

## THRILLING STORY OF HAIG RETREAT

Illinois Officer Relates Experience  
of Hun Attack on the  
British.

### TEN DIVISIONS AGAINST ONE

Despite Overwhelming Number of En-  
emy, His Losses Were Great—  
Miraculous Escape From Bap-  
tism of Shell Fire.

First Lieutenant Roswell T. Pettit, M. O. R. C., of Ottawa, Ill., in a letter to his father, Dr. J. W. Pettit of the Ottawa tuberculosis colony, and published in the Chicago Tribune, relates the thrilling story of the great battle in Picardy. The American officer was in the thickest of the fighting for nine days, during the retreat of the British Fifth army from before St. Quentin. Lieutenant Pettit's account of the battle thrills with the stress of the conflict, as it was written immediately after he had passed through the tremendous experiences and before his impressions had been in any way dulled by time. His letter follows:

Lieutenant Pettit's Letter.  
March 30.

Dear Father: Now that the show is over for me for the time being, and I have time to breathe and sleep and eat and write, I'll try and tell you about the battle. Before you receive this you will have had the whole story from the papers, but I know you will be interested in knowing what I did in the affair.

Of course, the things I saw were but an infinitesimal part of a gigantic whole and it would be impossible for me to give a correct description of the battle. And as I write this, I do it with no knowledge whatever of what has been going on even a few miles from me.

I have not seen a paper in eight days; I have received no mail, and the only information we have received has been by word of mouth, and most of what we hear must be wild rumors. For example: The French have advanced 20 miles at Verdun, the Americans have taken Ostend, and are on their way to Zeebrugge, and a great naval battle has been fought in the North Sea.

All I know is that on this part of the front the Germans attacked us in overwhelming numbers, in places ten divisions to our one; that they suffered terrible losses, but finally broke through our lines of defense, one after another, and fighting for the most part, a rear guard action, we have retired about 15 miles in a straight line.

For a week before the battle started we had been expecting it; we were ready to move on 30 minutes' notice. I had been out with combatant as well as medical officers on tours of reconnaissance, definite methods of evacuation of the wounded had been worked out, and our plans of counter-attack been made. After four or five days of waiting, the storm finally broke.

The Boche opened up on us at 5 a. m. March 21, with the heaviest barrage I have ever heard. "Stand to," was sounded, we turned out dressed, and had all our equipment packed in 30 minutes. Then we sat down and waited for orders to move. The barrage kept up continuously, sometimes heavier and then of less intensity, sometimes it seemed to be to the north of us and then suddenly it switched to the south.

Our balloons were up as soon as it was light and the airplanes were buzzing over our heads. The ground mist gradually cleared and the Germans put a hail of shrapnel on our camp and we all took cover, but three men were hit. Why it is a fellow always feels safer with a roof over his head, even if he knows bullets and shrapnel and pieces of shell will go through boards and corrugated iron just like paper.

#### Ordered to Move.

Our orders to move finally came and we marched off to the brigade assembly point several miles away. This assembly point was in a little bunch of trees about the size of Allen park and behind and separated from a larger wood in front. In the larger wood there was a battery of heavy artillery and shells were dropping in there two or three to a minute, and it was heavy stuff, too.

Sometimes they overshot the big wood and shells were landing in the open around the little wood where my brigade had its assembly point. As we approached our little copse we could make all this out from some distance away and it wasn't a pleasant sensation to feel that we were marching straight into it.

All the battalions arrived and in that little copse there must have been at least two thousand men. What a chance if the Germans only knew! But the shells continued to drop in front of us and on either side, but none landed among us, and after waiting there for three hours, expecting to be blown to bits any second, we finally moved forward. Just as we left the copse, from behind us, up over a ridge, came a stream of galloping horses.

"It's the cavalry," someone shouted, but soon I made out limbers and field guns.

They galloped past us, going like mad, took up a position to our right, swung into position, unlimbered, and

in two minutes were blazing away. It was a thrilling sight.

#### Torn by Shells.

In going forward we went around the end of the larger wood in front of us, over ground that was torn to bits by the heavy shell fire that had just preceded, over another edge, across a valley, and under the crest of a hill. And here we found the tanks going over the top of the hill to take up their position. At this point we were still about a mile from the front line. At this place I opened up an aid post under the crest of the hill to take care of what wounded came in while we were getting into position.

Shrapnel was bursting in the air, shells were whizzing overhead, and our guns behind me were belching forth fire. The noise was deafening.

A railroad ran through the valley and an engine pulling a couple of flat cars was going by. A couple of soldiers were sitting on the rear truck swinging their feet. A shell burst on the track and only missed the last car about fifteen yards. Neither man was hit and the train went blithely on.

