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# SPRING DRIVE COMMENCES

British Attack Enemy on 12 Mile Front, Penetrating Defenses to Depth of Two and Three Miles, Carrying a Dozen Villages, Vimy Ridge, Two Strongly Defended Hills, Fortified Farm, and Labyrinth of Trenches.

# CANADIANS BEAR BRUNT OF FIGHTING TAKE FAMOUS VIMY RIDGE NEAR ARRAS

## GREAT SPRING OFFENSIVE NOW ON IN EARNEST

Haig's Terrific Assault at Enemy Line First of Series.

## GERMANS ADMIT LOSSES

British Forces Are Closing in Around St. Quentin and Cambrai.

By Ed. L. Keen, United Press Staff Correspondent

London, April 9.—The great spring offensive has begun. London's only question about the "big push" tonight was whether it was to be limited to the region in which Field Marshal Haig is now smashing his terrific assault—in the Arras-Cambrai sector—or whether this is merely the first of a series of similar smashes to follow in other sectors.

Battlefront despatches tonight significantly detailed great activity among the French and Belgian forces nearer the coast.

The Berlin official statement received tonight, admitted the British troops had forced their way into German positions.

"The fighting about Arras, the enemy forced his way into parts of our position," the statement said. "On both sides of the Aisne and on the Champagne fronts there was heavy artillery firing."

## Big Plan is Working

The British aerial offensive of Saturday, shown in the bombing of Zebruges, Ghent and Bruges, was tonight believed to be part of a great plan by the British commander-in-chief which would make the battle of Arras, now on, a mere incident.

Today's report from General Haig, indicating the wide front of the advance, the tremendous impetus of the smash and hinting at massed forces of thousands of men, all prepared England to receive news of casualties on a scale exceeding the heaviest hitherto reported. But England was prepared and calm withal.

The successes so far achieved by this tremendous drive supported the theory of experts here that the British air losses of last week—14 machines—resulted from persistent bombing of enemy ammunition depots and their lines of communications, undertaken deliberately and systematically with the idea of upsetting their plans for quick despatch of reinforcements. As last week's aerial operations were on a scale utterly undreamed of before, so experts now believe Haig's "big push" is on a scale not approached in any of the military operations of the past.

## Strategy Applauded

The strategy of a tremendously successful offensive at this particular time is applauded by military experts here. All the German statements explaining their withdrawal along the Arras-Laure line have boastfully remarked that such evacuation would defeat the allies' plans for a spring offensive. It was pointed out by the Germans that every vestige of cover had been destroyed in the evacuation; that the ground had literally been turned upside down; that German troops would be going back to long and carefully prepared positions of

## CANADIANS TO AID U. S. TO TRAIN MEN

Americans Will Go in for Greatest Effort to Win.

## SOON TO ORGANIZE

Sixty Thousand Will Take Officers' Courses in Summer.

Special to The Toronto World.

New York, April 9.—"Going to war is the best thing that could happen to the American people," Gen. Leonard Wood told the Canadian Club at its annual dinner here tonight. "This war will develop real character in the American people."

"We are together, you Canadians and we of the United States, for a great effort; one which we are going to carry thru. Let the American people not delude themselves. It is going to mean the sacrifice of more than money. It is going to mean the sacrifice of life in large quantity. But our lives, many as we shall lose, will be given cheerfully, because given for a principle we believe in. We all want peace. But it is better to break the peace that to break the faith. Every honorable man believes in arbitration, but every sensible man realizes that there are certain things that cannot be arbitrated."

"World peace is a dream. We live in an age of iron. It is advisable to be prepared. But let us not talk about water gone under the bridge. We must organize. Organization is the keynote, from the fireplace and the factory to the firing line. Equipment is a big problem for us. We need and must have the efforts of every individual. We do not yet realize that we are in a state of war. But we are realizing it, every one of us."

"We've got to get our men ready and train them thoroughly. You Canadians are going to give us a lot of help. We expect 60,000 men in training for officers in this department this summer. We are establishing camps something on the Plattsburg idea; Plattsburg and elsewhere independently and at colleges and army posts. Our men, not our money, are the sinews of war. We're going into a battle of blood and iron, not of gold. We don't know where it is going to lead us, but wherever it leads us we will follow, a united people."

