

# Ambulance Driver from Chicago Writes of Thrill and Terror of First Battle

No word was received yesterday regarding Christian Gross, the University of Illinois graduate who it is believed may have been killed in the ambulance service in France. At the same time that THE TRIBUNE was attempting to verify rumors emanating from Champaign that the young man had been killed his mother, Mrs. Charles W. Gross of 6107 Kenwood avenue, telephoned THE TRIBUNE to say she had an intuition that something had happened to her son.

Neither the war department, the Mexican ambulances headquarters, nor the Red Cross was able to get any word of young Gross. In his last letter, sent to his brother, Lieut. C. R. Gross of the Twelfth United States cavalry, he described in a vivid American style his first trip to the front and the life that he and his Chicago companions lead.

## From His Latest Letter.

Parts of the letter follow:

"We have large four speed Berliets," wrote young Gross, "which carry six stretchers. We make the trips to the postes just behind the French last line of trenches. As soon as we jump out of the cars we duck into a dugout or cave.

"To this poste the French stretcher bearers bring the wounded from the nearest points in the trenches. There they get the quickest and dirtiest dressing I have ever seen and are shot out into the car outside and we tear out and crank up and start out with an awful jolt. We get into fourth speed in two seconds and slide down that road with sweat all over us. These postes are never more than 800 or 1,000 yards from the German front line.

## In Plain Sight.

"From the postes down the road for a little more than three-fourths of a mile we are in plain sight of both trenches, and the road is always shelled to some extent. During attacks by the Germans it gets shells on it within your range of vision as fast as you can blink your eyes. Of course, they fall at different places, but they are coming in that fast. That is in the day trips, which are only made for a man who cannot be held without immediate surgical treatment until nightfall, or where the toll of an attack has filled up the small room of the poste.

"At night we cannot go nearly so fast—in fact, we never get into fourth speed unless it is getting along toward morning and a bit of light is at hand. The Germans won't fire at an ambulance, but the way the road lays they can't see what it is, and they give the road a few for every dust cloud they see.

## Some Chicago Boys.

"Mike Dailey is with me on one car; Milt Silver and a fellow from Evanston on another; Hawley Smith is on with an Illinois Delt named Earl Swaim; Bob Myers of Hyde Park (and now engaged to Gen. Rose) is on with Bill Gemmill, also of Hyde Park; and Dave Annan and another Chicago Deks are together.

"The days are very quiet, but here along the Chemin des Dames hardly a night goes by but what at about a half hour after dark this barrage starts by one side or the other and we know some of the off duty cars may be called out. As soon as the barrage starts, which is just like the roll of a giant drum, the other side begins shooting up trench

rockets, which light up the hell-hole-to-be between the trenches, so that the start of the attack will be seen.

## His First Trip.

"I never shall forget my first trip up to one of the postes at the very front. Three cars were wanted and Milt and Mike, Hawley, Earl Swaim, Milt's partner, and I thought this would be a good chance to see the front and learn the road. Earl went up in an officer's car to learn the road and tell it to us. When he came back he said: 'You won't believe a word I say, but there are shell holes all over the road and they are going off within twenty yards of the car and all over the place.'

"Well, we didn't believe him and we told the stretcher bearers to get in and we started up with Earl in the lead. Of all the drives I was ever on this had them all beat. We had been used to hearing guns from two miles back, but here we were going for nearly a mile over the road to the poste with those inferna things throwing up the sod and flashing up in front carelessly and on all sides of us.

## Terrific Noises.

"This was a day trip and of course we could see. When we passed through a wood which held the French guns the guns made the most racket I ever hope to hear. It busts your ears, caves your head in, and knocks you out of the seat every time one of the infernal things speaks. It's absolutely indescribable, just the loudest, fiercest, blindest crash, as though hell had broken loose right in your face.

"You look straight down the road so as not to see the other incoming shells explode and throw up the flame and dirt and you trust to luck and hold yourself tense so the engine won't die on you, for to get out and crank here would be death, from fright if not by iron.

"Not a soul was in sight, yet the ground was heaving all around and our cars were vibrating ninety miles an hour, as were our knees, and sweat stood out all over us. As soon as we got stopped in front of the dugout the stretcher bearers busted out of the back of the cars and beat it for the door. We did the same and left the engines going.

## 10 Killed Every Minute.

"Here, in twenty minutes 200 men are killed dead as door nails and another 1,000 out of the war with anything from a torn open chest or abdomen to a hand mangled or a piece of iron in the head which will kill when it is taken out at the hospital. Damn me if it isn't terrible, and then after it is finished, the lines are exactly as they were before.

"We were looking down at all these French guns and the German shells just lighting any place . . . and particularly on the road we had just come over, and, worst of all, had to go back over; and we were trying to be as calm as possible—if you can imagine that when you have a chill, a sweat, a headache, and a sore stomach all at the same time.

