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PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY 1914-1919

BY
RALPH HODDER-WILLIAMS
FORMERLY LIEUTENANT, P.P.C.L.I.

WITH A FOREWORD BY
THE LADY PATRICIA RAMSAY
COLONEL-IN-CHIEF OF THE REGIMENT

AND AN INTRODUCTION BY
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL A. HAMILTON GAULT
HONORARY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL, P.P.C.L.I.

IN TWO VOLUMES: VOLUME I.
NARRATIVE

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DEDICATED
(BY PERMISSION)
TO
THE LADY PATRICIA RAMSAY
COLONEL-IN-CHIEF
PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY

FOREWORD

THE record of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry is a record of great and heroic deeds. The first Canadian unit to take the field in the Great War, the Regiment holds a place second to none in the annals of the armies which came from every part of our Empire to fight for the common cause. In this history of the Regiment we are privileged to follow the fortunes of the brave men who enlisted in its ranks.

The story has brought out the magnificent spirit of devoted service and self-sacrifice which has justly won for it so great a name. One of the traditions of the Regiment, a tradition in keeping with the noblest ideals in our history, and a tradition, moreover, which was preserved by all ranks throughout the War, was the effacement of the individual in securing the advancement of the unit. All those who read the following pages will feel that they owe a debt of gratitude to Lieutenant Hodder-Williams for the masterly manner in which he has told the tale of those who, by their service, brought honour to themselves and lasting glory to the memory of the Regiment.

I, who have the honour to be the Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment, find it impossible to think impersonally of its men and of its glorious dead. I trust, therefore, that I may be forgiven if I take

this opportunity of paying a just tribute to their heroism.

It is impossible to discriminate between man and man—whether it be Colonel Hamilton Gault, who had so much to do with the raising of the Regiment which he afterwards led, those other gallant Commanding Officers, Colonel Farquhar, Colonel Buller, Colonel Pelly, Colonel Adamson and Colonel Stewart, or the last and youngest recruit. The individual deeds of bravery were many, the individual devotion to duty was unanimous, and, alas, the individual sacrifices were very great indeed.

I am sure that it will be with the deepest emotion that all readers, whether people of Canada or people of the Mother Country, will study this record of imperishable deeds. And the book will have served a noble purpose if it brings—as I hope and trust that it will bring—comfort and pride to those whose nearest and dearest fell fighting in the ranks of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

Patricia Ramsay
Colonel-in-Chief, P. P. C. L. I.

INTRODUCTION

ON the demobilization of the Service Battalion of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry the need of some permanent and official record was felt by a large number of its personnel. To this end Mr. Ralph Hodder-Williams, M.C., M.A., an ex-officer of the Regiment, and until lately Associate Professor of History at the University of Toronto, most kindly consented, at the writer's request, to devote his services, and for the past three years has been engaged in his spare time upon the compilation of all available military data bearing upon the life of the Battalion during the European War of 1914-1918, and in the writing of the regimental history of the Patricias.

The difficulties of preparing the narrative of a unit engaged throughout the late War only become apparent when the historian is confronted with the mass of material which he must examine before his task can be embarked upon. Battalion records alone are insufficient to provide the student with more than a superficial glimpse of his subject, and it becomes necessary to collate Brigade, Division, Corps, and even Army orders and reports, before the relative importance of the unit in operations can be gauged. Sometimes these reports, written in the heat of an action and emanating from the various sections of the battlefield involved, are

inevitably contradictory, and so upon the historian is imposed the added responsibility of disentangling the truth from a maze of conflicting data and the personal recollections of those who were engaged. Where reminiscence and documentary evidence clash, it is nearly always necessary to jettison the former, since, while frequently invaluable, it is, as all soldiers know, apt at times to throw the picture as a whole out of focus.

Through the courtesy and kindness of the Historical Sections of the War Office and the Department of National Defence at Ottawa, Mr. Hodder-Williams has had access to all the orders and records dealing with the operations in which the Battalion was engaged, both while brigaded in the 27th Division B.E.F. (1914-1915) and in the 3rd Canadian Division C.E.F. (1915-1919). To these departments I desire to convey the Regiment's grateful appreciation for all the help and encouragement so generously extended to its historian, and in particular I should like to take this opportunity of thanking Major-General J. H. MacBrien, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Chief of Staff, Department of National Defence, Canada, for kindly permitting Mr. Hodder-Williams to seek information and assistance from the departments under his control.

To Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, D.S.O., with his staff at the Historical Section at Ottawa, and to Colonel J. S. Brown, C.M.G., D.S.O., Major J. B. Cochrane, and the staff of the Military Surveys Branch at Ottawa we are especially indebted; to the former for the meticulous care with which he has reviewed the manuscript, as well as for his practical suggestions and help on occasions too numerous to mention; to the latter, for producing

and printing the maps which illustrate the operations described in the succeeding pages. The originals of these maps were specially prepared for Mr. Hodder-Williams under the expert supervision of his friend Mr. Alan Coventry of the University of Toronto, and should be carefully studied by the reader in connection with each operation as it is reviewed, in order that the sequence of events described may be the more clearly understood. Mr. Coventry's work has been literally "a labour of love," and I cannot say too much in grateful appreciation of the service he has rendered towards the publication of this book.

In preparing the records of individual service, Mr. Hodder-Williams has been able to check and supplement the information contained in the nominal rolls of the Regiment from lists specially made by the Records Office of the Department of National Defence, Ottawa. When it is realized that the staff of the Records Office gathered this information from among thousands of individual dockets before the automatic Hollerith system for searching them was completed, it will readily be understood how great is our obligation to their labours.

To Colonel F. L. Armstrong, O.B.E., Director of Records, and his staff, I wish to offer sincere thanks, not only for this, but for much valuable information relating to Battalion records with which the Regiment has been supplied in years gone by.

Our deep gratitude is due to Mr. W. H. Blake of Toronto for his valued suggestions and literary criticisms, by which the author has been greatly aided in the successive stages of his work. Mr. Blake was closely connected with the Service

Battalion by family ties, and so it is perhaps not strange that he should have taken so generous and active an interest in the writing of its history.

I also wish to express my grateful thanks to the publishers, Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, who in undertaking the publication of this work have declined to accept any share in profits which may accrue, in order to benefit the Regimental Fund. Their interest, like that of Mr. Blake, is not entirely impersonal, and no words can adequately describe my sense of sincere appreciation of their generosity and kindness in this respect.

Throughout the work Mr. Hodder-Williams' aim has been to give an impersonal, balanced, and authentic account of the story of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry from the day of its formation in August 1914, to the day of the demobilization of the Service Battalion in March 1919. Each section of the narrative has been submitted to, and approved by, the senior surviving officer of the period under review, and it is believed that no important statement of fact is without its corroborative evidence in official records. In it he has endeavoured to tell the tale of the joys and sorrows, the successes and trials of but one battalion of His Majesty's Forces, purposely leaving to other historians the right and privilege of chronicling the magnificent feats of arms of their own Regiments. In this Introduction, however, I cannot refrain from mentioning the names of the sister battalions with which the Patricias were brigaded in the early days of the war, and from which the Regiment first learned the Army precepts of self-sacrifice, true comradeship, and team play. These were the King's Royal Rifle Corps (3rd and 4th Battalions), the Rifle Brigade (4th Battalion),

and the King's Shropshire Light Infantry (2nd Battalion), as a brigade soon to be referred to by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir John French, as "The Stonewall Brigade," after its defence of the Ypres Salient in May 1915. Could men have had finer examples or better friends than these with whom to enter the melting-pot of war? Later, when the time came for army reorganization, similarly strong ties were formed between the Patricias and the Royal Canadian Regiment, the 42nd Battalion Royal Highlanders of Canada and the 49th Battalion from Edmonton in the brigade subsequently to be known in the Canadian Corps as the "Fighting Seventh." Nothing could have been more magnificent than the spirit of loyalty and comradeship which united together the battalions of these two brigades, and these bonds, forged and proven in the fire of battle, cannot rightly be overestimated by those entrusted with the organization of fighting troops.

It is needless to speak in detail of a battalion's debt to other arms of the service, but to the Divisional and Corps Artillery, British and Canadian, which supported these infantry brigades, ever ready to defend the line by protective barrage or to prepare and make possible an offensive, I should like to offer my Regiment's special tribute. Not always has the true importance of artillery been understood by that branch of the service called "cannon fodder" by the great Napoleon, but from the first a sympathetic understanding existed and gradually ripened into that close liaison between infantryman and gunner which so completely demoralized the enemy as the campaign wore on.

This Introduction would be incomplete without

mention of those who, in the early days of August 1914, contributed towards the organization of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

To the late Lieut.-General Sir Sam Hughes, K.C.B., my thanks are in particular due, for it was he who as Minister of Militia and Defence accepted and endorsed with enthusiasm the proposals which were to culminate in the formation of a fighting unit for immediate service overseas.

