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TUESDAY, 7 JANUARY, 1919.

War Office,  
7th January, 1919.

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

21st December, 1918.

MY LORD,

I have the honour to submit the following report on the operations of the forces under my command since the successful termination of the great defensive battles on the Somme and Lys Rivers, which were described in my last despatch.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

### (1) *State of the British Armies.*

At the end of April, 1918, though the onrush of the German Armies had been stemmed for the time being, the situation on the Western Front, and particularly on the British portion of it, was still critical.

The immense weight of the enemy's first and heaviest onslaughts in March and April, and the unprecedented masses of men and ma-

terial employed by him had called for practically the whole strength of the British Armies to withstand them, and had left our forces greatly weakened. Although prompt steps had been taken by the home authorities to despatch to France as rapidly as possible all reinforcements then available in England, as well as to recall considerable bodies of troops from other theatres of war, these reinforcements required time to arrive. A further period was needed to complete their training and equipment, to allow troops brought from abroad to become acclimatised, and to enable the new drafts to become assimilated within their various units.

Meanwhile it had become impossible to maintain at an effective strength the full number of our divisions. At the beginning of May no less than eight divisions had been reduced to cadres and were temporarily written off altogether as fighting units. Two other divisions were holding positions in line with reduced cadres which it was not yet possible to bring up to establishment.

Arrangements had been made at the end of April to hand over to the French for employment on a quiet part of their front a further

five divisions, comprising the IX. Corps (see para. 10 below). These had only just been re-constituted, and, being badly in need of rest and training, were not yet considered fit to hold an active sector. In return for these five British divisions, and in accordance with Marshal Foch's views, presently explained, regarding the enemy's intentions, the French had dispatched a number of their divisions to be held in reserve in rear of the British right and to strengthen the Flanders front.

There remained available for operations on the British front forty-five British infantry divisions, most of which were below establishment. Fully three-fourths of them had been heavily engaged in one or other of the enemy's offensives, if not in both. All were urgently in need of rest; they contained a large number of young, partially trained and totally inexperienced recruits, and subordinate commanders had had little or no opportunity to become acquainted with their men.

#### (2) *The Position of our Allies.*

The French, though as yet they had been less heavily engaged than ourselves, had none the less been obliged to employ a substantial proportion of their reserves in the fighting south of the Somme and north of the Lys.

The American Army, though rapidly increasing in numbers and efficiency, was not yet ready to take the field in sufficient strength materially to affect the situation. In short, the German attacks, though they had failed to break the Allied line, had stretched the resources of the Allies to the uttermost; while before Amiens and Hazebrouck they had brought the enemy within a short distance of strategic points of great importance. In these circumstances, the possibility of an immediate renewal of the enemy's offensive could not but be viewed with grave anxiety.

#### (3) *The Enemy's Position.*

On the other hand, the enemy had undoubtedly paid heavily for his successes, and had used up a great number of divisions, among them his best and his most highly trained. The reserves which he was known to have had at his disposal at the beginning of the year would suffice, indeed, to make good his losses; but in his case, also, time would be required before the divisions which had suffered most would be fit to undertake a fresh attack against prepared positions.

At the commencement of the period under review the enemy was estimated to possess seventy-five divisions in reserve on the Western Front. It was evident that further German attacks could not long be postponed if the enemy was to achieve a decision before the weight of the American Army was thrown into the scale.

#### (4) *The Enemy's Intentions.*

At this period, early in May, the Allied High Command repeatedly expressed the opinion that the enemy would renew his attack on a large scale on the front Arras-Amiens-Montdidier. The strategic results to be obtained by the capture of Amiens, the separation of the French and British Armies, and an advance towards the sea along the Valley of the Somme were very great, and might well have proved decisive. The enemy's opening offensive had already brought him within a measurable dis-

tance of success in this direction, and had carried his Armies through practically the whole of our organised lines of defence.

Since the conclusion of his attacks on this front in the first week of April, the enemy had had a considerable period of time in which to re-establish communications through the devastated area, and make his preparations for a fresh advance. This period of delay had also afforded us some opportunity, of which full use was being made with all the means and resources in our power, to lay out new trench lines and reconstruct such old systems as already existed. This work, however, was still far from complete, and our defences could not be compared with those which the enemy had already overrun.

#### (5) *The Policy of the British Armies.*

In short, the enemy still possessed a sufficient superiority of force to retain the initiative, and it was known that he would be compelled to act within a comparatively limited time if he were to turn his superiority to account before it passed from him. These were the two main factors which had to be taken into consideration when deciding the policy of the British Armies during the late spring and early summer. The common object of the French and ourselves was to tide over the period which must still elapse until the growth of the American Armies and the arrival of Allied reinforcements placed the opposing forces once more on a footing of equality.

The situation was an anxious one, but it was confidently expected that, if all measures open to us were undertaken promptly and executed with the energy and zeal demanded by the occasion, the enemy's future assaults would be met and overthrown as those had been which he had already made. If the Allies could preserve their front unbroken until August at the latest there was every hope that during the later portion of the year they would be able to regain the initiative, and pass to the offensive in their turn.

The period under review accordingly divides itself naturally into two main sections. During the first, the policy governing the action of the forces under my command was the maintenance of an active defence, whereby our line might be preserved unbroken, while every opportunity was taken to rest and train our sorely-tried Divisions. As the strength and efficiency of our Divisions were restored, minor operations of gradually increasing scope, but with limited objectives, could be carried out with greater frequency. These would serve to keep alive the fighting spirit of the troops, and could be used to effect local improvements in our line, where such improvement was considered necessary either for defence or for attack.

The second period arrived when the swelling list of German casualties and the steady influx of American and Allied reinforcements had produced an equilibrium of strength between the opposing forces. The complete success of the Allied counter-attack on the 18th July near Soissons marked this turning-point in the year's campaign, and commenced the second phase of the Allied operations. Thereafter the initiative lay with the Allies, and the growing superiority of their forces enabled them to roll back the tide of invasion with ever-increasing swiftness. At this point and in this connection I should like to pay my personal tribute to the

foresight and determination of the French Marshal in whose hands the co-ordination of the action of the Allied Armies was placed.

## PART I.

### THE PERIOD OF ACTIVE DEFENCE.

#### (6) *Reorganisation.*

During the period following the breakdown of the German attacks on the Lys the military centre of gravity moved to the south, and, as regards the British front, the months of May, June and July, though full of incident of a minor character, in which the different troops concerned showed great gallantry and skill, can be dealt with comparatively shortly.

At the outset of this period, the most pressing need after that of filling up the gaps in our divisions, was to close the breaches which the German advances had made in our successive defensive systems. This work had been begun, indeed, in the early days of the Somme offensive, but much still remained to be accomplished before our positions could be regarded as reasonably secure.

Further, the depth to which the enemy had penetrated in the Somme and Lys valleys had disrupted important lateral lines of railway, and had created a situation of extreme gravity with regard to the maintenance of communications in Northern France. At Amiens, Béthune and Hazebrouck much-used railway junctions had been brought under the effective fire of the enemy's guns, while the railway centre at St. Pol was threatened. To relieve the situation a comprehensive programme of railway construction was undertaken by us in conjunction with the French, so as to provide three separate routes for North and South traffic, which should be independent of Amiens. This involved extensive doublings and quadruplings of existing railways and the building of new lines for which some 200 miles of broad gauge track was laid during the period April-July.

All these various constructional needs threw an immense amount of work upon the staff of the departments concerned, and called for the employment of great quantities of skilled and unskilled labour. All available resources of men and material were concentrated upon satisfying them, and by the time that the great change in the general military situation had taken place, the essential part had been satisfactorily accomplished. In particular, a complete series of new defensive lines had been built, involving the digging of 5,000 miles of trench.

#### (7) *Minor Operations in May and June.*

While intense activity prevailed behind the lines, our fighting troops were not idle. Full use was made of harassing tactics by all arms, and in the Lys salient in particular the German troops crowded into this exposed area were continually subjected to a most effective system of artillery harassing fire.

The losses suffered by the enemy in the Lys sector and the destruction caused to his artillery and material were very great. Convincing evidence of this was obtained from prisoners' statements and was furnished also by the extensive German graveyards afterwards found in this area, by the condition of the roads, and the litter of all kinds found near them and near battery positions and dumps. These tactics undoubtedly postponed the renewal of

the German offensive on this front until the Allied counter-offensive made it impossible.

The chief centres of infantry activity during this period were on the fronts of the Fourth and Second Armies. Early in May small operations improved our line about Morlancourt. These were followed on the 19th May by an admirably executed operation in which the 2nd Australian Division (Major-General N. M. Smyth) took Ville-sur-Ancre with 400 prisoners. Later, on the 10th June, the same division in a highly successful night attack on a front of about two miles south of Morlancourt, effected a substantial advance, taking over 300 prisoners.

On the Second Army front, Locre Hospice and the small woods south-east of Dickebusch Lake, known as Scottish and Ridge Woods, were the scenes of very lively fighting, in which French forces took part. A successful minor operation by the French on the 20th May resulted in a valuable gain of ground in the neighbourhood of Locre Hospice and the capture of over 500 prisoners, though the Hospice itself was not secured by us till the first week in July. Ridge Wood changed hands several times prior to its final capture with 350 prisoners by the 6th Division (Major-General Sir T. O. Marden) and 33rd Division (Major-General Sir R. J. Pinney) on the 14th July.

A material improvement in our line was also effected by the capture on 3rd June of the small hill known as the Mont de Merris, west of Merris village, with nearly 300 prisoners, by the 1st Australian Division (Major-General Sir H. B. Walker) and troops of the 29th Division (Major-General D. E. Cayley). At other points there was much fighting of a minor character, notably about Aveluy Wood and in the neighbourhood of the Lawe River and Merville.

#### (8) *Operations in July; Hamel Captured.*

Two months of comparative quiet worked a great change in the condition of the British Armies. The drafts sent out from England had largely been absorbed, many of the reinforcements from abroad had already arrived, and the number of our effective infantry divisions had risen from forty-five to fifty-two. In artillery we were stronger than we had ever been.

Though the general situation did not warrant the adoption of a definitely offensive policy, in view of the concentration of the bulk of the enemy's large reserves in Prince Rupprecht's Group of Armies opposite the British front, I now felt strong enough to undertake operations of a somewhat larger scope, which would at once strengthen our position for defence and fit in with future schemes.

The first of these, carried out at the end of June, east of Nieppe Forest, aimed at establishing our main line of resistance farther in advance of the wooded ground, which was constantly being shelled with gas. The assault, launched at six a.m. on the 28th June by the 5th Division (Major-General R. B. Stephens) and 31st Division (Major-General J. Campbell), without preliminary bombardment, took the enemy by surprise and was completely successful; the German defences west of the Plate Becque stream, on a front of 6,000 yards from Pont Tournant to La Becque, being captured, together with some 450 prisoners.

A necessary preliminary to any operation to disengage Amiens was the recapture of our old

positions east of Hamel and Vaire Wood and the clearing of the Villers Bretonneux Plateau. This was accomplished on the 4th July by the Australian Corps (Lieut.-General Sir J. Monash), with the aid of four companies of the 33rd American Division and sixty tanks.

The most striking characteristic of the attack was the close and effective co-operation between Tanks and infantry. Moving up and down behind the barrage, the Tanks either killed the enemy or forced him to take shelter in dug-outs, where he became an easy prey to the infantry. Hamel was taken by envelopment from the flanks and rear, the enemy was driven from Vaire Wood, and at the end of the day our troops had gained all their objectives and over 1,500 prisoners.

Our success at Hamel was followed by a series of admirably executed operations north of the Lys.

On the 11th July troops of the 1st Australian Division gave a striking example of their ascendancy over the German infantry opposite to them. At 11 a.m. on this day, four men went out on patrol near Merris and returned with between thirty and forty prisoners. Other patrols, pushed forward both by the 1st Australian and 31st Divisions, secured in two days no fewer than 223 prisoners and established a number of new posts well in advance of our former line.

Surprise played an important part in the successful attack by which the 9th Division (Major-General H. H. Tudor) took Meteren on the 19th July, with some 350 prisoners. The village stood on high ground close to our line, and its capture provided greater depth to our defence.

For some time prior to this attack gas was discharged, in conjunction with a smoke and high-explosive shell bombardment. When at 7.55 a.m. on the 19th July our infantry advanced behind a barrage of smoke and high explosive the enemy was expecting only a gas discharge, and had in many cases put on gas masks.

The capture of Meteren was followed shortly after midnight on the 28th-29th July by a boldly conceived operation by the 1st Australian Division, which resulted in the capture of Merris, with 187 prisoners.

#### (9) Operations on the French Front.

By the end of July the reconstitution of the British Armies had been completed. The spirit of the men was as high as ever, and the success of their various local operations had had a good effect. I had once more at my command an effective striking force, capable of taking the offensive with every hope of success when the proper moment should arrive.

Meanwhile, events of the utmost and most critical importance had been taking place on the French front.

The British General Staff had always held the opinion that before the resumption of the enemy's main offensive on the Arras-Amiens-Montdidier front the attack on our Northern flank in Flanders would be followed by a similar attack on the southern flank of the Allied Armies. This view had proved correct. Though probably delayed by his unexpectedly extensive commitments in the Lys battle, at the end of May the enemy had developed his plan of operations on the lines which we had foreseen, and had launched a violent surprise attack on the Aisne front. In this attack certain British

divisions which had been sent there to rest became involved from the outset.

#### (10) Operations of the IX. Corps in the Aisne Battle.

At the end of April and early in May the 8th, 21st, 25th and 50th Divisions, subsequently reinforced by the 19th Division, and constituting the IX British Corps, under command of Lieut.-General Sir A. Hamilton-Gordon, had been placed at Marshal Foch's disposal as noted above. These divisions had been dispatched by him to the French Sixth Army, to take the place of certain French divisions concentrated behind Amiens.

Of these divisions, the 19th (Major-General G. D. Jeffreys), 21st (Major-General D. G. M. Campbell), 25th (Major-General Sir E. G. Bainbridge) and 50th Divisions (Major-General H. C. Jackson) had taken part in both the Somme battle and the battle of the Lys. The 8th Division (Major-General W. C. G. Heneker) had been involved south of the Somme in some of the heaviest fighting of the year, and had behaved with distinguished gallantry. All these divisions had but lately been filled up with young drafts, and, despite their high spirit and gallant record, were in no condition to take part in major operations until they had had several weeks' rest. During the first fortnight in May three of these divisions—the 21st 8th and 50th—were put into line on a front of about fifteen miles between Bermicourt and Bouconville, north-west of Reims.

About the 26th May, prisoners taken by the French gave the first definite information regarding the great offensive launched by the enemy on the Aisne front on the morning of the 27th May. This attack, delivered by twenty-eight German divisions supported by Tanks, was directed against the Sixth French Army on a front of about thirty-five miles north-west of Reims. It involved the whole of the IX. British Corps, as well as the French Corps holding the Chemin des Dames on the left of the British sector.

Preceded by an artillery and trench mortar bombardment of great intensity, the German infantry broke into the battle positions of the Allied divisions. The enemy gained a footing on the Chemin des Dames at an early hour, and pressing on in the centre of his attack in overwhelming strength, forced the line of the Aisne on a wide front. By nightfall he had crossed the Vesle west of Fismes, and in the British sector, after very heavy and determined fighting, had compelled the left and centre of the IX. Corps, now reinforced by the 25th Division, to swing back to a position facing west and north-west between the Aisne and the Vesle.

On the 28th May and following days the enemy launched fresh attacks in great force on the whole battle front, pressing back our Allies to west of Soissons and south of Fere en Tardenois. The IX. British Corps, greatly reduced in numbers by severe and incessant fighting, was forced to withdraw across the Vesle, and thence gradually pressed back in a south-easterly direction between the Vesle and the Ardre. During the night of the 28th-29th May the 19th Division was brought up in buses, and put in to fill a gap in the French line across the Ardre Valley, deploying with great skill and steadiness. By the evening of the 30th May, at which date in the centre of his attack the enemy had reached the Marne,

the rate of his advance in the British sector had begun to slacken.

