

THE CANADIAN WAR PICTORIAL



THE FIRST STAGE OF THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE
Our artillery fire was terrific. Shells are seen breaking on the German front-line trenches

THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

VIMY RIDGE was a military position of imposing strength, of innumerable fortifications, of formidable reputation. It was defensively strong in natural characteristics as well as in the machinery and devices of the Hun. Its defences were of such extraordinary quality that when the French bombarded a point immediately to the south-east of the Ridge in the autumn of 1915, they expended one hundred fifteen-inch shells without seriously reducing the fire of the German batteries, for those batteries were all sunk beneath and behind elaborate constructions of earth and concrete.

On the morning of Easter Monday the Canadians struck at Vimy Ridge on a wide frontage.

For a week past our guns had subjected all the threatened region to a terrific bombardment. British airmen, taking advantage of every hour of clear weather to observe the effects of our fire, reported the enemy positions smashed—trenches blown away and roads in the rear broken to uselessness.

At five-thirty in the morning of the 9th of April the attack was launched. Every piece of our massed artillery and many advanced eighteen-pounders opened fire. Our "heavies" bombarded the German positions on and beyond the Ridge, and our field guns laid an intense barrage of shrapnel, strengthened by indirect machine-gun fire, along the front.

The barrage advanced by lifts, and close behind the barrage moved the waves of attacking infantry.

The early hours of the morning were cold and blustery, with flurries of snow blowing over the field.

All went well with the right and centre of the attack. The enemy offered only a feeble and fragmentary resistance. Intricate systems of defence and many fortified shelters fell into our hands. The smashing deluge of our shells drove the Huns from their broken trenches to their dug-outs; and from their dug-outs they issued in hundreds upon the lifting of the barrage and the arrival of our infantry—not to fight, but to surrender.

The left was not so fortunate. At this point of our attack the enemy had constructed a tunnel running from his fire-trench towards our position; and now, by way of this tunnel, his infantry came to the surface in rear of our advancing barrage and infantry, remanned their front-line trenches and attacked the attackers. Heavy and prolonged fighting followed. It was not until ten o'clock that night that the Germans were driven from the tunnel and reoccupied trenches and disposed of.

Snow was falling heavily by now, and there was immediate need of consolidating gains.

The fight continued on Tuesday. Our troops devoted their energies to consolidating their new positions in expectation of vigorous counter-attacks. But the counter-

(Continued overleaf)