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To the Front

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*NEW LIGHT ON OUR GREATEST
WORLD WAR BATTLES*

By Thomas M. Johnson

Illustrated



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The late George M. Smith

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CHAPTER ONE

MARSHAL FOCH COMES TO LIGNY

ON AUGUST 30, 1918, began the entry of the largest American Army ever assembled, into the greatest series of battles ever fought.

That day Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful armed forces ever directed by one man, came to the undistinguished and muddy Lorraine town of Ligny-en-Barrois to talk to General John J. Pershing at headquarters of the First Army that he was just assembling from the one million seven hundred thousand Americans then in France.

Scattered from the ports where they had landed, across France, and the whole length of the Western Front, largely a hastily trained, variously equipped amateur army, most of them had never heard a shot fired in anger. But they had the tremendous power of youth and faith in their country and its cause. Growing rapidly, soon to number two millions, flower of a nation yet young, at the decisive moment they were to throw victory into the Allied side of the scales of war.

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Their leaders had worked toward that moment through eighteen months since the United States entered the World War. As they had faith in their young men, they were the more determined that the strength of those young men be used as the men themselves, and the nation behind them, would have it. So when the Marshal made to General Pershing certain proposals about their part in an immediate concerted effort of all the Allies to crush the Germans and their supporters there was clash of wills and of national ambitions.

After ten years, the four days August thirtieth to September second stand out fraught with meaning and interest exceeding for Americans most such periods in our history. Then Foch, short, wiry, vibrant military thinker, or it seemed sometimes, dreamer, and Pershing, stalwart, almost massive, hard-driving captain of industry as much as captain of armies, the calm British Commander, Haig, absent but playing an important part, made great decisions that brought to trial by fire our amateur army. How this happened, and how seventy-four days after the Marshal and the General talked at Ligny, our army's youth and faith had made possible the crushing defeat of history's greatest military power, is the story of the culmination of our war effort, our hopes, fears, emotions.

After ten years, we see still working powerfully forces and conditions, political, social, economic, which

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had their origin in the victory won then. Conjure up again the German military power and all it meant, which we knew and dreaded in 1918; contrast it with what the world has gained since, however slowly and painfully. Had the Germans won, even had there been a peace without victory, an armed truce, what would ten years have brought?

Great days, tense, full of meaning and interest for Americans. As we reread now that bright page of our history we see that our manhood has not so wrought before or since. Its story is not quite what we thought, not a sort of triumphal procession from victory unto victory with never a stumble or halt, but rather a pilgrim's progress, learning and struggling. How much more glory and true satisfaction.

The war-time version of the war was so often not the true version. The War God slew the maiden Truth to make way for the twin Furies, Censorship and Propaganda. The first lowered before exact and often ugly reality a screen whereon the second threw attractive pictures. That is one reason why so few Americans know the full story of their biggest battles, one of which was their most glorious victory.

The screen is nearly lifted now, and those who gazed at it anxiously, hopefully, always proudly and bravely, can know how distorted were some of the things they saw. Why and how those watchers did not always

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know what went on behind is a still unwritten part of the great narrative of those battles.

It could not be written then, for those who told the battle's progress from day to day were under orders, controlled by Censorship and Propaganda, part of the war machine. They must weigh every word, thinking of the army that fought and the world that read and the people at home and, always, of the men in gray behind the machine-guns whom no telltale word must reach. The best "story" in the world was not worth a single doughboy's life. No wonder all the news did not get by the correspondent's conscience or the censor's blue pencil.

A story that never got on a cable was the story of the origin, the planning and preparation of that vast series of battles whose guns were crashing and flashing soon after Marshal Foch came to Ligny to see General Pershing on August thirtieth, as he took command of the American First Army, the first complete and eventually self-contained American combat force to be formed in France for really big fighting. That was the culmination of over sixteen and a half months' effort since the United States entered the war April 6, 1917, over fourteen months since General Pershing landed in France, June 13, 1917. Then he carried a document that had tremendous influence upon the fortunes of the American Expeditionary Forces and of the whole war. It follows:

MARSHAL FOCH COMES TO LIGNY

“From: The Secretary of War.

“To: Major-General J. J. Pershing, United States Army.

“Subject: Command, authority, and duties in Europe.

“The President directs me to communicate to you the following:

“1. The President designates you to command all the land forces of the United States operating in continental Europe and in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, including any part of the Marine Corps which may be detached for service there with the Army. From your command are excepted the military attachés and others of the Army who may be on duty directly with our several embassies.

“2. You will proceed with your staff to Europe. Upon arrival in Great Britain, France, or any other of the countries at war with the Imperial German Government, you will at once place yourself in communication with the American Embassy and through its agency with the authorities of any country to which forces of the United States may be sent.

“3. You are invested with the authority and duties devolved by the laws, regulations, orders and customs of the United States upon the commander of an army in the field in time of war and with the authority and duties in like manner devolved upon department commanders in peace and war, including the special authorities and duties assigned to the commander of the Philippine Department in so far as the same are applicable to the particular circumstances of your command.

“4. You will establish, after consultation with the French War Office, all necessary bases, lines of communication, depots, etc., and make all incidental

arrangements essential to active participation at the front.

"5. In military operations against the Imperial German Government you are directed to cooperate with the forces of the other countries employed against that enemy; but in doing so the underlying idea must be kept in view that the forces of the United States are a separate and distinct component of the combined forces, the identity of which must be preserved. This fundamental rule is subject to such minor exceptions in particular circumstances as your judgment may approve. The decision as to when your command, or any of its parts, is ready for action is confided to you, and you will exercise full discretion in determining the manner of cooperation. But, until the forces of the United States are in your judgment sufficiently strong to warrant operations as an independent command, it is understood that you will cooperate as a component of whatever army you may be assigned to by the French Government.

"6. You will keep the department fully advised of all that concerns your command, and you will communicate your recommendations freely and directly to the department. And, in general, you are vested with all necessary authority to carry on the war vigorously in harmony with the spirit of these instructions and towards a victorious conclusion.

“(Signed) NEWTON D. BAKER,
“Secretary of War.”

Those orders originated with one man, Major-General F. J. Kernan, then Assistant Chief of Staff of the Army, but satisfied every one. Major-General Tasker H. Bliss, then Chief of Staff, passed them with assent to Newton D. Baker, then Secretary of War. Mr. Baker approved but on a matter so im-

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portant consulted President Wilson, Commander-in-Chief of all the armed forces of the United States. President Wilson gave his oral approval. Neither he, Secretary Baker, nor General Pershing went back on those written orders with which General Pershing went to France.

Their gist was that he should form the American troops coming after him into an independent but cooperating American Army when he thought the time was ripe.

General Kernan says of his part in preparing them:

“One idea seemed to me of tremendous importance—that America’s effort was to be as a distinctive participant in the war, with armies organized under her own officers fighting under her own flag.—During all my service in the Army there existed a curious cult whose central and dominating idea was American inferiority in all that relates to war,—and I was greatly afraid that their pernicious influence in some hour of stress and under the persuasion of our Allies, might deliver us over to the rôle of mere replacements for the ranks of our Allies instead of having us participate upon terms of equality as an independent and proud and capable American Army.”

There were other reasons, if anything more practical, why that was the only way. Language differences, varying national habits, even national objects in the war, as well as other view-points, and methods of training, made anything else impossible, even were the United States not a great nation. Lucky for the

cavalryman Pershing and for his army and the nation behind it that he had that fifth paragraph to use like a saber to hew his way out of tight places.

Few expected when he left Washington that the A. E. F. would ever exceed five hundred thousand. Reaching France he found Allied morale low, the spring offensive a failure, mutiny in the French Army and Russia collapsing. The Germans planned to transfer masses of troops for a crushing blow at weary France and Britain before unprepared America could do anything. On July 6, 1917, General Pershing cabled Washington:

“Plans should contemplate sending over at least 1,000,000 men by next May.”

He discarded quickly the idea of a small fighting force for mere moral effect. The need was far greater than that. One million men was the “smallest unit which in modern war would be a complete, well-balanced, and independent fighting organization.” That was the germ of the First Army that was forming at Ligny on August 30, 1918, nearly fourteen months later. After further study General Pershing cabled, July 11, 1917:

“Plans for the future should be based, especially in reference to the manufacture of artillery, aviation and other material, on three times this force, i.e., at least 3,000,000 men.”

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That cable burst in Washington with a loud noise. Few in the seats of the mighty had appreciated that so far from the Allies being about to win the war, they were in danger of losing it. This misconception was due partly at least to Allied propaganda and was one of its most notable achievements. Warning of that had come from Admiral Sims in London, based upon the unrestricted submarine campaign alone, now from General Pershing after studying the military situation. The same warning note he struck again and again, in 1917, "more than anyone knows even yet." And most urgently at the end of the year:

"The Allies are very weak, and we must come to their relief this year, 1918. The year after may be too late. It is very doubtful if they can hold out until 1919 unless we give them a lot of support this year."

Washington had thought that our support would be mostly in loans of money and supply of war material, food and shipping and naval aid; not so much in the way of military aid. Luckily General Pershing changed all that in time, for if he had not started the War Department working in 1917, however slowly at first, along right lines, a great American Army could not have made victory possible in 1918.

Once decided what sort of army he must have and the War Department started providing it, General Pershing next studied how and where he would use it when he got it. To feed, clothe, supply and care for

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one million men or three million, three thousand miles from home, he would need, of course, an extensive line of communications over the four hundred miles from the ports across France to the Western Front—and where on that front would his men fight? Long before he had an army, he must choose a battle-field.

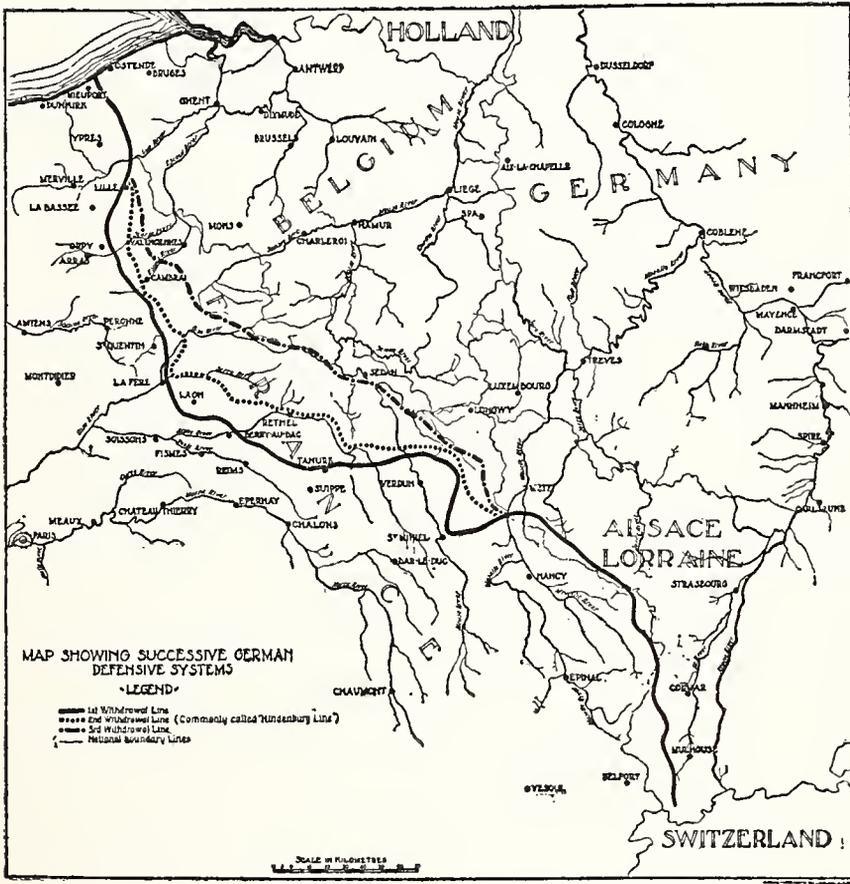
Not so hard as it sounds, for there was only one good one left—in fact, to General Pershing and his Staff, carefully chosen from the ablest American officers, it seemed that the one left was the best one. This was the Lorraine front, especially that part facing Metz.

Here, the Americans believed, was the Achilles heel of the German Armies on the Western Front. Successful attack here would wound the Germans deeply, both militarily and economically, force their withdrawal from northern France, and much of Belgium.

Here their vital line of communications was most exposed at the link between Metz and Sedan. Here was Metz itself, southern bastion and pivot of three-quarters of the German front. Metz taken or enveloped, that front must fall back. Here within twenty miles of the French trenches was the Briey Basin where the Germans got most of their iron for munitions manufacture, here also were the coal-fields east of Metz and, not far beyond, those of the Saar Valley. This was the back door to Germany. Here was the place for the great American Army, already planned, to strike a deadly blow. The British were tied to the

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northern sector protecting the Channel ports, the French to the central, protecting Paris. The French had made unsuccessful tries for the great prize in Lorraine, then given it up. Now they pointed it out to the Americans.



Successive defense lines prepared by the Germans during four years to hold their gains of 1914 in France and Belgium, or permit their orderly and gradual relinquishment. On September second, when the attack on them was finally planned, they were unbroken. The night before the American attack at St. Mihiel, September eleventh, the first only had been breached at one small point near Cambrai. After the Battle of the Western Front commenced, September twenty-sixth, all were broken in forty-seven days, and the Americans were just turning still another though sketchy line from Antwerp south via the Meuse through Sedan, when the war ended.

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One might say Lorraine began to be the American front on April 7, 1917, the day after the United States entered the war. Then a group of American officers attached to the French Army since 1914 got together with the French General Staff to talk about what was to be done now that we were in the war. They discussed where the American front should be if there ever was one, and so, partly at the instance of the French, it was suggested to General Pershing when he reached France that the American front be in Lorraine. Probably General Pershing would have chosen Lorraine anyway, it was so obviously the best choice.

To move men and supplies between this sector and the only French ports available, those on the west coast, notably Brest, St. Nazaire and Bordeaux, the Americans must use railroad lines running east through Tours and Bourges to Neufchâteau and Épinal just behind the Lorraine front, and improve them until they could handle first the additional twenty-five thousand tons a day required for an army of a million, later fifty thousand or seventy-five thousand for one of two or three millions. Along these lines were to be the main supply depots.

But neither our then small A. E. F. nor our great peaceful people at home could make these things happen in a day. The dark winter of 1917-18 came, and always more word of the coming German offensive

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to prevent their ever happening. On March 21, 1918, the blow fell.

With incredible rapidity and force the Germans broke the trench front many had thought impregnable, almost reached Amiens and separated British and French. Here with a vengeance was the open warfare for which General Pershing had insisted, against Allied remonstrances, that the Americans be trained. It was the darkest day for the Allies since 1914. Hurriedly they agreed that the Supreme War Council was ineffective, that they needed an Allied commander-in-chief and that Marshal, then General, Foch was the man. His appointment was made permanent April third on General Pershing's formal proposal at a conference of Allied leaders.

American belief that an Allied generalissimo was indispensable had been demonstrated already. President Wilson, Secretary Baker, General Bliss and General Pershing were unanimous. Already General Pershing, though omitted from the original British-French agreement, had said to General Foch: "All that we have is yours."

Whether or not this was a "minor exception" under paragraph five of his orders, it was certainly a "particular circumstance" that wiped out other considerations.

"What is the big thing we are after?" he asked himself.

W I T H O U T C E N S O R

“To give the Allies all the help possible to stop the German drive,” was the answer.

So he gave General Foch control of nearly one hundred and fifty thousand American fighting troops then in France, backed by one hundred and fifty thousand more engineer and special troops. It was a small force, but there were more to come, and the former newspaper man Clemenceau made good propaganda of the occurrence. Also the Americans were placed on somewhat the same footing as British and French in the forces commanded by the new Generalissimo, rather than being merely a part of the French Army. It was a defense against the Allied movement to prevent ultimate formation of an independent American Army and absorb American troops into their own ranks, that General Kernan, General Bliss, Mr. Baker, President Wilson and General Pershing had foreseen when they agreed in Washington upon the course General Pershing should pursue in France, and embodied it in his orders. For some time now that saber blade was to spend little time in the scabbard.

The greater the German menace became, the more persistent were the efforts of the Allied leaders to get raw American man-power for their depleted ranks. This was partly because they sincerely believed the emergency required postponement of the attempt by our less experienced generals and staff-officers to handle large units, especially whole armies, in big fighting.

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The great need now, they said, was men—cannon fodder, though they didn't use that German expression. Some Allied generals wanted fresh young Americans under their command to encourage their own tired troops—and to add to their own glory. Some Allied politicians believed an independent American Army would give the United States much greater influence at the peace conference which would divide the spoils of victory. Of all of which the Americans were quite aware.

A few American officers rather leaned toward the Allied view for which there had been quiet French propaganda throughout the winter. But they were not numerous, influential or particularly popular at Chaumont, American G. H. Q. in French Lorraine. They became less so, as the Allied efforts became more persistent.

For now, "with their backs to the wall," British joined French in trying by every means to absorb American doughboys into their ranks. To that neither General Pershing nor President Wilson—both were approached—would consent, but they did give enthusiastically every other support they could. They agreed substantially to the urgent Allied appeal of March twenty-seventh that "from the present time, and until otherwise directed by the Supreme War Council, only American infantry and machine-gun units, be brought to France, and that all agreements

or conventions hitherto made in conflict with this decision be modified accordingly." That delayed formation of a self-contained American Army complete with its own artillery and special troops, but the American leaders made that concession to save the Allies. The British found unexpected shipping, and by June first there were six hundred thousand Americans in France, and after that they came with a rush so that by late July there were one million two hundred thousand.

On July fifteenth, the stubborn defense of Americans with the French on the Marne and in Champagne had been invaluable in shattering the last big German drive. On July eighteenth, American troops had played for the first time a decisive rôle in a great battle of the World War when at Soissons the 1st and 2nd Divisions formed, with the 1st Moroccan Division, the spear-head of Marshal Foch's first counter-offensive that marked the turning-point of the crucial campaign of 1918. They had shown that their youth and courage and open warfare training might work wonders. That was the situation when Marshal Foch held at his secluded headquarters at Bombon a very important conference of the commanders of the three Allied Armies, General Pétain of the French, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig of the British, and General Pershing of the American, to make plans for the future.



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After Ten Years



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Rest Billets



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Letters from Home—Mail Call

MARSHAL FOCH COMES TO LIGNY

The Marshal radiated optimism. At last he could carry out fully the doctrine he had taught so conspicuously before and throughout the war: "Attack, always attack."

"Our counter-attack goes well," he said in effect. "Let's keep it up and do the Germans all the harm we can before winter, then prepare to give them their final beating in 1919."

That was all that seemed possible then, for if the Germans were at last on the defensive, their four months' offensive had taken heavy toll of the Allies in prisoners, in material, in killed and wounded, and left the French Army almost exhausted, though the British had now had three months of comparative rest. But with one million two hundred thousand Americans in France and three hundred thousand more coming monthly, much could yet be accomplished in 1918.

All the Allied commanders agreed that they should keep the initiative and submitted proposals as to what their forces should do. These were blended into a program of local attacks to take from the Germans all the ground they had gained in 1918, and, further, to drive them back to the portion of the Hindenburg Line whence they had started, thereby giving the Allies possession of the strategical railroads they would need to manage a big concerted offensive. Perhaps, if all moved fast, this could be started before winter so

it was advisable to plan now "for the end of the summer, or for the autumn, an offensive of importance, of a nature to augment our advantages, and not to give the enemy rest."

There was nothing said about ending the war that year. It was hoped to do that in 1919. As the conference met, the Germans were retreating from the Marne salient, but retreating very cleverly, fighting as they went, causing pursuing French, British, Americans and Italians losses, especially in the inexperienced American divisions, heavier than their own. Their morale was showing but the first tiny cracks, which widened and spread only slowly. But what had happened to them in the Marne salient could happen elsewhere. Their advances of the spring and early summer had left them holding dangerous salients rather easily pinched off now that the Americans had given the Allies numerical superiority. So this program was agreed upon by the Allies:

1. The British, with French help, should attack the Amiens salient, freeing for Allied use the Paris-Amiens railroad.

2. The French, with some American help, should aid this attack by continuing to reduce the Marne salient and completing the freeing of the Paris-Châlons railroad.

3. The Americans should attack the St. Mihiel salient, freeing the same railroad eastward to Nancy.

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An attack on the Lys salient in Flanders was planned also, but the Germans averted that by withdrawing voluntarily.

At last an independent American Army would fight its own battle. Americans had fought under French and British, but not until three weeks earlier, had even the I American Corps taken command of a sector of front at Château-Thierry. General Pershing had missed no chance to press for more freedom, as dictated by his orders and his convictions. Now, he said, the emergency that justified scattering the Americans had passed, thanks no little to their splendid fighting qualities, and it was time for them to show what they could do in their own American way, as an American Army, on an American front.

That front should be in Lorraine as originally agreed. At last he won out, and left Bombon, July twenty-fourth, to start active preparations for a battle first planned seventeen months before.

The decision made when the Americans first reached France that their front should be in Lorraine, meant that their first big attack would be to wipe out the St. Mihiel salient, for until that was done they could do nothing else safely. That sharply jutting bulge in the German line crippled our communications by cutting the Paris-Nancy and Verdun railroads and gave the Germans a fine jumping-off place for flanking counter-

attacks, and dominating observation posts whence they could watch American movements.

In September, 1917, Major-General Fox Conner and Brigadier-Generals Hugh A. Drum and LeRoy Eltinge, recognized American tacticians, prepared at General Pershing's direction the fundamental strategical conception that was to underlie the American fighting on the Lorraine front. First of all, they agreed, the salient must be cut off. That done, the next step was nothing less than a converging attack upon the fortress of Metz, vital railroad center and pivot of the whole German front from the Vosges Mountains to the North Sea, and the hardly less vital Briey Iron Basin. That was the original American plan, imposing in simplicity, at first glance staggering in audacity, yet upon reflection, and as it turned out, entirely feasible.

The American staff started after the July twenty-fourth conference to carry out that original plan. On July fourth General Drum had been selected Chief of Staff of the First Army and had started to assemble his assistants near Château-Thierry, among most of the American combat troops. The French wanted Americans on the road to Paris until the turn of the tide on July fifteenth to eighteenth showed the danger ended. What had been serious intent now became good camouflage, one of the first steps in a campaign to fool the Germans about what the new

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American Army would do to them and when and where.

Along the Vesle, our I and III Corps under Major-Generals Hunter Liggett and Robert L. Bullard were fighting side by side. There was the largest concentration of American troops on the Western Front, and there came very near being the first independent American front. It would have been, but for General Pershing's determination to have only a front where there was something doing and the decision of the July twenty-fourth conference that as soon as possible the Americans should attack the St. Mihiel salient. The Vesle front was stabilizing, so to St. Mihiel, he told Marshal Foch, he would go.

That is why on August tenth General Pershing was ready to take over from the VI French Army command of the Vesle front, and with it of the 3rd, 4th, 26th, 28th, 32nd, 42nd and 77th American Divisions and four French divisions, but on August eleventh the whole new Army Staff that General Drum had assembled since July fourth was flitting away from the Vesle, southeastward toward Lorraine. There, first in Neufchâteau, later in Ligny-en-Barrois, it started the job of preparing for St. Mihiel.

It was a real job, for St. Mihiel was to be a real battle, based upon the strategical conception of September, 1917, and the ideas that General Pershing and his staff had always had. They worked out a plan that

called for a powerful attack in which nineteen American and French divisions—four French—were to wipe out the St. Mihiel salient; but they were not to stop there. They were to push on through the “Michel” section of the Hindenburg Line the Germans had more or less prepared across the base of the salient, and beyond, into open country, “in accordance with the extent of the initial success obtained and the character of the hostile opposition encountered.”

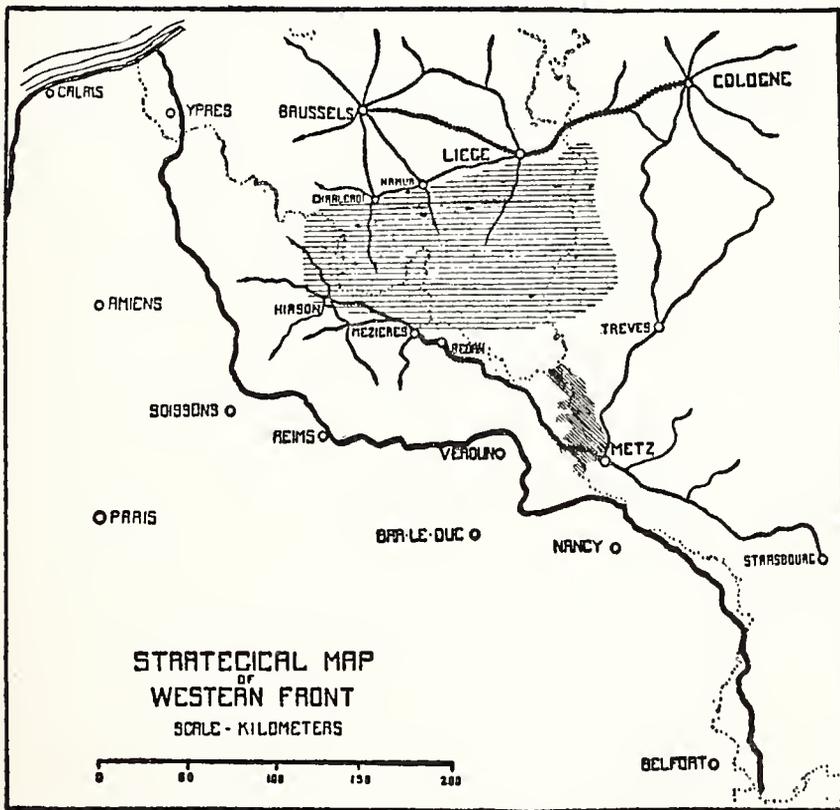
Right there in the Woëvre Plain, beyond St. Mihiel, was a great place to do it. There, the Americans thought, was the most sensitive part of the German front, in Belgium and France. That front was really a great peninsula formed by the German lines as they had pushed into Belgium and France in 1914, been driven back a little, and finally, stopped and remained with minor fluctuations, ever since. The neck of the peninsula, from the Woëvre Plain beyond St. Mihiel, or from Metz, to the southern tip of neutral Holland, was only one hundred and twenty-five miles across, most of it the rough, wooded Ardennes region almost impassable to modern armies. North and south of the Ardennes were the only entrances or exits from Germany to the peninsular Western Front, and these were two main railway systems that were the jugular veins of the German Army.

Any army that could get far enough across the neck to cut or threaten to cut one of these jugular veins

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would cause a big German defeat and a retreat from France and at least most of Belgium.

The southern and nearer of these jugular-vein rail-ways was at parts of its Metz-Sedan link, only twenty-five miles from the front. If the new American First



Strategical map of the Western Front before the great final battles, showing the two main jugular-vein railroads supplying the peninsular German front between the black trench line and the southern tip of neutral Holland, but separated by the rough Ardennes region very difficult for armies to traverse, indicated by shading, as is also the Briey Iron Basin and the sensitive region about Metz.

Army did not advance far enough in its first attack actually to cut it, it could still make a lot of trouble. Stopping in the Woëvre Plain a few miles beyond the

broken Michel section of the Hindenburg Line, we could interrupt railroad traffic on the Metz-Sedan line and the Metz network with shells from long-range guns and bombs from airplanes. We might pulverize that fortress, depot and junction point for the whole front as the Germans had pulverized the forts of Liège and Namur in 1914.

The American Staff had studied the Metz region at the Army War College in Washington before the war. They knew it intimately, and saw even greater vistas. Suppose our first onset should surprise the Germans and break through as did the British in the Amiens salient on August eighth, called by Ludendorff "the black day of the German Army." Suppose we found the formidable Metz defenses undermanned. With a rush, we might take them.

Then there were the iron mines of the Briey Basin. French engineers estimated that seventy-five per cent. of the iron ore the Germans used for war material came from there, and that if the Germans were prevented from using the Basin, their factories would have to close not only in the Lorraine-Luxembourg region but in Westphalia and the Saar Valley. With Briey within reach of our guns, that would happen.

With high hearts, the Americans worked out in detail their plan to wound the Achilles heel. On August fifteenth General Drum sent it to G. H. Q., and General Pershing approved it. The main idea was

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that the Americans would first advance far enough to cut off the salient, but no more. That was the "minimum objective." They would not try immediately to break the Michel part of the Hindenburg Line, cut the railroads, or try for Metz. But then, if all was going well and the Germans had been surprised and badly defeated, the Americans would go on to the "ultimate objective."

That was another story. That would put them only fifteen miles from the very important junction of Longuyon where three railroads from the east converged to go through Sedan, only five miles from another important junction at Conflans, and as little as seven from Metz itself. Long-range shelling and airplane bombing are easy at those distances. And if the attack was going well when they were reached, why not keep it up?

Marshal Foch liked the American plan so well that on August seventeenth he not only sent it back with his O. K., but added to it. He wanted, he said, "to strike the heaviest blow possible and secure the maximum results." So he made the attack even heavier and more extensive, and increased the number of divisions taking part to twenty-five, adding six French divisions, around seventy-five thousand men. They were to attack, also under General Pershing's command, on the left flank, north of Verdun, heading toward Longuyon.

W I T H O U T C E N S O R

So the battle of St. Mihiel, the first attack of the American First Army, with French assistance, was to be an attempt to deal the Germans by surprise a staggering blow that might bring a big strategic victory.

Before the blow could be dealt, there must be a great secret concentration of troops, guns and supplies on both sides of the St. Mihiel salient where hitherto, although we had installed some depots and railroads, only comparatively small bodies of American troops had operated. General Pershing took command for the first time of a sector of the Western Front, from the Moselle to Verdun. The First Army Staff worked day and night to prepare to attack as near September tenth as possible. That was the situation when, on August thirtieth, Marshal Foch came to Ligny.

CHAPTER II

GREAT DECISIONS

THE Marshal brought with him the plan of a new battle, so vast that it might be called the Battle of the Western Front. Its forty-seven days ended with the end of the World War.

Since the July twenty-fourth conference, things had changed rapidly. British and French attacks planned then were going well. The British attack at Amiens on August eighth had confirmed earlier belief that German morale was sinking more rapidly. After it Ludendorff had advised the Kaiser to ask an armistice, but the Allies did not know that. American troops showed splendid morale and even greater fighting value than expected, and were arriving at the rate of two hundred and fifty thousand or three hundred thousand monthly—an abundant reenforcement that made possible many things.

“So,” said the Marshal, “let’s commence that general attack we talked about, just as soon as we can. Here is the plan.”

The plan was fundamentally simple. Its principle was the Marshal’s favorite: “*Tout le monde à la bataille!*” meaning, “Everybody fight!” On September fifteenth the Allied Armies in the Balkans were to

attack the Bulgarians, on the nineteenth the British in Palestine were to strike the Turks, and he was urging the somewhat reluctant Italians to have a try at the Austrians. Finally, about September twentieth he wanted to commence against the Germans on the Western Front a driving, smashing, converging attack of French, British, Belgians and Americans that should give them no rest. They were just beginning to crack. They might break under this new strain.

It was a big and risky thing to attempt. French and British had lost heavily during the summer, Americans alone were fresh. But the French, however tired, would do their part—they always had. Clemenceau would see to that. The British had to break the most notorious part of the Hindenburg Line, but they were going stronger after their rest. Lloyd George and the British War Cabinet dodged responsibility, but Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig took it and won.

In so doing, it seems, according to British semi-official authorities, the British Commander determined for the American Army the place, the time, even the nature of the greatest, longest, most stubborn, most costly and, finally, most victorious battle it ever fought—the Meuse-Argonne.

When Marshal Foch approved on August seventeenth General Pershing's plan for the powerful American attack at St. Mihiel, even widened the front of attack and added six French divisions, he meant

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this to be the American part in the general Allied offensive discussed at the July twenty-fourth conference.

Marshal Foch planned to aim this general offensive against the German peninsula and lines of communication, the two jugular veins through the neck of their front in Belgium and northern France. General Nivelle had tried it in 1917 and failed with a dull thud that nearly caused French collapse. But the Germans had been fresher then, and he had no Americans. "Attack!" was Marshal Foch's motto, and here was his chance. So every one was to lunge for the jugular-vein railroads. The British were to strike along the northern railroad system, through Maubeuge and Liège, first breaking the Hindenburg Line near Cambrai where it was most strongly fortified though not naturally strongest. The French were to strike at the southern line at Mézières, just west of Sedan, advancing north through the Champagne country. The Americans were to attack the southern line also, from Longuyon to Metz, by the St. Mihiel attack plans of which the Marshal had just approved. To complicate matters for the Germans, the Belgians, with British and French aid, were to attack in Flanders.

But Sir Douglas Haig did not like the American part in the plan which was practically what General Pershing had proposed to Marshal Foch. The Brit-

ish Commander's main idea was to have a converging Allied offensive, and the Americans would be pushing toward Metz in a direction divergent from the line of advance of the other Allies. Also, the British Commander, like many another, considered his own front most important, and wanted from the rest all possible support for the British attack on the Hindenburg Line at Cambrai. So he said that all the Allied Armies must converge in the same direction.

Strategists, like doctors, often disagree, but the patient does not always die. Field-Marshal Haig considered the northern jugular-vein railroad, the Liège line, more important than the southern, the Metz-Sedan-Mézières line. Marshal Foch may have considered both equally important, but official and unofficial authorities agree that his great objective was to cut the southern railroad at its important link from Montmédy, northwest of Metz, through Sedan to Mézières. The Germans used this four-tracked line to shuttle troops and supplies back and forth between their fronts north and south of the rough Ardennes. That would divide these fronts one from the other and cut the German Armies into two separate parts.

But the biggest thing of all was that all the Allied Armies cooperate and strike together. So the Marshal must be diplomat as well as strategist. If Field-Marshal Haig thought the attacks should converge, *eh bien!* Perhaps he was right. The British Com-

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mander had shown himself all along entirely loyal, yet less willing than General Pershing to take his strategy undiluted from the Foch fountainhead. Often the Frenchman gave in to calm British tenacity. This was a notable occasion.

The American Commander, the Marshal decided, would have to change his plans. There would be no American drive for Metz or the Briey Basin through the Woëvre Plain. Perhaps there would be no attack even on the St. Mihiel salient. Instead there would be an American drive for the Sedan-Mézières shuttle railroad, sixty miles northwest of St. Mihiel through the rugged, formidable region west of the Woëvre Plain that became historic later as the Meuse-Argonne. That decision, that change in plan, had brought him to Ligny on August thirtieth.

Now he proposed to General Pershing that all the Allied Armies on the Western Front should join in a concerted offensive against the German jugular-vein railroads in which the British, with French and Belgian help, should strike at the northern or Liége line and the Americans, with French help, should strike at the southern or Sedan-Mézières line. The offensive should be launched as quickly as possible, without a moment's delay, which meant:

1. The American plan for the St. Mihiel attack, which the Marshal had approved thirteen days before, should be changed, and our real battle whittled down

to a limited objective attack simply to cut off the salient preliminary to the American part in the great general advance.

2. This part should be an attack astride the Argonne Forest, toward Mézières and Sedan, to cut there the southern jugular-vein railroad. It should start immediately after the St. Mihiel attack ended, September fifteenth or twentieth, and be made by American and French troops.

3. But the Americans should fight neither together nor in one place. A small American Army of 250,000 or 300,000 men should attack, with the French, west of the Argonne Forest. East of the Argonne, the French should attack, helped by 100,000 to 150,000 Americans under French command. The rest of the 1,200,000 Americans then in France would be scattered in various sectors of the front under French or British command, working on our Services of Supply or in rear training areas.

4. Two French Generals, Degoutte, an army commander, and Malcor of the artillery, should be placed at General Pershing's disposition "furnished with sufficient power to assure the rapid solution of all questions."

Those proposals of Marshal Foch on August thirtieth were the first that General Pershing or any other American had heard in detail of what became the greatest battle of world history, the Battle of the

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Western Front, in which six million men were actually engaged and as many more closely involved. General Pershing has called the plan "suddenly conceived." It upset his arrangements and placed him face to face with a new situation requiring immediate decisions of far-reaching importance. Nor did he like all the proposals—nor accept them all.

In fact, the interview that ensued was as lively as it was historic—though neither Marshal Foch nor General Pershing has said so since. General Pershing remarked that it was a good deal to expect that, first, he should change on short notice plans for St. Mihiel that the Marshal had recently approved, and, second, start another battle on another front fifty miles away, only five or ten days later. Americans liked speed, but wasn't this a little too much? And even with St. Mihiel whittled down, it took two armies to make a battle. If we won a big success, ought we to drop it unexploited and take up the new Meuse-Argonne fight? If we failed, would the Germans let us make the switch?

"The Germans are getting into serious difficulties," said the Marshal in effect. "The St. Mihiel salient is very vulnerable. I think they'll fall back from it at the first sign. It would be to their advantage to engage a lot of our troops there for a while. I don't expect much resistance."

The Marshal had vision perhaps more prophetic

than he knew, for whether that idea originated in deduction or the French Intelligence Service, it was so correct that General Fuchs, commanding the Germans holding the salient, had issued, August twenty-fifth, orders preparing for at least a measure of withdrawal. By August twenty-seventh he definitely scented the American attack, then scheduled for September tenth.

Whether or not General Pershing believed that, he opposed even more strongly the Marshal's proposal to break up again into detachments the American Army whose independence he thought he had just secured. This looked like just another means to absorb our troops. East of the Argonne Forest they would be entirely under French command, interspersed with French. West of the forest the so-called American "Army" of less than a fifth our total strength would be only nominally its own boss. The nature of the ground showed that. Those two French generals with "sufficient power" might, with all good will, hinder rather than help. He declined their services.

"If we must change our St. Mihiel plans and fight this new battle in the Meuse-Argonne," he said to Marshal Foch, "we will do it under American command and management, subject only to your general strategical supervision. You can give us full control of the country from the Argonne east to the Meuse, or if you want one American Army west of the Argonne,

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then the force east of it must not be mixed with French troops, but must be another American Army."

"This is an emergency, a crisis!" the Marshal cried. "This is the best way to use your inexperienced troops and leaders. If you do not agree, I shall appeal to President Wilson!"

Thereupon the American Commander-in-Chief stood upon figurative hind legs and said: "I don't want to appear difficult, but the American Government and people expect their Army to operate as a representative part of the American nation, no longer as separate bodies under various controls scattered over the whole Western Front. We have been on the point of forming such an Army before, and always some new thing has come up to prevent it."

Once again General Pershing relied upon that trusty weapon, the orders of President Wilson, Secretary Baker and General Bliss. They left it to his judgment to determine when the American forces in Europe should be sufficiently strong to justify their operating independently. In his judgment, that time had come. Nearly two million seemed "sufficiently strong." To General Pershing alone has been given most of the credit or discredit for perseverance or stubbornness in fighting incessantly for that consummation when in fact he was carrying out the orders of his superiors. Nevertheless, under the terms of the orders, his was the decision as to when the time was ripe for

WITHOUT CENSOR

the formation of the true American Army that all wanted and that was contemplated in the orders. Now the time had come, he decided, so he carried out the orders enthusiastically, for he himself was convinced that they were the right orders for the American Army and the American nation. When General Pershing is convinced, he is convinced.

"I don't believe in having anything but strong convictions on the important, basic things of life," he said a few months ago. "After a man has thought a thing out the best way he can, and found out what seems right, how can he have any but a strong conviction about it?"

So he squared his jaw and braced himself to fight the long fight over again. Two strong men, used to command, faced each other with views directly opposed. Marshal Foch saw his plans thwarted, feared delays and loss of opportunity. He flared up.

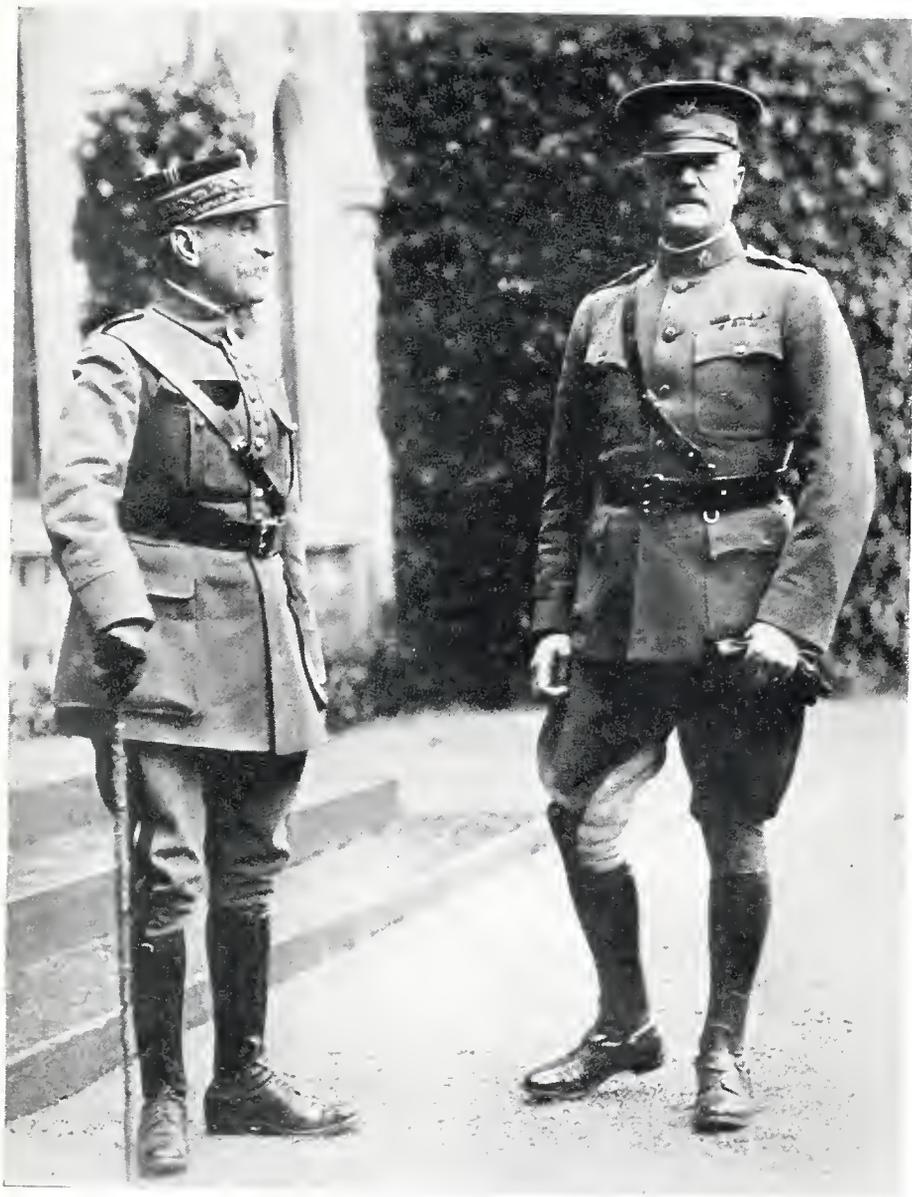
"Do you wish to go to the battle?" he asked.

He might as well have asked: "Do you want to fight? Have you got the nerve?"

General Pershing kept cool. "Most assuredly," he replied, "but as an American Army."

"It will take a month," the Marshal said, "and there's no time to lose."

"Give me a sector," said General Pershing eagerly, "anywhere you decide, but an American sector, and I'll take it over at once."



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Marshal Foch and General Pershing



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Looking over the Woëvre Plain toward Metz

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“But your army is incomplete,” the Marshal objected. “It is short of heavy artillery, technical troops, labor troops, aviation. It can not operate alone. We are giving you much French and British help even for this St. Mihiel attack.”

“True,” General Pershing replied, “but why? For five months, since the German drive started, we have been holding those special troops in the United States and shipping infantry and machine-gunners because the Allies asked us to. They promised to lend us special troops of theirs to make up our shortage. Now I think it is time the Allies made good on that promise.”

“*Eh bien!*” said Marshal Foch. “Let us think it over. Here is a note outlining the plan for the coming offensive. Study it, and then write me.”

The Marshal gone, General Pershing studied his note with General Drum, and, as soon as he could reach them, with Major-Generals J. G. McAndrew and Fox Conner, Chief of Staff and Chief of Operations of the A. E. F. None thought of anything but the vigorous offensive the Americans had always favored. Now was the time for it, to push home the advantage won over the hard-pressed Germans through the Allied superiority of three hundred thousand fresh Americans. The Americans, all felt, were the key to the situation. But for them, the Allies, even if they had survived the German spring offensive, would

be unable now to take the offensive themselves. They would have had either to sit down and await a negotiated peace, or to gather strength for a 1919 campaign, another year of war.

Nowhere else in Europe was there such a striking force as the young fresh Americans trained for the offensive and for open warfare through which alone quick victory could come. Marshal Foch saw proof of that as he came to Ligny and passed them in thousands assembling for their first independent attack. Their leaders wanted some changes made in his plan.

It was no "Yes, yes" letter that went next day to the Marshal signed by John J. Pershing. The American Commander agreed that the Allies must continue to attack. He thought the situation favorable, the opportunity great. The chance to cut the jugular-vein railroads in the neck of the peninsula delighted a soldier's heart. The combination of an attack reaching from the Meuse toward Mézières with another attack toward Cambrai "offers to the Allies the possibility of virtually unlimited success."

But it would be very difficult for the Americans to take part in such an attack. For nearly a year and a half they had laid their plans and built their Services of Supply for fighting on the Lorraine front, especially facing Metz. It would be a tremendous task to change virtually overnight, as the Marshal wished.

Then General Pershing said:

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“In considering the attack of the American Army in the direction of Mézières [the Meuse-Argonne] we should, I think, give weight to the plans on which we have hitherto worked toward the formation, now to be realized, of that Army. Since our arrival in France our plans, not only with the consent, but at the initiative of the French authorities, have been based on the organization of the American Army on the front St. Mihiel-Belfort [Lorraine-Alsace]. All our depots, hospitals, training areas and other installations are located with reference to this front and a change of these plans cannot be easily made.

“For example, we have to foresee the care of our sick and wounded. We have already had very grave difficulties and considerable discontent in conditions which make us dependent on the French for the transport and care of our sick and wounded.”

General Pershing answered more fully what Marshal Foch had said the day before at Ligny, about the American Army's shortage of equipment.

“It has been said that the American Army is a fiction, and cannot now be actually formed because it lacks artillery and services. Unfortunately this lack is evident, but our shortages in this respect are due to the fact that the Americans have brought over infantry and machine-guns to the virtual exclusion of services and auxiliaries. Permit me also to recall that when this decision was made there was coupled with it the promise that the Allies would undertake to provide the necessary services and auxiliaries and that you yourself have repeatedly guaranteed the formation of a real American Army. It seems to me it is far more appropriate at the present moment for the Allies temporarily to furnish the American Army

with the services and auxiliaries it needs than for the Allies to expect further delay in the formation of an American Army. I am writing faithfully my own ideas, which are those not only of every American officer and soldier, but also of my Government."

After hinting to Marshal Foch what might happen if he really did appeal to President Wilson, General Pershing presented his own idea of what the American Army should do, once it was formed. This was:

He did not agree with the Marshal's plan to limit the St. Mihiel attack arbitrarily to cutting off the salient. If the Americans succeeded in surprising the Germans, he didn't want them to stop without trying to carry out their full original plan, reach the maximum objective, and threaten Metz and the Briey Basin and that part of the southern railroad line running through the Woëvre Plain west of Metz.

"I think that the decision relative to the extension to be given to the exploitation of the success should be reserved," he wrote. "To do this, it seems indispensable that I keep at my disposition all the divisions that I am concentrating now in view of the St. Mihiel operation."

And if he did that, how could he have twelve to sixteen divisions ready for the Meuse-Argonne attack that Marshal Foch wanted to start September fifteenth to twentieth? The only answer was to give up the St. Mihiel attack or postpone the Meuse-Ar-

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gonne. And if the St. Mihiel attack were carried out as he thought it should be, no one could tell beforehand how long it would last, so no one could set a date ahead for the subsequent Meuse-Argonne. If we won a big success at St. Mihiel, that second battle might never have to be fought.

Here is what General Pershing proposed to Marshal Foch:

“Carry through the St. Mihiel operation and immediately thereafter withdraw as many American divisions as practicable and rest and reinforce them and train them with a view to their employment in an attack either in the region of Belfort or of Lunéville. After the attack just mentioned, withdraw and reconstitute and again attack, even though it will then be winter, with the best American divisions. During all this time, build up an American sector in the East [Lorraine and Alsace] and finally, during January or February, entrust to the Americans the sector from St. Mihiel to Switzerland [a third of the whole Western Front]. This is, in my opinion, the best utilization of the American troops, and I ask that this plan be followed.”

Boiled down, the program was to go as far as possible at St. Mihiel, then, if no great victory came, to attack in Alsace or Lorraine. The former attack, near Belfort, might cut the Rhine railroads and isolate Germany from large Swiss food supplies. The latter, near Lunéville, was more strategic and would be the eastern arm of the enveloping movement against Metz

and the mines and directly toward Germany, of which the St. Mihiel attack was the western. The Lunéville attack followed the strategic conception of September, 1917, and could be readily supported by the Services of Supply already created and rapidly expanding.

It was, in short, the same original American plan of campaign toward whose realization General Pershing had worked steadily since its broad outlines were first conceived. Its object was the same as the Foch plan, to drive the Germans from northern France and Belgium. Its first step was the St. Mihiel attack in the level Woëvre Plain west of Metz. It might have involved later an American attack east or northeast of Verdun, where Marshal Foch on August seventeenth had voluntarily tacked on the six extra French divisions, but it involved none in the rough Meuse-Argonne farther west where Marshal Foch now wanted the Americans to attack.

But again, as in the spring, General Pershing thought of the big thing, the emergency, the chance to end the war. He offered to give up his own program. He wrote: "However, in your capacity of Allied Commander-in-Chief, it is your province to decide as to the strategy of operations, and I abide by your decision."

The American Commander had shown that he wished to play the game with Marshal Foch and the 'Allies. He would attack, as nearly as possible, where

they thought it was in the common interest for him to attack, not where he preferred. But on one thing he was still convinced, therefore, firm. He wrote:

“There are a number of points which especially affect the American Army, and which I think should be given the consideration which the American effort in this war warrants. The first of these relates to the method of employing the American Forces.

“I can no longer agree to any plan which involves the dispersion of our units. This is a matter whose importance is such as to demand very frank discussion. Briefly, our officers and soldiers alike are, after one experience, no longer willing to be incorporated in other armies, even though such incorporation be by larger units. The older American divisions have encountered so much difficulty in their service with the French and British that it is inadvisable to consider the return of such divisions to French or British control. The same is true of our Corps staffs.”

He clinched the statement with this conclusion :

“Finally, however, there is one thing that must not be done, and that is to disperse the American forces among Allied armies; the danger of destroying by such dispersion the fine morale of the American soldier is too great, to say nothing of the results to be obtained by using the American Army as a whole. If you decide to utilize the American forces in attacking in the direction of Mézières [the Meuse-Argonne] I accept that decision, even though it complicates my supply system and the care of my sick and wounded, but I do insist that the American Army be employed as a whole, either east of the Argonne or west of the

'Argonne, and not four or five divisions here and six or seven there.'

That declaration of independence for the young American Army was one of the most important letters General Pershing or any other American general ever wrote. General McAndrew and General Conner delivered it at Marshal Foch's headquarters at Bombon, northeast of Paris, the night of August thirty-first.

Next day they talked to the Marshal and to General Weygand, his Chief of Staff. Some have said that the Germans were already beaten then. The Marshal did not think so. He emphasized that they were still fighting and, with a little rest, would cheat the Allies of the fruit of recent victories. He was sure the converging attack on the railroads, with the Americans advancing in the Meuse-Argonne, was the way to prevent that. He suggested that the Americans give up the St. Mihiel attack entirely.

The Marshal read General Pershing's letter soberly, especially the part in which General Pershing said that not only he but every American officer and soldier wanted an independent American Army and that their Government backed them. If that were so, he knew that General Pershing had an ace up his sleeve, in the terms under which Marshal Foch held his job. When, on April third, the Allied premiers and commanders gave him supreme command over their armies they had still an eye to self-preservation by

means more selfish than cooperation—like all allies. The last paragraph of the resolution said:

“The Commanders-in-Chief of the British, French and American Armies will exercise to the fullest extent the tactical direction of their Armies. Each Commander-in-Chief will have the right to appeal to his Government if, in his opinion, his army is placed in danger by any instruction received from General Foch.”

No one had made such an appeal yet, although Sir Douglas Haig had come near it, and Marshal Foch hardly wanted any one to appeal—especially the American Commander-in-Chief who had about all the Allied reinforcements and who was so sure that his Government would support him. And why not? He was carrying out his orders. So the Marshal sent word to General Pershing to come at two o'clock on September second with his Staff, prepared to work out a plan satisfactory to all. Once more the saber had cut the Gordian knot, or, to vary the metaphor, the ace had taken a trick.

The conference on September second at Bombon was important. There were, besides Pershing, McAndrew, Conner, Foch and Weygand, Pétain, French Commander-in-Chief and Buat, his Chief of Staff, and several others. As the Marshal's plan was discussed a second time, it seemed plainer still to the Americans that the attack in the Meuse-Argonne was

the most important and the toughest of all four converging attacks upon the jugular-vein railroads. On all the Western Front, the Allies were then nearest to either railroad at the Meuse-Argonne-Champagne front only thirty-one miles south of the Sedan-Mézières line. That was the place chosen for the American attack, supported by the French, to cross the thirty-one miles quickly enough to cut or shell and bomb to pieces the Sedan-Mézières shuttle of the southern railroad before the Germans could extricate troops, guns and supplies from their peninsula on the Western Front. If that attack succeeded, the Americans thought it would injure the Germans more vitally than any other of the Allied attacks, not even excepting the British drive for Maubeuge through the Cambrai section of the Hindenburg Line.

That section had been advertised so well that most people thought it alone was the Hindenburg Line. But the Cambrai section was only one part, perhaps fifty miles long, of that prepared line nearly two hundred fifty miles long, stretching from Lille to Metz, and if the Cambrai section was most deeply fortified artificially it was because it was less strong naturally than other parts. The strongest part, naturally, of all, called the Kriemhilde Line, was the part that Marshal Foch and Sir Douglas Haig had chosen for the Americans to attack in the Meuse-Argonne. Though when we started that attack, we should be

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nearer the southern jugular-vein railroad than the British were to the northern, we should be farther away from the part of the Hindenburg Line that we had to break than they from the part they had to break—and we should have to break three other prepared trench systems before we reached it.

The thirty-one-mile road to Sedan and Mézières through the Meuse-Argonne was rougher than anywhere on the Western Front. General Pershing has called the country “ideal for defensive fighting.” Nature and the Germans had made it so. Nature had made it rugged, hilly, wooded, muddy, for the climate was raw and rainy especially in autumn. The Germans had worked four years adding artificial obstacles to natural, and the thirty-one miles comprised, first, thirteen miles of trenches, barbed wire, concrete dug-outs and machine-gun nests, then several miles more surveyed that could be turned with a little time into still another defense line.

Here too the German defensive zone was thickest, because the Metz-Meuse-Argonne region was the southern pivot of most of their Western Front, the converging point for all the systems of trenches and defensive lines they had built in four years of war to protect their conquests or at least to give time for their orderly and gradual relinquishment and the extrication of German troops and material. Of these defensive lines the Hindenburg Line, otherwise the

Lille-Metz line, was only one, albeit the strongest, best fortified and best known.

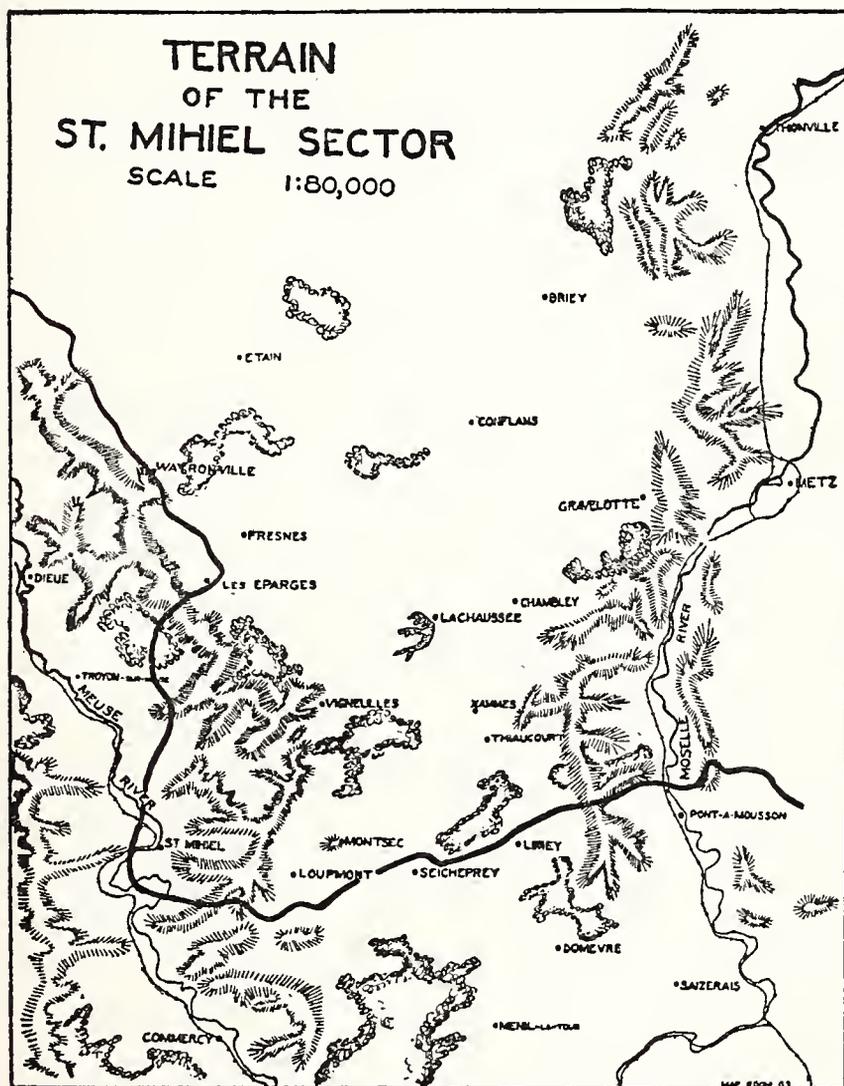
It seemed to Americans and French alike that the advance upon the southern pivot and the railroads, at Sedan and Mézières was the vital part of the whole plan agreed upon by Marshal Foch and Sir Douglas Haig, however hard and bloody it might prove. But the French had been through four years of war. They had lost heavily, and those who remained were too tired. The attempt simply could not succeed without the Americans. The German General Schwarte, in his authoritative war history published in 1926, says: "The chief work on the important right wing was assigned to the Americans."

