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The Stars and Stripes

By and For the Soldiers of the A. E. F.

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FIRST ARMY, A.E.F., NIPS OFF SALIENT IN OPENING DRIVE

Swift, Successful Blow at St. Mihiel Nets Over 15,000 Prisoners

GERMAN PLAN KNOCKED IN

Sector "Northwest of Toul," First French Home of Yanks, Comes to Life With Bang

The First American Army, commanded in the field by General John J. Pershing, struck its first blow last week.

It was a blow sudden, swift and beyond all shadow of doubt successful.

Supported by French Colonials, that Army closed like a giant pair of pincers on the old, heavily entrenched salient which the Germans had held ever since they dug themselves in after their failure at the first Battle of the Marne—closed in and in less than two days obliterated that salient from the fast-changing German war map.

The Germans immediately announced that they never had wanted the old salient anyway, that they had always had half a mind to evacuate it, that they knew the blow was coming and that they had craftily withdrawn just in time. But by way of comment one these protestations, the grinning doughboy can — and does — point to pens packed with more than 15,000 prisoners of all ranks and conditions, more than 200 captured guns, hundreds upon hundreds of machine guns, a king's ransom in captured material, millions upon millions of dollars' worth of locomotives, railway supplies, shells, clothing, food and rifles, to say nothing of the great stores that were burned in the precipitate German retreat.

Apparently history will show that they meant to withdraw from part of the salient and were caught in the act.

The Late Lamented Salient

If this was a withdrawal "according to plan," something must have gone slightly amiss with the plan.

The St. Mihiel salient was an ungainly snout projecting from the German line, an area of some 150 square miles, almost half the size of the Château-Thierry salient. The Germans had clung to it grimly since the second month of the war, because it held a bit of fair and fertile French land in bondage, because it annihilated a precious French railway junction and thus cut completely the short and easy communication between lonesome Verdun and Lorraine, and because it had proved, and might again prove, useful in any attack on Verdun.

The sentiment which fired the charging doughboys who, in two marvellous and unforgettable days, wiped that salient off the map, drew some of its strength from the fact that one of their points of departure was the American home sector, the oft-sung, oft-chronicled sector "northwest of Toul," which was taken over on that balmy and historic day nine months ago when American troops first entered the line to hold it.

Surely the advancing host was stimulated to high endeavor by the fact that behind them now lay Xivray, Seicheprey and Apremont Forest, that behind them, too, lay their shrine of Domremy, where Joan of Arc was born and which no German soldier shall ever profane by entering. Ahead of them—half-hopefully, half incredulously agaiting them—were many dear French towns and villages that had known the German officer as master through four most bitter years.

Liberty Comes Again

It was fine to witness the greeting which met them in each liberated village, the old folks creeping out of the cellars, fingering their beads and falling to their knees in prayers and tears of incoherent thanksgiving, the young girls flinging their arms around the embarrassed but highly gratified doughboys and kissing them again and again in the name of Liberté, Egalité and Fraternité.

It was fine to see the small children gazing curiously at these soldiers, so different in looks and manner from the gray-clad troops who were the only soldiers they had ever beheld. It was fine to see the pathetic little tricolors that had been sewn in stealth against the dawn of the great day, brave, badly-made French flags, suddenly emerge from their hiding places and flutter joyously from many a shattered window.

It was fine to be in St. Mihiel redeemed on Thursday when Capt. Clemenceau, son of the Tiger, led his Colonials into the wondering city, or again on that gala day—a week ago today—when once more French music sounded gaily in the square, when General Pershing and General Pétain shook hands in the street and when Secretary Baker led the grand-nephew of Lafayette to the bleak remains of the Lafayette château.

It had been a question of a carefully planned attack working with almost startling precision. A question of overwhelming artillery ripping up and disorganizing all the German works within the area. A question of a big, bouncing young Army, armed to the teeth and the teeth themselves glistening in a supremely confident grin. It had been a case of that Army's charging over the desolation that was No Man's Land, flattening out what resistance there was as a tank flattens out barbed wire entanglements and, by the quite unexpected swiftness of its rush, cutting off the retreat of the thousands upon thousands of Germans who had decided the time had come for them to leave.

