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Prime Minister's Department,
Melbourne, 28th May, 1915.

THE following further report, which has been received from the official press representative with the Australian Expeditionary Force in connexion with the operations of the Allied Forces on the Gallipoli Peninsula, is published for general information.

ANDREW FISHER,
Prime Minister.

Gallipoli (Three).—This week I watched a charge of Australian infantry. It was a brigade of seasoned infantry, not the Third Brigade, which made a wonderful charge on the day of landing, but another brigade of the same old division, which I make no apology for now referring to as our famous First Division. This charge was made in quite different country, under quite different conditions, of which, perhaps, it is too early to give exact details.

I had been watching for three days the attack by infantry of other famous armies on strong Turkish positions. Early on this particular day an Australian Brigade, which encamped at the rear under fire no worse than that of a few spent bullets, was ordered to move up into position to support, if necessary, a certain portion of the attack. Immediately they moved off to a point about 600 yards behind the trenches under fire, where they quickly dug in and waited all day. The enemy burst a few shrapnel shells over this camp later, but the only casualty was one man, who was hit by the case of a shell and killed instantly. It appeared likely that they would remain there all night. when, suddenly, at 5 o'clock, the order came to be in the fighting column in line with the Maoriland Brigade, and to be advancing against the enemy by 5.30.

This order was sent out with the utmost speed by the brigadier. Presently, at 5.15, the allied batteries began shelling the enemy's line. The noise was tremendous, white puffs of shrapnel, red clouds of whipped-up dust, black and green fumes of high explosives, burst again and again from the line along which the enemy's trenches lay, whipped up by the hail of shell from our guns firing over our heads. The men were busy putting on packs and falling in. Every one knew this bombardment was preparatory to our advance, which must be punctual on the instant, or the whole operation would be mistimed. Just on the hour named the leading companies of the two leading battalions came out of the last scrap of shelter, and up the gradual slope of a low plateau, across which, about 1,200 yards away, must have been the enemy's trenches, although invisible at that distance.

Four hundred yards ahead was the British firing trench, the most advanced position yet reached, but not yet connected by communication trenches. That fire trench when reached was the only scrap of cover in 1,200 yards, the whole plateau being covered by a low growth not higher than a man's feet. The moment the leading companies appeared they were met with a steady fire, always increasing as they came up the slope. Here and there men dropped, but as yet only a few, and the line took not the slightest notice. The fighting column was in splendid formation for advance up to the range of fire, being small groups of men advancing at wide intervals, each set of groups forming successive lines advancing towards the enemy. As the limits of fire were reached, these groups suddenly extended into single lines before any harm was done, as the bullets began to whizz thicker. This operation was carried out in perfect order by company after company exactly as had been done a thousand times at Mena Camp. The foremost lines had only rifle fire as yet to face, but everybody knew shrapnel would come as sure as Fate, and as the later companies of the first two battalions

were coming out of a few scraggy trees—something like ti-trees—at the bottom of the slope which formed the only semblance of cover, down came the shrapnel. First, a whizz on that descending scale we have grown to know so well, then "bang," and the dust was whipped up into curling clouds right between the advancing sections. The first burst was followed by a perfect hail of shrapnel. It was difficult at such moments to count the exact number of bursts, but my impression was that they must have come from three batteries of four guns firing salvoes as fast as they could be served.

The moment they opened, the Allied guns got on to them, and for some minutes the uproar was so deafening that it was impossible to hear the whizz of passing bullets. The universe seemed to be buffeted first from one side then from another, as if giants were battering its empty sides with sledge-hammers, and out of the midst of it came that infantry as if nothing was happening. Columns of pink dust were whipped up between sections, sometimes hiding portions of them completely from view, but the next moment they appeared out of the turmoil marching stolidly uphill. Sometimes when shrapnel burst in front of them you would see some youngster fend his forehead with his elbow, and come through rolling dust-clouds almost blindly. But I did not notice one man falter, and, curiously enough, I believe that the shrapnel did little actual harm. It must have hit some men, of course, but I saw none fall. There never could be a better object lesson of the maxim that the best way to avoid shrapnel is by going forward.

The infantry went the greater part of the distance up to the firing trench at a run. Within two or three minutes of the beginning of the advance the first line was up, and into that trench. There they squeezed down between the British, who were manning it, or lay down for a moment panting on the surface behind it, to some extent sheltered by the parapet. Bullets were chipping earth off the top of the parapet into the faces of the men below. Little puffs of dust were flung up on every side all over the surface of the plateau. A bit of wood lying on the ground in front was flung up feet into the air, as if bullets were playing tip-cat. The men took three minutes breather, and then the Brigadier who had so far led the charge himself, jumped up on the parapet, "Now, then; on, Australia!" he said, waving his periscope, just a bit of wood with two broken bits of looking-glass, which he carried in his hand. The men gathered themselves up, and shouting, "On, Australians! Come on, Australians!" swept over the parapet like a whirlwind, and out across that deadly plateau. A perfect storm of bullets met them, and men dropped fast. They must have reached the objective nearly 500 yards beyond the firing trench within three or four minutes at most. When they got there, they simply flung themselves down, and dug with entrenching tools. Many took off their packs, and placed them in front of their heads. After they had been there for a quarter of an hour, the troops swept up line on line. They halted a few minutes at the firing trench, as the first had done, but always swept beyond it in a few minutes with a cheer, and the shout of "On, Australians!"

