















THE LEATHERNECK

# “DEAR FOLKS AT HOME — — — ”

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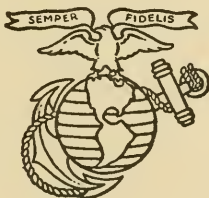
The glorious story of the United States Marines in  
France as told by their Letters from the Battlefield

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To him is due much of the love of the emblem that glows in the heart of every United States Marine; to him is due the great recruiting organization which gathered into the Corps those men who fought and bled at Belleau Wood; to him is due this book and to him this book is affectionately dedicated. His name is

**ALBERT S. McLEMORE**  
**COLONEL U.S. MARINE CORPS**





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## INTRODUCTION

It was in the latter part of June, 1917, that two regiments of United States Marines, the Fifth and Sixth, landed on French soil, a part of the vanguard of millions of American troops that were to make their way across the Atlantic to crush the Hun.

It was proper that they should be among the first to reach France, for they represented a fighting organization that had numbered many a "first" in its long history; they represented the oldest, proudest branch of the military service — for the Marine Corps officially came into being in America in 1775 by an act of the Continental Congress.

They stood for century-old victories, these Marines. They stood for the unfurling of the American flag for the first time above an Old-World fortress, in Tripoli, in 1803; for a share in the defeat of the *Serapis* by John Paul Jones, commanding the *Bonhomme Richard*; for the storming of the fortress of Chapultepec, in the days of the Mexican War; for achievements at Guantanamo, Cuba, during the Spanish-American War, where a detachment fought off the assaults of six thousand Spaniards; for glorious devotion to duty in innumerable engagements and in scores of countries of the world, where they

had fulfilled their duties as the Universal Peacemaker. Theirs, for instance, were the flag-draped caskets that returned to America from Vera Cruz, Mexico, in the troublous days of 1914; theirs the lives sacrificed that a Mexican commander might respect the honor of the American flag.

Therefore, in keeping with all this, it was only natural that to the United States Marines should have fallen the honor of being among the first of America's troops to land in France. Indeed, theirs had been the first actual participation in America's war against Germany, for on the morning of April 6, 1917, barely an hour after President Wilson had signed the Declaration of War, a detachment of United States Marines from the Philadelphia Navy Yard, under Major Robert L. Denig, boarded and seized the interned German ships then in Philadelphia Harbor.

What should be more fitting, therefore, than that the United States Marines should be among the first to land in France, and that, in the dark days of June, 1918, they should be called upon to form the wall of stone that would throw back the Hun advance on Paris, and change it from a victorious offensive to a disastrous defeat, lasting even unto the ultimate dissolution of Germany's hopes for the conquering of the world. At the battle of Château Thierry, of which Belleau Wood formed the scene of the main struggle, the United States Marines turned

back the Hun hordes, even though it cost a casualty list amounting to nearly fifty per cent of the officers and enlisted men. At Soissons, in the beginning of the great Allied offensive, July 18, they fought against almost insurmountable odds, lost two thousand men, from the ranks that had been refilled since Belleau Wood, and only ceased their advance when the extreme gravity of their losses made it imperative that they dig in and content themselves with holding the positions they had gained. At the battle for the Saint-Mihiel salient, they aided in restoring to France territory that had been lost for years, and helped in the capture of eighty German officers, thirty-two hundred men, ninety-odd cannon, and vast stores. In the freeing of Rheims, as a part of the Second Division, they scaled Blanc Mont Ridge, the sides of which had run red with Allied blood more than once, conquered it, went down the slopes on the other side, and occupied the plains beyond, tearing a great, gaping hole in the German defense that had its echo in the enemy's precipitate flight from Cambrai and St. Quentin.

So gallant has been the conduct of the United States Marines in France that it has called forth congratulation after congratulation from both the Allied and the American commanders.

After the battle of Belleau Wood, the French Staff sent the following message to them:

*Army H.Q., June 30, 1918*

IN view of the brilliant conduct of the 4th Brigade of the 2nd U.S. Division, which, in a spirited fight, took Bouresches and the important strong point of Bois de Belleau, stubbornly defended by a large enemy force, the General Commanding the VIth Army orders that henceforth, in all official papers, the Bois de Belleau shall be named, "Bois de la Brigade des Marines."

DIVISION GENERAL DEGOUTTE

Commanding VIth Army

(Signed) DEGOUTTE

To this was added the praise of General Pershing in the following order:

THE Brigade Commander takes pride in announcing that in addition to the Commander-in-Chief's telegram of congratulation to the 4th Brigade published in an endorsement from the Division Commander, dated June 9th, General Pershing has to-day visited Division Headquarters and sent his personal greetings and congratulations to the Marine Brigade. He also added that General Foch, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies in France, especially charged him this morning to give the Marine Brigade his love and congratulations on their fine work of the past week.

By command of Brigadier-General Harbord.

M. LAY, Major Adjutant.

Nor did their gallantry at Soissons go unnoticed, for this official order was read to the officers and men:

GENERAL ORDERS NO. 46.

It is with keen pride that the Divisional Commander transmits to the command the congratulations and affectionate greetings of General Pershing, who visited the Divisional Headquarters last night. His praise of the gallant work of the Division on the 18th and 19th is echoed by the French High Command, the Third Corps Commander, American Expeditionary Forces, and in a telegram from the former Divisional Commander. In spite of two sleepless nights, long marches through rain and mud, and the discomfort of hunger and thirst, the Division attacked side by side with the gallant First Moroccan Division, and maintained itself with credit. You advanced over six miles, captured over three thousand prisoners, eleven batteries of artillery, over a hundred machine guns, minenwerfers, and supplies. The Second Division has sustained the best traditions of the Regular Army and the Marine Corps. The story of your achievements will be told in millions of homes in all Allied Nations to-night.

J. G. HARBORD

Major-General, N.A.

France, July 21



Before the Marines went into battle, as a part of the Second Division at Saint-Mihiel, their commander, Major-General John A. Lejeune, wrote the following order:

*September 11, 1918*

GENERAL ORDERS NO. 52.

THE Second Division is again about to attack the enemy. I feel that we should recall the heroic exploits of the Division on the historic battle-fields near Château Thierry and Soissons. By these victories, the Second Division turned back the invasion of the Hun and immortalized its name and the name of the Hun.

The approaching battle will constitute a great epoch in our country's history. For the first time, an American Army will give battle on the soil of Europe under the command of an American Commander-in-Chief. The prestige and honor of our Country are therefore at stake. I am confident that our Division will maintain them proudly and that it will sweep the enemy from the field.

JOHN A. LEJEUNE

Major-General U.S. M.C.

And the Second Division fulfilled that order faithfully and well, with the result that General Lejeune added, after the battle:

17th September, 1918

GENERAL ORDERS No. 54.

I DESIRE to express to the officers and men my profound appreciation of their brilliant and successful attack in the recent engagement.

Our Division maintained the prestige and honor of the country proudly and swept the enemy from the field.

JOHN A. LEJEUNE

Major-General, U.S. M.C.

Then came the battle for Blanc Mont Ridge, with its resultant victory — and following that, an order of praise that is treasured by every United States Marine:

*France, 11 October, 1918*

OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE SECOND DIVISION:

IT is beyond my power of expression to describe fitly my admiration for your heroism. You attacked magnificently and you seized Blanc Mont Ridge, the keystone of the arch constituting the enemy's main position. You advanced beyond the ridge, breaking the enemy's lines, and you held the ground gained with a tenacity which is unsurpassed in the annals of war.

As a direct result of your victory, the German armies east and west of Rheims are in full retreat,

and by drawing on yourselves several German Divisions from other parts of the front, you greatly assisted the victorious advance of the Allied Armies between Cambrai and St. Quentin.

Your heroism and the heroism of our comrades who died on the battle-field will live in history forever, and will be emulated by the young men of our country for generations to come.

To be able to say when this war is finished, "I belonged to the 2nd Division, I fought with it at the battle of Blanc Mont Ridge," will be the highest honor that can come to any man.

JOHN A. LEJEUNE

Major-General, U.S. M.C.

Commanding

So that was the stuff of which the men who wrote this book were made. The past tense must be used for many of them — for more than one sleeps now in the fields of France, his rifle forming his headstone, his grave smoothed by the hands of his comrades. Few of the old eight thousand who formed the first two regiments of Marines remain alive and unwounded. The Fifth and Sixth Marines have upheld their traditions at a staggering cost, a cost, however, that acts only as an inspiration to the Marines who have replaced the losses, a newer, stronger call to battle and the fulfillment of their Corps Hymn:

*“From the Halls of Montezuma  
To the shores of Tripoli  
We fight our country’s battles  
On the land as on the sea.”*

The Fifth and Sixth Marines were not the only ones who went to France; there were replacements, machine-gun battalions, additional regiments. And this book is about them all — for it was written by them, written in the fire of battle, in the area of death, and in the calmness of the rest billet; the story of the United States Marine in France by Himself.

Some of the writers of the letters which follow were killed in battle, even before their missives reached America. Most of the others bear the scars of wounds to testify to their bravery. Upon the breasts of more than one hangs the Distinguished Service Cross, awarded for extraordinary heroism in battle. And to record their thoughts, their actions, their cheery messages home, their vivid yet modest descriptions of some of the fiercest battles of all history, this book has been compiled, a living testimony to the heroism of the men who helped save Paris; many of whom sleep to-day in that Wood of Death where they thrust back the Beast as it clawed at the very threshold of Civilization: the Bois de la Brigade des Marines.





“DEAR FOLKS AT HOME——”



# “DEAR FOLKS AT HOME — — —”

## CHAPTER I

### IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING

HE was a United States Marine, fresh from the grime and grit of battle. One arm had been torn off, a thigh had been slashed by a shell-splinter, and a machine-gun bullet had ripped its way through his “good” shoulder. It was enough to kill an ordinary man, but the Marine lived.

The reason for that fact lay far in the past, in his “boot” days when this United States Marine underwent the recruit training which fitted him for overseas service, training which turned his muscles to mobile steel, his heart to a tireless engine, and his whole being to a hardened, all-resisting piece of human mechanism that could fight off death to the very last second.

“The first day I was at camp,” a Marine once wrote to his mother, “I was afraid I was going to die. The next two weeks my sole fear was that I was n’t going to die. And after that I knew I’d never die because I’d become so hard that nothing could kill me.”

Indeed, such is the rigorous health that Marine Corps training, at Mare Island, California, and Paris Island, South Carolina, breeds in the body of a man. And just how it is done is well told in a jocular letter from Private Rubin Jaffe, Company G, Mare Island, California, to the Major who enlisted him at San Francisco:

MY DEAR MAJOR:

I HAVE N'T completed my training yet — so I don't know what there is in store for me, but judging from past performances, I reckon that standing up before a machine gun and being shot at, or thrown from a speeding aeroplane, would be right in line. We ought to be puncture-proof when we get out of here.

I'm afraid you would n't recognize me now, my dear Major — gun-totin', rip-roarin', son-of-a-gun of a hard-boiled Marine that I am. Why, I have grown so tough that the gobs scurry to their holes when they hear my hobnails a-poundin' the deck.

Here's the moving picture of a day as she is lived in this neck of the woods. At 6.30 a big guy with a little horn comes blowing around, playing a tune that ain't a tune at all, but which in plain gob-lingo means, "Hit the deck, leatherneck — Rise and Shine."

You have almost brushed your bristles (you can't part your hair here, for they part you from it) when

they yell for roll-call. After that comes the morning run. This is usually pretty easy — never more than two or three miles.

You are just recovering your breath at quarters when somebody yells “chow,” and exactly three and one half moments later (I think a moment is a smaller unit of time than a second) there is n't a soul in sight.

The next scene is necessarily a short one, for I'm not master enough to describe a “chow-hound” in action. It is truly a picture no artist can paint, though a phonograph might be able to record a slight impression of the scene — especially when there's soup.

After “chow” comes “Swedish” — and it sure must have been some disgusted Swede who thought of this. This 'ere “Swedish” is n't what you would call a knitting contest. Not exactly. It's a cross between contortioning, steeplejacking, and tail spinning and is designed to make either a MAN or a lunatic out of you. My opinion of Swedes has changed considerable since my introduction to their method of torture. They must be born without bones.

If you survive the “Swedish,” the undertaker gets one more chance at you before the morning is over. That's out on the drill ground where you pack your guns around in “Squads Right” and “Double Time,” etc.

There's a funny thing about those guns when you are doing double time up a hill. Every step they gain a pound in weight, and after the first seven miles you begin to wonder if you could n't make good in the heavy artillery carrying some of the big guns on your shoulder, relieving a couple of teams of horses and a motor truck or two — mebbe!

No morning is complete without a "run around the barrel." This is an exquisite form of torture the drill sergeants have for a man who commits some grave offense like brushing a fly off his face while standing at attention, or turning toward the "chow-hall" when "left-face" is the command.

There's a steep hill on the Island, and on that hill rests a barrel. "Running around the barrel" means doing double time around that hogshead. You run until you are ready to drop — and then you run some more.

But after you have made the cruise is when you are liable to strike the shoals. The first thing the sergeant asks you when you come into port is how you liked the voyage. If you grin and say "Fine!" — back you go. If you look kind of world-weary and disgusted — back you go. So the first thing every good Marine does is to cultivate a bland, blank, blasé, neutral expression so that a mind-reader could n't read his thoughts in regard to the cruise around the hogshead.

Noon finds us in the "chow-hall," of course —

and again let me draw the curtain. It would never do to describe. Some civilians might accidentally see it and it would result in such a rush of enlistments that there would n't be a man left in civil life — and we have got to have some, you know.

From 1.30 to 4.00 there is more drill — and then you are “free” — to attend to the hundred and one other duties that are piled on you.

There's washing and ironing. Yep, we do it. They aim to make MEN of us in the Marine Corps. (Please be sure to spell that “MEN” always in capitals.) You would think, though, they were making women of us, too. The first thing a Marine learns after discipline is cleanliness. Always must be clean — and there are n't hand laundries always handy in No Man's Land — so he learns “how” himself — get me?

Then there's semaphore and wig-wag every Marine is required to learn.

Generally, in the evening, just before taps, we hold “bull” sessions, and, believe me, this is one of the most interesting events of the day. Here are men and boys from all over the country, from every occupation imaginable, who have passed through countless experiences — and to spend an evening chinning in a tent with a group of such fellows is certainly a treat. I thought I was broad-minded, but it needed bunking with some Texas cow-rider and drilling alongside of some Montana sheep-

herder or maybe a University graduate to show me there was lots of room for expansion. If there is one thing I'll be eternally grateful to Uncle for, it will be for this opportunity of growth, for this chance of fellowship with the finest of good fellows, bound in one common cause.

From the foregoing, one would strongly suspect that this is rather a strenuous life. It is — but at the same time a most fascinating one, and we all love it. Naturally, we are proud of our Corps, and I never saw a leatherneck who was n't an egotist of the most rabid sort over the fact that he was a United States Marine.

It is glorious. Never do you hear a growl or kick. On the skirmish line in heavy marching order and in "Swedish" I have heard big men sobbing and crying through gritted teeth. I have done it myself. But do we stop? Never! Not until we drop. Go until you can't go another step — and then go some more. That is the creed of the Marines. It is passing through the training here that one can understand why the Germans call us "devil-dogs" — why the Marine Corps has made such a splendid record "over there."

The attitude toward the men in drill is entirely impersonal. They are so many units capable of so much endurance — which they must go the limit. A Marine is n't coddled if he "does n't feel right." Out in the line he must go — and the first thing





THE FINISHED PRODUCT



you know, a good stiff hour's work has put him back on his toes again.

I cannot express the feeling, the wonderful morale, that comes on us as the weeks progress — the satisfaction that we are ready to do our damndest for Uncle — and every man is FIT for anything that may come up. It is that spirit that whips us on — that makes such damned egotists of us over the fact that we are United States Marines.

By the way, Major, I want to tell you about something that has helped me immensely. Discipline here is of the strictest kind and it is often difficult for the easy-going civilian to conform to it. But in my case: — you will recall that in your talk to us before we left, you told us that “there was a reason for everything” — a motive behind every order that would be issued us. I don't know why — but that phrase stuck in my mind — and has been of immeasurable aid in my adaptability to the Marine Corps discipline. When a man sees a good reason for an order, he is generally pretty cheerful about obeying it. But when he does n't — then is when it is n't so easy. Yet they can't go into detail about every order and regulation here — and so whenever something would come up I could n't see through, I'd say to myself, “There's a reason for it,” and cheerfully “carry on.” Invariably, time showed up the “reason” and necessity for the order or regulation.

I could keep on writing, Major, but you know a Marine does n't get very much time for writing letters — and I'm surprised I got time enough to write this one. You can rest assured, however, that I'll drop you a line whenever I can.

I have n't been over to see Major Lowndes yet, but I will very soon, and then I will discuss with him ways and means for my going to the Officers' Training School. I'm really surprised to see how quickly I adapted myself to military life and how well I like it. But come what may — be I buck private or Major-General — if I get out of this thing alive, my service in the United States Marine Corps will be one of the proudest and most cherished memories of my life.

Give my kindest personal regards to the boys in the office — and I would appreciate your letting Lieutenant McLauchlin see this letter. I have n't time to write him one personally, — and naturally my remarks to him would be the same as to you, Major, — for not only is "Mac" a regular fellow, but he is as proud as any leatherneck I've ever met over his being in the United States Marine Corps.

To you personally, there is always the best — o' course.

Sincerely

RUBIN JAFFE

Company G — Section 1  
Marine Barracks  
Mare Island, California

## CHAPTER II

### ON THE RANGE

THE United States Marines had been brought forward to the fighting line at Château Thierry. Closer and closer the Hun came, closer —

And then something happened!

Something new, something the Germans had neither known of nor expected. Here were men who did not follow the rule of firing merely in the general direction of the enemy. Instead, there they lay, in wave formation, the machine-gun bullets whining about them, the “hell by heavies” and “whizz bangs” bursting near by, yet adjusting their sights and aiming as calmly as though their game was the squirrel in the old hickory tree or the rabbit beside the road, back home.

For every bullet a Hun. For every squeeze on the trigger, one enemy less. The percentage of deaths from rifle fire changed from one death in a hundred almost to decimation.

Then it was that the Huns learned that they were facing the United States Marine who counts himself a poor fighter, indeed, unless he wears a Marksman’s Medal. And the way these medals are won is told by Private Sheldon R. Gearhart of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, writing home from

the recruit training camp at Paris Island, South Carolina.

*Paris Island, S.C.*

WE'RE on the rifle range now and are having life a little easier because it is quite cool here the last couple of days. A week ago to-day it was 132 degrees in the sun. You know this island is nothing but sand, sand, sand. You can grit your teeth any time, I don't care when, and grate on it. It's in your chow, on the sheets, and in your eyes. It blows and drifts just like snow, and it's just like snow to walk through — you sink in.

We get up every morning (Sunday included, for we shoot on Sunday too) at 4.30 A.M., have roll-call at 4.45, chow at 5, and at 5.30 we shove off for the range. It's about one and a half miles and we get there about 6 o'clock. We stay until 9 A.M., then come back to barracks. (That's when I'm writing this — 10 A.M.) At 11 we have chow, go back to the range at 12, and stay until 4, making a seven-hour day. Out of those seven hours we work ten minutes out of every hour and sit around and talk or sleep the other fifty minutes. We're not shooting now, just snapping in, but we begin to shoot Friday. These Springfield rifles kick just like a mule. When they go off they push you back about a foot, right straight along the ground. You shoot from three positions: prone, kneeling, and sitting. We shoot



“FROM THE HALLS OF MONTE-ZO-OMA”

*The Marines' Hymn*





from 200, 300, 400, 500, and 600 yards. From the latter distance, those bull's-eyes look like pin-heads. Rapid fire you shoot ten shots in one minute. It's real exciting when you are actually shooting. The things sound like a cannon. They shoot a bullet as long as your index finger. All rapid fire is done, not at a bull's-eye, but at a silhouette of a man's head and shoulders, the bottom of which is 36 inches.

The firing lines are lines from where you shoot. They run parallel to the targets and are about 500 yards long. They are higher by two feet than the surrounding ground. A man is stationed to a target and there are 65 men (one company) on the firing line at once. Back of the line the main coach stands with a megaphone. He calls out the commands.

Ever hear these fellows at side shows in a circus? That's the way this fellow yells. Here are a few of the commands we get: "All right! All right! You 253 company, up on the line! Get your slings on your arm, face half to the left and open the bolts! Place your right hand on the butt of your piece! Simulate! Load and lock! Ready on the right! Ready on the left! Position!" (At this command you get whichever position from which you are shooting.) "Commence firing!" Bang! Bang! Bang!

The only time I ever shot a gun in my life was when I shot a cat down at Uncle Harry's one year.

Ask Aunt Myrtle if she remembers it. If I have any trouble with my eyes at all I expect it will be on the range. It's hard for me to see the targets, but if I can't shoot at them I'll shoot at the numbers.

Am in the best of health; have never been sick a day since I've been on the island.

Chow!

Your brother

SHELDON

## CHAPTER III

### THE LADY LEATHERNECKS

NOT all the informative letters about the United States Marines have come from fighting men. At least two of them were written by a new element in the Marine Corps, rollicking, happy letters that carried between the lines a deeper, greater meaning. They were the letters of a girl who had become a "lady leatherneck," that a real "he-man leatherneck," as the Marines call themselves, might take up his gun and march away to war.

War found many a fighting Marine champing at his bit. He had been assigned to clerical or headquarters duty, while his bunkies, his pals, were going overseas!

Application after application piled in for transfer to active duty. One by one they were sorrowfully refused — for the officers were as anxious to get "over there" as the men. Then came the inspiration, the enrollment of women to take the clerical duties off the shoulders of the men, and allow them to depart for the Big Adventure. Real Marines are these women and girls. They enlist as the men enlist after passing a rigid physical and mental examination. They wear the winter field and khaki, the overseas cap; they drill, salute, and have their

officers. Every one of them means a man released for fighting, and they are as proud of the traditions of the Corps as the men themselves.

One of the first to be enrolled was a New York girl named Martha L. Wilchinski. And, her oath completed, she hurried to write to her sweetheart fighting in France:

DEAR BILL:

I'VE got the greatest news! No, I have n't thrown you over; I'm still strong for you, Bill. No, it's no use; don't try to guess. You're not used to that much mental effort, and you might get brain-fag. Besides, you'd never guess, anyway. Now, listen, and try to get this. I know it'll be hard at first, but it'll grow on you after a while. Are you ready? Well, then, — I'm a lady leatherneck; I'm the last word in Hun hunters; I'm a real, live, honest-to-goodness Marine! The process was painful, I admit, and lasted for thirty-six hours, but I survived it all right. Our future together does n't look so black to me now. Don't be surprised if you see me mentioned for a Croix de Guerre or something. You know me! I'm not looking for sympathy or anything, but honest, I've been through an awful lot. They've done everything to me except punch my name out on my chest. That's coming soon, I guess.

But I'll begin from the beginning and tell you everything *ad seriatim*. That's Latin. It means, "Go



GOOD-BYE



to it, kid." You know I always had a kind of a hunch that the Marines would realize the necessity of women some day, so I was laying low and waiting. Well, when I heard they had at last hung out a sign at the recruiting station — "Women wanted for the United States Marine Corps" — I was ready. "Mother," says I, "give me your blessing, I'm going to be one of the first to enlist." I was there when the doors opened in the morning. I was one of the first all right — the first six hundred! You'd think they were selling sugar or something. Well, when the crowd heard that you had to be willing to go anywhere as ordered and you had to be a cracker-jack stenog, they thinned out some. And from what was left the lieutenant picked out twelve to go over to the colonel and have him give us the double O. I was one of them, of course. I'm not looking for applause, but you know I always said you could n't keep a good man down. You're only a corporal, Bill, so you may not know what a colonel is. A colonel is a man who talks to you over the top of his glasses and looks through you as if you were a piece of smoked glass. You know me, I'm not afraid of anything this side of sudden death, but during the three seconds he looked at me I had everything from nervous prostration to paralysis agitans. That's called psychological effect. I would n't admit it to a soul but you because it's scientific and will probably go over your head, any-



way. The colonel gave us a pretty stiff examination, and out of the fifteen, five lived to break the news to mother. You've got to admit it, Bill, it shows merit. He told us to report the next morning for a physical examination.

That was a terrible ordeal. It took three men and one woman to do the job. You can't appreciate what I went through. Those doctors must have thought I was a ventriloquist or a somnambulist or something. I had to cough through my nose and breathe through my ears. I had to stand on my right eyebrow and wave my left foot. Maybe they thought I was training for the Signal Corps or something. I had to wiggle my ears. I got ptomaine poisoning; I sprained my big pto in the tussle. Then I had to match colors. I'm not complaining, but you know it's hard to keep up with colors when they change every season. The colors don't change, of course, but some smart guy wants to make it hard for everybody else so he calls green, chartreuse, and yellow, maize. Then they took my finger-prints. They'll know me when they see me again. The nurse could n't find any marks on me for purpose of identification. "Take a picture of my freckles, nurse," said I. Some kidder, eh? And, I've got a terrible confession to make to you. You know what I said, no secrets between us. They took my height in my stocking feet. It was n't fair; nobody had ever done that to me before and I told the doctor



as much. I'm a terrible shrimp, and I don't know whether you'll want me when I tell you. I'm sixty-two inches. Is n't it heart-breaking? I felt as big as a yardstick when I heard it. But you know me, Bill, I'm a sport. You can always have your ring back. There's still nine installments to pay on it, anyway.

Well, only three of us came out alive. The others had fallen by the wayside. Then the colonel came in and told us to come over and be sworn in. I'm going to tell you something. I'm not bragging, but it is n't every private that's sworn in by a colonel. It was terribly impressive. Something kept sticking in my throat all the time. I don't know whether it was my heart or my liver. I had to swallow it several times before I could say, "I do." Then they took a movie of us. I'm not throwing "bokays" at myself, but you've got to admit it, the kid's clever!

And then I got my orders. Travel orders they call them. But that's only to make it hard. The only traveling I have to do is to come down from the Bronx in the new subway, and that's not traveling, that's just plain suffering. I'm so worried about those orders, I sleep with them under my pillow at night and wear them around my neck during the day.

I got some good tips from the boys. They said if you want to scare the captain just click your heels at him. I don't remember whether they said click or kick; I guess they meant kick. And another

thing they said. When I'm made a sergeant, I must n't stand for being called "Sarge." Nothing doing on that "Sarge" stuff. They'll have to call me anything that's in the Manual. I hear some people are giving us nicknames. Is n't it funny the minute a girl becomes a regular fellow somebody always tries to queer it by calling her something else? There are a lot of people, Bill, that just go around taking the joy out of life. Well, anybody that calls me anything but "Marine" is going to hear from me. "Marine" is good enough for me.

Bill, you never were very literary. But did you ever hear me speak of Kipling and what he said about the female of the species being more deadly than a triple titration of TNT? Well, if a regiment of Marines can make the Germans stand on their bone heads and yell "Kamerad," you can imagine what a regiment of female Marines would do? Why, those plop-eyed, yellow-skinned bounders would run so fast and furious they'd never stop for second wind until they reached Berlin.

I never received that German helmet. Are you sure you got the fellow, Bill?

I can't sign myself as affectionately as I used to, Bill. You understand. I'm a soldier now and you would n't want me doing anything that was n't in the Manual.

Yours till the cows come home,

PVT. MARTHA L. WILCHINSKI, M.C.R.

Time went on. Private Wilchinski learned to do "squads right," to salute at the proper angle, and what she never believed she'd ever be forced to do — "police." But Private Wilchinski learned that "police duty" in the military sense is vastly different from the civil. Even the fact that the colonel "who looked over his glasses" had handed her a corporal's warrant, could n't fully efface memory of that "police work." And again she wrote Bill:

*New York, September 23, 1918*

DEAR BILL:

WELL, Bill, here I am again. I've been waiting for a chance to write you, but you'd never believe me if I told you I've been so busy sweeping floors and picking up cigarette butts and washing windows and everything, I have n't had a chance. That's a fine occupation for a Marine! Believe me, if I had known what I was enlisting for —! What'll I say to my grandchildren, Bill? When they ask me: "What did you do in the Great War, Grandma?" I'll have to say: "Washing windows on the second floor." That's a fine thing to have written on your tombstone, is n't it!

It's these everlasting inspections, Bill. There's only one thing the matter with them — they never come off! That is how I have it doped out, Bill. They want to save janitor's wages, so an order comes around that the general or somebody is com-

ing for inspection. Then everybody gets busy and starts scrubbing and bumping into each other and stepping on each other's feet and everything. And just because I'm low in rank I have to do most of the work. The captain comes in and says: "Here's where you ought to shine!" "I am shining, Captain," I says; "I'm shining everything in sight." So he takes a chair and puts it on the table and stands on it and runs his finger along the ceiling. Then he shows it to me, and it has a speck of dust on it, and he looks at me like I broke his heart. So I climb up after him and I'm so nervous, I fall down and break the chair and scratch the table and dislocate my adenoids.

But that is n't all, Bill. I don't want to get court-martialed or anything by the general — not until pay-day, anyway — so I wash my face and go out and get a shine and everything. And the general never came that day at all, and the next day it rained and spoiled my shine and I had to get another one. I tell you, Bill, this life is wearing me out to a whisper. I'm getting so thin I had to take another hole in my wrist watch.

You remember I told you last time that a "movie" man took a picture of me being sworn in. He said it was going to show the week after. Well, Bill, I went to the movies steady every night for three weeks and spent \$2.13 on myself and that fellow Pete, who lives next door to us; he's got a

B classification — he'll be here when they go and be here when they come back. And all I got out of it was Spanish influenza and a pain in the ear on the side where Pete was snoring all the time, and I'm out \$2.13, and all the lunch I can live on for a month now is a glass of milk and a short walk.

My cousin Sadie has been coming in and bragging for a week about her friend's being gassed and wounded and decorated and everything. I know her friend all right. The only way he'd ever get on the casualty list is by starving to death on account of sleeping all day and not having to get up for meals. And the only decorations he'd ever get are a couple of black eyes. Well, I was mighty pleased when I saw your name in the papers, Bill. That Sadie has n't got a thing on me now.

I hope they did n't have to give you ether, Bill. I hear the fellows do terrible things when they come out of ether. I heard of a fellow who made love to the nurse. I bet he tried to hold her hand and everything. I get a lot of inside dope about the war, Bill; that's how I happened to hear about this. You want to be careful about those French girls, Bill. They're terribly rough. I hear you can't take a peaceful walk by yourself without having one of them drape herself around your œsophagus and getting closer to you than your landlady on payday. I'm sending you a book on biology. It's called

“How to Tell the Wild Women.” You ought never to go to Paris without it.

I have some very difficult situations to handle sometimes, Bill. For instance: The other day the lieutenant and I were waiting to go down in the elevator. Now, here’s the question. If I am a lady and he’s a gentleman, I go in first. If he’s an officer and I’m a corporal, he goes in first. It all depends on how you look at it. I did n’t know how he’d take it, so I thought I’d wait and see what he’d do. I guess he thought the same thing. So we both stood there eyeing each other up on the right oblique. Then he stepped forward and I stepped back. Then he stepped back and I stepped forward. Then we both stepped back. I was getting pretty dizzy by that time. I guess he was too. Then we both squeezed in at the same time. I guess that’s what they mean by military tactics.

Well, I’ve got to stop now and start in picking up cigarette butts again. They’re smoking them very short this year. I tell you, Bill, if I ever get out of this alive and have a home of my own, there’ll be no cigarettes in my house. Not that I’m throwing out any hints. I thought you’d just like to know, that’s all.

Your comrade in arms

CORPORAL MARTHA



## CHAPTER IV

### “THIS VALE OF MUD AND TEARS”

FEW letters from the front have been more pictorial than the ones written by Major Robert L. Denig, of the Marines, to his wife. In later chapters, others shall appear, giving their graphic descriptions of battle and of loneliness, each containing an artistry, a beauty of touch and detail that is seldom found in a fighting man.

The ones which immediately follow were written before he had gone into battle, and are descriptive of an American officer's life on the Western Front, preparatory to taking his active part in guiding troops to battle.

In most of the letters which follow, Major Denig was “at school” learning all the fine points that the French had gained in the bitter years of their experience, that he might avail himself of every opportunity to know the means of defeating the Boche when the great test came.

And that Major Denig learned his lesson well is indicated by the following recommendation issued to him at the time he was transferred from the Third Division to his own beloved Fourth Brigade of United States Marines:

*Headquarters Thirtieth Infantry**American E.F., France*

7 July, 18

*From:* Commanding Officer, 30th Infantry.*To:* Commanding General, 3rd Division (Red).*Subject:* Major Robert L. Denig.

1. Major Robert L. Denig has been with this organization for over two months, one month of this time being spent in the front line.

2. During this entire period Major Denig showed the greatest efficiency as an officer, keeping always on the alert and improving every opportunity to strengthen his command. His ability as a commander and an instructor has impressed me very favorably.

3. I hereby recommend that this be forwarded to the Marine Corps.

E. L. BUTTS

Colonel, 30th Infantry Commanding

*H'dq., 3rd Division**A.E.F., July 8, 1918*

MAJOR ROBERT L. DENIG:

THE Commanding General directs me to inform you that he concurs in the foregoing statement of Col. Butts, commanding the 30th Infantry, and wishes to express to you his appreciation of your services while serving with the 3rd Division.

(Sd)

DAVID L. STONE

Colonel, A.D.C., G 1



Therefore, the following letters go far to disprove the old theory that the fighting man must be blunt, cold-blooded, and brusque. For in Major Denig's letters are found the deepest, sincerest sympathy, and a kindly spirit far removed from the old idea of the frigid, thoroughly unresponsive warrior.

*France, Nov. 30, 1917. Friday*

LAST Saturday Hunt, Metcalf, and myself were ordered up to this hole, to take five weeks' course in the First Corps School. I am in the field officers' course, which includes visits to the front-line trenches.

Well, to go back and start over, I was in the big city of Bordeaux when the orders came, so Hunt packed up for me, and Baston in a side car looked me up. He found me, of course, at a little round table at the Café Bordeaux. I then bought a couple of extra blankets, brought them back to camp, gathered in the party, and left with them and our baggage for the gare du Midi. We had dinner in the station, bought some papers, and boarded the train at 10.20. We had a hard time getting seats, but finally got settled, with Hunt in a different compartment. He had to fight garlic fumes all night. I had a good seat and pleasant companions. It was a cold night and rainy. We passed through Tours.

We arrived in Paris at the Quai d'Orsay at 9 A.M. and after a scramble for our baggage we

started across town in a bus pulled by an old horse driven by an old man. I was the guide and pointed out the sights. We crossed the Seine, drove through the Tuileries, crossed the rue de Rivoli, where the gold statue to Jeanne d'Arc stands up the avenue de l'Opéra and passed the other famous ones and got out at the gare de l'Est, where we rechecked our baggage and bought a ticket for this twentieth-century Valley Forge. Hunt and I got a hot bath and I a shave. You can only get hot water in Paris on Saturday and Sunday.

At noon we pulled out. The station was full of soldiers and officers going back to the front. Women must say good-bye away from the station, and I saw many weeping on the far side of the square as I came up.

The train was full of Americans, as it runs to Nancy, the end of our front. We came up the Marne through Bar-le-Duc, at which place the Germans delight in dropping bombs. I saw many anti-aircraft guns about there. We passed within ten miles of Rheims, and from there on, many soldiers' graves, but the country is full of live ones. We got here at 6.00 P.M. and walked out to camp in the rain and mud. After reporting, we were assigned billets in an old leaky French barracks. The whole floor is muddy and in one place the mud is six inches deep. You can take a stick and shove it in the ground two feet without half trying.

Our baggage was dumped at the foot of the hill in the mud and we had to lug it up ourselves. There are sixty of us in this shack. I am Senior. Uncle Sam allows us three candles per day for all of us. Twenty men to one candle. Water is scarce; you get it when you can out of a wagon. The drinking-water is treated with chemical and makes you sick to drink it. Hot water can't be had. To take a bath you stand on your trunk and have some one swab you down in ice-cold water. I did not bring mine. We have two stoves, real small, and for them we get one hundred and twenty pounds of *wet* wood. The daily allowance could be put in a steamer trunk. We steal all the wood we can. I got a flagpole and a ladder which were at once "camouflaged" with an axe.

The mess is good. The 15th Company, my old one, does the cooking and they look out for me. It costs five francs per day, but that is the only expense here, outside of the wear and tear on your clothes. Mine are a *wreck*. I am mud from head to toes, feet always wet in spite of hip boots. The woolen socks are fine. I usually have on three pairs, as the snow and *mud* cover everything and every one. Mud on the Western Front is no joke, it can't be described; it is thick and sticky, and when it dries on you it is as hard as a brick. My overcoat will stand alone.

About the camp are narrow walks of wood about a foot wide. They are slippery and hard to keep on.

Officially they are known as "duck walks." If you meet any one, one has to get off in the mud and it is always deep there. The one person I pity here, outside of myself, is the poor sentry who walks about on them looking up in the air all the time for German planes. I have not seen the sun for ten days or more. No wonder the Kaiser is fighting for a place in the sun! But what we can't understand is why he wants all this mud; they ought to give it to him.

