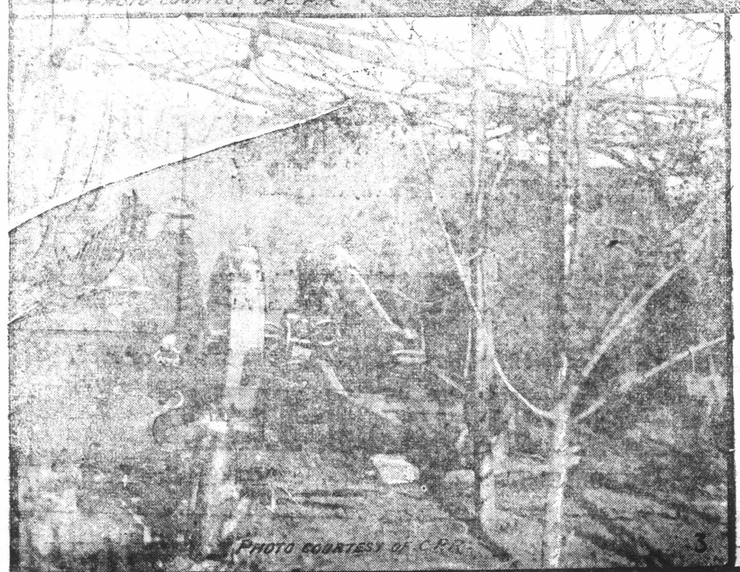
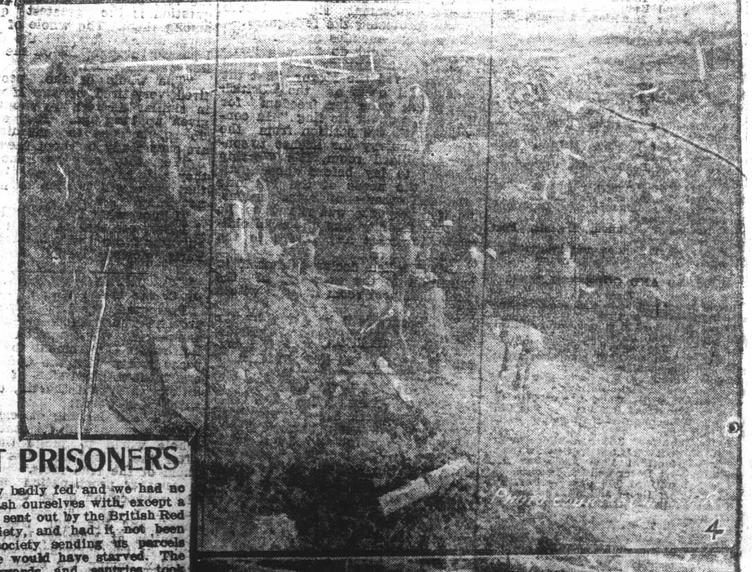
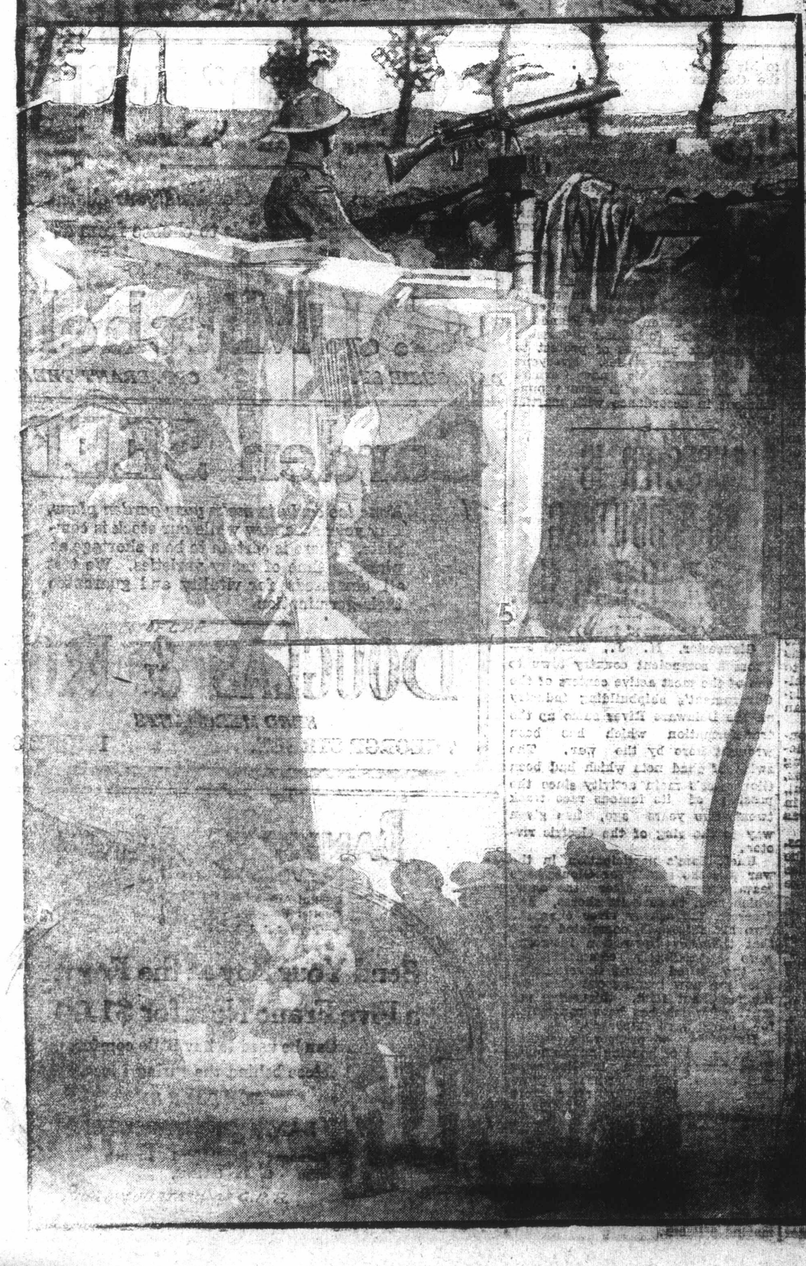
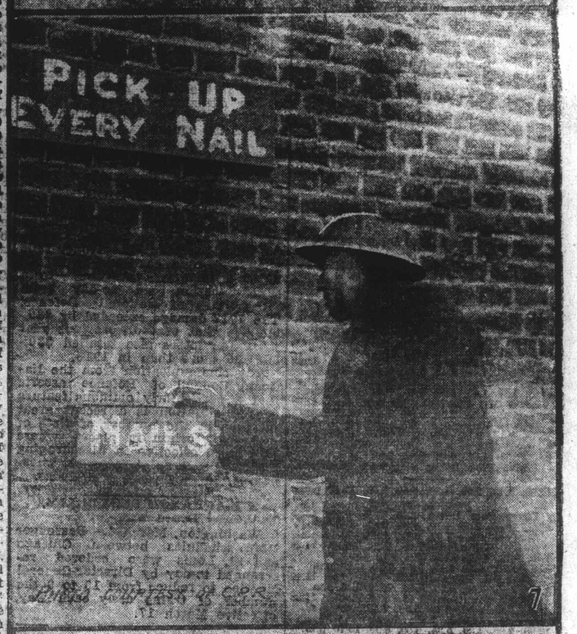
Scenes on the Western Front — Pigeons on Military Duty