To Major-General Sir Eugene Fiset, C.M.G., D.S.O. (Deputy Minister of the Department of Militia and Defence), to Lieut.-General Sir Willoughby Gwatkin, K.C.M.G., C.B. (Chief of the General Staff), the late Major-General D. A. MacDonald, C.M.G., I.S.O. (Quartermaster-General), and the late Colonel J. F. MacDonald (Director of Ordnance) is due a deep debt of gratitude for their distinguished and untiring services in equipping and despatching an infantry unit at full strength in the surprisingly short space of fourteen days, as well as to the many gentlemen throughout Canada who voluntarily acted as recruiting officers in those early days and arranged for the transportation of the first drafts to Ottawa.

The kind and sympathetic assistance of many personal friends cannot be overlooked in these pages, and I should particularly like to thank Sir Vincent Meredith, Baronet, President of the Bank of Montreal, for the encouragement and aid which were given at a time when all the world was beginning to think of war, and to record the kindness of those gentlemen who, prior to the embarkation of the Battalion for overseas, insisted upon giving their horses as officers' chargers to the Patricias.

Less than a year later, when the heavy toll of casualties was being felt and the shortage of

reinforcements was causing grave concern to the senior officers of the Regiment, the new drafts raised by the Universities of Canada, and known as the "University Companies," began to come through, and were for more than a year the chief source of reinforcement to the Patricias. The personnel of these drafts was magnificent, and I take this opportunity of expressing the Regiment's gratitude to all those gentlemen throughout the Universities of Canada who were responsible for the movement which so largely maintained the Battalion during a very trying and difficult period of its existence. While several of these gentlemen became officers of the Regiment, there are many others whose very names I unfortunately do not know; but I should like particularly to recall those of Majors A. S. Eve and C. M. McKergow, both of McGill University, whose untiring efforts had so much to do with the successful raising of the earlier of these six companies.

From the outset of the campaign all ranks of the Patricias became indebted to "The Women of Canada" for many kindnesses and welcome gifts, which brought material comfort from across the seas into the front-line trenches; and, on behalf of the Regiment, Lady Evelyn Farquhar and other ladies devotedly organized and maintained local societies which largely contributed to the welfare of the Battalion's personnel. To all whose generosity and sympathy helped to alleviate the lot of the fighting troops "somewhere in France," it is my privilege here to express most grateful thanks on behalf of every officer and enlisted man of the Regiment.

To my friend Mr. Hodder-Williams, who has so kindly undertaken the work of writing this

history at my request, is my final acknowledgement due, and I shall always be deeply grateful to him for making possible the idea of presenting the Regimental Record of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry to my old comrades and friends, as well as to the public at large.

In conclusion, I would speak of the Regiment's pride in having bestowed upon it the signal honour of bearing the name and carrying the Colour of H.R.H. Princess Patricia of Connaught to the battlefields of Europe.

Many will realize the inspiration which this meant to men who were about to face the ordeal of fire in their country's cause; but few will understand how great an incentive this became to the formation of regimental *esprit*, and to all that goes to create the soul of the fighting machine. Yet this gage was not all that was given to the Regiment, for throughout the war this gracious lady was ever at hand with encouragement and sympathy for all who were in need. Many there are who will cherish the memory of her kindness in hospital and home, and will proudly recall, as long as they live, the intimate ties which came to bind all ranks of the Regiment to her whose name it bears. To H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught and to the Lady Patricia Ramsay, Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment, is the loyalty of all who had the honour of serving with her Colour ever respectfully subscribed.

These volumes are published with a threefold purpose. It is thought that they may prove of interest to the student of military history as a guide to some problems of infantry tactics in modern warfare; it is believed that they will serve as a

memorial of comradeship in the field for survivors of the Service Battalion; but most especially is it hoped that the story of the Regiment in which so many gallant comrades laid down their lives at the call of country may be a source of consolation to the proudly sorrowing hearts of their relatives and friends, and that the memory of the great deeds in which the Regiment played its part will point the way to duty for countless generations of Canadians yet unborn.

For nearly four years in the forefront of the battle, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, from oldest veteran to latest joined recruit, never faltered, never wavered; each officer and man steadfast in his purpose, ever ready to sacrifice himself for his Regiment's need. Such was the undying spirit of our fallen comrades living on in the hearts of those who came to fill the ranks; and such is the Regiment's proud tradition, left as an imperishable heritage to Canada.

Manilla & Co.
Honk Col P.P.C.I.

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

THE Lady Patricia Ramsay has honoured me by accepting the dedication of this book and by writing in a Foreword to it a moving tribute to the memory of all who served with her Colour. My old comrades will readily appreciate how high a value I place upon our Colonel-in-Chief's approval of this history of her Regiment.

My wife has given me the constant help and encouragement without which I could never have completed such a task, undertaken out of regular hours. Mr. W. H. Blake, placing his great critical gifts whole-heartedly at my service, has devoted many hours of labour to the correction of my manuscript, to its very great profit. One old friend and colleague, Mr. Alan Coventry, has given me invaluable assistance by superintending the preparation of maps, while another, Mr. Ralph Flenley, has made many suggestions which have been incorporated in the narrative. My secretary, Miss Apha I. Hodgins, has verified my references with minute care and has spent many weeks at the arduous routine of checking the data collected in the Appendix dealing with individual services.

I have frequently appealed, on specific points, to members of the Service Battalion, P.P.C.L.I. Limitations of space permit me to name but two : Colonel Agar Adamson has passed on to me his immense store of papers and reminiscence, with the

generosity that all who served under him know so well; Major Ten Broeke has read and corrected many parts of the narrative upon which no man living can speak with quite the same authority. In thanking these two, I desire to thank all; I have not made one request that has not brought a quick and helpful reply. I must also acknowledge for my own part the ready assistance, to which Colonel Gault has already referred, given to me by the authorities in several departments of the Ministry of National Defence at Ottawa, and by their staffs. Particularly great is my sense of obligation toward Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, Chief of the Historical Section, for advice and constructive criticism at all times, and especially during the final revision. To all these helpers, and to any others whom I have unwittingly failed to mention, I wish to express my gratitude. Almost all suggestions, I think, have been accepted; but since final decisions have been placed unreservedly in my hands, I must of course assume undivided responsibility for every mistake either of omission or commission.

I owe the greatest debt of all to Colonel Gault. My pride and delight at being invited by him to prepare this record were tempered by some slight foreknowledge of the difficulties of the task; and as a condition of undertaking it I stipulated for his advice and help at every stage of my progress. Generously indeed has he interpreted a promise the implications of which neither of us could see in 1920. His enthusiasm and his countless practical expressions of sympathy have sustained me throughout the journey; and I wish my last word to be one of deep appreciation of all that his example has meant to the Regiment and to its historian.

R. H-W.

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CHAPTER I

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE REGIMENT

August to December 1914

THE battalion which served throughout the war against Germany as Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry prized very highly its regimental spirit. To respect and preserve this collective sentiment is a first duty of its historian. The charge entrusted to him debars from giving prominence to individual action and achievement except in the essential development of his narrative; and the tribute that he would pay to the leadership of six Commanding Officers (three of them fallen in the field), to the endurance of over 5000 officers, N.C.O.'s and men who served under them, and to the memory of 1300 comrades who gave their lives, cannot be adequate if it fails to breathe the spirit of united effort and common service which was born with the Regiment and did not perish. Yet, emphasis upon the personal factor is essential to the story of how the Regiment came into existence, under conditions which perhaps have no parallel in British military annals; for it was brought into being by two men—Hamilton Gault and Francis Farquhar.

CHAPTER
I.
August
1914.

On August 3, 1914, Mr. A. Hamilton Gault of Montreal, who served in the South African campaign

Aug. 3.

CHAPTER

I.

Aug.
1914.

and thereafter maintained an active interest in military affairs, arrived in Ottawa to put before the Minister of Militia and Defence the proposal which was to result in the formation of the Patricias. Sir Edward Grey was on that day making his decisive speech in the House of Commons at Westminster, and the Canadian Government was aware how very grave was the crisis. It was, in fact, during a short recess in an official conference on the military situation as it affected Canada, that Mr. Gault saw the Minister, Colonel Sam Hughes, and offered in the event of a declaration of war to arrange for the formation and equipment in Canada of a military unit to be placed at the disposal of the Imperial authorities. Mr. Gault at first suggested that he should raise and equip a small mounted corps which might prove as valuable in Europe as such mobile troops had been in South Africa; but the Minister, while much interested in the offer, urged the greater need of trained infantry for which, if war broke out, there must be an instant pressing demand, and in this view Mr. Gault at once acquiesced. The offer was left in indefinite form for consideration by the Government. But before returning to Montreal Mr. Gault met Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Farquhar, D.S.O. (Coldstream Guards) Military Secretary to H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, the Governor-General of the Dominion. Colonel Farquhar had heard of the proposal from the Minister, took it up with enthusiasm and promised to help in every way possible.

Aug. 5.

