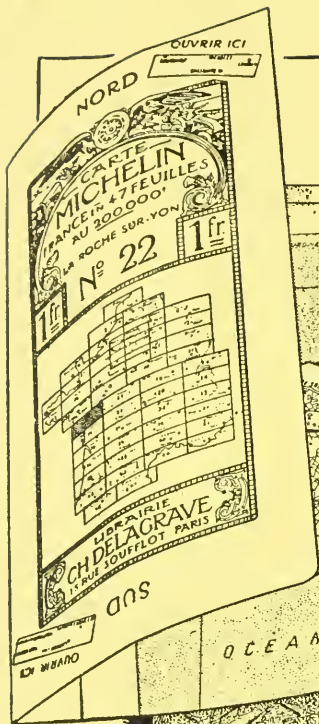


MICHELIN ILLUSTRATED GUIDES
TO THE BATTLEFIELDS (1914-1918)

THE AMERICANS
IN THE
GREAT WAR

VOLUME III.
MEUSE-ARGONNE BATTLE
(MONTFAUCON, ROMAGNE, ST MENEHOULD)

MICHELIN & Co., CLERMONT-FERRAND
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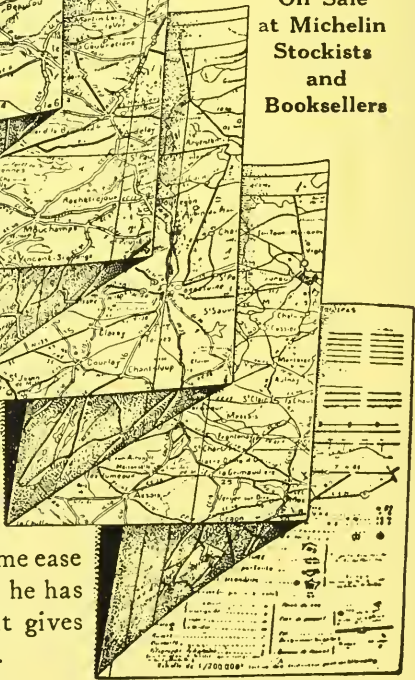
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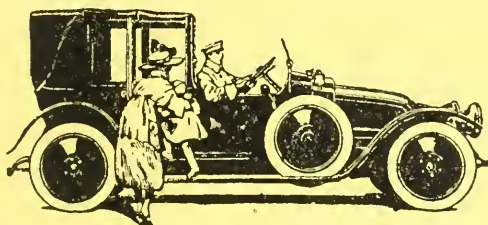
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THE AMERICANS
IN THE
GREAT WAR

VOLUME III.

The Meuse-Argonne Battlefields
MONTFAUCON, ROMAGNE, SAINTE-MENEHOULD

Published by
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THE MEUSE-ARGONNE BATTLEFIELDS

As in the two preceding volumes of "Americans in the Great War," no attempt is made in this third volume to describe the military engagements in great detail. It was thought better to illustrate the ruin and devastation caused by the great struggle, rather than to dwell too long on the actual hostilities. This object has been attained by securing a great number of carefully selected and exclusive photographs and maps, all of which are published in this volume, together with necessary descriptive text. Like its predecessors this volume is not a military treatise but a guide book.

Nevertheless, it is the duty of the author as well as a great pleasure to hesitate long enough at this moment to say a word in appreciation of the invaluable service rendered to France and to civilization by the valiant American soldiers.

It was during the period covered in the pages following that the American Army reached its maximum fighting strength, and achieved its greatest military triumphs.

The splendid fighting spirit of the troops was remarked by all, and their fine comradeship, both on the firing line and at rest, won the widest possible admiration. Furthermore, the seasoned military experts who had been engaged in the war for four long years were amazed to discover with what remarkable rapidity the American soldiers and their high spirited officers had adapted themselves to the art of war.

In the words of Marshal Foch: "As for the American troops you may tell your people that they are admirable. They can be reproached only with going ahead too fast!"

The Meuse-Argonne campaign ended with the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918. Marshal Joffre in a speech of thanksgiving said: "I am proud to have been the sponsor of the noble American Army, which has been the determining cause of our present victory."



THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE AMERICAN FORCES,
JOHN J. PERSHING

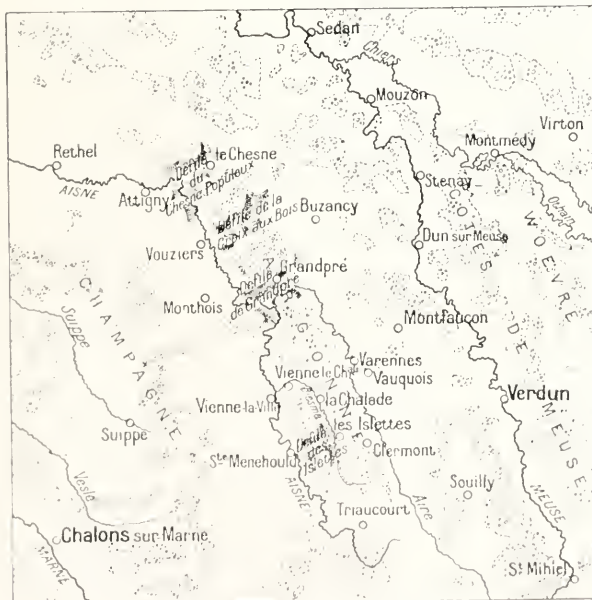
THE MEUSE-ARGONNE BATTLEFIELDS 1914—1918.

FOREWORD

THE present volume—No. 3 of the series : “The Americans in the Great War”—see Volumes 1 (“The Second Battle of the Marne”) and 2 (“The Battles of St. Mihiel”)—deals with the Argonne proper and with the Marshes of the Argonne, that is to say, the greater part of the country lying between the Battlefields of Champagne and Verdun, described in the Michelin Guides : “The Battles of Champagne” and “Verdun.”

The Argonne was never independent, administratively or politically. It has always been attached to a neighbouring State, large or small. Originally a border-land between Champagne and Lorraine, it belonged formerly to the three Bishoprics of Châlons, Rheims, and Verdun. Later it became the Comté of Argonne, with Sainte-Menehould as capital, but remained tributary to the three bishoprics. After the annexation of Champagne, the King of France and the Duke of Lorraine each took that part of the Argonne bordering on his territory. Later it was divided between the Province of Champagne, the Duchy of Bar, and the Duchy of Lorraine.

With the exception of several lateral valleys which divide it into sections difficult of access to one another, the Argonne, covered with thick forests, and for long roadless, presented an all but insuperable obstacle to military operations. These valleys, or defiles, considered from north to south, are : the passes of Chesne Populeux, Croix-aux-Bois, Grandpré, Chalade, and Les Islettes. These five passes, famous since the campaign of 1792, which ended in the French victory of Valmy, have often been disputed.



THE DEFILES OF THE ARGONNE

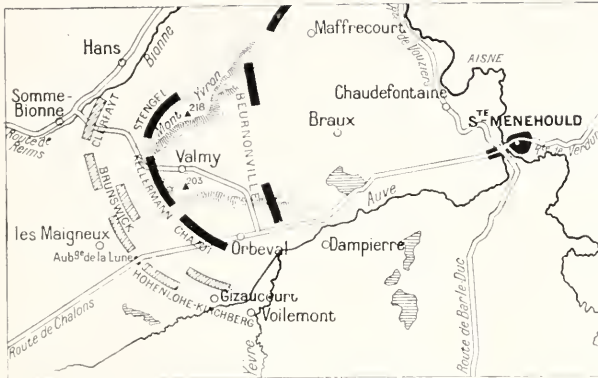
The Argonne Campaign of 1792

At the end of August, 1792, General Dumouriez—in face of the rapid advance of the Prussians, who were besieging Verdun, and of the Austrians, who were drawing near Stenay—was forced to abandon his proposed offensive in Belgium, and continue on the defensive. Divining the intentions of the enemy to reach first the Aisne and then Châlons, in order to march on Paris, he decided to block the roads from Lorraine into Champagne by a defence of the Argonne. On September 1, he marched from Sedan on Grandpré, whence on the 3rd he despatched a detachment against St. Juvin. With his right resting on the Plateau de Mareq, his left on Grandpré, and his artillery parked at Senuc, he took up his headquarters at the Château of Grandpré, the property of one of his friends, Semonville. His lieutenant, Dillon, occupied Les Islettes and the course of the Biesme as far as Passavant-en-Argonne, with headquarters at Grange-aux-Bois. General Kellermann was marching to join Dumouriez, and arrived by the Toul-Bar road. At the call of Dumouriez, the inhabitants of the districts of Clermont and Bar retired to the forests of the Argonne with all the provisions and supplies which they could carry with them.

On September 7, the Duke of Brunswick and the King of Prussia viewed the Pass of Les Islettes and the high ground of the Biesme from the summit of Clermont Hill. Judging their capture impossible, or too costly, they preferred to turn the position by forcing one of the three other passes held by Dumouriez: Grandpré, Croix-aux-Bois, or Chesne Populeux. Their choice fell on the Croix-aux-Bois defile, whose capture was entrusted to the Austrian General Clerfayt. Meanwhile feint attacks were made on Briquenay and Mareq, before Les Islettes and Grandpré, in order to deceive Dumouriez. On the 12th, Clerfayt took the Croix-aux-Bois pass. One of Dumouriez's lieutenants, Chazot, recaptured it on the 14th, but lost it again on the same day, and was obliged to retire. Threatened with having his position turned and his army surrounded, Dumouriez decided to retreat immediately, and occupied Termes, Olizy, and Beaupaire, in order to protect himself against a possible advance by Clerfayt. Brunswick sent a messenger with a flag of truce to propose a parley. Whilst the bearer was vainly waiting in the French outposts at Mareq for permission to proceed to Dumouriez's headquarters, the latter, who had waited till nightfall in order to conceal his movements from the enemy, struck his camp. At 8 a.m. on the 15th he crossed the Aisne over the bridges of Senuc and Grand-Ham and marched towards Cernay, thus saving his army. Chazot's Division alone, which had received orders to proceed from Vouziers to join the army at Montcheutin, arrived too late. Attacked by the Prussian Hussars in the Plain of Montcheutin, it retreated in confusion, the panic spreading to the rest of the army, with the exception of the vanguard which held the Prussian Hussars' advance. Dumouriez, without resorting to extreme measures, endeavoured to restore the *moral* of his troops: a few deserters, after having their heads shaved and having been deprived of their uniforms as unworthy to wear them, were publicly dismissed the service. The army quickly pulled itself together, and hastened to make good its previous weakness.

Contrary to the opinion of many, who believed he would retire on Châlons in order more easily to effect a junction with Kellermann, Dumouriez decided not to abandon the Sainte-Menehould position. Leaving Dillon's advance guard at Chalade, in Les Islettes, and in the south of the Argonne, he established himself in front of Sainte-Menehould, on the plateau where Maffrecourt, Chaudfontaine, and Braux-Sainte-Cohière stand. Thus, while no longer covering the Paris road, he threatened the rear of the Allies.

Brunswick, who had left Grandpré and was already on the Châlons road, was forced to stop and face Dumouriez. Fearing that Dumouriez, by retreating, would once more escape, the King of Prussia, acting hastily and in opposition



THE BATTLE OF VALMY (1792)

to the plans of Brunswick, ordered the march which brought his army to Valmy. On September 20, his army established itself opposite Valmy, five miles west of St. Menehould, on the Lune plateau which crosses the Sainte-Menehould-Châlons road through Aube.

The Lune Inn, which then stood by the side of the road near the Lune crossroads, formed by the junction of the Somme-Bionne and Gizeaucourt roads, was pulled down about 1854 and the materials used for building one of the Maigneux farms.

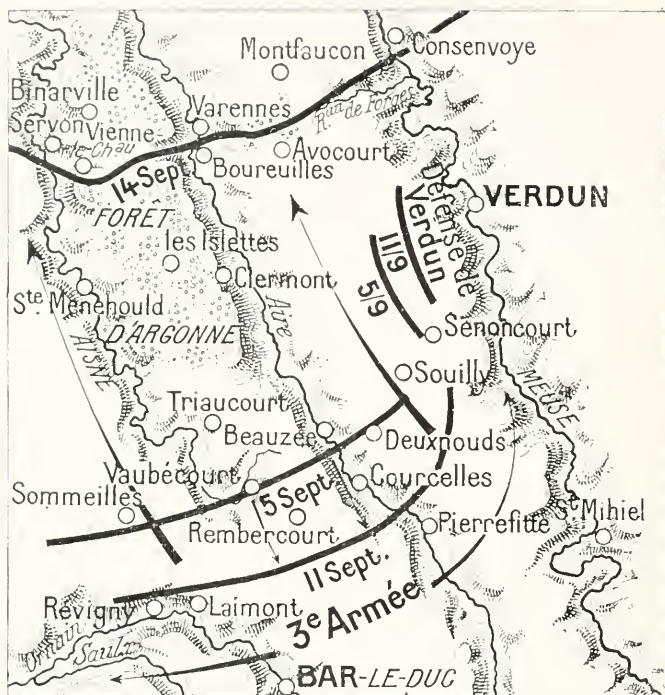
Thanks to the clever dispositions of Dumouriez, who directed General Stengel to occupy Mont-Yvon (in order to cover Valmy on the right), and General Chazot to march on the Lune heights (to protect Kellermann's left), the latter was able to withstand the enemy assault.

The Prussians decided to attack Valmy, and towards noon their infantry crossed the valley which lies between the two armies. But the French, drawn up on the ridge between Moulin and Valmy, under the command of Kellermann, hurled themselves on the Prussians and drove them back amidst cries of "Vive la Nation." Brunswick, disconcerted, stopped the attack. Kellermann pressed on, while General Stengel held the Austrians on the right. About 4 o'clock, General Beurnonville came up with reinforcements, and the battle was won.

On the evening of September 20, Dumouriez and Kellermann, agreeing that the position was dangerous, decided to evacuate Yvron and Valmy during the night, to cross the Aube and deploy between Dampierre and Voilemont. On the 21st, Kellermann, in his new position covered by the Aube and the Yèvre confidently awaited a fresh Prussian attack, which, however, was never delivered. Discouraged, and anxious as to the health of his troops, the Duke of Brunswick, after ten days of vacillation, decided to retreat. Thanks to his clever negotiations, which misled Dumouriez, he succeeded in saving his army and in regaining the frontier without being pursued; but fatigue, hunger, and dysentery had decimated his forces. Of the 42,000 Prussians who invaded France in the previous August, barely 20,000 recrossed the frontier.

The moral effect of the victory of Valmy was considerable. It was the first victory won by the Armies of the Revolution over the Allies. It humbled the pride of the Prussians and gave the French unshakable faith in the future of their arms.

The German poet, Goethe, who followed the operations, said, in speaking



THE FIRING-LINE IN ARGONNE DURING THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE MARNE (1914)

of Valmy : "On that day and at that place began a new era in the history of the world."

In 1814 Blucher went round the Argonne. In 1870 the Third Prussian Army (the Army of the Meuse) crossed it without much difficulty.

THE GREAT WAR (1914-1918)

In August, 1914, in spite of their success on the Meuse, the French Third and Fourth Armies were ordered by Joffre to make a general retreat towards the south. The Third Army, under Sarrail, pivoting on its right, now rested on Verdun. Facing it was the German Vth Army, under the Crown Prince.

The German forces, following the retreat of the French Armies, slipped in on either side of the thick woods of the Argonne, along the Valleys of the Aisne and the Aire.

On September 5, under Joffre's orders, the retreat came to an end, and the great battle, which was to save France, began. After six days of violent fighting (see Part III—The Revigny Pass—of the Battle of the Marne, 1914), the Crown Prince's troops, under pressure of the French Third Army, retreated along both flanks of the Argonne; but during the latter half of September, they came to a stand, after reaching and consolidating the following positions: on the east, Montfaucon, commanding the ground between the Aire and the Meuse; Montblainville and Varennes, commanding the Valley of the Aire;

on the west, Binarville, Servon, and Vienne-le-Château, commanding the Valley of the Aisne. A fierce and prolonged battle then began. The French troops, held on the flanks, pushed on into the forest, in an endeavour to cut the enemy's transverse lines of communication, which consisted of two main roads from east to west (see map, p. 8).

(1) The main road from Varennes to Vienne-le-Château, *via* the Four-de-Paris, where a road running north-south branches, crossing at Les Islettes, the "National Road," and the railway from Châlons-sur-Marne to Verdun, *via* Sainte-Menehould.

(2) The wide forest road which, two or three kilometres to the north, runs almost parallel to the first road, from Montblainville to Servon-Melzicourt, *via* Bagatelle, and across the Bois de la Gruerie.

The Germans, on their part, made every effort to maintain their lines of communication. Moreover, they had not given up the hope of encircling and taking Verdun. Through the transverse valleys of the Aire and the Aisne, and the central passage of the Biesme, they threatened to cut the Châlons-Verdun Railway, and thereby separate the Army of Champagne from that of Verdun. The importance of the Argonne position thus becomes evident, and explains the fury of the fighting which took place there.

The Battle in the Forest

The Forest of Argonne consists of woods of beech, horn-beam, ash, and oak which, with an undergrowth of hazels and shrubs of many varieties, form almost impenetrable thickets. Lovely nooks and wild glens abound; opposite narrow ravines, whose steep sides are clothed with copse-wood, are cool valleys full of streams, pools, and springs.

These picturesque spots have often charming names: *Bois de la Viergette*, *Ruisseau des Emerlots*, *Fontaine la Houyette*, *Fontaine-aux-Charmes*, *Fontaine-Madame* and *Bagatelle*. Sometimes the names are quaint: *Fille-Morte*, *Moulin de l'Homme Mort*, *Ferme-la-Mitte*, *Chêne Tendu* and *Courte-Chausse*. Below the long ridge, which forms, as it were, the backbone of the forest, the *Chemin de la Haute-Cherauchée*, and, a little further west, the *Parillon St. Hubert* evoke memories of bygone hunting-parties. All these names, yesterday but little known, are to-day famous, as for months they recurred almost daily in the Communiqués of the Great War, and each of them brings to mind, not one battle only, but a series of battles, fierce struggles, and hand-to-hand encounters in the dense undergrowth.

The stationary warfare assumed a special character in the Argonne. Lanes and footpaths formed the only breaks in the impenetrable thickets. There were no gentle slopes, no convenient firing positions for the infantry, no observation-posts for the artillery—everything being concealed by the thick foliage; no easy roads, for though several wide valleys enter the forest, they invariably end in narrow ravines which, except where there are paths, present almost insuperable obstacles.

The innumerable springs give rise to excessive moisture. Tiny rivulets intersect the clay soil, and mud collects easily, making the paths impassable. Log roads had to be made in order to facilitate the bringing up of reliefs and supplies. Trenches were no sooner dug than they filled with water and mud, necessitating continuous baling, often with makeshifts such as pails, shovels, dishes, mess-tins, etc.

These trenches, dug haphazard under enemy fire, were very irregular in line, and French and German trenches sometimes overlapped. The fusillade was uninterrupted, but erratic, except for a few snipers perched here and there in the trees. At night, the forest was swept at random by rifle and machine-gun fire, to make movement dangerous and to prevent surprise. Rockets continually lit up the night. Here the rifle was merely an auxiliary weapon, but grenade and bomb fighting went on all day without respite.

Under this continuous rain of hand projectiles, and the hurricane of shells which destroyed the trenches, the casualties were heavy. Apart from the losses in actual battle, there were often hundreds of killed and wounded in a single day. In the attack or defence of a trench the fighting immediately became a hand-to-hand struggle, in which the long, cumbersome rifle generally gave place to the knife and revolver.

Owing to the difficulty of approaching the enemy trenches in the open, advances were made by pushing saps ahead, or by blowing them up with mines. On both sides incessant digging of galleries and mine-chambers went on underground, whence a race in speed and skill between the opposing sappers, for it was a case either of blowing up the enemy first, or being blown up by him. Over the mine-destroyed trenches, through the smoke and under the rain of earth and stones caused by the explosions, the soldiers dashed forward to occupy the new shell-crater, or to fight for it if the enemy had reached it first. Then would follow a bloody hand-to-hand struggle with grenades, knives, bayonets, daggers, axes, etc., resulting in the gain of a few yards of ground.

From the end of 1914 to March 31, 1915, between Four-de-Paris and the Valley of the Aisne, the French sappers excavated over 3,000 yards of mine galleries, and fired fifty-two mine-chambers, using nearly 16,000 lbs. of explosives.

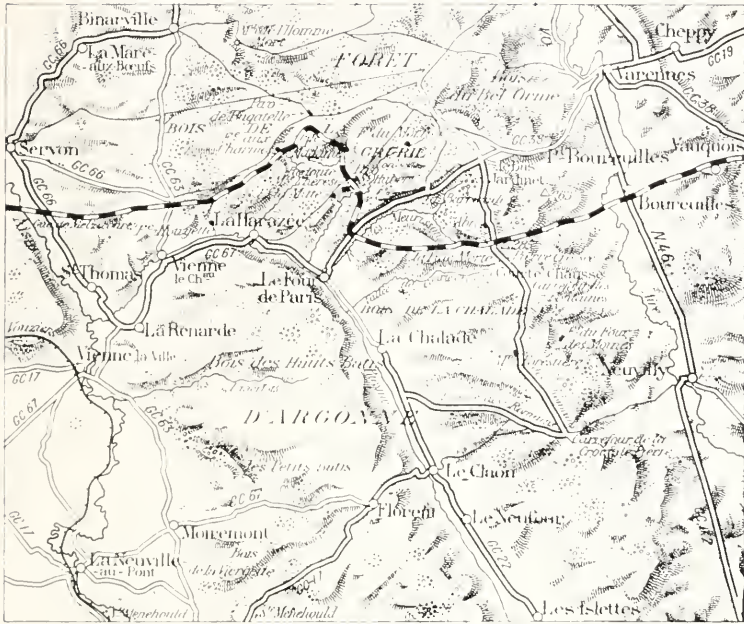
The Stationary Warfare

(September, 1914, to September, 1918.)

