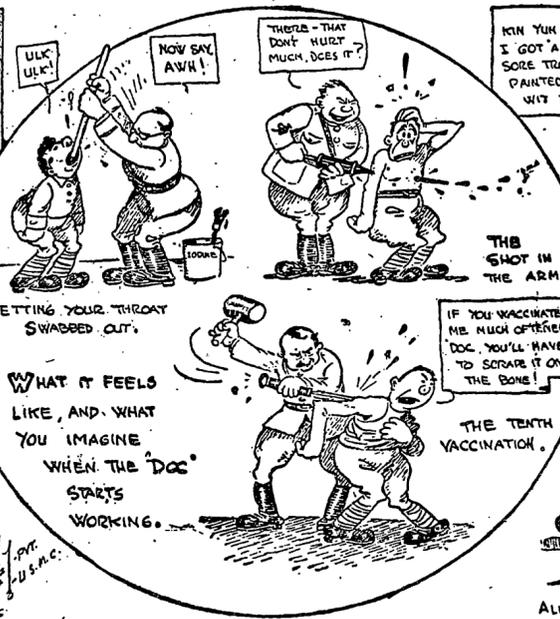
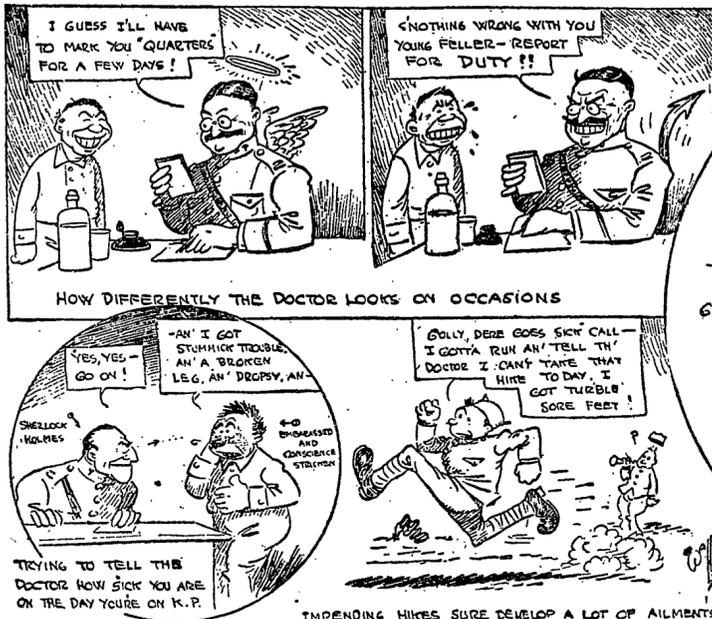


ANSWERING SICK CALL

-By WALLGREN



VERDUN SLEEPS IN RUINS, DREAMS OF HER RESURRECTION

Doughboys Camp in Silent City Peopled Only By Soldiers

AMERICANS HOLD CITADEL

Walls Will Rise Again When Tourists Walk Where Poilus and Yanks Swap Tobacco

So common are blasted villages on the Western front that a traveler passing through Verdun today would pay little attention to the shattered outlines and ragged walls of that once gay and prosperous city.

Verdun—the city that was like a magnet to the German armies for nearly four years, but in which the enemy never set foot—stands today silent and lonely. Its only inhabitants are a few French soldiers and a unit of American doughboys which helped to launch the successful attack east of the Moselle last week. There is not a civilian within its walls, although German shells ceased to whistle and crash upon its battered architecture several days ago when the Boches sent over a few scattering farewell shots before hauling their artillery back to safer positions.

Within the past few weeks various American units have camped overnight in the city, either going to or from the lines. Pioneer units have cleaned the streets of their cities over a few sections, the lumbering cautious to pass forward with their loads of ammunition and food. So well has this work been carried out that one passing through the city streets would hardly distinguish them from the streets of any French city far back of the lines—except for the boarded-up windows and the ugly holes made in the walls where shells have penetrated.

Grass Along Sidewalk

Letter boxes, where the postman once made his daily rounds, have long since been eaten by rust. Some have fallen to the ground, others have been pierced by shell fragments.

Streets that have not been used by military traffic have long lost their marks of usage. Grass has grown up between the cobblestones and along the sidewalks. The bureau de postes, which has received many a shell during the past four years, would hardly be recognized by its former patrons.

In front of one of the few buildings that are still intact save for a shattered roof, a French poilu stood last Monday and gazed upon the neighboring ruins. Questioned by a Yankee comrade, he said that he was home on permission. His face wrinkled with a hard smile as he spoke.

"Four years ago," he said, "I left my father and mother here and went to war. Now I return here for the first time since I departed, and find this."

The Lonely Citadel

Verdun's citadel, to the passerby, is like a curious shrine in a Latin village. It stands by itself on the hill, as lonely as Verdun itself. It is now being used as a Yankee headquarters, and Yankee dispatch bearers, with roaring motorcycles ride in and out of its gates at all hours of the day and night. Occasionally, within the past week, batches of German prisoners have passed in and out of the gates.

The ancient guns that once spoke from concealed positions in defense of the city have since been returned to their old positions in the citadel. They were too ancient to follow up the retreating Huns, as did the other and more modern pieces of like caliber.

