

The Americanization of Belleau Wood—By Isaac F. Marcossou

UP IN the valley of the Clignon, forty-five miles to the north of Paris, the Stars and Stripes float day and night over a wooded terrain less than two hundred acres in area. Stark, gaunt, shell-swept trunks mingle with the living green of sturdy oak, birch and pine. Shallow trenches stretch from east to west. Machine-gun emplacements pockmark the ground. Here and there rusty helmets, bayonets and rifle barrels strew the earth. A cool, mysterious peace broods over the section. The silent, shadowy forest corridors are like verdant aisles in a stately cathedral reared by Nature. And it is a holy place.

This spot is Belleau Wood. To most Americans it is simply the scene of one of the historic engagements in the World War which marked our entry as fighting factors in the conflict. Some also know that the victory here heartened the French in their darkest hour and literally turned the tide of the stupendous struggle.

But Belleau Wood, with its memories and its silence, means infinitely more. It is the only spot in France which, to paraphrase Rupert Brooke, is forever America. Although we sprinkled that battle-torn soil with our blood all the way from St.-Mihiel and the Argonne down to the banks of the Marne, this is the sole sanctuary of our valor that actually belongs to us.

A Shrine of Courage and Sacrifice

WITH Belleau Wood it is different. This ever-green battle abbey, where the Marines held the road to Paris and broke the spearhead of the last German drive at immense cost, is today the property of the Belleau Wood Memorial Association.

Thanks to the efforts of that association the Wood has become a shrine for reverent pilgrims. It is our Valhalla overseas, endowed with every tradition that courage and sacrifice can bestow.

Senator George Wharton Pepper, of Pennsylvania, delivered a memorable address in behalf of the Belleau Wood Memorial Association at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, April 9, 1922. He described the collision between long previously generated forces of democracy in the

West with the pretended German military supermen at little Belleau in these striking passages of his address:

"The army of democracy included many American divisions. Each of them is known to us as well by its official number as by the descriptive name which we have attached to it in pride and affection. As the boys from home went eastward they thought nothing of Belleau or St.-Mihiel or of the Argonne. Theirs was the spirit of the knight-errant faring forth on a great adventure. Indeed, at that time there was nothing in Belleau or in these other places to compel their attention. Yet the region of the Meuse-Argonne, St.-Mihiel and little Belleau, sleeping on both sides of the tiny Clignon, was destined, by the shock of opposing forces, to be awakened suddenly to a glorious immortality.

"It is often so in life.

"A man comes suddenly upon a time and a place. He discovers that without warning he has reached the hour and the spot which are to witness the critical decision of his career. When, pausing there, he makes that decision, the whole past of his life is behind him.

"It was so with the boys in the American divisions, although they knew it not. Behind each boy was the whole past of his life. His ancestors, his father, his mother, his home, his childhood, the influences under which he had grown up, the free institutions which had sheltered his life, the use that he had made of the opportunities which

America had lavishly offered him—all these were assembled in support and reserve. I make no distinction between the several divisions. I do not attempt to appraise the values of individual units, or to compare or contrast the significance of the various battles in which the boys took part. It is scarcely worth while to add that I am making no claim for America. If it were a matter of laying claim to honor and credit, an American could make it only on behalf of our comrades in arms. The simple fact is that our sky, and theirs, was studded with stars and that each star had its individual glory."

Hell Wood

AT THIS time of Armistice remembrance, when the heart of the Allied world turns again to that day of days when peace laid its benediction