Activity on the Argonne front was greatest during the first year of the war. The German positions were held by part of the Army of the Crown Prince, whose technical adviser was the old Marshal von Haeseler. This army was composed mainly of first-class troops, including the XVIth (Metz) Corps, one of the best in Germany, and superior to the famous Prussian Guards. This Corps was commanded by General von Mudra, a sapper skilled in mine warfare, who had under his command numerous well-equipped pioneers. The French Divisions of the 5th and 2nd (Active) Corps, though inferior in equipment, outrivalled the enemy in courage and daring. They held the sector for many months, and their tenacity was more than a match for German technique. They quickly adapted themselves to the necessities of forest fighting, and from February, 1915, they were fully equal to the enemy in discipline and equipment.

In October, 1914, the line, as a whole, crossed the entire width of the Argonne, from the north of Vienne-le-Château to the north of Neuville. As a matter of fact, there was no continuous line, the French troops holding only rudimentary trenches, as stationary warfare was still distasteful to them. They believed the pause to be but temporary, and that they would soon resume the advance. They constantly attacked the Germans, who, equally aggressive, endeavoured to gain ground, and to wear down the French resistance by attacks on trenches, and by ceaselessly-renewed local engagements.

The line was very irregular, with constant re-entrants and salients, and frequently shifted. The French had established themselves on the two parallel roads which cross the forest: at Bagatelle on the northern road, in Gruerie Wood and at the Barricade on the southern road. Between the two roads they seized and consolidated positions, such as the *Pavillon St. Hubert* and *Fontaine-Madame*. On the northern road and around Bagatelle, during the last months of 1914, the Germans alternately advanced and retreated about half a mile. In October, they captured St. Hubert, only to lose it again. Later, they advanced to within 400 yards of Four-de-Paris on the east, but in November they were stopped in this sector. In the centre, in spite of repeated attacks, they were unable to take *Fontaine-Madame*.



THE BATTLE IN THE FOREST

In January, 1915, the line crossed the Melzicourt Ford, a little upstream from Servon, and the Servon-Vienne-le-Château road to the north of Fontaine-la-Houyette, running thence, with numerous salients and re-entrants, through Gruerie Wood, as far as Fontaines-aux-Charmes and the outskirts of Bagatelle. From there it went south through Fontaine-Madame to within three-quarters of a mile north of La Harazée, then north towards St. Hubert, then south again, crossing the Meurissons Stream, to within 300 yards of Four-de-Paris, finally turning eastwards across the Woods of Bolante and Courte-Chausse, to the Valley of the Aire between Neuville and Bourcuille.

For almost a year the struggle on this line continued with unabated desperateness. It is impossible to enumerate here all the battles fought almost daily in the sectors of Fontaine-aux-Charmes, Bagatelle, Marie-Thérèse, Fontaine-Madame, St. Hubert, Four-de-Paris, Les Meurissons, Bolante Wood, Courte-Chausse and Haute-Chevauchée. The most important are referred to later, in the Itinerary. On the whole, the French troops, with whom the Garibaldi Regiment co-operated for a short time, made some progress and inflicted bitter defeats on the enemy. To the east, in the Valley of the Aire, though they failed against Bourcuille, they succeeded in March, after numerous attacks, in taking Vauquois.

During 1915, the Germans several times resorted to massed attacks on an extended front, especially in June and July. From June 20 to July 14 the Crown Prince launched an offensive in great force, employing as much as an entire army corps for a single thrust. On June 20, after an intense bombardment with gas shells, his troops attacked on both sides of the Binarville-Vienne-le-Château road. Gassed and almost buried in their shattered trenches, the

French could not stop the enemy, but on June 24 counter-attacks regained almost all the lost ground.

On the 26th, the Crown Prince renewed and developed the attack, which, on the 29th, extended from the Four-de-Paris to about two miles beyond the Binarville-Vienne-le-Château road. After a three days' bombardment, he hurled at least 40,000 men into action, three times in succession. Against the salient from Bagatelle to the north of Four-de-Paris alone, on a front of about five miles, he launched two divisions. Thanks to a hail of shells and gas bombs, the enemy advanced and, through the corridor of the Biesme, came within five miles of their objective, the railway station of Les Islettes. The fire of the 75's, however, barred the road, and the French reserves subsequently counter-attacked and retook the lost ground covered with enemy dead.

After some local attacks on July 2 and 7, the Germans launched a fresh general attack on the 13th, from the Binarville-Vienne-le-Château road, as far as the Haute-Chevauchée. After a bombardment with more than 45,000 shells, five regiments of the XVIth Corps rushed the shattered trenches. It was a powerful thrust, especially on the east, where a few trenches were lost; but in the course of several days' fighting the enemy was held, and on the 14th the French counter-attacked on the west, pushed the Germans back north of the Servon road, and held for a short time the Beaurain Wood to the west of this road. On September 7, the enemy once more threw two divisions against the western side of the forest; but in this attempt, as in the first, they failed to break through.

In September, 1915, the French offensive in Champagne made itself felt in the Argonne. On the 25th, a subsidiary attack, designed to cover the flank of the main attack, was carried out between Servon and Gruerie Wood, over difficult ground, strongly entrenched by the Germans, and flanked by many machine-guns. After carrying the first German lines, the French troops, who had been counter-attacked and decimated by machine-guns on the western edges of the Gruerie Wood, were forced to retire on their original positions. However, this minor operation prevented the enemy from using the Argonne to launch a counter-offensive on the flank of the main attack. On the 27th, they attacked in the Fille-Morte and Bolante sector, doubtless to cover the despatch of reinforcements from the Argonne to Champagne.

In October the Argonne front suddenly became as calm as it had previously been active. The enemy, discouraged by their losses, in despair of reaching the Sainte-Menehould-Verdun road, and with their hands full elsewhere, remained on the defensive in the Argonne. Their efforts were now turned in other directions—towards Les Eparges, the Trench of Calonne, and Ailly Wood, from which they hoped once more to threaten Verdun. The Crown Prince had expected to cross the Argonne, but after sacrificing thousands of soldiers, he was unable to break down the French resistance. The massed attack on an extended front having only increased his losses without result, he returned to his original plan of trench raids and small local operations, the object of which was to nibble away the ground and exhaust the opposing troops as much as possible.

From November, 1915, the sap and mine fighting was renewed, in which the French gained the advantage. Every month, at one place or another, or at several places at once—at Bolante, Fille-Morte, Hill 285, near the Haute-Chevauchée road, at St. Hubert, Courte-Chausse, and Marie-Thérèse, in the Vanquois sector—mines destroyed the enemy trenches, and there were fierce fights with hand-grenades for the shell-craters.

The battering of the defences, the constant improvement of the equipment, and the construction of deep bomb-proof shelters, mitigated the hardships of war and effected a considerable reduction in the losses of the French.

During the battle of Verdun, fighting in the Argonne was practically limited to artillery duels, the French batteries on the eastern border frequently engaging the enemy batteries in the Bois de Cheppy and Montfaucon.

In 1917, the fighting consisted almost entirely of hand-to-hand struggles for outposts or trenches. The French, who excelled in this kind of warfare, constantly destroyed the enemy mines and brought back numbers of prisoners from more or less extensive raids.

THE OPERATIONS OF 1918

During the first half of 1918, while grave events were taking place on other parts of the front, the Argonne remained quiet. The battle, however, spread from point to point, and the Argonne front in its turn was again set ablaze on the date fixed by Foch in his plan for the great offensive which was destined to bring the Germans to their knees.



MARSHAL FOCH

After the Allied counter-offensive of July 18 on the Aisne front (see Volume 1: "The Second Battle of the Marne"), which drove the Germans back to the Vesle, the Allies were forced to mark time on the centre of the front.

The battle shifted to the wings. Offensive followed offensive with unfailing regularity, first on the left (the Franco-British offensive of August 8), then in Artois (the offensive of August 20), and lastly against the whole of the Hindenburg line, which the Allies attacked on September 1.

The Germans were already greatly shaken, but Foch gave them no respite, and to prevent them recovering he redoubled his attacks.

An offensive movement on both wings began: on the left (in Flanders) the Belgian, French and British armies, under the command of King Albert, attacked simultaneously with the Fourth French Army under Gouraud and the First American Army under Pershing on the right.

As a prelude to taking its place in the line for the great offensive, the American Army had already fought the brilliant action which, on September 12, reduced the St. Mihiel salient. (See Volume 2: "The Battle of St. Mihiel.")

This operation was only just over when the main body of the American army was moved very rapidly from the Meuse to the Argonne, to the positions assigned to General Pershing in the Allied plan of campaign.

This very important movement, effected without a hitch between September 4 and 24, involved the displacement of enormous forces; eleven French divisions, constituting the Second Army, were replaced by fifteen divisions of the First American Army, which thus held the whole Verdun front from the Aisne to the Moselle, between La Harazée and Pont-à-Mousson.



AMERICAN CEMETERY CONTAINING 28,000 GRAVES, ON



GEORGE H. CAMERON,
*Commander of the American
5th Corps, comprising the
79th, 37th and 91st (active),
and 32nd (reserve) Divisions.*



HUNTER LIGGETT,
*Commander of the American
1st Corps, comprising the
35th, 28th and 77th (active),
and 12th (reserve) Divisions.*



ROBT. L. BULLARD,
*Commander of the
American 3rd Corps,
comprising the 33rd,
80th and 4th Divisions.*



HILLSIDE, NEAR CUNEL VILLAGE (SEE P. 45)



MAJOR-GENERAL JOSEPH DICKMAN
(1st Corps.)



MAJ.-GEN. JOSEPH E. KUHN
(79th Division.)



MAJOR-GENERAL
WILLIAM WEIGEL
(83rd Division.)



MAJOR-GENERAL
GEORGE BELL
(33rd Division.)



MAJOR GENERAL
WILLIAM H. HAY
(28th Division.)



MAJOR-GENERAL CHARLES G. MORTON
(29th Division.)



MAJOR-GEN. EDMOND WITTENMEYER
(7th Division.)



MAJOR-GENERAL
JOHN L. HINES
(3rd Corps.)



MAJOR-GENERAL
JAMES W. ANDREWS
General Chief of Staff.



MAJOR-GENERAL
ROBERT ALEXANDER
Commander of the 77th L



MAJOR-GEN. WM. M. WRIGHT
(1st Corps.)



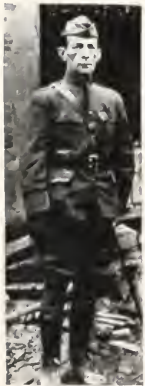
MAJOR-GENERAL HANSON E. ELY
(5th Division.)



MAJOR-GENERAL JAMES H. M'RAE
(78th Division.)



MAJOR-GEN. C. P. SUMMERALL
(5th Corps.)



MAJOR-GENERAL
LEROY S. LYON
(90th Division.)



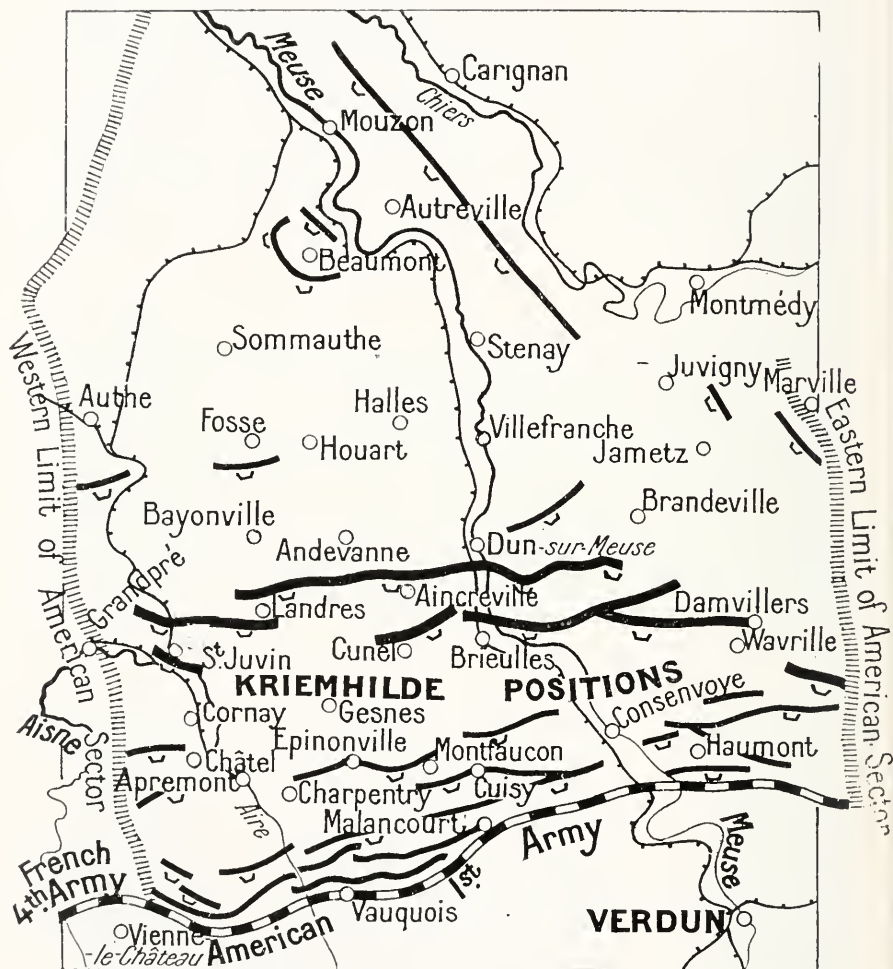
MAJOR-GENERAL
GEORGE R. DUNCAN
(82nd Division.)



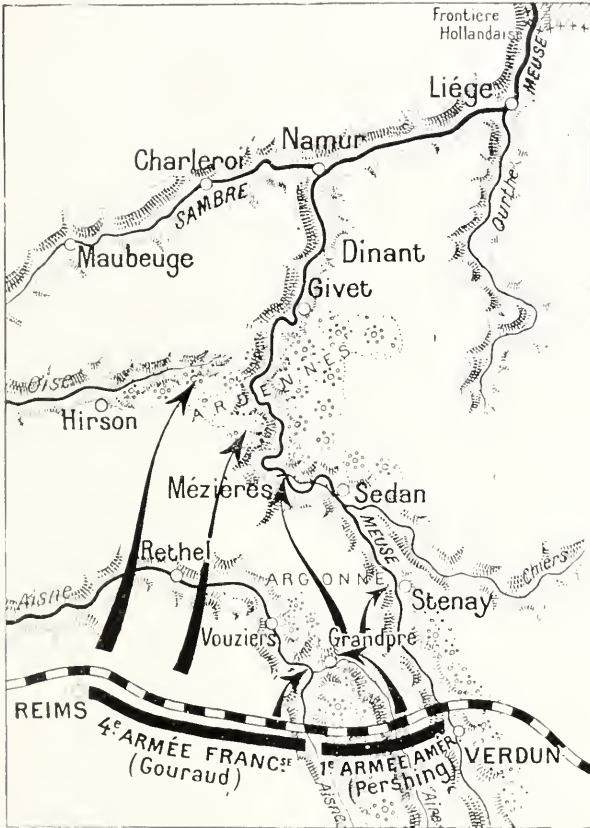
MAJOR-GENERAL
SAMUEL D. STURGIS
(80th Division.)



MAJOR-GENERAL
ROBERT L. HOWZE
(Com. of the 3rd Div.)



The above map shows in detail the German Positions between the Meuse and the Argonne on the eve of the great Franco-American Offensive of September 26, 1918 (see next page), the immediate objective of which was to drive the enemy across the Meuse.



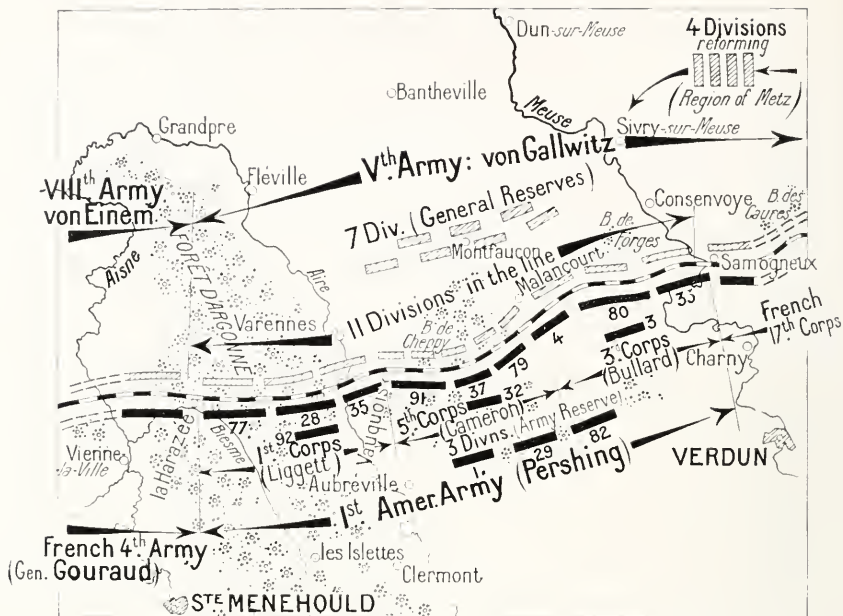
THE OBJECTIVES OF THE FRANCO-AMERICAN ATTACK OF
SEPTEMBER 26, 1918

The Franco-American Offensive of September 26, 1918

The combined attack of the French and American armies had for its immediate objective the driving back of the Germans across the Meuse. They were to advance northwards, on either side of the Argonne, join hands at the Pass of Grandpré, and then together continue the push towards the Meuse and cut the main German line of communication formed by the Sedan-Mézières Railway.

The Allied and Enemy Forces

As this volume deals only with the battle of the Argonne the French attack will be dealt with separately in "The Battles of Champagne." Here we shall confine our attention to the attack made by the American First Army on the front between the Aisne and the Meuse.



THE ALLIED AND ENEMY FORCES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ATTACK OF SEPTEMBER 26, 1918



GUN EMPLACEMENT WRECKED BY HEAVY GERMAN SHELL

The displacement of the American forces was completed by the evening of the 22nd. On the 25th all the units were in position for attack, and were distributed from east to west as follows :

Between the Meuse and Malancourt : the 3rd American Corps (Bullard), comprising three divisions (33rd, 80th, 4th) in line, and one division (3rd) in reserve.

Between Malancourt and Vauquois : the 5th American Corps (Cameron), comprising three divisions (79th, 37th, and 91st) in line, and one division (32nd), in reserve.

Between Vauquois and La Harazée : the 1st American Corps (Liggett),



ENORMOUS SHELL CRATER FILLED WITH WATER

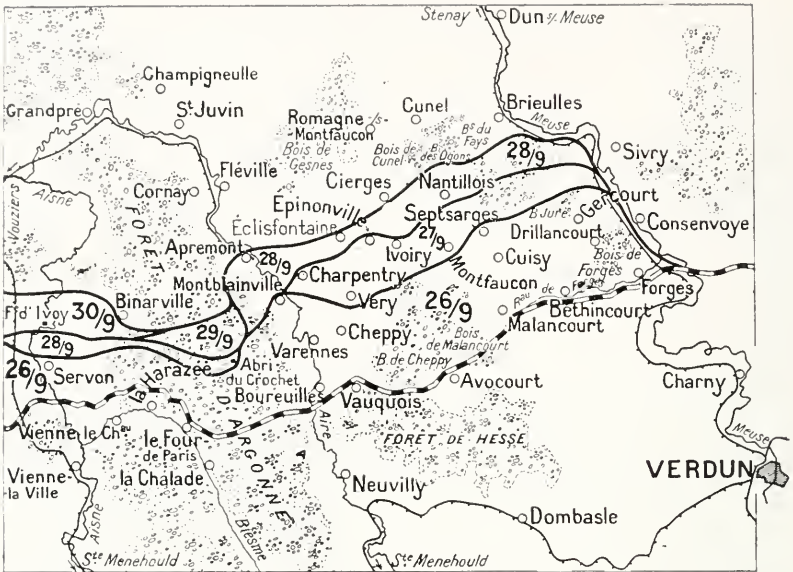
comprising three divisions (35th, 28th, and 77th) in line, and one division (92nd) in reserve.

In addition, there was the army reserve, consisting of three divisions (1st, 29th, and 82nd).

On the left, the liaison of the American Army with the French Fourth Army (Gouraud) on the outskirts of the Argonne, between the Aisne and the forest, was maintained by two infantry regiments.

On the right, the French 17th Corps was stationed as look-out on the right bank of the Meuse.

Facing the three corps of the American Army, the Germans had in line eleven divisions belonging to the army of Von Gallwitz. Seven divisions were in the army reserve, whilst four additional divisions were being reorganized in the Metz sector.



FIRST STAGE OF THE FRANCO-AMERICAN OFFENSIVE, SHOWING THE ALLIES' PROGRESS FROM SEPT. 26 (26/9) TO SEPT. 30 (30/9), 1918

The Attack

(September 20—September 30, 1918.)

On September 26, 1918, the combined attack was launched on either side of the Argonne. At 5.30 a.m., after an artillery preparation of six hours on the French side, and of three hours on the American, the Allied troops advanced to the attack. While the French took Servon, and gained a footing on the low hills which skirt the right bank of the Aisne, the Americans, who did not at first encounter great resistance, seized in a single rush the first German position. The second line was soon reached, and in spite of the increasing resistance, an average advance of about four to six miles was effected. The Pennsylvania, Kansas, and Missouri troops belonging to the 1st Corps (Liggett) took Varennes, Montblainville, Cheppy, and cleared Vauquois.

