

CHATEAU-THIERRY MIRACLE.

Berthing Expected Grave Events in Paris Before July 18.

In the Century Magazine for May, 1919, appears an article entitled "The Miracle of Chateau Thierry," by Col. R. H. C. Kelton of the General staff at Washington, formerly chief of staff of the Third Division. Although a large part of the facts that are brought out in this article are familiar to the majority of us in one form or another, Colonel Kelton has presented them so graphically and brought out their significance so clearly that it is believed that everyone in the division will be interested in reading the account. We are, therefore, printing certain parts of it.

Chateau Thierry was an emergency; it had no part whatever in the plans prepared by the general staff of the American expeditionary forces or in the original French scheme for the entry of the American forces upon the Western front.

On May 24, on the eve of the German drive at Chateau Thierry we find the American divisions then in France widely scattered, and more than half of them outside of the geographical, and even the supply, limits of the intended American sector, so that French and British regulating stations and railheads had largely to be used by the American service of supply, a procedure which increased the problems and perplexities of the American general staff.

Americans Meet Crisis.

On May 27, however, it was no longer a question as to which divisions had completed training according to any adopted schedule; it was a dire emergency and a question as to what troops of any class were available for Chateau Thierry. The two American units nearest to that point, the Second and Third Divisions, were rushed without delay and with the speediest means of transportation to the point of danger in order to stop the drive.

The result of the German attack the morning of May 27 was a rude and startling surprise to the allied headquarters. In four days, or on the evening of May 30, the leading elements of the German troops were at Chateau Thierry, and on the following day the Boche stated in his communique: "We stand along the Marne." No greater measure of self satisfaction was ever reflected in his pompous announcements than in this. It was a big advance, nearly 40 miles in four days, and included a general attack within that period.

But on this same fourth day at Chateau Thierry the German troops found a small American fighting unit, the Seventh Machine Gun Battalion of the Third United States Division, which had come a distance of 110 miles in 30 hours by motor transport, and the Boche failed to cross the Marne.

For 72 hours the Seventh Machine Gun Battalion successfully contested the crossing, and by the second day of June the Third United States Division was in position along the river from Chateau Thierry to the east for a distance of about 12 miles.

Here are the positions of the American divisions that played the critical role in the operations at Chateau Thierry early in July, or seven days before the final offensive of the German forces in the present war:

The First and Second Divisions in reserve to the west of the Chateau Thierry salient; the Third and Twenty-sixth Divisions in front line sectors to the east and west respectively of the town of Chateau Thierry itself; the Forty-second Division in front line sector to the east of Rheims; the Fourth and Twenty-eighth Divisions in support positions south of Chateau Thierry; and the Thirty-second Division arriving near Coloumiers from its previous station in the Vosges.

Boche Plans Disclosed.

For several weeks the evidence had been accumulating of a German attack that would extend the Chateau Thierry salient south of the Marne and widen it toward the east, in order finally to effect the capture of Rheims and overrun the terrain to the southeast perhaps as far as Chalons.

Air reconnaissance, prisoners, and captured documents, all corroborated this general plan. The information was reliable for its very frequency; the only undeterminable item was the date when the attack might be expected. In the latter part of June a French patrol crossed the Marne near Dormans and succeeded in capturing a German engineer officer who admitted he was reconnoitering the proposed crossings and had in his possession the data concerning the bridges which the Boche expected to throw across the Marne in the double bends of the river at Mont-St. Pere and Jaulgonna. The evidence was conclusive that the attack would take place from a point just east of Chateau Thierry along the Marne to Dor-

mans, and probably even further to the east, on the north side of the river.

As a matter of later history it was learned, in September, from prisoners at St. Mihiel that the Germans had also planned an attack from the west front of the St. Mihiel salient, to be carried out about August 8, which should squeeze out Verdun in the same manner that they expected, in the July attack, to get the city of Rheims, and thus draw the battleline in a full sweeping curve from Chateau Thierry to the nose of St. Mihiel itself. Such a plan would have deprived France of the whole of the Châlons area, which had always been of immense military value. This attack, of course, never developed.

The German plan to force a crossing of the Marne in the Jaulgonne bends, to capture the heights on the south side of the river, which commanded the valley of the Surlin, and thus to debouch to the south and at the same time widen the Chateau Thierry salient to the east, was so evidently correct from the point of view of terrain, in both topographical and geographical features, that no military mind could disregard the great probability of such an operation. The sought for information was the day and hour it might be expected.

How well the untried artillery brigade under Brig. Gen. William M. Cruikshank carried out this plan was shown in a remarkable set of airplane photographs of the whole line of the river from Gland to Jaulgonne, taken from low altitudes on the second day after the fight, in which the multitude of shell holes along the north bank and the wreckage of boats and bridges in the water clearly demonstrated the efficiency of our gunners. In these same photographs there could be seen, even without the use of a reading glass, the hundreds upon hundreds of German dead that lay

(Continued on page 3, column 1.)

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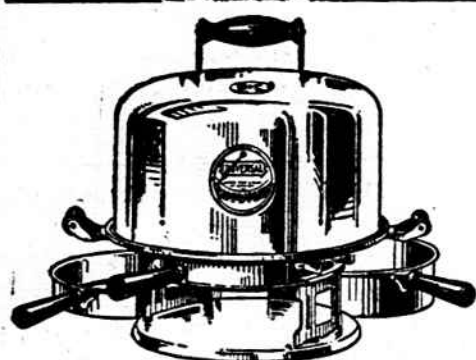
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