Well, this war is still going on. The sound of the guns is with us all the time. Two nights ago the bombardment from midnight to daylight was terrific. Just as dawn broke all guns stopped at once, and you knew that they were "over the top, with the best of luck, and give 'em hell." Troop trains pass all the time and hospital trains are coming back. I counted sixty-three cars in one train with red crosses on them.

Our losses have been about 1000, so far, but you would not know it here. I suppose you have the lists at home. We do not get them till the mail comes from the States. The first raid the Germans made was on our first night about an hour after we got in the trenches. The Germans all spoke English; they were tipped off by a spy. None of our dead were shot: they had their necks cut, which will be their approved method of treating us. The Scotch, called by the Germans, "Ladies of Hell," they mutilate; Canadians, they crucify; and so it goes.



MORGAN DENNIS

“IF YOU MEET ANY ONE, ONE HAS TO GET OFF IN THE  
MUD”





At present I am studying Stokes Mortars, a fine little gun for short-range work, from 100 to 800 yards. It shoots a shell containing two and a half pounds of high explosive. The gun costs only \$80 and the shell \$3. You can train the gun crews in two weeks. The danger zone of the burst has a 400-yard radius. I was nearly hit yesterday by a piece of a shell, though I was 500 yards from the burst. The piece landed in the ground about 10 feet from me. We heard it coming, and I was watching the rest run, lie down, etc. The next time I will do the same. One officer dove in a trench, landed on his head, and was brought out senseless, more scared than hurt, I think.

We go to lectures and walk over a mile to our work, over a high field of *mud*. There is more country here than at home. The people live in villages miles apart. The country is high rolling hills and looks like the Dakotas. From the hill back of the camp you can see for miles. The town is about 2000 in population, and all the people are learning English, so it is easy to get on. I use French all the time. The crowd in our shack is O.K., most of last year's West Point class, all captains. I am the dean in age, length of service, and rank. We had a bridge game last night, in which I won the wood from the other end — high stakes — so the other end has to go cold for a day.

It is four o'clock now and dark. I am trying to

write this on a trunk locker, near the stove, with a candle stuck in a bottle.

The day begins at 6.30 A.M. and ends at 9.00 P.M. The instructors are English and they are good. Yesterday was Thanksgiving and a holiday. We had a big dinner. I did all my washing and cleaned my gear, and wished I were home. Some cheerful guy reminded us of the empty chairs at home, and of the fact that some of us would never go home again. Be that as it may, I will. Bordeaux looks good to me. After seeing this mud and discomfort you can understand the pictures of the *Vie Parisienne*. Any man who goes through months of this is entitled to all the fun he can find. It is hell, and what it is in the first line I will find out in a few weeks.

*December 1, 1917*

MORE rain, therefore, much more mud; but we like it now. It is just one week since we left the big city. Hunt and I are homesick for the place, and we figure on giving ourselves one big fine party when we get back. I got a hot bath to-day in the staff bathhouse. A few francs to the soldiers running it did the job. Got an awful shock to-day, as Bobbie Adams says. I am due here for seven weeks, five here and two in the trenches. Christmas and New Year's in this advanced zone does not seem alluring, when Bordeaux offers so many attractions and com-



forts. We have invented a new dance called the "Duck Walk." The favorite song in this shack is, "My girl is a Lulu, every inch a Lulu, Lulu, that old girl of mine."

A black-and-white cat has taken his or her home with me, and has occupied my blankets, which, by the way, as I sleep in my shoes, are quite dirty. I have not the nerve to kick the cat out, as its home and owners are gone and it is, no doubt, lonely like me.

*December 2, 1917*

SNOW again to-day and cold as can be. Last night it rained and I had a leak on my head and one on my feet. But I got well under the canvas of the bedding roll and got through the long, cold night. If I ever get back to Bordeaux I will give myself one swell party and get this mud and wet out of my system. The song of hate has started for the night, and those in the trenches can have my share to-night. Here we are huddled about the stove with wet feet having a song and gab-fest. Metcalf is sick with the grippe. His cot is astride a puddle, but he will be O.K. soon. I have invested in one of the peaked hats with four stripes, Major, to wear inside. They are great.

*December 3, 1917*

COLD, clear day, a miracle for France, as the sun shines. The hills are covered with snow, the mud is

nearly frozen underfoot, so I put it down as *some* day. My feet are dry, and I got along without an overcoat. My overcoat is a *wreck*.

We started our second week to-day. In the morning we studied German grenades. In the afternoon we had trench raids, and Stokes Mortars firing. The phosphorus bombs are the worst, to my mind, as the stuff flies all over if it hits you and it burns right through your clothes; you can't put it out. Then there was the "thermos" bomb that burns at a heat of 3000 degrees, burns through steel. I also watched a gas attack of chlorine gas. General Pershing and Colonel House come to-morrow. Got three letters from you to-day that I answered.

*December 4, 1917*

ANOTHER fine day. This morning taken up with a machine-gun lecture. The statement was made that we must win for many reasons, one so that our women would not be used to scientifically propagate the race, as is now done in Germany.

This afternoon General Pershing, Colonel House and wife, General Bliss, Admiral Benson, and a numerous party visited this great University. They came from Paris in autos. Our various classes gave exhibitions; first bayonet and musketry, then hand grenades, rifle grenades, trench mortars, trench raids, artillery firing, aviation, and many minor stunts. The Boche joined in with a heavy bombard-

ment of the front lines, but the wind was wrong for much noise from them.

*December 5, 1917*

MACHINE-GUN lectures this morning and in the afternoon lectures on shipping. Two English officers spoke and they were very interesting. They give the devil his due; as a fighter they have no adverse remarks to give the Boche. In training you must make your men bloodthirsty in every way you can. The targets are German heads; German prisoners are used to aim on. Songs of hate are sung by the troops. A bull's-eye is called a Kaiser, an inner a Crown Prince, an outer a Von Tirpitz, etc. Bullets are red to represent blood on the bullet (B.B.), etc.

It is very cold; ice in the billets every day. My hands are black with dirt and I can't get it out.

*December 6, 1917*

WHY 1917 I don't know, except that it is so near 1918. Another fine day but thawing. I hope it stops, as I would rather freeze than mire. To-day we put in our time in engineering stunts. The stringing of barbed wire is a science in itself. Have not moved into the Swiss Hut yet, as this bunch is too care-free and likes to sit around the fire and bull too much for me to want to leave.

Last night we had another fine bombardment for some six hours, and a big Zep flew high overhead.

*December 7, 1917*

ATTENDED machine-gun lectures all day and also fired on the range with a pistol and with a captured German gun, the latter in order to be able to load and fire it, and also to know how to put it out of commission in the quickest time, if you are unable to take it off. To-night we had a trench raid with a Stokes Mortar barrage. The finest part is the star shells; they light up the surrounding ground for at least a half-mile with a bright white light. Then there are the various-colored rockets used as signals as to how the attack goes.

*December 8 — Sunday*

TO-MORROW we go to watch some attack manœuvres by the Second Division on some trenches near here. It will be an all-day job. Next Friday I am going to Paris. It looks now as if I would spend Xmas in the trenches, as the week before Xmas I take a three-day finishing-up course in gas. The roads are full of ambulances, etc., *en route* to Italy.

So we declared war on Austria! It caused about as much comment here as taps.

*December 10 — Monday*

SPENT all day watching the First Division attack the Washington Centre of Resistance. A heavy fire was put down on the Berlin Trenches; the guns firing were two miles off, and the remarkable part

was that all shells hit in a hundred feet or on the trenches. We had also a gas attack and I sat in a shell-hole a half-hour and nearly suffocated.

*December 19, 1917 — Wednesday*

I WENT to Paris on the 14th with Hunt, and we returned on the 16th to this vale of dirt and tears. Some one suggested that they send our hut home as an exhibit and we stay in it. Under those circumstances you could not drive us out. We talk the war over at times, especially when it is time to go to sleep. We all agree that the next time we will be too old and know too much to be let in on another secret like this. Why, the blooming scrap has just begun.

Bordeaux for mine. I have friends there now both high and low, and life is pleasant in that city of wine, women, and war babies. Be that as it may, I am here now and to-morrow night will be in Houdelaincourt, and the good Lord only knows where after that, as I will be in the saddle till Xmas Eve, with a toothbrush for baggage. After that perhaps somewhere else, but Bordeaux or bust by the 31st.

One of the lieutenants here in taking instructions in gas got rattled. He is in the hospital now, blind, sick, and out of luck generally. It is all in the game.

*December 22, 1917*

MY billet is now in Houdelaincourt, a place not far from this vale of mud and tears. I was ordered out with the First Division and was attached to the Third Battalion of the Eighteenth Infantry. After packing my bedding roll, etc., I motored over and was assigned the above billet at 62 rue le Grand. It was a big square room with two feather beds built in the wall; they were real ones, the kind, as I have remarked before, that you live in. It was all smoked oak; the beams overhead were crooked and rough, the open hearth had a real fire, and I sat in front of it with the old man who owned the house and talked for several hours. His wife had just died and he was lonely. He told me that the village of 800 people had 50 killed, 80 wounded, and 18 prisoners. He brought in three little boys, from seven to two, whose father had been a prisoner for two years, and whose mother had died; they are all alone. You can picture them as well as I can describe them.

There are no young men left in the place. Wood has gone from eight to thirty francs a cord, and he can get no oil and cannot afford candles. The result is, the village is dark at 6 P.M. I was in bed at 8.

Well, I got up the next morning, of course, in spite of the feather bed; had breakfast, then mounted my horse which the orderly had brought, and set forth to find my outfit. It was the finest

winter morning I have ever seen. Everything was an inch white in hoar frost. My road went fifteen miles through a forest and every twig was white; it looked like lace. I caught up with the outfit about ten and we marched and did stunts till three, when I got ordered back here. The ride back was just the same, as it was freezing all day and the foothills of the Vosges are *not* warm.

To-morrow I go to the French Front at Soissons, my helmet and gas masks are ready, so this Xmas I will be in the trenches.

I will give this to Hunt to mail, as he might get back to Bordeaux before me. Anyway, he does not go to the front, and I might get that stray shot. There is not much doing there, though we hear there might be. I am only an observer, so will look out for No. 1.

*Christmas Night, 1917*

*La Huhe in the Bois Beau Marias near  
Cordonne Chemin des Dames*

THE above is full direction of how to find me tonight, but perhaps the Germans might object, as the Crown Prince is opposite. I am now forty feet under ground in a cute little room of a big dugout. I have a bed, old furniture, and am warm, though it is snowing above. We have to learn a lot about that end of the game. The walls have white paper and are covered with pictures out of the *Vie Par.*, which



make life worth living. Then I have a telephone; how is that for comfort? Also an orderly who is on the job at all times. Your and the children's pictures are on the wall, so you have been to the front too.

The burns on the paper are due to drying the ink in a candle flame. This abri or dugout is in the side of the plateau of Craonne, the Chemin des Dames is above, the papers at present call it California. The woods are all shot to pieces; not a whole tree left. To-night we got a shelling, but dinner, and afterward bridge, went on without remark, so I could say nothing, and I guess it would not have helped much.

To go back, I left Montigny at nine this morning and by auto came here, stopping to see a kite balloon hidden in some woods; they got ready to take me up, but the wind rose and prevented it. But I saw the working of the whole affair. Then to a division headquarters at the Château Rancy. It was all shot to pieces; a few rooms had been fixed up to house the staff. The village at the foot of the hill on which was the château is in even worse condition. I saw only a few old men with canes and some servants. From there through Concevreux and Maizy to where I had Christmas dinner at noon with the staff of this division, menu enclosed. They were quartered in a fine old house, the property of an author belonging to the Academy. It was jolly.

After dinner to Craonnelle, and here. The road



all the way was camouflaged with canvas, burlap, and trees. You have no idea how much stage setting is done to hide movements — miles and miles of it.

The guns go all the time. Machine guns rattle every time some one shows a head. Now it is dark and trenches are being dug, for the hold on this place is not yet secure.

To-morrow and the next day I will live on the front line, when we will be separated by one hundred yards. On Friday (this is Tuesday) I will go to Craonne, where the colonel commanding will show me how Chemin des Dames and Craonne were taken.

I came here by Château Thierry and Soissons. It is on the Aisne. I go back via Rheims and Épernay. So I will have had some trip.

This has been with it all a lonely Xmas, though unique in the extreme.

*La Hutte, France,*

*December 28, 1917*

It is hard to know where to begin this letter as I have had such a fine time. The front is "some place"; that is, the real front on a tour such as mine.

On the morning of the 26th we left here at six, a Lieutenant Martin (French, who speaks fine English), another officer, and Major Elliott, U.S.A., and

I went to the post of command of a battalion holding a part of the front line. There we lived in an old German dugout, of which I have written to you.

That same night I went to one of the outposts, listening post. The company holding that sector had dug thirty feet under the ground; the men were sleeping on the steps, but seemed well off at that. At this point, though they had been there six weeks, the trenches were shallow and they had not been able to put out any wire, due to the Germans, who do not hesitate to shoot at the slightest movement. So we crawled out a shallow old German trench caved in by shell fire, to a point blocked by sandbags and old snarled wire.

It was a moonlight night, so I could see No Man's Land well, just to the German trenches at this point one hundred yards off. In front of us in the same trench the Germans had an outpost not forty yards distant. That is as near as I got. Both sides just keep their ears open for the slightest noise. If it gets dark both sides send out patrols to control the narrow strip; hence the numerous small fights you read about. Four days ago the Boche raided the part I was in and killed four, wounded seven, captured one officer, two N.C.O.'s, and five men.

After I had seen that all was well we crawled back and returned to the dugout. We had not much more than arrived when an order came to be on the "alert," as the listening machine had picked up a

German message to attack our sector between eight and ten, but no date was given; so all went to their station and I to bed. Got up at 5.30 and got a place where I could peek over, and waited. At eight sharp five big two hundred and fifty pound bombs sailed high in the air and lit on the outpost of last night; then quiet. The critical hour of ten passed and no attack, so I went below.

At one a shell burst on the door, so we went to look. By two, fifty-six shells had burst, by my count, within one hundred yards of us. It is great; the sporting element comes right up, if you have any, and you get real interested. This is how it sounds: — Boom — — — — *Whir-er-er-er-er-er-er-Bang!* and dirt, stones, dust, and snow fill the air. If you are out, — which, if you have no duty to do, is foolish, I admit, — you keep to the enemy's side of the trench and trust to luck. The men are so scattered and the trenches so deep that there is slight danger. Not a soul was hit. But it is some sport. My side partner did not care for it, so I got all the attention. The men gave me candy and cigarettes and I had a real drawing-room affair.

We then had to leave; we walked back here through the trenches via Ville-aux-Bois; not a wall above two feet high; it was built on the side of a hill. The Germans had tunnels in the hill and a railroad, miles of electric cables, concrete, steel rails, dug-outs, etc. You have to see it to believe it.

On through Pontavert, shot to pieces, but the walls still standing, which, as you see the fireplaces, makes a greater impression; then back here. A fine dinner, a game of bridge, in which I won twenty centimes (four cents), and to bed. The guns went all night and the machine guns rattled. Oh! I forgot an important point. I fired my first shot on land at the German lines, a one-pounder. I fired twice on a stretch of road. They do so to harass the enemy. I did not hit any one. The two brass shell cases I have as mementoes.

This morning we went to Craonne and the Chemin des Dames. Craonne is like the "Rock," the sides and top of which are one *mass* of shell-holes. The town is swept away, just a brick or a rock now and then. The French are digging in. The Germans had miles of concrete tunnels in it; wire, shells, old clothes, helmets, grenades, equipment, strew the entire place, by that I mean *miles*. Three hundred thousand men it cost. Three years and an advance of less than a mile.

The Germans have the valley below and higher land beyond; they are dug in. The French are digging in. We crossed to the top, and there I saw my first dead men, frozen in various positions.

We tried to go down to the plain. The trench was in plain view of the Germans in places. When we would come to such a place, one after the other would run for it, to the next turn. I was third.

The German would watch, let the other two go, get a line, and *ping-gip!* The bullets for me, and they did not go far off either. We beat it back. This time I was in the lead, so number three got it. We made the top and got to an observation post, but the damage was done. Their guns opened up and we had shrapnel for a half-hour; and they can shoot, don't forget it. Every burst about fifteen feet up, they carried the whole hilltop. We sat down and waited. Later our guns opened up in reply, and so the games go on.

If you stick your head up thirty seconds it is a safe bet you will get a message from the Kaiser. One trench took us through a graveyard, or what is left of it. A broken stone on which I could only make out "Marguerite"; her coffin was cut through and stuffed with sandbags. The German sandbags are made of paper, and are remarkably strong; they look like cloth.

Then, to the P.C. du Colonel, where we had a big dinner. The cake beautifully made was Craonne. The baker lives there, but he cannot now put his finger on where his house stood, the whole place being so torn up. For guests, a regimental custom was observed. The cooks, orderlies, and waiters come in and recite a piece welcoming the guests, then they announce the menu. After each item you bring your glass down with a bang. They wind up by wishing you a good appetite. They almost

shout it all. Needless to say, it starts things going. You then toast them and the party is on.

After dinner, the front line, where I was yesterday, got a heavy shelling. We could see it from the hill. A day rocket went up from there and thirty seconds later a wall of bursting shells fell between there and the German trenches in No Man's Land. It lasted several minutes, a barrage a fly could not go through, and all coming from five miles back of us. You ask for a barrage and a few seconds later you have it. It is all a machine that works like a clock on both sides.

The fact that we came for a week to learn is amusing to the French. They had prepared to keep us a month. As it is, I am only a sight-seeing tourist, dined at every turn. They can't do enough for you.

We returned via Craonnelle, again all shot to pieces. The ruin wrought cannot be described; it is just a country swept clean. The land a mass of shell-holes, every tree killed, all houses down, and this from the English Channel to Switzerland and at least fifty miles wide. I passed a six-inch battery, each gun with over a hundred rounds, a day's supply; and there are thousands and thousands on each side.

To-morrow I go back.

Yours

ROB

Oh, yes, rat-hunting in the trenches is some sport. They run down and every one tries to jump on them. I got a couple. The rats are worse than the Boches.

## CHAPTER V

### QUIET DAYS

NOT all of the life of a United States Marine in France has been confined to fighting. It is true, that since the dark days in Belleau Wood, near Château Thierry, when the Marines threw back the Hun, there have been many calls for the "leather-necks" to act as the shock troops on the "jump-off" of an offensive. But before that time there were comparatively quiet days, in which the observing Marine studied his surroundings and wrote home after the fashion of the following letter:

*Dear Old France, May 18, 1918*

MY DEAR RAYMOND:

SINCE writing last I have been transferred. My ambulance company went to the country, — no, I mean to the front, — but that is the spirit over here. The men are wild to throw a hand grenade or bounce a rifle ball off of a Hun's helmet. I am now the adjutant to the commanding officer, Camp Hospital 26, a bigger job and a harder one and considered an honor by most of them. Anyway, it is a peg up the ladder and that's what we all want. Make good, in other words. We have 500 beds and more coming. Have over 15 officers and 130 men in the



command. Hospital filled all the time. Lots of excitement. All kinds of cases and lots of surgery.

The country here is beautiful and the weather here is better still. Lots of trees and grapevines are showing life. Flowers, etc. The roads are old and like pavements. The towns, of course, are old and the people away behind the times. Carts are two-wheeled, never four. Every day you see lots of old Frenchies coming along the road with two to six big casks of red or white wine aboard. He generally has enough cognac aboard to steer his old Dobbin in front of your car. At that he is highly respected among the Yanks, as they have occasion at times to spend a few francs occasionally with him. With five francs (\$1) he can go to his billet in search of the Kaiser. Most all of us are beginning to be able to talk French. Opportunities are good to learn when you are quartered in billets. Billets are either homes, barns, lofts, etc. No men are quartered in tents. Officers draw real rooms. Swell beds of feathers, but minus the bird. Fireplace and all conveniences except baths, running water, etc. The enlisted men have ticks furnished them with straw, and with their own blankets, form a very comfortable bed. They are in attics, lofts, sheds, caves, etc. Dry and protected. Our quarters at the present are in the hospital, but I am talking of the army. Our men in France are well taken care of. They eat well. Every thing except fresh vegetables comes from the

States; from canned salmon in Alaska to Borden's milk in New York. We are on white bread and have sugar. Fresh beef from the States (frozen), onions from Ireland, oranges from Spain and Portugal. We are well fed and taken care of. You in the States are making the sacrifices; you are Hooverizing to make an army that will be invincible.

Raymond, you have not got the true conception of what we have here. No one over there has unless he has been here. They who are new are being whipped into the best of shape. They are hard, healthy, and strong. They know well what they are here for. There will be no mercy shown. The cunning of the American has never been equaled. We see it every day. He only falls once for the same game. He knows what his forefathers fought for and he will do credit to the country that has staked her all that the principles for which we fight will not perish. Ray, you will say I've got the bug, but if you were here you'd have the fever, for we're not coming back till it's over over here. We'd all like to get back in time to vote for Van Alstine for President and Hughes for Vice-President, but we have our doubts.

I look for Germany to make another big offensive, a real one, and then her finish. She cannot keep her people satisfied with the loss of blood. She is becoming worried at the constant hordes of Yanks getting over. Our supplies are coming more and

more in spite of her submarine warfare which is proving a joke, for our destroyers have put the fear of God in them. I am confident that this summer will see the beginning of the end. Let's hope so, but we will never beg, for we are good sports and can sure give them hell. In this game it's figuring how you can kill the slickest without being detected, and you naturally get hard. For my part I'll be like the Ladies' Aid Society, "No, we won't stand for them being segregated, we want them exterminated." That's me. Back home we know you are behind us, for now it is a popular war. That always stimulates the soldier, for he feels just like the little boy who has his big daddy believe in him in a fight. He knows he gets a square deal.

As ever

GORDON

LIEUT. G. L. McLELLAN,  
1st Lieut. M.C.,  
Camp Hospital 26, A.E.F.

Another form of those "quiet days" — for any Marine who went through the fierce battles of the summer and autumn of 1918 will tell you that anything which happened before that time was funereal in its quietude — was detailed in a letter by Private Clifford Medine, of the Marine Corps, to the folks at home in New Orleans, under date of April 8, 1918:

I AM not going to tell about the exciting trip we had coming over, although we thought then that the Huns were making it hot for us, as we had three very narrow escapes, but now, since I have been up where the big show has been going on for nearly four years and have seen and been in real action, those experiences on the way over are not worth relating. We had to travel a long way to reach our camp after landing on the other side; the cars we traveled in were fine for sight-seeing, they were the same kind you see headed for the stockyards in New Orleans, but very much smaller; however, it was great fun at that. Every time we stopped, the population of the town would beat it down to the tracks and give us the once-over in the same manner one makes the rounds of a circus menagerie. As we could not understand each other's lingo, all we did was to look at each other and grin.

After reaching our camping-place, we had a rest for nearly a week, then we started to get ready to meet the "squareheads." We had our final instructions on our French and English gas masks and received our steel bonnets; after that we waited for the order to the front with much eagerness. Well, we did not have to wait long — the order came, and the fellows were so full of pep when we got the news that we acted just like a bunch of kids going to a picnic.

In a few days we were again in our "Pullmans,"

headed for the front. We left the train some few miles behind the lines and did the balance of the way on "shank's mare." This was early in the morning; we could hear the big guns going full blast, and every hour brought us nearer the place we had trained so long to get to. That morning I saw my first air battle, and it was a thriller — four French planes and two Germans. The French bagged both of the Huns' machines, one falling only a short distance from us, and before dark we saw five more air battles. That night we reached a village (I should say, what was left of a village), where we expected to catch a few hours' sleep, but had only turned in a short time when the Huns cut loose on it, and out we had to come and make for the shell-proof dugouts. (They are shell-proof until they are hit by a shell.) There we remained all night, jammed in like sardines in a box.

We remained for three days before going to relieve the French, and those three days will be remembered by me as long as I live. It was then I had my first experience of being under fire of the big guns, and we received our full share. But it only made us that much more anxious to get to the trenches. We shouldered our packs again and then we were on our last hike. Well, about midnight we reached the much-talked-of trenches and we were given a royal welcome by the Huns. We had fireworks of all descriptions; in fact they gave us a

little of everything they had from the smallest shell to the largest.

As it was dark as pitch we could not see anything of No Man's Land except when star shells were fired, so it was daylight before I had my first look at No Man's Land and the German lines. Then we were very much surprised to learn that our trenches were only a short distance apart. Then one of the fellows said: "You know, boys, this war proposition is getting to be a serious matter, and if those damned squareheads are not careful they are going to hurt some one." But our boys are not taking it seriously — in fact, we have a bunch of fun up here.

We remained in that sector for fifteen days and had some very rough arguments with the squareheads, which decreased their number a great deal. Of course we, too, lost, but very few compared to them, which was remarkable, as we were new to the game and nearly all the fighting was hand-to-hand business.

Easter Sunday the Huns played us a dirty trick. We were going to have a big dinner, turkey and everything, and just a half-hour before they dished out the chow, the damned fools dropped a big shell in the dugout where the kitchen was and out went the big feast, flying in all directions, with the cook and a few helpers. My closest call was when about fifteen of us were in a shallow dugout enjoying a hot game of "seven-come-eleven" when we received





“IT TAKES MORE THAN ONE SHELL TO BREAK UP A GOOD  
CRAP GAME”





a message from Fritz in the shape of a big shell. Luckily it was defective, or I would not be writing this letter. It takes more than one shell to break up a good crap game.

April 8th was my unlucky day. We had been under a heavy bombardment of gas and shrapnel since four in the afternoon, and I was out on a listening post about 2 A.M. when I was hit by a piece of shrapnel which put me to sleep for a while. In this condition, my gas mask got off, and I received a good dose of gas. But as the hospital and ambulance service at the front is very good, it was not long before I was in a field hospital where I got the best of treatment, being later sent back to a base hospital. There is an old saying that a burnt child fears the fire, but it is not so with the American boys. Since I have been in the base hospital I have not met a man who is not anxious to go back for more.

The boys are making a hit with their fighting spirit. In some places it has been necessary to issue an order for court-martial to any man asking for a transfer to some company at the front. That is the prevailing feeling of ninety-nine per cent of the American boys over here.

This has been a great experience for me, and I would not have missed it for the world. When the scrap is all over, though, and I can get my feet back on American soil, Miss Liberty will have to turn around if she wants to look me in the face again soon.

## CHAPTER VI

### IN THE TRENCHES

WHEN the Americans come marching home again, their stories will be mainly of warfare in the open. With the coming of the great German offensive, trench warfare faded, never to return again, and it was then that the American forces, particularly the Marines, were thrown into the battle line. Therefore, the tales of trench life will be few when the Americans return. However, there were many who became acquainted with the muddy "ditch," and one, at least, who wrote home regarding it—Corporal Adel Storey, of the Eighty-third Company, Sixth Regiment, United States Marines. In the following letters to his parents in Wichita, Kansas, he gave a picture of its joys and sorrows:

*At the Front in France*

*April 10, 1918*

MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER:

WE are in the trenches now. The weather conditions are fairly good now with the exception of being cloudy, so that the trenches could not dry up. It is so muddy that I think I am getting web-footed. We are sure getting used to the noted mud of this country, for we eat in mud, sleep in mud, and live

in mud, and if there is anything else to do, I guess we do it in mud too. We are living in dugouts down in the side of the trench. We don't have very much to do in the daytime, but we have a plenty to do at night. Generally, in the evening there is some artillery dueling until dark, and then at various intervals a machine gun somewhere along the trench opens up. Occasionally we get a gas alarm some time during the night and rockets are sent up so we can see what is going on out in No Man's Land. It seems to me about the easiest way to startle a fellow is to have him on post by himself, and then have the sentry next to him shoot at something (or nothing) with his rifle or machine gun.

There are several ruined towns near here. They are nothing but heaps of stone now. All the people have long since left this part of the country, leaving it entirely to military operations.

Everything is as quiet now as if I were at home — not a gun or any other war instrument to be heard. It is just after dinner and everybody in the dugout with me is asleep. I had my sleep from 5.15 A.M. to 11.30 A.M. We have to take turn about in our sleeping in this place, for we have n't enough places to sleep to accommodate all of us at once.

One of the fellows is getting up now, so I think I'll go back to bed for a little while before supper. I nearly forgot to thank you for the box you sent

me. We certainly enjoyed it. I also got seven letters from home.

Love and best wishes to all.

*At the Front, April 21, 1918*

OUR sector is still quiet, but each day seems to bring some activities. If they keep on we may see some real action here yet.

There are things happening nearly every day that are interesting or amusing. One incident that happened the other day caused us several good laughs at the expense of the sergeant with me here in this post and an Irishman we call Pat. To start with, Pat had n't washed his mess kit for a week or more and it was sadly in need of it, so the sergeant persuaded him to go down to a brook, which crosses our section of the trenches, to wash them. While they were busy, the Boches must have seen them, for they were in plain view of the German lines. At any rate, while in the midst of their job, about a six- or eight-inch shell dropped beside them, about thirty yards away. They forgot their mess kits and everything else in their hurry to get away from that particular spot. The Germans dropped several shells quite near the same spot. The boys did n't go back after their mess gear right away, either; they waited till after dark to go down again. Pat says he is n't going to wash his mess gear again soon, if he is going to cause anything like that again.

Another laugh we had yesterday was on the French sergeant who is with us here. One of the boys asked him if he were married, and he answered "No, Infantry."

It does not seem to warm up very fast in this country. It is nearly May 1st, and my fingers are so cold I can hardly write.

*At the Front, May 12, 1918*

MY DEAR MOTHER AND FATHER:

I WROTE you a letter just a day or two ago, but as this is Mothers' Day, and the authorities are going to try to rush these letters home in a little better time than ordinarily, I will write you a little to-day. I do not know of much that is new or startling; it is just the same thing day in and day out. It manages to rain about every other day or so and keeps the trenches in continual mud. If it were not for the boards that we have in the bottom of the trenches, we would nearly have to swim all the time.

We are up nearly all night every night and do most of our sleeping, that is done, in the daytime. Two of our meals are served in the daytime, and the other at the change of watches in the night.

We have to wear our gas respirator and helmet at all times. It seems to me at times that my neck will break, and I am sure that I am beginning to get round-shouldered. Our respirator and helmet weigh a little over six pounds, and with one on your

head and the other hanging round your neck, you can imagine how it feels. And then, none of the passageways or tunnels and lots of the dugouts are high enough to stand up in. I think, though, that my neck must be a couple of inches shorter than it used to be from bumping my head on the beams.

The box from you came several days ago and the one from Mary came two days ago. They were both highly appreciated, and I want to thank you all for them. There were also some letters from home, which were most welcome.

I don't know very much war "dope," for I have n't seen a paper dated later than the 5th, so you must know more than I do. I wish this war were over, though. Even though I have only been in this country six months to-day, I am getting tired of it already. We nearly always have time to sleep in the daytime, but at night we either have to stay up all the time, or, if we lie down, we have to lie with cartridge belt and gas masks on, and rifle and bayonet by our sides. It is night now, and I am sitting here writing with my belt and mask hanging on the chair, pistol on the table and rifle leaning against the wall, waiting for — I don't know what next. We never know one minute what is going to happen the next.

I don't know whether I have ever mentioned the rats which infest the trenches or not, but I know that you have read of them in different places.





“THEY DON’T RUN FROM US, EITHER, LIKE ANY  
ORDINARY RAT”





Never in my life have I seen rats of such size as these are here. They don't run from us, either, like any ordinary rat does. They will fight like a good fellow when you fool with them. Where we are now there are several cats, and in the daytime they come into the dugouts and around where we are, but at night they stay out in No Man's Land. One of the fellows remarked the other night that this is the first time in his life that he had seen cats run away from home by the rats. But it is a fact, when everything is quiet at night around the trenches and in the dugouts the rats are out in force and the cats take refuge in No Man's Land.

Well, I must get ready to go on watch now as it is nearly midnight and my watch is the last half of the night to-night.

I am sorry to tell you, but I must, for if I don't tell you I am afraid no one else will, Fred was injured two or three days ago. I don't know just how nor how seriously, as he was taken to the hospital before I had a chance to see him. The hospital apprentice told me it was serious, but not dangerous, and not to worry about it. So please do not worry and I think everything will be all right again soon. Mother, will you write to Mrs. McKaig and tell her? Either write to her or send her this letter so she will know. Please do this, as I may not have time nor opportunity again soon to write to any one.

Write when you can. I am well and feeling fine.  
Lots of love and best wishes to all from

ADEL

Remember me to my other friends you may see.

ADEL

CPL. ADEL M. STOREY  
83d Co., 6th Rgt., U.S. M.C.  
A.E.F., France

## CHAPTER VII

### CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS in the trenches! Christmas, when the thoughts turn toward home and one forgets that the war will not last forever; forgets that there will come the time some day when once again he can look upon the bright-burning candles, the ever-green, the holly, and the heavily laden table of the Christmas feast; forgets it in the fact that here all is dull and cheerless, lonely, cold, and miserable. For the smile cannot last always on the lips of the fighter "over there." In spite of all he can do, the blues will sometimes get the better of him; and when should the human mind be more susceptible than on Christmas Eve, thousands of miles from home, and with grinning Death, lurking in the shadows, only a step away? Thus it is that the following letter of Major Robert L. Denig reflects the feelings of many a man who spent Christmas Eve in the trenches, thinking of home and wishing for those he loves:

*Western Front, France*

*Xmas Eve, 1917*

So this is Xmas Eve and I am at the above place. I have a fine billet, dandy bed, small wood stove,

two candles, and a good French orderly who salutes every time I bat an eye and says, "Mon Commandant!" I mess with the general of this corps, a fine old gentleman, who drinks my health and says, "How!" "Prosit!" and "A votre sante!" To-day noon he had a plum pudding, but it was cold; the rum on it was good, though. He was disappointed. I have been all over the various base depots here in his car, and to-morrow, Xmas Day, I will be in the front line of a particularly active section to stay four days. But all that does not go to make a merry "Night before Xmas." I got here last night. I watched a German airship come over our lines (French) and the anti-aircraft guns fire on it. The firing did not seem to bother "Fritz." He came right on, made a wide curve, and went home. Later, as darkness fell the star shells lit up the hills and the guns began, only to die out again. The auto finally got to the Headquarters and I was shown my billet and introduced to the general. He at once invited me to dinner at 7.30 and said my studies would begin right after. He was as good as his word, too. The table he sets is excellent, and the cigars brought from the States by Marshal Joffre are to my liking.

It was a bright moonlight night and the German avions were active, dropping bombs about our home in a most reckless manner, but the meal went on. Suddenly a heavy barrage opened up; the

general said, "A barrage," the 'phone rang, and we learned that Mr. Boche was making a raid. If you had read to-day's paper you would have seen it. It was soon over and I thought no more of it. About eleven that night, while I was in the Information Section, a young German prisoner was brought in. He was a sentry during the raid and had been captured. He was well dressed, strong, and well fed. The first thing he said was, "An American." I asked him how he knew. He said it was in the papers that they had taken some of us prisoners. I asked him how many there were of us, and he said about 200,000, but only about two divisions of fighting men. I then asked him if he got enough to eat. His answer shows that the German can see a joke. He said, "I have fought for three and a half years in Russia and am quite fed up on it." He was twenty-six years old, and came from the 352nd Division, just two months ago brought from Russia. The Information Bureau is a most interesting place; all the daily hints, news, observations, and aero photos come in there and are compiled. The maps are corrected daily, and such maps! They are printed and sent out; each corps does the same; every trench on both sides is shown. The photos are clear; you can even see men, though taken from two thousand yards up and more. A new path shows up; follow up the path and there is a new gun or something. It is photoed; a battery

opens up on it by map. The next day another picture is taken. Perhaps it needs no more treatment. I could write pages on that, but the above will give you an idea of how it all has to go. Work, work, work! It is a war of the magnifying glass.

This morning I went to the artillery park where all the repairs are done, hundreds of guns of all sizes, and this is just one corps. Some smashed beyond repair, but parts are saved and a new gun is made. I fired about every known kind of machine gun and had great sport.

From there I went to a sawmill. It made all the woodwork for this corps, barracks, boxes, frames for dugouts, gun platforms, and a host of other things. Then to the depot where the daily trains of food, clothing, forage, etc., were being unloaded, and scrap metal, old clothing, etc., being shipped out on the now emptied food cars; whole trainloads of crushed rock for the roads at the front. The amount of work done on the Western Front has equaled the Panama Canal.

At the station there are two camps, both complete; one for the going soldiers and the other for those returning from leave. These camps have canteens, lavatories, sleeping-huts, waiting-rooms, and eating-huts. Each has its police station and information bureau; for a soldier returning from leave might find that his unit has left; he is then directed how to find it.



DENNIS-

THE FIELD TELEPHONE





After that I went to the "Chicago," as they call it. They butcher for 35,000 men, and it was most complete. One place the killed horses were being brought in and every bit of them is used; also the wounded horses that have to be killed.