On the right, the troops of the 3rd Corps (Bullard), crossing the Forges stream, entered Malancourt, Béthincourt, Cuisy, Septsarges, Gercourt and Drillancourt. On that day over 5,000 prisoners were captured by the Americans.

On the 27th, the advance was slower; the fire of the enemy artillery increased in intensity, and German reinforcements counter-attacked. Nevertheless, the Americans carried Véry, Epinonville, Ivoiry and Charpentry.

On the centre, the 5th Corps (Cameron) met with formidable resistance, and in crossing the woods of Malancourt and Cheppy the troops from New Jersey, Virginia, Oregon, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana suffered very heavy losses. In addition, they had to face numerous German counter-attacks. On the 26th it was impossible to reach the formidable Heights of Montfaucou, but on the 27th the ridge, outflanked on the west by the capture of Ivoiry, and on the east by that of Septsarges, fell into the hands of the 5th Corps which reached Nantillois.

On the evening of the 27th, the American spoils included over 100 guns (12 of large calibre), numerous trench-mortars, hundreds of machine-guns, and over 8,000 prisoners, 125 of whom were officers.

On the evening of the 27th, the infantry fought fiercely for the last *points d'appui* assigned to them for that day.

In order to prevent a counter-offensive by the Germans, General Pershing rapidly organised, behind the ground already won, a line of defence through Cercourt, Drillancourt, Juré Wood, Dannevoux, Nantillois, Eclisfontaine, Charpenry, Montblainville and Apremont.

On the 28th, the resistance of the enemy further stiffened: fresh troops carried out repeated counter-attacks on the French right and against the American centre. The Americans, however, reached the outskirts of Briulles-sur-Meuse, Ogons Wood, the southern edge of Cierges, and the northern outskirts of Apremont, whilst in the forest, the Franco-American liaison troops occupied the Crochet shelter. On the west the French approached Binarville and reached Ivoy Farm.

Up to that point, the American Air Force, fully maintaining its supremacy in the air, had brought down twelve observation balloons and over sixty enemy aeroplanes.

The next day, the Germans, throwing fresh reinforcements into the battle, counter-attacked furiously.

Between the Valley of the Aire and Cierges, the Americans had to fight hard for several days, in order to resist the pressure of the enemy and to hold the ground they had gained. On the 29th and 30th violent fighting took place round Apremont. The Germans, reinforcing their artillery, fired great numbers of gas shells. They stubbornly defended the approaches of the "Kriemhilde" position, which from Champigneulle to St. Juvin, through Cornay, Fléville, and the woods of Gesnes, Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, Cumel and Fays, reached the Mense in the Briulles district.

Thus the first stage of the attack was over. The Americans had forced the Germans to abandon their first and second lines and had captured 9,000 prisoners and more than 100 guns.

The Period of Attrition

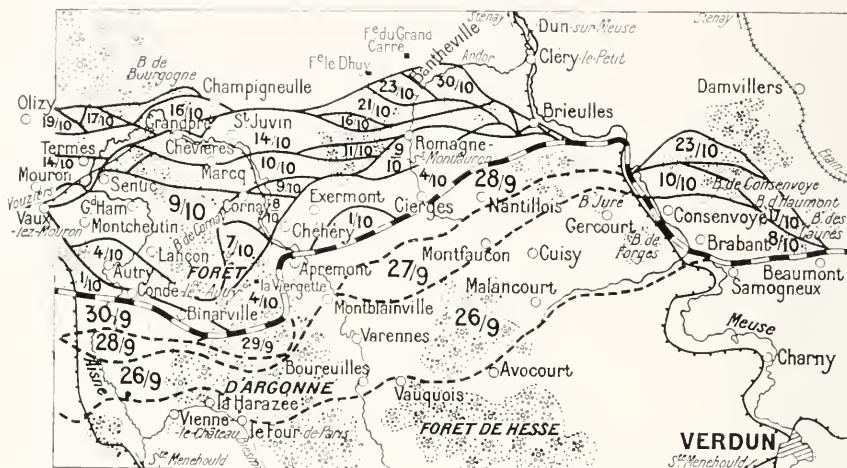
(October 1—31, 1918.)

The advance effected during the first stage of the attack brought the American infantry face-to-face with fresh German positions, strongly defended, bristling with machine-guns and automatic weapons, organised one behind the other and connected up with one another. These positions had to be reduced bit by bit.

The smallest wood or the least depression of the ground was utilised by the Germans with the greatest skill. In the woods they made use of a new type of auxiliary defence-works—barbed-wire entanglements (*Maschendraht*) about nine feet in height, fastened to trees or to stakes six inches in diameter.

The Americans on their side attacked desperately, and succeeded in gaining the disputed ground, step-by-step, thereby laying during the whole month of October the foundation of the operations which in November were to end in the enemy's capitulation along the whole front.

On October 1, a hard struggle began which lasted several days, with alternate advances and retreats. The French, finally breaking the counter-offensive on their flank, advanced along the Valley of the Aire. On October 1 they occupied Binarville, Condé-lez-Autry and Vaux-lez-Mourou, after capturing considerable material, including 200 narrow-gauge trucks and numerous trucks of normal gauge. The Americans, on their side, in spite of the machine-guns, barbed-wire, and counter-attacks supported by tanks, pushed forward bravely.



SECOND STAGE OF THE FRANCO-AMERICAN ATTACK, SHOWING PROGRESS
MADE UP TO OCTOBER 30 (30/10)

On October 4, Pershing launched an attack along the whole Army front.

On the right, the American 3rd Corps advanced as far as the Brieulles-Cunel road, which, however, it failed to pass. In the centre, the 5th Corps reached Gesnes. On the left, the troops of the 1st Corps advanced on the Forest of Argonne and reached La Viergette. On the edge of the forest the same troops made an advance of about two miles, reaching the outskirts of Fléville and capturing Chéhéry, as well as Arietal Farm on the north of Exermont.

On October 7, the 1st Corps drove the Germans out of Chatel and Chéhéry, and from the heights to the west of the Aire, as far as the outskirts of Cornay, which they took on the following day.

But with the arrival of numerous reinforcements the German resistance increased, and the advance became more and more difficult.

An extension of the attacking front was then decided upon, and the French 17th Corps (Clandel), which was keeping watch on the right bank of the Meuse, was placed at General Pershing's disposal.

This army corps was reinforced by the French 26th Infantry Division and the American 33rd Infantry Division, which were already operating on the right bank of the river. These dispositions having been completed a fresh attack was launched from the Argonne as far as Beaumont, to the west of the Meuse.

On October 8, the German positions were violently bombarded, and on the 9th the troops advanced to the assault.

On the right, the French 17th Corps advanced as far as the southern outskirts of the Haumont and Consenvoye Woods, but could not get beyond these positions, which had been very strongly fortified by the Germans.



VARENNES. TELEPHONISTS OF THE 108TH REGT. (28TH D.I.)
WITH GAS MASKS

Along the Meuse the American 3rd Corps entered Brioulles, while the 5th Corps reached the main German line of resistance between Cunel and Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, and captured Fléville. On the left wing the 1st Corps occupied the heights south of Marcq and the woods of Cornay.

Meanwhile the troops of the French 4th Army on the left bank of the Aisne swept the Montcheutin—Vaux-lez-Mouron Plateau and, on the right bank, took Lançon, Grand-Ham and Senne. The capture of the latter village gave them one of the gates of the Grandpré Pass. The junction of the French and American armies was effected at Lançon. On that day the Americans, from the Argonne to Chaume Wood, on the east of the Meuse, captured more than 2,000 prisoners, and the French 600, besides many guns.

On the 10th, the French crossed the Aisne opposite Termes, which they captured; they then occupied the railway-station of Grandpré, taking numbers of prisoners. The enemy, in danger of being cut off, evacuated the forest, pursued by the Americans, who, after progressing beyond Marcq and Chevières, linked up with the French before Grandpré. Further east, their line passed north of Sommerance and through the northern outskirts of Romagne Wood and Gesnes.

The arrival of American reinforcements in ever-increasing numbers enabled Pershing to extend his operations.

The American Second Army, which had just been constituted under the command of General Bullard, lined up on the right of the First Army (which had now passed under the command of General Liggett). To his command were joined the 33rd and 17th French Corps, wedged between the two American armies.

The three corps of the American First Army, after the promotion of Generals Liggett and Bullard, were commanded as follows: The 1st Corps by General Dickman, the 5th Corps by General Summerall, and the 3rd Corps by General Hines.

This was the state of affairs on October 14, when the general attack was launched.

The 1st Corps captured St. Juvin and reached the outskirts of St. Georges. In the centre the 5th Corps passed Cunel and Romagne, and reached the outskirts of Landres-St. Georges village. Along the Meuse, the 3rd Corps passed Forêt Wood, while on the east of the Meuse the French 17th Corps fought a violent engagement in the woods of Coures and Ormont.

The fight waxed furious. On the 16th, the Americans took the Hill of Châtillon and the village of Champigneulle, while on the following day they were definitely masters of Grandpré. To the west of the Argonne the French, who had entered Vouziers, on the 12th, after a very hard struggle and in spite of several counter-attacks, cleared Termes and entered Mouron. On the 14th, they drove the enemy back beyond the Grandpré—Vouziers road, and two days later took Talma and Hill 222 to the north-west. The Germans, whose resources were fast diminishing, made a desperate but unsuccessful resistance, and there was much confusion among the enemy units engaged in the valleys of the Aisne and the Aire. The battalions withdrawn from the firing line were hastily reorganised at the base, and at once despatched to the most critical points. The main positions were held by picked troops and especially by machine-gunners, whose numbers and stubbornness caused great ravage in the Allied ranks. From Grandpré to Rethel the country had been inundated. Apparently, the enemy were constructing a new line (the "Freyastellung") to the north of the "Kriemhilde" position. The new line passed north of Landres and Bantheville, through Hazois Wood, the Farms of La Dhuy and Grand Carré, and along the northern slopes of the valley of the Andon, between Bantheville ad Cléry-le-Petit.



VARENNES. RENAULT TANKS WITH 1½-IN. GUNS, USED BY THE AMERICAN FORCES

On the 17th, fierce fighting took place between Olizy and Grandpré ; the French advanced north-west of Olizy, but after a violent bombardment were forced back from Talma by a counter-attack. On the 18th, they crossed the Aisne to the north-east and east of Vouziers, capturing Vandy and Pissois Farm and reaching the western outskirts of Chestres. Meanwhile, American patrols entered Loges Wood, Landres-St. Georges and Bantheville Wood, all of which had been abandoned by the enemy.

From the 19th to the 30th a desperate battle was fought to the east of Vouziers. Every advance was followed by German counter-attacks, the positions constantly changing hands. On the 19th, the French Fourth Army broke a vigorous German attack carried out by parts of seven different divisions. On the 19th and 20th, Chestres, Macquart Farm, Hill 193 to the east of Vandy, and Terron were taken, but the Germans recaptured the last-named village. On the 22nd, the French had reached the outskirts of Terron, the woods to the south-west of the Malva Farm, Landèves, Chamiot Farm, and the suburbs of Falaise. Terron, retaken by the Czecho-Slovaks, was held in spite of repeated German counter-attacks. To the west of Grandpré the positions were strengthened, while the Americans checked the Germans north of Bantheville and advanced into the woods of Loges and Bourgogne.

A period of calm followed, and thus ended the second stage of the offensive, during which the Americans had captured 7,000 prisoners and fifty guns.

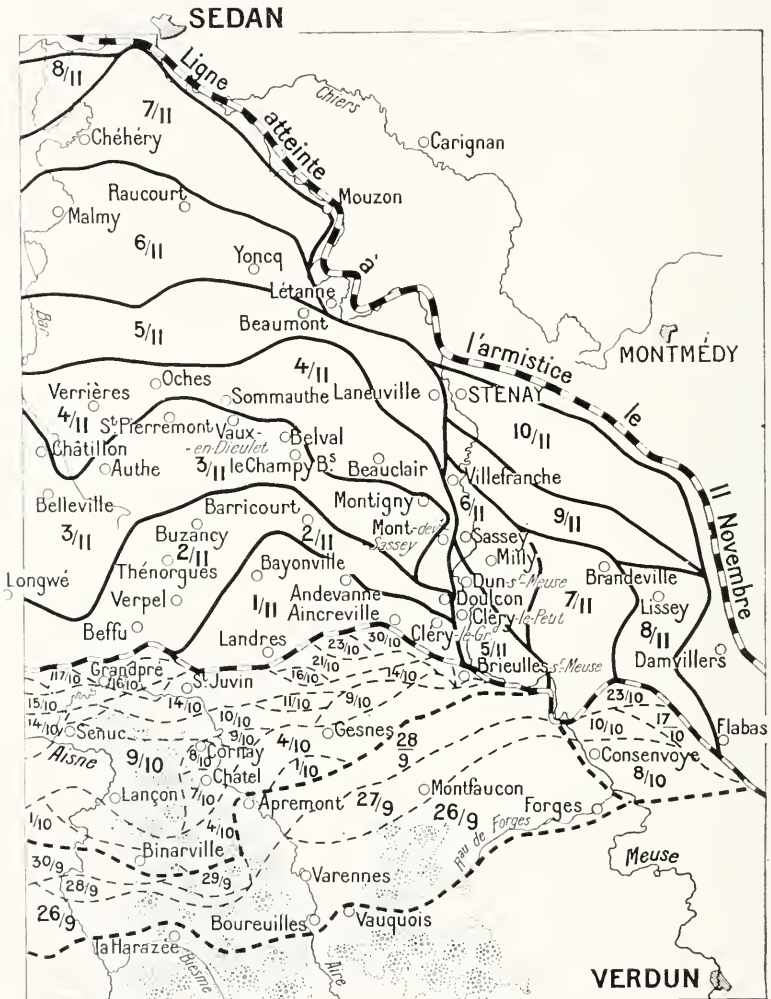
The Pursuit

(November 1—11, 1918.)

During the quiet days at the end of October, the Americans proceeded rapidly to reorganize their forces, so as to be ready, as soon as Foch should give the signal, for their part in the new Allied offensive.



ALLIED ARTILLERY CROSSING FLOODED DISTRICT NEAR VOUZIERS



THIRD STAGE OF THE FRANCO-AMERICAN OFFENSIVE ; THE ALLIES' PURSUIT OF THE RETREATING GERMANS UNTIL ARMISTICE DAY (NOV. 11, 1918)

In the north, the Belgians had just cleared their coast-line, and were menacing the enemy by an advance into the very heart of Belgium. The British had occupied Lille and broken down the defences of the Hindenburg Line. Meanwhile, the French, relentlessly driving back the retreating enemy, had entered Laon, after forcing the formidable bastion of the St. Gobain Forest.

On November 1, between Grandpré and the Meuse, the Americans had in line the following forces of the First Army (Liggett):

The 3rd Corps, composed of the 5th and 90th Infantry Divisions.

The 5th Corps, composed of the 89th and 2nd Infantry Divisions.

The 1st Corps, composed of the 80th, 77th and 78th Infantry Divisions.

Their right was prolonged by the French 17th (Active) Corps, which, with the 33rd (Active) Corps, was in liaison with their Second Army.

Facing these forces the Germans, under the command of Von der Marwitz, had massed three army corps between Buzancy and the Meuse, reinforced by two Austro-Hungarian divisions.

At 5.30 a.m. on November 1, the troops of the French Fourth Army (Gouraud) and those of the American First Army (Liggett), after a two hours' bombardment of great violence, launched a fresh offensive.

The Americans attacked on the north, and, in spite of a stubborn resistance, advanced several kilometres, taking 3,600 prisoners and forty-four guns. The French attacked on the east, along a twelve-mile front, cleared the whole of the right bank of the Aisne, and hit into the Argonne, threatening on the right and in the rear the Germans, who, facing south, stood opposed to the Americans. 1,300 prisoners and a number of guns were captured. On November 1, the American 3rd Corps, on the right, seized Aincreville, approached Doulecon and took Andevanne and Cléry-le-Grand. In the centre, the 5th Corps captured Bayonville, Rémonville and Landres. On the left, the 1st Corps, in the face of the enemy's fierce resistance, were only able to advance slightly in Loges Wood.

On the following day (November 2) the Americans vigorously followed up their attack. The 1st Corps, freed on its right by the advance of the 5th Corps on the previous day, pushed on boldly five miles beyond Thénorgues and Buzancy, while the French, on their side, carried half of the northern portion of the Argonne, reaching the Ballay-Longwé line on the east of Vouziers.

On the 3rd, the enemy, threatened with being surrounded, fell back. The Allies straightened their line towards the north, and advanced twelve miles in the centre. The line now passed through Semny, the southern bank of the Ardennes Canal, the southern outskirts of Chesne, the course of the Bar as far as Châtillon, through Belleville, Authe, St. Pierremont, Sommauthe, Vaux-en-Dieulet, Belval, Le Champy-Bas, Beaclair, Montigny-devant-Sassey and Mont-devant-Sassey. In three days the Germans lost over 6,000 prisoners and 100 guns, and were driven back towards the Sedan-Mézières-Metz highway, the approaches to which were desperately defended. However, their resistance broke down before the continued push of the Allies.

Already the Allies' heavy guns were steadily bombarding the Stenay, Montmédy and Longuyon Railways.

On November 4, the American 3rd Army Corps reached the Meuse between Villefranche and Stenay, while two solid bridgeheads were established at Briculles and Cléry. The Germans, disconcerted by this rapid advance, withdrew to the right bank of the Meuse.

The two other American Corps followed up the advance, and on the 5th were within nine miles of Sedan, while the French advanced six miles north of the line of the Aisne. On the 8th, the French were the first to enter the suburbs of Sedan, and on the 9th they reached Mézières.

On the extreme right the Germans gave way before the impetuous attacks



TANKS PUT OUT OF ACTION, AFTER DESTROYING GERMAN
MACHINE-GUN NEST NEAR BAYONVILLE

(Nov. 7, 1918.)

of the French 17th Corps, and after a violent engagement, were driven back, the next day, to the foot of the heights of the Meuse, south of Stenay.

On the evening of November 10, the First American Army was to cross the Chiers and push on next day to Montmédy, when the Armistice on the 11th saved the German Army from destruction.

The spoils of the American Army during the last stage of the offensive comprised 5,000 prisoners, 250 guns, 2,000 machine-guns, in addition to enormous quantities of stores. In all, during the Meuse-Argonne Battle the Americans took 21,000 prisoners and 400 guns, which, added to their previous captures, amounted to 50,000 prisoners and over 1,000 guns. Seventy-eight German divisions were engaged during the battle, and the American casualties numbered 100,000 men.

VISIT TO ARGONNE

FIRST DAY : 155 km.—Verdun, Buzancy, Varennes, Vauquois, Clermont-en-Argonne, and Sainte-Menehould.



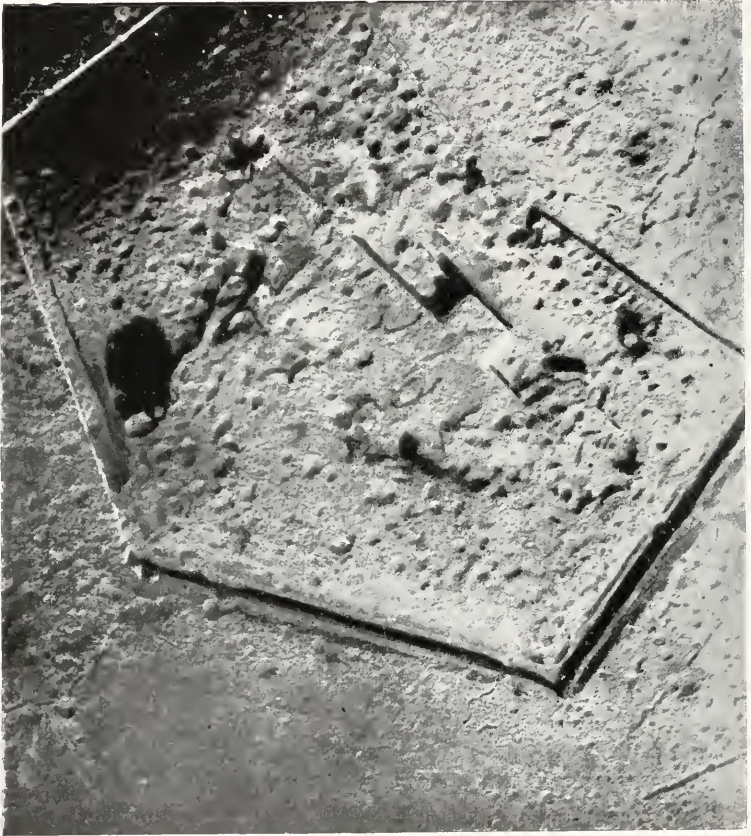
ITINERARY FOR THE FIRST DAY

Leave Verdun* by the Chaussée Gate. Beyond the ramparts, turn to the left into N. 64 leaving N. 3 in front, and, fifty yards further on, N. 18 on the right).

N. 64 follows the right bank of the Meuse, crosses the Faubourg of Belleville, climbs the Hill of Bellerive Fort, and passes close to Froide-Terre Hill. Opposite stands Bras, at the foot of Poivre Hill.

* For particulars concerning Verdun, Bras, Charny, Esnes, Malancourt, see The Michelin Illustrated Guide. "The Battle of Verdun."

To visit Verdun, Bras, Charny, Esnes, and Malancourt, see the *Michelin Illustrated Guide* : "The Battle of Verdun."



THE FORT OF DOUAUMONT AND ITS APPROACHES

(Photographed from aeroplane in May, 1916.)

