ERMANY
N DEFEAT

By
Count Charles de Souza

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GERMANY IN DEFEAT

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PHASES I AND II

By COUNT CHARLES DE SOUZA and MAJOR HALDANE McFALL

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GERMANY IN DEFEAT

A STRATEGIC HISTORY OF THE WAR

THIRD PHASE

BY

COUNT CHARLES DE SOUZA

WITH 26 MAPS AND PLANS

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRUBNER & Co. LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY
1916

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GERMANY IN DEFEAT

CHAPTER I

THE CHARACTER AND THE TRUE IMPULSE OF THE THIRD PHASE OF THE WAR

Owing to the first battle of Ypres, which marked the end of the great German offensive in the Western theatre of operations, the enemy armies pitted against England and France were placed in a complete state of siege, a condition of strategic impotence which no effort on their part, however powerful, could redeem, and their aims in regard to military achievement and conquest were of necessity modified. For it was no longer for them, as in the pre-Marne days, a question of crushing France and subduing Europe and the rest of the world, but of making the most of an unexpected and dangerous situation.

With all her resources and long standing preparations dating from forty years; with many technical advantages which her government and her central position gave her, Germany had been

unable to solve her military problem. Her Grand General Staff, a body of men who in their profession were thought to be unrivalled, had given the utmost care and attention to the working out of their plans; they had kept count of all possibilities and had weighed all alternatives. Yet they had been disappointed again and again. They had formidable means at their disposal and their system of tactics allowed them every lavishness to reach their ends; whilst their free and easy, elastic code of morals, permitted them to fashion the rules of war to their own requirements. But, in spite of all, they had been thwarted and checked, defeated in fact in their very first attempt, by people whom they despised and thought were in all matters—and especially in military matters—inferior, vastly inferior, to themselves; and whom, for the matter of that, were certainly not so well prepared, so thoroughly well equipped as the Germans were. Even on equal grounds the Germans, according to their own reckoning and that of the world in general, should have crushed their opponents at the Marne, if not sooner; instead of which they had been stopped and driven back and no further attempts on their part had given the results which were still expected even then.

They now knew of the valour of the British

and the French and of the transcendental talent of Joffre and his Generals, they knew the resolve of the Allies to carry on the war to its final and ultimate conclusion; and at their back, Russia, which they had equally despised, had overpowered Austria in the first encounters, and had grown in strength.

Their resources, their central position and even the outside help which had come to them, could not enable the Germans to retrieve their fortunes; a single hope remained to them, that the Allies, blind as to their own victory, should weary of the war and come to an agreement, propose peace terms, which would leave Germany, though thwarted, still strong and free to start afresh at some later time.

This hope, we may add, was not groundless as the Allied nations were for a long time unaware of the results their armies had obtained, and they often gave signs, through their Press, of pessimism and uneasiness of mind and more than once their Governments played into the hands of the enemy. The latter took the utmost advantage of this frame of mind, and endeavoured by every means to impress the world with their views of events and with a sense of German invincibility.

It must be said that in that way they succeeded where their armies had failed, and there-

by they managed to keep up to the end the appearance of victory on their side.

The operations therefore following the Marne and Ypres have to be considered from the political standpoint, and the various offensives and attacks which were carried out by the Germans on all fronts must be viewed in the light of purely defensive action. They were at bay, their back to the wall; but they were resourceful and strong, and prepared for any sacrifice.

For this fortitude, if for no higher human qualities, they might be praised, albeit sight should not be lost of the fact that they were themselves blinded by self-conceit and the delusions which their leaders imposed upon them.

These leaders constituted a powerful caste whose former ambitions were barely killed and who, after their initial failure, had to stand face to face not only with impending ruin and disaster, but with something worse than defeat; for their fate was irrevocably bound up with that of the army.

The German army in their hands was not a weapon for defence, but for aggression and conquest, and were it to be vanquished in the eyes of the people, the whole oligarchic, feudal system which it sustained and supported would then collapse and the German Empire would crumble to pieces and disappear.

To understand this one should realise the basis on which the German Empire was founded. It was that of strength, of military power and invincibility, and a deep sense of race superiority which was ingrained in the Teuton mind. For centuries the Germans had been taught that they were the elect, the race divine, and that they were destined in the end to predominate, and to hold sway over the whole world, the entire planet. Their aristocracy, their war caste had exerted all their powers to foster and enhance this habit of thinking, and the institutions of Germany were fashioned and modelled in accordance with it. The mere fact of being a German gave precedence, in Teutonland, over any other. In face of all this one could well gauge what defeat might mean for Germany—it would probably be the equivalent of total disruption and annihilation—and the first to suffer would be those who had misled, taken in, the nation; the high caste, the rulers, the military party whose interests were wholly supported by the vanity and the spirit of submissiveness of their peoples.

Hence the dire necessity for the German leaders, who knew they were defeated, to keep on assuming to the end the bearing of conquerors. It was a vain attempt, which cost the world an endless toll of good lives, and peopled

Europe with maimed and crippled men. But the German leaders had no choice; they must conquer or die; or else succumb not only under the blows of their adversaries, but also under the fury and vindictiveness of their suddenly enlightened peoples. Maddened and disappointed, they struggled and struggled on, in a desperate endeavour to ward off or at least to mitigate what they well understood would be their eventual fate.

Such was the impulse which determined the closing stages of the war, for it was wisely left to the Germans to bring about their own undoing and under the circumstances it is small wonder that the world was misled and bewildered, and that the Allied nations failed for so long to realise that there were bars, and strong ones, between them and the caged monster.

These bars were the French and British Armies which had fought with a gallantry unsurpassed, and defeated the vaunted soldiers of the Kaiser, although these were more numerous and better equipped at the critical stages, and were deemed invincible all the world over.

With the rifle and the bayonet and the glorious "75," the hardy sons of the Entente, of the free democracies of the West, had knocked over the goose-steppers by the thousand. The higher combinations of warfare had done the rest.

Joffre had out-witted Von Moltke; Foch, Sarrail, Castelnau and French had woven an impenetrable, unbreakable net round their proud, overconfident opponents. The battles of St. Mihiel, of Auberive, of Craonne; of the Aisne, of Roye, of Arras; of the Lys, of the Yser and of Ypres, had rendered secure the positions of the Allies and completely deprived the enemy of strategic freedom. The Germans could indulge in frontal attacks; but that was all. And, once the strategic barrier was firmly established, nothing could prevail against France or England, and the Germans were condemned for the reasons above stated, to dash their heads uselessly against it and to squander and exhaust their strength until their opponents would be ready to give them the final blow.

All they could do, since they were bent on fighting to the bitter end, was to try by every means to improve momentarily their hopeless position, so as to tire and overawe the allied civilian populations, who were prone to look askance at the inevitable horrors of war. So, frightfulness in its worst degree was resorted to by Germany, who, tarnished already, stained with countless crimes, abdicated her last remaining scruples, and took to violating at random the laws of humanity. She stopped at nothing, she let her impotent rage have full play.

This warrior nation—a Christian one!—made war ugly by her degradation. She became a torturer, a poisoner, an anarchist of the land, of the air and of the seas. She used the elements for her foul devices. She doomed herself as a race and as a nation; and she stamped the free people of this planet with a fulsome dread of the spirit of conquest and aggression.

In spite of this, however, it behoves the impartial historian to study with all fairness the manner of Germany's more secondary fights so as to unravel the mystery which surrounds some of them and also to serve as a guide to future generations. The strategic problems should always be approached and presented in a proper light and all unnecessary and confusing details left to the tactical expert, the drill-sergeant, or the platoon commander, or other professionals who can make the best use of them.

This is the more necessary as the vastness of the conflict and the increasing intricacies of modern tactics, coupled with the secrecy which was maintained for long by the authorities as regards the military operations have spelt confusion amongst the masses and led the majority to form wrong opinions. In the midst of the excitement and the passions aroused by certain developments the best qualified judges themselves have not escaped the bane of political and

national bias, and they have generally taken a one-sided view of the question. There is thus a danger that the lessons of the War may be forgotten and that the old practice of perverting history for unwholesome purposes may still be adhered to.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN IN GALICIA AND SOUTHERN POLAND

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In the history of the first and second phases the happenings on the Western front were dealt with up to the first battle of Ypres which closed the period of big movements in France and Flanders.

In the third phase, one has to turn first of all to the Eastern front, because there the German staff made their first attempt towards their new ends; but before dealing with the events which followed Tannenberg in Poland and East Prussia, it is necessary to speak of the Galician campaign, as this formed the keystone to the Russian war plans.

We have seen ("Second Phase") that at the opening of the war the Russian Staff were uncertain as to the real strength of the German Eastern forces, although they knew of course that the main bulk of Germany's troops were being directed to the West. This inability to gauge with approximate accuracy the resources of her more dangerous opponent was the chief

cause of Russia's undoing in the third phase—for having settled with Austria, she continued to act in regard to Germany as with a secondary power, and thereby failed to reap the advantages of her initial victories. Twice during the earlier stages she lost the opportunity of dealing with the Germans in a decisive manner; and the latter, in consequence, preserved the initiative of movements which they had so easily won at Tannenberg. The eyes of the Grand Duke were fixed on the Carpathians in the direction of the Hungarian plains, of Buda-Pesth and Vienna; he stood technically on the defence in Poland; he left his flank open to the heavy and well-aimed blows of the Germans; and, finally, owing to a strategic error of the first magnitude, he was compelled to relinquish all he had won in Galicia, to withdraw from Poland and to lay all Western Russia open to invasion.

Excuses were later invoked, as is usual in such cases; it was said that Russia had lacked arms and munitions; and that owing to many adverse factors, tactical and geographical, the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholoevitch, the Russian Generalissimo, could not have done better than he did: we shall see that all this was only partially true, and that with sounder strategy, Russia would undoubtedly have obtained more satisfactory results.

Now for the campaign in Galicia and Southern Poland.

This campaign proved that Russia was better prepared for war than it was thought she was; and that the Grand Duke had under him leaders of great talent.

In the previous conflict (the Mandchourian campaign) Russia had had severe lessons and she had thereby learnt much; and as the set to with Japan was not so far removed the Russian army numbered still in its ranks men of experience in the matter of modern tactics and many officers who had made their mark in battle. Generals who became widely known in the great war had already achieved reputations in Mandchouria; and it can be said that with the exception of the Turks and the Balkan States no armies amongst the belligerents were better fitted in 1914 to take the field than those of the Czar. The experience and efficiency of the Muscovite forces largely made up for some disadvantages from which they suffered, such as the length and scarcity of their communications, the distance of their depôts and bases from the sphere of operations; and the numeric inferiority of their larger units to those of the foe (see footnote at p. 19). The tried aptitude of their commanders also increased their chances of victory over the heterogeneous, inexperienced,

and indifferently led elements of the Dual Monarchy. And so the Germans were somewhat ill advised in the first phase to trust the carrying out of an ambitious plan to their clumsy allies, the Austrians.

When making their concentration against Austria, the Russian leaders kept in view two important factors: The first: the very early mobilisation of the Austrian forces; the second: the position of the Austrian centres of concentration.

The first factor requires no explanation. The significance of the second is also clear, but less obvious.

A glance at the map, however, will show that the Austrian centres of concentration—Lemberg, Preshmyzl and Cracow—lay very near the frontier; which means that on equal grounds the Russian forces could be forestalled, and outflanked by their opponents. Therefore the concentration of the Russian forces opposed to the Austrians had to be made on a backward line. Here one may explain that a backward line of concentration does not necessarily imply defensive action; on the contrary, a forward concentration is more often employed for defence (amongst other examples, Battle of Ypres, Second Phase), whilst a backward one is more generally made for offence (examples. Castel-

nau's flanking movement at Roye and French's pivoting movement in Flanders; same phase).

If we go back to past history we see that in the campaign of Waterloo, for instance, Napoleon concentrated his forces *within* the French frontier before moving into Belgium and that both his adversaries, Wellington and Blucher, also selected a backward line of concentration.

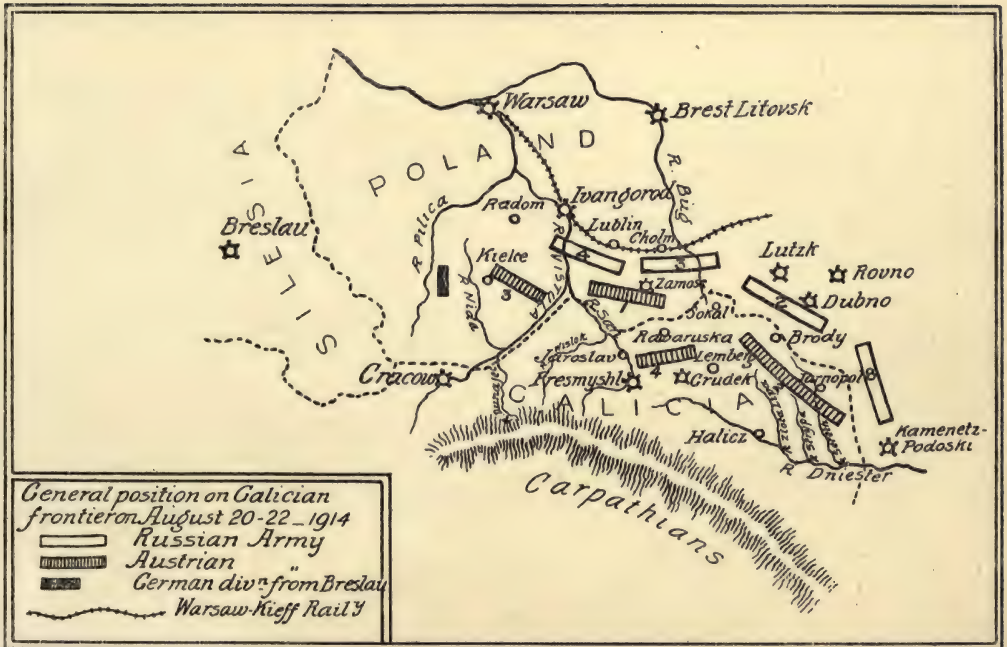
A French quotation will make the point clearer; it is: "*Reculer pour mieux sauter.*" "To stand back so as to make a better jump."

The Russians, then, when they chose the Ivangorod-Lublin-Cholm line to concentrate upon did so for offensive purposes, and not for defensive ones, as the Austrians erroneously supposed. The Russian forces which were termed "South-Western Armies" and were under the higher direction of General Ivanoff—a commander of great ability—consisted in four armies of about five army corps each (first line and reserve), with auxiliary troops (Cossacks, Siberian riflemen, etc.) attached. They were disposed as follows (counting from north to south): The 4th (General Evert) at and near the fortress of Ivangorod, on the right bank of the Vistula; the 3rd (General Plehve) in between it and the River Bug; the 2nd (General Russki) at and near the fortresses of Lutsk, and Rovno in Wolhynia, and the 8th army (General

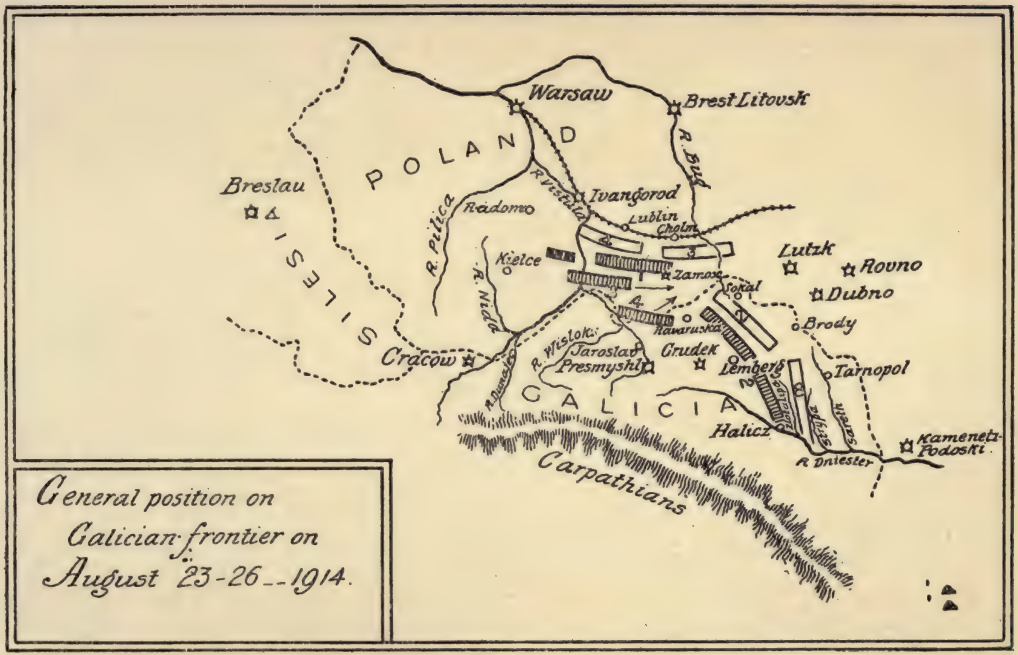
Brussiloff) between the 2nd army and the right bank of the Dniester, near Kamenetz Podoski.

Now as regards the disposition of the opposing forces it can be said that the backward concentration of the Russian South Western armies yielded further advantages than those of mere security; for it misled the Austrians into supposing that their opponents were directing their main forces against Germany. The significance of the faulty plan of concentration which the Austrian leaders adopted is thus made clear. Their first armies, which also numbered four, were disposed as follows, counting from left to right: the 3rd, under Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, was concentrated at Cracow, and it advanced across the frontier to the river Nida, and beyond it, on the left bank of the Vistula. It was joined at Kielce by a reserve division of the VIth German Army Corps,* originally quartered at Breslau. The 1st army, under General Dankl, was concentrated at Preshmyzl, and advanced towards Zamosc and the Lublin-Cholm line. The 2nd, under General Auffenberg, was concentrated at Lemberg, and advanced towards Lutzk and Dubno; or, rather, it pivoted forward on its right, which rested on the Dniester, near Halicz. The 4th army, under

* The first line units of this corps were operating in the Western theatre of war. See Phase 1.


General position on Galician frontier on August 20-22_1914
Russian Army
Austrian "
German divn. from Breslau
Warsaw-Kieff Rail'y
Warsaw
Brest Litovsk
POLAND
SILESIA
Breslau
Ivangorod
Radom
Lublin
Cholm
R. Bug
R. Pilica
Kielce
R. Nida
R. Vistula
Zamosc
Sokal
Lutzk
Rovno
Dubno
Brody
R. San
Rawa Ruska
Jaroslav
Lemberg
Cracow
Presmyshl
Grudek
Tarnopol
GALICIA
Halicz
Kamenetz-Podoski
R. Dniester
Carpathians

MAP I.



General position on Galician frontier on August 23-26--1914.

MAP 2.

General Booverigg, was concentrated behind Dankl's, in the Preshmyzl district. These armies, with the exception of the last, which consisted only of three army corps, were big, and totalled twenty-five army corps (1st line and reserve) between them. They thus outnumbered the Russians, who totalled only twenty.* But although the Austrians enjoyed such a numerical superiority, their plan of concentration was so faulty that when hostilities were opened they were outnumbered by their opponents at almost every point of contact. The Archduke, who selected his line of advance on the assumption that the Russians would throw large forces across the Vistula to cover Ivangorod and Warsaw, found no opponents to oppose; and thus the 3rd Austrian army became temporarily useless. General Booverigg (4th army) could not finish his concentration until Dankl in his front had advanced and made room for him, first to concentrate, and then to deploy. Hence, only two Austrian armies out of four could be adequately employed at the initial stage of the operations; and when under pressure of

* This numerical inferiority of the Russians was even greater than is implied by the difference in number of army corps, the Austrian army corps being the larger. An Austrian army corps did not number less than fifty thousand men, whilst a Russian army corps scarcely totalled forty thousand, this being due to the difference of mobilisation and conscription laws and organisation in the two countries.

events the Austrian commanders tried to mend this state of affairs they made matters worse, for the useless 3rd army was made to execute a hurried change of front, and a forced march across the Vistula and the lines of communications of Dankl's army; a dangerous manœuvre which was clumsily carried out and which led to confusion and disorder, and depressed the *moral* of the Austrians. Certainly if officers want to learn how *not* to conduct a campaign, they can do no better than to study the Austrian side of the first Galician campaign.

In contrast, the Russian operations revealed a high degree of efficiency and talent which would have cost Austria much more than it did could the Russian generals have guessed the supreme incompetency of their opponents; for the Russian generals were not aware of the faulty distribution of the opposing armies and in consequence they acted too cautiously.

Their plan was to let the enemy come on into Poland and then to outflank them from the south. For that purpose Evert and Plehve on the right stood on the defensive, whilst on the left Brussiloff and Russki advanced as soon as their troops were deployed and ready (August 20-21). One can imagine what would have occurred if the northern armies had taken the offensive simultaneously or at the very moment

when Archduke Joseph Ferdinand was executing his change of front and cross-march. Dankl would have been thrown over him and utter confusion would have ensued, which would undoubtedly have caused the complete annihilation or capture of the four first Austrian armies. Instead, Evert and Plehve remained passive until September 3, by which time the Archduke had executed his movement and most of Boo-verigg's forces had reached the battle front.

Brussiloff's and Russki's advance against Auffenberg followed automatically on the first attacks which Dankl made on the Lublin-Cholm line to capture the Ivangorod railway.

The weight and violence of the Russian onslaught took Auffenberg by surprise, but faithful to his part as pivot he attempted no countermove; he merely prepared positions in his rear, on the Zlota-Lipa, a tributary of the Dniester, and tried to make a stand to cover Lemberg and the communications of the northern armies; the Russians entered Brody and Sokal in the north; and in the south they stormed with ease Tarnopol (August 23); after which, elated by success and carried away by their own impetus, they crossed the Strypa and assaulted with the greatest dash and determination the Zlota-Lipa position.

Up to then Brussiloff and Russki had acted together to perfection; but afterwards they did

not succeed so well in co-ordinating their movements; otherwise Auffenberg would have suffered a still more crushing defeat.

Either the Russian generals misjudged the position, or Russki found it impossible to restrain his troops; at any rate, the Zlota-Lipa position was attacked too soon and stormed too quickly, and Brussiloff had no time to complete his own movement. This was a forced night-march which the extreme left army corps, under the distinguished Bulgarian general, Radko Dmitrieff, executed to Halicz on the Dniester,* so as to take Auffenberg in flank and rear. This movement, like Kluck's advance near Meaux, at the Marne, was meant to be decisive. So it would have been, if the troops more to the north had not been in such a hurry and had sought rather to pin the Austrians to their position than to oust them from it. Before, however, Dmitrieff's main body had reached Halicz, the Austrians, after a four hours' fight, were dislodged, and they were in full retreat.

Here we find a similar if reversed condition to what occurred on the Marne, or rather, on the Ourcq, on September 5-6. General Maunoury with the French flanking force attacked prematurely; he failed to reach the objective set to

* Radko Dmitrieff had commanded the Bulgarian army at Kirk Kilisse and Lule Burgas in the first Balkan war (1912).

him (Chateau Thierry)* and the Germans evaded the trap. In Galicia, Dmitrieff, through no fault of his own, did not attack soon enough. He reached his first objective (Halicz) but much too late and with an exhausted army corps.

Thus Auffenberg withdrew his right in time and was able to carry out his retreat in fairly good order until the collapse of the other Austrian armies on the Lublin-Cholm line.

Curiously enough, Auffenberg's set-back and retreat did not at first greatly disturb Dankl nor his royal colleague, who joined him on his right; for they both thought by then that the bulk of the Russian forces were massed in the south, and that they, therefore, had a fair chance of outflanking them in the north and thus of reversing the situation to their own profit. They soon found, however, that they were mistaken; for in spite of all endeavours they could not break the resistance of Evert's and Plehve's troops. On the contrary, they were repulsed and driven back time and again; and when at length the Russians changed their action, the Austrians, exhausted and demoralised, gave way immediately.

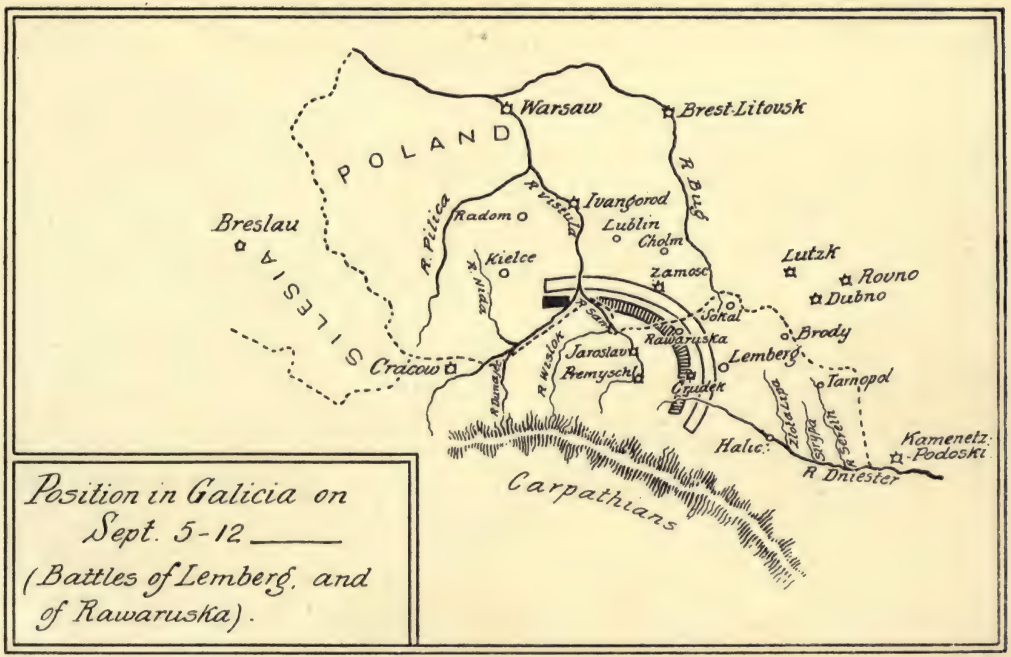
Some explanation here is necessary to account in a complete way for the lateness of the Russian counter move in that region.

* Note :—See Joffre's army order to the 6th French army at the Marne.

It should be remembered that the battle of Tannenberg was fought on August 26-29 and it, therefore, co-incided, or, rather, synchronised, with the Austrian offensive on the Lublin-Cholm line. The news of the German victory, and of the defeat and destruction of Samsonoff's army, no doubt, disturbed the Russian commanders in Poland, and they must have felt somewhat insecure in their own position. Stock could not be taken for some little time of the reverse, in which the army of Rennenkampf to the right of Samsonoff in East Prussia and Suwalki might have been involved.* Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how Tannenberg could have prevented the Russians from pursuing more audacious aims in Southern Poland; and so the fact remains that the delay in the advance of Evert and Plehve's armies was due chiefly to their ignorance or lack of information as to the true disposition of their adversaries.

The Austrian rout was complete. They lost all cohesion. They abandoned baggage, material and ammunition; and the number of prisoners taken by the Russians was considerable, this being mainly due to the fact that the Austrians entrusted the protection of their retreat to Tchek and Slavonic battalions who were prone to sympathise with the Russians and surrendered

* See map 2, Second Phase.



Position in Galicia on Sept. 5-12 _____
(Battles of Lemberg and of Rawaruska).

MAP 3.


R. Bug
Warsaw
Ivangorod
Lublin
Cholm
R. Pilica
R. Vistula
Radom
Breslau
Kielce
R. Nida
R. San
Lamosc
Lutzk
Rovno
Dubno
Sokal
Rawaruska
Brody
Lemberg
Tarnopol
Grudek
Jaroslavl
Premysch
R. Wistok
Cracow
R. Dunajec
R. Dniester
Halici
Kamenetz-Podolski
Carpathians
Limit of first Russian offensive in Galicia Sept-Oct. 1914.

MAP 4.

wholesale whenever they had the occasion. And so, after a retreat which has been wrongly and unjustly compared by misguided critics to the Western Allies' manœuvre to the Marne, the broken and discomfited Austrians reached the Rawa-Ruska-Grudek line, where they managed to rally on prepared positions (September 12).

How unfair was the above mentioned comparison is exemplified by the inability of the Austrians to retake the offensive as the French and British had done in France; which, furthermore, the Austrians did not even attempt to do, although they were on more favourable ground, with a huge arsenal immediately in their rear (Preshmyzl) that they could draw upon. The battle of the Marne was fought in the open; that of Rawa Ruska on fortified positions. At the former engagement the French out-generalled the Germans and flung them back. In Galicia, all the Austrians could do was to resist during eight days to the stubborn and murderous assaults of the Russians, who finally captured the fortress of Grudek (September 17) and broke and dispersed their opponents. The hapless remnants of Dankl's and Auffenberg's armies were cut off and captured, or annihilated; whilst those of Booverig and the Archduke were in part shut up in Preshmyzl, and in part driven off, like helpless herds of cattle, across the Wislok and

into the recesses of the Carpathian Mountains—Lemberg, Grudek, Rawa Ruska, Joroslaw, all Galicia in fact with the exception of the great fortress, was in the hands of the Russians.

