

CHAPTER XI

TRAINING WITH THE BRITISH



IN some ways there was no more interesting phase of the division's service abroad than the period immediately following our arrival in France, during which the division made the acquaintance of the British army and with their aid and advice began a rigorous course of training supplementary to that received at Spartanburg.

It may be asked why this additional course of training was necessary or even desirable after so long a period of training at Camp Wadsworth and at a time when the presence of American troops in the line was so urgently needed. The explanation of this is to be found in the condition already mentioned, that the American troops arrived in France short of much of the *materiel* requisite not only for combat, but for training. It was necessary, therefore, that upon receipt of machine guns, Lewis guns, Stokes mortars, one pounders, grenades, wireless, sanitary and engineer equipment, the men should be trained in the use of this British type of *materiel* and armament. Furthermore, it had been found during the war that progress was so rapid in the development by both sides of new methods and *materiel*, that it was essential for troops to be kept up to date by constant training when they were out of the line. The service abroad, therefore, in all arms of the service, consisted of a cycle of phases. Upon relief from the line a division enjoyed a period of cleaning up and rest. This was followed by replacement of *materiel*, armament, equipment and men lost during the active service in the line. The division, thus renovated as it were, moved to an area adapted for training and engaged in exercises best adapted to bring it up to the minute in its methods and skill. While undergoing this training the division was usually considered to be in reserve.

In the case of the 27th Division there was additional need for this training, for the reason that the division was, so far as the British were concerned, a unit of a foreign army, expected to function with them efficiently. To do this it was necessary, by association and official relation, to learn their methods in all fields of military endeavor. There was much in the British army that differed from the American army, and the period of training with the British was not only essential for the reasons mentioned but was, as stated, one of the most interesting phases of the service abroad.

The reader may well imagine the keenness of the officers and men of the division as day by day they came in intimate contact with the sights offered in the area immediately behind the lines by the great and polyglot army of the British, then engaged in the greatest struggle in its history. There could be seen the famous regiments of the British army as they

marched to or from the front, rested in their billeting areas, or engaged in training exercises. Not only did one see English, Irish, Scotch and Welsh troops, but also the soldiers of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as well as detachments of the Indian army, South Africans, Fiji Islanders, West Indians and large numbers of Chinese coolies. There were also close by, Portuguese, French and Russian troops, as well as large groups of German prisoners employed in various ways. Add to this panorama of military activity the uncertainties and the possibilities of the outcome on the immediate front and the nightly air raids in this new environment, and the reader will grasp the necessity for a period of time sufficient for a foreign division so placed to acclimate itself before being committed to battle.

On June 5th orders were received at Division Headquarters that for purposes of administration and cooperation with the British army, the division would be affiliated with the 66th British Division, a unit of the Third British Army, under General Sir Julian Byng. This division was commanded by Major General H. K. Bethell, and had been quite used up two months previously during the progress of the German drive which began March 21st. The 66th Division had not many more than 2,000 officers and men left. It was, therefore, not much more than a cadre and its *personnel* was largely distributed among the units of the 27th Division in order to assist the latter in getting acquainted with British methods of administration and supply, to give advice and make suggestions concerning training, and generally to aid the preparations to meet the enemy.

At this time Staff Captain Robert W. Hanna of the British army was attached to 27th Division Headquarters as Liaison Officer and Assistant to Major Edward Olmsted, Assistant Chief of Staff (G-1) of the division. Captain Hanna proved to be of inestimable value throughout his service with the division, which was continuous until after the armistice. He brought to his work not only an intimate knowledge of British administration and supply, but a spirit of comradeship which soon made for him many firm friendships.

General Bethell was the youngest Division Commander in the British army. This information was disclosed to the writer by General Bethell personally on the occasion of his first visit, which took place a day or two after the arrival of the 27th Division at St. Riquier. Returning one afternoon from Noyelles, General Bethell was found at the Division Commander's billet. His salutation was: "General O'Ryan, I understand you are the youngest Division Commander in the American army; I am the youngest Division Commander in the British army. Look here, I think we had better get together for mutual protection." This was accomplished in orthodox fashion by immediately sitting down to tea. General Bethell was found to be an officer whose sole object was to make himself, his brother officers and the remnants of his division as helpful as possible to the 27th Division in its new environment. He suggested that it would be well for his brigade, regimental, battalion and company commanders to call upon their opposite numbers; that is to say, upon the commanding



Brigadier General Albert H. Blanding, commanding 53d Infantry Brigade



The gas chamber

officers of similar American units with which they were associated, and then to have them to tea or dinner, after which it might be helpful for the American commanding officers to arrange for similar formalities for the British. General Bethell expressed the view that people were quite the same the world over and would get along handsomely if they would only get together and learn to know one another. This was agreed to and the arrangements carried out.

It is interesting to recall at this time, and in view of the subsequent understanding and accord which obtained between the British and American officers, some of the incidents based upon difference of national customs which threatened in the beginning to create misunderstandings. In the first place the custom is well established in the American army that at a social gathering every officer should at some time during the occasion of the gathering introduce himself to other officers superior to him in rank, stating his name and organization. In this manner officers, without waiting for a formal introduction to others with whom they are not acquainted, meet and chat with practically all those present. In the British army, however, following English custom, the practice is quite different. Not only does no officer introduce himself to any other, but seldom if ever are they introduced to each other by another. In the British army, if an officer has anything particular to say to someone else, he says it, but at the same time keeps his identity a dark secret. Obviously, these widely differing customs were bound to result in some surprises until they became understood and reconciled.

One infantry officer of the 27th Division, visiting headquarters the day following a social gathering at a British battalion headquarters, complained bitterly of what he called English rudeness. He said he went to a British battalion headquarters in pursuance of an invitation to tea, and although he was politely relieved of his cap and escorted to a room by one of the hosts, was not introduced to any other officer in the room. For a time he waited, ill at ease, for something to happen. Shortly he was reinforced by another officer of his own battalion who began to experience the same feelings. In a few moments a British officer present in the room approached, blushed and remarked with considerable embarrassment that it was a "beastly day out," then faltered and retired. This Britisher made no other disclosure except that relating to the weather. Another, a few moments later, approached and, also without disclosing his identity, blushed apologetically and said in the English language, "Look here, do you care for any tea or something?" The two American officers allowed they would try the something, as they felt by that time they needed it. Having been stimulated and encouraged in the manner indicated, and remembering the admonitions given them about "getting along" with our Allies, they determined upon an offensive. Accordingly they advanced to a group of three British officers and the senior of the two, addressing a British colonel, said, "Sir, I am Captain Jones of the 105th Infantry, 27th American Division."