Thursday, September 12, 1918

The battle began in the first hours of Thursday, September 12, 1918.

Had one guessed what was coming and on Wednesday at midnight made his way to one of the crests that look out over the rolling, little-wooded countryside behind St. Mihiel, he would have been in position to behold one of the great spectacles of this war.

At midnight, the tanks were set, the Infantry was ready, each man with his rounds of ammunition. Shoulder to shoulder with them were the groups of

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HANDSHAKE LINKS PATROLS' MEETING IN SALIENT'S CORE

Sergeant Tells Story of Historic Junction of Advancing Yank Forces

PRISONERS MADE EN ROUTE

East and West Join After March Through Darkest of Nights and Thickest of Woods

The first proof that the St. Mihiel salient had been wiped off the war map was provided in the meeting of advance American patrols in Hattonville.

This is the story as Sergeant Herd, who was one of the advance patrols, tells it. He was the first man to reach the place where the Yankee line was welded together.

I started out Thursday with my squad to reach the first objective and then continue the patrol.

I think the first experience that brought any real thrill came when I reached Nonsard. Coming into this town, we heard singing down the street. When we went forward to investigate, we found a number of French girls in a bomb-proof dugout singing "The Rosary." They came out as we approached, and when they saw we were Americans—well, I don't think any of us ever got a finer reception.

On Toward Hattonville

Then we began to push along. It was tough going that night, as it was raining and bitter dark, and the woods through that part of the country are as thick as underbrush. But with the aid of a small compass we held our direction, worked our way carefully along, and reached each objective on time.

Here and there we'd run across a wagon and take it for a big gun. Here and there, too, we'd bump into a few loose Germans, round them up and start them to the rear.

I reached my last objective just before daylight, and then decided to push on to Hattonville in the hope of meeting an American patrol coming the other way.

I left the squad behind and took only Scotty with me. We left our rifles and packs and simply took our side arms, as it was long, hard marching, and we were pretty well worn out.

Hattonville rests down in a valley, and at dark is ordinarily hard to find, but Scotty and I had luck here. We suddenly saw a burst of flame and knew that Hattonville was burning, with the Boche in retreat. So, with this flame to guide us, we moved carefully on our way, on the lookout for any surprise.

I cut in by a graveyard back of the town and then went on in. About the first people I saw were five Austrians under an Austrian lieutenant. They didn't feel much like fighting, because they surrendered at once. So we took them in a tow and then kept on moving to see what might be ahead.

From the Other Direction

Just at the edge of the town I saw two Yanks coming in from the other direction. Then I knew that we had the salient nipped off, that our lines had been joined up.

It was a wonderful sight to see these two men, for I understood what it meant. They had come from another outfit and were even more tired than we were, as they had been marching with full equipment. We both probably thought the others were Boches at first, but it didn't take us long to find out the difference.

It was still pouring rain, just faintly light, and we had been on the go for about 16 hours, so we didn't have an awful lot of conversation to spare. But we passed the time of day, shook hands to complete the last link and took another look around to see that no Boche had been overlooked.

These patrols also reported a number of prisoners they had rounded up and had started back to the rear, where they went with great willingness. One of them had run into a German colonel. But instead of coming out to surrender, he sent his man out to announce that he was willing to be taken prisoner, so they went in and got him.

Back With the Austrians

After meeting the first patrol, I started back with my Austrian outfit. It was then I met the other patrol, for there were three sets working, and that was complete evidence that all of us had reached our final objectives and that the entire salient was in American hands.

The hardest part of the work was the long night march through the woods, where we never knew at just what minute we'd run across Boches looking for battle or stumble on a machine gun nest. I have never seen a darker night or thicker woods.