## Spain is Neutral in War Between U. S. and Germany

Madrid, April 9, via Paris.—The Official Journal today published a decree declaring the neutrality of Spain in the war between the United States and Germany.

great strength; that the allied forces would have to advance with exceeding slowness over the broken up terrain and would have to "dig themselves in" before they could hope to cope with the prepared German defenses.

The Germans evidently expected that they would be able to stave off the much feared allied offensive for several months. But they did not count on the methodical rebuilding of the devastated territory; the co-ordinated advance of both French and British and the cool audacity of the British commander-in-chief.

Tonight British troops were within two and a half miles of the main artery of German communications between Cambrai and St. Quentin—at Le Fresnoy le Petit. They were closing in around not only St. Quentin, but Cambrai as well.

## DINEEN'S FIRE SALE.

Everything is included in the fire sale, even the new spring goods that were unopened when the fire occurred. Everything is reduced to prices that are but a fraction of the actual cost. Store opens at 10 o'clock this morning. Dineen's, 140 Yonge street.

## PUSH GATHERS MOMENTUM AS TROOPS GO ON

Titanic Bolt Loosened All Along Line After Big Bombardment.

## ASSAULT BY INFANTRY

Wave After Wave of Steel Rain Formed British Barrage.

By William Philip Simms, United Press Staff Correspondent.

With the British Armies Allied, April 9.—England's biggest "push" came the great Somme drive of last summer was gathering momentum tonight. The earth and sky alike were joined in the combat, extending over a wide front between Lens and Cambrai.

It was with an almost indescribable baptism of fire that the great advance started Sunday. Through Easter Day, the day sacred to the resurrection of the Prince of Peace, British guns roared unceasingly at the Germans. Artillery commanders, with their watches timed to the second with each other, all along the line, loosed their guns in perfectly timed salvos. The roar increased at night until a period of comparative silence until at morning a titanic bolt was loosed and synchronized. It sounded as if all the wrath of the armies had suddenly been spat out in a long pent-up burst.

Infantry Assault Begins. It was at this moment that the infantry assault began—the Canadians taking a prominent part.

All along the front, the muffled explosions of mines gave the appearance in the dusky dawn of a volcanic field. Above them were to be seen the German rockets and flares, calling imperatively for help and bursting high in the heavens. The whole scene was like a stupendous fireworks display, the greatest the world has ever seen. Then day advanced with the morning light and thru the rifts of smoke one could see wave after wave of steel rain forming the British barrage fire to protect their advancing troops and silence the enemy. Between these perfectly placed waves of death the British forces walked calmly ahead, as if on parade.

The German rockets frantically signaling the hand equivalent to S. O. S. flew up more and more hurriedly than ever as the enemy strove madly to get reinforcements against these advancing lines and the hail of death in the barrage fire.

British "tanks" again proved the usefulness in this opening of a great push. Impervious to the rain of German machine gun bullets they trudged on, scattering consternation. In the meanwhile, far up above in the sky, British airmen hovered and wheeled and ducked about, for all the world like a great flock of seagulls, searching out the enemy positions, reporting back to artillery range controllers, beating back curious German planes seeking to find out the source of the thrust against the Teutonic line and fighting aerial combat in co-ordination with their fellow fighters on the ground.

## British Forces Advance From Two to Three Miles on 12-Mile Front, Pounding Villages Out of All Recognition, Driving Germans From Scores of Important Positions and Capturing in All 5800 Prisoners.

By R. T. Small.

With the British Armies in France, via London, April 9.—The war on the western front, which has been moving more rapidly in the past five weeks, broke into full swing today. Widening their attacks, which they have been directing against the retreating Germans in the sector of the Somme, the British struck still further north, and in a series of assaults on a broad front, with Arras more or less the pivotal point, they drove the Germans from scores of important positions, penetrated far into the German lines and caused heavy casualties.

A visit to corps headquarters this afternoon indicated that the number of prisoners taken in the past twelve hours will exceed five thousand. The barbed wire "cages" or compounds built to receive prisoners which were expected to be taken were overcrowded before noon, altho the principal attack did not begin until shortly after dawn.

