the Rockefeller Institute, after consultation with some of the heads of the French Medical Staff, made a study of this vexing problem and with the backing of this wonderful institution with its ample funds, working without the red tape that in most instances goes hand in hand with an endeavor of this kind, after a surprisingly short time, developed a treatment known as Irrigation Intermittent Carrel. The apparatus used consists principally of a reservoir or container attached to the bed of the injured at the proper elevation to insure a flow of the fluid.

Connected with this and inserted in the wound itself is a rubber tube by which the fluid is conducted to the field of injury. At regular, determined periods during the day and night the fluid is released from the container and allowed to flow through the wound, carrying off poisonous matter or arresting any infectious condition.

As it was soon seen that this was the best method for handling deep wounds, they set out to perfect the treatment. The fluid used was very costly, particularly as such large quantities had to be employed in this intermittent irrigation, consequently there followed a great deal of experimenting, which, however, did result in the perfection of the treatment, but Dr. Carrel went farther. He and his associates compiled a chart or card, which recorded the age of the patient, the square inches or area of the wound, and such other facts as enabled them, through the handling of so many cases, to establish and chart lines of healing showing the progress of the wound from day to day in its course of treatment, and giving such other information as the proper time of closing the wound and the discontinuing of irrigation, etc.

So accurate did this chart work out that it enabled them to control all cases by its use. Thus, in the event that a wound had not progressed properly in its healing by a certain day to the requirement shown on the chart, the deduction was that the case required special treatment and so it was immediately given the requisite attention. One can see the far-reaching effects from a military viewpoint of such a system.

With these charts to govern them, the doctors at the different base hospitals could compute very readily just how many beds in their hospitals were occupied by cases of this particular kind and with this method of treatment estimate very closely two to three weeks in advance how many patients would be released and the number of beds that would be available for new cases at any given time.

Still another forward step in military medication is in the treatment of burns. I saw in France a man who had been working with powder which in some way becoming ignited, burned one side of his face very badly. He was taken to the hospital and treated by the new method of spraying paraffin over the burn and allowing it to heal from the bottom—a method which eliminated all the scar tissue with the result that it was almost impossible to tell that he had ever been burned.

We see so many cases in this country of people whose faces are covered with scar tissue caused by burns because they had been treated by such methods as allowed the air to get at the field of injury, causing a scar tissue to form, which nothing will ever remove. But by healing from the bottom and developing toward the surface the natural functioning of the healthy tissue leaves the exterior appearance practically without a blemish. This in itself is a wonderful development. For if a person is burned and treatment is necessary, there is some consolation in knowing that he will not be forced to go through life with hideous scar tissue marrying

his appearance for the want of proper treatment. In addition to the “M. D.,” there is, in each division, the Dental Corps.



German Sacrilege—Christ's Figure Decapitated



Ruins of the Church Containing the Figures

CHAPTER V

[49]

A LESSON I LEARNED

Shortly after leaving for the front there came an order that our section was to be inspected by one of the captains from one of the large auto parks at the front. This meant that the general cleaning day was at hand. Naturally, we all started brushing and polishing motors and revolving parts to make as good a showing as possible.

When we were given our cars we were allotted certain equipment in tools, extra tires, etc., all of which we had to inventory and sign for, as each driver was held responsible for the equipment that was distributed. I noticed, while taking stock of what was on our car, a little paint brush that looked as if it had the “mange,” but I listed one brush and threw it into the tool chest and soon forgot that I had ever seen it.

This particular day the happy thought came to me that with the assistance of some petrol (kerosene) and my little mangy brush I would be able to get at some parts of my car that I could not clean or reach by hand. After a few minutes' search the brush was found and I began work. I had not gone very far when I noticed that the few straggly brisks that were in the brush when I commenced had disappeared and that nothing remained but the handle.

In true American fashion, without any thought, I tossed the handle into a rubbish heap and dismissed it from my mind. The boys on the next car to me were using a brush in the same manner as I employed mine and were getting good results. I said to one of them:

“Have you got another brush?” to which I received a negative answer, but one of the boys said: “I saw some little brushes in the Bureau” (office). As it was close at hand I walked over and asked one of the sergeants on duty for a brush. He asked: “Is there not a brush on your car?” I told him that there had been about a quarter of a brush, but that when I used it all the brisks had come out of the handle. He then demanded the handle.

“Oh! I threw that away,” I replied.

“Well, I'm sorry but you will have to get along without a brush,” said he brusquely.

There before me lay a small bundle of brushes; mine was worn out, no good for further use to anyone, and discarded, yet I could not have a brush. I pressed my point a little farther in a most persuasive style, but met with not the slightest encouragement, and I soon saw the reason for the refusal.

When a new brush is issued the old one must be turned in. There is no trouble in getting new equipment, if needed, but the old must be exchanged for the new, even though it were just the handle of a brush. Any part of returned equipment that can be used saves just that much in the making over of the article. This is the thrift of the thrifty French. What American would ever do otherwise than I did? When a thing wears out with us it is discarded—but not with them.

Well, I set out at once for the rubbish pile to reclaim the handle that I might get a new brush. It so happened that at the time I discarded the handle another of our sergeants, standing close by, after I left for the Bureau, walked over, picked it up, and put it under the cushion on my car. Of course, when I returned the handle was gone. We looked high and low but in vain. We finished cleaning our car minus a brush. But a day or so later I happened to look under the cushion for something and there was the handle. I returned it to the Bureau and the sergeant who had picked it up was on duty.

“Well,” said he, “I thought you would be around for a new brush, and to get it you would have to turn in the old handle, so I picked it up after you left and put it back on the car.”

[53]

This was my lesson. Learned early, I never threw anything away after that. This regulation held good on everything,—tires, tubes and all. If you lost a spare tire enroute, it was your funeral when you needed it for a change. Without some part of the old one, you could not obtain a new one. It was amusing, in a sense, to note the effect this regulation produced when, for example, we would change an inner tube on the road. Before we would think of starting again, we would check up all the lugs, valves, nuts and caps, for we knew full well we would get no new inner tube for the old one unless we turned in all the parts when we desired an exchange.

CHAPTER VI

[54]

A VISIT TO PARIS

To one who visited Paris before the war, Paris of to-day presents a strikingly different aspect—and why shouldn't it? When we stop to think that there is hardly a family which has not been deprived of some member in the terrible toll of death. The courage of the women has been marvelous through it all. To some it has meant the loss of a husband and to others, sons, while to countless it has meant both, and yet, with this sorrow to bear, they are ever ready to make further sacrifices in order that the outcome might be as the dear ones they have lost would have had it. Is it any wonder there is sadness in their faces? And such a calm sadness it is, too. No hysteria whatsoever, never a demonstration, but the look on their faces portrays^[55] very vividly what is in their hearts. Even the children, who are too small to appreciate what their loss has been, absorb from their mothers this characteristic composure that is appalling.

In little villages still within reach of the big German guns, one grows familiar with the night bombing raids of the Huns. They know that the bombs are for the women and children that are left, and at any moment may come the knock on the door, the gathering of what few earthly belongings they have, and escape into the night before an attack.

I have never seen children like these before, and I never want to see any again. Some little tots seven and eight years of age truly look like old men and women. They reminded me of the little men of the mountains in the story of Rip Van Winkle. They never smile, but wear the same emotionless expression at all times. Games seem to be unknown to them as they sit around on the doorsteps of their homes (where there are homes), and sad is their lot if anything happens to their mothers, for no one else in the community has anything for them. Everyone has his own to look out for, and it's hard enough to do that. This is why there are so many urchins following the armies. There is no one to provide for them. They have to shift for themselves.

The Mont Martre, the artists' quarters, are familiar to all for the frivolity which has always characterized this section of Paris. It now bears a close resemblance to a graveyard and it would be very hard for anyone to imagine that La Vie Boheme (the life bohemian) ever existed here.

The Boulevard Exterior, which before the war was a blaze of white lights that seemed to come to life about the time Paris was retiring, has taken on the appearance of a main street in one of our country towns at 2 a. m. Such places as the Moulin Rouge (Red Mill), Rat-Mort (Dead Rat), have long since ceased to operate as centers of life. Other familiar places to people who knew Paris before the war and had a world-wide reputation are the Latin Quarters and all along the Boulevard St. Michel, where the students held forth and where one could find almost any form of excitement, all have passed into oblivion like a dream. The boys are all with the colors and thousands of them had already paid the price.

Paris is very sad. The mailed fist has fallen and left its mark everywhere.

To-day the theaters are still running; such places as the Follies Bergere, Olympia, Café Ambassadeurs have their evening performances, but it is more for the diversion of the men on leave from the front than for any other reason. Long will these performances be remembered by the men gathered there nights to throw off the thoughts of war. I have seen almost every uniform of the Allied armies at these places in an evening, the men fraternizing, and absorbing what gaiety there was, trying to forget what they had left behind at the^[56] front, enjoying their leisure as best they could.

But the show is over each night at eleven and once outside the doors in the dark streets of cold, sad Paris you find no place to go. With dancing unheard of and all cafés closed at that hour, Paris has locked itself within doors to brood quietly over the happiness that seems forever lost.

Never fear that the French will forget America after this war,—no more than America has forgotten the French. I was in Paris on that memorable Fourth day of July, 1917, when the first contingent of American Oversea forces marched through the city to the music of great military bands, which played the martial airs of both France and America. The whole population was mad with joy. Persons of all ages, from tiny children to men and women old and bent, singing and shouting, surged back and forth.

Every nook and corner along the line of march was occupied. Balconies, windows, and even roofs⁽⁵⁹⁾ were filled to capacity, and the words, "The Americans have come to help us," were shouted over and over again. Boys and girls, carrying small American flags, waved them continuously, while their elders looked on through tears of appreciation.

The procession under way, women along the line of march showered our boys with roses, and almost immediately a long-stemmed American Beauty rose protruded from the muzzle of every Springfield rifle in the parade. Some of the men had wreaths around their necks, flowers on their broad-brimmed hats and in their belts, while they fairly marched upon a bed of roses. No words can express the full significance of this parade as it affected the hearts and minds of the war-stricken people along the line of march. It will go down in history as the feature of a glorious day for two glorious nations.

Here was to be seen the real test of friendship, the concrete proof that the greatest of Republics had finally cast its lot with those who had helped to make that Republic possible. The whole affair was wonderfully inspiring, and the blood rushed through my veins in burning gratitude, for those boys marching out there were our boys and I was an American like them.

CHAPTER VII

[61]

“THE FRONT”

The average person in this country has a different idea of what the term “Front” means to those who have been “Over there.” “The Front” from this point of view consists of a series of long trenches, filled with infantry, and their personal equipment, such as barbed-wire, for they know that exists, and back of the trenches some cannon; but little does the layman know about the component parts necessary to make up a “front” and all the branches of service that are utilized, each an individual cog in an efficient fighting machine. I shall enumerate some of the departments that are not only necessary but vitally essential.

In addition to the countless thousands who labor in the mills, factories, foundries and machine shops, there must be supply depots, where all this equipment goes for storage when it is completed. These are not unlike our warehouses. From the warehouses, supplies are requisitioned for the different portions or sectors of the front where they may be needed. There are what we might term sub-warehouse stations, generally located back of the front near a railroad siding, where supplies remain until needed by the army. Here a great number of men are required for the clerical work, stock-keeping, loading and unloading. After this the material and equipment must be delivered to different parts of the battle front. This constitutes another big branch of service in which countless auto trucks and men are used, known in the French Army as the Camion Service, and most of the success of an army in either offensive or defensive operations depends largely on this organization and its ability to “deliver the goods.”

Then there are the supply departments for food; for the army has to have meals regularly. It is difficult to realize what it means in the way of supplies to feed an army. Each section of the front has its base of supplies from which the transportation department obtains them. This is where the meat is prepared and weighed out to the different departments of the army.

Other supplies in food stuff are measured out the same way. After this is done, the supplies are transported to the front, or near the front, where the field kitchens are located. Here it is again apportioned and distributed, for the cooks have just so much with which to feed so many. The cooking and serving requires still more men.

Next comes the bakery department. The raw materials are delivered to the bakery and the finished product taken away. One can appreciate the size of some of these army bakeries when you know that their capacity is 180,000 loaves of bread a day. This was the capacity of the one from which our bread came, which I visited. When you consider the output of such a bakery you realize that a great number of men are necessary who don't fire a shot and yet are a vital factor in a military organization.

The telegraphic and telephone departments constitute still another important element in the system. They employ a great many men, who are continually putting up new equipment and repairing the old, for the lines of communication must be ready at any instant, as they control the movements of the troops and the fire of the artillery.

Then there are the Dressing Stations with their corps, who attend the injured; the brancardiers (stretcher-bearers) and, somewhat removed from the first lines are the *Post du Succors*, with their attendants and doctors. Still farther to the rear are the base hospitals, and after that the Army hospitals, each with its corp of doctors, nurses and attendants, to say nothing of the ambulances, drivers, laboratories and attendants. [65]



A “Load-up and Getaway”—Wounded for the Hospital

There are the auto parks along different sections of the front, where there are hundreds of mechanics busy on cars of every description undergoing repairs of all sorts, for without these what would become of the camion service when new parts were needed for the auto truck? What would become of the supplies that they convey, and what of the army that needed the supplies?

Think of the number of men necessary for the ground work only around the hangars to serve, say, 3,000 planes (between 30 and 40 thousand men). What a part, for instance, of our soldiers concentrated at the Mexican border two years ago would be used up for just this one seemingly small branch of the army of to-day.

There are other departments, such as Observation, Dispatch Riders, Blacksmiths, Mechanical, Camouflage, Road Gangs, Clerical Forces for each division, Horseshoers, Artillery Supply Caissons, which ~~must~~ be utilized; for many times guns are located off the roads and the auto trucks cannot get through the fields and mud, and so the caissons have to be used, as they are horse-drawn.

Last but not least is the very large and important department—that of the engineers who make and repair the bridges, railroads, gun placements, roadways, and new buildings.

All are most necessary for the success of the army for each has just as an important part as the other, and without the thousand upon thousand of non-combatant men behind the lines the ones at the front would count for naught.

CHAPTER VIII

[67]

MASSING BEFORE VERDUN

In the month of February, 1916, the German Army initiated a drive against the fortress city of Verdun, which in time developed into the greatest battle that the world has ever known. The Crown Prince was given command of the huge forces concentrated here, and offered the opportunity to vindicate himself in the eyes of the people, after having signally failed to occupy Paris eighteen months before.

Men, guns, equipment, and every possible aid were at his disposal and service, with which to make victory certain. The cost in men killed was not to be considered. Vindication after his tremendous blunders was a paramount necessity, and to be purchased at any cost. This policy became manifest at the very outset by the way he hurled great masses of men forward to certain death. It is all now a matter of history.

It has been held by many reliable military authorities that this battle was the turning point of the war, for, with everything in his favor, the Crown Prince had been unable to win. In the first days of the attack on Verdun the success of the Germans was very marked. The reason for this partial success is no secret now—France was not prepared. Regarding the condition of affairs at Verdun on the day of the attack, I have most reliable information from two officers of high rank in the French Army.

The Germans had been massing supplies and men before this city for weeks, in systematic preparation for the attack. They had artillery and shells in plenty. It was not for some time after this concentration had been under way that it attracted the attention of the French—so busy were they on other fronts adjusting the army as a whole to prevailing conditions. When it was discovered that there was undue enemy concentration in front of Verdun, steps were at once taken to combat it, but it was too late for extensive preparations.

That is why Verdun, supposedly the most formidable fortress in France, was gutted and its brave defenders forced back. They were unprepared for the onslaughts and masses of a trained and brutal foe. Under the conditions it is not surprising that the German Army made such great progress.

One of my informants, who is a thoroughly capable military authority, told me just in a few words how he viewed the situation at the time and how most French officers felt when the German attack was in full swing. It was impossible for the French to take the offensive. In the wake of their superior artillery fire, vast waves of German infantry came on. They arrived in droves and congregated in swarms. As far as could be seen in front of the French position the ground was covered with men in German uniforms. [70]

They came so fast and so thick it was impossible for the French to kill them all, though the slaughter was terrible. Yet on they came, and so it was that the French retirement began. Even during the retreat, the rear guard continued raking the German masses with machine guns and tearing holes in the lines of the oncoming infantry. The French fell back to safer ground. These tactics continued throughout the first day, the defenders in each instance holding out just as long as it was safe, but always having to give ground.

Late in the afternoon my informant, who had been from one point to another along the line, reached the town of Verdun itself. There he received orders from the General Staff to take all money from the bank and proceed with it to Bar Le Duc, far away in the rear. This order, so he told me, confirmed his expectations as to what was about to happen. Apparently the city was doomed. The Germans were fast closing in on the city and defeat was in the air. The injured were pouring in so fast it was impossible to attend them or give them quarters. They were laid out in cellars, barns, wherever room could be found, until they could get attention and be carried to the rear.

In leaving town after obtaining the money the officer started to the rear on the main road, but the oncoming traffic was so heavy that the road had to be abandoned. Camions, artillery, trucks, wagons and men filled the road—all bound for Verdun. As they went by he said to himself, "They have come too late." Unending was this stream of supplies, and the order was that nothing was to stop them. If a motor refused to run, camion and all were toppled over into the roadside ditch and the procession continued uninterrupted. After a few days of this unending stream, ever moving up, the ditches on either side were filled for miles with every sort of conveyance and all kinds of supplies.

Arriving at Bar Le Duc that night he delivered the money and securities safely. At dawn orders came to return to Verdun. He and his companion officer were more than surprised, for it seemed impossible that the

city had not fallen, and even then he felt that it would be only a question of time and long before they could arrive. But they started back as ordered. As they proceeded they expected momentarily to be stopped by word that Verdun had fallen—but that word never came.

Much to their joy, upon arriving, they learned that the French had delivered a terrific counter attack and that great numbers of reinforcements had arrived and had been hurled against the enemy. For the immediate present they were holding their own against the Boche. Prospects brightened. News came that further reinforcements would arrive before night, with supplies in plenty. Things began to look more “rosey.” The Germans had captured one position after another, but after being checked for a moment the necessary breathing spell was afforded to the French.

