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OPERATIONS OF CO "M" 16th INFANTRY (1st DIVISION)
IN THE CANTIGNY OPERATIONS
May 28 - June 6, 1918.
(Personal experience)

MAJOR STUART G. WILDER, INFANTRY

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Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, Page
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Recollections of the Commanding General,
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ments of fact are accurate.

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~~Fine~~ True copies of original documents of all
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its components. The most authoritative,
comprehensive and accessible source avail-
able on any combat organization in the
World War. It contains all orders, summa-
ries of intelligence, operations reports,
memoranda, field messages, etc., etc., from
the files of the Adjutant General and
private owners. (15 volumes available)

G-2 G.H.Q., A.E.F.

History of 251 Divisions of the
German Army which participated in
the War.
Washington, Government Printing Office.

A complete and accurate account of the
organization and service of all units
described and their components.

Reichswehrministerium.

Selected documents from War Diaries, Battle-Order Maps, etc., of the 18th German Army, 26th Reserve Corps, etc.

Translations from original documents in the German Reichsarchiv. Completely authoritative enemy sources for units engaged at Cantigny.

Society of the First Division

History of the First Division. Philadelphia, The John C. Winston Company, 1922.

Carefully written by a board of participants in the operations described, from original records of the division after an examination of the battlefields. Very accurate as far as it goes and thoroughly documented. However, no names of persons or adjacent units are given in it, it was written without access to enemy sources, and it never mentions an action of any person or unit which might be considered discreditable.

DK

Thomas, Shipley

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Written by an officer of the 26th Infantry (First Division) who had access to all War Department records but not to German records. A record of operations accurate as to contents.

Wilder, Stuart G.

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A contemporary document kept by the author. Entries made at the time and, while meager and with gaps, accurate as to matters contained in it.

Wise, Jennings C.

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Times, London	Times History of the War. London, "The Times" 1914-1921.
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U. S. War Department	Battle Participation of Organizations of the A.E.F. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1920.

Morning Reports and Returns of units
of the Third Battalion 16th Infantry.

True
~~Fine~~ copies of originals in the files of
the Adjutant General, Washington, D. C.

Maps were traced from the originals in the
files of the Adjutant General, Washington,
D. C. except for the trace of the front
line after the operation which is made from
the 1/20000 map issued by the American
Battle Monuments Commission.

MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS USED

Bullard	"Personalities and Reminiscences of the War"
Hist. of 251 German Divs.	"History of 251 Divisions of the German Army which participated in the "ar"
Hist. of 1st Div.	"History of the First Division"
Hist. of AEF	"History of the A. E. F."
Diary of S.G.W.	"Diary kept by the writer"

Marginal references containing a volume number refer to the
indicated volume of the World War Records of the First Division;
the pages of these are unnumbered. Marginal reference containing
the name of a German unit, as "26th Res. Corps", "272d R.I.R.", are
to the file of German War Diaries.

INTRODUCTION

The history of the First Division throughout the period from the declaration of war until the summer of 1918 is one of pioneering effort. The casual reader, learning of the great achievements of the American arms in the closing half-year of the war, gains no true comprehension of the long and troubled development of the American military organization up to that time. War found the nation unprepared and, due to the political situation, the Army ^{was} prepared as well. Organization, strength, armament, even military policy and system of training were lacking. These were supplied in various ways. Policy and organization were extemporized, strength augmented by draft, armament manufactured or purchased abroad.

The system of training came more slowly and of this the First Division laid the foundations. The national unpreparedness had another important outgrowth which could not at once be remedied: military prestige was also entirely lacking. The associates of the new belligerent had no confidence whatever in the capacity of the American arms and this scepticism was based on hard experience. Trained troops under veteran command had failed before this and the American Army had done nothing worthy of consideration in half a century. Remembering this the efforts of the British and French to secure the Americans as replacements in their own armies seem more justifiable.

Before the American Army, then, could achieve the equal and separate station to which its size, potential power and the national aspirations entitled it and

escape the tutelage which lesser allies on both sides underwent, it was necessary to build up a reputation, and Allied confidence in the capabilities of the American Army was, the writer submits, the work of the First Division. In every step of preparation this division was the first apprentice and its success in each justified the use of the later arrivals.

*and No 2d
1 Belleau Woods*

"The Cantigny operation, though relatively small, marks a distinct step forward in American participation in the war." (1) Its success proved that the American Army was qualified to engage in offensive operations; for the first time the Americans took and held what had been German.

(1) Letter of Gen. Pershing to Gen. R. L. Bullard, 28 May 1918 - Hist. 1st Div. p 86. ✓

Besides its historical significance it has interest to the military searcher for another reason. It was the only offensive engagement of the Americans in trench operations, the old system of static warfare, of limited objectives and vast and detailed preparations seeking no decision, which was even at that time outmoded and soon to be discarded. The mastery by the troops of the First Division of the characteristic technique of organization and consolidation, as well as the highly specialized tactics, will, it is thought, repay investigation. It is in this belief that an account of such a minor operation as that detailed here is set forth.

Moreover "no narrative of the Cantigny operation would be complete without at least a **brief** account of the character and the prior service of the troops engaged in it." (2) For the better understanding of these troops, then, such an account is included.

(2) Turn of the Tide, p 7.

ORGANIZATION AND PRIOR SERVICE

The declaration of war by the United States against the German Empire, 6 April 1917, found the Sixteenth Infantry at Camp Newton D. Baker, El Paso, Texas. It had recently returned from participation in the Punitive Expedition into Mexico and the personnel, commissioned and enlisted, was thoroughly trained, disciplined and experienced in the conduct of field service as practiced at that time. The rifle companies had a strength for duty of about fifty men. The organization was one of three battalions of four rifle companies each, and one regimental machine gun company armed with Benet-Mercier and Lewis guns.

About the middle of May, 1917, while it was engaged in border patrol, it received about fifty recruits per company and a week later was recalled to Fort Bliss. There Companies D, H and M were transformed into machine gun companies, the battalion organization thus becoming the same as that at present in use. At the same time additional recruits were assigned to bring the companies to a strength of 200 men. The men received were volunteers who had enlisted within the first two weeks of war and a very choice grade of recruits. The second increment were hand-picked from a large camp and contained only large-sized men of American ancestry, literate and intelligent. Though necessarily young, a large proportion were well educated. This select class of men was largely responsible for the ease with which training was assimilated and new conditions met in France, also for the success of the division in absorbing replacements after its heavy losses in 1918.

On 12 June, 1917, it sailed from Hoboken, N.J., with the 18th, 26th and 28th Infantry and the 5th Marines, landing at St. Nazaire, 26 June. From that time until October 1917, the regiment and division were engaged in training. Division and regimental headquarters were at Gondrecourt, Meuse.

Training included the basic instruction of the soldier and the mechanics of unit tactics to include the battalion. This long period was necessary because of the deplorable lack of training program. Not only did no one know how to teach - no one knew what to teach.

Not even a standard organization for the rifle company had been determined on. A table of organization presently appeared dividing the company into three platoons of two sections each. The sections were again divided not into uniform squads but into grenade and automatic rifle groups of different strength. These were arranged into a squad formation for marching according to the judgment of the company commander and the whole organization was diverged from as desired, making prevalent a considerable variation in companies. This was never remedied.

The training followed in general the French system and was conducted by the 47th Division of Chasseurs Alpins, whose battalions were billeted near the American units. (4) Schools to teach the technique of automatic weapons and grenades were conducted by the Chasseurs. In addition British instructors taught the system of bayonet training now in use generally in this army. At the same time rifle marksmanship was emphasized and even while instruction was groping with the unfamiliar formalities of trench warfare as conducted by the French there still persisted a consciousness that not all of our pre-war system was valueless.

4) Hist. 1st
Div., p 19

The machine gun companies during this time remained with their battalions, until in September the establishment of the school at Gondrecourt made a readjustment of stations necessary. They were then assembled in one station for centralized training.

Much of the effort of the division was devoid of benefit to it. Both tactics and equipment were tried on the dog with the First Division as the only available animal. Trained and efficient officers and men were taken to establish a central school at Gondrecourt, which was later to become the First Corps School; this school was the fountain-head from which issued the instructional methods used by the divisions forming in the United States. The embryonic S.O.S., the Air Service and the Tanks also drew heavily. Supplies became increasingly short, clothing was by winter practically impossible to obtain and the size of our great companies made overcrowding prevalent in the towns.

