

AMERICA IN FRANCE X—The Argonne

The plain of Champagne, stretching eastward from Reims, ends in a great wooded plateau, cut by innumerable ravines, that for four years has projected at right angles across the center of the battle line between Switzerland and the North Sea. It is the great forest of the Argonne, similar in name to, and there is a likelihood of being confused with, the greater bulk of the Ardennes farther north.

The Argonne is roughly 70 kilometers long and 15 wide, and runs slightly west of north to east of south. It is cut in two about three quarters of the way up by the valley of the river Aire, and here, some 15 kilometers from the starting point of the present Franco-American attack, stands the little village of Grandpre, a name which will echo familiarly in the ear of anyone who has read Longfellow's "Evangeline." The Acadian Grandpre, in fact, was named for the village between the wooded escarpments of the Argonne.

The passes of the Argonne, of which there are five, have been fought for in other wars than this. The most notable victory connected with the name of the Argonne was won, however, against the same enemy. When the Prussians invaded revolutionary France in 1792, they fought their way through the Argonne, but were summarily defeated at Valmy, a tiny village nine kilometers east of St. Menchould, and well south of the start of the present battle. The victory was the first striking success of the Revolution. It, too, was won in September.

Varennes-en-Argonne
Valmy is rather far afield from the Argonne, despite the fact that it is with it. On the eastern outskirts of the forest, however, lies a town, taken by the Americans last week in the first day of their attack, whose name is written large in the history of France and of her revolution.

Varennes-en-Argonne, one part of which, the upper part, is built on the slopes that are the beginning of the plateau itself, whose streets now echo to the rattle of guns and rattan cars, once saw stroller, and daintier feet step across its cobblestones than those of Yankee supply and mess sergeants on the muddy lanes of the town. The mess sergeants, however, even in these days of long range bullet eyes, are probably enjoying greater security in Varennes than did Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

The story of their flight to Varennes is as heart-breaking a narrative as the history of France. The King and Queen, the little Dauphin, and a few court ladies, who had been living at the Tuilleries in Paris virtually as prisoners since their departure from Versailles, arranged to seek safety in flight from the fate that only too obviously was awaiting them in the capital.

First of Many Hitches
On the night of June 20, 1791, they set forth, abandoning their equipage for a plain traveling carriage just outside the city's barricades. They reached Châlons late the following afternoon, and the flight already seemed to be approaching a successful ending when, 14 miles beyond Châlons, the first of many hitches occurred.

Here, at Pont-Sommerville, a military escort was met by the King. The hour set was 6:30, but the Duc de Choiseul, in charge of the escort, had thought it was to be 2:30. Assuming something had gone wrong, the Duc, instead of waiting, became panic-stricken and withdrew the escort.

When, therefore, the party reached St. Menchould, at 8:30, they were unprotected. A luxurious carriage could not arrive in St. Menchould in those days without exciting at least a certain amount of gossip, but it remained for the noblest gossip of them all—the village postmaster—to recognize the King through his resemblance to the portrait on the document by which the postmaster had just been paid. It was much as though some one had recognized Washington from a postage stamp.

Royal Party Followed
The postmaster could scarcely be expected to keep the news to himself, even had he been a warm supporter of the King, which he was not. The royal party was accordingly followed. They crossed the Argonne to Clermont, 14 kilometers south of Varennes, where they might still escape. The King's courier called out "Route de Varennes!" to guide the postillions, thereby apprising the pursuing postmaster, who very likely would otherwise have taken one of the main roads south or east. Another military escort intended for the King's party had actually done this.

The travelers reached Varennes at 11 o'clock at night. The relays of horses which they expected were not ready, so new relays were encountered. Not, however, by the postmaster of St. Menchould. The waiting horses were in the tavern of the Bras d'Or and gave the alarm. Then he seized a cart of furniture and barricaded the bridge over the Aire.

The royal fugitives meanwhile attempted to continue the journey, but their passports were demanded by the revolutionary M.P. who now directs camion traffic at Varennes. The passports did not bear the countersign of the President of the National Assembly—unlikely that they would. The party would have to be detained.

Over the Grocery Store
The M.P. of 1792, whose name was Sauce, was at all events kind enough to offer them the hospitality of his house. Up the winding staircase in the rear of the little grocery store on the ground floor (with its strong odor of tallow which the Queen could not endure), into a tiny back room in the humble dwelling of M. Sauce, stepped the proudest company in history. The Queen called for clean sheets, and the little Dauphin and his sister were soon as fast asleep as if the fate of the Bourbons, were never to be decided.

Before 5 in the morning a crowd of over five thousand, from Varennes and the towns roundabout, was outside M. Sauce's suddenly famous little dwelling over the grocery store. An hour later arrived messengers ordering the King's return to Paris. Various ruses were tried to gain time, in the hope that assistance might yet arrive. One of the maids in waiting feigned sudden illness. Nothing availed, and the little party descended the narrow staircase—a staircase that led as straight to the guillotine as the steps of the scaffold itself. Louis was beheaded January 21, 1793; Marie Antoinette on October 16 in that same year.