"Oh, really," stammered the colonel. "Yes, yes, I am sure," but needless to remark did not disclose who he was.

"Yes," continued Captain Jones, somewhat flustered, "and this is Lieutenant Smith, also of my regiment."

By this time the British colonel looked particularly distressed, glanced rather helplessly at his associates, both of whom colored deeply and bowed, then with renewed morale, said: "Yes, yes, the 105th Infantry—fine fellows. I saw them on the road yesterday and directly I saw them I knew they were Americans." About this time the power of the offensive waned so rapidly that the two American officers beat a hasty retreat.

Other instances of similar character were of rather frequent occurrence during the first week or two of the division's association with the British army. Soon such incidents became subjects of intense amusement at messes of British and American officers, who chaffed each other unsparingly over their earlier experiences and the relative merits of their national customs.

One British officer whom the writer knew very well asked one day concerning the ungodly custom which obtained in the American army of officers unloading upon others a mass of unrememberable data concerning their identity, military grade, organization, etc., upon the slightest provocation. Our very convenient and simple social custom relating to acquaintanceship of those meeting for the first time was explained to him, and then he was asked for justification of the ice-packed social ceremony of the British service, which places a premium upon embarrassed silence and makes a state secret of identity.

After the first week or two with the British, it was observed that the British officers had evidently been schooled or at least admonished in relation to the American custom, for at subsequent social gatherings, and until they came to understand each other, it was rather a common and extremely amusing sight to see a perspiring and very much flustered British officer introducing with meticulous care British and American officers meeting each other for the first time. "This," said Colonel Atkins of the Nth Dragoons, addressing a brother officer and nodding toward an American officer, "is Captain Jones of the one, ought, five American Infantry, or is it the one, ought, six, captain? Well, at any rate, it is one of the American regiments. He is of the 27th American Division, you know, and he is here with us and all that sort of thing. I say, I want you to meet him." Then after a moment of deep thought as he mentally checks off the details of the American formality, "Oh, yes, by the way, Captain Jones, this is Dados of our 41st Division."

The reader may imagine the chagrin of Captain Jones when, due to the bungling of the American formula by the well intentioned British introducer, he addressed his new acquaintance as "Major Dados," only to find that true to British form the major's name had not been disclosed at all; that Dados does not spell a name but stands for D. A. D. O. S., Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Service. Thus Captain Jones, like many other American officers, received his first acquaintance with

another dreadful British custom, namely, the waging of war by a seemingly endless array of mysterious initials.

Some idea of the intricacies of British military conversation may be gathered from the following language employed by a British officer in giving a brother American officer an account of his recent doings. "Yes, I have been out here for quite a bit. I came over as a subaltern in the 6th Don AAC. Directly I got here I was given rather a cushy job. You see I had to inspect property. I visited a lot of places of the R. A. M. C., but hardly was I on the way with this work when I got a chit from the G. O. C., R. F. A., of the 40th Don AAC, who asked me if I would care for a billet with him. You see he knew I was a gunner. As a matter of fact, what I was really interested in were the Tock Emmas, with the Emma G's as second choice, but I felt I did not know enough about them and dreaded the school work. You are not with the Tock Emmas by any chance, are you?"

The American officer, of course, did not know whether he was with them or against them, for he did not then know that the Tock Emmas were the Trench Mortars. All he knew was that he understood the American language, something of the French and almost nothing of the English.

It should be explained here that in the British army language a gunner is an artilleryman; G. O. C., R. F. A. is General Officer Commanding, Royal Field Artillery of a division or higher unit, and the R. A. M. C., the Royal Army Medical Corps. As telephone conversation had disclosed the frequency of error in relation to particular letters of the alphabet, due to their similarity of sound over the wire, a system had been adopted for minimizing such occurrences by using a prescribed pronunciation for particular letters. Under this system a was called aac, b—beer, d—don, m—emma, p—pip, s—esses, t—toc, etc. The 41st Don AAC, therefore, meant the 41st D. A. or Divisional Artillery, Tock Emma meant T. M. or Trench Mortar, while Emma G meant M. G. or Machine Gun. With these keys to the British army language the sample of conversation above given becomes understandable to American ears. In addition, therefore, to acquiring familiarity with British methods of administration, supply and training, it was also necessary for American officers and men to acquire a reasonable degree of familiarity with the English language. At times when our men began to pride themselves upon the attainment of proficiency in this language they received rude setbacks due to some shortcoming in their accomplishment, directly traceable to ignorance of the language medium employed between the two armies.

An example of this may be cited in Major Olmsted's experience with a very helpfully inclined British officer of the corps. This British officer was the corps "Q," which in our language means the corps quartermaster. Major Olmsted wanted twenty motor trucks to transport property from the village of St. Firmin. He asked the corps "Q" to have the twenty trucks report at St. Firmin at three o'clock.

The corps "Q" replied in an amazed tone of voice that it was quite impossible.

"I thought you wanted to be helpful?" countered Major Olmsted.

"I do, to be sure," replied the corps "Q," "but one cannot do the impossible. If you will look at your map you will see there is no railroad at St. Firmin."

"What has that to do with it?" asked Major Olmsted.

"Oh, nothing in the world," answered the corps "Q" sarcastically, "except that railroad tracks are essential for trucks."

"Since when?" asked Major Olmsted, adding hastily: "Say, what language are you speaking anyway, English or American? With us trucks are rubber tired and are propelled by gasoline."

"Oh, my word," responded the corps "Q," "you don't want trucks at all, do you? What you really want are lorries."

It was then made clear that in the English language trucks are railroad carriages and lorries are motor trucks.

