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MONDAY MORNING MARCH 19 1917—FOURTEEN PAGES

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**SENATE P OTTAWA**

# 100-MILE ADVANCE

**L**ONDON, March 18.—The Germans continued their retreat on the Somme today, yielding between 400 and 600 square miles of territory to the British and French along a front of nearly 100 miles, extending from the Arras sector to the Oise River. Pressing close on the heels of the retreating enemy, the French and British troops occupied mile after mile of open ground, and are still pushing forward.

The German retreat reached its greatest proportions within the Arras and Noyon salients which now have been nearly eliminated. At points in the former sector the British advanced to a depth of ten miles, while the French forward movement reached a depth of twelve miles at places within the Noyon loop.

About seventy villages and towns fell into the hands of the allied soldiers during the day. The important fortified centres of Peronne, Chaules and Nesle were occupied by the British, while the French took the strategic town of Noyon, the largest centre to fall to the German retreat.

In the Noyon sector the British and French forces have joined hands in the advance, their lines temporarily overlapping for a distance of several miles. Together they entered Nesle this morning, where they were greeted with cheers by the remaining residents.

At almost every point along the whole front, the allied soldiers are out of the trenches, and for the first time in months the cavalry of both the French and British armies is operating extensively in wide open territory. In every direction mounted troops are being sent forward ahead of the main forces. At few points have the opposing troops met in battle. Even encounters between German rearguards and the allied advanced units have been rare, so rapid has been the German retreat, and so cautious have the French and British commanders been to prevent their soldiers from falling into a possible trap. For the first time since the great re-

reat began, the German war office today makes frank admission of the movement, announcing the evacuation of Bapaume, Peronne, Roye and Noyon and stating that "our protecting troops inflicted considerable losses on the enemy and then gave way, as had been ordered."

All reports from the battle front indicate that the forces on both sides are moving every minute of the day and night. Throughout last night the eastward sweep kept up, the Germans hastening their own efforts as they began to be pressed closer and closer; the allied soldiers, filled with wild enthusiasm, following on like a pack of hounds at the heels of a fox.

The Germans are burning and destroying and looting on their way, leaving a trail of devastation over the rolling country. Hardly a house in all the villages and towns into which the British and French have advanced remains standing; scarcely a field fails to show the inroads of the retreating army. Amid the smoking ruins of Roye and Lassigny 800 inhabitants were discovered alive when the French soldiers entered. They were almost crazed with joy at the sight of the tri-color and the horizon of blue uniforms.

When the British troops entered the town of Peronne this morning they received a similar greeting from the few residents left there. The town itself they found to be little more than a shell, battered beyond recognition by the furious fighting of many months. Just 102 years ago the same town was entered by another British army, after it had capitulated to the Duke of Wellington. Peronne is as famous a name in the history of the wars of France as Bapaume. Before the war it numbered 4000 inhabitants.

To gain the best idea of the extent of French territory evacuated in the last three weeks it is only necessary to state that it amounts to more than three times the area of ground won on the Somme

front during the eight months previous. Not since the first day of the war has there been so much activity on both sides of the line. What is going on in the German ranks can only be imagined, but some appreciation of their situation can be gained from incidents of the French and British retreat in the summer of 1914. Merely moving the wounded and transferring the field dressing stations is a task which requires almost superhuman labor. Undoubtedly the Germans have drawn back most of their heavy artillery long since, perhaps weeks ago, as during the last few weeks the German guns have replied but feebly to the fire of the French and British batteries.

On the allied side of the line many difficulties are to be encountered also. The feeding of immense forces of troops on the offensive and advancing at the rate the British and French are doing is one of the most difficult jobs, for the commissary department must make constant changes of base and herculean efforts to keep supplies moving over a broad front that takes a new line almost every hour.

Then there is the mad dash forward of signal corps, which must keep in constant touch with the officers directing affairs; and the frantic and desperate digging and building of the engineers, whose duty is to prepare the way for the advance of the field artillery and ammunition trains.

News of the allied advance has now taken the proper perspective as it is fed to the people of England and France. Through a heartening movement for the allies, no thoughtful person here considers it more than a prelude to the great decisive campaign in the west. In any case, the British thoroughly realize that they are in for a lot of heavy work this spring. They are ready for the blow whenever it falls. They blocked the way to Calais once when they were poorly prepared, and they are full-confident they can repeat the performance under the more favorable conditions that now exist.

**F**ROM a staff correspondent of The Associated Press British headquarters in France, March 18, via London, March 18.—In the City of Albert, where the famous gilded leaning Virgin still depends miraculously from the lofty tower of a rather gaudy and fantastically shell-torn church, there has long been a British sign reading "To Bapaume." It has pointed the way along a narrow straight road toward the quaint Picardy town, transformed by the Germans into what they term a modern field Gibraltar.

The field-grey German lines are falling back now on a front of approximately 40 miles. They are dissolving in clouds of blue-grey smoke, for the Germans have lighted fires to screen in their wake. No village is being spared from the torch. The retreat on the British front now extends from well below Chaules on the south, to almost Arras on the north, and covers about one-third of the entire British line. It has even extended down where the French lines begin.