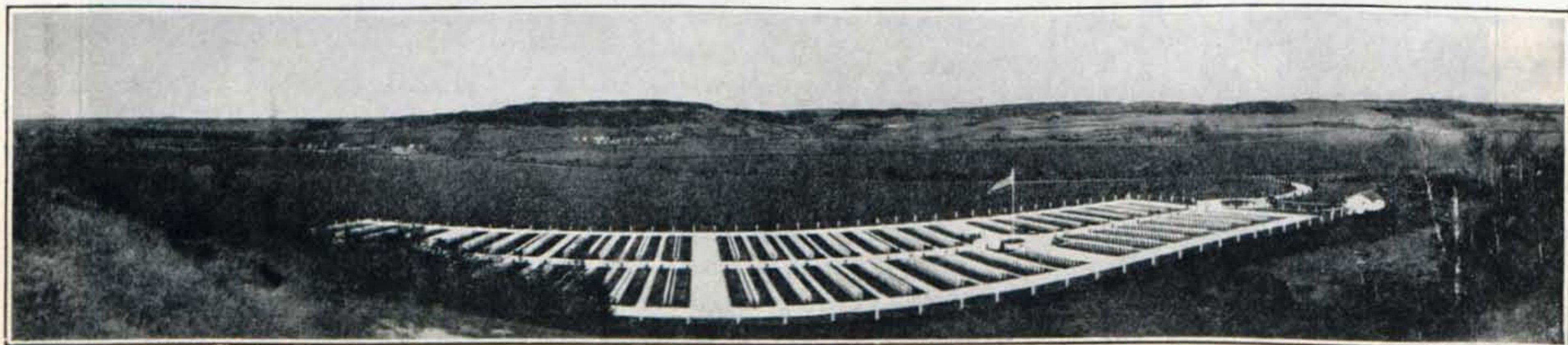
upon those long years of agony and slaughter, it is fitting perhaps that the story of the conversion of Belleau Wood into a permanent memorial to those who fell there should be told. Not only have we purchased the property outright, but we are restoring the trenches and machine-gun nests so that henceforth the visitor may visualize, as well as appraise, the price that the Second Division, comprising the Fifth and Sixth Marines and the Ninth and Twenty-third United States Infantry, with the Sixth Machine Gun Battalion, had to pay for glory during those desperate June weeks of 1918.

Any consideration of Belleau Wood inspires an obvious thought in passing that is not without moral or timeliness. It relates to the aftermath of war. There are always two balance sheets when the fighting is over. The fiscal side is invariably as destructive of illusion as war itself is of reputations. Peace, even among allies, has its recriminations no less bitter than those of war.

Happily there is also that other side upon which there can be no debate and for which there are no terms. It is the obligation to the dead who paid with their lives. Here France and America, whatever their postwar differences, have been a unit, nowhere to such whole-hearted extent as in the cooperation that made the Belleau Wood project possible. Its dedication was an inspiring international event. Marshal Foch attended, and in his speech he referred to that sanguinary area as "the cradle of victory."



Chateau-Thierry—Belleau Wood



The U. S. Cemetery at Belleau Wood



The Road That Leads to the Flag

Clearly to comprehend the significance which attaches to our acquisition of Belleau Wood and to understand a description of it as it looks today, it is necessary to make a swift résumé of the imperishable chapter of gallantry written there. In French the words *bois de belleau* mean "wood of beautiful water." But the Marines who fought there will always know the region as "hell wood."

Up to the beginning of June, 1918, American troops saw little active service. Most of the units had been deployed in calm sectors. Our closest contact with fighting was in the capture of Cantigny on May twenty-eighth. The operation there was in close association with the French and, in the light of subsequent events, relatively unimportant. It remained for Belleau Wood to give us our baptism of blood.

If you are at all familiar with the conduct of the war you know that in 1918 the Germans concentrated on a series of major operations—they were termed the "peace offensive"—which they firmly believed would be decisive. Into them they threw their crack units as well as the bulk of their reserves. There was a reason. Although victorious on the firing line, they faced reverse on the home front due to the pinch of hunger and economic collapse. It was now or never. The human rampart build out of the opposition of the Americans made it a case of never.

American Troops on Their Own

THE first great German offensive which began in March smashed the Fifth British Army and was only halted outside Amiens. The second—Lys—overran Armentières. The third, and the one which directly concerns us, was the tremendous advance west of Rheims which crossed the Chemin des Dames, captured Soissons, and brought the enemy sweeping down the Marne valley to Château-Thierry, which, for all practical purposes, was the bridgehead for Paris. Once through this gap the capital was at the mercy of the invader.