Twenty-four hours later war was declared. Colonel Farquhar knew that Mr. Gault's offer was being favourably considered, and telegraphed to him: "Come up at once, have got idea." Mr. Gault returned to Ottawa, and on the evening of

August 5 discussed with Colonel Farquhar the form that the unit ought to take. These were days when everybody was haunted by the fear of arriving too late. So, with rapidity of mobilization uppermost in his mind, Colonel Farquhar suggested advertising for men who had seen previous service with the Colours and would therefore require the minimum of preliminary training. The two sheets of note-paper on which he had jotted down his "idea" have been preserved, and are interesting as the first document in the Regiment's history :

CHAPTER
I.
Aug.
1914.

THE PROJECT

1. The raising of two double companies, organized as a self-contained half battalion, strength all ranks 500 men.

2. *Recruiting.*

The scheme of recruiting not in any degree to clash with the Militia, my object being to make use of the many men now in Canada who have seen service and who are not at present enlisted in any unit. These men should shake down quickly.

3. *Sources of Recruiting.*

(a) Police forces such as the C.P.R., Toronto and Winnipeg police, etc.

(b) Various veterans' societies or associations.

(c) Advertisement in papers.

4. *Qualifications.*

(a) Having seen active service (?)

(b) Age 35 or less.

(c) Physically fit.

(d) Ex-regular soldiers to have at least a "fair" character certificate. Other recruits to have an analogous "character."

(e) Any man drawn from the Militia to produce written permission to enlist from the O.C. his Militia Battalion.

CHAPTER

I.

Aug.
1914.

The merits of this plan were obvious, but its success would wholly depend, as Mr. Gault insisted, on an experienced officer being chosen for the command. The events of the past two days made the problem of officering any such unit very difficult. With the declaration of war the Canadian Contingent came into existence, and this was likely to interfere with the original proposal for raising a regiment in Canada as a unit in the British Army. But it also immediately complicated the whole question of the command. When making his offer Mr. Gault had in mind the names of several Canadian Militia officers with knowledge of active service who might accept invitations to take senior or junior commands in the new corps; and it may be mentioned in parenthesis that one gentleman who had been approached, and was eager to go with the Regiment as a company commander, rose very early in the campaign to brigade command in the 1st Canadian Division (which had a prior claim upon him as an experienced officer of Militia) and was already a General of Division when the Patricias joined the Canadian Corps at the end of 1915. This source of supply was now necessarily and very properly cut off. There was, however, no difficulty in finding the right commanding officer, for Colonel Farquhar offered his own services to Mr. Gault if he could be relieved from his duties at Government House and obtain permission from the War Office. No suggestion could have given greater satisfaction: a senior Guards officer of distinction and wide experience in active service was the perfect leader for a band of old Regulars returning to the Colours.¹

¹ A summary of Colonel Farquhar's military career is taken from the *Times* of March 25, 1915:

“First appointment in Coldstream Guards from the Militia in 1896. Captain, 1901. Major, 1910. During the South African War A.D.C. to

The name of the proposed unit was discussed during this conversation of August 5, and, at Colonel Farquhar's suggestion, it was decided to ask Her Royal Highness the Princess Patricia of Connaught that the Regiment might have the honour of bearing her name.¹ Colonel Farquhar asked the Duke of Connaught's permission to associate the name of Her Royal Highness with the adventure, and an interview next day between the Duke, the Princess, Colonel Farquhar and Mr. Gault began to weave between Princess Patricia and her Regiment the tie which became so close, and was so prized a tradition in the years that followed.

On August 6 the offer was provisionally accepted by the Canadian Government, which agreed to co-operate with Mr. Gault in raising and sending to the front a full battalion of veteran soldiers. Colonel Sam Hughes put the resources of the Ministry at the disposal of Mr. Gault, and cabled to the War Office for authority to raise an infantry battalion of the character proposed. Pending sanction no decisive action could be taken, but unofficially the plan was carried forward another step during the

CHAPTER
I.
—
Aug.
1914.

General Pole-Carew. Took part in the advance on Kimberley, including the action at Magersfontein, and was also present at the actions at Poplar Grove, Dreisfontein, Vet River and Zand River, and at those near Johannesburg, Pretoria, Diamond Hill and Belfast. Mentioned in Despatches. Queen's Medal with five clasps. D.S.O. On active service in Somaliland as a special service officer, 1903-4. Served as General Staff Officer, 1903-13. Appointed Military Secretary to H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, 1913."

¹ The words "Princess Patricia's Own Canadian Light Infantry" appear at the foot of Mr. Gault's note on the evening's discussion. The phrase "Light Infantry" was introduced as vaguely applicable to the irregular force contemplated in the draft proposals. The word "Own" was dropped before the raising of the Regiment was authorized. The full title was still too long for everyday use, and various abbreviations were invented. In written orders the initial letters "P.P.C.L.I." were almost always used. On parade, *Patricias!* was the usual warning command. "P.P.'s" ("Pip Pips") was the commonest of the colloquial variants. The partial abbreviation "Princess Pats," by which the Regiment was best known to the general public, was always discouraged within the unit.

CHAPTER
I.
—
Aug.
1914.

next two days. It was arranged that Colonel Farquhar should command, with Mr. Gault as his Senior Major, and Captain H. C. Buller (Rifle Brigade) as his Adjutant. In Captain Buller the new Regiment obtained from the Regular Army another experienced officer who had advanced rapidly in his profession, and was then acting as aide-de-camp to the Governor-General. The Duke of Connaught was considerate enough to yield to the Regiment yet another member of his personal staff, Captain D. O. C. Newton.

Authority to raise and equip the Patricias reached Ottawa from London on August 8. On the estimates provided by General D. A. Macdonald, C.M.G., Quartermaster-General of the Canadian Forces, Major Gault completed the details of financing the new unit with Colonel Fiset, the Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence; and on August 10 the Minister of Militia and Defence, together with Major Gault, signed a regimental charter which had been hurriedly prepared. The more important clauses of this document read as follows :

Aug. 10.

1. With the approval of the Imperial Government authority is given for the raising of one infantry Regiment to be named "Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry."

2. This Regiment is to be complete at war strength as laid down in war establishments, with Oversea base and depot in Canada.

3. As regards the expense entailed in the raising, clothing, equipping, pay, transportation, feeding, maintenance and all other expenditure connected with this Battalion in and out of Canada, the sum of one hundred thousand dollars will be provided by Captain Hamilton Gault of Montreal. The remainder will be defrayed by the Department of Militia and Defence for Canada.

The charter further provided for the issue of the entire war outfit for a battalion; for free transporta-

tion of recruits to Ottawa, where Lansdowne Park was put at the Regiment's disposal for mobilization ; for the payment of all ranks at the same rate as other battalions in the Canadian Expeditionary Force ; and for the continuation of all these arrangements " until the discharge of the Officers and Men after the return of the Battalion to Canada." CHAPTER
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1914.

Thus, but a week after the idea had taken form in Mr. Gault's mind, the Regiment was a fact—on paper. In another ten days it was a fully mobilized unit, 1100 strong. The machinery for recruiting went into action. Advertisements appeared on August 11 and the following large poster was widely distributed : Aug.
11-19.

R E C R U I T S
W A N T E D !

FOR

P R I N C E S S P A T R I C I A ' S
C A N A D I A N L I G H T I N F A N T R Y

R A I S E D B Y A. H A M I L T O N G A U L T, E S Q.

C O M M A N D E D B Y L T.-C O L. F. F A R Q U H A R, D. S. O.
(Coldstream Guards).

This unit will be equipped as soon as possible, and placed at the disposal of the Imperial Authorities.

Preference will be given to ex-regulars of the Canadian or Imperial Forces ; or men who saw service in South Africa.

Qualifications—(1) Physically fit.
(2) Age limit, 40.
(3) " Good " certificates of discharge for ex-soldiers.

Conditions—Enlistments for one year or the war. Pay Canadian rate.

A P P L Y T O R E C R U I T I N G O F F I C E W I T H I N.

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Colonel Farquhar sent telegrams to Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton, inviting certain gentlemen to recruit in these centres. Major Gault went to Toronto, where the Army and Navy Veterans' Association co-operated to such good purpose that a full company under the leadership of Sergeant-Major A. Fraser reported at Ottawa before the end of the week. On their heels a constant stream of applicants began to arrive from Western Canada.

