SQUADRON A

IN THE

GREAT WAR

1917-1918

INCLUDING A NARRATIVE OF THE

105th M. G. BATTALION

By

STANTON WHITNEY, Major, Inf., U.S.A.

Boutez en Avant!

SQUADRON A ASSOCIATION

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DEDICATED

WITH UNDYING AFFECTION AND RESPECT
TO THOSE COMRADES WHO IN THE GREAT WAR
GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY

PREFACE

THIS is a military record of active and former members of Squadron A, National Guard, New York, while the United States of America was at war with Germany. It makes no attempt to cover Federal or State military service before April 6, 1917, nor to include the long and honorable list of those who served otherwise than in the military or naval forces of the United States or of the Allies. It is but one chapter in the history of Squadron A.

The information as to individuals, which appears under the heading "Roll of Service," is taken from questionnaires received by the Publication Committee in answer to repeated requests. Information printed between brackets has been secured from other sources.

The delay in bringing out this book,—partly due to delay, in many cases unavoidable, in receiving questionnaires,—has been largely in the interest of economy in production and of completeness and accuracy.

The record set forth in this volume, it is believed, indicates that Squadron A has justified and will always justify its claim of being a peace-time training school for competent officers in

time of war. This book is published by the Squadron A Association, 94th Street and Madison Avenue, New York, "for the information and guidance of all concerned," and especially of those who will hereafter carry on individually or collectively the traditions of the Squadron.

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OF THE
105TH MACHINE GUN BATTALION

BY

STANTON WHITNEY, Major, Inf., U. S. A.

MAJOR WILLIAM RUNK WRIGHT
Oct 13, 1917 – March 19, 1918

MAJOR KENNETH GARDNER
April 18, 1918 – Feb. 19, 1919

COMMANDING OFFICERS 105th M.G. BATTALION

MAJOR STANTON WHITNEY
Feb. 19. 1919 – April 1, 1919

NARRATIVE OF THE 105TH M. G. BATTALION

I

THE INCEPTION OF THE BATTALION

ALTHOUGH the United States had declared the existence of a State of War with Germany on April 6, 1917, it was not until July 16 that Squadron A, Cavalry, N.G.N.Y., was called into the Federal Service by General Order 90, War Department. At this date, the Squadron had not been so very long out of the Federal Service—having been discharged on December 28, 1916, after a tour of duty on the Mexican Border, service which had started on June 19, 1916. The processes of being "Federalized" were therefore not absolutely new and utterly strange.

For a month there were great activities at the Armory at 94th Street and Madison Avenue and the Squadron A Club a block below did a thriving business. There were drills in Central Park, equipment was thoroughly overhauled and great efforts were made to recruit up to the required strength. Squadron Headquarters, Troops A, B, C, D and the Machine Gun Troop were all short of men and "rookies" began to pour in. As there were more applicants than vacancies to fill, we were able to discriminate and pick out the best men. Thus the month passed—paper work and physical examinations, oaths and drills, until, on August 17, the Squadron was ordered to camp in Van Cortlandt Park. Although we were a Cavalry outfit, very few horses were available. Many of the men therefore left the Armory for the camp-site in a way not ordinarily associated with the Pomp of War and the

Dash of Cavalry—they went up by the Subway. Our first introduction to the modern war of Science and Chemistry!

No sooner had we arrived at Van Cortlandt Park than the personnel began to change: men were detailed to attend the various training schools for officers, men were commissioned from the ranks, men were S.C.D.'d (discharged on Surgeon's Certificate of Disability, and not to be confused with the D.S.C.—Distinguished Service Cross) and new men were consequently being enlisted. Drills were many and hard and "hikes" were of almost daily occurrence. Those hikes! They were the first of the Horrors of War we ran up against: and they were real horrors at that. We were cavalrymen, with all the pride and hauteur of cavalrymen; and the hardship—and ignominy—of walking like a "doughboy" seemed terrible. It hurt our feet and it hurt our pride. But we hiked. Yet, looking back as we can now, those hikes were as child's play compared to our strolls through Belgium and through France—whether we were on a *pavée* road or making our way across country over barbed wire and shell holes.

Bad as were the hikes (and they were bad enough), the hardest part of the tour of duty at Van Cortlandt Park was getting used to losing our best men. Virtually all of our non-commissioned officers were commissioned and left us: many of the privates left us for the same reason. It was—and is—a source of pride to us that so many of our men were of officer calibre; but the losses of good men hit us hard. Almost every day, each Troop was confronted with the problem of building up a new organization. First Sergeants were leaving, Sergeants were leaving, Corporals were leaving, Privates were leaving. Luckily we had unlimited good men to call upon for the responsible positions and there was no halt in the work. Our officers were not changed—yet. It took real courage to recommend the best men for commissions because that meant that new non-commissioned officers had to be appointed and trained.

On August 30, 1917, the "Send-Off Parade" for the 6th Division (later to become the 27th) was held in New York, so Squadron A, together with other units at Van Cortlandt

Park, moved into the City on the afternoon of August 29 and proceeded to various armories where the units bivouaced over night. The Parade took place in glorious weather; and the next day we returned to Van Cortlandt Park to take up again the routine of preparation. Drills and hikes, hikes and drills, and more drills and more hikes. Finally, on October 12, we proceeded to Jersey City where we entrained for the South. Rumor had it that we were going to Camp Wadsworth at Spartanburg, South Carolina, and—for a wonder—rumor was correct. There was the ordinary grousing over the fact that the men considered that they were overcrowded on the train—three men to a double seat in a standard day coach—but in after months we looked back to that trip as a marvel of luxury: we had not as yet been introduced to the French *Hommes-Chevaux* method of transportation.

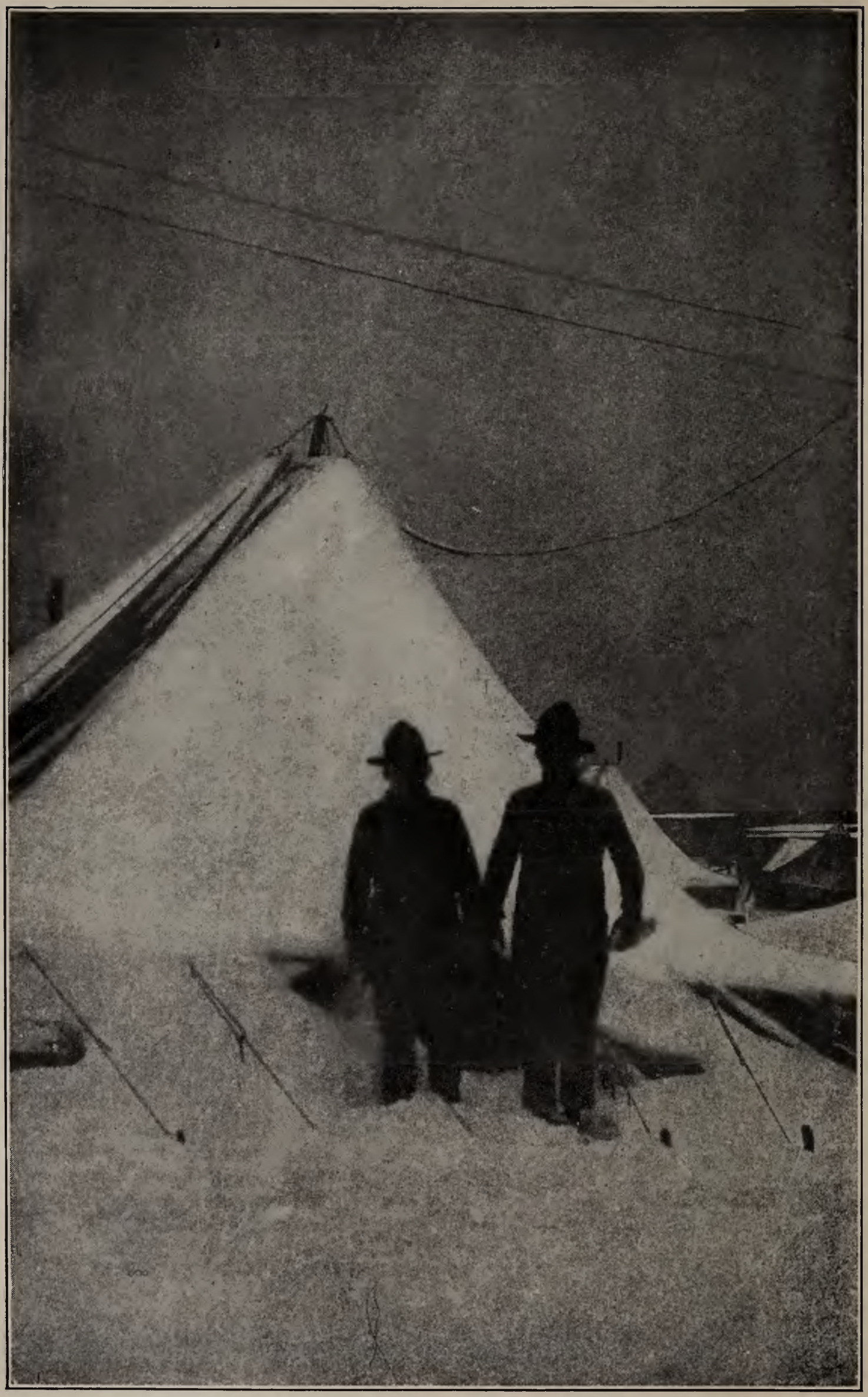
Squadron A, consisting of Headquarters, Troop A, Troop B, Troop C, Troop D and the Machine Gun Troop, boarded the train and during the night disappeared from the Army Lists as Squadron A, and appeared on October 13 as the 105th Machine Gun Battalion, made up of a Headquarters Company, Company A, Company B and Company C. Company A was born as the result of a consolidation of Troops A and B, Troop D formed the nucleus for Company B and Company C was old Troop C and the Machine Gun Troop combined. This change into a Battalion of Machine Guns cost us two Captains—Captain Howard Cowperthwaite, Jr., formerly in command of Troop A, and Captain Ridgely Nicholas, commanding officer of Troop C—both of whom were rendered superfluous and assigned to the Division Trains. Our first casualties of the War!

II

TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES

ON October 13, 1917, as we left the train at Spartanburg, the 105th Machine Gun Battalion sprang into being. The first big wrench came soon; we were ordered to turn in all horses, drawing those to which we—as a Machine Gun Battalion—were entitled. Remember that we were (or had been) Cavalrymen and took that intense pride in the fact which is a part of every Cavalryman's nature. But orders had to be obeyed and we turned in our horses. They had been on our picket lines for only a very short time; but, some few days later, they stampeded from their new location and, in the dead of night, returned to us. Straight through an Army Camp of some 20,000 men they came back to their old picket lines. Now can you understand what a wrench is was for us to turn in horses like those! They were immediately taken away from us again although we did not offer much help to the men who came after them. Horses that had been cursed and sworn at, once they were taken away from us, seemed to have acquired new attributes of speed, docility and intelligence. The mount once referred to as "that damned beast" was mentioned as "that bully little mare I used to have." We knew we were at war—we had again suffered casualties; we had lost our horses.

Once having arrived at Spartanburg, the Battalion busied itself in arranging its quarters at Camp Wadsworth. We were under canvas and much had to be done to make the camp site habitable. Ditches had to be dug; company streets were a constant source of work; company insignia had to be put on the Company Mess Shacks; and Officers' Row sprang into being with officers' shacks of uniform design. Later on, the tents in the company streets were boarded in and board floors were laid. Ornamental rustic fences were built, and more ditches were dug. When in doubt, it was always safe



THE SUNNY SOUTH—SPARTANBURG, S. C.

to dig a ditch—it was always needed. This was all part of a soldier's work; but don't for a moment think that drills and hikes were neglected. Drills were necessary and still more drills; hikes were indispensable and still more hikes. And then there were the schools. Officers' schools on every conceivable subject—and French lessons. Non-commissioned officers had schools on the Machine Gun (the Battalion was armed with some Colts), the use of the Bayonet (we never carried a bayonet), Military Hygiene, Map Reading, Use of Instruments (such as the Prismatic Compass, Clinometer Mil Scale, etc.), Field Sketching, Military Courtesy, Gas Instruction, Field Baking, Bugling and every other conceivable and inconceivable military subject. There were plenty of schools. Each non-com., on finishing his course, returned to his company and conducted schools for the enlisted men, supervised by the graduates of the Division Officers' Schools. Drills and hikes continued as usual. New equipment was issued. Scores of pamphlets were forwarded by the War Department, and from these the Division authorities evolved new subjects on which to establish additional schools. It was a busy period. New officers were assigned to the Battalion and some enlisted men were promoted from the ranks. New recruits were coming in, old men were being transferred out, and new non-coms, were constantly being warranted to fill existing vacancies. Early in November, 1917, batches of enlisted men from the 71st New York Infantry, from the 10th New York Infantry, and from the 47th New York Infantry were transferred to our outfit while, at the same time, the men who, on August 17, had been sent to various Officers' Training Schools were formally transferred —on paper—to the 47th New York Infantry. The winter was a very severe one, and officers and enlisted men were thankful that quarters were partly boarded in and that Sibley stoves had been issued. So much for a general *résumé* of the training at Camp Wadsworth.

To be a little more specific: A series of trenches had been constructed by the Engineers for practice purposes—both for the practice of the Engineers in constructing them and for the practice of the troops in occupying them. Close

attention was paid to all the latest news from the battle fronts in Europe and the troops occupying the trenches conformed, so far as our information permitted us, to all the rules of trench warfare as followed abroad. Troops in the trench system were relieved at night and the relieving troops went through all the formalities of the relief. On November 19, the Battalion occupied these trenches for a period of twenty-four hours. It rained. Little did we realize then how prophetic that was of our subsequent trench duties in Belgium and in France. It Rained!

We soon began to lose commissioned officers and enlisted men. The first officer to leave us was 1st Lieutenant Colgate Hoyt, Jr., of Company C who, on December 10, went as Aide to General Michie. On February 14, 1918, Captain Graham Youngs of Company B was transferred to the 308th Cavalry; and 1st Lieutenant A. Campbell Smidt of Company A left us for the 309th Cavalry on February 16. On the 22nd, Captain Albert H. Putnam of Company A was promoted to Major of Cavalry and assigned to the 309th Cavalry which also gained another of our officers when 1st Lieutenant George W. Vanderhoef, Jr., of Company C was transferred on February 23. On March 5, Captain Stanton Whitney of Company C was transferred to the 107th Infantry and, on the 19th, Major William R. Wright relinquished command of the 105th Machine Gun Battalion and proceeded to Washington for assignment. So it was that on March 20 no original Battalion Commander or Company Commander remained with the Battalion. On January 7, the first group of enlisted men left us for Officers' School (some of them came back to us later as commissioned officers) and on the 10th, another lot were discharged on Surgeon's Certificate of Disability (S.C.D.), while twenty-two others were transferred to the Motor Mechanics Regiment on the 22nd.

Meanwhile the Table of Organization, always mysterious, was again changed. The Machine Gun Battalions of a Division had heretofore consisted of two Brigade Battalions of three Companies each and one Division Battalion (supposedly motorized) of four Companies, but now, each

Brigade Battalion was to be composed of four Companies each with a Division Battalion (presumably motorized, but the War did not last long enough for this motorization to go into effect) of two Companies. This change in the Tables resulted, March 6, in Company A of the 104th Machine Gun Battalion under command of Captain Harold H. Donaldson being transferred as a whole to our Battalion and designated Company D. More changes were to follow. However, routine work still continued, and March 13 saw Company C assigned to exterior guard duty at the trench system for a period of twenty-four hours, to be followed the next day by Company B. On February 27, 1st Lieutenant Nathaniel H. Egleston was promoted to Captain and placed in command of Company B; and 1st Lieutenant Lucius H. Biglow received his promotion on March 20 and was assigned to command Company A. 1st Lieutenant Frederick W. Wurster left us on April 10 when he was promoted to Captain and assigned to the 304th Cavalry. Captain Donaldson of Company D had been transferred to the 314th Cavalry on March 30th. April 18 brought the Battalion a new Commanding Officer in the person of Major Kenneth Gardner, formerly Captain of the Machine Gun Company, 107th Infantry, who assumed command on that date. On the 27th, 1st Lieutenant Walter G. Andrews was promoted to Captain and took command of Company D, while Captain Robert R. Molyneux was assigned to command Company C. On this same date, 2nd Lieutenant Sherrill Babcock of Company B and 2nd Lieutenant William O. Upjohn of Company A were transferred out of the Battalion. More enlisted men also had their connection with the Battalion severed: April 20, all those at Officers' Training Schools were transferred to the 105th Field Artillery (their connection with the Battalion had virtually, except for purposes of record, terminated when they went to the Schools), the 29th marked the transferring of twenty-six to the 102nd Ammunition Train and seventeen were transferred to Infantry Unassigned on May 1.

Notwithstanding the difficulties created by all these changes, the Battalion had been kept hard at work. On

March 30 it had again occupied the trench system and on April 8 it had hiked to Glassy Rock for rifle, pistol and machine gun practice. While on the range, the welcome orders arrived to march back to Camp Wadsworth to prepare for Embarkation. We were to go to the Front, presumably to some place in France though not one of us actually knew where we were going, when we were going, from what port we were to sail, where we were going to land or what we were going to do after we had landed. *But we were going!* That was the important fact! We hiked back to the camp in record time and redoubled all our activities. Battalion and Company Quartermasters were swamped with work. Overseas equipment (in part) was issued, almost daily show-down inspections were in order, and the thousand and one matters made necessary by the proposed overseas service had to be attended to. Our Colt Machine Guns were turned in and Vickers-Maxims, chambered for the American ammunition, were issued. As a matter of fact, we never used these guns for reasons explained later. On April 27, an Advance Party consisting of six commissioned officers from the Battalion and three sergeants from each of the four companies, left Camp Wadsworth for an unknown destination—we merely understood that they would rejoin us Over There.

