

the front of the French position, were reduced in turn.

LENS OPERATIONS RESUMED.—HILL 70.

(45) Towards the middle of August a slight improvement took place in the weather, and advantage was taken of this to launch our second attack east of Ypres. Thereafter unsettled weather again set in, and the month closed as the wettest August that has been known for many years.

On the day preceding this attack at Ypres a highly successful operation was carried out in the neighbourhood of Lens, whereby the situation of our forces in that sector was greatly improved. At the same time the threat to Lens itself was rendered more immediate and more insistent, and the enemy was prevented from concentrating the whole of his attention and resources upon the front of our main offensive.

At 4.25 a.m. on the 15th August the Canadian Corps attacked on a front of 4,000 yards south-east and east of Loos. The objectives consisted of the strongly fortified hill known as Hill 70, which had been reached, but not held, in the battle of Loos on the 25th September, 1915, and also the mining suburbs of Cité Ste. Elizabeth, Cité St. Emile, and Cité St. Laurent, together with the whole of Bois Rase and the western half of Bois Hugo. The observation from Hill 70 had been very useful to the enemy, and in our possession materially increased our command over the defences of Lens.

Practically the whole of these objectives were gained rapidly at light cost, and in exact accordance with plan. Only at the farthest apex of our advance a short length of German trench west of Cité St. Auguste resisted our first assault. This position was again attacked on the afternoon of the following day and captured after a fierce struggle lasting far into the night.

A number of local counter-attacks on the morning of the 15th August were repulsed, and in the evening a powerful attack delivered across the open by a German reserve division was broken up with heavy loss. In addition to the enemy's other casualties, 1,120 prisoners from three German divisions were captured by us.

THE YPRES BATTLE.—LANGEMARCK.

(46) Close upon the heels of this success, at 4.45 a.m. on the 16th August our second attack was launched east and north of Ypres; on a front extending from the north-west corner of Inverness Copse to our junction with the French south of St. Janshoek. On our left the French undertook the task of clearing up the remainder of the Bixchoote peninsula.

On the left of the British attack the English brigades detailed for the assault captured the hamlet of Wijdendrift and reached the southern outskirts of Langemarck. Here some resistance was encountered, but by 8.0 a.m. the village had been taken, after sharp fighting. Our troops then proceeded to attack the portion of the Langemarck-Gheluvelt Line which formed their final objective, and an hour later had gained this also, with the exception of a short length of trench north-east of Langemarck. Two small counter-attacks were repulsed without difficulty.

The attack of the First French Army delivered at the same hour was equally successful.

On the right a few fortified farms in the neighbourhood of the Steenbeek again gave trouble, and held out for a time. Elsewhere our Allies gained their objectives rapidly, and once more at exceptionally light cost. The bridge-head of Drie Grachten was secured, and the whole of the peninsula cleared of the enemy.

In the centre of the British attack the enemy's resistance was more obstinate. The difficulty of making deep-mined dug-outs in soil where water lay within a few feet of the surface of the ground had compelled the enemy to construct in the ruins of farms and in other suitable localities a number of strong points or "pill-boxes" built of reinforced concrete often many feet thick.

These field forts, distributed in depth all along the front of our advance, offered a serious obstacle to progress. They were heavily armed with machine guns and manned by men determined to hold on at all costs. Many were reduced as our troops advanced, but others held out throughout the day, and delayed the arrival of our supports. In addition, weather conditions made aeroplane observation practically impossible, with the result that no warning was received of the enemy's counter-attacks, and our infantry obtained little artillery help against them. When, therefore, later in the morning a heavy counter-attack developed in the neighbourhood of the Wieltje-Passchendaele road, our troops, who had reached their final objectives at many points in this area also, were gradually compelled to fall back.

On the left centre West Lancashire Territorials and troops from other English counties established themselves on a line running north from St. Julien to the old German third line due east of Langemarck. This line they maintained against the enemy's attacks, and thereby secured the flank of our gains further north.

On the right of the British attack the enemy again developed the main strength of his resistance. At the end of a day of very heavy fighting, except for small gains of ground on the western edge of Glencorse Wood and north of Westhoek, the situation south of St. Julien remained unchanged.

In spite of this partial check on the southern portion of our attack, the day closed as a decided success for the Allies. A wide gap had been made in the old German third line system, and over 2,100 prisoners and some thirty guns had been captured.

EFFECT OF HOSTILE RESISTANCE.—METHODS REVISED.

(47) The strength of the resistance developed by the enemy at this stage in the neighbourhood of the Menin road decided me to extend the flank of the next attack southwards. It was undesirable, however, either to increase the already wide front of attack for which the Fifth Army was responsible or to divide between two Armies the control of the attack against the main ridge itself. I therefore determined to extend the left of the Second Army northwards, entrusting the attack upon the whole of the high ground crossed by the Menin road to General Sir Hubert Plumer as a single self-contained operation, to be carried out in conjunction with the attacks of the Fifth Army farther north.

During the wet weather which prevailed throughout the remainder of the month, our efforts were confined to a number of small operations east and north-east of Ypres,