I have seen many troops at work during the last week. I have seen many attacks by all sorts of soldiers, but have never seen anything approaching the swiftness or dash of that advance. The Australian Brigade was in position from an hour to an hour and three-quarters before the troops on its left, whilst most of the troops on the right did not get within 400 yards of it that night. The brigade could not have advanced further because the Turks were opposite this gap on the right, and bullets began to come in from behind the flank. I am told that when the troops reached the advanced line there was not the least fear of their giving ground. On the contrary, immediately cheering to find supporting lines coming in amongst them, and to know other supporting battalions of the same brigade were close up behind, they began to dig in in broad daylight. They were in high spirits, laughing, and yarning over all sorts of things—what people in Australia were thinking, incidents of the day, and of the landing; every sort of topic, in fact, except the charge they had just made. Within half-an-hour they had, in many parts, cover from which nothing could have stirred them.

The Australian method of advancing may not be the safest, but it is making itself famous here. The toll of officers is always heavy. I saw one splendid officer jump up on the parapet to lead his men on. Immediately he sank back against a tree stump as if breathless. "Are you hit, sir?" asked some one. "Oh, yes; but I think it's slight," he panted. Two men tore open his shirt, and found it was a flesh wound on the shoulder. He just took a breath, jumped up again as if nothing had happened, said, "Come along, men," blew his whistle, and led the battalion on. They would follow him through anything. He had not gone 200 yards before he was hit again.

Australians may well be proud of their infantry. I have not seen all varieties of infantry, but of those I have so far seen in action, none quite equalled, and few compared with, the infantry which received its long, weary training in the desert around Cairo. The same is true of the stretcher-bearers. The Army Service Corps also worked untiringly, often under shell fire. The magnificent work of the artillery can hardly yet be touched on without giving facts which might assist the enemy. I have not had much opportunity yet of seeing the work of the British Regulars, but Australians will never forget the support given them whenever asked for by the Navy, and the extraordinary courage with which it was always accompanied.

Australians may rely on these facts. I write only of what I have seen, or know to be true. A British officer has just said to me, "I hear your men did very well here." And so they did, but it was almost child's play compared to that first Sunday.

Prime Minister's Department,
Melbourne, 28th May, 1915.

The following extract from *London Gazette* of the 9th April, 1915, is published for general information.

ANDREW FISHER,
Prime Minister.

Admiralty,
13th April, 1915.

The following despatch has been received from Rear-Admiral the Hon. Horace L. A. Hood, C.B., M.V.O., D.S.O., reporting the proceedings of the flotilla off the coast of Belgium between 17th October and 9th November, 1914:—

Office of Rear-Admiral,
Dover Patrol,
11th November, 1914.

SIR,—I have the honour to report the proceedings of the flotilla acting off the coast of Belgium, between 17th October and 9th November.

The flotilla was organized to prevent the movement of large bodies of German troops along the coast roads from Ostend to Nieuport, to support the left flank of the Belgian Army, and to prevent any movement by sea of the enemy's troops.

Operations commenced during the night of 17th October, when the *Attentive*, flying my flag, accompanied by the monitors *Severn*, *Humber*, and *Mersey*, the light cruiser *Foresight*, and several torpedo-boat destroyers, arrived and anchored off Nieuport Pier.

Early on the morning of the 18th October information was received that German infantry were advancing on Westende village, and that a battery was in action at Westende Bains. The flotilla at once proceeded up past Westende and Middlekirke to draw the fire and endeavour to silence the guns.

A brisk shrapnel fire was opened from the shore, which was immediately replied to, and this commenced the naval operations on the coast, which continued for more than three weeks without intermission.

During the first week the enemy's troops were endeavouring to push forward along the coast roads, and a large accumulation of transport existed within reach of the naval guns.

On 18th October machine guns from the *Severn* were landed at Nieuport to assist in the defence, and Lieutenant E. S. Wise fell, gallantly leading his men.

The *Amazon*, flying my flag, was badly holed on the waterline, and was sent to England for repairs, and during these early days most of the vessels suffered casualties, chiefly from shrapnel shell from the field guns of the enemy.

The presence of the ships on the coast soon caused alterations in the enemy's plans, less and less of their troops were seen, while more and more heavy guns were gradually mounted among the sand dunes that fringe the coast.

It soon became evident that more and heavier guns were required in the flotilla. The Scouts therefore returned to England, while H.M.S. *Venerable* and several older cruisers, sloops, and gunboats arrived to carry on the operations.

Five French torpedo-boat destroyers were placed under my orders by Admiral Favereau, and on the 30th October I had the honour of hoisting my flag in the *Intrepide*, and leading the French flotilla into action off Lombartzyde. The greatest harmony and enthusiasm existed between the Allied flotillas.

As the heavier guns of the enemy came into play it was inevitable that the casualties of the flotilla increased, the most important being the disablement of the 6-inch turret and several shots on the waterline of the *Mersey*, the death of the Commanding Officer and eight men, and the disablement of sixteen others in the *Falcon*, which vessel came under a heavy fire when guarding the *Venerable* against submarine attack; the *Wildfire* and *Vestal* were badly holed, and a number of casualties caused in the *Brilliant* and *Rinaldo*.

Enemy submarines were seen, and torpedoes were fired, and during the latter part of the operations the work of the torpedo craft was chiefly confined to the protection of the larger ships.

