

A Bavarian division, the Fifth Bavarian Reserve, had been living in those pill-boxes and shell-holes until two nights ago, and whatever the German equivalent may be of "fed up" they were that to the very neck. Some of our Suffolk and Berkshire boys had taken prisoners among these Bavarians on days and nights before the attack, and these men made no disguise of their disgust at their conditions of life. Like other Bavarians taken elsewhere, they complained that they were being made catspaws of the Prussians, and put into the hottest parts of the line to save Prussian skins. Some of the Bavarian battalions have had an epidemic of desertion to the back areas, in the spirit of "I want to go home." A fortnight ago there was a case of thirteen men who set off for home. A few of them actually reached Nuremberg, and others were arrested at Ghent.

One strange and gruesome sign of trouble behind the German firing-line was found by one of our Cameronians the other day after an advance. It was a German officer bound and shot. Opposite Poeleappelle the German Command thought it well to pull out the 5th Bavarian Reserve and replace them two nights ago by Marines of the 3rd Naval Division, who are stout fellows, whatever their political opinions may be after the recent mutiny at Wilhelmshaven, from which some of them have come. On our left centre yesterday they fought hard and well, with quick counter-attacks, but opposite Poeleappelle they did not resist in the same way and did not come back yesterday to regain the ground taken by our men of the Eastern Counties.

The Norfolk and Essex battalions had to make their way over bad ground. In spite of a spell of dry weather one night of rain had been enough to turn it all to sludge again and to fill and overflow the shell-holes, which had never dried up. The Lekkerbolderbeek has become a marsh waist-deep for men, not so much by rain-storms as by shell-storms which have torn up its banks and slopped its water over the plain. Before the attack yesterday morning our air photographs taken in very low flights showed the sort of ground our men would have to cross. Everywhere the shell-craters show up shinily in the aerial photographs, with their water reflecting the light like silver mirrors. Higher up there are floods about Houthulst Forest extending to the place where the enemy keeps his guns behind the protection of the water, and no lack of rain-filled shell-holes on each side of the Ypres—Staden railway.