

The Standard Stripes

1919

Twenty-Sixth Division

National Guard of New England: Arrived in France December 5, 1917. Activities: Chemin des Dames sector, February 6 to March 21, 1918; La Reine and Boucq sector, April 3 to June 28; Pas Finl sector (northwest of Château-Thierry), July 10 to 25 (battle operations July 18 to 25); Rupt and Tryon sector, September 8 to October 8 (St. Mihiel operation, September 12 to 14); Neptune sector (north of Verdun), October 18 to November 14 (Argonne-Meuse offensive).



Prisoners captured: 61 officers, 3,087 men. Guns captured: 16 pieces of artillery, 132 machine guns. Total advance on front line: 37 kilometers.

Insignia: Dark blue "YD" monogram superimposed on diamond of khaki cloth. The initials represent the nickname of the division, which, since its arrival overseas, has been known as the "Yankee Division."

THE HOME SECTOR

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The Twenty-Sixth's Story

WITH THE YANKEE DIVISION IN FRANCE, by Frank P. Sibley. Little, Brown and Company.

NO newspaper correspondent, accredited or unaccredited, knew any division in the A. E. F. quite so thoroughly or so intimately as Frank P. Sibley of the *Boston Globe* knew the Twenty-sixth. Of the Twenty-sixth he was, from first to last, so roving, observant and devoted a part that his minute chronicle of its adventures overseas belongs at least in every New England home whose service flag meant a YD man.

In the anxious days back in the summer of 1918, Mr. Sibley was wont humorously to forecast his inevitable war book as something likely to be called "The Amateurs," and, after his by no means illegitimate forebodings were set at rest by the German surrender in November, he was disposed to no more gracious a title than "They Got Away With It." But, after all, it was less a constructive criticism than a simple record of the division's experience which he was minded to write when he got home. So he merely called it "With the Yankee Division in France."

To anyone at all familiar with the mutually rancorous mood in which the Twenty-sixth and the A. E. F. parted company, it is surprising how little of all the old bitterness lingers in the Sibley narrative—how little of its space he has devoted to the feud which unquestionably existed between the New Englanders and Chaumont. In his comment on that feud, Sibley is frankly partisan, a devoted admirer of General Edwards, whose eleventh hour removal from the division wrung so many faithful hearts within its ranks.

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WITH THE YANKEE DIVISION IN FRANCE

"Resistance to something," quoth Henry Adams, "was the law of New England nature." And the Twenty-sixth's resistance to G. H. Q.'s policy of breaking up local divisions—a policy which, whether wise or unwise, was adopted in what was thought to be the best interests of America—led, directly or indirectly, to much of the animosity recorded in odd corners of this book. Mr. Sibley was much too closely identified with the Yankees to view the feud in perspective or to chronicle it with Olympian dispassionateness. His testimony is *ex parte*. It is one-sided.

He writes:

"One of the highest ranking officers in the Army told me, as late as February, that General Edwards was relieved of his command because he criticised his superiors indiscreetly. On that ground every officer and man I have met could be removed from his position—with the exception of two men."

Which rather begs the question, doesn't it? Nor, in commenting on the removal of Colonel Logan from the command of the One Hundred and First Infantry, does Mr. Sibley admit for one moment how much a like indiscretion led to the removal of a scrupulous and inspiring leader who stood head and shoulders above most regimental commanders.

As though distrusting his own capacity for impartiality, Mr. Sibley has really touched very lightly on these sore spots, loath to leave them out and yet wisely unwilling to throw his history out of focus by going into them as exhaustively as they deserved. There is, however, a damaging enough indictment in one paragraph to make difficult if not imprudent a triumphal procession of A. E. F. powers through the highways of New England:

"Trafficking in army politics, in the midst of world war—the relief of all National Guard colonels and generals in a division—all of whom had to be put back because the charges against them were so fatuously empty—and, as a crowning indictment, the sending men forward to death after the armistice had been signed but before the hour named for the cessation of hostilities, merely to 'straighten out the line' when the final position of that line was not of the slightest military importance; these things mean that somewhere in our higher command there was incompetence, that there were men not fit to control the fates of American citizens, that there was unjustifiable sacrifice of lives."

Part of his indictment is quite answerable. Part of it is not. Of the attack launched after the armistice, we have not heard the last. It is curious it plays so small a part in the Sibley book.

Many of these things Mr. Sibley must have yearned to say back in the days of the censorship when criticism of the Army was not among the many privileges accorded to newspaper men. To him and to the few equally high-minded and professionally scrupulous journalists on duty as such in France, there must often have occurred a painful dilemma. Was it his duty to his paper to stick to his job till he dropped, saying as much of the truth as the powers would permit, but, any way, sticking to the job? Or was it his larger duty to his public, the fathers and mothers in these

WITH THE YANKEE DIVISION IN FRANCE

New England homes, to return beyond reach of the censor and air freely the matters he thought might be corrected if the white light of publicity were turned on them? It is difficult to say. Certainly if the fighting had continued through the winter, the dilemma would have grown more painful. In this connection, it is only fair to say that many of the things over which Mr. Sibley burned with indignation at the time, he now, in perspective, regards as scarcely worth mentioning.

It seems so unlikely that any one else will ever write an equally authoritative history of the Twenty-sixth that it is to be hoped that later editions of this one will contain an index and some easily accessible tabulations of the divisional movements, losses and gains.

A. W.