Prospectors, trappers, guides, cow-punchers, prize-fighters, farmers, professional and business men, above all old soldiers, poured into Ottawa by every train. (Long afterwards some one at Battalion Headquarters wrote, in filling up an official form: "Place of origin—all over the world.") The P.P.C.L.I. recruits were responsible for many a story of these days when men drove to the nearest station, hitched their horses to a convenient post and vanished eastward. One party is said to have forced an unwilling train crew, at the point of the gun, to give them a lift towards Ottawa; and the tale, true or false, is characteristic enough of the hour to deserve a place in the most sober of records. Among the earliest to arrive were the "Legion of Frontiersmen," who banded themselves together in the West at the outbreak of war, came to Ottawa by the first train and enlisted in a body. These reinforcements to the Toronto contingent added a new feature to the scene at Lansdowne Park, for the Frontiersmen were picturesque in a uniform of soft hats, khaki shirts and neckerchiefs. The Edmonton Pipe Band, early arrivals too, announced to Colonel Farquhar, when he encountered them one morning at Ottawa railway station, that they had come to play the Regiment to France and back

again. They were under a gallant old Highlander, Pipe-Major J. Colville, and wore full Highland kit and the Hunting Stewart tartan—given to them, with their pipes, by the St. Andrew's Society of Edmonton. Colonel Farquhar was able to take them on the establishment, and they lightened many a march for the Regiment over the hard French roads and proved stout-hearted stretcher-bearers in action.¹

The response of veterans recalled to the Colours wellnigh overwhelmed the Commanding Officer and his small staff, and it was soon apparent that unless strict principles of selection were adopted the Regiment would be greatly over-recruited within a week. Colonel Farquhar bore the heaviest part of this work on his own shoulders, inspecting and questioning each applicant; and hundreds of the ex-soldiers who paraded before him were gratified to find how familiar he was with their old regiments. The 1100 men whom he accepted were chosen in nine days from applicants approaching 3000 in number. Many arrived too late, but fortunately other units were mobilizing alongside and were able to absorb this good material. Training began as soon as the first men were attested and the Duke of Connaught was often present on parade to watch the Regiment taking shape. Officers were appointed as quickly as the men were recruited. Colonel Farquhar, unable to draw upon existing Militia units at the expense of the First Canadian Contingent, appointed to the senior commands former officers of the Regular Army at the time resident in Canada, and others having experience of active service but now unattached to any corps. The

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¹ Much later a brass band was added to the regimental establishment, but the Pipers remained the senior band throughout the war.

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junior officers were selected from the many gentlemen who offered their services, but always without injury to the raising of other units.

Mobilization was completed on August 19. Figures prepared at the time show clearly the character of the original battalion. Out of a total strength of 1098, 1049 had been with the Colours and possessed 771 decorations or medals; 456 had seen war service. Under the conditions of enlistment it was inevitable that nearly all should have been men born in the Old Country: less than 10 per cent of the "Originals" were of Canadian origin; almost 65 per cent were Englishmen, roughly 15 per cent Scots, and 10 per cent Irish. Two sections were composed entirely of ex-Guardsmen, two of ex-Riflemen, and two of English public-school boys; a few seamen and marines represented the Royal Navy; every regiment of the Regular Army but one was represented on a P.P.C.L.I. battalion parade. There is no matching the composition of the "Originals" in the history of British arms.

On Sunday August 23, at the close of a church parade in Lansdowne Park, Princess Patricia presented a Colour to the Regiment. No invitations were issued and no announcement was made; but the rumour prevailed in Ottawa that the Regiment was about to leave for the front, and the ceremony was attended by a very large and unexpected throng of well-wishers.

The Princess herself designed and worked the Colour during the fortnight of mobilization. On it the initials "V.P." in gold were entwined upon a blue centre against a crimson ground. The staff was cut from a tree in the grounds of Government House. The Colour became famous as the only

one carried into action by a British unit during the Great War, and it has sometimes been supposed that special permission was granted by the War Office to the Patricias to take a Colour into the field. This was not the case. The Colour was originally presented as a Camp Colour only, and as such was taken to the front without infringing Army Standing Orders. Its adoption as a Regimental Colour came much later at the suggestion of Brigadier-General W. E. B. Smith of the 80th Brigade after the Second Battle of Ypres. Thereafter the Colour was always paid ceremonial honours, though it was only consecrated two months after the Armistice and a few days before the Patricias left Europe for home. But the making and presentation of this Camp Colour gave it a high significance in the history of the Regiment. An order published in September 1914 at Levis camp directs that the sentry posted over the uncased Colour in front of the Commanding Officer's quarters "is clearly to understand that dead or alive he is responsible for its safety." Whenever the Battalion was on the march in France and Belgium it was carried by a subaltern officer between a guard of senior N.C.O.'s. Each new draft was at its first battalion parade drawn up on an advanced flank while the history and significance of the Colour were explained, and was then paraded before it; and only after this ceremony was a recruit considered to be fully a member of the Regiment. In the trenches and in battle the Colour was in the special charge of the Adjutant, and in no action in which the Patricias were engaged was it farther from the line than Battalion Headquarters. Once only was it sent to the rear for safety—after being buried by a direct hit on the Battalion Headquarters dug-out in the *mêlée* at Sanctuary Wood

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 Aug. 1914. on June 2, 1916. In the engagement of May 8, 1915, the Colour was hit by both bullet and shrapnel; and on August 12, 1918, during the battle of Amiens, the shaft was damaged by artillery fire. On November 11, 1918, the worn Colour headed the jubilant march into Mons, and in 1919, crowned with a wreath of honour by its maker (now Colonel-in-Chief) at her farewell parade in England, it returned to Canada with the Regiment.

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Five days after the ceremony in Lansdowne Park the Patricias left Ottawa by train for Montreal. Here, in response to the pressing request of the citizens, Colonel Farquhar marched his men to the docks by way of the principal streets, which were lined with dense, cheering crowds. The Regiment embarked on the *Megantic* and sailed next morning amid great excitement, saluted by the whistles of every ship in the harbour. But at Quebec came a chilling disappointment. Colonel Farquhar, his staff and whole command had worked for three weeks at highest pressure in order to reach the scene of action without the loss of a day; and now the *Megantic* was held up by an order from Ottawa that the Admiralty wished no troops to cross the Atlantic without convoy. In this moment of sharp discouragement the Colonel set an example by carrying the news himself to the men's mess room and saying quietly: "This is our first knock; take it like soldiers." The Regiment disembarked on the morning of August 30. Instructions to join the First Canadian Contingent at Valcartier Camp were countermanded at Colonel Farquhar's request, and the Patricias were allowed to remain across the river at Levis where an old camp was quickly put in order almost within sight of the place of embarkation.

The Regiment was in training at Levis during most of September. The order that delayed departure was perhaps fortunate in the long run, for these four weeks under canvas gave time enough to shape the veterans in the ranks to a point which impressed the British authorities with their fitness for immediate service when they reached England. The training at Levis included trench digging and siting, night operations, advance and rear guards, outposts, practice in the attack and a field day. There was a review by the Duke of Connaught, and much time was spent on the ranges in thoroughly testing the Ross rifle.

On September 27 the *Patricias*, with a parting message of good luck from the Princess, re-embarked, this time on the *Royal George*, which sailed down the St. Lawrence as a unit in the fleet transporting the first 30,000 from Canada, and met the convoying men-of-war in the Gaspé Basin. Three uneventful weeks at sea in pleasant weather brought the Regiment to the end of the first stage of its journey. There is little to be said of life on an Atlantic transport; but it is worth noting that the P.P.C.L.I. signalling section which had been organized at Levis under Lieutenant P. V. Cornish was specially commended by Admiral Wemyss for its work on the voyage. The convoy was diverted from the original destination, Southampton, by the presence of enemy submarines in the Solent, and entered Plymouth Sound on October 14. By the evening of October 18 the *Patricias* were encamped with the rest of the Canadians on Salisbury Plain. They remained at Bustard Camp for a month, and were reviewed with the rest of the Contingent, first by Field-Marshal Earl Roberts and afterward by H.M. the King.

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For the next year, however, the Patricias were to see little of their comrades from oversea. The Regiment, composed almost to the last man of soldiers who had rejoined the Colours, needed little more of the preliminary training without which it was considered unwise to put Canadian volunteers into the field. Colonel Farquhar lost no opportunity of pointing out the fitness of his command for immediate service. Within three days of arriving at Bustard Camp he wrote in strong terms to Lieutenant-General E. A. H. Alderson, C.B., who had been appointed to the command of the Canadian Contingent :

The conditions of Service in the Battalion were that the men should be under forty years of age, ex-regulars or men who saw service in South Africa. 850 men fulfilled those conditions, the majority being ex-regulars.

Of the remaining 250, 219 are all picked men who have served for considerable periods in the auxiliary forces. The remainder are prize-fighters, cow-punchers, and pipers. . . . The rust is now off the old soldiers and if the Battalion is ever fit for service, it should be so in ten days.

General Alderson endorsed this application for "early despatch to the theatre of war." There was a short but anxious delay. For a few days it seemed possible that the Regiment would be brigaded in General Rawlinson's newly formed IV. Corps. This opportunity was lost, but soon after the King's inspection on Salisbury Plain it was decided that the Patricias should go to France with Major-General T. D'O. Snow's 27th Division of the V. Corps, then about to be organized under the command of General Sir Herbert Plumer.

Nov. 16—
Dec. 19.