Nevertheless, the idea that they should attack in the Meuse-Argonne didn't inspire in General Pershing and his advisers instant and unrestrained enthusiasm. Would not equal results be attained by striking into the region west of Metz, the Woëvre Plain beyond St. Mihiel, and cutting the southern railroad there, to say nothing of reaching the Briey Basin, then later, perhaps, striking east of Metz, near Lunéville?

A plan must be decided upon at once, for time pressed. Nobody at the conference predicted peace before Christmas. General Pétain said that if the Americans did attack in the Meuse-Argonne, they might get a third of the way to Sedan before winter,

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then must await spring. A week later he sent to Marshal Foch his plan for "the battle of 1919." Sir Douglas Haig alone seems to have had an inkling of what



How the land lay in the St. Mihiel salient before the American attack, September twelfth, showing the Meuse Heights on the left, with the Moselle Heights on the right, and the level Woëvre Plain in the center leading north toward the southern of the two German railroad systems and the Brie Iron Basin.

was coming. He ignored the British War Cabinet's warning that he attacked the Hindenburg Line at his own risk, and asked for more equipment for open warfare. Even then secret service reports from inside Germany predicted revolution and said the working classes looked upon the great and growing American Army as their future deliverers from war and despotism. No one seems to have taken the spy reports at full value. Still General Pershing must decide how his new army should be used.

He faced an awesome decision. The question was not simply: Where should he attack? If he chose rightly, there might be German disaster, if wrongly, there might be another American Wilderness in the Meuse-Argonne. The new battle might nickname him "Butcher," even lose him the greatest military command in American history. Under the Allied resolution of April third a weak man might pass the buck to President Wilson, claiming that by Marshal Foch's proposal his army was "placed in danger." A man too ambitious or too stubborn—some have called General Pershing both—might insist blindly upon the full original American plan. Instead, he asked himself again, "What is the big thing we are after?" The answer was, "To win the war as soon as possible." To the question, "How?" the answer was, "By playing the game with the Allied Commander-in-Chief."

But that did not mean delaying longer formation

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of the independent American Army that all the American leaders had foreseen and experience had shown should be formed at the earliest possible moment. He was as firmly convinced as ever that that moment had arrived and on that one point, after nearly a year and a half, thought he had played the game long enough.

The Americans would not, he said, fight any more scattered all over the map. Marshal Foch had proposed to have a small independent American Army west of the Argonne Forest, and more Americans intermingled with French east of it. If the Marshal wanted the Americans to fight the Meuse-Argonne at all he could give to one unified independent American Army either the whole front west of the Argonne, or the whole front east of it. Marshal Foch knew that was that. He yielded. From that moment date independence and unity for the A. E. F.

"*Eh bien*, on which side of the Argonne do you wish to fight?" he asked.

Another important decision. West of the Argonne in the Champagne, the country was for a time more level, the going easier, though later it became harder. The American Services of Supply had not been built to reach there. East of the Argonne the country was the hardest on the Western Front but supply and evacuation easier for the Americans though still more difficult than they liked. But could any Allied Army

but the young Americans stand the gaff of the Meuse-Argonne? Some one had to. Wasn't it up to them? Again the big thing, to win quickly and play the game.

"We'll fight east of the Argonne," General Pershing said.

Marshal Foch knew what that decision meant. His eye brightened.

"It is a country *rudement accidentée*," he said. "But—you have the devil's own punch. Go to it!"

At least, so he told American correspondents later. The Marshal was proud of his knowledge of English. He was learning American.

And how about St. Mihiel? Now that the Americans were committed to the Meuse-Argonne, should they give up entirely this earlier planned attack which they were still working at Ligny to prepare, or must they first at least cut off the salient? Another tough decision, and General Pershing, General McAndrew and General Conner withdrew with maps to a separate room to study it carefully.

They decided that we could not safely attack just west of the Meuse River with the St. Mihiel salient menacing our flank and rear from just east of it. The Germans would be on our backs in a minute. Also we needed the railroads and observation posts in the salient. So we must first cut it off. But that complicated the problem. It was now September second.

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Marshal Foch wanted us ready in the Meuse-Argonne by September twentieth, with the St. Mihiel salient all cut off. We had then only nine battle-experienced divisions in France, half the number required for the two battles. A division is twenty-seven thousand men with guns, transport and animals. It can not be juggled about instantaneously, especially in a crowded area where many other divisions are also being moved. We would have to take a chance on using some divisions without battle experience—well, they had to begin some time. The need would never be greater than now. General Pershing explained this to Marshal Foch, saying:

“In presenting the situation as to the relative condition of these divisions, I don’t mean to give the impression of any hesitancy in undertaking with all the vigor and enthusiasm I can muster, to execute the projects in view.

“I will undertake the St. Mihiel attack at once, and if it’s humanly possible, on the date set. I will also prepare another operation in whatever sector the Marshal may designate,—I understand this to be west of the Meuse [the Meuse-Argonne]—for the earliest date possible. I will undertake the operation there when the St. Mihiel fight shall have been finished. I will place every available man in these attacks. The American Army will do everything possible to carry them out.”

That cleared the air. Again Marshal Foch was vibrant with enthusiasm. “I have never doubted the

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sentiments which animate you," he said. "So I am not surprised to hear you utter this splendid expression of good will."

He admitted that it was a hard program mapped out for the Americans, but he was sure that they would do it. And now, "*tout le monde à la bataille!*"

At once he prepared his "Directive Number 3537" which, dated September 3, 1918, and marked "Strictly Personal and Secret," went to the Allied Commanders, Pétain, Haig and Pershing. It said:

"At present, the Allied offensive develops with success from the Scarpe to the Aisne, forcing the enemy to recoil on the whole front.

"To develop and strengthen that offensive, it is necessary that without any delay, all the Allied forces engage in battle, following convergent directions, on favorable parts of the front.

"With this aim:

"1. The British Armies, supported by the left of the French Armies, will continue to attack in the general direction of Cambrai-St. Quentin.

"2. The center of the French Armies will continue its action to throw the enemy beyond the Aisne and the Ailette.

"3. The American Army will execute the following operations:

"a. The offensive already planned in the Woëvre [St. Mihiel] reduced to the obtaining of the line Vigneulles-Thiaucourt-Regnéville [cutting off the salient only] sufficient to assure the results desired—to disengage the Paris-Avrincourt [Paris-Nancy] railroad and gain a base of departure suitable for future operations. This attack is to be launched as soon as

possible, so as to give no respite to the enemy, at latest September 10.

“b. An offensive in the general direction of Mézières, as strong and violent as possible, covered on the east by the Meuse, and supported on the left by an attack of the IV French Army.

“This last offensive is to be prepared with the greatest rapidity, and to be launched at the latest, September 20-25.

“It will have as aim, at first by actions pushed forward astride the Argonne Forest, to throw the enemy back on the line Stenay—Le Chesne—Attigny [an advance of about twenty miles]: later to reach the region of Mézières, [some fifteen miles farther on] always manœuvring by the East, to conquer the resistance on the Aisne. Its successive stages are marked by the lines:

“Dun-sur-Meuse-Grandpré-Challerange;
“Somme Py-Stenay-Le Chesne-Attigny.”

There was the plan finally agreed upon,—converging attacks by all the Allied Armies to break the whole two-hundred-fifty-mile Hindenburg Line from the Meuse to the North Sea and cut the two jugular-vein railroad systems vital to the Germans, and so force their retreat from their peninsular front in Belgium and northern France back at least to the German frontier. The Belgian-British-French attack in Flanders was described in a separate directive issued September eighth. That completed the plan of the Battle of the Western Front.

How important was the American part in it is shown by the stipulation that their attack in the Meuse-Ar-

gonne should be "as strong and violent as possible" and that through them the French on their left were to be enabled to cross the formidable obstacle of the Aisne River. The two main thrusts would be those of the British, rested and reorganized since the Germans last hit them in April, who still had some American troops with them, and the almost wholly fresh American First Army. The other attacks would be mainly to preserve connection, and keep the Germans busy and distracted on as much of the front as possible.

That was the plan that was tried, and it worked.

The German revolution was not included in the plan. But whether or not it would have worked anyway, or whether the American plan would have brought victory and peace sooner and at smaller cost, we can not know. We can honor Marshal Foch who drew the plan, blending all the Allied Armies into a harmonious whole, and General Pershing who played the game with him on September 2, 1918,—in manner still not fully appreciated in either's country.

The Americans entered the greatest battle in American or in world history, sacrificing some of their strategical convictions, because they believed it best and wisest to give their indispensable help to the Allies and to the Allied Commander-in-Chief to execute the hardest part of his plan, and so to hasten peace and victory.

CHAPTER III

THE TWO BATTLES OF ST. MIHIEL

So THERE were two battles when the Americans wiped out the St. Mihiel salient in twenty-six hours—and then stopped. You read about the battle that was and got one of your greatest war thrills. The battle that might have been if the Americans had kept on going, and why they didn't—who has heard of it?

At St. Mihiel, propaganda and censorship were cleverly enlisted, for perfectly good military reasons, to tell the world a good deal, but not all, about the battle that was, and nothing about the battle that might have been. To this day few, even of the nearly two millions of the A. E. F. in France, have heard the full story of the first independent American offensive of the World War.

The battle that was made a spectacular news story, even in that tremendous last year of the war, 1918. The papers were full of it. When it broke on September twelfth, whistles blew and bells rang and people at home whacked strangers on the back and bought extras from newsboys shrieking about "Saint Meheel!"

It was great reading, glorious reading! The salient that for four years had thrust out as the most con-

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spicuous feature of the Western Front, pinched out in twenty-six hours by an amateur army!

Its more than 100,000 German defenders overwhelmed! Some 15,000 of them captured, with 443 guns! Our losses, 7000! A complete local victory!

No hint that it might have been a great deal more. That the American Army's first battle might have caused the German Army's last——

Surely no hint that it might by any possibility have had the same decisive effect in ending the war that the terrific Meuse-Argonne, biggest battle we ever fought, had two months later at the cost of nearly two hundred thousand American casualties of all kinds.

But before our first battle could even start, our staff, which the Allies had been worrying about, faced a tremendous job. The change in plan meant they must change dispositions for the St. Mihiel battle in a week if possible, then fight it, and at the same time prepare a second battle on another battle-field in which much of the same artillery, aviation and material and eventually all other troops would be used—and all in three weeks. The Staff did the job.

In that time they handled a million and a half men including French and Italians going out and Americans coming in, besides artillery, aviation, tanks, supplies, ammunition and hospital equipment for two great battles. Most of the movement had to be at

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night, in cold weather, without showing fires or lights. Among the First Army Staff-Officers responsible were General Drum, Colonels Robert McCleave, George C. Marshall, Stephen O. Fuqua, Walter S. Grant and John L. Dewitt and Majors Lewis H. Watkins and Ralph Ward, with valuable help from General Hirschauer and his Staff of the II French Army.

Now that we had won the fight for an independent American Army, superhuman efforts had to be made to get it on the front. In the emergency, General Pershing stripped the Services of Supply of men and vehicles, down to the very bone—at a time when demands upon it were to be heaviest. He, General McAndrew and General Conner believed the situation justified it, despite the protests of Major-General James G. Harbord, commanding the S. O. S. and Brigadier-General George V. H. Moseley, Chief of the Coordination Section at G. H. Q. As Marshal Foch had said, the A. E. F. was lopsided. It had too many fighting men, not enough S. O. S. troops.

The S. O. S. even had been short of special troops. Now we had to have still more for our new First Army on the front. We had not enough engineers and labor troops to build and run railroads and roads, or telegraph and telephone lines, or hospitals, or to handle ammunition. We had not enough military police or salvage troops. We had not enough wagons, horses, ambulances, trucks, locomotives or railroad cars. We

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needed replacements of all kinds, human and material.

To correct this result of rushing across fighting men to help the Allies, General Pershing had cabled the War Department already to send us special troops, and cut down on infantry and machine-gunners whereof we had plenty. The War Department replied that troop movement and shipping schedules could not be changed immediately, but it would do its best.

Breakdown threatened the army behind the army, without which no fighting man may eat or be clothed, or have bullet or bayonet to fight with, or bandage or medicine to save his life. As General Harbord telegraphed General Pershing, battles were fought "by the First Army and the S. O. S.—if the S. O. S. fails the First Army will fail." Breakdown on the S. O. S.: defeat at the front. That was just after he had wired on September thirteenth that "recent withdrawal of troops from S. O. S. (to the front) is having disastrous effect here." He had twenty-five per cent. of the men he needed, thirty per cent. of the transportation and twice as much cargo coming in to be unloaded and handled in the next thirty days, besides more troops arriving. He insisted that General Pershing give him, as labor troops for the S. O. S., three divisions trained in the United States as combat troops, now in France but not at the front.

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Early September, 1918, was a wearing and trying time for the A. E. F. From top to bottom it was shaken by the changes incident to becoming an independent force with its own fighting front when it was only partly ready to do so. There were grumblings that the Americans were too impatient, that General Pershing in his desire to command his own troops had put something over on Marshal Foch, had bitten off more than the A. E. F. was ready to chew. But American enthusiasm and ingenuity worked day and night. And it came out all right. Those at home heard nothing of all this until they saw the black streamer heads across the front pages of their newspapers on September twelfth, ten years ago.

An important thing to prepare for was handling news and propaganda, for the Intelligence Section at G. H. Q. now realized the importance of such things. It determined upon wide-spread publicity once the battle had started, but before that thick gobs of silence, lest the Germans be assisted in turning our dress rehearsal into a farce. Nobody admitted it, but every one knew they might do it.

So the newspaper correspondents with the A. E. F. took a week-end off from reporting the fighting of the Pennsylvania Guardsmen of the 28th Division and Major-General Robert Alexander's New Yorkers of the 77th along the Vesle and went down to G. H. Q. at Chaumont for another of their periodical get-wise

conferences with General Pershing. The General was, as always, his own spokesman, clear and forceful. Like every one else at that time, he did not expect the war to end in the immediate future. He cautioned us against too much optimism in dispatches because of recent successes.

"You'd better not win the war," he said with his most engaging smile, "until next year. We hope to have something interesting for you to write about pretty soon," he went on, and talked a little about the coming battle, when, for the first time in his life, he would command a great army in action. He didn't seem worried about it. He tried not to tell too much, but St. Mihiel was getting as much publicity as a *Follies* first night. Our enthusiastic amateur army was spreading the news all over France, ably assisted by a French populace only too glad to have such cheering tidings as a coming *attaque Américaine*. Every one was leaking, from the American colony in Paris to government officials in Washington. The newsstands in northern France were featuring maps of the St. Mihiel salient. No wonder prisoners said the whole German Army knew about it, and that on the same day that Marshal Foch appeared at Ligny, Lieutenant-General Fuchs, commanding the German Army Detachment C, holding the salient, was preparing for trouble.

That sort of thing had helped wreck the big French

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spring offensive of 1917. The Intelligence Section was worried. It had purposely allowed the announcement on August tenth that the First Army had been formed to operate in the Marne area, but that apparently had not fooled the Germans. It tried again.

Down in the Vosges, far from St. Mihiel, the small ruined village of Frapelle reposed almost in No Man's Land. The Germans kept a few squads of men there, but it was valueless to them—or to us. Yet one night, with barrage and all appurtenances of a regular attack, the 6th Infantry of the American 5th Division stormed Frapelle.

An amazed German staff asked itself, "*Warum?*" Intelligence hoped the answer would be: To prepare for a larger attack, and that more German troops would be sent to the Vosges and away from St. Mihiel. The American official communiqué, which the Germans read, made much of the capture. The correspondents were asked to do likewise; and did, as their journalistic consciences permitted.

Then Intelligence invented the Battle of Alsace—whereof more later.

Efforts at mystery in dealing with the correspondents were hardly so successful. The only question in our minds was on what day we should leave sunshiny Meaux on the slow-flowing Marne for the gray skies and rocky hillsides of Lorraine. Several correspondents of London papers joined us, and on September

tenth we were told to be ready for an early start next morning. Until the last minute we sent dispatches about the fighting on the Vesle, to distract attention from St. Mihiel.

We had a genial breakfast the morning of the eleventh, at the Sirène. We bade farewell to sharp-faced madame and the quizzical youth Napoleon, faithful Ganymede, roaring a ribald ditty about an ideal journalistic state, "When the censor's in Tokio."

Near evening, in the familiar mud and mist of Lorraine, our procession of cars was halted by an earnest and very new M. P.

"Hafta take off that tag," he said, pointing to our tricolored G. H. Q. windshield emblem. "Can't show tags here. Can't show lights, neither."

We were entering the First Army area, whither for the past two weeks and more the Yanks had been coming, but without the "drums rum-tumming" and other boisterousness of the song. Machiavellian efforts had been made to keep secret the concentration in Lorraine of the greatest American force that, up to that time, had ever assembled.

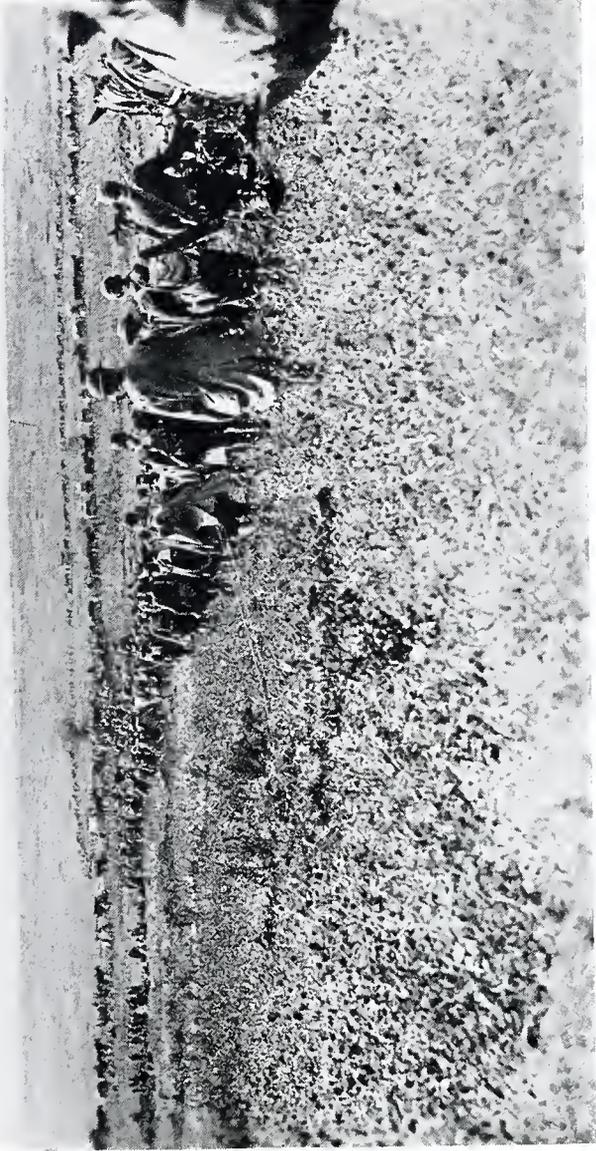
We drove through a darkening village that seemed deserted, but suddenly its streets filled with soldiers, who emerged from every building, formed silently and moved away without even the scratch of a match. The eastward road became crowded with looming trucks and shadowy men. In woods were giant guns,



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

At 'voir, Napoleon

Correspondents and censors leave Meaux, September eleventh



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

The Attack, September Twelfth
Montsec in the dim distance

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draped in camouflage nets, silent, biding their time. Through that darkness, with lights out, almost noiselessly, we slipped along toward great events.

It was raining when we reached the almost deserted streets of Nancy—before the war, Lorraine's most thriving city. Shelling and air bombing had taken heavy toll, and the Place Thiers was ghastly with a few shaded blue lights cast upon gutted shells and propped-up façades of buildings. Major-General D. E. Nolan, Chief of Intelligence of the A. E. F., awaited us in an upper room of the Hotel Angleterre, on whose wall was displayed the Battle of St. Mihiel.

The plan of battle was simple, as the General explained it to twenty-five correspondents seated on beds and floor, taking notes and marking pocket maps. His wall map showed the salient, its apex at the town of St. Mihiel on the Meuse River, southeast of the French fortress of Verdun, southwest of the German fortress of Metz. The western face of the salient, something over fifteen miles long, followed the Meuse Heights northward from St. Mihiel to east of Verdun; the southern face ran eastward from St. Mihiel twenty-five miles through the flat Woëvre Plain to the heights of the Moselle at Pont-à-Mousson. This salient, with an area of four hundred square miles, would be pinched out by two converging attacks.

The main attack would start on the southern face at five o'clock next morning and drive north, then

northeast, principally through the Woëvre Plain, to meet the second attack, which would start at eight from the western face southeastward, and would hurl the Germans from the Meuse Heights. Between the two attacks, around the apex of the salient, French troops would advance enough to keep the Germans busy. The whole operation would stop when the two attacks had united and formed a straight line across what had been the base of the salient, facing the withdrawal position the Germans had prepared and called the Michel position, part of the Hindenburg Line. Two days were allowed for this.

General Nolan's first concern was, of course, propaganda values. He urged that our first dispatches make clear that the objectives were strictly limited, so that nobody would misunderstand when the attack stopped. This was not to be the battle that might have been.

"We are not attacking the fortress of Metz," he said emphatically.

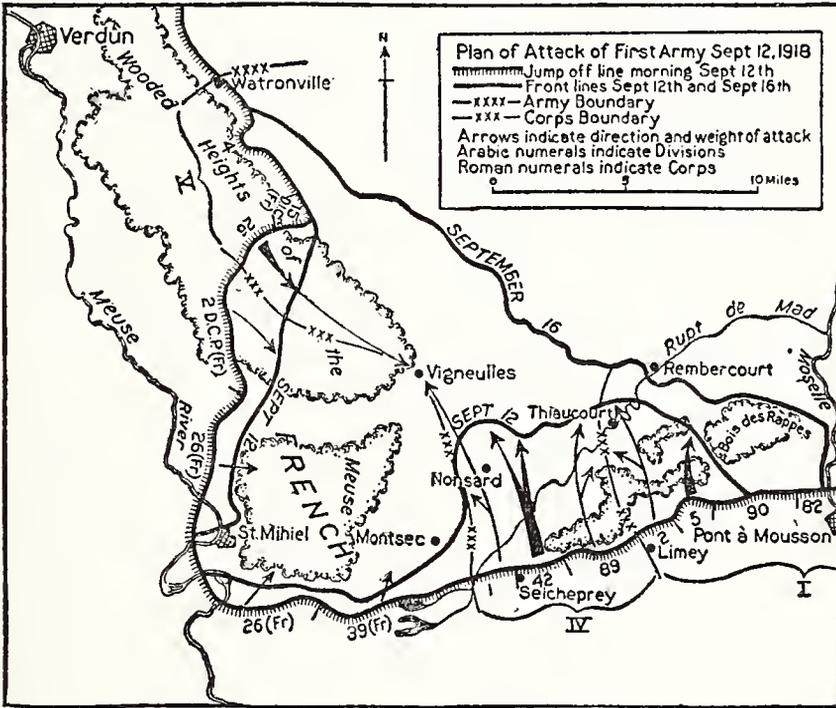
There was no hint then of what was coming after. One member of our new English contingent tried to find out. "What is this attack leading to?" he asked.

"I am not in Marshal Foch's confidence," was General Nolan's curt reply. The General filled to perfection the part of the shrewd Chief of Intelligence, and kept his secrets.

The Germans probably expected us to attack soon,

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General Nolan said, and might be planning a withdrawal, or, again, might put up a good fight; for although General Fuchs's one hundred thousand men were not of the best, his trenches and barbed wire were strong. The Staff was worried lest two men who had



The plan of attack on the St. Mihiel salient September twelfth, and its success, showing how the salient was pinched off by attacks from south and north that met in the center. Courtesy American Battle Monuments Commission.

deserted the night previous had told the Germans when to expect us, but as it turned out they hadn't, until too late to do the Germans any good.

Publicity arrangements were good. There were censors enough on duty to minimize delays at the new office on the Place Stanislas. Here were received by

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motorcycle courier frequent bulletins from press officers, former newspaper men attached to various headquarters, which were very useful, but could hardly replace news and impressions gathered first hand along the front. Telegraph transmission was good from the large Nancy post-office to Paris—cable relay point. The bearded French operators, who at first bewailed the mass of messages in English, soon got the spirit of the day and cleared them rapidly.

Propaganda considerations dictated that every American daily newspaper get something as soon as possible about the opening of the battle, so this arrangement was made: each of the twenty-five correspondents would send first a one-hundred-word flash announcing that the attack had started. These closely skeletonized flashes became twice one hundred words when expanded by a good rewrite man in a New York newspaper office, and that without falsifying or exaggerating. The press associations got the wire first and drew lots for precedence. Correspondents of individual newspapers and syndicates did the same.

Every flash emphasized that the attack had limited objectives only. Most of them were written around midnight, five hours before the jump-off and mentioned the strength of the enemy's positions and the rain as alibis in case the attack did not continue as well as it had started. The first news of St. Mihiel went on the wire at Nancy at five A. M., September

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twelfth,—“H hour” or “zero” when the Infantry jumped off,—around midnight, September eleventh, in New York. That made St. Mihiel really an “evening-paper story” for the next day, and even the “beat” bulletin, a United Press flash from Fred S. Ferguson announcing simply that the Americans were attacking “between the Meuse and the Moselle,” appeared in the first editions of afternoon papers of the day of the attack and, allowing for the time difference, only a few hours after the attack had actually commenced.

Once the flashes were on their way, the wire was to be thrown open and the game to become catch-as-catch-can and the devil take slow writers. There was to be no restriction on the length of dispatches, and many men wrote before the jump-off follow stories based upon what General Nolan had told them and such “think stuff” as they could concoct after a twelve-hour automobile ride. Then they went to the roof of the Angleterre to see the artillery preparation.

It was said that the artillery concentration for St. Mihiel was the most powerful in the war up to that time. Nobody took any chances on the first independent American attack, and more heavy guns were brought together than ever before. Almost the entire Allied Railway Artillery Reserve, monster guns on steel railway carriages, took part, shelling the Metz railroad network far behind the front. Some three

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thousand guns of all calibers, more than had ever been fired before in an American battle, hurled nearly a million rounds of red ruin upon the salient.

From the roof of the Angleterre, we heard the muffled sound of troops and wagons below in the street, moving northward. We peered in that direction, where 555,000 Americans and 110,000 Frenchmen waited for H hour, but there was not a sign, not a light nor a sound. Minutes crawled until one o'clock. Then the heavens opened and the earth reeled.

The glare that leaped into the northern sky was white, sometimes yellow or orange, or shot with red where the thermite burst. In its midst the varicolored rockets which the Germans shot to beg help from their artillery seemed like children's squibs. The light flickered on the wet roofs of Nancy about us. The earth trembled and the air throbbed. This was fifteen miles from the front.

Again the halls echoed with the chatter of typewriters as we tried to describe the stupendous scene for newspaper readers three thousand miles away. Many of us wrote on until, from beneath the window, the chauffeurs' horns called us for the dawn of the day of St. Mihiel.

It was not quite light, and the gun flashes lighted the edges of dark clouds as we drove into Menil-la-Tour, where the winter before we had hobnobbed with the 1st Division when it held the first and only Amer-

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ican sector. The town was now IV Corps Headquarters, and Major-General Joseph T. Dickman and his Chief of Operations, Colonel W. N. Haskell, were chuckling over a report slip announcing "Some Germans still holding out in town of St. Mihiel."

"Fine!" said General Dickman. "That means more prisoners."

Right then something told us that our first appearance was going to be a knockout, even a wow. A few minutes later we heard from a grinning intelligence officer that his first officer prisoner had asked for a drink of French beer, "because German beer is only water now." Still, French liberated civilians reported Germans had left their village saying they were "going home—that's all."

The news got better all the time. The rain stopped and the sun came out,—a miracle for Lorraine,—speeding the advance. More prisoners appeared. Ambulances were few, operating teams in many hospitals stood idle. Reports of remarkable progress came in. Time-tables were upset.

Even covering the news of this battle was easy. We made the short trip to and from Nancy several times, getting off hurriedly written dispatches, then going back for more. Soon after the American communiqué—largely for European consumption—came out, it became clear that its claims were too modest. Censorship on news dispatches was cautious at first, but

in the afternoon General Nolan gave the word to go the limit. Our first independent offensive was an unqualified success—now let's tell the world, get the credit, cheer up the Allies and scare the Germans.

At six o'clock that evening, after a censorial confab, a dispatch was passed beginning: "The old St. Mihiel salient is no more." The "old" was insisted upon, because there was still a small vestige of a salient. At seven, Ferguson, of the United Press, got by a cable saying, "The Americans have completely flattened out the St. Mihiel salient." That was one in the afternoon in New York.

We just could not keep out the superlatives and adjectives that night. They sprayed from the typewriter keys, while the eagle screamed and flapped his wings. Victory was in the air. No drink, pre- or post-Volstead, gives the same kick as writing the news of a victorious battle on the edge of the battle-field. That, and not the fact that the Germans were bombing Nancy and the air was full of shrapnel, is probably the real reason why several American newspapers ordinarily veracious, rejoiced next day at the capture of "a famous German gas expert, Count Otto Schmeerkase." Anything seemed possible that night.

That night, too, as late couriers brought reports of still further progress, some raised the cry, "Why can't we go on? Why stop on these limited objectives?" But the censor's ruling was iron-clad, and, of course,

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rightly. Such a possibility could not even be hinted. Metz, Thionville, Conflans, Longuyon, other important points behind the German lines must not even be named. We were all working for Marshal Foch. We were fighting the battle that was, not the battle that might have been.

What had happened was about this: The main attack on the right, up the Woëvre Plain had been a cyclone, sweeping all before it, thanks to the headlong dash of the 2nd and 42nd Divisions and the skilful maneuvering of the 1st. The newer divisions, the 89th leading, 5th, 90th and 82nd, had done well also. Objectives had been reached far ahead of schedule. One counter-attack had been repulsed.

The French holding attack in the center had been less strongly pushed than planned, but more strongly resisted. Still, the French had made some progress and reached St. Mihiel. The dominating height of Montsec, east of it, had fallen, outflanked by the 1st Division.

The French and American attack on the Meuse Heights on the left had not gone so rapidly as that in the plain. There the Germans resisted stubbornly to protect their troops withdrawing from the tip of the salient. Near evening the 26th New England Guard Division and French Colonials finally succeeded in driving the Germans and Austro-Hungarians from almost their last fastness, but they had

hung on long enough there to permit all but four thousand of some forty or fifty thousand troops, marching and fighting a rear-guard fight that delayed the French, to escape from the bag at whose neck we were trying to draw the string.

There has been a lot of hokum, German, Allied and American, printed and spoken about that very important part of the St. Mihiel battle. Why did we get only fifteen thousand prisoners instead of fifty or sixty thousand? How did all those Germans wriggle out of the bag? Even after ten years, many still believe that the Germans withdrew before our attack started, that we struck into the air, and simply chased an enemy who ran faster than we. Ludendorff started that tale by the communiqué he wrote on September twelfth as alibi for what had happened. Hundreds of millions all over the world read that communiqué, but how many, especially in this country, have read the correction, apology even, that Ludendorff wrote later in his memoirs? Here it is:

“The earlier reports indicated that the evacuation was proceeding satisfactorily, this being facilitated by the enemy not following up. I founded my official communiqué, which turned out later to be too favorable, on these reports.”

Truth is, although our advance publicity did, as we feared, warn them, the Germans made poor use of the warning. Not only did they not withdraw before

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we hit them, but they even guessed our plans so wrong that our blow caught them by surprise and off balance, and almost ruined them entirely, even though we had to pull the punch and stop on a limited objective. They showed cleverness only in getting out of the fix they were in. They retreated better than they had sized up our intentions or fought to prevent our realizing them.

So the description of St. Mihiel as "the sector where the Americans relieved the Germans" may be amusing but is quite inaccurate. Best proof of that comes from the Germans themselves, notably from General Fuchs's report to General von Gallwitz, written a week after our attack. It settles all the rumors.

From August twentieth to September first, General Fuchs and General von Gallwitz knew the Americans were up to something new. The assemblage of our First Army could not be entirely camouflaged. But they couldn't be sure what was coming until September first, when Hindenburg and Ludendorff notified General von Gallwitz that they had information that the Americans planned a converging attack upon Metz—the very thing General Pershing had recommended to Marshal Foch in his letter of the day before. Secret service, or coincidence?

Already General Fuchs's troops had commenced the first preparations for slow and gradual withdrawal from the salient, a dangerous position for the Ger-

mans without troops enough to hold it against strong attack.

The Germans thought they had all the time in the world. They put more men to work on the uncompleted or undug trenches of the Michel position, put in some extra guns and moved out others, but on September seventh, so far from having started to withdraw they planned to get the jump on us and attack first. General von Gallwitz suggested, and General Fuchs tentatively agreed, that they try to drive down the Woëvre Plain into our assembling troops, guns and supplies, gobble up what they could, upset our plans and make the American First Army a laughing-stock. Military effect, considerable; moral effect, tremendous. But this time Allied Secret Service functioned and we would have been ready.

General von Gallwitz and General Fuchs worked out their plan in conference on September ninth, but dropped it like a hot potato when they heard the same day that the Americans would attack not only the southern but the western face of the salient. Hitherto they had known only about the attack in the Woëvre Plain. News of preparations along the Meuse Heights settled the counter-attack idea. General von Gallwitz asked Hindenburg and Ludendorff for permission to withdraw immediately from the salient to the Michel position.

When, during the conferences from August thirti-



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General Max C. W. von Gallwitz

Who commanded the German Group of Armies in Lorraine, opposing the Americans



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

They've Gone!

A Patrol of the 165th Infantry entering a village in the St. Mihiel salient abandoned by the Germans

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eth to September second, Marshal Foch had predicted that the Germans would withdraw at St. Mihiel without much fight, he had said that all the Americans really need do was to attack the salient from the south. Luckily they had insisted on the northern attack too. Had they not, St. Mihiel would have been at least a far bloodier battle than it was.

The Germans in the salient did not make the best use of the Hindenburg-Ludendorff permission to get away before the Americans struck. On September tenth, they started to withdraw supplies and men on a schedule that would have landed them on the Michel position by September eighteenth. The trouble was, we attacked early the morning of the twelfth.

That was a bad time for the Germans,—the night chosen to begin withdrawing for a short distance only the front line on most of the southern front. Their rearward-moving infantry at some points was actually caught on the roads by our barrage. Our attack was a surprise, and got the Germans very much at disadvantage, but they had certainly not withdrawn from the salient.

Nor did they begin to withdraw until they had fought vainly for six hours to stop us. After several hours of our bombardment, but before the infantry attack, General Fuchs told General von Gallwitz he saw no reason to start evacuating the salient and would not do so. By noon he felt differently.

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He knew then that in the Woëvre Plain the Americans had broken his front, and were within less than a mile of the Michel position, near Thiaucourt. He feared that these troops, supposedly our 42nd and 2nd Divisions, might at any moment break through this line to which he had hoped to withdraw. During most of the day, he had not troops enough there to hold it. He reported afterward:

“There was not only danger of a break-through at the vital point in the Michel position, but also a serious threat at the line of retreat of the Mihiel Group which was still in the salient.

“The situation required an immediate decision. If the troops in the St. Mihiel sector were to be saved from capture there could no longer be the slightest delay in ordering the withdrawal of the front to the Michel position. Army Headquarters therefore issued the following order to the Mihiel Group at noon:

““The withdrawal will begin at once.””

Ten minutes later he got more news of American success that made him write: “The entire withdrawal to the Michel position was endangered.”

Until that evening, it was touch and go for the Germans. The bag of the salient was being closed, and the whole Mihiel Group, forty or fifty thousand men, hotfooting it twenty miles to the rear to escape. The neck was held open barely long enough, on the north by the defenders of the Meuse Heights ordered

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to hold at all costs, on the south by small detachments who guarded the important road crossings, but more than these, by the fact that we did not follow through immediately.

Our Intelligence captured later estimates by German experts of the value of American troops, generals and staffs as revealed at St. Mihiel. Some praised cooperation between infantry and artillery, the courage of the troops, other things. Those, Intelligence gave to the correspondents to cable home. Others said the troops attacked clumsily. The German experts said one thing emphatically—we had missed the chance of a lifetime to win a big victory. We had caught the Germans off guard, dealt a terrible blow, then failed to reap the full reward. Those, Intelligence kept to itself. The Germans, of course, did not know about the battle that was and the battle that might have been. But throughout September twelfth and into the evening, General Pershing and the First Army Staff were uncertain what was happening behind the German lines in the salient.

The German withdrawal had commenced at noon, but not until afternoon did General Pershing feel justified by all his information, in taking even then a chance of it being so general that he could upset the careful program of two days' advance by limited objective stages and give orders for every one to push on and close the salient regardless of schedule. The first

reports he had indicated that the Germans were fighting, as in fact, they were.

General Nolan and his right-hand man, Colonel Arthur L. Conger, had followed up the advancing doughboys that morning in an automobile, so closely that it very nearly became German. They had seen how the battle went, that there were still German troops, guns, supplies enough in the salient to show there had been no general withdrawal. They had seen, too, how the doughboys went at them with rifle and bomb and bayonet, how gallant and how gay they were in this first American battle. Returned to the house in Ligny where General Pershing did some of his most important work, General Nolan told him all this. Face shining with delight, for several minutes General Pershing walked the floor, overflowing with praise for the young American soldiers.

"I knew they'd do it," he said. "I knew I could depend on them. There are no soldiers in the world to equal them."

It was very late in the afternoon before his information agreed pretty well that roads out of the salient were clogged with German troops, guns and supplies. They were streaking it to get out of the bag.

To prevent that, the cavalryman Pershing turned to cavalry. He had only three troops, D, F and H of the 2nd, but in they went. That was romance,—three hundred horsemen, sabers thumping against

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horses' flanks, riding into a forest to trap part of a fleeing German Army. But the romance turned to broad farce.

The horses did it. Only three weeks before, they had been in veterinary hospitals recuperating from wounds, mange and shell-shock. When, ten days before the battle, General Dickman reviewed the cavalry thus mounted, he excused them from galloping past lest the scene resemble Rosa Bonheur's *The Horse Fair*. Nor were the men, many recruits with only ten days' training in mounted combat, all centaurs. But they rode into battle with hearts light if seats sometimes uneasy.

At four in the afternoon they started from Nonsard, five miles behind the former German front, to see what they could find out about the German retreat and to blow up with hand grenades, if possible, the only railroad they could use, at Vigneulles.

Riding into Nonsard wood, they struck German "sign" immediately, abandoned horses and wagons, then a few scattered soldiers. As they reached the edge of the wood, they saw a sight that nearly drove them wild.

Stretching eastward out of the salient was a road, jammed with German troops, wagons and guns, part of the Mihiel Group in retreat. On this shining mark the cavalry opened fire with automatic rifles, and prepared for a pistol charge. The Germans stopped

retreating and came at them from the road. From the wood through which they had just passed hidden machine-guns fired into flanks and rear. They were trapped.

What happened then took all the romance out of the first and one of the few American cavalry fights in the World War. As rifle and machine-gun fire crackled all about them, those shell-shocked, emaciated nags laid back their ears, kicked up their heels, and ran away. Back through the wood they streamed, inexperienced riders sawing at bridles while a few old timers pistoled German machine-gunners. The Vigneulles railroad remained intact. The cavalry returned to Nonsard (it was getting dark) minus one man killed and one captured, plus ten captured Germans and the further information that the rest were escaping as fast as they could.

To cut them off, General Pershing needed not three hundred but three thousand cavalry, well trained and mounted. Lacking them, he tried to make the best possible use of his infantry. He telephoned the Corps Commanders, Dickman of the IV, Cameron of the V Corps, who were to draw the strings of the bag by meeting in the center of the salient. The attack order had authorized them, if things went very well at first, as they certainly had, to advance on their own responsibility on the first day to the objective designated for the first phase of the second day's advance. This,

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General Liggett and General Dickman had ordered at about noon.

Now General Pershing ordered that the rest of the previous program be scrapped, and that the two infantry attacks join at once. The 26th Division from the north and the 1st from the south were to march and fight, if necessary, all night, and meet by daylight near Vigneulles, so fastening tight the mouth of the bag. The most daring piece of work in the battle was the night march of the 102nd Infantry from Connecticut that followed.

Six miles they plugged away through woods that night, down from the heights into the plain. Several times they met Germans on the road. Once they ran head on in pitch dark into a German truck train, without lights, trying to get supplies out of the salient. The New Englanders fought and marched hard. They had been told it was a race between them and the 1st Division, for Vigneulles. By 2:15 next morning they had won, and stood at that main cross-road of the salient.

But most of the Germans were gone. The 1st Division had had the most complicated task of any American division. By 7:45 the evening of September twelfth they had got almost to the scene of the cavalry's discomfiture two hours earlier, two miles from the Vigneulles-St. Benoit highway, main German line of retreat from the salient. Troops sent to

cut it got lost in the dense underbrush, and it was three o'clock in the morning before they got patrols on to the road and took some prisoners.

In the meantime, General Pershing's information indicated the truth more clearly: the Germans were retreating and most of them getting away. He spurred on the corps commanders, and about midnight Colonel Haskell telephoned for General Dickman to the 1st Division this order:

("The First Army reports that all the roads leading northeast toward Vigneulles and Hattonchatel, including the trails, are crowded with artillery moving northeast. Send a brigade of infantry lightly equipped and reinforced with all available machine guns to occupy the roads leading southwest from Hattonchatel and Vigneulles with a view to bottling up this retreating artillery. The Corps Commander believes an opportunity presents itself for a great capture."

Probably by the time the 1st Division received that order, the opportunity was almost gone. Nevertheless, after brief delay in the darkness, at 3:15, the 2nd Brigade was on the move, in another groping, anxious night march to meet the 26th Division. It was eight o'clock in the morning when the 28th Infantry reached Vigneulles and found the Connecticut Yankees of the 102nd waiting with grins of welcome and triumph.

An hour later the cavalry went through and lived

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up to its gallant tradition. The shell-shocked horses stood fast, or better, galloped for a real cavalry charge, took one town, St. Maurice, twenty-five Germans and some valuable information. Twenty more were nabbed in burning Billy-sous-Côtes, and a battery of field-guns. A patrol went on farther and spotted Germans stringing barbed wire before Jonville. They had reached the Michel position of the Hindenburg Line. The troopers turned around and cantered back to Vigneulles, where the doughboys gave each three bottles of German beer.

About all that remained on September thirteenth was for the doughboys to push forward patrols and consolidate our new position facing this new German line across what had been the base of the salient, pick up the pieces, and shake hands all around. We had wiped out the salient twenty-six hours after the jump-off and twelve hours ahead of schedule, gained all our objectives, removed the menace to our right flank, got the railroads and observation posts we needed to use in the Meuse-Argonne, and, besides, fifteen thousand prisoners, four hundred forty-three guns and many stores. The first American battle had ended in victory.

The moral effect was important. St. Mihiel confirmed the belief in Allied countries that the tide had turned. Such overwhelming success for a new army made every one, Ally and German, wonder: "What will they do when they really get going?" The best

propaganda just then was plenty of straight news of what the Americans had done.

To get more of it, the correspondents managed the next day, despite the road jams that were the American Army's besetting sin, to make a pretty complete tour of the salient. Highest of the high spots was Montsec, a flat-topped steep-sided butte east of St. Mihiel, crowned with steel and concrete dugouts. From the Woëvre Plain below, Americans had lifted longing eyes to Montsec since January. It had been for the Germans a strong fortress and observation post in one.

Half-way up the road to the crest, we met Brigadier-General D. E. Aultman, likewise sightseeing. Back in January, he had said one day, standing before Brigadier-General George B. Duncan's P. C. in Ansauville, "Before Christmas, I'll meet you on Montsec." And we had thought, "Dream on!"

From Montsec we saw the might of a nation deployed upon the plain, our guns firing from German gun-pits, roads filled with slow-moving truck and wagon trains, infantry drying their clothes on German barbed wire, even narrow-gauge trains already puffing along German tracks.

We passed through St. Mihiel, only partly ruined, and found its handful of French civilians tearing down, with fierce cries, German *Ortskommandantur* signs. They looked wan and shabby, after four years under the invader, but that day, exalted.

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After detours to escape shell-torn roads not yet rebuilt, we picked our way to the Meuse Heights and the quaint and still smoking village of Hattonchatel, with its monastery, perched upon a crest dominating the new German positions as Montsec had dominated our old ones. From this eagle's nest, fascinated, we watched the Germans digging frantically to strengthen their Michel trenches. We saw on a horizon of gray-blue the smoke of troop trains bringing reinforcements. They could have few secrets from us now.

Down in the plain, we found the blazed trail of yesterday's advance in the fresh shell-holes and ruined villages beginning at Seicheprey. We drove across the thronging battle-field by roads just remade of broken stone from shell-shattered French homes, past the spider's web of barbed wire rusted brown, the brick trenches and concrete machine-gun pill-boxes that had not proved invincible, until we came to the village of Beney,—already rechristened Bennie,—seven miles beyond the old front line and almost in the new one. Here we found the "69th of Ireland" and some more of the Rainbow Division.

While German shells exploded methodically at three-minute intervals in an empty field near by, they told us this battle was much easier than "whin we crossed the O'Rourke and captured Murphy's Farm," three weeks before. Father Duffy said, "There's been very little work in my line." Bill Donovan, Lieuten-

ant-Colonel now, had led the regiment as if on one of his cross-country runs and was up at Sebastopol Farm, "where there's a cow."

Beney afforded no cow, but we lunched with Colonel Benson Hough, of the 166th, from Ohio, on German potatoes and dark bread, horse meat and very *Ersatz* coffee in a dugout, with the unmistakable Boche smell, whose previous occupant had left behind also his fountain pen and Iron Cross.

The 42nd and their neighbors, the 2nd Division, could have kept going, they said, "till hell froze over." With nothing in front of them, they had to stop on limited objectives reached far ahead of schedule. The 2nd Division was easily on its second day's objective on the first day.

On the front of the Rainbow Division, the chance of a farther advance seemed particularly good. And this was the place where General Fuchs feared it most. Early on the twelfth, the first day, the division advanced so rapidly that Major-General C. T. Menoher asked and General Dickman gave permission to go on to the objectives assigned for early next morning. Then Major-General Douglas MacArthur, commanding the 84th Brigade, believed there were few and badly scared Germans between him and Metz and that he could get within reach of the great fortress with slight loss.

General MacArthur has the brain of an engineer and

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the temperament of a cavalryman. He pushed ahead on foot for several kilometers and was not fired upon. Here seemed the chance for audacious action, and he proposed, through Lieutenant-Colonel Donovan, that the Rainbow forget limited objectives and push on. Scenting a big victory, he sent back to General Menoher messages urging this.

“Let me go ahead,” he wrote, “and I will be in Metz, and you will be a Field-Marshal.”

General Menoher felt obliged to remain a major-general and on his assigned objective, but to-day he says:

“The Division felt that in this case, at least, the limited objective, with no automatic means provided for advancing beyond such objectives, was a mistake, and was the direct means of causing the loss of a golden opportunity such as seldom comes.”

That was the opportunity to fight and win the battle that might have been.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

How about that battle? The battle that was, was over. We had wiped out the salient, and stopped. If we had gone on, what would have happened?

If we had followed the original American plan, thrust deeper into what General Pershing considered "the most sensitive section of the enemy's position on the Western Front," the Woëvre Plain, the Metz region, the Briey Basin, the back door to Germany, should we have caused German disaster? Following it up, might concerted Allied attacks have brought the end sooner, perhaps without the hardships and losses of the Meuse-Argonne? Even after ten years, who can be sure? It is one of the biggest questions about all the American fighting in the World War, and it remains still unanswered.

American generals and staff-officers have pondered that question, then and since. The historical section of the Army War College has studied it. Opinions differ, but many believe our neat local victory at St. Mihiel might have been far more—that the American Army's first battle might have been more nearly than it was the German Army's last.

They think that at St. Mihiel we had a great chance.

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We had caught the Germans unaware, just starting to withdraw, thrown them into confusion, got a local break-through. We had found a soft spot in the break-wall. If the thundering wave of husky young Americans that hit it could have gone on, that wave would have burst clear through the German front, with results decisive for the whole campaign. Sir Douglas Haig's and Marshal Foch's change in the original plan, acquiesced in by General Pershing in the common cause, prevented that. The wave at St. Mihiel was stopped just short of a big victory, so that the battle that might have been could not be.

What say the commanders on both sides? Let us take first the Germans. Ludendorff directed operations in 1918 under Hindenburg's nominal control. Now, after ten years, he writes for Doubleday, Doran:

"I venture the opinion that it would have been possible for the Americans to win a much greater and more decisive victory if their initial successes had been exploited with more decisiveness and firmness of intention."

Next to Ludendorff was General von Gallwitz, the Army Group Commander who directed more fighting against Americans than any German higher commander, and ranked among the best in the German Army. On March 20, 1928, he wrote me:

"In my opinion, the American Army, on September 12, the day of the Battle, could have advanced farther

than it actually did. As early as noon we had ordered the general withdrawal from the salient of St. Mihiel to the Michel position. Also on the 13th and 14th the Americans might have acted more aggressively. I was glad that no attack took place on the 14th as we were not ready in the new position. The advance against the Michel position, the outposts of which stood along the line: Morauville—Manheulles—Doncourt—Haumont—Vandieres, could have been executed more promptly.

“A quicker following up would have inflicted upon us some more losses; however, an overrunning of the Michel position I consider out of the question. In order to capture this position a further employment of great forces and an operation on a very large scale would have been required. I do not believe an interruption of the railway lines leading toward the northwest could have been effected within a few days, however, a mere threat directed against them would have been embarrassing for us and made necessary a concentration of considerable forces.

“An American advance to Longuyon would have constituted a blow which we could not have borne; we would have been obliged to prevent such an event to the utmost. Likewise interference with railway traffic by continuous bombardment and air bombing would have caused us great embarrassment.

“A successful attack launched against the Michel position would have been more important than the successes gained along the Meuse and in the Argonne.

“The bulk of the war material of Metz had been withdrawn already before September 12. The strength of the defense lay in the reenforced field positions south of, and on both sides of Metz, for which the southern forts offered a very strong support. Simply to overrun these positions would have been impracticable.”



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Slightly Wounded



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

German shells bursting in Thiaucourt, near where the Germans thought the Americans could have broken through, if they had not stopped

THE BATTLE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

General Schwarte's *Der Grosse Krieg* says:

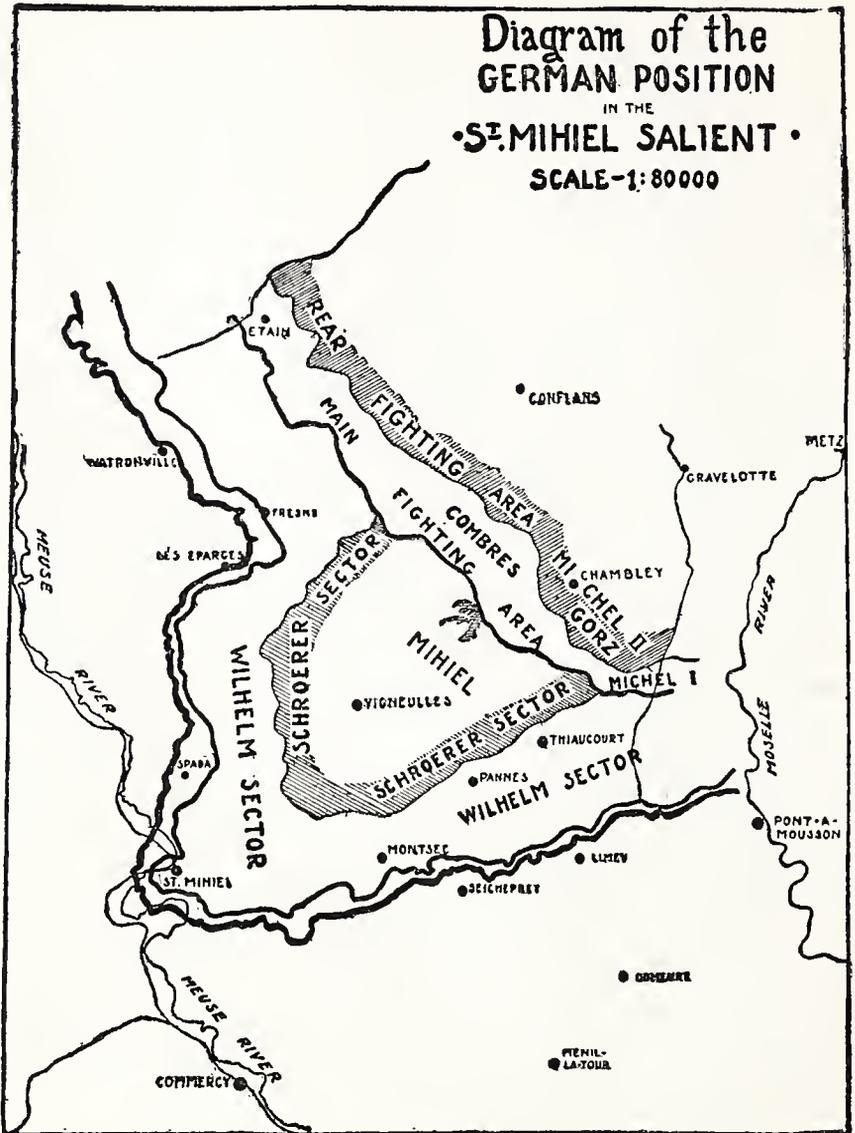
"It has never been explained why an attack was not attempted much earlier from Verdun to cut off the important German communication from Metz to Thionville, with all its branches, and to reconquer the Briey plateau. Perhaps sombre memories of the fatal events at Metz in 1870 played a part in this."

General von der Marwitz, whose V German Army of General von Gallwitz's Group played a large part in defending the Metz-Sedan link of the southern railroad system, said: "The Longuyon-Sedan line is the life artery of the Western Army," meaning the whole German Army in northern France and Belgium. He said the Longuyon-Sedan line, not the Sedan-Mézières line.

General Fuchs, who was right in the salient, says: "The failure of the Americans to recognize their tactically favorable position prevented the latter from bringing catastrophe to Army Detachment C."

The Americans recognized their position. Their hands were tied. Even after ten years German generals seem not to realize that all we were allowed to try was to cut off the salient.

But how striking that General von Gallwitz says that a successful attack against the Michel section of the Hindenburg Line at St. Mihiel would have been more important than what we did in the Meuse-Argonne—and that General Fuchs says we had that success within grasp. Now as to the Americans.



The German position in the St. Mihiel salient when we attacked. The two solid black lines indicate the front line and line of artillery protection. At the moment of attack the German infantry from Montsec to northeast of Limey were withdrawing to this second line. This was to be the first step in a gradual withdrawal to the Michel Line via the Schroeter, or Schroerer, Sector or intermediate position already prepared, also, to have been completed by September eighteenth. But we attacked September twelfth. The names "Combres," "Mihiel," "Gorz," are the names of the three Corps Groups holding the salient when we attacked. Of these the first fought well and held up our northern attack long enough for the second to get out of the bag being closed around it largely through the collapse of the last before our southern attack.

THE BATTLE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

General Pershing says in his report as Commanding General of the First Army:

“Without doubt, an immediate continuation of the advance would have carried us well beyond the Hindenburg Line and possibly into Metz, but our success could not have been thus exploited without delaying the Meuse-Argonne operation already planned.”

In other words, the St. Mihiel attack had resulted in the big opportunity hoped for in the American plan, but the agreement of September second prevented our taking advantage of it.

General Dickman, who commanded the IV Corps which made the greatest advance and had the greatest opening, said in his book, *The Great Crusade*:

“The enemy withdrew in a disorganized condition to a line of defence only partly completed. Had not the plans of the Allied Command called for a great operation elsewhere, we could doubtless have made a further deep advance in the direction of Briey, with immediate menace to the enemy’s line of communications. However, the First American Army was committed to the Meuse-Argonne operation, and many of the divisions destined for participation therein had been engaged in the St. Mihiel battle; it was necessary to move them to the new theater of operations as quickly as possible. For these reasons, the St. Mihiel front was reluctantly permitted to stabilize.”

In a letter, not long before his death, General Dickman added:

“The failure to push north from St. Mihiel with our overwhelming superiority in numbers will always be regarded by me as a strategical blunder for which Marshal Foch and his staff are responsible. It is a glaring example of the fallacy of the policy of limited objectives, as was recognized later.”

Notwithstanding, General von Gallwitz thinks that to have broken the Michel position we should have needed “a further employment of great forces and an operation on a very large scale.” It did not look so from the line which we reached September thirteenth, the second day. At that point the famous Hindenburg Line seemed very much overrated.

It was weaker than the well-advertised section about Cambrai that the British, with some American help, broke readily enough two weeks later. At St. Mihiel it was much weaker than the two defensive lines the Americans had just broken to reach it. There were a good many concrete pill-boxes, but little barbed wire, while what trenches there were were seldom strong or deep. Many trenches had been staked out but not dug, which explains why from Hattonchatel we saw the Germans digging in broad daylight. Officer prisoners said “the Hindenburg Line in its present condition is untenable,” and the printed First Army Summary of Intelligence said: “Prisoners say that for two days work has been going on day and night on the Hindenburg Line” and “on the whole the German officers do not seem to believe in the strength

THE BATTLE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN of the Hindenburg Line and foresee the possibility of further withdrawals." Colonel Willey Howell, Chief of Intelligence of the First Army, believed then and believes now, that the Hindenburg Line was much less formidable than it sounded.

