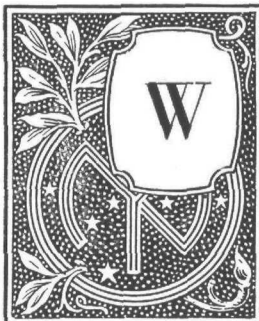


## CHAPTER XXIII

### EXPERIENCES OF MEN TAKEN PRISONER



WHILE the 27th Division captured approximately 3,000 German officers and soldiers, it lost to the enemy but 200 prisoners throughout the period of its service. Most of the men of the 27th Division who fell into the hands of the Germans were wounded at the time of their capture and in most cases were taken during counter-attacks.

After the division had settled down in the Le Mans area, most of those who had been taken prisoner were repatriated and returned to the division. Others, too badly wounded to render military service, were returned direct to the United States. In order to have a record of the circumstances affecting their capture and subsequent experiences, the men, upon their return to the division, were required to make out and sign a statement giving the following information:

- (a) Date, place and particular circumstances of capture.
- (b) Approximate time of the day.
- (c) Was the soldier captured wounded? If so, to what extent? If not, why did he surrender?
- (d) Movements in detail for the remainder of the day. This should include where sent; if questioned, by whom, when, where and nature of questions.
- (e) By what forces captured, giving regiment and division, if possible.
- (f) Treatment in relation to intimidation, if any, and food provided. If wounded, character and extent of medical treatment.
- (g) Brief statement of subsequent movements of the prisoner after the first day; where confined, whether required to work, character of work, how fed and whether or not escaped.
- (h) Any comments or statements having military value in addition to the foregoing.

A résumé of the more interesting of these statements will be given in this chapter.

Private First Class Thomas Burton, of Company A, 106th Infantry, and Private Bartolomeo Cuneo, of Company C of the same regiment, were both wounded at Quennemont Farm on September 27th in the attack on the outworks of the Hindenburg Line. The former took refuge in a shell hole at the extreme front and shortly before dusk was evacuated by German stretcher bearers. The latter named soldier was wounded by shell fragments and lay all night near the enemy lines, where he was found and evacuated by German soldiers at 8 o'clock on the morning of the following day. These soldiers report that they were passed through an aid station, where their own first aid packets were removed and fresh paper bandages applied. The first named prisoner was captured by the 27th German Infantry Regiment. Both prisoners reported that their

treatment was satisfactory. They were sent to hospital at Le Cateau, from which place they were finally sent to Giesen, where they were confined until after the Armistice, when they were sent to Metz and taken in charge by French authorities. These men reported that a number of German enlisted men seemed to think the American soldiers were really Englishmen in American uniforms and that the U-boats were accounting for a great number of ships engaged in the transportation of American soldiers to France.

On September 27th, Corporal Alfred Knudsen, Corporal Theodore Schermuhly, Private Joseph Manzione and Private Philip Wendell, all of Company A, 106th Infantry, having reached Quennemont Farm and secured a lodgment in a German communication trench, became separated from the remainder of their platoon. Corporal Knudsen was wounded. Others of the party were dressing the wounds of Sergeant Sullivan of the same company, whose right leg had been blown off by a piece of shell, when they were surrounded by a large number of German troops and compelled to surrender.

Corporal Christian Faaland and Private Edwin Dwyer of the same company gained the enemy trench east of Quennemont Farm. Two of their companions, Privates Anaroma and O'Connor, had been badly wounded and left in a shell hole. When night came on the two men first named sought to connect up with others of their command and to secure relief for the two wounded men. In the effort to do this at night, they got into a trench which was filled with enemy soldiers and found themselves surrounded.

On the same day, Corporal Lester Harris, with Privates William O'Donnell and William Zorn of the same company, held a shell hole at the edge of Quennemont Farm throughout the day. At nightfall an enemy party crept up and captured them.

On the same day, at the same place, Private Clarence Owen of the same company lay badly wounded in a shell hole. After dusk he was evacuated by German troops.

All of the foregoing soldiers were interrogated at German Divisional Headquarters in relation to the strength of their regiment, how long they had been in France and the location of other units of the division. All stated that they refused to answer questions, except those affecting their names and organizations. All reported that the Germans accorded them as good treatment as could be expected. All except Corporal Knudsen were sent to Le Quesnoy, where they remained for six days, thence by stages to Dulman in Germany, where they were kept until after the Armistice. After this they were sent to Rotterdam, Holland, from whence they were returned to the division via Hull, London and Winchester, England. While prisoners these men were not compelled to work. At places where they were detained, work by prisoners seemed to be voluntary, some of it being in military cemeteries and the rest in railroad yards. All complained of the food to a German Sergeant Major, who informed them that the German authorities were doing the best they could and that the

Germans themselves were faring no better than the prisoners. Corporal Faaland and Corporal Schermuhly, both of whom spoke German, reported that their German guards informed them that if the war did not end soon there would be an uprising in Germany. These guards also informed them that most of the army realized that the U-boat warfare had been a failure and that America had larger numbers of men in France than the German authorities admitted.

