

BRITANNY LEAVES GIVE SCENT OF SEA TO WEARIED YANKS Region About St. Malo Most Accessible to Near-Homegoers EATS AND BATHING PLENTY Amplitude of Entertainment, Including Many Side Trips to Historic Forts and Resorts

Away out upon that promontory of north-western France which is capped by the city of Brest, there is nestled in a nook of a "stern and rock-bound coast" a bit of a 55-acre town all wrapped up in 70 feet of solid granite wall. It is known to the world as St. Malo, the maritime Yveton of France, but to the A.E.F. it means the center of the Brittany leave area, a place to go to and roam carefree and unrestrained, seven fun-full days to get into shipshape before going on the longed-for journey westward.

Plenty of Dancing Partners The average A.E.F. permissionnaire, however, is not out on leave to hustle around like a Croix tourist to see and do more than he can be fed up on antiquarian or contemporaneous statistics. What appeals is the chance to "get out" among "em," which is American for "entertainment," with lots of dancing, eating, drinking, and sleeping between clean, white sheets all such an hour as pleases the individual.

There are about a dozen live towns in the area, all within easy distance of each other and full of things to see and do. The Corsair city of St. Malo is the center of interest. It came into history along toward the end of the sixteenth century, when an Irish lord by the name of Mervin (modernized: Malo) who had settled there with a Celtic friend of his named Aron, established what would today be called a colony of each youth who braves it, later, when the Normans from the north came along the coast raising particular odium with the towns that wouldn't give up the slightest inch of territory.

Dinand and Mt. St. Michel Trips Dinard, quite a fashionable and cosmopolitan town, is a beautiful bay, an ideal seaside resort. It presents a decidedly American appearance in the layout of its streets and houses and the cleanliness of its trim front yards and beaches. The mystery explains itself when it is made known that there is a large colony of Americans and English owning property in Dinard and living there year through.

And the Fish, and Mayonnaise Any lover of seafood is due for one grand party in this leave area. Besides the usual abundance of the freshest of fish, there are the meatiest lobsters, which are to be selected as they promenade across the restaurant counters, cooked to a turn and served with a mayonnaise dressing of a flavor unique. At Cancale, a morning's excursion from St. Malo, are acres upon acres of oyster beds where the most delicious of A.E.F. appetites can be readily taken care of. It is a curious thing to walk among the beds at low tide, and be blessed very audibly by several millions of oysters.

ALLIES BUY OLD O.D. Thousands of O.D. uniforms, last seen by their former wearers as the clothing was being carted away to a delousing plant or salvage heap, have been sold to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Roumania by the United States Liquidation Commission. The uniforms were dyed either black or blue, and will clothe many Poles, Serbians and Roumanians who are in need of suits. Some English uniforms have been sold to Poland and a large amount of horse-drawn equipment to Roumania.

HOW THE 27TH AND 30TH HELPED IN PIERCING THE HINDENBURG LINE

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1,500 yards, taking Lock No. 8 on the Ypres Canal, Lankhof Farm and the village of Ypres, while the 27th Division advanced about 2,000 yards, occupying Vierstraat Ridge and the northern slopes of Mount Kemmel, and making some progress up the eastern side of Wytshate Ridge. To the east of Ypres the 14th British Division made similar progress on the left of the 30th, while on the right of the 27th the 34th British Division gained substantially toward Mount Kemmel itself.

Ready for Drive to the Scheldt

The front which they then occupied was very nearly that which the British had held previous to the German attack of March 21 and from which they had been driven back nearly to Amiens. Starting in about August 1 to recover once more that devastated stretch of the valley of the Somme between its junction with the Aisne and St. Quentin, which had been first lost in 1914, regained in 1916, and then lost again in the spring of 1918, with true British doggedness they had pushed on, foot by foot, for nearly two months against the most bitter opposition, until they were once more occupying all but the foremost of their old trenches before the Hindenburg line between St. Quentin and Cambrai, while between Cambrai and Lens the redoubtable defensive line was already broken.

