

H.Q.

SUBJECT

FIRST ARMY

OPERATIONS - REPORT ON

26TH August - 11th November

1918

R E P O R T  
O N  
F I R S T   A R M Y   O P E R A T I O N S

26th august - 11th November 1918

This general account is compiled from the records at Headquarters First Army and does not give details of the various actions of Corps, Divisions, Brigades and smaller units.

Its object is to give a consecutive narrative of the operations of the Army as a whole, emphasising the chief strategical and tactical features. Details of the work of the Super Heavy Artillery, Royal Engineers, machine Gun Corps, 1st Brigade, R.A.F., Railway and Road Construction Troops, Supply Troops, etc., are therefore omitted, although their co-operation was unceasing and essential to the success of the operations.

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1St ARMY G.S. AUGUST 1918.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page.</u>
PART I ..... The second Battle of Arras.....	1.
The Attack on the Queant – Drocourt line .....	10.
PART II ..... Events during September.....	18.
PARTIII The Crossing of the Canal du Nord and the Battle of Cambrai <sup>1</sup> -	
1st Phase	22.
2nd Phase	28.
PART IV Operations North of the Seneffe, 1st - 16th October.	38.
Part V From Cambrai and Douai to Valenciennes	<a href="#">44.</a>
Part VI The advance from the Escaut to Mons and the conclusion of hostilities	<a href="#">67.</a>

APPENDICES

MAPS

MAP “L”



Secret.

WAR DIARY.

1ST ARMY.

AUGUST 1918

REPORT ON OPERATIONS.

PART I - The 2nd Battle of ARRAS

(.....)

(See General Map "K" and Map of " German retreat from 1st Oct. to 25th October 1918")

PLANS. On the 5th October orders were received from G.H.Q. that the main attack would be resumed on 6th October by the First French Army east of St. Quentin and that this would be followed on 7th October by an attack on a wide front between ST Quentin and Cambrai by the 3rd and 4th British Armies. In this second attack the 1st Army was to co-operate north of Cambrai. Orders were therefore issued on the same day by the 1st Army to the VIII, XXII and Canadian Corps, 1st Bde. R.A.F., and 3rd Cav. Bde. For the following operations to be carried out on the 7th October.

- Canadian Corps. (1) To carry out increased arty. Activity and vigorous patrolling north of the Escaut Canal, so as to confuse the enemy as to the the<sup>2</sup> limit of the front of attack and to tie down his troops
- (2). To attack and secure the passage of the Escaut Canal at Ramillies as soon as information was received that the 3rd Army had reached the high ground about Awoingt. S.E. of Cambrai, an operation.
- (3). To carry out with the 11th Div. An operation already planned for clearing the high ground between Abancourt and Aubencheul-au-Bac.
- XXII Corps. To carry out active bombardment and harassing fire along the Sensee River and Trinquis Brook<sup>3</sup>, so as to simulate an attack on its front and co-operate in the attack of the 11th Division.
- VIII Corps. To carry out the operation (already arranged) to capture Biache St. Vaast and the Fresnes - Rouvroy Line on its front; and to continue to gain ground east of Lens.

On the 6th Oct. orders were received from the G.H.Q. that the attack of the 6th and 4th Armies would be postponed 24 hours, i.e. until 8th October. 1st Army operations were consequently also postponed with the exception of that of the 8th Div. (VIII Corps), which took place as arranged on the 7th Oct. and was successfully carried out as already described in Part IV. The operations of the 11th Div. For the purpose of clearing the high ground between Abancourt and Aubencheul-au-bac was also successfully completed on the 7th October by the enterprise of patrols of the 11th and 56th Divs. A short account of this action and of the feint attacks of the XXII Corps along the Sensee and Trinquis on the 8th Oct. has already been given (pp. 36, 37 and 40), so it is only necessary now to turn the events that took place on the front of the Canadian Corps on the Escaut.

#### EVENTS

8th October. On the 8th Oct. the Canadian Corps opened a heavy bombardment along the front between Cambrai and the Sensee at 4.30 am. At which hour the Third Army launched their attack from Cambrai southwards; the 4th Armies commenced their attack at 5.30 am. The attack of these two Armies was extremely successful and by noon the left of the 3rd Army was at Niergnies, but in consequence of the hard fighting experienced there by XXII Corps and at Wambaix by the VI Corps on their right, it was not

From Cambrai and Douai, to Valenciennes

found possible to capture the Awoingt Heights during the day the attack of the Canadian Corps against the crossings at Ramillies was to be contingent<sup>4</sup> on the capture of those heights, and consequently no movement was made this day by the 2nd Canadian Div. which had been detailed for the operation. During the afternoon there was a marked decrease of hostile arty. fire on the front of the Canadian Corps.

Orders were received from G.H.Q. during the afternoon that the operations would be continued on the 9th and that the 1st Army would secure the crossings about Ramillies and co-operate with the 3rd Army in the attack on Awoingt. At 6.40 pm. orders were issued to the Canadian Corps that the attack on Ramillies would be made at an hour to be fixed by the Corps Commander. After the crossing over the Escaut had been effected the Canadian Corps was to establish itself on the high ground east and south-east of Escaudoeuvres with a view to joining hands with the left of the 3rd Army which had been ordered to exploit toward the Cambrai - Le Cateau road and Cauroir. The 3rd Cav. Bde. which had been moved up to the valley of the Hirondelle near Pronville was to be ready to move at two hours' notice after 7 am.

As the troops required for the capture of the second objective of the Canadian Corps - the high ground S.W. of Escaudoeuvres - could not commence to move up until crossings had been obtained over the Canal and would have to traverse the open ground between Tilloy and Ramillies, fully exposed to the enemy on the slopes above Escaudoeuvres, the Corps commander decided to force the crossings by night so that the approach march could be completed before dawn.

EVENTS At 1.30 am. the 2nd Canadian Div. attacked and captured Oct. 9th Ramillies, only meeting with slight opposition.

A bridgehead was also secured at Pont d'Aire and troops began to cross quickly over the Escaut. At the same time the 3rd Canadian Div. passed troops over the canal into Cambrai near Bapaume Road, across the Lock, which although destroyed, still afforded an easy means of passage for infantry. Very few of the enemy were found in Cambrai and these were quickly disposed of. By 8 am. the town was reported clear of the enemy, and the 3rd Canadian Div. joined hands with the XVII Corps, whose troops had entered from the south. By 10 am. the Canadian and XVII Corps were in touch north of Awoingt.

Resistance<sup>5</sup> rapidly diminished in front of the 2nd Canadian Div. on both sides of the Escaut, and by 8 am. the right of the Div. had seized the line of Cambrai - Denain railway at Alouette, immediately south of Escaudoeuvres - while on the west of the canal Esars, Cuvillers and Bantigny were also in our hands. The high ground in the angle between the Escaut and the Sensee to which the enemy had clung so obstinately and which had been the scene of such severe fighting since 29th September, thus finally passed into our hands without difficulty. The withdrawal of the enemy from the area between the two rivers was confirmed by reports that he had destroyed his bridges.

NEAR ESTRUN WASHES

AND HEM-LENGLET

The 3rd and 4th Armies on our right were reaping the full measure of their success of the previous day: in front of them the enemy was retiring rapidly, offering only slight resistance with weak rearguards and abandoning many guns and machine guns. Orders were issued by 1st Army at 10.48 am. that the

ORDERS 10.45 am. Canadian Corps was to occupy the area between the Escaut and the Sensee and to secure the crossing over both the canals and at the same time to operate east of the Escaut so as to cover the left flank of the 3rd Army, which was directly on Avesnes-les-Aubert. XXII Corps was ordered to relieve the

Canadian Corps on the defensive flank as far east as Fressies and to move the 49th Div. in Army res. to the area between Epinoy and Marquion, so as to be available for early employment.

EVENTS. During the afternoon the 3rd Canadian Div. occupied the railway east of Cambrai between the Cambrai - Le Cateau and Cambrai - Saulzoir roads. They were relieved on this front during the evening by the 24th Div. (XVII Corps) who extended their front northwards to the Cambrai - Saulzoir road, where they joined hands with the 2nd Canadian Div. The 3rd Canadian Div. were then withdrawn west of Cambrai into Corps Reserve. The 2nd Canadian Div. had continued to enlarge their bridgehead east of the Escaut and by nightfall had captured Escaudoeuvres and the high ground east of it, while their advanced guards were in touch with weak rearguards holding a "shell-hole" line west of Cagnoncles - Naves - Thun St. Martin. West of the Escaut the spur overlooking the Sensee river between Paillencourt and Fressies had been occupied as well as the villages of Thun Leveque and Paillencourt.

No time was lost in establishing communications across the Escaut and at 6 pm. the Canadian Engineers had thrown six pontoon and two heavy bridges across the Canal between Cambrai and Ramillies.

Only about 300 prisoners were captured during the day and it was evident from the nature of the resistance encountered that only rearguards had been engaged. Prisoners stated that our attack at 1.30 am had anticipated the enemy's withdrawal which had been ordered to commence from Cambrai and Cuvillers heights between 2.30 am. and 3.30 am. From the prisoners it was possible to make an estimate of the German dispositions on the southern portion of the army front. From the Cambrai-Saulzoir road to Aubigny-au-bac on the Sensee there appeared to be five divs. in line (35th, 220th, 10th Ersatz, 6th and 48th Res. Div.) while two other Divs (1st Guard Res. and 15th Res.) were holding some line in rear. Three divs. (49th Res. 234th. and 207th) were also believed to be in the Valenciennes area. All these divs., with the exception of the 16th Res. and 10th Ersatz, were known to be of low strength in consequence of the hard fighting they had lately been through.

ORDERS. At 10.40 pm orders were issued by 1st Army that the Canadian Corps would continue to operate on 10th Oct. to cover the left flank of the 3rd Army and to clear the angle between the Escaut and the Sensee Rivers. Orders were also issued for the 49th Div. To move at the area immediately west and northwest of Cambrai, and the 51st div. to between Bourlon Wood and St Oille; both these divs. were still retained in Army Reserve.

EVENTS The Canadian Corps continued their advance at 8 am Oct. 10th. and at first met practically no resistance. By noon the 3rd Can. Div. had captured Naves and Thun St. Martin and their adv. guards had reached the line of the Brolin river between the Cambrai - Saulzoir road and the Escaut. West of the Escaut the 11th Div. captured Estrun and completed the clearing of the angle between the rivers with the exception of Hem Lenglet and Fressies, which were still held by strong rearguards.

In the afternoon the resistance became stiffer in front of the 2nd Can. Div. and they were held up at dark on the slopes of the high grounds S.E. of Iwuy. In the evening the 40th Div. released from Army Res. and allotted to the Can. Corps, moved up from Cambrai and took over the southern half of the front occupied by the 2nd Can. Div. namely from the Saulzoir - Cambrai road to the Iwuy - Avesnes-le-Sec road. The 56th Div. (XXII Corps)

relieved/



relieved the 11th Div. (Canadian Corps) on the defensive flank as far as east of Fressies.

On the right of the Canadian Corps. the 3rd Army again made great progress and were engaged with enemy rearguards on the general line Le Cateau - Boussieres.

ORDERS At 5.50 pm. orders were issued that the Can. Corps was to continue to protect the left flank of the 3rd Army which was advancing on the line of the Selle River. The objectives of the Corps would be Saulzoir - Avesnes-le-Sec- Lieu St Amand.

