

Resume of the Operations of the Second American Division in Champagne, from October 2 to 9, 1918

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THE offensive undertaking by the 4th Army, between the Aisne and the Suippe, during the latter part of September, 1918, pursuant to the orders of the Marshal Commander-in-Chief, had as its aim, first, the capture of the formidable positions of the Germans on the Champagne front, and then the advance through the unfortified terrain in a northerly direction.

The first part of this task was almost entirely accomplished between September 26 and October 1. Upon the 2nd of October, the *left* of the Army reached the stream "PY," to the north of which the enemy still held the heights of Notre-Dame-des-Champs; farther east, the *center* had progressed more rapidly, and had pushed up to the outskirts of Orfeuil and Monthois, and the *right* had formed a junction with the American Army in the Argonne, near Binarville.

The last organized positions which remained to be carried were exceptionally strong. In particular, the Massif de Notre-Dame-des-Champs had already repulsed several attacks—that Massif de Notre-Dame-des-Champs, with its precipitous slopes, swept and laid bare by machine guns.

The Commanding General of the 4th Army, in order to carry the last German line in front of his *center*, between Orfeuil and Blanc-Mont, and thus to permit the positions of the Massif de Notre-Dame-des-Champs to be flanked from the east, issued orders for a general attack to be executed on October 3.

Tanks were placed at the disposition of the 11th and 21st Corps in order to assure the success of this operation which should have decisive results.

Moreover, to facilitate the task of the 21st Army Corps, whose regiments had fought since the beginning of the operation, it was reinforced by the 2nd American Division. This division, detraining to the south of Chalons upon the 27th of September, and assembling first in the zone of Mairy-sur-Marne, had been drawn nearer the front on the 30th and billeted in the Souain-Suippes region. In view of the projected attack, it entered the sector during the night of October 1st and 2nd, to the left of the 21st Army Corps.

The mission assigned to the Army Corps was to attack in the general direction Orfeuil-Ferme Medeah-Blanc Mont, with the 43rd Division, the 167th Infantry Division, and the 2nd U. S. Division. This latter division was in liaison to the west with the 11th Corps.

The two brigades were side by side, the 4th Brigade of Marines on the left, and the 3rd Brigade of Infantry on the right. Each of these two brigades had at its disposition a battalion of light tanks. The first objective to attain was the powerfully organized German positions on the crest of Blanc Mont-Medeah; and, afterwards, the division was to advance as rapidly as possible in the direction of St. Etienne-a-Arnes-Ferme Scay.

After a short but extremely violent artillery preparation, the attack started at 5:50 hours upon the 3rd of

October: Despite a considerable number of machine guns and a heavy artillery fire, the two brigades, with an admirable dash, attained the assigned objective, Blanc Mont-Medeah. In the course of its advance, the 5th Regiment of Marines sent a detachment to the 11th Army Corps to help it clean out the German trenches. During this time, the division was subjected to a violent artillery fire, as well as a machine gun fire upon its left flank.

At 16 hours the attack started anew. In the woods, filled with machine guns, the advance continued and, at 18:30 hours, the forward elements of the 2nd American Division reached the line marked by the Ferme Scay and the crossroads at a point one kilometer south of St. Etienne-a-Arnes.

The advance realized by the 2nd U. S. Division during the course of the day was remarkable, and reached a depth of about 6 kilometers. Numerous prisoners, cannon, machine guns, and material of all kinds, fell into its hands.

The rapid advance of the 21st Army Corps, and, in particular, that of the 2nd U. S. Division, during October 3rd, brought about the most favorable results.

The enemy, placed by this rapid advance of the *center* of the 4th Army in a very difficult position upon the Monts,* as well as in the Valley of the Suippe, decided to evacuate the Monts and to retreat upon the Arnes and the Suippe.

The execution of this movement was begun during the night of the 3rd and 4th. But to cover their retreat on the west of the Suippe, the Germans, during the day of the 4th, re-acted violently and resisted desperately the units of the 21st Army Corps, which sought to continue their advance of the preceding day. The attack of the 2nd U. S. Division, which was delivered at 14:30 hours upon the 4th of October, was received with a violent artillery and machine gun fire. The brigade of Marines upon the left nevertheless reached the southern outskirts of St. Etienne-a-Arnes.

The 5th, 6th and 7th of October were utilized for organizing the ground conquered during the preceding days, and for carrying out minor operations of detail upon the division front.

Upon the 8th of October, a new attack took place upon the whole Army Front; the 21st Corps, strengthened by tanks, was directed to advance in the direction of Machault. The attack started at 5:15 hours. The 2nd U. S. Division occupied St. Etienne-a-Arnes.

Beginning the 9th of October, the 2nd U. S. Division was relieved by the 36th American Division and moved to the region of Suippes for reorganization. It was then sent into the zone of Vadenay-la-Cheppe, where it remained until the 22nd of October, upon which date it marched to rejoin the American Army.

*A ridge which extends from the Suippe River to the Northeast outskirts of Rheims.