

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