EVENTS During the night 10th/11th and early morning the 11th Div. captured Hem Lenglet after hard fighting in which over 70 of the enemy were killed and a few prisoners taken. The final clearing of the angle between the Escaut and the Sensee was completed later in the day by the taken of Fressies by the 56th Div. here also about 30 prisoners were taken.

The Canadian Corps resumed its advance at 9.0 am. with the 49th Div. and 2nd Canadian Div. but met with heavier resistance than had been experienced during the two previous days. Since noon of the 8th October the enemy's arty. fire had been slight, but this day he at once opened with heavy well organized arty. barrage; nevertheless Iwuy was early captured by the 2nd Canadian Div. and the 49th Div. advanced slightly toward Avesnes-le-Sec. A heavy counter attack supported by five tanks was made about 11 am. against the junction of the two divs. just south of Iwuy and though all the tanks were knocked out by our arty. or forced to withdraw and the attack was repulsed, yet our line was slightly driven back. A further counter-attack was made during the afternoon but this time without any success, and at nightfall the Canadian Corps outposts were on a line running northwards from the Saulzoir road, immediately north of Rieux, to the east and north of Iwuy and Iwuy Chateau and thence to the Escaut.

To turn for a moment to the northern front of the Army, it should be remembered that on this day the 8th Div. attacked and captured the Queant - Drocourt Line north of the Scarpe and that the whole of the VII Corps subsequently advanced on the whole of its front from the Scarpe to Noyelles (See p.41)

At 5 p.m. the Canadian<sup>6</sup> Corps and XXII Corps changed places; the XXII Corps taking over command of the front from the Cambrai-Saulzoir road to Iwuy (inclusive) and the Canadian Corps of the defensive flank along the Escaut and the Sensee Rivers and across to the Scarpe. The 51st Div. relieving the 2nd Canadian Div. which was withdrawn into Corps Reserve.

ORDERS At 7.5 pm orders were issued by 1st Army that the XXII and Can. Corps would continue to operate on the 12th so as to cover the flank of the 3rd Army

and to gain the general line Saulzoir - Avesnes-le-Sec - Lieu St. Amand. The boundary between the XXII and Canadian Corps was to be the Iwuy - Louches railway as far as it s crossing over the Escaut, west of Neuville-sur-l'Escaut, and thence along the Escaut.

EVENTS The 12th Oct. witnessed a considerable advance on the whole front of the army excepted along the Sensee between Estrun and Palluel. At an early hour air patrols reported that the enemy had withdrawn on the front of the XXII Corps to the river Selle as far north as Haspres and thence on to the line Haspres - Lieu St. Amand. Adv. guards of the 49th and 51st Divs. immediately followed up this retirement and made good progress; though continuously engaged by rearguards/

From Cambrai and Douai, to Valenciennes.

rearguards who were in sufficient strength to compel the main bodies to deploy. On the right of the 49th Div. advanced about three miles and captured Villers-en-Cauchies after considerable fighting. After passing through the village the Div. gained the spur immediately to the north east of it and the line of the railway running north as far as Avesnes-le-Sec Station; from this line they were unable to advance during the rest of the day as the enemy developed considerable strength on the ridge which runs in a northwesterly<sup>7</sup> direction from Saulzoir, on the Selle River. to Lieu St. Amand on the Escaut. On the left the 51st Div. Debouching from Iwuy, rapidly crossed the Iwuy - Louches railway but had to fight hard up to the bare slopes to Avesnes-le-Sec and towards Lieu-St.Amand. A footing was gained in Avesnes-le-Sec, where the 51st Div. and 49th Div. joined hands, and on the spur northwest of it, but no further progress could be made against Lieu St. Amand which formed a strong bastion on the Escaut protecting the right flank of the German position on the Saulzoir Lieu St Amand ridge.

The 2nd Canadian Div. who were advancing between the Iwuy - Louches railway and the Escaut, on the left of the 51st Div. were similarly checked before Lieu St Amand. At nightfall this div. was astride the Cambrai - Valenciennes road north of Hordain and in touch with the 56th Div. on the railway a thousand yards southwest of Lieu St. Amand.

It will be remembered that progress was rapid this day on the northern portion of the Army front, where the Canadian Corps reached the Sensee Canal throughout its length between Palluel and Corbehem and the VIII Corps were approaching Douai and the Haute Deule Canal.

The 3rd Army on our right reached the Selle River near Solesmes, where the enemy was found in considerable strength; its left Corps (XVII) was in touch with the 49th Div. southeast of Villers-en-Cauchies.

ORDERSOCT. 12th.

At 7.0 pm. Army Orders were issued that the

XXII Corps would continue on the 13th to

cover the left flank of the 3rd Army., which was

to operate so as to secure crossings over the selle<sup>8</sup>. The XXII Corps were to secure as objectives Saulzoir and the ridge running then northwest by Lieu St. Amand to the Escaut Canal, pushing adv. parties across the Selle. Canadian Corps was ordered to take every opportunity of pushing posts across the Sensee east of Palluel with a view to obtaining bridgeheads from which to operate to the north should the enemy show signs of withdrawing on this front. VIII Corps was to continue the advance on the Scarpe deviation and the Haute Deule canal.

The 63rd Div. began to arrive in the St. Pol area during this day, on transfer from the 3rd Army, and was ordered to be held in Army res. The XXII Corps moved up the 4th Div in Corps Res. with its head east of Escaudoeuvres.

EVENTSOct. 13th.

During the night 12/13th patrols of the 49th

Div. reached the River Selle, south of Saulzoir but their attempts to effect a crossing were

prevented by heavy machine gun fire from the right bank. At 9 am. the XXII Canadian Corps attacked on the whole front between Saulzoir and the Escaut. Fighting was heavy

throughout/

throughout the day; the enemy was well supported by arty. and and<sup>9</sup> only gave ground slowly. On the extreme right the 40th Div. drove the enemy out of the western portion of Saulzoir and reached the left bank of the Selle, which runs through the centre of the village. The Germans still hold the right bank strongly and it was impossible to effect a crossing. This div. also established themselves in the small woods 1,500 yards N.W. of Saulzoir and on the east crest of the Saulzoir – St Amand ridge as far north as Avesnes-le-sec – Haspres road. Attempts to advance down the slopes to the Selle were prevented by heavy machine gun fire from the high ground on the right bank of the river. At 11 am. a heavy counter-attack supported by tanks was made from the direction of Haspres against the left of the 49th Div. but was repulsed and our troops maintained their hold on the ridge. On the left of the attack both the 51st and 2nd Canadian Divs. were early checked by heavy fire from the commanding position of Lieu St Amand and the ridge to the south of it. Avesnes-le-Sec was cleared by the 51st Div., which also gained the high ground immediately to the north east, of it, but little advance could be made beyond this over the open ground swept by flanking fire from Lieu St. Amand. By the evening the left of the 51st Div. succeeded by hard fighting<sup>10</sup> in establishing itself in the hollow road on the southern edge of Lieu St Amand, but could make no further progress. About 200 prisoners were captured on the front of the XXII Corps during the day and three German Divs. (10th Res. 10th Ersatz and 200th) were identified in the front line between the Cambrai-Saulzoir road and the Escaut. The dispositions of the enemy on the whole of the Army Front, as far as could be ascertained, are shown on Map "S". On the northern front of the First Army the advance has slowed down during the day, although progress was still being made towards Douai and the Haute Deule Canal.

The long flank of the 1st Army joining the head of the attack, in co-operation with the 3rd Army, to the holding front on the water line which had been such a distinctive feature of the operations since their commencement on the 26th August, attained its greatest length on this day. It now stretched from Saulzoir on the Selle to Palluel on the Sensee, a distance of 16 miles, practically at right angles to the front of the main British advance. It is interesting to note that throughout the advance this flank had coincided with the line adopted and entrenched by Villars as his "No<sup>11</sup> plus ultra" line to oppose the Duke of Marlborough in the latter's final campaign in 1711. Villars' line ran along the Escaut from Valenciennes, by Bouchain as far as Estrun, thence by the Scarpe past Arras and across to the Canche and so to the sec<sup>12</sup>. Between Bouchain (on the opposite bank to Lieu St Amand) and Arras the lines are identical and the historical coincidence is carried out even to the bridgeheads. Villars, in 1711, held bridgeheads at Aubigny-au-Bac and Arleux; the 1st Army, in 1918, at Aubigny-au-Bac and Sailly-en-Ostrevent, within 5 miles of Arleux.

EVENTS

14th Oct.

No orders for operations on the 14th were issued by the 1st Army and operations south of the Escaut, were confined to

attempts by patrols to find opportunities for crossing the Selle. The enemy was found however to be still holding his positions firmly. On the right of the XXII Corps the 49th Div. found it impossible to maintain their position in the Western portion of Saulzoir without heavy casualties and therefore withdrew it slightly during the night 13/14th.

Events

South of

The Escaut

Oct. 15th-

19th.

On the 15th October, however, patrols again entered the western portion of the village and established posts which were held continuously until the 19th October, when the Selle River was crossed throughout its length, as will be seen later. During this period a considerable number of French inhabitants were evacuated from the villages. There was no material change of the front south the Escaut between 14th and 19th October. The enemy continued to hold his positions on the right bank of the Selle as far north as Haspres and thence across the high ground to the Escaut at Lieu St. Amand. Plans (which are described below) were prepared by the 3rd and 1st Armies for an organized attack to be made on this position on the 20th October and preparations were pressed on to this end.

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent operations

Orders

Oct. 15th.

On the 15th Oct. secret instructions were issued by 1st Army to the following effect. No further organized attack was intended by the 3rd Army until 20th October unless the strategic situation demanded it. XXII Corps was to be prepared to act in conjunction with the XVII Corps (Third Army) so as to cover the left flank of that army by advancing its right in conformity with any forward movement of the XVII Corps. Canadian and VII Corps were to keep touch with the enemy on the line of the Escaut - Sensee - Scarpe deviation and Haute Deule Canals and were to occupy the far side of the canals if opportunity offered. All Corps were to concentrate on re-organisation of formations, restoration of communications; and improvement of arrangements for

Orders

Oct. 17th.

supply and ammunition supply.

At 8.15 on 17th October 1st Army Order was

issued to the following effect. The advance south of the Escaut Canal was to be resumed on 20th October. The 3rd Army would operate to capture the high ground east of the River Selle and the XXII Corps. so as to cover the left flank of that Army, would capture Saulzoir and Haspres and the high ground beyond and the eastern slopes of the ridge between Haspres and Lieu St. Amand, which village was not included in the objectives. The boundary between the 1st and 3rd Armies was to run from the main road 1,000 yards of Saulzoir, in a northeasterly direction, passing 500 yards south of Verchain and Querenaing. The attack was to be carried out as a surprise without preliminary bombardment.

Orders

Oct. 19th.

The above order was amplified by further orders

Issued from the 1st Army at 1.0 am. on 19th Oct. which directed that XII and Canadian Corps advance would be continued after the objectives detailed in the previous order had been captured. The objective of this further advance was the northern crest of the high ground running roughly parallel to and south of the Escaut and included the villages of Querenaing - Monchaux-sur-Ecaillon - Noyelles-sur-Selle - Lieu St. Amand. The 3rd Army intended to cross the river Ecaillon with eventual objectives the villages of Beaudignies and

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent operations.

(cont)

Ruesnes. XXII and Canadian Corps were to be prepared to carry out the attack to gain the above objectives on 24th October.