Extracted from the *Michelin Illustrated Guide*, "The Battle of Verdun."



BRAS VILLAGE. FRENCH CEMETERY. POIVRE HILL IN BACKGROUND

*At the entrance to **Bras**, on the left, there is a large French military cemetery (photo above). In the village, completely ruined, turn to the left into G.C. 38, which soon crosses the Est Canal and then the Meuse (on the right, under the ruined bridge: fortifications and shelters). **Charny**, about one mile from Bras, is next reached.*

G.C. 38 crosses the ruins of this village (level-crossing on leaving), then turns to the right, leaving the Thierville road opposite.

*The road goes round the Heights of Vacherauville and Marre Forts, then enters the almost entirely ruined village of **Marre** (about three miles from Charny). Turn to the left at the first houses, pass in front of the ruined church, then turn to the right, leaving the Bourrus Woods road opposite. Follow the railway.*



MARRE. G.C. 38 FROM CHARNY. RUINS OF CHURCH ON THE RIGHT

Wayside Cross at fork in roads to
Malancourt (right) and Avocourt (left)

G.C. 18, leading to
Malancourt

Hill
304



PANORAMIC VIEW OF ESNES AND HILL 304. THE SIDES

*Two kilometres beyond Marre, before Chattancourt Station, G.C. 38 turns to the left (leaving the Cumières road opposite), then, 1 km. from the fork in the road, reaches **Chattancourt** (completely ruined) at the foot of Mort-Homme (photo below).*



ALL THAT IS LEFT OF CHATTANCOURT. IN THE BACKGROUND : MORT-HOMME

G.C. 18 leading to
Malancourt



THE HILL ARE FULL OF SHELTERS, ESPECIALLY ALONG G.C. 18

*On leaving the village, G.C. 38 turns to the left and climbs the side of **Hill 275**, from the top of which there is a fine view of Mort-Homme Hill and Hill 304; a little to the left, Montzévillie village, situated in a hollow, and, behind, the Valley of the Meuse, Poivre Hill, Talou Hill and Samogneux, are also visible.*

*The road next descends; at the sides are numerous military works and French graves. 2 km. 200 beyond Chattancourt there is a crossroad: the Montzévillie road lies ahead, while G.C. 38, turning to the right, climbs a crest from which there is a view of Esnes and Hill 304. **Esnes** (4 km. 200 from*



ESNES CHURCH, HILL 304 (LEFT) AND G.C. 38 (BEHIND THE CHURCH)



WAYSIDE CROSS OF ESNES ON HILL 304. AVOCOURT ROAD
(LEFT) AND MALANCOURT ROAD (RIGHT)

Chattancourt), partly ruined, is reached : Panorama of Hill 304 (photo, pp. 34-35).

G.C. 38 passes in front of the church (photo, p. 35) and then rises towards Hill 304. 1 km. from Esnes, near a wayside cross (photo above), is a fork ; take the road on the right (G.C. 18) to the top of Hill 304. On the right there is a fine view of the Valley of the Meuse.

The road crosses the old front lines, then zigzags down to Malancourt (5 km. from Esnes). At the entrance to the village, on the right of the road, is a concrete blockhouse (photo below).

Malancourt was completely devastated. *Pass in front of the ruins of the church, quite near to which there is another blockhouse. Keep along*



GERMAN BLOCKHOUSE, WITH MACHINE-GUNS, AT ENTRANCE
TO MALANCOURT



CUISY-SUR-MEUSE.
AMERICAN
SOLDIERS
IN FRONT
OF RUINED
CHURCH

The road on the left leads to Gercourt ; that on the right to Bethincourt.

G.C. 18, leaving on the left, in the village, the Avocourt road. Climb Hill 251, from the top of which Montfaucon Ridge is seen.

3 km. 400 beyond Malancourt (and 1 km. before Montfaucon) the road joins G.C. 19, which take to the right in the direction of Consenroye.

*One kilometer further on, at the fork, keep along G.C. 19, which turns to the left (the Cuisy road, straight ahead, is impassable). On the right, in a tiny valley, is seen the village of **Cuisy**, completely ruined. 1 km. 200 further on, to the right, there is a road leading to Cuisy. G.C. 19, after rejoining the Septsarges road, reaches **Gercourt**, 5 km. beyond Cuisy.*

Several concrete German defence-works are to be seen in Gercourt, while the ruins of the houses and church present a terrible scene of desolation (*photo below*). Opposite the church stands a house lined with concrete, in which the Germans had installed a telephone exchange.

Cuisy and Gercourt were within the German front lines from 1914, and were only retaken in 1918 during the American offensive of September 26.



RUINS OF
GERCOURT
CHURCH

*On the right :
G.C. 19,
leading to
Consenroye.*

DESTROYED
GERMAN
GUNS
ON G.C. 19,
BETWEEN
GERCOURT
AND
CONSENOYVE



The road turns to the right near the church. After leaving the village, it passes 500 yards to the left of Forges Wood, in which German batteries were posted. Large calibre guns destroyed by French artillery are still to be seen on the road, 1 km. from Gercourt (photo above).

On rejoining the road from Dannevoux (I.C. 23) turn to the right and follow the railway as far as **Consenoye** (1 km. 300 from Gercourt), which is reached after crossing the Meuse and the canal.

Consenoye, on the left bank of the Meuse, was connected with the right bank by a fine bridge, which the French blew up after the retreat from Charleroi. After the victory of the Marne, all efforts to dislodge the Germans from the village were unavailing, and until the German offensive of February 21, 1916, Consenoye marked the limit of the advance on both sides. It was over this bridge that supplies were brought up for the sector on the left bank of the Meuse during the 1916 offensive. The village was retaken in the course of a brilliant combined action by the French and Americans during the offensive of October 7, 1918.

SIVRY-SUR-
MEUSE
*The Church
and N. 64.*





AMERICAN
MONUMENT
COMMEMO-
RATING THE
CROSSING
OF THE
MEUSE ON
NOV. 1, 1918
(On I.C. 49,
3 km. from
Vilosnes.)

Consenvoye suffered less than the other villages previously mentioned. Around the church, which was not severely damaged, are some soldiers' graves.

Keep along past the church as far as N. 64, into which turn to the left. Follow the valley of the Meuse to **Sivry** (4 km. from Consenvoye).

N. 64 crosses the partly destroyed village, then runs alongside the canal and the Meuse to a fork in the road, 2 km. 500 from Sivry. Here leave N. 64



BRIULLES-
SUR-BAR,
NOV. 4, 1918
117th
American
Engineers
(42nd Inf.
Div.)
Arrival of
the Field
Kitchen.



PANORAMIC VIEW OF DUN-SUR-MEUSE (LOWER TOWN) AND T
OF THE CHUR

and take the Vilosnes road on the left, which continues alongside the Meuse. Part of **Vilosnes** (3 km. 500 from Sivry) was destroyed, but the church, which stands on a height, was not seriously damaged.

Near the church, take the road on the left across the canal and the Meuse, then beyond the level-crossing at Vilosnes Station turn into I.C. 49 on the right. Follow the railway, which is on the left bank of the Meuse.

Three kilometres from Vilosnes Station, on the right, between the road and Chatillon Wood, there is an American monument commemorating the crossing of the Meuse on November 1, 1918 (photo, p. 39). Further on, at the entry to **Brieulles**, opposite the station, stands another similar monument.

The outskirts of Brieulles were stubbornly defended by the Germans during the American offensive of September, 1918. On September 29, during the first stage of the offensive, the American 3rd Corps reached the southern outskirts of the village, but were unable to enter it. It was not until October 9 that the American troops, after a fierce struggle, captured it.

At the station, turn to the left along the road through Brieulles (4 km. 500 from Vilosnes). Pass near the church, leaving the Nantillois road on the left. Cross the village, in which a number of the houses are in ruins. The rising road leads to the cemetery (numerous German graves), then descends to the I.C. 64, which runs beside the railway and the Meuse to **Cléry-le-Petit** (3 km. 500 from Brieulles). Before entering the village, a third American monument is seen on the left.



CON-CLÉRY-LE-PETIT DISTRICT, AS SEEN FROM THE TERRACE
OF THE UPPER TOWN



CHURCH OF DUN-SUR-MEUSE. SOUTH FRONT



PANORAMIC VIEW OF DUN-SUR-MEUSE

Cléry-le-Petit was slightly damaged. On November 4, 1918, the Americans reached the Meuse between Brioules and Villefranche. On September 5, they crossed the river at Brioules and Cléry, on foot-bridges built by the American engineers, in spite of the stubborn resistance of the Germans established on the right bank. It was the American 5th Division which first effected the crossing of the river and established solid bridgeheads at Cléry and Brioules,



DUN-SUR-MEUSE. BRIDGE ACROSS THE MEUSE DESTROYED BY THE GERMANS



R AND LOWER TOWNS

which resisted every attack. *Keep straight on, leaving the church on the right, and the Cléry-le-Grand road on the left. After crossing the little River Andon, Dun-sur-Meuse on the top of the opposite hill comes into view. The G.C. 2 bis near Doulcon is reached, which take to the right as far as Dun-sur-Meuse (3 km. from Cléry-le-Petit).*



DUN-SUR-MEUSE. DAMAGED NAVE AND SOUTH AISLE OF CHURCH
(SEEN FROM THE CHOIR)



BANTHÉVILLE. RUINS OF CHURCH AND VILLAGE
(G.C. 2 bis.)

The town is reached after crossing first the railway (l.c.) near the station, then the canal and the Meuse (photos, pp. 42-43). Motor-cars can climb as far as the church. Turn to the left beyond the last bridge in the lower town, then take the first street on the right, which by a wide bend and a steep ascent leads to the upper town and to the terrace, where stands the church. There is a fine view over the lower town and the valley of the Meuse (photo, pp. 40-41) from here.

Return to and recross the bridges ; keep straight on to **Doulcon**, leaving the Cléry road on the left.

At the fork in the road beyond Doulcon (in ruins), take G.C. 2 bis on the left, as far as **Romagne** (9 km. from Doulcon), passing through **Aincreville** (severely damaged) and **Banthéville** (completely ruined).



ROMAGNE. RIGHT SIDE OF ROAD COMING FROM BANTHÉVILLE
(On the left : I.C. 4, leading to Sommerance.)



ROMAGNE. GERMAN GRAVEYARD (700 GRAVES) NEAR VILLAGE CEMETERY

Before entering Romagne, on the right, there is a large German cemetery and some American graves.

Most of the houses in Romagne were destroyed. Near the church (in ruins), take on the left the Cunel road and cross the bridge. 300 yards from the village there suddenly comes into view on the side of the hill a very large American cemetery containing some 28,000 graves (photo, pp. 14 and 15). Return by the same road to Romagne Church, and take the Sommerance road (photo, p. 44) on the left.

Pass the other side of the German cemetery (photo above), then go through Romagne Wood, in which are numerous German dug-outs and gun-emplacements. Next cross a large plateau (Hill 247); 7 km. 100 beyond Romagne, Sommerance (damaged houses) is reached (photo below). In the village,



SOMMERANCE. RUINED CORNER OF VILLAGE AT JUNCTION OF THE ROMAGNE AND FLÉVILLE ROADS

AMERICAN
MONUMENT
(1ST DIV.,
OCT. 11,
1918)

On I.C. 4,
1 km. from
Sommerance
village.



beyond the public washing place near the church, take the street (I.C. 4) which ascends on the right. 1 km. beyond Sommerance, on the right of I.C. 4, there is another American monument (1st Division, October 11, 1918) (photo above).

3 km. 200 beyond Sommerance, **Landres** village (severely damaged) is reached. During the American offensive of October 14, 1918, the approach to Landres was fiercely contested. The American 5th Corps reached the outskirts of the village on October 14, but it was only on the 18th, after three days' heavy fighting, that Landres was taken. The church was partially destroyed. Turn to the right beyond the church and then to the left. After crossing the stream, turn to the right again, and 100 yards further on, to the left.

One kilometer beyond the village, at the fork in the road, take I.C. 15 on the left across a plateau, and through the pretty little village of **Landreville** in the Valley of the Agron. At the entrance to this village, on the left, there is an interesting château with turrets, one of which was destroyed (photo. p. 47), **Bayonville**, 5 km. beyond Landres, is next reached.

Several houses in Bayonville were destroyed, the village having been frequently bombed by the Allied airmen during the Franco-American offensive

LANDRES.
I. C. 4.
RUINS OF
CHURCH ON
THE RIGHT





LANDREVILLE. THE OLD CHÂTEAU, WITH DESTROYED TURRET

of September-October, 1918. The badly damaged church dates from the 16th century, but has been frequently restored.

*After passing in front of the church, the road turns first to the left, then to the right. At the end of the village take I.C. 12, which climbs **Hill 290**, called *Bellevue*. Looking back there is a fine view over Bayonville, and the district of Romagne-Bantheville. 3 km. 300 from Bayonville, at the fork, take the left-hand road; picturesque run down to **Buzancy** (4 km. 400 from Bayonville).*

*At the cross-ways on I.C. 12, near the first houses, keep straight on along *Rue du Général Chanzy* to the *Place Chanzy*. The statue of Chanzy (born at Nouart, in this district), which stood in this square, was carried away by the Germans.*



BAYONVILLE. RUE HAUTE DE L'ÉGLISE, WITH TROOPS OF THE 89TH INF. DIV., ON NOV. 2, 1918



BUZANCY.
I. C. 12 AT
ENTRANCE
TO VILLAGE

*The
Itinerary
follows
Rue du Gen.
Chanzy
opposite.*

lions, presented by Louis XV. to King Stanislas and brought from the Château of Lunéville, ornament the entrance. Of the 17th–18th century château, only the outbuildings are left.

The Mosque of Mahommed is a fragment of a very old square building. According to tradition it was built by a Noble Jean d'Anglure, a crusader who, captured by the Mohammedans, regained his liberty by promising to build a mosque. It seems more probable that this building is the remains of a lodge attached to the Château de la Cour.



CHAMPIGNEULLE. RUINED MILL NEAR RIVER AGRON, AT END OF VILLAGE



CHAMPIGNEULLE VILLAGE AND CHURCH, SEEN FROM I.C. 20,
BEFORE ENTERING THE VILLAGE

Take I.C. 6, a continuation of the Rue du Château, as far as **Thénorgues** (3 km. 200 from Buzancy).

Before entering **Thénorgues**, a German burial ground is seen on the right in the communal cemetery. In front of the church take I.C. 20 on the left, which, 2 km. 700 further on, reaches **Verpel**. Beyond the church of **Verpel** turn to the left, and immediately afterwards to the right. Outside the village, the I.C. 20 divides; keep straight on. Picturesque run down into the Agron Valley.

Cross the Agron near a mill, reaching **Champigneulle**, which stands on a hill, 4 km. 200 from **Verpel**. Numerous houses are in ruins. The road passes in front of the very curious church, the nave of which has fallen in (photo below). On leaving the village, the road again descends into the valley, recrosses the Agron, then rises on the left up **Hill 182**, on which stands the village of **St. Juvin** (2 km. from **Champigneulle**). At the entrance to the latter there is a large German cemetery.

CHAMPIG-
NEULLE
CHURCH,
SOUTH
FRONT



St. Juvin

On September 15, 1792, a strong Prussian detachment, under the command of Hohenlohe, drove a small body of French troops from the village, forcing them back on Senuc. Eighty foot-soldiers were taken prisoners and sent to the headquarters at Landres. Among them were several Alsations whom the Prince of Prussia addressed in German, offering to enrol them in his regiment, but only one of them agreed to serve against France.

In October, 1918, along the St. Juvin—Landres—St. Georges line, the Americans delivered a long series of fierce assaults upon the "Brunehilde" position, or second line of defence which the Germans had prepared in this district. On October 11, 1918, at the time when the Americans approached St. Juvin, the village was in flames. Its recapture proved difficult. On October 14, the Americans outflanked it on the north, and, on the 15th, regardless of their heavy losses, they succeeded in taking it inch by inch, and in gaining the positions of St. Georges and Landres-St. Georges. On the 16th they were fighting in Champigneulle on the west of St. Georges, and holding the Châtillon Hill on the south of Landres. By the 18th they had occupied both these villages.

St. Juvin is dominated by its church—one of the most interesting of the fortified churches in this district—which, in the distance, looks like a fortress. Its high thick walls, with narrow windows and occasional loopholes at the top, form a parallelogram, flanked at each corner by a round tower with corbels.

In the interior of the church there is a well and an oven. Dating from the early part of the 17th century, it was rebuilt between 1615 and 1623 on the site of the old church destroyed under the League about 1552. Some of the relics of the patron-saint of the Parish, St. Juvin, were preserved in a shrine of gilded bronze.

The Fountain of St. Juvin, situated between the Woods of Marcq and Cornay, is frequented by peasant pilgrims who invoke the Saint to cure their sick pigs. Failing a visit to the well, the peasants touch the shrine in the church with a piece of bread, which is afterwards given to the animals. The church contains a statue of St. Juvin, depicted with a stick in his hand and two pigs at his feet. There is a legend that St. Juvin was the disciple of St. Oricle, the Martyr of Senuc. One day when he was walking with Oricle and his sisters (Oricule and Basilique), they had to cross the Aisne near Senuc



FORTIFIED
CHURCH
OF
ST. JUVIN



VARENNES-EN-ARGONNE, SEEN FROM N. 46 IN THE UPPER TOWN
On the right : The ruined Church. In the foreground : The River Aire.

at the "Ford of Madame Anciaux." Oricle's sisters had lifted their skirts before entering the water, and Juvin, who was behind them, exclaimed: "Oricle, Oricle, what fine legs your sisters have." Oricle, in anger, reprimanded Juvin severely, and condemned him to keep pigs for the rest of his life, which is why Juvin, up to his death, kept pigs in the heart of the forest, round the well which to this day bears his name.

After visiting the church keep straight on, leaving the St. Georges road on the left, and on the right, that leading to Grandpré. After a rather steep descent, turn to the left along N. 46, at the end of the village.

Follow the Valley of the Aire to Fléville (4 km. 200 from St. Juvin), which escaped practically unscathed. 4 km. further on N. 46 passes close to Apremont, then over a ridge, from the top of which Vauquois Hill, now quite bare, comes into view on the right. From here, a rather steep descent brings the tourist to Varennes (1 km. from Fléville).

Varennes

This little town, made famous by the arrest of Louis XVI. (p. 74), was almost completely destroyed.

In September, 1914, it was occupied by the Germans, who converted it into a fortress. On September 26, 1918, the first day of the Franco-American offensive, it was retaken by the American First Army in a single charge.

The River Aire divides the town into two parts: the upper town on the left bank, and the lower on the right bank. The visit to the upper town will be made on the second day (*see p. 74*).



VARENNES
CHURCH.
SOUTH-WEST
FRONT

N. 46 coming from Fléville, passes the church (hist. mon.—photos above and below).

The three-sided apse of this church, with its fine windows, dates from the 14th or 15th century; the façade and the tower from the 18th.

The Hôtel du Grand Cerf, near the church, contains carved presses and pretty Argonne earthenware.

The bridge over the Aire, from which there is a pretty view of the river, connects the upper and lower town.

Before crossing the bridge, take G.C. 38 to the left, 1 km. 800 from Varennes; leave the Cheppy road on the left, and keep on in the direction of Vauquois, the bare crest of which is seen on the right.

3 km. 500 from Varennes, on the right, is a sheet of water, behind which rises Vauquois Hill. One hundred yards further on, at a small wood, leave the car and take on foot the (bad) road on the right for about 400 yards, to a square constructed in cement and stone. This was a German Command-Post (photo, p. 54). On the left of this building, follow a small winding path up to Vauquois Crest.

(The visit on foot to Vauquois Crest takes an hour.)



VARENNES,
NAVE OF
CHURCH
SEEN FROM
THE CHOIR

G.C. 38

Beginning of road leading
to Vauquois Crest

PANORAMIC VIEW OF VAUQUOIS CRE

NEAR VAUQUOIS. GERMAN POST OF COMMANDMENT, AFTER
CAPTURE BY AMERICAN TROOPS, WITH STARS
AND STRIPES FLYING

German Post of Commandment (see p. 54) Road leading up to Crest

Vauquois Crest (mine craters)



AS SEEN FROM C.C. 38 AT AVOCOURT

Vauquois

Vauquois is one of the famous spots of the Argonne battlefield. The Germans took it in September, 1914, during a strong attack on the French 3rd Army, in their efforts to encircle Verdun. The ridge concealed their operations to the north of Varennes, covered the re-victualling of the Argonne front by the Four-de-Paris road, and above all furnished their artillery with an excellent observation-post. The importance of the position caused the Germans to convert it into a veritable fortress. Caves were made in the rock and connected by underground passages. The streets of the village were excavated, so that the vent-holes of the cellars formed loop-holes on a level with a man's head. The walls of the houses and gardens were battlemented, and trenches were dug in the slopes in front of the village. The position was supported and flanked by the guns in the Woods of Cheppy, Montfaucon and Argonne. Approach was the more difficult, in that the position was surrounded on all sides by ravines and *glacis*, which provided admirable firing positions for the machine-guns.

This formidable position, which earlier in the war, before the improvement in the French artillery, would have been considered impregnable, was taken by the French 10th Infantry Division after heroic sacrifices. The first assaults especially, made without artillery preparation or support, cost the splendid French Infantry heavy losses.

The first attack was made on October 28, 1914, by two battalions of the 46th Regiment of the line. The French front lines were then on the *Mamelon*

NEAR
VAUQUOIS.
CAPTURE OF
GERMAN
TRAIN
LOADED
WITH
RAILS



Blanc, facing Vauquois. Two companies debouching from Noir Wood attacked the western slopes of Vauquois, the sections deployed in skirmishing order, without artillery preparation, and without a single big French gun being fired on the village. As the men dashed forward up the slopes they were shot down by the carefully concealed German riflemen, but continued nevertheless to advance, in spite of the rain of bullets, till an avalanche of big German shells overwhelmed and scattered them. At the end of half an hour almost all of them were out of action.

