

# "OUTWITTING THE HUN"

By **LIEUTENANT PAT O'BRIEN**

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(Concluded from last week.)

## SYNOPSIS.

**CHAPTER I**—Introductory. Pat O'Brien tells of his purpose in writing the story of his adventures.

**CHAPTER II**—Tells of his enlistment in the Royal Flying Corps, his training in Canada and his transfer to France for active duty.

**CHAPTER III**—Describes fights in which he brought down two German airplanes and his final fight in which he was brought down wounded within the German lines and was made a prisoner of war.

**CHAPTER IV**—Discovers that German hospital staff barbarously neglected the fatally wounded and devoted their energies to restoring those who might be returned to the firing lines. Witnesses death in flight of his best chum, Lieut. Paul Rainey.

**CHAPTER V**—He is taken to the officers' prison camp at Courtrai. There he begins planning his escape. By great sacrifice he manages to save and hide away two daily rations of bread.

**CHAPTER VI**—He confiscates a map of Germany and just half an hour later is put on a train bound for a prison camp in Germany. He leaps through a window while the train is traveling at a rate of 30 miles an hour.

**CHAPTER VII**—For nine days he crawls through Germany, hiding during the day, traveling at night, guided by the stars and subsisting on raw vegetables. He covers 55 miles before reaching Luxembourg.

**CHAPTER VIII**—For nine days more he struggles on in a weakened condition through Luxembourg in the direction of Belgium.

Anyways, they motioned me indoors, gave me my first hot meal in more than a month! True, it consisted only of warm potatoes. They had been previously cooked, but the old woman warmed them up in milk in one of the dirtiest kettles I had ever seen. I asked for bread, but she shook her head, although I think it must have been for lack of it rather than because she begrudged it to me. For if ever a man showed he was finished, I did that night. I swallowed those warm potatoes ravenously and I drank four glasses of water, one after another. It was the best meal I had had since the "banquet" in the prison at Courtrai.

The woman of the house was probably seventy-five years old and had evidently worn wooden shoes all her life, for she had a callous spot on the side of her foot the size of half a dollar and it looked so hard that I doubt whether you could have driven a nail into it with a hammer!

As I sat there drying myself—for I was in no hurry to leave the first human habitation I had entered in four weeks—I reflected on my unhappy lot and the unknown troubles and dangers that lay ahead of me. Here, for more than a month, I had been leading the life of a hunted animal—yes, worse than a hunted animal, for nature clothes her less-favored creatures more appropriately for the life they lead than I was clothed for mine—and there was not the slightest reason to hope that conditions would grow any better.

Perhaps the first warm food I had eaten for over a month had released unused springs of philosophy in me, as food sometimes does for a man.

I pointed to my torn and water-soaked clothes and conveyed to them as best I could that I would be grateful for an old suit, but apparently they were too poor to have more than they actually needed themselves, and I rose to go. I had aroused them out of bed and I knew I ought not to keep them up longer than was absolutely necessary.

As I approached the door I got a glance at myself in a mirror. I was the awfulest sight I had laid eyes on! The glimpse I got of myself startled me almost as much as if I had seen a dreaded German helmet! My left eye was fairly well healed by this time and I was beginning to regain sight of it, but my face was so haggard and my beard so long and unkempt that I looked like Santa Claus on a bat!

As they let me out of the door I pointed to the opposite direction to the one I intended taking and started off in the direction I had indicated. Later I changed my course completely to throw off any possible pursuit.

The next day I was so worn out from exposure and exhaustion that I threw away my coat, thinking that the less weight I had to carry the better it would be for me, but when night came I regretted my mistake because the nights were now getting colder. I thought at first it would be better for me to retrace my steps and look for the coat I had so thoughtlessly discarded, but I decided to go on without it.

I then began to discard everything that I had in my pocket, finally throwing my wrist watch into a canal. A wrist-watch does not add much weight, but when you plod along and have not eaten for a month it finally becomes rather heavy. The next thing I discarded was a pair of flying mittens.

These mittens I had gotten at Camp Borden, in Canada, and had become

quite famous, as my friends termed them "snow shoes." In fact, they were a ridiculous pair of mittens, but the best pair I ever had and I really felt worse when I lost those mittens than anything else. I could not think of anybody else ever using them, so I dug a hole in the mud and buried them and could not help but laugh at the thought if my friends could see me burying my mittens, because they were a standing joke in Canada, England and France.

