

*World War I Diary of Philip H. English*  
The Revised Diary of a Lieutenant of the Connecticut National Guard.  
1917 – 18 – 19.



Image: New Haven Museum

**National Guard:**

Didn't know much, but knew something,  
Learned while other men played,  
Didn't delay for commissions;  
Went while other men stayed.  
Took no degrees up at Plattsburg,  
Needed too soon for the game  
Ready at hand to be asked for,  
Orders said, "Come" – and they came.

Didn't get bars on their shoulders,  
Or three months to see if they could;  
Didn't get classed with the reg'lars  
Or told they were equally good.  
Just got a job and got busy,  
Awkward they were, but intent,  
Filling no claim for exemption,  
Orders said, "Go" – and they went.

Didn't get farewell processions,  
Didn't get newspaper praise,  
Didn't escape the injunction  
To mend in extension their ways.  
Workbench and counter and roll-top,  
Dug in and minding their chance,  
Orders said: "First line of the trenches!"  
They're holding them – somewhere in France.

"National Guard" by R.F. Andrews, published in *Life*, 1918

(p1)

World War I Diary of Philip H. English (\*D 570.3 26<sup>th</sup> E64 Vol. 1)

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Spelling and Grammar is as appears in original document. Page numbers in parenthesis, example: (p4) denote the original page numbers  
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## THE CALL TO ARMS.

Philip H. English

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1917, I was working at the plant of the Acme Wire Company in New Haven, aiding in the shipping of wire. Suddenly an errand boy darted out to the shipping platform with exciting news that the Connecticut National Guard had been mobilized for possible duty against Germany. War had not yet been declared.

Hurrying to my motorcycle, I sped toward the Meadow Street Armory. Near Hillhouse Avenue my driving chain broke, making my motorcycle useless. Abandoning my machine, I ran the rest of the distance to my company room. The German emperor would have been amused had he seen our tiny company of thirty men answer its roll-call that afternoon. Following the termination of Mexican Border duty in November 1916, many of our older officers and men had resigned. We had but one lieutenant, Ray Barnes, on our commissioned list. Most of our privates were newly enlisted, around eighteen years of age. Our great need was one hundred and twenty-five recruits. For the first nights we were allowed to sleep at home. Each morning at eight we answered "roll-call" at the armory, and busied ourselves removing our scanty field equipment from the armory attic. We also packed away our gaudy gray uniforms, which looked very much like stage costumes under existing conditions.

On March 30<sup>th</sup> we had our first duty to perform. Marching solemnly to the Winchester Arms plant, we occupied quarters in a small shed. Relieving D Company, F. Company posted fifteen men on guard at various points about the plant. Each man stood at post for four hours, and after resting for four hours, resumed his post again. At five in the morning I was sleeping soundly at (p2) Guard Headquarters when a heavy explosion occurred near my cot. Springing to my feet to aid in repelling the Prussian Guard, I observed Tommy Cornell proudly pointing to a small hole in the ceiling. While inspecting his piece previous to dismissal of the relief, he had accidentally fired the company's first shot.

At the conclusion of twenty-four hours at Winchesters, the boys returned to the armory to learn that thereafter we must sleep in our company room. As no cots were available, we slept on the floor. My brothers slept on the top of a six-foot steel locker, due to the fact that there was not space below for all. If he had rolled off he would have injured himself and somebody below. We ate our meals at a nearby restaurant.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> John Eckle and myself were appointed as 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenants of Infantry. Among other changes in rank Fred Holloway was made 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant. Corporals H. K. English and W. Clark were made sergeants. Privates Joe Hall and S.R. Chatfield made corporals. Mancel Rice enlisted as private.

Enlistments came slowly. When the President and Congress formally declared War on Germany there was little response from the young men of the city. Anxious to build up our puny company we rented an empty store next to Poli's Theatre, set up a tent inside, stacked a few rifles with bayonets attached in the window and placed an American flag in the window center, flanked by a yellow standard. Beneath the flag was a large sign, "Which is your flag." For weeks we maintained a few men in this store gathering recruits. Joe Hall narrowly avoided many fist fights as he stood in the middle of the side walk, taunting sturdy male passers-by as "Yellow." Gradually our strength increased, and what remarkable specimens answered our

challenge. Private Kale Kevitz never knew which was his right foot. Private Leithauser did his daily duty in a saloon, (p3) requiring much punching each night before he would let others sleep. One youngster of fourteen nearly succeeded in enlisting. Private Healy, 16 years of age, falsified his papers successfully. He was later killed in action.

On April 11<sup>th</sup> I took a detail of two squads to Marlin Arms Company on Willow Street, where we reinforced the factory police, and were given the thrilling duty of watching the discharge end of the factory sewer in Mill River. Rumor said that somebody was going up that sewer to place a bomb under the machine-gun department. I suggested a little barbed wire. On April 15<sup>th</sup> we were ordered back to the armory. Our return march down Orange Street gave great joy to one hundred small boys who joined our little column with shouts of enthusiasm.

On April 16<sup>th</sup> with a company strength of eighty the Grays, Co. A, 2<sup>nd</sup> Conn. Infantry again took over the Winchester plant for a period of ten weeks, living on the third floor of Tract K, a modern concrete building where we had splendid quarters. Fourteen men walked their posts for four hour periods. Life at Winchesters was deadly dull. Nothing occurred to break the monotony of police duty. Our orders were to keep the sidewalks adjacent to the plant clear of pedestrians. This suited all but obstinate walkers. One drunkard refused to be checked, walked onto the guards bayonet (which was directed at his arm-pit) and only halted when the point of the bayonet tore through the back of his overcoat. A few moments later, wildly cursing, he burst into guard headquarters to demand a new coat. Kal-Kivitz imagined himself attacked one night and fired a number of shots at the moon. My motorcycle came into frequent use as a quick means of inspecting two miles of sidewalks, covered by our foot-sore soldiers, day and night. One morning early I rode to New York to buy a uniform, making (p4) the trip from Winchesters to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in 2 ¾ hours.

Our building was too new. As Italian builders had left lice behind them, F Company was soon lousy. Then followed days of shaving the entire body to apply salves which bit worse than the lice. With the coming of spring, life became more endurable. On a nearby vacant lot we initiated our rookies into the mysteries of handling a rifle. Not one of them had ever fired a shot.

Early in June we were inspected by General Clarence Edwards, who was greatly astonished to have one of our men calming walk by him at "Present Arms," whereas the man should have stood still, when approached. General Edwards was loud in his condemnation of continued police duty for untrained troops who faced combat.

On June 28<sup>th</sup>, to everybody's joy, we marched to Yale Field and went into tents just north of the Yale Bowl. On the following day I was ordered to Saybrook to take temporary command of C Company with headquarters in a work car at the big railroad bridge across the Connecticut River. The officers of this company had all gone to New Haven to take examinations. Certain of the men had taken advantage of this fact to stage a drinking party and were raising a hubbub when I arrived on my motorcycle late in the afternoon. In fact one, Pinkie Meehan, was sufficiently exhilarated to fire a round of ammunition from his rifle in my general direction as I stood on the rail siding looking down at the men's tents, some three hundred feet away. It was necessary to place him under arrest and send him off to the Guard House in New Haven, for a few more shots might have done some serious damage. During the next four days I lived on the bridge. We posted few men as the only danger could be easily

covered by a man at each end, (p5) and a third behind a huge searchlight which illuminated the supports of the bridge at night. How fine it seemed to look over the blue waters of the Sound and to sit under the stars at night after the confinement of life at Winchester. Each day I marched the men into the hills northwest of the bridge to practice open warfare maneuvers in the thickets.

On July 4<sup>th</sup> I gave all possible freedom to my men and rode back to Madison where my parents met me. We had a very pleasant morning on the beach, my first day "off-duty" since March. That night I was ordered back to Yale Field to find that F Company had moved to a new area just south of the Bowl. We now had a strength of three officers and one hundred and twenty-five men. Within a few days the entire 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Conn. Infantry regiments were assembled at this camp, their combined strength being about 4500 men. Then followed a Summer of hard drilling on the Yale baseball field, combined with practice marches to Woodbridge and Mount Carmel. One hot day we tramped down to the sand-spit near Savin Rock, stripped naked on the beach, and plunged, as one man, into the water on a given bugle call. By the time we had marched back to Yale Field we were dripping with perspiration.

On August 10<sup>th</sup> I was transferred from F to M Company of Torrington, 145 fine soldiers. My brother married Rose Woodruff at Mount Carmel on August 18<sup>th</sup>. I had received typhoid inoculation a day before and was so dizzy prior to the ceremony as to make it necessary for Henry Farnam to put my shoes on. The bride appeared before my feverish eyes as vague as a white cloud, but at any rate I was able to go through the motions of being best man. Harold had just finished his Plattsburg course and was about to go on duty (p6) at Camp Devans as second lieutenant of infantry.

On the following day the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion marched to the East Haven rifle range for three days firing practice. While marching to the range Major Beebe informed me that we were soon to sail for France. I took charge of instruction on the 200 yard range. Day after day I lay in the sand watching the red flags waved as indication that scores of recruits were firing high or low. They improved rapidly. As I was leaning over one man during "rapid-fire" instruction, his rifle breech blew out with terrific force. The bolt flew back over his shoulder, the magazine buried itself in the ground. Pieces of steel tore the pocket out of the pants of a man beyond me, breaking his pipe. Nobody was hurt.

On the morning of August 25<sup>th</sup> an impressive ceremony was held on the baseball field, where the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> regiments were merged to form the 102<sup>nd</sup> with an enlisted strength of 3600 men, under command of Colonel Ernst Isbell. The two regiments were drawn up in long lines facing one another. One by one the companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> moved over to join the company bearing the same letter in our regiment. After a brief address by our Brigade Commander, General Tranb, we marched back to our camp to the strains of the famous "Second Connecticut" march. Each infantry company now had a strength of 250 men and six officers, a remarkable contrast to the puny company which gathered in F room in March. The men were sturdy, well-trained, and in excellent spirits. Recruits joined the regiment daily, attracted by rumors of an early sailing date.

From September 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> drilled of our new organizations went on at a furious pace. Final baggage preparations were made for overseas duty. Innumerable parents strolled through (p7) the company area, bidding farewell to their sons. At night I practiced riding my motorcycle

on the rough back roads of Woodbridge, hoping that I might take my machine to France. This privilege was not allowed me.

On September 9<sup>th</sup> D Company marched quietly out of the camp in the evening – not to return. Some few mothers tramped with their boys to the train at West Haven. The company's destination remained a mystery.

On this day I was appointed Provost Officer, a chief-of-police for the camp in charge of 170 prisoners and general law and order. Most of the prisoners were confined in a section of the baseball field for minor offenses. A few days later Colonel Isabell freed the entire group in order that they might drill with their units.

I was in charge of a small guard scattered over the main cities of Connecticut to return stragglers to Camp Yale. Again my motorcycle came into use to visit these distant Military Policemen.

On Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion received orders to entrain at a rail siding in the Winchester yard. My mother was alone on Hillhouse Avenue. I had dinner with her and she sent me off with a smile and a cheerful farewell which I shall never forget. Ben English and Arthur Woodruff sat with my in my tent until three in the morning, when dark columns of infantry tramped silently out of camp, bound for the train. They carried me by automobile to our cars where we awaited the arrival of the troops. A crunching of cinders underfoot announced the arrival in the dark of the men of M Company. At 4 A.M. we boarded our train at the Winchester Plant to steam quietly down the main line, where we turned northward toward the Connecticut River Valley. All windows were ordered down. All lights were extinguished (p8) in the cars. Unknown to New Haven we slipped away towards Canada. My final memory of Camp Yale was of Mrs. Locke in the arms of her husband beneath the stars of a warm autumn night. She was never to see him again.

“It's a Long Way to Tipperary.”

Worn out by the strenuous duty of breaking camp during the sleepless last night, I dropped into heavy slumber by the time our train left Cedar Hill, to awake at noon, at Northfield, Mass. By night we were steaming north through Wells River and Newport, Vermont, occasionally cheered by the natives when we stopped at small stations. After a night's sleep in our day-coaches, we awoke in the suburbs of Montreal amidst the peal of Sunday morning church bells. Our train circled the city to end its journey at a quiet pier east of the center. We learned that we were the first armed United States troops to enter this city since the American invasion of 1775-1776. This fact did not disturb the Montrealers for none of them knew that we were there. Nobody saw our troops detrain for a roll-call and a quick march into King Edward Dock where we at once went aboard our waiting transport, the trim little Canada, 9500 tons. She had been in passenger service and carried her regular civilian crew.

At noon with baggage aboard and all men assigned to bunks hawsers were released. As we backed clear of the pier-end, a wounded Canadian soldier in Scottish Kitts, his arm in a sling, stood on top of a pile, shouting, “Give ‘em Hell, Yanks!” He was our farewell committee. Our men roared out one cheer and quietly our ship slipped down the clam blue Saint Lawrence. After an uneventful day we passed Quebec at midnight. About this time our officers made

friends with Captain Chrystie who introduced us to a fine (p9) supply of “Scotch” in a very comfortable smoking cabin. Everybody’s morale was greatly improved and nobody took too much.

At 9 A.M. on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup>, we passed the mouth of The Saguenay midst dozens of small whales, and coasted along the Gaspé shore. On the following morning we were out of sight of land but passed the Magdelena Islands at sunset. The 19<sup>th</sup> was rough. We tossed and heaved off the Nova Scotia coast to the great discomfort of the infantry men. Late in the afternoon we passed through steel submarine nets in the narrows of the Halifax harbor. Passing two British cruisers and a half-dozen transports brown with cheering Americans, we dropped anchor in a superb basin above the city. For forty-eight hours we lay at anchor awaiting other ships to join our convoy. One by one vessels entered this port, greeted by a tumult of cheers. One vessel carried a wild set of New Zealanders who had been aboard for over sixty days. They were an undisciplined lot, weary of the sea. One ship’s boat from their vessel was rowed around the Canada. Several of our men swapped hats with their distant allies before our officers could interfere. The rakish anzac hats, turned up on one side, were worn by some of our men for many weeks before they could be replaced.

Our ships were all European and culled from many seas, as their names clearly indicated: Mongolian, Orita, Orissa, Rualina, Carpathian, Canada, Carmania, Ionian, Kroonland, Achises, Miltiades, Themistocles, and Victorian. The latter was a converted cruiser, carrying heavy guns behind secret ports in her black, orange, and blue camouflaged sides. Every ship carried a six-inch (p10) stern gun and a British guncrew, for submarines were very active around England. Some of the ships had a black hull painted on a gray background to make them appear as though they were moving in the opposite direction from their true bow. Under gray skies we lay at anchor until September 21<sup>st</sup>. No shore leaves were allowed, as the New Zealanders routed the Halifax police in a sharp battle. To quote from my diary: “At 4:00 P.M. the engines on all transports began to turn, and in single file the silent gray boats head out to sea through the nets. Wild cheers from the Carmania, alive with Yanks as we go past her. Rousing cheers and “The Star Spangling Banner” from the two British cruisers at anchor in the narrows. A stirring departure which brings a lump to one’s throat and makes one glad to be alive. Outside the harbor our fourteen ships divide into three files and quietly head eastward through a list mist. By night just the glean of shaded lights here and there indicate the passing of 20,000 soldiers.”

“Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>. Smooth sea, dashes of rain. Convoy scatters over ocean on approaching a schooner at evening.

Sept 23<sup>rd</sup>. Rough seas make it necessary to cancel church service. Too many sick men.

Sept 25<sup>th</sup>. Quiet sea. 248 mile run. Concert in saloon tonight. Sept 26. Heavy roll. Sports on deck for men. Tug-of-war, boxing. Target practice by cruiser on our right. Columns of white spray rise as shells strike near the target, a cask.

Sept 27<sup>th</sup>. Warm rain. Conduct boxing bouts on slippery deck. Cruiser has target practice four miles north of convoy.

Sept 28<sup>th</sup>. Nearing Ireland. Course decidedly to South. Calm sea. Boldt and Cap. Whitney have wrestling (p11) match. Gas school in smoking room, followed by Scotch. Daily stand-to at boat stations for each company at 11 A.M. All men in life-preservers.”

On September 29<sup>th</sup> at noon a plume of black smoke appeared on the eastern horizon. Soon eight torpedo destroyers rushed up to us at twenty-five knots, dashing here and there on our flanks in a welter of spray. Now the submarines might do their worst. At least we could count on friendly hands to rescue any who swam. Of these boats two were American and the balance British. As a full moon added to our visibility at night, all men were ordered to sleep on deck. It was difficult to move without stepping on somebody.

September 30<sup>th</sup>. Two weeks aboard and no land yet. We were reported to be in the "danger zone" off Ireland. Destroyers wove in and out among our ships, and zig-zagged incessantly ahead.

October 1<sup>st</sup>. No land sighted. We saw a few trawlers dragging for mines. At night two light ships were passed as we entered Mersey River.

On October 2<sup>nd</sup> we anchored off smoky Liverpool. Gulls screeched overhead. American destroyers lay alongside. At 8:00 A.M. we docked at Princess Wharf and immediately disembarked after sixteen pleasant days on our fine ship. A Boy Scout proved my first welcome and took my mail to the Post Box.

### Rolling Down to Le Havre.

At noon a troop train of 3<sup>rd</sup> class coaches rattled out of Liverpool, bound for Southampton by way of Birmingham and Oxford. It bore the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry whose members were overjoyed to be ashore again, and greatly amused by the soprano shrieks of our little engine. All afternoon we looked out at trim farms and hedge-rows. (p12) The English were not over enthusiastic about our passage as troop trains were an old, old subject to them. At midnight we detrained on the docks at Southampton to hike for miles through a pitch black night to our first "Rest Camp." Here our men crept into small conical tents to sleep on the ground, closely packed together. The "officers" went into one shed, the "lieutenants" into another, for the "leftenants" under British rules, were far inferior to captains. All meals at this camp were alike; tea, bread and apple jelly.

We found that our men, at liberty, got along too well with British girls, and as a result enjoyed frequent first-fights with British escorts. We had more trouble with the inhabitants during one night in England than in 300 nights across the channel.

On the next morning at 9:00 I left the 4<sup>th</sup> platoon back to the docks where at noon we boarded the ancient British cattle ship "Courtfield" bound for Le Havre. She had steel decks which made our hob-nailed shoes act as roller-skates. It was fun to slide in port, but at 5 P.M. when we pulled out from behind the Isle of Wight, we slid 30 feet at a time whenever we let go of the rail. How she rolled! Her tall stack threshed back and forth in wild gravitations. The captain picked me to command a periscope shooting guard of 30 infantry men. We were posted in the extreme bow with orders to shoot any moving object in the water. "Just to splarsh the 'scope so the blighters can't see us." We were well "splarshed" by the first roller, which came aboard solid green, washing my bewildered men down the scuppers amidst shouts of dismay. Wet and seasick they were ordered below after piling their rifles on the boatdeck where the captain ordered me to remain all night. (p13) A blast of the whistle was to call my men for more periscope shooting should the need arise. What a night! Black as pitch. No guard rails, and the

deck slanting several times a minute at unbelievable angles as the old tub rolled her lower decks under in a cross, a very cross sea. Striving to prevent my rifles from slipping overboard, I stretched my blanket over them, and tried to sleep. They made a very poor mattress, and startled me from time to time by sliding near the open edge with an easy gliding motion. Luckily I escaped going overboard and there was no call for target work at anytime. I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. At dawn the French coast arose before us, but we could not enter port for a number of hours as the tide was low. As my men came on deck for a breakfast of tea I was forced to laugh at their remarkable appearance. They had tried to sleep in cattle stalls still wet with fresh white-wash. This floury material had transferred itself to their uniforms with a grip like glue. It would not brush off so I proudly led a white-washed platoon down the gang-plank to the great amusement of several hundred German prisoners who stopped their freight handling to watch the Americans disembark. Twenty-two days out from New Haven we landed in France to enter another rest-camp and to enjoy more tea. That night Major Beebe, Boldt and myself celebrated our arrival by a real diner at the famous Tortoni Restaurant, surrounded by scores of French officers and their wives – (?). Leaving the rest-camp at 1 A.M. on the sixth we entrained behind another soprano engine for an unknown destination.

### Billets in the Vosges.

All night we idled along at ten miles an hour, (when we moved) so dawn of the seventh found us in Rouen, going towards Paris which we passed at 4 P.M. after glimpsing the Eiffel (p14) Tower in the distance. At nightfall we crossed the first Marne battlefield near Meaux, seeing our first soldiers' graves marked by small wooden crosses. Coffee was served our men at Bar-sur-Aube. Again we crept towards the East, spending a second night in our crowded compartments. Attempts to sleep in the baggage racks overhead proved impractical.

On Sunday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, we crawled through Neuf Chateau, Vosges, in time to see part of the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry gathered for church services in the fields. On the last steep grade, our train broke in half when an end tore out of my car, but no damage was done to the occupants. At noon we detrained in the valley beneath our new home, a tiny one-street hamlet called Certilleux by the French and Certilloo by our men.

Detraining at a small station our men shouldered their heavy packs to march along a tree-lined highway in a beautiful green valley, flanked by rolling hills. It was just such a valley as one would find in northern Connecticut, but the natives were decidedly different. Before our company marched 300 yards we were accompanied by sixty small boys and girls, many of them in wooden shoes. They had come scurrying down from the village shouting "Vive les Americains, les Americains." They thought we were all cowboys, and eyed us as though we were zebras just out of the zoo.

Swinging off the main road we doubled back up a steep hill into tiny Certilleux, a cluster of plastered houses with pink tiled roofs. Sundry cows retreated as we advanced. Chickens scurried behind a hundred manure heaps. Wizen farmers in black aprons peered out from doorways to see the Americans arrive. They were not as vociferous as their children for after all we were 1200 foreigners invading their homes and barns in this little settlement of 800 (p15) souls. Furthermore all of their younger men were at War and fully half the homes were

tenanted by lonely wives or widows, for Death had laid a heavy hand on the men of each French home. Under the direction of Paul Valle, who had met us, we dropped a squad off at every barn we passed. Each man climbed a ladder into a hayloft, dropped off his pack, and there he was, quartered with the hens and cows. Within one-half hour the men were at home among new neighbors. At the foot of the hill was a half completed wooden barrack for the officers, a low wooden building like a bathhouse, minus tar-paper. The wind blew thru it so strongly as to occasionally extinguish a candle on my soap-box table. Bennie Boldt and I moved into a tiny cell together. The captains were all quartered comfortably in houses in the village.

Our first task was to muster men to set up our kitchens. Unfortunately all of our pots and kettles had been left temporarily in Liverpool. Rolling-kitchens were not yet available. Gathering rocks we plastered them with mud making V-shaped enclosures. I then sent a man to the village blacksmith for some iron bars to lay across these stone walls. My man could not speak French, but soon reappeared with the iron rim of an old wagon wheel. This we broke and straightened to support our only pots, corned-beef tins. We also built chimneys of tins placed on top of one another and buttressed with stiff mud. No sooner had we completed this most awful stove than the blacksmith appeared, demanding hundreds of francs (some \$18.00) for his rim, which my man had stolen! Such a torrent of vivid French poured forth as to bewilder us. A French officer finally appeased him.

Between October 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> we gradually grew accustomed (p16) to mud, manure, cows, and more mud. Going to Neufchateau I purchased a baby's bathtub as a stew pot. Each day we climbed to a plateau above the village to drill with a company of French infantry in horizon-blue uniforms. Lack of a common language was a barrier to quick-learning, but our men got along well with their new instructors.

On the morning of Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> practically all of our officers departed by truck to Neufchateau where we entrained to attend Officer's School at Gondre-court, 25 miles to the north. Descending from the train in a deluge of rain we placed our baggage in an open truck and set out for the school, expecting comfortable quarters.

About a mile from town we were dumped by a roaring brook, and told to move into some forlorn wooden barracks which stood in six inches of mud across the stream, and as there was no bridge we waded the stream, carrying our small trunks. We set up our cots on the mud floor, which was so soft that each cot immediately sank nearly out of sight. A small stream ran thru one end of the building. It was a very cold day. To get lunch we again waded the stream and splashed thru a half mile of slippery mud to the mess hall. Returning to our muddy shed I build a fire of green wood in a small stove, which had no draught. Blinded by smoke we were forced to extinguish the fire and roll up in blankets to keep warm. That night to everybody's joy Ben Boldt fell out of his cot into the brook which ran under it. He was wearing pyjamas which were matted with mud. Poor Ben.

On the following day rifles were issued to all of us and under a smart young army officer we wheeled and slipped in the mud in "close order" drill. As some of us wore rubber boots, we did not resume West Pointers. Captain (p17) Freeland's boots were too big for him. When ordered to "mark time" his feet moved up and down in his boots, which did not move as they were glued in the mire. When asked by the wise lieutenant why he did not "mark time"

Freeland said he was “marking time.” We enjoyed teasing this lieutenant on other mornings by correcting his orders from the real reank without moving our lips.

Manual of arms in sticky mud brought new troubles for the stock of each rifle brought up a mass of mire the size of a baseball. This would be transferred to the right hand at “right shoulder” and then would be smeared over the sights on further commands. It was very hard to keep our rifles clean. The School was made up of 200 infantry and machine-gun officers. The course lasted six weeks, grounding us in bombing, bayonet, gas, sniping, trench construction and similar valuable lines of work. Gondre Court was near enough to the front to enable us to see some battles between opposing aeroplanes, and to hear the distant thunder of artillery fire north of Toul.

On Friday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, a black stormy night, I went to Nancy with Sam Tyler on a three day leave. It happened that the Germans were making an air raid on England that night with a number of Zeppelins. Returning by Nancy they dropped a number of bombs near the railroad station just as we stepped out of a lightless train into a strange black city. Seeking a hotel we nearly plunged into a canal. Not a soul was in the streets for it was past midnight. After an hour's search we plodded into a dark hotel and flashed our pocket electric lights, to find the broken lathing of the ceiling hanging in our faces, all windows missing and two inches of plaster on the floor, for a bomb (p18) had exploded in this hotel earlier in the evening. Leaving luckless Hotel France we crossed the dark Place Centrale to the Hotel Thiers where we secured a room on the top floor.

Hardly had we turned in when the city's church bells rang an alarm, and resounding crashes deafened our ears. It was merely a battery of three-inch guns firing at another Zeppelin from the front of the Hotel. Until we learned this fact Sam and I had decided that every bomb was landing in our immediate vicinity. Long gleaming fingers swept the clouds as a dozen powerful searchlights sought the Zeppelin. At length we saw a slender needle battling the storm at a great height directly overhead. It was a little risky to stick one's head out of the window, as descending fragments of anti-air craft shell struck showers of sparks from sidewalks and pavements, falling with the tinkle of heavy glass.

