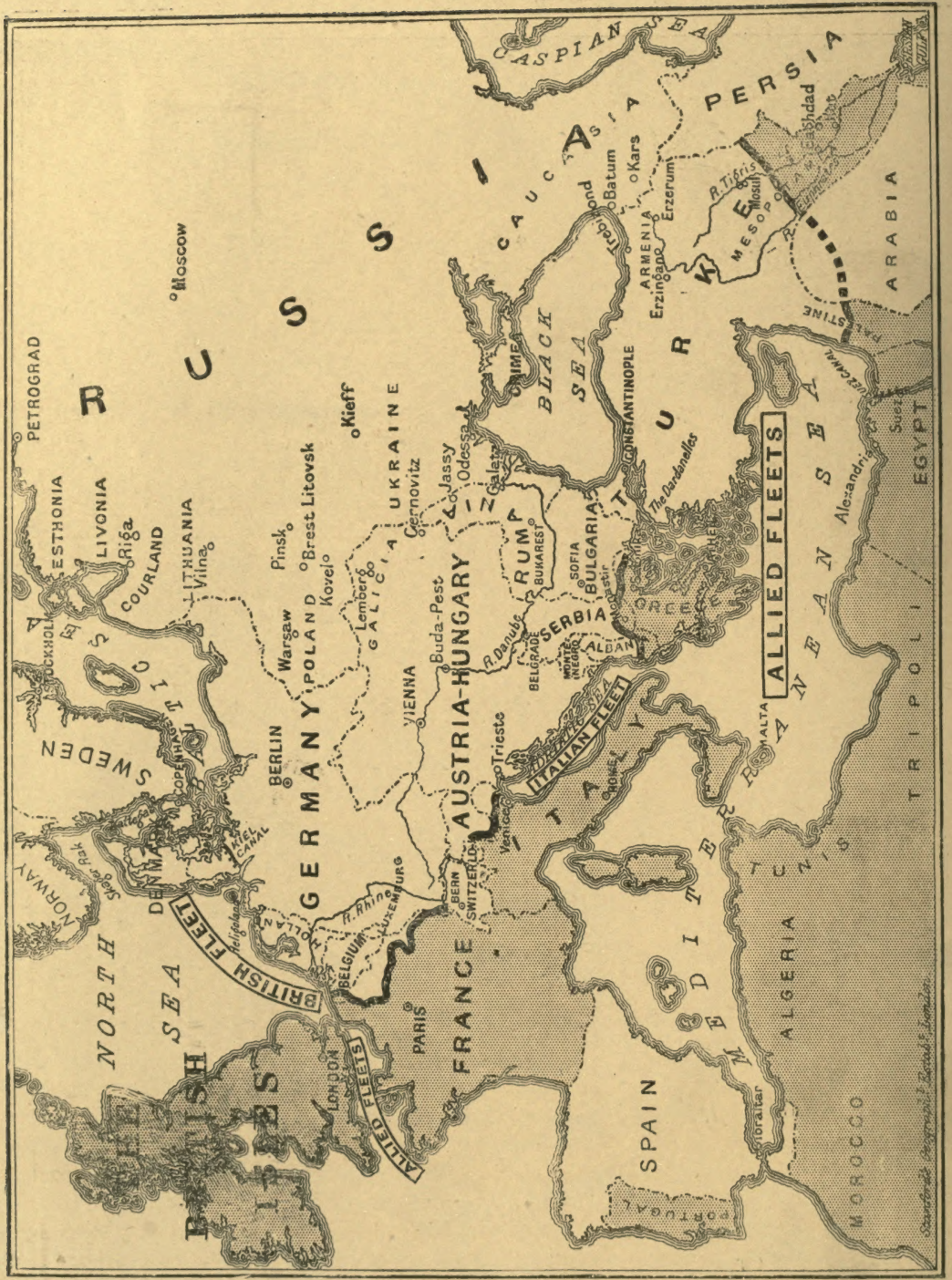


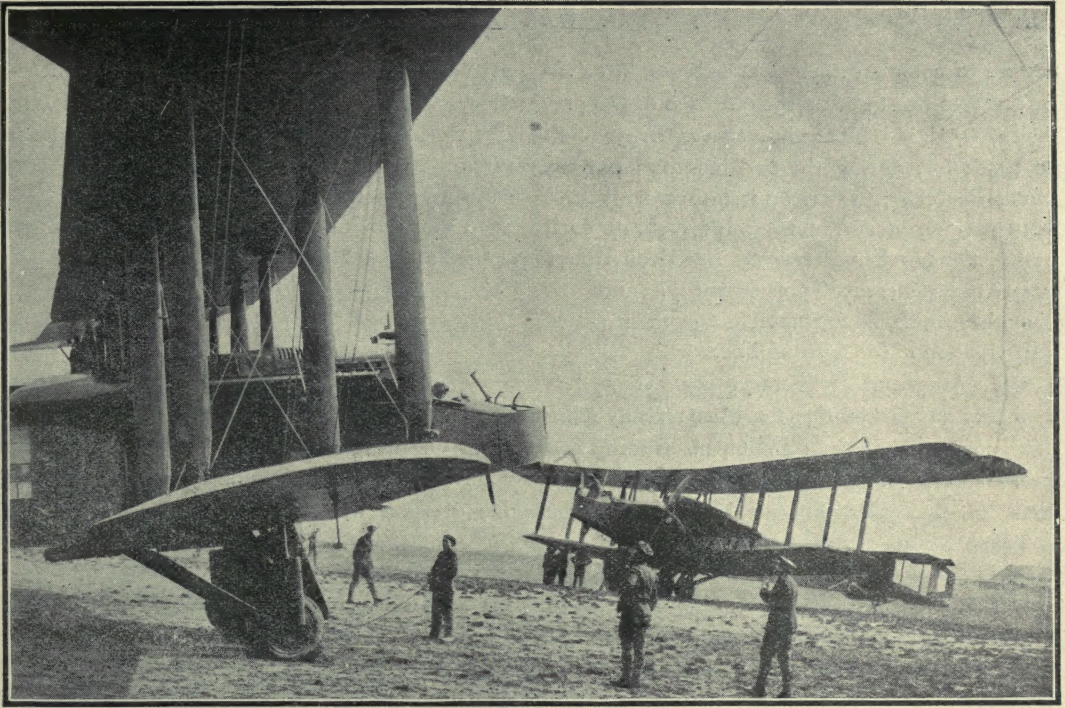
THE WAR ¹⁹¹⁸ in May



A BRITISH KITE BALLOON.



Scamander's Progress, J. Russell & Co. London.



An R.A.F. machine ready to start with its load of bombs for Germany.

THE WAR IN MAY 1918

The Second Month of the German Offensive.

[This account of the war during the month of May is written on the 22nd, and it only includes the despatches up to the evening of that day.]

IN the last three weeks of the second month of the German offensive there has been a complete suspension of major operations. Each day a renewal of the great offensive has been expected, but the German army has remained inactive, and has not only suffered the loss of precious time, but also of exceptionally favourable weather. The enemy's last success was the capture of Mount Kemmel on April 25th, where their great effort in Flanders was brought to a standstill by a remarkable defeat on April 29th. Since then the time has been filled by the completion of the defences of the allied armies and by a series

of minor successes in which the British and French troops have substantially improved their defensive positions. While it is true that the present allied line, from the marshes of the Yser to the ridges of the Ailette, has been forced back from its original fortifications along almost its whole length except for some 30 miles north of Arras, still the present line has considerable natural advantages for defence. And now that the German commanders have allowed the momentum of their attack to cease the next phase of the offensive cannot begin without the complete preparations necessary for overcoming a firmly established line.

That the German offensive has been temporarily delayed is now beyond question. For the time being, at least, the war of movement has come to an end. In view of the German

failure to complete their first success two considerations must decide the outcome of the present campaign. Most important is the question of time; for, during the two months since the offensive started, American reinforcements have been pouring steadily into France. With each month the number of trained American troops must now increase progressively, and the organisation is now complete for their active participation in the fighting line.

