

THE STORY OF THE HIKE

By Lieut. Col. Reginald L. Foster, 12th New York Infantry.

Arthur Balfour once said, "The supreme sensation I know is the feel of the golf club just as you hit the ball far and clean and true."

Quite so. But there's another, just a shade nearer the acme of supremacy. It's to hike a hundred miles under the unrelenting Texas sun—through hurricane, rain, heat, dust—and then, when you've trudged to the very end, to look back at the tail of your regiment and see the last squad of the last company closed up as compactly on the column as the drill book specifies—40 inches.

There's a sensation for you! And you're glad you belong to the bunch from Columbus Avenue and Sixty-Second Street.

Yes, you're glad you're on the Mexican border with the Twelfth Infantry, whose home habitat is New York City's heart. But you're gladder the hike's done.

Every New York Regiment on the border, down where the glistening Rio Grande takes its last bend for the homestretch to the Gulf, has duly made its hike. "Weather conditions permitting" is not in the bright lexicon of the citizen soldier. You do your bit, no matter what Old Sol and Jupiter Pluvius, acting in wicked concert, dole out.

If the mercury sizzles up to 125 or 128 in the glare, you walk just the same; and just as fast as the march table prescribes, 2 1/2 to 3 miles an hour. If the wireless S. O. S.'s from Brownsville "Hurricane coming," you walk and hope that you can reach camping ground before it lights upon the devoted regiment.

When the military powers that be laid out the route of the "big hike" for the New York troops stationed along the border at Pharr, McAllen and Mission, they figured on no picnic stroll. None but the fittest would go. So a comprehensive circle was lined out on the map, the regiments to follow a day or so behind the other. They were to make ninety-four miles in eleven stages, short ones at first and getting longer, so that the last four days the boys were to do more than they did in the first seven.

The longest day's stage was fifteen miles (some maps make it eighteen) and the shortest five miles. The route lay through the Texas waste—cactus and mesquite and more cactus from McAllen to Mission to Alton to Sterling's Ranch; then to La Gloria (raided by bandits and burned down last year) and back next morning; a bivouac where the individuals from Colonel down cooked each his own food; then from Sterling's again to Laguna Seca and on next day to Young's Ranch; back to Laguna Seca once more and a third time to Sterling's, now the big fifteen miler to Edinburg, twelve miles on the final day to McAllen.

Ever hear of "Schedule A?" No? Then be apprised that it is the soldier man's Vade Mecum, Hoyle's Games and the Ten Commandments all rolled into one. It is that part of the Field Equipment Manual, United States Army, which says just what individuals and organizations may and may not have in possession at any and all times. It is the thing skinned down as fine as possible—one baggage wagon to each battalion of four companies, and one combat wagon. On the baggage wagon may be the cooking utensils and 50 pounds of baggage per officer, no more; on the combat wagon, 1,200 rounds of ammunition for every ten men, seven litters, eight axes, eight shovels and eight picks (for entrenching); and a box of reserve surgical dressings.

As for the buck private—he carries everything he owns on his back—8.6 pounds of rifle; 1 pound of bayonet; 29 pounds of pack, which contains blanket poncho, shelter half, tent pins, extra clothing, rations and mess kit. When you count the filled canteen, entrenching tool, belt filled with ammunition, first aid packet and everything, including the clothing he wears, the soldier lugs from 58 to 61 pounds, no matter whether he is 5 feet 4, and weighs 125 pounds; or is a 180-pound six-footer.

The boys from Columbus Avenue lived up to "Schedule A," no more, no less.

So they started. It was a brave sight—a regiment of a thousand hammered down soldiers,

fiery of face and lean of waist, setting out as if in the enemy's country. Counting the distance taken up by the advance and rear guards, and the long, winding wagon trains of food for the men, and forage for the patient horses and mules, Col Johnston's command stretched more than a mile along the road and took twenty minutes to pass.

In that wagon train were three days' food for 1,000 hungry men, 12,000 pounds—mostly tinned beef and great sides of sow-belly; a ton of hard tack, jam, 1,000 pounds of coffee, half a ton of chocolate, oatmeal, prunes, sugar, condensed milk, rice, potatoes and canned tomatoes. So much for food.

Now, something more important. Water.

"Every man must have enough left in his canteen at the end of the day's march to wash his feet"—that was the order.

This was training for the desert. Nothing to drink at all (remember the sixty pounds on each sweating back and the 125 degrees in the sun) for the first two hours. Then one rinse of the month. Later on a half, four swallows.

Mission was the first halt.