Thirty German divisions had been hurled against seven French and British divisions on a forty-mile front. The inevitable happened. Exhausted after weeks of incessant fighting, the French were compelled to fall back. For six days they had retreated disheartened and disorganized.

Human endurance could stand no more. It was in this critical hour that the French high command decided to call on the Americans.

The Fourth Brigade of the Second Division, composed of the Fifth and Sixth regiments of Marines and the Sixth Machine Gun Battalion in command of Brigadier General James G. Harbord, had occupied a quiet sector on the Verdun front until the middle of May, when it was brought down to an area nearer Paris for open warfare training. After the Germans took Château-Thierry and Vaux, the whole Second American Division was flung across their path to halt the rush toward Paris.

There is no need of going into the detailed operations of the division save those that relate to Belleau Wood,

lost in establishing contact. I emphasize this point to make it clear that when the Marines went into action they had been traveling for a day and a night, had been without hot food, and likewise lacked tanks, gas shells and flame projectors.

The French wanted to run the show, but General Harbord asked to be let alone. He said, "Let us fight in our way and we will stop them." He won out and was given a free hand. Thus it came about that Belleau Wood was the first engagement in the war in which our troops went on their own.

So desperate was the crisis that the orders received by the commander of the Second American Division from the commander of the Sixth French Army read as follows:

"Do not retire one step. Retake every inch of ground lost. Attempt to push back the enemy and choose every opportunity to kill him. Continue to install yourselves everywhere and without delay by digging into the earth in the positions actually held."

When the Marines Met the Germans

THE Marines did not need this injunction. They knew that it was up to them to stop the Germans and they did it. They went into Belleau Wood across a wheat field



Belleau Wood as it Appears Today. A Typical Spot That the Marines Had to Take

which was the key to the immediate situation. In their plunge to the south the Germans occupied the little towns of Belleau, Torcy and Bussières, which lie to the north and the north-west of the Wood. They now penetrated and occupied the forest.

Here they dug three lines of trenches—the first was at the southern end—and installed scores of machine-gun nests. Lines of barbed wire and sharpshooter holes completed what was a strong natural defense due to the thick underbrush and heavy trees. Garrisoned with infantry and alive with machine gunners, it was too strong a fortress to be allowed to remain in enemy hands. The Wood had to be cleared, and the task fell to the Marines, who, on June second, comprised the only American unit that had arrived on the scene.

The Marines Brigade had received orders to move barely forty-eight hours before, and the journey to Lucy-le-Bocage, the hamlet that lies to the south of Belleau Wood, had been made in motortrucks. Owing to the failure of the French to synchronize the orders for the mobilization of the various units, there was much confusion. Companies became separated, supply trains were misdirected, and much time and, what was more important, much energy and sleep were



Marines Raising the Stars and Stripes Over Belleau Wood

swept by a withering fire. Once inside those dim confines they stayed. From June second until the last German was routed out of the forest on June twenty-fifth, Belleau Wood was the scene of what was probably the bitterest hand-to-hand fighting in the war. Those silent aisles of oak, birch and pine witnessed deeds of individual heroism that in other conflicts would have stood out as epic feats. At Belleau Wood they were merely part of the day's work. When you see that densely grown ground today, with its shell-torn trees and points of natural advantage, you realize

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The U. S. Cemetery as Seen From the Wood

THE AMERICANIZATION OF BELLEAU WOOD

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what it meant to face the hail of lead there at close quarters.

While the Wood was being cleaned up a lieutenant of Marines—James F. Robertson—captured Bouresches, southeast of the forest, with twenty men. This town is the setting for the much discussed play, *What Price Glory*. One of its authors, Laurence Stallings, fought at Belleau.

The Marines did the job, but at heavy cost. In and around the Wood the slain were in the proportion of about one to every five wounded, while the usual battle ratio is one killed to every seven or eight wounded. It means that many wounded soldiers remained in the fight until killed by a second or third wound.

To round out this brief summary of the Battle of Belleau Wood it is necessary to place it historically. To begin with, it was the first engagement in the World War fought by Americans in the American fashion under American leadership with American initiative and daring.