After I had met the two patrols and knew the line was joined up, I went on back a kilometer and a half to the place where I had left my squad, taking the Austrian detachment along. I then sent word back that the meeting had been effected and that the line across the salient was intact.

NEW CHIEFS ON STAFF

A Chief of Infantry and a Chief of Cavalry have been established as members of the staff of the Commander-in-Chief and will act as advisors on their respective branches.

The new officers, under G.O. 150, are charged with inspecting all infantry and cavalry, with respect to organization, training, material and equipment, methods, and all other phases affecting efficiency.

They will be responsible for preparation of all details in instruction and training of their respective branches, and will inspect training schools and make recommendations to the Chief of Staff.

They will also prepare drafts of infantry and cavalry manuals and other literature on their services.

Their supervision of infantry and cavalry units will continue until these units have been assigned to tactical units.

AIRMEN IN FIGHT WHOLE DAY AHEAD, HARASS RETREAT

American and French Flyers Have All the Best of Sky Warfare

THREE HUNS IN 10 MINUTES

Yankee Major Lands in Convoy of German Prisoners—Lieut. Putnam, Ace of Aces, Killed

The air activity in the fighting which effaced the St. Mihiel salient befitted the rest of the action.

American airmen were in the air in force and, in co-operation with the French, were as spectacularly successful in their element as the Infantry and other branches of the service were in theirs.

From the doughboy viewpoint, there never before had been such a show of American strength in the air, never such support. From the standpoint of a spectacle, it was a three times three ring circus, with something doing all the time. From the military standpoint, it was a scientific, methodical maintenance of superiority above the battlefield.

And for the satisfaction of the tens of thousands of fighting men, scattered over these 150 square miles of conquered territory, who looked admiringly on while low flying planes skimmed a few hundred feet overhead and snooped through shrapnel puffs over the border of Hun-land; who saw groups, circling far above, disappear into the clear azure of the sky; who saw squads of them fighting, like hives of enraged hornets, and saw some fall, it may be stated that we had all the best of it.

Statistics Not Complete

The statistics are not yet complete. An aviator is not credited with a victory until it is confirmed from another source, and it is too early for all these verifications to come in, but, as an indication, it can be stated that one large unit of combat flyers, which does not, however, include other important formations, had, at the close of the fourth day after the opening of the battle, asked for confirmation on nearly 30 Boche planes believed destroyed.

The aviators' part in the battle began in reality the day before the Infantry went over the top. That day was cloudy and rainy, the sort of day on which usually, there would be little or no air activity. Nevertheless, the whole St. Mihiel salient was under constant surveillance by Yankee aviators, who, flying singly to avoid exciting suspicion, skimmed beneath the low clouds, oftentimes in the rain, and noted the uneasiness of the enemy, the beginning of his effort to escape the impending storm.

The next day, the American advance was in full swing, the Boche was making desperate efforts to get out of the salient with as much material as possible, and the fact that he only partially got out and that the advancing Infantry took thousands of prisoners and millions of dollars worth of spoils can be attributed in good measure to the aviators.

An Arduous Way Out

The enemy's principal line of retreat, the only one after the first few hours of the battle not swept by constant artillery fire, was the road near the center of the base of the salient leading eastward from Vigneulles to St. Benoit. Over this six kilometer stretch of road passed practically all the men and all the guns which the Germans saved from the collapse of the salient, and this road, on the first day of the battle, was under

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PICK AND SHOVEL COME INTO OWN AS SALIENT GOES

Battle of Dreadful Roads Won by More Than Ammunition

EVERY ONE HELPS ON JOB

Doughboys, Prisoners, Even Master Engineers Make Highways Passable for Advance

Every battle has some mark which distinguishes it from all others, and the offensive which redeemed for France the long enslaved villages of the St. Mihiel salient will linger always in the memories of those who had a part in it as the Battle of Dreadful Roads.

