

THRILLING STORY OF HAIG RETREAT

Illinois Officer Relates Experience of Hun Attack on the British.

TEN DIVISIONS AGAINST ONE

Despite Overwhelming Number of Enemy, His Losses Were Great—Miraculous Escape From Bap-tism of Shell Fire.

First Lieutenant Roswell T. Pettit, M. O. R. C., of Ottawa, Ill., in a letter to his father, Dr. J. W. Pettit of the Ottawa tuberculosis colony...

Lieutenant Pettit's Letter. March 30.

Dear Father: Now that the show is over for me for the time being, and I have time to breathe and sleep and eat and write, I'll try and tell you about the battle. Before you receive this you will have had the whole story from the papers, but I know you will be interested in knowing what I did in the affair.

Of course, the things I saw were but an infinitesimal part of a gigantic whole and it would be impossible for me to give a correct description of the battle. And as I write this, I do it with no knowledge whatever of what has been going on even a few miles from me.

I have not seen a paper in eight days; I have received no mail, and the only information we have received has been by word of mouth, and most of that we hear must be wild rumors. For example: The French have advanced 20 miles at Verdun, the Americans have taken Ostend, and are on their way to Zebruggue, and a great naval battle has been fought in the North sea.

All I know is that on this part of the front the Germans attacked us in overwhelming numbers, in places ten divisions to our one; that they suffered terrible losses, but finally broke through our lines of defense, one after another, and fighting for the most part, a rear guard action, we have retired about 15 miles in a straight line.

For a week before the battle started we had been expecting it; we were ready to move on 30 minutes' notice. I had been out with combatant as well as medical officers on tours of reconnaissance, definite methods of evacuation of the wounded had been worked out, and our plans of counter-attack had been made. After four or five days of waiting, the storm finally broke.

The Boche opened up on us at 5 a. m., March 21, with the heaviest barrage I have ever heard. "Stand to," was sounded, we turned out dressed, and had all our equipment packed in 30 minutes. Then we sat down and waited for orders to move. The barrage kept up continuously, sometimes heavier and then of less intensity, sometimes it seemed to be to the north of us and then suddenly it switched to the south.

Our balloons were up as soon as it was light and the airplanes were buzzing over our heads. The ground mist gradually cleared and the Germans put a hall of shrapnel on our camp and all took cover, but three men were hit. Why it is a fellow always feels safer with a roof over his head, even if he knows bullets and shrapnel and pieces of shell will go through boards and corrugated iron just like paper.

Ordered to Move. Our orders to move finally came and we marched off to the brigade assembly point several miles away. This assembly point was in a little bunch of trees about the size of Allen park and behind and separated from a larger wood in front. In the larger wood there was a battery of heavy artillery and shells were dropping in there two or three to a minute, and it was heavy stuff, too.

Sometimes they overshoot the big wood and shells were landing in the open around the little wood where my brigade had its assembly point. As we approached our little cove we could make all this out from some distance away and it wasn't a pleasant sensation to feel that we were marching straight into it.

All the battalions arrived and in that little cove there must have been at least two thousand men. What a chance if the Germans only knew! But the shells continued to drop in front of us and on either side, but none landed among us, and after waiting there for three hours, expecting to be blown to bits any second, we finally moved forward. Just as we left the cove, from behind us, up over a ridge, came a stream of galloping horses.

It's the cavalry," someone shouted, but soon I made out limbers and field guns. They galloped past us, going like mad, took up a position to our right, swung into position, unlimbered, and

in two minutes were blazing away. It was a thrilling sight. Torn by Shells. In going forward we went around the end of the larger wood in front of us, over ground that was torn to bits by the heavy shell fire that had just preceded, over another edge, across a valley, and under the crest of a hill. And here we found the tanks going over the top of the hill to take up their position. At this point we were still about a mile from the front line. At this place I opened up an aid post under the crest of the hill to take care of what wounded came in while we were getting into position.