I learned later that one Zeppelin failed to return to Germany on that occasion. Descending in a crippled condition, it was captured intact, together with its crew, by a stout-hearted old Frenchman of Bourbonne-les-Bains, who had gone rabbit hunting at dawn. This old fellow was the hero of the Vosges for months. I met him later in the summer. On the following morning we found that aerial bombs had caused much havoc near our hotel. Going out in search of wool clothing we had our shopping broken up by a day-time bombing trip of a hostile aeroplane. Iron shutters on all shops were instantly loqwews, plunging interiors into darkness.

During the remaining weeks at Gondrecourt little of interest occurred. We drilled hard from dawn to dark, breaking the monotony of life by an occasional singing bout at Ben Boldt's billet by the Petit Pont. One day (p19) we were drawn up for inspection by Marshall Joffre, a portly white-haired general in a long blue cape. We were glad of the chance to see the victor of the Battle of the Marne in 1914. How different a type than the vain-glorious German Generals!

Just before Thanksgiving I returned to M Company at Certilleaux to pass a number of days digging trenches in the rocky Noncourt Sector. This was back-breaking work due to our inability to avoid underground ledges.

On Thanksgiving day we had turkey from America together with "pie" (mostly crust) our cooks working all night in preparing a special dinner.

I found the men short of pay, cigarettes and wool clothing, notably sox. One little fellow in the rear rank stood shivering in deep snow one morning with tears in his eyes, his face blue with cold. I found that he owned no sox. Luckily the Red Cross saved the situation by a general shipment of knitted sox. Thus the women at home helped when our clothing was insufficient.

I was now comfortably quartered with Lieutenants Smith and Boyd in the tiny farmhouse of Madame Laval, a wrinkled old lady whose son and sole support had been killed in battle. Each evening we would sit on stools with the Madame and her daughter Marguerite, conversing in abominable French. Occasionally I would pass an evening with Captain Locke.

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, I received orders from Division Headquarters to move forty miles to the south to Langres where Dn Strickland and I were to act as instructors at an Infantry School for Sergeants of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 42<sup>nd</sup> divisions. I said farewell to many friends in M Company, packed my baggage and started off alone to a (p20) strange town.

Langres was an old Roman fortress, perched on a lofty hill-top and reached by an inclined railroad, which climbed 200 feet from the plain below. I was assigned to quarters in a humble cottage #20 Avenue Turenne, to the south of the town. My new landlady, Madame Pell, was a laundress. Here Dan Strickland joined me for a stay of eight weeks.

Dan and I were placed with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Company under Captain George Wellage of Texas (later killed in action). He was a fine straight-forward officer whom we both admired. Our student body was made up of 500 non-commissioned officers whom we were to train as lieutenants of infantry. It was a European Plattsburg, made up of the finest body of men in France. A large majority of them were over six feet in height and graduates of universities. They were quartered in an old fortress known as Turenne Barracks, a somber quadrangle of gray stucco dormitories four stories high, grouped around a snowy parade ground.

We worked hard, for Major Pike, our commanding officer, was determined to weed out the physically weak. Reveille was at 6 A.M. Drill went on steadily from 7:30 until 11:30 and from 1:00 P.M. until dark. Each evening the men studied by candle-light under instructors. No matter what the weather might be we struggled thru snow and mud in daily mock battles, aided and criticized by French instructors. Each morning we started the day by close-order drill on a sheet of ice in the main yard. The men tumbled by the dozen in ranks, only to be walked upon by their more sure-footed comrades. Later in the day we tramped for miles over the snow in battle formations, advancing against imaginary machine guns, then throwing ourselves prone in several inches of wet snow. For a (p21) month we worked feverishly at infantry combat practice passing on to the men all that we had learned at Gondrecourt. We dig a complete set of trench in a water-logged field, relieved companies in these trenches and charged with bayonets fixed. Again and again we executed tedious tasks, only to be severely criticised by our superiors. It was a hard school. Hard on the men and hard on the instructors. One of our means of hardening the men and shortening the lives of the instructors was to run up every hill we approached, no matter how high it was. During these dashes up the long grade into Langres I

have seen many men fall on the highway utterly exhausted to lie there unattended while the rest of us strove to keep going at top speed. As we were required to report for certain roll-calls Sunday, little relaxation was possible from week to week.

On the lighter side of life I should state that the instructors were free nearly every evening to enjoy the nightlife at Langres, which consisted of hilarious gatherings in tiny cafes. Dan and I usually had a hurried lunch at the café of Madam Blanche where we tested at least sixty kinds of cordials and laughed at the vain attempts of a score of poilus to make love to the proprietress.

On Christmas day Majors Rau, Beebee and Taylor, Lieutenants Donald North, Strickland and myself enjoyed a fine roast goose at Madame Clairet's, 2 Rue des Chavannes. Our talk was largely of New Haven and of what lay ahead of us. It was a very pleasant occasion. We also attended a wonderful Christmas Eve dinner, given forty American officers by fifty French officers at their club. Champagne flowed freely. We formed a long line with our (p22) hands on the shoulders of the officer ahead to perform a lively snake dance in and out among our tables to the festive strains of "Madelon." A "Blue Devil" alpins chasseur bellowed so loudly in my ear as to affect my hearing temporarily.

On New Year's Eve I was given permission to return to the 102<sup>nd</sup> where I spent a last night with my friend Ben Boldt in Landaville-eu-Haut, popularly known as "upper Klondike." We tramped miles thru a foot of snow to Certilleux to celebrate the New Year's arrival in a tiny café, popping the corks from many bottles of green champagne at fifty cents a bottle. At three in the morning Boldt and I wandered back to Klondike for a good rest. This was my last meeting with my truest friend; a man who had reenlisted to please me in spite of the passion of his German father; a man who was shot thru the head in the following July while flying low near Chateau Thierry, to assist an infantry regiment. Ben was clean and strong, a remarkably efficient and popular officer.

On returning to Langres intensive drill and larger mock battles were carried on under real machine gun fire. Thus we were accustomed to the crack of bullets overhead. In one of these actions trench mortars also fired over our heads into a frozen lake, throwing blocks of ice high into the air. We were later presented with a bill to cover \$50.00 worth of carp, gathered from the lake by the natives after this battle. On this day at Fort de Peigney I first met "Machine-Gun" Parker, soon to be made colonel of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. It was he who directed the fire of twenty-five machine guns over our heads when our infantry candidates attacked over snowy fields.

(p23) January produced weary weeks of drill amid deepening snow and driving freezing mists. Each day on the high plateau we faced biting winds as we pushed our infantry platoons into combat against one another. Gradually our number of candidates was reduced by sickness or failure to pass satisfactory examinations. On January 15<sup>th</sup> Dan Strickland was ordered back to the regiment, leaving me alone in my billet. I missed Dan greatly as he always saw the bright side of any incident, and had been my constant companion thru weeks of cold attacks on imaginary enemies. I never knew how he managed to make his escape from the Candidates School, but I envied his good fortune.

(p24)

## GRENADE ACCIDENT, FRANCE.

Philip H. English

On the morning of Saturday, January 28, 1918, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Company, Army Candidates School, Langres, was ordered to proceed a mile south of the citadel for practice with live hand grenades of the heavy defensive type.

Captain George Wellage, 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf. (killed at Chateau Thierry) was in command, and I was second in command, the Company being composed of 250 sergeant candidates for commissions for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> divisions A.E.F.

We tramped south through six inches of snow over Caesar's military road to the practice trenches, only to receive orders to march on to the new grenade pits just south of te Bois d'Amour for practice with live grenades.

As we marched into the practice trenches, we passed a squad of poilus who were sitting in the snow, jamming the fuses into the heavy iron defensive grenades we were to use.

Each grenade weighted about 1 ½ pounds and was supposed to break into small bits of iron five seconds after leaving the thrower's hand. The death range of these grenades was supposed to be 25 yards so that the thrower was compelled to stay in his hole and keep his head down until each grenade had exploded. These grenades were of the heavy cast-iron defensive type used in fighting off hostile raiding parties.

Wellage took the right hand pit and I took the left pit, the company remaining a hundred yards to the rear in a deep trench. Two men at a time came up the communicating trench to our pits bringing three grenades apiece to throw from the front line position.

(p25) All went well for half an hour. Major Pike sending the men up at intervals and each man hurling his three grenades over the parapet of the six foot trench in which we stood. The racket was tremendous, each grenade shaking the group and flinging large pieces of rock back into our trench as it exploded. One man was a little nervous and flung his grenade straight into the air, but we both ducked around a projection in the trench before the explosion. Green men were very apt to do this with their first live grenades. Some of the men were nervous and I had to quiet them by joking with them before allowing them to throw. One of Wellage's men let a grenade slip out sideways from his cold fingers and it exploded just over my parapet. The resulting rain of rock made me wish that I had my steel helmet on in place of my felt campaign hat.

Towards the middle of the morning one of my best sergeants came up to throw his grenades. His first two throws were perfect and by jumping up as he threw I saw that his shots were landing squarely in the shell-hole target sixty feet in front. This man had been a locomotive engineer and was cool and steady.

His third grenade left his hand in good shape and without any premature ignition. I was watching each grenade and knew from previous experience with bombs the exact instant when the fuses sputtered and lighted.

About eight feet from the thrower's hand and while over the front wall of the trench the grenade exploded prematurely. The fuse was practically instantaneous. I was just standing on tip toe to watch the flight of the grenade when it blossomed in mid-air with a thunderous roar. I can see it unfolding even now.

(p26) The rush of gas flipped me off my feet and boosted me around a projection of the trench into the next fire-bay where I landed on the back of my neck and completed a very pretty backwards somersault. I jumped to my feet with ears ringing from the concussion, shock each arm and leg to see if they were still in working order, and laughed hysterically on finding that I could still walk. Then I dove around the corner through dense smoke to see what had happened to my pupil.

The poor fellow was lying on his side in the snowy trench but working his legs as though they were doing a hundred yard dash and shouting that he was killed. He had been hard hit in the arms and legs and practically knocked out by the shock. I noticed that his right hand was shattered so that the bones were protruding through the joints of the fingers. I knelt beside him and told him he was not dead as he was yelling too loud for a dead man, and then I pulled out my handkerchief to bind his hand. I could hardly see what I was doing as blood was running off my nose and chin from gashes in my face. I felt as though I had been hit by two dozen ball bats in every part of my body and limbs.

Soon Major Pike and my Captain peeked over the edge of the trench, expecting to find a couple of dead soldiers. I saluted, told the, that the accident was entirely beyond my control, and that we were not badly hurt. Major Pike lost his head at seeing such a bloody pair and ordered a man to take his car to summon an ambulance at the hospital a mile and a half away. My man was getting faint, and blood was beginning to trickle out of both my coat sleeves as well as out of one boot top, so I asked him if I could take my man and rush (p27) him to the hospital in the touring car.

He agreed that the plan would save time, so I had a couple of men carry the injured man to the car, and I held him in my arms on the way to the town trying to cheer him up. My teeth pained me terribly in the cold air and I found out that a couple of my front incisors had been knocked out by a piece of the bomb.

I soon had my men on the operating table in the citadel and held his hand while they gave him a shot of morphine to quiet him. I will never forget the surprised looks on their faces of those nurses and doctors as we walked into the operating room, fairly drenched in blood.

While the doctors were probing a big gash in the other fellow's thigh, the room began to whirl, and I slipped into a chair just in time to avoid dropping to the floor. A nurse undressed me and I found that my white underwear had turned scarlet, due to wounds in my nose, cheek, collar bone, left forearm, right biceps, right thigh and left shin. After my wounds were dressed, I was mighty glad to crawl into bed and had to laugh with the other boys in my ward when I looked in a glass and could only see my eyes and mouth through countless stripes of sticking plaster.

The other man was at once rushed to Chaumont for an operation to save his arm. He was hard hit.

On January 30<sup>th</sup> I was discharged from the Langres hospital and told to rest for a few days in my room at Place Jean d'Arc, Langres. January 31<sup>st</sup>, my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, a high fever set in, due to my infected wounds. By nightfall I was light-headed and barely able to stagger back to the hospital.

(p28) On February 1<sup>st</sup> I was rushed thirty miles to Chaumont by a U.S. ambulance. On February 2<sup>nd</sup> Doctor McWilliams placed me on the operating table, administered ether, and extracted particles of bomb and uniform from my left arm and left leg.

A few days later a dentist removed the nerve from my shattered tooth.

On February 10<sup>th</sup> reinfection occurred and both my wounds were reopened.

Paralysis of left fingers, due to severed nerve, was corrected by a splint which held my hand back at right angles to the forearm for a month.

Thanks to the never-failing kindness of my nurse, Miss Agnes Dunn of Boston, and to the splendid services rendered by the Roosevelt Hospital Unit I was enabled to return to my regiment in the line north of Toul on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

(p29)

#### IMPRESSIONS OF THE TOUL SECTOR.

On March 25<sup>th</sup> greatly weakened from blood-poisoning and wearing a sling on my nearly useless left arm, I was discharged from Base Hospital and allowed three weeks sick-leave.

On hearing that invisible aeroplanes were bombing Paris from a great height, I set out for that city by rail to learn what was really happening. I found that Gare de l'Est overflowing with a panic stricken group of refugees fleeing from the shells of "Big Bertha" the long-range gun which was scattering its fire over the city at irregular intervals. After spending two days with my friend Clare Mendell at the University Club, I tired of the city's activity and decided to head for Nice by way of Tours, Bordeaux, Toulouse and Marseilles, which I visited in the order named. I had a pleasant stay in Nice from April 4 to 14<sup>th</sup>, meeting a number of wounded American officers with whom I took trips to Monte Carlo, Menton and Ventimille. My cousin Ben Harwood was in Nice for a few days with me. Turning northward again I broke my journey at Tarascon and at Dijon, before returning to Base Hospital 15 for my baggage. At Chaumont I met my friend Jack Wallace, Lieutenant of M Company, on leave following a severe gassing at Chemin des Dames.

He informed me that my division was now located at Creil, north of Paris. Following this false clew I rode into Paris to be told that the Yankee Division was north of Toul in the front line.

I reached Toul at nightfall of April 18<sup>th</sup> to pass a very comfortable night at the Y.M.C.A. Next morning (p30) I boarded a narrow-gage railroad for a ride of twelve miles, descending from the train at the rail-head, Menil la Tour. Hailing the driver of a mule-team I climbed onto the seat with him for a ride of two miles to the Supply Company 102<sup>nd</sup> at Sanzey. Here my friend Mike Connors invited me to have supper with him in a shed. We were in a wood about five miles from the front line. The country was flat and quite heavily wooded. Aside from the occasional boom of artillery and the frequent passage of aeroplanes one would not have dreamed that the front was near at hand. The country was little damaged for the Germans has never advanced to this point. Broad bands of wire on the reverse slope of the hills told of plans for a warm welcome at some future date should the enemy break through.

After supper I telephoned Emerson Taylor, regimental adjutant, to report for duty. On learning that I was returning from the hospital he told me to stay at Sanzey for the night as all

was quiet on the front, to get a good sleep and to await his instructions as he wanted to talk with Colonel Parker before assigning me to a company.

All was quiet on the front, but not for long. At that every moment 3600 Germans and 200 canons were massed opposite Seicheprey waiting to attack at dawn. "All quiet on the front." Many a man was never to see dawn the following day.

Shortly after midnight while I slept in a shed the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion relieved the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion in the front line, Captain Locke staying with D Company as was usual to instruct Captain Freeland in the defense of his new area.

(p31) At 3:05 A.M., April 20<sup>th</sup>, a deluge of shell-fire dropped on the newly arrived front-line companies, tearing gaping holes in wire entanglements, half-leveling the trenches and burying some of the men alive in dug-outs. Close on the heels of this barrage, hidden by a dense ground mist, some 200 Germans equipped with flame-throwers and light machine guns, overran the Sibille trench, and entered Seicheprey. Fighting against this first mad rush Captain Locke was shot thru the head. One hundred other Americans died and 130 were taken prisoner. A second German raiding party stormed Remiere Wood, 600 yards to the east.

At Sanzey we were awakened by the roar of battle and by bursts of shells in our woods, for the back areas also were shelled to delay the arrival of reserves. There came immediate calls for reserve ammunition; for hours we loaded trucks and wagons with supplies. With the coming of daylight our infantry was able to drive the enemy out of Seicheprey. The Germans made no further attempts to advance. By night they withdrew to their lines, leaving our front-line trench littered with dead and wounded. The orders for this Sector allowed none of our reserve troops to move forward. The men in the front lines had died like heroes, fighting to the last against superior numbers. Companies C. and D. largely made up of New Haven men suffered the greatest losses.

At night came a call for coffins, of which we have a large supply. They were a folding type made in the United States. As F. Company's wagon went forward into the night I climbed aboard with my friend Henry Dorr, to seek M Company for the adjutant had been too much occupied to send me to any company. In the dusk we rolled along by the Bois de la Reine, following the big loads of coffins. It (p32) was a jolly procession: to add to my enjoyment Harry showed me holes in the same canvas top of the wagon where shell fragments had whizzed through the night before.

At 9 P.M. the wagon left me in Ansauville where M Company's kitchen was located. I might as well have stepped off in a coal-mine so far visibility was concerned. Leaving my blanket roll in the gutter I headed for a faint light behind a church. It was the opening of an abri, where lived Dugout Nelson, Town Major. From Lieutenant Nelson I learned that my company's kitchen was in a barn nearby. Leaving the warm dug-out I stumbled down a dark lane to the rolling kitchen where I was warmly welcomed by a new set of cooks. On asking for the old cooks I learned that they had died as a result of heavy gassing near Soissons. My men offered to show me to an available room in the Town Hall. As I dragged my bedding roll into a dark corner they told me of Captain Locke's death that morning. I was completely stunned by the news for the Captain had been my very close friend.

On the following day the 230 men of M. Company returned to Ansauville from their reserve position near Beaumont. All retired in dreary barns or deserted homes for they had stood up under heavy shell-fire for hours.

Ansauville was a semi-wrecked village with muddy streets. It quartered a handful of civilians and two companies of infantry. An occasional shell dropped on the town.

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> I had my first active duty in charge of a day-time wiring party which was to construct barbed wire entanglements in a dense wood southwest of Beaumont. With 100 men I marched towards Beaumont ridge, keeping my (p33) men in a long single file with twenty foot intervals to avoid shellfire for the German balloons were always looking for targets. I soon found that my long confinement in the hospital had snapped my reserve strength for I was barely able to reach the woods. Here engineers awaited us with long stakes and heavy reels of wire. The stakes were driven into the marshy ground by large wooden mallets, the driver standing on a box to wield his maul effectively. Other men carried the heavy wire back and forth between the new stakes weaving an effective barrier among the trees. All thru the day we kept up this work, lurching on dry bread. By sunset I was too exhausted to make the long march home, so I sent my men back under a sergeant and started toward Mandres. Here I hoped to find a wagon going to Ansauville. Fortunately Chaplain Petty was passing in his Ford. He spied my weary expression, had heard that I was in bad shape, and saved me from dropping on the road by driving me back to my quarters.

On April 24<sup>th</sup> a group of new recruits arrived who did not know how to load their riffles or to fix bayonets. I tried to give them some bayonet drill in a slippery field and was stabbed in the palm of the hand when one of them became a little too lively and slipped near me. The battalion first-aid men stitched up my hand in a few minutes, enabling me to resume drill.

On the following day Paul Valle came to same me from nearby Brigade Headquarters. He did not seem to like my appearance, but made no mention of a possible change of duty.

(p34)

#### BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS.

On April 28<sup>th</sup> a motorcyclist brought orders for me to report for temporary duty to Headquarters 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry brigade in the nearby Bois de la Reine. This summons came as a complete surprise, but packing my haversack I walked down the road to see what had happened. I found Headquarters to be a group of four little one-story tar-paper shacks in a greenwood which was just breaking into foliage, a heavenly looking spot after Ansauville. Here I was warmly welcomed by General Traub and Valle and assigned duties as assistant to the Brigade Adjutant. From the Generals' hut wires rant to the 101<sup>st</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, 102<sup>nd</sup> Field artillery, to the neighboring brigades and Division Headquarters. These wires directed the combat activities of some 12,000 men. We also had a small radio, which seldom worked. The Headquarters group included, Valle and Hart, aides; Lanigan, artillery lieutenant; Hardie, Signal Lieutenant; Saint Croix, French liaison agent; Major Wade, Brigade Adjutant, and myself; a score of unlisted men acted as switchboard operators, couriers, map workers, wagon drivers and cooks.

The duties of infantry officers on the staff were very interesting. We were each assigned a front line and reserve position sector for careful study. My particular sectors were Remiere and Jury Wood. These sectors I mapped on a large scale, showing each platoon's location and also the positions of each dug-out, ammunition dump and machine gun. Contours indicated the lay of the ground. It was the general's plan to use his sector lieutenants to aid him in handling the details in each sector whenever offensive or defensive moves (p35) became necessary. By visiting the area in the daytime to study the dispositions of troops we could largely supplement the general's observations in each zone. This plan had considerable merit, as it provided the general with more information that he could pick up [only] by repeated visits.

My first visit to the regimental headquarters of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry at Beaumont was made with Paul Valle, one bright spring morning. As we approached this shattered headquarters town on its commanding ridge, a couple of light shells whizzed overhead to land on battery positions at our rear. This sensation of being underfire was so new to me that I dropped to the ground long after the shells had passed an involuntary reaction. This amused Paul greatly so he gave me the soldiers usual creed, "You never hear the one that hits you, so why worry."

At Beaumont we entered the rear door of a large dwelling, half-shot away, with gaping holes in its upper walls, for a pleasant visit with Colonel Parker, who was smoking his mammoth pipe. I also chatted with Orville Petty who was sorting the personal effects of a number of men killed at Seichprey. He turned over to me some small personal belongings of Captain Locle, which I later delivered to Mrs. Locke. As on most mornings shellfire was so light at Beaumont that the Headquarters force was enjoying a sun-bath at the rear of their quarters.

Two days later I returned to Beaumont in the afternoon to make my first inspection of the front line. Leaving the protection of the tumble-down walls on Beaumont's main street I followed a man of the 102<sup>nd</sup> who was going to Seicheprey by the main bayou. We entered a trench at the (p36) east end of the village to follow its twists and turns down a long slope. Just as we started down this trench the Germans dropped a half-dozen shells onto its upper end, very close to us. Fortunately these burst in the open, but we were showered with rocks and gravel which bounded harmlessly off of our "tin" hats. At the foot of this hill the trench came out into the open in a little ravine where, shielded from enemy fire our reserve companies lived in deep dug-outs, ready at any time to man a series of nearby trenches. This was the main resistance line. It being broad daylight few of the garrison were in evidence as most of the men slept all day. Swinging into the protecting cover of Mother Earth we followed a more s-zag trench alongside the road to Seicheprey. As we approached the village my guide told me to hurry along, crouching low, as the trench had been nearly leveled in the recent battle. This gave enemy snipers a chance to fire at passers-by. These snipers must have fired at very long range, but were good shoots. I scurried after my fast-moving guides, two rifle bullets cracked by at short intervals, kicking up the dirt the dirt in a bank just behind my head. Spurred on by this activity I soon caught up with my guide. We entered the main street of Seicheprey. House walls gave sufficient protection here to make movements over the top reasonably safe. Seicheprey looked like a toy store village which has been over-run by elephants. Not a house had windows or roof. Walls were savagely scarred by shell-bursts. Sand-bag walls gave protection to dug-out entrances at battalion and dressing station dug-outs. The street and fields were covered with

debris. Thistles and brambles waist-high covered its neglected gardens. In peace time (p37) 300 people have lived here, but the town had stood practically in the front line for nearly four years. Dominated by nearby Mount Sec it was ruthlessly shelled whenever a German balloon or telescope picked up signs of life in its gaping ruins. At best the town was worth few lives, for it stood in a marshy tract of no military value. General Traub always felt that the front line could have been moved behind the town to the great advantage of it all.

Leaving Seicheprey I tramped alone 600 yards over the top to Remiere Woods, walking near the Sibille trench thru open country. These front line woods were the most lonely tracts of country imaginable. Stumpy trees were reft and split by shell fire. In fact the entire front thald of the woods have been shot away. Tangles of rusty wire wound in and out thru drab thickets. Strands of loose wire caught the passerby. Jumping down into a narrow trench into mud a foot deep, I waded to the Post of Command in the rear of the wood. Here in a stinking little dug-out without any light save a candle, I talked with the Captain of the defending company His chief complaint was that the Germans in the opposing Sonard Woods [handwritten note: after shelled his dugout], but the shells went over our heads to explode about American cannon firing from the Beaumont ridge. In safety we at on the trench edge to observe a half hour of shell fire pass over our heads, for it was seldom the practice of either side to shell front line infantry during the daytime. Such fire merely called forth retaliatory fire which caused wounds or deaths without military advantage to either side. Leaving the dug-out we splashed thru muddy trenches in order that I might learn the full defense plans of this area. Here and there in shallow shelters or under small iron coverings (p38) the men of the company slept soundly on damp blankets, little disturbed by passers-by or swarms of flies. In sharp contract to the concrete trenches of the Germans our boggy trench walls were held up by rotten willow revetments. The pressure of the soil had so pressed in this frail support as to make it necessary to turn sideways to penetrate main trenches. Duckboards floated on pools of water of uncertain depth. It was easily possible to fill hip-boots with mud in some portions of the front line trenches. Peering into the German wire we saw no signs of life.

At sunset I trudged up the boyan to Jury Woods, inspecting a couple of machine gun positions en route. At the top of the hill I stood in the open a moment to get a better idea of the German trenches down below, but moved on very willingly when told that a German machine gun often raked this area. In the gathering twilight I set off across country from the Paris-Metz road toward Mandres, only to strike a wire barrier of great depth which defied penetration. Skirting this for several hundred yards I was again forced back towards the lines by a few small gas-shells which plopped down by a battery just ahead of me. Soon I was back at Mandres, my first visit to the trenches was over.

One feature of life in the Bois de la Reine was the multitude of rats which scurried about our sleeping quarters. My little tar-paper shanty housed a family of six; mother, father and four children. Each morning at dawn they ran out from under my cot for a frolic on the floor, occasionally scrambling up the wall to dash across my blankets. It was always advisable to hang shoes from the ceiling, so (p39) that they would not be gnawed; and to shake blankets before using, for they appreciated the warmth of wool. This army of rats had dwelt in these woods since early in the war and had prospered on war rations. They were too numerous to try to trap.

