# AMERICA IN FRANCE

## XII—The Meuse

It would be presumptuous to include the river Meuse in this series without stating beforehand that the Meuse is, before all else, France in France. For the Meuse, in 1870, saw France locked in an heroic but vain struggle with Prussia, and 46 years later saw her engaged against that same enemy in a more epic struggle still, in a defense that has never been surpassed in history, before which Prussia and Prussia's crown prince recoiled beaten. The Meuse is Sedan. The Meuse is Verdun.

Had the Meuse never before been hear of, the vivid weeks that followed February 21, 1916, would have been enough to illumine it with eternal glory. The daily persistence of "the right bank of the Meuse" and "the left bank of the Meuse" in the communiqués proved to a breathless world that the Hun was being held at bay, that he should not pass.

The enemy at that time—ever since September, 1914, and up to September, 1918, in fact—was across the Meuse at two points. He held the stretch north of Verdun to where it disappeared within his lines at a right angle up through the country in which the First American Army is now advancing, and he held the Meuse bridgehead opposite St. Mihiel.

### Rises Near Marne

The Meuse, like the Marne, rises on the plateau of Langres; the sources of the two rivers are scarcely 20 kilometers apart. For some distance they roughly parallel each other, the Marne running through Chaumont and St. Dizier, the Meuse through Neufchâteau and Commercy.

The Marne turns northwest, and then west, passing Chalons, Epernay, Chateau-Thierry and Meaux, and, after a series of meandering loops, flows into the Seine two kilometers below the walls of Paris.

The Meuse continues slightly west of north, past St. Mihiel, Verdun and Sedan, where it makes a great loop in an unsuccessful attempt to cross the barrier of the Ardennes, and finally succeeds in entering the western tip of the forest at Mezières and Charleville, after winding in and out even more eccentrically than it does at Sedan. North of the Ardennes, the Meuse is joined by the Sambre, flowing in from the west, at Namur. Thence it flows north across Belgium into Holland, where it becomes the Maas as it passes Maastricht on the Dutch frontier, and mingles with the many-mouthed Rhine to enter the North Sea just below Rotterdam.

The Meuse is a river of three countries and a thousand battles. Scarcely a village, certainly not a good-sized town on its banks but is a redoutable cluster of fortifications—with the accent on the east. Neufchâteau, for instance, was from the eleventh century surrounded by a wall of seven towers, and of this wall two gates, the Porte de France and the Porte St. Pierre, still stand.

### The Battle of Sedan

Before 1916, Sedan was undoubtedly the most famous town on all the stretch of the Meuse. The battle of Sedan was fought and lost September 1, 1870. MacMahon's army of 100,000 left Châlons on August 23, with Napoleon III, to rush to the relief of Bazaine, shut up in Metz. The road to Metz was cut by the Prussian and Saxon armies, numbering 250,000 men, which forced MacMahon to fall back to Sedan.

The battle began at 4 o'clock in the morning. MacMahon was wounded, and Ducrot took his place, after yielding to de Wimpffen. These changes in leadership had their effect on the outcome of the battle, but the French cause was doomed from the outset, and at noon the encircling German armies had effected a juncture.

The French attempt to break through was futile, though it was carried out with such a hardihood that it won the admiration of the King of Prussia, who was watching the battle from a height across the Meuse. The French were forced to capitulate, and the surrender was signed the next day at Donchrey, on the bend in the Meuse opposite Sedan. The German losses were about 10,000; the French, over 11,000.

### Sufferings of Prisoners

North of Sedan, in the great loop of the Meuse, is the promontory of Iges, where the more than 80,000 French who were made prisoner were encamped for ten days before being sent to Germany. It rained continuously, and, as the 80,000 had no shelter and only one biscuit a day to every two men, their sufferings were intense.

Typhoid fever, smallpox and other pestilences broke out among them. The Meuse, surrounding the camp on three sides, was thick with bodies, and dead horses were swept down in such numbers that hundreds of them often jammed and became stinking dikes of putrid infection.

Twenty kilometers northwest of Sedan, at Charleville, the aspect of the Meuse valley suddenly changes. Heretofore the river has flowed through a pleasant rolling country, between the gentle slopes of a peaceable farming countryside. Now it courses through deep, thickly wooded passes, at times rounding rocky escarpments, and through one of the chief industrial regions of western Europe.

### Junction With the Sambre

Eighty kilometers or so further north, as the crow flies—which is far from being the way the Meuse runs—lies Namur and the juncture of the Sambre with the Meuse. The words Sambre and Meuse have a little thrill all their own in French history. It was the Sambre et Meuse regiment, the Sans Culottes, or pantaloonless unconquerables under General Jourdain, which, operating in that region during the Revolution, had as its marching song the air that has since been embodied in the famous "Sambre et Meuse" march. To hear the Garde Rèpublicaine band play the "Sambre et Meuse," particularly to hear them play it at the head of marching poilus, is to know France.

