

THE LAST FOUR MONTHS

CHAPTER I

WHAT WENT BEFORE

Unity of Command—The British Reverses in the Spring

IN Europe 1917 was a year of disappointment for the arms of the Allies; only in Asia, where our earlier ventures had failed, did fortune smile on us. At the beginning of that year Ludendorff and Hindenburg brought off their first coup on the Western front, when they withdrew the German forces from the awkward position in which they were placed as the result of the first battle of the Somme, and retired behind the Hindenburg line, which then first became famous. By this manoeuvre they checked the plans of the Allies and brought about the failure of General Nivelle's great offensive upon which such high hopes had been set. The result of this failure had been to throw a great strain upon the British army, which had to obtain for the French the time to recover. In the battle of Arras we had won the greatest success yet gained by British arms in France, but Haig had been forced