

tinued without intermission. The surface of the land became impassible.

" The low-lying, clayey soil, torn by shells and sodden by rain, turned to a succession of vast muddy pools. The valleys of the choked and overflowing streams were speedily transformed into long stretches of bog, impassible except by a few well-defined tracks, which became marks for the enemy's artillery. To leave these tracks was to risk death by drowning, and in the course of the subsequent fighting on several occasions both men and pack animals were lost in this way. In these conditions operations of any magnitude became impossible, and the resumption of our offensive was necessarily postponed until a period of fine weather should allow the ground to recover. As had been the case in the ARRAS battle, this unavoidable delay in the development of our offensive was of the greatest service to the enemy. Valuable time was lost, the troops opposed to us were able to recover from the disorganisation produced by our first attack, and the enemy was given the opportunity to bring up reinforcement".

*(Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch).*

Under such circumstances some withdrawals were inevitable. ST. JULIEN had to be given up for a few days, but by the 16th., although the weather was not yet settled, the advance was resumed. Our attack was now directed to the German third position on the GHELUVELT-LANGEMARCK line, north of the MENIN Road, the second tier of ridges, bordering the Salient on the east. The third tier was PASSCHENDAELE, which must have seemed to the enemy impregnable. von Arnim more than ever pinned his faith to his pill-boxes and his new system of 'elastic defence'. This was officially described as one " in which his forward trench lines were held only in sufficient strength to disorganize the attack while the bulk of his force were kept in close reserve, ready to deliver a powerful and immediate blow which might recover the positions overrun by our troops, before the British had time to consolidate them. "

That day the Allies pushed on beyond the BIXSCHOOTE-