Of a sudden the column resolved itself into fifteen separate lines—the twelve companies, band, hospital and supply outfit. The wagons seemed to park themselves; the tired horses ambled to their well-earned hay and a sup of water in the makeshift corral, and up sprung a little city of dog tents—500 of them, two men to a tent. Then the train came up, and out piled the cook stuff; pots and pans went on quickly built fires, and the makings of a dinner were in evidence. Camp had been pitched.

And now the great treat—a cup of water. Each company formed, marched a bit and lined up where the motor tank stood, every man, cup in hand. Yes, he had used up the leavings of his canteen for his feet, and the captains had made foot inspection. Every pair of pedals had been gone over—plaster here, iodine there; a blister pricked scientifically, a corn shaved. That's how men are made to hike day after day without going under.

"Nowhere to go but out!" You remember this line when you make and break camp day after day, and walk through the same dust and past the same mud holes and into the same thorn bushes.

But all the while you are learning what soldiers call "march discipline." You learn the tricks of the road—the ten-minute halt at the end of the first forty-five minutes to adjust packs; the five-minute halt at the end of every twenty-five minutes, every man moving instantly to the right hand side of the road and sitting down by order; the opening out of the column to get air down the middle; the timing of the pace to get from 102 to 108 steps a minute, so that the miles may be reeled off every seventeen or eighteen minutes; the call of "message!" and a hand shot up to attract attention and the word passed from company to company by the Sergeants, sending orders from the Colonel anywhere along the column to his Majors at the head, rear and midway.

Among a thousand men there is always some one "off his feed." Somebody takes his gun; an officer will pick up his pack "only ten minutes more to the next halt, Bill," from the sympathetic Corporal, and perhaps the surgeon riding up with a nip of aromatic spirits of ammonia to whip along a lagging heart or to put one more punch into rebellious muscles.

Then the day of days, the last! Only twelve miles to home. In the distance McAllen looked like fairyland, the permanent camp a city of delight, your own tent a palace.

In they swung with the regular army inspectors at their heels, the 1,000 hearties, skinnier than ever, hot, sweaty, doused with dust, but all there. The ambulance held one man.

So it was "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here!" from a thousand throats as the long column wound itself home, its duty done. And say, you New Yorkers hats off to Charley Bajart, who carries the Twelfth's national colors. He had hiked every inch of the way, toting his flag. And the surgeons wouldn't let him go to the Spanish war with the Twelfth, because he was too old then—eighteen years ago.

THETA DELTA OHL

Many of the Theta Deltas in the New York Division have suggested that an oldtime banquet be held on election night at "somewhere in Texas." Of course it will be "without" as Lieutenant Dean Nelson, 2nd Field Artillery, M. P., is one of the committee. It is requested that those Thetas who desire to "give the hours the tether" notify Arthur L. Howe, Sigal Corps, McAllen, Texas, not later than Saturday noon so that the Committee may make suitable arrangements.

CONSCRIPTION IMMINENT IN CANADA

It is being predicted that universal military service will soon be adopted in Canada. While Canada has made a splendid record in enlisting volunteers for the European war, it has become apparent that it must abandon the volunteer system if it is to raise 500,000 men as proposed by the Canadian government. Several of the large cities have petitioned the government to pass a law for conscription on the lines of that which was enacted by the British House of Parliament. Canada is having the same experience in raising troops as all other countries that have depended upon a volunteer system in a great war have had. With the adoption of this policy by Canada, only the United States and China will be clinging to the volunteer system.—Army and Navy Journal.

A VISIT TO THE D. Q. M.

Office of Depot Quartermaster the Best Spot in Division.

There are those who go to war or Texas armed with guns and bayonets or sabre or side-arms. Some go armed with typewriters and indelible pencils and memorandum books of the U. S. A. There's a man that thinks that the clerks of the Depot Quartermaster's corps are, in their own way and their own place, more important soldiers than the faithful boys who plunge ahead with drawn bayonet and breathless cry to carry a trench or put fear into the enemy's heart.

For the soldier works at his maximum only in an emergency, while the clerks in the Depot Quartermaster's office, Lord help them, have been sweating over books and requisitions 15 hours a day during a long hot summer.

Imagine coming to Texas and working in a soldier's uniform, at a typewriter or a desk, or superintending the movement of trains and cars. Imagine handing out forage by the load day after day, and never seeing any scenery but the wall opposite and a road which is alternately ankle deep in dust and knee deep in mud.

Who is the Depot Quartermaster? In the first place, the D. Q. M. isn't just a man. It is an institution. Like a Trust Company or a railroad, the work is departmentalized and systematized so that, unless you know the workings of this station, you could pass the new D. Q. M. office at West McAllen and hardly know it was there.

But inside that renovated barn sit the men who direct the influx of food-stuffs and forage for the entire 12,000 men of the Division. Here is the new Division Paymaster. We don't have to wait for Brownsville to pay us now, we have our own paymaster in the Division.

