

Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., October 4, 1918.

WRITES WITHIN SOUND OF A RAGING BATTLE.

From the Williamsport Sun.

The following soldier's letter is unique because it was written under the stimulus and within the area and sound of a battle then going on, and second while no one could suspect it from the text, by a boy whose previous views of life would almost place him in the pacifist class. The S. K. & F. soldiers' club to whom he writes, is an organization of the employees of the Smith, Kline & French Co., druggists, of Philadelphia, with whom the writer was formerly identified.

The writer, William B. Clare, is well known to drug trade in this city, and has been here a number of occasions. Frank Kilgus, of this city, who travels for the same firm, and who belongs to the same club, permits The Sun to publish the letter, which will no doubt be read with interest. The letter in part follows:

To the Soldiers' Club S. K. & F. Co. "On the Firing Line, France, Aug. 8.

"Herewith begins a letter that may at any time be interrupted by some iron rations from the German batteries that lay about five kilometres ahead of us; some few days ago in the stress of battle I received a package of papers and a letter from you fine folks back there in Philly; yesterday I received some cootie catches from Mr. K. and today another batch of papers and magazines. It sure felt good to look at a regular old Philly paper once more and the boys are all in their dugouts undisturbed by the shells reading them while I try to snatch time to write you a few lines in reply. I have received some few letters from those outside of the S. K. & F. Soldiers' club, too; no doubt they were shown my last letter and they believed what I said that a letter means more to a soldier than anything else. I sure appreciate those letters already received. Words fall me when I try to say or write just how much I do appreciate it. I want to warn you that this may be a rather irrational letter, for shells are bursting not further than fifty yards away and just in front there is a battery of huge American guns, and when they bark they shake the ground like an earthquake. We belong to the American army in the Chateau-Thierry Sector that has been hammering hell out of the Huns for the last month and, tell the world it's no soft job. I've been shelled so much I feel like a peanut; in fact, I feel lonesome when they let up for a few minutes. The Hun batteries keep about four to five miles to the rear of the retreating army and just shell hell out of us all the time. Our batteries have their hands full shelling the retreating armies.

"We have been in the line since July 4th and going forward day by day. All along the line there are ruined French villages all renamed by the Germans. Even the streets are renamed such as, Von Hindenburg Weg, or Kaiser Weg or something similar. The funny part is the main road they called the Path to Glory and it led to Paris, the Yanks have renamed it the Path to Glory again, only this time the sign posts point to Berlin instead of Paris. German ammunition lies all along the road, here and there a shattered gun testifying to the accuracy of the American gunnery, and then the piles of German dead, sometimes fifty to sixty to a pile, then a little pile of four or five with a single khaki uniform, his hand on his Gat, showing he got his Boches before they got him. It's always thus, all along the line. It's costing us blood and men to drive through—damn them, they can't stop, they won't fight square! While the main German army, the first division of Prussian Guards, are retreating licked to a frazzle by the insignificant Yankee militia they scoffed at; while they are retreating they leave behind their machine gun nests manned by Bavarians with plenty of ammunition to hold up the line and when good Americans charge them with cold steel and they are on the verge of being captured they throw up their arms and yell "Kamarad." The damn dirty dogs think they will get mercy after Americans have seen their buddies killed by their side. Do they get it? Like hell they do. No prisoner captured here only when they are caught by companies, and to date we have caught 40,000 since July 15th, not so bad for the militia is it; especially when they are fighting the far-famed Prussian Guard, the elite of the German army!" The dirty dogs even use women. I was in the rear of a charge on a certain woods that was full of machine gun nests in trees. A whole regiment of the so-called insignificant militia who hail from Philly charged up this hill toward those woods with machine guns spitting fire and the rat-to-tat-tat of the bullets making a deafening noise and the bullets going ping-ping-ping all around you, men dropping by your side cursing the Huns, and when they reached the top every Hun machine gunner yelled "Kamarad" and when the cold steel began to go home I saw in two different instances gray uniforms torn open and women's naked breasts displayed and they expected mercy because of their sex, and like the damn fools we are, they were given it. God knows how many good Americans these Amazons killed before they realized their sexual difference. It's hell, I tell you, the way these Germans fight, they use every cunning device they can. Their artillery is good, but the infantry can't fight without it. They even take their aeroplanes and paint the French colors on them and swoop down back of our line and pour machine gun fire into our lads waiting behind some trench.