This afternoon I visited the canteen. They sell everything and what they don't have they will order. A good big cup of coffee costs a cent, and so on. They sell about four thousand bottles of wine per day, and I have yet to see a drunken French soldier. I remarked that they had an abundance of everything. They answered, "We get what we want at the front." At the evacuation hospital there were three thousand beds. I followed the system to nearly the finish. First, a big covered driveway in which all the ambulances stopped. The wounded are taken out into two big sheds, where they are sorted — the stretcher cases are on one side, those able to sit up, on the other; then the most urgent cases go to the operating-room, and on to the wards. Those who are able to be sent away are removed to the interior; the others remain — i.e., those too seriously wounded and those who will return to the front in a few days. The wounded have tags on which is the history of the case as it goes along. I saw that. Then, to the operating-room where a man with his hands crushed was to be gotten ready — result of last night's raid. On into a ward where some nurses in the pretty French uniform were

fixing up for to-morrow. They had mistletoe and trees and were getting a real homelike look to the place, but the fly in the ointment for me was a dying officer, who wanted to be home with his family. He had just had a big loss of blood from a wound — last night's raid again. A nurse was patting his head and trying to jolly him along. I hardly had the nerve to wish him a Merry Christmas. I was glad to leave the mixture of Christmas holly and a dying man who talked of home and children. So the next place, the aviation camp, was a great relief. Forty planes all ready to go up, guns mounted, and no play. But again it was the picture part that interested me. In three hours from the start of a flight, the pictures wanted would be developed and handed to a motor-cyclist and sent to the unit commander requiring them. If he were in a place where the land routes were bad, a plane would take them and drop them in a case near him. There was a big fine-looking lieutenant who had a glass eye. He told me that he had fallen seven hundred yards and lost his eye. A few months later, when up three thousand yards, a piece of a shell hit him and broke his glass eye; very funny, as he said, but he had his nerve and made a good landing with his observers. The general told me the story over again to-night at dinner, which, by the way, is just over. We wished each other a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He then gave instructions for

my going to the front line, so when Bobby and Chuck are playing with their toys, I will be some five hundred yards from the Boche! My helmet and gas mask are ready and no doubt it will be a unique Xmas.

Several days ago before coming to the sector where I am now, I got on a train near the "Hilltop on the Marne," which book, by the way, you should read. A Frenchman also got on the train. I was forced to stand near a door and my effects blocked it. He got mad as I did not get it out of his way in time, and said a few words, which I did not mind. Back of him was a good-looking girl, well-dressed and really pretty. She said in good English, "Don't mind him, he is nervous to-day." I thanked her and said, "You speak English well." "I ought to, I am from the States." We talked a bit, and the fact that Xmas was approaching came up. I said: "I suppose you will hang up your stocking." "Of course. I am not too old for that, but I wish I were home."

The villages up to here are badly shot up, some have not so much as a piece of wood left in them. Those that are at all used have signs over the doors, "Off. 6, Hom. 15, Chev. 4," meaning, Officers 6, men 15, horses 4, so the billeting officers can tell at a glance what can go in. All crossroads have signs to such and such a front.

Near the front big signs warn you of the gas zone,

which runs ten miles back. Masks then have to be in the alért position, as a few breaths will fix you.

The room I have was used by the priest of the corps, so the mantel has a Christ in a manger, some cattle, the Wise Men, and Mary and Joseph. The old church is next door. He has been fixing it up all day. I never felt so lonely on "The Night Before."

All is quiet except for a gun now and then, and as we are in the range, you wonder when the next shot will come. Some villages, the kind you used to see running along both sides of the road, are no more — just a white patch or streak of dust like plaster; they have been pulverized; they don't stand six inches up, and that in its most literal sense.

Well, "A Merry Christmas to all and to all good-night."

## CHAPTER VIII

### MOTHER

“WILL my boy forget?”

More than one mother has asked the question as she has turned away from watching the fading train that is bearing the only person in the world — for her, at least — toward that great, grim place of uncertainties, The War. “Will my boy forget?” she has asked herself as she has waited for the letters that are, oh, so slow in coming. “Will my boy forget?”

But her boy does not forget. And, as evidence, are the three following letters written by United States Marines in France, to their mothers on Mothers’ Day. The first:

*Mothers’ Day*  
*Trenches, May 12, 1918*

MY DEAR LITTLE MOTHER:

THIS is one of the greatest days in the year and has been given to the dearest person in the world, and that is you, Mother. I am wondering how you are and what you are doing. Mother dear, I have a little confession to make to you, and here it is. For seventeen years and over I did not appreciate, at least to a certain extent, my beautiful home, and most of all you, Mother. But the last year, I have experienced

the greatest part of my life, and have learned one of life's lessons, and that is the value of a home and a mother. From the day I left to join in this great struggle for the liberty of the world, to the present day, I have learned more than I ever knew, and have fought one of the greatest battles there is, and finally won. The only thing I live for is to do my bit and then return to you a brave, strong man, both mentally and physically, and to prove to you that I am. I guess this life I am living over here will teach me and a great many others a great lesson. But please don't worry, because I am enjoying life over here and am in the best of health. And the death-rate is very low, considering everything.

This trench life is great. Everybody's enjoying it. "Bang, Bang." Had to stop to see where the shells were bursting. Our artillery is bombarding a destroyed French village in No Man's Land, supposed to have German soldiers in it. I guess they are gone by now. "Bang!" They are off again. On a patrolling party, a few nights ago, we ran into a German party and the Germans shouted "Halte" in German, and down we went to old Mother Earth and the music started, and after a stiff encounter, in which we were greatly outnumbered, we finally drove them off, and returned to our own trenches with one wounded, he being an officer. But he sure did excellent work after being shot, and is greatly praised by the men.



MORGAN DENNIS

“RETURNED TO OUR OWN TRENCHES WITH ONE  
WOUNDED, HE BEING AN OFFICER”





I had two dandy letters from Berkley and they think you are dear. What did you write and what was the answer? Inquisitive, eh!

Well, Mother dear, will stop for a while, just wrote you a few days back.

Hoping this finds you in the best of health I am sending lots of love.

I remain your loving son

LEWIS A. HOLMES

29th Co., 5th Rgt., U.S. M.C.

The second letter has its echo in the casualty list, for Harry Wendel, of the Marines, no longer has his place in the fighting line. There is a cross above his resting-place in one of the hallowed fields of France; he is gone from the trenches, the billets, and his fighting, friendly comrades; a victim of gas and wounds received in historic Belleau Wood. And his last letter to his mother, Mrs. Carrie Wendel, 25 North Mayfield Street, Austin, Chicago, Illinois, was the following, written on Mothers' Day, 1918:

MY DEAR MOTHER:

EVEN though I did drop you a line a few days ago, I think it my duty to drop you a letter on this day, as it is Mothers' Day, over here as well as in the States, and I must say that my thoughts are with you more than ever, on account of the occasion.

We have done our first hitch in the trenches and

we are now back in the rest billets for a while, where I hope to be able to write you more often.

The weather over here is getting warm and we are getting to see more of France, and I must say that I do not blame France for being at war.

It is sure pretty, since the warm weather has set in, and it sure makes a fellow think of home.

I wish I were there, as it must be fine around home by this time, but we have to look after other things over here before we think of going home.

Now that you know that I have been in the trenches I am sure you will worry more than before, but, Mother, I again ask you not to do so, as I have not been in much danger, and none of us mind it in the least.

We came in this morning after a ten-mile hike, and we sure were tired when we arrived in this town, which is a much better town than we were in before, but after a couple of good nights' sleep I expect to feel much better.

The letter which follows was not written on Mothers' Day, but it carries a greater message of love than were it addressed on the day that belongs to mothers. Private Eugene M. Abbott, of the Marines, had learned that his mother was worrying. Wounded, tired, worn from his various fights, Private Abbott painted out his troubles and forgot them that his mother — the mother he loved and

who loved him — might forget also, in the reading of his cheery, happy-hearted letter from the front:

*Casual Co. 5, A.P.O. 726*

*September 22, 1918*

DEAR MOTHER:

I RECEIVED all my mail the other day, Mother, and about twenty of the letters were from you. And I certainly was glad to get them, too.

Was certainly sorry to hear of Sherman's death, as I saw him the morning we were going to take our position on the line, and he said good-bye to me and good luck. That is all I heard from him until I got your letter stating he had been killed. I knew about Ralph Kerr, as I saw his name in the casualty list. But I never saw Tony's in the list. No, Mother, Raymond and Lewis were in different hospitals. And I have seen neither since May. But they are both in fine shape, as I have talked to some of the boys of their company, and they tell me they were only slightly wounded.

Gee! there is no use worrying about some one who is wounded; as they can shoot you in a million different places and not hurt you a bit. They have to hit a good place if they put you out for good. I have seen them shot through the stomach and lungs, and it is n't so bad. Of course, it will put you on the bench for a while, but it is n't a bit serious. The doctors over here can fix up any kind of a wound, and

they either kill them outright or not at all, as it is very seldom that a man dies in a hospital from wounds received in action. They know their work too well, and a bullet or two through the flesh won't do any one any harm. Just leaves a little mark.

Mother, Lill tells me that you are getting gray-headed worrying about me. Well, Mother, that is foolish, as I am just as safe as if I were back home with you. And that little bullet did n't hurt me a bit. In fact, it will be a good lesson to me. I won't try and stop any more of them. And you know nothing will happen to me, as only the good die young, and I have n't a chance. So please ease your mind, and stop worrying about me. And when this is all over, I will be home with bells on, and I am going to make some noise. I can hear them asking questions already. How is that? I will have enough stories to keep you up day and night, telling them to you. You can't imagine what a great thing it is to be able to get into this little fight. And also be a MARINE. Just a little proud of that name, and so are you, are n't you, Mother?

Well, Mother, they sure did give us a chance to show them what we could do, and we did it. We were in a fine place to let the dogs have a sample of what was coming to them; as it was this particular place that they wanted to get through. And, oh, what a surprise was awaiting them! They thought the

French were still in that sector, and when they started over the first time, we sure made them turn and run for cover, that is, what was left of them. The French did n't understand our setting our sights, and taking good aim, and then shooting, at all. They sure thought we were peculiar soldiers. The boys acted as though they were at a picnic, and all the time they were coming over by the hundred, and we certainly made them pay dear for their trial, as they never got to our lines at all. And we piled up the dead on them in great shape. And then a few days later we fought over that same field and had to lie down among them, as it was impossible to bury them, as the field was continually being raked with machine-gun fire. But that is nothing. You don't mind it at all; after you once get used to it, one could sit on one of them and eat a meal. Ha! Ha!

But the best way of putting them to the wall is to pile up "casuals" on them. You do just as much good as if you put them out for good, as it takes some one's time to take them out and then take care of them. But you can't afford to shoot at their legs. You may miss them. So we make it a sure thing and shoot at the body.

I sure used to love to hunt when I was home, but this hunting over here has it beat a mile, as it is real game and lots of fun. I suppose you think I am becoming barbarous, but it is not true, Mother.

You just get that way when you are up at the front for a while, and they shell the ration train when it is coming up every evening and then you get nothing to eat for a day or so. We lived on canned Willie and raw bacon and hardtack for a week, so you see it is no wonder we were in to give them a good licking. But the boys never complained a bit; in fact, there was less kicking among them than there is when we were being fed real good.

No, Mother, I was not wounded before, it was just an accident. I was going to shoot a V.B., that is a grenade, and it went off in the gun. It did n't do much but cut my hands a little and put a small hole in my side, but I sure was a lucky boy, as it had enough explosive in it to kill a dozen men. It knocked me down flat as a board, and bent the gun so bad that you could n't see through the thing. So you can imagine just how much force is in one of the V.B.'s. I think I had a horseshoe and a four-leaf clover in my pocket and did n't know it, as I sure have had some close calls, but a miss is as good as a mile, and I am knocking on wood all the time.

Well, Mother, I will have to close for this time, and will write more real soon. With the most of love to all,

Lovingly

EUGENE

## CHAPTER IX

### BEFORE THE BATTLE

THE accompanying letter is not from a United States Marine. But so well does it typify the beautiful thoughts in the minds of those who fought overseas, when they received the news that they were about to face death, that it has been included in this collection. The letter was written by Adrian Edwards, a young lawyer of Carrollton, Illinois, who was killed May 4th in France. Just before starting for the battle line, young Edwards wrote the following letter, which was to be forwarded to his mother in case he did not return. Weeks later, the letter was received by his mother. The son was dead — but the sentiment which had prompted the message, and the high ideals which it displays, lived after him, a constant, beautiful inspiration to the millions of men who took their place on the line of battle and faced the danger of the fate of Adrian Edwards. This is the letter:

*Somewhere in France*

MY DEAR MOTHER:

I AM about to go into battle and have instructed the company clerk to send you this letter in case I become a casualty, hence the receipt of this letter



by you will indicate that I am either with God or a prisoner in the hands of the enemy.

Since I will never become a prisoner of the foe if I remain conscious and able to fight, it is doubtful if I will ever be an inmate of a German prison camp.

Do not grieve that I am among the missing, but rather rejoice that you have given a son in sacrifice to make the greatest military caste of all time lay down the sword — to save civilization, to prevent future wars, to punish the Germans, who have disregarded every law of God and mankind, whose only god is the god of war and military force — and to make the world safe for democracy.

I desire that you view the matter in the light and spirit of the Spartan mothers of old, who, when their sons went forth to battle for freedom and their native land, said to their sons: "Either come home proudly bearing your shield before you, or upon it."

War was absolutely necessary on the part of my country, and although I was thirty-four years old and nobody expected me to go, yet some one had to go; some one must make the sacrifice, some mother must lose her son.

In the light of these facts, and knowing our country's great need, I volunteered, and have never for one moment regretted my decision, and I will not, although my life and a useful career must end. Life is not the highest boon of existence. There are ideals that are superhuman, interests greater than



life itself, for which it is worth while fighting, suffering, and dying.

If possible after the war, I would like for my remains to be brought to America and interred at White Hall. I have provided well for your support, as I have a \$10,000 insurance policy with the Government and several thousand with the old-line companies. My friends, Thompson and Jess, have these policies and other valuable papers.

Good-bye, Mother; I will see you in the next world. You may know I died fighting for you, my country, and all that life holds dear.

Your son

ADRIAN

## CHAPTER X

### UNDER FIRE

BEFORE America's fighters got into action in Europe, the word "hell" was seldom heard. But since the days of going "over the top" there has been a change. Boys write of "hell" to their mothers with never a thought of profanity — they are simply using the one word that can adequately describe what they have endured.

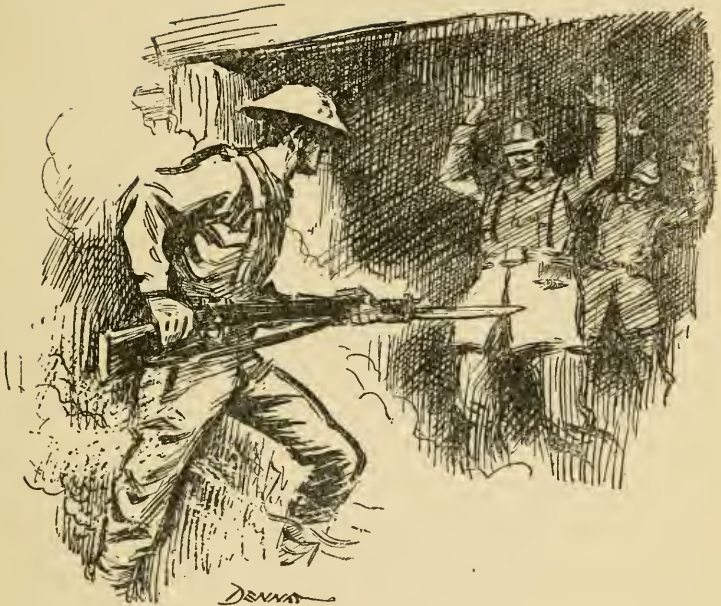
To be under fire is to be in hell, nothing else. The most fantastic designs of Satan, his lake of brimstone and his exquisite tortures, must fade in comparison with the newer, more fiendish forms of mental and physical anguish known as "under fire." Thus it is that the following letters might easily be called "Missives from Hell," for they are by men who have been — and seen, and who have conquered.

One is from Howard E. Perry, of the Seventy-sixth Company, Sixth Regiment, Marines:

*June 18, 1918*

DEAR SISTER:

I WILL now take time and answer your letter. Have been having a hot time of it for some time. Was moving back from the front. Was back for about two



“KAMERAD”



weeks and then came up to where the Germans were coming on to Paris when they came to us, and then they had to stop. Had some time of it. We held them back under a heavy bombardment. It certainly was hell; shells bursting all around you, gas and shrapnel, but we stayed on and then started after them.

We went over the top two straight mornings and drove the Boches out of a big wood. Must have run them three or four miles. They certainly are a dirty bunch of fighters. They will fight with cannon and machine guns till you get up where you can get a fair chance with them, then they quit and yell "Kame-rad." Our company captured over a hundred prisoners itself, about forty of us captured fifty-two in one bunch. Just imagine forty Germans taking fifty-two Americans alive!

After we got the woods, then came the bombardment again. It was about twice as bad as the first and kept on getting worse all the time, and they kept it up at intervals for days. I certainly thought it was all up with me, and had just about made up my mind to stay in the woods with a lot of my comrades who paid the price, but God answered some of our prayers and we are still here resting up our nerves now, getting ready to go back and get them again.

We lost lots of men, but the Germans paid dear for them. Well, Sis, I thought I had lots of nerve,

but these big shells take all of that out of you. All it is now is being a man, and I am sure going to do my bit trying to be one. So, Sis, pray for me that I can get back and I will do the same.

Your loving brother

The following extracts from letters by Corporal G. Gulberg, of the Seventy-fifth Company, Sixth Regiment of Marines, are a literal voice from the dead; for in one letter he wrote:

WELL, Coble — I've got something new and interesting to tell you about this time. I am a "lucky guy," and the doctor says I can shake hands with myself until my dying day. Although it happened over two weeks ago, he never told me until a few days ago. I won't go into detail about it just now, as the hospital censor might not pass it. I was dead for the first time in my life. I had stopped breathing, and my heart had stopped, for only a few minutes. It was only those few minutes, but I was dead just the same. Four doctors worked on me and brought me back. Later on I'll tell you more about it. It was some experience. I was pretty sick the next four days.

Long before this, he had survived the terrific fighting in Belleau Wood, which he described as follows:

WELL, to begin with, I am very lucky to be alive. I don't know how in God's world I ever came out all in one piece. I suppose you have already read about the Marines going "over the top." General Pershing was here and congratulated us on our fighting ability. We went "over the top" one morning at 4.00 A.M. and made an attack on a German hill, well fortified with machine guns and mortars. It cost us quite a few men, but we sure stuck it to those "square heads." The woods was just covered with dead Marines, and Germans. Mostly Germans. I think we captured five or six hundred prisoners and forty machine guns. A few of the "Dutch" got away by beating it across the fields before we could get to them. We took up positions at once, and then we got hell for seven days. I think they were afraid to come over in person so they started an awful bombardment. First they used shrapnel and high explosive for about fourteen hours and it just rained steel all over that hill. The next morning they came over, thinking that they had blown us out, and it was then that my gun was christened by getting our first two Germans. We drove them back to their lines at once. They then used mustard gas on us. They rained a few thousand gas shells over, and we had to wear those darned gas respirators for a few hours. Some of the boys were gassed, but the line held as strong as ever. Every morning just before daylight

we were greeted with a heavy barrage. I think they pulled that off to stop a possible attack, which they thought we might make. I was certainly glad to get out of that place when I did. We were an awful-looking outfit when we came out. Not a wash or shave for ten days, and all in from sleepless nights.

Then came the great drive against the Germans in the vicinity of Soissons, July 18th. Gulberg fell wounded, later to "die," then come to life again. Of the wound, and the battle which brought it, he wrote:

I WAS bumped off, right off the reel this time, but my bunch got there, and made up for me, and the other boys who did not get there. Got shot through both legs and lay on the battle-field about four hours, before I could get help to the rear. You know, the only ones going to the rear are cripples and have troubles of their own. A fellow who was shot in the face came along and put me on his back, and with a rest now and then, in shell-holes, we managed to get to the Reg. dressing-station without getting shot up some more. Georgie, dear, I am not kidding one bit when I say that it was the hottest place in the world. It rained machine-gun bullets, and shells of all sizes fell like hailstones. But that could n't stop the Americans. They were going right ahead, and they are going still. I guess I was



due to get it this time, as I've been fussing around several fronts since March and always came out on the top. I'm ahead of the game so far, anyway. I've got four hits to my credit. I know I sent one Heinie to his eternal rest camp, and I guess the other three recuperated, but they are not in Germany. You know, the German soldier is the biggest coward in the world. He will shoot and kill until cornered, and then throw up his hands and bellow forth his famous war cry, "Kamerad!" We captured some time ago some prisoners, and among them were kids fifteen and sixteen years old. There was one boy who said he was seventeen years old and was at the front only five days. He was crying pitifully, and we gave him cigarettes and some of our monkey meat and hardtack. You ought to see how the German prisoners are treated over here. While at the field hospital awaiting treatment, they were treated the same as any one of us. They were given coffee, tea, bread, jam, etc., by the Red Cross, and the Y.M.C.A., and the French. I hope they treat American prisoners half as good, but I am afraid not.

But the acme of being under fire was left for First Lieutenant S. C. Cumming, Fifty-first Company, Fifth Regiment, Marines, for, after the turmoil of battle came what was worse, the sniper. His letter:

DEAR WILL:

WHILE lying here in bed waiting for a machine-gun hole through my right leg to get patched up, I am going to write that letter that I have been owing you for about six months.

The hospital is located at Vichy in southern France. There are two captains in the ward with me, and we figure that we are about the luckiest people in the world, as there are few left of the old outfit which has gotten credit from General Foch for greatly assisting in stopping the Hun drive on Paris. We stopped and cut to pieces and were driving back the divisions from Baden when the Huns threw in against us two divisions of Prussian Guards, which they had intended using in the drive against Compiègne, and these also were driven back until we gained all the objectives, which gave us a commanding position over important positions held by the Huns.

I will tell you a few instances and take a chance on the censor letting them get by. This fighting was all in open country, through woods, wheat-fields, and towns — the country being hilly. The Hun infantry is not what we call infantry, in that it is armed with a light Maxim machine gun, weighing about fifty pounds, and the ammunition carriers are armed with rifles.

They also have a well-organized sniping system. Because of the kind of fighting, it was very hard

to get anything up to the infantry, and we often had to "roll" our dead for food and ammunition and dig holes in the ravine for water, which we could get at about two feet.

One afternoon I was told to take up a certain position across a ravine as a counter-attack was expected. In choosing the position I noticed in a very good natural ridge the Huns had dropped several shells, so decided not to use it, but had the men crawl out to an imaginary line in the grass about a hundred yards in advance of this position and lay still until night — about four hours. The Huns did not fire, because they did not want us to know that we were observed. The counter-attack did not come that night, so the men dug in little individual holes, striking water at from twelve to eighteen inches.

At 3.15 A.M. the Huns dropped a heavy artillery and machine-gun barrage just in the rear of us and where they thought we ought to be. At 3.30 A.M. they attacked, and we did not fire a shot until they were within a hundred yards. Well, a Hun never got near us and I lost only one man, while the ground in the rear of us was chewed up. We will skip to a few days later. Four-thirty A.M. June 11, 1918, a whistle blew and the arm motion "Forward" was given, and line after line moved off toward a wood six hundred metres away, across an open and level field covered with grass about six inches

high. The ground became covered with a sheet of machine-gun bullets from a Prussian Guard machine-gun battalion and their supporting infantry which was placed to hold the wood, as it was an important position.

We moved forward at a slow pace, keeping perfect lines. Men were being mowed down like wheat. A "whizz-bang" (high-explosive shell) hit on my right, and an automatic team which was there a moment ago disappeared, while men on the right and left were armless, legless, or tearing at their faces. We continued to advance until about fifty yards from the woods, when something hit me and I spun around and hit flat. I did n't know where I was hit, so jumped up to go forward again, but fell. I crawled to a shell-hole near by. I don't see how I ever got there, as the ground was being plowed by machine guns. I heard later that my company had one officer and twenty-nine men left when we reached the objective. We had gone to this sector with eight officers and two hundred and fifty men.

The Hun machine gunners fire low, as after you are hit in the leg you fall and then they fill your body with bullets, so there is little chance. Also the Huns are not short of man power yet. The outfit which we attacked had no men under twenty-one or over forty. Of course, they were picked troops. Also they are wonderful fighters. One instance is that of a Hun who fell shot through both legs and

a corporal ran up to him and holding his bayonet at him said, "Kamerad." The Hun raised up on his arm to get his pistol, and seeing it was out of reach yelled back, "No Kamerad." A captured officer was passing a group of Marines who were in the way and yelled at them, "Gangway." He got three inches of it attached to the end of a rifle!

But going back to the shell-hole; it happened to be one made by a trench mortar and was about six feet deep and ten feet across. I put on a first-aid dressing and started figuring on how to get back to a first-aid station. Shells were still lighting around, shrapnel bursting, machine-gun bullets passing overhead; mingled with the cries and groans of the wounded and dying made it still an unpleasant place to be in.

On cleaning out the woods, a sniper, who was undoubtedly up a tree at the time, had been left behind. From the sound of his rifle I figured he was about fifty yards away, and was picking out any wounded who were moving and had not reached cover. I had lost the rifle that I was carrying, so decided to try my Colt forty-five on him. I crawled up to the edge of the shell-hole and heard a "ping." Deciding that discretion was the better part of valor, I got back down again and looked at my pistol to find it minus a front sight. A few minutes later I heard some one running and another crack from the Hun, and a Marine came rolling in. How-

ever, he kindly brought his Springfield rifle with him. After this rifle had spoken three times the way was clear, and I started crawling to a first-aid station, leaving all equipment behind but a blanket, a canteen, and my trusty forty-five, so when I got weak I could roll up and keep warm. I got picked up later by stretcher-bearers and went through a battalion and regimental dressing-station and in an ambulance where we were taken to an evacuation hospital, which I reached at 1 P.M. Was operated on, stayed three days, put on a hospital train and came straight to this hospital.

CALVIN

## CHAPTER XI

### BELLEAU WOOD

ANY story of the United States Marines in France is only a shell, a makeshift, without the story of Belleau Wood, near Château Thierry. For it was there, fighting for weeks without relief, struggling against the best divisions that Germany could throw into the battle lines, often driving back five and ten times their number, that the United States Marines played their part in turning back the German drive on Paris.

The graves are flower-strewn in Belleau Wood now. Tender hands have smoothed them and straightened the rude crosses that were erected there during the fire of battle. Buried without the accustomed blessing, the bodies of the United States Marines nevertheless have made it hallowed ground, a wood that will ever live in the memories of those who love freedom. No longer do the French call it Belleau Wood, for every map has been officially changed to "Bois de la Brigade des Marines."

And it was only just that the most graphic description of how that battle was fought and won should have come to Major-General George Barnett, Commandant of the Marine Corps, from a Marine, Major Frank E. Evans, of the Sixth Regi-



ment of Marines, giving the details of the fight in which the dripping claws of the Hun were forced upward in surrender, and his snarling lips made to frame the word "Kamerad" — at the points of bayonets in the hands of the United States Marines. The letter:

WE have all been under a terrific drive from the time we left our rest area on May 30th and left our trucks and went into line the afternoon of June 1st. Holcomb's battalion was unloaded just in rear of the support position to which our brigade was assigned and his company commanders got part of their orders while their men were disembarking, and then they deployed and went in. The strain accumulated like a snowball running downhill until we were pulled out temporarily on the 15th, and at times in that long stretch it looked as though the elastic backbone of the men and officers could not stand another tug, but they were always ready on an instant's notice to deliver a new attack or stop a new counter-attack.

I feel I can say without boasting that the Marine Brigade not only lived up to the very best traditions of our service, but even surpassed them at times, because we never faced such odds and never were confronted by such a crisis.

We left our rest area at 4 A.M., May 31st, in camions, twenty to thirty in a camion, having



bivouacked the night before, as we had expected to leave at six and again at ten that night. We took a route that skirted within fifteen kilometres of Paris, and when we reached those villages we realized that we were really on our way. Our other villages had been drab, primitive little villages where we had comfortable billets and a simple hospitality. Here we found beautiful little towns with charming villas, blooming gardens, and French who had that unconquerable gayety of the Parisian, and they lined the roads and threw flowers into the trucks or handed them to the men, and waved American flags at us. It was a wonderful transformation, and the men responded to it. Then, as we neared Meaux, we saw our first fugitives on a road that was a living stream of troops in camions, guns, and trains hurrying to the front. And the refugees went straight to the heart of us. When you saw old farm wagons lumbering along with the chickens and geese swung beneath in coops, laden down with what they could salvage, cattle driven by boys of nine or ten years, little tots trotting along at their mothers' skirts, tired out, but never a tear or whimper, saw other groups camping out on the road for the night, there was the other side, the side that I think fired the men to do what they did later. I saw one wagon coming along towering to the top with boxes and mattresses, and on the top mattress was a white-haired old lady who would have graced any home,

dressed in her best, and with a dignity that blotted out the crude load and made you think of nothing but a silver-haired old lady, who was the spirit of a brave people that met disaster with dignity. Meaux was crowded with them, but we had learned by that time that the work of getting them into new homes was well organized, and we knew that the camions that were rushing our division up to the lines would pick up many of them on the return.

Up from Meaux the road went straight to the front with glimpses of the Marne. And it was a living road of war, troops on foot and in the lumbering camions. French dragoons trotting by them with their lances at rest and the officers as trim as though they had just stepped out of barracks; trains, ambulances, guns from the 75's to the 210's, staff cars whizzed by, and a trail of dust that coated the men in the camions until they looked like mummies.

It was late in the evening when we were diverted to the right of our first destination. It was midnight when our First Battalion halted in their trucks at a point seven kilometres back of where we finally went into line, and officers and men bivouacked on the roadside or in the fields. We found orders to throw us into line that night, but two of our battalions had been held up, the men were sadly in need of rest, for they had had practically no sleep for two nights, and it was finally decided by the French to put us in the next afternoon. And Hol-

comb's battalion arrived just in time the next afternoon, so that the order could be carried out by rushing their trucks close up to our line and deploying them out from the trucks to their positions.

So it was June 1st when we took up the support line with French troops, hard pressed by the Boche, holding the line out in front. The news was that the Boche was coming. Our first P.C. (post command) was in the outer edge of a strip of woods that is now two kilometres in rear, with as much protection from any kind of fire as a spot in the speedway. But from what the French told us, the Boche guns had got up in small numbers and that in their fights the Boche had fought with machine guns, a prodigious quantity of them, and grenades. Our position then linked up on the left in front of Champillon with the Fifth, who in turn had the Twenty-third on their left. The Fifth had Wise's battalion in line while we had the First and Second, with Sibley in support. On our right were the French. The next day, the Second and the French began to drop back, tired out and outnumbered, and that afternoon, by pre-arranged plan, they were to pass through, and our line was to become the front line. In the meantime, to close a gap between us and the Fifth, we had put three of our reserve companies into line on the left, and that afternoon the Sixth held a front of seven kilometres with one company as regimental reserve.

We had dropped back from our too-close-to-nature P.C. and installed ourselves in a house in La Voie Chatel, a little village between Champillon and Lucy-le-Bocage. From one side we had observation of the north, and when the Germans attacked at 5 P.M. we had a box seat. They were driving at Hill 165 from the north and northeast, and they came out, on a wonderfully clear day, in two columns across a wheat-field. From our distance it looked flat and green as a baseball field, set between a row of woods on the farther side, and woods and a ravine on the near side. We could see the two thin brown columns advancing in perfect order until two thirds of the columns, we judged, were in view. The rifle and machine-fire were incessant and overhead the shrapnel was bursting. Then the shrapnel came on the target at each shot. It broke just over and just ahead of those columns and then the next bursts sprayed over the very green in which we could see the columns moving. It seemed for all the world that the green field had burst out in patches of white daisies where those columns were doggedly moving. And it did again and again; no barrage, but with the skill and accuracy of a cat playing with two brown mice that she could reach and mutilate at will and without any hurry. The white patches would roll away, and we could see that some of the columns were still there, slowed up, and it seemed perfect suicide for them to try.

You could n't begrudge a tribute to their pluck at that!

Then, under that deadly fire and the barrage of rifle and machine-gun fire, the Boches stopped. It was too much for any men. They burrowed in or broke to the cover of woods, and you could follow them by the ripples of the green wheat as they raced for cover. The Fifth bore the brunt of it, and on our left the men raked the woods and ravines to stop the Boche at his favorite trick of infiltrating through. An aeroplane was overhead checking up on our artillery's fire, and when the shrapnel lay down on those columns just as an elephant would lie down on a ton of hay, the French aviator signaled back to our lines, "Bravo!" The French, who were in support of the Fifth and at one time thrown into the line, could not, and cannot to-day, grasp the rifle fire of the men. That men should fire deliberately and use their sights, and adjust their range, was beyond their experience. The rifle fire certainly figured heavily in the toll we took, and it must have had a telling effect on the morale of the Boches, for it was something they had not counted on. As a matter of fact, after pushing back the weakened French and then running up against a stone wall defense, they were literally up in the air and more than stopped. We found that out later from prisoners, for the Germans never knew we were in the front line when they made that attack.

They were absolutely mystified at the manner in which the defense had stiffened up until they found that our troops were in line.

The next day Wise's outfit pulled a spectacular stunt in broad daylight. They spotted a machine gun out in front, called for a barrage, swept out behind it, killed or wounded every man in the crew, and disabled the gun. They got back O.K., and then the Boches launched a counter-attack that was smashed up. For the next few days we were busy pushing out small posts to locate the enemy, and to reoccupy such strong points as were beyond the main line assigned us. While it had all been pre-arranged, our people were anxious to recover what they could, without precipitating an engagement, of some of the ground evacuated by the French.

The real fireworks broke on June 6th when a general advance on the brigade front to straighten out the lines and recover territory was decided on. In the meantime the Twenty-third had been brought in from the left and put on our right, Holcomb's flank. Our division sector had been shortened to about the front that the Sixth had held and we had two battalions of the Fifth and two of the Sixth in line. At 5 P.M. we started out for our new objectives, on a wonderful day, and the twilight is so long here that it was practically broad daylight. The eastern edge of the Bois de Belleau and Bouresches were our main objectives, with Torcy



and other parts of the Belleau the Fifth's. Sibley's battalion had the advance with Holcomb's in support. The colonel and Captain Laspierre, our French military adviser, went out to Lucy, the central point behind the advance, Sibley moved out in perfect order, and poor Cole told me the night before they got him that when Holcomb's Ninety-sixth Company moved out later and came through the woods and into the wheat-fields in four waves, it was the most beautiful sight he had ever seen. The artillery preparation was short and one of the platoons of our machine-gun company laid down a barrage. But out in the thick Bois de Belleau liaison was extremely difficult. The woods were alive with machine guns, and at times where our lines and those of the Fifth had passed through, they soon found Boches and machine guns in their rear. The advance on the left was held up by stubborn fighting, but about nine Sibley sent in a runner with word that his left was advanced as far as his right, that he had reached the northeast edge of the woods, that the worst of the machine-gun nests was on a rock plateau near his post command, but that he had surrounded it. In the meantime word came in that Colonel Catlin had been wounded, and I felt that the bottom of the war had dropped out. He had such a complete grasp of military situations, was familiar as no one else could have been with what was to be done, and officers and men invari-

ably looked to him, and there seemed no limit to his capacity for work or his ready sympathy with and understanding of his subordinates. Captain Laspierre had gone to report to Feland, who was in charge on the left, when a shell burst near and he was evacuated, shocked and gassed. It was a double blow. The colonel had moved a short distance out, as he had planned, from Lucy to watch the first phase. He was standing up in a machine-gun pit with his glasses up, when a sniper drilled him clean through the right chest. It was a clean wound and our reports lead us to believe that he will be out by the middle of July if not sooner.

In the meantime, because of the extreme difficulty of liaison and with a dark night closing in, orders went out to consolidate. This came just before we had word from Sibley. It was just 9.45 when word came in that Bouresches had been taken by Robertson's platoon of the Ninety-sixth, or rather the twenty-odd men of his platoon who had managed to break through a heavy machine-gun barrage and enter the town. One of Sibley's company had been assigned the town, with Holcomb's battalion to establish the line from there to where the Twenty-third's left flank lay. It had been unable to advance and at the same time keep in touch on its left as ordered. Duncan, hearing, however, that this company was two hundred yards in advance (an error), raced ahead with his Ninety-sixth Com-



pany and was met by a terrific machine-gun barrage from two sides of, and from, Bouresches. As Robertson told me, he had managed to get part of his platoon through the barrage and, looking back, saw Duncan and the rest of the company, charging through the barrage, "go down like flies." Robertson had one half of the line and Duncan half. Robertson blew his whistle just before this to bring up all of his half of the line, and missed Lieutenant Bowling. He passed the word, "Where is Johnny?" and saw Bowling get up, face white with pain, and go stumbling ahead with a bullet in his shoulder. Duncan, the last he saw of him before he was mowed down, had his pipe in his mouth and was carrying a stick. Dental Surgeon Osborn picked Duncan up and with a hospital corps man had just gained some shelter when a shell wiped all three out.

Just after Robertson gained the town and cleaned out the Boches after street fighting, in which his orderly, Private Dunlavy, killed later in the defense of the town, captured and turned on them one of their machine guns, others filtered through, and the Seventy-ninth Company, under Zane. Holcomb was very enthusiastic about Zane's handling of the town.