I had on two shirts and as they were always both wet and didn't keep me warm, it was useless to wear both. One of these was a shirt that I had bought in France, the other an American army shirt. They were both khaki and one as apt to give me away as the other, so I discarded the French shirt. The American army shirt I brought back with me to England and it is still in my possession.

When I escaped from the train I still had the Bavarian cap of bright red in my pocket and wore it for many nights, but I took great care that no one saw it. It also had proven very useful when swimming rivers, for I carried my map and a few other belongings in it and I had fully made up my mind to bring it home as a souvenir. But the farther I went the heavier my extra clothing became, so I was compelled to discard even the cap. I knew that it would be a tell-tale mark if I simply threw it away, so one night after swimming a river, I dug a hole in the soft mud on the bank and buried it, too, with considerably less ceremony than my flying mittens had received perhaps; so that was the end of my Bavarian hat.

My experience at the Belgian's house whetted my appetite for more food and I figured that what had been done once could be done again. Sooner or later, I realized I would probably approach a Belgian and find a German instead, but in such a contingency I was determined to measure my strength against the Hun's if necessary to effect my escape.

As it was, however, most of the Belgians to whom I applied for food gave it to me readily enough, and if some of them refused me it was only because they feared I might be a spy or that the Germans would shoot them if their action were subsequently found out.

About the fifth day after I had entered Belgium I was spending the day as usual in a clump of bushes when I discerned in the distance what appeared to be something hanging on a line. All day long I strained my eyes trying to decide what it could be and arguing with myself that it might be something that I could add to my inadequate wardrobe, but the distance was so great that I could not identify it. I had a great fear that before night came it would probably be removed.

As soon as darkness fell, however, I crawled out of my hiding place and worked up to the line and got a pair of overalls for my industry. The pair of overalls was the first bit of civilian clothes I had thus far picked up with the exception of a civilian cap which I had found at the prison and concealed on my person and which I still had. The overalls were rather small and very short, but when I put them on I found that they hung down far enough to cover my breeches.

It was perhaps three days later that I planned to search another house for further clothes. Entering Belgian houses at night is anything but a safe proposition, because their families are large and sometimes as many as seven or eight sleep in a single room. The barn is usually connected with the house proper, and there was always the danger of disturbing some dumb animal even if the inmates of the house were not aroused.

Frequently I took a chance or searching a back yard at night in the hope of finding food scraps, but my success in that direction was so slight that I soon decided that it wasn't worth the risk and I continued to live on raw vegetables that I could pick with safety in the fields and the occasional meal that I was able to get from the Belgian peasants in the daytime.

Nevertheless I was determined to get more in the way of clothing and when night came I picked out a house that looked as though it might furnish me with what I wanted. It was a moonlight night and if I could get in the barn I would have a fair chance of finding my way around by the moonlight which would enter the windows.

The barn adjoined the main part of the house, but I groped around very carefully and soon I touched something hanging on a peg. I didn't know what it was, but I confiscated it and carried it out into the fields. There in the moonlight I examined my booty and found that it was an old coat. It was too short for an over-

## YOUTH.

From the Walk-Over Shoe Prints.

Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of ripe cheeks, red lips, and supple knees; it is a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions. It is the freshness of the deep springs of life.

Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease. This often exists in a man of 50 more than in a boy of 20.

Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years. People grow old only by deserting their ideals.

Years wrinkle the skin; but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.

Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear and despair—these are the long, long years that bow the heart and turn the greening spirit back to dust.

Whether 60 or 16, there is in every human being's heart the lure or wonder, the sweet amazement of the stars and at starlike things and thoughts, the undaunted challenge of events, the unfeeling, child-like appetite for what next, and the joy of the game of living. You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.

In the central place of your heart is an evergreen tree; its name is Love. So long as it flourishes you are young. When it dies you are old. In the central place of your heart is a wireless station. So long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, grandeur, courage and power from God and from your fellow-men so long are you young.

coat and too long for an ordinary coat, but nevertheless I made use of it. It had probably been an overcoat for the Belgian who had worn it.

Some days later I got a scarf from a Belgian peasant and with this equipment I was able to conceal my uniform entirely.

Later on, however, I decided that it was too dangerous to keep the uniform on anyway and when night came I dug a hole and buried it.

