

**HOW EUROPEAN BATTLE AFFECTS SOLDIERS.**

Many facts of extraordinary interest were observed by Dr Crile during the fighting and are described by him in his book in a manner which would only be possible to a very skillful and scientific surgeon.

For instance, he tells how and why men slept on the march and even when severely wounded. He tells us how and why men sustained terrible wounds without feeling any pain and in some cases without being conscious of it.

Perhaps one of the greatest retreats in history was that of one of the allied armies from Mons to the Marne. After a sustained and heavy action at Mons, being overpowered by the enemy, the French and British armies began their retirement, which continued for nine days and nights. One hundred and eighty miles of marching, without making camp, was accomplished in that great retreat, in which the pace was set by the enemy. Only rarely were sufficiently long halts made for the men to catch a few moments of rest. Food and water were scarce and irregularly supplied.

"It has been shown," says Dr Crile, "that animals subjected to the most favorable conditions, kept from exertion or worry, supplied with plenty of food and in good hygienic surroundings, do not survive longer than from five to eight days without sleep. The mere maintenance of the conscious state is at the expense of the brain, the adrenals and the liver. And these changes are identical with the changes in these organs wrought by exertion, infection and emotion. The changes wrought by these activators can be repaired only during sleep. Sleep, therefore, is as essential as food and air. In this retreat from Mons to the Marne we have an extraordinary human experiment in which several hundreds of thousands of men secured but little sleep during nine days, and in addition made forced marches and fought one of the greatest battles in history."

There is no reason to believe that man could live nine days without sleeping, and these soldiers solved the problem by sleeping while they marched. Sheer fatigue slowed down their pace to a rate that would permit them to sleep while walking. When they halted they fell asleep. They slept in water and also on rough ground, when suffering the pangs of hunger and of thirst, and even when severely wounded.

They passed through villages asleep. When sleep deepened and they began to reel they were awakened by their comrades. They sometimes fell down asleep in water, on stones, in brush, or in the middle of the road, as if they had suddenly fallen in death. Any man who dropped out of the ranks was lost to the army, for no matter on what pretext he fell out, sleep conquered him and the enemy captured him in that condition. That artillerymen slept on horseback is shown by the fact that every man lost his cap.

Dr Gros, of the American Ambulance, who went to the battlefield of the Marne, in the rear of the retreating French army, to collect wounded, gives some extraordinary incidents concerning the power of sleep. When the ambulances arrived at Meaux at midnight they found the town in utter darkness. Not a sound was heard in the street, not a light was seen. The only living things were hundreds of cats. The surgeons called, they shouted, they tried for half an hour, in vain, to arouse some one. At last they succeeded in awakening the mayor, to whom they said:

"Can you tell us in what village we shall find the wounded? We were told that there were many here." The mayor replied: "The village is full of wounded. I will show you."

With the aid of a flickering lamp the doctors threaded their way through dark streets, through a dilapidated school building; not a light, not a sound! There was the stillness of death! They rapped louder but there was no response! Opening the

door, they found the building packed with wounded—over 500—with all kinds of wounds.

"Some were dying, some dead, but everyone was in deep sleep," writes Dr Crile. "Bleeding, yet asleep; legs shattered, yet asleep; abdomen and chest torn wide open, yet asleep. They were lying on the hard floor or on bits of straw. Not a groan, not a motion, not a complaint—only sleep!"

It is interesting to know that these sleeping soldiers usually dream. The dream is always the same, always of the enemy. It is never a pleasant pastoral dream or a dream of home, but a dream of the charge, the bursting shell, of the bayonet thrust. Again and again a badly wounded soldier in the hospital would spring up in his sleep with a battle cry and reach for his rifle.

Concerning pain, Dr Crile observes the following conditions:

1. In the midst of a furious charge the soldier feels no pain if wounded, and sore and bleeding feet are unnoticed. In the overwhelming excitement of battle he may be shot, stabbed or crushed without feeling pain.

2. The blow of a high-velocity bullet or projectile, unaccompanied by the heat of battle, causes no impact or pain, though there may be a burning sensation at the point of entrance, and the soldier may feel as if he had been jarred or struck. Frequently he first learns of his wound from a comrade.

3. In the state of complete exhaustion, in which loss of sleep is the chief factor, pain is quite abolished.

4. Under heavy emotion pain is greatly diminished, even prevented. A remarkable example of the absence of pain mentioned by Dr Crile is that of a young British sergeant who, in a severe engagement, while standing near a battery, had his leg partially cut off by a shell that failed to explode. He felt no pain, merely a jar, and discovered his injury only when his leg failed to support him. He hopped to a nearby stack of grain and lay down behind it.