It might be mentioned here in connection with all statements made by our men that they seemed greatly impressed by the fact that the German intelligence officers who questioned them were able to tell them the units composing the division, names of commanding officers, and the previous service of the division, all of which was given to them by the German officers during the progress of their examination and in order to impress them with the completeness of their intelligence system. The men did not seem to appreciate that similar information concerning German units was in the hands of our intelligence officers when questioning German prisoners.

Private Peter Pfeifer of Company G, 106th Infantry, having with the corporal of his squad reached the objective line east of Guillemont Farm, found himself out of touch with the survivors of the platoon, and deciding that his command had passed further to the east, moved on with a view to locating them. Passing into another trench beyond the objective, the two men found themselves engaged with a large number of enemy soldiers. This was at 9 o'clock on the morning of September 27th. The Corporal was killed and the above-named soldier was taken prisoner. He was compelled to carry wounded enemy soldiers to an aid station for some time, after which he was evacuated to the rear, finally reaching the town of Coudry. There he was interrogated by a German intelligence officer, who told him the usual information at hand concerning his division and its units. He was given military postal cards to send to his home to notify his people of his capture. After being a prisoner for about two weeks, he escaped from the prison cage accompanied by another American and a Canadian of the Tank Corps. They were at liberty for about four days, traveling by night and living on raw vegetables gathered from fields along their route. They reached the town of Le Cateau, where they went into a machine shop and fell asleep. There they were discovered by a party of German soldiers. They reported that these soldiers were kindly disposed and were pointing out the proper road to take when an officer approached and directed their arrest. One of the German soldiers, who was called by the others "Professor Schultz" and who spoke excellent English, asked them several questions. Learning that they had escaped, he informed them that he would tell the officer that they, the prisoners, had just been captured and were on their way back from the lines rather than toward the lines. This was in order that they might escape punishment for their absence. They remained for six days in custody of the company to which these German soldiers belonged and during this time learned that the members of the company were for the most part extremely bitter against the Kaiser, the Crown Prince and the German military authorities gen-

erally. At the end of six days they were sent to a prison camp near the town of Gossieles. There they found a considerable number of French prisoners. After being at the latter place for about a week, Private Pfeifer, accompanied by the same Canadian and a French prisoner who spoke English, forced a window of their hut and, making their way through the barbed wire fence, escaped. Although the guard detected them at the last moment and fired four shots at them, none took effect. After traveling about four kilometers, they were secreted by a French family and later, at the time of the Armistice, succeeded in reaching a camp of New Zealand troops near Cambrai. Private Pfeifer was returned to the division by way of Winchester, England. He had no complaint to make of the treatment accorded him while a prisoner in the hands of the Germans. While at a place near Jumet, Belgium, about the time of the Armistice, he saw a German soldier step up to an officer and remove the officer's insignia of rank, telling him that he would have no further use for it. All German troops, he observed, seemed glad the war was over and they cheered lustily as they passed through the towns.

Privates Karl G. Kampf, Irving Fuchs, Stephen Trzceak and Elmer W. Ross, of Company K, Private Andrew Marrone of Company I, Corporal Hugh Devine, Privates Kenneth Teator, Thomas Fusco, Frank C. Hlavac, and Archibald C. Schoomacker, all of Company M, 106th Infantry, most of them wounded, were taken prisoners at the Knoll on September 27th and 28th. They reported that their captors belonged to the 27th and 84th German Infantry Regiments. They had no complaint to make concerning the treatment accorded them.

Sergeant William O'Connell of Company L, 106th Infantry, was wounded on September 27th while at the Knoll. He remained, however, with his command, but later was compelled to seek refuge in a shell hole from enemy machine-gun fire. At 9 o'clock on the morning of the 28th he was evacuated by enemy soldiers. Although wounded by shrapnel and shell fragments, he, with Corporal Charles Schwartz of Company L, was compelled to aid in carrying wounded to the rear. His own wounds, however, had been painted with iodine and dressed.