The American Secretary for War has definitely announced that there are already more than 500,000 American troops in France, and he has also stated that the Americans now hold more of the allied line in France than the Belgians. The American sector now ranks third in point of length. We may confidently expect that the Americans will rapidly extend their frontage in each succeeding month. At the same time American troops are being brigaded with British and French divisions at the discretion of General Foch.

Next to the vital importance of gaining a victory within a limited time, the Germans must consider the question of their own man-power. Actually during the month we have had a great deal of evidence to show that the German wastage has been exceptionally heavy. The most striking fact is that boys of the 1920 class have already been found in the firing line. A company of some 250 boys of this class has

been discovered by the French to be attached to the 13th Reserve Division; they had only eight weeks' training, and were not due to be sent into action before July of this year. We can only conclude that some proportion of the 1920 class is already in the training depôts immediately behind the line.

Further light has been thrown on the number of German divisions engaged since the opening of the offensive. The identification of German divisions up to May 1st alone shows that at least 140 divisions have taken part in the fighting. Of these at least 50 were sent into the line twice, about 20 were put in three times, and one division was used four times. Making every allowance for the probability that a division which is sent into a line for a second time will be below its full strength, none the less its casualties are just as likely to be as heavy on the second occasion as on the first. Consequently we must reckon that the German losses represent those of not 140, but over 233 divisions. A division is not withdrawn until it has suffered so severely that it needs a rest and requires reinforcements, and the German railways are at present in such disrepair and are strained to such an extent that they cannot permit of withdrawing troops until they have seen as much fighting as they can reasonably be expected to endure. The strength of a German division is 14,000 or 15,000 men, of



French Troops moving up into action.



The German Offensive. Two small German prisoners with a British soldier.

whom 7,000 or 8,000 are infantry. It is not likely that any division would be withdrawn unless it had lost at least $\frac{1}{3}$ th or probably more of its total number, so that the full losses suffered by the equivalent of more than 233 divisions can scarcely be less than 600,000 men.