Of course, they were dreadful. Traffic conditions were, as the doughboys say, "Fah Bonn," through no mismanagement and to no one's surprise. If every M.P. had known every twist and turn of the countryside as well as he knew his own home town, if never a shell had searched and found a promising cross roads, it would still have been a staggering task to send the supply and ammunition trains, the side-cars and ambulances and ration carts, the kitchens and on-moving artillery over the roads that converged on the new and much shortened battleline.

Trap Doors in Country Lanes

For parts of those roads, never perfect in their prime, had not known the turn of a wheel in four long years. All through those years they had been scraped and torn and upheaved by exploding shells. From the early months of the war they had been broken and sliced by the network of French and German trenches.

Then, of late, the Germans, after trying to stare defeat out of countenance, had been laboriously mining them, leaving, where they could, what looked like an innocent bit of country lane but what was really a hid, thinly roofed trap or bottle and sprinkled with dirt—a pit designed to undo the doughboys, capsize the tanks and halt the traffic. A wary advance will discover such pitfalls and avoid them. But this means a detour. A detour means a halt. A halt means a block in the traffic.

Add to all this the fact for many days and nights these roads had been steadily pelted with summer rain.

The men assisting in the repair of the road were compelled to work all night. The work was under way at dawn on September 12. The first batches of prisoners that came trotting back that morning lent a hand to the task cheerfully enough. Engineers directed, and you might have seen master engineers swinging a pick that morning. Doughboys from the supporting outfits were detached as reinforcements to the road-menders. Much can be done with the shovel which every foxy doughboy carries concealed about his person these trying days.

Roads While You Sleep

As for material, what better could you ask than the crumbling stone of those poor ruined villages that marked what used to be the St. Mihiel battleline, villages whose tragic silhouettes against the sunset could be seen through Yankee field glasses all spring and summer, villages whose utter demolition makes such half destroyed places as Vaux and Seringes and Sergy look like model towns by comparison?

With such tools and such stuff, the holes were filled, the detours were made.

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YANKEE SPURS, TOO, WHERE TANKS AND DOUGHBOYS SPEED

Cavalry Band Leads Way Ahead of Infantry Up Past St. Mihiel

SILENCES MACHINE GUNS

Running Fight With Boche Ammunition Train—Pushcart Has Trophies for All

A band of American Cavalry, riding as if to uphold the traditions of the service made when it used to number among its officers Captain John J. Pershing, had its share of honor in the redemption of the St. Mihiel salient.

There were many reports circulating about the exploits of the Cavalry after the fall of the salient. The most common was that "the Cavalry took 1,700 prisoners and lost one man." The total of prisoners may be correct, but it is not confirmed by the Cavalry. The horsemen didn't stop to compute their captures, but turned them over to the Infantry to be added to the general total of prisoners without distinction.

Machine Guns Met With Pistols

The principal resistance the Cavalrymen met was from isolated German machine gun nests. These were usually encircled and put out of commission with pistol fire. On one occasion Cavalrymen came upon two Germans holding forth in a shell hole with a machine gun. One was accounted for with a pistol bullet in the head. The second crouched out of sight in the hole. The Cavalrymen took shelter and waited to see whether he would show fight or surrender.

They waited five minutes and nothing happened. A lieutenant had just started to give orders for the encircling of the hole when Mr. Boche appeared. He appeared suddenly, coatless and in his stocking feet, and started to do a Marathon towards Berlin. He was overtaken before he had gone 50 yards.

He had decided to make a run for it and had taken off his boots and stripped to his shirtsleeves to make better time, he explained.

The horsemen, riding into one little town, found that a German general had departed an hour before. Also they found a mounted major departing in the wake of his chief. The major surrendered gracefully to an American captain, who overtook him going up the main street. He relinquished his horse, ornate saddle, padded stirrups and all, and went rearward afoot. The horse was kept with the troop. They call him "Kaiser Bill."

Souvenirs for Everyone

In another town the Cavalrymen overtook a squad of Germans with a whole pushcart full of German pistols. There was a souvenir revolver for every American present.