At St. Mihiel we overran rapidly every village of the outpost zone mentioned in General von Gallwitz's letter. The Hindenburg Line proper was some three to five miles thick, as at Cambrai, divided into a Main and a Rear Fighting Area. Yet less than seven hours after our attack started, when at noon on September twelfth he ordered the withdrawal from the salient, General Fuchs trembled for his Hindenburg Line. He heard then that American troops advancing northeast of Thiaucourt had penetrated within less than a mile of a vital and weak point in it, and, as he did not know they were forbidden to attack it, thought "there was danger of a break-through." During the afternoon and evening of September twelfth that danger was "very great and continually threatening," beyond Beney where we saw our 42nd Division friends. There were not until night troops enough in the Hindenburg Line there to defend it. But General Fuchs found with a sigh of relief: "The enemy had not followed."

Next day doughboys and cavalry completing the battle that was, got close enough to this dread line to reach out and touch it. They entered various supposed strong points of the "main fighting area," and re-

turned to tell of seeing "a few Heinies running over the hill." The Germans gave up some parts of the Hindenburg Line and moved back only when they found that the Americans had stopped coming. The cavalry had seen them belatedly stringing barbed wire at Jonville, one of its strong points, but one of Lieutenant-Colonel Donovan's patrols, an officer and six men, with three tanks chased the Germans out of Jonville entirely—then had to come back. Donovan was a front-line officer. He writes:

"There was confusion and uncertainty behind the Hindenburg Line, and no real stabilization. In my opinion then, and so far as I can check up now, it would have been possible for us to have pushed through."

That is part of what General Pershing meant when he wrote: "Reports received during the 13th and 14th indicated that the enemy was retreating in considerable disorder."

At the time no correspondent could write a word of all that.

As a whole, the Germans fought only fairly well at St. Mihiel. Few of them were first-rate troops to begin with. The best division, the 10th, was among the hardest hit. One of the poorest, the 77th Reserve, cracked wide and let us through. Many of its Alsace-Lorrainers surrendered gladly. The battered remnant was immediately withdrawn from line. Nearly half

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the troops in the salient were Austro-Hungarians or Landwehr, not generally considered first- or even second-rate troops.

Even had they fought stubbornly on the half-finished Hindenburg Line, they would have had weak assistance. Behind the front were three divisions, one at least tired. They were supposedly under General von Gallwitz's orders, but General Fuchs took the bit between his teeth when his salient tumbled about his ears and ordered them to counter-attack the Americans and avert the "great danger" to the Hindenburg Line. Not the counter-attacks, but our orders stopped us, but General Fuchs didn't know that.

The Germans never made a really strong counter-attack and our staff estimated that they couldn't for two or three days. With plenty of airplanes and long-range artillery, mostly borrowed from French and British, we surely gave the railroad centers behind the front, at Conflans and, later, at Metz, shelling enough to delay help. Our aviators who looked the ground over reported that we had succeeded. By September sixteenth, the Germans had assembled in the Woëvre more troops by possibly seventy-five thousand than they had on the twelfth, but mainly about the same, second- or third-rate divisions that in four years of war had proved not such fire-eating Huns after all.

Our new First Army was of sterner stuff. Our most experienced divisions in the front line were still

fresh, enthusiastic and "just r'arin' to go." They had tasted victory and wanted more. Behind them we had six reserve divisions, with experience averaging not less than our attacking line the first morning of the Meuse-Argonne two weeks later. There were 150,000 of them, twice the German reserves. All told, 650,000 French and Americans opposed some 200,000 or 250,000 Germans. We had assembled many more troops than we needed for the battle that was, because of the late change in plan, and for safety's sake. Suppose we had thrown them all into the battle that might have been?

After we had broken the Hindenburg Line, then what? The Germans' morale was low—ours was high. How far could we have gone? Could we have closed our grip upon that narrow peninsula neck between what had been the salient and the frontier of Holland, cut or threatened the southern and nearer of those two jugular-vein railroad systems then and there,—not later, in the Meuse-Argonne, after another far longer, harder battle?

Before our new front line were the three branches of this southern system, running west from Germany into the peninsula, converging upon Longuyon: the southern through Metz, the central through Thionville, the northern through Luxembourg. Many American officers think we could have cut one, probably two of them before the Germans mustered re-

THE BATTLE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN serves and nerve enough to stop us. Then we could take breath for another crack at them.

According to this view, we could surely have taken Conflans and thus cut the first. The same operation would have placed us near enough to Briey to put the mines under shell-fire and bombing, if we did not capture them. Already the Germans were facing something of a munitions shortage which became more serious later. What might have happened if they had been suddenly deprived of seventy-five per cent. of their ore supply?

General Pershing has said that we might have pushed on and entered Metz. On September twelfth there was only one German division, twelve thousand men, in the city. By September sixteenth, thirty-six thousand more had been rushed up—mostly Austro-Hungarians. But we would hardly have been four days getting there. Three days before, our front line had stopped, twelve miles from the suburbs, though nearer the outlying forts.

Those pre-war fortifications were strong, and General von Gallwitz remarks that they, with the war-built trenches and barbed wire, could not have been “simply overrun.” Our Intelligence Section thought the question was less how strong were the fortifications, than how many and how good troops there were to man them, and that would depend on whether our attack caught the Germans unprepared—which it did.

Three weeks before the attack, our Intelligence Section at G. H. Q. advised the First Army:

“Should the advance to the first day’s objective be accomplished quickly and with slight losses, as might be possible in case of complete surprise, and should there be little show of resistance, in other words, if our attacking line is able to capture or destroy the bulk of the troops holding the line and few reinforcements have arrived, the temptation to continue the attack with Metz as the ultimate objective would be strong. It would be a mistake not to be prepared to take advantage of such an opportunity. The defenses of Metz, while too strong to be taken by direct assault if well garrisoned, could be stormed if weakly held.”

Written before our plans were changed, by a prophet and son of a prophet, for everything came to pass as he had foreseen—save that we could not seize the opportunity and try for Metz. Even had we been unable to enter the city itself, if we had turned against the Metz forts our railroad artillery—more powerful than the German howitzers that pulverized the Liège and Namur forts in 1914—we might have got close enough to shell and bomb out of commission the railroad network surrounding it. As it was, we scared the Germans in Metz stiff.

A few of the longest-range French guns could reach the city before the attack started, from a turret at Dieulouard, installed as threat of reprisal for German bombardment of Nancy. Brigadier-General

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Edward F. McGlachlin, First Army Chief of Artillery, asked permission to break the resulting gentlemen's agreement to "live and let live" if only because the news would cheer the public in Allied countries and at home, and depress the Germans. Tardily and reluctantly the French consented, and on September thirteenth, one day late, thirteen-inch shells burst about the great German fortress city and its railroads. Soon afterward the remaining Nancy dwellers, including correspondents, were ducking and wincing as the even heavier German Bertha shells burst there.

General McGlachlin got his moral effect. German Lorraine newspapers got excited, and an official explanation had to be concocted. General von Gallwitz says much war material had already been removed from Metz. Now, within forty-eight hours, the Germans completed preparations to evacuate the city on short notice. The American threat hurried the stripping of city and forts until by the Armistice, in the words of a German staff-officer, "Metz had long ceased to be a fortress."

If in the battle that might have been, we had knocked out the railroads about Metz, heavy strain would have been put upon the other parts of the southern railroad system. Had we advanced farther in the Woëvre Conflans would have been in danger. Its capture or paralysis would have severed the first branch railroad. It was not far to Thionville on the

second. That would have put full strain upon the last, the Luxembourg line. It could not have stood it. The great southern jugular vein would have burst.

Now all three lines converged at Longuyon, some forty miles northwest of Metz. When Marshal Foch approved the original American plan on August seventeenth, before the changes of September second, he had added to our arrangements for the battle that might have been, an attack toward Longuyon, to be made by French divisions. General von der Marwitz, commanding the German V Army on that front, next to General Fuchs, said later: "The Longuyon-Sedan line is the most important artery of the Army of the West," meaning the entire German Army in France and Belgium.

Metz, Thionville and Longuyon were certainly centers of great importance to the German Army, not merely locally but on the whole Western Front. It is noteworthy that in the last days of the war, in November, the American First and Second Armies, under Marshal Foch's orders, were headed directly for this region beyond the St. Mihiel salient, at the edge of which the First Army stopped upon a limited objective on September thirteenth. American objectives in those last days were not rigidly defined; they were generally Briey, Longuyon, Montmédy. After six weeks of desperate frontal attack in difficult country, with poor communications, obliged at the start to use our least-

THE BATTLE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN experienced troops, we had finally, at cost of nearly 200,000 casualties, got the same results that, some say, were within far easier reach at St. Mihiel—and here we were in November, knocking at the door that stood ajar in September! Marshal Foch's Franco-American attack on Metz would have started November fourteenth, if the war had not ended on the eleventh.

Further, it is urged, if the Sedan-Mézières line was actually the most important single link of the two great railroad systems, we had our chance, exploiting our St. Mihiel victory and hand in hand with the advance upon Longuyon, to threaten that line by a flank movement from the east at the same time that we pushed into the Briey Iron Basin and shut off the greater part of the German ammunition supply. The French from the Meuse west to the Argonne region could have made then, in cooperation with us, the same drive upon Mézières from the Champagne that they made later with our help upon Sedan through the Meuse-Argonne. In short, having made a break at one important point, we stopped and moved over and did it all over again, at another point perhaps more important (opinions differ) but so much more difficult that it took us forty-seven days.

The whole region was too vital for the Germans to throw away. We could not have marched right on without fighting. For some days we might have taken advantage of their disorder and gone far. But they

would have brought up more and more reserves. By that time, should we have got far enough to wound mortally their Achilles heel?

Despite the story just told, there are those who say not. First they say—and no American denies—that Marshal Foch is a very great strategist, but that no one can always call the rolling of the dice of war. No one could have anticipated surely the sudden and complete success of our inexperienced army in its first battle. There was no reason to suppose German morale had sunk so low. They think it was wiser for our new Army and Staff to have a sort of limited objective dress rehearsal before going on the big time. The Allies could not risk the consequences, political as well as military, had we been beaten in our first attempt at an American offensive. No, they say, the hand of the master did not shake, and at last, at whatever cost, his plan worked and we had victory and peace.

These skeptics as to the battle that might have been say that the part of the southern railroad near Sedan and Mézières, which we cut in the Meuse-Argonne, was more vital to the Germans than the part southeast of Sedan which we might have reached after St. Mihiel. The nearest part of the front to the Sedan-Mézières link was the Meuse-Argonne, and though that country was rough and hard it was the most direct route, and therefore a frontal attack there was the thing.

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Marshal Foch had to consider the probability that our advance publicity had warned the Germans to prepare a big counter-attack to hit us spraddled over the Woëvre Plain. The autumn rains there were early and heavy and might drown out any farther advance. As it was, we had trouble enough with road jams through the belief of our enthusiastic chauffeurs that the rules in moving supplies behind the front resemble those on the country club road on a Saturday night—"t'hell with the guy ahead, the guy behind, and the traffic cop." Nor were all our M. P.'s then sure what it was all about. We couldn't have straightened out our traffic soon enough to supply our advancing troops—and an army travels on its stomach. The American Staff has always maintained that the road jams were exaggerated by Allies not always sympathetic with our desire to run our own show.

Among the believers that what was, was right, is Major-General Hunter Liggett whose I Corps advanced beside General Dickman's IV Corps. He writes in his book, *A. E. F.*;

"The possibility of taking Metz and the rest of it, had the battle been fought on the original plan, existed, in my opinion, only on the supposition that our army was a well-oiled, fully coördinated machine, which it was not as yet. If all the divisions had been battle-tempered and battle-disciplined as were the First, Second and Forty-second, which again they were not, it might have been worth while for us to

make the attempt, despite the facts that the rainy season had begun and that an advance would bring our right under the guns of Metz, our left under the Meuse heights north of Verdun.

“Under the conditions that existed on September 12th, I thought then and think now that Marshal Foch was exceedingly wise to limit us to the immediate task of flattening out the salient and protecting our rear for another attack to the westward.”

What did Marshal Foch think? There are stories that he asked General Pershing why, when such an opportunity appeared, he had not kept on, fought the battle that might have been, but they are unsubstantiated and hardly credible, in view of the September second agreement. There are tales, too, that officers of the Marshal's Staff present at the battle that was wrung their hands over the lost opportunity. Again, just tales.

In truth, those who knew at the time about the battle that might have been said little or nothing, and that under their breath. Events strode rapidly then. The battle that was had no sooner ended than troops and guns were streaming away from St. Mihiel westward, where the coming struggle of the Meuse-Argonne cast its shadow before.

CHAPTER V

CAMOUFLAGE

THAT shadow must not fall in warning over No Man's Land and among the Germans. We had surprised them once, won instant success. If only we could again. We tried to fool them with every trick of war-time deceit, camouflage.

With the triumphant news of St. Mihiel on the wire, propaganda started for the Meuse-Argonne. The evening of the thirteenth, with success certain, General Pershing and General Nolan considered the untruthful German communiqué for which Ludendorff has since apologized. Then it looked like clumsy propaganda to fool such as believed it about what had happened at St. Mihiel. General Pershing wrote an American communiqué that night which left no doubt as to who had won. Also it opened our propaganda barrage before the Meuse-Argonne to help confuse Hindenburg and Ludendorff about American intentions. Here it is:

“In the St. Mihiel sector, we have achieved further progress. The junction of our troops advancing from the south of the sector with those advancing from the west, has given us possession of the whole salient to points twelve miles northeast of St. Mihiel and has

resulted in the capture of many prisoners. Forced back by our steady advance, the enemy is retiring and is destroying a large quantity of material as he goes. The number of prisoners counted has risen to 13,000. Our line now includes Herbeuville—Thillot—Hattonville—St. Benoit—Xammes—Jaulny—Thiaucourt—Vieville.”

General Pershing wanted the Germans to think that he was fighting the battle that might have been, pushing on toward Metz. So he talked about “our steady advance” and our line “now” as if we were going farther. By eleven o’clock that night the German wireless would have picked up the communiqué and sent it straight to Hindenburg and Ludendorff.

To help fool them, censorship rules governing dispatches were changed. Before and during the attack we could not mention Metz. Now we became gossipy about it, wrote of seeing its spire from Hattonchatel height and of the long-range shelling of its railways and forts.

Our papers fell beautifully. Some even date-lined dispatches: “ON THE METZ FRONT.” “YANKS DRIVE FOR METZ!” they said, while behind the lines most of the Yanks hiked away from Metz toward the Meuse-Argonne. No wonder, though. Despite the “voluntary censorship” supposedly in force at home, Washington correspondents were sending “confidential information” to the same effect. Unknown to us, the Associated Press had innocently started the good

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work the first day of St. Mihiel. One of its rewrite men in New York with some of that "confidential information" wrote a bulletin saying that Metz was the American objective. He thought he was beating the journalistic world. Instead, he was beating the Germans, helping Intelligence spread misinformation. Photographic agencies helped, willingly or unwillingly, by distributing pictures of Metz labeled, "The American Objective" or something similar. Even Marshal Foch helped by cabling the Knights of Columbus: "We shall one day see your victorious banner floating over Metz."

Part of the plan was a fake attack in Lorraine that led the Germans to think we were surely after Metz, not Mézières or Sedan, as earlier we had made them think we were after Mulhouse in Alsace.

Thus it happened that during the crucial last months of the war, when the German Army needed every soldier and every gun to stave off defeat, its commanders were haunted by the specter of great American attacks, first in Alsace, then in Lorraine. They moved thousands of troops and many guns from points where they were desperately needed, to reenforce other points that the Americans made them believe were threatened. The same fear influenced Ludendorff to advise the German Government to seek an armistice. Yet these particular great American attacks never came off.

WITHOUT CENSOR

It was never intended that they should, for they were a colossal practical joke, a Yankee bluff that worked.

Making it work was one of the cleverest "undercover" jobs of the war. The full facts have been buried in the innermost recesses of the Intelligence Section of the General Staff. Even now, inquiries bring a chorus of "Don't quote me."

For more than a month, at the very time when the Allies were preparing and beginning to deliver the blows that ended the war, the Germans were kept guessing, and they usually guessed wrong, where and when the great new American Army was going to strike. Right up to the Armistice, they were not sure what was coming next. The deception was so complete that even American officers who were to lead in these "battles" were in the dark—as they had to be to insure success.

To begin with, only a few men knew about it, and most of them were generals. There were Pershing and Pétain, American and French Commanders-in-Chief; McAndrew, then Chief of Staff of the A. E. F., now dead; Fox Conner, then Chief of Operations of the A. E. F.; and Hugh A. Drum, then Chief of Staff of the First Army. A few others were in the secret and participated in its execution, but never many. Among them were Colonel Willey Howell and Captain Sanford Griffith of the First Army Intelligence



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The fortress city of Metz, original American objective. This photograph, with a misleading caption, appeared in the United States three days before the St. Mihiel attack



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

The Rolling Kitchens

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Section, and Colonel A. L. Conger, of the Intelligence Section at G. H. Q., whose part was especially important.

In August, when almost everybody in France was talking about the coming American attack on the St. Mihiel salient, we have seen that German spies, less a joke in France than here, were busily reporting the talk. General Pershing and General Pétain guessed that would happen and agreed that something must be done to draw a herring across the trail and make the Germans believe that after all they would not be attacked at St. Mihiel.

Soon afterward, about August thirtieth, Captain de Viel Castel, French liaison officer at American Press Headquarters, returned to Meaux from French "Grand Quartier" and told a group of American newspaper correspondents, quite confidentially, a military secret. The American First Army, which was then being organized for its initial independent blow, might attain brilliant results, he said, by an offensive in Alsace, one hundred and twenty-five miles southeast of St. Mihiel. The Americans might push through and capture Mulhouse, on what was then German soil, only ten miles from the Rhine! Not only would the moral effect be great, but the wrecking of the Rhine bridges by shell-fire would cripple German communications.

"Of course," he cautioned, "I do not say that the

Americans *will* do that, but it is an interesting possibility, and I am sure that Captain Morgan would pass carefully worded dispatches."

And Captain Morgan did pass, for such as wrote them, dispatches to American newspapers, expatiating on the great military and political results that would come from a successful American offensive in Alsace. Let us hope the German Intelligence Section read those dispatches.

The dispatches indicated as the place of attack a natural breach in the mountain wall of the Vosges between France and Germany, a broad pass called the Gap of Belfort. On the French side of the gap was the historic fortress city of Belfort; on the German side, Mulhouse, then, Teutonically, Mülhausen. From the dome-like summit of the Ballon d'Alsace, a nearby height, one can look through the gap and see the Rhine, dimly beyond.

The Belfort Gap was the point on the entire Western Front nearest to that river of story and strategy, and it was also the only point from east of Metz to Switzerland where an Allied Army could advance over level ground. Prospect of an attack there would give the Germans a real scare, would be a most unwelcome war baby for the famous Alsatian storks to lay upon their door-step, but up to August 28, 1918, they had had no reason to expect anything of the kind.

That night, Major-General Omar Bundy, com-

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manding the VI Corps, sat at dinner with his Staff in Bourbonne-les-Bains, in the American training area, about seventy-five miles northwest of the Gap of Belfort. General Bundy was in charge of training several divisions recently arrived in France. It was understood that some of them might participate in the American attack at St. Mihiel then scheduled for September tenth or thereabout.

Then came a rap on the door, and in walked Captain Howe, bearing important confidential dispatches from G. H. Q., and with them, mystery and drama.

So important were the dispatches that General Bundy and Brigadier-General Briant H. Wells, his Chief of Staff, left the room to read them. They found that General Conner, acting for General Pershing, directed General Bundy to take a few of his Staff at once to Belfort where, at the Grand Hotel et du Tonneau d'Or (the Golden Cask, fit name for a mysterious rendezvous), he would receive from Colonel Conger the special instructions of General Pershing. The orders commanded absolute secrecy, and were so worded that General Bundy and General Wells could think but one thing: they were being sent on a mission of greatest moment. They returned to the dining-room, where the Corps Staff grew silent as they saw their generals' grave faces.

"I wish to see Colonel Baltzell, Colonel Mackall, and Colonel Barden—at once," said General Bundy.

W I T H O U T C E N S O R

These officers he directed to be ready to start next morning for an unknown destination where they would stay an indeterminate period of time, and not a word to a soul about it. When they set forth in the morning, the three colonels, General Bundy and General Wells, Captain Vernon E. Pritchard and a French liaison officer, they left Colonel Charles H. Bridges in charge, to continue the training of the several divisions in that area.

"But where are you going?" asked Colonel Bridges.

"We can't tell you," said General Wells, and the cars drove away.

At the Tonneau d'Or in Belfort they found Colonel Conger, imperturbable, almost professorial in manner, but with keen eyes behind the mask. He at once impressed upon General Bundy the need for secrecy, and then told him there had been so much talk about the St. Mihiel offensive that the news had leaked into Germany, and General Pershing had decided to call off that attack. The actual attack would be made about the same date, September tenth, but through the Gap of Belfort, with the Rhine as objective. General Bundy and his staff were to occupy at once headquarters in the center of Belfort that had been engaged for them by Captain Griffith and to prepare plans for the attack.

It would be a powerful blow, Colonel Conger disclosed, as befitted the first All-American attack of the

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war. Some two hundred and fifty thousand men, with a strong artillery, would take part. The seven front-line divisions would be the 29th from New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia; the 35th from Kansas and Missouri; the 36th from Texas and Oklahoma; the 78th from western New York, New Jersey and Delaware; the 79th from north-eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland and the District of Columbia; the 80th from Virginia, West Virginia and western Pennsylvania; and the 91st from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming and Utah. Detachments from each division were now arriving in Belfort to reconnoiter the trenches they were to occupy. But the Germans must know nothing of the change in plan; all must be done most secretly.

That would be difficult in Belfort. The Alsace front had been quiet so long that this influx of American generals and other officers almost made Belfort's famous rock-hewn lion curious. Those who indeed did sit up were the German agents who had found this city with its many blond, German-speaking Alsatians a happy hunting-ground, with plenty of cover. It was only ten miles from German soil, only a few miles farther from Switzerland, hotbed of spies and a center of the German spy system. As the news spread, much of Belfort's male population converged upon the Tonneau d'Or, to stand in the lobby and

crane eager necks, becoming every moment more curious and more excited.

They saw General Bundy leave to stir up what had been the quietest sector of the Western Front, a rest-cure, where French soldiers, and German too, were sent after exhausting service for a well-earned *repos*. There in the trenches they smoked their pipes for hours without hearing a gun fired and looked out upon a No Man's Land overgrown with daisies; or else, in a forest glade a few hundred yards from the front line, sat safely at rustic tables and drank the fine foaming beer of Alsace. It was a good old war. The trenches must be held, of course, but in a spirit of live and let live. The French troops enjoyed the scenery, of which there was plenty. The deep green fir forests, the swift-rushing streams, the villages, varicolored and oddly designed, set amid the blue Alsatian mountains—they really are blue—made it a land of pure delight.

General Bundy visited Major-General Charles G. Morton, commanding the 29th Division, already designated for the attack, which was in the trenches between Altkirch and Thann. General Morton had prepared at General Pershing's order, a report advising that the time to attack in Alsace was not the fall, but spring. Major-General W. M. Wright, of the VII Corps, forwarding General Morton's report, thought an attack might be made around Hartmansweilerkopf,

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but did not enthuse. By September third, General Bundy had concluded Alsace was the place and now the time.

Colonel Conger called on the Staffs of the VII and VIII French Armies, commanding in Alsace; and, backed by orders from General Pétain, got them to give up their battle-maps to the Americans, who, he said, were making an *étude*. That aroused some perturbation among our French allies. *Quoi donc*, they wondered, was this American *étude* all about. Did their sometimes too-ardent allies propose to stir up this rest sector with alarums and excursions? They hoped not—most sincerely they hoped not.

But it looked so. All along the twenty-mile front selected for the attack, American reconnaissance parties were now examining trenches, dugouts, gun-positions, rest-billets, which they believed their respective divisions were soon to occupy. It was too bad, Colonel Conger told them, that this could hardly fail to cause talk by the French troops and even by the Alsatian civilians who, in this peaceful sector, were permitted to remain in their homes close to the front. Colonel Conger expressed a pious hope that the German observers would not see the unusual activity in these usually almost deserted trenches.

Meantime the VI Corps Staff had prepared a tentative plan for the coming attack, containing many recommendations as to how the secretly forming Amer-

ican First Army could most readily break the German front in the Gap of Belfort and cut the Rhine bridges near Mulhouse. This plan Colonel Conger took to Chaumont to show to General Pershing.

Immediately on his return, on September fourth, Colonel Conger sought a conference with General Bundy. General Pershing, he said, not only approved the plan but had decided to make the attack even more extensive than had been contemplated. He especially liked a recommendation that as soon as the Rhine was approached, the Alsace attack should be followed and supported by a second attack to the north, in the Vosges Mountains, launched by French and American troops there, including the 6th Regular Division. He wished the Staff to study that problem a little more fully.

What General Pershing actually had said was something like this: "We can't have the St. Mihiel attack ready until September 12. We'll have to string out this Alsace affair a little longer, and this seems the best way."

When the battle of Alsace was originally discussed at First Army Headquarters, between General Pershing and General Drum, it was agreed that as few as possible should be in the secret. So Colonel Conger set the Staff to work on this new phase of the battle plan. The stern businesslike silence of this group of American officers, working day and night

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in their centrally located but tightly closed headquarters, heightened the tension of the crowd in the Tonneau d'Or lobby. It was whispered that accommodations had been reserved for the correspondents attached to the A. E. F.—doubtless to report a great battle. Belfort buzzed with gossip.

Now was the time, Colonel Conger decided. Surely reports of what was going on must have reached Germany. Now was the time to furnish confirmation that Hindenburg and Ludendorff could but accept as proof that a strong American attack in Alsace was coming. He had been encouraged by the frequent appearance of several gentlemen in the hotel, even in his own corridor. He hoped they were the very gentlemen he was working for.

Then came the crowning episode, the turning-point in the great battle of Alsace. In his room in the Tonneau d'Or, Colonel Conger sat himself down and typed a letter to General Pershing. He reported that all was ready for the big attack through the Belfort Gap, if General Pershing would but set the date.

Colonel Conger made a copy of the letter, using a brand-new sheet of carbon-paper. When he had finished, he held up the carbon-paper to the light. Every word to the American Commander-in-Chief stood out, clearly stenciled. Colonel Conger crumpled up the carbon-paper and threw it into the waste-basket. Then he left the room.

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For five minutes this clever intelligence officer walked about the lobby of the Tonneau d'Or. Then, too anxious to wait longer, he returned to his room. The waste-basket was empty! It had taken no longer than that.

With the comfortable feeling of a task well done, Colonel Conger went again to Chaumont, and the door of General Pershing's office in Barrack B was closed tightly after him, perhaps to bottle up the laughter of the Commander-in-Chief at what his Sherlock Holmes had to report.

"It's working fine," he said. "String it out just a little longer."

So back to Belfort went Colonel Conger to assure his little group of earnest workers that General Pershing was well satisfied and that, even though they had heard with alarm that some of their seven divisions were moving directly away from Alsace, all was going "according to plan." General Pershing now wanted a special study made of the ground in the Vosges where the northern attack would be made, to support the one in Alsace.

The reconnaissance parties had finished their work, and were sent to tell their division commanders that they had made good progress in preparing for an Alsace attack, while General Bundy and General Wells went thirty miles northwest of Belfort to Remiremont, in the Vosges, headquarters of General Wright's

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VII Corps. There they studied roads and the supply situation in the event of an advance from that quarter. General Wells was beginning to ask himself some questions about this rather lengthy preparation for an attack by troops that marched away from the place where it was to be made, when the dénouement came.

General Pétain appeared suddenly in Belfort. He held, rather ostentatiously, a conference of all the corps and division commanders in the region. To German agents, the conference looked doubtless like a council of war before battle. If they heard that Colonel Aristides Moreno was in town, and knew who he was, it must have made them more excited. He was the A. E. F.'s chief spy chaser. What really happened at the conference was that General Pétain thanked the assembled generals for their cooperation in a battle that was never to come off. It was, he explained, a ruse.

The French worked as hard on it as we did. General Pétain gave fake instructions, Marshal Foch even sent out a bulletin of false rumors to be spread. But the Americans, not the French, told Colonel Repington, the famous English military writer, about it. He immediately asked some one else if it were true! And in Switzerland, American Secret Service did a clever job. . . .

General Morton went from the conference to break the news to General Bundy, who took it like a soldier.

He had obeyed his orders. If it were a fake, he hoped it would work. If not, he would be ready to attack when his troops arrived. He realized that not one more person than necessary, no matter how trustworthy, could have been safely informed—that secrecy was essential.

The end and the results justified the means. The stirring up of the silent places of the Alsace front had its reward. The Intelligence Section found soon afterward that, as hoped, the German spies had reported what was doing in Belfort, that on August thirtieth a general alarm had been ordered in Mulhouse, hospitals moved across the Rhine, and bank reserves got out of danger while Government employees were prepared to move at short notice. For two weeks there was panic in Upper Alsace. To meet the danger, the Germans moved a division in reserve up to the front, and sent another division to Mulhouse and two more to the Vosges on the north. All of which we found out through secret service or German prisoners.

So the same game was tried again, as part of our camouflage to deceive the Germans about the Meuse-Argonne. If they could be made to believe that five hundred thousand American troops, with guns and supplies, were moving from the St. Mihiel region not northwest but southeast, in exactly the opposite direction from that in which they really were going, then the First Army would again be able to surprise the enemy. General Pershing, General Drum and Colonel Howell

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held a conference at First Army headquarters at Ligny-en-Barrois, out of which grew the battle of Lorraine.

This was a more elaborate "battle" than that of Alsace, for all were learning by experience. It was decided to create the impression that American reserves were moving, and that other preparations were afoot for a great converging attack upon the fortress of Metz, a natural sequence to the St. Mihiel victory foreseen in General Pershing's original plan, now discarded.

About September fifteenth German observers stationed on the Vosges foot-hills in the Lunéville sector, quiet as Alsace since the disturbing Rainbow Division had left, reported that Allied aviators were becoming very inquisitive about the German rear areas. Planes with the red, white and blue marking were flying far behind the lines, evidently seeking photographs and information. This was one of the early premonitory signs of a far-reaching offensive. It was followed by another, equally well recognized. The Allied artillery aroused itself from its wonted lethargy, and began dropping shells far behind the German lines, upon points untouched for years. The artillery fire was so handled that German observers, noting every detail, could conclude only that preparations were being made for the barrage and concentration fire that precede and accompany an attack.

Then Brigadier-General S. D. Rockenbach, com-

manding the First Army tanks, received a mysterious order to send twenty-five tanks on "a mission extremely dangerous, that must be handled with great discretion." General Rockenbach was then making every effort to assemble as many tanks as possible for the Meuse-Argonne. The A. E. F. never had tanks enough, and for this attack had no heavy tanks at all. The Tank Commander could not spare twenty-five light tanks and said so, but General Pershing ordered that they be sent anyway.

So the twenty-five tanks, commanded by officers especially chosen for gallantry, reported to Major-General Joseph T. Dickman's IV Corps. The young officers, fully understanding that this was a desperate job, agreed that rather than be captured they would kill themselves.

On the night of September twenty-first-twenty-second, German listening-posts, east of the Moselle in the Lunéville sector heard the unmistakable clatter and rumble of tanks behind the American lines. Next morning, their observers spotted tank tracks leading from one patch of woods to another—a good many tank tracks. Next night the noise was repeated, with even more tracks the following morning. A large force of tanks seemed to be concentrating behind the American lines, and tanks are used only in attacks. The young officers succeeded so well that they brought down a heavy German bombardment.

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At the same time, only a few miles away, the greatest military figure of the war stepped for a moment upon the scene and played a brief "bit" in the farce. Marshal Foch made a flying visit to Alsace and Lorraine in his special train. He and General Pershing went over the St. Mihiel battle-field just as the tanks were assembling; and the next day found the director of all the Allied Armies holding conference in the large and conspicuous city of Nancy, near the front, with Generals de Castelnau and Gérard, who would command an attack in either Alsace or Lorraine.

Afterward the Marshal explained that trip by saying he had been informed that Ludendorff was complimenting him by having his goings and comings closely watched, and he wanted to "give him a little change."

In the meantime, down around Lunéville, Colonel Conger had a setback. The reconnaissance parties had worked so well in Alsace that he tried them again. Each division in reserve of the First Army sent to Lunéville a party of officers and men, who sallied forth to go through the trenches and get from the French occupants information necessary for an American relief. They were enthusiastic, too enthusiastic, when they proudly reported back to Colonel Conger that they had taken pains not to arouse the suspicions of the German observers, crouching with glasses in the treetop observation posts of that wooded sector.

“Good lord!” said Colonel Conger to himself. “What have they done?” They had borrowed French uniforms and worn them all the time they were under German observation! Some other way must be found to complete the Germans’ deception. The Meuse-Argonne attack was to begin September twenty-sixth, now only a few days off.

But General Drum’s First Army Staff was not lacking in resource. So while the Germans prepared for trouble in the Lunéville sector and beyond St. Mihiel, their wireless stations east of Verdun seeking to intercept Allied messages, succeeded—and got an awful jolt. Messages in English, a considerable number of them, suddenly began to fill the air. They were in code, of course, but a code the Germans could decipher, and when they did they came to this astounding conclusion: “A great many American troops—they identified the wireless stations of a half-dozen divisions—were moving up to the front, east of Verdun and northwest of St. Mihiel, behind the thin screen of French troops who held the front-line trenches there. They belonged to a new American Army, the “Tenth,” and were exchanging messages which, though carefully worded, could only mean that a general attack might be expected.

General Drum and Colonel Parker Hitt, the radio expert of the army, were creating an American Tenth Army for the first and only time in the history of the

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A. E. F., from a few radio stations—a feat unique in our military annals.

The intercepted and decoded messages were considered so important that they were sent immediately to Hindenburg and Ludendorff. They knew another American blow must fall soon, somewhere. Apparently here was the priceless intelligence that told where. Orders went out to hasten preparations for defense of the front on each side of Metz, from east of Verdun to the Vosges, and to redouble vigilance in seeking information about the coming American attack. Besides this, such reserves as could be spared from other parts of the front must be massed in German Alsace and Lorraine, and near Metz, east of the Meuse.

When on the morning of September twenty-sixth nine attacking American divisions, two hundred forty thousand men, jumped off west of the Meuse all the way to the Argonne Forest, they found immediately facing them only five weak German divisions, sixty thousand men. They were able to advance, at some places, seven miles before the Germans could bring to the point of real danger the reserve divisions that had been awaiting elsewhere the attack that never came.

When the battle which began that September twenty-sixth ended victoriously on November eleventh, the Intelligence Section set out to find how its practical joke had looked from the other side. It came in

contact with an officer of the German Intelligence who, even now, must be called only Colonel X. During the war he had the very important job of receiving and acting on information, from whatever source, that came in about Allied plans and movements. He had been on the receiving end of all the decoy misinformation, and he had duly weighed the reports of the American activities in Alsace. Then he had written to Ludendorff:

“I recognize quite fully that all these preparations made for attack may perfectly well turn out to be a *ruse de guerre* intended to mislead us as to the real point of attack. However, there is nothing to indicate that it is not the real point of attack, and our danger there is so great that I deem it imperative to have these divisions.”

Upon this advice, Ludendorff sent the thirty-six thousand men to Alsace and the Vosges. Wherefore French artillery there resumed frantic activity. Then indications of the coming battle of Lorraine, the converging attack upon Metz, began to pour in upon Colonel X. The wireless messages, the tank tracks, the airplane flights, the artillery fire, all were carefully studied. The German troops were still so disposed as to protect the southern front against the new danger.

Ludendorff took that danger very seriously, for the sector, that of Alsace and Lorraine, was of the whole Western Front the sector nearest the Fath-

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erland. A break-through there meant invasion. In his mind's eye, Ludendorff saw Metz overwhelmed by a shimmering flood of bayonets that poured onward toward the Rhine. The Central Powers were crumbling; already Bulgaria had collapsed. Threatened with desertion by her Allies, Germany must strengthen her own defenses.

So from that time on, the German leaders worried about Lorraine and Upper Alsace, from Mulhouse to Metz, more than about some other places where the danger was greater. That worry influenced the final decision, little over a month after General Bundy's Staff had appeared in Belfort, to ask an armistice. So two battles that never were fought, and never were meant to be fought, helped to end the world's greatest war.

CHAPTER VI

THE BIGGEST BATTLE AMERICANS EVER FOUGHT

THE Chief of Intelligence drew from his pocket a long envelope.

"Gentlemen," he said, "here is the plan of to-morrow's battle."

The men in uniform leaned forward about the table. The rumble of wheels sifted through the curtained windows. The locked door muffled the sentry's voice.

"Can't let nobody in. S'orders."

The Chief of Intelligence took from the envelope a few mimeographed sheets.

"It will be a very great battle," he said slowly, "a big job."

So the Meuse-Argonne proved to be: a very great battle, greatest any American Army ever fought in any war, our part in the mighty struggle that in forty-seven days broke the greatest military power in history, and ended the greatest war; a big job, so big that only the grim will of the few who led, the bright courage of the many who followed, made it, at last, the greatest, most far-reaching, single American victory.

Less will, less courage, could have lost that battle,

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if not in one sense, to the Germans, then in another, to the Allies. The battle was won, and the American Army, pick of the American nation, passed a stern test that tried it to the uttermost. What a test it was is scarcely comprehended even now after ten years, when many would answer, "What was the Meuse-Argonne?" by, "A battle in a forest where a battalion got lost!"

We have never appreciated our greatest battle, or what our soldiers accomplished there. The same forty-seven days were too lurid with other great events. Bulgaria, Turkey, Austria-Hungary fell one after another. The German Armies yielded on every front. The people revolted, the Government asked armistice, the Kaiser fled. Even the flu epidemic came to distract attention.

News of the Meuse-Argonne seemed buried. The straining, dogged American effort was not always spectacular like some Allied advances elsewhere. Then as, finally and suddenly, we won through to the splendid goal of great strategic defeat for the German Armies, Germany collapsed and the war ended. None of which American correspondents, listening absordedly to General Nolan's "advance dope," could foresee the night of September 25, 1918, in the dingy hotel in Bar-le-Duc.

A few hours later they wrote for the world to read news of the opening of Armageddon. The Allies

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were striking together. The end was in sight. But before it came, a drama was to be played upon that dark, misty, rugged ground of northern France, between the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest, where more Americans fell than upon any battle-field in history.

What news it was! The unceasing assault of our one million two hundred thousand hastily trained young soldiers, half in their first battle, upon positions the most vital and among the strongest on the Western Front, defended by a veteran German Army desperate because it must hold them to escape complete disaster. Forty-seven days and nights of unending struggle with nearly two hundred thousand casualties of all sorts that have not ended yet—you read of new ones often.

That was what it cost us to stop trains running through a place called Sedan. A high price, though the Germans paid about as high in casualties—and when those trains stopped, the German Empire stopped, and with it, the most enormous war in history. The price was not too high.

On the way to Sedan and victory the German Army was not the only obstacle. We were short of about every kind of supply and equipment, including experience. We made mistakes. That caused other obstacles—Allied attempts to take our battle away from us, later, to deny the value of our part in victory.



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

The Meuse-Argonne

“That dark, misty, rugged ground - where more Americans fell than on any battle-field in history.”



Copyright, International Film

The Goal of the Meuse-Argonne
The railroad station at Sedan, held by the Germans

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But we made good, as an American Army, under the American flag and an American general whom history will call a great general. In the process, we made big news, not all of which was written.

The night of September twelfth, eighteen hours after the jump-off at St. Mihiel, heavy guns barely cool moved westward, starting the greatest military assembly in American history. Federals and Confederates at Gettysburg totaled 175,000. There were altogether 1,200,000 Americans, 150,000 French and 750,000 Germans in the Meuse-Argonne.

On one day there were 1,031,000 Americans and French in the First Army. The largest number of Americans was 896,000 on October sixth. They used as many as 145,500 animals and 178,800 gallons of gasoline a day. They built twenty-one and rebuilt fifty miles of standard railroad, one hundred seventy of narrow, and repaired three hundred miles of roads. Their artillery fired 4,216,575 shells. They salvaged goods worth \$20,000,000.

The battle news was written by some twenty-five accredited correspondents, and many more who made short visits. American operators sent our dispatches by American wires to London or Chaumont for cable relay, though occasionally ancient French operators and equipment beat them in transmission time—perhaps because of American kidding.

But again, from the correspondents what went for-

ward was supposed to be a deep dark secret. Not a word about another attack, not a whisper. For the winter, Nancy was to be our jolly home—news greeted with profanity, for Nancy was bombed every clear night at expense to sleep and nerves, to say nothing of real-estate values. But it is hard to prepare secretly for a great battle fifty miles from twenty-five newspaper men whose job it is to know about such things. Our amateur army had advertised St. Mihiel beforehand, and seemed to feel it had paid. Nancy was a great crossroads, and we heard about the Meuse-Argonne from one friend after another over the tables of the Angletterre, the Stanislas or the Liegeois.

On September twenty-second, General Drum walked up the steps of the *mairie* in the slightly shopworn town of Souilly, a few miles behind the Meuse-Argonne front. Awaiting him was the II French Army Staff.

“It is an honor that you relieve us,” they said. “Here are the sector plans. At right, plan offensive. At left, plan defensive.”

They indicated two heavy tomes.

“The line,” said General Drum to himself, “forms on the right.”

His succinct battle orders covered only a few sheets.

The same day American correspondents were driving over roads crammed with troops, truck trains and guns and a thousand and one signs of what was com-

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ing. The final days, luckily cloudy, were like a subway rush hour. We wondered how everything would ever get in place in time. Troops thronged villages, roads, ditches, even fields, most of them clamoring: "Where the hell's our outfit?"

Two doughboys are reliably reported to have had this conversation:

First Doughboy: "Gosh, the whole Army's here. Where we goin'?"

Second Doughboy: "I dunno, but it's a big battle. I hear Pershing said it would be worth a hundred thousand men to win it."

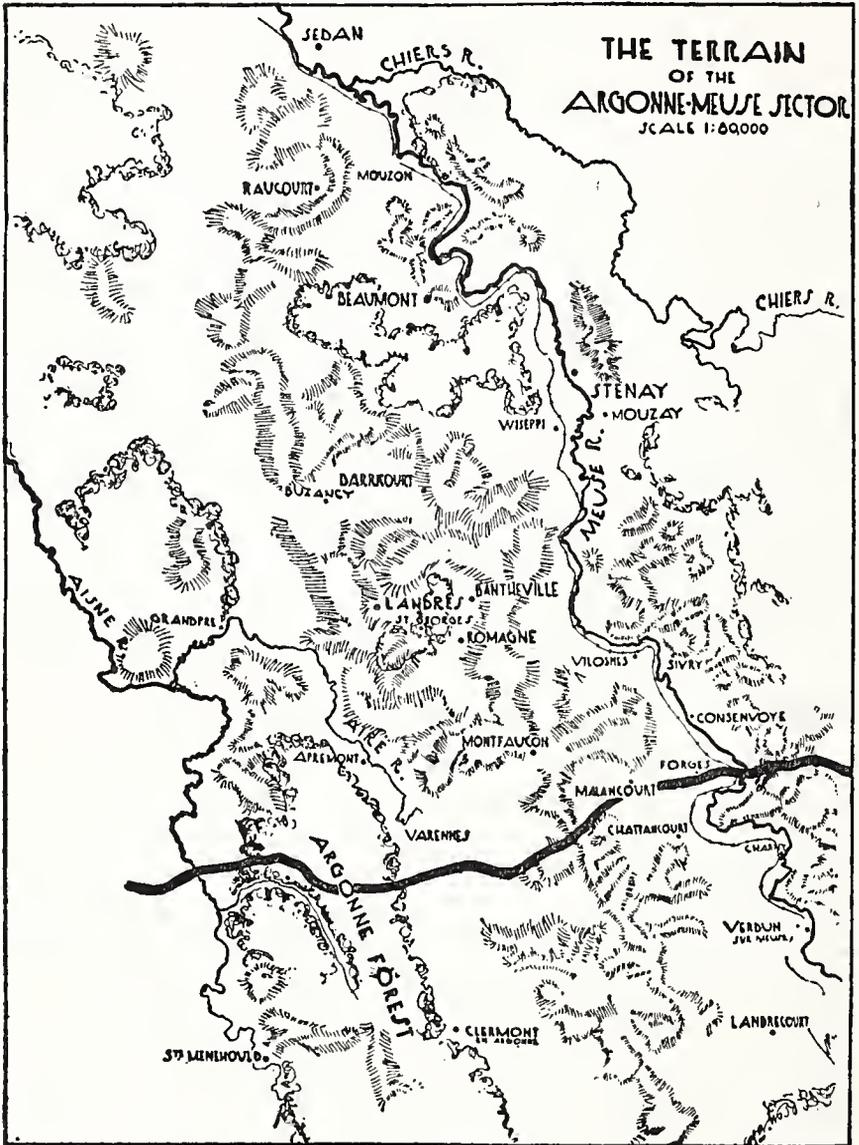
First Doughboy: "Hundred thousand men? Liberal old son-of-a-gun, ain't he?"

From the heights, crowned by the Verdun forts, we looked on the morning of September twenty-sixth over the "country ideal for defensive fighting" and wondered whether that and more might not be the price. At St. Mihiel was the flat Woëvre Plain, but here in the Meuse-Argonne were ridges, hills, valleys, gulleys, ravines, forests, woods, copses, every natural fortress and hiding-place for troops and artillery, above all, for the terrible machine-guns.

The American battle-field stretched before us, a great triangular defile, twenty miles wide at its opening or base, the jump-off line, and tapering toward Sedan, thirty-one miles to the north, where the Meuse River turned westward to flow through

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Mézières, fourteen miles away. North of both cities was the almost impassable, rough, mountainous Ar-



The lay of the land in the Meuse-Argonne, "ideal for defensive fighting," as General Pershing has said. The map indicates the successive ridges, the river valleys, the Argonne Forest, but few of the smaller woods and hills that made this the hardest fighting country on the Western Front. The black line is the front September twenty-sixth when our attack northward commenced.

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dennes region against which we should fling the Germans if we struck hard and quickly enough.

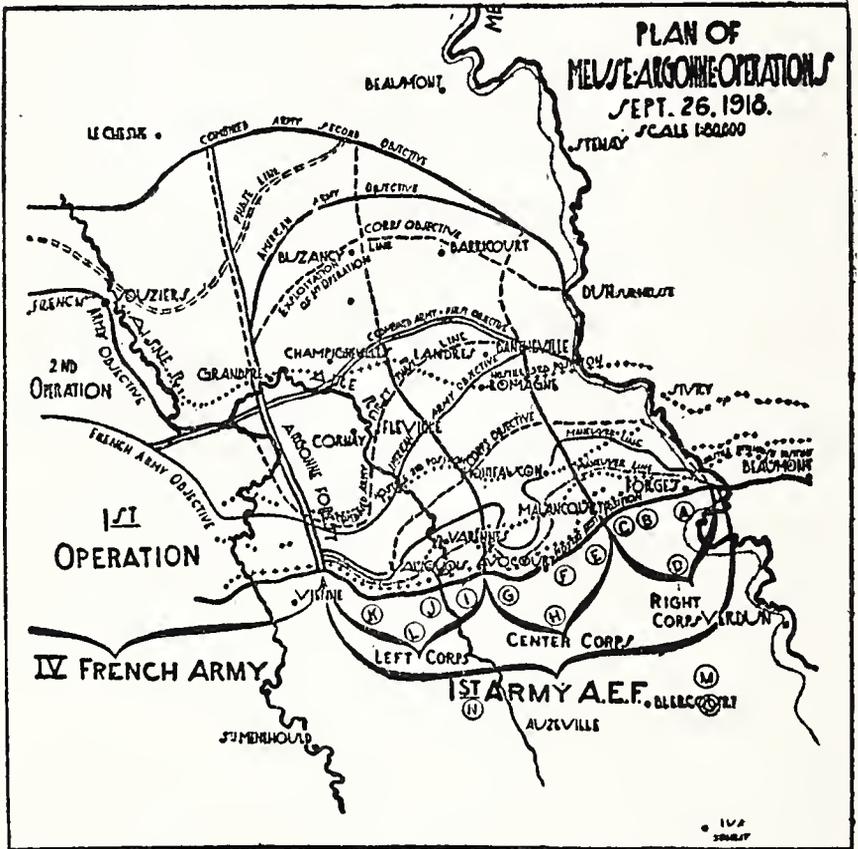
To the east, through the mist that seemed always to swathe that battle-field, loomed the heights of the Meuse. Away to the west, was the Aire Valley overlooked by the tree-crowned promontories of the Argonne Forest. Almost straight ahead, up the center of the defile, was the ruined village of Montfaucon, "Mount of the Falcon," crowning the first of three barrier ridges that crossed the defile and opposed our advance. The second ridge ran just before Cunel and through Romagne, and the third, through Buzancy, fifteen miles from the jump-off. That was the crest of the high ground in the defile. From it the country sloped down toward Sedan, sixteen miles away. When our infantry was at Buzancy, our long-range artillery could reach Sedan and the vital railroad.

West of the Argonne Forest was the IV French Army, commanded by General Gouraud, of the one arm. Heavily reenforced, he was doing the job Marshal Foch had proposed to give in part to a small American Army. His battle-field was the Champagne Plain, easier at first naturally than the Meuse-Argonne, but strongly fortified. His ultimate objective was Mézières, as ours was Sedan.

To reach those objectives quickly was the hope of the ambitious plan that the Marshal, General Pétain

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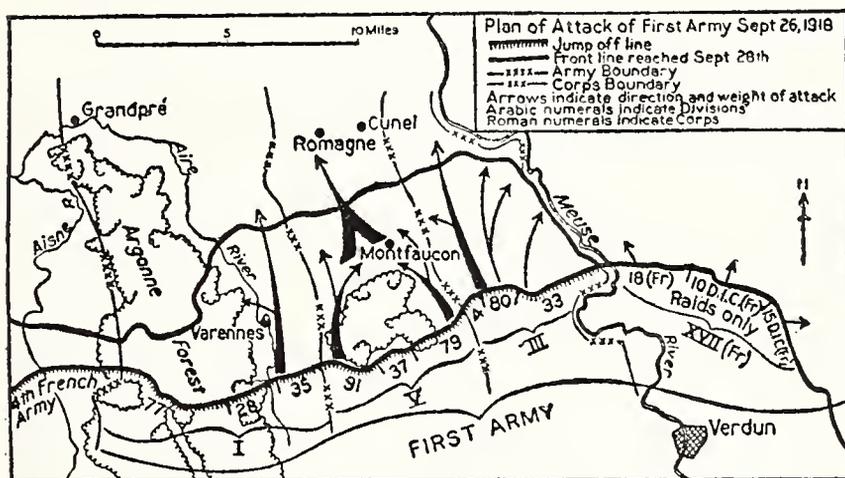
and General Pershing and his Staff had laid out for the First Army, still almost as amateur as in its first battle two weeks before. The event made this plan look optimistic as the event made our limited objective



The detail of the Meuse-Argonne attack plan. Lines of crosses indicate the German entrenched lines, solid and dashed lines, the stages of the advance whereby we were to capture them. It was hoped that by night of September twenty-sixth, the first day, we would have reached the American Army Objective, solid line, here marked "Hostile 3rd Position," whose apex was beyond the Kriemhilde Line at Romagne. Our cavalry were to meet the cavalry of the IV French Army in the Grandpré Gap, and that night infantry were to push on toward the exploitation line of the First Operation beyond Buzancy and Barricourt. Neither we nor the French fulfilled our part of the plan, although we came closer than the French. It took three weeks, not one day, to break the Kriemhilde Line and thirty-six days to reach Buzancy. In five days more we dominated Sedan. Then the war ended.

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plan at St. Mihiel look pessimistic. But it was a time for optimism, Marshal Foch thought. Objectives, he said, should be less limited.



How the plan of attack in the Meuse-Argonne fared. We could not quite make the advance of nearly ten miles the first day to reach the Kriemhilde Line Heights at Cunel and Romagne as indicated by the large arrow, to be followed by a farther advance enabling long-range artillery to shell the southern German jugular-vein railroad at Sedan. The plain black line indicates the front we had reached after two days' fighting.

So the Americans, preparing for this second and greater battle, hoped for a knockout at the start. They hoped that twenty-four hours after the doughboys had jumped off, they would have made it possible to cut very shortly afterward the great southern jugular-vein railroad at Sedan, thirty-one miles away! The plan was magnificent, Napoleonic, as finally elaborated from the conferences of Marshal Foch, Sir Douglas Haig, General Pershing and General Pétain.

After the conferences, Marshal Foch had sent to General Pershing instructions calling for an advance

so great that it seemed attainable only by a rush headlong through the comparatively thinly held German lines before they could be reenforced. So the First Army Staff drafted a plan of attack of which the cautious have said that the sky was the limit.

There was ambition. Jumping off at 5:30 in the morning, before evening the doughboys were expected to have advanced eight miles and more. They were to have overrun four German trench systems, the last of these the Kriemhilde Line. They were to have knocked the Germans off the heights of Cunel and Romagne. They were to have pressed on that night toward the Buzancy Ridge. They were to have captured that ridge next day or the day after if possible, so that long-range guns rushed up might shell or threaten at Sedan the southern end of the jugular-vein railroads, at the moment the British Army, with other Americans in the van, smashed at the northern railroad through the Cambrai section of the Hindenburg Line.

We were to fight in the Meuse-Argonne the battle that might have been at St. Mihiel, even more. And here, as at St. Mihiel, we would pinch out the Germans, this time by a flank attack with the French, astride the Argonne Forest, then beyond it join the French again in the Grandpré Gap. That would be a twelve-mile jump. Then we would push down the gradual slope toward Sedan, outflanking the Ger-

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mans before the French on the Aisne River and clearing the way for their advance to Mézières.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. So General Pershing thought, and approved the plan in all its audacity. So General Pétain thought, inspired by the mood of victory. That hard-headed soldier must have forgotten that he had said, September second, that the Americans could not pass Montfaucon before winter, when four days later he approved their plan to go five miles beyond Montfaucon on September twenty-sixth.

Therefore, all agreed to try it, and so General Pershing ordered the First Army on September twentieth, saying: "The advance will be pushed with great vigor. The American Army objective will be reached during the afternoon of D day. [September twenty-sixth.] The penetration thus made in the hostile Third Position [Kriemhilde Line] will be exploited during the night of D Day—D plus 1."

That meant a tremendous effort, for a stupendous prize. Should it succeed, it would be the greatest thing on the Western Front since 1914. By a headlong rush forward, we hoped to surprise the Germans, break four, in one place five, trench systems, and seize the key heights before they could get up reserves. That was the big thing, and meant tremendous speed and hitting power. The rest would come more easily.

Again Marshal Foch showed how important was this American attack in the whole scheme of things.

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On September twenty-sixth he wrote General Pershing a final note, marked "personal and secret":

"In particular, the advance of the American Army between the Meuse and the IV French Army, as also the strength of the American Army, remove all risk. It is necessary then, that without further indication, on the initiative of its leader, it push its advance forward as far as possible.

"The American Army should think first of all of pushing its advantages as far and as quickly as possible in the direction of Buzancy.

"The IV French Army by its advance toward the Aisne and Rethel, under the same conditions of rapidity, decision and initiative, will cover the American Army. The IV Army must in any case, seek and keep liaison with the American Army, but at no price must it slow up the movement of the American Army, which remains decisive.

"There is no question of fixing for these two armies, fronts not to be passed without a new order, such a restrictive indication being of a nature to prevent them from exploiting in depth favorable circumstances and to break the élan which must be maintained above all.

"In the present circumstances, we must develop above all the power of assault of the Allied Armies.

"The Marshal Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies counts upon the spirit of decision and initiative of each of these armies."

The note breathed a spirit of dashing attack. Marshal Foch even asked General Pétain to back it up with "a great appeal" to General Gouraud and General Pershing. Nothing must be allowed to slow up the attack, and until the doughboys had broken the

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Kriemhilde Line and gained the heights, they were to make as few halts as possible, even to reorganize.

That question of halts played quite a part, it proved. To accomplish the ambitious plan, General Pershing and the First Army Staff expected to break the Montfaucon Line by driving the III and I Corps as flanking wedges on either side the Mount of the Falcon, to squeeze out the Germans there. That was the Corps Objective. Then the V Corps between would close up, sweep over Montfaucon and on to the Kriemhilde Heights at Cunel and Romagne with the two other corps. That was called the Army Objective. Their attack order said this advance was to be "based upon the V Corps and regulated by Corps Commanders." It prescribed corps missions thus:

"III Corps (Right) by promptly penetrating Montfaucon Line, will turn Montfaucon and section of Montfaucon Line within zone of action of V Corps, thereby assisting capture of Montfaucon Line west of Montfaucon. Upon arrival at Corps Objective, will advance in conjunction with V Corps to American Army Objective.

"V Corps (Center) will reduce Montfaucon Wood and Cheppy Wood by outflanking from east and west. Upon arrival of III and I Corps at Corps Objective it (V Corps) will continue advance to American Army Objective and penetrate Kriemhilde Line without waiting for advance of III and I Corps.

"I Corps (Left) upon arrival at Corps Objective will advance to American Army Objective in conjunction with V Corps."

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The order looked even farther ahead, and told what each corps should do after the Kriemhilde Line had been broken, in the advance against the Freya Line and the Buzancy Ridge whence the country sloped downward to Sedan.

There has been, and in some quarters still is, controversy as to the exact meaning of that order and as to what effect, if any, differing constructions of it had upon the outcome on September 26, 1918, the first day of our biggest battle. Different judges explain differently why the plan embodied in the order was not carried out. Be that as it may, one reason was certainly the inexperience of the troops.

The eastern wedge would be driven by the III Corps under Major-General Robert Lee Bullard, fighting man of unquenchable fiery spirit, with, from east to west, the 33rd Illinois Guard, the 80th Pennsylvania National Army and the 4th Regular Divisions, only the 4th battle-experienced as a division. The western wedge would be driven by the I Corps under Major-General Hunter Liggett, indomitable, indefatigable, with, from east to west, the 35th Kansas and Missouri Guard, without battle experience, and the 28th Pennsylvania Guard and 77th New York City National Army Divisions, both with battle experience in the Marne salient. In the center before Montfaucon the V Corps had three green divisions, of which none had ever been in battle, one had never been under fire,

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and one had been on the front in quietness only ten days. These were from right to left, the 79th Pennsylvania National Army, 37th Ohio Guard and 91st Pacific Coast National Army. The hardest task fell to the least-experienced troops.