Added to all their other duties and troubles, each commissioned officer had to make feverish efforts to supply himself with an overseas equipment as called for and required by Port of Embarkation Orders. So many white shirts, so many white collars, a pair of rubber boots, a folding bucket and many other articles too numerous to enumerate. It was a real task to get these articles together. (It may not be amiss to mention here that the list of required articles was almost completely changed before embarkation so that many things previously required were absolutely prohibited at a not very much later date. What subsequently happened to the kits actually taken over by officers and men will be explained later.)

Actual orders to move had not as yet been received and we awaited them with growing nervousness. What if plans

were changed—it had happened before—and our preparations for overseas service should turn out to be in vain? At last the actual orders came and, on the morning of May 4, 1918, the Battalion marched out of Camp Wadsworth. We had started for Active Service!

III

EN ROUTE TO FRANCE

THE 105th Machine Gun Battalion marched away from Camp Wadsworth at 8:30 A.M. on May 4 and in due course entrained at the No. 1 Siding at Fair Forest. The first section of our train, consisting of Battalion Headquarters, Sanitary Detachment and Company A (Brigade Headquarters was also on this section), under command of Major Gardner, pulled out of the siding at 10:15 A.M., to be followed, at 10:35, by the 2nd section consisting of Company B, Company C and Company D (forty men from the 105th Infantry accompanied this detachment), under command of Captain Andrews. We still had but a vague idea of our immediate destination, but all doubts and surmizes were put at rest when the first section pulled into Newport News at 1:30 P.M. on May 5, followed, two hours and fifteen minutes later, by the second section. We immediately went to Camp Stuart and were assigned to Block 12 which proved to be our home until May 18. On the 6th, there were added to our strength, four 2nd Lieutenants, all former enlisted men of the Battalion who had received their commissions after graduating from Officers' School: Frederick Snare, Jr., was assigned to Company C, Tracy A. Clute to Company D, Richard G. Lyon to Company B and Henry B. Jennings to Company A.

The period of our stay at Camp Stuart was fully taken up with preparations for overseas service. New equipment was issued, show-down inspections again became prevalent and 1st Sergeants were tearing their hair over the appalling mass of paper work. Among other papers to prepare, there was the dreaded "Embarkation List" to be made out for each company: on each list had to appear the full name of each individual, his serial number, and the name of his nearest of kin with relationship and address. No erasures were

allowed. This list was not to be made out in alphabetical order but in the order in which the men would pass up the gang-plank. It had to be made out, not in triplicate, not in quadruplicate, but in whatever term is the proper one for ten copies—maybe it was twelve. These lists were nightmares.

The Company Quartermaster Sergeants also had their troubles. All equipment had to be boxed in cases of certain dimensions and these cases had to be classified, numbered, contents noted and net weight and cubic feet of displacement, as well as Battalion and Company designation, plainly marked on each case. Officers' locker-trunks had to be included and virtually every officer delayed getting his baggage listed and marked until the Q.M. Lists were almost completed. If the Q.M. Sergeant ever hated a commissioned officer, he hated him then. The sergeants and the corporals were busy checking up their platoons and squads and surreptitiously endeavoring to pass some undesirable private to other control.

Only the private had no share in the mental worries so prevalent during our stay at Newport News and yet he too had his troubles. Being ordered from here to there and back to here again, seemingly without rhyme or reason, kept him guessing. Kit bags had to be packed and labeled, and decision had to be made as to what extras were "absolutely needed" and had to be included. Later it was discovered that what seemed necessary over here was superfluous and a positive nuisance over there. It was a case of live and learn. The Company Insurance Officer raged around verifying each man's insurance and checking up on Compulsory Allottments. He *knew* that everything was all right, it was all right before we left Spartanburg, but he did not believe what he knew. The Company Clerk seized every available opportunity to recheck Service Records: what he expected to find wrong with them when they were all right on leaving Camp Wadsworth, nobody—not even himself—knew. Even the officer had his own special worries outside of company matters. Did his equipment conform with Port of Embarkation Orders? Would the

authorities discover that his baggage far out-weighed his allowance and, if so, would he have a chance to repack or would his kit be left on the dock? Luckily there was so much to do that no one from Private to Major had much time to worry. Work was so steady that one could grab only a few moments in which to do his worrying. Captains were using all their wits endeavoring to convince the medical authorities that certain men were unfit for active service with the result that at the last moment, just before embarking on May 17, eight enlisted men were discharged on S.C.D.

At 2:30 P.M. on May 17 we left Camp Stuart and proceeded in heavy marching order to Pier 5, arriving an hour and fifteen minutes later. At four o'clock, we started to load aboard the *U.S.S. Calomares* and, at quarter to five, the loading was completed. Company B was the first unit of the Battalion to embark, and they were followed in order by Company C, Company D, Company A and Battalion Headquarters. May 18 was very clear and, at 8:10 A.M. the *Calomares* cast off her moorings and steamed out to Hampton Roads where we lay from twenty minutes past nine to ten o'clock when our little Armada, consisting of the *Calomares,* the *President Grant* and the *Occidente,* convoyed by the destroyer *Huntington* and a cruiser, set out across the Atlantic. The next day, dawning clear with a smooth sea, saw us joined by the *Pocahontas,* the *Duke of Abbruzzi,* the *Minnewaska* and two other transports.

Meanwhile the Battalion was not idle. Setting up drills were held; fire drills were numerous; and assignment was made to life boats and to life rafts which were prepared for quick launching. It was impressed on our minds that we were indulging in no yachting cruise at the expense of the United States Government—we were a small cog in the great machine of a War—a War in which the enemy would adopt any and all means to prevent our safe arrival in Europe. May 20 started in with rain and a rough sea, but later on the weather cleared and the sea smoothed down. During the rain, at 11:00 A.M., another transport joined our convoy. The next few days were uneventful,

the sea generally rough and the weather clear; some of us did not care whether we were torpedoed or not. Inspection of quarters, ship routine, boat drills and fire drills were of daily occurrence. Accommodations on the *Calomares* were very good for the officers and good (far above the average) for the enlisted men, who were quartered below decks with tiers of bunks fashioned from canvas tightly stretched between a framing of pipe. Although the accommodations were not those of a man traveling first class on one of the Cunard liners, the Battalion was far more comfortable than it was again to be for many months to come. On May 25, there was a little break in the routine when the *Calomares* engaged in target practice with her guns with results which made us far more confident of the outcome should an enemy submarine try to torpedo us. In fact the firing was so marvellously accurate that some of the men secretly wished that one of the Kaiser's pirate craft would try to put something over on us. Be that as it may, no one was particularly elated when, at noon on May 26, orders were issued to put on the life-belts and stand by. This was no routine drill: Something was in the air. Finally the tension was broken when, at seven minutes past four the *Calomares* fired the first of twenty shots at an enemy submarine. Explosive shells were used and several men were positive that the submarine had been hit at least twice and had been put out of business. However, no information was given out as to the results of the firing. Long afterwards, we learned that the deadly submarine had been nothing more or less than an overturned lifeboat; but we never learned what an overturned lifeboat was doing in that particular part of the Atlantic Ocean or what was the fate—if any—of the vessel to which it had belonged.

May 27 brought no thrills until 7:30 P.M. when five or six transports passed us on the port side on their way back to the United States. We hoped the good old *Calomares* would soon be following them up. Late that night, nine destroyers darted up to convoy us for the remainder of our journey and the sight of these wicked looking little trouble seekers, when we discovered them the next morning,

was very reassuring. If anything looks efficient and as if it meant business, a destroyer does—and we had nine of them with us. Her duty ended, the cruiser which had been with us up to then, silently put about, headed for home and disappeared about 3:30 P.M. on the 28th. The destroyers were all about us like hornets, now loafing along at our gait, now suddenly darting off to investigate some suspicious ripple on the water, now dashing across our bows and now scurrying under our stern. They were everywhere, snooping about like a pack of fox hounds being put on the scent. Very soon (to be exact, at twenty minutes past five that same afternoon) we saw them in action. There was a swift dash on the part of these little warships followed by the geysers formed by the explosion of depth bombs. A submarine had been located. Later we learned from official reports that it had been destroyed. The following day passed without incident; and it was not until the next morning that we found out that two of our fellow transports had left the convoy at midnight. This 30th of May, Decoration Day, was a memorable one for us: again we were attacked by submarines—how many, we did not know—but we did know that the *Calomares* fired forty shots from her guns, with what results we never heard. The incident was soon forgotten because we steamed into the Lock at St. Nazaire, France, at 9:30 P.M., and docked an hour and three-quarters later. All night long the Battalion unloaded ship and, at 6:00 A.M. on the 31st, it debarked, marched away from the dock at 7:35 and arrived at Camp No. 1 at 8:30.

We were in France!

IV

TRAINING PERIOD IN FRANCE*

THERE we were at last in France and, although we had no machine guns, no horses and no wagons, we knew that all our energies were to be devoted to building the Battalion into an efficient fighting machine. We were sure of ultimate results, of ultimate success, because we had the men, we had the officers and—above all—we had the spirit and the morale. The morning of June 1 was spent in undergoing a rigid inspection of personnel and of what equipment we had and the afternoon was *enjoyably* spent in swimming in the Bay of Biscay. That swim was one to be remembered as was also the one we had the following afternoon. At five in the morning of June 3, we left camp and loaded train at seven. With us on the train was one company of Military Police, Division Headquarters and Brigade Headquarters. At twelve minutes past eight, our train pulled out and we were off on our first trip in the *Hommes-Chevaux* cars. As the *Hommes-Chevaux* method of transportation is now a matter of history, no description of that modern method of torture will be entered upon here. It is sufficient to say that the size, shape and general construction of these baby imitation freight cars—looking more like the side car of a delivery motorcycle than anything else—was such that the forty men packed into it could neither stand, sit or lie down with any comfort even had they been packed in without any impedimenta. But when forty full marching packs were also introduced—well, the impossible was accomplished. It must be admitted, however, that there are no records to show that any member of the American Expeditionary Forces lost his life from suffocation or by being crushed to death by his fellow sardines in one of these *Hommes-Chevaux* atrocities. We passed through La Pois-

* See Appendices L, M and N.

sonnière, Angres and Le Mans, making a short stop at each of these stations.

During the morning of June 4, the Battalion suffered a severe loss in the death of General Michie, our Brigade Commander, who died of heart disease at half-past six. The train stopped at Darnetal where last honors were paid to him at twenty minutes past ten in the morning.

THE ENLISTED MAN'S KIT

June 5, at 4:30 A.M., our train drew into Noyelles and two hours later we unloaded the cars and marched to a British "staging camp" where we had breakfast. A staging camp bears about the same relation to a detachment of troops as does a wayside gasoline station to a touring automobilist. Replenish your fuel tanks and on your way! You may remember that, in mentioning the preparations at Camp Stuart, an explanation was promised of the final disposition of the enlisted man's kit on arrival in France. This is what happened: after breakfast, the Battalion was marched to a field where all kit bags had been stacked. There each man secured his own and unpacked it. Such articles as were needed and specifically mentioned (and, strictly against all orders, many totally unnecessary personal belongings) were laid aside to be stowed away in the pack already full to overflowing—mostly with contraband. The extra uniform and much other equipment which had been specifically ordered taken overseas, was repacked in the kit bag, the Battalion fell in and marched away, and left the bags neatly stacked in the field where they had been found. Later on—very much later on, after the Armistice—these same bags were returned to their owners; but meanwhile everything of value had been abstracted. However, when we again saw the blue denim sacks, we were so worn out and so overjoyed at the prospect of seeing home again that we did not very much care.

From this field we marched the short distance to St. Firmin and had our first experience of billeting. A soldier of the United States is accustomed to camping under canvas and to going into regularly built cantonments, but he is not

used to being dropped into somebody's private house as a forced guest, welcome or unwelcome. An English billeting officer met the Battalion and distributed the men about the small village. Barns, stables, rooms in farmhouses and all conceivable forms of shelter were made use of, and the men proceeded to settle themselves as if the experience were not a new one. The American soldier quickly adapted himself to circumstances and either adopted the customs of the country or introduced his own customs to be adopted by the inhabitants of whatever country he happened to be located in. Yes, the American soldier was adaptable.

Although we realized that we were in the British sector, near the north end of the battle line which extended from the English Channel to Switzerland, we had yet to learn that we had definitely been attached to the English Armies for training. But so it was. On arriving at St. Firmin, the first installment of British equipment was issued to us and this issue consisted of four rolling kitchens. The British rolling kitchen was a two-wheeled metal contrivance with a folding stove-pipe on which—the contrivance and not the stove-pipe—miracles in the way of cooking could be performed, once the hang of the thing was mastered. A two-wheeled limber-like contraption, used to carry supplies (and incidently most of the cooks' personal baggage) was attachable to the rear of the kitchen proper and the whole works was drawn by two horses, controlled by a rider on the near horse of the team. However, the Battalion had no animals at this time. With the kitchen we were introduced to the British ration which differed in many ways from the one to which we had grown accustomed. Tea instead of coffee, mutton and rabbits instead of roast beef and steak, no cereals but an abundance of cheese, and plenty of jam. At first the men complained, but later came to prefer it in many ways to the American ration: there seemed to be more variety. Canned goods were very much the same in both armies. June 6 was given to the Battalion as a holiday to enable the men to wash up and get used to billets.

AN AIR BATTLE

We had not long to wait for further excitement. An air battle was staged just above the town the very next day; and we could also hear the sound of the heavy guns firing up at the Front. The noise seemed very loud to us, but it really was only a distant rumble. Still it was the first firing we had heard and it impressed us mightily. It made us feel that we were really a part of the great European show. The four rolling kitchens were still the only equipment which we had as yet received; but that afternoon twelve Vickers Machine Guns, chambered for the British ammunition, were issued to the Battalion. The American Vickers Guns, issued to us at Camp Wadsworth before sailing for France, were never seen by us after we loaded them on the *Calomares* at Newport News; the difference in ammunition would have made them useless to us on the British Front.

The regular Saturday Inspection was held on the morning of June 8 and, in the afternoon, the men were allowed "on pass" to visit Rue and other nearby towns. The men made the most of the permission. Souvenirs were acquired at prices computed in francs instead of in centimes. But what did we care when we were off on our first liberty in France! After Government Insurance and Compulsory and Voluntary Allotments, the average private had some six dollars and thirty cents coming to him per month: the non-coms drew a little more. Six dollars and thirty cents was about thirty-two francs and in francs to the Yank seemed quite an amount. In America, we had of course figured with the dollar as the unit; and in France, with the franc as the basic coin in our calculations, we seemed to have five times as much spending money. But the Frenchmen, except in transactions with *les Américains,* figured in centimes while the English Tommy figured in pennies. The Yank therefore bore the reputation of being a millionaire. There is no question about it, whenever an American soldier struck a village or a town in France—whether on pass or on leave—the French shop-keeper be-

came almost wealthy (for a Frenchman) overnight. The American eagerly bought some embroidered silk handkerchiefs or some similar article for five francs which, up to then, had been unsaleable at thirty centimes. Stock which had littered up the store shelves for years and which could not be sold at any price, was snatched at by the American soldier. He just wanted to buy—no matter what it was.

June 10 marked the beginning of what might be called the "Detailing Era" and this era lasted all through our service in Belgium and in France. We realized that it was necessary and tried to reconcile ourselves to it but, it seemed to us that, when time was heavy on the hands of the powers that were, they would suddenly remember that no detail had been called from the Battalion for two or three days. If they were only slightly bored, they would suggest that a few privates be sent somewhere for several days; if their *ennui* was a bit more pronounced, a batch of non-coms would be sent to a school in something-or-other for a couple of weeks; if they were desperate, three or four commissioned officers would be instructed to proceed to Clamecy or Langres for at least a month. It seemed to us that the times of desperation were very apt to come just when the Battalion most needed its officers. Anyway, two commissioned officers and twelve non-commissioned officers were detailed to attend the British Machine Gun School at La Champneuf Farm, close by our billets at St. Firmin. These detailed students returned to their various companies while the Battalion was at Sallenelle.

It was also about June 10 that our command received further equipment from British sources: thirty-eight more British Vickers machine guns, forty-one limbers (complete), four General Service Wagons, one Maltese Cart, one Officers' Cart and two Water Carts. We also received our first animals: one hundred and fifty-nine draft horses (heavy and light) and twenty-two riding horses. These riding horses were not ours for very long; we had to turn most of them back and, in a very short time, the Captain alone of the company officers was mounted and he only on special occasions. Immediately, every man volunteered

for service with the Transport. Remember, we were almost all ex-cavalrymen and anything to do with a horse looked good to us.

TRANSPORT COMMENDED

Just a few words about this transport equipment which was totally different from anything with which we had ever been trained. The limber—a two-wheeled cart with another similar cart attached as a trailer, with low sides, a drop tail-board and no top—was drawn by four horses (two when four were not available) and carried the four guns of a platoon. The General Service Wagon, known as the G. S. Wagon, took the place of our combat wagon but was of much heavier construction. The Maltese Cart was a two-wheeled affair used for the transportation of medical supplies (chiefly O.D. pills), the Officers' Cart was used by the officers of Battalion Headquarters as a baggage wagon and the Water Cart was what the name implied. However, it bore no relation to a watering-cart, the water it carried was for cooking and for drinking purposes. It was strange to the ordinary American soldier to realize that Belgium and Northern France had the scantiest supply of water that was fit to use even though it had been boiled. It would really seem that the rain which was almost constant during our active service, might have helped to solve the question of water supply, but such was not the case. All water had to be toted along in these carts and distributed to the various units in the lines. The loss of one of these water carts would have been more severe than the loss of one or more limbers. Some substitute could always be found by which to transport the guns but nothing could take the place of a water cart. Luckily, not only did we *not* lose one of our precious two but actually acquired an abandoned German one which we were able to put to splendid use. Three water carts were better than two and four would still have been too few. Actually, a Machine Gun Battalion on active service, necessitating—from the very nature of the arm—more or less independent action on the part of the various companies and covering a comparatively

large area of terrain, should have had five of these carts: One for each company and one for Rear Battalion Headquarters and the Transport and Headquarters Company concentrated there. We did not run our transport as Company Transports but as a Battalion Transport with the necessary details from each company. A lieutenant from one of the companies was detailed as Transport Officer and he was entirely responsible for its appearance, discipline and efficiency in action. The Battalion was very proud of the personnel of its transport and justly so. Machine gun squads in the front lines never lacked rations owing to the failure of the ration-limber to get through, the Transport was never lost and—though in constant use, plowing through mud with daily and nightly rain—the harness, limbers and horses were kept in such good condition, everything was so clean and neat, that the Commanding General of the Division took occasion to write a personal letter of commendation to our Major. Again I repeat, we were justly proud of our Transport.

