

# INTERESTING LETTERS FROM A PORTLAND MAN.

## Gives Description of a "Drive" in France and How Wounded--Pays British Red Cross High Tribute.

France, November, 20, 1917.

Dear Friend Pye

The last time I wrote you I was in the "pink" of condition and I believe it was the night, or two nights before we went into the hardest fight of my experience. It fell to our lot to take the crest and a portion of the other side of the Passchandaclé Ridge. Well! we took it and hold it still, but of course, that goes without saying. Of all the campaigning experiences I have had, that one will be forever upmost in my memory. I'll try and relate to you the affair from the start, until the time I got my knockout.

We waded into the front line, about seven miles, through mud and mire, blood and water, sometimes going up to the neck and at other times hanging on in strings to our rifles to help pull one another along. The load! Good God! we each had two hundred rounds of ammunition, two smoke bombs, six rifle grenades, ten bombs, two water bottles, two ground signals and two other heavy signals, a shovel, our rations for forty-eight hours, and a lot of miscellaneous things that go to make a modern soldier and a perfect walking armory.

Of course, it rained (as this is the only weather we have in Belgium.) Fritz shelled us unmercifully all the way in and our casualties were somewhat heavy. However, we got in and believe me, if ever men held out for thirty-six hours under one of the heaviest bombardments in the history of the war, it was us—for he simply turned on us what he calls "Annihilating" fire. We were burned and buried again and again. It seemed he had all the world's artillery set on us! Our trench was smashed to atoms and alas! many of our boys, too: We simply lay in the earth with our faces buried in the ground, waiting for that thirty-six hours to pass over. Each minute we each expected the end. The signal came at 6:05 a.m. and believe me the whole line jumped up and away we went. Even though it had meant death, I was never so glad to "jump the bags" in any attack before.

We stumbled forward, we rolled and crawled, and what I remember, the boys were singing and howling. I guess it was relief to get away from that waiting for it. The bombers, the section under my charge, I never saw. Soon after the start I seemed to sky high, my rifle smashed and all my equipment blown off me. I pulled myself together and kept dangling forward till I reached our objective when I was told that I was wounded. It was rather amusing, for I hadn't got a thing to defend or fight with, except the shovel. Two of the boys dressed my thigh and before I got too weak, or too stiff, I commenced the most agonizing and longest crawl of my life. I had to keep moving or sink and I crawled clear to Ypres and then remembered no more until I was in a hospital wagon.

Our wounded were getting sniped cruelly by the Boache and at time one almost despaired of getting out at all; However, when one fully realizes that determination is the only salvation, it's ample surprising where the strength comes from. Of course you can't understand the situation up there until you can realize that the greatest military feat has been accomplished through what seems impassable mud. Try to understand that if a man is very badly wounded he is worse off than dead, for his chances of ever getting out are so very remote. It's a regular "quick sand mud" and one's disappearance to the underground is rapid. There is one redeeming feature about the mud up there, it stops the flight of lots of shrapnel from his "heavies." I can't understand yet, the readiness of the Boache to lose such positions. His men (with very few exceptions) will not face us. They have positions that have, if held to, are absolutely impossible to take. His "Bill Boxes" are absolutely safe from any shell (the only thing I've seen to withstand our heavies.) It's no use, Heinie will not put up a fight against us, he's literally scared and with very few exceptions, his hands go up before we get at him. Now! I'm not saying they're all like that, but the very, very great majority. There was some good bayonet work with our boys that morning. It was the only thing to use, as our rifles were like sticks of mud and slime.

Well, I can't write much more now, for my wound is troublesome, although not serious. It's torn a piece out of my thigh, but my flesh is, apparently clean and healthy and I think it will soon heal. The rest, I can assure you, I'll appreciate, for I'm in a large hospital and above all, I'm between sheets and I'm clean! It's the first time my clothes have been off for fifteen months (except, of course, for a change.)

I guess the Italian fiasco has upset you. It has me for it's both discouraging for us and only prolongs the end of the Hellishness. To me, there

seems no end in sight, for with every reverse, I believe the attitude of the Allies will be more determined, and, of course, on the other hand, the confidence of the Entente more optimistic.

Write me soon and address my mail as before as it will be forwarded to me.

Best wishes to yourself and please remember me to all friends. Tell Miss Anderson those handkerchiefs just match the white sheets.

Chas. R. Parrott.

1st Southern General Hospital, Ward 3, Stourbridge, Worcester, England, Dec. 9, 1917.

Dear Friend Pye:—

I know only too well that you will appreciate another letter from me. That's really the whole joy of writing it seems to me, when one's letters are looked forward to. It's giving someone else pleasure, I suppose that really causes the incentive to write.

