

MAJORITY OF ROADS BUILT AT VERDUN

French Accomplished Wonders After Attack by the Germans Began.

RAILROADS ARE LAID AS THE TRAINS MOVE

Poilu Repairers Sulk When Teuton Shells Tear Up Stretch They Have Just Mended.

BY HERBERT COREY.
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BACK OF VERDUN, May 4.—We could not take the road through Comoy to French officers with our party explained. The Germans were shelling it this morning. No damage had been done as yet, but—
"We must take a very poor road indeed," said he.
It was a very fortunate road indeed for us, for it gave us a chance to see something of that marvelous organization the French have built up back of Verdun. These things are no longer secrets. The Germans, no doubt, know them almost as well as their authors. To put them in a phrase, the French have built new railroads, turnpikes, short cuts and footpaths through this district. All the building has been done since the Germans attacked Verdun. Today Verdun could be buried under a flood of provisions of every sort, so effective is this organization.

Few Roads There.
"Why was this not provided before the Germans attacked?" we asked.
"The French," was the reply, "have a tremendous faculty for coping with the unexpected."

Some wonder has been expressed at the German attack upon Verdun, presumably the strongest bastion of the French front. In reality it may have been the weakest. The Germans, however, did not expect the French to have the most modern battle demands. On the German side there are, according to the reports, two lines of trenches, all sorts and gauges. It follows the Germans argued they could drown the French under a flood of iron in two days. Because of a sheer inability to reply the French would be forced to give up the line.

Autos Carried Munitions.
The hour that it became apparent the Germans really "meant" to attack Verdun the French high command began to repair this deficiency. In the transport service, at dawn of the following day 18,000 automobiles of various sorts were engaged in supplying Verdun with what its army needed. The first reports current in Paris were that 5,000 automobiles were set at this work. I am told by an officer of the automobile service the larger number accurate.

It is not sufficient merely to order a given number of automobiles to haul certain quantities of freight to a certain point. On the first of the automobiles to roll along these roads to Verdun were station masters and road menders, mechanics and mechanics, and every sort of supervisor and aid to the auto transport. At intervals of hardly more than a mile stations were established. At first these stations consisted of a few tired and bearded men who waved flags at oncoming machines. By noon of that day they had become machine shops in tents. The automobiles were run on the "rock" and the smashed machine was tipped into the ditch. Nothing was permitted to impede the flow of cars toward the city.

"Behold the road menders!"
Road Menders Sulky.
A road mender is always a grouchy and uncompanionable person. These road menders at first glance promised to prove as surly as the remainder of the road-mending race. They were all "poilus" in the French army, blue and of abundant whiskers, dear to the heart of the territorial soldier. They were the older soldiers, a bit too well in years to be too delicate for the front trenches, but sturdy, solid, game fighters. Just the same, there was one soldier road mender almost to each yard of the roads leading to Verdun.

"The beloved grumblers," said my companion, fondly.
A poilu turned a heated and indignant face upon us. An hour previously this road had been shelled by the Germans. Some of the shells had fallen upon his appointment of turnpike. This had embittered him frightfully. That one should spend his day in the mud and rain for these Boche beasts to tear to pieces with their snare shells—
Work Frequently Undone.
His lot was made the more unbearable by the fact that as he dropped shovelfuls of crushed stone in the shell holes automobiles would come spinning along and splash the crushed stone out again. It was impossible for him to make a finished and perfect job of it under such conditions. I saw him shake a fist at a large truck that had just passed. As we came by he glared. This is the only word for it. He glared. On some of the roads the shells drop constantly," said my companion. "But these old grumblers pay no attention. When the shells fall too fast they lie down by the roadside and wait for the pipes. When the storm is over they come growling back to the roadside and patch the holes the shells have made."

Many Miles of Roads.
In order to supply the needs of Verdun many miles of new road have been laid down since the battle began. Some of these new roads are very fine affairs, piled high with crushed stone, and others are of a temporary and makeshift character, in which the new cut grade has been hastily veneered with a stone surface. Nowadays, of course, the automobile traffic has greatly slackened. The 18,000 cars employed during the first few days had to carry out of Verdun its 22,000 civilians, as well as carry in a reserve stock of munitions of every sort.

At intervals over the hills one sees puffs of brilliantly white steam. The first assumption is that a shell has just burst. After a short time it is found that each unusual aspect of the landscape, each cloud of smoke or of steam, is unhesitatingly ascribed to Father John's Medicine.

My children used to be troubled with coughs and were weak and run down, but Father John's Medicine made us all happy and healthy, and we have used it for the last fifteen years. Many druggists and people have tried to make me use substitutes, but I never shall as long as Father John's Medicine is sold, as we were blessed with many happy years of health by the use of Father John's Medicine. (Signed) Mrs. Omer Berube, 32 Easton St., Lawrence, Mass.

steam roads one sometimes sees in operation in quarries or on great construction works in the United States. Each miniature engine draws a train of half a dozen or more cars. The rails are very light and the wheels very flimsy, so that at first the whole construction seems flimsy and unsafe. On the other hand, these little roads are precisely adapted to the day's need.
"The track may be laid very rapidly," my companion pointed out.
That was obvious. As I watched a gang of soldier track layers began carrying out rails spiked in sections on the light wooden sleepers. They were laying down a side track. The grading had been done with shovels and a few handfuls of crushed stone, and the track was laid almost as fast as a man can walk. Before our automobile was out of sight the engine was backing down upon it—carefully, as an engine should to which had been entrusted a train of cars—but quite safely.
"They run almost to the enemy's lines," I was told. "They are very often under shell fire, these little trains, but their crews do not mind it. They are hard to hit, and even when they are hit they are not hurt. The shells are not so big as the shells that are used in the trenches, and the train goes triumphantly on."

