"MY GOD, LOUIS, IT'S THE GERMANS"

M F Y 15

I was driving my Chrysler when I announced the above startling discovery to my companion, Lt. Louis W. Wehrle. The road ahead was blocked by two army tanks and we were covered by revolvers over the muzzles of which appeared faces blackened by grime and grease. We had at first supposed the tanks to be French but when I distinguished the command "HALT" over the roar of the motors, and realized that the revolvers as well as the command were aimed at us, it suddenly dawned on me that we had blundered on to the vanguard of an advancing German motorized division.

It was 7 o'clock of a lovely spring evening, just five after the German Army had violated the Belgium Frontier. The date was the 15th of May and the place was the little French Village of Montcornet, about forty miles west of Sedan.

During the preceding week I had been directing the activities of one of our units (ten ambulance cars and drivers). We had moved into the region in answer to an S.O.S. from Miss Anne Morgan to help in the gigantic task of evacuating over two million civilian panic stricken refugees from the threatened areas to points farther south.

I had that morning dispatched the ten ambulances to Soissons bulging with refugees with instructions to return to our headquarters at Requigny as soon as possible, and had myself returned to Paris to get a car load of much needed medical supplies.

I found Paris cheerfully going about its business, secure in the belief that the allied armies were massing for a big counter attack on the banks of the Meuse and the conviction that the Germans were rushing to their Waterloo. I had seen German Bombers dropping their messengers of death all over the region between Reims and the Belgium border entirely unhindered by any interference from either the Allied land or air forces. The significance of the complete absence during the entire preceding week of any sign of defense against the German air attacks had evidently escaped me, as I was entirely reassured by the comforting headlines in all the Paris papers announcing the forthcoming battle of the Meuse. I shared the general optimism, (in italics) The banks of the Meuse were about to become the scenes of another battle of the Marne. (end italics).

In this frame of mind and feeling slightly heroic, I loaded the supplies into the car, promised my wife to be home for dinner the following Sunday, and left Paris about four o'clock in the afternoon to rejoin my unit at Requigny. I reached the outskirts of Montcornet some two hours later and had seen no German planes in the air during the trip. I was consequently feeling quite happy in the belief that they were probably all too busy helping the Germans withstand the much heralded Allied counter attack on the banks of the Meuse some forty miles away.

On turning a bend in the road, I came upon three of our ambulances drawn up to the side of the road. The three drivers, Louis Wehrle,
Murray Shipley, and Jan Głowacki, were on a nearby rise of ground listening to the sound of machine gun fire coming from a little distance up ahead. StilI convinced that the Germans were very busy some forty miles and having seen no sign of their planes that afternoon, we were at a loss to explain the rattle of machine gun fire in the sector. Presently two French soldiers (the first I had seen since leaving Paris) on bicycles came leisurely up the road from the direction of the firing. They told us that it was a French battalion cleaning up a company of German Parachutists which had been landed earlier in the day.

My contour map showed a small by-road leading out of the Village of Montcornet to higher ground. Lt. Wahrle and I decided to follow this road a little way in order to reconnoiter. Climbing back into the Chrysler we started out but after following the by-road for about a mile we were no wiser than before, and so decided to return to the ambulacles and proceed on our way to Roguiny. Up to this moment, with the exception of the two French cyclists and the noise of desultory machine gun fire, there had been no visible sign of the presence in the locality of either the French or German Army. In fact with the above two exceptions a more peaceful and twilight-sun-bathed countryside could not be imagined.

Leaving this pastoral scene behind, we returned to the Village, but on turning into the main street we found our way blocked by the two German tanks referred to in the opening paragraph. It took some minutes for us to realize that the black-shirted figures emerging waist high from the armored turrets of the tanks and brandishing Lugers were trying to make us understand in some foreign gutteral tongue that they desired us to climb out of our car and stand at attention. They then frisked us for arms. Having satisfied themselves that we were unarmed, they made us understand that we were to remain standing at attention and await further orders. The situation was to say the least, uncomfortable, and in no way improved by a playful little habit the Germans had of taking shots at the gliding birds overhead, or shooting at fanned enemies in the surrounding deserted houses.

We hopefully produced our Geneva cards which bore huge red seals of the American Embassy, and explained to anybody so interested that we were American citizens whose mission it was to transport the wounded of either side from the scene of battle to the field service hospitals or dressing stations.

Louis, who, by the way, is the world's greatest optimist, was a bit taken back by the lack of interest displayed over our identity, as well as the total lack of reverence for the big red Embassy seal. Nothing would shake his confidence however, that the whole thing was a slight misunderstanding and would soon be straightened out.

By this time the Village was beginning to swarm with motorcycles, armored cars carrying officers, armored trucks loaded with
The company was facing a severe financial hardship due to the recent economic downturn. The board met to discuss potential solutions and came up with the idea of implementing cost-cutting measures. One of the proposals was to reduce the company's overhead expenses by downsizing the workforce. The board members debated the pros and cons of this decision, ultimately deciding that it was necessary to maintain the company's financial health.

Additionally, a memo was sent to all employees outlining the changes that would be made. The memo stated that the company was facing tough times and that everyone needed to work together to ensure its survival. The employees were asked to volunteer for part-time work or to take unpaid leave if they were unable to work full-time.

Furthermore, the company was exploring the possibility of partnering with a larger corporation to share resources and reduce costs. This would involve a thorough review of the company's operations and a careful selection of a suitable partner.

The board also discussed the option of cutting back on marketing and advertising expenditures. It was agreed that this would help to save money in the short term, but it would be important to maintain a strong brand presence in the long term.

Despite the challenges, the board was confident that the company could weather the storm and emerge stronger.
clipped-headed infantry men, and many other armored motor trucks bristling with light cannon, anti-aircraft guns and ammunition, machine guns, transmitting and receiving radio sets, etc. It seemed as though we had fallen off of the peaceful French hillside right into the arms of the whole German Army. The town of Montcornet had fallen into the hands of the enemy within a half hour without a shot being fired in its defense. The Village was rapidly transformed into a German Military Outpost, ready to withstand attack from any quarter.

We had had the unsolicited privilege of watching the capture of Montcornet from ringside seats. I had had the unique experience of traveling from Paris, not only to the front but right into the enemy lines without once being challenged by a French Sentry. Louis Wehrle and I were now Prisoners of War! As we were being escorted to the rear, I jokingly said to Louis "It may be a couple of months before we get out of this", firmly believing that I was overstating the case by about 100%. Disillusionment came slowly but surely. And it was two very much discouraged and depressed Knights of the Red Cross who were finally released from a German Prison Camp near Dresden some fourteen weeks later.