On June 11, in accordance with S.O. 161, Headquarters 27th Division, American E. F., June 10, 1918, Major Gardner and two sergeants left at 6:45 A.M. for a four-day period of observation with the British troops in the front line trenches near Albert. On June 15, Captain Molyneux and a private left on a similar detail and, on June 20, 1st Lieutenant Cook and two sergeants completed the observation details from the Battalion. It was also on June 11 that we gained three 2nd Lieutenants: Hugh deY. Stillman was assigned to Company D, Harry H. Powers was attached to Company A and Andrew L. Smith joined Company B. On the 12th, pursuant to Order No. 802/239, 198th Infantry Brigade (British), June 12, 1918, the Battalion marched over to La Champneuf Farm where, together with the 107th Infantry, the 108th Infantry, the 104th Machine Gun Battalion and the 106th Machine Gun Battalion, it took part in an inspection and review by Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, British Expeditionary Forces. Whether or not it was the direct result of this review, the fact remains that the next day twenty enlisted men were

transferred to Replacement Troops and three more 2nd Lieutenants were attached to the Battalion: Thomas F. Hickey came to Company B, Eldon M. Stenjam to Company D and Walter B. Wyon to Company C. Lieutenant Wyon, on the 24th, was moved over to Company D.

With the exception of a practice 10-mile hike in full field equipment on June 14, the next few days were taken up with drills—close order, machine guns, signalling, gas, musketry, transport and all other such exercises as were prescribed and necessary. On the 18th, the Battalion, in compliance with Field Order No. 2 and Orders No. 11, Headquarters 27th Division, June 16, 1918, left St. Firmin in the morning and, passing through Faviers, Noyelles and St. Valery, arrived at Sallenelle at a quarter to three in the afternoon. It was soon billeted, and routine work was begun again. An extensive course of instruction in all that pertained to a machine gun battalion was now conducted by Captain T. F. Crocker, M.G. Corps, *B.E.F., and Major Alderson, *B.E.F., assisted by a detail of British non-commissioned officers. This instruction continued during all our stay at Sallenelle. While billeted there, on June 24, one commissioned officer and two sergeants were detailed for a month's course at General Headquarters Machine Gun School at Camiers and, on July 1, four commissioned officers and four sergeants were ordered to the Army Infantry Specialist School at Langres for a period of four weeks. As the five officers who, on April 27, left us to go on the Advance Party had not yet rejoined the Battalion, the detailing away of these others made us very short of commissioned personnel.

On June 27, the Battalion marched to the vicinity of Hautebut to witness a gas demonstration. We had had many drills with the gas masks and flattered ourselves that we were letter perfect—or rather, action perfect—in swiftly adjusting that instrument of torture, but, when we were actually up against the real thing as we were at Hautebut, we seemed hopelessly slow. There we were, standing in line, before a system of practice trenches in which had

* British Expeditionary Forces.

MACHINE GUN COMPANY IN A FRENCH VILLAGE

ST. QUENTIN CANAL

been placed a number of gas cylinders, waiting for the alarm of "Gas!" It was very dark and we were very nervous. Some of us wished that we had been a bit more careful when last we were ordered to inspect our masks for possible defects. Supposing there were some pin holes in the fabric? What if the outlet valve should stick? When the alarm of "Gas!" was given, the masks were torn out of the containers, breath was held and masks adjusted. It seemed hours before the masks were properly put on and yet, in the last practice, the whole performance had seemed so simple. The demonstration (much to the surprise of some of us) passed by without any casualties, but the Battalion gas masks received a great deal more attention from that day on.

On July 3, at 7:15, the Battalion abandoned Sallenelle and, after a two hour and a half march, arrived at Noyelles where it entrained in two sections. The 1st section, made up of Battalion Headquarters, the Sanitary Detachment, Company A, Company B and one platoon of Company D, left at 11:18 and was followed three hours later by the 2nd section, consisting of Company C and the remaining two platoons of Company D. The detraining point was Wizernes, which was reached at 7:30 that evening by the 1st section; this section made camp at Clairmarais Forest at 11:30 that night. The 2nd section did not make camp at the Forest until the following morning at 6:00. We never found out why we went to Clairmarais Forest because, on the evening of July 5, the Battalion marched away to Broxeele, arriving at 12:30 A.M. on the 6th. Orders 26, Headquarters 27th Division, A.E.F., July 5, 1918, started us, at ten o'clock on a march to Quelmes, where the Battalion was billeted at half-past ten that night and where it stayed until July 14. Nevertheless, the silver band on the Battalion Colors credits the command with going into the Dickebush Lake—Scherpenberg Defensive Sector on July 9, although it was July 15, a week later, that we actually reached Beauvoorde Woods. On the 7th, the six commissioned officers and the twelve sergeants who had been on the Advance Party from the United States, rejoined the

Battalion, and very welcome they were. We had another change of officers on July 9, when Captain Andrews of Company D was transferred to the 107th Infantry and Captain Whitney, who had formerly been in command of Company C, was transferred to the Battalion from the 107th Infantry and assigned as Commanding Officer of Company D. On the 13th, Chaplain John C. Ward, who had been with us since December 19, 1917, was also transferred to the 107th Infantry. Meanwhile the Battalion spent most of its time in machine gun firing on an improvised range just west of Lumbres.

Sunday, July 14, saw the Battalion again on the move when it left Quelmes at nine in the morning—it was raining hard and continued to do so during parts of the 15th and 16th—and marched to Buyscheure. The next day we marched via Noordepeene, Cassel and Steenvoorde to Beauvoorde Woods, arriving just before noon and taking the place of the 106th Machine Gun Battalion who had been in camp there. The next day the Battalion was inspected and reviewed by General Plumer, commanding the Second British Army of which we were now a part. More school details were called for: one commissioned officer and one sergeant to attend General Headquarters, B.E.F. Intelligence School at Merkeghem from July 6 to 30 and one officer and five sergeants to attend G.H.Q., B.E.F., Gas Defense School at the same place from July 16 to 23.

V

IN THE LINES IN BELGIUM*

SINCE July 15, 1918, the Battalion had been learning the Game of War to the accompaniment of the German heavy artillery fire in the vicinity of Mt. Kemmel in Belgium. Right in "The Sector" we were—the Bloody Sector, the devastated salient of Ypres—made famous by the stubborn British defensive of virtually four years duration. At Verdun the French had said, *"They shall not pass!"* and they did not; at Ypres the British said nothing, but the German never passed. The enemy was able to destroy Ypres with his artillery but no hostile German foot was ever planted in its streets. *"They shall not pass!"*

It was our first experience of the enemy artillery, and day and night the German shells crashed about us. It was most exciting and most disquieting to us "amateurs of war," but to us who did not appreciate the real danger and had not as yet seen our dead, it was not nearly so nerve-racking as it became later when we had more experience. So far we had never seen one of our boys (most of them were boys though they acted like men) disappear as a human being and reappear as a lump of bloody flesh as the result of one of Jerry's shells. Our first wounded and our first dead were men of Company B. On July 26, two men of this company were slightly wounded by shell fragments, but later rejoined their command and were discharged with the others at Camp Upton. On August 14, two Company B men were killed at Bida Farm by a high cxplosive shell. One of them was instantly killed and the other died the next day in the Casualty Clearing Station to which he had been taken. Our first real casualties and we had never actually been in action! It shows the "luck of the game" because the total number of Company B men

* See Appendices L, M and N.

killed in action was only five and the shelling in the East Poperinghe lines was mere child's play as compared with the shelling in the Hindenburg Line and at La Selle River. Towards the end of hostilities we realized that one lone shell may do more damage than a perfect hail of shells which do not land quite right—or rather quite wrong. On July 31, one of the men of the Sanitary Detachment was slightly wounded.

But to come back: At first, under enemy artillery fire we were fidgety, later on we were nervous, and in the end we were frankly and avowedly afraid. All this experience was being gained while we were holding the East Poperinghe defensive line—a line of reserve trenches included in the defense of Ypres located some distance in the rear of the Front Line which was up about Scherpenberg Hill ahead of Dickebush Lake and La Clytte. When I say we were holding the line, I refer to the 27th Division of the American Expeditionary Forces, commanded by Major General John F. O'Ryan, the only National Guard officer in command of a Division. We were in these positions from July 15 to August 20, with occasional short reliefs.

The training was varied. For instance, on July 24 the Battalion was relieved in the East Poperinghe lines by the 106th Machine Gun Battalion and was attached to the British in the Front Line. Company A and Company C were attached to the 6th Divisional Machine Gun Battalion, B.E.F., and Company B and Company D were attached to the 41st Divisional Machine Gun Battalion, B.E.F. The various companies were under the British Captains—not for administration but merely for machine gun training. Experiences were many and varied but these experiences are material for "yarns" and not for this story of the Battalion. On July 31, the 106th Machine Gun Battalion came up for its period of training in the Front Line and the Battalion marched to the Oudezeele area where such pleasures as baths and the Division show were enjoyed. On August 6 the Battalion was back in the East Poperinghe lines where it remained (with skeletonized organization) until August 20. Meanwhile, on August 12, 46 enlisted

men were assigned to the Battalion from the Division Reception Camp. Incidentally, these were the only replacements we received until after the Armistice.

We will always remember the East Poperinghe lines and the trenches near Dickebush Lake (Étang de Dickebush, as the maps call it), Condiment Cross, Skaw Cross, Siena Cross, Mersey Cross, Colne Farm, Breda Farm, Mud Farm, Bida Farm, Anjou Farm, Gower Buildings, Akba Cottage, Malin House, Dijon House, Remy Siding, Renninhelst, Ouderdoum, La Clytte, Dickebush—all these names will ever remain in our memory and each will always call up a vivid picture to our eyes. It was our first experience of war—Real War.

A FIGHTING UNIT AT LAST

On August 21, we started on our own. We had graduated from training and were now part of the Allied Army. We were finally a Fighting Unit. From the East Poperinghe lines we moved forward and took up a position in the Dickebush Lake and Scherpenberg Sectors where we were close up to Jerry's front lines and here we experienced our first taste of machine-gun strafing—and most disagreeable it was. Mt. Kemmel was held by the Germans and Mt. Kemmel dominated everything in sight. From its crest, Jerry could see our every movement; and every movement that he saw was greeted with a deluge of shells. The German was never asleep. Whiz-bangs, High-explosive Shells, Trench Mortars and Machine Gun fire put an effective stop to any daylight movement of the Allies.

We were now a part of the Second British Army under General Plumer and were in the same corps with the English and with the Australians—generally known as "Tommy" and "Digger." The bane of our lives were Jerry's snipers! They were more than annoying, they were dangerous. Very cautiously, you would raise your head to take a look over No Man's Land when *WHEEEZ, WHEEEZ,* and you would duck just as quickly as possible. No, Jerry was not asleep. It was most disconcerting when,

for the first time, you realized that the bullet fired by the German was meant for you personally—that he was trying to kill *you*. War for the first time meant something to you; and you realized that it was a dangerous sport and that some one was likely to get hurt before it was over. You had a sneaking suspicion that the some one would be you. To add to our enjoyment of the situation, we received the following order:

27th Division.

1. This position will be held and the section will remain until relieved.
2. The Enemy cannot be allowed to interfere with this program.
3. If the gun team cannot remain here alive, it will remain here dead; in any case it will remain here.
4. Should any member through shell-shock or other cause attempt to surrender, he will remain here—dead.
5. Should the gun be put out of action, the team will use Rifles, Revolvers, Mills Grenades and other novelties.
6. Finally—the position, as stated, will be held.

Cheerful orders for a bunch of war amateurs!

Dominated as we were by the German positions on Mt. Kemmel, all our movements and all reconnaissance had to be made by night—and how dark those nights were! Imagine a country—not a community, but a whole country—where not a light was shown, and you may get some idea of what utter darkness means. No glow in the sky from some city, no lights along what roads remained, no lights from flickering fires. Utter darkness. The twelve guns of each company were established, more or less, in pairs and these pairs were sited at some distance apart. As we had been warned that the Germans might launch an attack at any minute, the guns were established in depth—that is to say, in each company, four guns were on a general forward line, four were positioned on an approximate line some two or three hundred yards to the rear and the remaining four were still further behind. The guns were sited in this way so that if the enemy made good his attack and put the four forward guns out of action, the second line of guns could still operate as could the guns furthermost to the rear if the second line of guns were overrun by the German

MT. KEMMEL, AUGUST 22, 1918

attack. NO RETREAT! A pleasant outlook for new Machine Gunners expecting a German drive!

We all remember August 21 when the Battalion moved to take up our forward positions. We were to go in to relieve the 6th Divisional Machine Gun Battalion, B.E.F. As has been noted, the Battalion had already served an apprenticeship of training with this British Battalion: at least Company A and Company C had been with the 6th while Company B and Company D had been serving with the 41st. As was customary, the Second in Command of each company preceded his company to look over the terrain and to arrange for the transfer of trench stores. Company A and Company D moved out of Beauvoorde Wood to go to Details Camp—a British Machine Gun Camp half way to the front lines—so as to arrive there at 11:00 A.M.; and on August 22, Companies B and C left the Wood so as to arrive at Details Camp at 5:00 P. M. On that same day, Company A and Company D went forward at 7:30 P.M. (19:30 hours according to French military time) to relieve D company and half of B company of the 6th British—the British Machine Gun Company manned 16 guns while we American companies were armed with only 12. Company B and Company C advanced on August 23 to relieve A Company and half of B Company of the same British Machine Gun Battalion. They also left Detail Camp at 7:30 P.M. The march forward of Company A and Company D can be taken as an example of the routine. The trip was more or less uneventful because, although the companies moved forward during a time when the Germans were strafing the roads with their artillery, none of the shells fell close enough to them to be dangerous. The British guides, designated for that purpose, met them at Reninghelst, once a village of Belgium and a British Rest Camp, but then merely a mess of ruins which served as a target for the Boche artillery. From that point on to Company Headquarters, Companies A and D wore gas masks because the Germans were amusing themselves by throwing over a flock of gas shells. Very disagreeable people were those Germans. From

Company Headquarters, the gun teams had to proceed on foot. Limbers were therefore unpacked and guns and ammunition and all the other machine-gun paraphernalia had to be transported by carrying. A machine gun is no light load to carry at any time—neither is the tripod—but the ammunition is the load that breaks the hearts of the men. Twenty-one thousand rounds at the least have to go up with each machine gun; and it must be remembered that an ammunition box holds only one belt of two hundred and fifty cartridges. When a gun crew is not up to full strength (and it never seemed to be as long as the Battalion was in action in France) the question of transporting the ammunition up to the gun position meant trip after trip by the machine gunners. Walking in the dark over an unknown bit of terrain, carrying a heart-breaking load, stumbling over all sorts of obstructions, under constant harassing fire by the ever-vigilant enemy—it was not pleasant. And our men did it without complaint.

From Company Headquarters, the various gun-teams disappeared off into the darkness on their way to relieve the English machine gunners. The Captain established Company Headquarters in the cellar of a ruined farmhouse situated close to the second platoon of four guns. Maps were taken over from the English, and various routine matters connected with the taking over of Trench Stores and with the identification of the S.O.S. lines were attended to. As the second in command of each company had been over the ground on the previous night, all plans had been made. Guides had been provided for each gun team so that there would be no delay in completing the relief. Then the Company Commander waited for the reports to come that the guns were in position and that the British guns had been withdrawn: he waited for the report of "Relief complete" from each platoon commander. A long wait and no report. Still waiting. Meanwhile the Hun artillery had grown more active and he could not help thinking that perhaps some of the gun-crews had been hit. Suspense! Surely, by now, he should have received word from at least one of the platoons. Finally, the Second

Platoon reported "Relief complete"; and he could breathe a bit easier while waiting further news. Another long wait before the First Platoon had reported and a still longer one before the Third Platoon was heard from. The Captain then wrote out his "Relief complete" report for the Company and sent it back by runner to Battalion Headquarters which were located some distance to the rear. The routine as thus given for one particular company applies, with various minor modifications, equally well to the other companies.

