

KEY
 FRENCH ARMIES
 LIMITS FIXED FOR RETREAT
 BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
 LIMIT FIXED FOR RETREAT
 GERMAN ARMIES
 (HEAVY ARROWS INDICATE TROOP MOVEMENTS)
 STONED MARSHES
 GUARDED BY FOCH
 WHERE FRENCH POSITIONS ON SEPT. 9
 ARE OMITTED THEY ARE FACING THE
 ENEMY LINES OF THAT DATE.



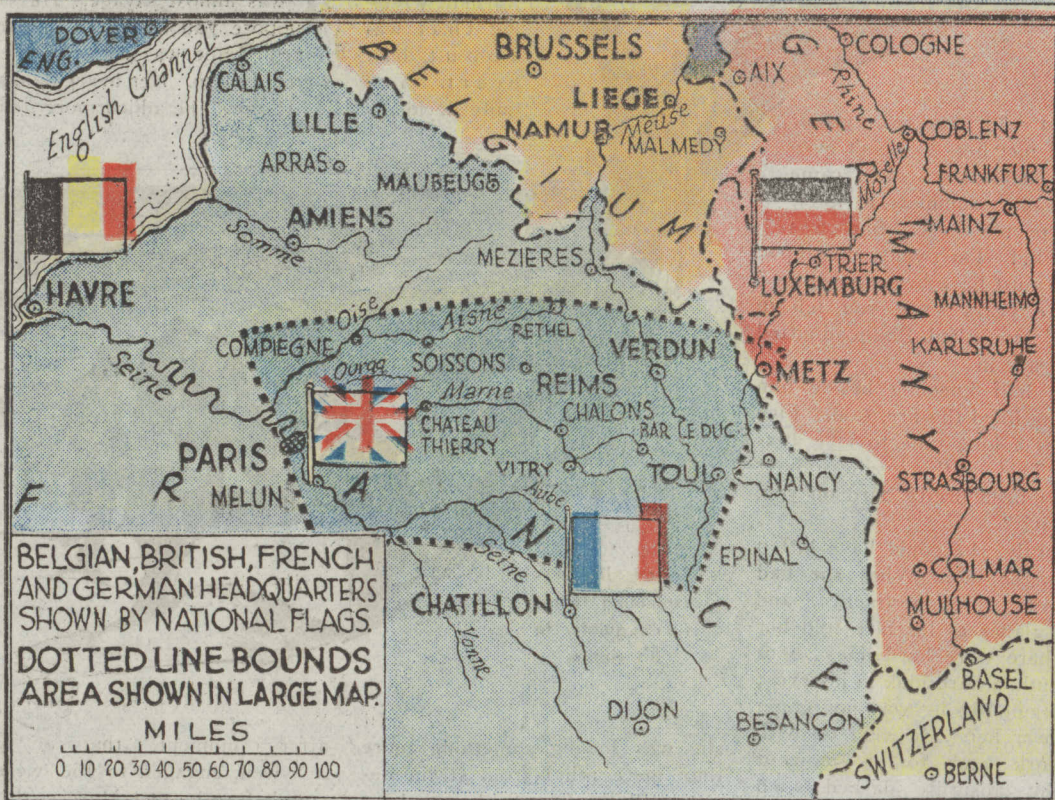
By John A. Menaugh

TWENTY years ago today began the German retreat at the first battle of the Marne. Then and there the issue of the World war was decided, though more than four long years had to pass before Germany was conquered. Volumes have been written upon the subject of those fateful days in early September, 1914, when the Germans swept through France to the gates of Paris, and almost without exception every authority has stated plainly that it was the first battle of the Marne that plucked from the overconfident forces of the kaiser a speedy and decisive triumph over the Allies.