Shrapnel was bursting in the air, shells were whizzing overhead, and our guns behind me were belching forth the fire. The noise was deafening. A railroad ran through the valley and an engine pulling a couple of flat cars was going by. A couple of soldiers were sitting on the rear truck swinging their feet. A shell burst on the track and only missed the last car about fifteen yards. Neither man was hit and the train went blithely on.

By this time it was getting along toward evening, the sun was sinking in the west, and finally went down a great ball of fire. At the time, I remember, I noticed its color. It was blood red and had a sinister look. Was it my imagination, or might it have been a premonition? At any rate, I shall never forget the color of the sun as it set that night at the end of the first day of probably one of the greatest battles in history. It certainly didn't look good to me. The drumming of the guns continued, twilight gradually deepened into night, the signalers stopped their wig-wagging and took up their flash signals, a fog dropped down on us and put the lights out of business, and when we left to go forward under the cover of darkness they were busy putting out their telephone lines—signalers and runners don't have an easy time.

Shell Dump Goes Up. Behind us a shell landed in an ammunition dump and it went up with a roar; then the rifle ammunition started going off like a great bunch of fire-crackers, and great tongues of flame lit up the sky. It is reported that the Germans had broken through our line and we were to counter-attack in the morning. We got into positions without a single casualty. I opened an aid post in an old dugout and settled down to sleep until morning. You may think it funny that one could sleep under such conditions, but I had been up since 5:30, had tramped about six or seven miles, had had a rather trying day and was dog tired.

Just like some of the warm days we get the last of March at home. In going forward it was necessary for us to march seventy-five yards in front of three batteries of field guns. There are six guns to a battery. They shoot an eighteen-pound shell and while we were there each gun was shooting twice to the minute. You can imagine the racket when I tell you that the discharge of one gun can be heard about four miles. In addition the Boche was trying to knock out this battery and he was dropping his six inch shells a little too close for comfort.

Nearly in a Trap. Then I made a lovely mistake. I was to establish an aid post near battery headquarters and went blithely on when I met a company commander and asked him where to go. "Back there about a quarter of a mile," he replied. "This is the front center company. If you keep on in the direction you are going you are going up over that ridge and Fritz will be waiting for you with a machine gun."

So my sergeant and orderly and myself didn't waste any time in clearing. On the way back I found a gallon can full of water, got into a corrugated iron shelter and had a wash and a shave. It certainly felt good. I don't believe I had washed for thirty-six hours. It was warm and bright. I could look out of my shelter and see our support lines digging themselves in several hundred yards away. The cannon fire ceased, the machine guns settled down to an occasional fitful burst and it was midday of a beautiful spring day.

A couple of partridge flew over me. What did they know or care about all this noise and racket and men getting up in line and killing each other? Along about three o'clock things began to liven up again. In the meantime headquarters had been established in a sunken road with banks about fifteen feet high on either side (later this cut was half filled with dead). My aid post was in a dugout near by and gradually things got hotter and hotter.

Our men had dug themselves in and were popping away with their rifles. The field batteries behind us were putting up a barrage, airplanes were circling overhead, both ours and the Germans'. The Germans put up a counter-barrage, the machine guns were going like mad. I was standing with the colonel on a little rise of ground above the sunken road when the Germans broke through about a mile to the north of us. They could be plainly seen pouring over the ridge in close formation.

Tanks Get Into Action. Then the tanks came up, and you should have seen them run! Just like rabbits! The tanks retired; the Boches reformed and came at it again. They told me that at certain places our men withstood fifteen successive attacks and that the Germans went down in thousands. One Welshman told me that his gun accounted for 75 in three minutes during one wave.

Machine-gun bullets were nipping around me, the shell fire was getting

hotter, and even though it was a wonderful sight to watch I decided "discretion was the better part of valor," or something like that, and got down in my dugout. I went back to the advanced dressing station through the hottest shell fire I ever experienced. More than once I went down on my face when a shell burst and the pieces went whizzing over my head. I spent the night in a mined village where the advanced dressing station was located, and all night they shelled it to blazes. It was remarkable how few casualties we had.

