

CHAPTER III

FROM ARRAS TO AMIENS

THE Canadian Corps was fortunate that it had in Sir Arthur Currie a chief it both loved and trusted, a brilliant citizen soldier it was proud to follow anywhere. But its greatest asset lay in the unconquerable spirit of the rank and file, bred to free open skies, adaptable to changing circumstances, seasoned by many battles, inured to hardship, submitting willingly to stern discipline—thus transmuting these clerks, artisans, lawyers, farmers, railway-men, lumber-jacks and the like, into as fine a body of professional troops this war has produced—but troops that all so happily sought only in victory the hour to lay aside the sword and return to the plowshare.

And now before them was a splendid adventure. On July 1, the 2nd. Canadian Division was at last relieved from the line, the 3rd. Canadian Division taking its place. It had passed under orders of the VI Corps on March 28, relieving the 3rd. British Division in the Neuville Vitasse Sector just south of Arras, and on the night of March 31 extended its front southwards by relieving the left battalion of the Guards' Division. The front held extended from south of the Cojeul river, east of Boisleux St. Marc, to the slopes of Telegraph Hill, 6,000 yards. The 2nd. Canadian Division held this front for an uninterrupted period of 92 days, during which time it repulsed a series of local attacks and carried out no less than 27 raids, capturing three officers, 101 other ranks, 22 machine-guns, and two trench-mortars, and inflicting severe casualties on the enemy. The aggressive attitude adopted by this Division during those critical days and under such adverse conditions had a most excellent effect on the troops generally, and it certainly reduced to the lowest point the fighting value of