

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 IV.

The scene of the slaughter could now be surveyed at leisure. Dead and wounded were strewn all around, and over them clouds of smoke and flames made the air thick. But we were already too hardened to feel much pity. Humanity was thrown to the winds and the cries and begging of the wounded left everybody cold.

Some Catholic sisters lay dead in front of their convent. The only building that was spared in Donchery was the armory of the Twenty-third French dragons.

There was not much time in which to do anything, for at seven o'clock the French began to hurl shells into the village. We fortified ourselves behind a thick garden wall directly in front of the Meuse. The river bank at this point was flat, but on the opposite side it was steep. Here the French infantry had dug itself in and established three lines, one above the other. The artillery firing was too far. We did not come within its range, so that we were able to observe the effect of the shelling of our own artillery on the enemy infantry positions before us. The 21-centimeter shells raced by above our heads and burst with a fearful noise in the enemy's trenches.

The French could not resist this hail of shot very long. They soon abandoned all the heights on the river bank. They abandoned Soudan without a fight and it was left intact, which had not been the case with Donchery. Hardly a house had suffered.

When the bugles sounded in Donchery, it was discovered that our company had lost 38 men in battle. A position was taken behind the dragon armory and our company, which now was reduced to 90 men, was ordered to attempt the building of a pontoon bridge over the Meuse. After we had been re-enforced by 80 men, we marched in small detachments in order not to draw the enemy's attention to us. After an hour's march we stopped in a small forest about 200 meters from the Meuse to rest until darkness set in. At twilight a division bridge train was driven up close to our hiding place. This was soon followed by a corps bridge train as a reserve. After all preparations were made and the main advance work, such as setting up the bridge stays and landing platforms, were ready, the single pontoon wagons drove up. They were speedily but silently unloaded. We completed four pontoons, that is, 20 meters of bridge, without the enemy discovering anything.

Then suddenly the searchlight of the enemy was set in action and scanned the river. We dropped to the ground at once. The enemy must have seen us, for the searchlights played here and there and kept our bridge position under continuous glare. We were discovered hardly before we knew what had happened, and a rain of fire fell in the water in front of us. We continued to lie flat on the ground as four more shots struck the water, this time a little nearer to the bridge and one shot hit the bank. At once a third rain of shot followed and two struck the bridge. Two men fell in the water and two lay dead on the bridge. Those in the water swam ashore and escaped none the worse for their experience except for a bath.

In spite of the continued volume of artillery fire, we brought the two dead men to land. The bridge was now greatly damaged and there was no choice except to replace the damaged pontoons by new ones. We began this difficult task as soon as the artillery fire let up. Hardly had we begun it again when a salvo struck and greatly damaged the bridge. Fortunately we had no losses. We were now ordered to retire, and after a half hour began anew. The enemy's searchlights were now dark. We brought about ten pontoons up without interference and then we were suddenly bombarded again. We had attracted the attention of the enemy's patrol.

Several batteries now opened fire on

us at one time and after ten minutes the entire work was only a pile of wreckage. Two more men were killed. The order now came to retire. Eight men were detailed to attend to the dead and wounded and we were taken out of this danger zone. After we marched about two kilometers up the river, we were halted, and discovered that the corps bridge train was in place. We were told that we would get the bridge ready on land. Sections consisting of two pontoons each were firmly fastened together, equipped with anchors, everything else made ready and then put in the water. The location for the bridge was indicated to us and we rode with all our might down to the bridge position. The enemy did not see through these tactics and did not interfere, so that all the parts reached the position in a very short time, where they were fastened together. In less than twenty minutes the bridge was completed and the infantry stormed over it.

The bridge was covered with straw in order to dull the noise of the troop movements. At the same time, at different places, transports with pontoons were assisting the army to cross and before the French found out what had happened our troops had occupied the opposite bank and established themselves firmly there.