In the second place, up to this time "American help" had been merely a phrase. Now it became a bulwark of the Allied cause. With the capture of Belleau Wood and the clearing up of the adjacent country by our men, the Germans turned from offense to defense. French resistance stiffened; the road to Paris was blocked for good, and from then until the Armistice, victory was in the air. Belleau Wood was the Gettysburg of the war of wars.

No wonder Marshal Foch called it "the cradle of victory." By order of General Degoutte, commanding the Sixth French Army, the name of the scene of the fight was changed to Bois de la Brigade des Marines, which means the Wood of the Marine Brigade. Hence the identity of the American Marine is officially fixed on the map of France just as it unofficially reposes in the grateful and admiring remembrance of all who know what he did there.

For many decades Belleau Wood was the property of the Paillet family, who used it as a shooting preserve. Their hunting lodge, which stands near the northern fringe, is a wreck because it was in the direct line of fierce shell fire for weeks. Only the gaping circular walls remain.

In Memory of Our Dead

Our first solemn duty at Belleau Wood was to the dead. In war the burial squad followed hot on the heels of battle. What is today the beautiful Belleau Cemetery—officially it is known as the Aisne-Marne—was located immediately after the battle. It is at the foot of the knoll from which Belleau Wood stretches southward. No site could be more appropriate because it forms the approach to the spot where many of the troops who rest there fell in battle. Although two thousand bodies that once reposed here have been sent home, 2214 graves remain.

Generals and cooks rest side by side. The star of David indicating the Jewish casualty is neighbor to the cross that crowns the turf over a Christian. Here death is indeed the supreme leveler.

While loving care was bestowed upon Belleau Cemetery, because it is the shrine for many who make annual pilgrimages to the cross-sentinel patches of greensward, little attention was paid to Belleau Wood except for the constant search for missing bodies which continue to be uncovered.

With peace, Belleau Wood remained, of course, the property of the Paillet family. The trenches and machine-gun nests were filling up and becoming overgrown with brush. It meant that the hallmarks of our

valor were being obliterated just as the battlefields of the Somme, the Oise, the Marne and the Meuse were yielding to the plowshare and the sickle. Nature is ever the swift and sure restorer. In a few more years Belleau Wood, save for the shell-riven trees, would have become almost like any other French forest in external appearance. Moreover, in that leafy dust was "a richer dust concealed," because the bodies of fifty American soldiers who fell there are still undiscovered.

It was quite by chance that the Wood came into American hands. In 1921 Mrs. James Carroll Frazer, an alert and public-spirited resident of Washington, became interested in the little village of Belleau and its environs. She organized and became president of the Belleau Wood Memorial Association. Its purpose was to rebuild the village in memory of the men who died at Belleau Wood and vicinity. The association also had in view the reconstruction of other devastated towns and the erection of memorials and monuments to the American dead throughout France.

Saving Belleau From the Tourists

The Marines had distinguished themselves in and around Belleau, and their participation appealed peculiarly to Mrs. Frazer. During the war she had been chairman of the Comforts Committee of the Navy League. Hence the organization of the Memorial Association, with Belleau as its objective. This work was inaugurated with the installation of a water tower and pump for the commune of Belleau as a tribute to the soldiers of Pennsylvania who gave their lives to clear the Wood.

In 1922 Mrs. Frazer was making a visit to Belleau when she heard that the Wood was to be converted into a sort of amusement park. It is easy to understand how and why this scheme was conceived. Belleau Wood lies in the midst of the sight-seeing zone. Château-Thierry is not far away. Every day the rubberneck wagons come up from Paris to give tourists a quick view of what was one of the most decisive battle areas of the war. A hotel at Belleau Wood had profitable possibilities.

Mrs. Frazer at once communicated the disturbing news to Major General John A. Lejeune, Commandant of the Marine Corps, who shared her apprehension. She decided to do her utmost to save the Wood from desecration and to acquire the historic spot. The purpose of the Belleau Wood Memorial Association was diverted for the moment from village reconstruction to this task. Under Mrs. Frazer's stimulating direction sixteen men and women subscribed \$1000 each, which was sufficient to purchase the one hundred and twenty-odd acres fought over by the Marines in those weeks of terrific assault.

