GERMANY IN DEFEAT

By
Count Charles de Souza

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PHASE I

By COUNT CHARLES DE SOUZA and MAJOR HALDANE McFALL

With **20** Battle-Maps,

"It is strategy so thrillingly told that modern romance cannot compete with it. The thing is quite extraordinarily exciting, and lucid too. It certainly explains things in a way not known here. The result is sound and professional."—*English Review.*

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GERMANY IN DEFEAT

A STRATEGIC HISTORY OF THE WAR

SECOND PHASE

BY

COUNT CHARLES DE SOUZA

WITH 22 MAPS & PLANS

SECOND EDITION

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THE PERSONAL NOTE
OF MAJOR HALDANE MACFALL

Could one but dip into the pages of the Book of Fate, that which is Foreword to this volume would have been Postscript to the last—since it is also Farewell. Perhaps it may be so in future editions. We who were comrades together at Sandhurst in the years gone by little foresaw that thirty years thereafter the Great War would see us in harness, whether like Douglas Haig to become Commander-in-Chief, or like Paul Kenna, who won his V.C. when we were yet youngsters, to find a soldier's grave in the tragedy of Gallipoli. The bugle has sounded and we are out.

Since the writing of the First Phase of *Germany in Defeat* this call to arms has made me feel that my share in the work does not justify my name being placed upon the covers of further volumes, lest it trick the public, take from my partner's credit, or involve mine. My withdrawal leaves Count Charles de Souza free to express his strategic estimates unhampered, whilst it rids me of any further responsibility where I do not share his views. Up to the end of the First Phase I was in accord with his judgments; but, whilst his judgments are always interesting, I am unable to discuss them with him, and I do not wish to be bound by them further unless I am able to state my demur, which is impossible when I am using every hour of my day, in what small fashion is granted to me, to help to create the new armies for battle; and still more impossible should I, at a few hours call, have to lead men into action. The rest is now become for me an insignificance. What I have to say of this war can be as well said when Germany is utterly smashed and broken, and her vile will wholly impotent for evil; than which, nothing else much matters.

PREFACE

THE name of Major Haldane Macfall appeared on the first phase of *Germany in Defeat* on account of the Personal Note and the Introductory Matters contained in it, and also for the help which that talented officer afforded me in the "Englishing" of my work, which was in French. Since then I have made considerable progress in English, and Major Haldane Macfall's military duties having become heavier, I have endeavoured to continue my work without his valuable assistance.

For the guidance of those readers who may not find it easy to test the accuracy of the views expressed in this study on the war, I may explain my methods of research and reasoning. This, to some extent, I did by adding a short appendix to the first phase, but I have realised since then that such data as I jotted down was not sufficient to enlighten those to whom this kind of work is not familiar. Taking it too much for granted that all readers would weigh my arguments as carefully as I weighed them my-

self before adopting them, I merely drew up a general list of the material I had gone through without explaining by what process of induction and deduction I obtained my results. That this process is a sound one is proved by fresh details which were unknown to me at the time of writing, and which have since come to corroborate my views. Some of these details were then available, but they escaped my notice. Others were so twisted as to be incomprehensible, and they had to be left aside until proved right by clearer and more authoritative information.

In a general way all accounts were classified according to country, sector and the date of issue, and they were then compared with each other. The English, French, Belgian and German communiqués (to mention only the Western Campaign) were studied day by day with the map, and then supplemented with more detailed accounts.

All this, however, was only the groundwork, as the significance of certain moves and the motives underlying those moves had to be determined, which, as may be guessed, was not the easiest part of the task. It goes without saying that some experience is necessary in the matter, and a familiar know-

ledge of the campaigns of the past is not only useful but indispensable, as the study of those campaigns form the basis of the army education of the present day leaders, who are necessarily guided, in the operations they undertake, by the principles they learnt at their military schools. In connection with this, of course, one has to pay due regard to the increasing complexity of modern tactics, but without, however, allowing oneself to be blinded by them nor awed by the gigantic scope of modern operations, for the principles of *strategy* are just the same to-day as they were in the time of Hannibal, and they will always remain the same to the end of all time. Tactics only change owing to new inventions and the natural evolution of local means of combat.

Finally, one must possess at one's finger ends all the basic rules of warfare and keep in one's memory the main historic facts which exemplify those rules. With such mental equipment, reliable information, and painstaking efforts, it is quite possible for any one to accurately guess the meaning of a strategic move within six weeks of its execution, and even to weigh the alternatives and to gauge the hidden reasons and intentions which led to its adoption.

But above all, military problems should be approached with strict impartiality, otherwise it is not possible to produce a work of any value to the officer and the student of war. This is what I have endeavoured to do, and I hope I have succeeded in that part of my task.

C. DE S.

CHAPTER I

THE EFFECT OF THE RUSSIAN OPERATIONS ON THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

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BEFORE going into the strategy of the campaign in France during the second phase of the war one must take note of the events up to that date in the Eastern theatre of operations, if only to clear some misapprehensions that have arisen in regard to them. The action of Russia, important as it was, had little to do with the decisions attained elsewhere, yet, although this assertion does not diminish one whit the glorious part taken by the armies of the Tsar in this gigantic conflict it is likely to be challenged by those who have centred their attention on the developments of affairs in Poland, Galicia, and the near East. It might be taken as a slight on this great, valiant, and resourceful ally of France; perhaps even by those who merely try to condense the different campaigns into a single whole—who combine, for instance, an advance on Warsaw with

a thrust in the Argonne ; a Cossack charge in the Carpathians with the capture of a trench by the French in the Vosges ; and the rout of a Honved battalion in the Bukovina with a big allied effort in Flanders. This "large" but unprofessional way of surveying the war is responsible for a good deal of the confusion which prevails in the public mind, and it also tends to enhance the prestige of the Germans, who have done all they could to strengthen this illusion. A picture is given us of German contingents who are being continually rushed from one front to another according to the exigencies of the situation, whilst the Allies seem impotent, or incapable at any rate, of taking advantage of the temporary shortcomings of their foe. Her central position and close co-operation with another powerful empire speaking the same tongue helps Germany to manipulate her line in one or the other quarters of operations with comparative ease, but the constant transference of whole army corps from one front to another is, like many another popular conception, a myth of the imagination. It was caused by the retreat of the Allies in France, and the glamour of the first Russian victories over the Austrians, which gave the impression that no factor

in the West could prevail against Germany. Thus, when the Germans in their turn had to retreat and fell back to the Aisne, it was asserted that this was due to their being weakened at a critical moment by the necessity of sending help in the shape of huge reinforcements to her sorely pressed ally. These reinforcements [1] only consisted of a Saxon cavalry division which operated in Lorraine till the end of August and found itself involved in the Austrian rout at Ravaruska, September 12, and also a little later by a few Austro-Hungarian battalions which had taken part in the Western campaign ; but these small contingents were magnified by the chroniclers of the war into several army corps, thus providing the German leaders with a good excuse for their failure in France. The truth is that in the framing of her plans for the conquest of Europe and the subjugation of the world, Germany had not contemplated carrying on extensive operations on both her fronts at the same time. For the attainment of her ends she had relied on the speedy crushing of France on the one hand and the successful action of her ally, Austria, on the other. Whilst this ally started her " punitive " expedition against Serbia,

[1] See appendix F.

and massed her more important forces against Russia, Germany invaded Belgium and France with nearly the whole of her first line troops and three-fourths of her best second line units. With this she had more than enough to solve her problem at once, if the French had acted as she expected. Her defeat was due to her presumption and to the transcendental ability displayed by the French staff, but not to any depletion in the German ranks caused by the defeat of Austria. On the contrary, as we shall see later on, far from being weakened Germany became stronger in the West after the Marne, big drafts and several army corps of fresh formation swelling the German ranks in Belgium and in France, whilst a similar process went on on the Eastern front, where, through elements recruited on the spot, and the amalgamation of Austro-Hungarian contingents with Prussian, Saxon and Bavarian units, Germany formed five new armies, numbered from 8 to 12. That the early Austrian reverses in Serbia, in South Poland, and in Galicia were disappointing to Germany there is no doubt, but that this had any effect on the course of her strategy elsewhere is a delusion which can be dispelled not only by an impartial study of the campaign in France, but also

by an accurate survey of the Russian operations themselves.

The task which Russia had to tackle at the opening of the war was by no means a simple one—and the Russian Councils were necessarily divided over it. A good deal depended on the course of developments in France; the Germans might win there (as was generally expected), and then Russia would be immediately confronted by the victorious hosts, which, added to the Austrians, would be too great a weight for Russia to bear. The supposition was also put forward that the Germans might fail in France, but the Muscovite leaders could not wisely calculate upon that. They took what seemed the safest course then—they decided to deal first with Austria, this power appearing to be at the time the most immediately threatening to Russia. Austrian mobilisation, like the German, had the start of their opponents; and simultaneously with their expedition to Serbia they quickly assembled huge armies in Galicia. These, under the command of Generals Dankl and Auffenberg and of Archduke John, invaded South Poland (August 20–25), and spreading along the line Lublin-Kolm threatened Brest-Litovsk, the main centre of Russian concentra-

tion. It was only then that the Russians, hampered by various difficulties and especially the scarcity and the length of their lines of communication, began to take action, and, concentrating their efforts on the invaders, out-manœuvred them and rolled them back towards and beyond their own frontier.

In the meantime two events of the utmost consequence to the Slav cause and the immediate development of Russian strategy had taken place. The first was the startling victory won by the Serbians at Shabratz and on the banks of the Drina (August 19–20) and the utter collapse of Austria's " punitive " expedition. The Serbs were underrated by their presumptuous foes. They had led into their mountain fastnesses the powerful and glittering army of General Potoriek; and then, turning upon it, they had smashed it. Thousands of prisoners and an immense booty fell into the hands of the despised force. The effect of this astounding event was great, especially on the Russians, who looked upon the Serbs as brothers. It demonstrated at once that the fatuous Austro-Magyars were not a match for their adversaries. Further proofs of this were given in the incapacities of the


Map to illustrate the first phase of the Russian campaign (August-September 1914
BALTIC SEA
R. Niemen
Kovno
Dantzig
Koenigberg
EAST PRUSSIA
Mazurian Lakes
Thorn
Posen
Grodno
R. Narew
Lomza
Mowo Georgievsk
Warsaw
R. Vistula
Brest Litovsk
Wangorod
Breslau
Lublin
Cholm
Cracow
Ravaruska
Jaroslav
Crudek
Lemberg
Premychl
Tarnopol
R. Niester
Carpathians (Mountains)
GERMANY
POLAND
AUSTRIA HUNGARY
BUKOVINA
RUSSIA

MAP 1.

Austrian staff in South Poland and Galicia, where, from the start, the Austrian leaders seemed bent on upholding their traditions for slowness and slovenliness of movement. This may have been partly due to the unnerving effect of the news from Serbia. In any case the Russians, although they were still busy with their concentration, and they had by no means the advantage of numbers or position, took the offensive and kept it up until they overthrew their opponents and crushed them with immense slaughter at Lemberg (September 4) and at Ravaruska (September 12). They captured Yaroslav, Tarnopol and Grudek (September 17-21). These notable successes were achieved by the armies of Generals Evert, Broussiloff, and Rousski, who captured over 100,000 prisoners and 400 guns; and the victors proceeded forthwith to invest the important Austrian fortress of Premyschl.

The second event was less favourable to Russia; in fact it counterbalanced in its immediate effects all the successes obtained by the Slavs put together. This was the battle of Tannenberg—or Hohenstein—which was won by the German 8th army under General Hindenburg in East Prussia. The Russian northern forces under Generals Rennenkampf and

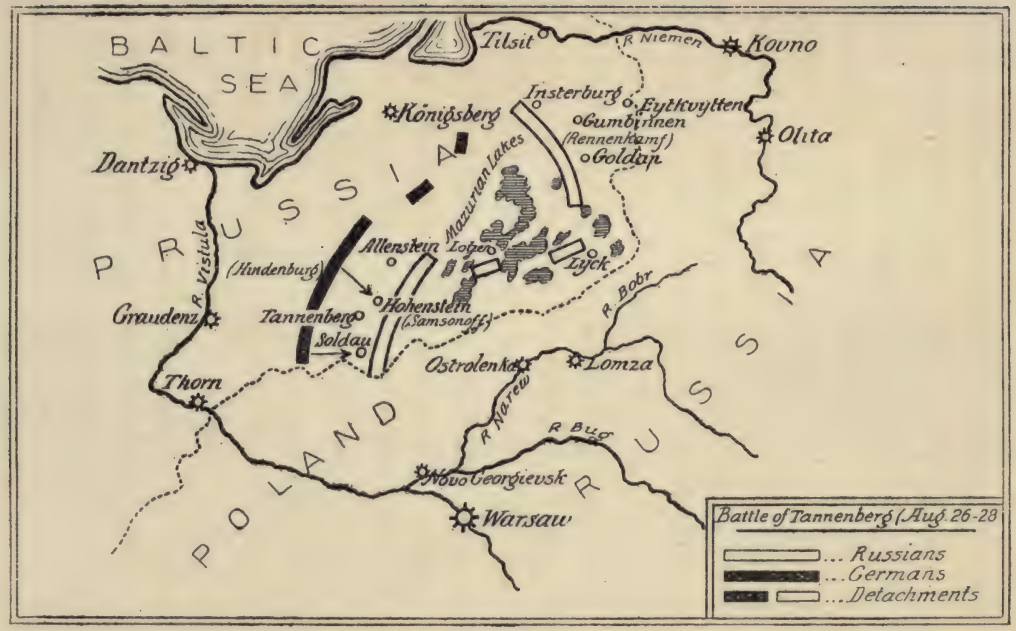
Samsonoff were gathered on the Narew and the Niemen, and they crossed, at an early date, into German territory with the main object of attracting in the north hostile contingents which otherwise might impede the Russian movements elsewhere.

They succeeded but too well. Advancing on a wide front so as to give the impression that the main Muscovite forces were massed in the north, Rennenkampf and Samsonoff achieved at first some successes, the former easily routing the Prussian frontier divisions at Eytkuytten (August 10) and at Gumbinnen (August 20). But gradually, in a mistaken attempt to threaten simultaneously two widely separated fortresses (Dantzig and Koenigsberg) their movements became disconnected. The natural features and obstacles of the region known as the "Mazurian" Lakes increased their difficulties. Apprised of this, General Hindenburg, who commanded the 8th German army in East Prussia, concentrated swiftly all his forces against one of the isolated Russian armies—the one nearest to him, under Samsonoff, which stood in a very false position, with its left exposed, somewhat scattered, and its rear to the marshes. Having regard to this and also to other advantages which the Prussian com-

mander enjoyed, especially in the matter of war material, one can say that General Samsonoff was bound to suffer defeat. But he committed faults which rendered still easier the task of his formidable opponent. He left unprotected his main line of communication at Soldau, which Hindenburg promptly seized ; then, realising too late his mistake, instead of retreating towards his colleague Rennenkampf, he made an attempt to retake Soldau, and in so doing he unwittingly lost hold of the key of the position, Hohenstein. Hindenburg seized this also. And thus outflanked on both sides the Russian army was driven, in helpless confusion, into the marshes (August 27–28). The Germans took over 80,000 prisoners, amongst whom were Samsonoff himself and some of his staff. Rennenkampf was too far removed to lend him any assistance ; and when the enemy's victorious columns issued on his own flank at Goldap, he made up his mind instantly to retreat, and he evacuated East Prussia.

Altogether the venture cost Russia well over 200,000 men and an immense quantity of war material. But it was in its moral effect that the battle of Tannenberg was of value to the Germans, and to the belated Austrians, to whom it gave solid

grounds of hope. It enabled the Germans to assume the general direction of the campaign against Russia, and to thoroughly reorganise the resources of their allies, and to amalgamate these in whatsoever way they liked with their own. The Russians were naturally put out by this great reverse; they wavered; loitered on the Galician plains, and lost further time in their advance on the Carpathians. They might have turned the German victory to some account by adopting at once the defensive in Galicia, and by concentrating mainly against their more efficient foes. But the news of the Marne cheered them unduly and misled them. They calculated that soon the Western Allies would be on the Rhine on their way to Berlin. So, leaving the Kaiser's capital to the tender care of their friends, they made their goal Vienna. And the Germans reaped all the fruits of their victory in East Prussia. Whilst the Russians were laying siege to Jaroslav and Premyschl, and taking measures to complete the conquest of Galicia, and to carry the Carpathians, the Germans, roused to strenuous action, were undertaking vast operations in Courland and Poland. Thus the effect of the first Russian operations on the campaign in France was not what a good many


BALTIC SEA
Tilsit
R. Niemen
Kovno
Insterburg
Eydtkuhnen
Gumbinnen
(Rennenkampf)
Goldap
Olita
Königsberg
Dantzig
PRUSSIA
Mazurian Lakes
Allenstein
Lotzen
Lyck
(Hindenburg)
R. Vistula
Graudenz
Tannenberg
Hohenstein
(Samsonoff)
Soldau
R. Bobr
Ostrolenka
Lomza
Thorn
R. Narew
R. Bug
POLAND
RUSSIA
Novo Georgievsk
Warsaw
Battle of Tannenberg (Aug. 26-28
... Russians
... Germans
... Detachments

MAP 2.

people imagined, especially by the Germans themselves and their friends, whose greatest hopes were centred in France, and who were loth to admit that their failure there was mainly due to the good generalship of the French leaders. There was no concerted plan of campaign between the staffs of the allied countries, geographical position, as well as divergences of views and temperaments, precluding such action; whereas in this respect the Teutonic Empires enjoyed a tremendous advantage, as by similarity of ideas, customs, and traditions, sameness of language, and, above all, their central position, they could carry out two distinct campaigns under the same direction. The Russian operations, therefore, in a History of the War, have to be treated separately at least up to the end of the second phase —except naturally in what concerns the internal resources of Germany—but this, it must be borne in mind, does not greatly bear on strategy, for Russia herself, at the beginning, had enough resources to defeat, and even to crush, Germany, if she had subordinated every other consideration to that end.

CHAPTER II

THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PRESENT DAY CAMPAIGNS AND THEIR BEARING ON THE ASPECT OF THE SITUATION IN FRANCE AFTER THE MARNE

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The campaigns of to-day in which wellnigh the whole manhood of the contending nations is engaged must necessarily last a long time. The decision, however, is quickly reached because the issue of strategy rests on strong elements of surprise. Once this has worn off and the opponents know one another better the conflict may be unduly prolonged because it settles into a war of local positions, or siege warfare, which aims at exhaustion, the length and final results of the conflict depending on the resources and power of resistance of each side, and the political complications which may ensue. The Teutons having crossed the frontiers of people whom they despise, are led, through their presumption, into a set of false moves ; the decision is swiftly attained by the opposing side ; but a wrongly timed manœuvre prevents the Allies from completing

the victory; ensuing developments confirm the results of this victory and put a definite seal on the ultimate fate of the aggressive nation—but the troops of this nation remain in occupation of the opponent's territory; Germany makes much of the fact; the world fails to realise her defeat, and that her hold on hostile ground is due to the botchy strategy which lost her the campaign; and finally political complications intervene to procrastinate the finish. A first-rate military power (Turkey) joins the Central Empires, and the forces of the Allies, which could have hurried the finish in the principal quarters of operations, are diverted to other and secondary spheres of action.

The position of France after the Marne, however, was secure. Her people themselves, who were necessarily good judges in the matter, never doubted it for one instant. From the first they had felt confident, knowing that the conduct of the war was in strong hands, that they were not alone, and that every man fighting on the side of freedom was ready to die for the cause. At one moment during the retreat (the great movement which had saved everything) some despondency had been felt. But not for long. The vivid flash of the Marne had revealed

the true state of affairs, the work of the French arms was indicated before the face of the doubters and croakers. The enemy had advanced, had invaded French territory; but he was not conquering; he had, indeed, been checked; he had retreated. France and her Allies were saved.

But the protracted nature of the operations which followed dulled the sense of victory in the long run, and made it even appear as if the campaign had to be started and won all over again. It was held (and this, strange to say, especially by those who had little or nothing to lose or win in the matter) that as long as the Germans stood on French soil they must be considered the conquerors, and that they would not be beaten until they were driven back across the Rhine and the Allies reached Berlin!

Needless to say this view, which neutralised somewhat the effect of the allied victories, was diametrically opposed to that of the directors of the campaign themselves, of the great Joffre in particular; nor was it shared by the gallant soldiers under him, who knew how they had thrashed the foe; nor even by the Gallic civilian, whose logical brain told him that the enemy having failed to win the war at the first

go, had, of a necessity, lost it. The issue was settled; and the finish was a question of time; the length of it required to reduce the invader to absolute impotency depending on their internal and external resources on the one hand and the power and degree of efficiency of the Allies themselves on the other. In any case the campaign being won, the ultimate fate of the German armies in France was sealed. General Joffre held the initiative, and would take good care not to lose it. He would put the finishing touches to his strategic masterpiece and the struggle would continue until Germany was stricken down and crushed, and repented bitterly her wild dreams of conquest.

This was the feeling expressed in France and amongst the Allies generally after the Marne, and it was also reflected by the sudden rise of French prestige abroad, where the French character was little understood, as since 1870 it had been the accepted opinion that French troops could not stand against the Germans. But neither in Paris nor in London were there any concrete signs of elation, such as are generally provoked by great successes won in the field; the population remained calm and confident, whilst in Berlin and other cities

of the German Empire, the ostentatious exhibition of trophies of war, and the chanting of songs of victory, of triumphant hymns of hate, went on as if there remained still great possibilities for the German arms to achieve their object. The contrast presented by the people who were silently conquering with those who were bragging under defeat would have been indeed ludicrous, if the nature of the war and the development of the campaign had been better understood and grasped by the world at large; and if Germany's propaganda of world-wide deceit had not been greatly helped thereby.

It was this propaganda which brought in Turkey on Germany's side towards the end of the second phase, and which caused some of the Allied politicians to blunder, and to meddle in matters of which they understood little or nothing. Dazzled by the grandiloquence of the German statesmen and their press the world forgot Germany's own dictum before the war: that a German army that would be compelled to retreat from the gates of Paris would, and must, in the long run be beaten. But it must be admitted that the general frame of mind on this point was mainly caused by the un-

precedented scale of the operations and the novel means of warfare which sprang from it.

The advent of the aeroplane, the extensive use of motor craft, and other innovations of every description contributed largely to confuse the public mind and to entice it into the snares of the pro-German campaign. And thus it was that the decisive character of the Marne was not understood in time, and that the prolonged operations which followed were not viewed in their true and proper light.

CHAPTER III

THE REASONS WHICH INDUCED THE GERMANS IN RETREAT TO STOP ON THE AISNE AND TO TAKE UP A POSITION OF DEFENCE IN FRANCE

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During the short period called the First Phase of the War, the main German armies were checked in France, flung back, and placed in a position of defence; while in the Eastern theatre of war Austria, as we have seen, had suffered defeat at the hands of Russia, and she had also been unfortunate against Serbia. But Germany's main concern was that France had not been crushed, for the failure of this attempt meant the inevitable collapse of Germany's designs in the direction of world-conquest. With the opening of hostilities her leaders had felt fully confident; later, when in obedience to Joffre's moves, they were rushing blindly into France, they had still seen success within their grasp. They had failed again. Out-flanked, their centre pierced, they had fallen back—and, after a retreat which was akin to flight, they were clinging stubbornly, with

gloomy forebodings, to a line of entrenchments which they had hastily thrown up across Northern France. This line was, by nature, well adapted for defence, and the Germans entrenched themselves there and prepared for the coming onslaught of their opponents. This fact, in itself, shows how well the Germans knew they were beaten; a feeling which became more emphasised in the course of time when they made their defensive positions stronger and stronger—for it was an avowal on their part that they no longer relied wholly upon open field action to win their battles. The "invincible" warriors of the Kaiser, who had so "triumphantly" advanced a short while before, now dug themselves in the ground like moles; otherwise—and this is certain—their despised antagonists would have made short work of them. They employed every device to add to the strength of their entrenchments, and it is no wonder that Joffre refrained, and, restraining the ardour of his troops, strove by other means to complete the discomfiture of the foe.

