

AMERICA IN FRANCE

IV—Alsace

It was in the third week in May that American troops, jubilantly welcomed by all the people of the countryside, filed along the mountain roads to take their place in that part of the great Allied line which restores to France a portion of her own Alsace.

It was their first appearance on German territory, or rather on a land that has been German-held ever since the end of the war of 1870, when, triumphant and unscrupulous, Prussia wrung from helpless France her fair provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.

It was the first appearance of American soldiers on soil that had been taken and re-taken, fought for and fought over by troops from every country of the continent, for from the days of Caesar the Alsatian plain, that luckless crossroads of ancient Europe, has been a bloody battleground. None of its towns is without its bitter memories of siege and massacre and pillage. The very name Alsatia long ago became a synonym in alien speech for debatable land.

Half as Big as Jersey

Alsace is bounded on the north by the Rhenish Palatinate, on the south by Switzerland, on the west by the Vosges. Looking to the east from their mountain posts, the American artillery observers can keep a watch on the Rhine. Alsace is a little country. It is not half so big as the State of New Jersey. It had long been loosely held by the House of Hapsburg when, in 1648, the treaty that closed the Thirty Years' War added its acres to the crown of France. It was one of Bismarck's projects in launching the Franco-Prussian war and one of his first conditions when his time came to name the terms in the humiliating treaty of Frankfurt in 1871, to recapture for Germany a country that had been French for nearly two centuries, longer by a generation than America has been a nation.

As long ago as 1701 the Prussian statesman Schmettau warned his people in these words:

"We can never retake Alsace because it is notorious that its inhabitants are already more French than the Parisians. Even conquered, the land of Alsace would cover a burning brazier of love for France."

More than a century and a half later, M. de Freppel uttered this solemn prophecy to the father of the present Kaiser:

"Believe the words of a Bishop who speaks before God and with his hand on his heart: Alsace will never be yours."

By Force of Arms

But Germany seized the provinces by force of arms, and by one stroke of the pen robbed of their French nationality a bitterly protesting people that numbered a million and a half.

"The Alsatians must rid themselves of the spirit of France," said Bismarck coolly. "When once they feel themselves entirely Alsatian, they are too logical not to feel themselves entirely German."

So began that stupid but systematic process of Germanization, pushed now with coaxing, now with threats, now with bribes, now with force, and which, after half a century, has left the Alsatians more than ever devoted to France, more than ever distrustful of Prussia, a brutal process of Germanization which provoked throughout watchful and uneasy Europe much of the fear and dislike which found expression in the present war.

Heart and Soul With France

German professors could argue that the Alsatians, like some of the Swiss, spoke a German dialect, and that when Alsatians wanted to vow they would never be German they had to say: "Nimmer will ich Deutsch sein," for lack of any other tongue. They could argue that, back in the Middle Ages, when Alsace had been a Germanic if not a Prussian affiliate, but they had to keep their noses buried deep in dusty histories to keep from seeing the thing which is heart and soul with France.

They had to talk and only about Alsace in a hushed undertone to keep from hearing the tramp-tramp of that sorrowful exodus of the nineteenth century—the departure of more than a quarter of the population when the time came to choose between leaving their native land or accepting German citizenship.

Sought Independence First

The exodus of the Alsatians became so alarming that Bismarck had to put up the bars and thus pen in the country an unreconciled and irreconcilable colony of discontent. So many Alsatians enlisted as a matter of course in the French Army that Berlin had to require that the Alsace enroll them in the Foreign Legion. Today there are many Alsatians in high posts in the French Army; in the German Army there are almost none. As soon as Alsace-Lorraine was allowed to send delegates to the Reichstag, the delegates grieved and surprised their Prussian masters by making as their first proposition the immediate independence of the captive provinces. The German garrisons keeping order in Alsace-Lorraine have had to proceed exactly as though they were in hostile territory which they are. They have been through 40 years and more an interminable series of fines and imprisonments for expressions of French sympathy, penalties for possessing French flags, emblems and souvenirs, penalties for playing the Marseillaise, or even for wearing a headress that resembled the French kepi.

Berlin said these were just the didoes of a contrary people who liked to ape foreign customs. But to this day, in the borderland regions, the exasperated Prussians must print their notices and even their propagandist sheets in French if they want them read.