In the meantime, although the capture of Bouresches was the most spectacular of the first fighting, Sibley was having heavier work in the

Bois de Belleau. He reported early that there were many machine guns in the woods. At first prisoners came in early, and the men who brought them back reported that the companies were cleaning up fast with few casualties. Young Timmerman charged one machine-gun nest at the point of the bayonet and sent in seventeen prisoners at a clip.

After the first batches of prisoners came into the courtyard of our post command and stood with hands up in the orthodox Kamerad style, and the runners were full of the easy manner in which Sibley was going through the woods, came a message that the woods ahead were full of machine guns, and that one, on a rock plateau in the north-eastern edge, was especially troublesome, a nest estimated to hold between ten and twelve guns. Then came word that he had reached the limit of his objective at the edge of the woods, that he had surrounded the machine-gun nest, and was awaiting orders. Then came word from the brigade to dig in and consolidate the positions won. Two companies of Engineers were placed in Lucy, one for each battalion. We sent out a truck loaded with ammunition and tools to Bouresches, got up our Stokes and one-pounders for Sibley, and Holcomb was ordered to straighten out his line from Bouresches straight down to the Triangle Farm, where the Twenty-third rested its left flank.

The truck went out with Lieutenant W. B. Moore,

the captain of the track team, halfback on the football team, and president of the senior class at Princeton last year (1917). The whole road was lighted up by flares, exploding shells, and swept by both artillery and heavy machine-gun fire. It was a great trip, and we had fifty volunteers from the Headquarters Company, of whom we only sent the necessary crew. When it got back we knew we could hold Bouresches, and the counter-attack at 2.30 in the morning, although they got within thirty feet of the town, was smothered by our fire.

The 7th was spent in getting rations, water, and ammunition out to both battalions, and the little Ford we have hung on to, although it was twice on the verge of salvage, ran through a period of thirty-six hours over the road to Bouresches in daytime and at night, or to a point from which the stuff could be carried off to the left to the ravine running along the right of Sibley's position. All that day and the next Sibley's men rushed machine-gun nests in hand-to-hand fighting. The guns were emplaced on crests in the thick woods, on rocky ridges, with fire to all points. Their light guns could easily be moved around to our flanks or rear and the Boches certainly know the art of working through, infiltrating, and opening fire from unexpected quarters. Many times the groups got a footing on these crests, only to have to fall back in the face of a deadly machine-gun and stick-grenade fire. It was

work of the most reckless courage against heavy odds, and they took their toll of us for every gun captured or disabled. All through this time Sibley had Boches and guns on his flank and in his rear, for the woods were held by both forces, and the liaison on our left had been crippled by the initial advance in which the battalion on his left, Berry's, and his own had to fight their way in the dark, and Berry was wounded early in the fight.

On the 9th, Sibley was withdrawn to a point from which the artillery could hammer away at the machine-gun nests, which had been thoroughly located. For an hour fifty American and French batteries of 75's and 155's threw everything they had into those woods on the right. Hughes went in on the 10th, and his first message was that the artillery had hammered the Bois de Belleau into mince-meat. Overton, who had taken over the Seventy-sixth Company that day, charged the old rock plateau position in brilliant fashion, killing or capturing every gunner and capturing all the guns, and with few casualties. He "got his" later when the Boches shelled him in his hastily dug-in position for forty-eight hours. Hughes captured six Minnenwerfers, about thirty guns, light and heavy. The copy of commendations we sent to you will tell you better than anything else the story of Sibley's magnificent work before the artillery preparation made the task an easier one. Young Robinson

charged into certain death to take one nest, and a string of bullets caught him full in the breast. Young Roberts, a runner told me, — the last time the runner saw him, — was flat on a rock not twenty yards away from one gun, blazing at it with an automatic in either hand. They hit him three times, and hit him hard before he would consent to go to the rear. There was not an officer left in the Eighty-second Company, and Sibley and his adjutant, Bellamy, reorganized them under close fire and led them in a charge that put that particular nest out of business at the most critical time in all the fighting. I heard later that at that stage some one said, "Major Sibley ordered that —" and another man said, "Where in hell is Sibley?" Sibley was twenty yards away at the time, and a hush went down the line when they saw him step out to lead the charge. And when the word got around that dead-tired, crippled outfit that the "Old Man" was on the line, all hell could n't have stopped that rush. With all the stories that I've heard about it, I wonder if ever an outfit went up against a more desperate job, stuck to it so gamely without sleep, at times on short rations, with men and officers going off like flies, and I wonder if in all our long list of gallant deeds there ever were two better stunts than the work of Sibley and Holcomb.

Since the 10th, while the fighting has not been of

that savage hand-to-hand fighting, we've been in there, the two regiments, always advancing, never giving an inch, attacking and smashing counter-attacks by the literal score. They've had five and part of a sixth division *versus* our brigade, and half the time three divisions at once. One of them, the Twenty-eighth, is one of their finest.

Just one more incident of Sibley's work. The supply of grenades gave out at one time, due mostly to the fact that no one knew what a veritable nest of machine guns those woods sheltered. They would have been a Godsend, and as one of the men said, "When I thought of the hundreds I'd thrown away in practice, I'd have given a million dollars for a grenade more than once."

They've had reliefs for a few days, the battalions, for it's a battalion war now, but many people would have hardly called it rest. It was the best we could get, but the rest woods were shelled at times, there was no chance to scrub and wash clothes, and if it rained no shelter except ponchos and little dugouts that were soon flooded. But every time they went back into the lines, dead tired, but with a spirit that made any task possible. There were times when it seemed to me, with my talk over the 'phone, their official and unofficial messages and their reports of casualties, of bombardments and gas, that they must have reached their limit and could not hold. But they held like grim death without a



whimper and got away with it. At one time, when a borrowed regiment took over the sector for a few days, the battalion marched back to the Marne for a swim. They had to go before daybreak, and return at nightfall, and by the worst of luck those were cold, rainy days.

We're still in [this was written on June 29th] and the line now takes in all the woods from our right, which Sibley is now holding, up to the left where the French are. In one night, on the 26th, Shearer moved his line forward for the Fifth and sent in 560 prisoners. The next two nights, Keyser, on the extreme left for the Fifth, moved his lines and took up the positions assigned without a loss, and sent patrols three hundred yards ahead without resistance.

They (the Germans) have had the fight knocked out of them and admit it. The artillery has done wonderful work at all times. The last big draft of prisoners had been cut off from supplies for three days by our fire. One man in the Sixteenth Company, Leonard, captured and held in the front lines, brought in, unarmed, a captain, four lieutenants, and seventy-three Germans. Another Marine, wounded and found in a dugout by Shearer's men, had had his fun when they hammered questions at him, in a smattering of German, French, and English. When they asked him how our food supply was he said, "Bon. Beaucoup



chow." When they wanted a line on our machine guns they asked, "Combien put-put-put?" and he came back with "Beaucoup put-put-put." The prisoners vary a lot, some fine big chaps, and many look like retired farmers, under-sized, or running down to seventeen. At first they thought we were Canadians, but the last lot say all the Germans know we have about 700,000, and they say they don't want to fight us, that we give them no rest and our artillery punishes them terribly. We've found lots of letters and diaries, and the diaries are interesting. They start off with the "Gott-mit-uns" lines and boasts of what they will do to the Big Americans. Then they tell of lying in the woods under a terrific fire and about the big Americans who seem to know no fear. Then they end — a complete story of disillusionment.

I know you will be interested in what gallant work the officers and men are doing. The men have learned that the officers will lead them anywhere, and the men worship them. And the officers will talk you to a finish at any time about their men. But they'll hit us heavily on officers, for they had to fight with a reckless bravery to carry the day.

Speaking of the relation of officers and men the writer says:

I DON'T believe there ever were battalions where officers and men had such a common feeling of

strong love and affection and mutual admiration for each other. They were brothers in arms in the fullest sense of the word, and if ever any one asks why our officers and men cannot adopt the French attitude of officer and men comradeship, you can tell them that those days in the lines simply was the medium through which the constant care, the faithful performance of duty, and the live interest that our officers, notably the platoon officers, had shown from the Quantico days in their men, was translated into as perfect a comradeship as could exist between men. I saw them toward the end out in the woods, and I found them out there serenely confident, their faces showing the strain, but the old spirit unconquered. And I found them either clean-shaven or shaving, and Turner, Hughes's old adjutant, then acting as Garrett's adjutant, as Hughes had just been evacuated gassed, could have walked into the White House and passed inspection.

Major Evans, in spite of his self-effacement in the foregoing letter, has received the following citation for his work during the battle:

MAJOR F. E. EVANS, Adjutant, 6th Marines:  
DURING the trying events of the early part of June, 1918, this officer carried the administrative burdens of his regiment with great efficiency. His untiring efforts, constant diligence, and intelligent trans-

mission of orders from the Brigade Commander during a number of days when his Regimental Commander was in an advanced headquarters and not always in communication, contributed in no small degree to the successful part played by this regiment in the operations against the enemy from the 1st to the 16th of June, 1918.

## CHAPTER XII

### LITTLE ELIZABETH FORD

“DRAT that Lizzie!”

You’ve said it a hundred times yourself as a “rattling good little car” swung around a corner on one wheel, nearly collided with the Pierce-Arrow parked near by, just missed knocking over a nurse and a baby-carriage, scraped the paint from a delivery wagon, and, rattling and banging and jolting, joggled along on its always uncertain journey. The butt of jokes and gibes it has been, an Ugly Duckling that must, perforce, wait for the fires of battle to prove that it, too, can have its share in making the world safe for Democracy.

When the first contingent of United States Marines were leaving America for “over there,” a friend of one of the regiments, Mrs. Elizabeth Pearce, presented it a Ford car for whatever use might be necessary.

The days and months went by. At last, the Hun was rushing on Paris and the United States Marines were called upon to help stop the progress of the marauder. Then it was that the Ugly Duckling came into her own and — but read the story in a letter from Major Frank E. Evans of the Marines:

*France, June 22, 1918*

MRS. CHARLES A. CHILDS,  
Newport, R.I.

MY DEAR MRS. CHILDS:

JUST now we have been enjoying a brief and temporary respite from our work in the lines, and before we go back I do want to tell you some news that I know will make you feel justified in your excellent choice of the Sixth Marines, you and Mrs. Pearce and Miss Willard, when you presented the beautiful colors to us. We did not finally receive them from our quartermaster until just on the eve of our sailing for France, and we wanted very much to have you down to League Island to make an official presentation, but, as you know, orders were countermanded a number of times, with us as well as with the other troops, and at the last moment we had General Lejeune present them in the name of all three, and the Regimental Order cited all the facts of the presentation.

And the Ford which Mrs. Pearce gave us will go down in Marine Corps history, at any rate. The "Elizabeth Ford," as the Regiment knows her, has had a unique career. Not only in Quantico, where I drove her, but in Bordeaux, and later up in our training area, she carried everything from sick men to hardtack. Then we had two months in the trenches near Verdun, and at the end of it it seemed as though she would have to go to the

scrap-heap. Her top was entirely gone, and we made a mail wagon of her. In some way the men, who have an affection for her that you can hardly comprehend, patched her together and we brought her down to our first rest billets. A week later we had to go to another area, forty kilometres north of Paris, and in the long line of motor cars that made the trip the Elizabeth Ford sailed along without mishap and was the talk of the Division.

Then we came up here and she rose to the heights of her service and her record. The night we took Bouresches with twenty-odd men, and news came through that others had filtered in and the town was ours, we shot out a truck-load of ammunition over the road. The road was under heavy shell and machine-gun fire. Later in the night we sent the Ford out with rations. For the next five days she made that trip night and day, and for one period ran almost every hour for thirty-six hours. She not only carried ammunition out to the men who were less than two hundred yards from the Boches, but rations and pyrotechnics, and then, to the battalion on the left of the road, in those evil Belleau Woods, she carried the same, and water, which was scarce there. For these trips she had to stop on the road and the stores were then carried by hand into a ravine. I saw her just after her first trip and counted twelve holes made by machine-gun bullets and shrapnel. At one time the driver, Private Fleitz, and

his two understudies, Haller and Bonneville, had to stop to make minor repairs, and another time, when they had a blowout, how she and the men escaped being annihilated is a mystery. The last time I saw her she was resting against a stone wall in the little square of Lucy-le-Bocage, a shell-wrecked town, and she was the most battered object in the town. One tire had been shot off, another wheel hit, her radiator hit, and there were not less than forty hits on her. We are trying every possible way to find new parts and make a new Ford of her. She is our Joan of Arc, and if it takes six old cars to make her run again we'll get those six and rob them. The men have a positive and deep-seated affection for her that is touching. The service she did us, just when it was vital to get out to the fighting men ammunition, food, and water, can never be estimated.

I hope you will let Mrs. Pearce and Miss Livingston know the history of the flag and the Ford, and I will try to write them direct, for our indebtedness to them and to you is too great for words. With my best wishes and the most pleasant memories of your great kindness to Mrs. Evans and myself, I am

Faithfully

FRANK E. EVANS

Major, U.S. M.C.

MAJ. F. E. EVANS

6th Marines, A.E.F.



CHAPTER XIII  
OVER THE TOP — WITH GOD

WITH the coming of war, there is always the fear that the life at the front, the carnage of battle, and the killing of one's fellow man will act as a deterrent to religion. But, it seems, war has an opposite effect, the details of which are told in a letter from Lieutenant Merwin H. Silverthorn, of the United States Marines, to his family:

*July 1, 1918, Monday, 8.10 a.m.*

DEAR MARIE, MOTHER AND FOLKS:

I AM sorry that I have not had an opportunity to write sooner, but such is the case. There is so much to write about that this letter will be quite incoherent. June is a month that will always be the most vivid in my memory. It will always be a month that, though I live to be a hundred years old, whenever I recall it, I will have to thank God that I am now writing this to you; and a pang of deep sorrow will always pierce my heart when I think of some of my bosom friends, men young in years, but men from the ground up, who have made the supreme sacrifice, and with a smile on their faces, and their eyes lifted to God, but still plunging forward in that seething mass of hell, have met

their end like true Americans. It is a sight that will always be vivid; and an experience that has changed me overnight, from a youth seeking adventure to a man who has shaken dice with death, who has seen that grim monster reach out his cold, scaly hand and pick out so many brave men; but thanks to your prayers and mine, and thanks to the dear Father, who sent His Guarding Angel to protect me, I am still alive.

If there be any person who does not believe there is a God, let that man go "over the top" just once. It will do more to convince him than a thousand years of religious meetings.

The first time I went "over the top" was on June 6th. Oh, what a happy bunch we were! I and the best friend I had, next to Mick Williams, were shaking hands with one another, happy and exultant in the fact that at last we were "going over." Only two minutes later he had met his end, but he met it like a hero, an American and a man. I am speaking of Steve Sherman, who, no doubt, you will remember I have mentioned in some of my letters. I think his mother is a member of the Marine Mothers' Club. If she is, and you see her, Mother, convey to her my deepest and most sincere sympathy. Tell her I was with Steve only a few minutes before he fell. I did n't see him when he went down, but I collected the details from men who did, and they all are unanimous in saying he

fell fighting hard with his face toward the enemy and a smile on his face. It was a machine gun that got him.

Of the forty men in my platoon that started to cross a small ravine only one hundred yards across, four of us reached the other side. That was when we took Bouresches. We were in the line for one whole month. I state as an absolute fact, and it has been confirmed officially, that the Marines stopped the great German drive, saved Paris, and then, with over half of their number killed or wounded, drove the Germans back and once more saved the day.

During the month of June, I went "over the top" three times. You have read of the fierce fighting in Bois de Belleau. I have had the honor of leading my platoon "over the top" twice in those now famous woods. The second time, June 25th, with scarcely a handful of men, we completely routed the Germans and killed, wounded, or took prisoners more men than we had ourselves.

No doubt you have heard the story of the Marine who in our last attack became lost and found himself surrounded by Germans. He surrendered to them, and they questioned him. He told them who were opposite them, but they already knew that. He then told them that another regiment of Marines were in their rear. This was a new one on them. There was a major, three captains, and seventy-nine men. The major said, "If you will

guarantee that your men won't kill us, we will surrender to you." The Marine replied, "I will guarantee that, but I don't know the way back to regimental headquarters." The German major said, "I do." Whereupon he got out his compass and, with the Marine in the lead, the German major, three captains, and seventy-nine men, started back through the woods and arrived at regimental headquarters O.K.

I suppose father will want to know if I kept a stiff upper lip. Yes, Dad, I did. As I lay wounded, out in a clover-field, with machine-gun bullets cutting the top of the grass, and shrapnel breaking all around, the field covered with dead and dying, I thought of what you used to tell me, "Keep a stiff upper lip, boy." Well, I did. I crawled along toward some woods, four hundred yards away. Would I ever make it? Every minute was a year. At last, when I was one hundred yards away, I could stand it no longer. I would n't crawl and be killed crawling, so with a prayer on my lips (it was n't the first one that day by any means) I made a dash for it and gained the woods safely.

The Hun is a dirty fighter. He will keep his machine gun going till the last minute and then yell, "Kamerad!" In our last attack, there was some hand-to-hand fighting. We gained the top of a knoll. The line was broken, men were wavering, when some one on the left let out a yell. It ran like

wild-fire up and down the line. With a mighty yell the Marines came tearing down the slope. The Huns were helpless from fear. They threw down their guns and ran or yelled, "Kamerad!" Here it was that the bayonet came in for a goodly share. You may think it heartless of us, but let me ask you this: If you have had your pals killed alongside of you, and have missed death yourself a number of times, by inches, are you going to have mercy on the coward that shoots wounded men, on the dog that kills women and children, the skunk that sets fire to hospitals, the people who deem themselves ordained by God to rule the world? Would you have mercy? At last men grew tired of killing with the bayonet and then took prisoners.

As a summary let me tell you just a few of the things I have been through and seen in the last month of hell. I have gone "over the top" three times; have gone through a machine-gun fire pronounced by experts to be as murderous as any yet encountered in this war; I have lain in a field wounded for two hours while the machine-gun bullets kept cutting the grass not *one* inch over my body; I have lain wounded and been shot at by a sniper, who picked off a number of wounded men all around me; I have been bombarded by shrapnel, high-explosive shells, mustard gas, phosgene gas, vomiting, and other gases; I have been shot at with a machine gun from an aeroplane; I have lain in a

shell-hole from 8 P.M. till 6 A.M., alongside of a sergeant, both of us with our trench knives in one hand and cocked pistols in the other, thirty-five yards from Hun machine guns, in a thick woods, while they threw hand grenades at us, sniped at us, raked the top of our little shell-hole with machine guns, shot at us with trench mortars, whizz-bangs, and one-pounders, as well as rifle grenades. We were so close that when they would shoot up the flares to illuminate the surrounding territory, the flares would go practically straight up in the air, but would fall behind us. I have known men who went raving mad last month; I have seen men with arms blown off, legs blown off, and heads blown off. I have had men killed on all sides of me and have not been touched. I have only had my clothes off four times (that is, for sleeping) from the 8th of April till the 28th of June. I have gone days without sleep or food. The last month has been a horrible nightmare.

Now, dear people, don't worry about what I have been through; it is all over now. Just give a prayer to our Heavenly Father for bringing me through. After it is all over, I will come back to you all, to tell you more about the awful month of June, 1918, when the Marine Corps saved the day.

My best love to you all.

Your sweetheart, son, and brother

MERWIN

Lieutenant Silverthorn, shortly before writing this letter, was wounded during an attack, but continued the charge. For this, he received the following citation:

SECOND LIEUTENANT MERWIN H. SILVERTHORN,  
20th Company, 5th Marines:

WHO, on June 13th, received his commission as 2nd Lieutenant, continued in the attack after being wounded.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE QUALITY OF A HERO

UPON the official records at Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C., appears the following citation, upon which Captain George W. Hamilton, of the Marines, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross:

CAPTAIN GEORGE W. HAMILTON, 49th Company,  
5th Marines:

DURING an attack on the enemy, showed exceptionally brilliant leadership. He advanced his company a kilometre to his final objective against an enemy in trenches and equipped with machine guns. He and his company passed through several zones of machine-gun fire. When it is known that this company lost approximately ninety per cent of the officers and non-commissioned officers and fifty per cent of company in casualties, Captain HAMILTON'S rare quality of leadership is apparent. During the latter stages of the attack, after the men had lost their leaders, he ran up and down his line under severe fire leading his men forward and urging them on, by cheering and similar efforts. He did this at great personal exposure. Captain HAMILTON displayed a quality of extraordinary heroism.

And in the following letter, knowing nothing of the citation to come, not realizing that he was a hero, that he was otherwise than a hard-fighting, resourceful Marine, Captain Hamilton told of the difficulties that beset one when his brain, his quick-thinking mind, must form the barrier between his men and death. The letter was addressed to a friend in Washington, where Captain Hamilton makes his home, telling of the action near Château Thierry, and follows:

*Forty-ninth Company  
Fifth Regiment Marines  
American E.F. — 6/25/18*

DEAR "V":

AS promised, I want to give you as much of an idea as possible of our operations during the present month. I am writing at my dugout door, near the edge of the woods which mark our reserve-line position, and the facilities make it so difficult that the letter will probably not be all I had hoped it to be.

On June 5th, Old Jule Turrill, our battalion commander, got word that we were going to participate in an honest-to-God attack the *next morning*, and selected my depleted company and the Sixty-seventh to start things for his battalion. We were to have Americans on our right and French on our left, and were to make our get-away at 3.45 A.M. I'll have to skip some events here, but at 3.30 my

company was ready, having relieved another Marine company in the front line. I was supposed to guide left and keep in "liaison" with the French. I could n't see them and knew that at 3.45 they had not started. At 3.50 I started things myself, and we were off. Had n't moved fifty yards when they cut loose at us from the woods ahead — more machine guns than I had ever heard before. Our men had been trained on a special method of getting out machine guns, and, according to their training, all immediately lay down flat — some *fell*.

I realized that we were up against something unusual and had to run along the whole line and get each man (almost individually) on his feet to rush that wood. Once inside, things went better, but from here on I don't remember clearly what happened. I have vague recollections of urging the whole line on, faster, perhaps, than they should have gone — of grouping prisoners and sending them to the rear under *one* man instead of several — of snatching an iron cross ribbon off the first officer I got — and of shooting wildly at several rapidly retreating Boches. (I carried a rifle on the whole trip and used it to good advantage.) Farther on, we came to an open field — a wheat-field full of red poppies — and here we caught hell. Again it was a case of rushing across the open and getting into the woods. Afterwards we found why it was they made it so hot for us — three *machine-gun*



MORGAN DENNIS

“IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE WE RUSHED THE POSITIONS THAT WE WERE ABLE TO TAKE THEM”



*companies* were holding down these woods and the infantry were farther back. Besides several of the heavy Maxims we later found several empty belts and a dead gunner sitting on the seat or lying near by. It was only because we rushed the positions that we were able to take them, as there were too many guns to take in any other way.

After going through this second wood we were really at our objective, but I was looking for an unimproved road which showed up on the map. We now had the Germans pretty well on the run except a few machine-gun nests. I was anxious to get to that road, so pushed forward with the men I had with me — one platoon (I knew the rest were coming, but thought they were closer). We went right down over the nose of a hill and on across an open field between two hills. What saved me from getting hit I don't know — the Maxims on both sides cut loose at us unmercifully — but although I lost heavily here I came out unscratched. I was pushing ahead with an automatic rifle team and did n't notice that most of the platoon had swerved off to the left to rout out the machine guns. All I knew was that there was a road ahead and that the bank gave good protection *to the front*. It happened, however, that there was a town just a few hundred yards to the left, and while most of the Germans had left, about one company was forming for a counter-attack. I realized that I had gone too



far — that the nose of the hill I had come over was our objective, and that it was up to me to get back, reorganize, and dig in. It was a case of every man for himself. I crawled back through a drainage ditch filled with cold water and shiny reeds. Machine-gun bullets were just grazing my back and our own artillery was dropping close (I was six hundred yards too far to the front). Finally I got back, and started getting the two companies together, and I sent out parties to the right and left to try to hook up with our French and American friends, but it was n't until the next day that we got a satisfactory liaison.

And now came the counter-attacks — five nasty ones that came near driving us back off our hill — but — we hung on. One especially came near getting me. There were heavy bushes all over the hill, and the first thing I knew hand grenades began dropping near. One grenade threw a rock which caught me behind the ear and made me dizzy for a few minutes. But I quickly recovered my senses when I saw one of my gunnery sergeants jump toward the bushes with a yell and start shooting to beat the devil. Not twenty feet from us, was a line of about fifteen German helmets and five light machine guns just coming into action. It was hand-to-hand work for several strenuous minutes, and then all was over. We hauled the guns in later and buried most of the Germans.



After the counter-attacks we settled down to the work of digging in. Gee, but it was a long day! The night proved to be worse, and on account of my flanks I was more worried than I cared to admit. The Boches went up the valleys to our right and left and from their flares I thought we were all but surrounded. Two more companies had come up, however, and the fire from the rifles and auto-rifles of several hundred men must have made the Germans nervous, too, for about dawn they went back and only left several machine guns to worry us during the next day.

I'm tired of telling about fighting and am going to knock off. We held the positions; the lines came up on the right and left, and we now have satisfied the Germans that they have n't a chance as long as they are up against Marines.

Best to you.

GEORGE

## CHAPTER XV

### AFTER THE BATTLE

OUT of the Zone of Death they came, men who had fought and bled, that the Hun might be cheated of his prey. Back from Belleau Wood, every one of them a hero, and every one of them with but one idea — first to bathe and cleanse himself of the grime of battle, then to seize pencil and paper that he might write the glorious news home! Masterpieces were written on those days, masterpieces of description, even if now and then the rules of grammar were forgotten and the proper phraseology smashed to shreds. And when Private Joseph Greenburg, of the Ninety-sixth Company of Marines, chewed the end of his pencil, then dashed toward his task of description, he became the spokesman of the Marines, and told his story as only a “hard-boiled” Marine could tell it:

WE Marines were looking for a fight. We got it.

About two weeks ago the Huns got to acting rather rambunctious. They were beginning to give the French a sort of a merry chase. The villagers had started to abandon their homes, and they went out of town a-scooting. Then somebody decided that the “blinkin’ ’uns,” as the British put it, ought to be stopped.

So they gave the Marines about twenty-four hours' notice and stuck us on this side of France. We took our positions in a wood, where we found a secondary line of French. They had been expecting their comrades to fall back and join them.

Well, sir, we had n't been there but three hours by the clock when, blame me, if they did n't come off that hill, and the Huns after 'em. Gee, we WERE mad! But we could do nothing, for if we fired we'd hit the French, too. So we waited.

As luck would have it, the French outran the Huns and got to us first. The Huns, fagged, stopped opposite us in a wood, expecting to finish the job to-morrow. They did n't dream the Americans were there. And especially the Marines.

That night our artillery gave them a rousing welcome. We sang, "Hot time in the old town to-night." The next day they brought up artillery, and then we began to celebrate the Fourth of July. Something seemed to tell the Huns there was something wrong, and they did the hesitation for a while.

But Paris is a pretty fine burg, and they did want awfully bad to see it. For five days they stayed in their shells and sent them over hot. On the sixth day we figured they'd had plenty of rest for Huns, and figured perhaps they'd fight. We decided the stop they'd made in the wood was the last one they'd make before Paris.

So we ups and at 'em. I'll say they had machine guns beaucoup. But our first line had forgotten how to about face, and they began to back away by degrees. Fifty yards or more, and they let loose the old Kamerad stall. But too many of our boys had dropped by their gun fire, and it was dog eat dog. Kamerad, my eye! We were the regular "devil dogs" they had named us.

It was one of their crack divisions, we heard later, and we knew why. It was because we made 'em crack. We not only cracked 'em, but we broke 'em.

We were out to kill Germans, but, of course, we took a lot of prisoners. We had to. What are you going to do when some youngster comes running up to you and pleads? From a distance you can plug him and grin. But when he runs up to you, chest bared, unarmed, and bawling like sixty, all the blood vanishes from before your eyes and you forget what you set out to do.

Oh, when it's their turn they ride us like hell. But we've put the fear of God into them, and they know it.

I was plugged, but I'm getting along fine now, and I'll be out pretty soon to take another whack at the boneheads. If you see my name in the casualty list, forget it. I'll be all right when you get this.

Sincerely

JOE

The fighting had a different effect upon Private Howard L. Grimm, of the Forty-third Company of Marines, that of making him realize how glad he was to be still alive, and it was this theme that ran through his descriptive letter to his mother:

*American Expeditionary Forces*  
*Young Men's Christian Association*  
*Headquarters: 12 Rue D'Aguesseau, Paris*

*June 18, 1918*

DEAREST MOTHER:

YOU have probably read of what the Marines have done over here and are probably worried to death. I am alive and well, eating three a day once again.

I am going to tell you about our part in the drive, that is the Second Battalion of Marines. There are a thousand things I cannot tell you until I see you, which I hope will be soon.

The French were retreating when the Marines were shoved upon the line. We checked the Boches in short order. Then one morning we made an attack. I was in the first wave. We drove them back in the face of their heavy machine-gun fire, capturing about eight hundred prisoners and many machine guns in the first attack. Then we held our position under heavy shell fire.

Later we made our second attack again on Boche machine guns and drove them back, taking about

four hundred prisoners, and the Marines in all took about two hundred and fifty machine guns. The Second Battalion alone took about twelve hundred prisoners. The Boche casualties I do not know, but I do know we fought against some of Germany's best troops. Bismarck's army, two divisions, and the Crown Prince's pet division. A captured Boche captain said the Marines were the worst troops to advance they had ever known, and it was never thought possible by them that any one could advance against their machine guns that way. We took their machine guns and turned them on them when we held our line. This was all open warfare in the woods. We could have had plenty of German souvenirs, but I was too glad to get out alive to bother carrying any. I have thanked God that He has permitted me to be here and able to write you, and my faith has been so strengthened that it has made me a new boy. The Boches are so afraid of us that they run at sight of a bayonet. They call us "devil dogs." One instance only — a sergeant and corporal were taking twelve prisoners to the rear when they ran into a bunch of Boches. They took a few shots at them and soon "Kamerad" came from all directions. When they arrived at the rear they had over one hundred prisoners.

The Boches do not want to fight. They are on the run all along the front and I think we can look for

a speedy end to the war. The Americans are showing them how! This is all I am going to tell you except that we were relieved by American "dough-boys" and are now behind the lines. The French call us the "Saviors of Paris" and nothing is too good for a Marine.

PVT. HOWARD L. GRIMM

43d Co. 2nd Battalion

5th Regiment, U.S. Marines

Major Henry N. Manney, quartermaster of the Sixth Regiment, did not even wait until he had been relieved, before he wrote his mother. June 10th was the date of his letter, and it was written in Belleau Wood, while the fight still was on:

DEAREST MOTHER:

I SUPPOSE you know by this time where we are, as all the American, British, and French papers are ringing with the exploits of the Marine Brigade. The performance was so splendid that for once the censorship lifted, and not only have all the papers had the Marines in their principal headlines for days, but they have even mentioned officers by name. Since it has all been printed in the papers, there is no harm in telling you that we were rushed across country to stop a Boche push that was coming through the French like tissue paper. We stopped them with a bang, and then tore into them



and took back the ground that had been lost. The Marines lived up to their reputation and even bettered it. A week's steady fighting with practically no sleep and very little food and water during the first part of it, but we are still going forward.

Our casualties are not small, but the Boches have been terrifically punished and the ground regained, so it is worth it. I wish that I could have shared more in the glory of the actual fighting, but my job keeps me back out of range of everything except artillery fire. My men have caught it taking up rations at night as well as my mules, and one of my officers was badly wounded. A sniper got the colonel through the chest, but he is doing all right, and the lieutenant-colonel is running things so well that there is no change to be noticed. This is open warfare, just our style, and nothing could be finer than the way our men went to it.

As the papers said, the men were rushed across country by motor, and I had to take all the wagon trains and march. The train was several miles long and we hiked day and night. I had about an hour and a half's sleep in about five days, and on one part of the march we covered fifty-five miles in twenty-two consecutive hours of marching. The news reached us on the march that the Brigade was fighting and needed us, and we sure came a-running.

This is actually the first chance I have had to



“THIS IS OPEN WARFARE, JUST OUR STYLE”



write since the 29th of May, and I don't know when I will be able to mail this, as we have no post-office, and there is no time to censor mail. Maybe I can get the censor to stamp this and pass it.

We are living right in thick woods without any shelter, and have to keep under cover because of the observation of the Boche planes. Luckily we have had fine weather and no rain, so it has been all right. My bedding roll is slung as a hammock between two trees, and mules are tied all around me. They certainly are some songbirds, too.

Am terribly busy, and must stop now.

Lots of love.

HENRY

Nothing to worry about, and will write as soon as I can.

Private H. A. Leonard wrote his letter from a hospital. But never was a man in a hospital happier. Had he not taken part in filling the gap between the Beast and Paris? Incidentally, Private Leonard, in his letter, gave the viewpoint of the man on the American fighting line toward the man he fights, now and after the war:

*American Ex. Forces*

*June 10, 1918*

DEAR HELEN AND MOTHER:

WELL, I suppose that by now you have heard of our big fight. It certainly was glorious. We were rushed

up to the big drive and put right on the line. We stopped and held them for five days and then went after 'em. They had a lot of artillery and machine guns that raised the devil with our lines until we got up to them, and then it was our turn. We sure did a good job. I am rather worried about Harold, as his platoon was rather badly shot up, but I was talking to his officer at the dressing-station and he said that Harold was a great kid with the bayonet, and that he got through the machine-gun fire all right. We got a lot of prisoners and they were mighty glad to be captured; at least, they said they were. I was talking to one in the ambulance who said that the war is about over for them. He also said that he was going to get his family from Berlin and come to the States after the war. I told him to get that idea entirely out of his head, as we were going to lynch them as fast as they came. Just two hours before he had been mowing our men down with a machine gun, and now he is figuring on going to America to live in peace. Can you beat that for nerve? He was educated, too, and spoke good English. We found two or three machine-gun crews chained to their guns; maybe they did n't get down on their knees, though!

Now, about myself. Here I am in a hospital with a little gas in my lungs which will soon be out. I have absolutely nothing. My pack and clothes were taken from me, my toilet articles were hit, and all

smashed up. Had a Bible in my pocket. It has a bullet hole in it, but I never got touched. I can't understand that yet. Anyhow, as I was saying, I have a suit of pajamas on and that is all I possess in the world.

Don't ever worry about the cause, as it is very safe. The Allies may give a little ground, but when our time comes we will have the men, and they won't. It sure is a sight for bum eyes to see a bunch of mad Americans having a rough-and-tumble, hand-to-hand fight with about three times their number of Boches. The latter just have n't got a chance, and how well they must know it by now!

CORP. H. A. LEONARD

78th Co., 6th Regiment

U.S. M.C., Am. Ex. Forces

“Post-impressionistic” is the word that Private E. A. Wahl, of the Marines, used in his descriptive letter following Belleau Wood, a word that shows the difference in the fighting man of to-day and yesterday. Time was when a man in the army would not have known the word “post-impressionistic” from a brand of catsup. But times have changed, and all America is fighting now, even the private who has the command of words such as is shown in the following letter:

*June 27, 1918*

MY DEAR ANN:

THERE is so much to say of the events that have transpired the past thirty days that it is rather discouraging to attempt a letter of ordinary proportions. This will have to be a sort of post-impressionistic one of what we have gone through.

To begin with, I will have to say that I am sincerely thankful to the Almighty Power that I am here whole-skinned writing home again. Providence saw fit to let me go through unscathed the sixteen days of hell in the front lines (June 4th to 20th). One becomes convinced of the existence of an unseen Power guiding him if he comes through alive an experience like ours, in case he previously entertained any doubts as to such things.

Decoration Day, just after I had written you my last letter (quite a long one, did you receive it?) we received sudden orders to pack and move from the quiet little country place just outside of Paris where we were resting. At midnight we started off. Motor trucks were to have transported us, but they did n't seem to have enough to carry us all even though there were hundreds continually passing. So it was a case of hike again for the Seventy-third (for which, by the way, we're quite noted) and several other Marine companies. That hike is pretty much a blur. I hope I will never have to do one like it again. We had one rest of from twelve noon until



nine in the evening of the first day. The rest of the time it was just tramp, tramp along until dusk of June 3d, when a string of motor trucks hove in sight to take us the rest of the way. (We were then in the region where the refugees were trundling past in their many pathetic states.) Did those trucks look good to us! Tired out beyond description, we did n't care where we were or where we were going, just so we could ride. We learned from the weary, dust-covered drivers (many of whom had n't slept for several days) that the situation was serious and that we were badly needed. We bumped along all night at a tremendous speed, passing the long lines of dim-shaped wagon trains, truck trains, cannon, troops, and the poor refugees, who, of course, were bound in the opposite direction.

Just as the day was breaking, about 3 A.M. of the 4th, we drew up in the main street of a little deserted village in the midst of the boom and flash of big guns. We climbed out with our machine guns and equipment and trailed off into a little near-by woods. Excitement began to drive away our weariness then. We were told to rest, and that we would n't be going into the lines until evening. Managed to sleep for a couple of hours, but the roar from the artillery and machine guns in front became so heavy as the day advanced that rest was impossible. Stretchers with wounded French Marines began coming up from the lines. Ambulance

after ambulance dashed down and dashed back again. We realized that we were at last in the thick of things. About noon a couple of high-explosive shells dropped near us. Then another and another. We were caught in an enemy artillery barrage that lasted about two hours. Our first casualty occurred then, a Corporal Johnson was hit by a piece of shell through the back, and died a few minutes afterwards.