Carlyle tells the story graphically, but with a few inaccuracies, particularly as regards the distances between some of the towns covered in the flight. The order for Louis's arrest used to be shown at the hotel de ville. Some day it may be shown again—in a new hotel de ville.

NARROW GAUGE TEAM LAYS 280 SECTIONS

Two Engineer Privates Win Individual Honors With 53

LABOR BOYS DINE LATE

Lieutenant Sets Table for Night Feed—Battalion Puts in Busy Three Months

Completing sections of narrow gauge track at the rate of eight feet a minute, a team representing Company C of the 128th Engineers won a track assembling contest at Light Railway Central Shops, with a total of 280 sections. Company C and Company B of the Blank Engineers were tied for second with 270 sections each.

Individual honors were captured by Privates T. A. Olsen and H. W. Behren of Company B, this pair having 53 sections to their credit. Privates Paul P. Hackett and William Morrissey of the winning team were second, with 52 sections.

Each team was composed of 12 men, who worked in pairs, placing and bolting rails upon the steel ties. Two five meter length rails and eight ties, fastened with 24 bolts were used for each section. Endurance as well as nimble fingers counted in turning out one section every 11 minutes, which was the record made by the winning pair. Six helpers were kept busy providing the competitors with the necessary bolts and ties.

Race On at 7 a.m.
The race began at 7 o'clock in the morning, the men quickly swinging into a break-neck pace that was continued without let-up during the entire day, in spite of raw winds and drizzling rain.

It was at once evident that the contest would be a close one, for each section of the teams gained even the slightest advantage.

Gradually the two companies of the Blank Engineers forged ahead, and at noon they were leading the 128th Engineer representatives by six sections. By three o'clock Company B increased its lead to nine, and the members of the team were already planning how to celebrate the victory.

Then the unexpected happened. With their first defeat in a 15 months' Army career seemingly inevitable, the 128th Engineers became desperate, and two men in the outfit became heroes in a men's understand finish that equaled any uphill fight staged on the Polo Grounds in ante-bellum days.

The Birds Speed Up
"Speed up, birds!" shouted this pair as they completed a section in seven minutes. The birds did speed up. There were no crowded bleachers nor cheering rosters—the fellows who would have liked to watch the contest were busy on jobs of their own. The final count, by a committee of neutral officers, gave the 128th Engineers the victory by a single section.

"We gotta hand it to you fellows," said the sergeant in charge of the Company B team.

The officers of the post had promised to provide a feed for the winners, but the race was so close that it seemed unfair to discriminate against anyone. So that night a regular celebration was held in the mess hall, the members of the three teams being the guests. The lunch consisted of salad, sandwiches, apple pie and doughnuts.

W. J. WALKER, Y.M.C.A.
Not long ago, just before the recent American advance, news came to the commander of a certain colored Labor Company that it was absolutely necessary that a certain amount of goods be piled on a train that would pass through the town in central France where the company was stationed in order that the supplies might reach the men of the front line before it was too late.

That evening the men of the company came in dog tired, soaking wet from the all-day rain and anxious for the comfort of the barracks. While they were lined up for supper the first lieutenant who was in command briefly explained what was needed and told them that he would not order a single man to leave the train, but would ask for volunteers. Every man who was willing to put in the evening for the good of the Service was to step one pace to the front.

Every single man, including the cooks and K.P.'s, who were at the time, stepped forward to the front. The lieutenant stepped forward that one pace. So the big trucks were loaded down with the whole company. The lieutenant was on the front seat of one of them and the mess sergeant and the top on the front seats of the other two.

About 10 o'clock the lieutenant and the mess sergeant and two K.P.'s walked back to the barracks and got supper for the crowd. The lieutenant himself set the table with jam and melons, which he bought. And when 1 o'clock in the morning came the company returned to a fine, hot meal. When 6 o'clock came they were later every man turned out, ready for the work of the day.

W. J. WALKER, Y.M.C.A.

In your article of September 6, "Achievement," you recite two achievements by troops of the A.E.F. which are interesting and will no doubt be inspiring to others who must content themselves with doing all they can to end the war in the S.O.S.

Laying aside false modesty and accepting your invitation, I submit for your consideration a few achievements accomplished by one battalion within the period of three months. We have not broken any records that we know of, but we cannot help feeling that we are setting a pace hard to beat for a non-combatant outfit:

- Cleared 35,000 square yards of timber.
 - Laid 2,750 square yards of flooring.
 - Laid 2,137 square yards of floor.
 - Erected 1,277 sections of frame barracks.
 - Cut 518 cords of brush.
 - Excavated 8,571 cubic yards of dirt.
 - Rebuilt 103 gasoline motors.
 - Repaired 106 transmissions.
 - Repaired 298 magnetos.
 - Repaired 278 batteries.
 - Repaired 103 generators.
 - Repaired 108 starting motors.
 - Repaired 19 gas tractors.
 - Repaired 11 rheostats.
 - Repaired 81 motor trucks and automobiles.
 - Made 470 bearings.
 - Sawed 23,035 feet of lumber.
 - Laid 10,818 feet of narrow gauge railway track.
 - Drove 2,141 rivets and repaired 100 bicycles.
- The battalion is composed of five companies of approximately 165 men each.
- H. M. ROUSE,**
Chief Technical Officer.