The German military critics have claimed that however heavy their own losses they have compelled the Allies to throw their reserves into the firing line and that General Foch's strategic reserve has been depleted in order to supply men to hold the line. An examination of the details of the two or three important actions which have taken place since April 21st shows a comparison of our losses with those of the Germans. General Foch has adhered strictly to his rule of holding the line with the smallest number of divisions while economising his reserves for use at the decisive moment. Also, the arrival of the Americans in larger

numbers and the extension of their frontage has enabled him to withdraw some troops for whatever purpose he thinks fit.

Before proceeding to a detailed account of the particular engagement two subjects of the highest importance must be noticed. In the first place, the Allies have undoubtedly obtained a supremacy in the air more complete than at any previous period. They have shaken the morale of the German airmen so thoroughly that in the day to day fighting over the trenches they can assert their power freely and continuously. Our artillery is consequently better supplied with observation than theirs, and the German losses are correspondingly increased. Within the last two months over 1,000 German aeroplanes have been driven down and destroyed by our airmen. The American airmen are beginning to make themselves felt and each day take their toll of the enemy machines. Our squadrons have carried out long distance raids



H.M. King George talking to a Scottish officer just out of the line.



General view of Bailleul taken on the afternoon the town fell.

over important German towns, and have dropped an immense number of bombs on the German communications and billeting areas behind the lines. For two months London had been entirely immune from German raiders, and on Whit-Sunday, when a determined raid was carried out by some 30 German machines, 7 of them were brought down. As for the damage inflicted by the raid, the vast majority of Londoners have seen nothing of it, and probably not one person in ten could say in what parts of the town the bombs fell.

The month's returns showing the losses caused by German submarines are unusually satisfactory. In April a year ago 893,817 tons of shipping were sunk; this year the tonnage loss during April was 305,093 tons, of which 220,700 were British. The total of steamships

entering and leaving United Kingdom ports was again over 7,000,000 tons for the month.

And what is most important, for the first time the rate of building has overtaken the rate of losses. The combined total of building in the United States and the United Kingdom during April exceeds 3,000,000 tons, and there is good reason for expecting that the rate of construction in both countries will be increased. Furthermore, the returns for April do not yet show the improvements which will result from the blocking of the harbours of Zeebrugge and Ostend by the British Fleet on April 22nd/23rd and May 9th. Two direct results are certain to follow from these exploits. In the first place, submarines can no longer come out of those ports, and those which were already at sea cannot return to them. Secondly, the German

light cruisers and other craft, now sealed up in the harbours of Flanders, once compelled our Navy to maintain certain forces to watch their movements and, if possible, to induce them to give battle. Now that they are out of action for some time a certain number of our own destroyers and cruisers are released for dealing with the submarines elsewhere. We may expect that the sinking of submarines will proceed more rapidly, while their work of piracy will be greatly hampered by the closing of Zeebrugge and Ostend.

The first battle to be noted is that in front of Villers-Bretonneux on April 24th. Between the river Somme and the small river Luce, which is a tributary of the Avre, lies a plateau which occupies most of the triangle that converges between the two rivers towards Amiens. It is

the last important piece of high ground between the present battle line and Amiens itself, and it directly overlooks the city. On this plateau also was the junction between the French and British forces at the end of April. It extends roughly across some 3 miles of the allied line. On its southern border the French held the village of Hangard, and on its northern flank the British held a line running in front of Villers-Bretonneux. At half-past six on the morning of the 24th, after the usual intensive bombardment, the German attack commenced. Three divisions were used against the British, and three against the French, while two more attempted to outflank the French from the south. The first attack was everywhere repulsed. The second entered the wood of Hangard and carried the ruins of the village.



A Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment ('Die Hards') who have been doing wonderful work during the German push.