"Well, we rolled a cigaret apiece to appear careless, for the Frenchmen inside were looking us over we knew, and we tried to look as though we were hard enough to sleep in such a place without batting an eye.

## Looted in a Hurry.

"Well, they loaded the cars up in a

hurry and we tore off down the slope along the bottom of the valley, through the woods which hid the French guns, and out on the open road again.

"I was driving and watching the holes, and Mike and I both had our steel helmets on the side of our heads like some tinhorn sport—on the side toward the trenches. We were in third and I was stepping on it for all she was worth. Past the line of French guns I gave her fourth and stepped on it for every ounce it had. These cars make sixty in fourth when empty and we let her have it for a good mile behind the French guns. We spend very little time in that area once we are started, as you may guess.

"On this first trip, after I had gone into high, I had the feeling that we must have presented a funny sight with our tin derbies on the side of our heads and so I took just one quick glance at Mike.

## His Poker Face.

"He was looking fixedly straight down the road with that fixed, icy, terrified, glassy look he uses in his facial expression stunts with his poker card pantomime like he did in last year's opera, if you remember. A half mile farther on, when there were no more shells bursting within our sight, we both sighed and began to cool off. We tried our hand at talking.

"When we had said a word or two we both naturally broke into a laugh. Our voices, in spite of our efforts to prevent it, were shaking like leaves and we couldn't help laughing at ourselves and the bluff of calmness both of us had tried to put on.

"We started in to sing 'Mandy' a little farther on, but the song did not suit either of us and so we gave it up half finished.

## Ambulance Hit by Shell.

"That night Hawley's and Earl Swaim's car got a piece of shell through the hood and knocked the top of their engine all to smash. That piece was going some when it came, and Earl Swaim was not right all that night. He sat in the dressing station until morning with a fixed look on his face, and every time Mike and I came back for another load we always found him in the same position. We'd have been the same, I know, to feel that if we were going just a bit faster it would have gotten us right across the legs."

The letter describes also an air attack in which shells dropped within a few feet of the wreck of a stone house where the boys were staying.

"Please send this letter to Wallie," young Gross concludes, "and keep your shirt on, for any darned Krouthead shell will have to be stepping to catch Mike and me in our iron horse. I just want to add that this is one frightful war, and it will take a lot to end it, and also that I hate to see our troops get into it here. It's a different kind of a war than was ever fought before.

## Years for American Girl.

"I haven't seen an American girl in any of the bases we have carried wounded to. It would seem good to talk the good old God's language to any American, and an American girl would be a novelty, as we've seen none for over two months now. Saw Jo Loomis and Fred Legler in Paris. They're driving trucks. Yours in the bonds and for all the boys my very best."

# Chicago Daily Tribune

WORLD'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 1917.—TWENTY-FOUR PAGES.

THIS PAPER CONTAINS TWO SECTIONS—SECTION

## BOTTLES

### COONS OF THE DAY

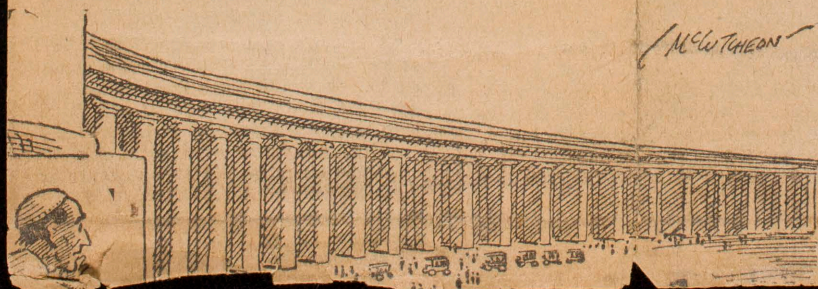
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Italy Goes "Over the Top."



Will They Ever Stop Reigning?



## 19 BILLIONS IS WAR COST TO U. S. ONE YEAR

### \$3 to Be Raised by Taxes to Every \$7 in Bonds.

(By a Staff Correspondent.)

Washington, D. C., Aug. 27.—[Special.]—The full financial program of the United States government for the fiscal year 1917-'18, which practically will amount to the first year of the war, was revealed today by Chairman Kitchin of the ways and means committee of the house, showing that it will require approximately \$19,300,000,000 to run the government during the year, or approximately fifteen times as much as in an ordinary year.

According to Chairman Kitchin's estimates, based, it is understood, on figures submitted to him by the treasury department, the first year cost of the war to the United States, exclusive of loans to the allies and expenses of the shipping board, will be about \$10,000,000,000.

#### FUTURE GENERATIONS TAXED.

Loans to the allies will aggregate \$7,000,000,000, the expenses of the shipping board about \$1,000,000,000, and the ordinary expenses of the government will swell the total to \$19,300,000,000.

In raising the revenue to meet this great cost, the treasury department has recommended, and the financial committees of the house and senate