It has been said that the positions the Germans selected to stop on had been reconnoitred and even prepared by them long beforehand—but this cannot

be correct, as, before their overthrow, they were too certain of winning to consider the possibility of failure; and in the hurry and confusion of the retreat they unwittingly abandoned several important positions which afterwards they did their utmost to recapture, the towns of Soissons and Reims for instance, and other points elsewhere which became the objective of some of their local attacks.

There were other reasons which made them stop their retreat where they did. First of all, in spite of their heavy losses, they were still numerically strong. Reinforcements were reaching them, and freshly formed army corps were at hand.

Secondly: their leaders dreaded the effect of a further retrograde movement on their people at home, and also on neutral countries who might be useful to them if it could be demonstrated to them that Germany had not lost the campaign. Up to the turning point at the Marne the German people and the neutral world had been given to understand that the German armies in the west were conquering, that not a hitch had occurred since these armies had set foot on hostile territory and that they were on the eve of achieving a complete and definite triumph. Flamboyant *communiqués* were

issued and spread abroad by the "Wolf Bureau;" whilst prisoners and captured trophies and war material kept pouring into Germany. Extravagant exaggerations were indulged in, and the German people were neither able nor willing to disprove or control announcements which were so flattering to their pride. Suddenly, however, it was learnt that the "invincible" legions of Germany had stopped short their seemingly victorious advance, and that they had fallen back; and this for no very clear reason—or rather for reasons which did not seem clear to the Germans and their friends, who were living in thrilling hopes and expectations. The German Staff and the Wolf Bureau were at some pains to explain the situation and the necessity for a "strategic" retirement. With their transcendental imaginative talent, they could not explain away nor conceal certain facts—the Kaiser's anger, for instance, with Von Hausen and his personal disappointment in regard to Nancy. Nor were the German people altogether satisfied with the official statement concerning a "superior" hostile force which had *unexpectedly* attacked Kluck on his flank; this meaning either that some one on the German side—Kluck himself perhaps—had blun-

dered, or else that the enemy was cleverer than themselves.

It was about this time that the news of the Russian victories in Galicia were issued in Germany. The Russians, who were supposed to be quite unprepared for war and unready, had rolled back, outflanked and routed the Austrian armies which had invaded South Poland. But, strange to say, these developments, far from increasing the difficulties of the German Staff, helped them greatly—first because contemporaneous events in East Prussia (the victories won by General Hindenburg at Tannenberg and Goldap) more than counterbalanced in their effects the Slav gains elsewhere; and, secondly, because now the Germans, with the magnanimity and generosity which is a distinguishing feature of all Teutonic tribes, could, and did, throw the blame for their retreat in France on their faithful friends, the Austrians. To the Germans the defeat of their Allies at Lemberg was clearly the cause of Kluck's surprise near Paris; of Hausen's discomfiture "somewhere else"; of the Crown Prince's "erratic movements" near Verdun; and of the Kaiser's "unprofitable ride" towards Nancy. Happily for Germany her own military leaders were geniuses;

they would mend the situation. Already General Hindenburg had swept the Northern Russian armies out of East Prussia. Very soon the opponents of Germany in the West would succumb also in an inevitable catastrophe. Such was the way of thinking in Germany; and the German Staff, with the means at their disposal, acted upon it. Having realised that they could not altogether rely on the military qualifications of their Allies they decided to take up the general direction and management of affairs in Austria—but this without losing sight of the fact that the decision lay in the West, where they might regain chances of victory if only their antagonists would act as they expected. They had no notion of Joffre's designs—and they still underrated the French, who, they thought, were over-elated by success and would endeavour to carry at once the German positions in view of sweeping them out of the territory they occupied. They would suffer great losses, waste their strength, and, in the end, be overwhelmed. This was the main reason which prompted the Germans to retreat no further; for had they guessed what the French would do they would probably have found it safer, even advantageous, to take up a more backward line of defence—

the line of the Meuse for instance, with the strong *points d'appui* at Liege, Namur, Givet. This consideration brings us to the third and last reason which induced the Germans to choose the line of the Aisne to make their stand upon—the isolated position of the Belgian army at Antwerp.

The Belgian army, through faulty concentration, had found itself cut off from the Allies during the Great Retreat. Its situation resembled that of Bazaine at Metz. It must either fight in the open, and be overwhelmed, or else capitulate. Its fate, indeed, would have been sealed had the Germans set the right way about it.

The Germans were loth at first to make the sacrifices necessary to carry Antwerp by assault. It was one thing to have attacked and reduced a fortress like Liege, which had been held only by the garrison, plus an extra field division or so. It was another to take by storm a larger fortress defended by a mobile force of 90,000. The decision, argued the Germans, lay in France. If they won there the Belgian army would no longer count. It would, automatically, surrender, and thus would be eliminated from the field of action; should it, on the other hand, resume activities, the Germans

would out-manœuvre it, cut it off from its fortified base, and surround it in the open. The end would be the same.

So they waited, procrastinated, trusting to the success of their new scheme in France, or rather to the action of the allies themselves, who, they felt sure, would play into their hands and help them to reverse the situation created by the result of the Marne operations.

CHAPTER IV

THE DELUSIVE CHARACTER OF THE GERMAN ATTITUDE IN BELGIUM DURING THE MARNE

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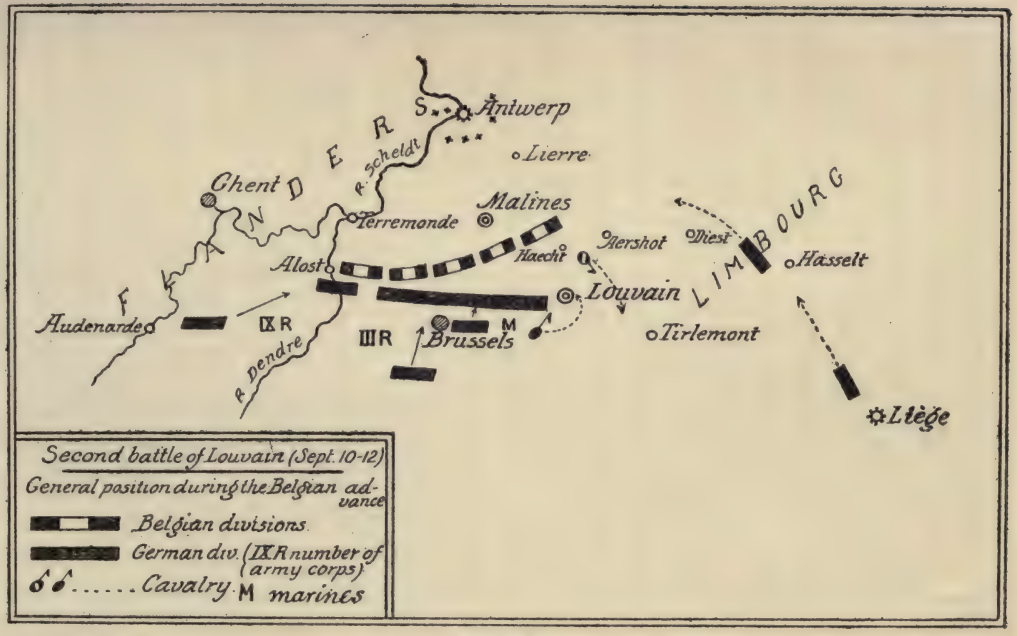
Ere one deals with the developments of the campaign subsequent to the Marne one must make clear the movements in Belgium which synchronised with the collapse of the German offensive. These movements are interesting, not only in their intrinsic character, but also, and mainly, because they furnish the student of war with a special example of Machiavellism in warfare, of methods which remind one of the part which is played by the cat with the mouse. As we have seen, the Germans had an early chance of overpowering the Belgian army at Antwerp ; only, they considered the undertaking would be too costly ; or, if success was achieved in France it would be unnecessary. They thought it a good plan however to try and entice the Belgian field force out of the fortified zone where it was sheltering, to overwhelm it, and force it to a capitulation in the open. This explains the strength

of the Germans in Belgium at the time and their methods of fighting there. Flying columns harassed the Belgian outposts and committed depredations in towns and villages. Invariably they fled before their opponents, thus fostering on these the illusion that they were more than a match for their foes. Meanwhile the German main forces were lying in wait in prepared positions north of Brussels, on a line which stretched from the south of Alost to Louvain. Here, at least, two army corps, or their equivalent, were in observation, whilst in Brussels itself and to the south several divisions were in billets or encamped. More troops could be called up in case of need from Liège and other localities in the Limbourg.

The news of the Marne cheered the Belgians. The passive attitude of the enemy in Belgium made them take a wrong view of the situation. They sallied out of Antwerp on September 8 and advanced, in five infantry and one cavalry divisions, on a wide front. Their object was to cut the communications of the enemy with Germany and to reoccupy Brussels.

At the first intimation of the attack the Germans brought up to the north of Brussels all the reinforce-


Antwerp
Lierre
Scheldt
Chent
Malines
Terremonde
Alost
Haecht
Aershot
Diest
Hasselt
Louvain
LIMBOURG
Audenarde
IX R
III R
M
Brussels
Tirlemont
Dendre
Liège
Second battle of Louvain (Sept. 10-12)
General position during the Belgian advance
Belgian divisions
German div. (IX R number of army corps)
Cavalry
M marines

Map 3.

ments that were at hand, including a division of the 9th reserve corps, which was on its way to France and a division of marines which had just arrived in Brussels, the main body consisting of divisions and detached brigades belonging to the 3rd reserve, 4th reserve and 6th army corps, with a numerous cavalry and powerful artillery attached. The advanced troops fell back before the Belgians, who captured easily a couple of hamlets and repulsed a few weak counter attacks. The German artillery replied but feebly to the opposed batteries, and the cavalry remained in the background. Altogether the plight of the foe seemed great. Newspaper correspondents, who followed the operations from the Belgian side, described the German position as desperate, one of them going so far as to state that " the state of affairs on the part of the enemy suggested temporary fortification to cover the line of retreat ! " The Belgians were elated, and went on boldly with their offensive in the direction of their capital, no doubt thinking that they would soon enter it on the heels of the fleeing foe. Their left reached Louvain, and their right pushed beyond Alost ; a division there, however, was held up in the wooded region west of Brussels where the Germans,

evidently, were in some strength. It was the 9th reserve corps massing for a timely spring at Terremonde, to the right rear of the Belgians.

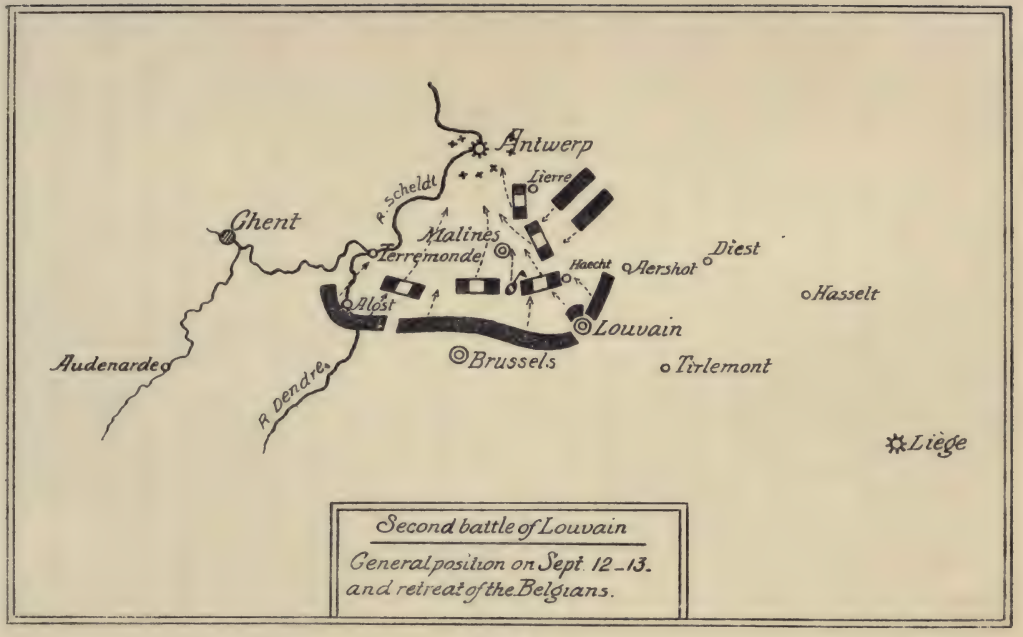
Suddenly, on the evening of the 12th, a formidable German attack developed in quite an unexpected quarter. This was on the left rear of the Belgians, along the railway line from Aerschot to Lierre. German troops from Liège had joined those quartered at Diest and Hasselt in the Limbourg, and the whole mass, a couple of divisions at least, were making a dash in columns, against the Belgian communications, at the very spot where Kluck had struck on a previous occasion (see First Phase). This attack was simultaneous with the brusque appearance, near Louvain, of a multitudinous number of squadrons and other ominous signs of activity in the German lines. But the inordinate violence of the flank attack and the clumsiness of the enemy in other ways saved the Belgians, who instantly realised the object of the wily tactics of their foe. They parried the blow by a quick change of front and a side thrust on Haecht and, under cover of night, they retreated once more to Antwerp.

The cause of this retirement after the highest hopes had been entertained was self-evident—the

enemy had revealed his strength and his intentions ; and the Belgians had no wish to be annihilated or captured. They were fortunate indeed to have so easily walked out of the formidable trap set for them, and they were to be congratulated on the uneventful result of their adventure. Yet such is the curious mentality of some people that general disappointment was expressed in the Allied press, writers and experts of weight naively wondering why September 13 had not been a day of decisive victory for the Belgians !—whilst, in responsible quarters (which, it must be said, were not in total accordance with the principal directors of the campaign), measures were taken to mend this state of affairs. The Belgians were to hold on to Antwerp at all costs or, in terms of strategy, to remain isolated —and if they undertook another offensive against the Germans, this offensive *must* succeed, or else . . . or else the instigators of this proceeding would wash their hands of the whole affair, and leave to the handy man of France, the supreme court of appeal in doubtful cases, to mend matters as best he could on the understanding that all merit and glory of any success achieved would accrue to those who had so much contributed to increase the

difficulties of his task. Such was the fascination exercised by a fortress of doubtful strategic value on the minds of politicians who were ignorant of the rules of war; and this, too, after the so very recent lessons of Liège, Namur, and Maubeuge.

Herein we get an inkling of the cause of the prolonged and dangerous isolation of one important field element of the Allies—and of its rash enterprises against an enemy who was strong enough to throttle it when he chose. The Belgians were deliberately encouraged to remain in their hapless situation, and were even led to despise their formidable opponents, and it was owing, partly to the blundering psychology of the said opponents, and partly to the talent of the great leaders of France, that in the end they were saved. As to German psychology—the Germans at the time of their hasty rearrangements to avoid a complete *débacle* in France had the means of solving at once the Belgian side of their problem—in other words of hurrying the fall of Antwerp and capturing the Belgian army into the bargain. Four German army corps—or their equivalent—were, by now, near Antwerp, and four others of new formation were on their way to Belgium. Maubeuge had just


Antwerp
Lierre
R. scheldt
Ghent
Malines
Terremonde
Haecht
Aershot
Diest
Hasselt
Alost
Louvain
Audenarde
Brussels
Tirlemont
R. Dendre
Liège
Second battle of Louvain
General position on Sept. 12–13.
and retreat of the Belgians.

MAP 4.

fallen (September 9), and the siege pieces which had reduced its forts, as well as those of Liège and Namur, to a heap of ruins, were at hand. It was not likely that the divisions in Antwerp would venture out on an enterprise which had nearly led to their envelopment. But what was more important than this was the well substantiated report of an Allied landing at Ostend. This was meant to steel the soul of the Belgians, and to keep them unflinching to their guns. But the Germans, through other rumours and calculations that they made—of which more anon—mistook the import and intent of that landing; they took it to signify that the Allies meant to enable the Belgians to quit their dangerous position. Therefore the quicker they set to their task the better for them. But somehow, in spite of all that, they lingered. The Allies were still far, and the German armies in France had somewhat recovered from their knocks on the Marne, and were holding on stoutly to their positions. The Belgians were demoralised. Abandoned seemingly by their friends, for the sake of whom they had suffered and endured so much, they might be willing to come to terms, to surrender. Thus argued the Germans, and, on the day following

the retreat of the Belgians, Marshal von der Goltz, the military governor of Brussels, was sent to Antwerp on a "pacific" mission. The result of this mission is well known—it ended, like previous attempts of the kind, in a categoric rejection by the proud, loyal, and heroic Belgians, of the German proposals—but the time spent by the enemy in fruitless negotiations did even more to alter the situation in favour of the Allies than the consummate strategic ability of General Joffre. Von der Goltz only laid the results of his abortive mission before the conclave of German Generals and Princes which was held in Brussels on September 23–25. By this time Joffre had scored again in France, and he was on his way to bring about the ultimate abortion of all further plans of German aggression.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVANCE OF THE ALLIES FROM THE MARNE AND THE CAUSES AND AIM OF THE SECOND GERMAN OFFENSIVE IN FRANCE

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IMMEDIATELY after the Marne the victors knew not what course the vanquished would follow. This is exemplified by the way in which the Allies advanced after the retreating foe, and the attacks they delivered on his rearguards and delaying parties before they had themselves recovered from their past exertions and regained the cohesion which is necessary for a successful collective effort. The whole of the allied armies from the mouth of the River Aisne to the Vosges mountains kept in close contact with the Germans, although it was all they could do to wrest from them positions which they only defended to mask the occupation of the line of defence which they had chosen. This hurried action, however, which sprang from the elation of the advancing troops and the desire of the staff not to leave any respite to the foe, enabled the Allies

to seize and capture some important points where the enemy in his disorganised condition had no time to establish himself. The left wing armies of Joffre—Maunoury and French—entered Soissons, forced the crossing of the river Aisne and issued on the north bank; whilst to their right D'Esperey and Foch reoccupied Reims and secured a line running east and north of that town from the plateau of Craonne to the neighbourhood of Souain. But further to the right de Langle was not able to push much beyond Suippes and Ville-sur-Tourbe, and only with a great effort Sarrail in the Argonne drove the bulky columns of the Crown Prince and kept them at a respectable distance from Verdun. In Lorraine and the Vosges Dubail, who had been enjoined to act strictly on the defensive, nevertheless advanced also, and seized several commanding positions, the enemy having retreated as far as the frontier, but this was because the German armies of Lorraine which had been so roughly handled at St. Dié, on the Meurthe and on the "Grand Courronné," had been broken up and reduced to a minimum of strength to reinforce their line elsewhere. A similar process—the transference of troops from east to west—had been going on behind the French

line—thus it was that the 2nd army, under Castelnau, was no longer in Lorraine, whilst the armies of Dubail and Sarrail were depleted of certain contingents to add to the strength of the western French commands. From that time Dubail, whose army was still strong, was entrusted with the command of the whole eastern section from Nancy to Belfort, with no other end in view, however, than the defence, and the consolidation, by local action, of the main positions; for whatever might be the course of subsequent developments, General Joffre had no intention, as so many observers eagerly and wrongly surmised at the time, of forcing the line of the Rhine to threaten or cut the German communications. The strength of the enemy's fortified line in Lorraine had been tested (*vide* Battle of Saarburg, First Phase) with cost, by the French. In the same way the French fortified line from Toul to Belfort had been tested, with greater cost still, by the Germans, and it was not to be expected that on either side further substantial efforts would be made in that quarter of operations. But this is said not only to make clear Joffre's action but to show that this action—the early and rapid transference of troops from east to west—had nothing to

do, as was generally supposed, with any definite anticipation of a renewed German offensive movement westward; for it was not until this movement was in actual progress and Castelnau's army had practically accomplished its concentration in its new sphere of action that General Joffre notified to his generals that he meant to avoid frontal attack, and to outflank, turn, or envelop the German right. This intention was the outcome of the enemy's evident decision to carry his retreat no further and the stout resistance which the Allied troops under Maunoury, French, and D'Esperey, encountered as they progressed on the north bank of the Aisne. They had crossed the river in front of a stiff opposition, and had compelled the enemy to evacuate Soissons; but, gradually, as they advanced they found themselves involved in risky and costly attacks against carefully entrenched positions; then, the Germans, having received strong reinforcements, launched severe counterblows, which were partially and temporarily successful, especially against the enterprising Maunoury, who had advanced far and who, in consequence, lost nearly all the positions he had acquired. It must be said that the positions he encountered were of particular

strength, as they consisted in part of an extensive line of quarries extending for miles near the forest of L'Aigle, which the enemy also used as a powerful pivot and rallying point. Later Maunoury was able to conquer the quarries by means of artillery and mining operations.

On his more composed colleague to his right the onslaughts of the foe made less impression. Rooted to the spot the British infantry, with admirable precision and coolness, shattered with its steady and well regulated fire the dense columns of the enemy, the 1st corps, under Douglas Haig, especially distinguishing itself, as it had done at Mons and Le Cateau. It was in these circumstances that Sir John French, encouraged by success, made plans to attack and capture Condé (a town which intersects the road leading along the valley from Soissons to Reims), but he desisted on receiving from General Joffre particulars of the generalissimo's new intentions (September 19). This decision was kept to even when Sir John French received, on the 24th, from England several batteries of heavy field howitzers which helped him greatly to consolidate the positions that he had won.

