

MY FOURTEEN MONTHS AT THE FRONT

An American Boy's Baptism of Fire

By WILLIAM J. ROBINSON

CHAPTER V. The "Mad Major."

THE nurses in the hospitals are worshiped and adored by the soldiers, and surely this is as it should be, for they are suffering almost as much as the men, and yet they keep cheerful and supply the tender womanly sympathy which means so much when in physical anguish. They are a wonderful body of women, and their work is appreciated. Some of



When a Man Has Been Killed His Letters Are Marked "Killed."

them are close enough to the front to be under fire, and they are as brave as the men when it comes to facing danger.

During an aeroplane raid last fall I had a chance to watch some of the nurses. We had about thirty German aeroplanes over our encampment dropping bombs. As they went back to their own lines they flew over a hospital located in an open field. There were huge red crosses painted on the top of every tent, so it would seem that any mistake as to the nature of the camp would be impossible. Nevertheless as the taubes passed over they dropped several bombs in the hospital and killed quite a number of the poor chaps who were already wounded. The nurses worked as hard as they could trying to quiet the rest of the men, and it is no easy task, for, while a soldier may face almost anything when he is well, it is a very different matter when he is lying helpless, wounded and in pain, on a stretcher.

I was very much interested to learn how a man's mail was taken care of when anything had happened to him. It seemed to me that the chance of his letters being returned before his people could be notified was very great. On asking about this I found that when a man has been killed his letters are marked "Killed," but instead of being sent directly to his people they are returned to the war office and are sent from there, after the casualty has been made known, to his relatives. In this way many people are saved a great deal of premature worry and uneasiness.

I shall never forget the time I saw the Royal Horse artillery go into action, for a more thrilling sight would be hard to imagine. I was out, alone in the car, and I had been doing patrol duty. I went rather closer to our firing line than I intended to, but decided to push on until I struck the "route nationale," so I would have a good road all the rest of the way back to camp.

I had to go through the village of Dieffebusch, and as I came to the crossroads just outside the village a sentry stopped me and said I could not go on. It seems that some Germans had got a machine gun in the steeple of the church and were cleaning up everything that tried to pass. The horse

artillery had been sent for, and I learned that they were on their way even then.

I decided to wait around and see what happened, so I pulled in to the side of the road. I had hardly stopped when I heard a rush and rattle that sounded like an old fliver in the distance. Around the curve dashed eight boxes on the dead gallop, pulling an eighteen pounder behind them. They dashed by, but about fifty yards ahead of me they swung around and trained that gun on the church.

ed Kemmel. I had been there before, and from what I had seen then I wasn't eager about making the trip again. We started off about 1 o'clock and expected to be back by 5. I noticed as I came to the Kemmel road that there were two sentries on duty there, but as they only saluted the officers and didn't say anything I thought no more about it. Now, Kemmel lies at the foot of a hill and is tucked in between Mount Noir and Mount Kemmel. It would be a cozy little place in peace time, but it is an awful trap to get caught in when there is a war on.

I sent the car up the hill as fast she could go, and it was a long climb. As we went over the brow and started on the down grade we ran right under the nose of the German artillery observers. This road was officially closed, and those sentries should have stopped us. Well, it scared me so that I went down that hill so fast those officers must have thought they were in a parachute. As we entered the village the shells commenced to drop in on us, and we ran for the nearest shelter, which happened to be a brewery.

There wasn't much left of the place anyway, as it had been in German hands, and we had shelled them out of it, and when we had taken it they had shelled us out of it. Anyway, we left the car and crawled into the cellar. It was wet and filthy, but it looked just like heaven to me that day.

We lay there in all this fifth hour after hour, while the shells literally poured in all around us. They certainly wasted a lot of good ammunition trying to get us, but the best of it was that they didn't succeed. One of the officers remarked during a moment's silence that the crown prince of Germany must have made his headquarters in the place when it was in German hands. Another officer replied that he wished the crown prince was there now.