Raising the money was the easiest part of the job as events now proved. When Mrs. Frazer sought to consummate the purchase, her agent in Paris discovered that it was impossible for a private alien corporation—the association had been organized as such in the District of Columbia—to buy land in France. The reason was that the French, having had a costly taste of German penetration through this process, had set up the bars after the war. It was then necessary to get a Federal charter, which meant that the association had to be incorporated under an act of Congress. With a Federal charter it could do business with Monsieur Paillet.

Undaunted, Mrs. Frazer set to work to get the charter. No time could have been more inopportune. A filibuster was on; thousands



of bills were up; the session neared its end. Vice President Coolidge, as he then was, became a strong ally; many senators and congressmen rallied to the project, and in the closing hours of Congress the bill was jammed through. On March 3, 1923, the Belleau Wood Memorial Association got a new and Federal lease on life and could go ahead and buy Belleau Wood. This was accomplished in May.

Once the association was in a position to buy Belleau Wood, the French gave every support. Marshal Foch accepted the honorary chairmanship of the French Committee. To a greater degree, perhaps, than any other Frenchman he appreciated the practical kinship of that bit of once embattled wood with the salvation of his country.

Belleau Wood was dedicated as an American memorial on July 22, 1923, with what was perhaps the greatest tribute yet paid to our dead in France. It was one of those Sundays of blue sky and smiling sunshine so rare in the area of the Marne Valley, because rain is the usual fate of most French celebrations. Eminent French and American generals aglitter with decorations mingled with peasants attired in their Sabbath best. High and low met on a common ground of reverence. Particularly appropriate was the presence of a detachment of Marines from the Pittsburgh, flagship of the American fleet in European waters, which included some of the survivors of the battle in the Wood.

The flag-draped speakers' stand stood in a clearing almost in the center of the forest. To the left and right stretched the opened trenches and machine-gun emplacements that had hurled death on our men. In front sat the audience, while troops of French cavalry in steel helmets formed a blue-clad fringe all around.

The Cradle of Victory

Judge Walter V. R. Berry, who is chairman of the French Committee of the Belleau Wood Memorial Association, presided. Peculiar interest attached to the two principal speakers, who were Marshal Foch and Major General Harbord.

In his speech the Generalissimo of the French Armies, who directed the Allied destinies in the closing period of the war, said:

"In order to understand the nature of this ceremony one must recall the anguish which gripped us when we fought here in June, 1918. The violence of the German attack had carried the enemy to Château-Thierry, ninety kilometers from Paris. It was the heart of France which was menaced and it was necessary to bar the road. At that moment we remembered that Generals Pershing and Bliss had said to us: 'We are here to fight and to be killed. Do with us as you will without counting.'"

Then, as if addressing the shades of the departed warriors, he added:

"Glorious dead, you can sleep in peace on this soil which was the cradle of victory. Lafayette in America built the first span of Franco-American friendship; you here have built the second. America shall henceforth be sovereign over this bit of land."

At the conclusion of his remarks came the first of the many incidents that stirred and touched the spectators. The marshal

gave a sharp command and the French tricolor, which had floated from the tall pole alongside the speakers' stand, came down while the cavalry band played the Marseillaise. A moment later the Stars and Stripes went fluttering up to the strains of The Star-Spangled Banner.

General Harbord's speech vividly rehearsed the feat of his old brigade in the Wood. Among other things he said:

"It is very appropriate that this shell-torn wood and blood-soaked soil should, with the consent of our great sister republic, pass forever to American ownership. It is too precious in its associations, too hallowed with the haunting memories of that fateful June of five years ago, to be permanently sheltered under any flag, no matter how much beloved, other than our own. Now in the quiet sunshine of a happier summer it has become a tiny American island, surrounded by lovely France. I cannot conceive that in all time to come our

country will ever permit the pollution of this consecrated ground by the foot of an invader marching on that Paris which Americans here died to defend."

