

THRILLING STORY OF HAIG RETREAT

Illinois Officer Relates Experience of Hun Attack on the British.

TEN DIVISIONS AGAINST ONE

Despite Overwhelming Number of Enemy, His Losses Were Great—Miraculous Escape From Baptism of Shell Fire.

First Lieutenant Roswell T. Pettit, M. O. R. C., of Ottawa, Ill., in a letter to his father, Dr. J. W. Pettit of the Ottawa tuberculosis colony, and published in the Chicago Tribune, relates the thrilling story of the great battle in Picardy. The American officer was in the thickest of the fighting for nine days, during the retreat of the British Fifth army from before St. Quentin. Lieutenant Pettit's account of the battle thrills with the stress of the conflict, as it was written immediately after he had passed through the tremendous experiences and before his impressions had been in any way dulled by time. His letter follows:

Lieutenant Pettit's Letter.

March 30.

Dear Father: Now that the show is over for me for the time being, and I have time to breathe and sleep and eat and write, I'll try and tell you about the battle. Before you receive this you will have had the whole story from the papers, but I know you will be interested in knowing what I did in the affair.

Of course, the things I saw were but an infinitesimal part of a gigantic whole and it would be impossible for me to give a correct description of the battle. And as I write this, I do it with no knowledge whatever of what has been going on even a few miles from me.

I have not seen a paper in eight days; I have received no mail, and the only information we have received has been by word of mouth, and most of what we hear must be wild rumors. For example: The French have advanced 20 miles at Verdun, the Americans have taken Ostend, and are on their way to Zeebrugge, and a great naval battle has been fought in the North sea.

All I know is that on this part of the front the Germans attacked us in overwhelming numbers, in places ten divisions to our one; that they suffered terrible losses, but finally broke through our lines of defense, one after another, and fighting for the most part a rear guard action, we have retired about 15 miles in a straight line.

For a week before the battle started we had been expecting it; we were ready to move on 30 minutes' notice. I had been out with combatant as well as medical officers on tours of reconnaissance, definite methods of evacuation of the wounded had been worked out, and our plans of counter-attack had been made. After four or five days of waiting, the storm finally broke.

The Boche opened up on us at 5 a. m., March 21, with the heaviest barrage I have ever heard. "Stand to," was sounded, we turned out dressed, and had all our equipment packed in 30 minutes. Then we sat down and waited for orders to move. The barrage kept up continuously, sometimes heavier and then of less intensity, sometimes it seemed to be to the north of us and then suddenly it switched to the south.

Our balloons were up as soon as it was light and the airplanes were buzzing over our heads. The ground mist gradually cleared and the Germans put a hail of shrapnel on our camp and we all took cover, but three men were hit. Why it is a fellow always feels safer with a roof over his head, even if he knows bullets and shrapnel and pieces of shell will go through boards and corrugated iron just like paper.

Ordered to Move.

Our orders to move finally came and we marched off to the brigade assembly point several miles away. This assembly point was in a little bunch of trees about the size of Allen park and behind and separated from a larger wood in front. In the larger wood there was a battery of heavy artillery and shells were dropping in there two or three to a minute, and it was heavy stuff, too.

Sometimes they overshot the big wood and shells were landing in the open around the little wood where my brigade had its assembly point. As we approached our little cove we could make all this out from some distance away and it wasn't a pleasant sensation to feel that we were marching straight into it.

All the battalions arrived and in that little cove there must have been at least two thousand men. What a chance if the Germans only knew! But the shells continued to drop in front of us and on either side, but none landed among us, and after waiting there for three hours, expecting to be blown to bits any second, we finally moved forward. Just as we left the cove, from behind us, up over a ridge, came a stream of galloping horses.

"It's the cavalry," someone shouted, but soon I made out limbers and field guns.

They galloped past us, going like mad, took up a position to our right, swung into position, unlimbered, and

in two minutes were blazing away. It was a thrilling sight.

Torn by Shells.

