

AMERICANS TAKE BIG PART

Drive Enemy Back on Half of 35-Kilometer Crescent.

CROSS THE OURCQ IN FORCE

And Have Taken Possession of
Hills Nearly Two Miles to
the Northward.

SEVERAL VILLAGES TAKEN

Stores and Ammunition in Quan-
tities Seized—Enemy Fall-
ing Back to the Vesle.

By EDWIN L. JAMES.

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WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY
ON THE MARNE, July 28, 6 P. M.
—American troops have crossed the
Ourcq, and on a wide front have
advanced their lines to a depth of
more than three kilometers to the
hills beyond the river.

Our forces have taken several vil-
lages and captured large stores and
much ammunition.

On our left the French troops are
on the outskirts of Fère-en-Tarde-
nois, and on our right they keep
abreast with the American advance,
having reached and passed Cham-
brecy.

Our first troops crossed the
Ourcq at 5 A. M., and by 10 o'clock
we had a strong force on the north-
ern bank. Sergy was taken at noon.

The Germans appear to be fall-
ing back to the Vesle River line,
which would wipe out the Soissons-
Rheims salient. Our troops are
pressing them strongly.

Our Greatest Advance.

Yesterday, on a front of thirty-
five kilometers, the Germans with-
drew their line in a crescent, ex-
tending from the Ourcq River to
the Ardre River, before the tre-
mendous pressure the French and
American troops had exerted for the
last five days.

Of the front of thirty-five kilo-
meters American troops hold nearly
half.

The Marne River is now com-
pletely cleared of Germans.

Yesterday's advance by the
Franco-American troops was the
greatest in importance since last
Sunday, when the Germans had to
get out of Château-Thierry and go
back across the Marne, and compares
favorably with the sensational gains
made when General Foch sprang his
surprise, ten days ago. A striking
idea of what our troops have done
in the ten days is shown by the
fact that from where one of our
units started around Belleau to
where our soldiers stand this morn-
ing in front of Courmont is be-
tween twenty-five and thirty kilo-
meters, making a daily average ad-
vance of more than two and a half
kilometers.

The nature of the German with-
drawal yesterday indicated that they
did not contemplate a big stand on
the Ourcq River.

Americans' Superb Work.

The Franco-American line this
morning ran in front of a crescent
extended from the bank of the
Ourcq through Bruyères, Villeneuve,
Courmont, Passy-Grigny, Cuisles,
and Chaumuzy on the Ardre River.
This meant that the enemy had been
driven from his strongholds in the
Forest of Ris and the Forest of
Fère, where, according to prisoners
taken in the last week, he intended
to make a strong stand behind the
hills in those woods. That line ran
at some points only three or four
kilometers from the River Ourcq,
and to the south of Fère-en-Tar-
denois was about three miles from
that German war traffic centre. All
yesterday our guns pumped high ex-
plosives into Fère, so that it was of
little use to the Germans.

With pardonable pride the Amer-

Continued on Page Two.

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Continued from Page 1, Column 5.

icans may take much credit for this further dampening of the Crown Prince's plans. We have kept up the hardest kind of pressure against the tip of the German salient, and it is our men who have driven the enemy back upon the Ourcq and out of the Forest of Fère and the Forest of Ris. The French are operating on our right. Our fighting has been constant and effective, and a great aid to General Foch in this operation.

Went Back for Red Cross Farm.

The bitterest fighting the Americans have had in the last thirty-six hours has been in the Forest of Fère, where a bloody struggle took place for the Croix Rouge farm, a cleared space of ten acres in the midst of the wood. Friday afternoon late we took this farm by sheer man power, our men rushing in upon the German machine gunners, who fought to the end. Once there, they were the target for more enemy machine guns, almost surrounding the farm, and yesterday morning withdrew.

The attacking force got reinforcements, and toward noon, after an intensive artillery concentration on the farm, leaving only ruins, we advanced on a front that not only covered the farm but also the woods for a kilometer on either side. This advance was completely successful. We kept on up through the Forest of Fère for a distance of four kilometers, and at 3 o'clock in the afternoon captured Fresnes, a good-sized village, where the retreating Germans had left strong rearguard machine gun nests.

From Fresnes up to Courmont the going was not so hard, and there was little resistance, except from scattered machine guns along the roadside, whose crews fought until killed. On the right of these troops Americans swept through the Forest of Ris, where there has been so much fighting in the last five days; took Champ Voisy, and pushed the lines a kilometer in front of that place.

All along the American's toughest proposition has been the German machine gunners in trees. These were picked fighters and game men. At their posts they kept their guns going until the Americans killed them. I have not heard of one of these tree-climbing machine gunners being taken prisoner. There seemed to be an understanding between them and the Americans that it was a fight to the death. Germans captured on the ground said the monkey machine gunners had been told to hold the posts at all costs. The Americans took it for granted that

such warriors were not expecting quarter. They paid the last penalty for the heavy cost to us.

Aviators early in the morning reported a heavy movement to the rear by the Germans before our lines, and prisoners taken in the morning said they had received orders contemplating a falling back for from two to four kilometers for two days. Checking of the line showed this would take the enemy back over the Ourcq in front of the Americans.

Acknowledge Germans' Bravery.

