

SENDING NEWS OF BATTLE

Some of the Difficulties Encountered by Correspondents in the Field.

MAPS POLITELY HAMPER PUBLICITY

Newspaper Men Have Hard Time in Getting Anything on the Wire Under the Present Regulations.

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ANTUNG, Manchuria, May 10.—(From a Staff Correspondent of the New York Herald-Special to The Bee.)—This morning I saw a copy of the Herald of Sunday, March 11, in which there was an article dealing with the expense of the war to the newspapers and the correspondents who were obtaining. The writer was good enough to say that it was not the fault of men in the field that more news was not forthcoming from them. I have referred in some of my letters to the restrictions and regulations which have been around. Here is a sample of what happened at the time of the fight for the Yalu, and against which there is no guarantee for the future.

On the morning of April 30 headquarters moved from Shokodo, back of Wiju, to a place called Genkado, a little northeast of Wiju and almost on the bank of the Yalu. It was five miles beyond its old location, which had been a little more than three miles from the camp of the correspondents, who were assigned to a place in the low valley away from as much as possible of the army movement in order to keep them from seeing anything that was going on. When headquarters moved we asked permission to move also, but it was not granted. One result was that we had to ride sixteen miles that evening to get our messages passed by the censor.

Next morning after the fight we were told by the supervising officer that he was not sure whether headquarters had moved again or not, but he thought it had. He would go to Genkado and let us know. Meanwhile we were to go back to our camp and await the coming of his orderly. When at 3:30 o'clock the orderly had not arrived with the promised message we saddled our horses and started out to look up headquarters for ourselves. We found the supervising officer in his old camp alone. He said that he had been to Genkado, but headquarters had gone on and had left no order there for him. He had therefore come back to his old place to wait for orders. None had yet arrived.

He had just written us a note to say that under the circumstances the best thing for us to do was to wait in our camp until he should hear from headquarters. He reconsidered that, however, when we talked with him and said that we might go on in search of headquarters. He would wait a little longer, and if nothing came for him he would follow us. He was mounted on a bicycle, his horse having been taken for some other use.

A Search for Headquarters. The official hour for receiving messages submitted to the censor was between 4 and 5 in the evening. It was about 4 when we left the camp and the supervising officer, with five miles yet to go to the place. We had no time to lose, and we lost none. No sign of headquarters was left to Genkado, nor any man who could give us the least hint of where it was. The stream of men and horses and pack animals was moving across the Yalu, going over the first channel on two bridges just above Genkado. We followed. The bridges led to Kurto Island, and in a few minutes there we were, struggling to make speed through sand that came up to the fetlocks of the horses. The road, or rather the trail, for there is no road through sand, was filled with transportation and men as far as we could see, but well ahead we made out the Peking cart and some of the Chinese interpreters who had been attached to headquarters below Wiju.

It was a sandy, hard path to get through the sand across Kurto. The official hour for receiving messages had gone by when we came to the second channel at the far side of the island. It was the main straits of the Yalu, wide, deep and swift, and the water was crowded with the men and animals of the army, and there was no chance for the man who would not push for himself. We jammed our way into the string and got on the bridge. On the far side the sand continued, softer and deeper, if possible, than below. No man knew where headquarters had gone. We asked them by the dozen.

We had carefully learned the Japanese words, but now we discovered that there was a great flaw in our knowledge; we could never understand what the other fellow replied to our questions. They talked enough when we questioned them to have answered us many times over, but as we could not understand a word we were just as badly off at the end as at the beginning. And, top a wonder, we found no officer of all the lot who passed who could speak English, German or French. It was the first time I had ever seen so many Japanese officers without finding one with whom I could talk.

Hard Riding. Now we struck a new kind of mean road. The sand changed into stones, ranging in size from little pebbles to cobbles as big as a man's two fists. This was even more difficult going than the sand, for it hurt the feet of the horses. They suffered so evidently in going over the stones that it was impossible to hurry them. The road was still no sign of headquarters. At last, well after the closing of the hour for inspection, we came near the eastern base of Tiger Hill, and then we learned that during the day General Kuroki had had headquarters in the field near the big rock. We were with renewed hope. There was a chance that he not moved on, although the certainty that he had scored a great victory practically convinced us all that he must have gone on to Chulliang Cheng.