Corporal Edward Dilmeier of Company K was hit by a string of machine-gun bullets in the hip, groin and foot while at the Knoll. He was evacuated by enemy soldiers and after his wounds were dressed was compelled to walk most of the night to Le Cateau. He considers his treatment as good as could be expected. At Le Cateau he received an anti-tetanus injection and was then removed by ambulance to Meschede, where he was placed in a hospital. After the Armistice he was repatriated through the German camp at Geisen, on November 24th.

Corporal William Grace of Company I was badly wounded at the Knoll on September 27th. He took refuge in a shell hole and at 7:30 P. M. was evacuated by enemy soldiers. His captors could not find their aid station, and it was 3 A. M. on September 28th before his wounds were dressed with paper bandages. He was then sent to Le Cateau. Several of these soldiers reported that while at Le Quesnoy a leaflet was circulated

among the French prisoners containing what purported to be a speech made in the Reichstag by a socialist member. The speech contained a prediction that Germany and France would soon be sister republics. The speech was supposed to have been delivered a week before the Armistice. Most of the prisoners above named reported that behind the German lines numbers of German soldiers had informed them that they realized that they had been deceived by their leaders. In contrast with this, they commented on the attitude of German officers who claimed that the German army was unbeatable. Many Germans made inquiries concerning the treatment accorded German prisoners by the Americans.

Sergeant Morton Brown of Company D, 106th Infantry, reported that on September 27th, while taking part in the attack on Quennemont Farm, he became entangled in enemy barbed wire, and that, having extricated himself, he ran and caught up with his platoon at the parapet of a German trench in time to take part in the mopping up. Having accomplished this, the party then advanced to a small copse a hundred or more yards beyond the trench, where he with two other members of his command became separated from the others. Stopping to give aid to a seriously wounded man of Company C who was lying in a shell hole, they were suddenly attacked by enemy soldiers with "potato masher" bombs and compelled to surrender. It appeared from the statement of this soldier that his rifle had been broken at the small of the stock and consequently he was not able, having expended his grenades, to repel this attack. He reports the food received while a prisoner to have been very poor.

Sergeant James F. Early of Company C, 106th Infantry, reported that on September 27 at Quennemont Farm he was one of a small party of men under Lieutenants Malloy and Ryan. The enemy counter-attacked. Sergeant Early's party was outnumbered about twenty to one. Two men, one of whom was Private James D. Winne of the same company, were designated to cover the retirement of the party. During this retirement Lieutenant Malloy was killed and Lieutenant Ryan wounded. At 9 P. M. the Sergeant, while in a shell hole, was taken prisoner. He later escaped with Private Pfeifer, whose experience has already been related.

Private John T. Ryan of Company H of the same regiment was captured beyond Guillemont Farm on September 30th. He was one of the provisional battalion of the 106th Infantry assigned to mop up behind the 107th Infantry in the attack of September 29th. While being marched to the rear he made his escape in the darkness. He had been relieved of his steel helmet and had been given a civilian cap. He walked the rest of the night and arrived at Nivelles, where he attached himself to some French refugees who were traveling toward Brussels. He had succeeded in disguising himself and reached Brussels safely. A Belgian photographer, who spoke English, took him to his home and gave him food. A brother of the photographer was a member of the police force of Brussels. Through him Private Ryan, with two English civilians, were given a room in a schoolhouse. He reported that twice the Germans searched the place without finding them. On the 10th of November German

troops stationed in Brussels appeared on the streets and tore the insignia of rank from the clothing of their officers. They waved red flags.

Private Fred C. Becker of Company M, 106th Infantry, was captured at the Knoll. This soldier reported that he spoke German fluently; that at the first station to which he was sent a German officer attempted to intimidate him, but that at other places the treatment accorded him was satisfactory. While a prisoner, Private Becker conversed with several German officers, one of whom told him that it was not the German army that had failed, but that the civilian population had lost its morale because of shortage of food. Another officer, the day following the Armistice, asked him when he thought the United States would begin to send food to Germany. He reported that soap was almost impossible to get and that the civilians frequently stole grease from the car axles in the railroad yards. The civilians generally looked undernourished and were dissatisfied with conditions. Private Becker, as well as other prisoners, commented favorably upon the excellent work done on behalf of prisoners by the American Red Cross.

Private Edward McGarry of Company C, 106th Infantry, reported that on September 27th, while at Guillemont Farm, he was struck in the hip with a machine-gun bullet and shortly afterward, while attempting to crawl after his comrades, was again struck in the nose and cheek by rifle bullets. He then became unconscious and the following day was picked up and evacuated by enemy soldiers. He reported that he was treated as well as could be expected under the circumstances. He was in the hospital during the entire period of his experience as a prisoner.