It gradually became apparent that the rush of the enemy along the coast had been checked, that the operations were developing into a trench warfare, and that the work of the flotilla had, for the moment, ceased.

The arrival of Allied reinforcements, and the inundation of the country surrounding Nieuport rendered the further presence of the ships unnecessary.

The work of the squadron was much facilitated by the efforts of Colonel Bridges, attached to the Belgian Head-quarters, and to him I am greatly indebted for his constant and unfailing support.

Prime Minister's Department,
Melbourne, 28th May, 1915.

The following extract from *London Gazette* of the 13th April, 1915, is published for general information.

ANDREW FISHER,
Prime Minister.

From the Field-Marshal, Commanding-in-Chief,
The British Army in the Field.

To the Secretary of State for War, War Office,
London, S.W.

General Head-quarters,
5th April, 1915.

My Lord,

I have the honour to report the operations of the Forces under my command since the date of my last despatch, 2nd February, 1915.

1. The event of chief interest and importance which has taken place is the victory achieved over the enemy at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, which was fought on the 10th, 11th, and 12th of March. The main attack was delivered by troops of the First Army under the command of General Sir Douglas Haig, supported by a large force of Heavy Artillery, a Division of Cavalry, and some Infantry of the general reserve.

Secondary and holding attacks and demonstrations were made along the front of the Second Army under the direction of its Commander, General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien.

Whilst the success attained was due to the magnificent bearing and indomitable courage displayed by the troops of the 4th and Indian Corps, I consider that the able and skilful dispositions which were made by the General Officer Commanding First Army contributed largely to the defeat of the enemy, and to the capture of his position. The energy and vigour with which

General Sir Douglas Haig handled his command show him to be a leader of great ability and power.

Another action of considerable importance was brought about by a surprise attack of the Germans made on the 14th March, against the 27th Division holding the trenches east of St. Eloi. A large force of artillery was concentrated in this area under cover of mist, and a heavy volume of fire was suddenly brought to bear on the trenches at 5 p.m. This artillery attack was accompanied by two mine explosions; and, in the confusion caused by these, and the suddenness of the attack, the position of St. Eloi was captured, and held for some hours by the enemy.

Well directed and vigorous counter attacks, in which the troops of the 5th Army Corps showed great bravery and determination, restored the situation by the evening of the 15th.

A more detailed account of these operations will appear in subsequent pages of this despatch.

2. On the 6th February a brilliant action by troops of the 1st Corps materially improved our position in the area south of the La Bassée Canal. During the previous night parties of Irish Guards and of the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards had succeeded in gaining ground whence converging fire could be directed on the flanks and rear of certain "brickstacks" occupied by the Germans, which had been for some time a source of considerable annoyance.

At 2 p.m. the affair commenced with a severe bombardment of the "brickstacks" and the enemy's trenches. A brisk attack by the 3rd Coldstream Guards and Irish Guards from our trenches west of the "brickstacks" followed, and was supported by fire from the flanking positions which had been seized the previous night by the same regiments. The attack succeeded, the "brickstacks" were occupied without difficulty, and a line established north and south through a point about forty yards east of the "brickstacks."

The casualties suffered by the 5th Corps throughout the period under review, and particularly during the month of February, have been heavier than those in other parts of the line. I regret this; but I do not think, taking all the circumstances into consideration, that they were unduly numerous. The position then occupied by the 5th Corps has always been a very vulnerable part of our line; the ground is marshy, and trenches are most difficult to construct and maintain. The 27th and 28th Divisions of the 5th Corps have had no previous experience of European warfare, and a number of the units composing it had only recently returned from service in tropical climates. In consequence, the hardships of a rigorous winter campaign fell with greater weight upon these Divisions than upon any other in the command.

Chiefly owing to these causes, the 5th Corps, up to the beginning of March, was constantly engaged in counter-attack to retake trenches and ground which had been lost.

In their difficult and arduous task, however, the troops displayed the utmost gallantry and devotion; and it is most creditable to the skill and energy of their leaders that I am able to report how well they have surmounted all their difficulties, that the ground first taken over by them is still intact, and held with little greater loss than is incurred by troops in all other parts of the line.

On the 14th February the 82nd Brigade of the 27th Division was driven from its trenches east of St. Eloi; but by 7 a.m. on the 15th all these trenches had been recaptured, fifteen prisoners taken, and sixty German dead counted in front of the trenches. Similarly in the 28th Division trenches were lost by the 85th Brigade, and retaken the following night.

During the month of February the enemy made several attempts to get through all along the line, but he was invariably repulsed with loss. A particularly vigorous attempt was made on the 17th February against the trenches held by the Indian Corps, but it was brilliantly repulsed.

On 28th February, a successful minor attack was made on the enemy's trenches near St. Eloi by small parties of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The attack was divided into three small groups, the whole under the command of Lieutenant Crabbe; No. 1 Group under Lieutenant Papineau, No. 2 Group under Sergeant Patterson, and No. 3 Group under Company Sergeant-Major Lloyd.

The head of the party got within 15 or 20 yards of the German trench and charged; it was dark at the time (about 5.15 a.m.).

Lieutenant Crabbe, who showed the greatest dash and *élan*, took his party over everything in the trench until they had gone down it about 80 yards, when they were stopped by a barricade of sandbags and timber. This party, as well as the others, then pulled down the front face of the German parapet. A number of Germans were killed and wounded, and a few prisoners were taken.