Although the enemy did continue to hammer away there came a time after a while when conditions became equalized between the offense and defense. The French forced the Boche to settle down into siege warfare. If Verdun was to be taken at all it would have to be by a siege and not by storm. Thus did the French wrest victory from defeat, for as each day went by without Verdun falling one more dagger was driven into the heart of the German campaign.

Each day the French held on brought renewed vigor and determination to hold on forever. Every known trick was applied to the situation by the enemy. The “nibbling” process netted the Germans a gain here and there but always the French exacted heavy toll for such advances. Under ordinary conditions the Germans would have given up the Verdun job as hopeless, but it is not an ordinary thing to vindicate a Crown Prince. The House of Hohenzollern cared not how many men were sent to unnecessary death so long as absolute defeat could be obviated.

The great siege of Verdun was well upon its second year when I struck French soil, and it was on its scarred front that my work began, and where I saw my first battle. It was one of the battles that completed the final rolling back that I shall describe, and it was the most spectacular event I ever hope to see. The action was on the front between Ft. Vaux and Ft. Douaumont, which no doubt all are familiar with, on account of the terrific fighting that has never ceased along these particular points. Both sides captured and recaptured each other’s positions many times, as has been told in detail by the press from the viewpoint of many special writers.

When I arrived at Verdun I was immediately ordered up to Flurey. The only thing left to mark the remains of this town was a bell tower, which had been tumbled over, but some fifteen feet of it still stood above the ground. The bell had tumbled into the debris. We were quartered in an *abri* about twenty feet underground. I was at once attracted by the unusual *aerial* activity, there being a large number of French and German planes in the air most of the time. These I watched with great interest, particularly one Frenchman who was jockeying for a position of advantage, from which to attack a two-man Boche plane. Finally he dove for it, but missed. At this instant a fighting plane came to the aid of the Boches, but the Frenchman, by clever manipulation, looped the loop, and soon was on the tail of the newcomer. With his machine gun he soon got in the shot that sent the Boche plane tumbling to earth.

Then began a battle royal with the two-man machine. The French plane was smaller and a great deal faster. It could dodge up and down and sideways so quickly that it avoided the machine-gun fire of the big flyer. Discouraged, the two-man machine turned tail for home; the Frenchman followed. The Germans dived toward their own lines, but a well-directed shot hit their gas tank, and to earth they went in a cloud of flame and smoke.

The victory was complete for the moment, but disaster came quickly on its heels, for when the French plane was almost back in our lines, there came swooping down from a cloud another Boche. My heart fluttered at the sight, for it was plain that the Frenchman was unaware of the new danger. He had slowed up and was leisurely picking his way home. There was no way to warn him of his danger. At the last second he must have discovered his plight for he seemed to turn, but it was too late. The German gun was singing and the next instant saw this brilliant aviator tumbling earthward. I shut my eyes and gasped for breath.

CHAPTER IX

[77]

THE SIEGE OF VERDUN

It was now six p.m. and, although the German shells had been coming in at regular intervals all day, they increased the intensity of their fire now and things were pretty hot, for they were putting lots of big ones over. We felt quite secure in our *abri*, and after an hour the bombardment ceased.

That night we got little sleep, for the French preparatory fire, in view of the big offensive planned for the next day, had increased to such violence it sounded like Hell let loose and running wild.

We were up at three a.m., ready to start at break of day. If possible, the French fire seemed to increase each moment. So fast were the big guns discharging their deadly missiles that it was impossible to distinguish one report from another. It was one vast rumble. However, we did not get away, as word came that the Boches were putting over gas along the road on which we were to travel, and so orders came for us to wait. That gave us time to get a good meal tucked away. It is always good judgment to eat when one has an opportunity, for the chances are that during an attack the rarest thing that one will experience is an opportunity to eat.

It was nearly eight o'clock before we got under way. The road over which we were going was controlled by Boche batteries back of Pepper Hill, and even now we were noticing the shells landing in the roadside ahead and behind us. Camions, dead horses and soup kitchens were in evidence, toppled over into the ditches, but we were not hampered and kept right on going.

In a few minutes we were stopped by a French sentry and warned not to try to go ahead as the Boches were shelling the road in advance quite heavily. We could hear the shells breaking about half a kilometer further on, so we pulled up and stopped here for about thirty minutes. There seemed to be a lull at the end of this time, when we again started forward, but had not proceeded very far when we came to an artillery caisson turned over in a ditch and three horses lying dead in the road. Two of the men attached to the caisson had been killed by the same shell and were lying at the roadside, partly covered with canvas.

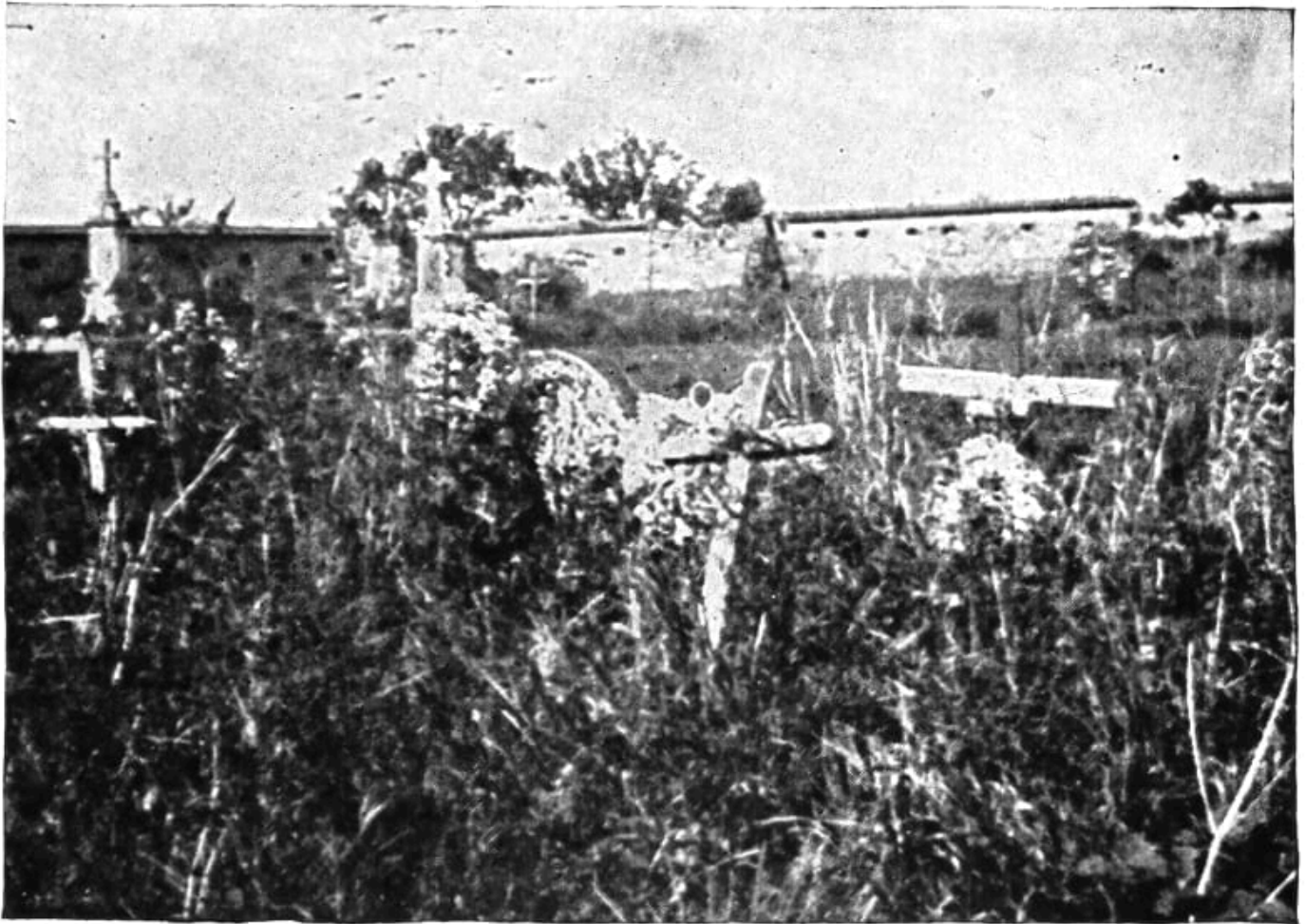
We were held up here for a couple of moments until the Frenchmen pulled the last horse that blocked the road out of the way. Five minutes more travel brought us to a sharp turn in the road, but just before we reached it a shell exploded near us with a sound that convulsed us. A quick application of the brakes was necessary, for we found that the shell had landed in the road just in front of a camion. The three men who were on the camion heard it coming and jumped to safety, but the explosion had torn their motor and the front of their car into bits.

It so happened that this truck occupied the very middle of the road and it was impossible for us to pass on either side of it. Bang! a shell broke at this moment on the hillside about one hundred feet away. Hasty examination and inquiry soon convinced us that we would be held up here for some time. It appeared like a most uncomfortable place to be stuck in, and the developments of the next few moments justified the impression. Bang! Bang! two shells exploded one on one side of the road and the other just ahead. We decided to turn our car around and get away from this spot until the damaged truck was removed. This was finally accomplished, but no sooner had we turned than the shells began bursting in and around the road in the direction we were traveling.

A Frenchman at this moment pointed out the location of an *abri* by the roadside where we were and into which we could crawl until the shelling stopped. Ahead of us some two hundred feet the road passed through a sort of a cut, where the banks came up on both sides high enough partially to protect the car from being damaged, except by a direct hit.



The Bivouac of the Dead



Where the Souls of Men Are Calling

The *abri* was a very welcome place and as long as we had started for it we lost no time in getting there. We had hardly descended the stairs when two Frenchmen came down supporting a third between them. I recognized him as one of the men who had been on the camion. His trousers were red and the blood was trickling to the floor. His clothing was removed at once and a gaping wound was found in his stomach. He screamed with agony.

A doctor, who was present, stepped forward at this moment to examine the man, but quickly shook his head. We knew that meant the wounded soldier did not have a chance. At this instant a shell landed about twenty feet from the entrance to our retreat, and the vibration was so violent that it almost shook our teeth out. A great deal of loose dirt between the beams above our heads fell—some of it into the gaping wound of the unfortunate man lying on the floor. I was horrified and called the doctor's attention to the matter, but he said that it was of no consequence; the man was doomed.

Naturally I began to feel very nervous, for the place in which we were quartered did not impress me as any too safe, being only about fifteen feet below the surface, and should a shell land on it I felt that we would stay there a long, long time.

And the shells did come, one after another. It appeared that they were shooting at the dug-out instead of the road now. The place fairly trembled. The doctor fell to his knees and started praying a sort of chant—"My God, my God. I have always tried to serve thee well," etc. I must confess that I was not enjoying myself any too well, for I remember having picked up an old newspaper which I tried to read, but merely turned the pages over and over and whistled nervously, wondering where the next one would land.

The doctor turned sharply and addressed me. "You fool, have you no reverence, to whistle while a man is praying?" He upbraided me severely. Such experiences, together with the agonized cries from wounded men screaming with pain, were not pleasant. I expected momentarily to see the nose of a Boche 105 come poking through the roof and bury us like rats, but Dame Fortune smiled with favor upon us, for the expected never came. But the cries of the man who had been so badly wounded had now ceased. He had passed away.

After the bombardment lifted we ventured forth, expecting the worst. But there was our car, untouched, just where we had left it. A few moments' work by some Frenchmen got the auto truck off to the side of the road far enough to enable us to pass. I do not ever remember experiencing such profound relief at leaving a place as I was to get away from this bend of the road.

Soon we came to where the French cannon were putting over the usual preparatory fire before the attack. We parked our car in a sort of a gravel pit, which afforded good protection. By this time we had passed several large Howitzer batteries, also some large Marine pieces, and when these guns would fire we could hear their big shells go screaming over our heads on their way to the front. One cannot help wondering how any living thing could exist within the confines of such an inferno.

After about ten minutes we came up before a field telegraphic headquarters, and adjoining was the telephone exchange for this sector of the front. Needless to say, this was a busy place. Here all impending movements shaped themselves, and communications from the General Staff were relayed to the army both by wire and 'phone. All the big guns throwing shells over our heads were controlled by this bureau.

A captain informed us that an attack was to be launched at twelve noon sharp. During the time that we were here I noticed undue aerial activity on the part of the Germans, for there were some twelve or fifteen of their machines in the air over the French lines, and at the same time I noticed six observation balloons floating behind their lines with lookouts alert. It impressed me as rather irregular that the French had not sent up machines to drive the Boche planes back over their own lines in such times as these, for it was now ten-thirty, and, with an attack coming off at noon, they might gather a lot of information regarding the concentrations of the French and take steps to counter the move.

Almost at the moment that these thoughts were running through my mind the captain was called to the telephone, and after a short time returned with the information that the call was an order for the French aviators to proceed against the German observation balloons, regardless of cost, and to destroy them. I asked if they were going after the planes, too, to which he replied:

"No—they are instructed to pay no attention to the aeroplanes until they have completed the destruction of the observation balloons. The planes are to be left entirely to our anti-aircraft batteries."

Turning toward the rear, I noticed the result of the orders just issued, for one after another of the French planes ascended, until I had counted nineteen. All started to maneuver for positions of advantage. The battle-planes ascended to elevations where they could protect the planes that were going after the balloons. Over to the right of our position, within two minutes of each other, the anti-aircraft batteries scored direct hits, and brought two Boche planes tumbling to earth, while overhead a German attacked a French plane and forced it to descend behind our lines.

Time was drawing closer now when we must go forward to take up the position we would occupy during the attack. Already the French fire was deafening, mingled with the terrible roar of German shells. In about twenty minutes we gained the summit of an elevation from which we could see the German trenches that were to be attacked, about twelve hundred yards in front of us, but considerably lower, excepting one slope on the left, where there was a steep incline leading to the top of a small hill, on which was located the second line defense of the Germans, the first being at the bottom.

We could see very plainly the effect of the French fire, for there were shells of all sizes breaking over the German positions—a mass of shrapnel explosives. With the aid of powerful glasses I could distinguish that while there was some barbed wire standing before the German trenches the accuracy of the French artillery had resulted in reducing it so much that there would be easy access for the infantry.

At eleven-forty-five exactly there was not a German observation balloon in the sky. French aviators were now free to engage the Boche planes. In the next few moments two German machines were brought to earth and with them one French plane in combat. Immediately thereafter a German machine fell in flames, brought down by the aircraft batteries. I could not help but think how wonderfully accurate the calculations of the Headquarters Staff had been in planning the aerial operations.

Located in pits on the hill on which I stood were the French 75's, about forty pieces all told, that had been placed there the night before. Not a single shot had been fired from them. Afterwards I learned more in detail the part these guns were to play and the reason for their temporary inactivity.

At twelve sharp, as if by magic, out of the ground arose wave upon wave of French infantry. So spectacular, and so inspiring, was the sight that we stood motionless, our eyes fixed upon the advancing lines

of blue. For several minutes I did not see a man fall. This was due to the fact that the Germans were still in their dug-outs on account of the intensity of the French preparatory fire, still falling on their position.

This did not last long, however. The curtain fire raised quickly and we could observe the shells breaking in the rear of the German front-line trenches, instead of on them, as they had been a moment before. The same instant German machine-gun fire opened, and, just as the French reached the wire in front of the enemy position, I could see blue figures falling all along the front, and while the buzz of the machine guns was inaudible, due to the terrible din of the cannon, I knew by the way the men dropped that the machine guns were doing the mischief.

Notwithstanding the slaughter, more men jumped into the gaps and on they swept. They had now reached the parapet of the German front-line trench and we could see them fighting with grenades and hand to hand. A short while thereafter the supporting columns of the French surged on over the first line in an attack upon the secondary defense. Supporting columns still filed out of the French trenches below. How so many could come from that source was enough to mystify one, but here they were before our eyes, streaming forward in surging waves. I noticed now that the French fire had again been lifted and was being thrown even farther to the rear than heretofore.

The shells, as we now observed them, broke in a clearing that seemed about five hundred yards wide, back of the secondary defense of the Germans. It was on this stretch of ground that all the French artillery on our hill was trained, but as yet not a shell had been fired from them. We could see very clearly that the first line had been captured, for even now the French had started back with groups of prisoners taken from it. We could discern quite clearly at times that they were making good progress against the secondary defense, although the smoke and bursting shells in the area between were very heavy and obscured the view. I glanced toward my left and saw caissons going up on the run with cartridges and hand grenades to repel the counter attack.

The Germans must have anticipated this move, for they put over a terrific fire on the road over which these supplies had to be transported. Just about this time word came back that all objectives had been captured and consolidation started. Instantaneously another rush of caissons went forward with additional supplies, and every gun behind us seemed to be throwing a barrage fire back of the positions captured. There was no lull. The French infantry had captured all that they had started out for,—in fact, all that there was.

An under officer of the battery beside me exclaimed, “Hurrah!” and I turned my head in the direction in which he was looking, to see three regiments of “Blue Devils” charging with bayonets fixed up the steep slope that had until now defied all thrusts. The casualties seemed to be remarkably few for such an exposed position, and before we could realize what had happened the French had gained the crest, and, in the next few moments, had thrown the Boches off the hill.

Orders were now given for every man to take his position. At first I could not understand why these orders caused such activity among the batteries that, up to now, had shown no signs of being in the fight at all—but I was soon to learn. Everyone seemed breathless with impatience, but stood cool and rigid. Finally I heard a shout, “Here they come!”

I shall never be able adequately to describe the sight. Masses of Boches surge forward in counter attack; closer and closer they drew toward the French positions until there was an earth-rending crash and forty sheets of flame burst from the mouths of the cannon beside me.

I was too stupefied to realize what had taken place for the moment, but soon regained control of myself. The guns never stopped a second. Each piece was throwing shrapnel at the rate of twenty-two to twenty-five shots a minute into the oncoming ranks. We could observe quite clearly the shells landing among them and over them, and with each explosion could see gaps torn in their lines and men mowed down like so many weeds. Finally they faltered, and the next instant fell back in disorder to the positions they had left. The ground was literally strewn with their dead when the cannon ceased.

It was not long that we enjoyed this lull for the German batteries started shelling our positions furiously. Hitherto we had not come in for much attention, a shell every now and then was our lot, but now their fire was directed straight at us, and from what we received I imagined that every gun made in Germany was trained on this hill.