During the next few days, however, fighting was still intense. On the southern and western portions of the battle front the enemy made deep progress, gaining the north bank of the Marne from Dormans to Chateau Thierry and advancing astride the Aisne to the outskirts of the Villers Cotterets Forest, and across the high ground north-east of Attichy. On the eastern flank of the salient created by the enemy's advance the British forces, at this date under command of the French Fifth Army, withdrew gradually to the line Aubilly-Chambrecy-Boujacourt, where they were able to consolidate. Though the enemy's attacks continued persistently for some time longer, and on the 6th June culminated in two determined attempts upon the important position known as the Montagne de Bligny, which commands the valley of the Ardre, all these attacks were most gallantly repulsed, and the enemy's advance definitely stayed.

Throughout this long period of incessant fighting against greatly superior numbers the behaviour of all arms of the British forces engaged was magnificent. What they achieved is best described in the words of the French General under whose orders they came, who wrote of them:—"They have enabled us to establish a barrier against which the hostile waves have beaten and shattered themselves. This none of the French who witnessed it will ever forget."

#### (11) *The Second battle of the Marne.*

While our troops were still engaged in the fighting south-west of Reims a fresh battle had broken out on the 7th June on the French front between Noyon and Montdidier. In this case the enemy did not succeed in effecting a surprise, but the strain thrown upon the French Armies by these two attacks was considerable, and the situation was such that the German Command might reasonably be expected to endeavour to develop it with all the means at their disposal.

While, on the one hand, at the beginning of July it was known that Prince Rupprecht's reserve group of divisions about Douai and Valenciennes were still intact and opposite the British front, on the other hand, for a number of reasons it was believed at French General Headquarters that the Germans were about to attack in strength east and west of Reims. It was apprehended, indeed, that the attack might spread even farther east into the Argonne and might endanger a wide sector of the French position. Marshal Foch accordingly withdrew the whole of the French forces, some eight divisions, from Flanders, and transferred them southwards to the French front. In addition he asked that four British divisions might be moved, two of them to areas south of the Somme and two to positions astride that river, so as to ensure the connection between the French and British Armies about Amiens and to enable him to move four French divisions farther east to his right flank. After carefully weighing the situation, I agreed to this proposal, and immediate orders were given for the movement.

On the 13th July a further request was received from Marshal Foch that these four British divisions might be placed unreservedly at his disposal, and that four other British

divisions might be dispatched to take their places behind the junction of the Allied Armies. This request was also agreed to, and the 15th, 34th, 51st, and 62nd British Divisions, constituting the XXII. Corps, under command of Lieut.-General Sir A. Godley, were accordingly sent down to the French front.

Meanwhile, on the 15th July, the enemy had launched his expected attack east and south-west of Reims, and after making some progress at first and effecting the passage of the Marne, was held by the French, American and Italian forces on those fronts. On the 18th July Marshal Foch launched the great counter-offensive which he had long been preparing on the front between Chateau Thierry and Soissons, supporting this successful stroke by vigorous attacks also on other parts of the German salient. In this fighting the XXII. British Corps speedily became involved.

#### (12) *Operations by the XXII. Corps.*

On the 20th July the 51st and 62nd Divisions of the XXII. Corps, under command of Major-Generals G. T. C. Carter-Campbell and W. P. Braithwaite respectively, attacked in conjunction with the French on the eastern side of the salient south-west of Reims. The sector assigned to the British troops covered a front of 8,000 yards astride the Ardre River, and consisted of an open valley bottom, with steep wooded slopes on either side. Both valley and slopes were studded with villages and hamlets, which were for the most part intact and afforded excellent cover to the enemy.

On this front our troops were engaged for a period of ten days in continuous fighting of a most difficult and trying nature. Throughout this period steady progress was made, in the face of vigorous and determined resistance. Marfaux was taken on the 23rd July, and on the 28th July British troops retook the Montagne de Bligny, which other British troops had defended with so much gallantry and success two months previously. In these operations, throughout which French artillery and Tanks rendered invaluable assistance, the 51st and 62nd Divisions took 1,200 prisoners from seven different German divisions and successfully completed an advance of over four miles.

Meanwhile, on the 23rd July, the 15th and 34th Divisions, under command of Major-Generals H. L. Reed and C. L. Nicholson respectively, attacked on the west side of the salient in the neighbourhood of Berzy-le-Sec and Percy-Tigny, south-west of Soissons. These divisions also had many days of heavy and continuous fighting on different parts of this front until withdrawn during the first days of August, and acquitted themselves very gallantly side by side with their French comrades in arms. Many prisoners were taken by both divisions, and the 15th Division in particular earned distinction in the fierce struggle for Buzancy.

## PART II.

### THE PERIOD OF OFFENSIVE ACTION.

#### (13) *The Situation at the End of July.*

The definite collapse of the ambitious offensive launched by the enemy on the 15th July, and the striking success of the Allied counter-offensive south of the Aisne, effected a complete change in the whole military situation.

The German Army had made its effort and had failed. The period of its maximum strength had been passed, and the bulk of the reserves accumulated during the winter had been used up. On the other hand, the position of the Allies in regard to reserves had greatly improved. The fresh troops made available during the late spring and early summer had been incorporated and trained. The British Army was ready to take the offensive; while the American Army was growing rapidly and had already given convincing proof of the high fighting quality of its soldiers.

At a conference held on the 23rd July, when the success of the attack of the 18th July was well assured, the methods by which the advantage already gained could be extended were discussed in detail. The Allied Commander-in-Chief asked that the British, French and American Armies should each prepare plans for local offensives, to be taken in hand as soon as possible, with certain definite objectives of a limited nature. These objectives on the British front were the disengagement of Amiens and the freeing of the Paris-Amiens Railway by an attack on the Albert-Montdidier front. The rôle of the French and American Armies was to free other strategic railways by operations farther south and east.

In addition to the disengagement of Amiens, the situation on the British front presented strong arguments in favour of certain other schemes, such as the disengagement of Hazebrouck by the recapture of Kemmel Hill, combined with an operation in the direction of La Bassee. If successful, such an operation would have the effect of improving our position at Ypres and Calais. The Lys salient would be reduced and the safety of the Bruay coal mines become less threatened.

These different operations had already been the subject of correspondence between Marshal Foch and myself; as well as of the earnest consideration of the British General Staff. Ultimately, I had come to the conclusion that of the tasks assigned to the British forces the operation east of Amiens should take precedence, as being the most important and the most likely to give large results.

It would depend upon the nature of the success which might be obtained in these different Allied operations whether they could be more fully exploited before winter set in. It was subsequently arranged that attacks would be pressed in a converging direction towards Mezieres by the French and American Armies, while at the same time the British Armies, attacking towards the line St. Quentin-Cambrai, would strike directly at the vital lateral communications running through Maubeuge to Hirson and Mezieres, by which alone the German forces on the Champagne front could be supplied and maintained.

As a secondary result of the advance of the British Armies towards the all-important railway centres about Maubeuge, the group of German Armies in Flanders would find their communications threatened from the south, and any operations which it might be possible for the Allies to undertake in that theatre at a later date would be powerfully assisted thereby. It was obviously of vital importance to the enemy to maintain intact his front opposite St. Quentin and Cambrai, and for this purpose he depended on the great fortified zone known as the Hindenburg Line.

#### (14) *General Scheme of British Operations.*

The brilliant success of the Amiens attack was the prelude to a great series of battles, in which, throughout three months of continuous fighting, the British Armies advanced without a check from one victory to another. The progress of this mighty conflict divides itself into certain stages, which themselves are grouped into two well-defined phases.

(A). During the first part of the struggle the enemy sought to defend himself in the deep belt of prepared positions and successive trench systems which extended from the springtide of the German advance, about Albert and Villers Brétonneux to the Hindenburg Line between St. Quentin and the Scarpe. From these positions, scene of the stubborn battles of the two preceding years, the German Armies were forced back step by step by a succession of methodical attacks which culminated in the breaking through of the Hindenburg Line defences.

(B). Thereafter, during the second period of the struggle our troops were operating in practically open country against an enemy who endeavoured to stand, on such semi-prepared or natural defensive positions as remained to him, for a period long enough to enable him to organise his retreat and avoid overwhelming disaster. The final stages of our operations, therefore, are concerned with the breaking of the enemy's resistance on these lines.

Throughout this latter period, the violence of our assaults and the rapidity of our advance towards the enemy's vital centres of communication about Maubeuge threatened to cut the main avenue of escape for the German forces opposite the French and American Armies. The position of the German Armies in Flanders, themselves unable to withstand the attacks of the Allied forces operating under the King of the Belgians, was equally endangered by our progress behind their left flank. To the south and north of the area in which our victorious Armies were driving forward through his weakening defence, the enemy was compelled to execute hasty withdrawals from wide tracts of territory.

The second phase had already reached its legitimate conclusion when the signing of the Armistice put an end to hostilities. Finally defeated in the great battles of the 1st and 4th November and utterly without reserves, the enemy at that date was falling back without coherent plan in wide-spread disorder and confusion.

#### FIRST PHASE: THE FIGHTING IN ENTRENCHED POSITIONS.

##### THE BATTLE OF AMIENS.

(8th-12th August).

#### (15) *Plan of Operations.*

The plan of the Amiens operation was to strike in an easterly and south-easterly direction, using the Somme River to cover the left flank of our advance, with the object in the first place of gaining the line of the Amiens outer defences between Le Quesnel and Mericourt sur Somme, thereby freeing the main Paris-Amiens Railway. Having gained the Amiens defence line, the attack was to proceed without delay towards Roye, and to include the capture as soon as possible of the important railway junction of Chaulnes,



thereby cutting the communications of the German forces in the Lassigny and Montdidier areas. If all went well, French troops would be in readiness to co-operate by pressing the enemy south-east of Montdidier.

Preliminary instructions to prepare to attack east of Amiens at an early date had been given to the Fourth Army Commander, General Rawlinson, on the 13th July, and on the 28th July the French First Army, under command of General Debeney, was placed by Marshal Foch under my orders for this operation. Further to strengthen my attack, I decided to reinforce the British Fourth Army with the Canadian Corps, and also with the two British divisions which were then held in readiness astride the Somme.

In order to deceive the enemy and to ensure the maximum effect of a surprise attack, elaborate precautions were taken to mislead him as to our intentions and to conceal our real purpose.

Instructions of a detailed character were issued to the formations concerned, calculated to make it appear that a British attack in Flanders was imminent. Canadian battalions were put into line on the Kemmel front, where they were identified by the enemy. Corps headquarters were prepared, and casualty clearing stations were erected in conspicuous positions in this area. Great activity was maintained also by our wireless stations on the First Army front, and arrangements were made to give the impression that a great concentration of Tanks was taking place in the St. Pol area. Training operations, in which infantry and Tanks co-operated, were carried out in this neighbourhood on days on which the enemy's long-distance reconnaissance and photographic machines were likely to be at work behind our lines.

The rumour that the British were about to undertake a large and important operation on the northern front quickly spread. In the course of our subsequent advances convincing evidence was obtained that these different measures had had the desired effect, and that the enemy was momentarily expecting to be attacked in strength in Flanders.

Meanwhile, the final details for the combined British and French attack had been arranged early in August, and the date for the assault fixed for the morning of the 8th. The front held by the Australian Corps on the right of the British line was extended southwards to include the Amiens-Roye road, and the Canadian Corps was moved into position by night behind this front. The assembly of Tanks and of the Cavalry Corps was postponed until the last moment and carried out as secretly as possible.

Partly as the result of successful minor operations of the Allies, and partly in consequence of the change in the general situation, the enemy during the first days of August withdrew from the positions still held by him west of the Avre and Ancre rivers. These movements did not affect our plans, but, on the other hand, a strong local attack launched by the enemy on the 6th August south of Morlancourt led to severe fighting, and undoubtedly rendered the task of the III. Corps more difficult.

#### (16) *The Troops Employed.*

The front of attack of General Rawlinson's

Fourth Army extended for a distance of over eleven miles from just south of the Amiens-Roye road to Morlancourt exclusive. The troops employed were: On the right the Canadian Corps, under command of Lieut.-General Sir A. W. Currie, with the 3rd, 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions in line, and the 4th Canadian Division in close support; in the centre the Australian Corps, under command of Lieut. General Sir J. Monash, with the 2nd and 3rd Australian Divisions in line and the 5th and 4th Australian Divisions in support; on the left, north of the Somme, the III. Corps, under the command of Lieut.-General Sir R. H. K. Butler, with the 58th and 18th Divisions in line and the 12th Division in support.

The attack of the French First Army, under General Debeney, was timed to take place about an hour later than the opening of the British assault, and was delivered on a front of between four and five miles between Moreuil inclusive and the British right. As the Allied troops made progress, the right of the French attack was to be gradually extended southwards until the southern flank of the Allied battle front rested on Braches.

Behind the British front the British Cavalry Corps, consisting of three Cavalry Divisions under command of Lieut.-General Sir C. T. McM. Kavanagh, was concentrated at zero hour east of Amiens. A special mobile force of two motor machine gun brigades and a Canadian cyclist battalion, under command of Brig.-General Brutinel, had orders to exploit success along the lines of the Amiens-Roye road.

#### (17) *The Battle Opened.*

At 4.20 a.m. on the 8th August our massed artillery opened intense fire on the whole front of attack, completely crushing the enemy's batteries, some of which never succeeded in coming into action. Simultaneously British infantry and Tanks advanced to the assault. The enemy was taken completely by surprise, and under cover of a heavy ground mist our first objectives, on the line Demuin, Marcelcave, Cerisy, south of Morlancourt, were gained rapidly.

After a halt of two hours on this line by the leading troops, infantry, cavalry and light Tanks passed through and continued the advance, the different arms working in co-operation in the most admirable manner. At the close of the day's operations our troops had completed an advance of between six and seven miles. The Amiens outer defence line, including the villages of Caix, Harbonnières and Morcourt, had been gained on the whole front of attack, except at Le Quesnel itself. Cavalry and armoured cars were in action well to the east of this line, and before dawn on the 9th August Le Quesnel also had been taken. North of the Somme the enemy was more alert as the result of the recent engagements in this sector, and succeeded by heavy fighting in maintaining himself for the time being in the village of Chipilly.

East of the line of our advance the enemy at nightfall was blowing up dumps in all directions, while his transport and limbers were streaming eastwards towards the Somme, affording excellent targets to our airmen, who made full use of their opportunities. Over 13,000 prisoners, between 300 and 400 guns, and vast quantities of ammunition and stores of all kinds remained in our possession.

The brilliant and predominating part taken by the Canadian and Australian Corps in this battle is worthy of the highest commendation. The skill and determination of these troops proved irresistible, and at all points met with rapid and complete success. The fine performance of the cavalry throughout all stages of the operation also deserves mention. Having completed their assembly behind the battle-front by a series of night marches, on the first day of the attack they advanced 23 miles from their points of concentration, and by the dash and vigour of their action, both on this and subsequent days, rendered most valuable and gallant service. The general success of all arms was made possible by the good staff work of my own staff at General Headquarters, and of the Staffs of the Armies concerned. Under the able and experienced direction of the Fourth Army Commander, General Rawlinson, the preparations for the battle, including detailed artillery arrangements of an admirable nature, were carried out with a thoroughness and completeness which left nothing to chance. Without this excellent staff work neither the rapid concentration of troops, unknown to the enemy, nor the success of our initial assault and its subsequent development could have been accomplished.