The increasing hardships were met by an increasing physical resistance which inured the men to withstand the worst exposure of campaign without weakening. This gradual and severe hardening was a prime factor in producing that endurance and fortitude which was "never broken by hardship or battle" (5) and gave the division its (unique) battle-life.

In late October 1917 the first battalion of each regiment occupied a very quiet position east of Luneville, where for ten days the routine of occupation of a defensive sector was learned. During the following relief by the second battalions, F Company, 16th Infantry, was raided and suffered the first casualties of the war. (6) Following the relief of the third battalions,

(5) G.O. 201,
G.H.Q.

(6) Hist. 1st
Div. p 30 ✓

maneuvers of all arms were engaged in, culminating in inter-brigade operations lasting several says. These ^{Sh} maneuvers were almost entirely in open warfare, with **tactics** comparable to those now in use in the Army. Meeting engagements, development for attack of a brigade in route column, the occupation of a defensive position in a mobile situation, and similar operations were conducted. It is now well known that this phase of training was engaged in by direction of the Commander-in-Chief personally and his insistence upon it in his army was one of the greatest of his contributions to victory. The **junior** officers did not understand the purpose of all this and, being filled with French doctrine and without broadening experience and at the same time eager for active service, they considered that valuable time was being lost "chasing Indians". The program was carried out day and night regardless of weather in an exceptionally severe winter. General Robert L. Bullard, the division commander, stated at a critique that it was "the worst day he had seen troops out in in thirty-five years' service." (7)

(7) Diary of
S.G.W.

A feature of this training which shows clearly the improvement in educational methods in the Army was the complete failure to give officers any **basic** theoretical instruction in tactics. Great emphasis was laid on the acquisition of technique of every sort but junior officers led companies into battle without an hour of instruction in combat principles as they are now covered in Training Regulations. Such understanding as they acquired came from their experience on maneuvers. Instead of theoretical instruction followed by practical

application officers of less than a year's service were given two hundred half-trained men and engaged in division maneuvers. One result was that those quick to comprehend soon grasped the unformulated underlying principles, their initiative and self-reliance were strongly developed and some notable natural leaders came to the front and were recognized. On some less gifted, however, the light was slow to break and mistakes were made which instruction in any regimental school would have avoided. And trial-and-error instruction is always expensive. A due proportion, of course, never knew what it was all about. Certainly no reserve officer who has completed any correspondence course will enter battle in the next war with so little basic knowledge as the company and platoon commanders of the First Division.

During December, 1917, an important change in the First Division was effected. Organization and tactics which, till then, followed the French triangular system, now reflected the growing British influence which became paramount in our service; it continued so until the American Army began to find itself about mid-summer and adapt the foreign theories of war to its peculiar national genius. The machine gun companies, D, H and M, of the infantry regiments, were transferred entire and combined to form the 2d and 3d Machine Gun Battalions. (8) Replacement battalions for all the regiments arrived during December. From these, new rifle companies were organized to fill the vacancies and a stiffening of a few trained men from the other companies of its battalion was given each. At the same time all rifle companies were brought to the new strength of 250

(8) Hist. 1st
Div., p 36

(9) Diary of S.G.W.men. (9)

M Company, 16th Infantry, was one of those thus formed and the writer, who had commanded L Company on the Mexican Border and continuously up till then, was transferred to command it. He continued in command throughout the period covered here. The company was composed of replacements forwarded from the training camp at Syracuse, New York. Transfers had been selected by the unit commanders from their own men. (10); the quality of the material was therefore not high. Most of the men had been drafted in September; they were only partly trained, discipline was low and the proportion of non-English speaking foreigners was high. A great many had never fired the rifle. Thirty-six were German, Austrian- or Turkish-born, and several could speak no English whatever. There were many Poles and Russians and Jugo-Slavs of various sorts; a racial group of high quality were Cornishmen from the mines at Butte.

(10) Major M.S.
Eddy,

With regard to these foreign-born soldiers the writer found no difference between them and native Americans in courage or willingness or the conduct which we commonly consider to be inspired by patriotism. They were generally more amenable than the true Americans to discipline, particularly the Slavs, and were as enduring of physical hardship. They lacked in quickness of perception and were harder to instruct but much of this can be explained by the language difficulty. They did not furnish the wealth of noncommissioned officer material to be found in the native stock. The few men entirely ignorant of English were found places on routine tasks which they performed well; such men were notably patient and obedient.

The military capacity of these men appeared very early. The company was throughout one of the lowest in march casualties and was quickly notable for the small amount of firing done at night.

The men arrived badly equipped with clothing. All wore the garrison shoe, a light shoe with cloth lining and unshod sole which quickly wore out on the crushed rock of the French roads, and these had all been fitted too tightly. New shoes were absolutely unobtainable - as were also socks and underclothes - and many men were forced to make the hard march to the Toul sector in January wearing Arctic overshoes in place of shoes, with ruinous results to the feet. In addition they were not hardened to the climate, living conditions and impure water but withal bore themselves well.

From 15 January to 10 March, 1918, the First Brigade occupied the Ansauville Sector, north of Toul.

(11) This was an old and stabilized sector on the south side of the St. Mihiel salient, occupied since 1915 and with highly organized defensive works. With the coming of the Americans it became moderately active. Here M Company underwent three eight-day tours in the front line and engaged in the activities of the support and reserve positions. It carried on the construction of trenches and wire in all positions and learned patrolling and the routine of trench warfare. No offensive operations were engaged in or serious attacks resisted. The casualties were slight but by early April when the division assembled the new organization was fully as efficient as the average company of the regiment and not the least able in the battalion.

(11) Hist 1st.
Div., p 43 ✓

SITUATION IN THE CANTIGNY SECTOR

In the middle of April, 1918, the Allied fortunes were at a low ebb. The German March offensive had been a tremendous blow, well nigh disastrous, and another great attack was expected against the British which would involve the new line. The enemy had so completely gained the offensive that nothing was contemplated except to parry the new thrust and no effective system of defensive tactics had been devised by which it could be done. America had been in the war for just a year and her army had so far accomplished nothing. (18) No offensive operation at all had been undertaken since the previous September by the Allies. (19) Allied unity of command had at last been achieved but those who even knew of it did not understand its significance.

(18) Turn of the Tide, pp 3-4

(19) G-3, 1355. Operations Reports, 1st Div. - Vol. XII.

The mission of the newly-engaged American division was primarily to hold its position. The conduct of the enemy was such as to indicate to every grade the probability of another great attack at any time. All recognized that though every road and avenue of approach was harassed with constant artillery fire the enemy took care not to destroy the main front-to-rear roads behind the American lines, while he used every effort to interfere with the work of consolidation.

The sector to which the First Division came was west of Montdidier at the point where the lines turned from east-and-west to north-and-south - the extreme limit of the German advance. It was naturally well adapted to organization for defense. From 2000 to 3000 yards in rear of the front lines a slight ridge, higher than any ground on the German side, paralleled the front. This gave artillery observation, long fields of fire to

Intensive training was conducted in the reserve position and during the three weeks of rest in the old training area while the Second Brigade held the sector. At this time alarming reports were heard of the progress of a great German drive in Picardy and it was generally felt by the rank and file that the division might take an active part on that front. It was not unprepared therefore for the order for entrainment. Unknown to it, General Pershing had offered to the Allied High Command all his forces and the First Division

(12) Hist 1st. Div., p 64 ✓ had been accepted as ready for use. (12)

(13) Hist. 1st Div., p 66 ✓ During the first week of April the division moved by rail to the Gisors area (13) northwest of Paris and 75 kilometers south of Montdidier, the limit of the

(14) Diary of S.G.W. German advance. By that time the attack had been halted and the First Division had time to engage in some open warfare training, culminating in a divisional liaison maneuver for all echelons. (14) This was important to the new companies which had not been present for the

(15) Diary of S.G.W. winter maneuvers. Upon assignment of the division to the French First Army the Commander-in-Chief assembled all officers at Division Headquarters at Chaumont-en-Vexin and addressed them. (15) From his manner it was obvious to everyone that an operation of the greatest importance, at least to the Americans, was before them and his earnestness impressed all hearers.

(16) Diary of S.G.W. Immediately after this a four-day march to the front began (16), the division passing into the control of the First Army. (17) The weather was mild and the country and roads fine. The division moved on parallel roads and the marches were not exhausting so the troops arrived in rear of the destination physically and mentally fit.

