

GUNNER DEPEW

Albert N. Depew

EX-GUNNER AND CHIEF PETTY-OFFICER, U. S. NAVY
MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN LEGION OF FRANCE
CAPTAIN GUN TURRET, FRENCH BATTLESHIP CASSARD
WINNER OF THE CROIX DE GUERRE

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CHAPTER IV.

On the Firing Line.

When I reported on the Cassard after my fourteen days' leave, I was detailed with a detachment of the legion to go to the Flanders front. I changed into the regular uniform of the legion, which is about like that of the infantry, with the regimental badge—a seven-flamed grenade.

We traveled from Brest by rail, in third-class cars, passing through La Havre and St. Pol, and finally arriving at Bergues. From Bergues we made the trip to Dixmude by truck—a distance of about twenty miles. We carried no rations with us, but at certain places along the line the train stopped, and we got out to eat our meals. At every railroad station they have booths or counters, and French girls work day and night feeding the poilus. It was a wonderful sight to see these girls, and it made you feel good to think you were going to fight for them.

It was not only what they did, but the way they did it, and it is at things like this that the French beat the world. They could tell just what kind of treatment each poilu needed, and they saw to it that he got it. They took special pains with the men of the legion, because, as they say, we are "strangers," and that means, "the best we have is yours" to the French. These French women, young and old, could be a mother and a sweetheart and a sister all at the same time to any hairy old ex-convict in the legion, and do it in a way that made him feel like a little boy at the time and a rich church member afterwards. The only thing

we did not like about this trip was that there were not enough stations along that line. There is a tip that the French engineers will not take, I am afraid.

There is another thing about the French women that I have noticed, and that is this: There are pretty girls in every country under the sun, but the plain girls in France are prettier than the plain ones in other countries. They might not show it in photographs, but in action there is something about them that you cannot explain. I have never seen an ugly French girl who was not easy to look at.

We finally got to Dixmude, after having spent about eighteen hours on the way. On our arrival one company was sent to the reserve trenches and my company went to the front line trench. We were not placed in training camps, because most of us had been under fire before. I never had, but that was not supposed to make any difference. They say if you can stand the legion you can stand anything.

Before we entered the communication trench, we were drawn up alongside of a crossroad for a rest, and to receive certain accoutrements. Pretty soon we saw a bunch of Boches coming along the road, without their guns, a few of them being slightly wounded. Some of them looked scared and others happy, but they all seemed tired. Then we heard some singing, and pretty soon we could see an Irish corporal stepping along behind the Huns, with his rifle slung over his back, and every once in a while he would shuffle a bit and then sing some more. He had a grin on him that pushed his ears back.

The British noncom who was detailed as our guide sang out: "What kind of time are you having, Pat?"

The Irishman saluted with one hand, dug the other into his pocket and pulled out enough watches to make you think you were in a pawn shop. "Oh, a fein toim i'm havlu," he says. "I got wan from each of thim fellas." We counted fourteen prisoners there in the bunch. Pat sure thought he was rolling in wealth.

After we were rested up we were issued rifles, shrapnel helmets and

belts, and then started down the communication trench. These trenches are entrances to the fighting trenches and run at varying angles and varying distances apart. They are seldom wide enough to hold more than one man, so you have to march single file in them. They wind in and out, according to the lay of the land, some parts of them being more dangerous than others. When you come to a dangerous spot you have to crawl sometimes.

There are so many cross trenches and blind alleys that you have to have a guide for a long time, because without one you are apt to walk through an embrasure in a fire trench and right out into the open, between the German front line and your own. Which is hardly worth while!

If any part of the line is under fire, the guide at the head of the line is on the lookout for shells, and when he hears one coming he gives the signal and you drop to the ground and wait until it bursts. You never get all the time you want, but at that you have plenty of time to think about things while you are lying there with your face in the mud, waiting to hear the sound of the explosion. When you hear it, you know you have got at least one more to dodge. If you do not hear it—well, most likely you are worrying more about tuning your thousand-string harp than anything else.

In the communication trench you have to keep your distance from the man ahead of you. This is done so that you will have plenty of room to fall down in, and because if a shell should find the trench, there would be fewer casualties in an open formation than in a closed. The German artillery is keen on communication trenches, and whenever they spot one they stay with it a long time. Most of them are camouflaged along the top and sides, so that enemy aviators cannot see anything but the earth or bushes, when they throw an eye down on our lines.

We took over our section of the front line trenches from a French line regiment that had been on the job for 24 days. That was the longest time I have heard of any troops remaining on the firing line.

Conditions at the front and ways of fighting are changing all the time, as each side invents new methods of butchering, so when I try to describe the Dixmude trenches, you must realize



"I Got Wan From Each of Thim Fellas."

ize that it is probably just history by now. If they are still using trenches there they probably look entirely different.

But when I was at Dixmude they were something like this:

Behind the series of front-line trenches are the reserve trenches; in this case five to seven miles away, and still farther back are the billets. These may be houses or barns or ruined churches—any place that can possibly be used for quartering troops when off duty.

Troops were usually in the front-line trenches six to eight days, and fourteen to sixteen days in the reserve trenches. Then back to the billets for six or eight days.