Meanwhile, at 5.5 a.m., the attack of the French First Army had been launched successfully, and gained the line Pierrepont, Plessier, Fresnoy, all inclusive, in touch with Brutinel's Force on the Amiens-Roye Road west of Le Quesnoy. Three thousand three hundred and fifty prisoners and many guns were taken by the French forces on this day.

#### (18) *The Advance Continued.*

The sweeping character of this success, which in one day had gained our first objective and disengaged the Paris-Amiens Railway, opened a clear field for the measures of exploitation determined upon to meet such an event.

The attack was continued on the 9th August. After meeting with considerable opposition on the line Beaufort-Vrely-Rosieres-Framerville, the enemy's resistance weakened under the pressure of our troops, and once more rapid progress was made. The 5th Hussars, 1st Cavalry Division (Major-General R. L. Mullens), took Meharicourt at a gallop; the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions (Major-Generals T. T. Pitman and A. E. W. Harman) also passed through our advancing infantry, capturing a number of prisoners and gaining much ground. That night we held Bouchoir, Rouvroy, Morcourt, and Framerville, and were on the western outskirts of Lihons and Proyart.

North of the Somme the III. Corps, including the 12th Division (Major-General H. W. Higginson) and a regiment of the 33rd American Division (Major-General G. Bell) attacked in the late afternoon and gained a line east of Chipilly, Morlancourt and Dernancourt.

During the following days our operations continued successfully in close co-operation with the French. By the evening of the 12th August our infantry had reached the old German Somme defences of 1916, on the general line west of Damery, east of Lihons, east of Proyart, having repulsed with severe loss determined counter-attacks in the neighbour-

hood of Lihons. North of the Somme we were on the western outskirts of Bray-sur-Somme.

Montdidier had fallen to the French two days earlier, and on the whole front from the Oise River to the Roye road at Andechy our Allies had made deep and rapid progress.

On the night of the 12th August, as has been seen, our advance east of Amiens had reached the general line of the old Roye-Chaulnes defences. The derelict battle area which now lay before our troops, seared by old trench lines, pitted with shell holes, and crossed in all directions with tangled belts of wire, the whole covered by the wild vegetation of two years, presented unrivalled opportunities for stubborn machine-gun defence.

Attacks carried out on the 13th August proved the strength of these positions, and showed that the enemy, heavily reinforced, was ready to give battle for them. I therefore determined to break off the battle on this front, and transferred the front of attack from the Fourth Army to the sector north of the Somme, where an attack seemed unexpected by the enemy. My intention was for the Third Army to operate in the direction of Bapaume, so as to turn the line of the old Somme defences from the north. The French First Army now ceased to be under my command.

Meanwhile, south of the Somme, our pressure was to be maintained, so as to take advantage of any weakening on the part of the enemy and encourage in him the belief that we intended to persist in our operations on that front. During the succeeding days, local attacks gave us possession of Damery, Parvillers and Fransart, and made progress also at other points.

#### (19) *The Results of the Battle of Amiens.*

The results of the battle of Amiens may be summarised as follows. Within the space of five days the town of Amiens and the railway centring upon it had been disengaged. Twenty German divisions had been heavily defeated by thirteen British infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, assisted by a regiment of the 33rd American Division and supported by some four hundred tanks. Nearly 22,000 prisoners and over four hundred guns had been taken by us and our line had been pushed forward to a depth of some twelve miles in a vital sector. Further, our deep advance, combined with the attacks of the French Armies on our right, had compelled the enemy to evacuate hurriedly a wide extent of territory to the south of us.

The effect of this victory, following so closely after the Allied victory on the Marne, upon the moral both of the German and British troops was very great. Buoyed up by the hope of immediate and decisive victory, to be followed by an early and favourable peace, constantly assured that the Allied reserves were exhausted, the German soldiery suddenly found themselves attacked on two fronts and thrown back with heavy losses from large and important portions of their earlier gains. The reaction was inevitable and of a deep and lasting character.

On the other hand, our own troops felt that at last their opportunity had come, and that, supported by a superior artillery and numerous tanks, they could now press forward resolutely to reap the reward of their patient, dauntless and successful defence in March and April. This they were eager to do, and as they moved forward during the ensuing months, from one-



success to another, suffering, danger and losses were alike forgotten in their desire to beat the enemy and their confidence that they could do so.

Meanwhile, as a further and immediate result of our successes, the enemy was thrown back definitely upon a defensive policy, and began to straighten out the salients in his line. Between the 14th and 17th August he withdrew from his positions about Serre, and further north indications multiplied of an intention shortly to abandon the salient in the Lys valley. Our patrols were already beginning to push forward on this front, and on the night of the 13th/14th August established posts south and east of Vieux Berquin. On the 18th and 19th August the capture of Outtersteene village and ridge, with some 900 prisoners by the 31st, 29th and 9th Division of the Second Army, hastened the enemy's movements on the Lys.

THE BATTLE OF BAPAUME.  
(21st August—1st September.)

(20) *Scheme of Operations.*

In deciding to extend the attack northwards to the area between the rivers Somme and Scarpe I was influenced by the following considerations.

The enemy did not seem prepared to meet an attack in this direction, and, owing to the success of the Fourth Army, he occupied a salient the left flank of which was already threatened from the south. A further reason for my decision was that the ground north of the Ancre River was not greatly damaged by shellfire, and was suitable for the use of tanks. A successful attack between Albert and Arras in a south-easterly direction would turn the line of the Somme south of Peronne, and gave every promise of producing far-reaching results. It would be a step forward towards the strategic objective St. Quentin-Cambrai.

This attack, moreover, would be rendered easier by the fact that we now held the commanding plateau south of Arras about Bucquoy and Ablainzeville which in the days of the old Somme fighting had lain well behind the enemy's lines. In consequence we were here either astride or to the east of the intricate systems of trench lines which, in 1916, we had no choice but to attack frontally, and enjoyed advantages of observation which at that date had been denied us.

It was arranged that on the morning of the 21st August a limited attack should be launched north of the Ancre to gain the general line of the Arras-Albert Railway, on which it was correctly assumed that the enemy's main line of resistance was sited. The day of the 22nd August would then be used to get troops and guns into position on this front and to bring forward the left of the Fourth Army between the Somme and the Ancre. The principal attack would be delivered on the 23rd August by the Third Army and the divisions of the Fourth Army north of the Somme, the remainder of the Fourth Army assisting by pushing forward south of the river to cover the flank of the main operation. Thereafter, if success attended our efforts, the whole of both Armies were to press forward with the greatest vigour and exploit to the full any advantage we might have gained.

As soon as the progress of the Third Army had forced the enemy to fall back from the Mercatel spur, thereby giving us a secure

southern flank for an assault upon the German positions on Orange Hill and about Monchy le Preux, the moment arrived for the First Army to extend the front of our attack to the north. Using the river Sensee to cover their left, in the same way as the river Somme had been used to cover the left of the Fourth Army in the battle of Amiens, the right of the First Army attacked east of Arras, and by turning from the north the western extremity of the Hindenburg line compelled the enemy to undertake a further retreat. It was calculated correctly that this gradual extension of our front of attack would mislead the enemy as to where the main blow would fall, and would cause him to throw in his reserves piecemeal.

(21) *Opening attacks; Albert.*

At 4.55 a.m. on the 21st August the IVth and Vth Corps of General Sir Julian Byng's Third Army, under command respectively of Lieut.-General Sir G. M. Harper and Lieut.-General Sir J. A. L. Haldane, attacked on a front of about nine miles north of the Ancre, from Miraumont to Moyenneville.

The opening assault was delivered by the divisions then in line—namely, the 42nd, New Zealand, and 37th Divisions of the IVth Corps, and the 2nd and Guards Divisions of the Vth Corps, supported by tanks, and carried the enemy's foremost defences rapidly and without difficulty. The 5th Division and 63rd Division (Major-General C. E. Lawrie) of the IVth Corps, and the 3rd Division (Major-General C. J. Deverell) of the Vth Corps then passed through, and continued the advance. During this stage the thick fog, which at first had favoured us, led to some loss of direction. None the less, after much hard fighting, particularly about Achiet-le-Petit and Logeast Wood, where the enemy counter-attacked vigorously, our troops reached the general line of the railway on practically the whole front, capturing the above-named village and wood, together with Courcelles and Moyenneville, east of which places they crossed the railway.

The 21st Division of the Vth Corps assisted by clearing the north bank of the Ancre about Beaucourt, and as a result of the whole operation the positions we required from which to launch our principal attack were gained successfully, with over 2,000 prisoners.

Early next morning the IIIrd Corps of the Fourth Army, assisted by a small number of tanks, attacked with the 47th, 12th and 18th Divisions, the 3rd Australian Division and the 38th Division co-operating on either flank. By this attack, in which the 18th Division (Major-General R. P. Lee) forced the passage of the River Ancre and captured Albert by a well-executed enveloping movement from the south-east, our line between the Somme and the Ancre was advanced well to the east of the Bray-Albert road. The left of the Fourth Army was brought forward in conformity with the remainder of our line, and over 2,400 prisoners and a few guns were taken by us.

(22) *The Main Attack Launched.*

These preliminary attacks cleared the way for the main operation. This was opened on the 23rd August by a series of strong assaults on practically the whole front of thirty-three miles from our junction with the French north of Lihons to Mercatel, in which neigh-

bourhood the Hindenburg Line from Quéant and Bullecourt joined the old Arras-Vimy defence line of 1916. About 100 tanks were employed by us on different parts of this front, and were of great assistance, particularly in overcoming the enemy's machine gunners. Many of these fought with great determination, continuing to fire until their guns were run over by the tanks.

On the eve of these operations I issued a note of instructions to the forces under my command, in which I drew attention to the favourable change which had taken place in the conditions under which operations were being conducted, and emphasised the necessity for all ranks to act with the utmost boldness and resolution. Wherever the enemy was found to be giving way, there the pressure was to be increased.

To this appeal all ranks and all Services responded during the strenuous fighting of the succeeding weeks with a whole-hearted and untiring devotion, for which no words of mine can adequately express my admiration and my gratitude. Divisions, which in the worst days of the March retreat had proved themselves superior to every hardship, difficulty and danger, once more rose to the occasion with the most magnificent spirit. Over the same ground that had witnessed their stubborn greatness in defence they moved forward to the attack with a persistent vigour and relentless determination which neither the extreme difficulty of the ground, nor the obstinate resistance of the enemy, could diminish or withstand.

At 4.45 a.m. the Australian Corps attacked south of the Somme, employing the 32nd Division (Major-General T. S. Lambert), composed of men of Lancashire, Dorset and Scotland, and the 1st Australian Division (Major-General T. W. Glasgow), and captured Herleville, Chuignolles and Chuignes, with over 2,000 prisoners. The fighting about Chuignolles, on the Australian front, was very heavy, and great numbers of the enemy were killed.

At the same hour the 18th Division and the right brigade of the 38th Division of the IIIrd and Vth Corps recommenced their attacks about Albert, and by a well-executed operation, entailing hard fighting at different points, captured the high ground east of the town known as Tara and Usna Hills. At the same time two companies of the Welsh Regiment, part of the left brigade of the 38th Division, waded the Ancre in the neighbourhood of Hamel, and with great gallantry maintained themselves all day east of the river against constant counter-attacks.

Meanwhile, at different hours during the morning, the other divisions of the V. Corps and the IV. and VI Corps (comprising respectively the 17th and 21st Divisions; the 42nd, New Zealand, 5th and 37th Divisions; and the 2nd, 3rd, Guards, 56th and 52nd Divisions) attacked along the whole front north of Albert, directing the chief weight of their assault upon the sector Miraumont-Boiry Becquerelle.

Our troops met with immediate success. On the right, progress was made by light forces of the 17th and 21st Divisions along the left bank of the Ar-re north of Thiepval, but in this sector no deep advance was attempted during the day.

North of the Ancre, the attack of the VI. Corps was opened at 4 a.m., at which hour the

3rd Division took Gomiecourt with 500 prisoners. During the morning the attack spread along the front of the IV. Corps also. The enemy's main line of resistance was stormed and, penetrating deeply beyond it, our troops captured Bihucourt, Ervillers, Boyelles and Boiry Becquerelle, together with over 5,000 prisoners and a number of guns. Under the continued pressure of our attacks the enemy was becoming disorganised, and showed signs of confusion.

Our troops were now astride the Arras-Bapaume road, and closing down upon the latter town from the north and north-west. The position of the German divisions in the pronounced salient on the Thiepval Ridge was becoming perilous.

At 1 a.m. on the night of the 23rd-24th August the Third and Fourth Armies again attacked, and during the early morning the advance was resumed on the whole front from the Somme to Neuville Vitasse. On the right, the 3rd Australian Division took Bray-sur-Somme, and the 47th Division (Major-General Sir G. T. Goringe), the 12th and 18th Divisions of the III. Corps carried our line forward across the high ground between Bray and La Boisselle. In the neighbourhood of the latter village and at certain other points heavy fighting took place, and a number of prisoners were taken.

On the front of the Third Army, the same divisions which had delivered the attacks on the previous day again moved forward against the beaten enemy and pressed him back rapidly. The German positions on the Thiepval Ridge were carried by a well conceived and admirably executed concentric attack, directed upon the high ground about Pozieres from the south-west and north-west. In this brilliant operation the brigade of the 38th Division, attacking on the right, crossed the Ancre at Albert during the early part of the night, and formed up close to the German lines on a narrow front between the Albert-Pozieres road and the marshes of the Ancre. The left brigade of the same division waded breast deep through the flooded stream opposite Hamel, under heavy fire, and formed up in the actual process of a German counter-attack along the line held by the two companies who had crossed on the previous morning. At the given hour, the brigades of the 38th Division advanced in concert with the other divisions of the V. Corps on their left, and drove the enemy from the high ground about Ovillers and Thiepval. Continuing their advance, the divisions of the V. Corps gained Pozieres, Courcolette and Martinpuich. Miraumont, which for three

days had resisted our attacks, was taken by the 42nd Division (Major-General A. Solly-Flood) with many prisoners, and pressing forward the same division seized Pys. The 5th Division (Major-General J. Ponsonby) having captured Irles, cleared Loupart Wood in co-operation with the New Zealand Division (Major-General Sir A. H. Russell), tanks rendering valuable assistance to our infantry in both localities. New Zealand troops having taken Grevillers, reached Avesnes-les-Bapaume, and assisted also in the capture of Biefvillers by the 37th Division (Major-General H. B. Williams). Strong opposition was encountered on the high ground between Saignies and Mory. Our troops pressed the enemy in these villages closely, and farther north the Guards Division (Major-

General G. P. T. Fielding) gained possession of St. Leger. On the left, troops of the 56th Division (Major-General Sir C. P. A. Hull) had heavy fighting about Croisilles and on the high ground north-west of that village known as Henin Hill. Important progress was made, and on their left the 52nd Division (Major-General J. Hill) took Henin-sur-Cojeul and gained a footing in St. Martin-sur-Cojeul.

Several thousand prisoners, many guns, and great quantities of material of every kind were captured by us on this day.

#### (23) *Bapaume Taken.*

During the next five days our troops followed up their advantage hotly, and in spite of increasing resistance from the German rear-guards, realised a further deep advance. The enemy clung to his positions in the later stages of this period with much tenacity. His infantry delivered many counter-attacks, and the progress of our troops was only won by hard and determined fighting.

During these days the 37th Division cleared Favreuil late in the evening of the 25th August, after much confused fighting. On the same day the 2nd Division captured Sapignies and Behagnies, taking a number of prisoners, and the 62nd Division drove the enemy from Mory.