(17) Hist. 1st Div., pp 69-70. ✓

the front and cover in rear and became the site of the main line of resistance. Woods of no great size were conveniently numerous and growing crops covered the open ground. The country was well drained due to a **chalk** formation close under the soil. This chalk, though easily worked with the pick, showed badly on aerial photographs and all new works were soon taken under fire.

The German position was not as favorably located as the American. Instead of a ridge a narrow stream-~~valle~~ valley, that of the Trois Doms, paralleled the front about 3000 yards in its rear and gave covered lateral communication and artillery positions. The first position held a footing on the level ground far enough to the west of the stream to cover movements in the valley but so near that any Allied advance would jeopardize its use. The next defensive position was beyond the 3 Doms. The only good German observation was had from the plateau of Cantigny, a flat nose projecting southeastward from the main mass of the western ridge. To north and west and south lay ravines while 1000 yards to the east the ground fell away to the 3 Doms. Only to the northwest was the land level or rising. Protected by the ravine to the south the Germans had maintained a **salient** projecting on that side a half mile into the Allied line. Observation from the town prevented movement by day over a considerable part of the ground in front of the main line of resistance. A reasonable resistance in it would disorganize an attack made upon the positions to the east; it was therefore the most important feature of the terrain on the enemy side.

When the First Brigade in late April displaced units of the 45th and 162d Colonial Divisions on a front of four kilometers, it found the lines weakly held by these divisions which were not of high quality. They had stopped the enemy advance which by then was wearing itself out (20) but were numerically too weak to do much work in organizing the sector. (21) A front line trench had been dug but it was not continuous and many front line units could not be reached by day. A little wire, also not continuous, had been put up in front of the front line. Little work except shelter had been done on any other position, as at that time the disposing of troops in depth with emphasis of the organization of a main line of resistance well in rear of the front line, had not come strongly into vogue. Even fire trenches for other than the front line position had not been dug; there were no communication trenches or dug-outs. The Infantry and Artillery telephone nets were very inadequate. On the main line of resistance the garrison was sheltered in cellars in the towns. As a French officer is said to have remarked, "It is not a sector but it is a good place to make one."

Coincidentally with the American organization progressed the parallel work of the enemy. Opposite this front were the 25th Reserve and the 30th Divisions; on 16 May the 30th was replaced by the 82d Reserve Division. (23) These were rated as sector-holding troops, the assault troops of the March offensive having been withdrawn for use elsewhere. These experienced units were by no means inferior and knew their work thoroughly.

(20) Bullard -
Pers. & Rem.
of the War,
p 178.
(21) p 183. ✓

(23) Hist. of 251
German Divs.
p 390. ✓

They fortified their positions with diligence and skill and patrolled energetically, conducting small and large scale raids with vigor and capturing identifications. Great activity was necessary to establish and hold control of No Man's Land. They suffered greatly from our artillery fire (22) but until the Cantigny operation shattered their effectiveness permanently the Americans were never able to disregard them.

(22) Summaries of Intelligence Vol. IV.

The organization of these divisions was well known to the Allies. Immediately on identification of the 82d Reserve Division on that front a full history, organization and estimate of it came through G-2, G.H.Q., from the French. Most of its service had been on the Eastern Front and it had engaged in the operations there until December 1917, when it was brought to the St. Mihiel area. Before the move most of its Alsatians were transferred out and better replacements given it. With special training it was greatly improved; though still rated "Kampf truppen 3" (third class in a scale of four), its use in an offensive was expected by the French. Its strength was equal to or in excess of that of the average division. Some companies had 250 men and all over 200. Each company had an assault group (Stosstrupp) of 80 to 90 men and by April all had five machine guns and some the full allowance of six. (24) In the fighting during the summer and fall it was almost constantly in the line in the St. Quentin area. It resisted strongly until reduced to about 1200 combatants by October 1918.

(24) Annex to Summary of Intelligence, 1st Div., 16 May, 1918, Vol. IV

(25) Hist. of 251 German Div. (25)

The 25th Reserve Division was rated second-class in March 1918. It became exhausted by too long stays in the line and deteriorated until disbanded and used as replacements by October. The 30th Division was considered first-class but it too deteriorated during

(26) Hist. of 251 German Divs. ✓ the spring until only rated second-class by summer. (26)

As usually happened when Americans entered an area, the sector became more active. Artillery of all kinds had been assembled during the recent activity and with ammunition supply facilitated by the good communications in rear the firing was enormous. Each side had offensive intentions and sought to prevent the other consolidating a position; suspected works and routes of approach were under continuous fire.

ENTRY INTO THE CANTIGNY SECTOR

Immediately upon entry into the line the construction of defensive works was undertaken, a task whose conduct was well understood by all ranks. The organization was the standard one always used by the First Division for both offense and defense: regiments **abreast** in column of battalions. The 16th Infantry was on the right. M Company on 24 April went into the reserve of the first position around Belle Assise Farm where it dug trenches and on 28 April passed to support at Broyes (27), where it strung wire and worked on the main line of resistance. From 2 to 10 May it occupied the front line in the Bois de Fontaine (27), a hot corner where it lost a number of men principally from the constant shelling. Patrolling, digging and wiring engaged it.

(27) Diary of S.G.W.

On relief of the First Brigade by the Second on 14 May, the First passed into reserve, the front being too narrow for the whole division. By that time fire trenches had been dug on all the lines of all positions and the first position and main line of resistance fairly well protected by wire, the latter carefully sited. Work did not proceed very rapidly because of enemy fire and the shortness of the nights which by summer were less than six hours long. The German units opposite complained of the same difficulties in the way of their work. (28)

(28) War Diary
of 272d
R.I.R.

PREPARATIONS

Shortly after the arrival of the Americans a plan was drawn up by the French First Army for the capture of Montdidier by the American First Division with two French divisions. (29) After consideration this was dropped and a much less extensive operation by the Americans alone substituted.

(29) Hist. of
A.E.F. p 73.

Headquarters First Division prepared plans for the capture of the town of Cantigny by one regiment; these were adopted by 10th Corps without material change. The purpose of the original plan was strategic, to free an important railroad center. The operation adopted was of local importance only, to improve the situation of the front lines and deprive the enemy of an important and defensible observation post. It had been twice captured and recaptured before and **from its** obvious advantages to the Germans it was certain that they would strongly endeavor to retake it. (30)

(30) Bullard -
Pers. & Rem.
of the War,
p 196.

Weighty but impondenable considerations were the morale factors. All who heard the Commander-in-Chief's address on 16 April were convinced that he

contemplated an offensive use of the division, and that soon. Several American divisions had held quiet sectors successfully. The 26th Division had fared ignobly at Seicheprey the month before but the 2d Division had given a good account of itself in the Toulon-Troyon sector. The First Division had passed satisfactorily through all the steps of training and testing. Its conduct in an attack would be an index of the offensive value of the American Army, which was now the only hope of restoring the balance of man-power.

At the same time it was imperative that no untimely reverse should spoil the effect of an American victory. French command therefore assembled a body of artillery enormous for so small a front. 386 guns were made available, 178 of which were heavy guns and howitzers up to 280 caliber. Approximately 200,000 rounds of (31) Hist. 1st Div., p 79 ✓ ammunition were accumulated. (31) Elaborate tables of fire were prepared and wire communications greatly extended. A platoon of twelve medium French tanks and a flame-projector detachment were added.

The 28th Infantry, selected to make the attack, was replaced by the 18th Infantry and given special training. While in the sector the 18th dug a jump-off trench and a dummy to deceive the enemy and accumulated supplies in dumps close to the assault position. Wagons brought munitions as far forward as P.C. Minneapolis at the price of some casualties. All these preparations were made with a fair degree of secrecy, so that officers of the 26th Infantry on the night of the projected attack were unaware of the plans at the hour of assault. (32) Maj. B.R. Legge.

The plan of attack was simple. Three battalions abreast, from right to left 1st, 2d and 3d, each with three companies in assault, were to make a direct frontal attack. Two companies of the 18th Infantry were in regimental reserve around Bois des Glands. Regimental headquarters were in P.C. Minneapolis, a deep and commodious dug-out in the steep bank north of the quarry below Bois Roberval.

The left battalion, with which we are most concerned, took position on the night 26-27 May, in the trenches on the reverse slope east of Bois St. Eloi, with one company in reserve in that wood. Battalion headquarters were in a very small cut-and-cover dug-out in the eastern corner (about 120.9-331.7) and an aid station was in a larger one on the road in the southeast corner of the same wood (about 120.85-331.7). The order from right to left was M Company, K and L, with I in reserve.