The services performed by this distinguished corps have continued to be very valuable since I had occasion to refer to them in my last despatch. They have been most ably organized, trained, and commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel F. D. Farquhar, D.S.O., who, I deeply regret to say, was killed while superintending some trench work on the 20th March. His loss will be deeply felt.

A very gallant attack was made by the 4th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps of the 80th Brigade on the enemy's trenches in the early hours of 2nd March. The Battalion was led by Major Widdrington, who launched it at 12.30 a.m. (he himself being wounded during its progress), covered by an extremely accurate and effective artillery fire. About 60 yards of the enemy's trenches were cleared, but the attack was brought to a standstill by a very strong barricade, in attempting to storm which several casualties were incurred.

3. During the month of February I arranged with General Foch to render the 9th French Corps, holding the trenches on my left, some much-needed rest by sending the three Divisions of the British Cavalry Corps to hold a portion of the French trenches, each division for a period of ten days alternately.

It was very gratifying to me to note once again in this campaign the eager readiness which the cavalry displayed to undertake a rôle which does not properly belong to them in order to support and assist their French comrades.

In carrying out this work leaders, officers, and men displayed the same skill and energy which I have had reason to comment upon in former despatches.

The time passed by the Cavalry in the French trenches was, on the whole, quiet and uneventful, but there are one or two incidents calling for remark.

At about 1.45 a.m. on 16th February, a half-hearted attack was made against the right of the line held by the 2nd Cavalry Division, but it was easily repulsed by rifle fire, and the enemy left several dead in front of the trenches. The attack was delivered against the second and third trenches from the right of the line of this Division.

At 6 a.m. on the 21st the enemy blew up one of the 2nd Cavalry Division trenches, held by the 16th Lancers, and some adjoining French trenches. The enemy occupied 40 yards of our trench and tried to advance, but were stopped. An immediate counter-attack by the supporting squadron was stopped by machine-gun fire. The line was established opposite the gap, and a counter-attack by two squadrons and one company of French reserve was ordered. At 5.30 p.m. 2nd Cavalry Division reported that the counter-attack did not succeed in retaking the trench blown in, but that a new line had been established 40 yards in rear of it, and that there was no further activity on the part of the enemy. At 10 p.m. the situation was unchanged.

The Commander of the Indian Cavalry Corps expressed a strong desire that the troops under his command should gain some experience in trench warfare, Arrangements were made, therefore, with the General Officer Commanding the Indian Corps, in pursuance of which the various units of the Indian Cavalry Corps have from time to time taken a turn in the trenches, and have thereby gained some valuable experience.

4. About the end of February many vital considerations induced me to believe that a vigorous offensive movement by the Forces under my command should be planned and carried out at the earliest possible moment.

Amongst the more important reasons which convinced me of this necessity were:—The general aspect of the Allied situation throughout Europe, and particularly the marked success of the Russian Army in repelling the violent onslaughts of Marshal Von Hindenburg; the apparent weakening of the enemy in my front, and the necessity for assisting our Russian Allies to the utmost by holding as many hostile troops as possible in the Western Theatre; the efforts to this end which were being made by the French Forces at Arras and Champagne; and, perhaps the most weighty consideration of all, the need of fostering the offensive spirit in the troops under my command after the trying and possibly enervating experiences which they had gone through of a severe winter in the trenches.

In a former despatch I commented upon the difficulties and drawbacks which the winter weather in this climate imposes upon a vigorous offensive. Early in March, these difficulties became greatly lessened by the drying up of the country and by spells of brighter weather.

I do not propose in this despatch to enter at length into the considerations which actuated me in deciding upon the plan, time, and place of my attack, but Your Lordship is fully aware of these.

As mentioned above, the main attack was carried out by units of the First Army, supported by troops of the Second Army and the general reserve.

The object of the main attack was to be the capture of the village of Neuve Chapelle and the enemy's position at that point, and the establishment of our line as far forward as possible to the east of that place.

The object, nature, and scope of the attack, and instructions for the conduct of the operations were communicated by me to Sir Douglas Haig in a secret memorandum dated 19th February.

The main topographical feature of this part of the theatre is a marked ridge which runs south-west from a point 2 miles south-west of Lille to the village of Fournes, whence two spurs run out, one due west to a height known as Haut Pommereau, the other following the line of the main road to Illies.

The buildings of the village of Neuve Chapelle run along the Rue du Bois-Fauquisart-road. There is a triangle of roads just north of the village. This area consists of a few big houses, with walls, gardens, orchards, &c., and here, with the aid of numerous machine guns, the enemy had established a strong post which flanked the approaches to the village.

The Bois du Biez, which lies roughly south-east of the village of Neuve Chapelle, influenced the course of this operation.

Full instructions as to assisting and supporting the attack were issued to the Second Army.

The battle opened at 7.30 a.m. on the 10th March by a powerful artillery bombardment of the enemy's position at Neuve Chapelle. The artillery bombardment had been well prepared and was most effective, except on the extreme northern portion of the front of attack.

At 8.5 a.m. the 23rd (left) and 25th (right) Brigades of the 8th Division assaulted the German trenches on the north-west of the village.