The heaviest fighting today developed along a line a few miles south-east of Arras, in a northerly direction to the neighborhood of Lens; but the serious extended far in the direction of St. Quentin. In the territory captured today was the famous Vimy ridge, which had been fought over time and time again ever since the war was 10 months old. The French had fought desperately and valiantly in an endeavor to wrest this vantage ground from the Germans, the battles costing both belligerents untold casualties. Back of the northern end of Vimy ridge lies the principal coal fields of France, which are still in German hands.

Tanks Helped the Canadians. The fighting on Vimy ridge was carried out by the Canadians, who had retained a footing on the ridge all winter, but always higher up was the enemy. On either side of the Canadians were English and Scottish battalions, and in today's battle there was glory enough for all. The irrepressible "tanks" also shared in the honors of the successful assault. One position captured, to the northeast of Arras, was a sort of labyrinth of trenches enmeshed in multiple bands of wire called "the harp," because of its shape. Prisoners had proclaimed this strong point practically unassailable; but, sweeping over it today the British took within it nearly 1000 prisoners, and they captured also during the day three German battalion commanders, who compare in rank with colonel in the British army. The Canadians took 1700 prisoners.

It was said everywhere along the attacking line that the Germans appeared to have been taken by surprise, and only in a few instances did they put up a strong fight. One reason for this was that they had been fairly put by the British artillery fire of the past ten days.

From the high ground overlooking Arras a panoramic view for many miles of the British attack was presented. The concentration of guns for this operation was probably the greatest for a given amount of front since the war began. Almost countless guns had taken part in the bombardment since the beginning, but it was not until the last night that many masked batteries joined in the grim chorus.

Like Brink of an Inferno. Approaching the battlefield well before dawn, the reflection of the gun flashes against the low-hanging clouds gave the inevitable impression of a continuous play of sheet lightning along the horizon. But when this wonderful night picture of modern warfare came into full view it seemed as if suddenly one stood on the brink of an overwhelming inferno. Looking down into the valley tongues of flame could be seen flashing from hundreds upon hundreds of gunmounds, like so many white-hot serpents' fangs. The guns were playing upon the ridges looming up in the distance enveloped in darkness, upon which lay the German lines. There was as yet no alarm. The Germans had become accustomed to receive daily "raider" from the British and they were sending up only routine star shells and trench flares.

As dawn approached the British batteries, one by one, became strangely silent. For half an hour the stillness was almost oppressive. The hot pit flashes disappeared. All this time, however, the German star shells were ascending with the same monotonous regularity which marks the German positions along the entire front. The glorious weather of Easter Sunday had disappeared and from menacing black clouds overhead rain began to fall. It was driven along by a stinging gale left over from the abundant storms of March. The storm delayed the coming of dawn to such an extent that it was still quite dark when the moment set for the British attack arrived. Then, as if the myriad of guns had been synchronized to the tick of a watch, they broke the foreboding stillness with a volcanic roar. The earth trembled from the shock. The flicking tongues of the inferno appeared now to have been multiplied a hundred-fold. The objective hills began to writhe under the tortures of the screaming shells. The dark profiles of the ridges, etched against the background of the gray clouds, were now more clearly defined by the high explosive missiles, which burst along the ground like flaring pots of fires. Above these, in the air, played the shrapnel barrage shells, breaking with giant fiery flashes and hurling their leaden hail of death on all below.

Enemy Calls for Assistance. The first volley scarcely had reached the German lines when up went the ever-ready signals of distress and S.O.S. calls for assistance from the supporting artillery. Most of the distress rockets burst in great showers of golden rain; others looped high in the air and broke into flaming balls of red and green. It was difficult to realize that this was not simply a stupendous, almost supernatural pyrotechnic spectacle arranged for the pleasure of the gods. It was more difficult still to realize that it was actual reality of war and that the thousands of flashes and quick flames playing in the dawn were funeral torches lighting the way of souls into eternity.

From the moment the great crater eruptions along the horizon started the whole world seemed red. Under the glare of the exploding mines which had been dug under the enemy lines, and out under the shells, could be seen the British soldiers trudging, trudging across no man's land to a hand-to-hand encounter with the Germans. They moved closely behind

## In Brilliant Dash Over Famous Stronghold Canadian Infantry Captures Dominating Position, Overcoming Tremendous Concentration of German Attacks and Taking 2000 Prisoners.