After that, the Russians had nothing to fear from Austria, and from that moment they might well have centred their attention to the Germans. They could have adopted the defensive in Galicia; and directed their chief forces to Poland; or else made for Cracow and Silesia.

But the Grand Duke Nicholas had other plans. He subordinated in his mind everything to the complete crushing of Austria; he looked towards Vienna, towards Hungary and the gallant Serbs; and thus it was that he only took half measures to cope with the growing strength of the Germans, and that the latter remained in possession of the initiative of movements which they had won at Tannenberg.

CHAPTER III

THE OPENING OF THE FIRST PERIOD OF BIG MOVEMENTS IN POLAND; AND THE CAUSES OF THE INDECISIVE CHARACTER OF THESE OPERATIONS

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THE battle of Tannenberg not only gained the strategic initiative for the Germans on their Eastern front but gave them also great moral ascendancy over the Austrians. After their initial collapse the latter felt helpless; so they wisely left it to their cleverer and more efficient allies to mend matters as best they could. Hindenburg took over the general management of affairs on the Eastern front, and the direction of the campaign against Russia; and he made plans to counteract the Russian success in Galicia. Already, whilst he was still in East Prussia, he had been busy with the formation and organisation of the German Eastern armies, and after the completion of his rapid campaign in East Prussia, leaving the 8th army there in the hands of General Von Schubert, he came over to Thorn, to Posen, and then to Breslau, to arrange the details for an offensive in Poland.

The new German armies, the 9th and the 10th, were formed with German and Austrian reserves; and they were stiffened with a certain number of units of the first line from both Austria and from Prussia; they were also strengthened with war material drawn from the frontier fortresses. The main Austrian forces were also re-organised and re-inforced so as to enable them to play their part in the new campaign. Nominally, they were under the command of an Archduke. Really, from that epoch, they obeyed Hindenburg and his staff.

Hindenburg's plan for the defeat of Russia in Poland was a fine piece of constructive strategy, and although it miscarried, it revealed to the full the high qualities of the great German general. He took the utmost advantage of his facilities for rapid concentration and transport, and of his short communications. No time was lost; and whilst the Russians, after their surprising success in Galicia, were hesitating and wondering what next to do, the Germans, anxious as to developments in another sphere, and stimulated by their own no less surprising victory in East Prussia, got ready and launched their blows in the direction of Warsaw and the Middle Vistula.

Their object was to compel the Russians to evacuate Galicia, and to bring them on to a

decisive action on the line of the Bug—a more or less similar undertaking to that which had been vainly striven for by Dankl during the critical period of the preceding operations. The isolation or capture of Ivangorod and the cutting of the Russian communications with their chief centres of concentration would have brought about the collapse of the Russian system and forced their south-western armies either to capitulate or to execute a disastrous retreat into Bessarabia and the Pripet Marshes.

On September 26-27 the formidable array of Teutonic armies which were gathered on the line Posen-Breslau-Cracow started to move eastwards, whilst in the north, in the Russian province of Suwalki, Hindenburg's former forces, now under Von Schubert, having pursued Rennenkampf to the River Bobr and the Niemen, sought to pin him there and to draw towards them those Russian forces and reinforcements which otherwise might act against Hindenburg in Poland.

The Russians were not evidently prepared to meet such an onslaught, for they had lingered in Galicia and made arrangements to attack the Carpathians and Cracow. Their main forces were gathered in that region, and Poland was correspondingly denuded of troops, only one army—the 4th—being stationed there between

the Nida and the Pilica with small detachments on its right to cover Warsaw. In one matter, however, the Russians made up for their lack of strength in Poland; they gave the direction of affairs there and also in Suwalki to General Russki, the former commander of the 2nd Army in Galicia, who was succeeded at the head of this force by General Dmitrieff.

Russki did not attempt at first to oppose seriously the Germans in Poland. The Russians there were systematically drawn back to the line of the Vistula, whilst the southern armies followed this movement by retiring before the advancing Austrians, to the San. It was against Von Schubert in Suwalki, that Russki directed his first blows; and this for the very simple reason that the prolonged occupation of the Niemen and Bobr line by the Germans made the position of the Russians in Poland, in such small strength as they were, untenable; further, there was a strong possibility that a defeat inflicted on the German East Prussian army would lead to the discomfiture of the others. This was proved by subsequent developments; although the Russians through faulty concentration and lack of immediate means failed to reap the full advantages of their victory.

Von Schubert's reverse, however, was sufficiently severe. It was caused by his lack of


Baltic Sea
Memel
Courland
Tilsit
Koenigsberg
Insterburg
Kovno
Wilna
Dantzig
East Prussia
Lotzen
Suwalki
Olita
Allenstein
Lyck
Augustinow
Grodno
Graudenz
Soldau
Ostralenka
Ossowiec
Lomza
Bielostock
Thorn
Roshan
Posen
N. Georgievsk
Ossowetz
Warsaw
Brest Litovsk
Bohmen
Lodz
Tomaszolo
Ivangorod
Breslau
Nudom
Lublin
Kielce
Cholm
Lutzk
Rovno
Dubno
Cracow
Jaroslav
Lemberg
Grudek
Przemysch
Stambor
Halicz
Stanislau
Dniester
Czernowitz
Carpathians
Bukowina
Roumania
HUNGARY
SILESIA
POLAND
GALICIA
The first Austro-German offensive in Poland. - General position on Sep 26-27
= Russian Armies
= Austrian do
= German do
East Prussian railways & Warsaw-Wilna-Petrograd line shown.

MAP 5.

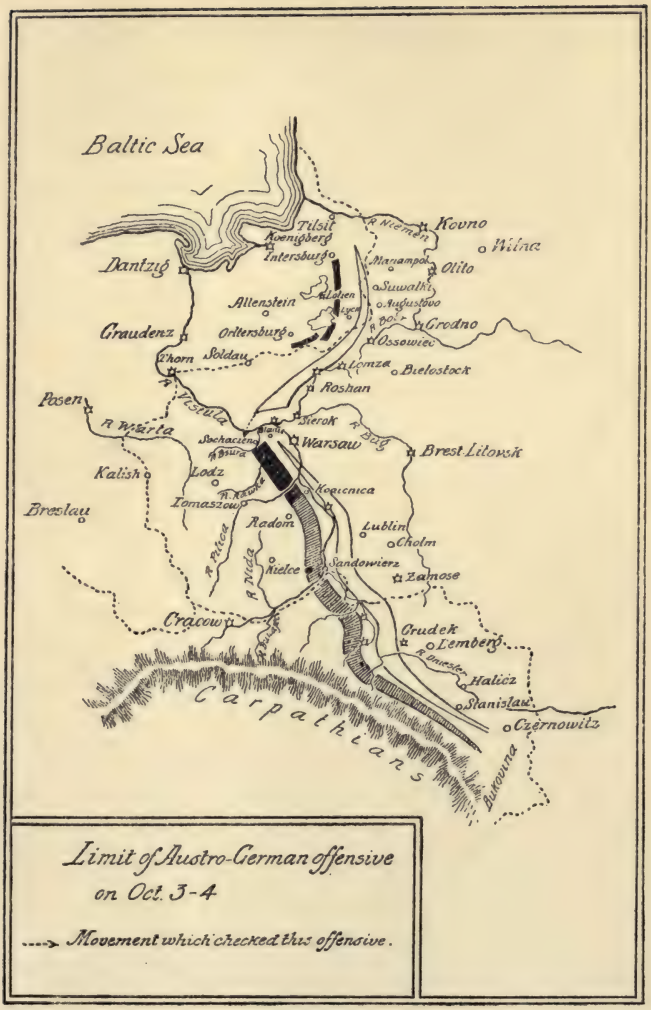
ability and foresight, and by his strenuous endeavours to emulate his great predecessor. In his attempt to overawe and mislead the Russians, he imposed excessive deployment on his worn-out and comparatively weak forces. He attacked simultaneously three fortresses—Kovno, Grodno and Ossowieck—and tried at the same time to force the crossings of the Niemen and the Bobr at different points; and the result was that his opponents, having recovered, and gathered strength, broke his lines, outflanked him to the North and the South, and rolled back his weary and depleted columns to the German frontier (September 27-30).

This occurred at the moment that Hindenburg was taking the offensive in Poland, and if Von Schubert's first disaster did not react more strongly on the other German commanders, it was because the latter viewed it in the light of a strategic and voluntary retirement. Such was, at any rate, the impression conveyed by Von Schubert's account, this general trying to make light of the affair in the hope of recovering the initiative which he had lost; and so, Hindenburg, taking for granted there was nothing to fear, hammered for all his worth in the direction of Ivangorod and Warsaw, his left wing getting within gunshot of the latter place, whilst the Austrians, under Dankl, were making

preparations to invest or storm the former; and further south, in Galicia, Archduke Joseph Ferdinand (4th Austrian army) and General Boehm von Ermolli (2nd army) on his right, were attempting to cross the San and to compel the Russians to raise the siege of Preshmyzl. In the latter item they partially succeeded; in the former they failed, but their subsequent discomfiture was due to events in the north.

Von Schubert could not keep up the delusion for long. He had hoped to recover, and to make a successful stand in Prussian territory. The Russians at his heels, however, would not be denied. There was in particular amongst them an army corps from Siberia (the 3rd), composed of giants, terrible men, whose bayonets made fearful holes in the German ranks. It was on the line Augustovo-Moriampol that the final battle took place, on October 1-4. It was not a strategic battle, for the character of the country and other causes made it difficult for the assaulting force to manœuvre; and on account of their moral ascendancy and numeric strength the Russians had nothing more to do than to overpower and crush their opponents.

This they did with as much ease and rapidity as Hindenburg when he had destroyed Samsonoff's army. The Prussians were beaten and their broken fragments were scattered in all



Limit of Austro-German offensive on Oct. 3-4

----> *Movement which checked this offensive.*

MAP 6.

directions. Some fled to Intersburg, others to Lotzen, to Hohenstein, and to Soldau, the scene of their former victory. East Prussia, the beloved province of the Junkers, came once more under the shadow of invasion.

It is said that both the Kaiser and his son arrived from the Western front in time at Augustovo to witness the disaster; which looks as if they were fated never to obtain the cheap glory which they were vainly seeking since the opening of the war.

Schubert's defeat took place in time to enable Russki to outflank Hindenburg on the Lower Vistula and the Bsura. Divisions of Rennenkampf's army joined, or rather combined their action with fresh reinforcements which had been concentrated at Warsaw, and after a fierce struggle on the Sochazew-Blonie line, Hindenburg relinquished his attempt. He fell back towards Kalish, Posen and Breslau, his retirement naturally involving that of the Austrians to the south of him. The latter, however, always slow in the advance, were also slow to retreat, and in consequence they suffered more, as usual, than the Germans. General Dankl who after the events related above, had no reason for persisting in his attempts to cross the Vistula, nevertheless continued his efforts until his left was outflanked at Kosienica and fiercely attacked by

a Russian army corps which was headed by a Caucasian division (October 24). The latter in particular were impetuous, formidable troops; and, moreover, they were quite fresh and at full strength. They broke the Austrians and drove them back on Radom. Dankl's right then, which had not retired, was exposed about Sandomierz; and in order to withdraw it safely and in good order, he was compelled to accept battle at Kielce (October 28) under such disadvantageous conditions that he lost 12,000 prisoners and fifty guns.

This defeat and the whole collapse of the Austro-German offensive in Poland caused the discomfiture of the 2nd and 4th Austrian armies in Galicia, which were attempting to relieve Preshmyzl and to cross the San. General Dmitrieff, at the head of the 2nd Russian army, distinguished himself there by a clever turning movement south of the fortress, between Sanok and Sambor, when he succeeded in cutting off a couple of Austrian divisions which, to avoid capture, went to swell the already large Preshmyzl garrison (October 25-26). His further efforts, however, were unavailing, so were those of the 3rd Russian army to recross the San until the Austrian retreat began (November 6), the Austrian generals, under the influence of the Germans, and also the bitter lessons of

the opening, exhibiting, in this campaign, a higher degree of talent. They fell back in fairly good order and with comparatively small losses to the lines of the Dunajec and the Nida, where they established themselves in strong positions. The Russians advanced once more, and they resumed the investment of the disputed fortress; but apart from that and the temporary glamour of their victories in the north, they failed to derive much profit from the situation, and to provide in adequate and decisive fashion against the renewed attempt of the Germans in Poland.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE OF LODZ AND THE END OF THE FIRST PERIOD OF BIG MOVEMENTS IN POLAND

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THE second Austro-German offensive in Poland is to be viewed in connection with contemporaneous events in other directions, more especially with the intervention of Turkey which took place just then, and the Russian attack on the Carpathians which started at about the same time. The intervention of Turkey dispelled the German Staff's more immediate fears in regard to the action of England and France, as now without too many serious misgivings Germany could direct important reinforcements and reserves to her Eastern frontier.

The Russian attack on the Carpathians made it still easier for the Germans to reassume activities in Poland, because this fresh undertaking on the part of Russia (the attack of the Carpathians) would create demands upon her which would compel her to remain on the defensive in Poland. Hindenburg's prospects were indeed favourable; his second plan also was better than the first. It miscarried through a variety of reasons, not the least conspicuous being the

talent of the Muscovite leaders on the spot, who, with slender means, succeeded in thwarting their powerful and stubborn opponents. The chances which were offered to Russia at that date on the blood-stained soil of Poland were such that it makes one regret that the aforesaid means were slender and that the forces which would have turned the scales in that quarter were squandered elsewhere—for, as in the first instance, it was all General Russki could do just to stem the tide of invasion; and as we shall see, the chief battle of that new campaign ended in a draw, when a few more divisions or a larger proportion of first line units on the Russian side would have turned it into a complete and decisive victory.

It is known that Russia had her largest and best armies in Galicia, the forces she employed in Poland being chiefly composed of 2nd line troops.

The new Austro-German advance to the line of the Vistula started in mid-November, and was carried out by the same armies which had acted in the first movement, the only alteration in their disposition being that the 8th German army, being reconstituted and reinforced and placed under a new commander (Von Below)*

* General Von Below should not be confused with General Von Bulow who commanded the 2nd German army in France.

now took its line of action from the fortress of Thorn, the defence of East Prussia being temporarily entrusted to detachments.

The Russians were still weak in Poland, and reinforcements from their centres of concentration did not reach the zone of action in time to hinder the initial progress of the Germans.

The latter struck heavily on the upper Bzura, and won a considerable victory at Kutno (November 15-16). The importance, however, and the results of this were, as usual, much magnified by the foe.

Hindenburg was made a Field-Marshal on the strength of it. He was certainly more deserving of the *baton* at Tannenberg, as Kutno was not to be compared with the former victory; but the German people at the time were much depressed at the turn of events in the main sphere—viz., the Western front—and they were in need of some refreshment, and their staff, smarting under their failure in France, were striving to distract the attention of the world from that quarter.

A far more noteworthy performance than Kutno was General Mackensen's stroke at Lodz; but it is only fair to say that the German staff made the most of it also, and that they tried to obliterate its after effects and inconclusive results.

The enemy's onslaught on the Russian centre near Lodz was scientifically planned and well-conducted. General Mackensen, who, at the head of the 9th German army, led this formidable attack, was the type of the dashing cavalry officer endowed with brains, a combination which is not frequent. He was a first rate organiser and at the same time a capable leader. Like Hindenburg, he realised that rapid and forceful action was necessary against such dogged and ponderous fighters as the Russians; he therefore concentrated his forces swiftly, massed his guns, and under cover of Hindenburg's—or, rather, Von Below's—movement at Kutno, he launched his columns forward in serried ranks on the banks of the Ner, a tributary of the Warta, his left wing divisions under Von Morgen (1st army corps) pivoting and sweeping northwards towards Lowicz, an important railway junction; whilst his right wing columns in the south pressed on in the direction of the Warsaw railway line, north of Lodz. The Russians had little to answer with to the heavy ordnance which smashed their defences and ploughed their ranks; and they were not numerically strong enough to withstand Mackensen's infantry attacks.

They gave way until they found themselves compressed or jammed, on a partially surrounded position. Had Mackensen then reached

his objectives—Lowicz and the Warsaw railway—the Russians between these points would have been swiftly and completely encircled, and captured or crushed.

The Germans failed for several reasons.

First of all, owing to the spirit in which they undertook these operations, the Kaiser's generals acted with a degree of caution which made them seize at random on every opportunity to increase their local gains. Thus when the unexpected progress of the 9th German army in the centre occurred, reserves which were needed there to bring the manœuvre to a successful conclusion were not at hand, because they had been directed, on the spur of the moment, towards Kutno, with the object of adding some "finish" to that battle; and so Mackensen's thinned and exhausted ranks, strained moreover by excessive deployment, were left without support. Secondly, the commander of the Russian 4th army, General Evert, rose to the occasion by making the best use of his reinforcements. He brought them all to play against Mackensen at Lowicz and near Lodz, whilst he preserved a passive attitude in front of Von Below in the north. A fresh Russian division entered the field at Lowicz, whilst another played on Mackensen's right flank from Breziny. Thirdly, General Russki, who had the higher command in Po-

land, brought swiftly from Sierok and Novo-Georgievsk, other reinforcements which were thrown across the Vistula, between Wysrogrod and Plock, against Hindenburg's left flank on the Bzura; this manœuvre being a singular repetition of the movement which had defeated the enemy's first attempt in Poland.

Finally, the Austro-German armies, under Woyrsch and Dankl, to the south of Mackensen, were neither strong enough, nor in a fitting condition to play a decisive part in the action. The Austrians made feeble attempts on the Pilica and the Nida which invariably ended disastrously for themselves; the Russian *communiqués* of the period dealing with that section of their front were frequently prolific in the numbers of prisoners captured, which were out of proportion with the fighting that had occurred.

So, Mackensen, who made such a bold and clever attempt to surround a portion of the Russian forces, and, through this, to break their front, not only failed, but was very nearly surrounded and captured himself, with his whole army. Two of his army corps were partially cut off and at one moment they were given up for lost. But like all true leaders of men, the brilliant commander of the 9th German army was as cool-minded as he was bold. Having swiftly realised that his movement had failed


Plock
N.Georgievsk
Sierok
Warsaw
Blonie
Sochaczew
Kutno
8
Lowicz
R. Visula
Skiernewice
9
R. Warta
R. Ner
Brezniny
Lodz
Koluski
Sieradz
10
R Pilica
1
Map to show Mackensen's stroke
at Lodz (Nov 20-21_1914)
Russian Counter attacks
Main Railway lines.

MAP 7.

and that he stood in a position of extreme danger, he thought of nothing but saving his battered and half crippled forces. It was a hard task, as the Russians, victorious in their turn, were bent on reaping the full profit of the action; in other words, in cutting off Mackensen completely. They were not, however, as has been said, in sufficient numbers; and, moreover, they had suffered almost as heavily, in casualties, as the foe; and so the Germans succeeded, although at a fearful cost,* in extricating themselves from the most desperate situation they had got into.

Thus ended the battle of Lodz; the Russians, disappointed, and somewhat exhausted, broke off the action in order to readjust their lines in Central Poland,† and also to meet with adequate forces the counter-move which Hindenburg, with Below's army, was attempting to the north of the Vistula in order to redeem the inconclusive results of Mackensen's abortive stroke.

This new move requires some explanation as it has been misinterpreted and often wrongly described.

We have seen that the German 8th army, after Kutno, was outflanked on the Bzura. When Mackensen had succeeded in walking out of the

* The Germans lost at Lodz over 20,000 prisoners and about 300 guns.

† The Russians admitted that it was through lack of reserves that they could not push their counter stroke home at Lodz.

trap which had so nearly closed round him the necessities which arose from his dangerous situation were nullified; his fellow commanders then kept or recalled the reinforcements and reserves they had set in motion to help him. Thus Von Below was enabled to hold on on the Bzura and even to check the Russian flanking movement on the Lower Vistula. Supported to the north of the river by some of the East Prussian elements, this commander made a daring, and rather theatrical attempt, to reach the outskirts of Warsaw from the north. This attempt ended in fiasco, the Russians repeating with success at Prasnyz, although on a smaller scale, their Lodz counter-manœuvre (December 14-15).

Such were the results of the first period of big movements in Poland, the opposing forces there, and also to the north as far as the Niemen, and to the south along the Dunajec and the Nida, settling gradually into the kind of "deadlock" operations or "siege warfare" which prevailed by then on the Western front.

Germany had failed; but Russia had failed also to turn to account her victories; for, as we shall now see, her main forces were being directed against an obstacle, the strength of which neutralised inevitably the advantages which, at that period, she possessed over Germany.

CHAPTER V

THE FAVOURABLE EFFECTS OF THE CARPATHIANS ATTACK ON THE GERMAN PLANS

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WHILST the Russians, with limited means, were trying to oppose and defeat the German attacks in Poland, the Grand Duke, with his main forces, was venturing upon a move which was meant to be the finishing stroke of the war.

The primary object of this move was the capture of the Carpathians, the great range of mountains which separates Galicia from the Magyar plains. This range constituted the strongest position or barrier on the Teutonic front, and the Grand Duke and those of his staff who shared and supported his views calculated that once they were in possession of it they could deal more easily and at leisure with their foes.

With such a pivot in their possession, the Russians, it was said, could manœuvre at ease, and take Germany in flank from the south; Hungary would be at their mercy; the Serbs would be definitely relieved; and, finally, Austria would be forced from the list and compelled to

sue for a separate peace. Thus Germany would have been left to face the Triple Entente alone. The view seemed sound and it had some factors to recommend it. The peculiar position of two neutral nations at the time, who were neighbours to the Dual Monarchy, was a particular inducement for Russia to act in the way she did; and it must be admitted that had everything turned out in the political sphere as the Grand Duke hoped and expected, there is no saying what success he might have achieved. Unfortunately, the military disadvantages of the enterprise as regards the threatening spirit and strength of the Germans, outweighed appreciably its political prospects. One may take for granted of course that the Grand Duke and his staff did weigh and consider everything, except perhaps one factor which in spite of their previous experiences, they seemed to have left out of their reckoning—the talent of the leaders of the opposite camp and the latter's facilities for rapid mobilisation and concentration. These leaders, however, had been thwarted; and they had been repulsed twice from Poland. This made the Grand Duke over confident and led him to plunge deeper and deeper into his bold and daring movement.

When he considered that his position was secure in Poland, he proceeded to a vast con-

centration in Southern and Western Galicia, the movement starting almost as soon as the Austrians, after their unsuccessful attempt to relieve Preshmyzl, were definitely checked on the San; and thus synchronising, practically, with Hindenburg's second attempt in Poland. The 3rd army, under Plehve, pushed across the Vistula, the Biala, and the Dunajec, towards Cracow (December 1-6). The 2nd, under Dmitrieff, invaded North Hungary almost as far as Barfeld; whilst the 8th army advanced frontally against the range itself, and the 9th acted towards Bukovina, along the Dniester and the Pruth, to protect the Russian communications from that direction. Behind all these forces yet another army, which was concentrated in that quarter, laid siege to Preshmyzl. This was the 7th army, under General Selivanoff.

It was then, and after their second failure in Poland, that the Germans redrew entirely their plans in regard to Russia; these to be well grasped must be approached from the standpoint of outside events.

At that stage the great German offensive in the West had come to an end; the German armies in France and Flanders stood on the defence on fortified ground, their local needs being reduced to a minimum. Turkey had joined the Central Empires, and it was calculated that the Allies

would thereby be appreciably weakened on their main fronts. The Kaiser's generals thought that without too many misgivings they could centre, at least momentarily, their attentions on Russia, and endeavour to defeat her, to crush her, to sever her from her alliances and thus remove her from the field of combat, which would pave the way for another onslaught against France or else lead to the new conditions of peace that Germany, baffled but not crushed, was striving for. For she was unaware of the stringent policy of man-economy that France had deliberately and wisely entered into, and she interpreted Joffre's refusal to attack as a sign of weakness and exhaustion.

The disposition of the Russian forces such as it has been shown, and which was entailed by the Grand Duke's scheme, greatly favoured Germany, for it left her free to manipulate at ease her own line, and to prepare behind that line any counter-move that she would wish to attempt. The Russians, as yet, were not too numerous, and besides, attacked by the Turks, they were entering in a remote region (the Caucasus) into a fresh campaign, which would naturally absorb some of their reserves and new formations, and their surplus strength. But the best prospects for Germany lay on the Carpathians; for the assailants could be nailed there

and made to pay the full toll of any gains; then, afterwards, Russia would be too weak to stand the accumulated strength of her opponents. Herein lies the key to the great Teuton offensive of 1915, and to the mysterious and apparently aimless German and Austrian moves which preceded it.

Needless to say, as the right view of events was not taken all these moves were misinterpreted, and thereby Germany, although she finally failed, reaped nevertheless the major profits of her undertaking; for she succeeded once more in blinding the world as to the results she achieved and as to her true position, and she succeeded in drawing on to her side yet another well-armed and powerful neutral State—Bulgaria.

The battle of the Carpathians constituted on her part a delaying action; and not as was supposed and believed, an attempt to relieve Preshmyzl; in the same way the fresh offensives which she carried out in the spring, in Courland, Suwalki, North Poland, and in Bukovina, were not real attacks, but false ones, which were designed to mislead the Russians. Finally, the eventual defeat of the latter was due to faulty distribution and unsound strategy; and not to lack of means or shortage of materials; so it can be taken for granted that Russia lost the cam-

paign directly she embarked on the conquest of the Carpathians.

This operation, the most tremendous of the kind which has ever been undertaken, imposed on the Grand Duke demands and sacrifices which prevented him from keeping himself at full strength elsewhere; and which, in the end, practically exhausted his forces. Yet, as we shall see, the Grand Duke, at the crucial moment, acquired a sufficiency of troops and material to make good his position, and to hold his gains. He failed to make proper use of them; and this is the true cause of Russia's disappointment.

The capture of the Carpathians in itself, however, was a brilliant feat of arms of which the Russian armies and their leaders, and especially General Ivanoff who devised the operation, could well be proud. It was a triumph in tactics and it displayed to the full the qualities of doggedness and endurance for which the Muscovite soldier is famous. In the teeth of a most formidable and desperate opposition they overcame all difficulties. They fought in the snow-clad peaks with an unconcern and an ease which astonished their opponents; they charged up steep rocky inclines and dislodged the well entrenched defenders from strong and thoroughly prepared positions; they defeated all counter

attacks, and by the end of March they were masters of the Carpathians. The Duklow pass, the Luchow pass, the Rosztoki pass were in their hands and sotnias of Cossacks, pushing forward, sallied into the Hungarian plains, and filled with consternation the apprehensive population who fled in thousands in anticipation of the Muscovite invasion. The number of prisoners made by the victors in that operation was estimated at 80,000. About this time (March 21) Preshmyzl fell, the victors capturing there a whole army (130,000 men), and an immense booty; and thus Russia then looked truly irresistible and triumphant. The world, who was always prone to look away from the main quarter of the struggle, was ready and eager to hand over to the Grand Duke the palm of victory—and there is absolutely no doubt that amongst those who praised and glorified his action, there was not a single individual who understood the position; and who therefore had an inkling into what was brewing. We shall see more fully presently the favourable effect of the Russian undertaking on the enemy's plans; ere now it can be shown that far from fearing the result, the Germans did what they could to egg on the Russians on their costly and daring enterprise. They took advantage of the necessity there was at one time of affording tactical help to the Austrians, to foster the belief that

considerable German forces were being concentrated in Hungary, behind the Carpathian range. And in order to heighten the effect of their announcements in the matter, they sent two generals of some notability, Marwitz and Lisingen, to take charge of affairs in that quarter. No one in the opposite camp had then a doubt that full German army corps had reinforced the Austrians; and it was owing to this that the Grand Duke took so seriously the enemy's counter move in Bukovina and the occupation of the Uszok pass by a small German contingent. And whilst the Grand Duke, thinking that the enemy was going to make an effort —a frontal effort—to reconquer the Carpathians, kept accumulating troops and material in that direction, the Germans were actively and feverishly busy with their secret preparations, *behind another sector of their front.*

CHAPTER VI

THE FASHION IN WHICH THE ENEMY SUCCEEDED IN CONCEALING THEIR PREPARATIONS ON THEIR EASTERN FRONT

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LET us now see how and to what extent the critics, and the Russians themselves, were misled by the Germans. The point is worth dwelling upon, as it constitutes a psychologic phenomenon of utmost interest, and it will, at the same time, illustrate the limitations of the human mind when affected by any form of bias, whether national or professional.