Anybody But Germany

Some Alsatians in late years wanted annexation with Switzerland, some independence, some restoration to France. But even the younger generation that had no memories of 1870 agreed with their elders on one thing: No one wanted to be part of Germany.

So it went until the eve of the present war, and it was an American, David Starr Jordan, who put the case in the following nutshell: "Germany says to the annexed population: 'I will give you your freedom on the day when I am sure of your love for the Empire.' To which Alsace replies: 'I shall never love you till the day you give me my freedom.' And Lorraine adds: 'I can never come to terms with you. Then Germany says to the French: 'We cannot be friends till you have forgotten.' And France replies: 'It is impossible for me to forget!'"

French Cross Boundary

Then came the war, and in the first weeks, greeted by a heart-warming welcome from the kidnapped people, the French advanced over the boundary that had been set down by the evil treaty of Frankfurt. "Our return is for good and all," said

YES, IT'S A GERMAN SIGN



Behold five Yanks gathered together at the Sign of the Two Keys. The Restoration zu den zwei Schlüsseln used to dispense Pilsner, Munchner, and Budweiser—the real Bohemian brew, not the St. Louis brand—in the foamy

days before August, 1914, without paying duty on them. That is because it used to be in Germany, or rather in Alsace, which Germans have been trying for 40 odd years to convince the world was part of Germany. It isn't. Ask the five Yanks and the two Alsatians.

ROMANCE HAS PART IN CANTIGNY FIGHT

Lovesick Carrier Pigeon Comes Into Port 24 Hours Late

YANK OFFICER IN DUTCH

Entente Nearly Breaks Up When Birds of War Are Mistaken for Grouse

Romance played its part in the battle which served to place the little village of Cantigny in American hands, and, as it happens, played the very devil with the communications.

In that battle the Americans used every known device of modern warfare, and what the Yankee troops in that particular sector did not happen to have themselves they borrowed from the French.

The carrier pigeons, for instance. Tidings as to how the battle was waging in and beyond Cantigny were brought skimming back through the air by the birds who sometimes serve as messengers when the distance is too great for signals, when the fire is too heavy for wires, and when the emergency is too urgent for runners.

The pigeons often sped over head with their messages by way of precaution, in case any or all of the more modern and more satisfactory means of communication should break down. It was so at Cantigny, and that is why no great harm was done when the most startling and most portentous message of all those carried back to the army arrived at divisional headquarters exactly 23 hours and 40 minutes late.

Pigeons so seldom loiter, they so seldom dawdle on the way like the A.D.T. messenger boys in the comic journals of yesterday, that there was an immediate investigation. And it was found that the man in charge of that particular basket had, in an abstracted moment, placed two mating pigeons together. So, when the male was taken out and the urgent tidings fastened to his leg, his mind was on something of far more consequence than the outcome of the struggle for the possession of Cantigny. His mind was on the bird of his heart, and around her basket he lurked and lurked.

German Plans Disclosed

During that same engagement, a strange pigeon seen circling uncertainly overhead was shot down for investigation, and proved to be a German pigeon carrying a message bearing in its little metal anklet a message full of important information regarding German plans at a point in a remote unrelated sector. The message was immediately transmitted by wire to the French troops concerned.

The home of the homing pigeons is never far behind the lines. Within sound of the guns—some 10 or 12 kilometers behind the first line—they dwell in coops that look like high-set, portable corn-cribs. The problem of the carrier pigeon in war-time is the problem of the homing bird to consider a migratory coop as its home. It is an old problem, always successfully solved by the sailors, who teach their birds to come back to the boat, wherever the boat may be.

The war pigeons are trained by always being fed and sheltered in this one coop, and the coop itself is never left more than a month or so in one place. There may be no military reason for moving it, but it is constantly shifted lest the birds grow too fond of one place.

Never Eat Off Ground

The caretakers are always careful to feed the birds on the high shelf of the coop, and never by any chance to let a stray grain fall to the ground. Once the bird gets the habit of looking on the ground for its dinner a moment of hunger might make it pause for refreshment on the way back with a message. To make up in its diet for the little rough pebbles the normal toothless bird will eat in order to crush its food, the fanciers break up a good, appetizing brick into small fragments and serve these as a side dish.