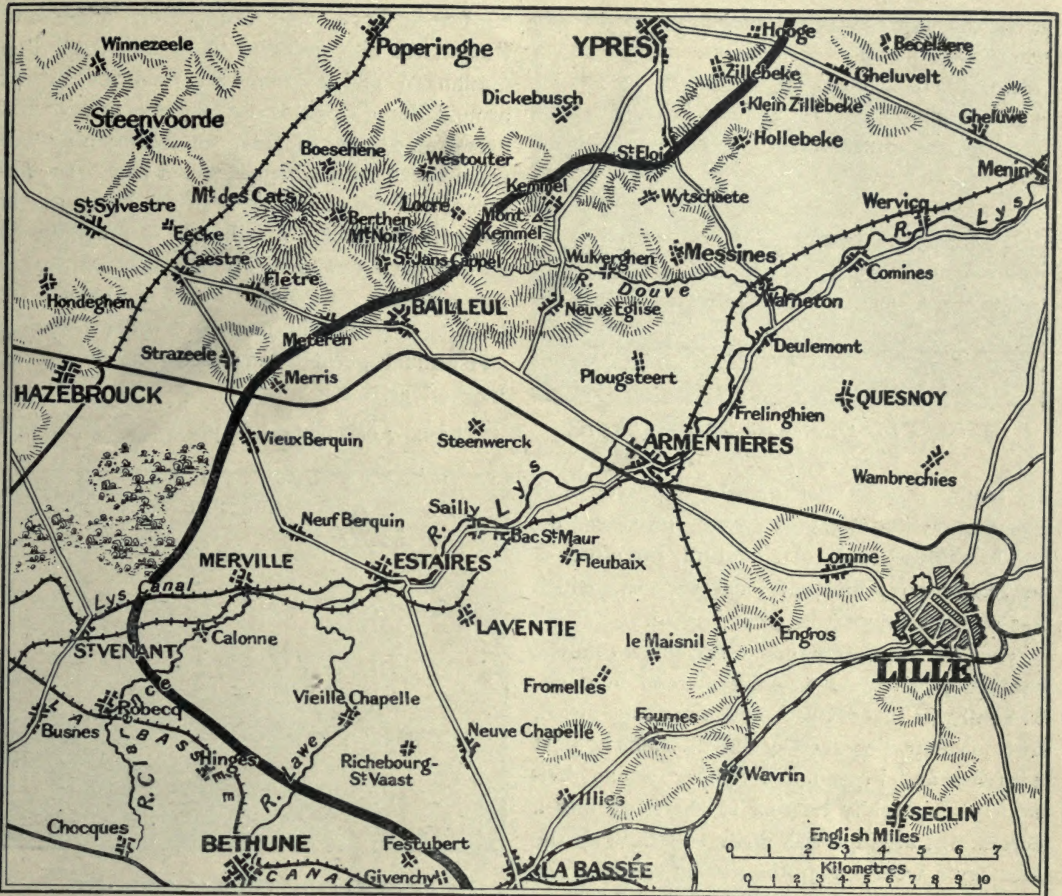
It swept through Villers-Bretonneux and drove forward over the edge of the plateau between the two allied armies. In the evening the arrival of reinforcements against the British proved that the attack was going to be pressed to the utmost and heavy fighting continued through the night. In the morning a powerful counter-attack, in which Australian troops specially distinguished themselves, drove the Germans back, and before midday Villers-

Bretonneux was regained. About 1,000 prisoners remained with the British troops. The Germans claimed twice that number of prisoners, but the essential fact is that their determined attack at a critical point of the line was completely defeated. That their defeat was a costly one is proved by the unusually large number of German dead found by our troops on the re-occupied ground.

At about the same time the Germans delivered



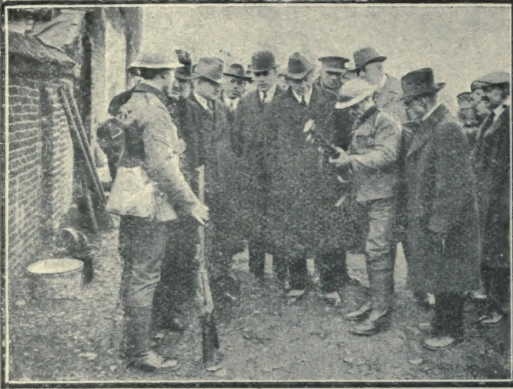
Stanford's Geograph. Estab. London



their successful onslaught against Mount Kemmel. Beginning on the morning of the 25th the battle raged continuously until the 27th. Specially trained troops of the Alpine Corps, brought from the Italian front, were used for the assault on the hill, and during this engagement the Germans relied principally on their new method of pushing forward small successive groups of machine guns. Before the attack, Kemmel Hill, which is a distinctly isolated lump with the villages of Kemmel and of Dranoutre on its north-western and south-western flanks, protruded as a salient from our line. Throwing great masses of troops against both sides of the hill the Germans succeeded in outflanking it,

and after its ultimate retention had become impossible some men of one French division continued to hold on until the allied line could be reformed and straightened behind the hill.

The importance of Kemmel has been greatly exaggerated in the Press in England as well as in Germany. It is the first of the line of hills which stretch due westward from just south of Ypres. It lies itself slightly west of a line drawn due south of Ypres and only to a certain extent outflanks the town. But its tactical importance is that it gives a little more observation northwards over our communications around Ypres, and by capturing it the Germans have somewhat increased the difficulty of holding the salient.



American Labour Representatives in France talking to British soldiers.

In truth, it does not greatly improve what observation the Germans already possessed on the Messines Ridge. Its capture, therefore, is in reality an important local success, which has so far produced no greater results.