Principal  
changes in  
disposition  
Oct. 15th.  
to 19th.

The 4th Canadian Div. relieved the 56th Div. in the Canadian Corps and went into the line between the 2nd and the 1st Canadian Div. The 56th Div. was then placed in Army Res. and went into rest in the Arras area. The 4th Div. relieved the 49th Div on the right of the XXII Corps and the latter Div. moved into Corps Res. in the Escaudoeuvres area.

Events  
North  
of the  
Sensee  
Oct. 17th

On the 14th Oct. the 2nd British Army and Belgian Army launched a further attack towards Courtrai from the positions they had gained east of Ypres on the 28th and 29th September. This attack met with great success and by the 16th Oct. had outflanked Lille, Tourcoing and Roubaix from the North. Two deep salients had thus been driven into the enemy's lines south and north of his Douai-Lille front and the northern salient further threatened his hold on the Belgian coast. The effect was apparent at once. On the 17th Oct. the Belgians occupied Ostend, the 5th Army, Lille and the 1st Army (VIII Corps) Douai.

On the whole of the Army front between the Sensee and Dourges signs of the enemy's withdrawal were observed soon after daylight on the 17th. The 1st Canadian Div. crossed the Sensee canal on its whole length between Arleux and Corbehem and, opposed only by weak rearguards, gained the line of the road from Cantin to Douai. On the VIII Corps front the 8th Div. was held up opposite Douai by machine gun fire from the east bank of the Canal until noon. When the advance of the 1st Canadian Div. on the south made itself felt. The enemy then withdrew from Douai which was entered at 3.0 pm. by the 2nd Rifle Bde. and 2nd Middlesex Regt., who found the town empty of the enemy and of inhabitants.

A Considerable portion of the town was on fire and practically all the houses had been stripped bare of their content by the enemy. The fires were not got under till the evening of the 18th October by which time great damage had been done in the centre of the town. North of Douai the 12th Div. crossed the Haute Deule Canal on its whole front and reached the line Roostwarrenden - Malbois - Raimbeaucourt. Three pontoon bridges were thrown across the canal between Auby and Pont-a-Sault and three trestle bridges were under construction by the evening between Courcelettes<sup>13</sup> and Doignies.

H.Q. of the 1st Army moved this day from Ranchicourt to Duisans.

Events  
Oct. 18th.

On the 18th October the enemy's retreat became rapid on the whole front north of the Sensee. The 4th Canadian Div. crossed the Sensee at Fressies and Aubigny during the night without opposition, and by the morning of the 18th October had occupied the high around about Gressain and Villers-au-Tertre, where it was in touch with the first Canadian Div. on its left. Further to the east the 4th Canadian Div also crossed at Wasnes-aubac and occupied the ridge northwest of the village in the face of slight resistance from small parties of the enemy. At daybreak the advance was resumed by the Canadian and VIII Corps and met with practically no resistance. Weak rearguards were encountered, but these were easily disposed of by advanced guards with little delay. The enemy abandoned

The/

Typist (Miss huckle) found that pages 52 and 53

Were missing from the original but in error a

duplicate (pages 32 and 33) had been inserted instead.  
Being a duplicate it is not repeated herewith.

The missing pages were not anywhere else. Looked through  
the whole of it thoroughly but they were not there.

Hence a break in the narrative.

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops. (cont)

Operations passed through Bois De Vicoigne, which was found to be less of an obstacle than had been anticipated, as the enemy had felled most of the timber. By the evening the Canadian Corps outposts were on the line; Trith – la Sentinelle – Aubry – Eastern edge of Boise<sup>14</sup> De Vicoigne.

On the VIII Corps front the 4th Hussars captured St. Amand at noon, but were subsequently held up east of the town on the Scarpe River, the bridges across which were destroyed. Inftry. of the advanced guards of the 8th and 18th Divs. reached the line St. Amand – Lecelles.

About 70 prisoners were captured during the day.

The 2nd Canadian Div. was withdrawn into Corps Res. on the 21st October, being relieved by the 4th Canadian Div. which extended its right by the Escaut.

Orders Orders were issued by 1st Army to the following

Oct. 21st. effect :- 3rd Army intended to attack on the 24th October the objective of its left (XVII Corps) being the high ground two miles east of Ecaillon, with its left on the hill south of Querenaing. The XXII Corps would attack in conjunction with the operations of the 3rd Army with general objectives the hill south of Querenaing – the high ground northwest of Querenaing – Maing – the Escaut South of Trith, which was already in possession of the Canadian Corps. Success would be exploited towards the Le Quesnoy – Valenciennes Railway. The Canadian Corps was to assist the XXII Corps with arty. fire from the north of the River and, together with the VIII Corps, was to continue the advance so as to reach the Escaut. Bridgeheads were to be secured over the Escaut if opportunity offered, but no advance was to be made by main bodies east of the River without orders from Army H.Q.

Events. During the night 21/22nd October both divs. of

Oct. 22nd. The XXII Corps advanced their outposts to within 800 yards of Verchain on the Ecaillon and thence along the sunken road from Bouveneule<sup>15</sup> farm within a hundred yards of the River to the western portion of Thiant. During the day the Canadian Corps encountered no opposition on the front of its right Div. (4th Canadian) until it reached the suburbs of Valenciennes, when it was held up in St. Vaast, Anzin, and Beuvrages.

The 3rd Canadian Div. from reserve passed through the 1st Canadian Div. which was now withdrawn into Corps res., and advanced without difficulty through the greater portion of the Forêt de Raismes. By the evening its right rested on the edge of the forest west of Bruay and its left on the railway near Suchemont. Like that of Vicoigne, the forest of Raismes presented no real obstacle, as it had been thoroughly cleared of timber and undergrowth by the enemy.

During the day the enemy commenced to shell St Amand vigorously with heavy calibres. He had filled the town previous to its evacuation with inhabitants from the surrounding neighbourhood and had also put into it about 2,000 invalid and infirm persons from the Douai area. In the German wireless of the 22nd it was stated it had been found necessary to shell the town as the British had posted machine guns on the church tower. This was a false statement, such action would have been quite useless, as on the only day on which the enemy were within range of small arm fire, viz. 21st October, it was very misty and impossible to see more than one hundred yards.

The VIII Corps during the day reached the line La Croisette – Curray<sup>16</sup> – Nivelles<sup>17</sup> – Flagnies where it was in touch with the Fifth Army.



Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)EventsOct. 23rd.

It was thus echeloned behind the left of the Can. Corps who early on the morning of the 23rd Oct. completely cleared the Foret Du<sup>18</sup> Raismes on its front. Instruction was therefore telephoned to the VIII Corps at 9 am. to push on so as to come up in line with the Can. Corps, it being unlikely that much resistance would be met until the Escaut was reached. There had been considerable machine gun fire on the VIII Corps front across the Scarpe canal during the night, but on the morning of the 23rd Oct. this died away and the 8th Div. crossed the Canal without difficulty. By the evening the 8th Div. had passed through the foret de Raismes and were in touch with the left of the Canadian Corps south of Odoeex<sup>19</sup> which was still held by the enemy. North<sup>20</sup> of Odoeex<sup>21</sup> advanced guards reached Haute Rive<sup>22</sup> and found the enemy holding strong bridgeheads covering the crossings over the Escaut at Hergnils<sup>23</sup>. The Canadian Corps reached the left bank of the Escaut throughout its front as far north as Thiers<sup>24</sup>, except where the enemy held bridgeheads covering the three main crossings into Valenciennes. At Fresnes also the Germans held a bridgehead covering Conde and Vieux Conde. There was no change on the front of the XXII Corps south the Escaut.

OrdersOct. 23rd.

The 3rd and 4th Armies delivered an attack on Le Cateau - Solesies<sup>25</sup> front which met with complete success. The 3rd Army consequently at 12.25 pm. Amplified its orders to XVII Corps for the attack on the 29th Oct. and ordered it to exploit towards Sepmeries. XXII Corps was informed of this change at 3.0 pm. During the evening of the 23rd Oct. the XXII Corps reported that there were signs of the enemy retiring along the Ecaillon, as a result of the success of the 3rd Army. Orders were then issued by 1st Army at 8.20 pm. that the exploitation of the XXII Corps as ordered on the 21st October, would be extended if the situation was favourable, so as to keep touch with the enemy. The right of the Corps was to be directed on the Artres - Preseau road. XXII Corps was also to take any opportunity of pushing troops towards Valenciennes along the south bank of the Escaut, while the Canadian Corps was to be prepared to combine with this movement and occupy Valenciennes if the enemy withdrew.

Battle ofThe EcaillonEventsOct. 24th

At 4.0 am. 24th Oct. while it was still dark the 4th and 51st Divs (XXII Corps) attacked the enemy's positions on the Ecaillon, in conjunction with the attack of the 3rd Army. Both divs crossed the river at an early hour in face of heavy rifle and machine gun fire, but the 4th Div. had severe fighting before they could complete the capture of the villages of Verchain and Monchaux and it was not until 12 noon that they were entirely cleared of the enemy. The crossings of the Ecaillon, which was a formidable obstacle, was a splendid example of the high moral and determined fighting spirit which animated our victorious troops. The width from bank to bank is approximately 25 feet, that of the water is 15 feet, depth of water 4 to 5 feet. The banks are steep, the stream swift and the bottom very muddy. Both banks of the river were wired and in addition wire was criss-crossed from bank to bank. The enemy had its outposts entrenched along the right bank of the river; while halfway up to the slope of the hill, and commanding the crossings at close rifle range, ran a series of short disconnected trenches each manned by 6 to 10 men and one or two light machine guns. Each of the four attacking btns of the 4th Div. carried foot bridges to throw across the



Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

stream, but there were mostly found too short and quite 50 per cent of the men crossed by wading others crossed singly by means of the wire stretched across the stream, while at a few places brushwood, branches and planks, which were found lying about, were placed on the wire and formed practicable crossings. In spite of these difficulties only slight casualties were incurred, owing to the darkness and to the boldness of the attack, and the troops scrambled up the bank and rushed rapidly over the trenches halfway up the slope capturing many prisoners.

After the enemy had been driven out of Morchaux<sup>26</sup> the left of the attack had little difficulty in securing the ground east of the village. The right of the advance however was delayed about Mur Copse<sup>27</sup>. The 61st Div (XVII Corps), the left Div. of the 3rd Army, was held up at Vendegies, and heavy fire from the high knoll to the North of the village arrested the advance of the 1st Army right. The 61st Div. had advanced its line during the evening before, and consequently had started its attack from about 600 yards in front of the right of the 4th Div. In the gap thus left between the barrage covering the two divs. The enemy were able to use their rifles and machine guns immune from our shell fire. Verdegies<sup>28</sup> was captured during the afternoon by the 61st Div. and Mur Copse and the Knoll fell to the 4th Div. By the evening both the 4th and 51st Divs. had captured the enemy's 3rd trench running roughly north and south along the high ground west of Querenaing. On the left of the 4th Div. the 51st had captured Maing after hard fighting and had advanced their left on the south bank of the Escaut to a point immediately opposite Trith, fighting throughout the day had been severe and the enemy had developed a heavy artillery fire, but the 4th and 51st Divs. captured some 1,150 prisoners. The comparative ease with which the third line of trenches was captured is probably accounted for by its sitting. This trench was deep and well constructed and covered with a strong belt of wire, but the greater part of it was withdrawn slightly behind the crest of the ridge and afforded a very short field of fire. It appeared to be sited by the view that the attack would be broken up by defending arty. as it advanced over the open slopes towards the crest of the ridge, and that it would then be finally demoralized by rifles and machine gun fire at close range. The German arty. however was not sufficiently well organised to break up the attack, which was advancing in irregular lines and groups, and the moral of the German soldier was no longer capable of awaiting the close assault of determined British Infantry.