It was towards the end of January (1915) when the stagnant tactics of the winter campaign were beginning to break off on the Polish front, that a forward movement was started on a sector of that front by the Germans. Except for the operations in the Carpathians, nothing of importance was then going on; and on the sector above referred to, along the Rawka, between Borzymow and Szydlowska, the enemy assumed suddenly a most aggressive attitude, and for a whole week they delivered incessant and fierce attacks until the Russians, reinforced

in the usual manner—viz., by a re-shifting of their forces—counter-attacked, drove back the enemy, and placed him once more on the defensive in that region.

Immediately afterwards (February 7) Hindenburg started his second great move in East Prussia.

Ere we come to deal with this latter operation, let us recall the speculations which were made as to the strength of the Germans on the Borzymow front. These speculations were invariably entered into from the standpoint that the enemy had *always* the superiority of numbers at *every* point where he attacked, and they were made with the intention of excusing any mishap which occurred or seemed to occur, to his opponents. Borzymow furnishes us with a good instance of this kind of biassed and localised vision.

The current estimates—or at any rate, those which were vouched for by many an expert—placed the number of Germans there at 140,000 men, an excessive valuation which was based, apparently, on the enemy's own reports; we shall see that the Germans had very strong reasons for exaggerating their own strength in that region. The above figures were accepted as correct by a very high authority* who explained

* The *Times* History.

this singular increase in the following manner: ". . . . During the fighting which had occurred round the Barrows (Mozily)* between January 5-11, two German corps were said to have been engaged, one being in action, the other in reserve, but in February additional forces were obtained by a *new concentration*† (sic)." From the same pen, a few lines ahead, we get the following statement: "The Germans did not keep behind their lines reserves in any way proportionate to the forces actually engaged." Then of course, there could have been no new concentration as this would suppose the existence of important reserves behind the fighting line; and the strength of the Germans during the latter action has therefore to be reduced from the higher figure (viz., 140,000) to their original two corps (or about 80,000 men).‡ Before we go further, here we have a striking example of a critic of high standing who actually gave credence, *simultaneously,* to two contradictory opinions; a state of mind which reveals the utter indifference of some people as to the soundness of their judgment or the consistencies of their views.

* A desultory action of no importance.

† The italics are mine.

‡ In fact it was not proved that these units were complete; mention was made of troops belonging to two different army corps, and the commentators, in the usual manner, took for granted that the *whole* of these corps were there.

Needless to say, the above quoted expert failed entirely to explain the mystery and to penetrate the intentions of the enemy, although he had a good indication which, curiously enough, he described himself as follows: ". . . . No blows were delivered between the Pilica and the Carpathians; yet we have good reason to suppose (sic) that at the time the thrust was delivered at Borzymow *considerable Austro-German forces were concentrated around Kielce and on the Tuchow-Gorlice line.*"*

There was the key to the new operations, in fact to the whole of Germany's fresh campaign; but it escaped the notice of everyone; and the world was consequently at a loss to make head or tail of the ensuing developments. It is only fair to add that apart from their national idiosyncrasies, the day to day commentators were lost in the details of these vast operations, and reasoning, as they were, from insufficient data and not properly digested facts, they were bound to draw their conclusions more or less at random.

Borzymow is a case in point. Hindenburg's second move in East Prussia, or, as it is more usually called, the battle of Lyck, is another.

Hindenburg was believed to have had under him there as many as fifteen army corps, eight

* The italics are mine.

of which were said to have been deployed between Tilsitt and Johannisberg—what these latter were there for has never been explained, but when one reflects that both the Kaiser and his son, the Crown Prince, accompanied the expedition, one feels less surprised that the belief should have been entertained, the presence of crowned heads always enhancing the importance of an operation.

The very rapidity, however, of Hindenburg's concentration should have shown that the Germans were not in such great strength as was supposed, the length in time of a concentration being always proportionate to the amount of troops employed.

The main incidents of this campaign were as follows : The Russian 10th army (Rennenkampf) was surprised at and near Lyck before it had time to "break bivouac," so to speak, that is to prepare to meet the attack, which was made at night; and after suffering a disaster, it had to execute a somewhat costly retirement to the lines of the Bobr and the Niemen. On this occasion a Russian army corps*—the 10th—which covered the retreat greatly distinguished itself in a rear guard action to which Rennenkampf's forces owed their safety. The above mentioned corps, in spite of fearful losses and prolonged

* Confusion is often made between the *army* and the *corps*.

forest fighting in very disadvantageous conditions, managed to retain its *moral* and to preserve its cohesion; and its main body, although at one time given up for lost, rejoined the retreating troops to their rear.

After this rather empty and uneventful success, the Germans spread themselves about in the wake of the retreating Russians; in the north they invaded Courland, and in the south they attacked at random, and with no great determination, the fortress of Ossowiec. They also delivered a disconnected, if somewhat more serious, attack, at Prasnyz, north of Warsaw, the scene of a former battle. Here they charged so recklessly that they were partially surrounded and they retired after suffering a loss of 10,000 prisoners. Meanwhile, on the Niemen, and on the Bobr, Rennenkampf, reinforced, and once more advised by the talented Russki, reassumed the offensive; and then, with comparative ease, he drove back the Germans and compelled them to raise the siege of Ossowiec, which, by the way, they had begun with inadequate forces and an uncommonly small siege train which they abandoned after putting out of gear or destroying the heavier pieces. Finally, except from Courland where they maintained some forces, they retreated to their frontier as rapidly as they had advanced.

Such was the character of an operation which was described as having been carried out by fifteen army corps (or, roughly, 600,000 men), this tremendous force, moreover, being under the personal direction and command of a general of great talent. Quite glibly its assumed object was set down thus: the cutting of the Russian communications with Petrograd! Were this correct it would have to be admitted that the Germans *did* desist from their object with much unconcern, and for little reason, unless we suppose that their opponents had also fifteen army corps in the same region, which is preposterous considering the strength of the Russians, at the time, in South Poland, Bukovina, Galicia and the Carpathians.

Now one may ask what was the intended effect, or tendency, of all this exaggeration, and the real motive of the Germans?

Simply this; to overawe the Russians in East Prussia, Suwalki and Courland; to make them over-anxious about their position in those parts; or what is clearer and more explicit, *to divert their attention from the spot at which the real blow was being prepared.* This was the main object of the Germans.

We have seen that some critic observed that at the time of Borzymow large concentrations of Austrians and Germans were carried out

around Kielce, in South Poland, and on the Tuchow-Gorlice line, in Western Galicia. The real centre of this concentration was Cracow.

There, during Hindenburg's false move in the north, Mackensen, his lieutenant, was gathering troops and material, the new force, when ready, being meant to act on the flank of the Russian armies which were operating in the Carpathians; and as success depended entirely upon secrecy, the Germans, who had matters in hand, did all they could to conceal their plans. This is why they publicly gave such importance to their Borzymow attack and the battle of Lyck; and also to their efforts in Courland to defend Memel, and, later, to reach Mittau and Riga. But they were not even content with all this; for almost immediately after the opening advance in the north, they initiated another move at the other extremity of the line, in Bukovina, where the Austrian general, Pflanzer, supported on his left by a combined force under Von Lisingen, advanced towards Dolina and the valley of the Pruth, and succeeded in re-occupying Stanislau (March 1). The Grand Duke brought up reinforcements to recapture the place, and to render more secure his apparently threatened position on the Dniester.

Finally, in Poland, the Germans resorted to methods which would seem childish and


BALTIC SEA
Lithuania
Courland
Polangen
Memel
Kovno
R. Niemen
Olita
Koenigsberg
East Prussia
Suwalki
Dantzic
Lotzen
Lyck
Grodno
Graudenz
Ossoviec
Soldau
Prasnysz
Thorn
Mlawa
Ostralenka
Plock
Posen
R. Vistula
R. Bug
Wyzogrod
Warsaw
Brest Litovsk
R. Warta
R. Bzura
Blonie
Lowicz
Borzimow
Lodz
Rawa
Ivangorod
POLAND
Breslau
Radom
Lublin
Cholm
Kovel
Lutzk
Czestochowa
Kielce
Zamose
Rovno
Dubno
R. Pilica
R. Nida
Jaroslav
Cracow
Lemberg
Grudek
Tarnopol
Gorlice
Presmyl
GALICIA
R. Dniester
Dolina
Stanislau
Jablonitza
Bukovina
Czernowitz
Homona
Ungvar
HUNGARY
Map to illustrate German false attacks & secret concentration on their Eastern front in the Spring of 1915
False attacks or concentration
Real Concentration
Main Russian forces
Siege front

MAP 8.

ludicrous had they not been crowned with success.

Astonished correspondents commented widely on these proceedings which were as follows: During that period—March-April, 1915—the Germans on any or every provocation sallied forth from their trenches in small numbers, and they carried out restricted and disconnected operations and reconnaissances which were scarcely, if ever, followed by a serious blow. Often at night, they burst into song, lighted big fires, and made various noises; in the day time they shouted across to the Russians nearest to them that they had received reinforcements!

The Russians were non-plussed and could not make out the meaning of the strange and unseemly behaviour of their foes; as for the correspondents, they were content to throw ridicule on the whole exhibition.

Had they been aware of what was going on in other quarters behind the German front line, they would have felt less inclined to scoff; and it is also probable, if not certain, that the result of the campaign would have been different. The same denseness was displayed all round in regard to the apparently futile attack of the Germans at Ossowiec, a Russian general going as far as to say, with great elation, that "Rus-

sian concrete had proved too strong for the German monster shells," a statement which, as is known, the enemy utterly disproved later on.

The Germans also made the most of their false concentrations at Homona and at Ungvar in Hungary.* In connection with this it is curious to remark that amongst the number of prisoners which the Russians made a little later in the valley of the Laborcza not one of them was German; whilst at other points in the Carpathians some of the prisoners which were announced as Germans turned out to be Austrians in Prussian uniforms. It was, no doubt, owing to the illusions cleverly created by the enemy that full German armies seemed to grow out of the earth behind the Carpathian range and that the correspondents of the day estimated their strength at eight or ten army corps, some of these units, of course, having to be brought up wholesale from the Western front in order that the popular estimates should prove correct. If one adds to all this the extraordinary fuss the Germans made about the Russian insignificant raid at Memel (March 20-22) and the naval expedition they undertook against Polangen in Lithuania seemingly to "punish" that raid,

* As far as can be ascertained the Germans concentrated three divisions in Hungary between March and May, 1915. These were: the 3rd Prussian Guards division, a Bavarian division, and a Landwehr division.

one gets a fair idea of the thoroughness with which the enemy prepared his great offensive against Russia.

The result of it all was that the Russians reinforced their wings quite excessively; and then, feeling secure there, they continued in accumulating forces for the capture of the Carpathians; they left their flank weak at a vital spot; and the Germans carried to a successful conclusion their secret preparations.

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OF GORLICE, AND THE TRUE CAUSE OF THE RUSSIAN RETREAT

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THOSE who criticised Germany's costly and seemingly aimless undertakings against Russia in the winter of 1914 and early spring of the following year, did not evidently realise the chances of success she had, nor the difficulties which Russia experienced in checking her. The critics failed to grasp the cause of Russia's indecisive action; and so the meaning of the campaign and of the resulting events have remained unexplained. When dealing with them one should bear in mind one all-important fact: that the Russian war plan was based on the conquest of the Carpathians, and that, in consequence, Russia's attitude in regard to Germany had perforce to remain (in spite of some appearances to the contrary) purely, and technically, defensive. Thus the Russian forces were concentrated and deployed so as to exert

the greatest pressure on the Austrian portion of the line; which, however, does not mean that at any given period they obtained a pronounced superiority of numbers over their antagonists; herein lies the cause of the confusion that is often made, most people being too prone to estimate the strength of armies on a strict arithmetical basis. Too frequently one neglects properly to differentiate between troops of the first line, and those of the second and third.

The Russians, for instance, in their campaign used nearly all their best elements in Galicia, against Austria; whilst in the north, against Germany, they had mostly reserve troops. Against the heterogeneous and unequal elements of the Dual Monarchy, Russia opposed chiefly first line units,* whilst against the more united, better organised, and highly trained Germans, she sent more troops of indifferent quality (territorials chiefly). It was the same in the matter of war material, most of it being used for the conquest of Galicia and the Carpathians. Apart from all this, the Carpathians attack implied a lavish expenditure of reserves, as the percentage of losses in such an operation was bound to be high.

The Germans throughout regulated their ac-

* All the Cossacks and most of the crack Siberian and Caucasian regiments fought in Galicia and in Bukovina.

tion on this fact—and came near to achieving their object in the early phases. Their constant failures made them modify their plans without altering them; and, at last, by dint of constant trials and stringent secrecy, they gained their end; although they did not reap the fruits of the victory, and the ultimate issue (as regards Russia) remained in suspense.

At the epoch of her trials, Germany, on her Eastern front, resembled a strong and adventurous dwarf, who, allied to a cripple, was endeavouring to grapple with, and to overthrow, a clumsy giant. The cripple was full of life and had a chair to lean upon; but would have succumbed without the dwarf's aid. Eventually the latter, with a concealed weapon, stabbed the giant, who gave up then, so as to save his life and pick up strength.

The chair was the Carpathian Range; the concealed weapon, the secret concentration which General Mackensen effected at Cracow. We shall see that the giant (contrary to popular opinion) was not unarmed, but he was so intent on the chair and the cripple, that he failed to make proper, and timely, use of his weapons.

In regard to this, and ere one proceeds to relate the events as they occurred, it is necessary to expose the crooked view that was taken of them.

It was alleged and maintained that the sudden and dramatic set-back Russia experienced was caused by a shortage of material and munitions; and naturally the view was eagerly and readily accepted by unrestrained and unthinking patriots who are never prone to blame their own side nor to give any credit to the foe.

Russia ran short of material, there is no doubt, but this was not felt until *after* the strategic crisis was passed; and the means which she had then at her disposal would have helped her had she made better use of them. It is significant that, previous to her withdrawal from Western Galicia and the Carpathians, not the slightest rumour was current about her unlucky shortage. On the contrary, the vastness of Russia's resources was constantly dwelt upon, and much was made of her huge captures when Preshmyzl fell. The surrender of the great Austrian fortress yielded to the victors *over a thousand* guns of various calibres in good condition, rifles and small arms in quantity sufficient to equip a couple of army corps, and enough munitions to carry on the whole war for two months. Preshmyzl fell on March 21. The disastrous battle of Gorlice was not fought until May 4-9, so the Russians had ample time to make adequate dispositions not only with the material they had captured, but also with the

considerable besieging force which the fall of Preshmyzl had set free. This force (the 7th army) was sent to swell the ranks of the troops which were operating in the Carpathians; and it is also to be noted that the Russian *communiqués* dealing with that quarter, and especially with the events in Bukovina, laid stress on the superiority of the Russian artillery.

Directly, however, the blow fell at Gorlice, a general wail broke forth over Russia's lack of material, lack of guns, lack of munitions, lack of everything in fact, and with an obstinacy and a persistent disregard of facts which might well rouse the envy of the Wolff Bureau, these sympathetic condolings went on; they are going on still, and are likely to go on until Russia herself lays bare the true cause of her disaster in Western Galicia.

The truth of the matter is that the Grand Duke Nicholas left unprotected the way to his communications in Galicia and Southern Poland. Between the Rivers Biala and Ropa, along which the Russians were entrenched, there is a fairly easy stretch of country which leads to the railway junctions at Dembica, Yaslo and Rzesvow—and it is precisely there that the impetuous Mackensen struck his blow on that famous day when by means of the formidable concentration he so secretly and so successfully

effected, he smashed the Russian defences between Ciezkovice and Gorlice, and, having done this, he launched his storming columns in serried masses against the surprised adversary. Taken unawares and not prepared for the blow, the attacked divisions fell back, and thus uncovered the flanks of the other Russian forces on the Dunajec and of those which were operating in the Western Carpathians. The German plan was to reach the desired junctions, and if possible the fortress of Preshmyzl, before the Russians had time to fall back from their advanced positions; and had their plan succeeded both the 3rd Russian army on the Dunajec and the 2nd army in the Carpathians would have been surrounded; the others to the right and left would have been involved in the disaster. Happily, the Russian Generals, although taken by surprise, and acting under the stress of the most unforeseen, disappointing and calamitous events, did not lose their heads, and with an extraordinary coolness and fortitude of mind they took the measures necessary for saving their forces from capture or instant annihilation.

This then was the true cause of Russia's great disappointment: the success of the enemy's counterblow at a spot where the Russians were the least prepared to meet it. It might still

be argued that the Russian inadequate preparations at that particular spot were due to lack of reinforcements and war material. To this it can be answered that at other sections of the front no shortage of the kind occurred. It would be more honest to admit the truth—viz., that the Russian staff played into the hands of the enemy by letting their attention be diverted to other and less vital quarters when Hindenburg started his false offensive in East Prussia (February-March) with the too obvious object of capturing Riga, Grodno, Kovno and Ossowiec, and of threatening the Russian communications with Petrograd; and when simultaneously, in Bukovina, Generals Lisingen and Pflanzer displayed great activity and made a great show of strength; whilst in Central Poland, about the same time the Germans were making various attempts to mislead the Russians as to their disposition and numbers.

To these remote corners, and especially to the two extremities of the line—to Courland and to Bukovina—the Grand Duke sent extra material and reinforcements; furthermore, the Russian army which was set free by the surrender of Preshmyzl was massed against the Carpathians. Meanwhile, the enemy, who had been secretly busy for many months, concentrated their main forces in Western Galicia, along the Higher

Vistula, the Dunajec, and the south-western slopes of the Carpathians, the *best* army in the line under the *best leader* being pitted against the *weakest* section of the Russian line. And whilst General Dankl and Archduke Ferdinand, with two Austrian armies, on one side, "contained" the 3rd Russian army on the Dunajec and the Nida, and the other Teutonic units under Boehm Ermolli, Bonajovic, Marwitz and Lisingen preserved momentarily a passive attitude to give time to the main attack to develop, Mackensen at the head of a new force (the German 11th army) led this attack and broke the Russian line between the Biala and the Ropa, on the Ciezkovice-Gorlice front; and so rapid was the move that had the defenders been at last better supplied with guns and munitions, they could not have reversed the situation; for the enemy had retaken the *initiative* (and not merely the *offensive*) and once he had it it was not likely that he would lose it. The initiative, which is best described as strategic freedom, enabled the Germans to manœuvre and re-manipulate their line more quickly than the Russians, and to parry successfully all counter-blows.

The defeated troops owed their safety chiefly to the coolness and firmness of their generals; but also to the inability, the clumsiness, of


POLAND
R Nida
Sandomierz
to Cholm
R Vistula
Scuzin
R San
Rawa Ruska
Tarnow
Rezwow
Prevorsk
Jaroslav
Dembica
R Dunajec
R Biala
GALICIA
R Wislok
Ciezkovice
Jaslo
Preshmyl
Lemberg
Grybow
Gorlice
R Ropa
R Wisloka
Sanok
Carpathians
Zboro
Barfeld
HUNGARY
Map to illustrate Mackensen's stroke at Gorlice (May 4–9 — 1915)
Railways
= German 11th Army
= Austrian Front

MAP 9.

Mackensen's colleagues, who carried out their part of the task in a manner which allowed the Russians to get out of their difficulties.

To start with, Dankl's and Archduke Ferdinand's attacks on the Dunajec and the Upper Vistula were quite undue in violence. The object of these Generals should have been to pin the opponents to their positions, and not to drive them from it. Such was the force of the Teutonic bombardment along this line that the Russian positions were quickly rendered untenable, and for quite a long time it was supposed that Mackensen's attack had been made there. In contrast, the other Austrian commanders who were supporting Mackensen on his right, acted with excessive restraint; and when at length they elected to strike, it was too late, the Russians had evacuated the Carpathians and they were in full retreat; so, owing partly to the clumsiness and slowness of the other generals and partly to the rapidity and orderliness with which the Russians executed their withdrawing movements, the operation yielded far less than the Teutonic commanders had expected. Some advanced Muscovite units, it is true, were cut off and surrounded in the Carpathians; and in their exultant and highly coloured *communiqués* the enemy was able to announce shortly the capture of over 30,000 prisoners and some 70

guns; but this—and the announcement as to the number of prisoners was not quite accurate—was about all. The Russian armies preserved their cohesion, they succeeded in evading the deadly grasp of their foes, and when they reached the line of the San, and the Middle Vistula, they were practically safe and they were even able to deliver some successful counter-strokes. More than this, however, they could not do, unless they had managed to regain the initiative, which was not possible as long as the Germans committed no capital mistake. Vainly, and at great risk, did the Grand Duke endeavour to remain in possession of Preshmyzl and of the line of the San; and afterwards, when he failed to achieve this, to keep Lemberg, the capital of Galicia, which his troops had occupied since September, 1914. On June 22, after fierce and prolonged fighting, the Teutonic allies entered the town on the heels of the retreating forces. But like Preshmyzl where they had unsuccessfully tried to cut off some Russian troops, Lemberg proved to the victors an empty shell.

One need not follow here the Grand Duke's retreat across Poland and the Russian Steppes, nor study the manner in which this gigantic movement was carried out; but it is useful to examine the standpoint from which it was ap-

proached and discussed, and the effect this had on the course and result of ulterior events.

The Grand Duke's retreat was looked at by the Allies as if it were a voluntary movement on his part, some of the more sanguine or biassed critics even putting forth the theory that the Russians, being anxious lest the enemy should crush the Western Allies—the French in particular—were drawing the Teutonic masses after them! And things that might, aye, *ought* to have been said and written about Joffre's retreat to the Marne, were now said and written, without a shadow of justification, about the Russian movement.

One would not insist on this were it not that apart from showing the inaptitude of all concerned to grasp the facts and to view the operations in their true light, it was not also necessary to demonstrate how this misguided partiality injured the Allies—when towards the last stages of the Russian retreat the British and the French carried out their autumn move in France.

This move, which attained its object in full, left nevertheless an impression of failure—*because its motive was not then understood.* It was solely undertaken to relieve Russia; but as no one would admit that the Grand Duke had suffered defeat, and that his retreat was *not* a

deliberate but a forced one, a wrong aim was assigned to the Allies' effort in France—that of piercing the German lines! As this was not achieved (not at any rate to the extent which was generally hoped for), Joffre's movement was described as an abortive one; and when subsequently the Russians also failed to do what was expected of them, namely, to re-take the offensive in the manner that the Western Allies had done at the Marne, disappointment prevailed. And Germany, who had really been thwarted, looked victorious and triumphant; her prestige being further enhanced by the public utterances of Allied statesmen who wholly and placidly accepted the German point of view. They declared that Germany had not yet lost a battle, and that up to that moment (September-October, 1915) she had been winning! They left out of account Nancy, the Marne, and the series of battles which had sealed the fate of the German armies in France and made it even impossible for the enemy to reach his new ends. They reasoned like children, disappointed and fretful children whose rosy and fanciful dreams have been quenched by stern reality. Basing their opinions on the occupation of French, Belgian and Polish territory by the foe they naively and wilfully represented the Teutons as an invincible and unconquerable race.

The result was that Joffre's victorious move did not bear all its fruit, for it had been scarcely accomplished when yet another bellicose and well-armed State joined Germany.* Bulgaria, tremendously worked by pro-Teuton agents, impressed besides by the resistance of the Turks at Gallipoli and by the general tone of pessimism of the Allied press, entered the list on the side of the Central Empires (November 6, 1915). It was in vain that the French plenipotentiary, before leaving Sofia, tried to convince the Tzar, Ferdinand, that Germany had lost the war and was bound to be crushed. The latter could point out (and he did not fail to do so) the lack of confidence which prevailed amongst the Allies and which was exhibited in their leading journals; and also the unjustified and pusillanimous "admissions" of some of their chief statesmen.

* See Appendix B.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FRENCH WAR POLICY, AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STRATEGIC PROCESS KNOWN AS "NIBBLING"

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THE next operations to be considered after the Russian retreat are those which followed Ypres in the second phase of the war, and which culminated, in the third phase, with what is generally described as "Joffre's Autumn Offensive of 1915." It follows that other developments, such as the intervention of Italy, and the combined action of England, Russia and France against Turkey, must be left for later consideration, as these developments had little or no effect on the main spring of Teutonic action, and the chief object of the Allies was, after all, to crush Germany—to vanquish her and reduce her forces in such a way that never, at any future period after the war, could she lift her head up again and brandish the brutish "mailed fist" in the face of peaceful nations. This motive explains the policy which the Allies adopted on the Western front, and which the Generalissimo pithily described as "nibbling"

—a process which was calculated to exhaust the Germans, to bring them down to the level of a second-rate or third-rate power.

The nibbling policy on the part of the Allies answered admirably to the needs of the moment; the limited population of France and the unpreparedness of Britain—furthermore, it was quite in keeping with the national character of free peoples; of people fighting for independence and freedom, and not for glory; for the vindication of right against might; and the triumph of democracy over barbaric feudalism. The Allies indeed could have fought to the gallery; they could have rounded up whole army corps of Germans, but the game was not worth the cost; and in contrast to the swaggering staff of the Kaiser, Joffre and his generals were an unassuming, quiet and business-like lot of men. They sought rather to *kill* Germans than to make a triumphal entry into Berlin; they looked ahead, beyond the war, when Germany, denuded of men, would be shorn of her claws, an impoverished, a ruined, a bankrupt country; when she would no longer be able to compete for commercial supremacy; when for lack of means —of human material, and of agents—she would barely keep up her own sustenance.

Such was the meaning and object of the nibbling process, of the protracted local opera-

tions which more than once threatened to weary out the patience and confidence of the Allies, but which constituted in itself a triumph of strategy, and of war policy. A triumph of strategy because it thwarted Germany; of war policy, because it saved England from indolence and apathy; and made France once more the strongest country on the Continent.

But it took the world a long time to realise all this, and to understand that Germany was irrevocably defeated, and that her power was sinking—that Joffre and his armies had done well—mighty well—and that Britain and France were really in a position to give the knock-down blow to their enemy *whenever they chose.*

Joffre himself hinted as much more than once when he stated calmly and in terse terms, that he *could* break the German front; and he proved it with many an operation and especially with the offensive in Champagne. But the world was too dense, and it was blinded by that eternal question of territory, and also by the effects of the German propaganda. The word of Joffre had less weight evidently than that of the ignorant critic, or of the pro-Teuton. The Marne —that wonderful manœuvre which had saved France and Europe—was deliberately set aside, it was obliterated, forgotten, and the action of Germany after it, was represented as one of

successful, of triumphant defence; a defence before which all the efforts of the French, of the British, were unavailing and doomed to fail. People did not, and *would* not, understand that the Allied staff had not set itself the task of invading Germany, but of crushing, of annihilating the German forces; a task which could be just as well accomplished on the spot—in fact, it could be *better* done in Flanders and France than beyond the Meuse or the Rhine; the French staff were striving to do what otherwise might be the work of decades—and above all to keep France strong so as to prevent the repetition of a similar conflict.

France had abandoned, years ago, the disastrous and unfair policy of the Bonapartes, of the Bourbons; under the Republic she had learnt the principle of "live and let live," and she had won respect, and learnt herself to respect other nationalities. Now side by side with her Allies she was fighting for democratic ideals and against the cursed spirit of dominion and conquest which can only lead to ruin and perdition, and she meant to continue, afterwards, in the furtherance of true civilisation.

The tactical process which enabled France to attain her aims requires some examination, the more so as it has proved a stumbling block to the vast army of croakers who only saw in it

a sign of inability and impotence. Accustomed to measure military success by mileage and forgetful of the importance in this conflict of man-economy, the popular critics of the day invariably approached the question from the German standpoint and this for a simple reason —Germany was not occupied; her armies were battling *outside* her territory. In order to convince them, France would have had to sacrifice a million men in six months, and to forego the main advantages of British participation. Thus at the price of exhaustion she would have earned recognition and the applause of her friends; but at the same time she would have failed to exhaust Germany, as the offensive—the general offensive, such as the whole world was then calculating upon—would have proved more costly to her than to Germany. In other words, the defeat of the latter would have been demonstrated, made evident—but Germany would have remained strong; and free to renew her attempt on a fresh basis—*the basis of French exhaustion.*

So, paradoxical as it may seem, a too rapid winding up of the Allied victory would have furnished Germany with a sound foundation for a second war of aggression.