Opposed to this concentration was the German 82d Reserve Division, holding the line with all three regiments. The 270th Reserve Infantry Regiment held from near St. Aignan on the north to the north boundary of the attack. It was not involved. The 272d R.I.R. held from that point to the middle of the town; the 271st R.I.R. from there to the division boundary, the Bois de Fontaine. The important tactical locality was therefore split into about equal halves. The front of the 28th Infantry's attack therefore almost coincided

(33) Order of Battle, Maps, 82d Res. Div. with that of two regiments. (33)

THE ATTACK

The attack was launched at 6:45 AM, 28 May, under a dense rolling barrage and accompanied by terrific artillery concentrations on all known gun positions and possible points of resistance. The enemy reaction was slight and casualties were few and the objective was everywhere reached by 7:20 AM. The garrison of the town made little resistance and was captured in the dug-outs where it had taken refuge. The other enemy elements were driven in the direction of Fontaine sous Montdidier and to the edges of the Bois de Framicourt and Bois de Lalval. A great protective barrage of artillery and machine gun fire was placed before the position and consolidation began.

No sooner was the objective taken than the attached French artillery began to withdraw. The day before the attack the German offensive between Soissons and Rheims had overwhelmed the Chemin des Dames position and it became necessary again to call in every available man and gun to meet a fresh crisis. It has even been said that some French batteries left before they ever fired but this is untrue. (34) However, before noon practically all the attached artillery was on the move including the heavy and medium guns of the 10th Corps on counterbattery work; this was turned over to the divisional artillery and 105's and 120's of the 10th Corps. (35) The tanks withdrew immediately on reaching the objective without a word to anyone and so did the flame-projector detachments. (35)

On cessation of this supporting fire the enemy began to recover and by noon an intense machine gun and artillery fire covered the whole conquered

(34) Gen. C.P.
Summerall.

(35) Operations
Reports,
1st FA Brig.
Vol. XIV.

position. By that time the assaulting troops had
themselves in in shallow trenches, most of them being
concentrated in the front line. In the town of Cantigny,
a support line was occupied but on the left this was
not done. A platoon of I Company formed a strong point
in the cemetery.

The level ground crossed by the left (3d)
battalion was covered with growing crops, largely grain,
which shortened observation from trenches and hid en-
trenched men from each other. This battalion took its
objective and intrenched but about 5:00 PM, after enduring
constantly increasing artillery fire, the center company,
K, began to fall back. It was not driven out and with-
drawal was not due to counterattack; it left to avoid
shell-fire. The company commander had been killed and
the men escaped from the lieutenants due to the diffi-
culty of control under the heavy fire. (36) An order to
withdraw, of unknown origin, is alleged. (37) The right
of L (the left) Company became involved and also fell
back. They continued back as far as Bois St. Eloi, where
they were stopped about 6:00 PM and sent back to the old
front line on the right of the battalion sector. The
withdrawal was not, as described by the battalion com-
mander, "in an orderly manner, by echelon" (37) but a
disorganized retreat. On their return I was on the left
K on the right and L in support. About 1:00 AM, 29 May,
G Company, 18th Infantry, came upon the left (); prac-
tically the whole of these companies was jammed in the
old front line trench, which was congested with men.
Company I afterward reported a movement to connect the
old and new front lines (38); no trace of this was appa-
rent when the troops were relieved and there were no men
in rear of the open flank at that time.

(36) Operations
Reports, 28th
Inf.
Vol. XIII
(Capt. Tack,
Lts. Parker,
Etal)

(37) Oper. Rept.
3d Bn 28th
Inf.
Vol. XIII.

(38) Oper. Rep.
(Capt. Tack)
28th Inf.,
Vol. XIII.

While this was going on, M Company on the right had drawn farther to the right against the 3d Battalion. It held on and was not involved in K Company's retreat. A front line trench was dug and held as an outpost with 15 men, the remaining 65 holding a line of resistance 125 yards in rear. In all about 220 yards of trench were

(39) Oper. Rep.
(Capt. Manning)
28th Inf.
Vol. XIII.

dug (39) and turned over on relief. This all faced north-east, to the front and was not much refused. Between this company and the rest of the battalion there was little connection and that only at night by runner. This flank received the full force of the German preparation and counterattack; the crops to the front were full of German dead though not, as stated by the battalion commander, who had never seen the place "between 900 and 950".

By evening the Germans had reoccupied the abandoned ground; they claimed to have recaptured their old positions up to 200 meters north of Cantigny. (40) They were actually never quite so close.

(40) Morning
Reports,
26th Res.
Corps,
29 May 1918.

29 and 30 May passed without any material change in the position. The intense artillery fire prevented very much improvement in the fortifications or straightening out of the disorganized units. It was impossible to carry up supplies and the troops subsisted on the reserve rations they had brought in with them, eked out by captured German reserve rations of Russian canned fish.

The Germans counterattacked the morning of 29 May with no result but heavy losses to themselves. The Americans reported several counterattacks after 28 May; except the one mentioned these had no foundation in fact whatsoever. The Germans were merely feeling up to the new line and digging in outposts. German tanks were reported frequently, even by an Artillery colonel; the

Germans were actually demoralized by the French tanks which no one had ever seen before. On the other hand they dressed up their operations reports with an imaginary American attack on the 29th (along our entire front in dense waves" which they halted "with heavy losses".

(41) War Diary,
272 R.I.R.

(41) As a matter of fact both sides were exhausted and incapable of further effort and the 28th Infantry and 272d R.I.R. were relieved the night of 30 May by the 16th Infantry and 270th R.I.R. respectively. Both Americans and Germans were glad to settle down to digging in their new positions, while gratifying their feelings by harassing each other with all the available artillery.

ARTILLERY ACTIVITY

During the period of the Cantigny operation the activity of the opposing artillery passed any American experience. The occupation prior to 27 May had been marked by an ever-increasing fire but it was not to be compared with the week following that time. As reports of prisoners indicated its effectiveness the Artillery Brigade's ammunition allowance had been considerably increased. After the attack, when it took over the fire missions of all the units withdrawn, fire reached an intensity beyond that of the great offensives. Ammunition had been accumulated and supply was easy; on 28 May 800 rounds per gun were fired and on 29,30 and 31, 500 rounds per gun. (42) In a position so well reconnoitered and observed, with careful adjustments and ample airplanes and balloons, fire was easy to conduct and extremely accurate.

(42) Oper. Rept.,
1st FA Brig.,
Vol. XIV.

The enemy reaction was appropriate. The new positions were well known to them and the ranges certain; every show of activity brought a quick reply upon them. Reports for these days repeat the tale: "About 6000 shells of 77 to 210 caliber fell on the new positions and

- (43) Summaries of Intelligence, 28 May. 5000 on Villers-Tournelle" (43), "Strong concentrations on Cantigny" (44), "Heavy concentrations of about 2000 shells 77 to 210 between 18.21 and 18.24 hours". (45)
- (44) 30 May.
- (45) 31 May.
- Full details of the dispositions of enemy troops in rear areas, P.C's, routes, supply system and reliefs were learned from prisoners (46) and the artillery bathed every target with fire. The reports show that "enemy artillery reacted strongly" on Cantigny. (47)
- (46) Annex to Sum. of Int. 31 May.
- (47) Sum. of Int. 1 June.

The enemy's accounts show remarkable agreement. On 30 May an aviator reported the Americans forming for attack and "our annihilation fire prevented development of the attack. Our artillery placed waves of annihilation fire against the enemy trenches to the north and east of Cantigny." It "carried on destructive firing" on the same place. (48) This thing continued for days. "Our artillery engaged trenches at, and town of Cantigny with destructive fire." "Our artillery kept up a destructive fire on the new trenches at Cantigny and approaches." (49) "Our artillery harassed against trenches around Cantigny." (50) "Destructive shoot against infantry positions at Cantigny." (51)

- (48) Morning Report, 26th Res. Corps, 30 May.
- Same
- (49) 31 May.
- (50) 1 June.
- (51) 2 June.

The result of all this fire was surprisingly few casualties as soon as the infantry had got below ground. The German losses were very heavy in moving up and forming for their counterattacks, and these were blasted as soon as they appeared. Whenever shallow

intrenchments had been achieved and improved organization effected a system of supply, the losses fell off remarkably. Casualties for the sector totalled over 4900 in seventy-two days (52), an average of 70 men a day for the whole occupation, but considering the vast volume of fire the infantry sheltered in trenches fared better than seems possible. Thus from 1 to 6 June, I Company, 16th Infantry, lost only 15 men and L Company 23, while K lost but 4. (53) The price of this immunity, if it may be so called, was constant refraining from exposure. The time required for organizing dragged out beyond expectation. Nights often passed with little accomplished because of continued harassing fire and gas in the valleys to the rear made supply difficult. In the front lines the ever-enterprising machine-gunners occupied positions in shell-holes at short range and interrupted labor.

