

A Sketch Of The General Geography Of France—No. 4



The long and narrow PLAINS OF THE SAONE AND THE RHONE owe their importance to the manufacturing center of Lyons, and to the lines of communication which follow this route from northern France to the Mediterranean. The plains of the Saone are primarily agricultural, with hot summers and fairly long and cold winters. The vine, wheat, corn, cattle and sheep are the important products. Lyons, at the southern end of the Saone plains, is an important commercial center, because it is at the junction of the Saone, the upper Rhone and the lower Rhone routes, and so does business with the north, the east and the south. Lyons also is an important manufacturing center, using the silk raised in southern France and northern Italy to make the fabrics for which France is noted the world over. The valley of the Rhone is a narrow, corridor-like depression in which flows a stream too swift to be of much use for navigation. But though the stream is of little value as a highway, the valley has been and still is of the greatest importance as a comparatively easy passageway, hemmed in on one side by the Alps and on the other by the Central Plateau. In the remote past the Phoenicians penetrated via the Rhone valley into Gaul. Later, Mediterranean civilization, and still later, Christianity, entered France by this route. Today the northern regions of France have contact with the Mediterranean part of France by way of this valley. The important railway from Paris to Lyons and Marseilles follows this line.

THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION of France is a unit clearly marked off by the Alps and the Central Plateau on the north and by the sea from which it takes its name on the south. Its physical characteristics are different from those of any other part of France, and consequently the economic activities of the people are in large part different from those of the people of the rest of France. The climate is characterized by hot and dry summers, and by mild winters with a moderate amount of rainfall. This winter rain comes for the most part in heavy showers, so that most of the weather is sunny. Strong, hot, south winds (sirocco) blow at times in the summer, and in winter there occasionally are boisterous and cold winds (mistral) from the neighboring mountains. The streams are small for most of the year, but at the times of heavy rains they become raging torrents. Forests and grass-land are rare. The dominant form of native vegetation is a thicket composed of evergreen oaks, cypress, juniper and myrtle. The typical cultivated

plants are the vine, orange, olive and lemon, the first deep-rooted, the others with leathery, evergreen leaves, and all well adapted to the long, hot, dry summer. Because of this type of summer and of the consequent poor quality of the pastures, cattle are rare, but sheep are fairly numerous.

In general the Mediterranean region of France seems to be an area little favored by nature, except that it borders on that sea which was for so long a time the center of the civilized world, and which today plays an important part in commerce. As a result of this position, the Mediterranean region of France has played a considerable part in the history of the country. It is here that the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans touched France, founded cities and introduced their civilizations. Marseilles, near the mouth of the Rhone, commands a large commerce between northern France and the countries bordering the Mediterranean, as well as with the Far East.

Of especial interest at the present time is the character of the country in eastern and northeastern France, as affecting the campaigns of the war. The forested mountains of the Vosges have proved a barrier to the Germans. The rough country of Lorraine has been scarcely less difficult for them.

In this region there are several concentric belts of alternating uplands and lowlands, with a steep slope at the eastern margin of each upland. These steep slopes or scarps, each of which overlooks a lowland lying between it and the next upland to the east, make defense easy for the French and offense difficult for the Germans. The Ardennes Plateau, most of which lies in Germany, Luxembourg and southern Belgium, has blocked any movement of German armies into France except by way of two valley routes, the Moselle and the Meuse, both of which valleys lie well towards the southern and northern borders of the plateau.

Across the plains of the northern half of Belgium and of northern France, in contrast to all the country southward as far as the Swiss border, movement of an army is relatively easy, so far as natural obstacles go. Thus it was that the main German invasion of France took place in the north, even though this meant the violation of the neutrality of Belgium.

The following books treat various features of the geography of France in more detail than is possible here:
 Schrader & Gallouedec: "Geographie de la France" (Hachette, Paris, 1915).
 Johnson: "Topography and Strategy in the War" (New York, Holt, 1917).
 Davis: "Handbook of Northern France" (Harvard Press, Cambridge, 1915).
 Ask for these books at the Camp Library.

ONE CENT A MILE
 The United States Railroad Administration authorizes the following:
 Director General McAdoo, realizing that the payment of the full railroad fare means a serious hardship to our soldiers and sailors who desire to visit their homes before going overseas, has ordered that as soon as necessary details can be completed soldiers and sailors of the United States forces, when furloughed and traveling at their own expense, will be granted a rate of approximately one cent per mile. This fare will be available on delivery to ticket agents of certificates signed by commanding officers. Such certificates of standard form will be prepared and distributed with the utmost promptness.

"YANKS" FAST ACQUIRING TRENCH VERNACULAR

According to the stories told by Americans recently returned from Europe, the "Yanks," as the soldiers prefer to style themselves, are rapidly picking up the slang used by the British Tommies in the war zone, and appear to like it.

