

Letters from The Boys Who Have Gone to Make the World Safe for Democracy

MAJOR SWENSON PRAISES BRAVERY OF AMERICANS Army Surgeon Says They Do Not Complain When Wounded But Try to Help Others.

The following is an extract of a letter received by Mrs. Karl Swenson from her husband, Major Swenson, and details some of the thrilling experiences through which he passed while on the Western Front:

"We sure have had a taste and experience of a battle. I have seen it and been in it red hot. It's a wonder that we came out so well. We had forged ahead so far that we were caught in a cross-fire of the heavy artillery from two angles, and besides the aeroplanes swooped down on us and peppered the dickens out of us. Our dressing station was right on the Axiol Road for the division, and all transportation, supplies, ammunition, water, rations guns, etc., all came by. They all suffered heavy casualties, of course, and that made so much work for us.

"Then the gas shells raised havoc with us; the clothes of the boys became saturated with the gas, and we, working over them constantly for six and eight days without relief and little sleep, gradually got the gas into our lungs. Some were in quite bad shape before they realized what was the matter. Some of the doctors had to go to the hospital, but I got over mine entirely and didn't lose an hour's time from work.

"I don't believe I'll ever forget the confusion that reigned in the dressing station when a high explosive shell exploded in the room I was operating in, and the next two patients I operated on were my own assistants; another assistant, standing just a few feet from me, was killed outright. I was knocked down and bruised, but was able to go on with the work as soon as the smoke had cleared and the tables set up again in another room.

"I have been sent back for a few days' rest. We were on duty for eight days without relief and in that time I had only 10 hours' sleep and only two hot meals were sent to us, as we were always advancing. We lived on hardtack and bully beef. I am afraid you'll have to have ham and eggs for me every day of my life when I come home. I haven't seen any since I left the States. Since August I have done nothing but operate and dress

wounds. I should like to tell you about my work, but it's too horrible. I wish you could see the fine spirit and courage of these young American boys. You know I see them when they are anything but excited in battle. I seen them when they are out of it, wounded—and have given all they have—yet never a complaint or cry. Each one wants to do all he can for someone wounded worse than he thinks he is himself. And they are such splendid fellows and I am so proud of them all. *****

"When we awakened this A. M. we were given official notice of the armistice, so we haven't a thing to do, at least just now at 11 A. M. The guns stopped firing, and it has been quiet for a little while. We feel somewhat free, you may well know. We had just set up our dressing station and were ready for the wounded from the new drive when the order came.

"I want to tell you about the dressing station I now have. You see, when we advance I go ahead into a town and tell them I want the largest rooms in town for a hospital for American boys, and I always get what I want. In some places the family moves into the cellar, and in other places they just vanish and we never see them. But here the room is so large, 20x30 feet, and a wonderful tile floor and large stove. There is a mother, four small children and an old grandfather. I told her we would share the room and she seemed so grateful. They sleep in the cellar, but do their cooking on the same stove we use for our station. This morning she put a large kettle on the stove and filled it with good old cows milk, boiled it and then filled cups and came over and served us all with this good, splendid, hot milk. It's the first we have had since in the States, except canned milk, and it sure was good. This evening we gave her cocoa and she made cocoa for us all again with real milk—it was good. I had carried a can of chocolate caramels in my bedding roll for a long time, so I went and got it and gave it to the children. I wish you could have seen the children go for it, and the mother too. They had never tasted anything like it before, she said. She was so pleased that she went out and got apples for all my boys. And say, we were good. Fresh fruit is scarce here and a great treat for us. The

kiddies are dear and innocent, in 10 hours and do that easy, or though dirty and very poorly fed. I can plow 16 acres in 20 hours without stopping except changing drivers. I can also plow any time that you can plow with horses.

"The Belgians welcome the American troops, and when I drove through some of the towns on my route, they came out on the streets and almost blocked the streets in their eagerness to hail and welcome us. I must have been the first one through these places in a car and it was almost a Teddy Roosevelt reception, and I was in a hurry, too, and anxious to get away and through with my work."

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