(52) Hist. 1st
Div. p 97.

(53) Morning
Reports,
Cos. I, K &
L, 16th Inf.

This fire should constantly be borne in mind in any consideration of these days.

RECONNAISSANCE FOR RELIEF

The 3d Battalion, 16th Infantry, and M Company with it, moved during the night 26-27 May from the main line of resistance at Rocquencourt to a rest position at Maisoncelle-Tuilerie (54), which had been occupied by the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, during training, and vacated earlier the same night. It was evident that the men knew what was before them: they had taken no pains with the police of the town. The 3d Battalion had learned of the impending attack from the crews of the heavy French mortars which had been massed in the valley around Rocquencourt; it also learned in some way of the raid on the 26th Infantry on 27 May. On the morning of 28 May the writer, with some other officers, went to the hills

(54) Diary of
S.G.W.

back of Villers-Tournelle to observe but could see nothing at that distance because of the smoke and dust over the position.

At dark the night 29~~9~~30 a reconnaissance party from the battalion went forward, detrucking near Villers-Tournelle and proceeding on foot down "Death Valley" to P.C. Minneapolis, headquarters of the 28th Infantry. The valley was full of gas and bore the marks of heavy shelling. A brisk fire was at the time being put on the Bois des Glands and vicinity and along the valley toward Le Flessier. Around the P.C. many dead were piled; an aid station had been located in one of the entrances and wounded, who had died, and dead had accumulated there. The quarry was full of dead. All about was the wreckage of battle and the valley floor was well churned up by shell-fire except close under the steep reverse slope.

The party entered the dug-out during the conference of the battalion commander with the commanding officer, 28th Infantry. It was immediately apparent that the situation in the front lines was obscure. The party proceeded then to the dug-out of the commanding officer, 3d Battalion, 28th Infantry, in Bois St. Eloi. This officer indicated the positions of the units on a map but it developed that he had never been over his battalion sector since the attack and was very uncertain of the location of his troops. Runners were available, however, and these conducted the company commanders to the sectors they were to relieve.

The disposition of the battalion on relief was to be as follows: I Company, Captain A. F. Withers, was to relieve M Company, 28th Infantry, on the exposed flank

of the^{new} front line, its right connecting with the 2d Battalion at the hedge. Its immediate and primary mission was to connect the old and new lines and close the gap. K Company, Captain C. L. Irwin, was to relieve the units on the left of the old front line and move forward its right to connect up with I Company's extension. L Company, Captain F. M. Logan, was to take over the right of the battalion's sector on the old front line. Its left, and the right of K Company, were on the communication trench leading back to the Bois St. Eloi. One platoon was ordered to establish a strong point at once in the open gap west of the cemetery.

M Company was to go into battalion reserve in the vicinity of Bois St. Eloi. It had had an undue share of front-line service compared to the other companies of the battalion and so was placed on the reverse slope. The writer immediately reconnoitered his position. The jump-off trenches in front of Bois St. Eloi were about four feet deep; they were occupied by men, probably of L Company. 28th Infantry, with pieces of other units. The Bois St. Eloi had a shallow disconnected trench, also occupied, with light shelters in places, along the front edge and other fragments scattered in it. It was composed of rather small trees and the front edge had been so heavily shelled that the woods were much thinned out. It was apparent that the men would be safer in the trenches in the open. The machine guns which had been assembled in great numbers for the barrage which covered the attack, had been wisely put out in the open on the reverse slope in front of the woods; the hostile fire passed over them with little damage. Implacements in the woods had been badly shot up. St

Having examined his position, the writer obtained a guide and proceeded up the communication trench to the old front line. The head of this trench was under harassing fire which the men nearby said had been pretty constant since the attack; it continued thereafter at frequent intervals. The front line was found to be overcrowded with men, scattered without any apparent order. These were probably from K and I Company, 28th Infantry, and G Company, 18th Infantry. On returning to the rear all the party were found to have encountered the same lack of information and certainty as to the location of units. Captain Withers said at the time that seeing men moving in front of the old front line he inquired who they were. Some men said they were M Company, others that they were Germans. He suggested to the latter that they fire upon them but they replied that they were not sure; they were, in fact, M Company, whose whereabouts were unknown to these men in its rear. (55)

(55) Capt. A.P.
Withers.

During the whole course of this reconnaissance a constant harassing fire was being put on the conquered position and its approaches.

RELIEF OF THE 28th INFANTRY

The following night the 3d Battalion moved up and relieved the 3d Battalion, 28th Infantry, and the other units in the area. The battalion commander, Major W. F. Harrell, took over P.C. Minneapolis, the dug-out occupied by Headquarters, 28th Infantry, and it became battalion P.C. The writer occupied the dug-out in Bois St. Eloi as company P.C. but moved the same night to the better protected and more accessible aid-station dug-out on the road on the south side of the wood. The

company was disposed with one platoon in the more advanced jump-off trench 500 yards east of the woods, two in the trenches just east of the woods, and one in the woods. All companies made the relief without incident and by morning all other elements were out of the sector. The enemy was less active than usual, due, we now know, to his making a relief himself.

At the time of this return to the lines, M Company was commanded by the writer. Captain William R. McMorris (later D.S.C. and Legion of Honor) was second in command. The platoon commanders were Lieutenants Robert P. Clark (later D.S.C.), Robert R. Cooper (wounded 4 June, 1918), Everard D. Seely (wounded 8 June, 1918) and Robert S. Lynn (killed 8 June, 1918). (56) Other than the writer they were temporary war-time officers and their subsequent fate was fairly typical of that of the junior officers of the First Division.

(56) Return, M Co., 16th Inf. May & June, 1918.

During the same night the 16th Infantry relieved the elements of the 28th and 18th in the sector (57) (58), the 2d Battalion occupying the front line southward from the hedge-corner northeast of the town, and garrisoning the town. The position was better prepared for defense by greatly reducing the number of men in it.

(57) Opr. Rept. 1st Div., 31 May.

(58) G-3, 1355, Opr. Rept. 1st Div., 18 Dec. 1918.

Late in the night Captain Howard Hawkinson, 28th Infantry, stopped at the company P.C. on his way out. He gave an account of his movements on 28 May, which are of interest as he was killed in the Meuse-Argonne. He had commanded the left platoon of L Company, 28th Infantry, the left unit of the attack. He advanced (this he stated at the time and the writer has no other knowledge of it) in the indicated direction across grain fields but lost connection with the units on his right.

Division had lost on 27 May 1 officer and 71 men in its costly and fruitless raid on the 26th Infantry. From 28 to 30 May, from the attack to the relief of the 271st and 272d

(61) Report of C.G., 82d Div. to C.G., 26th Res. Corps, 1 June 1918. it lost 46 officers and 1290 men. The next day 29 men were casualties, a total of 47 officers and 1390 men in five days. (61) Heavy losses for units of the German strength.

In spite of the weak numbers and the futile waste of lives in the previous counterattacks, Headquarters 26th Reserve Corps did not relinquish the idea of retaking Cantigny although Headquarters 82d Reserve Division reported the 272d R.I.R. as "for defense only still combatable, if given 21

(62) Hq. 26th Res. Corps, Est. of Sit. 31 May. days' rest and training outside the zone of enemy fire, and furnished replacements." (62) The German command believed that "it was the intention of the enemy to take possession

(63) 26th Res. Corps War Diary, 31 May. of Height 104 (at the east end of the Cantigny plateau) in order to gain a view of the Dom-stream valley and toward Montdidier." (63) It believed that another attack to secure

(64) Est. of Sit., Hq 18th Army, 1 June. ~~this might be expected at any time. (64) On 31 May~~ faint attacks of artillery fire and men running forward were ordered in order to draw the American barrage and locate it accurately. On 31 May the 82d Reserve Division was ordered

to launch a surprise attack without the usual previous gassing of the American batteries, with its objective the former main line of resistance. The attack was to be made by the 270th R.I.R., which was to take position that night. H hour was set for 7:20 (8:20 AM Allied time) and D Day 3 June. This attack was cancelled 1 June, thereby avoiding another fruitless slaughter of men who from the start never had a chance. On 31 May the 82d Reserve Division reported strength as follows:

His men became scattered and lay down in the wheat, so that at last he came to the front edge of a wheat-field looking into the draw, probably somewhere about 121.8-332.4 (approximation by the writer) with only about a dozen men. He halted, directed his men to dig in and sent a small patrol to establish connection on his right. He sent other patrols through the day but these never returned. While in this position Hawkinson was counter-attacked from the Bois de Lalval but repulsed the effort with rifle fire. His fire drew other men to him out of the wheat until he had about forty men. Their digging drew hostile artillery- and machine-gun fire, they having long-handled shovels, but though it continued all day they maintained themselves until night. His repeated patrols to the right brought no result and his messages to the rear no answer (it does not appear that these were ever received). His men secured rifles and ammunition from the dead of both sides and the afternoon counter-attack was beaten off by rifle fire. After dark, his ammunition being low, his command small and isolated on both flanks, he withdrew to the old front line. (59) His account was borne out by the fact that the 16th Infantry patrols later found American dead in this area.