We were not allowed to change our clothing in the front-line trenches—not even to remove socks, unless for inspection. Nor would they let you as much as unbutton your shirt, unless there was an inspection of identification disks. We wore a disk at the wrist and another around the neck. You know the gag about the disks, of course: If your arm is blown off they can tell who you are by the neck disk; if your head is blown off, they do not care who you are.

In the reserve trenches you can make yourself more comfortable, but you cannot go to such extreme lengths of luxury as changing your clothes entirely. That is for billets, where you spend most of your time bathing, changing clothes, sleeping and eating. Believe me, a billet is great stuff; it is like a sort of temporary heaven.

Of course you know what the word "cooties" means. Let us hope you will never know what the cooties themselves mean. When you get in or near the trenches, you take a course in the natural history of bugs, lice, rats and every kind of pest that has ever been invented.

It is funny to see some of the newcomers when they first discover a cootie on them. Some of them cry. If they really knew what it was going to be like they would do worse than that, maybe.

Then they start hunting all over each other, just like monkeys. They team up for this purpose, and many times it is in this way that a couple of men get to be trench partners and come to be pals for life—which may not be a long time at that.

In the front-line trenches it is more comfortable to fall asleep on the parapet fire-step than in the dugouts, because the cooties are thicker down below, and they simply will not give you a minute's rest. They certainly are active little pests. We used to make back scratchers out of certain weapons that had flexible handles, but never had time to use them when we needed them most.

We were given bottles of a liquid which smelled like lysol and were supposed to soak our clothes in it. It was thought that the cooties would object to the smell and quit work. Well, a cootie that could stand our clothes without the dope on them would not be bothered by a little thing like this stuff. Also, our clothes got so sour and horrible smelling that they hurt our noses worse than the cooties. They certainly were game little devils, and came right back at us.

So most of the poilus threw the dope at Fritz and fought the cooties hand to hand.

There was plenty of food in the trenches most of the time, though once in a while, during a heavy bombardment, the fatigue—usually a corporal's guard—would get killed in the communication trenches and we would not have time to get out to the fatigue and rescue the grub they were bringing. Sometimes you could not find either the fatigue or the grub when you got to the point where they had been hit.

But, as I say, we were well fed most of the time, and got second and third helpings until we had to open our belts. But as the Limeys say: "Gaw blimey, the chuck was rough." They served a thick soup of meat and vegetables in bowls the size of wash basins, black coffee with or without sugar—mostly without!—and plenty of bread.

Also, we had preserves in tins, just like the Limeys. If you send any parcels over, do not put any apple and plum jam in them or the man who gets it will let Fritz shoot him. Ask any Limey soldier and he will tell you the same. I never thought there was so much jam in the world. No Man's Land looked like a city dump. Most of us took it, after a while, just to get the bread. Early in the war they used the tins to make bombs of, but that was before Mills came along with his hand grenade. Later on they flattened out the tins and lined the dugouts with them.

Each man carried an emergency ration in his bag. This consisted of bully beef, biscuits, etc. This ration was never used except in a real emergency, because no one could tell when it might mean the difference between life and death to him. When daylight catches a man in a shell hole or at a listening post out in No Man's Land he does not dare to crawl back to his

trench before nightfall, and then is the time that his emergency ration comes in handy. Also, the stores failed to reach us sometimes, as I have said, and we had to use the emergency rations.

Sometimes we received raw meat and fried it in our dugouts. We built regular clay ovens in the dugouts, with iron tops for broiling. This, of course, was in the front-line trenches only.

We worked two hours on the fire-step and knocked off for four hours, in which time we cooked and ate and slept. This routine was kept up night and day, seven days a week. Sometimes the program was changed; for instance, when there was to be an attack or when Fritz tried to come over and visit, but otherwise nothing disturbed our routine unless it was a gas attack.

The ambition of most privates is to become a sniper, as the official sharpshooters are called. After a private has been in the trenches for six months or a year and has shown his marksmanship, he becomes the great man he has dreamed about. We had two snipers to each company and because they took more chances with their lives than the ordinary privates they were allowed more privileges. When it was at all possible our snipers were allowed dry quarters, the best of food, and they did not have to follow the usual routine, but came and went as they pleased.

Our snipers, as a rule, went over the parapet about dusk, just before Fritz got his star shells going. They would crawl out to shell craters or tree stumps or holes that they had spotted during the day—in other words, places where they could see the enemy parapets but could not be seen themselves. Once in position, they would make themselves comfortable, smear their tin hats with dirt, get a good rest for their rifles and snipe every German they saw. They wore extra bandoleers of cartridges, since there was no telling how many rounds they might fire during the night. Sometimes they had direct and visible targets and other times they potted Huns by guesswork. Usually



They Potted Huns by Guess Work.

they crawled back just before daylight, but sometimes they were out 24 hours at a stretch. They took great pride in the number of Germans they knocked over, and if our men did not get eight or ten they thought they had not done a good night's work. Of course it was not wholesale killing, like machine gunning, but it was very useful, because our snipers were always laying for the German snipers, and when they got Sniper Fritz they saved just so many of our lives.