Orders to leave Bustard Camp came on November 14, and on the 16th the Regiment moved in three trains to Winchester and went into camp at

Morn Hill. Three days later the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade, the 3rd and 4th Battalions King's Royal Rifle Corps and the 2nd Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry arrived from India and were formed into the 80th Infantry Brigade under the command of Brigadier-General the Hon. C. G. Fortescue, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. As all brigades of the 27th Division were then being organized on a five-battalion basis, it was possible to attach the Patricias to this Regular Army brigade of riflemen and light infantry ; and the appearance of a small detachment of the Regiment at a church parade in Winchester Cathedral on November 29 first marked the association of the Patricias with these regiments of fine tradition.¹

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The mud of Bustard Camp in the first winter of the war, together with that at West Down North and South, Pond Farm and Sling Plantation, has given Salisbury Plain an unhappy reputation in the Dominion. Conditions at Morn Hill, Winchester, were at least as bad. The Patricias found themselves again under canvas in weather which was always cold and dismal, and usually wet. The men, however, remained unquenchably cheerful, and much intensive training was accomplished in a month of very hard work. Particular attention was paid to musketry, as the Ross rifle had been replaced by the Lee-Enfield pattern used in the British Army ; and it throws an interesting light upon a once fierce controversy that Colonel Farquhar urged this change immediately after the tests made at Levis, " firstly, because most of the men have shot for years with the ' Lee-Enfield,' secondly, because the experiences

¹ The 27th Division was the ninth British division to be sent to the front. The numbers " 80th " and " 27th " are liable to be misleading. In both Brigade and Division 80 per cent of the original personnel belonged to the Regular Army.

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which we have had with the Ross . . . can hardly fail to have shaken the confidence of the men in that rifle." One untoward incident of this period deserves record. A junior officers' tent caught fire at night, and the occupants received severe burns and were fortunate in escaping with their lives. The accident has an interest for all who served in the Regiment, for the two subalterns both earned distinction and died gloriously with the Patricias in the field: Talbot Papineau, who, through the happy combination of a proud name, clear vision and great personal charm, might well have lived to render further valuable service to the state in time of peace, was killed while leading the attacking companies at Passchendaele; Charles Stewart rose from junior subaltern to commanding officer and fell in almost the last engagement of the war at the head of the Regiment he loved so well and served so gallantly.

On December 16 the 27th Division was inspected on Fawley Down by the King. Lord Kitchener accompanied His Majesty; and as he passed down the lines looking at the service ribbons of the men, the Secretary of State for War turned to Colonel Farquhar with the remark: "Now I know where all my old soldiers have got to." The Royal Dec. 20. inspection heralded departure. On December 20 the 80th Brigade marched out from Winchester to Southampton Docks, which were reached in a little more than six hours.¹ The Patricias embarked at once on the *Cardiganshire*, which moved out into the Solent at 7 P.M. under destroyer escort with

¹ This march has given the "Originals" one of their cherished stories. When a mule collapsed on the road, the transport details were at a loss what to do. But His Majesty's Regulation was perfectly clear that *in hostile country* no animal should be left behind to fall into the hands of the enemy. So the march was halted, and the mule was led off to the nearest wood, shot and decently buried.

all lights out. The transport lay off Havre at daybreak, but there was a tedious wait of nine hours before the troops could disembark, and the rest-camp outside the city was not reached until after nightfall. On December 22 the Regiment completed its equipment for the field, and marched back into Havre to board a train of forty-eight trucks, only twenty-five of which could be spared for the officers and men, the remainder being required to accommodate its transport. With forty men to a truck it was impossible for all to sit down at the same time; but the Patricias were not in a mood for grumbling, and when shortly before midnight the train started for St. Omer, the men, as the battalion war diary notes, were "in tearing spirits." Railway journeys in France in the first months of the war were indeed tests of enthusiasm. The train took twelve hours to reach Abbeville and nearly twelve more to arrive at Arques, just east of St. Omer, where the Regiment detrained. Nor was this the end of the journey. The billeting area allotted to the Brigade was the small village of Blaringhem, about half-way between St. Omer and Hazebrouck, but well off the main road. The guide provided at Arques station went on for some miles before he admitted that he had never been to Blaringhem before, and had lost his way. It was three o'clock on the morning of December 24 before Brigade Headquarters at the village château were reached. The Regiment then found that it had come too far and must retrace its steps for more than two miles; and it was almost daybreak before the billets were found and a wearisome journey of over thirty hours was over.

Christmas Day in the field in 1914 lacked the comforts and festivities of later anniversaries. A

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cold and misty day was occupied in the dull work of overhauling transport. The last week of the year was spent, according to a letter of Colonel Farquhar's, in "improving our linguistic talents and finding the process rather a cold one." The Regiment also had its first arduous experience of digging trenches in the waterlogged plains of French Flanders while doing its share in the construction of the Hazebrouck defensive line which was being prepared by General Smith-Dorrien's Second Army. New Year's Day brought relief from this work in the Commander-in-Chief's inspection, which drew from him a special mention of "this magnificent set of men" in his despatch of February 2, 1915. Sir John French seems from the first to have been well impressed with the Regiment. He cabled to Sir Robert Borden after their first short tour in the trenches that they "fully justified the hope which their magnificent appearance inspired"; and he wrote in a letter to the Duke of Connaught: "When I inspected them in pouring rain it seemed to me that I had never seen a more magnificent-looking battalion, Guards or otherwise." The praise was sweet, for the Regiment had not spared itself to get quickly into fighting condition. Colonel Farquhar had pitched its duty high: in an order on discipline issued at Winchester on the day that the Patricias became part of the 80th Brigade he reminded his command that it was for the moment "entrusted with the reputation of all the Colonial Forces of which it is at present the advance guard."

The P.P.C.L.I. marched out from Winchester 27 officers and 956 other ranks strong. Captain Agar Adamson was left behind with instructional N.C.O.'s to receive an

expected draft from Canada and to open a reinforcement depot, possibly in France. Other reinforcing arrangements being made by the Canadian authorities, this detachment was able to join the Regiment in the field in February 1915.

The officers of the original Battalion Headquarters Staff were :

Lieut.-Colonel F. D. Farquhar, D.S.O., Commanding Officer ; Major A. Hamilton Gault, Senior Major and Second in Command ; Captain H. C. Buller, Adjutant ; Major C. B. Keenan, D.S.O., Medical Officer ; Lieutenant C. H. Bennett, Paymaster.

The first Regimental-Sergeant-Major was Sergeant-Major W. S. Marsden. He was succeeded in November 1914 by Company-Sergeant-Major A. Fraser, who held the appointment until his death in action on May 8, 1915.

The infantry of Major-General Snow's 27th Division consisted of :

80th Brigade

(Fortescue)

4th Rifle Brigade
3rd King's Royal Rifle Corps
4th King's Royal Rifle Corps
2nd King's Shropshire Light
Infantry
Princess Patricia's Canadian
Light Infantry

81st Brigade

(MacFarlane)

2nd Cameron Highlanders
1st Argyll and Sutherland
Highlanders
1st Royal Scots
2nd Gloucestershire Regi-
ment
9th Royal Scots (T.F.)
9th Argyll and Sutherland
Highlanders (T.F.)

82nd Brigade

(Longley)

1st Leinster Regiment
2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers
2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
1st Royal Irish Rifles
1st Cambridgeshire Regiment (T.F.)
6th Cheshire Regiment (Army Troops)

20 ORGANIZATION OF THE REGIMENT

CHAPTER

I

The 1st, 19th and 20th Brigades R.F.A. formed the divisional artillery. The 1st Brigade (98th, 132nd and 133rd Batteries R.F.A.) was affiliated with the 80th Brigade, as was also the 1st Wessex Company of the Royal Engineers.

This Division and the 28th (Bulfin) comprised the original V. Army Corps under General Plumer.

CHAPTER II

ST. ELOI

January to March 1915

Map No. 1, unfolding opposite p. 44

ON January 5, 1915, the 80th Brigade moved forward by way of Hazebrouck and Bailleul into Belgium along the road towards Ypres.¹ On the afternoon of the 6th the Patricias reached Dickebusch, and after a rest of some hours went up at night to occupy the front line—the first unit of the 27th Division sent into the trenches. No battalion ever found its first relief easy; and the Patricias were called upon to take over a discontinuous line from Allied troops whose formations and language were unfamiliar, with the enemy less than a hundred yards away. The embarrassments of the task were accentuated by the failure of the guides to meet the relieving companies at the rendezvous chosen by the advance party. The officers of the advance party themselves therefore guided the relief in, and in spite of many difficulties the line in front of Vierstraat was taken over from the 53rd French Regiment without casualties by midnight of January 6/7.

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¹ The battalion diary notes: "Lack of boots much felt; many men marching with no soles at all to their boots."

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The 27th Division replaced the 32nd French Division in the St. Eloi—Vierstraat area as part of a general relief of the XVI. French Corps by the II. British Corps.¹ The front first held by the Division was very important, for it ran from the northern outskirts of the village of St. Eloi to the Vierstraat—Wytschaete road, at the extreme south-western bend of the Ypres Salient created during the defence of the city in the First Battle of Ypres, some two months before. On the left, in front of St. Eloi, a rise in the ground gave consequence to the “Mound,” a clay dump twenty feet high and seventy feet long standing in a brickfield beside the road from St. Eloi to Warneton and commanding the southern approach to Ypres. To the right, the ground now to be held by the British fell away through Bois Confluent and in front of Bois Carré, and only rose appreciably beyond the Vierstraat—Wytschaete road, where the line began to straighten out in front of Mount Kemmel. Through this very low ground ran a succession of “beeks” which made drainage almost impossible, for the trenches were just in front of and on a level with these streams. On the right the Germans had the advantage, for they held the higher ground of Grand Bois and Bois Quarante and could drain their trenches away in the direction of the British line. In the centre, around Bois Confluent, there was not much to choose between the positions. On the left, the British held the Mound.

