

ALONG THE FIGHTING FRONT FROM SOISSONS TO BELOW THE MARNE

In its first drive an American platoon, after advancing several kilometers, came into possession of a building which had been a German regimental headquarters.

In the room which had been the office of the commandant was a dead dog. Attached to his collar was a metal tube. In the tube was a message calling for assistance from a German machine gunner.

A private of the luck species was watching a plane duel in the skies. "Quite a sight," said a voice beside him, and his head nearly dropped off when he saw that it belonged to the general commanding the division.

A long line of German prisoners, four abreast, in which were some Germans who admitted riding forward not many weeks ago in trains bearing the placard, "Nach Paris," marched southward along a dusty French road in charge of a detachment of Americans from the unit which had captured them.

"Out droll a Paris," he explained, "out droll" which is the French road direction for straight ahead.

Burly, dirty, whiskered, all in, but enthusiastic, a sergeant recounted the exploits of his platoon to his colonel. This was a tale of the Boche infantry met and beaten in a trench, and then cleaned up at the point of the bayonet.

An M.P. was standing in the doorway of the hotel de ville. It had been a quiet day, as days go a little way behind the lines. And just then the quietness came in an abrupt end, for a shell landed outside the hotel de ville, and the force of it knocked the M.P. down.

The gas alarm was the bell in the village church. The M.P. ran to the church. While he was running another shell landed close enough to send him sprawling again.

Once more he got up, and this time made the church without any further Charlie Chaplin incidents. And he began to ring the bell like all get out.

All kinds of things happen to helmets, and almost as many kinds of things happen to trousers. A private man who was relaying messages had a piece of shrapnel relayed to him that flattened his canteen like a pancake.

Easy come, easy go. One of the German regiments opposite the Americans, the members of which are, by this time, probably listed as missing, believed prisoners had just been paid when the curtain went down on their activity in la guerre.

Exactly 48 hours after the Germans marched before their paymaster and got their pay, they marched before an American officer, who relieved them of the modest collection of marks, pfennigs, and other things they had received.

Rules specify that no P.F. shall be deprived of his personal effects—iron crosses and the like—but almost any captured German is willing to sacrifice anything he has for real tobacco.

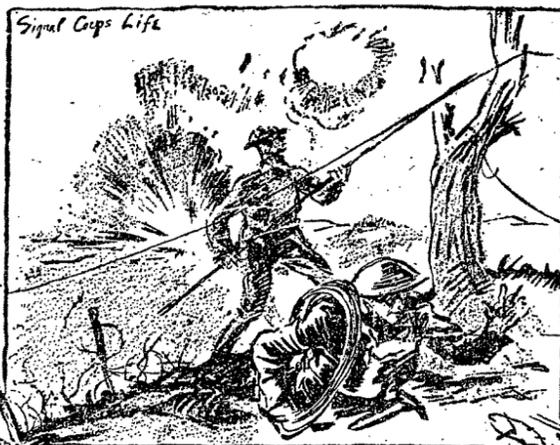
When one Boche arrived before the examining officer and was told to empty his pockets, he laid out five partly filled sacks of American makins, and not many more. He had a trench knife, a French cross, his helmet, a trench knife, and all the buttons he could spare.

A certain American private wasn't satisfied, however, with any modest vest pocket souvenirs of the battle. Nothing would do for him, he explained, but a German machine gun.