A Mecca

"Insignificant in area, out of the ordinary track of travel, not specially picturesque, and with no particular traditions in peace or war, this ancient hunting preserve of the Château of Belleau came into the spotlight of history by being at the spearhead of the German thrust for Paris in the last week of May, 1918. For a short period the music of its sonorous name was heard

in all Allied lands, and for its brief day it held the headlines throughout the world. The great crises of history pass unheeded by the actors in the drama, and it is not until after the event that the historian can say what particular hour on a crowded day was heavily charged with fate. The accident of place, the chance stroke of a zero hour wrote the name of the Bois de Belleau on the tablets, and with it chronicled the immortal fame of the Marine Brigade and their comrades of the Second Engineers.

"This melancholy spot, with its tangle of wildwood, its giant boulders, its mangled trees, with here and there the wreckage of war, a helmet, a rusty canteen or, perhaps in some lonely forest aisle the still tangible evidence of deadly hand-to-hand struggle, will for all time be a Mecca for pilgrims from beyond the western ocean. Mothers will consecrate this ground with their tears; fathers with grief tempered with pride will tell the story to their younger generation. Now and then, a veteran for the brief span in which we shall survive, will come here to live again the brave days of that distant June. Here will be raised the altars of patriotism; here will be renewed the vows of sacrifice and consecration to country. Hither will come our countrymen in hours of depression, and even of failure, and take courage from this shrine of great deeds."

The other speakers included Mrs. Frazer, Colonel T. B. Mott, our military attaché in Paris, Vice Admiral Andrews, commanding the American naval forces in European waters, and Senator Reed, of Pennsylvania.

The concluding ceremony was attuned to the high and uplifting spirit of this

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Mrs. James Carroll Frazer, Founder of the Belleau Wood Memorial Association

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memorable occasion. A representative of the Bishop of Soissons gave absolution for the unbound dead; the Marines fired three volleys over the mausoleum of their comrades; the bugles sounded taps while French aeroplanes, sweeping low, scattered flowers over the forest. In these circumstances Belleau Wood passed officially, as well as unforgettably, into American keeping.

It only remains to present a close-up of Belleau Wood as it is today under American supervision. I made the forty-five mile trip from Paris by motor along part of the Metz-Paris highway that the Marines held with their battered bodies. Few French trips are invested with such dramatic interest. From the Marne—that insignificant stream where twice the fate of France was decided—to the north every square mile is associated with the terror and tragedy of the World War. It was on this road—the spot is now marked by a monument to him—that General Gallieni's soldiers left their hastily commandeered taxicabs on that momentous September night in 1914 when they saved Paris from the first victorious German rush.

Soon you pass Meaux, where the Marine Brigade really got started on the fateful journey to Belleau Wood. Before you realize it you reach the little village of Lucy-le-Bocage, where the troops left the motor-trucks and advanced to glory and death. Within the shadow of a ruined church is the monument to the Second Division.

Not far away flows the stream which gives the valley of Clignon its name. After the war Marshal Foch came here and said to the inhabitants: "From the little river and the valley of Clignon we went on to final victory." I interpolate this because the momentous fight from Soissons to Rheims is always called the Second Battle of the Marne. Geographically this is not correct. You do not touch the Marne until after you top the crests of the hills that look down into Château-Thierry.

Once in Lucy-le-Bocage you are in the zone of our fighting. As you emerge from the town you can see Belleau Wood rising to the right, while across the wheat fields in front one sees the Stars and Stripes floating over Belleau Cemetery. At present, and until the road is constructed from Lucy-le-Bocage into the Wood, the only approach to the place where the Marines fought and died is by way of the cemetery.

Where Our Flag Flies in France

You therefore walk through this precious plot, climb the road that winds around the knoll, skirt the wrecked hunting lodge, and bring up at the entrance to our Valhalla. No matter how hardened you may be to the ravages of war and its consequences, the very sight of this brooding stretch of green stirs the feelings. Immediately you face the old road through the forest from the center of which rises the flagpole where flies our flag. It is the first evidence of American possession.