The plans for the great offensive involving the Allied forces on every front were now perfect and, as has been previously pointed out, the initial attack by Marshal Haig's British Armies was to be made on September 27, the day after the advance of the First American and Fourth French Armies on both sides of the Aisne. The British effort was to begin with an assault on the main Hindenburg positions, a 13-mile front before Cambrai, from Sauchy-Lez-Au to Gouzenourt, to be followed by an extension of the attack southward to St. Quentin and thence to the Aisne and still south of there by the First French Army. When its turn came, General Rawlinson's Fourth Army was to go in on the morning of September 27, under cover of the tremendous bombardment which was then opened and continued for two days by all the artillery of the Fourth Army on the main Hindenburg positions, the 106th Infantry of the 27th Division attacked the enemy strong points at the Knoll, Gullefont Farm and Quennefont Farm in the immediate front of the division. The positions were captured but were found very hard to hold, as machine guns and snipers were apparently fed up into them from the main canal tunnel, and when the 6th Brigade took over the front line that night, Germans were still found making vigorous resistance around those points.

Australians in Support

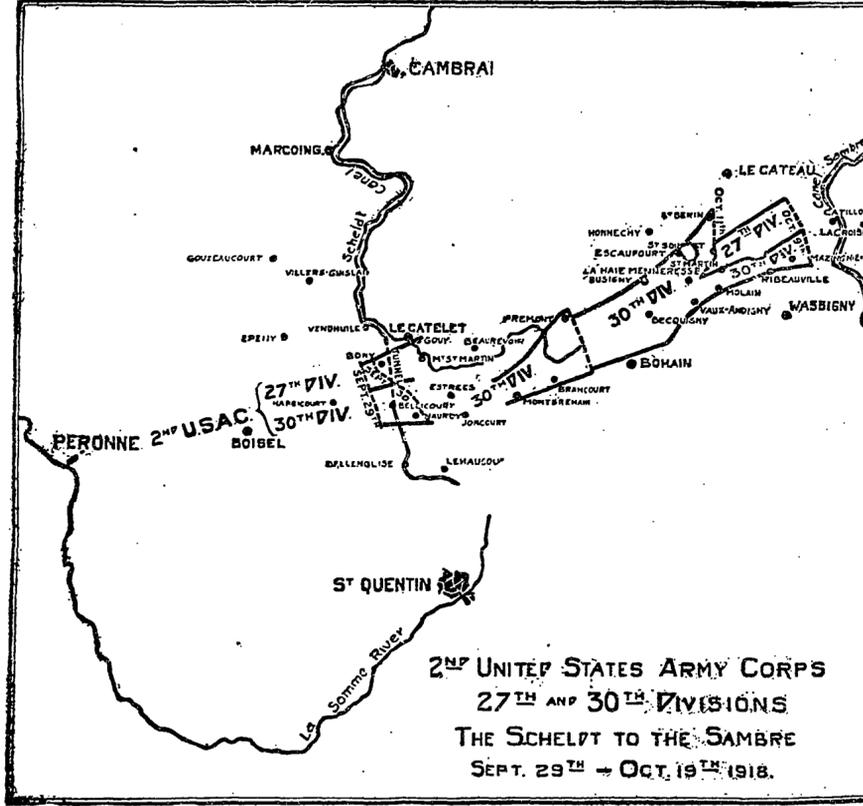
The 27th and 30th American Divisions relieved the 18th and 75th British Divisions in the immediate front of the attack which they were to make had been planned by the Australian Corps, which had been fighting since August 8 by this point the German line from Villers-Bretonneux to the Hindenburg line, and the 3rd and 5th Australian Divisions were to support the Americans closely and immediately when the first objectives had been obtained.

The portion of the Hindenburg line which they were to attack was about 6,000 yards long, the line of their sector being determined by the length of the tunnel of the Scheldt, or St. Quentin Canal, and it was perhaps more formidable than any other portion of the Hindenburg line. The peculiar characteristics which gave to the position its great strength cannot be better set forth than in the concise words of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, in his dispatch dated December 21, 1918, to the British Secretary of State for War, which is reported upon the operations of the British Armies during the final months of the war. Sir Douglas wrote:

Between St. Quentin and the village of Bantzenelle the principal defenses of the Hindenburg system are directed to the west, but more generally to the east of the line of the Scheldt Canal. The canal itself does not appear to have been organized as the enemy's main line of resistance, but rather as an integral part of a deep defensive system, the outstanding characteristic of which was the skill with which it was sited, so as to deny us effective artillery positions from which to attack it. The chief role of the canal was that of affording cover to the troops and to the cartrons of the main defensive trench lines during a bombardment. To this end the canal lent itself admirably, and the fullest use was made by the enemy of its possibilities.