Today the British pushed into Peronne, where they had to fight virtually every step of the way. There have been many fires in Peronne burning since Friday. The Germans also burned the suburb of Halle before abandoning it.

A score or more of towns and villages have been taken by the British during the day and it was reported tonight that patrols had reached as far as Nesle, southeast of Chaules.

For a time it seemed as if the German retreat would swing from Le Transloy as the southern pivot, but already it has gone far beyond that. Everywhere along the wide front the British are pressing the fleeing German rearguard and Bapaume witnessed lively street fighting. The taking of that town meant a great deal to the men in the trenches. One British battalion, due to be relieved yesterday from a term of strenuous work, actually requested that they be sent forward in order that they might see Bapaume clear of the enemy.

It was particularly fitting that the troops which fought the hardest about the Butte, last autumn, should be among the first to reach Bapaume, of which the Butte had long been regarded as the key position. There was no flying of flags or beating of drums as the British patrols penetrated the town, for there was fighting ahead, and Bapaume is filled with underground strongholds. But it was not long before the advance guard sent back over the telephone wires, which ever keep pace with the onward movement of the troops, that the enemy rearguard had "all been accounted for."

Later came a second message reading in true soldier language: "The mopping up of Bapaume is now completed."

Fires were smoldering in many parts remnants of the incendiary which had been rampant during the last days of German occupation.

No house was left intact, for those still roofed exposed interiors all burned out. This was carried to such an extent that certain sections of the town appear as having been swept over by a cyclone, walls having been blown out by interior explosions, allowing the slate roofs to slide almost undamaged into the streets. The famous old clock tower had had its upper part blown off to prevent its being used for artillery registering, by the British. Its face is all awry. Just outside of Bapaume was a badly shattered restaurant with several empty beer barrels standing on the wall.

There were also widespread reels of wire and various other tangled designs scattered everywhere to make progress difficult for an attacking enemy.

Redoubts and other fortified points about the town had been transformed into modern defences. In the town itself the numerous underground galleries consolidated from old cellars and constructed anew, must have housed at times thousands of German troops. British heavy shells had penetrated some of these shelters, leaving a trail of skeletons behind.

German writers have described Bapaume as fortified against every point of the compass, but after Loupart Wood had been taken by the British on the north-west, and the line was gradually going southeast of Bapaume, it is evident the Germans decided that they could hold the town no longer. German officers taken prisoner in the past, had told that months of labor were expended by the Germans in preparing Bapaume with about every device known to modern defensive skill, and they frankly asserted the British would not dare pay the price Bapaume would demand. Now this stronghold has passed under British dominion, with scarcely a casualty connected with the latest operation.

From all parts of the outlying British line tonight come further reports of progress. The German retreat is gaining in speed. Prisoners taken and identifications obtained from the dead show that fresh German divisions, including one recently returned, flushed with victory over the Rumanians, had been thrown in as a screen to shield the retiring troops.

The advance of the French troops continues today between the Avre and the Aisne, along a front of 60 kilometres (about 37 miles), according to the official communication issued by the war office tonight. French cavalry entered Nesle. In the direction of Ham, on the Somme River, the French forward movement reached a depth of about 12½ miles.

North of Soissons the French have occupied Crony, and in the same district have taken the villages of Carlepoint, Morsam and Nouvron Vingre.

The town of Noyon was occupied by French cavalry detachments at 10 o'clock Sunday morning. The text of the statement reads:

"From the Avre to the Aisne, on a front of more than 60 kilometres, the advance of our troops continued during the course of the day. North of the Avre our cavalry this morning entered Nesle and we immediately sent out patrols in the direction of the Somme. There were several engagements with enemy rear-guard detachments, who resisted feebly. The inhabitants of Nesle acclaimed our troops."

"Northeast of Lassigny we have up to the present advanced more than 20 kilometres in the direction of Ham."

"Further to the south our light cavalry detachments, moving along the valley of the Oise, occupied Noyon about 10 o'clock this morning."

"Between the Oise and Soissons (Aisne sector), the entire German first line, as well as the villages of Carlepoint, Morsam and Nouvron Vingre, fell into our hands. We have gained a foothold on the northern plateau of Soissons and occupied Crony."

"On the left bank of the Meuse the enemy violently bombarded our positions from Avocourt Wood to Le Mort Homme on the right bank as German attack directed against our trenches in the region of Chambrattan, was stopped short by our barrage fire."

"Two German aeroplanes were brought down today, one in the direction of Virginy, the other west of Brimont (Rheims region)."

"Belgian communication: At Ramscappelle and Perose, as well as at Dixmude and Steenstraete, there was artillery activity on both sides. Very spirited grenade fighting, occurred north of Dixmude."

Withdrawal Continues Rapidly  
 The withdrawal of the Germans continues rapidly over a wide section of the French front. The official announcement given out Sunday afternoon says the German rearguards were unable to delay the French, who defeated them and pressed forward energetically. The French have occupied all the ground between the old lines and the Roye-Noyon road, from Damery as far as the Lagny height. They are continuing pursuit of the Germans north of the Noyon road. The statement follows:

"Between the Avre and the Oise our troops made important progress during the night. All the ground between our old lines

and the Roye-Noyon road, from Damery as far as the Lagny height, is now in our hands. There were rather spirited engagements with portions of the enemy rearguard, which terminated to our advantage and did not impede our progress. The pursuit continues north of the Noyon road."