To those observers who are disinclined to take heed of the wars of the past, a striking example

of military recuperation may be presented. This is the way in which Napoleon, at the end of his career, faced once more a fresh coalition of powers, in spite of the defeats and losses he had sustained in the previous campaigns. He had lost a gigantic army in Russia; the Spanish Peninsula had absorbed many of his army corps; yet, although he was totally deprived of Allies, he found the means necessary for fighting both Prussia and England once more at Waterloo, a campaign which he lost *not* for lack of resources but owing to the miscarriage of his strategic plans. To doubt that Germany, if merely defeated in this war and not totally exhausted in man power, would have made a fresh start at some not remote period, is to disregard both the teachings of history, and the character and mentality of the German race of to-day; and, moreover, it is clear that without such understanding the meaning of the policy of France after the Marne and Ypres cannot be grasped.

There were other indications, however, which should have enabled the obtuse commentators above referred to to take the right view. These indications were fairly obvious to those who perused the official *communiqués* and reports carefully and with a free mind.

It was to be noted that since the first opera-

tions in Flanders no important concentrations had taken place on the Allied side—and that those offensive movements which loomed large in the public mind were purely of a local nature. Only for defensive purposes did the Allies carry out concentration movements on a large scale, this occurring every time that the Germans attempted a big attack. The public was led astray by the secrecy imposed as to the arrangements made by the Allies to meet, defeat, and crush those attacks; but the confusion should not have been more than temporary, as those who set themselves the task of illuminating the masses had enough material to work upon, and enjoyed great freedom in the matter of expressing their views. Thus they could have pointed out (they never did so) that the Allies fought the Germans on *advanced* positions, and with *advanced* troops mainly, the main positions and the reserves being strong, and sufficient to preclude the possibility of the enemy "bursting through." When French or British army corps were mentioned in official despatches as having taken part in an engagement, it was invariably taken for granted that the whole corps had been in action; whereas more often than not only a fraction of it, a division, a brigade, or a regiment, had really been engaged. Sometimes the length of the sector on which the action referred

to had occurred, made it clear that the units that had fought there were quite small; but the day-to-day commentators were prone to exaggerate everything; they did not use their judgment; they transcribed in too literal a sense the data contained in the official accounts; and they thereby unwittingly played into the hands of the Germans.

It was the latter's game to make it appear that they had obtained the maximum of gain at any given point; and in order further to enhance the result of their efforts, they multiplied the number of opponents which they had had to encounter; in which process they were helped, as has been said, by the ignorance, the pusillanimity and the slovenly methods of the chroniclers of the opposite camp. These overawed and misguided spirits persistently believed and maintained that the Germans were still working to attain a decision in the field—although this decision had been attained a long time since *against them, and they could not have altered it had they been twice as strong* —but the Allied chroniclers did worse, for they fell in with the views of the Wolff Bureau each time that this subsidised agency tried to transform Germany's action into one of successful and invincible defence. Thus the effect of the Allies' victories was spoilt, and some of them

although they yielded much, looked like defeats. Neuve-Chappelle is a case in point; so is the first French offensive in Champagne—whilst the partial or temporary and inconclusive successes of the Germans were given the utmost advertisement. Even in the matter of small or insignificant engagements the same exaggerations favourable to the enemy were freely indulged in. When, for instance, the capture of a French or British trench by the Germans was announced, the most was made of the event. How often after such paltry affairs did leading organs of the press not appear with ominous headings such as these, which were reproduced in the largest type on the posters: "German gains. French lines pierced. . . . The issue in the balance. . . ." and so forth; thus making it appear that the fate of Europe, of the world, depended on the results of some small bomb attack or of a mining operation; whilst for the general convenience of the foe the huge battles and big movements of the beginning *which had settled the issue* were ignored, or forgotten, and, in some quarters, relegated to the nether regions. Thus it was that the Allied civil populations trembled during the second battle of Ypres, and the battle of Soissons; all seemed lost then, and the roads to Paris and Calais open again. Yet there was no danger whatever; the Germans

never reached the Allied main positions; and the Allies repelled their final efforts with the greatest ease and equanimity. The situation was admirably summed up at the time in a French cartoon which represented a private placidly enjoying a meal in a trench and saying to his comrades: "Pourvu que les civils tiennent" ("Let us hope the civilians will hold on.") He might have been made to add: ". . . And that the armchair critics will understand the part we are playing." But perhaps he was not aware of their existence or of their power; and if he was, he did not suppose that they were not intelligent.

Now we shall follow the trend of events since the first battle of Ypres which closed all access to the Germans to the French coast, and placed them in a complete state of siege on the Western front; and we shall endeavour to find out and to grasp the cumulative effect of the ensuing operations on all their subsequent attempts.

But first of all the position of the Germans on the Western front after the first four months of war must be made definitely clear. It was one of impotence, which resulted from the collapse of their plans for the defeat of France. Against this proposition there is no argument, for had there been some possibility of reversing matters, and of reaching a solution on the

basis of military achievement, Germany—or rather her leaders—would have attempted it. The only possibility in her favour lay now in the direction of political achievement, and we have seen that in this she had already partially succeeded by drawing Turkey on to her side. Turkey's action helped Germany in the military sphere inasmuch as it enabled her to re-model her plans and, what was more immediately important to her, to avoid a rapid *débacle* on her main front. It gave her breathing time to recover from the heavy blows she had received, to gather up her reserves for a protracted defence, and to undertake against Russia the forward movements which have been described. Then, having abandoned their former designs, their dreams of world dominion, the war-caste of Germany settled down into a final and determined purpose—that of finishing the war on fresh terms and with the appearance of victory to them. If they could only continue to impress the world, and especially the populations of Russia, of England, and of France, they would be saved, for this would mean peace—and peace was necessary to Germany at the end of the year 1914. It was more and more necessary afterwards, especially as her prospects in that direction dwindled with every one of her new attempts, for the Allies were victorious and

strong, and so peace could only come when Germany was reduced to a skeleton.

At the end of 1914 in spite of her heavy losses, she was not in that condition and together with her bulky and resourceful ally and neighbour she presented a spectacle of compact strength which was not the less apparent because it was seriously and substantially undermined. Her armies were still numerous and well equipped, if somewhat knocked about and shaken in their *moral*. Her supplies for carrying on the war were plentiful; in many technical and tactical matters she still enjoyed some superiority over her opponents; and presently she availed herself of low means and foul devices to strengthen her position.

CHAPTER IX

THE LOCAL OPERATIONS IN FRANCE VIEWED IN THEIR STRATEGIC SENSE, AND IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENTS ON THE EASTERN FRONT

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THE new campaign has been aptly described as the Siege War. It was in fact a regular siege on an unprecedented scale, devised and carried out by the Allies to bring the aggressor nation to her knees—to annihilate her man strength, and to exhaust her in all her resources. It was a formidable and cruel plan but one which was strongly vindicated, for Germany had brought it on herself; she had made the opposed nations feel too well the danger of her active competition —of her hatred and contempt for everything not Teuton, and of her determination to impose her ideals and customs—and her cheap wares, too—on a reluctant world. She had sworn to eliminate France, Belgium, and, if possible, Great Britain—she had shown her true aims in her methods of military occupation. With Assyrian rigorism the Germans had subjected

females, and destroyed or mutilated males—this quite apart from a thousand ruthless actions which had roused the indignation and anger of a gentler, more refined world. They in turn would have to suffer; they would be made to pay the full penalty; and to empty to the dregs the cup of national humiliation and misery. But the more fitting punishment was the one which the Allies, and France especially, resorted to through strategic necessity and sound national policy—the nibbling, attritive process of siege warfare which in course of time *would* spell the total collapse and practical annihilation of the German forces. This process, in order that it should yield the utmost advantages in the shortest possible time, had to be undertaken on the existing line, that is, *outside* Germany; because on that line the enemy would be compelled to exert more energy than on his own territory, where an attitude of absolute defence would have better suited the spirit of the Germans, and taxed to the utmost the strength of the assailants. The Germans for political reasons chose to stay in France; and there they were fated to stay until the end, to be done to death by their fierce, wary and self-possessed opponents.

From the time of Ypres the operations on the Western front have to be divided into periods which correspond with each fresh attempt Ger-

many made on a large scale to attain her new ends.

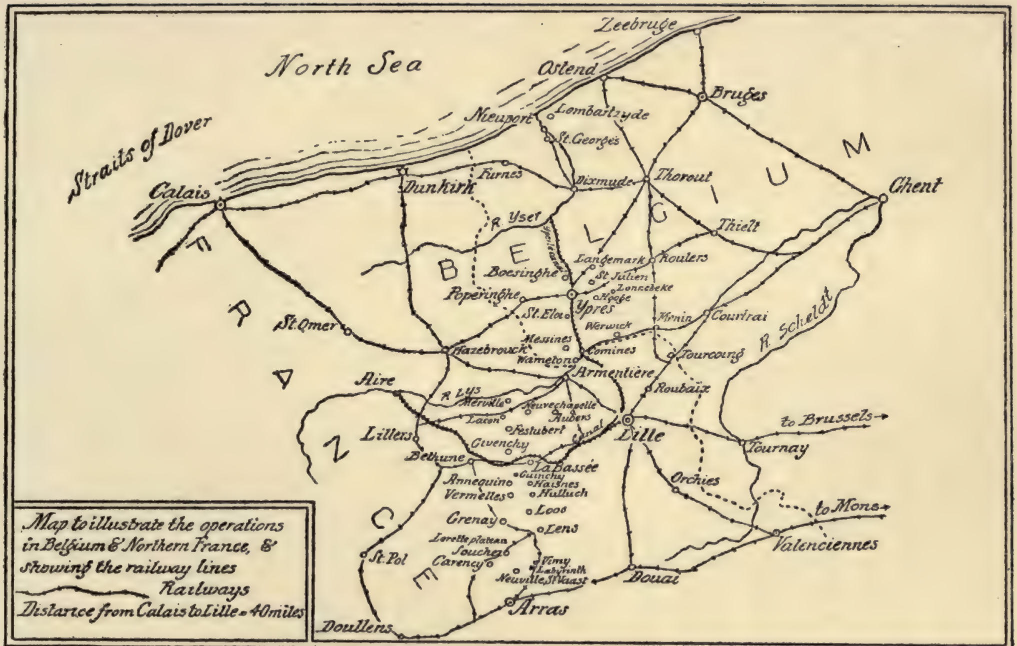
The first period extended from the battle of Ypres to the late autumn of 1915, and was thus fairly long. It indicated by stages the developments of the campaign on the Eastern front and thereby made apparent the large scheme of co-operation on which the Allies were now trying to work. The second period was one of transition, during which the Germans, under cover of a false move in the Balkans, prepared to resume activities on the Western front. Of this, more anon.

Starting at the opening of the first period, one could observe the gradual progress of the moves on both sides towards a closer combination of attritive and strategic action, the Allies being bent on obtaining the full profits of both, and the Germans sacrificing everything to save themselves from internal disruption. The former limited their efforts to thwarting the latter and compelling them to attack in disadvantageous conditions; the latter forewent the immediate profits in one sphere in order to preserve a bold attitude on all fronts; and the double game went on with the prospects of the Allies ever and ever in the ascendant.

The first period culminated with Joffre's par-

tial offensive in the summer and autumn of 1915, which, although it yielded all it was intended to yield, was really, in a technical sense, a false movement. But ere one deals with it in full, one must naturally review the preceding operations.

After the battle of Ypres it became clear that both sides would make a fresh concentration or distribution of their forces. The Allies especially having secured the desired line in Flanders and not intending to assume the offensive, reshifted their troops according to the exigencies of the situation; the Belgian army remained on the Yser but the French elements which were acting with it were reduced to a minimum. In the same way, the rest of d'Urbal's troops (8th army) were broken up, most of them being withdrawn from the Ypres sector, and re-amalgamated with the 10th army (de Maud'huy) in the Arras region on the right of the British army, de Maud'huy being sent later to serve under Dubail in Lorraine and D'Urbal taking his place at the head of the 10th army. British reserves had arrived, and to these was added in the course of time a Canadian division. Along the rest of the front the French reinforced their own lines, and they settled definitely into the new kind of warfare above described, which since the first operations on the Aisne had


North Sea
Straits of Dover
Zeebrugge
Ostend
Bruges
Nieuport
Lombartzyde
St. Georges
Calais
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmude
Thorout
Ghent
R. Yser
Thielt
Langemark
Roulers
Boesinghe
St Julien
Zonnebeke
Hooge
Poperinghe
Ypres
St. Eloi
Werwick
Menin
Courtrai
R. Scheldt
St. Omer
Messines
Hazebrouck
Comines
Wameton
Tourcoing
Armentière
Aire
Roubaix
R. Lys
Merville
Neuvechapelle
Aubers
Lacon
Festubert
Canal
Lille
Lillers
Givenchy
to Brussels
Tournay
Bethune
La Bassée
Annequin
Guinchy
Haisnes
Vermelles
Hulluch
Orchies
Loos
to Mons
Grenay
Lens
Valenciennes
Lorette plateau
Souchez
St. Pol
Carency
Vimy
Labyrinth
Neuville St. Vaast
Douai
Arras
Doullens
B E L G I U M
F R A N C E
Map to illustrate the operations in Belgium & Northern France, & showing the railway lines
Railways
Distance from Calais to Lille = 40 miles

MAP 10.

gradually extended to the whole front. The Germans also re-shifted their lines and reinforced them at various points; and thus began the new phase which in its technical aspect may be described as a struggle for positions; each side seeking to improve theirs and in so doing to inflict losses on the opponent. In these conditions—and having regard to the inflexible policy of France—it was evident that no extensive strategic scheme, on the part of the Allies, could be entered upon. With the Germans it was different, owing to their situation, the character of their new aims, and the development of affairs on their Eastern front; not to mention the necessity in which they stood of continuing to impress the world, more especially neutral nations. In other words they were technically on the defence in Belgium and France; but they were nevertheless compelled to act in offence, thus creating the illusion that they possessed the initiative of movements. The Allies, and more particularly the French, with a thorough understanding of the enemy's conditions, and of the German psychology and temperament, did what they could to thwart them and to egg them on; hence the long string of disconnected actions which formed the substance of the first winter's campaign in France, and which were the prelude to bigger, if similar

operations. These actions need not be described here in full, as their tactical details are to be found in numberless publications. But a chronological enumeration of the most notable together with particulars of interest which appertains to some of them will help the reader to obtain a good view of events.

The most important which followed Ypres was the battle of Givenchy (December 20-22). In this action the enemy, by means of a surprise attack, succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the Indians. These troops, it must be said, stood at a disadvantage owing to climatic conditions. Protracted trench warfare was not congenial to them and the inclemency of the weather weighed heavily upon them. Thanks, however, to General Douglas Haig and to some little support from the French they were successfully extricated from a dangerous situation.

The next actions of note occurred almost simultaneously at both extremities of the front —one was the brilliant re-capture of St. Georges, on the Yser, by the troops under de Mitry (December 28-29); the other was the storming of Steinbach, near Cernay, in Upper Alsace (January 1, 1915) by the French sharpshooters and "Chasseurs Alpins" of the 15th corps; the opening of the New Year proving thus of good

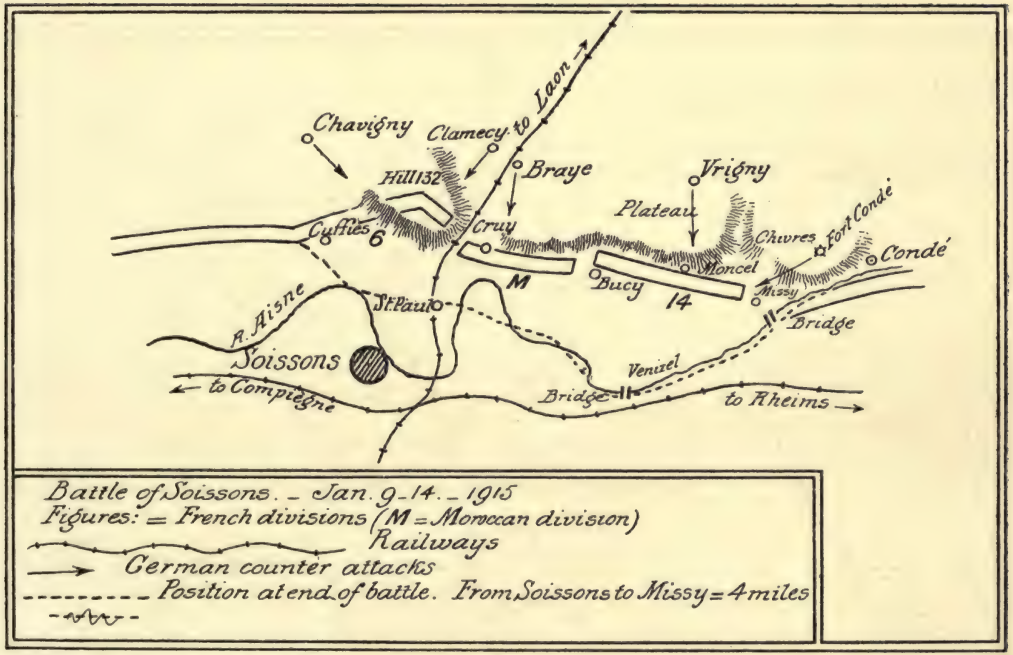
omen for the Allies, who later continued to improve their positions on the Yser, and on the Vosges, the latter falling gradually once more in the possession of the French who had captured and occupied them momentarily at the beginning of the war. They set a firm foot on the commanding heights in Alsace and no subsequent attempts of the enemy were able to dislodge them.

In the middle of the month (January 14-16) took place the second battle of Soissons. It was not so happy in its results as the previous actions, the Germans succeeding by means of a swift concentration, in driving the French back once more to the Aisne, and across it, between Crouy and Missy. This temporary mishap fell on the sanguine Maunoury, who with great energy and ability had captured the enemy's main positions on the north bank of the river and was endeavouring to reach Laon, an important railway junction. He established his centre division on the plateau north of the town and resisted successfully to the attacks of an army corps of Von Kluck's army under General Von Luchow. There a French brigade led by a promising officer of high scientific attainments, General Pétain, distinguished itself by the brilliant capture of a strong and dominating position known as "Hill 132." Maunoury's

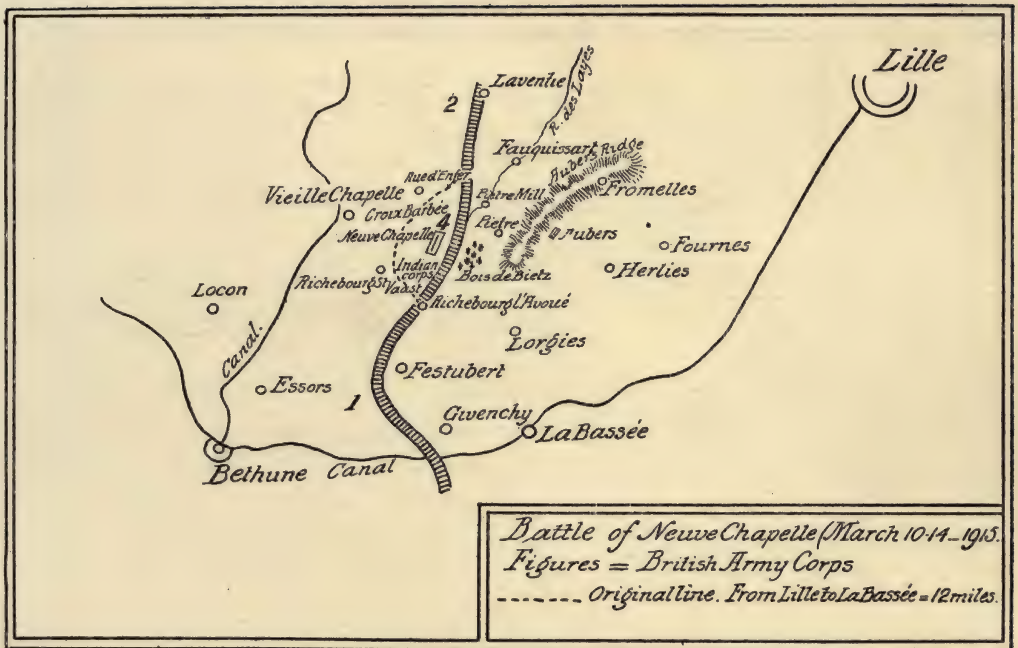
right wing division, however, was cut off from reinforcements by the sudden rising of the Aisne which carried off the bridges in its rear, and it had to retire in face of superior numbers. This compelled the French to abandon the conquered trenches on the plateau and Hill 132. The Germans, however, lost so heavily in counter attacking that they were unable to pursue their advantage, and even to reach the town of Soissons, as had been feared by the scared population. The French 6th army was reinforced; it kept at bay the Germans and made secure its new positions.

The glamour which at the time surrounded the event was, as we see, quite out of proportion with its true import. The Germans, however, were wont to make the most of their insignificant gains and local successes. In contradiction to facts, they compared Soissons to St. Privat, and multiplied by ten, in their accounts, the number of prisoners and guns which they had taken. And this, together with other boastings and exaggerations, helped to keep up the delusion and spirits of the German people.

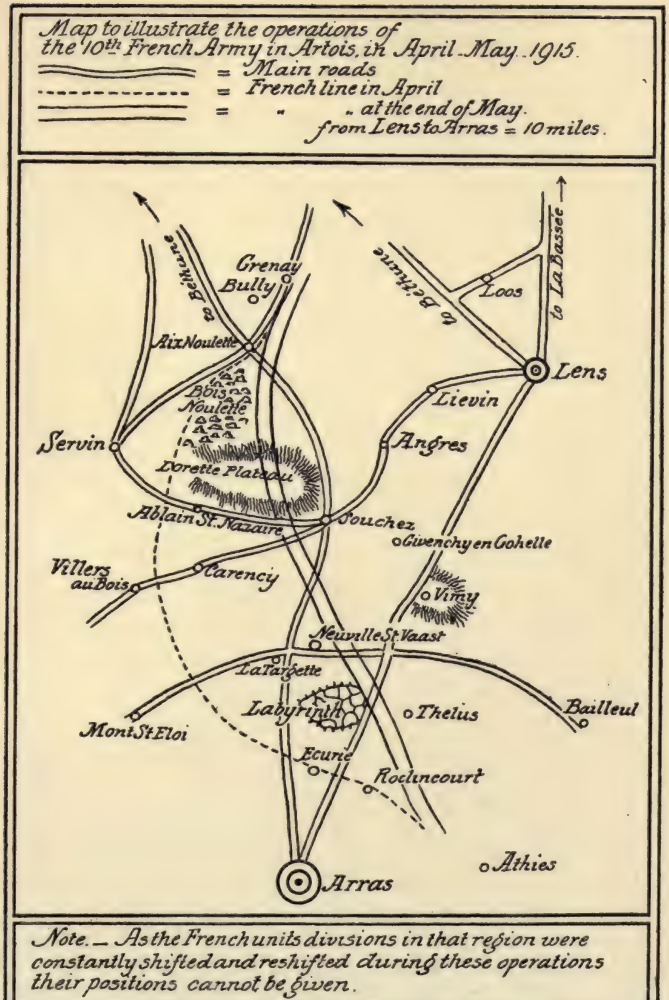
The French victory which followed on the Lorette plateau, in Artois, produced less impression; yet it was a far more brilliant achievement, for with small effectives—a division of the


Chavigny
Clamecy
to Laon
Hill 132
Braye
Vrigny
Plateau
Cuffies
6
Cruy
Chivres
Fort Condé
Condé
Moncel
M
Bucy
14
Missy
St Paul
R. Aisne
Bridge
Soissons
Venizel
to Compiègne
Bridge
to Rheims
Battle of Soissons. – Jan. 9-14. – 1915
Figures: = French divisions (M = Moroccan division)
Railways
German counter attacks
Position at end of battle. From Soissons to Missy = 4 miles

MAP II.


Lille
Laventie
R. des Layes
2
Fauquissart
Aubers Ridge
Rue d'Enfer
Vieille Chapelle
Croix Barbée
Pietre Mill
Fromelles
4
Pietre
Neuve Chapelle
Aubers
Fournes
Indian corps
Herlies
Bois de Bietz
Richebourg St Vaast
Locon
Richebourg l'Avoué
Lorgies
Canal.
Festubert
Essors
1
Givenchy
La Bassée
Bethune
Canal
Battle of Neuve Chapelle (March 10-14 – 1915.
Figures = British Army Corps
------ Original line. From Lille to La Bassée = 12 miles.

MAP 12.



Note. — As the French units divisions in that region were constantly shifted and reshifted during these operations their positions cannot be given.

MAP 13.

3rd corps under General Pétain*—the French carried fortified positions which were deemed impregnable, and they followed up their success in this region by other gains which culminated in May with the storming of the strong field work which has become famous under the name of Labyrinth; the victory yielded to the French 5,000 prisoners, 20 field guns and 60 machine guns.

The British also during that period won two considerable actions. The first, a defensive one, is known as the battle of La Bassée, and occurred between January 26 and 30, at the time of the costly attacks which the Germans delivered to celebrate the birthday of their Emperor. The second, an offensive one, was the battle of Neuve Chapelle (March 10-14). These engagements amongst others illustrated well the power of the British army for both kinds of action. At La Bassée, or, rather, near it, at Cuinchy, along the canal the Germans succeeded momentarily in capturing the opposing advanced trenches; but not only were they unable to keep them in their possession, but they even lost some of their own ground as the result of the British counter stroke; and their losses,

* This general had shown such ability in local warfare at the battle of Soissons that he was transferred to Artois with his division as soon as active operations were entered into in that region.

especially in slain, were immensurably higher than those of their opponents, not less than 200 German corpses being counted after the engagement in front of a portion of trenches occupied by a single English battalion.

The battle of Neuve Chapelle was an action in which through a surprise attack the British re-conquered the position which the Germans had occupied in October and powerfully organised in front of their pivot at La Bassée. This position formed a salient in the British line, and in order to preserve the integrity of that line (in other words to make it stronger), it was necessary to take the village of Neuve Chapelle—which had been once before attacked unsuccessfully (October 28). The former attempt had failed because it had been made with inadequate means. This time the operation was carried out by two army corps, the 4th corps and the Indian corps, which were swiftly and secretly concentrated on the line Rue d'Enfer-Richebourg St. Vast, their forward movement being covered and supported by the fire of 350 guns, British and French.

The Germans were surprised, outnumbered, out-flanked on both sides, and, after a stubborn struggle, they were ousted from the position. The victory was complete, and would have been more satisfactory had it been less costly. The

British casualties exceeded 12,000 out of 50,000 men engaged on that occasion.

This was due to the impetuosity of the new troops and of some officers who misunderstood the object of the attack, advanced too quickly and too far, and thus uselessly exposed their men to the effects of the severe counterblows which the Germans, with their accustomed thoroughness, did not fail to deliver. There was also confusion in the matter of bringing up reinforcements. The position, however, remained in the possession of the British, although their opponents did all they could to re-capture it—a fact which when contrasted to the previous engagement makes it clear that the enemy was inferior both on the defence and the attack.*

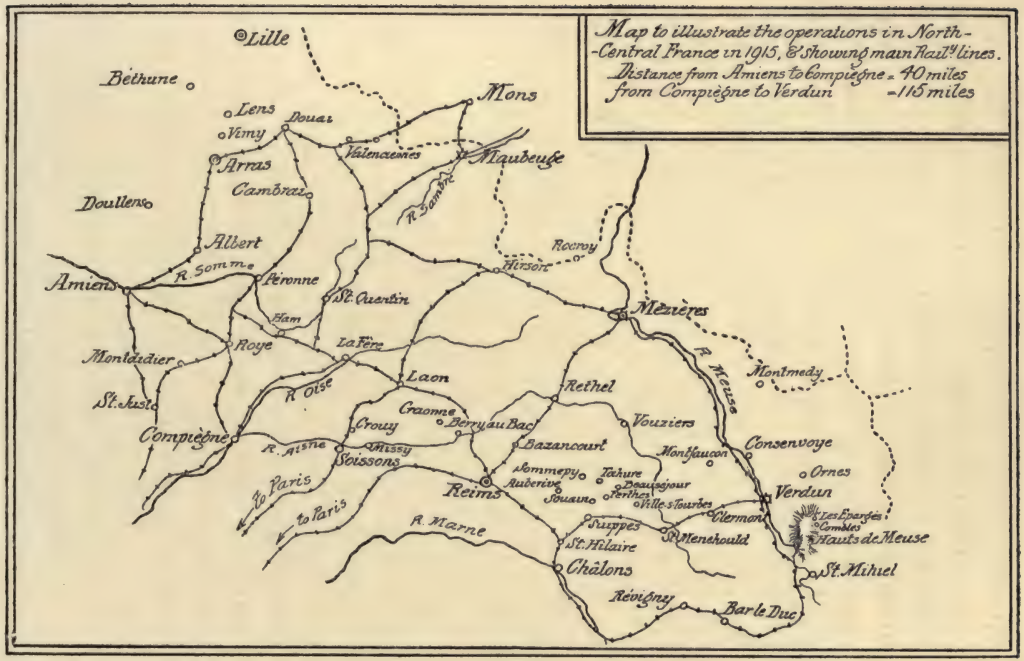
The French offensive in Champagne which synchronised with the battle of Neuve Chapelle was a more lengthy and methodical affair; it had also a totally different object. It started at the beginning of February and reached its climax at the date of Neuve Chapelle; it was carried out ostensibly to relieve the "pressure" exercised at the time by the Germans on the Russians in East Prussia and Suwalki; and for that reason it may be characterised as the first

* This is not a partial opinion as it is based on uncontrovertible facts.

attempt at a co-ordination of movements between the two fronts. Locally it yielded good results; it displayed once more the offensive qualities of the French troops and gave them good practice in the newly adopted methods of artillery preparation and the combination of infantry and artillery assaults on a large scale; but its primary object was not attained, simply because it was sought on a wrong assumption. Hindenburg's contemporaneous move in East Prussia was, as we have seen (Chapter VI), a false one, meant no doubt to clear Prussian territory from the Muscovite invader in true Tannenberg fashion, but also and mainly to distract the attention of the Russians from another sector of their front.

