

CHAPTER XIII

SERVICE WITH THE SECOND BRITISH ARMY



IN the last chapter the story of the division was carried up to the point where Division Headquarters was moving from the village of Nieurlet to the town of Oudezeele. En route to the latter place, the Division Commander lunched with General Sir Herbert Plumer, commanding the 2d British Army, and was informed in a general way of the conditions on the front of the 2d Army as they might affect the 27th Division. This distinguished General of the British army became a very good friend of the 27th Division, and all in the division who had the good fortune to make his acquaintance will always remember his kindness of heart and his interest and confidence in American troops.

In order that the conditions affecting the problems of the 2d British Army at this time may be understood by the reader, it is desirable to review in a brief way the military operations which shortly before the arrival of the 27th Division in Flanders so vitally affected that army. It will be remembered that Ludendorff toward the end of March, 1918, began a great offensive for the purpose of terminating the war before the American army could grow sufficiently to make itself a determining factor. The attack of March 21st fell in part upon the 5th British Army and in part upon the 3d British Army. The attack was made between Fontaine-les-Croisilles and La Fere. The 3d British Army resisted with some success, but the 5th British Army was driven back. The attack in the days following the 21st of March continued with successes which resulted in a breach in the line between the right of the 5th British Army, which was the right flank of the British army itself, and the left of the French army. As the British were primarily concerned with the defense of the channel ports, their tendency was to retire to the west and north, while the tendency of the French army, which was fundamentally concerned with the protection of Paris, was to retire west and south. It was only the decision arrived at about this time, making Marshal Foch the General-in-Chief of the Allied Armies in France, which served to correct these perhaps natural tendencies and to produce unity of command and effort. Under his leadership, liaison between the two armies was reestablished, French and British divisions were moved about under his orders as if they belonged to one army, and the great German drive was stopped; but not until it had reached the vicinity of Villers Bretonneux, a short distance east of Amiens. All this happened south of the sector of the 2d British Army which was in the vicinity of Ypres.

After stopping the German offensive in Picardy, Marshal Foch succeeded in getting together the nucleus of a reserve force. He had deter-

mined upon a counter-offensive when, on the 9th of April, the Germans launched another offensive, this time in Flanders. This attack was made against General Plumer's 2d Army between the Lys and Canal de la Bassée. The first day of this attack the Germans made considerable advance. The attack was pushed south of the Lys and on the north of Ypres. Messines and Ploegstert were taken. Armentières was evacuated. Marshal Foch directed that the British forces in Flanders hold tenaciously without retirement, and at any price defend and hold Mt. Kemmel, Neuve Eglise and Pont-de-Nieppe. The initial success of the Germans in Flanders stimulated them to renew efforts in that region. Marshal Foch was obliged to give up his plan for a counter-offensive on the Somme in order to send troops to the support of the British in Flanders. On the 11th and 12th of April French troops were sent to the vicinity of St. Omer for this purpose. German attacks along the British front in Flanders continued more violently than ever.

On the 16th of April Marshal Foch went to Flanders for personal observation of the situation. At Abbeville he conferred with Lord Milner, Marshal Haig and General Wilson of the British army. From that place he went north, stopping at Blendecques, which was then the Headquarters of the 2d Army. The next day an additional French division, the 34th, was sent to the support of the British army. About this time the British were forced from Wytshaete Ridge, immediately east of Mt. Kemmel.

On the 17th of April Marshal Foch directed two more French divisions, one to move by bus and the other by rail, in further support of the 2d British Army.

German attacks in the north continued without let-up and additional ground was gained. It seemed as if the important channel port of Dunkirk would fall before the German advance. Again the importance of holding Mt. Kemmel was stressed. Marshal Foch urged that the arrival of the American troops be expedited, and that in their transportation nothing but infantry and machine guns be sent over until the situation could be relieved. This was in order that valuable space aboard the transports might not be taken up with artillery and other material. Arrangements were made for some thousands of Italian laborers to be furnished the British army to aid them in the adequate preparation of their defensive line to resist further advances by the Germans.

On the 24th of April the important and dominating hill known as Mt. Kemmel, which was defended by one British and two French divisions, was assaulted and taken by the Bavarian corps. In spite of the capture of this important height, the Ypres salient immediately to the north continued in the hands of the British. More French troops were sent into Flanders. On this day Marshal Foch discussed with Generals Pershing and Bliss of the American army the employment of the American divisions as they became available. German attacks continued between Ypres and Bailleul.

On the 30th of April six more French infantry divisions and three divisions of French cavalry were sent north to Flanders. At this time

the force of the German attacks began to diminish, while at the same time, by reason of the reinforcements received in the Flanders region, the power of the defensive was increased. Thus during the first week in May very considerable bodies of French troops were operating in the territory of the 1st and 2d British Armies, and their presence there weakened to the extent of their numbers and the fatigue and losses resulting from their use, the strength of the French army under Marshal Petain, holding the area south and east of Montdidier. Accordingly, on the 10th of May, Marshal Petain warned Marshal Foch that the French army had arrived at the extreme limit of its ability to render further aid in the north. By the combined efforts of the French and British armies under the supreme leadership of Marshal Foch, the great German offensive of March 21st towards Amiens had been stopped, liaison between the French and British armies maintained and the second great German offensive in the vicinity of Ypres brought to a standstill. Again Marshal Foch planned immediately for a counter-offensive, but again Ludendorff maintained the initiative by commencing a third offensive, this time against the French army holding the line of the Chemin des Dames.

On the 27th of May the German army began its assault in the south. It will be noted that this offensive in this sector came shortly after large numbers of French troops had been sent north into Flanders, near the extreme left of the Allied line, where they had been more or less used up in stopping the German effort in that locality.

The attack in the south was between Anizy le Chateau and north-west of Rheims. The two German armies of von Boehm and von Bülow assaulted the eight French and three British divisions which held that line.

On the 27th of May the German army gained the line of the Vesle. In certain places their advance was for a depth of more than fifteen kilometers. On the 28th and 29th their successes continued. Soissons and Fere en Tardenois were taken. On the 30th they gained the line of the Marne, east of Chateau Thierry.

It is not germane to this account to narrate the incidents following the German offensive in the direction of Chateau Thierry. It is sufficient to say that at no time was the cause of the Allies so seriously threatened as when following the two great offensives further north, with all the shock they entailed to the British and French armies, the Germans successfully drove through during the last days of May and the first part of June, almost to striking distance of Paris. As a result of the great efforts made by both French and British armies during the months of March, April and May, there was available not much of a reserve of rested, fit troops, with which to meet this third German effort.*

On the 1st of June there had been held at Versailles the first meeting of the superior council of war. Then it became clear to those most con-

*It was on the Marne at this time that the American Army was able to push into the struggle the fresh divisions that stopped the German drive.



Temporary bridge at Oudezeele. Bridges like the above were carried over all streams in the Flanders area by the British to facilitate expected forced retirement