Five French guns were completely destroyed, while eight more had to re-locate positions so that they would not be wiped out. Shells of all sizes broke around us, but after a few minutes the shelling subsided.

Notice was now transmitted along the position that the Boches were forming for a second counter attack. Everyone was again in place and in a couple of moments again I heard, "Here they come!" And they did come, and also with them came a renewal of shell-fire on our position, when two more guns were hit. But they were paying a terrible toll for their advance, for their ranks were torn to bits by the French machine guns.

Nor did this stop them—they came on and on until they gained the parapet of the French position, and here fought hand-to-hand for it. But the defenders were the most tenacious. They refused to budge an inch, until, due to superior numbers, they had to give ground. But the Headquarters Staff had been watching for these very conditions, so, like a flash, two attacks were started simultaneously from the right and left, and before the Germans knew what had happened both bodies of the French converged in their rear, and all Germans not killed were taken prisoners.

It is difficult to analyze and describe one's feelings in going through such an attack, and what surprised me most, after it was all over, was the way in which I had lost all consciousness of what was taking place right around me, so intense was my desire to see everything that was transpiring out in front of our position. Even when the shells were coming in close, and particularly during the time when the batteries beside me were being shelled, and even hit, I do not remember paying much attention to what might happen to me, for I felt that all was in the hands of fate.

On our way to the rear we came across batches of prisoners. There appeared to be two distinct classes of soldiers, the first not one of whom seemed to be over twenty, while some here were mere boys and wore looks of terror and dread. I saw one youngster, surely not over seventeen, with his hand tied up, evidently wounded, the tears streaming down his cheeks. I was informed later that these boys were told by their officers that in the event of their being captured they would be tortured, and all manner of things would be done to them by the French. From their expressions one could see that they believed this to be a fact.

The other class consisted of men who appeared to be over forty years of age. Some of them had beards in which gray hairs were largely in evidence. All of them looked very poor and the rations that they had been given surely did not nourish them to any marked degree. The class that was lacking was the strapping young fellow of twenty-two to twenty-eight, the connecting link between mere boys and middle-aged men.

After all these came the wounded. Brancardiers and soldiers were now assisting at the dressing stations. All kinds and shapes of humanity lay in rows, one after another, awaiting the attention of the doctors who pass along the line examining and administering to those who have a chance for life. To one who is not used to such sights it would appear that the doctors are a hard-hearted lot, as they make their rounds, passing by those who have no chance. But here one must realize that the time and attention that a vitally injured man requires, should he have died on the way to the hospital, might have been the means of saving the life of the one who had a chance. Never shall I forget the expression on the faces of men when the doctors passed on to the next. They realized that it was only a question of moments before they made their supreme sacrifice. What must that feeling be? Of course, there are some that lose control of themselves because of intense pain from wounds, but on the whole the patience of these unfortunates is most remarkable.



The Wagon of Mercy Loading Up

After a heavy action all such men as can possibly get to the rear by themselves, or with the assistance of comrades, are forced to make the struggle, for the ambulance is taxed to its utmost in bringing back those who are unable to help themselves.

After the lull came, with the French holding all of their gains, I had the opportunity of going over the whole area of the Verdun battlefield, and the only expression that I can use to fit the scene is that it was a mess. Where, before the attack, there were beautiful trees, nothing now remained. It was impossible to tell or distinguish one shell hole from another, so raked and torn was the ground, now turned into chalk dust. First a shell lands here and throws the ground one way, then a shell lands there and throws it back—a continual churning process—and when the heavy rains come it turns it all into a quagmire of so much mud. There have been any number of instances where French soldiers had gotten into such places and gradually sunk almost out of sight before their comrades came to their rescue. In some cases they were too late to pull the victims out without pulling their arms from their sockets. All that could be done under such circumstances was to shake hands with the unfortunate—before he was swallowed up and sank from view in the lake of mud.

This has happened to horses and even to the light field batteries. It is impossible for one who has not witnessed these scenes to have even a vague conception of such conditions.

Following is an interesting letter portraying an action at Verdun:—

Verdun, — —

To-night I am sitting in the small underground cellar of one of the public buildings of the town, acting as a sort of timekeeper or starter for the cars going up to our most dangerous post, and handling the reserve cars for the wounded in the town itself. I wish I could describe the scene as I see it,—for a strange world is passing before me—Frenchmen, living, wounded and dying.

A long, heavily arched corridor, with stone steps leading down to it; two compartments off to one side lined with wine bins, where our reserve men and a few French brancardiers (stretcher-bearers) are lying on their stained stretchers, some snoring; beyond, a door that [100]

leads to a small operating room, and to the left another door that admits to a little sick ward with four beds of different sizes and make on one side and six on the other, taken evidently from the ruined houses nearby—and one tired infirmier (hospital attendant) to tend and soothe the wounded and dying.

In the bed nearest the door, a French priest, shot through the lungs—with pneumonia setting in—his black beard pointing straight up, whispers for water. Next to him, a little German lad, hardly nineteen, with about six hours to live, calling, sometimes screaming, for his mother, and then for water. Next to him, a French captain of infantry, with his arm shot off at the shoulder and his head lacerated, weak, dying, but smiling; and next to him a tirailleur in delirium calling on his colonel to charge the Germans. The Infirmier is going from one to the other, soothing one and waiting on another, each in turn. He asks me what the German is saying, and I tell him he is calling for his mother. “Ah, this is a sad war,” he says, as he goes over to hold the poor lad’s hand. [101]

A brancardier comes in with a telephone message,—“a *blessé* (wounded man), at Belleville—very serious.” This is a reserve car call. So one slides out and is gone like a gray ghost down the ruined street, making all the speed its driver can—no easy matter,—with no lights. In twenty minutes he is back. The brancardiers go out—they come in again, bearing the wounded man on a stretcher and place it on the floor beside the little stove. One of them, who is a priest, leans over him and asks him his name and town;—then, in answer to what his wife’s name is, he murmurs: “Alice;” while on the other side another brancardier is slitting the clothes from his body and I shiver with pity at the sight.

The surgeon comes out of his little operating room. Weary with the night’s tragic work—after so many, many other tragic nights, he doused his head in a bucket of water, then turned to the wounded man. He looked long at him, gently felt his nose and lifted up his closed eyelid. Then, at his nod, the stretcher is again lifted and the wounded man carried into the operating room, and soon after that, into the little room of sorrows. [102]

In answer to my eager question the surgeon shakes his head. Not a chance!

A brancardier and I gather the soldier’s belongings from his clothes to be sent to his wife, but even we have to stop for a few moments after we see the photograph of his wife and their two little children.

An hour later, as our night’s work was slacking down and several cars had driven up and been unloaded, the infirmier came in from the little room and said something to the brancardiers. Two of them got a stretcher and in a moment “The *blessé* from Belleville” came past us with a sheet over him. They laid him down at the other end of the room and another brancardier commenced rolling and tying him in burlap for burial. As you looked he changed to a shapeless log. Then out to the dead wagon.

Shortly after I went into the little ward again to see how the others were coming through the night, and was glad to see them all quieted down; even the little German seemed less in pain, though his breathing still shook the heavy little bed he lay on. [103]

Through a window I saw that day was beginning to break, and, as I noticed it, I heard the Chief’s car coming in from the “Sap,” and knew the night’s work was over.

CHAPTER X

[104]

A VISIT TO BACCARAT

One day I went into a little general store in Baccarat to make a few purchases. Having just arrived at this sector, and not knowing anything about the place, I engaged the woman who owned the store in conversation regarding the occupation of the town by the Germans. My interest was due chiefly to the fact that this particular store, while located in a devastated village, had, from all outward appearances, escaped damage.

It seems that just after the Boches occupied the town word was given out that Paris had fallen and was then in the hands of the Germans. The telephone and telegraph stations were all controlled by the enemy,^[105] and, of course, the statement was accepted as a fact, for no information could be obtained other than that which the Germans wished to give.

On the fifth day of the occupation a German captain, speaking perfect French, entered the store and inquired for the proprietor. When informed that he was speaking to her, he demanded:

“Madam, do you speak German?”

“No,” replied the woman. “I do not speak German, but I understand it quite well.” The officer then asked if she spoke English, to which she answered “No.”

“Well, if you do not speak it, you surely understand it?” he persisted, but she replied in the negative. The officer thanked her, and, without further comment, turned and left the place. The woman thought this a most unusual occurrence, especially as, without explanation, he left as abruptly as he had entered. Later she learned that he did the same thing all through this district, asking people precisely the same questions and leaving without comment, no matter what their answers were. [106]

In due course the reason for the officer’s visit came to light. The German command had learned that on the day of their defeat in the battle of the Marne, one of the causes therefor had been the flanking movement of the English. This information produced such an intense feeling of hatred that this officer was sent around town to find out if there were any people who spoke English or even understood it. If such were found their location was set down and reported to the German command.

The pressure on the town, however, soon took on such proportions that it was seen that it would have to be given up by the Germans. So the compiled information of the officer’s investigation was reviewed and those people who spoke or understood English were visited by the Torch Squad and everything they owned was burned.

Baccarat was by no means the only place that received this sort of treatment, for one has only to take a trip along the eastern front of France to see a great many similar instances of just what took place at Baccarat. Wanton destruction seemed to be the idea of the German command. Fruit trees were cut down because it would be years before France could grow them again. [107]

Houses were blown to pieces by the artillery when the civil population had left Baccarat. The churches seemed always to be the first thing razed to the ground by enemy fire. Of what military advantage this could be, I have never been able to see, but I have heard a theory advanced that seems plausible. The German command knew that the peasants of France were a hard-working people, occupied with their farms constantly; that they are also a home people and *know* very little of the outside world. Sunday they believed should be set aside for worship and rest. Brought up in this religious way, men, women and children attend church on Sunday with unfailing regularity.

I saw the church in the village of H— — completely demolished by shell fire, with the exception^[108] of the altar and the three life-size statues behind it on the wall. The figures of the Mother Mary and Joseph and that of the Christ in the center were intact with the exception that some German Hun had decapitated the figure of Christ. The destruction of houses of worship was intended to produce in the minds of these peasants the thought—“God is not with us,”—for if He were, they reasoned, “He surely would not permit the Germans to raze our homes and devastate our farms.” This would cause unrest and dissatisfaction in general with the Government, perhaps produce a cry for peace at any price, and that is what the Germans had hoped for. But

what a mistake they have made, for the French peasant will make every sacrifice, even to death, for their country.

CHAPTER XI

[109]

HOMELESS CHILDREN

At Saint Nicholas du Port we rested, waiting for our division to go to the trenches. Almost every night we were visited by Boche aviators who would come over and drop a few bombs to add to our comfort. It was one of the nicest little spots one could find, for we were quartered in an old cow barn from which we had to shovel about two wagon loads of manure before we could put up beds, and when we did not have the Boche flying over us we were busy with the "cooties" round about us.

If ever conditions existed that were cootie producing, we certainly found them here. There was an old tile roof that was perfectly watertight, except when it rained, and evidently intended for astronomical observation. At other times our anti-aircraft batteries, located across the road, when they shot at the Boches caused shell fragments to drop on our none-too-solid roof, and thereby add to the access of small rivulets, to say nothing of the danger of our losing about a yard and a half of hide. But we were visited so many times by the Boches that we ceased to pay any attention to them. With practice one can get used to anything.

One night a little boy came up out of the darkness and asked if he could sleep in the driveway. He said he was very tired and had no place to go. He had been ordered back, for when a regiment goes into the fighting zone no one that is not attached to it is permitted to go along. There are hundreds of these urchins in France that follow the armies and live with them when they are not in the trenches.

This is just what had happened to Lombard, for that was his name. We questioned him very closely and he finally convinced us of his truthfulness, and so we made him comfortable for the night on a stretcher in one of the cars. In a short time he was in slumberland. About an hour later the Boche aviators came over and things were soon humming. The batteries were going full blast when I thought of that poor child out in the car without protection, and unable to get out.

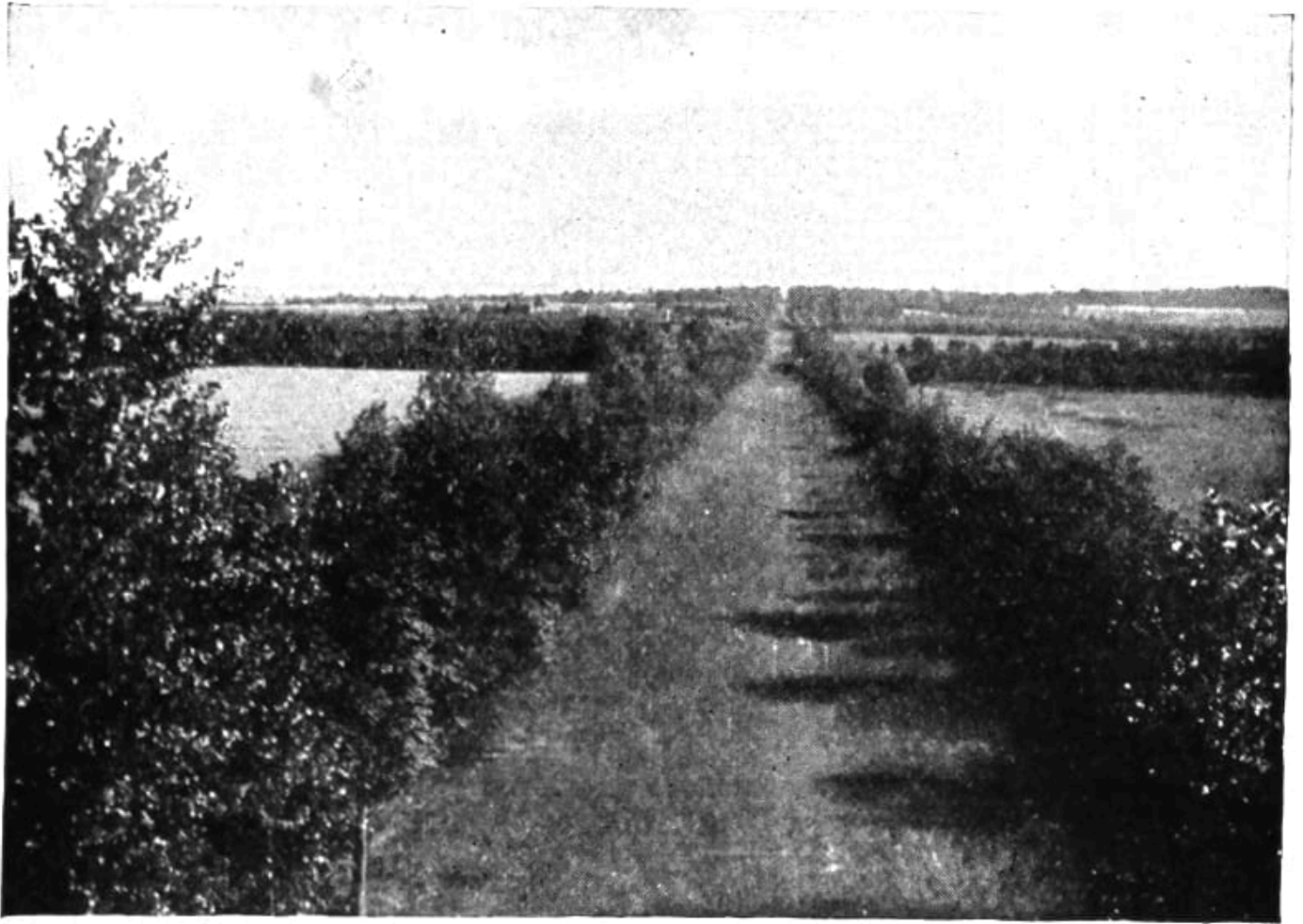
I put on my steel helmet and went out to release our guest. I brought him into the barn and felt much better to know that he was at least sharing the protection we were afforded. The air raid soon ended and all was still. In the morning our guest was given his breakfast and a few francs, the net result of an impromptu collection, but he seemed to like American hospitality and started in to cut wood and carry water for our cook. Someone suggested that we keep him with us to do errands and help generally, but before this was to be considered it was necessary to learn more about the youngster, as we all had valuables that we did not wish to lose, and coming to us as he did no one cared to take chances.

We decided to question the lad and learned that for over two years he had been wandering about from one regiment to another. His home was at a place called Pont a Meusson, and when the place had been attacked by the Boches, his father had been killed and his mother carried off. He had two older brothers in the French Army, but did not know where they were. Thus, after the cross-examining, we decided to let him stay. We felt sure that as long as he was to help the cook and handle food, we might just as well have him clean.

On account of the particular interest I had shown in him, I was allotted the job of seeing that he was cleaned up. After taking up another collection I bought him underwear, a clean shirt, and socks. There were miscellaneous donations like handkerchiefs, ties, towels and soap, so our guest was now ready for the bath. We had some water heated, into which we put a disinfectant to help matters along, for I don't think he had had a bath since he left home. It is hardly necessary to say that the bath was, at least, a partial success.



A Camouflage Road Made to Order



A Natural Camouflage Road

He seemed more than grateful for what we had done for him and all went well until we were ordered to the front with our division. Then it looked dark for Lombard, for we must go into the fighting zone and he would not be permitted to follow. But he seemed so distressed and forlorn that we tucked him away in a camion and took him with us. We bought him a little uniform, and, when we left our division, the American boys who came to take our places gladly took him in charge. We were sorry to leave this little fellow, for he had become a part of our daily life.

It is unfortunate that all the little children that follow the armies can not be taken care of in some such way. There are thousands of them straggling in the wake of the troops over there and they have no one to consider their comfort or safety. What will become of them, beaten from pillar to post day after day, with no one to put out a helping hand. This is a problem for the women to solve, since the men are occupied with other things and have no time to adjust the matter.

CHAPTER XII

[115]

AFTERNOON TEA

One day in my turn I went out on service to the small town of B—. The front-line trenches were located just outside the village. Upon our arrival, shortly after noon, in this town we obtained our meal from a soup kitchen that was tucked away in a sort of a driveway between two demolished houses. It was an ideal location for a soup kitchen, for, from all outward appearances, no one would ever think that this desolate spot would be picked out or utilized by anyone for any purpose whatsoever. After eating we started out for the post. This was the first time we had gone up to the front-line trenches covering this particular sector of the front.