It was the early efforts made by the enemy to

drive back across the Aisne Maunoury and French and to recapture Soissons and Reims which revealed to Joffre the German plan and informed him of their strength. Important reinforcements had reached them and there were signs that they had thoroughly reconstituted their battle front. In a general way they wished to adjust more solidly their defensive line, to draw in so doing the Allies into a sustained parallel fight, and to overlap their left once more in the manner which had so consistently failed since the beginning. This plan, it may be said, might have had some chances of success, especially because, in spite of their heavy losses, they still enjoyed the superiority of numbers, and besides derived the advantage of quicker means of transport through the concentric form of their front. But, having regard to the talent, determination, and increased *moral* of their wary opponents they were bound to fail again, and add one more link to the already long chain of their strategic disappointments. Firstly there was the gradual abandonment by Joffre of the lateral action into which the enemy wished to draw him; and secondly the detrainment of Castlenau's army on the line Clermont-Beauvais. Joffre's one aim at this time

was, as we have seen, to outflank or turn the German right. But, at the same time, it was essential that he should guarantee himself against all surprise. He was informed of the extreme depletion of the enemy elements in Lorraine, and he surmised from this that the German strength in the west, and possibly in the north-west between the Somme and the Oise, would automatically increase. So the reconcentration of Castlenau's army was undertaken and accomplished within the strict conditions prescribed by rules of war for an operation of the kind. These rules forbid a concentration within possible striking distance of the enemy, if that enemy happens to be strong, active, and intelligent. This was the case here. General Joffre never underrated the Germans. The line for the detrainment of Castlenau's army was selected as far back as Clermont and Beauvais. The same rules prescribe that a concentration carried out in view of an offensive movement must be covered by detachments. This was done, too. Before Castelnau's troops were fully detrained freshly formed units, under General Brugère, were operating on the Somme, and detachments which had issued from Calais and Dunkirk had reached the neighbour-

hood of Lille, Lens, and Douai. Thus the counter movement of the foe that General Joffre had foreseen was successfully anticipated and baulked. When on September 20 Castlenau's columns advanced north-eastwards from Clermont and Beauvais they came rapidly into collision with the same troops which they had met and defeated at Nancy. It was the 6th German army under Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, who, taking the opposed detachments in the north for the main body of the extended French left wing, was endeavouring to cut them off. Instead he found himself confronted by a fully deployed and compact army. The value of Joffre's manœuvre is here fully demonstrated—for had he concentrated Castlenau's troops on a more forward line the enemy might not only have interfered seriously with their detrainment, but the Germans would have known that the opposed elements further north were detachments, and they would undoubtedly have struck there and thus succeeded in turning the French left,—an undertaking which they vainly endeavoured to carry out later on. This attempt, it is almost needless to point out, had not and could not have the same meaning as the earlier one, which aimed at the envelopment and capture of the


Lille
Lens
Arras
Namur
Valenciennes
Maubeuge
Givet
BELGIUM
R. Somme
Amiens
Peronne
6 (Cr Prof Bavaria)
St Quentin
R. Meuse
ARDENNES
LUXEMBOURG
La Fère
Laon
2 (Bulow)
R. Aisne
Beauvais
Clermont
Compiegne
Soissons
3 (Einem)
(Wurtemberg)
Rheims
1
Longuy
Cr Prince
Varennes
5
R. Moselle
Thionville
Metz
(Heeringen)
R. Oise
R. Ourcq
R. Marne
Chateau Thierry
Epernay
Chalons
Verdun
St Mihiel
Paris
Meaux
Fere Champenoise
Toul
Nancy
LORRAINE
Epinal
St Dié
VOSGES
ALSACE
Belfort
General position in France after the German retreat from the Marne, and the Allies advance on the Aisne (Sept 15–20)
French armies 1 (Dubail) 2 (Castelnau from Lorraine, Concentrating) 3 (Sarrail) 4 (De Langle de Cary) 5 (Franchet d'Esperey) 6 (Mannoury) 7 (Foch)
British army (Sir John French)
French army
Detachment
German army

MAP 5.

whole of the French armies in the field. The object of the new endeavour was no doubt to turn or overlap the French left, but this simply in order to secure as much ground as possible in Northern France and eventually to gain possession of the coast. The Germans now were necessarily more cautious and less ambitious than they had been before the Marne, and since then they subordinated everything to the object of exhausting France. Part of this exhausting policy—and perhaps its more important item—was to sever or diminish the facilities of her communications with her Ally, England, and thus reduce to a minimum the help which England could afford France. England triumphed at sea. Her ironclads, numerous, efficient, and ever on the watch, had even penetrated into one of the lairs of the crouching German squadrons and had wrought much havoc therein (Battle of Heligoland). The invincible power of this formidable element enabled the British to pursue, undisturbed, their work of preparation, and to contribute their share to the operations on the Continent. Hence Germany, having failed to crush France, sought not only to exhaust her in her own resources, but to limit and even destroy, if she could, her other

means of supply. In this theme of action lies the key of Germany's second great offensive, the strategic aim of which was to secure as long a stretch of coast as was possible, with the incidental annihilation or capture of all armed elements, British or French, which found themselves cut off and isolated in the region.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OF ST. MIHIEL, AND THE FAILURE OF THE GERMANS TO ESTABLISH THEIR FRONT ON A MORE FORWARD LINE

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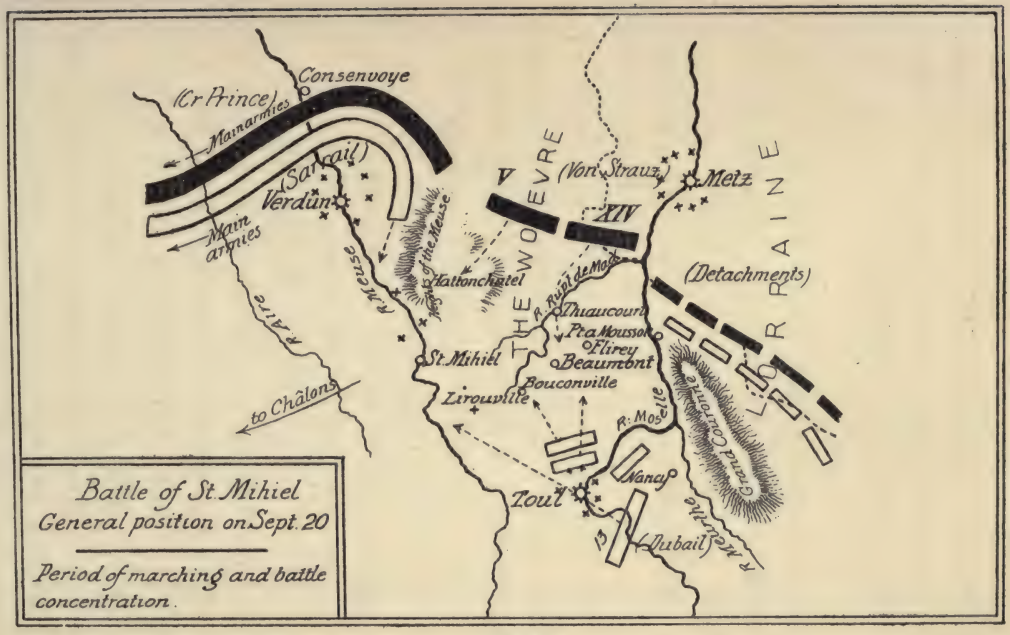
THE BATTLE OF ST. MIHIEL, AND THE FAILURE OF THE GERMANS TO ESTABLISH THEIR FRONT ON A MORE FORWARD LINE

THE movement undertaken by Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria at the head of the reconstituted 6th German army has been explained. The German commander's plan was to separate the main Allied forces from those which were gathered on the Somme, and which he thought were important. This is why the German detachments further north allowed the French to advance and even to reoccupy the big town of Lille. The masterly concentration of Castelnau's army upset the enemy's calculations, and Prince Rupprecht, whose headquarters were at Roye, narrowly escaped being turned himself and enveloped from the north—an object which General Joffre would undoubtedly have achieved if his detached columns had been stronger. He failed for lack of means, the reserves which he had at his

disposal being limited or not yet completely gathered up. As it was it was all he could do to prevent the suddenly enlightened enemy from overlapping him on the Somme, as we shall see further on ; and the removal of Castelnau's army from Lorraine and the subsequent depletion of other units there, to continue the movement undertaken against the enemy's right, dangerously weakened the French line at a vital spot.

This occurred at St. Mihiel, on the Meuse, where the Germans had already made an effort to establish their line across the river, and to isolate Verdun from the south. (See First Phase.) The unexpected turn of events in the west, as well as the firmness and ability of the commander of the 3rd French army (Sarrail), had thwarted that design, but the enemy had not altogether abandoned it. When their plans were redrawn, and they understood that their opponents refused to be led into parallel action, they decided to renew the attempt. This they calculated, if it succeeded, would relieve the Crown Prince, who was in difficulties in the Argonne ; it would also ease the efforts of the other German commanders elsewhere ; and what was more immediately important it would lead to the isolation of


Consenvoye
(Cr Prince)
Main armies
(Sarrail)
Verdun
Main armies
R. Meuse
R. Aire
to Châlons
Battle of St. Mihiel
General position on Sept. 20
Period of marching and battle concentration.
Heights of the Meuse
Hattonchatel
V
(Von Strauz)
XIV
THE WOEVRE
Metz
LORRAINE
(Detachments)
R. Rupt de Mad
Thiaucourt
Pt. à Mousson
Flirey
Beaumont
Bouconville
St. Mihiel
Lirouville
R. Moselle
Canal Colombey
Nancy
Toul
(Lubail)
R. Meurthe

MAP 6.

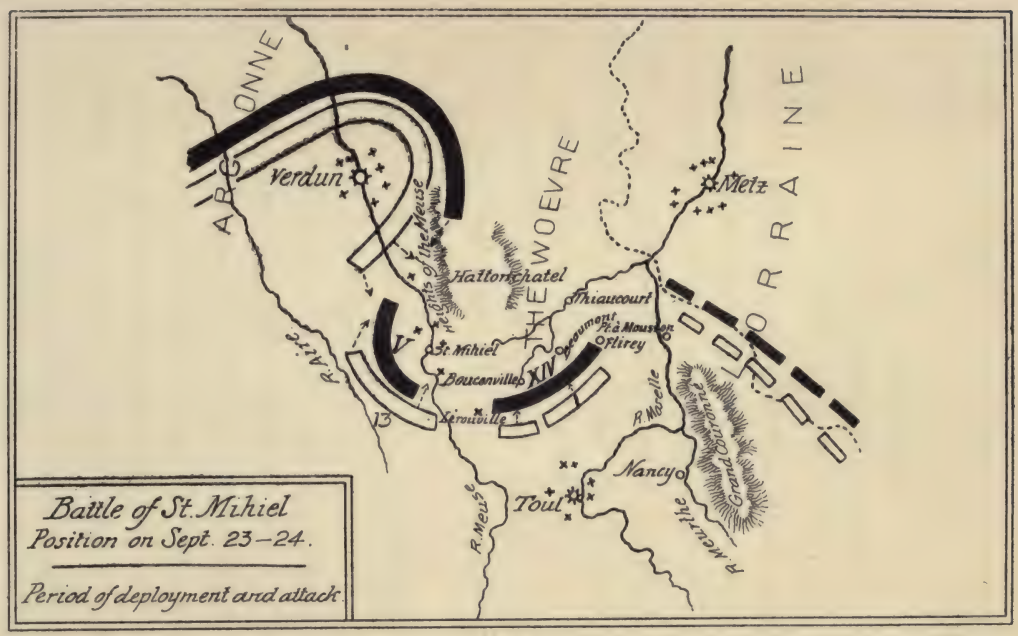
Verdun, which, on this occasion, the enemy attempted to carry out not only by way of the Meuse, but by another attack which will be spoken of later on.

The Germans, however, were not aware in time of the gap which momentarily existed in the French line at the very spot where they wished to strike ; and through over-caution and clumsy reconnaissance they lost their chance.

General von Stranz, who commanded there, preceded his advance (September 20) by the violent bombardment of a position which was not occupied by the French. This was the plateau, or promontory, of Hatton Chattel, to the north-east of St. Mihiel. There were no French troops in that part of the Woevre, and St. Mihiel itself was only held by a couple of Territorial battalions. Von Stranz, who had two *first line* army corps (6 divisions) under him, acted as if there was a whole army on his front. He made a slow and ponderous advance against St. Mihiel and the forts of the Meuse. He lost further time in the attack and subjection of those forts (September 22–23), and he only realised the situation when his advanced troops had crossed the Meuse. Then he hurried his action, but it was too

late. At the first sign of alarm both Sarrail, at Verdun, and Dubail, at Toul, had quickly taken measures to repair their mistake. Sarrail, although very busy in the Argonne, extended his right wing, and brought his artillery and all his cavalry to play on the right flank of Von Stranz on both banks of the Meuse ; and Dubail pushed northwards from Toul three divisions of the 8th and 15th corps, and north-westwards, across the Meuse, near Lirouville, the whole of the 13th corps. The first lot met the 14th German corps at Bouconville and near Flirey and easily routed it, driving it back to its defensive lines beyond Beaumont and Pont-a-Mousson ; but the 13th corps was hard put to it to check the 5th German corps in the valley of the Aire, for the French there could only act in piecemeal condition. The advanced troops, however, held fast against the frantic assaults of the enemy, and when the main body of the 13th corps arrived, the Germans were attacked in their turn, and driven headlong back into St. Mihiel.

This was the action in which, according to a German paper (*Berliner Tageblatt*), Prince Oscar, a son of the Kaiser, who led a division of the Imperial Guards (cavalry), had a heart attack, apparently


ARGONNE
Verdun
Heights of the Meuse
Hattonchatel
THE WOEVRE
Thiaucourt
Pt à Mousson
Flirey
St Mihiel
Bouconville
Xivray
Vieville
13
R. Aire
R. Meuse
Toul
Nancy
R. Moselle
R. Meurthe
Metz
LORRAINE
Battle of St. Mihiel
Position on Sept. 23–24.
Period of deployment and attack

MAP 7.

caused by the sight of the Turcos climbing up the trees " like monkeys," and the " terrific " hand-to-hand encounter which he described.

The success of the French did not lead to their re-occupation of St. Mihiel nor to the readjustment of their line north of it in the Woevre, for the enemy, rendered cautious by his previous reverses and a higher estimation of his opponents, had strongly fortified the districts during his advance. On the other hand there was no immediate and important object to be gained by the recapture of the lost position, and the French were well advised not to make the sacrifices which this barren undertaking would have entailed.

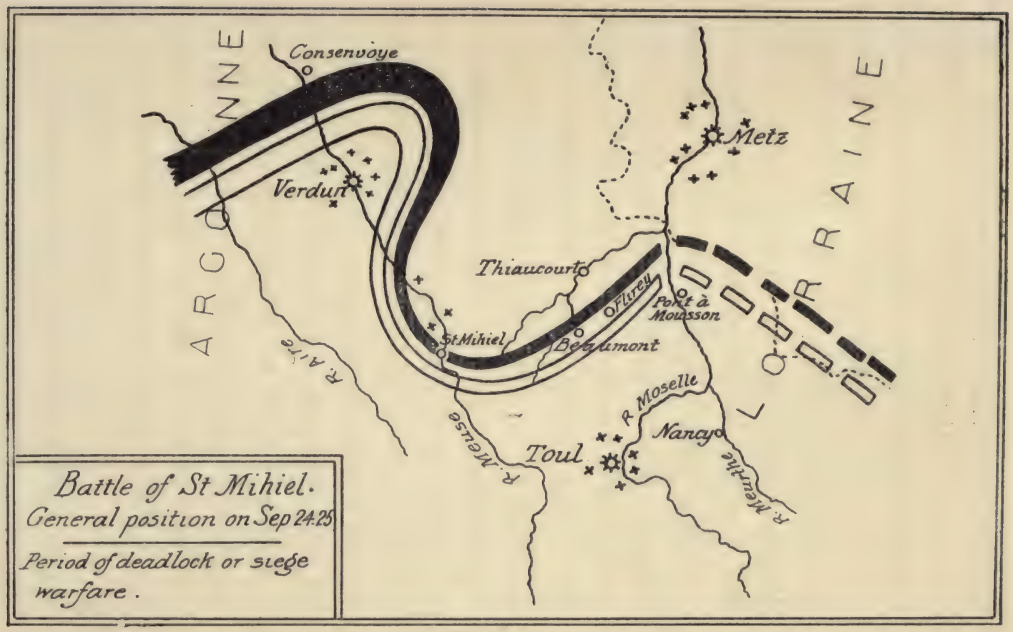
But it was not only through the need of keeping his line intact that General Joffre found himself temporarily short of means to bring to a successful issue his turning movement in the north. Simultaneously with the advance of the army of Bavaria between the Oise and the Somme, and their attempt at St. Mihiel, the Germans developed in the centre a big effort to recapture the positions which they had lost in the retreat. This effort was made by the 1st army, under Kluck, reinforced by the 7th reserve corps from Maubeuge, the 2nd army, under

Bulow, reinforced by the 18th army corps from Lorraine, and the 3rd or "Saxon" army, under Von Einem, likewise reinforced by the 15th army corps, also from Lorraine. The waves of the German attack dashed themselves against the line held by the Allies from the north bank of the Aisne, near Soissons, to the east of Reims in Champagne, and progressed at first somewhat. But the Allies were strong enough, and well enough entrenched, to repulse any attacks. Maunoury had an additional corps under him ; the slender forces under Sir John French had been joined by an extra infantry division (the 6th) ; the 18th corps, of d'Esperey's army, held a formidable position on the plateau of Craonne ; and Foch, to the right of d'Esperey, was up to any situation that presented itself.

At the very first attempt of the foe east of Reims (September 19), Foch, by a quick manœuvre, took more than 1000 prisoners.

On the north bank of the Aisne, near Soissons, the battle swayed to and fro, the disputed positions remaining finally in the possession of the British and the French.

On the Craonne plateau and in the valley below, near Berry au Bac, the Germans sustained a bloody


ARGONNE
Consenvoye
Verdun
Metz
LORRAINE
Thiaucourt
Fliren
Port à Mousson
St Mihiel
Beaumont
R. Aire
R. Meuse
R. Moselle
Nancy
Toul
R. Meurthe
Battle of St Mihiel.
General position on Sep 24/25
Period of deadlock or siege warfare.

MAP 8.

reverse, which was administered to them by the new commander of the 18th French corps, General de Maud'huy, one of the most brilliant and promising juniors of the day. His positions were so well prepared that with slender resources he was able to maintain them against greatly superior forces. Saxon and Bavarian divisions of the 12th and 15th corps and of the Prussian Guards, hurled themselves in vain against him, only to be flung back with great slaughter. The enemy's losses there were particularly heavy, and they included over 3,000 prisoners.[1] For this exploit General de Maud'huy was decorated on the field of battle. In connection with this, an incident occurred which illustrated the good fellowship which exists in the French army, General Joffre, after pinning the Legion of Honour on General de Maud'huy's breast, presented him with a pipe, as he is known to be an inveterate smoker. From that moment, in addition to his affectionate sobriquet amongst the soldiers of "Le père Joffre," the Commander-in-Chief became to the men of the 18th corps "père la Pipe."

The Germans having failed to reconquer the coveted positions between the Oise and Reims,

[1] The estimate of German losses is based on a careful study of the *communiqués*.

concentrated their efforts for the capture of the latter place. The 8th and 19th German corps, a division of the Prussian Guards, and a cavalry division, which included Death Head Hussars, took part in this desperate and forlorn attempt which aimed at turning the French position at Reims through the Suippes valley. The enemy scored an early success by the capture of Fort Brimont,[1] to the north of Reims, a point from which they could bring their artillery fire to bear on the town itself, and which for that reason they occupied in such strength, and further protected with such carefully prepared outworks, that it was impossible to retake it without appalling loss of life. The French realised this after a first attempt, and decided that to recapture it was not worth the cost, as strategically the position was of no use to the Germans, and merely afforded them the opportunity of wasting ammunition in a senseless bombardment.

In the vital quarter of the action the Germans were routed, their method of attack there causing them a terrible disaster. This occurred near

[1] Fort Brimont must not be confused with the chateau of the same name which remained in the hands of the French.


Laon
Rethel
Craonne
Berry au Bac
R. Aisne
Vic sur Aisne
Condé
Soissons
Hazancourt
R. Suippes
R. Vesle
Brimont
Betheny
Reims
Auberive
Souain
Suippes
To St. Menehould & Verdun
To Compiègne and Paris
R. Marne
St. Hilaire le Grand
Châlons
Map to illustrate the German attacks on the centre of the allies line between the 19th and 26th of September.
Battle front
Railway lines to show the junctions
General direction of German attack

MAP 9

Auberive, in the Suippes valley, where, headed by their famous hussars, the German columns advanced at full speed, making for St. Hilaire le Grand, which is on the road to the entrenched camp of Chalons. Their over-confidence seemed to have returned, for on this occasion they adopted none of the usual precautions taken in such circumstances. They were neither flanked nor preceded by reconnoitering parties. The French, who were expecting this attack, had carefully prepared for it, and the Germans were led into a death trap. Masked batteries of the "75" opened up suddenly on the Hussars and tore their ranks. The dispersion and flight of these squadrons uncovered the German infantry, whose flanks were raked by a withering fire. Nothing daunted, however, the Guards charged repeatedly until, mown down by the hundred and finally exhausted, they gave way before a sudden and fierce onslaught of the French colonial division led by General Humbert. Surrounded by the Zouaves, a Prussian Guards regiment refused to surrender and was practically annihilated; and the rest of the enemy's beaten troops retreated in confusion to their own positions.

It is said that on this occasion, as at Nancy, the German Emperor witnessed the battle, and that to this fact was due the reckless fashion in which his troops advanced. It is also said that he had hoped to enter Reims—the historic city where once upon a time the kings of France used to be crowned. But if the presumptuous monarch failed to grace with his august presence the sacred precincts of the famous cathedral his shells did so for him and continued to do so until the beautiful building and many of the peaceful dwellings around it were but a heap of ruins.

A more serious, if less noticed, attack, was made by the 13th and 3rd German corps against De Langle de Cary to the east of Souain. The objective of this attack was the railway junction of St. Menehould, the possession of which would have enabled the enemy to cut the communications between Reims and Verdun, and also to encircle this fortress completely if the simultaneous attempts of Von Stranz at St. Mihiel and in the Valley of the Aire succeeded. We have seen that Von Stranz was checked in time and driven back into St. Mihiel. The news of this (September 25–26) as well as the general collapse of the German attacks elsewhere

must have disheartened the leaders of the advance on St. Menehould, for after progressing for some time, they desisted; and the French recaptured with ease the ground which they had lost. (September 27.)

After this fiasco along the whole line of attack local actions followed, the intentions of which on the part of the Germans must not be confused with those underlying their first endeavour. The first onslaughts were carried out with the object of securing a more forward line of defence. The second, less important in themselves, had a higher aim, as these were meant to help the action of the army of Bavaria on the Somme. Prince Rupprecht had failed to overlap the French left wing which was rapidly developing northwards—this state of affairs was due to Joffre's strategic ability and to his mastery in the use of his lines of transport. Aware of this the Germans, in spite of their recent disappointments and losses, did all they could to hamper the action of their adversaries, to nail them to their actual positions or, at any rate, to delay their transference to the decisive quarter of the field. Hence the apparently disconnected but violent attacks which the Germans delivered at various

points on the Aisne, in the Argonne, and as far south as St. Dié and the region of Belfort, on September 28, whilst the great struggle between Castelnau and Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria was going on on the banks of the Somme and the Oise.