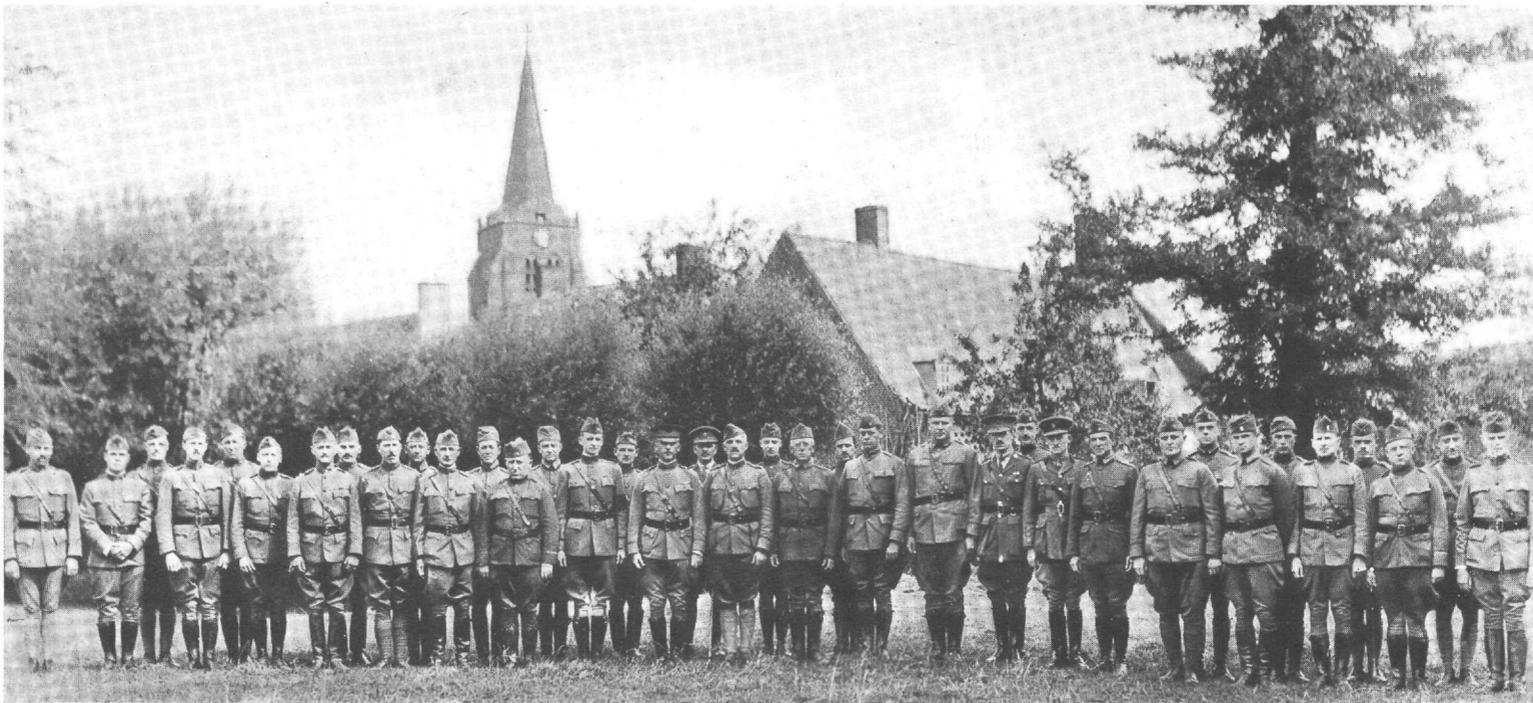
"Au Coc Hardi," Oudezeele's leading hotel

cerned that both British and French reserves were almost expended as a result of the long-continued and heavy fighting. It was realized that the speedy transportation to France of more American troops was vital. It will be remembered from a preceding chapter that at this time the 27th Division had arrived in France and was in part in the Rue area and in part on its way there from Brest and St. Nazaire. By the end of the first week in June the German army was within sixty kilometers of Calais and Abbeville on the British front and actually within gun range of Paris on the French front. The great concern at this time was that the Germans might renew their offensive in Flanders. In that event it was probable that the French army, as a result of heavy losses sustained in Flanders and again on the Marne, would not be able to spare a sufficient number of effective divisions to reinforce the British in a manner needed to stop another enemy drive in Flanders. It was under these circumstances that the 27th and 30th American Divisions were pushed up into Flanders in support of the 2d British Army, then facing the enemy with their backs literally to the sea.

The stay of the division at Oudezeele was for so considerable a period of time that some description of the town would seem to be warranted. Oudezeele was ancient—very ancient, and it was Flemish—all Flemish. The people spoke French indifferently, but Flemish fluently and volubly. There was the usual large and attractive church, a number of quaint stores, a blacksmith shop or two, several mills, and, of course, a number of estaminets, which became to the extent of their capacity, club-rooms for detachments of the men who were billeted in or bivouacked near Oudezeele. The rest of the village consisted of stone or brick houses, harboring a simple farmer class, who were nothing if not industrious. Although this



The billet of Colonel Montgomery at Oudezeele



Division Commander and Staff of 27th Division, taken at Oudezele, August 18, 1918. From left to right: First Lieutenant Edward B. King; First Lieutenant Henry A. Morriss; Second Lieutenant Robert G. Monroe; Captain Tristram Tupper; First Lieutenant James S. Wadsworth; First Lieutenant Edward C. O. Thomas; Lieutenant Colonel Theodore B. Taylor; First Lieutenant Auguste B. Peterson; Major William L. Hallahan; Major James L. Kincaid; Lieutenant Colonel J. Mayhew Wainwright; Major Mortimer D. Bryant; Major Homer N. Battenberg; Captain Davis T. Dunbar; Colonel Stanley H. Ford; Captain Albert N. Towner; Major General John F. O'Ryan; Captain J. S. Jenkins, B. A.; Major Edward Olmsted; First Lieutenant Joseph D. Eddy; Major Joseph W. Farrell; Captain William H. Terry; Major Lefferts Hutton; Major Benjamin J. Williams; Major R. R. Johnson, B. A.; First Lieutenant Matthew F. Carney; Captain Robert W. Hanna, B. A.; Major Walter L. Bell; Major Joseph J. Daly; First Lieutenant Harold T. Clement; Captain Raymond T. Moniz; Second Lieutenant James H. Doyle; First Lieutenant William J. Grange; Second Lieutenant Archie B. Gwathmey; Second Lieutenant William J. Halloran; Second Lieutenant Herbert Forsch; Second Lieutenant Perry S. Newell



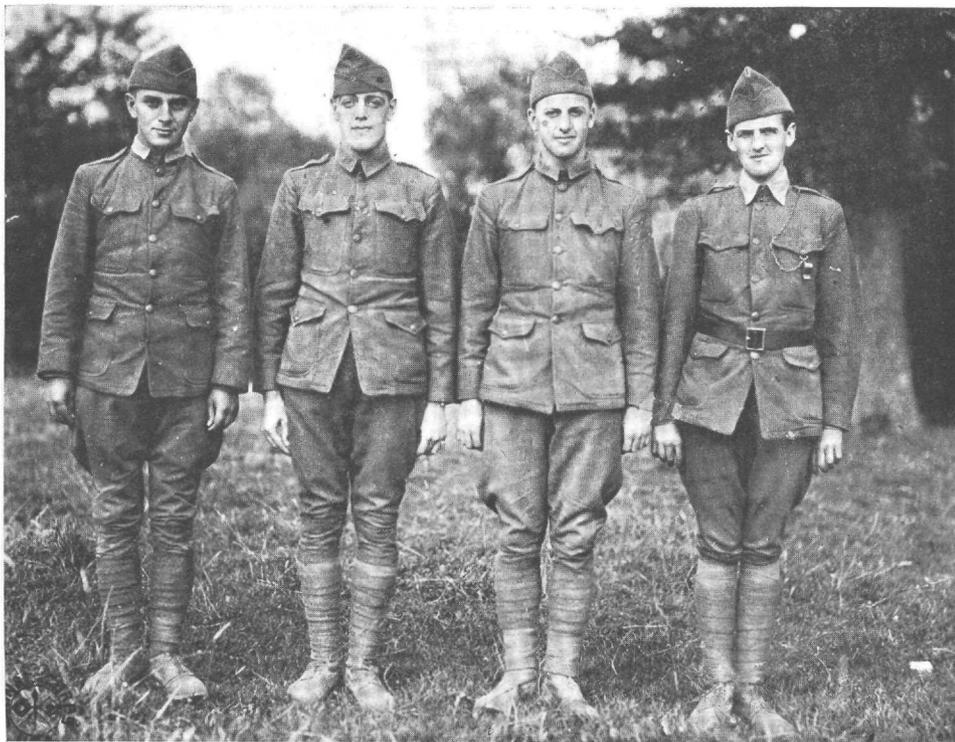
Division Commander's Headquarters at Oudezeele

village was within range of the bigger German guns, and all of the region was bombed nightly by German airplanes, the village life went on in normal manner. Crops were cultivated in every direction right on out to the vicinity of the Poperinghe Line.

The war was regarded by the mass of these people as an unauthorized interference with their farming activities. When the defensive position known as the East Poperinghe Line was established, it cut across the front of the XIX British Corps, through the cultivated fields of the Flemish farmers of near-by villages. When this line was being constructed, and the construction was carried out by the Engineers of the 27th Division under harassing enemy shell fire, positive instructions were given by the British authorities that the greatest care must be exercised to interfere as little as possible with the growing crops. When the threatened German drive seemed imminent a little later in the month of July, and inspections of the East Poperinghe Line showed that the fields of fire from the front line trenches were masked by the growing crops immediately in front, it was arranged, only after much protest on the part of the Division Commander, that the foreground might be cleared of the crops for a short distance in front of the wire.