After we had proceeded some three hundred yards, we came to a place where the trenches passed through a small clump of woods, in which was located one of our advanced artillery observation posts. Here we were met by a sergeant major, who informed us that we had better exercise a great deal of caution in our advance of the next hundred yards, which was the distance that separated us from our front line. It was necessary to pass through a gulley and the trench we were in was only shoulder high. The Boche trenches were so close to our front line that the enemy, by posting men in the trees behind their lines, were in a position to observe what transpired in the gulley, we were about to enter.

We climbed out of the trench, and, with the aid of field glasses, carefully scrutinized the taller trees to ascertain whether or not the Boche at this time was on the lookout. As we did not see anything that attracted undue attention, we decided to take a chance and proceed.

Crouching, we advanced some fifty yards. In passing one place that was particularly low, we were observed and the next second brought a hail of machine-gun bullets which kicked up the dust all about us. In front of us, some fifteen or twenty feet away, I noticed another spot where the side walls of the trench did not afford much protection and at the same instant, or just long enough for a man to proceed from one opening to another, came a stream of machine-gun bullets in front of us.

It was a case of being between the devil and the deep sea; all we could do was to remain in the position where we were protected. We finally decided that by crawling on our hands and knees we could get past the second opening. This we did without being observed and the last we heard of our sniping Boche friend was a few shots intermittently fired in the hope of picking us off.

Arriving at the front line, we proceeded along the machine-gun positions, and, finally, entered a small communicating trench which led into the lieutenant's dug-out. We descended and found our friend seated at a table, pondering over military maps and familiarizing himself with this particular sector which our division had just taken over. While we were conversing, one of the under officers reported the completion of a "*Petit Post*" (listening post). The lieutenant inquired if I would care to accompany him in looking it over. Of course I would.

The general direction we took immediately impressed me as being toward the location of our Boche friend, who was planted in a tree based upon the angle that the machine-gun bullets came from. But we did not have to give much consideration to him, as the side wall of our trench nearest to his position was over six feet high and afforded complete cover. We soon arrived at our destination—sixty feet from the Boche front line.

The instruction completed, two soldiers were stationed here and became a part of the defense of this sector. We were soon on our way to the rear. We passed through the gulley where we had been held up on the way out without attracting any attention. Arriving at the town of B—, we obtained our tinned meat with four large potatoes, sought a quiet spot and built a fire to prepare our evening meal.

Suddenly we were startled by the hum of a shell, as it passed over us and burst in a field just beyond. Then came a second, which burst closer; then a third. My companion and I looked at each other in amazement—then, thinking that the smoke from our fire was the cause of the shelling, we quickly stamped it out and poured water on the spot where our spoiled dinner had been sending up delightful odors only a moment before. We ran as fast as good legs could carry us into an old house near by that afforded better protection in the event of a shell breaking near us.

The shells kept coming for about ten minutes, then stopped. Cautiously, we returned to where our fire had been and were considering the possible salvage when the hum of a motor attracted our attention to a Boche

aviator flying directly over our heads. We were only about five hundred yards back of our first-line trench, toward which the Boche plane proceeded. It went directly over the trench, swooped down and raked it from one end to the other with machine-gun fire. Circling back, he returned as far in the rear as we were and then again made a run for the front line to open up with his machine gun as he dived for it.

In the open we afforded him a fine mark, but each time as he flew back toward us we saw to it that there was a brick wall between him and ourselves. By this time he had attracted the attention of our anti-aircraft guns and they began shooting shrapnel at him as he circled, and the machine guns in our front-line trenches also shot in our direction as they followed the flyer to the rear. As the shrapnel and pieces of the exploded shells fell like rain around us, we decided to give up our supper as a bad job, and went to sleep hungry that night.

We walked up the street and passed the *Post du Succors*. The stretcher-bearers had begun to bring in the wounded. One man had lost most of his head. Accustomed as I was to such scenes, the sight of this man's condition was the last straw in the way of gruesome experiences, and I was glad to get away and to bed.

CHAPTER XIII

[122]

“PETIT POST”

Out where the night seems the blackest, where one is unable to see his hands before his face, and where, in many instances, due to close proximity of the enemy trenches, one is compelled to be as quiet as a mouse, there is located in a shell-hole or the like is the *Petit Post* (or listening post), which is employed by all armies engaged in carrying on modern trench warfare.

Out in front of even your own barb wire, with no form of protection from the enemy, two men must be constantly on watch, in order to send up signals in the event that Fritz decides to come over with his nippers for the purpose of slashing a passage in the wire that his men may come through quickly in order to prevent the machine guns from collecting too much toll. It is necessary for the men at the post to lie flat and listen for the nip of the wire clippers. If this comes, it is their duty to signal the front-line trench, and, with star shells, the machine-gunners can discern the enemy and put the finishing touches on the wire-clipping party.

The end generally comes before they even get started. As soon as these men know that the enemy are over, in addition to sending up their signals, they throw out six or eight hand grenades, and then run back to their trenches as best they can and assist in the defense in the case of an attack. But the thing to imagine is lying out there in the rain and mud with absolutely no protection, the wind cutting to the marrow and moaning mournfully as it sweeps over “No Man’s Land,” whistling through the barb-wire entanglements. The night seems just that much blacker after the star shell dies out, for such is the blinding effect on the eyes.

There have been many instances where enemy patrols have stumbled right into these little listening posts while they are on patrol duty in “No Man’s Land,” and other instances have been known where one patrol would be walking side by side with an enemy patrol until someone would happen to discover the fact and then there was always a fight. A few exchanges of shots, a few thuds from the swinging of butt ends of guns and all was over in a few moments.

Picture yourself on such duty where even a whisper will bring you a present in the form of a hand grenade, and when there are no wire-cutting operations on, or enemy patrols to bother you, it rains, and you wallow in mud like an animal with your knees knocking together, and your clothing so wet that it sticks to your body. But this is very important work and must be performed. Two lives out there may mean the saving of hundreds in the trenches.

All such operations as cutting the wire and patrol duty are carried on under the cover of darkness, with only the intermittent star shell, which is sent up like a rocket to impede the work. When these are in the sky it is necessary for everyone between the trenches to lie flat on the ground because a man standing with this light on him would be a mark for the enemy sniper.

I have known of instances where men on patrol duty have been shot early in the morning while inspecting the wire, and, falling over, hung there entangled in utter helplessness. The light coming on prevented their comrades from rescuing them and they lay there for days at a time with the German machine guns trained on them. Once in a life time on *Petit post* is enough—an abundant sufficiency.

CHAPTER XIV

[126]

BADONVILLER THE MARTYR

In the foothills of the Vosges Mountains just inside the Lorraine border is the site of what was once a peaceful village. This village suffered the most terrible devastation of any along the eastern front in France. Not only the town but also the civil population received such treatment at the hands of the Boches that it is beyond my powers to describe the atrocities that were committed. But I shall endeavor to set forth some of the outstanding facts in order that the reader may understand why this village is now known as “Badonviller the Martyr.”

When the German Army invaded France from Lorraine this peaceful little village lay in its path, and, after sharp fighting, was occupied by advance troops of this army.

The enemy entered the town at three o'clock in the morning and marched five abreast all through the day and long into the night—a continuous stream of men that never paused. On they went to the next village, Roan L'Etape, and in its turn that village suffered even a worse fate than had Badonviller, as the resistance by the French here was greater, hence the destruction was to be greater. At this point, the German command allowed free sacking, and applied the torch. The homes of the inhabitants were burned and destruction of things and pillage in general permitted, even though of no military value whatever.

In this town the German officers caused to be written all over the altars of churches, public buildings and store fronts the words “Capute Ramberviller,” the name of the next village in the path of this army. This meant that not a stone should be left unturned and the torch applied to every home, store, church or building of any kind. There was a reason for this, a German reason.

During the Franco-Prussian War, over fifty years ago, the civil population in this village of Ramberviller turned out to assist a handful of French soldiers in holding back some crack Prussian regiments until the French reserves could come up and defeat them. Fifty years of grievance, and this was their opportunity for revenge.

Think of revenge on a people most of whom were unborn at the time because their grandfathers defended their homes from pillage a half century before! But the stories of atrocity that had been handed down were borne out by the new generation of German soldiery, the flower of the German Army of to-day.

Now this village happened to be the next in the line of march, but the French had anticipated what was in the heart of the Hun and the French Headquarters Staff, knowing what would happen to this town if captured, decided to make a stand against the invader between Roan L'Etape and Ramberviller. And here history repeated itself, for the glorious poilu of France administered a smashing defeat to the invading army, and Ramberviller was again spared. But not without the toll that always attends heavy fighting.



Bombing the Hun

To-day the fields and the woods are filled with crosses, black for the Allamand and the Tri-color for the French. Thirty-five thousand men fell in the fighting before this village. From this point the French kept pushing the Boche back until they got them out of Roan L'Etape and finally back to Pexonne, just outside of Badonviller.

As the Germans were falling back they used the upper part of a house in this town as a hospital for officers—one large room, and a smaller one adjoining. The smaller of the two rooms was used as an operating room, while the larger one became a ward where the stretchers were placed on the floor. In the small room was a window looking out on to a little courtyard, and, as the arms and legs and hands and feet were amputated, they were thrown out of this window into a pile on the ground floor. The woman who owned the house was forced to assist wherever her services might be required. After the elapse of several days, she requested the privilege of cleaning up the little courtyard of its human debris. For reply she was told by a German surgeon to mind her own business, or she might ornament the pile also with her “filthy French carcass.”

The brancardiers, or stretcher-bearers, of the German Army were bringing in officers in numbers as the fighting increased, and it so happened that in the ward to which I have alluded there was no more room, being filled to its capacity, except in one corner where a young French boy was stretched out, his leg amputated at the thigh. As the last German officer was brought in and it was found there was no room for him, two Boche stretcher-bearers lifted the French boy up and threw him out of the second-story window into the street below, where, needless to say, he died very shortly.

To give you the history of just one of the families here it will be necessary for me to go back to the first attack by the Boches on this village. A young boy nineteen years old, the son of the mayor of this town, was shot and mortally wounded while defending the village from attack. He was carried to his home and laid at his mother's feet, where he soon died. (Number 1.)

The following morning, with her son dead in the house, the mother stood at her gate weeping. The Boches were filing through the streets in front of her home when a German officer took notice of her. He stepped out of the ranks, and, as he approached, inquired why a woman should feel so badly at seeing the glorious soldiers of the Kaiser marching by triumphantly, and when she replied, “You have killed my boy,” the officer drew a revolver and shot her dead. (Number 2.)

In the house we have described as used for a temporary hospital, on the first floor was located a large room used by some of the German officers as a Headquarters. This room had two large windows looking out upon the street. A little boy nine years old, walking down the road, was called by one of the officers sitting at one of the windows and given a pitcher in which to bring some beer from a neighboring café. The child returned in a few moments with the beer, which he handed to the officer, and, for some unknown reason, the officer lifted him by the collar into the room and shot him.

As the child fell mortally wounded, he was picked up bodily and placed on a red-hot stove used for heating the water for the operating room upstairs. The odor issuing from the burning clothing and flesh soon brought the doctor to the head of a small staircase on the second floor. "What is that smell?" he demanded, and the officer who had placed the child on the stove replied, "Doctor, we are preparing your dinner." Whereupon, the doctor shouted, "Take that damn stinking thing off of there, as the smell is coming upstairs and it will make somebody sick." Thereupon, the body of the boy, now dead, was taken from the stove and thrown out of the kitchen window onto the pile of arms and legs in the courtyard. (Number 3.) [133]

Four days later a young girl was carried off by the Boches, as they were evacuating the city through pressure from the French, who had, by this time, so increased in number that the Germans saw that it would be impossible to hold the village. What became of this girl no one can say, but from what I know of a great many other cases I believe it would have been much better for her had she been killed in the streets than to have suffered the fate that I am sure must have been hers. (Number 4.)

Her father, who was the mayor of the town, protested to the German command regarding the treatment his family, as well as the women and children of the town generally, had received, whereupon he was tied hand and foot and mutilated, being told at the same time that this would refresh his memory whenever he had any thought of interfering with the supreme command of that particular army. (Number 5.) The total of the family.

The French pressure now becoming too heavy, the Boches were unable to withstand it, and started a systematic sacking and demolition of the village. Barricades were thrown up in preparation for street fighting; not even the dead were held in reverence, for trenches were dug through the cemetery and the bodies and skeletons were thrown up to become a part of the embankments and the headstones lined the parapets, behind which the barbarians would fight.

I have related the happenings that have taken place in only one home and in one village. I have occupied the room described herein as the officers headquarters and prepared meals on the same stove. There were many such families, there were many such operating rooms, and there were many women known to be alive that were carried off by the Boches. It is hard to understand how such things are possible, but that is why this little town is now known as "Badonviller the Martyr."

CHAPTER XV

[135]

“SNIPERS” AT WORK

The “sniper” of the present war would have been called a “sharpshooter” during the war of the rebellion. Such men are most expert in the use of the rifle and seldom miss their mark. Many of them have now become proficient in the use of the modern machine gun for the same class of work, that of picking off the “lookouts” on the firing platforms of the opposing trenches.

Most everyone has heard of the game bird known as the snipe. They are very small and hard to see, usually blending with the landscape and shrubbery. When it is said of a man that he can “hit a snipe with a rifle at two hundred yards,” the last word in praise of his marksmanship has been said. Thus the term “sharpshooter” has been displaced by the word “sniper” by reason of the American love of brevity.

The “sniper” of to-day is no less than a picked marksman whose trained eye is both keen and tireless. The “lookouts” of the trenches may well be wary of him. They know he is always on the job and that his far-seeing eye, with the aid of the globe-sights through which he constantly peers in search of his prey, is ever on the lookout. He knows the hatred in which he is held and that once captured no punishment is held too cruel for infliction upon him.

There was one place in our front line where the trench was shallow and a man of ordinary height would have been exposed from his shoulders up had it not been for two boards twelve inches wide that had been placed there. The two ends that came together were not sawed straight and left a V shape where they joined. Some sand bags were placed in front of the opening between the two boards, but the V was left partly uncovered, which enabled the Boche to peer through. The opening was so small that it was impossible to see a man and get a shot at him before he had passed.

In front of the German trenches at this point was a willow tree that had been pruned for the willow industry. This means that when the tree grows up to the required height the main trunk is cut away and the stump sealed. Then the dwarfed tree starts sprouting, “shoots.” This keeps it short and bushy. Such was this tree. From within it a man could observe the top of a helmet in our trench on either side of the V-shaped “peep hole.”

This was just the knowledge that the Boche wanted in order to make use of the bad joint between the boards. A man was placed in the willow with a machine gun, which was strapped securely into the fork of the tree so it would not shake. It was trained on the V hole between the two boards. The gun was so fastened that it did not have to be aimed, for each time it was fired the ball would go straight through the V. [138]

One of the boys in the French trench unknowingly exposed himself and was found dead with a bullet through his brain. There was nothing to cause any other thought than that he had carelessly looked over the top.

Later that afternoon a sergeant, in line of duty, was going along the same trench inspecting the machine-gun positions. Three or four shots were heard and he was found dead with a bullet through his head. While mystifying, this second death did not reveal the truth. The sergeant was tall and his death was laid to this fact. However, the French lieutenant did know that whoever was doing the shooting was no amateur, and gave orders to his men to be especially cautious, and it so happened that no one else was hit that day.

Next morning, nevertheless, brought renewed activities, and among the first casualties was the death of a French boy who was killed at the same spot by a bullet through his head. This brought about an investigation, which disclosed the V-shaped opening between the two boards. A sand bag ended further trouble from this source, but the location of the “sniper” was yet in order. A Frenchman at a machine-gun position thought that he had noticed smoke issuing from the willow tree. It was decided to keep careful watch on it and send a scouting patrol out that night. As soon as it was dark enough the men started out and soon found the Boche tucked away in the tree with his gun. Needless to say, no time was wasted on him, several bayonet thrusts serving to end his activities as a machine-gun sniper.

In another location there was a little brook just behind the line, and, during the summer, the boys would go back about thirty yards and fill their canteens with fresh, cool water—and sometimes they failed to return. When found they would be lying dead in the brook, which was only a few inches deep.

The roadway on the side nearest the Boches was eight feet above the brook and everywhere else perfect covering was afforded, yet every once in a while someone was bagged here. Finally a young fellow, who was preparing to fill his canteen, before doing so dropped to his knees to take a drink from the stream. Just as he did this he heard three bullets whistle over his head and splash in the brook some distance ahead, which disclosed the fact that the Boches were shooting from a position over five hundred yards away through a culvert in the road. When the target showed through this culvert several bullets sped on their way. The act of stooping over had saved the young man's life.

CHAPTER XVI

[141]

“KAMERAD!”

The word *Kamerad* has come to possess a significance not at all in keeping with its original meaning. On the western front the French and English have probably solved the problem of what to say and do when greeted by this well-known form of Boche salutation. Picture to yourself two trenches filled with soldiers, a barbed wire in front of each and “No Man’s Land” stretching out endless between the two. French cannons in the rear are hammering away with remarkable precision, dropping deadly shells into the German lines, and all machine guns on the French front-line parapets manned and ready for business. At the same instant hands go up in the German trenches and soldiers climb out on top with the shout of “*Kamerad*” on their lips. Their arms are extended over their heads in token of surrender. They have no rifles and no side arms, nothing with which to attack and only the expression of joy upon their faces.

At this moment a battery of machine guns are trained upon them and ready to wipe out the handful of Germans in less than five seconds, but not a shot is fired as they advance. Men in the French trenches go so far as to expose themselves in order to assist the surrendering enemy on their way to the rear as prisoners of war.

Suddenly, at a distance of twenty feet, the hands of the Germans dive into their pockets and each man cracks the cap on two hand grenades, and, at this distance, throws them with deadly accuracy all along the machine-gun positions in the French trench, killing or wounding all the occupants and disabling their guns, thus allowing their own infantry to cross “No Man’s Land” without danger.

Does not an episode of this nature afford us some substance for a moment’s reflection? Suppose you had been one of the occupants of the French trench and had escaped injury, and the following week you were again detailed for duty in the front-line trench. Also, suppose you were at the trigger of a machine gun when a handful of men climbed out of a German trench yelling “*Kamerad*.” Now what do you think you would do? You bet you would.

