MONS, AND THE RETREAT
By Captain G. S. Gordon
With an Introduction by
Field-Marshal Lord French
1/3 net.

The Evening News—"... The true history of those
stirring and heroic days, briefly and clearly told by a
soldier and an expert."

THE MARNE CAMPAIGN
By Lieut. Col. E. E. Whitton, C.M.G.
10/6 net.

Saturday Review—"... Clear and concise ... gives
a much better general impression of the Battle of the
Marne than any other we know."

1914
By Field-Marshal Viscount French
of Ypres, K.P., O.M., etc.
With a Preface by Marshal Foch
21s.net.

CONSTABLE AND CO. LTD., LONDON.

YPRES, 1914
AN OFFICIAL ACCOUNT PUBLISHED BY
ORDER OF THE GERMAN GENERAL STAFF

TRANSLATION BY G. C. W.

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY THE
HISTORICAL SECTION (MILITARY BRANCH)
COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE

LONDON
CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD
1919
THE OPERATIONS OF THE FOURTH ARMY
FROM THE END OF OCTOBER TO THE
9TH NOVEMBER 1914

Whilst the northern wing of the Sixth Army under General von Fabeck was engaged in the heavy fighting just described, the Fourth Army of Duke Albert of Württemburg had been doing its utmost, by means of constant attacks, to prevent the enemy from withdrawing any troops from his front to support his endangered positions near Ypres. By 11 am. on the 3rd November the reorganisation of the German forces rendered necessary by the inundation of the front between the coast and Diksmuûde had been sufficiently completed to enable an offensive to be delivered on this day, on the line Diksmuûde–Gheluvelt. The right flank, from Diksmuûde to the coast, was secured by the 38th Landwehr Brigade, 4th Brosatz Division, and part of the 43rd Reserve Division, all under the orders of the general officer commanding the XXII Reserve Corps. The dispositions of the attacking troops were as follows: the XXIII Reserve Corps in the sector Noordzooûte–Bixzooûte; the III Reserve Corps, including the 44th Reserve Division, on both sides of Langemarck, facing the front Her Sâs–St. Julien (this was the most important group in the offensive); the XXVI and XXVII Reserve Corps were to the south again, with the left flank resting on the Gheluvelt–Ypres main road. 1

By the evening of the 5th the XXIII Reserve Corps had been able to gain ground at and north of Bixzooûte, while the 5th Reserve Division advancing from the north had forced its way close up to the western edge of Langemarck. But all our efforts to capture this place by attacks from north and east, in spite of reinforcements being brought up, failed. It became evident that the enemy's skilfully placed and more numerous artillery, combined with his well-wired infantry positions in a country so favourable for defence, were more than a match for our guns, especially at a time when ammunition was scarce, and the misty weather prevented observation from aeroplanes. A continuation of the offensive here would only have meant a useless sacrifice of life. It was therefore decided with deep regret to resort to the long and wearisome task of sapping in order to hold the enemy. The situation of the Fourth Army indeed was no enviable one. Here in the plains of Flanders, operations were effected by the November weather and heavy rains, far more than in the country east and south of Ypres. The troops had to endure great hardships; their trenches rapidly filled with water, and were necessarily so shallow as to give insufficient protection against artillery fire. In several places they had to be evacuated altogether, and the men lay out in the open with only a hastily constructed wire entanglement in front to secure them.

1 The portion of the Ypres salient attacked by the XXIII Corps was defended by French troops alone; there were no British north of the Broodweerde cross-roads.
against surprise attacks. Sapping too proved most difficult in this water-logged district. Frequently it could only be carried on by piling up sand-bag parapets, and these being easily seen by the enemy were promptly shelled. Thus the attack made slow progress. Regular reliefs for the troops in the front line were out of the question, for the units available at that time were too weak; and in any case, the men found relief time a very dangerous moment, as the enemy was able to observe every movement, especially where he still held good observation points, as at BIXSCHOOTE and LANGEMARCK.

A very extensive system of espionage served to complete his knowledge of our intentions. Individual soldiers were left behind in civilian clothing, with concealed telephonic communication; they kept hidden during the daytime in attics and cellars, and reported our movements and dispositions quickly and accurately to their headquarters. A great deal of information was also given away by the Belgian population, who crossed the German lines by secret bypaths, or sent news across by carrier-pigeons, or by lights and signals. Although the punishment meted out to espionage was severe, the Belgians always kept up this form of patriotic work. It was extremely harmful to us, and its effect could be diminished only by maintaining thorough surveillance of the country in rear of our lines. Our reserves, about which the enemy was always well informed, had for the above reasons to be kept close up behind the front lines in order to be near at hand at the critical moment. Their movements, as well as the sending up of all the necessary supplies, were often matters of extreme difficulty. Generally the reserves had to bivouac on sodden meadows, the farms in the neighbourhood being insufficient to provide shelter for them all. The troops who were withdrawn from the front line and put in reserve had therefore small opportunity for either rest or recreation.