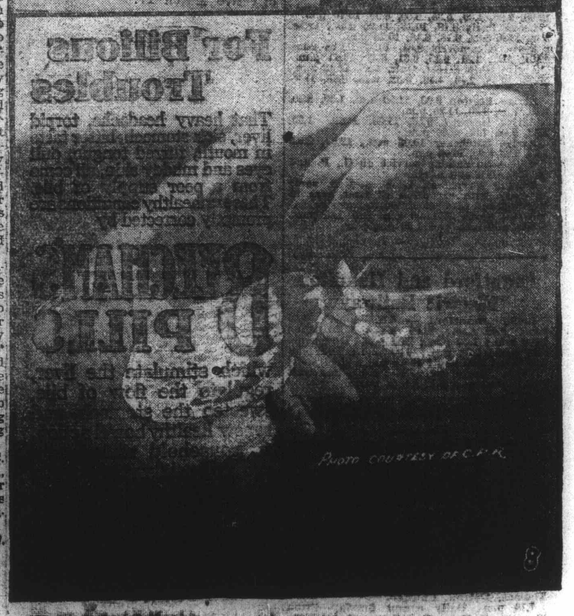


(1) A roadside scene as the Allies advanced in France. (2) With the British forces in Italy. View from the Montello looking towards Cornuda. (3) With the British in Italy. A battery in action. (4) On the Cambria front. Clearing up the Canal du Nord, which we took in our advance. (5) On the British western front. Highland machine gunner ready with his gun for any emergency. (6) On the British western front in France. "Jocks" loading into a motor truck on their way to the trenches. (7) On the western front. Nails left on the road cause a lot of trouble to horses and motor transports. They are picked up and put in boxes, which are placed at the roadside. (8) On the western front. Pigeons on military duty in France. A message from the trenches being removed from the leg of a night howler.









HOW GERMANS TREAT PRISONERS

The following is an interesting story of a horseman's experience on the C. P. R. steamer "Mount Temple" when she was captured by the Germans and his subsequent treatment while a prisoner. Simard is now on the C. P. R. SS. "Melita."

