

SOLDIER LETTERS

In Camp Somewhere in France,
July 22, 1918.

Dear Father:

This is a beautiful morning, clear and bright. I am sitting out in the woods, where we are camped now. We move so much and so frequently that it is difficult indeed to follow the moves.

This particular camp is the rear camp which is a little behind the lines of great activity where there is a little rest for the horses and men. I came in here this morning to shave, see an officer, and am taking a little time for writing home. Received the order to move out from our former camp to our present front line position about one week ago and almost constantly since that time all our men have been fighting night and day. Such fighting as the Germans, who are taken prisoners, say they cannot stand and they also say they never saw such fighters as the U. S. troops are. They say nothing they throw over against us can stop us unless they actually kill all the troops. We have been classed as "shock" or "attack" troops, which means that we are kept for occasions when there is need of tried and trusted veteran troops which cannot be stampeded and are thrown in to bring successes. Do not think this is just talk of our own. We are now tried troops for we have been constantly working since last year. The entire body stopped the Hun on his great advance and the refugees have taken heart and gone back into their houses and farms after we have gone in and stopped the roads. On different occasions we have proven that we can receive an order, march many miles and at once go into position and open fire with only the rations which we have with us, and never stop at all for sleep. For almost three weeks I have gone without taking off my clothes, and about two weeks without having my shoes off. Such fighting as the artillery can put up! The Germans who are taken prisoners ask us to show them the

automatic cannon which throws over them the terrible rain of shell.

We are right now in a very much fought over section. The fighting has been very hard and severe. The way the dead Germans are lying in the wheat fields reminds me of the description of Gettysburg. Dead Germans along the road caught right where they were, in ditches or on the side of the hill, there they lie. Dead Germans in the woods, dead horses along the roads, and off in the fields. The air smelling with the results of the battle; burials going on; piles of old stuff from the conquered Hun; German helmets, German guns, German knapsacks, German cannon taken by the hundreds, also the ammunition for the same, and German officers captured by our men compelled to show our men the way of handling their cannon, and then they load and fire, and load and fire, right over against the retreating Germans. German machine guns by the wholesale have been taken, and can you believe it, the Germans chain their men to the machine guns so they cannot get away. I have seen the chains and where they were anchored into the ground. No such with the U. S. troops! Their cry is, "On and on, and defeat the Hun, and then return to the best country in the world." They all want the job done completely and thoroughly and the total and complete defeat of the Hun and all for which such fiends stand.

Days and nights pass, and we do not know the day of the week, or the date of the month. You might think it strange that such is the fact, but with day and night fighting, and up day and night, and more work and then another day and night, we lose track of just what day it is that we are doing the work.

There are so many German wounded. No statement is made here as to our own, whether it is small or not, but great numbers of the enemy come here to our dressing stations, and when they are able to render any assistance they are set to work as litter bearers and they are very gentle and careful in all of their dealings with our wounded. They are seemingly entirely contented to be within our lines and at once will

do all that is required of them. When they have any first aid work to do they do it thoroughly. No danger or thought of them trying to escape back to their own lines. Their escaping from us is one of the least thought of conditions. Never is there any prisoners who are not accounted for at the end of any work or at the end of any day. The driver of my car brought in a prisoner who was wounded the other night and that little thin, undeveloped and childish boy could hardly talk to me when I went up to him, he was so full of fear. He must have thought death was sure and certain for him, for I think all of the German officers tell all of the Hun soldiers that they will be killed if they allow themselves to be captured. That boy of 21 years was so scared he could hardly talk to me. Said he would not do anything in the world, said he would be a good boy. His face was so filled with terrible fright and his jaw was so shaking that it was really pathetic. He certainly was a frightened boy, captured by the enemy he had been taught to fear as he would be put to certain death, and now he was in the hands of that same enemy and talking to an officer of that same army. Without being able to speak a word of English he was so frightened he did not know what to do. I told him he was alright, and asked him if he wanted something to eat, when he had eaten last, and he told me, with wonder in his eyes as to what possible interest it might be to me to know when he had eaten last, he told me he had not eaten since 10 o'clock the night before. When I sent and had water and food brought to him, gave him some chocolate, and told him to go to it, he could not understand at all what trick these enemies were going to try on him, but began to eat a little, for did not the major command him to eat? and when he found he was getting good food and that the chocolate I gave him was good, and that I covered up his thin, cold open arms and made him comfortable, that kid could not understand at all how the stories he had been told in Germany as to the way of cruel treatment if he was captured could possibly be in accord

