

DOINGS OF THE VAN LOONS



It looks as if Father has the problem solved.

The Confessions of a German Deserter

Written by a Prussian Officer Who Participated in the Ravaging and Pillaging of Belgium.

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CHAPTER X.

The enemy's shelling to reduce our position gradually grew stronger, but without effect. Some houses caught fire. Enemy cavalry patrols in strong force appeared and disappeared again. Everything became quiet. Within ten minutes matters again became lively, as large hostile columns approached. We retired some distance without firing a shot. The artillery took a position behind a village and began shelling the approaching enemy. A cavalry patrol galloped across an open field, the horses covered with foam. We heard the commander of the patrol tell a cavalry officer that the enemy were approaching from all sides. We quickly left the village. The artillery remained and the cavalry detachments occupied a position while the cannon were trained on the enemy. Toward noon shrapnel shells again began bursting over our heads, but they exploded too high in the air to do us any damage. Yet this served as a serious reminder to us that the enemy kept right on our heels, a realization of which caused our retreat to become a rout. The numbers who dropped exhausted constantly increased. It was impossible to render them any assistance, for there were no more wagons. Many soldiers used their last atom of strength to drag themselves to the side of the road. Others fell where they were marching to be crushed soon afterward under the horses' hoofs or the wheels of any vehicle that might pass. The road was strewn with equipment thrown away by the soldiers. Our detachments had long since cast aside all unnecessary impediments.

In this way we proceeded until we reached a forest which was filled with fugitives. Many of these had stretched some sort of cloth from tree to tree as a protection from the rain. There they lay, men, women and children and old men, some in unspeakable misery. This fugitives' camp was spread over the forests to the edge of the road and as we passed we could see the furrows woven into their faces by the terrible sufferings they had been through. They looked at us with weary and saddened eyes. The children begged for bread, but we had none for ourselves, even though we were tortured by hunger. The enemy's shrapnel continued to accompany us. Scarcely had we passed through the forest when shrapnel burst in it. As a consequence a camp of fugitives, now exposed to trench fire, was abandoned and its numbers sought safety in the open fields. Many tried to accompany us until the order came forbidding them the road, as their advance hindered troop movements. The fugitives, therefore, were forced into the rain-soaked fields.

Toward evening we reached a village which had previously been sacked and here we found some rest. The mayor and two citizens of this village had been seized by the Germans and taken away under cavalry escort. Just why this had been done we were unable to find out. We did know, however, that almost every town was obliged to give hostages. Most of the cattle were taken along and large herds were transported to the rear by cavalry.

We belonged to the rear guards, which explained why we were unable to find anything to eat. There was absolutely nothing to the village where we were now quartered. After half an hour with our hunger still unappeased we resumed our march. After we had marched about three kilometers we arrived at a spot which had formerly been a bivouac. Advancing armies had camped here perhaps eight days before. Bread, which had been plentiful then, lay strewn around on the ground. In spite of its water-soaked condition it had been gathered up and

BUY W. W. S.

No one realized at this stage of the battle that it was the beginning of a murderous, exhausting struggle for positions.

We were to fight here from the same trench, month after month, without gaining territory. The wounded, who lay in No Man's Land between the trenches, were left to perish.

The French tried to rescue them under the protection of the Geneva flag, the emblem of the Red Cross, but we only sneered at them and shot it to bits. The impulse to shoot down the enemy surpassed every human feeling. The Red Cross flag had lost all its value for us when it was raised by the French. Mistrust was nurtured among us. We were told that the enemy misused the flag and that we must shoot down the men that bore it.

We repulsed all attacks until they gradually ceased. We were now able to fortify our position, which we did with the greatest care, making it as strong as possible. Half the men remained on guard while the other half deepened and widened the trenches. A lively fire was maintained continuously by both sides. The losses were very large. Most of the men killed were shot through the head, the trench protecting the remainder of their bodies.

Firing increased in intensity as night fell. Although nothing could be seen we continued firing all the time because we thought this would prevent the enemy from making any attacks. Through the nights munitions and material were brought up and new men arrived. Great quantities of sandbags



The Red Cross Flag Had Lost All Its Value.

were sent us, which were filled and used as a protection against bullets.