Probably the most exciting episode of the Cavalry's advance was a fight with a Boche ammunition and supply train. The Americans had brought with them, strapped to their saddles, several light machine guns, and these, when the train was encountered in a wood, were unslung and set up. The Germans replied with machine guns hastily mounted on their wagons.

For 20 minutes a running fight was waged until the Boche gained the security of a position defended by machine gun nests and the Americans were forced to pause. The wagon train got away, but only after its members had suffered casualties and it had abandoned a couple of wagons.

LIBERATED TOWNS WELCOME ADVANCE OF YANK VICTORS

Even Greater Ovation from Salient's Prisoners for First Poilu

THIAUCOURT AGAIN FRENCH

Population, Fed on Four Years' Lies, Finds Own Soldiers Do Not Wear Paper Suits

Thiaucourt is only one of the many French towns which were liberated by American troops in wiping out the St. Mihiel salient. And the incidents of the liberation of Thiaucourt are only parts in the story of countless other places.

For four years the French inhabitants of Thiaucourt lived under German rule. Men, women and children, old and young, they had all become accustomed to German newspapers, German money, German domination in full.

These French citizens had been led to believe for months that Germany had already won the war to all practical purposes; that America had sent over no troops; that the French Army was in rags and badly starved; that it was just a question of a few more weeks or months until the final triumph. They had given up all hope, in the main, of anything but a German victory.

News of American Successes

Then, streak by streak, the light began to dawn again. First, there was the Seicheprey affair last spring. The Germans brought their American prisoners through Thiaucourt, the first time the inhabitants had ever seen any American soldiers. They knew then that America was in the war.

No further light streaked through for some time. Then came the first whispers of the Franco-American success on the Marne, merely rumors at first and, finally, verified reports from the German troops, who were unable to conceal their dismay.

Just at this time the advance detachment of the Americans arrived. He was a member of a chasse squadron, brought down within German lines. His machine landed only a kilometer from the village where he was captured. When he was brought in three French girls made him an American flag which they presented one day when his guard was not guarding as well as he might.

These were all merely signs and tokens. There was still no definite proof that the Americans were really coming or that Germany was losing her four-year grip.

Then, just after midnight of September 11, the inhabitants of Thiaucourt and their German captors heard the first rumble of a mighty thunder. It was the preliminary American bombardment. They had heard three weeks before that the Americans were coming, but no one had believed they were coming so soon.

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ST. MIHIEL SALIENT FOUR YEARS OLD

Great Dent in Allied Line Made After Battle of Marne

The St. Mihiel salient, popularly and universally known to all France as "the hernia of St. Mihiel," has for almost exactly four years persisted as the most noticeable protuberance in the whole Allied line.

The salient was created September 23, 1914, by the armies of Gen. von Strantz, after the German forces, sent reeling back from the Marne, had reached the line of the Aisne.

Von Strantz's army was a new one. It had not been in action in any part of the Marne battle. Four South German corps, mostly Würtembergers, constituted the new army, which had several reserve divisions.

The French line from Verdun to below St. Mihiel, held by General Sarrail, the defender of Verdun in the battle of the Marne, was defended by three corps, increased before the St. Mihiel attack by the arrival of the larger part of another army corps from Toul.

Advance from Thiaucourt

Opposed to Sarrail's line were the commands of the German Crown Prince and of von Strantz—at least seven corps.

Von Strantz advanced September 20 from the region of Thiaucourt upon Troyon, one of the string of forts between Verdun and Toul, about eight miles north of St. Mihiel. The fort was virtually destroyed, but the French garrison held out and repulsed the strong effort to take it.

On September 23 came the main attack. It was directed straight at St. Mihiel. The Germans gained a footing at Hattonchatel, the spur of the plateau east of Troyon, brought up their heavy guns, silenced the fort of Paroches across the Meuse and, soon afterwards, the guns of the Camp des Romains, just south of St. Mihiel. These successes led to the capture of St. Mihiel itself and its bridgehead across the Marne.