On a certain night when one could hardly see six feet away, a French patrol was sent through our wire into “No Man’s Land.” Headquarters had information to the effect that the German division in the lines opposite our position had been changed, and the patrol was to learn just what division had taken its place. To do this it was necessary to capture a prisoner and search him, for all men carry numerals on their uniforms as well as certain papers, which, even though they be of a personal nature, serve to identify them. I might here point out to what extent such data is of military importance.

French, English and German troops in their three years of war know from direct contact on different sectors of the front just which regiments of any army are “shocking” or attacking troops, and which are what we term “holding troops,”—used merely to defend trenches after they are captured. If a man is identified as belonging to a division of “shock troops,” great precaution is taken by the different commands against what may be considered a certainty. Prepare for an attack—that’s the rule. If he is merely of a “holding” division, there is not so much to worry about.

This is what happened that night. The patrol was instructed to capture a prisoner if possible and bring him in. Just after dark two young French boys were posted in a shell hole in “No Man’s Land” in front of the French barbed wire to await events. They felt quite secure of being observed from the enemy parapet, when star shells were sent up. They stayed in this position for quite a while.



French Infantry Enroute to the Trenches

At the expiration of a half hour three figures appeared in front of them, all walking cautiously. Suddenly they stopped, talked very low for a few moments, then separated. Two men went one way and the third in exactly the opposite direction, which was toward the position that the boys occupied. This man was instantly covered and could have been shot down had either of the French boys so desired, but he was allowed to proceed, and, at the proper time, was challenged and commanded to halt. The German, knowing full well that rifles were trained upon him, and that he had not the slightest chance to escape, called out clearly:

“Kamerad, Kamerad.”

He was commanded to throw up his hands and advance, which he did. It was impossible to note that slung behind his uplifted hand was a Leuger revolver. On he came until he could discern both figures very clearly, and, at six spaces, fired pointblank at each.

One was wounded so badly that he died soon after, but the other so slightly that he was able to get in one good smash with the butt end of his gun, which laid the Hun low—then dragged him into a French trench.

The prisoner proved to be a German lieutenant, and, under pressure, gave out some valuable information. This goes to show that the code of surrender is violated by German officers, as well as by their men, and, while the two Frenchmen were instructed not to shoot, but to bring in a prisoner, no man is expected to take the least chance with an enemy. No bullets are fired nowadays just to wound an opponent. They are all fired for one purpose only, that is—to kill.

Another incident which impressed me as being a very sad one happened during an attack in the Somme, to a young lieutenant attached to the same division as I. He became noted for his fearlessness and daring. He was found in the very hottest of everything and always at the head of his troops in a charge across “No Man’s Land.” Not only did he enjoy the confidence of his men, but also the confidence of the government, which, in recognition of his bravery, decorated him with the *Croix de Guerre* (French War Cross) and the *Medaille Militaire* (Military Medal), two of the highest honors that can be conferred upon a soldier.

One day, after a very brilliant charge, his company captured the Boche front-line trench, and, as he was jumping down into the trench, he saw a German officer lying prostrate, his head and face covered with blood. At this instant a French poilu ran up and was just about to put the finishing touches on the German when the latter began yelling "*Kamerad! Kamerad!*" The lieutenant waved the poilu aside as the man seemed very badly wounded. He then asked the German if there were any men in a certain dug-out, pointing to one leading off from the front-line trench. The officer replied "No, but there are some in that one," indicating another located down a small communicating trench toward which the lieutenant forthwith started, revolver in hand. But he had no sooner turned his back when the Boche officer rolled over on his side, whipped out a revolver, and shot him through the back, killing him instantly.

Bravery had brought this French lieutenant the highest honors in the army, and human consideration for a dying man brought about his own death.

Kamerad!—how I loathe that word in its German significance.

In another attack the French Infantry went forward and captured all the front-line Boche trenches on a certain sector. The artillery fire that had been directed against their trenches and the lines behind them rendered it impossible to deliver rations to their men in the front line for over two days before the attack.

This situation, coupled with the terrific strain of the intense artillery fire, had turned them into a pitiful-looking crowd. Finally, two Frenchmen started to bring the German prisoners back to their own lines and at this particular point the German trench was very deep and hard to climb out of. So they foolishly marched them along through their front-line to a place where they could crawl out more easily.

All along in a front-line are boxes filled with hand grenades with which to repel attack quickly. The line of march along the trench was zigzag, making it impossible for the front of the line to be viewed from the rear or *vice versa*, and, as they turned a corner in their line of march, a couple of the Boches dug into one of these grenade stations and killed nine infantrymen before they themselves could be laid low.

Take another instance, one that occurred during the recent invasion of Italy. The Austrian command instructed their troops to do everything in their power to gain the confidence of the Italians, in the hope of fraternizing with them, and when they had succeeded, the command secretly pulled out the supposedly friendly Austrian troops and put in their places German "shock troops," which fell upon the Italians like a stroke of lightning, and murdered them without mercy.

The same thing occurred in Russia, and, therefore, I hope that my countrymen will never make the same mistake. Never take your eye off the Boches. They are not to be trusted under any circumstances. I know that this is a very difficult attitude to assume, but chances should never be taken with men whose officers misuse *Kamerad*, and the terms of surrender. When I read that Germans are made prisoners I wonder why.

CHAPTER XVII

[151]

THE ART OF CAMOUFLAGE

The word camouflage has come into common use both here and abroad and I think it might be interesting to devote a little time to a brief discussion of the different uses of camouflage, or low-vision painting, and to tell you how extensively it is used and where it is most effective.

At the front there are many roads that pass over hills to the rear of the lines, over which supplies have to pass on their way forward,—roads that are within sight of the enemy observation posts, and would prove easy targets for their guns should they be left clearly exposed to view. Many people believe that just because a road is camouflaged the enemy does not know the road exists.

This notion is erroneous in most cases, for they do know that the road is there behind the camouflage, but the object is to obscure from their view whatever is passing a given point. Otherwise it would be easy for the watchful enemy, with glasses, to see whether men were moving forward, or whether shells were being transported for the artillery. With the use of camouflage they are deprived of this data and the knowledge of just when or where on a road to put a shell so as to have it reap a plentiful harvest. Do not misunderstand me when I say that just because a convoy is passing along a camouflaged road that they are safe. Traffic moves along this avenue of supply with some degree of safety.

In some places the road will have camouflage on just one side. In other places it is necessary, in order to provide the proper protection, to put it up on both sides, and in other instances lines of brush are strung on wires every fifty feet or so to break the continuous stretch of road as it appears to an aviator from above.

The method that is employed is that of placing upright, twelve to fourteen feet high along the sides of a road, something not unlike a regular fence around a farm. Along these are strung wires, on which brush and weeds are hung and fastened at top and bottom so that the wind will not blow them down or to one side.

Under ordinary conditions at the front, this form of camouflage affords effective protection, for without it the enemy could shoot at convoys, etc., with some positive knowledge of just what was passing along the roads. One sees the camouflage roads of both sides on a front, knowing full well that men and supplies move along them, but just where they are at the time a shot is to be fired is problematical, and, with this uncertainty before them, only in time of undue activities on the part of either side is any attention paid to them, and then waste or no waste they are raked from one end to the other with shell fire.

Back of the lines at various distances are the batteries, and it is not always possible to locate them where they can enjoy the shelter or obscurity of clumps of woods, so often they have to be located in fields or in other open places. However, a battery is always located so that when firing the flash is obscured to the enemy, preferably behind some little hillock or rise in the ground, so there is never much chance to locate a battery by other means than observation balloons or aeroplanes.

Camouflage is employed here also and covers are so constructed that they hide entirely the location of the battery, leaving no opportunity for the gun to be seen. If a photograph is taken by an enemy aviator, when developed the battery takes on the appearance of an ordinary clump of brush in the picture, and surrounding it are so many just such clumps of brush that there is nothing showing at any particular place to give any information as to just which is a battery.

If a battery is being searched out and great uncertainty exists here, the enemy do take chances in shooting at the different clumps in the hope of getting a hit on a battery. This is where the anti-aircraft guns play an important part in keeping the observation plane up at altitudes where photographs do not give enough detail to reveal too much information, for, should they be permitted to get down close enough, they might be able to distinguish too readily the camouflage from the real.

Low-vision painting is another form used extensively. It is unusual to see a camion (auto truck) or any form of vehicle on the road that is not painted up so that, at a distance, it blends into its surroundings. Whereas, if it were not painted up, it would stand out clearly and the contrast to surrounding conditions would make it a target for the enemy guns.

The same condition exists on water as well as on land. Hence we see so many boats painted up for low vision. This does not mean that they are always obscure to the submarine, but with the mass broken and with the absence of defined contrast with the sky and water, they do not afford such a target to the enemy observing through a periscope. [156]

In the rear of the lines at the front are little huts, in which are stored cartridges and shells. They are built very small so as not to be conspicuous. In all instances the additional precaution is taken by painting these huts so that it is practically impossible for enemy aviators to distinguish them at ordinary heights. One sees back of the lines in many places, in some instances fifteen or twenty of these huts one after the other like a little row of workmen's dwellings, and one might be struck at first with the thought that they could be seen, but the low-vision painting obviates all of this and they are quite safe.

An interesting experience took place at the front recently when two French artists conceived the idea of having some sport with Fritz. Some old canvas, such as had been used to cover wagons, was located and cut up in strips and joined so that they could be rolled up on a pole. Then, with a bucket of paint and several brushes, they set to work painting a railroad track with the ties, rails, etc., as it would look from above. It was painted with the purpose of attracting attention.

After working for some time, they completed quite a stretch of "railroad." When enough was finished they carried their railroad out on a pole and unrolled it, always running it from one small clump of woods to another, so that it would have the appearance of a battery location. It would be left here long enough to attract the attention of some Boche aviator and when he started back in his machine to report the existence of a railroad at this particular location the Frenchmen would roll up their "railroad" and put it away.

In a little while the shells would start coming in right where the "railroad" was. After a short time, or when they imagined the destruction complete, they would stop, then the Frenchmen would quickly unroll the "railroad" again and soon the Boche aviator would be seen flying over the lines to observe the destruction, but it must have been much to his surprise to see it there in the same place untouched. He would then fly back again and as soon as he turned his tail homeward in would come the "railroad"—shortly more shells. This unusual railroad could be shifted from one location to the other at will, and, whenever the Boche were in the air, it always came in for its share of attention, but, unlike most railroads at the front, this one was never hit. [158]

CHAPTER XVIII

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SPIES AND THEIR WORK

For years we have heard of the efficiency of the Wilhelmstrasse, or Secret Service Police of Germany, and everything we have heard regarding them has proved fairly accurate, sometimes even beyond our wildest expectations. The Spy System of the German Government is a wonderful organization, any way we look at it. Since 1870 it has been in the making. Its agents are everywhere, they speak all languages fluently. This enables them to carry on their systematic work of uncovering every fact, rumor, or suspicion that may be of importance to the German Government.

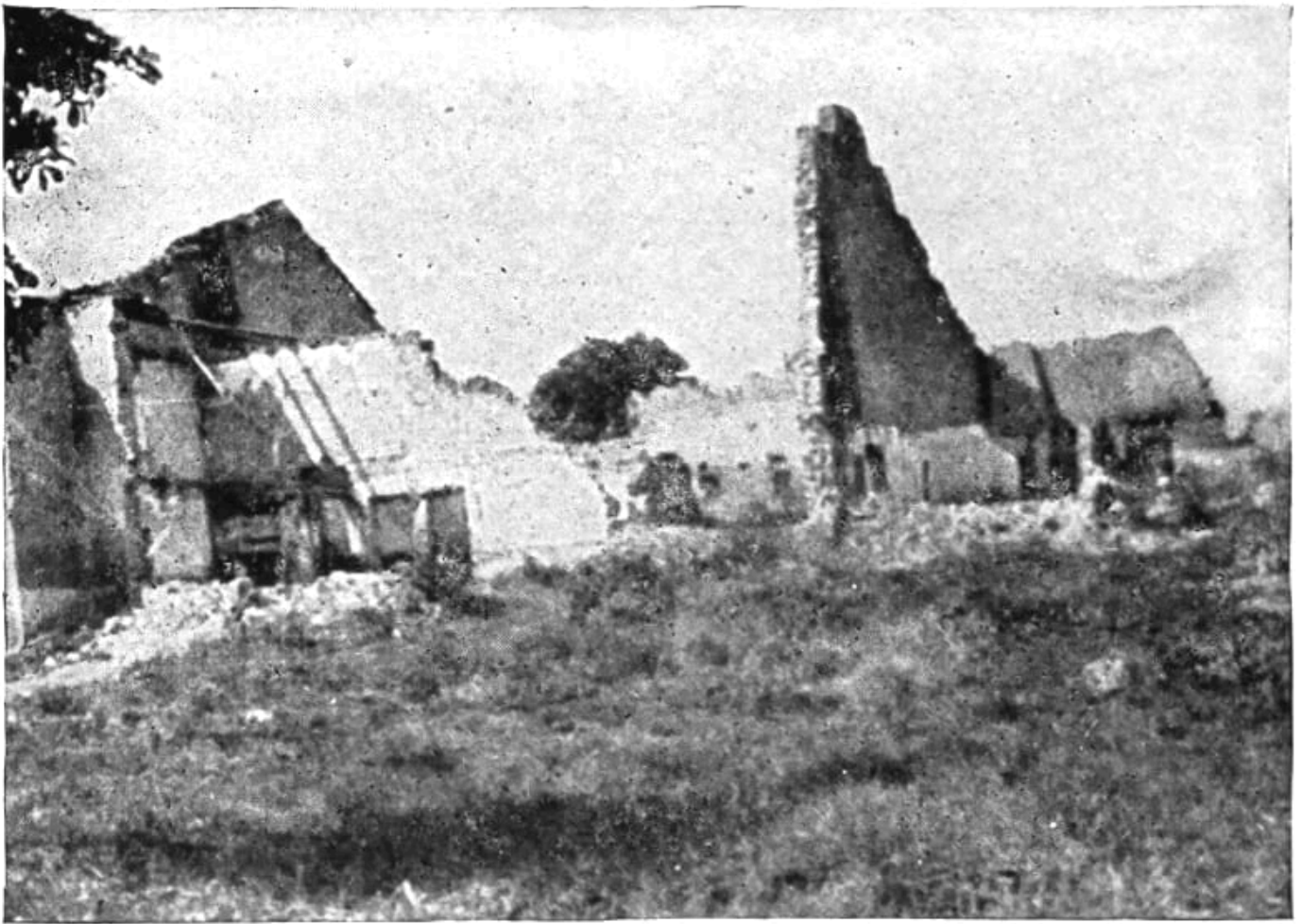
England and France particularly, and all countries in general, have had convincing demonstrations of the thoroughness of German Secret Service activity for many years. Since the war broke out, they have been doing everything in their power to cope with the situation.

Now that we are at war with Germany, it is well to remember that in this country, as well as in those of our Allies, secret agents of the German Government are constantly seeking information. Therefore, one of the greatest injustices the people of this country can do our Government is to impart any information to anyone except a government representative. Our friends who may be inclined to talk too much should be warned in a friendly way to say nothing. We can never tell who is sitting next to us in a train, car, boat, or any other public conveyance, and the little remark seemingly of no consequence, that passes your unsuspecting lips, may be the nucleus around which the spider may weave his web.

There is no reason in the world why your friends or relatives in the American Expeditionary Forces overseas should not be permitted to write you in detail all those things that form part of their daily experience. Moreover, there is no reason for maintaining such a thing as a censor.



Sacked and Burned



Badonviller Destroyed by the Germans

If all mail and information could be delivered into the hands of the ones they are meant for, I am sure there would be no reason for such strict regulations, but there is no assurance that letters will not go astray and information fall into the hands of our enemies. And, besides, there are a lot of people who unconsciously reveal things that are written to them, and in this way information gets out broadcast, which, in many instances, proves most harmful to proposed military operations. Therefore, we have the censor who keeps these matters under control and thereby eliminates a very fruitful source of information from falling into the hands of our enemies.

In France one is particularly attracted by placards on cars, station platforms, and streets, flashing these words, "Teshez Vous," which mean "Close your mouth." In other words, "The enemy is everywhere." [162]

The sooner the people of this country "Teshez Vous," the sooner they will begin to deprive the people who are seeking information of one of their richest sources. Remember the enemy is everywhere.

It is most surprising to find by what dark and devious paths one may be approached when one's information is valuable enough to be required, and the only sure way to keep from dropping threads of such information is to know nothing, and to discuss nothing with people one does not know—we cannot rely even on friends. We all have fool friends.

Just before leaving Paris, for example, I became acquainted with a man whom I remember very clearly as frequenting a certain café, posing always as a Hollander, but for a great many years past a resident of New York City. He manifested a great interest in American soldiers, and I have heard him ask the boys such questions as "How many Americans do you suppose there are now in France?" "How many boys in your camp?" "Where are you located?" "Are you specializing in any particular branch of fighting?" and a great many other questions along the same lines. As a demonstration of his sincere friendship for the American boys, he would say "Let me pay for this check." "Let's have another one for dear old America."

Suddenly he disappeared. I afterwards learned that he had been quietly camouflaged by the police and that he would not be around again soon manifesting so much interest in what America might be going to do.

It is very clear now to most people what took place in the case of a female German spy, a conspicuous figure in Paris, always seen in the characteristic garb of a South American lady. She was never known to wear a hat, and was seldom seen without the typical mantilla, thrown over her straight, black hair. She had plenty of money, a Rolls-Royce always at her command, and everything that would allay the slightest suspicion that she might be an agent of the German Government.

Her game was meeting officers and seeking information from them. Working as agents with her were charming chorus girls from one of the most noted theaters in Paris. It was she who obtained the information regarding the extensive building program of English tanks and forwarded it to Germany. From her jaunty appearance, she was the last one to be suspected, but she turned out to be one of France's most dangerous enemies, and paid the price with her life before a firing squad in a French prison during the early part of last October.