In going forward we went around the end of the larger wood in front of us, over ground that was torn to bits by the heavy shell fire that had just preceded, over another edge, across a valley, and under the crest of a hill. And here we found the tanks going over the top of the hill to take up their position. At this point we were still about a mile from the front line.

At this place I opened up an aid post under the crest of the hill to take care of what wounded came in while we were getting into position.

Shrapnel was bursting in the air, shells were whizzing overhead, and our guns behind me were belching forth the fire. The noise was deafening.

A railroad ran through the valley and an engine pulling a couple of flat cars was going by. A couple of soldiers were sitting on the rear truck swinging their feet. A shell burst on the track and only missed the last car about fifteen yards. Neither man was hit and the train went blithely on.

By this time it was getting along toward evening, the sun was sinking in the west, and finally went down a great ball of fire. At the time, I remember, I noticed its color. It was blood red and had a sinister look. Was it my imagination, or might it have been a premonition? At any rate, I shall never forget the color of the sun as it set that night at the end of the first day of probably one of the greatest battles in history. It certainly didn't look good to me.

The drumming of the guns continued, twilight gradually deepened into night, the signalers stopped their wigwagging and took up their flash signals, a fog dropped down on us and put the lights out of business, and when we left to go forward under the cover of darkness they were busy putting out their telephone lines—signalers and runners don't have an easy time.

Shell Dump Goes Up.

Behind us a shell landed in an ammunition dump and it went up with a roar; then the rifle ammunition started going off like a great bunch of firecrackers, and great tongues of flame lit up the sky.

It is reported that the Germans had broken through our line and we were to counter-attack in the morning. We got into positions without a single casualty. I opened an aid post in an old dugout and settled down to sleep until morning. You may think it funny that one could sleep under such conditions, but I had been up since 5:30, had tramped about six or seven miles, had had a rather trying day and was dog tired.

Just like some of the warm days we get the last of March at home. In going forward it was necessary for us to march seventy-five yards in front of three batteries of field guns. There are six guns to a battery. They shoot an eighteen-pound shell and while we were there each gun was shooting twice to the minute. You can imagine the racket when I tell you that the discharge of one gun can be heard about four miles. In addition the Boche was trying to knock out this battery and he was dropping his six inch shells a little too close for comfort.

Nearly in a Trap.

Then I made a lovely mistake. I was to establish an aid post near battalion headquarters and went blithely on when I met a company commander and asked him where to go.

"Back there about a quarter of a mile," he replied. "This is the front center company. If you keep on in the direction you are going you are going up over that ridge and Fritz will be waiting for you with a machine gun."

So my sergeant and orderly and myself didn't waste any time in clearing. On the way back I found a gallon can full of water, got into a corrugated iron shelter and had a wash and a shave. It certainly felt good. I don't believe I had washed for thirty-six hours. It was warm and bright. I could look out of my shelter and see our support lines digging themselves in several hundred yards away. The cannon fire ceased, the machine guns settled down to an occasional fitful burst and it was midday of a beautiful spring day.

A couple of partridge flew over me. What did they know or care about all this noise and racket and men getting up in line and killing each other?

Along about three o'clock things began to liven up again. In the meantime headquarters had been established in a sunken road with banks about fifteen feet high on either side (later this cut was half filled with dead). My aid post was in a dugout near by and gradually things got hotter and hotter.

Our men had dug themselves in and were popping away with their rifles. The field batteries behind us were putting up a barrage, airplanes were circling overhead, both ours and the Germans'. The Germans put up a counter-barrage, the machine guns were going like mad. I was standing with the colonel on a little rise of ground above the sunken road when the Germans broke through about a mile to the north of us. They could be plainly seen pouring over the ridge in close formation.

Tanks Get into Action.

Then the tanks came up, and you should have seen them run! Just like rabbits! The tanks retired; the Boches reformed and came at it again. They tell me that at certain places our men withstood fifteen successive attacks and that the Germans went down in thousands. One Welshman told me that his gun accounted for 75 in three minutes during one wave.