Of our life in these woods during may and June there was little of interest to narrate. As spring changed to summer living conditions improved. The ground dried. Trees came into full lead. Life was more enjoyable. One afternoon Paul Valle and I hung our uniforms on a barbed wire entanglement by the Rome Pond, and picking our way thru the wire with difficulty enjoyed a good swim, hoping that observers in nearby German balloons would not end our plunge.

During the latter half of May 300 of Major Hickey's raiding party practiced near us the program of the elaborate raid which netted the "million dollar prisoner." As this party started forward with blacked-faces, helmets shielded with burlap and mammoth ball bats, weighted with sections of lead-pipe and studded with spikes we expected great results. However, too much "ranging fire" for the artillery barrage gave away our trick. A couple of car-loads of ammunition, 200 machine guns forming Parker's Box barrage, and 300 raiders produced one puny prisoner from the banks of the Rupt de Mad near Laheyville.

Early in June I spent a day in the trenches north of Haigelle Wood, occupied by the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry. This area lay one-half mile to the east of Jury Wood. Thanks to a continuation of Beaumont Ridge I was able to ride my motorcycle up to Battalion Headquarters and then to strike across open fields thru a French soldiers' cemetery to the (p40) headquarters of the front line company which was located in a splendid dug-out directly under the Paris road. Here was trench life at its best: Comfortable dry quarters, glass windows (away from the enemy) and a highway embankment to stop shells. Yet one had only to climb onto the highway to draw snipers bullets, for the Germans were close at hand.

In mid-afternoon a sergeant took me thru a shallow trench to an observation post of sand-bags on a hummock very near the enemy line, which stretched away below us to the right and left in front of the tiny Bois des Elfes. Anxious to show me everything the sergeant led me out from behind the sand-bags. Outlined against the sky in the afternoon sunlight we instantly drew fire from a German one-pounder somewhere below us. Fortunately the first shell passed just over our heads with an ear-piercing soprano whistle. The next shot lifted a couple of sand-bags from the top of our wall, but by that time we were again behind the bags, as snug as possible, and laughing at our mishap. It was lucky that no heavier shells followed as this post was lightly built. A few nights later this section was raided by the Germans, who were repulsed with heavy loss. A few Americans were killed by shell fire.

That evening I sat for several hours on edge of the Paris road, watching a trench panorama which spread out before me for miles. It was a quiet night on the front, a perfect summer night. As darkness fell veery lights occasionally rose from the trenches illuminating the country for several hundred feet in all directions. Then all would become dark save the stars overhead. Here and there the long rattle of machine guns told of streams of lead pouring (p41) into communicating trenches. Now and then a cannon would boom in our back areas, followed many seconds later by the burst of the shell behind the German lines. It was hard to realize that this narrow belt of world hatred stretched for 400 miles across France and into Belgium. Yet there it was in front of one's eyes, the fruit of 1918 years of Christianity among civilized nations, and no end to this war was in sight.

A few nights later "Windjammer" a mysterious American "gas" colonel fired 1500 drums of gas from trench mortar batteries into a German raiding party, forming just to the left of Jury Wood. We understood that this gassing was "most successful." At any rate the Germans were

stirred to a frenzy of artillery fire which drove French refugees pell-mell out of a dozen villages, resulted in "The Battle of Boucq" when Division Headquarters fled to the drainage ditches and wounded Colonel Shelton, 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry at Royanmeix. One wicked Austrian 88 shell burst over the telephone dug-out at Brigade Headquarters, while a second pierced the Salvation Army tent, sending the "lassies" to the doubtful protection of our tar-paper huts.

The attractive side of life at Brigade Headquarters was the number of visitors who dropped in while passing to and from the front: General Edwards, hale and hearty, always good natured; Colonel Parker, cursing the High Command at Chaumont for sending him rusty bombs; General Passaga, defender of Verdun, laughing at my atrocious French, and Elsie Janis, a ray of sunshine, dancing for thousands of doughboys on improvised stages at a dozen fronts. Nightly we listened to the gossip of the trenches as relayed to us by radio and telephone.

(p42) Towards Paris dark clouds loomed. Near Soissons the Germans broke through to the Marne, cutting the railroad between us and Paris. Alarmists said we would soon be surrounded and "folded-back" into Switzerland. Word came of desperate fighting by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division in Belleau Woods, and of the capture of Cantigny by the gallant First Division. With rumors of relief we prepared for duties in a far bloodier Sector, anticipating yet dreading the excitement of a real battle of which we had yet to learn the real meaning.

On June 26<sup>th</sup> after 80 days in this Toul Sector, birthplace of American Combat Divisions, we were relieved by the 82<sup>nd</sup> United States Division and, with regret at leaving our woodland shacks, motored down to the Toul. One of my last duties was to run out to the little church-yard at Mandres where I placed flowers on the still fresh grave of Captain Locke with sorrow in my heart. His men had cut for his grave a stone marker. Beside him lay other fallen defenders of Seicheprey in a long common grave. \*Footnote. These bodies were later reinterred in the superb American cemetery at Thian court.

The Division's losses in this Sector were as follows:

	April	May	June
Killed	148	167	89
Wounded	504	151	259
Gassed	250	226	259
Missing	162	57	3
	<hr/> 1064	<hr/> 601	<hr/> 1226

## 1918

(p43) June 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> were busy days in the railroad yards at Toul where 26,000 men of the Yankee Division were entraining for duty on an unknown front. For six days the entire division had been billeted in and about this little fortified town to recuperate from 80 days of continuous service in the trenches under Mount Sec, ten miles to the north. Now, under the magic of carefully planned entraining orders, at intervals of 30 minutes, battalions of all kinds, infantry, machine guns, artillery and hospital units, converged at the loading platforms from nearby hamlets. A cloud of dust in the summer sun on a distant hill-side indicating marching

men, a motorcyclist riding out with final instructions, a quick concentration of troops on the raised cement ramps, a hurried unharnessing of horses and mules, a score of wagons rolling onto flat-cars, 500 men stretching out on the straw-covered floors of wooden freight cars, officers climbing into the last car on the train, and with a tooting of a soprano locomotive whistle another troop train would roll off towards Paris. Fifty times in forty-eight hours this brief drama was repeated without interruption from inquisitive German planes which occasionally droned by overhead.

Wearied by numerous duties as motorcycle guide for incoming batallions, I climbed into the officers' car of one of the last trains with Paul Vallee at 4:00 P.M. on June 30<sup>th</sup> and shortly fell fast asleep as our train glided slowly westward over rolling wheat fields bright with scarlet poppies.

Where we were going we did not know. The German armies had recently advanced victoriously within forty miles of Paris. Plunging toward Amiens in March, they (p44) had shattered the British 5<sup>th</sup> Army. Later they had scaled Mount Kemmel overlooking the smoking ruins of Ypres. In May they had driven the dispirited French infantry southward from the Vesle to the Marne by a victorious surprise attack, thereby cutting the main rail line from Paris to Verdun. And General Ludendorff's great "Peace Offensive" was yet to come. Paris was daily shelled by artillery and nightly battered by bombs from German planes. We well knew that our trip westward would be the New England National Guardsmen in the path of the German steam-roller. Our men were cheerful enough but tense with the expectancy of hard-fought battles soon to come.

At dawn on July 1<sup>st</sup> we awoke in the railroad yards east of Paris. Ahead, the gilded dome of Napoleon's Tomb glistened in the sunlight. Near at hand rose the slender tapering form of the Eiffel Tower. The long-anticipated 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade in Paris seemed assured, but not for long. Another engine sized our train and with puerile shrieks of glee from its whistle reversed our direction. Now we were headed eastward again up the bank of the Marne.

Red-roofed villages, linked together by poplar-lined highways, nestled in each sweeping curve of the stream. Farmers reaped beautiful crops of wheat in peaceful fields, yet Chateau Thierry lay just ahead. Belleau Wood was near.

Then signs of war approached. Groups of *ages poilus* were hastily digging machine gun positions at each hilltop. Here and there belts of barbed wire, thirty feet in breadth, stretched up from the shore of the river to distant heights. Beneath the arches of railroad and highway bridges, one could discern kegs of powder, ready "to make these bridges jump" (*faire sauter*) when Ludendorff's mighty forces should again sweep towards Paris.

(p45) At 10:30 A.M. our train reached its destination, Trilport – east of Meaux. A hasty detraining ensued, for huge bomb holes close to the station told of recent aerial visitors. In fact, our unloaded of the train went ahead too rapidly. Due to the fact that the platform was low, we had great difficulty with wagons and horses. Car doors were lifted from hinges and down these steep inclines we slid our wheeled equipment. Now and then a wagon would upset, throwing its load of packs and provisions in confusion on the busy platform.

General Traub's horse caused my downfall. This spirited animal took one look at the crazy gangplank we had improvised, set his ears back, and braced himself on his haunches, resisting the efforts of two men on his bridle. This was no time to argue with a horse, so I put

two men under each haunch and he had to move forward. Squealing and plunging he coasted clear of the car until both hind legs dropped into a crack high above the ground, scraping some skin away. At this moment, much to my consternation, the general appeared and expressed his opinion of our operations in smoking language. Eight perspiring men lifted the outraged steed's hind quarters so that he might slide to the ground.

As soon as my motorcycle clattered down to the platform, General Traub ordered me to find him a headquarters in Villemareuil, some two miles to the south. Anxious to atone for the vigorous manhandling of his mount, I sped up a dusty macadam road under the noon-day sun. Troops in the first village I traversed could not tell me the name of the town they were in, as they had just arrived. After a couple of false turns, I flashed into Villemareuil and commenced the old army game of ousting a Lieutenant (p46) Colonel Livingston (102<sup>nd</sup> Inf.) to make room for the Brigadier. As usual, hot language followed. Just as the Colonel was about to vacate "the God-damned house" he thought of unoccupied Chateau Brinches, a mile to the north, and advised me to speed out and "have a lot" as Dutch Keenan of the Grays would say.

On inspection it looked both good and bad. A solid brick building with spacious grounds, rose gardens, orangerie and stables; but it had been bombed, heavily bombed. Not a pane of glass in its windows, not a slate left on its roof. In fact, the slate roof was scattered all over the garden. Yet in the heat of a July day it looked attractive.

Jumping on my motorcycle I headed off the General's car, which had just passed the gate, and soon the Brigade Headquarters was functioning to perfection in the wrecked chateau. The General sat under a grove of superb trees watching his troops move in. The cooks had a little barnyard of their own. Horses were turned into splendid box stalls, typewriters began to clatter in in superbly furnished but windowless parlors. At such times this was a good war.

In these sumptuous surroundings on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, we made preparations to move the 12,000 men in the brigade when further march orders should arrive. Each night, going to a nearby hilltop, we observed German air raids on Paris and saw the dancing beams of a score of searchlights, vainly feeling among the clouds for the deadly planes.

As the enemy aviators retired in our direction, they would loose their last bombs on the railroad nearby. The quiet of a summer night would suddenly be rent by the or-r-runch of a heavy explosion. Any exposed lights after dark were sure to bring a visit from these death-dealing raiders.

(p47) Ten miles to our east the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was bravely holding Bellaeu Woods and had straightened its line by the dashing capture of Vaux. Two hundred dejected prisoners from this town came trudging down the valley of the Marne, under armed guards, on their way to prison pens.

On July 4<sup>th</sup>, I rode over to the 26<sup>th</sup> Division headquarters at Nanteuil. Going into G-3 (Operations) office with a message for the Chief of Staff, I was interested to observe a large battle map on the wall, and on it three field officers gravely pushing red and blue pins up and down the country roads as they planned our relief of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

This relief promised to be an especially precarious one as we know that the Kaisers "Friedensturm" or Peace Offensive was about to commence, and it would be hell to have another big drive towards Paris to occur just when the relief by our troops might complicate defense plans.

On July 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Headquarters received word to slip forward to Cocherel to place the 101<sup>st</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry in reserve positions where our men might easily support the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division in case the Germans tried another smash down the Marne. Movements of all troops were to commence after dusk and to cease at dawn.

With a feeling of regret we left the spacious, mirrored halls of our battered chateau, piled our packs into a big truck, and beneath the glow of a glorious golden summer sunset bumped down a steep hill to the little town of ----- . Here I waved to Major Rau and Captain Strickland who were chatting by the roadside, awaiting their orders to go forward into the battle zone.

The town had been fired by the Germans in the first battle of the Marne, and its walls charred and blackened (p48) made a gloomy appearance as contrasted with the calm surface of the river, still reflecting the after-glow in the western sky.

Crossing the Marne we ran northward up the valley of the Oureq, smothered by dust from a truck convoy up ahead, while our motorcyclists popped along in the wake of the truck.

Leaving the Oureq, we headed eastward over higher ground. Just at dark we cut across the path of a French Infantry regiment which was marching northward. An intersecting road swarmed with helmeted poilus as far as the eye could reach in each direction, and in the faint afterglow they appeared more like a river flowing by than they did like men. Near Cocherel we overtook groups of the 101<sup>st</sup> plodding doggedly along through the darkness to an unknown bivouac.

The brigade truck reached Cocherel about one in the morning and halted in a farmyard in the village. Colonel Logan was to meet the General at this point, but failed to appear, so with the couriers, I crawled under an old wagon and lay down for a little sleep on the ground. The wagon made a good roof and protected us from a passing shower. A number of hens enjoyed our shelter at the break of day. They were too companionable.

Just before dawn Colonel Logan appeared and after directing him to get his troops into the woods, we made a hurried trip to the southward, a distance of about a mile, to Grandchamps Farm, headquarters of the 51<sup>st</sup> Artillery at Inf. Brigades.

By daybreak the roads, which had positively swarmed with men a few minutes earlier, were absolutely empty, and an enemy plane flying over it would not be able to discover a (p49) trace of the great troop movement which had taken place.

Grandchamp Farm consisted of a huge stuccoed courtyard enclosed by hedges and huge barns. Its outer walls were loop-holed for rifles and machine guns, and small trenches extended from its eastward corners. In case of enemy attack it would have been a hard position to carry, as it commanded a splendid field of fire in every direction – a veritable second Hougomont of Waterloo fame.

For two days we remained under cover at Grandchamp, the relief of front-line positions being delayed by continued rumors of impending German attack.

These days passed slowly, as every man had a great feeling of suspense over the delay.

At last on July 7<sup>th</sup>, we received orders to take over the positions occupied by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. Just as the troops were ready to start, the orders were countermanded, and the two brigade commanders were left uncertain as to what move to make. General Traub tried to

phone Division Headquarters for definite instructions but found that some signal corps officer had taken all the phones to forward positions.

General Traub told me to get my motorcycle and ride at top speed down to General Edwards' headquarters at Chamigny-on-the-Marne.

Two regiments of infantry and three of artillery were affected, so I surely gave the speedy Indian every bit of gas it would take, and went flying seven miles over the hills to Headquarters on the Marne.

The Chief of Staff, Colonel Major, was much relieved by my arrival, as he had been swearing into a disconnected telephone for some time in a vain attempts to move the two brigades forward.

(p50) I received a verbal order to "tell tell them to go ahead" but refused to leave until the Chief of Staff gave me written instructions. Then back over steep hills at about fifty miles an hour, and after completing the speediest motorcycling of my life I delivered the instructions to the Infantry and Artillery Brigadiers. Then all organizations started forward to front-line positions.

Our Brigade Supply wagon rolled out of the farm-yard at Grand-champs Farm at 9 P.M., "Tex" Black handling his four fine horses in splendid shape as we crawled eastward through a perfect summer night. Swinging across the reserve trench positions in the woods to the east, we soon found ourselves on the Paris Road entering Montreuil-aux-Lions. Surgeons were busily engaged in tending the wounded of the Second Division. A strong odor of ether reached our nostrils long before the church came into sight.

Leaving the Paris Road at Montreuil, we followed the route carefully marked on the map held on my knees over a hilltop and into a little valley which twisted down to Domptin Brook at Villiers-sur-Marne.

Now we were momentarily expecting shell-fire and bombs, as we were entering the area of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

Over the trees ahead rose the ghostly flares from the fox-holes where YD men were quietly slipping into positions so valiantly won by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

Turning left at Villiers, we walked our horses northward up a narrow valley toward Domptin. The jet blackness of a mid-summer night was occasionally stabbed by tongues of flame as numerous 75s on the valley slopes sent their shells against nearby German positions.

Outside of Domptin we were warned by a Frenchman (p51) to pass through the village center rapidly, as the Germans were shelled the farm houses east of the bridge. A crash in the road ahead emphasized this warning. Then Tex applied his long whip to his tired team with such effect that we entered the dark, deserted village in real Wild West style. Four galloping horses, a rumbling old covered wagon, and just enough shells coming into the house tops to make the trip very interesting. Dashing by the dangerpoint in the darkness we crossed a stone bridge to halt in a gloomy barnyard in the western outskirts of Domptin.

As it had commenced to rain, the prospect was not cheerful. The marines had told such frightful stories of nearby Belleau Woods that we momentarily expected the each to lift and disappear. It was now three in the morning and General Traub's car was not yet in sight. I helped Tex put his horses in a nearby barn which stunk beyond description. In the morning we found the source of the stench – a long-deceased cow in the barnyard and a score of dead

chickens in the henyard. Some said these creatures had been gassed. At any rate they were very dead. As dawn broke, General Traub's arrival ended my long wait. I burrowed into the haymow in that loathsome barn. The sharp bark of nearby 75s and the occasional swish-crash of a German 77 coming in did not keep me awake very long.

July 8, 1918 – Domptin

Domptin was a tiny red-tiled French village of sixty houses nestling on the banks of a stream, surrounded by orchards and wheat fields. It had been headquarters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Army Brigade made up of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiments during the Belleau Woods Boursesches, Vaux Offensive. It was a deserted village for its inhabitants (p52) had fled precipitately in June as the Germans host thundered into Chateau Thierry and the neighboring towns just over the ridge. As the natives moved out the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division had entered their homes. Beds were moved down into sturdy vaulted wine-cellars. Pots and pans stood dirty on the hearth sides. Stern looking French farmers glared at our intruding men from picture-frames on walls and dressers. Closets were filled with remarkable mid-victorian clothing. Occasionally a French farmer would walk[ed] into out farm-house for a shirt or pair of pants. We never knew whether what he took belonged to him or to some other unlucky neighbor. During the heart of the day unsavory stench arose from dead cattle and horses. The infantry in Belleau Woods told of ghastly sights. Burying details worked nightly to clean up the distressing relics of savage fighting.

Our 51<sup>st</sup> Brigade Kitchen was set up in the schoolhouse yard. Here we messed in a schoolroom surrounded by blackboards and maps of France and the world.

Brigade Headquarters was established in a farmhouse on the hill-side west of Domptin above the school where a rickety vaulted dairy house gave a feeling of security. Inside this vaulted roof had been reinforced by sturdy timbers. A foot of straw on the floor afforded a good bed for those caring for telephone, radio and dispatch service. Telephone lines ran forward to battle positions over the ridge at Vaux and Boursesches.

Our first duties were to become thoroughly familiar with the Pas Fini Sector. It was well named. Nobody knew was the end would be.

The German lines were tactically very strong. From the vantage point of hill 204 they looked over our entire (p53) area, and swept the Marne high-ways with machine-guns and artillery. Bombing planes glided down on Paris nightly. On July 14<sup>th</sup> the brick railroad station at La Ferte nearby was completely destroyed by an enormous German aeroplane bomb. Heavy artillery shells from German guns roared overhead daily to tear up distant railroad yards at Meaux. Two American balloons at Villiers were downed in flames in one day, their occupants floating down like gigantic dandelion seeds on delicate parachutes. German aviators pursued them to earth with machine-gun fire, undaunted by the angry blast of protecting archies or anti-aircraft shells.

Beneath Hill 204 the German line picked up the shelter furnished by the Chateau Thierry Soissons railroad embankment. Vaux was out-flanked by this strong line on both sides. At Boursesches this bank was strongly held and the railroad station bristled with machine guns. Colonel John Henry Parker attempted to raid this station one night, only to have some of his

102<sup>nd</sup> men practically cut in halves by a hail of bullets as they stepped up onto the rails. Torcy, Civry and Belleau, wired and loop-holed glared menacingly across at our lines in the northern edge of Belleau Woods. The wooded Etrepilly Plateau gave the Germans a high reserve position and afforded protection to numerous artillery positions of all calibres. Occasionally a spiteful Austrian 88 would slam a shell into Domptin without warning, pulverizing the corner of a roof and exploding with terrifying violence before its sinister scream reached one's ears. Paul Valle and I studied many airplane photographs and the wood on Etrepilly Plateau. All showed indications of machine gun positions, artillery and ammunition dumps. Truly it seemed as though the Germans had come to stay.

(p54) The situation provided many strange contrasts. Here was a rich rolling farm country with tawny wheat breast high. Trees coming into fruit. Harvests waiting the sickle. Yet the onrushing enemy controlled every inch of it by searching shell fire. Men in the front lines lived by day in "fox holes" in the thickets, from whence they crawled out at night to precarious picket lines, swept by machine-gun fire.

Clear water swept by in our farmyard stream, yet we hesitated to bathe in its as it came not only from the odorous depths of Belleau Wood, but was also reported full of mustard gas.

Fresh food was lacking, swept up by a multitude of combatants. Our farm house home looked very presentable from the west, but from the east its shell-torn gable was open to the rain. Depp in our wine-cellar we slept in damp double beds while humidity dripped from our stone ceiling. Upstairs were dry beds, but at any moment a portion of the house might leave the ground.

Captain Saint Croix, our weak-kneed French interpreter, looked dolefully eastward each day as he told us: "Tonight zere ees no Boches here. Tomorrow zay will be all around us. Here, dere, everywhere. Zat iz zee way zey come." Then he and dapper little Rousseau would spend the rest of the day piling more rocks on the enormous stone pile beneath which they slept in a vaulted cellar.

The tiny village of Domptin lay forlorn and deserted beneath a hot July sun. Only one French woman remained of the 500 peacetime inhabitants. Nothing could drive her from her home. An American battery of 75s spat shells from her orchard towards German positions. In return 88s burst with head-splitting violence around and against this brave little woman's cellar door. After each storm of shell fragments (p55) screeched away the succeeding silence was broken by her shrill imprecations against the "salles Boches." Such was the wartime spirit of the French peasant.

Three miles behind us the Second Division occupied four miles of "fox-holes" in reserve position. Strolling back there we heard of their splendid successes, and were saddened by the staggering casualties which had depleted the ranks of their infantry.

Nightly General Traub read "O. Henry" in the village school house. It was a sad war, but temporarily not a bad war. The doughboys enjoyed their novel surroundings in these deserted villages. One evening staid Sergeant Carver appeared in the schoolyard in a tall plug hat, a swallow-tailed coat and gray breeches, accompanied by a stout lady in bodice and flounced skirt, an infantry lady, with muscular sunburned arms and woolen breeches.

July 14 – 17

## The Germans Attack

During early July the general situation rapidly became more disturbing. Nearby American observation balloons telephoned our headquarters about columns of hostile infantry moving down distant slopes in our direction. Heavy artillery fire on back areas became more pronounced. Machine gunning of deflies made it difficult to ration front-line garrisons at night and made approach to outpost towns impossible by daylight. The drone of enemy reconnaissance planes and bombers became more persistent. Our casualties from shell and gas were numerous. One evening we feared that the Germans had taken the village of Bouresches. No reinforcements were allowed to go forward as the defense scheme called for a stand on the reserve or second line position only. Our main defensive barrage fell behind (p56) our outpost line. Isolated by this barrage our outposts could expect only death or capture in the event of a driving enemy attack. 1200 men in each of our four infantry regiments supported by machine guns made up this outpost line.

At dawn on July 14<sup>th</sup> a German raiding party sifted into Vaux, held by the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry. Here a prompt counterattack and generous use of hand grenades in hand to hand fighting saved the village and cleared enemy machine guns from the roofless railroad station which they had seized. German and American bodies mingled on the embankment. Burial was impossible due to intense rifle and machine gun fire from both front lines.

The Paris-Chateau Thierry highway passed under the railroad tracks east of Vaux. This stone bridge was the scene of nightly grenade battles at short range as opposing infantry patrols met in the narrow and important under-pass.

By July 14<sup>th</sup> rumors of a German offensive became commonplace. What would we do if the Germans forced their way down the Marne and around our right flank? Valle and I were sent down to the river to study French positions on the hill overlooking the Rivert at Charle. While we were standing near that village a couple of heavy shells burst in the deserted main street. Tall plumes of black smoke arose slowly over the forsaken town. Next I was sent to study woodland trails leading back to the marine positions by which reinforcements could come to our support in case of emergency. Sitting on the edge of a fox-hole I talked with a number of young marines, recently engaged in the Belleau Woods offensive. They were tremendously impressed by the marvelous use of machine guns in the German lines. In one company every man who lifted his head eight inches to fire a Chancat automatic rifle was killed. Picking up a Marine Lieutenant as a guide, I (p57) inspected the reserve position, the only defence line between the Yankee Division and Paris. In this particular sector the Defensive works consisted of a ten-foot breastwork of fallen trees with branches sharpened and pointed to the east. On top of these trees brush was piled. Then all was bound together with barbed wire. No trenches existed. In case this feeble woodland position was stormed, its defenders would be exposed to every bullet and shell. But there were the Marines keeping an eye on the country they had won so dearly, ready to back us at any minute, resting peacefully in scores of shallow trenches in the woods. I was impressed by their youth. A large majority were 18 to 20 years of age. In spite of the recent loss of 50% of their comrades, their morale was excellent.

At nightfall on July 14<sup>th</sup> special warnings were telephoned to the 101<sup>st</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry to be on their guard as prisoners captured east of Chateau Thierry reported Ludendorff's great

Friedenstorm or Peace Offensive to be imminent. So exact was General Goursands information, that he ordered all artillery into action at 11:30 P.M. on German Assembly Points. Precisely at this hour every gun in the valley added its din to a gigantic chorus of shell-fire which swept the north bank of the Marne from Belleau to the Champagne districts beyond Rheims, a distance of 40 miles. German pontoon companies, waiting to fling their bridges across the river, were thrown into confusion and many pontoons riddled by shell fragments. Long columns of German infantry advancing over the ridges behind Chateau Thierry suffered very heavy losses.