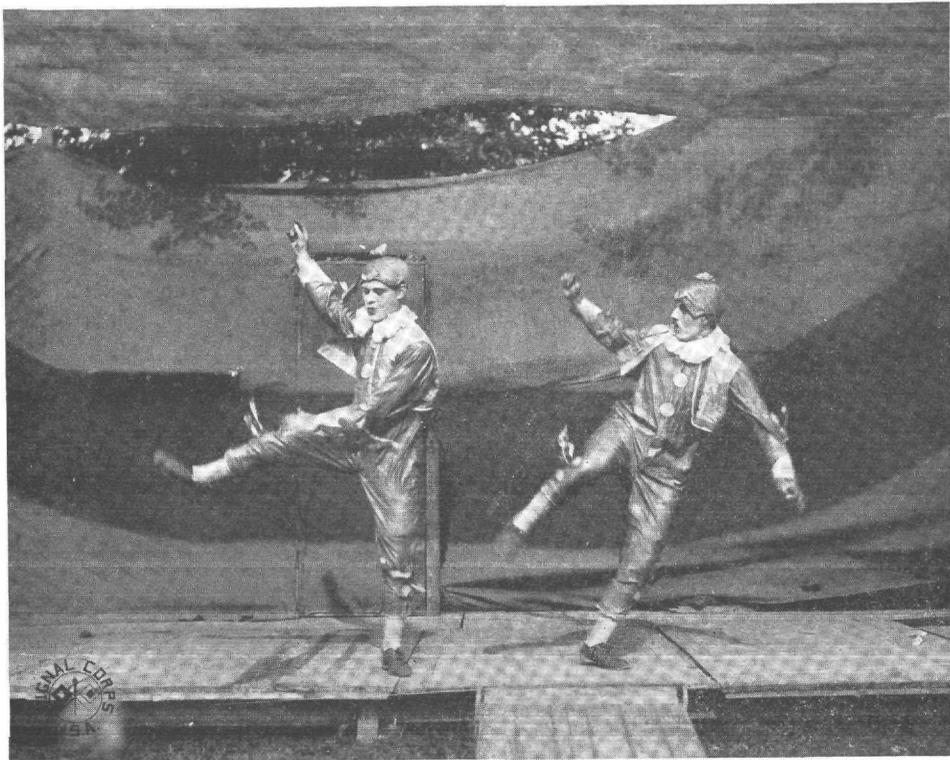
The four "leading ladies" of the Divisional Theatrical Troupe: Privates Krebs, Crawford, Pauly and Burns. Note the hats—they are the regulation steel helmets



The same "ladies" minus their stage make-up

It was not an uncommon sight to see old men, women and even boys and girls hoeing and working in the fields almost on the edge of the heavily shelled area, where it was impossible for anything but a few weeds to grow. They worked away with little interest in the cannonading or the shelling going on about them, unless, as sometimes happened, shells fell very close. On these occasions they took cover as best they could until the conditions again prompted them to continue their work.

This will give the reader an idea of the people as they impressed us at this time in Flanders. For the most part they were a flaxen-haired, stolid people, bearing little resemblance to the French in other sections. They seemed to be orderly, neat, industrious and very religious. In Flanders apparently most men, and all women and children, go to church on Sunday. The sermon is usually delivered in both Flemish and French. While the men and women of Oudezeele and the neighboring towns of Watou and Cassel seemed stolid and more or less indifferent to the coming of the American troops, the children in large measure made up for this attitude. It was obvious that these children liked the Americans, who paid attention to them, and made companions of them. Opposite the billet of the Division Commander in Oudezeele there was a large field surrounded by poplar trees. At the far end of this field there was erected a series of shower baths, while in the adjoining field there was usually bivouacked one or more companies of one of the infantry regiments. On the near side



Performing at Oudezeele. Privates Hughes and Marion



The quartette: Privates Whitman, Unger, Johannes and Hamilton (at piano)

of the field a small stage was erected and in this field every evening between 8 and 10 P. M., which at that season and in that region meant during daylight, the divisional show performed for the entertainment of the troops within walking distance of Oudezeele. True to American form, the soldiers saw to it that the boys and girls of Oudezeele occupied the front rows on the grass in front of the stage. The troops were constantly being moved about, as they went in and out of the line, and so the soldier audiences were constantly changing. Not so with the boys and girls of this ancient village. They were there every night, the same group of forty or fifty. At first they gazed in almost dumb wonderment at the nonsense of the clowns, or the dancing of the "girls," and listened intently to the divisional jazz band and the popular Broadway songs. After a week or two they got to know the leading men and leading "women" of the troupe, and great was the pride of the little urchins when during the day their friendly greeting was returned by one of these great personages. Before the division had been at Oudezeele a month one could hear the boys of the village whistling such songs as "Wait Till the Cows Come Home," "My Heart Belongs to the U. S. A.," "Mother Machree," and other melodies. In two months they were singing the songs in English, without, of course, understanding very much of the meaning.

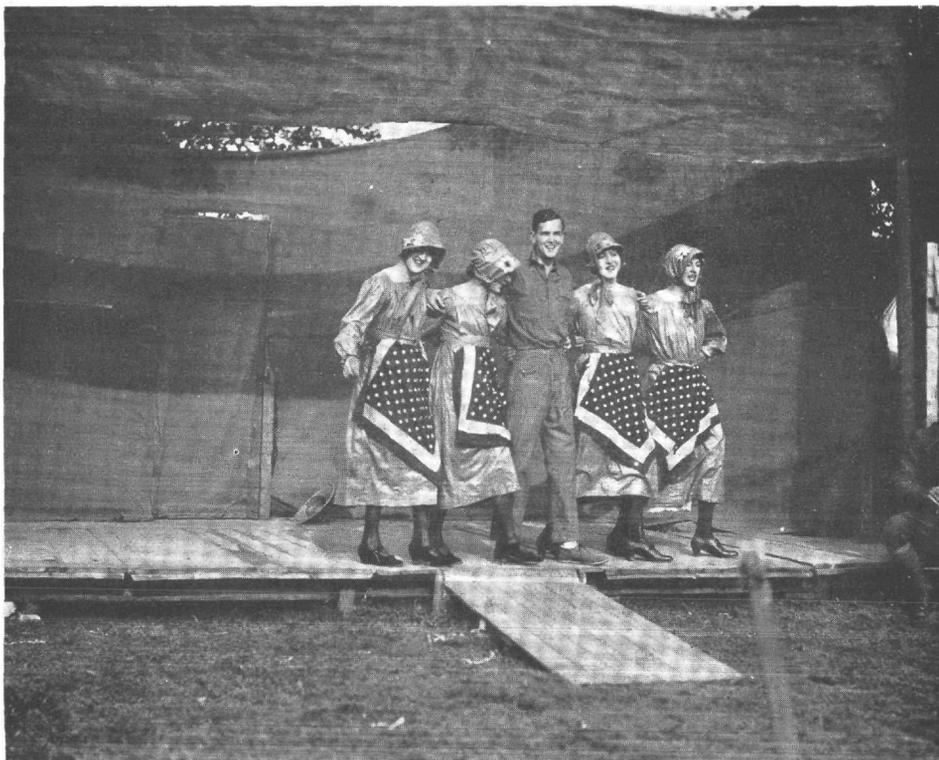
But a few kilometers from Oudezeele was the much larger town of

Steenenvoorde. The Germans did not appear to like Steenenvoorde, for they shelled it daily, the result being that before the 27th Division arrived in the area, it had become a deserted city. A reference to the accompanying map will show no direct roads leading from Oudezeele forward to the center of the sector held by the British division on the immediate front of the 27th Division.

In going forward it was necessary to move to the southern part of the 27th Division sector, through the town of Steenenvoorde to the main road running east and west through Cassel and Abeele and then turn east towards Abeele or, on the other hand, to proceed north to the town of Watou and then turn east on the main road. The Germans, knowing this, kept these roads under harassing fire. At unexpected times throughout the day a rain of shells would descend on Steenenvoorde in the vicinity of the junction of the Oudezeele-Steenenvoorde road and the Cassel-Abeele highway.

Very frequently as one traveled either of these roads, particularly in the vicinity of Steenenvoorde, there could be seen the bloodstains and wreckage of one of the numerous little tragedies that almost daily marked the advent of this harassing enemy fire.

On July 4th the 54th Infantry Brigade, less the machine-gun units, was directed to march to the Arneke Zermezele area the following day.

