

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 battlefront. 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 Locquignol, 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 Frasnoy 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 XXIIth 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,