Very early in the training period with the British, delivery was made of rolling kitchens, first line transport, motor trucks, automobiles and motorcycles, and all armament required. In relation to the latter it was determined that the 27th and 30th Divisions should turn in their modified Enfield rifles, because they required the .30 caliber American ammunition, and to substitute for them the British rifles, caliber .303. This step was necessary in order that the two American divisions might use British ammunition and thus avoid complications in ammunition supply which would otherwise occur.

It was a task of considerable magnitude to turn in nearly 15,000 rifles in the hands of troops scattered about over a considerable area and to issue in their place an equal number of other rifles. This task, however, was accomplished in most efficient manner and in a surprisingly short time by Major Joseph J. Daly, the Division Ordnance Officer. The efficiency and speed with which the entire work was done made a most favorable impression upon the British ordnance service.

About this time also rigid orders were issued concerning the precise number and kind of articles to be carried by each soldier and to be transported by units. Everything in excess of what was prescribed was deemed surplus and directed to be turned in and stored at Calais. Particularly was it directed that all cameras be turned in. There were numbers of small and valuable cameras in the hands of officers and enlisted men of the division. Many enlisted men had tailor-made clothing in excess of the one uniform prescribed, which had been carried overseas in barrack bags, pursuant to orders.

At the time these orders in relation to surplus property went into effect, other American divisions in addition to the 27th and 30th were still in the British area and were included in the order. It was obvious that the mass of property then to be sent to Calais would be so great that it would cover acres of space and would almost certainly be the subject of theft and damage by the elements. An effort was made in the 27th Division, and it is believed in others also, to secure authority to hire buildings without expense to the government for the storage of divisional sur-



British lorries which transported food and supplies for the 27th Division



Mail for the 27th Division

plus property, and to maintain the same in the custody of the division under guard of a few invalided soldiers. Such buildings were successfully maintained by units of the British army. Had this been done, the division would not only have gotten back the great mass of property thus stored, but could have drawn upon it as new clothing became essential. Authority for this plan, however, was denied and accordingly mountains of barrack bags were piled up at Noyelles and at railroad yards where there were no storage facilities. Due to the demands upon the railroads, this valuable property lay exposed to the elements until much of it was damaged. Later it was sent to Calais, where most of it was looted by parties unknown.

The orders regarding surplus property allowed no overcoat and but one blanket per man. At that period of the war operations were stationary, the nights were cold and frequently wet. It was believed that the men could better conserve their health and fighting qualities if made as comfortable as possible in the trenches, and accordingly authority was asked to retain the overcoats, the request being coupled with the statement that no allowance of extra transport for their movement would be requested. Major General Read, the corps commander, fortunately gave this authority. The result was that our men had the advantage of this extra clothing at times when it was badly needed and were never embarrassed by its presence either on the march or in battle. This was accomplished in the following way:

When the men were ordered to change station the overcoats were bundled by squads, tagged and temporarily stored by companies in some available building, and there were left under guard of a soldier of the company, usually one slightly injured or indisposed. After the company arrived at its new station and had settled down, motor trucks or transport wagons as available moved the company overcoats from the old to the new station. In that way there was no difficulty for each man to get back his own overcoat.

In relation to military property, it may be said that everything thereafter received until the time of the armistice came almost without exception from British sources. The division lived on the British ration and were issued British underclothes and shoes. As the outer clothing of the men became worn and requests upon American supply depots remained unfilled, it was necessary to issue British breeches and to some extent British tunics. The division never could understand its apparent abandonment by the American supply authorities, and accordingly when inspecting officers from the American area found our officers and men unconsciously employing British terms which their close association with the British and their use of British armament and equipment had made unavoidable, and criticized their use of this unauthorized British nomenclature, their criticisms met with little patience or sympathy from the men of the division. Most of these visiting officers were young and lacking in knowledge of the psychology of our situation and of the necessity for our men to cooperate in action and spirit with the great British army, of which the two American divisions, the 27th and 30th, were relatively small parts.

It was not long before the division had settled down to intensive training with the British. The machine gun battalions and companies of the division were concentrated near Rue on the coast. They were outfitted with British Vickers machine guns and engaged in target practice and field-firing exercises under the guidance of experienced officers and non-commissioned officers of British machine gun units. In similar manner every company in the division in every arm of the service had on detached service at British schools officers and non-commissioned officers following short courses in the specialties, so as to gain experience in the use of British armament and the advantage of British experience and advice. These schools included signals, liaison, bayonet, sniping, scouting, grenades, Stokes mortars, field fortification, wiring, Lewis gun, gas defense, preparation of British ration and use of British rolling kitchen.

In conveying the will of the Commander to the more than 25,000 men who constituted the division, it was frequently found to be inevitable that due to the transmission of thought through the chain of command, the subject matter was unconsciously influenced by those engaged in transmitting it. Sometimes, perhaps, the modification lent force to the thought, but at other times very much of what was desired to have reach the men was devitalized. These comments do not apply to orders, but rather to instructions governing the conduct of the men in battle. Accordingly, where it was desired to have the views of the Division Commander in relation to some subject of particular importance get to the men without danger of modification the plan was adopted of presenting such views in the form of a bulletin and of requiring the bulletin to be read to the men at a routine formation. If the subject matter was of vital importance, this reading was required to be made on three such occasions. Technical language was avoided in preparing these bulletins and a special effort was made to present each subject in a manner to attract and hold the attention of the men. A sample of these bulletins is indicated by reference to Bulletins 39 and 41, the first addressed to the enlisted men and the second to the officers of the division, copies of which follow:

HEADQUARTERS 27TH DIVISION, U. S. A.
AMERICAN E. F., FRANCE.

June 9, 1918.

BULLETIN No. 39.

1. A copy of this bulletin will be furnished each squad in the division armed with the rifle and will frequently be read and discussed by the men of the squad. The squad leader will be its custodian for thirty days following its receipt and will be responsible that each soldier in his squad becomes intimately familiar with its contents.

