CHAPTER VI

GENERAL O'RYAN'S TOUR OF OBSERVATION WITH THE BRITISH AND FRENCH ARMIES IN 1917

N September 18th, while at Camp Wadsworth, the Division Commander received a telegram from the War Department directing him, his Chief of Staff, Colonel H. H. Bandholtz, one aide and two enlisted men, to proceed to the port of embarkation at Hoboken, New Jersey, prepared for a protracted tour of hard field service abroad. The aide selected was First Lieutenant Charles P. Franchot and the enlisted men Sergeant Thomas S. Johnson and Corporal Albert A. Breunig of the Division Headquarters Troop.

The party immediately left Camp Wadsworth and arriving at Hoboken, New Jersey, sailed on the U. S. Army Transport *Antilles* on September 22d. The transport was one of a convoy of five ships escorted by the cruiser *San Diego* and three destroyers.

Without sighting submarines en route, although there were some false alarms, the convoy safely arrived at St. Nazaire, France, on Sunday evening, October 7th. The *Antilles* was a small American coast steamer and hardly fit for the rough voyage across the Atlantic. She was torpedoed and sunk on the return trip.

The day following the arrival at St. Nazaire the party left for Paris and reported to the Commanding General of that district for orders. There were in the party five other division commanders with similar staff groups accompanying them.

On Tuesday, October 9th, the entire party left Paris in motor cars and after stopping at Amiens for lunch, arrived at Chateau Lovi, near Poperinghe in Belgium, the headquarters of General Sir H. de la P. Gough, Commander of the Fifth British Army. This army at that time was engaged in fighting its way toward Paschendaele. The last part of the trip to the army headquarters was made over roads choked with troops, transport and ambulances. Large groups of German prisoners were also observed as they were marched toward the rear.

Immediately after arrival of the party at the Fifth Army Headquarters they were presented to General Gough, who, in most informal and friendly manner, invited the Division Commanders and Chiefs of Staff to attend an army conference about to be held between the Army Commander and officers of his staff, and the Corps Commanders of the Army. This invitation was of course accepted, and the party was present at a most interesting and profitable discussion of the operations of the day and the proposals affecting a continuance of operations on the day following.

At the conclusion of the conference the several American divisional groups were allocated to British divisions. The 27th Division Commander

and party were assigned to the 29th British Division, commanded by Major General Sir H. De B. De Lisle, K. C. B., D. S. O., with headquarters at Elverdinghe, north of Ypres. The 27th Division party left immediately after the conference for the new station and arrived the same night at Division Headquarters of the 29th British Division, which was located in a half-demolished chateau, reinforced and protected by great heaps of sandbags. In the grounds about the chateau were located heavy British batteries which fired throughout the night. Among these was an immense naval gun, which fired about once an hour, the concussion of each explosion rocking the building and shattering fragments of glass where they still existed in some of the window sashes.

At 1:30 in the morning all were awakened by heavy detonations accompanied by blinding flashes of white light. These were caused by enemy aviators, who dropped a number of bombs about the headquarters in an effort to locate the big gun. None of the occupants of the building, however, were injured.

Early the next morning the 29th Division continued its attack behind a rolling barrage and General O'Ryan and Colonel Bandholtz accompanied General De Lisle on a tour of observation toward the front of his division, at that time heavily engaged. The trip was made on foot and over ground deep with mud and heavily pitted with shell craters made by the British in previous attacks. The party passed through supporting troops and reached the advanced dressing station without injury, although it was necessary to pass through some heavy shelling. The dressing station visited was located in the remains of a German pill-box on a perfectly flat field. Dead and dying soldiers were lying about, while a large number of wounded, both British and German, were being accumulated and given attention by a small group of very much fatigued officers and men of the Royal Army Medical Corps. The observations made throughout this day were most profitable to the 27th Division party.