French cavalry here spoiled von Strantz's ambitious plan, which aimed at pushing on straight west to Revigny, thus getting south of Sarrail's army and putting it between the forces of von Strantz and the Crown Prince.

Sarrail's hopelessly outnumbered force then withstood every effort at its destruction, and managed to contain the Germans in the St. Mihiel salient, a position which the enemy has since held, despite the poor quality of the communications, as a threat against the French defense system in the east. Immediately afterward both sides dug in virtually on the line that existed until a week ago Thursday. The trenches of the St. Mihiel salient, therefore, dated from the very beginning of the 1914-1918 style of trench warfare.

'BOYS HAVE DONE WHAT WE EXPECTED,' WIRES PRESIDENT

Leaders of Allied Armies Felicitate Americans on St. Mihiel Victory

AND SO DOES ELSIE JANIS

"We are With You to a Finish, to a Man," Bethlehem Shell Leaders Cable

From every corner of the Allied world messages are pouring in to General Pershing, to be transmitted by him to the men of the First American Army, congratulating them on their performance in the St. Mihiel sector last week.

The President of the United States, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, the chiefs of Britain's, France's, Italy's forces in the field, the generals commanding the several French Armies, the directors of and workers in important war industries at home, the President of Cuba, the editors of Cuba, women's clubs in America, Liberty Loan committees, organizations of all kinds in the United States, individuals living everywhere between the Atlantic and the Pacific have hastened to send greetings, full of praise for the First Army's performance.

Some of the messages follow:

From President Wilson: "Accept my warmest congratulations on the brilliant achievements of the Army under your command. The boys have done what we expected of them and have done it in the way we most admire. We are deeply proud of them and of their feat. Please convey to all concerned my grateful and affectionate thanks."

From the Allied Armies' Chief

From Marshal Foch: "My dear General: The First American Army under your command on this first day has won a magnificent victory, as skilfully prepared as it was valiantly executed. I extend to you as well as to the officers and troops under your command my warmest compliments."

From Marshal Joffre: "I send you with full heart the most cordial congratulations on your fine success, which confirms the hope which I have always based on the bravery of the American troops and the merits of their commander. I express to you with joy my best compliments and my confidences in new victories."

From King Albert of Belgium: "In my name and in the name of the Belgian Army, I express to you my warmest congratulations for the important victory won by your splendid troops."

From Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig: "All ranks of the British Armies in France welcome with profound admiration and pleasure the victory which has attended the military offensive of the great American Army under your personal command. I beg you to accept and convey to all ranks my best congratulations and those of all ranks of the British armies under my command."

From General Diaz: "I am glad to express my fervent and cordial congratulations for the great victory by the valorous troops under your command and to present to the young and glorious American Army the confident salute which the Italian Army sends with fraternal sentiments."

"Many Happy Returns"

From Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo: "Congratulations to you and your glorious Army. Wish you manw happy returns of your birthday and many recurrences of yesterday's victory."

From Commissioner André Tardieu: "I am wholeheartedly with you on the occasion of your splendid success."

From Count Zamoyski, Acting President, Polish National Committee: "The brilliant success which the valiant American troops have won under your command is only the continuation of the glorious exploits of the gallant troops of the great Republic in the gigantic struggle for the triumph of justice, right and liberty. We Poles look upon this struggle with the greatest emotion, for it will return to our country her long-sought-for liberty. Permit me, sir, in the name of the Polish National Committee, to express to you and the American Army the most ardent felicitations as well as the homage of our deepest admiration."