2. At this stage in the training of the division, with the prospect of early service in the line, it is desirable that officers and men devote special thought to the manner in which the knowledge and experience they have acquired are to be applied in combat. During the past year our units have been so actively engaged in reorganization, disciplinary drill, physical training, target practice, field exercises and in the many specialties that the application of their training to the work confronting them may not be sufficiently clear. The moment is therefore opportune to burn into the minds of all a few principles, which, if fully understood and applied, will stand all in good stead in the hour of trial and contribute mightily to the cohesive hitting power of the division in its

first engagement with the enemy. "In war," said a great military authority, "nothing succeeds but that which is simple." Here are a few simple rules which if followed will make you effective soldiers in the fight.

3. WHAT GENERAL PERSHING SAID. In the first place, all will remember the admonition of the Commander in Chief, A. E. F., sent us as far back as last year, namely, that "At no time in our history has discipline been so important," and that "The standards of the American army will be those of West Point." Everything that has happened in the war since that time has justified the importance given this subject. So much has been said and done in our division in support of this standard that it is felt that our men are at least impressed with the necessity for such standard and are desirous of attaining it. But every man should remember that discipline means certainty and precision *in the little things*. For example, saluting *every* officer—not three out of five; shaving *every* morning, *not nearly every* morning; and it means in addition an alert and loyal state of mind in relation to *every* order given, not only the orders of high commanders, but more particularly the routine orders of the platoon and squad leaders. Therefore, in the performance of daily routine let *every* soldier of this division *always* enter upon his particular task with an appreciation of the fact that *his* individual intensity of purpose and *his* thoroughness of accomplishment constitute an important contribution to the mass of effort that is to determine the effectiveness and value of the division.

4. THE RIFLE IS THE STRONG ARM OF THE AMERICAN SOLDIER AND IT HAS AS MANY "WALLOPS" AS THERE ARE CARTRIDGES AVAILABLE—LEARN TO MAKE EACH "WALLOP" A KNOCKOUT. You will remember the orders published at Camp Wadsworth based upon messages from the Commander in Chief, A. E. F., that "The rifle and the bayonet are the principal weapons of the infantry soldier," and that "The principles of combat remain unchanged in their essence." Since that time, and recently, we have read of the German offensives where the fighting was in the open and where nothing counted so much as accurate rifle fire and the correct application of tactical principles of combat. In these attacks, if there were units that did not provide efficiently for flank security, such units suffered heavily for their omissions. If there were units whose fire power was lessened by poor sight setting and aiming, there were to be found the units whose fire did not stop the enemy. An authority once estimated that it requires 50,000 cartridges to hit a man in battle. Instead of belittling the value of rifle fire, this should constitute an inspiration to each soldier in the division armed with a rifle. It should constitute an inspiration because it demonstrates the immensity of the field for improvement which exists and the opportunity we have to develop improvement and turn it to our own advantage. It demonstrates further that if such character of rifle fire can be made to stay and at times stop the enemy's progress, then it must be clear that accurate and rapid rifle fire delivered by disciplined and resolute soldiers should be annihilating. Every infantry soldier therefore owes it to himself, to his family, to his regiment and to the division to become expert in the use of his rifle at all ranges within its effective hitting power. Ranges will be made available as soon as practicable here and elsewhere, but what is needed now and throughout our war service is the fixed determination of *every* soldier continually to improve his marksmanship and become an expert rifleman. If this is done there will soon be born a demonstrated confidence in the soldier that whatever he turns his rifle loose upon will have no further interest in this war. This degree of fire excellence works two ways—it is not only destructive of the enemy, but it is a life-saver to those who possess it; the more accurate our fire, the less accurate does that of the enemy become due to the punishment he is receiving. Let every man who reads this picture in his mind an infantry command splattering the landscape in its front with poorly aimed and nervously fired bullets suddenly coming under the fire of a command shooting with disciplined precision and confidence born of training and skill in marksmanship. Let every man visualizing the picture make up his mind that *his* company will be in the latter class. The rifle is the strong arm of the American soldier and it has as many "wallops" as there are cartridges available. Learn to make each "wallop" a knockout. I want to see our men always,

everywhere, working with their rifles. not only grooming them, but practising aiming and pointing, making rapid changes in sight adjustments, identifying targets at 1,000 and 1,200 yards pointed out by comrades, practising to attain manual dexterity in the rapid manipulation of the bolt, in the delivery of simulated magazine fire *that is aimed fire*. I want to see our men doing this in their own time, between drills and after the dinner hour, as well as at the range and on the drill field.

MORALE

5. THrice ARMED IS HE WHO KNOWS THE GAME AND HAS THE MORALE ON THE OTHER FELLOW. Make no mistake about it, the German soldier has had his belly full of war. Our common sense and his war losses tell us that he is war weary. His people are more so. He may be scheduled for a six-round bout, but it is doubtful whether he will last through to the fifth. We have the advantage of knowing that sooner or later we will win—it is only a question of time. Never permit any man to hang “war gloom” around your quarters no matter what the circumstances. “Morale,” said Napoleon, “is three-fourths of victory.” All but our recruits understand that morale does not mean noisy enthusiasm, but signifies zealous confidence based upon discipline and knowledge. Help get the recruits lined up for real morale.

TO MAINTAIN MORALE THERE ARE TWO THINGS TO PROVIDE AGAINST, ALWAYS, EVERYWHERE. These are *demoralization* and *surprise*. First as to demoralization. It is to produce demoralization that the enemy uses gas and all his variety of heavy gun-fire. Get your minds ready for it so you will recognize it for what it is intended to be—a *morale shaker*—and then don't shake. Remember that we send them “morale shakers,” and that we are a generous people. Whenever you are uncomfortable during the visitation of a “morale shaker” realize that in all probability the enemy is more so. We will experience many “morale shakers.” Always have on hand the determination and the confidence to see it through so as to be there with accurate rifle fire and the bayonet at the critical moment. Instances are recorded where one machine gun or one platoon of infantry with a good field of fire has stopped an entire enemy battalion. This will make it clear how desirous the enemy will be to shake our morale with a view to rendering ineffective the fire of our rifles and machine guns, whether in the attack or in the defense. Whenever you sustain a bombardment remember its purpose, put the lid down on your nerves and be ready for effective fire action at the right moment, for with it you can stop anything.