Fully as important, six of the nine Division Staffs had never before managed troops in battle. The Army Staff had done it only once, two weeks before, at St. Mihiel. They had been so hurried by the change of plan on September second, when our St. Mihiel concentration had already commenced, that they had had to grab divisions as they could for the Meuse-Argonne, without too-nice selection of sectors. That mainly, and necessity for safety at St. Mihiel, is why the experienced 1st, 2nd, 26th, 42nd could not be extricated from the first battle in time to start the second. Very possibly, as some have said, if they had been we should have gone clear through. But they could not have been. General Pershing had reminded Marshal Foch on September second that he had not experienced divisions enough for the program agreed upon—but that program was to push the weakening Germans hard. It meant speed. To make that omelette some eggs had to be broken—or risked.

So the troops that had been thronging to carry out this program were all eager, young and fresh, but, mostly, would be war-wise only with dearly bought experience. Our new battle maps, with colored crayon

lines marking successive objectives and phases, showed us almost a new A. E. F. Of the nine jump-off divisions only three had fought in battle as divisions, and those three had so many new replacements that of the 225,000 men only about 75,000 had been in battle. And nearly another 75,000 had never been under fire.

Still, no men in the world were more fit, more gay, more determined than those 225,000, mostly Guardsmen or National Army, "tin soldiers and drafties," led largely by "ninety-day wonders" from officers' training camps, who opened our part of the world's greatest battle. No other army had their equal in fresh vigor and enthusiasm. Napoleon's successor expected much of his "Young Guard."

Sure sign of what he hoped, but news that must be unwritten, was in the morning's order of battle. "5 Cav. Div. Fr.," it said. That meant that just back of the front was a division of French horsemen, lances in rest, waiting for a break-through—then to ride for a meeting with Gouraud's cavalry in the Grandpré Gap and, after, toward Sedan. Napoleon himself might have planned that.

The Marshal had come to see his hopes realized in this opening attack of his great battle, perhaps, if chance came, to push home with his own arm the thrust at Sedan and Mézières and the railroad. He had special headquarters in the Château of Trois-Fontaines, in the woods not far south of Bar-le-Duc.



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

A Road on the Battle-Field



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

A Ration Dump

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There was a chance. For four days, Ludendorff says, the Germans had known all about the French attack in the Champagne and were ready for it. But from the Argonne to the Meuse, they expected, at most, a slight attack and although they had taken prisoners and one deserter (their Intelligence called him "weak-minded") from several American divisions, they thought our great effort would be east of the Meuse, toward Metz. They had 250,000 men in that region. Our camouflage had fooled them. They had only six divisions in the front line, barely 70,000 men, against our attacking 225,000, odds of over three to one, and 85,000 more in reserve against our 150,000. In the first two days of battle they could move 70,000 more from the Metz area. Most of theirs were second- or third-rate troops, or men brought to rest in this quiet sector after hard fighting elsewhere.

The spring and summer fighting had worn down their strength. Behind all the Western Front, they had only sixty divisions in reserve, many of those tired and dispirited. The Allies' reserve equaled numerically seventy-five German divisions of infantry and ten of cavalry. All but the Americans, especially the French, were tired but not dispirited. They knew that at last things were going their way. While we were cutting off the St. Mihiel salient, British and French had finished the job of driving the Germans from the last of the ground they had won in the spring back

on to the Hindenburg Line on practically the whole front. Now they too were ready for renewed blows. That was the situation when, at 11:30 the night of September twenty-fifth, our artillery preparation joined that of Gouraud's French along a one-hundred-mile line from Rheims to the Moselle River south of Metz, one-fourth the whole Western Front.

To the last we tried to camouflage our plans, and until 2:30 the fire was noisier from the Meuse to the Moselle, the Metz sector, than from the Meuse to the Argonne. Then the really intense preparation began for the doughboys' attack. On the entire American sector, four thousand guns crashed, of which two thousand seven hundred were on the twenty-mile front of actual attack. Many were fired so fast they got red-hot.

On the whole American front not a single gun was American-made, only fifty-four per cent. were American manned. All the artillery had been made, forty-nine per cent. was served and fired, by the French who thus, as General Pershing had suggested to Marshal Foch, made good our shortage. We had 189 small tanks, all French-made, whereof Americans manned 142, French, 47. We had no large tanks, although we needed them. We had 821 airplanes of all sorts, good, bad, indifferent, of which 641 belonged to the American, 180 to the French Air Service, though most of the planes were of French manufacture.

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When at 5:30 the morning of September 26, 1918, the thundering artillery fire swept into a barrage stalking with great strides toward the German lines all the way from the Meuse to the Argonne, the American Army entered upon its greatest and most hazardous venture. Assembled hastily from the four quarters, of elements varied and often new to one another, new sometimes even to war at all, it played for a stake to catch the breath. It risked its vigor and enthusiasm against experience, for a decision of unheard-of quickness and importance. If it won, within seventy-two hours it might make possible the end of the war.

CHAPTER VII

THE JUMP-OFF

THAT morning of September twenty-sixth it seemed from the observation post on the famous hill of Mort Homme, beyond Verdun, that our new army, with all its improvisations, might accomplish what it so ardently hoped.

Our artillery preparation seemed to have been devastating. The German guns were almost silenced. The smoke mingled with the Meuse mists was from our own guns, not from their shell-bursts. As the mist lifted, we saw spread over the Meuse Heights the olive drab dots and lines that we knew were companies and battalions, patrols and platoons. They had started out well, according to reports coming to our post.

Down from the sky came an airplane. We glanced up, then turned back to the fascinating sights revealed by the scissors telescopes. Came a "put-put-put" and we all, including a general or two, flopped for cover from the snapping bullets. It was the wrong kind of an airplane—a bird of ill omen.

After a day along the front, visiting new headquarters, asking news of new officers, sometimes suspicious, sometimes zealous to "tell the newspaper men a good one," we gathered that evening in our new press

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headquarters in Bar-le-Duc, a small store up a steep, cobbled side street. Here was already installed the omnipotent blue pencil, that held sway like the Sergeant-at-Arms' mace or, when all the censors were working at once, seemed to have flowered like Aaron's rod. Here embattled correspondents were to bleed and die for preposition or turn of phrase, while callous censors looked on. Behind windows swathed in blankets, oil-lamps and candles guttered in smoke-laden air as men with dust-ringed faces checked up on the day's news, telling one another enough for a horse-trade, but keeping "exclusive" stuff to themselves. Motorcycle couriers brought from army and corps headquarters reports of press officers, experienced newspaper men stationed at each. These were eagerly scanned, but what every one awaited was the first American official communiqué on the battle.

At dawn each of the twenty-five cabling correspondents had sent a short bulletin announcing its opening and these had been read already in the newspapers at home. But the American Army was beaten on the news of the opening of its greatest battle. The first news Europe got was the French communiqué of that morning which calmly announced that "At five o'clock this morning, the French troops attacked in the Champagne, in conjunction with the American Army farther to the East." There had been no American communiqué yet. Many of us had sent home also

“picture stories” of things seen at the front, knocked out with all the feverish vivid freshness with which a great event is reported. But the real news of what had been accomplished during the day, and what it meant, could not be sent until we got the communiqué now being composed.

Throughout the battle, the communiqué set the pitch for the correspondents' dispatches. We could not tell of an attack, or the capture of a town—much less of a reverse—until after the communiqué had announced it, and often we must follow the communiqué's tone. In France and Germany especially the communiqués were almost the only real war news the people got in their newspapers. The rest was often “military criticism” written in newspaper offices or an occasional vivid description of some victory, perhaps unimportant, but inspiring. A communiqué might tell much or little as the truth was encouraging or discouraging. Thus was morale kept up.

The American communiqués were usually truthful, though sometimes they told only our side of the truth—if you get the idea. It was the truth, but not the whole truth. The first Meuse-Argonne communiqué made trouble for correspondents and the people at home who read their newspapers closely each tense thrilling day. It said that we had attacked the Germans on a twenty-mile front, penetrated to an average depth of seven miles and taken Montfaucon, which

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meant that if we had not taken the Kriemhilde Heights, we had broken the second position and might still within a few days be dropping shells on the Sedan-Mézières railroad and the German army be rent in twain. There was no word, of course, of railroad or Sedan, no revelation of plans, but that was what it meant to the correspondents who had heard the plan explained the night before. That was why they sat down the first night of the Meuse-Argonne and wrote jubilant, triumphant dispatches for you to read and chortle over next morning at breakfast. They were trying to tell you between the lines, what that communiqué meant but left unsaid, that the war might yet be won in the next week or so. The trouble was that most of the things the communiqué said had happened, had not.

About the only true statement, in fact, was that we had attacked on a twenty-mile front. We had penetrated the German lines to a *maximum* depth of barely seven miles at one place, an *average* depth of four, and had not captured Montfaucon. According to the communiqué, our almost unattainable main objective for the first day had been almost attained. In fact, we had done well, but were still considerably short of it.

As at St. Mihiel, General Nolan and Colonel Conger had been on or near the front line to see how the attack fared. Returning to Souilly, they checked what they knew first hand and what was reported up to nine

o'clock, and wrote the communiqué. But throughout the first day of the Meuse-Argonne, reports were often over-optimistic. Attacking troops, especially new ones, often claimed they had captured places they hadn't.

So it transpired that on the first night of our greatest battle, our communiqué, and after the communiqué, the correspondents, took Montfaucon—but the army did not. In a sense, that was a beat, but not the kind newspaper men covet. It was, we found, fast work—"fast and inaccurate—to-morrow's news to-day."

It was also, of course, good propaganda. Every Frenchman knew how Montfaucon dominated the Verdun front. Its name had magic significance. When it was not captured early in the day, another try was ordered before night, not for propaganda but for sound military reasons. The communiqué writers thought it had succeeded—but it had not.

We gathered eagerly that night over the corps reports of the result of the day's effort. They showed a situation truly tantalizing. Our artillery preparation had been short enough to surprise the Germans but too short to demolish their barbed wire. That had somewhat delayed our infantry who had not walked over it with the same agility as at St. Mihiel, but they had gone ahead faster than the French in Champagne whose longer preparation had given the Germans more time. At first a thick mist had confused attacking infantry and some had strayed from their proper

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course but it had also protected them from German fire. Later the mist had vanished. The result was this:

Before dark the III Corps had broken through its part of the Montfaucon Line. The 33rd Division had maneuvered perfectly on the Meuse. The 80th had done well. The experienced 4th had dashed ahead nearly seven miles, outflanking Montfaucon. But this eastern wedge was still short of the Kriemhilde Line by three or four miles.

The western wedge, the I Corps, had gone not so far but fully four miles for the Grandpré Gap, breaking German resistance. The 28th and 35th Divisions had knocked the weary 1st Guard Division almost for a loop. The 77th had started well on its heavy task in the Argonne Forest. The corps' front was not quite up to the Corps' Objective, and was from two to four miles short of the Kriemhilde Line.

So both flanking wedges had gone far, but not so far as hoped. The V Corps in the center had not taken its first great objective, the dominating height of Montfaucon. The Germans still held it, and from it surveyed the battle-field.

The greenest division in that green corps, the 91st, had done best. The Pacific Coast men had gone farther than the more experienced 28th and 35th, farther than any of our nine divisions. It had gone seven miles, carrying forward also the left of the 37th. But

the 37th's right and practically all of the 79th Division, were checked some two miles south of Montfaucon. The situation was tense, for the 4th, east of Montfaucon, had passed far beyond it, leaving the 79th three miles behind the 4th's left. The Germans in Montfaucon were in danger, but might possibly turn tables and split the two American divisions. Luckily, they didn't.

Ohioans of the 37th and Pennsylvanians of the 79th had all the troubles that assail troops in their first battle. The 37th had had six weeks in a quiet trench sector, the 79th only ten days. More than half its men had been in the army only four months. They must get by or through the big and well-fortified Malancourt and Montfaucon Woods, take the town and ridge of Montfaucon, then reach the Kriemhilde Heights, a task for all the craft and dash of the experienced 1st and 2nd Divisions. Why was it given to green troops? The answer, again, is the colossal task of getting any troops there at all under the conditions.

First the 79th fell behind the rolling barrage, perhaps because they were too slow, perhaps because it was too fast. So when the doughboys reached machine-guns, their German crews were all set. They took two hundred machine-guns in one big clearing in the woods where they were held up. Their telephone wires went out, cutting communication with corps

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headquarters, one of their brigadiers moved his post of command without "by your leave," their engineers found hard work repairing the obliterated Malancourt-Montfaucon road over the ancient Verdun No Man's Land, so little artillery got forward to support the infantry. One infantry brigade had to be reorganized on the field. Finally, at 4:50 in the afternoon, Major-General Joseph E. Kuhn, Division Commander, received a message from Major-General George H. Cameron, the V Corps Commander, that he "desired the attack pushed." At 5:35 the missing Brigadier, Brigadier-General William J. Nicholson, got the message and it was dusk before it reached Colonel Claude B. Swezey, whose 313th Infantry from Maryland had to make the actual attack. His men had fought all day, but, according to plan, by that time they should have been six miles farther ahead, on the Kriemhilde Heights. He ordered the attack.

Storming the Mount of the Falcon was like storming some medieval citadel. Its crest towered above the Americans in the gathering dark, spitting fire. Before them yawned a moat-like valley protecting its foot. They must cross the valley first, then climb the slope, and all under heavy machine-gun fire though little shelling. With a cheer they went forward. Bullets crackled about them and many had never heard their sound before. Here and there men dropped. Ahead rumbled seven light tanks with French crews. By

6:45 when tanks and infantry reached the valley bottom, it was dark, but not too dark for the German machine-gunners to find a mark. The French tanks came back. They would fight no more that night, their commander said, and they clanked away. Slowly the 313th went back to the crest south of the valley. Below in its darkness, shot through the head, lay the officer who of them all had got nearest to Montfaucon—Major Israel Putnam.

That was the attack the communiqué writers had counted on.

Next morning, helped by just four 75s and six tanks, the 313th took Montfaucon with no great loss. The Germans had held it long enough to throw out our plan of attack and now were ready to give it up. At 11:45 Colonel Swezey sent back from Montfaucon a report of its capture by a carrier pigeon which in less than two hours flew fourteen miles through heavy artillery fire and arrived with wing torn and bleeding in a pigeon loft—whence the message never reached General Kuhn. He first heard of the capture at 1:30 by courier.

Rather typical of battle conditions, especially in a new division. Typical also that the 313th Infantry had lost on the first day less than one hundred killed of its 3700 men, and that when on the fourth day General Kuhn found his division so disorganized and weary that he asked for relief, his actual casualties

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totaled little over 3000 of 27,000. Later the 79th did splendidly.

Montfaucon was a hoodoo also for the experienced 4th. A battalion of its 39th Infantry, supposedly advancing east of Montfaucon, became lost in the fog, and got on to the east slope of the Mount of the Falcon in the morning, about eight hours before the 79th's unsuccessful attack at dusk. The 39th found Germans there, and flanked the height, had a fight, and brought back one hundred prisoners. These, like the King of France's men, they marched down the hill again and went to Septsarges, which itself is a mile beyond Montfaucon. Of course they had been out of their proper sector. They left behind fifty men "who seriously considered going on" and taking Montfaucon. Impossible, of course, but had it been done so early in the day——

There is a great unanswered question about our first day in the Meuse-Argonne. It is: Could we, in that single day, have reached our goal, immediate breakthrough to the Kriemhilde Heights at Cunel and Romagne, and great German defeat? Was the plan of attack, however ambitious, not utterly impossible of realization? More, did the door to such a victory stand for a brief space just a little ajar, then before we could slip through, slam in our faces? Was there, in short, ever a chance of a miracle? The answer seems to be: Well, possibly—if——

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The great "if" of the first day of our greatest battle stands out clearly ten years later as: "If we had taken Montfaucon." That ruin-crowned height, recently chosen as the site of our new Meuse-Argonne monument, was the key to the situation. Had we got it as we planned, early enough in the day, we might have reached the Kriemhilde Line before the Germans reinforced their none too strong front and were ready to defend it. Why did we fail to take Montfaucon on the first day? The reasons seem to be four:

Because the 79th Division, in whose sector it was, was delayed and could make no real frontal attack.

Because the 4th Division, which had got three miles past Montfaucon, did not cut over and take it, notwithstanding it was in the 79th's sector. Some say that was what the First Army attack order intended, by directing the III Corps which included the 4th to "*turn* Montfaucon and section of Montfaucon Line within zone of action of V Corps" which included the 79th. They say that even if the 4th did not understand this, the battalion of its 39th Infantry that wandered in the mist on to the east slope of Montfaucon, let slip a golden tactical opportunity when it went back into its allotted sector. Battles, they say, are won by recognizing just such chances and taking them, disregarding some orders if necessary. They do not know the "battalion" was fifty men. Now others say quite a different reason saved Montfaucon.



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Montfaucon



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

The O. P.

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Because, they say, the First Army attack order was understood to mean that the two flanking wedges, the III and I Corps, must stop after they had broken the Montfaucon Line and mark time on the Corps Objective until they heard that the V Corps had taken Montfaucon, before they went ahead with the V Corps to the Kriemhilde Line. But for that understanding, they say, the wedges would not have stopped, but, going on, would have so threatened the Germans at Montfaucon with encirclement, that they must have got out before night. Meantime the III Corps, especially the 4th Division, would have had its part of the Kriemhilde Heights. On the 4th's front particularly, the Germans were on the run these say, but stopped running and came back when the 4th stopped and marked time. Some who should know say something similar occurred with the I Corps, although night found it mostly short of the Corps Objective, to which one who also should know retorts that "our orders were to go through, and these objectives were merely locations on the map where, on arrival, we reported our presence and re-formed without particular regard for the fortunes of the units on our flanks." It is stated that there was nothing in the attack order to delay the wedges, and that in practise what delayed them was rough ground, mist, the disorganization resulting among inexperienced troops and commanders, and the simple fact that there were also some Germans in the

neighborhood who were fighting hard to stop the advance.

It is difficult to understand any real misconception, if there was, of General Pershing's intentions and the First Army attack order. It had been issued six days before the attack, discussed in one conference after another. It would seem that if there were errors in the order or in comprehension of it by corps and division commanders they would have been ironed out. But if any misunderstanding or vagueness remained in any mind the morning of September twenty-sixth, it must have been swept away during the day by a communication from General Pershing based upon his information at the time. The purport of this communication is not obscured by the fact that part of that information turned out incorrect.

Reports from the V Corps and Air Service were often wrong about the situation at Montfaucon, which the former reported at 3:55 P. M. as having been entered by patrols, and at seven o'clock as having been captured. The Air Service said there were no Germans there (they were in the cellars) and a ten-mile gap beyond. At other points the Germans were reported withdrawing to the Kriemhilde Line. No commander can direct a battle victoriously unless he knows how it is going. But while his Intelligence was sometimes insufficient, the orders that General Pershing issued showed unmistakably his desire that every one push

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forward and fight hard, without unnecessary delays anywhere. He sent this message:

“Division and Brigade Commanders will place themselves as far up toward the front of advance of their respective units as may be necessary to direct movements with energy and rapidity in any attack. The enemy is in retreat or holding lightly in places, and the advance elements of several divisions are already on the First Army Objective [this information was inaccurate] and there should be no delay or hesitation in going forward. Detachments of sufficient size will be left behind to engage isolated strong points which will be turned and not permitted to hold up or delay the advance of the entire brigade or division. All officers will push their units forward with all possible energy. Corps and Division Commanders will not hesitate to relieve on the spot any officer of whatever rank who fails to show in this emergency those qualities of leadership required to accomplish the task which confronts us. This order will be published to all concerned by the quickest means possible.”

Here was a forceful order that left no room for misunderstanding, no excuse for waits on Corps Objectives or elsewhere, for any reason but need to reorganize our own troops, or because the Germans were fighting too hard. If after six days' study the First Army attack order was still misunderstood, this should have removed the misunderstanding. General Pershing also ordered the French cavalry forward to be ready for a break-through, but the horsemen found slow going over the old No Man's Land. With more speed some

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American cavalymen think they might have found an opening. But whether or not either the III Corps wedge or the I Corps had forced the door even ajar, the Germans soon closed it again. When night fell, we had nowhere broken or even closely approached the Kriemhilde Line, so we nowhere held its Heights. The night advance beyond the Heights, which the battle order directed, did not happen.

Was there such a break, anywhere on the twenty-mile front, the first day of the battle? The Germans know best. General von Gallwitz writes:

“I believe myself justified in stating that our front between the Argonne and the Meuse was broken through on September 26th, as the Americans in several places had penetrated to the extent of seven kilometers [it was more in several other places]. Of my Army Group only two weak divisions, holding together a front of fourteen kilometers, were located near the Meuse. The principal penetrations were made in Bois de Cheppy, near Very, Cuisy and Sivry. However, already in the evening the danger was averted by bringing up reserves. On the 27th and 28th we had no more worries, for on these days our troops already launched several counter-attacks.”

General Schwarte says that by night of the twenty-sixth the Germans had in some places nothing to stop us but machine-gun nests. A German staff-officer wrote afterward that for a time during the night of the twenty-sixth, only one depleted German infantry regiment, the 20th, blocked the Aire Valley. We made

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no effective night attack as contemplated in the attack orders. The Germans dumped in reinforcements helter-skelter, and by morning, if there had been a hole, it was plugged. One American officer well known as a tactician thinks that "it is undoubtedly true, although unknown to us at the time, that we came very near making a break-through in the Aire Valley."

If only commanders could know in the instant heat of battle what they find out later!

Certainly our hastily prepared attack had brought the Germans perilously close to disaster. They had used the "elastic defense," fighting only a delaying action in the first line, making their real defense on the Montfaucon line. There they had held barely long enough to get set to defend the approaches to the Kriemhilde Line and that line itself, where we hoped to break it. They had manned its outpost positions with their local reserves, and Hindenburg and Ludendorff were responding to a hurry call with divisions from the general reserve. Their communiqué could say, pretty truthfully:

"The great American and French attempt to break through, with its extensive objectives, failed on the first day of the battle as result of the stubborn opposition of our troops. New battles are imminent."

It was certainly truthful that new battles were imminent. This was the first test of General Pershing's

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stubborn, driving will to conquer in battle that was to make his command in the Meuse-Argonne so like that of Grant in the Wilderness. We had not taken all our objectives in a single rush in a single day, but Montfaucon might be the only obstacle to doing it on a second. We would try the more fiercely. At ten o'clock that night Army Headquarters issued "Field Order Number 25," opening:

"The enemy, without opposing serious infantry or artillery resistance, has been driven back on our whole front.

"The First American Army will continue its advance to the Combined Army First Objective [a still wider and deeper break through the Kriemhilde Line than planned for the first day]. The advance will be continued at 5:30 A. M. September 27.

"The First Corps, upon reaching the Combined Army First Objective, will gain contact with the IV, French Army through the valley of the Aire [at the Grandpré Gap.]

"The Fifth French Cavalry Division will be held in concealment in woods near Varennes prepared to advance to the north through the Aire Valley when ordered by the Army Commander."

What a story to cable home that night! But, of course, we could only stay up all night watching the stealthy yet terribly hurried preparations in darkness lighted by livid light of flashing gun muzzles, or the red glare of shell-bursts. It was a game for big stakes that faint hearts would not win.

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There were no faint hearts at First Army Headquarters. General Pershing, General Drum and the whole Staff were pushing everywhere all that night, pushing forward artillery, supply trains, above all engineers were repairing the three roads that were all we had over shell-churned, ruined No Man's Land which since the Verdun battles of 1916 had been one of the most impassable stretches of the whole Western Front. That was a night of toil and strain.

Next day was the first of many more like it, the cruel grueling days of the Meuse-Argonne. For some people not consulted about our plan, namely the Germans, had determined that to realize it we should have to fight not one day or two days, but forty-seven. They had recovered from the first shock, brought up reinforcements, greatly increased their artillery, and were now fighting every minute to defend the positions we were approaching which protected the Kriemhilde Line.

When at 5:30 the doughboys again jumped off, they met a terrible artillery fire, directed from that Falcon's nest at Montfaucon. Until noon the Germans hung on there, in a concrete observatory whence with a remarkable telescope (now at West Point) they swept our advancing lines, then telephoned their artillery how to work most havoc. By afternoon of the twenty-seventh Montfaucon had fallen, and the center was soon up with the flanks—partly because the flanks

had not moved ahead so much. On the second day the wedges had lost much of their power of the first.

To avoid misunderstanding, General Pershing's "Field Order 25" had said that this day the three corps would advance *independently* to break through the Kriemhilde Line. But not even this was enough. The III Corps which had led the advance the day before, now could barely eke out a costly mile. The V Corps did little more than come up even with the III Corps. The I Corps made a gallant try at the breach in the Aire Valley through which the cavalry might gallop. The 28th and 35th Divisions still advanced, and things looked interesting.

But this side of Varennes, several miles beyond the old front line, was a great mine crater. Traffic picked a crawling way around its edges, while engineers struggled to bridge the gap. Sweating, swearing men tugged at guns and wagons stuck in the mud. Ahead were the infantry, some short of food and ammunition, and of adequate artillery protection. Some had neither blankets nor winter underclothing. They were "mobile" if only to keep warm.

Near Varennes were the woods where the French cavalry were to have been hidden, awaiting the ride to Grandpré. Again, that ride never started. The French cavalry commander and Major J. G. Quekemyer, of General Pershing's Staff, searching in an automobile for the chance, struck a German mine and

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were blown up. "Blocked roads and other causes" are given as the reason why the cavalry did not move.

That began the Allied charge which made trouble throughout the battle, all over Allied Europe, and in this country, that our traffic jams prevented quick success and immediate full realization of all Marshal Foch's hopes in the Meuse-Argonne. Indeed, it has been recently part of Allied propaganda seeking debt cancelation.

This claim is vehemently denied by American officers who say, first, that Marshal Foch's plan was too ambitious to have been possible of immediate full realization anyway and, second, that while defective traffic control rather than congestion did cause difficulties these were met so rapidly that four days after the battle commenced we had relieved four tired divisions by three fresh ones, a movement of some hundred fifty thousand men by the same roads over which supplies went up and sick and wounded came down, for the whole army. There were only three roads between Meuse and Argonne through a battle area of one hundred fifty square miles, each road to serve a corps of two hundred thousand men, a good-sized city.

Traffic control in battle is a problem even with good roads and veteran armies, and not always solved successfully by French and British. In our new army most drivers and military police, even directing officers, were inexperienced. It rained some on September

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twenty-sixth, more thereafter, more and more, in fact, as the autumn rains of the Meuse Valley got working properly. Roads were always muddy and, over the old No Man's Land, were almost quicksands until the gray stone of many wrecked French peasants' homes had built them up. Worst of all was the congestion the first few days over the Esnes-Malancourt road in the V Corps area where sometimes for hours traffic moved only a few yards. Big signs sprang up: "PLAY THE GAME, BOYS! OBEY THE M. P.!" Later our traffic control improved.

Somehow, in less than forty-eight hours, all divisional artillery except a few heavy guns had crossed No Man's Land and was firing in support of the infantry. But that meant a quarter of the twenty-seven hundred guns that had opened the battle on the active front, and some were, for a time, short of shell. Further, during part of the forty-eight hours some divisions had had almost no artillery at all forward to support the infantry.

That meant that the doughboys must attack in some places, with little or no barrage protection, Germans who fired ten shells to their one. They met for the first time the deadly cross-fire with which from then on the Germans pounded us front and flank, bringing more and more guns to the Argonne bluffs on the west and the Meuse Heights on the east. What those could not reach, the guns on the Kriemhilde Heights straight

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ahead could. To attack was to run that gauntlet of flame and hot metal.

By evening of the twenty-seventh, the second day, great bravery and sacrifice had given us some advance everywhere, mostly in the Aire Valley, but not a breakthrough.

So on the morning of the twenty-eighth we tried again to pull ourselves together and do it. General Pershing sent a special letter to his corps commanders, saying that it was extremely important to drive forward with all possible force.

There was still some hope of at least forcing the Germans immediately behind the Kriemhilde Line. In fact, again some Intelligence indicated that they might be retreating there. First Army "Field Order 27," issued on the evening of September twenty-eighth, said that the German resistance consisted mainly of artillery and machine-gun fire and that "movements of convoys indicate retirement to the north." Marshal Foch was still at Trois-Fontaines Château, anxious to see far-reaching results in this vital region, as the remainder of the Battle of the Western Front began to unfold.

On the twenty-seventh the British had struck the first blow of the series that broke the Cambrai section of the Hindenburg Line. To-day, the twenty-eighth, Belgians, French and British were attacking in Flanders. To-morrow, the twenty-ninth, the British

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with the 27th and 30th American Divisions in the van, would electrify the world by penetrating the Hindenburg Line at Cambrai. The Germans were trying frantically, with divisions reduced by losses and fatigue, to plug all these holes at once. This was the situation the Allied leaders had hoped for.

The French military leaders thought it highly satisfactory and their censor passed dispatches from G. Q. G. saying: "It is perhaps not too much to say that the events of the next few days may be decisive."

But neither Allies nor Americans could strike quite hard or fast enough to cause immediate collapse of a German Army that still had plenty of fight.

We made a great effort in the Meuse-Argonne on the twenty-eighth, but it was not enough. Even our young soldiers were tired, after two days and nights of marching and fighting with little food or sleep, soaked with rain. Rain, too, made harder the work of bringing up supplies, and traffic was not yet straightened out. Also, too many Germans were fighting too well in this country "ideal for defensive fighting." They had one hundred twenty-five thousand men in the front line now, double as many as forty-eight hours previously, making odds now less than two to one, not disproportionate in the circumstances. They and their artillery cross-fire and their searching, mowing machine-guns were enough to stop us with small advances, save in the Aire Valley where the devoted 28th and 35th still went ahead a bit.

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The Aire Valley was about the only place where we advanced at all on the twenty-ninth, and there, as elsewhere on the twenty-mile front, we gave up some ground after we had taken it. Artillery was still not fully organized in new positions, or supply wholly adequate by inadequate roads. Troops, especially new units, were sometimes disorganized. Advanced units were not always supported when struck by German counter-attacks. On September twenty-ninth they drove back the farthest north fringe of our line on most of the battle front. In the Aire Valley they turned the tables.

Here the Kansas and Missouri Guardsmen of the 35th Division had made a splendid advance until the troops reached Exermont Ravine, eight miles from the original jump-off. Then occurred one of the saddest incidents of the battle. Depleted, exhausted, they were hit by the fresh 52nd German Division and some of the 5th Guard, rushed up to fill the gap, and hurled back.

For a time there was dangerous confusion, in some places almost panic. The division's right hand lost notion of what its left hand was doing. The haggard infantry staggered back to cover behind a thin new front line some two miles to the rear, formed by the 110th Engineers only one thousand strong. One of the battle's finest achievements was their repulse, with little but rifles, of a German counter-attack.

If the Germans had got through, they might have

thrown the left of our whole army into confusion equaling that of the 35th—a fine beginning for the greatest American battle. No wonder Colonel John C. Montgomery, of the I Corps Staff, was decorated because on the spot he had gathered all available men and stopped the German attack. Again, American inexperience had given the Germans a fine opening which the Germans had missed.

The veteran 1st Division made a forced march across the rear of the whole army and relieved the wornout and sorely tried 35th. They found the front line in places by advancing until the Germans fired on them, then digging in. They hoped at first to resume the advance at once, but next day found the Germans so determined that they could do nothing without time to get organized. It was so all along the corps front. There could be no more progress in the Aire Valley without more artillery, more trucks and more animals, of which the corps had started seven thousand short.

There was intense enthusiastic silence about this. No correspondent wrote, no censor passed, a word. That would violate two censorship regulations: nothing went that would “supply military information to the enemy,” or that would “injure morale in our forces in France, or at home, or among the Allies.” Why tell the Germans that they had nearly routed an American division? Why tell Kansas and Missouri or the rest of the United States? It was not a bad division, just

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new, and exhausted after a splendid effort against handicaps. The men were equal to any in the A. E. F. After the Armistice, G. H. Q. tried to straighten out the misunderstanding.

Then returning soreheads were filling newspapers with complaints, mostly unjustified. The 35th incident helped make a governor and caused a Congressional inquiry that revealed that war is a hard game and must be learned. Luckily the Germans did not know all that happened, September twenty-ninth, in the Aire Valley.

On September thirtieth General Pershing and the First Army Staff faced the fact that, for the time, we had struck a snag. Our first great attack had not been a failure by any means, but it had been stopped five miles short of its maximum objective, the Kriemhilde Line at Cunel and Romagne, and the Grandpré Gap. All nine attacking divisions had lost heavily, and not only the 35th but the 37th, 79th and 91st were more or less disorganized and must be relieved. The experienced 32nd Wisconsin and Michigan Guard, and 3rd Regulars, were doing this. Our traffic and supply problem had been tremendously complicated by rain. Roads were softened, troops in the open without the snug trenches and dugouts of stationary warfare were drenched and chilled. Sick with flu, exhaustion and unavoidable lack of hot food, they were coming to hospitals already heavily taxed. We needed a few days to pull ourselves together.

Gouraud's French had been stopped in Champagne, after an advance only half as far as ours. From now on, they were to advance mostly when we did, a sort of tail to the American comet. The German artillery was getting stronger, its cross-fire more costly. They had now one hundred fifty thousand infantry in line, fighting desperately and craftily. Their machine-gun defense became deadlier, counter-attacks fiercer and more frequent. All the advantage of our surprise had worn off.

There was only one thing for a prudent commander and staff to do—prepare to defend the new-won gains against a strong effort to retake them. Engineers and labor troops were set quickly to work building a defensive line behind the new front, from the Meuse Heights through Dannevoux, Nantillois, Éclisfontaine, Charpentry, Montblainville and Aprémont to the Argonne, to be held at all cost against a possible general counter-attack by the Germans.

Their propaganda was active, too, trying to buck up their own public opinion, depress ours. Their communiqués, printed in American if not in most Allied newspapers, dwelt upon our "heavy losses" and our "massed attacks"—with some truth. Inexperienced divisions had used reserves too soon, making heavy front lines to be mowed down by machine-guns which the men, with the courage of ignorance, charged frontally despite orders to flank them.

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General von Soden, German Corps Commander east of the Meuse where he expected soon to be attacked, said to his troops:

“The American infantry is very unskillful in attack. It attacks in thick columns in waves echeloned in depth, preceded by tanks. This sort of attack offers excellent objectives for the fire of our artillery, infantry and machine-guns. On condition that the infantry does not allow itself to be intimidated by the advancing masses and remains calm, it can make excellent use of its arms. The American attacks fail with the heaviest losses. . . .

“The general opinion of our troops is that the American troops are not a dangerous adversary when their method of fighting is known beforehand.”

The General was giving his men a little Dutch courage by methods not unfamiliar to American commanders. He was also obeying Hindenburg's order: “The troops must be impressed with the hollowness of the American massed attacks.”

Apparently the German infantry did sometimes “allow itself to be intimidated by the advancing masses.” Our more experienced troops did not mass.

It made good German propaganda, though—“Americans driven to slaughter!” There was Allied propaganda, too, and some American. The Americans, it said, were “rifle-crazy.” General Pershing and his Staff had harped so upon using the rifle and bayonet that the doughboys, especially in the inex-

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perienced divisions, depended upon them alone to knock out machine-guns, and it couldn't be done. You must use one-pounder cannon and Stokes mortars. Especially you must sneak up on machine-guns and flank them, not rush at them head-on. That was suicide.

They may have known that General Pershing had cabled the War Department a month before the Meuse-Argonne that French infantry were too dependent upon artillery and British lacking in initiative. Then he said: "The infantry of both services are poor skirmishers, a result of extended service in the trenches. The American mission in this war requires an aggressive offensive Army based on a self-reliant infantry."

The A. E. F. way to make them self-reliant was to teach them to trust their own weapons, rifle and bayonet. But they had one-pounders, Stokes mortars, hand grenades and machine-guns and were taught to use those also, in their proper places, not like the French soldier in the story, who ran, rifle in hand, after a German, to get close enough to throw a hand grenade. If German machine-guns took awful toll, overdoing the rifle and bayonet idea was not one of the main reasons.

Those were: first, so many of the attacking troops lacked battle experience which no amount of training can equal; second, the country was ideal for machine-

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guns, and third, we had not enough tanks which are the sovereign remedy for machine-guns.

On September thirtieth all our equipment was being depleted. Half our artillery had been French to start with, and Marshal Foch took some of it for other attacks. Of the eight hundred twenty-one airplanes we had now six hundred forty-one available and some of the French were needed elsewhere. We started with control of the air, but, as we advanced into rugged country where we could not build new aerodromes, it was hard to keep. The German aerodromes were nearer the front than ours. We had had troubles enough at the start, now we had more.

On September twenty-eighth, after our last great effort had been not quite enough, Marshal Foch had left Trois-Fontaines. He had waited there, though the Flanders attack and the Cambrai Hindenburg Line attack were starting. These attacks went farther, and brought more prisoners, than the American and French attack astride the Argonne. Now all were parts of a converging attack to break the Hindenburg Line and cut the railroads. In most of Flanders there was no Hindenburg Line; at Cambrai the British had been right in front of it, whereas in Champagne and the Meuse-Argonne French and Americans must fight forward through eight to twenty miles mostly entrenched before they reached it at all. They had failed to do this in a day or two.

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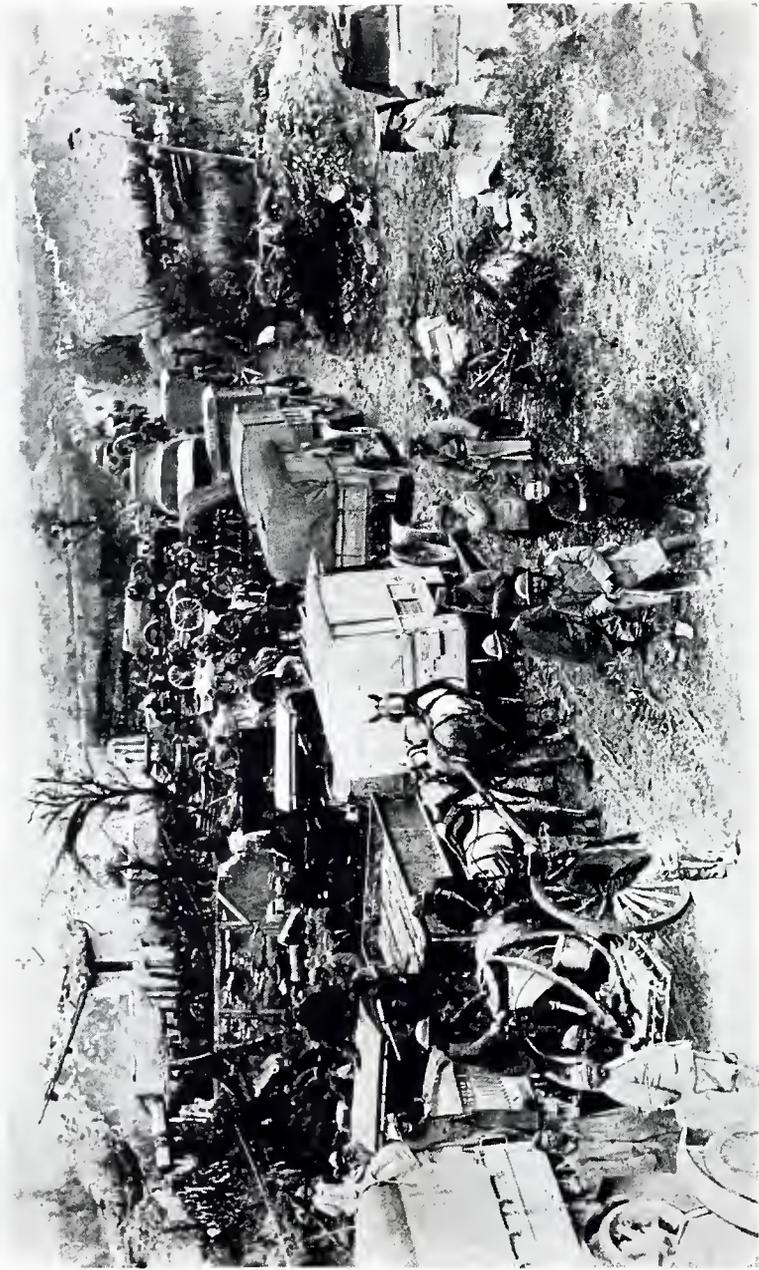
Before the British at Cambrai and the French from Cambrai to Champagne, the gaps between prepared German defensive lines were two to four times as great as before us, which gave them some interludes of more comfortable advance. After breaking the Hindenburg Line at Cambrai with American help, the British had now such an interlude in advancing to the next German line on the Selle. Their crushing blows north and south of Cambrai had won that town and 48,500 prisoners of whom Americans took nearly 4000, while we had taken 17,600 and the French in Champagne 21,500. On October first the British had gone seven or eight miles of their forty-five for Maubeuge, we, about the same of our thirty-one for Sedan, the French, in Champagne, three of their thirty-five for Mézières. But before the British, the Germans made little fight for fifteen miles, until they reached the Selle on October tenth, while in the Meuse-Argonne-Champagne they fought all the time.

After ten years it must seem to every one, as it did then to those who knew the circumstances and tried to weigh them, that the wonder was that the Americans had come as near as they had to realizing all the ambitious hopes and plans. But then, in the heat of war and eagerness to grasp what seemed more and more the chance to end it that they had almost despaired of finding, some French political and military leaders and some British, too, blamed our failure to



German Official

They Brought up Reinforcements in Trucks



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

A Traffic Jam

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fulfill the whole Napoleonic plan upon an army and staff too inexperienced to run a big battle. They pointed to the road jams. If only, they said, the Americans had those French generals "with sufficient power to expedite the solution of all questions." They resumed, partly because they sincerely believed us incompetent to run our own battle, partly from pique, a propaganda that became almost an intrigue to discredit American command in general and General Pershing's in particular.

The old idea of getting control of the American Army cropped up again in a vivid incident. Premier Clemenceau sojourned for some time in his automobile amid one of our road jams. American officers knew this, and heard, in fact, that he had been prevented thereby from making a speech at Verdun. They wondered whether they had heard the last of it when he finally became disentangled. Raymond Recouly, a well-known French military writer, tells what ensued, in his book, *La Bataille de Foch*.

When Monsieur Clemenceau reached Marshal Foch's headquarters his stock of patience, never great, had disappeared. Usually he was chary of disturbing the Marshal, especially at mass, which, the old agnostic said, "works very well with him." But this time he exploded.

"Those Americans will lose us our chance for a big victory before winter," he said in effect. "They are all

tangled up with themselves. You have tried to make Pershing see. Now let's put it up to President Wilson."

The French had thought of that before, when they found General Pershing stuck too enthusiastically to the orders President Wilson, Secretary Baker and General Bliss had given him when he sailed, to form an American Army as soon as practicable. In France they tried to wean away subordinates; in the United States, to have General Pershing removed. He was too stubborn, they said, and too ambitious. He wanted to be the man who won the war, just as President Wilson wanted to be the man who won the peace. The President seemed to think that some one must win the war first and it might as well be Pershing.

Marshal Foch sensed that. He knew the American Commander better than did Clemenceau, knew he was set like a rock now for an independent American Army. He knew also that General Ragueneau, head of the French mission at General Pershing's headquarters, had reported that any other American commander would be just as set, and would be backed by his Army and Government, so what was the use intriguing for General Pershing's removal?

"The Americans have got to learn some time," the Marshal said to the President of the Council. "They are learning now, rapidly. Every day they will help us more and more. We must play the game with them."

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Grudgingly Monsieur Clemenceau went back to Paris and told Admiral Sims, American Naval Commander in Europe, that the American Staff had broken down and lost a great chance, because that stubborn Pershing insisted upon the Americans trying a big military operation before they were ready. Some American Congressmen visiting France heard the story, and took it to Washington. There some whispered that General March would go to France to take General Pershing's place.

Meantime Marshal Foch got a letter from General Pétain, who on September second had predicted that the Americans would not get beyond Montfaucon before winter. He wrote:

“The advance of the First American Army is now stopped. The reasons for this temporary halt are to be found less in the resistance of the enemy, than in the difficulty the American staff finds in moving and supplying its troops under the conditions created by the advance of the First American Army on September 26. In consequence, the Franco-American maneuver which was intended to proceed with the right [the Americans] advanced, with successive objectives at Grandpré, Buzancy, Le Chesne so as to turn the line of the Aisne, risks being compromised.”

So General Pétain proposed: “That the II French Army now at Laheyourt [General Hirschauer's Army that we had relieved before the Meuse-Argonne] be brought into line, to take command of the

right corps of the IV [French] Army and the left Corps of the First American Army."

General Pétain wanted to take part of our battle away from us and give it to General Hirschauer to run.

Marshal Foch thought that over. Then he sent to General Pétain a detailed analysis of the attack thus far and put it up to him to make it go better, remarking that "to inspire, to lead, to supervise, remains the first task of a military leader." But he forwarded General Pétain's proposal to General Pershing, in a letter dated September thirtieth that was as welcome in Souilly as a German air raid. He proposed that the whole Argonne Forest front be given to General Hirschauer to command, while General Pershing retained command only of the French and Americans on both sides of the Meuse River. General Pershing should at once extend the attack east of the river as he had planned September twenty-fifth to do as soon as possible. The proposal did not mean that we should have fewer men engaged or smaller losses, rather larger, for the Marshal wanted us to bring to the Meuse-Argonne more troops from the now quiet Woëvre front, and put many of them under French command.

To part of the proposals General Pershing consented. He wrote back on October second that he had ordered the attack east of the Meuse, and was moving troops from the Woëvre to the Meuse-Argonne. In

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principle, he said, he did not object to placing some divisions at the disposition of the French but he must reserve his reply. But as to turning over one hundred thousand or more American troops and a good slice of an American battle-field, to a French general, that was, under the circumstances, another matter.

General Pershing and his Staff considered the proposal tactically unsound and morally impossible. Marshal Foch did not change the objectives, which remained Sedan and Mézières. So long as that was so, the problems of the Meuse Valley and the Argonne Forest were inseparable, and must be handled by the same commander and staff. Also the supply and road situation made such a change inadvisable.

What would be the moral effect if the American Army, not the German, should be cut in two in the midst of battle? What would the people of Germany and France and Great Britain and every other country say if this should happen at the beginning of our Army's greatest effort? What would the Army itself say, and how would it fight? It would be kept busy explaining, and the American people would be explaining all the rest of their lives.

Censorship might prevent the American correspondents telling of the changed state of affairs, but could not prevent its becoming known soon by word of mouth throughout Europe and the United States. Suppose the school histories to-day said that we had failed in

our first big battle and the French had to take command?

General Pershing's reply was plain. If the American Army's Objective was Sedan and Mézières, it must command the whole Meuse-Argonne front, not a slice of it. Marshal Foch dropped the idea.

But Gouraud's IV French Army needed help west of the Argonne. It had advanced about three miles, and been stopped. Pershing lent the 2nd, Regular and Marine, and the 36th, Texas and Oklahoma Guard, Divisions and they broke the deadlock, which is another story, and came back to him. That was as near as the idea got to fulfillment—not very near.

Still, on September thirtieth, after seventeen months of war, we were up against the real thing. We had won gloriously in the Marne salient, gloriously if easily at St. Mihiel, but there was to be nothing glorious or easy about the Meuse-Argonne now—just incessant, struggling, gasping fighting. How would our new Army stand the strain? So far it had known only victory, with losses, compared to British and French, insignificant. Now the losses had been heavy already, and would be heavier.

But it would be worth while, as war reckons such things. If we had not done the most that had been hoped, we had done a lot in five days. If we had not made the twelve-mile jump, we had gone eight. In the process we had dealt the Germans a terrible blow

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the effect of which was felt along the whole Western Front. We had not broken the Kriemhilde Line, but we had got so close to it that we could shell it heavily and the Germans feared our next jump would break it. On September thirtieth they had facing us more than twice as many men as four days before. We had taken ten thousand prisoners, over one hundred guns. They still feared an American attack in the important adjoining Metz area. They had weakened themselves elsewhere to meet the deadly menace of our attack at their most vital points.

The struggle up the slopes to the Kriemhilde Line, two to five miles from our new front line, would be terribly hard going. Could we do it in October and November? If we could, the German Army might still be crushed before winter. If not, it meant a winter campaign—if the weary Allies could stand it—and even then the German Army might escape. If we did not cut the railroad before winter, the Germans would withdraw at leisure from their peninsula in France and Belgium to a shorter line, more easily held, that could cost a half-million casualties to break.

Speed was the only way to prevent that, speed all along the line, speed above all in the American attack across the German line of retreat. That was the only answer General Pershing could see. The Americans had the place of honor. They could make possible a sweeping Allied victory before winter. They

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must not flinch at a high price now that would save paying a higher later. Our own initial success, Allied victories to the north, in the Balkans, Palestine, Italy, were bringing down the Teutonic house of cards. Only the day before Bulgaria had collapsed. There was no thought of quitting.

On the public-opinion front the situation was important. In the Allied countries people had been swept off their feet; in Germany, depressed, by the combined Allied offensive and its initial success. In the United States, we gathered, the doughboys were believed to have started on a little trip to Berlin. News of a stopover must be broken gently. Also news of losses, past and future. How would those at home face their first big casualty lists? Their morale was in for its first real test. Read the American communiqué of September thirtieth in that light.

“From the Meuse to the Aire, [the whole battle front] our troops have maintained and consolidated their newly captured positions in the face of counter-attacks and heavy gas and artillery bombardments.”

It left much untold, but its main message was that what we had yesterday, we held to-day, but no more. That night correspondents and censors checked up. We had two problems: first, how to handle the news that, for the first time since it came to France, the American Army had been brought to a standstill in

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battle; second, what should be done to ensure for the American people as much accurate news as possible of the long-drawn-out struggle that seemed to be ahead.

There was a great chance for what Mr. Pro Bono Publico calls "a sensational newspaper article." Think of the heads a tabloid would have written; "YANKS' BIG DRIVE FAILS!" "OUR BOYS SUFFER BLOODY REPULSE!" "HEAVY LOSSES!" Exaggerated, distorted, a perversion of truth, but what a story! The sort of thing that sold hundreds of thousands of papers several times a week through the Spanish-American War—but, aside from being fundamentally untrue, would have caused endless misery and anxiety to those at home with "some one over there," and to those abroad whose hope was in the Americans.

No such story went, proof perhaps that there can not be war without censorship, but none was written and submitted—perhaps a small tribute to those who wrote the news of the A. E. F. It had no tabloid war correspondents. One dispatch passed that night opened as follows:

"Rain, mud and other causes have temporarily slowed up the American offensive from the Argonne to the Meuse, which gives an opportunity to view the present situation here as simply one part of the whole great Allied battle.

"There is no doubt now that the Germans are preparing to oppose us here with a defense as desperate as anywhere. It is the universal opinion that in future

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the American forces will have to win every yard of advance with clenched teeth."

The censor inserted, wisely, the word "temporarily." The Germans knew our check was only temporary. The big thing was to let the Allies and those at home know it.

We tried to help them understand so that they could help better their struggling, striving army. We could not say that there had been a great plan that had not been carried through immediately; much less could we say what all knew, that to have carried it through immediately would have been a miracle. But whatever ought to be done, whatever will, courage, determination could do, the American Army would do for the American people. That message we wrote every night as we came back from the battle-field.

On October first orders went from Souilly that on the fourth, the army would attack again on the whole front of the Meuse-Argonne.

CHAPTER VIII

TRY AGAIN

Now as Marshal Foch left Trois-Fontaines Château disappointed with the progress of the Americans in the Meuse-Argonne and the French in Champagne, hoping for better success elsewhere, Hindenburg was hearing from his tactical brain, Ludendorff, that the jig was up.

The Allies' great concerted attack might be checked temporarily, Ludendorff said, but not permanently. Germany had neither men nor munitions left for such a task since her desperate but vain effort of the spring and summer to forestall the Americans. Ludendorff had foreseen then what was happening now. The Allies did not know it, nor did spies and Intelligence Services tell them, but the German High Command was beginning to crack. Hindenburg telegraphed Berlin from Spa, German Great Headquarters, that Germany must ask armistice of the Allies surely next morning, possibly that night.

Next day, September twenty-ninth, the Kaiser at Spa heard tidings of defeat. He was amazed, shocked, but finally accepted the estimate of his military leaders. He announced governmental reforms for Germany, and asked the Liberal Prince Max of Baden to

form a new ministry. Hindenburg and Ludendorff thought it was postponing the inevitable. They knew how the defeats already suffered, the menace of more, would press like a pall upon the spirits of their weary soldiers. They knew too that if the British could break the elaborate Hindenburg fortifications near Cambrai, they could break the weaker Selle line beyond. They knew that Americans and French would soon again be tearing at their vitals in the Meuse-Argonne-Champagne. So Ludendorff talked to Von Lersner, representing the German Foreign Office at Great Headquarters, who reported to Berlin:

“Today the troops are holding, but break-through may come at any moment, and our peace offer would then arrive at the most unfavorable time. Ludendorff feels himself at the mercy of the dice. At any instant and any point, a division may fail to do its duty.”

Grunow, another Foreign Office man, wired Berlin:

“I have the impression that they have entirely lost their nerve here.”

The German politicians kept their nerve better, or were more stupid, than the soldiers, and went on forming the new “democratic” government without asking armistice. They wanted details. So on October second Ludendorff sent by Major Baron von der Bussche to the leaders of all parties in the Reichstag a report the burden of which was: “Every day brings the enemy



German Official

Kaiser, Crown Prince, Hindenburg, Ludendorff during Battle of the Western Front



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Dug In

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nearer his goal and will make him less inclined to conclude a peace with us which will be satisfactory.”

If the American Intelligence could have heard that report, it would have laughed. General Bundy would have roared. From the North Sea to Switzerland, Ludendorff had told the Baron to say, the Allies were preparing to attack the Germans. The most extensive preparations were against Lorraine and Upper Alsace. Strong German forces must be stationed there to defend the Fatherland. The unfought battles of Alsace and Lorraine had worked better than we had dared hope. They were influencing the highest military and political leaders of Germany to throw up the sponge after four years of war.

There were, of course, many other reasons which Baron von der Bussche recited. Germany's Allies were falling away. Her own armies were being rolled back slowly, but inexorably. The German soldier was too tired, he was losing his grip. To-day he still fought, to-morrow, who could tell? It sounded like the voice of doom. Hindenburg echoed it in a communication he sent to Berlin:

“The High Command insists on the immediate issue of a peace offer to our enemies. . . . The German Army still stands firm and is defending itself against all attacks. The situation, however, is growing more critical daily and may force the High Command to momentous decisions. In these circumstances, it is imperative to stop the fighting in order to spare the

German people and their Allies unnecessary sacrifices. Every day of delay costs thousands of brave soldiers their lives."

The politicians were still not quite convinced, and asked Hindenburg to be more specific. He went to Berlin with the Kaiser. There he got news that for the moment, at least, the Allies were checked. He plucked up more courage. The momentum of the first Allied tidal wave had spent itself, the holes in his front had been plugged somehow, and he took heart. He said:

"At present the German Army is standing firm. It will withdraw from sectors if forced, clinging tenaciously to enemy soil. The duration of such withdrawals cannot be determined beforehand. But it is to be hoped that they may protect German soil until next Spring. . . . I do not believe there will be any general collapse. As long as sufficient reserves are at hand, the yielding of the front subsequent on enemy break-throughs need not have such a result."

Yet his tone meant that the situation was still serious. Ludendorff was more panicky, but Hindenburg also favored armistice negotiations. If, after their crushing defeat by British and French on August eighth, they had either asked armistice, as Ludendorff then advised, or started gradual retirement from that great peninsula in France and Belgium to a shorter line more easily defensible, they might have eluded danger of the concentric attacks, especially of having their retreat cut off by the Americans.

TRY AGAIN

They decided now on this gradual retirement to successive fortified positions that they had begun to prepare two years before, ending upon the Antwerp-Meuse Line. That would mean giving up practically all the French and over half the Belgian territory they had held since the invasion of 1914, but they would still be on the right side of the German frontier on a shorter line that they could hold with fewer men. To do this, they must get out of western Belgium quickly, and out of Lille, too, and give up some other portions of their old Western Front. They must hold up the British before Maubeuge, but above all, they must stop the Americans in the Meuse-Argonne. That attack not only threatened their retreat, it also threatened the Antwerp-Meuse Line itself.

On October fourth Prince Max assumed his duties as German Imperial Chancellor. The same day, the attacks Hindenburg and Ludendorff dreaded flared up again, and in that vital Meuse-Argonne region. The Americans were coming on once more, after four days of rest and reorganization. Next day, Prince Max sent his first request for an armistice to President Wilson.

But on the front there was no armistice. As Hindenburg's and Ludendorff's plan began to work, and all the Allied Armies needed time to bring up supplies over old battle-fields and make readjustments to renew the advance, the German troops had got a breath-

ing-spell. Like their leaders, they pulled themselves together and when the American First Army and the IV French Army, with the brilliant 2nd American Division as spear-head, attacked astride the Argonne on October fourth, they had to fight all the way. Losses were heavy, and that day commenced a period of fighting the bloodiest in American history.

The issue was clean-cut now. The Germans knew what we were after, the Kriemhilde Heights northeast of Cunel, and northwest and west of Romagne. That meant an advance of from four miles to seven or eight. If we did it, we could still throw into confusion their ordered retreat from the peninsula. General Pershing tried to correct the weaknesses shown in the first attack.

He ordered corps commanders to study and confer among themselves about a flanking maneuver to scale the heights, and ordered division commanders not to jam troops in the front line to make a Roman holiday for machine-gunners, nor throw them head-on at strong points. To secure better support by the guns, artillery officers were to accompany advancing infantry. This warning would be funny were it not tragic: "Infantry must not fail to display panels or flares when called for by airplanes. Air observers must keep informed of the situation, and must not confuse the enemy lines with our own lines."

We tried to surprise the Germans. On September

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twenty-sixth the artillery had fired for six hours before the doughboys jumped off. This time we used the tactics so instantly successful at Soissons less than three months before—no warning artillery preparation, just a sudden tremendous concentration of all our guns at H hour, upon German trenches, villages, roads, and a rolling barrage behind which the doughboys advanced. Whether the loss of 700 French guns from our active front, making the original 2700 guns there 2000, weakened too much the artillery fire, or whether an American officer wounded and captured told them the time of the attack, the Germans fought too hard.