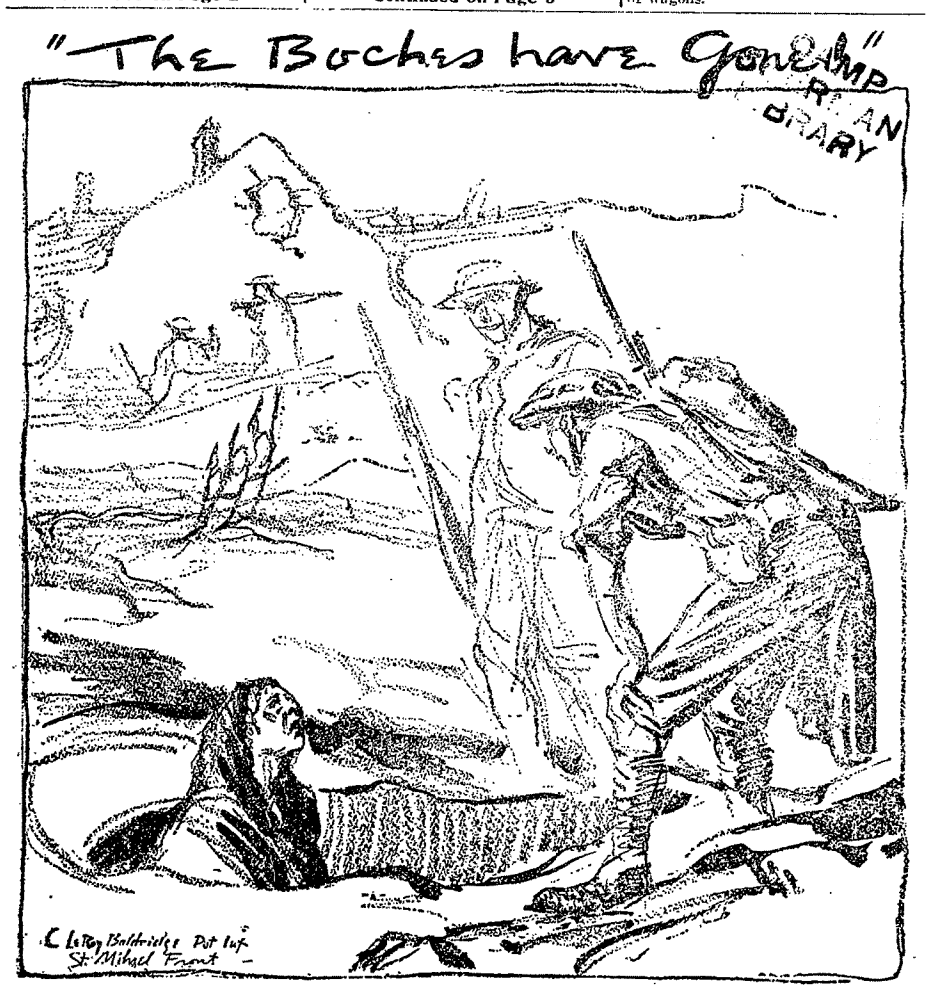
From the Jewish Welfare Board: "On the eve of the New Year, the Jewish Welfare Board, United States Army and Navy, representing three million citizens of Jewish faith, send greetings to you and your comrades in arms regardless of race or creed. You are fighting in a holy cause that justice may prevail and lasting peace come to the entire human family; therefore, through the righteousness of our country's aims and those of our Allies, you are granted the privilege of establishing a world of democracy which shall endure and become a blessing to all future generations. Our ardent prayer is that God may speed your victory and bless the work of your comrades, who are planting American ideals and traditions to preserve the noblest efforts of civilization."

She'll Join the Company

From Elsie Janis, London: "Congratulations on your big show. Sorry not to be in the cast. Hope to join the company in Berlin. Our regards."

From the Shell Loaders, Bethlehem Loading Co., May's Landing, N.J.: "Most honorable sir: Congratulations. We are with you to a finish, to a man."

SAVED FOR HOSPITALS

A dozen articles of subsistence that have previously been on sale in sales commissaries are now on sale there no more. They are required in the preparation of diets for the sick in hospitals, and the immediate supply is limited. "They will, therefore," says Bulletin 67, G.H.Q., "be sold only to hospitals."

The articles are: Canned apricots, canned cherries, plain chocolate, breakfast cocoa, soda crackers, graham crackers, gelatin, canned peaches, canned pears, canned pineapples, maple syrup, corn starch.