About eleven o'clock the morning of the third day a shell blew in the side of our post, but luckily no one was hurt. We stuck to it until about four in the afternoon, when we saw our men retiring over a ridge in front of us, keeping up a continuous machine gun and rifle fire, and we beat it back to another village and opened another post.

The Begrimed Lord. About ten o'clock on the morning of the fourth day Lord Thyme, my colonel when I was with the battalion, stumbled into the shack where I was sitting. He looked like a ghost. He had lost his hat, his face was covered with a four days' beard, the sweat had traced tracks in the dust from his forehead to his chin. His sleeve was torn and bloody and he had a gash in his arm where he had been struck by a piece of flying shell case.

"My God, doc, are you here?" he said. "You got out just in time. The battalion is all gone. The sunken road is filled with dead—mostly Huns, damn 'em. The line broke on the right; we were surrounded, and at the last we were fighting back and back. Only thirty of us got away."

So we knew the Boche had broken through to our right and our left, and it was a question of how long it would be before we, too, were surrounded, but we wanted to stick it out as long as we could. But not more than an hour later a medical officer rushed in from one of the battalions and between gasps of breath told us the Germans were on the edge of the village, had shot him through the sleeve with a machine gun bullet, (luckily that was all), and for us to beat it.

Let me tell you we did. I threw my knapsack and made the first hundred yards in nothing flat and then settled down to a walk because I was so out of breath I couldn't run any more. The incessant scream and crash and bang of the shells kept up and the rat-tat-tat of the machine guns never ceased. The village immediately behind us was a seething mass of brick dust, smoke, flame, and bursting shells. We were told on our way back that a stand was to be made behind this village, so we circled around it and took up a position about a half mile behind it at a cross-roads.

Unfortunately for us, a six inch battery came into action about fifty yards from us into, aside from the harassing effect of the terrific noise, batteries are always unpleasant neighbors, as they invite shell fire. We stopped here until about 10 o'clock at night, when we were ordered to retire.

There was no way of getting out the wounded that we had collected, so the stretcher bearers carried them on their stretchers for six or seven miles. In fact, we all helped, and when we arrived at our destination at 4 o'clock in the morning of the fifth day we were all in.

I could hardly move, but after two big bowls of hot tea and some hard tack I turned in on the floor and slept like a log for four hours, when we moved to another place and opened a dressing station.

Hun Plane Crashes. On the way a German airplane came down and crashed near the road, but neither the pilot nor observer were hurt. They were a couple of rather nert looking lads about 19 years old. And so it went for three days more, open a dressing station, retire (sometimes on the run), long marches, very little to eat except what we foraged from abandoned camps and dumps, dog tired, sleeping when and where we could, and finally the division was relieved. We now saw our first civilians, and last night I slept in a bed. It wasn't much of a bed, and the mattress was full of humps, but to get my boots off my sore and aching feet, to stretch out, and know I wouldn't be routed out in fifteen minutes—well, you couldn't have bought that bed from me for \$100.

Did you ever read Robert W. Service's description of the retreat from Mons? Well, that's the way I felt: Tramp, tramp, the grim road the road from Mons to Wipers: I've jammed out this dirty with me bruised and bleeding feet; Tramp, tramp, the dim road—We didn't 'ave no pipers—All bellies that were 'oller was the drums we 'ad to beat.

The ninth day, sitting around the fire in our mess after the best dinner we had had in days, the commanding officer handed me some papers and said, "Here is something that will interest you, Pettit. I want to say we shall be sorry to lose you." And this is what it was: "Lieut. Roswell T. Pettit, M. O. R. C., is relieved from duty with the British army and will proceed to the A. E. F., where he will report for duty."