Machine-gun bullets were nipping around me, the shell fire was getting

hotter, and even though it was a wonderful sight to watch I decided "discretion was the better part of valor," or something like that, and got down in my dugout.

I went back to the advanced dressing station through the hottest shell fire I ever experienced. More than once I went down on my face when a shell burst and the pieces went whizzing over my head. I spent the night in a mined village where the advanced dressing station was located, and all night they shelled it to blazes. It was remarkable how few casualties we had.

About eleven o'clock the morning of the third day a shell blew in the side of our post, but luckily no one was hurt. We stuck to it until about four in the afternoon, when we saw our men retiring over a ridge in front of us, keeping up a continuous machine gun and rifle fire, and we beat it back to another village and opened another post.

The Begrimed Lord.

About ten o'clock on the morning of the fourth day Lord Thyme, my colonel when I was with the battalion, stumbled into the shack where I was sitting. He looked like a ghost. He had lost his hat, his face was covered with a four days' beard, the sweat had traced tracks in the dust from his forehead to his chin. His sleeve was torn and bloody and he had a gash in his arm where he had been struck by a piece of flying shell case.

"My God, doc, are you here?" he said. "You got out just in time. The battalion is all gone. The sunken road is filled with dead—mostly Huns, damn 'em. The line broke on the right; we were surrounded, and at the last we were fighting back and back. Only thirty of us got away."

So we knew, the Boche had broken through to our right and our left, and it was a question of how long it would be before we, too, were surrounded, but we wanted to stick it out as long as we could.

But not more than an hour later a medical officer rushed in from one of the battalions and between gasps for breath told us the Germans were on the edge of the village, had shot him through the sleeve with a machine gun bullet (luckily that was all), and for us to beat it.

Let me tell you we did. I threw my knapsack and made the first hundred yards in nothing flat and then settled down to a walk because I was so out of breath I couldn't run any more.

The incessant scream and crash and bang of the shells kept up and the rat-tat-tat of the machine guns never ceased. The village immediately behind us was a seething mass of brick dust, smoke, flame, and bursting shells. We were told on our way back that a stand was to be made behind this village, so we circled around it and took up a position about a half mile behind it at a cross-roads.

Unfortunately for us, a six inch battery came into action about fifty yards from us, and, aside from the harassing effect of the terrific noise, batteries are always unpleasant neighbors, as they invite shell fire. We stepped here until about 10 o'clock at night, when we were ordered to retire.

There was no way of getting out the wounded that we had collected, so the stretcher bearers carried them on their stretchers for six or seven miles. In fact, we all helped, and when we arrived at our destination at 4 o'clock in the morning of the fifth day we were all in.

I could hardly move, but after two big bowls of hot tea and some hard tack I turned in on the floor and slept like a log for four hours, when we moved to another place and opened a dressing station.

Hun Plane Crashes.

On the way a German airplane came down and crashed near the road, but neither the pilot nor observer were hurt. They were a couple of rather neat looking lads about 19 years old.

And so it went for three days more, open a dressing station, retire (sometimes on the run), long marches, very little to eat except what we foraged from abandoned camps and dumps, dog tired, sleeping when and where we could, and finally the division was relieved. We now saw our first civilians, and last night I slept in a bed. It wasn't much of a bed, and the mattress was full of humps, but to get my boots off my sore and aching feet, to stretch out, and know I wouldn't be routed out in fifteen minutes—well, you couldn't have bought that bed from me for \$100.

Did you ever read Robert W. Service's description of the retreat from Mons? Well, that's the way I felt: Tramp, tramp, the grim road the road from Mons to Wipers; I've hammered out this ditty with me bruised and bleeding feet; Tramp, tramp, the dim road—We didn't have no pipers—All bellies that were 'oller was the drums we 'ad to beat.

The ninth day, sitting around the fire in our mess after the best dinner we had had in days, the commanding officer handed me some papers and said, "Here is something that will interest you, Pettit. I want to say we shall be sorry to lose you."