On the 27th August the 18th Division secured possession of Trones Wood, after an all-day struggle, in the course of which troops of the 2nd Guard Division, fresh from reserve, made strong but unsuccessful counter-attacks. Next day the 12th Division and 58th Division (Major-General F. W. Ramsay) captured Hardecourt and the spur south of it, overcoming strong resistance. Both on the 27th and 28th August the 38th (Welsh) Division (Major-General T. A. Cubitt) was engaged in bitter fighting about Longueval and Delville Wood, and made progress in company with the 17th Division (Major-General P. R. Robertson) attacking towards Flers.

Yielding before the persistent pressure of our attacks, in the early morning of the 29th August the enemy evacuated Bapaume, which was occupied by the New Zealand Division. On the same day the 18th Division entered Combles, while to the north of Bapaume a gallant thrust by the 56th and 57th Divisions penetrated the enemy's positions as far as Riencourt-lez-Cagnicourt. Though our troops were unable at this time to maintain themselves in this village our line was established on the western and northern outskirts of Bullecourt and Hendecourt.

By the night of the 30th August the line of the Fourth and Third Armies north of the Somme ran from Cléry-sur-Somme past the western edge of Marrières Wood to Combles, Lesbœufs, Bancourt, Fremicourt and Vraucourt, and thence to the western outskirts of Ecoust, Bullecourt and Hendecourt. Any further advance would threaten the enemy's line south of Peronne along the east bank of the Somme, to which our progress north of the river had already forced him to retreat.

This latter movement had been commenced on the 26th August, on which date Roye was evacuated by the enemy, and next day had been followed by a general advance on the part of the French and British forces between the Oise and the Somme. By the night of the 29th August, Allied infantry had reached the left bank of the Somme on the whole front from

the neighbourhood of Nesle, occupied by the French on the 28th August, northwards to Peronne. Farther south the French held Noyon.

#### (24) *The Fight for Mont St. Quentin and the Capture of Peronne.*

During these days an increase in hostile artillery fire, and the frequency and strength of the German counter-attacks indicated that our troops were approaching positions on which the enemy intended to stand, at any rate for a period. In the face of this increased resistance, by a brilliant operation commenced on the night of the 30th-31st August, the 2nd Australian Division (Major-General C. Rosenthal) stormed Mont St. Quentin, a most important tactical feature commanding Peronne and the crossings of the Somme at that town. Being prevented by floods and heavy machine-gun fire from crossing the river opposite Mont St. Quentin, the 5th Australian Infantry Brigade was passed across the Somme at Feuillieres, two miles farther west, by means of hastily constructed bridges. By 10.15 p.m. on the 30th August, the brigade had captured the German trenches east of Cléry, and was assembled in them ready for an assault which should turn the German positions from the north-west. At 5 a.m. on the 31st August the assault was launched, and, despite determined opposition, was completely successful. Both in the attack itself and in the course of repeated counter-attacks, delivered with great resolution by strong hostile forces throughout the remainder of the day and the greater part of the following night, fighting was exceptionally severe, and the taking of the position ranks as a most gallant achievement.

In this operation nearly 1,000 prisoners were taken, and great numbers of the enemy were killed. On the 1st September, as a direct consequence of it, Australian troops captured Peronne.

In support of the operation against Mont St. Quentin, on the morning of the 31st August the left of the Fourth Army (the 3rd Australian, 58th, 47th and 18th Divisions) attacked towards Bouchavesnes, Rancourt and Fregicourt, and by successful fighting on this and the following day captured these villages with several hundred prisoners. On the Third Army front also there was hard fighting on both of these days. At the close of it we held Sailly Saillisel, Morval, Beaulencourt and Riencourt-les-Bapaume, and were established on the ridges east of Bancourt, Fremicourt, Vaulx Vraucourt and Longatte. Troops of the XVII. Corps, under command of Lieut.-General Sir C. Fergusson, completed the capture of Bullecourt and Hendecourt, and, following up their advantage, during the night took Riencourt-lez-Cagnicourt with 380 prisoners.

#### (25) *The Results of the Battle of Bapaume.*

The 1st September marks the close of the second stage in the British offensive. Having in the first stage freed Amiens by our brilliant success east of that town, in the second stage the troops of the Third and Fourth Armies, comprising 23 British divisions, by skilful leading, hard fighting and relentless and unremitting pursuit, in ten days had driven 35 German divisions from one side of the old Somme battlefield to the other, thereby turning the line of the River Somme. In so doing they had inflicted upon the enemy the heaviest losses in

killed and wounded, and had taken from him over 34,000 prisoners and 270 guns. For the remarkable success of the battle of Bapaume, the greatest credit is due to the excellence of the staff arrangements of all formations, and to the most able conduct of the operations of the Third Army by its Commander, General Byng.

In the obstinate fighting of the past few days the enemy had been pressed back to the line of the Somme River and the high ground about Rocquigny and Beugny, where he had shown an intention to stand for a time. Thereafter, his probable plan was to retire slowly, when forced to do so, from one intermediary position to another; until he could shelter his battered divisions behind the Hindenburg defences. The line of the Tortille River and the high Nurlu Plateau offered opportunities for an ordered withdrawal of this nature; which would allow him to secure his artillery as well as much of the material in his forward dumps.

On the other hand, the disorganisation which had been caused by our attacks on the 8th and 21st August had increased under the pressure of our advance, and had been accompanied by a steady deterioration in the moral of his troops. Garrisons left as rearguards to hold up our advance at important points had surrendered as soon as they found themselves threatened with isolation. The urgent needs of the moment, the wide extent of front attacked, and consequent uncertainty as to where the next blow would fall, and the extent of his losses had forced the enemy to throw in his reserve piecemeal as they arrived on the battle front. On many occasions in the course of the fighting elements of the same German division had been identified on widely separated parts of the battle front.

In such circumstances, a sudden and successful blow, of weight sufficient to break through the northern hinge of the defences to which it was his design to fall back, might produce results of great importance. At this date, as will be seen from the events described in para. 27, our troops were already in position to deliver such a stroke.

#### (26) *The Withdrawal from the Lys Salient.*

Meanwhile, during the process of the great events briefly recorded above and in immediate consequence of them, other events of different but scarcely less importance were taking place on the northern portion of our front.

The exhaustion of the enemy's reserves resulting from the Allied attacks made the shortening of the German line imperative. The obvious sector in which to effect such a shortening was the Lys front. The enemy had only maintained himself in the Lys salient under the constant fire of our guns at the expense of heavy casualties, not only to his infantry in line, but to his artillery and troops in back areas. With the abandonment of his projected offensive against the Channel Ports all reason had gone for remaining in so costly a salient, while the threat, carefully maintained by us, of a British attack provided an additional reason for withdrawing.

Accordingly, from about the 26th July the enemy had been actively employed in removing the ammunition and stores accumulated for his offensive, and as early as the 5th August he had begun to effect local withdrawals on the southern flank of the salient.

The development of our own and the French offensives hastened this movement, although

immense quantities of ammunition still remained untouched. On the 18th August our patrols, whose activity had been constant, were able to make a considerable advance opposite Merville. Next day Merville itself was taken, and our line advanced on the whole front from the Lawe River to the Plate Becque.

During the following days, various other small gains of ground were made by us on the southern and western faces of the salient, but on the northern face the enemy as yet showed no signs of withdrawal, the various local operations carried out by us meeting with strong resistance. On the night of the 29th/30th August, however, impelled alike by the pressure exerted without remission by our troops on the spot and by the urgency of events elsewhere, the enemy commenced an extensive retirement on the whole of the Lys front.

In the early morning of the 30th August our troops found Bailleul unoccupied, and by the evening of that day our advanced detachments had reached the general line Lacouture, Lestrem, Noote Boom, East of Bailleul.

Thereafter, the enemy's withdrawal continued rapidly. At certain points, indeed, his rearguards offered vigorous resistance, notably about Neuve Eglise and Hill 63, captured with a number of prisoners by the 36th and 29th Divisions; but by the evening of the 6th September the Lys salient had disappeared. Kemmel Hill was once more in our hands, and our troops had reached the general line Givenchy, Neuve Chapelle, Nieppe, Ploegsteert, Voormezele.

#### THE BATTLE OF THE SCARPE.

(26th August—3rd September.)

##### (27) *The Retaking of Monchy-le-Preux.*

By the 25th August our advance had formed a salient of the German positions opposite Arras, and the proper moment had therefore come for the third stage of our operations, in which the First Army should extend the flank of our attack to the North. By driving Eastwards from Arras, covered on the left by the Rivers Scarpe and Sensee, the First Army would endeavour to turn the enemy's positions on the Somme battlefield, and cut his system of railway communications which ran south-westwards across their front.

At 3 a.m. on the 26th August, the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir A. W. Currie commanding, on the right of General Horne's First Army, attacked the German positions astride the Scarpe River with the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions (commanded by Major-Generals Sir H. E. Burstall and L. J. Lipsett) and the 51st Division. This attack, delivered on a front of about 5½ miles and closely supported by the left of the Third Army, was completely successful. By noon we had taken Wancourt and Guemappe, and had stormed the hill and village of Monchy-le-Preux. This latter position was one of great natural strength, well organised for defence, and commanded observation of much importance. Many prisoners were taken, and later in the day substantial progress was made to the East of these three villages, a strong counter-attack East of Monchy being successfully repulsed. North of the Scarpe the 51st Division pushed forward their line towards Roeux, so as to secure an easily defensible base of departure for this advance, and by a successful attack during the evening captured Greenland Hill.

Their opening success was followed up by the troops of the First Army with the greatest energy, and on the following day Cherisy, Vis-en-Artois, the Bois du Sart, Roeux and Gavrelle were taken. By the end of the month they had gained the high ground East of Cherisy and Haucourt, had captured Eterpigny, and cleared the area between the Sensee and Scarpe rivers West of the Trinquis Brook. North of the Scarpe, Plouvain was held by us. Our progress brought our troops to within assaulting distance of the powerful trench system running from the Hindenburg line at Queant to the Lens defences about Drocourt, the breaking of which would turn the whole of the enemy's organised positions on a wide front southwards.

(28) *The Storming of the Drocourt-Queant Line.*

On the 2nd September the Drocourt-Queant Line was broken, the maze of trenches at the junction of that line and the Hindenburg System was stormed and the enemy was thrown into precipitate retreat on the whole front to the South of it. This gallant feat of arms was carried out by the Canadian Corps of the First Army, employing the 1st and 4th Canadian Divisions and the 4th English Division, and the XVII. Corps of the Third Army, employing the 52nd, 57th and 63rd Divisions.

The assault of the Canadians was launched at 5 a.m. on a front of about 4½ miles South of the Trinquis Brook, our infantry being supported by 40 tanks of the 3rd Tank Brigade and assisted by a mobile force of motor machine gun units, Canadian Cavalry and armoured cars. The attack was a complete success, and by noon the whole of the elaborate system of wire, trenches and strong points constituting the Drocourt-Queant Line on the front of our advance was in our hands.

On the right the attack of the XVII. Corps, launched at the same hour by the 52nd and 57th Divisions, directed its main force on the triangle of fortifications marking the junction of the Hindenburg and Drocourt-Queant lines North-west of the village of Queant. Pressed with equal vigour it met with success equally complete. There was stern fighting in the network of trenches both North and South of Queant, in which neighbourhood the 52nd (Lowland) Division performed distinguished service and by the progress they made greatly assisted our advance farther North. Early in the afternoon our troops had cleared the triangle, and the 63rd Division (Major-General C. A. Blacklock) had passed through to exploit the success thus gained.

During the afternoon our further progress met with considerable resistance from machine-gun nests sited in woods and villages and on the reverse slopes of the Dury Ridge. There was hard fighting until dusk, especially on the front of the 63rd Division and of the 4th Division (Major-General L. J. Lipsett). By nightfall this opposition had been overcome, the 63rd Division had reached the railway east of Queant, and the 57th Division, swinging to the right, was threatening that village and Pronville from the north. Our troops had pushed forward to a depth of over three miles along the Arras-Cambrai road, and had reached the outskirts of Buissy. Cagnicourt, Villers-les-Cagnicourt and Dury were in our

hands. During the day 8,000 prisoners had been taken and many guns.

Troops of the Third and Fourth Armies prolonged the line of attack as far south as Peronne. At all points important progress was made, though fighting was severe.

In the battle of the Scarpe, as in the battles of Amiens and Bapaume and the victories that followed them, staff work of a high order played an important part in our success. The greatest credit is due to the First Army Commander, General Horne, and his staff for the excellence of their arrangements.

(29) *The Enemy in Retreat.*

The result of the battles of Amiens, Bapaume and the Scarpe now declared itself.

During the night of the 2nd/3rd September the enemy fell back rapidly on the whole front of the Third Army and the right of the First Army. By the end of the day he had taken up positions along the general line of the Canal du Nord from Peronne to Ytres and thence east of Hermies, Inchy-en-Artois and Ecourt St. Quentin to the Sensee east of Lecluse. On the following day he commenced to withdraw also from the east bank of the Somme south of Peronne, and by the night of the 8th September was holding the general line Vermand, Epehy, Havrincourt, and thence along the east bank of the Canal du Nord.

The withdrawal was continued on the front of the French forces on our right. On the 6th September French troops occupied Ham and Chauny, and by 8th September had reached the line of the Crozat Canal.

Throughout this hasty retreat our troops followed up the enemy closely. Many of his rear-guards were cut off and taken prisoner; on numerous occasions our forward guns did great execution among his retiring columns, while our airmen took full advantage of the remarkable targets offered them. Great quantities of material and many guns fell into our hands.

In the battle of the Scarpe itself, in which ten British divisions attacked and overthrew thirteen German divisions, thereby giving the signal for this general retreat, our total captures amounted to over 16,000 prisoners and about 200 guns.

(30) *The Battle of Havrincourt and Epehy. 12th-18th September.*

North of Havrincourt, the Canal du Nord, behind which the enemy had taken shelter, with the open slopes leading down to it swept by the fire of the German positions on the east bank, could scarcely be taken except by a carefully organised attack.

From the neighbourhood of Havrincourt, southwards, the enemy's main line of resistance was the well-known Hindenburg Line, which, after passing through that village, ran south-east across the Beaucamp, La Vacquerie and Bonavis Ridges to the Scheldt Canal at Bantouzele, whence it followed the line of the canal to St. Quentin. In front of this trench system strong German forces held formidable positions about Havrincourt and Epehy, which had to be taken before a final attack on the Hindenburg Line could be undertaken. By successful operations carried out during the second and third weeks of September these different defences were secured and our line advanced to within assaulting distance of the enemy's main line of resistance.

On the 12th September the IV and VI Corps of the Third Army attacked on a front of about five miles in the Havrincourt sector, employing troops of the New Zealand, 37th, 62nd and 2nd Divisions. The villages of Trescault and Havrincourt were taken by the 37th and 62nd Divisions respectively, and positions were secured which were of considerable importance in view of future operations.

On the right of the British front the IX and Australian Corps continued to push forward with light forces. By the evening of the 17th September, as the result of skilful manoeuvring and well-executed local attacks, they had captured Holnon village and wood and Maissemy, and were closely approaching Le Verguier and Templeux-le-Guerard.

Next day, at 7 a.m., on the 18th September, the Fourth and Third Armies attacked in heavy rain on a front of about seventeen miles from Holnon to Gouzeaucourt, the First French Army co-operating south of Holnon. A small number of Tanks accompanied our infantry, and were of great assistance.

In this operation, our troops penetrated to a depth of three miles through the deep, continuous and well-organised defensive belt formed by the old British and German lines. On practically the whole front our objectives were gained successfully, the 1st, 17th, 21st and 74th Divisions (Major-General E. S. Girdwood commanding the 74th Division), and the 1st and 4th Australian Divisions (the latter commanded by Major-General E. Sinclair-Maclagan) distinguishing themselves by the vigour and success of their attack. On the extreme right and in the left centre about Epehy the enemy's resistance was very determined, and in these sectors troops of the 6th, 12th, 18th and 58th Divisions had severe fighting. Before nightfall, however, the last centres of resistance in Epehy were reduced, and both in this area and on our right about Gricourt local actions during the succeeding days secured for us the remainder of the positions required for an attack on the main Hindenburg defences.

