LIEUT. CARROLL SWETENBERG

~~Takes a Part in the Big~~ War Both in the Argonne Forest and at Champagne—The World in a Blaze—Their Casualties Heavy—Henry Mack Vallines Divides—The Monument at Abbeville Beats Them All.

Abbeville has always had a glorious record in war and with the coming home of our young soldiers one realizes with a deep and growing feeling of appriciation the great glory they have shed on their home. To hear them talk is a liberal education and it is worth many months of life to watch their animated faces and to hear their casual mention of danger and hardships and it gives a person as old as "the writer" a feeling of awe to realize that this great war has been won by boys, boys whose birth we can remember and now as mere youths they have had experiences crowded into a few months which would last most of us a life time.

There is much talk among the newspapers of six months pay for the soldiers which would mean with many, six months of idleness. Well, most of them will need six months idleness to be able to answer all the questions asked them and to make even a passing remark to the people who want to hear everything a soldier has to say.

Lieut. Carroll Swetenburg has been home for about a month and we have been fortunate in getting him to talk to us and to allow us to pass it on to our many interested readers.

Lieut. Swetenburg is the son of Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Swetenburg and has made his home in Abbeville for the past nine years. He was born at Peaks, in Lexington County, twenty three years ago but Abbeville claims him and every man, woman and child in the county feels a pride in his fine record.

Lieut. Swetenburg volunteered at the first call for men, and received his training at Fort Oglethorpe, where he received his commission as Second Lieutenant. He was assigned at once to Camp Jackson, and to the 171st Infantry, Company D, 1st Battalion. It was here that the young soldier experienced his first "horrors of war" for one morning he, in company with other young officers, was called up to Headquarters and assigned his company, the officer remarking "this is a negro company", in a perfectly ordinary tone of voice We are told in the Bible that there was silence in Heaven for the space of a half hour, well, there was silence among these young officers for an hour. The shock came very near taking the pleasure out of their brand new uniforms, but this feeling soon wore off says Lieut. Swetenburg and the officers took a pride and pleasure in training their men. Most of the negroes were from South Carolina, fresh from the cotton fields sent in by the November draft. The majority were quick and eager to learn, were proud of their new clothes and that they were a part of the big show. They trained at Camp Jackson until the first week in April, when they sailed for France from Newport News. The trip over was without incident, save that the first few days rough weather was encountered and officers and men alike were sick enough to wish that they were dead. After this wore off the trip was pleasant and a source of unfailing wonder to the negro troops. They landed at Brest, where they remained for nineteen days. They have no pleasant recollection of the place for it rained eighteen out of this nineteen days. From Brest they made a four days trip across France to Marats le Grande, a town in the Department of the Marne. This journey was made in box cars whose capacity was forty men or eight horses. Lieut. Swetenburg is not a Congressman and had no "kick" on this, remarking "What would a soldier ride in, but a box car."

Here the Americans were brigaded with the 157th Division of the French Army and were trained by French officers, their formation being changed to conform to French methods. The Americans have four infantry companies in one battalion, while the French have three companies of infantry and one machine gun company.

After training four weeks our men were moved into the Verdun sector.

"Was this a quiet sector?"

"I never found a quiet sector in all my travels. There was always plenty going on in the way of shot and shell," replied the young soldier. "Here we were in the trenches for eighty-seven days. Our first relief came in eighteen days when we were sent back to a reserve position for eight days. We were supposed to be in rest camp but we spent the time repairing trenches and keeping up wire entanglement, which did not give us time to rest or to worry about what was coming to us."

"When we were making preparation for the big drive our battalion went in and stayed twenty-two days without relief. We were on outpost duty, and the troops in the rear were building up defenses. We were close enough to hear the German supply wagons coming up to the German line. Our artillery kept up a continuous fire all night long for fourteen days in the hope of destroying the enemy's preparation and their nerve. During this fourteen days the Germans did not fire a single shot while before it had been shot for shot. This silence was uncanny and rather got on the Frenchmen's nerves for they thought the big attack would come in this Verdun sector, but it moved further up the line and "broke" at Soisson and Rheims, making our boys miss the German offensive.

"We stayed in this sector until relieved in September with orders to go back for that old well earned rest all the American soldiers heard about when they were in France. We won our rest after an all night ride in army trucks, after which we arrived in a little town of about five thousand inhabitants. In a short while we were comfortably located and settled down to routine drills when on the third day about three in the afternoon orders were received that the Division would move at six-fifteen.

"How could you get ready in such a short time?"

"We just had to roll up our two blankets in mussett bags and put our underwear in our pockets and we were ready for the move. We marched seven nights, sleeping on the ground in the day time. We arrived at our destination about nine o'clock at night and at eleven-fifty-five, it seemed to us that the world went up in a blaze. This was in the Champagne sector and was the beginning of the big fight. We were interested spectators that night but moved forward to the line next day. Every man carried reserve ration and two hundred rounds of ammunition. Rations consists of two cans of meat and hard tack and every man carried his own share.

In the afternoon we moved out of town to relieve the French Moraccans and our first attack was made at six-forty-five or about daylight the following morning. We had one day of trench fighting after which the fighting was in the open. The German's were fighting a rear guard action with machine guns and light artillery, to cover the retreat of the infantry. We were fighting the 4th Prussian Guard. They were good soldiers and we fought for and paid dear for every inch of ground we won. I did not see any German running around with his hands up begging to be captured . I did not know there could be so much noise in the world but it did not unnerve the negroes for they followed their officers steadily and played a fine part in the winning of the war. We had one officer killed and one wounded while our company casualties were about seventy-three per cent. Our battalion went in with about seven hundred and fifty men and came out with two hundred men. By 'casualties' I do not mean that all these men were killed outright, the wounded are considered casualties too. During this engagement the Germans sent over plenty of mustard gas shells.