We have been in three wicked engagements and have been under constant shell fire since July 14th. It's a veritable hell, and at the present time every man is on an edge. We eat when we can, sleep less, and always are on the go, till a man's nerves get to such a point he would

fight his own mother-in-law. The French and British are relieved every ten days, but Black Jack says the only way an American will come back will be on a stretcher till the Germans are driven back to the Aisne, and you can tell the world they are going, too. I guess the main army has reached there by this time but there still remains the ten or twelve kilometre held by those sacrifice outfits who fight till they are licked and then want mercy. These Germans expect mercy and yet they compel men to adopt their own savage tactics. You can't expect men to be shelled every day, to go without sleep and eat for days and when at the cost of the lives of your pals and buddies you take a position held by them and then take prisoners. It's too much to expect from human beings, and you can tell the world there are few being taken in these savage hand-to-hand combats; its only when an entire outfit is surrounded that prisoners are taken. I've seen wounded men lying in long rows awaiting transportation back of the lines, and a wounded German comes in on a stretcher, and I've seen stealthy hands, hardly able to move, slowly grasp the butts of their gats and bloodless lips drawn back in a grin of hate, and if intervening hands were not laid on them a wounded Hun soon would become a good Hun (a dead one). I've seen a captain in my own outfit, who had slowly seen his entire company decimated man by man by machine guns carried into position under the guise of Red Cross litter bearers. I've seen that captain wounded in several places and being treated by us at our station when he saw a file of German captives going by, tear himself away from us and draw his revolver to fire on them. Who would be responsible, him or the dirty devils who invented the unfair tactics that drove a fair-minded man like this to lose his head? This war makes you a Hun hater, more and more. All the wounded men want is one more chance to get back and get even.

Our corps of forty-eight men has been cut down to thirty-eight in three weeks—some killed, some captured and some wounded. We work right with the men in the line. I've dressed wounds when the shells were dropping thick and fast and the machine gun bullets were whizzing. I've even had wounded men killed in my arms. I've worked for two days and two nights without a thing to eat or a moment's rest, with my sleeves rolled up and blood clean up to my elbows, performing all kinds of operations myself, not only giving first aid but administering morphine and tetanus antitoxin in the dark of night, afraid even to light a match for fear of drawing fire, and not only have I done it but every one in the sanitary detachment has done the same. These details are not inspiring I will say, but I wanted you to get a vivid first-hand picture of actual conditions at the front.

There is no glamor to this war. It's sordid and miserable; it breaks down strong men, but we must "carry on" as the British put it. I never realized how much this phrase really meant till the last month. The British and French have stood this hell for four years and yet they "carry on." What a subject for a service, or a theme for an address—"carry on" come what may, death, disease, injury, hardship, suffering, starvation, sacrifice of all kinds, still let us Americans "carry on" till the foe of mankind, the instigator of this awful holocaust, is wiped out of existence. What matters it if Americans die, let the glory be theirs that they died in the advance with the battle cry of the A. E. F. on their lips—"The American army always goes forward." They tell us we will be relieved when the Crown Prince reaches the Aisne Hell. I'm willing to sleep in this damn French mud, to go without chuck till Christmas, if they keep driving them back. Of course, some of us may go under, but there's plenty more to take our places, and if it takes a road built of American dead from here to the Rhine river, we are all willing to form one of the paving blocks and I know I voice the feeling of most of all of us members of the A. E. F.

This must be an awful letter, but every time I see one of those Hun shells strike it drives my pencil faster, but I must close. I could write for hours and not finish, but it is getting dark and when darkness comes hell breaks loose. Tonight about midnight our battalion is going to cross a certain river and I want to get this letter off by the Y. M. C. A. man, for there are some of us who are not coming back from that certain river. Who knows who it will be and who cares, for if some of us go west with the other boys we will get with our faces pointed toward Germany and with the song on our lips, "It's a Long Way to Berlin, But We'll Get There." I'll write you how we make out if I get through; if you don't hear from me look in the papers under the column killed or wounded "in action." That's a story in itself, "in action," and you can tell the whole world the American army in action is a magnificent sight and the Huns realize and they won't mix cold steel with us, and there's been more Boches shot in the back by far the last three weeks than there has been Yanks shot in the front.

Many, many thanks for your kindness of the past, it makes a fellow feel fine to know the folks with whom he spent his working hours are thinking of him. You are doing fine work, keep it up and when we pass on continue the good work to those who follow us, don't let your interest slacken, don't be dismayed by losses, by adversers but "carry on" to a complete finish.

Remember me to all the men and girls at the office and to various members of the firm.

We don't have either non-coms (non-commissioned officers) or commissioned officers out here, we are all one. The non-coms rip off their stripes and the officers their bars, they form too good a target for the Hun snipers, besides shrapnel and high explosive shells have no respect for persons and take off just as many officers as men. Out here we don't think of promotions, all we think of is lickin' the Huns.