By this time it was getting along toward evening, the sun was sinking in the west, and finally went down a great ball of fire. At the time, I remember, I noticed its color. It was blood red and had a sinister look. Was it my imagination, or might it have been a premonition? At any rate, I shall never forget the color of the sun as it set that night at the end of the first day of probably one of the greatest battles in history. It certainly didn't look good to me.

The drumming of the guns continued, twilight gradually deepened into night, the signals stopped their wigwagging and took up their flash signals, a fog dropped down on us and put the lights out of business, and when we left to go forward under the cover of darkness they were busy putting out their telephone lines—signals and runners don't have an easy time.

#### Shell Dump Goes Up.

Behind us a shell landed in an ammunition dump and it went up with a roar; then the rifle ammunition started going off like a great bunch of firecrackers, and great tongues of flame lit up the sky.

It is reported that the Germans had broken through our line and we were to counter-attack in the morning. We got into positions without a single casualty. I opened an aid post in an old dugout and settled down to sleep until morning. You may think it funny that one could sleep under such conditions, but I had been up since 5:30, had tramped about six or seven miles, had had a rather trying day and was dog tired.

Just like some of the warm days we get the last of March at home. In going forward it was necessary for us to march seventy-five yards in front of three batteries of field guns. There are six guns to a battery. They shoot an eighteen-pound shell and while we were there each gun was shooting twice to the minute. You can imagine the racket when I tell you that the discharge of one gun can be heard about four miles. In addition the Boche was trying to knock out this battery and he was dropping his six inch shells a little too close for comfort.

#### Nearly in a Trap.

Then I made a lovely mistake. I was to establish an aid post near battalion headquarters and went blithely on when I met a company commander and asked him where to go.

"Back there about a quarter of a mile," he replied. "This is the front center company. If you keep on in the direction you are going you are going up over that ridge and Fritz will be waiting for you with a machine gun."

So my sergeant and orderly and myself didn't waste any time in clearing. On the way back I found a gallon can full of water, got into a corrugated iron shelter and had a wash and a shave. It certainly felt good. I don't believe I had washed for thirty-six hours. It was warm and bright. I could look out of my shelter and see our support lines digging themselves in several hundred yards away. The cannon fire ceased, the machine guns settled down to an occasional sputter and it was midday of a beautiful spring day.

A couple of partridge flew over me. What did they know or care about all this noise and racket and men getting up in line and killing each other?

Along about three o'clock things began to liven up again. In the meantime headquarters had been established in a sunken road with banks about fifteen feet high on either side (later this cut was half filled with dead). My aid post was in a dugout near by and gradually things got hotter and hotter.

Our men had dug themselves in and were popping away with their rifles. The field batteries behind us were putting up a barrage, airplanes were circling overhead, both ours and the Germans'. The Germans put up a counter-barrage, the machine guns were going like mad. I was standing with the colonel on a little rise of ground above the sunken road when the Germans broke through about a mile to the north of us. They could be plainly seen pouring over the ridge in close formation.

#### Tanks Get Into Action.

Then the tanks came up, and you should have seen them run! Just like rabbits! The tanks retired; the Boches reformed and came at it again. They tell me that at certain places our men withstood fifteen successive attacks and that the Germans went down in thousands. One Welshman told me that his gun accounted for 75 in three minutes during one wave.

Machine-gun bullets were nipping around me, the shell fire was getting

hotter, and even though it was a wonderful sight to watch I decided "discretion was the better part of valor," or something like that, and got down in my dugout.

I went back to the advanced dressing station through the hottest shell fire I ever experienced. More than once I went down on my face when a shell burst and the pieces went whizzing over my head. I spent the night in a mined village where the advanced dressing station was located, and all night they shelled it to blazes. It was remarkable how few casualties we had.

About eleven o'clock the morning of the third day a shell blew in the side of our post, but luckily no one was hurt. We stuck to it until about four in the afternoon, when we saw our men retiring over a ridge in front of us, keeping up a continuous machine gun and rifle fire, and we beat it back to another village and opened another post.

#### The Begrimed Lord.

About ten o'clock on the morning of the fourth day Lord Thyme, my colonel when I was with the battalion, stumbled into the shack where I was sitting. He looked like a ghost. He had lost his hat, his face was covered with a four days' beard, the sweat had traced tracks in the dust from his forehead to his chin. His sleeve was torn and bloody and he had a gash in his arm where he had been struck by a piece of flying shell case.