At the same hour the Garhwal Brigade of the Meerut Division, which occupied the position to the south of Neuve Chapelle, assaulted the German trenches in its front.

The Garhwal Brigade and the 25th Brigade carried the enemy's lines of entrenchments where the wire entanglements had been almost entirely swept away by our shrapnel fire. The 23rd Brigade, however, on the north-east, was held up by the wire entanglements, which were not sufficiently cut.

At 8.5 a.m. the artillery turned on to Neuve Chapelle, and at 8.35 a.m. the advance of the infantry was continued.

The 25th and Garhwal Brigades pushed on eastward and north-eastward respectively, and succeeded in getting a footing in the village. The 23rd Brigade was still held up in front of the enemy's wire entanglements, and could not progress. Heavy losses were suffered, especially in the Middlesex Regiment and the Scottish Rifles. The progress, however, of the 25th Brigade into Neuve Chapelle immediately to the south of the 23rd Brigade had the effect of turning the southern flank of the enemy's defences in front of the 23rd Brigade.

This fact, combined with powerful artillery support, enabled the 23rd Brigade to get forward between 10 and 11 a.m., and by 11 a.m. the whole of the village of Neuve Chapelle and the roads leading northward and south-westward from the eastern end of that village were in our hands.

During this time our artillery completely cut off the village and the surrounding country from any German reinforcements which could be thrown into the fight to restore the situation by means of a curtain of shrapnel fire. Prisoners subsequently reported that all attempts at reinforcing the front line were checked.

Steps were at once taken to consolidate the position won.

Considerable delay occurred after the capture of the Neuve Chapelle position. The infantry was greatly disorganized by the violent nature of the attack and by its passage through the enemy's trenches, and the buildings of the village. It was necessary to get units to some extent together before pushing on. The telephonic communication being cut by the enemy's fire rendered communication between front and rear most difficult. The fact of the left of the 23rd Brigade having been held up had kept back the 8th Division, and had involved a portion of the 25th Brigade in fighting to the north out of its proper direction of advance. All this required

adjustment. An orchard held by the enemy north of Neuve Chapelle also threatened the flank of an advance towards the Aubers Ridge.

I am of opinion that this delay would not have occurred had the clearly expressed order of the General Officer Commanding First Army been more carefully observed.

The difficulties above enumerated might have been overcome at an earlier period of the day if the General Officer Commanding 4th Corps had been able to bring his reserve brigades more speedily into action.

As it was, the further advance did not commence before 3.30 p.m.

The 21st Brigade was able to form up in the open on the left without a shot being fired at it, thus showing that at the time the enemy's resistance had been paralyzed. The Brigade pushed forward in the direction of Moulin Du Pietre.

At first it made good progress, but was subsequently held up by the machine-gun fire from the houses and from a defended work in the line of the German entrenchments opposite the right of the 22nd Brigade.

Further to the south the 24th Brigade, which had been directed on Pietre, was similarly held up by machine-guns in the houses and trenches at the road junction 600 yards north-west of Pietre.

The 25th Brigade, on the right of the 24th, was also held up by machine-guns from a bridge held by the Germans, over the River Des Layes, which is situated to the north-west of the Bois Du Biez.

Whilst two Brigades of the Meerut Division were establishing themselves on the new line, the Dehra Dun Brigade, supported by the Jullundur Brigade of the Lahore Division, moved to the attack of the Bois Du Biez, but were held up on the line of the River Des Layes by the German post at the bridge, which enfiladed them, and brought them to a standstill.

The defended bridge over the River Des Layes and its neighbourhood immediately assumed considerable importance. Whilst artillery fire was brought to bear, as far as circumstances would permit, on this point, Sir Douglas Haig directed the 1st Corps to despatch one or more battalions of the 1st Brigade in support of the troops attacking the bridge. Three battalions were thus sent to Richebourg St. Vaast. Darkness coming on, and the enemy having brought up reinforcements, no further progress could be made, and the Indian Corps and 4th Corps proceeded to consolidate the position they had gained.

Whilst the operations which I have thus briefly recorded were going on, the 1st Corps, in accordance with orders, delivered an attack in the morning from Givenchy, simultaneously with that against Neuve Chapelle; but, as the enemy's wire was insufficiently cut, very little progress could be made, and the troops at this point did little more than hold fast the Germans in front of them.

On the following day, 11th March, the attack was renewed by the 4th and Indian Corps, but it was soon seen that a further advance would be impossible until the artillery had dealt effectively with the various houses, and defended localities which held up the troops along the entire front. Efforts were made to direct the artillery fire accordingly; but owing to the weather conditions, which did not permit of aerial observation, and the fact that nearly all the telephonic communications between the artillery observers and their batteries had been cut, it was impossible to do so with sufficient accuracy. Even when our troops which were pressing forward occupied a house here and there, it was not possible to stop our artillery fire, and the infantry had to be withdrawn.

The two principal points which barred the advance were the same as on the preceding day—namely, the enemy's position about Moulin de Pietre, and at the bridge over the River des Layes.

On the 12th March, the same unfavorable conditions as regards weather prevailed, and hampered artillery action.

Although the 4th and Indian Corps most gallantly attempted to capture the strongly fortified positions in their front, they were unable to maintain themselves, although they succeeded in holding them for some hours.

Operations on this day were chiefly remarkable for the violent counter-attacks, supported by artillery, which were delivered by the Germans, and the ease with which they were repulsed.

