

# 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 III.

Four of us had formed a close friendship. We had promised to keep together and help one another in every danger. So we often visited the homes of citizens together and did our best to quiet the harassed people we met and talk them out of fear of our forces. Without exception we found these people friendly and quick to feel

confidence in us when they learned that we really were their friends. If we wrote on their doors with chalk, "Here live good, honest people, please spare them," their gratitude knew no bounds. If so much had blood existed and if so many things which led to the military execution of innumerable Belgians, it was because of the mistrust systematically nourished on the part of the German officers.

That night we marched on after being joined by a 21-centimeter mortar battery of the foot artillery regiment No. 9 recently arrived. Not only were we to act as an auxiliary for this battery, but we were also expected to help bring these immense cannon into action. These guns were in two sections, each transported on a wagon pulled by six horses. These horses, the only ones used by foot artillery, are supposed to be the finest and most powerful in the German army.

Yet these animals were seldom up to expectations, so that it was a common thing to detail from 70 to 80 men to assist in transporting these mortars, and long, heavy ropes were carried for this purpose. This happened most frequently whenever the guns had to be taken off a highway and brought into a firing position.

Soon we arrived at the city of Bertrix. We found many houses at the right and left of us burning brightly. They had been set afire, we learned, because persons in them had fired on passing soldiers. In front of one of these houses was a half-burned man and woman with their fifteen or sixteen-year-old son. All were covered with straw. A little way farther on, three more civilians were lying dead in the same street.

As we were marching we suddenly received an order to surround a certain house at the left of us. Our captain declared that a shot fired from that house had killed a soldier. None of us had heard anything, however. The house from which the shot was alleged to have been fired was soon surrounded and hand grenades thrown into it through the windows. In a minute all the rooms were aflame. The air pressure from the exploding grenades was so great that doors in the house flew from their hinges and the walls of several rooms were crushed.

Almost at the same time five civilians ran into the streets with raised hands. They were seized at once and led before the officers, who constituted themselves immediately into a court-martial. Ten minutes later sentence had been executed, and five men lay on the ground with eyes bandaged, riddled with bullets.

In each case six of our men were always called upon to execute one man's sentence. I am sorry to say that I was one of the thirty called upon at this occasion. The condemned man who it was our duty to shoot was about forty years old, tall and straight. He never blinked as the bandage was put on. He was led to the garden of the house near by and his back placed to the house. After our captain said to us that it was our duty to aim true and end the tragedy quickly, we took our positions six paces in front of the condemned man. The sergeant commanding us previously gave us instructions that we were to shoot the condemned men through the breast.

Now we formed into two rows, one behind the other. The order sounded to load and aim and we each put five

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Riddled With Bullets.

cartridges into our rifles. "Prepare to fire"—the men in the first row knelt down and the second row took their places. Our guns were now held so that the barrels were forward and the butts were hip high. "Aim"—and slowly we aimed, holding our guns tightly with the butts against our shoulders and our fingers on the triggers.

The sergeant paused a half minute and then ordered us to fire. I do not know to this day whether our victim died at once, nor was there ever an opportunity to learn how many of the six bullets found their mark. All day I went around like a man in a trance, reproaching myself bitterly for having acted the part of executioner. For a long time I could not bear to speak about it to my comrades, for I felt guilty, and yet what could we soldiers do other than execute the orders given us?

In the evening we went into camp in an open field, pitching tents, and the next day continued our march.

The country through which we passed was uninteresting and offered nothing in the way of variety. The few tiny villages through which we passed had all been abandoned, and the poor-looking houses mostly destroyed. Long trains of fugitives passed us continually. These people were as a rule those who had escaped when the French army retreated and were returning now to find their homes destroyed by the rough hand of war.

After a long march, interrupted only by halts and short bivouacs, we approached the large Belgian-French border town of Sugny, located on the Belgian side of the border. It was about noon, and as the thunder of cannon constantly grew stronger, which indicated that a new battle was developing, we hoped to be able to remain in the town overnight. About one o'clock we entered and were billeted in a big barn. Most of the soldiers refused to eat from the field kitchens, and requisitioned eggs, chickens, geese and young pigs. Soon everybody was cooking. I am sorry to say that most of those who foraged had refused to pay for what they had taken.