Demoralization is sometimes effected by the happening of the unexpected. Communications relied upon break down. Leaders depended upon are killed or wounded. Supplies planned to be available are cut off. All these experiences will doubtless be yours and they will determine your value as soldiers. When these things happen recognize them as incidental to war and do not regard them as unforeseen calamities. By preparing your minds now for these incidents they will not surprise you when they occur. Have an alternative for everything—have several. Always resourceful, always aggressive.

As to surprise. Doubtless you have heard stories of how this squad or that company fought well until the enemy came in unexpectedly on the flank or from the rear. Every unit down to the squad when operating against the enemy must have out its feelers to prevent surprise. Most of you know this, but frequently the “feelers” do not go out sufficiently far, do not select the best positions for their observations or fail to report their findings with adequate speed or intelligence.

GAS

6. When gas shells burst about you you will be numbered among the quick or the dead. Be quick always. Be cautious removing the respirator. Many men have died because they removed it too soon.

FINALLY

7. (a) Be disciplined.
- (b) Shoot to hit.
- (c) Preserve your morale.
- (d) Never be surprised.
- (e) Know your gas defense.
- (f) Read and follow orders governing personal hygiene, sanitation, rules of the road and march discipline.

DO THESE THINGS AND THE ENEMY WILL ALWAYS FEAR THE 27TH DIVISION.

JOHN F. O'RYAN,
Major General, Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS 27TH DIVISION, U. S. A.
AMERICAN E. F., FRANCE

June 14, 1918.

BULLETIN No. 41.

1. The officers of the division have read Bulletin 39 addressed to the enlisted men. The moment is equally opportune for reflection on the part of the officers, concerning the application of *their* training to the work now confronting them. There are some aspects of this which do not appear in books or pamphlets, but which are of the utmost importance in the maintenance of well-conducted team-work. It is the object of this bulletin to impress some of these points upon the minds of our officers.

2. The technical training you are now receiving is in the nature of a finishing course. It is an important phase, but as most of you have had a number of years of service in the division, this finishing course cannot be expected to make material changes in your professional capacity as officers. The existing course, for example, will not supply military character or the fundamental physical and mental virtues, where these are lacking or are not already developed as a result of previous training. Speaking broadly, we will fight with the character and professional capacity developed in the division through the years and brought here with us. In the past constant criticism has been part of your development, to the end that there might be continued improvement. This criticism, however, never obscured the military virtues possessed by the body of our officers. Doubtless much room for improvement still exists, but certain it is that our officers are loyal, intelligent and zealous in high degree. You have demonstrated these qualities in peace-time and under war-training conditions. Now you must maintain them under the conditions of campaign and battle. You must do this not only for your own state of mind, but because their deterioration will affect the fighting efficiency of the division in most radical manner.

3. War experience indicates that some officers most effective and valuable in peace "blow up" under the stress of battle, while others deemed mediocre in garrison or camp become veritable leaders of men. Some who seem to be slow and diffident in their first fight become live actors in subsequent combats. No doubt the reverse of this is also true. It is also known that the human tendency to visit the consequences of an accident upon some other person is frequently accentuated in war, due to the stimulation of the emotions by losses and other incidents of battle. The injured mind almost instinctively seeks a scapegoat. These points should be understood by our officers. Only such understanding, supported by your discipline and your morale, will enable you to avoid the possibility of becoming either the thoughtless perpetrator or the unhappy victim of unseemly criticism which at times has characterized discussions following the combat wherein losses have been considerable. You cannot have an omelet without breaking eggs. You cannot have a battle without losses—not in this war. In relation to losses, it is idle to charge yourself or others with responsibility for such of them as speculation *in the light of after knowledge* might dictate were avoidable by other methods. Speculations concerning past events are valuable only in relation to the adoption of new ways and means for best conducting subsequent operations. Officers who demonstrate inapti-

tude or lack of leadership in combat will be replaced by others believed better qualified, but such changes will be effected by superior authority after careful consideration of all the facts.

4. Losses will result at times and in particular places from rashness, from timidity, from overconfidence, from lack of confidence, from the exercise of good judgment as well as poor judgment. The leader of every unit will give the best that is in him in decision and in execution. He will seek always to profit by the results of that effort, whether the results be fortunate or unfortunate. He will judge others as he would be judged. Never should he criticize a superior officer or permit in his presence such criticism. Always his attitude should be generous in relation to the efforts of brother officers. All officers should prepare themselves mentally to meet and accept responsibility, and the tendency in this connection should be to share with subordinates responsibility for the results of their honest exercise of judgment. Such an attitude and such relations as these will bind the officers together more closely in good weather and in bad, and will increase the effectiveness of their team-work. This principle should be made known to and developed among the enlisted men. Nothing would give greater cheer to a roughly handled enemy than the knowledge that their opponents were holding "post mortems" and disputing among themselves. Conduct of this character gives aid and support to the enemy, and one guilty of it, be he officer or enlisted man, should be viewed with suspicion and the facts and circumstances reported promptly to superior authority.

JOHN F. O'RYAN,
Major General.

It is believed that this and other similar bulletins exercised a considerable influence in developing a common point of view throughout the division in relation to matters covered by them.

The daily association in this intensive work between our officers and the British officers and between our men and the British soldiers soon developed mutual understanding and comradeship. In spots, our men found that numbers of the British soldiers at this time were most pessimistic concerning the outcome of the war. It was not infrequent for British soldiers to confide in our men their opinion that the Germans could not be beaten and that further attempts to accomplish his defeat would only result in additional and useless losses. In justice to the British officer, it should be said that no instance ever came to the attention of Division Headquarters of a British officer expressing anything but confidence in the ultimate outcome after the American army began to appear in strength in the British area.