That night the 29th Division was relieved by the 17th British Division, the latter commanded by Major General P. R. Robertson, C. B., C. M. G., the change being effected without particular incident. The following morning the attack was continued by the 17th Division, while observations of British battle methods were continued with that division. After four days of very hard and active service with these two British divisions, the 27th Division party was ordered to proceed to the headquarters of the 2d British Army at Ecoivre. There the party was assigned to the 31st British Division, commanded by Major General R. Wanless O'Gowan, C. B. The sector of the 2d Army was in the vicinity of Arras. The sector of the 31st Division, which was in the line, lay directly east of Vimy Ridge, which had been captured by the Canadians earlier the same summer. Four days were spent with the 31st Division in studying British methods of trench warfare. During that period the 31st Division delivered a cloud gas attack against the enemy, and one raid was made by the enemy. Careful inspections were made of the British light and heavy batteries, their emplacements and methods of fire, camouflage, methods of relief of troops,

gas defense, liaison, ammunition supply, sanitation, shelter, etc., while visits were made and methods studied at ration issue sheds, horse lines, divisional schools, bath houses and recreation centers. On October 17th a demonstration was given of the efficiency of a new type of British trench mortar in the destruction of wire entanglements.

While with the 31st British Division the 27th Division party had a narrow escape. While proceeding through a long approach trench toward the front line, attention was attracted by the sight of a rather low flying enemy airplane which was being fired upon by Lewis guns from the trenches about. The party consisted of Major General O'Gowan, British Division Commander; Brigadier General Wilson, Division Artillery Commander; Colonel Bandholtz, Lieutenant Franchot and the writer. In order better to observe the enemy plane, the party stopped in the trench at a point about 1,000 yards from the front line, and standing in column formation, gazed with interest at the evolutions of the enemy aviator, who finally passed directly overhead and disappeared in the direction of his own lines. The party continued its walk toward the front line when, about three minutes later, the threatening scream of a Howitzer shell was heard approaching. The entire party crouched against the right wall of the trench, the shell falling a few yards to the right and exploding, throwing a rain of dirt into the trench. A few seconds later a second shell arrived and burst with a terrific concussion close to the edge of the trench, covering the party with earth. The force of this concussion knocked Lieutenant Franchot down. The party then ran rapidly toward the front, while the enemy battery continued to drop six or eight more shells along the trench where the party had been walking. When near the front trench the Germans began a minnenwerfer bombardment of the front line in that sector, the effect of which was to drive the party into such shelters as were available until the bombardment was over. Trench warfare in that sector during the period of the visit of the 27th Division party consisted of a more or less continuous performance of such experiences. Every day brought its toll of casualties, not material so far as the losses of any one day were concerned, but totaling at the end of each month a considerable number of men killed and wounded.

The 31st Division was known as the York and Lancashire Division. In a recent visit to France the writer, while in the British area, saw many graves of Lancashire soldiers, and found that upon the cross of each there had been placed a circular disc with the words, "They Win or Die Who Wear the Rose of Lancaster."

After relief from service with the 31st British Division, the 27th Division party spent two days with Lieutenant General Sir F. W. N. McCracken, K. C. B., D. S. O., commanding the 13th British Corps, with headquarters in the Chateau of Comtesse d'Escalaibes at Chateau Ecoivres and there studied corps organization and functions and visited corps schools, the corps artillery headquarters and the corps photographic plant.

The American officers constituting the 27th Division group and officers of other American divisions with whom views were exchanged, all seemed

to be in agreement concerning the British army. In the first place, it was found that all of them had been cordially received by the British. In a way this attitude was natural, in view of the imperative need for American help. Nevertheless, aside from this, all the officers had been made to feel that there existed among the mass of the British officers a genuine desire to cultivate the friendship of Americans. Those who had opportunity to serve with the fighting elements of the British divisions were impressed with the courage and steadfastness of British troops, and with their marked submissiveness to discipline and to the rigorous and, one can truly add, cruel demands of war. All were impressed with the fact that war had become to the British army, as a result of three years of campaigning, a matter of daily routine; so much so, that their attitude in relation to tragic events seemed to us to be almost casual. All were impressed, too, with the gallant manner in which the British had sustained huge losses since the beginning of the war, and we could not withhold our admiration for their quiet and confident determination in relation to the outcome, a determination which did not seem to be affected by adversity or temporary non-success.