The insecurity of our communications back into the interior of Belgium must be passed over almost without mention, except to say that here too a colossal task had been set; for the weak force allotted to the General-Governor had not only to garrison Belgium, but to provide observation posts along the Dutch frontier. In carrying out these duties, the old Landsturm troops showed a spirit of endurance which said much for the military training they had received many years before. The work of keeping watch over the excited population was not without its dangers, and all praise is due to these garrison troops and to the auxiliary troops sent from Germany to their assistance. Thanks to them, the long lines of communication through conquered Belgium were not disturbed, and the supply of the northern wing of our army suffered no interruption from the enemy. For the honour of all concerned this must be put on record.

On the 4th and 7th November the enemy made attacks on a larger scale along the coast. On the 4th, believing that we had left only weak outposts behind, even opposite Nieuport, when we retired to the eastern bank of the canal, two to three Belgian regiments advanced through LOMBARTZYDE. At first they gained a slight success, but were shortly afterwards attacked by part of the 38th Landwehr Brigade.
from the east, and by the 33rd Ersetz Brigade from the south, and driven back. Detachments of the Marine Division pursued the fleeing Belgians. The second attack made by about five thousand French troops, which took place on the 7th, fared far worse; the whole of Lombartzyde was taken by our counter-attack, and the enemy losses were very heavy.\footnote{However, when British troops took over the coastal sector in 1917, Lombartzyde was in Allied possession.}

On the 9th November the 38th Landwehr Brigade was relieved by parts of the Marine Division, for the 10th November was the day on which the new offensive was to be made with fresh troops against Ypres from the south-east.

\footnote{However, when British troops took over the coastal sector in 1917, Lombartzyde was in Allied possession.}

THE LAST PHASE

When the 4th Division and von Winckler's Guard Division were sent forward on the 9th November into the northern part of the fighting line, formerly occupied by the XV Corps, the II Bavarian Corps, from the heights of St. Eloi it had just stormed, was able to look right down on Ypres. The orders of the Sixth Army commander, dated the 7th and 8th November, had given all the necessary instructions for the employment of the new units. The 4th Infantry Division and von Winckler's Guard Division were placed under the command of the Guard Corps, General Baron von Plettenberg, and were to be called Plettenberg's Corps. The XV Corps and Plettenberg's Corps formed the Army Group Linsingen.\footnote{For Order of Battle, see Appendix.}

The task set the troops of General von Linsingen was 'to drive back and crush the enemy lying north of the canal (Comines–Ypres); the main weight of the attack is to be delivered by the left wing. The Army Group Fabeck is to maintain its positions west of the canal, its task being to continue pressing forward and at the same time to support the attack of the left wing of the Army Group Linsingen, by as powerful enfilade fire as possible from its right flank batteries.' The decisive attack was to begin on the 10th November, when another strong reinforcement of engineers would
have arrived. All the other units of the Sixth Army and the whole of the Fourth Army were also, according to arrangement, to attack on this day with increased energy, so that the enemy should be allowed no rest, and held to his positions along the whole front.

On the stroke of 7 a.m. the Fourth Army advanced to the attack. This tenth day of November was to be a famous one in its history. The sectors of attack for each of the Corps remained, generally speaking, the same, except that the left wing of the XXVII Reserve Corps had been closed in slightly to the north. Strengthened by the Guard Jäger Battalion, a Guard Machine-Gun Detachment 1 and the 9th Machine-Gun Detachment, this Corps was to advance towards the Polygon Wood.

The orders for the XXII Reserve Corps ran as follows: 'The XXII Reserve Corps * in co-operation with the Marine Division will secure the Yser canal front, and will take Dixmude.' Immediately north of Dixmude the 4th Ersatz Division was in position, with the 43rd Reserve Division to the east and south, the two divisions together making a semi-circle of steel round the objective. This time our troops were determined to take the town so stubbornly defended by the French infantry. The enemy fully realised the importance of this bridge-head. Besides holding a strong German force always in the vicinity, it covered the canal-crossing nearest to Calais. On

* Consisting of the 4th Ersatz Division and the 43rd Reserve Division.

1 A Machine-Gun Detachment (Abteilung) is a mounted battery with six guns.

the 9th its garrison was further reinforced by the arrival of fresh French troops.

The rain of the previous days had made the ground over which the attack on Dixmude was to be carried out very heavy going. The Handzaeme canal, running east and west, divides it into two parts, the northerly one being particularly swampy and difficult to cross. The main attack had therefore to be made from the east and south-east on a comparatively narrow front. The town itself comprised both modern and obsolete fortifications, but the first strongholds of the defenders were the railway buildings and cemetery situated to the east of it. The railway embankment had been transformed into a very strong defensive position, and a heavy fire was expected from it when we advanced from the high embankments of the Yser. Under the cover of darkness the division was able to push its front line to an assault position within two hundred yards of the enemy, and at dawn on the 10th the artillery bombardment began. Our heaviest guns took part and countless shells from our Minenwerfer did their utmost to break down the enemy's resistance. By 7.40 a.m. our first attempt to take the enemy's advanced positions had failed, and another artillery bombardment against his obstacles and flanking posts was ordered. At 9.30 a.m. the advanced stronghold at the cemetery was stormed. Our infantry had scarcely got into position there before the artillery observers arrived to direct the fire of their batteries from the front line on to the next strong point. The artillery bombardment lasted throughout the morning until 1 p.m. when the general assault was ordered. The infantry,
with detachments of sappers carrying hand-grenades and various material useful in an assault, had worked its way forward close up to the line of obstacles.