I leave for Paris in the morning. This has been a long tale, but the half of it hasn't been told. I hope I haven't strung it out too much. I have just been informed that all my kit had to be burned to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. I shall probably want you to send me some things from home, but will see what I can get here first. Your son, ROSWELL.

In England to attempt to bring about the abolition of capital punishment. When he entered public life the English statutes punished with death nearly 300 crimes, ranging from murder and treason down to keeping company with gypsies. Romilly, who was of French descent, secured the repeal of these codes. Romilly was devoted to his wife, and when she died, October 29, 1818, the philanthropist fell into a delirium of grief. Four days later his grief had so preyed on his mind that he killed himself.

3,000,000 MEN FOR THIS YEAR

Baker Asks That Powers to Raise Army Be Unlimited.

PROBLEM OF DRAFT BASIS

Administration Bill Giving Authority to President, To Call All Men Needed, To Meet Opposition.

Washington—Blanket authority for the President to increase the army to whatever size may be necessary to win the war was proposed in the House Military Committee in executive session by Secretary Baker, Major-General March, acting Chief of Staff, and Provost Marshal General Crowder. An Administration measure amending the selective draft act, to provide for the grant of power, will be prepared immediately and prompt action on it will be asked.

Secretary Baker told the committee it would be unwise to set any limit on the number of men who could be called to the colors, and that the granting of complete discretionary authority to the President to increase the size of the army as rapidly as transportation and equipment facilities may warrant would have a great psychological effect on the enemy by showing how thoroughly the nation is throwing all its resources into the conflict.

The Army Appropriation bill this year, Mr. Baker said, should provide for approximately 3,000,000 men, including the nearly 2,000,000 now under arms, but this should not be accepted as any fixed limit to the number of men to be called within the year. Supplemental appropriations, he said, will be submitted as the army is increased.

Action on the Army Appropriation bill had been deferred by the committee pending the return of the War Secretary from Europe, when it could secure from him information as to the army's needs, based upon the knowledge he gained during his inspection of the American Expeditionary Forces and his conferences with British, French and Italian officials.

Secretary Baker also outlined to the committee the reasons why he opposed House amendments to the Senate resolution to change the basis of draft quota from state population to the number of men in Class I, under which states would be given credit for men who have volunteered for service in the army and navy. He said such credits would be fair if the basis was to be state populations, but that they would not be fair with the basis the number of men in Class I, because then some states would have to furnish no draft men, while others would have to furnish a very high percentage.

BOND SLACKER FIRED.

Munition Workers First Threatened Lyching.

Wheeler, W. Va.—John Knight, a moulder at the plant of the Wheeler Mould and Foundry Company, where shrapnel shells are being manufactured for the United States Government, narrowly missed lynching because of his refusal to buy a Liberty Bond. Cooler heads prevailed, however, and the workmen notified the management they would strike unless Knight was discharged. The management of the plant commended the patriotic spirit of its employees and discharged Knight. A rope had been secured and preparations had been made for the lynching.

KILLED WHEN PLANE FALLS.

Cadet Healy Loses Life And Companion Suffers Broken Ankle.

San Diego, Cal.—Flying Cadet Nicholas Healy was instantly killed and Cadet O'Hanley sustained a broken ankle as a result of an airplane accident at La Jolla, near here. According to reports from La Jolla the airplane fell in a spinning nose dive from an altitude of about 500 feet when the cadets had made a forced landing for some unknown reason and started up again. O'Hanley's home is in Garden City, L. I.

UNCLE SAM TAKES BAKERIES.

Steps In When Bakers Go On Strike In Buffalo.

Buffalo, N. Y.—Uncle Sam went into the baking business here to meet a situation caused by a strike of 266 bakers in twenty shops. Although wage demands had been granted by the master bakers, the strike was called on the issue of hours, the men demanding a reduction of sixty minutes a week and refusing to arbitrate the question.

HELMET FACTORY DESTROYED.