The British soldiers bore their sufferings when wounded without emotion or complaint, although numbers of British officers assured us that the average Tommy found much satisfaction in cursing the Hun, the conditions under which he had to live, and the war generally. Probably this comment applies to all soldiers in campaign. However that may be, the writer had opportunity to witness the conduct of slightly wounded, badly wounded and dying British soldiers of the 29th Division during the attack of October, 1917, near Langemarck, Belgium. On that occasion the writer was with the Commanding General of the 29th Division at a forward dressing station already referred to, during the progress of the attack. This dressing station was established in a German pill-box, which had been captured shortly before and which stood in a flat sea of mud. The only shelter against machine-gun bullets and heavier fire was found by remaining on the lee side of the small building. In this locality were gathered perhaps thirty badly wounded soldiers, several of them Germans. Half a dozen dead were also there. The morning was misty, rainy and cold. The surgeons were operating as best they could within the pill-box. We watched the work within for a few minutes, then withdrew to the outside, where we remained for an hour watching the progress of the attack. Many walking wounded approached the place, but were turned away and directed to continue their movement to the post for walking wounded, considerably further to the rear. Some of these walking wounded had been able to drag themselves to the point where we were, only because of the sustaining hope that this dressing station would mark the end of their great effort. It was affecting to note the reaction of such men when they were ordered to continue on to the rear. Some of them dropped to the ground to rest, looked helplessly at their bleeding wounds and then almost hopelessly over the shell-swept fields that lay between them and their goal. But not once was any plea heard from them, nor any criticism made of the

treatment accorded them. Those who delayed because of exhaustion or the character of their wounds were admonished that they probably would be hit again if they remained where they were and that the sooner they got through to the rear the better for them. Then and ever afterward such cases seemed particularly appealing. The gallant men who have gone forward and who have been wounded while courageously performing their battle functions would seem to be entitled on their way to the rear to immunity from the continued fire of the enemy. That, of course, cannot be, and so it frequently happened in the war that such men, while on their way to the rear, sometimes walking and sometimes carried on litters, were wounded a second and even a third time, while some were killed. In our own division we had two extraordinary cases illustrating the vagaries of chance in this connection. In the Hindenburg Line battle a shell struck a litter being carried by two German prisoners and upon which was one of our own men, badly wounded. The shell, without exploding, cut the litter in two and instantly killed the patient, leaving the two prisoners unharmed. The other case was that of a badly wounded soldier of one of our infantry regiments at St. Souplet, who was turned over to four German prisoners, who were directed to carry him in. The soldier made some protest against being carried by four prisoners without a guard, stating that he had no confidence in them. The prisoners were directed to proceed, but after going some distance a shell struck on the road and without injuring the patient, killed or badly wounded all four of the carriers, the legs and arms of some of them being torn off. When another group which had been following them came up they found the doughboy lying on the ground alongside his litter, cursing the worthlessness of the German prisoners and justifying his original opinion of their unreliability as litter bearers.

The 27th Division party was greatly impressed with the thoroughness of British preparation for battle in other fields besides actual fighting. For example, in the attack of the 29th Division referred to, large numbers of troops were engaged in carrying duck boards forward into the area over which the division was advancing. Duck boards are pieces of studding laid parallel and about ten inches apart upon which narrow strips of board are nailed for the purpose of providing a walk in places where men would otherwise sink deep in the mud. These labor groups under continued and harassing shell fire were laying three of these duck-board walks in the divisional sector straight out to the front over the shell-pitted and boggy fields. These duck-board walks made much easier the movement of carrying parties going forward with their heavy loads of ammunition and rations, the bringing in of wounded, and the coming in of messengers and others whose duties required them to return to the rear. At the same time that these duck boards were being laid, highways leading to the front were being repaired by other groups to connect up with the forward area. What interested us particularly in relation to this work of road repair was the substantial character of the work being done and the thoroughness of its execution. Concrete mixers and self-dumping wagons drawing cement and crushed stone from near-by demolished buildings were

working at top speed. While we were passing one of these groups going forward on the occasion referred to, we came under rather heavy shelling, and as there was no target in the immediate vicinity, other than the group engaged in laying the concrete, it seemed apparent that in spite of the mist, the party had come under enemy observation and that it constituted the target for the enemy artillery fire. Accordingly, the men engaged in the work were directed to withdraw laterally, leaving the machinery in the road. They did so slowly and to a distance of not more than 300 yards, when they squatted in the mud and watched the enemy's apparent effort to destroy their road equipment. We did not stop to see the result, but when we returned that evening the concrete road had been pushed well on in advance of the point referred to, and had been covered with loose boards throughout its length for the protection of the cement. In two or three places shells had struck and created craters in the newly made roadway, and at these places groups of men were engaged in filling in the craters and topping them off with a concrete surface.

