

STEEP MONTSEC, HUN GIBRALTAR, A REAL ANTHILL

Fortress That Vanished With Salient Swept Whole Region

COMFORTABLE AND SECURE

One Yank Sergeant Stormed Bastion All Alone Last Winter and Spent Night on It

On a spring-like night in January, 1918, a brigade of American Infantry settled down for the first time in the mud of those Lorraine trenches which have since become known in every American home as the old home sector "northwest of Toul." They were so posted that in the morning they could see the woods and valleys and the church spires of many of those villages through which, less than eight months later, American troops were to make a triumphant rush in pursuit of retreating German divisions.

...brizade which, in the midnight rain and darkness, took over that sector in readiness for the charge which has marked September 12 bright red in the American calendar fled into the old familiar trenches, mudily as ever. They took to these as their point of departure rather than those trenches, dug slightly to the rear, to which the American line had been withdrawn in that skirmish known as the Battle of Soehleprey.

A German Gibraltar

As the first Yanks to take possession there swept their field glasses the level land before them, what rose ominous to the eye in the clear January air was that steep, bristling hill some four kilometers to the northwest. It was the hill the French call Montsec, because its abrupt crest rises dry and sandy from what used to be one of the fattest and most fruitful vineyards in all Lorraine.

Montsec, with its 330 meters, was forbidding enough in itself. Through the four years of their unswerving tenacity, the Germans had so fortified and armored it that it rose a very Gibraltar in the line from Switzerland to the sea. From the front or even to surround and take it from the rear would, the newly-arrived Yankees knew very well, be a most bloody task if the assailants were stubbornly and heroically met by such a garrison as the disembowelled old hill could easily shelter. Yet in the early morning of September 12 the Yankee troops, sweeping nonchalantly past the hill, learned from their equally nonchalant French friends on the left that a reconnoitering squad had mounted Montsec with carelessly slung Rossies.

Tunnels, Tunnels Everywhere

A disembowled hill! There is no other word for such a human anthill as the Germans made of the famous Lorraine mountain.

Everywhere within the hill ran tunnels, some well paved and shored, some hollowed out in slovenly fashion, depending on the caliber of the resident troops who did the work. Tunnels entering from the bottom and meeting tunnels from the top. Tunnels opening out into underground chambers, some fitted up with bunks, some with kitchens, some with mess halls, some as pantries, some as arsenals. Tunnels connecting the various machine gun posts, of which 12 pointed towards the Allied line. Tunnels screened against the chance observer. You might walk quite a way up the hill without suspecting any subterranean life unless you happened to spot a smokestack protruding unexpectedly from the ground.

Equipped with shell-proof quarters, with ammunition, guns and food supplies, boasting, besides its signal points, a fine wireless station, supplied with water and electric light brought from Montsec, was as self-sufficient and impenetrable a fortress as one often sees in these days of sandbag fortifications.

Comfort the Watchword

Also, it was comfortable. Each observation point and each machine gun post within the hill had its place, its chair, its special tube for easy communication with its next-door neighbor. Comfortable beyond words are the officers' quarters, the row of little cottages on the German side of the hill, a hill so abrupt that no shell could be dropped on that side. If it missed scraping the top, it would inevitably fall far over in the valley beyond.

These quarters were fitted out with well-stocked pantries, cosy stoves, well-tended kitchen gardens, where cabbages abounded everything calculated to warm the heart of a mess sergeant. There was only one form of discomfort. This form of discomfort could be found hopping about every bed in the row.

The observation posts command a wide sweep of Lorraine. From them the Germans could study the Allied back areas, watching every daylight move, the convoys creeping along the roads looking from Montsec like beads strung on winding ribbons of yellow. Fine glasses they had, of course, some of them so large that they could actually be seen from American O.P.'s in the valley below.

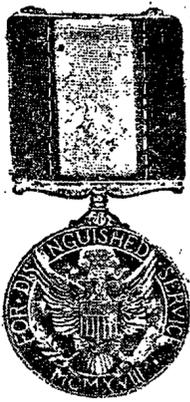
The Germans, of course, know all there is to know about Montsec—except perhaps one trivial paragraph in its history. They do not know that one night last winter a sergeant attached to the intelligence section of an American division went forth on a little private reconnaissance tour of "Germany," and, just to be able to say he had done it, tiptoed and crept his way to Montsec, and the last he was seen was to sleep till the approach of dawn.

