

June 28, 1919

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT TO THE
FOLKS AT HOME

A sequel to the story we carried in the issue of February 22 about Lieutenant Heinrichs, "the luckiest man in the war," is furnished by a letter from Maj. James E. White, who was in charge of the party that went to Metz, where Lieutenant Heinrichs was lying wounded, and brought him back to the American lines. Heinrichs was an aviator whose machine had been shot down, and he had been taken prisoner by the Huns. Incidentally, Major White's letter gives a graphic account of the ovation received by the Americans from the people of Metz. He writes:

It was on November 17, 1918, six days after the armistice, that we invaded Metz and brought Heinrichs, a wounded prisoner, back to our lines. We went without orders. The Huns were still there and the French had not arrived.

A wounded British prisoner came into Pont-à-Mousson and told me that there were thirty-five wounded American prisoners in St. Clemens Hospital, at Metz, without medical attention. Hastily getting two doctors, I set out with my adjutant in a Ford truck, our only transportation.

There were no guards, so we arrived in Metz in about an hour.

The populace, especially the small boy, gave us a hearty reception and the Germans did not disturb us. We were the first Allied officers to come in. We soon located the hospital and found Lieutenant Heinrichs dressing his own wounds. He was terribly injured. He had been shot in the face, arms, body, and legs, nine times in all.

We could take two of the wounded back with us, and Lieutenant Heinrichs insisted on going, so he was dressed in nondescript garments, French trousers, Belgian cap, German coat.

The trip back was pretty hard on him, and we had to leave him at the Evacuation Hospital near Belleville, instead of taking him to Toul, as we planned.

The surgeons we left in Metz. The Red Cross arrived with the French troops on the 19th, and took the men out.

They were certainly a happy lot when we came in that bleak November day. They had been told by the Germans that somebody would come soon. One poor chap, shot in the throat, died shortly after we arrived. He could not speak, but smiled his happiness at his liberation.

Metz that Sunday morning was crowded, with its populace in the down-town streets.

As we came bowling along in our Ford, the people craned their necks, attempting to see who we were. It was their first sight of Americans, and when they discovered who it was they literally blocked the streets. We could not drive farther, so got out to walk. Cheering crowds, men, women, and children, followed us about, and stood outside the café while we ate, cheering again when we came out. "*Vivent les Américains*" rang from every side. They followed us to the hospital and literally dragged our truck through the streets as we left with the wounded aviators.

The surgeons who remained were fêted and entertained by the citizens, and remained until the last of the wounded were removed.

The following Tuesday the grand entry of the French troops took place, but no welcome was more spontaneous than that given to the group of American officers who on that Sunday peacefully invaded the fortress of Metz.