

ALONG THE ROAD TO THE REAR

COCOA and cigarettes helped to win the battles of the 27th Division. These — the cocoa and cigarettes and innumerable other things — were furnished by the American Red Cross.

Also, during the push through the Hindenburg line, there might have been a shortage of transportation for the wounded had not Captain Stephen N. Bobo acted with prompt energy in calling for additional ambulances which sped from Paris to Picardy, and arrived in good time to save the lives of hundreds of men. Owing to the nature of the terrain, during the Hindenburg stunt, it was impossible to provide shelter for all the wounded and again the problem was solved by the Red Cross which furnished 2000 extra blankets additional cover that made it possible for the wounded to lie comfortably in the open until they could be transported to the rear.

In that push the walking and other wounded were in excess of 3000, making it necessary at the advance and main dressing stations for crews to be on duty 24 hours each day. They gave first aid and fed the men and supplied them with "smokes." Every wounded man was given food, hot drinks and cigarettes. And so when the division started its second stunt on October 15 to take St. Souplet and advance 9000 yards, officers and enlisted men were familiar with the service which the Red Cross was prepared to offer.

During the seven days in which the division was in this action, more than 3700 wounded men were handled in the various dressing stations, and evacuated to base hospitals. The dressing stations were on the main artery of communication in the zone of advance, and many wounded from the 30th American, the 50th British

and the artillery divisions drifted through these emergency hospitals.

Throughout the action the ten Ford ambulances, which had been brought up from Paris, carried wounded men from areas of the battle much further forward than heavy cars could go. The rolling kitchen went well into the forward areas, and during the operation served 48,000 cups of hot cocoa to the famished fighters. And when the division was relieved and started to the rear it was preceded by this rolling kitchen which was set up and put into operation at every point where the troops rested.

A word about sweaters — more than 10,000 were delivered to the troops from the rear echelon forward to the first line, while the socks given out by the American Red Cross exceeded 5000 pairs.

Civilians released from recaptured towns were also cared for. Between 300 and 1500 were found in every town taken from the Germans. All were fed, clothed and given medical attention, and large numbers of the wounded and feeble were evacuated to safer and more comfortable locations.

Captain Bobo's problem was to give comfort to the men of the 27th Division, and his efforts in behalf of the civilians was an extra service which the Good Samaritan cheerfully volunteered to perform.

He was assisted in his work by Lieutenants Sackett and Weaver. Both were energetic, efficient and tireless.

Letters of appreciation for the work of the Red Cross, and for the daring and efficient service rendered by the ambulance drivers were sent to Captain Bobo by Major General John F. O'Ryan, Lieut. Col. Walter C. Montgomery, Division Surgeon, and Major William J. Cranston, of the Ambulance Section, 102 Sanitary Train.

MUD, MUD, MUD

After those battalion maneuvers which preceded the last operation and which were to demonstrate before the officers of the division both the proper and the improper methods of dispatching enemy rearguard machine-gun nests, our fellows understood why some French peasants use *beaucoup* mud in the construction of their quaint little houses. It has all the qualities of good cement, costs nothing and the supply is limitless.

Part of a trench system just outside the village of Beauquesne was used in the make-believe attacks, and served as cover for our men as they crept forward toward the white flags that indicated the approximate location of the enemy's machine guns. It was in this ditch that the men encountered the most mud. The heavy daily rains of the previous six days had left the floor of the trench in bad shape. It was just one long strip of mushy yellow bog, anywhere from ankle to knee-deep.

The shallow depth of the trench made matters worse. It wasn't more than waist-deep at any point, and since it was part of the game for the assault troops to keep out of sight, they had to slish and wallow through the mire bent almost double. Lovely! With every panting breath they'd murmur with good-natured vehemence some commentary upon all mud, and particularly upon the mud through which they were wading.

This was a rehearsal, staged far back of the lines. A few days — a week or two later at dawn the curtain rose on the real performance — one of the grimmest

shows presented in the western theatre of war. But the men waded forward through the Boche with the same spirit that conquered the mud of Beauquesne.

Sgt. HARRY T. MITCHELL.

WHERE THE FRANCS GO

American soldiers will buy anything, anywhere at any time and at almost any price.

That this is true there can be no doubt after a visit to a few French shops. Diminutive shops with scant supplies of anything under the sun are veritable gold mines in France. It is quite uncommon in a community near an American army camp to see the shops doing business late in the afternoon — what goods are in store in the morning are almost invariably in the hands or stomachs of the Yanks before dusk.

In Corbie, the town in which the 27th Division rested after the push through the Hindenburg line, recently returned civilians opened tiny stores in which they sold grapes, apples, tomatoes, celery and canned goods. Men who had snubbed some of these commodities in civil life spent lavishly in those obscure marts. Day after day the soldiers visited the shops, repeating their purchases and incidentally strengthening the French belief that Americans are spendthrifts.

The rush on the Y. M. C. A. huts diminishes greatly when the supply of "eats" gives out, and the men turn to the local merchants to satisfy their gastronomic predelections.

L. W. R.