The general configuration of the ground through which this sector of the canal runs produces deep cuttings of a depth in places of 60 feet, while between Bellecourt and the neighborhood of Venduille the canal passes through a tunnel for a distance of 6,000 yards. In the sides of the cuttings the enemy had constructed numerous tunneled dugouts and concrete shelters. Along the top edges of these he had concealed well-sited concrete or armored machine gun emplacements. The tunnel itself was used to provide living accommodations for troops and was connected by shafts with the trenches above. South of Bellecourt the canal cutting gradually becomes shallower, all at Bellecourt the walls are almost at ground level. South of Bellecourt the canal is dry.

On the western side of the canal south of Bellecourt two thoroughly organized and extremely heavily wired lines of continuous trench run roughly parallel to the canal, at average distances from it of 2,000 and 1,000 yards respectively. Except in the tunnel sector the double line of trenches known as the Hindenburg line proper lies immediately east of the canal and is linked up by numerous communication trenches with the trench lines west of it. Besides these main features, numerous other trench lines, switch trenches and communication trenches, for the most part heavily wired, had been constructed at intervals to meet local weaknesses or take advantage of local command of fire. At a distance of about 4,000 yards behind the most easterly of these trench lines lies a second double row of trenches, known as the Beaurevoir-Fonsomme line, very thoroughly wired and holding numerous concrete shelters and machine gun emplacements. The whole series of defenses, with the numerous defended villages contained in it, formed a belt of covering extending from 7,000 to 8,000 yards in depth, organized by the employment of every available means into a most powerful system, well meriting the great reputation attached to it.



Guard CCXXXIInd, LIVth and CXXIst Divisions. Before being relieved, the 18th and 75th British Divisions had been unable to clean up all of the old British outpost positions which had been designated in the plans as the jumping-off line for the main attack. This was especially true on the left, so on the morning of September 27, under cover of the tremendous bombardment which was then opened and continued for two days by all the artillery of the Fourth Army on the main Hindenburg positions, the 106th Infantry of the 27th Division attacked the enemy strong points at the Knoll, Gullefont Farm and Quennefont Farm in the immediate front of the division. The positions were captured but were found very hard to hold, as machine guns and snipers were apparently fed up into them from the main canal tunnel, and when the 6th Brigade took over the front line that night, Germans were still found making vigorous resistance around those points.

Attack on Ridge Goes Forward

Nevertheless, at 5:50 on the morning of the 29th, in the midst of a heavy fog, under an intense barrage of high explosive, gas and smoke shells, and accompanied by numerous tanks, the attack went off and up the long, open slopes toward the blazing German trenches and the red brick ruins of Bellecourt and Bony on the canal tunnel ridge. The 30th Division went forward with the 120th Infantry on the right and the 119th on the left, each regiment with two battalions in front line and one in support,

the support battalions having the definite mission of mopping up the Hindenburg trenches, the canal tunnel and the village of Bellecourt. The 117th Infantry, following behind the 120th, was to deploy facing southeast after crossing the tunnel in order to assist the progress of the 46th British Division on the right by enflanking the enemy's position along the canal cutting toward Bellecourt and to protect the deployment of the 5th Australian Division, which was to relieve the 30th American Infantry after the latter had gained its objectives.

The 27th Division went in with the 108th Infantry on the right and the 107th on the left. Two battalions of each regiment in front line and one in support. One battalion of the 106th Infantry followed the 107th to assist in mopping up the Hindenburg trenches, the canal tunnel and its north entrance, while the 105th Infantry, following still further behind, was to face to the north after crossing the canal tunnel and protect the left flank of the corps in that direction as the 117th Infantry was to do at the other end of the tunnel. Two battalions of the 106th Infantry, which had suffered considerably in the preliminary

attack on September 27, formed the division reserve.