I never realized until I had to part with it just how much I thought of that uniform. It had been with me through hard trials and I felt as if I were abandoning a friend when I parted with it. I was tempted to keep the wings off the tunic, but thought that would be a dangerous concession to sentiment in the event that I was ever captured. It was the only distinction I had left, as I had given the Royal Flying Corps badges and the stars of my rank to the German flying officers as souvenirs, but I felt that it was safer to discard it. As it finally turned out, through all my subsequent experiences, my escape would never have been jeopardized had I kept my uniform but, of course, I had no idea what was in store for me.

There was one thing which surprised me very much as I journeyed through Belgium and that was the scarcity of dogs. Apparently most of what had been taken by the Germans and what are left are beasts of burden who are too tired at night to bark or bother intruders. This was a mighty good thing for me, for I would certainly have stirred them up in passing through backyards as I sometimes did when I was making a short cut.

One night as I came out of a yard it was so pitch dark that I could not see ten feet ahead of me and I was right in the back of a little village, although I did not know it. I crawled along fearing I might come to a cross-roads at which there would in all probability be a German sentry.

My precaution served me in good stead for had I come out in the main street of the village and within twenty feet of me, sitting on some bricks where they were building a little stove, I could see the dim outline of a German spiked helmet!

I could not cross the street and the only thing to do was to back track. It meant making a long detour and losing two hours of precious time and effort, but there was no help for it, so I plodded wearily back, cursing the Huns at every step.

The next night while crossing some fields I came to a road. It was one of the main roads of Belgium and was paved with cobble stones. On these roads you can hear a wagon or horse about a mile or two away. I listened intently before I moved ahead and hearing nothing concluded that the way was clear.

As I emerged from the field and got my first glimpse of the road, I got the shock of my life! In either direction

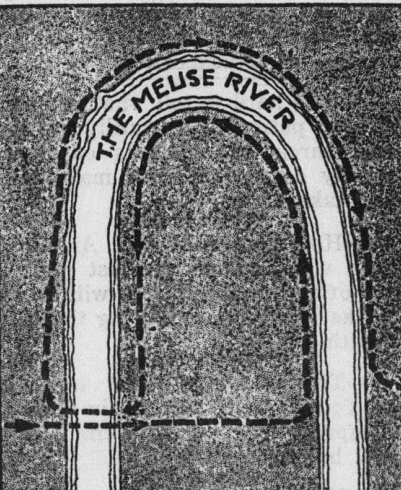


Diagram Showing How O'Brien Lost Precious Hours by Swimming a River and Later Finding That He Was on the Wrong Side and Had to Swim Back.

as far as I could see, the road was lined with German soldiers! What they were doing in that part of Belgium I did not know, but you can be mighty sure I didn't spend any time trying to find out.

Again it was necessary to change my course and lose a certain amount of ground, but by this time I had be-

come fairly well reconciled to these reverses and they did not depress me as much as they did at first.

At this period of my adventure, if a day or night passed without its thrill I began to feel almost disappointed, but such disappointments were rather rare.

One evening as I was about to swim a canal about two hundred feet wide, I suddenly noticed about one hundred yards away a canal boat moored to the side.

It was at a sort of out-of-the-way place and I wondered what the canal boat had stopped for. I crawled up to see. As I neared the boat five men were leaving it and I noticed them cross over into the fields. At a safe distance I followed them and they had not gone very far before I saw what they were after. They were committing the common but heinous crime of stealing potatoes!

Without the means to cook them, potatoes didn't interest me a bit and I thought that the boat itself would probably yield me more than the potato patch. Knowing the canal-hands would probably take their time in the fields, I climbed up the stern of the boat leisurely and without any particular plans to conceal myself. Just as my head appeared above the stern of the boat I saw silhouetted against the sky, the dread outline of a German soldier—spiked helmet and all! A chill ran down my spine as I dropped to the bank of the canal and slunk away. Evidently the sentry had not seen me or, if he had, he had probably figured that I was one of the foraging party, but I realized that it wouldn't pay in future to take anything for granted.

## CHAPTER X.

### Experiences in Belgium.

I had to contend with in my journey through Belgium was the number of small ditches. They intercepted me at every half mile or so, sometimes more frequently. The canals and the



Burying His Uniform at Night.

big rivers I could swim. Of course, I got soaked to the skin every time I did it, but I was becoming hardened to that.

These little ditches, however, were too narrow to swim and too wide to jump. They had perhaps two feet of water in them and three feet of mud, and it was almost invariably a case of wading through. Some of them, no doubt, I could have jumped if I had been in decent shape, but with a bad ankle and in the weakened condition in which I was, it was almost out of the question.