At midnight the noise doubled in volume when thousands of German cannon dropped their fire of destruction on French and American defensive positions on the railroad track and (p58) crests south of the river. Late in the evening of July 15<sup>th</sup> Paul Valle and I were returning to Domptin by motor from Division Headquarters and Nanteuil. As we passed over certain hilltops we witnessed this awe-inspiring artillery duel. Both crests above the river flashed incessantly as shells of all calibres burst on infantry and artillery positions of the opposing armies. Near the river arose intermittently the bright flare of Viery lights from positions held by the alert 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. (Later to be known as the Rock of the Marne.) Here and there a farmhouse burned, throwing a deep red illumination into the night and a pall of smoke over the distressed valley. It was appalling to watch this crisis of the World War. Here on a perfect summer night 'neath the quiet stars the concentrated hatred of nations created a storm of such deadly violence as to stun one's reason. The scene might easily have been taken from Dante's Inferno. One could not imagine that machines of man could create such horrible and wide-spread devastation over an unoffending farming country.

Just before dawn the German infantry came forward strong. Raiding parties vainly stormed against our divisional front at Vaux and Bouresches; but the main attack struck savagely at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, ensconced behind the railroad track on the river's south bank, and rolled over the front lines of the Rainbow Division at the eastern limit of this 40-mile wide offensive. By dawn German infantry had crossed the river in large numbers at Nezy and vainly sought, by desperate hand-to-hand combat, to penetrate southward, towards Conde-en-Brie. By nightfall the Germans occupied ten miles of the south river bank, in some spots penetrating French positions to a depth of 3 to 4 miles. However, they advanced with great difficulty, finding it impossible to maintain pontoon bridges in the face of direct artillery fire, or to displace (p59) the hard-fighting 3<sup>rd</sup> Division.

On July 16<sup>th</sup> sudden changes upset our group at Domptin. General Traub was promoted to command the 35<sup>th</sup> Division and left hurriedly, now a Major-General. With him went my friends of the past three months, Vallee, Hart, Hardie and Rousseau. Of the old 51<sup>st</sup> Brigade officers, only Captain Saint Croix and myself remained to greet General George H. Shelton who came from the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry. He was a tall gray-haired man of 50, with steely eye and a long scar across his cheek. A reminder of that shell which struck among his staff they left church one May Sunday in Royanmeix in the Toul Sector. He was a genial though quiet man of indomitable will. A silent man like Abraham Lincoln. A man respected by all who came in contact with him.

July 16<sup>th</sup> was marked by a cessation in the artillery duel which had filled the air with whizzing shells. Marshall Foch was quick to sense the slowly down and checking of Ludendorff's great blow. Marking the quiet which now prevailed on our front and the throwing into battle of

140,000 German reserve troops, he decided that the time had come for a counterstroke to cut the supply arteries of Ludendorff's attacking divisions.

July 18 – 25

The Yankee Division goes over the top.

The first indication of an attack in our sector was the sudden withdrawal of the Second Division's 20,000 men from our rear. Where they were going nobody knew, but they suddenly vanished in automobile trucks, leaving the thin line of the Yankee troops as the sole defending force covering the direct road to Paris. Just before midnight on July 17<sup>th</sup>, Brigade Headquarters was thrown into a flurry of action by the receipt of orders for our Division to attack.

(p60) General Shelton called his Colonels together for an hour's conference on final attack plans at midnight. This little group sat around a tiny oil lamp in our farmhouse parlor arranging the joint action of the infantry, machine-gun, artillery and supply services. It is no light task to direct the battle fate of 13,000 soldiers in a Brigade. Lives must be spent to obtain objectives, but spent intelligently and only where the result fully justifies the sacrifices of brave men.

The 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry was to charge Chateau Thierry-Soissons railroad line when its H hour was announced. However, the 51<sup>st</sup> Brigade was to be held back until the 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade had captured Torcy and Belleau, and had swung up even with our left.

In a torrent of rain the infantry of the Division was thrust forward through dark and dripping woods to new "take-off" positions where all anxiously awaited the coming of dawn. Sharp at 4:35 on July 18<sup>th</sup> the barrage rang out to our left as the 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade lunged eastward out of Belleau Wood to drive the surprised enemy out of Torcy and Belleau at the point of their bayonets. Immediate reports of success gave everybody new courage.

The exact results obtained were not known until noon as our fire and the enemy response laid a cloud of smoke and dust from wrecked houses over these tiny villages.

Unfortunately the 167<sup>th</sup> French Infantry Division on the left of the 26<sup>th</sup> U.S. did not fare so well. Hills 193 and 186 just outside of our Division's sector remained in enemy hands. From this summit an enfilading machine-gun fire poured down onto the 52<sup>nd</sup> infantry men, who were forced to hurriedly dig-in at the railroad. Late in the evening of July 17<sup>th</sup> a German raid of considerable strength penetrated (p61) the outskirts of Bouresches, held by Company 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. To be attacked while waiting to attack was most disturbing. However, General Shelton's anxiety was soon calmed by Colonel Parker's telephone message that the visitors at Bouresches were all dead.

July 19<sup>th</sup> brought encouraging news of French successes on our left.

July 20<sup>th</sup> dawned bright and clear. Early in the morning H hour for the 51<sup>st</sup> Brigade was announced as 3 P.M. Feverishly the motorcyclists sped back and forth giving last orders to the expectant regiments. At 2:00 P.M. General Shelton sent me close up to the front line in his Cadillac to give his Reserve First Battalion – 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry – positive orders to stand fast awaiting his orders. Running forward from Coupru, I located Major Rau and told him definitely that he was to take orders from General Shelton only. His expression appeared nettled at being restrained when their comrades were going over the top. My instructions having been carried

out, I ran eastward through thickets and wheat fields to observe the attack by the front line troops. At 2:30 all was quiet. A hot July sun shone down on peaceful grain-fields. At 2:45 with a devastating roar our barrage smashed trees and wire down in front of the German trenches. Deafening crashes burst from nearby woods as concealed 75s opened direct fire against nearby German machine guns. A camouflaged 155 (6 in.) Howitzer in a thicket 400 feet behind me opened with an unexpected blast that made my ears whistle for hours and lifted me off my feet. Exactly at 3:00 P.M. the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> battalions, 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, pushed forward over the railroad track and up the slope into the Agron and Bouresches woods in the face of machine gun and rifle fire, following a well-timed (p62) moving barrage. Running back several hundred yards past quick-firing American 75s, I jumped into the car and soon reported to the General at Domptin that all was going according to schedule.

Colonel Parker's first telephone message, "chasing 'em like hell," confirmed my report.

Almost immediately prisoners were rushed to Domptin for questioning by our German speaking Intelligence men from Division Headquarters. At 4 o'clock our Military Police had 60 weary and bloody Germans confined in a barn near the schoolhouse. As we had only a handful of armed guards we were afraid our prisoners would make a break for freedom. I went into the barn, searching belts and pockets for weapons, and in a few minutes came out with a dozen big pocket knives and a handful of letters for our interpreters to read.

These Germans seemed far more mechanical in their motions than our men. They would click their heels together and stand at attention when approached by an officer. They were young and husky, but tired, dirty and very lousy. Many were severely wounded. One slight boy had a bayonet wound under his ear. Blood dropped from a scarlet bandage around his neck.

All said that their troops were on their way to Paris and that the war would soon end in a German victory as a result of Ludendorff's attack. They expected to be re-captured at any moment.

Most of the prisoners carried pictures of their sweethearts, wives or children. These they have up under bitter protest. Our orders were to take all papers immediately for the benefits of our Intelligence Section at Division Headquarters.

(p63) All of their belt buckles bore the remarkable words, "Gott mit uns," but for this particular ground his immediate blessings were lacking.

At mess time our men shared their coffee with the prisoners. At dusk some mounted police appeared, signed receipts for the prisoners in the barn, and to my great relief these weary Germans trudged off through the darkness towards Division Headquarters and a more secure prison. As they left, one junior officer gave me his picture (now in my album).

Late evening reports from the front were encouraging. Casualties had been light in spite of a raking machine gun fire from Hill 204. Some light artillery pieces (3") trench mortars and machine guns had been captured. My friend, Lieutenant Riecke, L Co. 102<sup>nd</sup> Inf., was seriously wounded. Lieutenant Jack Feegel of I Company had advanced alone in front of his company to kill the crew of a stubborn German machine gun. The night of the 20<sup>th</sup> was quiet. It was hard to believe that our inexperienced infantry, civilian soldiers, had seized a strong German position, three miles in length. All night we discussed the victory, sitting in the straw at Brigade Headquarters by our telephone line observation posts, ready to order a defensive barrage in

front of Bouresches wood in case the 102<sup>nd</sup> reported a counterattack. In spite of great nervous fatigue we felt an uplifting exhilaration at the first big American victory.

Morning of July 21<sup>st</sup>, a clear scorching mid-summer day, brought more good news. The Germans were evacuating Chateau Thierry. Our infantry, together with troops of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Foreign Legion, fighting a few miles to our left, had cut the rail and highway connections between (p64) that town and Soissons. It was no longer possible for supplies to reach German forces on the Marne.

Our headquarters was to move forward to Vaux in the outskirts of Chateau Thierry to direct a vigorous pursuit. The infantry of the brigade was to push steadily forward with the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry acting as advance guard.

Once again Tex Vlack cracked his whip over the four horses on our combat wagon as we trotted out of Domptin, following a wooded trail to the Paris Road at Le Thiolet and down the hill into Vaux. What devastation our eyes. Here lay tragic remnants of a little village which had fallen under the fire of hundreds of heavy field pieces. Not a house was standing. Roadways were choked to their centers by crumpled tons of beams and masonry. Along the Paris Road several score of tall poplar trees had been felled by flying shells. Their shattered stumps bristled by the road-side looking like huge white shaving brushes. From the piles of rubbish which had been homes rose dank, dour odors, telling us the fate of the German garrison buried in these cellars during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division's successful attack on July 1<sup>st</sup>, when for twelve consecutive hours 500 rounds of high explosive shell per hour had dropped into this hamlet. Crawling over the debris with difficulty, we selected a foul-smelling cellar vault as Brigade Headquarters. While awaiting General Shelton's return from advance guard, we walked along the German front line, captured last night by the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry. Beyond the rail-road German bodies were strewn all over the hill-side. Mingled with them were the bodies of a few American Infantrymen. Behind a large barn on the side of Hill 204, I counted 38 dead Germans in one group. Evidently victims of shell-fire when forming the night attack. They lay (p65) with arms and full equipment just as they had fallen. I took a "Gott Mit uns" belt buckle from one stalwart body while wondering what God really thought of the sudden end of this group of marauders who had despoiled a peaceful country-side. By noon of the 21<sup>st</sup>, our advance guard had crossed the main Chateau Thierry-Soissons highway at La Sacerie Farm, two miles further east, and were subjected only to light shell-fire. Unable to breathe freely the stench-laden Vaux air, we were glad at dusk to receive orders to move our headquarters eastward to La Sacerie Farm. I was detailed as guide to take forward a truck-load of wires and ammunition. Just at dusk I hopped on the front seat with the driver and we started the motor truck towards Chateau Thierry by the direct road. Clearing Hill 204, Chateau Thierry soon came into sight, its suburbs illuminated by the red flames of burning German supply dumps. A few enemy shells were bursting in the center of the town. Running through the darkness, our truck, one of the first to approach Chateau Thierry, suddenly lurched into an unseen shell hole in the road, nearly turning over. A group of infantry, approaching from the east, informed us that the road ahead was impassable, due to shell-holes, and further ahead in the town itself, enemy barricades of paving blocks. Extricating our heavy truck with difficulty, we turned about and at midnight were again back at Hill 204. Here we turned north on a twisting country lane and pushed on through the pitch black night to Lauconnois Farm where we were able to again turn toward Chateau Thierry on another

shell-torn road. Ahead the sky glared with an angry red, indicating a score of buildings and supply centers in flames. Occasionally the entire horizon would be lighted by a lurid glow as enemy (66) ammunition supplies exploded. Every sign indicated a withdrawal of Ludendorff's mighty army from the salient. At 1:00 A.M. on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, after threading our way over two road-forks made perilous by enormous shell-holes, we reached the Soissons road (on the heights) north of Chateau Thierry. Here we joined a column of 75s moving eastward and soon arrived at a shadowy farmyard piled high with abandoned German shells. It was our new headquarters, La Sacerie.

As soon as we hopped to the ground to loosen our muscles after five hours of blind riding over unknown roads, we sensed that things were not going well. General Shelton, who had reached La Sacerie early in the evening by motor car, called me to him and explained his troubles. The 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry advance guard, under Colonel Parker, had cleared La Sacerie about 4:00 P.M. that afternoon. Continuing its march two miles eastward, its men successfully penetrated the dense Breteuil Woods and emerged into open fields. Forming as skirmishers, the point of the advance guard moved toward the hamlet of Trugny (1000 yards ahead) in a little valley. Beyond Trugny the ground rose to Epides, 400 yards further east. To the right of Epides and Trugny were thick woods bordering open wheat fields, and in the edge of these woods over a front of half a mile German machine guns were emplaced every 50 feet on average. This was the main reserve position which the German prisoners had vaguely described when questioned at Dompnin. At twilight the shattered advance guard had dropped back into cover of the Breteuil woods from whence patrols went out to seek means of advancing on these strongly held woods and villages. These patrols vainly sought cover for an advance lost many men, and reported to Colonel Parker that there was no means to attack save through open wheat fields. Thus, the advance (p67) had stopped at dusk.

At midnight General Shelton had sent Major Christopher Lee forward to his regimental commanders, carrying orders for an attack at dawn. He had gone in a side-car and now at 1:30 A.M. was still missing. No telephone lines were in place, so General Shelton was unable to determine whether or not his infantry had received its orders. Furthermore, he had received additional orders to extend his front to the north as the 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade on our left had become practically exhausted after four days of ceaseless marching and fighting.

A battered solo Indian motorcycle, twin cylinder model, was available so the General handed me his latest orders and on this venerable machine I roared off into the darkness over totally strange roads. The machine was a bit hard to handle, as it had no stand. On stopping it was necessary to lead it against a tree. It boasted no muffler, and its coiled saddle springs had worked their way through the leather saddle top in such a way as to give one's rear most remarkable pinches at every bump in the road. Down the front fork ran a long leather rifle case and in it was loaded Springfield, 30 cal. rifle ready for instant use. A very satisfactory comrade. The general's parting words were that he was not sure where Colonels Logan and Parker were located, but that I most locate them without delay. Having no headlight, I rode all over the road trying to find its center. Emerging from La Sacerie's farm lane onto a road running east toward the nearby front line, my troubles began immediately.

Thinking the road was clear, I was making good time when I overtook a 3" field piece. The first warning of its presence was a violent thud on my chest as its muzzle met (p68) my gun

mask [handwritten note: while hang on my chest.] It thrust me off the back of my machine, which went on a little distance before it died in the gutter with a loud coughs and explosions. Some artillery men helped me get the Indian back in the road and it went right on again no worse for its fall.

The next obstacle was even more surprising. Some kind of a cannon – I never saw it on account of the darkness – had slipped into the ditch of the road-side. Its six horses were stretched diagonally across the road pulling mightily to extricate the piece when I arrived suddenly on the scene, striking the near horse on the flank and pitching off the machine with a hop, skip and a jump to avoid innumerable horses legs and plunging hoofs.

The night air rang with artillery profanity. Everybody was anxious to murder the “son of a bitch” who had plunged into their horses. There was no time to argue about the situation so I at once got a couple of them to help me find my machine in its gutter retreat.

We hoisted it over a little bank into a wheat field and once again its barking motor went to work when I kicked down the starter. For a quarter of a mile I rode through the wheat, the grain-tops brushing my feet and the machine rising abruptly at each furrow. Fearing a ditch more than artillery, I slid down a little bank to regain the highway. The road entered some woods, becoming darker than ever. The only way to follow it was to look up and be guided by the opening in the tree-tops overhead. Soon a farmhouse loomed darkly to the right of the road. A sentry told me that this was Champluisant Farm, headquarters 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry. Rushing into a barn, I found Colonel Logan, explained the attack to be made in the early morning by his regiment, and sought directions to Colonel Parker’s headquarters. I was told (p69) that he was off in the brush at some remote point, and to take a wood-road to reach him. Unfortunately I was directed up the road to Epieds instead of the correct road, leading north to Bretreuil Woods.

The Epieds road ran sharp downhill to the east and then up a very steep hill. At the foot of this hill, squarely in the middle of the road, was an enormous shell-hole, and in the hole, lying on its side, was a Ford ambulance. Fortunately I discerned this great hole just before my front wheel entered it, but it was hard to get around the wrecked automobile and impossible to rush the steep slippery grade ahead. Twice I tried the climb in low gear but only succeeded in spinning my rear wheel or stalling my motor, and rolling backwards, pushing with right and left leg alternately to keep the motorcycle upright. I then tried a scheme which had worked well on sandy roads at home. I started the motor at high speed, dismounted while in third gear with the clutch out, steadied the machine with my thigh and left arm while cautiously pulling in the clutch lever with my right hand. By careful balancing, ceaseless pushing and endless spinning on the back wheel, I finally coaxed the machine to the top of the grade and emerged exhausted in open country. (On this same road and at this same spot, Major John Murphy 102<sup>nd</sup> Machine Gun Battalion, one hour earlier in a motorcycle side-car inadvertently rode in the German position at Truguay 300 yards away, turned about under enemy machine-gun fire and raced back to safety, receiving his Distinguished Service Cross for “a daring reconnaissance.” If I had blundered a little further I would have found the stage all set for a warm reception.)

Here I stopped a moment to get my bearings. Machine guns were cracking ahead. An occasional shell passed overhead (p70) coming from the east. A few rifles barked. Fearful of riding through the front line, and sure that I was on the wrong road, I moved along slowly until I

met some 103<sup>rd</sup> infantrymen who told me I was passing through the front line and that Colonel Park was a mile to my left. Turning around, I slipped down the hill which I had worked so hard to climb, turned north at Logan's farm and entered the dark edge of Breteuil Wood.

The whole forest swarmed with American infantry, for I had ridden into the main body of the advance guard. A company of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry effectually barred further motorcycling by sleeping on their packs in the middle of the highway. Supporting my machine on a convenient tree, I ran up the road on foot. It was now 3:15 A.M. and I was frantic with anxiety to deliver my message.

Approaching the extreme front line at the edge of Breteuil Woods, I found the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry forming for their attack at dawn. Fortunately there was no fire from enemy artillery, for a few well-placed shells would have wrought havoc. The infantrymen were silently resting in close formation by the wood trail, awaiting the first trace of dawn before fixing bayonets for their gallant rush against Truguy and Epieds.

Friends from M. Company ran with me to a point near the edge of the woods. Here I picked up one of the regimental headquarters runners. Together we dashed through dense woods to a tiny opening in the underbush where in inky blackness sat Colonel Parker and his adjutant, Emerson Taylor.

Colonel Parker showed the effects of the great strain he had undergone. He was very pessimistic about the outlook for his attack. I had brought up a small map showing (p71) the territory to the north which he must cover due to the worn-out condition of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. I told the Colonel that he should light a match or produce a flash-light to study the papers I had brought forward. He railed against those ordering the attack, told me of the machine-gun defense line that had shattered his patrols on the previous evening, almost sobbing in the darkness as he related the losses of "his boys."

Emerson Taylor puled me to one side, stating that the Colonel was too exhausted to study my orders. The occasional swish of machine gun bullets through the branches overhead bore on the Colonel's claim that any lights would bring a burst of fire. Captain Taylor was much disturbed to learn that the artillery was not yet sufficiently informed of the infantry's whereabouts to throw a moving barrage at dawn. He urged me to make a brief reconnaissance of the infantry front line and to make all possible speed to artillery headquarters with whatever firing data I could gather. This request meant another half mile of running along the edge of the woods. In passing by the infantry, the first traces of dawn enabled me to recognize my old friend, Dan Strickland, Captain of D. Company 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. I stopped just long enough to grasp his hand and wish him good luck, little dreaming that he would be shot down, seriously wounded, and a prisoner of war by evening. A greeting to Sergeant Manteuffel of M. Co. and just as the troops advanced from their take-off positions in the first faint dawn, I raced back to my motorcycle completely worn-out.

Nearing my machine I encountered a pathetic group of wounded men, hobbling down the road unassisted and seeking an ambulance. One man with a broken ankle was leaning (72) on the shoulder of a man with a bullet wound in his jaw. A third was holding a shattered arm across his chest to keep it from swinging to and fro.

Hever was daylight no more welcome to me than dawn of July 22<sup>nd</sup>. My night's work in this time had been one mishap after another in pitch darkness. Now the road was faintly visible

and fear of collision a thing of the past. Spurred on by the dire need of artillery fire to cover the attack, I turned on full power and was back at Artillery Headquarters near La Sacerie in a short time. Here I met a Major with a map and hastily pointed out few safe targets on roads just beyond Epieds and in the woods beyond Truguy. One battery of 75s was already in position a short distance up the road and in a very few moments these pieces opened on the designated targets. (At a later date Dan Strickland gave me the interesting news that the artillery fire in these areas was very effective and swept important crossroads clear of enemy traffic. He knew what he was talking about for he was over there as a prisoner of war this very afternoon.)

Not until I dismounted at Brigade Headquarters at La Sacerie and completed my report to General Shelton did I realize my extreme fatigue. My arms trembled as a result of many hours tense grip on the handle-bars. Including the time directing the truck, I had been continuously rushing over black unknown roads for more than 12 hours. The General ordered me to stay close at hand as another motorcycle trip might be necessary in a few minutes. Tumbling into the gutter by my machine, I was asleep in a minute, not in the least disturbed by the crash of nearby artillery and the coming and going of trucks and couriers. At 9:00 A.M. I was suddenly awakened. General Edwards had arrived (p73) unexpectedly in his Cadillac car and had requested a guide to take him forward to see how the attack was progressing. It seemed fool-hardy to take the big car any further forward, but he knew what he wanted to do and in a moment we were gliding up the road. My position was on the running board by his driver. A bright July sun was glaring down on the highway leading to the east. How easy this trip seemed after my blind plungings of the proceeding night. Going past Colonel Logan's headquarters, we went straight down the Truguy road to a point in the wheat field southeast of Breteuil Woods. Here we halted in the open on a rise whence we could see our infantry advancing on Truguy with bayonets fixed. Just at our right a battery of 75s was firing point-blank from positions in the open fields. Their crews had rolls of camouflage netting to throw over their guns in case German Aeroplanes appeared. I greatly feared lest a German 77 might open on the General's car at any moment. Fortunately during the ten minutes while we remained in the open under enemy observation no such fire developed. The picture of our infantry boldly pushing forward without shelter against these fortified positions remains vividly in my memory. It was hard to reconcile the peace of a summer day, rolling farm-land, and broad wheat fields, with the tragedy being enacted before us.

Shortly after we left an enemy airplane swept over this group of infantry, signaled their position to German batteries and a storm of shrapnel wiped out a majority of these plucky infantrymen. Sad to relate our combat planes gave us no aid during this battle.

This narrative does not pretend to present a tactical summary of the engagement. It must suffice to relate that the attack met a desperate resistance throughout the (p74) the day. Troops storming Truguy seized the village, and only to undergo a bombardment by heavy artillery which caused very heavy losses. Unsupported by the French on their left or the 101<sup>st</sup> on their right, the 1<sup>st</sup> batallion 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry met a converging machine gun fire of great violence from front and both flanks.

The point of the attack, skillfully led by Captains Strickland and Goodman, stormed Epieds in the face of this fire. Their little group of survivors, some 50 in number, took refuge in the buildings at the south end of the village after hand to hand fighting in the streets.

Unsupported by reserves, this group was overwhelmed by a counterattack and captured by noon.

Reserve troops, seeking temporary cover in the wheat from this blast of machine gun fire, were easily spotted by hostile planes and once located were battered by heavy shrapnel fire.

When General Eswards had had an opportunity to study the situation, he ordered a hasty return to his headquarters in order that he might drive home a flanking attack through the Bois de Borbillon at our right. Just before noon I left his car at La Sacerie.

Under the noonday glare our headquarters proved to be very forlorn and unsheltered ruined farmyard. The roofless farmhouse in the corner of the brick-walled farmyard was useless as a shelter, due to the fact that it contained several thousand rounds of German shells of all calibres. Incoming shells from time to time dropped near this mass of munitions. Fortunately for us no direct hits were made on the house. In the southwest corner of the yard was a tiled wagon shed, open in the direction from which we might expect shell-fire. Nearby was a little building, once used as (p75) a pig-pen, but now lined with cotton sheeting in order that General Shelton might use it at night. He was too busy to sleep there, fortunately for him, as the odor of its former tenants still persisted. Directly in front of our headquarters' shed, ten feet from where we handled operations for the next 24 hours, was a dead horse, very dead. About a week dead under a July sun. he smelled. We threw a little dirt over him. His presence was still highly pronounced. After a few hours we got accustomed to our odorous neighbor, but changed the name of the farm to "Dead Horse" in his honor.

All through the afternoon discouraging reports came in by couriers from the 102<sup>nd</sup>. At nightfall a second attack by the survivors of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade and 51<sup>st</sup> Brigade failed in the face of deadly machine gun barrages.

Nightfall meant additional orders for a more determined attack on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. General Shelton was forced by bursts of enemy shells near the magazine to set up his lamp on a table in an open field behind the farm. Shortly after midnight an enemy bombing plane swept over, dropping occasional bombs, which burst with even louder roars as the raider neared us.

The General stayed by his lighted lamp, never looking up from his writing of orders while this disturbing visitor swept through the darkness at a low elevation. Throughout the night the Brigade staff worked to coordinate artillery and infantry action for the attack on Rpieds through Barbillon Wood by the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry on the following morning. Sleep was unthought of. And again the planes miscarried. Due to a shortage of telephone wire, communication forward to the infantry was slow. At dawn our barrage crashed down on the woods and crept forward for half an hour, but the (p76) 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry did not get off at 4:30 A.M. and the entire performance had to be repeated at 6:30. The German, forewarned, shifted their machine guns to cover this woodland tangle and short the attack to bits when it finally got under way. So hot was the fire that it became impossible to bring in many wounded who lay in the woods for 12 hours until nightfall.