It was part of the enemy's plan to exaggerate the number of their forces in that quarter, and they succeeded so far as to lead the Allies to believe that strong German units were being withdrawn from the Western front. It was computed in many quarters that Hindenburg had fifteen army corps with him in East Prussia, whereas he could not have had more than a third of that number.

Nevertheless, General d'Esperey's movement in Champagne was brilliant. Strong hostile positions were stormed between Souain, Perthes and Beausejour, and the French made many


Map to illustrate the operations in North-Central France in 1915, & showing main Rail^y lines.
Distance from Amiens to Compiègne = 40 miles
from Compiègne to Verdun = 115 miles
Lille
Béthune
Lens
Vimy
Douai
Mons
Valenciennes
Maubeuge
R. Sambre
Arras
Cambrai
Doullens
Albert
R. Somme
Amiens
Péronne
St. Quentin
Ham
Roisel
Rocroy
Hirson
Mézières
R. Meuse
Montmédy
Montdidier
Roye
La Fère
Laon
Rethel
St. Just
R. Oise
Craonne
Berry au Bac
Vouziers
Compiègne
Crouy
R. Aisne
Missy
Soissons
Bazancourt
Montfaucon
Conservoye
Ornes
Verdun
Sommepy
Tahure
Beauséjour
Auberive
Souain
Perthes
Ville s/ Tourbe
Reims
to Paris
to Paris
R. Marne
Suippes
Clermont
Les Eparges
Combles
Hauts de Meuse
St. Hilaire
Menehould
St. Mihiel
Châlons
Revigny
Bar le Duc

MAP 14.

captures, the Germans admitting in their *communiqués* that their losses in that part of France were greater than those they had suffered in East Prussia, which were computed by themselves at 15,000.

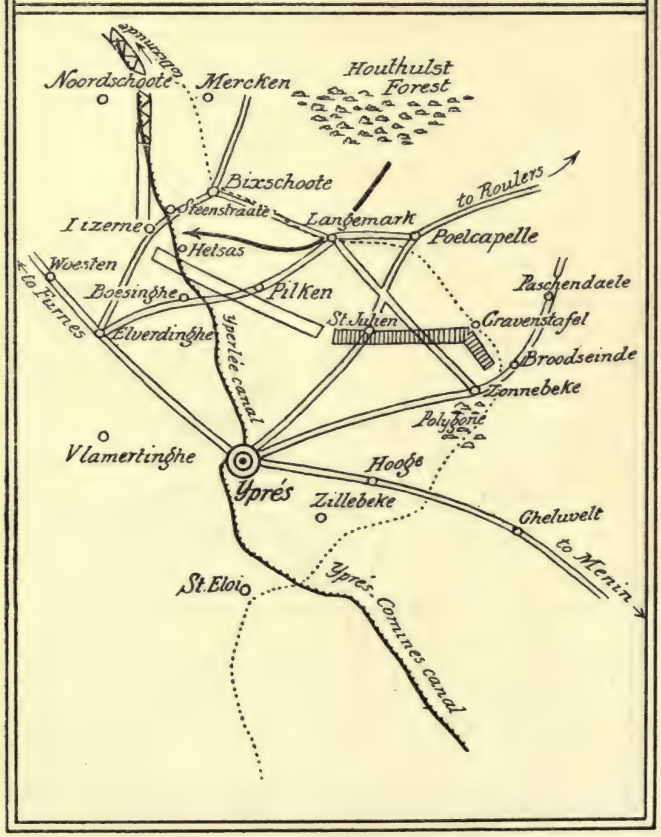
Finally, this French movement paved the way for the bigger one which was carried out at the same spot in the autumn.

Other local actions all along the line demonstrated more conclusively that the Germans were not the equals of their foes both in tactical combinations and actual combat, and that no amount of effort, thoroughness or ingenuity on their part would reverse the issue. The most conspicuous in that phase is the one which is generally termed the second battle of Ypres.

There, near Langemark in Belgium, on April 22-23, the Germans, by treacherous means, succeeded in breaking momentarily the Allied line. Under cover of poisonous fumes which were emitted from cylinders and were carried south-westwards by a favourable wind, the German infantry, protected with respirators, advanced against the French contingents which linked the British army with the Belgians near the Yperlée Canal. Taken by surprise, and overpowered by the gas, the French territorials, the Turcos and the Zouaves, gave way and retired in disorder towards and across the Canal. They abandoned

some material and 50 guns; and what was worse, they uncovered the flank of the newly-formed British 5th corps,* which then lay exposed in the neighbourhood of St. Julien. There, however, the initial progress of the enemy was stopped, for he had staked his all on the success of the first attack, and his supply of gas was momentarily limited. The poisonous fluid did no more on that occasion than skirt the British lines to the south of the French; and a British Colonial force, the 1st Canadian Division, under General Alderson, which was fresh and at full strength, took matters in hand. With the finest dash and intrepidity the contingents from the American Continent, brilliantly led by their brigade commanders, Curry and Turner, attacked the Germans in flank and held them back; this enabled the French to recover and to bring up reinforcements; and gave also time to Sir John French to move troops from the south. The baffled enemy made vain efforts to break the resistance of the fiery Colonials and to pursue his advantage beyond the Canal; the struggle went on for days—for the Germans had massed there important forces—no less, it is said, than six army corps; to oppose which the Allies had

* This army corps belonged to the 2nd British army under General Sir Herbert Plumer; the 2nd British army was at that period still in process of formation.


Second Battle of Ypres. 1915 Position after the first German attack (April 24).
= Main attack
..... = Allies original line
= French
= Main roads.
= Belgians
= Canadians & British
from Ypres to Poelcapelle = 6 miles.
Noordschoote
Mercken
Houthulst Forest
Bixschoote
Steenstraate
Langemark
to Roulers
Poelcapelle
Izerne
Hetsas
Woesten
Boesinghe
Pilken
Paschendaele
to Furnes
Elverdinghe
Yperlée canal
St. Julien
Gravenstafel
Broodseinde
Zonnebeke
Polygone Wood
Vlamertinghe
Ypres
Hooge
Zillebeke
Gheluvelt
to Menin
St. Eloi
Ypres-Comines canal

MAP 15.

Second Battle of Ypres. (1915)
Position in May, after the Allies counter moves and the readjustment of their line

MAP 16.

no more than about half that number;* when, however, the latter had recovered and safely re-adjusted their temporarily broken line, the French renewed the action and delivered counter-blows which showed how little they were affected by their reverse. Reinforced, and supplied now with protective respirators, which for the first time made their appearance on the Allied front, the French Colonial division, under General Putz, which had at first given way, retook the offensive, and, supported on its left by a division of the 36th army corps, it drove back the enemy across the Yperlée, and in a single, but well-sustained assault (May 15-16), it captured three villages, three redoubts, and four lines of trenches. The German forces destroyed in this attack were computed at three whole regiments; losses which have to be added to those the enemy suffered from the British further south. Such was the manner in which, after unforeseen circumstances and terrible, and, up to then, quite unusual, experiences the Allies could strike back against their more brutally equipped opponents.

After their failure the Germans, so as to keep up the effects which their rather previous and expectant boastings had produced, centred their

* Portions of the 3rd and 5th British corps, of the Indian corps, and the troops previously mentioned.

efforts against the British near Ypres and at La Bassée; but this new attempt was barren of results. Sir Douglas Haig who endeavoured to counter-act the enemy's move by a threat at Lille, did experience a partial reverse at Aubers, but he retrieved it quickly by the brilliant capture of Festubert (May 18), an action in which some of the Canadian battalions which had fought so gallantly near Ypres again distinguished themselves; and the only achievements to the credit of the foe—if one may apply the expression to such vandalism—was the systematic and brutal shelling of the old-world and beautiful town of Ypres, and the bombardment of Dunkirk with a long range gun.*

At this period also the German Zeppelins multiplied their ruthless deeds over England, and the German submarines surpassed themselves in the sinking of unarmed merchantmen, all this no doubt enhancing the prestige and good name of the Fatherland, but proving to her small compensation for her failure in the field.

Besides the second battle of Ypres, there were other actions of importance which added to the feeling of those in the know that Germany was impotent and beaten; that with all her facilities,

* This piece, presumably a 42cm., was posted at Dixmude; it was very soon destroyed by French guns.

her reserves in men, and the vast and efficiently concentrated resources at her command, she was incapable of reversing the issue or of forcing a decision in her favour *anywhere*.

Amongst these actions were those which finally put the French in command once again of all the Vosges passes, and of the strong positions known as the Hauts de Meuse, which covered Verdun. One need not go into the details of these battles, but to realise their meaning, it is sufficient to know that it was with very limited and slender effectives, and nearly always inferior, numerically, to the Germans, that France recovered those commanding positions. At Les Eparges, for instance, and near Combles, on the Hauts de Meuse, only *two* French divisions fought during three weeks against *three* German ones; and they remained in possession of the disputed heights after inflicting on the foe a loss of 3,000 killed. Vainly did the Germans subsequently attempt to re-conquer the lost positions. Their strenuous efforts failed, a fact which seems to indicate that they were either inferior in intelligence and fighting power to their opponents, or else that the critics were mistaken in supposing that the French were inferior in tactics and in military equipment to the Germans. Still another action which exemplified the growing superiority of the

French tactics was that which was fought at Quennevières, between the Aisne and the Oise (June 7-9); for there, the victors, who were the assailants, suffered in casualties only 1,750, of which 250 were killed, whilst they buried on the conquered ground over 3,000 of the enemy; the disproportion of losses on this occasion being somewhat greater, if similar, to the results of the contemporaneous battle of Artois where the French although they were again the attacking side suffered much less than the Germans.*

The cumulative effects of these operations cannot be, of course, measured by territorial gain, for this, as has been said, was a matter for secondary consideration. It is in the higher sense that the question must be approached, and if technicalities are entered into, stress must be laid on the strategic results which were obtained in regard to Russia. The Germans' thrust against this power miscarried, not because they "shot their bolt," as was said, nor owing to any mishap or accident; but chiefly because at the critical moment the enemy's Eastern forces lacked reinforcements, the shortage being partly due, no doubt, to the losses

* As at Quennevières, the French division (3rd army corps) which captured the Lorette plateau, buried on the conquered positions more than 3,000 Germans. It took besides 2,600 unwounded prisoners, its own casualties being only 250 killed and 1,250 wounded; the number of its missing being insignificant.

Map to illustrate the operations in Eastern France in 1915

Distance from Verdun to Belfort = 95 miles

MAP 17.

incurred on the spot, but also and chiefly to the constant necessity for the Germans of sending central reserves to France. So to that extent Joffre's restrained policy thwarted Germany; and we shall see later how, through these methods he again foiled the foe, and compelled him to work out and accomplish his own undoing.*

* This word must be taken in the sense of "crushing"—as the actual "undoing" of Germany had already been accomplished. See First Phase.

CHAPTER X

CONCERNING THE INDECISIVE CHARACTER OF SECONDARY OPERATIONS

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THE culminating point of the third phase was the momentous movement which brought to a conclusion the Teutonic onslaught on Russia, and thereby defeated Germany's new aims in the direction of peace on even terms. Previous to that, other developments of importance had occurred which, although they exerted no decisive influence on the course of the war, must be put on record, if only to complete the view of affairs; and also to illustrate the ineffectiveness of secondary issues on the mainspring of the conflict, a fact which should be accepted as an axiom in strategy. It is indeed from that point of view that these operations are instructive, and they should serve as an example and a reminder to the statesmen and military men of the future; as well as to all people generally who let their minds wander away from main issues and who are attracted by the grandiose

and the theatrical. For, in this war, secondary undertakings have overshadowed to an uncommon degree the chief events of the struggle. One may take, for instance, any of the outside moves which preceded Joffre's decisive attack; whether one considers the Caucasus campaign, the Turkish attempt at Suez, Italy's intervention or the Dardanelles expedition, one finds the same vaingloriousness and inconsistencies displayed by contemporaries, and a somewhat ludicrous rise and fall of childish hopes and expectations with every pulse of the political barometer. A certain section of the press encouraged this spirit, in a curious and puzzling attempt at removing the attention of the public from the centre of the strategic sphere, to which, after all, it was bound to return in the long run. No harm, of course, would have resulted had not those who were in charge of affairs been permeated with the same desire, and the same obtuse bias in regard to the meaning of the war. Outside events were hailed with frantic force and ambitious and presumptuous politicians seized upon these occasions to exert their powers and parade in the limelight. Thus came to be decided the most tragic of these moves, which cost the British a fearful toll of lives, a serious drop in their prospects, and procured a fresh ally to the chief enemy.

To understand this undertaking, one must trace it to its source, and thus realise how the powers that be may be swerved from the true course and made to play the game of the enemy.

Turkey declared war against the Allies on November 5, 1914, a development which need not seriously have disturbed any of the opponents; for the new belligerent had no means for acting in the main sphere, and in a general sense could only play the part of a second-rate power. Some deft play and a little bluffing would have been sufficient to neutralise the action of these thick-headed Islamites, who were strong, no doubt, and even efficient, but who had neither the power nor the facilities for making effective use of their forces. This was made clear by the length of time which elapsed before Turkey attempted a serious effort; and then this effort almost immediately ended in collapse. Spurred on by their German advisers who wished to ease the Teutonic task against Russia, the Turks undertook in the Caucasus and in Persia operations for the carrying on of which they were neither fitted nor properly equipped. Almost at once (January, 1915) these movements were nipped in the bud, the Russians at the battle of Sarykamysh, or Kara Urgan, as it is also called (January 6-10), defeating and routing the five hostile army corps which had set foot in

Transcaucasia; whilst near Tabriz in Persia, the Russians achieved another easy success.

Turkey now lay open to invasion, and it was not likely that after such a disaster she would be in a position to annoy Russia.

Her next attempt was a much feebler one. It was made in February in the opposite direction. A motley body of troops, the exact strength of which has never been ascertained, was concentrated in Palestine; it crossed the Sinai desert, and made a determined if futile attempt to force the crossing of the Suez Canal. The British commanders, who, it must be said, took no chances, had made such adequate preparations, that with paltry losses they easily baffled the Turkish endeavour. Such was the impotency which was displayed by the new member of the Triple Alliance, who might well then have been left to her own devices and to simmer quietly in her own helplessness.

The Russians, with small forces, would have kept the watch on the one side, and the British with their fleet and a couple of mobile divisions, on the other; and the Allies would then have found themselves in a position to greatly increase their strength against the Germans.

The glamour, however, of the Russian victory was too great, and coupled with the Turks' abortive attempt at Suez, it gave the impression

that Turkey could be easily dealt with and swiftly crushed; the illusion being strengthened by the exaggerations and bombast of the Allied press on that matter, who failed to see that the defeat of Turkey was not the result of weakness, but of presumption and bad leading, not to mention the ability displayed by the opponent.

In Transcaucasia the Turks set themselves a task above their powers; they spread their troops about somewhat at random in a difficult and unknown territory; they seemed absolutely unaware of the strength of their adversaries; the latter who lay in wait for them in the Chorok Valley and the snow-clad uplands surrounding it, had no difficulty in out-manœuvring them and ejecting them with appalling losses, beyond the frontier. The Russians, under General Youneditch, invaded Armenia and threatened the fortress of Erzerum, the Turkish base of operations in that region; and in the Black Sea near Batum, their fleet destroyed a flotilla of eleven schooners laden with reinforcements for the Turkish Anatolian* army.

The Turkish attack on Suez was made with comparatively scanty forces; and it had no military object, the Turks' main intention being to incite the Egyptians to rebellion; albeit in

* This was the appellation for the Turkish forces which operated on the Asiatic side of the Black Sea.

their attempt they again unconsciously obeyed the impulse of Germany, as their activity near the Red Sea was meant to lead Britain to withhold her forces in that quarter, and, later, to pitt them against Turkey, and not against Germany. Herein lies the origin of the Dardanelles expedition, as it would be wrong to suppose that at the time of the first naval demonstration by the Allies in the Straits (November, 1914) the British Cabinet had as yet any fixed design in regard to Turkey; and the Turkish reverses at Suez and in the Caucasus were both previous to the arrangements which were made for the said Dardanelles expedition.

Other possibilities of course than the mere defeat of Turkey were considered by the Allied Ministers. The diversion, it was said, would help Russia, and also the Serbs who, in spite of their great victories—Shabatz and the Tcher—and the co-operation of Montenegro, were still heavily pressed by the Austrians; there was also the strong hope that some other Balkan State—Greece or Bulgaria, or both—spurred on by the event and a great show of strength in the Near East on the part of Britain, would join the Allies. Finally it was expected that a loud ringing success would shift the attention of the world to that quarter. The dangers and difficulties of the enterprise were not overlooked, judging by

the size of the expeditionary contingent. There were reserves from England; Ghurkas and Indians which had been quartered in Egypt; several divisions from Australia and New Zealand; and a couple of French Colonial divisions under General d'Amade, the whole being placed under the command of Sir Ian Hamilton who had earned reputation in South Africa and the Boxer Rebellion. But on the whole, those who planned the undertaking were over-sanguine; and they failed to arrange and to time the operations so as to ensure success. The Allied fleet, which had already given long warning to the enemy, acted prematurely; it subjected the forts at the entrance of the Straits to a vigorous and prolonged bombardment before the land forces were ready to disembark; and thus the opportunity was lost of making a straight dash on Constantinople, the avowed objective of the move; for the Turks, put on their guard, reinforced their troops on both sides of the Straits —on the Gallipoli peninsula and the Asiatic shore—and strengthened their positions there so as to make them impregnable, and render impossible the forcing of the Straits by the Allies. What was worse for the ulterior prospects of the latter, neither Greece nor Bulgaria intervened to join them. They stood aloof until finally one of them (Bulgaria) won over by the

pro-Teuton propaganda, threw in its lot with the Central Empires.

Such was the result of a venture which was entered into on somewhat unsteady grounds, and which was devised by experts who were prone to subordinate strategy to politics. Gallipoli proved the barren grave of an army of heroes, of brave men who had rushed in thousands from the very Antipodes to fight the Germans but who ended miserably, if gloriously, on the soil of Turkey. There is no need to go into the details and the tactical handling of the operations which was brilliant, as, apart from questions of space and other reasons, one's main concern here is to know how *Germany herself* was defeated; and it cannot be said that the Dardanelles movement exerted much, if any, influence on the centre of affairs, except, perhaps, in a detrimental manner to the Allies; for Britain whose means for land warfare were at the time much limited, squandered a good deal of her strength on the remote peninsula, and the glory she acquired scarcely compensated for the number of useful lives she lost. The detailed study of the landing and other operations which were so ably carried out by Sir Ian Hamilton and the picked lot of officers who acted under him had therefore better be left to the tactician, who can do no better than to study

the able official despatches dealing with them. From a historical point of view, the Dardanelles Expedition can be likened to similar endeavours of Britain in the past which were an expression of her growing sense of sea-power; or in other words, of her natural tendency to make the most of her island condition. As the British Empire grew out of that tendency little could be said against the Gallipoli campaign had it not miscarried through initial faults of execution; a consideration which leads one to make a further observation that might be of use to people in power. This is: that the British in spite of their love for tradition have another and more detrimental tendency than the one above stated; they are prone to disregard the teachings of History, and to lay aside established rules of war. Hence the predominance of amateurish or superficial experts at the opening of this conflict, and also the indifference which was displayed, before the war, towards the advice and warnings of great soldiers.*

Nor can it be said that the next event which was almost simultaneous to the Dardanelles yielded the results which were expected and

* It should never be forgotten that Lord Roberts, one of the greatest strategists of modern times, spoke during ten years in favour of a sound and enlarged scheme of military preparations; and that his warnings fell on deaf ears, his countrymen setting the opinion of Lord Haldane above his.

looked for. This was the intervention of Italy in the tenth month of the war.

Italy entered the conflict at a period and in conditions which were not favourable. Since Germany's fiasco in the West and the Russian and Serbian victories of the initial stage, Austria had felt that sooner or later Italy, who had so curtly dropped her former acquaintances, would come in against her; and she naturally took the necessary precautions. Helped by the experience she had gained in Galicia, in the Carpathians and elsewhere, and advised also by the Germans, she erected along the Italian frontier, across the Tyrolese Alps and on from there to the Adriatic coast, a line of defence which no army, however strong and well equipped, could have overcome within a year.

Italy waited long, and thus gave time to the Austrians to consolidate their positions, which, moreover, were naturally strong and easy to defend. Although of all neutrals she was alone to realise swiftly the decisive character of the Marne operations, she took some time to prepare and to make up her mind. Thus Italy's action, which was calculated to affect Austria's arrangements on her Eastern front, did not spare Russia her reverse in Galicia nor the prolonged retreat which resulted. Austria, as we have seen, was too well prepared for the Italian

onslaught, and when it occurred—(May, 1915)—the Teutons had already gained the upper hand over Russia. This, however, is not to detract from the valour and efficiency of Italy's army nor from the ability of her leaders, who had a most difficult and thankless task to perform; the campaign which opened in June under the direction of General Cadorna was specially arduous; but in a work on the war dealing with the defeat of Germany, one has to show the true results of each move, and to place them in their right perspective. Had the Italians gained at once their object it would be another matter. This object was to pierce the Austrian lines; failing that it was hoped that the attacks of the Italian army would at least react in favour of Russia; even this indirect aim, however, was not attained and the action of Italy therefore, at the period in which she entered the war, cannot be accurately described as having been decisive. It compelled Austria to keep up a new force in the Tyrol and added to the drain on her resources. But as long as the Austrians maintained their positions against Italy their internal arrangements could not be disturbed; and Germany who made use of her allies to parry secondary threats need not entertain immediate fears from that side. As it was, Austria enjoyed much freedom in her third campaign

against Serbia, Italy being too much occupied on her own frontier to counteract her opponent's action in the Balkans.

CHAPTER XI

THE RUSSIAN RETREAT, AND THE MOTIVE OF JOFFRE'S OFFENSIVE IN 1915

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THE decisive move of 1915 was made by General Joffre—but to show its character and true import one should at first review the happenings and developments which led to it and which when properly condensed make its meaning very clear.

The defeat of the Russians in Galicia and their withdrawal from the Carpathians and the Austrian province which they seemed to have definitely occupied and conquered, came as a blow to the *Entente* Governments and peoples whose eyes were too intently fixed on the Eastern theatre, and who were prone to exaggerate the power and the resources of the Muscovite Empire.* It would be rash to affirm that the

* The popular views in regard to Russia gave rise, at the beginning of the war, to a rumour that it is worth placing on record. At the time of the Marne, and even long after, it was currently and seriously believed that a Russian army of a quarter million men had been brought up from Archangel, through Britain, to France! This childish belief, which survives still in some quarters, showed not only what an exaggerated idea the public had of Russia's facilities and resources, but also what small confidence was reposed in the armies under Joffre.

popular expectations were shared by Joffre and his staff, but it may have been taken for granted by them that the Russian leaders, knowing their business, had based their plans on a correct estimate of the enemy's resources and strength; so, when Russia failed, disappointment must have been experienced also in high quarters. The stir made at the time about the munitions questions was an indication to that effect—we shall see the reason further on—but for the time being it is only necessary to recall the growing activity on the Western front, as described in a previous chapter, in order to get an inkling of the basis on which the French staff was at work. A complete co-ordination of efforts, or rather, of movements, was not possible between the two widely separated fronts; and, at the same time, it was only fair that the armies under Joffre should not pay too heavily for the miscalculations of others; but on the other hand it would have been both mean and disadvantageous not to make an attempt to relieve the hard-pressed forces of the Grand Duke. Hence the operations which have been reviewed, and the crowning movement which shall be dealt with later.

The Russian retreat, we have seen, was a forced one which left the initiative in the hands of the enemy. In vain the Grand Duke, who staked much on the political potentialities of the

struggle, tried to thwart the foe and to redress matters to his own advantage, in order to keep a hold on Polish soil and remain in possession of Warsaw.

By means of counter-blows and a careful use and preparation of the ground over which he had to retire, he endeavoured to recover his balance. He made also a few important changes in the army commands—General Loeshe, a very talented man, replacing Plehve at the head of the 3rd army; General Ivanoff being put in charge of the whole line in Central Poland; and General Alexieff, who had been Ivanoff's Chief of Staff in Galicia, being entrusted with the handling of the situation in Warsaw itself.

Loeshe showed his mettle at the battle of Krasnik—(July)—where he defeated the Austrians with a loss of 3,000 slain and 15,000 prisoners, an action which makes it evident that the Russians were not so short of supplies and munitions as has been alleged; and which shows also that well lead, and pitted against forces which were badly handled, the Muscovite troops could score heavily.

Alexieff distinguished himself by his masterly withdrawal from the Bzura and the Blonie lines when the position in the Polish capital had become untenable.

How the position at Warsaw became unten-

able is easily explained. The Germans, under cover of various false attacks in Courland, on the Niemen, and on the Upper Bug, forced, in the north, the crossing of the Narew, and in the south, those of the Vistula, near Ivangorod. A prolonged and simultaneous onslaught by Mackensen's army at the position known as Krasnotaw, on the Lublin-Cholm line, added to the danger of the Russian centre armies in Poland; and these armies had forthwith to be withdrawn to Grodno and Brest Litovsk and the line of the Bug. Alexieff at Warsaw managed it so that the enemy was not aware in time of the withdrawal. The Russian general as he evacuated the Blonie salient, directed two army corps in oblique lines, one to the north and one to the south, and under cover of these fighting echelons, he effected at night the desired retirement without undue haste nor any confusion. Thus the "grand" entry of the foe into Warsaw, which was pompously headed by Prince Leopold of Bavaria, and Hindenburg and his staff, was devoid of the military glamour which had been sought by the Kaiser's generals.

To wind up with the material means and efficiency of the Russian forces: their ground preparation and use of field works showed that they were past masters in the art, as testified by their opponents. Such fortifications as they

Map to illustrate the situation on the Russian front, after the retreat from Galicia; and the German attempts to crush the Russian centre between the Vistula and the Bug.