It was about this time that Colonel Willard C. Fisk, commanding the 107th Infantry, became seriously ill with stomach trouble. This incident, for in a great war it would seem to be a mere incident, serves nevertheless as a reminder of the part played in the great war accomplishment of the Guard divisions by such men as Colonel Fisk. For more than forty years Colonel Fisk had served in the 7th New York Infantry. Born with a full measure of the fundamental soldierly qualities and possessing educational and physical fitness, he was enabled during the course of his long service in the regiment through all the grades, to exercise a very profound influence upon it. He commanded the regiment during the period of the Mexican Border service, and after the long period of training at Camp Wadsworth took the regiment to France. Colonel Fisk at this time was more

than sixty years of age. He was an ideal leader and the officers and men of the regiment were very happy in their confidence in his experience and skilled leadership. The regiment was at the top notch of its efficiency. The feelings of Colonel Fisk at this period, when he was confined to bed in his billet with his distressing illness, may well be imagined. The great occasion when he might lead his regiment into battle after all the years of preparation was almost within reach, yet Colonel Fisk was never greater, never more dominated by the spirit of self-sacrifice than on the occasion when the Division Commander visited him in his billet in the Rue area for the purpose of discussing with him his continued command of the regiment. He anticipated the subject and with outward calm, but with a controlled distress of mind that could be detected, said, "General, the doctors tell me I am very sick. I think I shall be all right in a short while. You know what I think of this regiment. Even if I were permitted to I would not by any selfish act of mine jeopardize its best interests. I am an interested party, and so you must decide my fate without an opinion from me."

The prompt answer was, "Colonel, you are going home. You have done a great work in the reorganization and training of this regiment. You have brought it to France and now due to your illness you must turn it over to some other man to lead it into battle."

Shortly thereafter Colonel Fisk left for the States for treatment. It was such men as Colonel Fisk, whose lives were devoted with complete self-sacrifice to the interests of the National Guard, that enabled this great body of troops, in the face of many obstacles and much opposition, to develop efficiency and demonstrate their dependability in battle.

Colonel Fisk was shortly thereafter succeeded in the command of the regiment by Colonel Charles I. DeBevoise, who had commanded for several years the 1st Cavalry, and who had just completed the course at the Army School of the Line at Langres, where he was graduated number one in his class.

About this time it was learned that ten American divisions in all had been sent up to support the British army. In order to understand the reason for this action, it is necessary to recall to the reader's mind that on March 21, 1918, the German army made a supreme and almost wholly successful drive against the British army for the purpose of gaining the channel ports and cutting the Allied army in two. The weight of the enemy attack fell upon the Fifth and part of the Third British Armies. Little progress was made against the Third British Army, but against the Fifth British Army the drive was most successful. This army, covering a wide front, and fighting against heavy odds, was defeated and driven back in the general direction of the important city of Amiens. By April 24th the German advance had reached Villers Bretonneux, distant but seven or eight kilometers east of Amiens. Here the Germans were finally stopped by a counter attack made by a part of the Australian Corps which had arrived shortly before the capture of the place by the Germans.

Meanwhile, on April 9th, the German army further north had attacked south of Ypres, had taken Mount Kemmel and had driven in a big

salient toward Hazebrouck, which later became known as the Lys salient. During the months of April and May the British were fighting with their backs to the sea, and it may be added not very far from the sea. It was because of this very grave situation that the leaders of Great Britain's destinies called for immediate help from the United States. It was pointed out that if we were to be of any real assistance we must hurry; that if we delayed it might be too late. The United States Government was handicapped in transporting troops overseas by lack of adequate shipping. It had not been considered practicable up to the time of this crisis for Great Britain to divert ships needed to keep the population of the British Isles supplied with food, to the job of transporting troops from America to France. Now, however, the need for soldiers was paramount. But a further embarrassment to our government was the fact that, although it had several millions of soldiers in training in the United States, it had not even at that late date adequate clothing, armament, equipment, ammunition and supplies necessary for their use. Accordingly, in order to expedite the availability of American troops in aid of the British army, an agreement was entered into between representatives of the two governments which became known as the Abbeville Agreement, because of the fact that the representatives met in the city of Abbeville on the Somme. This agreement was to the general effect that Great Britain would furnish additional ships for the prompt transportation of American troops to France, and would arm, equip and supply such troops immediately upon their arrival in the British area, the British Government to be later reimbursed the cost of material and transportation.

Of this gigantic problem and its solution, Lieutenant Colonel Repington, of the London *Morning Post*, one of the most widely read military critics of the war, wrote:

"The British defeat at St. Quentin on March 21st found the American army in France far from strong. The leading idea of our political War Cabinet—an idea never shared by our General Staff or our Command in France—was that we were overinsured in the West and that the war could be and should be won elsewhere. This conception had now gone the way of other lost illusions, and while our War Cabinet feverishly began to do all the things which the soldiers had fruitlessly begged them to do for months before, they also prayed America for aid, implored her to send in haste all available infantry and machine guns, and placed at her disposal, to her great surprise, a large amount of transport to hasten arrivals. It is a pity that the transport was not sent earlier.

"The American Government acceded to this request in the most loyal and generous manner. Assured by their allies in France that the latter could fit out the American infantry divisions on their arrival, with guns, horses and transport, the Americans packed their infantry tightly in the ships and left to a later occasion the dispatch to France of guns, horses, transport, labor units, flying service, rolling stock and a score of other things originally destined for transport with the divisions. If subsequently—and, indeed, up to the day the armistice was signed—General Pershing found himself short of many indispensable things, and if his operations were thereby conducted under real difficulties of which he must have been only too sensible, the defects were not due to him and his staff, nor to the Washington administration, nor to the resolute General March and his able fellow workers, but solely to the self-sacrificing manner in which America had responded to the call of her friends."

It was in pursuance of this agreement that the Government of the United States was enabled to make the extraordinary record of transporting overseas as many as 300,000 troops a month for a period of several months. This explains the presence in the British area so soon after the arrival of the 27th Division of the large force of American troops aggregating more than 200,000 men. It was during this period and by reason of the crisis referred to that a decision was made by representatives of the Allied Governments to designate a Supreme Commander to direct the operations of the Allied armies. When Marshal Foch received his commission to act as General-in-Chief of all the armies, one of his first orders was to direct the transfer of American troops in the British area to other localities. It was stated at the time that Field Marshal Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, protested against this withdrawal of American troops and that he was finally allowed to retain two American divisions and to select the two to be retained. He chose the 27th and 30th Divisions. The other divisions soon left the British area, but not before the 33d Division, also a National Guard division, largely from Illinois, had won distinction with the Australian Corps at Hamel. It was the first action when American troops serving with the British had taken part in any important offensive operation and all watched the result of the proposed attack with keen interest; we of the 27th with confidence, the British with concern, as to what would be disclosed of the real battle value of untried American troops.