Even at La Sacerie the 23<sup>rd</sup> brought its tribulations. During the early morning some German batteries, 77s, began to search our locality. Shellbursts kicked up the dirt on a hillside to our right and gradually crept down the slope toward our battered farm and its powder magazine. One shell finally burst in the court, showering heavy fragments of red tiling against

our helmets. Fearing heavy bombardment, General Shelton asked a few of us to explore a nearby railroad tunnel as a possible emergency headquarters. In company with a French Lieutenant, I hurried down the bank to the tracks at the tunnel mouth where we stopped for a moment to get a drink of from a clear spring. This tunnel had been used as a reserve position by 2000 Germans so we approached its portal with care. A German machine gun guarded its entrance. Across the tracks lay an innocent-looking strand of wire. The French Lieutenant, far wiser than I in the ways of the enemy, carefully traced this wire to a box behind a rock at the entrance and then up into the cliff above.

He waved me back 100 yards down the track, fastened a length of wire of considerable length to the trip wire and pulled on his long cable. With a deep roar the entire mouth of the tunnel seemed to vanish in smoke, while heavy pieces of rock were flung in our direction. It was a logical spot for a "booby" trap mine.

(p77) With this preliminary out of the way, we entered a most remarkable tunnel. Over the tracks heavy planks had been laid to form a splendid clean floor. The walls of the tunnel were partially sheathed and partially lined with cotton cloth, pillaged from nearby Chateau Thierry. The first section had been a German radio and telegraph station. Radio instruments were still in position. Then came four officers rooms, completely furnished even to massive beds, bureaus, and a dining room table. Behind these the quarters' wooden flooring over the tracks continued for some 200 yards to the north end of the tunnel making spacious quarters for many men. We entered each dark room with some trepidation, expecting more "booby" traps, but no further troubles developed.

Just as the General was about to move into this splendid shelter it was made unliveable by a series of well-placed gas shells, "sneeze," "tear," and "mustard," which burst at its north end. The General could not write orders wearing a gas mask, so we all stayed above ground.

Nightfall brought gloomy news of further heavy casualties forward, and increasing shell-fire on all back areas.

A third attack was planned for the morning of July 24<sup>th</sup>, when suddenly the whole picture changed. During the night our advance guard had been reinforced by fresh troops, the 112<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 28<sup>th</sup> Division, Pennsylvania National Guard. At dawn they sent forth patrols to feel out our front. Cautiously they approached the ominous death-dealing woods to the right of Epieds. Not a shot rang out. A deep silence prevailed over the battle field, for the hard-fighting German rear-guard with its scores of concealed gun had departed for an unknown reserve line in the deep Bois de Fere, just ahead.

(p78) Instantly General Shelton called for action from his entire Brigade. The 112<sup>th</sup> Infantry vanished into the woods ahead. Where they went we never learned, for they scattered widely and were not ahead of us when we ran into the next German position. Years later I met some of these men and found that they had swung too far to the right and had run out of our zone of action. Some of them got way down to the banks of the Marne, 2 ½ miles to our right.

The weary shell-torn survivors of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry hastily formed an advance guard near Truguy and followed the 112<sup>th</sup> Infantry into the Bois de Fere.

General Shelton called for his horse and accompanied by Captain Saint Croix rode off to the east. Before leaving he ordered me to move his entire headquarters to the Etang de la Logette, a small pond some four miles to the east. We chose this particular rendez-vous as an

easy assembly point, little knowing that our meeting place was still held by the Germans. As the General galloped off he ordered me to proceed at once by motorcycle to La Logette Pond to select a Headquarters location.

At 8 o'clock I was on my way alone on my venerable solo Indian. The hard-hit 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry was forming its advance guard on the road near Champluisant Farm to take up the pursuit. In believe Captain Clarence Thompson was in charge of the point. At any rate he was most thankful for a map which I handed him, as he had nothing to show him the nature of the country in which he was advancing. Maps were very scarce. Leaving my friends I rode up the deserted road to Truguy. A huge 10" Howitzer, abandoned by the enemy nearby, blocked the road near Truguy. It had dropped through a culvert and the American advance prevented its salvage by the enemy. This gun is now on Boston Common. I (p79) believe that I was the first man in the 102<sup>nd</sup> to enter Epieds that morning.

Its outskirts were heavily fringed with American dead, their bodies torn by shell and machine-gun.

As I cautiously rode up to deserted Epieds at 10 A.M. on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, I was thinking only of my missing friend, Captain Dan Strickland of D Co., 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. Dan and I had lived and soldiered together for three years. I had shaken his hand and wished him good luck as he started towards this little town. He had captured the town at the point of the bayonet, reported its capture to Colonel Parker, and then his whole attacking force had been wiped out by a counterattack. Had Dan been killed? The idea was unbearable. His family would be frantic for news. There was only one way for me to unravel this mystery. That was to search for his body. Leaving my motorcycle against a tree just south of the village I commenced a tragic hunt for my friend. A score of American dead lay where they had fallen in the fields nearby, many with their rifles still in hand, bayonets fixed and still pointing towards the nearby shattered hamlet, which appeared so serenely peaceful in the bright sunshine. For twenty minutes I went from body to body looking for my friend. Many I had to turn over to see their faces. Thank God Dan was not there! Going into the village I continued the search. Such sights! German dead in pretty little flower gardens. Two German bodies hanging over a windowsill. In the village grocery store, used as a German Red Cross Dressing Station, more still forms, wrapped in red bandages. Fresh blood ran across the threshold and sidewalk. It was evident that the enemy had left only recently. Not a soul in sight, not a team going by, only an occasional crash on the crossroad to the south, still harassed by some German shells.

(p80) Convinced that further delay was futile, I jumped onto my motorcycle again, anxious to make up lost time. Approaching the road which turned into the nearest edge of the Bois de la Fere, I ran into a salvo of shells from well-aimed 77s which burst in the road just ahead.

Instinctively I put both feet on the ground, letting the Indian go up the road without its ride, and dropped into the gutter to let this storm blow over. The motorcycle went on about 15 feet in an aimless way, then fell on its side in the road, coughing hard and blowing out clouds of smoke.

I was on it again in a few second entering the Bois de Fere. This road was one that I had given to our artillery was a target 48 hours earlier. They had done their shelling well, for the road was littered with green boughs and telegraph wires which delayed my progress by

catching in the spokes of my wheels. The road was deeply rutted by German artillery. Deep ruts to a motorcyclist meant trouble.

How lonely this wood was. Not a soul in sight. I thought of John Murphy's unexpected ride into German lines at Truguy on the night of July 21<sup>st</sup> and went ahead slowly. By this time the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry was several miles behind me and a few members of the advance guard were firing just ahead. Machine-gun bullets were whishing through the trees as I approached the Etang Logette just before noon.

Dismounting I drew my Springfield from my holster, having decided that scouting on foot would render me less conspicuous than to ride my Indian into a German position.

Advancing cautiously through the woods I picked up a German map and a German rifle. From the condition of the grass in the trail it was evident that the Germans had left (p81) this spot very recently. A burst of rifle fire nearby and a response of machine gun bullets through the trees convinced me that Logette Pond was no place for this Brigade Headquarters. I decided to search the wooded road for a new headquarters when there came a crackling in the brush. I crept to the edge of the field nearby, gripping my rifle, sure that the Kaiser himself would appear.

My lonesome reconnaissance was ended. Who should ride towards me but General Shelton and Captain Saint Croix. Both were rather nervous at finding a German resistance Line so near at hand. Furthermore, Saint Croix was lost. I produced my map and indicated our position. Saint Croix put his finger on a different point, called me a "damned fool" and said we were there. The General quieted him down. We went to a nearby hill-tip, studied the contours, and found ourselves on my point.

General Shelton told me that he had changed his headquarters' location to Grange Marie Farm, a mile southwest of where he stood. He told me to start back immediately on the following mission: to hurry the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry forward when I met them, to divert his headquarters' staff to Grange Marie, and to carry back to General Edwards the location of each body of troops that I passed en route to old Brigade Headquarters at La Sacerie.

Near Epieds I met the first of the 102<sup>nd</sup> column entering the Bois de Fere in two long files. I stopped for a moment to tell that gallant officer, Major George Rau, about the extent of the wood he was entering. He looked tired and think. That very night he was killed in action near Logette Pond by German shell-fire. For a half mile I rode between two files of 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry going forward, waving to many friends as I bumped by over the rough wood-road. (p82) They were exhausted from a continuous four-days battle, having little food and no sleep.

At 1:00 P.M. I left work at La Sacerie concerning the location of advance Brigade P.C. and hurried back two miles to Lauconnois Farm, Division Headquarters.

The Chief of Staff, Duncan Major, was anxious to obtain exact information concerning the position of his infantry units. As I had just come from the front line along the march of all infantry companies moving forward, I was able to receive his battle map. As he was planning a vigorous attack in the direction of Fere En Tardenois for the morning of July 25<sup>th</sup>, he was most appreciative of this recent and precise location of his offensive forces.

At 4 P.M. my talk with the Chief of Staff ended. He noticed my fatigue, learned that I had been moving since dawn, and was kind enough to get me a little food, which was most welcome. I had had coffee for breakfast and no rations on hand for lunch.

Learning that relief by the Rainbow or 42<sup>nd</sup> Division was likely to occur next day, I again climbed on my dilapidated, loud-barking motorcycle and rode back to La Sacerie Farm for a little rest in the shed with the famous, and ever more fragrant dead horse.

Word came back from General Shelton that he had sufficient runners to handle his dispatch work from Grange Marie. Exhausted after a week's continuous excitement, I stretched out on a blanket, near my motorcycle, and fell fast asleep. Almost immediately I was vigorously shaken and awoke with some curses to find one of the younger motorcyclists from Division Headquarters standing over me with an envelope of important orders in his hand. He told me that the Chief of Staff had ordered me to get to General (p83) Shelton at Grange Marie at once, that he had run into a cloud of gas and heavy shell fire near Epieds, that the roads were blocked with motor-trucks unable to get past the shelled cross-roads, that this machine was working badly, that he could not get up the steep hill ahead, and "What should I do?" As it was pitch black I lighted a candle, broke the seal on his orders and found them to be of great importance. Looking at the boy's face in the candle-light I saw that he was shaken by his experience and in no condition to try a hard ride.

Leaving my blankets with reluctance and stiff with fatigue, I once more stirred my faithful Indian motorcycle into action and chugged off into inky blackness, looking for an unknown farm in gloomy shell-torn Bois de la Fere. My only guide was a good road map and a little flashlight. It was 10 P.M. Ahead the sky was lighted intermittently through the woods by watching the sky overhead. Nearing Truguy the road was blocked by twenty trucks. The Chinese Annamite drivers were lying on the road, under their motors, not to make repairs, but as a haven of refuge against overhead shrapnel with occasionally whizzed past. I envied them and earnestly wanted to join them. Stopping for road directions I found the men wearing gas masks. They reported lively shell-fire, gas and high explosives on the next half mile of road. As there was no time to waste I pulled on my gas mask, buckled my tin helmet tight against my chin to prevent its hopping up and down in harmony with the bumping of my machine, and started up the gassed road at twice my usual speed. Whereas I had been nearly blinded by the darkness, the flapping gas mask now cut off all my vision. Almost immediately I felt a bank brush my foot (p84) as my machine left the road. Lifting one foot and hopping on the other I let the machine go out from under me and fell flat.

Sitting up in the darkness I yanked off my mask, got a whiff of gas, put the mouth-piece only in my mouth, and mounting again rode on down the highway with the upper part of the mask hanging beneath my chin. This enabled me to breathe easily through the gas mask tube without being blinded by dusty celluloid eyepieces. Fortunately the noise of my unmuffled engine made it impossible for me to hear the shells that were falling near the road and I was soon past the shelled and gassed area and clear of Truguy and Epieds. Turning right in that forlorn village I sped down hill on the road leading to the Marne and the village of Charteves. Somewhere in the darkness at the left of the road was a large clearing and from the field a rough wood-trail leading to Grange Marie and General Shelton. Twice I turned into the wrong fields to waste a valuable half hour riding my machine slowly along unbroken woodland fringes looking for the trail leading to the front. Finally I got into the right field and started up a very rough wood road on the motorcycle. At last my goal was near at hand. An unexpected

encounter with an invisible stump sent me over the handlebars and convinced me that on a pitch black night running was safer than riding.

Leaving my long-suffering motorcycle against a tree I plunged into the woods on foot at midnight. Following a rough wood-road in almost jet black darkness I jogged along alone. Halting breathlessly at a fork one half mile in the woods I found myself lost. Which road went to Grange Marie Farm, and which went to the front line? An occasional shell burst in the woods ahead. Now and then (p85) spent bullets rustled through the leaves above the road. Lost! And important orders burning a hole in my pocket.

Tearing my map and small flashlight from my pocket I sat down on a pile of cord-wood by the road to get my location. Concentrating on the map on the Bois de Fere I paid little attention to my seat until my hand struck a woolen blanket beneath me. Thinking it odd that a blanket should be stretched over a wood-pile, I flashed my light to my left and was horrified to see four human feet, encased in U.S. Army shoes silhouettes against the darkness. Putting my hand down to my right I felt human hair and realized that I was sitting on the bodies of two infantrymen who had been killed earlier in the evening. They had been placed by the road by comrades in order that they might be found later by burying details.

A little unnerved by this unusual seat I set off at a trot up the left hand fork and soon emerged in a large clearing. Ahead gleamed a faint candle-light in the window of Grande Marie. Just as I approached Brigade Headquarters there came the crash of a shell explosion directly against the door of the farmhouse. Captain Leahy, of the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry, standing on the door-steps, was immediately killed.

On entering the small stone farmhouse I found General Shelton in hot discussion with Colonel Major. General Shelton informed Major that his troops were too far spent to make the attack called for by Colonel Major. Furthermore, the attack orders of the Corps were in direct contradiction to orders sent up by General Edwards a few hours earlier calling on the 26<sup>th</sup> Division to halt in order that it might be relieved by the 42<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Division (which was marching from Chateau Thierry). Colonel Major's attack was never (p86) made.

The condition of our shattered infantry of the 51<sup>st</sup> Brigade in the woods nearby was deplorable. Their positions were raked by German artillery fire throughout the night. The men shifted from tree to tree, vainly seeking shelter. They had been advancing for five days with little food or sleep and without blankets. One of their bravest leaders, Major George Rau, 1<sup>st</sup> battalion, 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, was struck directly by a 3" shell and was instantly killed. I was stunned by the word of his death as I had been close to him for many months and had talked with him at noon-time.

At 3 A.M. this shell-fire shifted to our farmhouse. First came a crash on the peak of the roof which scattered clinking tiles over the yard. Next a blast at the left with drove in the glass in the windows where the General and the Chief of Staff were planning the events of July 25<sup>th</sup>. Then a cry of "gas" from the sentry at the door. Drawing on our gas masks we moved as one man to the cellar. It was surprising how quickly everyone decided to spend a few moments in the pitch black cellar. There were more odors than gas in that dark hole. The Germans had long used its entire floor as a toilet, but in gas masks we failed to notice this filth. Just at dawn on July 25<sup>th</sup> this shell-fire ceased and we emerged from our disagreeable abode, longing for a breakfast that never appeared.

At 6:00 A.M. General Shelton ordered me to hasten one half mile to the north where I was to meet a battalion of the Rainbow Division and to lead these relieving troops to the front-line position occupied by the 102<sup>nd</sup>.

A hot July sun was casting its brilliant rays over the rolling fields north of our battered farmhouse as I dragged my weary legs across acres of short grass. Alas, (p87) the day was too clear. Visibility was perfect. A nearby German balloon was scanning this field, watching closely for any sign of troop movements.

A half mile to the west I saw a drab column of 42<sup>nd</sup> Division Infantry, plodding slowly across the field in my direction. It was the battalion I was to guide to the front line. Running across the field I met the Major in command, called his attention to the balloon ahead and urged that he break his column of squads, leave the road and bring his men through the woods in double files at general intervals. He snorted at my suggestion, said his men were too damned tired to push through the wood so in column of squads he marched his troops along the edge of the woods. At once the balloon saw this target. Soon a shell slammed in just ahead of us, throwing soft earth over us, but doing no harm. The next shell struck the tail of our column. Groans and cries of "First Aid" came to us. The Major scuttled into the woods, scattering his column. A few prostrate figures remaining motionless in the open field proved the folly of advancing under balloon observation. Fortunately stretcher bearers were available to carry those who were wounded into the cover of the woods before a second salvo of shells tore holes in the grassy trail which this group of one thousand infantrymen had been following.

By noontime the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division forces had taken over our entire front line along the Jaulgone Highway. Gradually the survivors' infantry platoons emerged regiments near Epieds. For eight days these brave but haggard forces had driven eastward against an entrenched foe. Suffering from enemy fire, gas, hunger, thirst, and loss of sleep they were uncomplaining in the face of the loss (p88) of nearly half of their comrades.

At 1:00 P.M. I reported to General Shelton that the troops in my particular area were fully relieved he ordered me to get my motorcycle and to locate a new brigade headquarters in Etrepilly, some six miles to the rear. While walking back through the woods to my machine I encountered large groups of French cavalry armed with gleaming lances and short carbines. Their mounts were in superb condition. I was told that 10,000 French cavalrymen were in the immediate district awaiting an opportunity to dash through any hole in the German line to flank the German infantry by flanking attacks from the enemy's rear. Unfortunately, barbed wire and ceaseless machine-gun rear-guard action made it impossible for our mounted allies to take any part in our attack.

Near the road to Epieds I found my motorcycle reposing peacefully against a tree. Its dented engine came to life instantly and in a few moments I was back in Epieds. Here I dismounted for a few minutes to study a German machine gun nest of the type that had raised such havoc among our skirmish lines. The guns were placed at the edge of the woods at the ends of deep trenches live graves in appearance. Over these short trenches heavy logs gave full protection from shell fragments. The Germans had lain snugly in the bottom of such trenches at ten-yard intervals around this wheat field until our barrage had swept over. Then merely raising their helmets over the parapet they had superb fields of enfilading fire without any risk of being put out of action. In fact, our advance patrols seldom knew the location of the guns which

knocked down their comrades. All fire was lateral rather than frontal. This sweeping cross-fire was unusually deadly and almost impossible (p89) to stop by any other means than by grenade and bayonet. One had to admire the skill which these guns had been placed and handled. A few men in such positions would stop a hundred times their number of attacking infantry.

(p90) As I drove my motorcycle slowly back towards the Soissons road the intensity of the struggle for Epieds and Trugny were again forcefully brought to my attention. Many ghastly remains of artillery horses added unspeakable odors to foul air. Rifles and blankets lay in the edges of woods. Here and there were ration dumps, piles of corned-beef cans, left far behind by the advancing infantry.

Near La Sacerie I met a car containing Y.M.C.A. men and women who had driven out from Meaux on a sight-seeing trip. How strange to see a woman in such a spot. Their light laughter and lack of understanding concerning the sacrifices made on that field enraged me. How could anybody jest in such surroundings?

At 6 P.M. our Brigade Headquarters group reassembled in the war-torn town of Etrepilly. We were near the old line of Bouresches.

Etrepilly stood in a narrow valley through which a road wound uphill to the plateau above. It had been captured by the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, and had been contained strong positions for German machine guns and trench mortars.

Of its two score houses only one had a roof remaining intact. This house we entered cautiously fearing "booby" traps. After peering up the chimney for mines and lifting the bricks of the kitchen hearth in a search for hidden shells, the cooks prepared supper. The garden behind our house contained a heavy minen werfer and a large supply of fused trench mortar shells were scattered through the grass. Knowing well the havoc such ammunition could cause we avoided walking in the garden.

Our little cottage in Etrepilly illustrated wonderfully well the care with which the enemy destroyed property. (p91) All doors in this home had been unhinged and carried off to Germany. Every bit of furniture was gone. All pipes had been torn out of the house as a final bit of spite pictures had been smashed and fully a quart of ink splashed across a silk brocade wall covering in the parlor. The latter means of warfare seemed too despicable for any sane man to adopt.

After supper we moved further back to COUPRU where we slept serenely on the hay in a huge barn. The following morning I tied a rope to a German helmet, lowered it into a shallow well and drew up enough water for a shave and a sponge-bath. Just as I finished a battered infantry company plodded down the road toward the Marne, with a nervous-looking cow at its rear. I knew the cook who was leading the strange mascot, so I ran out to ask him whose property it was. He did not know and nobody wanted to know. He told me that Betsy (the cow) had flat feet and as a result bothered the Captain by delaying the company's progress. When last seen the cook was dragging this unwilling company member down the road in a vain effort to keep up with the vanishing column. This morning July 27<sup>th</sup> we moved again (the fifth move in five days) to beautiful Chateau Le Saussoy located on the banks of the Marne in the little village of Chaningny. Division Headquarters was a short distance down the Marne at La Ferte. As

General Shelton was greatly exhausted by the strain of a week's fighting he asked me to write his official report of the operations just concluded. General Edwards was expecting this report the following noon, so I sat up all night in the quiet Chateau writing by candle-light the following account of the activities of the 51<sup>st</sup> Brigade in the Second Battle of (p92) the Marne. Much of this was revised by General Shelton but I append my original copy, which gives a fair account of our operations.

(p93)

REPORT OF OPERATIONS.

July 18-22<sup>nd</sup> (Inclusive)

Written for General Shelton

By P.H. English

51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade.

1. At 3:00 18<sup>th</sup> July 1918 F.O. 51 26<sup>th</sup> Division was received at H.Q. 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade. According to provisions of this order the 26<sup>th</sup> Division was to attack in conjunction with the 10<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> armies in an effort to take the enemy in his rear north of Chateau-Thierry. Guide to be left at all times. 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade to push forward first. 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade to stand fast and await orders.
2. Day 18 July quiet on front 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade. Heavy fighting in Sector adjoining. Liaison maintained with 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry by 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry at Bouresches station.
3. At 17:00 18 July F.O. 52 26<sup>th</sup> Division received announcing objectives to be attained, and limited of Brigade zones of action in case of advance. 1<sup>st</sup> battalion 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry ordered into Brigade Reserve. 1<sup>st</sup> battalion 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry into Division Reserve. At 22:00 call for barrage in front of Bouresches. Barrage falls promptly. C.O. 102<sup>nd</sup> reports that the Germans who tried to enter town are rerouted.

July 19<sup>th</sup>

4. Advance of the 51<sup>st</sup> Brigade delayed by enemy resistance in sector of 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. C.O.s 101<sup>st</sup>, 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry and 102<sup>nd</sup> Machine Gun Battalion assembled at 11:30 and plan of attack perfected. Line between regimental zones determined. Colonel Parker ordered to advance in a north-easterly direction until he was clear of Bouresches Wood when he was to turn due East.

July 20.

5. Progress of 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade showed that time to advance (p94) guiding left, was near at hand. "H" hour announced as 15:00 (F.O. 55.)
6. At 15:00 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry went forward into Bouresches Wood on entire regimental front. 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion advanced in support. Advance made under heavy machine-gun fire. Hostile artillery fire very light.
7. The 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry, following the standing order to guide left moved forward from its advance line at 15:55, maintaining close liaison with the right of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry and with the left of the 146<sup>th</sup> French regiment.
8. By midnight 79 prisoners had gone through Headquarters 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade after being questioned by Lieutenant Zimmerman, G 2. 26<sup>th</sup> Division.

July 21

9. Between 1:00 and 3:00 the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> battalions of the 102<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry reorganized on a north and south lines extending along the eastern edge of Bouresches Wood, and thence south to the eastern edge of Vaux. At dawn the attack was resumed by both regiments in an easterly direction against the Bois de Borne Agron and the Bois de Rochets. Heavy artillery fire on these woods during the night of July 20-21 had cleared the way for this attack and no resistance was encountered.
10. At 3:00 message received from Colonel Parker 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry announcing capture of some 100 prisoners, including 2 officers; 1 "88" gun, 2 "77"s an batteries of 3" and 6" trench mortars (all taken in Bouresches Wood.)
11. At 11:00 Headquarters 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade was closed at Domptin and reopened at noon in Vaux. Hill 204 and Chateau-Thierry were abandoned by the enemy during the night of July 20-21.
12. (p95) At 14:00 the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry had reached the woods west of Champ d Asile Farm and reorganized for further advance. At 17:00 the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry had reached Blanchard Farm. The enemy had retired to the vicinity of Trugny and offered no resistance to the advancing line. At dusk the advance was resumed by both regiments and the Chateau-Thierry-Soissons road was crossed without opposition. All battalions of the 101<sup>st</sup> bivouaced for the night in the woods east of Champluisant Farm. All battalions of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry bivouaced for the night in the north-eastern limit of Breteuil Wood.
13. In accordance with F.O. 58 26<sup>th</sup> Division 51 Brigade Headquarters closed at Vaux at 20:00 to reopen at La Sacerie Farm at 23:45.
14. F. O. 58 ordered an immediate resumption of the attack, giving as objective the Fereen Tardenois-Janlgonne road.

July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

15. At 2:00 General Shelton received Field Message from Chief of Staff 26<sup>th</sup> Division (Colonel Major) directing 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade to take over entire zone formerly assigned to the 26<sup>th</sup> Division. The same order assigned to the 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade the zone on the left which was to have been covered by the 167<sup>th</sup> French regiment. This order was at once transmitted to Colonel Logan and Parker and to Major Murphy 102<sup>nd</sup> Machine Gun battalion by special motorcycle courier. Patrols from 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry disclosed fact that Trugny was held by a number of machine-gun nests.

At 4:00 the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry advanced toward Trugny from Breteuil Wood, supported on the left by Cos. E. and F. 102<sup>nd</sup> and on the right by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 102<sup>nd</sup>. Advancing through heavy machine gun fire and with (p96) slight artillery support the troops suffered heavy losses but succeeded in reaching Trugny. Heavy artillery fire directed by airplane on the attacking troops caused casualties in the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion of 25% of the effectives, and a withdrawal of the troops became necessary to enable our artillery to deal with enemy machine-guns located on elevation to west of Trugny and in edge of Trugny Wood.

16. At 4:00 the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> battalions 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry advanced from Champluisant Farm past Verdilly and attempted to outflank Trugny on the east but were stopped in the woods

south of Trugny by heavy machine-gunfire. The entire regiment bivouacked in this place during the night of July 22-23. Heavy destructive fire by our artillery on Trugny and Epieds during the night.

July 23.

During the entire day the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry remained in the Bois de Bretenil.

18. (Jenna's note: in book, this is "18" and not the correct "17".) At dawn in accordance with F. O. 59 26<sup>th</sup> Division the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry attacked in northeasterly direction through the Bois de Trugny with the object of piercing the enemy's line of resistance. This attack was halted at 10:15 by extremely hostile machine-gun fire from the tree tops in woods north of Epieds. Our artillery laid a violence fire on enemy strong points. The casualties of the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry were heavy during this action.

July 24.