The faint hope that we should find the commander-in-chief at Tiger Hill was soon dispelled. We crossed another bridge, over the small channel of the Ai river that separates Tiger Hill from Oseki Island, rounded the base of the big rock and found there only some of the batteries that had helped to play havoc with the Russians in the morning. Nor could any man of those we saw tell us where the general had gone. Below us, across a wide strip of sand, covered here and there with patches of water, lay the village of Chang Kiang Dai, where the Chinese custom house was. This was the Chinese custom house. The Japanese had held and which we called Ping, for lack of an official name. We headed there, for Japanese officers could be distinguished walking about. It was after 5 o'clock now, and we began to be doubtful of getting our messages passed even if we could come up with headquarters. Here we met a soldier for whom there is great hope. When we called out the old question as to the location of Dai Ichi San Shiroku (first army headquarters) he understood what we wanted. More, he knew that we would not understand his reply if he answered in Japanese. So he turned in his saddle and simply pointed toward Chu Liang Cheng. That man shall have my vote for member of Parliament when he becomes a Japanese subject.

The going was very slow, and once we fell into quicksand and two of the horses were nearly ruined. One man got through

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headquarters had gone on, how far the officer who gave the information did not know, probably to Chu Liang Cheng. We were now about fifteen miles from our camp and Chu Liang Cheng was still another five miles distant, with the unpurged main stream of the Ai River between us. But we had seen the men cross it in two places that morning, and there must be a way for us, so we pushed on. At the river bank, just eastward from Chu Liang Cheng we could plainly see two tents of the hospital corps that marked a field station.

The long lines of men and carts kept hurrying forward and we fell in with some of them. Soon we came to the ground over which the infantry had advanced in the morning, and presently had evidence of the character of the work the Russians had done in the body of a dead soldier lying on the sand. It was not covered and a curious group of men stood around it. They had seen the soldier and were talking about it. One of the men spoke to him and offered him a drink of water. When we came away he turned his head and looked after us, a mute appeal to race sympathy, an appeal that will not be denied.

It was 6 o'clock when we rode away from the hospital camp. The staff colonel had told us we could have a message over the field wire that evening in conformity with the regulation, which said we could send twenty words on the occasion of a great battle, and that we could send it from Chulliang Cheng. We hurried now, and were not long in getting into the town, for there was hope of sending off that twenty words. Almost at the outer edge of the town we met a gendarme, who asked if we were foreign correspondents. To our affirmative reply he responded that there was a building assigned to us already. Evidently there had been a mistake, and it had been expected that we would move over to Chulliang Cheng that afternoon. But no word had come to us, and the only prospect was a night ride back over the twenty-one miles to our camp.

Headquarters Found. Headquarters was in a large, comfortable Chinese building, almost of the dignity of a magisterial yamen. The compound was very brightly lit, and the walls were covered with the victory, rifles and ammunition and a few swords. The general was walking in the yard with some of his staff, including Major General Fujii, the chief of staff, and Prince Kuroki, who is a first lieutenant and adjutant on the staff. Several prisoners had already been brought in and the news was that more were coming. There was great bustle about the court yard, with officers and orderlies coming and going, and prisoners being constantly brought in, most of them wounded. Search parties were out going over all the field, and as fast as wounded men were found they were brought in. The Japanese were doing everything in their power to make the wounded of the enemy as comfortable as possible. Dr. Tamura, the headquarters surgeon, personally attended several of those brought in while we were there.

General Kuroki came up to the little group of correspondents and we were introduced to him. We had been with headquarters for ten days, but this was the first opportunity we had had to meet the general. He said he had waited for this day to meet the correspondents, because up to that time he had been too much occupied with the work of preparing for the battle which we had seen. He turned to General Fujii and the chief of staff and announced that there had been captured by the Japanese twenty-eight Russian guns, twenty officers and a great many men, the exact number of whom was not yet known. Neither was the number of Japanese casualties, but they were several hundred.