Several soldiers now arrived with barrels of wine and also many bottles, which were instantly opened and emptied. The obvious result, and soon many noncommissioned officers and men were helplessly drunk. The owner of our barn had possessed three large hogs. One of the drunken noncommissioned officers tried to kill one of these hogs with a dull pocket knife. He had tortured the poor beast almost to death when the animal was mercifully killed by a bullet. A few minutes afterward the officer went to sleep. This was only an example and not the worst, for the inhabitants of

the town had to endure much from our men who had become drunk. There were open and secret robberies of gardens, stables and houses here and no restrictions whatever were put on the soldiers. There was no improvement in their general conduct, despite many complaints. One family reported that the French had treated them very well, but that our highly trained soldiers plundered and stole. It was therefore not surprising that the population suffered want and hunger. I often shared my bread with these suffering people. With two comrades, one day, I gave my portion of meat, vegetables and preserves and also a bag of onions to a woman with eight children. Because the iron was missing in our blood, we three were sentenced to extra watch duty for a week for the offense of displaying a love of humanity.

Our leader, Lieutenant of Reserve Elm, declared that such a thing as pity was insanity. He said if the woman had eight children that was her business. Then he concluded by saying with great emphasis: "In war everybody looks out for themselves, even if everything around him perishes."

Another soldier was sentenced to serve 14 days at hard labor. He was bringing bread to a hungry family and had six small loaves in his arms, which he had gathered from among the soldiers. The same lieutenant met him, accompanied by several noncommissioned officers. To the question as to where he was going, he replied that he was on his way to assist a poor family which had actually suffered hunger. The lieutenant at once ordered him to return the bread to his company. Then he raged and raged at the soldier, calling him fool, idiot, Hottentot, etc. But the soldier nevertheless did not obey and when the lieutenant thundered a second command to halt, the soldier turned around and threw the bread before the lieutenant's feet. Then he said quietly, "I do not wish anybody any harm, but if you and your autocratic family, and the whole German nation had to endure what the poor Belgians are obliged to suffer, it would be a bitter but just lesson."

This man was sentenced to serve 14 days for talking back to his superior officer. It surprised us all that he was let off so easily. But bitterness in the ranks grew, and at last the many hard punishments that were pronounced created so much feeling that the soldiers refused to tie any of their comrades. We left Sugny the next morning and one hour later crossed the Franco-Belgian border. Here again we were ordered to give three cheers as we did when our troops first crossed Germany into Belgium. At noon we arrived at Vivier-Au-Court. We remained in the village until evening and were permitted to go about without restrictions. In the afternoon nine men of my company were arrested for assaulting a woman but were soon released. At this time there was a great scarcity of tobacco among our soldiers and I knew that a mark or more was paid for a cigarette whenever one was offered for sale. Here, in Vivier-Au-Court there was but one government tobacco stall. I have seen how men were forced by noncommissioned officers at the point of guns to give up their entire supply of tobacco for worthless requisition papers. These "gentlemen" later sold their tobacco at half a mark for small packets.

Toward evening we marched off and brought the howitzers to a new position, from where the enemy's defenses on the Meuse could be bombarded. After a short march we encountered and fought a French army northeast of Donchery. Only the enemy's rear guard was on our side of the Meuse. To it was given the duty of covering the crossing of the main body of the French armies over the Meuse, which was done near Donchery.

The few bridges left standing were not sufficient for the enemy to cross as speedily as he should have. As a result there developed in Donchery a terrible fight. The French made an enormous effort. There was a terrible slaughter as man fought against man. It was one of the most fearful battles I have ever witnessed. No one knew afterwards how many he had killed. Sometimes stronger men, then weaker ones attacked. The glare from burning houses turned into red the whites of the fighters' eyes and revealed men battling one another frothing at the mouth.