At the close of these operations, in which fifteen British Divisions defeated twenty German Divisions and completed the fourth stage of our offensive, we had captured nearly 12,000 prisoners and 100 guns.

### (31) *The Development of the Allied Plan.*

The details of the strategic plan outlined in paragraph 13 upon which future operations should be based were the subject of careful discussion between Marshal Foch and myself. Preparations were already far advanced for the successful attack by which, on the 12th September, the First American Army, assisted by certain French divisions, drove the enemy from the St. Mihiel salient and inflicted heavy losses upon him in prisoners and guns. Ultimately, it was decided that as soon as possible after this attack four convergent and simultaneous offensives should be launched by the Allies as follows:—

By the Americans West of the Meuse in the direction of Mezieres;

By the French West of Argonne in close co-operation with the American attack and with the same general objectives;

By the British on the St. Quentin-Cambrai front in the general direction of Maubeuge;

By Belgian and Allied forces in Flanders in the direction of Ghent.

By these attacks, it was expected, as already indicated, that the important German forces

opposite the French and Americans would be pressed back upon the difficult country of the Ardennes, while the British thrust struck at their principal lines of communication. In Flanders, it was intended to take advantage of the weakening of the German forces on this front to clear the Belgian coast by a surprise attack. Success in any one of these offensives might compel the enemy to withdraw to the line of the Meuse.

### (32) *The Role of the British Armies.*

The results to be obtained from these different attacks depended in a peculiarly large degree upon the British attack in the centre. It was here that the enemy's defences were most highly organised. If these were broken, the threat directed at his vital systems of lateral communication would of necessity react upon his defence elsewhere.

On the other hand, the long period of sustained offensive action through which the British Armies had already passed had made large demands both upon the troops themselves and upon my available reserves. Throughout our attacks from the 8th August onwards, our losses in proportion to the results achieved and the numbers of prisoners taken had been consistently and remarkably small. In the aggregate, however, they were considerable, and in the face of them an attack upon so formidably organised a position as that which now confronted us could not be lightly undertaken. Moreover, the political effects of an unsuccessful attack upon a position so well known as the Hindenburg line would be large, and would go far to revive the declining moral not only of the German Army but of the German people.

These different considerations were present to my mind. The probable results of a costly failure, or, indeed, of anything short of a decided success, in any attempt upon the main defences of the Hindenburg line were obvious; but I was convinced that the British attack was the essential part of the general scheme, and that the moment was favourable.

Accordingly, I decided to proceed with the attack, and all preparatory measures, including the preliminary operations already recounted, were carried out as rapidly and as thoroughly as possible.

### (33) *The Hindenburg Line.*

Between St. Quentin and the village of Bantouzelle the principal defences of the Hindenburg system lie sometimes to the west, but more generally to the east of the line of the Scheldt Canal.

The canal itself does not appear to have been organised as the enemy's main line of resistance, but rather as an integral part of a deep defensive system, the outstanding characteristic of which was the skill with which it was sited so as to deny us effective artillery positions from which to attack it. The chief rôle of the canal was that of affording cover to resting troops and to the garrisons of the main defensive trench lines during a bombardment. To this end the canal lent itself admirably, and the fullest use was made by the enemy of its possibilities.

The general configuration of the ground through which this sector of the canal runs produces deep cuttings of a depth in places of some sixty feet, while between Bellicourt and the neighbourhood of Vendhuille the canal passes through a tunnel for a distance of 6,000



yards. In the sides of the cuttings the enemy had constructed numerous tunnelled dug-outs and concrete shelters. Along the top edge of them he had concealed well sited concrete or armoured machine-gun emplacements. The tunnel itself was used to provide living accommodation for troops, and was connected by shafts with the trenches above. South of Bellicourt the canal cutting gradually becomes shallow, till at Bellenglise the canal lies almost at ground level. South of Bellenglise the canal is dry.

On the western side of the canal south of Bellicourt two thoroughly organised and extremely heavily wired lines of continuous trench run roughly parallel to the canal, at average distances from it of 2,000 and 1,000 yards respectively. Except in the tunnel sector the double line of trenches known as the Hindenburg line proper lies immediately east of the canal, and is linked up by numerous communication trenches with the trench lines west of it.

Besides these main features, numerous other trench lines, switch trenches and communication trenches, for the most part heavily wired, had been constructed at various points to meet local weaknesses or take advantage of local command of fire. At a distance of about 4,000 yards behind the most easterly of these trench lines lies a second double row of trenches known as the Beurevoir-Fonsomme line, very thoroughly wired and holding numerous concrete shelters and machine-gun emplacements. The whole series of defences, with the numerous defended villages contained in it formed a belt of country varying from 7,000 to 10,000 yards in depth, organised by the employment of every available means into a most powerful system, well meriting the great reputation attached to it.

#### (34) *The Battle of Cambrai and the Hindenburg Line.*

(27th September-5th October.)

The battle of Cambrai, which on the 5th October culminated in the capture of the last remaining sectors of the Hindenburg line, was commenced by the First and Third Armies.

Between the neighbourhood of St. Quentin and the Scheldt the Fourth, Third and First Armies in the order named occupied on the evening of the 26th September a line running from the village of Selency (west of St. Quentin) to Gricourt and Pontruët and thence east of Villeret and Lempire to Villers Guislain and Gouzeaucourt, both exclusive. Thereafter the line continued northwards to Havrincourt and Mœuvres and thence along the west side of the Canal du Nord to the floods of the Sensee at Ecourt St. Quentin.

On the First and Third Army fronts strong positions covering the approaches to Cambrai between the Nord and Scheldt canals, including the section of the Hindenburg line itself north of Gouzeaucourt, were still in the enemy's possession. His trenches in this sector faced south-west, and it was desirable that they should be taken in the early stages of the operation, so as to render it easier for the artillery of the Fourth Army to get into position. On the Fourth Army front, where the heaviest blow was to fall, the exceptional strength of the enemy's position made a prolonged bombardment necessary. I therefore decided that a very heavy bombardment, opened during the

night of the 26th/27th September along the whole front of all three armies, should be followed on the morning of the 27th September by an attack delivered only by the First and Third Armies. In this way the enemy might be deceived as to the main point of attack, the First and Third Armies would be enabled to get nearer to their final objective, and the task of the Fourth Army artillery would be simplified.

#### (35) *The Battle Opened.*

On the morning of the 26th September French and American forces attacked on both sides of the Argonne, between the Meuse and the Suipe rivers.

At 5.20 a.m. on the 27th September the Third and First British Armies attacked with the IV., VI., XVII. and Canadian Corps in the direction of Cambrai on a front of about 13 miles from Gouzeaucourt to the neighbourhood of Sauchy Lestree. The success of the northern part of the attack depended upon the ability of our troops to debouch from the neighbourhood of Mœuvres, and to secure the crossings of the Canal du Nord in that locality. The northern portion of the Canal was too formidable an obstacle to be crossed in the face of the enemy. It was therefore necessary for the attacking divisions to force a passage on a comparatively narrow front about Mœuvres, and thereafter turn the line of the Canal farther north by a divergent attack developed fanwise from the point of crossing. This difficult manœuvre was carried out successfully, and on the whole front of attack our infantry, assisted by some sixty-five tanks, broke deeply into the enemy's position.

The attack proceeded according to plan from the commencement. On the right strong resistance was encountered at Beaucamp. Several strong counter-attacks were made during the day in this neighbourhood, but in spite of them troops of the 5th and 42nd Divisions successfully established the right flank of our attack between Beaucamp and Ribecourt. The 3rd Division moved forward with the Guards, forcing the crossings of the Canal in face of heavy fire from machine guns and forward field guns, and captured Ribecourt and Flesquieres. The Guards Division (Major-General T. G. Matheson) took Orival Wood and reached the neighbourhood of Premy Chapel, where the 2nd Division (Major-General C. E. Pereira) took up the advance.

In the centre the 52nd Division (Major-General F. J. Marshall), passing its troops across the Canal by bridgeheads previously established by the 57th Division, on the opening of the assault carried the German trench lines east of the Canal and gained the high ground overlooking Graincourt. On their left the 63rd Division and the 4th and 1st Canadian Divisions (under command of Major-Generals Sir D. Watson and A. C. MacDonell) moved under cover of darkness down the west bank of the Canal between Mœuvres and Sains-lez-Marquion. In the half light of dawn these three divisions stormed the line of the Canal itself, and advanced on Graincourt, Anneux, Bournon and the slopes to the north of the latter village.

As soon as the line of the Canal had been secured our engineer troops commenced the construction of bridges, completing their task with remarkable speed and working with great

gallantry under the fire of the German guns. Greatly assisted by their efforts our advance continued. Obstinate resistance was met with at Graincourt, and it was not until late in the day that the village was finally surrounded and captured by the 63rd Division. The 57th Division (Major-General R. W. R. Barnes) meanwhile had passed through and carried the line forward east of Anneux to Fontaine-Notre-Dame. Bourlon had been carried by the 4th Canadian Division, and the 3rd Canadian Division (Major-General F. O. W. Loomis) had passed through at Bourlon Wood, which was wholly in our possession.

On the left the 1st Canadian Division, having seized Sains-lez-Marquion early in the attack, advanced with the 11th Division (Major-General H. R. Davies) and took Haynecourt, while the latter division captured Epinoy and Oisy-le-Verger. On the extreme left the 56th Division of the XXII. Corps crossed the Canal and having cleared Sauchy Lestree and Sauchy Cauchy, moved northwards towards Palluel.

At the end of the day our troops had reached the general line Beaucamp-Ribecourt-Fontaine-Notre-Dame-east of Haynecourt-Epinoy-Oisy-le-Verger, and had taken over 10,000 prisoners and 200 guns.

Next day the advance on this front was continued, and Gouzeaucourt, Marcoing, Noyelles-sur-l'Escaut, Fontaine-Notre-Dame, Saily and Palluel were taken. At Marcoing our troops established themselves on the east bank of the Scheldt Canal and on the northern flank entered Aubencheul-au-Bac.

### (36) *The Hindenburg Line Broken.*

The heavy and continuous bombardment opened on the morning of the 27th September, had been maintained by the Fourth Army along its whole front without intermission for two days. The intensity of our fire drove the enemy's garrisons to take refuge in their deep dugouts and tunnels, and made it impossible for his carrying parties to bring up food and ammunition.

At 5.50 a.m. on the 29th September, under an intense artillery barrage, General Rawlinson's Fourth Army attacked on a front of 12 miles, between Holnon and Vendhuille, with the IX., II. American (General G. W. Read commanding) and III. Corps, a strong force of tanks, manned by British and American crews, accompanying the infantry. On the right of the Fourth Army the French First Army continued the line of attack in the St. Quentin sector. On the left the V. and IV. Corps of the Third Army had attacked at an earlier hour between Vendhuille and Marcoing, and had heavy fighting about Villers Guislain, Gonnellieu and Welsh Ridge.

On the Fourth Army front, the 46th Division (Major-General G. F. Boyd) greatly distinguished itself in the capture of Bellenglise. The village is situated in the angle of the Scheldt Canal, which, after running in a southerly direction from Bellicourt, here bends sharply to the east towards the Le Tronquoy Tunnel. Equipped with lifebelts, and carrying mats and rafts, the 46th Division stormed the western arm of the canal at Bellenglise and to the north of it, some crossing the canal on footbridges which the enemy was given no time to destroy, others dropping down the sheer sides of the canal wall, and, having swum or waded

to the far side, climbing up the farther wall to the German trench lines on the eastern bank. Having captured these trenches, the attacking troops swung to the right and took from flank and rear the German defences along the eastern arm of the canal and on the high ground south of the canal, capturing many prisoners and German batteries in action before the enemy had had time to realise the new direction of the attack. So thorough and complete was the organisation for this attack, and so gallantly, rapidly and well was it executed by the troops, that this one division took on this day over 4,000 prisoners and 70 guns.

On the remainder of the front, also, our attack met with remarkable success. South of Bellenglise, the 1st Division (Major-General E. P. Strickland), with the 6th Division covering their flank, crossed the ridge north-west of Thorigny and reached the west end of the Le Tronquoy Tunnel. Here they gained touch with the 32nd Division, who had passed through the 46th Division and taken Lehau-court and Magny la Fosse. North of Bellenglise, the 30th American Division (Major-General E. M. Lewis) having broken through the deep defences of the Hindenburg Line, stormed Bellicourt and seized Nauroy. On their left the 27th American Division (Major-General J. F. O'Ryan) met with very heavy enfilade machine-gun fire, but pressed on with great gallantry as far as Bony, where a bitter struggle took place for the possession of the village.

Fighting on the whole front of the II. American Corps was severe, and in Bellicourt, Nauroy, Gillemont Farm, and at a number of other points amid the intricate defences of the Hindenburg line, strong bodies of the enemy held out with great obstinacy for many hours. These points of resistance were gradually overcome, either by the support troops of the American divisions or by the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions (Major-Generals Sir J. J. T. Hobbs and J. Gellibrand), which, moving up close behind the American troops, were soon heavily engaged. On the left of the attack the 12th and 18th Divisions cleared the slopes above Vendhuille.

Meanwhile, the Third Army captured Masnieres and secured the crossings of the Scheldt Canal between that village and the outskirts of Cambrai, while the Canadian Corps made progress north-west of that town, taking St. Olle and Sancourt.

For the next two days our attacks continued on all fronts. On the 30th September the gap in the Hindenburg Line was enlarged by the capture of Thorigny and Le Tronquoy by the 1st and 32nd Divisions, thus securing possession of the Le Tronquoy Tunnel. On this day the enemy abandoned Villers Guislain and Gonnellieu, being threatened with envelopment, and withdrew behind the Scheldt Canal.

Next day, the IX. and Australian Corps attacked in conjunction with the French First Army, who occupied St. Quentin. Levergies was taken by the 32nd Division and Australian troops captured Joncourt, Estrees and Bony, establishing our line well to the north and east of the latter village.

In the Cambrai sector, the New Zealand and 3rd Divisions took Crevecœur and Rumilly, while north of Cambrai the Canadian Corps cleared the high ground west of Ramillies and entered Blecourt. The fighting on the Canadian front at this period was particularly

severe, and our troops displayed great courage and determination. The enemy employed large forces, amounting to at least 11 divisions in the space of five days, in his attempt to check our advance, and counter-attacked frequently and in strength.

(37) *Montbrehain and Beaurevoir.*

During the first week of October the Cambrai battle was completed by a series of successful minor operations, in which the breach driven through the Hindenburg Line, and such prepared defences as lay behind it, was widened.

On the 3rd October the Fourth Army attacked between Sequehart and Le Catelet and captured those villages and Ramicourt, together with the Beaurevoir-Fonsomme line on that front. In this operation the 50th Division took Gouy and Le Catelet after heavy and prolonged fighting, in which a number of counter-attacks were beaten off.

In the course of the next two days, other local improvements were effected in our line in this sector, and the villages of Montbrehain and Beaurevoir were captured after hard fighting, in which Tanks did good service. Our advance compelled the enemy to evacuate the high ground about La Terriere, in the bend of the Scheldt Canal between La Catelet and Crevecoeur, with the result that on the 5th October the right of the Third Army was able to cross the Scheldt Canal and occupy the Hindenburg Line east of it, thereby greatly simplifying our arrangements for our next attack.

