

head cover. The enemy had expended months of labour upon perfecting these defences.

The total number of prisoners captured during these operations amounted to 57 officers and 3,000 other ranks. Material which fell into our hands included 26 field-guns, 40 machine-guns and 3 minenwerfer.

I deeply regret the heavy casualties which were incurred in this battle, but in view of the great strength of the position, the stubborn defence of the enemy and the powerful artillery by which he was supported, I do not think they were excessive. I am happy to be able to add that the proportion of slightly wounded is relatively very large indeed.

20. Since the date of my last despatch the Army has received strong reinforcements, and every reinforcement has had its quota of Field Artillery. In addition, numerous batteries of heavy guns and howitzers have been added to the strength of the heavy artillery. The arrival of these reinforcements in the field has tested the capacity of the Artillery as a whole to expand to meet the requirements of the Army, and to maintain the high level of efficiency that has characterised this arm throughout the campaign. Our enemy may have hoped, not perhaps without reason, that it would be impossible for us, starting from such small beginnings, to build up an efficient Artillery to provide for the very large expansion of the Army. If he entertained such hopes, he has now good reason to know that they have not been justified by the result.

The efficiency of the Artillery of the New Armies has exceeded all expectations, and during the period under review excellent services have been rendered by the Territorial Artillery.

The necessity to denude the old batteries of Regular Horse and Field Artillery of officers and non-commissioned officers, in order to provide for the expansion referred to, has not in any way impaired their efficiency, and they continue to set an example to all by their high standard and devotion to duty.

I must give a special word of praise to the officers and rank and file of the Royal Garrison Artillery for the admirable way in which they have accustomed themselves to the conditions of active service in the field, to which for the most part they were unaccustomed, and for the manner in which they have applied their general knowledge of gunnery to the special problems arising in trench warfare. The excellence of their training and the accuracy of their shooting have, I feel sure, made a marked impression on the enemy.

21. The work of the Artillery during the daily life in the trenches calls for increasing vigilance and the maintenance of an intricate system of communications in a thorough state of efficiency, in order that the guns may be ever ready to render assistance to the Infantry when necessity arises. A high standard of initiative is also required in order to maintain the moral ascendancy over the enemy, by impeding his working parties, destroying his works and keeping his artillery fire under control.

To the many calls upon them the Artillery has responded in a manner that is altogether admirable.

In the severe offensive actions that have taken place it is not too much to say that the first element of success has been the artillery preparation of the attack. Only when this

preparation has been thorough have our attacks succeeded. It is impossible to convey in a despatch an adequate impression of the amount of care and labour involved in the minute and exact preparations that are the necessary preliminaries of a bombardment preparatory to an attack in a modern battle.

The immense number of guns that it is necessary to concentrate, the amount of ammunition to be supplied to them, and the diversity of the tasks to be carried out, demand a very high order of skill in organisation and technical professional knowledge.

22. The successful attacks at Hooze on 9th August and of the First Army on 25th September show that our Artillery officers possess the necessary talents and the rank and file the necessary skill and endurance to ensure success in operations of this character.

Moreover, the repulse of the enemy's attack on 8th October in the neighbourhood of Loos and Hulluch with such heavy losses shows the capacity of the Artillery to concentrate its fire promptly and effectively at a moment's notice for the defence of the front.

I cannot close these remarks on the Artillery without expressing my admiration for the work of the observing officers and the men who work with them. Carrying out their duties, as they do, in close proximity to the front line in observing stations that are the special mark of the enemy's guns, they are constantly exposed to fire, and are compelled to carry on their work, involving the use of delicate instruments and the making of nice calculations, in circumstances of the greatest difficulty and danger. That they have never failed in their duties, and that they have suffered very heavy casualties in performing them, are to their lasting credit and honour.

The work of the Artillery in co-operation with the Royal Flying Corps continues to make most satisfactory progress, and has been most highly creditable to all concerned.

The new weapons that have been placed in the field during the period under review have more than fulfilled expectations, and the enemy must be well aware of their accuracy and general efficiency.

23. I have on previous occasions called your Lordship's attention to the admirable work of the Corps of the Royal Engineers.

This work covers a very wide field, demanding a high standard of technical knowledge and skill, as well as unflagging energy; and throughout the supreme test of war these qualities have never been found wanting, thus reflecting the greatest credit on the organisation of the Corps as a whole, and on the training of the officers and men individually.

The spirit which is imbued in all ranks from the base ports to the front trenches and beyond is the same.

No matter where or how the personnel of the Corps has been employed, devotion to duty and energy have been ever present.

In this despatch I wish particularly to draw attention to the work of the Field Units and Army Troops Companies, which must almost invariably be performed under the most trying circumstances by night as well as by day. Demanding qualities of whole-hearted courage and self-sacrifice, combined with sound judgment and instant action, the work of officers, non-commissioned officers and men has been beyond all praise.