

The War Experiences of an "Armour" Man

IT is with great appreciation that I avail myself of the privilege to tell in a brief way, the story of my experience in the great war with the first American Division from the latter part of 1917 to the latter part of August, 1918. It was my good fortune to serve with but one organization, the First Regiment of U. S. Engineers, during my entire service in France.

Before outlining my experiences in France, I will outline as nearly as I can the process of training which we went through before receiving assignment to troops in the field.

For a period after the sinking of the *Lusitania* it seemed that our country would eventually be drawn into the war. In February and March, 1917, it was the general opinion that war with Germany was inevitable. Having studied some literature regarding the Officers' Reserve Corps, I made application on March 1, 1917, for a Commission as a First Lieutenant of Engineers in the Officers' Reserve Corps. Shortly after the war was declared on April 6, 1917, I was notified to appear for examination and subsequently ordered to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, on May 8, 1917, to receive training.

The training at Ft. Sheridan consisted of the rudiments of infantry drill, signalling, minor tactics, study of army regulations, etc. The training here was severe. The candidates were drilled almost constantly during the day time and had to study until late at night. However, the course was conducted by able Regular Army officers and progressed rapidly. At the end of about four weeks of such training we were sent to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, to receive our engineering training.

The training at Ft. Leavenworth consisted of the practices of pioneer troops in the field; namely, pontoon bridge construction, field fortifications and organization of the ground, reconnaissance and topographical sketching, musketry, tactical problems in the field and further study of Army Regulations, Courts Martial, Engineer Field Manual, etc. The course of instruction lasted until August 15, 1917, when the officers were given their assignments. About fifty to sixty per cent of the candidates who started with the two engineer companies at Ft. Sheridan received assignments at the completion of the camp at Ft. Leavenworth.

I received commission as First Lieutenant of Engineers in the Officers' Reserve Corps on June 19, 1917; was placed on active duty July 10, 1917; assigned to the 311th Engineers, National Army which was to be formed at Camp Grant, Rockford, Illinois. The assignments were given out August 15, 1917, at the close of the camp and we were given about ten days furlough before we were required to report at Camp Grant.

When we arrived at Camp Grant the skeleton organization was made up as far as officers were concerned for the new regiment. No troops were to arrive for a few weeks. I remained at Camp Grant two days when another officer and myself received orders to report to the commanding officer at the port of embarkation Hoboken, New Jersey, for extensive duty overseas. On August 8, 1917, I received orders to sail.

We sailed on the U. S. Mail Steamer *St. Paul* to Liverpool and went across country to South Hampton, England, where we took a channel steamer to La Havre. Upon arrival at La Havre we were sent to a British rest camp and received our assignments to various schools in France. About forty officers were chosen to attend the Engineer School of the French Military Academy of St. Cyr and Versailles (*Ecole Militaire du Genie*). At this school we received instruction in the various branches of the service, namely, organization of the ground for defense, trench warfare, gas warfare, artillery, and extensive study in field fortifications. The courses were conducted by English speaking French officers of whose extensive experience in the field we had the benefit.