

## The GAS ATTACK

### DIVISION'S MOVEMENTS IN FRANCE

One section of the Twenty Seventh American Division disembarked at Brest, and another at St. Nazaire. The division went almost immediately into Flanders where it was brigaded with the British. Some of the cities and towns in which the New Yorkers lived and fought during their sojourn in France and Belgium follow:

NOYELLES-SUR-MER.	DOUGLAS FARM.
FAVIÈRES.	ST. RIQUIER.
RUE.	BEAUQUESNE.
MORLAY.	TINCOURT-BOUCHY.
BOUQUEMAISON.	TEMPLEUX LA-FOSSE.
DOULLENS.	STE. EMILIE,
WINNEZEELLE.	JONCOURT.
OUDEZEELE.	PRESMONT.
NEURLIET.	BUSIGNY.
QUELMES.	RONSSOY.
STEENEVOORDE.	BELLECOURT.
ABEELE.	ST. SOUPLET.
EAST POPERINGHE.	LA SABLIERE WOODS.
TRAPPISTES FARM.	CORBIE.

further preparing themselves for line duty that night found them too fatigued to wait up for enemy planes.

Regulations, providing that the estaminets and streets be cleared of troops by 9:30 o'clock, were rigidly enforced by the Military Police. "Vin blanc" parties came to an abrupt close each night with the sounding of the military curfew hour. Pride in the division coupled with discipline held the men apart from riotous parties and, consequently, many friends and a fine impression were made in each town into which the New Yorkers moved.

The daylight hours were crowded with business. Much of the work that had been done in the Spartanburg training camp was gone over, and new methods of warfare, instituted after the division left the states, had to be learned.

Small arms target practice was continued until the division was ordered to take over the defense of the East Poperinghe Line.

Up to this time the troops had dwelt in tents or billets. In every kind of haymow and cowshed known to France the men had slept and made their homes. In orchards, fields and woodlands they had joined their shelter halves. In half wrecked hovels, long since deserted by peasants who feared the invading Huns, the men had driven nails in the walls for their equipment, built fires in the dilapidated chimneys, and called them home.

But now the men were to have some experience in trenches which had not been constructed for practice, but for actual warfare — for the defense of France. They were to spend long, bitter nights — clear nights and inclement nights in these slits in the ground — they were actually up against the Hun only not so close to him as a few weeks hence would bring them.

Just how they would "carry on" in the event of a break-through to their line on the part of the Boche was taught the men of the division. Every squad and every individual member of every squad had a certain post to take up in case the call came. For many days they held themselves in readiness for action, guarding

that reserve system as conscientiously as though it had been the front line. The division's sector was along a front of approximately 3000 yards, divided into three sections with one regiment to each section. The infantry regiments alternated in assuming responsibility for the line, and in practicing on a rifle range in the back area. Continuous detachments were sent from each unit of the division to the front lines for observation and tactical study. While on those trips several men were killed and wounded by German shrapnel, and others were cited for gallant service.

Under harassing fire directed by the Boche at the area occupied by the New York division, details from the various units laid long lines of communication cable.

Then came the order which sent the division into Belgium, the first American unit to fight in that ravished country.

Relieved of responsibility for the reserve line, the division sent infantry and machine gun units into the front line before Kemmel Hill, the bugbear of both the Allied and enemy forces. Over it some of the bloodiest battles of the war had been fought. It had been stormed, captured, lost and recaptured numerous times. Hosts of gallant lads had made the supreme sacrifice in an effort to seize and hold that ugly elevation.

At the time the division faced that stupendous problem, the Germans were in possession of Kemmel, and had it so strongly fortified that it seemed next to impossible to snatch it from them. Nevertheless it was left to the Twenty-Seventh and another American division to take that hill. At first the Empire state men were with the British troops in the front line, but not for long. The Tommies, who had long been there on the defensive, were soon taken out of the trenches, and the 27th Division made solely responsible. Meantime preparations for storming the hill were being completed; batteries were being placed, observation posts established, and the plan of attack worked out.

Veterans of the war were astounded to learn that a division with such limited experience in the field had been assigned to take Kemmel. They agreed that the division was highly efficient, and that the soldierly qualities of its men were unquestionable, but they seemed to doubt any division's ability to cope with the task of winning back the small mountain.

Notwithstanding these misgivings the division set itself for the job. The troops were given sufficient rest to put them in fine fettle for the drive. Plans were laid to a nicety. But arrangements and details had scarcely been worked out to perfection before an official report, announcing the evacuation of Kemmel by the Germans, reached division headquarters.

This action on the part of the enemy was not made without cost to both sides. The division suffered many casualties even before the German withdrawal, and many more when the infantry followed the retreating Huns far beyond the ridge. All encounters with the foe in rearguard actions were marked by success.

A German officer, captured during a raid by one of the divisional units, said that the evacuation was effected because of a belief on the part of the Germans that Americans were being massed at Kemmel.

Shortly after this German retirement the division moved down into Picardy and settled in the center and environs of Beauquesne, a quiet little town, for another rest and for further practice in manouevring and open warfare. A fleet of British tanks participated in these