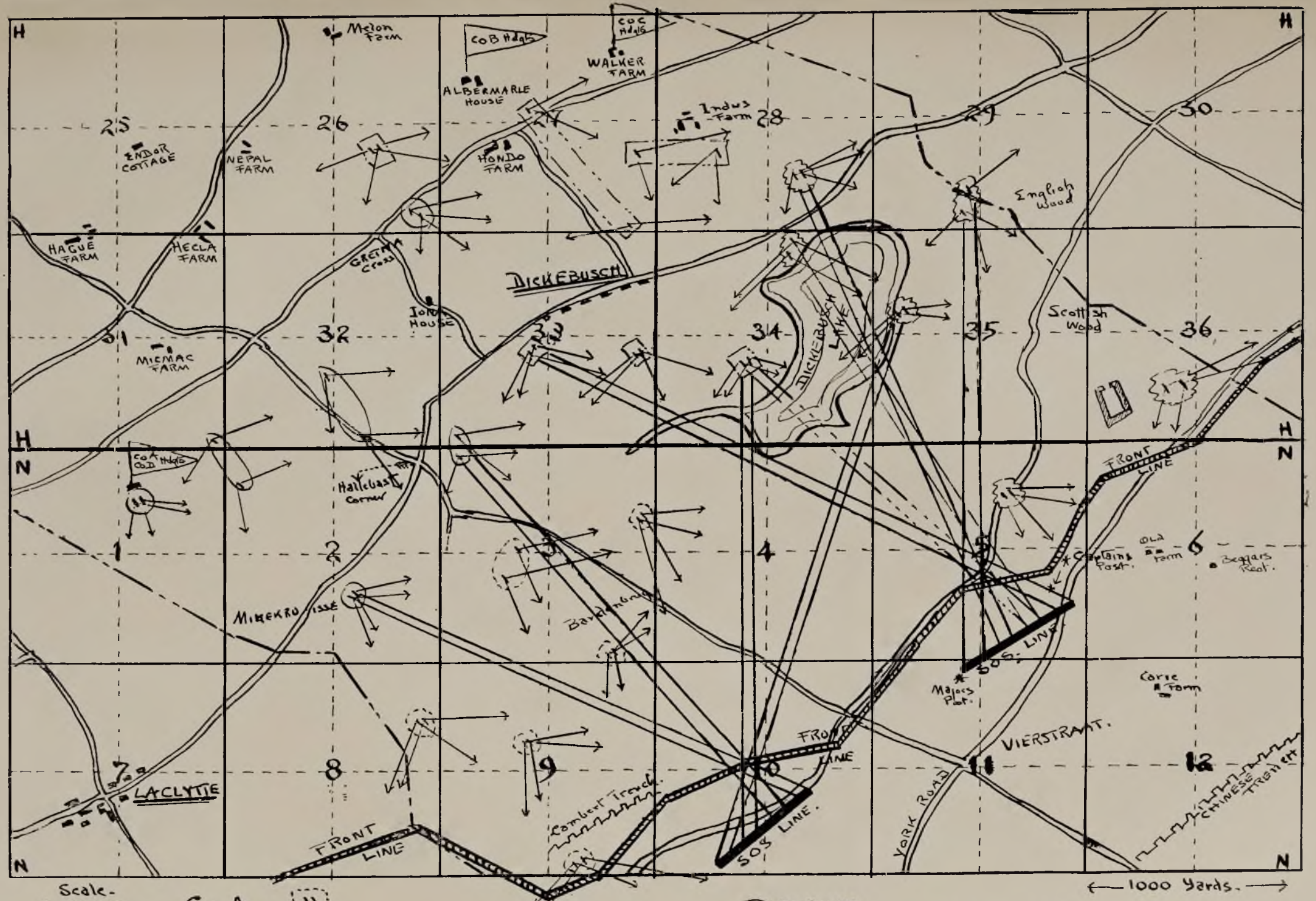
Up to this time, the enlisted men of the Battalion had enjoyed a monopoly of hard physical work; but now real work began for the Captain. Moreover, he had to hurry because he had to cover a great deal of ground in a limited period of time. He had to work in the darkness and could not be moving after dawn unless he was willing to have German artillery, German sharpshooters, German machine guns, German trench mortars, and German everything else take pot shots at him. And more than that, vastly more important than any question of his personal safety, he could not give away the positions of the guns so that the enemy could concentrate on them. Therefore no movement could be made under German observation. Officers were fairly easy to replace but enlisted men, machine gunners, were scarce. But to return to the C.O. and his routine duties. He had to inspect all of the guns to see that they were properly sited in order to carry out the designated tasks: he had to make sure that each Platoon Commander and each Gun Commander clearly understood his orders, the position of the enemy, the field of fire that each gun was supposed to cover: he was responsible for the S.O.S. lines and all other necessary data. "Finally—the position, as stated, will be held."

Having inspected the gun positions, he hurried back to Headquarters but could not make very good time owing to the nature of the ground. This country had been shelled continuously by the Germans for over three years and it was a veritable nightmare. Not a living thing about but the Allied soldiers and they not at all in evi-

dence. Not a tree, not a blade of grass and, of course, not an unruined house left standing: the few isolated walls of what used to be buildings could hardly be called houses. It was more than depressing—it was nauseating. The ground was nothing but a series of shell-holes, even the trenches being almost obliterated by shell fire so that it was not an easy country to walk over in the pitch darkness. How dark those nights in Belgium could be! And added to it all, the constant *CRUUUMP, CRUUUMP, CRUUUMP* of the Boche shells was disquieting—to say the least—until it became monotonous. On returning over the route, the officer generally found that the Germans had been busy in that neighborhood as evidenced by fresh shell holes which had not been there when he first had made the trip. As long as no one was hit, it made very little difference. Finally the Company Headquarters cellar was reached and, after a bite to eat, all hands rolled up in their blankets and were soon fast asleep. All this happened on the night we Yanks took over from the British and put our machine guns into position.

We were in these positions from August 21 to 30 and, as the rountine of each day and of each night was about the same, a typical twenty-four hour schedule will serve as an example.

At first, Battalion Headquarters was located in Beauvoorde Woods where the Battalion Transport and Rear Company Headquarters also remained; Company A Advance Headquarters was established in a ruined farmhouse about 1,000 yards southwest from Micmac Farm (where the headquarters of the 2nd Battalion of the 106th Infantry was located); Company B Advance Headquarters picked out Albemarle House. Company C Advance Headquarters was to be found at Walker Farm; and Company D shared Headquarters with Company A. Meanwhile, Battalion Headquarters, Battalion Transport and the Rear Company Headquarters had moved forward and had taken up the position vacated by the Headquarters of the 6th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps, B.E.F., near Grove Farm, which was about 2,000 yards due "grid" north of the town



BELGIUM

Aug 23 – Sept 1, 1918.

105th M.G.Bn

Drawn to scale
All data approximate.

S. Whitney.
Oct 25-1921.

of Abeele. Our front lines ran approximately northeast and southwest, with Company C in the forward positions of the left sector of the Division and Company A occupying a similar position in the right sector. Company B was in depth in rear of Company C, while Company D bore the same relative position to Company A. It may be stated that the forward positions were uncomfortably close to the Enemy lines. So much for a very sketchy outline of the Battalion positions.

TYPICAL 24 HOURS

Now for a sample twenty-four hour schedule. Remember that this schedule was not one officially laid down and followed out in detail by each company, but merely gives an idea of the routine followed by each of the companies. Different tasks may have been undertaken at different hours, the same tasks may have been undertaken at different hours, it all depended on local conditions. Working by night and remaining under cover and resting by day, made the schedule a bit topsy-turvy. Company Headquarters generally woke up and began to get busy about ten-thirty in the morning, and had some sort of a lunch at half-past eleven. Daylight hours were usually taken up in figuring fire-data for harrassing fire—that is to say, working out the elevations and compass directions for some specified target so that, at night, we could lay a designated gun on that target (always some important point or locality held by the Boche) and open fire hoping to do all the damage possible—to morale as well as to personnel. Such tentative targets as possible concentration areas, tracks, crossroads, areas of activity, relief points, and much travelled roads would be chosen. Naturally no target was engaged in this night harrassing fire without sanction from Division Headquarters, as our own troops might be engaged in a raid into Jerry's lines at a point where our machine-gun fire might cause them to suffer casualties. The choice of targets depended on such data as was obtained from scout planes, service of information, and other such sources, all of which information was carefully correlated and transmitted to us

by Division Headquarters. All the figuring for this harrassing fire had to be worked out from our available maps (and they were splendid ones), as it was impossible to use direct observation instruments in the terrain involved. It was most interesting to work out these firing problems so that all that had to be done when the proper time for shooting arrived was to lay the gun by compass and by clinometer and be fairly sure that the majority of the bullets fired would hit the designated point: you were absolutely sure that all the bullets would hit in the near vicinity of the target engaged.

At six P.M. Company Headquarters supper would usually be ready and Company Headquarters would always be ready for supper. It was surprising how hungry you could get. After supper would come a cigarette or a pipe (if we had not run out of smokes) and then the usual routine paper work connected with the administration of a company.

Around about nine P. M., Headquarters would be on the lookout for the ration parties from the guns and the ration limber from Rear Headquarters, the limber that came up nightly with the rations for the following twenty-four hours. As soon as possible, these would be unloaded and the limber would hurry away, back to Rear Headquarters, for the vicinity of Company Headquarters was far from safe, as Jerry also indulged in harrassing fire and had a nasty habit, every now and then, of shelling us with the utmost vigor and precision. He also took keen enjoyment in smothering us periodically with one of his many obnoxious gasses—generally choosing the most inconvenient times, preferably when we were at meals. But to return to the subject of rations. These rations were made up at Rear Headquarters (no fires being possible in the front lines; the rations were cold) and usually consisted of bread, bully beef, jam and cheese. They were packed in gunny sacks, one sack to each gun team, one sack to each Platoon Headquarters and one to Company Headquarters. Dominated as we were by the ever-menacing Mt. Kemmel—how we hated that place!—it was impossible to get to the

gun positions by daylight. All rations, therefore, had to be distributed at once. Two men from each gun team and two from each Platoon Headquarters would be on hand on the arrival of the ration limber to hurry the arriving rations back to their positions. As there was no water fit for drinking purposes in this part of Belgium—although there was plenty under foot—drinking water had to be brought up with the rations, and was transported in five-gallon petrol tins (British for a five-gallon gasolene can), one tin to each ration gunny sack. What we would have done without the English petrol tin, I do not know. We soon learned to acquire any serviceable one we ran across and valued it next to the Vikers machine gun and the ammunition. It was used to carry water, coffee or tea; it served to bring up the rum ration (when we got it) and, properly altered, it came in useful as a wash basin. In localities where a fire was permitted, punched full of holes and filled with wood embers, it did splendid duty as a brazier. Doubtless, had the War lasted a little longer, it could have been adapted to take the place of the issue uniform; it surely could have been used for auto repairs—maybe it was. The English petrol tin was invaluable and should be celebrated in verse, as a necessary non-combatant, along with the Army Mule. The Germans had special soup carriers, special utensils to transport water, special braziers, special things for special purposes, while we had the English petrol tin which served all purposes. Without doubt, the tin helped win the War.

The ration-carrying parties had no easy task: they had to pass over ground torn up by years of constant shell-fire, the darkness was intense and the Germans would intermittently cover the terrain thoroughly with their High Explosive Shells. It was not a task for any man who was not willing to take risks. Immediately after the distribution of rations to the carrying parties, the Company Commanding Officer (accompanied by his Second in Command, if he was lucky enough to have one), would pick his way through the darkness to the guns selected for night harrassing fire, see that they were moved to their night-firing positions

and give them their firing data: "Such and Such a Compass Bearing, So Many Degrees and Minutes Elevation, Search and Traverse So Many Degrees, Rate of Fire So and So, Firing to Begin at Such an Hour and to discontinue at Such an Hour." We never fired these night harrassing guns from their daytime positions because Jerry could often locate the position of a machine gun by the flash of it firing—notwithstanding all our precautions to hide it—and once the Boche located a machine gun, that locality was not one to tarry in as every bit of available Hun artillery seemed to concentrate on that spot. It was always a source of amusement to us to watch a heavy concentration of German shells on a position occupied by a machine gun the night before the Strafe. Also it was a source of thankfulness that we were not there.

After seeing that the guns were firing and that all instructions were understood (the instructions were in writing), the C.O. would either remain with them until it was time to inspect the other guns or would return to Company Headquarters to wait for that time. Jerry was very methodical: if the heaviest firing occurred at a certain time on one night you could be quite sure that it would again occur at that same time on the following night. Very seldom were we fooled. In this particular sector we soon discovered that on an ordinary night, when nothing had happened to "put his wind up," Jerry shelled all areas pretty heavily from dark to one A.M., and would then let up a bit until four A.M., so that, although walking about a terrain devoid of any cover except that afforded by shell holes was not a very safe pastime at any time of the day or night—you ran less risk if you made all necessary visits to the guns between one and four A.M.

Speaking of Jerry's methodical habits and methods: There was a cross-roads near where the 2nd Platoon of Company D had its headquarters indicated on the map as Hallebast Corners but generally referred to as Hell Blast Corners. Jerry used to concentrate his artillery on that point every night from four-thirty to five A.M. (there were other "periods of hate" on this corner, but the four-thirty

to five A.M. one was special). It was impossible to pass at this time but one minute earlier or one minute later it was as safe as any other particular spot—you had a 50 per cent. chance of not being killed or wounded. But this is a digression.

About one A.M., the Company C.O., generally accompanied by his Second in Command, would start to make the rounds—to inspect his gun positions. A pistol—very often carried in the trench-coat pocket where it was instantly available—and a cane completed the armament for the tour of duty; and, of the two weapons, the cane was the more useful. The cane was not for swank; it was indispensable. You used it as a blind man uses one, tapping away in front of you to feel out the way and to prevent, if possible, a sudden slip into some shell-hole half full of slimy malodorous water. It might be that the C.O. had not proceeded far on his way to the first gun position when *CRUUUMP, CRUUUMP, CRUUUMP* and the Boche had landed a flock of high explosive shells ahead of him. So he promptly changed his mind about continuing to the guns along that special path and decided that it would be wiser to make a detour—better a bit of a longer walk with an even chance of arriving at the destination than a short cut with all chances in favor of walking into a Boche shell and—*finis!* Slipping and sliding and occasionally falling into a shell-hole—lucky for him if it were a dry one—he finally arrived at the gun position and found the gun crew alert. Remember, we were expecting, at any moment, an attack from Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria's group of Armies which was opposing us in that sector, so that none of the men were taking any chances of being caught napping. The gun crews were alert! As there were other guns to be visited and much ground had to be covered before dawn, the C.O. was soon on his way. He might learn that one section had been subjected to gas-shell strafing during the day without any resultant casualties and maybe at that moment the Hun shells were dropping about him. If none of them hit within thirty yards or so, he did not worry, because the narrow slit in the ground—you could not call

it a trench—dug for the shelter and protection of the machine gun and the gun crew, afforded him as much protection as he could get anywhere in Belgium.

Maybe while he was at a gun position: "Sniff, sniff! That's a queer smell! Not cordite! Smells like garlic! Damn it all, Jerry is throwing over some more mustard gas shells! GAS!" On with the gas masks and hold your breath until they are adjusted if you don't want to pay a visit to some hospital with all the chances of coming out with a pair of hopelessly ruined lungs. (Many of our men are tuberculosis patients as a result of a mild case of gas in France.) A test for gas shows that it is still there; later, another test finds no virulent traces of gas. "ALL CLEAR!" and off come all the masks. Eye-pieces are cleaned and masks are put back in the wallets ready for another quick adjustment which may be necessary at any moment.

And so he hurried through the night visiting all his company guns. Slipping into shell-holes, getting caught in the barbed wire, his feet mixing themselves up in bunches of telephone wires which were laid all over the place, dodging shells and seeing the enemy where there was no enemy, he finally stumbled back into his headquarters. The Company C.O. and the Ration Parties (mentioned before) ran the same risks each and every night. It was about five-thirty A.M. when the C.O. reached his palatial headquarters, so he got a bite to eat, wrapped himself up in his blanket, trench coat, overseas cap and all, prayed that Jerry would not register a direct hit on his shelter (he did hit one of the Headquarters a few days before we "took over" and killed the two English officers who were there) and went to sleep, thoroughly tired out. At eleven A.M. he was up again and another day had started.

Some nights were very exciting, others were comparatively tame; but the routine never varied. If Jerry's "wind was up" and he was shelling heavily, any movement outside of headquarters or of a gun position was very risky and you were never quite sure if you were going to get back. If Jerry was contented and just indulging in harrassing fire with his artillery and his machine guns, your

only danger was from some stray shell which you stood a good chance of dodging—you could hear it coming. However, at no time was it safe to let your brains go wool gathering; too many things could happen in a very short space of time. Remember, too, we were amateurs at this game of war—very much amateurs.

The twenty-four hour schedule described so far has mainly applied to the company headquarters routine; the men at the gun positions have scarcely been mentioned. However, the men of the gun crews kept very much the same hours as did company headquarters, resting by day and alert by night. Resting it was called by courtesy, because sitting in a hole in the ground with the rain pouring down, thoroughly soaked and wallowing in particularly clinging mud, could hardly be called resting. Some of the gun crews, to be sure, were in concrete emplacements or pill boxes which afforded some protection from the constant rain, but the majority of the men were not so fortunate: they had protection from view but no protection from the elements. Two guns out of Company A's twelve, four of Company B's dozen, one out of the twelve of Company C and five out of Company D's three platoons were lucky enough to have this shelter—twelve gun crews out of forty-eight more or less sheltered from the ever-present rain. Thirty-six gun crews with virtually no shelter except from view.

Numerous small routine duties had to be attended to during the daylight hours: ammunition and ammunition belts had to be cleaned, guns had to be overhauled, a constant watch over No Man's Land had to be maintained, note had to be taken of all enemy activities which it was possible to observe, gas shelling had to be noted. There was always plenty to do. At night, ration parties had to be sent out and the particular guns designated for harrassing fire had to be carried to their night-firing positions, flash screens had to be erected. It was natural that the routine of the enlisted man was more monotonous than that of the commissioned officer, because there is no doubt that added responsibility brings added interest.

The weather was atrocious—continuous rain from August 23 through August 31. On August 21, two new officers were assigned to the Battalion, both of whom participated in all the actions in which the 105th had a part: Second Lieutenant Richard D. McCasky was assigned to Company B and Second Lieutenant Bert R. Anderson joined Company D. On August 23, Company D suffered its first casualty when one of the men was slightly wounded by a fragment of enemy shell, but soon returned to the company only to be killed in action on September 28, 1918. On August 26, First Lieutenant Adsit of Company C was transferred to the 107th Infantry and on August 29, Company D gained a new officer when Second Lieutenant Frank H. Grace was assigned to the Battalion. On August 27 one of the Lieutenants of Company D was so badly gassed that he never returned to his company. Company A suffered its first casualties on the 31st when two men were wounded by machine-gun fire and one man was gassed. Of these three men, two returned to the company and one was invalided back to the United States.