When the Germans advanced on Paris in the early stages of the war, located in the department of the Oise some thirty kilometers from that city was the old chateau Bornel Bon Eglise, where was stationed a French garrison to resist the invader at that point. As the German Army advanced, the French garrison retired to this chateau, in preparation for the stand to be made when protected by its walls. [165]

Everything was in readiness for the attack, when, at the psychological moment, the gates of this castle were suddenly thrown open and the Boches captured the chateau with very little trouble. Upon investigation it was afterwards found that the gatekeeper, a trusted employee for many years, had been planted here for just such a service should the occasion ever arise when it would be necessary for someone to accomplish just the thing he did.

Such conditions can, without stretching one's imagination very far, be laid at the door of German Secret Service Agents. That is the kind of preparedness the Germans had been fostering for forty years.

In a little village on the eastern front of France this year two soldiers on observation duty in a front-line trench noticed a small white dog roaming about "No Man's Land." They followed his trail with much interest, and the last seen of him he was going under the French barbed wire toward the rear of the lines. [166]

Nothing was thought of the wanderings of this dog until two nights later, when the same two men who happened to be on duty again observed the same dog crossing "No Man's Land" and crawling under the German wire. This aroused their suspicion, and, as they came off watch, the incident was reported to the lieutenant, but he thought nothing of it, as with all armies there are mongrel pets belonging to soldiers. However, a few nights later the same dog was again seen back in the French lines. This caused enough curiosity to bring him under closer observation, as it was quite unusual that a dog should frequent "No Man's Land" with such regularity.

That same night, in the glow of a star shell, our canine friend was seen wending his way toward the German trenches, and so orders were immediately issued to all the front line not to shoot the dog, as the command wished to investigate the haunts of the animal that seemed to choose "No Man's Land" as his favorite playground.

A few nights later our canine friend again appeared, and was seen crawling under the French wire and jumping over the front-line trenches, on his way back toward a little French village behind the lines. A couple of soldiers were detailed to follow him, which they did at a distance not calculated to alarm the dog, who walked along at a business-like gait until the outskirts of the town was reached. Then, with the suddenness of chain lightning, the dog bolted around a demolished wall down a side street and was lost to the view of his observers. It was impossible for his pursuers to give any information as to what had become of him.

It happened that he was again seen that same night, returning under the wires and disappearing behind the German line. These facts called for carefully laid plans by the Division Headquarters to intercept the dog in order to know more about his peculiar movements. After waiting a few nights he was seen coming for the French lines and was allowed to pass unmolested, several men having been secreted along the line that he was now known to travel up to a certain point. On came the dog in his business-like way until, again reaching the outskirts of the city, he broke into a run at top speed, dodged around tumbled-down dwellings, side streets, over walls, and again was lost to view. But on his return he was caught, and tucked away in his collar was a map drawn very small, but showing in detail the positions of some of the French batteries behind the lines at a certain point.

The paper was put back in his collar and the dog allowed to proceed on his way, for if he returned to the German lines minus this paper it would immediately cause suspicion that he had been interfered with and

might end his visits before the one sending the information could be caught. Orders were immediately dispatched to the battery mentioned in the communication to change its position. The next day brought the German shells to the exact location where the paper in the dog's collar had indicated this battery to be, but, of course, no damage was done, as the battery had been moved during the night.

A very careful watch was now kept for this dog, and, a few nights later, he was captured and a very fine thread tied to his collar in the hopes that it might be traced to the place where the information originated. The dog was permitted to proceed as soon as the thread was securely fastened to him, but when he felt the weight of the thread pulling on his collar he turned and retraced his steps. The thread was broken and the dog released in the hope that he would return for the information, but he balked and was soon back in the German lines.

The return of the dog without information must have caused a change of plans, as the dog did not appear again for several days. Finally he appeared, and in readiness for him was a French police dog, which was immediately put on his trail. The police dog, being allowed to go a little too soon, caught up with the German dog at the edge of the village. Here the German dog had always broken into a run, and, of course, the police dog became excited and downed the German dog in his tracks. Before they could be interfered with, the spy dog was very badly mutilated. Thus ended his visits.

Although merely a dumb animal he seemed to possess almost human intelligence, winning the respect of the French army men. It was not their intention that harm should befall him and they were much grieved that he went back to his own a cripple for life.

Carrier pigeons are employed as messengers in the spy service of the German Army. While in Paris I was with a captain of English artillery who became a very close friend. He related to me the following account of how his battery was sent into action on a certain sector which I know will prove of interest.

On a certain day orders were received from his Division Headquarters to take up a position near the village of R — . The battery responded quickly and occupied the location for two days. It was most noticeable that very few shells came that way. On the morning of the third day quite a little aerial activity was evident, but nothing much was thought of it. The position seemed to be very secure, as it was in quite a heavy clump of woods. But shortly after noon the shells began breaking closer and closer until they got so hot that the position became untenable. Consequently the battery was moved to another clump of woods quite a distance away, where again all was quiet.

Next morning the captain was much surprised to see a peasant with two horses ploughing in the field just back of the new position and also that the Boche aviators were again hovering over the lines. Shortly after noon, as on the day previous, shells began to drop around the new location and in the field behind. It appeared to the Captain that it must be a pretty hot place for a farmer to be ploughing so serenely, therefore, he stepped out of the woods to investigate, but found the farmer had gone. The shells were coming in so close to the battery position that it was again found necessary to move, this time to a very heavily wooded location further on to the right. After the move was completed all became quiet again.

The following morning the Captain observed the same peasant ploughing again in the field and also that an unusual aerial activity had opened near his new location. It seemed necessary to investigate so he went back to the location first occupied by his battery and found a double furrow ploughed behind the old battery position. Further observation disclosed the same double furrow directly behind the second location, and now the third furrow was being run. Sure enough these furrows were signals to the sky pilots, for shortly afterwards shells began to land around the new location, but the peasant was nowhere to be found. On orders quickly given the battery was at once moved back into the original position.

With the morning came the same peasant with his two horses and plough, but he had run his last furrow on this earth the day before. A blow with an iron wrench ended his activities forever. That afternoon enemy aeroplanes hovered overhead, awaiting the new furrow that was never ploughed.

CHAPTER XIX

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LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

MORT HOMME,
August 25th, 1917.

DEAR ED:—

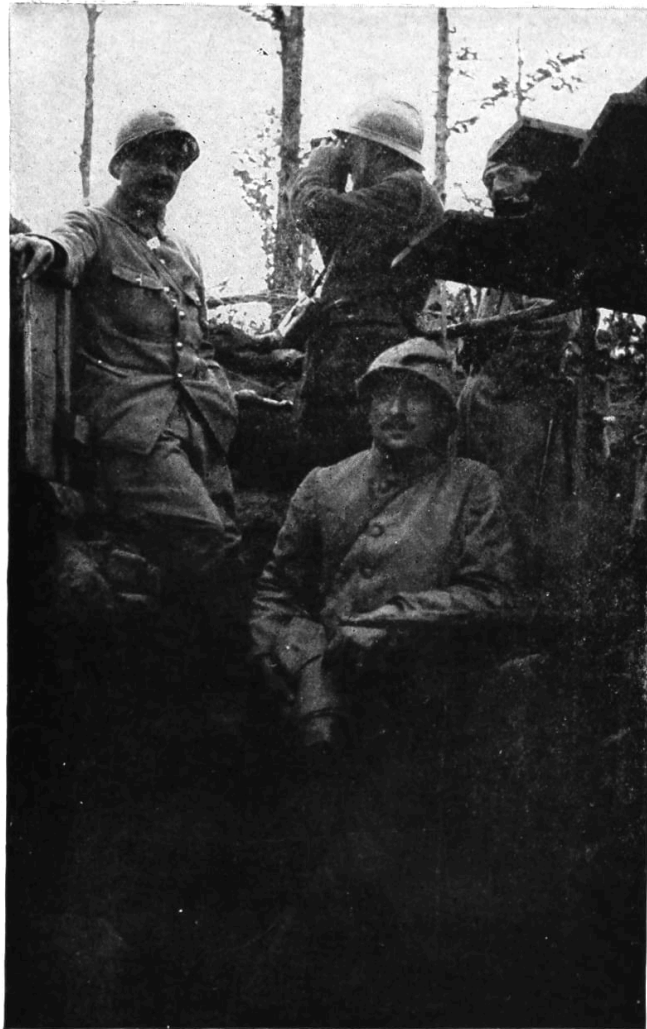
You no doubt think ill of me not to have answered your letter, but I know you will overlook my seeming neglect after you have read this.

Have you ever experienced a feeling of complete disaster when suddenly everything changed and you saw a decent place to get some sleep, and a good hot meal in the bargain? Well, that is what just happened to us after we left “Hell” behind, but, even now, when anyone drops anything, or yells, I find myself taking to cover. No, I haven’t shell shock. I simply cannot fully collect myself.

No doubt by this time you are acquainted with the details of the recent attack at the Bois d’Avicourt, where the French just naturally kicked the stuffings out of the Boches and walked away with such positions as Hill “304,” Avicourt, and Mort Homme (Dead Man). But, even if you are, I know you will enjoy some of my experiences during that fight—so here goes.

After leaving Paris we took the train to Chalons and there we got our cars. The whole section is made up of little Fiats, and so you see we got a good start. We were on our way across country passing through Bar le Duc and on up to a little town called Erize La Petite, about fifteen miles from Verdun. The town was misnamed by someone, for I think they meant to call it “La Petite Dump.” However unfortunate that may be, we remained there for two weeks, sleeping in an old barn, until one night it rained so hard that we swam to our cars and finished our rest, soaking wet. We were all as disgusted as could be when orders came that we had been assigned to the 25th Division and were to move up to join it the following day for the attack, which was to take place three days later. The following day found us crawling up to the town of Brocourt, where the hospital is located. The Boches shelled this village with high explosives that night. A doctor informed me that they did this systematically every night at the same hour.

Morning came and we were ordered up farther front. From the way the shells were coming down on us I thought we were joining the German Army instead of the French. We halted in the village of Reciecourt. I want to state right here that I was perfectly satisfied with the place we had left, and La Petite Dump seemed to me like “Paradise Lost,” for, on our way up to Reciecourt, we stopped four times to wait for the Huns to quit shelling the road ahead of us. Upon our arrival we began hunting for a house to use as a base, but the best we could do was to find one with two shell holes through the roof. We took it just the same.



Sixty Feet From a German Front-Line Trench

That afternoon Singer, who is our chief, and Paul Hughes, our sous-chief, took two ambulances and drove with one man from each car up to the different posts we were to serve during the attack. Joe Widner, you remember him, is my teammate on our car, and I flipped a coin to see which of us would take the ride. I won the toss.

Ten of us got into one ambulance and ten into another. I went with Singer, and as I got in I remember Singer threw the latch down on the back of the car and we could not get out, for it could be opened only from the outside.

Now this was my first experience under heavy shell fire, and I did not relish the thought of being sewed up in this ambulance, unable to get out if I wanted to, for I always have been a pretty good sprinter and I felt if it got too hot I might be able to beat a couple of shells down the road; but, with the door locked, what a chance! As we went forward, we passed several large French batteries beside the road, all of them hammering away at Fritz. The farther forward we went the more numerous the guns, all more or less concealed. The front of the car was open and right ahead of us there came a terrific crash. I heard Singer say, "That one sure came close."

"That what?" I yelled back.

"That shell," he replied.

Then I realized what a cute little place we were locked in, and, believe me, I got sick all over. I felt that my feet were shrinking and my shoes were falling off. My thoughts took on some speed. How gladly I would have changed this dirty shell-riddled ambulance for a Broadway subway. I kept my eyes glued on the floor of the car, with no idea of where we were or where we were going until we jolted around a sharp turn in the road and ran into a fallen tree. Naturally, the car stopped, and Singer opened up the exit and said, "This is the first post."

My release from that car gave me a new lease on life, and I began to take notice of the environment, after making sure that I was still intact. There were five or six dugouts here; in front of one were two men seated at

a table. In front of them was a little plot of ground containing some newly made graves. Over to the right was a gang of men digging a long ditch about eight feet wide and eight feet deep. I thought it was a trench. Mills Averill, however, suggested it was to bury garbage. So we asked, in our sign language mixed with Franco-American French. One of the men looked up from his writing long enough to say, "*Pour l'attack*" (For the attack). Good God, Eddie, it was a grave big enough for a regiment, and just to think that it was for men who at that very moment were alive and in perfect health! I cannot tell you my feelings at this gruesome sight.

At this moment a wagon drove up. The diggers laid down their tools and went over to it. I am sure it was a dead man they lifted out, for I saw his feet on the stretcher, but the rest of the poor devil was in a burlap bag. I did not try to see the rest of the human debris that came out of this death cart. The men at the tables wrote some records, and the ditch received the mass. This was anything but a pleasant experience for green men, and only our first post at that.

We climbed into the car and visited each of the other posts, and as we went along the sights that met our eyes were always worse than at the previous place. As we pulled up in front of what we thought was our last post Singer said there was one more, but we couldn't go up in the car except under cover of darkness. So we started out on our shoe leather, and it was some walk. The mud was knee deep and clingingly affectionate.

Nothing ever seemed quite so good as when we turned our faces toward the rear. That night, in my dreams, there seemed to be all sorts of little mistakes being made, such as planting me in the hole at Post No. 118¹ with the dead men. Tough stuff to dream about,—you can imagine how much rest I had.

The next day Joe and I went on duty. We had to stay through the entire morning of the attack, for all twenty cars were in use. Our post began in order from Reciecourt. Going out were P4, P2, PJ left, PJ right, P3 and R4. There were four cars at P4 and two at PJ right. If a car came down with wounded from PJ, left post, it would stop at P4, and a car would be dispatched from here to take its place. P2 and PJ right were on the same road, so when a car came down from PJ, right, a car would go up from P2. The car coming in always continued on to the hospital. P3 and R4 were worked only on calls, and R4 only at night, for in daylight they would have been blown off the road. It was a sort of muddled schedule, but the shell fire was so heavy that no telephone wires could stand for a half hour. So we made the best of a bad situation.

The French were bringing up guns continuously, all sizes from 37's to large-caliber Marine pieces.¹⁸ They would take up firing positions alongside the roads and fire over our heads. When they let loose the ambulance would rock with the concussion.

We had two runs in from P4 during the night, and at three-thirty a. m. the barrage fire began and it was terrible. We could not hear the Boche shells break. It was all one great uninterrupted roar, made by four thousand cannons. Can you imagine such a thing in that small sector? Joe and I went up to PJ right about four a. m. As we turned a corner we found an artillery caisson that had been hit. The horses lay dead in the road. What had become of the men I do not know, and we did not try to find out, for when we saw that we could just barely get by we kept on going.

As we neared a crossroad we found the shells falling so thick we had to pull up and wait for an opportunity to dash by. It soon came. We did not have to listen for the Boche shells for we could see them break very plainly. Ahead of us was another sharp turn leading down into a little valley at the other end of which was the post. Suddenly a car appeared, running towards us like mad. As it approached we recognized Bud Riley and Eddie Doyle. Bud was driving, his eyes bulging out of his head as he leaned over the steering wheel watching the road. He never even glanced at us. His car was full of wounded and Eddie Doyle had to stand on the running board. As we passed he yelled, "God be good to you fellows for you are going into Hell!"

Joe was driving, and on receiving this news he let up on the speed a bit, for, if we were going where Eddie said, Joe thought we had better take our time about it.

He looked at me and I looked at him. I finally ventured to say, "Cheerful, isn't it?" but Joe must have been thinking of Flatbush. Then we turned the corner and we discovered that Doyle was right. The whole gully was a mass of dead horses and wrecked wagons and parts of human bodies. The Germans had put over gas and caught the wagon train in the valley. The horses were harnessed and could not get away. Evidently some of the drivers stayed too long. Paul Hughes, Singer, Armstrong, Halverson, Woodell and Colledge had gone up ahead of us, and were cutting harness and releasing some horses that were yet alive, and driving them up to higher ground out of the gas. They saved a great many by a little head work, and the Government rewarded them all with the *Croix de Guerre*.

We stopped, as there wasn't room to get by, but soon Hughes came up and told us to go on over the heads of horses that could not be saved, which we did, and were soon at the post. All day we ran to and from the front, with our car full of wounded and dying. For twenty-four hours the twenty cars never had a rest. And, remember, we carried only bad cases. The others walked.

The attack lasted five days, the German prisoners pouring in over all the roads. Frank Carleton was ^[185] hit by shell splinters in the leg. He also got the War Cross pinned on his chest. The whole attack was rotten, many suffering from chlorine and tear gas. Singer is in bad shape from it and I guess we all show the strain. But we are lucky with it all, for there was not a car in the whole lot that did not have shell marks on it.

The old Twenty-fifth Division suffered pretty badly, but the struggle was not without success, for Mort Homme, Avicourt and Hill "304" are in our hands, and I hope they will stay there. Besides, we have plenty of German prisoners.

As this is the way I have been spending my time, you know I did not have much of an opportunity to write letters. I must stop now and get a little sleep. If they shell us here to-night I hope they choke.

Good luck. Ed Harding, Jim Baker, Baldwin, Creigier, Doyle, Riley, Joe, Tom and Arney are all O. K. and join me in sending you their best. Remember me to the bunch with you. [186]

"GUS" EDWARDS,
Section 60.

A LETTER FROM SALONIKA

DEAR ED:

I have just returned here from the front, and learned from your letter that you are in France. You don't know how glad I was to hear from you. My prompt reply will bear me out, for you know I am not much of a hand at writing letters. Let me commence by saying that if they ever want you to come down here, don't you do it, for, if there is one place that the Lord forgot to fix up just enough to be decent it's this Bulgarian front, and, from what I have seen, all the Balkan States are no better.

Once in a while we get some papers which show pictures of the hardships the British Tommies are enduring with artillery, etc., in the Flanders mud. If they have anything on us they must surely be in a bad way, because ninety-nine per cent of our front is mud. The remainder is—also mud. They have a roadway here and there at least. We never see what one would call a clearly defined path. It's just one big field of mud.

The Monastir road is the main artery of travel out toward our front, and this has been so cut up by the never-ending traffic and through lack of other parallel roads that it is about as bad as you can imagine it. At the end of the road (this end) conditions are barely tolerable.