The second assault was made on the following day (the 29th), after a very short artillery preparation, during which only a few shells were fired, most of which failed to burst. Fresh companies attacked further to the right, near the Cigalerie. The men charged with the bayonet, but as on the previous day, were mown down by the German machine-guns and rifles, and failed, after heavy losses. At night, an attempt to rescue the wounded left on the field was unsuccessful, the enemy firing pitilessly on the stretcher-bearers, in spite of the Red Cross lantern.

The third assault was carried out on February 17, 1915, by the 76th, 31st and 46th Infantry Regiments. This time the operation, which almost succeeded, was better prepared. The French artillery had improved its equipment and methods, being now better adapted to stationary warfare. The artillery preparation with guns of 75, 95, 150, 155 and 270 m.m. lasted more than twelve hours. The 31st Regiment of the line charged into Vauquois, and reached the ruins of the church, but, caught by the fire of the Argonne and Montfaucon batteries, and that of the machine-guns of Cheppy, it was forced, after heavy losses, to fall back. Abandoning the plateau, this regiment held on half-way down the hill.

The fourth assault was made on February 28, under further improved conditions. A plan of the village, of which only the ruins were left, was issued to the troops. Each company had its precise objectives assigned to it, and the men were armed, for the first time, with the new hand-grenades, charged with melinite. The bombardment began at dawn. Big guns shattered the shelters, and 75's, hoisted to the top of the *Mamelon Blanc*, fed by infantry, who carried up the shells on their backs, fired directly on the village. When the attack began, the band of the 46th Regiment of the line, stationed at the bottom of the ravine, played the "Marseillaise." Within a few minutes a number of the bandsmen fell killed or wounded, but the survivors sounded the charge, and the storming waves of the 89th, 76th and 46th Regiments



NEAR VAUQUOIS. GERMAN DEPÔT. CAMOUFLAGED BARBED WIRE DEFENCES

dashed forward. Bullets and shells soon silenced the music ; of fifteen bandmen only five escaped unwounded, but the companies leading the charge were by this time climbing the slopes of Vauquois. At the divisional observation-post, General Valdant, who was following the attack, turning with great emotion to his officers, raised his *képi*, and said : "Gentlemen, salute !" The fight was stubborn : twice the troops, dashing from one shell-hole to another, reached the plateau, the second time standing firm. The houses were taken one by one, and the church reached. The village had been wiped out—only shell-holes, heaps of stones, bits of walls and shattered cellars remained. Throughout the next day the Germans shelled the defenders, who were armed only with rifles. Outflanked, the French were slowly forced back from shell-hole to shell-hole, fighting all the time, but their line of defence, organised under fire on the edge of the plateau, brought the enemy to a standstill. At 2 p.m. the French infantry, for the fifth time, stormed the village, carried the German trenches, entered the ruins, and within half an hour drove back the enemy at the point of the bayonet. At 3, 4, 5 and 5.30 p. m., the Germans counter-attacked ; but although troops of fourteen different units were successively launched, they could not dislodge the French from the main street. Twice during the night they tried, in vain, to take the church. For four days and nights, under an incessant pounding by high-explosive shells and a rain of bullets, the French troops held on without supplies, dependent for their food on the rations taken from the dead. The Colonial Infantry, who for a short time relieved the attacking troops, were decimated in a few days. The Germans were already making use of a powerful *minenwerfer*, to which the French could only reply with hastily-devised mortars roughly made out of 77 m.m. shell-cases, and which carried only 100-150 yards. It was an unequal contest. The Germans attacked almost every night, but were repulsed with hand-grenades and rifle fire, sometimes with the bayonet. The position became untenable and the French had either to retreat or advance. Once more they attacked. On the afternoon of



VIEW OF THE MINE CRATERS, WHERE VAUQUOIS VILLAGE USED TO STAND
(Scen from the crest of Vauquois Ridge.) In the background : Argonne Forest.

March 4, the 76th regiment of the line took the German trenches west of the church, reaching the wall of the cemetery, in spite of enemy grenades and mines. On the 5th a German counter-attack was repulsed and the capture of Vauquois by the French was definitive. During the night of the 15th-16th, a fresh German attack was easily repulsed. On the 16th, at the Cigalerie, which during the attacks of February and March had served as a dressing station, Standard-bearer Collignon, of the 46th Regiment of the line, Councillor of State, and former Secretary-General to the Presidency of the Republic, who had voluntarily enlisted at the age of fifty-eight, was killed by the explosion of a shell while trying to rescue a wounded man belonging to the 76th Regiment of the line. Ever since, at Regimental roll-calls, his name follows that of La Tour d'Auvergne, and the reply is made : "Died on the field of honour."

Cazeneuve of the *Opera Comique*, Adjutant of the 46th Regiment of the line, who had volunteered at the age of fifty-four, was also killed at Vauquois by a bomb which shattered his dug-out.

Vauquois for long remained a particularly dangerous sector, the scene of frequent hand-to-hand struggles, of mining and counter-mining, and of continuous bombardment. The Germans were not reconciled to the loss of this position, which gave the French an outlook over Varennes and the road which formed a continuation of the light railway which they had built between

SHELTER ON
CREST OF
VAUQUOIS
RIDGE



Montfaucon and Spincourt. On March 22, 1915, near the ruins of the church, they attacked a trench with liquid fire. Mines were exploded almost every month, followed by fighting for possession of the craters. Engagements of this nature took place on April 5, July 26, August 3, September 1, November 18 and 21, and December 16, 1915, and on January 13 and 16, February 3, and March 24, 1916.

The Battle of Verdun was followed by a period of comparative calm in this sector, both sides practically abandoning mine warfare. In 1917 there was hardly anything but hand-to-hand fighting, and a few more or less important raids. Three times during the first three months of 1918, the French carried out important raids in this region. On March 17 especially, along a front of 1,400 yards, they advanced to a depth of 800 yards into the enemy lines, and brought back about a hundred prisoners. On September 26, 1918, the first day of the Franco-American offensive, the outskirts to the north of Vauquois were completely cleared, while Boureuilles was taken by the Americans.



AUBREVILLE.
RUINED
BRIDGE AND
HOUSES

The ridge, which rose 390 feet above the Valley of the Aire, and more than 250 feet above that of the Buanthe, is no longer recognisable, the bombardments and mine-explosions have shattered, and, so to speak, decapitated it. The sight is impressive; mine craters have swallowed up the village; trenches, shelters, barbed-wire are all that remain (*photos, p. 53*).

The view extends as far as Clermont-en-Argonne.

After visiting Vauquois, return to and follow G.C. 38. The original front lines are soon crossed. Cheppy Wood on the left and Hesse Forest on the right were cut to pieces by the shells. The ground is covered with defence-works. 6 km. 500 beyond Varennes the road divides on the edge of Hesse Forest. G.C. 38 running to the left, towards Avocourt. Take the right-hand road (I.C. 60), which enters the forest. Numerous French military works, and some gun emplacements, may be seen along the road. The road to Récicourt, on the left, is soon passed.

Coming out of the forest I.C. 60 crosses a plateau, then reaches Aubréville (14 km. from Varennes).



CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE. PANORAMIC VIEW OF COUNTRY LOOKING
TOWARDS VAUQUOIS

*Cross the railway (l.c.) near the station, then the Couzance River, and enter the ruins of Aubréville (photo, p. 59). At the end of the village the road forks; keep straight along I.C. 60, which crosses first the Aire, then the railway (l.c.). The **Ridge of Clermont-en-Argonne** soon comes into view.*

*The road joins that leading to Neuvilly; cross the bridge over the railway and enter **Clermont**, coming out at the Place de la Mairie.*

Clermont-en-Argonne

The history of this picturesque little town, which was the capital of the old Comté of Clermont, has been a troubled one. In 719, Charles-Martel gave it and its dependencies to the Bishop of Verdun. In 1094 it was taken by an adventurer named Odon, and recaptured from him by the Bishop of Verdun. In 1110, Dudon, Count of Clermont, having insulted the Bishop of Verdun, the town was besieged by the Emperor. In the subsequent struggles between the Bishops of Verdun and the Counts of Bar for the possession of the town, it was several times besieged and burnt. The Counts of Bar, who finally gained the upper hand, on the condition that they would pay homage to the Bishops of Verdun, strongly fortified it. A fortress, added by Henri II., Count of Bar, in the 13th century, was built on the St. Anne Plateau. Letters of enfranchisement were given to the inhabitants of the fortress by Count Tiébault II. in 1246, and to the people of the town by the Duke Henri IV. in 1339. In 1354, Yolande of Flanders, Countess of Longueville, Bar, and Cassel, had a mint at Clermont. In 1539, Clermont became a feudatory state of the Empire. Ceded to France in 1634 by the Treaty of Liverdun (confirmed by the Treaty of the Pyrénées in 1659) it was definitely incorporated in France by the Treaty of Paris on March 29, 1641. In 1648, Louis XIII. settled it on the Great Condé, whose family held it until the Revolution. During the



CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE. GENERAL VIEW OF RUINS, SEEN FROM THE TERRACE OF THE CHURCH

Fronde, Clermont took part in the war of the rebel princes; in 1654, the town was besieged by the royal troops, the siege being conducted by Vauban, who had himself fortified the place in 1652. On November 8, 1654, the Marquis de Riberpray took the fortress and church by assault, and on the 22nd, after a siege lasting one month, the town surrendered. The upper town and the fortress were entirely destroyed, while the peasants of the surrounding district were made to pull down the fortress. Clermont and its dependencies were added to the national domain in 1790. In 1792, Clermont was occupied by the Austrian and Hessian troops under Hohenlohe. On September 11, enemy hussars surprised and captured some French troops near Clermont, who, while foraging, had lost their way in the fog; they also surrounded a company of infantry in the gardens of the town. On September 20, the French, who were holding the pass of Les Islettes, took their revenge on the Hessians. The latter, held up by the fire of the French artillery, were forced to retreat, and the sharpshooters, under Marceau, drove them back to the gardens of Clermont.

In 1914, Clermont was occupied by German troops of the Crown Prince's Army. The town was almost deserted, with the exception of the old men's asylum, in which the pensioners remained under the care of Sister Gabrielle. During the night of September 4, the 121st and 122nd Wurtemberg Regiments broke in the doors of the houses with the butt-ends of their rifles and pillaged the town. At the asylum, after smashing the doors, officers entered with revolvers in their hands, but Sister Gabrielle, surrounded by her nuns and the inmates, received the invaders, and by her firm demeanour won their respect. In the rest of the town the pillaging went on throughout the day. About noon a German soldier started an incendiary fire; everything was

burned or destroyed, with the exception of the asylum, which owed its escape to Sister Gabrielle.

At the Place de la Mairie turn to the right into the Grand Rue.

To visit the interesting church of St. Didier (*hist. mon.*) climb the rather steep Rue Casimar-Bonjour (*accessible to motor-cars*), to the terrace on which stands the church. Very fine view.

The Church of St. Didier dates from the 16th century. The date of the choir (1530) is carved on the keystone of the vaulting. The three naves and main portal were added in 1596. However, the building as a whole is pointed-flamboyant in style, the ogive being preserved in the arches, vaultings and transept. The Renaissance style appears only in the decoration of the capitals, the consoles in the interior, and the doors. The western façade is late Renaissance, and must have been completed about the beginning of the 17th century. Its two arched portals retain their old wooden folding-doors orna-



CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE. OLD WOMAN CONTEMPLATING THE
RUINS OF HER HOUSE, RUE CASIMIR-BONJOUR,
NEAR CHURCH

mented with rose-headed nails. Above, in a niche surmounted by a fine rose-window is a modern statue. On the south an ancient corner turret was rebuilt in 1728. The façade bears the escutcheon and crowned monogram of Henri de Lorraine, Duke of Bar.

The interior of the choir is imposing. The apse is six-sided—rather an uncommon arrangement.

In the "Chapelle des Morts," which opens off the northern nave, near the transept, there is a Renaissance tomb with a remarkable bas-relief; below is depicted a nude body lying in a grave, being devoured by worms; above, three successive panels represent the Weighing of Souls, the Mirror of Death, and Purgatory. Each subject is accompanied by an inscription in French verse carved in fine black Gothic characters. There are few sculptural representations of Purgatory earlier than the 16th century, and this is one of the earliest examples to be found.

The Presbytery.—The Presbytery, standing in a narrow street which runs along the south side of the church, is an old wooden building, the interior



CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE. SOUTH-EAST FRONT OF CHURCH

of which is in a perfect state of preservation. In it is kept an earthenware model dating from 1530, which was brought from the Chapel of St. Anne. This model, attributed to Ligier Richier, represents the Virgin receiving the body of Christ after it had been taken down from the Cross. It has been imperfectly restored and painted.

Chapel of St. Anne.—Above the church, on the top of the St. Anne Plateau, where the fortress used to stand, there now remains only an unpretending chapel, much frequented by pilgrims. The building has a wooden front, surmounted by a small steeple, and a stone choir with pointed vaulting, the flamboyant ornament being in the same style as that of the St. Didier Church. Four ancient elms give shade to the parvis and rise high above the steeple. Inside is a sepulchre with six almost life-size statues, acquired in 1829 when the Church of the Minimes of Verdun was pulled down. Three only of these statues, the three Mariés, all painted, are late 16th



CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE. 15TH CENTURY CHURCH. RENAISSANCE PORTAL

CLERMONT-
EN-
ARGONNE.
CHURCH
NAVE,
SEEN FROM
NORTH
AISLES



century. The finest, which is in the centre, is attributed by some to Ligier Richier, but this appreciation is open to question. Near by there is a hermitage, which at the beginning of the 17th century belonged to the Benedictines, and later to the Franciscans. In 1845, the town of Clermont acquired the whole plateau, the promenade, hermitage, and the chapel. From the plateau—the highest point in the Argonne—there is a fine and very extensive view over the Forest of Argonne on the left, and the Forest of Hesse on the right, while the Vauquois-Montfaucon ridge appears in the distance.



CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE. THE ENTOMBMENT IN THE CHAPEL OF ST. ANNE,
ON THE PLATEAU OVERLOOKING ST. MENEHOULD

Return to and follow the *Grand Rue* which, outside the town, becomes *N. 3* and runs alongside the railway to **Les Islettes** (5 km. 800).

This large market town marks the centre of the valley. In 1789, Arthur Young, in his "Travels in France," described it as a "heap of mud and manure." Since then it has been drained and embellished. Thatched roofs are still common there. Its glass-making industry, which formerly flourished, has greatly declined.

On September 17-20, 1792, while the Prussian Army was advancing towards the Châlons road and fighting at Valmy, the Austro-Hessians of the Landgrave of Hesse and of Hohenlohe Kirchberg made two demonstrations against Les Islettes, but were promptly checked by the French. During the action of September 20, a bullet killed a gunner near the Landgrave, who was himself unhorsed.

In 1914, the tunnel of Les Islettes, though mined, was intact on September 3 when the Germans took the village. A fortnight later the Germans, driven northwards by the French, evacuated the village. The Crown Prince, unable to resign himself to the loss of this capital position on the Châlons-Verdun



LES ISLETTES, AFTER THE BOMBARDMENT

road and railway, for a whole year (until the French offensive of September, 1915, in Champagne) made strenuous efforts to retake Les Islettes, in order to cut this important railway and turn Verdun. However, his numerous attempts to crush in the French line all failed. Only once (June 29, 1915) did his troops seriously threaten the position. On that occasion they got within 8 km. of the station, but a formidable barrage by the 75's held them, and French reserves hurriedly brought up soon drove them back beyond the Four-de-Paris. Throughout the war the town was an important military centre, General Headquarters, and food, clothing, and munitions depôts being established there.

The town, which was somewhat damaged by the bombardments, contains a very large French military cemetery.

Outside the town, the road climbs a steep slope and enters the forest. Pretty view of Les Islettes and the Forest of Argonne (on the left).

N. 3 next reaches Grange-aux-Bois (5 km. beyond Les Islettes), which takes its name from a house and grange, formerly the den of a gang of cut-throats who were wiped out in 1514.

The church is of no particular architectural interest, although it contains some curious statues, notably that of St. Nicolas (18th century) over the altar in the right aisle.

St. Menehou'd is next reached (3½ km.), after a pleasant run down the shady Avenue Victor Hugo, which crosses the Aisne.

Sainte-Menehould

The origin of this town is uncertain, and its history prior to the Merovingian epoch obscure. Judging by the Gallo-Roman relics and graves discovered in the neighbourhood, it seems probable that at an early date a Pagan temple or Gallo-Roman *castrum* stood on the rock encircled by the two arms of the Aisne. Houses gradually arose about the fortress—an important stronghold prior to the 5th century. During that century, Count Sygmar held assizes in the château. Sygmar and his seven daughters were Christians. One of the latter, Manechildis or Manehildis, being of a religious turn of mind, devoted herself to the care of the sick and poor, and was greatly beloved in consequence. After her death she was honoured by the people as a saint, and the town then took her name St. Menehould.

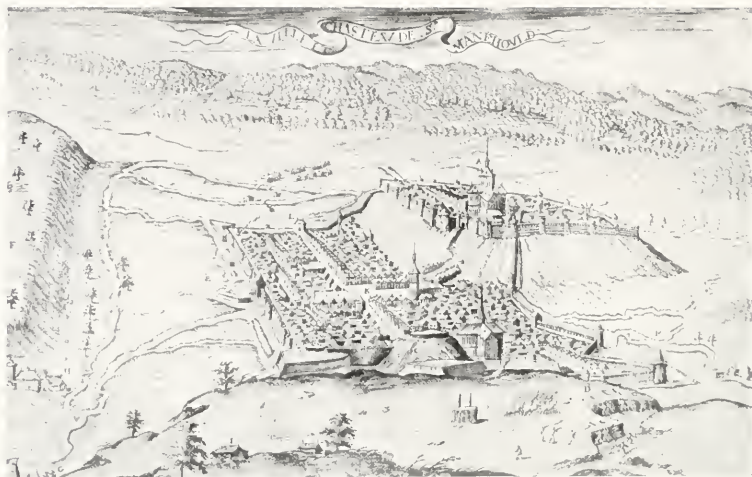
During the wars of Chilpéric against Sigebert the town was partly destroyed. More than a hundred years later, towards the end of the 7th century, Drogon, Duke of Champagne, son of Pépin of Hérisal, rebuilt the castle and surrounded the rock with ramparts. St. Menehould was frequently besieged. In the 11th century it was attacked by troops of the Duke of Lorraine and the Bishop of Verdun. In the 12th century the castle fell into the hands of a robber-chief, Albert or Aubert, who plundered the Bishoprics of Verdun and Châlons. At the end of the 12th century St. Menehould was finally included in the County of Champagne. It became French in the 13th century, after the union of Champagne with France. In 1398, Charles VI. built a wall round the town proper. In 1423, the English took the town, but the Constable of Richemont recaptured it in 1435. In 1545, Marini, an Italian engineer, built a new line of ramparts with moats and four gates. Several years later the town, ravaged by plague, was attacked by Antoine de Cory, the Calvinist, who, however, failed to take it. Under the League, the Governor, Mondreville, sided with the Guises, but could not shake the allegiance of the burgesses to Henri III. On May 1, 1589, Antoine de Saint-Paul, a leader of the League, pursued the royal troops as far as the gates of the town, but the burgesses forced them to retreat after a battle lasting two hours. In 1590 the Duke of Lorraine tried in vain to reduce the town by force. In March, 1603, Henri IV., after renouncing the Protestant faith, visited the faithful city, accompanied by Marie de Médicis. In 1613, the Prince of Condé and the Duke of Nevers took the castle by surprise and forced the burgesses to lay down their arms. In 1630, Marillac was imprisoned in the castle for several months. In December, 1631, and January, 1632, Louis XIII. stayed in the town. In 1634, the King ordered the castle to be pulled down; by mistake the walls of the town were also razed, and in 1635 they had to be rebuilt. In October, 1652, during the Fronde, the Great Condé, with an army of 15,000 to 16,000 men and two guns, laid siege to the town, which eventually capitulated, with the honours of war, after thirteen days of trench warfare and three assaults. In October of the following year the royal troops besieged the town in their turn and forced the garrison to surrender. This siege of 1653 was the last to which the town was subjected. In 1712, St. Menehould had to pay a war-levy to the Dutch robber-chief Grownstein. On the night of August 7, 1719, the town was almost entirely destroyed by fire. It was at St. Menehould in 1791 that Louis XVI., while attempting to escape from France, was recognised by Drouet, son of the postmaster of Varennes. On September 3, 1792, the body of Beaurepaire, Military Commander of Verdun, who committed

suicide rather than surrender to the Prussians, was buried in the town cemetery. It was before St. Menehould that Dumouriez established himself while awaiting the arrival of Kellermann, who defeated the Prussians at Valmy in September 20, 1792.

In 1911, the town was for a long time occupied by the enemy. Early in August of that year, the first refugees from the neighbourhood of Longwy, Longuyon, Audun-le-Roman, and the region of the Meuse reached St. Menehould. On Monday, August 21, the guns in the north-east of the Argonne were heard in the town. On the 31st the sound of the cannonade drew nearer, and refugees from the Ardennes flocked in, terrifying the inhabitants with stories of German pillage and atrocities. On September 1, the horizon towards Monthois was lit up by the incendiary fires, and the next day the people were advised to leave the town. The banks closed, and many of the inhabitants left the city, the trains in the evening being literally taken by storm. The last train left at about ten o'clock on the morning of the 3rd. Early in the morning of the 4th, the last French troops marched through the town on their way to Verrières. At 3.30 companies of a Prussian Reserve Corps, preceded by Uhlans, entered St. Menehould by the Moiremont road and destroyed the telegraphic and telephonic apparatus at the post-office and the station. The Germans, exasperated by the evacuation of the inhabitants, hastened to pillage the deserted houses and shops. The tobacco warehouse, the Caffa stores, and the cellars of Quesnel the wine-merchant were emptied and the contents sent away on army waggons.