"In the region of Rhelms and north of Selcheprey there were patrol engagements. Several attacks on the Calonne trench cost the enemy losses without any results for him. Prisoners remained in our hands."

"Elsewhere the night was calm."

French advance guards have entered the important town of Roye and the French have occupied the entire front between Andechy and the Oise, comprising powerfully fortified lines which the Germans have held for more than two years. This announcement is made in the official communication, issued Saturday night from the war office, which adds that at several points the road between Roye and Noyon has been reached. Frankfurt-on-the-Main has been bombarded by French aeroplanes in retaliation for the firing of Bapaume by the Germans.

The text of the statement reads:

"Along the whole front between Andechy and the Oise, about 15 miles, the enemy, declining battle, abandoned under the pressure of our troops, powerful and and skillfully fortified lines, which they had held for more than two years."

"Today our advance movement continued rapidly. Our advance guard entered Roye, pursuing an enemy contingent which blew up crossings and streets in the interior sections. About 800 of the civil population, whom the Germans did not have time to remove, greeted our soldiers with enthusiasm."

"North and northeast of Lassigny, which we likewise occupied, we have reached several points and even advanced beyond the road between Roye and Noyon. In the course of our pursuit we made prisoners who have not yet been counted."

"Quite violent artillery fighting took place in Champagne in the region of Maisons de Champagne, and on the right bank of the Meuse, in the sector of Les Chambrattan and the Courieres Wood. On the left bank of the Meuse we directed destructive fires effectively against the German organizations in the region of Avocourt."

There is nothing to report on the rest of the front. Last night our air squadron bombarded enemy organizations in the region of Arnville, and factories and blast furnaces at Welkibgen, where a great fire broke out, as well as stations and roads in the region of St. Quentin. All of our airplanes returned undamaged. In reprisal for the setting on fire of Bapaume, one of our airplanes today bombarded the town of Frankfurt-on-the-main.

Belgian communication: Bomb fighting was characterized by great intensity in the region of Dixmude, in the direction of Ferryman's house and the Steenstraete. During the day reciprocal bombardment was resumed with violence in the neighborhood of Dixmude."

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**PERSON**  
 The British troops have made another extensive advance eastward German positions on a front of about 16 miles, according to the official report from British headquarters in France Saturday.

On the north the British gain reached from Bapaume to Monchy-au-Bois, and included the Villages of Le Transloy, Achiet-le-Grand, Achiet-le-Petit, Bucquoy and others. On the

south the gain included various villages from La Maisonette, south of Peronne, to Fresnes.

The text of the statement reads:

"Bapaume has been captured by our troops after stiff fighting with the German guard. The town has been systematically pillaged by the enemy. All private houses and public buildings alike have been destroyed and everything of value carried off or burned."

"Our advance has proceeded rapidly during the day on both banks of the Somme. South of the river we have entered the enemy's positions on a front of about 16 miles and occupied the Villages of Fresnes, Horgy, Villers-Carbonelle, Barleux, Eterpigny and La Maisonette."

"North of the river, in addition to the Town of Bapaume, we are in possession of the Villages of Le Transloy, Bienvillers, Bilmcourt, Achiet-le-Grand, Achiet-le-Petit, Abtainheville, Bucquoy and Esarts."

"We also hold Quesney farm, 1500 yards northeast of the last-named village, and have gained the northwestern and western defences of Monchy-au-Bois."

"We carried out successful raids this morning east and northeast of Arras. The enemy's support line was reached and two machine guns and a number of prisoners captured. A hostile raiding party was driven off during the night northeast of Vermelles."

"An encounter took place yesterday between a patrol of eight of our aeroplanes and 16 enemy machines, with the result that in 20 minutes' fighting the hostile formation was broken up. Two German aeroplanes were destroyed and two others driven down damaged. All of our machines returned."

**Attacks Near Verdun.**  
 "On the right bank of the Meuse two French companies made an attack at dawn on a trench sector captured by us on March 16 north of Chambrattan farm. The attack failed. On Combres Height and near Malsey, north of St. Mihiel, storming detachments entered the French positions and returned, each with twenty prisoners."

"Strong attacks made by the French between Oehrida and Preba Lakes were repulsed. A violent struggle for the mountainous district north of Monastir brought no important successes for the enemy. The dominating heights, which were attacked, also during the night, are firmly in our hands."

**Fighting Still Goes On.**  
 In a supplementary official report issued Sunday night it is announced that "in the grip of land between Arras and the Aisne, voluntarily evacuated by us, only in some places are our protecting groups in fighting touch with the hostile cavalry and infantry."

The statement continues:  
 "On both sides of the Meuse fighting activity is marked. In the east there is nothing of importance. Engagements between Oehrida and Preba Lakes and north of Monastir were resumed today, and have not yet ended."