General Kuroki spoke again, and this time we got the good news that we were permitted to send forty words each over the military wire, and we were not to hold to the common message for those correspondents who represented papers in the same town, as the regulation contemplated. Then the general said that the Russians had displayed very great gallantry in the tenacity with which they had held their position. They had made a fine fight, and he was glad to express his admiration of them as soldiers.

When he had finished, General Fujii gave us a few more details of the fighting and the results, and then we scattered

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about to get our telegrams ready. We had all written long telegrams to be sent down by courier to Ping Yang, and each man had a twenty word message ready for the field wire, which he now had to write to get in the additional facts and to use the forty words allowed. It was quite dark in the compound and there were no candles, but some soldiers lit a fire and by the light of that we got through our work. It was not so easy to get through with the censor.

Back to the Censor. The two officers attached to headquarters who speak English were not yet up. One was our supervising officer, who was back somewhere near his old camp, and his associate had not been heard from. Besides, every officer of the staff was as busy as he could be with the work of the army, and a dosed times or more Colonel Hagino, the chief censor, was obliged to lay down a telegram half read and rush off to see about this or that or talk to some Russian who had just been brought in. Then it was announced that it would be impossible for our field messages to be sent from Chu Liang Cheng, because no operators had come up who could handle English. So we should have to go back to the office at the old headquarters at Shokodo to file them.

It would be an angry ride back, in the face of all those miles of transportation moving our way, and our horses had had nothing to eat. Neither had we, but that did not count much if only the horses got something. The accusation has since been made that there were men that night who took the nose bags of horses standing in the yard to get a feed for their own animals, but surely not Dai Ichi Ichi (First Army), correspondent would do that. It would not be in conformity with the regulations. The moon was due to rise about 10 o'clock, and we decided to wait for it in order to have a little light in fording the Ai river. No one exactly relished that part of the homeward journey, for it was a tricky ford, and following a ripple it was not easy under the cloud-obscured moon.

More Wounded. As we stood in the compound waiting for the moon to come up we saw several more Russians brought in. Two came together, both wounded. One had been shot through the body and was on a stretcher, and the other was wounded in the arm and could walk. As the litter bearers laid down their stretcher the man on it opened his eyes and stared at the soldier. The man ran away about him. Then he began to pray in German, and never was a more fervent "unser vater" uttered by a man than that mumbled by this poor fellow in his desperate need. The Japanese crowding around did not understand and only stared at the foreigners standing bareheaded until the stippled prayer was ended. His petition finished he began to call on his captain for water. None of the Japanese near him comprehended, but one of the correspondents, who happened to know the Japanese word for water, told a soldier. The man ran away and returned immediately with a big cup brimming full. The poor fellow on the litter gulped it down with eager swallows and sank back on the stretcher. Away went the soldier again and brought another cupful, and the wounded man drank that, too, with a look of such dumb gratitude in his eyes as one sees in a stricken animal that finds unexpected help.

Meantime the other man was still standing beside the litter of his comrade. Now one of the Japanese undertook to show him the Russian understood and clumsily different signs and gestures he strove to make the Russian know what he meant, but in vain. At last he moved the Russian a little to one side to get room, and himself sat down beside the stretcher. Then the Russian understood and clumsily tried to sit down. He was stiff and hurt and came near falling, but two or three of the Japanese soldiers caught him and helped him down. Then General Fujii came up and gave him a cigarette, which the poor devil took as if it were a draught of the elixir of life.

There was an officer brought in about this time who had been shot through the body from side to side. It was a desperate wound, and the surgeon who examined it knew that the man could not live, but he did what he could to make him as comfortable as possible. The wounded officer bore the pain of the examination and to dress without a murmur, but when he saw the faces of the correspondents about him there came a gleam into his eyes that made it hard not to be able to speak freely with him. There had been slackening of the busy occupation of all at headquarters when we started away, a little after 10 o'clock. The streets of Chulliang Cheng were full of men passing to and fro, transportation coming in and men about camp fires getting their belated supper. We had a lantern from headquarters that bore the inscription, "Grand Army Headquarters," for a passport on the road, and they said that if we would wait a little longer they would give us an escort, but that was late enough for a twenty-mile ride to the telegraph office and we started without the escort.