But these spasmodic attempts left Joffre undisturbed. He felt sure of his soldiers and of the able leaders who helped him. The troops were as well entrenched as the foe himself, and they had learnt from him many a tactical lesson in attack or defence. They were better supplied now than they had been with quick firers and various weapons of trench warfare. The officers who led them were tried men, and in the higher command all the inapt or indifferent generals had been weeded out. Joffre, after all the successes already achieved, could not be dismayed, nor even puzzled, by any new attempt of the foe, for he read his intentions as in an open book. He held him tight with his right and centre, whilst with his left he deftly manœuvred in the north where his eyes, the steely gaze of the strategist, rested on the isolated Belgian army at Antwerp. By hook or by crook he meant to rescue that army and, thereby, to create a situation which would debar Germany from any access to the coast,

Belgian or French. The line of the Scheldt, up to Termonde at least, he decided should be the limit of the enemy's sphere of action in the West. And General Joffre would, of a certainty, have completely achieved his object if, as we shall see further on, outside influences of a character more or less political had not interfered with his strategic arrangements.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GERMAN ATTACK ON ANTWERP, AND THEIR EFFORTS AGAINST THE EXPANDING FRENCH LEFT WING; AND THE MANNER IN WHICH JOFFRE DEFEATED THOSE EFFORTS AND CLOSED TO THE ENEMY THE COAST OF FRANCE

CHAPTER VII

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GERMAN ATTACK ON ANTWERP AND THEIR EFFORTS AGAINST THE EXPANDING FRENCH LEFT WING ; AND THE MANNER IN WHICH JOFFRE DEFEATED THOSE EFFORTS AND CLOSED TO THE ENEMY THE COAST OF FRANCE

THE study of the operations which saved the Belgian army and closed the coast of France to the Germans should be based on the calculations made by the French Staff previous to carrying them out ; for thus only can it be realised that they were the result of cold logic and not of chance, and that, in spite of appearances, the Allies never ran any risks of losing their prospects of finishing the campaign at their own time and on their own terms. In other words they could not lose the initiative. Everything was calculated, taken into account beforehand, and especially the greatest advantage that the enemy enjoyed—that of the interior lines, which enabled them in normal conditions to reinforce and prolong

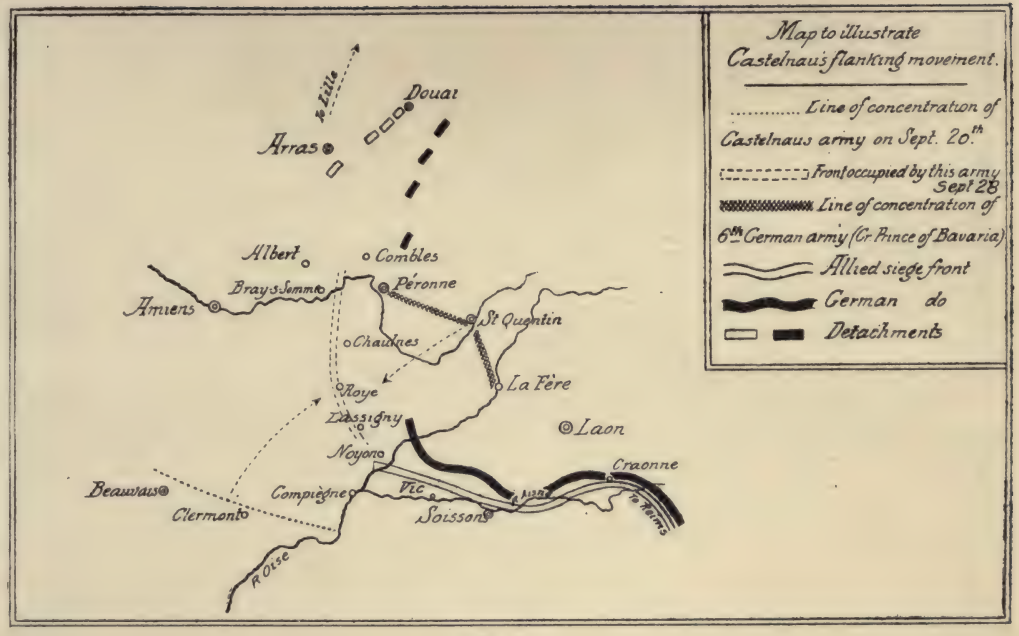
their wing more rapidly than their opponents could prolong and reinforce theirs. To meet this contingency the most strenuous use had to be made of the railroads and other quick means of transport, and the continued transference of units from one part of the battle line to another, as well as the amalgamation of those units on their way north with reserve troops of fresh formation was methodically planned and carried out. By such means the Germans were constantly checked until their right wing reached the shores of the North Sea, *outside France*. Having due regard to everything, the difficulties the Allies were struggling against, especially their numeric inferiority and their shortage of war material, the achievement can, with all justice, be characterised as a *tour de force*.

Now for the events which marked the progress of Joffre's plan, and which were imaginatively described in the Press as the "race to the sea." This expression, by the way, has little meaning, for General Joffre at the time had his eyes turned well inland, on the Scheldt, and those of the enemy were fixed, until the last minute, inland also, on Arras and Amiens on one side, and on Antwerp on the other. Neither of the opponents achieved his

object in full, and it was more by accident than preconceived design that the efforts and motions of the opposed forces led them to that particular region of the coast which they eventually occupied. The balance of advantage in the end rested with the Allies, and the rout of the foe which ensued from the final clash was complete. This produced the illusion that some particular point and fixed objective on the coast had been aimed at by both sides. Hence the sporting expression affixed by popular imagination to an operation which in reality was too complex and elastic in character to be rightfully likened to an equine performance on the turf.

On September 28 Joffre's expanding wing, formed by Castelnau's army, reached the neighbourhood of Péronne. Castelnau's army consisted mainly of reserves and freshly formed Territorial units, strengthened by seasoned divisions of the first line, of the 20th corps and fractions of other corps (4th, 7th, 17th), taken from the armies of the centre. With these comparatively slender contingents Castelnau had to contend against a formidable force of no less than five complete infantry corps and four mounted ones. Thus outnumbered and engaged in a flanking movement, which of a necessity thinned

their ranks as they spread north, the French nevertheless managed to hold out against powerful and violent onslaughts, and to establish themselves on strong positions, which stretched from Ribécourt, on the banks of the Oise (where Castelnau's right joined Maunoury's left), through Roye and on to the Somme. But they were hard put to it to head off the German encircling movement near Péronne. The Crown Prince of Bavaria, seeing that he had erroneously viewed the situation, and wrongly calculated the disposition of his opponent's forces, sought to start afresh his offensive in a new direction. A quick change of front brought the largest number of his best troops against Castelnau's left, which was composed of Brugère's territorial divisions. One of these was fiercely attacked at Bray sur Somme, decimated by the artillery of the Guard, and its broken remnants were compelled to fall back a distance of four miles ; and it seemed as if the enemy would succeed in his turning movement, reach Amiens—as he had done in the first phase of the campaign—and obtain possession of the French coast from Dieppe, or even from Le Havre, to the north. But, as has been said, the French Staff in their calculations had foreseen, and


Map to illustrate
Castelnau's flanking movement.
Line of concentration of
Castelnau's army on Sept. 20th
Front occupied by this army
Sept 28
Line of concentration of
6th German army (Cr Prince of Bavaria)
Allied siege front
German do
Detachments
to Lille
Douai
Arras
Albert
Combles
Bray s/Somme
Péronne
Amiens
St Quentin
Chaulnes
La Fère
Roye
Dassigny
Laon
Noyon
Craonne
Beauvais
Compiègne
Vic
Soissons
Clermont
to Reims
Oise

MAP 10.

prepared for, every contingency. Keeping count of the enemy's strength and of his intentions which his attacks had revealed it was natural that his frontal effort having failed he should choose an alternative ; and this alternative could not be any other than the one he adopted. Thus it was that, as on so many previous and subsequent occasions, the French found themselves in a position to check their seemingly victorious opponents. As Brugère's routed division retreated in confusion, units of the ever handy 20th corps, winding their way up behind the fighting line, arrived in time to redress matters on the banks of the Somme and bar to the Germans the way to Amiens. The French batteries silenced the Artillery of the Guard, and the Bavarians and Saxons, attacked with the bayonet, were driven back on Péronne and Combles. The triumphant 20th corps prolonged the left of the 2nd French army on the plateau between Albert and Combles, in the direction of Arras and Douai, where the detachment from Dunkirk already spoken of was already operating.

By this time the Germans were aware of Joffre's plan. The French generalissimo wished not only to turn or envelop his opponents' right wing ; but,

failing that, to form his junction with the Belgian army. The detached forces which were operating near Lille and Douai and which the Germans mistook for a vanguard of a new army, were visibly working towards that end; and so also appeared to be the significance of the landing of British contingents in Belgium.

The same date—September 28—marks the failure of the enemy's attempt on the line of the Somme and the opening of his attacks on the forts of Antwerp. He had felt confident up to then of reaching his new ends in France, and in consequence had lingered in Belgium. Now he was confronted with a new situation and the possibility of losing all his remaining chances of eliminating the Belgian army from the field of action. He must do this at once, or else he would be too late—and no doubt he would have succeeded if, misled by wrong information and still staking much on his immediate prospects in France, he had not sought to solve his problem by the faulty principle of double, or "parallel" line of operation. As to the wrong information which formed the base of the new German calculations in regard to the situation in Belgium—since their surprises at the Marne they

were at a loss to form a correct estimate of the immediate resources of France. The unexpected appearance of the 6th army on the Ourcq and the inordinate strength (comparatively) of the French centre had upset their preconceived notions, and this was the main cause of their undoing. After that event, what puzzled them above all was the numbering of one of the new French armies, the 7th, under Foch, which in the Allied reports was officially announced as being the 9th. This implied that there were two more than the other six which were known to be in the field; and the Germans knew not, and, on account of the stringent secrecy maintained by the French Staff, *could not* know, whether these new armies, the 7th and the 8th, were as yet formed or still in process of formation. The bold action of the French divisions which were acting from Calais and Dunkirk, lent some likelihood to the former supposition; so did the landing of British troops at Ostend, as from the enemy's point of view these troops might well be the vanguards of important composite forces which were being directed to operate along the Scheldt. In support of this it is as well to mention an incident which occurred in Belgium on September 22. On

that day, near Lebbeke, German staff officers "en reconnaissance" were surprised and perturbed by the firing of British and French shells from the left bank of the river. These projectiles came from a couple of Allied batteries which were serving with the Belgians; but the enemy had no information as to that. Finally, as we shall see more fully later on, the illusions of the enemy in respect of the early presence of important Allied forces in West Flanders were nourished and kept up by the rapidity with which General Joffre manipulated his battle line and brought up new elements to elongate his left wing in the north.

The Germans, at the date mentioned, could have made an unimpeded advance to the coast between Calais and Ostend; for there was nothing in front of them on that line but the weak detachments already mentioned. But imagining that the interval was already strongly occupied and that a trap was being prepared for them in Flanders, they refrained, and applied themselves instead to direct action against the French left wing, and, simultaneously, to a frontal assault on the Belgians at Antwerp.

It was at this moment that the evacuation of the Allied fortress might have been undertaken in view

of the junction which General Joffre was contemplating to effect with the Belgians *on the line of the Scheldt;* there the Belgian army, fresh, complete, and supported by British and French troops, would have offered a far more effective resistance than it did subsequently on the line of the Yser, when its ranks were sadly depleted,[1] when it was disorganised by a retreat executed under very adverse circumstances; when its artillery was reduced and most of its ammunition was spent. The line of the Scheldt was stronger than that of the Yser; and the Allies, having prepared that line, would have held it successfully and thus barred to the Germans all access to the sea, which, since the Marne, was the plan consistently pursued by Joffre to the very end. To do justice to the Belgian leaders it must be said that, when informed of the rapid development of Joffre's left wing in France, they took measures to carry out the same movement which they were only allowed to execute, at greater risks and costs, much later on. But, for the first time in the war on the side of the Western Allies, political influences weighed on the strategic conduct of the campaign.

[1] The Belgian field army in Antwerp was nearly 90,000 strong; on the Yser line it could barely muster 50,000 combatants.

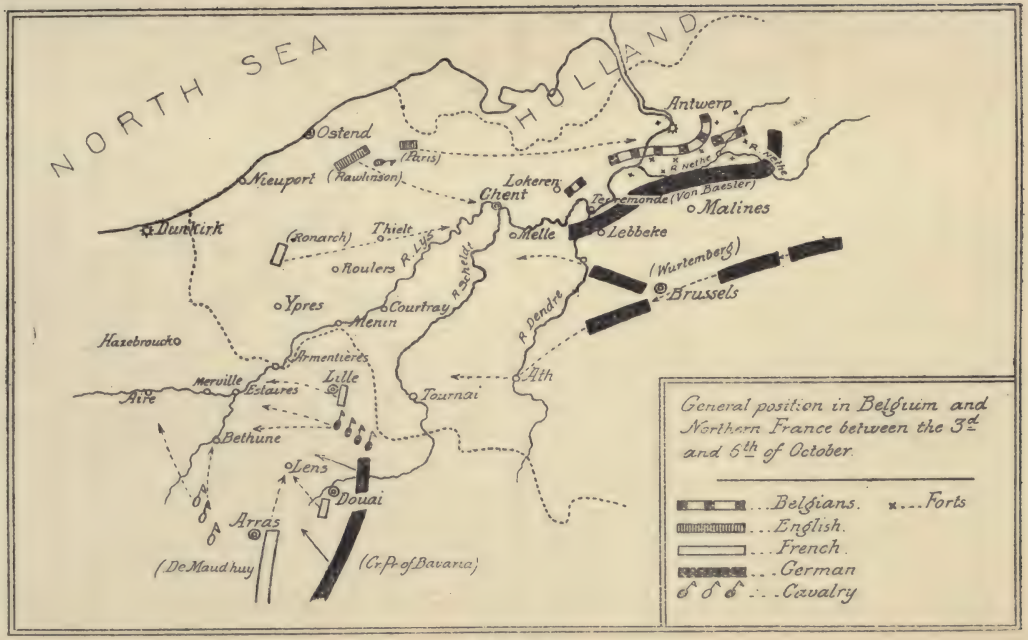
The forces which had been landed at Ostend were *not* really meant, as sound strategy dictated, to act as a link between the Belgians and their allies, but to give them actual support in Antwerp itself, so loth were the Allied statesmen to agree to the evacuation of the fortress, a contingency which they were bound to submit to in the end. And then it was in great part due to the blindness and clumsiness of the foe himself that the Allies, without more mishaps, were enabled to resume sounder principles of war.

The Germans continued to press on Joffre's left wing in France ; and the Crown Prince of Bavaria, adjusting his movements to that wing's expansion, glided gradually northwards, his place between the Oise and the Somme being taken by units of the 2nd German army under Von Bulow. This commander, energetic and efficient, did his utmost to help the action of his royal colleague in the north ; and he made a frantic attempt against the French line at Roye, which, if it had completely succeeded, would have resulted in the envelopment of Castelnau's army and the new elements which were concentrated at Amiens, on the line of the Somme. But the French position was absolutely secure and

no effort of the enemy could prevail against it. The Prussian Guards, after a terrific struggle, did capture Roye itself (October 3), but they could not advance further; and they were most terribly cut up, again under the eyes of their Kaiser, who had so recently witnessed, near Reims, a similar disaster. But on this occasion it was worse, for a regiment of this *elite* corps, cut off from the rest, surrendered completely, together with its band, musical conductor, and its whole staff of officers. (See "Bulletin des Armées," October 4–7.) Finally, on the top of this success, the French, in a counter attack near Roye, captured 1,600 more prisoners. These were nearly all Poles, whom the Germans, for political and racial reasons, preferred to employ against the French rather than against the Russians; but who, nevertheless, fought without enthusiasm and most willingly surrendered when the chance was offered them.

Meanwhile, further north, the army of Bavaria, likewise reinforced by a division of the famous Guards, attacked near Arras the new French forces which were issuing from the left rear of Castelnau. This was the 8th army under General de Maud'huy, the brilliant officer who had so recently distin-

guished himself near Reims. This army, consisting of reserves and divisions of the 14th and 21st corps taken from the right wing and the centre of the line, detrained at Amiens on the 30th, and General de Maud'huy, by the rapidity of his concentration and movements, succeeded for a time in outflanking the Germans towards Lens—but he was too weak to maintain his gains ; the Germans pressed him back and then, determined to have done with it and to check the Allies' visible attempt to rescue the Belgians, they ventured upon a course which they might have taken sooner if they had not rashly embarked on another important undertaking at the same time ; if, in other words, the forces which were necessary to subdue and capture the Belgian army at Antwerp had been more quickly available in North France. Aware at last that the mobility of their opponents was as great as, if not greater than, their own, the Germans decided to make the utmost use of their more mobile elements. They mustered all the mounted troops that lay immediately at hand, and cavalry corps after cavalry corps were launched south of Lille along the La Bassée Canal, towards St. Omer, Dunkirk, and Calais. Strong infantry supports followed, whilst


NORTH SEA
HOLLAND
Antwerp
Ostend
(Paris)
(Rawlinson)
Nieuport
Lokeren
Ghent
Terremonde (Von Baesler)
Malines
Dunkirk
(Ronarch)
Thielt
Melle
Lebbeke
R. Lys
R. Scheldt
(Wurtemberg)
Roulers
Brussels
Ypres
Courtray
Menin
R. Dendre
Hazebrouck
Armentieres
Merville
Estaires
Lille
Aire
Ath
Tournai
Bethune
Lens
Douai
Arras
(De Maudhuy)
(Cr Pr of Bavaria)
General position in Belgium and Northern France between the 3d and 6th of October.
...Belgians.
...English.
...French.
...German
...Cavalry
...Forts

MAP 11.

on the heights south of La Bassée, a formidable position was prepared to serve as pivot to subsequent movements in Flanders. The cavalry manœuvre was well planned and carried out, and, had it succeeded, would have enabled the Germans to reach Calais and to cut off the retreat of the Belgian army from Antwerp.

But the execution of the movement in point of time was faulty for, once more, like at St. Mihiel, the enemy acted too cautiously. He could not make use of the troops which were engaged at Antwerp, nor of the new army corps of fresh formation which were only just beginning to concentrate at Lille and Courtrai; and the Crown Prince of Bavaria, at grips with de Maud'huy on the Arras-Lens front, and apprehensive for his right flank and rear in Flanders, did not dare to risk an immediate advance in force on Calais. Thus the Allies managed once more to check their opponents. French cavalry divisions under General Conneau darted north behind de Maud'huy; and, simultaneously with the Germans, the French mounted troops deluged the undulating country west of Lille, where along the Belgian frontier the greatest cavalry action of the campaign took place, no less than

twelve divisions, or about 60,000 men, being engaged on both sides at the same time. The battle swayed to and fro for days (October 6–10) with no marked progress on either side, until a new French corps (the 10th) arrived. It detrained in the Lille district on the 10th, and deployed immediately on the left of the 8th army, about Annequin, along the Aire-Bethune Canal; and the crossings of the river Lys at Aire which the German cavalry had managed to secure were recaptured by the French. By this date the Belgian army had escaped from Antwerp and was on its way to the Yser; and the transference of the British army from the Aisne to Flanders had begun, and was going shortly to take effect. From that moment it can be said that, although General Joffre could not attain his object in full, the immediate chances of the enemy in Flanders were on the wane.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRANSFERENCE OF THE BRITISH ARMY FROM THE AISNE TO FLANDERS, AND THE SIEGE OF ANTWERP

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THE transference of the British army from the line of the Aisne to Flanders was one of the most important and complicated operations of the war. It initiated with the desire of Sir John French to see his contingent resume its original position on the left of the French forces. Incidentally the transference was necessitated by the advantages to be derived from the shortening of the British communications, and the grouping together of all British elements in the same region. Sir John French would make his junction with the detachment under Sir Henry Rawlinson which had landed at Ostend in support of the Belgians ; and he would also be joined in due time by the Indian corps which was disembarking at Marseilles. Strategically the movement would enable General Joffre to keep up the illusions of the enemy in regard of the supposed

early concentration of an allied army in Flanders, as the Germans would not know for some time whether the British troops they would meet there had not all been landed at Ostend or at any other points on the coast of Northern France or Belgium.

The execution of the movement in itself, resulting in the removal of the British army from the line of the Aisne, and its transport and detrainment in the north of France, was by no means an out-of-the-way achievement, as it formed part, or was at any rate the continuation of a process which had been going on since the beginning of the war, a process which had upset the calculations of the enemy at the Marne and everywhere else ever since that decisive event. In one respect, however, the present case differed from the others.

The basic elements which were required for the formation of the new French armies were removed from portions of the line where it was not found necessary to replace them in strength. The British forces, on the contrary, were taken away from positions which were not easy to defend and which could only be held successfully by a substantial quota of men. Another difficulty was the necessity to keep the enemy in the dark until the movement

was practically accomplished; otherwise he might take advantage of the temporary shortcomings which are inherent to an interchange of troops on the same positions—an operation which is akin to rash concentration. Most of the alterations had, perforce, to be made at night—and to guarantee themselves against any surprise the Allies resorted to other means of anticipating or paralysing any possible interference from the foe.

This was done by a double offensive movement which was carried out by the French on both sides of the positions to be evacuated by the English. On the left, Maunoury, supported by some of the British troops, which had not yet begun to withdraw, brought pressure to bear on the enemy west and north of Soissons. On the right, near Reims, D'Esperey undertook a series of attacks which yielded important local gains and kept the Germans nailed to the spot. Meanwhile the British divisions one by one were quickly withdrawn, replaced by French troops and transported to the north behind the fighting line. The more mobile elements moved first, the cavalry reaching on October 10 the region where, since the 6th, the French mounted corps, under Conneau, were heavily engaged with the

enemy. On the 11th, infantry units of the 2nd British corps detrained at Hazebrouck, whilst on the same day the 3rd accomplished its detrainment at St. Omer, and the new lines of communication of the British army, with its depots and bases of supply in England, were officially established in North France. General Foch, chosen by Joffre as his second-in-command, controlled the movement as well as the operations which were to result in the concentration of the Allied troops in Belgium. As the success of this concentration depended on the degree of velocity with which it was carried out, Sir John French did not wait for the arrival of the rest of his troops to begin operations. He deployed on Maud'huy's left, and pivoting on Givenchy, where his right was in touch with the 10th French corps, he brought his front on along the river Lys from a point opposite La Bassée, where the enemy was strongly established, to the neighbourhood of Ploogstraet in Belgium. This, naturally, was not achieved without much heavy fighting, as the Germans, aware of the constant accumulation of allied troops in the north, brought more and more reinforcements to cope with the situation. The allied cavalry, however, under Allenby and Conneau,

triumphed. It drove the German horse from the woods which served them as cover and *points d'appui* to the north of the canal, and gained possession of the important position of "mont des Cats."

This is a plateau which dominates the plain towards Ypres and upon which the enemy, had they had time, might have erected a pivot as strong as that at La Bassée, which would have barred the advance of the Allies to Ypres and would probably have prevented their junction with the Belgians. The allied cavalry after this success spread north-eastwards towards the Lys, whilst the British infantry, throwing off the cramping effects of trench life, carried position after position, driving the enemy through Bailleul, Merville, and Festubert. Thus the German turning movement by way of a thrust at Calais (the first they attempted in that direction) was checked; and a few days later the Allies were in a position to bring to a successful issue their new plans in Belgium.

Before coming to this, however, it is necessary to relate the event which came so near to wrecking the said new plans.

This was the German attack on Antwerp, which began on September 28th. At the end of the next

day the heavy guns of the assailants had demolished all the outer forts and rendered the fortress untenable. The Belgian Staff, as has been said, decided to withdraw the field army and to effect, by way of the line of the river Dendre or of the Scheldt, a junction with the French army, the left wing of which was rapidly developing northwards. The retreat was to begin on October 2 and arrangements were made to carry it out. In the meantime the Germans shelled the inner ring of forts, and on October 1 their infantry started their assaults. This delay in the matter of the use of infantry shows that they had learnt much at Liége, Namur, and Maubeuge and that they recognised that a modern stronghold cannot be tackled first with the rifle and the bayonet. Even then, at Antwerp, the assailant's foot troops acted too soon, as they gave the defenders opportunities for successful counter blows. In fact, they might not have acted at all in the way they did, since their object was not merely to subdue the fortress but to capture the opposing force which was sheltering in it. They could have massed there and then on the right bank of the Scheldt and have crossed it, thus cutting off the Belgian army's only possible line of retreat.

Whether this could have been done in time if the Belgians had stuck to their original arrangements for retreat is doubtful; but seeing that the Belgians were made to alter their plan and to linger on unduly in the doomed fortress, the Germans would undoubtedly have achieved their end if they had adopted the surer course.