with the way he was being treated. In fact when I had him go out in my car, and myself walked he was speechless. I landed that kid in an evacuation station, and when he found I compelled the attendants to carry him, he was entirely without words, and could not talk at all. I do not know where that kid is going but you could not pry him out of the American lines. You took a crow-bar, and another German who under certain circumstances had the opportunity offered to him in some other section to return to the German lines said he would rather the officer shoot him right then, than he be compelled to go back to the Hun lines and territory.

When the German officers pass by as captured prisoners their faces are full of surprise when they see the food we have, the troops in good health and fully armed and standing watching them and see other things which they probably were told did not exist or could not exist. The prisoners are thoroughly sick of the war, one said the other day he had a chance when on guard in his own (German) camp and as one of his own officers of high rank passed him he threw a hand grenade at him and there was no more of that German officer.

Our troops as I said are now held as "shock" or "attack" troops, which means that we are hurried to whatever part needs support and there go in for nights or days, or days and nights of continuous work. Our men get tired, yes, surely they do, yet they hold out, and never once have they failed to hold the Hun charge.

That means that wherever the fighting is the thickest and the heaviest, and the needs are the greatest, there is where we are sent, and so when you read in papers that heavy fighting is going on at any one point, there you may know our troops have been sent and are right there day and night. If the fighting is heavy and there is need of support, you can understand that our men are there fighting, and they stand for days at a time. Never do they complain. I have seen them slightly wounded, I have seen them seriously wounded, I have seen them mortally wounded, I have seen the terrible effects of gas on them both internally and externally, yet never have I heard a word of complaint from any of our American troops. What they want to know is how the fight is going, how is "Bill," or "Jim," or "Doctor," or "fix Jim, you will find him over there, he needs you more than this wound," and it may be that the man speaking is very, very seriously wounded himself. The Germans tell us when they come into our lines as prisoners that they never saw such troops, nothing they can do to us can stop us from coming over. Day and night we go, but I think we may get a little rest after while.

I thought of you and your sleeping in the old barrel when I was sleeping out in the rain the other night, my clothing on and covered only with my raincoat and blankets over which was a water-proof cover or spread which was entirely water-proof except in the parts where water leaked through. That was some sleep, but I got up fine, that is I was called, about 5:30 a. m. and turned out to get ready for another and newer charge to be started in a very short time.

Write soon. ELLIS.
MAJ. ELLIS E. W. GIVEN, M. R. C.
15th Field Artillery,
A. E. F.

Mysterious Mutism in Ancient Times.

A case of imagined inability of speech, one of the puzzles of today, is narrated by Herodotus, who tells that "Croesus had a son who was in other respects proper enough, but dumb. When the city was taken, one of the Persians, not knowing Croesus, was about to kill him. Croesus, though he saw him approach, from his present misfortune took no heed of him, nor did he care about dying of the blow; but this speechless son of his, when he saw the Persian advancing toward him, through dread and anguish burst into speech and said: 'Man, kill not Croesus!' These were the first words he ever uttered, but from that time he continued to speak the remainder of his life."

Fire Barrage.

Barrage or dam, is a new word in the military vernacular—specifically the act of barring by artillery fire. By exact measurements a line of guns is brought to bear upon a certain terrain. The fire creates a complete screen of projectiles. Behind it a body of troops is safe; through it no enemy can advance. By moving barrage line forward ("creeping" barrage) a detachment can advance with a minimum of casualties. It is controlled by observers at the front, who find ranges and direct artillery fire by telephone or wireless, and it demolishes, in front of the attacking force, wire entanglements, trenches and "pill-boxes."

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