(38) *Results of Breaking the Hindenburg Line.*

The great and critical assaults in which during these nine days of battle the First, Third and Fourth Armies stormed the line of the Canal du Nord and broke through the Hindenburg Line mark the close of the first phase of the British offensive. The enemy's defence in the last and strongest of his prepared positions had been shattered. The whole of the main Hindenburg defences had passed into our possession, and a wide gap had been driven through such rear trench systems as had existed behind them. The effect of the victory upon the subsequent course of the campaign was decisive. The threat to the enemy's communications was now direct and instant, for nothing but the natural obstacles of a wooded and well-watered countryside lay between our Armies and Maubeuge.

In the fighting of these days, in which thirty British and two American infantry divisions and one British cavalry division were engaged against thirty-nine German divisions, over 36,000 prisoners and 380 guns had been captured. Great as were the material losses the enemy had suffered, the effect of so overwhelming a defeat upon a moral already deteriorated was of even larger importance.

Combined with the events in Flanders presently narrated, the advance we had made opened a new threat to the German positions on the Lys front.

(39) *The Battle in Flanders.*

As indicated above in paragraph 13, the general strategic plan of the Allies contemplated the development of operations on the Flanders front. The details of these operations were settled at a Conference held by the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies at Cassel on the 9th September. The force to be engaged was to be placed under the command of His

Majesty the King of the Belgians, and was to consist of the Belgian Army, some French divisions, and all the artillery and a certain number of divisions of the Second British Army, commanded by General Sir H. Plumer. To the definite plan then laid down I gladly gave my assent.

Accordingly at 5.30 a.m. on the 28th September the XIX. and II. Corps of the Second Army attacked without preliminary bombardment on a front of some 4½ miles south of the Ypres-Zonnebeke road. The 14th Division (Major-General P. C. B. Skinner), 35th Division (Major-General A. H. Marindin), 29th and 9th Divisions delivered the initial assault, being supported in the later stages of the battle by the 41st Division (Major-General Sir S. T. B. Lawford) and the 36th Division (Major-General C. Coffin). On the left of the II. Corps the Belgian Army continued the line of attack as far as Dixmude.

On both the British and Belgian fronts the attack was a brilliant success. The enemy, who was attempting to hold his positions with less than five divisions, was driven rapidly from the whole of the high ground east of Ypres, so fiercely contested during the battles of 1917. By the end of the day the British divisions had passed far beyond the farthest limits of the 1917 battles, and had reached and captured Kortewilde, Zandvoorde, Kruiseecke and Becelaere. On their left Belgian troops had taken Zonnebeke, Poelcapelle and Schaap Baillie, and cleared the enemy from Houlthulst Forest.

South of the main attack, successful minor enterprises by the 31st, 30th (Major-General W. de L. Williams) and 34th British Divisions carried our line forward to St. Yves and the outskirts of Messines. Wytchaete was captured, and after sharp fighting our troops established themselves along the line of the ridge between Wytchaete and the canal north of Hollebeke.

During the succeeding days, despite continuous rain and great difficulties from the scarcity of practicable roads, the British and Belgian forces followed up the defeated enemy with the utmost vigour. On the 29th September our troops drove the German rearguards from Ploegsteert Wood and Messines and captured Terhand and Dadizele. By the evening of the 1st October they had cleared the left bank of the Lys from Comines southwards, while north of that town they were close up to Wervicq, Gheluwe and Ledeghem. On their left the Belgian Army had passed the general line Moorslede—Staden—Dixmude.

In these most successful operations and their subsequent developments the British forces alone captured at light cost over 5,000 prisoners and 100 guns.

(40) *The Withdrawal from Lens and Armentieres.*

Once more the effect of our successes showed itself rapidly.

At the beginning of September the enemy had withdrawn from his outpost positions astride the La Bassee Canal, and the activity of our patrols led to sharp fighting, in which the 16th (Major-General A. B. Ritchie), 55th (Major-General Sir H. S. Jeudwine) and 19th Divisions advanced our line close up to the outskirts of La Bassee. Thenceforward the situation on the Lys front had remained practically unchanged until the 30th September, when the divisions of General Sir W. R. Bird-

wood's Fifth Army made certain small advances south of the Lys. On the *2nd October*, however, the enemy once more began an extensive withdrawal, falling back on the whole front from south of Lens to Armentieres. In the sector south of Lens, indeed, patrols of the 20th Division (Major-General G. G. S. Carey) met with considerable resistance on this day about Acheville and Mericourt, but progress was made. During the next two days the movement continued, under vigorous pressure from our troops. By the evening of the *4th October* north of Lens we had reached the general line Vendin le Vieil—Wavrin—Erquinghem—Houplines, where the increasing strength of the enemy's resistance indicated that he intended to stand at any rate for a time. South of Lens the withdrawal slackened about this date on the general line Fresnoy—Sallaumines—Vendin le Vieil, but shortly afterwards the development of our operations on the St. Quentin—Cambrai front forced upon the enemy a further retreat in this sector.

## SECOND PHASE: THE FIGHTING IN OPEN COUNTRY.

### THE SECOND BATTLE OF LE CATEAU.

(6th—12th October.)

(41) The second and concluding phase of the British offensive now opened, in which the Fourth and Third Armies and the right of the First Army moved forward with their left flank on the canal line which runs from Cambrai to Mons and their right covered by the French First Army. This advance, by the capture of Maubeuge and the disruption of the German main lateral system of communications, forced the enemy to fall back upon the line of the Meuse and realised the strategic plan of the Allied operations.

The fighting which took place during this period, being in effect the development and exploitation of the Hindenburg Line victory, falls into three stages, the breaks between the different battles being due chiefly to the depth of our advances and the difficulties of re-establishing communications.

In the first of these stages, the battle of Le Cateau, certain incomplete defences still held by the enemy were captured, and his troops compelled to evacuate Cambrai and fall back behind the line of the Selle River. In the second stage, the Selle River was forced, and by a development of this operation our front pushed forward to the general line Sambre Canal—west edge of the Mormal Forest—Valenciennes, where we were in position for the final assault upon Maubeuge.

(42) Having completed their arrangements, at 4.30 a.m. and 5.10 a.m. respectively on the *8th October* the Third and Fourth Armies attacked on a front of over 17 miles from Sequehart to south of Cambrai. French troops continued the line of attack on our right as far south as St. Quentin. Farther south, French and American troops attacked on this day east of the Meuse and in Champagne, and made important progress.

On the British battle front our infantry and Tanks penetrated the enemy's positions to a depth of between three and four miles, passing rapidly over the incomplete trench lines above referred to and gaining the open country beyond. Strong at the outset of our attack, during the later stages opposition weakened. Brancourt and Premont were taken by the 30th American Division, while to the north of them

the 66th Division (Major-General H. K. Bethell), attacking beside the 25th Division (Major-General J. R. E. Charles), captured Serain. Villers Outreaux was cleared by the 38th Division with the assistance of Tanks after heavy fighting, and late in the afternoon Malincourt was captured. The New Zealand Division passed through Lesdain and took Esnes, while on the left of the attack, the 3rd, 2nd and 63rd Divisions captured Seranvillers, Forenville and Niergnies after very heavy fighting, in the course of which the enemy counter-attacked with Tanks. On the extreme left the 57th Division made progress in the southern outskirts of Cambrai.

As the result of this attack the enemy's resistance temporarily gave way. His infantry became disorganised and retired steadily eastwards, while our airmen reported that the roads converging on Le Cateau were blocked with troops and transport. Several thousand prisoners and many guns fell into our hands. During the following night the Canadian Corps captured Ramillies and crossed the Scheldt Canal at Pont d'Aire. Canadian patrols entered Cambrai from the north and joined hands with patrols of the 57th Division working through the southern portion of the town. Next morning at 5.20 a.m. the Fourth and Third Armies resumed the attack on the whole front, cavalry assisting in the advance. By nightfall our troops were within two miles of Le Cateau, had captured Bohain, and were attacking Caudry from the south. Cambrai was in our hands, and our troops were three miles to the east of the town.

In this day's fighting cavalry again did valuable and gallant work, hurrying the enemy in his retreat and preventing him from completing the destruction of the railway which runs from St. Quentin to Busigny and Cambrai. When our infantry were held up by heavy machine-gun fire from Cattigny Wood and Clary, a dashing charge by the Fort Garry Horse gained a footing in Cattigny Wood and assisted our infantry to press forward. Farther east, Dragoon Guards and Canadian Cavalry were instrumental in the capture of Honnechy, Reumont and Troisvilles.

On the *10th October* our progress continued, though the enemy's resistance gradually stiffened as our troops approached the line of the river Selle, and attempts made by the cavalry to cross that stream had to be abandoned. That night we had reached the outskirts of Riquerval Wood, and held the west bank of the Selle river thence as far as Viesly, whence our line ran past St. Hilaire and Avesnes, taken by the Guards and 24th Divisions, to the Scheldt at Thun St. Martin.

During these days the French First Army on our right advanced its line east of St. Quentin, clearing the west bank of the Oise-Sambre Canal as far north as Bernot.

### (43) *The Withdrawal from Laon.*

By this advance, in which 20 British infantry, two British cavalry, and one American infantry division routed 24 German divisions and took from them 12,000 prisoners and 250 guns, we gained full possession of the important lateral double line of railway running from St. Quentin through Busigny to Cambrai. During the repair of such portions of it as had been destroyed and the removal of delay action mines left by the enemy, our line was carried forward by local operations. By the *13th October* we had reached the Selle river at all

points south of Haspres, and had established bridgeheads at a number of places.

Meanwhile, on the 7th October, under close pressure from our troops, the enemy had extended the flank of his withdrawal south of Lens, and on that day the 8th Division had captured Biache St. Vaast and Oppy, with some hundreds of prisoners. After the launching of our attack on the 8th October, this movement continued with increased rapidity. By the evening of the 13th October, our troops had reached the western suburbs of Douai, and were close up to the west banks of the Sensee Deviation and Haute Deule Canals on the whole front from Arleux (south of Douai) to Vendin le Vieil.

During this period also our Allies had been pushing forward steadily on both sides of the Argonne. Held by their attacks on his southern flank, while to the north the British offensive was driving forward rapidly behind his right, the enemy was forced to evacuate his positions in the Laon salient. Signs of a widespread German withdrawal were reported on the 11th October, and by the evening of the 13th October Laon was in French hands.

#### (44) *The Advance in Flanders Resumed.*

While these great events were taking place to the south of them, the Allied Forces in Flanders were busily engaged in re-establishing adequate communications in the area of the old Ypres battles. By dint of great exertions, and the most careful organisation of traffic routes, by the end of the second week in October the restoration of the Allied systems of communications was sufficiently far advanced to permit of a resumption of the offensive.

Accordingly, at 5.35 a.m. on the 14th October, the British, Belgian and French forces under command of His Majesty the King of the Belgians, attacked on the whole front between the Lys River at Comines and Dixmude.

The British sector extended for a distance of between 9 and 10 miles from Comines to the hamlet of St. Pieter, on the Menin-Roulers road. The assault was launched by the X., XIX., and II. Corps of General Plumer's Second Army, under command respectively of Lieut.-General R. B. Stephens, Lieut.-General Sir E. E. Watts, and Lieut.-General Sir C. W. Jacob, employing respectively the 30th and 34th Divisions, the 41st and 35th Divisions, and the 36th, 29th and 9th Divisions.

The Allied attack was again attended by complete success. The two southern British Corps advanced their line according to programme to the southern edge of the rising ground overlooking Wervicq, Menin and Wevelghem, in spite of very considerable resistance. Meanwhile, the II. Corps, after heavy fighting, penetrated to a depth of between three and four miles eastwards, capturing Moorseele and making progress beyond it to within a short distance of Gulleghem and Steenbeek. On our left Belgian troops reached Iseghem, French troops surrounded Roulers, while farther north other Belgian divisions took Cortemarck.

During the ensuing days our success was vigorously exploited. By the afternoon of the 16th October we held the North bank of the Lys from Frelinghien to opposite Harlebeke, and had crossed the river at a number of points. To the north of us our Allies also had made striking progress. Before nightfall on the 15th October Thourout was surrounded, and next day

the enemy retired rapidly. Ostend fell on the 17th October, and three days later the northern flank of the Allied line rested on the Dutch frontier.

In these operations and others of a lesser nature carried out on the last day of the month after the withdrawal next mentioned the British forces operating on this battle front captured over 6,000 prisoners and 210 guns.

#### (45) *The Evacuation of Lille.*

Our advance north of the Lys had brought our troops far to the east of the Lille defences on the northern side, while our progress on the Le Cateau front had turned the Lille defences from the south. The German forces between the Sensee and the Lys were once more compelled to withdraw, closely followed by our troops, who constantly drove in their rearguards and took a number of prisoners. The enemy was given no opportunity to complete the removal of his stores and the destruction of roads and bridges, or to evacuate the civil population.

The movement began on the 15th October, when, in spite of considerable opposition, our troops crossed the Haute Deule Canal on a wide front north of Pont-a-Vendin. By the evening of the 17th October the 8th Division of General Sir A. Hunter Weston's VIII. Corps had entered Douai and the 57th and 59th Divisions (Major-General N. M. Smyth) of Lieut.-General Sir R. C. B. Haking's XI. Corps were on the outskirts of Lille. At 5.50 a.m. on the 18th October our troops had encircled Lille, which was clear of the enemy. During the day our line was carried far to the east of these towns and east of Roubaix and Tourcoing, occupied by the 40th and 51st Divisions (Major-General Sir W. E. Feyton commanding 40th Division) of Lieut.-General Sir H. B. de Lisle's XV. Corps. Thereafter our troops pressed forward steadily, until by the evening of the 22nd October they had reached the general line of the Scheldt on the whole front from Valenciennes to the neighbourhood of Avelghem.

### THE BATTLE OF THE SELLE RIVER.

(17th-25th October.)

#### (46) *The Forcing of the River Crossings.*

Meanwhile, communications on the Le Cateau front were improving, and it was possible to recommence operations of a more than local character for the forcing of the Selle positions and the attainment of the general line Sambre et Oise Canal—west edge of the Forêt de Mormal—Valenciennes. This advance would bring the important railway junction at Aulnoye within effective range of our guns.

Our operations were opened on the 17th October by an attack by the Fourth Army on a front of about ten miles from Le Cateau southwards, in conjunction with the French First Army operating west of the Sambre et Oise Canal. The assault launched at 5.20 a.m. was delivered by the IX., II. American and XIII. Corps, employing respectively the 46th, 1st and 6th Divisions, the 30th and 27th American Divisions, and the 50th and 66th Divisions.

The enemy was holding the difficult wooded country east of Bohain and the line of the Selle north of it in great strength, his infantry being well supported by artillery. During the first two days his resistance was obstinate; but the attacking British and American troops made good progress. By the evening of the 19th

October, after much severe fighting, the enemy had been driven across the Sambre et Oise Canal at practically all points south of Catillon, whence our line followed the valley of the Richemont east and north of Le Cateau.

This success was followed at 2 a.m. on the 20th October by an attack upon the line of the Selle river north of Le Cateau. The troops employed were the 38th, 17th, 5th, 42nd, 62nd, Guards and 19th Divisions of the Third Army, and the 4th Division on the right of the First Army in that order from right to left.

On this occasion also the enemy's resistance was serious, and he had been able to erect wire entanglements along the greater part of the line. Our advance was strongly contested at every point, frequent counter-attacks being made. Supported by a number of Tanks which had successfully crossed the river, our infantry, after severe fighting about Neuville, Amerval, Solesmes and Haspres, gained their objectives on the high ground east of the Selle, pushing out patrols as far as the river Harpies. North of Haspres other troops of the First Army continued to make progress on both sides of the Scheldt Canal, reaching the slopes overlooking the left bank of the Ecaillon River and occupying Denain.

(47) The capture of the Selle positions was followed almost immediately by the larger operation for the attainment of the required general line above mentioned running from the Sambre Canal along the edge of the Mormal Forest to the neighbourhood of Valenciennes.