19. In accordance with F. O. 62. 26<sup>th</sup> Division the Brigade was reinforced during the night of July 23-24 by the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion 112<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 28<sup>th</sup> Division. This battalion was to attack through the Trugny Wood at 4:05, but the enemy's withdrawal during the night changed this attack into a pursuit which continues all day. The 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion (p97) 112<sup>th</sup> acting as advance guard, the 101<sup>st</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Infantries following in column on the wood road leading northeast from Epied.

20. No contact was established with the enemy until evening when the advance guard was checked by machine-gun fire at the Fere-en-Tardenois Road. Here under orders from General Shelton it took up an outpost position in the woods just west of the road. This battalion was supported in its position by 16 guns of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Machine Gun Battalion.

21. At 16:00 the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry in the Bois de Fereand took up a position with the advance guard, under artillery fire east and northeast of Logette Pond. Troops of the 42<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Division relieved our infantry in these positions during the morning of July 25<sup>th</sup>.

(p98) On August 1<sup>st</sup> all 102<sup>nd</sup> men were upset by word that Colonel John Henry Parker was to be relieved of his command. After six months of anxiety and peril the Colonel's health has failed. His nerves were on an edge, and he was given a much needed leave before being assigned to another infantry command. "Machine Gun" Parker was a born leader of men. He instilled a fighting spirit in the 102<sup>nd</sup>, unequalled in the Division. He left a host of sincere friends.

On August 4<sup>th</sup> came unexpected orders from Division Headquarters, assigning me temporarily to head the Motorcycle Dispatch Service of a new 6<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, forming at Neuf Chateau. To leave the old Division! With true soldier loyalty we felt that no other body of men equalled the 26<sup>th</sup>. General Shelton consoled me by predicting many weeks of training to come, a true prophecy. He also said that the next fight was going to be north of Neuf Chateau, and urged me to obey my orders without complaint. As a matter of fact I was still badly shaken from numerous heavy falls from my motorcycle on dark woodland trails and my wounded leg bothered me considerably. So I was glad to stop riding for a few days. With feelings of deepest gloom I packed my knapsack and set off for Neuf Chateau via Paris. In the A.E.F. every officer and enlisted man moving from one district to another found it advisable to make the trip by Paris.

How strange it seemed to see the life of a great city after fifteen weeks spent in barn yards, trenches, cellars and woods. The long-range gun was still dropping shells on the boulevards at frequent intervals, but the dull crash of "arrivals" no longer stirred up the panic which I had witnessed in passing thru Paris in March. The people seemed (p99) more at ease and more hopeful. In walking thru the section near Notre Dame Cathedral I came upon a four-story apartment house shortly after a long-range shell struck its front. For two stories beneath the roof the front wall was missing. Floors had sagged and furniture tottered, ready to pitch into a pile of plaster and brick on the sidewalk. That evening I went to a lively musical revue in a tiny theatre known as "The Abri." Its front was heavily sand-bagged, but inside all was as merry as possible.

On August 7<sup>th</sup> I reported for duty at 6<sup>th</sup> Corps Headquarters near the Joan of Arc statue in Neuf Chateau. An army Corps usually handled the supply and operations of from four to six combat divisions, but this Corps was only an embryo and had no troops assigned to it. Day by day Brigadier Generals, Colonels, and Majors arrived to form the various staff sections: G. 1. (Supply), G. 2. (Enemy Operations), G. 3. (Operations and orders). Every officer was cursing at his new assignment. There was little to do. However, I was soon happier when a dozen splendid new motorcycles roared up to headquarters, and immediately stole one to pay a surprise visit to Madame Laval in nearby Certilleux. How lonesome the hamlet seemed without the toops of my old third battalion.

A jolly fat infantry captain, partially blinded by shell fire joined me in the Despatch office and together we studied mysterious code books which enabled us to change concise attack orders, such as "23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry will advance to Verdun at 20 o'clock" into absurd groups of four letters, "PVAX GUYZ LXPZ ORBC." We soon found that it was twice as hard to decode. Especially when five or six quick-tempered Colonels were conducted an attack and expecting instantaneous service. One letter out of place spoiled the whole message (p100) so we had to be very careful. Our Corps Commander was Major General Omar Bundy, a small gentlemanly gray-haired man, who had directed the Second Division in its desperate capture of Belleau Woods. I liked his unassuming direct ways and was glad to have the privilege of knowing and serving him.

By the 12<sup>th</sup> of August our Corps organization, some 40 officers and 150 enlisted men, was complete. At once we were moved 45 miles south to Bourbonne-les-Bains to direct the training of eight combat divisions in open terrain battle exercises. The 26<sup>th</sup> Division was one of those divisions, but I had no time to call on my friends. Each day we ran off a mock battle between the units of nearby divisions. It was my task to send manoeuvre orders to a certain division, to provide transportation – a dozen Cadillac cars – for umpires, to set up Message Centers in distance villages, to assemble information from unknown woods, and to attend criticisms where any breakdown in communication lines caused caustic comment. These bloodless battles went on for three weeks. My only chance to see Bourbonne was on Sunday when our mock wars ceased. I lived in a little garret over the home of a small farmer and rabbit-hunter. In very bad French we nightly planned a rabbit-hunt for the following day, but I never had a chance to go shooting. Our eight divisions covered a circle nearly sixty miles across, so there was little leisure for the Despatch Service.

One advantage in Bourbonne was its municipal bath. It was a tiny village, a health resort, built over warm sulphur springs. The main bath-house contained eighty huge marble tubs and for five cents one was given a huge towel and a bathroom. On opening the faucet a stream of yellow stinking sulphur water poured forth. The odor was (p101) terrible, the skin remained sticky with sulphur, but it seemed marvelous to have a real bathtub after motorcycling over dusty roads on hot August days. A year's bathing in buckets or muddy brooks made one appreciate a tub.

Having access to telephone wires leading to many divisions I was able to call up the Adjutant of Stuart Kimball's 91<sup>st</sup> Division and to locate him in the little village of THIVET, 35 miles away in the direction of Langres. One fine summer day when I had despatches going to Dijon I hopped into a side-car and ordered my driver to procede via Thivet. In an hour he dropped me at a picturesque little town far above the upper Marne, and continued his trip, giving me three hours to spend his Stuart. Stuart's company driven on by never-ending orders from our Corps for more mock battles was out defending the Marne river from attack by a group of hostile cows. I tramped miles looking for young Kimball, but met a thousand sweating strangers in Khaki.

Late in the afternoon I returned to Stuart's company headquarters in a charming little farm-house, and awaited his return. At dusk a weary machine-gun company trudged up the long hill into Thivet. There was my cousin, with a rubber machine-gun hose worn as a necktie and a large tripod on his back. He saw me, but marched by in silence, as he could not fall out of formation until dismissed.

In a few minutes he shook off his burden and we met for the first time in four years. He cursed his occupation which he called "Playing mule." Animals were not available for his platoon, so the men had to act as substitutes. This was not much fun on a hot August afternoon. I inspected Stuart's billet, which he shared with some hens, and had a pleasant chat with him in a big barn. (p102) Soon my side-car returned to interrupt my account of the Marne fighting. Stuart soon learned about combat from warm personal experience in the Argonne where his division made a superb advance. He had his shoe blown from his foot by a shell-burst and was carried to the rear by German prisoners.

Late in August General Bundy was ordered to make a careful study of the French trench lines extending from GERARDMER to BELFORT along the slopes of the Vosges Mountains. Three cars filled with high ranking staff officers rolled off to the eastward to consider a possible increase of American activity in this rugged area. Almost immediately the rumor leaked out that the impending offensive at Saint Mihiel was to be given up in favor of a new drive for possession of MULHAUSEN and the upper Rhine Valley. For two days later I was hurriedly called by General Briant Wells, ordered to pick my best rider in order that I might rush through to the Vosges with special orders for General Bundy, whose exact whereabouts were unknown. It was impressed on me strongly that the sealed orders in my possession were to be most carefully guarded as they involved the movements of many divisions. My first destination was an American Headquarters in Remiremont, some 40 miles away. At noon-time, in a cold dashing rain, we sped off on a motorcycle and side-car, the precious orders pinned in my shirt pocket. It was a forlorn day, low hanging clouds swept over forest and hill. Driving rain beat in our faces, ran down our necks, soaking us to the skin. Rough dirt roads, twisting thru ravines

and over mountains were two inches deep with slippery mud, which was thrown into our faces by the front wheel. Our route lay through PLOMBIERE. (p103) we were able to reach Remiremont at four. I cannot recall the number of the Corps Headquarters located here, but it seemed to be a kind of a Klu Klux Klan. Due to my bedraggled appearance I was put through a stiff questioning by a group of highly polished officers (G-2's and G-3's). Finally I was led into the "holy of holies" where the Chief of Staff gave me a second set of orders and whispered in my ear that I would find General Bundy in GERARDMER, whither I was to proceed at top-speed.

Again we dashed off through a downpour, heading eastward for ten miles up a rough wooded valley. Up and up we climbed into the mountains, as night closed in on us. Just after dark we skirted a small wooded lake and slide into the tiny French mountain resort known as Gerardmer. In a few moments I located General Bundy in a tiny inn where I handed him my precious envelopes. My driver and I crawled into a little farm house for the night. This was one of the hardest rides I ever made. The roads were so high-crowned that we slid off into deep gutters a half-dozen times. Next morning General Bundy gave me a dozen despatches to take back to Bourbonne-les-Bains. Our return trip was uneventful as the day was clear and the roads much dryer.

Months after the Armistice I learned that General Bundy's detailed reconnaissance in the Vosges was only a ruse to deceive the German high command. Some artillery was moved into position. False orders telling of the movement of a half-dozen Divisions into this area were allowed to fall into the hands of German spies in the (p104) hotel at Belfort. The result was the sending of several German reserve divisions to the Mulhausen district and the diversion of enemy attention from the increasing concentration of American troops about the Saint Mihiel salient. It was an interesting plot to have a part in. It seemed very strange to me at the time that General Bundy should make such an important secret trip in his official Cadillac with his flag flying from the front fender and with his two stars on the windshield. He attracted much attention wherever he stopped.

Early in September combat practice by our six divisions became less hectic. One by one we sent entraining orders to troops in our area to join the concentration about Toul. General Bundy's wall map showed the locations of all combat troops. Gradually the pins denoting combat units gathered in thick clusters to the south of our old Toul Sector. Then these tell-tale pins moved into trench positions. Yet the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps remained quietly at peaceful Bourbonne. We longed to follow our troops northward but no orders came to end our monotonous duty.

Just as we despaired of moving the scene changed like a flash. On September 11<sup>th</sup> we learned that the long-expected Saint Mihiel offensive was to commence on the following morning. Furthermore our Operations Staff was to move to SaiZerais on that morning to observe and assist Fourth Corps Headquarters in handling part of that prodigious drive.

Wild with excitement we listened to the boom of heavy artillery far to the north and watched the flashes of giant guns illuminate a heavily clouded sky. Torrents of rain fell throughout the night. At dawn my couriers roared forth on their motorcycles, heading for action. At 5 A.M. (p105) September 12<sup>th</sup>, three heavily loaded Cadillacs rushed north to Neuf Chateau and on to Toul. The roads were free from traffic, so we tore along at full speed, late into battle, but on our way at last.

After leaving Toul we approached a battle of mammoth proportions. 500,000 Americans and 100,000 French were successfully driving a converging attack to cut off the entire Saint Mihiel Salient. 125,000 Germans and Austrians vainly sought to defend this important area which they had occupied for four years.

The 26<sup>th</sup> Yankee Division together with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> French Divisions were driving over the Meuse Heights, 12 miles to the west. In front of us the 26<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> French, accompanied in line from West to East by the 1<sup>st</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup>, 89<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup>. United States divisions were rapidly progressing to the North towards THIAU COURT. The Sector under control of the IV Corps, which were to assist extended from FLIREY to the Moselle River at Pont a Mousson.

We had no information concerning the progress of our troops. As tense with anxiety and excitement, we dashed toward this southern battle-line at 50 miles an hour.

For me it was a return to familiar country. Nearly every village North of Toul I had visited on my motorcycle in the early spring. Just ahead at Mandres lay the bodies of Captain Locke and a hundred other Connecticut men, killed in the defense of Seicheprey.

The first evidence of an Allied success was the appearance, far ahead of their old stations, of a dozen observation balloons controlling the fire of our heavy artillery.

(p106) The next signs of success in battle were the absence of ambulances or lightly wounded men, walking to the rear. More positive indication of a decisive advance was the presence of exposed artillery of all calibres firing in the open along the Metz road from Beaumont to the Moselle. Under previous conditions these guns would have been instantly put out of action by hostile fire.

As we rushed into Saizerais, we saw convincing proof of a great victory. On an open road to the South of the town, under a light guard of American infantry whose bayonets gleamed in the sunshine, stood in close column 3,000 German and Austrian prisoners. Men who had occupied the hostile trench positions that very morning.

In a few low tar-papered buildings just north of SaizZerais was the IV Corps "operations section" handling the American advance on ten miles of front just ahead of us. I immediately joined the Message Center where a stream of incoming aeroplane, motorcycle and telephone messages were pouring in from our advancing divisions.

On a little hill-top three hundred yards away our corps aeroplane panels were displayed, a huge marker of white canvas outlined against green grass. Every hour of a scout plane would swing down from a great height to drop near our marker a slender tin tube containing maps of the latest front line. These metal containers had a smoke device attached which spat out sparks and blue smoke so that we could readily find the tube even tho it fell in woodlands or at night.

Just across the road from headquarters stood our pigeon wagon, a canvas covered vehicle looking like a huge milk cart. Its sides were pierced by many small netted (p107) windows, thru which one could observe a score of contented carrier pigeons on perches. High in the rear of the wagon was the pigeon entrance, covered by a small wire door. In front of this door was a perch for incoming birds to alight upon. When a pigeon did so a small electronic switch was sprung, a bell rang in our building to call the attendant. He would run out to the wagon, take the little aluminum tube containing the message from the birds leg and lift the door so that the latest messenger might rejoin the other pigeons inside the wagon. These

pigeon wagons were usually stationed at one point for many weeks to enable the birds to become familiar with the landscape and easily find their way back when released from their baskets in the front line. Pigeon messages usually came thru promptly under all weather conditions, as the birds were kept hungry in the lines and sped back to the wagon for food. Foggy weather at times caused delay. Occasionally a German pigeon would alight our wagon. One had to be careful not to release male and female pigeons at the same time. In such a case the home station might be entirely forgotten for a number of hours.

I cannot give a detailed eye-witness account of the Saint Mihiel operation as the next forty-eight hours were entirely taken up by the deciphering and copying of a flood of messages, and the hurrying forward of important orders. With a score of motorcyclists available I was no longer allowed to ride myself, as had been the case on the Marne when only one courier was available at a time. Furthermore the riders were more experienced and better schooled in map-reading. How they rushed off across the ridge! Followed by a streak of dust, a stooping form in leather (p108) helmet and vest flashes across the grassy plains to the north at a mile a minute, headed for distant divisional Headquarters. In a very few minutes the same man returned having covered 15 to 25 miles, wiped the dirt and greases from his face and rested with his happy-go-lucky comrades until it was his turn to make another trip.

My impressions of this battle were necessarily limited by the strict discipline enforced by the necessity of handling each despatch without delay. A dozen tense colonels fairly groaned for endless information. "Where was the front line? On what targets could they heavy artillery drop its fire without endangering our patrols? Was ammunition going forward? Did our aeroplanes know of an advance in a remote wood? Were steps being taken to close all roads to the north by which the enemy might withdraw? Could ambulances and ration wagons cross former no man's land at Mamey? Were the reserve divisions needed at Thiau Court? How heavy were casualties in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division? Had the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division advanced too far? These are a few samples of messages sent and answered.

One time as I went out for a few moments I saw Generals Pershing, Bullard and Liggett talking with a group of our higher officers. At another time I tried most unsuccessfully to talk German with a group of German and Austrian officers who were awaiting questioning. After dark the sky to the north assumed a lurid crimson hue denoting the burning of a score of villages in the Woevre plain by the retreating enemy.

This very evening, September 12<sup>th</sup>, tho we had no word of the event, the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry of the Yankee Division was making its daring night march of six miles along the densely (p109) wooded Tranchee de Calonne to Hattonchatel and Vigneulles. At 3:00 A.M., September 13<sup>th</sup>, its advance guard, headed by Colonel Hiram Bearss and Captain A.F. Oberlin, cleared the Meuse Heights and descended to occupy flaming villages on the plain. Unfortunately they cut the main road northward from Vigneulles just too late to capture a host of retreating Germans. This headlong dash thru dense woods met no resistance. A few well-placed machine guns would have caused heavy American losses for the speed of advance made it impossible to throw out flanking units to protect the column.

At 8:00 A.M. infantry of the 1<sup>st</sup> division advancing from Nonsard joined forces with Yankee Division troops in Vigneulles, and the Saint Mihiel Salient existed no longer. The

advance of divisions on our front was deliberately halted just beyond range of heavy German artillery located in the defenses of Metz.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> our infantry dug in and organized their new positions stretching across the head of the old Salient. No serious counter attacks developed. Thiau Court was heavily shelled and partially burned. One tragedy of the 13<sup>th</sup> was the bombing near Vigneulles of Company F. 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (partly composed of New Haven Grays) by unknown allied aviators, who flew over them at a great height. The company was drawn up on a road when a number of small bombs struck a group of officers and non-commissioned officers, killing 9 and wounding a score.

After September 13<sup>th</sup> our front was firmly entrenched and quiet aside from harassing artillery fire. Life became more serene in our tiny village. In fact so serene that I despaired of further activity and at 5:30 one evening I entered the office of the Adjutant, General Briant Wells, (p110) where I made an earnest plea to be returned immediately to the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. I wonder that he listened to me at all as it was most unusual for a first lieutenant to suggest to a brigadier general such a change of duty. I had purposefully chosen an hour when the office was empty and had selected a kindly general. He was most courteous. Inquired in detail about my past services, learned of my grenade troubles, temporary disability and dislike of my Corps duties. He promised to write to G.H.Q. at Chaumont in an effort to return me to my old division. He kept his word, but three dull weeks passed before my transfer orders became a real fact.

On September 15<sup>th</sup> the IV Corps moved to the Argonne, leaving our 6<sup>th</sup> Corps in charge of four divisions which stretched along six miles in front to the west of the Moselle River, directly opposite Metz. From our observation post of Mousson one could plainly see that great German fortress a dozen miles to the north. Aside from the instigation of frequent raids on enemy positions we had little fighting to handle. A golden September sun shown on peaceful fields and a long double line of lazily swinging observation balloons. Balloon observers were equipped with powerful telescopes with a range of 15 to 20 miles. Day after day from dawn to dark these balloons strained at 2500 feet of steel cable, secured to a windlass on a camouflaged truck far below in a wood. In the nearby town of LIVERDUN a tragedy occurred which proved the deadly accuracy of balloon observation. A company of engineers was bold enough to form its daily mess line in an open field, some eight miles from our front line. One clear autumn noon they came under the observation of a German balloon some 15 miles distant. Without warning a salvo of high explosive (p111) shells burst on and about that lines of men, killing or wounding nearly half of them. Probably one-third of our A.E.F. casualties were occasioned by fire directed from these innocent appearing kite-balloons.

As September drew to a close new changes appeared on our great "operations" map in the Corps Headquarters. Dozen of reserve divisions in the Saint Mihiel area were concentrated in the district between Bar-le-Duc, Chalons and Verdun. A close study of these pins indicated hundreds of thousands of Americans gathered south of the Argonne Forest. One by one veteran divisions of our front were replaced by inexperienced troops, and it became apparent that the next great offensive by our forces was to be west of the Meuse against the rugged wooded hills of the Argonne.

Our 6<sup>th</sup> Corps area was too far to the East to take part in the opening advance of the Meuse Argonne battle on September 26<sup>th</sup>, but we made immense preparations for heavy

artillery fire and very heavy raids for that date, in order to pin down hostile reserves and to confuse the enemy as to the scope of the advance.

At 11:30 P.M. on September 25<sup>th</sup>, thousands of cannons commenced a heavy fire on the German Lines in front of us. Every woodland for twenty miles to our east and as far to the west flashed incessantly with the fire of concealed American batteries. Far ahead a line of flashing lights and rumble of heavy explosions marked the German positions, crumbling under the most intense artillery concentration of the World War. At 2:30 A.M., September 26<sup>th</sup>, this fire redoubled far to our left – west of the Meuse – where 225,000 Americans made ready to go over the top from Verdun to Rheims.

Our part at the opening of this great offensive (p112) was to simulate a real advance by charging into the German front lines at the break of day. One the Meuse heights my own division was performing a similar false attack, which resulted in very heavy losses during the successful capture of MARCHEVILLE by the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry.

In accordance with orders every division on our front flung its best troops against the German front line at dawn on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Our aeroplanes sweeping back with reports of victory caused a feeling of elation, but almost immediate news of heavy casualties turned our joy to sorrow. It was hard for the men under our corps to understand why they were to advance in the morning in the face of desperate machine-gun fire and to retire to their starting point at night. They could not understand that the loss of lives on our front would benefit their comrades 40 miles away in Argonne. Naturally they felt that our leaders had blundered. Nothing was further from the truth. Their brave sacrifice deceived enemy into holding 80,000 reserve troops east of the Meuse. Yet it was heart-breaking to capture and abandon again a score of our hotly contested enemy positions. The hills north of us were covered with the bodies of our dead before nightfall ended the victorious chatter of German machine guns. To order these attacks was a terrible duty but justifiable when one considered the whole picture. Night brought a flood of our wounded, but few prisoners.

#### BACK TO THE YANKEE DIVISION.

The period from September 26<sup>th</sup> to October 14<sup>th</sup> was the most depressing that I ever experienced in France. Our front was quiet. There was little to do aside from the direction (p113) of an occasional raid. The 6<sup>th</sup> Corps was idle on the very edge of the world's greatest battle. Where were my old pals in the Yankee Division? Why couldn't I join them? I had long weeks ago tired of typewriters, field clerks, interpreters, and the polished band-box of officers of this hum-drum headquarters. News from the Argonne told of appalling American losses and a staunch enemy resistance. Nobody dreamed of an armistice. My longing to rejoin my old division in this Argonne campaign was keen. And there I was! Tied to code-books, fussy old colonels, and fat contented majors who would call for a Cadillac limousine for a pleasure trip to Nancy or Toul as tho the war was the last thing on their minds.

On October 12<sup>th</sup> General Briant Wells called me to his office, thanked me for handling his orders through August and September, then handed me orders from Chaumont, which directed me to return to the 26<sup>th</sup> Division which was in a rest area south of Verdun. In about 10 minutes my baggage was rolled and tossed into an ambulance, which was leaving for Toul.

Good-bye to the hated 6<sup>th</sup> Corps. I was going back to my friends. At Toul I had learned that the Y.D. was going to rest for a number of days, so I decided to celebrate my release from virtual prison with Marshall Williams, who was near at hand. I reached him by telephoning Doctor Flint's unit at Aulnois. He hiked to Toul at dawn; we proceeded to General Traub's old café on the back street where in the midst of a slovenly French family we drank many toasts to the future. Poor Marsh had been stranded in the hills with his immobile hospital for months. He fairly begged me to take him with me to the Argonne, but finally yielded to duty and common sense, and dutifully trudged off to return to Dr. Flint at base 39. The Paris train (p114) rolled in. It was too much to resist. Another lieutenant in rubber boots with a sawed-off shot-gun on his shoulder, strolled up and down the platform of the Toul Station with me. There was no train to Verdun that night. The Division was resting. Why not go to Paris? As the express rolled westward we swung aboard the last car – off for Verdun – via Paris.

About 8:00 P.M. my new friend and I strolled up the Champs Elysee. He with his shot-gun (with which he had killed numerous Germans). I with my knapsack at my back, looking for a theatre. It seemed incredible to have freedom and to be in Paris. We bought tickets to a musical show, which he attended in his muddy rubber boots with his stubby shot-gun. He said the gun was too valuable to leave behind him so he carried it everywhere.

Morning came all too soon. Crawling down countless flights of stairs from an attic bedroom, assigned me by military police, I jumped aboard the first train to Bar-le-duc where I changed for Verdun.

The Bar-le-duc station had recently been heavily bombed. It was a mass of splinters, broken glass and fallen plaster. The town for a number of squares was in the same condition. Going through a deluge of rain to a little hotel I vainly sought quarters for the night. No trains were running to Verdun, as a bomb had broken the narrow-gauge tracks. The town swarmed with slightly wounded Americans from nearby hospitals. I had supper with an aviator who had just fallen 6,000 feet in a Liberty-motored plane. He said the plane exploded as he neared the ground and he landed severely burned. His criticisms of Liberty motors and "flying coffins" was very harsh.

(p115) From wounded infantry officers I learned of the terrific losses our troops were suffering in the depths of the Argonne. These officers were brave enough, but they honestly believed the German positions on the Krimehilde line were invincible. They told me that our offensive was definitely halted and that conditions were unbearable and changing from bad to worse. In the midst of this cheery discussion I glanced across the room and saw Oscar Maurer, pastor of Center Church, New Haven, Y.M.C.A worker with the 26<sup>th</sup> Division. He was kind enough to find me a room and to promise to drive me 40 miles to Verdun on the following day. From him I learned that my division was on its way into the Argonne battle, but would rest a few more days about Verdun.

At noon on the following day a dilapidated Y.M.C.A. Ford rolled northward from Bar-le-duc on the "Sacred Way" the famous road that saved Verdun in 1916. This beautiful highway followed a series of rolling valleys, passed through Souilly and thence to the rugged hills above the Meuse, now famed from one end of the world to the other for deeds of heroism accomplished on their shell-torn slopes. Dead Man's Hill, Pepper Hill, Forts Denaumont and

Vaux. Their names mean human sacrifice for country under appalling conditions of mud, starvation, and despair.

As we neared this new battle area the guns growled more and more savagely, for we were entering the right-hand portion of the great Meuse-Argonne battle. Just before dark our Ford rolled wearily up to an immense concrete tunnel in a hillside south of Verdun. It was the entrance of the mighty Citadel, an underground fortress capable of sheltering 25,000 men, the headquarters of the 26<sup>th</sup> Division. After an absence of 10 weeks I was back among friends.