Well! I've been in the above hospital for two weeks now. I had three weeks in the hospital at Le Treport, France. The hospital in France was a huge hotel in pre-war days, a most luxurious place, right on the cliffs. One could look through the windows and see for miles across the channel, but always with his mind on England, or for me, dear old Portland. Well! the time came to be moved to England and then began the most inspiring and touching memories of my war experiences. The wounded forget their pain, the limbless forget their loss, the blind forget their terrible affliction, and the gassed forget their inevitable doom, and from those great strong faces one sees the tears run as the boat reaches England. I tried to study it out man, as I limped about the deck with my two sticks and the only conclusion I could come to was, that we were going home. Going back to the land for which the lads had fought. The realization of actually returning with life. One hears it said so very often in life "There's no place like home"—maybe it's said too casually, but it's the first and only time I've ever seen the actual joy, the joy that moves a soldier to tears. There wasn't a cheer from the men—there wasn't a smile, but the joy was demonstrated with tears of gratitude—thanks for the life that was spared them and who knows! possibly the realization that they had fought their fight for their dear old country and "done their bit" Strange and most realistic thoughts pass through one's mind. One sees it in France, one actually sees it in Germany. One sees it now practically the world over—and soon, old Friend, you good people will be brought to see it too!

As soon as the ship was docked, we were most delicately and carefully handled and with a system that runs so smooth, that one actually thinks he's in Heaven, we are placed in the huge hospital trains. Oh God! such comfort is almost bewildering after France. Good, delicious meals are served around and then as the trains pass through the country, one sees gratitude. 'Twas there that my tears were shed. As the train rushed along, the people cheer and cheer. One wonders why it is possible for that spirit to remain so staunch and so fervent after almost four years of war. Four years of sacrifices unknown before.

We reached Stourbridge about midnight and it seemed the whole countryside was out to cheer us. On the station were (ever to the fore) the backbone of this war, the Red Cross Ladies. They work like trojans, giving and thinking of nothing else but the comfort of the men. Then waiting out side are all the private automobiles of the country and after hot coffee and fruit, etc., on the station, we were carefully (always very carefully) driven to the Hospital. The system of the whole thing is a revelation to me. Every branch it seems so disciplined to a wonderful state of efficiency. As one passes his time away in hospital, the picture comes to his mind of what women are to war. You know a soldier is in the line so long that he thinks he's the "only thing". He gets rough, uncouth and more like a savage. He forgets there's others so far, maybe, behind. Of course, it's almost natural I suppose, when up there man, women are not of your life. There's nothing gentle, there's nothing but the savage and the ravage of war. But these women—the way they work, the sacrifices they make and above all, the gruesomeness of their work. Surely, surely! if a man loses his life in the line, these good women give theirs equally as courageously and devotedly for us. It matters not whether they are ladies of title or Princess, they start at the bottom to learn their profession of nursing. They scrub floors, they make beds, they do the most manial kind of work

and the most gruesome work. It's their life work now, it seems, for after three and a half years of war, it remains no novelty. Their hours are long and the discipline strict. Their ordinary pleasure in life has gone and gone completely. The pleasure now is in their work and it shows itself in the way they so cheerfully and so very tenderly do their work. For myself, there will always be two parts in war and both parts are equally as essential and both call for equal sacrifice. I'm afraid the Red Cross will come first, always and now, believe me, if never before you thought the work of Florence Nightingale, Utopian and glorious, you may think so now.

Well, I guess my enthusiasm and my gratitude for the Red Cross has carried me far enough. It will be never forgotten if I am spared to come through, old man—and if I die over there, well yes, the Women of Britain alone are worth the sacrifice, leave alone the principle.

We get some splendid concerts in hospital. The best operatic stars travel around. Their work is great. I've never listened to finer music than in hospital. I've paid big money for worse. The various societies and schools give excellent concerts and there's hardly a night goes by without something good for the "boys." Yes! these people are good, they're the very essence of goodness.

The hospital is full, terribly full, all over the British Isles. This is a huge place and it used to be a poor house before the war. We have quite a number of American doctors here and the doctor that attends me came from California, the University of Berkeley. He and I got fast friends as for a long time I was at Berkeley. I am the only Canadian in this ward. The man alongside me is an Australian. He told me some wonderful stories of the work of the Germans in Australia. The preparations the Germans made in Australia to fight against the empire were simply alarming. The amount of field artillery they had smuggled into the country "as pianos" and the various other stores and plots that were nipped "in the bud." The way the Germans had got into the House of Representatives and the way they had so very cunningly done their work through I. W. Wism was a revelation to me. It will come out, after the war, and then look out for truths. Apparently the world does not yet know what agonizing times Australia and New Zealand had at the beginning of the war. They intended to make war there deliberately and it appears they had sufficient people there to do it. The lad has many facts and if his word is doubted, he can immediately turn to something that happened in Parliament to prove what he says. Possible you have read of some of their work there. I have not. Well, they lost out, anyway, just as the dogs will lose out in main. They are powerful yet, horribly powerful, and will take a lot of beating. Every one realizes the enormity of the task, but by God! the people seem determined to bring them down, for they seem to realize the great issues at stake. I can tell you, there's very little joy in Britain right now. Everyone is rationed and food is scarce. There's an awful scarcity of sugar and well—even in hospitals, they seem to put it on the outside of the tea cups. These are the things, with many, many worse that the people have got to endure in order to win. I only hope their stolidness and their staunchness holds out. I think it will.