The original front of attack stretched from east of Mazinghien to Maison Bleue, north-east of Haussy, a distance of some fifteen miles. The assault was opened by the Fourth Army at 1.20 a.m. on the 23rd October and was delivered by the IX. and XIII. Corps, employing respectively the 1st and 6th Divisions and the 25th and 18th Divisions. The Third Army again attacked with the V., IV., VI. and XVII. Corps, employing respectively the 33rd and 21st Divisions, the 5th, 42nd, 37th and New Zealand Divisions, the 3rd and 2nd Divisions, and the 19th Division. On the second day the 61st Division of the XVII. Corps and the 4th Division and 51st Division of the XXII. Corps, First Army, extended the line of attack for a further five miles northwards to the Scheldt.

The unfavourable weather of the preceding days had made it difficult to locate the enemy's batteries, and during the earlier stages of the battle hostile artillery fire was heavy. Despite this, and in spite of determined opposition at many points from the German machine-gunners, in two days our infantry and Tanks realised an advance of six miles over difficult country. About many of the woods and villages which lay in the way of our attack there was severe fighting, particularly in the large wood known as the Bois l'Eveque and at Pommereuil, Bousies, Forest and Vendegies-sur-Ecaillon. This latter village held out till the afternoon of the 24th October, when it was taken by an enveloping attack by troops of the 19th Division and 61st Division.

At the end of that day the western outskirts of the Forêt de Mormal had been reached, our troops were within a mile of Le Quesnoy and to the north-west of that town had captured the villages of Ruesnes and Maing. Local operations during the following three days gave us Englefontaine and established our line well to the north and east of the Le Quesnoy—

Valenciennes railway, from the outskirts of Le Quesnoy, past Sepmeries and Artres to Famars.

#### (48) *The Enemy's Position at the End of October.*

By this time the rapid succession of heavy blows dealt by the British forces had had a cumulative effect, both moral and material, upon the German Armies. The difficulty of replacing the enemy's enormous losses in guns, machine-guns and ammunition had increased with every fresh attack, and his reserves of men were exhausted. In the Selle Battle the twenty-four British and two American Divisions engaged had captured a further 20,000 prisoners and 475 guns from the thirty-one German divisions opposed to them, and had advanced to a great depth with certainty and precision. Though troops could still be found to offer resistance to our initial assault, the German infantry and machine-gunners were no longer reliable, and cases were being reported of their retiring without fighting in front of our artillery barrage.

The capitulation of Turkey and Bulgaria and the imminent collapse of Austria—consequent upon Allied successes which the desperate position of her own armies on the western front had rendered her powerless to prevent—had made Germany's military situation ultimately impossible. If her armies were allowed to withdraw undisturbed to shorter lines the struggle might still be protracted over the winter. The British Armies, however, were now in a position to prevent this by a direct attack upon a vital centre, which should anticipate the enemy's withdrawal and force an immediate conclusion:

#### THE BATTLE OF THE SAMBRE

(1st-11th November.)

(49) The principal British attack was to take place at the beginning of November, as soon as possible after the capture of Valenciennes, which I regarded as a necessary preliminary. In view of the likelihood of fresh withdrawals, time was of importance. Accordingly, at 5.15 a.m. on the 1st November, the XVII. Corps of the Third Army and the XXII. and Canadian Corps of the First Army attacked on a front of about six miles south of Valenciennes, and in the course of two days of heavy fighting inflicted a severe defeat on the enemy. During these two days the 61st Division (Major-General F. J. Duncan), 49th Division (Major-General H. J. G. Cameron) and 4th Division (Major-General C. H. T. Lucas) crossed the Rhonelle river, capturing Maresches and Preseau after a stubborn struggle, and established themselves on the high ground two miles to the east of it. On their left the 4th Canadian Division captured Valenciennes and made progress beyond the town.

As a consequence of this defeat the enemy on the 3rd November withdrew on the Le Quesnoy—Valenciennes front and our line was advanced. There were indications that a further withdrawal was contemplated both in the Tournai salient, where the line of the Scheldt was turned by our progress on the battle front, and also in the area to the south of us, where the enemy's positions were equally threatened by our advance. Our principal attack was ready.

(50) The front of the decisive attack delivered by the Fourth, Third and First Armies



on the 4th November extended for a distance of about thirty miles from the Sambre, north of Oisy, to Valenciennes.

The nature of the country across which our advance was to be made was most difficult. In the south the river had to be crossed almost at the outset. In the centre the great Forest of Mormal, though much depleted by German wood-cutting, still presented a formidable obstacle. In the north the fortified town of Le Quesnoy, and several streams which ran parallel to the line of our advance offered frequent opportunities for successful defence. On the other hand our troops had never been so confident of victory or so assured of their own superiority.

After an intense bombardment our troops moved forward to the assault at about dawn, under a most effective artillery barrage, and very soon had penetrated the enemy's positions on the whole battlefield. Throughout the day their pressure was never relaxed, and by the evening they had advanced to a depth of five miles, reaching the general line Fesmy—Landrecies—centre of Forêt de Mormal—Wargnies-le-Grand—five miles east of Valenciennes—Onnaing—Scheldt Canal opposite Thiers.

On the right of the attack the 1st Division of the IX. Corps, under the command of Lt.-General Sir W. P. Braithwaite, starting at 5.45 a.m., captured Catillon, and proceeded to pass troops across the Sambre at this place and at the lock some two miles to the south of it. This difficult operation was accomplished with remarkable rapidity and skill, and by 7.45 a.m. the 1st Battalion Cameron Highlanders and the 1st Battalion Northampton Regiment were east of the river. Bois l'Abbaye, Hautreuve and La Groise were captured in turn, and though held up for a time at Fesmy, our troops took this place also in a renewed attack at 4.0 p.m., subsequently advancing well to the east of it.

The 32nd Division on the left of the IX. Corps met strong resistance all along the river line. By hard fighting they forced a crossing at Ors, and, pushing forward, took Mezieres and Heurtebise, reaching the outskirts of La Folie. Later in the day other troops of this Division, having crossed the river south of Landrecies, moved against La Folie from the north, and the village was captured.

Meanwhile the XIII. Corps, under command of Lieut.-General Sir T. L. N. Morland, had attacked at 6.15 a.m. with the 25th, 50th and 18th Divisions, and quickly overran the enemy's positions, despite strong opposition, which at Preux-au-Bois was maintained until the village was completely surrounded by our infantry and Tanks. Severe fighting took place also about Landrecies, where a battalion of the 1st Guard Reserve Division had been specially detailed to hold the bridgehead. Troops of the 25th Division, having overcome this resistance, crossed the Sambre north and south of Landrecies by means of rafts, and captured the town.

The divisions of the Third Army in the centre of the attack also encountered stiff resistance at first, but when this was overcome made rapid progress. The 38th and 17th Divisions of the V. Corps, under command of Lieut.-General C. D. Shute, pushed far into the Forest of Mormal. Before dawn on the 5th November, the 38th Division had reached the eastern edge of the forest, while the 17th

Division, after sharp fighting about Locquighol, had penetrated a mile to the east of that village.

On the IV. Corps front the 37th and New Zealand Divisions repulsed a counter-attack north of Ghissignies early in the battle with great loss to the enemy. Thereafter the 37th Division took Louvignies and Jolinetz, with over 1,000 prisoners, and during the late afternoon and evening pushed on to the centre of the forest. By 8.0 a.m. the New Zealand Division had already surrounded Le Quesnoy. Without attempting to take the town by direct assault, the New Zealand troops swept past, and far to the east of it, capturing Herbignies by the evening. Meanwhile we had gained a footing on the ramparts surrounding Le Quesnoy, and at 4.0 p.m. the German garrison over 1,000 strong surrendered.

Opposite Orsinval the 62nd Division of the VIth Corps attacked at 5.20 a.m., and as soon as that village had been taken the Guards Division of the same corps attacked on the left of them. Both divisions had hard fighting, but made good progress, capturing Frasnay and Preux-au-Sart, and reaching the western outskirts of Commegnies. On the front of the XVIIth Corps on the left of the Third Army the enemy's resistance was less vigorous, though sharp fighting took place about Wargnies-le-Petit. This village and Wargnies-le-Grand were taken by the 24th Division (Major-General A. C. Daly) during the afternoon, while the 19th Division captured Bry and Eth.

On the front of the First Army the XXIInd Corps and the Canadian Corps advanced against little opposition, except on their right. Here the 11th and 56th Divisions, having crossed the Aunelle River and captured the villages of Le Triez, Sebourg and Sebourquiaux, were counter-attacked on the high ground east of the Aunelle and pressed back slightly. The 4th and 3rd Canadian Divisions on their left reached the outskirts of Rombies, and the eastern side of the marshes north of Valenciennes.

In these operations and their developments twenty British divisions utterly defeated thirty-two German divisions, and captured 19,000 prisoners and more than 450 guns. On our right the French First Army, which had continued the line of attack southwards to the neighbourhood of Guise, kept pace with our advance, taking 5,000 prisoners and a number of guns.

#### (51) *The Return to Mons.*

By this great victory the enemy's resistance was definitely broken. On the night 4th/5th November his troops began to fall back on practically the whole battle front. Throughout the following days, despite continuous rain, which imposed great hardships on our troops, infantry and cavalry pressed forward with scarcely a check, maintaining close touch with the rapidly retreating Germans.

On the 5th November the troops of the Fourth Army realised a further advance of some four miles; penetrating beyond Prisches and Maroilles. On the Third Army front the 5th, 21st, and 33rd Divisions pushed forward well to the east of Mormal Forest, while farther north by the evening we were approaching Bavai. Only on the First Army front was the resistance encountered at all serious. Here, after regaining during the morning the ridge east of the Aunelle, and capturing Roisin,

Meaurain and Angrean, the divisions of the XXIInd Corps were held up for a time in front of Ancre and along the line of the Honnelle River.

Throughout the day the roads packed with the enemy's troops and transport afforded excellent targets to our airmen, who took full advantage of their opportunities, despite the unfavourable weather. Over thirty guns, which bombs and machine-gun fire from the air had forced the enemy to abandon, were captured by a battalion of the 25th Division in the fields near Le Preseau.

On the 6th November considerable opposition was again encountered on the front of the First Army, as well as on the left of the Third Army. Ancre, however, was captured, and the Honnelle River crossed, while Canadian troops took Baisieux and Quievrechain. During the night of the 6th/7th November the enemy's resistance again weakened, and early on the morning of the 7th November the Guards Division entered Bavai. Next day Avesnes fell into our hands, Hautmont was captured, and our troops reached the outskirts of Maubeuge.

Meanwhile to the north of the Mons—Conde Canal our success was bearing fruit. During the night of the 7th/8th November numerous explosions were observed behind the German lines, and on the following morning the VIIIth Corps and Ist Corps (Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Holland) of the First and Fifth Armies were able to move forward, occupying Conde and crossing the Scheldt on a considerable front south of Antoing. Farther north the enemy abandoned his bridgehead at Tournai, and the western portion of the town was occupied by our troops.

On the 9th November the enemy was in general retreat on the whole front of the British Armies. The fortress of Maubeuge was entered by the Guards Division and the 62nd Division (Major-General Sir R. D. Whigham), while the Canadians were approaching Mons. The progress of the Fifth Army was accentuated, and Peruwelz, Antoins and Tournai captured. The Second Army crossed the Scheldt on its whole front and reached the outskirts of Renaix.

Next day, the advance of the five British Armies continued, cavalry and cyclists operating in advance of the infantry. Only in the neighbourhood of Mons was any substantial opposition met with. Here the Canadians advancing towards the town from south and west, and working round it on the north, encountered an organised and tenacious machine-gun defence. Further north our cavalry were on the outskirts of Ath, and our line was far to the east of Tournai. Renaix had been captured and our troops were approaching Grammont.

In the early morning of the 11th November the 3rd Canadian Division captured Mons, the whole of the German defending force being killed or taken prisoners.

#### (52) *The Armistice.*

At 11 a.m. on the 11th November, in accordance with instructions received from the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, hostilities were suspended. At that hour the right of the Fourth Army was east of the Franco-Belgian frontier and thence northwards our troops had reached the general line Sivry—

Erquelines—Boussu—Jurbise—Herghies—Ghislenghien—Lessines—Grammont.

The military situation on the British front on the morning of the 11th November can be stated very shortly. In the fighting since November 1st our troops had broken the enemy's resistance beyond possibility of recovery, and had forced on him a disorderly retreat along the whole front of the British Armies. Thereafter, the enemy was capable neither of accepting nor refusing battle. The utter confusion of his troops, the state of his railways, congested with abandoned trains, the capture of huge quantities of rolling stock and material, all showed that our attack had been decisive. It had been followed on the north by the evacuation of the Tournai salient, and to the south, where the French forces had pushed forward in conjunction with us, by a rapid and costly withdrawal to the line of the Meuse.

The strategic plan of the Allies had been realised with a completeness rarely seen in war. When the armistice was signed by the enemy his defensive powers had already been definitely destroyed. A continuance of hostilities could only have meant disaster to the German Armies, and the armed invasion of Germany.

#### (53) *The Work of the Troops.*

In three months of epic fighting the British Armies in France have brought to a sudden and dramatic end the great wearing-out battle of the past four years.

In our admiration for this outstanding achievement, the long years of patient and heroic struggle by which the strength and spirit of the enemy were gradually broken down cannot be forgotten. The strain of those years was never ceasing, the demands they made upon the best of the Empire's manhood are now known. Yet throughout all those years, and amid the hopes and disappointments they brought with them, the confidence of our troops in final victory never wavered. Their courage and resolution rose superior to every test, their cheerfulness never failing however terrible the conditions in which they lived and fought. By the long road they trod with so much faith and with such devoted and self-sacrificing bravery we have arrived at victory, and to-day they have their reward.

The work begun and persevered in so steadfastly by those brave men has been completed during the present year with a thoroughness to which the event bears witness, and with a gallantry which will live for all time in the history of our country. The annals of war hold record of no more wonderful recovery than that which, three months after the tremendous blows showered upon them on the Somme and on the Lys, saw the undefeated British Armies advancing from victory to victory, driving their erstwhile triumphant enemy back to and far beyond the line from which he started, and finally forcing him to acknowledge unconditional defeat.

The great series of victories won by the British forces between the 8th August and the 11th November is the outstanding feature of the events described in this Despatch. At Amiens and Bapaume, in the breaking of the Drocourt-Queant and Hindenburg systems, before Le Cateau and on the Selle, in Flanders and on the Sambre, the enemy was again and again brought to battle and defeated.

In the decisive contests of this period, the strongest and most vital parts of the enemy's

front were attacked by the British, his lateral communications were cut and his best divisions fought to a standstill. On the different battle fronts 187,000 prisoners and 2,850 guns were captured by us, bringing the total of our prisoners for the present year to over 201,000. Immense numbers of machine guns and trench mortars were taken also, the figures of those actually counted exceeding 29,000 machine guns and some 3,000 trench mortars. These results were achieved by 59 fighting British divisions, which in the course of three months of battle engaged and defeated 99 separate German divisions.

This record furnishes the proof of the skill of our commanders and their staffs, as well as of the fine fighting qualities of the British regimental officer and soldier. It is a proof also of the overwhelmingly decisive part played by the British Armies on the western front in bringing the enemy to his final defeat.

It is an accepted military doctrine that in good defensive positions any given force can hold up an attacking force of considerably greater numbers. This doctrine was proved in the fighting of March and April of this year, when, despite the enormous superiority of force which the enemy was able to concentrate against the right of the British Armies, all his efforts to effect a definite break-through were frustrated by our defence. Yet, as has been seen, when the tide of battle turned and the British Armies advanced to the attack, throughout practically the whole of the long succession of battles which ended in the complete destruction of the German powers of resistance, the attacking British troops were numerically inferior to the German forces they defeated.