The Patricias entered the trenches in the right (Vierstraat) sector of this line. Even under normal conditions the ground would have been unsuited to trench warfare during a Belgian winter, and

¹ The 27th Division had been attached to this Corps pending the arrival of the 28th Division and the formation of the V. Corps.

in January 1915 many circumstances combined to make it almost untenable. The weather was unusually wet, the rain turning to sleet and snow as the month advanced. The trenches were mere ditches protected by a few sand-bags loosely thrown up for a parapet, and with no paradosses at all. They had been neglected by the French, were too wide for security and not even bullet-proof; and being unrevetted and undrained they were continually falling in under the constant rains. Battalion, brigade and divisional diaries all agree in condemning a line in parts of which the garrison had to stand knee-deep in liquid mud. There was neither a continuous front-line system nor a communication trench, and the roads were so choked with mud that two-way transport was impossible. A trench tour, however short, was not only exceedingly fatiguing but put very many on the sick list. At first there was much suffering from "trench feet," a disease then almost unknown to the Army Medical Corps, and Canadians accustomed to a thermometer that goes far below zero suffered equally with troops lately returned from India.¹ Reports from the whole Division show an average temporary loss of 150 men to the battalion from the effects of exposure during the first few weeks.

The Regiment came under an artillery bombardment of over an hour the first morning. Both shrapnel and high explosive shells were used by the enemy, who was aware no doubt that new troops had entered the trenches opposite, and wished to give them early evidence of his superiority in numbers of guns and in artillery communication.

¹ A Winnipeg City policeman serving with the P.P.C.L.I. broke down when told that he had frozen feet at a temperature of 32°. He was accustomed to night duty in Manitoba when 20° below zero was a not unusual temperature.

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Thereafter the line was fairly quiet, but the Bavarians used their higher position forty or more yards away to good advantage by sniping from their better-constructed and drier trenches through steel loop-holes. The melancholy tale of trench casualties opened on the first day, and the names of two Lance-Corporals, W. Fry and H. G. Bellinger, head the roll of the Regiment's killed in action. On the second night the Regiment lost its first officer, under circumstances which show the difference between the front line of those days and the elaborate defensive systems perfected during the years of stalemate. Captain D. O. C. Newton, losing his way in the darkness, walked through the lines between two outposts and found himself in No Man's Land, going towards the German trenches. Turning back he was challenged by his own men, but apparently failed to hear. Warnings had been given that Germans were attempting to get into and behind the line; and the sentry on duty, getting no reply to his challenge, fired, only to recognize his officer's voice as he fell. The sentry at once climbed over the parapet and dragged Captain Newton into safety, but found that his own shot had been fatal.¹

In January the 80th Brigade made four complete tours of the front line, support and reserve positions. During this time the Patricias also made acquaintance with the St. Eloi sector and found its condition worse if possible than that in front of Vierstraat. The state of the trenches demanded frequent reliefs, and the battalions were constantly on the move between the front line, the support positions round

¹ A fellow-officer writes: "The gallant and mortally wounded officer's last effort at speaking was to let it be known that he should not have been where he was and that the sentry only did his duty."

Elzenwalle and reserve at Westoutre. A fruitless spy-hunt in the Elzenwalle Château, the pursuit of an enemy sniper behind the British lines, a difficult moonlight relief over the sky-line at St. Eloi, and a narrow escape for Colonel Farquhar (who was sniped at from a hedge only twenty yards away by a German who had crossed No Man's Land in the night) were the events most worthy of mention in an arduous routine. There was much night firing, bursts of rapid fire came in the daytime from the enemy's steel loop-holes, and reliefs had to pass more than once through heavy shelling around Bois Carré. The casualties reached fifty by the end of the first month, and included two more officers, Captain F. Fitzgerald and Lieutenant C. Price, who were killed at St. Eloi. The Mound was often heavily shelled and became harder and harder to hold. Both sides were sapping. There was much sniping both by day and night, and in this the Germans had at first so great a superiority that Colonel Farquhar instructed Lieutenant W. G. Colquhoun, the Scout Officer, to form a *corps d'élite* of marksmen to cope with the enemy's snipers. Lieutenant Colquhoun was given a roving command, and the men whom he chose and organized under Corporal J. M. Christie became free lances who fought the German snipers with their own weapons. Their success was at once very marked—in a two-day tour near the Mound they accounted for seventeen of the enemy—and Lieutenant Colquhoun rendered good service in thus laying the foundations of a sniping section in which the Regiment always took great pride.

With the extension of its frontage to include the trenches immediately north and east of St. Eloi, the 27th Division entered in February on a stubborn

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contest for the Mound. The Patricias occupied the new trenches, which were taken over from the French when the 28th Division came into the line on the left, in the first week of the month. Battalion Headquarters were at a farm, which Colonel Farquhar christened "Shelley Farm." The name (and the spelling) stuck, though the spot had little of poetry about it. The Mound rose on the western side of the road from St. Eloi to Warneton. Across this road two trenches, 19 and 20, continued the line in a north-easterly direction; thence the line bent back sharply in front of Shelley Farm through trenches 21, 22 and 23, to conform to the German position, which paralleled the St. Eloi—Hollebeke road with its front line north, and the main system immediately south, of this road. The two lines were extremely close at this curve, and the interest of the Germans in the Mound, from which they would be able to overlook the whole southern defences of Ypres, made an early struggle for its possession certain. The outlook was not encouraging. The Germans, as was proved later, were fairly well off for trenches, but the condition of the British line here was even worse than on the right. The defences were very inadequate—low, untraversed, not even bullet-proof. Trenches 19 and 21 were particularly bad, in many places filled above the knee with slush and filth; their garrisons had to occupy such dry spots as they could find by cutting one-man recesses into the parapet. Buried in the ditches lay French, German and British dead, and there were many corpses protruding from the crumbling parapet. Movement by day was impossible, as the German snipers commanded the whole area from high ground beyond trench 22. Within twenty-four hours of entering the extension the

Patricias received a report that an enemy attack on the 28th Division had broken the line on their immediate left and that they might at any moment be under close range enfilade fire. The 4th K.R.R. came up in support, and Lieutenant Colquhoun took out a party to reconnoitre, only to discover that the alarm was due to a temporary withdrawal owing to a misunderstanding of orders. The Battalion lost its relief and had an extra twenty-four hours of duty—no light matter in times when trench conditions were at their worst.

The days, and especially the nights, spent in the front line were not wasted. Everything possible was done to drain trenches, strengthen decaying parapets and provide reasonably secure shelter and head-cover; but the task was endless, and the whole position east of St. Eloi was plainly insecure. The Patricias, however, were not heavily engaged during the greater part of the month, for after this first experience of the new trenches they were twice sent into the old line in the bad but less critical positions on the right of St. Eloi in front of La Brasserie. During this time the 80th Brigade fought its first engagement. On February 14 the Germans took trenches 19 to 22 in a sudden attack on the 82nd Brigade, and the 3rd K.R.R. of the 80th Brigade carried out a counter-attack that drove them back in the early hours of the next day. The Patricias once again had their relief postponed, but on February 21 withdrew for a week's rest at Westoutre.

This period of rest gives convenient place in the narrative for a word as to the problem of reinforcement, which was already causing much concern to the Commanding Officer. In six weeks of constant trench duty the Regiment had suffered seventy

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casualties, including five officers.¹ These losses from enemy action may be reckoned as comparatively small for so difficult a sector of the line, though the percentage of killed to wounded was high. But the wastage from sickness had been abnormal, and the Regiment was for a few days nearly 400 men under strength. The arrival of the oversea draft which had been left at Tidworth under Captain Agar Adamson brought up the numbers to 700. But this draft exhausted all the reserves in sight, for the Canadian reinforcements in England were ear-marked for the 1st Canadian Division, now arriving in France. In Canada new battalions were continually being formed with the idea of sending a complete 2nd Canadian Division across the Atlantic, and this was pushing out of mind the necessity of repairing wastage among the battalions already in France. It was only much later that a satisfactory system of territorially-grouped regimental depots was brought into existence. In the spring of 1915 there was no system at all; and for eight months after their arrival in France the Patricias had reason to be anxious about their future. Small drafts from various Canadian sources kept up the numbers during the spring, and fought splendidly in the Second Battle of Ypres; but these were secured with difficulty and after much suspense. The losses of April and May brought some 450 men from Canadian battalions in England, and by early summer the "University Companies P.P.C.L.I. Reinforcements" began to cross the Atlantic. Something will be said in a later chapter of these 1200 university men who gave to the Regiment a personnel very different, though not less distinctive,

¹ The three already named killed, and Lieuts. S. L. Jones and H. E. Sullivan wounded.

from that it possessed on leaving Canada. It may be that the men who organized this plan of reinforcement saved the Patricias from extinction; for the University Companies began to reach France in July 1915 and thereafter kept the depleted ranks filled for more than a year. When, later on, the Patricias joined the Canadian Corps, the organization of a general Canadian reserve soon solved the problem of recruitment.