The French artillery and infantry now opened a terrible fire on the pontoons. Our units, which had defended the pontoons, were relieved and replaced by infantry. I was made a leader in the pontoon and with four men at the paddle and 18 infantrymen as a crew, we started our first crossing in a veritable hail of shell, but with only one minor casualty, we reached the opposite bank. A comrade took my place at the steering gear. On the return trip, our pontoon was struck by bullets but fortunately above the water line. All about us the pontoons crossed, several in a sinking condition. The men who manned them, all of whom could swim, tried to swim to the bank, but many infantrymen were drowned.

We landed, and took a new pontoon, which, by a superhuman effort, we managed to get across the river a second time. This time we arrived with two dead and one wounded infantryman. Long before we reached the bank the infantrymen jumped into the shallow water and waded to land.



Arrived With Two Dead and One Wounded.

With the two dead left in the boat, we turned around. Our crew ached as a result of the continuous rowing and their hands were soon covered by blisters, but nevertheless we had to row on. There was no rest.

When we were 20 meters from the bank, our pontoon was hit below the water line by several bullets. When the bullets struck our boat they made only a tiny hole, but as it emerged on the bottom, it tore an opening as large as a plate. As a result our pontoon settled rapidly and there was nothing else for us to do except to jump into the icy water and swim. Hardly had we left the boat when it sank, but we all reached the other bank safe for the moment.

In spite of our wet clothing we had to take a new boat at once, and with our blistered hands had to man the oars again. In the middle of the river we collided with another boat. This boat had lost its pilot and two rowers. It rammed us and our pontoon tipped over and 18 infantrymen and one member of the crew were thrown into the water. We were saved along with four men from the other pontoon and taken to the left bank. Hardly had we landed before we were ordered to take over a pontoon loaded with ammunition.

About five more times we crossed the Meuse. Meanwhile day broke and there a terrible battle developed between the troops which had crossed and the French. The Germans had the best in this encounter because they could not be shelled by the French artillery.

We were given a short rest and lay in our water-soaked clothing in an old abandoned trench shivering with cold. Our hands were swollen to twice their normal size. They pained so greatly that we could not hold a bottle to our lips. It was a terrible sight to see young and strong men lying on the ground helpless and broken.

After a short rest we were ordered to seek for wounded in the burning houses but we did not find many, for most of those who had been badly wounded and unable to save themselves, were burned to death. Only the buttons of their uniforms and their weapons indicated to us to which side they had belonged.

In some cases, there were not even these vestiges. Only a little heap of ashes within the ruins of a house, was all that was left of whole families for whole streets. During the search most of us behaved as if we had not taken part in the terrible events of the last hour, as if we had not seen the horrors of this encounter and as if we had forgotten entirely the danger we had just escaped.

As to honoring the dead, something which had been taught us by our mothers from infancy, or a fear which the average person feels toward a body, there was no sign. My pen would balk if I tried to recall the expressions, to describe the acts soldiers as well as officers committed to determine the nationality or sex of the dead. In the meantime, the battle between our troops and the French had reached a climax. Our troops had suffered great losses but now our turn came.

The German artillery shelled as we crossed the enemy's position with great fury. Our artillery succeeded in silencing the enemy's batteries and we tried to take his high positions by storm.

When we were within 200 meters of the enemy's defenses, the French machine guns were turned upon us and we were driven back with enormous losses.

Ten minutes later, we stormed a second time and had to retire again with great losses. We again formed for attack within the shelter of our trenches, but the fighting spirit was gone. But we dared not lose courage, although the victims of our useless storming attacks covered the field and we were able to look at our dead comrades all about us.

The artillery started up again; reinforcements arrived; after half an hour, we stormed a third time, over the bodies of our fallen comrades. As we halted about 20 meters from the enemy's trench, he withdrew his entire first line. Soon after we saw the Germans advance along the whole line. The reason for this unexpected retreat was explained later when we learned that the main part of the French army had retired some time before. The heavy toll of life among our comrades was taken in a mere rear-guard action.