They were ready for us, sixteen divisions, including some of the best, in front line where a week before had been only five. They counter-attacked the first day, this time. Where before had been one machine-gun, were two, or three, or ten. Their rattling and crashing resounded among the wooded hills. We did not take the heights that day or the next, we could barely get nearer by a mile or two—a mile or two studded with still forms in olive drab.

Not yet had all our infantry and artillery learned to work together, although with the 1st, 3rd and 32nd, six of our eight attacking divisions now were battle experienced. Desiring surprise, we had provided for only an hour's artillery concentration on Cunel and Romagne. On neither October fourth nor

fifth could the doughboys reach them. There were reports that they had broken the Kriemhilde Line between the two villages—false reports. Any reports at all were slow coming in. German counter-attacks were so fierce that some troops in the V Corps withdrew before them.

Only the toughest, most desperate of all our attacking divisions could get anywhere near the new Army Objective, set farther beyond the Kriemhilde Line.

That division was the 1st, and its accomplishment was one of the finest feats of the whole great battle. The division had come on a hurry call to relieve the worn out 35th. Its artillery had disregarded traffic rules in getting into position. Some of its infantry were still rather green replacements, who promptly sat down in mustard gas shell-holes, painful for them and for the Staff. But the majority were of the old 1st, proud of their "savvy" how to make war. They had the Aire Valley sector. Back of them was still the French cavalry division, pointed for Grandpré, and right with them American cavalry, who after their baptism of fire at St. Mihiel had been doing risky and valuable front-line work here for a week.

The 1st did not reach Grandpré, but they opened a road that led to it. They largely made possible the conquest of the Argonne Forest. The French cavalry again found no opening, but a week later when American infantry reached the Grandpré Gap, north of the

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Forest, and joined hands there with the French, it was due largely to the 1st Division's bravery and sacrifice in the Aire Valley. In that week they advanced nearly five miles, with losses of eight thousand, the heaviest suffered by any American division in any single action. We went to their front each day for a new tale of heroism, like the blotting out of the infantry of the German Fifth Guard Division. But each day, too, we heard that more friends of the old days of Gondrecourt, Toul, Soissons, good soldiers, good fellows, good men, were gone and would not be back.

It was due, too, if in considerably smaller measure, to the 2nd in the Champagne that the Germans left the forest. That division had been lent to General Gouraud, whose French troops had been unable to budge much after their first assault, and were now stuck before St. Étienne. He gave them the job of "cracking" the hardest defensive nut on his front, Blanc Mont, key-point in the German line. On October third and fourth, as the 1st Division fought up the Aire Valley east of the forest, the 2nd fought up the Champagne Plain west of it. Each did its job in a professional and "regular" way, notwithstanding the 2nd included a brigade of Marines.

Maneuvering daringly, the division passed by Blanc Mont on either side, reunited beyond and pressed forward, leaving the redoubtable hill to be mopped up later. French troops flowed into the gap in the Ger-

man dike, and their whole Champagne front collapsed. They retreated more than twenty miles to the Aisne.

"Our troops used to be able to drive through like that," a French general told an American correspondent. "They can't any more."

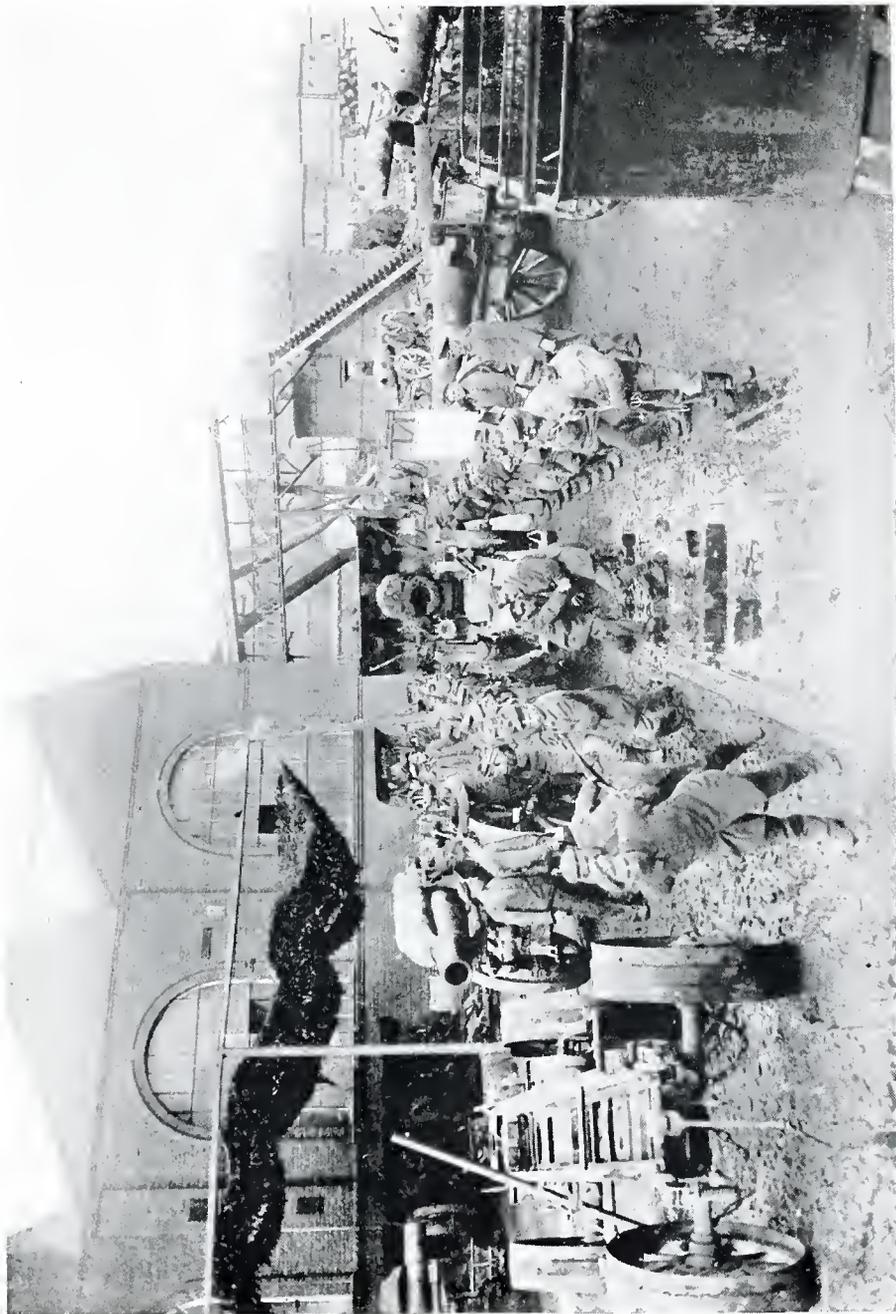
General Schwarte agrees with him in his new war history. The French, he says, were too tired. "Frequently only single nests of machine-guns composed the framework on which their attacks were shattered." General Wellmann, who commanded on the eastern part of the Champagne front, says the same in his recently published journal. The two German generals say that the American attacks, especially the incessant drive of the First Army in the Meuse-Argonne, forced the German retreat before Gouraud in the Champagne. General Schwarte says:

"The Americans, with their superior forces, menaced the Fifth German Army and our divisions on both sides of the river [Meuse], and it could not be foreseen whether our divisions, which grew continually weaker, would succeed in still resisting for a long period. Thus there was imminent danger that retreat into the Antwerp-Meuse position might become impossible. The Deutscher Kronprinz group of the German Army, together with the Eighteenth Army which joined it (in the Champagne and as far as Rheims) was forced therefore to draw back into a position behind the Aisne, by a rear movement on October 9, into the so-called Brunhild Position. This difficult retreat also was completed in several stages without much



German Official

Troops of the Crack German First Guard Division Coming out of the Meuse-Argonne, October 4, 1918



German Official

The German Retreat—moving back heavy artillery

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molestation on the part of the enemy. The great advantage gained by the attacker through this movement is essentially to be attributed to the advance of the Americans on the Meuse. Chiefly through these battles, the German hold upon the Champagne front was broken."

So although at the second try we had not pierced the Kriemhilde Line at Cunel and Romagne, where we wanted to pierce it, here was a chance to get the Argonne Forest out of our way, and carry out part of the plan by reaching the Kriemhilde Line at Grandpré where there might be a soft spot. Cooperating with the French and the 36th American Division advancing west of the Argonne to follow up the 2nd's blow in the Champagne, we would pinch out what remained to the Germans of the Argonne Forest by an attack from the jumping-off place the 1st Division had gained on its eastern edge. That was one of the most daring things we did in the battle. It succeeded well, and would have succeeded better had it been done just as planned.

The Pennsylvania Guardsmen of the 28th and the All-American 82nd Division stormed the eastern Argonne bluffs overlooking the Aire Valley. They scaled them in the early morning mists of the seventh, and took and, finally, held Châtel Chehery and Cornay, two villages that clung to the heights like Swiss chalets—or chamois. That fight amid the early morning mist resembled Lookout Mountain or Stony Point,

both famous in our history, but more men fought in it, and it was only an incident of the Meuse-Argonne.

Fighting was desperate and hand-to-hand. An entire brigade of the 82nd Division, some eight thousand men, had been ordered to attack, but through haste and confusion, fewer than two thousand waded and swam the Aire on time. Fortunately, the almost exhausted 28th justified its nickname of "Iron Division," and one of its brigades commanded temporarily by General Nolan, who preferred the front to G. H. Q., stormed Hill 244. The rear of the Germans in the forest was threatened and Major-General Robert Alexander's 77th Division from New York City was attacking them in front. By noon of the same day, they commenced to give way before him, although repeatedly they counter-attacked fiercely around Cornay for time to get out. We had done on a small scale to the Germans in the forest what we were trying to do on a large scale to all the Germans in northern France and Belgium—pinch them out, by converging attacks and threat to their line of retreat.

So the October fourth attack had not taken the Cunel-Romagne Heights but it had removed a tremendous obstacle from the road to Sedan. It had rescued the left flank of our army from the terrible cross-fire of German artillery on the eastern Argonne bluffs that had cost us so many casualties and delayed us so seriously in the Aire Valley the first ten days of

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the battle. It had helped the IV French Army make a big advance. That was the military result.

Another result was that for American newspaper readers, it nearly took the "Meuse" out of "Meuse-Argonne," and that it inspired them with the two greatest American "hero stories" of the World War, that have found places in our history with Bunker Hill and Valley Forge, the Alamo and Pickett's Charge and San Juan Hill—the "Lost Battalion" and Sergeant York. There are new facts to be told of both.

CHAPTER IX

FINDING THE LOST BATTALION

THE Argonne Forest became famous primarily because any sort of battle there was a "good story," but with the 77th Division from New York City in it, the story was better, still better when a battalion from that division became involved in probably the most poignant American episode of the war.

A third of the correspondents covering the Meuse-Argonne represented New York newspapers, and besides that, as "the big town" New York has news interest throughout the country. Whatever its polyglot National Army Division might do, would be interesting. When its tenement dwellers became backwoodsmen, and pretty good backwoodsmen, in a Robin Hood's Forest, the story was as good as Charles A. Dana's famous, "If a man bites a dog." It was celebrated in song, by the 77th's amateur theatrical troupe, and story, by correspondents dubbed by other divisions volunteer press-agents—which was quite inevitable.

The first of these visited the 77th when the attack of September twenty-sixth had died down. He looked about him, amid the gloom of the forest on a rainy day, at the thick belts of barbed wire, interlaced among

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the trees, the deep trenches screened by underbrush, the concrete dugouts, the hidden machine-guns. He saw German prisoners with helmets camouflaged with leaves, cartridges with bullets filed across sickeningly to make dum-dums, brought in by merchants of bananas and push-carts, crapshooters and subway guards, lawyers from Park Avenue, gangsters from Avenue A, not a woodsman nor a lumberjack among them, intermingled with some cowboy replacements, Americans all, attacking a forest, the strongest single natural obstacle on the Western Front.—He saw, in short, his story.

That was his contribution to the evening's news swapping in Bar-le-Duc—but after his own descriptive dispatch was written and safely cabled. Next day other New York correspondents followed the trail he had blazed. All the world heard of the Argonne Forest. So began the general belief that its capture was the principal object of the Meuse-Argonne, which became for many, and still is, the battle of the "Oregon Forest."

The forest, of course, was only one of many obstacles, though a big and a picturesque one, on the road to Sedan and Mézières. It must be conquered before those places could be reached. We had hoped to encircle it immediately. Finally we took it largely by encirclement, partly by frontal attack, but of the one million two hundred thousand Americans in the

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Meuse-Argonne battle, fewer than one hundred thousand fought in the forest and it occupied only a fifth of the original battle front, and was the scene of fighting during only fourteen of the forty-seven battle days.

The 77th Division's twenty-seven thousand men did more forest fighting than any other. The plan of September twenty-sixth had been for them to follow up the Germans as they were encircled or pinched out of the forest, but as it turned out, that didn't happen until later, so after advancing three miles through dense woods with little hard fighting, the New Yorkers found themselves, by September thirtieth, stopped dead, like the rest of the First Army. They had struck the western prolongation of the Montfaucon line, which was in the forest, the German "Hauptwiderstandslinie," main resistance line, where they must hold or die.

But the 77th must not let them hold. It must sweep their artillery from the eastern forest bluffs whence it raked our troops in the Aire Valley and beyond to protect the Kriemhilde Heights. So Souilly told General Alexander, and he saw no alternative save to hew his way through the forest wall ahead. The 28th on his right, French on his left, were stopped by strong positions whence the Germans poured an overwhelming fire. He believed the way to obey his orders, despite protests of some subordinates, was to strike at the center, hoping for a soft spot. He ordered his

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four front-line battalions, from left to right, west to east, of the 308th, 307th, 306th and 305th Infantry, to attack due north and reach about a mile ahead the northern slope of the ravine or valley cut east and west through the forest by Charlevaux Creek. They tried the morning of October second, but failed. General Alexander ordered them to try again at 12:30. He says:

“My orders were quite positive and precise. The objective was to be gained without regard to losses, and without regard to the exposed condition of the flanks.”

These orders Colonel Cromwell Stacey, a regular officer commanding the 308th, forwarded to Major Charles W. Whittlesey, formerly a New York lawyer of about thirty-five, commanding the advanced battalion, in the following message:

“The advance of the infantry will commence at 12:30. The infantry action will be pushed forward until it reaches the line of the road and the railroad generally along 276.5 where the command will halt, reorganize, establish liaison to the left and right, and be ready for orders for a further advance. This does not change the plan as given you by myself. You still leave two companies on your left as a containing force, that is, the remainder of the First and Second Battalions. The General says you are to advance behind the barrage regardless of losses. He states that there will be a general advance all along the line.”

It has been said since that the battalions of the 77th were ordered to advance "regardless of *their* flanks." From the quotations above it appears that that may have seemed the intent of the order, but the flanks General Alexander meant were those of his division, not of its regiment's. To order them to attack "regardless of *their* flanks" in the forest, was to invite ambush and encirclement.

Although all four front-line battalions attacked, only the 308th could advance—so its "Lost Battalion" got "lost," which it never was. The Germans called it "The Beleaguered Battalion," and were right. After ten years, knowledge of their side, and facts hitherto unknown, suppressed or forgotten about our side, show the popular conception quite different from the truth. It is harder to find the truth than it was to find the battalion.

Whittlesey and his men did exactly as they were ordered, and were the only ones who did. They knew always, and every one else practically always, where they were. To reach the east and west Charlevaux Valley, they advanced north on the eastern side of a smaller, north-and-south ravine that ran into it. The western side of this smaller ravine was strongly held by the Germans, but they found the eastern side and the slope above almost deserted. They captured two officers, twenty-eight men and three machine-guns, but the rest must have been swept back by the attack of the

307th, and not have returned after Major Kerr Rainsford ordered the 307th's exposed western flank withdrawn because he did not know support was coming. He and Major Crawford Blagden did this on their own responsibility despite an order of General Alexander that "not an inch of ground must be given up." The 307th and 308th were acting "regardless of flanks," whether or not that had been intended. Working together, results would have been different, but throughout the attack neither saw the other.

So aided somewhat, if indirectly, by the advance of the 307th, the 308th crawled, scouted, maneuvered through underbrush and trees, with some loss from machine-guns and snipers but with little infantry fighting until, around six o'clock that evening, they came out on the southern slope of the Charlevaux Valley, here quite wide. Across it, easily seen and recognized, was their objective, a road cut into the northern slope.

Major Whittlesey's objective was in reach, but on the right he could not see the 307th, nor on the left the French. He was alone, and to advance to his objective might be to walk into the Germans' parlor. He talked to his officers. Major George G. McMurtry, his second in command, does not remember, but Captain William J. Cullen does, that they discussed this risk.

"Our objective is the other side of this valley, not this one," said Major Whittlesey. "Our orders say to cross and occupy that ridge. Take your men forward."

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To a man of Whittlesey's character, no other decision was possible. A conscientious, zealous New Englander, he obeyed orders to the letter, neglected no jot of duty. He had recently been promoted by recommendation of Colonel E. H. Houghton of the 307th, an American who had fought three years and won three wound stripes and a Military Cross with the Canadians. Commanding the 308th during a brief interlude, he had found Captain Whittlesey was one of the best officers of the regiment.

Some have surmised that Whittlesey "rushed ahead before every one else" or made some other horrible blunder that placed his men in an untenable position. Had he stayed on the southern slope when his orders were to take and occupy the northern, and he could see no Germans between, he would certainly have been court-martialed. He was a very gallant man, who obeyed orders.

In only one tiny detail did he diverge from them. Having crossed the valley under some machine-gun fire, and reached the opposite slope, Whittlesey told his men to dig in on a three-hundred-yard line facing north just below the east-and-west road cut into the slope which his orders mentioned, and east of Charlevaux hill. This spot was thickly wooded and covered with underbrush and protected by a small promontory. He had guessed correctly, picked a strong position. German shells



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Major Charles W. Whittlesey
Commander of the "Lost Battalion"



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

In the Heart of the Argonne Forest

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never reached this place, that became famous as "the Pocket." His men felt good that night though on short rations. They had not only taken their assigned objective, but had broken through the German main resistance line in the Argonne Forest. The trenches through which they had passed were part of it. But they were all alone, no friend to right or left. They stuck into the German I Reserve Corps like a knife. Whereupon the Lost Battalion got, not lost, but beleaguered.

Now everybody has been blamed for that: Whittlesey, for doing things he did not do; the French on his left; the American negro troops of the 368th Infantry and, finally, the 77th Division's commander and Staff.

The French, of the 1st Cavalry Division, dismounted, are accused of having "left a hole" on the 308th's left through which the Germans slipped in. True, they failed to capture La Palette Pavilion, known to be very strong, and there may have been a gap in their line, though that is not sure. But three of the four front-line battalions of the 77th likewise failed to advance or to hold their gains. They too "left a hole" on the 308th's right. The buck has been passed to the negroes, too.

A regiment of them, the 368th, all drafted, and officered almost entirely by negroes, got the job on September twenty-sixth, together with French troops,

of forming the connecting link between the IV French and American First Armies on the western edge of the Argonne Forest. In their first battle, most of the negroes would not face shell-fire. Two of their three battalions repeatedly broke and ran, were stopped by white officers, once at pistol's point. One battalion did make some advance and hold it, but the regiment had to be replaced by French Cuirassiers. Nothing was said about that in press dispatches but after the war rumor magnified it into failure of all negro troops in France at all times, which was unfair and untrue, and with equal unfairness and untruthfulness, gave it as the cause of the surrounding of Whittlesey's force.

Careful inquiry shows that by October second, when Whittlesey attacked, the negroes were all gone, and the relieving French had taken all the ground the negroes should have taken and were in liaison with the left of the 308th, where they belonged. It has never been claimed that they should have been farther ahead than the 308th. The negro incident, pitiful because of failure of negro officers to justify a well-meant experiment, caused trouble, but not what happened to the Lost Battalion.

It did cause an incident forerunner of and somewhat like that of the Lost Battalion. From September twenty-eighth to thirtieth the negroes had left a hole on the 308th's left through which German small parties and snipers came continually, sometimes cut-

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ting off Whittlesey's men from food although not surrounding and besieging them as they did later.

One more reason why Whittlesey went unhesitatingly across Charlevaux Valley on October second was that before jumping off that day, he had sent a message to Colonel Stacey speaking of danger of more Germans sifting through and asking whether these bush-whackers could not be dealt with by the troops to his rear, as he had none to spare on the front line. He supposed this would be done, but Colonel Stacey himself had few if any troops to spare.

The negro incident had just one happy result. It gave us this story of the night before the battle:

First Negro Soldier: "Well, guess we'se gwine show 'em to-morrow. Hear dey got fifty thousan' white troops behin' us an' when we bus' de line for 'em, dey goin' right through."

Second Negro Soldier: "Yeah."

First Negro Soldier: "What you so gloomy about? We'se gwine be in all de newspapers to-morrow. What you reckon dey'll say?"

Second Negro Soldier: "What dey'll say? Why, dey'll say, 'Fifty Thousan' White Troops Trompled to Death!' Dat's what dey'll say."

The division command and Staff had in the Argonne Forest a task unequaled elsewhere, bad enough without having to plug holes on the flanks. General Alexander says that after the attack started the after-

noon of October second, but before Whittlesey had reached Charlevaux Valley, he warned Brigadier-General Evan M. Johnson of the 154th Brigade, now dead, that he did not believe the French on the left had taken La Palette Pavilion, as the American I Corps reported, so there might be a hole. He was right both times. He told General Johnson to use his brigade reserve of one battalion to protect Whittlesey's left and gave him, to replace it, another battalion from division reserve.

Evidently the two generals' ideas how to plug the hole differed. General Alexander thought General Johnson would put the reserve battalion in contact with Whittlesey's left flank, facing northwest, instead of which General Johnson put it, facing north, a half-mile or more in Whittlesey's rear and not in contact with him. The hole through which many of the Germans came was between this reserve battalion and Whittlesey's left rear.

General Johnson made another attempt to support Whittlesey that should have succeeded. At seven o'clock, as their men dug themselves in along Charlevaux Valley, Whittlesey and McMurtry established headquarters together in a little fox-hole whence they sent back to Colonel Stacey their first report, telling where they were. This was taken by runner to the rear along a line of runner posts dropped off as their attack had progressed to keep connection with the regi-

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mental commander. The exact course of this message is rather mysterious, but it did reach Brigade Headquarters. When General Johnson heard of it, he realized Whittlesey's danger. He had gone where he had been told but nobody else had, so he might be cut off.

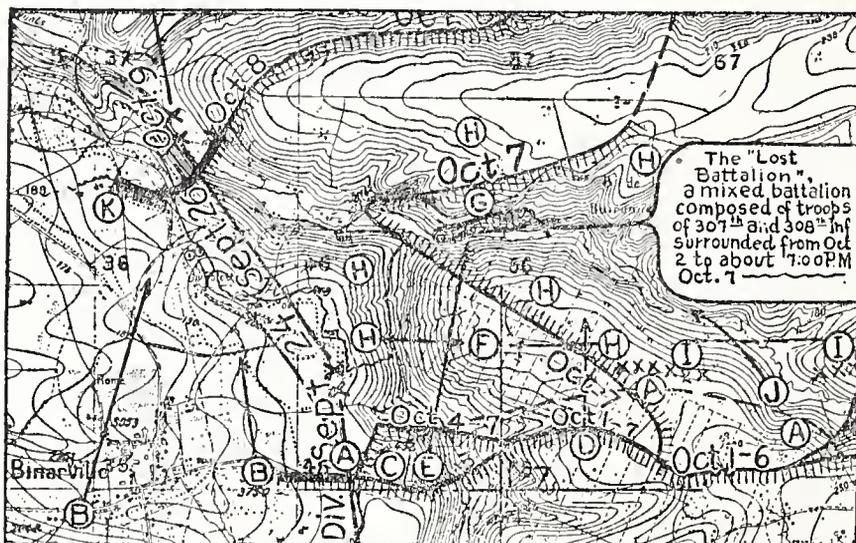
General Johnson ordered four companies of the 307th on or near the front line to circle around and slip through the path Whittlesey had found, join him and support him until next morning the attack could be renewed. In darkness, I and F Companies took the wrong side of the smaller north-and-south ravine, ran into German machine-gun fire, and stopped. L got lost and Colonel Houghton later ordered its commander arrested. K alone did as ordered. Captain Nelson M. Holderman led it in Whittlesey's footsteps to where a few hours earlier Whittlesey and his men had stood before crossing the Charlevaux Valley, where it remained for the night, in touch with Whittlesey's runner posts.

Now there, says General Wellmann who commanded the German I Reserve Corps, the American leadership was clumsy. They lost a chance to play havoc with the whole German front in the forest. Having broken through, they stopped and did nothing. They should have driven home the successful thrust. He says:

"The Americans had not been long in battle, and had hardly learned the horror of war. So their nerves

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were still unbroken, they were fresh, full of fight, and brave. The individual soldier was well equipped. But the troops as a whole, especially the leaders, lacked peacetime training and war experience. Once they had gained an initial success, they did not understand how to exploit it, as is shown by the inactivity of the American detachment about the Charlevaux Mill."



MAP OF SMALL SECTION ON THE WESTERN EDGE OF THE ARGONNE FOREST SHOWING HOW THE SO-CALLED "LOST BATTALION," REALLY THE BELEAGUERED BATTALION, BROKE THROUGH THE GERMAN LINE AS ORDERED, WAS THEN SURROUNDED FOR FIVE DAYS AND NIGHTS AND AFTER HEROIC RESISTANCE FINALLY RELIEVED.

Wavy thin lines represent contours of ground. Wavy, especially zig-zag, thick lines represent German trenches. Lines of x's are German barbed wire. Key to letters and arrows follows:

A-A-A connected by broken line represent front of 154th Brigade, left Brigade of 77th Division whence it attacked morning and afternoon of October 2, 1918.

B and B with arrows indicate direction of French attack same day which failed, then fell back south of Binarville.

C indicates Companies D and F, 308th Infantry left behind as "containing force" during noon attack, October second.

D with arrow indicates direction of morning attack of 307th Infantry that cleared peninsula shaped-ridge extending northwest and helped prepare way for Whittlesey's advance.

E with arrow indicates direction of that advance, the afternoon at-

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tack of Companies A, B, C, E, G and H, 308th Infantry and parts of C and D, 306th Machine Gun Battalion, which with K, 307th Infantry, became known as the Lost Battalion.

F German trenches, part of their main line of resistance, broken through by the Lost Battalion, as ordered.

G oval-shaped figure indicates position on their objective on northern slope of Charlevaux Valley, reached as ordered by the Lost Battalion and held for five days and nights after they had been surrounded by Germans returning to trenches they had lost (F) as indicated by arrows

H and H through gaps especially on the west but also on the east and from the north until they held positions generally indicated by four letters H without arrows, encircling G.

I-I indicates German barbed wire line of X's which helped cut off the Lost Battalion from the rest of the 77th Division to the south, but

J with arrow indicates relieving troops of 307th Infantry filtering through gap in barbed wire I-I to work up Charlevaux Valley northward and finally relieve the Lost Battalion, later occupying wedge-shaped front line marked October seventh.

K indicates French now come up on left in touch with new American front line of October eighth, resulting from German retreat from whole Argonne Forest forced by advance of 1st Division followed by 28th and 82nd, east of the Forest.

Perhaps true, and probably General Johnson had that in mind when he sent the four companies of the 307th up the ravine after Whittlesey. Very possibly it would have come off and next morning General Wellmann would have found his main resistance line broken wide open had the other companies done in the darkness as K did that night, and got through. The Lost Battalion would not have been lost. But Whittlesey had neither orders nor authority to try anything of the sort, and if he had, in the circumstances, he would only have put the battalion's head farther into the lion's mouth.

Even next morning some think it might have been saved had the same K of the 307th remained where it was on the southern slope of Charlevaux Valley and within hailing distance of Whittlesey's force on the

W I T H O U T C E N S O R

northern slope. In some degree it protected his rear and linked him with the rest of the 77th. On the other hand, K numbered only seventy-nine men and might easily have been surrounded and wiped out. At any rate, K Company of the 307th joined A, B, C, G and H of the 308th and part of C and D of the 306th Machine Gun Battalion on the northern slope at about seven o'clock. Whittlesey, McMurtry and Holderman compared orders and agreed it should stay there. As a battalion is composed of four companies with strength normally a thousand, and as here were six and eventually parts of a seventh and eighth with strength little over half that, the Lost Battalion was no more a battalion than it was lost.

K of the 307th replaced on the right flank E of the 308th, which an hour earlier had been sent back, commanded by Lieutenant Karl Wilhelm, to seek connection on the left flank with D and F that had been left the night before on the western edge of the smaller ravine up which Whittlesey had advanced, as directed by Colonel Stacey's order the day previous. Whittlesey reported this to Colonel Stacey by his line of runner posts, also asking rations. He received no further orders, so sat tight. German artillery began shelling at 8:30 but Whittlesey had chosen his position so well that no shells struck among the fox-holes along the slope. As the men laughed over this, there came the first indication that the Germans were closing in on them.

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Captain Cullen on the left and Captain Holderman on the right sent out patrols to see what they could see. At half past nine the patrols returned to report not only that they could see neither French nor Americans, but that on both flanks they had run into German patrols. Right after that came worse news. Lieutenant Leake and eighteen men of E Company returned breathless, some of them wounded, to report that a strong force of Germans had got through the hole on the left and west that neither French nor Americans had plugged and were to the left rear of Whittlesey's force. These Germans had scattered E Company and Lieutenant Wilhelm had ordered Lieutenant Leake to get back with his men and tell Whittlesey of his danger. Then came word that Germans were firing on the runner posts connecting with the rear, and that this string might be broken. Germans were appearing on the slope to the right rear, also, coming through the other hole between the 307th and 308th.

Whittlesey immediately sent Holderman with K of the 307th and some battalion scouts, about one hundred men, back across the Charlevaux Valley over the ground he had crossed three or four hours earlier, to drive off these Germans, reestablish the runner posts and try to get satisfactory connection with the rest of the 77th Division. As K started, a German startlingly close shouted to those on the southern side of the val-

ley what was happening. When the Americans arrived, they found much German barbed wire, some newly strung, and were fired upon from front and flank. Fighting, they pushed ahead through two belts of wire until Holderman decided they were in danger of being surrounded by a large force. They withdrew, carrying their wounded, to Whittlesey's position which they reached at 1:30. The Lost Battalion, crouching in fox-holes amid the heavy underbrush of the slope, knew that they were surrounded, that the Germans were in front of them, behind them, on their flanks. Whittlesey and McMurtry passed this word to their company commanders:

“Our mission is to hold this position at all costs. No falling back. Have this understood by every man in your command.”

Some have asked: Why didn't he retire? That would have been against his orders, and might have put him in a still worse position tactically. Also, he expected the rest of the division to come up.

By this time, too, General Alexander and the 77th Division Staff had a clear idea what had happened. Whether or not the first message sent back the night before ever reached Colonel Stacey or General Johnson, it never reached General Alexander. After the division returned to New York some one stole two suitcases full of records of the 308th, including some Lost Battalion data—a priceless souvenir some day.

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The theft leaves gaps hard to fill. The General had heard at two in the morning that Whittlesey's runner posts might be cut, but that happened every day in the forest, and "this information did not, at the time, make a very deep impression." But General Alexander heard later that General Johnson had not put the reserve battalion where he expected him to, so there was a hole between it and the French, leading to Whittlesey's left rear. The two generals had been at swords' points before. General Alexander decided to leave General Johnson in command of the 154th Brigade in view of the difficulties of maneuvering in the forest at night, and indeed, some say that from where General Johnson had put the reserve battalion they had more freedom of movement than had they been where General Alexander supposed.

The morning of October third General Alexander ordered the attack resumed, and directed General Johnson to give special attention to joining up with Whittlesey. The objective set for the whole division was the northern slope of Charlevaux Valley occupied by Whittlesey alone. But when the rest of the 154th Brigade tried to advance through the smaller north-and-south ravine, by which Whittlesey's force had got there, they found the way barred. The German trenches on the ridge south of him which he had crossed were full of Germans, well supplied with machine-guns, the barbed wire was restrung, even strengthened, and now covered the whole ridge. They

could not break through it. Now the Lost Battalion was indeed the beleaguered battalion. General Wellmann says:

“The situation had become very peculiar on the left wing of the 254th Regiment. Here they held the main line of resistance again. But beyond it the Americans who had broken through were in the Mill [Charlevaux] sector, and were here beleaguered in the dense pathless forest, right behind the main line of resistance.”

Whittlesey and his men had heard the firing to their rear, as the rest of the 154th Brigade tried to reach them. But the firing receded, died down, and they knew that the Germans had repulsed the attack, and were free for a time to try to destroy the *Amerikanernest*, as they called it. General Wellmann and the records of the 76th Reserve Division bear testimony to their extraordinary desire to gobble the Americans who were at once a tempting prize and a thorn in their side. They tried for five days and nights, by infantry attack, by trench mortar bombs, hand grenades, machine-guns sweeping the valley, by sniping rifle fire from front, flank and rear, finally by flame throwers. The Americans clung to their small fox-holes along the slope. The trees saved them. Safe holes could be dug under their roots. Trunks and branches deflected bullets.

They soon became hungry for they had started short

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of rations. The living ate those of the dead, but, before it ended, were eating leaves. In fact, even at the end of October third, the Lost Battalion was dwindling fast, its effective strength only two hundred forty-five. Water could not be got from the muddy stream in the valley, watched by snipers, slashed by machine-guns. Some who volunteered to fill canteens did not return. The men had started without blankets, and it was cold and rainy. There was no surgeon, only two Medical Corps men, binding wounds with bandages or wrap puttees taken from the dead.

Time after time the Germans attacked, trying ruses, calling false orders in English, sometimes approaching with great noise, sometimes sneaking through underbrush.

Even their friends seemed to have turned against the Lost Battalion. The second day, October fourth, while the Germans were giving them a brief rest, an Allied artillery barrage came down upon them. Slowly the shell-bursts commenced on the southern slope of the valley; more rapidly, more thickly, they crept down the slope, crossed the valley, and settled straight on the line of fox-holes held by the cowering, bewildered Americans. Crashing shells threw about branches, leaves, earth and stones, smashed in fox-holes, burying some men. All wounded who could walk were moved to places of comparative safety, but thirty Americans were killed or wounded

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by that barrage. So easy to pass the buck to the French, but the weight of evidence seems to be that it was American. Whittlesey and McMurtry thought so. From its flaming smoking midst Whittlesey sent his last carrier pigeon with this message:

“We are along the road, parallel 276.4.

“Our own artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us.

“For heaven’s sake stop it.”

It is claimed—and denied—that this was the first correct report Whittlesey had sent of his position, that his first report gave it incorrectly and that is why American artillery, at the direction of Major Bradley Martin, fired into the Lost Battalion.

Stories differ, too, as to a happening next day. This time, one version says, the barrage was French. A French airplane had told their division commander on the left that he saw plenty of Germans around Charlevaux Valley, but no Americans. They must have surrendered or been wiped out, he said, and he was going to shell the Germans. General Alexander objected, but, nevertheless, some say the French opened fire. Captain Holderman says: “The shells came from southwest, from over Binarville [where the French were] many of them striking dead into the position occupied by the American forces.—When the men realized that it was another friendly barrage intended for the enemy, the first thing remembered was that

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Major Whittlesey had released his last pigeon the day before." Others say this was an American barrage, so well aimed this time that only stray shots came near. To Whittlesey and McMurtry, it seemed that the shells just missed them, passed on. Right at the end of it came a German attack, but that was beaten off, and the sound of the firing told the rest of the 77th that the Lost Battalion was still there.

It had made every effort to let the division know that. Whenever Whittlesey asked volunteers to take back messages, he found them. The Germans captured all but three of the messengers—captured some of them lying face downward amid the brown forest leaves.

So starving, chilled, drenched, sleepless, threatened with instant death from foe or friend, the men hung on through great heroism. Among them, calm and smiling, moved the scholarly, spectacled Whittlesey or the optimistic McMurtry, laughing and joking in a whisper with part of a German potato-masher grenade sticking from a wound in his back. One by one their nine precious machine-guns were knocked out, their ammunition ran low. The Germans could not see why they did not surrender. "Kamerad, will you?" they shouted across, to which the doughboys replied: "Kamerad yourself, you——!" Some German-Americans came in very handy here.

General Wellmann expresses highest admiration for this "nervy bunch" and for their commander. He says

that the German troops surrounding them were fewer than they, and they might have fought their way out, but he does not know how few the Americans were. The Germans captured Lieutenant Leake, who told them there were a thousand or so! The Germans tried to cajole them into surrendering.

A party of soldiers from Captain Cullen's company on the left flank slipped off to "look for the kitchens," or for food dropped from airplanes trying vainly to succor the Lost Battalion, and all were killed, wounded or captured. Only one, named Hollingshead, returned, bearing this letter, exactly transcribed:

"To the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Batl. J. R. 308:

"Sir:

"The Bearer of the present, Lowell R. Hollingshead, has been taken prisoner by us on October——. He refused to the German Intelligence Officer every answer to his questiones and is quite an honourable fellow, doing honour to his fatherland in the strictest sense of the word.

"He has been charged against his will, believing in doing wrong to his country in carrying forward this present letter to the Officer in charge of the 2nd Batl. J. R. 308 of the 77th Div. with the purpose to recommend this Commander to surrender with his forces as it would be quite useless to resist any more in view of the present conditions.

"The suffering of your wounded man can be heard over here in the German lines and we are appealing to your human sentiments. A withe Flag shown by one of your man will tell us that you agree with these conditions."

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"Please treat the Lowell R. Hollingshead as an honourable man. He is quite a soldier we envy you.

"The German commanding officer."

The writer of that letter was Lieutenant Heinrich Prinz, who before the war had lived in Seattle, Washington. We met him after the Armistice, in Coblenz, and he expressed highest admiration for the bravery of the battalion.

His ruse did not work—neither did Whittlesey reply: "Go to hell!" That legend originated when correspondents first got the "story" from an enthusiastic division commander.

"What answer did he send 'em?" they asked.

"What answer would he send 'em?" General Alexander replied. "He told 'em to go to hell."

That was passed around Bar-le-Duc that night as Whittlesey's answer and so it went to a hundred million readers.

Next day, those few correspondents who saw the mild-mannered Whittlesey, asked him:

"Did you really tell 'em to go to hell?"

"Well," he said slowly, "McMurtry and Holderman were squatting near by. I read the note. We smiled. I just folded up the note—it was typewritten—and put it in my pocket and said to the soldier, 'Go back to your post.'"

Whittlesey said in his written report: "No reply seemed necessary."

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But the next thing he did, after putting the note in his pocket, was to order taken in the white cloth panels with which he had attempted to signal American airplanes trying to drop food. He was afraid they might look like "withe Flags."

Neither Whittlesey nor his men could know what efforts had been made to rescue them, nor what excitement their predicament was causing at every headquarters as far back as Souilly, nor in the world outside. General Liggett and General Alexander were planning and striving to untangle the snarl. Every day all or part of the 77th tried to press forward through the forest to the Charlevaux Valley, but the main resistance line that Whittlesey had found so easy to pass through was now barred by fiercely fighting Germans. Ceaseless attacks wore down the American strength until Colonel Stacey asked to be relieved as commander of the 308th rather than continue. On October fifth General Alexander ordered General Johnson to take the divisional reserve battalion and personally supervise the attack on the 308th's front, at the same time relieving Colonel Stacey, and placing Captain Lucien S. Breckenridge in command of the regiment.

The frontal attacks looked hopeless, and every one, from highest to lowest, was keyed up to find some other way. Out of all this thinking came the attack of the 82nd and 28th Divisions up the Argonne bluffs, that

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pinched the Germans out of the forest. Most writers have given that attack all credit for the relief of the Lost Battalion. More complete knowledge shows this to be incorrect.

General Wellmann explains that on October sixth, the day before the attack started, he received an order from General von Einem, his Army Commander, to withdraw several miles in the forest because of the success of the 1st Division in the Aire Valley. General Wellmann asked permission to hold on another day and try again to capture or wipe out the devoted American battalion.

But, in the meantime, the 77th Division itself had found a way to come to the rescue. Colonel Houghton of the 307th was a front-line Colonel, and, as a former comrade, Brigadier-General Harold F. McDonald of the Canadians, once said: "A very fightin' man." He discovered a gap in the German barbed wire south of Charlevaux Valley through which men might wriggle one at a time unobserved, if they were very careful. Then, when enough had got through, they might start to work their way along the valley from the east, toward Whittlesey's position.

By the morning of October seventh, two men from Whittlesey's force had got in touch with these men creeping forward, and were brought to Colonel Houghton's hole in the ground. Some of his wounded were found bandaged by German surgeons who had

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said: "Soon it is we who will be surrounded." Houghton's men pushed on.

At seven o'clock that evening their first small party reached the right of the line of fox-holes that the Lost Battalion had held with such fortitude for five days and nights. Companies A, B and M of the 307th soon appeared. The siege was ended.

Just in time. The Lost Battalion had held out on nerve for the last two or three days, saving every ounce of strength to repel German attacks. One of the worst of all had come the last morning, October seventh—General Wellmann's final effort before he withdrew. He had asked as reenforcement a specially trained "storm battalion" which reached him numbering sixteen men! But he had others, and for the first time he used liquid fire. Belching smoke and flame did not demoralize the Americans on the right flank, after their terrible ordeal—it made them mad. They jumped from their fox-holes and with their rifles, shot the men carrying the flame throwers.

Yet when Houghton's men came among them, they could hardly have withstood another attack. Hand grenades were all gone, ammunition almost, only two of nine machine-guns left and no machine-gunners to handle them. To meet the next attack the men were sharpening defiantly on stones and earth their bayonets—about all they had left.

But to the south and east, they heard coming ever

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nearer the automatic rifles, the bellowing Chauchats, sounding, as Whittlesey said, like the Pipes at Lucknow. The night of October seventh they got a little food, slept for the first time safely, guarded by the rescuing 307th. Next morning occurred a thing that brought tears to the eyes that saw it.

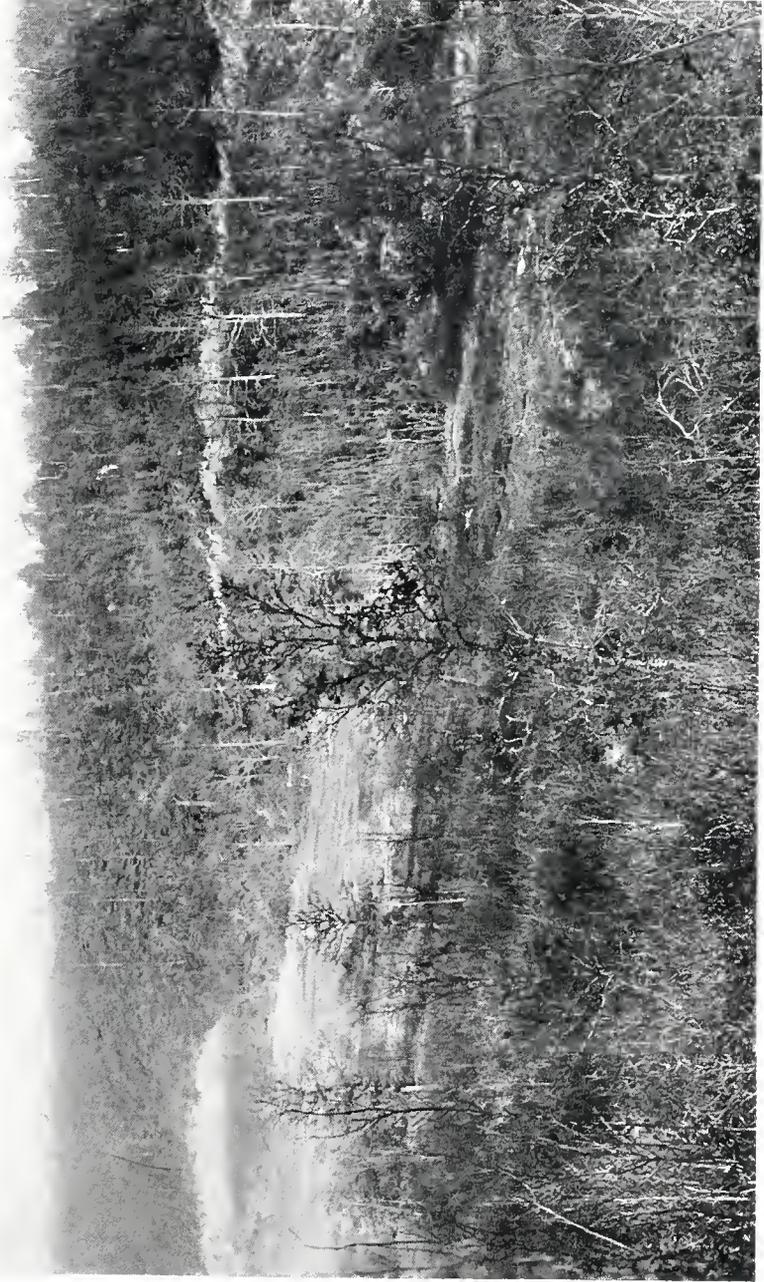
Up from fox-holes at roots of trees, pits where dead lay with living, rose 194 men of the 679 who had attacked five days before, and of the 194 many bore wounds. They were all who could walk out of Charlevaux Valley, which they had taken and held, as ordered. The rest were dead, or had to be carried. The 194 walked heavily, numbed by utter exhaustion, clothes tattered and filthy, faces like drawn masks of putty, with the fixed stare of determination. Worn out, dirty, hungry, thirsty, they would not give in. The eyes told that. Those of us who were there and saw them, as the Pioneers turned the first spadeful of earth for the others, knew that here was indeed a holy place.

We tried to write it that night, in Bar-le-Duc. Most of us realized that the Lost Battalion was the greatest American "human interest" story of the war, for, despite General Alexander's protest to the censor, the name invented by a newspaper man was too striking to be discarded. Perhaps some foresaw that even now, ten years after in homes and schools throughout the country, that story would be told to children, that it

would have become a bright page in American history. There was chance in that.

First, the 77th Division had drawn attention to the Argonne Forest. But after that, responsibility for giving the Lost Battalion its place in news and history goes to a newspaper man, a short fiery southerner named Kidder Mead, then Press Officer of the I Corps of which the 77th was a part. Army regulations could not stifle his news sense, nor autumn rains in the Meuse-Argonne damp his ardor. He knew a story, and when he sat down twice daily to write the report of doings on the corps front for a motorcycle courier to take to Bar-le-Duc, he told it. He wrote no "From—To—Subject" official report. He transported himself back to the *World* office on Park Row, and just wrote a news story, that we always read eagerly on our bulletin board.

Mead had drawn our attention to Whittlesey's men before October second, when from September twenty-eighth to thirtieth they had had trouble with small German parties and snipers coming in through the unplugged hole on their left. When Whittlesey was really cut off, on October third, Mead saw the story at once, and after that his bulletins played it up heavily. Correspondents went daily to 77th Division Headquarters, until the battalion was relieved. Some of the publicity that day was due to the fact that Major Bozeman Bulger, then Chief Press Officer, now again



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Where the "Lost Battalion" Was Belcagnered

Just below the road cut into the northern slope of Charlevaux Valley, in the Argonne Forest



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Captain George G. McMurtry
Second in command of the "Lost Battalion"

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on the *Evening World* staff, was both newspaper man and former officer of the 77th Division.

Revisiting his old outfit, accompanied by Damon Runyan, of Universal Service, he heard about the relief of the battalion, went to the hospital where Captain McMurtry and many others had been taken, talked to them, got their "story," and hurried back to Bar-le-Duc. He passed around the story that night. News sense and enthusiasm for the splendid heroism, patriotism, pathos, tragedy of it, did the rest. Most moving was Frazier Hunt's graphic dispatch to the *Chicago Tribune*. Next day, the papers were full of it.

Whittlesey got one of the rarest military decorations in the world, the Congressional Medal of Honor and was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel. McMurtry got the Medal of Honor, his citation saying that "the successful defence of the position was due largely to his efforts." He too was promoted. Holderman got the same decoration and promotion for his seven wounds. Cullen received the D. S. C. for holding the left flank and for exposing himself to signal airplanes. A large number of men were decorated.

General Johnson gave up his plan to have Whittlesey court-martialed—for exactly what, is not clear.

Those who sought Whittlesey found a tall, slim, youngish man, wearing glasses, very tired, sitting on a stump in a little clearing at a forest crossroads, and

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near him the battalion—the handful that was left. About the first thing he said, and he really said it, was: “Don’t write about me, just about these men.”

They had been fine, he said, patient and game. We asked him whether the replacements from the west that the 77th had got just before the fight had been better than the New Yorkers.

“Well,” he said, “they’re bigger men physically, you know, and more used to outdoor life and they were fine—but they were all fine. One of my finest was a New York Jew, a runner, named Liner.”

He introduced a dark, alert young man, who said with a look of wonderment: “Just to think—a year ago I was studying law, and I had every comfort, too. Now, I have been lousy for two weeks.”

“It was kind of hard to stick it out sometimes,” Whittlesey said, “especially when we heard them trying to get through to us, getting nearer and nearer, then being driven back. It was hard not to have a wash, too. In fact, when they did get through, it was quite a relief.”

Then he looked abashed, and said hastily: “I wasn’t trying to make a pun.”

A fine modest gentleman. How untrue and unjust, like most gossip, were the rumors about what he had done. He was of the conscientious type that worries. His friends thought afterward that his nerves were “shot,” and those rumors, preying upon his mind, may

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have helped cause his tragic death by suicide. He had obeyed his orders with unswerving devotion. He had done a soldier's duty. He and those with him had left one of the World War's noblest traditions. That is the true glory of the Lost Battalion. It will never be lost.

Another modest man was the principal figure of the other hero story, Sergeant Alvin C. York. He deserved his fame, though oddly it did not come until several months after the war was over. The newspapers missed this best-known American individual feat of the war, as they did the second best known, that of Lieutenant Samuel Woodfill. The reason was simply that the battle had got too big. Not all of it could be covered. There was more heroism to the square mile than even twenty-five men, working sixteen hours a day, could possibly find out about and write. General Pershing was the reporter who "spotted" and "broke" the Sergeant York story.

Several months after the Armistice, George Pattullo, of the *Saturday Evening Post*, was at G. H. Q. in Chaumont "looking for stuff to write about."

"Go over to the 82nd Division at Prauthoy," General Pershing said, "and ask General Duncan about the man who didn't approve of war."

That was York, an elder in the Church of Christ and Christian Union in a mountaineer community, in the Wolf River Valley near the Kentucky-Tennessee

border, a tall solemn man with serious religious doubts about the ethical justification of war. But he never liked to be called a "conscientious objector." When he reached Camp Gordon and talked things over with Captain Edward C. B. Danforth, of Augusta, Georgia, and Major G. Edward Buxton, of Providence, Rhode Island, his doubts were removed—long enough, at least.

In the attack against the eastern Argonne bluffs, that pinched the Germans out of the forest and relieved the Lost Battalion, York, almost unaided, captured one hundred thirty-two prisoners, including a major and two lieutenants and twenty-eight machine-guns after he had killed thirty men single handed.

On the morning of October eighth, he started with fifteen other men of the 328th Infantry after German machine-guns firing against the flank of the attack. They stumbled upon a German battalion headquarters, and all officers and men surrendered, but machine-guns near by turned upon the Americans and only seven remained unwounded. York took command, told the other six to guard the prisoners, and started sniping machine-gunners, shooting as only a Kentucky mountaineer can shoot. He had shot twelve when a German lieutenant and seven men rushed him. With eight shots of his Colt automatic pistol he brought them all down. That was too much for the German

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major, who offered to surrender, machine-guns and all. That made York's prisoners ninety, and he had six men with him!

The way back to the American lines was hard and tortuous, through the eastern edge of the Argonne Forest. York knew such country at home, though not infested by German machine-guns. But one by one he gobbled them up, fighting when he had to, never missing a shot. When he reached battalion headquarters, he didn't know how many prisoners he had. A count showed one hundred thirty-two, carrying twenty-eight machine-guns as peace offering.

Since the war, York has devoted himself to obtaining better education for the people of his old home. He has spoken often for the school he has opened, and upon religion, but seldom about what happened that day in the Argonne, when he smote the Germans with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

In the pressure of battle, Major-General George B. Duncan, commanding the 82nd Division, heard little more about it than did the correspondents—and they heard nothing. Again, the battle was too big, and nobody knew the facts fully until after the Armistice when conferences were held at division headquarters in which all phases of the participation in the Meuse-Argonne were examined. At one of these conferences York told his story in his own way, and so impressed General Duncan that he repeated it to General Per-

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shing. It was decided to give York the Medal of Honor. General Pershing recognized that here was indeed "something to write about," and Pattullo happened in at the right time and saw his opportunity.

He, York and Major Buxton drove back to the Argonne Forest, nearly a day's run, and spent two days going over the ground of York's exploit, York explaining what had happened. Pattullo, with the happy affluence of time that distinguishes the magazine from the newspaper correspondent, talked also to the surviving members of York's detachment. His story in the *Saturday Evening Post* introduced to the American people probably their best-known war hero.

CHAPTER X

STRUGGLE

WHILE the Argonne Forest was making heroes and becoming the best-advertised piece of real estate in the world, twenty miles away on the other end of the line there were other events important to the battle. On October eighth, the day after the battle in the clouds that pinched the Germans out of the forest, we began a long fierce struggle to push them from the heights east of the Meuse.

These heights were the exact southern pivot of their gradual retirement from the peninsular front. If we took the heights before they had got all their troops to that haven of refuge, the Antwerp-Meuse Line, they must probably go back to the German frontier, after that, the Rhine. Desperately they drew still more from dwindling reserves to plug this new hole.

Even partial success east of the Meuse would give us advantages: observation posts that the Germans had used to evil effect in directing terrible cross-fire upon our infantry approaching the Kriemhilde Line west of the Meuse. Loss of these posts, and those upon the Argonne bluffs, meant blessed and real relief to our troops between, and their casualties would drop. They had been heavy, seven, eight, nine thousand a

day and on September twenty-ninth, heaviest of any single day of our war participation, nearly eleven thousand, including Americans with the British. Partly to reduce them, we tried east of the Meuse another pinching maneuver like the stroke that had succeeded against the Argonne Forest.

It worked well, at first, considering that we hadn't enough artillery to support it fully, as General Claudel, commanding the French XVII Corps under General Pershing's orders, complained before it started. It did not reach its ultimate objective, the commanding summit of the eastern Meuse Heights called the Borne de Cornouiller, or Hill 378, but in a week's bloody fighting it came within a mile of it.

There was no worse fighting anywhere in the Meuse-Argonne than that east of the Meuse, although it was comparatively uncelebrated. The 33rd Division did another brilliant job, bridging and crossing the Meuse under heavy fire, to scale the heights from the west, while the 29th New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland and District of Columbia Guard Division scaled them from the south, supported on its right by the 18th and 26th French Divisions. Those two American divisions and their French comrades made a splendid fight. The 29th, in battle for the first time, drove farthest north under Major-General Charles G. Morton, at cost of five thousand casualties.

This was terrible country to conquer, rough and

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rugged naturally, made worse by the great battle of Verdun in 1916 that had scarred hillsides and ravines for miles with shell-craters that made it look like the moon. Here was No Man's Land of song and story at its worst. To get more than three miles through it, in a week, was an accomplishment. It landed the troops in a cockpit at the foot of the Borne de Cornouiller, pounded sodden by artillery, drenched by gas, exhausted, able only to hug shell-holes and curse cold, wet, shortage of artillery and above all, of course, the Germans.

They were cursing, too, the *verfluchten Amerikaner*. The attack east of the Meuse had scared them more even than we had hoped. General von Gallwitz sent a hurry call to Hindenburg and Ludendorff for reinforcements, no matter from where, so that he could stop the Americans and French. He feared they would extend their attack further eastward, to the Woëvre Plain, envelop Metz as the Germans had expected us to do instead of attacking in the Meuse-Argonne. He said the most favorable direction for the Americans to attack was against the line from Longuyon to Briey, the "battle that might have been" at St. Mihiel. General von Gallwitz thought General Fuchs's troops had not recovered sufficiently even from the battle that was, to resist such an attack.

We could not do it now. It would have doubled the length of our battle-line of thirty miles, already long-

er than any American Army ever had before. We had neither men nor guns enough. Again we tried to deceive the Germans. We had won local successes on the flanks, in the Argonne Forest and east of the Meuse, but our main attack in the center had not gone through the Kriemhilde Line and taken the heights at Cunel and Romagne. There was a chance that German reserves had been drawn from there, to left and right. General Pershing took that chance. While the I Corps on the left mopped up the forest and advanced at last to join the IV French Army in the Grandpré Gap, he threw the V Corps in the center, with the III Corps on the right helping, at the slopes leading to the heights.