There they are, fixed comfortably for the winter, or two winters, or (paradise) as long as "this emergency shall require." In the event of the Division or any part of it moving across the Border, the Depot Quartermaster remains at his post, next to the railroad, and dispatches by trucks, wagons or pack mules the necessary supplies of the day. But that doesn't worry the D. Q. M. It's all part of his year's work and like the boy who eats green apples and gets sick, he expects it.

Step into the D. Q. M.'s office and meet the force. For heaven's sake don't slam the door.

Sergeant C. B. Francke will probably be the first man you meet. He is chief clerk and he has 23 years of active service, 20 of them spent in quartermaster work.

Col. W. M. Bertsch is Depot Quartermaster. Assisting him is Captain L. M. Purcell, in charge of the personnel of the office force, and finance. Lieut. Sidney A. Storer directs the handling or transportation, receiving and shipping freight, etc.

Property comes under the ken of Capt. F. M. Conklin, who also cares for the construction of new army buildings and the management of the water supply.

Capt. J. O. Steger is the man who handles material and questions pertaining to subsistence.

Who is the paymaster? Meet Lieut. Franklin Keams, who now pays all the men in McAllen and Pharr.

A necessary corner of the D. Q. M. work is the repair shops, under the direction of Mr. A. J. Robinson. Here are blacksmith, wheelwright and saddlers' shops.

Every horse in the Division receives daily 12 pounds of oats, and 9 pounds for a mule. Both receive 14 pounds of hay a day.

Your daily bread and karo cost the government anything up to 29.52 cents a day. Goods are computed in money values, and your company supply sergeant feeds you either beans and bacon and roast beef out of this small but necessary sum.

Contrast this 30 cents with the current prices in a McAllen restaurant and give Uncle Sam credit for feeding his soldiers wisely if not too well even in Texas:

Tenderloin steak—60 cents (potatoes extra).

Ham and eggs—45 cents.

Hot roast beef sandwich—30 cents.

Home made pie (doubtful)—15 cents.

That affairs have run smoothly in the ranks of the Depot Quartermaster station is due to the experience and thoroughness of a few veterans such as Captain Steger and Captain Purcell and Sergeant Francke, for in the first few weeks when every train dumped a thousand more troops into McAllen, there was plenty of work to do but few trained men to do it. Gradually a few soldiers and civilians clerks were schooled in the difficult and technical work of the corps, so that today the D. Q. M. station is equipped for permanency and efficiency.

A great help to the expeditious handling of the work was the erection of new stores and the present offices at West McAllen. The D. Q. M. now has plenty of facilities for keeping busy. And the chances are that he will do it.

A LETTER FROM HOME.

My Dear Rattler: May I express my pleasure in receiving you each week and my pleasure in reading you.

Up here in little old New York there is plenty of almost everything and a surfeit of some things, newspapers in particular, printed in all languages and script. They are stacked high on the newsstands or discarded on every trolley. On Sunday they are as thick as blankets and big enough to cover the Palisades; of these I glance at headlines, fold them again and present them to the ashman.

But the paper of just eight pages that comes to me by mail! The Rio Grande Rattler! I read from first to last page, its editorials, its personal items, its news of the games and the hikes, the poems and jokes, and even the ads. I read it all. You see I'm the mother of a Corporal down there and I am looking for the one small paragraph which may give the date of his return.

Just the same, The Rattler is a splendid idea, full of courage and pep—and certainly must be a pleasure to many not on the Border. Here's wishing it every success, but not too long a life.—A Devoted Reader

THE ARTILLERY RANGE AT LA GLORIA

First and Second Field Enjoy Target Work Under Actual Service Conditions

STIRRING DAYS OF SHOT AND SHELL

Now that the 1st Field Artillery has returned from La Gloria, having completed its range firing with the three-inch guns, and the 2nd Field is hard at it pounding away at the little targets hidden in the brush, Rattler readers here and at home will want to have some idea of what such a range is like, and of what it means to stand behind a gun.

"Going into action" connotes a great deal to an artilleryman. He acts and thinks more quickly in those few moments of excitement than at any other time in his life as a soldier. The drivers strain every muscle to bring their horses up to the greatest possible effort—to run, to wheel, to stop—so that each gun and each caisson of the battery may be brought into the desired position as quickly as possible, and the battery ready to receive the orders for firing. In real fighting many lives may depend upon the rapidity in which a battery gets into action, and it is for the drivers to do it so quickly that the gunner and his men may get their orders for range and deflection and put them into effect in time to catch a rapidly moving enemy force or protect the advance of their own infantry or cavalry. It is hard work. It is dangerous work, too, in a way, and requires nerve and skill.