The pioneers were relieved toward morning and gathered in a farmyard behind the firing line. The farm had been spared by the cannon, and even all the stock remained. This booty was soon to be consumed. Several hundred soldiers came and a wild hunt ensued for ducks, chickens, geese, pigeons, etc. About five hundred of these were caught, after which everybody began cooking. Not far away 80 cows and heifers were seized and turned over to the field kitchens. Hay and grain were carried away, even the strawstacks and barns were torn down and the lumber used for firewood. In a few hours a beautiful farm had become a ruin and the proprietor a beggar. I had seen the owner in the morning, but he had suddenly disappeared with his wife and children, and nobody knew where he was.

The next night we were sent into the trenches again. There was little to do, so we talked with the men who had re-enforced us from the interior of Germany. They knew absolutely nothing of our retreat from the Marne and were astonished when we pictured to them the events of the last few days.

The following morning we left the trench before daybreak and went into quarters at Cernay-en-Dormois. We were billeted in the middle of the village in an abandoned house. Our field kitchens failed to arrive, so we prepared ourselves a meal of fowl and whatever else we discovered. Whenever anyone caught a chicken there

were twenty men racing for it. Toward evening long provision trains arrived, as well as fresh troops. They went to the front in long columns and relieved the exhausted men.

Soon the whole village was crowded with soldiers. After a rest of two days the regular nighty pioneer service was resumed. Every night we were sent to the front-line trenches to build wire obstacles. The French found us out by the noise required to set up the posts, so that we had fresh losses almost every night. We completed the task of setting up barbed wire entanglements in the sector assigned to us in about fourteen days. During this period we rested by day, but at night we went out regularly. But our rest had many interruptions, for the enemy artillery bombarded the village regularly. This always happened at certain hours, for instance, in the beginning, every noon from twelve to two o'clock, fifty to eighty shells fell in the village. Sometimes they were shrapnel, sent over by the field artillery. We soon grew accustomed to this, despite the fact that soldiers of other detachments were killed or wounded daily. Once or twice during this noon bombardment a shrapnel shell fell into our room and burst without doing much damage. The room would be filled with dust and smoke, yet no one would think of leaving. This firing was repeated daily with ever-increasing violence.

CHAPTER XII.

The inhabitants of Cernay who had remained, mostly old people, were all gathered in a barn because of the fear of spies. Here they were guarded by soldiers. As the enemy bombardment always occurred at a certain hour, our commander thought that somebody in the village was in communication with the enemy by means of a concealed telephone. It was even discovered that the hands of the church clock had been turned and at one time stood at six and shortly after at five o'clock. The spy who signaled the enemy by means of this clock was not discovered, neither anyone using a concealed telephone instrument. In order to catch the right one all the civilians were interned in the barn. These civilian prisoners were supplied in the same way the soldiers were, with food and drink, but were also exposed, like the soldiers, to the daily bombardments, which in time destroyed the whole village. Two women and one child had been killed in this manner and yet the people were not removed. Almost daily houses caught fire in the village and burned down. The shells were now falling regularly at eight o'clock in the evening. They were of heavy caliber. At eight o'clock promptly, when the first shell arrived, we left the town. There followed, in short intervals, fourteen to fifteen shells, the "iron ration." We believed that the French cannon sending these shells were brought up somewhere at night.

When we returned from our promenade, as we called the nightly excursion, we were sent to our places in the trenches. There we were used for every kind of duty. One evening we were called up to fortify a farm taken from the French the previous day. We had to build machine guns and place them.

Our camp at Cernay-en-Dormois was continually under heavy bombardment. Finally rest became impossible. The heavy-caliber shells struck the roofs of the houses and penetrated to the cellars. The civilians were taken away after several had been killed by shells. After about ten weeks in this country we were sent to another part of the front. Our destination was kept from us.

At the depot at Challerange we entered a train waiting for us. It consisted of second and third class coaches. The train rolled slowly through the beautiful country, and for the first time since the war began we saw the light behind the front. All the leopards, crossings and bridges were occupied by the military. Everywhere was activity. Long trains loaded with agricultural machinery of every variety stood at the larger stations. The crew of our train consisted of officials of the Prussian state railways. They had traversed this country often and told us that there was no agricultural machine in all occupied territory. The same thing happened with all machinery of industry that could be spared. Everywhere we saw the finest kind of machinery en route to Germany.

