

observed fire of our artillery, and his positions in this sector jeopardised. In short, so great was the importance of the ridge to the enemy that its loss would probably cause the abandonment by the Germans of their carefully prepared defence systems for a considerable distance to the north of it.

The successive days of constant marching and fighting had placed a very severe strain upon the endurance of the troops, and, before a further advance could be undertaken, some time would have to be spent in resting and relieving them. This need for delay was regrettable, as the enemy's forces were increasing, and fresh German divisions were known to be arriving, but, with the limited number of troops at my command, it was unavoidable.

It was to be remembered, however, that the hostile reinforcements coming up at this stage could at first be no more than enough to replace the enemy's losses; and although the right of our advance had definitely been stayed, the enemy had not yet developed such strength about Bourlon as it seemed might not be overcome by the numbers at my disposal. As has already been pointed out, on the Cambrai side of the battlefield I had only aimed at securing a defensive flank to enable the advance to be pushed northwards and north-westwards, and this part of my task had been to a large extent achieved.

An additional and very important argument in favour of proceeding with my attack was supplied by the situation in Italy, upon which a continuance of pressure on the Cambrai front might reasonably be expected to exercise an important effect, no matter what measure of success attended my efforts. Moreover, two divisions previously under orders for Italy had on this day been placed at my disposal, and with this accession of strength the prospect of securing Bourlon seemed good.

After weighing these various considerations, therefore, I decided to continue the operations to gain the Bourlon position.

The 22nd November was spent in organising the captured ground, in carrying out certain reliefs, and in giving other troops the rest they greatly needed. Soon after mid-day the enemy regained Fontaine-notre-Dame; but, with our troops already on the outskirts of Bourlon Wood and Cantaing held by us, it was thought that the recapture of Fontaine should not prove very difficult. The necessary arrangements for renewing the attack were therefore pushed on, and our plans were extended to include the recapture of Fontaine-notre-Dame.

Meanwhile, early in the night of the 22nd November, a battalion of the Queen's Westminster's stormed a commanding tactical point in the Hindenburg Line west of Mœuvres known as Tadpole Copse, the possession of which would be of value in connection with the left flank of the Bourlon position when the latter had been secured.

#### THE STRUGGLE FOR BOURLON RIDGE.

(7) On the morning of the 23rd November the 51st Division, supported by tanks, attacked Fontaine-notre-Dame, but was unable to force an entrance. Early in the afternoon this division repeated its attack from the west, and a number of tanks entered Fontaine, where they remained till dusk, inflicting considerable loss on the enemy. We did not succeed, however, in clearing the village, and at the end of

the day no progress had been made on this part of our front.

At 10.30 a.m. the 40th Division attacked Bourlon Wood, and after four-and-a-half hours of hard fighting, in which tanks again rendered valuable assistance to our infantry, captured the whole of the wood and entered Bourlon Village. Here hostile counter-attacks prevented our further progress, and though the village was at one time reported to have been taken by us, this proved later to be erroneous. A heavy hostile attack upon our positions in the wood, in which all three battalions of the 9th Grenadier Regiment appear to have been employed, was completely repulsed.

Throughout this day, also, the 36th Division and troops of the 56th (London) Division (T.) were engaged in stubborn fighting in the neighbourhood of Mœuvres and Tadpole Copse, and made some progress.

This struggle for Bourlon resulted in several days of fiercely contested fighting, in which English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish battalions, together with dismounted cavalry, performed most gallant service and inflicted heavy loss on the enemy.

During the morning of the 24th November the enemy twice attacked, and at his second attempt pressed back our troops in the north-eastern corner of the wood. An immediate counter-attack delivered by the 14th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the 15th Hussars, dismounted, and the remnants of the 119th Infantry Brigade, drove back the enemy in turn, and by noon our line had been re-established. Meanwhile, dismounted cavalry had repulsed an attack on the high ground west of Bourlon Wood, and in the afternoon a third hostile attack upon the wood was stopped by our artillery and rifle fire.

On this afternoon our infantry again attacked Bourlon Village, and captured the whole of it. Later in the evening a fourth attack upon our positions in the wood was beaten off after fierce fighting. Further progress was made on this day in the Hindenburg Line west of Mœuvres, but the enemy's resistance in the whole of this area was very strong.

On the evening of the 25th November a fresh attack by the enemy regained Bourlon Village, though our troops offered vigorous resistance, and parties of the 13th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment, held out in the south-east corner of the village until touch was re-established with them two days later. The continual fighting and the strength of the enemy's attacks, however, had told heavily on the 40th Division, which had borne the brunt of the struggle. This division was accordingly withdrawn, and on the following day our troops were again pressed back slightly in the northern outskirts of Bourlon Wood.

With the enemy in possession of the shoulder of the ridge above Fontaine-notre-Dame, as well as of part of the high ground west of Bourlon Wood, our position in the wood itself was a difficult one, and much of the ground to the south of it was still exposed to the enemy's observation. It was decided, therefore, to make another effort on the 27th November to capture Fontaine-notre-Dame and Bourlon Village, and to gain possession of the whole of the Bourlon Ridge.

In this attack, in which tanks co-operated, British Guards temporarily regained possession of Fontaine-notre-Dame, taking some hundreds