The 201st Reserve Infantry Regiment advanced rapidly at first by frontal attack. North of it, the 15th Reserve Jäger Battalion under Captain Hameln worked forward across the deep marshes between the canal and the railway. The 202nd Reserve Infantry Regiment came under a heavy enfilade fire from the Yser embankment, and at 1.30 p.m. orders were issued for the Corps reserve under Colonel Teetzmann, consisting of a few battalions of the 43rd Reserve Division and of the 4th Ersatz Division, to be brought up into the line. Its task was to help carry forward the attack of the 202nd Regiment against the railway embankment, and to secure the left flank of the advance. The nearer the attack approached to the town, the more desperate became the resistance of its defenders. The gallant commander of the 201st Reserve Regiment, General von Seydewitz, always in the front line encouraging his men, was killed leading the attack just as his regiment and the Jäger entered the devastated town at about 3.30 p.m. Our well-directed artillery fire had cleared the front at the critical moment, and the enemy withdrew to the flanks of and behind Dixmude, but did not cease to offer resistance. He held the railway embankment south of the town with particular tenacity. Even when this had been finally stormed, the 202nd Regiment had to continue the fight, with heavy loss, among the burning houses in the southern part of the town, until the 201st Regiment by a wheel southwards were able to give assist-

ance. Teetzmann's brigade in its attack on the Yser embankment, to protect the flank of the division, had meanwhile reached the river. Thence it pressed on towards the bridges west of the town, so that the enemy's retreat was threatened. In spite of this, however, he gave nothing up without a struggle, and every block of houses had to be captured: in fact the street fighting that ensued was hardly less bitter and terrible than at Wytschaete and Messines.

During the struggle in Dixmude, the French artillery fired into the place regardless of friend or foe, and both suffered alike. The fight was still raging among the houses at the northern exit, where von Beers was only making slow progress with the advanced detachments of the 4th Ersatz Division, when our reserves were assembled in the market-square to deliver the final blow. The French infantry and Marine Fusiliers put up a desperate defence, but finally had to give way, for though not numerically superior, the offensive spirit of the German troops overcame all resistance. It was not until the west bank of the canal had been reached, that the mass of the enemy put up another defence.

Dixmude was captured, and the French had been driven back across the canal. A combined counter-attack by Belgians, Zouaves and French, which began during the evening and continued into the night, was unable to alter the situation, and though Dixmude in consequence was under the heaviest fire, our troops held their ground. Weak detachments of the 4th Ersatz Division were even able to cross the river north of the town under cover of darkness,
though the extreme swappiness of the ground prevented them carrying their success any further. The enemy had prepared the bridges, west of DIXMUDE, for demolition some time before and had constructed strong positions along the west bank of the Yser.

**THE CAPTURE of DIXMUDE.**

*on November 10th, 1914.*

![Diagram of DIXMUDE and surrounding areas.]

These were especially good, as the ground there is higher and overlooks that on the east bank. Our artillery had therefore to make another preparatory bombardment. The spoils taken at DIXMUDE were considerable, and in spite of the fact that the British assert that the Allies only lost a few hundred men, we took in prisoners alone 17 officers and 1400 men.¹

¹ It is not clear why a British assertion about the defence of DIXMUDE should be quoted, nor indeed is it clear what shape this assertion can have taken, as no British troops were concerned in the DIXMUDE fighting, nor could there have been any occasion for any official British announcement about DIXMUDE.

In the diagram above, for 201st, 202nd, and 203rd Res. Jäger Regt. read Res. Infantry Regt.

Our allied enemies had also been driven back over the canal, south of DIXMUDE, on the 10th November. The XXIII Reserve Corps had made a successful attack on NOORDSCHOOTE and through BIXSCHOOTE against HIT SAS. A long and bitter struggle took place for the high ground south-west of BIXSCHOOTE; but by evening the canal had been reached along almost its whole length between NOORDSCHOOTE and BIXSCHOOTE, whilst about a brigade of the 45th Reserve Division and weak detachments of the 46th had crossed it. The inundation had however gradually extended southwards as far as this district, and put any far-reaching extension of this success out of the question. The XXIII Reserve Corps took prisoner about 1000 men and captured a considerable number of machine-guns in this operation.

The reinforced III Reserve Corps had had a particularly hard fight on both sides of LANGEMARCK. Throughout the 9th November and during the following night the French delivered heavy attacks there and had been everywhere repulsed. Rows of corpses lay in front of the III Reserve Corps, on the left wing of which the 9th Reserve Division, now affiliated to the Fourth Army, had been brought up into the line. Making every use of the element of surprise, General von Beseler had ordered the assault to begin at 6.30 A.M. Punctually at this moment, as dawn was breaking, the bugles sounded the attack. On the right wing the 44th Reserve Division pushed forward till close up to HIT SAS, taking prisoner 14 officers and 1164 men. The official despatch, in reporting this advance, says: 'West of LANGEMARCK our young regiments advanced against the
enemy’s front line singing “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,” and captured it. The left wing of the division hung a good way back, as the 5th Reserve Division on its left was unable to push on so rapidly. It had broken into the enemy’s first position, but its eastern wing was completely held up in front of Langemarck. The 6th Reserve Division had attacked the place from north and east, without being able to take it. Documents discovered afterwards prove that the enemy had concentrated strong forces here for a big attack that he himself intended to make on the 10th, and these were now defending every yard of ground with the utmost determination. The 9th Reserve Division had at first made good progress in the direction of St. Julien, but it came under a heavy cross-fire, and was thereby compelled to give up a large part of the ground gained. General von Beseler therefore decided to pull out the main body of the 9th Reserve Division, and move it to his right wing, where the 44th and 35th Reserve Divisions had had a decided success in the direction of Het Sas.