We lay there till the fire let up, which it did about 5 o'clock. I was worrying about getting back, and I was also wondering what had become of the car. If it was gone we might just as well kiss ourselves goodbye, for our chances of getting out on foot would be slim.

When the fire had abated we came out and looked around. The enemy certainly had made a mess of the place, for even the top story of the brewery had been shot away from over our heads. I went to look the car over, and you can just believe I was relieved to find that, aside from having a few holes through the body, it was all right.

The officers decided to wait until it was dark before chancing to run back. I didn't know what was going to happen to us. I wasn't very familiar with the road, and I was afraid they would have some kind of barricade up or have a few machine guns trained on us or something equally unpleasant. I certainly was dreading that ride back, but there was no other way out, and we were between the devil and the deep sea. It was at a time like that that I wished that I had never seen the British army. I turned the car around, and as soon as it was dark we got in and started. I opened her up

The British Tommy will gamble with On or For Anything.

wide, and by the time we got to the bottom of the hill we were doing about fifty miles an hour, and I couldn't see very much, either, for of course I did not use any lights.

I didn't know what was waiting for us at the top of the hill, but I did know that if there was anything there we were going right through it, even if we didn't go any farther. The ridiculous part of it was that we went right through and never saw a thing. Absolutely nothing happened, but I don't ever want to feel again the way I felt going up that hill.

Shortly after this I learned that the British Tommy is a great gambler and will gamble with, on or for anything. Trench pools used to be very popular. About ten fellows got together, and each put 10 francs in a pool just before they went into action. They left this money with some one behind the lines, for they would be in action anywhere from six days to three weeks.

The idea of the pool was this: Those who lived to get back would take the money and split it evenly among themselves. If only one lived he would have the whole lot. Sometimes the pools would be fairly big and sometimes the reverse, but whatever they had went in.

It was the only gamble I ever saw where you couldn't lose. If you came out safely you were bound to get your own money back at least.

The Tommies are strong for carrying pets with them too. They keep canaries, rats, mice, dogs, cats, goats and

even pigs, and they will go hungry themselves rather than see the object of their affections want for anything. On the march if they get tired they may throw their equipment away, but I never heard of one yet who would give up his mascot.

During the winter there was a lot of talk about the "mad major." He was an artillery officer who was just about the biggest daredevil I ever heard of. He kept an aeroplane himself, and if he wanted to correct a range he would go and drop smoke bombs over the point he wanted to get. He was absolutely fearless and would fly so low that they would be potting at him with revolvers, but it didn't seem to bother him.

I have heard that he did more damage with his battery than a whole brigade of ordinary artillery could under ordinary circumstances. I don't know what became of him in the end, but the last of his stunts that I heard about was this: There was a big screen inch howitzer doing us an awful lot of damage. It was out of range of our guns, and we were much put about as to how to get it out of action.

The "mad major" went out alone in his aeroplane and took with him just one bomb, a hundred pounder. He located the gun he wanted while flying at an altitude of 3,000 feet. He got right over the position and stopped his engine. He did a nose dive to within 400 feet of the gun. Then he dropped his bomb and blew the thing to atoms. He got back safely, but the planes of his machine were riddled with bullets.

Soon after this we were on the move, and, as it happened, we went from bad to worse. The first day we entered a little place that was unoccupied by troops, and we decided to spend the night there. The Germans must have heard of our arrival promptly, for before we had been there an hour shells began to drop in on us.

The officer I was driving was with me at the time the first one burst. It landed in the back yard of the house we were in, and the force of the explosion sent us all in a heap on the floor. The officer decided that we would get out of the place and find some nice, quiet spot to spend the night. We left at once and went about five miles down the road until we came to a field ambulance. We found that they had some spare stretchers, so we decided to stay there. The officer's servant carried stretchers in for all of us, and after having something to eat we went right to sleep, as we were tired out.