Crossing the Ai. Just before we got to the Ai we met some artillery coming in and one of the officers told us that we could get across directly below Wiju, which was a long long ride around Tiger Hill and back by Genkado. Some of the men objected that the shortest way home was along the longest way around, but the majority voted to try the short cut, and so we kept together. At the place where we struck the Ai it was much narrower than where we had forded in the evening, and we knew it must be considerably deeper. There was a little fire on each bank, with some men sitting beside the one on our side. We were followed by one of the biggest horses in the lead and a small Korean pony following. It was too dark to see the ripple very well, and a little more than half way over the man ahead lost it. Two men searched about for it and the rest of us waiting to see the result. It came very quickly when both horses suddenly dropped almost out of sight and their riders called out to us to go back. They had slipped off the edge of the bank they had been following and were swimming their horses. The current was very swift and the Korean pony had a sharp struggle for his life, but in a minute or two both had struck the bank again and climbed out into the shallow water. Then we all lied back to the fire, where the men were. As we went we passed by four dead men lying on the sand, with nothing to mark their presence, and not even a blanket to cover them.

We got back to the fire just in time to see a pontoon ferry come in with an ammunition wagon on it. The men in charge said we could send our horses over on the ferry, five at a time, and there were more ammunition wagons to come over to our side there would be opportunity for the two trips it would require to take us all over. The Japanese horse is a wild beast. He kicks and fights with any other animal that comes near him, and it was close quarters for five of them on the ferry, which was made by lashing two pontoons together with their section of roadway as when in use in a bridge. We got the first five over safely, but half a dozen times they made such a row that it seemed some of them must surely go overboard. The ferry went back, and in half an hour or so the other five got across, after a narrow squeak from losing one or two of the horses. When we had forded the Ai in the evening we had approached it from a strip of land that runs down from Tiger Hill, but now we had crossed to Chulliang Cheng, and there was no way to get off it except by ferrying. We rode across the island to the main stream of the Yalu, which is more than 600 yards wide, deep and very swift. There was another ferry, but this time we had to come out, and they were in charge of a non-commissioned officer, who would give us no help.

At the Ferry. Plenty of the ferryboats were lying along the bank, but there was no one to work

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show it to us. It took more than an hour before we reached the blessed bridge. The floor of it had been covered with matting to prevent the Russians from hearing the rumble of wheels or the noise of hoofs on the planks when the artillery was taken across the bridge before.

From the night it was plain sailing, with only a detour of three miles to the telegraph office at Shokodo. It was 5 o'clock when I got back to camp and day was breaking. The courier who had been waiting to go to Ping Yang with the long message was tattered and started off and we turned in, to be awakened two hours later with the information that the camp was to be broken up as soon as the thunderstorm then raging had stopped, for the move to Chulliang Cheng, as headquarters was likely to go on at once.

Two Disappointments. That was what we did to get out a forty word message about the fight for the Yalu. Today we got the joker. It came in two ways. First was a copy of a Tokio newspaper, printed in Japanese. It was dated May 1, the morning on which we had our forty mile ride to get forty words. It contained one solid page of description of the battle, made from the official report received in Tokio on the night of May 1 and given out to the newspaper men there at once. Undoubtedly it was called to our papers at great length, and these messages got in for our military for twelve days, and that ahead of our poor little forty words.

The second cheerful bit of information came in the shape of messages from the forwarding agents in Ping Yang, who wrote that the telegraph office there had been closed for the transmission of matter not military for twelve days, and that not one of our messages had been accepted, in spite of the fact that all of them bore the stamp of the censor at headquarters here. They had been sent on by runner to Seoul, whence they may have been cabled home after another four days' delay, and after the official report had grown so old as to be forgotten. Not even mail matter was delivered in Ping Yang.

All the correspondents send their dispatches in duplicate, one copy by runner and the other by the military post, and that to arrive to be forwarded. The Japanese prevented any of those in the post from arriving by forbidding the delivery of mail. They prevented any of those by courier from going by closing the telegraphs. When the men work all day and ride all night, risking their lives to get out forty words, they are doing about all they can. The only thing left is to wait.

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