For this third try at its hard and crucial task, the V Corps had been strengthened. Its divisions were all experienced, the 1st, 32nd and 3rd. They, if any one, could endure what they had endured already, and still advance. Added was the 181st Brigade of the 91st Division that had shown that inexperience is not always fatal. The 1st and 32nd were expected to take Romagne Wood and town largely by an encircling attack, and the 32nd was also to storm the ridge of Côte Dame Marie. For the first time that dominating height faced us, an important key to the Kriemhilde Line lock whose turning was to take many a day and night and many a doughboy's life. To the east, the 3rd, supported by the 80th, was to drive for the

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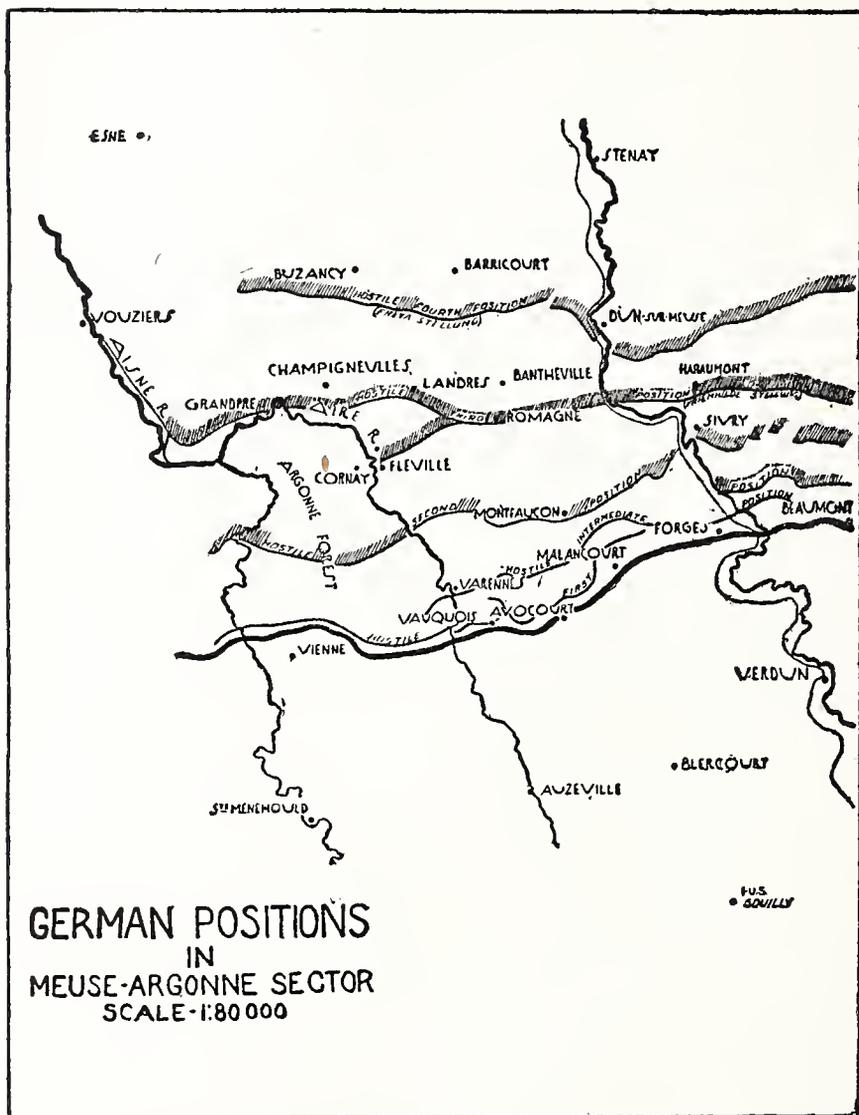
Cunel Heights. On the 80th's right was the wonderful 4th, now in the fourteenth of its unequaled twenty-five days' service in our greatest battle. It was to flank Cunel from the right and swing east to the Meuse.

Artillery plans were changed. Attacking without preparation had worked at Soissons in July better than in the Meuse-Argonne in October. This time for nineteen and one-half hours all the artillery we could muster rained shells upon the German lines. General Cameron had complained of lack of artillery support, so even the army artillery on his corps front was put under his command. When the longest attacking line up to that time in American history dashed forward, the morning of October ninth, the immediate result differed from that five days before.

This time the Germans could not counter-attack at once. They waited until the infantry had passed the zone smashed by our nineteen and one-half hour artillery fire. Sometimes the fire had not been so devastating as we had hoped. We had shelled some places where Germans ought to have been, but weren't. Often they were not in woods, ravines, other well-known hiding-places, but out in the open, on forward slopes, in tiny holes so cleverly hidden that only infantry close at hand could see them. The Germans sprang from earth to oppose the doughboys before they reached the heights.

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Yet, struggling forward through machine-gun fire that wiped out platoons and companies, shell-fire that



German positions in the Meuse-Argonne, showing the first, intermediate and second or Montfaucon Line that we broke in our first assault September twenty-sixth to thirtieth, the third or Kriemhilde Line that it took us until October sixteenth to break at its vital point northwest of Romagne, and the unfinished Fourth or Freya Line protecting the highest ground before Sedan, that at Buzancy, which we broke with decisive results on November first.

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made earth a hell of flame and smoke, hurtling rock and sod and whistling razor-edged fragments of steel—so ingeniously does man make such things—they got at some points to the Kriemhilde Line and fought hand-to-hand with the Germans who defended it. At last, after two weeks of struggle, American soldiers set foot in some of those trenches that barred us from our goal, Sedan and the railroads.

But by the time they reached the trenches, not all were left who had jumped off that morning. Many lay before the barbed wire. The struggle was fierce where the 32nd Division, forty per cent. of German descent, a great fighting division, strove for the Côte Dame Marie, the Mamelle trench and Romagne village. After a fight for the Mamelle trench, with rifle, bomb and bayonet, they got into Romagne village. That was a deep wound for the Germans, and late in the afternoon they came back with furious shelling and counter-attack that drove back the 126th Infantry from Romagne to the Mamelle trench. There they stayed, less than a mile from Romagne. The Côte Dame Marie towered untaken. The 3rd got near to Cunel, but could not take it.

To the west things had gone somewhat better. Here Major-General Charles P. Summerall, artilleryman who favored dense barrages, considered himself short of guns for the 1st Division's assault. His infantry regiments attacked one after another, each protected in

turn by the entire divisional artillery. This barrier of bursting shells trapped in his dugout a German lieutenant-colonel, so much to his discouragement that he talked for two days to our intelligence officers—with excellent results. Drumming machine-guns swept the advancing 1st, and its ranks, already thin after five days of battle, were thinner still. It took the hills it had desired, and a part of Romagne Wood.

The Germans fought until death. Some of their best divisions stood before Romagne and Cunel—stood when they did not charge forward in counter-attacks. Their specially trained machine-gunners, after four years masters of their work, were directed by non-commissioned officers picked because they would die rather than surrender. Wherever the myth originated that they had to be chained to their guns, it was not there nor then. They fought their guns until they were killed across them. There were in line and reserve six hundred thousand Germans with thousands of guns and more thousands of machine-guns opposing the American First Army.

The battle swayed back and forth that day so that it was hard to know just what we had done, what was really ours. We could not hold all that we took, for before exhausted, skeleton units could dig in on newly won ground, a terrific burst of shelling would come to make way for a German counter-attack. Next day's communiqué announced we had taken the Côte Dame

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Marie, and our dispatches that you read on October tenth, said so—but it wasn't true. We touched the foot of that towering height, not the crest.

We were through most of the outpost zone, but the main Kriemhilde Line was still intact. So on the night of October ninth General Pershing, General McAndrew, General Conner and General Drum sat down on the second floor of the *mairie* at Souilly to take stock of our resources for a long-drawn-out battle. For the Germans it meant relentless defense, for us, relentless attack, and if their danger was becoming great, we had troubles of our own, in material and in manpower. Through the windows came the boom-oom-oom of the guns rumbling along the heights of the Meuse, a harsh menacing rumble, the voice of the God of Battles demanding more sacrifice. And we must make it, for only so might we carry out Marshal Foch's plan and beat the Germans here and now, once and for all, before winter intervened and we had to make a far heavier sacrifice in another year of war. It was necessary for us to fill up our gaps, and go forward.

There were still two American Divisions, the 27th and 30th, with the British and five, the 2nd, 6th, 36th, 81st and 88th with the French. We needed them all in the Meuse-Argonne, and it was decided that General McAndrew and General Conner should go next day to Bombon and tell Marshal Foch so. If he wanted

General Pershing to keep hammering at the pivot of the German retirement, the strongest part of their whole line, he would have to help him get fighting men enough to do it.

Again, there was not a thought of letting down. Next day, General Pershing predicted that if things went as they ought, the war would be over before Christmas.

Marshal Foch was a bit impatient when General McAndrew and General Conner called upon him. Why weren't the Americans getting ahead faster? he asked. The French were announcing their advance on the whole front from the Champagne to Rheims, freeing many square miles of front held by the Germans since 1914, and the taking of St. Quentin. The British communiqué of October ninth told with just pride of an advance in a short time of thirty to forty miles, capture of one hundred and ten thousand prisoners, and one thousand, two hundred guns and the taking of Cambrai. Americans serving with French and British had cracked hard nuts for them and helped their advances directly, as the First American Army in the Meuse-Argonne had exerted pressure that helped indirectly, but the Marshal had to be reminded of that. The Germans were to some extent getting away with their retirement. The men and guns they were losing were only part of the whole great force they were trying to extricate from France and Bel-

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gium which could be caught, it seemed, only through victory in the Meuse-Argonne.

"Winter is coming," said the Marshal.

Since the German armistice proposal had revealed some of their weakness, he saw real chance of complete disaster if every one kept fighting—"*tout le monde à la bataille.*" There must be no cease in the American attacks. Losses must be made up and he promised that as soon as possible, the French would return some of the American divisions with their troops. The French themselves needed replacements for the losses of incessant fighting throughout spring, summer and fall—and four heavy years before that. He realized, of course, that the Americans were striking the pivot of the German retirement, and their losses were heavy, but they were just beginning to have losses, comparatively they were young and fresh. They must keep on striking.

He realized, too, that they must keep on striking as an American Army under an American commander. Though there might be reverses sometimes to offset the successes, though all the most ambitious objectives might not be reached, the Americans would be under his strategical direction but would fight their own battles. By this time he knew General Pershing and his Army too well to suppose there was any chance of installing at Souilly those French generals "with sufficient power to expedite the solution of all questions."

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True to himself, true to the the principles he had taught his officer pupils before the war, the ardent, aggressive Marshal saw but one thing to do.

"Combattez! Combataz! Combattez!" he cried.

He thought that if we didn't "Fight! Fight! Fight!" incessantly, the Germans might fool us, slip back in good order in the night from the Kriemhilde Line to the Freya Line, rather than stand longer and risk a break-through. General Pershing and the First Army Staff had thought this possible, so the Army was ordered on the morning of October tenth to "take advantage of the enemy's retreat. Each unit will be pushed ahead, gaining progressively points which will assist the advance of adjacent units." No objectives were assigned, it was to be a sort of guerrilla warfare. Even a troop of the 2nd Cavalry rode out ahead of the 1st Division. On those three miles alone on the thirty-mile front, it proved, there was a slight local German retirement.

There was no general retreat. The doughboys found that out as soon as they jumped off. The same machine-gun bullets, the same shells, swept the lines and groups in olive drab. At many places they could not go forward at all. Again the difficulty of getting orders quickly to the front line. The 32nd Division misunderstood the time set for the attack, then tried vainly to advance without a barrage. The Michigan and Wisconsin men got into some German trenches of the

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Kriemhilde Line, but late in the afternoon were driven out again. Romagne, Cunel, Côte Dame Marie remained German still. East of Cunel the 4th, which should have been relieved days before, gritted its teeth and advanced nearly a mile and set foot in Kriemhilde Line trenches.

So by the night of October tenth, from the Meuse to Grandpré, the Germans were mostly in their main fighting positions, backs to the wall. There what remained of eight American divisions faced them, worn down by heavy fighting and sickness, cold, wet, sometimes hungry, sometimes disorganized after at least a week, at most more than two, of battle. But they were asked to make next day one more great effort.

General Pershing tried again to break the Kriemhilde Line and take the heights to which we were now so close. "Fight! Fight! Fight!" Marshal Foch had cried. Now "Fight! Fight! Fight!" was the cry all along the American front, from Ornes, east of the Meuse, to Grandpré. Perhaps the retreat idea persisted. Towns behind the German lines were reported in flames, convoys moving north. To spur tired men to greater efforts, the Army Staff set the objective this time beyond the Kriemhilde Line, beyond even the Freya Line, at Buzancy, whence the ground sloped down to Sedan.

We couldn't make it. October eleventh was a hard day. It was the last jump-off for many. They left

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their fox-holes to be struck down by a fire as withering, devastating as any American troops ever faced. They were attacking prepared entrenchments crowning heights and protected by woods—there could be nothing worse. It seemed that men could not live in the open, slashed by machine-gun bullets just skimming the ground, the height of a scythe. If they took a patch of woods, it was drenched with gas. If they approached a Kriemhilde trench, they must first get through a barrage of bursting shells, then fight the German infantry hand-to-hand and if they conquered a hundred yards of trench, hold it against counter-attack. And of their own artillery there never seemed to the weary doughboys enough to smash a way through.

It is true to say that we bought every foot of ground with blood. When night fell upon a crimson day, we had a shaky hold of some of the Cunel-Romagne trenches, although nobody knew who would keep Cunel Heights. First we had a foothold, then the Germans. Like two beasts fighting for the kill, Americans and Germans flung themselves at each other. But having got so far, we found we must go farther at once. The Germans were still in Romagne Wood and Bantheville Wood, looking down upon and flanking the ground we held. We could keep our foothold only at awful cost until the woods and the Côte Dame Marie were stormed. We must keep on going or be pounded

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to pieces. But we needed some fresh troops and more guns, and must allow a few days to bring them up.

Other things were needed, too. General Pershing had been on the front through the fierce fighting of the ninth, tenth and eleventh, urging every one ahead, encouraging, inspiring, driving where drive seemed needed. His determination was no weaker than when, at the opening of the battle, he ordered instant removal of "any officer of whatever rank who fails to show in this emergency those qualities of leadership required to accomplish the task that confronts us." He believed he had discovered such cases, and that it was time for a shake-up. Besides, he alone had been controlling directly too much front, not only the great battle in the Meuse-Argonne, but also the quieter but never negligible Woëvre.

General Pershing divided the First Army into two armies, the First and Second, assuming direction of both, and relinquishing command of the First Army to Major-General Hunter Liggett, whose steady relentless progress on the western flank of the battle-field, had cleared the Argonne and reached Grandpré at last. So General Liggett's tall powerful form was seen in the *mairie* at Souilly as he learned the ways of the big organization he was now to command through General Drum and his Staff. Beginning October sixteenth, he was to drive it, subject to General Pershing's general direction, through the rest of the battle.

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The new Second Army got a different sort of leader and a different mission. Its front began beyond where the First Army's attack east of the Meuse stopped, at Fresnes-en-Woëvre, and extended to Port-sur-Seille on the Moselle south of Metz. It included the Woëvre Plain and our new front since we wiped out the St. Mihiel salient. It was the front threatening Metz, whence General von Gallwitz feared the attack we were not yet strong enough to make. The First Army had held this sector as part of its ninety-one miles of front, but it was now turned over to the Second Army whose new commander received orders to prepare to start the Metz attack as soon as we could give him men, guns and material enough—meantime, to harass the Germans. This new commander was Major-General Robert Lee Bullard, all vibrant enthusiasm and offensive zeal, whose III Corps had done well along the Meuse. He and General Liggett were made lieutenant-generals.

To General Liggett's old I Corps came from the Woëvre one of the most forceful American generals, Joseph T. Dickman, Commander of the 3rd Division in its impregnable defense of the Marne on July fifteenth and of the IV Corps in its dashing advance at St. Mihiel. A commander no less forceful got General Bullard's III Corps, Major-General John T. Hines, who had commanded the mainstay 4th Division. To command the V Corps in the place of General

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Cameron, came the epitome of a military leader, daring and careful, ruthless and inspiring, a Christian and a fighter, whose officers and men worshiped him, Major-General Charles P. Summerall of the 1st Division. Our new set of corps commanders from Meuse to Argonne were the right men.

A corps commander in the Meuse-Argonne had to be a better soldier and a bigger man than any of the famous corps commanders of the Civil War, Union or Confederate. His corps was usually of two hundred thousand men all told, with amount and variety of weapons and equipment surpassing infinitely those of Longstreet's or Jackson's or Sedgwick's or Warren's thirty thousand. He had to command aircraft, tanks and machine-guns of which Civil War generals never heard. Yet the names of Civil War generals were household words, those of their successors in the World War scarcely known.

When these changes in command were made, General Nolan asked the correspondents especially to write dispatches about the formation of the Second Army. We told not only what sector it was taking over, but said it was "facing Metz." The hope was that the German Intelligence, clipping and studying American newspapers carefully as ours clipped and studied German, would find those dispatches worth pasting on a card for Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and that General von Gallwitz would get reserves that otherwise

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we should have to face in the Meuse-Argonne. It looked then as if General Bullard could not actually attack for more than a month, anyway. The best policy was to make the Germans expect him sooner.

And now, once more at the Kriemhilde Line before snow should cover the way to Sedan and the railroad.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE HEIGHTS

ONLY two days to gird ourselves for the fourth great blow.

On October twelfth, Marshal Foch issued a new directive and General Pétain telegraphed General Pershing and General Gouraud urging them to combine to strengthen their threat to the German retreat. General Pershing replied:

“The First American Army continues to press the enemy on the front east and west of the Meuse. An especially strong attack, with fresh divisions, having the object of breaking the hostile front between the Argonne and the Meuse, has been ordered for the 14th inst. This attack will be pushed with the utmost vigor. The situation is fully appreciated and all efforts are being and will be exerted for decisive results.”

The faces we saw in all headquarters, in billets in ruined villages, along the gray mud roads of the battle area, were grim those two days. Many troops were near exhaustion, and inspecting officers went their rounds anxiously. But our young army was not used to being denied what it wanted. It burned to erase the memory of the last attack. We met our old friends of the Rainbow coming from the Woëvre for their

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first trial in the fire of the Meuse-Argonne. Broad, weather-beaten, hard as nails, they got over the roads with the incomparable slouching swing of veterans.

“Hear this is the worst yet,” they said. “Boche fightin’ like hell. Well—we’ll do what we can. Got a cigarette?”

They relieved the 1st, and the 5th came in and relieved the 80th. These two fresh divisions were to drive right through the Kriemhilde Line, meet two or three miles beyond and press forward. The objective this time was nearer than Buzancy. They were to flank Romagne and Bantheville Woods, while the 32nd took the whole of Côte Dame Marie and the rest of the line mopped up the woods and then came up even with the wedges the two fresh divisions had driven. That was to be the main attack in the center.

On the right, we would try again for the dominating crest east of the Meuse, the Borne de Cornouiller. On the left, Gouraud’s IV French Army, which had joined us on the Aisne at Grandpré, was to attack on the same day, hoping to outflank the Germans blocking us there. Gouraud had chosen the fourteenth to attack so we did the same, although we preferred the fifteenth and it disarranged our plans. Soon after the jump-off hearts sank, as the first reports began to come in.

“Licked again,” we whispered one to another. “What shall we write now?”

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But the doughboys had not yet begun to fight. In the next three days they turned the tide of the greatest battle Americans ever fought and made sure that we would have what we desired and be in Sedan before winter.

Those were three days and nights of hell, nothing else. We had a little more artillery to help than on October eleventh, though not all we needed, but the Germans fought harder. The famous Meuse-Argonne autumn rains were at their worst, drenching and chilling men who fought all day and lay all night—sometimes lay all day and fought all night—unsheltered, on the treacherous slopes of the Kriemhilde Heights. Behind were the new corps commanders, all fighters and drivers, and General Pershing, pushing this final attack before turning over Army command to General Liggett.

“Fight! Fight! Fight!” they said. “We must go through!”

We did go through. In three days and nights of hell, we broke the Kriemhilde Line once and for all, and stepped out upon ground whence we could deal the blow that drove the Germans from northern France and Belgium and was militarily decisive in ending the war.

At first it seemed, as on October eleventh, that we should be stopped in our tracks, or get only a few blood-soaked yards. The infantry jumped from their

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fox-holes almost at once into hand-to-hand fighting at many places, and through the earlier hours of the attack some were too busy holding their own to advance. Down upon them from the heights came storms of bullets, snapping and crackling, thudding into human flesh, while the air sobbed with the rush of shells. Gray mud beneath, gray sky above, gray-clad men with gray steel bayonets, thrusting and stabbing, gray faces gleaming moist with rain, smell of blood and sweat and powder, curses, cries—this was the American front.

By nightfall, the 32nd Michigan and Wisconsin had fought and maneuvered its way around and over the crucial Côte Dame Marie and to a bright place in our history.

Bullet and shell stopped them in front. But to their left the fresh 42nd was driving as planned, wiping out some of the machine-guns that had raked the 32nd. During the barrage, the 32nd had crept up to the barbed wire. It was not all cut, but when the barrage lifted and whistles shrilled, they started through it. On the left a tragic thing happened. As the first waves of the 127th Infantry floundered amid the dark-brown web that clutched and tore, the sound of machine-guns stabbed the air. They were caught like flies. Some struggled frantically to get through, others sagged and fell shapeless upon the wire. The attack stopped.

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But on the right, a battalion of the 126th Infantry, partly hidden, got through the wire and then, miraculously, far enough ahead to flank the Côte Dame Marie that loomed overhead. The first thing the Germans on its slope knew of their predicament was when rifle grenades began bursting in their midst. The 126th kept them so busy that now the 127th could slip through on the other flank. The German-Americans held the Côte Dame Marie in jaws that would never let go.

They planned instantly to close their death grip. In that night's darkness they would creep up the slopes to the top, and do it with cold steel. They crept forward stealthily, but no shot sounded, no cry of alarm. Wondering, patrols of the 127th Infantry reached the crest. They found dead in green-gray, leather cartridge boxes, empty shellcases—but no Germans. They had escaped from the trap, but in so doing had given up the principal key to the Kriemhilde Line. Sure sign that they were losing their nerve.

Even before early morning of October fifteenth brought the 32nd this prize, it had another, that village of such historic, yet sinister significance in the whole Meuse-Argonne battle—Romagne. It, too, had been taken largely by the flank. The 128th Infantry had surrounded it, bottling up the Germans within whom the 125th, following, had fought hand-to-hand. Rifle and bayonet, bomb and pistol strove for the vil-

lage, but soon the Americans were assembling two hundred disheveled prisoners. The rest lay in streets or cellars.

Since the battle began, the name Romagne had meant the Kriemhilde Heights among which it lay, some of its gray-stone, red-roofed houses still standing despite the blasting of our artillery. Thousands of doughboys had stared at it through bloodshot eyes and muttered: "We'll git you yet!" cursing it as "Romain." They still call it that at American Legion meetings. Near Romagne is the largest American cemetery in France.

Now the 32nd, having been two weeks in the furnace, having taken the Côte Dame Marie, did not rest until in a third week it had pushed a mile farther through the last remnant of the Kriemhilde Line and into the outposts of the Freya Line. The divisional emblem is a red arrow piercing a line. The 32nd had had six thousand casualties, fought eleven German divisions. Their rest billets were trenches, shell-holes, pup tents in rain and mud, filthy German dugouts, all the battle-field afforded.

Here General Haan spoke to them, with a proud broad smile upon his German-American countenance: "You men are to be congratulated on the splendid success you have again achieved. You have just been in perhaps the greatest battle that has ever been fought in the world, and you were in the very center of that,



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

The Trenches on the Heights
Part of the Kriemhilde Line



Behind the Battle

Supplies going up, prisoners coming down

Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

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and every one of you is glad of it." Then, casting his eye over the sea of mud and rain: "You are now located in a so-called 'rest area' which without doubt is from every view-point the rottenest and worst in all of France, and you ought to be glad of that because see what stories you can tell to your friends when you get home, without the least exaggeration."

The 42nd had helped the 32nd crack one hard nut, and also cracked some of its own, but neither immediately nor easily. Its battle for the Kriemhilde Line was the fiercest of the Rainbow's long front service in France. It took all of three days and nights, seventy-two hours such as none in the division has spent before or since, ending with its right, the 167th and 168th Infantry from Alabama and Iowa, through the deadly Romagne Wood. But more, from the Côte Chatillon west of it, they looked down proudly upon the Germans as did the 32nd from the Côte Dame Marie to the east.

The two crests, Dame Marie and Chatillon, were the keys to the Romagne Heights and the Kriemhilde Line between the Meuse and the Argonne. We had them, had them fast, for no German troops living, though they tried, could take back from the Rainbow and the Arrow such prizes, so dearly won. But the two Guard Divisions had not strength left to turn the keys in the lock and push open the door to the Buzancy Ridge, the Freya Line and Sedan. In three days they

had lost perhaps seven thousand killed and wounded. The other divisions which attacked with the sturdy pressure that helped them had lost enough more to make twenty thousand the immediate cost of breaking the Kriemhilde Line.

On the left of the 42nd Division the three days went less well. The 165th and 166th Infantry, New York Irish and Ohioans, ran into a shambles before the Kriemhilde Line at St. Georges and Landres-et-St. Georges, northwest of the Côte Chatillon. They got forward scarcely at all, were mowed down almost before they started. Here too, not all the barbed wire had been cut by the artillery fire.

Time after time the Irish lads of the old 69th charged over the bare slope before Landres-et-St. Georges, to be thrown back by machine-gun fire from a sunken road that they must take before they could reach even the barbed wire before the Kriemhilde Line trenches.

“We need more machine-guns and more ammunition and more artillery,” the Rainbow said, “to take that sunken road.”

General Summerall, the new Corps Commander, came to see for himself. His face was stern as he questioned brigade and regimental commanders and staffs.

“They’ve lost their nerve,” he thought, and said: “We must go through.”

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To one commander, then another, he said:

"You are relieved from command."

The Army ordered no further attack, but General Summerall is confident to-day that if it had, the left of the 42nd would have gone through, sunken road or none. The Rainbows had a reunion in New York recently, and General Summerall spoke, introduced by Father Duffy who one night in October, 1918, called him, "That old Prooshian, General von Summerholtz." The hatchet is buried.

That was a bitter time for the old 69th, and cost them many of the carefully chosen Irish lads who had volunteered in New York. A machine-gun bullet in the leg brought down Lieutenant-Colonel Donovan, whose nickname "Wild Bill" made people picture a fierce black-bearded Giant Blunderbore, not a quiet blue-eyed athlete. He would soon have been a brigadier or dead. The regiment lost some of the old Irish sergeants of whom it was especially proud.

"It's not what it used to be," one of them complained. "There's too many of the Old Originals gone, and some of these new replacements have to be kind of urged when we jump off—kind of urged."

Before the attack, some of Donovan's men told him they doubted if they had machine-guns and ammunition enough.

"We can't get any more," he told them. "Anyway, all the 69th needs is bayonets and guts!"

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The Irish went over, crying: "Bayonets and guts!"

Somehow that appeared in the *Sun*, "Bayonets and guns!" Was it a cable error, or was the language too virile for a family newspaper? The censors claimed that was one thing they didn't do, anyway.

Though checked before Landres-et-St. Georges, the break through the Kriemhilde Line to the east made splendid success for the V Corps. The III Corps on its right did not do so well. The 5th Division could not drive its wedge as had the other fresh division, the 42nd. It had various difficulties. It had not been in the Meuse-Argonne before. Anyway, while the 32nd and 42nd broke the Kriemhilde Line, the 5th was trying frantically for Rappes Wood and having terrible losses. Still, the III Corps had taken Cunel, linked with near-by Romagne as symbol of the Kriemhilde Heights.

On the extreme right and left of the Army front, there had been less progress. East of the Meuse, we had not yet reached the towering Borne de Cornouiller, after a still harder fight in the valleys. On the left the 82nd even got through the Kriemhilde Line at one place west of St. Georges, but was driven back. The 77th took St. Juvin and at least got into Grand-pré, across the Aire. To start a fight when 77th and 78th Division veterans gather, ask, "Who took Grand-pré?" The answer seems to be that the 77th took part of it which was turned over the night of October fif-

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teenth to the relieving 78th, which fought two weeks for the rest.

Abie's Irish Rose was unthought of then, but an Irishman named McClenehan and a Jew named Rapaport collaborated in St. Juvin to the dismay of sundry Germans. Rapaport had been none too enthusiastic about the army at first, but became thick with McClenehan and felt better about it. In the streets of St. Juvin, he saw McClenehan fall after smoke had jetted from a cellar window. Infuriated, Rapaport ran across the street and hurled a grenade through the window.

"Come out," he shouted, "or I kill you all."

More than a hundred Germans came out, hands up. Then the Jew beheld McClenehan dusting himself off.

"I flopped to fool 'em," the Irishman explained.

Beyond Grandpré, the French were now ahead of us thanks to the German retirement to the Aisne forced by the American attack that had flanked them.

At the end of the three days, October fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth, we were well through the center of the Kriemhilde Line and held its key positions, although the Germans still clung to some trenches. To make the break-through a complete and safe preliminary to a great knock-out blow at the unfinished Freya Line and the railroad at Sedan, we must do one more thing before General Pershing could settle details with Marshal Foch. We must bring the III

Corps up even with the V Corps' proud farthest north beyond Romagne. General Hines went at it as a square-jawed soldier would.

The 5th and 3rd Divisions had not taken the heights assigned as their objectives on October fourteenth, and the two important woods of Rappes and Clairs Chenes. Both were regular divisions and two new regular commanders, square-jawed as Pershing and Hines, came to push them forward at all costs to their objectives. These were Major-General Hanson E. Ely and Brigadier-General, now Major-General, Preston Brown, one of the most picturesquely vigorous in action as in language of the A. E. F.'s generals.

This fighting was a local action, but there was none sterner in the battle. The regular 3rd proved themselves, like the regular 4th, iron men. They took Clairs Chenes Wood with whatever troops they could rake and scrape together, a company of three hundred left from two battalions of one thousand each, engineers, signalmen, machine-gunners, any one. The 7th Infantry lost of its full strength of 3700, 2250 killed, wounded and sick. Only one field-officer and three captains remained. The 2nd Battalion came out of action without an officer. Of fourteen new second lieutenants who joined the regiment October tenth, only one remained. The 5th was fresher, and, re-organized by General Ely, no less gallant. By October twenty-first it had done its part.

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So there was optimism at Souilly and Ligny and Bombon. Marshal Foch had seen his exhortation "*Combattez! Combattez! Combattez!*" taken up by the Americans, who were now atop the strongest natural position on what had been the Western Front. That front was now unrecognizable.

On the day we broke the Kriemhilde Line the Marshal, coordinating the Allied attacks as a leader controls an orchestra, had renewed the British, French and Belgian advance in Flanders nominally commanded by the King of the Belgians, but assisted by that General Degoutte whom the Marshal had offered to General Pershing. It went well. On October seventeenth the British, aided again by our 27th and 30th Divisions, and the French, attacked the Germans on the Selle River, their last fortified line before Maubeuge. In little over a week they had advanced from five to seven and a half miles, were within twenty miles of Maubeuge—as we were within twenty of Sedan—and only seven from the railway junction at Aulnoye. This big success meant that an important connecting link between northern and southern jugular-vein railroads was under shell-fire. Defeat stalked the German path.

They hurried their withdrawal in Belgium and northern France from ground made untenable by Allied successes, gave up Lille, long northern pivot of their defensive systems. Marshal Foch wished to hasten them still more, and drew upon the Americans

for reenforcements to use in Flanders. It was hard to spare them from the Meuse-Argonne, but General Pershing sent the 37th and 91st and told some of the iron divisions in the Meuse-Argonne that they must stay a few days longer in front line without relief. And Marshal Foch telegraphed:

“It is understood that this reduction of the American Forces will in no way change the mission assigned to the American Army, especially between the Meuse and the Aisne.”

He wanted us to be very vigilant, for again he believed the Germans might retire on our front as they were retiring at other places. They might yet relinquish the Kriemhilde fragments and sneak away in the night to the Freya Line. That would delay our next blow while they rested and reorganized. So the front line was told to keep eyes open and patrols out, and take precautions against German counter-attack to cover their retirement. But they were not retiring in the Meuse-Argonne. Elsewhere, perhaps. They still kept the southern pivot, and must until their great retreat to the Antwerp-Meuse Line was complete.

There was unmistakable proof that the pace was telling seriously on the German Army, and that rank and file were losing their nerve as their leaders had lost theirs for a time. Every day we had watched the prisoners clumping along in groups herded by amused

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cavalrymen, or standing silent in the barbed-wire prison cages. Eagerly we questioned the intelligence officers who tried to get all they could out of them. Many were disgusted with the war, they said, but that was not why they had surrendered. There were lots of fighters still up on the Kriemhilde Line.

But a change had come. There was more talk against the Government. "Soon we shall have no more Kaiser," a few said. Others grinned and said, "*Ja, ja.*" Some scowled. The shrieks of an empty stomach were the voice many had heeded. They brought with them when they surrendered propaganda circulars that we had shot across to them by trench mortars, or dropped upon them by airplanes, picturing the American soldier's bill of fare, white bread, butter, real coffee with condensed milk, a luxurious feast after "*ersatz*" everything and not much of that. "Well, we've surrendered; when do we eat?" they asked.

No wonder many could not stand the Meuse-Ar-gonne. "The Americans have the worst blood-letting sector on the front," one told an intelligence officer. "Every foot of ground must be disputed until the retreat from the sea is complete."

Few if any foresaw then that the morale of the German nation would so soon buckle and collapse. The gray monster seemed then like a clever champion, battered, bleeding a little, rather short of breath but hardy and wily, striking shrewd blows and using his ring-

craft to stall off a knock-out while he pulled himself together.

As a whole, the German Armies at the front still fought. There was not the abandon of 1914, but machine-gunners were consummately clever and fanatically brave, artillery was expertly handled and often made to do the work of infantry. The *Feldgrauen* usually fought well. They did not always cling to forlorn hopes, as their flight from the surrounded Côte Dame Marie showed, and morale varied with units, but to picture the German infantryman of October as demoralized and cowardly is ridiculous.

German equipment was not what it had been. In three months they had lost in one way or another some eight thousand five hundred guns, about a third of all they had on the Western Front. Some guns with worn-out inner tubes lobbed over shells inaccurately. More shells were duds, did not explode. There was a copper and brass shortage and the new cast-iron cartridge cases sometimes jammed machine-guns. But none of these things had gone so far as to cripple the Germans irreparably. In a few months they might have, but in a few months, winter would have come and a chance to rest and refit behind the Antwerp-Meuse Line.

As late as October twenty-sixth General von Gallwitz advised the Kaiser that this could be done, the Germans could go on fighting another year. The

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group commander facing the Americans was one of the few chosen generals whose opinion the Kaiser had asked.

So it is not incomprehensible that no Allied Intelligence Service realized how near the Germans were to collapse. Their estimate was that the Army at the front certainly did feel the strain, but had not cracked wide under it. American correspondents were even cautioned against writing anything that would cause over-optimism at home. On October twenty-fifth at a meeting of the Allied commanders at Senlis, where Marshal Foch had moved forward from Bombon, Sir Douglas Haig favored offering the Germans terms of armistice easier than the Marshal was proposing because he feared pushing them too far. Pétain and Pershing voted him down.

Neither the French nor the American Commander seriously expected then mutiny anywhere in the German Army or revolution at home. The American Secret Service at least had had for some time reports from its agents in Germany that revolution was coming, but they usually said not until winter. And there had been such reports before. Even when revolt did come, starting with the navy, spreading to the *Etappentruppen* on the Services of Supply, it never got so far with the bulk of the German troops at the front. Before the Americans, in the Meuse-Argonne, they fought to the last day of the war.

They fought desperately to hold us up. They could not yield at the pivot of their retreat until they got men and supplies out of the peninsula. They would fight to prevent our enlarging immediately our gap in the Kriemhilde Line but news of it had effect upon the German Government. The German communiqués did not explain its ultimate meaning—communiqués never do—but Prince Max and his counselors knew. The British had broken into the last German position before Maubeuge. The retreat might not succeed. Just as we broke the Kriemhilde Line, President Wilson had refused to treat with the Hohenzollerns, but Germany must have peace. While Prince Max's Government discussed how to get it, Ludendorff resigned.

So closed the first and critical phase of the Meuse-Argonne, greatest battle in which Americans ever fought. We did not fully realize it, but at last we had the German groggy. All that we needed now was a little time to gather strength to knock him out. General Pershing has said of the first three weeks, in a report known only to army men:

“The first half of the Meuse-Argonne battle presented difficulties, numerous and seemingly unsurmountable, which make the success gained stand as a splendid achievement in the history of American armies. Suddenly conceived and more hurried in plan and preparation; complicated by close association with a preceding major operation and directed against the vital point of the Western front; attended

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by cold and inclement weather and fought largely by partially trained troops; the battle was prosecuted with an aggressive and heroic spirit of courage and fortitude which demanded eventual success despite all obstacles. The morale of the American soldier during this most trying period was superb. Physically strong and virile, naturally courageous and aggressive, inspired by unselfish and idealistic motives, he guaranteed the victory and drove a veteran enemy from his last ditch. Too much credit cannot be given him; his patriotism, courage and fortitude were beyond praise.

“Upon the young commanders of platoons, companies, and battalions fell the heaviest burden. They not only suffered all the dangers and rigors of the fight, but carried the responsibility of caring for and directing their men, often newly arrived and not fully trained. Where these leaders lacked practical knowledge of battle tactics they supplied the deficiency by courageous onslaughts against the enemy’s line. Yet quick to learn, they soon developed on the field into skilled leaders and inspired their men with increased confidence.

“To the higher commanders and their staffs great credit is due for the successful performance of an exceptionally complicated and arduous task. The problems born of inexperience multiply with each increase of strength, and the division, corps and particularly the army headquarters were confronted by problems of superlative difficulty. Their work is seldom appreciated and its importance rarely realized. The [First] army staff at one time was involved in serving a front of 93 miles and a force of approximately one million men. With typical American directness of action and intensity of purpose, each successfully carried out his duties despite all complications and every untoward event. To Brigadier General Hugh A. Drum, my

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chief of staff for the First Army, especial credit is due for the discharge of his vast responsibilities with high efficiency."

The fighting spirit of a fresh young army, upon which the General had counted, had prevailed over the experience of a cunning enemy. War is, in truth, a young man's game, and our young men were about to win it.

CHAPTER XII

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MORALE played a greater part in the World War than in any other. As never before nations practically man for man, almost woman for woman, child for child, were actively enlisted in a conflict. It was like the South in the Civil War on a vast scale. On both sides service and sacrifice were universal, and so were interest, even fascination, gripping and unflagging. Morale rose with news of a success, sank with that of a reverse. Propaganda and Censorship strove to control national emotions and harmonize them for victory as Marshal Foch harmonized the blows of the Allied Armies.

Always in the crucial campaign of late 1918, both sides considered morale. The Germans tried anxiously to bolster up theirs, after four years' hardships followed by the spring failure to win before fall brought the Americans in great force and retribution. They told of repulsing many American attacks with heavy losses, in communiqués and statements to a controlled press that from their view-point were often fully as truthful as ours. If you start out to advance eight miles and advance one or two, your enemy may be jus-

tified in saying he has beaten you even though he could ill afford to lose the one or two miles.

On October twelfth our own communiqué said:

“East of the Meuse heavy fighting is in progress in the Bois des Caures. On both sides of the river, our troops have attained their objectives. The total number of prisoners captured in this sector since September 26 amounts to 17,659.”

“Our troops have attained their objectives.” What objectives? The Army Objective the day before had been Buzancy, still eight miles away. On most of the front we had made little or no advance.

We had to consider morale, Allied and American, rather than exact truth. We were trying to win a war, and must keep confident our own people, and above all the Allies, who were making a great effort largely on nerve. So G. H. Q. looked at it, so G. H. Q. always will look at it, and doubtless, rightly. War without censorship and propaganda is conceivable only between Utopia and Elysia. October, 1918, saw a propaganda battle, too.

Rumor, at first creeping, was now running through the streets of Paris and London that the Americans had bungled the Meuse-Argonne. Our slow painful fight foot by foot over country ideal for defense but hitherto uncelebrated in the newspapers did not appeal to imagination like Allied advances sometimes almost unopposed, occupying large and well-known

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places. Cambrai, St. Quentin, Laon, Lille, because better advertised, meant more than Meuse-Argonne, Côte Dame Marie or Romagne. French and especially British were winning great and glittering success. Ours was great, not glittering. It matters less, usually, how far an army advances, than where. Allied leaders, civil and military, cheered tremendously by the turn of the tide, seeing victory within grasp at last, thought humanly of glory and reputation and posterity,—also prestige at the peace conference that might be held after all. And quite understandably, like the Athenians, they were getting tired of hearing the Americans praised.

So they listened to talk that American leadership was blundering. General Pershing and his Staff did not yet know enough about modern war to manage great armies in great battles, but insisted stubbornly on trying to do it. Marshal Foch was worried. He had promised Clemenceau that France need not endure another war winter, yet the Americans might make it necessary after all. Such talk usually seemed to sift from the top downward. It was unjustified and untrue, yet there it was.

Pessimists predicted that the Americans would never reach Sedan before winter. Frenchmen and Englishmen pointed to the bigger advances of their armies, results usually of the wonderful revival in power of the British Army and the heroic willingness of the

French to do their weary best, but sometimes of the punch of fresh American troops attached to them, sometimes of the German plan of retreat hastened by American pressure in the Meuse-Argonne. Some Americans, after the strain of the last three weeks, began to wonder too. A few, sent home because General Pershing thought they had failed in the Meuse-Argonne or because surgeons said health had gone, were trying to make themselves heard.

They were few, but less excusable than the Allies who, by this fourth war year, had lost their millions of husbands, sons, brothers, had endured four winters of privation, and dreaded a fifth. G. H. Q. could understand their forebodings, so set to work by censorship and propaganda to tell the Allied peoples what the Americans were doing and what they were up against.

While the A. E. F. was in France, no French newspaper or press association ever had a correspondent regularly attached to it—even during the Meuse-Argonne battle. They got what news of the A. E. F. they printed, from occasional visits to it of *journalistes* who wrote readable and vivid but not very informative articles, “features,” rather than news. Seventy-five per cent. at least of the real news of American fighting, printed in French newspapers during this time, was in the official American communiqués. The French people were used to communiqués, knew their idiosyn-

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crasies, but rather preferred them to too much brutal truth. They were more soothing to war-shattered nerves. So our communiqués, recently increased to two daily, were the best means to reach the French.

From the top down, the British were skeptical about our new Army. Since their War Cabinet had opposed our forming our own army and taking on a big job before 1919, they had watched us with misgiving. When we went ahead in the Meuse-Argonne, red-tabbed staff-officers murmured, "Extraordinary," and when we had a set-back, exclaimed, "Ah, just as we thought!" Their army was making a wonderful comeback after its reverses of the spring. The importance of our part in the Allied concentric attacks was not understood by the British public, and may not be now although the foremost British military writer, Major-General Sir Frederick B. Maurice, understands it. Just before he died, Field-Marshal Earl Haig said that the British Armies bore the main burden of the war during its last eighteen months and won the victory, while the Americans, although they hastened it, were not the decisive factor in obtaining it.

That sounds much like October, 1918, when almost the only newspapers in London that printed much about the Americans were the *Daily Mail* and *Telegraph*. Their correspondents, Herbert Bailey and Cameron Mackenzie, worked with the veteran Battersby of Reuter's Agency, hard and conscientiously at

their jobs. Other English correspondents informed their papers that the Meuse-Argonne was not worth writing about, as it was only subsidiary to the British attack, then departed for places where wine was better and beds softer.

Intelligence set the facts before the A. E. F., the Allies and the people at home through every available medium. *The Stars and Stripes*, the weekly newspaper by soldiers for soldiers, started nearly a year before on the suggestion of Major N. W. Campanole and Major Frederick Palmer, by Lieutenant Guy T. Viskniski, with twenty-five thousand dollars advanced from the secret service fund, told the A. E. F. world as nearly as possible what it was all about. The communiqués reached every one, A. E. F., Allies, even American newspapers although our press dispatches usually beat the communiqués home. Their tone changed. Here is part of the communiqué of October fourteenth:

“This morning the American troops resumed the advance north of Verdun. They are now operating against positions of the greatest strategic value and natural strength.”

We had learned two lessons: at the opening of an attack to say little about how it went lest we claim too much, and to drive home the importance of the American part in the Battle of the Western Front. The communiqué of October twentieth said:



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Where the Blue Pencil Flourished
Censors of all Allied Nations in the Paris Bourse



German Official

“Good Morale of our Troops during the Voluntary Retirement,” said the German Legend

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“During the heavy fighting of the past week north-west of Verdun, we have drawn from other parts of the Western Front a constantly increasing number of German divisions which are bitterly contesting every foot against our strong attack in order to secure the retreat of the German forces which has been compromised by attacks from the south and west.”

When progress was slow and hard, communiqué writing was something to worry about.

“Good lord, what can you say?” an intelligence officer asked. “You can’t tell ’em the truth—‘This morning we attacked on the whole front and on most of it were bloodily repulsed.’”

But with experience, our communiqués became less and less modest (war does not foster modesty), played up more and more what we were doing until they reached the grand finale of capturing Sedan—whereof more later. That was the old army game, Allied and German. They all did it. The American communiqués toward the end gave those who read them a far better conception of what the Americans were accomplishing, than they had had before—but not so many read them. There was so much big news as the war rushed to its close.

We had another good way of reaching part of the Allied Armies and of our own, commanding officers, staffs and intelligence officers over the whole battle-front, and the whole of France. That was the printed Summary of Intelligence that was marked either

“Secret” or “Confidential” and distributed in limited numbers to a carefully selected clientele, as Captain Mark S. Watson once remarked.

These printed daily circulars commenced to drive home the facts about the Meuse-Argonne, especially how it was consuming more and more German divisions. The circular of October eighteenth said: “Our front is the only one [of all the Allied attacks] where the number of divisions has increased steadily.”

It enumerated the thirty-three German divisions that in twenty-three days had faced the Americans, eight of them twice, one three times, with only four days’ rest—so terrific was the pace set by our incessant attacks. A little later the Summary of Intelligence announced that the only really properly rested German divisions in reserve behind the whole Western Front were on the southern part between the Moselle and Switzerland, most immediately threatened by our First and Second Armies—and by General Bundy’s fake attack in Alsace!

Before it ended, the Meuse-Argonne battle had drawn in forty-seven German divisions, whereof only two ever got out again. One went back to the British, one to the French front, but those that stayed included three drawn from the British, and seventeen from the French fronts besides two drawn from the Eastern Front, Russia and Rumania. Seven more, not included, faced our Second Army making a total of fifty-four

divisions occupied by the two American Armies besides another score or more engaged by the additional American troops serving with the Allies. During the Battle of the Western Front Americans kept occupied one-third the entire German fighting strength. That alone was the difference for the Allies between victory and stalemate. Intelligence, and the correspondents working with it, tried to still the rumors and get this over to Allied publics.

We reached the French press through the "jazzed-up" communiqués. It was easier to get what we wanted into the British press, thanks to the late Lord Northcliffe, who understood America and was directing Allied propaganda with tremendous vigor. Articles appeared by two of the best-known English military writers, Belloc and Repington.

Belloc's article was especially valuable. He explained that the Meuse-Argonne was "not a failure—but the great strategic offensive the Germans have always feared." He also called it a "containing effort" because of the German divisions it was consuming in its fiery furnace. Not only were the Americans burning up in the Meuse-Argonne the German strategical reserve of man-power, but their fresh troops had given the Allies a similar reserve steadily increasing. How the pendulum swung slowly and steadily is shown by the fact that in April, 1918, when the German attacks were at their height, their rifle strength on the Western

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Front was 1,569,000 to 1,245,000 for the Allies and that in November the German rifle strength was 866,000 to 1,485,000 for the Allies. In April Germans outnumbered Allies by 324,000 fighting men, in November Allies outnumbered Germans by 619,000.

We had an influx of distinguished visitors of various sorts and nationalities who were taken up to Montfaucon and from that eminence shown the kingdoms of the Meuse-Argonne. Letter-perfect conducting officers drew their attention to the rugged nature of the ground. If the visitors were soldiers, that was enough. If civilians, they had to be told more. One of these visitors attached himself to us for a few days, an English colonel, one of the tiniest men in uniform, but a sort of bantam phoenix who breathed fire against all Germans. He was said to be a confidant of Mr. Lloyd George himself, sent to find out what the Americans really were doing.

To tell Mr. Lloyd George's countryman about that, but, far more, to tell our own people, General McAndrew and General Conner came to Bar-le-Duc for a meeting with the correspondents that had a great influence on the news of the Meuse-Argonne. Very seriously and frankly they talked to fifty or so correspondents, censors and press officers who filled the old abandoned store that was Press Headquarters, sitting on chairs, tables, floor, and following closely General Conner's pencil as it pointed here and there on our big

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map that covered a whole wall. What they told us was this: The American attack seemed to them the crux of the big plan to crush the German Armies, the Americans' job was to keep up that attack and die in thousands on the Kriemhilde Heights if need be to save another year of war that would take tens of thousands. There might be a winter campaign.

Again they went over Marshal Foch's plans in detail, and gave permission for the first time to indicate in our dispatches enough of them to make more comprehensible to those who read, what part our army played. They stressed the difficulties of the German retreat, over only two railroad systems by which they must withdraw not only two million troops, many guns and supplies, but the machine-shops, hospitals, depots, installed in the occupied parts of France and Belgium during four years. They pointed out that the American advance was now only twenty miles from the southern railroad at Sedan, had reached the heights, would soon be going down-hill fast and that if our shells began to fall upon the railroad at Sedan before the Germans had got out, it would be ruin for them. To do that, we must fight, fight, fight.

General Pershing had gone over the whole situation, they said. He had counted the cost. He knew the losses would be heavy as we drew to the Meuse-Argonne more and more German divisions that might otherwise be used to oppose French and British attacks

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elsewhere, but that was part of the plan. If all went well, it might just possibly be over before winter. But what did we think would be the reaction at home to a winter campaign?

We had only one answer. The American people would stand whatever they were asked to stand. Wood, of the Chicago *Daily News*, drawled through his nose:

“Well, General, I think they’re just beginning to find out there’s a war.”

Then there was a terrible rattle and crash that brought every one upstanding. Our distinguished guest had gone to sleep and fallen off the table. What about his report to Mr. Lloyd George?

The Germans gave us the best bit of propaganda we had during the entire war. Just at the right moment Intelligence captured an order that General von der Marwitz had issued to his troops a few days before when he began to fear seriously the big attack east of the Meuse that we were not able yet to make. His order got a wider circulation than the General intended—it went all over the world. In fact, it has become a part of American history. Here it is:

“1A No. 10519 Secret

“According to information in our hands, the enemy intends to attack the V Army east of the Meuse in order to reach Longuyon. The objective of this attack is the cutting of the railroad line Longuyon-Sedan,

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which is the main line of communication [*Lebensader*-life artery] of the Western Army. Furthermore, the enemy hopes to compel us to discontinue the exploitation of the iron mines of Briey, the possession of which is a great factor in our steel production. The V Army once again may have to bear the brunt of the fighting of the coming weeks, on which the security of the Fatherland may depend. The fate of a large portion of the Western Front, perhaps of our Nation, depends on the firm holding of the Verdun front (the Meuse). The Fatherland believes that every Commander and that every one will fulfill his duties to the utmost. If every soldier realizes the greatness of this task and this is done, the enemy's attack will be shattered.

“Von der Marwitz.”

“The fate of a large portion of the Western Front, perhaps of our Nation, depends on the firm holding of the Verdun (Meuse) Front.” That was the gist of it. The German General said that the most dangerous to the Germans of all the Allied attacks was the American attack in the Meuse-Argonne. What better propaganda to cable home, all over the world, for that matter, for every one to read?

We started a campaign to sell the Meuse-Argonne to the world. Our dispatches that day carried, carefully phrased to tell the Germans no more than they had guessed already, the explanation of what was back of the ever-changing situation. Every day we worked it in, the German retreat before the concentric Allied attacks, pivoting on our front, Sedan, the railroads. General Conner had given us a phrase, “*voie de ro-*

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cade," meaning "lateral shuttle railroad system," that struck our imaginations. We used it often.

The late George M. Smith, managing editor of the *Evening Sun*, remarked that the doughboys were the best war correspondents, but this time we did pretty well. Like every one else in the A. E. F., we had at last learned our jobs. Even the censors thought so. Major Gerald S. Morgan who was Chief Censor thought our biggest battle was our best covered.

The Press Division, too, got properly organized just when the war ended, thanks to the efforts of Major A. L. James following the pioneering of Colonel Walter C. Sweeney, long Chief of Censorship of the A. E. F.

They and General Nolan had built up gradually a system that really helped get and spread news of the A. E. F. We had a well-equipped headquarters in Bar-le-Duc. Our own courier service brought us twice daily reports from both army and all corps headquarters written by press officers, former newspaper men, most of whom knew how to extract news, and write it. We had now an information service presided over by Captain A. E. Hartzell, former cable editor of *The Sun*, that furnished data on almost any military subject.

A system of "releases" helped us write what we wished about particular units at particular times and places, sometimes helped us to get such data, without giving the Germans dangerous information—by the

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simple expedient of not "releasing" the dispatch until we knew the Germans had taken prisoners from that unit at that time and place and so knew it was there.

The arrangement about casualties was similar. The War Department wished relatives to hear from it officially before they read of casualties in the newspapers, which meant two or three weeks' delay. Dispatches mentioning killed or wounded by name were held until word was received that the relatives knew. This was the work of Wood, who specialized in "name stuff," and a gain in the battle for less censorship.

The "name stuff" went big in thousands of places where they knew nothing and cared less about strategy or tactics. It set people handshaking on Main Streets the country over about what "our home boys" had done. American communiqués, like Allied, tended more and more to mention units and commanders. The misleading communiqué of September twenty-sixth had done that, at least, for the first time, speaking of troops from Pennsylvania, Kansas and Missouri and their Corps Commander, General Liggett.

The "humanizing" of the communiqués increased our work. We must not only follow the general trend of the battle day by day, we must also gather especially from units coming from the areas served by our papers, "name stuff," "home-town stuff," exploits, deeds of heroism, anecdotes, abounding in names, street addresses, even local quips. Most who scorned

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this "police reporting" heard from their editors. But the more of it they did, the more dependent they were for news of the general battle upon the bulletin board and the "canned stuff."

Those things were invaluable, but could not take the place of real digging for news along the front. No rewrite man in a press office could equal a reporter who had felt it and smelt it and seen. To cover the vast battle as it should be covered, he must go every day and be part of it, talk to the men who were doing it, then come back and weave in with what he had gathered first hand the "canned stuff" now so abundantly provided. Then he must get his dispatch back to the waiting newspaper office.

Cable transmission was never satisfactory and as the battle approached a climax it got worse. Transatlantic cables were few during the war. The one that gave the quickest service was the single thread of the French cable that did not pass through England, as the others did. Its "Urgent" dispatches at seventy-five cents a word, maximum rate, got across in a few hours when other routes took eighteen, twenty-four, even forty-eight. Often this single cable was reported out of order by some ingenious if not ingenuous correspondent just returned from Paris: "No telling when they'll get it fixed," he would say, then slip off to file a little "Urgent" of his own. But the French cable kept on clicking the words across the ocean, and usual-

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ly if you read in your morning papers about something that had happened on the front the afternoon or evening before, that was the reason. We sent our "flashes" that way, followed up with details lumbering along at the press rate of ten cents or the "full" rate of twenty cents a word.

G. H. Q. tried to help us get our news across. Not only were two American soldier operators, each an expert at home, installed in the French post-office at Bar-le-Duc, but French operators sent some of our dispatches. The Signal Corps installed wires connecting Bar-le-Duc with London via a special American cable under the English Channel, hoping to save delay in reaching London. Probably it did, but the traffic on the American lines seemed to grow heavier, and you had the thrilling experience of reading in papers as late as November sixteenth dispatches sent via England describing some of the closing incidents of the war that ended November eleventh.

As our papers got more and more dispatches about the Meuse-Argonne, stressing the important nature of its desperate struggle, they got the idea. "PERSHING'S MEN TACKLE GIANT TASKS," the head-lines said; "HARD ROAD FOR YANKS." By this time a million Americans had been in the battle area, and more were coming. If it had lasted just a little longer, or there had not been so much other absorbing news, the Meuse-Argonne would have

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become the only concern of the whole United States. But there was the collapse of Bulgaria, then Turkey, government changes in Germany, Allied advances in Palestine and France—the great Italian victory of Vittorio Veneto. How many papers did you buy every day in late October and early November of 1918?

The demand upon us became heavier, especially as censorship restrictions upon identifying units were removed. "Send thousand words about Steenth Division," would come a cable from the office, and the correspondent would curse and ask, "Do they think it's like covering City Hall?" and then go out and get the thousand words. Expanded, that made two thousand in his paper. It might take him a day and night and he would have to write his main story of the day from the "canned stuff" on the bulletin board, plus what some other correspondent told him. More letters came from readers at home, asking if we could look up this one who had been in the battle, and hadn't been heard from, or tell them a little about how that one died? Of course, we did our best.

There were various ways of covering the front. The new men found new ways. Of the four hundred eleven visiting correspondents who at one time or another visited some part of the A. E. F. and wrote something about it, a goodly number came to the Meuse-Argonne. One original person sat down in the bar of the Metz et Commerce in Bar-le-Duc, filled with

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doughboys playing a bit before returning to the battle, and said in a distinct voice; "I'll buy a drink for every one from Pittsburgh." As the crowd gathered, he took out his note-book and at the end of a few hours, put it away filled with "home-town stuff" enough to keep him writing for days. Another visitor brought a Baedeker which was useful in describing ruined towns, or unruined, whether he had seen them or not. Some newcomers from the States told us people at home wanted "the truth" and we were not telling it. We weren't gory enough, they said, and spent most of their time in field hospitals listening to the groans of wounded or the ramblings of shell-shocked. They craved blood and horrors.

We couldn't see it. Perhaps by that time, we had seen enough. Not a few, like Herbert Corey and Lincoln Eyre, had been writing about the war since 1914, almost all a year or more. Why add to the anxiety of those at home? There was a correspondent who, before starting back to write battle stories, would say, "Now let's go and look at the dead!" He was not an American correspondent, but his battle stories gripped the English-speaking world. Perhaps we were wrong.

Nevertheless, covering the world's greatest battle was the hardest job American newspaper men had during the war. The Peace Conference was more elusive, more exasperating, but less tiring emotionally and far less physically. Each day's work in the Meuse-Ar-

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gonne meant trying to cover an area of several hundred square miles including twenty miles, then thirty, then forty of battle front where in all the forty-seven days until the war ended, there was fighting, usually pitched battle. Gettysburg lasted three days. It was not enough to cover army headquarters and four corps. There were from seven to twelve American divisions engaged at once and from six to ten or more resting and training in the battle area to reenter the line. Here we must get vivid incident, anecdote, "home-town stuff." We could go as close up as we wished for the "front stuff" our editors told us people at home were "eating up."

Then there were aerodromes, tank headquarters, a dozen other places where we could get a story a day. There were the hospitals, too, where we exchanged newspapers, chocolate and cigarettes for stories of heroism and self-sacrifice to be written that night inadequately but white-lipped and with awe. Each day we saw the two streams of battle, our youngest and bravest and best, whistling and shouting, going up the line afoot or in trucks, coming back gray-faced and silent in the ambulances.