(p116)

#### THE BATTLE OF MEUSE HEIGHTS.

As I stepped thru the immense gates at the entrance to the Citadel I passed into a short tunnel which led into a court paved with stone flagging and surrounded by lofty masonry walls. On top of these walls were steel cupolas containing light artillery. Immense banks of earth were piled against the outside of the walls. As a means of defense the citadel was circled by a dry moat some 30 feet deep with vertical walls of masonry. The moat bottom was covered with barbed wire entanglements, as well as the entire belt of land around this great defense center. In spite of its appearance of great strength it was a dangerous spot, for the Germans controlled hill-tops a few miles to the north from which they could direct a fire of deadly accuracy on any point in Verdun. In fact the area about the Citadel was more dangerous for troops to occupy than many points miles nearer the trenches.

Deceived by the mighty walls about the Citadel's inner court I said to myself, "Well a fellow certainly would be safe if he stayed here." Wham-Zeeeee! A German shell of heavy caliber burst against the wall overhead, and threw its screeching hot fragments about the court. I ducked into the nearest abri for shelter, understanding now why so few men were moving about under these mighty abutments. I entered a second tunnel which bore the sign "Headquarters 26<sup>th</sup> Division."

By a strange twist of fate the first man I encountered in this gas-lighted entrance hall was General Clarence Edwards, Divisional Commander. He was leaving the Citadel (p117) to arrange to take over a portion of the front line that very night, October 15<sup>th</sup>. As I saluted he recognized me and asked me where I was going with my knapsack on my back. I told him that I was on my way back to the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry after a long tour of duty at the Message Center of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps. He told me to wait in the entrance tunnel for a moment while he had word with the Chief of Staff. Returning to me from an inner room he ordered me to report to Colonel Major and stepped out into darkness. Puzzled by his action I took off my helmet and pack and then entered a dimly lighted office far underground, where I found Colonel Major seated at a desk. Reporting back for duty with my division I requested an immediate assignment to my former infantry regiment. Then came a great surprise and disappointment, for the Chief of Staff told me that the General had ordered me to take charge of the Division Despatch Service as Lieutenant Smith of the Message Center had just gone to the hospital with pneumonia. The motorcyclists and telephone services were without a head. The division was going into line that very night. As orders were being misspent, due to a lack of control of the riders, I was to take charge at once before further confusion arose.

Cursing inwardly at my wretched luck I stumbled down a dark tunnel into a little cell surrounded by telephones. On a bench nearby sat the motorcyclists, many of whom I knew. In a few moments Sergeants Gavin and Feneslan showed me the various wires. All through the night we talked in crazy code to distant colonels, checking up the arrival of battalions in combat positions to the north of Fort Donanmont. I shall always remember this night with its unexpected (p118) resumption of staff duty as one of my bitterest disappointments in the line of duty. Toward morning I left the wires to my faithful comrades and crawling into a little dug-out on the side of the passage-way tried vainly to sleep. The air was damp and warm. It wreaked with powerful disinfectants. Outside many miles away the continued roar of artillery told of renewed attacks in the Argonne. Out there in the rain my men were taking over a new sector, while I was tied to a group of telephones far under ground. How strange are the ways of fate. If I had not met General Edwards I would have been with my regiment.

Dawn came outside, but its rays never penetrated our subway headquarters. Down here night and day were alike. Dim electric lights cast a tawny light on white-washed masonry tunnels. The Citadel was a reserve depot capable of housing 25,000 men. Its tunnels extended for miles on a number of different levels. It contained immense barracks, a large chapel, numerous mess rooms and a great bakery, all 50 to 100 feet underground. Its sanitary condition was excellent considering the fact that hundreds of thousands of men had been quartered in these forlorn vaults.

Fortunately I was forced to spend only one night at this great fortress. Early on the morning of October 16<sup>th</sup>, General Edwards established an advance headquarters in a strong shelter just to the West of Bras on the banks of the Meuse. Here he was joined by G-2 (Intelligence Section), G-3 (Operations Section) and the Message Center.

Glad to escape from our tunnel we jumped in a truck and bumped over the latest of Verdun's collapsed building fronts strewn over the streets. We emerged at the Porte Chaussee and sped up a muddy road, well blasted by fresh artillery fire to what was once Bras.

(p119) This unhappy town was in the French front line for a number of months in 1916. As a result it had not only been knocked down but had been absolutely flattened by avalanches of heavy shells. Being at an important road fork and on the Meuse Canal it was used as a first-aid center and ammunition dump. In appearance it resembled a gigantic prairie dog village on which some careless truckman had deposited frequent piles of plaster and tiles. Everybody lived in deep dug-outs under the cellars of ruined farm-houses. There was good reason to stay underground for at regular intervals, day and night, the enemy searched the Meuse Highway with shrapnel, high-explosive and occasionally added nocturnal treatments by aerial bombs. Soldiers at Bras slept all day far underground and stirred about their various tasks when the sun had set.

Turning to the left in the center of Bras our truck came to a stop on the banks of the Meuse Canal. Here we unloaded our packs and, crossing a foot-bridge over the canal, entered a huge dug-out under the abutment of a shattered highway bridge. This sturdy shelter had been used as an important French headquarters during four years of continuous heavy fighting. As a result it was built to withstand any bombardment. The front wall of the shelter, 80 feet in length, was built on granite blocks 3 feet in thickness. Resting on this wall was a mass of railroad tracks, and concrete 4 feet in thickness. On top of this reinforced concrete were 3 feet

of sandbags and the entire roof was camouflaged by tall grass. Overhead were two round steel cupolas, eight feet across barely protruding above the grass. These were slotted on all sides in such a manner as to give machine-guns a (p120) sweeping fire down the Meuse plains in case of attack. All entrances to this headquarters were masked by a long screen of wire-netting, intermeshed with grass, suspended 10 feet above us on stout poles. This dismal tomb was to be our home for the next four weeks. Its one asset was its strength. Shrapnel and high explosive rolled off of it like water from a duck's back, but this dug-out's back was porous. Rain found its way into the crypt-like quarters readily and it rained steadily. Furthermore the windows were mere 6 inch slots on one side cut through a 3 foot wall, so very little daylight entered to augment our flickering candles. Our bunks contained sacks of musty wet-straw on chicken-netting springs. We slept one above another 3 deep, without sufficient space to sit up in bed. Each bunk contained a very generous allowance of lice, so within a few hours we were continually scratching to divert the attentions of these hungry visitors. Nobody found fault with these forlorn quarters as they were magnificent compared to the mud-holes occupied by the front line infantry to our northeast.

Our mess table stood in the open under a small sheet of corrugated iron. It was always a pleasant diversion to look up at this iron during meal times to count the number of new shrapnel and shell-fragment holes opened in our ceiling since our last sitting.

Just south of our headquarters a temporary wooden bridge spanned the Meuse. This bridge was under German observation, as intermittent wagon traffic drew instant artillery fire from concealed batteries. Fortunately nearly all of this fire was shrapnel, and the gunners consistently set their fuses too short. The result was a sporadic rain of whistling lead balls, having too little (p121) force to pierce our helmets. Little attention was paid to this shrapnel fire, but let one high explosive shell burst overhead and every man in the open would dive for cover. There was many "baby elephants" (heavy corrugated iron shelters), along trails as refuges when heavier shells arrived.

General Edwards' dug-out was next to the Meuse. Then came Colonel Major, Colonel Harsey G-2, Colonel Taylor G-3, the Message Center and a little shelter for the motorcyclists. From the Message Center radiated a web of underground telephone wires, to four infantry regimental commanders, to artillery headquarters, to front line observation posts, and (thru Verdun) to our Corps Commander and neighboring divisions.

It is hard for a peace-time visitor to comprehend the utter desolation of the Meuse Valley in this locality in war time. To our right rose the Heights, brown shell-torn hills, crisscrossed with abandoned trenches and rusty wire. Not a tree remained. Splintered stumps, weeds and thistles covered the fields. Five hundred feet above us and a mile away an irregular earth wall against the horizon denoted the remnants of famous Fort Donnaumont, now in French hands. North of Fort Donnaumont from Beaumont to BELLEU Wood, on a three mile front, our infantry faced the enemy. Low hanging clouds dropped cold rain into countless shell-holes. Roads were inches deep with slippery slimey mud. Every crossroad was accurately registered by enemy artillery, which had practiced on these same intersections since 1914. Moving units were never safe on these shell-swept highways.

Bu October 18<sup>th</sup> out entire Division had taken over its Sector just beneath the hilltops of the Meuse Heights. (p122) These frowning hills, crowned by German machine-guns nests in

concrete pill boxes, looked menacingly down on our muddy exposed shell-hole positions. Such front-line dug-outs as were available had recently been captured from the enemy, and as a result faced the wrong way. Their entrances became death traps instead of shelters. Furthermore our sector was at the point of a pronounced salient, raked from three sides by powerful hostile artillery. As a result our infantry underwent all sensations of being constantly bombarded from the rear. This condition was very various and did much to wear down their morale. The intensity of this fire may be judged by the following extract from an official G-2 report dated October 27<sup>th</sup>. "From 4:30 to 6:30 it was estimated that 10,000 shells fell in the Sector of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry alone." Our division's artillery on that date fire 18,827 "75" shells and 2739 "155" shells (6 inch).

Lack of adequate shelter, combined with continual cold rain caused heavy losses from influenza and pneumonia. Those who write of the glories of war should wallow in a muddy shell-hole under these conditions to learn its actualities. Gas-filled hollows and ceaseless activity of enemy snipers added to the misery of front-line conditions.

### OUR LAST BATTLES AND THE ARMISTICE.

Before the 26<sup>th</sup> Division's advanced Headquarters had settled down to its work at Bras orders came from the Corps Commander to plan a vigorous attack against the left wooded heights of Hill 360 and Ormont Wood. These positions were fortified with concrete machine-gun strong points, heavily wired. Our infantry zone of advance was across open country, enfiladed by invisible machine guns, and (p123) subjected to crushing artillery fire, faultlessly controlled by direct observation from the heights.

General Edwards promptly prepared his troop dispositions which were arranged in detail by Colonels Taylor and Howard of G-3. Within a few hours 44 copies of the complete attack order had been typed, mimeographed and rushed into my dug-out for distribution to all organizations in the Division. My motorcyclists and horsemen dashed away into the night and by dawn signed receipts in my file showed that all unit commanders had received their despatches. These commanders in turn wrote orders covering the action of their particular units and then anxiously awaited our announcement of "H" hour, "Jump-off" Time for the infantry men. Just at this moment we were stunned by orders relieving General Edwards of his command and ordering him back to the United States. This relief was primarily caused by the General's continued refusals to eliminate a half-dozen National Guard officers of high rank from the division. The General believed in the ability of these men. They had, with one exception, proved their fitness on many hard-fought fields; but General Pershing felt differently so our commander had to leave us. I had close personal acquaintance with the officers involved and feel that General Edwards should have relieved one of them, but the service of the others was beyond reproach. Investigations later vindicated our General's judgment as all questioned were later returned to their regiments for further duty.

I shall always remember the misty night when General Edwards bade us farewell. Undaunted by the recent loss of his favorite aide (Nat Simpkins – died of pneumonia) by the (p124) cable announcing the death of his only daughter in America and by the necessity of leaving his men on the eve of battle, he quietly shook hands with his devoted officers, stepped

into his car to vanish down a muddy shell-swept highway. Scarcely an eye was dry as his car rolled away in the gloom of a rainy night.

This change in command had been announced in the front-line on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, the morning of our attack. Every man sensed keenest regret for the "Old Man" was everybody's idol. Remembering the General's last order, to carry on loyally to the end, they swept ahead into Ormont Wood and up Hill 360. Flesh and blood could not face the rain of bullets, shells and gas which raked the slope of 360. For the first time in the war the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry failed to make its objective, but clung tenaciously to an exposed position in shell holes at the foot of the hill.

At Bras our Message Center was a very busy spot. Sergeants Gavin and Feneslan and myself took turns at telephoning coded orders to Brigadiers, Colonels and Majors of all organizations of the division. When the fighting reached critical periods these orders were rushed to our dug-outs as brief notes written in lead pencil by the Chief of Staff. At times it was our task to secure aeroplanes from a French aviation field 50 miles away. This call for air service was very difficult to make. We talked thru a half-dozen switchboards; some American, some French, building up a precarious chain of communication which was continually interrupted.

On one occasion we secured a French aeroplane only after 3 hours of vexatious conversation. When our aviator finally swung over our canvas panel and headed for the front, we were tremendously relieved. He was to mark our front-line position on a map and to drop his diagram back at Bras, (p125) in order that our artillery might fire without injury to our men. A few minutes later we received word that our plucky French aviator had been shot down in flames by a German flyer who has swept down from a great height.

At another time a most vital map when released from a returning aeroplane fell squarely in the center of the Meuse Canal. I hastily organized a diving corps of a half-dozen expert swimmers who penetrated eight feet of water and an indefinite depth of mud to successfully rescue the container. The map itself was legible and of great aid to the artillery.

A frequent occurrence at night was the receipt of an emergency call from our infantry for a protective barrage at a certain point. We would instantly transmit this call to nearby Artillery Headquarters and would then step down by the Meuse to watch the flashes from our batteries appear on the sides of a dozen hillsides before us. At times when the 6-inch guns joined the chorus the din was overpowering.

Such fire usually started some hostile artillery action, with occasional hits near home. One evening a huge German shell struck just across the canal, about 100 feet distant. Exploding against a tree trunk with a mighty blast it threw a poplar splinter 8 feet long and one foot in thickness against the wall of our shelter. Running out of our shaking abri to see what had happened we tripped over this new arrival and burned our fingers attempting to pick up hot-shell fragments.

One black night in a rainstorm when conditions were bad for my motorcyclists the Chief of Staff directed me to send a horseman to the 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade with urgent orders. Due to the temporary absence of our other mounted men on other mission I was forced to borrow a splendid (p126) mount from a Colonel. This animal was the Colonel's personal property and had been his mount for several years in the United States. My rider galloped off in a deluge of rain towards Bras. A moment later a number of shells crashed in Bras. Five minutes later my courier limped back, bearing a bloody saddle. He had stopped at bras to tighten his saddle girth. A shell

bursting nearby killed the horse but spared the rider. Ten minutes later the same courier galloped up the Meuse Heights on a second horse, this time to successfully complete his mission.

The gallant service performed by our motorcyclists in this battle deserves special comment. Sergeant Nelson, ably backed by Tedesco, Maturo, Boomhauer, Hobbs and Ryder (to mention only a few of the dozen) were ready to ride on a moment's notice at any hour of the night. Slipping along over slimey trails, ripped and torn by frequent shells, they had no complaints to make. At the end of such a ride the couriers' faces would be brown with sticky mud which dripped from noses and chins. Needless to say all trips were made without lights. All the motorcycles were battered and nearly worn out so that we had to constantly strip them down to keep them running. On many a black night these riders tumbled out of their bunks with a smile to start a ride which demanded more courage than front-line service. Fifty orders would go out at night. Fifty signed receipts for these orders would be in my hands by 3:00 A.M.

Life at the Message Center was not easy. Our bunks crawled with lice. Our straw mattresses and blankets were always wet. Then "Bear Cat" Smith – the Oregon cowboy – one of my "runners", had a severe attack of trench-mouth which filled his mouth with ulcers. As a result the six men (p127) in our tiny abri were put under strict quarantines. For a number of days a guard was posted at the entrance to our shelter to prevent our mingling with other Headquarters' men. Day and night we were on continuous duty; telephones ringing, radio messages to decode, aeroplane panels to attend, pigeon messages to decipher from tiny scraps of paper, a thousand transients to direct to the lines, information from prisoners to pass to G-2 – any mistake meant trouble up ahead. A nervous tension seized the Chief of Staff. He would call me to his dug-out night after night at three or four in the morning to ask about the sending of orders and their receipt.

Bright spots in these muddy days were our brief mess in the open under a sheet of galvanized iron. Such cheerful men as Emerson Taylor, acting G-3, Hamilton Harsey and Lt. Colonel Murphy were always good company, even tho the rain dropped into our mess kits thru holes made by shell fragments in our tiny roof. We were fortunate in having few casualties in spite of the fact that droning shrapnel balls plunked down upon us day and night. One rider had his scalp torn open while shaving on the nearby river bank. A bridge one hundred yards south of us was accurately registered and subjected to a spasmodic fire when wagon or truck convoys were approaching it. Nearly every team went across at a gallop, spurred on by whining shell fragments and gigantic spouts of river water.

Just across the canal the main highway thru Bras was nightly swept clear of traffic by intense bursts of high explosive. Those supply and medical units dwelling in dug-outs under the stone heaps, once homes, had to be constantly on alert, ready to throw themselves flat on the ground at the first shriek of an "arrival." Just Across the canal (p128) bridge was a deep dug-out occupied by four doctors. One night they were playing cards in the entrance to their shelter when a six-inch shell came squarely into their abri, but failed to explode. One man was killed, mangled beyond belief. The other three players were nervously shocked, but unhurt. Such were the ways of fate. A bolt out of the night from a gun a dozen miles distant. It was this impersonal slaughter by an invisible distant enemy which made this Argonne battle so hard to bear.

The 26<sup>th</sup> Divisions' battles northeast of Fort Donaumont from October 16 to November 11 defy accurate description. It was the policy of our Corps Commander to keep a never ending pressure on the Germans by continuous attacks on short lengths of front. The results of such piece-meal attacks were staggering casualties in successive battalions. Each advance by our troops was followed by vigorous enemy counter attacks. The nearby enemy reserves seemed to be limitless. One portion of Belleu Wood changed hands four times in twenty-four hours. On October 27<sup>th</sup> General Shelton sent in a strength report for his infantry battalions as follows:

		Officers	Men
101 <sup>st</sup> Inf.	1 <sup>st</sup> battalion	4	175
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3	100
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3	150
102 <sup>nd</sup> Inf.	1 <sup>st</sup> battalion	0	178
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2	100
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3	100

Each of these battalions originally numbered 25 officers and 1000 men. On this date battalions in some instances were commanded by Second Lieutenants and Companies by Corporals. Between October 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 722 wounded men (p129) were directed at this Brigade's dressing station.

Gradually the enemy was crowded off the Meuse Heights. Flabas was taken by the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry on November 8<sup>th</sup>. A new enemy line faced us on the Woevre plain.

### THE WAR ENDS.

November brought new and lively incidents at Bras. It is difficult to more than summarize these stirring days.

General Bamford, successor to General Edwards, shouted for more blood-shed, seeming to feel that his patrols accomplished nothing unless each scouting group had a great portion of its men killed nightly.

Colonel Bearss of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry stamped in and out of Headquarters. Always chewing a cigar, and carrying a box of them under his arm, he muttered about "fixing bayonets and going through to Berlin."

General Cole of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade was unfairly charged with having furthered "fraternization" between certain groups of his men and a company of Germans which had sought a temporary armistice.

Bedraggled herds of German prisoners tramped contentedly down the muddy highway to Verdun, guarded by equally tired Americans to whom prisoners were no longer a novelty but a nuisance.

"Aunt Horace" Hobbs, former Divisional inspector and harsh critic of all line officers was suddenly assigned as Colonel of the 101<sup>st</sup> – vice Logan, relieved. To everybody's joy Colobel Hobbs spent a large part of his time seeking invisible, non-existing "stragglers" to build up the strength of his exhausted regiment.

All unheralded a new and aggressive neighbor our immediate door-yard in the shape of a 14-inch naval gun, (p130) mounted on an armored railroad car of mammoth size. The gun was equipped with sturdy steel supports which rested on concrete emplacements built alongside the railroad tracks. This powerful friend was concealed each day eight miles to the south of our position. At nightfall it would stealthily roll up to its emplacement to open fire on the Montmedy railroad junctions, twenty miles northeast of Bras.

I shall always remember its first blast. One night early in November life was comparatively peaceful in our dug-out. Few of our guns were firing and for once incoming shrapnel ceased its overhead explosions. Bearcat Smith was in the midst of one of his Oregon lumberjack stories, when a blazing flash of light illuminated our tiny windows. An ear-shattering crash was accompanied by a half-dozen smashes in our abri as the ground settled perceptibly, thereby knocking to the floor steel helmets, mess kits and rifles which had hung on nails in the walls. Positive that a very heavy German shell had landed on Headquarters we sprang out into the dark night to learn that a 14-inch United States shell enroute to Germany had passed a few feet over our head. This unusually heavy concussion was caused by a muzzle blast as we were only 400 feet ahead of the muzzle of this naval rifle. At half-hour intervals through this night and each succeeding night our big friend belches prodigiously as it thrust its 1000 pound shells 10 miles into the air and dropped them in distant railroad yards. Its fire was regulated by radios of aeroplane observers. After a few explosions we paid little attention to each local thunderbolt, for it became part of the great artillery chorus which barked from every hill around us.

November brought the first touches of Winter. Dark grey mists swirled for days over the Meuse heights. (p131) Heavy rains poured down on our sod roof. Filtering into our quarters it streamed down the walls and dripped from metal ceilings. Stoves were lacking and wet blankets gave little warmth. To undress was unheard of for Message Center duties never ended. The officer-in-charge was constantly summoned by the Chief of Staff to give information on road conditions or to explain possible slight delays in the receipt of intelligence from front-line observers. One morning at two I delayed an unimportant dispatch for a few minutes in order that my motorcyclist might take to front line regiments some medical supplies. This attempt to save awakening an extra rider resulted in my receiving a terrific "God damning" from our high-strung chief-of-staff. Of course I had to take this while standing stiffly at "attention" in front of this exalted person. After tantrums of this kind I would usually had a good laugh with my friends in G-3; Emerson Taylor and Colonel Murphy were also subjected to lively criticism by Colonel Major.

I cannot pass by these last dark and muddy nights of the war without an added tribute to my motorcyclists and horsemen. No matter at what hour I ran into the couriers shelter to call for a rider these men were ready to go. Not glad to go, for the roads were deep with mud and each intersection subject to harassing fire. I can see these men today crusted with mud, wool caps under their football helmets, spurting away over the hills with messages that meant life and death to their comrades "up front." Hours later the same men would return from ten mile adventures on murky roads with heavy black mud dripping from their faces in a stream. This mud caped on mud-guards until it acted as a brake on the tires. Then it (p132) was necessary to take off the mud-guards and drive through a spray of soft flying ooze.

On the afternoon of November 8<sup>th</sup> I was awakened from a brief cat nap in my bunk by a new and ominous roar in the air. This grew steadily louder. Running out from under the camouflaged screen I witnessed the approach of three hundred aeroplanes sweeping northward down the Meuse valley on a daylight bombing expedition. They flew low in a series of rigid "Vs" under the protection of a swarm of higher flying combat planes. I later learned that this particular concentration of French and American aeroplanes made a highly successful daylight bombing raid on the German railroad to our north. This was reported to be the largest concentration of air strength, brought together during the history of aviation. This flight covered a large part of the sky over the valley, and its hundreds of roaring motors blended in a deep bass note of great volume, almost like the deep monotone of Niagara Falls.

That very night we caught a slight return in bras when a low flying German aviator dropped 26 small bombs in rapid succession on our village street. Little damage was done but the explosions and accompanying concussions were heavier than any shell-fire during an equal period.

From the first of November our men began to feel that a German defeat or at least an advance to the Rhine might be accomplished before Christmas. The few newspapers which reached us showed a rapid recession of the German front to our West. Furthermore we heard of a great new attack to commence to our south on November 11<sup>th</sup>, an attack by a group of fresh American divisions with the purpose of enveloping that mighty German troop reservoir, Metz. To our north American divisions fought their way across the Meuse near (p133) DUN to expose the flank of the enemy before us. On November 10<sup>th</sup> our riders carried to the Division orders for a new attack in an effort to capture Les JUMELIES d'Ornes, Twin hills on our right front. It seemed almost tragic to drive our fatigued handful of infantry regiment against more machine guns, but War is a grim enterprise and it was grimly carried out to the very end. According to my usual custom on the night before an attack I was up all night to make sure that details were properly handled and every organization in its place with full information as to its exact duties.

At 5:45 A.M. on November 11<sup>th</sup> I was surprised to hear an outburst of cheers from G-3's little dug-out next to mine. Upon running to see what made Emerson Taylor so joyous the morning of an attack I learned that our Headquarter's Radio Station had just received a message from the Eiffel Tower which stated that hostilities would stop at 11 A.M. Our attack was to jump off at 9:30 that morning. To attack or not to attack. That was the question. Thru the midst of a cold grey morning an officer in a motor car rolled in from 2<sup>nd</sup> French Corps Headquarters directing our artillery fire to go according to schedule, but specifying that our infantry was not to advance. Our task seemed finished. With strangely mixed emotions we watch the mist sweep over the gaunt dark heights of the Meuse where our infantry waited final instructions for their last morning of combat. Ammunition trains clattered over the Meuse Bridge from Charny. The usual ambulance cars crept down into Bras.

Just after 9 Colonel Major dashed into my dug-out with the following astonishing message, written in lead pencil, to Commanding Generals.

(p134) 51<sup>st</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigades, 51<sup>st</sup> Artillery Brigade. "Orders from the Regret Corps direct that the infantry will advance to the attack as per F.O. 105, 26<sup>th</sup> Division as 9:30. The attack will stop at 11 when hostilities will cease."

With joy turned to dismay I instantly telephoned the three generals concerned, that the infantry was to advance. I was later informed that this message did not reach the infantry companies in time to cause heavy losses. Those few battalions which did advance under the barrage moved only a short distance and lost few men. Nevertheless some were killed in this last hour of the War.

Sharp at 9:30 our artillery broke into action on the slopes East of the river, 77's and 155's roaring defiance at a beaten enemy in the nearby plains as our men strove to exhaust their stock of shells before 11. Little fire came our way.

It was now my duty to send out additional orders to infantry colonels telling them what to do at 11:00: To avoid fraternizing, to report on their front-line positions, and to post unusually strong sentinels as safeguard against counter attack.

As the Armistice hour approached Taylor, Major BOISOUVRAY and myself walked clear of the camouflage and stood arm in arm listening to the drum-like fire of our artillery. From 10:55 until 11:00 every cannon roared incessantly. spurts of flame flared from battery positions about us. Then came a last mighty roar, one or two scattering shots and deep silence, broken by feeble cheers wafted to us from distant batteries. At Headquarters there was little rejoicing of a noisy kind for everybody remained hard at work on his particular task. Major Boisouvray with typical French emotion broke down into tears for a moment. He had fought over (p135) these hills for four long years, and many of his immediate family had fallen on the slope ahead of us. We all felt stunned rather than jubilant. Strangely enough the sickening silence seemed most unnatural and depressing after weeks spent amid the roar of battle. One listened expectantly for the whistle of shrapnel balls overhead. The War was over.