The town Salonika itself is located on the sea in a sort of hollow, and around us like sentinels are the hills, which guard every approach to the city proper for miles. Members high on the staff say the city could never be taken from the land side, and from the supplies stored here I am sure they believe this to be a fact. I do not think it will be long before we will come in for our share of attention in the columns of the newspapers, for we have been expecting the development of military activity for some little time past. [188]

The sanitary conditions are much improved here and everything is done to counteract disease. All kinds of improvements have been made, but the poor devils at the front are the ones that come in for their share. Men contract diseases here unknown to medical science, besides those that are known. Nearly everything reeks with malaria. I have taken enough quinine to run a drug store in the States six months, and while I, like many others, pride myself on the good fortune we are having, I am sure, in the days to come, we will see the effects which always follow.

No doubt you are familiar with the Venizelos régime. I see him about quite often. The men that are with him are all bright, smart, up-to-date fellows, and with the Allies hammer and tongs, and they are far more loyal to Greece than the King's party, who follow the instructions of Kaiser Bill.

Write me a long letter, for it helps a great deal in such a place as this, and if you ever get some American newspapers you might send them on when you are through with them. Keep in touch with me, but don't ever think of coming here unless they tie you hand and foot and send you.

Take good care of yourself and hand those wooden-headed Germans some hot ones.

Your pal,

CHAPTER XX

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EYES OF THE ARMY

All military observation balloons are practically “the eyes of the army.” They are generally captive—always out of reach of enemy artillery fire. Of course, they may become the victims of surprise attacks from enemy aviators.

These sausage-shaped craft are very important adjuncts to the fighting forces, and they have regular habits. They go up every morning and come down every night. In this they are aided by the engine of some large auto-truck, which hauls them in or lets them go up, according to orders from the officer in charge. Their efficiency as posts of observation may be readily appreciated. There is nothing going on below for miles upon miles that cannot be distinguished through the use of powerful glasses in the hands of skilled lookout men.

With these fellows on watch very little can transpire that they are not likely to discover in a jiffy. The enemy tries to send a wagon train of ammunition to some point of advantage, when, bingo! some shells explode in their path—then it’s a case of jumping and running for their lives. Troop movements are subject to the same kind of attack, in fact, everything is an open book to the trained observers, lolling about in the high altitude breezes, alert, however, to every little thing going on.

It is most interesting to watch the work of the observation balloon, which always anchors close enough to the front to give it the advantage of seeing everything, yet far enough to the rear to protect it from being shot at by the enemy anti-aircraft batteries. It depends upon the contour and character of the ground, and at just what elevation the balloon officials can best observe. The great bag is held in place by a steel cable, and has direct telephone communication with the artillery field station.

This station is located so that all wires from the observation posts lead into it, as do also the wires from the field batteries along certain parts of the front. When anything transpires that seems of enough consequence to deserve a few shells, the observer phones the location as it appears on his chart, and a corresponding chart at the artillery bureau furnishes correct information to the officers in charge, as though they were looking at the very spot themselves. The range is computed and phoned to the battery that commands the particular location of the objective. The range is soon found and the firing begins.

It is then the duty of the gas-bag observers to inform the bureau the moment a shell explodes, setting forth the information that is necessary for corrections in the event that the shell missed; also whether it exploded before reaching the object or passed beyond. The moment this information is secured corrections in the range are immediately made, phoned to the battery, and the second shell is sent screaming on its way. After which corrections are again given, until finally the observer comes back with the word “hit.” They then have the range and can hammer away at the position until they have completed the necessary destruction.



Trying on the Gas Masks



Badonviller Barricaded for Street Fighting

So accurate has this system become that, with an observation balloon to govern and observe, artillery fire, after the second and third shot, will come uncomfortably close to its objective, if it does not make a direct hit. The accuracy of cannon-fire nowadays is remarkable, and, although batteries may be located in clumps of trees or even hidden by hills, they have reached a perfection almost beyond belief. Thus it may be readily seen that the observation balloon plays an important part in modern warfare. Because of these observation balloons, there has seldom been, if ever, such a thing as concentrations of large bodies of troops for attacking purposes, or unending streams of caissons bringing up shells or supplies without coming under the eye of the observer.

One day on the eastern front an artillery commander in our division started out on a tour of inspection. He arrived at a certain position, where a new battery was being located in a clump of woods just off the roadside. In preparation for the new battery some concrete work was being done on foundations.

Pulling up on the road in a clearing, the officer and his aide stepped out of the car, followed by the chauffeur, and entered the woods to review the work. At a distance, so small that it could scarcely be seen, was a German observation balloon. The party had no sooner entered the woods when they were attracted by the explosion of a shell in close proximity. This was soon followed by a second, which landed in the road, and then a third, which struck beside the front end of the auto they had just left and blew it into fragments.

One thing that comes under the eye of a person traveling along the military roads in France is the large number of soup kitchens that lie toppled over along the roadside. The reason for this is that there are always so many of these soup kitchens going to and from the front along roads that can be seen from enemy observation balloons, and they can be shelled with deadly and unerring accuracy.

It is a most rare occurrence for the drivers of these soup kitchens to be injured or wounded, for they can hear the shell coming and dive off of the kitchens into the roadside or run for their lives. Meanwhile the shell will make a direct hit and blow the soup kitchen to pieces.

Observation balloons are a hindrance to operations that the enemy desire to be unobserved; therefore aviators are dispatched against them and instructed to clear them from the skies. Of course, there is no means

by which an observation balloon can resist successfully an attack by an aviator, even if equipped with a machine gun, because the aviator will always attack it from above.

The best opportunity to destroy observation balloons always comes on cloudy days, when an aviator can circle around in the clouds until he gets directly over the balloon, and drop, unobserved, upon it. Then, with a machine gun, or an incendiary bomb, he can put it out of existence. When the observers see that they cannot get away from the enemy aviator their only chance is to jump from the basket with a parachute, as the moment the bomb strikes the gas bag and the contents ignite, it becomes an "inferno."

Two interesting incidents took place at Verdun in connection with observers and enemy aeroplanes after their gas bags had been struck and destroyed. In the first instance, the observer jumped from the basket, and was descending toward the earth suspended and swinging at the end of a parachute, like the pendulum of a clock.

The enemy aviator, for additional exercise and excitement, circled around and descended along with the parachute, shooting at the observer as he swung through the air, with his machine gun, until he got his man. But in so doing he descended closer to the ground than he had contemplated doing, and a well-directed shot from an anti-aircraft battery brought both himself and his plane tumbling to the earth.

The second instance was where a Boche aviator had dropped out of the clouds and an observer, seeing there was no chance to get away from him, quickly jumped from the basket of his balloon with a parachute. The bag was struck shortly after and burst into flames.

It must have been the intention of the Boche to have some machine-gun exercise with this observer, for he circled around and tried to get into a position to fire. Before he could accomplish this the observer, swinging through the air, drew an automatic revolver, and with a well-directed shot hit the aviator and killed him.^[98]

Observation balloon work is considered a very dangerous branch of the service, inasmuch as observers do not have an opportunity to protect themselves from enemy aviators and must rely chiefly on anti-aircraft batteries for protection.

CHAPTER XXI

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ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERIES

Located all along the front are batteries, which consist principally of French cannon that we have heard so much about, known to the world as 75's. While this type is most frequently used, there are some aircraft batteries of larger caliber, known as the 105's. The reason that these two types of guns are used exclusively is due to their flexibility. They can be changed to different angles and elevations and be fired with the rapidity so necessary in following an aeroplane in flight.

Aircraft batteries are always located where protection is necessary from aviators in the rear of the lines, also in the event of the enemy aviator being able to get by the batteries up front. [200]

The guns are mounted over a pit on a revolving platform that can complete a circle. Counterweights are attached to the gun for elevation so that it can be changed quickly from the horizontal to very near a 90-degree angle, the direction, of course, being obtained by the shifting of the revolving platform.

Some very novel contrivances have been developed for computing ranges, and each aircraft battery uses every available device that is likely to assist them in making flying uncomfortable for the Boches. Where there are two or more of these batteries they are connected up with each other by telephone, and, as an enemy flyer comes within range of their guns, the angles are phoned back and forth, and with this knowledge they can make the location untenable, even if they do not bring the flyer down. I have seen many an enemy flyer get into these pockets and rejoice at the moment he discovered the trap that there were some clouds close by into which he could dodge and get away with his skin intact.

These planes are, in most instances, observation planes, either to see what is transpiring behind the lines or to take photographs of enemy positions. The bombing planes work mostly under cover of darkness, which enables them to come down much closer to earth.

To meet this condition there is located at each aircraft battery a device known as an audiphone. It is a large box-shaped affair, made of sheet metal about thirty-six inches square. Inside are fastened four small cones, in appearance much like victrola horns. These are in turn connected with a vibrator similar to that in an ordinary telephone receiver. To this are attached two rubber tubes, identical with the instrument used by doctors called a stethoscope, for listening to the heart.

This equipment is fastened to a post, and can be turned in any direction. The box-shaped device, working on a common axle, can be elevated or lowered at will. When an aviator is in the air a lookout places the two hard rubber tubes to his ears and turns the equipment in the general direction of the supposed location.

He then elevates and lowers the box-shaped device until he arrives at a position where the clearest motor vibrations are received, the post being marked off in degrees, like the revolving gun-platform. The arrow on the audiphone points to the degree indicated on the post, and thus the direction is obtained and the gun trained at the same degree.

Then there is a second arrow with a scale corresponding to the one upon which the gun is elevated. When the clearest vibrations come in, the angle at which the box rests is indicated, and this in turn is copied by the gun. The distance is estimated by the strength of the vibrations coming in on the receiving instrument. The general location is phoned to the searchlight stations and the light is projected to afford the batteries observation in the event that the aviator changes the direction of his flight after the first shot is fired. [203]

These projectors in many instances depend, of course, upon the locations where the greatest aerial activities take place, run up as high as four and a half feet in size, and with three or four searchlights playing into the heavens it is very easy to discern an aeroplane, unless it is flying very high.

The French 75's make a wonderful anti-aircraft gun that, with the remarkable perfection that gunners have attained, insures an enemy aeroplane quite a warm reception. But, at best, machines brought down by either side by anti-aircraft guns are very few, for no matter how good the marksmanship the aeroplane always has the advantage. He can take to higher levels quickly and the higher his elevation the greater his security.

When a shot is fired at him in a certain position he knows that it will be from eight to eighteen seconds before the projectile will reach his elevation. By merely changing his course in a fast machine, four or five

seconds will take him three or four hundred feet away from the bursting shell. But the frequency of direct hits in lower altitudes does not warrant aviators taking chances. They'd better be on their way.

CHAPTER XXII

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HAND GRENADE WORK

There are two kinds of hand grenades, offensive and defensive. The first is employed in all offensive operations and to explain its use more clearly it is well to start with the bombers, popularly known as the suicide club.

Before an attack is made, in most instances, a barrage fire is put over on the enemy trenches and the length of this preparation depends on the extent of the offensive and on the area over which it spreads. The purpose of this barrage fire is to blast out of existence all of the enemy machine guns on the parapet of the trenches that are to be attacked.

It must be understood that with a heavy barrage fire on their front-line positions the enemy would be unable to keep many men in readiness at the guns, and the machine guns themselves would be endangered if they were left exposed. Therefore they take to the dug-outs with guns and all other equipment.

Chosen from the regiments, there are certain men known as bombers, who are ready, at a specified time, with another kind of equipment—a large basket-shaped pocket swinging at their waists filled with hand grenades. They are always ready in the front-line trench to go over at the time set by the command. The barrage fire still plays on the enemy lines when the bombers charge across “No Man’s Land.” It is their task to keep the enemy and their machine guns in their dug-outs so that they cannot drag them to the parapets of the trenches for use against the infantry, which invariably follows the bombers “over the top.”

The grenade used by the bombers in an offensive of this kind is a trifle larger than a good-sized lemon; projecting from one end is a pin, on which there is a touch button. [207]

Touch the button and the pin does the rest. It ignites a fuse on the end of which is an explosive cap, similar in design to the caps we use in this country for dynamite blasting. The cap sets off the charge which is supposed to be one of the most powerful and deadliest of explosives.

The shell of the grenade is corrugated into little squares that break up and fly in all directions when the charge is exploded, and covers a large area on its mission of destruction. Much care and skill is required of the bomber, since he must be able to throw a grenade with great accuracy and always far enough to keep himself from being injured.

There is a common notion abroad that bombs are thrown like baseballs, but this idea is erroneous. The method employed is radically different. Grenades are timed so that they go off quickly after reaching their objective and within five seconds of the time when the first throwing motion is made and the time fuse is going. [208]

During the early part of the war the moment a grenade was started fusing it was the desire of the bomber to get it on its way as quickly as possible. The Germans noticed that the grenades did not go off for several seconds after they landed, and, in many instances, picked them up and hurled them back. Many of our men were killed in this way before they learned to measure the time accurately.

All along the front, in back of the lines, are fields where one may see companies of men practicing daily with grenades. Their work is a most important factor in modern warfare, as the defenders of a trench rely chiefly on their machine guns to resist infantry attacks. Should the bombers contrive to hold the enemy in their dug-outs, their own infantry can cross over without having to face a death-dealing stream of bullets that would be poured into them by three or four machine guns.



Awaiting Orders Behind the Front

Strange to say, of all the men making up the different branches of service around base and army hospitals one rarely ever sees a maimed bomber. It is one thing or the other with these fellows. They come back whole or not at all. A most dangerous work is that of the bomber, as he is always the first to go over, and, of course, offers a tempting mark for whatever machine guns are not in the dug-outs but remain on the parapets of an enemy trench.

Defensive grenades have a different classification and are employed in a distinctive way. Any or all infantrymen of an army may be equipped with this form of grenade. They are made on a principle diametrically opposite to that of the offensive grenade. The best of these are manufactured by an English concern and are very reliable. The element of danger in its operation is very slight. They are used principally for the destruction of barbed-wire entanglements, in order that infantrymen may make a quick passage over "No Man's Land."

Should one of these grenades land alongside of a post supporting the enemy barbed wire, the explosion which follows is so tremendous that it will shatter that post into bits, causing all of the wire to drop to the ground. This will afford enough gaps to make passage free and easy.

The defensive grenade is vastly different in structure and function, as the jacket containing the charge is a tin composition, very light in construction, so that every particle of force will be effective at a given point, without the necessity of having to break through a heavy iron shell. Just enough weight is used in the body of this type; it is devoid of the pin and the button, but has a handle held in place by a cotter pin on the end of which is a ring. When the ring is pulled it draws the cotter pin from the locking device on the body of the grenade, which holds the handle in a safe position.

Before the pin is pulled the bomber must have the handle clamped down securely in the palm of his hand with the grenade, for the moment the handle is allowed to fly up the grenade begins fusing and must be thrown.

As long as the handle is held securely in its original position, even though the pin be drawn, it is harmless. It is, however, ready for service in the fraction of a second, and makes an ideal defensive weapon for instant

use. It can be thrown directly in front of a man rushing at you with a bayonet, and it will blow him into fragments. At the same time there will be perfect security to the one who launches it, but, at five times the distance, an offensive grenade would prove a boomerang. For cutting down enemy barbed wire, there is nothing so effective, except heavy artillery, which can compare with this high explosive hand grenade for terrific power of destruction.

There is a newer form of grenade now in use, which is fired from a regular rifle. An attachment like a cylinder is fastened to the barrel of the rifle and a regulation cartridge inserted into the cartridge chamber, as when it is to be ordinarily fired. Then a grenade is placed in the cylinder and the gun is discharged while held at the height of the waist line, the muzzle being elevated or lowered according to the distance the grenade is to be thrown. There is a gauge showing where the grenades will approximately strike at different elevations of the muzzle, and it is surprising with what accuracy they will reach their objective. This method is used where the distance is too great for throwing by hand. The ball, when fired, passes down the rifle barrel and through the grenade, striking a contact spring, which starts it fusing. The gas from the explosion of the powder in the chamber forms the propelling power.

A great many other contrivances are used for the launching of grenades, such as various forms of spring traps. The French have a pneumatic device,—a cylinder in which the grenade is placed, and the pressure for launching it is produced by means of a pump, not unlike in design that of the automobile tire pump. All these different devices, while serving a purpose, do not meet all requirements as effectively as does the grenade which is launched by hand. It is a most dangerous missile and hard to get away from.

One serious danger to which consideration must be given and into which Americans are apt to be tempted is the collection of souvenirs of war. All along the front one sees many things that are of interest,—unexploded shells, hand grenades, and the like. The inexperienced, unsuspecting the danger of such things, are tempted to pick them up and examine them.

This has caused many a death. It is a risk that should never be taken, for it is only another way of courting death. Not every shell or grenade that is sent over explodes, and many actually lie intact for days only to explode at some slight disturbance. One only needs to observe the French, who are familiar with all angles of the game through their three and a half years' experience, to learn what they think about tampering with shell heads.

A regular corps of men, appointed generally from some artillery battery, make it their duty to look after unexploded shells, either by setting them off, or by carting them away and burying them,—likewise unexploded hand grenades. These are collected and buried, but many an experienced man has come to his death while clearing up roads and fields of these unexploded missiles.

There have been instances known on different fronts where the Germans have "fixed" everything they leave on the field, allowing shells and grenades to lie there for someone to pick them up. An attractive officer's helmet might catch one's eye and appear to be just about the most harmless thing in the world. But to touch it more than likely means death.

CHAPTER XXIII

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THE AMERICAN Y. M. C. A.

An honest confession is said to be good for what ails you, mentally and physically, so here goes with reference to my erstwhile ignorance concerning that great and growing organization known to all the world as the Young Men's Christian Association. I'll admit my prejudice. It goes back to the days when I invented every possible excuse to keep from going to Sunday-school, and so when I arrived at maturity I found myself shying toward the outer curbing every time. I used to pass quickly these quiet, orderly buildings, fearful that someone would rush out and thrust a lesson leaflet into my hand.

Once I had a friend who, when in earnest conversation, would halt occasionally to point his long forefinger and say, "Listen to the truth!"—and that's the kind of a gesture and the exact words that I would use now if I should find it necessary to raise my voice in defense of the Y. M. C. A.