How important the Meuse is strategically can readily be seen. It is the great natural water barrier of Europe west of the Rhine. That is why Germany is fighting so desperately to defend her positions east of the Argonne, for the American attack, striking north on both banks of the Meuse, is battering at the very hinges of the door which she is trying desperately to shut in the face of the Allied advance. And if the hinge goes, of what use is the door?

## MR. SCHWAB TO A.E.F.

The following telegram for the A.E.F. has been received from the Director-General of the Emergency Fleet Corporation:

"Please say to the boys on the other side that we are producing the ships and will keep them supplied; and that the workingmen of this country are loyal, enthusiastic and determined to do their part in this war; that our hearts, our spirit and our energies are with our boys abroad.

"C. M. SCHWAB."

# HENRY'S PAL TO HENRY

## SHOWING HOW TO MAKE HAY WHILE THE SUN SHINES WHEN YOU HUNT UP YOUR OLD OUTFIT

It was a little German Henry about 4 ft. tall

Franse, Oct, 16, 1918.

Dear Henry: Well Henry if you ever chased after your old shapo in a wind storm and seen it rolling up a street and when you got to the end of the street you ask some guy if he seen it and he says it went down a alley and you went after it and when you got to the end of the alley you ask somebody else if they seen it and they said it was going up the boulevard etc. maybe you got a pretty good idear of how Buck and me got back to our outfit after we had been away for a week at Aix.

We got back to our old co. camp Henry about breakfast time and there wasn't no co. there. There was a guy out at the crossroads who claimed he was a M.P. and we ask him where they went and he said the last he seen of them they was chasing Boches off toward Germany.

By this time he says They ought to be in Berlin by the way they was traveling the last I seen of them. He says There was a top cutter long here about 4 p.x. this morning that was looking for the same outfit. Do you know who he was he says.

Do we know that bird Buck says. I guess we do know him I says and if we ain't back to camp before he is we will be on K.P. for a month.

Well Henry we hit off toward Germany and from the way it looked there had been a war going on all rite. We counted about a 100 machine guns that had been left behind by the Germans and a lot of the Germans was kookoo on their guns.

Well we got to where another M.P. was and ask him if he had any dope on our outfit. Sure he says I can tell you where Gen. Pershing's orderly sleeps and what the general had for breakfast this morning. What is the name of your outfit he says and fished in his pocket for a diary or a dictionary or maybe it was a worlds almanak or something.

When Buck told him which outfit we belonged to he says Sure I know where they are at. Just keep rite on up this road till you come to a pile of dead Boches along side of the road and then turn to the left. Your co. is up there burying dead.

We kept on up the road all rite Henry and turned to the left where the dead Boches was but when we got there first thing we seen was a colored man who was digging a grave beside a dead horse. What outfit is here Buck says.

He says Dis am de colored regt. from Dixie what am here to bury de dead Bushes what you folks leave behind.

What plantation did you all come from Buck says to me, and then he wanted to go back and beat up on the M.P. But I talked him out of the notion and then we went on up the road to the town. It was a town onse Henry.

There was another M.P. in the town and he said our regt. was up in the woods about 3 kilos from there in reserve. So we hiked up there Henry and found out that it was a ammunition truck train that was camped there. They didn't have any idear where our outfit was but said they might be over in the next valley camped in another one of them places that had onse been a town.

Well Henry it was about noon when we got over there and it wasn't our outfit at all. It was a transport outfit of some kind and one of the loots with them said he thought our outfit had been all shot up and there wasn't nothing left of it worth speaking of. Buck said if the cook stove and one of the cooks was still all together it would be all rite with us because we hadn't had no breakfast. Then the loot said for us to go up and get something to eat.

Well Buck and I borrewed a couple of mess kits and got in line. They had some big juicy stakes and some good looking gravy and some coffee all set out to serve and Buck and me was about to faint waiting for our turn to come when we got up to where the mess sergt. was serving the stakes and he looked at us like we was a couple of AWOL guys or something and says What outfit are you 2 birds from.

When we told him he says Why in hell ain't you messing with them and not hanging round here trying to bum a meal. Buck says we don't know where our outfit is etc. and he says That's a old story with me. I heard that before. You are a couple of guys beating it away from the lines Ill bet.

I showed him our orders where we had been sent to Aix on leave and that convinced him I guess. He give me a stake that you could use for a quilt and Buck got one that you could use for a carpet or something. Buck said we could stand it for another day and so we hit off again toward the lines.

On top of the hill we was going along through some shell holes and dugouts when we heard some guy cough down in one of the dugouts. We thought maybe it might be some bird who knew where our co. was so Buck says Hello down there. Who are you and etc.

Gott in Himmel ach Dundervitter or something that sounded about like that is what this bird down there said back at us.