A British staff officer agreed to let the officers at the 27th Division Headquarters know promptly of the outcome. Shortly after the operation was concluded, and it will be remembered that it was a finished success, this British officer hastily came into Division Headquarters. His joyous manner indicated what the general result had been. Some officer present, more impatient than the rest, immediately demanded, "What about those Yanks of the 33d? Did they make good?" The British officer replied, "I asked the identical question a moment ago over the phone to the Australian headquarters and the Australian officer's reply was, 'These Yanks are certainly good fighters, but, my God, they are rough.'" This coming from an Australian was praise indeed. This incident was the origin of the widely circulated story about the roughness of American troops in battle.

Thus the departure from the British area of the mass of American troops left the 27th and 30th Divisions as the representatives of the American army with the British. It is believed by the division that one of the determining factors in the selection of the 27th Division for continued service with the British was the impression gained by Field Marshal Haig when he inspected and reviewed a detachment of the division during the first week in June at a place near Rue on the coast. On that occasion the detachment consisted of the 107th Infantry and the fourteen machine gun companies of the division. Marshal Haig made a careful inspection of each company and spoke a word or two to each of the battalion and company commanders.

The officers and men, by their soldierly appearance, exceptional physical fitness and steadiness in ranks, presented an appearance sufficient to stir the blood of any soldier, and the Field Marshal upon completing the inspection, and as he walked with the writer toward the point from which he was to take the review, expressed his admiration of the appearance presented by these troops. Because he had spent so much time in making the inspection and had talked with so many officers in the hearing of the companies, the men had opportunity to estimate Marshal Haig. It was later learned that the officers and men who took part in this review developed a very decided respect and liking for him. What impressed them, and in fact all who had the opportunity of meeting him, was his fine soldierly presence, coupled with his frank, simple and enthusiastic manner. But it was not until the detachment began to pass in review that the Field Marshal gave vent to the fullest measure of his approbation. The regiment passed in column of half companies with bayonets fixed. The alignments and the slope of the pieces were as near perfect as could be seen outside of the Military Academy. At this time it will be remembered these units had no recruits and had sustained no casualties. As with perfect precision they swung by, the Field Marshal turned to the writer and said, "My, but these are seasoned troops. This is certainly no war-raised division. What magnificent chaps they are!"

During the inspection about twenty airplanes had been circling about overhead, probably as a measure of security against the possibility of an enemy air raid. As the column of troops got under way for the passage in review, one of these aviators in a spirit of devilry, which seemed at times to be characteristic of the air service, shot his plane toward the ground at a point behind the rear of the column, and having attained a height of not more than six or eight feet above the points of the bayonets, flew at high speed and with a deafening roar from the rear to the head of the column and then high into the air. It was a very severe test of discipline to have this aerial cyclone, which could not be seen by the men until it had passed, approach them from the rear and so short a distance above their heads. Not a head in the marching column moved, however, and so far as could be seen, not an eye moved. The Field Marshal made some severe comments concerning the action of the aviator, but these were lost in his approval of the discipline shown by the troops.

A decided difference was found between the American point of view and that of the British in relation to what might be termed routine military existence. It was perhaps natural that this should be so. We had come into the war but recently. Our troops were filled with confidence and pride in their ability to win, and this confidence and pride had had no opportunity to suffer a setback at the hands of the enemy. In all probability the British army had experienced the same emotions in 1914, when they first entered the war, but between 1914 and 1918 four long years of bloody suffering had chilled their enthusiasm. War to them had become the routine of life and there was no prospect of any immediate change. They discussed and planned and executed with deliberation and



A Stokes mortar platoon of the 107th Infantry



Target practice for the "one pounders"

a matter-of-fact manner that seemed to the impatient Americans to be lacking in intensity of purpose. The British, furthermore, had been so surfeited with the horrors of the battlefield that they made special effort in their life behind the lines to approximate the normal or peace-time existence as closely as possible. Every British division had its divisional show and nightly these shows entertained the troops in some part of the divisional area. There were athletic contests between regiments and divisions. There were frequent horse shows and dinner parties, while every afternoon at five o'clock there was tea at every point where British officers and British troops were located. All these features aided in enabling officers and men, on each occasion after they were withdrawn from the bloody and muddy human abattoirs of battle, to persuade themselves that they were still human, and had not passed on into some other and very horrible life. After our division had been in action a few times, all were very willing to avail themselves in similar manner of these helpful and distracting influences.

These features not only furnished diversion to those who participated, but for both British and Americans were, in a broad sense, in furtherance of the amalgamating process so necessary in the cause of efficiency.

Reference has been made to the intensive work which went on in the British training area in relation to the specialties. This training, however, was not carried on to the neglect of practice in coordination of the efforts of the several arms of the service. Division exercises were held at stated times. Some of these were most profitable, particularly in training for the maintenance of battle liaison. On Saturday, June 15th, for example, a divisional exercise prescribed by the corps involved the march of the 27th Division to attack an assumed enemy occupying Gapenne Ridge. The exercise employed all units of the division.

Shortly before this, the command of the Second American Corps was given to Major General George W. Read. This assignment was welcomed by the Commanding General of the 27th Division and by others who knew General Read. He and the writer had been members of the same class at the Army War College during 1913-14 and had become well acquainted.