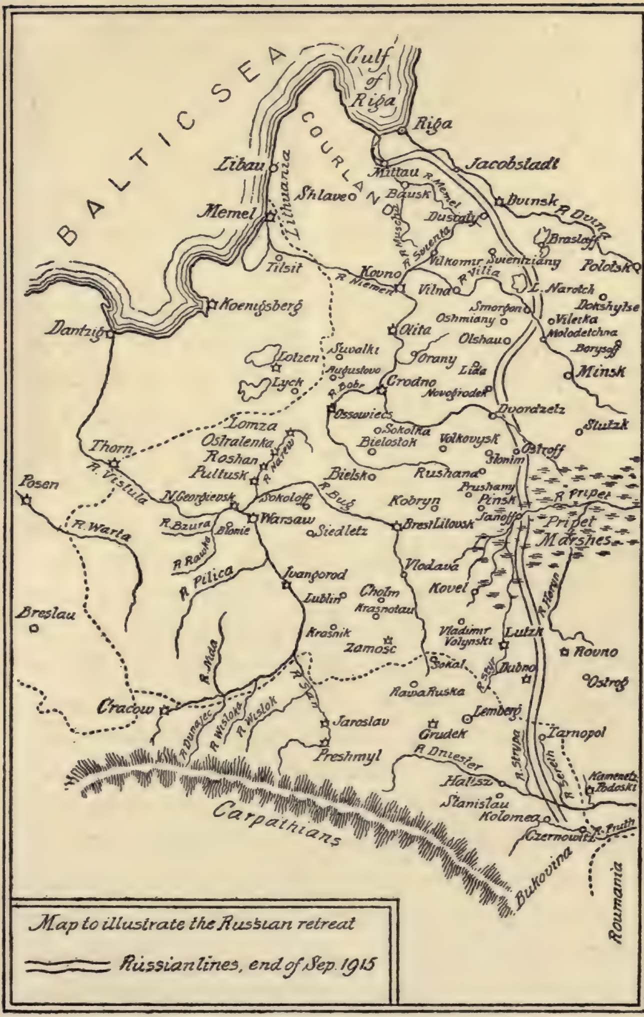
= Main attacks
= Subsidiary do
(Mackensen) = Name of German Commanders.
= Russian armies
= Main Russian Railway lines

MAP 18.

rapidly erected on their positions of retreat should have been proof against all assaults. But in spite of all, they could not readjust their front and combine their moves for a successful collective effort. Actions were won at some points but lost at other points, and although the foe failed to score in a decisive manner, he succeeded, by dint of well thought out movements, effective concentrations at the right spots, a wilful power which could not be denied, and above all a thorough disregard for sacrifices, in ousting the Russians from Poland, and from nearly all their centres of concentration, arsenals and fortresses. The whole manœuvre in itself constituted a gigantic victory, albeit an empty one, and it was the more remarkable from a strategic point of view that it was achieved by forces which had previously often been beaten, and which, moreover, contrary to popular credence, did not enjoy an appreciable numeric superiority over their foe. (See Appendix). With the exception of the Marne, no better illustration could be found of the value of strategy. The Russians were brave and efficient, well trained, well equipped, and they had numerous arsenals to draw upon. But somehow they failed to make the best use of the means at their disposal; and they were too frequently outwitted by the Germans. The conse-

quence was that their troops, although they fought with a devotion and a degree of doggedness and heroism which often surpassed that of the adversary, had to give way before well planned and well sustained onslaughts; and a time came when the Russian armies were threatened with wholesale disintegration and demoralisation.

This was towards the end of August when, besides Ivangorod and Warsaw and the Narew fortresses, having lost Kovno, Grodno and Brest Litovsk, they found themselves without a pivot to lean or manœuvre upon; and a vast expanse of open country behind them. Only at restricted portions of their front could they rely on some natural support—on the Dvina between Riga and Dvinsk, in the north; the Pripet marshes in the centre; and the broken banks of the Sereth and the Strypa in the south; but those obstacles could hardly have hindered the progress of the hostile forces who had overcome greater difficulties—who had crossed the Narew, the Niemen, the Vistula and the Bug; broken down the Russian defences at Gorlice and at Krasnotaw; and stormed Novo Georgievsk, Ossowiecs, Kovno, Grodno, and Lutsk. What perhaps shows best the position in which Russia stood at the time are the well known despatches and telegrams which were exchanged between


BALTIC SEA
Gulf of Riga
COURLAND
Lithuania
Riga
Jacobstadt
Libau
Mittau
Shlave
Bausk
R. Memel
Dvinsk
R. Dvina
Memel
Braslaff
Tilsit
Kovno
R. Niemen
Vilkomir
Svientziany
R. Vilia
Polotsk
Vilna
L. Narotch
Koenigsberg
Smorgon
Dokshytse
Oshmiany
Vileika
Molodetchna
Dantzig
Olita
Olshau
Borysoff
Lotzen
Suvalki
Orany
Lida
Minsk
Augustovo
Lyck
Grodno
Novogrodek
R. Bobr
Ossowiecs
Dvoretzelz
Lomza
Slutzk
Sokolka
Ostralenka
Bielostok
Volkovysk
Thorn
Roshan
Slonim
Ostroff
R. Narew
Pultusk
Bielsk
Rushana
Posen
R. Vistula
N. Georgievsk
Sokoloff
R. Bug
Kobryn
Prushany
Pinsk
R. Pripet
R. Bzura
Warsaw
Janoff
Pripet
Blonie
Siedletz
Brest Litovsk
Marshes
R. Warta
R. Rawka
R. Pilica
Vlodava
Ivangorod
Cholm
Kovel
Lublin
Krasnotau
Breslau
Krasnik
Vladimir Volynski
Lutzk
Rovno
R. Nida
Zamosc
Sokal
Dubno
Ostrog
Rawa Ruska
R. Styr
Cracow
R. San
Jaroslav
Lemberg
R. Dunajec
R. Wisloka
R. Wislok
Grudek
Tarnopol
Preshmyl
R. Dniester
R. Stryna
R. Sereth
Halicz
Kamenetz Podoski
Stanislau
Carpathians
Kolomea
Czernowitz
R. Pruth
Bukovina
Roumania
Map to illustrate the Russian retreat
Russian lines, end of Sep. 1915

MAP 19.

the Russian and French Governments and the Grand Duke and General Joffre. These communications constituted an avowal of distress; Russia was in danger, and she appealed to her Allies and friends.

In what manner this appeal was answered and the enemy was finally foiled in his desperate attempt is the subject of the next chapter.

Needless to say, Russia, who has exhibited at all times her fine and generous spirit, recognised to the full, in her official *communiqués,* the timely help which was afforded her by her Western Allies.

CHAPTER XII

THE FRANCO-BRITISH OFFENSIVE OF 1915; AND ITS MILITARY RESULT AND EFFECT AS REGARDS THE SITUATION OF RUSSIA

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THE FRANCO-BRITISH OFFENSIVE OF 1915; AND ITS MILITARY RESULT AND EFFECT AS REGARDS THE SITUATION OF RUSSIA

It was during the latter stages of the Russian retreat that there was a notable increase of artillery activity on the side of the Allies on the Western front—and during that period also started the munitions campaign for increasing the output of the war factories in England and in France. This question was an involved one, but its aim was clear (at least to those who viewed the progress of affairs with an impartial eye): it was meant to replace an "advance" in kind by a stationary one with shells; in other words to achieve the results of a general offensive without incurring the losses which such a movement would have entailed.

Up to then all artillery actions in the siege warfare had been of a local character; but gradually as the Teutonic eastern armies pressed on in Russia, more and more batteries were brought into play by the Allies in France; until

the whole front from the Belgian coast to the Swiss frontier became a continuous blaze of guns, the tremendous line of fire being prolonged seawards by a fleet of seventy-five vessels which bombarded the shore from Ostend to Zeebrugge; and the general bombardment being supplemented by numerous air raids which were carried out on the enemy's field depots and communications.

Such action was calculated to disturb the German generals, who were bound to interpret it as an ominous sign of a coming onslaught on the part of their Western foes; and the immediate result of it was that strong German reserves, not less than sixteen divisions—divisions which had been intended for the Russian front—together with a certain number of units which had fought in Poland, were immediately sent to France; and there was a distinct slackening of the German forward movement in Russia. This occurred during the first stage of the Allied general bombardment (August-September).*

Owing to a momentary shortage of shells, however, due to excessive and unforeseen expenditure, the bombardment abated somewhat, and as no attacks followed, the enemy, who was still in doubt as to the real intentions of the

* Compare the *communiqués* of that period on both sides, for *both* fronts.

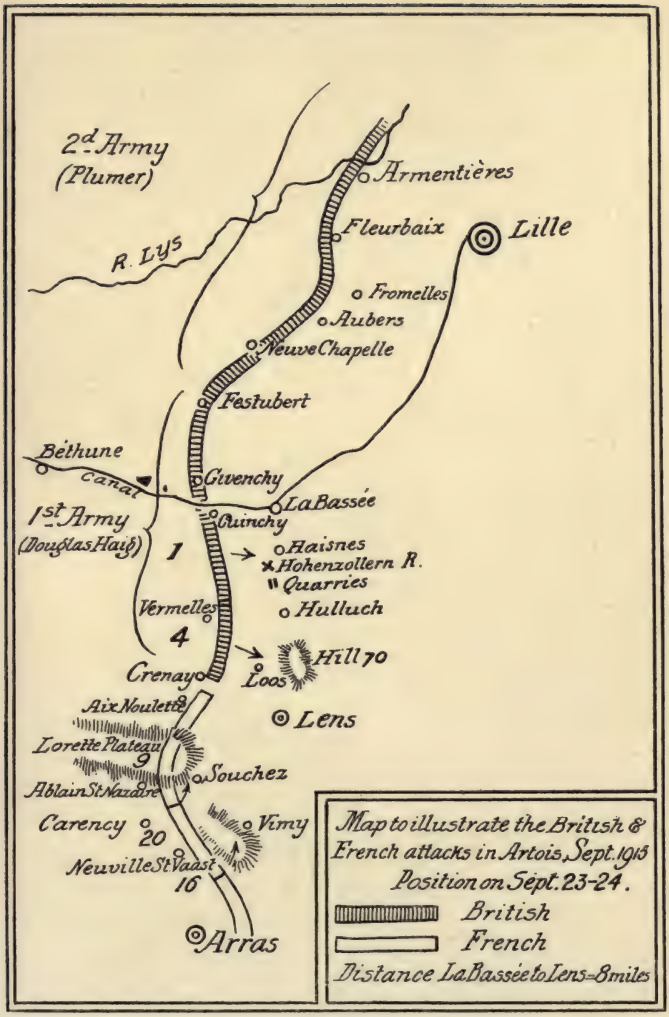
Allies, resumed his action in the East, towards Riga, Wilna, and the Pripet Marshes. The Russians were not demoralised, and they had been allowed some respite; so, in an endeavour to establish themselves at last on some sound defensive line, they frustrated Hindenburg's attempts to reach Riga; to envelop a portion of their forces at Wilna; and to drive their south-western armies in confusion over the Marshes; and they were also able to maintain their footing on the banks of the Dniester from where the Austrians attempted vainly to dislodge them. Nevertheless, they were in great difficulties and would probably have been compelled to retire further back, had not Joffre in the West been able to resume his own action, and to launch combined attacks which compelled the Germans to relinquish their object and to divert more of their central reserves to France.

It was towards the end of September that the Allied movement which has been inaccurately described as a "general" offensive, began. It shortly preceded the Teutonic offensive against Russia and was simultaneous with a counter, or parrying, movement, which the enemy attempted in the West with the fresh troops which had been brought there. These troops, once they arrived in the fighting area, had to be made use of; they acted chiefly as reinforcements to the

5th German army (Crown Prince) in the Argonne and took part in the formidable attack which shortly preceded—(September 23)—the French and British onslaughts in Champagne and Artois.

The true aim of the Allied offensive was made sufficiently clear by the restricted sectors of the front on which it was executed, but the issue was confused by a variety of factors which made it appear that the chief object of Joffre and his Generals was to pierce the German lines; and which thereby spoilt some of the effects which the movement was intended to produce. The proclamations which the Allied Generals issued to stimulate the ardour of their troops were wrongly interpreted, and, as usual, the popular imagination assigned to Joffre objects which the great commander had not the faintest intention nor the slightest reasons to strive for. As always his mind was intent on the strategic problem; and barring the help he was called on to afford Russia, he had no further aims, as regards the Germans, than those he wished to attain through his "nibbling" policy. In other words, he meant to refuse, right to the end, to be drawn into a costly general attack on the German fortified positions which, he knew, extended for miles *behind* their main front.

But it must be said that General Joffre pre-


2d Army
(Plumer)
Armentières
Fleurbaix
Lille
R. Lys
Fromelles
Aubers
Neuve Chapelle
Festubert
Béthune
Canal
Givenchy
La Bassée
Quinchy
1st Army
(Douglas Haig)
1
Haisnes
Hohenzollern R.
Quarries
Vermelles
Hulluch
4
Hill 70
Crenay
Loos
Aix Noulette
Lens
Lorette Plateau
9
Souchez
Ablain St Nazaire
Carency
20
Vimy
Neuville St Vaast
16
Arras
Map to illustrate the British & French attacks in Artois, Sept. 1915
Position on Sept. 23-24.
British
French
Distance La Bassée to Lens = 8 miles

MAP 20.

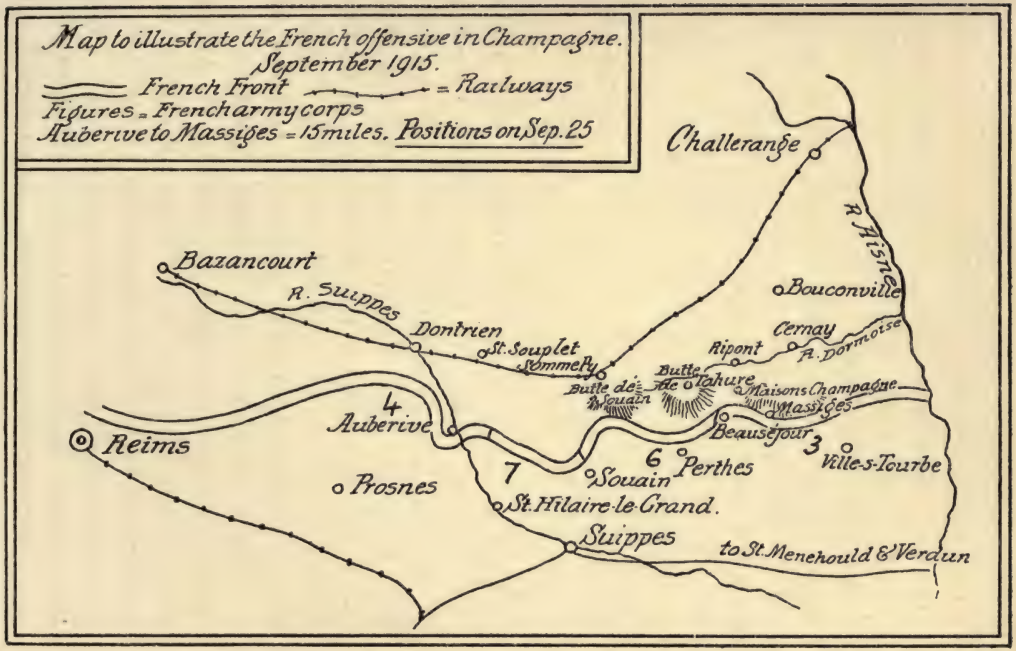

Armentières
R. Lys
Fleurbaix
Lille
Fromelles
Aubers
Neuve Chapelle
Festubert
Givenchy
Canal
La Bassée
Béthune
Guinchy
Haisnes
Hohenzollern R
Quarries
Vermelles
Hulluch
Hill 70
Crenay
Loos
Aix Noulette
Lens
Lorette Plateau
Souchez
Ablain St. Nazaire
Carency
Vimy
Neuville St. Vaast
Arras
1
4
9
20
16
Map to illustrate the British & French attacks in Artois, Sept 1915
Position on Sept. 27-28.

MAP 21.

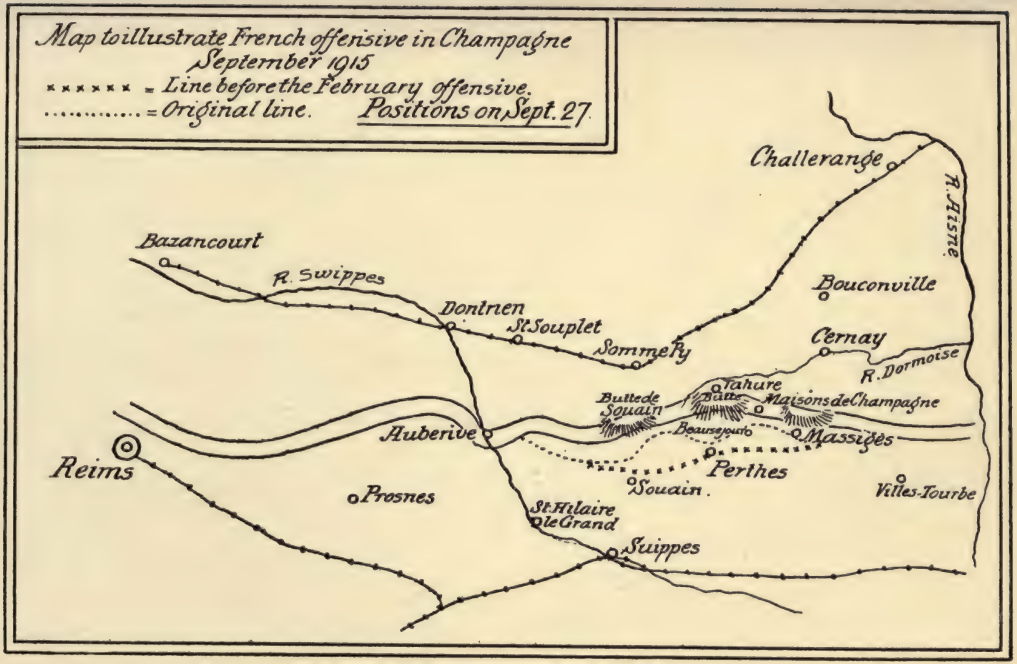
pared his move in a way which was bound, at least momentarily, to mislead not only the enemy, but the Allies themselves.

Firstly all leave was stopped a week previous to the engagement; secondly more stringent regulations were enforced by the military censors. Thirdly the renewed artillery activity was increased to the utmost intensity; and finally powerful concentrations were carried out at various points besides those on which to deliver the attacks. The outcome of it all was that eight French army corps out of a total of forty-two on the line took action on a length of front not exceeding twenty miles; and that the British forces, which, on the receipt of further reinforcements consisted of six army corps portioned into three armies and had extended their front to fifty miles, took action simultaneously on a front of not more than ten miles; so the much expected and tremendously advertised "general" offensive of the Allies on the Western front resolved itself into a minor one, in which only a small fraction of the troops on the spot were employed. The British forces now on the fighting front consisted of two armies, the 1st under Sir Douglas Haig which had since June gradually extended its front south of La Bassée towards the Lorette Plateau which the French had captured in June; the 2nd army

(General Plumer) to the north of it extended as far as Boesinghe on the Yperlée Canal, where it was in touch with the 36th French army corps (General Hely d'Oissel). Other British forces, termed the 3rd army, were mostly still in process of formation, and they lay in reserve in the bases and training camps at the rear. Some portions of it being intercalated, for training purposes, in the French lines on the Somme. Of all these troops only the portions under the immediate command of General Haig took action in the battle of Loos. One of these, the 1st corps under General Gough, acted on the line Cuinchy-Vermelles towards Haisnes and Hulluch; and the other, the 4th corps under General Rawlinson, took action to the south of the former, from the line Vermelles-Grenay, towards Loos. In the centre of the Allied line, in Champagne, portions of the 4th and 5th French armies, under the higher control of General de Castelnau, assaulted the German positions between Souain and Massiges; whilst in Artois half-a-dozen divisions of the 10th French army, under General d'Urbal, supported the action of the 4th British army corps towards Lens. The British, renewing the tactics of Neuve Chapelle advanced suddenly, and boldly, on a broad front and carried the German advanced lines very rapidly. The Germans, locally, were taken by


Map to illustrate the French offensive in Champagne.
September 1915.
French Front
Railways
Figures = French army corps
Auberive to Massiges = 15 miles. Positions on Sep. 25
Challerange
R. Aisne
Bouconville
Bazancourt
R. Suippes
Dontrien
St. Souplet
Sommepy
Ripont
Cernay
R. Dormoise
Butte de Souain
Butte de Tahure
Maisons Champagne
Massiges
4
Auberive
Reims
Beausejour
3
Ville-s-Tourbe
6
Perthes
7
Souain
Prosnes
St. Hilaire-le-Grand.
Suippes
to St. Menehould & Verdun

MAP 22.


Map to illustrate French offensive in Champagne
September 1915
× × × × × × = Line before the February offensive.
..... = Original line.
Positions on Sept. 27.
Challerange
R. Aisne
Bazancourt
R. Swippes
Dontrien
St. Souplet
Sommepy
Bouconville
Cernay
R. Dormoise
Tahure
Butte
Maisons de Champagne
Butte de Souain
Auberive
Beausejour
Massiges
Reims
Perthes
Souain
Prosnes
St. Hilaire le Grand
Villes-Tourbe
Suippes

MAP 23.

surprise; besides, the demands of the Argonne attack they had unwittingly started, prevented them from reinforcing sufficiently and in time the sectors at which they were themselves attacked. Thus it was that after an artillery preparation lengthy and powerful which wrecked the more advanced German defences, the assailants both in Artois and in Champagne were able to capture, at a minimum cost, a good deal of ground, and to inflict severe losses on the foe. In Champagne especially the French, carried away by a tremendous enthusiasm, played havoc amongst the enemy; they cleared with comparative ease the field-works, dug-outs and trenches which their guns had demolished, and they stormed stronger strongholds bristling with arms and defences of every description. Colonials, infantry of the line and reserve troops behaved equally well; and mounted units shared in the exhilarating work of rounding up the routed enemy. The difficulty on that occasion was not so much of vanquishing the foe, but of restraining the victorious troops once the main task was accomplished. In the general elation which prevailed some battalions consisting of very young men got out of hand, and they were seen rushing forward over the devastated ground towards the rear of the enemy's second positions, where they were naturally

promptly slain, or taken prisoners, this enabling the Germans to claim some captures, which were paltry indeed in comparison with those the French had made. The latter at the end of a week's fighting, summed up the enemy losses as follows: 100,000 casualties, 23,000 prisoners, 155 guns, and over a hundred smaller pieces—quick-firers, trench mortars, etc.—together with a considerable amount of other material; *all this for the Champagne battle alone.* Such a victory, had it been won by the other side, would have filled the world with awe and admiration; unfortunately for the victors it was won by them *on French soil,* and it failed thereby to give satisfaction to the immense army of croakers who were looking to an advance on Berlin, and who, short of such a costly and unnecessary enterprise being carried through, were bent on belittling and criticising the achievements of their own men. The British army, especially, which had done wonders in the north, came under the lash of the irrepressible fire eaters. Its more apparent—and inevitable—faults and deficiencies were laid bare; and whilst what it had achieved was thrust aside or forgotten, what it had not achieved, and was *not* intended to achieve, was constantly dwelt upon.*

The action of the British upon the Hulluch-

* The *Times* History described the battle of Loos as a defeat.

Grenay line had been powerful, and highly successful, the motive of the movement being similar to that of the French. In consequence of it German reserves were being diverted from Russia, and attracted and nailed to the Western front. With magnificent dash the British infantry had carried several miles of trenches, three formidable redoubts (the most celebrated of these was the "Hohenzollern" which the enemy deemed impregnable) and other field works; and in their *communiqués* which were couched in modest terms, the British staff reported the capture of 4,000 prisoners, twenty-three field pieces and three score machine guns. But partly as the result of the German counter-stroke, which was not unforeseen by the staff and should have been expected by the people at home, and partly by the blasting of silly hopes, the usual wailing went on. As if to soothe and please the enemy, the Allied losses were persistently exaggerated; a deplorable proceeding which lent colour to the falsehoods issued from Berlin and which helped the Kaiser's Government to reassure their peoples and to convince neutrals once more of German invincibility.

As regards the criticisms which were at that period levelled at the British forces, it must be said here in all fairness that they were not altogether groundless; but the spirit in which they

were made was unfair, especially towards the leaders, and the great War Minister, Lord Kitchener, who had worked his hardest, and done his best, to weave a considerable and efficient force out of very raw material. It should have been reflected that the British army in the summer and autumn of 1915 could no longer be what it had been at Mons, the Aisne and at Ypres. Most of the long-service men—officers as well as privates—of which it had originally been composed, had been slain and disabled; and in a country which had not been prepared for such a conflict, those hardened and experienced veterans were very difficult to replace. In the matter of artillery especially the British army had considerably weakened—not for lack of guns, but of trained artillerists—and recourse had to be had to the French in that matter. Then the freshly trained infantry had to gain some experience ere it was employed in decisive tasks; and naturally the repetition of such mistakes which had proved so costly at Neuve Chapelle, at Aubers, and elsewhere, could not be avoided at the outset; as in the former instances, those mistakes were chiefly due to young and over impetuous officers who evidently considered that bravery was the sole thing in battle. At Loos the British advanced again too quickly, and less methodically, than the French; and,

in consequence, they suffered more;* their reserves were not in time to act in full force against the enemy's counter-stroke, and towards the end, they had to relinquish some of the captured ground, as well as a portion of the front which they had taken over from their Allies to the south of La Bassée. A French army corps (the 9th) re-occupied it, during the course of the battle,† to enable the British to meet and check powerful counter-attacks of the enemy (Sept. 30-Oct. 2). This alteration, however, amounted only to a temporary reshifting of the forces consequent upon an insignificant mishap; and the definite gains of the British as we have seen were considerable; and they foiled the subsequent attempts of the Germans to recover their lost positions.

Contrary to what had been the general practice at the beginning of the war, less criticism was indulged in as regards the French. But they were still under-rated, their achievements were underestimated; and their statements concerning the hopeless situation of the foe, although quite accurate, were not believed. It was even credited that the French losses in Champagne

* Three British generals were killed at Loos—Capper (7th division), Thesiger (9th division), Wing (12th division).

† Current Histories describe the battle as having been "broken off" on Sept. 28, when the Allies' offensive action ceased; but it continued afterwards with the enemy as the assailant.

and Artois were higher than those of the Germans, this assertion doing much to cloud the significance of Joffre's policy, since man-economy was the motive of that policy. The French staff constantly tried to make it clear that their chief aim was to exhaust Germany, and not necessarily to invade her in the course of operations; so, were it demonstrated that the French losses were at least as large as the Germans, then the latter's contention would be vindicated, namely, that the French were really impotent, and that they did not re-conquer at once the occupied territory not merely, as was the case, because they did not wish to do so, but because they had not the power to do so. Such was the foundation of the German propaganda, the world-wide movement which was strengthened by Allied pessimists and by those presumptuous and uninformed "experts" who criticised Joffre and endeavoured to teach him his profession.

One may take it for granted that the French, who, for many good reasons did not publish their losses, did not suffer half as much as was declared by their boasting opponents; and that locally as well as strategically Joffre's movement in 1915 was a complete success; on technical grounds it put beyond question the Allies' ascendancy over the enemy; it relieved Russia;

it convinced the Germans that Joffre could, as he had declared, break through their front; and it compelled the Kaiser's generals to look westward once more in a hopeless quest for the *status quo ante bellum,* the peace on even terms which since the Marne they were seeking in vain.

Nor must it be thought that the victory of the Allies stopped with their actual "offensive," for a greater and more general action followed in which the Germans, now the assailants, made with their diverted and re-concentrated forces, strenuous but vain endeavours to reconquer the lost ground in Artois and Champagne (September 28-October 15). The Allies' advanced troops met these attacks on their own fortified and impregnable positions; they slaughtered the foe and held their ground, and with the exception of a few trenches, nothing of the threescore square miles of ground which the Allies had won was retaken by the Germans, although the latter in their assaults used large effectives and resorted to every possible means—regular or foul—to increase their chances.

Maddened with rage and constant disappointment, and with a lurking fear of the restless and impatient populations behind them the German leaders launched attacks upon attacks; only to be beaten back over and over again; until in despair they devised a last and cunning attempt

towards political gain, and the achievement of a peace of their own making.

It was their last card; they had to play it; they had to choose between this and ignominious collapse; or what would still be worse from their own point of view: unconditional surrender on the soil of the enemy.

To sum up the period under view: the Germans had started the war with the primary object of crushing France, and then Russia; France in the first phase had defeated her, and in the second had placed her in a state of siege. Then Germany, altering her aims, had attempted to crush Russia. But France again had thwarted her; and now Germany had no sound hope in the military sphere. As has been said at the end of the second phase, she was condemned to bleed to death, to exhaust her man-strength, and to succumb in the end under the blows of those she had wished to conquer. And this for a very simple, one might say for an *obvious* reason: she had failed to win at the first go; she had been beaten at the Marne; and after that decisive event she had not a chance of concluding the war even upon her new, reduced, terms.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRUE CAUSE OF THE GREAT BATTLE OF VERDUN, AND THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH INDUCED THE GERMANS TO MAKE THEIR FRESH ATTACK AGAINST FRANCE

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THE great battle of Verdun and the protracted operations which followed on the banks of the Meuse above St. Mihiel were the result of the Allied offensive movements in 1915; these movements (the battles of Loos, Artois and Champagne) had drawn to the West—to France—reinforcements and reserves which Germany had meant to use against Russia; and once the troops which had been thus diverted were in France, they had to be employed, unless by retransferring them to some other fields, the enemy wished to lay himself open to further onslaughts such as those which had pierced his front line in Artois and Champagne. During these actions and after, the German armies in France swelled rapidly with an influx of fresh forces; only to discover, however, that the Allies' movement was a false one; and as they had not reached

the point of exhaustion and demoralisation which spells collapse, the Germans gathered themselves up for yet another effort.

This does not at all mean, as has often been supposed, that they possessed the initiative of movements—strategic freedom. On the contrary, it was Joffre's restrained action, his "nibbling" tactics which obliged them to adopt that course, and to make further desperate and costly endeavours.

One consideration will bring out with full force the tragic side of the Germans' last and forlorn attempt.