"My God, doc, are you here?" he said. "You got out just in time. The battalion is all gone. The sunken road is filled with dead—mostly Huns, damn 'em. The line broke on the right; we were surrounded, and at the last we were fighting back and back. Only thirty of us got away."

So we knew the Boche had broken through to our right and our left, and it was a question of how long it would be before we, too, were surrounded, but we wanted to stick it out as long as we could.

But not more than an hour later a medical officer rushed in from one of the battalions and between gasps for breath told us the Germans were on the edge of the village, had shot him through the sleeve with a machine gun bullet (luckily that was all), and for us to beat it.

Let me tell you we did. I threw my knapsack and made the first hundred yards in nothing flat and then settled down to a walk because I was so out of breath I couldn't run any more.

The incessant scream and crash and bang of the shells kept up and the rat-tat-tat of the machine guns never ceased. The village immediately behind us was a seething mass of brick dust, smoke, flame, and bursting shells. We were told on our way back that a stand was to be made behind this village, so we circled around it and took up a position about a half mile behind it at a cross-roads.

Unfortunately for us, a six inch battery came into action about fifty yards from us and, aside from the harassing effect of the terrific noise, batteries are always unpleasant neighbors, as they invite shell fire. We stopped here until about 10 o'clock at night, when we were ordered to retire.

There was no way of getting out the wounded that we had collected, so the stretcher bearers carried them on their stretchers for six or seven miles. In fact, we all helped, and when we arrived at our destination at 4 o'clock in the morning of the fifth day we were all in.

I could hardly move, but after two big bowls of hot tea and some hard tack I turned in on the floor and slept like a log for four hours, when we moved to another place and opened a dressing station.

#### Hun Plane Crashes.

On the way a German airplane came down and crashed near the road, but neither the pilot nor observer were hurt. They were a couple of rather neat looking lads about 19 years old.

And so it went for three days more, open a dressing station, retire (sometimes on the run), long marches, very little to eat except what we foraged from abandoned camps and dumps, dog tired, sleeping when and where we could, and finally the division was relieved. We now saw our first civilians, and last night I slept in a bed. It wasn't much of a bed, and the mattress was full of humps, but to get my boots off my sore and aching feet, to stretch out, and know I wouldn't be routed out in fifteen minutes—well, you couldn't have bought that bed from me for \$100.

Did you ever read Robert W. Service's description of the retreat from Mons? Well, that's the way I felt: Tramp, tramp, the grim road the road from Mons to Wipers. I've hammered out this ditty with me bruised and bleeding feet: Tramp, tramp, the dim road—We didn't have no pipers—All bellies that were colder was the drums we had to beat.

The ninth day, sitting around the fire in our mess after the best dinner we had had in days, the commanding officer handed me some papers and said, "Here is something that will interest you, Pettit. I want to say we shall be sorry to lose you."

And this is what it was: "Lieut. Roswell T. Pettit, M. R. C., is relieved from duty with the British army and will proceed to the A. E. F., where he will report for duty."

I leave for Paris in the morning. This has been a long tale, but the half of it hasn't been told. I hope I haven't strung it out too much. I have just been informed that all my kit had to be burned to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. I shall probably want you to send me some things from home, but will see what I can get here first. Your son, ROSWELL.

## GENTLE BUT SEVERE REBUKE

Frenchman's Words Calculated to  
Make Petulant Woman Hang Her  
Head in Shame.

When the war first started, one of the Americans who were stranded in France was a well-known New York society woman. She was naturally disturbed about conditions, and being unused to annoyances, she grumbled and complained.

She planned to stop at a small inn, and the next morning when her breakfast was tardy, she called the landlady in and gave him a severe lecture for "being" to have her eggs half an hour late.

"Even if France and Germany are at war, do you think, sir, that I am going without what I am accustomed to have?"

"Madam," said the old man, "we all have to go without some of the things we used to have. You for a little while I forever."

"Do you see yonder clump of trees? A few miles further on is where the armies are fighting. My three boys marched away when the war broke out. First one, then the second was killed. And now, I have given the youngest to France, and it was only a few days ago that his old mother and I heard that he, too, was struck down and is now sleeping somewhere beyond those trees."

#### Hard Work.

Andrew Carnegie has had to stand for a lot of stories, so this little one blamable on him won't add but a trifle to his conscience:

"Speaking of the obstinacy of the Scotch," said the Laird of Skibo, "I once knew a Scotch minister who told me of a parishioner who prayed as follows:

"Lord, oh, Lord, keep me from going wrong, for you know how hard it is to do anything with a Scot when once he has made up his mind."—Exchange.

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#### Voice of Vanity.