A word or two is in order here concerning the organization of the Second American Corps. When American divisions were sent to the British area early in the spring of 1918, General Pershing did not immediately designate a corps commander. He created by order the Second American Corps and designated a corps staff for the purpose of getting its organization under way, but retained in his own person its command. In the first instance, he detailed as Chief of Staff of the corps, Lieutenant Colonel (later Brigadier General) George S. Simonds of the regular infantry, who had been on duty in the G-3 (operations) section of the staff at General Headquarters. Colonel Simonds was known to the division as the co-author with Captain Marshall of a very instructive primer on military topography, which had been used in the schools of the New York Division a number of years before the war. The efficiency of Colonel Simonds as Chief of Staff of the corps was marked and he combined with

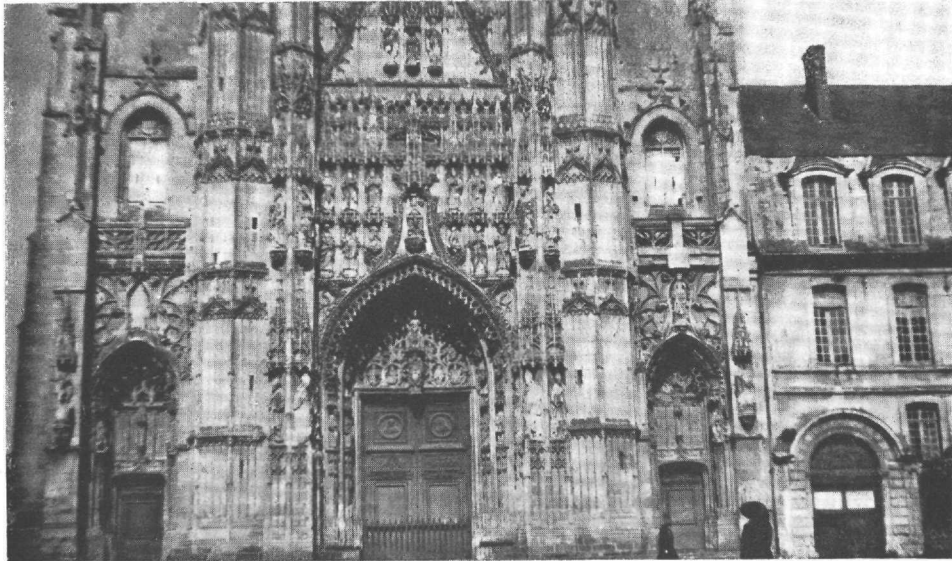
that efficiency a complete understanding of the many little problems involved in our mission with the British.

In our relations with the British the corps had a mission more difficult than either of the divisions which composed it, for the reason that the best interests of the joint British and American effort called for a most intimate and direct relation between the American divisions and the British units, with which they were associated. General Read at no time permitted his authority over the American divisions to interfere with this desirable relation. On the contrary, he furthered it by a complete subordination of what might be called the pride of command to the practical demands of the time. In the military operations which followed the training period, when the 27th and 30th Divisions were parts of British and Australian corps, this policy was continued, and it was not until the Le Selle River operations in October that the 27th and 30th Divisions operated under the direct command of Major General Read as the Second American Corps. In relation to the remarkable spirit of cooperation and loyalty which existed between the 27th and 30th American Divisions throughout their service in Belgium and France, and which will be more particularly referred to elsewhere, the headquarters of the Second Corps must be included as an important element in the make-up of this happy military family.

Reference has been made to the bombing activities of the enemy which occurred during the training period. This bombing took place every night when the weather conditions offered the enemy opportunity to reach their targets. The town of Abbeville marked an important railroad crossing over the Somme and this place was a constant target for enemy aviators. Further west the cities of Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne received constant attention. The Division Headquarters at St. Riquier was but a short distance from Abbeville and every evening about dusk one could see the inhabitants of the town leaving for places of shelter in the near-by hills. Many narrow escapes were had by officers and men in these bombing raids, but no casualties occurred while the division was in the Rue training area.

St. Riquier, among other things, is noted for the fact that in one of its towers still standing the great Joan of Arc was held prisoner for a considerable period of time before her trial and execution, which occurred at Rouen. The town itself is surrounded by steep, rolling hills and presents a very ancient and quaint appearance. In the Rue area and northwest of the town of St. Riquier is located the famous Forest of Crecy. North of this forest in the year 1346 was fought the famous Battle of Crecy, which was the first big battle in which gunpowder was used. The location of the battlefield is marked by a monument. There were, therefore, many places and features of historic interest to attract the attention of men during their stay in this area.

Finally, on June 16th, orders were received that the division would leave the Rue area and proceed to the St. Valery area south of the Somme. This area is shown on the diagram sketch and adjoins the Rue area on the south. Division Headquarters was directed to be established in the town of Escarbotin, near Frieville. At the same time the Division Com-



Church at St. Riquier

mander was notified that the stay in the St. Valery area would be for a few days only and that the division would shortly be ordered to the vicinity of Doullens in support of the Third British Army. The change from the Rue to the St. Valery area was made by marching.

On June 20th, at the invitation of Major General Bethell, the writer dined with him for the purpose of meeting General Rawlinson, the Commander of the Fourth British Army. It was under General Rawlinson that the division later made its famous breach of the Hindenburg Line.



Division Headquarters at St. Riquier

General Rawlinson is the type of soldier who appeals strongly to Americans. A very different type in many ways from the Field Marshal, he possessed the same simplicity of manner and genuine enthusiasm. It seemed to be rather characteristic of all the British officers of high rank that they were men devoid of formality or in fact of anything tending to inspire awe or build up importance.

True to the advance information given, the stay in the St. Valery area was very short. On Friday, June 21st, the troops of the division were again on the march from their billeting areas to staging billets and camps toward the new area, where the division was to be in support of General Byng's Third Army. On Saturday, June 22d, Division Headquarters closed at noon at Escarbotin and opened at the same hour at Beauval.

For the benefit of the non-military reader, it should be explained that a division headquarters during time of war is always open, and in order that important messages may at all times receive attention at headquarters, it is the practice when a change of station is to be made, to send to the new station an advance party to establish the new headquarters and to function there after a given hour, up to which time the division headquarters continues to function at the old station. With notice of such change and of the hour given in advance to all units of the division, it is possible to maintain uninterrupted relation with all units of the division while on the march.

The move from the St. Valery area did not, of course, terminate the training period with the British, but from that period on there was, in addition to the work of training, a tactical mission. As the move from the St. Valery area into the area of the Third British Army carried with it the mission of constituting a part of the Third Army reserve, the continuation of the story of the training with the British will be continued in the next chapter.