In the evening we passed Sedan. Early the next morning we arrived at Montmedy. Here we had to leave the train and were permitted to go to the city for several hours. Montmedy is the principal base of the Fifth army, commanded by the crown prince. Enormous stores of war materials were

gathered here. Added to this there was the army field post institute and the executive offices of the railways as well as a number of hospitals.

It was very lively in Montmedy. Many wounded men were seen strolling through the city and an especially large number of officers all at home were attached to single etapes. In faultless uniform, carrying riding whips, they strolled around. This point was about thirty-five kilometers behind Verdun and one hundred kilometers from our former position. As we marched away shortly after noon we suspected that we were being taken to the neighborhood of Verdun.

CHAPTER XIII.

After a march of 15 kilometers we reached the town of Jametz. Here everything was offered us by the inhabitants. We were treated with coffee, milk and meat. We went on early the next morning and in the evening arrived at Damvillers, where we heard that we were about five kilometers behind the firing line. The same evening we advanced to the little village of Wavrille, which was our destination.

We took up our quarters in a house which had been abandoned by its inhabitants. We were attached to the Ninth reserve division and the next morning went to our position. Fifteen of us were assigned to duty with an infantry company. On the entire line, as far as we could see, there was no musketry fire. Only the artillery on both sides kept up a weak action. We were not accustomed to this quietude in the trenches, but the men who had been there for some time told us that frequently not a single shot was fired for days and that no activity was shown.

Enormous forces of artillery were being mobilized. New guns continued to arrive every day and were installed without going into action. The transportation of munitions and material was also very brisk. We did not suspect at this time that this was the first preparation for a great offensive.

After four weeks in this vicinity we were sent to another part of the front, once more without being told our destination. We marched away and in the afternoon we arrived at Dun-sur-Meuse.

Hardly had we entered the town when the German crown prince, accompanied by several officers and a large pack of hunting dogs rode by.

"Good morning, pioneers!" he called out to us.

Then he inspected our unit closely. He spoke to our captain, after which one of the officers of his staff took us



Only the Artillery Kept Up a Weak Action.

to a Red Cross establishment where we were banqueted and given wine.

The headquarters of the Hohenzollern heir were located at Dun-sur-Meuse. The ladies of the Red Cross treated us cordially. We asked them if all passing troops were as well treated as we had been.

"Oh, yes," a young woman answered, "but only a few come here. The crown prince, however, has an especial attachment for the pioneers."

We were quartered over night. Soldiers told us that Dun-sur-Meuse was the headquarters of the Fifth army. There were gay times in the town, with

an open-air concert every day. The officers often received women visitors from Germany.

After a hard march we arrived at the front positions. In a veritable labyrinth of trenches, filled with water, we had the utmost difficulty finding our way about. Finally we arrived at the very front. The French were only ten meters away and before we had been there two days we took part in a hand grenade encounter.

Some distance back we established a pioneer depot. Twenty-five of our men did nothing but assemble hand grenades. We were soon settled and ready for an emergency.

In camp we were divided among various troops. They showed us how the warfare waged at this front required every imaginable kind of fighting. There was mining, sapping, hand grenade throwing, mine throwing and light patrol battles. This went on day after day and night after night, with 48 hours in the trench and a 12-hour rest. The shortage of men made a less strenuous schedule impossible.

(Continued Friday.)

Notice of Certain Street Improvement Bonds Will Be Taken Up.

Notice is hereby given that there are sufficient funds in the street paving fund of the City of Independence, Oregon, to take up for payment and cancellation Bonds No. 8, 9, 10 and 11 bearing date July 1st, 1914.

That on July 1st, 1918, each of said bonds will be taken up and cancelled and paid in full, principal and interest to said date and thereafter said bonds will cease to bear interest.

Dated and first published May 31, 1918. W. S. KURRE, City Treasurer.

Wood Sawing Prices

Hereafter the following prices will be charged for cutting wood.

Ash, Maple and Fir, one cut 60c., 2 cuts 75c., 3 cuts \$1; Slabs and Oak, 1 cut 60c., 2 cuts 85c., 3 cuts \$1; By the hour \$2.

P. O. BLACK.

Max Goldman

Deals in

- HIDES
- PELTS
- WOOL
- FURS
- MOHAIR
- CASCARA BARK
- VEAL
- PORK
- BEEF
- POULTRY
- BUTTER
- EGGS
- FARM PRODUCE
- WOOD
- WOOD
- GROCERIES
- SHOES
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