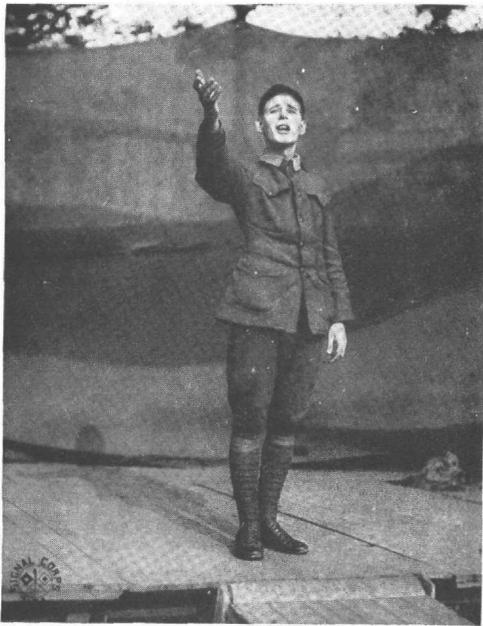


Jack Roche and "girls" singing "Wait Till the Cows Come Home"

On July 5th the 105th Infantry, less machine-gun company, was directed to march the same day to the Tilques area for range practise. On the same day Field Orders No. 15 and Orders No. 26 were issued for the units of the division, less those engaged in target practise, to move forward for the occupation and defense of the East Poperinghe Line. These orders and the march table are included in the Appendix as Exhibit 19.

While the principles governing the conduct of war have remained unchanged for a long period of time, the tactics employed in the application of these principles have varied in accordance with the kind of troops employed, the topographical features to be encountered, the climate, the available resources of the army and the opposing tactics of the enemy.

As a result of the recent successful German offensive, Marshal Foch had prepared and sent to all the Allied armies a memorandum prescribing the tactics which should be employed to meet successfully a repetition of such enemy methods. In this memorandum he stressed, among other things, the importance in defensive operations of disposing the available troops in depth. The idea of this was that when the enemy thrust pierced the defensive front line, their task would not be completed, but on the contrary, would only have begun, because of the necessity in their con-



Private Harry Gribble. This soldier was largely responsible for the success of the divisional show

tinued advance of overpowering continued resistance. It was believed that dispositions of troops made in depth would insure an effective resistance after the initial effort of the enemy had caused him to suffer a reaction from such effort. The psychology of such a defense was that the enemy, after successfully piercing the first defensive system and believing himself free to maneuver, would be disheartened to find himself opposed by additional defenses and continued resistance. It was felt that the enemy advance would be forced to slow down by reason of casualties and the need for ammunition and supplies to be pushed forward to sustain the renewal of the advance against such resistance, all of which would afford time for the higher command to send reserves to the threatened

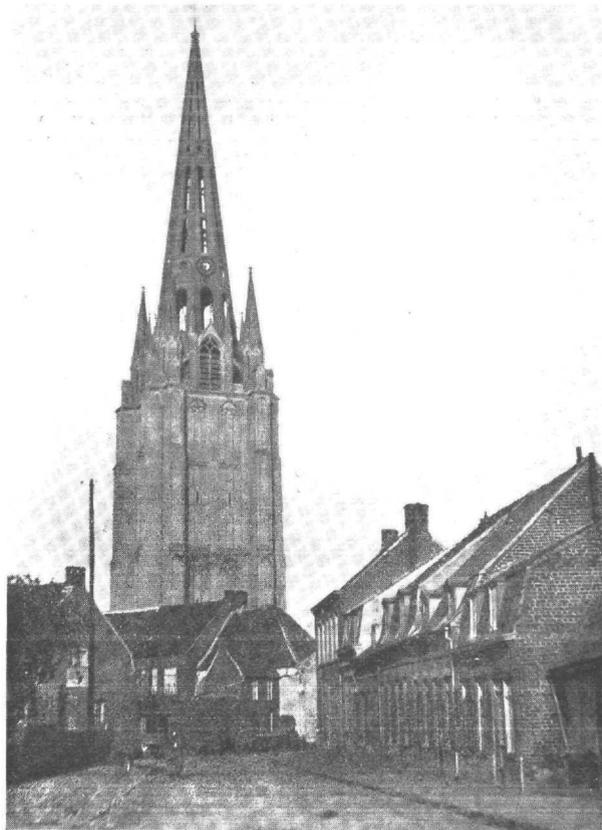
point to further strengthen the resistance and to counter-attack.

It was in pursuance of this conception of a proper defense that the East Poperinghe Line was established. The first defensive position extended from the Scherpenberg Hill on the south in a northeasterly



Hotel du Lion Blanc, Cassel, once used as headquarters by Marshal Foch. In right front of photo may be seen the Hotel du Sauvage

direction through the villages of La Clytte and Dickebusch to the area of the II British Army Corps adjoining on the north. This defense system consisted of several lines of entrenchments, the front line extending from the valley immediately east of the Scherpenberg, in a northeasterly direction to the intercorps boundary, passing to the east of Dickebusch Lake. Behind this system there was a second defensive system, known as the Westoutre Line, constituting the zone which included the villages of Westoutre, Meath Farm, Ouderdom, Wellington and Ottawa Farm. Behind this second defensive position



The church at Steenvoorde

was a third in course of preparation, known as the East Poperinghe Line. This latter system consisted of three lines of entrenchments extending on the north from the vicinity of Anjou Farm south through Hooggraaf Farm to Condiment Cross and thence to Mersey Cross. This third system was a very well laid out scheme, but was not more than half completed. It was recognized, at least by the higher ranking officers, that any great enemy thrust in this section would carry the enemy through the first and second defensive positions and that the real defensive effort would be made in the East Poperinghe Line.

Accordingly, the 27th Division, which was assigned to the XIX British Corps, and the 30th American Division, which had been assigned to the II British Corps, adjoining on the north, were given the task of further preparing for defense the East Poperinghe Line and of occupying and holding it in the event of attack. The general plan called for a constant study and reconnaissance of the line to be made by officers of all ranks in order to familiarize themselves with the topographical features of the ground and the approaches to their own sectors of occupation, while at the same time three missions were to be carried out by the American troops. The first of these missions was to dispose the mass of the troops for prompt occupation of the line in the event of an alarm. The second was, by rotating the units, to feed small detachments, for purpose of advance training, into the British divisions holding the front system. The third mission was, by rotating the regiments, to give each infantry regiment opportunity for a finishing course in rifle practise at the British ranges in the Tilques area, well to the rear, in the vicinity of St. Omer.

In order that these missions might be carried out, frequent changes were made in the locations of organizations.

The following bulletin, published to the division on July 12th, explains the several methods used during the war upon the Allied side for locating points on military maps:

HEADQUARTERS, 27TH DIVISION
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES, FRANCE

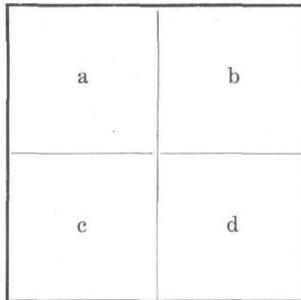
July 12, 1918.

BULLETIN
No. 2

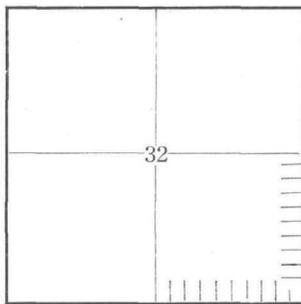
MAP COORDINATES

1. Three principal systems of map coordinates are in use in France: French, British and American.
2. BRITISH SYSTEM.—This is the system of coordinates used in connection with the maps recently issued to this division. It consists of lining off areas on a gridiron system, each grid or square receiving a letter and being divided into thirty-six squares numbered consecutively from left to right, in groups of six. The numbered

squares are in turn divided in four equal squares, always presumed to be lettered as follows:



In order to locate a point on the map with precision, the small lettered squares are assumed to be divided into tenths each way. The point is then located as follows (as an example):



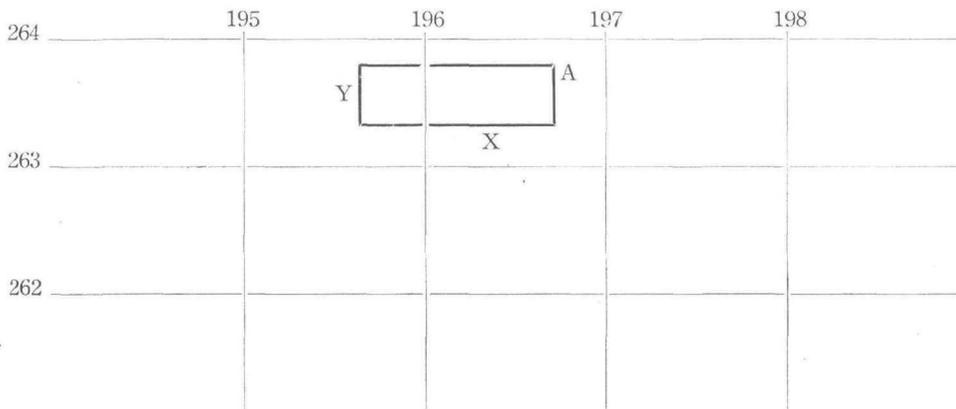
“L”

L 32 d 5.3.

