

As day broke upon the horizon of old "Mother Earth" on the morning of Nov. 4, 1918, all indications pointed toward a dark and gloomy day. The bright face of "Old Sol" was hidden behind a thickly matted curtain of cloud and a fine mist of rain had set in which seemed to blend with the already muddy surroundings in making everything damp and miserable. The northeast wind brought a shivering chill to the weary soldiers who had already been marching for hours before dawn.

We were now ordered to halt and to 'fall out' to rest a while by the edge of a woods. The rolling kitchen, the transports bearing supplies and many other things

That go along with Regimental Headquarters assembled here. This was going to be our Headquarters for the day. Our objective for the day was a small city, lying some miles to the north. The Germans were well fortified there with their artillery, reaching far to the east and to the west and a well entrenched infantry defense in front and behind the city. We could now foresee plenty of work for the signalmen.

During the night before, our artillery had been moved up and lined in such a position, as to make it possible to bombard the German stronghold with ease. Our infantry were still marching up and forming a 'front line'

reaching some miles to either side of Headquarters, and there, waiting for orders to go over the top. While we were waiting for the other units to get into position, our cooks had prepared a scant breakfast, consisting of hardtack, corned beef and coffee. We nourished our bodies with this scant morsel and were then already for the fray. Every man was eager to do his part in making good the day's objective.

A few German shells had already whizzed by overhead with their shrill mourning cry, so the first order of the day was to 'dig in'. I found an eight inch empty shell and with that together with my

bayonett soon had a hole in
the ground large enough to
cover a man.

Before I had chance to take cover
another order came, this time
quite different from the first. I
heard a voice say, "I want three
men to take these signal rockets
to the front line." Then the voice
of my sergeant named the men.
As I listened attentively I heard
the name "Godwin". I sprang to
my feet and joined the other
two and off to the front we went.
As we journeyed, we could hear
the shrill buzz of shells from
each artillery, and occasionally
the chatter of a machine gun.
We soon reached the front line
and as I stood on the edge of a

Big shell hole delivering the
message to the occupants, I heard
voice from within say, "You had better
get in here, you are on the front
now." Without hesitating at all,
I plunged headlong into the pit,
and finished up the message.
Then began the retrace journey
to Headquarters. One of the boys
looking over to the edge of the
field saw a bunch of dead
horses and a few men, who
had been killed early that
morning, and through curiosity
said, "Let's stop by and hunt
some souvenirs." "This sweet life
of mine is all the souvenir I
want," said I, and straight
on I went, he followed also.
We soon reached Headquarters

again and lay around for a few minutes waiting to hear more orders, and pretty quick they came. This time the order was to have a bunch of men begin at Headquarters and stretch a continuous telephone line following and keeping up to the front line. As the sergeant called the names, again I heard the name Godwin.

It was getting near to mid-day as we set out upon this task and the fine mist of the early morning had now turned into a gentle rain. The route taken was somewhat across country, off from the main highway, and the shell torn fields over which we crossed were a solid sheet of

sticky clay. Just sticky enough to add about ten more pounds to our already heavily burdened feet. We stuck to the task faithfully and toward the middle of the afternoon our wire supply ran out, so at first we were puzzled as what to do, then a thought came to one of the men, that he remembered seeing some rolls of German wire some distance back but along the route over which we had come. Two men were detailed to go back and hunt for the wire, I being one of the two. We found what wire we needed and were soon back on the job again. The German artillery were now firing bombs to the right and

to the left of us, and as I watched
the great explosion, I wondered
if one would finally get us or if
we would see the end of another
'perfect day' and our plans fully
carried out.

Just about night fall the
infantry swept into the town
and drove out or captured the few
remaining Germans and proclai-
ed it a safe camping place for
the night.

The news was phoned back to
Headquarters and we were
beginning to feel jubilant over
the prospect of getting an early
rest, but, alas! The message ^{that} came
back over the wire was anything
else but music to our anxious
ears. Here is what we got, "Due

to the scarcity of wire you will have to wind up that - which you have stretched out today and bring it out to the main highway, where wagons will be waiting to receive it. Then you will follow the road back to the town."

Wet, weak and weary we started upon that task. Darkness came upon us. These men began to murmur and complain bitterly. No food since early morning, trudging through gluey mud all day and a steady rain over head. Progress was so slow that we connected the phone and wired a message to Headquarters that it was impossible to get the wire out

That night. All the answer we got was to bring the wire when we came. For another hour we toiled under the most perilous circumstances.

Again we connected the phone and pleaded, for the sake of humanity, to be relieved of that task. The same answer greeted us. "Bring the wire with you." When we saw that all efforts toward being relieved were in vain, we determined to finish regardless of time or circumstances. I remember the words of one of the men as we plunged through the darkness, only able to find our way by following a wire as we let it trail through our hands

while walking along. "There are the bodies of two dead Germans just to our right, I saw them there this afternoon," said he.

"They are perfectly harmless now," said I, and on we sped.

Well, we at last finished our task and were back to the highway about nine o'clock.

Now for a hike to the town then we are through. We started off at a pretty brisk rate, for the shape we were in, but didn't go far with it for all at once my foot slipped, I lost my balance and fell head long into a shell hole about six feet deep. I was too weak to try to catch or even to try to regain the road after striking the bottom so all I

could do was to yell for help. This I did, to perfection. My comrades came at once to my rescue. They dragged me from the muddy pit and carried me to a log by the side of the road and seated me there so as to regain strength enough to 'make it' into town. I was now completely covered in mud. I finally started out again and by ten thirty o'clock had reached the town in which we were to spend the night.

The first thing we looked for was the kitchen. I was too near exhausted to want any thing to eat, but managed to force in a few mouthfuls and drank some coffee.

After that a barn-like structure was pointed out to us as being the place where the rest of the boys were sleeping and where we would find shelter for the night.

A dim candle light showed us that nearly all the space was taken up. I spied a vacant place near the entrance. I walked over, planning to stretch out and get some sleep but it was then that I realized for the first time that I had lost my blankets. I sat down on the floor shivering from cold, covered in mud and as wet as an all day rain could make one. Sleep took its flight and left me in despair. I knew not what to do. I tried to think

up some way to make myself comfortable. I was afraid to build a fire, for that might be an easy target for a German aviator. I wouldn't dare awaken a man to ask him to let me share his blanket with him. They were sleeping so peacefully that I was reminded of this passage "Sleep and take thy rest."

I finally decided to go back to the kitchen and stand by the stove and try to warm up some, but when I reached there I found the fire had died out and the stove rapidly cooling. I stood around for a few minutes, then went back to the shack where the other boys were.

Just as I reached the door-way I heard a sickening buzz then a terrific explosion. A few seconds later I heard a sentry give the 'gas alarm'. I felt to see if my mask was in place, found it on hand, but no serious effect was felt from the explosion, so that excitement passed over.

In just this way I spent most of the night, first in the shack then in the door-way, then on the street. Finally just before the dawn of another day I crouched helplessly to the floor shivering from cold and completely exhausted. As the other boys arose to start on another day's career, they discovered my helpless condition.

so they at once built a fire and placed me just in front of it. Then went out and brought me some hot coffee, which I drank only for the warming effect. After a few hours I began to recover but was unable for active duty any time during that day.

This was written by Paul Godwin as a day he experienced during World War I - November 1918