Oct. 25th. At 7 am. on the 25th the XXII Corps continued their advance and at first met with practically no resistance. Querenaing was captured early in the day by the 4th Div. and by noon the advanced troops had crossed the railway east of the village and were close to Artres. On their left the 51st Div. also gained the line of the railway from the Querenaing - Famars road to the Maing - Famars Road. Both divs. were counter-attacked at 4.0 pm., but the attack were repulsed ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ after our advanced troops had been driven back to the railway. At 6.0 pm. The enemy again attacked the left of the 51st Div. east of Maing, but was met with the bayonet and repulsed by the 6th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who followed up the enemy, inflicting severe casualties on him, and advanced our line east of the railway astride the Maing - Famars Road. About 200 prisoners were captured during the day by the XXII Corps.

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)Events North  
of the EscautOct. 24th &  
25th

There was little change on the front of the Canadian Corps during these two days, but patrols reached the line of the railway between Fresnes and Odonez<sup>29</sup>. The 8th Div. (VIII Corps) cleared Odonez and reached the<sup>30</sup> Escaut south of Hergnies, while on their left the 12th Div. acting in co-operation with the right of the 1 corps (Fifth Army) captured Bruille - Le long Buhot and Buridon.

EventsOct. 26th.

At 10. am. on 24th October the XXII Corps continued The attack on the whole of their front south of the Escaut and met with considerable success. Advancing from the Sepmeries - Valenciennes railway the right of the 4th Div. pushed down the slopes of the ridge to the Rhonelle River and rapidly cleared Artres, which lies on the left (west) bank of the River. The adv. Troops of the Div. followed the enemy across the stream and reached the heights on the right bank, capturing some 50 prisoners. At 2.30 pm. The enemy counter attacked these advanced troops and forced them to retire on to the Rhonelle, where, however, a valuable bridgehead had by this time been established covering Artres. The left of the 4th Div had some difficulty in overcoming resistance at Caumont farm, on the Querenaing - Famars road but this done them advanced rapidly up the western slopes of the Artres - Famars ridge and captured the important features of Grand Mont and Mont Rouge<sup>31</sup>. By the evening they were firmly established on the crest of the ridge beyond the Artres - Famars road looking down the slopes to the Rhonelle.

On the left of the 4th Div, the 51st had severe fighting. With their right joining the left of the 4th Div. at Mont Rouge they fought their way into Famars, but the enemy defended the village stubbornly and was only driven out of it after hard house to house fighting. At nightfall the 51st Div. held the perimeter of the village, but all attempts to debouch from it northwards had been prevented by heavy fire from Mont Houy and from arty. posted between Saultain and Valenciennes.

The left of the 51st Div. captured the houses and enclosure of La Fontenelle and made slight progress along the right bank of the Escaut towards Poirer<sup>32</sup> Station and the Steel Works, but was unable to make further headway towards the capture of Mont Houy. About 300 prisoners were captured during the day.

North of the Escaut there was a little change in the situation except that the 8th Div. (VIII Corps) established their outposts along the west bank of the Canal between Odonez<sup>33</sup> and Bruille.

Description  
of the enemy's  
positions on  
The Escaut.

The 1st Army was now in touch throughout its length with the enemy's position on the Escaut; a short description of this position is necessary to explain The operations of the next few days. North of Valenciennes the enemy's defences ran along the east bank of the Escaut as far north as the old fortress of Conde. North of Conde they continued along the east bank of the Jard Canal which from here run parallel to the Escaut and separated from it by 1000 to 200 yards of marshy ground, flooded by the enemy, as far as fort de Flines, where the two canals join. Both banks of these canals were heavily wired and the east bank provided with trenches, while the houses, wall and factories of Valenciennes and the towns and villages north of it, were loopholed<sup>34</sup>, prepared for defence, and garrisoned by numerous machine guns. Other formidable defences were presented by the old fortifications of Valenciennes and Conde, those of the latter town in particular being in a complete state of preservation and capable of withstanding a heavy bombardment. The enemy

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

had further increased the obstacle furnished by the canals by the destruction of the bridges, by closing the sluices and cutting gaps in the banks, thus flooding the country on both sides, in many localities to a width of several hundred yards. Immediately north of Valenciennes the floods in the angle between the Escaut and the Conde - Mons Canals covered several square miles and so rendered it impracticable to turn the town from the north. A direct crossing of the Escaut in face of the enemy did not therefore offer favourable prospects, and its difficulties were rendered greater by the fact that the employment of heavy arty. or gas shells, against the towns or villages were precluded by the presence in them of large numbers of French civilians.

South of Valenciennes the Escaut no longer lay as an obstacle to be crossed, but its presence added to the difficulties of co-operation between our formations. Here the problem was different. The Germans defences left the Escaut and branched off into two arms. The most westerly of these consisted of a carefully prepared line of wire and trenches ran practically due south along the high ground west of Aulnoy, embraced the prominent and wooded height of Mont Houy, and continued along the ridge between Famars and Querenaing. The fighting of the 24th to 26th Oct. had placed that portion of the line which lies south of Famars in the hands of the XXII Corps, but Mont Huoy<sup>35</sup> still remained in possession of the enemy.

The other arm of the defences consisted only of hastily prepared short length of trenches; it also hinged on to the Escaut at Aulnoy and Mont Houy and ran in a southeasterly direction past Preseau and along the high ground east of the Rhonelle River.

To take either of these positions the capture of Mont Houy was essential, and the capture of Mont Houy was therefore a necessary preliminary to the capture of Valenciennes and the turning of the line of the Escaut. It was in fact the key to the whole position dominating both the town and the Escaut Valley and safeguarding observations up the valley of the Rhonelle and over the plateau towards Saultain and Durgies<sup>36</sup> on which most of the enemy's batteries were now posted. As a defensive position it had many advantages: the wood with which the hill is crowned is of small extent, but presented a difficult obstacle to movement owing to thick undergrowth. A strong line of trenches and wire ran along the west and southwest crest of the hill facing the Escaut and deep cover trenches for supports had been prepared within the wood. The ground slopes steeply to the Escaut on the west and southwest, less steeply on the south, and gently to the south-east towards Famars and northwards to Aulnoy and the suburbs of Valenciennes. But its commanding and isolated position made it an easy target for concentrated arty. fire and its main defences faced the flooded Escaut, in itself a sufficient guarantee against direct attacks from the west.

Plans &  
Orders  
Oct. 27th.

On the 27th October the Army Commander held a conference at Auberchicourt, whither advanced H.Q. of the Army had moved on the previous day, with the Commanders of the XXII and Canadian Corps, to discuss plans for the further operations. A representative of the General Staff of the 3rd Army was also present. After the conclusion of the conference instructions were issued that the XXII and Canadian Corps, with the co-operation of the XVII Corps, 3rd Army, would continue to operate so as to force the enemy to evacuate Valenciennes.<sup>37</sup> The operations were to be carried out in three stages.

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

First Stage (on 28th Oct) XXII Corps to secure Mont Houy<sup>38</sup> and, as a general objective, the sunken road north of it which runs from Aulnoy by Chemin Vert to Poirier Station. The Canadian Corps the immediately to relieve the XXII Corps of the front between the Rhonelle River, at a point half a mile south of Aulnoy, and the Escaut at Poirier Station.

Second stage. On 30th Oct. the XXII and Canadian Corps to secure Preseau and the line of the road thence to Marly steelworks (exclusive) and thence across to the Escaut immediately north of the Faubourg de Cambrai. The 3rd Army would co-operate in this stage, so as to cover the right flank of the XXII Corps, and its left Corps (XVII) would capture Maresches.

Third Stage. On 1st November the XXII and Canadian Corps to complete the envelopment of Valenciennes by securing the general line Ferne<sup>39</sup> De Wilt<sup>40</sup> (S.E. of Preseau) - Caultain<sup>41</sup> - south-west end of St. Saulve. The Canadian Corps to take every opportunity of supporting this attack by passing troops over the Escaut wherever a crossing could be effected west and north of Valenciennes.

Certain modifications had subsequently to be made in this plan owing to heavy resistance encountered by the XXII Corps on 28th October.

Events  
Oct. 27th.

During the night 26/27th October advanced troops of the 12th Div. (VIII Corps) cleared the village of Chateau L'Abbaye of the enemy and during the early morning of the 27th Established outposts on the west bank of the Escaut Canal immediately south of Hergnies.

South of the Escaut, the XXII Corps was occupied in getting up guns and ammunitions to support their further operations and in improving communications. The day was marked however by a determined German counter-attack made by the 35th Div. against the 51st Div. at Famars. The enemy penetrated well into the village, but was driven out again by the 4th Gordon Highs. after severe fighting, in which heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy and about 50 prisoners taken.

Events  
Oct. 28th

During the night 27/28th October the 12th Div (VIII Corps) attempted to cross the Escaut and Jard Canals, west of Hergnies, but were held up by heavy machine gun and rifle fire from the east bank of the latter Canal. Posts were nevertheless established by them between the two canals both S.E. and N.W. of Hergnies.

At 5.15 am. the 51st Div (XXII Corps) delivered their attack against the Mont Houy position, in accordance with the plan of operations for the envelopment of Valenciennes as outlined above. Strong opposition was encountered, but by noon the whole of Mont Houy had been captured and the leading troops of the Div. had reached a general line running from a point about half a mile north of Famars, on the Famars - Valenciennes road, across the hamlet of Chemin Vert and thence along the road to Poirier Station. It was found impossible to hold the road between Aulnoy and Chemin Vert, which had been given as part of the objective for the attack. This road is shown on the Map as sunken for part of its length and provided a bank on its northern side throughout its length. It is, in reality, level with the country to the north of it and has considerable bank on its northern side. While, therefore, it afforded good cover to the enemy defending it against an attack from the south, it gave no protection, after its capture to the 51st Div. from fire from across the open plain stretching northwards for 1,200 yards to la Targette and La Redoute. At 2.30 pm. The enemy delivered a strong counter-attack supported by heavy arty. fire. This attack forced the centre of the 51st back to the Mont Houy and slightly down its southern slopes. T

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

The right of the Div. fell back slightly on the northern edge of Famars, but the left still maintained its hold on the quarry at the south-west corner of the Mont Houy Wood and on Poirier Sta. The Div.. established itself at the end of the day's fighting

in this position, which is shown marked yellow on Map "T". About 130 prisoners were taken during the action.

See  
MAP  
"T"

According to the instructions which had been issued the 4th Canadian Div. was to relieve the 51st Div on the front gained during the day between the Rhonelle and the Escaut, and the troops required for the relief were held ready to move forward at 4 pm. to carry it out immediately after dark. Qwing, however to the late hour at which the German counter-attack was made it was impossible to ascertain by 4 pm. the exact situation of the 51st Div. It was known that part of the objective, the Aulnoy-Chemin Vert road, was not in their possession but it was not known whether Mont Hoy was still held by the British or not. As the Aulnoy-Chemin Vert had not been gained, the Corps Commander of the Canadian Corps proposed that the relief should be postponed, but at 5 pm. the Army Commander issued instructions that if the Mont Hour was held by the 51st Div. the Canadian Corps would take over the front as ordered but that if the Mont was not held, the relief was to be postponed. The Commanders of the troops on the spot were to make the decision. By nightfall it was clear to these commanders that Mont Houy was no longer in possession of the 51st Div. and the relief was consequently postponed. At 7.25 pm. telegraphic orders were issued from First Army that the relief would take place on the 29/30th October. These orders also directed that the second stage of the operations would be carried out on 31st October, instead of on the 30th and the 3rd stage on the 2nd November instead of the 1st.

