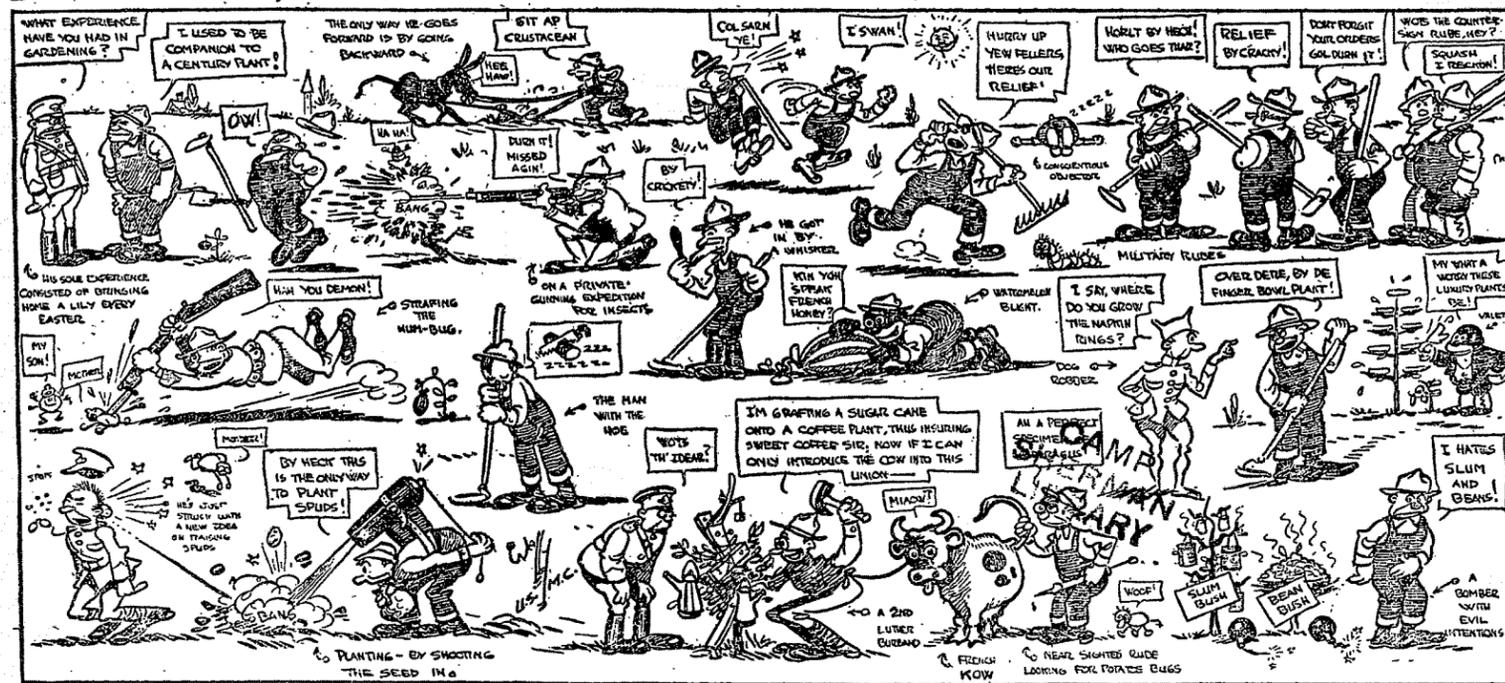


FORWARD, HOE!—AS PER G.O. 34

—By WALLGREN



HELPFUL HINTS

No. 5—NEVER LEAVE YOUR LIGHT BURNING AFTER TAPS.

PARDON ME PRIVATE, DID YOU KNOW YOU LEFT YOUR LIGHT BURNING?

MY, MY, SO I DID SERGEANT. HOW CARELESS OF ME—PRAY FORGIVE ME OLE TOP!

THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS OFFENSE BY DISPLAYING ANY ILLUMINATION OF ANY SORT AFTER TAPS YOU NOT ONLY BREAK A RIGID IRON BOUND ARMY LAW, BUT ANNOY YOUR SLUMBER SEEMING COMRADES AND DESTROY THE PEACE OF MIND OF YOUR TOP SERGEANT—AND WORST OF ALL YOU WASTE VALUABLE FUEL, ESPECIALLY IF THE LIGHT BE ONE OF THE ELABORATE INCANDESCENT ELECTRICS SO COMMONLY USED BY PRIVATES AT ANY RATE, IF CAUTIOUS, DO NOT ABUSE YOUR DETECTOR, BUT PACIFY HIM BY SEEMING AMIABILITY—MOST LIKELY YOU WILL BE PENALIZED ONE ELECTRIC BULB

EX-LEGIONNAIRE HAPPY AS A PRIVATE IN A. E. F.