The Limeys have a great little expression that means a lot: "Carry on." They say it is a cockney expression. When a captain falls in action, his words are not a message to the girl he left behind him or any dope about his gray-haired mother, but "Carry on, Lieutenant Whosis." If the lieutenant gets his it is "Carry on, Sergeant Jacks," and so on as far as it goes. So the words used to mean, "Take over the command and do the job right." But now they mean not only that but "Keep up your courage, and go to it." One man will say it to another sometimes when he thinks the first man is getting downhearted, but more often, if he is a Limey, he will start kidding him.

Our men, of course, did not say "Carry on," and in fact they did not have any expression in French that meant exactly the same thing. But they used to cheer each other along, all right, and they passed along the command when it was necessary, too. I wonder what expression the American troops will use. (You notice I do not call them Sammies!)

I took my turn at listening post with the rest of them, of course. A listening post is any good position out in No Man's Land, and is always held by two men. Their job is to keep a live ear on Fritz and in case they hear anything that sounds very much like an attack one man runs back to his lines and the other stays to hold back the Boches as long as he can. You can figure for yourself which is the most healthful job.

As many times as I went on listening-post duty I never did get to feeling homelike there exactly. You have to lie very still, of course, as Fritz is listening, too, and a move may mean a bullet in the ribs. So, lying on the ground with hardly a change of position, the whole lower part of my body would go to sleep before I had been at the post very long. I used to brag a lot about how fast I could run, so I had my turn as the runner, which suited me all right. But every time I got to a listening post and started

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THE BEND BULLETIN

to think about what I would do if Fritz should come over and wondered how good a runner he was, I took a long breath and said, "Feet, do your duty." And I was strong on duty.

After I had done my stunt in the front-line and reserve trenches I went back with my company to billets, but had only been there for a day or two before I was detached and detailed to the artillery position to the right of us, where both the British and French had mounted naval guns. There were guns of all calibers there, both naval and field pieces, and I got a good look at the famous "75's," which are the best guns in the world, in my estimation, and the one thing that saved Verdun.

The "75's" fired 30 shots a minute, where the best German guns could do was six. The American three-inch field piece lets go six times a minute, too. The French government owns the secret of the mechanism that made this rapid fire possible. When the first "75's" began to roar, the Germans knew the French had found a new weapon, so they were very anxious to get one of the guns and learn the secret.

Shortly afterward they captured eight guns by a mass attack in which, the allies claim, there were 4,000 German troops killed. The Boches studied the guns and tried to turn out pieces like them at the Krupp factory. But somehow they could not get it. Their imitation "75's" would only fire five shots very rapidly and then "cough"—puff, puff, puff, with nothing coming out. The destructive power of the "75's" is enormous. These guns have saved the lives of thousands of poilus and Tommies and it is largely due to them that the French are now able to beat Fritz at his own game and give back shell for shell—and then some.

(To Be Continued.)

MRS. GERKING II.

(From Friday's Daily.)
Mrs. M. R. Gerking, formerly in charge of the Bend surgical hospital, is reported to be ill at her home in Tumalo.

FULL OF COLD; HAD THE GRIP.

Many will be pleased to read how Lewis Newman, 506 Northrand St., Charleston, W. Va., was restored to health. He writes: "I was down sick and nothing would do me any good. I was full of cold. Had the grip until I got two 50c bottles of Foley's Honey and Tar. It is the best remedy for grip and colds I ever used." Sold everywhere.—Adv.

YOUTH IS HELD FOR ABDUCTION

JOSEPH CLYDE DUCKETT ARRESTED BY SHERIFF ROBERTS AT SISTERS—WANTED AT CHEHALIS, WASHINGTON.

(From Saturday's Daily.)

Joseph Clyde Duckett, charged with the abduction of a girl from Chehalis, Washington, was arrested yesterday at Sisters by Sheriff S. E. Roberts and is being held in the county jail awaiting the arrival of Sheriff J. F. Berry of Chehalis county who will arrive on the train tomorrow morning.

Duckett, who is but 19 years of age, is charged with enticing a Chehalis girl of several years younger to come to Oregon with him from Washington. The couple lived together at Sisters for some time, and then the girl returned to her parents.

OLD RESIDENT OF COUNTY IS DEAD

(From Thursday's Daily.)

Mrs. Amanda Dealy, 63 years of age, wife of Charles Dealy, died at her home at Bear Creek Buttes last night, following a stroke of paralysis which occurred one week ago. Mrs. Dealy was an old resident of Crook county, having lived here over 30 years.

Her husband and three sons, Lee, William and Thomas, survive her. Funeral services are to be held at Prineville tomorrow afternoon.

LIBERTY TEMPLE FINISHED.

(From Friday's Daily.)

The interior of the Liberty temple will be painted either today or tomorrow, and will be ready for the united welfare campaign next Monday. The roof was put on Wednesday and additional windows put in place.

DR. HYDE HERE.

Dr. E. O. Hyde of Redmond, who has taken over the practice of Dr. Hoech, is in the city aiding County Physician R. W. Hendershott.

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