I don't believe we had been asleep more than an hour when a shell landed in that field ambulance! It tore through the roof and burst in the room next to us, killing and wounding eighteen men who had already been wounded once. I got up in a hurry, but found that the officer was before me, and when I reached the car he was making himself comfortable in the tonneau. I took my waterproof sheet and blankets and made myself a bed on the cobblestone under the car. I slept like a log until it began to rain, and then I got up in disgust and sat up the rest of the night in the driving seat.

The next day we stopped in a little village called Pradelles, the place where the Germans had stood a priest up against the wall of his own church and shot him because he wouldn't give them the information they wanted.

Across from this church was a little "estaminet," where I went to buy a bottle of wine to have with my dinner. You can imagine my surprise when the Frenchwoman in charge called me an "English pig" and said that she would sell nothing to the English. I told her what I thought of her, and she told me what she thought of me.

She said the English were thieves, murderers and other nice things and informed me also that the only true gentlemen in the world were the Prussians. She certainly had me aroused, and I was going to arrest every one I could find in the house until her daughter came in.

She saw at once how things were and led the old lady upstairs and then explained that the Germans had taken her two youngest sisters away and that since that time her mother had been insane.

It was outside of Pradelles that we ran into the Germans and had a long distance scrap. We were not strong, and we didn't know how strong they were, so we were not pressing them very hard until some reinforcements came up. I think they were in the same position, for they didn't try to get to close quarters. So we kept at it all afternoon until at night the Germans retired, and we camped a little farther on and waited for our main body to come up. Our casualties numbered only about twenty dead, and we buried them in the churchyard before we left.

I passed through Pradelles about two months later, and I went into the churchyard where those chaps were buried. The people of the village have set little white crosses at the head of each grave. On each cross are the name number and regiment of the soldier

lying below, and under that is "Mort de la Champ d'Honneur." It was a most thoughtful thing for those poor thoughts to do.

It was in a village called Outraestene, quite near Pradelles, that I first saw the Prince of Wales. He was with Sir John French, and they were reviewing a brigade that hadn't been in the country very long. He is a nice looking fellow, but very boyish in appearance. He is liked by the men and quite often will go and sit among them and talk to them.

Soon after this I received orders to prepare for a two day journey in the car. I didn't know where I was to go until the night before I was to start,



The Prince of Wales, With Sir John French, Reviewing a Brigade.

and then I was told that I was to go to Paris to get an officer who was waiting for me there. Of course I was delighted, for I hadn't been in any large city for a long time.

Paris is more than 200 miles from where we were then, and my orders were to make it in one day. While it was a long journey, I felt that it would be well worth it, so I set out with a light heart. At Lillers I hit the main Paris road, and it was glorious. There is no speed limit for a dispatch car, and you bet I was flying my blue and white flag that day. Straight down through St. Venant, St. Pol, Doullens and Amiens I flew, and about 6:30 I came to the outskirts of Paris. I was surprised on entering the capital to find so few British soldiers. I knew that we had several permanent bases in the vicinity, and I expected to find the place swarming with Tommies.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Don't Fail to Read Next Week's Installment of this Remarkable Story.