PRAISE FOR S.O.S.

General Pershing has sent the following message to Major-General Harbord, C.G., S.O.S.:

"I want the officers and men of the S.O.S. under your command to know how much the First Army appreciates the prompt response made to every demand for men, equipment, supplies and transportation necessary to carry out the operations. Please extend to all our heartiest congratulations and say that they share the success with us."

THE D.S.M.



The Distinguished Service Medal is here shown exact size.

The medal itself is of bronze, with the eagle in the middle, crowned with 13 stars. Around the eagle in gold letters on blue enamel, are the words: "For Distinguished Service, MCMXVIII."

The ribbon has a white center, with a pin stripe of dark blue edging the white, and a band of red at either end.

The D.S.M. may be awarded to any one who distinguishes himself or herself by exceptionally meritorious service in the line of duty or in connection with operations against an armed enemy of the United States. The D.S.M. is awarded for exceptional gallantry in action only; the D.S.M. may be awarded to soldiers in the S.O.S., or to persons in civil life back home who yet are engaged in war work of some kind.

PALESTINE FREED, BULGARIAN FORCE SPLIT BY ALLIES

Western Front Continues to Boil—Advance Near St. Quentin

The week ending Wednesday, September 25, has seen two of the most clearest triumphs of the whole war.

Both were achieved on fronts which have often been referred to more or less contemptuously as side shows, and side shows they are in the sense that, as decisive battles of the war, when it comes, will scarcely be fought on either of them. Attacking on a line familiar to anyone who ever went to Sunday school, General Allenby's forces, assisted by French troops, broke the Turkish line in Palestine, enveloped, with the aid of Arab forces, two whole Turkish armies, and captured upward of 25,000 prisoners—a prodigious total for an isolated front.

The victory in Palestine means that the Holy Land, the golden quest of three disastrous crusades in the Middle Ages, has been definitely reached. The results, what, for instance, does Constantinople think of it?

Equally freighted with great possibilities is the Allied advance in Macedonia, which has at one point almost reached Bulgarian territory. The Bulgarian armies are already split in two, and can only hope to affect a juncture, if at all, far behind the point which their retreat has now reached. The total of prisoners here exceeds 12,000, with more to come.

A.E.F. INTERVIEWED ON PEACE OFFER

Austria the Bunk

The career of THE STARS AND STRIPES as an honest-to-goodness newspaper can scarcely be said to have been complete until it has taken some burning question of the day and sent a reporter to interview a lot of people about it.

The recent peace move from Vienna, where the waltzes used to come from, will do. A reporter from THE STARS AND STRIPES solicited expressions of opinion on this question from various well-known men about the Army.

Corporal George W. Roughtneck had just finished dancing with the young Countess Coughdrop of the big Casino at Aix-les-Bains when our reporter but-tooled him. The corporal flicked the ash from his cigarette and observed:

"You may quote me as saying that I am in no mood at present to discuss peace with anybody."

Private M. P. Gloom, who is just beginning a long and involved sentence in the guardhouse at Bois for blacking his superior's eye, made this comment:

"I can think of no better reply than the one our own John Paul Jones made when the British called on him to surrender. I send the same ringing and definite reply to the shores of the blue Danube: 'Sir, I have not yet begun to fight!'"

Private Henry J. Doughboy was found sharpening his bayonet in his trench in the St. Mihiel sector. He looked, up from this operation only long enough to say:

"I have left all those matters to my lawyer, Mr. T. W. Wilson, of Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D. C. I refer you to him. Don't bother me. I'm dog-gone busy."

AT THE CROSS ROADS

Officer in car: Does this road go towards the front?
M.P.: Yesir, what's left of it does.

PESTERED COOK TAKES REVENGE UP AT ST. MIHIEL

D. S. C. Wearer Presides Over Well Supplied Hun Slaughter House

GREAT DAYS FOR PANCAKES

German Flour Can't Be Made Into Good Pie Crust, But Biscuits Aren't So Worse

From the mixture of melodrama, tragedy and comedy attached to the cooks and kitchen staff that kept pace with the American advance in the St. Mihiel salient, some dramatist should weave a wonderful plot around the title of "Ricket's Revenge."