Corporal Edwin J. Kramer of Company E, 106th Infantry, was captured at 9:30 in the morning of September 27th at Guillemont Farm by a party of enemy soldiers while he was lying wounded in a shell hole. While being evacuated he was struck twice by fragments of shells, once in the arm and once in the leg. He was taken to a hospital at Marlincourt, where he was given black bread covered with unpalatable soup. He states he has no criticism to make of the treatment accorded him.

Private Leonard L. Lamphorn of Company A, 108th Infantry, was taken prisoner at 9:30 A. M., August 8th, in front of Mt. Kemmel, Belgium. With two other American soldiers and two British soldiers, he was at a listening post 150 yards in advance of our line. The duty of these men was to observe the front constantly between darkness and dawn. Shortly before dawn they retired to a shell hole behind the listening post and fell asleep. At 9:30 A. M. they were awakened by six German soldiers and taken prisoner. The treatment accorded them was satisfactory. They were sent to a prison camp at Cartrig, Belgium. Private Lamphorn was repatriated by way of Switzerland, rejoining the division December 28th.

Private First Class Arthur F. Hall, of Company M, 108th Infantry, was taken prisoner September 29th in an enemy counter-attack. He reports that while a prisoner he was twice beaten with the butt of a rifle and with sticks for accepting food from Belgian civilians while passing their towns en route to the rear.

Corporals J. E. Applin and F. D. Mosher of Company L, 108th Infantry, were captured on October 13th near St. Souplet. The company at the time was digging in. The two corporals had advanced about fifty yards beyond the company and were looking about when they were suddenly covered by the rifles of three German soldiers. They were marched to Marburg and placed in a prison camp, where they were confined for two weeks, after which they were transferred to Namur, Belgium, where they were confined for three weeks, during which time they worked loading barges with hospital supplies. They report the food given them poor, but their treatment satisfactory.

The division lost two officers captured by the enemy. These were Captain Harry F. Sullivan, commanding Company K, 106th Infantry, and First Lieutenant Richard H. McIntyre, in command of the Stokes Mortar Platoon of the 107th Infantry. The capture of Captain Sullivan has already been mentioned. Lieutenant McIntyre, having distributed the Stokes Mortar Platoon on the morning of September 29th, joined the detachment assigned to the First Battalion shortly before the zero hour. The objective of this battalion was the open canal from the north end of the tunnel to the divisional boundary near Vendhuile. Lieutenant McIntyre followed the platoon in its advance. When the first wire was reached he waited for a tank which was immediately behind him to go through and open up the way. This was done, and he and his runner, Private William J. Cairns, had passed through the wire when the smoke screen settled on the field, obscuring visibility. The Lieutenant and his runner continued to walk in an easterly direction through the smoke without either being able to see anything. Being unable to find his Stokes mortar detachment and seeing no troops of the battalion, he turned and saw directly in front of him two Germans. One ran and disappeared in the smoke, while the other surrendered. They took shelter in a shell hole at a point reported by the Lieutenant to be immediately north of a railway running northeast and southwest across A. 9 a. Three other German soldiers then appeared, but, when hailed, ran off. The runner killed one with his rifle and wounded the others. The wounded men at once surrendered and came into the shell hole with the rest of the party. At this moment several American soldiers appeared in the smoke to the south in charge of a German guard. Private Cairns shouted to them that he would get the guard with his rifle and for them to make a fight. They called out that there were too many Germans about. The smoke then lifted somewhat and disclosed several groups of German soldiers in trenches to the west of the Lieutenant's party. Almost immediately a German machine gunner opened fire on the party from the rise in the ground to the south of them. The Lieutenant then determined upon a retreat and abandoned the German prisoners. He and Cairns had made about three hundred yards from shell hole to shell hole under fire of the German machine gunner when Cairns fell into a trench. A few moments later, being driven by enemy machine-gun fire to the protection of a shell hole, the Lieutenant was surrounded by several groups of German soldiers who forced his sur-

render. Private Cairns then appeared and asked whether the Lieutenant had surrendered. As he, too, had been surrounded, he was directed by the Lieutenant to give up. They were taken to the north end of the tunnel and from that point to Le Catelet. At Bertry the Lieutenant was placed in the guardhouse with two British tank officers, a British machine gun officer, Scotch infantry officer and two British aviators. Later the party was sent to Busigny, where they were joined by four officers of the 119th Infantry of the 30th American Division. Lieutenant McIntyre was finally sent to the American officers' camp at Villingen.