I, Joseph Simard, 66 years of age, of Montreal, left Montreal on the 29th Nov., 1916, on the SS. "Mount Temple" as horseman, on my first voyage to sea. There were about 750 horses on board and about 45 men to take care of them. Nothing abnormal happened until the 6th of Dec., and about 3 p.m. on that day a cruiser flying the British flag, came towards us at right angles on the starboard side and at about a quarter of a mile distant she hauled down the British flag and hoisted the German flag, she then fired about a dozen shots at us. The Chief Steward, Mr. Gilbert, was killed on the after deck while standing next to me, and I also heard that there had been another member of the crew killed. I was wounded in three places, one piece of shell amputating the third lower part of my right leg, another piece struck me about the middle part of the leg, and a third piece striking me above the thigh, came out at the right side of the basin. I crawled among the dead horses for safety and the next thing I saw was the crew leaving the ship in lifeboats. I gathered my strength and lowered myself over the side till I reached the water, where I was picked up by one of the lifeboats. The German Cruiser "Moewe" sent a launch and took us all prisoners, and one of our crew died on board. The German doctor finished the amputation of my leg and I was then put into the cruiser's hospital. I was on board the "Moewe" for four days, and I was well treated and the food was good. I was then transferred to the "Yarrowdale" along with the rest of our crew, and we were on board this ship until the 1st of January, 1917. The doctor of the "Yarrowdale" was very rough and didn't seem to care to attend to the wounded at all, and I was locked in the hospital and could not see very much. We were not too well treated, and on New Year's morning all I had for breakfast was dry bread and cold water. We were at Swinemunde and four English captains and myself, wounded, were transferred to a tug and taken up the river to a place called the Australian Hospital, and the first thing they did was to remove the stitches which were put into my leg by the doctor of the "Moewe," and which the doctor of the "Yarrowdale" did not trouble to remove. The doctor at the Australian Hospital was very angry about it, and the removal of the stitches gave me a lot of pain. I was at this hospital for five days, and was well cared for and had good food. After my stitches expired at the hospital I was sent to barracks where I was very badly treated. I was there for about 15 days, and the feeding and sleeping accommodation was very bad, my bed consisting of a bag filled with wood shavings, which was very hard, and we had very little coal. From this place I was transferred to Dundernin and was there for another 15 days and experienced the same discomforts i. e., bad food, very little coal, and bad sleeping accommodation. I was then sent to Brandenburg, and was there until I was released on the 13th of January, 1918. It was very cold at this place, and as they gave me nothing to keep me warm I had to sleep in my clothes. I was very badly fed, and we had no soap to wash ourselves with, except a few pieces sent out by the British Red Cross Society, and had it not been for this society sending us parcels of food we would have starved. The German guards and sentries took from us what was left of our meals, as they said that the prisoners got more food than they did. In one month 1,500 Russians died from starvation in this camp. The number of prisoners in Brandenburg is as nearly as follows: 18,000 Russians, 12,000 French, 2,000 British, and about 500 Italians. On account of the British prisoners being more stubborn than the others, they used the Russians as horses to draw waggons full of all kinds of material to and from the station. It took about 50 or 60 men to draw one of these waggons. I saw a Russian shot dead for refusing to take his boots off and give them to one of the guards, after having stated that he had paid for them himself. Two other Russians were wounded by the same shot. I also saw a man struck on the head with the butt of a rifle to force him to work, the man being unable to do so on account of weakness, and he died three days later. In the camp there was a gaol, and in this place there were 2 Russians and 1 Frenchman. One day the place was burned down and the guard that had the key refused to open the door, and with the help of the rest of the guard he kept the prisoners back who tried to break in to save the people inside, and the result was that the unfortunate men in the gaol were burned to cinders. The guards were very strict and their officers gave them full power. The prisoners have to be on parade at 5 a.m. to see if there are any deserters and to find workers. I had to turn out with the rest and had to support myself with two pieces of wood because they would not supply me with crutches. One morning I refused to turn out and the guard threatened to run his bayonet through me, but instead of that he took pity on me. The Commanding Officer, who seeing my infirmity, released me from falling into line in the morning. I heard during my stay there that four munition factories were closed on account of the shortage of material. I passed through Berlin twice during my captivity, and I heard from a Frenchman and a German non-commissioned officer, that the Kaiser had four castles in Berlin with copper roofs, and that the roofs of three of these castles had been removed and turned into munitions.

On my arrival in London the Canadian Red Cross took great care of me and supplied me with new clothes and very good food, and they also showed me London from one of their cars, for all of which I am very grateful.

I wish to thank the commander and officers of the SS. "Melita" for the kindness and courtesy they have shown me during my voyage back to Canada, the comfort of my sleeping accommodation, and the food, being the best I have ever experienced.

I am greatly indebted to Doctor C. A. Dupont, captain in the R. A. M. C., and late surgeon of the C. P. R., for acting as my interpreter and thus enabling me to set forth my experiences in English.

JOSEPH SIMARD.

Witness:

A. H. HUDSTIS,
Feb. 19th, 1918.
"MELITA"