ECHOES FROM THE ST. MIHIEL FIGHT

The familiar looking and familiarly spelt French word "saint" is pronounced by at least 80 Yanks out of a hundred as though it were its English counterpart. There is one glorious exception. St. Mihiel is called "San Mihiel," not "Saint Mihiel," by everybody in O.D. who had anything to do with reducing the salient. It is not only pronounced San Mihiel. It has even achieved the distinction of being written that way on division bulletin boards—probably by old campaigners with Philippine, Cuban and Mexican memories cluttering up their orthography.

During the German's four year occupation of one tiny hamlet in the St. Mihiel salient, the French population was forced to work for the German officers, prepare their meals, wash their clothes, clean their dirty boots and do various other tasks that were imposed upon them, just as it did in the other towns.

One toiler was an old woman, much bent with years and suffering with rheumatism. Her daily task was to care for five rooms, wash and scrub the floors, change the linen and look after the officers' many petty wants. She was not allowed to visit her neighbors without first obtaining permission.

During all those four years this old woman kept, hidden away in a secret trunk, a silk waist and tailored skirt, hoping against hope that a brighter day would dawn for her.

The bright day dawned when the Americans swept forward on the early morning of the 13th of September, driving the Germans before them. After the barrage had passed on and the streets had filled with Yanks, she dusted off the trunk, unlocked it, dressed up in her best, carefully smoothed out the wrinkles, asked a doughboy if it was bon, then went calling on her neighbors and even paid a visit to the American commander.

A German machine gun nest was captured by the Americans after an hour of hard fighting, during which time the gunner and his two comrades were killed. When the Americans reached the pit they found that the dead Germans wore the insignia of the German.

The paper shortage is still with us, and the tone of German paper captured in the St. Mihiel attack comes in quite as handy as anything else that used to belong to the Germans but doesn't now. One divisional adjutant uses a drawerful of Tages Rapport blanks for scratch paper. Tages Rapport is only our own familiar and troublesome daily report.

A waiting column of infantry was watching the aimless circlings of a French plane. Then they began to realize that the circlings were not aimless, that the pilot, in all his voracious lather and your high and low, was looking for something. Apparently he found it, for soon he made off in a beeline for somewhere and disappeared.

The waiting column could not see the end of the adventure, did not know that the French flyer, discovering at last the huge red cross that marked an American hospital, finally slid down, stopped a few feet from the hospital entrance, got out, and asked if he might have his wounds dressed.

NO BOCHE CAPTIVES TO WORK NEAR LINE

Prisoners Will Approach Front No Closer Than 30 Kilometers

What is a prisoner of war? G.O. 150, quoting from "Rules of Land Warfare," defines him as follows: "A prisoner of war is an individual whom the enemy, upon capture, temporarily deprives of his personal liberty on account of his participation directly or indirectly in the hostilities, and whom the laws of war proscribe shall be treated with certain considerations."

Other extracts from "Rules of Land Warfare" quoted by the new G.O. in this connection, are these: "Prisoners of war are in the power of the hostile government, but not of the individuals or corps who capture them. They must be humanely treated."

"All physical suffering, all brutality which is not necessitated as an indispensable measure for guarding prisoners are formally prohibited."

To Keep Personal Belongings
"All their personal belongings, except arms, horses and military papers, remain their property."

"Prisoners of war must not be regarded as criminals or convicts. They are guarded as a measure of security and not of punishment."

The G.O., however, goes farther than this and insists that prisoners of war will, under no circumstances, be employed within 30 kilometers of the front line, except that, when being sent to the rear after their capture, they may be required to carry with them their own or American wounded to a place of safety.

Corps and army prisoners of war enclosures will be provided with means whereby to furnish hot meals to prisoners as soon as the latter are received. When practicable, hot soup will be furnished them even nearer the front, according to the new G.O.

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The M.P.E.S., otherwise the Military Postal Express Service, will hereafter be known as the Postal Express Service, United States Army, according to G.O. 155.

The organization tables of divisions and division headquarters are also altered to provide a mail detachment in each division, to consist of a first or second lieutenant, two sergeants, four corporals, six first-class privates, and 14 privates. They will be attached to the headquarters as additional troops.

The same G.O. calls attention to the fact that all members of the Army in France, in addressing letters or telegrams to units or individuals in France, must use the abbreviation, "American P.E.S.," not A.E.F.

IN THE DAYS THAT WERE

"Watcha lookin' so gloomy about?"
"It's over a year since I dropped a lighted cigarette in the cuff of my trousers."

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