



FIFTH SUPPLEMENT

TO

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MONDAY, 21 OCTOBER, 1918.

War Office,

21st October, 1918.

The following Despatch has been received by the Secretary of State for War from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, K.T., G.C.B., G.C.V.O., Commanding-in-Chief, British Armies in France:—

General Headquarters,
20th July, 1918.

My Lord,

I have the honour to submit the following report upon the operations of the Forces under my Command during the period following the actions in the vicinity of Cambrai in the first week of December, 1917.

General Situation.

(1) The broad facts of the change which took place in the general war situation at the close of 1917, and the causes which led to it, have long been well known, and need be referred to but shortly.

The disappearance of Russia as a belligerent country on the side of the Entente Powers had set free the great bulk of the German and Austrian divisions on the Eastern front.

Already at the beginning of November, 1917, the transfer of German divisions from the Russian to the Western front had begun. It became certain that the movement would be continued steadily until numerical superiority lay with the enemy.

It was to be expected, moreover, that large numbers of guns and munitions formerly in the possession of the Russian Armies would fall into the hands of our enemies, and at some future date would be turned against the Allies.

Although the growing Army of the United States of America might be expected eventually to restore the balance in our favour, a considerable period of time would be required to enable that Army to develop its full strength. While it would be possible for Germany to complete her new dispositions early in the new year, the forces which America could send to France before the season would permit active operations to be recommenced would not be large.

Transition from an Offensive to a Defensive Policy.

(2) In view of the situation described above, it became necessary to change the