American in Thick of War Since 1914 Gives Up Sergeancy and Declines French Commission to Serve Under Uncle Sam

By W. S. BALL, Correspondent "Providence Journal" with the A. E. F.

A certain American command had marched to within a few miles of the battle line and was going forward into the trenches that night. For this particular command it was the first excursion into the fighting front. Young Americans in khaki were putting the finishing touches on their equipment—needless, because every detail had been completed before they came this far, but serving to pass the time and occupy the mind.

Others were playing games or reading, or carrying on the routine in their temporary quarters in the billets of departure. A group fell into talk of certain features of attack and defense, and learning of which a headquarter might have envied.

"I tell you, it's this way," one was saying. "I was told by a fellow who lent it up in his French school—just then a short, stocky figure in khaki rounded a corner of the stone stable which was the billet. The speaker was interrupted.

"Don't tell us what you've heard. Here comes 'Pop.' We'll put it to him. He knows."

"They greeted the newcomer with real affection. Dark of complexion, broad shouldered, strong faced, with a touch of grey in his dark hair, but none in his militant mustache, he was old enough to have been the father of most of the youngsters who hailed him. Also, he walked and carried himself like one who had 'carried on' longer than most of our men.

"How about it, Gene? Do we or don't we do so-and-so in case—"

"Well, it's like this, boys," he answered. "I was back in the Champagne fight, and again at the Somme—"

"And he gave the answer from experience such as the youngsters obviously envied.

Fine Night to Go In

Of all the group, he was the most exuberant at the prospect of getting into the trenches. Where younger ones were inclined to take the coming adventure seriously, he was bubbling over with happy good nature. He looked at the sky judicially.

"It's going to be a fine night for it, boys!" he exclaimed. "Just a few hours now, and we'll have a chance to show what we can do. And in Uncle Sam's uniform, too. I tell you, boys, we're going to give the Boche a little lesson about America."

"For 'Pop' knew exactly all about it—knowledge gained from three years' experience in the Foreign Legion and the fighting 170th, a famous regiment of France. He had learned at Cronelle, and in the Champagne fight, and at Verdun, and in the Somme affair. He had taken all of war's chances that one man could take. He had been wounded; he had been decorated for gallantry in action; he had won promotion for bravery. And here he was aching for another chance to get at the Boche.

Once a Pawtucket Grocer

One is not permitted by our Army's censorship rules to mention his name in this account. That is a pity, because so long as he was in the French service it could have gone freely. It is of especial interest to New England people, because until the war began in 1914 he was, with his wife, running a little grocery in Pawtucket, R. I. For the purposes of this narrative I shall, therefore, call him Private J—, private now, though he has in the French Army been a sergeant and has been offered a commission. He declined it because he did not want to pledge himself to be anything but an American when the war is over. He became a private in khaki because he wanted to fight the battle of his native Belgium under the colors of his adopted America.

One of the first in America to respond with his body as well as with his heart and mind to Germany's challenge was the Pawtucket grocer. It was on August 4 that the Prussian plunged into peaceful Belgium. On August 8, just four days later, Mr. J. sailed for Europe. The idea of neutrality in such a case hadn't occurred to him.

At that time he was 38 years old. Born in the Ardennes—the part of Belgium where the inhabitants are Celtic in appearance and impulse—he had come to America as a youth, settled in Rhode Island, been naturalized and established a prosperous business. He was as soundly American as the governor of

his State, but—outrage had been committed, and his birthplace was the victim.

But here enters as a factor the strength of his Americanism. Reaching France, he looked around for the best use of his services, and enlisted in the French Foreign Legion instead of in the Army of Belgium. Quite simply he told a friend, who happens to be a friend of mine, why he made that choice.

"If I had joined the Belgian Army," he said, "it might have been hard to establish my American citizenship after the war. And I didn't want to lose that. I wanted to go back to Pawtucket, to my wife and my store and my friends. The Legion would take me without any such question. The Legion was fighting for Belgium as well as for France. So I joined it."

The Day Before Charleroi

That was the day before Charleroi, while the grey hosts of Germany were sweeping southward on their road to victory. For a month and a half while the battle of the Marne was testing France and abolishing the Kaiser's predatory schedule—these American volunteers and other newcomers to the ranks of the Legion were being put through a quick emergency training. Soon after the donkey fastened its toes in the soil of northern France and braced its shoulders for the strain, the Pawtucket grocer and his "classmates" were sent up to the Legion and began to fight, which is a way the Legion has.