(59) Capt. Howard
Hawkinson.

While this relief was being effected a relief was going on opposite. The battered 271st and 272d R.I.R. were being taken out. The line was taken over by the 270th which extended from the north. I/270 held its position as before. II/270 held from the left of I to the Bois de Framicourt and III/270 from there to the Cantigny-Fontaine road. I/118 of the 25th Reserve Division went in from that point to the Bois de Fontaine, the former division boundary. (60) The 82d Reserve

(60) Order of
Battle Maps,
82d Res.
Div.

270 R.I.R.	1st Bn	455	2d Bn	431	3d Bn	410
271		91		240		253
272		160		230		270

(65) 26th Res.
Corps to
82d R.D.

a total of 2539 for the infantry brigade. (65) The 82d Reserve Division was through.

The most pressing work before the 3d Battalion 16th Infantry, was to close the open flank. The Germans in Trench De Dresde and the Americans in the new front line were mutually outflanked and outflanking, each far in rear of the other's position. Each could enfilade the other's trenches and the one who recovered first was in an excellent position to roll up the other's line. The success of the whole operation was still not secure. At the same time, unknown to the front line infantry, the artillery which had made the initial advance easy was gone and care had to be taken not to bring on a general engagement by giving the impression of a serious attack. The instructions given the battalion were explicit on this; the reason being unknown, the junior officers considered themselves let down by not having a powerful artillery support.

M Company, in its support position, was immediately employed in improving the defensive works, digging and stringing wire, and in battlefield police. The bodies around battalion P.C. and in the quarry were buried on the slope south of Bois St. Eloi. 26 of these were buried in one great shell-hole enlarged and deepened suitably and the next night, when the new chaplain sent up properly named wooden crosses the corporal in charge was mightily puzzled how to put them all on one grave.

A vast amount of materiel, American, French and German, lay everywhere. This was carried gradually to the sand-pits 500 yards up the Le Flessier road to be removed in the ration carts which mightly brought cooked food to that point. Three weeks later, when the battalion was again in the lines in the sector adjoining to the north, a considerable amount had not yet been transported away in the small surplus space afforded by the carts. The commanding officer of I Company was unjustly relieved on the report of this state of affairs by a staff officer of First Brigade who had daringly ventured so far forward. The companies in the front line carried out further quantities. A patrol of L Company brought in a 37-mm gun from beyond Trench De Dresde, which it found surrounded by its dead crew, and several German machine guns and whole cart-loads of rifles were salvaged. More or less fragmentary horses lay about - one directly in front of M Company's P.O. - where a wagon-load of Stokes mortar ammunition had been hit by a shell before the attack. This work engaged the company during the nights from 31 May to 2 June. The days were spent under cover avoiding shell fire which caused small losses daily.

On the morning after the relief the writer reconnoitered the whole position as far as was accessible by day - as late as 8 June, and probably much after that, the new front line was impossible of access after dawn.

(66) Report of
Co. A, 18th
Inf.
Vol. XIII.

(66) On arriving at the head of the C.T. leading to the front line he found a group of K Company men watching a lieutenant fire at a German who was sunning himself naked to the waist, on the top of the ground not above 200 yards

to their front; the Trench De Dresde was certainly occupied by day.

The ground wherever German works had been suspected was terribly shell-torn by the preparation fire. To the southeast toward the cemetery mortars of 240 and 280 caliber had fired heavily. The whole surface was upheaved and holes up to ten feet deep and fifteen across were everywhere. About half way to the cemetery L Company had established a strong-point of a platoon with two machine guns and this he visited. It was possible to reach this by day through the shell-holes. Some immense craters had been connected up by two trenches forming a cross and up the sides of the holes fire-steps had been dug. On 2 June during harassing fire a single shell burst at the junction of these trenches and killed five men and wounded four. The cemetery was so completely destroyed that little vestige remained; small fragments of stone, splintered bone and the bead-strung wire of which the French make flowers for grave decorations were the only traces showing in the mounds and holes that covered that part of the position. Later, on the night of 3 June a sergeant with some machine guns wandered into the new front-line trench and inquired of the writer where the cemetery was located; he had been unable to find it in the dark. The night of 31 May, I Company was visited by the writer and the position examined.

K and L Companies were engaged during the whole occupation in digging, wiring and patrolling. The scores of dead, American and German, who lay in the wheat were buried as fast as found; it was soon possible to locate them by scent and for the same reason necessary to bury them. They brought in quantities of salvaged equipment also. The position

of I Company, however, was the important one in the battalion. During three nights it had been unable to advance into the gap to its left rear and dig in. Any movement along the line indicated for occupation brought machine-gun fire, according to the men, though only two men were killed and one wounded on 1 June and six wounded and one shell-shocked on the 2d. On 2 June Captain Withers, commanding, was evacuated, suffering from dysentery, and Captain W. R. McMorris, second in command of M Company was placed temporarily in command (67); he returned to M Company 4 June (68), when Captain Holden was assigned to I Company. (67)

(67) Morning Rpt.
Co. I, 16th
Inf.

(68) Return of M
Co. 16th Inf.
May & June,
1918.

THE NEW POSITION

On the afternoon of 3 June the writer was summoned to Battalion P.C. Major Harrell had a map showing the position and pointed out the already well-understood situation of the open flank. He declared that the gap must be closed - the writer agreed - he continued that it would require a good man with a good company - the writer, having a suspicion of the facts, expressed confidence in I Company. The major stated that M Company must relieve I Company, move out the line and dig in that night. The writer expostulated, claiming that six hours of darkness made it impossible. He was then shown a pencil communication written and signed by General Bullard, the division commander, directing that the situation be relieved that night. It was obvious that Division Headquarters was very nervous about the continued existence of such a condition and it seems probable that those responsible for the area were also nervous for their scalps if it was not remedied. The note was very

strong; unfortunately a search by the writer in the files of the World War Division of the Adjutant General's office was fruitless and it is probable that it was not preserved. It now appears that the Commander-in-Chief, who had witnessed the attack, had personally written General Bullard, enjoining him in the strongest terms to hold the captured position regardless of the cost. (69) It was finally agreed that a night's extension of the time allowed for moving the line would be secured if possible and this concession he obtained. Assurance was also given that on completion of the operation the company would be relieved at once.

(69) Bullard,
p 198.

Immediately after dark on 3 June, M Company relieved I Company (70) and reconnaissance was made for the proposed night operation. It was found that frequent but rather ineffectual machine gun fire began after dark from a short distance northwest of the company's flank and continued through the night. It was later learned that the Germans placed light machine guns on the mounds under which sugar beets were stored and from this slight command were able to shoot over the standing grain. This was alarming rather than dangerous but it seems to have held up I Company.

(70) Diary of
S.G.W.

The position was found to consist of two trenches, **one** a front line trench along the line finally consolidated as the front line. Its **right** was at the hedge corner (122.3-331.9) and it extended northwest about 125 yards. It was about four feet deep, quite straight, and continuous. A trench of similar description paralleled it about 125 yards in rear. Two platoons were placed in each, with Chauchat groups pushed out at night in shell-holes about forty yards to the front and

to the flank. One or two German light machine guns left by the previous occupants were posted at the end of the trench to fire to the flank. Many men had German rifles as well as their own and the potential defensive firepower was enormous. There was no wire. Near the left of the support line a hole had been dug in the bottom of the trench about four feet in diameter and six feet deep, like a shallow well. This was company P.C. It was very secure as only a direct hit could harm it but the chalk spoil thrown out showed clearly on an airplane photograph and it drew artillery fire of all calibers. However a candle could be lit in it under cover of shelter halves and messages read and written at night.