In front of the city, toward the German lines, horses now feed over shell-pitted fields. Grass is growing green in the shell holes, and when spring comes again blood-red poppies and sun flowers will grow where, for four years, no living thing could exist.

Within sight of the city, marked by zig-zagging rows of trenches and twisted barbed wire, is what was once the front line and No Man's Land. But now American soldiers going to or from the lines pass over the old battle ground knowing that only a chance shot from a long range German gun could cause any immediate danger.

Verdun is only sleeping after four years of hardships. In the days to come the carpenter's hammer will awaken the stilled city and rock masons will spill their plaster on the sidewalks below as the shattered buildings are rebuilt.

And in the years ahead many an American will tell the story of how he, with his regiment, camped over night in the city when Verdun was nothing but a rock pile, and how the American doughboys and French poilus swapped tobacco on the street corners and lit their cigarettes in a secluded spot where the match glow could not be seen by enemy aviators.

FROM THE SELLE TO THE MOSELLE

On October 15, in the midst of the advance beyond Romagne in Argonne, a pigeon arrived breathless at one corps headquarters with the news that the Infantry was holding the line at Nantillois, a point several kilometers behind that from which the new advance has been launched. There was some bewildered and anxious telephoning before any one noticed that the date of the message was October 6. The bird had been AWOL for nine days.

"I was just coming down that hill," narrated the M.P., "not having had a thing to eat in two days, being so busy bringing back Heinekes, when I sniffed hot cakes a-brewing at the bottom of it. Going around a clump of bushes, I looked at the place the smell was coming from and there, sure enough, was a real kitchen, smoking up to beat all get-out.

"You can be sure I stepped along. But before I stepped very far—blowee! A shell landed square on that kitchen, blew the stove and the cook and all to smithereens, and scattered torn-up hot cakes all over the map of the salient."

"I went in and asked to be taken off M.P. duty. After that, I didn't dare trust myself leading droves of Heinekes back, and me with a loaded gun!"

which is at least not quite so feminine. Sometimes, never having experienced the delights of a minstrel show, he distorts it into Sambo.

You may not like it, but you haven't the heart to tell him so. He uses it in utter friendliness, and as a mark of friendliness the Yank receives it.

There are a few tolerably intact houses in the Somme region, but there ought to be a reward for anyone who can locate a whole window pane. The windows in a division C.O.'s office, if the room is fortunate enough to have a whole sash left, will probably be covered with oiled paper, which lets in the light, but keeps out the cold and the scenery. Anyway, there is not much scenery left thereabouts.

Shortly after it had been rumored through the American lines that Germany had made a bid for an armistice, an evacuee from near a certain field kitchen north of Verdun would have heard three K.P.'s of a certain doughboy regiment discussing the peace question.

Darkness had settled down and hid the kitchen in its already camouflaged position in the edge of a forest. There were no lights other than the faint glow of a few live embers from the supper fire. Two of the K.P.'s, bending over a wash tub, were peeling potatoes, while a third scrubbed away on the blackened pots and pans.

"I got a life-sized painting of me

doin' this when peace comes," said one of the doughboys.

"Huh! What else would you do to earn a living?" retorted the one washing the pans.

"Oh, don't you worry about Smithy," said the third K.P. "His old man's got enough jack to buy the Brooklyn brewery. I know Smithy all right; he's pretty well fixed."

"Yes, and that ain't all," said Smithy. "I got a wife, too. I can just see her comin' down the path to meet me." He threw down the half peeled potato and brought forth a well preserved photograph. "This," he said, "is her. And do you know that in a letter the other day she said, 'When the war's over—'"

"Come on there! Get busy on them spuds! Remember we got a bunch of hungry men to feed in the morning who's goin' to be fighting all night. Where you think you're at, anyway—a rest camp?" The mess sergeant's voice was everything but friendly.

"Oh, hell!" said Smithy, as he replaced the photograph and picked up the half peeled potato. "This is too busy a place for a fellow to talk peace."

P.C. north of Verdun two Sundays ago and was somewhat startled to see some one sitting at a table who reminded him very much of the pictures he had seen of von Hindenburg.

The soldier was almost frightened when the man before him said, "Vot vill you have?" He wasn't sure that he had not entered an enemy P.C., but he took a chance.

When the visitor explained his mission there the rather ponderous man, who wore the uniform of the United States Army and the bars of a first lieutenant, replied: "Vell, you vant der captain."

Later the soldier questioned the lieutenant about the resemblance to the owner of the late lamented line.

"Vell, no; I ain't Hindenburg—not yet. I was in der American Army mit Pershing ven Pershing was a captain. Pershing is a general now, and me—I am a lieutenant. Maybe, someday, if I question an oddder million prisoners or so, maybe I am a captain."

The lieutenant was Oscar Lottig, for 20 years first sergeant of a certain Engineer regiment.

A Yank entered a certain divisional

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THE CENSOR

I suppose I'm the only one "doing his bit," who doesn't share in the joy of receiving letters "from the Front" or from Blighty." You see, I get so many of 'em through my hands. Why, bless you, I sometimes find myself censoring the letters written—

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