The figure “5” represents the number of tenths along the “X” coordinate, the figure “3” the number of tenths along the “Y” coordinate.

3. FRENCH SYSTEM.—This differs from the British in that figures only are used. The Plans Directeurs are divided in squares, one lineal kilometer on a side. Lines creating this division are numbered consecutively, left to right and from bottom to top. The system consists in finding the kilometric coordinates of the point in question, dropping off figures not necessary for accuracy or clear understanding, and reading the figures beside each other (“X” coordinate first) without pointing them off.

For example:



The kilometric coordinates of point “A” are:

X = 196.783; Y = 263.724.

For ordinary purposes, locations to closer than the next tenth of a kilometer are unnecessary; therefore the locations made to the nearest tenth and the coordinate of the above point are:

$$X = 196.8; Y = 263.7.$$

The last two digits of each number are taken and the point is described thus:

6837

4. AMERICAN SYSTEM.—When location to units and tenths of kilometers will designate the point accurately enough, the French system of coordinates, without the dot, will be used. In all other cases, the point will be indicated by writing the two coordinates on a line, X first, properly pointed off and separated by a dash. Thus, the point given above may be indicated under the French system as follows:

6837

or

96.8 — 63.7

or

6.78 — 3.72

or

96.78 — 63.72

or

6.783 — 3.724

or

96.783 — 63.724

etc., depending upon the degree of accuracy with which it is desired to locate the point.

5. Distribution of Plans Directeurs are as follows:

1/20,000 down to include Battalion Commanders of Infantry and Battery Commanders of Artillery;

1/10,000—(non-secret) down to include Company and Battery Commanders; (secret) down to include Battalion Commanders;

1/5,000—down to include Battery Commanders and in the Infantry to include Company Commanders, except during the period of attack, when the distribution is down to include Chiefs of Sections.

6. AEROPLANE PHOTOGRAPHS.—Aeroplane photographs are increasingly used to obtain information of the enemy's positions, works, artillery emplacements, communications, etc. Their interpretation and use should be known to all officers.

7. Further information may be obtained from "Instructions Concerning Maps," American Expeditionary Forces, 1918.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL O'RYAN:

STANLEY H. FORD,

Lieutenant Colonel, G. S., Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

FRANKLIN W. WARD,

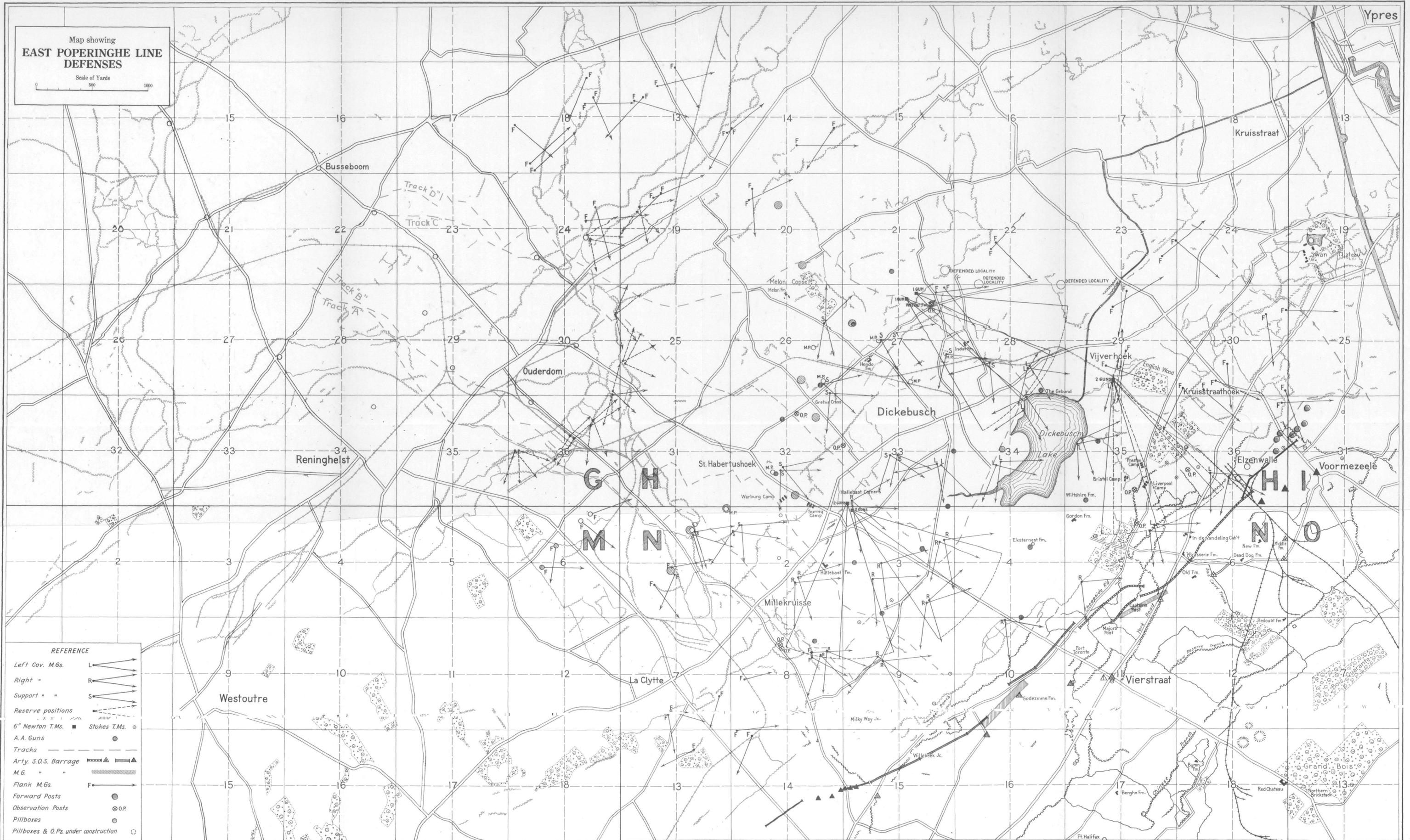
Adjutant General, Adjutant.

On July 16th Field Orders No. 19 were issued, covering disposition of the 105th Infantry Regiment in the East Poperinghe Line. Copy of this order is included in the Appendix as Exhibit 20.

On July 19th there were changes in disposition, all made by marching. These resulted in the 3d Battalion of the 107th Infantry going to R.2.d.6.8. and the 3d Battalion of the 105th Infantry to L.22.a.3.1, while the Headquarters of the 105th Infantry was directed to move the following day to the vicinity of Trappiste Farm at K.17.b.2.1. These references are to the accompanying map of this area.

Map showing
EAST POPERINGHE LINE DEFENSES

Scale of Yards
0 500 1000



REFERENCE

Left Cov. M.Gs.	L	→
Right "	R	→
Support "	S	→
Reserve positions	○	→
6" Newton T.Ms.	■	→
Stokes T.Ms.	○	→
A.A. Guns	●	→
Tracks	---	→
Arty. S.O.S. Barrage	▲	→
M.G. "	▲	→
Flank M.Gs.	F	→
Forward Posts	●	→
Observation Posts	○	→
Pillboxes	○	→
Pillboxes & O.Ps. under construction	○	→

As the years go on it will become increasingly interesting to those who participated in the operations of the division during the war period to refresh their recollections concerning the features of the routine which occupied the attention of the officers and men at that time. Reference is made more particularly to such matters as bathing, laundry, gas respirators, excess baggage, tentage, regular reports, cemeteries, refilling points, dumps, gasoline, empty containers, etc. For this purpose there is included in the Appendix as Exhibit 21 copies of Orders Nos. 36 and 38 of July 19th and 20th, respectively, dealing with these subjects under the conditions as they existed at the time.

It has been mentioned that the 27th Division was a part of the XIX British Corps. For those readers who may be interested in the organization of a British corps headquarters, there is included in the Appendix as Exhibit 22 a table showing the corps organization of the British army with a statement of the duties of each staff officer. The XIX Corps was commanded by Lieutenant General Sir Herbert Watts. The Corps Chief of Staff was Brigadier General C. N. MacMullen, D. S. O., 15th Sikhs. The relations of the division with the XIX British Corps continued for so considerable a period of time that some mention of General Watts and his Chief of Staff should be made.