Besides losing men through wounds, the Battalion lost the services of many of its most experienced men when on August 29, five commissioned officers and four sergeants were detailed to attend school at Clamecy and two sergeants were ordered to report to the 11 Corps Gas School at Châtillon-sur-Seine. The 105th did not have its full complement of officers at any time so these school assignments were not very popular with the Major and the various Captains.

So much for the routine work in the lines while we were expecting a German advance. Now for the start of the Allied Offensive which continued, with never a let-up, until November 11, 1918—the day on which the Armistice was signed. On August 31, our infantry patrols reported that the Hun, over toward, and on Mt. Kemmel seemed to be withdrawing; by evening the news was confirmed and the menace of direct German observation from that point was removed for good. Although the Germans, at times, held up the Allied Armies, they had started their last and

continuous retreat. From that day, they never advanced. Mt. Kemmel was promptly occupied by our own troops and, for the first time since we had been in Belgium, it was safe to move about by daylight. Now that we could see them, the routes from gun position to gun position seemed entirely different and we practically had to learn our way about all over again.

VI

VIERSTRAAT RIDGE*

AS the Boche was retreating, the position of the machine-guns was no longer sound because all possible targets were out of range. We therefore prepared ourselves for the inevitable advance. Sure enough, at nine in the morning of September 1, the order came for Companies B and D to "leap-frog" through Companies C and A and to follow up our Infantry which had advanced during the night of August 31-September 1. The Division Staff was not quite sure but that the Hun withdrawal might not be a feint to tempt us forward out of our positions in order to attack us at a disadvantage and thus be able to drive through on his way to the Channel Ports of Calais and Boulogne, objectives he had long attempted to reach. The Infantry had been pushed forward to confirm the German retreat and the Machine Guns were temporarily left in position to aid the Infantry advance and to form rallying points for the Infantry should it be forced to withdraw, and especially to hold up the German advance at all costs. Orders were promptly transmitted to the various gun crews of Companies B and D and the Captains of these companies immediately moved forward to reconnoiter and to get in touch with the situation. As the shelling was fairly heavy, the reconnoitering parties often had to abandon the roads and move forward across country. The Wyschaete-Vierstraat Road was certainly being searched by the Boche Artillery! By half-past four in the afternoon, the First Platoon of Company B was established well forward on the left and the other two platoons were in readiness to move forward on receipt of definite orders. The Second and Third Platoon of Company D were in position near the Wyschaete-Vierstraat Road just to the westward of Vier-

* See Appendix J.

VIERSTRAAT RIDGE, AUGUST 8, 1918

straat Ridge with the First Platoon waiting orders in its former position near Company Headquarters. On the way up, the Battalion did not suffer many casualties. Company B had two men wounded, but neither severely enough to be evacuated; Company D also had two men wounded (near the troublesome Hallebast Corners), both of whom rejoined their gun squads at a later date. Not being able to locate definitely the front lines held by the 105th and 106th Infantry, neither Company B nor Company D could put their guns into action but held them in readiness. Company D did get six guns into action under the following circumstances: While waiting just behind Vierstraat Ridge until dusk—because, once on the Ridge, it would be under direct observation by the enemy—the Company was asked to lay a barrage on a portion of Chinese Trench to facilitate an infantry attack which was to start at five P.M. The map was hastily consulted, positions selected, firing data calculated and the six available guns were rushed over the Ridge, set up in the open and put into action. Four belts per gun (1,000 rounds) were fired and the guns were promptly moved to a semi-sunken road to the rear and left of the firing position. They were retired just in time, for almost immediately, with a roar and a crash, scores of Jerry's shells tore up the positions so recently vacated. Not a casualty! But Company D made up for it later when at five o'clock in the morning of September 2, the Germans scored a direct hit and killed five men. In addition, ten men were evacuated to the hospital—one having been wounded by a shell fragment, three suffering from shell-shock and six badly gassed. All but one of these men rejoined the company, but at a much later date. As in the case of every man of the Battalion who was killed in action, all bodies were recovered and taken to the rear where they were given proper burials with religious and military services. Meanwhile, Company B had its First and Second Platoons in advanced positions with the Platoon Headquarters at Captains Post which, only a few days before, had served as one of the targets for night harrassing fire. We were advancing! September 2

passed without many developments as far as the Machine Guns were concerned. The guns could not be put into action because the forward position of our Infantry was not definitely enough known. In the afternoon we received the welcome news announcing that the Battalion would be relieved in the lines during the night of September 2-3 by the 41st Divisional Battalion, Machine Gun Corps, B.E.F. We were very glad of the relief because, although our casualties had not been particularly heavy, we had served a long apprenticeship in the front lines and needed time to digest the lessons we had learned. Companies A and C were relieved early during the night of September 2-3, Company B was out of the lines by three in the morning of the 3rd, and Company D reported Relief Complete at eleven o'clock in the morning of that same day. In the afternoon, the Battalion was again reunited near Grove Farm. That night, further casualties developed when two officers and twenty-three enlisted men were evacuated to the hospital, badly gassed by German gas shells. That last night at Vierstraat Ridge the organization had been smothered with these tokens of Jerry's hate. Of these men, one officer was evacuated to the United States, one returned to the company just before the Battle of the Hindenburg Line, and all of the enlisted men returned at a later date, some, unfortunately, just in time to be killed or wounded in one of the later actions in which the Division participated.

September 4, the Battalion rested, cleaned equipment and prepared generally for the next move.

VII

SPECIAL TRAINING IN FRANCE*

DURING the afternoon of September 4, after three days of comparatively clear weather, it again started to rain and, naturally, the Battalion prepared for a move. Moving orders were issued. Where we were going and why we were going was not explained; enough for us to know that we were moving somewhere. At ten o'clock at night (22.00 hours by military time) Headquarters, Company A, Company D and the Sanitary Detachment, less seven men, left Grove Farm and "proceeded by marching" to Heidebeeke. Had we known at the time of the series of orders necessary to move the Battalion, we would have realized that something important was in the air. Field Order 40, Headquarters 27th Division, dated September 4, 1918, Secret Orders 79 and 80, 27th Division of the same date, and Battalion Secret Order (a Field Order) 22 were necessary to make the Battalion get up and hike. And it certainly was a hike. It was dark, so dark that it was just possible for a man in the column to see occasionally the man ahead of him. So it was that the first section of the Battalion began to move, stumbled into Heidebeeke at 1:30 A.M. on September 5 and entrained in the usual "Hommes-Chevaux" train at 2:30 A.M., and finally pulled out of the village at 3:30 A.M. Company B and Company C, with the seven Sanitary Detachment men left over from the 1st Section, did not leave Grove Farm until 1:00 A.M., and arrived at 4:15 A.M. This second section pulled out at 6:35 A. M.

The First Section arrived at Candas at 7:45 P.M., detraining at 8:20, and was followed by the Second Section which arrived at 11:50 P.M. and detrained at 1:30 A.M. on September 6. At 9:00 A.M., the entire Battalion, again

* See Appendices L, M and N.

reunited, "proceeded by marching" to Thievres where it arrived at 2:40 P.M. (14.40 hours, military time). That expression "proceeding by marching" meant a lot to the Battalion: Everything that a man owned had to be rolled up in the pack and that pack had to be carried on the man's back while the Battalion plodded over good, bad or indifferent roads to an unknown destination for an unknown purpose. The pack was heavy and uncomfortable. The men knew nothing, and the Company Officers were equally well informed. The Battalion was travelling on faith.

Now for a little digression: moving from billets involved quite a bit of work and routine as may be seen from the following orders which were issued by one of the companies (a similar order was issued at every change of billets).

1. On receiving orders to change station, all non-commissioned officers in charge of billets will attend to the following details:
   (a) Billets will be thoroughly policed and left in a perfectly clean condition.
   (b) No articles of any nature belonging to the enlisted men, whether issue or personal property, will be left in the billets.
   (c) No markings which would serve to identify this unit will be left in billets.
   (d) All straw will be gathered together and will be neatly piled against one of the walls of the Billet.
   (e) The ground in the vicinity of the billets will be thoroughly policed.
   (f) Latrines and Straddle Trenches will be filled in at the last possible moment and will be marked by two stakes placed at the extremities of the trench and facing inward, on which will be written the nature of the fill—whether straddle trench or refuse dump—and the date of filling in.
2. All non-commissioned officers will carefully inspect billets and see that no articles are left behind and that billets are left in a clean state.
3. The ground in the vicinity of the kitchen will be thoroughly policed and all refuse to be left behind will be buried.
4. ALL CANTEENS WILL BE FILLED BEFORE FALLING IN TO MARCH TO THE NEW STATION.

..... Captain.

March orders were drastic: Column of squads, right of the road, halt from ten minutes before the hour to the

hour, fall out at the proper time in accordance with certain strict orders. But why talk about this phase of the War, we knew and know about that.

To come back to our narrative: Arriving at Thievres, a very attractive village as yet untouched by the War, we promptly went into billets. As far as we can remember, those billets were among the best we had in France. There were roofs on those houses!

It did not take us long to discover that we were in for a period of special training. On September 7, we started the routine by having at 1:00 P.M. a rigid inspection of individual equipment, Machine Guns, Transport, Quartermaster's Supplies and all other fighting paraphernalia. An inspection by the Major was a thorough inspection; nothing escaped his eye. When the Major made an inspection it was *some* inspection.

To give us a perfectly homelike feeling, it again began to rain and continued through the fourteenth of the month. During the rain, we had some changes of personnel: On the 12th, 1st Sergeant William L. Lesher of Company A (who later rejoined the Battalion as a 2nd Lieutenant of Company D) and 1st Sergeant George Noble, Jr., of Company B (eventually a 2nd Lieutenant of Company C) were detailed to the School of Infantry, Section A.C.S., to study for commissions. Another instance of essential non-commissioned officers of the Battalion taken away from us with no replacements to fill up the ranks of the enlisted men, depleted by the necessary promotions. Not all of our losses were caused by battle casualties!

September 13, the Battalion spent the day at an improvised range, practicing shooting with the pistol and with the revolver. As far as we know, we never had the chance of using them against Jerry. Up to the eighteenth of September, we were busy with the ordinary routine duties—machine-gun drills, hikes and general manoeuvre drills—never forgetting the inevitable and dreaded regular Saturday inspections. On the 18th we marched out of Thievres to participate in the divisional manoeuvres, returning to billets at 8:00 P.M. on September 19. For a wonder, the

weather was clear. Little did we know at the time what were the purposes of these manoeuvres. We of course realized that we were being trained for some special "show," a show staged by the powers that were, but a show to be taken on faith by the men of the Battalion. The men were told nothing and the officers received the same information. We knew, however, that there was something in the wind.

As it started to rain again on September 20, the Battalion began to prepare for a change of station; and, sure enough, we got our orders. On the 22nd, all the Battalion transport moved out of Thievres to proceed by marching to Lieramont. At 1:30 A.M. on the 23rd, the Battalion (less transport mentioned above) marched to Authieule where it entrained at 4:30 A.M.; the train pulled out at 4:45 A.M. At 5:30 P.M., on the same day, we detrained at Tincourt and proceeded by marching to Lieramont, where we arrived at 8:10 P.M. (military time, 20:10 hours). We promptly bivouaced for the night—very promptly. Now our suspicions of a big show in the offing, a very big show, were more than confirmed. We were moving through a part of France devastated by the War. Péronne was certainly not an example of a thriving city; it was uninhabited because there was nothing left to inhabit. To be sure, France—the part we were traversing—was not a ruin like Belgium. At least the ground was left. But villages and towns were but walls and piles of stones. Very often the map was the only means of locating a village; the pre-existent village looked like a deserted stone quarry. Péronne—we passed it by—uninhabited and in range of the German guns, was the shell of a city. We were in the War Zone of France! When the transport arrived at 5:00 A.M. on September 24, the Battalion was again a complete fighting unit with 651 enlisted men and 21 officers available. Available but not effective, because many were away at schools, some were on sick report, and others were in no condition to do the hard work necessary for successful use of the machine guns. Any company that could rely on 50 men for machine gun crews, runners, and signalmen, was very lucky. But to come back to the story. Lieramont was not a comfortable summer

resort; the Hun shells were very apt to stir the town up a bit (literally) and the Boche delayed mines also exploded according to schedule and added to the disadvantages of Lieramont as a summer rest city. No, that part of France was not a Mecca for tourists in 1918, only for tourists of the A.E.F. and Allied Forces.

The Battalion was again in the fighting line.

So much for the special training in France. This training culminated in the breaking of the Hindenburg Line. The Second American Corps, consisting of the 27th Division and of the 30th Division broke the Hindenburg Line near Bony. Our special training had not been wasted.

VIII

THE HINDENBURG LINE*

AFTER the preparations of the 27th Division in Belgium our more or less unexpected (speaking from the standpoint of the Battalion) withdrawal from the British Lines, seemed to presage our attachment to the American Army. Earlier in the game, it would have been welcome news but, at this time, we were greatly relieved to learn that we had been merely transfered—still as a part of the British Forces—from the Second British Army to the General Headquarters Reserve. We had grown fond of the English and the Australians and each of us was getting used to the other. We had learned the principle of give and take. We were a part of this British General Headquarters Reserve during all the period mentioned earlier in this narrative under the heading of "Special Training in France."

On September 3, 1918, the day we entrained for Tincourt, the American Second Corps, composed of the 27th Division and the 30th Division, was transferred from this General Headquarters Reserve to the Fourth British Army. On September 24, the 27th Division took over the Bellicourt Sector, with Companies B, C and D of the Battalion moving out at 8:00 P:M. (20:00 hours) to relieve the 18th Divisional Machine Gun Battalion, B.E.F.

To make the position of the Battalion a bit clearer, without going into the strategy and the general war plans of our superiors, it may be as well to say that the 30th Division was on the right of the 27th Division. The 2nd American Corps covered a front of about five thousand yards. The Ninth British Corps was to the right of the American Corps and the third British Corps occupied a position on the left. This front was the front of the Fourth British Army which

*See Appendices A, C, D, E, J, N.

PART OF THE HINDENBURG LINE

ST. QUENTIN CANAL—HINDENBURG LINE

had, on its left the Third British Army and on its right the Tenth French Army. The Australian Corps was in reserve behind the front of the Fourth British Army, which meant that they were responsible for the terrain from Cambrai to St. Quentin with the center of the line about opposite Bony. So much for the general positions as they affected the Battalion. When Companies B, C and D moved forward, Company A was temporarily held in reserve at Rear Battalion Headquarters: Advance Battalion Headquarters moved out of Lieramont and established themselves at Ronsoy.

The date set for the breaking of the Hindenburg Line was Sept. 29; but the 27th Division had a preliminary task to accomplish. The Knoll, Guillemont Farm, Quennemont Farm and other strong points of the German outpost line had to be reached and occupied before the main attack could be launched. And bear in mind, that these positions —strongly entrenched and with myriads of concrete machine-gun emplacements—had successfully beaten off recent British attacks. So it was that, during the night of the 26-27 September, the Battalion as a part of the 27th Division moved forward to take part in this curtain-raiser scheduled for the early morning of September 27.

Company A advanced and took up a position in the vicinity of Lempire Post (See Appendix J for the exact map references in connection with the Hindenburg Line operations), Company B occupied the ground near Dose Trench, Company C was concentrated about Holland Post and Company D was sent to Yak Post. Always remember that the machine guns were never bunched and that the positions given above refer more to Company battle headquarters than to the actual position of the individual guns which, for the Battalion, covered a front of approximately 1000 yards. "Bands of fire," "barrage groups" and "strong points" recall to every one of us the siting of machine guns. The afternoon of the 26th of September had been a busy one: the men were preparing for an advance, Battalion Headquarters was busy with orders from Division, transport was again seeing that everything was in

shape. Company commanders had received their orders for the next morning's attack, had personally reconnoitered the involved terrain as far as possible (they had looked over the Knoll with field glasses, as it was impossible to get there in person and return), and had figured out the data for firing the machine guns in connection with the ordered barrage. A creeping barrage had been ordered with lifts of 200 yards at four-minute intervals, the machine-gun fire to last from zero hour to zero plus 75 minutes—in other words, one hour and fifteen minutes. The objectives were given to each company and for Companies A, C and D the firing directions read as follows:

1st	Objective	Zero	to	Z	plus	18	(Map Reference of Obj.)
2nd	"	Z plus	20	to Z	plus	24	Raise 200 yards
3rd	"	Z "	26	" Z	"	30	"
4th	"	Z "	32	" Z	"	36	"
5th	"	Z "	38	" Z	"	42	"
6th	"	Z "	44	" Z	"	48	"
7th	"	Z "	50	" Z	"	75	"

S.O.S. Line—Map Reference given.

Company B's task was slightly different: it did not call for participation in the general barrage but involved protection to the left flank of the Division by searching fire on Tombois Road and on Bird Lane, and by concentrated fire on an enemy strong point in the valley between the two. The searching fire along Bird Lane could not be carried out as the British were raiding Lark Post at its further extremity. The four guns detailed for this task were therefore diverted to other uses: none of the guns of the Battalion was idle during the Hindenburg Line operations.

It was no easy matter to get the guns into position for this barrage. All Company movements had to be made after dark and the country was most unadapted to night walking. To make the night shift of positions more disagreeable, Jerry, doubtless informed of some pending movement, sent over flocks of gas shells. Much of the marching, therefore had to be done with the men wearing their gas masks. The gas mask worn by day was an instru-

ment of torture and, by night, it was almost unbearable. However, all guns were in position and laid before the designated hour for the opening of the barrage. All night long the big guns on both sides thundered. The shriek and crash of the German shells were constantly in our ears. The whine and staccato *plop, plop* of the Hun machine guns were intermittent during the night. It was noisy enough, but at zero hour, pandemonium broke loose. No longer could you hear the crash of any particular shell unless it was too close for comfort. All that you could hear was a constant roar which seemed to shake the earth. You really could not *hear* it, you *felt* it. Can you imagine standing by the sea-shore during a storm, the like of which has never occurred, at a time when all the surf in the world had been concentrated there? Can you imagine the crash of the thunder, the flash of the lightning, the roar of the surf? Can you imagine all this? Well, you have not grasped even the tiniest idea of what a barrage looks like, of what a barrage sounds like. It is impossible for the ordinary layman to describe, and would tax the powers of the greatest of authors. To understand a barrage, you must have been in one: reading about it conveys very little.