The postponement of the relief on the evening of the 28th October, although rendered almost inevitable by the late German counter-attack, illustrates the danger of the selection of general objectives of a definite nature from the map, or from aerial reconnaissance, and of too rigid an interpretation of such general objectives by lower formations. The objective of the operations was to secure a line from which future operations could be initiated, and in this case the line secured, although not corresponding exactly with the general objective laid down, subsequently proved to the requirements of the situation.

Events. During the night 28/29th October ~~the~~ the  
Oct. 29th. 12th Div (VIII Corps) were relieved on the front between Hergnies and Chateau L'Abbaye by the 32nd Div. and were then withdrawn into Corps Res.

At 6 am on October 29th the enemy attempted a counter-attack, under arty. barrage, against the left flank of the 51st Div. between Mont Houy and Poirier Station. The attack was repulsed with loss in front of our positions which we're maintained intact.

At 4 pm. the enemy again put down a heavy arty. barrage on the 51st Div. on this occasion on the whole front between Famars and the Escaut. Enemy troops were seen moving up to counter-attack, but they were engaged by both heavy and field arty. from the west bank of the canal and dispersed before the assault could be delivered. Further south the 4th Div. (XXII Corps) during the course of the day extended their bridgehead on the

right/

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

right bank of the Rhonelle opposite Artres, to a radius of about 400 yards.

There was no other change on the front of the Army. On the evening 29/30y<sup>th</sup> October the 4th Canadian Div. (Canadian Corps) relieved the Bde. Of the 51st Div. (XXII corps) on the front between Famars (inclusive) and the Escaut, while the remainder of the 51st Div. was relieved by the 49th Div. (XXII Corps). The 51st Div. was then withdrawn into XXII Corps Res.

EventsOct. 30th& 31st.

There was no change in the situation of the front of the Army during 30th Oct. On the 31st the posts which had been established by the 8th Div. (VIII Corps) between the Escaut and Jard Canals, near Hergnies, were withdrawn to the west bank of the Escaut, owing to unnecessary losses caused by heavy fire from ~~xxxx~~ trench mortars. Orders were issued to the 8th Corps that their operations were to be restricted to active patrolling in order to detect and follow any retirement of the enemy from the Jard canal, as it was not the intention of the Army Commander to expend men in forcing the passage of the Canal or in forming bridgeheads on the enemy's side.

Plans & orders.Oct. 29th.

At 10. pm. 9th<sup>42</sup> Oct. orders were issued by 1st Army that the XXII and Can. Corps would attack on 1st November so as to secure the general line "Preseau - road thence to Marly Steelworks (exclusive) - railway thence to the Escaut. Success was to be exploited towards the line given as the general objective for the third stage in the 1st Army Order of 27th October, namely, Ferme de Wult - Saultain - south-west end of St. Saulve. XVII Corps (3rd Army) would co-operate in the attack and had been ordered to capture Maresches and St. Hubert.

On 29th Oct. Orders were received from G.H.Q. that the 1st, 3rd and 4th Armies, together with the 1st French Army would attack at an early date with the object of breaking the enemy's resistance south of Conde and continuing the advance towards the line Avesnes Maubeuge-Mons. The 4th November was subsequently fixed as the date for the attack.

The capture of

At 5.15 am. 1st Nov. the attack was delivered on the front between Maresches and the Escaut by the 61st Div. (XVII Corps 3rd Army), 4th and 49th Divs.

Mont Houy and

(XXII Corps) and 10th Can. Inf. Bde. Of the 4th Can. Div. (Canadian Corps) in that order from

The Battle ofValenciennes(See Map "T")

right to left. On the front of the XXII Corps both the 4th and 49th divs. forced the passage of the Rhonelle River throughout without great difficulty and gained the high ground south and northwest of Preseau. The leading troops of the 4th Div. penetrated into Preseau but at 9.30 am. were

EventsNov. 1st

Counter-attacked and forced to fall back to the

western edge of the village where they established themselves astride the Sairlon<sup>43</sup> Ravine, in touch with the left of the XVII Corps on the high ground between Maresches and Preseau. The enemy's resistance was severe and no further progress was made on this flank during the day.

The 49th Div. after gaining the western crest of the spur, which runs from Preseau towards Aulnoy, pressed on across open ground exposed to heavy arty. and machine gun fire and reached the Preseau - Marly road on the whole front of the Div. to as far as the railway immediately south of Marly Steelworks. They were unable to advance beyond this road in face of fire from the enemy holding the sunken road between Preseau and



Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

Saultain and the enclosures of the west of the latter village. At about 12 noon the Germans delivered a strong counter-attack, supported by 5 tanks against the right flank of the 49th Div., with the result that the whole of its front was forced back about 1,000 yards to the line of the Preseau - Aulnoy road and, north of Aulnoy, to within a few hundred yards of the right bank of the Rhonelle River. The left flank of the Div. gained touch with the right of the Canadian Corps on the railway immediately south of Marly Steelworks.

On the left of the attack the 10th Can. Inf. Bde. has gained a striking success. Under cover of a very heavy concentration of arty. some particulars of which are given below, the attack swept over Mont Houy and the open ground to the north of it by 6.30 am., within 1¼ hours of the commencement of the action, the leading troops has secured the line of the road from Aulnoy to Poirier Station. The advance continued without any pause on this line and by 7 am. Aulnoy had been cleared of the enemy and the bridge over the Rhonelle captured intact. Up to this hour the enemy's arty. fire had been heavy after coming down promptly at the outset of the attack, but from 7 am. it steadily decreased under the effective counter battery work of the XXII and Canadian Arty. A field gun posted near la Vessie Church<sup>44</sup> caused some trouble to the attack as it progressed beyond Le Chemin Vert, but it was successfully outflanked and captured by inftry., who by 12 noon gained the line of the railway west of Marly Steelworks and the Faubourg De Cambrai without much further difficulty. On the right machine gun fire from Marly Steelworks prevented further progress, but further west patrols were able to push across the railway towards Marly and the southern outskirts of Valenciennes.

As soon as it was seen that the main attack was meeting with success, the 12th Canadian Inftry. Bde. (4th Canadian Div.) which was holding the left bank of the Escaut, passed three companies of inftry. Across the canal east of the Faubourg de Paris Station and a platoon further north below the ruins of the Valenciennes - St Amand road bridge. Considerable fire was encountered by these parties from the houses of Valenciennes and they were unable to advance beyond the railway on the western outskirts of the town before night. As soon as it was dark patrols began to work gradually into the town. The line gained by the XXII and Can. Corps and held at nightfall is shown marked blue on Map "T". About 2,750

Comments

prisoners were captured during the day, almost equally divided between the two corps. The Canadian Corps also captured 7 field guns. Exceptionally heavy losses were suffered by the enemy, especially on the front of the 10th Inft. Bde. where alone 800 dead Germans were counted and buried. On the other hand the casualties of the 10th Canadian Bde. were light considering the result achieved and amounted in all to 501 of whom 121 were reported killed or missing. This disparity between the losses of the attackers and defenders is chiefly accounted for by the effectiveness of the arty. support.

Arty.  
Of Can.  
Corps

Owing to the position of the army astride the Escaut it was possible to bring converging fire on the enemy's position at Mont Houy. Full advantage was taken of this by the Canadian Corps, 8 Field Arty. and 6 Heavy Arty. Bdes being allotted to the support of the

10th/

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

10th Inftry. Bde. whose initial attack was made on a front of 2,500 yards. of the field Arty. Bdes. 3 were sited south of the Escaut, about Maing, to supply the frontal creeping barrage; one was sited on the left bank in Trith St. Leger to add oblique fire to the barrage; the remaining two were in position at La Sentinelle, west of the Cambrai - Valenciennes road and were employed to deepen the barrage by enfilade fire. The creeping barrage was composed entirely of 18-pr. Shrapnel. It moved at a rate of 100 yards in 4 minutes until Le Chemin Vert<sup>45</sup> was reached, when it slowed down to 100 yards in 5 minutes. Three batteries of 4.3" Hows. Were employed with great success in making a smoke screen to hide the attack from the rows of houses of Aulnoy, Le Chemin Vert, La Vessie, and Faubourg De Cambrai, while the remainder were used in bombarding machine gun nests, jumping from one group to another in advance of the barrage.

The Bdes. of Heavy arty. were mostly sited on the left bank of the Canal so as to bring oblique enfilade and even reverse fire on to the area of attack. Approximately three and a half Bdes. Were employed in counter-battery work, which consisted of neutralizing fire on hostile batteries, in concentrations on suspected assembly areas and harassing fire on routes of approach. The remaining two and half bdes. Carried out intensive fire on all groups of houses suspected to contain machine guns. A large number of 3' and 8" hows. formed a creeping barrage which moved along the rows of houses in the valleys of the Escaut and Rhonelle. The demolition of buildings and the smoke, dust and flying debris caused by this heavy concentration completely demoralized the enemy.

It is probably that in no other actions of the war has it been possible to bring so heavy a concentration of fire on the area to attack under conditions, so favourable for a combination of frontal, oblique enfilade and reverse fire; and with clear weather allowing of direct observation. There can not be doubt as to its complete effectiveness. It is proved by the comparative ease with which the 10th Canadian Brigade captured its objective, by the large number of Germans killed, and by the state of bewilderment of the prisoners, who in most cases readily surrendered themselves on arrival of the inftry.

The enemy's action. The capture of Mont Houy and the crossings of the Rhonelle River at once caused the enemy to evacuate Valenciennes and the line of the Escaut.

The defences of Mont Houy and of the Escaut were captured by a tactical outflanking movement from the south, which thus put the crown to the strategical outflanking movement by which the enemy had been gradually forced since the end of August to relinquish all his position north of the Scarpe, Sensee and Escaut Rivers. An examination of the Mont Houy position after its capture showed that it was well prepared for a direct attack from the west across the Escaut, but that very inadequate and hasty defences had been made against an attack from the south. Yet the enemy had had ample warning that the attack would be made from the south and not from across the Escaut. Even if he neglected the warning given by the whole course of the British operations south of the Escaut since the forcing of the Canal Du Nord on 27th September, it must have been obvious to him after the capture of the Ecaillon position on the 24th October that the southern flank of his line on the Escaut was in danger. That he did appreciate this danger is shown by the stubborn resistance encountered by

the/



Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

The 51st Div. at Mont Houy from 26th to 29th October by the strong reinforcement brought up to the neighbourhood and also by the direct evidence of a German Staff Officer who came to Army H.Q. after the Armistice.