Our troops at once started forward, to find that the German command had planned to retreat by a system of sacrificing a large number of machine gunners, as they have been doing for the last five days. These men are put in their places to do or die. Mostly they died, but certainly they were game. They had been supplied yesterday morning with all the ammunition they could shoot in two days, and told to hold the line. But our advance was too strong for their plans. They did not get a chance to shoot all their ammunition, and the machine gun ammunition taken by us yesterday will amount perhaps to tons.

To those who assert that the morale of the whole German army is poor I would point out that these men won the admiration of the American soldiers, who certainly are no hero worshippers. Certainly, most of the German Army have not their grit, but what they did shows the Kaiser still has some good fighters. It is these men, the non-kamerading kind, that form the backbone of any effort the Kaiser may make in the future. They are desperate fighters, but were conquered by the Americans.

Two of them, manning a machine gun which our men had passed in the rapid advance, opened up on a passing Colonel, knowing that to do so was certain death. They missed the Colonel and got the end they knew. would be theirs when our doughboys got a line on them.

It might as well be admitted that it is only these machine gunners who have enabled the German Crown Prince, far from the scene of their endeavors, to withdraw his guns and stores and infantry without great losses in captured. That his withdrawal has been regularly conducted there is no denying, nor does this detract from the efficiency of our troops, whose pressure forced the unwilling retreat.

It wasn't a pleasant rear march for the Germans yesterday. When it was first reported that the withdrawal had started our artillery ranged along the Ourcq from Feren-Tardenois east were smashing most of the German bridges. Along the American front the Ourcq was little more than a trout stream, about twenty feet wide and from two

to three feet deep. The German soldiers got back by fording the river.

The day was cold enough for overcoats, and it was raining. The roads the Germans had to use were filled with mud from four to six inches deep, in which some of their guns and supply wagons stalled and fell into our hands.

I suppose that yesterday for every shell the enemy sent over we sent a hundred back, which means there was practically no German shelling. A glance at the map will show what the Allies have accomplished in the last ten days, since the German line swept from Soissons down east to the forest of Villers-Cotterets, through Belleau, through Château-Thierry, south of the Marne in the Condé region and up through Neilly to in front of Rheims. It appears that more than half of the terrain in the German salient ten days ago is now in allied hands.

The Germans have very poor lines of communication for a stand along the Aisne. The Soissons-Rheims Railroad is useless to them.

For holding positions back of the Vesle the conditions are much more favorable for solving the physical difficulties of the German situation. There are many who think the Crown Prince will try to stop the Allies on the Vesle line, along which the Soissons-Rheims Railroad gives a good line of communication. Certainly he will be able to make a better organized resistance than in the last week.

Why Crown Prince Tarried.

One might well ask why, if the Germans intended to withdraw from the salient, they did not do so quickly, rather than suffer the losses we have inflicted since they quit Château-Thierry. There are two answers to this. First, that the Germans knew machine gun warfare in rearguard actions would inflict certain costs on the French and Americans. But there was a more potent reason.

When the Crown Prince started the hard luck drive which took him south of the Marne and then right back again, he had shoved into the salient between the Aisne and the Marne enormous stores of ammunition and supplies, as well as many hundred guns, which were to have served his troops while they took Epernay and swung around toward Paris. It was extremely useful to get those supplies out. Foch had cut his railroads for the most part, and controlled the larger highways. Therefore, the Germans had to make costly stands at Soissons and Rheims and along the tip of the salient against the Americans to have time to get their war material back.

So far, they have well succeeded in this. But the Crown Prince has not saved himself so far from the stigma of inglorious defeat.

Can the German high command

stop the Allies and at the same time launch another offensive? Conservative opinion believes it can try both. Whether it can succeed in either is a question. The allied armies answer in the negative.

The enemy has perhaps twenty divisions saved for something. I believe the situation is that the German command has been contemplating a drive against the British, but hesitates to use up all of its reserves until it sees how far Foch intends to push the Crown Prince back. If the Kaiser hits the British, he may lose, or he may win. Disregarding which would be the result, he would use up his now all-important reserves, while Foch would have his supply of French troops, augmented by fresh Americans. The German command of course is under pressure because of the need of bolstering up the German morale, but perhaps is afraid to take the chance of another drive just at this time.

The Unknown Factor.

Ludendorff knows the British strength and knows the French strength. But there is one factor that Ludendorff does not know, and that factor is the strength of the American assistance. He does not know how many Americans are ready to be thrown against him—how many men we have ready and able to take the front line.

The German command may have thought it knew when it asserted that America would not fight. It may have thought it knew when it said the Americans could not fight. It knows now that it was wrong both times. And now that it knows America will fight and can fight, it doesn't know how much America can fight at this time. Uncle Sam has the Kaiser guessing.

One thing the Kaiser misjudged was the spirit of the youthful Americans. They take their stand by the side of the best veteran soldiers of France, and that means the equal of any soldiers in the world.

Our lads are not disheartened by the ferocity of their adversary, not dismayed at the size of their undertaking. This incident shows the spirit of our boys: A young American soldier stood by the side of the grave of his brother, killed north of Château-Thierry. When the Chaplain had finished his prayer and the clouds began to fall on his brother's body, with his lip between his teeth he turned away and said: "That makes six I've got to get. We had counted on three apiece."

July 27, (Delayed by Censor.)—In their advance the Americans today captured the villages of Fresnes and Courmont, as well as the Croix Rouge Farm, in the Forest of Fère. The capture of Courmont brings our troops within four miles of the Ourcq River, across which the Germans are reported to be withdrawing.