

The First Division of the American Army, after finishing its preliminary training behind the lines, went to the trenches for the first time in October, 1917, as the first contribution to the fighting forces of the Allies. By the time that the great German offensive in Picardy began, on March 21st, 1918, the American army had four experienced divisions in the line. The great crisis that this drive developed, however, made it impossible for the Americans to take over a sector by themselves. Gradually, as their numbers increased and more reserves, fresh from the States, were placed in training behind the lines, the American boys went in in substantial numbers. Already they had displayed their splendid fighting qualities and had demonstrated that as soldiers they had no superiors. Incidentally, it did not take them long to convince the enemy that contrary to their own opinions, they themselves were not invincible.

On August 30th, 1918, the American forces took over the first American sector, in preparation for the St. Mihiel offensive. The American line was soon extended across the Meuse River to the west edge of the Argonne Forest. The concentration of tanks, aviation units, artillery equipment, and materials of all kinds for this first great American offensive was enormous. The scores of elements of a complete army were moulded together, with American railroad and American service of supply units throughout. The concentration included the bringing up of approximately 600,000 troops. The French Independent Air Force, together with British bombing units and American Air forces, placed the greatest aviation personnel that ever took part in any Western Front offensive under the direct command of General Pershing.

On the day after they had taken the St. Mihiel Salient a great share of the corps and army artillery that had operated in that offensive were on the move toward the area back of the line between the Meuse River and the western edge of the Argonne. The German General Staff was well aware of the consequences of an American success along this line, and it was determined to use every available American division in an effort to force a decision at this point. The attack began on September 26th. The work of the American army and of the American engineers in this drive will forever remain in



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Desolation of Flanders, Where the Germans Were Trying to Break Through Early in 1918.