Heroes, those men, no bunk or exaggeration about that. One boy of seventeen, downy-faced and tow-headed, clutching the bandage over a terrible abdominal wound, whispered: "A big Heinie done it to me with one of them saw-tooth bay'nets. Twisted it when he

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pulled it out. They's some awful mean men in this war." Another man of fifty, who had lied to get into the army, heard that he could not live. "And me with a wife and three kids," he said, "I call that tough luck." And rolled over, face to the wall, and died.

There were men of other nationalities who wrote more gracefully than we, but none worked harder or sent more real news. The American reader expects facts in his news columns rather than ideas. They came hard sometimes, but usually we got them and got more by the censor—though never all.

Perhaps that censorship, some of which was so necessary then, helped cause the reaction of criticism after the war. By what they said and would not permit to be said, censorship and propaganda pictured the A. E. F. always perfectly equipped and supplied, advancing gloriously, even blandly, from victory unto victory—a picture as unfair to the doughboys and their leaders as it was untrue.

Writing without censor, it seems, too, that patriotism and the thrill and lust for victory that are part of war, led us in the same direction—although most strove against it. The A. E. F. itself was to blame for no little of the exaggerated praise that newspapers printed. From general to doughboy, every one of its two million believed his outfit, be it combat division or grave-digging unit, the most wonderful agglomeration in France, incapable of mistake or shortcoming, achiev-

ing only victory. The setbacks he carefully forgot when he saw any one with the correspondent's green and red brassard.

Our troubles were nothing to General Pershing's. Then was his time of greatest trial, under constant pressure to keep striking at the German pivot, eager as a soldier to do what he no less than Marshal Foch knew was needed, and "Fight! Fight! Fight!"—eager as a leader to do what his men wished, and win. He knew that was their first wish, and never lost the confidence in them that had led him into the supreme test of the Meuse-Argonne.

It would be one care less if he thought the people at home knew and understood what the Americans were doing, so Major Morgan sent him copies of some of the dispatches that were going from Bar-le-Duc to the States. He seemed a hard-pressed man to us then, perhaps a little like Grant in the Wilderness campaign. Some compared the Meuse-Argonne to the Wilderness. Some thought, too, that if General Pershing could get his million men through the Meuse-Argonne before winter, he would be a general great as Grant, or greater.

One night, the General was coming back to Ligny-en-Barrois from a conference with Marshal Foch. His car had run out of gasoline and stopped at a small village for more. A very old French woman, wrinkled and gray-haired, a black shawl over her bent shoulders, peered at the small American flag the General's car

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always carried. Then she hobbled to the window.

"*Monsieur*," said the old woman, "*Monsieur—merci à vous.*"

Then she went on. That made up for a lot, General Pershing thought. Probably she had not even known who he was. It was the American flag, that was all.

A thing that helped inestimably was the support of President Wilson. He had never seen General Pershing until the General came to Washington to take command of the A. E. F. He had been chosen on his record, because the President liked the way he handled the expedition into Mexico against Villa, because once he had his orders the President believed he would obey them, and because he was first and always a soldier, not a politician. Having chosen him, President Wilson trusted him.

He backed him, too, stood behind him when he got Allied hints that Pershing was "not quite the man, too stubborn." In 1914 when the World War broke out, the President forced the army to observe strictest neutrality. The General Staff began studying plans for a possible eventual American part in the war, of course, in closest secrecy, yet it was ordered stopped almost immediately and when we entered the war, there was no official plan. But having entered, the President and Secretary of War Baker let regular army men handle the army's part in it. It was their game, and they were allowed to play it with little interference.

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Some day President Wilson, who wished to be the great Peace President, may be known as our greatest War President. So it seems to army officers who have studied it. He profited by the experiences of his predecessors. Perhaps because he was a historian, he avoided many of the mistakes in making war of earlier American presidents. Pretty generally, he let the army run the army, and the navy run the navy.

When we entered the war in April, 1917, he started at once at the point Lincoln had attained in the last year of the Civil War. He chose his man, and having chosen him, he stood by him. The orders under which Pershing sailed for France met Pershing's approval, and when Pershing stuck to the orders, Wilson stuck to Pershing. No American president ever gave a general more thoroughgoing support than Wilson gave Pershing.

The General needed such support, for no American general has had a problem of such magnitude—so much more vast than that of Washington, or Scott, or Grant.

CHAPTER XIII

BEHIND THE FRONT

THE American Army fought the first and hardest half of its greatest battle almost with one hand tied behind it. Through the three weeks that it took to reach the Kriemhilde Heights, there was shortage of supplies and material, even men. That was why the situation looked sufficiently serious to General Pershing and his advisers when, on the night of October ninth, they sat down in the *mairie* at Souilly to review it.

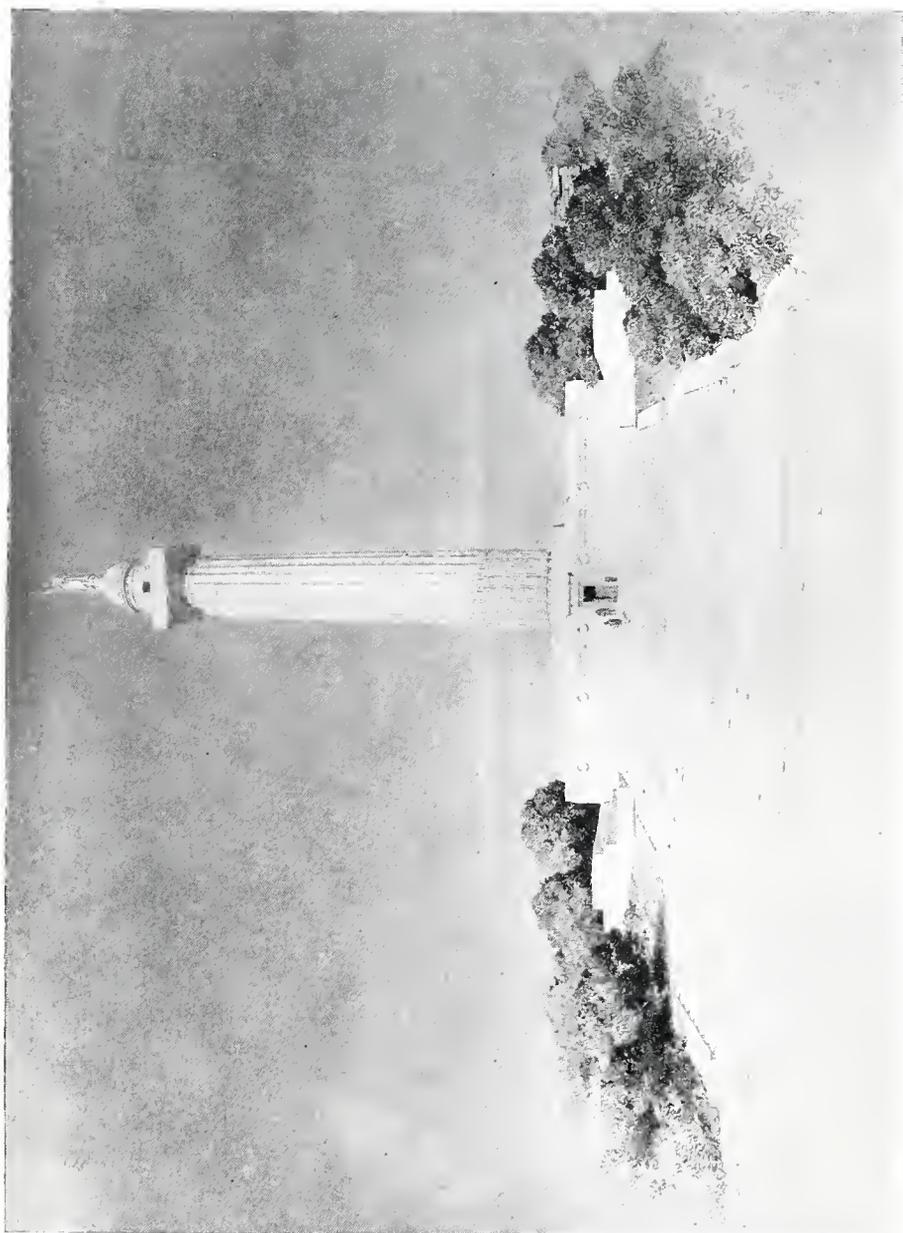
The United States never accomplished the great feats of production of war material that were promised, as people read so proudly and enthusiastically in their newspapers. The war ended too soon. We were in it nineteen months, but that was not time enough to get things made and to France in quantity. For every seven tons of supplies that came from home, the A. E. F. bought ten in Europe.

It took Congress six months after we entered the war to appropriate for ordnance expansion. There were blunders aplenty such as when the first American-made gas-masks sent to France nearly strangled a general and his staff because some miraculous gadget on them wouldn't keep out gas, and the second lot also proved useless for foreign service. Shipping was never suf-

ficient, and sometimes not well employed. During the critical period of the Battle of the Western Front, the A. E. F. got from the States only two-thirds the supplies it asked.

Before that, in the spring emergency we had filled ships not with supplies but with men, men, men, to turn the tide and give the Allies victory. So they gave us the war material that we were not making fast enough at home, or could not send over if we were. No more than fair, for the War Department kept hands off American factories working already on Allied contracts, and we shipped raw materials to be worked in Allied factories. But sometimes if they could not spare enough, we went without. Ordnance would have got into quantity production just in time for the big Allied spring drive in 1919 that the Meuse-Argonne made unnecessary. Let us hope for well-supplied Allies in the next war so that an American general and American soldiers may not have to face another such situation as in the Meuse-Argonne.

We needed more artillery to prepare for our attacks by blasting the thousands of German machine-guns from their nests before and in the Kriemhilde Line, and so to save the lives of thousands of our men who attacked them. The French had given us what guns they could spare, from their own attacking armies. It is humiliating but true that all told only twenty-nine



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

In Memory of the Meuse-Argonne
The new American monument at Montfaucon



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

A French 155 "Short" in action

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American-made guns reached the Meuse-Argonne front throughout the battle, and some of those were there during only part of it. Five of them were great fourteen-inch naval guns on railroad mounts that fired four hundred thirty-six shots in the battle. The rest were 24 4.7s, light howitzers. All the remaining artillery was made in French works and bought from the French Government. When we entered the war, the French gave us the plans for their famous seventy-five millimeter field-gun and after spending some time trying to improve it, we finally landed at a French port one hundred and nine 75s made in America, just before the Armistice. They never reached the front. We could have used a thousand more 75s than we had in the Meuse-Argonne. We had to resort to all sorts of expedients to offset our artillery shortage. Once artillery got into that battle, it never got out until it was shot out.

When General March prepared the plans for the Army Artillery of the A. E. F., he provided for one hundred and twenty-four railroad guns of heaviest caliber. In the Meuse-Argonne we had fifty-five such guns, or fewer, five of them American. Two-thirds of the Army Artillery was usually French.

So were practically all the shells, when they weren't British. American-made six-inch shells arrived in France October thirtieth, too late to reach the front.

Nor did any American-made gas shells reach France, although 3662 tons of gas did. A few American-made 75 shrapnel shells did actually reach the First Army dumps before the Armistice. On the last day of the war, Colonel John L. Dewitt, in charge of its supply, loaded a few into a Ford and tried to reach before eleven o'clock some guns that were firing. He could not make it, and the war ended without an American-manned gun having fired American-made shrapnel at the Germans.

When we entered the war, we decided to develop our own type of machine-gun, and advertised the heavy and light Brownings as "the best in the world" which probably it was. But Brownings reached the Meuse-Argonne accompanying just three of the twenty-two American divisions that fought in it. The rest used French heavy Hotchkiss guns, but not equal to the Brownings, and for light machine-guns, the broadcasting Chauchat. We never lacked rifles, but were somewhat short of automatic pistols.

No tanks made in the United States ever reached France. At the Armistice only fifteen tanks had been completed and they were still in the United States. The total program called for 23,390. Ludendorff said in his memoirs that Allied tank attacks were a decisive factor in the Allied victory in 1918. That wasn't true of our tank attacks in the Meuse-Argonne. We hadn't enough tanks. What we had were borrowed from

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French and British who had scarcely enough for their own needs. Of the 189 tanks that started the September twenty-sixth attack, a short time later only 18 were fit for action. Rough country, engine trouble and German anti-tank guns did that.

After the October ninth conference, General Pershing sent General Rockenbach to Paris to "give the Allies anything in the A. E. F. for five hundred tanks." They weren't to be had. We had no heavy tanks in the Meuse-Argonne, the only American-manned heavies being of British manufacture and serving with the British. Some of the few lights in the Meuse-Argonne were manned by Frenchmen who couldn't speak our language—or we theirs. They left us in October. More tanks seemed to be marooned in No Man's Land or in the repair shops than fit for action. We had only sixteen to jump off in our last great attack, November first, and only one survived the day. Tank casualties were one hundred and twenty-three per cent.

As to aviation, the censors often asked us: "For God's sake, lay off it." It was a sore point. Every one knew about the "sky filled with airplanes" publicity at home, that had helped in speeding up German airplane production. Every one knew also that our own production had failed sickeningly. We never had enough airplanes in the Meuse-Argonne, and the longer the battle lasted, the fewer we had. The A. E. F.

received 6010 and at the Armistice had 510 available on the front. On September twenty-sixth, when the battle opened, there were 584. On November fifth there were 452. Many of those were of French and British manufacture. The D H 4s made in the United States were the notorious "flaming coffins."

Colonel William Mitchell, Chief of the First Army Air Service during the Meuse-Argonne, has said that "not a single fully equipped airplane ever reached Europe from the United States and of those that did some had to be almost entirely made over, and the fliers had to be almost entirely trained again, and supplies of all kinds had to be obtained from a number of different countries."

To make up the deficiencies of the American Air Service, we had considerable help from French, British and Italians. All the night bombing of the First Army was done by five squadrons of Caproni bombing planes of which three were manned by Italians, two by French. Of seven squadrons in the Army Artillery Observation Group, only one was American, and two of four balloon companies. We had three other balloon companies that were French. Besides this, sixteen other French aviation units served with the First Army at some time during the Meuse-Argonne.

Despite all its handicaps, the cosmopolitan air service of the First Army during the Meuse-Argonne had

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distinct advantage over the Germans most of the time, and this was due largely to the greater initiative of the American pilots. All told, Americans, French and Italians brought down 417 enemy airplanes and 53 balloons. The number of our airplanes lost in action was 199 and of our balloons destroyed, 22.

The Liberty Motor, heralded as a product of wizardry, turned out in the battle test a good serviceable motor about like good Allied motors, its principal advantage quantity production—once that materialized. The censor who passed a dispatch that said so remarked: "This may counteract some of the bunk in the States."

The best feature of American aviation was the aviators, a fine lot who gave their lives without stint to keep as nearly as possible air control of the Meuse-Argonne. During that battle most squadrons had to be entirely replaced once at least—that is, on an average, every aviator became a casualty. In the Air Service, that usually means one thing—death. In the seven days of St. Mihiel our Air Service casualties were fifty to sixty per cent.

On the ground, for an army supposed to cut across a German line of retreat and pursue a fleeing enemy, we resembled tortoise rather than hare. We had fifty-two per cent. of the normal allowance of motor transportation, trucks, automobiles, motorcycles, that we should have had. Sometimes it got lower than that. But for the French aid, we should have had only twen-

ty-eight per cent.—and we are the greatest automobile producers in the world.

We had few over half as many horses and mules as we should have had, some of those decrepit nags no other army would use. They died so fast in the Meuse-Argonne that Marshal Foch made the French Army give us 13,000 of their horses. From September eighth to October twenty-third, only 2917 animals came from the United States.

It was thanks to the energy of General Peyton C. March as Chief of Staff in the United States, of Major-General James G. Harbord as Commanding General of the Services of Supply in France and of Brigadier-General Charles G. Dawes, whose Staff found in Europe more supplies than came from home, that the supply situation was no worse. The S. O. S. in France worked night and day, straining every nerve and muscle, throughout the Meuse-Argonne.

On and behind the battle-field itself, we were better off in one respect in early October than we had been when we started on September twenty-sixth—we had something like enough special troops to get our work done. That work is of infinite variety and needs all kinds of troops specially trained. They are the skilled services and laborers who insure the supply of food, ammunition, clothing and all other necessities to the fighting troops, and take care of their communications and hospitalization. They include a wide variety of

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the trades of civil life, and many thousands of them were needed to keep the First Army nourished and supplied for its blows at the enemy.

During the first two weeks of the Meuse-Argonne we had nowhere near as many American special troops as we needed, nor all we needed of any nationality. Our shortage of American special troops consisted then of most of the Army Artillery acting directly under the Army Command as distinguished from divisional and corps guns, most of the air service, and a smaller proportion of services of supply troops. This was made up as far as practicable by the French lending us special troops, as General Pershing had suggested to Marshal Foch at the Bombon conference September second, but they could not spare all we needed. Later in October we gave them back some of these special troops as more of ours reached the front, but two of our three corps between Meuse and Argonne never got their full quota of special troops.

More serious, our losses were becoming heavier, would be heavier still in the stubborn, slogging struggle that was ahead. Sick and wounded were going back in an unending stream that seemed always larger, to hospitals that just managed to care for them. Only this semi-open warfare could end the war, but flu and pneumonia took heavy toll of front-line troops without the dugouts and shelters of trench warfare, in the open, with only fox-holes to protect them from the raw

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October climate and drizzling rain of France's least sunny province of which the doughboys said: "Lorraine—mostly rain."

There was a time during the Meuse-Argonne when a little less hard work day and night by every one responsible might have brought on a shocking state of affairs in our hospitals. As it was, sick and wounded nearly jammed them. Several times in October it looked as if we could not take care properly of all our casualties. On October ninth there were 110,000 in the base hospitals, whose normal capacity was 100,000. The crisis capacity, if every square foot of available space was filled and the hospitals crowded to the limit, was then 150,000. This was only in the base hospitals, far behind the front. It did not include field hospitals and mobile hospitals in the battle area. Some hospitals at some times during the battle were overcrowded, but crisis capacity for all base hospitals was never reached—for which let us be thankful, for even crisis capacity would have meant discomfort.

During three weeks of such intense and incessant fighting, losses were serious. Day after day General Drum brought to General Pershing lists to try even his stout heart. He remembers the daily casualty report in the Meuse-Argonne as his saddest war experience. What was the cost?

The average citizen, knowing the facts, would say "almost two hundred thousand." He would include

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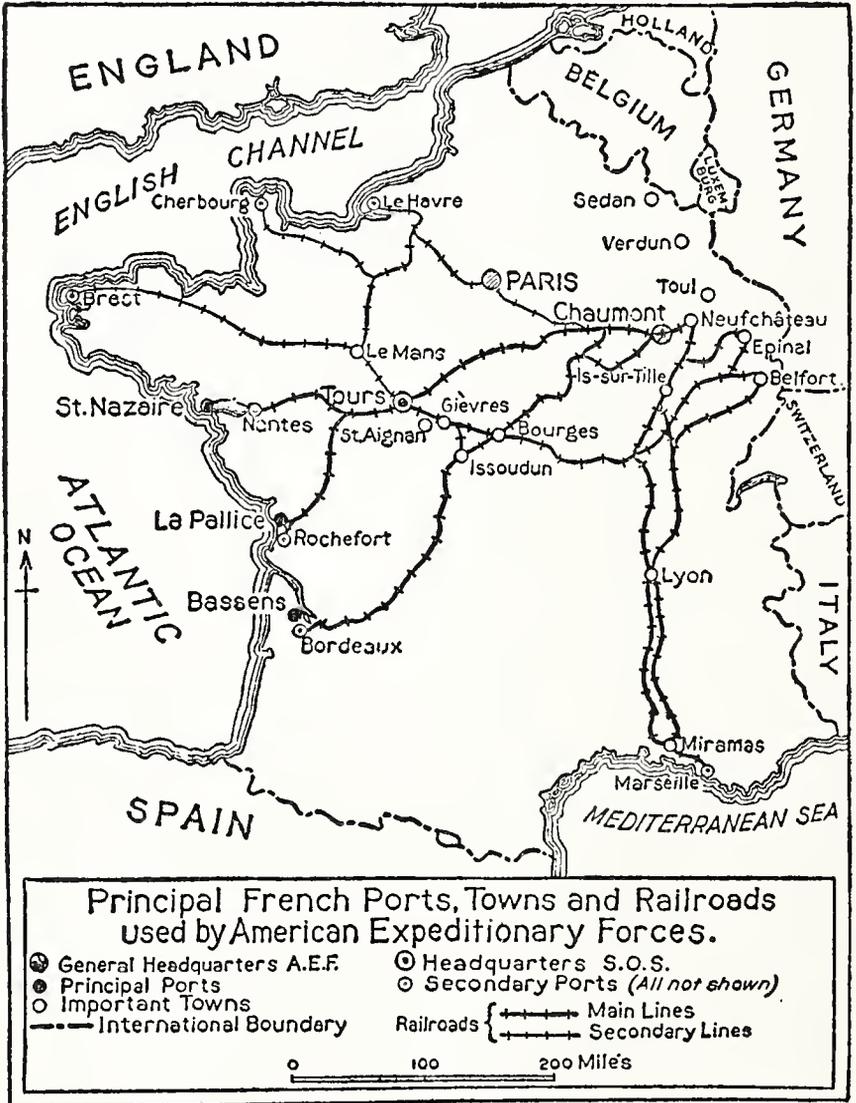
not only those killed or who died of wounds, and wounded, but the sick and the shell-shocked. If he added those who afterward had recurrence of old injuries or developed new, as result of battle experience, he would probably say "two hundred thousand, sure."

The War Department said not long ago that careful rechecking shows 122,063 "battle casualties" for the Meuse-Argonne to which should be added 4142 marines and sailors, giving a total of 126,205. But "battle casualty" does not mean what the average citizen means by "casualty of the battle." It is a technical military term, excluding all shell-shock cases, accidental wounds even if received in battle, all sickness whatever, all ex-soldiers, who after getting out of the army died of wounds or sickness contracted in battle, and those still in the army who died of World War wounds after January 1, 1921.

Of the number thus excluded, "evacuations from the front" are a good criterion, for men didn't get away unless there was something the matter with them. The First Army medical units evacuated 143,051 sick and wounded, according to the Adjutant-General's office not long ago. The First Army Report, published in 1923, says it was 177,000. Latest figures for killed outright in action are 20,214, which added to 143,051 gives 163,265, to 177,000, gives 197,214. Again, that excludes many later injuries, and of course, all minor wounds, injuries or sickness for which a soldier was

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treated on the spot and returned to duty. So the Meuse-Argonne's casualties "of all sorts" probably mean to the average citizen almost 200,000.



Hindenburg has expressed his belief that our experience in the Meuse-Argonne "will have taught the

United States for the future that the business of war cannot be learned in a few months, and that in a crisis, the lack of this experience costs streams of blood." Now, has it taught us?

To fill the gaps in the line that must always go forward, General Pershing and his advisers estimated the night of October ninth that they must have ninety thousand fresh men, "replacements." We, like the Allies, were jamming things through everywhere to keep up the pace. The French had called their youngest classes, British had drafted boys of seventeen and eighteen. But we could see only forty-five thousand replacements to fill a ninety thousand hole.

The War Department was sending over fully organized new divisions but not enough "loose man-power," trained individually to fit into the experienced, battle-tried divisions that were below strength numerically. Some of these new divisions were even incompletely trained. The experienced divisions must be kept up to strength to go back to battle—we had seen in the September twenty-sixth attack that willingness and courage were not enough without experience. The only thing to do was to break up some new divisions and distribute their man-power to the Meuse-Argonne and the Services of Supply, where it was needed.

It was tough for some of the men. They had been sent to France too soon, sometimes only a few weeks after they had been "drafted" and sent to training camps,

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at some of which they learned little except setting-up exercises, squad drill and community singing. Then they were sent to the front, to the greatest battle their country ever fought, at its fiercest stage, sometimes not even knowing how to handle a rifle.

We could always recognize them on the roads of the battle area. They were paler, slighter, than the men who had had their proper hardening and had not just come from crowded transports, and they looked about nervously. Who could blame them?

"What outfit's this?" we would ask, and the reply would be:

"Well, we were from the 76th Division [or the 86th or any other of the seven lost divisions] but now they tell us we're the Umptieth Replacement Battalion."

"How long have you been in France?"

"About a week, I guess."

General Hagood describes this situation in his book, *The Services of Supply*:

"At this time many thousands of replacements were being sent through Le Mans and stopped off there for a couple of hours to get gas instruction before going to the front. General E. F. Glenn, the Depot Commander, telephoned me to get authority to keep these men eight additional hours in order to give them some target practice. He said that a great many had never fired a rifle and that some did not even know how to open a breech block. He said it was a shame to send these men to the front in this condition when with eight hours' delay he could give them at least one string of

shots on the range. I took it up with G. H. Q., but the answer came back that the need for them for the front was too great to warrant this delay and that they must be sent forward immediately."

There was no adequate system in the United States for training men simply as replacements for infantry units already in France. Major Huger W. Jervey was sent home to install one, but the Armistice was signed before he had a chance. Nor did many of those men who went untrained into battle have a chance.

New ways to speed up replacements were discovered, and replacement depots were established in the battle area. During the lull the newcomers could be taught a little more about how to care for themselves in battle so that in the big push fewer of them had to be "kind of urged." There were still not replacements enough, and what with that and straggling, engineer regiments sometimes had to be used as infantry.

Even such emergency measures as sent them in were not enough. Before the battle ended, we had to reduce the strength of our experienced divisions by 4000 men, from 27,000 to 23,000, by cutting infantry companies of 250 to 175 men, and other expedients. The situation had become worse, if anything, since the October ninth conference and our fighting divisions in France needed 105,513 infantry and machine-gun replacements, and only 66,490 were available.

Battle strain was telling in another way. Some of

our troops were straggling. The number has been estimated at one hundred thousand by General Liggett, and at twenty-five thousand or less by General Drum, depending upon what you call a straggler. The one hundred thousand seems rather high, but we could, of course, write nothing about it. The American people then were being told that their army was composed entirely of noble young heroes, probably golden-haired and red-cheeked, who would scorn to go A. W. O. L. for a few days when the fighting was hottest, perhaps for a sightseeing or souvenir-hunting tour.

That was all it was sometimes—curiosity of youngsters seeing their first great battle, and their first foreign country. They had ingenious ways of doing it, sometimes in French uniform or British, or in their own, decked out with decorations bought in any French store. One sturdy youth in an out-of-the-way town, wore the crimson *fourragere* of the Legion of Honor, given only to a few French divisions with six citations. “Yes, they give it to the 1st Division,” he said. “I belong to the 1st.” He had been in France about a month. Some of the youngest ones, scared boys, drifted to Y. M. C. A. hotels where they were fed and warmed and often got their nerve and went back to the front.

By this time two-thirds of the men who fought our greatest battle were drafted men, not volunteers. That was for our country one of the great and remarkable

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accomplishments of the war. To have adopted immediately and unquestioningly a system of military service that brought riots and turmoil in the Civil War, and have carried it out with remarkable efficiency, was a big accomplishment. If a few of the soldiers it made so quickly, faltered, the great majority did not.

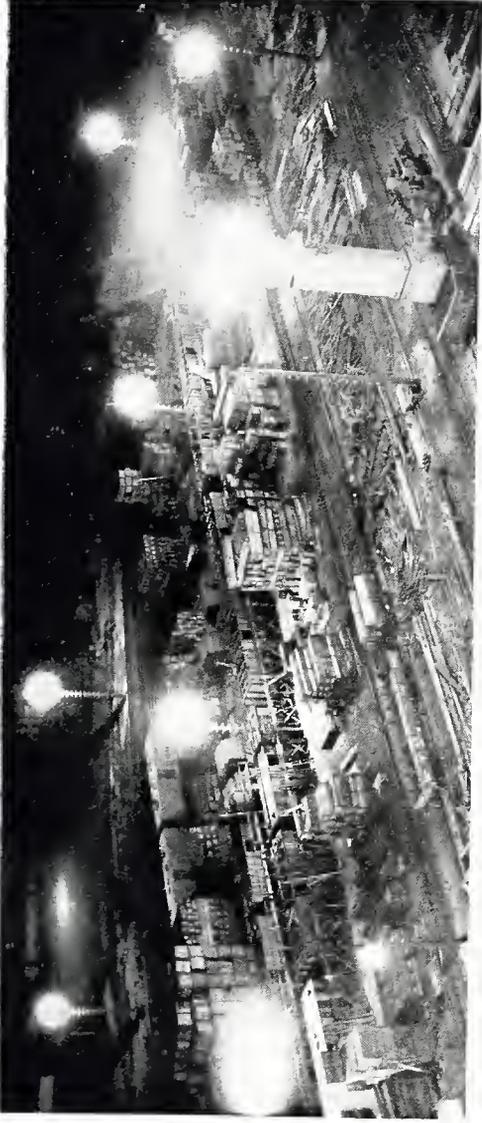
The small minority were dealt with by various devices artful as they. General Drum made non-commissioned officers responsible for straggling and gave hard-boiled sergeants, and corporals learning to be hard-boiled, a job worthy their talents. The number of military police was increased, until there was a cop for every hundred doughboys, and they established roundup stations for stragglers in the battle area. Those often complicated, always gay and conspicuous shoulder patches the boys wore when they came home were adopted in the Meuse-Argonne, primarily because they helped spot stragglers. The 2nd Division had tried them at St. Mihiel as means of recognition, copying the Canadians who originated the idea. Now everybody put them on and although the first purpose was to prevent straggling, they helped build unit esprit de corps and were interwoven with the division nicknames.

We were getting more supplies, at any rate. The vast S. O. S. was at last getting its stride across France, connecting the Meuse-Argonne with sixteen ports where ships from home discharged cargoes to maintain

the A. E. F.'s now 1,900,000 men. Its construction projects and depots were never all completed, it was still somewhat undermanned, but had by now almost 668,312 men and women including 23,772 civilian employees. General Harbord had speeded it up to keep the pace set by the battle, and he and Brigadier-General George V. H. Mosely at G. H. Q. were gradually meeting one of the A. E. F.'s greatest problems.

General Harbord knew how to use propaganda and publicity on his job. He started the base ports on a team-race for speed and efficiency in unloading supplies, got gangs of negro stevedores working against one another, papered his part of France with posters emblazoned "We Deliver the Goods—S. O. S.!" and saw that the Press Division steered plenty of visiting correspondents and special writers away from the Meuse-Argonne and along his Services of Supply to write about docks and warehouses and hundreds of thousands of pairs of shoes. He and Dawes and Atterbury and Hagood put over the Meuse-Argonne as much as the First Army did.

By the end of October it was time to put it over. Working incessantly day and night, on front and S. O. S., we had been solving our traffic and supply problems. Saving only some front-line units in action, the Army had always been fed well. General Pershing gave that special attention and Colonel Dewitt did a



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

"We Deliver the Goods—S. O. S.!"

Supply depots, railroads, and shops worked day and night to feed the battle



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

American Docks at Nantes

Part of the vast S. O. S. connecting the Meuse-Argonne with sixteen ports

good job. Gone were the days when a board of officers could report against throwing away wormy coffee because "holes occupy no space, weigh nothing, and when the coffee is ground, they disappear." There were no petty economies, and though many a doughboy cursed too much goldfish and corned willy, cold facts, records and statistics show that he was the best-fed soldier in any war in history.

By the end of October, too, we had got more American-manned artillery and learned how to use it better. Our dumps were piled with shells, and we could give the infantry a barrage such as we had always wanted to give them. We had almost enough American special troops. Doughboys, staff and commanders knew their parts, and for the first time in the war, an American Army worked like an American machine.

After their conference October twenty-first, Marshal Foch had written to General Pershing: "At the point we have reached in the battle, we shall obtain great results if all the Allied Armies strike the enemy redoubled blows, by attacks well managed and well co-ordinated." General Pershing pushed his preparations and set the date for an attack "that shall be decisive if possible" at October twenty-eighth, but General Gouraud's IV French Army needed a rest and we were glad to wait until November first. We could use the time.

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For five weeks we had fought incessantly, pitting the valor of our inexperience against the courage of the Germans' despair and the cunning of four war years. We felt now that we were equal to them in experience—in all else, superior. We were ready for a blow to force them to their knees.

CHAPTER XIV

VICTORY

THE attack of November first, and the battle that followed, were our "big push." Those eleven final days of the war showed at last the result of nineteen months girding ourselves for victory, gave inkling what would have been the American power in 1919.

High hopes were not dashed, and the plan that won was practically the American plan prepared by the First Army Staff and approved by General Pershing who, now a Group Commander, dealt directly with Marshal Foch. They agreed to be ever more daring, taking chances that would have been suicidal a short time earlier. On October twenty-sixth the Marshal wrote:

"Important results such as we are striking for in the present period of the war and in presence of an enemy whose strength is decreasing daily, are to be hoped for only by progress as rapid and deep as possible.

"Troops thrown into an attack have only to know their *direction of attack*. In this direction they go as far as they can, without any thought of alignment, attacking and maneuvering the enemy who resists, the most advanced units working to help those who are momentarily stopped.

"In this manner they operate, not toward lines indicated, according to the terrain, but against *the enemy*,

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with whom they never lose contact once they have gained it."

How joyfully must the old fighter have written that! Next day he wrote again:

"The moment has come for the American Army, restored to good condition after its successful offensive of September 26, and today capable of a very powerful effort, to retake its place in this battle, supported incessantly by the other Allied Armies.

"The direction of attack of the First American Army fixed by my directive of October 21, and by the arrangements made October 26 with General Maistre (French Group Commander on our left) has vital importance for the operation as a whole.

"It is then of the highest moment that the First American Army be able to begin its operations on the date agreed upon, that is, starting November 1, and that it be able to continue them as rapidly as possible, until important and certain results have been attained.

"I therefore direct that the attacks which will be undertaken November 1 by the First American Army, be pushed and continued without pause until that Army has taken possession of the road Boult-aux-Bois-Buzancy and eastward [breaking the Freya Line and gaining the ridge whence the country sloped toward Sedan] and has assumed occupation of that region as the first result to be obtained."

The Americans agreed to all this, to anything that might hasten the first advance, the big jump of nearly seven miles that the Marshal wanted. They favored, in fact had been trying to execute, the tactics he pre-

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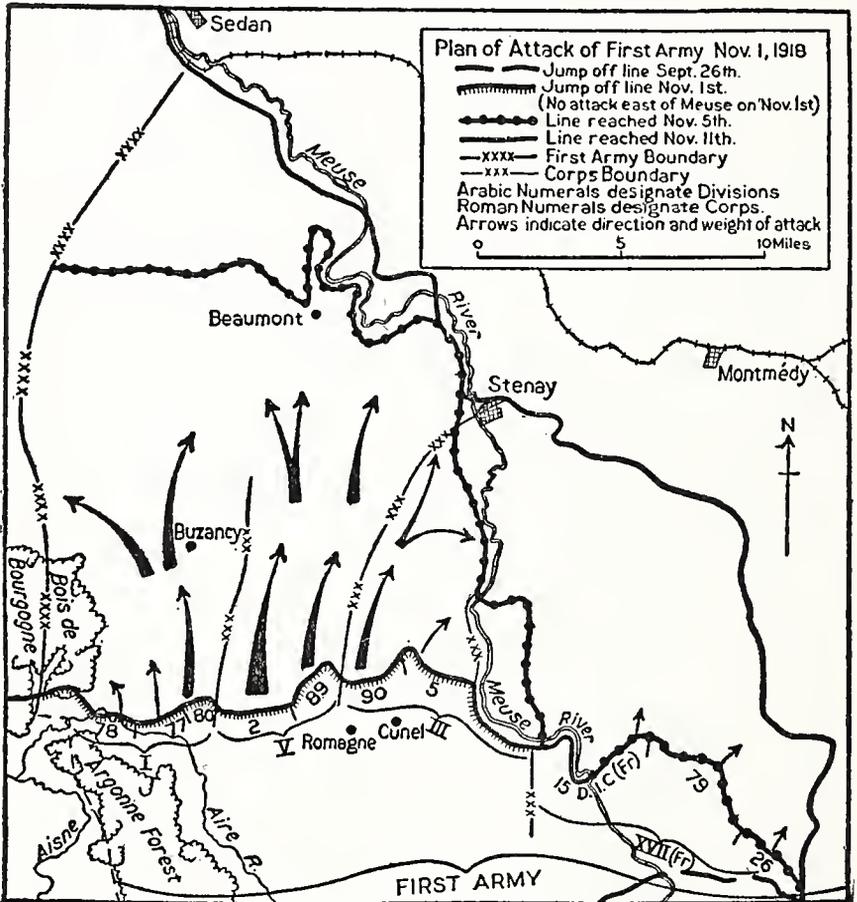
scribed, really borrowed and adapted from the great German spring drives that had shown the supposedly invulnerable Western Front could be broken. The American plan was to make the main drive in the center, from our new front line on the Kriemhilde Heights and take first the Barricourt Wood and Ridge some seven miles north of Romagne, key to the unfortified Freya Line. That, they believed, would force the Germans to withdraw beyond the Meuse River. Afterward would be time to push forward on the left and join the French at Boult-aux-Bois. General Pershing chose the American plan and, as it turned out, he and the planners were right.

The Germans were all set for us where Marshal Foch wanted us to attack hardest. Since relieving the 77th Division the night of October fifteenth, the 78th Division under Major-General James H. McRae had been fighting incessantly to clinch its hold upon Grandpré and get through the Kriemhilde Line there. A massive stone building called the Citadel dominated Grandpré from a bluff whence machine-guns swept its streets, the Aire Valley and the flat land to the east around an evil patch of trees called Loges Wood, and a village, Champigneulle—called by the doughboys, Champignyville. The 78th had finally taken the Citadel, by encircling it, but could not take Loges Wood. The struggle there had drawn German attention and reserves to the western end of our battle

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front, another reason for trying to break through elsewhere.

Experience and Marshal Foch had taught us some new wrinkles and we used them all. When a division



Plan of attack of American First Army November 1, 1918, our "big push" in France that carried us to the heights overlooking Sedan and hastened the war's end. Courtesy American Battles Monument Commission.

struck snags, orders were to attack them with specially designated units, the rest of the division pressing on between the snags. Reserves were not to be piled up against snags, but used where progress was

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being made. Cooperation was stressed, and neighboring units were to help one another. Frontal attack was to be employed only where unavoidable. In short, this was open warfare. We had broken through about the last trenches the Germans had in France. There was almost none on the Freya Line. Now we were going out "into the blue."

To help us we had more American-manned artillery, though still fewer guns than on September twenty-sixth. On the main front we had one gun every ten yards. But they fired twice as fast as ever before, and more shells and heavier shells than ever before. Heavy guns usually five miles back were so close up front that as General McGlachlin delights to remark, "when they saw one of those damn' seventy-fives they thought they were too far behind, and moved." Army and corps artillery threw a concentration of shells just before the rolling barrage of the divisional guns as it bounded toward the objectives. That made a danger zone for the Germans over one thousand yards deep, our thickest barrage of the war. We had learned now to blast Germans from unexpected hiding-places where they were rather than other places where they "ought" to be. We had mustard-gas shells enough to drench the big Bourgoigne Wood so that not even an American dared to go there for days. Our artillery fire November first was the greatest in any American battle.

To make a worse inferno for the German infantry, all the bombing squadrons we had, making up in enthusiasm what they lacked in airplanes, attacked the front line instead of dumps and communications to the rear. What the shells missed they often hit with bombs and machine-guns from the air. We had never helped our infantry so much and so directly before.

Of the seven divisions that jumped off the morning of November first on the twenty-mile front from the Meuse to the Aire at Grandpré, five were National Army Divisions, and probably half the two regular divisions were replacements, so easily four-fifths of the attacking force were drafted men. The 2nd was the only one of the "Old Guard" divisions, and it had an appropriate part. Experienced, resourceful in attack, a dashing division with keen rivalry between its Marine and regular infantry brigades, the 2nd was chosen spear-head of Summerall's driving V Corps, which was, in turn, the spear-head of the Army.

The corps was to make a big break through the center and take the Barricourt Ridge. It had only two front-line divisions, the 2nd and the 89th, a western National Army Division that first Major-General Leonard Wood, then Major-General W. M. Wright had made one of the finest in the A. E. F. Behind were the trusty 42nd and 1st, ready to take over once the 2nd and 89th were exhausted.

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Everything depended upon the V Corps, so every one went to Cheppy to ask General Summerall, "How about it?" The General came in from visiting his corps front, exhorting officers and men in the deep resonant voice which, with his religious character, gave him the nicknames "Holy Joe" and "Sitting Bull." Summerall was spiritually a Civil War corps commander, mentally a scientific modern soldier, a twentieth-century Stonewall Jackson. He could deliver an exhortation to make men cry and curse and beg to get at the Germans. One of his favorite stories on himself is how, after a speech, he passed two dough-boys on the edge of the crowd and heard one ask the other: "Who'n hell's that guy?"

We asked him about next day. He went over his consummately careful arrangements, the artillery preparation and protection that he himself had worked out. It would go, he said.

"How about counter-attacks?" we asked.

General Summerall smiled.

"There will be no counter-attack," he said.

We went back to Bar-le-Duc, feeling somehow that this time we were going through. We felt surer that evening, as we heard the battle plan explained by Colonel Lewis H. Watkins of the Army Staff.

The big map of the whole Western Front that night of October 31, 1918, showed a greater chance for a crushing blow than on September twenty-sixth, when

Marshal Foch's concentric attacks commenced, and, as then, the American seemed the crucial sector of the whole front.

Next morning all the Allied Armies were again to attack a German peninsula, but diminished in size by the waves that had beaten upon it since September twenty-sixth. The Allies were going to try to crush in the front from northern Belgium to the Meuse, some two hundred and fifty miles long, and on or behind those two hundred and fifty miles were two million Germans, thousands of guns and much material. Facing the Meuse-Argonne was the gap now narrowed to one hundred miles, through which they were still trying to withdraw men and material to the Antwerp-Meuse Line protecting the German frontier, over the two great railroad systems through Brussels-Mauberge-Namur-Liége on the north, and Mézières-Sedan on the south. All the Allied Armies were attacking together to prevent that.

The British were now only twenty miles from Maubeuge and Mons, fewer from Aulnoye Junction, and once there would seriously hamper the German retreat in Belgium but must go thirty miles farther before they would reach Namur and rout the whole German right wing. They were assisted by King Albert's Belgian-French-British Army reenforced now by the 37th and 91st American Divisions. The American First Army would drive again for Sedan, now only

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twenty miles away, and if it got there quickly, it would break the back of the whole German retreat. Here was the chance to make completely successful the plan that Marshal Foch and General Pershing had first discussed in Ligny on remote August thirtieth.

We drove with lights out through the darkness of that night, along the roads of the front, beside long columns of men made still darker by mud and rain, silent but for the click of hobnails on the hard gray stone road, the creak of equipment, the word of command. The only light was the livid white flashes of the guns that filled the air above with a sound like the rushing of wings—shells in hundreds of thousands, opening a way toward Sedan. Soon from the high places that we sought, our ears detected a change in the sound of the guns and of the shells. The rolling barrage had started to roll.

Peering down through the uncertain mist before the dawn, we saw along the dark ground what seemed myriads of tiny fireflies spring up and flash and twinkle and then begin, slowly, to flit forward. The doughboys had lighted cigarettes, and had jumped off. It was H hour of the most powerful, most successful American attack of the World War.

In the all-important center, the V Corps was splendidly irresistible. It shot forward six miles through German infantry and artillery like a meteor blazing

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a fiery path to every objective, through the Freya Line, on to the Barricourt Ridge. With three artillery brigades backing it, the 2nd flanked Barricourt Wood which the 89th took. On its right the 90th, fine National Army Division from Texas and Oklahoma, took Andevanne and the 5th advanced to the Meuse, putting the III Corps beyond its objective.

On the left, what the Americans had expected happened. The I Corps was stopped again by the Germans waiting in Loges Wood and Champigneulle. But by dusk they could stay no longer with the 2nd Division where it was, flanking them, and pulled out for Buzancy, Boulton-aux-Bois and points north. Our plan had worked like a charm.

Our terrific blow had so stunned the Germans that they could make no real counter-attack. They might retreat fighting, but retreat they must across the Meuse near Dun-sur-Meuse and Stenay, and through Sedan and Mézières. Some have said that most of the Germans were gone before we attacked. General von Gallwitz says: "Our front line was not withdrawn before the attack of November 1. The Americans did not encounter our outpost troops, but our real front line." In explanation of the American break-through he says that his divisions were tired and weak in number. They never recovered from November first.

The I Corps leaped forward at dawn November second and found only a few machine-gunners with

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whom doughboys dealt, then jumped back to motorcycles and trucks and hurried after the main body. The 77th got beyond Harricourt, their objective, and with the 80th closed a breathless day in the still smoking streets of Buzancy, fired by the retreating Germans.

That helped, for not all the V nor the III Corps had reached their objectives until night, when, attacking in darkness, the 2nd Division again leaped ahead by snatching Nouart and Fossé from German rear-guards. The day's fighting had been violent, but the Americans had the jump and wouldn't give up while they could get square for nearly forty days and nights of misery in the Meuse-Argonne.

It is harder to reach objectives the second day of an attack than the first. You are tired, and the enemy knows your intention. We did it November second on most of the front, and staff-officers in the front room of the Souilly *mairie* almost capered before the wall map as the thumb-tacks and red string went forward to places that had seemed once as far away as Berlin. The drawn sleepless face of Colonel George C. Marshall, Chief of Operations, lighted up as he went over with us the colored penciled lines on his own map and talked with happy sureness of where we would be next day.

So that night the first words that jumped to the typewriter were: "The American Army has won its

greatest victory in France"—and then the typewriter stopped, for a roar had gone up from a group about the telephone.

"Listen to this," Captain Hartzell shouted. "German communiqué!

"'Between the Aire and the Meuse, American divisions launched on a narrow sector of attack succeeded in penetrating our position between Champigneulle and Aincreville, and in advancing beyond our artillery lines on both sides of Bayonville.'"

"That's the nearest they've come yet to admitting we were doing anything to 'em!"

In a moment of silence, a lank telegraph operator drawled:

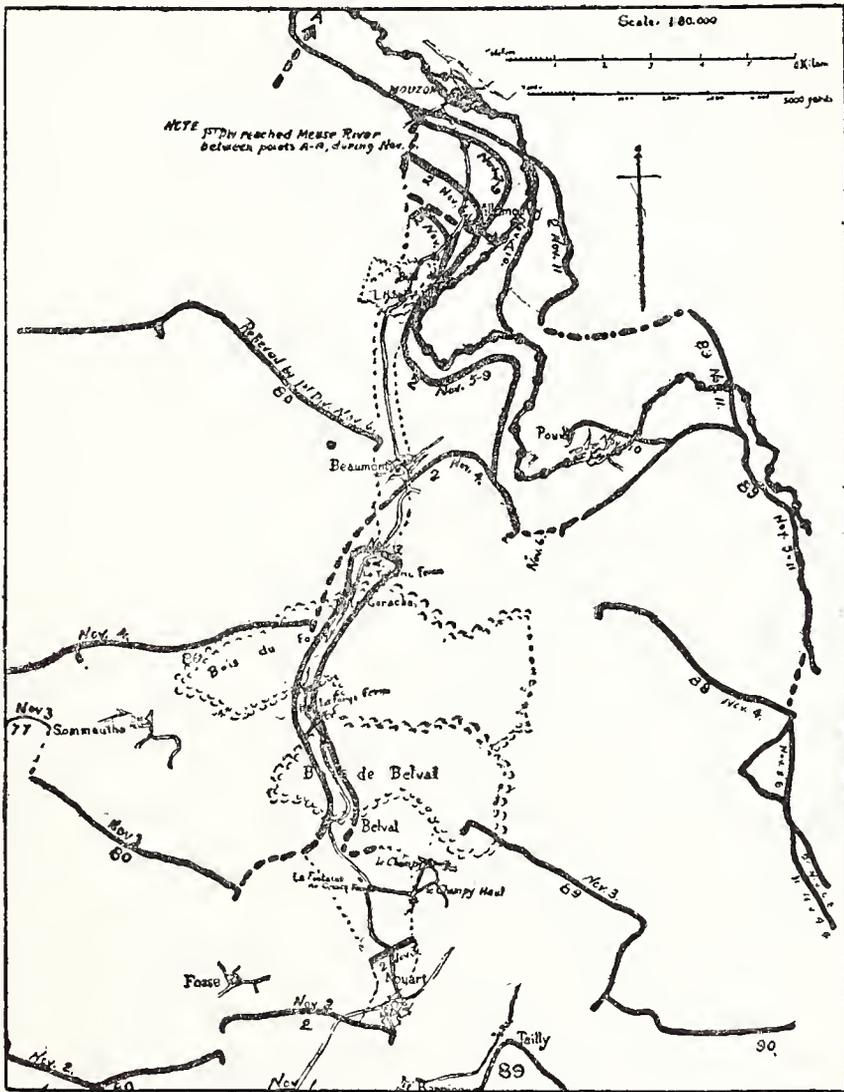
"W-a-a-al, wonder what effect this'll have on th' guerre?"

Not long before, General Pershing had received from Marshal Foch a telegram urging him to give the Germans no rest, to strike again and again and drive them everywhere beyond the Meuse.

The Americans expected to, and all day November third we drove back the Germans despite reinforcements brought to stop us, and thrown in frantically, piecemeal. In the first three days of November the Germans nearly doubled the number of men in front line against us, drawing from reserves that were dwindling almost to nothing from the demands of French, British and Belgian attacks as well as ours.

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They slowed us up a little here and there, but night-fall found us on most of the objectives set. Even the



The night march of the 2nd Division into the German lines that conquered the Beaumont Ridge and hurried the German retreat to Sedan. The "finger" in the center shows how the 9th Infantry stuck ahead of the whole American line, into the German line, after the march through woods occupied by the Germans to La Tuilerie Farm. Lines on either side show how the 89th and 80th Divisions came up and the whole line swung forward. Courtesy of Colonel R. O. Van Horn.

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ensorship relaxed, and the American communiqué announced, thus releasing for our detailed stories, whence came the victorious divisions. Texas-Oklahoma, it said, was the 90th, Kansas-Missouri-Colorado-New Mexico, the 89th; New York, the 77th and part of the 78th; New Jersey-Maryland-West Virginia-Pennsylvania-District of Columbia-Virginia, the 78th and 80th.

Two days later, for the first time since the battle opened on September twenty-sixth, the communiqué again named army and corps commanders. That let us put more personality into dispatches, and paint for those at home a picture more interesting and full of meaning. It also made more work, for as rules came off and we were allowed to speak of this general and that division or regiment by name and number, we commenced to realize that the generalities enforced by censorship are often easier to write. Getting all the news of that far-flung battle as it rushed to its close inexorably as tragedy was such a task that we missed the full story of one of its most striking features—more, one of its most important strokes that greatly affected the outcome. That was the night march of the 2nd Division into the German Army.

Does it sound incredible? Probably it was the most audacious feat of American arms in France, one of the most audacious in our history, something like Washington's crossing of the Delaware and attack

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on Trenton. Nobody has made a painting of it yet. Nobody, in fact, has heard much about it.

It was a sort of inspiration based on thought and experience, as many inspirations are. Having taken Fossé and Nouart in a night attack, the 2nd Division on November third was rather out of joint, its right just beyond the two towns, its left two miles farther north facing the southern edge of the Belval Wood, the day's objective.

This wood was also part of a belt of forest some four miles deep and eighteen miles wide, running northwest from the Meuse and right across our path. At this point it was called the Forest of Dieulet, and it covered rising ground, the Beaumont Ridge, making the last natural obstacle before Sedan. If the Germans got time, they might make a stand there for a while.

We must not let them do it. We must follow through our blow so that it would have full effect upon the whole German line to the North Sea. Americans had beaten French to the junction at Boulton-aux-Bois, but the French were going strong. Starting from the Aisne, reached after the German withdrawal due to American success, they were five miles nearer Mézières than we to Sedan. A race was beginning all along the line for vital German junctions that a few months before had seemed unattainable. At first the British attack had been held up, but the Canadian Corps, finest larger shock unit

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in France, had taken Valenciennes and the reflex of our break-through toward the southern railroad at Sedan had done the rest. The British were pressing forward toward Maubeuge on the northern line. Every extra blow we struck at the pivot had double weight. The next was at the forested Beaumont Ridge.

The top of the ridge was a plateau overlooking Beaumont itself. On the slope of the plateau was Tuilerie Farm. Colonel R. O. Van Horn of the 9th Infantry squinted through his glasses at the dark edge of Belval Wood.

"Tough nut to crack in daytime," he thought. "But how about night?"

So he asked and got permission when dark came simply to march the 9th Infantry into the wood and on to the plateau. Then they would be four miles within the German lines and the Germans would have to retreat. He never doubted the 9th could do it.

At dusk the adventure started. First came a group of German-speaking soldiers selected from I Company, who did good work that night. Then followed the three battalions, about two thousand men now, in columns of twos, so narrow was the road, a mere track deep in mud. Orders were absolute against making a sound, striking a match, saying a word save when, very softly and in German, the

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little group at the head lured a few curious German outposts within reach of the silent bayonet.

The first stop was La Forge Farm in the woods, a big place and full of Germans—all asleep. The doughboys shook them into bewildered consciousness though many seemed not yet sure they weren't dreaming. Soon one hundred and sixty of them were headed back along the trail, led by a large, fine-looking German sergeant who had reported to Major Janda in good English with an excellent American salute that he had served in the American Army and the New York police. He had adventures en route back, running into more Americans advancing in the dark who realized a German was a German before they realized he was a prisoner, and fired on the procession—but duly reported himself with one hundred and fifteen left of his one hundred and sixty.

When the advance resumed, the 9th met Germans neither sleeping nor prisoners. The German-speaking advance group were the ones surprised when, in thick darkness, they crossed a clearing and ran straight into a line of Germans digging machine-gun pits, for the attack they expected next day. Neither darkness nor German-American accent fooled them, and they sprang to their machine-guns, and the little clearing was lighted by bursts of flame. Straight into them rushed the Americans, with nothing but rifles and bayonets. A few minutes hand-to-

hand, and what machine-gunners remained started along the road to the rear. This was two miles behind the German advanced line. The scouts were more cautious, and neatly gobbled another machine-gun detachment all lined up to go north.

Silently the 9th slogged on along the muddy trail, grimly smiling as they heard in the woods on either side German artillery firing methodically and contentedly at the positions they had vacated hours before. Those guns, they knew, would never get out. All next day cooks and K.P.'s following behind with the rolling kitchens brought in strings of surrendered artillerymen, lured, the doughboys said, by the smell of the chow.

At 11:30 scouts came back to the head of the column with fingers on lips, signaling silence. Just ahead was another clearing, and Tuilerie Farm, the objective. To make things better, its buildings were lighted and from them came a babel of voices, singing and shouting. So the Hessians made merry in Trenton.

Creeping around the clearing, at the signal the Americans rushed the main building. Dumfounded German officers raised hands above heads and stared at doughboys appearing as from the earth wherewith they were so liberally plastered. Soldiers stopped singing and set foot on the road so many German feet had trod. One of the prisoners was an intelli-



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

Pursuit - orderly disorder



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

The Race for Sedan

First Division troops dodging machine-gun fire

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gence officer whom his comrades reminded forcibly, in language interesting to the German-Americans, that he had said the nearest Americans were five miles away. Not long before, it seemed, Prince Eitel Friedrich, one of the Kaiser's sons, had stopped at Tuilerie Farm, en route to a conference of German commanders.

If that conference was in Beaumont it broke up quickly. The Germans had expected to leave there next day, but at three in the morning news came that the Americans were on the plateau and would soon be shelling Beaumont off the map. Hurried orders were issued to retreat at once, leaving baggage behind, and in disorder all sorts of Germans pushed and crowded out of town, headed across the Meuse.

Meantime the Americans were making ready to hold Tuilerie Farm. Thanking heaven for a perfect Meuse-Argonne night, pitch dark, raw, rainy, they dug in about two hundred yards beyond the buildings. Word was sent back that the stroke had succeeded, and the 23rd Infantry and part of the 5th Marines came up along the same road. Then came a high spot in the battle.

Behind the 9th Infantry rumbled a battery of four 75s of the 15th Field Artillery to support the venturesome doughboys, but thinking of the battle as a whole, the big Battle of the Western Front, Colonel Van Horn told them to do something else

first. He told them to try to throw shells on to or near the great southern jugular-vein German railroad.

"What target?" asked Captain Walsh.

Colonel Van Horn almost said "Sedan!" but that was still nearly fifteen miles, too far for a 75. Carignan on the same railroad, was nearer, and there too a branch line ran north.

"Try Carignan," he said, and one after another the 75s cracked, and their shells sped into the darkness, headed north. Wherever they hit, was farthest north for American or French light shells. The Germans could have no plainer warning of disaster.

They tried to stall for time, and at daylight hovering airplanes and a sausage balloon unimpeded directed their fire upon the troops still coming up the narrow woodland road. Soon bursting shells had lined it with dead, but doggedly 23rd and Marines came on, and with the 9th and the battery of 75s, first threw back a counter-attack, then advanced another mile toward Beaumont.

Miraculously, almost, the daring manuever had worked, and worked big. If the 2nd had been a little less experienced, the Germans a little less demoralized, it might not have worked. But the 2nd's commanders had sized things up correctly. The 80th and 89th Divisions pressed forward right and left to widen the gap the 2nd had made. On November fourth every German on the twenty-mile front was re-

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treating before the First Army. They had lost the Beaumont Ridge and could not stop until they were all across the Meuse. If only we had had cavalry then! But the French cavalry had left us, and our own few hundred had been mostly scattered on odd jobs. One officer and fifteen men were in the final advance, but they rode nearly to Sedan. With American guns on Beaumont Ridge throwing shells even fairly close to Carignan, the Germans could hold Sedan no longer.

As our front line leaped ahead the Germans' "brilliant second," the Austro-Hungarian Empire, fell crushed by Italian attack from without and disunion within.

If our 75 shells were falling near Carignan, we had already reached with heavier shells points on the southern railroad farther from Sedan. Since November first when the attack commenced, our heaviest railroad guns had been firing on the junctions at Montmédy, Longuyon, Conflans, Spincourt and Dommary-Baroncourt.

They boomed the beginning of the end for the Germans in France. During those decisive days they kept stretches of the Metz-Sedan system out of business much of each day and night.