After the first line of trenches had been taken, the attack of the XXVI and XXVII Reserve Corps was very soon held up by wire entanglements which had not been destroyed by our guns, and by a second line of trenches provided with every modern device. The XXVII Reserve Corps spent most of the day in making such disposition of its forces as would enable it to give the utmost support to the Army Group Linsingen, which was getting ready to attack further south on the morrow.

In the Army Group Linsingen, however, the preparations of Plettenberg’s Corps for an offensive on the morning of the 10th were not sufficiently advanced to allow it to take place on that day. Further, the dense autumn mists prevented the necessary reconnaissances. With the concurrence of General von Linsingen, and after arrangement with the neighbouring troops, General Baron von Plettenberg therefore decided to attack on the 11th November. On the front of Deimling’s (XV) Corps the 10th November, up to four in the afternoon, was spent in a preparatory artillery bombardment; especially good work was done by means of heavy enfilade fire from the south, carried out by a massed group of artillery consisting of three batteries of heavy howitzers, three batteries of mortars, a battery of 10-cm. guns and a battery of long 15-cm. guns, all under the orders of Colonel Gartnayr, commanding the 1st Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment. After the bombardment both divisions of the Corps advanced to the attack and, in co-operation with the II Bavarian Corps fighting on the high ground of St. Eloi, were able to gain some hundreds of yards.

On the 11th November the combined offensive of the Fourth Army and the Army Groups Linsingen and Faböck took place. The remainder of the Fourth and Sixth Armies continued their attacks. The great efforts made by the Fourth Army on the 10th had considerably weakened it, and further handicapped by a heavy rain-storm which beat in the faces of the attacking troops, no special success was gained by it on the 11th; nevertheless the enemy was everywhere held to his ground and prevented from transferring any troops to other parts of the front. On the extreme right wing the Marine Division made a suc-
cessful attack on NIEUWPORT, capturing several hundred prisoners. At the same time the Guard Cavalry Division, affiliated to the Fourth Army, was sent up to

the Yser, in order to relieve part of the 4th Ersatz Division, which went into Army Reserve. On the left wing of the Army, the XXVI and XXVII Reserve Corps worked their way towards the hostile positions by sapping, whilst the units on the extreme south flank of the XXVII Reserve Corps attacked in close co-operation with Plettenberg’s Corps.

On the 11th, in pouring rain, the Army Groups Linsingen and Fabeck began the last phase of this severe and terrible struggle for Ypres; and it was destined to fix the general line on which the opposing armies were to remain rooted till the spring of 1915.

Von Winckler’s Guard Division fought on the right wing of the Army Group Linsingen, and for us the day was to be a historic, though costly one. In former wars the Guard had always been in the heat of the fray at its most critical stages, and the sons were to show themselves worthy of their fathers. The spirit of Frederick the Great and the glory of St. Privat shone again on the battlefield of Ypres. The British speak of the attack of the Guard as a most brilliant feat of arms.

Before the infantry of the Division could come into immediate contact with the enemy, a broad zone had to be crossed under his artillery fire: through the hail of shell the pride and iron discipline of the Guard brought its regiments unshaken. At 7.30 A.M. the German batteries opened, and a furious bombardment continued for two and a half hours, and then the infantry attack began. It struck against two divisions of the I British Corps, a war experienced foe, whose fighting methods were well adapted to the country.¹ The artillery preparation however had

¹ The frontage attacked by the twelve battalions of General von Winckler’s Guard Division, far from being held by two British Divisions was held from north to south by the 1st Infantry Brigade, now reduced
been a thorough one, and in spite of the enemy's superiority in numbers the advance made good progress, so that shortly after 10 a.m. the strong position along the southern edge of the Polygon Wood was in the possession of the 3rd Guard Regiment.¹

At the same time the butt ends and bayonets of H.M. the Emperor's 1st Guard Regiment had forced a way through the wire entanglements and trenches in front of Verbeek farm, and it was taken in the first assault. The regiment had thereby captured an excellent position from which to support the right wing of the attack.² Led by its fearless commander, Prince Eitel Friedrich of Prussia, it then pressed on without a moment's delay into the wood north-west of the farm. Meanwhile the 3rd Guard Regiment was still engaged along the southern edges of the woods to some 800 bayonets, a battalion of Zouaves and the left brigade of the 3rd Division, little over 1200 strong. Even if the whole of the 3rd Guard Regiment may have been absorbed in the task of covering the main attack from the British troops lining the southern edge of the Polygon Wood, the superiority of the attacking force was sufficiently pronounced.