If you don't remember Cook Harry C. Ricket, he is the man who won the D.S.C. with one of the most remarkable citations of the war. It was in the woods near Fere-en-Tardenois in late July that Cook Ricket stuck to the job after his kitchen was blown up by shells, after his provisions had been scattered by shell fire, and after nearly every one else was driven away by the tremendous volleying of 48 hours.

Day of Revenge Comes

This all happened nearly two months ago. Since that date Cook Ricket had not been thinking so much over the D.S.C. he had won or the honor he had gained. He had been brooding on the day of revenge. The Germans had blown up his kitchen and scattered his food. They had forced him to prepare his meals from a hole in the ground, partly filled up at times by high explosives. His one desire was to even up the score. This chance came in the push at St. Mihiel. As the advance reached its first stage, Cook Ricket was on the job again, but under vastly different conditions.

"I guess I'm even with 'em now," he said, as he was preparing the evening meal. "When we got to this place I found a German slaughter house already in shape. We shined it up a bit, and I looked around. One of the first things I found was a big supply of German flour and German lard. Both were great stuff for pancakes and biscuits."

"Then I went back of the shack and found a German garden with fresh vegetables all ready. I got some peas and cabbage from this, hooked up a few chickens, and everything was ready. We've been living mostly on this German food ever since, and living like lords. There was a big supply of flour and lard and all the vegetables we need. They had me at the jump before, but I'm square with them now."

With a Hun Revolver

While Cook Ricket was delivering his talk it could be seen that he was guarding his supply with a big German revolver, also captured in the late drive. The incident he had just related at Fere-en-Tardenois had been wiped out completely. His revenge was established.

There were other cooks and kitchens, however, who had a trifle harder time of it as further proof that a cook belongs to the shock troops of the Army. One of these followed the advance with four kitchens for his battalion. A big shell totally wrecked one kitchen, and a few minutes later a bridge crashed in, destroying another. But he continued on his way and fed his battalion from the two remaining kitchens.

Another company he pushed forward at top speed, leaving its kitchens well behind. When the men got to a certain German camp they saw, just ahead, a large cage containing several rabbits. The place was under heavy shell and shrapnel fire at the time, but it failed to halt the rush.

Then a young tragedy occurred. A cluster of shrapnel broke near by and tore a hole in the rabbit cage, the scared animals immediately escaping. With shell and shrapnel raining all around, the entire company broke and started in pursuit of the rabbits.

They jumped through and over shell holes, ducked away from whistling 150's and 77's and kept up the wild chase until every rabbit had been gathered in and safely caged again, to await the arrival of the first cook.

"We missed our kitchens for two days," one mess sergeant said, "but we ran into one of the finest supplies of German grub you ever saw. We lived on it for two days and even after our kitchens had arrived with plenty of our own food we still used part of the German supply to round out a full course meal."

It was soon discovered by the cooks that German flour was poor for the pastry used in pies, but exceptionally good for biscuits, pancakes and the like.

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How to Subscribe

To aid the men of the A.E.F. in subscribing the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company has arranged with various branches of the Societe Generale, the French banking house, to receive subscriptions on its behalf in towns in or near which American troops are located, and which have no branch offices of the Farmers' Loan. You may also subscribe by mailing your check direct to the trust company's Paris or London office, or, if you have an account there, by writing and authorizing them to debit your account with the amount you wish to invest. The same plan holds good for the Equitable Trust Company.

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BOYS GRIEVE FOR FATHERLY COLONEL TAKEN FROM LINE

Continued from Page 1
battle and helped deliver the thrust that wiped out the St. Mihiel salient.

During the first hour of the battle, as the regiment swept through the woods in its wake, a private observed an American soldier going in and out of buildings looking for Germans. Later both entered the same building and killed two Germans who were operating a machine gun. After that they romped off down the street and captured a dozen Germans in a cellar.

As the two were bringing back their prisoners an M.P. flashed a light on them. The M.P. suddenly straightened up and saluted.

"By God!" said the other private, as the light played over their faces. "Our old colonel!"

"That was the best part of my vacation," the colonel declared after it was all over.

A HUN CASUALTY LIST

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