Montmédy, Conflans and Longuyon were junction points well equipped with sidings and repair shops, almost if not quite as important as Sedan, which other

guns would soon reach. It was the Sedan-Longuyon railroad that General von der Marwitz had called the German "life artery." Over it the Germans were trying to withdraw enormous stores. The shells with which we were cutting it were among the few American shells fired by the A. E. F. and came from some of the most powerful guns possessed by any Allied Army.

These were five monster fourteen-inch American naval guns, upon steel railroad mounts made in the United States and steered cautiously over the protesting French railroads by crews of American sailors commanded by Rear-Admiral Charles P. Plunkett. This redoubtable sailor had brought the guns to France against some skepticism, to the front against more. Some said the guns wouldn't work and they and their carriages would wreck the tracks and road-bed. On his first trip to the front, a French railroad official tried to stop Admiral Plunkett.

"Talk to Marshal Foch," the Admiral told him. "He's the man I'm working for," and to the engineer, "Let 'er go!"

When our big attack commenced, these guns and their dark gray mounts and trains lurked upon special railroad tracks outside Verdun. They had tried a few ranging shots on their targets, and were ready for real business. With a crash and roar that shook the ground, they sent fourteen-inch shells weighing 1400 pounds shrieking near-

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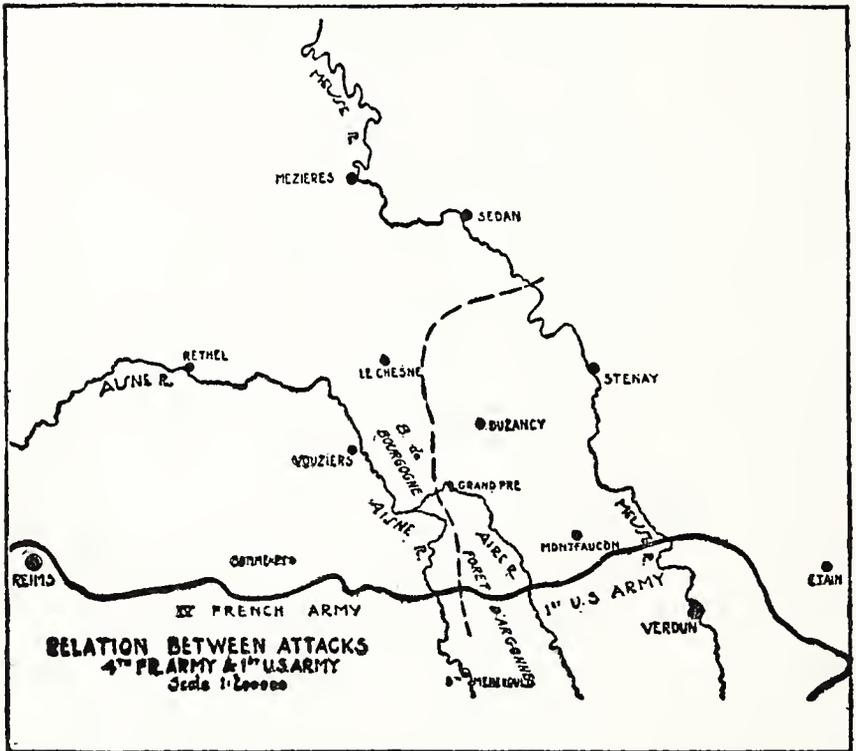
ly 30,000 yards to the German junctions. They put the railroads out of commission for six to ten hours a day by hits on and near the tracks, then turned attention to other things. The morning after the 2nd Division's night march, they set fire to the entire lower freight yards at Montmédy and three days later threw fifty shells upon the Montmédy bridge. One shell landed in a German headquarters, which were promptly moved. Until the last minute of the war Longuyon was receiving more than a daily dozen of shells.

While American shells cut direct communication between Metz and Sedan, the army was straining to reach Sedan itself, not only with long-range heavy guns but with more of the 75s of which we had more, and last, with the struggling, panting, wet, muddy, triumphant doughboys who went with them. On the morning of November fourth commenced the "race for Sedan," one of the most celebrated exploits of the A. E. F., yet with an undertone of broad farce running through it that has been partly but not fully brought out since. At the time it was very much hushed up.

Once the 2nd Division's night march had taken the Beaumont Ridge, the Germans could no longer stand against us and started pell-mell back toward Sedan or eastward across the Meuse. They retreated well, as usual, and lost comparatively few prisoners and guns. By the evening of the fourth, the 89th

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Division had reached Laneuville across the Meuse from Stenay, blocking their last exit that way. Every division was rushing ahead, the 2nd, 80th and 77th leading with some confusion in the eager haste to gob-



Relation between attacks of IV French Army and American First Army, illustrating race for Sedan. Dashed line is army boundary.

ble up more Germans and sweep into Sedan. Fighting ended the evening of November fifth with the front line ten miles from the southern outskirts of the city. Two divisions of the Old Guard, the 1st and 42nd, nearly enough rested to be ready to go, had leap-frogged through the 80th and 78th and were on their way.

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But the German retreat and our advance now brought us gradually around facing northeast and east rather than north, as we had been facing. That might carry us past Sedan on the east, not into the city that had been our goal so long. The honor of entering it would fall to the 40th French Division on our left, natives of Sedan, who were hurrying to catch up with us. After all the forty-one days of the struggle for Sedan, we would not be the ones to take it.

Further, as the First Army swung eastward, Marshal Foch repeatedly moved our army boundary away from Sedan. In compliance, General Liggett issued on November third to the First Army orders under which no American troops would enter Sedan or its immediate vicinity. They would swing past it by the southeast. The doughboys might never see the city that had been for so long the objective of their great effort.

Then, on the evening of November fifth General Dickman, whose I Corps was nearest Sedan, and General Summerall, whose V Corps was lining the Meuse from Stenay north to Mouzon, nine miles southeast of Sedan, received this message:

“MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDING
GENERALS, I CORPS, V CORPS

“Subject: Message from the Commander-in-Chief.

“1. General Pershing desires that the honor of entering Sedan should fall to the First American Army.

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He has every confidence that the troops of the I Corps, assisted on their right by the V Corps, will enable him to realize this desire.

"2. In transmitting the foregoing message, your attention is invited to the favorable opportunity now existing for pressing our advance throughout the night. Boundaries will not be considered as binding. By command of Lieutenant General Liggett.

"H. A. Drum,

"Chief of Staff."

That was the starting pistol for the final heat in the race for Sedan, with more thrills and greater stakes than most sporting events, and more talk afterward. News of General Pershing's desire was brought to First Army Headquarters by General Conner. Neither General Liggett nor General Drum was there. Colonel Marshall prepared the memorandum at General Conner's request, and partly as he dictated it. General Drum, returning, added to "troops of the I Corps" the explanation "assisted on their right by the V Corps," and that "boundaries will not be considered as binding." Then, because of its urgency, it went, without awaiting General Liggett's return, to the two Corps Commanders, General Dickman and General Summerall.

Its authors intended that the I Corps drive straight for Sedan. So doing, it would have to violate the army boundary and cross over into territory assigned to General Gouraud's IV French Army, but of course General Pershing knew that when he sent his message

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by General Conner. His understanding with General Maistre covered that. If the I Corps in moving out of its previous course and to its left front toward Sedan required the assistance "on its right" of the V Corps, then the V Corps too would have to extend beyond its previous left or western corps boundary to comply with the memorandum. That was what they meant. The I Corps, "assisted on its right" by the V Corps, would take Sedan, and "boundaries would not be considered as binding." But again an order meant different things to different men.

During the sixth, the Rainbow Division, now left and westernmost division of the I Corps and so of the First Army, therefore nearest Sedan, swung over from the northeastward path they had been following, and pushed out due north for Sedan. They drove tired men, dying horses and worn-out transports to the breaking point over roads rutted and sometimes blown up by retreating Germans. Their advanced battalions had dwindled to scouting parties, had outrun artillery support, and depended upon rifles, machine-guns and "toy cannon" one pounders against German shells and machine-guns. But they had plenty of ammunition, and drove back the German rear-guards. On the morning of November seventh they stepped over the previous army boundry into territory assigned to the French who were still behind, and faced the heights south of Sedan and dominating the city.

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Early that morning the 165th Infantry stormed the last hill. Their ammunition gave out half-way up, and the Irish took the crest with their bayonets. From there they looked down upon Sedan, goal of all our hopes, important junction of the Germans' most important railroad, which had been for them since 1870 symbol of crushing victory over France.

The Americans were west and south of the river, while most of Sedan is north and east. But a part of it lay nearly two miles beyond the height they held, and on the same side of the Meuse, while nearer still and almost at their feet was the small village of Wadelincourt, last before Sedan was reached. It might be called a suburb of Sedan. A small patrol of the 165th slipped down the hill, dodging bursting shells from the German artillery across the Meuse, into the valley, and into Wadelincourt. Corporal John McLoughlin of New York City came back and reported that there were a few Germans in Wadelincourt. Until then, no Allied soldier had been as near Sedan as he, and few got any nearer before the war ended.

Now that same morning the American communiqué said:

“At four o'clock yesterday afternoon advanced troops of the First American Army took that part of the city of Sedan which lies on the west bank of the Meuse. The bridge leading across the Meuse into the remainder of the city, which is filled with the retreat-

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ing enemy, has been destroyed and the valley of the river is flooded. The railroad bridges are also destroyed.

“The enemy’s principal lateral line of communication between the fortress of Metz and his troops in northern France and Belgium, is by the success of the American Army, no longer open to him.”

That evening the American communiqué said:

“The Rainbow Division and units of the First Division seized the heights south and southeast of Sedan and the suburbs of that city lying on the west bank of the Meuse.”

That was more nearly correct, but not entirely. By those two communiqués hangs the tale of what really happened before Sedan.

After the 42nd had stormed the heights overlooking the city, while the 165th’s patrol was edging toward Wadelincourt, Rainbow men lying on the ground resting, beheld other American troops coming up. They spread out fanwise and pushed still farther northwest, apparently to take Sedan by the left flank. They were of the V Corps, the veteran, hard-boiled, splendid 1st Division, finishing the longest march in the quickest time any American division made in France with an attempt to take Sedan despite anything but their orders.

Those orders had come to them from General Summerall, now commanding the V Corps as previously he

had commanded the 1st Division. "Boundaries will not be considered as binding," said the memorandum. General Summerall sought Brigadier-General Frank Parker, now commanding the 1st after service in it as long as General Summerall's. General Summerall told him to march upon Sedan, and to assist in capturing the city the next morning. Not only was the 1st ten miles as the crow flies southeast of Sedan, it was deployed on a four-mile front, in fighting contact with the Germans along the Meuse, headed at right angles to the road to Sedan. Nevertheless:

"I want this Division in Sedan to-morrow morning," said General Summerall, and handed General Parker a copy of the First Army memorandum.

General Parker read it, and said to General Summerall:

"I understand, sir. I will now give my orders."

So General Parker started the 1st, by such roads as there were, toward Sedan. That march was something like the rival 2nd's exploit at Beaumont and certainly its results were equally sensational if less important. The men were fagged out and short some equipment, but were told that all depended upon the 1st being in Sedan next morning. All the 1st's accumulated experience went into making it. Through the night they plugged along, stumbling, gasping, cursing, but not for one minute giving up. They followed the roads that offered, on the right up the Meuse

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Valley to Pont Maugis and the heights where the Rainbow troops were, and on the left, through the advancing columns and supplies of the I Corps and so across the same army boundary that the 42nd had crossed, into the French sector ahead of their 40th Division trying to make Sedan.

After Marshal Foch had moved the army boundary, they had counted upon triumphal entry into Sedan, erasing the ancient stain of the Franco-Prussian War, and here were these crazy Americans trying to do it first. General Pétain, even Marshal Foch, bestirred themselves, issued orders overriding General Maistre's agreement with General Pershing. The 40th French Division remarked politely that they must fire their artillery as indicated by their own orders and sector limits, so by inference, if it happened to hit some of the intruding 1st and even 42nd Divisions, it would be regrettable but unavoidable.

By this time the 16th Infantry had passed through the 42nd, and got nearer to Sedan, but neither into the city nor into Wadelincourt. Only delays on the night march caused by blown-up bridges had prevented that. There had been some fights with German parties during the night, but always the main body of the 1st had pressed on. Morning of the seventh found them on the right a mile or two from the edge of Sedan, on the left, four or five, where the 26th Infantry, with Lieutenant-Colonel Theodore Roosevelt at its head

limping with a wounded leg, was three miles over Marshal Foch's dead-line. From headquarters in Chehery General Parker was about to send forward a fresh battalion of his old regiment, the 18th Infantry, under Major A. M. Patch, to cross the bridge over the Meuse which French peasants reported still undestroyed, and clear the last German from Sedan, whether west or east of the river. Those who know the 18th Infantry think it would have done that, if any one could.

It never had the chance. Following the roads, less of the 1st Division of the V Corps had come out on the right of the 42nd of the I Corps, than in its midst and on its left. The memorandum had said: "The I Corps assisted *on their right*" by the V Corps, were to take Sedan.

Troops of 1st and 42nd were mingled in some places, and a patrol of the 1st arrested Brigadier-General Douglas MacArthur of the 42nd saying that with his officer's cap with stiffening removed he "looked like a Boche." Protests of the 42nd and other I Corps units about road congestion and confusion were understandable if sometimes exaggerated. General Dickman passed them back to General Liggett, who also was hearing from the French, and to General Summerall.

Early November seventh, General Summerall told General Parker to withdraw the 1st Division to the right of the V Corps. After that General Summerall received this telegram:

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“The Army Commander [General Liggett] directs that troops of the V Corps be withdrawn from the zone of advance of the I Corps. Report when this is accomplished.

“DRUM.”

General Dickman and General Summerall, each in good faith and according to his lights, had executed what he understood to be the desire of General Pershing. But the race for Sedan had kicked up too much fuss. General Pershing had decided to let the French have it after all. General Liggett as Army Commander, ordered an investigation of the relative merits of the action of his I and V Corps. He had not heard of the memorandum that started them pell-mell for Sedan, until some time after its issuance. But he dropped the investigation when he heard the facts.

Not until after the last shot did any Allied troops enter Sedan, where the Germans stayed until November fourteenth, three days after the Armistice. French troops of the 40th Division entered, but no Americans, though some almost did. On the night of November seventh and eighth, while the 1st and 42nd Divisions withdrew from the heights overlooking Sedan, the French suggested that some Americans might help take Sedan and enter the city with them. D Company of the 166th Infantry of Ohio was chosen, and started in the morning to join the 251st French Infantry at Frénois, a mile southwest of the part of Sedan west of the Meuse which the communiqué said we

had captured twenty-four hours before. On the march a group of correspondents overtook them, heard what they were to do and tried to beat them to it. A Cadillac on a broad road is a plain and attractive target. German shells forced them to turn around and return to Bar-le-Duc, whence they sent dispatches saying that D Company of the 166th were the first Americans to enter Sedan. That was almost but not quite true.

That night, the eighth and ninth, the French sent two patrols to seek Germans and information in the outskirts of Sedan, and asked if some Americans wanted to go along. Captain Russell Baker sent two platoons. The first, under Lieutenant Calvin Todd, slipped out at 5:30 and reached the few houses called Forges, just across a road from the main Sedan station on the Sedan-Mézières railroad, the famous shuttle link of the southern system. The other patrol, commanded by Lieutenant George E. Crotinger, reached almost as near the station at a similar suburb called Petit Torcy. So that night of November 8, 1918, forty-four days after the Meuse-Argonne began, three days before the war ended, is another high spot in our part in the Battle of the Western Front. The patrols scouted about until the tac-tac-tac! of machine-guns, then the screech of shells told them there were still Germans in Sedan. French and Americans came back together, in high good humor, their mission accomplished.

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That same night at Frénois there was a heart-warming incident. There, less than two miles from Sedan, within easy range of the Germans, the colonel of the 251st gave a dinner to the American officers and Captain Baker presented to him the American flag that he had carried for over a year. Only a Frenchman would have thought of giving the dinner, only a Frenchman could have expressed so touchingly his gratitude for the gift. Next day the General commanding the 40th French Division brought word of the Armistice and said Captain Baker's men might remain a welcome guest, or rejoin their regiment. At 10:30 orders came from his own Colonel, Hough, to rejoin his regiment. Thus ended, in all good will, a rather surprising incident.

That it ever occurred was due largely to the tremendous moral significance of Sedan in the surcharged atmosphere of the war's ending. To the Americans, Sedan had represented the objective of our greatest battle. To the French, its name had always been reminder, even synonym, for the crushing defeat in 1870. When the 2nd Division took the Beaumont Ridge on November fourth and Sedan became suddenly and quickly attainable, it leaped forward into focus in the very foreground of the picture. To be first to enter Sedan would have not only tremendous moral effect upon the people of either country, indeed, of the world, but upon the soldiers of all

armies, at the end of one of the most exhausting campaigns of history. For the French especially, that was something to consider. Undoubtedly, theirs was the more urgent claim.

Joseph Delteil expresses it perfectly in his new book, *The Poilus*.

“Sedan! That name in the communiqué flamed like the mouth of a lion! Sedan was the very breath of France. Sedan was resurrection!”

So often propaganda values are not intrinsic. Actually, of course, the big thing, rather than to be in Sedan itself, was to hold the heights that dominated the railroad and to have the railroad under shell-fire so that the Germans must abandon it. The railroad was what really mattered, not the city.

If the Americans were nearer to it than the French, and going faster, General Pershing thought in the critical situation not only there, but on the whole front, with Armistice negotiations going on, there was no time to waste. Let them go on. Those were General Pershing's military reasons. General Maistre agreed. That other reasons weighed is shown by the memorandum: “General Pershing desires that the honor of entering Sedan should fall to the First American Army.” So General Conner went to Souilly. Events elsewhere were connected with the race for Sedan.

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Colonel Edward M. House had come to Paris as President Wilson's representative in determining finally with the Allies the terms of the Armistice about which the President and the Germans had been exchanging notes for a month. Colonel House had directions what attitude to take that corresponded well with the nature of that generally mild and benevolent man who wished to exercise to good ends the power placed in his hands.

There was to be an armistice. President Wilson's wishes on that point were very clear. Immediately the Germans made their first overture, although he refused to deal with the existing government, the President had determined never to permit to close again the door that had been opened. Not only was this chance to end the World War too good to lose, but it was a chance for President Wilson to play precisely the part he had long desired, that of the statesman who ended it. In one note after another to the Germans, President Wilson spoke as for an Allied world ready to fight on indefinitely to make the world safe for Democracy and the Fourteen Points. Yet at the same moment, many Washington correspondents knew that prolonging the war was the last thing in the world the President or the Allies wanted to do. British, French, Italians were almost as tired of war as the Germans. We ourselves, with two million men in France and more going every day, engaged in the

greatest battle in our history, were far more completely in the war than had seemed possible when we entered it nineteen months earlier. We were not tired yet, but some ears heard the rumble of a distant drum.

A correspondent called upon Colonel House at the Crillon.

“Are we going to have peace, Colonel?” he asked.

Colonel House pointed to the latest casualty report from the Meuse-Argonne.

“We’ve got to have peace,” he said. “We’ve got to stop this.”

What worried Colonel House and his Staff in Paris most was that some mishap might yet lose the golden opportunity. It was still not realized how near to collapse the Germans were. That did not come until the German Navy revolted and the Kaiser abdicated. Colonel House’s task was to show the Allies the wisdom and necessity of an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points on which alone the Germans were then talking armistice at all. He found it sometimes harder to convince the Allies than the Germans.

Why, he was asked politely, should the Allies give the Germans a particularly square deal? The Germans wouldn’t have done the same for them if they had lost. And besides, why should they accept these American ideas? It was their victory, not that of the Americans. The American Army had played a comparatively small part in it. Colonel House wanted to know more about it.

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General Pershing sent General Nolan to Paris with carefully assembled data and maps setting forth in black and white what the American Army had done to help win the war. There was nothing about loans, food, munitions, naval help, moral stimulus, supplied to the Allies—it was just about the army, and finally, about the Meuse-Argonne.

“And now,” said General Nolan, pointing to the railroads, “we have done it.”

That night General Nolan called up the communiqué writers, by long-distance telephone.

“Put Sedan in the communiqué and keep it there,” he said. “Mention the name every day. And the communiqués are still too modest. We must talk more about what we’re doing. Look at the French and British communiqués.”

To put Sedan in the communiqué would help answer those who belittled the American part in the victory. General Nolan’s order was one reason for the famous November seventh communiqué. The other was incorrect information. The communiqué follows practically verbatim a “Digest of Operations” Number 62, marked “Secret” furnished to the Intelligence Section by the Operations Section, at General Headquarters, A. E. F. It may have been based upon air information. So alone and unaided the communiqué captured Sedan.

No word of all this escaped the vigilant blue pencil at Bar-le-Duc, and, in fact, little ever was submitted

to censorship. We knew full well that it would not get by. Obediently we wrote that the 1st and 42nd had been withdrawn because "they were in the French sector anyway," and little more.

The really big thing we sought, to cut the railroad completely and finally, was made possible in fact on November sixth, before the 42nd and 1st reached the last hills before Sedan. That day the 75s made good their first threat from the Beaumont Ridge two days before. They had hurried to keep up with the breakneck advance of the doughboys, drawn sometimes by blown and used-up horses, sometimes by men no less blown and used up who had hitched themselves to the ropes when horses staggered and fell. Now we could finish the job begun by the naval guns. We had hundreds of 75s that we could bring to bear upon the railroad. The Germans had run their last train over it, and when the doughboys actually walked over the tracks, as did some of the 77th Division, they found the rails blown to bits.

The famous "jugular vein" or "life artery" was cut through from Sedan to near Metz. From Sedan to Mézières the railroad was so congested that hardly a wheel could turn. The French were approaching Mézières, which they entered November tenth. We near Sedan and they at Mézières found the four-track line between the two cities filled with German supply trains, all headed homeward for Germany, all cut off

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by our victorious advance. Even westward, beyond Mézières, the tracks were jammed for miles. The German communications were cut. The great strategic plan of August thirtieth had worked.

On the same day that the 75s' shells commenced falling on the tracks near Sedan, the Germans asked President Wilson on what terms they could have an immediate armistice. Just after midnight that night, Marshal Foch received from Field-Marshal von Hindenburg a radio message naming the German plenipotentiaries to negotiate an armistice, and asking how they could get through the French lines. The German Government, the message said, asked "a suspension of arms in the interest of humanity."

Behind the front now Germany was collapsing, at the front her armies faced a debacle. Four years' blockade, made possible primarily by the British Navy, was culminating in near famine and serious shortage of supplies for the people, even the army. Revolt, starting in the navy, was spreading. Red flags were waving over the Rhine fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, over Coblenz, Cologne, Mayence. Supplies for the army could not cross the bridges. Services of Supply troops were mutinous, crying: "Lights out! Knives out!" defying their officers. On the front some units, usually from Russia, gave up, lost discipline and courage. In one village they left a sign: "Welcome, Americans. We will be home for Christmas, you won't."

But most of the German troops at the front still fought. A special order from Hindenburg had urged them to hang on to French soil so that Germany could get a better peace. Unless it came soon, the army would break in a rout of magnitude hitherto unknown in history. For the first time short of proper supplies and equipment, their vital communications cut or thrown into confusion by incessant, inexorable Allied attack everywhere on the longest battle-line the world ever saw, the hour had struck for them.

The British took Aulnoye Junction on November sixth. Three days later they took Maubeuge in the corridor between Holland and the rugged Ardennes through which ran the northern railroad they were now following. In Belgium the Allies, with the 37th and 91st American Divisions in the van, were crossing the Scheldt, thirty miles from Brussels. Some German troops retreating from Belgium were forced on to Dutch soil, and interned. The Americans had cut the southern railroad and, with the French, were now pressing the German center back against the southern and western edge of the Ardennes, through which a million Germans must struggle vainly to escape. Everywhere on the two-hundred-mile front French, British, Belgians, Americans were pressing forward. And on that whole front the place the Germans chose to throw in their last rested reserve division was against the Americans.

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There has been discussion as to which Allied Army was responsible mainly for the completeness of German defeat, the rapidity of their descent, after November first. The sensible answer seems to be that in the long run all the Allied Armies and nations were responsible, that those eleven days of November were the culmination of four years, during only two of which Americans were in the war at all, during only one of which theirs was an effective military force. But if an immediate cause be sought, it must seem to Americans that it was the effort of their army in the Meuse-Argonne culminating in the break-through of November first. Much of the ensuing Allied success seems to have hinged on that. It seems so to the Germans, who ought to know something about it.

The reason that Hindenburg gives in his memoirs for the final German defeat is this: "The pressure which the fresh American masses were putting upon our most sensitive point in the region of the Meuse, was too strong."

Just after the Armistice he told correspondents that the Meuse-Argonne "was strategic," decisive on a great scale. So did General Groener, successor of Ludendorff. Ludendorff said, in an article published last year in a Spanish military journal, that the Americans were the decisive factor.

General von Gallwitz, who saw more of us than any other higher German commander, writes: "It is

difficult to say whether the American or the British attack on November 1 had greater effect. The simultaneousness of both successful operations made it very hard for us." But then: "I believe that the cutting of the railway lines leading in the direction of Sedan and Mézières would have been more disagreeable for us than the interruption of our communications with Maubeuge and Mons."

When, after the Armistice, Colonel Conger met various leading German commanders and discussed with them the Meuse-Argonne from their view-point and ours, the Chief of Staff of General von Einem's III German Army which opposed us in the Argonne Forest itself and afterward, said: "I have fought in eighty battles, in Russia, in Serbia and in Rumania, against the French and against the British. You have been the most honorable of our enemies, and the bravest, and in 1918, the only ones who have seriously attacked us."

As remarked before, strategists, like doctors, disagree. They disagreed over what should be the final blow, the *coup de grâce*, to knock the last bit of fight out of the retreating German Armies and to reap finally and fully the fruits of the victory of all the Allies. Again Marshal Foch and Sir Douglas Haig had varying plans and this time the Marshal did not give in but prepared to start the great encircling attack on Metz that the Americans had long favored and the Germans had feared for two months.

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French and Americans now prepared to carry out what was to have been the American part in the Battle of the Western Front until Sir Douglas Haig got Marshal Foch to change it. Now the Marshal's plan was the same, fundamentally, as the strategical conception Generals Conner, Drum and Eltinge had drawn up in September, 1917. Metz and the fortifications about it were to be outflanked by attacks on either side. In these, according to General Pershing's proposal of November third to Marshal Foch, would be three American Armies, the First, attacking the German position on the Meuse Heights southeast of Sedan, the Second attacking in the Woëvre Plain north and west toward Metz, Briey, and the iron basin, and a new Third Army attacking from the Lunéville front, east of the Moselle, and south and east of Metz, and toward the coal-fields. For this last attack six American divisions were designated, the 3rd, 4th, 28th, 29th, 35th and 36th.

They were to participate in a powerful attack directed by General Mangin, one of the best French attack generals, through a gap in the Vosges foot-hills near Château-Salins made by the Seille River, that led to the Saar Valley, and so on to the Rhine. Nearly three hundred thousand French troops would take part, with over half as many more Americans. Two of our naval guns would fire upon railroad junctions in German Lorraine. On the whole front from the

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Meuse to Switzerland, nearly two hundred miles, the Germans were hopelessly outnumbered. They had, according to French Intelligence, thirty-seven, according to American, forty-five divisions, with only one in reserve, the 91st, in Alsace. To reenforce that front would have been extremely difficult for not only were the remaining divisions, which the French estimated at one hundred and fifty, the Americans at one hundred and forty, tied to the big battle stretching from the Meuse to the North Sea, but the Germans were now obliged to send troops to the Bavarian frontier facing Austria and what is now Czecho-Slovakia to halt an invasion from the south by the victorious Allied Army of the Orient. On November second Marshal Foch, Sir Douglas Haig, General Pershing, Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson and other Allied Generals had urged upon the politicians that thirty to forty Allied divisions be used in this movement to attack Germany from the south.

The troops on the front from Metz to Switzerland, were among the poorest in the German Army. They had just seen the Austrian troops lent to Germany start jubilantly homeward, war ended for them. The dismantling of Metz that General von Gallwitz has described had proceeded apace. The front-line troops had been told how to blow up their dugouts.

A German staff-officer said after the Armistice that Metz "had been for long not the fortress it once was.

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Much of the mobile artillery had been removed, and there were not troops enough there to defend it." The Metz garrison was among the most revolutionary of the German troops on our front, first to raise the red flag. When after the Armistice Major Charles F. Thompson, Chief of Intelligence of the Second Army, entered the German lines, they applauded him.

So Marshal Foch must have been right in expecting that the five hundred thousand French and Americans under Mangin and Bullard would quickly cut through the thin German lines, outflanking the Moselle, and so up the Saar Valley to Sarrebruck, to Treves, onward to the Rhine. That would threaten the retreat of such Germans as escaped from the meshes of the Allied net cast about the Ardennes wilderness, and at the same time make it difficult or impossible for them to make a stand on the border. It would be a race to the Rhine. So thought the Marshal.

Sir Douglas Haig did not believe in it, did not want troops diverted from the converging movement upon the Ardennes which he believed would crush so much of the German Army that there would be nothing left to fight elsewhere. Marshal Foch, however, believed Lorraine, the back door to Germany, was now the road to final victory. He planned a battle that, had it succeeded, would have been greater than anything the Marshal's great model, Napoleon, had to his glory. But it would have cost many thousands more Allied

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lives. The Marshal turned his back upon it and took the Armistice which made the Germans militarily as impotent as would victory upon a bloody field. So he showed himself greater than Napoleon.

The stranger that some have not understood why the Allied Armies, including the Americans, were "fighting right up to the Armistice." Sir Arthur Currie, Canadian Commander-in-Chief, recently won a libel action defending himself from the charge that he had attacked Mons the last day to get glory. There were two good reasons. Neither Marshal Foch nor any one else could quite trust the Germans, after four years' experience, and did not dare stop a vast decisive battle in its most critical stage, until they knew it was absolutely sure that the German Army and Government were really completely through.

"The Germans have talked peace before," they said, which was true, "always with some ulterior motive. We won't let them trick us again. Even if this Government in power now wants an armistice, a counter-revolution at any moment may turn the tables. We'll take no chances." So General Pershing received from Marshal Foch on November fifth this little-known message:

"It can happen that the enemy may spread rumors that an armistice is signed in order to deceive us. There is none. Let no one cease hostilities of any sort without information from the Marshal, Commander-in-Chief."



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

A Sign of Victory—Grandpré, November, 1918



Photo by Author

"We will be home for Christmas!"

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A wise precaution, for there were such rumors whether or not, as many believed, of German origin. One of them caused the so-called "fake Armistice" for it was believed in some diplomatic circles in Paris, telephoned from the American Embassy there by our naval attaché, Captain, now Rear-Admiral Richard H. Jackson, to Brest where Admiral Henry B. Wilson, American naval commander in French waters, passed it on to Roy W. Howard, now of the Scripps-Howard newspapers, then President of the United Press. Both spread the news to the Brest daily newspaper and Howard, like a good newspaper man, sent a flash to the New York office of the United Press in case they had not heard from Paris. Brest was celebrating, and as Howard was escorted to the telegraph office by Admiral Wilson's aide, his message was not sent as usual, back to Paris to be passed by the Inter-Allied censorship bureau in the Bourse, but direct to New York.

Had it reached Paris, it would have stopped there, although for a time the rumor was believed sufficiently in Paris to cause small celebrations. For some time the French censor held up all dispatches bearing on it, no matter what they said, including one to the U. P. from Ferguson in Paris based on Colonel House's statement that there was nothing in the rumor, and one from Howard in Brest saying that Admiral Wilson had assumed full responsibility.

There are all sorts of surmises as to why the Ameri-

can Embassy took the rumor seriously enough to send it to Admiral Wilson, but even now Admiral Jackson remains silent. Howard, Ferguson and the U. P. acted, of course, in good faith and the "fake Armistice" was, strictly speaking, no fake at all.

On the front the war moved as rapidly as ever. The British threw in three cavalry divisions that harried a German retreat so rapid the infantry could not keep pace with it, especially over destroyed roads through devastated country stripped of almost all food. On the American front there was, now, no retreat, for it remained the German pivot. The last three days of the war saw advancing the longest American battle-line of history, into which the Federal battle-line at Gettysburg could have been dropped and found again only because the Federals wore blue uniforms. On November tenth American units were actually engaged in battle on 107.3 miles of the rather less than 200 whereon all the Allied armies attacked, and held besides 14.1 miles of trench front where there was no active fighting. So on the shrinking Western Front, now only about 325 miles, we held 121.4 miles, more than a third, and British, French, Belgians, and Italian and Polish detachments the rest.

Another telegram from Marshal Foch hurried a little preparations made already to send forward our long line to carry out the first steps of his new plan, or our old one that had not been carried out at St.

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Mihiel. This telegram came November ninth and said:

“The enemy, disorganized by our repeated attacks, retreats along the entire front.

“It is important to co-ordinate and expedite our movements.

“I appeal to the energy and the initiative of the Commanders-in-Chief, and of their armies, to make decisive the results obtained.”



At nine o'clock that evening General Pershing passed on this appeal to his Army Commanders, General Liggett and General Bullard, in almost the Marshal's words:

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“The enemy disorganized is withdrawing along the entire front. Follow closely and push him with all energy to secure decisive results.”

So both the First and Second Armies started a little sooner than planned their nutcracker movement on Metz. The Second began its advance up the Woëvre Plain, slowly swinging the western jaw, to meet the eastern that was due to move on November fourteenth. In the last three days of the war its 28th and 33rd Divisions broke into the main German resistance line on its front and, cooperating with the 81st Division on their left, had started to encircle Metz.

The 81st was at the southern end of the First Army whose V, III and II French Colonial Corps, which had relieved the XVII French Corps, had begun the new movement before the race for Sedan ended. The crossing of the Meuse, first attempted November third, not accomplished until November fifth, was one of the most daring deeds of the whole battle.

General Hines urged that the crossing be made immediately and General Ely didn't wait. The 5th Division, he was told, was the keystone of the whole army advance northeastward, and until it crossed the Meuse not much could be done. On November third two companies tried to cross with little artillery support, but were thrown back. On November fourth two attempts failed, but at dawn of November fifth the 61st Infantry got bridges across. Some doughboys

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crossed by canvas floats that the German artillery could not sink, others used rafts or swam, no matter how cold the water of one of the largest rivers in France, in a November flood. Next day they took Dun-sur-Meuse and commenced driving the Germans from the Meuse Heights.

The V Corps was ordered to do the same farther north, although the Germans had a strong position well defended southeast of Sedan, between the Meuse and Chiers. It had been planned not to attack it frontally but to move the I Corps around to the region east of the Meuse, beyond the Borne de Cornouiller, whence it could flank the Germans before the V Corps. But in view of the urgent messages from the Allied and American commanders, the V Corps attacked in the Beaumont bend of the Meuse the morning of November eleventh when news of the Armistice did not reach some of its advanced units, notably of the 2nd Division, until after eleven o'clock.

On that last day, probably the most significant success militarily on the whole Western Front was won by the Americans. On November fourth the 79th Division, rested and reorganized after its earlier fighting, assaulted the towering bald heights of the Borne de Cornouiller east of the Meuse, key of the pivot positions there as the Côte Dame Marie and Côte Chatillon had been of the Kriemhilde Heights west of the river. The attack succeeded, but late in the

day the Germans brought terrific artillery fire to bear upon the Americans on the crest, then counter-attacked. Only twenty-five Americans remained alive and prisoners when the fight was over. A hastily reorganized battalion got back the southern half of the hill, and next morning, November fifth, as the 5th Division crossed the Meuse, the 79th took the Borne de Cornouiller again and held it once for all. From this highest summit of the whole region they looked over the battle-field nearly to its western edge at the Argonne Forest.

Now we could turn our glasses, and so our shells, upon the Germans as they had turned theirs upon us, and while the 32nd and 26th American and 15th French Divisions swept forward, the 79th dashed for the Woëvre Plain. It took Damvillers, and the morning of November eleventh the Pennsylvanians stormed the last of the Meuse Heights before the plain was reached. To the north the rest of the First Army, the 5th, 90th, 89th, 2nd and 77th Divisions held or were gaining good positions from which to jump off for the new assault on Longwy and Montmédy. The 5th Division was only four miles from Montmédy when the war ended.

So in the final moments, the Americans were turning from the south the Antwerp-Meuse German retirement line.

That answered final Allied efforts, especially

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British, to break up the American Army, that continued up to the Armistice. The British were especially active. Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, said in late October that the British were tired but willing and able to fight, the French very tired and neither willing nor able, and the Americans were unfit to fight. Lord Milner, British Secretary of State for War, came to Paris to propose that the American troops be divided among French and British. During the Armistice deliberations, Sir Douglas Haig made slurring references to the Americans which later he withdrew. Lloyd George and Clemenceau urged our own War Secretary, Mr. Baker, who had approved the original orders to General Pershing to form an independent American Army when he thought best, to consent, now that the order and the General had been completely vindicated, to that army being cast to the four winds.

Strange time to propose it. Marshal Foch, who by now knew the doughboys and their leaders, wrote November eighth to General Pershing: "The accomplishments of the American divisions under your orders are too fine for me not to look forward for every means of leaving them there." When the war ended, the American front before Metz, and the adjoining front where Mangin's French were to have attacked, were about the only places where the Allies could have

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continued heavy fighting much longer without some little time to catch their breath. The Germans were trapped in the Ardennes, as Sir Douglas Haig had planned, but British and French could not immediately follow their advantage.

The German retreat was like a door swinging on its hinge. As ever more rapidly we dislodged the hinge from the Meuse Heights, the rest of the door swung more rapidly still. British and French could scarcely keep up with it. They could not keep their railheads, and so their supplies and ammunition, up within reach of their advancing front lines. German mines left behind continually exploded, wrecking bridges and roads. Front lines, especially of tired men, can not move very far through devastated country without supplies, which railroads or truck trains alone can bring in sufficient quantity.

On the American front there were still plenty of railroads, and on Armistice Day the III Corps railhead was at Dun-sur-Meuse, less than ten miles from the front line. On the Second Army front and where Mangin was to attack, the situation was even better. It seemed to those who were there, that Americans and French in Lorraine could have kept going another two weeks without becoming disjointed. For those two weeks after the Armistice we had wonderful fighting weather, clear, snappy, to speed up the troops and keep the roads hard for artillery and supply trains

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and, perhaps, for Mangin's cavalry. Then the American would have been, beyond argument, the most active front of all.

That was the situation when General Pershing and all the Allied Commanders received from Marshal Foch this note;

“1. *Les hostilités seront arrêtées sur tout le front à partir du 11 (ONZE) NOVEMBRE, 11 (Onze) heures (heure française).*

“2. *Les Troupes Alliées ne dépasseront pas jusqu'à nouvel ordre la ligne atteinte à cette date et à cette heure.*”

The end had come—Victory.

CHAPTER XV

PEACE

THE last days of the world's greatest war on the front were an unforgettable, poignant experience. "It will be the greatest event since the Crucifixion—the end of the World War," some one had said on the ship crossing nearly eighteen months before. Every correspondent was keyed to highest pitch to see, hear, write everything that happened in each twenty-four hours that flitted by dizzy with a multitude of events. When the Army started its race for Sedan, so did we, and most of our time for a week was spent following the hurrying front line which sometimes could hardly be found, over shell-torn roads, through traffic jams, sponging hand-outs from chow wagons, sleeping in automobiles or on the floors of churches or abandoned German dugouts, returning briefly to Bar-le-Duc if we could get through the traffic, to file hurried but, we hoped, vivid descriptions of what was going forward, then back again to the ever-receding front. It was useless to go far forward and try to get back the same day. The roads were jammed, and if our traffic control had improved, so had our equipment increased

If no American soldier reached Sedan, neither did

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any American correspondent, though many tried. Road jams, French military police or German shells cut them off. What they could have done except turn around and spend a day coming back to cable "I have been in Sedan," is difficult to know. But the Sedan idea gripped every one then. One Signal Corps photographer trying for Sedan started taking pictures of shell-bursts, getting closer, closer. They found some striking pictures in his camera.

One night, we slept in Grandpré after dinner in a subterranean chamber where we heard the story of the storming of the citadel. Our host was an Assistant Provost Marshal, called himself "Chief of Police of Grandpré," and saw that all lights were out, or windows blanketed. He pointed out at the main crossing in his town, a sign that read:

"Hier wohnte
Aug. 1870
Fürst Bismarck."

Beneath the sign doughboys of the "Sightseeing Sixth" Division trudged along, heading for the front, where other doughboys were driving the armies that had tried to carry out Bismarck's wishes to a second Sedan. Beyond Sedan lay Germany!

Another evening, we came into the whirlpool of the pursuit at Buzancy to find General Alexander of the 77th standing before a large German sign obliging-

ly directing to Stenay where the Germans were now fleeing across the Meuse.

“All we want to do is catch up with these beggars,” he said. “We’ll show ’em a little armistice.”

They knew at the front almost as much as you did about the negotiations and the striking events that led up to them. On the second story of a ruined store in Buzancy—not conspicuous, for most of Buzancy was more or less ruined—we spent an hour alternately watching from the window the passing pageant of a victorious army, and helping a wireless operator translate French messages he was intercepting. One day, they told of the revolt of the German Navy, another, how the German armistice commission had been unable to get through their own rear areas to cross to the French lines, because the roads were so crowded. Then we heard that the Kaiser had gone to Holland, leaving Hindenburg to bring home the German Army—one reason why the Kaiser is an exile and Hindenburg President of his ancient realm. All this news wireless stations through the Meuse-Argonne were catching and spreading among the troops.

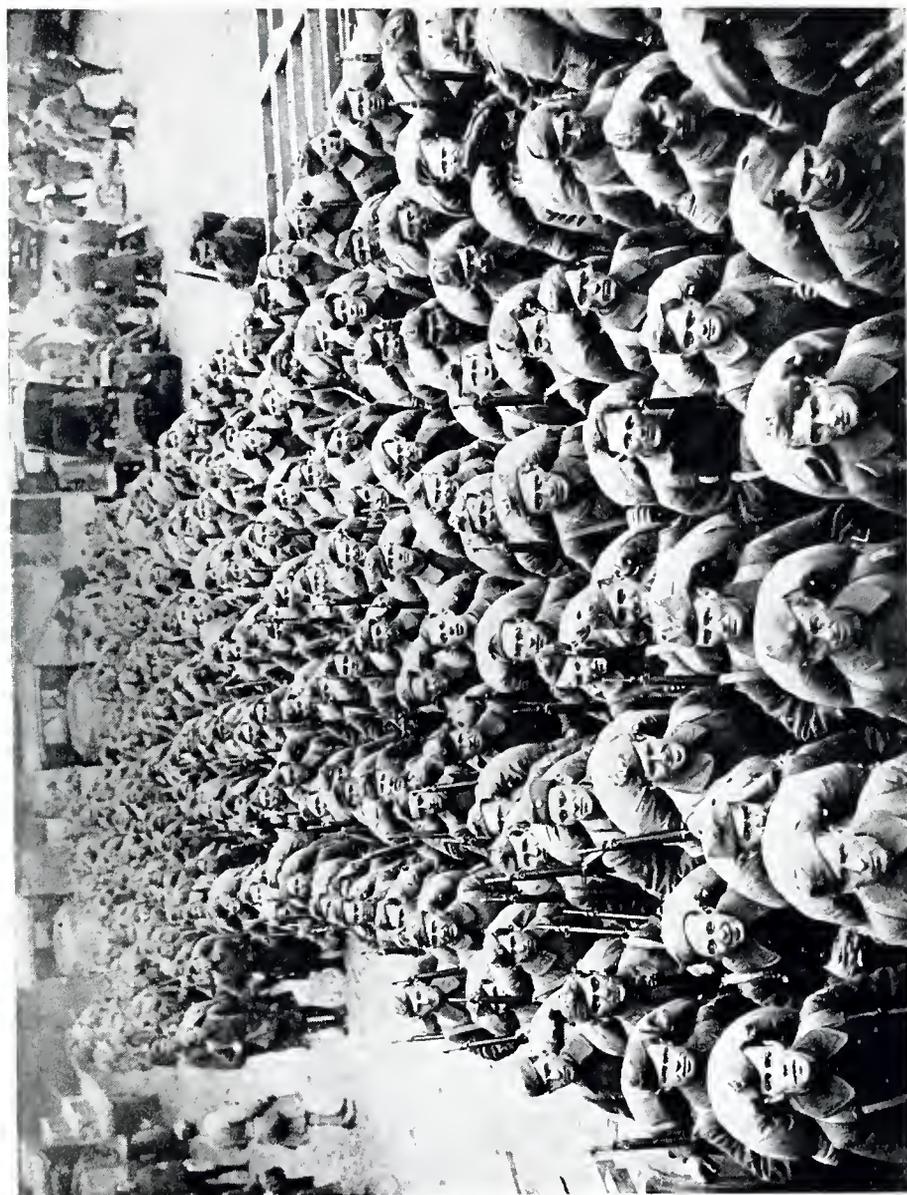
No wonder that we saw from that window an exuberant southerner wearing a shiny black leather spiked helmet, who called to us: “I’m goin’ back to So’th Cya’line! This yere guerre is finie!”

We heard other cries of “La guerre est finie!” first of many, from a little group of young men who came



Courtesy, U. S. Signal Corps

La Guerre est Finie!



Copyright, International Film

Home Again—Hoboken, 1919

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marching into Buzancy, dark clothes contrasting with our men's olive drab. One of them blew silvery blasts upon a bugle, and as they turned the corner under our window they were singing the *Marseillaise*. "*Marchons! Marchons!*" they sang and "*Le jour de la gloire est arrivé!*" They were young Frenchmen from near Sedan, caught in the German invasion, now released after four years.

In the stream of white-tagged walking wounded, making a careful way down from the line, were truckloads of old people, from reconquered villages where sometimes the Germans had set white flags—especially since President Wilson's protest at their treatment of the French people in their retreat.

There was always an undertone of guns. Sometimes near, sometimes far, their deep "Boom-oom-oom," or their nearer sharper crashing or the "Brum-m-p!" of an exploding shell ran through those days and nights. The rain and the raw wetness of the Meuse-Argonne seemed to stifle them. The big thing, anyway, was the victory, and the men who had brought it about.

They went sloshing and clattering forward, doughboys bending to the job under their packs, rifles slung over shoulders, helmets tilted on one side, cigarette between lips if they were lucky, asking only "When do we eat?" Artillerymen fell asleep on the caissons, fell off, jumped on and fell asleep again. Truck

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drivers swore at infantry and artillery because they hogged the road, then ran into the ditch and were pulled out by infantry and artillery. Every one tried to give way to ambulances, with only helpless hob-nailed shoes at the backs. But always the lines moved forward.

There, we felt, was the ultimate reason why we were seeing the second battle of Sedan, the end of the war. The private soldier, the enlisted man, the "dough-boy" won the war. That was one thing to put into dispatches.

We chose to spend the last night of the war in Buzancy, because we had friends and billets—hospital stretchers across chairs—and there was a broad road almost straight from there to the front at the Meuse and Stenay that we could travel quickly next morning.

Then amid sunshine coming golden through breaking mists, like a halo upon the uncleared battle-field, the soldiers of the American Army found the true glory of War—Peace.

At eleven o'clock they fired their last shot, and the world's greatest war ended in victory.

For most of them, dirty and dog-tired in body and spirit, it was something unnatural, almost incredible. They stood up in trenches and cold wet fox-holes, stretched themselves, looked about in wonderment, while, so close often that a stone would hit them, other figures stood up, too, and stretched themselves. They

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were gray-clad, and had been enemies, whom our men had tried to kill, lest they themselves be killed.

That day brought to the world so much that could not then be guessed—and can not quite be guessed now. But then our men were not delirious with joy and jubilation. They cheered, here and there, and fired rocket flares. Many slapped one another on the back and said; “Well, I guess the old guerre is finie.”

It had not come over them yet with all its force that the young lives they had taken in their hands every day, were safe, with all that safety to young lives means, and that there was an end of the horror unspeakable and weariness and hardship—that after four years, all was right with the world.

Once that idea came, their faces turned in but one direction—toward home and those who loved them and had spared them for the world’s greatest cause, and whose faces they thought never to see again. For them peace meant but one thing—home.

What a series of unforgettable pictures those boys of ours saw on that day of days when the world laid down its arms; pictures of No Man’s Land, where men walked upright in daylight, where men in khaki met men in gray to swap souvenirs and laugh the strange laugh of men whose lives have been given back to them; of batteries of guns that had poured forth death, now silent; of French towns bright with suddenly blossoming flags of red, white and blue after

four years of mourning, but above all of the faces of true friends as they looked at one another and said: "Well, we came through it, didn't we?"

It came differently at different parts of the now long line that the Americans held. There was a place near Sedan where the New Yorkers of the 77th Division faced the Germans across the Meuse. There was Stenay, where the Americans picked their way across the flooded river, entering and delivering the town at the very moment when the fighting ended. There was the country east of the Meuse where, until the last moment and even after, the Americans were fighting fiercely. There was the swampy country near St. Mihiel, where they waited in trenches for an hour and then walked out into No Man's Land.

Everywhere it was the same, in one respect; there was the same sudden and profound silence as the hour struck and the guns ceased for the first time their terrible chorus that for four years had never ceased from the North Sea to the mountains of Switzerland.

No man could tell it all or half of it, but we tried, beginning with America's last night of fighting in the Great War, through to the morning when it happened, on into Stenay with the troops who first entered it, and here and there about what was the field of the second battle of Sedan, and so back through the French towns, flag-decked and filled with the happiest people in the world on the happiest day in the world.

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Coming into Buzancy as dusk fell, there was an air of expectancy everywhere in the crowded streets of the town that the German had marked for his own. Troops were pouring through—battered troops with a war-worn look, but marching with an easy step as if they knew what was coming.

It was the Rainbow Division, back from the outskirts of Sedan, veterans of one hundred and seventy-five solid days in the trenches, and of every big battle in which the American Army had been engaged.

Down the street in the brick *château* where General von der Marwitz had had his headquarters, the officers of the division were making themselves at home, as old campaigners can, despite broken windows and gaping holes in the walls. Here they sat down to dinner spread upon rough plank tables, lighted with candles stuck in slim-necked German wine bottles.

Officers and men were muddy, their uniforms frayed and their faces hardened by fighting. It was the last night of the war and they knew it, but they talked of it briefly as tired men talk. Then they sat silent, musing before the big fireplace filled with blazing logs.

“Wonder when they’ll send us home,” they said.

Then discussing the news of the turmoil in Germany—“Maybe we’ll have to go there to do business.”

Outside, the streets were filled with marching men. Among them appeared familiar faces, but many

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strange ones—all too many. It was the splendid "Old 69th" marching to its last rest billets of the war, through mud and rain, as it had marched so many miles before on the path of glory. But it was a different regiment from the one that arrived in France a year before.

In a little while the clouds passed and the moon came out, shining down brightly upon the ragged ruins of Buzancy. It would have been a perfect night for bombing, all agreed, but they agreed, too, that the Germans would hardly try it. They didn't try it here, but we heard that along the Meuse they had, even after the Armistice had been signed.

Later in the evening in our billet, about the glowing fire in a stove where a week ago the Germans had toasted their shins, we heard soldiers talking outside, saying that the war would be over the next day at eleven o'clock. They talked in a matter-of-fact way as if remarking that they would jump off next morning, which would be a commonplace to the 42nd Division. As we went to sleep the troops were still sloshing through the mud of the streets outside, but the town was swathed in complete darkness. It might be the last night of the war, but no one was taking chances on an air raid. By morning every one had heard the good news.

During the night the guns had fired so heavily that it sounded like drum-fire. One could see their flashes

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in the sky, and it seemed as though it had intensified rather than slackened. An officer came in early in the morning and said that the Germans had shelled the roads near Beaumont unusually heavily, but orders had come that the Armistice went into effect at eleven o'clock and that all firing must cease at 10:55.

Going up the road toward the Meuse and Stenay we passed more troops marching. It was another famous division,—the 1st,—first in France, first to fight, and by a great chance we passed the men of the 16th Infantry, of whom one company had the first fight with Germans in a trench raid near Arracourt, in Lorraine, on November second, a year before.

The 16th had just received the news and were cheering as men cheer who know what the war meant in agony and bloody sweat, some of them were waving their muddy rifles high overhead. They were the only men of ours that we actually saw cheering, but the whole regiment, some plodding along the road and some just breaking camp where they had bivouacked in shelter tents in the mud, was jubilant. The 16th had earned the right to cheer.

Farther down the road, beyond Nouart, the Staff of General Summerall's V Corps that had broken the German center ten days before stood in front of their billets with a Sabbath air of idleness.

Near by in a little wood was a long, varicolored six-inch rifle, the crew of which were cleaning out the bar-

rel. "We fired the last shot at 10:55," they said. It was Battery C of the 56th Coast Artillery, formerly at Fort H. G. Wright, New York. Lieutenant Harry C. Carpenter of Norwich, N. Y., pulled the lanyard for their last shot. Of course there are a thousand claimants to the honor of having fired the last shot of the war for the American Army.

Somewhere along those roads was C Battery of the 6th Field Artillery of the 1st Division, commanded by Captain Idus R. McLendon of Atlanta, Georgia, that fired the first shot on October 23, 1918, when Sergeant Arch of South Bend, Indiana, pulled the lanyard.

As we passed more and more guns we heard the reason for the heavy artillery fire of the night before. It was that our guns were firing as many shells as possible so as to give the Boche as much discomfort as they could before the war ended.

The farther we went the stronger became the impression of what the end of war meant. As we neared the Meuse we passed along roads strewn with debris of recent fighting, gouged with fresh shell-holes, bordered by dead horses, piles of shells and wrecked trucks and wagons. Twice we passed motionless, blanket-covered figures. Everywhere were evidences that this place had been under recent heavy shell-fire. Yet not a single gun sounded.

Here began proofs that it was really all over. All along this road stood our men in little groups, talking

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or sauntering about where a few hours before no one would have shown himself needlessly.

In the little village of Laneuville, where a red, white and black flag lay in the mud, we found ourselves amid westerners of the 89th Division that took Barricourt Wood, turning-point of the battle of November first.

Here, sitting in a cellar by candlelight was Lieutenant-Colonel George W. Blackington, of Flint, Michigan, commanding a battalion of the 353rd Infantry, whose men had crossed the Meuse into Stenay before the Armistice took effect. They found the Germans gone and were pushing out patrols.

From Laneuville to Stenay was a precarious crossing. The Germans had flooded the Meuse, turning what had been a river of a hundred odd feet in width to a series of ponds and lagoons perhaps a mile wide, and had blown up all the bridges. So our men clambered on narrow planks over a series of rushing torrents.

Stenay itself, as they found it, was a remarkable transformation from despair to happiness, but again incredulity was the reigning sentiment in the streets of this pretty town that the Germans had left only a few hours before. A pitiful group of civilians, old men, women and children, unbelievably shabby, gathered about the tall Kansans, trying to understand all the wonderful things they told them—how the war was

over, how the Kaiser had abdicated and the gray-clad men who had been their masters for four years were utterly beaten.

"Is it true?" they asked pitifully, but they had already produced French flags from some recesses and the tricolor floated from many windows. It was fine to see them cheering our men as they went through the town.

Before one tiny shop stood a little French child scarcely four years old, waving a hand to the splendid helmeted soldiers who were passing. One broad-shouldered man stepped from the line, took the child in his arms and held her high in the air, with an ecstatic smile such as only fathers smile.

"I've got kids of my own," he said, answering a question, "and now I know I'll see them again." He was Private A. C. Larsen of Minneapolis.

In Stenay is the château of André de Verdier, where the Crown Prince lived throughout the bloody German defeat at Verdun in 1916. It was a beautifully furnished place and there had assembled a little company of people of Stenay to be safe from the shells which the Germans told them we Americans would hurl into the town. We lunched there on American coffee with sugar given by the American Relief Commission, with bread made partly of American flour and partly of German, with German cheese.

They told us how the Germans had pillaged everything before they left, as indeed we could see. Every

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shop and house had been smashed in outrageous fashion quite wantonly, and the trail of the beast was left everywhere. Two of these people were husband and wife, each more than eighty years of age and white-haired and wrinkled. The good news was too much for them, but the old man said through his tears: "It's a great day for us all, Monsieur, a great day."

All this time American troops in small knots were passing through the streets and deploying into a skirmish line, but nobody knew where the Germans were. It seemed that they had started for their own country already, leaving behind them on the last day of the war the last bit of France they had defiled. The few troops left in Stenay had posted sentries with fixed bayonets at all corners and the remainder had spread to search for souvenirs, scorning the danger of "booby traps."

But there was one other soldier there, an odd, dull-looking figure in dirty gray, who shuffled aimlessly about the streets as if stunned. He was a German soldier who had stayed in Stenay, having doubtless had plenty of war. He had been made prisoner several times by various Americans who turned him loose again when they saw how harmlessly stupid he was. He seemed a type of the whole army he had deserted, completely baffled and beaten. As we left Stenay its old people and children were still standing in the streets trying to talk to the Americans—trying to comprehend what had come to them.

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On the way back one saw how armies still move although war may stop. The roads were still filled with the old familiar procession of trucks and wagons and marching men; military police still saluted passing officers; engineers still toiled with pick and shovel to undo what the artillery had done to the roads outside of Laneuville.

However, we heard the music of a band and found the musicians of the 122nd Field Artillery, all Chicago men, playing, *Hail to the President*, and then swinging into *Keep your Eye on the Girlie at Home*.

We passed trucks marked with the Statute of Liberty of the 77th Division and heard that they had received the news in the trenches on the Meuse, near Mouzon. We found a number of men of the 78th Division in rest billets near Revigny. One of them had been an itinerant linotyper and he said: "I'm going back to work on *The Albany Argus*. My nerves were all shot up when I came into the army. Now they're fine." He saw nothing humorous in that, although he had just come from the inferno at Grandpré.

We heard how the Pennsylvanians of the 28th Division stopped fighting in the trenches near St. Mihiel, and got up and met the Germans in No Man's Land, how the 80th, in rest billets near Varennes, shot off all the rockets it could find to celebrate, how the 26th, all New Englanders, east of the Meuse were fighting al-

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most to the last minute and stopped their attack just in time.

So we passed through French towns, all rejoicing, to Bar-le-Duc, bright with lights for the first time in many hundreds of nights, where people cried: "*La guerre est finie!*"—and then were silent, as if they feared it were not true.

THE END

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