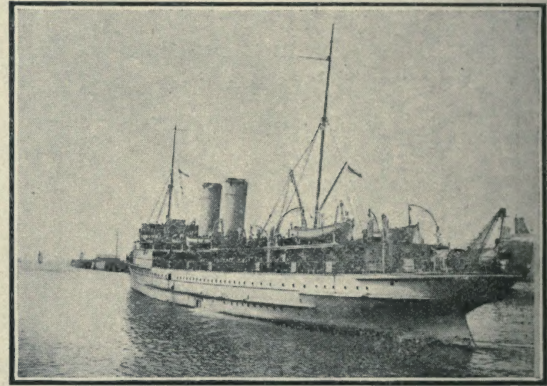
The German Commanders well knew that the capture of Kemmel was not an end in itself. The hill was taken on the first day of the attack by a concentration of 9 German divisions against 4 British and French. Further German divisions were rapidly hurried to the front and a determined attempt was made to follow up the first day's success with the utmost speed. The new German line ran almost straight from Meteren, behind Kemmel Hill, to Voormezele, in a north easterly direction. If this line could



Canaries suffering from gas and wounds, which have been rescued from amidst the ruins in shelled areas.

be forced back, and Mont Noir and Mont Rouge, the hills adjacent to Kemmel, could be outflanked and surrounded, then the salient around Ypres would be no longer tenable. But everything must depend on maintaining the same speed with which Kemmel had been captured, and the allied forces in the Ypres salient must be compelled to fall back in precipitation so that their communications might be thrown into disorder. So long as they are able to fall back slowly and in unbroken order they can cause much greater casualties than they suffer themselves.

The new offensive took place over a frontage



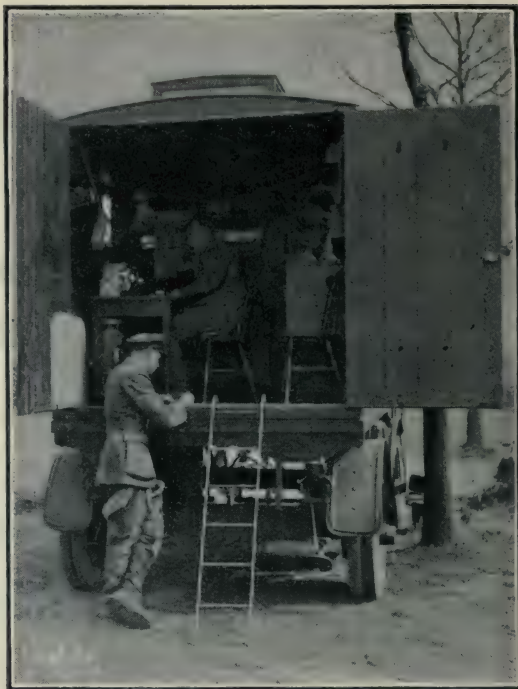
Departure from France of American Labour Representatives.

of roughly 17,000 yards. About one-third of this length, between Meteren and the foot of Mont Noir, was held by the Australians. The centre was held by French troops, and the remainder of the line by 3 English divisions. Against either 6 or 7 allied divisions the Germans threw in 13, of which 6 attacked the French, 5 were opposed to the British left, and 2 more were thrown against the Australians on our right. The German divisions belonged to two separate Army Corps, and were handled by distinct commanders. Those on the German right were to engage British, while 6 divisions on the left endeavoured to separate the British from the French. Throwing his heaviest masses into the first attack General Eberhart



forced the French back behind the village of Locre, and for a short space occupied the important cross-roads which the British troops had christened as Hyde Park Corner, which stood more than 1,000 yards behind our original line. If that advance could have been pushed further both the Scherpenberg to the north and Mont Noir and Mont Rouge to the south would have been turned. But soon after midday a dashing counter-attack by the French drove the Germans back not only to their own trenches, but fully 1,000 yards beyond. Throughout the day the German attack persisted, and four successive onslaughts were delivered in massed formation. Each was crushed completely by the French artillery and infantry fire. When night fell, with the complete exhaustion of the German divisions, the fighting had ceased, leaving the French victorious in one of the most critical and hotly-contested battles of the campaign. How great was the determination of the Germans to press the attack to a successful issue is proved by the fact that they again adopted their system of massed attacks. Not much less than 100,000 German troops took part in the engagement, and their casualties cannot have been less than one-fifth or a quarter of that total.

Since that attack the Germans have not tried again in the sector of the Lys, or on any other part of the front. But the French on May 19th themselves took the offensive in a brilliantly successful minor engagement. On a front of 4,000 yards they advanced their line towards Kemmel, gaining all their objective and took 400 prisoners. The success of such an undertaking shows that the initiative is not so completely in the hands of the Germans as they would have people believe, and in itself the gain of ground makes the renewal of the offensive among these Flanders hills all the more difficult. For the present the Germans are forced to prepare their next attack as though it were their first attempt; and while the hills near Kemmel are held by the Allies their machine guns can



A telephone lorry exchange of the Royal Air Force Kite Balloon Section.

inflict desperate losses on troops advancing across the open in close order, as the Germans certainly must if they intend to continue their attempt.

Naval Raids on the Belgian Coast.

THE last month has seen the realisation of long prepared naval plans to restrict the operations of the German submarine.

In the early hours of April 23rd—St. George's Day—a daring and successful raid was carried out against the destroyer and submarine bases at Zeebrugge and Ostend, the object being to block the entrances to both harbours. For this purpose six obsolete cruisers were employed—*Brilliant*, *Sirius*, *Intrepid*, *Iphigenia*, *Thetis* and *Vindictive*. The first five were filled with concrete and used as block-ships. The *Vindictive*, which was attended by two ferry-boats, *Daffodil* and *Iris*, was specially fitted for landing storm-

ing and demolition parties. A large number of auxiliary and patrol vessels took part in the expedition, which was covered by British and French naval forces and was commanded by Vice-Admiral Roger Keyes.

