

AMERICA IN GERMANY

II—Coblence

Coblence, the principal town on the left bank of the Rhine to be occupied by the American Third Army, lies at the junction of the Rhine and the Moselle, the latter being by now almost as familiar to the German-bound Yanks as the Mississippi or the Missouri. In peace times Coblence had a population of about 50,000, and the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, which lies just across the river, is capable of housing a garrison of 100,000 men.

The city is situated on a sort of triangular peninsula, formed by the junction of the two streams. In the early days of the Roman Army of Occupation, not much store was set by the site, and instead of being elevated to the dignity of a "castrum," camp, or "oppidum," town, Coblence was merely a posting station on the Rhine Road. Ad. Coblence, or "at the confluence," it was called, which the latter Germanic tribes shortened and roughened, as is the way with things Germanized, into Koblenz, or Coblence.

Coblence, then, is—or rather was—the capital of the province of Rhenish Prussia, the seat of both the civil and military authorities for that district. In addition to the great garrison across the river, the town itself furnished quarters for 6,000 troops. Bounded on the north and east by the two rivers, it is situated on the south and west by a chain of strong forts, of which the most important are Fort Alexander and Fort Constantine.

Many Times Besieged

In the days when German overseas trade amounted to something, Coblence was an important wine center, being the largest champagne manufacturer. As one of its German chroniclers piously puts it, "most of this is exported to England and the British colonies." Down to the establishment of the federation of Rhenish towns, considerably before the Thirty Years' War, Coblence's commercial importance was practically nil.

The Thirty Years' War saw the city alternately besieged and garrisoned by the Swedish, French and Prussian troops. In 1688 although the town was nearly destroyed by the French cannonade, Marshal Boufflers was compelled to retreat without being able to force an entry. During the German occupation it became the seat of the Elector of Treves, but after the rise of the French republic and the defeat of the Prussian army at Valmy Coblence—spelled that way instead of the German way—was officially pronounced the chief department of Meurthe and Moselle.

This it remained through the Napoleonic wars, the Little Corporal himself visiting it in 1804 with his spouse Josephine, and again on his way through to Russia. "The Russian campaign," blowing up, the French were compelled to evacuate on January 1, 1811, to force an entry, which then became Prussian. This it remained until early this week.

Birthplace of Metternich

Besides being fought over by many nations, Coblence has one particular claim to fame for having introduced to the world Prince von Metternich, of Austria, next to Bismarck perhaps the greatest trouble-maker of the whole nineteenth century. That famous, or rather infamous diplomat, author of the remark, among others, that "Italy was only a geographical expression," first saw the light of day in Coblence in 1773 in the Metternich Hotel, which, built long before the city was built, still one of the sights of the town. Over the hills two and a half miles west is the village of Metternich, his family's seat.

An earlier von Metternich, the Elector Lothar, formed the Roman Catholic League at Coblence in 1609, for the city, like Cologne, is overwhelmingly Catholic, and always has been. Of its churches, perhaps the most interesting to the American Army is the Carmelitenkirche, which was the German garrison's own place of worship.

There in the choir are set forth, clustered around the picture of the Virgin, the representatives of the nation saints of Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery and Engineers—Sts. Maurice, George, Barbara and Joseph respectively, all obviously named before St. Bertha came into reign. Another and perhaps more handsome church is that of St. Castor, founded as far back as 836, with its four picturesque towers that form one of the most striking landmarks as one approaches Coblence from the Rhine side.

Over the Hills Is Ems

Over the hills to the east of Coblence is Ems, the famous watering place, famous also for the "Ems telegram" from Emperor William I, doctored by Bismarck in order to leave France no choice but to go to war in 1870. There is another remembrance of 1870 on the plateau of Karthause, to the west of the town, where 10,000 French prisoners were quarantined pending the signing of the last Treaty of Versailles. Further to the north, beyond the Moselle, lies another point of interest for lovers of France, a blunted pyramid of lava erected in memory of General Marceau, who fell at Altenkirchen in 1796. The inscription upon it tells how the general was "a soldier at 16, a general at 22 years," but it tells nothing of his blockade of Ehrenbreitstein in 1795. However, there is near by another monument to the famous General Hoche, who held "the Gibraltar of the Rhine" until the peace of Loeben. Ehrenbreitstein, directly across the river, will undoubtedly be within the ground to be held by the Americans on the right bank of the Rhine. This fortress, which rises to a peak 350 feet above the river and 573 feet above sea level, is inaccessible on three sides and connected with the neighboring heights on from the north. Deep wells dug into the side of the hills are said to assure the occupying garrison of its water supply for three whole years.

