

YPRES

THE PART PLAYED BY THE 2ND CANADIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE
AND PARTICULARLY BY THE 5TH CANADIAN BATTALION
IN THE SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES.

IT is not the intention of this article to attempt to describe in full the Second Battle of Ypres, or to go into details regarding the work done by the 1st Canadian Division. Rather, it is intended to describe briefly the part played in those stirring events by the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade and particularly by the 5th Canadian Battalion.

The Canadian Division moved from Steenuoorde to a point near Ypres during the week ending April 17th, the Second Brigade taking up a position on the right, adjoining the British lines, the Third Brigade on the left, with their left flank in touch with the French Territorials, the whole in relief of a French Division on the North side of the Ypres salient. On the night of April 14th, the 7th, 8th and 10th Battalions went into the front line trenches with the Fifth in reserve about a mile in the rear. The 8th Battalion was relieved two days later by British troops, and on the night of the 19th (Monday) the Fifth and Eighth relieved the Tenth and Seventh respectively, the Fifth on the right touching the Royal Fusiliers, and the Eighth on the left, rubbing shoulders with the 3rd Canadian Brigade. The 1st Canadian Brigade was several miles in the rear in corps reserve.

The portion of the line held by the 2nd Brigade was from three to four miles north and a little east of Ypres. Its right rested on Grovenstafel, and its left about a mile and a half directly in

front of the village of St. Julien. From there the 3rd Brigade held the line as far left as Langemarck. Beyond that were French Territorials, Algerians and Turcos, who held nearly two miles of frontage where the Allied line runs north towards Dixmude.

The trenches taken over by the Second Brigade were found to be in very bad condition. Old tumble-down parapets, the few dug-outs there were caved in and full of rotting straw—they looked, these trenches, as though they had been uninhabited for months. In many places they were little more than shallow ditches, and progress along them in the day time was mostly a case of crawling on hands and knees. There were no communication trenches with the exception of some small water-soaked ditches, overgrown with rank grass.

Work was immediately begun to make the trenches inhabitable, and when the Fifth and Eighth went in on the night of Monday the 19th, they found that while some progress had already been made, there was a great deal still to be done. Fresh from rest billets, hardened by several weeks of route marching and drilling, they started in with a will to carry on the task begun by the Tenth and Seventh. Work could be done only under cover of darkness, and on Monday and Tuesday nights considerable progress was made all along the line; deepening the trenches, building sandbag parapets, constructing