Since the Marne, or rather, their retreat to the Aisne and their establishment on consolidated positions in Northern France, it had been their policy to represent their situation as one of victorious defence; and in spite of their failure to reach a rapid solution; in spite of their multitudinous reverses and disappointments, they continued to strain every nerve and every argument to demonstrate and to prove that France was a thwarted and defeated nation, and that she was no longer of account. To attain this end, they had constantly sought to divert the attention of the world to quarters which were not French; in spite of all this, and the fact that Germany's policy had brought her fresh Allies, Joffre firmly and persistently re-

fused to play the game of the foe; to fling his forces at random on the German fortified positions and to obtain peace thereby at the price of French exhaustion.

The Germans profited by the universal mood, and from the very soil where they were waylaid and trapped and where all their efforts had ended in fiasco, they continued to twist events and to trumpet abroad imaginary victories. And they so far succeeded in their propaganda that not only in pro-Teuton circles, but also amongst some of her friends, France although admired and praised for her courage, was looked on as a powerless and practically vanquished nation. The thunder of the French guns in Champagne dispelled the illusion; and the battle of Verdun testified to the complete and definite triumph of France; there, after all their bragging, the Germans found the old rampart which they had endeavoured in vain to break and crush in Lorraine (at the battles of the Meurthe and of Nancy), and against it they started the furious onslaughts which shook the earth; which revealed at last, to the full, the worth of the French; and which marked the beginning of the end for Germany; for these onslaughts which the enemy prolonged and renewed till the end, may be fittingly described as the agony of the German Empire. To make them, the

Kaiser's generals drew to the dregs the resources of their country; they threw into the roaring and blazing furnace the major portion of the manhood of their nation; they sacrificed wholesale, in daily holocausts, what remained of the flower of the German race; and this in order that Teutonic ideals and customs should prevail; and above all, that the Kaiser and the Hohenzollerns should continue to reign; and that the War Caste who supported them should preserve their sway, their power. Such is the meaning of the battle of Verdun in the psychologic and national sense. Let us now view it in the military.

It has been alleged and widely credited, that at Verdun the Germans were still looking to the solution of their strategic problem.

That such a belief should have been entertained at such a time, and after the developments—the German retreat from the Marne, and the siege war which had preceded Verdun—is a glaring indication of the unbalanced mentality of too many human beings; for it was also held simultaneously by the same people that the German commanders were not fools, that they knew their profession, in which case they were bound to have taken stock of their past reverses, as well as of the cautious and wary action of their opponents. Unless one is ripe for Bedlam, one

does not try one's fist once more against a wall for the purpose of bursting it, when one has already found to one's cost that it is solid concrete. The Germans had found, at the Marne and elsewhere, that the French lines *were* solid concrete; their action against them at Verdun was not truly meant to break them. The denseness of mind which prevailed, however, is to be excused, since the whole world was overawed by the blustering foe, the critics were blinded by the German's occupation of French territory, and their ideas were confused by the tactical complexity of modern battles.

The *object* of the Germans at Verdun was not military; only their *manner* of proceeding, their mode of action, was so. Let us suppose, for comparison, that an artisan wishes to counterfeit coin. His object is to deceive; but were it different it would not affect his manner of producing the coin. So it does not follow that because the Germans drew up their plan on military lines that they had any other than a political end in view—which was to impress and discourage France and force peace on her and her Allies. In working out their design, the German staff took count of two chief considerations; the first, the Balkan complications which threatened to disturb and to weaken both France and England; the second, the growing

power of the latter country in military organisation and efficiency.

The second proposition needs no detailed treatment, as it is quite clear that the Germans could not wait until the British were at full strength to make their attempt to force peace on France and detach her from England. They had, in fact, to make full haste in the matter, otherwise their prospects in that direction—or at any rate, those they thought they had—would be completely and definitely gone. Britain with full-grown armies and her invincible navy, would be too much for Germany—the baffled, tired and semi-exhausted Germany of post-Marne and Ypres days.

The other proposition—the Balkan "tangle" —must be dealt with at some length if only for the reason that by itself and without any other consideration, it would have formed a strong inducement for the Germans to proceed as they did.

On the intervention of Bulgaria (November, 1915), Austria undertook a fresh campaign against the Serbs; and the Teutonic prospects in the Balkans and the Near East generally were then in the ascendant. For Serbia, although she had been twice victorious could not keep up the game for long against a fresh foe; and the Allies having squandered some of their strength

at the Dardanelles could afford little relief to her unless they weakened their main front in France and Flanders. Here was an opportunity for Germany to use her cunning once more; to induce the Allies, and especially the French, to embark on a foolhardy enterprise in the Near East, whilst under the cover of her false move there, she would prepare in secret her new attempt. The German leaders were aware of the tendency amongst the Allies of looking towards the East; and also of the racial sympathy between the French and the Serbs. Similar pressure might be exerted on the Allies and on the French Government in particular, as had been exercised at the opening of the war on the French staff in favour of Belgium. In this, the former case, the authorities in Paris had little power, if any at all, on the military commands. In the case of Serbia, Joffre, at the time of Bulgaria's intervention, had no say in the matter since the near Eastern sphere, or any other lying outside France, was not within his military command. Shortly, it is true, this was altered; Joffre was given the entire direction of all the French forces; besides, previous to this nomination, his friend and admirer, General Gallieni, had become War Minister. But at the moment of Bulgaria's intervention, Joffre's command was still restricted to North-

Eastern France; and troops which lay not within this area were at the disposal of the government.

The Germans therefore, started to make a show of strength in the Near East; they sent there Field-Marshal Von Mackensen, the victor of Gorlice and Krasnotaw, as this would very likely lead the Allies to suppose the German forces which were being directed to that quarter were important, in fact, in fitting proportion to the rank and distinction of their commander.

Only three German divisions were sent against Serbia, the main Teutonic forces which acted against this country being, as before, Austrian, and very soon two of these German divisions were withdrawn and brought back to the Western front.

But the news was spread broadcast that a strong German army, consisting of several army corps were co-operating with the Austro-Bulgar forces; it gained wide credence, and, judging by the stir that it made, there can be no doubt that the German dodge temporarily, at least, misled the Allies; for considerable pressure was brought to bear by public opinion and the press, on the governments, in favour of an important move in the Balkans; and the Allied leaders came once more under the shadow of censure for their cautious and apparently

timorous policy. It was said seriously, even by people in authority, that the strategic pivot had been shifted (!) to the Near East; that the Germans were endeavouring to open their way to Persia through Asia Minor; that a *million* GERMAN troops would shortly join forces with those of the Sultan on the banks of the Bosphorus; and the apprehension of the Allied governments and people became acute when it was ominously announced that Marshal Mackensen had visited the Turkish defences at Gallipoli; which he did, truly, but with quite another object in view than that of establishing his country's forces in a quarter so far distant from the main fields of operation.

Happily, General Joffre was by then in supreme command of all the French forces; and partly to allay popular fears, and partly to mislead the enemy himself, he allowed the rumour to be spread that he was diverting important contingents to the Balkans; colour being lent to it by the appointment of General Sarrail, who had already gone there to take charge of matters in the name of England and France.

Only six regiments were sent from France to Salonika; the rest and major part of the Allied force, which was eventually, with the consent of Greece, concentrated there, consisting of troops which were taken from the Dardanelles

when England, under pressure of events and also the advice of Joffre,* decided at last to evacuate the Gallipoli peninsula.

Joffre did not swerve from the path of security. His heart bled, no doubt, for the hapless Serbs, as it had bled for Belgium, but the fate of his own country was in his hands, and he was too versed in the wiles of the foe not to discern the Germans' true object. Even had he not been aware, as he was, of the activity which reigned behind the enemy's lines in France, he would not have depleted his forces there to afford relief to Serbia; for France, in spite of popular delusions, was truly the pivot of the conflict, and a single local movement or action on the Western front had more weight in the balance than any portentous operation which might be undertaken outside the strategic sphere. This quite apart from the main theme of Joffre's campaign, which aimed at exhausting the Germans, who were hoping against hope to find the French unprepared and to impose peace upon them; but knowing all the same, through long experience and bitter disappointments the true mettle of these opponents.

* General Joffre's visit to London in December, 1915, was connected with this event.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GERMAN PLAN FOR THEIR ATTACK ON THE VERDUN SALIENT; THE SITUATION OF THE FRENCH AND THEIR MEASURES FOR THWARTING THE ENEMY'S ATTEMPT

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THE GERMAN PLAN FOR THEIR ATTACK ON THE VERDUN SALIENT; THE SITUATION OF THE FRENCH AND THEIR MEASURES FOR THWARTING THE ENEMY'S ATTEMPT

THE formidable battles and series of desperate actions which developed on the banks of the Meuse and around the Verdun salient, need not be reviewed here to be well grasped, beyond the initial and decisive stages, which lasted three weeks, from February 21 to March 10. But ere account is given of them one should note the final preparations and covering moves of the Germans, as well as the situation of the French previous to and during the first onslaughts.

The actual plan of carrying Verdun, and thereby of forcing peace on the French nation, was devised by Marshal Count Haeseler, under the higher direction and with the approval of Von Falkenhayn, the successor to Von Moltke in the command of the German armies in the West. Von Haeseler himself had succeeded

Von Eichhorn as "adviser" to the Crown Prince, when the latter General (Eichhorn) had been transferred in the spring of 1915 to a command on the Eastern front. The Crown Prince's army happened to find itself in the region which was selected for the attack, but otherwise he personally had nothing to do with the planning and carrying out of the operations. He had little knowledge, no talent, and was barely capable of leading a battalion. His own private quarters at Montmedy, where he spent most of his time in sensual enjoyment the while thousands of men were dying for him, had nothing military about them.

Von Haeseler, a leader of the old school, was a believer in intense concentration; a point on which he agreed but superficially with Mackensen, who was more of an opportunist in the matter. Mackensen, although a regular "hacker," was not over inclined to subordinate a general plan to a concentrated attack, as he had shown at Lodz and elsewhere. Haeseler, on the contrary, although by his great age and weak constitution he was devoid of temperament, thought only of the latter scheme, of the "*Pointe à outrance*," and owing to his view, which was generally considered a fallacy, he had been hitherto mistrusted by his fellow generals, especially after his handling of affairs

at Antwerp and on the Yser in 1914.* In the former instance he had centred his mind on the eastern sector of the fortress with the result that the Belgian army which he meant to capture, had been left an opening of escape through the western sector. On the Yser, Haeseler, who commanded there until the Grand Duke of Wurtemberg's new force was concentrated in Flanders, delivered stubborn assaults on Dixmude; and his failure there, coupled with Wurtemberg's slowness and dilatoriness of movements enabled the Allies to secure firm positions around the Ypres salient.

Nevertheless the aged marshal's views prevailed in the end, as other events seemed to prove his contention. Moltke had not succeeded in his turning movements, and Falkenhayn, who succeeded Moltke at a period of deadlock, had been prone to spread his efforts and to deliver his blows at random; and neither had this method given the desired results; so Haeseler's opinion came at last to be taken in more serious consideration, and in default of a better scheme the German staff decided to stake their all—their last card—on the new plan, which they trusted would at last bring them the safe peace they had been striving for since the Marne.

The choice of Verdun itself as a sector of

* See Second Phase, Ch. VIII, IX, X.

attack was not a faulty one. The French advanced lines there formed a salient beyond the Meuse, and the enemy would have an opportunity to force an action on a proportion of troops which had a river behind them and whose best line of communications could be cut by long range artillery. The French staff no doubt had provided for such an eventuality; indeed, it came out later that they had devised a scheme to undertake the defence of Verdun should it be necessary, without making use of the railways. A system of motor transport had been organised which, when the time came, worked to perfection; the German staff, however, had little information on the point, and offensive operations against the Verdun salient with the fortress itself as an objective, seemed to them, on technical grounds, a comparatively easy proposition; especially as their centre of concentration for the attack was a very convenient one. This was the great fortress of Metz from where the German armies battling in the Argonne and the Woevre were fed with supplies and reinforcements. The arsenal was immense, and owing to the constant influx of material from neighbouring fortresses—from Mayence, Strassburg, Bitche, Saarlouis, New Brisach—it was practically inexhaustible. It had furnished the major part of the heavy artillery for

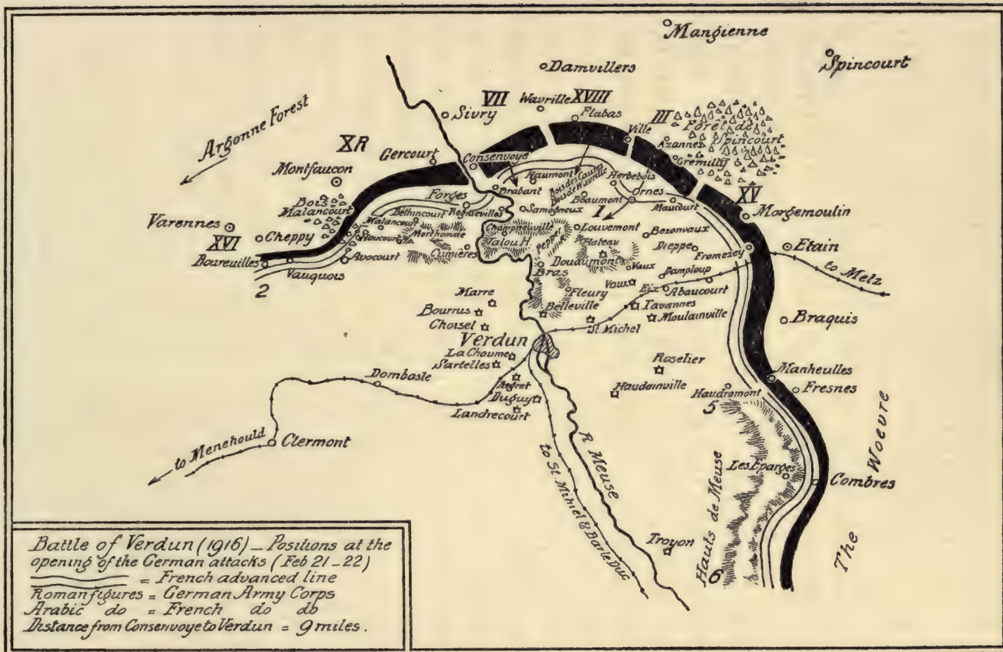
the attack on the "Grand Couronné" in 1914; so it was as much through convenience as through deep planned design that the Verdun region, this time, was selected for attack.

The concentration which resulted was carried out under the cover of various false moves and attacks, which the enemy made all along the line, during the end of January and the first weeks in February, 1916; at Ypres; near Armentières; near Arras; at Vimy; on the Somme; at Frise; in the Argonne; and also in the Vosges and Upper Alsace. These local actions, some of which were of importance, puzzled the Allies; as great advertisement was also given to the contemplated siege of Belfort by the Germans. The Crown Prince paid a visit to Alsace, and reports were spread as regards a coming German move in that region. Meantime troops were being called from the main depôts and bases in Belgium and Northern France, and also from Germany, and they were massed round the Verdun salient, especially opposite the sector which was selected for the decisive attack. This secret concentration was carried out in the first weeks of February in the wooded region to the east of the Meuse, between Consenvoye and Spincourt, the major part of the artillery, especially the heavy batteries, being massed at the latter place and at Gremilly, so as to take

in flank by overwhelming fire the positions which the infantry was to assault in front.

The actual German plan of attack, however, was faulty in one particular. Haeseler's concentrative design made no provision against a possible counter action on the part of the French *from the left bank of the river,* a quarter, moreover, where the Paris *communiqués* had made it clear that the French position was not, and had never been, a comfortable one. Sarrail, who had commanded there, had done what he could to improve the French positions in the Argonne, and de Langle de Cary, who had succeeded him, had continued the work in thorough fashion; but the region north-west of Verdun was vulnerable, and could not be as easily defended as the eastern one, where there were higher ridges, and forts, to lean and manœuvre upon. Moreover, as we have said, the railway line from Ste. Menehould to Verdun—and the only one on which the French could rely in case of need, to bring up reinforcements from the Western part of the front—was within range of the enemy's heavy artillery.

Later, when the opening stage of the operation was over, and Haeseler was given his dismissal, the German plan of attack was, as is known, modified, and infantry action was resorted to on *both* banks of the Meuse simultaneously;


Mangienne
Spincourt
Damvillers
Argonne Forest
VII
Sivry
Wavrille
XVIII
Flabas
III
Forêt de Spincourt
Ville
Azannes
Gremilly
XR
Gercourt
Consenvoye
Montfaucon
Haumont
Herbebois
Bois de Malancourt
Forges
Brabant
Beaumont
Ornes
Varennes
Bethincourt
Regneville
Samogneux
Maucourt
XV
Morgemoulin
Malancourt
Champneuville
Louvemont
Bezonvaux
XVI
Cheppy
Haucourt
Morthomme
Talou H.
Plateau
Dieppe
Fromezey
Etain
Boureuilles
Avocourt
Cumières
Douaumont
Vaux
Bras
Bamploup
to Metz
Vauquois
2
Marre
Fleury
Vaux
Eix
Abaucourt
Bourrus
Belleville
Tavannes
Moulainville
Braquis
Choisel
St. Michel
Verdun
La Choume
Sartelles
Roselier
Dombasle
Manheulles
Regret
Haudainville
Haudromont
Fresnes
Duguy
5
Landrecourt
to Menehould
Clermont
to St. Mihiel & Barle Duc
R. Meuse
Hauts de Meuse
Les Eparges
Combres
Woevre
The
Troyon
6
Battle of Verdun (1916) _ Positions at the opening of the German attacks (Feb 21 _ 22)
= French advanced line
Roman figures = German Army Corps
Arabic do = French do do
Distance from Consenvoye to Verdun = 9 miles.

MAP 24.

but it was too late. The element of surprise in the second battle was lacking; the French by then had the situation well in hand; they had improved their defences on the left bank, and, lastly but not least, the initial impetus of the assailants was broken. Nothing shows the faultiness of Haeseler's plan better than the manner in which the French outflanked with their fire across the river the enemy columns which attacked Samogneux and the Talou ridge, on February 24-25. The sudden determination of the French High Command to hold on at all costs on the right bank was based on the fact that at the opening stage they had nothing to fear for their communications. At the first sign of the attack, reinforcements were brought up from Champagne and the Argonne, to Malancourt, Bethincourt and Cumières, on the western side of the Meuse, to parry an expected blow of the enemy from Montfaucon, where his batteries were nearly as active as at Spincourt, and from where it was natural to suppose his infantry would also act. No attack, however, took place from that quarter, and the French therefore utilised their forces in that region to thwart the enemy's endeavours on the right bank.

Now as to the French situation before the battle. It was admirably summed up by a hostile critic, the Hungarian Count Andrassy,

who, of all observers, seems to have been the only one to realise to the full the difficulties of the German task.

He dwelt on the facilities which the French had created to meet and defeat any localised attempt; he spoke of their growing strength and of the great concentrations which the extension of the British front would enable them to make; and finally he declared the region behind Verdun from Malancourt and Avocourt in the north to Révigny and Bar-le-Duc in the south, was an immense camp. This was perfectly true, for all over that region there were French troops; and guns and munitions galore. In fact, the critic's description made one think that General Joffre must have known all along the design of the foe. To dogmatize on this point, however, would be going too far; for the first developments of the German attack made it clear that the French generals had no definite idea beforehand as to the exact locality which the enemy had chosen to make his attempt, nor the way in which he would make it. Nevertheless, it would be just as incorrect to adopt the popular view; viz., that the French main line was ever, at any moment, in danger of being broken. This contention, which is often made, is disproved, beyond a doubt, by the inability of the foe, in spite of all his efforts and the immense

superiority and tactical advantages he enjoyed in the initial stages, to reach the said French main line, and to set foot, even momentarily, in the outskirts of his objective, Verdun. To be clear, the French advanced positions, just like at other parts of the front, were held around the fortress by inconsiderable forces. Behind them, on stronger positions, stood the supports, and further back still, to the west of the Meuse, the bulk of the French armies were encamped. Thus the outside fringe of the fortified Verdun salient, from Brabant-sur-Meuse to Fresnes in the Woevre, was occupied by a number of small units which, in all, totalled about two divisions; whilst more to the rear, on the Talou and Pepper ridges and the northern extremity of the Meuse Heights, slightly stronger forces were entrenched; the nucleus of the army corps to which these advanced elements belonged being stationed at Verdun itself, and on the left bank, ready, at a moment's notice, to take action. The whole of this force was under General Herr, commander of the 10th army corps at the head of which he had fought at Charleroi, at Guise, at the Marne, on the Aisne, and at Soissons; he was a capable officer, and before the war had followed and studied closely the Balkan campaigns; but when the German attack began on the Meuse he was not considered fully qualified

to undertake the defence of the Verdun salient. In fact it was alleged he had not brought up his supports in time; and this had imposed excessive and unnecessary strain on the advanced elements which first had to meet the onslaughts of the Germans. Herr, however, was not entirely to blame, as, at the time, those over him were quite in the dark as to the foe's real designs; and the fact that General Herr was not relieved of his command, but simply placed under another man of higher scientific attainments, is a proof that he had neither swerved from the path of duty, nor committed any capital mistakes.

Herr's army corps formed part of the right wing of the armies under General de Langle de Cary, who had replaced Sarrail on that part of the front, and whose forces extended from the Meuse to the Champagne, near Reims. On the advice of Castelnau, now Chief of the General Staff, General Pétain, a specialist in local operations who had achieved distinction at Soissons, in Artois, and in the battle of Champagne, was chosen by General Joffre to assume responsibility at Verdun. Pétain brought along with him, from Champagne, the 3rd corps which he now commanded, the 7th corps, and also a division of the 20th army corps under General Balfourier, which had come over from Artois

on the further extension of the British front there. It was these troops, as well as reserve divisions and North African elements, which counter-attacked the Germans with such effect at Samogneux and at Douaumont.

So much for the French situation. Now for the final German preparations which opened the battle.

The action started with a general and intense bombardment by the enemy of the French advanced positions from Malancourt, on the left bank of the Meuse, to Abaucourt, on the right bank; the main volume of fire being directed from the region of Spincourt, where the greatest number of German batteries were massed, against the northern sector of the salient which the concentrated and concealed infantry were in readiness to assault. According to those who witnessed it, the bombardment was the most terrific of its kind. It surrounded the Verdun region, on three sides, with a devastating ring of fire; it destroyed in a twinkling the French advanced positions; it removed entirely from the map a number of small localities; it convulsed the country side like a tornado; it vibrated in the air and altered atmospheric conditions miles and miles around; and, what was more serious for the defenders, it shattered their nerves, as well as their ground organisations. The havoc

wrought by the 1,500 odd guns which the Germans brought into play on the reduced sector on that occasion was worse than the results which had been obtained by the French artillery in Champagne; and no doubt the enemy was buoyed up by this hopeful beginning, for he had felt convinced that the opponents were in large numbers in the region; but that these numbers would be demoralised or wiped out; and that the German infantry movement which would follow the bombardment would just be a triumphant parade march. Then, although in a military sense the victory thus achieved would be an empty and inconclusive one, the Wolff Bureau would take matters in hand, and play on the feelings of the French to convince them and their friends that they were defeated, and that a prompt and "honourable" peace would be the only solution for them. Nevertheless, in spite of their confidence, the German generals, with unpleasant recollections still fresh in their minds, decided to take no chances; and they arranged to time and manipulate their infantry assaults with the utmost thoroughness and caution. They saw to it that the gas-cylinders; the *Flammenwerfer* and other fiendish instruments were plentiful, ready and in good working order. They stimulated by proclamations, and assurances the ardour of their men; and, finally,

to make still more sure, they drugged, with ether and other innocuous fluids, the attacking battalions.*

It must be said here that with the exception of a few units, the German foot soldiers were no longer what they had been; their ranks were sadly depleted of first line men, and of veterans who had gone down by the thousand both on the Western and the Eastern front. Younger or older men, the majority inexperienced and indifferently trained, had filled the gaps made by the rifles and guns of the British, of the Russians and the French. They were fresh, if inexperienced; they were kept in the dark as to the true situation; they were imbued with a sense of the supreme superiority of their race and of the Fatherland. They were convinced that Germany was winning and would stand triumphant; they absorbed readily all the untruths that were told them; and they made no doubt that the Day at last had come; that the French at last would be beaten; that Verdun would fall, and that the way to Paris, the final goal, would be opened to them. Their swaggering Crown Prince, whom they idolised, tearing himself from his favorite occupations, paraded before them, and filled them with pride and confidence; the drugs did the rest; and fired with

* This has been vouched for by many reliable witnesses.

renewed faith and enthusiasm, and inspirited, although deafened, by the mighty roar of their guns, the German infantry sallied forth from their cover and trenches, and, in a supreme and desperate onward movement, they rushed on once more to slaughter.

It was the opening of the last act of the drama; the German leaders had stepped over the fatal incline; henceforward, until the end, when the mantle of death would cover them, the Kaiser's armies would attack and attack, at the same spot; they would swelter and shrink in the heat of the infernal battle; they would succumb piecemeal under the devouring breath of the French guns; for Joffre held them now in his masterly and deadly grasp; he had been egging them on all along.

CHAPTER XV

THE VERDUN BATTLES AND OPERATIONS VIEWED AS THE RESULT OF THE ALLIES' WAITING POLICY

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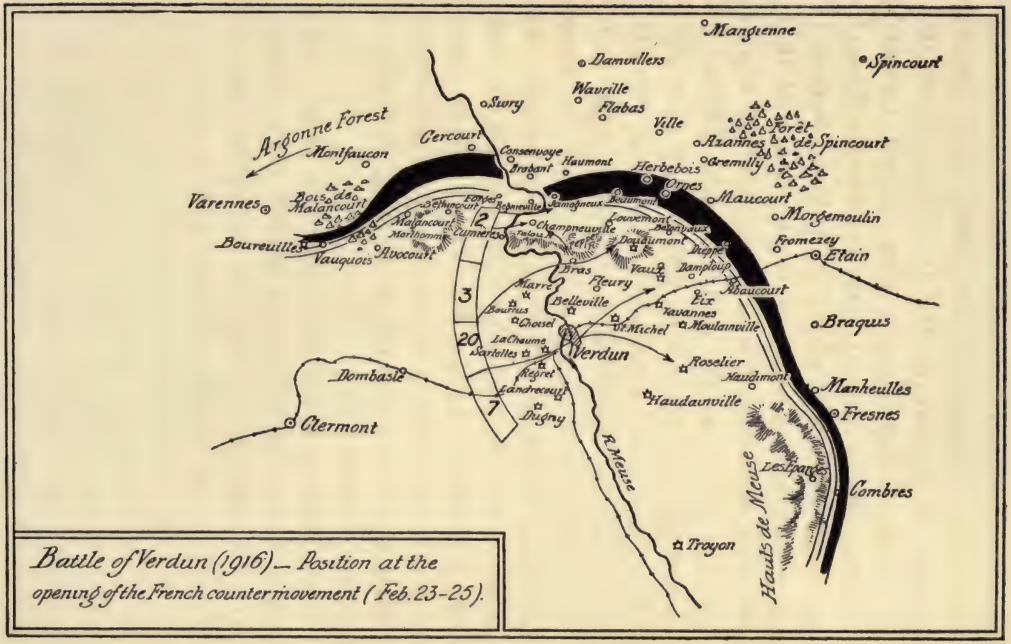
In dealing with the great battles and operations which developed and were prolonged for months around the Verdun salient, one must naturally dwell chiefly on the opening stages, as these initial movements, like those of the general conflict itself, decided both the course and the issue of the struggle.

The first action started on February 21st, that is if one dates it from the opening of the German infantry assaults, the preliminary bombardment of the foe having been in full swing some time before. It increased in intensity and violence until the moment appointed for the infantry movements; when the German troops which were massed opposite the sector of the salient to be attacked, advanced and deployed on a line stretching from Consenvoye, on the Meuse, to a point facing Ornes, at the opening of the Spincourt forest. There were altogether three

full army corps (or, roughly, 120,000 men) with subsidiary columns in support; and others flanking them towards the Woevre, and on the left bank of the Meuse; they moved forward and swarmed in compact masses over the French advanced positions which had been battered, ploughed and destroyed by their guns, and they forthwith assaulted the various *points d'appuis* —farms, hills, woods and villages—which, in spite of the terrible fire to which they were subjected and to which they could not as yet adequately reply, the French still held with grim and stubborn determination. And in these localities—Brabant, Haumont, Herbebois, the woods of Wavrille and Des Caures—which suddenly assumed a sinister fame, there were desperate and fearful encounters, the whole region around becoming a blazing furnace, a roaring volcano.