"Keep the guns in action, hurry up with that stoppage. Steady now; raise the sights 200 yards. Watch the time. Fire!" were the only thoughts of the machine gunner, and by machine gunner is meant every individual man of the Battalion, because it was the individual who counted. Once the barrage had started, officer and enlisted man were of equal importance, neither one of more importance than the other insofar as keeping the guns in action was concerned. "Never mind Jerry's counter-barrage—keep the guns in action." And they were kept in action. It was no longer a case of "They shall not pass"; it was a question of "Let's go: they can't stop us." It is a matter of history that, from this time on, the German often succeeded in delaying the Allied Armies but never succeeded in stopping them.

The Battalion suffered casualties: five men of Company A were killed and twenty-one wounded; Company B, one

man killed and one wounded; Company C counted two men dead and seven wounded, and Company D suffered the loss of two men killed and two wounded. These casualties all occurred during the barrage of the early morning of September 27. Remember that each company had, at the most, but eighty men in active action. During the afternoon, the Battalion remained in the same positions as those of the morning, being constantly alert to repel possible enemy counter-attacks. The Hun was fighting desperately and the Knoll was changing hands over and over again. No machine gun overhead fire could be used and no indirect fire was safe as our own infantry were fighting in scattered groups all over the terrain involved. Occasionally, very occasionally, it was possible to use direct fire when a body of the enemy disclosed itself. It was mostly a question of waiting. Fighting continued all through the 28th; but, as conditions were the same, the guns of the Battalion were very seldom in action. However, further casualties occurred: Company A had nine more men wounded, Company B, one man, Company C, two men and Company D lost one man killed and three wounded. Jerry's heavy artillery still had our range.

On September 29, the big attack on the Hindenburg Line was launched and the Battalion, after laying down a fixed barrage on the S.O.S. Line of the 27th, was withdrawn from the lines, only to be immediately pushed forward to more advanced positions. The countermanding of the orders for the withdrawal of the Battalion (which took place at 6:00 P.M.) and the further orders to advance were rendered necessary in order to protect the exposed left flank of the American Corps—temporarily unprotected by the British Army on the left—where the enemy had appeared in force. However, no Hun attack materialized. On this date, Company A lost seven men wounded, Company B accounted for one man wounded, Company C had one killed and one wounded, while Company D suffered no casualties. On September 30, the Battalion held its positions while the Australian Corps leap-frogged through the lines to "carry on" with the battle, and on the first of

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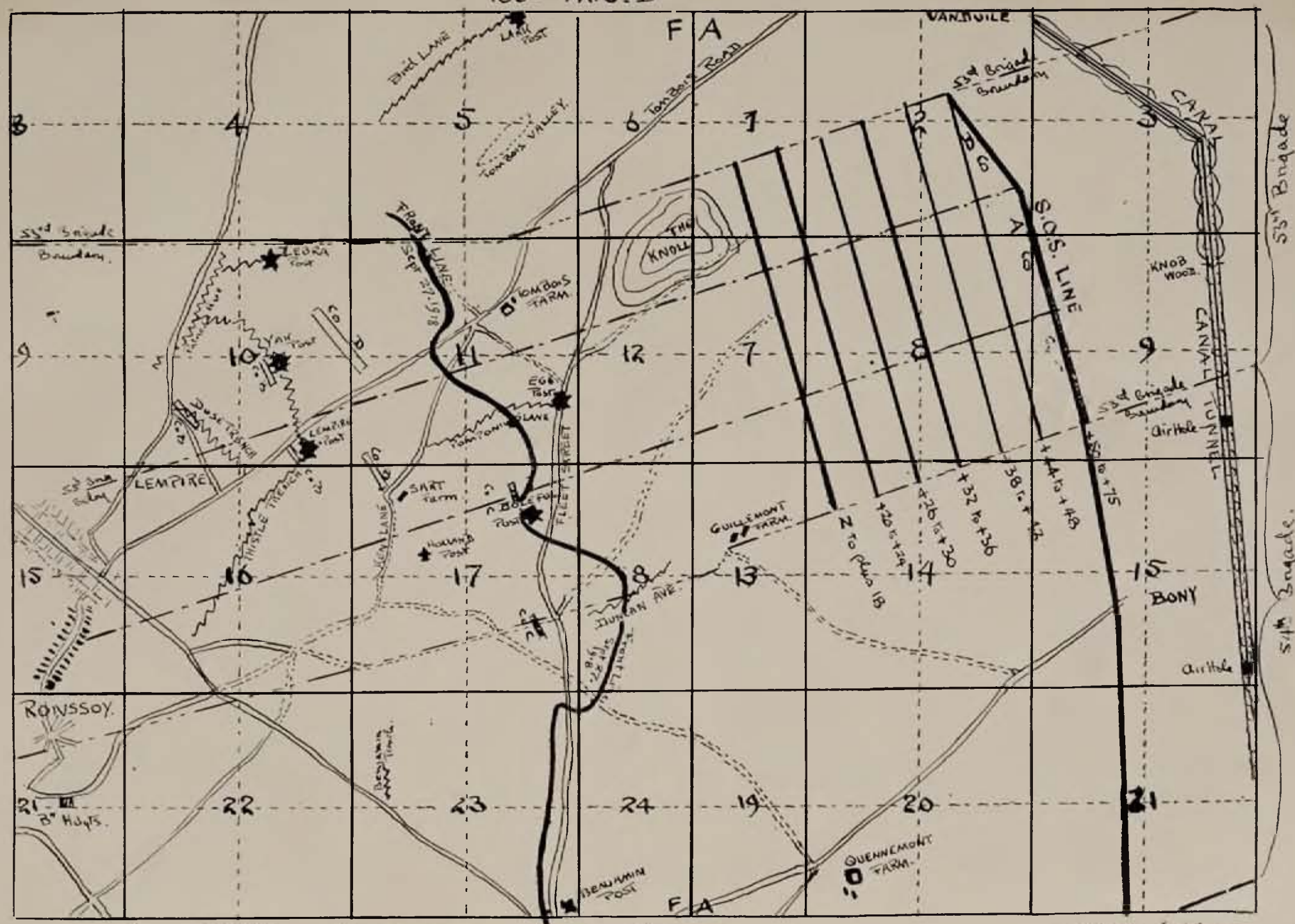


September 27, 28, 29, 30th – 1918

Stanton Whitney.
Sept 10-1921

October was withdrawn from the lines and marched back to St. Emilie. September 30 saw further losses among the machine gunners when one man was killed and four were wounded in Company A and two were wounded in Company B. Five of forty-eight machine guns of the 105th had been destroyed in four days, thirteen men had been killed and sixty-two men wounded. The Hindenburg Line was no picnic for the Battalion.

IX

LA SELLE RIVER*

ALTHOUGH we did not know it at the time, the Battalion was slated for an early return to the front lines. Meanwhile, we wandered about—or so it seemed to us. From Hervilly we marched to Red Woods where we bivouaced from the 2nd to the 7th of October. During that period, we had the usual Saturday inspection with an extra one on the 4th thrown in for good measure. Shortly before two o'clock on the afternoon of the 5th (naturally it was raining), the Battalion proceeded by marching back to Hervilly, arriving before evening mess time. Drills occupied the next day and, at half-past three on the afternoon of the 9th, we left for Nauroy, arriving and bivouacing shortly after seven that evening. The next night found us in the vicinity of Premont with a continuation of the hike on the 11th until, on October 12, at 1:00 P.M., we reached Becquinette Farm—2,500 yards southwest of Busigny—where we set up our shelter-tents in preparation for a stay for the night or for a month, depending on orders. As it turned out, Rear Battalion headquarters was to be located there until the afternoon of October 21. During the next two or three days, the Battalion, realizing from the sound of the guns that it was soon to be again in action, occupied its time in overhauling and putting into perfect order all machine-gun equipment, examining ammunition-belts and rectifying any faults that had made their appearance due to the jouncing about of the ammunition-boxes in the limbers. Transport was looked over; harness was again oiled up; and two clear days without rain were invaluable in helping dry out blankets and uniforms. Officers utilized the time in going forward to investigate the country

* See Appendices A, C, D, E, F, I, J, K.

toward the front in order to get an idea of the terrain over which the Battalion would soon have to fight, as it was in support of the 105th Infantry which was holding the lines in the Right Brigade Sub-Sector. The Corps Front, until October 11, had been held by the 30th Division, which was relieved on that date by the 27th Division. Although the enemy was periodically shelling the roads in this territory, it seemed to us that his heaviest artillery was not so much in evidence as heretofore. In comparison with his artillery work at the Hindenburg Line and even in Belgium at Vierstraat Ridge, the German shell fire was almost negligible. However, the Hun machine guns were fairly active, especially in that part of the terrain between Vaux Andigny and La Haie Menneresse, and were sniping whenever a chance presented itself. Becquinette Farm, Busigny and Becquigny—only a few days before occupied by the Boche—were virtually undisturbed by shell fire. In fact, everything was a bit hum-drum and boring both to officers and men. The first break in this dulness was on October 15 when Captain Molyneux received his Majority and was assigned to the command of the 104th Machine Gun Battalion, leaving C Company in command of Lieutenant Leake. On this same date, the 30th Division took over the southern half of the Corps Front which was established as follows: The 30th Division on the right held a line from 57B SE, 1-20,000, W 14 d 4500 to W 9 a 7060 while the 27th Division occupied the left of line from W 9 a 7060 to Q 33 d 6000 to Q 27 d 6000. In other words, the 30th Division was holding the line from a point about 1000 yards Grid Southwest by West from Molain to a point 850 yards West of St. Martin Rivière with the 27th Division resting on its arms from that point Northwest to a spot 500 yards South of St. Souplet and from there North for 1000 yards.

On October 16, things began to happen. Receiving Field Order No. 63, 27th Division, October 15, 1918, to move forward and take up positions in order to cover with a barrage our advancing infantry who were to attack at zero hour (05:20 A.M.) on the 17th, each Company Com-

mander—taking with him his Second in Command and three non-commissioned officers to act as guides for the platoons when the Company later moved forward in the darkness—set out to reconnoiter the positions as assigned by the Battalion Commander. Company A had been instructed by Battalion Headquarters to site its guns near the orchard at W 2 c 8040, about 1400 yards Northwest of La Haie Menneresse on the road to St. Souplet; Company B was to place its guns in a hollow near W 3 a 8550, about 1350 yards Southwest of the railroad station in St. Souplet; Company C set up its twelve Vickers in a set of practice trenches near W 2 d 3020, some 300 yards Southeast of Company A; and Company D was to put eight guns into action in the open near W 8 d 4090, about 625 yards South of Company C's position. Actually getting to the designated positions and arranging a more definite site for each gun was not an easy task, for Jerry was not asleep and any discovered movement was promptly greeted with a flock of his Whiz-Bangs. From our point of view, the Hun artillery was too accurate to be comfortable. On the way forward the reconnaissance parties passed through or close by the Bois de Busigny, L'Ermitage and Bois Proyart. But if it had not been for the map one would never have recognized the forests or woods: hardly a tree was left standing. As Le Rond Pont (headquarters of the 3rd Battalion of the 107th Infantry) was being shelled, no loitering was done in that vicinity nor was La Haie Menneresse visited, for Jerry seemed to be using the church steeple in this little hamlet as a ranging-point for his artillery. Time was a factor to be reckoned with, because Field Order 63 had not come into the hands of Company Commanders until the afternoon of the 16th, and reconnaissance had to be completed, fire data worked out, and a return made to Becquinette Farm in time to start that evening with the guns for the designated positions. Distance was another thing which had to be taken into account: the reconnaissance involved a round trip of something over nine miles and, although a small party unencumbered with machine-gun equipment could make better time than could

a company with its packs, its machine guns and ammunition, this small party was moving by daylight and therefore had often to seek concealment, which was unnecessary for the Company moving in the dark. Anyway, no Company Commander could afford to loiter that afternoon of the 16th. Of course, the companies had been notified of the impending move and all preparations had been made for a quick get-away: fighting-limbers had been packed, ready to move forward; a day's rations had been issued to each man, and all surplus baggage had been left at Rear Battalion Headquarters.

At 5:30 P.M., the Battalion with Company D in the lead, moved out of Becquinette Farm to take up the selected positions. Owing to a shortage of men, Company D was made up of but two platoons with 8 guns in all, but the other three companies had their regular 3 platoon formation with 4 guns to a platoon. Inquiries having brought out the information that Becquigny had been particularly free from shelling for some time, the route to the front was laid out through this village. But that evening was to prove to be the exception to this "shell exemption," when about 6:15 P.M.—as Company D was marching through with large platoon intervals—two Hun shells landed simultaneously on the road right at the head of the Second Platoon. It would almost seem, notwithstanding the unlikelihood, that the German Battery Commander had had direct observation and had seen the Battalion on the move. Had the two shells landed 10 or 20 yards further up the road, the casualties would not have been so heavy. Other shells exploded in the road and, after checking up, it was found that Company D had lost 6 men killed and 9 men badly wounded. As no man of the 1st Platoon had been injured—the 2nd was all but wiped out—it proceeded on its way with the 4 guns available. Later on the remnant of the 2nd Platoon reached its position with but 2 guns in commission out of the original 4. Company A, Company B and Company C turned north and, marching to their positions by way of Busigny, escaped any casualties. The remainder of the night was spent in digging shelters for the

men and the guns in preparation for the various tasks assigned to each company in connection with the barrage ordered for October 17. Company A had as a target for its intensive fire that portion of the railroad embankment across the Selle River, 380 yards south of the railroad station of St. Souplet, to a point some 575 yards further south; Company D was to cover with its fire this same embankment from the southern point of Company A's target to a spot about 400 yards still further south (including the bridge which was later discovered to be destroyed); Company C took on a target 500 yards East of the embankment where Companies A and D were concentrating their fire and Company B trained their guns on the practice trenches 500 yards Southeast of the St. Souplet railroad station and those 600 yards East of the 1st target. Operation Order No. 2, Headquarters 105th Machine Gun Battalion, October 16, 1918, reached Company Commanders during the late night of October 16-17 and read as follows:

OPERATION ORDER No. 2.

1. Zero Hour—05:20 hours

2. Brigade and Battalion Headquarters—ESCAUFORT (Q 31 c). Runners will enquire exact location.

3. Company A will cease fire at Z plus 12.

4. Company D will cease fire at Z plus 24.

5. Company C guns on left half of Co. C target *North* of W5 a 88 will cease firing at Z plus 24.
   Company C guns on right hand of Co target *South* of W 5 a 88 will cease firing at Z plus 36.

6. Platoon of Company B firing on Practice Trench (Q 34 d 93) will cease firing at Z plus 21.
   2 Platoons of Company B firing on Practice Trenches (Q 35 c and d) will cease firing at Z plus 42.

7. Immediately after ceasing fire, Company A will proceed with limbers (if possible) down road through W 2 d—W 3 c—W 9 b locating a crossing of the SELLE RIVER between southern Brigade Boundary and MARSH MILL and will remain on *West* bank ready for quick

105th M.G.Bn

Part of 57B S.E.
Map. 1-20,000.

54th Brigade

ST SOUPLET.

ST. SOUPLET

RR Station.

53rd Brigade Boundary

B Target

A Target

C Target

55th Brigade

APPROXIMATE

MARSH MILL.

53rd Brigade Boundary

ST MARTIN-RIVIERE

IMBERFAYT FARM

C & D Cos. Oct 17 PM Night-Oct 17-18

FRONT LINE Oct 16-17 Night.

LA HAIE MENNERESSE

FRONT LINE Approximate.

ST SELLE River.

MOLAIN

30th Division Boundary

30th Division

1,000 YDS

October 17th 1918 – Early Morning –

See Cos C and D for Oct 17-18 in W 8 a.

advance, before receipt of further orders. If limbers cannot be used, guns will be carried in pack, limbers being brought forward as soon as possible.

8. Companies C and D will be held ready to move forward from battery positions.

9. Importance of sending prompt reports will constantly be kept in mind.

Major GARDNER
Knowlton Durham,
1st Lt.

Promptly at 5:20 A.M. the barrage was laid down according to schedule, and what a barrage it was! All the artillery of the 27th and of the 30th Divisions had been concentrated on a front of 4,500 yards for this especial show and, in addition, each Division had contributed 96 heavy machine guns—not counting the 48 guns of the regimental Machine Gun Companies in each Division. The barrage at the Hindenburg Line had seemed to us the ultimate in barrages; but this one at La Selle beggared description: in comparison, the German counter-barrage was hardly noticeable but it did its deadly work. Two men of Company B, six of Company C and five of Company D were killed, while one man of Company A, five of Company B, twenty-one of Company C and six of Company D were wounded and evacuated to the Casualty Clearing Stations. Fighting limbers and their necessary teams (these had either been kept close to the guns or a short distance to the rear and flank) were ready at the appointed times. At 5:40 A.M. Company A moved forward and, in accordance with orders from Battalion Headquarters subsequent to Operation Order No. 2, crossed the Selle River and by evening had concentrated its 12 guns in the vicinity of Arbre Guernon and Advantage Farm. Company B, also acting under Battalion Orders, moved forward immediately after firing its 42 minute barrage, crossed the Selle River and, shortly after noon, had two guns of the 2nd Platoon (two had been knocked out by the enemy shell-fire) in position just off the road running from St. Souplet to Arbre Guernon and about

750 yards East of the railroad station in the former place, four guns of the 3rd Platoon near the destroyed railroad bridge some 1,350 yards South of the Station and three guns of the 1st Platoon (one had been put out of action by the Hun counter-barrage) just East of the practice trenches which had served as the Company's second target in the morning barrage. Company C, during and immediately after the barrage of the early morning, had been severely punished by enemy shell-fire with casualties of 6 men killed and 21 (including an officer) wounded. Company D, counting 5 dead and 6 wounded in addition to the 6 killed and 9 wounded of October 16, was very short of enlisted men. At about noon, instructions were received from Battalion Headquarters to combine Companies C and D under command of Captain Whitney of Company D, and in compliance therewith, a Provisional Company, consisting of some 41 enlisted men (counting runners, signallers and attached medical) and 4 officers from Company D and E officers, and about 62 enlisted men from Company C, was functioning at half-past twelve. This combined company took up a position of readiness near the road from La Haie Menneresse to St. Souplet about 650 yards Southwest and 650 yards Northwest from the firing positions of Company C and Company D respectively, remaining there during the night of October 17-18.