And this is what it was: "Lieut. Roswell T. Pettit, M. O. R. C., is relieved from duty with the British army and will proceed to the A. E. F., where he will report for duty."

I leave for Paris in the morning. This has been a long tale, but the half of it hasn't been told. I hope I haven't strung it out too much.

I have just been informed that all my kit had to be burned to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. I shall probably want you to send me some things from home, but will see what I can get here first. Your son, ROSWELL.

DADDY'S EVENING FAIRY TALE

BY MARY GRAHAM BONNER

A FAIRYLAND BALL.

The pine trees were singing songs to the fairies, and the fairies one by one were going to sleep. The big moon came out, smiled as he saw the fairies sleeping and whispered to the pine trees: "Is Fairyland going to be very quiet tonight?"

"No," the pine trees whispered. Just so they could be heard and so as not to awaken the fairies, "there is going to be a ball."

"Are the sleeping fairies going to awaken?" asked the moon.

"No, my dear moon," said the pine trees, "these fairies are the daytime fairies—the ones whose dresses are like the sun, only more dazzling so that people can't see them. They will sleep so soundly though that they will not awaken—and, too, the ball is being given in yonder glade."

"Are there other fairies coming to the ball?" asked the moon.

"The night fairies are coming—and hush—here come the fairies of twilight, headed by Fairy Twilight-Bell," said the pine trees.

Along through the woods came countless little fairies dressed in wonderful dresses of dark blue and purple. They wore silver crowns and they carried wands of silver with silver stars which dropped on the mossy ground.

"Hello, pine trees," called Fairy Twilight-Bell. "I see the day fairies have gone to slumberland."

Now the fairies of the twilight come out just after Mr. Sun has gone to bed and at the hour of day which people call twilight. Fairy Twilight-Bell was named because the twilight fairies voted for her as their queen. Her voice always sounded like a beautiful silver bell and so they named her Twilight-Bell.

The moon was so glad he had decided to get up early. "I just love a party," he said, grinning. "There is nothing I like so much. And I hope you'll choose hide-and-go-peek as one of your games before you begin the dancing."

"We will, Mr. Moon," the twilight fairies shouted, and from away in the woods an echo sounded:

"We will, Mr. Moon." But it was really not an echo at all. The sound came from the voices of the night fairies who were just hurrying along to the ball. They wore gowns of very dark purple with wonderful star-shaped sashes and crowns and wands. They came along singing:

"We're here, we're here,
Let's be of good cheer,
"And dance and play
"All the night away."
"Mr. Moon will beam, and the Pine Trees will sing,
"Let the joy-bells of Fairyland, Hap-pilyland, ring!"

The pine trees joined in the singing and Mr. Moon beamed. For they did as he had hoped and played hide-and-go-peek with him behind the pine trees.



"It's a Ball; a Real Ball."

He was so delighted and appreciated what the fairies did to amuse him so very much that he sent them a joyous surprise!

He told the moonbeams to play with the fairies, and then he asked the shadows from Shadowland to attend the ball, which they did.

The shadows danced with the fairies and the moonbeams, and all through the night the pine trees sang and made wondrous, soft music.

And Mr. Moon chuckled to himself and said: "Certainly fairyland is not quiet tonight. The pine trees were right. It's a ball, a real ball, and what is more, it's a real fairyland ball—the best kind in the world."

And as Mr. Moon smiled and grinned and talked all the time of how happy he was, the shadows, moonbeams and fairies kept on dancing.

It seemed as if they would never grow tired, but at last the night seemed to become less dark, and the early gray dawn began to appear.

"Hurry, hurry," said the fairies, "we must leave for we are the night fairies, and the dawn fairies will soon be here. This is their time and we have had ours."

So the night fairies left and the dawn fairies came, but as Mr. Moon went to bed for the daytime he said: "It was the best ball of the year!"

Proper.

Harold came home one night with his clothes full of holes.

"What in the name of goodness has happened to you?" exclaimed his mother.

"Oh! we've been playing shop ever since school was over."