We sought shelter everywhere, falling flat on our faces as we heard shells come screeching down. That was our only protection. We just had to lie flat wondering if the next was going to get us. One shell landed about fifteen feet from me and exploded. I heard a scream at the same time and looked up. It had landed in a hole where two chaps from another company were lying. Several of us rushed over to the spot and pulled them out. They were horribly cut up, but not dead. A horse tied to a tree about five feet away was killed instantly. I think it was the poor animal that screamed. An ambulance rolled by at that moment, and we stopped it, had the boys' wounds dressed, and they were rolled away. I can't begin to describe my state of mind — you will just have to imagine it. We were getting our first real taste of the horrors of war.

At dusk we fell into single file and started down a road toward the lines. Dead and wounded were

liberally distributed along the road. Shell-shock victims acting like crazy men were being led to the rear by comrades. I will never forget that first trip through the pitch darkness of tangled woods down to our first positions. Bullets whistling around us snipping off tree branches, big shells screaming and crashing in all directions, stumbling into shell-holes and over fallen trees, taking about three hours to reach our positions — it tested one's endurance to the limit. We arrived about midnight to a position on the edge of the woods overlooking a piece of No Man's Land. Threw off my pack and ammunition boxes and fell right to sleep. Did n't even trouble to dig or find a hole. Awoke at daylight amid an awful din. The infantry around us was preparing to make an attack and our artillery was throwing over a barrage. Everybody was awake and on the job. We could see the Boches running out of a little patch of woods to our left that our guns were shelling heavily. We opened up on them. We silenced one of their machine guns in the woods that was shooting directly into us. Then our infantry started over after them. Several of the boys dropped on the way, but most of them made it. Only a few of the Boches were left in the woods and most of them called, "Kamerad!"

The whole sixteen days was just a nightmare of this sort of business — attacks and counter-attacks. I cannot describe it. The aggressiveness of the

Marines halted this drive of the Germans, I am told. We are the pets of the French people these days. We advanced and held ground which the French troops that we relieved were evacuating. It has been costly, though. Ted Fuller (Captain) an old classmate of mine was killed. Major Cole, of the Machine-Gun Battalion, was wounded badly and died a couple of days afterwards. Our Colonel Catlin was shot through the right lung by a sniper, but is getting along fine, I understand. Captain De Roode was slightly wounded in the foot. So, you see, destruction plays no favorites here. It is not only the lowly private that gets picked. We have lost some splendid chaps from our company.

The Germans have suffered terribly, though. Whenever we have made an advance and taken over positions evacuated by them we find their bodies lying about everywhere and grave after grave. We have taken enough of their machines to equip a division, I guess. As far as I know, no Marines have been taken prisoners; a few are missing and undoubtedly many of the wounded have been captured. No German attack has been successful, so naturally they have n't had much opportunity for making many captives.

The spirit of our men is wonderful. It is beyond the wildest imagination. They walk right into rifle and machine-gun fire in the most matter-of-fact way. They have just taken the Boches off their feet.

We have n't given them a minute's rest. Our First Lieutenant Daly, who already has two Congressional medals of honor, walked right into a German machine-gun nest with a couple of infantrymen and heaved hand grenades at them until the few that were left screamed, "Kamerad!" Bullets had cut his gas mask and clothes in several places, but he came back unscathed. Then — he was slightly wounded back of the lines here the other day by a piece of shrapnel that burst near our field kitchen. It made the old Irishman as mad as the devil. We expect him back from the hospital in a few days. He is an indispensable part of the Seventy-third Company.

Day before yesterday I took my shoes off for the first time since the month of May. Several of us went down to the Marne and took a much-needed bath. We did n't have any clean clothes to put on, but it was refreshing at that. Since we came out of the lines we are lying in reserve a few kilometres back. Another division comes up in a day or two to relieve us and then we go to some town for a rest, get a new outfit of clothes and equipment, and new men to replace the casualties.

I understand we are to take part in the parade of July 4th in Paris. It is rumored that the Brigade of Marines is to get the "fourragère" — I hope it's true. Croix de Guerre are to be handed out quite liberally I understand. General Pershing has made

several citations of us in army orders, they say. His former Chief of Staff, General Harbord, has had the Marine Brigade since General Doyen was transferred to the States.

The boys have souvenirs galore, helmets, pistols, rifles, etc. Some of them have so much stuff that they torture themselves carrying the load around. Souvenirs have not interested me particularly as yet. There will be plenty of time to pay attention to them. The German equipment is splendid — that of the divisions that have opposed us, at least. They may be on their last legs, but their packs and everything they have is of the typical German thoroughness, and certainly does not indicate any shortage of material for the military. Their machine guns we have used to advantage. I guess many a Boche was put out of commission by his gun in the hands of the Marines.

I have much more to say, but will write no more at this time.

Unexpected orders came to-day that we go into the lines again. It is rather disappointing but "C'est la guerre."

As ever

E. A.

Twenty-four hours after his relief, Private Walter Scott Hiller was writing his family of the victory, and adding, at the end of the letter, the wish that had been in their hearts also, during all those dark



days of fighting: "God be with you." Belleau Wood had been a testing-ground for Hiller — the testing-ground that had shown him what the traditions of the Marine Corps meant and all they stood for. The letter:

*Somewhere in France*

*June 16, 1918*

DEAREST MOTHER, DAD, BROTHERS AND SISTERS: I RECEIVED four letters just two days ago. They were handed to me while I was sitting in a hole in the ground about two by four waiting for the Boches to show up.

Mother, you asked if I ever regret being a Marine. Do you think any man would regret being a part of such an organization, that have proven to be real fighters, that can go up against the Kaiser's best-equipped and well-trained forces and give them the defeat we did? Not this man; even though I had fallen it could not have been for a better cause. We have surely realized since we have been over here what a wonderful country and nation the United States is, and to be able to fight for her is a splendid opportunity.

When going up to the front some weeks ago, we saw people moving everything they owned out of the towns because the Huns were advancing. It made tears come to my eyes and of several other boys that I have since talked to regarding that



scene. My thoughts went home to you folks, and I pictured some things in my mind if the Germans were victorious the world over. I just set my jaw and determined to do everything I possibly could to eliminate that curse from the earth.

You can't imagine the feeling it gave when we had them on the run in retreat. There were many that did n't get a chance to run because our men were too cool and steady with their firing. Everything was n't our way all the time, and several times things looked pretty dark for us. It was then more than ever before that I remembered your teachings, dear Mother, and I offered some prayers that I know were answered, because when I could go through what we have and come out without a scratch, I'm sure He must have blessed me.

If you could have seen us this morning, I'll venture to say you would n't have known me. None of us had shaved since Decoration Day, and some had n't washed at all. I washed once in the whole time. Our clothes were in shreds, and to say we looked like tramps would be expressing it mildly. Our "chow" was n't much of a variety. It consisted of bread and "monkey" meat, as we call some canned meat that comes from Argentine, and sometimes a little sugar to put on the bread. It is very unhealthy to make a fire within several miles of the lines, so we never had any hot stuff, but as the weather was good all the time, we got along O.K.

What care we for hardships or danger when we know we are doing our duty, and fighting for the things we are?

Well, I guess I've told you all I can to-night. Will write again soon and tell you a few things and answer your letters, but I want to get this off as soon as possible to relieve you folks at home.

God's blessings be with you all at home.

Your loving son and brother

WALT

And now, a letter with an echo. We who stay at home wonder often what it is that makes a man a hero, what psychological action takes place to make him forget all fear, all thought of personal safety, that he may do his duty to the utmost. Upon the record case of Corporal Fred W. Hill at Marine Corps Headquarters, appears a citation for bravery, which reads:

CORPORAL FRED W. HILL, Headquarters Company,  
6th Marines:

REGARDLESS of personal danger he showed conspicuous bravery in carrying ammunition from the battalion dump into the actual fight in the face of a heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. When in charge of the dump he learned the necessity for hand grenades in the assault against strong enemy gun positions, and without waiting for orders or assist-

ance carried hand grenades to the point of danger. This on the 8th of June, 1918.

And in the letter that he sent his mother, soon after his relief from fighting in Belleau Wood, comes the answer to the question. For Corporal Hill was white with anger against the Beast; he had just seen humanity torn by its claws, and the sight had cut deep. In Corporal Hill's letter comes an explanation of why the United States Marines outfought the hordes of Germany's best warriors at Belleau Wood, in spite of the odds of numerical strength against them. They had seen something to make them grit their teeth and forget everything save the thought of revenge. And in Corporal Hill's letter to his mother, comes the story—from one who saw:

*France, Sunday, June 30, 1918*

MY DEAR MOTHER:

IT sure seems good to be able to write you once more. For just about one month we have had no time for letters, but I have thought of you often during that time and I suppose you know where we have been. I have seen more warfare crowded into that short length of time than I ever thought I would. Of the Marines and what they accomplished, I have little to say, as I know that the newspapers have handled it in first-class shape, and to say that I am pleased is putting it mildly.

I have always hoped and expected that they would do their share, and when the French say that we fight like our "Canadian cousins," it is praise of the highest sort. Our success seems to have elated the French people, and they seem very well pleased by the demonstration that we can more than hold our own. In other words, a Marine is ace-high around here.

The war came home to me more this time than it ever has before. One reason being that I saw my first line of refugees coming up here, and it was an impressive sight. As the German advance continued, these people were forced to leave their villages and most of their belongings and flee. Many of them on foot, but the majority had a two-wheeled French wagon drawn by one horse. On this they piled all of their needed and desired articles and left. There was an unbroken line of them for several miles, and in some cases they were driving herds of cows and flocks of sheep ahead of them rather than to allow these to fall into German hands. This line of march is one that I will never forget, but the people themselves seemed to bear up bravely under it. The other reason is that there are new faces in the ranks where many of our best friends used to be. The long marches are over for Les Runkie, while Walter Capps and William Garrioch are now in hospitals. The latter two, as far as I could learn, are not wounded seriously and were well taken care

of. My old pal, Jack Drake, also was wounded and many other friends I have in the outfit. No one realizes better than I do how fortunate I have been, and I know that it is a surprise to me for which I am very thankful.

We always had food during our stay and the fellows found a dandy way to warm it. A candle is cut up and put in a can and a rope put in for a wick. We were not allowed to burn twigs, as the least sign of smoke would disclose our position and be followed by a load of German "scrap iron." This candle fire burns low and clean, and we were able to fry bacon and warm beans and coffee even in the very front-line positions. One of the stunts was to fry a piece of bread in the bacon grease and then sugar it. Sounds funny, but I swear I never ate anything that I enjoyed more than our "trench doughnuts." As far as I know, our brigade has been cited twice for their work, and one by General Pershing that I saw stated that we were the only ones who held the Germans and did not give way an inch. On the first day of the battle, I saw Roy Chase and he was O.K. Just had a chance to say "Hello" to him and had to go on. I wish I could describe a battle-field over which an advance or retreat has been made. The shell-holes, equipment, ammunition, arms, and soldiers whose fighting is over will always be remembered by me.

One instance that bears mention is the fact that

in our advance we captured several Boche machine guns, and in a short time had them turned around toward Germany and were picking off Huns with them. Humorous crowd — what? Shooting up the Boche with his own guns and ammunition! This was by far the most open game of warfare that we have been in yet, and it seemed much better than the trenches. For several days and nights our quarters were an abandoned creek-bed or ravine. During a lull in battle we would curl up around a nice soft rock and get a few winks of sleep to keep us going for an all-night vigil. Practically our only covering was the sky and I should n't wonder if I were to get lonesome, on walking down an asphalt street in the city, to see all of that perfectly good lodging-space going to waste. I never knew what a relief it was to be able to remove my shoes and sleep. Also wash and brush my teeth. It sure is a grand and glorious feeling.

There are so many little incidents which I desire to relate that it would take a week to do so. One of importance is that during the whole encounter the Marines never seemed to forget their purpose here, and I know personally of several instances where they allowed the Boche hospital men to appear in the very open and carry on their work and never fired a shot. Likewise a fellow returned to our lines with a Hun bandage on him. He fell close to the enemy's lines and they dressed his



wound and turned him loose. I had plenty of opportunities to pick up souvenirs, but the idea sort of goes against the grain with me, and there is nothing belonging to a German which I desire to remind me of what I have been through.

One form of wound which I can understand now is shell shock. It seems to be an advanced stage of nervous breakdown and is caused by a "boiler" bursting very near to a man. In many cases he is not injured, but the suspense before bursting and the immense concussion are too much for him and he breaks down. June 2d was my anniversary in the Marines and it was a memorable one. We came in for a great "panning" from the Boche artillery for several hours and some were too close for comfort. Akers and I had several come so close over us that we could feel the ground "bounce" when they hit. A few very close ones were "duds" and did not explode. One ripped up the road about twenty feet from us and about six feet from Major Sibley, and then failed to burst. If there ever was a miracle this was it.

Now for something cheerful. About our fourth day we were beginning to long for a change of diet when a runner coming through a deserted French town found several live chickens. These he knocked over "pronto" and brought into the front line where we cooked them over a candle. It's useless to try and tell you how much we enjoyed it.



During a bombardment we would get into as much shelter as possible while it lasted. Was talking to a fellow one day in the woods when a German shell whistled over. This fellow heard it coming and said, "Well, there goes a call to quarters," and he was gone. Another fellow was an Italian bugler. The big shells have a peculiar sound when they break and he describes it like this. He heard a big shell coming Bzzz — *Wop!* and he says, "I never even answered."

With love to you and all. Keep the good work up.

Your soldier

FRED

## CHAPTER XVI

### BREAKING THE NEWS

“THE first thing they ask is paper and pencil to write a letter home — or ask me to do it for them.”

A Red Cross nurse was speaking, and her subject was the man who had fallen wounded and who now sought to beat the casualty cablegram with a letter saying that his wound was “nothing at all.” And certainly the letters which have come from United States Marines have borne out the nurse’s statement.

Cheer, cheer, cheer — that is all that emanates from a wound, as far as the folks at home are concerned. Never a complaint, never a whimper, never a cessation of the brightest attitude toward life and the hope of recovery — such is the sentiment of thousands of letters that have come to the United States from wounded fighters in France. For instance, when Private Grover Noonan, of the Marines, wrote home of his wound, he told no disagreeable details. Instead here was his letter:

*American Expeditionary Forces*  
*July 24, 1918*

DEAR FOLKS:

JUST a line to say hello and tell you I am still here. Had a little bad luck and got hit in the right leg.

But it is nothing serious and by the time you get this I will be out and kicking again. I received all the letters, but have had no chance to answer them. Will take a day off as soon as I can and write each one of you, for I believe I have had a letter from each of the gang. Also had one from Neil and he is still in fine shape. Was glad to get John's registered letter and hear that Nana was getting well. Surely am proud of our little sis and knew if the time came she would be just as brave as they can be. Will quit here and write when I can. Be good and don't worry about me.

With love

THE KID

PVT. GROVER C. NOONAN  
Hd., 6 R. Marines

The same was true of Private Charles J. Vanek, seeking to cheer up the folks at home, and talking of being wounded as though it were some form of a new entertainment, devised for worthy Marines:

*June 14, 1918*

DEAR COUSIN:

THOUGHT I would write you and let you know I was wounded last Thursday, June 6th, by a machine-gun bullet. I was shot through the right thigh just above the knee. I was operated on Sunday in Paris. I am in St. Nazaire and am feeling fine. We sure did give the Germans the devil. We captured a little village

and took many prisoners. I was wounded while we were making the attack. I lay on the field three hours after I was wounded, so you see I was not shot bad. I could not get up and leave without drawing fire, so I lay with the rest of the boys. After it got dark I went to the first-aid dressing-station and had my leg dressed. I also took a wounded prisoner with me. One of the boys captured him in the village, also took his machine gun. We went over the top without any artillery barrage. We sure did some scrapping to take the village.

How is everybody getting along at home? I hope all the folks are well. I guess you have read in the papers what the Marines did last week and first part of this week. I sure am tired of lying in the hospital. We are treated fine by the doctors, nurses, and Red Cross, but I would much rather be up at the front with the boys. By the time this letter reaches you I guess I will be back with my company. Will close for this time. With love to all. Write soon.

Your cousin

CHARLES J. VANEK

Censored by 79th Co.

6th Regiment

U.S. Marine Corps

As for Corporal John F. Pinson, Jr., he had one regret. It was not that he had been wounded — but that his wound had kept him from further participation in the fight. And his letter to his mother in St. Louis was as rollicking as though he were on his vacation and writing home about the biggest fish he'd ever caught:

DEAR MOTHER:

LOTS more adventure. New sights and at present good times. Suppose long before this you have received one of those “dog-gone” telegrams stating that your son was slightly wounded in action and have been worried needlessly on my account. If so, stop worrying right away, because I am having the best time since I have been in France. I am only slightly wounded in the leg and hand and can walk without any trouble — and eat.

Well, what do you think of the Marines? I suppose that there have been some accounts of our action in the papers “over there.” The French and American papers are full of such accounts concerning the Marines over here. Every one is talking of nothing but Marines. The French are particularly enthusiastic about us, and as soon as they find out we are Marines they just can't do enough for us.

It was my luck, just as usual, to miss the best part of the fighting — being scratched up at the

very beginning by some German shell fire, but the boys certainly did their part wonderfully well. Up to the present they have pushed the Huns back over five miles and are still going strong.

It was certainly hard fighting all the way against almost overwhelming odds, but nothing living could have stopped them when they once got started. One company's officers could not stop them and they penetrated about a mile ahead of the rest of the line before they could be checked. It was a real battle, and being in the open through wheat-fields and farm lands, was much to the Americans' liking. The boys all swung into action, laughing and kidding each other as they charged the German machine guns as if they were at a drill, dropping every twenty yards or so to rake the German lines with rifle and machine-gun fire.

We received first aid on the field and then were taken to the field hospitals by ambulance, being showered with cigarettes, chocolate, and everything. All the way every one treated us fine, doctors, ambulance drivers, Y.M.C.A. men, nurses, and Red Cross workers. We were then taken to Paris, where we were sent to the finest hospital I have ever seen. I was operated on there and had a shell sliver removed from my hand, after which we rode about two hundred miles on one of the new United States hospital trains, equipped regular American style, with every modern convenience, operating-



MORGAN JENKS —

“THE BOYS ALL SWUNG INTO ACTION LAUGHING AND  
KIDDING EACH OTHER”





room, kitchen, doctors, and what-not. They are the finest hospital trains in the world. We are now way down in Southern France in about the finest hospital imaginable, and at present I am walking around in a suit of pajamas with bathrobe and slippers. This place is a regular summer resort. They are going to have a negro glee club here to-night. They have the latest moving pictures here each night. We indulge in games of every sort. We have a library here with the latest books. Elsie Janis was here a few days ago to entertain the boys, and she is some little entertainer.

I am in Base Hospital No. 8, but continue writing to me under the usual address to the company, as we may at any time be sent to another hospital. Several of the boys from my company are with me here, and we are all able to walk. And we're having a good time together.

Will write more to-morrow as it is almost "chow" time. Don't worry. I am in for a month or so of good times, with nothing to do. Love to all.

A story of heroism is in the letter of Private Frank McCarthy to his mother. It is not a story about himself, but about his chum, the man who had been his friend in the days before the war, and who fulfilled the greatest duty of friendship on the battle-field:

DEAR MOTHER:

A FEW lines to let you know that I am feeling fine. I hope you got my last letter, as I know you will be worried if you get word from the War Department before you receive word from me, but you need n't worry, as I am able to walk around just as before.

Mother, I suppose you read all about the Marines in the New York papers. Well, it was in one of those battles that I was wounded, but before they got me I was able to get to the edge of the woods and help to drive them out. When I was first hit I thought I was going to die, and I was glad that I took ten thousand insurance, but I did not die. Well, Mother, I think I will close now as I will write a letter to you once a week to let you know how I am getting along.

Mother, if you should see Mrs. Harned tell her that her son saved my life. He was the first one to come to me when I fell inside of my own lines after coming in off the field. He picked me up and helped me in so I would n't be hit again, and put a bandage on, then he helped me walk to the dressing-station. If it was not for him I could never made it. He certainly was a friend in need, and he came in the right time, but I have n't heard from him since. He may be wounded in another hospital, but I don't think so. Tell Aunt Marg. I will write her a letter in a short time. With love to all the family,

Your loving son

FRANK

Corporal Harold Murray, also writing to his mother in Chicago, made the letter shorter, but just as cheery. As far as his letter was concerned, his wound was nothing at all, and his stay in the hospital a vacation:

MOTHER DEAR:

JUST a few lines to let you know that all is well. As you see by the letterhead, I am in the hospital, wounded. It's nothing serious, though, so don't worry. Sorry I can't tell what's the matter, but you know the censors. They treat us great. To tell the truth, it's so nice I don't know whether I want to get well or not.

HAROLD

The letter of Private Elmer Meeker, to his father, Levi Meeker, in Cincinnati, had news that was almost interesting enough to make his father forget the wounds that had sent the boy to the hospital. For Elmer Meeker was lucky, and just how lucky is told in the following:

I WAS wounded in the big drive on the second day with a machine-gun bullet. I never got to the front line, but was surely headed that way.

The doctor who operated on me told me the bullet had hit something before striking me and had split in two pieces, and that one piece had

lodged on one side of my windpipe and one on the other, so you see I had a close shave.

There is only one nurse in the ward who can understand English, and she has a merry time "getting next" to our slang. She can't for the world understand how "potatoes," "murphies," and "spuds" all mean the same thing.

One fellow had a sore foot and we told her he had a "bum runner," and she could n't "get that" at all. Well, we have good "eats" here and all we want. It is a little hard for me to swallow my food, but not nearly so hard as a machine-gun bullet, for I could n't get that down at all, so they had to cut it out. I intend to keep on living in spite of Fritzie.

With the same lack of theatrics that one would telephone a friend about a dinner engagement, Private Walter S. Lamb wrote home about the fact that he was in a hospital. And, of course, in each of his two letters, was that inevitable line, "don't worry." The letters:

*France, June 27, 1918*

DEAR ONES AT HOME:

I THOUGHT I would drop you a few lines to let you know I am feeling fine. Am in the hospital just now. Got slightly wounded on the knee and was gassed. Am going back to duty again in a couple of days. Well, Ed, I have seen some pretty stiff action the

last month. I have a nice little watch I took off a German prisoner. I would like to send it to you, but I am afraid it might get lost. I expect to go to Paris soon. We are to be decorated for the work we have done. We surely had the squareheads on the run lately, and we are going to keep them that way if we can. Hope father and mother are well. Tell them not to worry about me, for I am feeling fine and am glad I am here.

Give my best regards to all.

WALTER

*France, July 2, 1918*

DEAR BROTHER:

RECEIVED your letter O.K., and was glad to hear you are well. I am feeling fine; never felt better in my life. We have been doing some battling the last month, as you probably have seen by the papers. But I have been pretty lucky. The good Lord has been with me. I have some souvenirs from the German prisoners we captured. Have a watch, a dagger, and a large belt with a big brass buckle on. It has a crown and the words, "Gott Mit Uns." Imagine, the dirty cowards! God with them after the work they have done! Give my best regards to all and tell mother and father not to worry about me. Tell the boys and girls to write to me. I would like to hear from them.

Will close with love to all.

WALTER

So enthusiastic was Leroy Harned after a few weeks' fighting that, when he wrote to his mother, he forgot to mention the fact that he was in a hospital until nearly the end of his letter. Nor did he tell the details of what was far more important, that it was he who had saved the life of Private Frank McCarthy, whose letter appears also in this chapter. It is simply the letter of a cheerful, modest boy, writing the "big news" home, and forgetting the heroics:

*Active Service, A.E.F.,  
June 19, 1918*

DEAR MOTHER:

IT has been so very long since I last wrote you I know you must be very tired of waiting for this letter to come. Since I wrote you last, we have been more than busy. In the last three weeks we have seen more action than in all the rest of the year we have been here. Of course, you have read the papers and you know where we have been and what we have done.

There are no trenches up here. It is open warfare. And we sure have got it on the Hun at this style. As soon as we took over the line, we started on the offensive and we never let up on them as long as we lasted. All day long we kept advancing in different positions until we had straightened out the line, which was the objective.



We captured a great many prisoners, some of whom were officers, and they seemed well pleased to be out of the fighting. They did not like our style of fighting at all and I expect they will like it a great deal less before this affair is over.

In some cases we scared them to death with our nerve. In one instance, about one hundred of us advanced fifteen hundred yards across an open field in broad daylight while the Huns were popping away at us with machine guns. We did not have even the help of an artillery barrage, but we walked right up to their pits and drove them out, with the bayonet. We then turned their own machine guns on them and we sure did wipe them out.

But, of course, we were only a handful and we had to fall back to our own lines after a while. It was just a thrust to make Fritz miserable. In going back McCarthy was wounded in the side and the back. I did n't get a scratch out of that, though my rifle was hit four times. You surely must have been praying for me then, Mother dear.

For three days we kept on the offensive there, and then our company got a day's rest in reserve.

And then we went to a town our boys had taken at another point. We were in there for some time and all the time under a heavy bombardment. It was not exactly pleasant there. But at last we were relieved.

While we were coming out they started to shell

us again, and they sent over a great many gas shells. On account of the nature of the country we had to go through, we could not bother with gas masks. It was a case of run through the gas and take a chance or stay and be killed by shrapnel. We got out all right, though a good many of us are affected by the gas more or less. I am not very bad. My lungs are sore and hurt some at times, and my throat is sore. My eyes were very bad at first, but they are all right now. I was very lucky. I have only one burn on the outside of my body and that is more of an itch than a burn. It was mustard gas, so there is nothing to worry about. We will be in first-class shape in a little while again. It just takes time, and we are certainly being treated fine now.

I have been at two field hospitals and am now at a base, a long way behind the lines. It is a beautiful place and every one is so nice. The Red Cross people are always trying to find something else to do to make you happy, and the nurses are so good. They must be angels, Mother. The times when I am feeling best, I think I have been lucky to be gassed.

It is likely my name will be in the casualty lists, but it is for this, so there is nothing for you to worry about, Mother. And now I think I will close this letter, and will write you again in a few days.

With lots of love to every one, from your loving son,

LEROY



MORGAN · DENNIS

“THE NURSES ARE SO GOOD”



And these letters, with their optimism, with their cheer and their smiles, show that the Marines who were battling against the Hun were something more than fighters. They were men — men in action and men in thought, men who were big enough men to be tender and gentle, and who, while those they left behind “keep the home fires burning,” help to supply the spark that gives life to the flame of hope.

CHAPTER XVII  
ANOTHER VIEW OF IT

THERE is another view of that cheer — one that comes from those who passed through the hospitals where lay the wounded men, back from the fighting. The cheer is still there, but it is a reverent feeling that grips at the heart and brings a choking into the throat; a cheer that causes the tears to gather and the smile to be one mingled with the involuntary twitching that precedes a sob. Witness, as an example, the letter of a member of the paymaster's force of the Marine Corps, writing to a friend in America:

*Office of the Chief Paymaster  
U.S. Marines, France, A.P.O. No. 702  
Paris, France, June 17, 1918*

DEAR —

THE home papers have doubtless informed you of the achievements of the Marines in France these past few days, and I need not state how proud we are that they have lived, fought, and died in accordance with the traditions of the Corps.

I visited one of the large military hospitals yesterday and came away both stimulated and downhearted. I may not tell you what I saw nor all I

heard, but I can write that if some of the sights called for the utmost pity and sympathy, the demand upon one's steadiness of heart was more than offset by the display of patient suffering and extraordinary cheerfulness that approached the heroic. Every one of these bandage-swathed men made light of his mutilation, and one poor fellow, both legs gone, remarked, with a satisfied smile: "The Boches may not have left me a leg to stand on, but I know I got three before they put me out of business. I plugged one, and got the other two with the bayonet."

I talked with only Marines, for the real purpose of my visit was to get the names of those who needed money. A wounded man loses everything, even uniforms. On going into action, his pack is left behind, and when carried to a first-line hospital, his clothing, always unfit for further wear until cleaned and mended, is stripped from him. From the first, he is evacuated to a second hospital farther back, whence when strong enough or the place becomes too crowded, and facilities and time are found, he is again evacuated to another hospital, still farther at the rear. All that accompanies him is the contents of his pockets at the time he was wounded; watch, money, knife, trinkets, etc., deposited in a small bag which remains with or near him until he is discharged as cured, shipped home, or dead. So as a measure of strength returns, he clamors for money



with which to buy toothbrush and toilet articles. Later, when still further convalescent, he desires money for taxicabs (they are great taxicab riders, these wounded), car fares and restaurant "eats," and we aim to satisfy his just demands to the best of our ability.

Not a groan, moan, or word of complaint did I hear, and God knows there was ample reason for all three. One nurse, wearing a Marine Corps emblem, informed me she considered herself a Marine because of having been with our boys several months, and she claimed to be intensely proud of them. Until lately, she said, she had not believed such uncomplaining endurance and unvarying good-humor possible in the face of such terrible suffering. One man actually waved the bandaged stump of an arm at me as he cried, "Hello, Sergeant." Please remember that the wound was only four days old and every movement of the injured member caused pain. But he wanted me to see what he had given for his country.

If evidence were lacking of ingrained German untrustworthiness and treachery, the following from the lips of three men, one an officer, would be ample. During the progress of a hot engagement a number of Germans, hands aloft and crying "Kamerad," approached a platoon of Marines, who, justifiably, assuming it meant surrender, waited for the Germans to come into their lines as prisoners. When



“THEY ARE GREAT TAXICAB RIDERS, THESE WOUNDED”



at about three hundred yards distant the first line of Germans suddenly fell flat upon their faces disclosing that they had been dragging machine guns by means of ropes attached to their belts. With these guns the rear lines immediately opened fire and nearly thirty Marines went down, before, with a yell of rage, the latter swept forward bent upon revenge. I am happy to state that not a German survived, for those who would have really surrendered when their dastardly ruse failed, were bayoneted without mercy.

As stated, I talked separately with three different Marines at different times and have no doubt of the truth of the story. When it spreads throughout the Corps, it will be safe to predict that the Marines will never take a prisoner. Can they be blamed? As one man remarked, "A good German is a dead German." Another remarked, "They are like wolves and can only hunt in packs. Get one alone and he is easy meat." Still another, "They have no guts. Stick him with a bayonet and he yells like a stuck pig." These are not the opinions of a few, but facts believed by a large majority.

Little of this sounds uplifting, and smacks of caloused sensibilities. But the business that brought these men to France is not a refined one. It is kill or be killed, perhaps both, and the duty of each man in the American army is to kill as many of the enemy as may be, before he, in turn, is killed. Likewise, it

is his duty to study and understand the psychology of the German, and he does it in his crude way, although he would not understand such mental processes by the term "psychology." An occupation lacking refinement creates unrefined descriptive terms, and the man whose temporary trade is war, chooses his own phrases and originates new definitions.

Perhaps my letter shows the stimulation mentioned above, and I will not deny that my patriotic nerves are tense with horror at what I have seen and pride at what our boys have done, even while my soul is sickened with this closer view of the red monster, war. In the spirit of the men seen to-day, I am moved to greater admiration for their qualities and an abiding faith in our ability to finish as we have begun. Youth of the American army, flower of our young manhood, my hat is off to you! May victory perch upon your banners, and God give you the reward you deserve here and hereafter!

Forgive the tone of my letter, if it sounds too strong and revengeful. The large majority of the men who have suffered in the recent fighting are men of the Marine Corps, and some of them, as comrades, braved the dangers of the submarines with me, and with whom, for a time, I was cold, wet, and hungry. Some of the dead I can remember as the singers who persisted in lifting their voices in songs at times when all were most uncomfortable

and conditions were the worst; some of the maimed were splendid specimens of physical manhood, and excelled in the various lines of sports and athletics. They were my brothers, for the once, and their memories are dear to me. They are dead or mutilated, and the German is still unconquered. Do I need further excuse?

Many of our blessés, or wounded, are only slightly wounded, lightly gassed or suffering from shell shock, and as soon as they are permitted a few hours' liberty from the hospitals, they come to our office for money. The word has passed among them that Major Bevan "is a prince" and turns no man away without some of the money due him. God knows the boys have earned it all — and more.

We have worked like beavers these last four days taking care of the fellows. Macomber and I have handled all the cases that presented, and you must know it is not always plain sailing. In many cases there are no records at hand to show the amount due a man, when he was last paid, or the items that must be charged against his account. Where we have his records, we pay him in full, and in other cases give him a goodly portion of what he claims is due.

It would sadden you to look upon some of them, and break your heart to see and hear others who are gassed. This "mustard" gas is a fearful thing, and if it will blister healthy flesh accustomed to

exposure, imagine the effect upon the eyes, and upon the lungs when inhaled. But after the first, or perhaps second, view of bandages and splints and hacking coughs, you would forget the sad side of the picture, for their indomitable spirit, cheerful optimism, and unquenchable desire to fight to the end loom large in the picture. For four days I have listened to much the same stories, but affording new side lights each time the tale was repeated. All is told in such a matter-of-fact manner, without egotism or thought of the personal bravery entering into the tales. The recollection of what they accomplished and the manner of doing it is expressed in, "We sure gave them hell." "We chased them all over the map." "We" did this or did that, and not what the individual did. Ask one of them if he got his man, and the chances are that he will tell you he is not sure. "I had a good bead on the beggar and he dropped when I fired, but maybe somebody else got him," is a common reply to such a question. Only in bayonet work is he certain, and then he glories, not in his personal superiority, but the superiority of the Corps in that kind of fighting, and waxes enthusiastic. The Marines remained true to tradition and charged with the old-time yell, which seemed to disconcert the Boches, to whom it is something new. The Marine must employ the warwhoop, and yells when he starts forward, as a hound, unleashed, bays at his quarry.



What could be more matter-of-fact than a statement made to me this afternoon? "They (the Germans) cut loose at us with machine guns and we had none at that point. We made a break and took some away from the Boches and drilled away with them." One, with no less than five wounds in his left arm and shoulder, declared he had had a bully time with his bayonet, and had almost forgotten he had ammunition until the fire from a machine gun knocked him over. Another declared that picking off Germans with his rifle was child's play compared with trying to qualify on a rifle range. Four of them lay in a wheat-field and picked off at least twenty Germans before their location was discovered and a shell or two dropped among the wheat. He was the only survivor and got off lucky with no more than wounds in leg, arms, shoulders, and head. With all this he was walking the streets of Paris to-day.

Yesterday was another busy day filled with the same work, the same stories, the same cheerfulness and optimism in the face of pain, mutilation, and disablement. It means something these days to be a Marine, but I have dilated so much upon this theme that, for once, I will refrain.

Remember me to all.

As ever

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### “SHE TOO IS A MARINE”

IN the estimation of the United States Marine, grimy and dirty and bloody, bullet-torn or shell-shocked, fresh from the noise and bitterness of the fighting line, the nurse who bandages his wounds, who assuages his pain, is as much of a Marine as he. Therefore, the following letter, from a niece of Lillian Russell, the famous actress, is as much of a Marine letter as any epistle from a man who wears the insignia of the Corps. And it shows that the fighting men who stopped the Hun at Belleau Wood and Bouresches are as beloved by those who ease their pain as they were feared by the Boches who sought to inflict it:

*American Military Hospital No. 1*

*Neuilly-sur-Seine, Paris, France*

*June 15, 1918*

MY DEAREST UNCLE ALECK AND AUNT NELLIE:

IT is so hard to write a letter these days — so much happening and I am allowed to say so little!

First, your cable came and put me in fine spirits; I was especially low — a little too much work, a strained back, and the emotional stress of the men coming in the last ten days pretty nearly laid me

up. I am fine again, thanks to the good red blood I have in my veins.

Things are getting more and more expensive; we are lucky to have enough good food to eat. You see the battle line is coming nearer and nearer. All our victories are coming nearer to Paris all the time. I wonder if you have any idea of the real situation; I don't believe you have. Didn't our Marines do glorious work? Ethel's husband was in command and the men and the officers here can't praise him enough. What tales I have to tell you when I can! I have talked to men five hours after the fight; that is pretty direct news. The colonel's regiment has the first citation of the war — first Americans to turn back the Germans. How proud I am to be a part of it all! The Marines in the hospital say I am a Marine now, too, and let me tell you, that is a compliment, because to be a Marine is to them to be the greatest thing in the world.

They are a funny lot; have to be handled with care. I learned very quickly how to get on with them, and they do anything I tell them without question. One big fellow sent for me to come quickly yesterday; I had visions of him in agony, but when I got there I found a very much dressed-up woman weeping over him. "For God's sake, Nursie, call off the Lady War Worker," he said, "and I'll take that bath I would n't take yesterday."

I had tried to persuade him to go to the bathroom

and take a bath and he had informed me that he had n't had a bath for four months and he was d——d if he would take one when he was sick.

There's not a cuss-word in the English or French language that I am not absolutely familiar with, and it's surprising, but after you hear them often enough, they don't sound so bad. Coming out of the ether is where we get the real choice ones.

