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MONDAY, 29 MAY, 1916.

War Office,
London, S.W.,
29th May, 1916.

The following Despatch has been received by the Secretary of State for War from General Sir Douglas Haig, G.C.B., Commanding-in-Chief, the British Forces in France:—

General Headquarters,
19th May, 1916.

MY LORD,—

1. I have the honour to report the operations of the British Forces serving in France and Belgium since 19th December, 1915, on which date, in accordance with the orders of His Majesty's Government, I assumed the Chief Command.

During this period, the only offensive effort made by the enemy on a great scale was directed against our French Allies near Verdun. The fighting in that area has been prolonged and severe. The results have been worthy of the high traditions of the French Army and of great service to the cause of the Allies. The efforts made by the enemy have cost him heavy losses both in men and in prestige, and he has made these sacrifices without gaining any advantage to counterbalance them.

During this struggle my troops have been in readiness to co-operate as they might be

needed, but the only assistance asked for by our Allies was of an indirect nature—viz., the relief of the French troops on a portion of their defensive front. This relief I was glad to be able to afford.

Its execution on a considerable front, everywhere in close touch with the enemy, was a somewhat delicate operation, but it was carried out with complete success, thanks to the cordial co-operation and goodwill of all ranks concerned and to the lack of enterprise shown by the enemy during the relief.

2. On the British front no action on a great scale, such as that at Verdun, has been fought during the past five months, nevertheless our troops have been far from idle or inactive. Although the struggle, in a general sense, has not been intense, it has been everywhere continuous, and there have been many sharp local actions.

The maintenance and repair of our defences alone, especially in winter, entails constant heavy work. Bad weather and the enemy combine to flood and destroy trenches, dug-outs and communications; all such damages must be repaired promptly, under fire, and almost entirely by night.

Artillery and snipers are practically never silent, patrols are out in front of the lines every night, and heavy bombardments by the artillery of one or both sides take place daily in various parts of the line. Below ground there