Thrice Captured

Despite its seeming impregnability, it has been three times captured and held. In 1631 the French obtained it through the treachery of the Elector Philip Christopher. In 1637, back in the days of Louis XIV, the German imperial general, Johann von Werth, invested it, and starved out the French garrison. After Hoche's conquest of it in 1790, the fortifications were dismantled by virtue of the Peace of Lunéville in 1801. So great store did Prussia set by Ehrenbreitstein, however, that in 1870 she forced France to pay 15,000,000 francs for the express purpose of restoring it, later adding to that many marks of her own. More peaceful recollections of the place are furnished by recalling that the poet Goethe, in 1774, visited the thal, or little village at the bottom of the fortress promontory, to see his friend M. de la Roche, then chancellor of the elector of Treves. The locality was also loved of the Grand Duchess Louisa of Baden, as the Louisenruh, or tower of Louisa, to the south of the fortress proper, bears evidence.

HENRY'S PAL TO HENRY

PROVING THAT WHEN YOU GO WITH THE ARMY TO LUXEMBURG, YOU LEARN SOMETHING



"He nearly fell out of his chair laughing."

Somewhere in Belgium, Nov. 19, 1918. Begotes Heindrick: "Wasst ist dass Henry. I bet you don't 'kn'o'w." That is German for kisser say.

Well Henry I am sure having some experience in this old war. Our outfit is going to Germany as the army of occupation. We are in Belgium now which ain't very far from Germany. Luxembourg is where we are headed for on the map and I got my old gun and a couple of hand grenades in my hip pocket so if they start anything I'll be ready to protect myself. Luxembourg is a tough place I guess considering all them proosians that come from just the other side of there. I bet I and Buck will have to take turns about sleeping or somebody will come along and bean one of us.

But at that Henry I am learning to parley some German just the same so I can tell them Luxembourg tufts where to head in at. If you don't think so just listen to this. Trinkwasser flegelkeller Nach Coblentz ortskommandatur achtung, feldbahn verboten sehr gut. Ain't that good for just reading the signs along the road for 3 days.

Of course Buck is learning me some German to because he parleys it pritty good. His old man come from Germany you know. Buck don't remember from what part he come but he is German all right.

Well Henry of course Luxembourg ain't never been at war with us but it's nearly the same because they let the Germans pass over their country and their army set round and played krap or something while they did it. I don't see why the ugly old dutches didn't shoot her army out to stop the German army like the Belgians did. She must be a grand dutches all right to let them huns come across her country. Look how easy the Belgian army stopped the huns for a few days till the French could get their army together to meet them. The Luxembourg army could do the same if they don't go into Belgium before they did.

Well Henry we are billeted at a Belgium farm house tonight. Buck and me is sleeping where a German was sleeping not over 10 hours ago. The bed is so fresh I can smell timberer yet. But the light of day in Coblence is stronger than that to keep his legs moving to-day Henry. We come 23 kilometers toward Henry.

Well Henry I will write a letter from Luxy as soon as I get there.

So long Henry S. T. B.

Luxembourg, Nov. 21, 1918. Dear Heindrick: Well Henry we are here and I guess my old gat and them hand grenades will never be used any if I have to use them Henry. I been looking all afternoon for a place to put them when somebody ain't looking.

Henry Luxy is sure enough not German. I don't know whether it is most French or American but there is a awful lot of both here. The stores and windows and everything in the windows is just like at home. Everywhere you go there is American signs and American flags.

Henry when we marched through town it was even better than that morning when our co. marched off to war the first time. There was people lined up on all sides of the streets and everybody was throwing flowers at us and talking American. Besides speaking French and German and American there is another language here to that sounds like opening a bully beef can with a dull old bayonet that they spoke that to us.

But Henry I have discovered a army which you could be the general to without even hurting anybody's feelings but your own. And I guess if I had of went to school a little longer I could maybe be one of your captains or something. I never did know Henry why it was that the Luxembourg army didn't try and stop the Germans from marching across their country. But I know now Henry. The Luxembourg army has got just as many men in it as our co. had after our top kicked the 'bucket that time with the ammonia. "There is 249 including generals and sekund loots."

Henry I would sure hate to have to belong to it. Just think how many times a guy would have to be on K.P. and on guard in a year in a army like that. And I bet the O.D. gets tired of his job all right.

Henry there is one thing though I bet which would seem awful nice. If you wanted to get a discharge or something you wouldn't die or something while you was waiting for it because the general wouldn't be very far off like he is in our army.

I bet this army has got a whole warehouse full of red tape which it ain't used. Our army ought to buy it now so they could get it cheap because they will have to use a lot of it getting us birds mustered out pritty soon.

Yes Henry when we got into Luxy the whole Luxembourg army was lined up to receive us and every man was present but a couple of sekund loots that had a pull with the general or something and got off so they could bum around town with stray pvt's of the U. S. army. There was 2 other buck pvt's of the Luxembourg army which was on sick call but the old doc. I guess was in a hurry and wanted to be in the parade and marked them dooty so they had to get in to it.