During the next hour the enemy abandoned all the heights of the Meuse. As we reached the crest of these heights, we could easily overlook the roads over which the French had retreated. They were departing in close formation, in long columns. Our company and others received orders to assemble and soon we pursued the fleeing enemy. It was our work to repair roads which had been destroyed so that they would be passable for our armies, a task that was harder in the burning midday sun, owing to the fact that the dead and wounded had first to be disposed of.

The dead bodies were seized by two men, one at the head and the other at the feet, and thrown into the ditch. Corpses were handled exactly as was a board to be used in building a bridge. Legs and arms were tossed likewise into the ditch. Dead horses and damaged batteries had to be removed. We were not strong enough to remove dead horses. We managed to capture a horse which was running wild and hitched him to the carcasses. Corpses hanging in the trees were left there. No one cared anything about them.

Canteens and knapsacks of the dead were searched for food and drink and whatever we found was eaten with the greatest relish.

French soldiers who had died of sunstroke covered the road. Others crawled to right and left of the road and waited there for relief or death. We did not dare to help them. The order was to advance and we had to march on and on. The captain told us we had to pursue the fleeing enemy

LESTER D. LOWE LIKES THE ARMY

SAYS HE HAS GAINED FIFTEEN POUNDS SINCE HE ENTERED SERVICE — PECK CREIGHTON ALSO MEMBER OF COMPANY.

(From Friday's Daily.) Army life agrees with Lester D. Lowe, formerly of this city but now with the remount depot at Ft. Bliss, Texas. Private Lowe has written a letter to Sheriff S. E. Roberts. "Army life is fine for a man's health if he will do what is proper," writes Lowe. "I have done so, so far, and have learned that they only ask that a man does the best he knows how. If a man is not capable of doing one thing they put him at another where he has a better chance to fit in, and will give all a fair chance. I have gained 15 pounds since I entered the army in spite of the fact that I have done some hard work. It has put me in condition and I feel just as good at night as I do in the morning. We box and run foot races and wrestle every night.

"The only Bend boy that is in this camp besides myself is Peck Creighton. We have been together all of the time, and it looks as though we might cross the pond together. He is well and getting fat. Looks like a new man. I expect we will go across in about six weeks with the pack train."

WAR EXCHANGE

SUGAR-SAVING CANNING.

Fruit Juices.

1. See that all equipment is ready.
2. Prepare fruits by cleaning, stemming, etc.
3. Heat slowly in an acid-proof kettle until fruit is tender. Before beginning to cook berries, mash. A little water may be added if necessary. Cut hard fruits, such as apples, into pieces and add half as much water as fruit.
4. Place in dampened bag; press to remove all juices.
5. Drain through closely woven bag, dampened; do not press.
6. Pour fruit juice into hot jars, or tin cans.
7. Place scalded rubber and cap in position.
8. Partially tighten tops; seal tin cans completely.
9. Sterilize 40 minutes at a temperature of 165 degrees F. (Simmering.)
10. Remove jars from canner; seal completely.
11. Invert to test joints for pin-hole leaks.
12. Cool, label, wrap and store for winter use.

Use for flavoring and beverages.

with all our strength and much discontent was manifest on receipt of this order. After being on our feet day and night, slaying like barbarians, taking no time to eat or rest, we continued to receive commands to maintain the pursuit with all haste. The captain understood how we felt and tried to pacify us by friendly conversation.

(To Be Continued.)

EIGHT FOREST FIRES REPORTED

THREE OF THIS NUMBER COVER AREA OF MORE THAN 200 ACRES EACH—CREWS OF MEN ARE BEING SENT OUT.

(From Tuesday's Daily.) Eight forest fires, three of them covering an area of more than 200 acres each, have been reported to the headquarters of the forest service here as a result of the electric storm of Sunday afternoon and night. Four of the fires have been located in the Pine mountain district, under the supervision of Forest Ranger Harold Smith, who sent in a call late last night for men to aid in fighting the flames, which are gradually spreading. It is in this district that three of the largest fires have occurred, the greatest damage being done in townships 21 and 22, range 15, east, on the property of the Northwest Timber company, which has large holdings in that region.

