

RED CROSS SIGN OF DANGER WHEN FIGHTING THE HUNS

E. Phillips, of the Medical Department, Describes Shell-ing of First Aid Station by Hun Artillery

Dr. C. R. Phillips has recently re-ceived a letter of unusual interest from his younger son, Samuel El-nberger Phillips, of the medical department of the 314th Regiment, which he describes his experi-ences in the battle area. This regi-ment was actively engaged in the battle area from September 13 to the signing of the armistice after which they were used for guard duty in the vicinity where they had been engaged in fighting.

"About 2 A. M. of the 14th we pulled into the shell torn town of Recourt, about ten kilometers east of Verdun. Immediately we were shown to billets and it was my lot to get in the only house in town with a roof on it. I also was lucky enough to get nice bunk on which I deposited my weary self till morn-ing.

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"The next day was Sunday. It was a clear day and the big guns were quiet for a change. Along to-ward mid afternoon, I was stand-ing by the back door of my billet, looking out over the fields spread before me. In the immediate front of the picture were two large dug-outs, the first I had ever seen. I was just at the point of going over to see them when a sudden, queer, shrieking noise attracted my atten-tion. As I looked up the whistling ended in a roar and as I stood petrified with wonder at this new ex-perience a piece of shrapnel whizzed

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past my ear bringing me suddenly to life. My gas mask was my first thought at the moment, but as I reached for it, some yelled 'Gates to dugouts.' Simultaneously came another shriek from over the hill. I TOOK. It only lasted a few minutes, but it was enough. I had been under fire.

"Several hours later, just as the sun was disappearing behind the distant hills, I heard the now familiar sound of an airplane. Looking up I saw a black machine hovering overhead, a moment later a roar from the road followed by the rattle of the machine gun showed plainly to any doubters who our visitor was. A minute later another roar was heard. But it was a different sounding affair. This new noise was very familiar—being the American plane. What followed I cannot describe. But the result of the battle was that the Boche fell and the American flew away un-hurt.

"At dark that night we moved forward again. This time on foot. When morning broke we found our-selves in dugouts along a road with strict orders to stay in. Well, in the morning broke we found our-selves in dugouts along a road with strict orders to stay in. Well, in the morning broke we found our-selves in dugouts along a road with strict orders to stay in.

"The most terrific barrage in the history of the world was heralded by the opening barrage of the 'heavies.' One was placed just about fifteen feet from where I was stand-ing. When it went off the first time it knocked me flat with its concus-sion, and for the first time in my life I thought I could see the Pearly Gates open for me. But it was not the last, by far.

"My first dead man I saw about 7 o'clock the next morning. I was go-ing down the trenches when after a sudden turn I came upon them. Five American boys blown to bits. Many times since then have I seen these things, but never have they so touched me as the first time. Pre-vious to this I could not get down to the reality of war. All the noise and trouble seemed like a 'blood and thunder' novel, until this first real-istic touch came.

"The third day about 5 P. M. I was in the very front with my Com-pany G, when I found a man in a shell hole with a broken arm. This

hole was near the edge of the cele-brated Argonne Forest. Near by was another wounded man in an- other shell hole. As I dressed the first man I heard the 'ping' of a rifle with a silencer attached. This means but one thing, a 'sniper.' I ducked, and then peeping over the edge of the hole I saw a sight that made my blood boil. A German sniper elev-ator concealed in the edge of the wood, was taking 'pot shots' at the wounded man in the nearby shell hole. The sniper did not see me. I was unarmed but my patient had the rifle. On the impulse of the mo-ment I tore the red cross from my arm, took my friend's rifle and care-fully aiming fired. The sniper sniped no more. I got my HUN. On num-erous occasions I have been marked for fire from snipers, but I have long since ceased to wear the Red Cross. It is a deadly mark.

"On Sunday morning the terrible happened. Our first aid station was shelled, killing two of our lieuten-ants, my best chum, about a dozen wounded men, and the car-riage of that scene I cannot describe. The Telegraph mentions it on the first page of the October 3 issue. How I came out alive, not to men- tion unhurt, is a story that is able to tell. This event left our outfit de-moralized for the rest of the day. Every officer was killed, wounded or shell shocked. I have been marked for fire from snipers, but I have long since ceased to wear the Red Cross. It is a deadly mark.