It is obvious that in modern conditions an attacking force would have no chance of approaching a strongly defended port except under some cloak of invisibility, and the main feature of both attacks was the artificial fog spread by the small craft.

On nearing Zeebrugge *Vindictive* and her tenders went ahead, and was close upon the Mole when the wind swept back her smoke screen and laid her bare to the searchlights. Under a terrific fire she got alongside the Mole, with the assistance of *Daffodil*, and while her decks were swept by machine-gun and shell-fire the storming parties went up the gangways and dropped down the parapet of the Mole. Here they carried out their work of demolition, bombing and setting fire to the buildings and workshops.

Meanwhile the blockships were making their way towards the mouth of the canal. *Thetis*, the leading ship, fouled one of her propellers in the net defence, and ran aground in the channel

some hundreds of yards from the mouth of the canal. *Intrepid* and *Iphigenia* both entered the canal and were sunk there in accordance with the plan.

Another phase of the attack was the destruction of the bridge forming the shore end of the Mole, which was successfully accomplished by the blowing up of an old submarine filled with explosives. The landing party from *Vindictive* was then recalled and the force returned with the loss of one destroyer and four small craft.

Zeebrugge was thus effectively blocked, but the simultaneous operation at Ostend was less successful. The two block-ships *Brilliant* and *Sirius* got off their course and grounded just outside the port entrance, thus only incompletely endangering the fairway to the harbour.

On the night of May 9th the operation was completed by the battered *Vindictive*, which in the interval had been filled with concrete. This time the channel was effectively blocked, *Vindictive* being sunk by her crew well within the piers, and lies athwart the fairway.

Aerial observation has since confirmed the effectiveness of the obstructions.



One of our outposts watching for enemy movement.



The main street in Jericho after its occupation by the British forces Feb. 21, 1918. New Zealand soldiers and a British officer may be seen.

Operations in Palestine.

SINCE the successful raid on the Hedjaz railway by British troops at the end of March several operations have been carried out further south by the Arab forces of the King of the Hedjaz. Between April 11th and 14th the railway was demolished at different points to the north and south of Maan, and on the latter date the Turkish garrison of Tell Shahn station surrendered to the Arabs. On the 17th the station of Maan was attacked, and by the 24th a section of the line farther south was effectively occupied. In the course of these operations 550 Turkish prisoners were taken.

On the last day of April General Allenby resumed his operations east of the Jordan with the object of easing the situation to the south. A second raid on Es Salt was carried out, the village being entered by Australian mounted troops on May 1st, when 33 German and 317

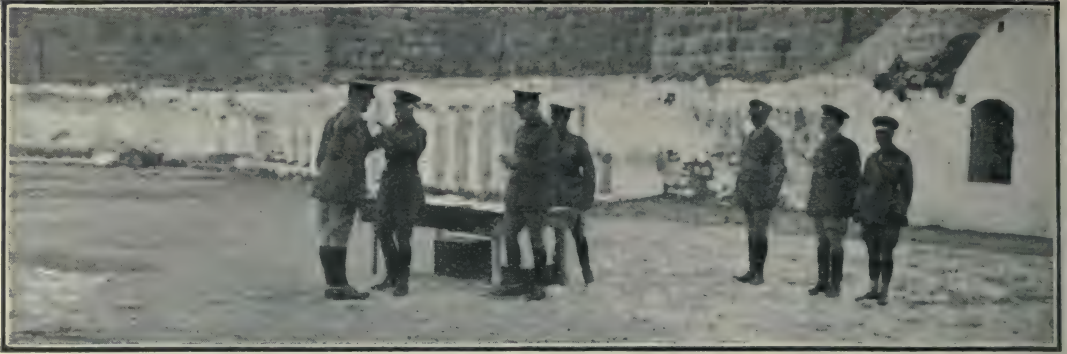
Turkish prisoners were captured. This had the effect of drawing considerable Turkish reinforcements to the neighbourhood of Es Salt, some from Amman and others from across the Jordan. The latter force crossed to the north of Auja and moved southward along the river bank, compelling a brigade of horse artillery to fall back from its position on Redhill Ridge. This necessitated a rapid march of Anzac cavalry from the south to cover the rear of the force engaged at Es Salt. Turkish attacks from the north-east and north on the Es Salt position were repulsed on May 2nd and 3rd with heavy losses, and meanwhile preparations were made to remove the prisoners across the Jordan. During the night of the 3rd the advanced troops holding Es Salt were withdrawn, and subsequently the bulk of the troops withdrew to the west bank of the Jordan, leaving strong detach-



Pontoon bridge over the Jordan at El Ghoraniyeh.



A company of Royal Welsh Fusiliers in the front line among the hills that skirt the Nablus Road south of Singil.



The Duke of Connaught decorating the Commander-in-Chief at Jerusalem.