Simultaneously with these efforts for the construction of duck-board walks and good motor truck highways, other large parties were engaged in pushing forward a narrow gauge railway, so as to advance the railhead for this type of road as far forward as possible. These groups worked with great courage under harassing shell fire. The result of work of this character was that the British army moved with deliberation, but fully prepared, so far as foresight indicated, to hold and make good its gains.

American officers in their early relations with the British were for a time misled by the casual manners of British officers. The latter seldom, if ever, employed technical military terms in conversation, formal or informal. American officers, on the contrary, naturally and habitually talked the technical language of the military profession. If, for example, information were lacking concerning the character and composition of an opposing force, and the probable intentions of such force, an American officer would suggest the desirability of a "reconnaissance in force." On the other hand, the average British officer having the same thing in mind would say: "I think we should push in and have a look."

If casualties were extremely heavy in a particular part of the line, the average American officer would report: "Heavy casualties here." The British officer would report: "Things here are a bit fruity."

If front line troops were fatigued by nervous strain and loss of sleep, and fearing attack, began to fire nervously and send up rockets unnecessarily, the American officer would report: "Front line troops fearing attack, firing unnecessarily." The British officer would report: "Lads in front have the wind up, making a deuce of a racket."

If a British command were badly defeated and driven back with heavy losses, the average British officer, referring to the matter, would say: "The Nth Division were jolly well checked, and, as a matter of fact, were knocked about a bit." On the other hand, the enthusiasm of the average British officer in relation to his successes was no greater than his chagrin when defeated. The accomplishment of a British division brilliantly successful

in attack was usually commented upon in some such language as this: "Well, they didn't do badly at all."

During this trip of observation and later after the 27th Division arrived in France, there were many occasions when our officers and British officers messed together. These occasions gave opportunity for observing the mannerisms, customs, habits and points of view of the numerous classes and types of officers of the British army. Seldom was there an occasion at a British mess when there were not present Scotch, Irish and Welsh officers, as well as English. Frequently, also, there were attached Colonial officers, Canadians and Australians more particularly. It was rather noticeable that the natural and proper pride of men in their homeland, their own people and the military prowess of their units prompted most of them to come vehemently to the defense of their own against good-natured criticism by others of the party. Sometimes the criticism was made for the purpose of getting a particular officer "started," and was not seriously made or with any justification. At other times a discussion would be inaugurated, based upon criticism of an organization, an individual or a race, apparently for the mere enjoyment to be derived from the discussion. On these occasions it was to be observed that the newer peoples such as Americans, Australians and Canadians were, as a rule, more sensitive to criticism and indicated a greater zeal in coming to the defense of their people, their methods, customs and habits than was the case with representatives of the older nations. This attitude to some extent seemed to apply also to the Scotch and Irish, perhaps more particularly to the latter. Many officers in these groups seemed to feel they had a mission to undertake a defense against any criticism, no matter what its purpose and irrespective of its merits. English officers seemed, as a rule, to be less disturbed by bantering and criticism than most other classes. Whether their lack of zeal in the defense was by reason of an appreciation of the uselessness of such arguments is not known. Perhaps they were hardened against criticism. But it was noticeable that the average English officer seldom defended criticisms made of England, its people or their customs and habits. Not infrequently an English officer, after some thought, would agree with the justice of some criticism. Facts seemed to disturb the English less than they disturbed others on these occasions. On the other hand, the average English officer seemed to many American eyes to be rather self-sufficient. This comment applied more to regimental officers than to those of higher grades. In any discussion concerning the merits of a particular kind of organization, of methods of warfare or of supply and replacement, the final and most convincing argument by the average English officer seemed to be that what he advocated was the rule in the British army. But the outstanding feature of all these associations and the discussions which grew out of them was the good will and harmony which prevailed among the great and diversified body of officers who were working together in furtherance of their common cause.

Another characteristic of British officers was their almost universal ability to visualize official criticism. For a people supposed to be un-

imaginative, this characteristic always seemed to us quite remarkable. For example, a British colonel, being dissatisfied with the appearance of one of his companies, would send for the company commander and address him somewhat as follows:

"Good morning, Jones, I wanted to have a talk with you about B Company. Look here, I don't think your lads looked quite right this morning. It seemed to me—well, I mean to say, they weren't quite up to the standard of this battalion, were they—buttons, boots and all that sort of thing—what? I wish you'd mention it to your platoon commanders."

