

German trenches extending very far back, our own line of trenches not extending to anything like the same depth. One plan showed the objectives to be attained. Another showed the arrangements for the barrage, beginning at 5.30 in the morning—zero, they called it—then proceeding at intervals of five minutes until the division on the right was to attain its final objective at half past two. They went on with the barrage in front of them—just as I had seen them rehearsing it; going on behind a line of men with rifles at the slope, representing the barrage. They went on, and at 2.26 the division on the right, which had the furthest to go in gaining its objective, was able to telephone back seven miles, over wires laid while the battle was being waged, informing those in charge of the guns that they could lift the barrage, as the troops were all ready to occupy their final objective at half past two. Behind one of the divisions a number of pioneers were going forward laying their wires. They found a German tunnel. It was safer inside than outside; they went in. While laying their wire in the tunnel they discovered a number of Germans. The pioneers are not supposed to be a combatant force, but they are always ready for a fight; so there was a fight, with the result that the Germans were overpowered. It is recorded that a sergeant of the pioneers marched proudly back with 16 German prisoners and claimed from the enclosure a receipt showing that they had been taken by the pioneers. In the tunnel mines were found ready to be exploded until the pioneers cut the wires.

I may, perhaps, be pardoned if I give to the House a short extract from a document which was placed in my possession by an officer who came over with me in the same ship. It is a fairly full report from a German intelligence officer of the 79th German Reserve Division, and it contains information that the Germans had gathered with regard to this proposed attack. I shall read only one paragraph of it:

Spring Offensive. The spring offensive of the Entente that was to be expected will most probably be staged in this vicinity, perhaps with the intention of turning the Siegfried Line (Drocourt-Queant Line) and thereby defeat its purpose. North of Arras the British will be forced, according to the nature of the ground, to deliver a joint attack on the long narrow Vimy ridge, the possession of which gives them command of the high ground in this vicinity and would also be a safeguard against German attacks on the left British flank near Arras.

Opposed to the Division (79th Reserve) are Canadian troops. The 3rd Canadian Division on the right flank of the Division (79th Reserve Division) came into line about the middle of March. Recent identifications place the 2nd Canadian Division on the left divisional flank. The extreme flanks of the Canadian Corps have closed in towards the centre