During the battle of the 1st November no fewer than 21 Btns of 5 different German Divs were identified by prisoners taken on the front of the 4th., 49th and 4th Canadian Divs. Nevertheless, as already stated, the enemy had neglected to prepare the position against an attack from the south. His defences in this direction consisted of shallow and short lengths of trenches, and of isolated rifle and machine gun pits. One is forced to the conclusion that this neglect was due to two causes, failing moral and lack of personnel. The German infantry of the Spring of 1918, or of the previous years of the War, would have provided itself with deep trenches and strong wire entanglements in the course of four days, even if it has been exposed to constant arty. fire as on this occasion. Discipline would have compelled it to complete the work, even if the military instinct for its necessity had not. It would appear the as if both discipline and the personnel moral of men, who had been driven out of one strong position after another during the past three months, had failed. It is probable also that the heavy losses in personnel had so lowered the strength of the German divs. that they had not sufficient men to carry out extensive entrenching at the same time as they were fighting. It was obvious that the German inftry. was relying more and more on machine guns for defence and such work as was done on defences was devoted to preparation of machine gun posts.

ORDERS.

Nov. 1st At 7.20 pm. 1st November orders were issued from 1st Army that the XXII corps would attack on the 2nd Nov.

So as to secure Preseau, the line of the Preseau Marly road and Marly Steelworks. The Canadian corps was to exploit eastwards through Valenciennes and capture Marly. Both Corps were to exploit success towards the general line Ferme De Wult - Saultain - St.Saulve.

Events.

Nov. 2nd The 49th Div. and Canadian Div. delivered their attack while it was still dark on the morning of the 2nd Nov. some opposition was encountered by the 49th Div. but by daybreak it had established itself on the Preseau - Marly Road and had captured the Steelworks. Further advance from this line was prevented by heavy fire from Saultain and the sunken road to the south of it. The right of the 4th Canadian Div. occupied Marly without opposition, but on the left had considerable trouble in clearing Valenciennes of the enemy; whose rearguards slowly retired fighting through the town. By day break however the 12th Canadian Inftry. Bde. had reached the eastern edge of the town and pushed out patrols beyond towards St Saulve. About 5000 civilians were found in Valenciennes and 2000 in Marly.

The 4th Div. in co-operation with the WVIII Corps (3rd army) attacked at dawn. Preseau was captured after a brisk fight by the 4th Div. who then pushed on and gained the high ground east and north of the village, capturing 5 field guns and two tanks, abandoned by the enemy. The XVII Corps at the same time gained the height at Ferme De Wult.

Fighting continued to be heavy on the front, of the XXII Corps and no further advance on the front of the was made either by the 4th or 49th Divs. who between them captured nearly

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

1000 prisoners during the day. The enemy was still endeavouring by means of reinforcing divs. hurriedly brought up to bring the advance to a standstill, three more divs. were identified on this day. By the evening of the 2nd Nov. in fact no less than 42 btns. of 19 regts. Of 8 different German Divs. had been identified on the front of the 3 British attacking divs. since the morning of the 1st November.

On the other hand there were signs of an impending withdrawal north of Valenciennes. Resistance was slackening on the front of the 4th Canadian Div., who by evening had captured St.Saulve and had patrols four to five miles east of Valenciennes. North of the town the enemy's Inftry. still continued to hold his positions on the east bank of the Escaut and Jard Canals, but there was a noticeable decrease in the activity of his arty. on this front.

On the night 2/3rd November the XXII Corps relieved the 4th and 49th Divs. by the 11th and 56th Divs. respectively. The two former Divs. were then withdrawn into Corps Res.

Orders.  
Nov. 2nd

At 2.30 pm. on 2nd November 1st Army Orders were issued in amplification of instructions already issued on the 30th Oct. to the Commanders of the XXII and Canadian Corps regarding the operations to be carried out on the 4th November in conjunction with the 3rd and 4th British and 1st French Army. These orders notified that the general advance would be continued towards the line Avesnes - Maubeuge - Mons and that the first stage of the operations for 1st and 3rd Armies would be the line of the St. Remy Chaussee - Pont-sur-Sambre - Bavay - Montignies - Hensies road.

The XVII Corps had been ordered by 3rd Army to capture Jenlain and cross the Aunelle River to secure the spur east of Warnies-le-Grand. The General line of the objectives of the XXII Corps would be; Left bank of the Aunelle River at the southern end if the Wood one mile N.N.E of Jerlaim<sup>46</sup> and thence along the high ground east of Curgies overlooking the Aunelle. The Canadian Corps to attack so as to cover the left flank of the XXII Corps, capture Estreux and place its right flank about the Sebourg - St. Saulve Road, one mile east of Estreux, the XII and Canadian Corps were also directed to exploit beyond these objectives and to be prepared to continue operations on the 5th November and subsequent days. VIII Corps was ordered to act so as to detect and follow any retirement of the enemy from his present position along the Jard Canal.

EventsNov. 3rd.

The objectives given in the above order to the XXII and Canadian Corps for their attack on the 4th November fell however into their hands on the 3rd November. As soon as it was daylight patrols along the whole front of these two Corps found that they were only opposed by weak rearguards. The advance was immediately resumed and by noon the XXII Corps had occupied Saultain, and the 4th Canadian Division Estreux. During the afternoon the advanced guards met slight opposition which was easily brushed aside. By nightfall the 11th and 56th Divs. (XXII Corps) had captured Curgies and the high ground east of it overlooking the Aunelle River, and the right of the 11th Div. was in touch on the left bank of that river with the XVII Corps, which had captured Jenlain. Outposts of the 4th Canadian Div. were established on the high ground a mile west of

Curgies/

Plans for forcing the Selle River and subsequent ops.(cont)

Curgies and thence ran due north to the eastern outskirts of Onnaing and eastwards along the Mons – Valenciennes railway. North of this railway the 3rd Canadian Div. pushed patrols across the Escaut and commenced to bridge the Canal at Bruay, Thiers, and Escaupont, but there was still no definite sign of withdrawal from the front north of Conde.

The retirement thus started south of the Mons – Valenciennes railway was the result of the defeat inflicted on the enemy in the Battle of the 1st and 2nd November and was continued on the 5th November until the evening, when the enemy took up a temporary position on the high ground of the Audelle<sup>47</sup> River. The events however of the 4th November and subsequent days belong more properly to the operations undertaken by the 1st, 3rd and 4th Armies, for the advance to the line Avesnes – Maubeuge – Mons, and are therefore more conveniently dealt with in a separate part.

The advance xx xxxxxx from the Escaut to Mons and the conclusion of Hostilities (See general Map " K ").

Introductory.

In consequence of his severe defeat in the battle of Valenciennes on ~~xxx~~ November 1st and 2nd Nov. the enemy retreated on the 3rd Nov. in front of the XXII and Canadian Corps to the line of the Aunelle River. His retreat was closely followed up by these Corps, who, by that evening had established their outposts on the villa<sup>48</sup> of Onnaing. They had thus already gained the first objectives allotted to the 1st Army for the operations which were to commence on the 4th November in conjunction with the Armies on the right. At 6.40 p.m. on 3rd November orders were consequently issued by 1st Army that the XXII and Canadian Corps would continue the advance on the morrow towards the Bavai<sup>49</sup>-Hensies Road.

The nature of the country into which the XXII Corps was now advancing is very different to that which had been previously traversed. Until the Aunelle River was reached the operations east and south of the Escaut had taken this Corps over a succession of open rolling downs, intersected at right angles to the direction of the advance by the parallel streams of the Selle, Ecaillon and Rhonelle, running northwards to the Escaut. With the exception of the enclosures round the villages, which lie almost entirely in the valleys and the rivers, the country is quite bare and offered no cover save that occasionally afforded by sunken roads and slight folds in the ground. From the valley of the Aunelle River eastwards the country becomes much more broken. It is intersected by numerous fast flowing streams, whose generally flow is northwards, but with more tortuous courses than those of the rivers already crossed. The valleys are deep, with steep slopes covered with small woods, Orchards, or enclosures fields. Villages and isolated clusters of houses are numerous and thickly inhabited, especially after the Belgian Frontier is crossed. These villages lie not only in the valleys, but also on the high ground which is thickly timbered and dotted with small plantations and hedged enclosures. The roads are numerous but bad, those that are paved admit of lorry traffic in only one direction; this greatly added to the difficulties of a rapid advance, specially in view of the fact that by the 4th November the Divs. of the XXII Corps were already 25 miles from their railheads. Owing to the more rapid withdrawal of the enemy, the nature of the operations also underwent a considerable change both on the front of the XXII and of the Canadian and VIII Corps as soon as the two latter had crossed the Escaut. It was no longer possible, or necessary, to support the infantry with heavy, tractor-drawn artillery, the difficulties of movement and supply of heavy ammunition were prohibitive. 60-pdrs. however kept well forward with the advanced infantry and gave invaluable support, and 6" Hows. were also brought up when heavy resistance was encountered. Nor was it any longer necessary or desirable that the movements of the separate divisions of a Corps should be strictly co-ordinated by the Corps

H.Q./

The advance xx xxxxxx from the Escaut to Mons and the conclusion  
of hostilities. (cont)

H.Q. or that the movements should be made according a rigid arty. plan. Divs. were directed to make and take their own opportunities for advancing to the general objectives given them while co-operating with the divs. on their flanks. They arranged for their own arty support and allotted arty. units to Inftry. Bdes. And, when required, to Btns.

Events  
Nov. 4th.

The crossing  
Of the Aunelle  
River

As soon as it was light on the morning of the 4th November the advanced guards of the XXII and Canadian Corps were in motion and at first only came into contact with the rearguards which offered little resistance. The 11th and 56th Divs crossed the Aunelle River with little difficulty and captured the villages of Le triez, Sebourg and Sebourgiaux. The advanced guards of these divs. gained a footing on the high ground east of the Aunelle River. The enemy was found to be holding this ridge strongly and, before sufficient reinforcements from the main body could arrive to make our hold on it, good, he delivered a counter-attack which forced the advanced troops to fall back on the right bank of the Aunelle. Her bridgeheads were successfully established, while bridges were constructed and arty. and ammunition brought up in readiness to support the advance on the next day.

On the left the 4th Canadian Div. reached the western outskirts of Rombies and Quarouble after being engaged with strong rearguards throughout the day. North of the Mons - Valenciennes railway the 3rd Canadian Div. established our posts on the general line Onaing<sup>50</sup> - Escaupont<sup>51</sup>, east of the flooded marsh which covered the angle between the railway and the Escaut. About 250 prisoners were taken by the XXII and Canadian Corps during the day.

North of the Conde there was still no change, and all attempts by patrols of the VIII Corps to find crossings over the Jard Canal was checked by machine gun fire.

The operations of the 3rd and 4th British Landrecies and Le Quesnoy had been captured and the Foret de Mormal penetrated to a great depth.

Orders  
Nov 4th.

At 3.30 mp. 4th November orders were issued by 1st Army that the XXII and Canadian Corps would continue their advance on the 5th November towards the Bavai<sup>52</sup> - Hensies road, in co-operation with the 3rd Army.

On the night 4/5th November, the 6th Div. (VIII Corps) was withdrawn into the neighbourhood of Marchiennes and St. Amana<sup>53</sup> in Army. Res. Their place in the line was taken by the 52nd Div. who extended their front, the VIII Corps thus coming on to a one-division front.

Events. Nov. 5th.

