

heavy fighting, in the course of which the 1st Battalion Royal Guernsey Light Infantry, 29th Division, Major-General D. E. Cayley, C.M.G., commanding the division, did gallant service, he succeeded in the afternoon in overcoming the resistance of our troops about Douliou and La Becque, forcing them back in a north-westerly direction. As the result of this movement, a gap was formed in our line south-west of Bailleul, and bodies of the enemy who had forced their way through seized Outtersteene and Merris.

In the evening a brigade of the 33rd Division, Major-General R. J. Pinney, C.B., commanding the division, with a body of Cyclists, a Pioneer battalion, and every available man from schools and reinforcement camps, came into action in this sector. On their left, troops of the 25th, 34th, and 49th Divisions, Major-General N. J. G. Cameron, C.B., C.M.G., commanding the last mentioned division, though heavily attacked, maintained their positions to the south and south-east of Bailleul, and before midnight our line had been reformed.

Next day, the enemy followed up his attacks with great vigour and the troops of the 29th and 31st Divisions, now greatly reduced in strength by the severe fighting already experienced and strung out over a front of nearly 10,000 yards east of the Forêt de Nieppe, were once more tried to the utmost. Behind them the 1st Australian Division, under command of Major-General Sir H. B. Walker, K.C.B., D.S.O. was in process of detrainning, and the troops were told that the line was to be held at all costs, until the detraining could be completed.

During the morning, which was very foggy, several determined attacks, in which a German armoured car came into action against the 4th Guards Brigade on the southern portion of our line, were repulsed with great loss to the enemy. After the failure of these assaults, he brought up field guns to point blank range, and in the northern sector with their aid gained Vieux Berquin. Everywhere except at Vieux Berquin, the enemy's advance was held up all day by desperate fighting, in which our advanced posts displayed the greatest gallantry, maintaining their ground when entirely surrounded, men standing back to back in the trenches and shooting to front and rear.

In the afternoon the enemy made a further determined effort, and by sheer weight of numbers forced his way through the gaps in our depleted line, the surviving garrisons of our posts fighting where they stood to the last with bullet and bayonet. The heroic resistance of these troops, however, had given the leading brigades of the 1st Australian Division time to reach and organise their appointed line east of the Forêt de Nieppe. These now took up the fight and the way to Hazebrouck was definitely closed.

The performance of all the troops engaged in this most gallant stand, and especially that of the 4th Guards Brigade, on whose front of some 4,000 yards the heaviest attacks fell, is worthy of the highest praise. No more brilliant exploit has taken place since the opening of the enemy's offensive, though gallant actions have been without number.

The action of these troops, and indeed of all the divisions engaged in the fighting in the Lys Valley, is the more noteworthy because, as already pointed out, practically the whole

of them had been brought straight out of the Somme battlefield, were they had suffered severely and had been subjected to a great strain. All these divisions, without adequate rest and filled with young reinforcements which they had had no time to assimilate, were again hurriedly thrown into the fight and, in spite of the great disadvantages under which they laboured, succeeded in holding up the advance of greatly superior forces of fresh troops. Such an accomplishment reflects the greatest credit on the youth of Great Britain, as well as upon those responsible for the training of the young soldiers sent out from home at this time.

The Struggle for Neuve Eglise.

(60) On the afternoon of the 12th April sharp fighting had taken place in the neighbourhood of Neuve Eglise, and during the night the enemy's pressure in this sector had been maintained and extended. By the morning of the 13th April his troops had forced their way into the village, but before noon were driven out by troops of the 33rd and 49th Divisions by a most successful counter-attack in which a number of prisoners were taken.

In the course of this day, also, a succession of heavy attacks were driven off with great loss to the enemy by the 33rd and 34th Divisions about Meteren and La Crèche. In the evening further attacks developed on this front and at Neuve Eglise. The pressure exercised by the enemy was very great and bodies of German infantry, having forced their way in between La Crèche and Neuve Eglise, began a strong encircling movement against the left of the 34th Division north and east of the former village. During the early part of the night our troops maintained their positions, but before dawn on the 14th April withdrew under orders to a line in front of the high ground known as the Ravelsburg Heights between Bailleul and Neuve Eglise, the enemy having been too severely handled to interfere.

At Neuve Eglise the enemy again forced his way into the village, and heavy and confused fighting took place throughout the night. A party of the 2nd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, 33rd Division, maintained themselves in the Mairie until 2.0 p.m. on the 14th April, and during the morning of this day other troops of the same division were reported to have cleared the village with bombs. The enemy persisted in his attacks, however, and by midnight Neuve Eglise was definitely in his possession. Other attacks delivered on the 14th April between Neuve Eglise and Bailleul and south-east of Meteren were repulsed.

Farther south, local fighting had taken place meanwhile both on the 13th and 14th April at a number of points between Givenchy and the Forêt de Nieppe. In these encounters the enemy had met with no success. On the other hand, a local operation carried out by the 4th Division on the evening of the 14th April resulted in the recapture of Riez du Vinage with 150 prisoners.

The Capture of Bailleul.

(61) On the morning of the 15th April the 19th Division repulsed hostile attacks about Wytchaete. Late in the afternoon fresh assaults in great strength, in which the Alpine Corps and two other fresh German divisions were engaged, developed against Bailleul and the Ravelsberg Heights. After heavy fighting