



AT a time when the fate of Europe hung in the balance the Twenty-Seventh Division was ordered to entrain for ports of embarkation preparatory to departing for France.

New York's Own division, composed of broad-shouldered, energetic soldiers — the kind of soldiers with whom our Allies consider it a privilege to fight — was soon to have an opportunity of proving its fitness for participation in the most titanic struggle of all ages.

When these soldiers left their training camp at Spartanburg, S. C. last April, after eight months of diligent work they knew full well what they were up against. They knew their rifle, their bayonet, the hand grenade, and all the details of modern warfare.

But more than all they knew they were ready to meet the Boche.

And so it was with a goodly supply of confidence that they gathered at Atlantic ports, and sailed for the war zone. The cheering civilians, who greeted the boys in every city and town through which their trains passed en route to the ports, could read no signs of misgivings in the countenances of those stout lads. There was no room for gloom on the transports that carried these fighters to the shores of France.

The division was off for the war — the fighting end of the war. It was starting the first lap of a great adventure which history perforce will record as nothing short of amazing.

The division that the Empire state had fitted out, trained and donated as a tactical fighting unit to the United States Army was just getting a start toward the Hindenburg Line, widely press-agented as "impregnable".

It was a gay party, a festive frolic — that journey across the Atlantic. For a fortnight the men forgot the seriousness of their mission, and enjoyed themselves on deck, below decks, in the galleys, crow'snest and stoke hole. One convoy made the trip without the thrill of a submarine attack, but another section of the division learned something of the method of attack employed by German sub-sea craft.

The convoy in which the latter section crossed the ocean was attacked on two occasions, the last of which involved a sea battle lasting more than an hour. Aeroplanes, torpedo boat destroyers and the armed transports were all engaged in the encounter against a school of U-boats which had waited at the entrance of the port of debarkation for its prey. The coast of France had just loomed into vision when bells aboard the transports signaled the appearance of the sub-sea fighters. The destroyers immediately began manoueuering among

the transports in search of the elusive craft, and they dropped depth bombs in the wake of the ship carrying the division headquarters staff and elsewhere. Allied hydroplanes hovered over the destroyers giving signals and otherwise assisting in the thrilling fight. A terrific canonading ensued.

The efficiency of the navy accounted for a notable victory. Two of the enemy underseas fighters were netted, as officially reported, while in all probability others were put out of action.

The erstwhile sleepy port towns in which the sections of the division disembarked, and which opened their arms to the American boys, were buzzing with war work. Yanks were by no means strangers to the French peasants, but the humble village folk had not wearied of extending warm welcomes to the men from America. If the khaki and campaign hats of General O'Ryan's soldiers interested the quaint people, the war weary civilians in their sombre clothes were curiosities to the new arrivals.

Little opportunity for sightseeing was afforded the troops in these towns, for it was essential that they be cleared of soldiers with as much despatch as possible to make room for new units. The railroad yards were filled with long trains of box cars marked "40 Hommes-8 Chevaux", and into these the troops were loaded. The cars were so small that they seemed like toys, and too frail to carry the load of huskies assigned to them. In each car were boxes of rations, enough for three days.

The destination was unknown, of course, to the men.

For thirty-six hours these trains wheezed, jerked, halted and sped into France, bringing up finally at a rail-head in the Somme river basin. The division detrained, went for a few hours to a rest camp, and proceeded next day to the towns in which the units were to be billeted during their preliminary training period. None of these towns was a great distance from the English channel. The presence of British troops in each village was unofficial notification to the New Yorkers that they were to be brigaded and to do their fighting, for a time at least, with Field Marshall Haig's forces.

"Jerry", as the German airmen are called, lost no time in bringing to the attention of the troops the fact that he was still a factor to be dealt with in the war. The drone of his machine, and the consequent bombardment of the sky by the Allied anti-aircraft guns were heard the first night spent in the interior of France and every clear night during the period of training brought a repetition of the first night's activity in the heavens. But the men were so actively engaged during the day in