I will write again if—so good luck and good wishes from one American

to the finest bunch of real Americans I know, the S. K. F. Soldiers club.

Sincerely,
W. B. CLARE.
P. S.—On the Chateau-Thierry front with the best little division in the world. "You know us, Al."
France, August 14, 1918.
The Soldiers' Club.

Dear Friends: Just a line to let you know I came back safe again, like the cat. Returned from the front this morning early, no harm done, either. Saw a Philly paper and the news has reached you of the good work of the old N. G. P. The accounts in the papers were tame compared to the real thing. Those who really did the heroic work were left unnoticed, but who cares, the whole gang really deserves the credit, not merely one or two.

We are here waiting for orders, may have to go back for more. Hope I am still as fortunate.

Sincerely,
W. B. CLARE.

Value for Money.

"I have here a knife," said the weary canvasser.

"Don't want it," snapped the busy man.

"It's an extremely useful article, sir. Apart from the many blades—"

"Take it away!"

"It has a screwdriver, a tin opener, a cigar cutter, a tobacco stripper, a wire cutter, a button hook, a—"

"I tell you I don't want it!"

"It further contains a pair of scissors and engraved upon it is the compound interest table, principal cash fares and the price of the whole thing complete is one and six-pence."

"I repeat I don't want the wretched thing!"

"No; I know you don't. You're one of those blooming old misers who won't buy a knife unless it has a weekly newspaper, a perpetual season ticket and an Italian opera company attached. Well, we've give up making that kind in war time at one and six-pence!"—London Tit Bits.

Literal.

"She gave her lawyer friend a paradoxical wish."

"What was it?"

"She had hoped her brief career would be a long one."—Baltimore American.

Paper from Sawdust.

Newsprint paper from sawdust is a fact, says American Forestry. Not only is the idea being worked out in the United States, but the London Times already is using the material. In a recent issue, just received in this country, the Times says editorially: "Sawdust is a by-product produced in Britain. It takes the place of wood pulp, the importation of which is greatly reduced owing to government restriction. Sawdust paper is manufactured by the Donside paper mills, Aberdeen, where experiments have been in progress for a considerable time and are still being carried on in the hope of effecting further improvements."

The importance of the new process to the newspaper business cannot be over-estimated. Sawdust newsprint paper, if entirely successful, means alleviation of the threatened famine. The war, as is generally known, has forced newsprint paper to new high rates, and actually has resulted in scores of small newspapers being forced out of business, either because of inability to buy enough paper for their needs, or inability to pay the prices demanded by papermakers.

German Woman Flier is Killed on West Front.

With the American Army in France—that the Germans are using women as military aviators is indicated in a report that in a machine recently brought down by the Americans the pilot, who was killed, was a woman.

The captain of the company of the 167th Infantry says the pilot of a German plane brought down near Serzy, August 28, by Lieut. Miller Thompson of the American air force, was a woman. The discovery of the sex of the aviator was made, the captain says, when his men buried the enemy pilot and her observer.

Home Folks' Chance.

Uncle Sam wants 50,000 doctors for the army—which is more than half of the visible supply. This ought to give some of the home folks a chance to save their appendices—or their appendices?—Los Angeles Times.

—Subscribe for the "Watchman."

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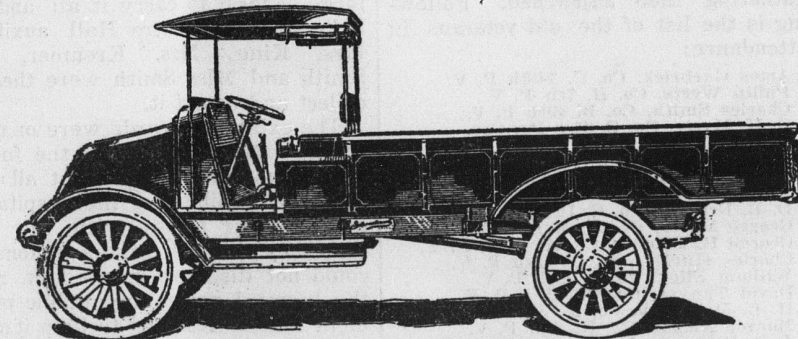
is efficient. It not only lays potatoes on the ground but every potato on top of the ground and in plain view of the pickers. The price is right. Supply is small so let us have your order early. They are extensively used in this vicinity and have given satisfaction to every user. If you are in need of an elevator machine, we can fix you up.

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