

On Monday, 3rd June, the 175th Regiment attempted to make a crossing. The defenders were ready to receive them. The Germans came down to the water's edge with narrow bridges, so made that they could be thrust forward like extensible ladders. The bridges were supported on small floats, and were sufficiently wide for two men to advance abreast. Some twenty-two of these bridges were flung across the stream. When all was ready, the guns on the northern heights began a heavy bombardment, and a battalion was sent across to form a bridgehead in the station. The battalion crossed the river, gained the horseshoe flat, and at once garrisoned the station with machine guns. Under the cover of rapid fire from this fortified bridgehead it was hoped that the remainder of the regiment would be enabled to get across.

At once the French organized a counter-attack. The only troops available were cavalry, who attempted to rush the station, but were badly cut up by the machine-gun fire of the defenders. A small body of French infantry now tried to work round the station on the right, but it, too, was held up. At this moment a company of American machine gunners arrived. The German fire was mastered, and as it died down the French infantry advanced and captured the bridgehead. Of the thousand men or more who had already crossed the river not more than sixty or seventy survived. A few managed to escape by swimming, and two boatloads reached the northern bank without being sunk. Over a hundred men surrendered. The attempt to establish a bridgehead south of the Marne had failed, and again the Americans had come to the rescue of their French brothers-in-arms.

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Before I pass on to describe two other incidents of American pluck and promise, let me remark that the Marne is a name of ill omen to the Germans. You have not forgotten that the first great check which the Germans suffered occurred on the Marne during September 1914. The enemy came sweeping on, driving the Allies before him. They retreated some thirty miles beyond the river, and there knitted up their lines anew. Then it was that von Kluck made the mistake which altered the whole face of the campaign, and led to the long trench warfare which you have followed through so many pages. The Germans thought that the main Allied strength lay in the east of France. They therefore left their western flank open, and began a