#### BACK TO NEUFCHATEAU.

Above my dug-out was a concrete machine-gun nest with a round steel turret eight feet in diameter. In this casemate in sat for an hour at noon with Dr. Helff of Keene, New Hampshire. For the first time we talked about going home. Home seemed as distant as the moon. How strange it would seem to live in a dry house. Outside arose the sound of music. An artillery band marched up the valley road to serenade General Bamford. While the concert was going on a German radio message was received from the lower Meuse requesting that American troops to withhold sniping rifle fire. Apparently the men in a neighboring division could not resist firing a few more shots at a visible enemy.

On the front line there was little celebrating and no fraternizing with the Germans. Our former enemies in accordance with Armistice provisions soon rolled their packs for their long march to the east bank of the Rhine.

At nightfall our doughboys decided now that the war was really over that the trench fire works might well be expended in bulk. From the grim Meuse hills stretching for miles to our north and south arose the dazzling gleam of veery lights, shot into the air from thousands of trench pistols. Here and there artillery rocket signals streaked upwards into the low hanging clouds to burst in showers of red and green stars. The strange silence of our first night without cannon fire was occasionally broken by cheers (p136) along the Bras highway as automobiles rolled to and from Verdun with incredibly bright headlights in use. Such illumination without

the chance of enemy shell fire seemed unbelievable. We rushed to the tiny windows of our dug-out to tear down gas-curtains, which had long kept all night lights subdued and which at the same time had kept our shelter damp and stuffy. Last night Division Headquarters had presented a sombre appearance to the hostile aviator. It was just as gloomy as a railroad fill in the heart of a wilderness. Tonight scores of candles gleamed cheerily thru uncovered loop-holes as fifty staff members prepared for the divisions next move.

We all hoped that our troops might march into Germany with the divisions chosen for the Army of Occupation, but conditions were such that we were not selected for that duty. In the first place our infantry regiments were so decimated by the struggles of the last few weeks as to be numerically few. In the second place our artillery and transport horses and mules had died by the hundred around Verdun from shell fire on the picket lines and from a contagious mange. It was impossible for our guns to go forward.

By November 14<sup>th</sup> the last of our troops had been relieved by the 6<sup>th</sup> Division. By daily marches of 15 miles our troops plodded over muddy roads toward our first French home in the Neufchateau area. Division Headquarters first moved to Benoite Vaux, (a tiny hamlet near Pierrefitte) clustered about a religious shrine in a dense oak grove. This ride of 35 miles I made on the soft cushions of an ambulance, which sped by interminable columns of marching infantry. The following days of movement brought the heaviest strain of my motorcyclists that they had met. Battalions were scattered in some sixty different hamlets (p137) each night. It was my task to see that each group was informed by dawn of each day where it was to spend the following night, and where it was to obtain rations. All roads were strange to my riders so that it was necessary for me to draw a rough map for each courier before he could speed off with his orders. Frequently a rider would cover a dozen small towns in two hours, frantically seeking units that were still on the road. The situation was further complicated by the unforeseen arrival of the "Wild Cat" American Division whose 28,000 men cut across our routes at right angles, blocking our progress and delaying our marches. Again and again reports would reach the Message Center in the early evening. "Strange troops in our billets." "What shall we do?" this meant a rush trip by a tired courier to discover an unoccupied town. Men were more numerous than locusts in plague time. Roofs were scarce. Rain was abundant. I did find time to steal a motorcycle at Benoite Vaux for a brief ride one glorious Sunday over the Meuse at Troyon and back to the scene of the Saint Mihiel battle.

Once clear of the "Wild Cats" cross current our traffic difficulties eased to such an extent that I was able to mount a motorcycle for a race with my fifteen motorcyclists over fifty miles of fine highway to Domremy near Neufchateau. How we did tear along the road when we once cleared twelve miles to marching infantry. Every muffler was open and there was no speed limit. The natives jumped for their doors as rapidly as wooden shoes would permit when our speedy cavalcade rushed through their narrow streets. We were soon bedded down for the night in a warm hay-mow in Joan of Arc's birthplace.

As it took the infantry three days to march that one hour motorcycle distance I had considerable time to visit (p138) with my old friends the Laval in Certilleux. Rolling up to my first billet one sunny autumn noon I was greeted by my French grandmother and Marguerite as tho I were a son of their house. Amidst all the neighbors we opened a bottle of wine to celebrate our reunion. The fact that my miserable French failed me utterly in describing my

whereabouts during the past 12 months caused much amusement to my old friends. Before leaving I went down to Captain Locke's wizened old land-lady to tell her of his sad death in action. This little hump-backed lady, over 75 years old, broke into lamentations over the loss of "le pauvre capitain, mon ami." It was hard to comfort her. What wonderfully friendly people the French peasants are! It is a shame that the average American tourist never meets these sturdy farmers.

Certilleux was very quiet without the bustling presence of the 1200 men of the 102<sup>nd</sup> who had tenanted its lofts and hay-mows a year earlier. A golden sun shone brightly on the red tiled roofs of its ancient farm houses. A thumping noise on the floor of a large barn led me to half dozen old men who were vigorously flailing wheat with flexible rods as they crept about on all fours. Occasionally they would stop their beating to move the straw into the street.

Madame Laval was keeping her usual appointment with her cow in a nearby field. She made her usual-customary complaint that the wild boars had eaten her potatoes. I left my friends with regret to return to Domremy for the night.

On the following morning, bright and early the marching infantry in columns many miles in length trudged southward into Neufchateau, which village was in gala array to joyously welcome its Yankee Division. Every church bell rang for (p139) hours as our regiments poured through these familiar streets. Acquaintances were renewed for brief intervals as company after company swung on towards the Montigny-le-Roi area further to the southwest.

Some of my friends in G-3 gave me a seat in their big Cadillac car for the last 50 miles of the journey. Before leaving Neufchateau they allowed me time for a bath at the officers' club. For the first time in five weeks I was freed from lice which had joined me in rapidly increasing numbers. Their constant attention had been irritating and had made sleep almost impossible. I should hate to confess how many of my little lodgers left me at this time.

Life at Montigny-le-Roi seemed too peaceful to be reality. Division Headquarters opened in large residence in the center of this small hilltop town of 3000 on November 23<sup>rd</sup> and here we remained until January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1919. Road conditions were good and my couriers had the aid of daylight on short runs over familiar country. Drill was carried on by all units. Headquarters troop held formal guard mount with music on the main street daily. This ceremony afforded great joy to the towns enthusiastic juvenile population which trooped after the band with shouts of joy.

Occasional battle manoeuvres were held by Brigades, at which times my Message Center would move to some distant valley for the day in order that the motorcyclists might serve the troops of that particular district. Once again orders were rushed forward to attacking infantry and to imaginary infantry, but never a shot was fired.

Early in December I was allowed a brief leave to visit my brother Harold who was reported by G.H.Q. to be in (p140) Saint Nazaire, about to sail for home. I rushed across France by train to the most forlorn French seaport imaginable, and tramped for hours up and down muddy streets in a deluge of rain seeking my brother. Where he was at that time I never discovered. Twenty-four hours rail journey to no advantage for Saint Nazaire was a second-rate Hoboken. I did enjoy a pleasant day in the old castle at NANTES, a few miles up the River, before returning to Paris in a sleeping car which boasted no blankets.

The Place de la Concorde presented a most unusual appearance, being banked on every side by hundreds of German cannons. Statues representing Metz and Strasbourg were decked with French flags and scores of floral wreaths. These monuments had been draped in black mourning bands since the occupation of Alsace and Lorraine by the Germans in 1870.

Before returning to Montigny I made a brief inspection of shell-torn Rheims. Never can I forget the utter desolation of this once beautiful city, the home in 1914 of 100,000 peaceful inhabitants. Only a handful of homes on the outskirts retained their roofs. Every building between the station and the cathedral had been blasted by heavy artillery. In most cases floors had dropped into cellars iron trolley poles leaned over the streets at about angles. Rubble and plaster covered the sidewalks. A few sad-faced Frenchmen carried debris out of the shells of their homes.

The Cathedral stood radiant in the morning sunshine. Fortunately the brunt of the storm had beaten its sturdy flanks for it faced away from the devastation shells which plunged against its walls for four long years. Its nave was ~~knocked~~ heaped with burned stone and timbers, relics of (p141) the fire which destroyed its roof in 1914. The western tower was shorn of its superb Gothic stone carvings when the same fire roaring up the scaffolding which had enveloped the tower. A few fragments of stained glass rattled in empty window frames. Such as the result of "Kultur" and "The Brotherhood of Man" nearly 2000 years after the birth of the Prince of Peace.

Returning to Division Headquarters I again took over the despatching of all orders. Thanks for the work of my efficient Sergeants my duties were light. My billet was the finest I occupied in France. A sunny large room in a comfortable home contained a large double bed and an open fire place. One windy night as I sat by the fire, listening to a flood of rain beat against the panes, somebody knocked at the door and in walked my brother. Needless to say we had a joyful reunion after a separation of sixteen months. Poor Harold had bene quartered under canvas on a flooded river plain for weeks. He never dreamed that a lieutenant could find such a room as I occupied, and snorted derision at the hardships endured by combat troops. He was soaked to the waist as a result of his long walk from the station. However, he expected to sail for home within a few weeks, while the 26<sup>th</sup> appeared to face a long stay in muddy France.

Our next visitor was our Commander-in-chief Woodrow Wilson who was in the midst of his triumphant journey from Paris to Rome to support his 14 Points at the Peace Conference. At dawn on Christmas day he descended from his private car at Chaumont, inspected our Yankee Guard of Honor, a battalion of infantry, reviewed several regiments near Langres, and motored to Montigny for dinner. His arrival spoiled a good holiday for the troops. All day long they had stood at attention on his road and that (p142) on the chance that Woodrow might pass by. When he did so their reward was a spatter of mud and a glimpse of numerous silk-hatted dignitaries in fleet limousines. At one town the president climbed a ladder to a barn loft to inspect carefully prepared quarters of an infantry squad.

At noon a score of automobiles swung up to the schoolhouse where a dozen cooks had been roasting every available chicken for hours. Gathered to greet the president were a hundred divisional and regimental officers and a scattering of enlisted men wearing decorations for valor. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson occupied seats in the center of the head of the table flanked by a few French Mayors, and polished Headquarters' officers from Chaumont. I had been one of those in charge of dinner preparations and pushed in the President's chair as he sat down. Tired

by hours of work during the previous night I had almost an uncontrollable desire to pull the chair out from beneath him, but fortunately for me I resisted the impulse. Mrs. Wilson was gaily clad in silks and furs. The President appeared grey and tired. Three dozen reporters, notebooks in hand, trailed this visiting party. After dinner the President rose suddenly, waved his hand at the group before him, and rushed off to keep another appointment, with even wishing us a Merry Christmas. Few men knew less about leadership and human good-will than he. On determining the President's route I instantly sent instructions to nearby troop centers to remove their groups of waiting men from such roads as the party would not traverse. Thousands of men stood for hours to see nothing. It was not a Merry Christmas for the Yankees in France.

(p143)

### THE FIRST MOVE TOWARD HOME.

The winter of 1919 opened with heavy snow which added to the discomfort of thousands of restless soldiers quartered in drafty haylofts in Northern France. Our headquarters town was on a lofty hill, swept by icy winds. Day after day my couriers sped over slippery roads with matter of fact messages about drills, rations, promotions and court-martials. No longer were we thrilled by the stern realities of battle. No longer was the despatch center of real importance. Tired of inactivity and too comfortable a life I went to General Harry Hale, Division Commander and asked to be returned to duty with my regiment. The General promised to give me duty with troops after the next move of the Division, but did not know when this would occur.

One bit of excitement during the winter was an unexpected slide down the hill oat Montigny le Roi in a big touring car. I had been to Chaumont with a number of officers in a seven passenger car without chains. Returning in the evening our driver lost all control on the slippery road. We slid for two hundred feet until our car left the road to climb the steps of the town hall at the foot of the hill. Nobody was hurt.

On January 15<sup>th</sup> the colors of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry were decorated with the Croix de Guerre by the French military authorities as a tribute to the valor of the companies which had raided and held Marcheville on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1918 – on the first day of the Argonne battle.

Emerson Taylor and myself road over to Mandres le Nogent to attend this interesting parade and ceremony. With the other officers of the regiment we had the privilege of shaking hands with Generals Pershing and Petain, who honored our men of the sturdy first battalion.

(p144) General Petain, the Saviour of Verdun in 1916, was an unusually impressive and kindly man of about 60. He was over six feet in height, blonde with piercing blue eyes. He appeared more like a friendly uncle than the victor over Germany's mightiest army. He was generally interested in our troops and, in marked contrast to Mr. Wilson, expressed true friendliness, appreciation and good-will.

On January 17<sup>th</sup> the whole division entrained for the Embarkation area about Le Mans to everybody's joy.

Our Headquarter's junior officers tramped through six inches of snow in a raging blizzard to a car marked "officers" attached to the end of a long troop train. Darkness had fallen

when we reached the proper track in a forlorn freight yard miles from our starting point. The "Officers'" car had no glass in its windows and no cushions on its seats. Blinding clouds of snow swept into its unlighted interior. It was bitter cold. Not a bit discouraged we dove into an empty freight car just ahead, but just then we made a bad error. We selected a steel box-car, thinking it would be tighter than a wooden car. Little did we know that this steel ice-box would be our home for the next forty hours.

After vainly burrowing in the straw in an attempt to find warmth we adjourned to a nearby country store for liquid reinforcements in the form of cognac. Greatly cheered we each purchased a small straw hat and staged an absurd parade back to our side-door Pullman. I would give a great deal for a photograph of a dozen young men in ridiculous straw hats clustered about one lone candle on the floor of the car on this bleak night. Who cared how the wind whistled through the door? We were going home.

(p145) During the night our train crept to Langres, where numerous engines attacked it ferociously, striving to see which one could hit the heaviest blow without wrecking the cars. All night we switched back and forth without going anywhere. At dawn we pulled back the sliding door to discover that we were only twenty miles from our starting point. Early in the morning our heavily laden train at length cleared the freight yards to careen along the tracks at fifteen miles an hour towards Tours. Snow was still falling. Breakfast consisted of hard tack. Lunch was the same. As we rolled slowly through small villages the infantry men ahead showered troops of cheering children with hard-tack. "Beeskeet" the youngsters shouted. Biscuits rained on them from every car door.

Once the train stopped to enable us to fight a fire which broke out in the straw on the floor of a car just ahead of ours. This car was built of wood, but the blazing straw was kicked out of the door without harm to its thirty inmates. Wrapped in blankets we rode by candlelight for our car had no windows.

In the afternoon we pulled into a coffee station, where a number of iron pots boiled merrily over open fires in a snowy field. Coffee and biscuits for supper and again we rolled southwest, spending our second night in the freight car. It is impossible to describe the din and chill of winter travel in a steel car.

On the morning of the second day we stopped rolling to stretch our stiff legs in our new headquarters village. Looking at the sign on the station we learned that we were in Ecommoy, a few miles west of Le Mans. Being near the ocean we had left the snow behind. The air was mild. It seemed as though we had leaped from winter into spring. (p146) Within an hour typewriters were banging in a large residence while I was acquainting my couriers with a map of our new area. Soon motorcycles were feverishly popping as sheaves of new drill instructions sped out to troop headquarters in twenty new towns. Our last long move by rail was ended.

After our arrival at Ecommoy at my request General Hale ordered my return to the 102<sup>nd</sup>. My long tour of duty as a handler of orders, couriers and lines of communications was over. After a short farewell to my riders I reported for duty to Company C, 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry in accordance with orders from Colonel Potts.

I was placed with a real Irish company, the remnants of the Sarsfields of New Haven, a scattering of Middletown men and drafted men from [ineligible handwritten note]. We had a fat Southern captain who preferred in stay in bed mornings, while his lieutenants did his work.

C Company was a fine fighting company. It had made a brilliant record at Seicheprey, on the Marne, at Marcheville and at Verdun. Out of the line it fought a hard battle with rum and cognac. The Sergeants were weak and little respected by the men. The Colonel told me it was the company most needing control and discipline. We were quartered at YVRE-LE-POLIN, a tiny hamlet on a plain, dotted with pitch pines. Again I was back in a farm-house among chickens, cows and manure as in the days at Certilleux. Other companies in the town were commanded by my old friends Leavenworth and Oberlin. My major was Clarence Thompson long an intimate friend.

Of the daily routine little was new. Each morning at six I took reveille and heard platoon reports covering 250 men. Breakfast was served near a sectional dancehall floor which Captain Mathes had placed on saw-horses to serve as out-of-door tables. This little novelty (p147) pleased the men who had eaten their meals on the ground for months.

After breakfast we inspected billets, and at 7:30 took the company out for an hour's road march under arms. Various drills and ceremonies such as guard mount, occupied the rest of the morning. Afternoons were given over to sports, baseballs and footballs being provided by Uncle Sam. On many afternoons I acted as umpire in ball games between rival companies. Games on which heavy stakes were placed. Games in which the umpire was in more danger than under shell-fire. Rocks were never thrown, but excitement was at fever heat and profanity unlimited. Evenings we spent before an open fire at Company Headquarters.

The company lacked real stability due to frequent "making and breaking" of non-commissioned officers. This developed ugly feelings and destroyed proper respect for corporals and sergeants. The fault really lay with Captain Mathis, a lazy fat Southerner. One or two bullies among the privates aroused my ire by continually stirring up fights. One evening I had an unexpected opportunity to teach one of these smart chaps a much needed lesson in front of the company.

Just at dusk we were drawn up in long double ranks in the village street. Roll call had been completed and the men stood "at rest" waiting for the bugler to blow "retreat." The captain was "off-duty" as usual, so I was in charge of the formation. Suddenly there was a burst of profanity behind the second platoon and one of the company's bullies, a husky six footer, Tynan by name, broke thru the ranks to knock down one of my lieutenants with a tremendous blow of his fist.

According to regulations I had no business to lay (p148) hands on this man, but in a flash of temper at the man's insolence I sprang on him and was fortunate enough to secure him across the ~~wrist~~ wind pipe with the strangle hold, forbidden in my wrestling days at Yale, but never forgotten.

Down we dropped in a mud puddle, my man punching and kicking but gradually running short of wind. First he, then I, would be on top. This man was cordially hated by the company and shouts arose "Get him! – lieutenant. Get him!" Under my tight grip his jaw gradually dropped and I was able to pin him to the ground. Just as the bugle blew "attention" I had two men march him off to the Guard House to recover his wits when sober.

Covered with mud, I conducted "retreat" before a very orderly company. This little incident seemed to help the company. Most of the men meant well, and only a handful were mischief makers. Private Tynan returned to the United States as a military prisoner. Eight weeks

later at Camp Devens my last military duty was to order his release. He faced serious charges and a long sentence in Leavenworth Prison, but as the war was over I felt that he had been sufficiently punished.

Early in February we spent two very rainy days on the mammoth target range at Saint Biez, where officers and men fired an elaborate course. These days were trying. We walked six miles to sit in a driving rain for dreary hours waiting our turn to shoot. It was so wet that I had to blow drops of water out of the hole in my "peep" sight before each shot. When I lay on the ground to shoot "prone" the rain water ran into my shirt front, creeping along my stomach in a most disconcerting way. So the "toughening" process went on in time of peace.

On this same rifle range we were given our final (p149) Divisional Inspection by General Pershing. The mustering of 26,000 men on one parade ground required a dress rehearsal which occupied all one day. "Stand here." "Move a few feet." "Make room for the artillery." "Stand there." How we cursed these long drawn ceremonies!

Finally we reassembled on a clear spring day to be looked over by our Commander. Again 26,000 men stood all day awaiting the arrival of General Pershing. I believe he looked at every man in the Division. Finally the massed bands crashed out the martial "Sambre et Meuse" March as we paraded by numerous generals in closely massed battalions, frantically striving to hold the men in straight lines as they stumbled over the rough ground. All marched with fixed bayonets which flashed brightly against the green pines about the field. On breaking into columns of squads we were forced to leave the field at a trot to clear the way for oncoming masses of troops at our heels. Each rank while running had to jump a wide and deep ditch, a risky leap with fixed bayonets. Nobody was cut but a number of men fell into the ditch before they saw it. General Pershing expressed himself as well pleased with the divisions' appearance.

While at Yvre le Polin a pretty little girl of ten was a great favorite with the men of Company C. Daily she would join us at mess and play with the men when they were off duty. To our great grief she suddenly died of pneumonia. The men voluntarily purchased a very handsome floral memorial. A large delegation from C Company attended the funeral. The note of thanks from the child's mother follows.

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Yvre-le-Polin  
March 4, 1919  
(Translation)

We have been deeply moved by the delicate attention that you have showed us, and we beg you to accept – officers and soldiers – this expression of our sincere thanks.

Widow Auve.

Such incidents showed the fine feelings of our men towards the French people. These little courtesies will be remembered for years by men of both nations.

At length a sailing date was announced for the 25<sup>th</sup> of March. Notice was given that no men having lice would be allowed to board the transport. There was an unprecedented rush for soap and in each barn platoons could be seen stark naked examining one another for the last "cootie."

We left the friendly people of YVRE with regret and moved by rail to Brest, a shabby seaport town. Here we detrained to march four miles up a small mountain to famous Pontangen Barracks. This camp during the spring and autumn of 1918 had been a hell-hole of mud, rain and influenza, but but by the time of our arrival had been put into wonderful shape. Wide board walks connecting large wooden buildings, spacious Y.M.C.A. houses and a large moving picture theatre.

For two days our regiment went thru rigid medical examinations. All clothing was cleaned and washed. Every man had a hot-bath for the first time in months. Then came the great day when with band playing and colors flying we marched out of camp and down to the dock. As (p151) we tramped over the brown of the hill the harbor spread out before us, dominated by our 20,000 ton transport the Agamennon which lay at anchor half a mile off shore. What a cheer the men gave when they spied this ship. At last home appeared a reality.

### HOME AGAIN

All thru the afternoon small ferry boats ran back and forth from shore to ship, jammed to the limit with troops and baggage. By night 5000 officers and men were falling over one another on the spacious but overcrowded transport. Details of feeding and quartering the men were handled by the naval crew, so the officers looked forward to a little rest. Not for me! No sooner had I found my cabin, than an orderly directed me to report to the Adjutant, as new Officer of the Day, in charge of the guard, for eight days. Due to the complications of placing men from stem to stern, inspecting all posts I was never relieved from duty until the ship docked at Boston. My special duties were to break up gambling, heavy drinking, and to keep the men out of all life-boats which hung from davits.

All went well until we passed close to the Mauretania in mid ocean. As the the ships saluted one another with deep blasts of their whistles our men ran to the rail on one side of the various decks we were short of ballast and listed so heavily to port as to frighten the captain. We assembled an emergency guard of sailors and soldiers armed with short clubs to sweep the men clear of the rails on each deck. Needless to say some fights developed for no soldier liked to take orders from a sailor. Within a few moments we had the ship back on an even keel.

(p152) Our return voyage was far more uncomfortable than the outward trip, as the ship was greatly overcrowded not only with men, but also with innumerable cockroaches. My bunk was against the steel side of the ship. Each morning I watched a long parade of roachers march out of a crack near my head and up the side of the vessel. As they always traveled on on route and kept out of my blankets they were not disturbing. Where they came from and where they went was a mystery. The Agamennon had once been known as The Kaiser Wilheml II and was a big four funneled ship with powerful engines. She had been seized as a war prize by our government in 1917.

By April 5<sup>th</sup> we had crossed the Banks and neared Cape Cod in a dense spring fog. I recall going to the very prow of the ship during an inspection of my guard on our last night at sea. It was a pitch blank evening. Clouds of dog dimmed all lights as we crept along through heavy seas. It was hard to realize that this mighty iron shell was carrying 5000 soldiers back to America. The deep moaning blasts of our fog horn seemed to wail a lament to those we had left

forever in France. I longed for my friends Locke, Boldt who had stood by me the night we approached England. I thought with dread of meeting Harold Hemingway's family. Why should we unworthy ones come back when the bravest remained behind? Shaking off this spell I turned in for the night with Lieutenant Clark, inventor of grenade traps which had saved his platoon from extermination during a German raid in Remieres Wood.

Early on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April we were met in Massachusetts Bay by a half dozen committee boats bearing delegations from several Connecticut towns. Some of these boats bore (p153) oilcloth signs such as, "Welcome Home "102<sup>nd</sup>." Hullo Joe Brown;" "Greetings from Hartford." Some of our former officers were wildly cheering as they were recognized on the decks of these ferry boats or small naval craft. All morning we were bombarded with oranges, apples and crullers by our enthusiastic welcomers. At noon on a perfect spring day we crept slowly up Boston Harbor escorted now by scores of small craft. In the middle of the afternoon, gay with bunting, we docked at Commonwealth Pier. Such a day to be officer of the Guard! Half of our men on sighting friends on the dock tried to climb into life-boats at the risk of breaking the ropes the falling to their deaths. The ship's captain became enraged at their foolishness and called me to the bridge in order that I might better direct my guards on the boat deck. Thus working to the last minute I came into port.

Nor were my troubles over as the placing of gang planks in position drew a shoving mob of thousands. So dense as to make it impossible for anybody to enter or leave the ship. After a fifteen minute battle we stretched ropes to end this trouble. Then the Colonel told me that as a reward for eight days Guard Duty I might go ashore for the evening.

My sister Alice was on the dock. Occasionally I ran to the rail to wave greetings from a height of 80 feet. After a pleasant dinner at Miss Ranneys with Alice I returned to the ship for the night.

Early on the following morning we entrained for Camp Devens where we entered steam-heated, electric-lighted barracks. Such luxuries! Glancing at a pencilled name on the door of my room I read, "H.K. English." In a camp accommodating 30,000 I was in my brother's old quarters.

(p154) There is little need to describe the days at Devens prior to my discharge on April 29<sup>th</sup>. Going over to the "Indian" Factory at Springfield I took possession of a new twin motorcycle which was most useful around Camp. The final Divisional review and parade in Boston defy description in the warmth of the greeting given us by the people of New England.

After discharge, and to farewell to hundreds of firm friends, still in uniform, I rode my motorcycle to Hartford where the regiment reassembled informally for a final parade to turn our colors over to Governor Marcus Holcomb in front of the State Capitol.

At noon on April 30<sup>th</sup> I again started my motorcycle and headed for New Haven. Soon East Rock appeared in the distance, then the elms of Hillhouse Avenue. Two years and one month had passed since I had worn civilian clothes. Of this period eighteen months were spent in France.

In conclusion I am convinced that Sherman was right.