

8 FROM BAPAUME TO PASSCHENDAELE

leave Arras as a health resort, but it was sanctuary for men who had been in hell fire up by Monchy.

The first day of the Arras battle was our victory. We struck the enemy a heavy blow, and the capture of the Vimy Ridge by the Canadians and the Highland Division was as wonderful as the great thrust by English and Scottish battalions along the valley of the Scarpe across the Arras—Cambrai road. By April 14 we had captured 18,000 prisoners and over 200 guns. But it was hard fighting after the first few hours of the 9th, and the operations that followed on both sides of the Scarpe were costly to us. The London men of the 56th Division, and the old county troops of the 8rd and 12th and 87th, and the Scots of the 15th suffered in heroic fighting against strong and fresh reserves of the enemy who were massed rapidly to check them and made fierce, repeated counter-attacks against the village of Rœux and its chemical works, north of the Scarpe, and against Monchy-le-Preux and Guémappe, south of the river. Again and again these counter-attacks were beaten back with most bloody losses to the enemy, but our own men suffered each time until they were weary beyond words. I saw the cavalry ride forward towards Monchy, where they came under great fire, and I saw the body of their General carried back to Tilloy. It was a day of tragic memory.

At this time, as Sir Douglas Haig has recorded, the battle of Arras might have ended. But the French offensive was about to begin, and it was important that the full pressure of the British attacks should be maintained in order to assist our Allies. A renewal of the assault was therefore ordered, and after a week's postponement to gather together new supplies, to change the divisions, and complete the artillery dispositions, fighting was resumed on a big scale on April 28. It was on a front of about nine miles, from Croisilles to Gavrelle. Important ground was taken west of Chérisy and east of Monchy, where our troops seized Infantry Hill, but the violent counter-attacks of the enemy in great strength prevented the gain of all our objectives on that day, and once more put our troops to a severe ordeal. Rœux and Gavrelle on the north of the Scarpe, Guémappe on the south, were the focal points of this struggle and the scene of the bitterest fighting in and out of the villages. On April 23 and 24 the enemy made eight separate counter-attacks against Gavrelle, and each was shattered by our