The import of this apparently casual criticism and what can hardly be called more than comment cannot be understood without considering the effect produced upon the company commander. Under such criticism the British officer would return to his company much chagrined and not a little flustered. Usually he would summon his subaltern officers and address them somewhat as follows:

"Look here—I have had a perfectly dreadful morning. I was hauled up before the C. O., who gave me a hell of a telling-off and said the company was filthy."

Having concluded its service with the British, the 27th Division party returned to Paris and, after two days' rest, left for the French front in company with other American division commanders and their staffs. The party left Paris by motor on October 21, 1917, and went first to the palace at Compiegne, where they were presented to General Petain, then Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies. After a short stop at Compiegne the party continued on and arrived at Soissons the same evening. Soissons at that time was uninhabited except by the caretakers of the better class mansions and by a small number of civilians whose duties in connection with the army kept them there. Officers and enlisted men of the French army were, of course, to a small extent, billeted in the town. Daily the city was subjected to long-range harassing fire and it was depressing to see the fine buildings of this city daily suffering the results of that fire. The day following our arrival at Soissons the 27th Division party was assigned to the 38th French Division, commanded by General G. De Salins. The 38th Division was composed of Algerian troops and had made a famous reputation in the French army. About this time Captain Baron de Kergorlay of the French army reported to the 27th Division party as liaison officer. We were confidentially informed that within a few days the French would commence an offensive which had been in preparation for several months, having for its object the taking of the German position along the Chemin des Dames north of the River Aisne. The Headquarters of the 38th Division were located in an extensive system of dugouts, built into the side of a hill near the destroyed village of Vailly, north of the town of Couvrelle. The Division Commander, General de Salins, explained to the 27th Division party in detail the plans for the attack and the mission of his particular division. To his division had been assigned the task of capturing the German strongpoint, consisting of the former French fortress de Mal Maison. Two Japanese officers had

also been assigned as observers with this division. The attack was to be accompanied by a large number of small French tanks. The French had prepared carefully concealed positions for a considerable number of their batteries immediately behind their own front line. The plan for the attack involved the advance of the infantry behind a rolling barrage to a first objective line. After a short rest the advance was to continue to a second objective line, which was about the limit of the range of the supporting artillery. After another short rest, the attack was to continue, this time, however, supported by a rolling barrage fired by the guns which had been secretly placed far forward for that purpose. It was believed that this final advance would carry the French infantry into and beyond the German gun positions. The 27th Division party spent two days before the attack getting acquainted with the preparations for the offensive, inspecting the tanks, the artillery and troops to be engaged. For several days, more than 600 75 mm. guns, 432 Howitzers, 120 heavy guns of various caliber, 50 large naval guns and 260 trench mortars had been firing continuously on the German positions on a front of six and two-thirds miles. Early on the morning of October 22d the 27th Division party went forward to a high hill overlooking the coming battle-field. This hill was occupied by the old fortress known as Fort de Conde. It was still dark when we arrived. The noise of the artillery was continuous and in every direction could be seen the punctuating flashes of the guns as they were discharged. At zero hour the barrage fell and the infantry went forward. At times the infantry could be seen, but more often visibility was obscured by the smoke and fumes of the barrage which gradually enveloped the field. Soon the walking wounded began to pass as they went to the rear. Information received was that all was going well in the attack. After an hour or two at this station the 27th Division party left for the evacuation hospital to observe the manner in which the wounded were handled. En route to the hospital, which was near Couvrelle, we passed large numbers of German prisoners going to the rear. At the hospital at Couvrelle every modern appliance and convenience seemed to be provided for the efficient care of the wounded. This French offensive of 1917, known as the Battle of the Chemin des Dames, was a brilliant success. More than 12,500 prisoners were captured. All the enemy positions were taken, as well as 350 pieces of artillery.