Of the population only eighty-two men had remained, twelve of whom were obliged to present themselves each morning at six o'clock before the Kommandantur, as surety for the order and peace of the town. Six men by day and six by night were kept as hostages by the German sentries, first at the Maison Viard, where the Kommandantur was housed, and then at the Hôtel-de-Metz. The Mayor was kept busy by the German requisitions. From Nettancourt, where the Crown Prince was reported to be, came an officer to demand champagne, fine wines, and liqueurs. On the Mayor's declaring that there was nothing left the officer lost his temper and threatened to have him shot. General von Schaeffendorf, commanding the VIIth Artillery Corps, took up his residence at the Château de la Mignonnerie. Headquarters were established in the Maison Géraudel, Rue de la Force, where the Duke of Wurtemberg was erroneously reported to have been housed. The able-bodied men of the town were commandeered for fatigue-duty and for the cleaning of the streets. A day or two before evacuating the town, the Germans requisitioned 6,000 bottles of claret, but left them behind in the hurry of their departure.

On September 13, a cannonade was heard from the south. On the 14th, there was great excitement in the German garrison, regimental baggage-trains passed through the town northwards and the Staff prepared to leave. In the morning the enemy troops streamed along the Verrières and Daucourt roads, soon followed by the garrison and waggon-loads of stolen furniture. The Municipal Buildings, Savings Banks, and Post-office were full of German sick and wounded, only part of whom could be evacuated through lack of ambulances. There was a speeding up of the retreat, resulting in great confusion, the bridge, Faubourg de Verrières and Rue de Vitry being encumbered with German troops on the way to Moiremont and Chauffontaine. Shortly afterwards an enemy battery of 77's, which had taken up a position on the Verrières road, withdrew at a gallop through the town, while the last German troops fled along the Rue de Prés towards the Pont des Maures. Almost immediately afterwards the French artillery occupied the ridge of Bel-Air and opened fire on the retreating enemy columns. At about 5.30 p.m. the French advance-guards, cyclists and light cavalry entered St. Menehould. A Prussian laggard was shot in the Avenue Kellermann on his refusal to



SAINTE-MENEHOULD TOWN AND CHÂTEAU (old engraving)

surrender. At 7 p.m. General Cordonnier arrived in the town, which was occupied by the 51st Regiment of the line, and a continuous stream of French troops passed through, following up the pursuit in the direction of Villesur-Tourbe, Vienne-la-Ville and Florent.

While the trench warfare lasted the headquarters, supply-dépôts and hospitals for the Argonne front were centred in St. Menehould, and for four years it was entirely given over to military activities. Frequently bombarded, the first shells were fired at the station at 4.30 a.m. on April 26, 1915, when some houses were struck and two civilians killed. On July 20 of the same year another bombardment was directed by aeroplanes. At 1.30 a.m. on August 28, an aeroplane dropped a few bombs. On September 14, a heavy bombardment set fire to the evacuation hospital, killing two civilians, one of whom, M. Bocquillon, the Deputy Mayor (acting for the Mayor, who was ill), was struck on his way to the Hôtel-de-Ville.

During 1918 the town was frequently bombed by enemy aeroplanes.

A VISIT TO THE TOWN

On arriving by the Avenue Victor Hugo, after crossing the bridge over the Aisne, the Gendarmerie, at No. 3 on the right, should be noticed. It is the old post-house where Louis XVI. was recognised during his flight in 1791. Over a door which opens into the Rue de la Porte-des-Bois, the word "Poste" carved in the stone may still be seen.

The royal carriage stopped near this post-house in broad daylight, arousing the curiosity of the bystanders by its imposing appearance and by the respect paid to the traveller and his family by the members of his suite. The post-master, Drouet, thought he recognised Louis XVI., whom he had seen at Versailles, and he was confirmed in his belief by an *assignat* (paper money) with the king's head stamped upon it, which had just been given him.

After the departure of the carriage, Drouet followed it to Varennes, where he caught it up and had the royal family arrested.

SAINTE-
MENEHOULD.
HÔTEL-DE-
VILLE



The Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville is next reached with the Hôtel-de-Ville, an 18th century building, on the right (photo above).

Cross the "Place," keeping to the left, via the Rue Chanzy, which is the main street. On the right, at No. 33, is the Hôtel-de-Metz, an old inn on the road from Metz to Paris, formerly well known, the original kitchen of which has preserved its ample dimensions and innumerable copper utensils.

The Rue Chanzy ends on the bank of the Aisne at the Place d'Austerlitz. At the sharp turning on the left, before crossing this "place," take the Rue de la Côte-du-Château, then the Rue des Ormes, which leads to the church.*

The church, surrounded by a graveyard, stands on a rock in the centre of the old town, of which nothing is left but fragments of the castle and some ruined walls to the south and south-west. The church was built in the 13th and 14th centuries. Its exterior is massive; the main doorway is hidden by a modern porch. Beyond the Chapel of the Virgin, on the right of the choir, a low sacristy was added at the end of the 17th or beginning of the 18th century. Some fine fragments of earlier sculpture (five panels depicting scenes from the Passion, and three richly decorated canopies) have been incrustated in the outside walls. Tombstones have been built into the walls on either side of the doorway in the left transept, at the entrance to the church.

The interior consists of five naves with low vaulting. In the left arm of the transept, under a tri-cusped pointed arcade, the group "The Death of the Virgin," represents the Virgin recumbent, with children reading and clinging to her hands and feet, and eight weeping women carrying books. In the chapel on the left of the choir there is a 17th century picture—a view of St. Menchould, with three figures, one of which is the Patron-Saint of the town; the other two are supposed to be Louis XIII, and Richelieu. Behind this chapel, which was formerly used for the ceremonies of the town-guilds, is a recess called the Treasury, a small vaulted 15th century room opening on the choir. The polygonal choir presents a fine appearance with its five slightly pointed windows, framed by two archivolts, supported on little columns with Romanesque capitals. All around is an elegant 13th century arcade, screened with rather heavy woodwork. The last nave on the right consists of three separate 14th century chapels. The capitals of the aisles represent human heads. The chapel of the Virgin contains a curious capital

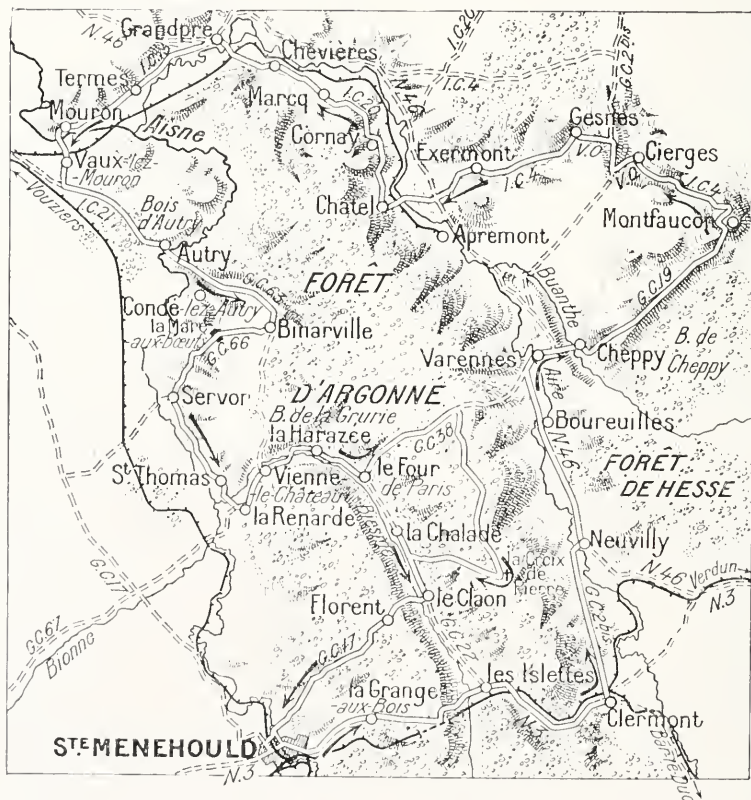
* The church is reached by a flight of steps; the entrance is close to No. 72, Rue Chanzy.

representing an oak laden with acorns, towards which a peasant is driving three pigs. This Chapel was founded in 1552 by the Lord de Saulx, and was used from the end of the 16th century onward by the Guild of Vine-dressers, who had the vaulting painted with frescoes. It is also known as the Chapel of our Lady of the Vines. Formerly it contained a number of tombstones, since removed. There is still to be seen, in one of the chapels off the right aisle, a large and very fine 15th century tombstone with effigies of Jean Toignel and his wife under a handsome carved Renaissance pediment.

Take the Rue du Cimetière, which passes behind the church, then the Rue Basse-du-Château, which leads to a path skirting the old walls of the castle. From this path there is a fine view over the town, the Valleys of the Aisne and the Auve, and the surrounding hills. Go round the cliffs and return to the steps which lead down to the Rue Chanzy.

SECOND DAY : Sainte-Menehould, Varennes, Montfaucon, Grandpré, Vienne-le-Château, La Gruerie Wood, Le Four-de-Paris, La Haute-Chevauchée and La Chalade.

Distance : 130 km.



ITINERARY FOR THE SECOND DAY



CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE. RUINS ON THE BAR-LE-DUC ROAD

From St. Menchould to Clermont-en-Argonne (15 km.) take the same road as the first day (see pp. 31-70).

*On reaching the Place de la Mairie at Clermont, turn to the left, cross the railway, leave I.C. 60 on the right, and keep straight on. G.C.D. 2 runs straight from Clermont to **Neuvilly** (6 km. 500).*

During the trench warfare of 1914 to 1918, this road was often swept by the German artillery. At the beginning of September, 1914, Neuvilly was taken by the enemy, but a fortnight later it was recaptured by the French.



NEUVILLY, seen from behind the church. At the back: ARGONNE FOREST



NEUVILLY. RUINS OF ELECTRIC POWER STATION ON
RIVER AIRE

Until the end of the war it was in close proximity to the front lines, and was frequently shelled.

*Opposite the church of Neuville the road joins N. 46, which take to the left. 3 km. 500 further on, the original front lines are crossed. **Boureuilles** lies $1\frac{1}{2}$ km. beyond.*

The village of Boureuilles-on-the-Aire has completely disappeared. As



GERMAN PRISONERS TAKEN BY THE 35TH INF. DIV.,
NEAR BOUREUILLES



BOUREUILLES. D. CO. OF 11TH ENGINEERS ROAD-MAKING

early as November, 1914, it had been reduced to a mere heap of stones and rubbish.

After being rushed by the French on January 4, 1915, it was retaken by the Germans, who held it until the Franco-American offensive of September 26, 1918.

*2 km. 500 beyond Boureuilles the tourist comes to **Varennés**.*



BOUREUILLES. THE 27TH ENGINEERS REPAIRED THIS BRIDGE
OVER THE AIRE IN AN HOUR AND A HALF
(N. 46 crosses the bridge.)



VARENNES. MAISON DE PRÉFONTAINE

On June 21, 1791, Louis XVI. and his suite, in their flight from Paris, halted here late at night to enquire the way.

Varennes

Enter the upper town by the Rue des Religieuses (or Rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville). The first house on the right is the Maison de Préfontaine (photo above), which is still as it was when, on June 21, 1791, at 11 o'clock at night, Louis XVI. and his suite, in their flight from Paris, knocked at the door to ask their way.

On the other side of the street is the Place du Château, where there are some German soldiers' graves.

The Rue de la Basse-Cour—a continuation of the Rue des Religieuses—crosses the Place du Marché (photo below) in which stands, on the left, the ruined house of Sauce, the grocer, Procureur of the Commune, in which Louis XVI. passed the night. This house, formerly No. 23, had, until the war, remained much as it was in 1791.



VARENNES. PLACE DU MARCHÉ AND RUE DE LA BASSE-COUR,
NEAR THE BRIDGE

Ruins of house where Louis XVI. was arrested.



VARENNES. BANKS OF THE AIRE
N. 46 crosses the bridge.

Drouet, who recognised the King at St. Menchould (*p. 68*) reached Varennes before him, by a short-cut. The whole town, aroused by the tocsin, assembled, and compelled the carriage of the King to stop.

The arrest of Louis XVI. was made at the Bras d'Or Inn, the site of which was afterwards occupied by three houses, one of which was No. 310 (*the bottom photograph on p. 74 shows the ruins of these houses*).

The king and his family stayed at Sauce's house until the morning, when they were taken back to Paris.

At the Mairie the authentic official report of the arrest of Louis XVI. may be seen.

Keep along the Rue de la Basse-Cour, then cross the Aire which divides the upper from the lower town (visited on the first day, p. 52).



VARENNES. BRIDGE OVER THE AIRE
Seen from N. 46, coming from Neucilly. At back : Ruined Church.



CHEPPY. TROOPS OF 1ST INF. DIV. WATERING HORSES
The ruined village is on the top of the hillside.

Beyond the bridge, take G.C. 33 to the right for 1 km. 800, then G.C. 19 on the left, 2 km. beyond Varennes, after crossing the Buanthe, Cheppy is reached.

This village, with its interesting church, remained within the German lines from 1914 to 1918, being retaken by the Americans on September 26, 1918. Frequently bombarded by aeroplanes and artillery, especially during the Battle of Verdun, it was completely wiped out.



CHEPPY. DETACHMENT OF 107TH ENGINEERS (32ND INF. DIV.)
 CLEARING ROAD OF BARBED-WIRE ENTANGLEMENTS



CHEPPY. DRESSING STATION

The Itinerary follows the left-hand road, at fork, to Montfaucon.

To visit the ruins, turn to the left at the first houses along the road, which runs past the quarries for 400 yards (photo below).

*Return to G.C. 19. At the end of the village (photo above) the road divides. Leave the road lying straight ahead, which leads to Avocourt, and follow G.C. 19 on the left, through **Chéhémont Wood**, and cross a great plain dominated by the **Montfaucon Ridge**.*

*Five hundred yards before reaching **Montfaucon**, take the road on the right which, at Montfaucon, joins the road from Malancourt.*

Montfaucon is 8 km. from Cheppy.



CHEPPY. GERMAN POST OF COMMANDMENT ON BAULMY ROAD

Ruins of Cheppy in the background.

Montfaucon

This very old market town, whose origin is said to date back to the end of the 6th century, grew up around a monastery founded by St. Balderic, son of Sigebert I., King of Anstrasia.

It was below Montfaucon that Count Eudes, in June, 888 or 889, aided by several nobles, including Marc de Doulecon, is said to have inflicted a bloody defeat on the Normans. The Chronicler, Abbon le Courbe, tells how, after the defeat of the Normans before Paris, Endes, pursuing them across Champagne and the Argonne, caught them up near Montfaucon. After a terrific struggle the Normans were cut to pieces and 19 000 of them were left on the battlefield. In 1081, Godefroy de Bouillon, Duke of Basse-Lorraine, built a castle-fortress there, which, however, he dismantled before leaving



MONTEFAUCON VILLAGE IN RUINS, WITH GERMAN OBSERVATION-POST IN FOREGROUND, ON THE RIGHT

for the Crusade in 1096. Another castle was subsequently erected on the same site. In 1349 the Flagellants, who as a penance marched in procession, scourging themselves publicly, passed through Montfaucon under the leadership of Gilles de Rodennack, Lord of Chassepierre.

During the Hundred Years' War the district was frequently ravaged by bands of robbers, in consequence of which Charles V. authorised the inhabitants to build a wall round the town. In 1387 the town suffered during the war between the burgesses of Verdun and three neighbouring lords. During the religious wars the town was taken and burned (1552). In 1591, Henri IV. razed the castle, of which not a trace remains.

In 1636, Montfaucon was once again ravaged by war, the enemy burning the whole town, one house only being left standing. The Parish Church of St. Laurent caught fire, and a number of the inhabitants who had taken refuge there perished in the flames.



MONTFAUCON.
OBSERVATION-
POST ON
ROADSIDE
NEAR
CHURCH
*Overlooking
Montfaucou
Wood,
Cheppy Wood,
Hesse Forest,
and
Clermont
Argonne.*

On September 9, 1792, Montfaucou was occupied by Prussian troops under Kalkreuth.

In 1914, after the battle of the Marne, the Crown Prince had his headquarters there for a few days, before establishing himself at Stenay. The French 40th Infantry Division, during the retreat at the end of September, forced the Bavarians to fall back on the woods of Montfaucou, but the Germans quickly consolidated their positions on the ridge, from which it was impossible to dislodge them.

From the end of 1914 to 1918 they continued to improve the defences of this naturally strong position, making it the centre of their intermediate positions between the Hindenburg line and the "Kriemhildstellung," or second line of defence. It also provided them with a splendid observation-post, from which to survey the whole of the surrounding French lines. Another observation-post had been installed in the church, from which the enemy could see Verdun, and this post played a great part during the battle. The village, frequently pounded by the French heavy batteries, was reduced to ruins.



MONTFAUCON.
RUINS OF
MAIN STREET
*The Itinerary
follows I.C. 4,
on the right
to Clergues.*

MONTFAUCON.
FRANCO-
AMERICAN
OBSERVATION-
POST IN THE
RUINS, NEAR
THE CHURCH



It was retaken by the Americans on September 26-27, 1918, after desperate fighting with the German 37th Division, but only when it had been surrounded, and Septsarges, Nantillois and Ivoiry had fallen.

The site of Montfaucon is an unusual and striking one; unfortunately, the town was almost entirely ruined.

At the junction of the road from Malancourt, turn to the left, passing shortly afterwards in front of a concrete observation-post (photo, p. 79). Keep along the principal street as far as the fork, where take the uphill street on the right, turning immediately again to the right, and coming out at the top of the ridge near the ruins of the church. Several observation-posts may be visited, including one inside the church (photo below).

MONTFAUCON.
RUINS OF
THE CHURCH.
GERMAN
OBSERVATION-
POST ON THE
LEFT



The old Collegiate Church was surrounded by 17th century houses, built on the site of the old cloister, and inhabited by the canons. Below this part of the town several underground tunnels, since walled-up, were made.

The porch and the vestibule of the church dated from the 14th century, the other parts were rebuilt or restored in 1597 and 1781.

In the steeple a stone staircase of eighty steps led to the belfry, whence wooden stairs ascended to a platform in the spire, in which six openings gave a far-reaching view over the surrounding country. This platform, 170 feet above the base of the church, had a total altitude of about 1,240 feet. In the direction of Verdun the forts of Marre and Dugny could be seen, and, still further away (about 25 miles), the heights which dominate Souilly. To the south-west lie the plains of St. Menehould, and on the west the plain and plateaux of Champagne. In the same direction, in clear weather, the Fort of Berru, near Rheims, is visible. The panorama further embraces the following : *on the north-east*, the whole of the region of Grandpré ; *on the north*, Carignan and Montmédy ; *on the east*, the heights of the Meuse, seven miles away, shut in the horizon, hiding Damvillers and the Woëvre. From the top of the ridge may be seen : *on the south*, the 1916 battlefield of Verdun ; *on the north*, the terrain of the offensive of September 26, 1918. Between the Meuse and the Aire, from Briulles-sur-Meuse to Grandpré, the line of villages, woods and hills, which, after being fortified, formed the formidable German position known as the "Kriemhildstellung," should be noticed. Certain points in this line were only carried in October, and even at the beginning of November, 1918. Several of them, like Hill 299 to the north-east of Cunel and northwest of Briulles, were taken, lost and retaken several times by the Americans.

Return by the Rue de l'Eglise to I.C. 4, which take to the right down the hill. Half-way down, at the fork, take I.C. 4, on the right, to Cierges (4 km. 500 from Montfaucon).

From 1914 to 1918 the Germans had an aviation camp at Cierges. The camp and station were frequently bombed by the Allied aviators. In September, 1918, during the first days of the American offensive, fires broke out in the village, to which the Germans held on stubbornly. On the 28th, they launched several counter-attacks, but at the beginning of October were forced to abandon the village. On October 4, the capture of Gesnes (through which the tourist passes on his way to Exermont) finally cleared Cierges.

On reaching the Rue de l'Eglise, turn along the first road on the left, which, 1 km. 300 beyond Cierges, runs into G.C. 2 bis.

Turn to the right and follow G.C. 2 bis for 1 km., then take the Chemin Vicinal (local road) on the left—German dug-outs, 200 yards away on the left—which leads to the interesting village of Gesnes, lying in a little valley. Many of the houses were destroyed.

The road passes in front of the church, then turns to the left, skirts a German cemetery, then goes straight to Exermont (3 km. 800 from Cierges). Numbers

CIERGES.
RUINED
CHURCH AND
HOUSES IN
RUE DE
L'ÉGLISE

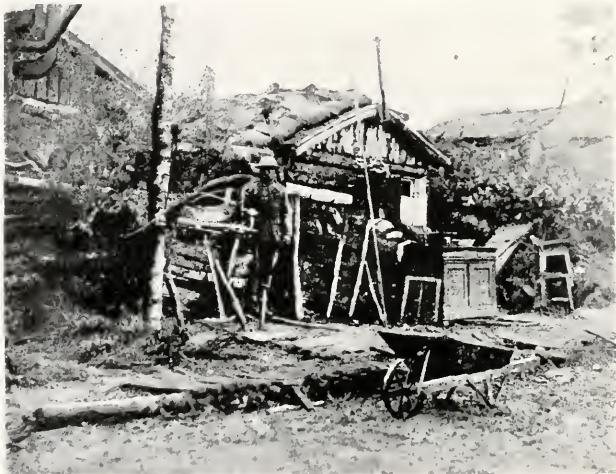


of German dug-outs, sometimes forming veritable villages, are met with on the way.