The crossing of the  
Angreau and Grande  
Honnelle Rivers

The XXII and Canadian Corps attacked at 5.30 am. on 5th November. The 11th and 56th Divs. Quickly cleared the ridge east of the Aunelle River and crossed the frontier into Belgium. As their advanced troops neared the rivers Angreau and Grande Honnelle resistance stiffened and it was clear that the enemy was prepared to defend the crossing over the latter river. The 11th Div. secured the passage of the Angreau by the capture of Roisin and its advanced troops pushed on and seized the hamlet of Meaurain and the spur north of it overlooking the

valley/

The advance from the Escaut to Mons and the conclusion, of  
hostilities. (cont-)

valley of the Grande Honnelle. They were unable however to effect a crossing over the river in face of heavy fire from the right bank. The 56th Div. also crossed the Angreau River at the village of that name, but was checked in its further advance by the enemy who held a strong bridgehead covering the crossings over the Grande Honnelle, which is joined at this village by the Angreau. Late in the evening the 56th Div. after severe fighting obtained a footing in the western edge of Angre but was unable to drive the enemy over the river. The right of the 4th Canadian Div. advanced astride the River aunelle, in touch with the left of the 56th Div. but were held up at Marchipont, in which village fighting continued still well into the night, when the enemy evacuated it. The left of the 4th Canadian Div. cleared Quarouble, while the 3rd Canadian Div moving round both flanks of the marsh between Onnaing and Escaupont, captured Vicq. About 100 prisoners were taken during the day, and the 11th Div. captured 5 British tanks near Sebourg. The advance of the Armies to the south had continues to be rapid during the day and the Forest of Mormal had been cleared of the enemy. During the 4th and 5th November the 49th Div. was transferred from the XXII Corps to the VIII Corps and placed in the area about Douai in Army Res. While the 63rd (Royal Naval) Div. was transferred from the VIII Corps to XXII Corps and brought up to the neighbourhood of Saultain in Corps Res. The movements involved in this transfer was made by bus.

Orders

Nov. 5th. 6th

Orders were issued at 2 pm. by 1st Army that the XXII and Canadian Corps would continue the advance on the 6th November with the ultimate objective the Aulnois<sup>54</sup> - Mons railway.

Events.

Nov 6th

Heavy fighting was experienced on the 6th Nov. when the XXII and Canadian Corps resumed their attack at 5.30 am.. The 11th Div. reached the left bank of the Grande Honnelle on its whole front, but was again prevented from forcing a passage by heavy fire from the wooden slopes of the opposite bank. The 56th Div. succeeded in crossing the river east of Angreau but were driven back to the left bank by a counter attack delivered from the Bois de Beaufort. Troops of this Div. also twice forced a passage lower down the stream at Angre and reached the high ground between Onnezies and Baisieux, but on each occasion they were driven back to Angre, where however they established a bridgehead which they maintained against all further attempts of the enemy. Fighting was severe also on the front of the 4th Canadian Div., but the country was more open and the enemy's positions consequently easier to define and to engage with arty. fire. Good progress was made by the 4th Canadian Div. who after taking Quievrechain forced the passage of the Grande Honnelle between Angre and Quievrain and captured Baisieux, thus endangering the retreat of the Germans holding the right bank of the Grande Honnelle further south, in front of the XXII Corps. North of the Mons-Valenciennes railway the 3rd Canadian Div. continued their advance along the southern edge of the floods in the angle between the Escaut and Mons-Conde Canal and reached the outskirts of Crespin. 420 prisoners were captured by the two corps during the day's fighting which continued to be heavy until nightfall.

The advance from the Escaut to Mons and the conclusion of  
hostilities. (cont.)

Events  
Nov. 7th.

On the night 6/7th November both the XXII and Canadian Corps made changes in the disposition of their leading troops. The XXII Corps narrowed the fronts of the 11th and 56th Divs. and brought the 63rd Div. into the line on the left of the 56th Div. The Canadian Corps withdrew the 4th Canadian Div. into Corps Res. replacing it in the line by the 2nd Canadian Div. In spite of this changes there was no relaxation in the activity of the reconnoitering patrols with the result that shortly after dark signs of the enemy withdrawing were detected along the whole front of the two Corps. Advanced guards were immediately sent out and found little opposition. On the front of the XXII Corps the 56th Div. crossed the Grande Honnelle, at Angre during the night and gained the high ground north of Onnezies without fighting, the enemy having evacuated this position which he had defended so stoutly on the previous day. Rapid progress was made on the whole front south of the Mons - Conde Canal during the whole day and it was not till late in the afternoon that the enemy's rearguards stood to make any resistance. At dark our outposts were established on the following general lines; XXII Corps, 11th Div. on the Bavai<sup>55</sup> - Hensies road east of Gussignies and Autreppe; 56th Div., east of Montignies-sur-Roc; and 63rd Div. East of Audregnies. North of Audregnies the line of the 2nd Canadian Div. made a sharp bend to the east and round the eastern edge of Elouges whence it ran due north to the Mons - Valenciennes railway south of Thulin. The 3rd Canadian Div. had captured Hensies during the day and established their outposts on the general line; western outskirts of Thulin - through Montroeuil-sur-Haine - Mons - Conde Canal at St Aybert. North of Conde the enemy still held his position on the Jard and Escaut Canals but on the front of 3rd and 4th British and 1st French Armies, the enemy was also in retreat and he had captured the important road center of Bavai<sup>56</sup>. Only about 30 prisoners were taken by the 1st Army during the day; among these rumours<sup>57</sup> were current that the withdrawal was to continue as far as Brussels.

During the 7th November the 16th Lancers and two sections of "D" Battery R.H.A. joined the XXII Corps, and the 5th Lancers and one section of "D" Battery R.H.A., the Canadian Corps. These troops belonged to the 3rd Cav Bde. which less the 4th Hussars, had been moved up from the Canal du Nord to the neighbourhood<sup>58</sup> of Poirier Station and Thiant on the 4th November. It will be remembered that the 4th Hussars had already been detached for employment with the VIII Corps.

Events  
Nov. 8th.

On the 8th November the enemy's line on the Escaut from Conde to Audenarde at last gave way. The rapid advance of the British Armies towards Maubeuge had now assured the cutting of the enemy's lateral communication between his southern and northern groups of Armies and any further delay on the Escaut would have meant the ultimate isolation and surrender of Prince Rupprechts group north of the Ardennes. On the 1st Army front no change were noticed along the Jard Canal north of Conde during the night of the 7/8th November and the reconnoitering patrols of the 52nd Div. (VIII Corps) were met with the usual heavy machine gun fire. As soon as it was light however patrols crossed both the Escaut and Jard Canals with little difficulty; the enemy's machine guns were withdrawn and only a light screen of riflemen offered any resistance. Conde, Vieux Conde, and Hergnies, were quickly occupied and advanced troops pushed



The advance from the Escaut to Mons and the conclusion of  
hostilities. (cont)

pushed out to the east of these towns. The floods on both banks of the Canals rendered bridging difficult and it was not till late in the afternoon ~~in the afternoon~~ that the 4th Hussars and Corps Cyclist Bn. could get across.

South of the Mons - Conde Canal the advance of the XXII Canadian Corps continued throughout the day and met with practically no opposition. By 6 am. advanced troops of these two Corps were on the following general line: Camp Perdu (North of Malplaquet, which was in possession of the XVII Corps) - Frquenne<sup>59</sup> - Blaugies - Dour - western edge of Boussu - thence along the River Haine to the junction of the Mons - Conde and Antoing - Pommeroeul Canals - and thence westwards along the Mons - Conde Canal to join with the right of the VIII Corps east of Conde. Bridgeheads were also established north of the Mons - Conde Canal by the 63rd Canadian Div. near St. Aybert.

Orders.  
Nov. 8th.

Orders from the 1st Army directed that the advance would be continued to the Maubeuge - Mons road, east of which adv. Guards were to be pushed to keep touch with the enemy. Corps were to concentrate effort on improving lateral and rearward communications.

At 8 pm. orders were also issued to the VIII and Can. Corps, that the Canadian Corps would reconnoitre with a view to passing troops across the Mons - Conde - Canal east of its junction with the Antoing - Pommeroeul Canal to the neighbourhood of Pommeroeul and Ville Pommeroeul so as to prevent the enemy withdrawing by the Basecles - Tertren<sup>60</sup> road. VIII Corps was to consult with the Canadian Corps as to passing troops across the Mons - Conde Canal from south to north in, the neighbourhood of St Aybert, as movement from here northwards on Bernissart would appear to be quicker than an advance from Conde or Hergnies.

Events.  
Nov. 9th.

Rapid progress was made on the whole front of the Army on the 9th: the enemy's resistance was practically negligible although he attempted to cover his retreat by small machine gun posts which, as a rule, withdrew as soon as our advanced guards began to outflank them. The Inftry. of all three Corps advanced an average distance of 7 miles during the day and the cyclists and 4th Hussars of the VIII Corps about 12 miles. By the evening the XXII Corps had reached the line of the Maubeuge - Mons road from S.E. of the Quevy to Asquillies, with cavalry well to the east of this line. The Canadian Corps were nearing Mons; they had manoeuvred cleverly through the mass of mining towns which lie south of the Mons - Conde Canal, and established their outposts on the line Genly - Framersins<sup>61</sup> - Jemappes. Their cavalry was also out in in<sup>62</sup> front endeavouring to work round Mons by the north and south. Troops of the 3rd Canadian Div. also crossed the Mons - Conde Canal east of its junction with the Antoing Canal and occupied Ville Pommeroeul. Two btns. Of the 8th Div. (VIII Corps) were sent up in busses from the St.Amand area and relieved the 3rd Canadian Div. in this town in the early morning of the 10th November. The 52nd Div. (VIII Corps) found the bridges destroyed over the Antoing - Pommeroeul Canal but were able to cross it with the locks which still remained passable; by dark the whole of its inftry. was across the Canal and moving on Hautrage while 4th Hussars had reached the line Tertre - Sirault. About 50 prisoners were take during the day and a large amount of ammunition, transport, and engineering material abandoned by the enemy fell into our hands. On our right the 3rd Army had captured Maubeuge and its advanced troops had established outposts east of the Maubeuge - Mons road.



The advance from the Escaut to Mons and the conclusion of  
hostilities. (cont)

OrdersNovember 9th.

At 3.30 9th November orders were issued by 1st Army That the advance would be continued on the morrow. XXII Corps to established itself east of Maubeuge – Mons road and to send mounted troops on advanced guards forward to keep touch with the enemy. Canadian Corps to advance to the high ground east and north-east of Mons and to send mounted troops and advanced guards to keep touch with the enemy south of the Canal Du Centre.<sup>63</sup> The VIII Corps was to push forward cavalry and advanced troops on the objective Mons – Jurbise road, using busses and lorries to carry forward supporting infantry. so as to come up in line with the left of the Canadian Corps as soon as possible and also to relieve troops of the Canadian Corps north of the Mons – Conde Canal.

EventsNov. 10th.

It was known by the 10th Nov. throughout the Army that an armistice concluding hostilities might be signed within the next day or two, but there was no relaxation of the vigour with which all units continued the pursuit of the enemy. On the greater part of the front the German rearguards offered little resistance, but here and there they stood their ground and forced the British infantry to deploy and attack before evacuating their positions. This was particularly the case at Mons., and immediate north and south of the town, where the enemy fought stubbornly in order to cover for as long as possible the important roads to Beaumont, Charleroi<sup>64</sup>, Brussels and Ath, which all radiate from this town.