It was on October 3rd, when the evacuation of the place by the Belgians had just begun and some of the troops were already across the Scheldt, that Mr. Churchill, the British Lord of the Admiralty, arrived at Antwerp, and he laid before the Belgian Staff and the Council of Ministers the views of his Government: Antwerp, he declared, the rich port and great base of supplies, could not, and must not, be abandoned; England had decided to send assistance and, Mr. Churchill added, important forces were already on the way. He must have meant the forces under Sir John French who were at the time being transferred from the Aisne to North France, and not the detachment landed in Ostend, which, by themselves, were by no means important. These were the 7th Infantry[1] and the 3rd Cavalry

[1] This division was commanded by General Capper, but the whole detachment was under Rawlinson.

divisions, under General Sir Henry Rawlinson, and a brigade of marines under General Paris ; to which must be added another brigade of marines (French) under Admiral Ronarch, which was on its way from Dunkirk to Ghent. These especially, and the former troops under Rawlinson, were first-rate elements, but in numbers they were not sufficient to achieve much or even to alter the situation appreciably in favour of the Belgians if these remained in their position at Antwerp. The Belgians, however, were loth themselves to accept the inevitable and quit Antwerp ; encouraged by the declaration and the attitude of the British Minister they determined to hold on and thus lost three valuable days, during which they could have effected their retreat at little risk and trifling cost and established themselves in conjunction with Rawlinson's forces and the French and British blue-jackets on the line of the Scheldt. Urged on by a wrong view of affairs and the unwarrantable promises made to them they chose the wrong course of procrastination, and it was indeed fortunate for them and their allies that the enemy, on his part, selected, and kept to, the more cautious form of attack ; for had the Germans struck sooner than

they did—which they could have done—across the Scheldt, it is difficult to see how the Belgian army could have escaped, unless it had taken refuge "*en bloc*" in neutral territory to be disarmed there, an expedient which would have been equivalent to capitulation.

At length, on October 6, the Belgians, alarmed at the progress of the foe, and seeing that they could receive no further reinforcements than the slender force of marines under Paris who were helping them in the defence of their fast crumbling forts, decided to resume their evacuating movement. Happily some of their forces were already on the left bank of the Scheldt and could thus check the tardy attempts of the enemy to cross the river. By the 9th, at mid-day, nearly the whole of the Belgian field forces had evacuated the fortress and were in motion towards Ghent, Bruges, and Ostend, whilst the Germans, not yet aware of this, were only just completing their passage over the river Nethe, to the east of Antwerp, and making ready for storming the inner ring of defences and the town itself, if necessary, at the point of the bayonet. Towards the end, however, a good deal of confusion prevailed in the Belgian ranks, and a division—the 2nd—

which formed the rear, narrowly escaped being cut off and captured, and suffered heavy losses; whilst the garrison troops, including the British marines, were unable, on account of the congestion, to rejoin the main army; and, to escape envelopment, they were obliged to enter Dutch territory, where over 30,000[1] able men were disarmed.

On the 10th Antwerp capitulated and the Germans entered the coveted city. They claimed a great victory and it looked indeed as if it was one for them, as if their situation had improved and they had now renewed chances of winning the war. The glamour of the event and its effects on the lay mind in all countries were great; and the pro-Teuton propagandists made much of it, especially in those quarters where the German Government, knowing their own situation better than people abroad, looked to armed intervention in their favour. For the "victory" was an empty one, if it was one at all; as the mere possession of Antwerp meant little or nothing to them once the Belgian army, which they had striven so hard to capture, was at large on its way to join its Allies in West Flanders or Northern France.

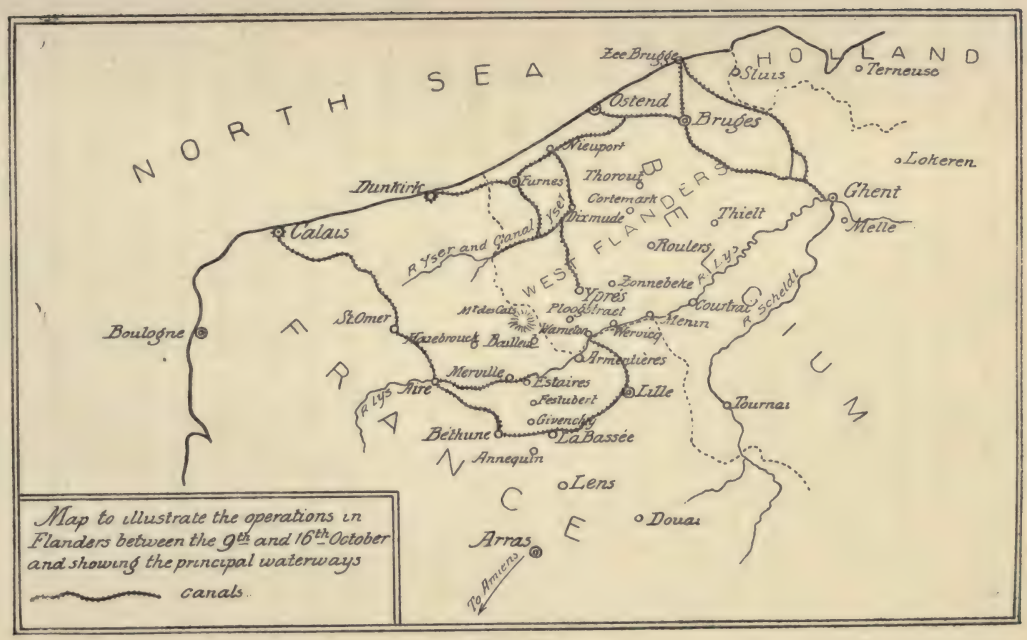
[1] These figures were given out in *Le Matin*.

The Belgians were only pursued by a couple of landwehr brigades which pressed hard on their rearguards about Lokeren ;[1] but this was in the night and, owing to the darkness and insufficient information, the enemy was not able to get in touch with the main body of the retreating army who was thus enabled to effect its retirement in fairly good order and to bring away unscathed some of its war material and munitions. Thinking that the Belgians were retiring in the direction of Roulers and Ypres, the Germans considered that it was too late to attempt to cut them off. It was believed that the British and the French were already in strength in Flanders. In fact, on that very day (October 10th), whilst the German commander, Von Baeseler, was presenting his last summons to General de Guise, commandant of Antwerp, the pursuing detachments which were "feeling" for the Belgians along the Scheldt came into collision at Melle, near Ghent, with the French marines under Ronarch. The resistance of these troops, as well as that offered at the same place a little later on by the more important contingents under Rawlinson, was well calculated to mislead the enemy and to convince them

[1] See Belgian official account entitled "*L'armée belge en campagne.*"

that the Allies were in strong positions. So, instead of concentrating their action in all haste towards the relentless pursuit of the Belgians, the enemy proceeded to the careful execution of a ponderous movement which aimed at a parallel assault on the positions which the Allies were supposed to have already organised and occupied in West Flanders. The army group under Baeseler pivoted backwards on its right in order to change front and to advance in echelons across the Scheldt, towards the coast, and the new German army group in Belgium, under the Grand Duke of Wurtemberg, which was beginning to concentrate at Courtrai and Lille, prepared to execute a similar movement, but by pivoting on its *left* and advancing towards Roulers and the line of the Yser.

All this was done to avoid the confusion and delays which often attend a general change of front necessitated by the selection of a new line of attack, but had the Germans been better informed as to the true line of retreat chosen by the Belgians, and especially as to the real disposition of the Allies in Belgium, they would have not lost time in the carrying out of such an elaborate operation. The first forces of the fresh army corps which arrived at


NORTH SEA
HOLLAND
Zee Brugge
Sluis
Terneuse
Ostend
Bruges
Nieuport
Lokeren
Dunkirk
Furnes
Thorout
Ghent
Cortemark
Thielt
Calais
Wixmude
Melle
R. Yser and Canal
Roulers
R. Lys
WEST FLANDERS
Zonnebeke
Ypres
Courtrai
R. Scheldt
Boulogne
St. Omer
Mt. des Cats
Ploegsteart
Menin
Hazebrouck
Bailleul
Wameton
Wervicq
Armentières
Merville
Estaires
Lille
R. Lys
Aire
Festubert
Tournai
Givenchy
Bethune
La Bassée
Annequin
Lens
Douai
Arras
To Amiens
Map to illustrate the operations in Flanders between the 9th and 16th October and showing the principal waterways
canals

MAP 12.

Courtrai and at Lille would have been immediately directed to advance on Roulers, Furnes or Ypres; Von Baeseler would have hurried from the north *in any fashion* with the units that were the nearest at hand, and the Allies would then have stood in a very dangerous position in Belgium. It is more than probable at any rate that they could not have undertaken to concentrate in Flanders, and the Belgians would have suffered a crushing and final disaster. The escape of the Belgian army at the eleventh hour under pressure of events was due, in the first place, to the stringent secrecy which was maintained by the French Staff as to the number and disposition of their forces; and in the second, although in more direct fashion, to the fine fight put up by the Allied detachments which covered the retreat of the Belgians. The 7th division especially, under General Capper, distinguished itself by its coolness under intense artillery fire and the orderliness of its movements at a moment which can well be described as the most confused in the campaign, and the bearing of this division will always deserve special mention in all detailed accounts of these operations.

CHAPTER IX

FRENCH'S PIVOTING MOVEMENT IN NORTHERN FRANCE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BRITISH ON THE LINE OF THE LYS

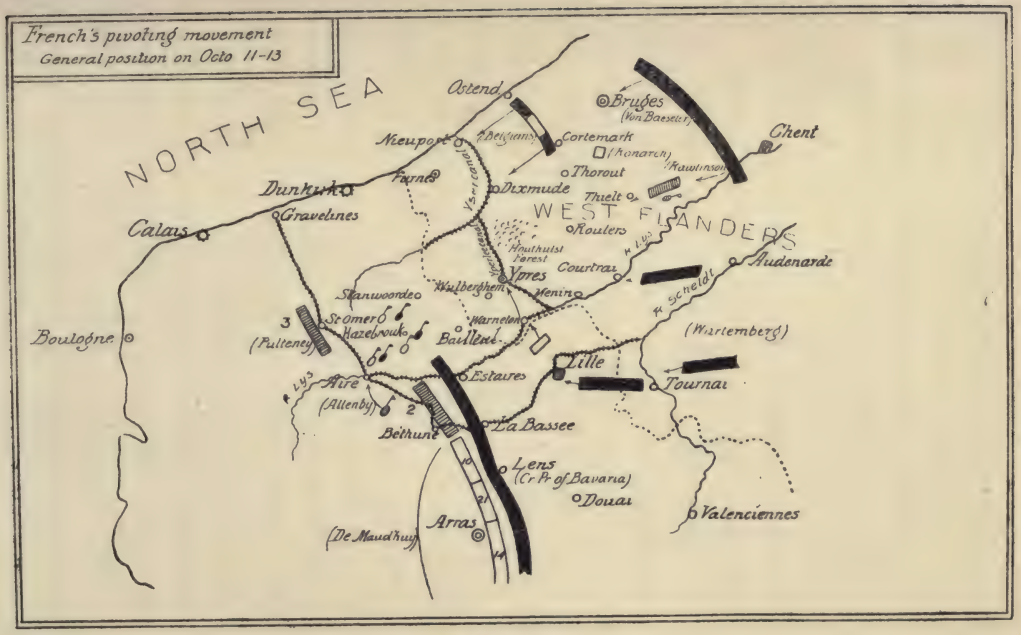
CHAPTER IX

FRENCH'S PIVOTING MOVEMENT IN NORTHERN FRANCE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BRITISH ON THE LINE OF THE LYS

Sir John French's pivoting movement in Northern France began on October 12, whilst the great cavalry action on the north bank of the Bethune-Calais canal was still going on, with the advantage now decidedly on the side of the Allies who, two days previously, had regained possession of the crossings at Aire, the point where the river Lys branches off with the canal. At that date the Belgian army, in retreat from Antwerp, had reached Cortemarck and Ostend; the covering detachment under Rawlinson had fallen back from Ghent to Thielt and Roulers; and units of the new German army group under the Grand Duke of Wurtemberg were arriving at Lille, which the small French force based on Dunkirk had evacuated, following orders in accordance with Joffre's new plan for concentration in Belgium. The French Staff recognised that,

owing to the delay in the evacuation of Antwerp by the Belgians, the attempt to secure the line of the Scheldt was no longer practicable. Hence the evacuation of Lille, a rich and important city, the Manchester of France, but which, under existing circumstances, could not be held by the Allies. A new line of concentration, therefore, was selected in West Flanders. This line extended from the La Bassée-Bethune canal, along the Lys to the Yser canal. The portion allotted to the British forces was that of the river itself from a point opposite Bethune as far as they could reach in the north, whilst behind them the French proceeded to effect their junction with the Belgians on the banks of the Yser. The first British infantry corps to come into action in Northern France was the 2nd, under Smith-Dorrien. It deployed between Bethune and Estaires whilst the 3rd corps (Pulteney) was detraining more to the rear at St. Omer.

Smith-Dorrien wheeled round on his right towards La Bassée with the purpose of cutting into the German line there, but he met much opposition in his advance, owing to the fact that the Crown Prince of Bavaria, although heavily engaged with de Maud'huy further south, was enabled, by the


French's pivoting movement
General position on Octo 11-13
NORTH SEA
Ostend
Bruges
(Von Baeseler)
Ghent
Nieuport
Belgians
Cortemark
(Monarch)
Thorout
Rawlinson
Dixmude
Thielt
Dunkirk
Furnes
Gravelines
Calais
WEST FLANDERS
Roulers
Houthulst Forest
Courtrai
R. Lys
Audenarde
Ypres
Wulverghem
Menin
R. Scheldt
Steenwoorde
Wameton
Boulogne
St Omer
Hazebrouck
Bailleul
(Wurtemberg)
(Pulteney)
Lille
Estaires
Tournai
Aire
(Allenby)
La Bassee
Bethune
Lens
(Cr Pr of Bavaria)
Douai
Valenciennes
Arras
(De Maudhuy)

MAP 13.

arrival of reinforcements at Lille, to strengthen his right. As he did so, however, de Maud'huy, in touch with Smith-Dorrien, became more aggressive. The 10th French corps, by a sudden thrust, threatened La Bassée from the south, whilst the 21st struck heavily at the enemy near Lens, upon which the German commander, leaving off momentarily his offensive against Maud'huy, consolidated his positions in front of the French so as to bring more troops against the English. And here we meet unmistakable proof of the enemy's perplexity as to the meaning of the Allies' movements in Belgium, the presence of British troops there and the disposition and objective of these troops. The Germans had the means of upsetting the arrangements of their opponents, of intercepting the retreat of the Belgians, of crushing the Franco-British detachments which were covering that retreat. They could have occupied Ypres, Roulers, and Furnes before the Allies had time to reach those points. The concentration which General Foch, who supervised and controlled these operations, was endeavouring to carry out in Belgium would have been baulked, and the Allies' left wing thrown back into Northern France ; finally the Germans would

have gained possession of the French coast as far as Calais, if not further. To say that this would have retrieved their strategic situation would be exaggerating; for, whatever their new gains, they could not hope to resume the ambitious programme of pre-Marne days—the first item of which consisted in the annihilation or capture of the whole of the French armies; failing that, the invaders had no chances of winning the campaign, not even of finishing the war as a whole on their own terms. But a victory of the Germans in Flanders would have minimised the prospects of the Allies, injured their cause in neutral countries, and unduly prolonged the operations.

The Germans failed to seize their opportunity, and this, for one reason which has already been stated: the belief that the Allies were already in strength in Belgium. The illusion was increased by the early presence of British and French troops there as far as Ghent, and the fine bearing of these troops in face of superior numbers; and also by the way in which Sir John French executed his pivoting movement.

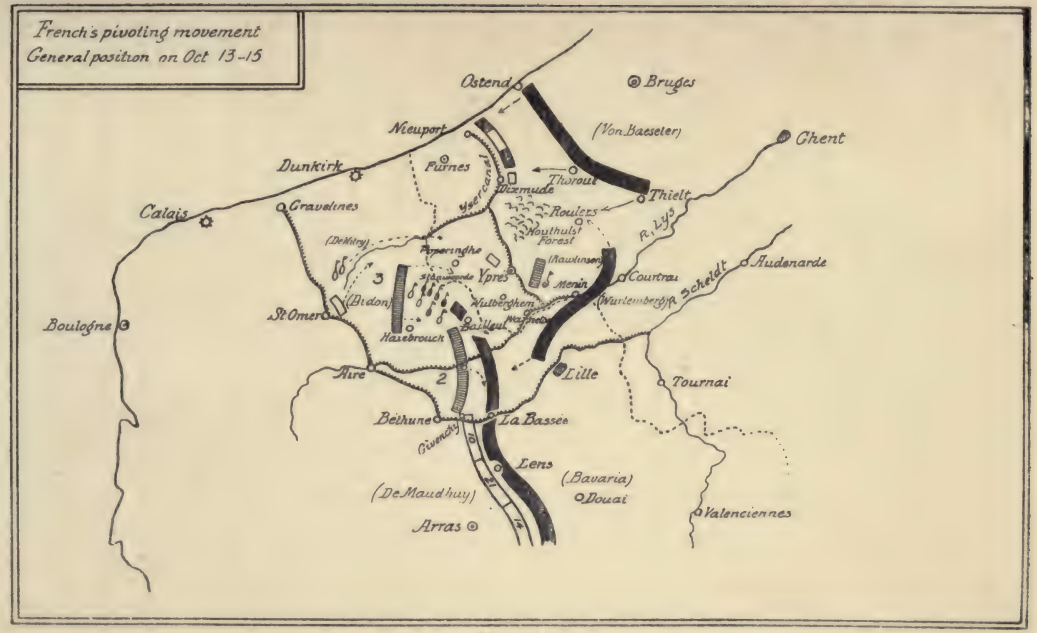
As we have seen, the British troops that the Germans encountered on that part of the front

belonged to the 2nd corps ; to these must be added the cavalry, under Allenby, which, advancing together with the French mounted corps under Conneau, covered Smith-Dorrien's flank. A little later, however, as the Germans increased their strength in front of Smith-Dorrien in order to throw him back and sever him from the French, they beheld more khaki-clad infantry which were advancing from the direction of the coast. This was the 3rd corps, under Pulteney, which had detrained at St. Omer ; the concentration of this contingent was similar, on a smaller scale, to that of Castelnau's army at Clermont-Beauvais at an earlier stage of the operations, and the effect on the enemy was the same. The Germans were put out and surprised and they lost time in gathering information. Meanwhile Pulteney wheeled round, on the left of the cavalry, towards Bailleul and Warneton. The enemy, already puzzled as to the disposition of the opponents, was completely taken in. He no doubt thought that an important landing of troops had been effected by the Allies, who would thereby be in a position to assume the offensive on a large scale in Belgium. Hurriedly evacuating Bailleul, which the English at once seized, the Germans withdrew

across the Lys ; and by the 16th of October, after some more desultory, but in some cases quite hard, fighting, in which the 3rd division especially distinguished itself by crossing the canals over planks in the teeth of a strong opposition, Sir John French was firmly established on the left bank of the Lys.

This date marks the opening of the operations in Flanders which culminated in the first battle of Ypres, but to make them clear and also to show their true importance it is necessary first to deal with the operations which made secure the position of the Allies, further south, from the Lys to the Arras front, and then with the siege or trench warfare which went on simultaneously on the rest of the front ; for without a clear knowledge of these concurrent events it is not possible to obtain the right view of the great movements which resulted in the final collapse of the enemy's offensive in Flanders. The siege operations, however, will be told in a subsequent chapter, whilst the former (the consolidation of the allied line on the Lys and the Arras front) must be dealt with now.

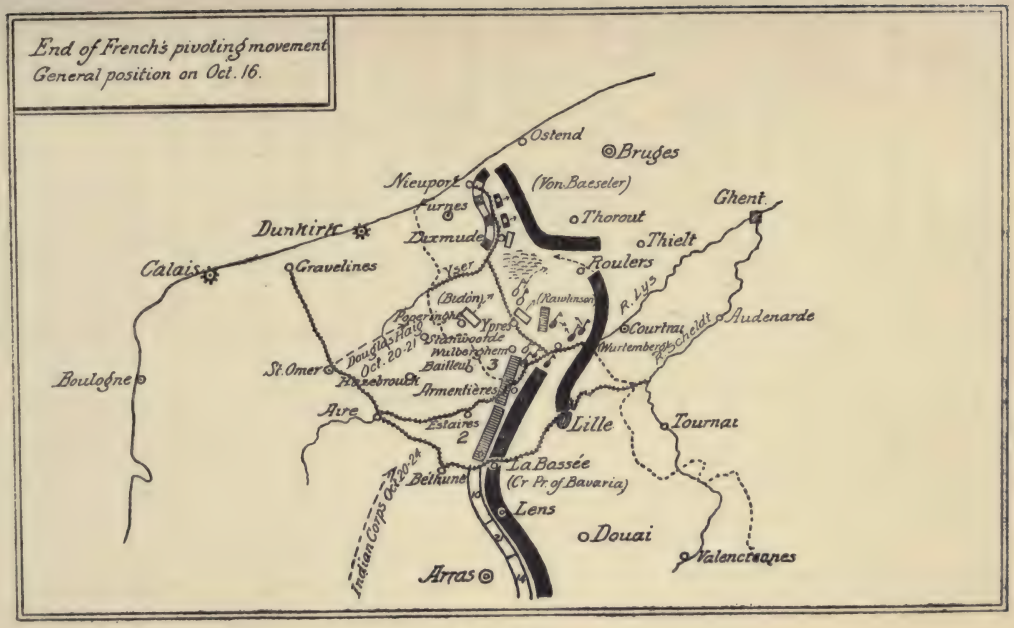
The situation of affairs following the failure of their thrust at Calais brought the German leaders to think that they had few remaining chances, if


French's pivoting movement
General position on Oct 13–15
Ostend
Bruges
Nieuport
(Von Baeseler)
Ghent
Dunkirk
Furnes
Thorout
Thielt
Calais
Gravelines
Dixmude
Roulers
R. Lys
(De Mitry)
Poperinghe
Houthulst Forest
(Maunoury)
Ypres
Menin
Courtrai
Audenarde
R. Scheldt
(Wurtemberg)
Boulogne
St Omer
(Bidon)
Hazebrouck
Bailleul
Armentieres
Aire
Lille
Tournai
Bethune
La Bassee
Lens
(Bavaria)
(De Maudhuy)
Douai
Arras
Valenciennes

MAP 14.

any, of reaching the end which they were seeking since their fiasco on the Marne. And well they might despair, for not in a single item of their new scheme had they been successful. The Allies on the Aisne and in Champagne had refused frontal action ; at the same time they had held on firmly to their own positions and thwarted every effort of their opponents to regain a more forward line. This had been followed by repeated German checks in Northern France and the escape of the Belgian army from Antwerp. Now the Allies were united and their unbreakable front extended as far as the sea, of which they had the mastery. Such was the general outlook in the West as it appeared to the enemy on October 16, for they were not aware of the real state of affairs and their constant disappointments weighed upon them. Nevertheless they decided to make the most of the existing situation and to employ to the best advantage their vast accumulation of forces at the northern extremity of their battle line. This accumulation, which was being answered by the Allies and which was going to lead to one of the fiercest clashes of arms of the whole war, was the outcome on the part of the Germans of their constantly renewed, but un-

availing, efforts to turn the French left; for these defeats made the army which was detailed for the task drift more and more to the north until it found itself pressed in the concentration sphere of the new army group under the Grand Duke of Wurtemberg. Congestion was inevitable, especially as the German commanders, taking it too much for granted that their movements would succeed, had made no provision for such a state of affairs. Thus six army corps and their full quota of cavalry and auxiliary troops found themselves "jammed" in a comparatively narrow space to the west and south of Lille, with the Allies pressing against them from both directions. Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, his right thrown back across the Lys, his left coerced near Arras, his rear barred at Lille by the concentrating columns of Wurtemberg, found himself temporarily in a difficult and ticklish situation resembling that of a juggler who is well supplied with implements but has to perform on too small a stage. The Allies were aware of this as well as of the confusion and uncertainty which existed in the enemy's mind and which were betrayed by his constant shifting and reshifting of his line; and, at one moment, it looked as if they would turn to vast


End of French's pivoting movement
General position on Oct. 16.
Ostend
Bruges
Nieuport
(Von Baeseler)
Ghent
Furnes
Thorout
Dunkirk
Dixmude
Thielt
Calais
Gravelines
Ypres
Roulers
(Rawlinson)
R. Lys
(Budony)
Audenarde
Courtrai
Douglas Haig
Oct. 20-21
Wytschaete
Wulverghem
(Wurtemberg)
R. Scheldt
Boulogne
St. Omer
Bailleul
3
Hazebrouck
Armentières
Aire
Estaires
2
Lille
Tournai
La Bassée
(Cr Pr of Bavaria)
Indian Corps Oct. 20-24
Bethune
Lens
Douai
Arras
Valenciennes

MAP 15.

account the difficulties of the foe. De Maud'huy's renewed and increased activity south of Lille; the strenuous attempts made by the allied cavalry to secure the crossings over the Lys between Armentieres and Warneton; and, above all, the orders sent by French to Rawlinson to march, from the east of Ypres, on Menin; everything points to a determined intention on the part of the Allies to drive the 6th German army pellmell into Lille and out of it afterwards. The temptation was strong, but, having regard to the vast and increasing strength of the enemy in Flanders, it was too dangerous. First of all, the Crown Prince of Bavaria, whose forces were at least equal in numbers to those under French and de Maud'huy put together, had no intention of remaining in his cramped condition. His organised positions were formidable and, at the worst, would have enabled him to carry out an orderly retreat whilst the Allies would have wasted their strength in a profitless undertaking. Secondly, by the 16th of October, when the army of Bavaria's right wing was thrown back across the Lys by the British, the concentration of Wurtemberg at Courtrai and Lille was practically accomplished,

whilst that of the Allies in Flanders had scarcely begun.