The weakness of the company lay in the way men were jammed in the trenches, too close to lie comfortably or for anyone to pass along readily. Their number only made them vulnerable without proportionately increasing their power of resistance.

The route to the rear ran west parallel to the hedge to near the cemetery and thence to the salient in the old front line (121.6-331.9). Suitable spacings along this for the combat groups to jump off from were estimated and the direction of advance determined. The nights were very dark and distances deceptive. The next day these were confirmed by observation from the trench. Nothing further could be done in preparation.

Shortly before daylight Major John M. Craig, commanding the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry, came to Company P.C. on reconnaissance. He stated that the units he relieved were very much disorganized, that two companies of the 18th Infantry of which no one knew anything were in the front line on the relief and that no

been checked they moved off without signal. Due to the blackness of the night visual coordination was impossible and it was not desirable to alarm the enemy with a Very light. Bayonets had been fixed and the men instructed to hold their fire and rush any enemy encountered. A good deal of machine gun fire was drawn at once but the nearest groups rushed the positions firing and the crews withdrew without personal contact. Emplacements were found in several places on sugar-beet mounds. The company and platoon commanders at once began correcting the alignment. Some groups were found to have gone too far, some were far short or had lost direction. In the unfamiliar terrain the men were very hard to find and it required a great deal of running up and down to locate and place the men, as the officers directing lost their bearings too. No prismatic compasses were to be had, the only control instrument being a cheap little French watch compass of no utility whatever here. German flares were constantly fired and it speaks well for the calm self-possession of the men, and the precaution of locking the pieces beforehand, that there were no casualties inflicted by our own men. In fact all casualties were very light - a few wounded by machine gun fire. The situation was so obscure to the Germans that they were unable to fire artillery at the new works though they shelled the older lines freely. The morning reports of M Company are missing from the files of the Adjutant General - probably lost - but the writer's recollection is that no more than half a dozen wounded were lost that night.

The men were by now experts with the spade. Each group at once put out a sentinel, stuck its rifles in the ground by the bayonet, handy for use and got underground as quickly as possible. When dawn drove all hands to cover a

provision for their relief had been made. They departed with the 28th Infantry, leaving a wide gap in the line which was not filled till the next day, when the units on each side spread out to close it. Company E, 18th Infantry, had also been forgotten in the Bois de Cantigny.

(71) Opr. Rep.
Co. E, 18th
Inf.,
Vol. XIII.

(71)

An incident of the day (4 June) shows the difficulty of communication, and perhaps some other lessons. Several hours after daylight in the morning the men in the trench near P.C. reported that a runner was coming from the rear. He came, of course, over the top under heavy fire aimed at him, springing up and running, jumping into holes, reappearing to one side where he had crawled, alarming watchers by lying concealed. Machine guns and snipers fired at him and a .77 in the Bois de Framicourt. He risked his life at every step. At last he reached the support trench and made his way over the anxious men who sought to learn his mission, and gave the writer an envelope. The top of the P.C. hole was fringed with concerned faces as it was opened. The message read, "You will report with the morning report this date the names of all men ^{in your company} who are graduate chemists."

(72) Diary of
S.G.W.

Immediately after dark of 4 June (72) Lieutenant Clark's platoon was withdrawn from the support trench and conducted to the line of departure. The men were placed at the proper interval by the writer and him, the direction of advance pointed out and they were told how far to go. The whole movement was controlled solely by the leaders of the little groups. The line extended to the left about as far as the fragments of German trench in rear of Trench De Dresde (about 121.9-331.9); it crossed the St. Aignan road. When they had

(73) Letter of
Maj. R.H.
Lewis, GHQ
Liaison Off.
5 June,
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line of eight posts (73) extended from the old flank down the trace of what was to become the front line trench. Each post occupied a trench of about two yards per man, of zigzag trace laid out by the officers, about three feet deep and two wide. These were forty or fifty yards apart but they completely controlled that flank.

On the same night II/272 R.I.R. relieved II/270 in the front lines to the north of Cantigny. "Reconstruction of trenches is continued with all means at our disposal." They found it difficult with such depleted personnel but began a continuous trench by connecting up shell-holes and craters. Wiring was reported difficult because it was hard to bring material forward; it was carried up by the Mining (Pioneer?)

(74) War Diary of
272d R.I.F.

Platoon of the Engineer Train. (74) Our patrols reported no wire before the enemy trenches at this time.

The expected airplane which was to photograph the position to see if it was correctly sited, did not materialize. As the marking panels had been used as cleaning rags for rifles during the great dearth of supplies in the winter the groups had been provided with sheets of newspaper, a perfectly satisfactory substitute. When on 6 June the plane did arrive the occupants were clearly visible in the trench, which extended as shown; the writer had a copy of the photograph made at that time but it has since been lost.

In spite of disappointment at not going out, work continued. Lieutenant Seely's platoon was taken from the front line and began the construction of a support trench back of the new line. (75) This also was of eight disconnected posts. (76) This change, by reducing the number of men in the trenches occupied at

(75) Diary of
S.G.W.;
(76) Letter of
Maj. R.H.
Lewis, GHQ
Liaison Off.,
June 5,
Vol. XII.

first, echeloning the company farther to the rear and covering the open flank put the sector in a good condition for defense, and this fact was reported. At the same time the new front line groups began digging toward each other to connect up; though this work was not completed on relief (77) it gave more room to the men in the trenches.

(77) Op. Rep.
Co. A., 18th
Inf.,
8 June,
V ol. XIII.

The garrison of the original trenches put up wire in their front and patrolled vigorously to the east, northeast and north, reaching the enemy positions along the Bois de Framicourt. Several minor encounters were had with the enemy but nothing much suffered or effected. Shoulder tabs of the 272d R.I.R. were brought in, besides pistols, gas masks, solid-alcohol heaters and a mass of other trinkets. Many of the Boche had a sort of case to protect a watch from gas; these were highly prized. Dead were also buried, some fractionally for the second or third time, as shell-fire undid the work. The men had acquired great self-confidence and disregard of the enemy: three men left the front line and beat through the wheat far to the front for most of a night looking, it afterward developed, for the body of a German officer reported by a patrol to have a great diamond on its finger. Salvage was also carried on.

On the second night, 5 June, K Company advanced a platoon from the old front line, pivoting its left on the little salient at 121.6-332.2 so that its right connected with the left of M Company. This included the southern end of the Trench De Dresde in its lines. With this movement the Cantigny operation came to an end and the lines were stablized. There was no further change.

RELIEF FROM THE NEW POSITION

The next night the 3d Battalion, 16th Infantry, was relieved from the front lines by the 28th Infantry and went back to rest. On passing the main line of resistance in front of Rocquencourt all ranks were dismayed to find that the battalion was to occupy that position because of an impending attack. This was what was later known as the German Noyon-Montdidier Offensive; it confined itself at this point to a heavy shelling of trenches and assembly positions, counterbattery work and gassing. M Company occupied a position on the military crest, very confining but not costly in casualties, for the three days of this alert. On 9 June it moved north to Coullemelle.

From 1 to 3 June the French 152d D.I. was relieved in the sector to the north by the First Brigade, 16th Infantry on the right, extending the division sector to include Grivesnes, a front of 6000 yards. (78) The Cantigny operation closed, then, with all four regiments in the line, in a position strongly organized for defense, two beaten enemy divisions before it, confident and ready for whatever might come.

RESULTS OF THE CANTIGNY OPERATION

The Cantigny operation was, in every material way, a success of profound significance.

Tactically it effected all the results intended. The advantages formerly held by the enemy through his possession of the position were transferred to the Americans. The German foothold west of the Trois Doms was rendered precarious and the situation of the Allied lines correspondingly strengthened on that front. The enemy divisions opposing were so mauled that

(78) Op. Rep.
1st Div.,
2 June.

they were deprived of even defensive value for the remainder of the occupation: they abandoned their trenches at the least alarm. Their condition grew progressively worse till it was necessary to relieve them at a time when the enemy could ill afford the expenditure.

The temporary tactical reverse on the left of the attack had no significance. It did not detract from any aspect of the success and so has been overlooked by investigators that the only reference to it found by the writer is in a small sketch in the latest edition

(79) Guidebook to of the Battle Monuments Commission's Guide Book. (79)
Am. Battlefields
p 222.