I'll never forget the first one I visited. I was in Paris on leave of absence, along with another young man in the same service as myself. He suggested a visit to the Y. M. C. A., and, so far as my pleasure was concerned, he might just as well have suggested the morgue. The motion was carried, however, and I found myself being jostled along, speechless with disgust for having come all the way from the front-line trenches to waste my time at such a tame sort of a place. Visions of being met at the door with a bundle of "tracts" and a pocket Bible came into my mind's eye, but, on the theory that it never pays to be a joy-killer, I said nothing. In less time than it takes to tell it I found myself the worst fooled mortal of my age and weight among all my numerous friends and acquaintances.

Our taxicab drew up in front of a palatial building, which I recognized as our destination, for I did know the triangular flag of the Y. M. C. A. We entered a large open court, where were several small tables and chairs, reasons for which we learned afterwards. Ascending a grand stairway we arrived at the second floor, or Club Room. At once two gentlemen stepped forward with a cheerful "Hello, Boys," and invited us to make ourselves "quite at home." Almost immediately thereafter we were taken in tow and escorted around the place.

At this moment I glanced at the peculiar expression on my friend's face. We had been there five minutes, and no one had handed either of us a Bible—which seemed most surprising to me. There were spacious lounging rooms, with big easy chairs, and tables heaped with books and magazines, also writing rooms, smoking rooms, victrolas, pianos, billiard and pool tables, just as you find them in a genuine American club. It reminded me of good old New York with all its comforts and ease. The atmosphere was that of wholesome refinement with a welcome in every face that beamed our way.

Our escorts informed us that things were not exactly in shape as yet, but would be in full running order very shortly. For a place that was not in working trim I wondered what could be done to make it more complete. I was soon to learn that its growth since the war began had been phenomenal. It had become the principal rendezvous for the army boys, a home, indeed, to which they could come at any time, day or night, and get good hot baths and clean up. I was completely surprised, for in Paris, at the finest hotels, such a thing was impossible, except on Saturdays and Sundays, because of the conservation of fuel.

Then, too, the Y. M. C. A. had established a Bureau of Tobacco, where the boys could obtain American cigarettes and cigars at a cost which was much less than they could be bought even at home. The French Government would not allow cigarettes to be sent to the boys in service, unless the duty, which was prohibitive, was paid on them. One has to have but a single experience with "army issue," the name applied by the boys to the tobacco passed out to soldiers, to know what a big satisfaction it is to be able to walk up to the counter of the Y. M. C. A. with the feeling of ease one feels in going into one's home-town favorite cigar store or club.

After showing us everything about the premises, our escort finally capped the climax by announcing, "It's four o'clock. Ice cream is ready to be served."

Now, say, gentle reader, suppose you had been driving an ambulance for several months, practically day and night for weeks at a time, and that all you had known in the way of "eats" was the same old stuff day in and day out? And, I ask you again, what would you say if suddenly you were invited to sit down beside a

daintily covered table in a delightful courtyard and found yourself confronted with a heaping big dish of real ice cream. Never mind your answer. You'd be found "a-hanging around" the place at four o'clock every afternoon of your stay in Paris. That's what we did, and we were welcomed each time in that same cordial way.

In the colder season, when it becomes too chilly for ice cream, the Volunteer Canteen Workers of the Y. M. C. A. established a tea room, where at four p. m. hot coffee, chocolate and such things as home-made doughnuts, cakes and pies were served. This place did not go a-begging for popularity, as may well be surmised, for it was filled to capacity every day.

It would be unjust to create the impression that the popularity of the American Y. M. C. A. is due to the fact that it serves good ice cream. That was only one of the many things that hit the right spot.

The biggest attraction, to my mind, was the spirit of sterling good fellowship which permeated the institution. The welcome was sincere. There was no snobbishness, no attitude of "look what we're doing for these fellows—shouldn't they be most awfully thankful." There wasn't a bit of that. On the other hand there was plenty of "there's nothing too good for you boys who are doing the job out there; we're going to serve you!" That is the attitude of the big-minded business men who have thrown open the doors of this institution in order that the boys from "out there" might have comfort when on furlough in Paris. It was a big thought and it has kept many a youngster from going to the devil in that same big city.

Before I left France, the Y. M. C. A. was making big strides in the establishment of Huts and Canteens along the front; also around the villages where the divisions of the army go for rest. Here the men at the front can have an opportunity to purchase food and supplies. This in itself is a wonderful blessing for the devastated towns along the front, it is impossible to buy anything.

Imagine the undying impression a man will retain of this wonderful organization when he recalls the day he was sent to the rear, drilled by a Boche bullet and dragging one foot after the other through the mud and water of the trenches, chilled to the bone, as he turned a corner and found tucked away in a hole in a wall a man who handed him a cup of steaming hot coffee; or, when that same man lies on a hospital cot in the rear, recovering, there comes a representative of this same wonderful institution with words of cheer and consolation. Such is the work that these men are doing and such the wonderful contribution to humanity it has proved to be!

While in London I spent most of my time at the Y. M. C. A. huts. There they serve regular meals at a maximum cost of fourteen cents, which consist of soup, meat, potatoes, vegetables, bread, butter, dessert and coffee. It is open to any of the men of the Allied armies. I was particularly attracted one day to a group of boys sitting around a piano in the recreation room, singing and playing. An American soldier played the piano, an American sailor played a violin, a Canadian a banjo, and an Englishman a mandolin.

The "choir" was composed of a Belgian, a Scotch Highlander, an Irishman, a New Zealander, an Australian and a Frenchman—with a dozen Americans thrown in. I inquired of one of our sailors how he liked London? He replied, "Well, as much as I have seen of it, it's fine, but we boys spend most of the time right here at this piano."

I found this to be true, for, no matter what time I would go there, the same crowd was always present, and the room filled with blue smoke thick enough to choke a Chinaman.

The facts set forth are my only experiences with the Y. M. C. A., but let me commend to everyone the wonderful work that this organization is doing, for if anything can hearten a man when he is away from all that is near and dear to him it is the attention paid him by big-minded, big-hearted men who carry on the field work of the Y. M. C. A. No one preaches to you when you are under its roof, but there creeps into one's heart a new feeling that one longs to hold on to. I'm for the Y. M. C. A. strong.



A Small “Persuader” at Verdun



Field Telephone Station Controlling the Shell Fire

CHAPTER XXIV

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REAR-LINE DIVERSIONS

During their leisure hours it is quite necessary for men to have something of interest to divert their minds; the French military authorities have been quick to realize the value of the old saying that all work and no play makes Jack a poor fighter.

There is with each army corps a regularly established department devoted to the entertainment of the soldiers. They have also with them official kinematographers of the French Army, who take pictures of everything interesting that transpires in the sector. The films of one army, through a bureau, are exchanged with those of an army operating in another sector, for the benefit of the men so that they can see what is going on at the fronts. The shows are generally given in some little village at the rear, where the men who are not in the trenches are quartered. The program is changed each day and a sprinkling of comedies are worked in to give the entertainment the proper flavor.

Commencing at seven-thirty to eight p. m. the little streets are generally packed, long before the time the doors are to open, and when they are thrown back you are generally lifted off your feet by the mad rush and scramble for seats. After being jostled about like a rubber ball, you may finally end up inside the theater—and occasionally outside. It's a case of come early or you don't see the show, because there are no places large enough in these small villages to afford accommodation for all the men that are quartered there.

On these occasions there is always music furnished by the regimental bands, and this is one of the features of the show. Many of these bands have men who are celebrities known internationally. We had in our division two grand opera singers and a violinist, who, before the war, was the leader of the orchestra at Monte Carlo.

As soon as the performance began the doors were closed to exclude all light, and the windows covered with heavy drapery. The minute the soldiers get inside, they light their pipes and cigarettes and settle down for an evening's entertainment. In ten minutes the place is filled with smoke, and an hour after the performance commenced it would seem impossible that a picture could be thrown on the screen. But no one seems to mind the smoke barrage so long as they are afforded amusements to divert their minds.

Other evenings, at scheduled times, big events would come off in the form of a drama or a comedy, produced entirely by the soldiers. Some sketch was always presented where the largest men in the regiments took the parts of angels or some fellow with a beard portrayed the part of the ardent young lover. Of course, to complete the performance, it was necessary to have a few women, and these not being available, someone had to make-up for the part.

These were usually picked from among the mule drivers and cooks of the regiment (or somebody in similar positions, where daintiness in the execution of their regular work best suited them, in the judgment of the impresario, for the part). There was always a king who was a very stern ruler, likewise a fearless warrior. The smallest man with the squeakiest voice generally fell heir to this rôle. All in all, the cast was usually very well selected, and it invariably produced just the effect that the entertainment committee desired.

But the concerts given by the military bands were the real entertainments, after all. They were sure to exceed one's expectation, for they were classical and sublime. Selections from all of the leading operas were rendered in a most creditable way, and it was really a great pleasure to attend them.

CHAPTER XXV

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“FOOD WILL WIN THE WAR”

Upon my return to this country, after having lived as I did abroad, the billboards with the caption, “Food Will Win the War,” was one of the first things that caught my eye, and I was deeply impressed with its significance, but a few days after arriving I was also destined to learn very soon how little these words seemed to mean to the average American. I visited, of course, several of the leading cafés and hotels, and from the menus one could hardly believe that this country is at war and allied with people and armies that are badly in need of food.

No army can fight efficiently, laborers cannot toil in the manufacture of equipment and supplies^[16] for the armies in the field, unless they have the proper and sufficient food.

America little realizes what France has accomplished along lines of conservation. Reflect, for the moment, on the following facts. Before the war, France depended largely on this country for many foodstuffs, even when all of her tillers of the soil were following their agricultural work daily. Upon the outbreak of war, all her able-bodied men of a military age were called to the colors. There was no one left to work the farms but women, old men and young boys, and naturally their domestic production fell off, though the demand for food was ever greater. Moreover, one must consider the territory that has been devastated into regions of barren wastes, for, in August, 1914, when the German armies swept through northern France to the very gates of Paris, all the stock on farms were driven off and confiscated for their troops. Then in the retreat everything that was productive was destroyed.

It is not difficult to understand why the internal production of France has suffered a material decrease^[23] and she must now lean just that much more on our assistance in the providing of foodstuffs. With conservation working in this country we can give them that which is really unnecessary to us, but vital to them. An order has just been issued to the French Army from Headquarters to cut down the daily bread ration of each soldier, and I want to say that I know what this means, for I have lived on it, and for nourishment, at the best, it is nothing to brag about.

Some people think they are making a supreme sacrifice in submitting to our wheatless day regulation, but they should dwell a moment on the thought that for over three years the soldiers, to say nothing of the women and children of France, have not seen a loaf of white bread. Their wheatless day is seven days a week and fifty-two weeks a year.

I think I know the American people well enough to feel that they would not stand aside and selfishly^[19] see men, women and children go without food, especially when they can give it without any great inconvenience to themselves. I feel it is the lack of a proper understanding that is the basic cause of food wasting in this country, and not a disregard for the suffering of others.

Every time we sit down to a meal, either in the home or in a restaurant, and order more food than we can consume or need, we are taking from the reserve which does not morally belong to us and thereby depriving the man at the front of sufficient food. I think everyone will agree with me when I say that if there is anyone entitled to a decent meal once in a while it's the fellow who is ready to give up his life for his country—and all we are asked to do is to give up those habits which are unnecessary and wasteful.

The great problem of winning this war rests with the American people, and if each one does his and her part, that will prove the deciding factor in defeating the Germans.

A noted statesman of Germany is credited with saying that Germany has not the slightest fear^[20] of the American Army or Navy. But when the hundred million people rise up as a unit with undivided aim—that day will be the undoing of Germany. Now, this simply means that it is the American people that Germany is afraid of.

It is very difficult to bring the nearness of the war home to each and every one of us. It is difficult, indeed, for each to realize that we are just as much a part of this war as the boys who wear the uniform abroad. The only difference is that they have given everything they have to give and we can only approach their one hundred per cent liberality by conserving and rendering every assistance that is within our power to do by word, deed, and particularly money.

Everyone should do his part as an individual patriot, so that when our hundred million are working as a unit, the sledge hammer blows of our nation will be the undoing of a monster that will be swept from this earth with such force that it will never again menace liberty and freedom.

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CHAPTER XXVI

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HOMEWARD BOUND

It is said to be something of a job to run over to Europe during these war times, with so many restrictions in the way of ocean travel, but if anyone ever found it hard to get there they should try *leaving* there. The day we were given our discharge from the French Army we started to leave. We soon found that if it had not been for taxicabs we would all be there to-day, for when the offices that control the routine and formality that one has to go through were finally located, the only person that was considered was the taxi driver, seemingly in order that he might come in for his share of your roll before you get out of the country.

First it is necessary to go to the American Ambassador's office with your passport, and establish the fact that you really are yourself.

Application must be made in writing for your return passage and all facts about yourself established. After this is done you get your stamp of approval, which makes you feel that you are fairly well started.

The next in order, however, is a visit to the United States Consulate's office, and while this is not such a great distance away you feel that it is far enough. Here you get a second stamp of approval and are directed to the French Bureau of Military Control. This office is located out of town, possibly in order to afford the employees the fresh country air, and while you're getting there the taximeter does its share toward making the trip interesting and exciting, and causes one to lose all interest in the passing scenery no matter how beautiful.

At the French Bureau you surrender your release from the Army and are given a third stamp of approval, this time with a paper, which must be taken to the Prefecture of Police. So again you sit and watch the centimes turn into francs, until you're tempted to get out and walk. But where is this Prefecture of Police Bureau? Well, it's about the same distance on the other side of town as was the Bureau of Military Control on this side. On the theory that nothing from nothing leaves nothing, it would seem that for a weary soldier the only thing to do was to curl up on the rear seat and sink into dreamland. It might have turned out only a bad dream. I have heard shells flying by at a fast clip, but never did anything go so fast as the figures on that taximeter.

From the looks of the records kept at the Police Bureau I am sure they would know if there was anything in the world to your discredit, but if you have a clean bill you are quickly O. K.'d and are again on your way. When I got out of there I glanced at my driver, who was a young fellow when we started out, but having been gone so long I felt sure by now he had a beard that he could trip in.

On going back to America by way of England it is now necessary to pay a call upon the English Consul in Paris, who will look over the stamps the various offices have put on your passport in order to determine whether or not he would care to have you go back that way. This was my last taxi ride by way of kicking off the shackles that held me on foreign soil. Much as I loved France I was hungry for home and glad to feel that I was free to go there.

The following morning found our crowd on the train bound for Havre. As we sped along we passed just back of the front held by the English and, after an eight-hour trip, arrived at our destination. After transferring our baggage we were greeted with the pleasant information that there had been a storm on the Channel and many mines had broken loose. Until the trawlers succeeded in sweeping them back into harness no boat would leave that port.

Now the sad part of this news was that if this boat did not leave during the night we would miss our steamer for America—and the boat did not leave. So we slept on board, and the next day was spent in the town. That night we got under way, the storm kept us company and our steamer did everything but run upside down. It was a messy-looking crowd that arrived in Southampton the next morning, but we stayed only long enough to attend a meeting of the customs officials, then we were off for London. We had missed our boat and must wait four days for a sailing on another line.

That night I went to the theater, and after enjoying a good play for two hours the curtain descended abruptly and a gentleman stepped out on the stage to announce that there was an air raid on, and anyone choosing to leave could do so. There were a great many people who got up and left for the shelters that are

provided throughout the city. In less than five minutes the curtain went up again and the performance was resumed. When we left the theater autos and police bicycles plastered with signs, "Take to Cover," were speeding up and down the street. Most people went down into the underground railway stations, but the Boche did not penetrate the outer defenses and were only able to drop a few bombs on the outskirts of the city. During the four nights we spent in London there were three air raids.

A great many American sailors were in London, and it happened that the Church of Saint Martin held services while we were there. We couldn't miss that chance. The King and Queen and Princess were in attendance, as well as Field Marshall French and Admiral Jellicoe, with other celebrities.

After four days in London we left for Liverpool to catch our boat, and sailed for dear old America on the evening we arrived. Hard luck seemed to pursue us, for the next morning we found ourselves at anchor at the mouth of the river with the consoling news that two German submarines were lying outside the bar awaiting our departure. So we stayed there all day in a dense fog and also that night, with about twelve other vessels of various sizes.



Ruins Along the Lorraine Front

The following morning we slipped anchor and in a few hours were well out into the Irish Sea, the heart of the infested area. If there is any place where U-boats are thick it is off the Irish coast. Nothing eventful happened that first day but our boat was heavily armed and all the men were at their posts every minute. Meals were served to the gun crews at their posts.

About seven-thirty that night, after we had come on deck from dinner, there was a report of a cannon behind us—a U-boat had come up fifteen hundred yards astern, and, not having a chance to launch a torpedo, took a shot at us with a small deck gun. It was so dark that the U-boat could not be seen, but our gunners at the stern could see the flash of their gun and took that for a target. Of course, we could not see a hit if one was made, but the U-boat did not fire any more. Probably its officer did not care to try conclusions with so watchful a foe.

We did not wait to investigate. Full steam ahead soon put distance between us. All went well the rest of the night and the following day, each minute making our travel safer, and soon we were well out to sea with chances of being attacked growing less all the while.

On her trip previous the same thing had happened to this vessel, only their opponent was a little more persistent than ours had been. The U-boat fired fifty-four shots at her.

When three days at sea a fire broke out in one of the holds and spread to the dynamo room. All hands turned out to fight the flames, and, considering that they were coming out of the upper deck hatches for a while, things looked pretty bad. But at last, with good work on the part of the crew, it was under control. It is not very easy to sleep on a boat in mid-ocean when you know that a fire is smouldering and likely to break through and spread at any moment.

Four days later we fell in with the American patrol and the sight of two American warships was at once a comfort and a delight.

The only disappointment in store for us was our failure to arrive at New York early enough to get up the river and land. We missed it by half an hour and had to lie in the Narrows in sight of home all night long! Rotten luck. However, bad luck is sometimes good luck, for next morning as we came on deck there was the Statue of Liberty! I had seen it hundreds of times but never as I saw it that beautiful morning. And then, an hour later, wasn't it fine to scramble up the gangplank to see who would be first to put foot on good old American soil! Home again—*home again*.

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- Page [47](#). Replaced “parrafin” with “paraffin”.
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