Private Edward A. Guidice of Company K, 107th Infantry, was captured near Le Catelet on September 29th. He reports that he was in company with First Sergeant Dean, Corporals Volk and Waters and Privates Gullatto and Noonan of his own company, and an unknown sergeant from some other company of the 107th Infantry. They had advanced with a Lewis gun through the enemy's lines and finally took position in a deep shell hole, where the Lewis gun was placed in action against counter-attacking groups of enemy soldiers. These attacks were stopped for a time, but eventually the party was surrounded. Hand grenades were thrown at them, one of which wounded Corporal Volk and Private Guidice. They were then taken prisoner and conducted to trenches and told to lie down because of British airplane machine-gun fire. Half an hour later they were marched to a rear headquarters and questioned. On the way to the rear a German soldier picked up a rifle and threatened to strike several members of the party. He did strike Private Noonan across the back, knocking him into a trench. Private Guidice spent six weeks in a German hospital at Acchen, after which he was sent by train to a prison camp at Giesen. He reports the hospitals dirty and the food poor.

Sergeant Herman F. Eggers of Company F, 108th Infantry, reports that on September 29th he had arrived in front of Le Catelet when he was wounded by a machine-gun bullet in the right leg. Several German soldiers then took him prisoner, and he reports that, knowing that the Australians were to pass through the 107th Infantry, he made an effort to keep his captors with him in the shell hole where he was lying for as long a time as possible. He succeeded in holding them until 11:30 A. M. He reports that while lying in this shell hole he saw an American soldier advance alone, firing a Lewis gun. When his ammunition was expended he was abused for about fifteen minutes by German soldiers and then killed. The sergeant was evacuated to Bohain and thence to Le Cateau and thereafter to Meschede and finally to Giesen. He reports all prisoners had highest praise for the American Red Cross, and that from his observations the treatment accorded American prisoners of war by the Germans was all that could be expected under the circumstances. He makes exception in the case of prisoners sent out to work. These were sometimes badly treated.

Sergeant Henry Schurrman, Company C, 105th Infantry, was captured on October 17th at Auber de Guise, while making a reconnaissance in front of his company. He was cut off by enemy patrols and was captured by several German officers. He escaped from confinement October



22d by cutting the wire surrounding the prison camp with a file. He walked in a westerly direction a distance estimated by him to be about thirty miles, guided by the North Star and the sound of the guns. Sergeant Schurrman succeeded in slipping through the enemy lines into the lines of the 66th French Division, from which organization he was returned to the division.

Corporal Joseph M. Cahill, Company G, 105th Infantry, was wounded during the fighting for the possession of Arbre Guernon on October 17th. He was taken prisoner and carried back to North Chimney. This place was captured by troops of the 27th Division the next day and Corporal Cahill was found resting in a billet. He states that his wounds were dressed and food was given him by the enemy.

On the morning of September 27th several men of Company M, of the 105th Infantry, were captured in the vicinity of Crellin Avenue Trench. They had fought their way across several lines of enemy trenches, at the last of which Lieutenant Turner and two of the remaining men of the company were killed. Privates Manning, Reich, Story and Zirt, who constituted the survivors of the platoon, reached the last trench. They were surrounded and compelled to surrender. They report that some of their captors appeared to have been drinking heavily. They were threatening to shoot them when an officer arrived and had them sent to the rear. They were confined several days at Codrie, from whence they were taken to Le Quesnoy and later to Figenes and La Roco, and then through Dulman, Westphalia. They were repatriated through Holland.

Privates First Class John S. Crawford and Delmer D. Carpenter, 102d Field Signal Battalion, were taken prisoner September 27th. They were evacuated, but on October 14th succeeded in making their escape. In an effort to get back to the division through Jeumont, Belgium, they traveled by night for four nights, living on raw vegetables. They became so hungry that they determined to risk a raid on a German wagon train encampment in an apple orchard. They were investigating one of the wagons for food when the German sentry called upon them to surrender. In the fight that followed Carpenter was shot in the chest and killed. Subsequent shots fired at Crawford missed him. This soldier later sought shelter in an abandoned barn and fell asleep. About 4 o'clock in the afternoon he was awakened by being shaken by a group of German soldiers. They took him to a hospital at Norrell, where his feet were attended to by a German doctor who spoke English very well. He apprised him of Carpenter's death. After being four days in the hospital, he was sent back to the prison camp at Floures from which he had previously escaped. After the Armistice he escaped a second time and successfully reached Brussels, from where he was returned to the division.

Privates George Nash and James F. Sheehan of Company D, 102d Engineers, were captured while unarmed and acting as stretcher bearers on September 27th, the enemy employing them as stretcher bearers. They report the food very poor, but state they got a fair share. They record the treatment received as good as could be expected.