One night I came to a ditch about eight or nine feet wide. I thought I was strong enough to jump it and it was worth trying as the discomfort I suffered after wading these ditches was considerable. Taking a long run, I jumped as hard as I could, but I missed it by four or five inches and landed in about two feet of water and three of mud. Getting out of that mess was quite a job. The water was

too dirty and too scanty to enable me to wash off the mud with which I was covered and it was too wet to scrape off. I just had to wait until it dried and scrape it off then.

In many sections of Belgium through which I had to pass I encountered large areas of swamp and marshy ground and rather than waste the time involved in looking for better underfooting—which I might not have found anyway—I used to pole right through the mud. Apart from the discomfort of this method of traveling and the slow time I made, there was an added danger to me in the fact that the "squash, squash" noise which I made might easily be overheard by Belgians and Germans and give my position away. Nobody would cross a swamp or marsh in that part of the country unless he was trying to get away from somebody, and I realized my danger but could not get around it.

It was a common sight in Belgium to see a small donkey and a common ordinary milch cow hitched together, pulling a wagon. When I first observed the unusual combination, I thought it was a donkey and ox or bull, but closer inspection revealed to me that cows were being used for the purpose.

From that I was able to observe there must be very few horses left in Belgium except those owned by the Germans. Cows and donkeys are now horses and mules. Altogether I spent nearly eight weeks wandering through Belgium, and in all that time I don't believe I saw more than half a dozen horses in the possession of the native population.

One of the scarcest things in Germany, apparently, is rubber, for I noticed that their motor trucks, or lorries, unlike our own, had no rubber tires. Instead heavy iron bands were employed. I could hear them come rumbling along the stone roads for miles before they reached the spot where I happened to be in hiding. When I saw these military roads in Belgium for the first time, with their heavy cobblestones that looked as if they would last for centuries, I realized at once why it was that the Germans had been able to make such a rapid advance into Belgium at the start of the war.

I noticed that the Belgians used dogs to a considerable extent to pull their carts, and I thought many times that if I could have stolen one of those dogs it would have been a very good companion for me and might, if the occasion arose, help me out in a fight. But I had no way of feeding it and the animal would probably have starved to death. I could live on vegetables, which I could always depend upon finding in the fields, but a dog couldn't, and so I gave up the idea.

The knack of making fire with two pieces of dry wood I had often read about, but I had never put it to a test and for various reasons I concluded that it would be unsafe for me to build a fire even if I had matches. In the first place, there was no absolute need for it. I didn't have anything to cook nor utensils to cook it in even if I had. While the air was getting to be rather cool at night, I was usually on the go at that time and didn't notice it. In the daytime, when I was resting or sleeping, the sun was usually out.

To have borrowed matches from a Belgian peasant would have been feasible, but when I was willing to take the chance of approaching anyone, it was just as easy to ask for food as matches.

It the second place, it would have been extremely dangerous to have built a fire even if I had needed it. You can't build a fire in Belgium, which is the most thickly populated country in Europe, without everyone knowing it, and I was far from anxious to advertise my whereabouts.

The villages in that part of Belgium through which I was making my course were so close together that there was hardly ever an hour passed without my hearing some clock strike. Every village has its clock. Many times I could hear the clocks striking in two villages at the same time.

But the hour had very little interest to me. My program was to travel as fast as I could from sunset to sunrise and pay no attention to the hours in between, and in the daytime I had only two things to worry about: keep concealed and get as much sleep as possible.

The cabbage that I got in Belgium consisted of the small heads that the peasants had not cut. All the strength had concentrated in these little heads and they would be as bitter as gall. I would have to be pretty hungry to-day before I could ever eat cabbage again and the same observation applies to carrots, turnips and sugar beets—especially sugar beets.

It is rather a remarkable thing that today even a smell of turnips, raw or cooked, makes me sick, and yet a few short months ago my life depended upon them.

Night after night as I searched for food, I was always in hopes that I might come upon some tomatoes or celery—vegetables which I really liked, but with the exception of once, when I found some celery, I was never so fortunate. I ate so much of the celery the night I came upon it that I was sick for two days thereafter, but I carried several bunches away with me and used to chew on it as I walked along.

Of course, I kept my eyes open all the time for fruit trees, but apparently it was too late in the year for fruit, as all that I ever was able to find were two pears, which I got out of a tree. That was one of my red-letter days, but I was never able to repeat it.