Accompanied by Mr. W. B. Fitts, the superintendent of the Wood, I walked over every square foot of ground where our men battled. The selection of Mr. Fitts as custodian of this sacred spot was fortunate. A resident of France for many years, and with long experience in American journalism, he brings the necessary sympathy and understanding to his charge.

Belleau Wood is longer than it is wide. This was one reason why we attacked from the south. At the extreme southern edge the Germans dug their first line of trenches. They commanded the open area across which the Marines swept in waves from the direction of Lucy-le-Bocage. That field of death now smiles with plenty. On the day I visited the place it nodded with ripening grain.

The first line of trenches on the south was the outpost of the German defense. Behind it was a second line, which cut the Wood from east to west, while the third and last extended from the northeastern edge in a half circle across the road through the

center toward the west. This northeastern section was the strongest of all the positions. A company of Marines that made the initial assault on it retired with only eight men. It was not cleaned out until June twenty-fifth, and after the struggle in the Wood had raged for twenty-three days. Our artillery dropped 33,000 shells into it before we made the final charge. If you get the three lines of trenches fixed in your mind you will at once appreciate the fact that there were really two No Man's Lands over which fury reigned.

The German trenches were only part of the enemy defense. For every line of trench there were half a dozen machine-gun nests. Historically Belleau Wood will always be known as a battle of machine guns and gunners. No agency for destruction is more terrible than the machine gun, which sprays death unceasingly.

At the mention of the word trench the average person familiar with war conjures up the picture of the kind of excavation so common in the Somme and elsewhere which soldiers occupied for years. These permanent trenches were really underground habitations with wooden walks, parapets and dugouts.

All Credit to the Marines

Not so with the trenches in Belleau Wood. They were what army men call hasty or attack shelters, hurriedly dug in emergency—this applies especially to our own—and therefore shallow. They were not deep enough for a man to stand up in unobserved. This is why they filled up so rapidly. The same was true of the wicked gouges in the ground where the machine guns were placed. Our troops occupied these shallow trenches from June 10 to July 18, being bombarded hourly with gas and shells of every caliber. It was as hazardous to stick to the terrain won at such heavy cost as it was to carry it.

In connection with the filling up of the Belleau trenches, or rather the way that Nature invariably renews herself on fields of battle, are two interesting facts. A pair of deer survived the maelstrom of gas and shell and in the intervening years a considerable family has sprung from them. They nibble herbage on the grass-grown edges of trench and machine-gun nests. When the Marines first went into action, Belleau Wood was like a garden of wild strawberries. These, too, seemed to have withstood the wartime blasts. I saw the parallel to this comeback in the shell holes of the Somme, which flamed with poppies the year following the great British offensive of 1916.

It followed that when we took charge of Belleau Wood in 1923 most of the trenches and machine-gun nests, with the exception of those in that bloody northeast angle where the Germans dug themselves in more deeply than elsewhere, were almost obliterated. Rains had washed silt and earth into them and underbrush had grown up all around. During the past two years, however, the trenches and nests of the first and second lines have been opened up. The third line has not filled much. All this makes it possible to visualize the fighting.

No man can go through Belleau Wood without wondering how it was humanly possible for the Marines to go in and stay in. Every trench—they were built in short sections—had to be taken separately and in a hand-to-hand encounter. Moreover, every trench, no matter how short, was flanked and backed up with machine-gun nests. In addition, the Germans placed machine guns and sharpshooters in the trees. Thus death lurked all around and above. You leave those green glades with their grim reminders of battle with a new admiration for the courage and the tenacity of the American soldier.

Not only are the trenches and machine-gun nests restored but the Wood has been laid out in so-called streets that commemorate the men who participated in, or directed, the fighting. The clearing in the heart of the forest where the flag flies is known as the Place du Maréchal Foch.