The carrier pigeon does not wear an individual gas mask, but those who have gone forward in baskets at a time when

the then General Joffre to the town of Thann. "You are French for always," France brings you, with the liberties she has always represented, her respect for your own liberties, Alsatian liberties, respect for your traditions, for your convictions, for your customs. I am France. You are Alsace. I bring you the kiss of France."

FORFEITURE OF PAY ON WHAT YOU DRAW

Allotments, Insurance and Other Things Do Not Figure

NEW TREASURY DECISION

Fines Are Not to Be Computed on Amount Due Before Deductions Are Made

Forfeiture of "two-thirds of his pay for one month," according to a bulletin, No. 45, just issued at G.H.Q., is not equivalent to forfeiture of two-thirds of one month's pay. Say it quick and it sounds like a puzzle or a tongue-twister, but it isn't. Here is how it works out.

Private Gobbo, who knows the guard-house better than he does his own bunk, does not lack family sentiment and a sense of his patriotic obligations. Out of his \$33 a month he allots \$15 on a class A (compulsory) allotment, \$5 on a class B allotment, \$5 on a Liberty Loan, and \$8 for his War Risk insurance premium.

Thus, Private Gobbo actually draws only \$3 a month. He hits the skids and lands in a court-martial, where he is sentenced to forfeit "two-thirds of his pay per month for three months." Before the forfeiture of the fine can be deducted, according to the new bulletin, all his allotments, totaling \$30, must be deducted, and the fine computed on the remainder, which is his pay for one month. The remainder is \$3, and the deduction for the fine will therefore be \$2 for each of the three months, not \$22.

Not Affected by Sentence

The above ruling is based on a decision by the Controller of the Treasury, which says: "The monthly compulsory allotment of pay, Class A, under the provisions of Section 200 to 210 of the Act of October 6, 1917 (War Risk Insurance Act), the allotment under Class B in said law, the Liberty Loan allotments, and the premiums on War Risk insurance are not disturbed or affected by sentence of court-martial imposing forfeiture of pay."

"Forfeiture of two-thirds of his pay for one month" is not equivalent to forfeiture of two-thirds of one month's pay. The forfeiture in such case is for a definite period of time, one month, and ceases at the expiration of that period, even if the soldier was in a pay status only a part of that period."

MESSKITS THROUGH THE AIR

Buck (hacking at alleged steak): Say, Cookie, we don't draw any rations through the salvage depot, do we? Cook: Not as I know of. Why? Buck (still hacking): Well, our worn out shoes go to the salvage depot, don't they?

The caretakers adore their charges, who are usually nicknamed according to color. Each bird is so completely classified as to age, station, catalog number, corps and army affiliation that there is no room on its identification tag for all the information. So this is stamped in blue ink on the white wings, which, when opened up like a fan, do look rather like the much-be-scribbled fans the girls used to carry at the dances back home.

The French caretakers are known as *colombophiles*, which, literally translated means lover of pigeons. Very likely they are duly graded and known as Master Lover of Pigeons, Sergeant Lover of Pigeons, First Class, and so on, as the case may be.

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FREE ADVICE FOR LOVELORN LADS

G.F.D.—So she saw your picture in the movies, did she, and wrote you about it? Well, you should worry. She'll take everybody she knows to see that film, and you'll be in fine and soft. It pays to be decent to those Signal Corps guys.

A.W.—That is truly hard luck that her old man and your colonel are such good friends. The best thing to do under the circumstances is to avoid contact with the colonel as far as possible, though, as you are a corporal, that will necessarily be pretty hard.

J.T.L.—No, there is no possible way you can recover breach-of-promise damages from the Q.M.Corps. It was all your own fault to send her a picture of yourself in one of the old issue overseas hats. And, anyway, a girl who would break with you just because that hat was washed on to you is not a girl worthy of your affection. Forget her!

R.L.M.—Although duelling is frowned on severely in the A.E.F., I think you are thoroughly within your rights in challenging that brute of a sergeant of yours who wrote back to his sister (knowing it would get to your girl) that you had been put on company punishment for a week for sassing him back. For weapons, I should stipulate mess-tins full of slum at 20 paces, or fountain pens at 30 paces. And I hope you get him!

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