The French advanced elements were weak ones; on that sector of the salient they totalled barely 12,000 men; and the powerful *barrage* fire which the enemy through intense gun concentration was able to establish behind them, made it difficult if not actually impossible in every instance for the forces more to the rear to lend them any support. Nevertheless, they did what they could to maintain the illusion which the assailants evidently entertained as to



Battle of Verdun (1916).— Position at the opening of the French counter movement (Feb. 23–25).

MAP 25.

their strength in numbers. For the latter acted there as on former and similar occasions, their plan of attack, which they carried out to the letter, being based on the assumption that their opponents held the Verdun salient in full force. Neither through their aircraft reconnaissances nor by other means of obtaining information, had they succeeded in finding out the real numbers and dispositions of the French; and their massive tactics and ponderous and deliberate movements clearly showed that they were under the impression that a strong army was opposing them. Such had been the case at Ypres, and also at St. Mihiel (see Second Phase, ch. VI and XI-XII).

During five days the heroic Fantassins, the Chasseurs and the Zouaves held on against the surging masses. Plied with shot and shell, scorched by liquid fire, and suffering besides all the torments which troops in their position must endure, they defended stubbornly every inch of the ground, delivered telling blows, and by their efficiency and spirit of fortitude they held back and delayed the enemy columns which were endeavouring to reach Verdun and to turn from the north the Heights of the Meuse. Their action besides rendered possible the defence of the salient.

For some little time the French generals,

puzzled as to the true designs of the foe, could not make up their minds to undertake a counter-movement across the Meuse; and in view of the possible—and probable—development of the German offensive on the left bank of the river —a movement which would have threatened the communications of the troops on the right bank —they had taken into serious consideration the eventuality of having to evacuate Verdun; preliminary steps had been taken in that direction; from the very opening of the German bombardment the civilian population had been withdrawn; and some of the outer forts had been dismantled so that they should not serve as *points d'appui* to the enemy during the progress of his advance; a contingency, however, which made it more difficult in the course of time for the defenders to hold the salient when, owing to unforeseen circumstances and the blunder committed by the foe, they at length resolved to keep the positions on the right bank in their possession.

In regard to this, and lest a wrong view of affairs should be taken, it is as well to repeat here that the French Staff wisely subordinated everything to sound strategy, and above all, to their inflexible system of man-economy. General Joffre's primary consideration was to spare his men as much as technical requirements per-

mitted, and he would not have occupied in force and held a position if his calculations had showed him that the margin of casualties would be to the profit of the enemy.

It was chiefly the manner in which the Germans carried out their onslaughts which altered the minds of the French Staff in regard to the value of the Verdun salient as a point of general and decisive contact.

When the preliminary bombardment began, they had been expecting and somewhat fearing an enemy attack on the *Western* side of the Meuse from Montfaucon, which would have endangered the position of the troops on the right bank. The enemy's artillery was almost as active in that region and was centring its fire on the railway line to Ste. Menehould and Clermont. The Germans, there is no doubt, wished to mislead the French, but they committed a considerable error in omitting to carry out a more substantial threat, this being due, as has been said, to one of their leader's views on the matter. The French, who were fairly well informed as to the objective and purpose of the coming German attempt—an attempt which, moreover, they had foreseen and made ready for for months—had mapped out their scheme of concentration in view of forestalling a German offensive on *both* sides of the Meuse;

the right of de Langle de Cary's troops who were operating in the Argonne had been reinforced on the Avoncourt-Bethincourt line; and so certain the French generals felt about it that it was not until two days after the opening of the enemy's infantry movement to the north-east of Verdun that definite orders were sent to the commanding officer on the spot (General Herr) to hold the positions on the eastern bank at all cost (February 23). Even then, thinking of a ruse on the part of the foe, General Joffre felt diffident as to throwing too many of his forces on that side of the river, as it would be difficult and probably costly to withdraw them should this, for reasons of strategy, become necessary. On the 25th only when it was realised that the German attack was not a feint, and that they had as yet no intention of assaulting the French positions on the opposite side, the French Staff took ample dispositions to keep the salient, and Verdun, in their possession. It was then that General Pétain, a gifted and experienced tactician, was appointed, and that considerable reinforcements were thrown across the river.

This opened the second stage of the action; but ere one proceeds with the narrative of the battle, one may touch on a sidelight of the event which produced much stir at the time.

This was the nomination of General Pétain to take charge of matters at Verdun.

By the overawed public, the appointment of this general was interpreted as a sign of unreadiness and weakness on the part of the French, and in consequence General Joffre himself did not escape censure from malcontent quarters. The newspaper *Le Matin* published on the Verdun operations a criticism which was based on contorted facts, and which elicited a strong rebuke from high quarters. It was thought then—as usual (re battle of Soissons; battle of Ypres, etc.)—that the situation of France and of the Allies was critical; and the enemies of the Republic took advantage of the opportunity to injure the good name, and lower the prestige, of the existing authorities, their views on the matter corresponding naturally with those of the foe.

General Pétain's nomination, however, was a question of pure technicalities and the fuss which was made about it in some quarters was quite out of keeping with the character of the event. A tactical job had to be done, and that job was naturally given to the man who was best tried in the kind of operation which was about to be undertaken.

The French troops which were thrown across the Meuse on February 25-26 consisted in several

divisions belonging to the 1st, the 3rd, the 7th and the 20th army corps,* most of these first-rate elements having been brought over from north-western France after the fresh extension of the British front there. They were placed under the immediate direction of Generals Herr, Nivelle and Balfourier; and whilst they moved forward to occupy the commanding positions around Verdun, and to link them with those which were held by other divisions (5th and 6th corps) on the Heights of the Meuse, a flanking movement was carried out from the western bank of the river, near Forges and Cumières by units of the 2nd corps who had been battling for months in the Argonne. This movement, which was combined with an infantry attack from the Talou Heights, brought to a standstill in the valley of the Meuse, near Champneuville, the enemy column (VII corps) which had carried Brabant and Samogneux, and which from the latter place was advancing to the attack of the main French line; caught between two fires and vigorously charged with the bayonet, the enemy in that quarter gave way and retired; the support given him on the western bank being too meagre to allow him to resume his forward

* The 10th corps (General Herr) was already at Verdun; the 3rd, previously under Pétain, now under General Nivelle, was taken from Champagne; the 7th corps from the region of the Aisne; and the 20th corps from Artois.

movement with success; thus the French reinforcements were enabled to establish themselves and make good their positions on the range of low lying heights which cover Verdun from the north.

Even at that moment the Germans could have resorted to a counter-move on the left bank, and acted on the flank of the French forces which were counter-attacking them at Samogneux; but they were so intent on the progress of their frontal movement that they thought of little else. Their plan was to push straight on to Verdun, and from there to turn and render untenable the French positions on the Heights of the Meuse further south—which would have given them possession of the whole of the right bank of the river above St. Mihiel. Simple and direct action in this instance formed the basis of their scheme; as they were aiming at political achievement and not at reversing the strategic situation which they knew since the Marne was unreversible; hence the blunder they committed in not attacking simultaneously on the left bank; a blunder which permitted the French to hold the salient and make their positions there inexpugnable.

The crowning operation which rendered the position of the French secure at Verdun was carried out by General Balfourier with troops

of the 20th corps. The notable feature about this operation was that General Balfourier could only dispose at the moment of one brigade of the division which he had brought forward across the Meuse, the other at the time being still on the way. His task was not only to check the German forces (XVIII corps) which had entered Louvemont and were advancing from that direction against the eastern flank of the Pepper ridge position, but also to storm and recapture the Douaumont plateau, village and fort, which another enemy contingent (III corps) had taken. Happily, Balfourier's battalions were crack troops, and they were at full strength and comparatively fresh. Furthermore, their leader was an officer of talent. Without hesitation, as the brigade issued from Bras, on the Meuse, he threw it forward to the west of Douaumont, his action there resembling that of Sir Douglas Haig at Ypres on October 21, 1914 (see Second Phase, Chapter XII) when the English general had stopped the dangerous gap, north of the town. At the battle of Verdun Balfourier stopped the gap which then existed (February 26) between the Pepper ridge and the Douaumont position; he outflanked and overthrew the Germans at Louvemont; and then his battalions stormed and carried the Douaumont position, where they cut off and surrounded a famous

German unit, the Brandenburg regiment, who had set foot into the partially dismantled, and battered, fort. This incident, of little interest in itself, created the widest sensation by the value which was universally attached to the enemy's pet units; and the curious facts concerning it were firstly: that few observers showed any interest in knowing who were the men who had beaten and cornered the smartest troops of the Kaiser; and secondly: that the real noteworthy incident of the day passed off practically unnoticed by the world at large. Yet this latter episode marked the true character of the battle, and the moral significance of the whole conflict since the cocksure and insolent aggressors had set foot in France.

It occurred at the moment when the re-capture of Douaumont by the "iron division" of the 20th corps was announced. Spontaneously, the troops which were coming on in the rear, in and around Verdun, burst into song; and the martial and triumphant strains of the *Marseillaise,* issuing from 80,000 throats, covered with their clamour the thunder of the guns.

It was the old spirit of Valmy re-asserting itself. It was the voice of proud and unconquerable France. It was the trumpet of victory over a field of carnage; the wilful expression of a people whose destiny was not at an end, and

who meant to continue in the pursuit of the highest ideals of the human race—talent, honour, freedom.

That the victory was real and incontestable, there is no denying; for from the moment that the French re-occupied in strength their main lines around Verdun and connected them firmly with the rest of the front, a condition of affairs was created such as Joffre had been seeking all along with his policy of patience, and economy. He had forced the Germans to undertake a new offensive with no military prospects for them whatever; and they were now condemned by their own action, their swaggering endurance, their *braggadocio* and Joffre's persistent refusal to attack them to squander the rest of their forces in a mad and hopeless endeavour; and this in the manner which their opponents most desired. This point is made absolutely clear and incontrovertible by a remarkable and significant fact, but which like most remarkable and significant facts in this war have passed unnoticed—except when they were twisted round and their meaning misinterpreted.

The one which at this stage was worth pondering upon was the comparative inactivity of the British forces on the Western front whilst the great struggle around Verdun was going on. The British forces had by then attained great

development, and a fairly high degree of efficiency; moreover the hostile elements which confronted them owing to the demands at Verdun were not, and could not be, at full strength.*

Yet apart from casual and unimportant local actions such as were being fought out at other parts of the front, the British remained passive and went on quietly with their work of preparation. Nor must it be supposed that their attitude was one of impotence or of mere indifference; on the contrary, they were now numerous and strong. The British army since Mons had grown with ominous rapidity,† considering the difficulties that beset the path of a nation who was not prepared for a great war; and the three compact armies of 150,000 men each which now held the portion of front from Pilkem, in Belgium, to the north bank of the Somme, represented only a fraction of the available manhood of the vast Empire. Other contingents were in course of formation, the whole of Britain being dotted with training camps; whilst in France itself, behind the active zone, numerous reserves were at the disposal of

* Many speculations and exaggerations were indulged in at this time regarding the numbers and strength of the hostile forces which confronted the British. The point, however, was immaterial, since the Germans on that portion of the front were on the defensive, and against the Verdun salient they brought the maximum of troops that could be deployed, and employed, in that region.

† See Appendix I.

Sir Douglas Haig, the new commander-in-chief, a soldier whom, the Germans knew by experience, was both thorough and brilliant. Finally, the British were really craving to get at the foe.

But Joffre knew his own game. Untimely action on the part of Sir Douglas Haig would have forced the Germans to adopt the defensive *everywhere,* and thus would have prevented them from wasting their strength as they were doing at Verdun.

There, on the blood-stained banks of the Meuse the French held them; and their chances of reaping even a limited and temporary success were small indeed.

During three days (February 26-29) after their initial advance over devastated and useless ground, they assaulted with the greatest dash and determination the main French positions. But the defenders were now in strength; and the French guns at length took matters in hand. The German assaulting waves dashed themselves in vain against the Talou heights, the Pepper ridge, and the Vaux position. They were ripped open with cannon, broken by the French bayonets, and driven back with fearful slaughter, time and again. Finally the mauled and battered German columns collapsed, and they were withdrawn from the fray; the casualties

of the assailants for the first full week of uninterrupted fighting being estimated, on the lowest computation, at 60,000.

For such heavy sacrifice the enemy technically had won nothing, although, as usual, he indulged in much boasting and he magnified tremendously the barren results he had obtained from the action*—an insignificant and useless gain of ground, a few prisoners, and some disabled guns; this was really all he could show as the outcome of his plan which was meant to open to him the gates of Verdun and to place him in possession of the Heights of the Meuse. The French, who had only lost 20,000 men, continued to hold Verdun and the main positions surrounding it, including the above-mentioned Heights, which were really the key to the whole region; and once they had made up their mind to keep this hold on the said positions, no efforts on the part of the Germans could have wrested them from their possession.

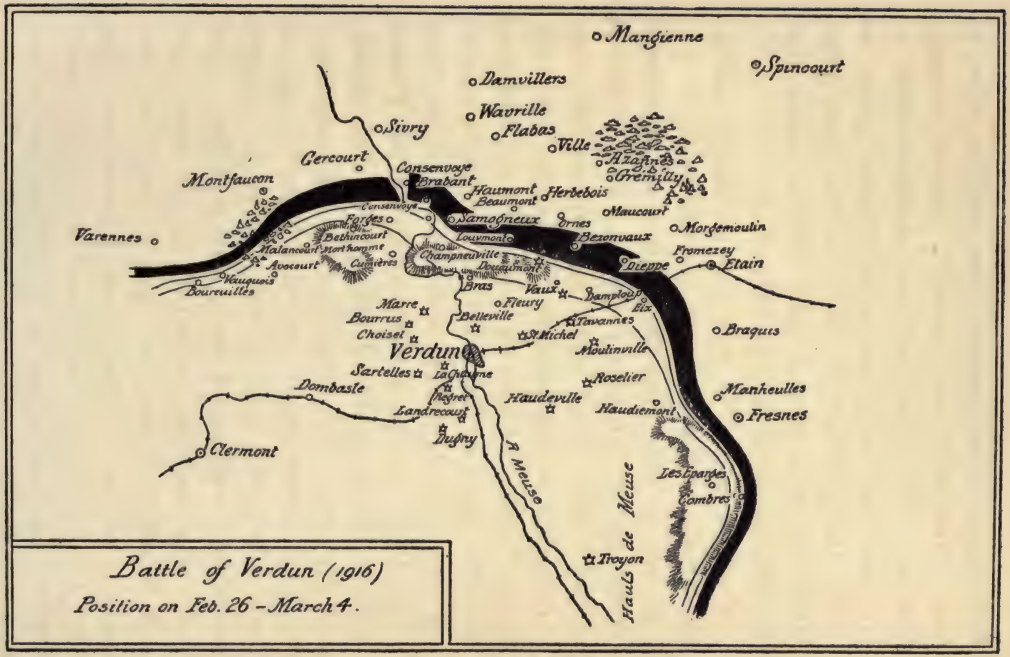
The long and the short of it was that the Germans failed in their object and that their attempt therefore was a complete fiasco. The French still held Verdun and the Heights of the Meuse, and nothing short of the capture of these points by the foe could have given the right colour to their fantastic claims and reports.

* See Appendix E.

Nothing daunted, nevertheless, and impelled by their premature and boastful announcements, and also by their obstinate determination to overawe their opponents and force peace on them, the German generals redrew their plan, called up fresh forces, and after a short lull, the second battle began (March 4).

Needless to say it was just as barren and as disastrous to the Germans as the first.

It was in vain that they threw forward fresh forces on an enlarged front. They suffered another and still more sanguinary repulse. They renewed nevertheless the action and combined it with diversions which they attempted at other parts of the front. They failed again; but they were launched now upon a course from which there was no withdrawing; for the French had gradually gathered strength in the region, and they were becoming in turn the assailants. With no other object in view than to egg on their opponents and to exhaust them, Joffre's men counter-attacked every now and then. And every now and then, always with the same fixed and determined purpose, they allowed the Germans to advance, to make small gains—and then they pounded them; and their artillery crushed them; until the region of the Meuse above Verdun became a charnel of death, a pit of hell, from where the cry of Germany in agony, in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Flabas
Sivry
Ville
Azannes
Grémilly
Cercourt
Consenvoye
Montfaucon
Brabant
Haumont
Beaumont
Herbebois
Maucourt
Varennes
Forges
Bethincourt
Malancourt
Avocourt
Cuisières
Haucourt
Bourcuilles
Namogneux
Ornes
Louvemont
Bezonvaux
Morgemoulin
Champneuville
Abaucourt
Fromezey
Dieppe
Etain
Bras
Vaux
Damloup
Fleury
Marre
Bourrus
Belleville
Choisel
Tavannes
St. Michel
Braquis
Verdun
Moulinville
Sartelles
La Chaume
Roselier
Dombasle
Ingrès
Haudeville
Haudiomont
Manheulles
Fresnes
Landrecourt
Bugny
Clermont
R. Meuse
Les Eparges
Combres
Hauts de Meuse
Troyon
Battle of Verdun (1916)
Position on Feb. 26 - March 4.

MAP 26.

distress, spread and rose, and rent the very heavens. For Joffre now held the enemy in his inexorable grip; slowly but surely he was strangling Germany; he was bleeding her to death. After having defeated the German armies and placed them in a situation of strategic impotence, he was squeezing the life out of them.*

And this because he had been far-seeing, because he had known how to wait. Verdun in its wider significance was the result of his nibbling policy—the policy which had given Britain time to prepare, and Russia to recuperate; and now these Powers, together with France and with Italy, would be in a position to give the final blow to the Central Empires, and to crush them as they had meant to crush those who had dared to oppose them.

* After the second month of the struggle at Verdun the German casualties were being computed, at the lowest estimate, at a quarter million. Owing to the character of the defence the French losses during the same period were well under a third of that number.

APPENDIX

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A.—In the Teutonic offensive against Russia the re-manipulation of the German Eastern forces and their partial amalgamation with Austrian units gave birth to a new term in military nomenclature. This term: "Army Group," requires some explanation as it confused the critics in regard to the strength of the Germans in that campaign. It was adopted by the German staff to signify indifferently: 1^a: A composite or mixed army corps; 2^a: An army composed of several army corps; or 3^a: A real "group of armies" consisting of two or more armies of several army corps each. Through such a vague and at the same time complicated system of appellations confusion was bound to arise in the calculations of the critics. But, precisely, the enemy adopted it with the main object of concealing the strength and the disposition of his forces; albeit some new term was actually required to define composite of mixed forces. For instance, a German "group" of

the first description was generally composed of a number of secondary units (divisions, brigades and regiments) belonging to *different* army corps; in some cases the mixed German force, which, in number of men, was barely of the strength of an ordinary army corps, included in its total an Austrian division, or brigade. Prince Leopold of Bavaria, amongst other generals, was in command of such a "group," a very small one as to numeric strength, but which was fairly representative of all the tribes, or races, in Teutonland. In the second description come the groups under von Gallwitz, who operated on the Narew, and under von Falkenhausen, who co-operated in Suwalki and Courland, each of these generals having under his own command a couple of mixed army corps with some auxiliary brigades or regiments attached. There were other "groups" of a similar composition, but all of them—viz., the totality of the Austro-German forces operating against Russia, belonged at that period to *two* real "groups of armies," one, in the north, under Hindenburg, the front of which extended from the Baltic Sea to Central Poland; and the other, under Mackensen, which was deployed to the south of the first, as far as the banks of the Dniester and the Pripet Marshes; in all the forces under these marshals were the equivalent

of forty-eight army corps, sub-divided into a dozen so-called "army groups."

B.—The intervention of Bulgaria on the side of the Central Powers was, like that of Turkey, the result not only of the pro-Teuton propaganda, but also and chiefly of the lack of confidence and dignity on the part of Allied politicians and statesmen. The British and French plenipotentiaries in Sofia found it difficult, and quite impossible in the end, to restrain the Bulgars, because they were not adequately supported by their governments and press. Speeches were delivered, especially in the British Parliament, and newspaper articles were written, especially in leading British journals, which convinced the Balkan Powers, and others, that Germany was winning, and as these Powers were already animated by certain impulses and thoroughly "worked" by the pro-Teuton propagandists, they naturally took the views of the enemies of the Entente. This quite apart from the effect which was produced by the failure of the Dardanelles Expedition, as the Balkan peoples were quite aware that the centre of the struggle and the pivot of the war was in France. It is a notable fact that at that period no stress was laid in Allied quarters on the decisive results which had been already achieved

on the main battlefields. The formidable and sanguinary defeats which the German armies had suffered were passed under silence, whilst secondary events of little importance and sometimes not altogether unfavourable to the foe, were given the greatest prominence. A couple of instances, chosen amongst many, will give an idea of the trend of thought of those who, at the time, consciously or unconsciously, were working against the interest and good renown of their country.

Towards the end of 1915, two highly esteemed and respected newspapers* were prosecuted in Parliament for publishing matter which was useful and favourable to the foe. The prosecutor, however, a politician of note,† spoilt the effect of his attack by going one better, in the way of pessimism, than the periodicals he was prosecuting. In summing up the case he made the following statement: "We quite well know that up to this moment the only victory to the credit of the Allies is the battle off the Falklands"—thus furnishing the Germans with one more valuable item for their world-wide propaganda.

This is instance No. 1. Now for instance No. 2.

* The *Daily Mail* and the *Times*.
† Sir John Simon.

In January of this year (1916) there appeared in a widely-read magazine* an article signed by the famous editor and entitled "Law versus War," in which the following passages occurred: "So far the Germans, militarily, have won; it would be moral cowardice to deny it." "The Germans want peace, not because they are exhausted, but because they have technically won."

No comment is needed, but one may say that nothing could have suited the Berlin press agencies better. The Germans were constantly on the look out for such brilliant tit-bits in the publications of their adversaries, and they never failed to make the utmost use of them.

C.—In contradiction to all this there came some time after (April, 1916) an extraordinary, although unwilling, admission of failure on the part of the foe himself. There appeared in Germany a small book entitled "Die Schlachten on der Marne" in which it is owned that the German armies *were defeated* at the Marne. Excuses naturally are given for the defeat, and the occurrence is presented in a light which leaves little credit to the chief victors in the struggle. This is not to be wondered at, con-

* The *English Review*.

sidering the German mentality, and what falsifiers of history the Teutons are. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the defeat is admitted, and for that reason alone, if for no other, the book is worth bringing to the notice of those who may not know it.

D.—Another work to be recommended is the "Manœuvre Morale" of Colonel Feyler. In it the famous Swiss critic makes a most minute and interesting study of the German propaganda. He reveals the methods which the German government and generals employed to mislead the world and to impress on it the point of view that they wished it to take; and also how they succeeded in hiding and obliterating occurrences and developments which were not favourable to themselves. With what consummate art they manipulated their official news and controlled the action of press agencies not only in Germany but all the world over, can only be realised on acquaintance with the "Manœuvre Morale."

E.—The only item of the propaganda that is somewhat lightly touched upon in this work is the systematic practice of the Germans in exaggerating their opponents' losses especially in the matter of trophies of war and prisoners.

Perhaps Colonel Feyler had not sufficient data to work upon; or else he regarded the practice as the familiar and old time one of belittling the fighting qualities of the foe; although nevertheless he makes one feel that he knew there was more behind it than mere boasting. The fact is that the German reports in that particular had another and more hidden purpose than that of keeping up the delusions of their peoples, and of undermining the confidence and determination of the Allies. Their erroneous claims elicited sometimes counter statements from the opposing side, and through this they hoped to obtain useful information as to the arrangements of their opponents and the strength and the disposition of their forces. A good instance was furnished at the opening of the great battles around Verdun. On that occasion the Germans, who were in the dark as to the numeric strength of the defenders, loudly claimed to have taken 38,000 *unwounded* prisoners; and owing to the impression which had already been produced by their apparent gains, the French authorities found it necessary to refute their statements. They were quite aware, however, of the designs of the foe in the matter, and consequently their reply, which was couched in vague and guarded terms, revealed nothing to the Germans. It was merely to the effect that

the total French losses were under half what the enemy claimed to have inflicted on them in prisoners alone; and that the *missing* (including wounded and slain) could not have been above a quarter of that number (namely, about 5,000 men).

Foiled, the Germans then threatened to publish the names of all the prisoners they said they had made; but to this impotent threat there was no answer. The incident amongst others showed how intent the Germans were on gathering information by every means in their power; and it demonstrated also the value of the policy of silence into which the French Staff had entered.

F.—Attempts have been made in some quarters to throw discredit on my work, "GERMANY IN DEFEAT." It has been alleged that I do not give sufficient details and references to prove the accuracy of my views. On this point I refer my readers to the APPENDIX of the First Phase; to the preface of the Second Phase; and to the *communiqués* and other official documents which are easily accessible to everyone, as my work is almost entirely based on the laborious and minute study of the said *communiqués* and official documents. I say "almost" because I have also made use

of supplementary sources of information *by personal research,* a rather tedious and wearisome process but which is necessary if one wishes to go into the kernel of things. The condensed form which for purposes of clearness I have imprinted to the work can give no idea of the amount of material which I had to gather before producing the said work. But for many reasons, some of which affected by own interests, I did not think fit to quote my authorities in every instance. So, my readers, I am sorry to say, must leave it or take it; and when in doubt as to the accuracy of my statements, they will have to control them themselves as best they can. Perhaps I shall be able to help them in subsequent editions; but this will naturally depend on the future course, and also the length, of the war.

G.—Yet another complaint which must be answered is the one which was made by a somewhat pedantic and obtuse reviewer in an Oxford publication. It is to the effect that the maps contained in this work are not furnished with scales, and do not all show the railway systems. Simple common sense should have told this critic that the size of the maps did not allow everything to be included in them, and that they were not sketched to show the dis-

tances, which can be ascertained through other maps (at least by those who are familiar with the geography of Europe), but they were drawn chiefly with a view to making clear the strategy of the war.

Moreover, he could have reflected that railway lines have no more importance in present day warfare than the high roads, which are extensively used not only by mounted troops, and infantry on the march, but also by all kinds of motor and other vehicles forming convoys, transport columns, and so forth.

Finally, the maps which accompany the First and Second Phases cover chiefly the big movements and are not intended to explain the tactics of the siege—or trench—warfare. In the Third Phase alone certain sectors had to be somewhat detailed, and the distances indicated in some cases so as to help the reader to follow more easily the contents of the text.

H.—The review of "Germany in Defeat" in the *Daily Telegraph* of May 20th (1916) contains a criticism which it is necessary to answer. In repudiation of my view of the first Russian movement into East Prussia (August, 1914), the critic wrote as follows: "It is at least certain that the Grand Duke Nicholas launched his armies into East Prussia with the object of

drawing off a proportion of the German forces operating in France, for he said so himself to Major McCormack, of the United States Army, whose father had been the American Ambassador at Petrograd and who was accredited to the Russian headquarters. Major McCormack quoted the Grand Duke Nicholas on this subject in his book."

Now, I have no wish to throw doubt on Major McCormack's statement; but I beg to advise those who adopt that line of reasoning to bear in mind the following facts:

Firstly, that the Grand Duke Nicholas, in spite of his popularity, his qualifications and his rank, was relieved of the command of the main Russian forces at the end of his retreat in 1915.

Secondly, that the great Von Moltke who won the war of 1870-71 wrote a book on his campaigns which has not been accepted by the military schools of the world as the standard work, preference being given to the History compiled by the German staff itself.

Thirdly, that the great Napoleon, in the famous St. Helena "Memorial," gave an account of his battles which has never been considered as accurate by the best historians.

Lastly, that it is not the habit of responsible commanders to confide their true plans to

officers of foreign powers. In conclusion, I should add that on debatable points one must go upon *facts alone,* and use one's judgment.

I.—The gradual growth of the British forces which operated on the Continent (France and Belgium) during the first two years of the conflict can be shown in condensed form as follows :

At Mons (August, 1914), four infantry, one cavalry, divisions (with artillery attached, and non-combatants) ; total, 85,000 men. At Ypres and on the Lys (Oct.-Dec., 1914), nine infantry and six cavalry divisions (including Indians) ; total, 180,000 men. At Loos and in Flanders (Sept.-Oct., 1915), two armies of, roughly, 12 infantry divisions each (with cavalry and auxiliary services) ; total, 300,000 men.

In March, 1916 (date of Verdun), three armies consisting, roughly, of three and four army corps each ; total, 430,000 men.

The widest extension of the British front had been, originally, 25 miles. At the latter period (March, 1916) it had developed to 80 miles, from the Yperlée Canal near Pilkem, to the north bank of the Somme south of Albert.

(The comparatively rapid formation of the 3rd army was due to the withdrawal from the Dardanelles, as several first rate divisions who had gained experience in the Gallipoli campaign

came to form the nucleus formations of the said 3rd army. They were chiefly Colonial elements, from Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand).

Printed in Great Britain by Ebenezer Baylis & Son, Worcester.