The line of trenches directly to the west has been named the Allée du Major General James G. Harbord, while the one-time path of hell stretching to the east is the Allée du General Degoutte. General Pershing's name has been given to the aisle that leads into the second No Man's Land. The road to the north is designated as the Allée de la Brigade des Marines, while the continuation of it south to the point where our troops went in, has been christened Allée de la Twenty-sixth Division.

The streets are all marked with painted signboards. Printed placards are also placed at the principal points of fighting. They set forth succinctly what happened there. Thus the visitor really needs no guide or guide-book to Belleau Wood.

Although much has been accomplished in the restoration of the Wood, considerably more remains to be done. Sections of the No Man's Land, for example, are still almost unexplored.

Somewhere in those dim reaches rest the remains of the fifty unfound American dead. Every week or so a body is recovered because the search parties are constantly at work.

There are endless souvenirs of the combat days in the shape of rusty machine guns, rifles, helmets, grenades and bayonets. These will be placed in a museum on the spot. Here and there you also find fragments of clothes and shoes.

In June last four German bodies were recovered in the Wood, and reinterred in the German cemetery not far from the village of Belleau, where 14,000 of the enemy are buried. All the German graves in France, by the way, are marked with black crosses, whereas white is employed for the Allied graves.

Restoration of Trenches

One of the many tasks that lie ahead of the Belleau Wood Memorial Association is the complete restoration of the trench system and also its permanent maintenance. Then, too, is the all-important matter of an adequate entrance and exit. As I have already intimated, the present temporary approach is through the northern edge, which lies just above our cemetery and is only accessible for pedestrians. A highway is now being constructed from Lucy-le-Bocage which will enter the Wood at the southern fringe. An impressive gate will mark it.

It is the hope of the association that our War Department, which controls the area from the cemetery up to the edge of the Wood, will permit the new road to pass out at the northern end of the forest. This would enable the visitor to make an uninterrupted journey by car from Lucy-le-Bocage through the Wood and then drop down easily along the knoll to the cemetery. Just now it is impossible to go into the Wood by motor.

At this point it may be well to clear up a point concerning which some confusion exists. Many people think that Belleau Cemetery and Belleau Wood are the same. As a matter of fact, although sentimentally linked, they are separate and distinct.

Belleau Cemetery is one of six that we have in France. The land is controlled by the War Department and is in charge of the Cemeterial Division of the Quartermaster's Department. Although we have paid for it, the property is only ours so long as it is used as a resting place for the dead. Belleau Wood, on the other hand, was purchased outright by the Memorial Association, which has title to it. The War Department has no supervision.

An Ever-Green Memorial

The money for the road to the Wood is available, but it will be necessary to raise a permanent fund of not less than \$100,000 for the upkeep of the Wood, to mark all the historic spots associated with our operations throughout the Aisne-Marne sector, and to install a suitable monument in the forest. The purchase price of Belleau Wood came from a few contributors. The association is anxious to make a much larger number of persons parties to its perpetuation. If this is achieved through small gifts then a considerable portion of our people may have a share in keeping intact the theater of one of our most gallant achievements anywhere.

Just what form the permanent monument in Belleau Wood will take is as yet undetermined. Many who have visited the Wood feel that a stone structure including a chapel and a museum, and surmounted by a belfry, would meet all requirements. The ideal site is the Place du Maréchal Foch, which is the heart of the battlefield and the scene of some of the bitterest fighting.

What our stewardship of Belleau Wood, to say nothing of contact with it, means to the youth of America is indicated by several episodes that came to my attention there. Two New York college boys who had worked their way across the Atlantic on a cattle boat, went without food for a whole day in order to visit the battle ground. A group of lads from Utah picked the forest as their first place of pilgrimage upon reaching France. They were so deeply impressed that they stood with bared heads at the flagpole while one of their number offered a prayer.

Thus the place where the German drive was checked and the tide of the war turned, has become a permanent memorial to the men who died there. In the larger sense no formal tribute of stone or bronze is necessary to commemorate that epic deed. Its heroism is registered on those shell-torn trees and along the gun-gashed lanes. Belleau Wood will remain the ever-green symbol of an immense sacrifice that was not made in vain.