¹ The Germans do not appear to have penetrated into the Polygon Wood at any point. The northern end of the breach in the British line was marked by a 'strong point' which had been erected near the southwest corner of the wood, known later as 'Black Watch Corner': this was successfully defended all day by a very week company of the Black Watch. Attacks were made on the 1st King's lining the southern edge of the wood, apparently by the 3rd Guard Regiment, and also further outward and to the left of the King's, on the 2nd Coldstream Guards. The Germans in this quarter would soon to have belonged to the 54th Reserve Division: at neither of these points did the attackers meet with any success.

² A thick mist which prevented the troops holding the front line trenches from seeing far to their front undoubtedly played an important part in concealing the advance of the German Guard, and contributed appreciably to its success.

west of Reutel, with its front facing north, and it put in its last reserves to help forward the left wing of the 54th Reserve Division.

At 10 a.m., on the last artillery salvo, the battalions of the 4th Guard Brigade advanced to the assault on

both sides of the Ypres-Gheluvelt main road, and they took the front British trenches in their stride.

The Emperor Francis' 2nd Guard Grenadier Regiment attacked from Veldhoek against the corner
of the Herentage Wood, north of the Ypres-Gheluvelt road, and took its edge. The wood itself
gave the infantry endless trouble, for it was impossible
to see a yard ahead in its thick undergrowth, which
was over six feet high. Suddenly at a few paces' distance, machine-guns would open on our troops
from behind a bush or a tree-trunk. Thus the task
set the Grenadiers proved to be an extremely difficult
one, the more so as they had lost many of their officers
and N.C.O.'s in the first rush across the open. Never-
theless, the defence-works inside the wood were quickly
taken one after another, but more strong points pro-
tected by wire entanglements untouched by our
artillery fire were encountered. The Fusilier Battalion
forced its way through to the château of Veldhoek,
which was surrounded by a marsh and an impene-
trable hedge. The men were trying to work their way
one by one through the latter by cutting gaps in it,
when suddenly a deafening roar of rifle and machine-
gun burst upon them. It came from the château on
their right, from some flanking trenches on their left,
and from trees behind the line. A number of the
few remaining officers fell, and finally the battalion
had to retire a short distance in order to reorganize.
But it soon came forward once more, and the com-
panies pressed on till they were close up to the château
itself, when another annihilating fusillade was opened
on them from all sides. Simultaneously the British
made a flank attack along the hedge in order to cut
off the men who had got through. Machine-guns

1 This is the eastern part of the wood known later as 'Inverness Cupar.'

firing from trees and from the château windows completely stopped any communication with them.
Very few only of these foremost troops, who were
commanded by Captain von Rieben, succeeded in
getting away. Those who did were assembled by
Captain Baron von Sell at the eastern edge of the
wood and were, with part of the 1st Battalion, led
forward again to the relief of the Fusiliers who were
surrounded. The attack of Captain von Sell developed
however into small isolated combats, and though the
boldest followed their leader nearly up to the château
again, they were received there with such heavy fire
from right and left that it appeared that they would
have to retire again and reorganize. Before this
could be carried out, a British counter-attack was
launched; but our men, disorganised and mixed up
as they were, held fast to their ground and stopped
the attack, although at first both their flanks were in
the air.†

Queen Augusta's 4th Guard Grenadier Regiment,
advancing south of the main road, at once suffered
such heavy losses that the first two attacks made no
headway. When however part of the regiment near
the main road pushed forward along it, echeloned
behind its sister-regiment on the right, and then
turned southwards, the advance made good progress,
and a firm footing was gained in Herentage Wood
south of the road. The reverses met with by the
Emperor Francis' 2nd Grenadiers unfortunately enabled
the British to bring such a heavy enfilade fire to bear

† This counter-attack may be identified with one delivered by the
1st Scots Fusiliers and one company 2nd Duke of Wellington's.
on Queen Augustia’s 4th Grenadiers, that their advance had to be stopped.¹

At 5 p.m. German Guard troops had a tussle with the British Guards. The King’s Liverpool Regiment made a counter-attack from the Nun’s Wood (Nonne Bosch) against the extreme left of the 1st Guard Foot Regiment and the northern wing of the 2nd Guard Grenadiers. The point of attack was well chosen, and took both the regiments in flank, for the 1st Guard Infantry Brigade was at this time heavily engaged, and held up in the woods (Polygon Wood and the eastern part of the Nonne Bosch), with its front facing north, and the 2nd Guard Grenadier Regiment, having spent all its energies against the château of Veldhoek, lay with its front facing west.² However, the British

¹ The 4th (Queen Augusta’s) Guard Grenadiers seem to have attacked the right of the line held by the 9th Infantry Brigade and to have been repulsed by the 1st Lincolnhires and 1st Northumberland Fusiliers. Further to the British right the 15th and 7th Infantry Brigades were also attacked, but by the 4th Division, not by the Guards. Here the Germans made no progress.