The new German contingents, having executed the movement described in Chapter VIII. in conjunction with that of Von Baeseler more to the north, started their concentric march to the Yser, through Roulers, almost immediately, and this gave elbow room and manœuvring space to the German 6th army in the Lille district. This army could deploy more at ease and prolong its front to the north bank of the Lys above Warneton. Shortly afterwards (October 18), Prince Rupprecht, who kept count of his kinsman's movement, resumed offensive operations, with a violence and desperation which showed how well, for all his strength, he felt the hopelessness of the German situation. For eight days (October 18–26), whilst the great struggle was spreading and developing northwards around Ypres and along the Yser, the Bavarian commander made frantic efforts to reassume the advantage—to overwhelm the British army; to sever this army from its allies the French; to drive out of Arras and reduce to impotence the latter. All to no purpose, however. And this action had not even the indirect result, also aimed at by the

enemy, of thwarting the concentration of the Allies in Belgium, a movement which was proceeded with as if nothing was happening along the rest of the line. Yet there were moments when the position of the Allies on the Lys and the Arras front seemed desperate. The British 3rd corps was pressed back from the Lys, near Warneton and Le Gheer, in the direction of Ploogstraet and Wulberghem. The 2nd corps, in the centre, weakened by heavy losses and also a temporary shortage of drafts, gave way somewhat under the formidable onslaughts of the foe, who thus were able to add to the strength of their pivot at La Bassée by the occupation and thorough organisation of Neuve Chapelle. Near Arras, the French, victorious at first, gave way momentarily, and the enemy's long range ordnance getting near enough to the town, shelled it once more and accomplished the wrecking of a beautiful historic monument—the famous Hotel de Ville, a model of its kind. But—and this is a shining proof of the sterling worth of the calculations made by the French Staff—no serious mishap of a strategic kind occurred, the reinforcements which were destined for that part of the front always detraining and entering the action within the scheduled time.

Thus, to take the British forces only: the Indian contingent, under Sir James Willcocks, which had disembarked at Marseilles, was due in Northern France, behind Sir John French's line, on a particular date. On that date (October 19) the first units of that corps arrived and were able on the next day to give support to the British 3rd corps at Wulberghem in Belgium. On the 24th, the whole of the Lahore division (General Watkis) was concentrated in rear of the 2nd corps, at Lacon, its fresh elements relieving a certain number of war-worn battalions and squadrons which were reduced to a state of extreme exhaustion. The native troops, although handicapped by the inopportune season and the violent change of climate and conditions, gave proof of their worth and of their usefulness in night attacks and with the cold steel. This was demonstrated, almost at once, by the combined attack made by the Sikhs, Bhopal infantry, and the Bombay miners and sappers on Neuve Chapelle on October 28. Owing to the strength of the German position the operation was costly and only partially successful, but it was of use in revealing the special aptitudes of these troops and the best ways they could be employed in the new kind of warfare the

enemy had initiated. On that very day the Meerut division got into line and the Indian corps was then complete and at full strength. It took up the main positions which the 2nd British corps and also the 1st French cavalry corps had occupied between Armentières and Givenchy, where the men of the East found themselves in contact with de Maud'huy's army. This big reinforcement enabled the above mentioned French mounted corps, as well as some of the British cavalry, to transfer their activity to the region of Ypres, where, during the initial stage of the operations, mobile elements were more needed than on the siege front further south. The 8th French army was likewise reinforced, always within the regulated time, by reserves and freshly formed elements. And thus it was that in spite of his strength and most strenuous and persistent endeavours, the Crown Prince of Bavaria failed to reach any of his ends and had perforce to register one more fiasco in his long list of disappointments.

Seemingly this great action had no decisive results, though, even so, it could be considered as an Allied victory, since the effect of indecisive action on the Germans in this war was equivalent to defeat. But to be strictly accurate the battle of the Lys,

as it may be called, was not indecisive. It was a decided strategic success which barred definitely to the enemy the road to the French coast, and which made the concentration of the Allies in Flanders possible. On the result of this operation depended the fate of the Belgian army, and the crowning accomplishment which sealed once for all the ultimate fate of Germany.

CHAPTER X

THE TRENCH WARFARE IN FRANCE AS VIEWED IN RELATION TO THE BIGGER OPERATIONS IN FLANDERS

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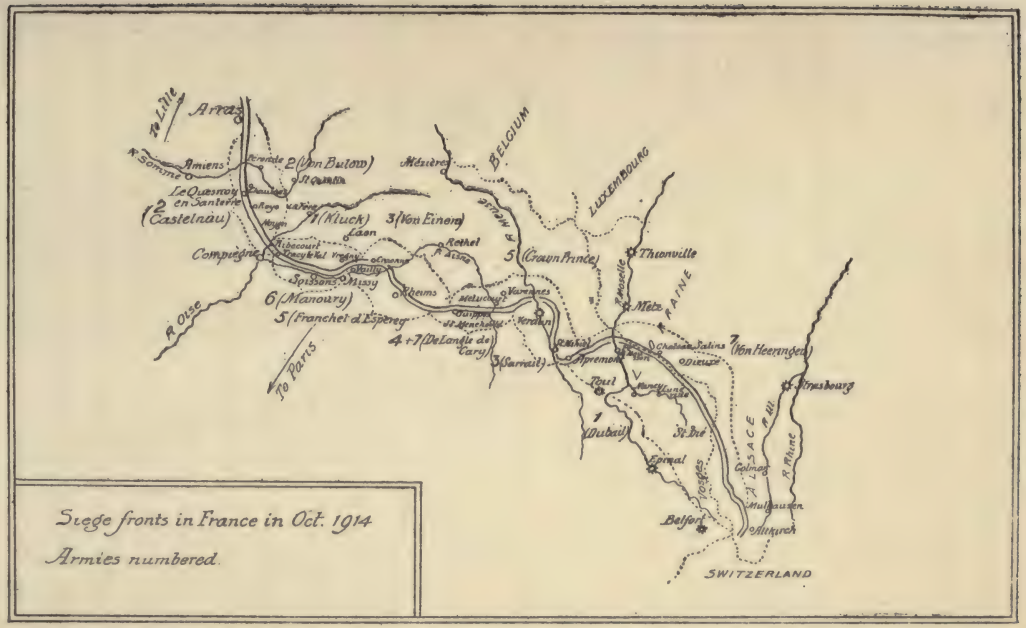
THE TRENCH WARFARE IN FRANCE AS VIEWED IN RELATION TO THE BIGGER OPERATIONS IN FLANDERS

As the conflict extended northwards and right across Belgium to the shores of the North Sea, the attention of the world became riveted upon the crowning scenes of the great drama which was enacted in West Flanders, on the banks of the Lys and the Yser and around the town of Ypres. The magnitude and desperate character of the struggle overshadowed concurrent events of vital import which were thereby overlooked or easily forgotten. And thus the significance of those very actions which absorbed the public mind came to be, like many another development in the campaign, rashly misinterpreted, and in a way, too, which suited the Germans and helped greatly their widespread propaganda in neutral countries. It was said, aye, proclaimed, that they were endeavouring to reverse the issue of the Marne, to obtain in fact a decision

on the basis of their first designs ; that each time, at every fresh try, they were within an ace of achieving this ; and what was mildly described as their " check " at the Marne was viewed in the light of a temporary mishap which they could easily redress. Their recrudescence of strength and activity blinded everyone, so did the answering French action which was left unexplained. What amount of harm the popular point of view did to the Allied cause can be gauged by its inevitable result. Before the year was out, before even the great actions in Flanders reached their climax, a powerful neutral joined Germany. Turkey, convinced by the attitude of the Allied Governments themselves that success would finally crown the efforts of the Central Empires, entered the lists on their side, and the Allies had perforce to alter their arrangements and to distribute their reserves and fresh trained elements according to a new scheme and a considerably enlarged sphere of operations.

How mistaken, how wrong were those who doubted the power of the Allies to finish the war on their own terms even with added odds against them will be fully demonstrated later on. Let us now examine some features of the campaign which, had


To Lille
Arras
R. Somme
Amiens
Le Quesnoy en Santerre
2 (Castelnau)
2 (Von Bulow)
1 (Kluck)
3 (Von Einem)
Compiegne
Laon
Rethel
R. Aisne
Soissons
Mizy
6 (Maunoury)
5 (Franchet d'Esperey)
R. Oise
To Paris
Reims
Varennes
St Menehould
Verdun
4 + 7 (De Langle de Cary)
3 (Sarrail)
Mezieres
BELGIUM
R. Meuse
LUXEMBOURG
5 (Crown Prince)
Thionville
Metz
RAINE
Toul
Nancy
Epinal
1 (Dubail)
St Dié
Colmar
R. Rhine
Mulhausen
Belfort
Mulhouse
SWITZERLAND
7 (Von Heeringen)
Strasbourg
Siege fronts in France in Oct. 1914
Armies numbered.

MAP 16.

they been intelligently condensed and rightly interpreted, would have gone a long way towards the shortening of the war.

The most notable of these was, naturally, the successful concentration of the Allies in West Flanders, which resulted in the final collapse of the German plan of campaign in the West. But ere one deals with this momentous undertaking it is necessary to go over the contemporaneous local actions or siege warfare which, properly reviewed, help to put the greater events in their true perspective ; for it should not be forgotten that, important as were the movements in Flanders, their sphere of extension did not reach beyond Arras, whilst simultaneously from that point, right across the whole of France to the Swiss frontier, incessant fighting for local positions went on ; a fact the high significance of which has unfortunately escaped the notice of well-nigh all the popular commentators on the war. This, strange to say, not from any lack of knowledge and information, for the daily " communiqués " were sufficiently prolific and detailed about these operations, but rather from that very excess of cumulative evidence which, far from clearing the situation, produced on the contrary

the effect of blinding light. People could not bring themselves to believe that the French were winning because they were not "advancing"; success in the war being measured not by the result of an operation but by the amount of ground gained.

Nothing in future ages will stand more to the credit of the Allies than the superiority they so quickly acquired over their foes in that kind of warfare for which they were the least prepared; and nothing will puzzle the conscientious historian more than the inability of the contemporaneous world to realise and correctly interpret such a fact. For the Allies, although handicapped in so many ways, not only defeated their formidable and well-equipped opponents in the higher combinations of warfare, but beat them also at their own game, the one at which they excelled—the war of details, of underground and forest fighting; the wily, cunning work of hand grenades, sap mines, and surprise attacks, aircraft work in all its various combinations; not to mention other and more objectionable methods which the thorough, but brutal-minded Teutons initiated later on. At a time when the occupation of French territory by the Germans outweighed all other considerations in the public

mind, the thick-headed admirers of brute strength might have pondered on the long chain of events which were described with such cheerful unwavering confidence in the daily " communiqués " ; for these official documents, if they did nothing else, at least gave sufficient indications to prove that the confidence of the authorities who issued them was based on substantial grounds. Temporary checks, which were always faithfully announced and described, were few and far between, whilst the successes, apart from those great achievements which completed the failure of the foe, were many and often of a nature to dispel any remaining doubt as to who were the conquerors in this campaign. The public, nevertheless, went on doubting until gradually, towards the later stages of the war, it began to dawn upon them that the reconquest of territory was not the main object pursued by those who directed and controlled the movements of the Allies.

It would be tedious to go over the whole of the siege work or lateral operations which synchronised with the big movements in Flanders, but it is as well to note those which deserve special mention, as this will show that the optimism of the best judges even at a time when the decisive character

of the Marne victories was not yet fully realised, was perfectly justified.

We have spoken of the partial offensives which at the beginning of October Maunoury and D'Esperey carried out to facilitate the removal of the British from the Aisne. After those no further pronounced movements were attempted during the second phase by the French in France as their effectives there at the time were reduced to a minimum so as to increase their strength in Flanders; and these effectives, mere skeleton of armies some of them, were enjoined to act mainly on the defensive. The enemy, however, was stronger and pursued consistently his policy of hampering the action of the opponent at the main point of contact. Hence those local engagements, partial attacks and counter attacks, which furnish us with outstanding indications of the Gallic superiority over the Germans.

First there was the frustrated attempt of the enemy to issue once more across the Meuse, at St. Mihiel. He gained a footing on the left bank, in the region of the wrecked fort, Les Paroches; but he lost it almost immediately (October 2) never to regain it afterwards.[1] Then the severe

[1] The Germans kept possession of the village, or hamlet, of Chanvoncourt, but as this was merely a bridge-head and they

defeat which was inflicted by units of the 2nd and 5th French corps on the 16th German corps in the Argonne (October 3). The latter, in a sudden movement which was perfectly carried out, tried to slip round the Bois la Grurie in order to threaten General Sarrail's communications. The French, however, were on the alert. They fell on the enemy with the bayonet and after a struggle, the grimness of which has been seldom if ever surpassed, the discomfited and routed enemy fell back to his former positions. About the same date in Lorraine the Germans indulged in a series of attacks which were all unsuccessful and resulted in the French advancing to and establishing themselves on the German frontier opposite Dieuze and Chateau Salins ; the enemy lost, also, on the slopes of the Vosges the positions from which he had been enabled to bombard the town of St. Dié.

Shortly afterwards (October 7–12) in the Woevre, there was the five days battle for the village of Apremont. This townlet lies at the opening of the forest of the same name which closes the approaches to St. Mihiel from the east and south. It changed hands four times and finally remained

were not able to issue from it, it is exactly as if they had no footing on the left bank.

in the possession of the French (8th Army Corps).

In the Argonne the local actions went on most bitterly, but they terminated generally in favour of the French, who on the 24th crowned their achievements of the period with the capture of the village of Melzicourt, an important position which commands the roads leading from Varennes across the forest to the Aisne Valley.

In Champagne the plateau of Craonne most particularly, and its immediate neighbourhood, were the scenes of many a murderous combat which invariably resulted to the advantage of the French. It must be said that the positions which d'Esperey had organised to the north of Reims were particularly formidable and easy to defend. To realise this one has only to go back to the crushing victory achieved there by de Maud'huy, and to add to it the defeat sustained at the very same spot a month afterwards, by the 13th Reserve corps of Wurtemberg. This corps in a fruitless night attack (October 27–28) lost more than 2,000 killed, whilst the casualties of the defenders were only a hundred.

But the most notable success of the period in the siege warfare was achieved by the troops under Castelnau at Le Quesnoy en Santerre. The enemy

there had elaborately fortified a position which served him as a pivot for his local endeavours on the left bank of the Somme. Since its action with the Bavarian army had come to an end the 2nd French army had remained more or less passive, its units being constantly depleted to reinforce the first formed contingents in the north. The place of the Bavarian army between the Oise and the Somme was taken by units of the 2nd German army under Von Bulow which were transferred to that spot from the valley of the Aisne ; but these enemy units, after their severe handling at Roye, Lassigny, and Chaulnes, were comparatively enfeebled also and did not attempt much more until the battles in Flanders reached their climax. Then Von Bulow and the other German commanders in charge of the trench line in France assumed suddenly a more aggressive attitude with the object of preventing the dispatch of more French reinforcements to the north. Von Bulow's attacks, however, which began on or about October 27, were all repulsed ; and a few days afterwards the French, taking the offensive, drove back the enemy, pushed him beyond Lihons,[1] and in brilliant hand-to-hand fighting captured Le Quesnoy

[1] This locality was mentioned in the *Communiqués* but can only be indicated on large-scale maps.

en Santerre (October 30–31). More to the right, on the banks of the Oise, the French progressed towards Tracy le Val, and subsequently all the efforts of the enemy to recapture his lost positions were unavailing.

All these victories, some of which, although of a local character, were quite important, show clearly that the invaders were in a sorry plight and that they only relied on their numbers and the accumulated strength of their positions to avoid more complete disasters. There they were, the would-be conquerors of the world, dug in like moles before feebler and less prepared opponents. The brilliant exponents of the goose step, who a few weeks previously were advancing so triumphantly into France with the avowed object of crushing and capturing the whole of the French armies, now, foiled in their chief attempt, stood on the defensive against those same armies which they had so stupidly despised. Their local attacks almost invariably failed and on the rare occasions when they succeeded they were generally followed by a more telling counter stroke. A good instance of this is furnished by the second attempt the Germans made to oust the French from the north bank of the Aisne. This occurred shortly after the costly

reverse sustained by the Wurtembergese Landwehr near Craonne. The positions that the French had taken over from the British, east and north of Soissons, were not easy to defend as they were commanded by the more elevated ground further north. Other shortcomings hampered the French in that region: with the exception of a few regiments all the troops there were territorials with little or no experience in trench warfare; and they were short of weapons—of heavy guns especially of the kind which had enabled the British to answer effectively to the long-range howitzers of the enemy. Thus it came about that the Germans, who still had hopes of recapturing Soissons, scored a big success which might have led them not only to the reoccupation of the coveted town but would also have rendered untenable the other French positions on the north bank of the river. The Germans made a determined effort and at the end of five days of desperate struggle (October 30–November 3) captured the village of Vailly, and drove the French back to the Aisne, and even at some points (near Missy) right across it. This success was tremendously magnified in the German reports;[1] and, certainly,

[1] This action is not to be confused with a similar engagement which occured in the same region in January, 1915.

by the importance given it even in the allied press itself, it outshone all the French achievements elsewhere. But it was only of a temporary character, although the German world was allowed, by the subsequent omissions of the Wolff Bureau, to rest on its laurels. The French line on the Aisne was quickly remanipulated and reinforced; Creusot heavy guns entered the action, and behold! the situation was suddenly reversed—the German howitzers were silenced; their infantry was counter attacked and routed, and the French not only recaptured Vailly, but they even set foot on new positions, on the plateau of Vregny, which they had not previously occupied! (November 8.)

So, along the whole line, with the exception of a momentary reverse—a reverse which as we have seen they retrieved brilliantly—the French scored continuously. They not only maintained their positions but won fresh ones. Everywhere in fair fight they defeated their opponents; and thus gave sufficient proof that with better preparation and the numerical strength which they still lacked they would finally crush the Germans and render them impotent for all time.

CHAPTER XI

CONCERNING THE BATTLE OF THE YSER AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE IN REGARD TO THE CONCENTRATION OF THE BRITISH AND THE FRENCH IN FLANDERS

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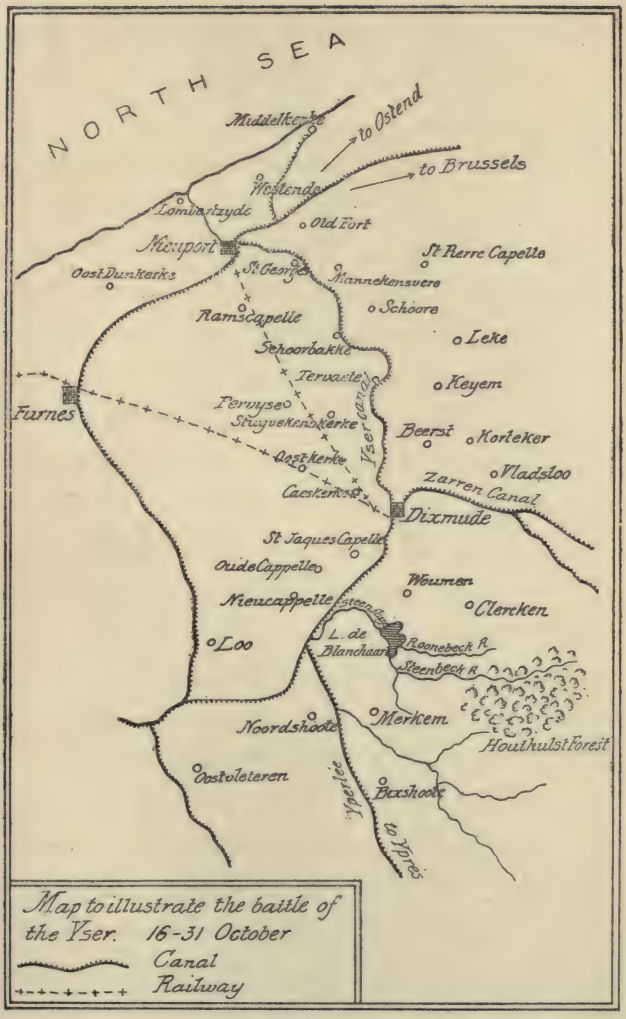
We now come to the crowning events of the second phase which gave to the world the impression that the Germans in France were seeking anew a solution to their military problem. These events in reality resulted from a collision of forces in a quarter where the accumulation of their troops had not been foreseen by the Germans, but which had been forced upon them—first by their failure to turn the allied left wing in France, and secondly by the escape of the Belgian army from Antwerp, a development which, as we have seen, they could not have guessed. The army of Bavaria in its vain and constantly foiled endeavours drifted from the line of the Somme as far north as Lille, and the army group under Baeseler, having missed its object at

[1] The general outline of this battle is given on the maps illustrating French's pivoting movement (Ch. IX.)

Antwerp, came down into West Flanders in pursuit of the Belgians ; during that time the freshly formed group under Wurtemberg was concentrated in the same region between the two other forces—and so it happened that at the opening of the operations in West Flanders the Germans had actually more troops than they could do with and that they were more embarrassed than helped by this vast and sudden accumulation. They could have turned it immediately to account had they been better informed as to the dispositions and true strength of their opponents ; but, as we shall see clearly later on, they were walking in the dark and found themselves at a loss to make out, and, therefore, to deal with, the situation.

Contrary to public opinion the German leaders were quite aware that the solution of the Western campaign had been settled already, a long time since.[1] The battles of Nancy and of Fère Champenoise had been the death blow of their ambition. What they were attempting since then was to maintain their footing and add to their gains

[1] A German professor captured at the first battle of Ypres stated as his opinion that the German leaders knew their situation and were only fighting to obtain good terms of peace.