This was the beginning of trench warfare, so-called. But in reality the "trenches" were shallow ditches. There were no trenches as we know them today—as "Pop's" squad entered them the other evening. There was no barbed wire protection. Aeroplanes were few and far between. There was no chance to call for an artillery barrage, to help face an attack.

When No Man's Land Was Anyman's

No Man's Land was Anyman's. When you wanted a dead German, you went out and killed him for yourself. If he happened to kill you first—that was a part of the game. They killed quite a number of "Pop's" companions first. He, as he admits, was lucky. He played his part and came through that first winter and the summer months that followed without a scratch.

Then came the battle of the Champagne. Again, he played his part, and again he came through as intact as when he had gone down to the Pawtucket station.

But a little later, in some fighting which doesn't head the chapter in any of the histories, he was not so lucky. He felt the twinges of German metal, but

in feeling it he displayed such bravery that he was cited in the orders. For that he was decorated, and then he spent a couple of months or so in the hospital. For the wound? Not at all! Just a little rheumatism or pleurisy or something like that, due to the previous winter's exposure.

After serving in this fashion with the Foreign Legion for a year or more, Private J— was given the opportunity, with a few other Americans, of transferring to the 170th, and took it. This was not a return to the quiet life, for the 170th was one of the "regiments of attack." Its record of casualties was almost as impressive as that of the Legion itself. Whenever there was heavy work to be done the 170th was invited to be among those present.

It was present at Verdun, for instance. It was one of the first supporting regiments sent there after the Crown Prince selected it as the ideal spot in which to acquire a reputation. In the first attack on the village of Vaux, when Germany seemed willing to throw away lives like cancelled stamps, the 170th held the place.

Made Sergeant for Bravery

Later, it was assigned to the gallant attempt to retake the Bois de Caillotte. Most of the Americans of the regiment went down there. Private J— took all the chances that they did, but his lucky star was shining. It was because of his work in that action that he was made a sergeant.

Being sergeant means that one lends. Later in that busy year of 1916 he led so well in the battle of the Somme that he was offered a commission. The only "out" about it, from his point of view, was that it meant assuming French citizenship and remaining here after the war was over. Whereas, Private J— wanted to go back to Pawtucket. One other American was offered a commission

at the same time and on the same terms. He accepted. Private J— (sergeant at that time) did not.

About this time he began to hope that his adopted land would enter the war of which he had seen so much. He hoped for a long time, but when, last April, it happened, of all the soldiers of France he was the most joyous. Instantly he sat down and wrote a note to the American embassy in France telling his experience and saying that he hoped to be able to contribute to the cause of America.

By way of reply he got what undoubtedly was the best that the embassy could do at the time. It was a very brief form-letter sort of reply, the gist of which was this:

Three Winters of War

"Your patriotic letter, offering your services to your country, has been placed on file, and, should the occasion arise, you will be notified."

Still with the French army, Sergeant J— went down Rheims way to lead a squad of recruits who had never been under fire. The machine guns got them. Sergeant J— spent a few days with them, and led them again. This time they went.

By this time the grocer of Pawtucket was well over 40 years of age. He had seen three winters of war, his black hair had turned a little grey, and millions of men no older were not even considering themselves eligible for active service. His superior officers concluded that, since he wouldn't accept a commission, he might perhaps be given a rest from the vicissitudes of the fighting front. So they sent him out to the Vosges region in charge of a crew whose business it was to mend roads.

He tackled the road problem as vigorously as he had the problem of killing Boches until one day he heard the an-

ouncement from the French Minister of War that American citizens in the French Armies might transfer to the Stars and Stripes.

At which point Pawtucket, all by itself over in the mountains of France, gave three cheers.

He headed straight for Paris as promptly as in 1914 he had dropped the grocery business and headed for Europe. On the way, not knowing, he passed close to the American office where he might have stopped off and been accommodated with a new set of enlistment papers.

With His Own People

In Paris it took him a week to effect the transfer. When it was finally achieved, they told him that he would be accepted as a private if he could pass the examination.

For answer he beat his deep chest, that was born in the Ardennes.

"And are you going to accept a place as a private?"

"Why not? I want to be in the American Army—with my own people."

A few days later he started for a certain American corner of Somewhere, hugging long official documents that were stamped with an eagle inside a circle.

Sometimes, if he has his health and fortune, I think he will be at the very

direction of a shell that I hear coming from the Boche. And then, I have a wife in Pawtucket. And she prays for me every day."

I never heard a more reverent seven words than these last.

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