² This part of the German account is not borne out by the British versions. The main body of the 1st Guard Regiment, which broke through the thinly held line of the 1st Infantry Brigade, pressed on north-west into the Nonne Bosch Wood, pushing right through it, and coming out into the open on the western edge. Here their progress was arrested mainly by the gunners of XI Brigade, R.F.A., who held them up with rifle fire at short range. Various details of Royal Engineers, ordering from Headquarters, transport men, railed stragglers of the 1st Brigade, assisted to stop the Germans, but the situation was critical until about noon on a little later the 2nd Oxford and Bucks L.I. arrived on the scene. This battalion had been engaged for several days near Zwarteleen, and had just been brought up to Zeebrugge to act as Divisional Reserve. Though under 400 strong the battalion promptly counter-attacked the Nonne Bosch Wood and drove the Germans out headlong. Many of them were caught as they escaped on the eastern and southern sides by the fire of the 2nd Highland L.I., now on the western edge of Polygon

THE LAST PHASE

troops ran into their own artillery fire near the Nonne Bosch, and the attack broke up and came to a standstill in front of our thin and scattered lines. Any further advance on the 11th November by our Guard troops north of the road was now out of the question.

In the southern part of the Herentalse Wood the 4th Infantry Division pushed on, though here too great difficulties were encountered. Deep trenches, broad obstacles, and enfilade machine-gun fire combined to make our progress slow, especially on the right wing.

The XV Corps in close co-operation with the left wing of the Pomeranians gained ground in the woods near and around Zwarteleen; the capture of Hill 60 near Zwarteleen was of exceptional importance. From this elevation another direct view over the country round Ypres was obtained.

South of the canal the 11th Bavarian Corps with much thinned ranks stormed forward again. The bit of

Wood, and of the 1st Northamptonshires, who had come up to Gijsbeek Wood, south-west of the Nonne Bosch, and with other units of the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades had filled the gap which extended from the Menin road. Thus those of the 1st Guard Regiment who had pushed straight on westward were prevented from penetrating any further. The King’s, to whom this account gives the credit for the Oxfordshire’s counter-attack, had been engaged with the 3rd Guard Regiment further to the north, completely defeating their attacks on the Polygon, but not making any counter-attack. It is worth recalling that at the critical moment of the battle of Waterloo it was the 2nd Oxford and Bucks L.I., then 52nd Light Infantry, who played the chief part in the defeat of Napoleon’s Guard.

The defeat of the 2nd Guard Grenadiers does not appear to have been the work of the 2nd Oxford and Bucks L.I., but of the other battalions, chiefly from the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades, who were pushed forward rather earlier between Gijsbeek Wood and Innleftrightarrow.
wood north-east of Wytschaete, which had already changed hands several times, was now taken by it. The heavy artillery again rendered invaluable services. Several strong hostile counter-attacks were held up chiefly owing to the way in which at the critical moment our guns always protected the infantry lines by a barrage.

In the area near Wytschaete, the 11th November was the day of the heaviest fighting. In the woods north of it, Bavarians and Hessians pressed forward together, slowly but surely. A French battery and four machine-guns were taken by the 168th Infantry Regiment at a farm about 150 yards north of Wytschaete, but the guns were so firmly emplaced in the sodden ground, that they could not be got away by the infantry. When the buildings were evacuated again, owing to the heavy fire of the French on them, the guns, made unserviceable by us, remained as a neutral battery between the lines. It must be recorded here that in the fight for one single farm the Hessians took prisoners belonging to three different regiments, a fact that proves what masses the enemy had put in to the fight on the Ypres front, and to what an extent he had to concentrate his units to ward off our attacks.

On and to the west of the Messines ridge the line remained almost unaltered during the 11th November. The very severe effect of the enemy’s artillery fire from Mount Kemmel on this front and the enfilade fire of artillery and machine-guns from Floegestreet Wood compelled our men to remain in their trenches.

Taken as a whole the operations on the 11th November were a great success. A series of brilliant feats, many of which it has been impossible even to mention in this short account, far less adequately describe, gave us unchallenged possession of positions from which any concentration of the enemy near Ypres could be seen, and immediately opened on by artillery. It is true, however, that no break through of the enemy’s lines had been accomplished: his numerical superiority and, more especially, the strength of his positions held up our offensive. The weather conditions, storm and rain, had also contributed towards the result.¹

The furious character of the fighting on the 11th November did not abate on the following day, but on the whole the situation remained unaltered. The general character of the operations on the entire front of the Fourth and Sixth Armies was now changed, and sapping was eventually resorted to, though here and there successes in open warfare were gained. For instance the XXII Reserve Corps managed to strengthen its detachments across the Yser at Diksmuide, and on the 12th the 201st Reserve Infantry

¹ The author must be thankful for minor services if he can reckon 11th November as a day of great success. The gain of ground at Veldhoek was trifling in extent and value, and though ‘Hill 60’ and the wood north of Wytschaete were more important points, there is no doubt that the throwing of the German Guard into the struggle had been expected to produce a break-through. The ‘numerical superiority’ once again attributed to the Allies was about an unreal as the alleged strength of the positions, hastily dug, imperfectly wired and almost wholly lacking supporting points and communications, which had such a much more formidable character in the eyes of the Germans than they ever possessed in reality. The gallantry and vigour with which the German Guard launched its attack will be readily admitted, but the honour of 11th November 1914 go to the weary men who after three weeks of incessant fighting met and drove back these fresh and famous troops.
Regiment, under Major Baron von Wedekind, stormed the enemy's defences opposite it on the western bank of the Yser, and held them under great difficulties. Constant rain had filled the badly constructed trenches with mud so that our troops had to support the enemy's bombardment and resist his counter-attacks lying in the open.