The folklore of the district, like that of many villages in the Argonne and the Ardennes, is rich in stories of fairies, demons and witches. Near the well called Fontaine-St. Germain, about a kilometre north of the village, is a place called "Ronde-de-Danses," where the grass never grows. Here, the fairies of the "Château d'Ariétal," near the spring of the same name, used to meet and dance all night.

Exermont was retaken by the Americans on September 28, 1918.

GERMAN
SHELTER AT
FERME-AUX-
BOIS, NEAR
CIERGES,
AFTERWARDS
POST OF
COMMAND-
MENT OF THE
315TH AND
318TH R.A.C.,
2ND
AMERICAN
ARMY



GESNES
VILLAGE AND
CHURCH,
*seen coming
from Cierges*



Beyond the church turn to the left and at the fork, 300 yards after the last houses, take the left-hand road (A.C. 3). After crossing the river and over Hill 183, the road cuts N. 46, passes over the river Aire, then the railway (A.C.), and after joining the Apremont road, enters **Châtel-Chéhéry** (4 km. 300 from Exermont).

This village, which suffered little (*photo. p. 84*), was abandoned by the Germans without much resistance, on October 7, 1918, in the face of the advance by the Americans, who had, however, encountered great difficulty in capturing the outskirts.

Gérard de Melcy, one of the heroes of the siege of Sebastopol, was buried in the cemetery which surrounds the church.

During the Franco-American offensive of September, 1918, the Americans found among the papers of the German Town-Major the following document.



EXERMONT.
GERMAN
PRISONERS



CHÂTEL-CHÉHÉRY VILLAGE AND CHURCH
Behind the latter, I.C. 4 leading to Exermont.

which throws light on the German methods of treating the inhabitants of occupied districts :—

“ 33rd General Divisional Headquarters,

“ 10th May, 1916.

“ We have absolutely no reason to be lenient with the French population.



ADVANCE POST ON HILL 240 AT MONTREFAGNE NORTH-WEST
 OF EXERMONT

I order a fresh examination of the taxable capacity of the inhabitants, and no misplaced feeling of sympathy with the people of the district must be allowed to affect that enquiry. It would be well to consider whether, with this end in view, we might not occasionally imprison some of the inhabitants.

“ (Signed) VOLLBRECHT.”

*Pass in front of the church and keep straight on. Cross the Boulasson Stream and follow the road past the foot of the promontory on which the **Château of Cornay** used to stand. This castle comprised several forts : Camp-Crochet, Vieux-Château, Grand Bel, and Petit Bel, all separated by deep trenches and connected by underground passages. A cross called “Croix-de-Bayle” now stands on the site of the “Grand Bel.” There is a tradition that this cross was erected to commemorate “the extinction of heresy,” Protestants having been numerous in the district. The fortress is said to have been destroyed during the Wars of the League.*



CORNAY VILLAGE AND CHURCH
I.C. 4 leading to Marcq.

The pretty little village of **Cornay** (photo above) which is soon reached, is 2 km. from Châtel.

Burned down by the troops of Charles-Quint in 1552, it was rebuilt beside the ruins.

The church dates from the 12th century, but was frequently restored. The last restoration dates from 1854, and is in harmony with the original style of the building.

*Opposite Cornay, on the right bank of the Aire, is **Fléville**, which possesses a fine 16th century château. This village was taken by the Americans on October 4, 1918, whilst Cornay and Marcq, the next village, were only evacuated by the Germans on October 9 and 10.*

Leave the Church of Cornay on the left and at the fork at the end of the

CHEVIÈRES,
BURNT DOWN
BY THE
GERMANS



village, take the left-hand road (I.C. 20) which crosses the valley (traces of artillery emplacements). At the first houses of **Marcq** the road crosses that from *St. Juvin*. At the crossing there is a large German cemetery.

Many of the houses at *Marcq* (2 km. 800 from *Cornuay*) were destroyed.

Pass through the village and keep straight on to **Chevières** (2 km.), completely burned down by the Germans previous to their departure (photo above).

Two kilometres beyond *Chevières* the road crosses the railway (I.C.) and runs into the *Senuc* road. Turn to the right and cross the *Aire*. **Grandpré**, a pretty little town, many of whose houses have been destroyed, is next reached (2 km. 900 from *Chevières*).

B. CO. OF
303RD
ENGINEERS
(78TH INF.
DIV.)
BUILDING
BRIDGE OVER
THE AIRE,
DESTROYED
THREE TIMES
BY ENEMY
ARTILLERY
FIRE. At back :
GRANDPRÉ.



Grandpré

Grandpré lies at the eastern end of the pass formed by the Valley of the Aire, which cuts deeply into the Argonne. The town is very old. To the south, on the Nègremont Mountain, there are traces of a camp which is supposed to be Roman. Attila, after his defeat in the *Champs Catalauniques*, also camped there, and long after him, Dumouriez. The village was possibly founded or extended by a follower of Clovis, who built a château there, but of which nothing now remains. Grandpré was pillaged in 881, by the Normans ; during the Hundred Years' War, by the English ; and, under the League, by the rival troops of the Marshal of St. Paul, Mayenne, and Henri IV. The latter stayed there in 1591. His letter of October 3, 1591, in which he relates the events of the preceding days, was dated from Grandpré. During the *Fronde* the country was again ravaged, and at a later date, pillaged by the Dutchman Crowenstein.

In 1792, Dumouriez had his headquarters at Grandpré, and after the battles of Croix-aux-Bois and Montcheutin, the headquarters of the King of



GRANDPRÉ. TEMPORARY BRIDGE ACROSS THE AIRE

Prussia were transferred there. In October of the same year, during the Prussian defeat, Grandpré was crowded with enemy sick, struck down by dysentery.

According to Goethe, the castle was at that time the abode of pestilence and death ; the neighbourhood of the village, thickly strewn with corpses and graves, was one gigantic cemetery.

During the war of 1914-1918 the German camps and military works at Grandpré were frequently bombed by the Allied airmen. Only at the end of September, 1918, did the Franco-American troops recapture the village after a long and severe struggle.

On a terrace, in grounds to the north of the village, stands a château in the style of Louis XIII., which is but the main entrance of an old and larger castle belonging to the Dukes of Joyeuse. This castle, in which Charles VI. lodged when on his way to the Ardennes, was rebuilt by *Louis de Joyeuse*, assisted by the generosity of Louis XI. Joubert, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Italy, was married to Mlle. de Montholon Senonville in this

GRANDPRÉ.
 RUINS OF
 CHURCH



castle on the 7th Messidor of the year VII. (June 26, 1799). The castle was destroyed by fire in 1834.

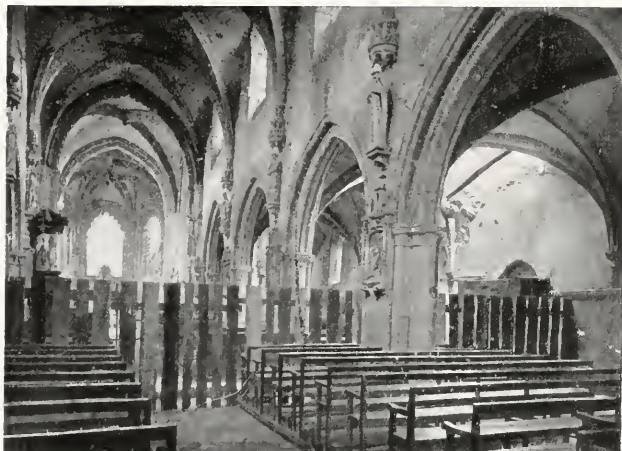
The road passes slightly to the right of the Church—a large, handsome building of yellow stone (hist. mon.—photo above), which suffered greatly from the bombardments.

Dating from the 13th century, when it formed part of the old Priory of St. Médard, it had frequently been restored and altered. The pulpit and the choir-stalls were composed of fragments of magnificent 16th century wood-work, brought from the Abbey of Belval. The church contains the tomb of Claude de Joyeuse, a remarkable monument in black marble.

*One hundred yards beyond the village, turn to the left, into I.C. 15, which leads to **Termes** (3 km. 500 from Grandpré).*

Many of the houses in Termes were destroyed. *Pass in front of the church, which has lost the top of its steeple (photo, p. 89). In the interior there is an old holy-water basin shaped like a mortar.*

GRANDPRÉ
 CHURCH.
 NAVE AND
 SOUTH AISLE,
 SEEN FROM
 THE CHOIR





SHELL HOLES ON MORT-HOMME HILL
5 km. north of Grandpré.

Opposite Termes, stands the village of Senuc, which dominates the junction of the Aire and the Aisne.

In 1918 the position of Senuc, strongly fortified by the Germans, was taken by the French troops after a long struggle.



TERMES. RUINED CHURCH
I.C. 15 at the corner of Olizy road.

*Keep along I.C. 15, which leads straight to **Mouron** (2 km. 700).*

It was between Termes and Mouron that, on October 2, 1792, the Prussian Army, retreating after the Battle of Valmy, recrossed the Aisne on two pontoon-bridges. Goethe, who was standing between the two bridges, watched the disappointed and exhausted troops go by.

The King of Prussia and the Duke of Brunswick, with their staff, brought up the rear. "Both," wrote Goethe, "paused for a moment before crossing the bridge, as if reluctant to abandon the Plains of Champagne, where they had just suffered a humiliating defeat."

Mouron and Vaux guard the entrance to the Grandpré Pass—the easiest pass of the Argonne.

In 1792, Dumouriez concentrated the greater part of his army there, leaving practically undefended the passes of Les Islettes, Croix-aux-Bois and Chesne.



MOURON. DESTROYED BRIDGE OVER THE AISNE, AND TEMPORARY BRIDGE

In 1918, the Germans clung desperately to these positions, from which the French had to drive them by main force.

The Church of Mouron is modern, but contains some interesting 17th century woodwork.

*On leaving the village, take the left-hand road, which soon crosses first the Aisne (photo above), then the railway (I.C.), reaching **Vaux-lez-Mouron** (1 km. 200 from Mouron).*

The road runs along the south side of Vaux Church, and after passing the portal, goes straight ahead.

About 100 yards beyond the church, leave the Challerange road on the right, and continue for another 800 yards, where the I.C. 21 joins up. Turn into the latter on the left.

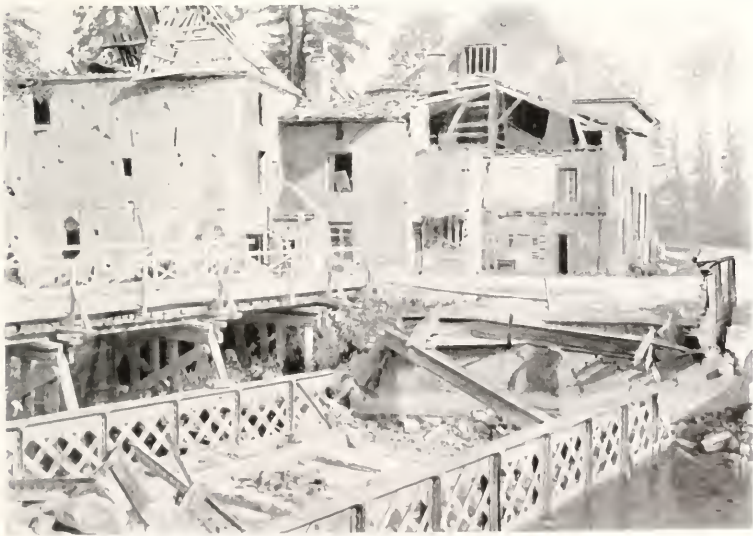


GERMAN VILLAGE ON THE EDGE OF AUTRY WOOD

1 km. 800 further on, after crossing the I.C., the edge of Autry Wood will be reached. On the right will be seen a village built by the Germans (photo above).

I.C. 21 now runs through the wood, which was strongly fortified by the Germans from 1914 to 1918.

On leaving it at the fork in the road, turn to the left ; 500 yards further on, at another fork, turn again to the left, reaching **Autry** soon afterwards (6 km. 300 from Vaux).



AUTRY. DESTROYED BRIDGE ACROSS THE AISNE



GERMAN TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

50 yards to the left of G.C. 66 (coming from Autry) and 150 yards this side of Binarville.

Autry, like all the surrounding villages, has had a chequered history.

It was besieged and taken by the English in 1359. At the beginning of the 17th century it was practically a deserted ruin.

Under the *Fronde* it suffered again. The Lord of Autry was one of the four knights who bore the canopy of the Sacred Ampulla during the consecration of the kings at Rheims.

The road winds round the rock on which stands the ruined church. St. Lambert's Chapel in the cemetery contains some interesting frescoes.

The château, which is below the church, dates from 1635.



SERVON. GERMAN SHELTERS

Along G.C. 66, below site of destroyed Church.



ST. THOMAS. ROUTE DE SERVON. WITH BARRICADES AND TRENCHES (Feb. 2, 1916).

Leave Autry by two bridges across the Aisne.

Beyond the second bridge and the second house, there is a German structure under the cliff, on the right.

*On the left is the road to **Lançon**, the village where the French and American troops effected their junction during the offensive of September-October, 1918.*

*Keep along I.C. 21 in the direction of **Binarville**. 1 km. 700 beyond Autry, leave the road to Condé-les-Autry on the right. 500 yards this side of Binarville and 200 yards before the fork with G.C. 66 coming from Varennes, there is a French military cemetery on the left.*



FRENCH DEFENCE WORKS AND DRESSING-STATION
G.C. 66, between Servon and St. Thomas.

Just before reaching Binarville, fifty yards to the left of the road, are two large German concrete structures, a post of commandment, and a telephone exchange (photo, p. 92).

The village of Binarville, and the adjacent hamlet of **Mare-aux-Bœufs**, were occupied by the Germans from 1914 to 1918, and were only recaptured in September, 1918, by the French 4th Army.

Binarville was completely destroyed.

Outside the village, leave on the left the (impassable) road from Vienne-le-Château, and keep straight on along G.C. 66.

Two kilometres further on, a few houses in ruins mark the site of Mare-aux-Bœufs. Keep to the left, leaving on the right the road from Condé-les-Autry.

Five hundred yards beyond Mare-aux-Bœufs, on the left, there is a German



FRENCH DEFENCE WORKS BETWEEN SERVON AND ST. THOMAS

post of commandment in concrete, with rooms, shelter and telephone exchange. An Iron Cross is carved on one of the doors.

Keep along G.C. 66, past numerous defence-works and shelters, some in concrete.

This region, an excellent artillery position and a veritable stronghold, from which the Germans launched many counter-attacks against the right flank of the French 4th Army, during the offensive of September 26, 1918, was liberated by the French on September 30, after a heroic struggle.

Five kilometres beyond Binarville is Servon.

It was near Servon that, on August 25th, 1786, the aeronaut Blanchard, on his way from Lille to Paris, where he hoped to present a bouquet to the King, was forced to descend after being carried out of his course by contrary winds.

Occupied by the Germans since September, 1914, and strongly fortified by them, the village and surrounding country were attacked by the French on September 25, 1915, during a minor offensive, intended to cover the main attack in Champagne. The French, after a short advance, were forced to retire on their original positions, in consequence of counter-attacks debouching from Servon.

The village was only retaken on September 26, 1918, by the French 4th Army, which, on the evening of the same day, reached the wood 1 km. 500 to the north-east of the village, after a fierce struggle.

To-day Servon is an absolute ruin. The cemetery alone, on the left of the road, indicates the site of the village.

Below the ruins of the church, which stood on the top of the hill on which



FRENCH MILITARY GRAVES AT ST. THOMAS

Alongside the road from Servon.

the village was built, several German shelters (*photo. p. 92*) may still be seen along *G.C. 66*.

Immediately beyond these shelters turn into the road on the left, which runs through the village; on both sides are other defence-works.

Outside the village, leave the (impassable) *Vienne-le-Château* road on the left, and keep straight on.

G.C. 66 runs alongside the *Visne* as far as **St. Thomas**, then passes by trenches and barbed-wire entanglements—the remains of the old German front lines.

Shortly afterwards, the old French front lines are reached. To the right, on the left bank of the *Visne*, is seen the hamlet of **Melzicourt**, which the French retook on October 25, 1914.

All through the trench warfare the French line ran through the **Melzicourt Ford**.

Two kilometres beyond *Servon*, by the side of the road, are large shelters



FIRST FRENCH LINE IN AISNE VALLEY, BEFORE SERVON
(*St. Thomas' Sector.*)

of stone and cement (*photo, p. 92*). *Opposite is a French military cemetery (photo, p. 95). Two kilometres further on St. Thomas is reached.*

The little village of St. Thomas formerly possessed a rich priory, founded in 1096 by Robert, Abbot of St. Méry, and Manassés, Archbishop of Rheims.

The modern church was built on the site of the Priory Chapel, destroyed during the Revolution.

The village has completely disappeared ; of the church only a few broken fragments of wall remain.

On leaving St. Thomas, G.C. 66 winds down into the valley of the Biesme, passes near a military cemetery, crosses the valley, then divides. Take the left-hand road (G.C. 67) which soon passes near the farm of La Renarde, then alongside a large military cemetery, finally reaching Vienne-le-Château (3 km. beyond St. Thomas).



ST. THOMAS CHURCH AND VILLAGE
Seen from G.C. 66 going towards Servon.



VIENNE-LE-CHÂTEAU. RUINS OF CHURCH

Vienne-le-Château

This very picturesque, industrial and forestal village was a royal provostship before the Revolution.

In the 6th century it belonged to the Bishops of Verdun.

The castle-fortress on the hill which dominates the town to the west was razed in 959 by the Count of Grandpré.

Later, it was several times rebuilt and demolished. Fragments of the ramparts may still be seen.

In the 12th century the district was purchased by the Count of Bar.

Vienne-le-Château was shelled by the Germans, especially in 1914 and 1915. The greater part of the village was wiped out, but the church and neighbouring Town Hall did not greatly suffer.



VIENNE-LE-CHÂTEAU. NAVE AND TRANSEPT OF CHURCH



VIENNE-LE-CHÂTEAU. ROAD LEADING TO LA PLACARDELLE

The church dates from the 15th century, with the exception of the façade, which is 18th century.

G.C. 67, after turning to the right, passes by the Town Hall, and follows the valley of the Biesme.

This almost straight river is often called "the canal" by the inhabitants.

The road hereabouts is very picturesque, and one of the finest in the Argonne. It runs south of the woods of **Gruerie, Bolante** and **Chalade**, i.e., through that part of the forest where, in 1914-1915, the battles which



VIENNE-LE-CHÂTEAU. INTERIOR OF RUINED FACTORY (1915)



LA HARAZÉE. CHURCH BELL INSTALLED AS GAS ALARM SIGNAL

have made the Argonne famous were fought. Of the many famous places in this forest those most accessible to tourists are mentioned and described in the order in which they may be visited without unduly prolonging the itinerary.

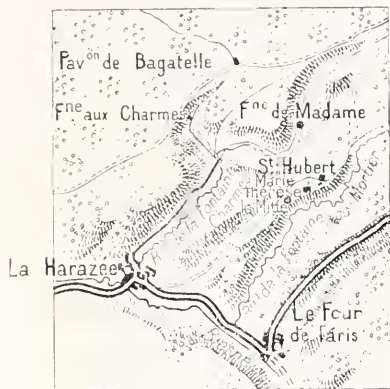
One kilometre from Vienne-le-Château, take on the left a road made during the war, which crosses the Biesme, and then follow the right bank, past numerous constructions and shelters (photos above and below), to La Harazée.

In this village, completely ruined, near a French military cemetery, G.C. 67, coming from the left bank of the Biesme, is joined.

Take the small path which first runs alongside a stream, then climbs towards Gruerie Wood, for 500 yards, to see the battlefield. The wood, which was hacked to pieces by the shells, contains numerous defence-works of all kinds, and makes an impressive sight. Further along the road are the German front lines.



LA HARAZÉE. ALL THAT IS LEFT OF THE VILLAGE
At back : GRUERIE WOOD



PATH FROM LA HARAZÉE TO GERMAN TRENCHES IN GRUERIE WOOD

Gruerie Wood in 1914-1915

Gruerie Wood, which the *poilus* called "Tuerie Wood" (Slaughter Wood), was one of the most active and dangerous sectors on the Western front from September, 1914, to the end of 1915. The conditions of warfare there were particularly trying. Attack followed attack almost without a pause, generally preceded by mine explosions, and often developing into ferocious hand-to-hand struggles. In this wood, sectors like the *Pavillon de Bagatelle*, and the valleys of the *Fontaine-aux-Charmes* and *Fontaine-Madame*, were the most fiercely contested.

