

FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 1919.

YANKEE DIVISIONS WERE DECIDING AID AT WAR'S END

Summary of Activities from Cantigny Fight to Armistice

LATE, BUT NOT TOO LATE

Besides Actual Winning of Battles Their Participation Braced Allied Morale Greatly

Coming upon the field late, but, providentially, not too late, no American division was ever used, except by way of training, in a sector of minor importance. As soon as they were sufficiently seasoned they were put in places where their influence would be of the utmost value.

At Cantigny the first of the American divisions to be so employed was placed at the apex of the deepest and most dangerous of all the salients driven by the Germans into the Allied front. It struck that salient a sounding blow, gained ground, made good and, in the darkest hour of the Allied cause, showed that America was coming in all her power, and lifted the morale in all armies.

At Belleau Wood and Château-Thierry, two more American divisions stopped, on their most sensitive part of the front, another German drive which was sweeping down toward Paris, and did much to steady the whole line.

There followed, a month and a half later, the work of the divisions between Château-Thierry and the Jaulgonne bend of the Marne and along the sector east of Reims, which helped to make abortive the fifth, the last and the most despairing of the enemy's offensives. When it was ended he knew the tide had turned, and so did the Allies.

Between Soissons and Chateau-Thierry

In the mighty counter-stroke between Soissons and Château-Thierry the American divisions took a part which may in all fairness be termed decisive. Two of them were put in to break the hinge of the Marne salient south of Soissons, and, nobly supported by French comrades on either side, they did it; a task stupendous and one whose far-reaching consequences perhaps cannot be justly estimated for years. At other points of the line, and particularly at the other end of the counter-attack, more American divisions bore a large percentage of the victorious fighting which, when it temporarily came to a stop along the Vesle, had definitely and obviously transferred the initiative from the

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LATE, BUT NOT TOO LATE

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side of the invaders to the side of the invaded.

On a number of fronts, from this time to the end, American divisions, by ones or twos, did courageous and never unimportant service. One took the important position of Juvigny, north of Soissons, in August, materially helping forward the French offensive which eventually forced the Germans to relinquish the line of the Vesle. Two, in September, cleanly broke the powerful Hindenburg line on the British front along the Scheldt canal tunnel. Two of them, in October and November, helped forward the great strides of the British, French and Belgian Armies in Belgium. Two others, in October, aided the French in the capture of one of the most stubborn positions in the Champagne region, Blanc Mont, and hastened the advance to the Aisne.

First Army at St. Mihiel

In September the first complete American Army was ready to strike. It struck at St. Mihiel, and so tremendous was its blow that, almost overnight, it wiped out the most annoying permanent salient on the Western front, removed a grave menace to Verdun, the pivot of the Allied Armies, and established a like menace to Metz, the pivot of the enemy's armies. More than all, it carried to the heart of Germany, like a lightning flash, the horrifying knowledge of America's power and courage and grim determination.

Almost immediately after came the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Here 22 divisions, the major part of the seasoned American troops yet in the field, ground their way for a month and a half through an appalling maze of defensive works held by all the forces that the enemy could possibly throw in to stop the attack that was aimed at his very vitals.

Probably no other single 30 kilometers of the front was in itself as important by far as the 30 kilometers between the Meuse and the Argonne through which the American Army was tearing its way, and probably on no similar portion of the front could the results of a clean break-through be quite so vital and far reaching. The American divisions did their immeasurable task; they made the clean break-through, and when the exhausted army, gasping and begging for mercy, signed an armistice, the troops in olive drab were far beyond the Meuse.

EDITOR'S NOTE—This article is the last of the series dealing with the activities of the A.E.F.'s combat units, the work of Capt. Joseph Mills Hanson, F.A., 'The Stars and Strips' historian at G.H.Q. These articles have been appearing in these columns since November, 1918, and constitute, in sum, a complete and authentic account of the work of the American divisions in France, Belgium and Italy, from Cantigny to the armistice. It had been the intention of 'The Stars and Strips', with Captain Hanson's permission, to have these articles reprinted in book form, the proceeds to go to some cause connected with the A.E.F.'s interests in France, such as the fund for French War Orphans. Through legal complications it was impossible, and it is now Captain Hanson's intention to have them collected and published in the United States at an early date.