Without any headgear, unkempt hair, uniforms open or mostly torn, it was bayonetting, hitting, scratching and plunging like wild beasts for life or death. Everybody fought for his life. There was no quarter. Only moaning and gasping could be heard. Each man thought only of his own life, of death or his home. Old memories raced through the mind, pursuing one another feverishly and yet men grew wilder, for they now battled a new enemy—exhaustion.

But there could not yet be any let-up. Again and again there is nothing to do but strike, stab, bite, fighting without guns or other weapons except those provided by nature for life or death. The exertion becomes more superhuman. You bite and you are a victor. But victor only for a second, for the next antagonist is already upon you. He has just killed one of your comrades. You suddenly remember that you still have a dagger. After a hasty search you find it in its regular place. One, two, three and it sinks to the hilt in the breast of your enemy. On, on, where there are new enemies. You suddenly see your next antagonist before you. He is after your life. He bites, stabs, scratches, to get you down, to pierce your heart with his dagger and again you use yours. Thank God, he lies on the ground; you are saved. But stop; you must have that dagger back. You pull it from the breast of

your late enemy. A stream of warm blood shoots from the open wound in your face. Human blood, warm human blood. You shudder, terrified only for a few seconds, for there is another adversary. It is again necessary for you to defend yourself. Again and again the murder commences anew. Always, and always again, through the whole night. At last, toward four o'clock in the morning, the French retired across the Meuse with the Germans storming after them. When the bridge was full of German soldiers, it was blown up by the French and hundreds of Germans found their death in the Meuse.

(To Be Continued.)

## FARIS WINS HIGH HONOR AS MARKSMAN

(From Tuesday's Daily.) R. S. Faris, with the Marines at Ft. Crockett, Texas, has accredited himself with high honor in the rifle practice, being one of the three out of his company to receive the badge as an expert rifle man. This news was conveyed in a letter to Mrs. Faris, received by her this morning. Mr. Faris stated that the boys were all desirous of going "over" as soon as possible and for that reason many of them, himself included, were refusing chances for promotion in acting as instructors on the rifle range in the hope of being sent over at an earlier date.

## PROPERTY OWNER VISITING IN BEND

(From Tuesday's Daily.) J. H. Clemmens of The Dalles, who has large property interests in this section, arrived in Bend yesterday morning and will remain here for several days looking over his affairs. In company with Mr. Clemmens was Guy Sears, who is contemplating purchasing some of the Clemmens property here.

## R. G. GOSNEY WILL SOON SEE SERVICE

Writes to Parents in This City from Camp Fremont Telling Them He Expects to Leave Shortly.

Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Gosney have received a letter from their son Glen, who left Bend May 1 for Camp Fremont, California, where he has since been stationed. Private Gosney in his letter has asked his parents to discontinue writing him until he sends them a new address, the company having been ordered into service, the destination and date of embarkation being prohibited by the censorship rules.

## County Filings.

Deschutes County Abstract company's report of instruments filed for record in Deschutes county: C. P. Niswonger to Moses and Maria Niswonger, quit claim deed, \$100. L. W. Davis to Elenor Grimes, warranty deed, \$10. Walter Harrison to Burr Black, warranty deed, \$10. Moses Niswonger to C. P. Niswonger, quit claim deed, \$100. W. H. Staats to Geo. P. Hibbard, warranty deed, \$10. Andrew Saye to W. A. Rice, et al., warranty deed, \$10. C. W. Hughes to J. S. Ayres, warranty deed, \$10.

## CANNOT SECURE TOBACCO THERE

SOLDIER BOYS WRITE TO BEND CONTRIBUTOR THANKING HIM FOR THE BULLETIN TOBACCO—SMOKES NOT PROCURABLE.

(From Saturday's Daily.) Cards from three of the boys "over there" have been received by T. McCann of this city, one of the contributors to The Bulletin tobacco fund. Sergeant Shadd, who received his package on July 12, writes: "Have today received package of tobacco containing your address on a card. Its contents were greatly enjoyed, as tobacco cannot be purchased at any price in this country, and a puff of smoke from the old home town now and then is greatly enjoyed." Private Bosch, who also received his tobacco kit on July 12, confines himself to the single sentence: "Many thanks," which perhaps in the end conveys as great a meaning as a more lengthy message. One of Mr. McCann's packages fell to a former Oregon boy, as evidenced by the following, which was written on the card returned: "Your gift smokes received and greatly appreciated. Am from Oregon myself, my home being in Portland, but sorry to say I have never been in Bend, but am aware that it is on the map." This card is signed by Private K. D. Joy of Company A, First United States Engineers.