Henry the dutches of Luxy who they call the grand dutches or something isn't ugly at all. She is only 23 and is as pritty as a picture. I seen her with Gen. Pershing and when the Gen. wasn't looking I carried on a brief flirtation like that talkum powdered society editor of the news used to say which I guess made quite a hit with her because when I seen her out riding in her cat this p.m. she smiled and nodded her head like she recognized me. Ain't it great Henry to be able to flirt with a head of a country.

Well Henry I got a date on tonight and

so has Buck. We are going out to a swell place where we are invited to stay as long as we are in Luxy. I hope they got a hot bath up there Henry.

So long Heindrick S. T. B. P.S.—I am glad I am invited out because prizes of things is fierce here. This a.m. I bought some erfs for breakfast and they cost a mark apiece. I guess they thought I was a easy one Henry.

Luxy, Nov. 23, 1918. Dear pal Henry: Well Henry Buck and I went to the big dinner that night. Everything was all right only they had gone and invited a couple of sekund loots who didn't feel just rite because of us being there. There was a officer there to from the Luxembourg army. We didn't know he was a officer of course and Buck and me thought he was a corporal or something. Buck ask him which squad he had and he nearly fell out of his chair laughing. Henry he was the commander of the Luxy army.

Nearly every parade I ever seen Henry has had some sailors in it to but there wasn't any in the parade the other day when we come into town. So I asked this general or what ever he was why there wasn't no sailors in it and he said it was because the admiral of the Luxembourg navy lost one of the ear locks and couldn't make the rifle in time. I guess maybe he did all rite because the river is pritty steep in places. But I would of liked to of seen the Luxy navy. I'll bet it is some outfit.

Well Henry we are going up into Germany toot sweet. We will be hanging round the border for a few days I guess from the looks of things and then we will go over as soon as the Germans get out of our way. If it wasn't for this silly old armistice, I guess we would go anyway.

Well so long Henry S. T. B. P. S. Buck has just lokated his unk. He is the guy who sweeps out down at the casino after the dance. Buck found him a German girl down there to.

TURN 'EM IN CLEAN

All organizations of the A.E.F. ordered to turn in arms or equipment of any kind will be responsible that each article is clean, that it is put in the best possible condition, and that it is properly prepared for storage. It is provided G.O. 212. An inspector from the next higher unit will inspect the articles to see that this has been complied with.

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Old John Alcoholism, gasping his last gasps in the States after a body blow calculated to put him down and out next July for the "period of demobilization," is on the mat again. This time G.H.Q. takes a few pinches at him in G.O. 213. G.O. 213 calls attention to a circular of instructions recently issued by the French Minister of War which declares that "the consumption of alcohol and alcoholic drink has now become a danger throughout the country," and then goes on to advise C.O.'s how to minimize the danger. Insofar as members of the A.E.F. are concerned:

The active assistance of all C.O.'s will be lent to the French authorities in the enforcement of existing French laws. All places, whether regular drinking places or not, and all persons found to be furnishing prohibited drinks to American officers or soldiers, or serving them with drinks outside of the prohibited hours, will be reported to the nearest French military or civil authority, as may be most expedient. All cases of intoxication of members of the A.E.F. will be investigated immediately upon discovery, with a view to ascertaining the place or persons responsible for supplying the intoxicants, and prompt report will be made thereof to the French authorities.

All alcoholic liquors are prohibited to soldiers under French law. The sale is permitted only of wine, beer, cider, port and hydromel. American commanding officers are instructed to consult local French authorities as the best means of co-operating in the suppression of the drink evil.

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The A.E.F. band school at G.H.Q., organized for the purpose of training bandmasters and preparing them for commissions, and to familiarize American musicians with several musical instruments little used in the United States, will continue in session, despite the fact that, owing to the armistice, no commissions will be granted.

Bandmasters now attending will complete the course and then be given a certificate of eligibility for a commission. The oboe, the bassoon and the French horn are the instruments the use of which it is intended to promote.

M.P.'s MULTIPLY

The organization of fifty-one new M.P. companies, in addition to those already formed and doing business, is ordered in G.O. 200. Twelve of these companies are for duty in the Intermediate Section, ten for the Advanced Section, the remaining distributed as follows: Base Section No. 1, 4; Base Section No. 2, 3; Base Section No. 3, 4; Base Section No. 4, 1; Base Section No. 5, 4; Base Section No. 6, 2; Base Section No. 7, 1; Base Section No. 8, 1; District of Paris, 4, and Hq., S.O.S., 2. The companies of M.P.'s organized under G.O. 150, says G.O. 200, will be assigned, one to each division, one to each army corps, and four, organized in one battalion, to each army.

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