We need the American Army, a huge army and we do need the air service. Remember we fight at a disadvantage, we have to advance over beaten ground, every inch of which the Hun has registered perfectly. It's an uphill fight at a tremendous cost. His spy system behind our lines is still wonderful. It has grown with the people, generated and fostered for years, but we'll get him yet!

Please don't talk or excuse Russia to me ag.in. If you were here, or rather in France, you'd know what it was to have your own guns firing at you, guns which were to help us on the East. We know, we'd have finished this last summer and beaten the Boche, had not we been betrayed by Russia, and now! what do we get, millions of men against us, who were relieved from that front—and yet you want to excuse Russia. Did Russia ever make a fighter? I'm afraid I can't see it in history, I'm afraid some people tried to base their opinions of a good Russia on it's Tolstoists and other men of genius. Wern't we fooled precisely the same in guaging Germany by the genius and talent of their country? That time has gone by, we must judge by their actions as we now judge Germany.

Well! I must close old friend. I'm going along O. K. My wound is healing magnificently and my nerves are steady daily. Please address your letters care Army P. O., London England, and I'll get them more direct. Don't send any more papers until I get back to France. My very best wishes to yourself and kind regards to all friends.

Yours most sincerely,  
Chas. R. Parrott.

P. S.: I guess I've lost a lot of mail, particularly papers, and I would like a copy of that letter, or letters you had published. C. R. P.

For sale, five heifers coming two year old next spring. Apply to Andrew Vetsch, Mutual Phone.

### CONDITIONS ARE VERY BAD WITH PEOPLE IN GERMANY.

#### Are Nearly Starved--The Country Honeycombed with "Graft."

Dr. Law, a dentist, did not leave Berlin until last October, and he throws some light on the conditions in Germany. He reports that all the food bought in Germany is by card system, and only a limited amount is allowed weekly. Only an eighth of a pound of butter a week is allowed, half a pound of meat, a pound of flour (mixed graham), two pounds of bread and five pounds of vegetables to each person. These things were not very expensive as there was a way of buying from soldiers, who got the food that should have gone to sick soldiers.

**Women's Faces Haunt**  
Dr. Law says that the faces of the German women haunt one. There is no coal and no soap at all. The only solution to the war he sees is for this country to fight the Germans on their own soil, for, although the people are nearly starved to death, they will not give in as long as they feel safe and think they are winning.

The bread is terrible stuff, made of coarse graham flour, with a mixture of straw and yellow turnips. There is no wool in the country and very little cotton. A meter of longcloth costs \$2.50 and may be purchased only upon written permit by the police, and then only once a year. Only two chemises a year are allowed the women, and those are made of the fabric that dissolves when boiled; these cost \$3 each. Six handkerchiefs at a time is the limit, and restaurants are forbidden to use table linen.

The Germans feel that Americans are not standing with the President and that nothing very serious can happen from our being in the war.

The people are weary of the war, but have no idea of giving up, as they believe victory will be theirs and refer frequently to the map, which, of course shows considerable conquered territory.

**Defeat Never Admitted.**  
The German people never admit defeat, but if news of a setback seeps through to them it is always but in the form of a "strategical retreat." The military powers say so and it is so to the people. When the people cry for peace, the war lords tell them they have offered peace, but the allies refuse it, and the people, with great patience, continue on.

"Germany today is honeycombed with graft," declared Dr. Law. "It is the most gigantic graft I have ever seen. I never thought in peace times that it would be possible. There never was graft in America that could compare with it. There is a new word in Germany since the war began. It is 'wucher' which corresponds to the word 'profiteer' in America. Many people in Germany have made loads of money since the war began. I think the people can live at least one more year. There is no tea or coffee, and the beer is about like water and tastes like varnish."

Newspapers are reduced in size, the ink being of poorest quality and rubs off easily. Of 500 shoe factories, 100 are making shoes for the armies and 30 for civilians, the others being closed; many go barefoot, all factories are making war materials; every bit of oil is gone, even to castor oil; train service, aside from military lines, is very bad, there are no automobiles, excepting for the military.

"The winning of the war for the allies," concludes Dr. Law, "depends upon how many airplanes America can furnish. There never will be an uprising of the German people until the army is driven back to the Rhine; then I believe it will come suddenly, after the German towns have been bombarded and torn down. The military party will die fighting, whether killed by the allies or by their own people in an uprising after Germany has been crushed."

Dr. Law and family left Berlin October 23 for Copenhagen, where he waited several weeks for a boat, and later went to Christina. He came from there to New York without any delay.

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