The same day we returned to Soissons and there witnessed the interrogation of a large number of German officer prisoners. Many of these spoke English indifferently, while some of them spoke that language very fluently. The writer had opportunity to talk freely to some of these German officers. These all expressed the same views in relation to the participation of America in the war. They estimated the number of American troops in France to be 50,000, which, if the estimate related to combatant troops at that time, was not far wrong. They all claimed that the U-boats would make a large American army in France an impossibility. Most of them were quite sure that German-Americans in the United States would so conduct themselves as to make it necessary for the United States Govern-

ment to maintain most of its army in the United States. This latter opinion was expressed most confidently to the writer by a very intelligent and apparently well-educated German officer. He was thereupon asked whether he would like to talk to a German-American then and there. With some surprise, he said he would, whereupon the orderly to the 27th Division Commander, Sergeant Major Albert A. Breunig, was called into the factory building, where the prisoners were gathered, and directed to answer any questions the German officer might see fit to ask him. The writer told the German officer that the Sergeant was a German-American, and like most other German-Americans of military age, was in the American Army. He was told that he might talk freely in German with this soldier. After some hesitation and with evident surprise, he asked the Sergeant in German his name, grade and organization. This information was promptly given in German. While asking this question, the German Major was studying the soldier. The latter presented a very military appearance, but had received no advance information of the fact that he was to be questioned in this manner. The German Major then asked him where he was born. He replied, "In New York City." He then asked him where his father was born. The Sergeant mentioned a town in Germany. He then asked him where his mother was born and he replied, "In New York City," but immediately added that her parents were born in Germany. Having received these answers, which appeared to make a deep impression upon the German officer, he asked with some show of emotion: "Then why are you in the American army?" The soldier was equally surprised to be asked such a question and replied simply, "I am here to fight the Germans." The soldier was then excused and the German Major turned to the writer and said: "My God, I cannot understand it."

The further feelings of this officer may be imagined when he was assured that a very considerable percentage of the writer's division was made up of men of German blood and that there were no more dependable soldiers in the American army than this class.

Following the Battle of the Chemin des Dames, the 27th Division party inspected the aviation camp at Maison Neuve and the following day proceeded by motor to Chalons to inspect the school work of the French Army at that place. There were seen large numbers of the nineteen-year-old class receiving their military training. The training was being carried out with great thoroughness and vigor. A visit was also made to the headquarters of the French army at Maiste, where opportunity was had to discuss with appropriate officers many questions affecting the recent offensive.

It is interesting to compare the impressions gained of the French officers and men with those received while with the British. The one outstanding fact concerning the French soldier was his strong physique. In America it was a popular idea that the average Frenchman was a slender, agile man, quite easily excited. While with the French army we did not see a French officer or soldier excited, either in battle or out of it. There was one exception in the person of a French Poilu who was intoxicated.

He is mentioned because he was the only French soldier our party saw intoxicated during this visit to France. The French soldiers were short in stature. They seemed, on the average, older than the "Tommies," and certainly the mass of them were broader of shoulder, deeper of chest and thicker of limb than the average British soldier. While the British army kept their buttons polished, boots shined and their faces shaved, the French soldiers apparently gave little attention to these niceties of military appearance. They impressed the writer not as soldiers who were waging a war, but as serious-minded and tired men, who were protecting their homes and their families from the threatened ravages of the enemy.

In the British area it was a common sight to see battalions of the Guards division of the British army marching in step even on road marches. In the French army the picture was quite different. The French soldiers almost always wore their overcoats with the skirts buttoned up. The horizon blue of the uniform appeared in many shades and frequently bore evidences of hard usage. The French steel casque was usually seen well back on the head and below this appeared the stout, strong, bronzed, serious face of the French soldier, with its intelligent dark eyes and black moustache. A pipe in the mouth, a mass of equipment piled high on his back, an exceedingly long rifle with an exceedingly long bayonet slung from the shoulder, completes the picture of the individual French infantryman. On the march they moved along, every man for himself so far as the cadence of step was concerned, but without straggling. They presented a picture of excellence of health, carelessness of attire, confidence and determination in their movements, great intelligence and seriousness of purpose.

A French regiment was usually followed by its transport. To the American eye the transport was very nondescript. Wagons of various types were to be found in the column. The horses were not often well groomed and many of them were hardly serviceable. The harness, too, was frequently observed to be in poor condition, having been augmented by ropes and wire. In the British army, on the other hand, the transport might serve as a model for any army. No army equaled the British in the condition of its animals, harness and vehicles. Apparently they know more about the upkeep of horses than any other people.