From Bagatelle a path leads to Fontaine-aux-Charmes, following the stream of that name (which falls into the Biesme at La Harazée), and then running beside the stream of Fontaine-Madame. These two streams, on the

south-east of Bagatelle, enclose a plateau broken by ravines and hills, along which the French advanced in September and October, 1914, threatening the German lines of communication through the Argonne. The Germans repeatedly tried to force them back south of the Servon-Varennes road, and to slip in through the valley of Fontaine-aux-Charmes, towards La Harazée. In December, 1914, they attacked Fontaine-Madame six times and Bagatelle three times. In January, 1915, attacks and counter-attacks occurred almost daily. From the 16th to the 26th, fifteen German attacks were launched in succession between Fontaine-Madame and St. Hubert, lying to the south-east, on the stream of Fontaine-au-Mortier. The French replied by immediate counter-attacks, and in the terrible fighting which followed each side gained a hundred yards or so of trenches. On the 27th, the Germans launched three attacks in the direction of Bagatelle, while two days later the whole of the XXVIIIth Wurtemberg Division, previously drugged with alcohol and ether, hurled themselves against the same position. The French left gave way, but retook part of the lost ground after six counter-attacks. The struggle continued on the following days, and, after heavy losses on both sides, the Germans were repulsed twice during the night of January 29, once on January 30, once on February 1, three times on the 2nd, twice on the 4th and 7th. On February 17, 1915, while a French offensive was developing in the district of Hurins-in-Champagne, the French troops in the Argonne attacked the enemy, to prevent reinforcements being sent from that part of the front. On the right bank of the Fontaine-aux-Charmes stream they blew up a German blockhouse, and subsequently shelled the gun-emplacement with a 65 mm. gun at 400 yards range. The most important operation was directed against the German position of the *Blanleuil Croupe*, lying between *Sec Ravin* and the *Ravine of Fontaine-Madame*, from which it was possible to enfilade the Bagatelle salient. Three mine chambers were made under the German lines. The attacking troops were divided into three waves: the first (one company), after the explosion of the mines, was to seize the position, pass it, and push on; the second (one company) was to consolidate the captured position; the third (a battalion) was to reinforce the attacking party and exploit the success. Each assaulting column was preceded by a bomb-thrower and followed by sappers with sand-bags and entrenching tools. At 8 a.m. the mines were fired, one of them blowing up a German mine. Two

minutes later the three assaulting columns, led by their officers, dashed forward. The position, attacked from three sides, was taken, and a hundred Germans were killed in the trenches. Four prisoners and a machine-gun were captured. At 8.30 the French held 350 yards of the German trench, and reached the second line, which was full of Germans. The enemy then launched fierce counter-attacks, which gave them back their second line. On the French side the second wave had arrived to reinforce the first company in the captured position. Two machine-guns mowed down the advancing Germans, but were in turn put out of action by the enemy, who renewed their counter-attacks with grenades. The French were reinforced by two companies of the third wave, the third company being used to revictual the combatants with grenades, bombs, and sand-bags. The Germans renewed their counter-attacks, but were driven back. Between 1.30 and 3 p.m., after a violent bombardment with artillery and *minenwerfer*, which churned up the



GRUERIE WOOD, SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE,
25 FT. DEEP
Awaiting inspection by General commanding Sector.

ground, the enemy counter-attacked the French right in force with bayonets, but were checked. The attack was renewed with grenades and bombs, and this time the Germans advanced through all the trenches in the vicinity. After a heroic resistance the French had to give way, and at about 4.30 p.m. the position was lost. The enemy then attacked the rest of the trench on the flank; under an incessant hail of bombs, the French were forced to withdraw, retreating step by step—200 yards in two hours—with a loss of 40 per cent of their forces. Little by little, their ammunition exhausted, and in the face of the impossibility of bringing up supplies, they were obliged to abandon the position and return to the trench from which they had started. A company of *Chasseurs* fought for two hours with German rifles and ammunition, and with unexploded German bombs. On March 1 another desperate struggle took place at Blanleuil. At about 7.15 a.m. three enemy mines exploded under the French trenches, and the Germans rushed into the craters, overwhelming two companies in the first line, the survivors of which fought hand-to-hand. The Germans, heavily reinforced, made considerable progress in Fontaine-Madame ravine, but a counter-attack by a French battalion stopped and held them. At nightfall another battalion counter-attacked in a slow storm, and after four hours of bayonet fighting recaptured the greater part of the lost ground. Very few prisoners were taken on either side. On March 22, at Bagatelle, after the explosion of three mines, two French companies took a German trench and repulsed a strong attack, while 500 yards away the enemy also exploded mines, threw themselves into the French trenches, and in a hand-to-hand fight were beaten and driven back. From June 30 to July 15 the sector was affected by the German offensive between Four-de-Paris and Binarville road. On July 28, and on August 4 and 17, three Ger-



GRUERIE WOOD. ST. HUBERT SECTOR

Taking the soup to troops in first-line trenches.

man efforts against Fontaine-aux-Charmes broke down. On September 9, a fresh and more powerful attack ended in a desperate struggle. The Germans, repulsed, renewed the attack a second time without success. On the following day the sector was heavily bombarded with big shells. From 1916 this sector became quieter, the fierce and prolonged struggle of 1915 giving place to a mutual shelling of the trenches with occasional grenade attacks and raids on both sides.

Another sector, that of St. Hubert, was the scene of frequent struggles from October, 1914, to September, 1915. In December, 1916, the Germans attacked St. Hubert five times. After alternately advancing and retreating, the French succeeded in maintaining their positions.

Between January 16 and 27, 1915, some fifteen enemy attacks took place in this region. At the beginning of July the battle became more violent. On August 2, the Germans made use of liquid fire in an attack. Subsequently the sector became quieter, like the rest of the Argonne.

Not far from St. Hubert the French line described a pronounced salient, known as Marie-Thérèse, in the enemy positions to the north of Fontaine-la-Mitte. This name was given to the position by the *poilus*, probably on account of the proximity of the lodge of a gamekeeper who had a daughter named Marie-Thérèse. Surrounded on three sides by the German lines, the Marie-Thérèse salient was difficult to hold, and the Germans frequently endeavoured to reduce it. On January 19, 1915, they exploded two mines in front of the French trenches, but the French immediately occupied the craters. On the 22nd, after having pushed sap-heads as close as possible to the French lines, the German grenadiers suddenly emerged from them at about 10 a.m., each throwing two large bombs. Then one of their battalions attacked the three sides of the position, killed the machine-gunners, and at certain points penetrated into the French second line. At 2 p.m. a battalion of French Chasseurs counter-attacked, and partly reoccupied the first line, but was then repulsed by German reinforcements. A third counter-attack in the evening and a fourth on the following morning regained some of the lost positions after a terrific struggle. All day and all night the fight went on with bombs, grenades, bayonets, knives, pickaxes—anything the men could



GRUERIE WOOD. ST. HUBERT SECTOR. MARIE THÉRÈSE RAVINE

lay their hands on—with equal ferocity on both sides. A hundred Frenchmen, nearly all wounded, were taken prisoners. At about 9.30 a.m. on February 10, the Germans mined some of the French trenches, and then attacked in considerable force, but although they occupied part of them, the attack was arrested almost immediately by a counter-attack, and in the evening the enemy was partially driven back. The fighting here was ferocious. The Germans, mostly drunk or drugged, murdered some prisoners after disarming them. About midday on the 12th, the enemy, in columns four abreast, on a front of 300 to 400 yards, once more hurled themselves against the Marie-Thérèse salient. However, after being brought to a stand by rifle fire, then scattered by an artillery barrage, they retreated with very heavy losses. Two hours later, two companies of French Chasseurs attacked in their turn, but suffered severely from the machine-gun fire, only one party succeeding in getting into contact with the enemy in a trench to which they clung. Twice on May 12, several times in the beginning of July, on August 2 (when they used liquid fire), on August 12 and 24, and twice on August 29, the Germans attacked this so greatly coveted and so well defended salient. Finally, there, as elsewhere, they abandoned all hope of breaking down the resistance of the French, and thereafter “Marie-Thérèse” was seldom mentioned in the communiqués.

*After visiting Gruerie Wood, return to and proceed along G.C. 67. The road passes beside two large French cemeteries, then a row of dug-outs. The forest becomes more and more denuded of trees, which were smashed by the shells. The site of **Four-de-Paris** is soon reached, though not a trace of the village remains (photo, p. 104). Four-de-Paris is 2 km. from La Harazée.*

Four-de-Paris

It was against the Four-de-Paris sector that the first efforts of the Germans, after their retreat of September, 1914, were directed. No sacrifice, however costly, was considered too great to recapture this essential position on the road to Les Islettes.

In two days (November 27-28) seven enemy attacks were launched to the north of Four. Three times on December 5 their troops, to the sound



GENERAL VIEW OF THE "FOUR-DE-PARIS" (see page 103)
The road in the foreground leads from Four-de-Paris to Varennes.

of life and drum, returned to the charge, but without success. On the 18th, after blowing up a trench, they again attacked. On January 5, 1915, by way of a diversion, the French 2nd battalion of the 4th Foreign (or Garibaldian) Regiment carried out an operation in this sector, while, further to the east, the rest of the regiment delivered the main attack at Courte-Chausse. At 10 a.m., the Garibaldians, supported by some bomb-throwers belonging to the 9th Battalion of Chasseurs and French 91st Regiment of the Line, and by two sections of the engineers, attacked the enemy trenches on a front of 400 yards, but, decimated by machine-gun fire, they were unable to reach them. On February 16-17 and on March 9 there were renewed and violent struggles. From June 29 to July 15 the battle broke out again in this sector, interrupted from time to time by terrible bombardments with gas shells.

In 1916 and 1917 this sector, like the rest of the Argonne, quieted down. Mining operations continued from time to time, but there were no battles properly so called. In the occasional surprise attacks which took place, the French generally got the better of the enemy.

*From Four-de-Paris, instead of going to La Chalade by the direct road through the valley of the Biesme (2 km. 500), the Itinerary follows a number of roads (17 km. 500 in all) through the forest, in order to visit certain picturesque spots and at the same time to see places like **Bolante, Les Meurissons, La Haute-Chevauchée, Fille-Morte, Pierre-Croisée** and **Courte-Chausse**, made famous by the war. All these places were the scene of fierce conflicts in 1914 and 1915.*

In December, 1914, many engagements, in which the French made slight progress, took place in this sector. It was to the east of Bolante Wood, in the wild ravine of La Fontaine-des-Meurissons, that the Garibaldian Regiment—raised by the Republicans of Italy to fight in France, and placed at the disposal of General Gérard (commanding the 2nd Active Corps)—received its baptism of fire. On December 26, 1914, the 2nd Garibaldian Battalion was detailed to carry a German trench. The attacking front was limited, about 150 yards, but the position was strongly held and protected by a deep entanglement of barbed wire. After an artillery preparation lasting from midnight until dawn, the Garibaldian companies rushed forward, one behind the other, to make a breach at all costs, but were held up by the uncut wire. At

one point an opening was made and a few men got through to the edge of the German trench, only to be killed there. It was during this engagement, which cost the 2nd Battalion 30 dead, 17 missing, and 111 wounded, that Second-Lieutenant Bruno Garibaldi—a grandson of Giuseppe Garibaldi, “the old red bird” whom, in 1870, the Prussian General Werder confidently expected to “catch in his nest” in the Vosges, but failed in the attempt—was killed. Bruno Garibaldi, though in reserve, advanced to the assault with the 2nd Battalion, his sword drawn, his green tunic unfastened, showing the traditional and symbolic red shirt. Wounded in the hand, he went back to the trench to have it dressed, then returned immediately to the fight. Struck by a bullet he continued to urge his men forward, until another laid him low. Before dying, he embraced a wounded comrade near by, saying, “Kiss my brothers for me.” On January 5, 1915, further to the right, on the Courte-Chaussée plateau, the 1st and 3rd Garibaldian Battalions had their revenge. Eight mines, the galleries of which, forty to fifty yards in length, ran under the German trench, were charged with about 6 000 lbs. of explosives during



“FOUR-DE-PARIS.” FRONT-LINE DEFENCES (1916)

the night. At 7 a.m. the next morning the mines were fired, one after the other, after which, to the sound of bugles and drums, eight Garibaldian companies took the shattered enemy front line in a single charge, threw a German counter-attack into disorder, took and retook the second line, and penetrated into the third German line. This they were unable to hold, but they had nevertheless made an important advance, taken four machine-guns, two *minenwerfer*, and 200 prisoners of the 135th, 26th, and 24th German Regiments—most of them Pomeranians. By a strange coincidence it was the flag of a Pomeranian regiment—the LXIst—that had been taken in 1870 at the Battle of Dijon by Ricciotti Garibaldi, Bruno’s father. The Garibaldians’ losses that day were heavy. Among the dead was Adjutant-Chief Costante Garibaldi, Bruno’s brother. Some days later a violent battle took place in the Meurissons ravine. On January 7, after a half-hearted German attack, which was easily beaten off, rough trenches were dug on the plateau—in view of a possible retreat—by men belonging to the 46th French Regiment of the Line, who worked under heavy fire. General Gouraud, commanding the 10th Infantry Division,

who came to examine the position, was wounded in the shoulder by a machine-gun bullet. On the following day a violent German artillery preparation began at dawn. At 7.30 a.m. three regiments of fresh enemy troops (Bavarian infantry) advanced to the attack. A trench held by men of the 89th Regiment of the Line was blown up, the French line was broken, and the Bavarians took on the flank the first and second lines held by troops of the 89th and 46th Regiments of the Line, who put up a fierce resistance. On the plateau the 11th Company of the 46th, which held the unfinished supporting trench, stopped the rush of the enemy. The Germans, unwilling to risk a frontal attack, turned the position on the right flank, and finally took the trench, but only after the gallant defenders had fired their last cartridges. The Germans penetrated into the ravine, capturing the regimental headquarters, and wounding the colonel and his staff. The 11th Company, however, still held on. On the crest, the cooks and the sick seized rifles and joined in the fight. At about 9.30 a.m. a blast of trumpets on the right announced the



FOUR-DE-PARIS FARM IN 1915 (SUBSEQUENTLY RAZED TO THE GROUND), ON THE ROAD TO CHALADE

arrival of reinforcements. Units of the French 89th Regiment of the Line and 2nd Garibaldian Battalion charged through the undergrowth. A furious hand-to-hand struggle ensued in the copse-wood, no quarter being given. The French succeeded in saving their comrades of the 46th, and checked the enemy, who eventually evacuated the ravine. At dawn on the 9th, units of the 120th Regiment of the Line relieved the Garibaldians, who numbered among their dead the Regiment's adopted child, Gaston Huet, a French boy of twelve, who had fought like a man. It was in vain that the Germans renewed their attacks; until nine o'clock in the evening they were repulsed and held. The remnant of the French 46th Regiment of the Line—some three hundred men—under the command of a captain clung for three days without supplies, to their positions. Their splendid resistance and sacrifice were not in vain, as reinforcements arrived in time to re-establish the position.

From March 9 to 19, several French attacks between Four-de-Paris and Bolante gave slight gains, in spite of enemy counter-attacks.



FOUR-DE-PARIS FARM IN 1918 (see p. 103)

On August 7, part of a trench was taken by the Germans in a night attack at Fille-Morte. During the whole of that month, at Courte-Chaussée, Les Meurissons, La Haute-Chevauchée and Bolante, continual fighting took place with artillery, mines, trench-mortars, grenades and bombs. On September 27, during the French offensive in Champagne, the Germans attempted a diversion against Bolante and Fille-Morte. After a heavy bombardment with explosive and gas shells, a force of nearly two regiments attacked in four successive waves. At first they made some slight progress, but were soon almost everywhere repulsed with very heavy losses. From October, 1915, it was in this part of the Argonne that the activity was greatest, though here, as elsewhere, the fighting considerably diminished. In 1916, frequent mining operations gave rise to grenade fighting around the craters at Fille-Morte, Bolante, La Haute-Chevauchée and Courte-Chaussée. In 1917, mine warfare was practically abandoned, but both sides frequently made



SHELL CRATERS ON HILL 285, IN THE "FILLE MORTE" SECTOR
(as seen from the road)



GERMAN CEMETERY ON THE ROAD FROM FOUR-DE-PARIS TO
VARENNES (4 km. from the former)

raids into the opposing trenches, for the purpose of taking prisoners and destroying the works and shelters there.

On reaching Four-de-Paris from La Harazée, take G.C. 38, on the left, towards Varennes.

*The road follows the valley of Les Meurissons (on the right is **Bolante Wood**), crosses Hill 265, and passes by the original front lines.*

From here onwards, veritable villages built by the Germans may be seen on the sides of the hill, on the left bank of the Meurissons stream.

The forest on the crest of the hill was cut to pieces by the shells.

Almost at the top of the hill the road runs past a German cemetery containing a curious monument (4 km. from Four-de-Paris ; photo above).



DESTRUCTION OF THE ARGONNE FOREST

One kilometre further on, at the Meurissons cross-roads, **La Haute-Chevauchée**, an old Roman road, is reached.

Follow *La Haute-Chevauchée*—a very interesting road, but in bad repair—driving slowly and carefully for the first 2 km.

The road passes through **Jardinnet Wood**, which is full of dug-outs, shelters and gun-emplacements.

On leaving the wood the view is impressive. Hill 285, opposite, is literally ploughed up by the shell fire, while not a single tree is left (*photo below*).

This is the sector of the Fille-Morte, Pierre-Croisée and Courte-Chausse.

The road goes round the hill, passing a succession of shell-craters on the crest.

Shortly afterwards, after entering *Chalade Wood*, the road improves. On both sides are French structures of stonework.



HILL 285, IN THE "FILLE MORTE" SECTOR
(The car is going towards the Croix-de-Pierre cross-roads.)

One kilometre beyond Hill 285 is the *Sept-Fontaines* cross-roads, where stood a French dressing-station, facing the road going towards the *Mont-de-Villers*.

Keep straight on : 1 km. 800 further on, at the cross-roads, near the site of the *Forest Keeper's Lodge*, there is a large military cemetery. The Lodge was completely destroyed.

2 km. 300 further on, *Croix-de-Pierre* cross-roads is reached. Fifty yards this side of the cross-roads, on the left, is the shelter where Lieutenant d'Conrson met a glorious death in 1915 (*photo, p. 110*).

At *Croix-de-Pierre* cross-roads, where the *Neurilly* road (on the left) and the *Clermont* road (in front) start, turn to the right into the road leading to *Chalade* (called *Chemin des Romains*).

Pass an old camp (*Camp Monhoven*), then 1 km. beyond *Croix-de-Pierre* leave the *Claou* road on the left.

Two kilometres further on there is a sharp descent leading to G.C. 22, which take on the right for 1 km. to **Chalade**.

The village of Chalade grew up around a monastery founded in 1120 by Robert and Riouin, monks of the Abbey of St. Vanne at Verdun.

The Abbey, occupied first by the Benedictines, and afterwards (from 1127) by the Cistercians, was placed under the care of the Bishops of Verdun, protected by the Lords of Vienne-le-Château.

The monks drained the marshes of the valley of the Biesme and cultivated the slopes.

The Abbey church, begun in 1275, was never finished.

There is a legend that the prior, who had given up all hope of finishing the church, received a visit from the Devil, who offered to finish the building for him, on condition that he should have the soul of the first Christian who crossed the threshold of the completed church.

The prior having refused this offer, the Devil scattered in all directions the



SHELTER, NAMED AFTER FRENCH OFFICER WHO FELL THERE
IN 1915

houses which had until then been grouped around the monastery, and reduced to dust the blocks of "gaize" in the quarries.

Since that time the houses have remained scattered, and there are no more blocks of "gaize" to be found in the neighbourhood.

This legend is doubtless a naïve explanation of natural phenomena, "gaize" being a silicious clay peculiar to the district.

The Abbot's house in the enclosure is in ruins. South of the church, monastic buildings, probably erected in the 17th century, are still standing, though in a dilapidated condition.

The Abbey church became the church of the parish. The windows and rose-window were restored in the 19th century. The nave has lost two of its bays, and the steeple has been pulled down.

The Gothic nave is large and high, the springing of the vaults resting on sculptured capitals. Fragments of old stained-glass, still to be found in some of the windows before the war, were destroyed by the bombardments.

At the end of the nave there is a fine rose-window, the mullions of which are said to have been taken from the old Abbey of St. Vanne at Verdun.



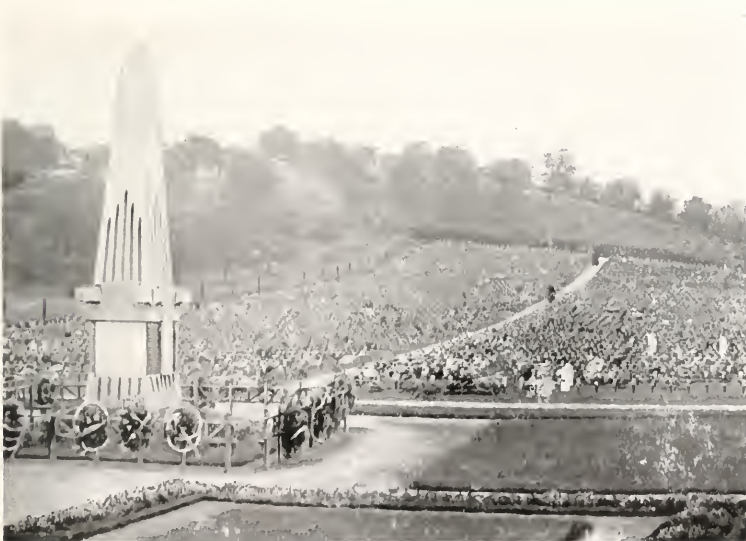
CHALADE. MILITARY GRAVES AND CHURCH

Return by G.C. 22, continuing along this road to **Claon** (3 km).

This little village served as a cantonment during the war, and was also a revictualling centre.

Take the road to the right in the village, returning to Sainte-Menehould, via Florent (9 km).

Before entering Sainte-Menehould, the road passes by a large French military cemetery containing 9,000 graves.



SAINTE-MENEHOULD. GREAT FRENCH MILITARY CEMETERY,
with monument to the defenders of the Argonne (10th and 18th C.)

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FRENCH MINE-THROWER ABOUT TO BE FIRED

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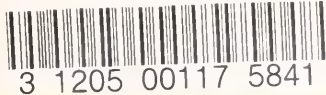
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