The complement of officers was more easily maintained. Colonel Farquhar departed from established precedents and recommended men from the ranks for commissions in their own unit; and five, three of whom rose to field rank and were decorated, were thus commissioned in January and February. The ranks of the Regiment, both at this time and after the arrival of the University Companies, included many who were fitted to bear commissions, and the practice was developed until, from the second half of 1916, it became a rule to which there were few exceptions. For example, hardly an officer on the long casualty list at Passchendaele (October-November 1917) or among those who returned with the Regiment to Canada (March 1919) had served in the field with any unit but the Patricias, and in both cases almost every one had risen from the ranks.

On February 27, in very wintry weather, the Patricias returned to Shelley Farm and took over trenches 19 to 22 on the left of the Mound. The failure of the Bavarians to hold these trenches on the night of February 14/15 against the counter-attack of the 80th and 82nd Brigades had not discouraged them from preparing another assault; and the Patricias, on entering this very uncomfortable part of the line for the second time, found a very

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aggressive enemy opposite trenches 20 and 21. Bombs had severely damaged these trenches and the Bavarians were sapping a parallel fire-trench close to 21, immediately in front of Shelley Farm, where a small salient projected into the British line 300 yards east of St. Eloi. It seemed reasonably certain that this fire-trench was to be used as a jumping-off place for a new assault upon the defences of the Mound. Partly to break up this work, partly to meet aggression with aggression, partly to put new heart into men who were living in filthy ditches overlooked by an enemy campaigning in far greater comfort, Colonel Farquhar immediately asked permission to deliver a local attack against the trench which was being sapped.

The enterprise of February 27/28 was no great one: less than a hundred men took part. Its place in this record may seem out of proportion, even though it be regarded as the first engagement of a Canadian regiment on the European Continent. But little as it was realized at the time, this "reconnaissance in force" was in fact the first of the Canadian "raids" which became so important a factor in the trench warfare of the next three years. Almost all the essentials of subsequent raids were present: the sudden assault by a handful of troops on a small section of line; the division of the attacking force into small groups, each with a special task; the systematic destruction of a trench; the attempt to secure prisoners for identification; the withdrawal before the enemy could counter-attack, after inflicting upon him all possible damage.

Mainly drawn from No. 4 Company, the men chosen for the attack were brought over to the assembly-point at Shelley Farm late in the night

of February 27/28. During the evening of February 27 Lieutenant Colquhoun was sent out to study the ground in order that he might report on German communication trenches along which counter-attack was to be expected, and on the feasibility of holding a trench slightly in front of the existing line if the attack succeeded. In a very successful reconnaissance this officer examined the German line and brought back word that the trench in question was four feet deep in water. The idea of holding any ground gained was therefore abandoned unless some other exceptional opportunity should present itself. About an hour before midnight the Sniping Officer went out a second time, accompanied by the Second in Command, to examine the ground between the German forward and main trench systems and to find the exact position of the communication trenches between them. This reconnaissance was exceedingly difficult, as the moon was shining brightly and the ground afforded no cover. The two officers crawled out between trenches 21 and 22, passed through the enemy front line, crossed the raised road beyond and approached the main position. When within the German lines they separated, and Major Gault, branching off to the left, crawled some distance in that direction towards a communication trench and post, and returned to report that there was a considerable space on the left clear of enemy posts and communication trenches, and that interference from this quarter was improbable. Lieutenant Colquhoun was less fortunate. Turning to the right, he entered a communication trench and had explored the German line for nearly a hundred yards when he was trapped by a working-party. He squeezed back into the shadows and was passed unnoticed by the whole

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party except the *unteroffizier* in its rear, who challenged him and took him prisoner.¹

The failure of his Scout Officer to return left Colonel Farquhar in the dark about the German communications on his right front. His information sufficed, however, for the main operation—the destruction of the sap—and as the night was advancing he delivered his attack without further delay. The sap was known to be wired with “knife-rests” on the Regiment’s right, but was clear on the left, which was chosen accordingly as the point of entry and of withdrawal. There was a communication trench between the German main position and the part of the sap opposite the left end of trench 21, and the assaulting party had therefore to be protected in its line of retreat. Though the attack was not so highly organized as in later raids, the assaulting party was divided roughly into three groups, each of about twenty-five men. These groups went forward at only fifteen paces’ interval with orders to co-operate closely throughout, but to each was assigned a special duty. The assaulting party proper, led by Lieutenant C. E. Crabbe (in charge of the whole attack), consisted of some thirty snipers and riflemen, with a small section of bombers under Lieutenant T. M. Papineau. Its object was to rush the German sap and clear it (from left to right) for approximately 150 yards, from a point opposite the left of 21 to one opposite the left of 20. The second group under Sergeant S. V. Patterson was to follow the main party, protect the rear, block any communication trenches that had been overlooked,

¹ This daring officer received the Military Cross and was subsequently “brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for gallant determination in attempting to escape from captivity.” He survived his long imprisonment and became the first Adjutant of the Regiment after its reorganization in 1919 as a unit in the permanent Canadian Militia.



LIEUT.-COLONEL F. D. FARQUHAR, D.S.O.

DIED OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION AT ST. ELOI,
MARCH 20, 1915.

act generally as a support and cover the withdrawal. The third party under Company-Sergeant-Major C. Lloyd, with rifles slung and carrying shovels, was to dash in and break down the German parapet.

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Led by Corporal D. Ross of the snipers, the whole party moved out from Shelley Farm not long before dawn, followed a hedge running parallel to and about 120 yards in rear of the line and crossed the open to trench 22. Thence they filed to the right along the parados and across the gap to the left end of 21, the appointed rendezvous and jumping-off point. Traversing the 15 or 20 yards of No Man's Land, at 5.15 A.M. they rushed the sap. The Germans were completely surprised and offered little resistance as the first party, led by Lieutenant Crabbe "with the greatest dash and *élan*,"¹ pushed up the trench while Lieutenant Papineau and his men ran along the parapet in front of them and threw their small stock of bombs at such of the enemy as showed fight. The party cleared some 80 yards of trench before it was brought up by a barricade of sand-bags and timber. Here some Germans made a stand and Corporal Ross was killed; and, as the operation was by now a race against daylight, the main body made no effort to push on; but a few men, led by Lance-Corporal C. B. Nourse, reached a dug-out held by the remainder of the German garrison under command of an officer, and with these they exchanged shots for some minutes before withdrawing.

The other detachments had followed close on the heels of Lieutenant Crabbe's party, the second—a "mopping-up party" in embryo—running along the rear face of the sap and helping to clear

¹ Throughout this book the sources of quotations, except where otherwise stated, are the official reports of operations, orders, diaries, letters, etc., of Battalion, Brigade or Division.

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the trench, the third, after losing their leader in the first rush, pulling down so much as they could of the parapet. The task of these groups was not less hazardous than the assault of the leading party, for the alarm had been quickly given, and innumerable flares directed machine-gun and rifle fire from the trenches beyond the road at the working-party as it crossed the open. The sap was reported to be a nearly completed trench, "deep and dry as a nail, immeasurably superior to our own, with a good parapet and many steel loop-holes." Colonel Farquhar was loth to abandon it, but as the Brigadier had ordered him to withdraw after the reconnaissance in force, he now concerned himself with getting the men back before daylight. At 5.30 A.M. he sent a message to Lieutenant Crabbe to withdraw in five minutes. The difficult operation of retiring under fire while dawn was breaking was successfully carried out, and the company reassembled at Shelley Farm, having suffered about twenty casualties. Lieutenant Crabbe was slightly wounded in bringing his men back, and Major Gault was hit in the wrist while helping to carry in a wounded member of the working-party across the open under heavy aimed fire.¹

Though it was galling to abandon a much better trench than the unsatisfactory British line, the results attained were considerable enough. The Germans were known to have suffered at least as heavily as the Patricias, and 30 or 40 yards of laboriously constructed parapet were destroyed. It was on the side of morale, however, that the raid had its chief value. Colonel Farquhar reported

¹ Major Gault, with Cpl. S. Hacking and Piper J. M. Robertson who assisted him, and Lieuts. Crabbe, Papineau and Colquhoun, Sgt. S. V. Patterson and L/Cpl. C. B. Nourse were all decorated.

that "the men showed remarkable dash that was most refreshing after two months' trench warfare"; and in publishing messages received after the action he expressed to his command "his deep pride and satisfaction at the manner in which all ranks had conducted themselves." The number of these congratulatory messages shows the interest taken by the Higher Command in this enterprise of the Regiment. Sir John French expressed "his great appreciation"; General Smith-Dorrien spoke of "a grand piece of work," General Plumer of "a gallant and useful exploit." The Divisional Commander telegraphed, "Well done, P.P.C."; and generous neighbourly appreciation came from the 28th Division on the immediate left and the 1st Canadian Division which had just entered the line farther to the south.