Fog Both Helps and Hinders

The fog proved in some respects an aid and in others a hindrance. It concealed the attacking troops from the enemy and prevented the accurate fire which, had the weather been clear, might very possibly have stopped the advance and driven it back in front of the broad and only partially demolished wire entanglements. But it also soon caused the units to lose direction and contact with one another, and to advance more slowly; and, more un-

fortunate still, to pass machine gun nests and strong points without seeing and destroying them. Many of these places appear to have been connected with the canal tunnel by the lateral passages previously mentioned and to have been heavily reinforced through these passages after the first waves of the attack had gone by. Consequently, a little later when the mopping-up and support units arrived in the clear, they met a resistance stronger and more effective than had been encountered by the troops in advance.

The front of the 30th Division went forward, on the whole, rapidly and with comparatively slight losses. Although, owing to the obscurity and loss of liaison, the advance and the fighting was soon being carried on chiefly by small groups of men, they accomplished their purpose, crossing the three trench lines of the Hindenburg system, taking the town of Bellecourt, the village of Bantzenelle and the canal cutting by it and a little later reaching and conquering the division objective, Nauroy, together with the outlying hamlet of Bricourt and Gouy, and beyond the first German support line running east of the canal from Le Cateau to Louchcourt, and when the 120th Infantry occupied them it had advanced a distance of 4,200 yards from its jumping-off trenches and had pierced all but the last of the three German trench systems.

To the right of the 120th Infantry the 46th British Division also had advanced brilliantly, crossing the steep banks of the open canal taking Bellecourt. The 119th Infantry was unable to get as far as the 120th, being under the necessity of refusing its flank approximately to the east of the canal tunnel ridge in order to maintain contact with the 27th Division, which was having a much harder time in the north half of the Second Corps' sector. Though the 30th had experienced trouble in mopping up behind its advance, the work had finally been accomplished, 47 German officers and 1,434 enlisted men being captured during the whole operation and late in the afternoon the 5th Australian Division passed through and took over the front line, many of the isolated groups of Americans remaining with the retiring troops until sometime during the following night.

Mopping Up Process Difficult

The 27th Division from the start suffered much more severely than its running mate. Though the front line progressed satisfactorily for some time, its troops being early reported in both Bony and Le Cateau, the two reserve regiments and the 3rd Australian Division following encountered violent machine gun opposition upon practically the very line from which

the attack had started. They were obliged to deploy and engage with all their energy in mopping up the machine gun nests and tunnel entrances from which literally "popped up" during the fighting as many, it was estimated, as two full German divisions. Either sufficient forces had not been detailed in the first place for the mopping up or else, which is more probable, the enemy's arrangements for infiltration were too elaborate to be dealt with by the ordinary methods. But at all events, the result was that the battalion of the 107th Infantry which had gotten into Le Cateau, on the left, was completely cut off for a time, while the battalion of the 108th, which had occupied the Hindenburg line south of Bony, retained its position only with the utmost difficulty until it was finally rescued by the advancing Australians.

It took the latter four days of hard fighting to finish the reduction of the Hindenburg works and the canal tunnel in the sector and to occupy securely Le Cateau and Gouy, although the 27th Division had already lost about 4,000 men in the initial attack and had taken about 1,500 prisoners. The command of the sector passed to Major General Gollibrand, 3rd Australian Division, shortly after midnight that night, though approximately 4,000 men of the 27th Division remained with the Australians throughout the next day and participated in their hard fighting.

All Set for Crossing Selle

The 30th Division sector was now about three miles wide and the direction of advance lay northward across rolling country toward the Sambre Canal and river, just southeast of Le Cateau and about 15 miles distant. The Germans could no longer oppose trench systems to the advance, but they might be expected to offer strong machine gun resistance at villages and farms, when a good line for temporary defense existed at the Selle River, about nine miles from Montrehain. The initial effort, therefore, was directed to reaching and crossing the Selle. This operation will be described in next week's article.

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