"Fed up" is one of the favorite expressions, and is used to depict the disgust of the speaker with the world in general or any subject in particular, such as oatmeal porridge for 100 days straight or 100 days' continuous rain.

Another expression adopted by the American troops abroad is "wangling." To "wangle" is to wheedle something out of a person which he would not voluntarily give. For example, a Tommy says to his mates in the trench: "I wangled an extra tot of rum today from the canteen sergeant," or "The sergeant major wanted to give me a fatigue job, but I wangled it all right." When a soldier succeeds in wangling something out of his superiors he tells his chums that he "clicked." The term "wash-out," used by the aviators, has been generally adopted by the Tommies to describe something that has to be done all over again. "A defense barrage" is to cover a mate in his absence for some fault that he has committed, and a "barrage attack" is to defend a friend when he is attacked in force. The word "Cheeryo," as a greeting or a short toast, has been adopted by the American naval officers and men in Europe.

TO GET "THE NEEDLE"

Soldiers in training in the camps and cantonments may find some crumb of comfort in the fact that civilian employees of the government are to be given "The Needle." For the protection of the health of workers in shipyards and munition plants, the United States Public Health Service has been instructed to give antityphoid inoculations without charge.

"NO VICTORY IN DEFENSE"

Discussing the problem of the soldier and the way to victory, General Ferdinand Foch, commander-in-chief of the Allies armies, recently wrote as follows:

"Modern warfare, to arrive at its end and to impose its will on the enemy, recognizes only one means—destruction of the enemy's organized forces.

"War undertakes and prepares this destruction by battle which brings about the overthrow of the adversary, disorganizes his command, destroys his discipline and nullifies his units as far as their fighting power is concerned.

"Our first axiom must be that completely to achieve its object a battle must not be purely defensive. A purely defensive battle, even well conducted, does not result in a victor and a vanquished. It is simply a game that must be begun over again. "From this it is an obvious corollary that an offensive, whether started at the beginning of an action or whether it follows the defensive, can only give results, and in consequence must always be adopted at the finish.

"To maintain our position is not synonymous with being victorious and even prepares for a defeat, if we remain where we are and do not pass to the offensive. To fix the direction of attack, to guard against the plans of the enemy and prevent him from carrying out the same manoeuvre, we must undertake to carry on and sustain numerous combats, each with determined aim.

PERSHING URGES SOLDIERS TO WRITE HOME OFTEN

The War Department has made public a general order, issued recently by General Pershing encouraging members of the American expeditionary forces to keep up correspondence with their relatives and friends at home. The order said:

"1. Duty to one's country does not end on the parade ground, nor even on the battlefield, but consists in doing everything in one's power to help win the war. To write home frequently and regularly, to keep in constant touch with family and friends, is one of the soldier's most important duties. Mothers and fathers will suffer if they do not hear often from sons fighting in France. In the present large companies it is not possible for officers to write letters for their men and every man must do it for himself.

"2. When no letters are received from overseas, the greatest distress is caused to those at home. They either feel that letters have been written and lost en route, or else they imagine all sorts of evils, such as sickness, wounds, even death. Both are bad for the active militant spirit which every true American man and woman must possess if our army is to obtain the real victory that all so earnestly desired.

"3. Every one in the United States who has a son or brother in the American expeditionary forces is proud of him, is constantly thinking of him, is anxious to hear from him. Letters home will bring many letters in reply, and the closer home ties will have potent influence for good, both in France and the United States. All officers should realize this fact, and both by encouraging their men and providing them with the proper facilities, do everything in their power to interest them in this vital question of writing home."

The Archbishop of York Pays High Tribute to United States

The Most Reverend Cosmo Gordon Lang, Archbishop of York and Primate of England, who recently visited this country, said in a statement regarding his American tour:

"A word needs to be spoken of disappointments and delays. Our friends across the ocean are far more sensitive to them than we. It is not any taunt that is needed, but rather increased appreciation of the greatness and skill with which they had planned their help and the increasing measure with which their plans would be fulfilled.

"That great and generous people who received me with a warmth of welcome I shall never forget, are saying to you: 'We are coming to stand by you till together we have vindicated the peace and freedom of the world and secured it for our children.' We say, 'It is hard to hold on, hurry up!' They reply: 'It is worth holding on; we are coming!'"

8,000 MORE MOTOR TRUCKS

Orders for 8,000 motor trucks for the use of the United States Army have been placed by the Motor Transport Service. These trucks, designated as "Class B Standard," will have a capacity of from three to five tons. They will be distributed as needed through the various branches of the army. Ten thousand of these Class B trucks had previously been ordered and are now in process of manufacture and delivery.

100 PER CENT INSURED

Company E, 161st Infantry, has a 100 per cent War Risk Insurance record. Every officer and enlisted man in the company carries a \$10,000 policy. The total amount of insurance carried by the company is \$238,000,000.

S. O. S.

Don't waste. A white chip may call the Kaiser's bluff.