At Bixschoote the enemy again attempted strong counter-attacks, but they were stopped largely by the muddy state of the country. On the 14th November there was a recurrence of severe fighting. Owing to the misty weather our relieving troops occupied a reserve position instead of the original front line; by the time the error was discovered, our watchful opponents were already in the front German position. Our men, however, gave them no rest there, for their honour would not suffer the surrender in this manner of their success of the 10th November. Without waiting for any orders from higher authority or for reinforcements they attacked and recaptured the strong position on the rising ground south-west of Bixschoote. On the front of the Sixth Army Herenthage Wood was completely taken by the Guard on the 14th November after severe hand-to-hand fighting.3

After the artillery had prepared the way as far as was possible in that difficult and wooded neighbourhood, the infantry, whose fighting spirit was by no means damped by the events of the 11th November, advanced to the assault. In the château of Herenthage a large number of British snipers surrendered. The XV Corps had another success in the wooded district of Zwarteleen after being reinforced by Hofmann's composite Division. A strong system of trenches and dug-outs were taken, as well as a large number of prisoners.

On the 13th November the Park of Wytschaete was captured from the French by the Pomeranians and Bavarians. A counter-attack, in which the French advanced against our positions shouting, 'Don't shoot,' in German, cost them heavy losses; and the Bavarians, whose tempers were roused by this treachery, drove them back to their original positions.

On the 20th November the farm 150 yards north of Wytschaete, for which such a severe fight had been made on the 11th, was finally captured by us. We thereby obtained a position in the Wytschaete salient which, although overlooked from Mount Kemmel, gave us such a commanding view of all the ground between Mount Kemmel and the Wytschaete-Messines ridge that surprise attacks by the enemy in this district were now out of the question.3

On the rest of the Flanders front only small fights took place, and on the 17th November the commander of the Fourth Army decided to give up any

---

3 This statement is not true. After an attack on 13th November in which prisoners were taken from the 4th (German) Division, the 9th and 15th Infantry Brigades drew back from the eastern edge of the Herenthage Wood to a line about 200 yards in rear (13th-14th November). This line was strongly attacked next day, and the Herenthage Château fell for the time into German hands, only to be recovered by the 2nd King's Own Yorkshire L.I., while a further counter-attack by a company of the Northumberland Fusiliers, assisted by a gun of the 8th Battery R.F.A., ousted the Germans also from the stables of the Château. Further to the British right the 7th and 15th Infantry Brigades successfully repulsed vigorous attacks.

3 The surprise came in 1917 in spite of this.
idea of continuing the offensive; a decision to which he was compelled by the low fighting strength of his troops and the bad autumn weather, which was affecting their health.\footnote{One reason why the G.O.C. Fourth Army came to this decision on 17th November is omitted. An attack in force had been attempted on this day by his 4th Division, but the 7th and 15th Infantry Brigades, holding the line attacked, had proved equal to the occasion, had driven the Germans back, recovering some advanced trenches carried by the first rush and inflicting heavy losses. This discouraging reception undoubtedly assisted Duke Albert in making his decision.} The frequent downpours of rain during November had caused a constant rising of the water-level, and it became urgently necessary to provide regular reliefs for the troops, for they were worn out by the constant fighting under such bad weather conditions. Clear signs of exhaustion in the enemy’s ranks on the front opposite the Fourth and Sixth Armies were also noticed. This permitted our gallant Fourth Army gradually to construct a good line of trenches and erect wire entanglements. As soon as these were completed rest-billets were allotted further to the rear and the men found quiet and pleasant quarters in the villages of Flanders untouched by war, with a not unfriendly population. The German General Staff fully concurred in the decision of the commander of the Fourth Army made on the 17th November. They at the same time expressed the hope that the Army would be prepared to hold its positions even against superior hostile forces. This expectation was completely fulfilled by the Fourth Army, and although at that time there were four and one-half French Corps, as well as the 25,000 Belgian troops, opposed to the forces of Duke Albert of Würtemburg, they never obtained a success of any consequence.

The threat against our right flank ceased soon afterwards. British monitors appeared a few times towards the end of November off the roadstead of Ostend. They bombarded the canal exit and our positions near by: but their fire was as ineffective as before. The ‘glorious’ activities of the British Grand Fleet along the Flanders coast came to a speedy end as soon as our ill-famed sea-rats, the U-boats, began to put in an appearance there.\footnote{It was the U-boats that came to a speedy end.}

The developments on the front of the Sixth Army during the second half of November 1914 were similar to those of the Fourth Army. For some time the sapping was continued, but from the 20th onwards strong detachments were taken from it and entrained for the Eastern Front, where General von Hindenburg was able, in the fighting round Lodz, to bring the Russian steam-roller to a standstill, and finally make it roll back again.