After the battles of the frontier in the latter part of August, 1914, the French and the British were in retreat before the swift advance of the Germans, who were executing a vast wheeling movement pivoted upon Belgium, with the aim of sweeping the enemy into Switzerland. Von Moltke, chief of staff and virtual commander-in-chief of the German army, on Sept. 4 learned that the French were moving many divisions westward to escape his wheel and massing considerable numbers of troops in the environs of Paris. He altered his plan immediately, ordering part of his forces, the First and Second armies, to hold off the French in the neighborhood of Paris while the remainder of his forces, five other armies, were to continue their encircling movement, driving in a southeasterly direction all of the French in front of them. It was the German aim not to storm or besiege Paris, but rather to defeat the Allies in the field and then march unopposed into the French capital.

Battle Line 180 Miles Long

On Sept. 9, considered the first of the four days of the first battle of the Marne, the Germans were disposed in an irregular line approximately 180 miles long and stretching from the German border to the suburbs of Paris. The First German army (Von Kluck) was south of the Marne and nearest of all the invaders to Paris. The Second army (Von Bülow) was a day's march east of the First army and also south of the Marne. Hausen's army, the Third, likewise was south of the Marne and a day's march east of the Second army. The Fourth army (Albrecht, duke of Württemberg) was north of the Marne, facing toward the south-



The Marne—Twenty Years Ago Today

east. The Fifth army (Crown Prince Frederick) was held to the north of Verdun by the defenses of that city. The Sixth army (Rupprecht of Bavaria) was south of Metz and some distance east of the Meuse. The Seventh army (Heeringen) was farther south, along the German border.

Opposing Von Kluck on the west and directly in front of Paris was the Sixth French army (Manoury), and on the south the British expeditionary force (General French) and the more westerly divisions of the Fifth French army (D'Esperey). Opposing Von Bülow on the south was the Ninth French army (Foch). Hausen's army also faced that of Foch, and the army of Albrecht was opposed to the Fourth French army (De Langle). The Third French army (Sarail) was in partial contact with that of the crown prince. The Second French army (Castelnau) stood before the divisions under the command of Rupprecht. Farther south the First French army (Dubail) faced the army of Heeringen.

Only those troops of each side that were west of Vitry (near the Marne, 125 miles east of Paris), or possibly those west of Verdun, actually are considered to have

taken part in the first battle of the Marne, though the entire action between the German border and Paris on the days of Sept. 6, 7, 8, and 9 might well be considered one great engagement. West of Vitry there were approximately 900,000 German soldiers and 1,100,000 troops of the Allies, with an additional 500,000 French, including the Paris garrison, in the capital.

It was Gallieni, military governor of Paris, who first realized that the Germans were offering a point of vulnerability with Von Kluck's army presenting a flank in its march across the front of Paris. He induced Joffre, the French commander-in-chief, to strike at once. Joffre set Sept. 6 as the day for the general attack. Manoury's army in the meantime had been strengthened by an emergency force created in Paris and rushed to the front in taxis. The British, an extra day's march south of the position at which they should have been, had two marches back to establish contact with the enemy.

Manoury struck—a complete surprise to the Germans. Struck also the whole Allied force to the east. D'Esperey made little headway at first. The British advanced swiftly. Von Kluck withdrew troops from his left and center to protect his right flank, leaving a 30-mile gap, defended by a thin veil of cavalry, between his army and that of Von Bülow. The British and D'Esperey's men shot into the gap. The British reached and crossed the Grand Morin and the Petit Morin and on the morning of Sept. 9 began a crossing of the Marne. Manoury was hurled back upon the Paris defenses, the guns of which wrought destruction in Von Kluck's ranks. Foch was heavily attacked on his right. D'Esperey, driving back Von Bülow, gave aid to Foch. Von Kluck was pinched in a trap. Von Bülow's position was nearly as critical.

Germans Retreat to the Aisne

At 1 p. m. the German retirement began. Manoury's army waited through the night of Sept. 9-10 for the attack which was to mean defeat to it. It never came. The Germans were gone, falling back to the Aisne.

Divergent action of the First and Second German armies, faulty direction from the German supreme command, and the threatened break-through of the British and the Fifth French army were the deciding factors of the battle.

