

The necessity for skilled labour at the front has been so continuous that Royal Engineer units have frequently been forced to forego those periods of rest which at times it has been possible to grant to other troops; but, in spite of this, they have responded loyally to every call on their services.

Notwithstanding the heavy casualties sustained by all ranks, the esprit de corps of the Royal Engineers is such that the new material is at once animated by the same ideals, and the same devotion to duty is maintained.

24. I desire to call your Lordship's attention to the splendid work carried out by the Tunneling Companies. These companies, officered largely by mining engineers, and manned by professional miners, have devoted themselves whole-heartedly to the dangerous work of offensive and defensive mining, a task ever accompanied by great and unseen dangers.

It is impossible within the limits of a despatch to give any just idea of the work of these units, but it will be found, when their history comes to be written, that it will present a story of danger, of heroism, and of difficulties surmounted worthy of the best traditions of the Royal Engineers, under whose general direction their work is carried out.

25. Owing to the repeated use by the enemy of asphyxiating gases in their attacks on our positions, I have been compelled to resort to similar methods; and a detachment was organised for this purpose, which took part in the operations commencing on the 25th September for the first time.

Although the enemy was known to have been prepared for such reprisals, our gas attack met with marked success, and produced a demoralising effect in some of the opposing units, of which ample evidence was forthcoming in the captured trenches.

The men who undertook this work carried out their unfamiliar duties during a heavy bombardment with conspicuous gallantry and coolness; and I feel confident in their ability to more than hold their own should the enemy again resort to this method of warfare.

26. I would again call your Lordship's attention to the work of the Royal Flying Corps.

Throughout the summer, notwithstanding much unfavourable weather, the work of co-operating with the Artillery, photographing the positions of the enemy, bombing their communications and reconnoitring far over hostile territory has gone on unceasingly.

The volume of work performed steadily increases; the amount of flying has been more than doubled during this period. There have been more than 240 combats in the air, and in nearly every case our pilots have had to seek the enemy behind his own lines, where he is assisted by the fire of his movable anti-aircraft guns; and in spite of this they have succeeded in bringing down four of the German machines behind our trenches and at least twelve in the enemy's lines, and many more have been seen to dive to earth in a damaged condition or to have retired from the fight. On one occasion an officer of the Royal Flying Corps engaged four enemy machines and drove them off, proceeding on his reconnaissance. On another occasion two officers engaged six hostile machines and disabled at least one of them.

Artillery observation and photography are two of the most trying tasks the Royal Flying

Corps is called upon to perform, as our airmen must remain for long periods within easy range of the enemy's anti-aircraft guns.

The work of observation for the guns from aeroplanes has now become an important factor in artillery fire, and the personnel of the two arms work in the closest co-operation.

As evidence of the dangers our flying officers are called upon to face I may state that on one occasion a machine was hit in no fewer than 300 places soon after crossing the enemy's lines, and yet the officer successfully carried out his mission.

The Royal Flying Corps has on several occasions carried out a continuous bombing of the enemy's communications, descending to 500 feet and under in order to hit moving trains on the railway. This has in some cases been kept up day after day; and, during the operations at the end of September, in the space of five days nearly six tons of explosives were dropped on moving trains, and are known to have practically wrecked five, some containing troops, and to have damaged the main railway line in many different places.

For the valuable work carried out by the Royal Flying Corps I am greatly indebted to their commander, Brigadier-General H. M. Trenchard, C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C.

27. Throughout the campaign the financial requirements of the Army have been successfully met by the Army Pay Department. The troops have been paid, and all claims against the Army discharged, with unbroken regularity, and the difficulties inseparable from a foreign banking system and a strange currency have been overcome.

The work of the department has been greatly assisted by the Bank of France, the administration of which has spared no effort to help.

28. While the circumstances of this campaign have brought no exceptional strain on horses, great credit is due to all concerned for the excellent arrangements in the Remount Depôts and Veterinary Hospitals.

29. I am pleased to be able once more to report very favourably on the divisions of the New Armies which have arrived in this country since the date of my last report.

It is evident that great trouble and much hard work have been expended on these units during their training at home, and it is found that they have received such sound teaching that a short period of instruction in trench life under fire soon enables them to take their places with credit beside their acclimatised comrades of the older formations.

30. The Territorial Force units have continued to merit the favourable remarks I have made on them in previous despatches, and have taken a prominent part in many of the active operations in which the Army has been engaged.

31. A new Division has been sent from Canada and has joined the Army in the field. The material of which it is composed is excellent; and this Division will, I am convinced, acquit itself as well in face of the enemy as the 1st Canadian Division has always done.

32. During the period under report I have been very glad once more to receive the Prime Minister at my Headquarters, as well as the Secretary of State for War.

The Prime Minister of Canada and the Minister of Militia and Defence of Canada also