"Are you sure the baby resembles me?" asked the proud father. "Absolutely. Aren't you pleased?" "Yes, I'm pleased. The only thing is that the youngster will get over being rather red faced and bald-headed and I probably won't."

#### Don't Worry About Pimples.

On rising and retiring gently smear the face with Cuticura Ointment. Wash off the Ointment in five minutes with Cuticura Soap and hot water. For free samples address, "Cuticura, Dept. X, Boston." At druggists and by mail. Soap 25, Ointment 25 and 50.—Adv.

#### Indignant Denial.

"Those are pretty looking trees over there. Are they deciduous?" "Indeed, they're not. They're the healthiest sort we've got on the place."

Dr. Pierce's Pellets are best for liver, bowels and stomach. One Little Pellet for a laxative, three for a cathartic. Ad.

There may be balm in Gilead, but there are no cheap excursions to that place.

Red Cross Ball Blue, made in America, therefore the best, delights the housewife. All good grocers. Adv.

A hog ought not to be blamed for being a hog, but a man ought.

A bucket of whitewash usually goes with each political investigation.

**How Fast They Are Dying.**  
Life insurance companies have gone far in figuring mortality rates, periods of expectancy, etc. Of course it can be figured out just how long you and I (based on the law of averages) may expect to live. From a well-known life insurance company the following interesting data is secured: "The population of the world is about 1,623,000,000. The average age at death is thirty-three years. Every year there are 37,372,727 deaths. Every week 308,516 die and 5,208 every minute. About three die every two seconds and about 60 have died while you were reading this item."

#### Awaiting a Delegation.

"Do you know that your daughter is engaged?" "I know it, of course, but as yet I haven't been officially notified."

Probably the worst thing about poverty is the monotony connected with it.



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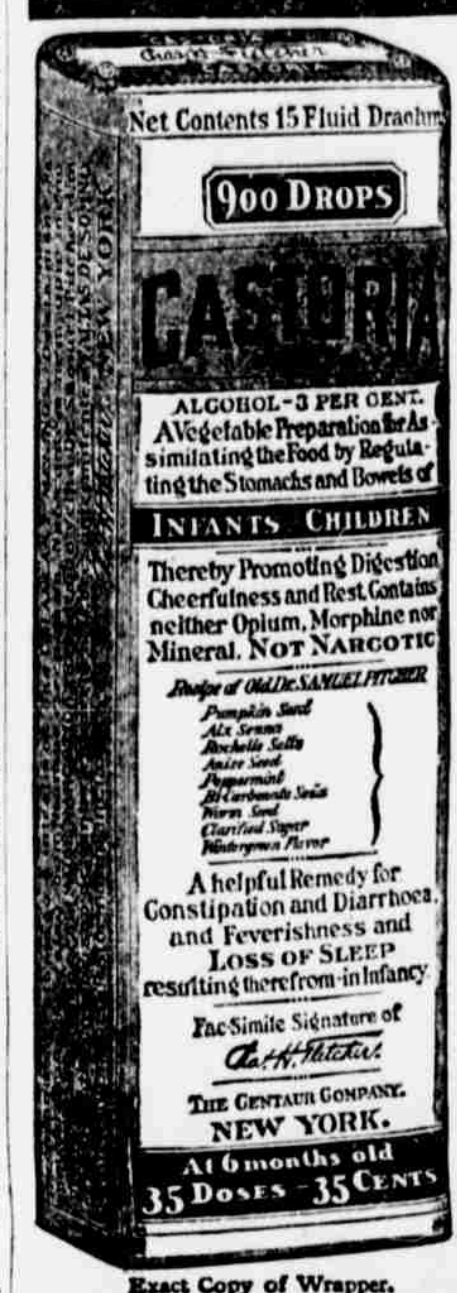
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## ATTENTION! Sick Women

To do your duty during these trying  
times your health should be your first  
consideration. These two women  
tell how they found health.

Hellam, Pa.—"I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound for female troubles and a displacement. I felt all run down and was very weak. I had been treated by a physician without results, so decided to give Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound a trial, and felt better right away. I am keeping house since last April and doing all my housework, where before I was unable to do any work. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is certainly the best medicine a woman can take when in this condition. I give you permission to publish this letter."—Mrs. E. R. CRUMMING, R. No. 1, Hellam, Pa.

Lowell, Mich.—"I suffered from cramps and dragging down pains, was irregular and had female weakness and displacement. I began to take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound which gave me relief at once and restored my health. I should like to recommend Lydia E. Pinkham's remedies to all suffering women who are troubled in a similar way."—Mrs. ELISE HEIM, R. No. 6, Box 83, Lowell, Mich.

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