From this time onwards the line of demarcation between the Fourth and Sixth Armies was the Comines-Ypres canal.
CONCLUSION

As the November storms passed and frost and icy winds heralded to the mild climate of Flanders the approach of winter, the unbroken defensive lines of both sides were being slowly strengthened. The effect of artillery fire compelled them to make cover in good trenches and behind thick breast-works. As the armament in use became more and more powerful, artificial shelter, where the surface water allowed it, had to be made deeper and deeper in the earth. At first passive defence was little understood by the German troops, as instruction in the offensive had dominated all other in their peace-training, and in the short period available after they were called up the volunteers had only been trained in the principles of attack. Their sense of superiority over their opponents did not let them rest content with merely holding positions. The high sense of duty in each individual was of assistance, and the methods of defensive warfare were quickly learnt. The continuous bad weather in the autumn and winter in this water-logged country caused great suffering; and the troops sent off to Russia to fight under the great victor of Tannenberg were much envied. The despatch of men eastward showed those left behind that any hope of a final decision at Ypres had disappeared.

1 See remarks in Introduction.
THE BATTLE ON THE YSER AND OF YPRES

Front were far too weak, and even the genius of a Hindenburg could not decisively defeat the masses of the Grand Duke Nicolas without reinforcements. Thus it came about that we had to lie and wait in front of the gates of Ypres, while all the available men from Flanders were hurried across to Poland, to help Hindenburg pave the way to victory.

There was never peace on the Ypres front. The belt of steel with which we had invested the town by our operations in October and November 1914, was a source of constant annoyance to the British, whilst our position on the Belgian coast seemed to our cousins across the Channel like an apparition whose shadow lay over the British Isles and especially menaced the traffic-routes between England and France. The British therefore continually tried their utmost to free themselves of this menace and their pressure produced counter measures. Thus in December 1914 heavy fighting again occurred, especially near the sea at Nieufort, and also at Bixschoote and Zwarteleen. On Christmas Eve the French vainly attacked Bixschoote: their hope of catching the Germans dreaming heavily on that evening was of no avail. When spring lifted the mist that hung over Flanders, a German offensive took place during April and May that forced the northern part of the Ypres salient back to within three miles of the town. After this the positions only altered very slightly. In March 1916 the British blew up our front trench positions at St. Eloi by five colossal mines, but were unable to hold on to the ground thus destroyed. In 1917 the death-agony of Ypres was renewed, and for months war raged over the plains of Flanders; the fighting was as furious as in October and November 1914. The young soldiers of those days have now become veterans, who know war and do not fear it even in its most terrible forms. The enemy are those same British against whom Crown Prince Rupert of Bavaria, in exhorting the troops to battle in 1914, once said: ‘Therefore when you are fighting this particular enemy retaliate for his deceit and for having occasioned all this great sacrifice; show him that the Germans are not so easy to wipe out of the world’s history as he imagines, show it by redoubling the strength behind your blows. In front of you is the opponent who is the greatest obstacle to peace. On! at him!’

He spoke as a prophet. Hate of the British who were so jealous of us, who brought on the war for the sake of their money-bags and spread the conflagration all over the world, who at first hoped that it would be but necessary to pour out their silver bullets to annihilate Germany: all this steeled the hearts of our warriors in Flanders, whose creed was the justice of the German cause. And the British efforts to wrest Flanders away from us again were stifled in mud and in blood. The fighting in 1917 was perhaps more severe than that of those stormy autumn days of 1914, but the objective for us was ever the same: to keep the enemy far, far from our homes. In this we succeeded in 1917 as in 1914.

Flanders! The word is heard by every one in the German Fatherland with a silent shudder, but also...
with just and intense pride. It was there that the British were made to realise that German heroism was not to be vanquished, not even by the use of the war material which the whole world had been manufacturing for years. When we read that up to the 14th November 1914, 40 divisions had been put into the battle round Ypres by the Western Allies, whilst only 25 German divisions were opposed to them,¹ and that in the course of the Flanders battle of 1917, 99 British and French divisions struggled in vain against a greatly inferior German force, it says much for our troops. But far from all. For the enemy’s superiority in material, in guns, trench-mortars, machine-guns, aeroplanes, etc., was two, three, and even fourfold. Who can doubt but that a nation whose sons know how to fight like this, must win? Let us only hold the hope that the seeds of blood sown in Flanders will bring forth rich and splendid fruit for the German Fatherland. This indeed would be the highest reward that could be bestowed on those of us who fought there.

¹ It is not to be read in this monograph. See Introduction.

APPENDIX

ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE FOURTH ARMY from 10th Oct. 1914 to 16th Nov. 1914.

Commander . . General Duke Albert of Württemburg.
Chief of Staff . . Major-General Ilse.

III Reserve Corps . (General of Infantry von Beseler).
       5th Reserve Division.
       6th Reserve Division.
       4th Ersatz Division.

XXII Reserve Corps . (General of Cavalry von Falkenhayn).
       43rd Reserve Division.
       44th Reserve Division.

XXIII Reserve Corps . (General of Cavalry von Kleist).
       45th Reserve Division.
       46th Reserve Division.

XXVI Reserve Corps . (General of Infantry von Hügel).
       51st Reserve Division.
       52nd Reserve Division.

       53rd (Saxon) Reserve Division.
       54th (Württemburg) Reserve Division.