"The next afternoon (Monday), our relief came up and we started back through terrible shell fire. That night we stayed on a barren hillside, almost frozen to death, with neither food nor blankets. Next day we walked fifteen miles, no food yet. That night we arrived in the woods in which we were first in the big meal. Rested all next day with plenty to eat. That night we started to walk again. For four days we walked under full pack with prac-tically no food at all. At night or rather day break we would hunt a deep woods and pitch our pup tents. Here we would stay till dark the next night. At last we pulled our weary bones into Rupt, where we rested two days and I got fed up again. Then on the march, living in the woods till we reached Ambly. Here we rested nearly two weeks all the time being held in reserve for the front.

"At 6 P. M. on the evening of Oc-tober 20, sudden orders came to pack up. The Germans are going to counter attack. The night was fever and bustle. At 7 o'clock I received orders to go over to Tilly with a special message. While there a bombardment started in the ap-pearance. Our battalion was to leave at 9 o'clock. I must be back at Ambly before they move. And bombs were dropping all around. At last I took a chance (and such a chance is a man's main job here) and started. By running all the way I made it. Then I had to get my pack ready. At last all was ready. We moved out in the front at double quick. For three hours we kept up a neck-breaking speed. Then came the or-ders to halt. This was about mid-night. In our tracks we lay until 4 P. M. next day, then cold, hungry and disoriented we started back—false alarm.

"At last orders did come to move and at dark on the night of the 23d we left. In three hours we were marching we reached Sommebeau where we stayed two days and then made another night march to a woods near Verdun. Next night we moved again to the old battle scarred fort where we stayed two days and one night. That first night I was placed on guard at cross roads.

"Next night we pulled out under 'fighting packs'; we were going in again! Across fields, railroads and streams we went, finally arriving on a hillside where we were told to 'dig in.' Morning showed us that we were in the front at Verdun. That was the 31st of October. From then till the 8th of November we lived in 'Death Valley' and such a life I cannot describe it. It was just plain hell.

"Then on the morning of the 8th of November we woke to the realiza-tion that the Huns were moving back. Forward we went with them. At first it was easy going then re-sistance showed itself and the trouble started. On the afternoon of the 10th I had a little trouble. I had given up all hope of ever getting out. I had been sent to the first battalion with a note and on the way I picked up another runner heading in the same direction. We got lost and finally found our way plump up against the German lines. We crawled back and found the first battalion. They were all lost and did not know that they were so near the Germans. The major was at a loss for a moment and just then the Huns spotted us. On they came, outnumbering us ten to one. Dig in! yelled the major, and dig we did. Nothing but my mess kit to do it with, but in three minutes I had a hole big enough to lie in. No one knows why the Huns stopped before every one of us was dead. Providence, I guess.

"Next morning, November 11th, we were in the valley between two high hills when the order came at 9:20 A. M. to go over the top. Such a sight I never saw before! Up and over they went, yelling at the top of their lungs charging, bayoneting, shooting and above all YELLING. For an hour they went; then a run-ner came up and at 10:45 the news began to spread, and at 11 A. M. the major yelled 'down.' Every man dropped. 'Cease firing' came next. Then a German stood up and yelled 'Kamerade, Le Guerre est Finishe.' (Notice he spoke in French).

"The scene then enacted would bring tears to the eyes of any man. Guns flew, men sprang up, cheers sounded and resounded throughout the valley. Then an appalling discov-ery was made. If the armistice had not taken effect at that moment not one man in the second battalion would be alive to tell this tale. Me with them. In their excitement the boys had gone way beyond their flanking comrades. The foe had closed in the rear with machine guns making a perfect death trap for all in it. We could not possibly have been saved.

"In a later letter he writes of the great preparations for welcoming the new year. 'Great plans had been made for the proper ushering in of the new year, and as I stood on the banks of the Meuse at 12 o'clock looking toward the west and long-ing to be able to step across the in-tervening miles and look in upon you all, there came a terrific blast that shook this part of the world. Tens of thousands of tons of am-munition went up and with them a thousand star shells illuminating everything within a radius of five miles. It was to be a perfect new year.

"P. S.—For goodness sake don't save any of that sauerkraut you wrote about. We came across a mil-lion gallons that the Hun had left behind, and we have it three times a day. I didn't know there was so much sauerkraut in the world. I sure am 'fed up' on sauerkraut and Hun."

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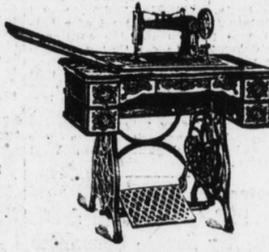
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