A greater effect than the tactical was on the First Division itself. Up till that time, like all new troops, its men's first concern was with what the enemy might do to them; after that the enemy's actions were a matter of indifference. Their concern was only with what they might do to the enemy (80). All ranks felt that they had dealt the enemy a severe blow. A tremendous self-confidence resulted which never left the division and quickly imbued the replacements who joined it. All were certain that the division was now ready for anything and knew that our Allies understood it. No troops were ever in a higher state of morale and physical and mental fitness than the First Division when it left the Cantigny front for its great stroke at Soissons the following month.

Greatest of all was the result produced upon the Allied and enemy armies and public. "It was the sole offensive operation undertaken by the Allies at a time when on the remainder of the front the Allies were either holding a defensive position or endeavoring to check the advance of the enemy." (81)

(81) G-3, 1355,
Op. Reps.
1st Div.,
Vol. XIII.

The Germans well understood the importance of this feature and the division which lost Cantigny was bitterly, almost insultingly, reproached by its commander for its neglect in allowing itself to be defeated. (82)

(82) Bullard, ✓
p 198.
(83) Lessons De-
duced from
the Attack
on Cantigny.
272d R.I.R.
5 June.

(83) The commanding officer of the 271st was superseded by a major; it was rumored that this was because of the reverse suffered by his regiment at Cantigny. (84)

(84) Appe. II to
Sum. of Int.
18 June.

Headquarters, German 18th Army, well said, "With this, the moral element of the success obtained by the enemy must also not be underrated. For the French especially, due to the momentary serious situation between Noyon and Rheims, it is of extraordinary significance, for the encouragement of the frame of mind, to be able to report

(85) Est. of Sit.
Hq. 18th
Army,
1 June.

even a partial success." (85)

It was indeed of extraordinary significance.

(86) Bullard, ✓
p 198

At once the Allied High Command got a true estimate of the value of the Americans (86) who were arriving in France by the hundred thousand. All reluctance to engage them in serious operations vanished. Within a week the trained but untried Second Division was given a place of honor in front of the German advance toward Paris and other American divisions of ^{far less} (no greater) experience were thrown in as fast as they could be engaged.

The great increase in French regard was noted and remarked upon with amusement by the men of the Division. All French troops in the area obviously had it impressed upon them that they must salute American officers sedulously and French civilians in the back areas manifested their esteem. The incoming relief a month later were considerate to a degree unknown since the days of the first landing.

The morale factor was, as was intended, the important one.

Of all these results M Company, 16th Infantry, partook. It was rightly felt that, while the credit for the attack belonged solely to the 28th Infantry which made it, the victory belonged to the whole division. The other units appreciated that they were as capable in every way as the 28th. M Company's part in its little after-effort was justly felt by it to have been a clean cut and creditable job and the men shared in the general increase in self-regard.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The operations of 30 May - 6 June in which M Company, 16th Infantry, took part, present important features in spite of their minor nature.

Their results demonstrated the good judgment of the division commander in specifying that the open flank should be closed by a night operation. At the time the junior commanders, in the sector and familiar with the situation, were unanimous in their belief that a regular attack after artillery preparation and supported by a barrage was the proper method to use. It was not known, of course, that the necessary artillery was no longer to be had but it is now obvious that, had it been available, such a proceeding would have been a waste of effort and men. It would have stirred up the quieting front and cost many lives from the resultant shell-fire, besides delaying the work of consolidation.

The low cost and relative ease of the operation show the great value of night operations to troops capable of carrying them out. The enemy, being unable to

learn what is going on and hearing no firing, was unable to direct the artillery upon the exposed men and even local machine guns fired wildly.

The maneuver also showed their ^{their} difficulty. S
Coordination was impossible and the very simplest plan was a necessity. Execution rested entirely on the initiative of small leaders and this will be true of any such operation. Troops confident in themselves are needed: lack of self-confidence was all that held up I Company. Night attacks are never to be undertaken by green men. Training in night attacks had been neglected as it is today but during the war the night was the time for movement and men got great experience in it which a present-day army would lack.

A wise control by the division commander was exerted throughout the action and a perspective was maintained which gave a juster view than those closer to the front enjoyed. During the attack the most alarming reports came from the front and were repeated back to Division Headquarters. Tales by wounded of men falling back, and hideous losses, startling sights that O.P.'s and Air Service thought they saw, accounts of Boche controlling the air, of tanks assembling, and on the following days of oft-repeated counterattacks and other fearful occurrences were duly sent in by infantry, artillery and air service, were sceptically weighed by the Division Commander and as duly discredited. Such detached weighing is the foundation of all sound decision. At the same time a truly serious situation, such as the open flank, was clearly recognized and firm measures taken to remedy it.

From this attitude of mind in the Division Commander sprang, on the one hand, confidence by the lower grades in his judgment, and on the other, energy in execution.

LESSONS

The basic consideration that underlay the actions of the First Division and all its elements during this period was a seeking for security. More than that, in the spring of 1918 it was the moving impulse that actuated all Allied thought, strategy and tactics.

The First Division was accepted for use by the Allied High Command with a view to its employment, not in an attack but to resist the German offensive. On arrival in the sector all activity for a month centered upon organizing and fortifying a defensive position. Security was the whole spirit of the defense in depth which sacrifices the first position for the preservation of the second. Trenches, wire, barrages, breakthrough guns, final protective lines have no other purpose. It is easy to see why troops long stabilized in an organized position lose their offensive spirit.

The slight offensive measures taken were for the obtaining of identifications which would reveal the arrival of fresh or assault troops, or to learn the enemy's intentions. The Cantigny operation, while offensive in execution, was defensive in purpose. To deprive the enemy of observation - to secure a strong outpost that would disorganize an enemy **attack**. That is, to prevent interference or surprise, not to seek a decision.

There was no caution in the execution of the attack, however. "The losses sustained were caused in part by lack of precautions.... The men circulated in the captured village as though they were out of sight and out of enemy reach." (87) The native desire to close with the enemy overcame considerations of safety and the attackers swept over him without regard for losses or the strength of the position.

(87) Report of
C.G. 10th
A.C. 29 May,
Vol. XII.

Upon completion of the attack the security of the conquered ground was again the first thought. Trenches, wire, echelonment in depth again. Outposts covered the front and guarded all working parties. Patrols and raids again sought to learn the enemy intentions.

good

It was fortunate for the First Division that before the elation caused by this local offensive had cooled it was withdrawn from an army whose mission was defensive and joined to one whose purpose was to attack. Soissons, child of Surprise and the Offensive, succeeded Picardy, the costly and indecisive. The lesson of all this is that lower units seldom choose the principles that will govern them. The defensive spirit was that of the Army and was forced downward from above. The American eagerness always shone bright and when given an opportunity the First Division carried out, as Headquarters First French Army said, an "operation well prepared and pigorously executed, which will serve to give the Americans, and others, a realization of the offensive valor of our Allies." (88)

(88) Ind. on
Report of
10th A.C.
29 May,
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7. The Division Commander was:

- (1) General Harbord
- (2) General Pershing
- (3) General Bullard
- (4) General Summerall.

Answer _____

8. The regiment chiefly involved was:

- (1) 102d Infantry
- (2) 23d Infantry
- (3) 28th Infantry
- (4) 5th Marines.

Answer _____

QUESTIONS

1. The Cantigny operation was carried out by:

- (1) The French
- (2) The British
- (3) The Americans
- (4) The French and British.

Answer _____

2. In the Cantigny operation the Allies:

- (1) Fought a drawn battle
- (2) Made a successful attack
- (3) Were repulsed
- (4) Made a defense.

Answer _____

3. The purpose of the Cantigny operation Was:

- (1) Strategic
- (2) For training
- (3) To improve the local situation
- (4) To create a demonstration.

Answer _____

4. The plan of operation provided for:

- (1) A night attack
- (2) Envelopment of a flank
- (3) A double envelopment
- (4) Frontal attack.

Answer _____

5. The Cantigny operation was carried out:

- (1) The winter 1917-18
- (2) The spring of 1918
- (3) During the summer of 1918
- (4) Near the end of the war.

Answer _____

6. The Americans engaged were:

- (1) The 42d Division
- (2) The 1st Division
- (3) The 2d Division
- (4) The 26th Division.

Answer _____

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Bois de Jentis

Cantigi

Bois de Jentis

**Defensive Works
prior to May 28**

— Allied Intrenchments
- - - German Intrenchments
- - - Wilder