NORTH SEA
Middelkerke
to Ostend
to Brussels
Westende
Lombartzyde
Old Fort
Nieuport
St Pierre Capelle
Oost Dunkerke
St George
Mannekensvere
Schoore
Ramscapelle
Leke
Sehoorbakke
Tervaete
Keyem
Furnes
Pervyse
Steenkerke
Beerst
Korteker
Oostkerke
Vladsloo
Isercanal
Zarren Canal
Caeskerke
Dixmude
St Jaques Capelle
Oude Cappelle
Wounen
Nieucappelle
Clercken
L. de Blanchaan
Loo
Boonebeck R.
Steenbeck R.
Noordschoote
Merkem
Houthulst Forest
Oostvleteren
Ypriée
Boschoote
to Ypres
Map to illustrate the battle of the Yser. 16-31 October
Canal
Railway

MAP 17.

in the territories they occupied, in order to blind the world as to their defeat, and thereby secure the help of certain neutral countries that they were counting upon. Their numbers and long and thorough preparations for war enabled them to act in this way, and their weaker and less prepared opponents had perforce to choose between quick exhaustion and the prolonged occupation of their territory by the enemy. Time being on their side, owing partly to the latent power of Russia, and partly through the mastery of the seas by England, they chose the latter course. Hence the siege war and everything else which ensued. The Germans were baulked in their new scheme, which aimed at the rapid exhaustion of the French; but they scored in another way, for they succeeded in drawing Turkey to their side, and thus in diverting Allied reserves which otherwise would have hurried matters to the further detriment of Germany in the main spheres of the conflict. Turkey's intervention obliged the Allies to modify their plans and to weaken their forces in the decisive quarters of operations. British contingents which were on their way to France were concentrated in Egypt, where they were joined later by important French units whilst Russia, who

was victorious in the Carpathians, and was also pressing heavily on the German eastern forces in Poland, had to send a big army to the Caucasus.

For all that the Germans could not alter the issue. In France especially they could entertain no other hope but that of improving their defensive positions ; of wearing out the resources as well as the patience of the Allies ; and thus of creating a situation which would enable them to make peace on terms that would not be too disadvantageous to them, and that would leave them strong enough to start afresh with better prospects at some future time.

The operations in Flanders have to be considered from that point of view. It is true that the Germans fought there with as great a determination as at the Marne ; that their leaders continued to issue thrilling proclamations and orders to their troops ; and that almost invariably in their passionate words (which savoured strongly of bitter disappointment) they still pointed to Paris as the goal ; but all this now was empty talk and braggadocio designed to throw dust in other people's eyes ; besides which they were naturally bent on securing the maximum of profit at any given spot with the forces that they had at their disposal. Finally, owing to their

position and the objects of their new policy, they had to continue to play to the gallery and assume the bearing of conquerors. Neutral people with Teutonic tendencies had their eyes fixed on them, and to the best of their ability were weighing the Kaiser's chances of eventual and final victory in view of throwing in their lot with him, and helping him to spread Prussian " Kultur " over the world.

Hence the huge efforts made in Flanders by the enemy, who calculated that any local victory, however dearly bought, would rally some fresh ally to the standards of Germany.

On the part of the Allies the general intention or scheme of these operations was to prevent any further progress of the enemy into Flanders, and render impracticable all attempts he might make to turn the Allied left by way of the coast ; and thus of sealing more completely the ultimate fate of Germany, which had already been determined by the result of the Marne operations. Technically the so-called battle of Flanders was a defensive action or set of actions against an enemy who had been constantly baffled and defeated, but who was still strong, had reserves at hand, and therefore could still act on the offensive. The Allied leaders could

determine the reasons for the enemy's action, and calculate beforehand on the likely trend of its development; so, the concentration of the British and French in Flanders and their junction with the Belgians there were undertaken on the basis of certain factors which had been foreseen and prepared for.

First, the inevitable lack of effectives on the spot, at the commencement of these operations; this temporary shortage being due to the eccentric form of the Allied front and the length of the lines of transport and communication resulting therefrom; a state of affairs which was similar to previous situations which had occurred between Compiègne and the Lys, and which had prevented General Joffre from turning the German right wing in Northern France. The second factor which had to be seriously considered was the somewhat weakened and disorganised state of the Belgian army after its trials and rapid retreat. The Belgians were short of one division, which had been interned in neutral territory (Dutch) after the evacuation of Antwerp; and they had not been able to bring away with them all their artillery and munitions. The third factor was more advantageous to the Allies. This was the

nature of the country, which enabled them to conceal their temporary shortcomings ; the fourth and last was more advantageous still : it was the action to which the enemy was committed by his lack of information and his previous moves in Northern France and Belgium. All alternatives were carefully weighed by the Allied Staff, and it was decided that should the Belgians be able to hold long enough the line selected for them, the extension of the Allied front would continue, and be carried on right to the sea, through Belgian territory itself. General Joffre could not hope now to carry out the prolonged offensive which would have enabled him to secure the line of the Scheldt, the main objection to that scheme being the state of the Belgians, who were not in a condition to assist successfully in a general forward movement. But the generalissimo could try and limit to the utmost the territorial gains of the invaders, and prevent them from reaching the French coast and the military and naval bases which would make it easy for them to hamper the action of England, and thus achieve advantages of great import ; and, in that sense, the concentration of the Allies in Flanders was meant to be decisive, although they had no other intention than to

establish their line on the ground chosen so as to place the Germans in the West in a complete state of siege.

These operations, to be made clear, have to be divided into three distinct periods: the first (October 16–20), during which the Belgians, having accomplished their retreat practically unmolested, took up their allotted positions, and entrenched behind the Yser; whilst the hostile forces, which were converging towards them from east and north, deployed in front of the Yser line and between the Yser and the Lys.

The second period opened on the 20th, when the Germans, having deployed, started their attacks on the Yser line with the capture of Furnes as their immediate objective. This stage ended with the inundations caused by the opening of the dykes of the Yser canal, a measure of quaint significance, and which, as we shall see, has been wholly misunderstood.

The third period extends from the 30th of October, when the inundations took place, to the 14th or 15th of November. During this final stage the Germans, having failed to pierce the Yser line and to reach Furnes, gradually concentrated their efforts

against the British and the French in the Ypres salient, their failure along the whole of the front in Flanders being as complete and disastrous as the battle of Nancy.

During the first period the Allies, owing to the weakness and the scattered disposition of their forces, ran some danger of being overwhelmed and driven back from Flanders; and it is probable that a less bold commander than the distinguished officer who controlled the movements of the defenders would have withdrawn to another and less exposed position. In connection with this, it has been argued that political considerations had something to say in the matter; and it was generally supposed in this case that the dictates of strategy were overruled by political considerations; so it appeared, even to those who took the correct view of the situation, because it was not realised that in pushing his left flank so far forward, General Joffre was not aiming at a strategic objective, but he was simply pursuing his policy of closing the coast to the enemy. It was said that the Germans would proclaim the annexation of Belgium if they overran that country completely, an argument which disregards the fact that some time previously, when their armies were

advancing into France, they were in a position to occupy the whole of Belgium, and that the possession of the capital, Brussels, entitled them, from their point of view, to annex the country. Their official declaration in that matter, had it been made, would not have altered the complexion of affairs in the field; so, a decisive German victory alone, no matter where won, could have brought about their annexation of Belgium. Furnes and Ypres, therefore, were military and not political objectives; and the Allies elected to defend this corner of West Flanders for the reasons already stated.

Owing to the first factor mentioned (the disposition and weakness of the Allies in Flanders in the first period), the Germans had a chance of effecting their object, which was to drive back the Allied forces into France , and to get possession of the coast as far as Dunkirk and Calais if not farther. During this transitional stage a wide interval existed between the right wing of the Belgian army near Dixmude, and the left of the Allies on the Lys west of Menin, the only forces which reached this interval before the 20th being the French cavalry corps under General de Mitry (four divisions), and the two Terri-

torial divisions of General Bidon;[1] whilst the British force, termed the 4th corps, under Rawlinson, consisting of the 7th division (General Capper) and the 3rd cavalry division, stood in an isolated position east of Ypres, on the line Zonnebeke-Zandwoorde. This force, after a stiff rearguard action south of Ghent to cover the retreat of the Belgians (October 16), had fallen back through Roulers, whilst the mounted troops, under de Mitry, hurrying from the French frontier, occupied the Houthulst forest, north of Ypres, and Bidon's Territorials, detraining at Poperinghe, Wlamertinghe and at Ypres itself, swiftly prepared around the town the positions which the French Staff wished to defend. At this moment no less than ten German army corps or their equivalent were in motion from the east and the north on the circular line Thorout—Roulers—Courtrai—Menin, all heading through the two former places towards the Yser. The northern contingent, under Von Baeseler, consisting of the 3rd Reserve and detached divisions of other corps, advanced frontally against the positions which the Belgians were hurriedly strengthening along the Yser from Dixmude

[1] 32nd Army Corps. Another division of this corps—the 38th regulars—joined a little later at Oostvleteren.

to the sea ; and the southern contingent, based on Courtrai, and under the direct command of the Grand Duke of Wurtemberg, consisting of the 22nd, 23rd, 26th and 27th army corps, of new formation, and of detached divisions of other corps, executed a flanking movement by way of Menin and Roulers towards the northern fringe of the Houthulst forest. This somewhat puzzling advance had a simple reason—the persistent belief of the Germans in the early presence of important hostile forces in West Flanders, their illusion being strengthened by the manner in which the Allies carried out and accomplished their concentration, and also by the attitude of the Belgian rearguards when they reached the line of the Yser.

The Belgian rearguards and the French marines which flanked them towards Dixmude turned suddenly and fiercely on their pursuers as these were in the act of deploying and selecting positions of attack. These actions, especially those that took place at Vladsloo and Keyem on October 15, 17, 18, were exceedingly costly to the Allies, but they served their purpose, which was a double one. Firstly to gain time for the retreating army to establish itself in a thorough manner in its new

positions; and secondly to draw the attention of the enemy away from a quarter where the Allies were not ready. This was the space between the Yser and the Lys, north of Ypres, which, as we have seen, was but scantily occupied. The Germans must not be allowed to concentrate there until the Allies had stopped the gap. As the enemy eastern columns advanced from Courtrai and Roulers they might become aware of this weakness and alter at once the direction of their march from one point to another—from the Yser, where they were converging, to Ypres itself, an occurrence which, had it taken place, would have rendered untenable the Belgian positions on the Yser and those of the British on the Lys. For this reason Ronarch's marines and De Meyser's brigade (Belgian), in spite of their fatigue and losses, flung themselves recklessly against the foe at Vladsloo and Keyem (October 15–18); whilst de Mitry's squadrons, advancing swiftly from Ypres, occupied the Houthulst forest; joined there immediately by the Belgian cavalry division, the French mounted corps issued from the woods (October 16–17) and spread northeastwards on the flank of the German columns which were issuing from Roulers, and in this way they not

only gauged the enemy's strength and confirmed the true direction of his movements, but, what was more important, they effectively screened the comparative emptiness behind them. But what took in the Germans more than anything was the presence of Rawlinson's contingent east of Ypres at the same date, for they could not for one instant imagine that their opponents were daring enough to expose themselves in that way. Had they been better informed they would have lost not a moment and would have advanced at once on Ypres and thus compelled the Allies to fall back to the French frontier. Instead they went on with their ponderous march and deploying movements ; and they maintained the general direction of their columns, which bore from Courtrai to the north-north-west so as to bring the greatest pressure on that sector of the opposing front that they judged to be the weakest.

It was at this juncture that General Rawlinson, in his position east of Ypres, received from Sir John French the order to march on Menin so as to increase the difficulties in which the Bavarian army found itself at the time at Lille. Happily, his troops being worn out by their rapid and lengthy evolutions in West Flanders, Rawlinson was not in a position

to obey the order—for had he done so he would have uncovered Ypres and also dangerously isolated de Mitry near Roulers. Sir John French said himself, or rather implied, in his despatch, that General Rawlinson had acted for the best. Shortly after, however, the commander of the "4th" [1] corps returned to England to organise there a fresh division (the 8th), the contingent which he had commanded in Flanders being amalgamated with the 1st corps under Douglas Haig.

This corps, the last British contingent to arrive from the Aisne in the northern sphere of operations, detrained at St. Omer on the 19th, and from there made a wonderfully swift advance to Ypres where, however, owing to the very rapidity of its concentration some of its units became momentarily entangled with the territorials under Bidon, in spite of which Douglas Haig, losing not a moment, hurried his front columns to the north of the town, where the danger was not past and the enemy gave signs that he had at last begun to grasp the situation. At this date (October 21), which marks the opening of the second period of these operations, the Germans

[1] Rawlinson's contingent, although only consisting of one infantry and one cavalry division, was termed the 4th corps, probably to mislead the enemy as to its strength.

were fully deployed between the coast and the river Lys, and they had begun their assaults on the Yser line. Sure of success there, they were as yet only "feeling" the resistance of the Allies around Ypres so as to surround them in that district when the time came, that is, when the Yser line was pierced and Furnes was reached; such, at any rate, was their intention up to that day. But the sudden offensive undertaken by Haig made them modify it, for on the 22nd, sweeping southwards de Mitry's exhausted squadrons, they occupied the Houthulst forest, which they meant to use as a *point d'appui* and a pivot against any Allied movement towards Roulers and Thielt, the German bases of operations in that region. But here again they were confronted with a perplexing situation, for as they closed around the Houthulst forest they did not meet with the strong resistance that they had expected, and this, taken in conjunction with Haig's advance,made them at last conclude that the Allies were much weaker than they appeared and that their offensive was a false one meant to hide that weakness and gain time for their reinforcements to arrive. It was the right view to take, but the Germans were slow in taking it and in consequence lost the opportunity

they had of thwarting the concentration of the Allies in Belgium. Nevertheless they did what they could to retrieve their mistake. Slightly altering the course of his centre corps the Grand Duke of Wurtemberg brought them to play on the Allies north of Ypres, the most powerful thrust being aimed at Haig's advancing columns near Pilkem whilst this general's right flank and the 7th division near Zonnebeke were being heavily pressed by important enemy forces acting from Courtrai. The thin British line gave way at Pilkem ; so did the French territorials to its left north of Bixshoote and Langemarck—but the Allies rallied on their supports, inflicted severe losses[1] upon the enemy and kept him at bay until the arrival, on the 24th, of the 9th French army corps under General Dubois. Simultaneously the Belgian line was being reinforced by various French units, one of which—a division of the 6th corps under General Grossetti—deployed to the south-east of Dixmude and acted powerfully on the flank of the Germans who were pressing against Bidon and Haig. This completely restored matters in that quarter : and then the British and the French, resuming the offensive,

[1] Over 1,500 German slain were found in front of the 89th French Territorial division alone.

drove back the enemy by degrees towards Roulers and thus effectively stopped the gap which had existed north of Ypres (October 27).[1]

Now we come to the event which marked the opening of the third period of the operations in West Flanders, and the true importance of which has not been realised.

As we know, the Belgians, from the start, were heavily pressed. Against the positions which they had hastily organised no less than four German army corps (or their equivalent) were deployed; and these troops, supported by the fire of 500 guns, assaulted repeatedly, with the greatest dash and determination, the *points d'appui* which the Belgians with a small quota of French held on the railway from Dixmude to Nieuport and the canal along it. Some of these *points d'appui*—Tervaete, St. George, and Ramscapelle, near Nieuport—in spite of a strenuous, and in some cases, most efficient resistance, fell into the enemy's hands, and the Germans gained a footing on the left bank of the river, whilst their tireless and ever repeated onslaughts against Dixmude went on, in spite of the fearful losses inflicted upon them there by Ronarch's efficient

[1]In these actions the French captured 5 field guns, and the British 7 quick-firers and 600 prisoners.

and dauntless force of bluejackets. At one moment it looked indeed to those on the spot as if the assailants would eventually succeed in bending or in breaking the allied line and in reaching Furnes, their objective. This was the impression conveyed especially to the monitor flotilla which from the sea raked with its shots the German flank on the coast. These allied boats were enabled by their small draught to approach the shore and to fire far inland; they did good service and played some havoc in the enemy's line, but they were at length driven off by the German land batteries.

But, curiously enough, when the German assaults had reached, or rather, passed their climax; when the German killed had accumulated by the thousand all along the Yser front; when in fact the German effort on that section of the line was practically spent; the Belgians, who were continuously reinforced by the French [1] and whose positions south of the canal were excessively strong, burst open the dykes, and flooded the country (October 29–31). The water rushed out, invaded the German trenches, and covered nearly the whole of the region between

[1] The 83rd Territorial division at Stuyvenkenskerke, a colonial brigade at Ramscapelle, and a brigade of the 6th corps at Lombartzyde.

Nieuport and Dixmude. Now this event was commented on everywhere as signifying that the Allies were at the last gasp and that they were resorting to "desperate" expedients in order to avoid a disaster. No one seemed to reflect, by keeping count of the dates, that this expedient, which *could have been resorted to sooner*, had a strategic, and not simply a local, significance. General Foch, who had the supreme charge of the Allied line in Flanders, had, as has been said already, decided to carry its extension to the Belgian coast. And he, and General D'Urbal, who was in direct command of the French troops in Belgium, calculated that in order to ensure the success of this operation, the Germans, who were converging from all points, must not be allowed at the beginning to concentrate against any sector of that line, especially against that sector which, for reasons already mentioned, had to remain weak or only partially occupied for some time. This vulnerable spot lay, as we have seen, between the Yser and the Lys, where, during a dangerous transitional period, the Germans could have burst through, and, through this, compelled the Allies to relinquish their object. Now if, as some officers advised, the flooding of the Yser front had


Map to illustrate the various commands in Northern France and Belgium composing the left wing of the Allies Oct - Nov 1914
Belgians
British
French
Headquarters General
NORTH SEA
FLANDERS
Ostend
Bruges
Nieuport
Dunkirk
Calais
Furnes
Dixmude
Ghent
(Dunkirk)
Roulers
Ypres
Courtrai
St Omer
(French)
Armentières
Aire
Lille
Tournai
Bethune
La Bassée
Lens
Douai
(Foch)
Albert
Combles
Amiens
Péronne
St Quentin
Chaulnes
Roye
Lassigny
Tracy le Val
Compiègne
Soissons
(Mannoury)

MAP 18.

been carried out sooner, the enemy, not being able to employ his strength there, would have brought it to bear elsewhere, that is, against the said vulnerable spot north of Ypres ; and the opening of the Yser dykes would then have proved a fruitless measure, since the Allied line could not have been maintained in Flanders. Instead, the French staff decided that, on the contrary, the Germans should be drawn to attack the Yser line under conditions which at first appeared advantageous to them ; then, when they had sufficiently exhausted themselves there, and the Allied position at Ypres was secure, the dykes were to be opened. This was to enable the worn-out Belgians to take a well earned rest and to thoroughly reorganise their units and to refit. The well calculated delay in the matter was a masterstroke of strategy, for it enabled the British and the French to proceed successfully with their concentration in Flanders, by keeping the attention of the enemy riveted on the sector where they were the stronger, whilst they were secretly and swiftly reinforcing the weaker ; and thus they found themselves in a position to bring to a triumphant conclusion their scheme to incapacitate the German armies in the West.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES AND THE END OF THE GREAT GERMAN OFFENSIVE IN THE WESTERN THEATRE OF THE WAR

CHAPTER XII

THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES AND THE END OF THE GREAT GERMAN OFFENSIVE IN THE WESTERN THEATRE OF THE WAR [1]

THE first battle of Ypres marks the end of the great German offensive in the Western theatre of war. Later, it is true, at various periods of time in the siege operations which ensued, the Germans made other and vigorous efforts against the Allied line, efforts which, like the first, were all doomed to fail. But the titanic encounter which immediately resulted from the concentration of the British and French in Flanders was the last link in the chain woven by the defenders around the blustering aggressors. From that moment the invaders were held tight, as in a vice. They could neither retreat nor advance, and, necessarily, they must succumb on the spot. Such, certainly, was not the end in view by the German leaders when they had violated the frontiers and stepped into French and Belgian territory. They had hoped to conquer France in six weeks, Russia

[1] See appendix G.

in three months, and then to turn the whole of the subjugated continent against England; and the only result achieved was that they were placed in a state of siege, in a situation similar—on a vaster scale of course—to that of Bazaine at Metz, with no other alternative than to fritter away their strength in the occupied territories, or surrender, and they owed it to the intervention of a strong vassal—Turkey—that they were not crushed altogether, much quicker. In fact, apart from outside help, there was no hope for Germany; and whatever the subsequent course of developments—even including such outside help—the eventual fall or dissolution of the Central Empires became as certain, as inevitable as the mathematical descent of the solar disc over the horizon at sunset. Such was the portentous meaning of the battle of Ypres—a battle that was not decisive in itself, but was the concrete confirmation of the previous great victories won by the Allies on the Marne, for it definitely placed the Germans in the west in a powerless [1] condition—with no opening, no outlet, nor any available space for a flank manœuvre or a turning movement.

[1] In the strategic sense, not necessarily in the tactical.

The true character of this battle would have been sooner realised if the intricacies of the struggle and the glamour of contemporaneous events in other spheres of activity had not blurred the issue. The Russians were pressing on with great dash in the Carpathians; on the banks of the Niemen they had won a victory (Augustovo), whilst in Poland the German eastern forces under Hindenburg were making their first efforts against Warsaw. With the hopes entertained of the Russians at the time, it was only natural that all eyes should be turned towards them. The sudden intervention of Turkey did much also to draw away the interest from the main field of operations. England seemed—for a time—more vitally menaced in the Near East than elsewhere. Egypt, where little fighting could have taken place, assumed momentarily more importance in people's eyes than the seat of the conflict, where a tremendous struggle was going on. Yet, in regard to this, a most timorous frame of mind prevailed, for the campaign in the West was approached and discussed from the German standpoint—or rather from the point of view that the German Staff, helped by the Wolff Bureau, did their utmost to impress on the world.

Another cause which made it difficult to survey accurately the scope of the operations in Flanders was the scanty publicity given to the arrangements of the French Staff. It was little known, for instance, that General Foch was in supreme command there, and that he would have borne the responsibility of any mishap—whilst few observers were even aware of the decisive part this talented leader had played at the Marne. So the operations were left to explain themselves, and it is little wonder that no one understood much, if anything, about them.

It was the appointment of the brilliant victor of Fère Champenoise [1] which made the carrying out of such difficult movements as culminated in the first battle of Ypres possible. Foch it was who avoided the premature flooding of the Yser, a proceeding of the utmost import, which could only spring from the highest strategic brain, and we shall see how this commander, well seconded by his coadjutors and the fine troops they led, won the finest offensive-defensive battle since Auerstaedt; how he thereby accomplished one of the most difficult and risky tasks of the war; and thus deserved the praise of an

[1] See appendix E.


Battle of Ypres_ General position on Oct 16 -20
Belgians
British
French
German
Large figures = army corps
Small . = divisions
Nieuport
(Von Baeseler)
Tervaete
Thorout
to Furnes
Dixmude
Zarren
Houthoulst Forest
Merckem
Staden
22
Roulers
to Thielt
(Wurtemberg)
Bixschoote
Langemark
Passchendaele
Moorslede
23
Elken
Poelcapelle
Zonnebeke
Poperinghe
Ypres
Becelaere
Gheluvelt
Zandvoorde
Courtrai
R Lys
Menin
26
27
Ypres Commines Canal
Comines
Warneton
Halluin
Tourcoing
Ploegsteert
3
Roubaix
(Cr Prince of Bavaria)
2
Lille

MAP 19.

Allied veteran of world-wide renown. But first one must explain what is an " offensive-defensive " battle.

It is an action in which *offensive* movements are undertaken in order to secure *defensive* positions which lie within the sphere of the enemy's action ; the manœuvre involving necessarily the adoption of the dangerous, and for that reason often forbidden, operation called : " concentration within striking distance of the foe." It is the boldest move in war, its success or failure depending on the amount or the value of the information gleaned by the enemy. Hence the necessity for stringent secrecy during a movement of the kind, for should the enemy be in strength, if he knows what his opponents are about, he can easily thwart their plan by concentrating in turn against each of their detachments ; or by seizing himself, at once, the positions which they are endeavouring to secure.