In the brooks and ponds that I passed I often noticed fish of different kinds. That was either in the early morning just before I turned in for the day, or on moonlight nights when

the water seemed as clear in spots as in the daytime. It occurred to me that it would be a simple matter to rig a hook and line and catch some fish, but I had no means of cooking them and it was useless to fish for the sake of it.

One night in Belgium my course took me through a desolate stretch of country which seemed to be absolutely uncultivated. I must have covered twelve miles during the night, without passing a single farm or cultivated field. My stock of turnips which I had picked the night before was gone and I planned, of course, to get enough to carry me through the following day.

The North Star was shining brightly that night and there was absolutely nothing to prevent my steering an absolutely direct course for Holland and liberty, but my path seemed to lie through arid pastures. Far to the east or to the west I could hear faintly the striking of village bells, and I knew that if I changed my course I would undoubtedly strike farms and vegetables, but the North Star seemed to plead with me to follow it and I would not turn aside.

When daylight came, the consequence was I was empty handed and I had to find a hiding place for the day. I thought I would approach the first peasant I came to and ask for food, but that day I had misgivings—a hunch—that I would get into trouble if I did, and I decided to go without food altogether for that day.

It was a foolish thing to do, I found, because I not only suffered greatly from hunger all that day, but it interfered with my sleep. I would drop off to sleep for half an hour, perhaps

and during that time I would dream that I was free, back home, living a life of comparative ease, and then I would wake up with a start and catch a glimpse of the bushes surrounding me, feel the hard ground beneath me and the hunger pangs gnawing at my sides, and then I would realize how far from home I really was, and I would lie there and wonder whether I would ever really see my home again. Then I would fall asleep again and dream this time, perhaps of the days I spent in Courtrai, or my leap from the train window, or the Bavarian plot whom I sent to eternity in my last air fight, or my tracer bullets getting closer and closer to his head, and then I would wake up again with a start and thank the Lord that I was only dreaming it all again instead of living through it!

That night I got an early start because I knew I had to have food, and I decided that rather than look for vegetables I would take a chance and apply to the first Belgian peasant whom I came to.

It was about 8 o'clock when I came to a small house. I had picked up a heavy stone and had bound it in my handkerchief and I was resolved to use it as a weapon if it became necessary. After all I had gone through, I was resolved to win my liberty eventually at whatever cost.

As it happened, I found that night the first real friend I had encountered in all my traveling. When I knocked timidly on the door, it was opened by a Belgian peasant, about fifty years of age. He asked me in Flemish what I wanted, but I shook my head and pointing to my ears and mouth intimated that I was deaf and dumb, and then I opened and closed my mouth several times to show him that I wanted food.

He showed me inside and sat me at the table. He apparently lived alone, for his ill-furnished room had but one chair, and the plate and knife and fork he put before me seemed to be all he had. He brought me some cold potatoes and several slices of stale bread, and he warmed me some milk on a small oil stove.

I ate ravenously and all the time I was engaged I knew that he was eyeing me closely.

Before I was half through he came over to me, touching me on the shoulder, and stooping over so that his lips almost touched my ear, he said in broken English, "You are an Englishman—I know it—and you can hear and talk if you wish—am I not right?"

There was a smile on his face and a friendly attitude about him that told me instinctively that he could be trusted, and I replied: "You have guessed right—only I am an American, not an Englishman."

He looked at me pityingly and filled my cup again with warm milk.

His kindness and apparent willingness to help me almost overcame me, and I felt like warning him of the consequences he would suffer if the Huns discovered he had befriended me. I had heard that twenty Belgians had been shot for helping Belgians to escape into Holland, and I hated to think what might happen to this good old Samaritan if the Huns ever knew that he had helped an escaped American prisoner.

(Continued next week.)

—For high class Job Work come to the "Watchman" Office.

### Drying Fruits.

Fruits may be dried in the sun until the surface begins to wrinkle, then finished in the drier. With stone fruits, such as peaches, plums, apricots and cherries, none but fruits that are fresh, ripe and in perfect condition should be used. With apples, pears and quinces, effective thrift calls for using the sound portions of fruit that may be partially wormy or imperfect. When properly dried, fruits should be entirely free from moisture, when pressed between the fingers on removal from drier. Line trays with cheesecloth or wrapping paper before spreading fruit on them.

—For high class job work come to the "Watchman" office.