Here he took out his dull, one-bladed knife, and completed the amputation, feeling no pain in making the division. An ambulance squad started for him, but immediately the enemy fired upon them, killing one. The fire becoming more intense, the sergeant rolled over and over into a nearby ravine. The enemy advanced so fast that in his excitement he struggled up, and forgetting that his leg was gone, threw his weight on the stump. Even then, however, he felt no pain. For several hours he lay there without pain, until after the danger had passed, and he was removed by the stretcher squad. Then pain took possession of its normal channel and his suffering began.

Dr Crile's explanation of the absence of pain in such cases is this: The stimulus of the sight of the enemy is so intense that no other stimulus can obtain possession of the final common path of the brain—the path of action. Pain is inevitably associated with muscular action; that is, an action of the muscles due to the injury must begin before the pain is felt. Therefore, if a bullet or bayonet wound is inflicted at the moment when this injury cannot obtain possession of the path of the brain, it can excite no muscular action and consequently no pain. Even where other stimulus do not possess

the path of the brain the shock of the wound may be too great to be perceived. Too bright a light blinds; too loud a noise deafens.

Dr Crile's observations on the fate of the wounded are interesting, and show that their chances of relief are small. The Red Cross, he says, has proved as much a target as a protection, for ambulances and hospitals are fired upon. The toll of killed and wounded among surgeons in the first week of the war ranked with that of the artillery officers.

"I knew of one instance," says Dr Crile, "in which an officer who had been wounded on the 'Hell Strip,' or 'No Man's Land,' that red lane between the German and the French advance trenches in the Argonne, lay there for six and one-half days, then died. Neither rescue nor capture was permitted. Flashlights played over this wounded man at night, and food was thrown to him from the trenches by day. Dead bodies lie on this strip or dangle on barbed wires for days and weeks and months."

The soldier who is so slightly wounded that he will soon be able

to return to the front is kept within sound of the guns lest he lose his courage. Here, with no sense of security, he must make his recovery. If he got back to the safety and comforts of home he might collapse.

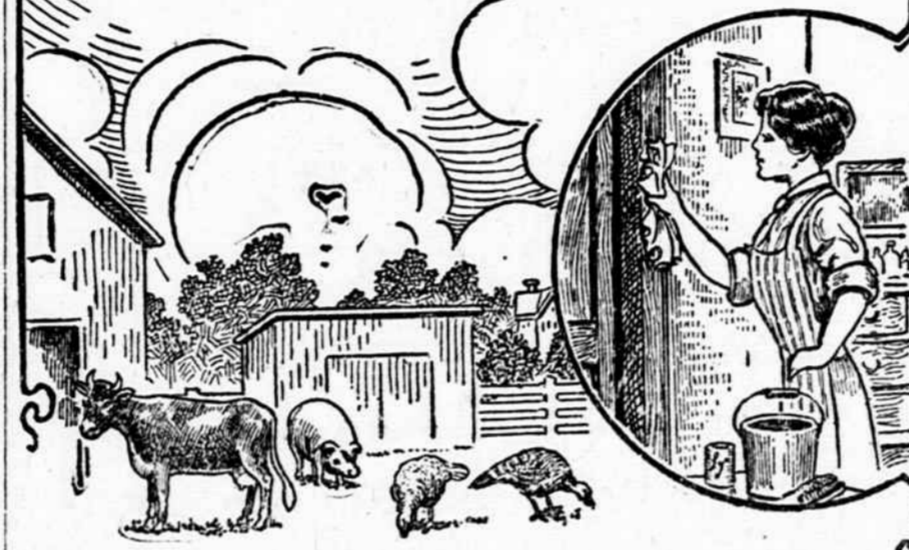
Wounded soldiers are usually left till darkness. Even at night rescue work is difficult, as shellfire plays constantly over the field. Like trapped wolves and bears, wounded soldiers often complete the amputation of their own mangled limbs. They may be buried alive in shelled trenches. They may be frozen to death or die of hunger and thirst. Their frozen feet may drop off with their shoes. The wounded must often consort with the dying, the dead and the decomposing.

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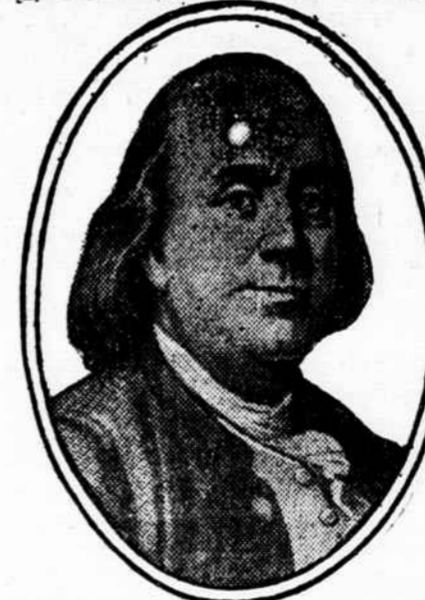
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