Trainloads of Road Menders.
We passed train after train laden with the territorial road menders, burdened with their picks and shovels in addition to their rifles and haversacks. They were on their way to build new roads or repair old ones. Next would come a company or two of soldiers on their way to the front, rather silent, as becomes men on their way into the "furnace," as they often call it, but grimacing and in good spirits. The next train might be loaded down with men just out of the fire trench, muddy, silent, crushed with the sheer physical strain of facing death sleeplessly for six days and nights. At regular intervals were switches and soldier sweethearts and in one valley a "round-house" improvised by sending out a few spurs from the main tracks.

Both automobile and steam roads were directed by a most efficient system of train dispatching, to serve which a separate telephone system was used. There has never been a minute since the battle began that the constant flow in both directions has been interrupted for a moment. There has never been a serious jam on any section. Practically speaking, there is never a minute that each car and each yard of road is not under the supervision of those armed with authority to take summary action.
"We used to think the French were weak in organization," was my companion's comment.
Pleasure Craft Being Prepared.
After having lain ashore for several weeks at Regan's boatyard, the yacht G. M. A., belonging to G. M. Anderson of this city, has been put overboard ready for service. Mr. Anderson will probably leave here on the first trip of the season in the latter part of this week.
Capt. Will Neitz has had repairs completed on his power boat Benjamin N., and recently made a trip aboard her. Capt. Neitz will take his family aboard the launch, and will spend a month cruising along the lower Potomac. To be cleaned and painted, and for such minor repairs as she may need, the power boat "Two Friends," belonging to Capt. Charles Hahn, is out on the railway at Regan's.

On the program of human events women are the consolation race.

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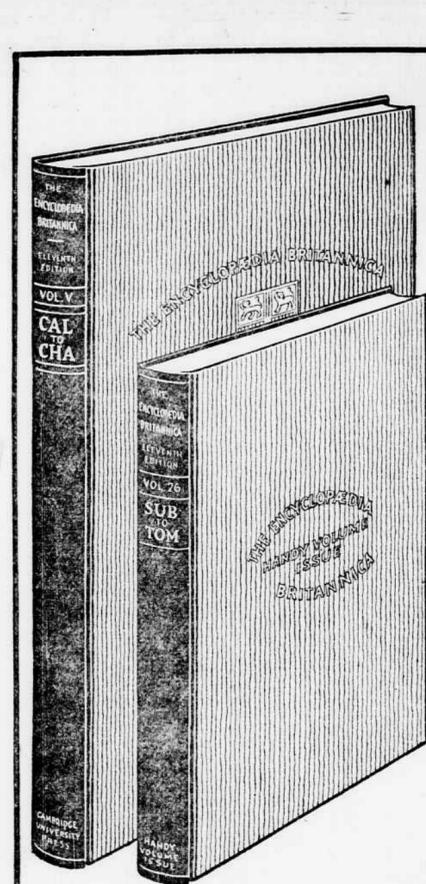
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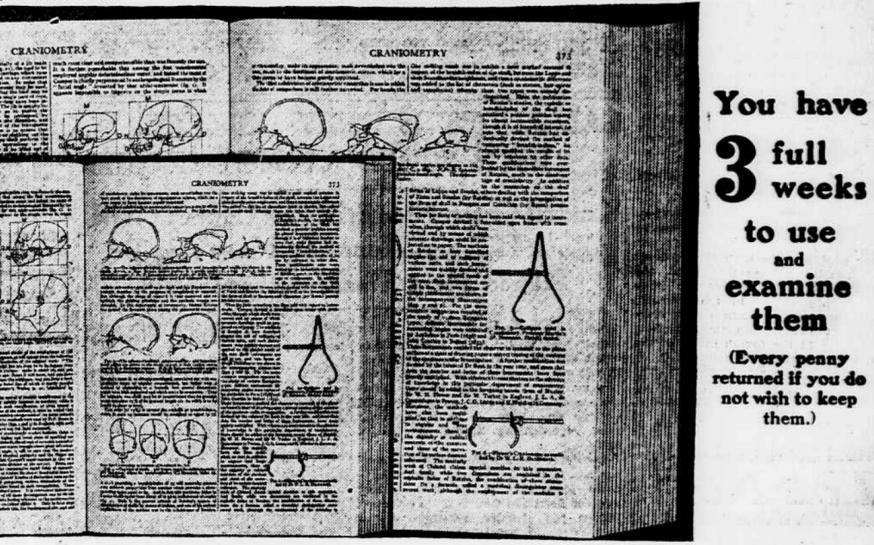
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