Another fire is reported in the Ft. Rock district, two near Crescent and one near Sparks lake. Men have been put into service at every available point to meet the demands for fire fighters, but the forest service is still in need of several men to aid in the work of fighting the flames.

UP AND ABOUT AGAIN.

"I was sick in bed with kidney trouble," writes C. F. Reynolds, Elmira, N. Y. "I commenced taking Foley Kidney Pills and in a few days was out of bed. Keeping up the treatment, I was able to go to work. Since then I have had no more back-aches." Foley Kidney Pills stop sleep-disturbing bladder ailments. Sold everywhere.—Adv.

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BOYS AT FRONT RUN FOR SMOKES

ALL ARE HAPPY TO GET TOBACCO KITS WHICH ARE SENT OUT BY THE PEOPLE FROM HOME THROUGH THE TOBACCO FUND.

(From Tuesday's Daily.) Boys at the front run from all directions when smoke kits are received, says a post card received by H. M. Greiner of this city from Corporal Andrew H. Treffs, member of the field artillery, one of those to receive a contribution from Mr. Greiner through The Bulletin tobacco fund. The cards read:

"It is with pleasure that I acknowledge the receipt of your smokes. I am in the artillery at the front. All of the boys are pleased and happy to receive these packages, and run from all directions when the gifts arrive."

When Children Start to School. School opens at a time of year when the change of seasons is likely to cause coughs, colds, croup, hay fever and asthma. Prompt action at the first sign of infection may keep children in prime good health and help them to avoid losing time. Foley's Honey and Tar is an ideal home remedy. Sold everywhere.—Adv.

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[5-24]

LOYAL LEGION REPORT IS MADE

DELEGATES TELL OF WORK AT SPOKANE.

Committees Will Have Charge of Disagreements Arising Within Their Territory — All Endorse Col. Disque.

(From Thursday's Daily.) A maximum and minimum wage scale as decided upon by the 225 delegates of the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen from the four different districts in the Inland Empire, which was held in Spokane on August 12, will be received here from Colonel Disque's office within a few days, according to a report made by the delegates from the Brooks-Scanlon Lumber company, who, in company with The Shevlin-Hixon delegates, were in attendance at the meeting.

The report, which is signed by J. Blew, C. L. Simpson and A. D. Norton, states that the meeting was called for the purpose of organizing the separate districts so that each local could handle its own affairs, relieving Colonel Disque of a heavy burden of work which in the past has fallen to his office, and yet at the same time be more satisfactory to the men, giving them the entire charge of the matters arising within their jurisdiction.

From the Bend district three men were elected at both the Shevlin-Hixon and Brooks-Scanlon plants, with additional representation from the woods. These committees are to act for the employees in the case of disagreement with the companies. In the event such a disagreement arises, and the committee representing the men at either of the plants has met with the company officials and cannot come to an agreement, the matter is then referred to a committee representing both the plants and the woods. This committee is elected by the other members, and is composed of the following men: Charles Hughes, Shevlin-Hixon company logging camp; Thomas Murphy, Shevlin-Hixon company mill, and C. L. Simpson of the Brooks-Scanlon mill.

Should this committee not be able to come to an agreement with the operators, the matter is then referred to a committee composed of the chairmen of the four districts making up the Inland Empire division. From there it would necessarily go to Colonel Disque's office for final settlement.

In closing, the report reads: "The meeting was brought to a close by everybody present endorsing Colonel Disque to the fullest extent, all delegates being perfectly satisfied that the colonel was just as fair for the employe as he was for the employer."

Where others fail a college man succeeds. Mt. Angel College, St. Benedict, Ore. Address Rev. E. L. Meier.—Adv.

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