By Stewart Lyon.

Canadian Headquarters in France, via London, April 9.—The crest of the Vimy Ridge has been carried. The strongest defensive position of the enemy on the western front has been captured by the army of Sir Douglas Haig, and the Canadian corps was given the place of honor in the great event, being strongly supported by some of the most famous of the British formations. The attack was preceded by a bombardment which continued for several days and in which guns of the heaviest calibre, formerly used on only the biggest battleships, took part. The results, as revealed by aerial observations, were a repetition of the battle of the Somme. Aeroplanes, flying low, could find only shapeless masses of churned-up earth where the enemy first line had been.

By Saturday afternoon Thelus, the chief village held by the enemy on the ridge and lying due east of Neville St. Vaast, was pounded out of all recognition, only two houses remaining. Prisoners taken told of heavy enemy losses. Even in the deep dugouts, where the Germans had hoped to be reasonably safe in that rain of death, no safety was to be found anywhere. In a desperate attempt to blind the eyes of the attacking army the Germans on Saturday endeavored to destroy our observation balloons.

## MAJESTIC, AWE-INSPIRING SPECTACLE

Saturday night our guns continued the work of devastation under conditions which made a spectacle that was majestic and awe-inspiring. A full moon in the east lit up the countryside, while the flash of the guns made a continuous play like that of the northern lights in the Dominion, or distant sheet lightning. This was sharply broken now and again by a column of reddish-yellow flame where on the ridge high explosives were bursting.

The gunners with tireless energy continued the cannonade thruout Easter Sunday. On Monday morning came the supreme moment; that in which our infantry was called upon to go out and reap the fruit of months of preparation. They had endured unwaveringly the answering fire of the enemy, which, however, was not comparable to ours. Some, impatient to be at the foe, had gone out on small wars of their own; and it is recorded that in one of the individual encounters in No Man's Land a Canadian, meeting a German, pursued him after emptying his revolver ineffectively at him. The Canadian cast about for some other weapon. The only one within reach was his steel helmet, and with the sharp edge of that he killed the armed German.

Such was the spirit of the infantry who, in the grey preceding the dawn, sprang from their shelters when the appointed time came. It was a great occasion, and greatly they rose to it.

## MEN SWARMED UP THE RIDGE

From the craters of the scarred front, which resembled the openings made in quarrying operations, the distance to the top of the ridge ranged from twelve hundred yards to a little short of a mile. Thereafter the ground falls easterly toward the great plain of Cambrai. Up the ridge, amid the shattered Hun trenches, our men swarmed in successive waves. On the northern end a few trees along the skyline marked where the wood of La Folie had been; our troops advanced as thru the remains of an orchard.

Within half an hour after the first German "S. O. S." rocket had been sent up, indicating a surprise attack, our objective was attained with slight loss. The tanks, which accompanied our advancing infantry had little to do, but were seen in action later near the crest of the ridge, on the extreme north of the line at a point east of Souchez, where much fierce fighting took place in 1915, when thousands of men fell.

## ENEMY PUTS UP HARD FIGHT

The enemy put up a stiff fight. Hill 145 had been provided skilfully with concealed machine gun positions, and long after they had been driven from the surrounding ground with machine guns on the hill they continued to sweep points of approach to the hill with their fire. Encouraged by this show of resistance on what otherwise was a stricken field the enemy began to send up reserves in trains from Lens, Douai and perhaps a greater distance, with the intention of launching a counter-attack. That attack was never made. As reports came in from the front and from the aviators of this mauling of the enemy beyond Vimy and the trenches in the vicinity a tremendous barrage was turned on by our heavy guns, the range being too great for field artillery.

Probably for the first time in the war twelve-inch weapons were used for this purpose at very long range. The splendid co-operation of the artillery arm in preventing this counter-attack did much to lessen our casualties on a difficult part of the front. On the southern end of the Canadian front the Germans yielded ground more readily than in the north. Many prisoners were taken; and as for Thelus, which had been strongly held

(Continued on Page 2, Cols. 1 and 2).