Long Island War Material Plant Is Burned.

New York.—The plant of the Meurer Steel Barrel Company, covering an entire block at Hunters Point, L. I., and engaged in the manufacture of war material, mostly steel helmets, for the Government, was destroyed by fire.

U-BOAT PERIL LESSENS.

Reduction Of Government Insurance Considered.

Washington.—The Treasury is considering reducing from 3 to 2 per cent, the Government marine insurance rate on steamers and cargoes passing through the war zone. This would be proportionately the greatest decrease made since organization of the Government marine insurance system and represents the lessening danger from submarines.

A Scouting Expedition At the Home Barracks



233,000 MORE CALLED TO COLORS

Men to Start Moving to Camps May 25.

BEYOND 860,000 THIS YEAR

Existing Cantonments To Be Enlarged And More To Be Built—More Divisions To Be Formed As New Selects Formed In.

Washington.—Simultaneously with the announcement that 233,000 men, from 45 States, had been called to join the colors in May, Secretary Baker indicated the scope of the government's plans for increasing its fighting strength, by stating that Congress had been asked to appropriate approximately \$15,000,000 for the Army for the next fiscal year.

That amount is exclusive of funds provided in the fortifications bill, which not only covers coast defenses, but, as a rule, provides the bulk of heavy field ordnance.

Last year the army estimates aggregated six billion and six hundred millions to pay for a force of 1,500,000 men, which has already been exceeded. The call for a quarter of a million men during May goes to all States except California, Oregon and Nevada, which with the District of Columbia, already have supplied so large a part of their quotas that it was decided not to include them this time.

The movement in most States will begin May 25 and will be completed in five days.

This brings the total number of men called for the month of May, including special classes, approximately 305,000.

The apportionment among the States include: Maryland 2,389, to Camp Meade.

Delaware 460, to Camp Dix, N. J. Pennsylvania, 7,700 Camp Meade, Md.; 4,600 Camp Lee, Va.; 3,900 Camp Humphreys, Va.; 2,922 Camp Greenleaf, S. C.

South Carolina, 1,900 Camp Jackson, S. C.; 288 Camp Wadsworth, S. C. Tennessee, 4,130 Camp Pike, Ark. Virginia, 6,135 Camp Lee, Va. West Virginia, 4,797 Camp Lee, Va.

By this order the War Department abandons its plan of assembling men in even monthly increments of approximately 100,000. Under the original program it was intended to call out not to exceed 860,000 additional men during 1918. The call for 150,000 in April and 233,000 this month will bring out in two months half the number originally contemplated for the year. Officials made it clear that it is now the purpose to mobilize all the men for whom equipment and training facilities can be provided.

"Let us avoid specific figures," Secretary Baker again said. "They imply limits. There is no limit. We will call out enough men to make victory certain. We will call them as rapidly as they can be trained and sent forward."

NO WAR ON TURKEY.

Secretary Lansing Tells Why It Is Not Necessary.

Washington.—Reasons why the State Department does not consider war declarations against Turkey and Bulgaria necessary at this time were given the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in executive session by Secretary Lansing. He is understood to have stated that the soldiers of neither of these Allies of Germany have come into action against Americans, and that American life is being protected in both countries.

MORE PEACE TALK.

Charles Of Austria Reported To Be Making Overtures To Italy.

Stockholm.—The Catholic International Press Agency announces, a dispatch from Basel says, that Emperor Charles of Austria is making a fresh peace offer, appealing to Italy to consider it in her own interests.

KILLED FIGHTING IN FRANCE.

Former Cumberland Boy Falls On Field Of Picardy.

Cumberland, Md.—James J. Larkin, aged 24 years, formerly of this city, was fatally wounded during one of the battles on the plains of Picardy, according to information received from the War Department. Shortly before enlisting in the service Larkin was employed in the cashier's department of the Wells-Fargo Company, at Braddock, Pa.