The French soldier seemed to be a generous captor in his relations with German prisoners. In the Battle of the Chemin des Dames large numbers of German prisoners frequently went to the rear in charge of an almost negligible number of French soldiers, some of them wounded. In almost every instance the French soldier guards carried their rifles slung over their shoulders, in which position, of course, they could not be prepared to use them with great promptness. It was not uncommon to see a French soldier give a cigarette to a German prisoner.

Another aspect of the French army which differed materially from the British was the relation between officers and enlisted men. While going forward on one occasion near Soissons we found a narrow road blocked by a French infantry regiment and a transport column seeking to pass it

in the same direction. Taking advantage of the short delay, we looked over the French troops while the French liaison officer with us engaged a French lieutenant in conversation. While this conversation was going on, one of the French soldiers stepped from the column with an unlighted cigarette in his hand and approached politely within a yard or so of his lieutenant, where he waited until the conversation was terminated. Thereupon the French officer looked inquiringly at the soldier and the soldier asked him if he might secure a light from the officer's cigarette. "Certainement, avec plaisir," replied the lieutenant as he handed his cigarette to the soldier, who, in the presence of the company, lit his own cigarette from that of the officer and thereupon returned it with a very polite bow to the lieutenant, who nodded pleasantly to the soldier while the latter returned to the ranks. The incident apparently aroused no interest among the French soldiers, who took it all as a matter of course. Such a thing in the British army would have been unthinkable. Even in the American army, had such an incident occurred, the life of the soldier for the following few days would have been made miserable by his comrades, who probably would have addressed the soldier as "Captain" or "Lieutenant." In the American army public opinion among enlisted men of most commands will not tolerate actions on the part of individual soldiers which are departures in matters of this kind from the action of the mass.

The French officers impressed us as being fast and accurate thinkers. They, too, like the British, under a very attractive garment of politeness, held a high regard for their own methods and military doctrines, which, like those of the British, were entitled to great respect, because supported by four years of continuous experience in war. While with the French we were accorded every courtesy and consideration, and from what we saw and learned could not withhold our admiration for their fortitude and the gallantry which enabled them to bear up so bravely under the great losses which had been inflicted upon them. In both the British and French armies we found every evidence of a sincere appreciation by each army of the merits of the other. This was true at least among the officers.

Following our period of service with the French army, all the American officers went to the American General Headquarters at Chaumont, where two days were spent with officers discussing staff organization of the American General Headquarters. American schools were also visited, and shortly thereafter the 27th Division party was ordered to Bordeaux for transportation back to the United States. The party reached New York November 26, 1917.

The opportunities afforded by this service with the British and French armies, including the examination of the facilities in France for the training of divisions behind the lines, were obviously most valuable, not only to the officers who constituted the party, but indirectly to the division they represented.

It became clear that training could proceed much more rapidly and effectively in South Carolina than could be the case in France, particularly during the winter season. Concentrated as the division was in the Ameri-

can camp, it was available without delay for any kind of maneuver exercises. Owing to the sparsely settled condition of much of the country in the vicinity of Camp Wadsworth, there was ample maneuver field available, and target practice furnished no difficult problem. In France, however, every division behind the lines occupied a billeting area, which included a score of towns, villages and hamlets, in many cases widely separated. The average billeting area was ten or fifteen miles in length and five to seven miles in width. To concentrate the division under such conditions would normally require a day's march before a field exercise could begin. During the bleak and long winter season in France it was not desirable to attempt to bivouac troops under training in the open fields. It was almost impossible in France to secure adequate target ranges. Most of the ranges in the British area were from 50 to 200 yards in length, while those at Camp Wadsworth were complete and satisfactory.

The trip abroad also accentuated the fact that the war would continue for a considerable period of time, and that there was very much to be learned by American troops in relation to the methods best adapted to apply in combat the sound principles of our own Field Service Regulations.

As a result of our observations and experiences abroad, the subjects of correct march discipline, unfailing ammunition and ration supply, physical endurance and determination of all ranks, thorough preparation for battle and a clear understanding by all of combat orders, took on a new importance. As will be seen in the next chapter, the experience abroad affected materially the continued training of the division after the return of the Division Commander and his party to Camp Wadsworth.