Life Was a Misery

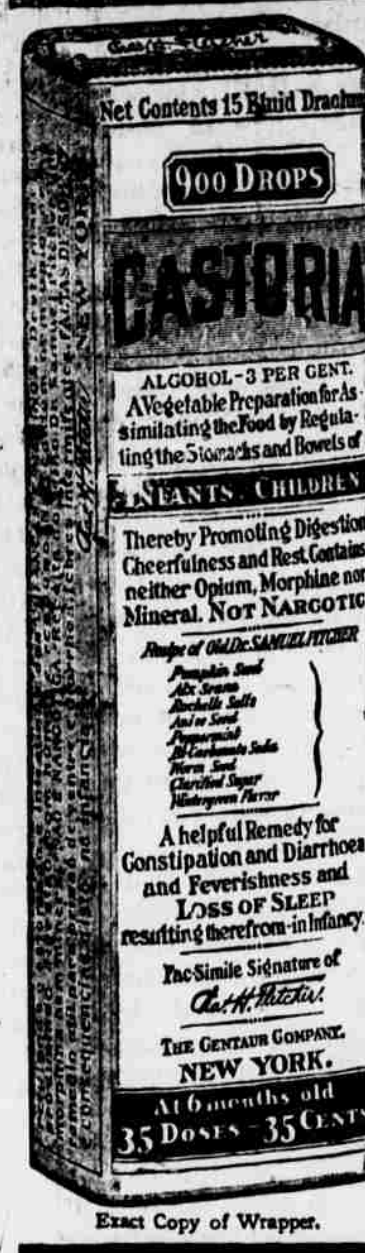
Mrs. F. M. Jones, of Palmer, Okla., writes: "From the time I entered into womanhood . . . I looked with dread from one month to the next. I suffered with my back and bearing-down pain, until life to me was a misery. I would think I could not endure the pain any longer, and I gradually got worse. . . Nothing seemed to help me until, one day, . . . I decided to

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SOUTHBOUND	Daily Except Sunday	Miles from Abingdon and Station No.	STATIONS		Length Sidings No. feet in clear	Number of Cars siding will clear	Telephone Signals (Dot means short ring, dash means long ring)	NORTHBOUND	Daily Except Sunday
			Eastern Standard Time	Time					
1st Class								1st Class	
No. 1			General Office					No. 5	
A.M.								P.M.	
7:20			Lv. Abingdon (W.C.)	Ar.				5:18	
0:5			Lv. Yard	Ar.	1138	35			
7:32			Lv. Watauga	Ar.	400	9		6:00	
7:45			Lv. Barron	Ar.	460	9		6:45	
8:00			Lv. Cedarville (W)	Ar.					
8:13			Lv. Drowning Ford	Ar.	125	2			
8:27			Lv. Valls Mill	Ar.	140	2			
Pass.									
No. 13									
8:12			Lv. Damascus (W) (T)	Ar.	820	15		4:18	
8:20			Lv. Laureldale (G.C.)	Ar.	400	10		4:11	
8:33			Lv. Taylor's Valley (W)	Ar.	600	15		3:55	
8:54			Ar. Creek Junction	Lv.	375	9		3:43	
9:42			Lv. Callahan Crossing (G.C.)	Lv.					
9:59			Lv. Green Cove (W)	Lv.	390	9		3:00	
10:27			Lv. White Top Gap (W.T.)	Lv.	390	9		2:50	
10:33			Lv. Nella	Lv.	200	5		2:28	
10:38									
10:45			Lv. Tuckerdale (W)	Lv.	480	12		2:14	
10:53			Lv. Lansing	Lv.	280	7		2:10	
11:04			Lv. Berlin	Lv.	195	5		2:04	
11:06			Lv. Warrenville	Lv.	390	8		1:58	
11:24			Lv. Smethport	Lv.	451	11			
11:39			Ar. West Jefferson (WCY)	Lv.	800	20		1:40	
11:54			Lv. West Jefferson (WCY)	Ar.	800			1:30	
12:05			Lv. Hamilton, N. C.	Ar.				1:24	
12:06			Lv. Donation	Ar.	160	4		1:14	
12:06			Lv. Bowie (W)	Ar.	360	9		1:00	
12:06			Lv. Riverdale	Ar.	320	8		12:43	
12:06			Ar. Eikland, N. C. (WCT)	Lv.	1310	80		12:30	
P.M.								P.M.	
Daily Except Sunday								Daily Except Sunday	
First Class								First Class	
No. 5								No. 4	
No. 3								No. 6	
P.M.								P.M.	
3:13			Lv. Creek Junction	Ar.	375	9		9:20	
3:28			Lv. Grassy Ridge (:) Ar.	Ar.				9:43	
9:10			Ar. Konnarock (WYO) Lv.	Lv.	20			9:11	
P.M.								P.M.	

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