## WAR EXCHANGE

### SUGAR-SAVING CANNING.

Fruits Without Sugar.

1. See that all equipment is ready before starting.
2. Test jars and rubbers.
3. Select only fresh, firm, sound products.
4. Prepare by cleaning, sorting, stemming, seeding, paring and coring.
5. Scald or blanch peaches, apricots, figs and plums one to two minutes in boiling water or steam.
6. Dip quickly into cold water. Finish preparation. (Omit steps 5 and 6 for all fruits not named.)
7. Pack at once in hot, clean glass jars or other containers.
8. Pour over the fruit the boiling hot water.
9. Wipe around top of jar carefully with clean cloth.
10. Place scalded rubber and cap in position.
11. Partially tighten tops; seal tin cans completely.
12. Sterilize for the length of time given below, according to the particular type of outfit used: Hot water bath, 30 minutes. Water seal, 214 degrees, 20 minutes. Five pounds steam pressure, 12 minutes.
13. Remove jars from canner, seal completely.
14. Invert to test joints for pin-hole leaks.
15. Cool as quickly as possible, avoiding drafts.
16. Label, wrap and store for winter use. Use for pie fillings, puddings, ices, sauces, salads and in the making of fruit punches.

## This Man Able to Work Now First Time in Two Years

Says Tanlac Gave Him Biggest Surge of His Life—Gains 20 Pounds.

"Well, I have just finished my third bottle of Tanlac, and do you know I had the surprise of my life the other day when I got on the scales and found I had actually gained twenty pounds already," said W. S. Hukill, a well known carpenter living at 7308 Park Ave., Tacoma, Wash., recently.

"I hadn't been able to hit a lick of work in two years, until now," he continued. "My appetite went square back on me, and what little I did manage to eat soured on my stomach, causing gas and intense suffering. My kidneys bothered me something awful and my back pained me so bad it was torture for me to have it rubbed. I was so nervous and miserable during those two years that I never knew what a good night's sleep was, and for seven months of that time I was flat on my back, hardly able to move. I, of course, was under treatment, spent some time in the hospital, and took all kinds of medicines, but with it all I kept getting worse.

"I kept dropping off in weight until I lost forty-seven pounds, and was almost a living skeleton. When I left the hospital and decided to see what Tanlac would do for me, I weighed only ninety-five pounds. But Tanlac has certainly made a wonderful change in me. I sleep fine, and really it's the first time in two years I have been able to sleep the night through. My back and kidneys don't bother me any more, and my stomach is in such a good condition that I can eat just anything I want without suffering a particle afterward. The way I am getting back my lost weight is astonishing. As I said, I have already gained twenty pounds, and I am still gaining. Not only that, I feel better than I have in years, and I am going back to my work as I feel strong and well in every way, and I just can't praise Tanlac enough for what it has done for me."

Tanlac is sold in Bend by the Owl Pharmacy, and in Sister by Geo. Aitken.—Adv.

## NEW FIRM PURCHASES SECOND HAND STORE

(From Tuesday's Daily.) G. W. Cook, for the past several years a resident of the Millican valley, and Frank Stanlake of California have purchased the second hand business formerly operated by G. C. Briggs on Bond street. The firm will be operated in the future under the name of Cook & Stanlake.

It's in the Air. Windblown pollen, carrying the germs that cause hay fever, is abroad in the land. One remedy is known to give relief and comfort from choking, gasping asthma and tormenting hay fever. Foley's Honey and Tar spreads a healing coating on inflamed membranes, stops coughs and colds. Sold everywhere.—Adv.

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  - An Illness—
  - OR—
  - Any New Building—
  - Social Functions—
  - Meetings—
  - A Real Estate Transaction—
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