As most of the objects for which the operations had been undertaken had been attained, and as there were reasons why I considered it inadvisable to continue the attack at that time, I directed Sir Douglas Haig on the night of the 12th to hold and consolidate the ground which had been gained by the 4th and Indian Corps, and to suspend further offensive operations for the present.

On the morning of the 12th I informed the General Officer Commanding 1st Army that he could call on the 2nd Cavalry Division, under General Gough, for immediate support in the event of the successes of the First Army opening up opportunities for its favorable employment. This Division, and a Brigade of the North Midland Divison, which was temporarily attached to it, was moved forward for this purpose.

The 5th Cavalry Brigade, under Sir Philip Chetwode, reached the Rue Bacquerot at 4 p.m., with a view to rendering immediate support; but he was informed by the General Officer Commanding 4th Corps that the situation was not so favorable as he had hoped it would be, and that no further action by the cavalry was advisable.

General Gough's command, therefore, retired to Estaires.

The artillery of all kinds was handled with the utmost energy and skill, and rendered invaluable support in the prosecution of the attack.

The losses during these three days' fighting were, I regret to say, very severe, numbering—

190 officers and 2,337 other ranks, killed.
359 officers and 8,174 other ranks, wounded.
23 officers and 1,728 other ranks, missing.

But the results attained were, in my opinion, wide and far reaching.

The enemy left several thousand dead on the battlefield which were seen and counted; and we have positive information that upwards of 12,000 wounded were removed to the north-east and east by train.

Thirty officers and 1,657 other ranks of the enemy were captured.

I can best express my estimate of this battle by quoting an extract from a Special Order of the Day which I addressed to Sir Douglas Haig and the First Army at its conclusion:—

> "I am anxious to express to you personally my warmest appreciation of the skilful manner in which you have carried out your orders, and my fervent and most heartfelt appreciation of the magnificent gallantry and devoted, tenacious courage displayed by all ranks whom you have ably led to success and victory."

5. Some operations in the nature of holding attacks, carried out by troops of the Second

Army, were instrumental in keeping the enemy in front of them occupied, and preventing reinforcements being sent from those portions of the front to the main point of attack.

At 12.30 a.m. on the 12th March the 17th Infantry Brigade of the 4th Division, 3rd Corps, engaged in an attack on the enemy which resulted in the capture of the village of L'Epinette and adjacent farms.

Supported by a brisk fire from the 18th Infantry Brigade, the 17th Infantry Brigade, detailed for the attack, assaulted in two columns converging, and obtained the first houses of the village without much loss. The remainder of the village was very heavily wired, and the enemy got away by means of communication trenches, while our men were cutting through the wires.

The enemy suffered considerable loss; our casualties being five officers and thirty other ranks, killed and wounded.

The result of this operation was that an advance of 300 yards was made on a front of half-a-mile.

All attempts to retake this position have been repulsed with heavy loss to the enemy.

The General Officer Commanding the Second Corps arranged for an attack on a part of the enemy's position to the south-west of the village of Wytschaete, which he had timed to commence at 10 a.m. on the 12th March. Owing to dense fog, the assault could not be made until 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

It was then commenced by the Wiltshire and Worcestershire Regiments, but was so hampered by the mist and the approach of darkness that nothing more was effected than holding the enemy to his ground.

The action of St. Eloi referred to in the first paragraph of this despatch commenced at 5 p.m. on the 14th March by a very heavy cannonade, which was directed against our trenches in front of St. Eloi, the village itself, and the approaches to it. There is a large mound lying to the south-east of the village. When the artillery attack was at its height a mine was exploded under this mound, and a strong hostile infantry attack was immediately launched against the trenches and the mound.

Our artillery opened fire at once, as well as our infantry, and inflicted considerable losses on the enemy during their advance; but, chiefly owing to the explosion of the mine and the surprise of the overwhelming artillery attack, the enemy's infantry had penetrated the first line of trenches at some points. As a consequence the garrisons of other works which had successfully resisted the assault were enfiladed and forced to retire just before it turned dark.

A counter-attack was at once organized by the General Officer Commanding 82nd Brigade, under the orders of the General Officer Commanding 27th Division, who brought up a reserve brigade to support it.

The attack was launched at 2 a.m., and the 82nd Brigade succeeded in recapturing the portion of the village of St. Eloi which was in the hands of the enemy and a portion of the trenches east of it. At 3 a.m. the 80th Brigade in support took more trenches to the east and west of the village.

The counter-attack, which was well carried out under difficult conditions, resulted in the recapture of all lost ground of material importance.

It is satisfactory to be able to record that, though the troops occupying the first line of trenches were at first overwhelmed, they afterwards behaved very gallantly in the counter-attack for the recovery of the lost ground; and the following units earned and received the special commendation of the Army Commander:—The 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers, the 2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, the 1st Leinster Regiment, the 4th Rifle Brigade, and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

A vigorous attack made by the enemy on the 17th to recapture these trenches was repulsed with great loss.

Throughout the period under review night enterprises by smaller or larger patrols, which were led with consummate skill and daring, have been very active along the whole line.

A moral superiority has thus been established, and valuable information has been collected.

I cannot speak too highly of the invincible courage and the remarkable resource displayed by these patrols.

The troops of the 3rd Corps have particularly impressed me by their conduct of these operations.