On the right of the XXII Corps the 11th Div. drove the enemy's rearguards through Havay<sup>65</sup> and captured the high ground east and north-east of the village. The heads of the 56th and 63rd Divs. reached Harveng and Nouvelles respectively, while the 16th Lancers covering the infantry columns of these divs. gained the Givry-Mons road east of Spiennes, capturing two 5.9" Hows.<sup>66</sup> The 16th Lancers had had difficulty in forcing a passage over the Blangeron River<sup>67</sup> at Harveng, where they were held up temporarily by rifle and machine gun fire. Reinforced by the advanced guard of the 56th Div. they attacked dismounted in concert with the infantry and drove the enemy from the low ridge on the east bank of the river and across the Givry-Mons road.

On the right of the Canadian Corps the 2nd Canadian Div. directed on a line of advance south of Mons captured the villages of Mesvin and Hyon and the low but important hills overlooking Mons from the south. The 3rd Canadian Div. advanced astride the Mons-Conde Canal and were held up outside Mons by severe machine gun fire from its outskirts. The town is practically enclosed on its southern western and north western sides by canals which made it difficult to get to close quarters with the hostile machine gunners. Nevertheless the 3rd Canadian Div. gradually worked up to the outer banks of the canals both south and west and west<sup>68</sup> of the town, ready to cross then after dark.

North of the Mons – Conde Canal also the 3rd Canadian Div. had stiff fighting, particularly in the low-lying ground of Ghlin, but by nightfall they had driven the enemy beyond the Mons-Jurbise railway and established themselves on the northern arm of the canal. On the VIII Corps front the advance of the 4th Hussars was retarded by the Bois-de Baudour, but by the evening they were on the line Ghlin-Herchies. Little opposition was encountered except north of

the

The advance from the Escaut to Mons and the conclusion of  
Hostilities. (cont)

The wood were the enemy attempted to delay the advance by holding on the line Vacresse – Herchies. Inftry. of 52nd Div. were rapidly pushed up to support the cav. and the enemy was easily forced to abandon his position by a turning movement from the south, from the direction of the Baudour Wood. The inftry. of both the 8th and 52nd Div. made every endeavour<sup>69</sup> by forced marches to bring the front of the VIII Corps up into line with that of the XXII and Canadian Corps. By the evening two Btns. of the 8th Div. arrived at Ghlin, where they relieved troops of the 3rd Canadian Div. after covering 15 miles since the morning. The 52nd Div. reached a line from the railway in the Bois de Ghlin<sup>70</sup> to Herchies.

Nov. 11th.

There was no pause during the night 10/11th Nov. all ranks felt the impulse to drive the enemy as far as possible before the Armistice was signed. The Canadians had the additional incentive of recapturing Mons before the close of hostilities. The capture by the 2nd Canadian Div. of the low hills south and south-east of the town during the previous afternoon had rendered the enemy's hold on Mons precarious and his line of retreat from it was still more seriously threatened by a further advance during the night by this div. towards St. Symphorien and the high ground between it and Mons. The enemy's main forces evacuated the town, but numerous machine gun posts were left in with orders to hold out as long as possible. These machine gunners continued throughout the night to fire heavily on all attempts of the 3rd Canadian Div. to cross the canals. Trench mortars were brought up and under cover of their fire Inftry. patrols succeeded in crossing the canals at various ~~xxxxxxx~~ points. At 4.30 am. two companies. following these patrols, entered the outskirts of the town and quietly disposed of the machine gun posts, the crews of which were all either killed or captured. By dawn the town was cleared of the enemy and the advanced guard of the Div. enthusiastically welcomed by the inhabitants, pushed through to the east to join hands with the 2nd Canadian Div. on Charleroi road.

Notification that hostilities were ceased at 11 am reached Army H.Q. at 6.30 and ordered to that effect were telephoned to all corps and the 1st Bde. R.A.F. at 6.50 am. All troops were to halt on the lines reached at 11 am. in accordance with the terms of the Armistice, which had been signed at 5.am east of Mons<sup>71</sup>

At 11 am. the Army halted and out posts were established on the following general line :- On the right of the XXII Corps the 11 Div. in touch with the left of the 3rd Army at Havay, thence their out posts ran along the Givry – Binche Road to Estinne<sup>72</sup> Station – north to the Charleroi road at a point one mile east of Villers St. Ghislain – Boussoit – La Bruyere<sup>73</sup> – St. Denis – Maisieres – Jurbise – to the Mons-Ath road immediately south of Lens, where the 52nd Div. was in touch with the right of the 1st Corps (fifth Army). The exact line gained by 11 am. is shown on the general map "K".

Comments  
on the final  
advance since  
4th Nov.

In the week that had elapsed since the 4th Nov. the XXII Corps and Canadian Corps had advanced an average distance of 25 miles, while practically the same distance had been covered by the VIII Corps since the morning of the 8th Nov. when the enemy commenced his retreat from the Escaut. The importance of the Advance cannot be gauged however by the distance covered, but by the difficulties surmounted. These were great both for

the

The advance from the Escaut to Mons and the conclusion of  
hostilities. (cont)

the fighting troops and for the services of supply and of communication. The XXII and Canadian Corps had fought their way forward throughout against varying resistance. At times the German rearguards gave very easily, but on occasions these Corps had to deal with determined resistance by forces stronger than rearguards who did not hesitate to deliver counter-attacks, as on the Aunelle and Grande Honnelle rivers on the 4th, 5th and 6th Nov. The country through which XXII Corps advanced was broken and enclosed, as already described, while the Canadian Corps had to fight through a wide stretch of marshy ground on each side of the Mons - Conde country and also through a succession of large mining villages and towns admirably suited to the rearguard tactics of the enemy. The VIII Corps met little resistance after the Jard Canal had been evacuated by the enemy; but it had to cross the wide floods on the east bank of the Canal and the Artoing<sup>74</sup> - Pommereueul Canal. Its line of advance lay through low-lying wet country, studded with woods which necessarily delayed the pace of the pursuit.

The roads on the whole front of the Army, although numerous on the map, are seldom fit for heavy traffic under the most favourable<sup>75</sup> conditions, and the enemy had destroyed both roads and railway very thoroughly. There was scarcely a bridge over a stream or canal which had not been destroyed and few cross-roads at which a crater had not been blown. These difficulties weighted heavily on the Supply services, who, in addition to supplying the troops with food and ammunition has also to feed nearly a quarter of a million of civilian inhabitants by the time hostilities ceased. On the 11th November the nearest railheads were 30 miles from the adv. Troops, yet there was not an instance of the troops being without food or ammunition. To appreciate the work of the railway and road construction troops it must be realized that all communications had to be entirely remade throughout their length from Arras and Lens, and that the progress of the railways in particular depended on the speed which many heavy bridges could be constructed.

The spirit of the troops however overcame all obstacles. The moral of the men, never shaken during the War even after the heavy test to which it had been subjected in the Spring of 1918, was never higher than when the tide turned and the advance began in August. The stories of the troops heard from the French and Belgian inhabitants of the territory occupied by the enemy since 1914, especially those regarding the treatment served out to British prisoners of War, undoubtedly added their desire to punish the enemy and to drive him back to his own country. Since the first days of November all ranks knew that an Armistice would probably be signed within a few days; it might be thought that the natural instinct of men then would be to avoid danger as much as possible if the war was already won. The news had however the contrary effect. The drive of the advance never slackened and the keenness of attack was never greater. The impulse of the men may perhaps be illustrated by the reply of a soldier of the 11th Div. on the 5th November to a question as to how he considered the probable Armistice. It was ~~xxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ that he was glad that the War was coming to an end, but that they all wished they could punish the Germans completely by giving them "one more good killing". This satisfaction was denied them by the rapid retreat of the enemy; but to the First Army was given the privilege of capturing Mons on the last day of hostilities, and to an appreciable<sup>76</sup> number of individual officers and men the distinction of firing their last shots of the War on the same ground as where they had first met the enemy in August 1914.

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1st AMRY<sup>77</sup>.

Report on Operations.  
August 26<sup>th</sup> to 11 November 1918.

APPENDIX 1.

*Appendices 1 to 5*

MISSING / MANQUE

*Maps "A" to "H" inclusive*

*Maps "J" and "K" and "L" to "Y" inclusive*

*Received from Gen Edmonds July 1937*  
*His letter 13/F dated 15/7/37 on HQ650-52-7*

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1 Sic for Cambrai  
2 sic twice  
3 Le Trinquis (*Ruisseau*, from Biaches-St Vaast to South of Sailly en Ostrevent)  
4 sic for contingent  
5 sic for resistance  
6 sic for Canadian  
7 in a single word (sic)  
8 sic for Selle  
9 sic twice  
10 sic for fighting  
11 Nec in latin  
12 probably sea  
13 sic for Courchelettes (Nord) and not Courcellette (Somme)  
14 Boise (sic) for Bois  
15 now Clos de Bouveneuil  
16 sic for Cubray  
17 sic for Nivelles  
18 sic for de  
19 sic for Odomez  
20 rather West of Odomez (O-N-O : **Latitude**. 50.4666667°, **Longitude**. 3.4833333°)  
21 sic for Odomez  
22 sic for Hauterive  
23 sic for Hergnies  
24 Mining town Thiers at Escaupont  
25 sic for Solesmes  
26 sic for Monchaux (sur Ecaillon)  
27 North of Sommaing sur Ecaillon : 51a (SE) Q.7.a.5.8 now Bois de Sommaing  
28 sic for Vendegies (sur Ecaillon)  
29 sic for Odomez  
30 sic for Odomez  
31 Rouge Mont on the map 51a  
32 Sic for Poirier  
33 sic for Odomez  
34 in French : (garnies de) meurtrières  
35 sic for Houy  
36 sic for Curgies  
37 sic for Valenciennes  
38 sic for Houy  
39 sic for Ferme  
40 De Wult on the map 51aNE (L.21.a.O.9)  
41 sic for Saultain  
42 sic but probably 29th  
43 sic for *ruisseau* (stream) de Saméon  
44 now Eglise de la Briquette  
45 sic for le Chemin Vert ( green lane)  
46 sic for Jenlain  
47 sic for Aunelle  
48 sic  
49 now Bavay  
50 sic for Onnaing  
51 sic for Escautpont  
52 now Bavay  
53 sic for St Amand  
54 en Belgique  
55 now Bavay  
56 now Bavay  
57 sic  
58 sic  
59 sic for Erquennes (B)  
60 sic for Tertre (B)  
61 sic for Frameries  
62 sic twice

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<sup>63</sup> The **Canal du Centre** is a canal in Belgium, which, with other canals, links the waterways of the Meuse and Scheldt rivers. It has a total length of 20.9 km. It connects the artificial lake Grand Large near Nimy, with the Brussels-Charleroi Canal near Seneffe.

<sup>64</sup> Sic for Charleroi

<sup>65</sup> south East Quevy (B)

<sup>66</sup> 15cm German howitzer (minenwerfer)

<sup>67</sup> the “R. de Harveng” called “Blangeroy R.”(not Blangeron) on map 45.W.2.2.ab before entering in Harveng, now called “La Wampe” tributary of Trouille River.

<sup>68</sup> Sic twice

<sup>69</sup> sic

<sup>70</sup> East of Baudour Wood

<sup>71</sup> Armistice was signed at Rethondes (10 km east of Compiègne) at 5.15 am.

<sup>72</sup> sic for Estinnes (B)

<sup>73</sup> Outskirt north-west of Havré (B), now « Coron des Anges” ( Angels’ mining city)

<sup>74</sup> sic for Antoing (B)

<sup>75</sup> sic

<sup>76</sup> sic

<sup>77</sup> sic