General Watts was a young man about seventy years of age. He is referred to as a young man advisedly. He looked young, he rode his horse as a young man would ride, he covered his corps area with the thoroughness and industry of a young man, and his mind and manners were those of a young man, for he was receptive, optimistic, quick to think and to act. He was all of these things naturally and without effort. After carefully inspecting the 27th Division he expressed, and soon showed, the greatest confidence in its ability to hold the East Poperinghe Line should the Germans undertake a renewal of their attack.

His Chief of Staff, General MacMullen, was a giant in stature, possessed a highly organized mind and an imperturbability of manner that breathed confidence into those with whom he was associated, because that exterior seemed to be backed by great resources of latent imagination, energy and determination.

On July 16th General Plumer, the Army Commander, made a personal inspection of the 54th Infantry Brigade, while in the vicinity of Abeele and Beauvoorde Wood. There was no shelling there on that occasion and in a field defiladed from enemy observation Captain Sandberg's company of the 108th Infantry gave a demonstration of a company in attack. This company, always noted for its excellence, and as well for the exceptional physique of the young giants who constituted it, made a most favorable impression upon the Army Commander.

On the 19th of July Major General Tasker H. Bliss of our army made a short call. During this period the infantry commands designated for prompt occupation of the East Poperinghe Line in the event of attack, actually held their sectors of the line with detachments and were engaged in observation, reconnaissance and the construction of shelters and lines

of communication. This work, of course, was visible in places to German observation by airplane and from balloons, and in consequence the detachments occupying the line were constantly subjected to harassing artillery fire. The first battle casualty of the division, other than from aerial bombs, occurred in the 102d Engineers on July 13th, when, due to this harassing fire, Private Robert Friedman of Company A was killed and a number of other men of the regiment wounded.

On the 19th of July the Division Commander was notified by telegram that Colonel Cornelius Vanderbilt, commanding the 102d Engineers, had been promoted to be Brigadier General in the National Army and was directed to proceed to the States to take over the command of an infantry brigade. Colonel Vanderbilt, as a result of his long service and experience in the division, had won a much-merited promotion, the inevitable consequence of which was his separation from the division.

On the 20th of July a conference was called by the XIX Corps Commander, the result of which was that the Commanding General of the 27th Division was directed to make a study for the purpose of planning the taking of Mt. Kemmel. This study occupied some time and resulted in the formulation of plans for the capture of Mt. Kemmel by the 27th Division. The execution of the plan was postponed from time to time by reason of threatened renewal of the German offensive on our front, and as will be seen later, became unnecessary when the enemy evacuated Mt. Kemmel on August 31st.

On Monday, July 22d, Miss Elsie Janis visited Division Headquarters and entertained more than a thousand soldiers of the division in the field of Oudezeele, where the divisional show gave their nightly entertainments. Her visit was greatly appreciated. She was the first American woman we had seen in several months.

In the Appendix as Exhibit 23, will be found copies of General Orders, Nos. 63 and 68, of July 24th and August 12th, prescribing the details of training in the front line with British divisions.

During this part of July all officers were busy inspecting and checking up the preparations for the defense of the East Poperinghe Line, and these inspections afforded opportunity to the Division Commander, whose duty it was to cover all parts of the line, to observe the state of mind of the men in the ranks concerning their ability to stop an enemy offensive at what had come to be known as the "East Pop Line." It was plain to be seen that there was no need for stimulating confidence. On the contrary, the men quite generally seemed to feel that with their rifle and machine-gun fire they would stop the enemy as fast as they were willing to come on. This confidence, of course, was in some measure affected by the fact that up to this time the mass of the men had not experienced the demoralizing influence of a concentrated artillery bombardment. The harassing fire to which they were almost daily subjected did not, in spite of occasional casualties, seem to dampen their enthusiasm, but rather served to annoy them, because they could not return the fire.

It was very evident that the entire personnel of the division had

resolved to expend itself completely if necessary in resisting an enemy break through the East Poperinghe Line. The machine guns of the division had been very carefully placed, so as to cover by their fire every avenue of approach. Similar arrangements had been made for the use of Stokes mortars and one pounders. Alternative positions had been selected for all of these auxiliary weapons, while dumps of ammunition had been placed and camouflaged. Very complete plans had been made for counter-attack to meet every conceivable condition that might develop as a result of temporary enemy lodgment in any part of the line. It was felt in relation to the defense of the East Poperinghe Line that the division would give a successful demonstration of its skill, determination and dependability.

There will be found in the Appendix as Exhibit 24 the defense scheme of the 54th Infantry Brigade for the defense of its part of the East Poperinghe Line, which will serve to indicate in greater detail what was contemplated by the defense. It will be noted from the plan mentioned that, under certain conditions, action by the division was contemplated east of the East Poperinghe Line. This action was prescribed in a secret memorandum issued from



*Major General George W. Read, commanding
II American Corps*

Division Headquarters on July 17th, copy of which appears in the Appendix as Exhibit 25.

On June 14th Major General George W. Read, having been designated to command the II American Corps, consisting of the 27th and 30th Divisions, assumed such command, but, as has already been stated, left

the actual command of the two divisions with the two British Corps Commanders in whose corps they were then serving.

On July 25th General Read visited the 27th Division and inspected a number of units. The inspection continued on the following day.



Brigadier General Palmer E. Pierce, commanding 54th Infantry Brigade, 27th Division

On July 24th Field Orders No. 22 included in the Appendix as Exhibit 26, were issued. These orders were important. The Headquarters of the 53d Infantry Brigade was moved to L.26.4.7.7. and it was prescribed that the command of the center subsector of the divisional front would pass to the Commanding General of that brigade at 9:00 A. M. on the following day. This officer already was responsible for the left subsector. Command and responsibility, therefore, became vested in the Commanding General, 53d Infantry Brigade, for the left and center subsectors and in the Commanding General of the 54th Brigade for the right subsector. In each case the troops consisted of the brigades, less the machine-gun units. These, in view of the needs of the proposed defense, were consolidated and organized

as a machine-gun corps, temporarily commanded by the Divisional Machine Gun Officer. The Infantry units disposed in depth retained, of course, the Lewis machine guns with which each of the infantry companies was armed. One regiment of infantry was kept at target practise in the Tilques area and constituted the divisional reserve.

About this time there had been received from the American General Headquarters copies of a document for distribution to officers of the division for the purpose of study. This report described the effective manner in which enemy forces, by the coordination of light and heavy machine guns, artillery fire and infantry assault, had captured positions in some other part of the front that were fully prepared and supported by machine guns adequately installed, doing all this with little loss to themselves and with heavy casualties to the defenders. In accordance with orders this memorandum was distributed to the officers of the division, but, as the memorandum did not point out the defects in the plan of defense referred to, which resulted in the reverses reported, and did not indicate the additional methods and measures which, if applied, would have smashed the German attack, it was feared by the Division Com-

mander that too much significance might be attached to this memorandum and that it might indicate to the division a belief on the part of the American General Headquarters that such German successes were to be expected. Accordingly, the Division Commander prepared a written critique covering the paper referred to and caused this critique to be distributed with the least possible delay to all officers of the division. As this critique indicates the problems that confronted the division in the proposed defense of the East Poperinghe Line, it is included in the Appendix as Exhibit 27.

On the 24th of July detachments of the division as large as battalions began their service with the 6th and 41st British Divisions, then holding the front line. The necessary movements to carry out this service were contained in Field Orders Nos.

