

THE LITERARY DIGEST

April 19, 1919

IT WAS DOUGHBOYS

(AND NOT MARINES)

WHO WON AT

CHATEAU THIERRY

IT was the dough-boys, and not the marines, it appears, who stopt the Hun at Château-Thierry, on his last and nearest advance toward Paris. Credit for that feat has heretofore usually been bestowed on the United States marines, altho they have never claimed it and have plenty of glory without it. Now comes the machine-gun battalion of the Seventh Infantry in the Third Division and lays claim to the honor. It is said that in the scrap at Belleau Wood the marines were pretty well used up, and the commander of the Seventh offered to relieve them so they could reorganize their ranks. Thus it came about that in the fight at Château-Thierry, which probably will go on record as the turning-point of the war, the marines were in the rear and it was the doughty machine-gunners of the Seventh who turned the trick. The story of the part taken by them in this engagement is told in *The Watch on the Rhine*, a paper published by the American Army of Occupation in Germany, from which we quote as follows:

The 7th Machine-Gun Battalion, being motorized, traveled overland in small Ford trucks from its training area in the vicinity of Château Villain, and reached Château-Thierry late in the afternoon on May 31. Positions were immediately taken up in that historic city, part of which was already occupied by the enemy. After a thorough reconnaissance each company was given a mission. The general mission was to repulse any attempt of the enemy to advance on Château-Thierry by the bridges entering the city.

About one o'clock in the morning of June 2 a detachment of this battalion was forced from its position on the north side of the river and fell back across the large bridge. In the meantime the enemy had formed in considerable strength on the north end of the bridge and attempted to enter into Château-Thierry. This bridge was then blown up and caused the immediate failure of the enemy attack.

General Marchand, commanding the 10th French Colonial Division, made the following statement after the action:

"On May 31, the 7th Machine-Gun Battalion, U. S. A., had just arrived with its automobiles. It installed itself in a cantonment to the south of Château-Thierry.

"At 3:30 p.m. the enemy threatened to take Château-Thierry, attempting to flank the town on our left, where an opening had occurred.

"The unit was immediately thrown into Château-Thierry at the same time as a Colonial Infantry Battalion which was in the same cantonment with it.

"Immediately the Americans reenforced

Chateau Thierry

the entire bridge, especially at the approaches of the bridge. Their courage and skill as marksmen evoked the admiration of all.

"Crusht by our fire, the enemy hesitated and, as a result of counter-attacks, vigorously supported by the American machine guns, they were thrown beyond the edges of the town.

"Château-Thierry remained entirely in our hands."

On the next day, June 1, the Huns renewed their attack, advancing against the bridge held by the Americans, masking their movements by the use of smoke bombs. At the same time they opened a fearful bombardment on the town. The Americans maintained their position, however, for General Marchand continued:

"The American machine guns held the south bank. They formed a protection for the withdrawal of the troops retiring from the northern section for the purpose of crossing the bridge prior to its destruction.

"Here again the courage of the Americans was beyond all praise. The Colonials themselves, tho accustomed to acts of bravery, were struck by the wonderful morale in the face of fire, the impassibility and the extraordinary *sang-froid* of their allies.

"In a combat in the street and at night, where coolness is one of the principal military virtues, the Americans only could play this rôle. Their watchfulness never failed them and, with their machine guns playing upon the roads of entrance and the destroyed bridges and foot-bridges, they prevented any repairs by the enemy.

"The losses of the 7th Machine-Gun Battalion, U. S. A., had been heavy, but not out of proportion to the great services they rendered nor to the bloody losses which they inflicted on the *Boches*.

"They will be relieved at the same time as the French troops, at the side of whom they fought (this evening). The French Command, knowing their just pride, feared they would have humiliated these valiant troops if they had offered them rest sooner than their French companions in the fight.

"The episode of Château-Thierry will remain one of the very fine deeds of this war. It is a pleasure for all of us to certify that our valiant allies with us participated in this event—our bonds of affection and of confidence will be strengthened by the same pride which we share in common.

"At the present time the Germans, without doubt severely tested, dare not remain in the northern part of Château-Thierry, which, however, we no longer occupy. The bullets which the American guns are sending do not give the *Boche* any taste to take up a residence there."

In recognition of their exploits at Château-Thierry the colors of the 7th Machine-Gun Battalion have been decor-

Chateau Thierry

ated with the *Croix de Guerre* and the battalion was cited by Marshal Pétain, of France, as follows:

“The 7th Machine-Gun Battalion barred to the enemy the passage of the Marne. In the course of violent combat, particularly on May 31 and June 1, it disputed foot by foot with the Germans the northern outskirts of Chateau-Thierry, and covered itself with incomparable glory, thanks to its valor and to its skill, costing the enemy sanguinary losses.

“The Great General Headquarters,
“24 November, 1918.

“PÉTAIN,

“The Marshal of France,

“Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies
of the East.”

The 7th Machine-Gun Battalion has, therefore, added a brilliant page to the history of an already famous and historic place in France, and the members of this battalion can be proud of the fact that they prevented the crossing over the Marne, defeating the enemy at a most critical time in the history of this great war. When we read of this, the second battle of the Marne, and later of the third battle of the Marne, which took place in the middle of July, 1918, we record the valiant fighting by units of the Third Division. Only two divisions of the American Army ever fought on the Marne, namely, the Third Division and units of the Twenty-eighth Division, the latter units attached to the Third Division and to the French during the third battle of the Marne.