The original plan for the attack of October 17 had fixed as the 1st Objective for the Corps, a line extending from a point about 1,575 yards Southwest of the crossroads in Basuel to Jonc de Mer Farm and thence South to Ribauville at the junction of the roads from La Vallée Mulâtre and Wassigny (R 13 d 4070—R 19 b 9980—X 7 c 9905). The artillery barrage, starting at 5:20 A.M., was to lift 100 yards every three minutes with thirty minutes concentrated fire (from 7:02 to 7:32 A.M.) on a line 500 yards East of Advantage Farm; and by 8:25 in the morning our attacking infantry was supposed to have reached the first objective where a three-hour halt was slated for the purpose of consolidating the position before advancing to the 2nd Objective which had been fixed as a line running

from a point 1,300 yards Southeast of the crossroads in Basuel, then Southeast on the road to Catillon to a position 700 yards West of Gimbremont Farm and from there South to the point lying 400 yards Northwest of the junction of the roads in Rejet-de-Beaulieu (R 9 d 2075—R 16 d 0085—X 4 b 1015). As it turned out, the German resistance proved to be stronger than anticipated, so the night of October 17-18 found the 27th Division with its front line established from a point 540 yards Southeast of Le Quennelet Grange to the point 500 yards North of Advantage Farm, thence along the road just to the East of the Farm and from there to a point 300 yards East of the crossroads in Arbre Guernon (Q 24 a 6510—Q 30 d 4000—Q 36 d 7070—X 1 a 3085).

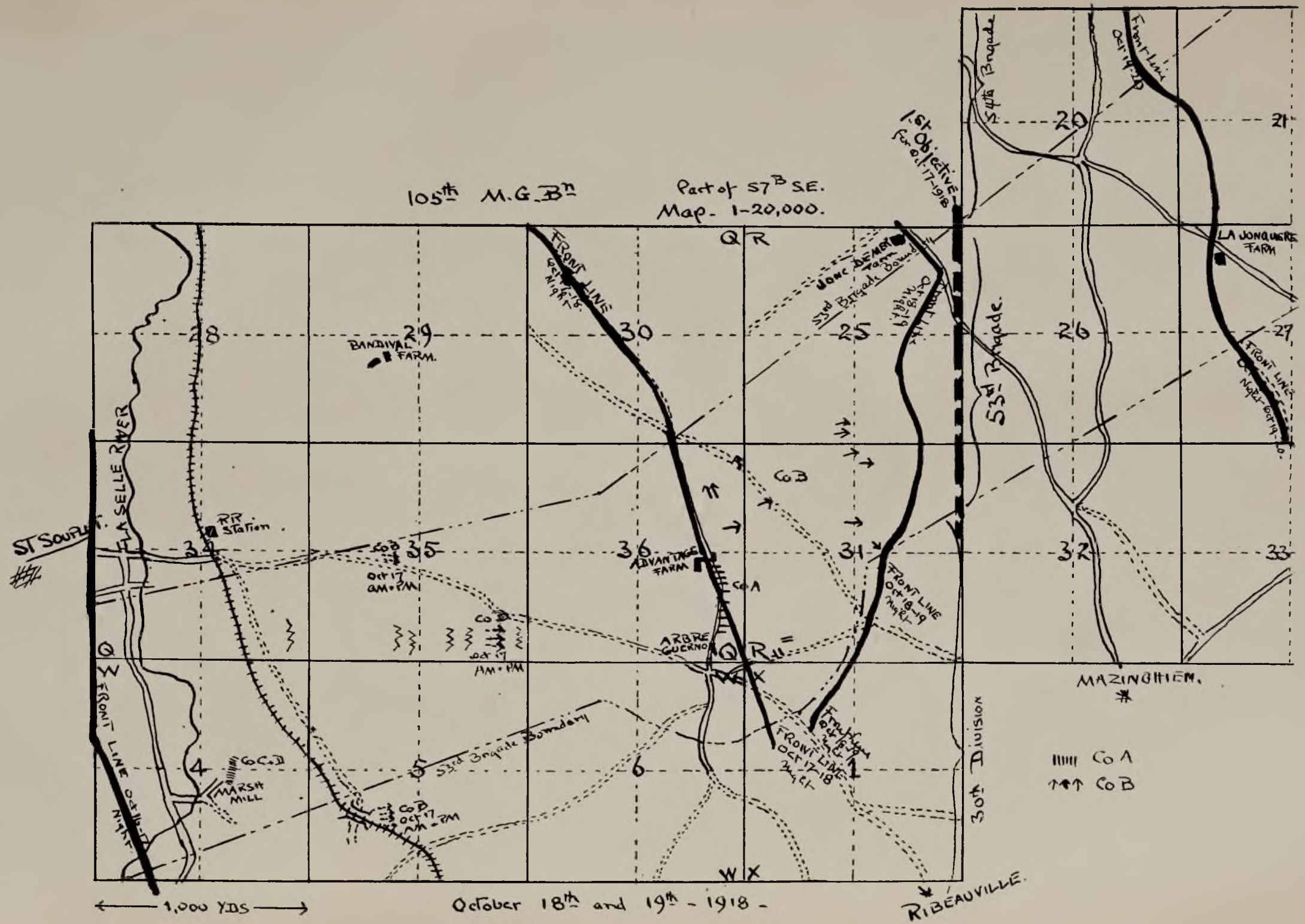
October 18 saw a renewal of the attack by the Fourth Army with the 105th Infantry, under cover of an artillery barrage and supported by the 106 Infantry and the Battalion, attacking in the 53rd Brigade Sector. Operation Order No. 3, Headquarters 105th Machine Gun Battalion, called on Company A to advance from Advantage Farm, at zero plus 30 (6:00 A.M.), and to take up certain positions but, as the attacking infantry failed to reach these points in the morning, the Company held its guns in the positions occupied in the vicinity of Advantage Farm. These same operation orders instructed Company B to move, at 6:00 A.M., to a position just Northeast of the Farm, prepared to fire either direct or indirect fire as circumstances might require. As La Jonquière Farm and the orchard South of it seemed to be strongly held by the enemy, the Company, at 4:30 P.M., fired about 8,000 rounds of harrassing fire in order to clear out these strong points. In due course, Jonc de Mer Farm was entered by our infantry but the Farm itself was not held. The similarity in names between these two farms tended to cause some confusion back at the various Rear-Headquarters. At six o'clock in the morning, the provisional company consisting of parts of Company C and Company D, now showing an effective strength of seven commissioned officers and one hundred and fourteen enlisted men, moved forward

and by 10:35 A.M. was established in a sheltered position near Marsh Mill (W 4 d 1060) where it remained in Reserve. Bad roads, intermittent enemy shelling—never very heavy—a destroyed bridge over the Selle River at St. Martin Rivière and the River, which was too deep to be fordable with transport—all contributed to make the move from position to position a slow one. The only casualties of this date were three men of Company A and eight men (including an officer) of Company B wounded. Meanwhile, the 30th Division on the right was advancing and had taken and had passed through Ribeauville on its way to Mazinghien. The front line of the 27th Division during the night of October 18-19 extended from just Northeast of La Roux Farm South through Jonc de Mer Farm to a point 1,300 yards Northeast of the crossroads in Mazinghien (R 13 d 4070—R 25 b 6575—R 31 b 6060). This was almost the exact line of the original objective.

From midnight, October 18 to 5:00 A.M., October 19, Company B harrassed La Jonquière Farm with 7,000 rounds and the crossroads in Mazinghien with 5,000 rounds. Early in the morning of the 19th, the 30th Division entered Mazinghien with its patrols and reported that it was being heavily shelled by the Huns. There was no question but that the enemy was steadily retreating. Meanwhile our infantry had advanced far enough to permit Company A's placing its guns in the positions designated in Operation Orders No. 3, Headquarters 105th Machine Gun Battalion; going forward by pack, 2 guns were placed in the orchard South of La Jonquière Farm to cover the right flank towards La Haie Tonnoile Farm (R 28 c 9970), 2 guns near crossroads 1,000 yards Southeast of Jonc de Mer Farm and two guns 500 yards Southeast of the Farm to cover the valley Northward towards Basuel. Later in the afternoon the remaining guns of the Company were sent up by limber to the same localities. The front line that night (October 19-20) was established from a point 1,200 yards West of Le Planty to a point (roughly) 1,100 yards West of La Haie Tonnoile Farm (R 14 b 5073—

105th M.G. Bn

Part of 57B SE.
Map- 1-20,000.



October 18th and 19th - 1918 -

R 14 d 7000—R 21 a 0020—R 21 c 2000—R 27 c 6090). The position of Company B's guns practically remained unchanged and Provisional Company C and D sat tight and awaited orders.

As far as the Battalion was concerned, there was no vital change in the situation on October 20 until orders were received from Battalion Headquarters to withdraw from the positions then being held and, in compliance with these, Company A left at 8:00 P.M., arriving at Becquinette Farm at midnight; Company B withdrew at 5:15 in the afternoon, reaching Battalion Rear Headquarters at 10:30; and combined Companies C and D reached their base at 4:00 P.M. having left Marsh Mills at 1:00 o'clock.

RUNNERS AND SIGNALMEN

No account of the activities of the Battalion would be complete without due credit being given to the signalmen and the runners—both those of the Battalion and those of the individual companies. They were the means of communication of the command, not only within the organization itself but also between the Battalion and the Brigade, and between the Battalion and the Division. Theirs was no easy task and, besides being very hazardous, was lacking in all spectacular features. Telephone wires had to be laid and communication established between Battalion Headquarters and outlying Company Headquarters. Platoon Headquarters had to be linked up with Company Headquarters and these wires had to be "kept laid." Boche high explosive shells had a discouraging habit of cutting these lines all to pieces, and signalmen had to go out and, with no protection from enemy shell-fire, had to locate the trouble and repair the breaks. Not much glory in this kind of work—but it was absolutely essential. No matter how hard these signalmen worked, no matter with what disregard of their personal safety, they exposed themselves to danger, there were times when the wire system failed entirely; it could not live through a Hun counter-barrage. Communication then had to be main-

tained by runners and these runners were also constantly exposing themselves to enemy shell-fire. Messages had to be delivered, shell-swept ground had to be crossed—and it was done. The record made by the signalmen and runners of the Battalion doubtless was equalled in other units of the A.E.F. It could not have been surpassed.

X

RE-FITTING IN FRANCE*

OUR losses in the Battles of the Selle River, Jonc de Mer Ridge and the engagement of St. Maurice River still further cut down our effective personnel so that the Battalion, with an *available* strength of 25 commissioned officers and 508 enlisted men on paper, had an *effective* strength of but 19 officers and 300 enlisted men. On October 15, our animals consisted of 15 Heavy Draft horses, 137 Light Draft, 8 Riding and 2 Mules; but on the 21st, we had but 14 Heavy Draft, 120 Light Draft, 7 Riding and the same 2 Mules. The Battalion was short of men and short of draft animals. Remember, we had received no replacements since we had first gone into the lines in Belgium. What was true in this respect of the Battalion was true of every unit of the 27th Division. It was therefore put in reserve in order that new men and new equipment might be procured before the next "show." So it was that the Battalion, on October 25, found itself billeted in Vaulx-sur-Somme (near Corbie) having marched from Becquinette Farm to Tincourt via Brancourt, Bellicourt, Hervilly and Roissell. We went by "Hommes-Chevaux" from Tincourt to Corbie and marched the short distance from there to our new billets. The town was pretty much in ruins and the houses still standing were, in many cases, roofless; but it was almost paradise compared with what we had had under recent battle conditions.

The original plan had been to entrain at Roissell; but our plans were set at naught by Jerry and his diabolical scientific accomplishments. Although it had been many days since the Germans had occupied Roissell, they had contrived to plant a delayed mine directly under the railroad track where it was crossed by one of the main roads

* See Appendices B, D, O.

not fifty yards from the station. Just after a trainload of American troops had pulled out and just before our empty train had pulled in, this mine exploded with a roar, throwing railroad ties, track and dirt all over the place. Luckily, none of our men were hurt though there were many narrow escapes from flying débris. Naturally, the huge crater formed by the explosion effectually put the railroad out of commission for the time being. Of course the crater was between our train and our destination; of course it was. A batch of German prisoners who happened to be handy was immediately rushed up and set to work clearing away the wreckage and preparing the road bed for repair. It was a cold day; but the Boches, being warmly wrapped in their overcoats, did not suffer from the cold, and therefore seemed to have no incentive to work really hard. There was no tendency on their part to overexert themselves until an old type British sergeant appeared on the scene, took command of the loafing Huns, made them shed their overcoats and warm wrappings and announced to them in forcible and picturesque soldier-words that if they wanted to keep warm they could jolly well get to work and work hard. They did. As the explosion meant that we had to renew our hike after thinking that our marching for that day was all over, we had no sympathy for anyone or anything German. We should have liked to sit around watching those German prisoners work, but even that pleasure was denied us. So we took up our weary way to Tincourt.

October 28 marked the promotion of Captain Egleston of Company B to Major and his assignment to the 106th Infantry. On the 29th, the Battalion received 35 Privates from the Division Replacement Camp bringing our effective enlisted strength up to 326 men. Note that these were our first replacements since August 12 when we had received 46 enlisted men from the Division Reception Camp. Baths, inspections and prescribed drills and duties occupied our time up to November 11, the day the Armistice became effective. It must be admitted that our first feeling on hearing of the Armistice and what it meant, was one of profound thankfulness that we would not again have to go up

ARBRE GUERNON, OCTOBER 14, 1918

into the front lines, that we would not again have to lie in a shell hole or a hastily dug "Y" trench while Jerry searched for us—and sometimes found us—with his high explosive shells and with his gas shells. Our second feeling—but that came much later on, for at first we felt only relief—was one of bitter disappointment that we had to let the Germans off so easily, that we could not make them suffer the way they had made the French and the Belgians suffer, that we could not finish the job we had started out to do. The Germans were on the run (the Armistice and its terms proved that), and we were sorry we could not join in giving them the unforgetable and thorough licking that was coming to them.

The fact remained that, at eleven o'clock on the morning of November 11, 1918, the terms of the Armistice were effective and all fighting ceased from the English Channel to Switzerland.

XI

WAITING FOR ORDERS

WHAT through dropping men who were still in hospitals and having officers and enlisted men absent at the various schools, the *effective* strength of the Battalion on November 11, Armistice Day, was 11 commissioned officers and 302 enlisted men; the *available* strength (merely the strength on paper) was only 18 officers and 501 enlisted men. We were less than 50 per cent. effective.

On November 13, 1st Lieutenant Durham was promoted to Captain and, on the 20th, he was assigned to command Company C, which had been virtually commanded by 1st Lieutenant Leake since October 16, the day Captain Molyneaux had received his Majority. Other promotions in the Battalion were to follow, but meanwhile the command passed the following two weeks in routine drills, routine hikes and routine duties. The Armistice had come as a sort of a let-down; and speculations were rife as to the probable time of our return to the United States. As rain started in again on November 26, we of course changed billets. Entraining at Corbie for Connere in the Le Mans area, we marched from there to Le Breil where we were billeted on the morning of November 27. It was still raining. Our available strength on that date was 11 officers and 487 enlisted men; our effective strength, 8 officers and 303 enlisted men. This strength varied from day to day up to the date of our sailing from France when our available strength was 18 officers (with 5 more attached) and 770 enlisted men (with 22 others attached). We would have given a great deal if we had these 770 men on October 17 when we started to fire the barrage at La Selle River, 323 was our effective strength on that date.

For a month we stayed in Le Breil, a month that seemed endless. Of course we had been transferred from British

control and supervision back to American control, but this made no difference in the routine; hikes and drills were just as many and just as much enjoyed as formerly. No, they were not enjoyed even as much as before—they were hated. Previous to the Armistice, there was something to work for; no work was too hard to prepare ourselves for licking the Boche. But now we wanted to get home and could see no sense in doing things which seemed useless. Maybe we should not have taken this point of view but that is how we felt. Doubtless the only way to keep our minds off our longing for home was to keep us busy and, it must be admitted, we were kept as busy as possible. Manœuver Field Order A, Headquarters 27th Division, 12/24/18, was issued, and part of the Battalion participated in the called-for manœuver. On December 23, part of the Battalion again participated in similar manœuvers. After real fighting, it was hard to work up any enthusiasm for a game in which no machine guns were in evidence and in which a single man with a flag represented a company of infantry, a battery of artillery or some other such unit. Still, these manœuvers tended to make us forget our other troubles. There were the usual crop of rumors: Sailing orders had been issued and were on their way; the Battalion was to be a part of the Army of Occupation on the Rhine. You could take your choice. The very uncertainty of our future movements was very nerve-racking and tended to make us lose all interest in routine matters. The game of soldiering—a grim game it had been, with human lives as the stakes—seemed flat and silly. However, there was nothing flat and silly about the Inspection of the Battalion by the Commanding General of the 27th Division when he looked us over on December 21. Every man was on his toes and every man was playing the game.