STEAMER RAMMED 66 LIVES ARE LOST

City of Athens Sunk off Delaware Coast.

33 PASSENGERS MISSING

Attempt Made To Lower Lifeboats Abandoned Because Of Rapidity With Which Vessel Was Sinking.

An Atlantic Port.—Sixty-six persons lost their lives when the steaming City of Athens, bound from New York for Savannah, was rammed and sunk by a French cruiser off the Delaware Coast. The missing include 10 men and two women who were passengers, seven out of 24 United States marines who were on board, 14 out of 20 French sailors and 33 members of the crew.

All the passengers and many of the crew were in their berths when the bow of the warship plunged into the side of the 2,300-ton coastwise vessel. Fire broke out almost immediately afterwards in hold No. 1, but it had no bearing on the fate of the ship, for the flames were quickly quenched by the rush of water which poured in.

Capt. J. Forward, one of the veteran commanders in the service of the City of Athens, owners of the vessel, did his best to avert a panic and man the life boats. So quickly did the doomed vessel sink, however, that there was no time to get the boats away, and many of those who perished were trapped in their berths.

Those of the passengers and crew who were able to reach the deck, all of them thinly clad and many without life preservers, plunged into the sea. The cruiser launched lifeboats immediately after the crash and turned its searchlights upon the waters in which men and women were struggling for their lives. Sixty-eight persons were picked up and brought back to this port by the warship, which was not seriously damaged.

THREE BILLS TO RAISE ARMY.

Smith, Of Georgia, Would Have It Number 5,000,000.

Washington.—Three bills to increase America's manpower in the war were introduced in the Senate. Senator Poindexter, of Washington, offered one authorizing the President to call 1,500,000 men under the Selective Draft law; Senator Reed, of Missouri, offered one to add 3,000,000 men to the army, and Senator Smith, of Georgia, introduced a resolution proposing to raise the army to 5,000,000 men.

Immediate action to increase the army, Senator Poindexter said, in a brief address, is necessary.

VILLA SLAYS ALL IN TOWN.

Orders Band To Massacre When Girls Are Refused Him.

El Paso, Texas.—Thirty old men, women and children were killed by Villa's men at Santa Cruz de Rosales, 40 miles southeast of Chihuahua City, last Friday, according to a report brought to the border by railroad men. Villa demanded that three young girls be delivered to him. When this was refused his men were ordered to kill everyone living in the little settlement, according to the report from Chihuahua City.

BRITISH AIRMEN BOMB TROOPS.

Huns East Of Loire Offer Good Targets To Pilots.

London.—An official report of aerial operations just issued says: "East of Loire the enemy's troops as Monday offered good targets to our pilots, who dropped 275 bombs on them and engaged them with machine gun fire. Seven hostile machines were brought down in air fighting and one was shot down by our infantry. Two of our machines are missing."

NO ADS FOR GERMAN PAPERS.

Mayor Smith Of Philadelphia Puts Up City Bars.

Philadelphia.—Heads of all departments of the city government were directed by Mayor Smith to cease furnishing public advertisements to German language newspapers in Philadelphia. The Mayor took this action in accordance with a resolution passed by City Councils after the City Solicitor had declared the resolution to be legal.

BAGS HIS 4TH HUN PLANE.

Lieutenant Meissner Brings Down A-batross Scout.

American Army in France.—As American aviator has brought down the fourth German airplane along the American front, northwest of Toul. Lieutenant James A. Meissner, whose home is in Brooklyn, after a thrilling aerial battle at about 15,000 feet, shot down an Albatross scout, which fell in flames.

THE WORLD WAR.

While the present halt in the battle possibly may indicate the near approach of the throwing into the fray of the great reserve army which General Foch has gathered, that such is the intention of the supreme commander of the Allied forces has not become apparent. In the hilly region just to the north of Loire the British also pushed back the enemy at several points, notably between Kemmel and La Clytte.