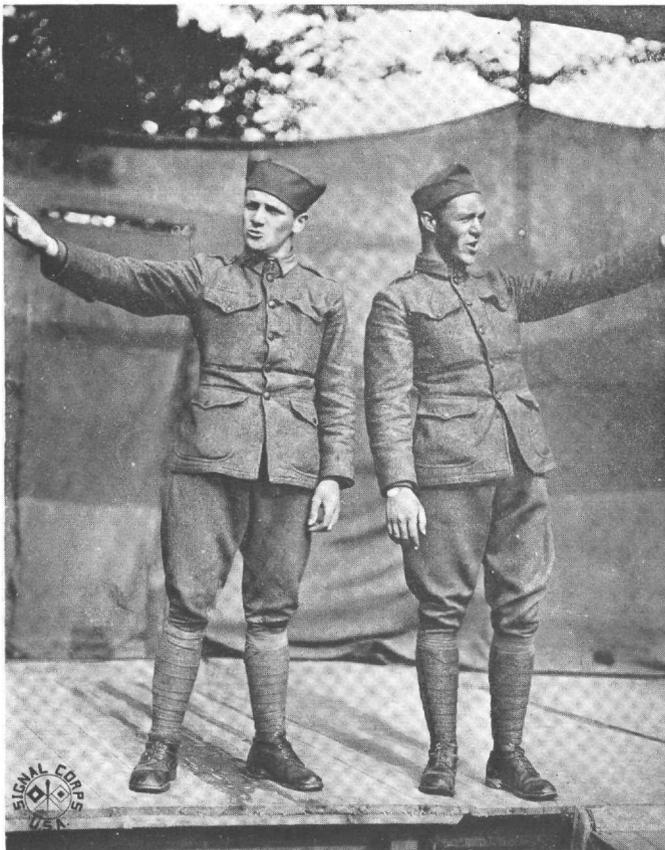
23, 24, 25, 26 and 29 and in Orders Nos. 42, 43, 44, 45 and 46, covering administration and supply, all of which appear in the Appendix as Exhibit 28. It was in this area about this time that the story was heard of the British Tommy, who, placed out in a listening post in no man's land, standing in water up to his waist, commiserated with himself concerning the never-ending tortures of the war. In a fit of despair, he murmured to himself, "O Gawd, 'ow I 'ates this cold and 'ow I 'ates this mud." Finally, as if desiring to end it all, he said, "O Gawd, I wishes I was dead." At that moment a big shell struck near him and, bursting, heaved upon him large masses of mud, which knocked him down. Gathering himself together and looking toward the heavens, he quickly and beseechingly ejaculated, "O Gawd, cahn't you tike a joke?"



Sergeant "Al" Van Zandt in impersonation of Bert Williams

During this period the relations between the 27th Division and the 6th and 41st British Divisions on our immediate front naturally became close and intimate. The fact that detachments of our troops were in the front line with the two British divisions made necessary daily supervision of their work by the higher officers of regimental, brigade and division organizations, which brought such officers in close and intimate contact with the personnel of the two British divisions. There were frequent social occasions when the officers of these divisions messed together and discussed their common problems.

Many cases of heroism marked the daily relations between the officers and men of the 27th Division and the 6th and 41st British Divisions. Sometimes the act was performed by a British soldier and sometimes by an American soldier. One of the British officers told the writer that a



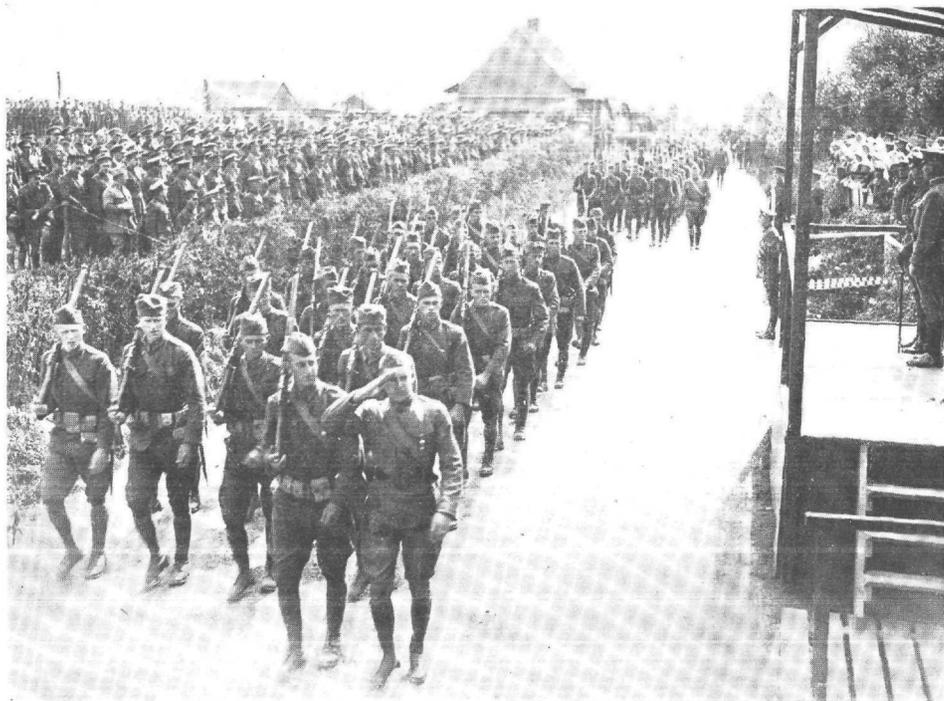
Fallon and Brown in "Me and Mickey"

night or two before the conversation a British patrolling party had been attacked in no man's land and driven back with losses. He called for volunteers from the group about him to go out and get one of their wounded who had been left behind. Heavy firing was in progress and the prospect was not attractive. Among the group of soldiers was an American, Sergeant Edgar F. Anderson of 53d Brigade Headquarters. He, accompanied by a British soldier who was the other volunteer, proceeded into no man's land and successfully brought in a badly wounded member of

the patrol. In miraculous manner they had escaped being hit. It then promptly developed that still another member of the patrol was missing and again the officer called for volunteers. Again Sergeant Anderson volunteered. This time the British officer protested, stating that it was



King George inspects Company L, 108th Infantry, commanded by Captain James Riffe, at Oudezeele, August 6, 1918. Left to right: Brigadier General McMullen, Chief of Staff, XIX British Corps; Aide de Camp to Lieutenant General Sir Herbert Watts, commanding XIX Corps; Lieutenant General Sir Herbert Watts; Brigadier General Palmer E. Pierce, commanding 54th Infantry Brigade, 27th Division; Major General John F. O'Ryan, commanding 27th Division; His Majesty King George



His Majesty King George reviews troops of the 2d British Army during church parade held at Terdegghem, August 11, 1918. Detachment of 27th Division passing in review. King George and Major General O'Ryan are on the reviewing stand.

primarily the duty of the Britishers to look after their own wounded. The Sergeant seemed surprised and saying, "Sir, this sort of thing is what we're here for," took one end of a litter and accompanied by another British soldier, returned to no man's land and successfully brought in the



"Kitty" Crawford

last of the wounded. It was this spirit of comradeship, contributed to in handsome manner by the British, which cemented so firmly the friendly relations which existed between the 27th Division and the XIX British Corps.

On another occasion Captain Jerome F. Langer, who commanded Company I of the 106th Infantry, with eighteen of his men was on a tour of duty with the 41st British Division on the Scherpenberg, facing Mt. Kemmel. His tour of duty was over and he was about to return with his party accompanied by a British soldier as guide. The area

was subjected to a hard hammering by the enemy guns. Captain Langer, however, was directed to proceed with his party. He did so and had reached the bottom land west of the Scherpenberg, when a veritable rain of shells fell about them. Several of the party were killed outright, including the British guide, while most of the others were badly wounded, among them being Captain Langer, who was struck in sixteen places by shell fragments. It is narrated by the survivors that Captain Langer succeeded in gaining his feet, and badly wounded though he was, maintained the discipline and morale of the survivors of his party. Several badly wounded were carried in by the more fortunate survivors, Captain Langer himself salvaging two rifles which had been carried by two of the American dead; he also aided in carrying one of the wounded. Fortunately Captain Langer, after a long course of treatment in the hospitals, recovered from his wounds.

One of this party was First Lieutenant Albert V. Clements, who was severely wounded in the right foot. Seen in the casualty clearing station shortly thereafter by one of the Division Headquarters staff, his only comment was, "*Another pair of shoes gone to the devil!*" Lieutenant Clements also recovered and is now commanding one of the companies of the 14th New York Infantry, in which regiment he served prior to the reorganization of the 27th Division at Camp Wadsworth.

On August 1st the Division Commander, upon invitation of the Australian Field Artillery Brigade, then camped in the vicinity of St. Omer, visited that unit for dinner and to witness the appearance of the 27th Division show in an entertainment given for the Australian troops. This occasion was perhaps the first social one of importance, which brought the 27th Division in close relations with the Australians and marked the beginning of later affiliations which became very close.

The show by the divisional troupe was much appreciated by the Australians, including the story told by one of the troupe to the effect that a certain Irishman, visiting the zoological park in London, saw for the first time a kangaroo. Being mystified at the odd conformation of the animal, he expressed great surprise and asked what it might be. The reply was, "That's a kangaroo—a native of Australia." "A native of Australia," gasped the Irishman with alarm. "My God, my poor sister married one of them."