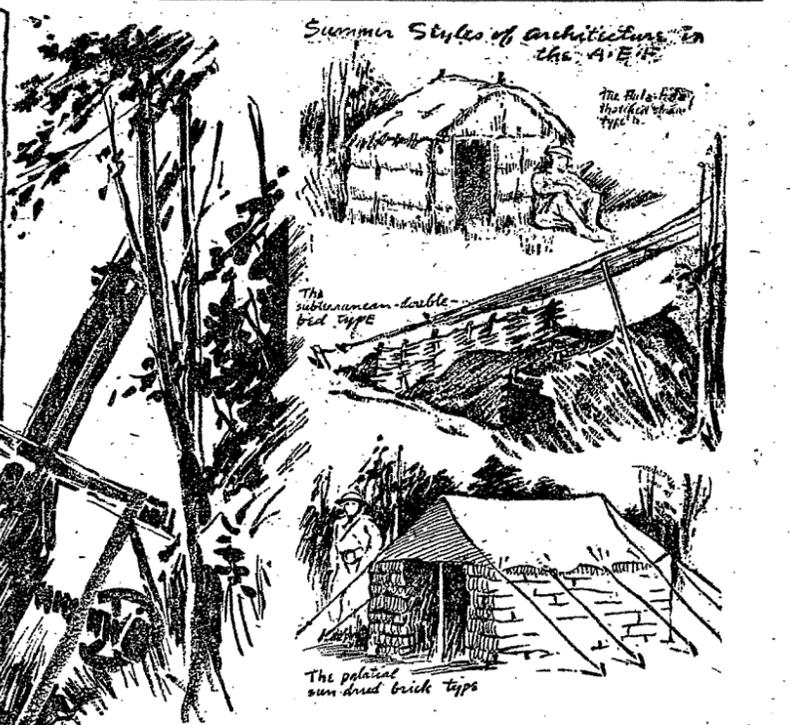
The composition of the perfect M.P. is as follows: Suspicion, 90 per cent; more suspicion, 10 per cent; total, 100 per cent and then some. All men, according to the M.P. at the front, are created equally suspicious characters.



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From sketches of American front Capt. C. B. Balbridge



He was going along a road toward the front when an M.P. stopped him. Most people do get stopped.

A cavalryman who was doing Paul Revere work between a headquarters and the line tied his horse to a tree and proceeded on foot to his destination.

He he a private or a general, "writing home" usually occupies the first leisure minutes of a soldier just out of action.

The Q.M. Corps has fallen down on the job. It is rather tough to have to admit this, but it is proved by the fact that the mahogany Louis Quatorze writing desks ordered for individual soldiers with brass studded legs—the desks, of course—have never shown up.

When he reached the gas hospital he was in a state of extraordinarily good humor. "What are you so happy about?" they asked him.

How much stuff does a Yank take into the line? It all depends on the Yank. In one squad you will see a man carrying full pack, including extra shoes and overcoat, and wearing a whole string of corned Willie cans such as a Fiji Islander wears a loin cloth.

Nothing makes an American soldier prouder of his organization than being in action with it. Any man up front will tell you that his platoon is the best in the company, that his company is the best in the regiment, and his regiment is the best in the Army.

Which is about the highest tribute a private can pay to his colonel. A French officer stood on a hilltop south of the Marne and trained his glasses on the field where Yank and Boche were having it out.

He belonged to that five per cent slice of the Army that doesn't smoke. His unit was stationed in a wood, and as he sat all the Yanks' skill with a pocket knife, he whittled himself a pipe in his spare time.

One of the regiments which took part in the "Soissons push" was relieved in the line just after night. It marched back, and established camp at the edge of a peaceful village.

It was not until after he had arrived that he discovered it was a French unit and not a German one he had seized. He won't repeat his remarks when he made the discovery.

The farther you get into France—in other words, the nearer you get to the front—the less French you hear. That explains why the headquarters troop was discouraged.

A German lieutenant came before the officer who was listing and tagging prisoners. "What's your name?" he was asked.

The doughboys in the push south of Soissons have the greatest respect for the French tanks that went over the top with them and almost a love for their little French operators.

"The tank I was with saved my life five times," said one admiring soldier, "and if I ever run across the Frenchman who was operating the machine gun on the high side I'm going right up and kiss him French fashion, whiskers and all."

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which accompanied them, and he compiled. He spent the next half-hour painstakingly gathering the fragments of a map which, when pasted together, showed all the Boche artillery positions in his sector.

If the open fighting that some of the troops are undergoing keeps us well have to invent some new slang. They still speak of going over the top, but it isn't satisfactory because, as a matter of fact, there sometimes isn't any top for the reason that there isn't any trench—or not much of a trench, anyhow.

"Going out after 'em" has been used. Anybody got any other suggestions?

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