What kind of a language is that Buck says. It might of been Swede or Roosian for all I knowed about it Henry but when this gink come out of the dugout and stuck his head up above the parapet Buck nearly fainted.

It was a little German Henry about 4 ft. tall and who looked like Ikey who used to have the peanut wagon on Main street. He stuck his hands up in the air and says he's our kamarad.

Don't go blubbering like that Buck says. You aint no pal of mine. What in hell are you doing here anyway Buck says. Then he rattled off a lot of stuff that would of took a motorcycle speed cop like old Toney was to keep up with him. One word he kept saying that I remember Henry was Ergebet Ike or something that sounded like that. He must of been trying to tell us his name or something.

He kept saying it so much that Buck was going to bust him in the nose for it but I wouldn't let him because he might of been telling us we was K.O. or something.

He couldn't talk a word of American Henry and all he did was keep his hands up in the air and point toward another dugout and kept saying something we couldn't get.

We took him to the other dugout and he yelled down at somebody else and 3 more little Germans come up with their hands up.

Buck got a club and says he will watch them while I go rustle a gun or maybe they will gang up on us.

I hunted round till I got hold of a good old Springfield rifle and a clip of shells and then I says to Buck that he can go on and hunt some more because that fuzee give us all the confidence in the world Henry.

Well we hiked them on toward the lines and kept looking in all the dugouts. But we didn't find any more.

We got up on top of the next hill and seen another M.P. Buck said it wasn't no use to ask him anything because he wouldn't know nothing anyway. We was going past him when he yelled at us and who do you think it was Henry. It was our old mess sergeant acting as a M.P.

Who is your friends you brought from Aix he says when he looked at our Boches. Oh Buck says They are some guys we run across who wants to spend a few days with us. You won't mind none about feeding them for a few days will you Buck asks him. Oh no he says I won't mind none. Down in the creek there I got about 1000 to feed. You can take them down there.

Well Henry that was last nite and this morning our old Top wasn't back yet. Maybe a shell hit him or something. Buck and I ain't wishing him no bad luck but if one did hit him Buck and me ain't going to wear no mourning clothes or anything.

If he does get back he won't have nothing on Buck and me. We got some prisoners even if we was away to Aix while the co. was fighting. That's more than the old Top can say.

Well our outfit is coming out of the lines tonite so maybe you will get one more letter from me anyway Henry.

So long Henry,
S. T. B.

P.S. The Top is back Henry. He picked up a general or something on the way up. The guy he brought in is all over with gold braid.

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# LOST BAGGAGE PLAN WORKING OUT WELL

## Business Has Increased 200 Per Cent a Month Since December

The Lost Baggage Bureau of the A.E.F. wants to have the A.E.F. know, for its own good, that it has a separate department for finding the A.E.F.'s lost trunks, bedding rolls, clothing rolls, suit cases and handbags, not to mention the rifles that the otherwise careful doughboy may leave on the train.

The bureau has a branch office at 36 Rue de Bac, Paris, which handles the difficulties arising in transfer and the losses due to transfer from one line to another in Paris.

At Tours it has a central warehouse and office, where all baggage is handled on a 30 day basis, being held for that length of time after a formal notice has been sent out to the owner that his baggage is there. At the end of that period, all unclaimed baggage is sent to A.P.O. 713 for storage, and a record of the shipment is made at Tours.

The Lost Baggage Bureau was established by general order last December, and since that time its increase in business, or rather in lost baggage, has been about 200 per cent a month. The Bureau functions all over France, and is notified by the R.T.O.'s of any baggage that remains in their possession for over 48 hours. During September it handled at Tours alone about 5,500 pieces of baggage, not including that handled out of Paris or other points in France.

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# NEW CHEMICAL INSIGNIA

The Chemical Warfare Service has a new insignia. It shows the salamander, that horned and winged legendary monster that was invulnerable to fire, mounted above a pair of gas shells. You can tell they are gas shells, because they are longer than shrapnel shells. The insignia has been approved at G.H.Q., and is awaiting indorsement from Washington.

The new insignia is to supersede one adopted only a few months ago. The old insignia was so highly symbolical that it didn't hardly symbolize anything to unscientific and war-hardened minds. Its two crossed chemical retorts looked to the uninitiated like the irons of golf sticks, and were reminiscent of ancient pottery and clay pipes of the mound builders.

Also, officers thought crossed retorts were not sufficiently warlike. After the chemistry end of their work, they have to do with the mechanics of making shells—with the business of making deadly things to throw at the Germans. They wanted an insignia that had something fierce about it. And now they've got it.

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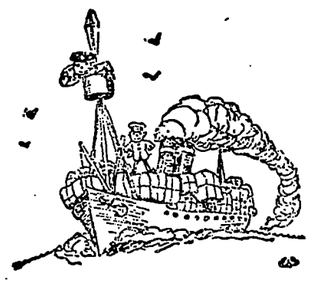

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