Have adopted another boy; this one is a Marine nineteen years old. Arm off at the shoulder and one leg out of commission. He seems just a baby, and the dearest youngster. We were afraid we were going to lose him, but he is pulling through in fine shape. We are all so happy about him. He thinks he is the luckiest boy in the world — I keep telling him he is all the time and now he is commencing to believe it. He says he never knew there were people like Ethel and me. His only trouble is that he was only in one attack and some of the fellows had a chance to be in three or four before they were picked off. What do you think of that for spirit? Oh, I wish I could write the things the boys tell us, but we are warned and warned that letters containing one word of military information or what may look like military information will not go through — so it all has to wait.

The Marines think I am a pretty good nurse. What I lack in knowledge, I make up in cigarettes and chewing tobacco, to say nothing of cherries

(wonderful here now) and chocolate. I'll have to tell you some time how I get tobacco and candy from my officer friends. I'm learning to be a diplomat among other things.

None of my packages have arrived and I am awaiting them very impatiently. Of course, I had to be foolish and tell the boys in the hospital that the tobacco and candy were on the way, and every morning the first thing they ask is if the things have come. I say "No," and then they damn the post-office and the express company and everything else in the world. After they get that out of their systems they start to sing. They are a funny lot, and life among them is interesting, every minute of it.

I fully intended writing Uncle Bert to thank him for moving my things, but have written such a long letter to you that I have n't time now. I wonder when I'm going to see you again? *Après la guerre.*

MILDRED

## CHAPTER XIX

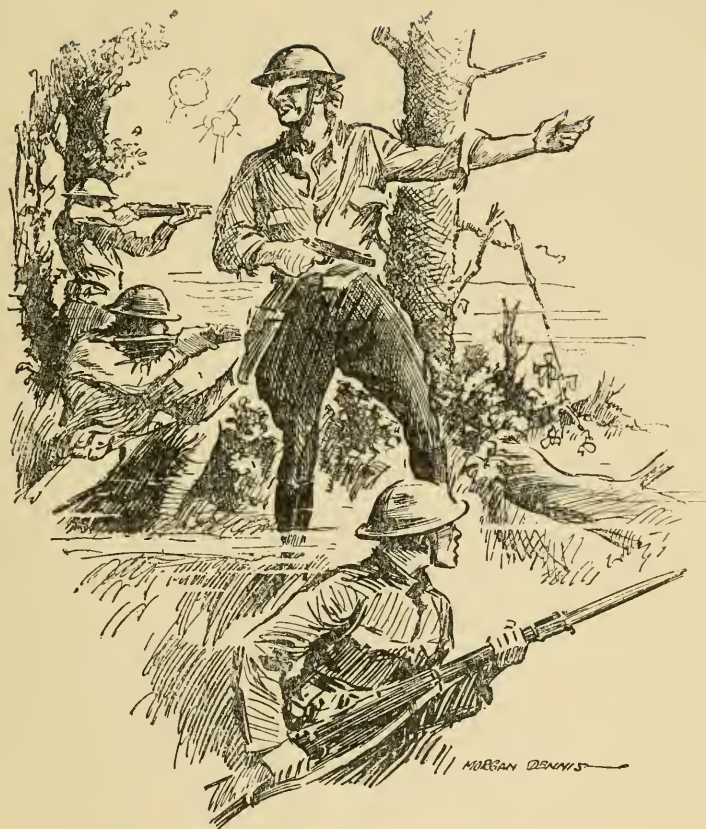
### TWO SIDES OF A STORY

HEROES, as a general rule, are modest. And in the case of Lieutenant Louis F. Timmerman, of the United States Marine Corps, the rule holds good in all its precepts.

Upon the official records of Marine Corps headquarters, there is filed a glowing recommendation for bravery, which reads as follows:

SECOND LIEUTENANT LOUIS F. TIMMERMAN, JR.,  
Company K, 6th Marines:

HAVING advanced his platoon beyond all other elements of his battalion in an attack on enemy machine-gun positions in the woods on the 6th of June, he led his men in a bayonet charge against superior numbers at a critical moment and captured two enemy machine guns and seventeen prisoners. This young officer displayed remarkable qualities of heroism and initiative, and by seizing his opportunity and attacking without hesitation against apparently unsurmountable odds inflicted severe damage upon the enemy. Wounded in the face by shrapnel, he remained at his post inspiring his men, performing all duties required of him and also carrying on his duties for twenty-four hours after



“ HE REMAINED AT HIS POST INSPIRING HIS MEN ”





his battalion had gone into reserve position before he would consent to be evacuated. This on the 6th of June, 1918.

But when Lieutenant Louis F. Timmerman wrote to his father, descriptive of the thing which had earned for him the Distinguished Service Cross, it was only the story of a rollicking boy who had been through a wonderful adventure and had the time of his life. Here is the way the lieutenant told the story:

*June 11, 1918*

DEAREST MOTHER AND FATHER:

THE first thing I want to do is to reassure you in regard to my condition. I am absolutely normally well. I was barely grazed on the left arm and chin by machine-gun or rifle bullets on June 6th. They were so slight that even in this short time the marks of them have practically disappeared. I am back on duty with the company. On the evening of the 9th I went to the field hospital to get an injection of anti-toxin and came back to the company this morning. Major Evans said this morning that my name had been cabled in on the casualty list, so I can imagine you were worried. However, I hope you got my cable, which a doctor at the field hospital took in for me.

To give you a short account of what has happened:

I got back from school and joined the company, which had recently come to this new front, on June 6th. The same afternoon we got orders to attack at 5 P.M. There are many, many details which I shall tell you some day, but, briefly: I took my platoon through two thousand yards of hostile woods under heavy fire, capturing some prisoners on the way. Advancing through Bouresches beyond the wood toward [deleted], our objective, I was caught under heavy machine-gun fire from points fifty yards to our left and directly in rear. My men were dropping rapidly. This all happened in a minute or so. I formed line to the rear and charged with the fifteen men still with me. Just inside the edge of the wood I ran into a German group of two machine guns and seventeen men, and captured them; they were abject with fear. Then, my objective still being ahead of me, I advanced in the open and was caught under fire from the flank. I was grazed at this time. Then we came back to the edge of the wood. I gathered in men from different platoons and companies, about thirty-five in all, and consolidated, got messenger back, and found I was farthest forward. Stayed there during the night; meanwhile the Second Battalion captured the town. The Germans had a large force of machine guns about one hundred and fifty yards to our left. Noble came out with what remained of his company in the morning, and we consolidated further.

The next morning, the 8th, we attacked — our battalion — the machine-gun position. The wood was covered with machine-gun fire, and although some of the Germans were knocked out, we suffered badly and had to retire a short distance, three hundred yards. Dug in that day and were pulled out into reserve the following morning. I had nineteen men left in the platoon; in the first attack I lost fourteen men, in the second attack five, and two days before I arrived a shell had knocked out twelve, making a total of thirty-one casualties in a few days. Of course, the greater part are merely wounded and some are missing.

I went to the dressing-station on the 7th, and Dr. Robertson said he would send me back for rest to the hospital, but I decided to stay with the company. After we came into reserve, our battalion doctor sent me back to get the anti-toxin and a day's rest. I am back with the company, still in reserve.

The company has 113 out of 242 men left, and the entire battalion is similarly shot up, though not so badly.

However, the Marines gained a bit of ground, stopped the German drive, and scared the Germans thoroughly, inflicting heavy casualties on them. My platoon took a total of twenty-one prisoners. One was shot by one of my sergeants when he tried to escape; another by his own machine-gun fire. The rest were sent back.

Major Sibley and Major Evans congratulated me on "my good work," referring to capturing the machine guns, I suppose. This is all open warfare, and this wood fighting is pretty lively.

The Marines have come through. The Germans are amazed at us. A battalion of the Fifth practically wiped out one of their advancing battalions by rifle and machine-gun fire. The Germans have launched counter-attacks, but they were all unsuccessful.

I hope this reaches you all right. I was in Paris one day and saw Renée; her mother was not at the hospital, on the way down.

Lieutenants Murphy, Forward, and Holladay were wounded, Murphy quite severely.

Lots and lots of love.

LOUIS

## CHAPTER XX

### OUT, IN, AND OUT AGAIN

FRANCE, to the Marine, during the fighting days presented a varied picture, and the Marine is nothing if not observing. However, no matter how many strange sights may have passed before him, his view of life presented only three pictures: out of action, in action, and out again. In the first picture he could see many things, such as were seen by Corporal H. W. Elliott, and detailed by him in a letter to his father:

*A village in France*

*February 7, 1918*

DEAR DAD:

THIS is truly a beautiful section of France, a beautiful spot in a beautiful country. As we stepped off the cars which had brought us to the little way-side station where we disentrained, the sun was just beginning to lighten the mist clouds o'er the hills to the east. Hills they were, but mountains they appeared. Their crests buried in great banks of heavy fog gave the impression of high cloud-blanketed peaks, an illusion that was accentuated by the deep mantle of snow and the intervening mist. As the minutes passed and the light of dawning day began to peep from behind the hills color-

ing the sky with the delicate touch of a master artist, we could see, away in the distance, a city of pine boards and tar roofing — our divisional headquarters in France.

Along the well-kept roads, from the four corners of the earth, winding and twisting toward the rails, came creeping, one after the other, big lumbering mule-drawn army wagons, an incessant, never-ending chain, supplying the boys behind the lines. Just a bit to the west a little group of conical tents, similar to the types of our American Indians, huddled close together as though for mutual protection against the elements. Passing up and down before them a French *poilu* with his rifle at the shoulder gave just the touch necessary to remind one of boyhood dreams of Indians fighting and the valorous exploits of "Buffalo Bill." Was almost tempted to peek in and assure myself that no painted and befeathered braves lay captive within.

Leaving the station we marched through the narrow, cobbled streets of the town and out onto the elm-lined roads of the countryside, a pretty rolling country of pastures, fields, and woods. Here and there a dominating bluff rising high above its neighbors, a silent sentinel protecting the peaceful hamlet at its feet from the ravaging hordes to the north and east.

Through several such towns we passed, each with its great stone church dominating the village, its



belfry housing the ancient bells that perhaps for centuries have called the good people to worship or warned them of impending danger. The stone cottages with their low tiled roofs and little hallowed niche above the doorway offering protection to a small image of the Saviour, the Virgin Mary, or some patron saint; a few children playing listlessly about the doors or in the water of the open sewers; a group of hens scratching busily atop the huge piles of manure which are found in front of every house; an old man clutching a long staff, his wooden sabots ringing on the stones as he drives a small herd of cattle before him, a dog barking at their heels; a half-dozen housewives busily scrubbing their weekly linen at the long stone pool that serves as a public laundry.

At last we had climbed our last hill, arrived at our "home" town, passed through, and turned down a little side road that led to our camp on the outskirts. Just a handful of wooden huts, bleak and forbidding, but a welcome sight to our little group of hungry and boot-sore Americans.

With best wishes and love.

HARRY

However, in another letter to a friend, Corporal Elliott had gone nearer the front, close enough to hear the roar of the guns. The time to "go in" was nearing:

*France, February 8, 1918*

DEAR RAY:

WE sailed from our home port October 31st and arrived at a harbor in France the morning of November 12th, but did not disembark until the 19th. Did not go to England at all, and I am mighty glad of it, after hearing some of the boys who did tell of their experiences there. Our duties have been varied, to say the least, and have taken us over a considerable portion of the country, inland and on the coast. We have worked and sweated in rain, mud, and snow — at times conditions have been very severe and at others we have practically loafed and enjoyed ourselves. At present we are behind the American lines and the rumble of guns is constantly in the air. Americans are everywhere — Engineers, Doughboys, and Marines, drilling and toiling, bringing closer the days of peace when we shall all return home. In a half-hour's stroll one will see a detachment busily at work in the woods, another at drill, steel-helmeted, gas masks hanging at their sides, while a third is busily engaged at machine-gun manœuvres, their American mules just as refractory as when at home. Love to all.

HARRY

In action? That shall come from a different source, from one who was not a Marine, but who had close association with them, and who therefore could

testify to their every action, and who learned to know their fighting ability from actual experience. His name was Private Hebel, of the 461st Infantry, 237th Division, of the Kaiser's army, and he wrote in a letter, as he lay in Belleau Wood, the following views of the United States Marines:

*In the field, June 11, 1918*

FORGIVE me that I am answering your letter at such a late date, but I could not do so before. We are having very heavy days with death before us hourly. Here we have no hope ever to come out. My company has been reduced from 120 to 30 men. Oh, what misery! We are now at the worst stage of the offensive, the time of counter-attacks.

We have Americans<sup>1</sup> opposite us who are terribly reckless fellows. In the last eight days I have not slept twenty hours.

Nor was that the only German viewpoint expressed in those days of June. Reserve Lieutenant Tillmann, of the 2d Battalion, 40th Regiment, Prussian Guards, thus, in his diary, changed his opinion of the Marines.

*June 6th:* Departure from Rocourt 3 P.M. to Bruyères, farther back Coincy. We had to move

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Marines.

This division (the 237th) was withdrawn about June 12th, on account of the severe losses sustained.

out of Rocourt because it did not belong to our sector. Rear is crammed full of troops. Billets therefore very scarce.

*June 7th:* At the front. American troops have made counter-attacks, have to move to the front again. Route of march over Rocourt-Epoux. We are lying in the woods to the right of Entripelly, for the present in position. In the night of the 8th and 9th we will relieve the front line. It must be a sad outfit which allows itself to be thrown out by the Americans. In the evening of the day of the 8th, there was heavy artillery fire. Fortunately the artillery fire did not reach us.

*June 8th to 9th:* Moved forward at night and relieved the 461st Regiment at 4 in the morning in the Bois de Belleau. Incomprehensible wide sector, where they have one company we have three.

*June 9th to 10th:* The worst night of my life. I am lying in a thick woods on an open height in little holes behind rocks, for this is certainly heavy artillery fire, until 6 o'clock in the morning. It is a wonder that the fellows were all at their posts when the Americans attacked. The attack, thank God, was repulsed. God has mercifully preserved me. They fight like devils.

LIEUT. TILLMANN

Here the diary stopped, as the diary and the diarist were captured and taken into American lines by the Marines.

Out of battle the world is serene again for the Marines, but even in its comparative calmness, Sergeant Curtis Bevington did not forget the things that had gone before:

AT last a few minutes of peace and quiet. We were relieved from the front line and are now far enough in the rear to be out of the "Dutch" 88's and the one-pounders. Sure an awful trip, this last one. Our boys made an attack — quite a brilliant one — with much success, but the "Dutch" put over an awful barrage, and every whizz of a shell brought a shiver, as they were falling all around my dug-out. A piece of shrapnel hit my mess gear while in my hand. Bits of it were falling everywhere. Wish I knew where we will go from here. At any rate, we will have a few days' rest here in the woods.

The line from which we came is shell-torn and hardly a tree has its complete set of limbs. Shrapnel has torn away most of the leaves. Where we are now the foliage is untouched, and no shell-holes. A few big guns near us speak their part now and then, but very few shells come our way. We are in no danger where we are now. A person full of sentiment and who has seen no battle front can never realize what a few hours' bombardment can do to a grove or forest.

Captured Germans have asked to see our auto-

matic artillery. The artillery has surely unnerved them. It is sure terrible; I know from experience.

Our "chow" the last trip up was very good, the ration carts coming quite close. One of my meals consisted of bacon, fried potatoes, toast, syrup, lobster, cookies, and chocolate, and also coffee. I really ached. Of course, the lobster was not our ration. A lieutenant gave me a can of lobster. The cookies were an issue from the Y.M.C.A. The rest, including hot coffee, was brought up by our cooks. Those boys came up to us and went back every night, and most of the time under shell fire; very fortunate, though, in the absence of casualties.

Went on a souvenir hunt and now have a few "Dutch" trinkets — a pocket-book, knife, leather scapula case they wear around the neck, and a corduroy-covered canteen.

Seems so funny to be sleeping in the open and not having to keep an eye on a dugout. The boys all seem happy, too, as they go around whistling and singing, and to line up in front of the cook wagons for hot "chow" is a big relief.

We use candle wax in making a smokeless fire at the front, and one candle will cook meat, spuds, and coffee for two men. Canned meat is also issued, but is very scarce. Matches are also a very scarce article. One usually has some when going up, but it's not very long before you run out.

Almost met my Waterloo last night. Putting my



“THE REST, INCLUDING HOT COFFEE, WAS BROUGHT UP  
BY OUR COOKS”





pack down outside my dugout, a shell whizzed by my head and hit the dirt a few feet behind me, buried itself in the ground, but failed to explode. I sure hit my hole head first. Funny, a fellow will duck a shell after it has passed and all danger is over. But after one time in shell fire one will hide under a leaf. We are like an ostrich in one respect — cover the head and feel fairly safe.

Tell all those who don't contribute to the Liberty Loans or Red Cross that they should be here, and after one trip they would give all to stop it. The Red Cross has kept us in cigarettes and tobacco for two weeks; also cookies, chocolate, and gum. The Y.M.C.A. has issued us things, too. All are a God-send. A piece of candy or a cooky seems to make you feel better. When the Red Cross issues things it feels as though your own people handed it to you, as they come from the States. Give them all you can.

Peace also was reflected in a letter from Corporal Harold Murray to his mother in Chicago, the peace that follows work well done:

AT last I have a chance to write to you. Our time is very limited. We can count the hours of sleep on our right-hand fingers, and sleeping in the front-line trenches is not very restful. We are out now, but I can't say for how long. The last time we came

out from a "hitch" we had only just enough time to wash our feet before we had to serve in another sector. I can report that so far I have no parts missing. I have just fifteen letters to write in answer to those received. You see we receive our mail pretty regular, whether we are busy shooting Boches or not, and no time to answer them, consequently every time we finish a "hitch" it keeps us busy writing letters.

It is raining now, but the weather has been great the last three days, the best I have seen over here so far. The trees are all in leaf and the country looks beautiful. Of course, the towns are razed to the ground for miles back of the lines and the woods and fields are full of barbed wire and shell-holes, but it seems to me that the country is made all the more picturesque by the horrors of war, at least in this particular part of the country where the hills are young mountains and where views may be had for miles from the tops of some of the highest ones. It certainly seems great to be able to navigate without tearing for a dugout every little while.

The camp we are in now is not far from the trenches, and while we are within range of the German guns, the valley we are located in is so twisting and deep that it is nearly impossible to get shelled. Here we sleep in peace every night. Our bunch are seasoned veterans by this time, and we don't pale any more when a shell happens to

tear up some ground half a mile away. You see us sporting our first service stripe and chevron for the first six months' service in France. It is a gold stripe worn near the bottom of the left sleeve. We are off for another one now, and if we have to stay over here long enough we will look like French generals when we return home. There is a scarcity of paper here. I was fortunate in getting this from a Frenchman.

Every one feels full of vim now that spring is here and the next time we get close to the Fritz we expect to chase them over to China.

Give all at home my heartiest.

## CHAPTER XXI

### CAPTURED!

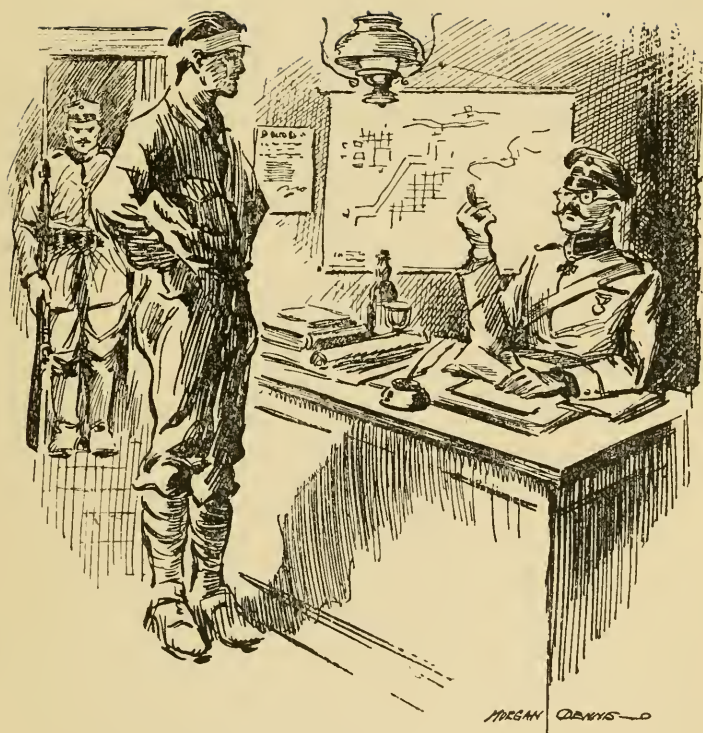
“WE kill or get killed.”

Such is the slogan of the United States Marine Corps. Inbred in their make-up is the determination to resist capture to the end, pay the penalty of death if necessary, but never to say the word “Surrender.”

But there are times when even a Marine, with his determination of death rather than surrender, has the misfortune to fall into the hands of the enemy. Such was the case with Private James Donohue, of Buffalo, New York, who, after having been gassed in an early encounter, invalided to England, then returned to the front line, took part in a raid, only to be knocked unconscious and captured. But Donohue came back to his “buddies,” and here is his story of how he did it:

I ATTACKED with our boys and ran into a lot of Fritzes. One of them hit me on the head with the butt of his rifle and when I woke up, I was inside the German lines being dragged before an officer at German headquarters. Every one I passed along the road kicked, jeered, and spit at me.

When I landed in headquarters, a pompous



“ I SAID ‘ THIRTY,’ BUT HE DID N’ T BELIEVE ME ”





German officer asked me how many divisions we had in France. I said, "thirty," but he did n't believe me. A guard was then placed over me, who watched me all night. Just as day was breaking, I was roughly awakened and given an axe and without breakfast I had to cut a lot of brush that was to serve as camouflage for machine guns.

I was working close to the front lines and American machine-gun bullets whistled past me for fair. I had to work all that night. When I tried to snatch even a few minutes of sleep, a husky guard would give me an awful kick with a big hob-nailed boot and I would grab the axe and go to chopping again. I saw three Germans disguised in American uniforms. I was getting so weak from hunger and loss of sleep that I thought I would go under any minute. Finally the guard gave me some black bread and thin, watery soup. I could not get any coffee.

Afterward they put me to digging trenches to bury dead Germans in. Along with other prisoners we dug long rows, two and three feet deep, into which it seemed as if they buried the whole German army.

Finally one night, I found my guard asleep. I walloped him over the head with my pick-axe. He never moved. I ran away through the woods in front and there chanced across some German Red Cross dogs. I found some canteens of water and hunks of bread tied on their backs, which I took.

All of a sudden I got where shells were bursting everywhere. I had to run into a barrage and thought it was all up with me. But I ducked along and suddenly a sentry challenged me. I recognized him as an American and shouted at the top of my voice, "I am an American! Don't shoot!"

So he passed me through the lines and that night I slept in the wood inside the lines and reported the next morning.

The Germans have lots of big guns — ten-inch, I guess — but lots of Germans have been killed and lots wounded. The Germans seemed to be working hard preparing to defend their country when we attacked them.

## CHAPTER XXII

### FROM TWO OF THE SIX THOUSAND

IT is a common saying in France that the grateful poilu will never cease to talk of Belleau Wood. In that he has company, for neither will the United States Marine. It was the scene of his first big victory on French soil, a wood where six thousand of his comrades fell, dead or wounded.

Here are letters from two of the wounded. From the first, Corporal Willard P. Nelligan, are several missives to his mother, descriptive of his life before, during, and after the battle, the first starting early in May, when he wrote:

I HAVE been in the trenches for some time now, and it's not as bad as I thought it would be. I've been in some of the toughest places, too. Recently I was one of the snipers, along with the machine-gun men, to go out and hold a village in No Man's Land. It's a French strong point. I had a post in an old building on the second floor in a corner that was still left of the place. I saw a Boche not very far out and put my telescope on him and blazed, then pulled my rifle. In about half an hour the artillery took four shots at me — high-explosive shells, too — but, luckily enough, they missed me, so I had to beat it. It was getting too hot for me.

The next night I volunteered and went out with a patrol to capture a Boche patrol which was thought to be there. We stayed in No Man's Land about three and one half hours and then, not seeing any signs of them, came in.

On May 18th he wrote:

WE had a little fun up there. The Boches seemed to think we did n't need any sleep or eats, as they took that time of the day to shell us, but they didn't get away with it, as we had the strongest dug-out. The boys were all anxious to go over the top, but our officers would n't let us. Our next trip up we'll get a good crack at the Boches, as we won't rest until we go over the top.

The boys in our platoon are a game bunch. When we were holding the strong point in No Man's Land, the boys were cursing the Boches for not coming over so we could get a chance at them, but our chance will come pretty soon. The morale of the boys over here is great. So far not a Marine has been captured, although we caught quite a few Boches.

When I go out with patrols this is what I generally carry: one pistol, one dagger, one rifle and a bag of hand bombs, together with a belt of rifle ammunition; two gas masks, one steel helmet and a bayonet — armed to the teeth. Sometimes we need all this, as it comes in handy in a pinch.

Then came Belleau Wood:

The American boys are sure holding up their end of it. We were rushed up there on short notice after riding in auto trucks for two days. We shoved right behind the line in reserve, but we were in reserve only four hours, when the Huns advanced. We pushed up to the front and opened up on them and gave them an awful reception. For two hours they kept coming, but not one came within a hundred yards of us. Our machine-gun and rifle fire was very accurate, so they stopped coming over. They could have come for days and never reached us.

Their officers told them that the Americans were no good, as they have had no experience and are only a bunch of men with uniforms on; but when they clashed with us they could n't make out how they were cut to pieces, as they thought the Yanks were no fighters.

Then their officers told them that we were n't Americans; that we were the Italians. And when we went over after them and got in close quarters with them, they threw down their guns and ran, yelling, "They're Americans!" and "Teufelhunden!" (devil dogs). That's what they call the Marines down at Verdun. Here's how we got the name:

We had our patrols out every night in No Man's

Land down there, and kept pestering the life out of them until they thought they would teach us a lesson; so they sent a raiding party, two hundred and fifty strong, to take our trenches and incidentally to get some prisoners. But we cut them to pieces, and instead of capturing any of us we captured most of them. They figured it was no use trying to capture any Marines, and they then nicknamed us "Teufelhunden." It must have spread down the line, because when we went over the top after them they started yelling, as I said before. So when the word goes down the German line how we smashed their best troops, I think they will consider us a little better than just raw men with uniforms.

You would be surprised to see our boys before we went after them in this last big battle. The French were carrying some wounded to the rear, and shells were bursting all around and gas of every description coming over. They just waited with a determined look on every face. You could not break down their nerve with an iron bar. The word came to go. Bang! You should have seen the way they went. If I ever get out of this war alive I'll never forget it as long as I live. And when we saw some of our pals falling around us you could n't stop the Marines with a brick wall. Some of the boys, when we reached the Boches, were crying mad, and they just tore the Boches to pieces.



DEVIL DOG AND BLUE DEVIL





Can you imagine what it is to lose a pal that's been a brother to you for a year? I don't know yet how many nor who were killed, but I saw some of my dearest friends go down. I only hope that they were n't killed. If one of my friends is dead, I'll swear never to take a German alive. He would give me the shoes off his feet if I did n't have any. That's the kind of a friend he was. I know him to be a man who knows no fear. He is Sergeant in our platoon, in charge of the platoon next to our first lieutenant, and he led the platoon in the drive. He was in the centre of the line and I was on the right flank with my riflemen. He came over and looked at me for a minute and then said, "Nellie, old boy, hold the right flank steady." I tried to say something, but words would n't come, so that was our good-bye.

On June 3d:

WE held the Huns and mowed wave after wave down as they came on. They then stopped coming for one and one half days. I got wounded, and the latest news I got from the boys coming here is that the boys are driving them back. God! how I wish I could be there to help them, but I suppose I'll be here for some time.

Again on June 10th:

AM getting along fine. I was operated on the other day. It seems the shell went in my side and out my

back. Some of the later wounded said they pushed the Huns back six kilos. Gee! how I'd have liked to have been there. That's my luck when I get a chance to do anything I get bumped off. I had charge of the right flank of our platoon on the line as acting sergeant. The sergeant over me was put in charge of a "liaison post." Altogether I got thirteen Boches, but I'll have to get over that unlucky number. When they were coming opposite me the Boches tried to assemble a machine gun, but as soon as we saw what they were up to five of my men's rifles cracked and there was one Boche left out of the four. He threw his gun down and ran for all he was worth, but he did n't get away.

Finally, on June 27th:

My wounds are coming along in grand shape. The American Red Cross and Salvation Army are the boys' friends over here. To-day I had the first dish of ice cream since I left the States, and a Red Cross nurse gave it to me. She has visited us nearly every day, bringing candy, smokes, and writing paper, and if ever we want anything we get it pretty quickly.

The other letter is more graphic, the story of a member of the "Suicide Club" as the machine gunners are called, and the recital of how he got his wound:

WELL, as I promised I will try and write a description of the Marines' drive. This finds me feeling pretty good. I am in bed with a slight wound from a machine gun, but if care and attention will put a man on his feet I will be dancing a jig in a short time.

Well, here goes for the battle. We were four days and nights with little sleep. We were under continual shell fire and in addition were right at the mouth of our own big guns. You can imagine what we felt like.

The word was passed to be ready at any minute. The word finally came to "fall in."

We were marched away just before daybreak and did not realize where we were going until we swung in front of our own first line and went into the front in battle formation.

My company with another was given the honor of forming the front lines.

The captain came along with a rifle swung across his shoulder and bayonet fixed. He said, "Five minutes more; get all the rest you can." I lay down in the wet grass and said a prayer. Then the word came, "Lay low," as the day was fast breaking. Then the order, "One minute; get ready." "Forward!" was the next command.

As the boys heard that word a mighty shout of joy went up and rifles began to talk. Contrary to other attacks we went ahead without a barrage.

We passed through a hedge and then into the open. Ahead of us in the woods were the Germans. They opened up with machine guns.

The boys never hesitated. They plunged right into the woods and then came the hand-to-hand battle.

The Germans were in trenches with machine guns. Everywhere it was as if the heavens were pouring down a shower of lead. It did not take long for the Germans to realize they had met their masters. They started to retreat, but it was too late. We cut them down.

Right here, let me tell you my contempt for the German fighter. They were supposed to be the Crown Prince's best. Every time one of them was bayoneted or shot down he squealed like a pig.

We drove them back, and there was no such thing as giving an inch. They tried to make a last stand in a ravine in the woods.

It was a sight for sore eyes to see those kids jump right into the face of that machine-gun pit in front of me, while the Germans, with a squeal like a pig, yelled "Kamerad!"

My first loader [automatic gun term] and myself shot at once. A machine gun on our right opened up. One young lad jumped into the pit, downed four of them and saved about six of our lives.

We drove them out of the woods and through a

wheat-field and then into a small open field where we attacked. We were feeling pretty good when a machine gun opened up on our right. I got mine right there and my second loader a minute after.

My first loader, a kid of nineteen, fairly jumped to my side and grabbed my loaded auto-rifle in the face of that awful fire. My first loader and I did not go far, as the sergeant came back to where I was lying. I said, "Where is L——?" He said, "He went down," and shook his head. I knew then the kid was gone.

I asked the sergeant for my gun. He told me I could n't handle it. I said, "I'll do the best I can," for I wanted revenge for the kid.

About this time Sergeant C—— came running to us and said there were a lot of Germans on the hill and the road. We followed him and after a little scrap we took the hill and the road. The sergeant placed my gun in a position to hold the road, when all of a sudden we realized we had gone too far in advance of the rest.

The Germans had flanked us on both sides with machine guns. We ran back to the wheat-field, but we were too late, for they had us in a pocket. It was a case of crawl back or stay and get shot to pieces.

I'll never forget those awful minutes getting through the wheat-field. I started to crawl. My pack was riddled. I was too high, so I lay down flat

and pulled myself through by catching hold of wheat and dirt.

I was dragging my wounded leg and auto-rifle and was getting pretty weak, so when about thirty feet from the woods I decided to make a dash for it. I did and luck was with me.

Here I met the rest forming a line. Then I fairly shouted as I found a machine-gun battalion forming in line.

Up to this time we had fought with rifles and bayonets. I stayed long enough to see this machine gun go out and annihilate the Germans who flanked us.

Then I started to the dressing-station. My eyes were opened then to the brutalities of the Germans. As the wounded were being carried back they had to pass an open space. The Germans had a machine-gun sniper picking off the wounded. They drove him off. The Germans had a one-pounder on a hill and they would follow you down the road for two hundred yards. Then they brought up a big gun.

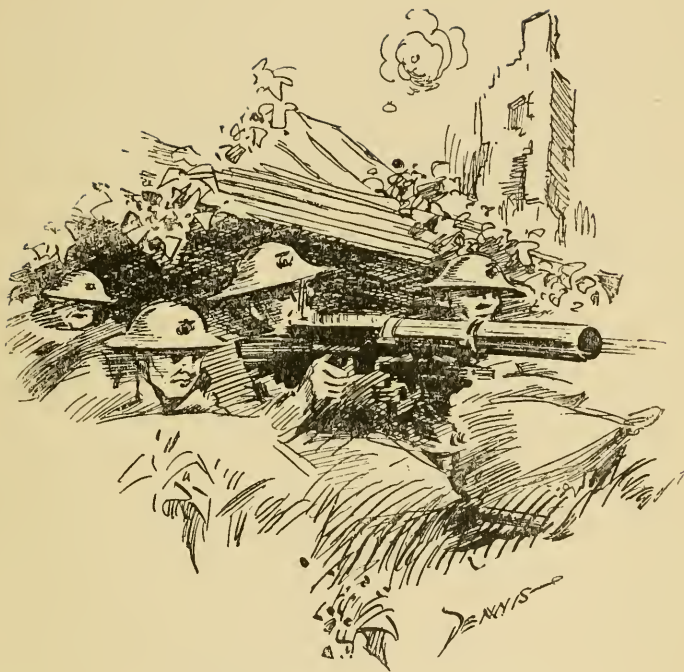
On this road I met German prisoners, one after another. They all had the same cry:

“Give us something to eat; we have n’t eaten in seven days.”

“We don’t want to fight; they force us to.”

“They tell us all we have to do is walk right into Paris.”





MARINE MACHINE GUNNERS



Along the road there was a crust of bread lying in a ditch. A German who could speak English begged his guard to be allowed to get it. The guard said "yes," and he fairly dove for it and gulped it down. I know he never chewed it.

Then came my big surprise. Up the road on the run came Dr. —, of the Y.M.C.A., attached to my battalion, with a stretcher in one hand and a package of cigarettes in the other.

When the Germans started to shell, the Y.M.C.A. men went into the midst of it and cared for and carried back the wounded. The men can't praise them enough.

The German is a good fighter only when he outnumbered you ten to one and is having things his own way. But let them have four or five to one and we will drive them to hell.

I know from that battle that they are whipped, because those kids (men now every one of them), in the face of that awful machine-gun fire, hollered at the top of their voices, ducked in, and came up hollering for more. The Germans can't stop that spirit.

I could write of case after case of heroism, but to cite any one in particular would be doing the rest of them an injustice.

Fate has certainly been kind to me to be able to say I am in the Marines and was in one of the companies who led the attack.

Well, I will have to close, as the censor will get tired of reading. I will soon be on my feet, and hope to God I don't get sent back until I see the Germans driven to hell.

Good-bye and good luck.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT

WE'VE all wondered the same thing — what they thought about, those fighters in France, when the shells were bursting near by and when Death hovered in the shadows.

We've wondered if they ever laughed, if they ever found anything humorous. We've — but the following group of letters solves many perplexities.

The first is from Lewis A. Holmes, of the Forty-ninth Company, Fifth Regiment of Marines, and he answers a part of the question with verse:

*June 18, 1918*

MY DEAR MOTHER:

I WILL start by telling you I feel a little better; at least can think. No doubt you have heard about the great success we are having around the big and brave, also best, German soldiers. They might be big and rather brave and considered good, but we took all of that out of them, because we surely did hit their line hard and smashed it to pieces. I am sending a verse from a paper. I would like to explain how I felt during the Great Drive; but it will explain:

*Where've I been and what've I seen?  
Towns and such — that what you mean?  
That sort of answer's easy to give;  
But to put in words the lives we live,  
The actual things we've all been through,  
To picture — well, just gas, to you,  
Is more than any one can do.*

*What is it like up on the line?  
Have you got a couple years of time  
To spend, while I try to describe one fight  
And endeavor to word the matter right,  
So you may know, without being there,  
How the machine-gun lads and the doughboys fare,  
Or the cooties go crawling everywhere?*

*How does it feel to go over the Top?  
I can shrug my shoulders, but then I must stop.  
Oh, we know, all right — as a mother knows  
How it feels to her when the one boy goes —  
And does n't return — as some of us do,  
And some of us don't — each time, when it's through —  
You'll have to wait till it happens to you.*

But I can remember this and it makes me feel so good to tell you and Sis. I always wondered how I would act and feel when in a big battle, and I have learned and am greatly pleased with myself. One place three sergeants, another private, and myself gave a mob of Germans we ran into unexpectedly, hell.