Christmas day was something of an occasion. The weather did its best to make us feel at home by sprinkling a scanty supply of snow over the ground. It was the first snow we had seen in France. More snow was to follow, always at the most inconvenient of times. Special dinners were served in all of the companies; and only the abso-

lutely necessary fatigue was called for. Yet the very thought that it was Christmas Day made us all the more homesick and all the more impatient for sailing orders. Do not get the idea that the Battalion was a great big "grouch." It was far from that: it was not made up of that type of man. Orders were cheerfully obeyed. But all the same, we were homesick and could not enter heart and soul into the life as we had before the signing of the Armistice. Discipline was never relaxed.

On the 27th (it is hardly necessary to state that it was raining) the Batallion again moved, but it did not move very far away. Headquarters (less Transport and Supply), part of the Attached Sanitary, Company A and Company D marched to Le Luart and billeted, while Transport, Supply, part of the Attached Sanitary, Company B and Company C hiked over to Sceaux, just a short distance from Le Luart. The next day, finding it a bit crowded in Sceaux, Company B moved over to Vouvray. The Battalion stayed on in these three villages until February 19, 1919, when it started on the first lap of its journey back to the United States.

The month and a half that the Battalion spent at these billets (destined to be our last of the war) was given over almost entirely to routine. Little by little all but our personal equipment was taken away from us. On January 12, we lost our two G. S. Wagons, eight heavy draft horses and one light draft horse; on February 1, ten limbers and forty light draft horses were taken from us; on the 6th, we turned in ten more limbers, fourteen light draft horses and the two mules; February 11 marked the withdrawal of our one Maltese Cart; on February 14 the Battalion was left with but five limbers, four rolling kitchens and eleven light draft horses; and on the 17th the four rolling kitchens alone remained to remind us of our former Transport. Not an animal was left. All pistols except those belonging to, or carried by, commissioned officers and 1st Sergeants had been turned in before February 19, as had been our machine-guns and all machine-gun equipment. Drilling

without rifles, without pistols, without machine guns—only the omnipresent packs were left to us—was hardly conducive to intense interest on the part of the officers and men. Setting-up exercises, hikes, Squads Right and Squads Left were virtually the only things left to do in the way of drill. However, every time we were ordered to turn in some part of the equipment or some part of the Transport we realized that we were that much nearer to starting for home. It was during this period also that officers and enlisted men continued to return to the Battalion from leaves and furloughs, the period for granting which had started while we were billeted in Vaulx-sur-Somme.

There were several events which stood out in this month and a half of waiting. On January 3, 1919, there was a Review and an Inspection by the Commanding General of the Division and, on the 22nd, during a cold rain, the entire Division was reviewed by General Pershing, Commander in Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces, in the vicinity of Champagne. During this review, Congressional Medals of Honor and Distinguished Service Crosses were formally bestowed on those of the Division who had earned them. The Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest decoration which the United States can bestow, was given to six men, and among these six was Sergeant Reidar Waaler* of Company A, who had won his honors in the battle of the Hindenburg Line.

On January 31, the entire Battalion, from the Major down to the newest enlisted man, was on its toes because it was held in readiness for inspection by the Embarkation Officers. The Battalion was assembled, and marched out to a nearby field, and all equipment was laid out on the ground for inspection. It began to snow quite hard and, of course all our blankets were soaked. But what did we care! This inspection meant that we were soon going home. The Embarkation Officers never turned up!

Every man in the Battalion felt as if a pitcher of ice cold water had been thrown over him personally. What if

* See Appendix F.

the plans and orders had been changed! Again on February 1 the Battalion was lined up for inspection. This time the Embarkation Officers put in a tardy appearance, made a rapid inspection and hurried away. We surely expected orders within the next few days; but none came. Still, as we realized that embarkation orders necessitated a mass of detail, we did not lose hope of a speedy getaway. It must be admitted that the next two weeks dragged, the days seemed weeks long and the nights seemed scarcely shorter. On February 12, Lincoln's Birthday, we lost a good friend when S. O. 35, G.H.Q., 2/4/19 relieved Chaplain Archer B. Bass (he had been with us since August 19, 1918) from duty with the Battalion and assigned him to other duty with the American Expeditionary Forces. On February 5, orders had been received to make up three detachments to be known as the Camp Lee, the Camp Sherman and the Camp Wheeler Detachments, each to be under a commissioned officer and to be composed of men of the Battalion who had been inducted into the service from the areas in the vicinity of these three camps. In compliance with these orders, there sprang into being the Camp Lee Detachment of thirty enlisted men commanded by 2nd Lieutenant Noble, the Camp Sherman Detachment of thirty-eight men under 2nd Lieutenant Grace and the Camp Wheeler Detachment of seventy-seven men under the command of 2nd Lieutenant Anderson. The above hundred and forty-five men and three officers were actually detached from the Battalion and, from this date on until March 18, drilled as separate units and submitted Morning Reports and did other paper work just as if each was a separate company. Three of the officers began their trip home to the United States on February 17 when 1st Lieutenant Cook, 2nd Lieutenant Snare and 2nd Lieutenant Lyon were ordered on detached service on an Advance Party to precede the Battalion to America. First Lieutenant Crane had left us on February 6 on similar duty.

February 19 was a great day for the Battalion: eight officers were advanced one grade in rank; and the Battalion

left its billets for Brest on its way back to the United States. Early in the morning, Major Gardner announced the following list of promotions and assignments:

Major Gardner	to	Lieutenant Colonel	Division Staff
Capt. Whitney	to	Major	Com. 105 M.G.Bn.
1st Lt. Leake	to	Captain	Attached Hdqts.
1st Lt. Flash	to	Captain	Attached Co. C.
1st Lt. Ball	to	Captain	Com. Co. D.
1st Lt. Reynolds	to	Captain	Attached Co. B.
2nd Lt. Downey	to	1st Lieutenant	Co. A.
2nd Lt. Matthews	to	1st Lieutenant	Co. B.

Captain Leake continued his duties as Adjutant but could not, on account of his rank be assigned to the position on paper; as Captain Durham was already in command of Company C, Captain Flash had to be carried as attached; as Captain Stewart D. Tiffany had been assigned to the Battalion on January 10 and had been put in command of Company B. Captain Reynolds had also to be carried as attached. As Company A now had more than its full quota of 1st Lieutenants, Lieutenant Cook was transferred to Company C and, on paper, was carried with that company although actually performing duty with his original company, Company A.

At ten o'clock, the Battalion, again reunited, proceeded by marching and by lorries to Champagne, arriving at three in the afternoon and entraining at five. The train pulled into Brest at a quarter to eleven on the night of February 20. After a long, weary hike up the hill, we reached Camp Pontanezen—in a heavy rain storm—at 1:30 on the morning of February 21. It was not till much later that we were assigned to tents, when we turned in, thoroughly wet but equally happy over the fact that we were actually on our way. The list of things which had to be done before the Battalion could embark was appalling and looked perfectly impossible; but everything went along swimmingly, and miracles were worked. February 21, 22 and 23 were busy days: officers and men were "de-cootie-ized," uniforms were fumigated (and rendered shapeless),

over-seas caps and all other equipment were absolutely standardized, French money was exchanged for American bills and coins (perhaps they didn't look good to us!), all paper work was thoroughly checked over by the authorities and the dreaded Embarkation Lists were made out for the various companies. It was a very busy three days and yet the Battalion was called upon to furnish large details to work on the roads and the ditches of the camp in order to make it appear and act less like the marsh it was. This camp was supposed to be a place where individuals and their uniforms and equipment were scrupulously cleaned up in preparation for their sailing for home: it is a matter of fact, not a surmise, that the Battalion was infinitely cleaner on arriving at Camp Pontanezen than on leaving it. The very situation and nature of the camp made it impossible to keep a uniform clean.

On February 24, the Battalion (including the various detachments) marched down the hill into Brest; but as, owing to various contradictory orders, it arrived too late to board the U.S.S. *Leviathan* that evening, it bivouaced on the pier for the night. The American Red Cross furnished each of us with a canvas cot which contributed greatly to our comfort. Nevertheless, not much sleeping was done that night. Everybody was nervous and excited and dreading some eleventh hour change in orders. We felt that not until the coast of France was out of sight would we really believe that we were on our way home. As it was, just before boarding the *Leviathan* on February 25, the Battalion Commander was informed that the Camp Lee, the Camp Sherman and the Camp Wheeler Detachments would not board the *Leviathan* with the Battalion but would take some other boat, some hours or some days later. It was very indefinite. As some trouble had developed in connection with Lieutenant Noble's papers just before leaving Camp Pontanezen, to be on the safe side and to be sure that a commissioned officer would be in command of the Camp Lee Detachment, he had been relieved from duty therewith and 1st Lieutenant Barthman had been assigned to command in his place. The misunderstanding was rec-

tified and Lieutenant Noble went on board the steamer with the rest of the Battalion.

At 11:00 A.M. on February 25, 1919, the Battalion, less absentees and officers and men of the three detachments, boarded the *Leviathan* and was directed to its quarters. The strength of the command on that date was 18 commissioned officers with 5 others attached and 770 enlisted men (counting in the three detachments), with 22 others attached. The disposition of these officers and men is shown in the table herewith.

STRENGTH OF THE BATTALION, FEBRUARY 25, 1919, ON EMBARKING FOR HOME

ENLISTED MEN

	Co A	Co B	Co C	Co D	Hdqts Co	Attached: Sanitary	Attached: Ordnance	Attached: Attached
With the Show (Division)	1	1	2	4	..	..	..	..
Detailed to Ordnance	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Detailed to Disbursing	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	..
Instructor at Langres	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..
Instructor at Clamecy	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..
Camp Lee Detachment Camp Sherman Detachment Camp Wheeler Detachment	24	29	28	64	..	..	..	..
On board *Leviathan*	160	141	147	119	44	18	4	..
Total	185	173	179	188	45	18	4	..

TOTAL STRENGTH 792
On Board *Leviathan* 633

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

Advance Party		..	2	2	..	..	..	..	..
Camp Lee	Detachment	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Camp Sherman	Detachment	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
Camp Wheeler	Detachment	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
On board *Leviathan*		3	2	2	2	2	2	..	3
Total			4	4	4	2	2	0	3

TOTAL STRENGTH 23
On Board *Leviathan* 16

XII

HOMEWARD BOUND

THE trip on the *Leviathan* was, on the whole, uneventful. Almost the only incident worthy of comment was the order issued by Brigadier General Debevoise who was in command of the 11,000 odd troops on the transport. This order was issued on February 27 and was one which the Navy men said would result in absolute chaos. On embarking, the various organizations had been poorly quartered in that, instead of being kept together by units, they had been split up and scattered all over the ship. For example, the Battalion was quartered in six different holds making a Battalion Inspection and the Inspection of Quarters an unnecessarily hard task. The 107th Infantry was even worse off. However, General Debevoise decided to re-assign quarters in order that units might be concentrated. The necessary orders were issued and, at a given hour, every soldier on the transport was moving by designated passages and companionways from his old to his newly assigned quarters. There was not the slightest congestion or confusion and, in a very short time, every man was settled in his new bunk. The Navy men did not know the discipline of the 27th Division; they did not know that if a thing was humanly possible, the Division could and would do it.

On the 27th, Captain Tiffany was transferred from Company B to Battalion Headquarters and Captain Reynolds was assigned to the command of Company B. There were no other changes in the Battalion except the ever-changing sick report. During our ocean trip to America, the officers and the men were kept on deck as much as possible. Notwithstanding every precaution, the dreaded influenza put in its appearance and our list of men in hospital mounted steadily. On February 28, the Battalion had eight men in

the sick-bay; on the 1st of March, there were thirty-nine; forty-two were sick on the 2nd and forty-eight on the 3rd. On March 4, the sick in hospital had dropped to forty-four; on the 5th, to thirty-six (but two men died on the 5th); and on March 6, the date of the docking of the *Leviathan* at Hoboken, New Jersey, the thirty-one men still in the ship's sick-bay were transferred to the Medical Authorities at Hoboken N. J. under authority of G. O. 19, Headquarters Port of Embarkation, November 18, 1917. Of these thirty-one enlisted men, three died at a later date, seven never rejoined the command, twenty rejoined their companies at Camp Mills and one returned to duty at Camp Upton. It cannot be said that the Battalion enjoyed an especially healthy trip on the *Leviathan*.

After a triumphal trip through New York Harbor and up a bit of the North River, with excursion boats full of 27th Division relatives, as an escort of honor, with tug boats and other craft loaded to the gunwales with welcoming committees, with every whistle and every noise-making apparatus afloat and ashore working to its limit, with the troops on board the *Leviathan* lining the rails and occupying every available bit of deck space, with every port-hole framing an eager, happy face, we docked at Hoboken at 11:00 A.M. With the exception of a detail left aboard to handle baggage and other heavy equipment, Headquarters, Company C, Company D, Attached Sanitary and Attached Ordnance marched aboard a waiting ferry-boat and, after much delay, steamed around Manhattan Island to Long Island City, boarded a train for Camp Mills and arrived at about 10:30 P.M. After a bit to eat, all hands turned in and slept away the first night on American soil that we had had since May 16, 1918. Company A and Company B, who had been left aboard the *Leviathan* to give it a thorough policing, got away about the time the rest of the Battalion was going into quarters at Camp Mills and, by ferry and by train, rejoined them at one o'clock of the morning of March 7.

XIII

AWAITING DISCHARGE IN THE UNITED STATES

THE routine procedure at Camp Mills was very similar to what we had been through at Camp Pontanezen in Brest. Again was the Battalion de-cootieized, again were uniforms fumigated and sterilized (and devitalized), again were large working details called for. Paper work was again closely scrutinized but, joy of joys, there were no Embarkation Lists to be prepared "in dozenicate." Liberal interpretation was made of the rules in connection with the granting of leaves and, at one time or another, every man who wanted to see his family or anyone else's family was given the opportunity. On March 8, Lieutenants Cook, Snare and Lyon (but not Lieutenant Crane) reported back to duty with their various companies. On the 12th, Lieutenant Crane was ordered from Detached Service with the Advanced Party to Detached Service with Headquarters, 27th Division in accordance with Paragraph 2, S. O. 66, Headquarters 27th Division, March 8, 1919; on April 1, he was transferred from the Battalion and was attached to Headquarters, 27th Division. On March 18, the Camp Lee, Camp Sherman and Camp Wheeler Detachments rejoined the Battalion; Lieutenant Barthman was relieved from duty with the Camp Lee Detachment and returned to Company A; and Lieutenant Noble was again given his former assignment as commanding officer of the above-mentioned Detachment, after having been relieved from duty with Company C.

On March 24, the entire Battalion, which on that date had (including the three Detachments) an effective strength of 17 commissioned officers (plus 5 attached) and 743 enlisted men (plus 22 attached) out of a paper strength of 18 officers (plus the 5 attached) and 753 men (plus the

HOME-COMING OF THE 27TH DIVISION, MARCH 26, 1919
Looking North from Madison Square

22 attached), proceeded by train and ferry to East 34th Street, New York City, where it was met by Squadron A, Cavalry, New York Guard, and by the "Ex-Members of Squadron A" and was escorted by them up Fifth Avenue to 94th Street and thence to the Armory at 94th Street and Madison Avenue where packs were shed, cots set up, the necessary guard posted and the personnel of the Battalion permitted to scatter all over the city on pass. All the way up the Avenue, the Battalion had been most enthusiastically welcomed, but it was not until the next day that we were to learn what real enthusiasm was.

Bright and early on the 25th, the Battalion assembled at the Armory and, by elevated train, reached 14th Street whence it marched to its rendezvous at 10th Street and Broadway to be ready for the "Home Coming Parade of the 27th Division." In mass formation, with tin hats, gas masks and full packs but no arms, the Division marched up Fifth Avenue to 110th Street where it was dismissed. The units then returned to the various armories in which they were quartered. To say that Fifth Avenue was crowded would not convey the idea of the masses of people that packed every available bit of the sidewalks and, in many cases, the roadway itself. Time after time the Battalion had to break into column of squads in order to force its way through the yelling, cheering, enthusiastic, friendly mob. All one could hear was a continual roar from 10th Street to 110th Street. It certainly was a splendid greeting. After the dismissal of the Battalion from the parade and its return to the Armory, the necessary guard was posted and the remainder of the Battalion sent off on pass.

Meanwhile, as orders had been received disbanding the Camp Lee, Camp Sherman and the Camp Wheeler detachments, the three commissioned officers and the 145 enlisted men comprising these groups were returned to duty with their various companies. On the morning of March 26, one commissioned officer (2nd Lieutenant Frank H. Grace of Company D) and 223 enlisted men (including three attached) were transferred out of the Battalion and ordered to return to Camp Mills to await further orders.

This was pursuant to S. O. 77, Liaison Office, Camp Mills, March 22, 1919. Early that same morning, the Battalion now numbering 16 commissioned officers (plus 5 attached) and 523 enlisted men (plus 19 attached) out of a strength on paper of 17 officers and 534 men (plus the attached 5 officers and 19 men) left the Armory and, by Subway and Ferry, reached Long Island City where it entrained for Camp Upton, arriving about 1:00 P.M. Routine work in preparation for discharge occupied the next five days and, on March 31, all those men carried on the rolls who were not present with the Battalion were transferred out in accordance with various Special Orders of the Headquarters at Camp Upton. On April 1, the paper and also the actually present strength of the Battalion was therefore 16 commissioned officers (plus the 5 attached) and 526 enlisted men (plus the 19 attached). Pay-rolls were signed; men were paid off; all Battalion records and papers were boxed and forwarded to Washington and the 105th Machine Gun Battalion was discharged from service in the Army of the United States of America.* Officers and enlisted men scattered to their various homes and the Battalion ceased to exist except as a memory and as an institution of which we were, and are, proud.

* See Appendices O, P, Q.