

A DAY'S REST



It means 24 hours less of shellfire

By Sgt. SAUL LEVITT
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WHEN the men come back from across the Moselle they are very tired, they do not talk much, they accept the attentions of other men detailed to run the rest camp quietly and a little helplessly. The rest camp is in a tiny village a few miles from the shellfire and the foxholes on the other side of the river. It is nothing but an old inn alongside a muddy road, but it has four walls and rooms and cots. After the holes in the ground and the chill rain and the fire and the counterattacks, this rickety old building looms up like the Waldorf-Astoria.

The men come back in trucks to the rest camp. Their B Bags are waiting for them; there are also bags for men who will never have to use them again. For a while in the early morning they spend time opening their bags finding lots of personal things like photographs, old letters from home that bear re-reading, fountain pens, books. There may also be another pair of pants and a clean suit of underwear in the B Bag. And if there isn't one in your own bag, there's bound to be a pair in the bag of the guy who won't need it anymore.

A Red Cross Clubmobile drops by during the day—a glamorous and unbelievable piece of machinery against the muddy, sorry-looking jeeps. And the Red Cross girl who steps out spick and span and attractive is just as unbelievable—a brave girl facing a lot of muddy, bearded, dirty soldiers, and who must know how to say the right things to the soldiers. There is no whistling though; the men are very tired. Maybe they don't believe the Red Cross girl in the spotless gray uniform is real. Besides, she's too far away even when she's right there, three feet away, handing out doughnuts.

THE men get a chance at a hot shower and hot meals during the day. They shave and take haircuts. Somehow the regiment has set up the rudiments of a PX in the old house where you can get a toothbrush, a letter folder and even a fountain pen.

The company cooks come down with them—the meals are hot C-rations plus canned fruit and sometimes fresh meat. "A good company cook knows how to add to the regular ration," says one soldier meaningly, as if imparting deep, dark secrets.

By afternoon the men are at their ease through the old house. They sleep, they read, they write letters home, they wash the deadly look out of their faces and relax.

I spent a day here with the men of a company commanded by Lt. Wm. H. Hallowell, of Evanston, Ill. Most of the day the lieutenant wasn't resting at all. He looked over his personnel lists and figured out his needed replacements. As he went down the line of names he crossed off those who were gone and said, "I've lost my best men,

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the best men I ever hope to see again. . . . They always seem to get the best."

His company had been one of the units that had gone across the Moselle and had held. From the 9th of September to the 14th, they had held off counterattacks and now there were no longer any counterattacks—"Only shellfire all the time," said platoon guide S/Sgt. Sam Gold.

THEY were back for just 24 hours—and the main thing about that 24 hours was not what it gave them, but what it took away—it meant 24 hours *less* of shellfire. Of course the little things like shaves, hot food, and a night's quiet dry sleep were real luxuries. Also the hot shower which would be their first hot shower since July.

The men didn't talk much about the other side of the river. They remembered the Germans as very noisy when attacking. Sgt. Gold said that many times he could hear the German officers urging their men on, and the men replying that they couldn't or wouldn't advance. Gold found a dead German with the barrel of his rifle still capped indicating that he wasn't even prepared to fire. In those five days three to four hundred Germans were killed. And at the end they came up the hill with blanket rolls as if they were sure they were going to take the hill. And they were found dead with the blanket rolls on them.

Sgt. Carmine Daniello, of Brooklyn, New York, smoked a big cigar during the afternoon, sitting on a windowsill and looking out on the muddy road and the rain falling. He was taking it easy in his own way. He didn't want to sleep just now. He said, "Just sitting around like this is all I want right now." On the other side of the river it had been so bad, said Daniello, "that every time you got up to attend to some necessary business they'd throw artillery." What bothered Daniello was the way the stories of the war came out in print. "If an American dogface gets it, why not say so? Say the dogfaces lose fifty men, then why say less? That don't make him feel good, if he sees it down as less when he knows it's more."

The Colonel in command of the regiment came down to the camp and wanted to know if everything was OK. Did the men have enough razor blades and soap? He was a middle-aged man wearing glasses, and he had more than a touch of genuine anxiety about his soldiers. "And see to it that they have a lot of dusting powder, too," said the Colonel.

In the evening there was a movie; then the long night's sleep without any fear of shellfire.

Then they went back across the river; and on their way they passed another company of soldiers coming up for their 24 hours of rest in the old house.

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U. S. TROOPS ON THE CONTINENT FLOCK AROUND AN AMERICAN RED CROSS CLUBMOBILE DURING A RESPITE FROM WAR.

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