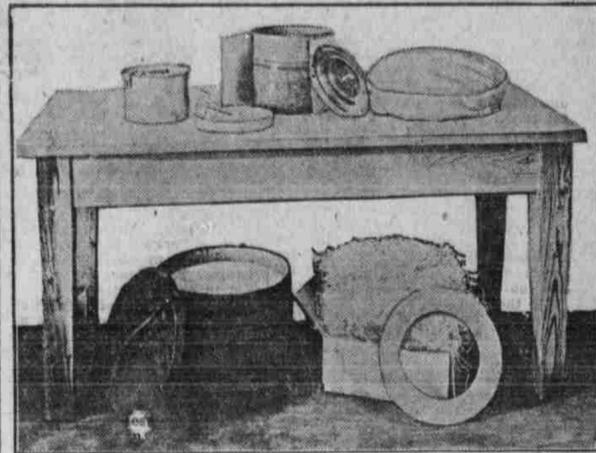
"Shop?" echoed the mother.

"Yes; we opened a grocery, and everybody was something," Harold explained. "I was the cheese!"

The Housewife and the War

(Special Information Service, United States Department of Agriculture.)

A FIRELESS COOKER FOR THE WARM DAYS



Material Needed for Making a Fireless Cooker.

FIRELESS COOKER IS EASILY MADE

Used With Kerosene Stove as Starter Kitchen Is Made More Habitable.

TIME AND FUEL ARE SAVED

Device is Warm Weather Comfort in Any Household—Food May Be Left Cooking Without Any Worry as to the Results.

a small vessel containing the food in the regular cooking vessel and surround it with hot water.

Soapstone disks will increase the usefulness of your cooker. They can be heated hotter than the boiling point of water and when shut up in the fireless furnish heat which cooks the food. If you made your fireless according to directions, you can safely use the disks. Heat them very hot, but do not let them get red hot, for fear of cracking. With one below and one on top of the cooking vessel you will be able to roast meat or even to bake bread or puddings. Without the disks your fireless is useful only for certain kinds of food—cereals, beans, pot roasts, stews, etc.

Make Fireless Cooker.

A tightly built box, an old trunk, a galvanized-iron ash can, a candy bucket, a tin lard can, a lard tub, and a butter firkin are some of the containers that have been used successfully in the construction of fireless cookers.

The inside container or nest which holds the vessel of hot food may be a bucket of agate, galvanized-iron or tin. This nest must be deep enough to hold the radiator and the vessel of food but not large enough to leave much space, as the air space will cool the food. The inside container must have a tight-fitting cover, and straight sides are desirable.

The packing or insulation must be some material which is a poor conductor of heat. The following materials may be used and they should be dry: Lint cotton, cotton-seed hulls, wool, shredded newspaper, Spanish moss, ground cork, hay, straw, and excelsior.

Sheet asbestos one-eighth inch thick and heavy cardboard have proved to be the best lining for the outer container and the wrapping for the nest. Heavy wrapping paper or several sheets of newspaper may be used for lining the outer container, but the nest should be wrapped with asbestos or heavy cardboard to prevent the hot stone scorching or burning the packing.

It is well to have the outside container large enough to permit four inches of packing below and around the sides of the nest. If a cooker is being made with two nests, six inches of packing should be allowed between the nests. Pack into the bottom of the lined outer container four inches of the packing. Place the nest or inside container wrapped with asbestos or heavy cardboard and hold steady while the packing is put around tightly and firmly until it reaches the top of the nest.

Make a collar, as shown in illustration, of cardboard, sheet asbestos, or wood to cover the exposed surface of the insulating material. This collar should fit tightly.

Make a cushion which when filled with the packing will be at least four inches thick and will fill completely the space between the top of the nest and the lid of the outside container. It should fit against the top tightly enough to cause pressure when the lid is closed.

The outside of the fireless cooker can be made more attractive by staining or painting it. The lid may be held in place by screen-door hooks and eyes. The cooker may be placed on casters so that it can be easily moved.



The Completed Fireless Cooker.