6. The work of the Royal Flying Corps throughout this period, and especially during the operations of the 10th, 11th, and 12th March, was of the greatest value. Though the weather on 10th March, and on the subsequent days was very unfavorable for aerial work, on account of low-lying clouds and mist, a remarkable number of hours flying of a most valuable character were effected, and continuous and close reconnaissance was maintained over the enemy's front.

In addition to the work of reconnaissance and observation of artillery fire, the Royal Flying Corps was charged with the special duty of hampering the enemy's movements by destroying various points on his communications. The railways at Menin, Courtrai, Don, and Douai were attacked, and it is known that very extensive damage was effected at certain of these places. Part of a troop train was hit by a bomb, a wireless installation near Lille is believed to have been effectively destroyed, and a house in which the enemy had installed one of his Head-quarters was set on fire. These afford other instances of successful operations of this character. Most of the objectives mentioned were attacked at a height of only 100 to 150 feet. In one case the pilot descended to about 50 feet above the point he was attacking.

Certain new and important forms of activity which it is undesirable to specify, have been initiated and pushed forward with much vigour and success.

There have been only eight days during the period under review on which reconnaissances have not been made. A total of approximately 130,000 miles have been flown—almost entirely over the enemy's lines.

No great activity has been shown over our troops on the part of the enemy's aircraft, but they have been attacked whenever and wherever met with, and usually forced down or made to seek refuge in their own lines.

7. In my last despatch I referred to the remarkable promptitude and rapidity with which reinforcements arrived in this country from England. In connexion with this it is of interest to call attention to the fact that, in spite of the heavy casualties incurred in the fighting between the 10th and 15th March, all deficiencies, both in officers and rank and file, were made good within a few days of the conclusion of the battle.

The drafts for the Indian Contingents have much improved of late, and are now quite satisfactory.

Since the date of my last report the general health of the Army has been excellent; enteric has decreased, and there has been no recurrence on any appreciable scale of the "foot" trouble which appeared so threatening in December and January.

These results are due to the skill and energy which have characterised in a marked degree the work of the Royal Army Medical Corps throughout the campaign, under the able supervision of Surgeon-General T. J. O'Donnell, D.S.O., Deputy Director-General, Medical Services. But much credit is also due to Divisional Brigade, Regimental and Company Commanders for the close supervision which has been kept over the health of their men by seeing that the precautions laid down for the troops before entering and after leaving the trenches are duly observed, and by the establishment and efficient maintenance of bathing-places and wash-houses, and by the ingenious means universally employed throughout the Forces to maintain the cleanliness of the men, having regard both to their bodies and their clothing.

I have inspected most of these houses and establishments, and consider them models of careful organization and supervision.

I would particularly comment upon the energy displayed by the Royal Army Medical Corps in the scientific efforts they have made to discover and check disease in its earliest stages by a system of experimental research, which I think has never before been so fully developed in the field.

In this work they have been ably assisted by those distinguished members of the medical profession who are now employed as Military Medical Officers, and whose invaluable services I gratefully acknowledge.

The actual strength of the Force in the field has been increased and the health of the troops improved by a system of "convalescent" hospitals.

In these establishments slight wounds and minor ailments are treated, and men requiring attention and rest are received.

By these means efficient soldiers, whose services would otherwise be lost for a long time, are kept in the country, whilst a large number of men are given immediate relief and rest when they require it without removing them from the area of operations.

This adds materially to the fighting efficiency of the Forces.

The principal convalescent hospital is at St. Omer. It was started and organized by Colonel A. F. L. Bate, Army Medical Service, whose zeal, energy, and organizing power have rendered it a model hospital of its kind, and this example has materially assisted in the efficient organization of similar smaller establishments at every Divisional Headquarters.

8. I have already commented upon the number and severity of the casualties in action which have occurred in the period under report. Here once again I have to draw attention to the excellent work done by Surgeon-General O'Donnell and his officers. No organization could excel the efficiency of the arrangements—whether in regard to time, space, care, and comfort, or transport—which are made for the speedy evacuation of the wounded.

I wish particularly to express my deep sense of the loss incurred by the Army in General, and by the Forces in France in particular, in the death of Brigadier-General J. E. Gough, V.C., C.M.G., A.D.C., late Brigadier-General, General Staff, First Army, which occurred on 22nd February as a result of a severe wound received on the 20th February, when inspecting the trenches of the 4th Corps.

I always regarded General Gough as one of our most promising military leaders of the future. His services as a Staff Officer throughout the campaign have been invaluable, and I had already brought his name before Your Lordship for immediate promotion.

I can well understand how deeply these casualties are felt by the nation at large, but each daily report shows clearly that they are being endured on at least an equal scale by all the combatants engaged throughout Europe, friends and foes alike.

In war as it is to-day between civilized nations, armed to the teeth with the present deadly rifle and machine-gun, heavy casualties are absolutely unavoidable. For the slightest undue exposure the heaviest toll is exacted.

The power of defence conferred by modern weapons is the main cause of the long duration of the battles of the present day, and it is this fact which mainly accounts for such loss and waste of life.

Both one and the other can, however, be shortened and lessened if attacks can be supported by the most efficient and powerful force of artillery available; but an almost unlimited supply of ammunition is necessary and a most liberal discretionary power as to its use must be given to the Artillery Commanders.

I am confident that this is the only means by which great results can be obtained with a minimum of loss.