There were about twenty-five in the bunch. But we never gave a thought to that. They had two machine guns. But we made each shot we fired

count. We had those old boys handling the machine guns so scared, all they did was to hold the guns in one place, and we stayed out of their way. We had those "Dutchmen" dropping right along. We finally captured their position and used their own guns on the other Germans who were coming to help them. I thought I could n't stick a man with a bayonet. But if you had seen me stick a six-foot Hun, you would kinda be surprised. I was myself. Ha! Before I went into it, I did n't think I could sit around dead men, but I'm changed. I was lying on two when I hit another German while he was crossing an open field. I have lost all sense of feeling for any German.

What we did to one German who had been wounded in both legs, while pretending dead (not knowing we were around) took two shots at a wounded Marine and killed him. Well, the kid with me jumped up and ran to the German and gave him a good "ole American bayonet" for his punishment — he won't shoot another American. I guess you have heard enough about the war and you can assure every one that their American boys are putting the K.O. on the Big, Brave, and Best German soldiers. France and England are also doing "Grand," especially the French, they are *wonderful*.

Well, the hospital is very nice. I am in the A.R.C. No. 1, in Paris, and we have a great many visitors; they bring us everything. The Red Cross people



are wonderful, and have some wonderful doctors. Every one is very proud of our work at the front.

Your loving son

LEWIS A. HOLMES

The love of home — and its advertisement to the world — was strong in the heart of Roy Bramblett, of the Fourth Replacement Battalion. And he took a supreme joy in knowing that the Hun learned there was such a place as Montana when the Marines went over the top:

*Somewhere in France*

*June 9, 1918*

DEAR FRIEND PADDY AND BUNCH:

I FIND myself in a very old-fashioned country amongst quaint people, about five hundred years behind the times. Had a fine trip, although tiresome before we landed.

You don't know how well off the people of the U.S.A. are until you see how the people exist here. They only have about fifty square feet of land to call a farm and have to fertilize that six months of the year to raise a crop the other six. Judged by the condition of the inhabitants who have given up money and all for their men on the firing line, it was about time we were coming over and making a cleaning.

The Marines eat 'em alive. Yesterday we cap-



MORGAN DENNIS—

“TOOK TWO SHOTS AT A WOUNDED MARINE AND KILLED  
HIM”



tured two hundred men and their guns and ran them back two miles, and they are still going. We will scatter those "sauerkrauter eaters" before the summer is over, and I told mother I would be home on the ranch for Thanksgiving dinner this fall or miss my guess.

The squareheads don't like our way of Injun fightin' and sure tear their tail over the hill when we start in to shout and yell, "Powder River, let 'er buck!" Believe me, old Montana will be a well-advertised State if they all fight like the ones already here.

ROY BRAMBLETT

4th Replacement Battalion  
Company C, U.S. Marines

A bit more serious was the letter from Private Clarence Weismantel to his father. But it displayed one thing plainly — that a fighting man can be too busy to pay much attention even to the bullet that hits him:

*June 13, 1918*

MY DEAR FATHER:

JUST a little line to let you know I have been wounded on the battle-field. We got the Huns out in the open and we sure hit them hard.

We were stationed at a rest camp about two weeks ago, when we got an order to pack up and leave for the front at a moment's notice, for the

Huns were coming through, and it was up to us to stop them.

Of course, we being General Pershing's prize troops, were selected to show the Huns the material the Americans were made of, and we did.

We just mowed them down.

We got to where the Germans were coming, and we lit in and checked the drive in a couple of days. We sure cut down a few "Dutch," and when we had the drive checked with success, the French general thought it would be great to counter-attack. We got those Germans running, and I see by to-day's papers they are running yet, at the point of the Marines' bayonets.

We were just ready to take a château when I was hit in the left arm.

The excitement was so great that a little thing like a wound in the left arm could n't stop me as long as my legs were in good shape, so I went on until I got several more shots thrown into me. I was finally so badly wounded I could go no farther.

I was hit in six places in all, but they are all flesh wounds, and I think I will get over it all right.

I am now in a hospital at St. Nazaire, and alongside of me is Brother Spiegel, just as happy as the day we both were at a lodge meeting of the Junior Order, United American Mechanics No. 21, at 3331 South Seventh Street.

My platoon took the town we were after and

captured five machine guns, two trench mortars, and ten prisoners; not bad for us leathernecks. The men of this platoon are the kind of fighters who don't know when they are licked.

I took a German walking-cane from their lines, and it is the most wonderful piece of art we have ever seen. It has a big snake carved on it, stained in natural colors. I don't know how I will be able to keep it, though, because we are always on the move and it might get lost.

I don't think I can send it home, but I will see about it to-day.

Well, Dad, I cannot write any longer, so I will close, hoping this letter finds you in better condition than it leaves me.

Your son

PRIVATE CLARENCE WEISMANTEL

46th Co., 6th Regiment

U.S. M.C.

Hugh Miller traded the game of baseball for the game of war. He had succeeded in the former, and in the latter, a Distinguished Service Cross was awarded him for the following act of heroism:

PRIVATE HUGH S. MILLER, 12211, Company K,  
6th Marines:

IN the engagement with the enemy in the woods on the 6th of June, he captured single-handed two of

their number. Ordered back to the rear three times by his commanding officer, he immediately returned to his post, refusing treatment while sick. This on the 6th of June, 1918.

And Hugh S. Miller found that the thrills of the baseball field were as nothing. He wrote to a friend:

You know it is every ball-player's ambition to play in a world's series? I had such dreams, too, picturing myself hitting a home-run in a pinch. But say, that is a mere trifle compared to being decorated by one's country. On July 12th I was decorated by General Pershing with the Distinguished Service Cross and given a real handshake by the General himself.

It was the greatest moment of my life. I shall never forget it. I captured two Germans, one an officer, from whom we got some good information. They were the first prisoners my regiment got.

Then after all this, I went into the last big drive with lots of pep and got wounded. But I am very thankful that I am alive, for the shell exploded right behind me, wounding others severely, including my officer, whom I assisted back to safety.

It is great to be in a successful drive like this one, to see the Boches running back toward Berlin, the prisoners, the captured guns, ammunition supplies,



and to advance over mined ground. I never will forget the aeroplanes fighting overhead, the tanks charging, and other great sights.

I think the turning-point has arrived and there never will be any more big German drives. One prisoner, who used to be a waiter in New York, said he had been waiting to be captured by the Americans. He had brothers in the States and he wants to get back. He says we are the fastest fighters he ever met, and nothing could stop us from going right on to Berlin.

From cartridges to cooties: for Private William Bishop, Jr., Seventy-sixth Company, Sixth Regiment, United States Marines, wrote of something vastly more interesting to him than Boches:

As for pleasure around here there is n't much except reading your shirt, which means to look it over for "cooties." And as for rats, they are the size of a five-year-old tom cat. You can't scare them. They crawl all over your bunks, and if you knock them down they just come right back again. If the Boche had as much nerve as the rats, or trench rabbits as we call them, we certainly would have a time of it.

As for John M. Steele, of the Sixth Regiment of Marines, — "jyrenes" as he calls them, — there was only one thing that worried him — the fact

that the folks at home might be worrying. For John's troubles were nothing — except:

YEP — I got between five Fritz balls and where they were going. I think the “jyrenes” must have stopped one hundred tons of machine-gun bullets and shrapnel. Did n't stop them [the Marines]; in fact the German fire did n't even slow up the “jyrenes”; result is, Fritz is about four miles closer home than he was before we took this smash at him. The U.S. Marine Corps sure has made 'em take notice since we hit the front lines; guess you know that. We are getting the big head — guess I had better quit talking about the U.S. M.C.

I am not seriously wounded and will be as good as new in a few weeks. Everything is as fine as it can be at the hospitals — going to be more like a vacation than being sick, after I get a little of the stiffness out of me. Elsie Janis is showing off for the boys this afternoon. I have to stay in bed. See the show some other time.

Going to “knock off” for this time. Want you to keep the folks' spirits up. Tell them I'm not worrying a bit and don't want them to worry — nothing to worry about.

It remained for Private Douglas C. Mabbott to give one of the really humorous accounts of fighting life, in a letter to friends in Washington:

*Somewhere in France*

*July 8, 1918*

DEAR FRIENDS THE McKEES:

IF I don't write pretty soon you'll be forgetting all about me or thinking I've gone west, and begun pushing up daisies. Don't you ever think it! In the month that I've been up at the front now I've been through so much of the Heinies' shell fire that I'm convinced they can't kill me. I've got so I can lie in a dugout and sleep through an artillery barrage, and that's going some.

But I have reached the conclusion also that Sherman's description of war was entirely inadequate. Showers of shrapnel, whizz-bangs, Busy Berthas, and German hardware stores or sea-bags (a strictly Marine term) bursting on all sides, during which a fellow knows that any moment may be his last, are hard enough on the nerves, but not nearly so bad on mine as some of the sights I see and the sounds I hear which are the results of such warfare.

I have had plenty of first-hand experience with all these things, and about everything else you read about in connection with modern warfare, including gas and gas masks, which I like not at all. Some day this is going to be over, and I'm going to bury that gas mask and that iron hat so deep they can't even sprout. In our last position in the Belleau Wood, we occupied a series of dugouts from which the Heinies had just been compelled to retire, and

immediately the German cooties began making dugouts in our hides. Since then we have been going through various gyrations after the manner of monkeys I have seen at the Zoo. Naturally enough, we have all modern inconveniences in and near the front-line trenches. One of these is the fragrance of well-ripened and unburied Heinies, which I have several times, by volunteering, helped to alleviate.

This portion of the front at least is so broken out with shell-holes that from an airplane it must look like a very bad case of measles or smallpox. I saw an American plane bring down a Boche the other day, from a great height, and it was a sight worth seeing. There are beaucoup air scouts from both sides continually over the front-line region, and we must take pains to camouflage ourselves from them in the daytime. Most of our work is done at night, anyway. I have been out on some mighty interesting night patrols in No Man's Land, been spotted and shot at, but got back with no punctures.

A few days ago I had a chance to look up a cousin who is a corporal in the Fifth Regiment. He did n't know I was over here, so naturally was surprised. We had not met for eleven years.

No doubt you read of the parade in Paris on the 4th. What do you know about it — yours truly was one of the lucky ones to go! With a small detail from our company and each of the other companies, I was suddenly sent direct from the front-line

trenches to the great city, and the morning of the 4th found us parading down the Grand Boulevard, the Champs Élysées, the Avenue de Président Wilson, and about all over Gay Paree, with the whole population throwing flowers at us and shouting "Vive l'Amérique" and "Vivent les Marines." It was pretty good to hear "La Marseillaise" and old "Semper Fidelis" played by an American Army band in Paris, and to see those fine old gray-haired Frenchmen take off their hats to Old Glory as we passed. I was glad to find how well the French people knew and appreciated the great part the Marines had taken in stopping the German drive.

We came right back after the 4th and joined our companies in the woods just back of the lines, and that's where we are now. Where do we go from here, boys? Marine emblems are at a premium over here, and the Heinies call us "Teufelhunden." We have got their billy-goats.

Sincerely

PRIVATE DOUGLAS C. MABBOTT

79th Co., 6th Marines, A.E.F.

Near St. Mihiel a cross rears itself above a newly made grave. Beneath the cross rests the body of Private Douglas C. Mabbott, the writer of the above letter, dead in battle, a hero, fighting — and smiling — to the end.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### JULY FOURTH — IN PARIS

PARIS! It means everything to the fighting men in France, the acme of every dream, every hope; the rainbow that shone after every battle. And strange as it may seem, there is many a cross-marked grave of an American soldier in France who never saw the city of fairy filament, even though his eyes had been upon it ever since the day of his enlistment.

The exigencies of war are grim ones. There are millions of soldiers in France. Paris could not accommodate one tenth of them, and therefore the rule has been that soldiers must stay away. Even the defenders of Paris, those two gallant regiments of Marines who helped to stop the rush of the Hun at Château Thierry and Bouresches, did not see Paris, unless they were wounded or were chosen as the fortunate ones who participated in the Fourth of July parade. Hence the letters which follow are of the Heights of Joy and the Depth of Sorrow, from those chosen for the parade, and those forced to stay behind.

Private Richard K. Kennedy, of the Sixth Marines, was one of the fortunate ones. Thus he described the journey of wonders:

*Somewhere in France*

*July 10, 1918*

DEAR BROTHER AND SIS:

BROTHER, I had a real treat the 4th of July. I spent it in Paris. (Spent a little more than the day — darn little.) For the second time in my life I was lucky and drew a winning number. July 3d our platoon commander came around and selected nine men and five of these nine were to go. Nothing left but to draw straws. Little did I think Richard would get a long one. Well, this time I fooled them, was lucky enough to get the article. It was but a short time and we were on our way. The evening of the 3d found us in Paris, a big band and a vast crowd there to meet us. We hiked a few kilos and were then at our camp; after eating a bit, cleaned ourselves up and hit the hay, as a day's riding on these trains here is too much.

The following morn found us up bright and early arranging our toilet for the big parade. We left camp about 8.30 and hiked to our meeting-place. The band hit up a good old march and we were ready to hike all over France. It was wonderful the way the people treated us. There were cheers and flowers coming from everywhere. The streets were covered with flowers several inches thick.

There were several big events; one of them was the renaming of a certain boulevard. It was changed to President Wilson Boulevard and was decorated



beautifully. Old Glory was unfurled everywhere. Even on the Tower. Most every one wore the American flag, and all had plenty of smiles for the boys. After the parade was over a big dinner was given by one of the large ammunition plants. The boys were treated royal; one American soldier and ten fair misses to a table. After the boys had their fill they had to step off a few dances. In the evening the boys went sight-seeing. I think I saw a bit more than they. I missed out on the meal so I would have more chance to see the place I had so long wanted to visit. We visited a number of places of note and must say it is a beautiful place. They have a wonderful collection of art. Most beautiful residential section I've ever seen.

Was a bit disappointed in the much-heard-of bright lights. Must say they are more than dim and cease to shine after 9.30. It's great to go roaming about in the dark in a strange town. We visited a show and heard some real Jazz music. Maybe it did n't get us feel all "molested" up. This little act and the seeing of the Statue of Liberty caused a few heartaches. We had eighteen hours of real sight-seeing and saw nothing. A month would be very little time. I remain

Your loving brother

RICH

With Raymond Brunswick, it was different. For Brunswick, who had hoped so hard for that trip,

saw, not Paris, but the roar and rush of battle again. However, it all had its reward, for later he received the Distinguished Service Cross from the hands of General Pershing himself:

I SUPPOSE you have read about the great Allied attack and how successful it was. The second division was not relieved on July 4th as I thought, but hurried to a new front where we all joined in and pushed the Germans back out of land they held for so long that they had German names to the streets of one town. The way they worked it was: one division would go "over the top" each day, while a new one came in support. The Sixth Regiment went over the fourth day of the drive, and by that time the line had advanced so far that the artillery had not time to move up and we went over the top without a barrage, following a number of tanks. They opened up heavy fire on us, machine guns and high explosives. The tanks did n't go all the way, and we passed them, going past our objectives, but unlike the other boys we were unable to get any prisoners, they retreated so fast.

We stopped and dug in under fire. The next morning the French took up the offensive and succeeded in driving them still farther back. Over twenty-two thousand prisoners have been taken and four hundred guns. The drive is still on and I saw the Scots moving up last night. They may be going to the

same front, I don't know for sure. The English are also pushing the Huns back and the entire attack all along the line is a big success. The ground we took was open fields, with wheat growing, and it was very hard making through it. We were forced to dig in and wait for relief in the hot sun without any water and very little to eat.

While making the attack a large shell broke near me and knocked me over a few times. It made me pretty nervous, and that night I got a little gas, so by the time we were relieved I was all in and the doctor told me I would rest better at the hospital back at the rest billet. So they brought us far back of the lines. It sure is a great relief to be out of reach of the guns and to have a real bed to sleep in. After I rest up a bit I will be able to join my company again.

They surely treat a fellow fine here. I had my first bath in thirty-two days here, which was some event in itself. Last night was the first in a long while that I slept without being awakened to stand by. According to the last report the drive is still going on in great shape, and the Germans falling back all along the line, leaving their guns behind. I met my old-time friend Brooks here in the hospital. He was shot in the arm, but is almost ready to leave. He was shot in June and was n't in this last drive. Rest is really all a fellow needs for gas, and since our company is resting it is no use for me to stay here. I tried to read yesterday, but every story is about war and



“ HE RECEIVED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS FROM  
THE HANDS OF GENERAL PERSHING HIMSELF ”



everything they make for soldiers or give them is in the shape of a shell or something pertaining to war. It is pretty nearly time for dinner.

To-day is the French day of great celebration. We are back of the lines in some woods resting. Last week I got a bunch of mail dated 'way back in April and May. Last week four men from each platoon received the "D.S.C." I was one of the four from our platoon and I enjoyed it very much. While we were waiting for Pershing, the band played the popular airs which was the first music I had heard for some time. The French and English and American generals, besides a number of other officers, were here, and when General Pershing inspected us there seemed to be a string of officers longer than the line of privates. Yesterday we received General Pershing's compliments and thanks for our work at the front. The number of prisoners we captured, machine guns, etc., I can't tell you, but General Pershing thought enough of it to compliment us.

Some of the boys were talking this morning how they were going to be satisfied with "Home, Sweet Home," when they got back, and I told them when I got back I was going to dig a dugout in the back yard so the change would not be too sudden.

But the really fortunate ones were the wounded, as far as Paris was concerned. At least, such was

the impression given in a letter by Private Lewis A. Holmes, Forty-ninth Company, Fifth Marines, to his mother:

*July 5, 1918*

MY DEAR MOTHER:

I'VE had such a wonderful time lately, especially yesterday, was out all day long. I have not been using my crutches the last few days and feel fine, but I get awfully tired at times, but am all right, so you need not worry.

No doubt you received my other letters some time ago, also read of what wonderful work the Marines did at Château Thierry. In Paris everybody is a *Marine* "absolutely." So guess you can be one too, eh! Yesterday Paris had a wonderful celebration and a great parade of American and French soldiers; and there were a few men from each Marine company who were left at Château Thierry. The streets were jammed. It was a great feeling to see the fellows you had fought side by side with. In the afternoon went to a big lunch given by the Blessés (wounded) and had a wonderful time. Also saw and heard the famous "Jazz Band" from New York, and as bad as my legs were I *almost* got up to dance; the music was great.

Later I went out to dinner with a nice young lady. Then to the Gaumont Palace, which held a big celebration for the Blessés and enjoyed that fine. Re-



turned to the hospital and enjoyed a good night's sleep. Then, this morning, was informed I was to go under ether at 2.30 this afternoon. Nothing bad, going to have my legs sewed up. So guess I will be in bed for a week or ten days again.

I certainly have enjoyed my stay in Paris, as I have met a great number of people, and made a great many friends, and have so many visitors. All the nurses call me the "little spoiled boy." They treat me fine, every one of them. Well, Mother dear, that's all the news I know of; so please write soon.

I remain your loving son

LEWIS

And here is a letter that tells the story of France and America, a letter to the Second Division of which the Marines formed the Fourth Brigade, a letter from France on America's Birthday:

GROUPE DES ARMÉES DU NORD

LE GÉNÉRAL COMMANDANT      *Q.G. 4th July, 1918*  
SECTEUR POSTAL 106

FROM GENERAL MAISTRE

Commanding the G.A.N.

TO GENERAL BUNDY

Commanding the 2nd Division (U.S.A.)

ON the occasion of the National Festival of the United States of America, General Maistre, commanding the Groupe des Armées du Nord, has great

pleasure in forwarding to General Bundy, Commanding the 2nd Division (U.S.A.), his sincerest wishes for the glory of American arms, and the especial success of the 2nd Division (U.S.A.). He takes this opportunity of expressing to the E.O.C. his most cordial appreciation.

*(Signed)*

MAISTRE

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE STORY OF TWO BATTLES

THE United States Marines of the Fifth or Sixth Regiment, who can return to America with the information that he survived both the Battle of Château Thierry, in which the struggle for Belleau Wood formed a part, and the Battle of Soissons, at the beginning of the great Allied offensive, July 18th and 19th, will be hard to find, for there will be few of them.

At Château Thierry, of the eight thousand Marines who were rushed to aid the retreating French, only two thousand marched back to their billets when the longed-for relief came. At Tigny, Vierzy, and Villers-Cotteret, in the vicinity of Soissons, two thousand more fell. The "old gang" is nearly gone; few and far between are the records of men who survived both battles.

Therefore, it is a bit unusual to find the letters of a United States Marine descriptive of the part he took in both struggles — as was the case with Sergeant Karl P. Spencer, who wrote his mother in Kansas City of the two widely different phases of warfare.

His first two letters were descriptive of Belleau Wood:

*June 27, 1918*

MY DEAR MOTHER:

I AM taking this opportunity to write. The Lord only knows when I will be able to get the letter off. Yesterday and to-day I received beaucoup first-class mail and a package of eats from Paris, plum pudding and chocolate bars. Believe me, Mother, one appreciates such luxuries after existing for six days on Argentine bully beef, French bread, salmon and water. Twice the Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. (God bless them!) have sent us jam and cakes and chocolates and cigarettes. I smoke cigarettes (when I have them) like a trooper, and especially when I am lying in my hole in the ground and the shells are breaking all around; they quiet one's nerves, I believe.

In my last letter I spoke of our moving to the rear; instead, that very day word came for us to go into the front line that night. Were we disgusted? Gee, but you should have heard us rave and swear! We have been in the trenches since March 14th, and in this sector nearly four weeks; no leaves; no liberty; no rest; they must think the Marines are supermen or maybe mechanical devices for fighting. But then we have it straight from General Pershing that what's left of the Marine Corps will parade in Paris July 4th. Glory be, if this is only true. According to the fighting we've done we rate something out of the ordinary, and, of course, you know the Marines are credited with saving Paris. You

have read exaggerated accounts of our exploits, perhaps you would be pleased to hear the truth. It is a long, long story so don't weaken.

Get you a map, locate Château Thierry, back up ten kilometres toward Paris by way of Meaux (Meaux was being evacuated when we arrived), and there you find the location of our battle-ground. The Germans were advancing ten kilometres a day when in swept the Marines, relieving the retreating boys and with the Eighty-second and Eighty-third Companies in skirmish formation, attacking, the Huns were stopped and in three hours lines were pushed back four kilometres. Our losses were slight, for the Germans were not prepared to meet a stone wall resistance such as they bumped up against and certainly they had no idea of an offensive movement being launched.

The German infantry had been moving at so rapid a pace that their artillery could not keep up with them. As a result it was easy sailing for us. You should have seen those Huns running; they dropped everything and started toward Berlin. Twenty German planes were counted overhead that evening; they wanted to find out what the devil had interfered with their well-laid plans; what they saw was a wheat-field full of Marines and for miles behind the lines hundreds of trucks going forward at full speed, loaded with men, provisions, and munitions. The Kaiser certainly had a set-back.

To continue with the battle, our objective was a railway station, but between us and our objective was machine-gun Hill 142, and here the Germans made a last stand. The hill is a sort of plateau rising out of Belleau Woods, but between it and the woods are patches of wheat and beyond the hill the ground slopes gently down to the railway station. The hilltop is covered with immense rock and behind these the Germans placed their machine guns and made their stand, and held out for three weeks. The Eighty-second and Eighty-third made one attack against this position. We formed in the wheat-field in wave formation, and with our captain and major leading we rushed up that hill in the face of twenty machine guns. The woods were also full of German snipers.

The attack failed; we lost all our officers and half our company. We were just starting when out from behind a rock comes an unarmed German with arms up in the air shouting, "Kamerad!" A dozen Marines rushed forward with fixed bayonets and stuck that man full of holes — orders were to take no prisoners. Many a brave Marine fell that day. That was our last attack. Since then six separate attacks were made on that hill and not until the other night did the Marines take it. Between the time of our attack and the successful one, the German artillery was moved up and we suffered much from shell fire.

The attack the 25th was wonderfully successful. We, the Eighty-second Company, were in support, but were not called upon. At 3 P.M. the American artillery opened up on the hill. The Germans suspected something and immediately began gassing our rear and shelling the support — us. After two hours of fearful bombarding, at 5.05 P.M. two companies of Marines marched up that hill in wave formation and never halted until they had taken the position. Their losses were heavy, for the whizzbangs, 77's, and other German guns were playing a tune all over that hill and about one hundred Maxims were spitting fire into the ranks of our brave men, but at heart those Germans are cowards, and when they saw the jig was up they surrendered. Six hundred prisoners, old men, and boys of eighteen and nineteen years, and fifty machine guns were taken. One Marine private took sixty prisoners, and by himself marched them away.

The inevitable followed. A counter-attack. Four hundred Huns attempted to retake the hill; a great many were taken prisoners, and several hundred gassed by our battery. To-day we hold the hill and the prospect of an early relief is bright. Not a great deal is to be feared from these defeated divisions, for the Marines have their "Nanny."

Finish to-morrow, Mother, for it's getting too dark to write.



June 28, 1918

I SAW a wonderfully thrilling sight several days ago — an air battle. For several hours a Hun plane had been flying low, up and down our lines, observing our activities and probably signaling his artillery our range. He was loafing over our position, when out from the clouds above darts a frog plane straight for the Hun; when within range the frog opened up with his machine gun and the next minute the German plane was nothing but a ball of fire. The aviator tried his best to get back to the German lines, but the wind was blowing our way, so Heinie darn near burned himself to death: but he turned and volplaned toward our line, and when within a few feet of the ground he sprang out of his machine, killing himself. Three Boche planes were downed that day in this one sector. Some of our men went out this morning to salvage the dead Germans. They returned with watches, razors, iron crosses, pictures, knives, German money, *gats*, and all sorts of souvenirs. I don't like salvaging, for the odor of a dead German is stifling. Nix on that stuff. The only souvenir I care to bring back to U.S.A. is yours truly.

This has been a banner day for us. Our ration detail returned this A.M. with Y.M.C.A. donations — chocolate, cookies, raisins, sugar and syrup, and cigarettes. This P.M. more mail arrived, K.C. papers and two pair of white lisle sox from Jones Store,

Paris. I put one pair on immediately, although my feet were dirty and darn near black, due to the absence of water and abundance of sand. Two weeks ago I had a bath. That was a memorable day. The major decided that his boys needed washing, so he marched the whole battalion about twelve kilometres to the rear to a small village on the Marne River. The town had been evacuated, so we made ourselves at home. New potatoes, green peas, onions, and honey. I had honey that day, but I certainly paid for it. Several of us put on respirators, wrapped up well and invaded the beehives. I finished with eleven bee stings and a great quantity of excellent honey. After that escapade I filled my tummy and then went for a plunge in the river Marne. We were a happy crew that evening.

Water up here is scarce. We send after drinking-water at night. One dares not wander very far from his hole during the day, except on duty, of course, for those deadly whizz-bangs are very muchly in evidence. A whizz-bang (so-called because of the sound it makes when hitting near by — you hear the whizz and immediately the bang) is a trench-mortar affair, calibre 88 cm., shot from a small gun about one and one half to two feet long, and smooth-bore. The shell has very little trajectory (in fact, the Germans use them for sniping), is filled with shrapnel, and its concussion is terrific. Damn it, I certainly hate these things! You can hear other

shells coming and quite often can dodge them, but these whizz-bangs come fast and low.

The only writing I shall ever do when I return home will be a theme or so for some English Prof. There will be so much war bunk after this affair is over that the people will become sick of the word "war." I used to be ambitious. I desired a war cross and honor, but my ideas have changed. I have seen too many men with those ambitions go down riddled with bullets. (One of our lieutenants was shot twenty times while trying to rush a machine-gun position.) So I've come to the conclusion that I am of more value and credit to my country, to you and myself, as a live soldier, obedient and ready for duty, than as a dead hero. No grand-standing — just good honest team work and common sense. Don't be disillusioned — if I live long enough I *may* rate a sir.

I hope Bill enjoys his work this summer. What would n't I give to spend several months in Denver! When I get back behind the lines and have a few moments' time I shall write to him. I am truly glad that he cannot get into the service. We have several kids his age with us; they are always ailing. Their feet hurt or something is always wrong, so they generally end up by being musics or galley slaves. The hiking about the country with a heavy pack and the irregular life of the trenches is just naturally too much for one so young. There is not

a man in the outfit who does not lose weight doing hitch in the trenches. About two months ago while we were at Verdun our captain and one lieutenant both went to the hospital physical wrecks.

Mother, I find I can spend a pleasant hour or so writing about different things, so I shall not close, but write a few words each day until we are relieved. When I finish this document I wish you would send it to Grandpa — he will probably enjoy reading about our scrap.

*Sunday afternoon, June 30, 1918*

OH, what a relief! Last night we were relieved on the front line. Relief came about —, at —. We were many miles behind the lines. We struck camp in a large woods. At 3 A.M. we had a hot meal; turned in later and slept until 11 A.M. when we ate again. Since then I have been swimming and feel like a different man. Received your June 10th letter a short while ago. More Y.M.C.A. supplies blew in, so with a full stomach and a feeling of security from those “Dutch” shells I am fairly happy. From a reliable source we are told that our battalion will parade in Paris July 4th and will be decorated for the fighting we have done this month. Will write you later whether or not this comes to pass.

With love KARL

SGT. K. P. SPENCER  
82nd Co., 6th Regiment

Then a rest and the order to attack — the attack that was to begin the doom of Germany as a militaristic power:

*July 26, 1918*

DEAR MOTHER:

SEVERAL weeks have intervened since my last writing and they have, I assure you, been busy ones. It has been hard work twenty-four hours of the day for the entire Allied army, but the Germans have been started toward the Rhine and are still going according to latest reports. If I remain in France much longer I will know this country as well as my own State. The Wandering Jew had nothing on us — “*ici aujourd’hui, là demain.*” That should be written of the Marines in France. The day the Germans began an offensive on the Château Thierry-Rheims front we were standing by in a small ville in the rear of Château Thierry.

The offensive began in the morning — the next morning we were in trucks riding toward Soissons. An Allied drive was to begin the following morning, July 18th, and our division was to start the ball rolling. After the truck ride came a forced march, and through one of the largest forests in France — immense trees eighty and ninety feet high on both sides of the road as far as one could see. It was a narrow road, but thousands and thousands of men were going forward over it.

A traffic jam on Grand Avenue could n't compare with the congested condition of this single road leading through the woods. Put yourself in the position of a spectator sitting on a raised position beside the road and this is what you would have seen: Overhead dozens of airplanes, all of them Allied (the supremacy of air was necessary to protect and cover the movements of troops); filing down the right-hand side of the road three columns of infantry, down the left two columns; on the right centre a continuous stream of vehicles, machine guns, carts, provision and munition trucks, hundreds of artillery pieces and their caissons; occasionally a general in his auto; large French tanks and British armored cars; and, probably best of all, the French cavalry, regiment after regiment going forward at a trot; on the left-hand side of the road coming out were trucks and ambulances and wagon trains and artillery limbers.

All the Allied troops of the world were represented here; the Americans in their khaki; Moroccans and Italians wearing a dirty brown colored uniform; the Scots in their kilties; Englishmen and Canadians in their khaki; Irish troops wearing tam-o-shanters and the French wearing all the different shades of blue imaginable — here was a display of colors that outclassed the rainbow.

About 10 P.M. it began raining and we were soon drenched. After about an hour of sliding and slip-



ping around in the mud, we left the main drag and made camp under the trees. It was still raining, but we were too tired and sleepy to mind it, so we were soon asleep. Next morning we were awakened at 4.30 A.M. by the *bang, bang*, of several guns, which was soon followed by thousands of them. I have never heard a barrage that could begin to compare with this one; we were only a couple of hundred yards in front of a six-inch battery and the concussion from these large guns was fearful. After two hours of this bombarding, our division, excepting this regiment which was in reserve, went over. Little resistance was met.

By eleven o'clock the line had been advanced ten kilometres; thousands of German prisoners were being marched back (most of them carrying in our wounded and a few of their own). The third line of Hun artillery was passed that day, hundreds of large guns captured, and thousands of machine guns. The attack had been a complete surprise, so the Germans had either thrown away everything and started running or had been taken prisoners.

As reserves we followed the advance. The road was more congested than the night before, if such was possible. Hundreds of tanks, armored cars, and motor-cycle machine guns were going forward: the Germans were on the run; they were to keep them going. Toward night we made camp in the woods and slept. We were to attack the next morning. At





“YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN US DIG”



4 A.M. the barrage was on and we were soon going forward. The attack was scheduled for 7 A.M. A few minutes before this hour we were formed in two more formations on the top of a small hill about one thousand yards from the Germans.

The Germans were on the reverse side of a hill in front of us; about three kilometres behind them was the edge of a woods, our objective. While we were waiting, the Hun artillery and machine gunners got busy and clicked off a few casualties, mostly leg wounds, for they were shooting low.

We had n't waited long until we saw the remainder of the regiment coming up behind us. There must have been six or eight waves of them; perfect lines, and at intervals of thirty yards behind the second wave was a line of tanks. Oh, what a sight! One that even made you forget the Germans were only a short ways off shooting at you. This formation soon passed through our own and we followed.

The tanks did wonderful work that day cleaning out machine-gun nests, but they drew much artillery fire which inflicted many casualties on the infantry. The Germans threw up a barrage of high explosives and machine-gun bullets, but we continued to advance and soon had taken the hill they had occupied. Here we dug in and awaited orders.

You should have seen us dig — it was no time at all until every man had a hole of some sort. The

Huns seemed to control the air this day — they were giving their gunners our range — and some shots were very effective. Soon we were going forward again. This time the Germans had us for right — shells were hitting everywhere, many of them between our two waves. The Hun aviators saw that this barrage would n't stop us, so they began to open fire with their machine guns — five of them flying about one hundred yards overhead shooting at us. Again we dug in and here we remained. We gained six kilometres that day and all objectives were taken. That night at twelve o'clock we were relieved and started toward the rear. Since then we have been traveling in a leisurely manner away from the front.

Your affectionate son

KARL

SGT. K. P. SPENCER

82nd Co., 6th Regiment, U.S. M.C.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### A PICTURE OF WAR

WAR, stark, staring war, where men are dying, and where there are no bands to play, no flags to go fluttering onward, no trumpets sounding — only the bursting of shells, the whine of the machine-gun bullets, and the cries of the wounded — that was war on the battle-fields of France. It was a war that only a real man can be strong enough to write about in all its grisly details; such a man as Major Robert L. Denig, of the United States Marines.

Major Denig was one of the first to participate in the war against Germany, leading a detachment of Marines from the Philadelphia Navy Yard to capture the interned German vessels held in port at Philadelphia, only an hour after the President signed the Declaration of War against Germany early on the morning of April 6, 1917. He also was with the first of America's military forces to reach France. His letter is descriptive of the opening of the great Allied offensive, in the vicinity of Soissons, July 18, 1918, after the last German drive had been turned and bent backward at the Marne.

In honor of their heroic work at Belleau Wood, the Fourth Brigade of Marines, composed of the

Fifth and Sixth Regiments, the same regiments which had stopped the Hun at Belleau Wood and Bouresches, were called forward, as a part of the Second Division, to take part in the grand offensive. They were to break the way, to crack open the defenses of the Germans, and cause them to reel backward, that successive waves of other troops might drive them still farther in retreat. It was a task that meant death, death everywhere, with the glory of victory exacting a constantly mounting toll of lives. And of this toll, of this grim, death-strewn battle-field, Major Denig wrote in the following letter to his wife, in Philadelphia.

WE took our positions at various places to wait for camions that were to take us somewhere in France, when or for what purpose, we did not know. Was passed me at the head of his company — we made a date for a party on our next leave. He was looking fine and was as happy as could be. Then Hunt, Keyser, and a heap of others went by. I have the battalion and Holcomb the regiment. Our turn to en-buss did not come till near midnight.

We at last got under way after a few big “sea bags” had hit near by. Wilmer and I led in a touring car. We went at a good clip and nearly got ditched in a couple of new shell-holes. Shells were falling fast by now, and as the tenth truck went under the bridge a big one landed near with a crash,

wounded the two drivers, killed two Marines, and wounded five more. We did not know it at the time and did not notice anything wrong till we came to a crossroad, when we found we had only eleven cars all told. We found the rest of the convoy after a hunt, but even then were not told of the loss, and did not find it out till the next day.

We were finally, after twelve hours' ride, dumped in a big field and, after a few hours' rest, started our march. It was hot as Hades and we had had nothing to eat since the day before. We at last entered a forest; troops seemed to converge on it from all points. We marched some six miles in the forest, a finer one I have never seen—deer would scamper ahead and we could have eaten one raw. At ten that night, without food, we lay down in a pouring rain to sleep. Troops of all kinds passed us in the night—a shadowy stream, over half a million men. Some French officers told us that they had never seen such concentration since Verdun, if then.

The next day, the 18th of July, we marched ahead through a jam of troops, trucks, etc., and came at last to a ration dump, where we fell to and ate our heads off for the first time in nearly two days. When we left there, the men had bread stuck on their bayonets. I lugged a ham. All were loaded down.

Here I passed one of Wass's lieutenants with his



hand wounded. He was pleased as punch and told us the drive was on — the first we knew of it. I then passed a few men of Hunt's company bringing prisoners to the rear. They had a colonel and his staff. They were well dressed, clean and polished, but mighty glum-looking.