It would be impossible to devise a more eloquent testimony to the unequalled spirit and determination of the British soldier, of all ranks and services. We have been accustomed to be proud of the great and noble traditions handed down to us by the soldiers of bygone days. The men who form the Armies of the Empire to-day have created new traditions which are a challenge to the highest records of the past and will be an inspiration to the generations who come after us.

#### *Infantry.*

Despite the enormous development of mechanical invention in every phase of warfare, the place which the infantryman has always held as the main substance and foundation of an army is as secure to-day as in any period of history. The infantryman remains the backbone of defence and the spearhead of the attack. At no time has the reputation of the British infantryman been higher, or his achievement more worthy of his renown. During the past three months, the same infantry divisions have advanced to the attack day after day and week after week with an untiring irresistible ardour which refused to be denied. No praise can be too high for the valour they have shown, no gratitude too deep for the work they have accomplished.

#### *Artillery.*

Four years of scientific warfare have seen a consistent and progressive development in the power and influence of artillery, both in the actual infantry battle and in all the stages which lead up to it. Despite the handicap under which we started the war, British artill-

ery has played a large part in that development and of late has dominated the enemy's artillery to an ever-increasing degree. The influence of this fact upon the moral both of our own and the enemy's troops could scarcely be exaggerated.

During the present year the greater number of guns available for our use and the amount and regularity of our ammunition supply, combined with the enemy's weakened powers of resistance, due to the bitter fighting of the past two years, have for the most part led to the substitution of sudden and intense outburst of fire for the prolonged destructive bombardments which preceded our attacks in 1917. All ranks of the artillery have adapted themselves to these new conditions with complete success, and in the rapid movements of the latter stages of our advance have shown the highest technical skill and most indefatigable energy. The accuracy and intensity of our barrages, frequently arranged at short notice and with little opportunity being given for ranging or previous reconnoitring of the ground, have contributed largely to the success of our infantry attacks. The intimate co-operation between artillery and infantry, which is the first requisite in modern war, has been a marked feature of our operations.

#### *Cavalry.*

The more open character of the recent fighting at once brought prominently to notice the fact that cavalry is still a necessary arm in modern war. On a number of occasions, to some of which short reference has been made in this Report, important results have been obtained by the use of cavalry, particularly in combination with light tanks and mobile machine-gun units. Such increased opportunities as have been offered them have been seized and utilised by the cavalry with promptness and effect. Both in the development of the successes of our infantry attacks and in following up the various withdrawals thereby forced upon the enemy, the different cavalry units have performed work of the highest value.

#### *Royal Air Force.*

During the past year the work of our airmen in close co-operation with all fighting branches of the Army, has continued to show the same brilliant qualities which have come to be commonly associated with that Service; while the ever-increasing size of the Royal Air Force and the constant improvement in the power and performance of machines, combined with the unfailing keenness of pilots and observers, have enabled intense activity to be maintained at all times.

Some idea of the magnitude of the operations carried out can be gathered from the fact that from the beginning of *January*, 1918, to the end of *November*, nearly 5,500 tons of bombs were dropped by us, 2,953 hostile aeroplanes were destroyed, in addition to 1,178 others driven down out of control, 241 German observation balloons were shot down in flames, and an area of over 4,000 square miles of country has been photographed, not once but many times.

The assistance given to the infantry by our low-flying aeroplanes during the battles of March and April was repeated during the German offensives on the Aisne and Marne, on both of which occasions British squadrons were

despatched to the French battle front and did very gallant service. During our own attacks, hostile troops and transport have been constantly and heavily attacked with most excellent results.

Both by day and night our bombing squadrons have continually attacked the enemy's railway junctions and centres of activity, reconnaissance machines have supplied valuable information from both far and near, while artillery machines have been indefatigable in their watch over German batteries and in accurate observation for our own guns. In these latter tasks our balloons have done most valuable work and have kept pace with admirable energy and promptness with the ever-changing battle line.

#### *Tanks.*

Since the opening of our offensive on 8th August, tanks have been employed in every battle, and the importance of the part played by them in breaking the resistance of the German infantry can scarcely be exaggerated. The whole scheme of the attack of the 8th August was dependent upon tanks, and ever since that date on numberless occasions the success of our infantry has been powerfully assisted or confirmed by their timely arrival. So great has been the effect produced upon the German infantry by the appearance of British tanks that in more than one instance, when for various reasons real tanks were not available in sufficient numbers, valuable results have been obtained by the use of dummy tanks painted on frames of wood and canvas.

It is no disparagement of the courage of our infantry, or of the skill and devotion of our artillery, to say that the achievements of those essential arms would have fallen short of the full measure of success achieved by our Armies had it not been for the very gallant and devoted work of the Tank Corps, under the command of Major-General H. J. Elles.

#### *Trench Mortars.*

Throughout the period under review the personnel of the trench mortar batteries, both heavy, medium and light, have continued to discharge their duties with skill and efficiency whenever opportunity offered for the effective use of their arms. During the period of trench warfare the heavier types of trench mortars well maintained their superiority over the enemy, while during the war of movement later in the campaign numerous instances were reported when the lighter types have been used with effect well forward in the attack in overcoming the resistance of hostile strong points.

#### *Machine Gun Corps.*

The high reputation earned by the different units of the Machine Gun Corps during the defensive battles of the spring has been well maintained under the changed conditions of the latter part of the year. The great value of the machine gun in the attack, when handled with energy and decision, has been proved again and again. The consistent failure of the enemy's frequent counter-attacks has been due in no small degree to the skilful use of these weapons.

#### *Royal Engineers.*

Reference has already been made to the vast amount of work carried out on new defences during the earlier part of the period

under review. In the construction of the 5,000 miles of new trench 20 million cubic yards of earth were shifted, while the wire entanglements erected in front of the trench lines consumed 23,500 tons of barbed wire and 15 million wooden or steel pickets.

During the period of our offensive all branches of the Royal Engineers and the Engineer units of the Dominions have shown the greatest energy and skill in the discharge of their different tasks. On many occasions, particularly in the construction of bridges under fire and in the removal of mines, they have shown courage of the highest order.

In the course of our advance some 700 road bridges, exclusive of pontoon bridges, were constructed. Many of these, and in addition a large number of footbridges for infantry assault, were constructed under heavy shell and machine-gun fire. Notable instances of the cool pluck and determination displayed in this work were furnished by a field company of the 38th Division, which in a crossing of the Selle River lost 50 per cent. of its effectives, yet completed its bridge, and by the fine performance of Engineer troops of the 1st Division at the crossing of the Sambre on the 4th November.

The work of the tunnelling companies has demanded equally with that of the field companies great courage and skill. In the period from the 8th August to the termination of hostilities nearly 14,000 German mines and traps of various descriptions, totalling over 540 tons of explosives, had been discovered and rendered harmless by the different tunnelling companies, while a further amount of nearly 300 tons of explosives had been withdrawn from our own demolition charges and minefields.

The provision of water for the troops presented a problem of great difficulty, which was met with equal energy and success. Many miles of new water mains were laid, and over 400 mechanical pumping plants, giving a daily yield of some 20 million gallons of water, were installed as our troops advanced. In addition to work of the kind performed by the transportation services, Engineer troops were responsible also for the repair of some 3,500 miles of roads, including the filling in of some 500 road craters.

#### *Gas Services.*

Prior to the commencement of the advance several important gas operations, in which large quantities of gas were discharged, were carried out successfully by the Special Brigade. After our advance had begun, immediate advantage was taken of any temporary stabilisation of the line to carry out a large number of useful operations of a lesser character, wherever it was possible to do so without danger to the lives of French civilians.

Some idea of the magnitude of the work performed and of the energy and zeal displayed by all ranks can be gained from the fact that the 21 Special Companies, with the assistance of two American companies attached for instruction, discharged during the period March-November a total of over 2,250 tons of gas. Between the 11th March and the 7th October gas was discharged on 119 nights out of 210, and no less than 301 separate operations were successfully carried out, in addition to a large number of others, which, when all preparations had been completed,

had to be abandoned in consequence of changes in the tactical situation. In all these different operations all ranks of the Gas Services have shown their accustomed courage and devotion to duty.

#### *Signal Services.*

The constant movement of the line and the shifting of Headquarters has again imposed an enormous strain upon all ranks of the Signal Service. The depth of our advance, and the fact that during the latter part of it the whole of the British Armies were simultaneously involved, made the maintenance of signal communications most difficult. The fact that in such circumstances the needs of the Army were met reflects the highest credit upon the zeal and efficiency of all ranks.

#### *Transportation Services.*

Attention has already been drawn to the work thrown upon the Transportation Services as the result of the German advances during the early part of the year. From the commencement of the British offensive in August the situation became reversed. Defensive measures were abandoned, and the energies of all concerned were centred upon the reconstruction of the railway system recaptured from the enemy. In spite of the fact that the enemy, as he withdrew, used every modern artifice for the destruction of railways, roads, bridges and water supplies, the Railway Construction troops were able to meet all demands and accomplished successfully an unparalleled programme of railway reconstruction. By the end of October no less than 1,050 miles of line, much of which had been destroyed, had been brought into service for our Armies. This included 485 miles of new track and some 4,000 feet of bridging.

The following is an instance of the speed with which the work of reconstruction was carried out. On the 17th October, Lille was evacuated by the enemy. On the 25th October the first train of supplies for the civil population entered the city, the railway having been carried across the Lys River at Armentières by a bridge constructed in the short space of four days. Some idea of the extent of the traffic dealt with can be gathered from the fact that in a period of six months nearly seven million officers and other ranks were carried by the broad and metre gauge railways. The number of ton miles worked by the light railway systems during a similar period amounted to over 21 millions.

The troops engaged upon this work have been drawn from the British Railway Companies and from Canada. They have worked continuously for months under great pressure. The energy and efficiency displayed in administration and execution are beyond all praise. I desire to acknowledge the great assistance rendered by the British railways and local authorities at home in supplying personnel, locomotives, wagons and plant, the valuable service of Canadian railway troops, and the loyal co-operation and assistance of the French railways.

A similar expansion is to be noticed in the work of the Roads Directorate. In June, 1917, the mileage of roads maintained was 1,640; in October of 1918 it was 4,412. During a period of six months of the present year 1,500,000 tons of road stone and 685,000

sleepers and pit props were used upon the roads. The enormous demand for material is reflected in a greatly increased output from the quarries and forests worked by us.

The work at the Base Ports has been discharged during the past year with an efficiency and dispatch undiminished by the fact that the ports have been persistently and heavily attacked by hostile aircraft. During the period under review the Channel Train Ferry Service, opened in February last, has proved of inestimable value.

As the result of the enemy's advance in the spring, the length of Inland Waterways operated by the British fell to less than 250 miles. By October, however, the mileage operated had risen to 464 miles, and, throughout our advance, every effort has been made to open up for navigation the waterways uncovered by the enemy's retreat. Very satisfactory results have been obtained and very valuable and important service has been rendered by the personnel concerned.

#### *Supply Services.*

The demands made by our Armies upon the Supply Services throughout the period under review were great and increasing. Every advance made supply more difficult, and during the later stages of our offensive the work was complicated by the necessity of feeding many thousands of liberated civilians in the reconquered territories. Despite the magnitude of their task, these services rose magnificently to the demands made upon them. It is in no small degree due to their excellent organisation and administration that our Armies in the Field have never lacked food, clothing, equipment, guns or munitions. The greatest testimony to the efficiency of these services is the rapidity of our advances, which otherwise would have been impossible. Their work was unostentatious, but its effect was far reaching.

#### *Forestry.*

During the twelve months ended on the 31st October, 1918, over two and a half million tons of timber have been cut for the use of the British and French Armies by the different units under the control of the Forestry Directorate. The work has been carried out with admirable thoroughness and efficiency in close co-operation with the Forestry Authorities of other Allied Armies, and has resulted in a very material saving of transport.

#### *The Omnibus Park.*

In my last Despatch I referred to the invaluable work performed by the Auxiliary Omnibus Park throughout the German offensive. During the period under review further heavy calls have been made upon it in connection with our advance. In all, a total of nearly 800,000 troops have been carried and over 2,500,000 miles have been run by the Omnibus Park. In accomplishing this task all ranks concerned have once more shown the same zeal and devotion to duty which distinguished their previous conduct.

#### *The Labour Corps.*

Throughout the period under review the demands upon the Labour Corps were incessant. The British labour companies were composed entirely of men medically unfit for active opera-

tions, and more than half their number owe their incapacity to wounds or sickness incurred while serving with fighting units. The men of the Corps, however, made light of their disabilities. Many companies worked for months on end under shell fire, long marches were willingly undertaken, and the essential work entrusted to them was cheerfully performed often under conditions entailing all the hardship and strain without the excitement of actual fighting. The successive British advances imposed upon all ranks daily increasing work and responsibilities. It is to the credit of the Corps and of the excellent system of command and administration developed in it during the earlier part of the year that the Labour Companies have invariably answered all demands made upon them.

#### *Medical Services.*

During the period under review the Medical Services under the direction of Lieut.-General C. H. Burtchaell, deserve special commendation for the initiative, energy and success which have characterised all branches of their work. The rapid advance of the troops and the extended front on which operations were carried out during the final stages of the offensive created problems in connection with the collection, evacuation and treatment of wounded which had not been met with in the earlier phases of the war. These difficulties were met with the most admirable promptness and efficiency.

My thanks are due to the consulting surgeons and physicians for the invaluable assistance given by them in the application of new methods to the treatment of wounds and disease; to the R.A.M.C. Officers and Permanent Staffs of the Convalescent Depôts for work which enabled many thousands of men to be restored to the fighting ranks; to the untiring and devoted work of the British Red Cross Society, the Order of St. John and all members of the Nursing Services, whose unremitting kindness and constancy has done much to alleviate the sufferings of the sick and wounded; and finally for the very valuable services rendered by the Base Hospital Units and by individual officers of the Medical Corps of the United States of America, attached to the British Army.

#### *The Chaplain's Department.*

Under the direction of the Principal Chaplain, the Rev. J. M. Simms, and the Deputy Chaplain-General, The Right Rev. Bishop Gwynne, the clergy of all denominations ministering to the Army have earned the

admiration and affection of all ranks. I desire once more to express on behalf of all officers and men my profound appreciation of their unfailing devotion and self-sacrifice.

#### *Administrative Services and Departments.*

To all other Administrative Services and Departments I desire to express the thanks of the fighting forces for the loyal and efficient manner in which they have carried out their essential tasks. During a period of great strain and incessant work they have contributed in their various spheres to the smooth working of the Army machine, and are entitled to a full share in the victory of our arms.

#### *The Navy and Home Authorities.*

The thanks of all ranks of the British Armies in France and Flanders are once more due to the Royal Navy and Mercantile Marine for their magnificent work, which throughout the heavy demands of the past year has at all times enabled our needs to be supplied.

We thank also the different Home Authorities and the workers in the great munition factories, both men and women, for the magnificent support they have given us through all stages of the war. We understand and appreciate the value of the work they have done.

#### *Our Allies.*

At the moment when the final triumph of the Allied cause is assured, we and all others of the Allied and Associated Armies can look back on the years that have gone with a satisfaction undimmed by any hint of discord or conflict of interest and ideals. Few alliances of the past can boast such a record. Few can show a purpose more tenaciously and faithfully pursued, or so fully and gloriously realised. If the complete unity and harmony of our action is to be ascribed in part to the justice of our cause, it is due also to the absolute loyalty with which that cause has been pursued by all those entrusted with the control of the different Allied Armies that have fought side by side with ours.

I propose to submit at a later date a further and final despatch dealing with the advance of the British Armies to the Rhine and the occupation of the Cologne bridgehead.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,  
Your Lordship's obedient servant,

D. HAIG,

Field-Marshal.  
Commanding-in-Chief, British Armies  
in France.

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