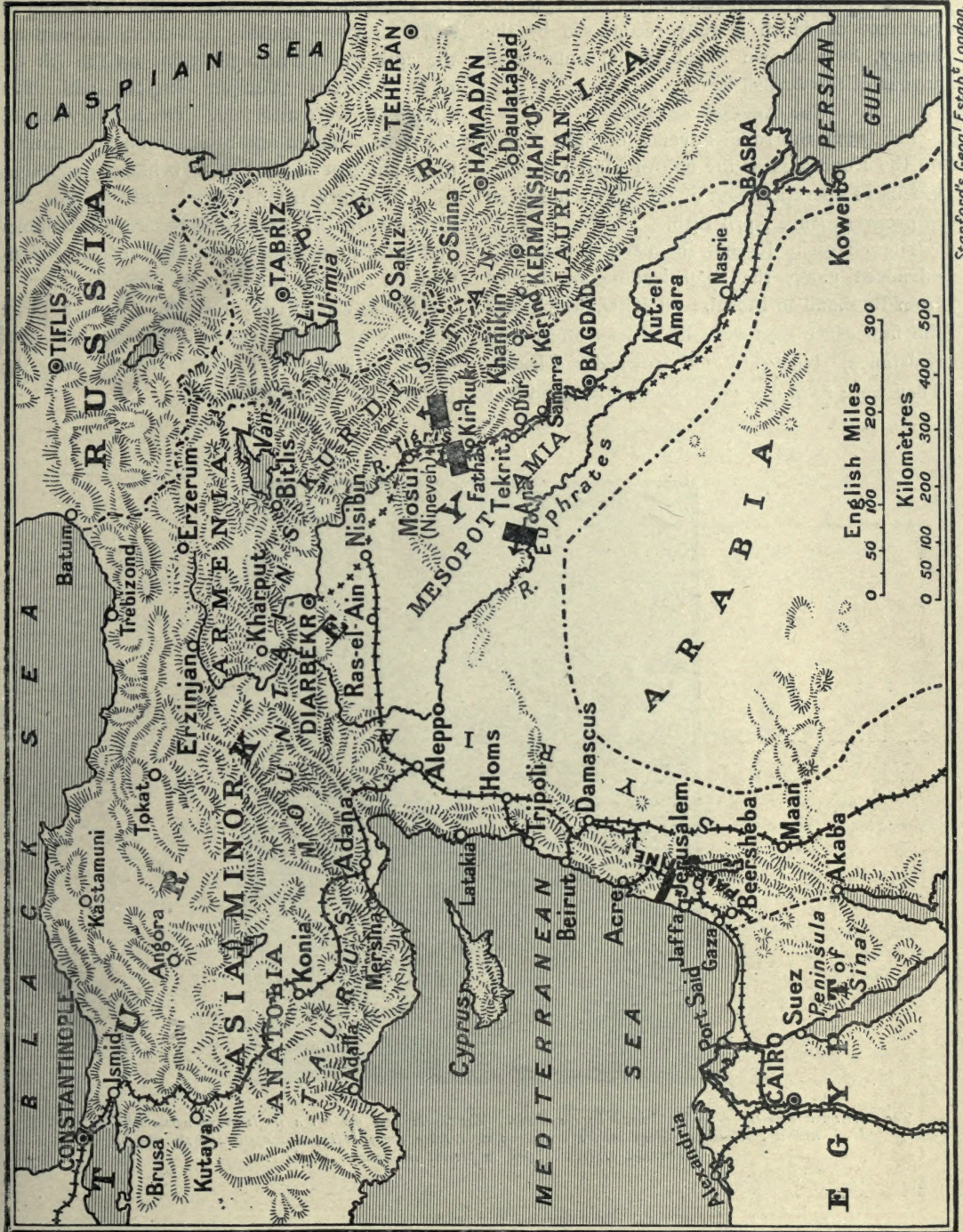
ments on the east bank to guard the crossings. The four days' operations resulted in the capture of nearly a thousand Turkish and German prisoners, besides the infliction of heavy losses in killed and wounded. Meanwhile the Arab

forces in the south took advantage of this diversion to inflict further serious damage on the Hedjaz line in the neighbourhood of Wadi Jerdun station.

Thus the month's operations against the



The work of the British Royal Air Force during the German Offensive. Every Pilot and Observer in this photograph has brought down at least three enemy machines.



Hedjaz railway, the political and strategic importance of which is fully recognised by the enemy, have shown a substantial balance in favour of the British arms.