9. On the 15th February the Canadian Division began to arrive in this country. I inspected the Division, which was under the command of Lieutenant-General E. A. H. Alderson, C.B., on 20th February.

They presented a splendid and most soldierlike appearance on parade. The men were of good physique, hard and fit. I judged by what I saw of them that they were well trained, and quite able to take their places in the line of battle.

Since then the Division has thoroughly justified the good opinion I formed of it.

The troops of the Canadian Division were first attached for a few days by brigades for training in the 3rd Corps trenches under Lieutenant-General Sir William Pulteney, who gave me such an excellent report of their efficiency that I was able to employ them in the trenches early in March.

During the Battle of Neuve Chapelle they held a part of the line allotted to the First Army, and, although they were not actually engaged in the main attack, they rendered valuable help by keeping the enemy actively employed in front of their trenches.

All the soldiers of Canada serving in the Army under my command have so far splendidly upheld the traditions of the Empire, and will, I feel sure, prove to be a great source of additional strength to the Forces in this country.

In former despatches I have been able to comment very favorably upon the conduct and bearing of the Territorial Forces throughout the operations in which they have been engaged.

As time goes on, and I see more and more of their work, whether in the trenches or engaged in more active operations, I am still further impressed with their value.

Several battalions were engaged in the most critical moments of the heavy fighting which occurred in the middle of March, and they acquitted themselves with the utmost credit.

Up till lately the troops of the Territorial Force in this country were only employed by battalions, but for some weeks past I have seen formed divisions working together, and I have every hope that their employment in the larger units will prove as successful as in the smaller.

These opinions are fully borne out by the result of the close inspection which I have recently made of the North Midland Division, under Major-General Hon. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley, and the 2nd London Division, under Major-General Barter.

10. General Baron Von Kaulbars, of the Russian General Staff, arrived at my Headquarters on the 18th March. He was anxious to study our aviation system, and I gave him every opportunity of doing so.

The Bishop of London arrived here with his Chaplain on Saturday, 27th March, and left on Monday, 5th April.

During the course of his visit to the Army His Lordship was at the front every day, and I think I am right in saying that there was scarcely a unit in the command which was not at one time or another present at his services or addresses.

Personal fatigue and even danger were completely ignored by His Lordship. The Bishop held several services virtually under shell fire, and it was with difficulty that he could be prevented from carrying on his ministrations under rifle fire in the trenches.

I am anxious to place on record my deep sense of the good effect produced throughout the Army by this self-sacrificing devotion on the part of the Bishop of London, to whom I feel personally very deeply indebted.

I have once more to remark upon the devotion to duty, courage, and contempt of danger which has characterised the work of the Chaplains of the Army throughout this campaign.

11. The increased strength of the Force and the gradual exhaustion of the local resources have necessitated a corresponding increase of our demands on the Line of Communications, since we are now compelled to import many articles which in the early stages could be obtained by local purchase. The Directorates concerned have, however, been carefully watching the situation, and all the Administrative Services on the Line of Communications have continued to work with smoothness and regularity, in spite of the increased pressure thrown upon them. In this connexion I wish to bring to notice the good service which has been rendered by the Staff of the Base Ports.

The work of the Railway Transport Department has been excellently carried out, and I take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the valuable service rendered by the French railway authorities generally, and especially by Colonel Ragueneau, late Director des Chemins de Fer, Lieutenant-Colonel Le Henaff, Directeur des Chemins de Fer, Lieutenant-Colonel Dumont, Commissaire Militaire, Chemin de Fer du Nord, and Lieutenant-Colonel Frid, Commissaire Regulateur, Armée Anglaise.

The Army Postal Service has continued to work well, and at the present time a letter posted in London is delivered at General Headquarters, or at the Headquarters of the Armies and Army Corps on the following evening, and reaches an addressee in the trenches on the second day after posting. The delivery of parcels has also been accelerated, and is carried out with regularity and despatch.

12. His Majesty the King of the Belgians visited the British lines on 8th February, and inspected some of the units in reserve behind the trenches.

During the last two months I have been much indebted to His Majesty and his gallant Army for valuable assistance and co-operation in various ways.

13. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is the bearer of this despatch.

His Royal Highness continues to make most satisfactory progress. During the Battle of Neuve Chapelle he acted on my General Staff as a Liaison Officer. Reports from the General Officers Commanding Corps and Divisions to which he has been attached agree in commending the thoroughness with which he performs any work entrusted to him.

I have myself been very favorably impressed by the quickness with which His Royal Highness has acquired knowledge of the various branches of the service, and the deep interest he has always displayed in the comfort and welfare of the men.

His visits to the troops, both in the field and in hospitals, have been greatly appreciated by all ranks.

His Royal Highness did duty for a time in the trenches with the battalion to which he belongs.

14. In connexion with the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, I desire to bring to Your Lordship's special notice the valuable services of General Sir Douglas Haig, K.C.B., K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O., A.D.C., Commanding the First Army.

I am also much indebted to the able and devoted assistance I have received from Lieutenant-General Sir William Robertson, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the General Staff, in the direction of all the operations recorded in this despatch.

I have many other names to bring to notice for valuable, gallant, and distinguished service during the period under review, and these will form the subject of a separate report at an early date.

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,

J. D. P. FRENCH,
Field-Marshal,
Commanding-in-Chief,
The British Army in the Field.

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