On the 6th of August His Majesty, King George, visited Division Headquarters, arriving at 11:30 A. M. He was met by the Division Commander and Staff and entered the field opposite the billet of the Division Commander, where Company L of the 108th Infantry, commanded by Captain James Riffe, was bivouacked. The King inspected this company, which made an excellent impression.

The Division Commander had received advance information of the visit of the King, and never previously having entertained a king, the staff were somewhat in doubt as to what was required by custom in the British army on such occasion. The British Corps Headquarters, with their accustomed good will, stated that they had no suggestions to make; that they were quite sure the King would like to stop for a few minutes and perhaps see some small formation of the American division before passing on. Pressed for a suggestion as to how the program might be improved, one of the British staff thought it might be well to have all "other ranks," as enlisted men are called in the British army, who were close by and not in the formation, directed to cheer spontaneously as the King drove off. This suggestion was adopted and it was directed that upon the departure of His Majesty the King the cheering would be "spontaneous." The reader will observe from this that our preparedness left as little as possible to chance.

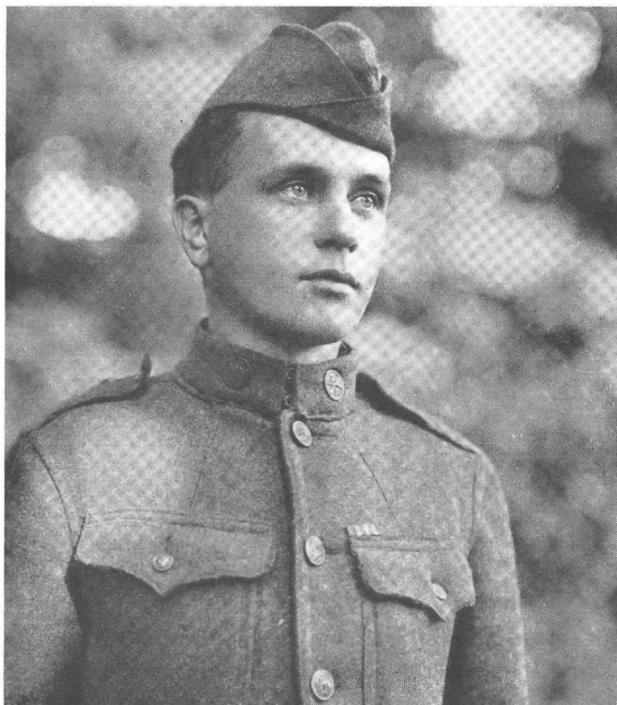
This day was saddened by the news received in the evening that Lieutenant Colonel Morris N. Liebmann of the 105th Infantry had been killed by shell fire while at Walker Farm.

On Sunday, August 11th, the 2d British Army held a church service



Grave of Lieutenant Colonel Morris N. Liebmann at Abele Airdrome

at Terdeghem, which was attended by the King. Every division sent a provisional detachment to attend this service. The service was



Corporal L. K. Knowlson, 105th Infantry, the first man of the division to win a decoration

to commemorate the anniversary of the entry of the British army into the war. After the service, the troops which had taken part were reviewed in column formation. The detachments represented many divisions of the British army, as well as the 27th and 30th American Divisions, and presented a most picturesque and interesting appearance. As each divisional detachment appeared, the Division Commander concerned joined the King and answered whatever questions might be asked concerning the troops which represented his division.

On the 15th of August notification was received that the division would relieve the 6th British Division in its sector in the front line, beginning on the night of August 21st. The divisional field order covering this relief, No. 33, together with Orders Nos. 64 and 65, covering the details of movement and supply, appear in the Appendix as Exhibit 29. The relief was effected without material incident, the Division Headquarters going forward from Oudezeele to a hutment camp, known as Douglas Camp, in a field near Abeele. Its location was at L.14.a.2.0.

During most of the time that the battalions of the 27th Division were operating with the 6th and 41st British Divisions in the front line they were opposed by an Alsatian division. Our troops had been extremely aggressive in patrolling no man's land and had prevented much activity on the part of the enemy. About the time that the 27th Division took over the front line from the 6th British Division the Alsatian division was relieved by the 8th Prussian Division, a very excellent organization, and this division immediately undertook aggressive steps to secure identifications of the organizations in their front. Accordingly, at 5 o'clock in the morning of August 22d, the 8th Prussian Division put down a heavy minnenwerfer barrage on a section of the front line held by Company L of the 107th Infantry. Out in front of this company was a small detachment of seven or eight men under Corporal Charles R. Henderson. This group was located in two connected shell holes. Having sought to demoralize the defense through their severe bombardment, the enemy pushed out two flanking machine-gun groups, which immediately went into action to cover the dash of their center group which was composed of about forty raiders. In the face of this strong force, which had but a short distance to advance, Corporal Henderson's detachment stood fast and those who had not been put out of action by the barrage opened fire with their rifles and later supplemented this fire by the use of grenades. The attack broke down with severe loss to the raiders, who also suffered from the supporting fire of the remainder of Corporal Henderson's company, which was commanded by Captain Fancher Nicoll. Of the seven or eight men who thus gallantly held their ground and inflicted these casualties on the enemy but two remained uninjured. The rest were either killed or wounded. The unwounded survivors were Corporal Henderson and Private George Delehay, who later died of wounds received in the attack of September 29th on the Hindenburg Line.

In this minor engagement Private Donald Emery of the Sanitary Detachment, 107th Infantry, also distinguished himself by his courage and resourcefulness in attending and evacuating the wounded.

Corporal Henderson and Private Emery, with other gallant soldiers whose names appear elsewhere, were awarded British decorations acknowledging their gallantry, skill and determination as exhibited in this engagement.

The experience had by all officers and men of the division up to this time was diverse and trying, but at the same time valuable. It constituted a real preparation for the first major engagement of the division which took place shortly thereafter in the attack on Vierstraat Ridge. The experience of officers and men during the months of July and August included constant harassing shell fire in the back areas, almost nightly bombing from enemy planes, constant machine gunning and sniping for those in the forward trenches, with frequent patrolling and raids.

Not soon will the survivors of the division forget such names as Scherpenberg, The Bund, La Clytte, Scottish Wood, Ridge Wood, Gordon Farm, Milky Way, Hallebast Corners, Indus Farm, Gretna Farm, Ouderdom, Reninghelst, Busseboom, Anjou Farm, Walker Farm, Hague Farm, Long Barn and Remy Siding. Every relief on its way forward, every detachment of troops coming out, messengers, runners, carrying parties and supervising officers going forward and returning, at one time or another have passed through or visited most of these places during their service on the Flanders front. All will remember the ghastly nights with the pyrotechnic display which marked the actual front, the constant banging of our own eighteen pounders as they barked from some unexpected place, past which men were picking their muddy way, the deeper roar of the heavier guns as they flashed their missiles into the night, the throbbing of the enemy bombers overhead, the barking of the "archies" as with the aid of the searchlights and supplemented by the usually fruitless hammer tapping of the machine guns, they sought to bring down the enemy planes. But most enduring of all will be the memory of those nights when the enemy shells came crashing down on the roadways at important crossings like Hallebast Corners, Ouderdom and Busseboom, when the enemy sought to harass the movements of our troops.

For the information of the reader interested, there are shown in the Appendix as Exhibit 30, Extracts from British General Headquarters Summaries containing copies of German documents captured about this time.

On one of these occasions Lieutenant Colonel J. Mayhew Wainwright, known to many of the soldiers as "the shell hound" because of his apparent desire to abide as much of the time as possible in this environment, was supervising the movement of reliefs and was following one of the tracks toward the village of Dickebusch, occasionally lighted by star shells. Ahead of him was an Italian American soldier of the Field Signal Battalion carrying a basket of pigeons on his back, which were destined for the front line. Shells were falling about. Both were expert in detecting the caliber and probable proximity of impact. They proceeded with the apparent unconcern of those featured in war stories, until their practised ears detected the much-heralded approach of a 5.9 Howitzer shell. Their tense senses warned them that this shell would get them. As a matter of

fact, it struck within ten feet of the pair. It did not burst—it was a “dud.” Colonel Wainwright confesses that he was transfixed, at first with dread and then with thanksgiving. The effect upon the Italian American soldier, however, was quite different. He crouched for a second as the shell struck and then when it did not explode, looked over his shoulder and said, with an evident air of disgust, “What’sa mat’, no good?”

As will be told in the next chapter, the routine warfare of position was terminated about this time and the division went forward into battle.