We finally stopped at the far end of the forest near a dressing-station, where Holcomb again took command. This station had been a big, fine stone farm, but was now a complete ruin — wounded and dead lay all about. Joe Murray came by with his head all done up — his helmet had saved him. The lines had gone on ahead, so we were quite safe. Had a fine aero battle right over us. The stunts that those planes did cannot be described by me.

Late in the afternoon we advanced again. Our route lay over an open field covered with dead.

We lay down on a hillside for the night near some captured German guns, and until dark I watched the cavalry — some four thousand — come up and take positions.

At 3.30 the next morning Sitz woke me up and said we were to attack. The regiment was soon under way and we picked our way under cover of a gas-infested valley to a town where we got our final instructions and left our packs. I wished Sumner good luck and we parted.

We formed up in a sunken road on two sides of a valley that was perpendicular to the enemy's

front; Hughes right, Holcomb left, Sibley support. We now began to get a few wounded; one man with ashen face came charging to the rear with shell shock. He shook all over, foamed at the mouth, could not speak. I put him under a tent and he acted as if he had a fit.

I heard Lieutenant Overton call to one of his friends to send a certain pin to his mother if he should get hit.

At 8.30 we jumped off with a line of tanks in the lead. For two "kilos" the four lines of Marines were as straight as a die, and their advance over the open plain in the bright sunlight was a picture I shall never forget. The fire got hotter and hotter, men fell, bullets sung, shells whizzed-banged and the dust of battle got thick. Overton was hit by a big piece of shell and fell. Afterwards I heard he was hit in the heart, so his death was without pain. He was buried that night and the pin found.

A man near me was cut in two. Others when hit would stand, it seemed, an hour, then fall in a heap. I yelled to Wilmer that each gun in the barrage worked from right to left, then a rabbit ran ahead and I watched him wondering if he would get hit. Good rabbit — it took my mind off the carnage. Looked for Hughes way over to the right; told Wilmer that I had a hundred dollars and be sure to get it. You think of all kinds of things.

About sixty Germans jumped up out of a trench

and tried to surrender, but their machine guns opened up; we fired back, they ran, and our left company after them. That made a gap that had to be filled, so Sibley advanced one of his to do the job, then a shell lit in a machine-gun crew of ours and cleaned it out completely.

At 10.30 we dug in — the attack just died out. I found a hole or old trench and when I was flat on my back I got some protection. Holcomb was next me; Wilmer some way off. We then tried to get reports. Two companies we never could get in touch with. Lloyd came in and reported he was holding some trenches near a mill with six men. Cates, with his trousers blown off, said he had sixteen men of various companies; another officer on the right reported he had and could see some forty men, all told. That, with the headquarters, was all we could find out about the battalion of nearly eight hundred. Of the twenty company officers who went in, three came out, and one, Cates, was slightly wounded.

From then on to about 8 P.M. life was a chance and mighty uncomfortable. It was hot as a furnace, no water, and they had our range to a "T." Three men lying in a shallow trench near me were blown to bits.

I went to the left of the line and found eight wounded men in a shell-hole. I went back to Cates's hole and three shells landed near them. We thought

they were killed, but they were not hit. You could hear men calling for help in the wheat-fields. Their cries would get weaker and weaker and die out. The German planes were thick in the air; they were in groups of from three to twenty. They would look us over and then we would get a pounding. One of our planes got shot down; he fell about a thousand feet, like an arrow, and hit in the field back of us. The tank exploded and nothing was left.

We had a machine-gun officer with us and at six a runner came up and reported that Sumner was killed. He commanded the machine-gun company with us. He was hit early in the fight, by a bullet, I hear. I can get no details. At the start he remarked: "This looks easy — they do not seem to have much art." Hughes's headquarters were all shot up. Turner lost a leg.

Well, we just lay there all through the hot afternoon.

It was great — a shell would land near by and you would bounce in your hole.

As twilight came, we sent out water parties for the relief of the wounded. Then, we wondered if we would get relieved. At nine o'clock we got a message congratulating us, and saying the Algerians would take over at midnight. We then began to collect our wounded. Some had been evacuated during the day, but at that, we soon had about twenty on the field near us. A man who had been

blinded wanted me to hold his hand. Another, wounded in his back, wanted his head patted, and so it went; one man got up on his hands and knees; I asked him what he wanted. He said, "Look at the full moon," then fell dead. I had him buried, and all the rest I could find.

All the time bullets sang and we prayed that shelling would not start while we had our wounded on top.

The Algerians came up at midnight and we pushed out. They went over at daybreak and got all shot up. We made the relief under German flares and the light from a burning town.

We went out as we came, through the gully and town, the latter by now all in ruins. The place was full of gas, so we had to wear our masks. We pushed on to the forest and fell down in our tracks and slept all day. That afternoon a German plane got a balloon and the observer jumped and landed in a high tree. It was some job getting him down. The wind came up and we had to dodge falling trees and branches. As it was, we lost two killed and one wounded from that cause.

That night the Germans shelled us and we got three killed and seventeen wounded. We moved a bit farther back to the crossroad and after burying a few Germans, some of whom showed signs of having been wounded before, we settled down to a short stay.



MORGAN QUINN

"WE STOPPED TO LOOK AT A NEW GRAVE"





It looked like rain, and so Wilmer and I went to an old dressing-station to salvage some cover. We collected a lot of bloody shelter halves and ponchos that had been tied to poles to make stretchers, and were about to go, when we stopped to look at a new grave. A rude cross, made of two slats from a box, had written on it:

*Lester S. Wass, Captain U.S. Marines*  
*July 18, 1918*

The old crowd at St. Nazaire and Bordeaux — Wass and Sumner killed, Baston and Hunt wounded, the latter on the 18th, a clean wound, I hear, through the left shoulder. We then moved farther to the rear and camped for the night. Dunlap came to look us over; his car was driven by a sailor who got out to talk to a few of the Marines, when one of the latter yelled out, "Hey, fellows! Any one want to see a real live gob — right this way." The gob held a regular reception: a carrier pigeon perched on a tree with a message. We decided to shoot him. It was then quite dark, so the shot missed. I then heard the following remarks as I tried to sleep: "Hell! he only turned around"; "Send up a flare"; "Call for a barrage," etc. The next day, farther to the rear still; a Ford was towed by with its front wheels on a truck.

We are now back in a town for some rest and to lick our wounds.

As I rode down the battalion where once companies two hundred and fifty strong used to march, now you see fifty men with a kid second lieutenant in command; one company commander is not yet twenty-one.

After the last attack I cashed in the gold you gave me and sent it home along with my back pay. I have no idea of being "bumped off" with money on my person, as, if you fall into the enemy's hand, you are first robbed, then buried, perhaps, but the first is sure.

Baston, the lieutenant that went to Quantico with father and myself, and of whom father took some pictures, was wounded in both legs in the Bois de Belleau. It was some time before he was evacuated and gas gangrene set in. He nearly lost his legs, I am told, but is coming out O.K. Hunt was wounded in the last attack, got his wounds fixed up, and went back again till he had to be sent out. Coffenberg was hit in the hand — all near him were killed. Talbot was hit twice, but is about again. That accounts for all the officers in the company that I brought over. In the first fight one hundred and three of the men in that outfit were killed or wounded. The second fight must have about cleaned out the old crowd.

The tanks, as they crushed their way through the wet, gray forest, looked to me like beasts of the pre-stone age.

In the afternoon, as I lay on my back in a hole that I dug deeper, the dark-gray German planes, with their sinister black crosses, looked like Death hovering above. They were for many — Sumner, for one. He was always saying, "Denig, let's go ashore!" Then there was Wass whom I usually took dinner with — dead too. Sumner, Wass, Baston, and Hunt — the old crowd that stuck together; two dead, one may never be any good any more; Hunt, I hope, will be as good as ever.

To picture a fight, mix up a lot of hungry, dirty, tired, and bloody men with dust, noise, and smoke. Forget the clean swords, prancing horses, and flapping flags. At night, a gas-filled woods, falling trees, and bright, blinding flashes — you can't see your neighbor — that is war. In the rear it is all confusion. The general told me, "Hurry to such a place, all goes well, we are advancing!" His staff miles away, all clean — one was shaving, another eating hot cakes — we had not had a hot bite for two days. As I reached my jumping-off place, wounded men, killed men, horses blown to bits — the contrast!

We advanced ten kilometres, with prisoners and guns, and the bells rang in New York for the victory, while well-dressed girls and white-shirted men, no doubt drank our health in many a lobster palace.

The officers mentioned in Major Denig's letter, with their addresses and next of kin, are:

Lieutenant Colonel Berton W. Sibley; Harriet E. Sibley, mother, Essex Junction, Vermont.

First Lieutenant Horace Talbot; no next of kin, Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

Captain Arthur H. Turner; Chas. S. Turner, father, 188 West River Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

Captain Bailey Metcalf Coffenberg; Mrs. Eliza Coffenberg, 30 Jackson Street, Staten Island, New York.

Captain Albert Preston Baston; Mrs. Ora Z. Baston, mother, Pleasant Avenue, St. Louis Park, Minnesota.

Captain Lester Sherwood Wass; L. A. Wass, father, Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Captain Allen M. Sumner; Mrs. Mary M. Sumner, wife, 1824 S Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Lieutenant Colonel Thos. Holcomb; Mrs. Thos. Holcomb, wife, 1535 New Hampshire Avenue, Washington, D.C.

Captain Walter H. Sitz; Emil H. Sitz, father, Davenport, Iowa.

First Lieutenant John W. Overton; son of J. M. Overton, 901 Stahlman Building, Nashville, Tennessee.

Major Egbert T. Lloyd; Mrs. E. T. Lloyd, wife, 4900 Cedar Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Major Ralph S. Keyser; Charles E. Keyser, father, Thoroughfare, Virginia.

Captain Pere Wilmer; Mrs. Alice Emory Wilmer, mother, Centerville, Maryland.

Lieutenant Colonel John A. Hughes; Mrs. J. A. Hughes, wife, care of Rear Admiral Wyeth Parkes, Post-Office Building, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Captain Leroy P. Hunt; next of kin, wife, Washington, D.C.

One month after writing this letter, Major Denig was wounded while leading his troops at the Battle of the St. Mihiel salient.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### “MY BUNKIE”

AFTER the battle, when the relief had gone in, and the tired, begrimed Marine had dragged himself back to the rest billets, there often came the task that was harder than facing death itself. It was to take pencil and paper and write a letter — a letter to “his mother” telling how death came.

Many a promise was made before a battle. Bunkie shook bunkie’s hand and gave him an address.

“If they should get me,” he would whisper, “write mother.”

And when the battle was over, the bunkie who was still alive fulfilled the solemn promise. “Out there,” somewhere, was a new-made, rough-hewn grave, perhaps fashioned by the very hands that afterward trembled with this greater task. But someway, somehow, the letter was written, and as a result unconscious classics, beautiful in their simplicity and sympathy, found their way across the seas to the waiting, anxious mothers at home. It was under such conditions that a letter traveled from Private James A. Flynn, Ninety-sixth Company, Sixth Regiment, United States Marines, to Mrs. L. Lehman, 1418 Bryn Mawr Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, telling of the death of her son, Kerlin, a letter inspired by genuine tenderness and grief:



MARGAN DENNIS

“IF THEY SHOULD GET ME, WRITE MOTHER”





MY DEAR MRS. LEHMAN:

"BAB," as every one knew him, was only a boy. But he did a man's work. And he did it well. He was liked by every one who knew him, and the news of his death caused a shock to his pals even in the awfulness which follows a battle.

We were advancing across a wheat-field. Ahead of us, in a clump of trees, was a sniper who was picking off some of our men. At the command of our captain to "go get that sniper," "Bab" and two comrades went after him on the double. A shell hit just ahead of the three, and a piece of shrapnel killed him instantly. Death was painless and a smile was on his lips.

The Bible which I am sending you is the one "Bab" always carried with him and one that he prized very much. The bill is one some one sent him, and he kept it as a souvenir of the States. I hope these do not cause you added sorrow by their presence. Rather, I hope that they will recall that when the Nation called, your boy was ready and willing to do or to die.

His was a great sacrifice, but paid at once. But "Bab's" life has not been in vain; he has only gone before the rest.

I feel unable to express my sympathy to you in your sorrow. "Bab" was my pal. He was like a brother to me and I felt his loss keenly. Trusting to God that time will ease the pain of the shock,

which, by its suddenness, seems unbearable, I remain

Your son's Bunkie

PRIVATE JAMES A. FLYNN

79th Company, 6th Regiment, U.S. M.C.

When Private Frederick Louis Riebold and Private Nelson M. Shepard, of the Twenty-third Company of the Sixth Machine-Gun Battalion, United States Marines, faced battle, they too made the promise. Riebold fell. Weeks later, Mrs. Mary Riebold, 1637 North Durham Street, Baltimore, Maryland, mother of the fallen Marine, received the following letter of consolation from her son's bunkie:

MY DEAR MRS. RIEBOLD:

IN writing you this, I am fulfilling a wish made to me by your son, shortly before we went into this battle we've just gone through.

Nothing that I can say, I know, can console you in the loss of such a brave young son, only I want to let you understand how deeply we miss him, who have drilled with him, lived with him, and fought beside him. But it may help to lighten your anxiety to know that he died so quickly that there could have been no pain. And he died at his gun post, like the good, faithful soldier he had always been. You have every reason to be proud of him, as I was proud of him.

Before we came here he asked me to write to you

in the event that anything happened to him — and however deeply I deplore it, I cannot help but feel that there is some satisfaction in meeting death as bravely as he did.

All the boys liked Fred — he was always cheerful and encouraging when things themselves were not cheerful nor encouraging, and he lived a straight, clean life. You have every reason to feel proud that you were the mother of such a boy.

Fred's body was buried on the spot where he fell, June 12th, in the Bois de Belleau, near the town of Lucy-le-Bocage. I trust that his body and those of others of our comrades who were buried in those woods will be reburied when that is possible. Anyway, Mrs. Riebold, it is a fitting place to lie, where one has fought and died.

Believe me, you have my heartiest sympathy and those of all of Fred's comrades in the company. I am sorry if I have reopened memories by writing you like this, but I know you will be glad to know that your son left behind him others beside yourself who miss him greatly.

Very truly yours

NELSON M. SHEPARD

Pvt. 23d Co., 6th M.G. Btn.

U.S. M.C.

P.S. Since writing this, I have learned that among others killed in action, your son has been recommended for a Croix de Guerre. N. M. S,

With a requiem of whining machine-gun bullets, two men laid a comrade to rest and placed two crossed bayonets above his rude-hewn grave. Then, when the battle had died away, one of them sought paper and pencil that he might write the following letter to Mrs. F. E. Probert, 312 South Whipple Street, Chicago, Illinois:

MY DEAR MRS. PROBERT:

AM sending you and your family the company's sympathy over the death of your son.

Am glad to say, Mrs. Probert, that Frank died like a man and a soldier. He was killed about three o'clock last ——— afternoon in an advance. Machine guns were sweeping the fields. It was one of these that got him.

Am writing this, for I know there are many mothers who never know how things were at the end.

Your Frank died in my arms as I was preparing first aid, only a few seconds after being hit. After that, it meant instant death to stand up, so we had to wait for night, but just after dark Private Sheets and I carried Frank to our lines and buried him. I can truthfully say a soldier Marine killed in action never had a better burial under fire.

His grave is marked by two crossed bayonets, and if I come through all right I will be glad to give you the location, although you may rest assured that

France will place a tri-color there. The kind French people will never let the grave die. It shall always be green.

Am sending his photos and case. It's all his personal property.

Your true friends

BEN R. ROBERTS  
PRIVATE SHEETS  
AND COMPANY

Private and officer alike, when death comes to those they love, the thought is of home and of those who will suffer. Thus it was that the following letter went forward from Major L. W. T. Waller, Jr., to Mrs. Mary Sumner, when Captain Allen M. Sumner, her husband, was killed in the beginning of the Allied counter-attack, July 19th:

MY DEAR MARY:

I HAVE been trying to get the chance to write to you for some days, but it has been impossible to do anything. Now that a few moments have turned up, I want to tell you about Allen; and, Mary, please believe me when I say that I am more sorry than it is possible to express at having to write this letter to you. Of course, by now, you will have received the bare official notice of his death. His end came as he would have wished it, at the head of his company at about 10 A.M. on July 19th — the second

morning of the big Allied attack, now still going on. He was struck by a fragment of a high-explosive shell in the stomach and died shortly afterward. His death was painless and he was unconscious from the moment he was hit. He was buried about two hundred yards south of the cemetery of the small town of Vierzy, which was about ten kilometres inside the German lines when we started the advance. His grave is marked with a cross, and his name, and is a matter of record in the files of the Eighty-first Company.

That company, my old company, was very badly cut up in this fight, but did wonderful work. We left the Belleau Wood area and came here by motor truck, taking part in the first day's attack. We reached Vierzy by dark and rested for the night. At daybreak the attack was resumed, but went slower than the first day; the German resistance had stiffened up a great deal.

Allen was with one of the platoons of his company waiting for the signal to advance. They were under very heavy shell fire and he had placed his men under cover as much as possible while he remained exposed to watch for the signal. He was hit while so doing. His company buried him where he fell under very heavy shell fire. It was impossible to move him. I have had his field gear collected together to save what was valuable and forwarded to the regular depot, from which place it will eventu-



ally be sent to you. He had a trunk in storage which I will try to locate. As I remember it, he had some things stored with friends or relatives in Paris, but I know of no way to find out unless you know.

It is useless to try to tell you how sorry I am; I simply can't express it. I know how much of a blow it must be to you — it is a blow to us all. We have lost one major and two captains killed and three captains wounded in this battalion, so it would seem as if we had had our share.

Allen did not die in vain — he left his mark, a shining example to all the officers of the battalion to influence their conduct to make them better able to lead to the ultimate victory which is sure to be ours.

Please let me know if I can do anything for you.

Your cousin

LITTLETON

Back in the "old days" before the war, Captain Donald Duncan, of the United States Marines, and "Al" Sheridan were neighbors in St. Joseph, Missouri. Then the war came and "Al" enlisted in the captain's company, to click his heels and salute, but, when no one could hear, to call him "Don," just as he had done in the old days.

France, Belleau Wood, Captain Duncan fell. Then out of the grime and dust hurried a figure. It was "Al," coming to aid his comrade, his neigh-

bor, his captain. In vain — even though he risked his life in the attempt. And days afterward, “Al” found the strength to write to Captain Duncan’s sister the story he sought to forget, but knew he would remember always:

MY DEAR MRS. COX:

I RECEIVED Mr. Cox’s letter of June 17th to-day, and mighty glad to hear of you all carrying your terrible sorrow so well. Since our Château Thierry scrap I have not been myself, due mostly to the loss of my best friend, and what few old men are left, which are very few, are all the same.

Mr. Robertson was gassed; returned to duty in time for Soissons fight, and was wounded there, I think through the neck. So I don’t know where he is now. We have a Lieutenant Cates, the only old officer left, and he has been slightly wounded. He is our company commander now, although only a second lieutenant, but a very capable man. The day poor Donald was killed was one terrible day for us all. At 5.15 P.M. we started over the top, intending to flank the enemy, as we were advancing through the field which was about one half mile, all in the open, and exposed to the Hun’s terrible machine-gun fire and artillery. Don had on his best suit, carrying a swagger stick, and smoking a straight-stem pipe, and the coolest man on the field, always giving orders and smiling all the time.

I was in the first platoon, and our platoon was on the right flank of the company, so we advanced a little too fast for the rest of the company, and Don came over and made us halt till the rest of the company got on the line with us. At that time we were within six hundred yards of our objective. While he was over talking to Mr. Lockhart, our platoon leader, the bullets were singing all around us, and I asked him, as a joke, if he thought we would see much action. He said, "Oh! yes, we will give and take. But be sure you take more than you give." I guess he meant lives. Anyway, he started away up the hill, and it was not a minute till down he went. The top soldier was with him all the time, and I was there in a jiffy. We got a naval doctor, a hospital apprentice, the top, and myself, and carried him to a small clump of trees. All the time he was gasping, hit through the stomach. We no more than laid him on the ground when a big eight-inch shell came in and killed all but myself. I was knocked down, but my helmet saved me.

So I left them, and rejoined my platoon, just in time to enter the town and get a bullet through my cartridge belt, and exploded three shells, but still untouched. And at last Fritz took me down, with gas. But I am back again, and will be as good as the next man for the next five years. There's not a day passes that some one of the old men don't mention the captain, and one of his traits, which

are too numerous to mention. But he was the idol of the regiment, and every private and officer knew him, for his company surely advertised him.

The major cried when he heard the news. His company had the reputation of being a wild bunch of Indians that did n't give a damn for anything. And it was true. But a more loyal bunch of men can never be gotten together again. And whenever a ticklish job came along, the Ninety-sixth was the chosen one. And we have yet to make a botch of our job. But now it's different: all new men and officers, and the same spirit does not exist as before. We are near Metz now, but will be relieved in a day or two to go behind the lines for a rest. And I hate to think of it, for I thought they brought us here to advance and take Metz. But we may have the chance later.

I would rather be in the front line than any place in France, because I am tired of the job, and want to finish it. The day poor Don left us was a bad day for Fritz. For we did n't take very many prisoners. All we could see was blood. And it's my motto from now on. I enjoy knifing a big squarehead more than my meals.

Did Mrs. Duncan receive my letter? My memory is not the best in the world now, and it's hard to write any kind of a letter. This game we are playing is enough to put a man in the mad-house.

Give my very best regards to the Duncan family,

and your own, and also Miss Mary Owen. I often think of you all. Sincerely, your friend

AL

In Belleau Wood, Walter Spearing, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a University of Pennsylvania man, who had been one of the first Marines to "ship over," received the wounds which caused his death. His comrade in arms had been "Sol" Segal, of Alliance, Ohio, barely twenty years old. And when the grave had been filled, "Sol" sat beside it and, upon paper captured from a German dugout, wrote a letter of consolation to Spearing's mother that is destined to become a classic—in the Marine Corps, at least. A letter of an overwhelmed man it is, a man grieving for the "bunkie" who is gone, yet strengthening the mother who, he knows, grieves deeper than he:

*At the Front, June 26, 1918*

DEAR MRS. SPEARING:

THERE is grief in my heart and in the hearts of all of my comrades for the great sorrow that this war has brought to you and to us. We all unite to express our heartfelt sympathy and condolence to the mother and family of one who has fallen in a cause as imperishable as will be the names of those who have fallen to defend it. Should there be anything my comrades and I can do to mitigate your

grief and to allay your sorrow — some little keepsake of Walt as a Marine, perhaps — but name it, dear lady, and it shall traverse the ocean to you.

Because you do not know me, please do not think it presumptuous for me to write. You are Walter's mother — I was his inseparable friend and comrade; that makes us two kindred souls in common grief for our nearest and dearest. Then, too, this letter fulfills a duty that I am bound by oath and will to perform. Many months ago, Walt and I promised each other, that, should the "God of Battles" call to one, the other would console the sorrowing mother. Now Walt has gone West to Home and to you forever, but his figure, his voice, his wonderful personality will always be living truths to me. I, myself, should the great call come, will go gladly, confident of a reunion and with faith in the eternal truth of that cause for which I die.

Beneath the green in Belleau Woods, forever connected with the "Honor of the Marines," lies Walt with two comrades, dead on the "Field of Honor." Above their graves the stately pines sway in their grandeur, an imperishable monument. But greatest of all epitaphs is that engraved within the hearts of his comrades. "A man, than whom there was no peer in kindness, in understanding, in comradeship, beyond compare." We alone know what could have been had circumstances so willed it. Whatever befall, whatever sorrow fills us, one

thing I swear to you, here hard by that lonely grave — the very paper that I write upon taken in a captured German dugout — I swear that Walt is well avenged, that he has not died in vain, for his spirit leads us on to ultimate victory. You are proud, I know, for you are the mother of a martyr — a martyr in a holy cause, Freedom and Liberty.

Dear lady, the very thought that you are in grief tears my heart. Do not sorrow; death, after all, is not so terrible, and here — why, here it is glorious.

Mother, in the name of the Twenty-third Company, in the name of the Marines, I salute you, and all my comrades salute you.

Devotedly

SOL SEGAL



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE REWARD OF THE BRAVE

DANGER of death, then the reward. Sometimes it is a grave with a slanting cross, sometimes a wound that means months in the hospital, sometimes a whole skin and the Distinguished Service Cross. And sometimes, as was the case with Sergeant Arthur R. M. Ganoe, it is a greater knowledge of why we live, a greater understanding of the beauties of gratitude and the love that lives in the hearts of those for whom you have fought. Sometimes —

But it is better told in the letter itself by the sergeant, a former newspaper man of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, writing to his old editor, A. W. Brown, Sunday editor of the *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*. Mr. Brown has copyrighted the letter, and it is used here with his permission. It is a letter that started to tell a story of a Fourth of July parade, and ended with a sermon:

(Copyright, 1918, by A. W. Brown; reprinted by permission.)

DEAR BROWNIE:

UP to the last moment, same being July 1st, we had held tenaciously to the belief that our division would be relieved to parade in Paris on the Fourth — Paris, the Mecca in our dreams of France. We

were wild to see such a historically famous city, to recognize with our own two eyes those places described by all manner of writers since Paris was a name to conjure with, to prove the truth of the tales of romance, adventure, and hospitality the few brought back who had been and seen. Some of us had been in the land twelve months, all of us three, yet those who had sighted Eiffel Tower could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The motor train that had deposited us, a barrier to the advancing Huns, passed within nineteen kilometres of the city. That was the closest we ever had come in all our journeying over France. No matter where we went we kept our eyes on the direction signs along the way and every one that bore the magic "Paris" mark elicited comment, and the first question we put to a Frenchman on entering his village was, "How far to Paris?" So we knew when we hit the line at L—— that we were between seventy and eighty kilometres north of the capital. We found the Germans coming and coming fast. Indeed, between our embarkation for and arrival on the scene they had captured the very town we were supposed to have occupied, and the hard-pressed Men in Blue were all in. We asked why the Germans were so slow about shelling L——. "Oh, no," they said, "the Boches would not bombard this town now. They wish to use it for billets to-night."

Imagine our amazement! "To-night?" we all

shouted. "To-night, hell! We're going to billet here to-night ourselves." They smiled the way all Frenchmen smile at the madness of Americans and they left us to contest with Fritz, who was only the length of a ten-acre field away, the priority billet claim on L——. Well, possession is always nine tenths ownership, so we used just that much of the town. We ceded Fritz the streets as his tenth because he swept them with Maxims. Keeping him out sort of riled the Hun, and next morning, as the sun shot the eastern horizon a fiery red, he sent his first shell into L——. That was two months ago. To-day not even a bat could billet there, for what once was a good-sized village is now nothing but a good-sized rock-pile. Long, long years from now, when the velvety green moss of France has mantled and neutralized the jagged face of that shattered village, it will be displayed with pride as the monument to the first Americans who stopped a German drive.

After these same Americans had swept the Germans back on a twenty-kilometre front, had decimated three Boche divisions and engaged seven others, after twenty-five days' continuous fighting on the hottest front in Europe, Dame Rumor said we would parade in Paris on Independence Day as a reward. We did n't want to parade. Participation in former parades had dampened our ardor for parading, but — Paris! We would do most anything to get to Paris.

You see, we never questioned the rumor, because we wished to believe it. We began to play a safer safety-first game. We were n't going to be "bumped off" on the eve of a great adventure if we could help it. Where the longest chances with death had been taken, now even the shortest were quibbled over. Where the ration detail had walked boldly over open fields, defying the Austrian 88's, they now sought the thickest cover. Men who seemed to have an evil genius for being in sight when a reconnoitring Boche plane came over, stuck to their dugouts. In a thousand little ways the safety game was played up to the last moment. But when July 1st came and went with us still in the first battle line, our diminishing hopes flickered into oblivion. We were in bitter despair, despairing of ever seeing beloved Paris. But along with our dead hopes came a sort of relief. Toward the last we had been swept back and forth between doubt and faith until we did n't know what we really did think. So a nervous strain was relieved when our hopes were strangled and we crawled into our dugouts after dinner July 2d, the only meal we had had in two days, and went to sleep.

My slumber was like a beautiful blue lake, lying under a summer sun, fringed with soft green trees, the glassy surface mirroring little fluffy clouds that hung enchanted by the reflection of their own silver whiteness. Suddenly a rough, harsh wind broke up

the glassy surface, sent the child-clouds scurrying, and bent the graceful trees into fantastic shapes. I awoke to the most dreaded word of the A.E.F. in my ears: "Outside with your pack and equipment!" Little briskness was displayed in the packward move. I must question the rude disturber of my slumber. Why was I invariably the victim when it came to guides for new movements, ration details, guard details, and all details?

"Shake it up, Ganoë, if you want to get these men back to M—— by six!" shouted the Top. Back to M——, ten kilometres, by six o'clock! It was now 4.40 P.M.

"What's the idea?" I inquired of the lieutenant, who, in lieu of any other officer, was C.O., and a fine chap, too.

"Just got orders to send twenty men and an officer to Paris for the parade. In view of the fact that we're in the front line and the company actually needs me, and it would bring a G.C.M. tumbling about my ears, and that I am the most unlucky devil outside a hospital — considering all these things, I have decided to stay here and send you as my representative."

He broke into a rusty laugh. Two seconds later I recovered and we started the craziest trip men ever made.

Now, Fritz, among his miscellaneous collection of life-taking instruments, has what is dubbed

“whizz-bangs.” Their chief characteristic is the absence of shrieking accompaniment. They are Austrian 88’s, a long-barreled cannon, rifled to perfection, and manned by the best gunners of the Central Alliance. It may sound foolish, but Fritz uses them for nothing but sniping — uses them as we use the rifle, and with most deadly effect. Many’s the solitary cross along the lines of communication marking the heroic end of some runner or orderly that testifies to the accuracy of aim of the 88-gunner.

Well, each company on the line sent back twenty men in broad daylight. Although we were lucky enough to come through unscratched, to this moment I see red whenever I think of how those durned Hun gunners must have chuckled over that wild game of hide-and-seek. Before leaving the shelter of the wood I divided the detail into three sections. I took the first section and placed corporals in charge of the other two, with orders to follow at five-minute intervals. Have you ever seen a big jack-rabbit crossing a Wyoming plain? I imagine our progress bore a close resemblance. We darted from ditch to bush, from bush to wall, and from wall back to ditch, always with an 88 shell a close second. It was hot beyond power of description. We were out of water. I poured water from my canteen in the face of a lad who fainted. It actually seemed at one time as if we would make



the ten kilometres in an hour and a quarter. The pounding of the 88's at the different details resembled a barrage.

When we had made five kilometres and emerged on the Paris-Metz highway we were done! Men carrying all their belongings, a rifle, two hundred and twenty rounds of ammunition, and a gas mask can't imitate the gamboling lamb long. We got down in the ditch on the far side of the road, unslung equipment, lay flat on our backs, and between gasps cursed Fritz as the shells burst all around us. After throwing many shells at where we had disappeared, Fritz either gave it up or concluded he had done for us. We resumed the hike after a half-hour rest, and hit M—— at 8.30 P.M., finding the cupboard bare. From there we hiked back three kilometres to S—— and boarded trucks at eleven. At 2 A.M. we piled off in a field and turned in, thinking to get a few hours' much-needed rest.

We were some collection! Out of the whole brigade there were approximately one thousand Marines. We were muddy and dirty, ragged and torn — well, the worst tramp I ever saw could have regained his self-respect by one glimpse of us! We were exhausted and hungry, and broke. Our feet were blistered and our backs were a great big ache, but we fell asleep to dream of the welcome of gay Paree!



Short-lived dreams! "Everybody up!" came at 3 A.M. The quartermaster had arrived with our new clothes. Never in the history of the Marine Corps was there such an issue of clothing. We shouted the sizes of the articles we wanted, and we got the nearest thing to it, or that which lay closest to the dispenser's hand. For two hours there was a continual stream of clothes in the air. When the sun brightened our surroundings, we located the Marne River and there was a grand rush for the bank. It was cold enough to discourage a fish, but we had n't seen water for a month. When we finished we were the queerest assortment of blue and purple animals outside the Zoo, but we were CLEAN. Then came breakfast — a spoonful of salmon, slice of bread, and cup of coffee. An insult to our appetites, yes! But we bided our time! WE WERE GOING TO PARIS! We all felt sorry for our comrades back on the battle line. After breakfast we hiked to N—— and the railroad. They packed forty-one of us in each dinky little box car, but we did n't kick. There was n't room to move one's feet. At ten o'clock the trip was begun. It was seventy-seven kilometres to Paris. Noon came, but no dinner. At one we sighted the Eiffel Tower. But we could n't eat that. Our spirits rose, however, and we actually became cheerful in our hunger. We were feasting our eyes. When at two o'clock the Tower had not grown closer, we began to remark

with sarcasm the inevitable (in)directness of French methods. At three we were cursing every Frenchman who ever had anything to do with building railroads, and at four we included every inhabitant of France in our railings at French inefficiency. For the Eiffel Tower was quite as distant as it had been at one o'clock. Curse these winding railroads!

Then with a startling swoop we descended into Paris, crossed the Seine, and found ourselves lined up on the cobblestones at the base of the Eiffel Tower. All within an hour!

But our jubilation was short-lived. We hiked six miles over cobblestoned streets at attention. At seven o'clock we hit Boulogne, a suburb, and cleaned up for supper. We got a cup of tea and a slice of brown bread, with the order to stay in billets. Were they starving us for the feast on the morrow? No, there was n't any mutiny. I saw a fellow counting francs. When he reached forty I reached the end of my endurance. With twenty of his francs warming a spot over my heart, I eluded eleven sentries, and, although I was dead on my feet, I was starving also, and I finally located a joint where fried eggs in unlimited numbers were procurable. I won't tell you how many I took in and entertained. You would n't believe me. They had no butter. A Frenchman at another table, learning I was a United States Marine, left

hurriedly and came back with a pound, which he presented to me. I did finally persuade him to accept a glass of wine in return.

Did you ever get drunk eating? Well, you spend a month at the battle front, where you are lucky to average a meal a day, and that shot full of holes as a cheese by enemy shells, and then get back where you can get all you want! Believe me, it's possible!

The next morning, July 4th, our Independence Day, at 4.30, we turned out for parade. We dragged the six miles back to Paris and stood on alternate feet until 11 A.M. We were the tail of the procession and we were a sore tail.

We started off. The streets were lined, lined many deep, with people. There were many, many children; beautiful, beautiful children. The farther we went the noisier grew the gladsome crowds. The streets were carpeted with flowers. Children dashed out with roses. They thrust them in our arms.

They caught the wording on our standard. "VIVENT LES MARINES!" the wondrous cry went up. It swelled and echoed. It raced ahead of us. The children broke through the soldiers who pressed the crowds back. The dear ones! They took us by the hands! Their lovely faces, like flowers, looked love into ours!

The papers said that we glanced neither to right

nor to left: that we marched doggedly on, with determined, set faces.

GOD! How could we look at those beaming people, who thought us heroes? How could we, HOW COULD WE, look otherwise? For our jaws were clenched to keep back the blinding tears!

Our numbed hearts were thawed, melted, and broken by this wondrous welcome! Bless you, we nearly went to pieces. Some one loved us again! Everybody loved us, the United States Marines, who they said had saved Paris! Oh, the bitter sweet anguish! A whole nation showered gratitude! I thought our leathern spirits had run the wildest gamut of emotions: But this welcome! It broke our hearts and made them whole again! Our battered spirits are nursed by cheers. We are caressed by myriad loving eyes. The hair on the back of my head stiffens painfully. My eyes burn as with caustic. A great lump of agony chokes my throat. Tears from the depths of some divine emotion ache in our eyes, burn our cheeks. O wondrous Paris! They shall not, SHALL NOT, take YOU from us! We would give our immortal souls for YOU!

Suddenly my heart seems cold and dead. For my thoughts revert continually to those lonely graves, 'way back there in the woods, to the hastily constructed crosses that mark the real heroes, those who deserve this loving recognition. I think of the



“‘DEAR GOD,’ SHE PRAYED, ‘MAY I NEVER MEET THE GERMANS’”



comrades grimly holding the line, the life-line of the world, while we receive a great people's honors. I feel like an interloper, a purloiner of the rights of others more deserving. I feel the honor is too great to bear. I stumble on.

A sweet little girl bows her lovely head over my free hand. She looks up at me. And her two starry eyes glisten with tears!

"Dear God," she prayed, "may I never meet the Germans!"

Though I may be battered into forgetting the fight our brave forefathers waged for liberty, the aching hearts of American mothers, the dead we cannot bury, the bloody trails and mutilated bodies, the moaning misery of hospitals, the pitiful procession of aged refugees, I might still hope for redemption. But may I make fast to the hottest pier in hell if I ever forget the appeal in that little French child's eyes!

After the parade we were fêted and entertained, decked out in flowers and ribbons, flattered and praised until we almost thought ourselves somebody.

Then we went back — back to the roar and din of battle. *But we went back different men!* We went back better fighters, braver than when we left.

For the cries of the little children were ringing in our ears!



It is such things that make victory — that uphold men and calm them in the face of death — “For a little child shall lead them.”

ARTHUR R. M. GANOE

Sergeant, 74th Co., 6th Regiment,  
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Somewhere in France

THE END



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