"After a nine days fight we were relieved and I tell you it was a grand and glorious feeling to get back and get our faces washed and some clean clothes on. We were sent to a little town called Auve, where we rested for three days. We were entrained one afternoon under the impression that we were going to Nice or Marsailles to reorganize, but after an all night ride we brought up in the Vosges Mountain. I shall never forget the sound of the French guide's voice as he walked up and down the line calling into the cars for Company D. Our regiment went right in and took over the sector known as Col de Bonhomme, meaning "Gap of the good man." We were only a short distance from the line of Alsace and things were not as lively as on the Verdun front. We remained here until the armistice was signed, that is from October 17th, till November 11th. We had been hearsace and thnigs were not as lively ing all sorts of peace rumors and along with the civilian population we were living on the fourteen points. On Sunday afternoon, Nov. 10th we understood that the Germans had refused to accept the armistice terms. This was a 'zero hour' for sure. Monday morning we were eating breakfast in a 'dug-out at about ten-forty-five, when heavy firing started all along the German lines. We thought there was going to be a raid and two young lieutenants went on a run up the trenches to see what was the matter. In some places our trenches were only twenty-five yards apart and our observers found that the grenades were falling over the parapets and the machine gun fire was directed at the side of the mountain. At eleven o'clock the Germans sounded "taps" and came up over the parapet bearing a white flag. The war was over. The heart breaking times of the last four years was a thing of the past, and a great sigh of relief went up and down the America line while the words, "We are going home, boys," flew from mouth to mouth.

The Germans tried to come over and be friendly but this was prohibited and we kept our same alert position, staying in the trenches ready for any emergency until the army was relieved. We were not sent into the "Lost provinces", this honor being reserved for the Second Moroccan Division.

When we were relieved we started on a march which we supposed would take us to the Rhine and the army of occupation but after a day we were turned around and put in a little town called Bruyeres, where we stayed until January 2nd, waiting for transportation. We had nothing to do so everybody went to Paris. We had been out of the world for so long that our pay had accumulated and we had so much money we didn't know what to do with it. However, the people around Paris soon made us understand that w vere expected to spend it, and of ourse, we had to please the French.

"How did the Germans tak the coming of peace?"

"They were glad," said Lieut. Swetenburg. Everybody was glad. We found the German soldiers well kept, well clothed and with plenty of good liquor and cigarettes, though when they started on their homeward march some were waving the red flag of revolution. Some of them said, "We were ready for war but you have beaten us, and it is over so far as we are concerned."

The young lieutenant has much to say of France that is interesting. In the war zone it is possible to see only the poorest class of people and a man anywhere who owns ten acres of land has a plantation.

They have compulsory education and every child from eight to twelve years must go to school.

The French people were glad always to see the Americans for they cleaned up their little towns and made things lively for a while. The officers usually had a mess and hired some French woman to cook for them and according to Lieut. Swetenburg a French woman can make good soup out of a chip and that they taught the Americans to eat carrots. Their supplies were all French and according to the negroes they got two meals a day, the continental breakfast of war bread and coffee not being regarded by Sambo as a genuine meal. Dinner and supper were about what any one would have, there being always plenty of rice.

Premier Clemenceau observed the fight on Observatory Ridge and Lieut. Swetenburg got a good look at him as he passed by the regiment. He is an old, old man, but is the idol of France. He has kept the country together and prevented a premature peace.

Lieut. Swetenburg says he saw no inter-marrying of the races, but the poor people of France looked on the negroes as genuine Americans, and he thinks they will be good Americans for he feels that those who have seen service will make law-abiding citizens.

The young soldier has a genuine affection for his orderly, a young negro from North Carolina who is named Henry Mack Vallines and who was smart enough to anticipate his wants and in the trenches the white soldier shared his blanket and rations and the colored boy was generous enough to divide his cootoes.

Lieut. Swetenburg was promoted to First Lieutenant before he left Camp Jackson. After going abroad only two lieutenants were promoted.

Everybody is asking the soldiers foolish questions and we were no crazier than the rest when we asked if he was "glad to get home", and we felt like we knew when he told us that he had seen many "big and beautiful sights but never anything to equal the Statute of Liberty, unless it was the Confederate monument at Abbeville. I have not consulted Mama but I believe she is as glad to see me as I am to see her." While one of the sisters told at school that "Mama has cooked up a lot of fine things for Carroll, in fact we have to watch her to keep her from killing the calf."

The captain of Company D. was Thomas Moffatt, a young attorney of Columbia. Capt. Moffatt is the half brother of Mrs. W. O. Bradley, who once lived in Abbeville and who has so many relatives and friends in the county. Capt. Moffatt was promoted and served some time as Major.

Lieut. Swetenburg's regiment was cited by the Marshal of France and their colors decorated with the Croix de Guerre. The young soldier has received his decoration since coming home and among his treasures is the farewell address of their French commander whose high praise is expressed in a manner worthy of one of Napoleon's greatest Marshall:

Headquarters 371st Infantry,
Dec. 19, 1918.
157th Division, General Staff,
Headquarters, 19th Dec. 1918.

Officers, non-commissioned officers, sappers, soldiers, gunners, and cavalry men of the 157th Division:

The Marshall of France, commander in Chief of the French army, has ordered the dissolution of our Division, on the date of the 20th of December, 1918. It is therefore the last farewell I address to you this

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