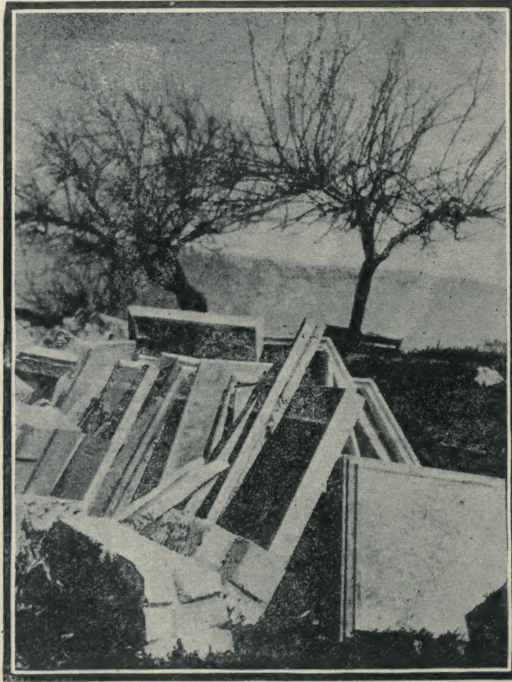
The Advance on Mosul.

Following the rapid advance of light forces on the Euphrates at the end of March a more extensive operation east of the Tigris has been in progress since April 24th.

The British forces in several columns advanced along the road leading northward from Baghdad to Mosul. At Kifri, which was the first place captured, the Turks offered no resistance, but retreated towards Kirkuk. They were soon overtaken by cavalry, and lost

150 killed and 538 prisoners. By the evening of April 28th the infantry had come up, and on the 29th the Turkish positions on the Ak Su river between Yanijah Buyuk and Tuz Khurmatli were attacked. The infantry forded the river at dawn and attacked on both flanks, the position at Yanijah being brilliantly captured by Lancashire troops under machine-gun and artillery fire. Tuz was thus rendered untenable, and after three hours' fighting the whole position fell into the hands of the British.

Kirkuk was occupied on May 8th, a large quantity of military stores being captured, and on the 11th the Turks were driven across the Lesser Zab at Alton Keupri.



The Armenian cemetery at Jaffa violated by the Turks. The Turks have not left a single grave untouched, and not one tombstone standing. Many marble monuments were taken away bodily, and apparently the British Forces just arrived in time to prevent the removal of the rest.

DIARY.

April.

- April 22.—Line advanced in Robecq sector; 68 prisoners.
- „ 23.—Successful British naval raids on enemy bases at Zeebrugge and Ostend. Strong attacks at Dranoutre repelled by the French.
- „ 24.—Strong attacks on British and French south of Somme; Villers-Bretonneux lost.
- „ 25.—Heavy enemy attacks from north of Bailleul to east of Wytschaete. Enemy gain Dranoutre and Kemmel Hill and village. British regain Villers-Bretonneux; over 600 prisoners.
- „ 26.—Heavy enemy attacks from Locre to La Clytte and astride Ypres-Comines Canal. Locre lost and regained. British and French advance line near Hangard; 900 prisoners.
- „ 27.—Voormezeele captured by enemy, but retaken.
- British capture Kifri; 40 prisoners; 538 prisoners taken by cavalry.
- April 28.—Hostile attack near Locre repulsed. British force passage of the Ak Su (Mesopotamia).
- „ 29.—Violent enemy attacks on French and English positions from Meteren to Zillebeke Lake, and on Belgian positions north of Ypres repulsed with very heavy loss. French counter-attack regains Locre; 94 prisoners. Allied line advanced slightly east of Villers-Bretonneux. British capture Tuz Khurmatli; 300 prisoners, 5 guns.
- „ 30.—Admiralty gives notice of prohibited area in North Sea from May 15. British reach Tauk River; prisoners amount to 1,800. 5,241 prisoners, including 136 officers, captured by British during April.

May.

- May 1.—Cavalry enter Es Salt, and capture 33 German, 317 Turkish prisoners; 9 guns abandoned at Jisred Damieh.
- „ 2.—Successful British raids south of Arras and east of St. Venant; 10 prisoners, 5 machine guns.
- „ 3.—Successful British operation in Hinges sector; over 40 prisoners. Enemy attacks on Es Salt repulsed; 314 prisoners. British withdraw from Es Salt.
- „ 4.—French take 50 prisoners in Locre sector.
- „ 5.—Line advanced west and south-west of Morlancourt; over 200 prisoners.
- „ 7.—Treaty signed between Rumania and the Central Powers. British enter Kirkuk without opposition.
- „ 8.—Strong enemy attack on British and French between La Clytte and Voormezeele. Allied front line entered in centre of fighting. British and French counter-attacks re-establish positions.
- May 9.—British complete the closing of Ostend harbour by sinking H.M.S. *Vindictive* between the piers. Hostile attacks north of Kemmel and near Albert and Bouzincourt. Position re-established by counter-attacks. French surprise attack captures Park of Grivesnes; 258 prisoners. Italians capture Monte Corno.
- „ 10.—British drive enemy across lower Zab at Alton Keupri; 30 prisoners and 2 guns.
- „ 14.—Enemy attacks south-west of Morlancourt on front of nearly one mile; Australian counter-attack re-establishes line; 50 prisoners.
- „ 18.—Australian troops capture Ville-sur-Ancre; 360 prisoners.
- „ 19.—French troops advance on front of 4,000 yards east and north-east of Locre; over 400 prisoners.
- „ 21.—Heavy hostile attack north-west of Merville repulsed.

DRAFT

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