The battle of Ypres, as an example of the successful carrying out of the movement described in front of a formidable and fully concentrated enemy, is almost unique in the annals of war, the only other corresponding action of the kind in modern times being the already mentioned Battle of Auerstaedt,

which was won by Marshal Davoust in the campaign of Jena, 1806.[1]

Ypres naturally was a more extensive action than Auerstaedt, and in view of the degree of success achieved there, one might place it on a par, as a strategic victory, with Fère Champenoise, although the latter will always stand as the master-stroke of the war,[1] and the turning-point in the campaign in France.

The battle of Ypres may be said to have commenced on October 21, when the 1st British corps arrived from St. Omer and advanced north of Ypres, and when, in consequence, the German columns which were converging from Roulers towards the Yser, slightly altered their course. We have seen that Douglas Haig and the French territorials to his left were driven back near Pilkem and Langemarck, but that later (October 24–25) the arrival of reinforcements enabled them to reassume the advantage. The enemy continued to be blinded by the daring moves of the Allies. They thought

[1] The study of this battle, if only to compare it in its strategic features with the first battle of Ypres, will repay the student. The best account of it in English is to be found in the work on Napoleon's campaign in Prussia, 1806, by Lorraine Petre.

[1] See Appendix E.

that the latter were really acting on the offensive with Roulers and Lille as their immediate objectives ; and, as often happens in case of false attacks, a good many Allied officers themselves were taken in by the orders they received, which was only natural since on such a prolonged front as that of a modern battle, even a divisional commander cannot know or keep count of all that is happening at every point of the line. In regard to the enemy, it must be said that their leaders were not the same men who had stepped so confidently into France and Belgium three months previously—such is the effect of successful strategy on a constantly baffled foe. After the hard knocks received, and their constant disappointments, the Kaiser's generals had lost a good deal of their spirit and daring of the first days. They were still in the dark and dreaded a trap ; and so they wondered, speculated, temporised, hesitated, delayed, and when at length, perceiving some light in the darkness, they decided to strike, it was too late—their opponents were already on the positions they had chosen, and could answer blow for blow. Meanwhile some of the German strength was being squandered at a secondary spot ; and thus, since the transitional period was passed, and

the Allies had practically accomplished their concentration at Ypres, the Germans had not the ghostliest chance of winning a victory in Flanders.

Yet this transitional period was long enough, for it was not until October 31, when the Yser was flooded, and, therefore, the enemy could concentrate his efforts against the Ypres salient, that the frail line of the Allies east and south of that locality—a mere fringe of troops—was substantially reinforced. Up to that time there were only the British 1st corps and the 7th division, which, upon the arrival of the 9th French corps to the north on the 24th, extended their action as far as Gheluvelt; and the cavalry under Conneau and Allenby (plus the 3rd cavalry division attached to Rawlinson's contingent), which prolonged the left of the 3rd British corps on the Lys, and guarded the approaches to Ypres from the south. In opposition to these forces there were Wurtemberg's rear corps (27th) acting from Courtrai, the left wing of a centre corps under the same command (the 26th) acting from Roulers, and, to the south, acting from Menin, Commines and Warneton, part of the extended right wing of the army of Bavaria (at least two army corps, 2nd and 15th) plus a formidable force of cavalry. It is,


Battle of Ypres
General position on Oct. 21-24.
Nieuport
(Von Beseler)
Thorout
Dixmude
22d
Houthulst forest
Yser Canal
87
Dudant
89
38
Bixschoote
23d
Poelcapelle
Paschendaele
Langemarck
Zonnebeke
Wlamertinghe
Ypres
26
Becelaere
27th
Courtrai
Gheluvelt
Landwoorde
St Eloi
Hollebeke
7th div.
Menin
Wytschaete
Werwicq
Messines
Wulverghem
Comines
Warneton
3
(Rupprecht)
(Cr Pr of Bavaria)
Tourcoing
Roubaix
Armentières
R. Lys
2
(Smith Dorrien)
Lille

MAP 20.

therefore, no wonder that during that period, the British forces who were attacked, south of Ypres, and had to sustain the first onslaughts of the enemy in that quarter, gave way, and were driven back, with heavy losses, as far as St. Eloi (October 27–29), and the situation, as on many a previous occasion, looked black indeed for the Allies. But, also, as on many a previous occasion, certain probabilities had been foreseen—and thus it came about that the Allies redressed matters as usual, once more to their advantage. Sir John French drew reinforcements from the north and south—where the line by that time was secure; and then, on the 31st, units of another French army corps—the 16th, under General Balfourier—entered the action south of Ypres, the rest of this contingent following on November 1–3; and, after several days of bitter struggle, the Germans were placed on the defensive in that region.

Baffled on one side the enemy, who was not short of means, tried in another. But this new attack, although it was one of the fiercest ever delivered, was in reality a false one, only meant to be turned into a real one if the maximum of profit was obtained. Its object was to distract the attention of

the opponents from the spot against which the real attack was being prepared; the intention of the German Staff being shown by the dates at which both were undertaken. That against the Yperlée canal, north of Ypres, which was the false one, started on or about November 2nd, on which day more French troops, in considerable numbers, had begun to appear alongside of the British, south of Ypres. The second, which was one of the most formidable *massed* onslaughts of the war, began directly the first had reached its climax, on November 10th. The attempt against the Yperlée canal was meant to divert all Allied reinforcements which were on the way to that part of the field, and there is no doubt that when, having carried Dixmude, pierced the French line at Merkem, and crossed the canal near Noordshoote, they were at last stopped, counter attacked, and driven back over the canal by a fresh division of French troops,[1] the Germans thought that they had fully attained their object. So it appeared when their last endeavours in the region came to naught—they tried in vain to issue from Dixmude across the Yser, and to pierce the French line at another spot—at Bixschoote. It looked, indeed, as if the French, anxious for their

[1] Humbert's colonial division.


Battle of Ypres
General position Oct 30-31
Nieuport
Thorout
Dixmude
22d
32d
23d
Roulers
Zuydschoote
Paschendaele
26th
16th (Balfourier)
Langemark
9th (Dubois)
Pilkem
Wieneringhe
Ypres (Plumer)
Becelaere
Courtrai
Poperinghe
Elverdinghe
27th
Menin
Wytschaete
Wervicq
Messines
Comines
15th & 2d (detached divisions)
Wulverghem
3
4
(Pulteney)
Tourcoing
Armentieres
2 (Haig-Darmen)
Roubaix
Lille

MAP 21.

positions north of Ypres, were concentrating there all their available reinforcements—and that, consequently, the point against which the Germans meant to act would remain weak. This was in the region immediately east of Ypres, where stood the 1st British corps, much weakened by incessant fighting, and the 9th French corps, somewhat worn out also. Against these thin ranks of opponents the enemy was massing behind his front line a force equivalent to four army corps and which included a division of Prussian Guards which had been brought up, in great secrecy, from the Arras front. Had they but known what preparation was being made in answer to this they would probably have desisted and attempted something else —although one must admit there was nothing else for them to do; they had no choice but to fling themselves at random, as they did, in a mad and desperate attempt to achieve at last some loud ringing success. The French Staff was so little disturbed by the German threat north of Ypres, that they did not send there more than the reinforcements originally allotted to that sector of the line. Nothing shows how well they had the situation in hand and how easily they guessed the intention

of the enemy as the striking fact that, at the very moment when the French line was being bent on the Yperlée (November 6–8), the destination of the fresh French contigents which were due at that date in Flanders was rigidly maintained; thus when a division of the 7th corps, and another of Foch's old 20th corps, arrived at Ypres they were not sent to the north, but placed in reserve to the south of Ypres, just behind the right wing of the British 1st corps. Meanwhile, immediately east of the town, Foch and French were massing on a front of no more than six miles, a stupendous battery of 300 guns.[1] The " surprise " attack of the Germans and their supreme effort to solve the question in Flanders was thus, from the start, doomed to failure. The Allies had accomplished their concentration. The enemy, therefore, could exert his strength to the utmost and deliver the fiercest onslaughts since Nancy—he was bound to fail, in the same manner as he had consistently failed, *everywhere*, since the beginning of the campaign, wherever the Allied field armies had elected to resist.

[1] At the battle of Wagram, 1809, General Drouot, who commanded the French Artillery, massed 100 guns on a quarter-mile front, but then gun range and field deployment were not so great.

The location of their supreme effort was easy to discern ; yet there were Allied officers whose attention was distracted from the true spot, as the enemy had wished. The powerful attack on Dixmude, which made the Germans masters of that much disputed locality, was well calculated to upset the mental balance of the defenders. The brigade of *fusiliers marins*, which had defended the place with such valorous tenacity was reduced to shreds, a few hundred men, nearly all more or less disabled. So were some of the other regiments which were momentarily driven across the Yperlée. But, as has been said, the enemy could not turn this false attack into a true one unless it yielded the maximum of profit. The capture of Dixmude by the enemy was a barren result, as they could not issue from it, and the thrust at the Yperlée was thwarted very swiftly. The Germans, perforce, had to make their last try somewhere else, and this was at a point opposite which their strength, owing to their failure on the Yser and the Arras-Lys front, and the deconcentration resulting therefrom, had kept accumulating. Thus they were brought almost unconsciously to attack in a quarter where, and at a moment when, the Allies were best prepared to

meet and defeat their onslaughts. It was on November 10th that the German masses, spurred on by stirring proclamations and the knowledge that their Kaiser was watching their exertions, flung themselves with the utmost audacity against the defences of the Allies east of Ypres ; and the wooded and low-lying region which extends from Zonnebeke to Gheluvelt became the scene of terrific and titanic encounters. The Germans, repeating the tactics of former days, charged in the open in dense masses ; and forsooth the Allied line was bent more than once —but every time the enemy columns, already ripped open by cold steel and torn by rifle fire, were finally shattered by the Allied shells—the most terrific bombardment that they had had to face up to then. They reeled back in confusion ; only to renew afresh their efforts, however ; until, on November 12, the German attack east of Ypres reached its climax and collapsed altogether. On that day, headed by the Prussian Guards, the constantly baffled and terribly punished assailants succeeded in wresting from their opponents the whole of the Zonnebeke-Gheluvelt *poligone* [1] and in

[1] The stretch of ground enclosed by the roads leading from Gheluvelt to St. Julien and from Zonnebeke to Becelaere. See map 19.


Battle of Ypres
General position on Nov 11-12
German false attack
Figures = Fresh French army corps.
Nieuport
Thorout
Dixmude
Yser
Roulers
Houthulst Forest
Bixschote
Langemark
Pilkem
Vlamertynghe
Poperinghe
Ypres
20th
Zonnebeke
Becelaere
Gheluwelt
Zandvoorde
Courtrai
St Eloi
Wytschaete
16th
Wervicq
R. Lys
Messines
Comines
Warneton
Wulverghem
Armentieres
Tourcoing
Roubaix
Lille

MAP 22.

reaching the outskirts of the former locality. But there their progress was checked. Fresh Allied units had reached the field; these were hurled at the battered and exhausted German masses; and the British and French bayonets had full play.

It was a sight such as would have refreshed the minds of the croakers and grumblers at home. Fighting shoulder to shoulder the men of Foch, d'Urbal, and French performed feats of valour that will ring through the centuries. Even the reserves —the territorials—especially those of England, behaved there like fully trained troops, like seasoned veterans. One of these, a Scottish regiment, routed some of the *elite* troops of Germany; although it must be said the kilt-adorned warriors were sadly diminished in the effort. They deserved nevertheless the praise of their seniors, and of the crack French units who witnessed their valour.

In connection with this it is good to note that the battle of Ypres marks the beginning of a happy and familar intercourse on a large scale between the soldiers of two nations with different traditions and speaking different tongues—two nations who had been bitter enemies in the past, but had always fought each other in an honourable way, and who

now, united as well by necessity as by a similarity of ideals, came to know and appreciate each other still better. For the first time in history we see French and British soldiers mixing freely, relieving one another in turn on the same positions and affording each other what tactical help they could. The knot of friendship was made in adversity and firmly tied—let us hope for ever—in victory.

Yes, in victory—for the battle of Ypres was one of the most brilliant, one of the most complete victories ever won. The Allied line did not advance, but it was not intended to advance ; and a glance at the battlefield after the event would have convinced anyone as to who were the victors. The losses of the Germans surpassed anything of the kind that had occurred before, except perhaps at Nancy, in the first phase of the war. Here, in Flanders, as at the " Grand Courronné " more than 40,000 identification discs of German dead were picked up by the Allies in front of the positions *around Ypres alone ;* and the total casualties of the enemy along the front from the Lys to the sea during the four weeks' fighting cannot be computed at less than 340,000, whilst those of the Allies—Belgian, British, and French, at the same spots and during the same

period, did not reach half that number.[1] Finally, the French Staff, which is not given to boasting, summed up the result in these words: . . . "never an offensive had been better prepared nor better led; and never such an offensive had suffered a more crushing, a more complete defeat."

The French Staff did not deem it necessary, but it might have added that the Allied movements had succeeded; that the junction with the Belgian army had been effected and successfully maintained; and that the Allies had secured the positions that they wished to secure in order to reduce the enemy to strategic impotency—the only result that could possibly be attained, after three months of fighting, in a war where millions of men are employed; and where consequently the depleted ranks of the opposed forces are constantly filled up with fresh drafts and new units. It was quite sufficient that the German offensive had been checked for the Allies to claim the victory; and to doubt the eventual results of the struggle once the invaders were placed in a complete state of siege on the Western front was sheer madness; for the Germans, having failed to

[1]The highest, and probably correct, estimate is 130,000—20,000 for the Belgians, 40,000 for the British, 70,000 for the French.

achieve their ends when at full strength, could by no manner of means regain them after their terrible losses and their endless succession of reverses. They had squandered their best troops in their first too confident attempt; and now they were condemned to squander the rest, whilst the Allies, behind the strategic barrier they had so successfully established, would gather their reserves and their war material for the finish of the war.

Before winding up this subject it is as well to relate an incident which shows to whom the credit of the successful carrying out of the operation (the concentration in Flanders) was chiefly due.

The veteran strategist already alluded to, after studying on a map the battle of Ypres, could not restrain his admiration; and, turning to some of General Foch's Staff, who were near him, exclaimed: "You have a great general!" Lord Roberts, the father of twentieth century tactics, knew how to appreciate talent in others and he paid to Joffre's right hand officer, this high and, certainly, well-deserved, compliment; the last, alas! that the great man of Kandahar and Paardeberg was ever to pay—for enfeebled by age, he shortly afterwards

succumbed to the inclemencies of the weather, and drew his last breath in the bosom of his beloved Indian regiments which he had gone to cheer and encourage with his presence. The first battle of Ypres, which was heralded by this sad and untoward event, marked the total collapse of the German offensive in the West. This offensive, which began in Belgium, was checked at Nancy and on the Marne, and finally defeated in West Flanders, was the most formidable ever attempted, for in it Germany employed nearly the whole of her best troops, troops of a quality that once lost she could not replace. This stupendous effort, we have seen, ended in complete fiasco, a fiasco expressed in the deadlock which Joffre imposed on the invaders and which was not less decisive because the world at large failed to appreciate it. Germany, in fact, was defeated. She might try her utmost, and, through the intervention of friends, seek some solution elsewhere ; she was nevertheless in the grip of death, of eventual dissolution, face to face with the implacable fate that she had wished, and striven hard, to impose on others. She must now bleed to exhaustion on the territories she had so ruthlessly invaded and devastated ; and sooner or later, whatever her ac-

cumulated resources, whatever help she would receive from outside, she must yield and bend the neck on the very scaffold that she had herself so unwittingly and brutally erected.

And this, let it never be forgotten, because she had failed to defeat and crush one nation that she particularly detested and despised—France.[1]

[1] See Appendix H.

END OF SECOND PHASE

APPENDIX

A

To the first edition of the First Phase of "Germany in Defeat" an apparent discrepancy is to be found in the two compositions given of the German army under the Crown Prince, and this discrepancy was pointed out in two newspapers:—the *Daily Mail* of September 18, 1915, and the Literary Supplement of the *Times*, October 7. In the second edition a couple of footnotes were added to explain why the composition of the Crown Prince's given on p. 195 could not be the same as that on p. 207.

B

Besides making the above criticism, which showed that he had not read the book carefully, the reviewer of the *Times* insinuated that the British army was treated, in "Germany in Defeat," as "despicable." The answer to this half veiled accusation is to be found on p. 107–8, First Phase, in the following phrase:— . . . . "there has probably never

been a better tactical unit in the field than the British army that stood against the Germans at Mons."

C

The same critic challenges the view that the Germans when besieging Liége were waiting for the French to enter Belgium; so does Mr. Spencer Wilkinson in the *Field* of October 16—the former's contention being that the Germans invaded Belgium owing to the weakness of France's northern frontier; the latter that the Germans did not attack Namur sooner because this fortress was further removed from the German frontier. The *Times* literary critic makes no provision for *alternatives* and thus goes against his own views which he expresses as being based on Moltke's dictum—that "no plan of campaign can foresee beyond the first battle——" If so, the Germans could not foresee beyond what would happen at Liége, and perforce had to adopt an alternative which was necessarily at variance with their original design of "hacking" their way through Belgium and of bursting through the French northern frontier. As for Mr. Spencer Wilkinson, he is evidently in a misapprehension as to the

distance from Namur to the German frontier—and the strength and degree of preparedness of the enemy on the said frontier. The Germans attacked Liége on August 5. They *could* have attacked Namur on the 6th or the 7th. Therefore, those who do not believe that the Germans waited for the French *in Belgium*, have still to explain why it was they did not attack Namur until *August* 20, *nearly three weeks after their first attack on Liége.*

D

The First Phase has not been carefully read either by the critic of the *Manchester Guardian* (November 6), who says, "The object of the book apparently is to show that the Germans lost the war on the Marne and have been a defeated people ever since. If this contention is more than a matter of words it is not true; what is true, however, is that the Marne wrecked all the strategical plans that the German General Staff had worked out before the war, and forced them to remodel everything. But as the second model was far more able than the first, there is nothing gained by writing as though the defeat of Von Moltke were the same thing as the defeat of Germany."

How far the second German model was "more able" than the first is shown in *this* volume on the Second Phase of the War, and the reader will decide for himself whether the Germans did not commit greater mistakes than in the first phase. What would have been gained by the universal acceptation that Germany and not merely Von Moltke, was defeated at the Marne, is also shown here, for had this view been adopted sooner Turkey would not have joined in the war against the Allies, and Germany would have been crushed *quicker*. The critic of the *Manchester Guardian*, in spite of all the well substantiated facts given him, cannot bring himself to think that it was not at the Marne that the original plans of Germany were disarranged, but much sooner, at the very opening of the hostilities in fact, when the French so unexpectedly advanced in Alsace, and when, a little later, they refused to walk into the trap set for them in Belgium. On the first contention, however, he is to be excused, since nearly every one was blinded by the invader's prolonged occupation of French and Belgian territory and by the effect of the German propaganda; and the *Times* critic himself, adopting the German point of view, challenged the title of this work by declaring

it was preposterous to talk of Germany as being defeated as long as she was in occupation of the said territories! an opinion which, needless to say, was diametrically opposed to that of the French Staff. General Gallieni, the former military Governor of Paris, and now French War Minister, who, one may suppose, is as competent a judge as the military critic of the *Times*, emphatically declared to members of the English and American Press sent to interview him in November, 1915, that Germany was defeated at the Marne.

E

A slight correction had to be made in the First Phase in the matter of the command of a French unit. This unit was the Tunis division which took part in the battle of the Ourcq, and on p. 173 was mentioned as being under the command of General Humbert; when, as a matter of fact, it was commanded by General Drude, General Humbert being in command of the Morocco division, which took part in the battle of Fère Champenoise (see p. 189). The cause of this unimportant mistake is interesting to explain, as it shows the one-sided view taken of the operations on the Marne by people who wish to demonstrate that the battle of the Ourcq was the decisive event

in the said operations. The French Staff, as is known take the utmost pains to conceal the disposition of their forces ; and after the Marne there was a good deal of speculation as to what particular corps or divisional subaltern commanded here or there. Little by little, when the crisis was passed, the arrangements and composition of the French armies became known ; as well as the special doings of some of the French corps and secondary units, and, amongst other things, it came out that General Joffre had especially praised the able and heroic conduct of General Humbert who commanded a colonial division. General Joffre spoke of the action in which this officer had distinguished himself as the turning point and most decisive event of the campaign, and nearly every one who read this announcement, taking for granted that the battle near Paris was the action referred to, deduced that General Humbert was in command of the Tunis division which had fought there, whereas this officer was complimented for the work he had done under General Foch near Fère Champenoise.

As I write news reaches me from Paris that General Maleterre, a learned and valorous officer who has lost an arm and a leg in the campaign, has just

delivered a lecture in which he said that Foch's flanking movement at the Marne fifteen months ago would remain as an example of its kind for centuries to come.

F

On the question of the much talked of transference of German troops from west to east during the first and second Phases of the War, it is necessary to add a few words. The Germans, in endorsing the popular view, wished to hide or screen their arrangements, and we have seen in the First Phase (ch. IX.) that the Russians, at a very early date, were taken in as to the strength of the German eastern forces; this enabled the German Staff to carry out the secret concentration of the Saxon army in the Western theatre of operations. What seems to have misled the Allies was the simultaneous appearance of similar German units in both spheres of operations. In East Prussia (August-September) the Russians encountered the Death Head Hussars; a little later (in Poland) they met Prussian Guards. This is explained by the inordinate strength of the said German units; the Prussian Guards, for instance, consisted of eleven regiments of several battalions each. Some of these could be in Poland whilst

the others were battling in France and Belgium. No German units of importance were transferred from West to East in the first and second phase of the war (August–November, 1914). On the contrary, far from being depleted, the German Western armies after the Marne were considerably reinforced by fresh contingents which were computed by the French Staff (see French Official Review "Six Months of War") at twelve army corps. After the second phase—that is after the battle of Ypres—this number went on increasing, until towards January, 1915, it reached the colossal figure of fifty-three army corps. Only one important German unit besides the cavalry division mentioned was transferred from France to Poland in 1914, but this not until the third phase, in December. This was the 21st army corps, originally belonging to the 6th army under Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria. It was the "premier" corps of the line of Germany and had been defeated by the French on the Meurthe and at Nancy. Its place was taken in Lorraine by a reserve corps of fresh formation. Nothing did more to enhance the prestige of the Germans, and increase the worth of the German troops in the eyes of the world than the popular view taken on the

matter, especially as the Western Allies, during the same period, were supposed—aye, believed—to have added considerably to their strength. It was given out, or rather implied, even in high quarters, that the British forces in the field in France and Flanders since the Marne totalled a million men. Whereas Sir John French, at the end of the second phase, had only under his command, including the Indian troops, four infantry corps, with a division attached (the 7th), and six cavalry divisions; in all barely 180,000 men.

G

Readers should bear in mind that in a work of this kind, which aims at making clear the strategic lines of the war, details of the fighting have necessarily to be avoided, only those which are striking or of an unusual nature, or which have a strategic significance, being mentioned. Documents relating to the work of divisions and regiments are readily accessible to the public, some of them, especially those concerning the British forces, having been given a wide publication. There is little, if anything, to add for instance to the detailed despatches of Sir John French, nor to the compilation made by

the Belgian Staff, which is entitled "L'Armée Belge en campagne." This has been translated into English. So has the work "Dixmude" from the pen of one of Ronarch's men, and where the doings of the famous *fusiliers marins* are most minutely described.

H

The view that the Germans hated the French more than any nation may be challenged by those who consider that on the contrary their passion was centred against England. But, although it is true that the just intervention of England in this war drove the Germans to acts and words of insensate fury, their detestation and contempt have accumulated for centuries against the French, whom they resolved to ruin and destroy utterly as a nation.

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