

designed to reduce certain of the more important of the enemy's strong points. In the meantime the necessary rearrangements of the British forces were pushed on as rapidly as possible so that our new attack might be ready directly the weather should improve sufficiently to enable it to be undertaken.

These arrangements included a modification of our artillery tactics, to meet the situation created by the change in the enemy's methods of defence.

Our recent successes had conclusively proved that the enemy's infantry were unable to hold the strongest defences against a properly mounted attack, and that increasing the number of his troops in his forward defence systems merely added to his losses. Accordingly, the enemy had adopted a system of elastic defence, in which his forward trench lines were held only in sufficient strength to disorganise the attack, while the bulk of his forces were kept in close reserve, ready to deliver a powerful and immediate blow which might recover the positions over-run by our troops before we had had time to consolidate them.

In the heavy fighting east of Ypres, these tactics had undoubtedly met with a certain measure of success. While unable to drive us back from the ridge, they had succeeded in combination with the state of the ground and weather in checking our progress. This new policy, for our early knowledge of which, as well as for other valuable information concerning the enemy's dispositions and intentions throughout the battle much credit is due to the zeal and efficiency of my Intelligence Service, necessarily entailed corresponding changes in our method of attack.

#### MINOR OPERATIONS.

(48) In the interval, on the 19th, 22nd and 27th August, positions of considerable local importance in the neighbourhood of St. Julien were captured with some hundreds of prisoners, as the result of minor attacks conducted under the most unfavourable conditions of ground and weather. The ground gained represented an advance of about 800 yards on a front of over two miles. In combination with the attack of the 22nd August, English troops also attacked astride the Menin road, and after six days of continuous local fighting established themselves in the western edge of Inverness Copse.

Meanwhile, in pursuance of my policy of compelling the enemy to guard himself on other fronts, successful minor operations had been undertaken elsewhere. On the Lens front, Canadian troops attacked on the 21st August, and carried the line of German trenches skirting the town to the south-west and west, taking 200 prisoners. Farther south, North-country troops attacked on the 26th August east of Hargicourt, and captured the enemy's advanced positions on a front of a mile. In this operation 136 prisoners were taken, and on the 9th and 11th September our gains were extended and further prisoners secured.

#### THE YPRES BATTLE.—PREPARATIONS FOR THE THIRD ATTACK COMPLETED.

(49) At the beginning of September the weather gradually improved, and artillery and other preparations for my next attack proceeded steadily. Both the extent of the preparations required, however, and the need

to give the ground time to recover from the heavy rains of August rendered a considerable interval unavoidable before a new advance could be undertaken. The 20th September was therefore chosen for the date of our attack, and before that day our preparations had been completed.

The front selected extended from the Ypres-Comines Canal north of Hollebeke to the Ypres-Staden Railway north of Langemarck, a distance of just over eight miles along the line then held by us. The average depth of our objectives was 1,000 yards, which increased to a depth of a mile in the neighbourhood of the Menin road. Australian, English, Scottish and South African troops were employed in the attack, and gained a success conspicuous for precision and thoroughness of execution.

#### THE MENIN ROAD RIDGE.

(50) During the night of the 19th/20th September rain again fell steadily, and when dawn broke thick mist made observation impossible. Despite this disadvantage, the assembling of our troops was carried out in good order, and at 5.40 a.m. on the 20th September the assault was launched.

Good progress was made from the start, and as the morning wore on the mist cleared. Our aeroplanes were able to establish contact with our infantry, to assist them by engaging parties of the enemy with machine-gun fire, and to report hostile concentrations and counter-attacks to our artillery.

On our right Welsh and west country troops advanced down the spur east of Klein Zillebeke, and after sharp fighting in the small woods north of the Ypres-Comines Canal gained the whole of their objectives. English battalions pushed through the eastern portions of Shrewsbury Forest and reached their objectives in the valley of the Bassevillebeek. Regiments from the south-east counties of England had some trouble from snipers and machine-guns early in their advance, but ultimately fought their way forward across the upper valley of the Bassevillebeek and up the slopes of Tower Hamlets. Here strong opposition was encountered, with heavy machine-gun fire from Tower Hamlets and the Veldhoek Ridge.

In the meantime, however, north country troops had already carried Inverness Copse, and after beating off a counter-attack in the neighbourhood of Dumbarton Lakes captured Veldhoek and the line of their final objectives some 500 yards farther east. Their progress assisted the south-east county battalions on their right to establish themselves across the Tower Hamlets Spur.

On the left of the North country division Australian troops carried the remainder of Glencorse Wood and Nonne Boschen. Before 10 a.m. they had taken the hamlet of Polygonveld and the old German third line to the north of it. This advance constituted a fine performance, in which the capture of a difficult piece of ground that had much delayed us was successfully completed. Sharp fighting took place at a strong point known as Black Watch Corner at the south-western end of Polygon Wood. By mid-day this had been captured, the western portion of Polygon Wood had been cleared of the enemy, and the whole of our objectives on this part of our front had been gained.

On the Fifth Army front our attack met with equal success. Scottish and South African