And when the battery is placed, and the horses and carriages have retreated to the rear, those all important orders come flashing at the gunner and his five or six men within so brief a space, piling one upon the other in quick succession, that it sometimes seems next to impossible for the men to hear them and carry them out accurately. Speed is important, but without accuracy it means nothing. This idea may be hackneyed, but nevertheless it is perhaps truer of artillery fire than of any other work in the world. And so the gunner toils, unmindful of heat, and sweat, and dust and all the turmoil about him.

Although none of the New York boys we know of have ever seen actual fighting in the artillery, those who go to the range at La Gloria get a taste of what real action means. At the very least they get an insight into the problems which their commanders must face when they come to direct the fire upon a human enemy force. At La Gloria there are targets to shoot at, targets which the swiftly flying shells must find and burst over full and fair, and there are moving targets which must be caught as they go. This sort of work is decidedly different and more difficult than that of aiming at some imaginary object when your gun is resting quietly and coolly in the battery's back-yard. It is hotter work, faster work and it is blacker work, too; but above all, it calls out the best effort from every individual guardsman at the guns, for it presents something worth while striving for, instead of a purely mechanical labor, made dry and stilted and uninteresting by continual practice. The dull, deadly boom of the gun at a man's cotton stuffed ear awakens his spirit almost to fighting pitch, and gives his true soldier's will a far greater impetus to serve his nation, than ever did, or ever could the mere playing at hero in the McAllen camps. At least he gets a taste of what real action means when he goes to La Gloria.

The stationary target is the block-house, well protected by sand bags so that when a shrapnel shell bursts too far over or around it there is no damage done. The height of burst, the range and the angle of deflection must be exactly correct according to the position of the firing battery, before a single shot could take effect, no matter how closely it shaved its mark. The extreme range at La Gloria is 2800 yards for the 3-inch guns, and at this range a battery coming into action from some odd angle, working quickly as though trying to catch a foe unaware or to cover a hasty infantry charge, must needs do a good piece of work in order to be successful.

And then there are the moving targets. These consist of four boards, two yards square each. A string of these are drawn across a given space in the brush, by horses, the animals dragging from a safe distance, and each target is very carefully screened so that its whereabouts cannot be discerned excepting by careful calculation. After each shot from a single gun new data must be made and given the gunners, and that quickly else the thing get away, as though a troop of cavalry were rapidly getting out of range.

Besides these targets there are machine gun targets, and upon the whole, the range may be considered perfect as drawing out the best effort of the artillerymen and machine gun troops, who can thus get their only experience—this side of Mexico—in this most important branch of service. The experience is invaluable, and the two or three weeks that have just begun for the 2nd Field Artillery will be well spent, indeed.—R. W. F.

"AIRPLANE" DISPLACES "AEROPLANE"

The name "aeroplance" to designate heavier-than-air craft has been discarded officially by the national advisory committee for aeronautics. In a report issued last week on "Nomenclature for Aeronautics," the name "airplane" is substituted for any "form of aircraft heavier than air which has wing surfaces for sustentation with stabilizing surfaces, rudders for steering and power plant for propulsion. The landing gear may be suited for either land or water use."

An introduction to the report says it is issued to eliminate duplications and erroneous use of aeronautical terms. Only new terms peculiar to aeronautics are defined in the appended list of 142 words and phrases.

PHARR DRUG STORE

Your Business Appreciated EASTMAN KODAKS TOO

Folsom Hardware Co.

The finest line of Mexican drawn work in the city.

Hardware for the carpenter—soldiers.

Blankets for everybody.

Chairs for your tents.

"If we haven't got it, we'll get it for you"

The Brightest Spot in Pharr is LINESETTER'S

Palm Garden

Adjoining Pharr Hotel Best Cuisine Orchestra Music With Every Meal

Best Service—Colored Waiters

Best Surroundings

Reasonable Prices

Enjoy Your Dinner Here!

PUT YOUR MONEY IN THE

First National Bank Of Pharr

"As Safe as Safety Itself"

We Sell The Rattler

In PHARR

W. W. IRVINE

Pocket Billiards

2 1/2 c. a Stick

Ask the boys for our address

Those who can bank here will find courteous treatment coupled with every facility for the careful handling of your business



First National Bank, Mission

Fred H. Morgan, Cashier

Zachry & Cawthon A Military Dry Goods Store

Announce a new line of SUITCASES

Handy for the boys on furlough. Look 'em over.

Steamer Trunks Special Prices

Bath Robes

Get one for that morning shower.

Don't forget a warm blanket or comforter. Worth the price.

Zachry & Cawthon