As was to be expected, the raid stirred up trouble for the Patricias. On March 1 trench 21 was heavily bombed and the garrison lost nearly 75 per cent of its effectives, while in trench 23 Major J. S. Ward, commanding No. 3 Company, received a mortal wound. An attack in force seemed probable, and in one report is said to have been actually attempted. Such of the enemy as left their trenches appear to have been easily driven back by rifle fire. But No. 2 Company had a nasty day. Their position, known by the high-sounding name of "International Trench," was merely a low breastwork of rotting sand-bags built in front of the old wide French trench, which was now filled with water and encumbered with the bodies of French, German and British dead. It was cut off from all communication with flanks and rear, and the gunners could not assist effectively without the risk of shelling their own line, as friend and

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enemy were barely ten yards apart. On the left the parapet was blown in, and there the trench had to be abandoned, but was reoccupied in the evening. This temporary withdrawal set a rumour going in the 28th Division that the whole of 21 and 22 had been evacuated in the face of an attack in force. The report was quickly contradicted by Colonel Farquhar, and, the situation having become normal by nightfall, the Regiment was relieved. These two eventful days had brought the Patricias some seventy casualties. It may be noted that shortly afterwards the 4th K.R.R., with the Patricias in reserve, made a carefully organized and most gallant attack upon the position raided on February 28. Supported by artillery fire this battalion captured and held the trench, but, consolidation proving impracticable, relinquished it after a few hours.

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2-13.

The Patricias had not seen the last of Shelley Farm. During the next ten days they were constantly providing working-parties behind 21, or garrisons for 23 (a trench-group farther to the left which was now incorporated in the divisional frontage). On March 11 they withdrew to their usual rest area in Westoutre. But the respite was short. Within seventy-two hours Colonel Farquhar received orders that brought his command hastily back to the defences of St. Eloi.

March
14.

The loss of the Mound on the afternoon of March 14 can scarcely have surprised the British Higher Command. Throughout the last month the pressure near St. Eloi had become more and more severe. It was clear that a forced retirement might have to take place, and support positions were everywhere prepared or improved. Early in March, air reconnaissances saw evidence of increasing German activity in the railway traffic through Menin,

and it was regarded as likely that these preparations had to do with an attempt upon the weak southern bend of the salient. An effort was made to forestall the enemy. During the first fortnight of March his line was heavily bombarded, the Patricias and other battalions garrisoning the line being withdrawn into reserve positions during the day and reoccupying their trenches at night. This was a welcome change on the part of the artillery from the usual daily allotment of five rounds to the gun, especially as the 3rd Siege Battery joined in the chorus with 6-inch howitzers, rare as yet on the British side of the line. Undoubtedly the gunners damaged the enemy's positions, but they did not deter him from attacking the Mound. The capture of this observation point was an essential preliminary to the general attack upon Ypres planned for the following month. Furthermore, the battle of Neuve Chapelle, which had opened on March 11, called for a counter-stroke against General Smith-Dorrien's line, where it was doubtless presumed that the garrison had been weakened to provide troops for General Haig's operations farther south. And so the Germans concentrated artillery before St. Eloi under the screen of the misty spring mornings, and late in the afternoon of March 14 delivered a carefully planned and successful blow.

Soon after five o'clock in the evening of this day, the "rest" of the Patricias in Westoutre was disturbed by a general summons to the alarm-post in the village. Such information as reached Colonel Farquhar then and throughout the night was vague and frequently contradictory; but it was clear that the 82nd Brigade had been driven out of the line over the greater portion of the divisional front. A mine had been exploded under the Mound at about

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5 P.M. and a strong infantry attack had followed upon heavy artillery bombardment. Not only the Mound but 750 yards of the front line on both sides of it, from trenches 14 to 20, were gone. The 82nd Brigade prepared to retake the lost ground; the 80th Brigade was summoned by the Divisional Commander to come up to support the counter-attack; and the Patricias were soon on their way back to the line. Passing through Dickebusch early in the evening, they halted for a short time at Kruisstraathoek, and at about 9.30 P.M. moved forward along the St. Eloi road as far as the northern limits of Voormezeele, where they remained during the first part of the night. Stragglers kept drifting through with confused but alarming reports of a German advance on Voormezeele, and a company was thrown forward to the east of the village to guard against surprise. Not till after 2 A.M. had the situation cleared sufficiently for the 80th Brigade to act. The Brigadier then personally instructed Colonel Farquhar to co-operate with the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade on his right in an attack upon the Mound, with the 3rd Battalion King's Royal Rifles in support. The 82nd Brigade was now known to have moved forward from Voormezeele at midnight and to have launched its counter-attack at 2 A.M. without waiting for the 80th. This attack had failed. The 1st Leinsters made some progress but did not recapture the line; the 1st Royal Irish were held up. The 82nd Brigade now called upon the 80th to help, but the counter-attacks of the two brigades were separate operations, for the 82nd Brigade was brought to a standstill soon after 3 A.M., nearly two hours before the 80th Brigade was thrown into action.

General Fortescue's instructions were necessarily

indefinite. Colonel Farquhar was to attack the Mound from the direction of trench 19, "clearing any of the enemy out of this and trenches 20 and 21," and was to use his own discretion when he had arrived near the scene of action as to the exact point and direction from which to launch his attack. No one knew which trenches the Germans still were holding and which they had abandoned. It was clear that the Mound and the trenches immediately to the right of it were lost, and here the Rifle Brigade was to attack. But the state of affairs on the left of the road was obscure; for while the Germans almost certainly held 19 and 20, it was impossible to form any definite opinion of how matters stood in trench 21 or in the recently completed breastwork, constructed at Colonel Farquhar's suggestion from the St. Eloi cross-roads to a point near Shelley Farm. Time was all-important. Orders for the attack arrived only three and a half hours before daylight, and the Regiment had to get over the difficult country between Voormezeele and St. Eloi very rapidly if it was to have the aid of darkness and surprise.

Colonel Farquhar rejected the most straightforward line of advance through St. Eloi village with an almost frontal assault on trench 19, deciding, as he afterwards reported, that the enclosed ground of the village would greatly retard progress, and that, even if an assaulting position could be reached in time, the enemy would be able to bring enfilade fire on the advance and occupation if, as was believed, he still held trench 20. The attack was therefore planned from the extreme left, from 22 or even from 23, with the object of working down the system to the Voormezeele—Oosttaverne road, and thus approaching the Mound from the left flank

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while the Rifle Brigade attacked from the right. The Brigade moved forward, but while the Rifle Brigade was able to keep to the St. Eloi road, the Patricias, crossing fields on the left towards Shelley Farm, found it impossible to keep pace. Progress was "necessarily very slow." There was much traffic in Voormezeele; touch could not be maintained across country without constant halts, and the reports from St. Eloi made it advisable to keep out a line of scouts all the time. In the race against dawn—for the Brigade did not move through Voormezeele till after 3 A.M.—the Rifle Brigade arrived at the outskirts of St. Eloi some hundreds of yards ahead of the Patricias. Its commanding officer decided to proceed independently, but saw the leading P.P.C.L.I. company moving into the fields on the left just as he sent his men into the attack. Meanwhile Colonel Farquhar, informed that the left of the line from trenches 23 to 20 had been retaken, was able to shorten his detour. Instead of continuing to Shelley Farm he changed direction slightly to the right and despatched the Adjutant with No. 2 Company to enter the breastwork behind trenches 20, 19A and 19. In spite of every effort the company reached the rendezvous only twenty minutes before broad daylight. Here they found the remnant of the 1st Royal Irish Rifles, with a single officer, who had escaped when the rest of the garrison of trench 19 was wiped out. This party did not know whether trench 19 was still occupied by the Germans, but made it unhappily certain that the contemplated attack in force was out of the question. Day was breaking and the position was dominated by the Germans on the Mound, who by now had consolidated their capture and garrisoned it with machine guns.

The Rifle Brigade made its attack but was unable to shake the German hold upon the key positions. Advancing successfully at first, this regiment recaptured "Rifle Brigade Trench" in front of the Mound by a brilliant exploit; but many gallant efforts failed to win a footing on the Mound itself, from which machine guns swept trench 19A, the breastwork, and the ground in front of the Patricias with continuous fire. An attempt upon trench 19 made no progress, and Captain Buller carried word back to Colonel Farquhar, leaving No. 2 Company to reinforce the Royal Irish. "It was evident," in the words of the Company Commander (Captain Agar Adamson), "that an attack upon the Mound would be folly," and it was abandoned. Some accounts appear to suggest that an effort made by Lieutenant D. Cameron and two scouts to reach trench 19 amounted to an actual occupation of that trench by the Patricias; but Lieutenant Cameron was sniped almost at once, and his body was only recovered two days later. The Royal Irish, who had been without water for twenty-four hours, lost their last officer, and came under the orders of Captain Agar Adamson. Together the two parties held the breastwork until they were relieved forty-eight hours later. During this time the British artillery steadily bombarded the Mound, but never actually silenced the machine guns. The gunnery as a whole was marvellously accurate, but in the course of the first afternoon a new battery opened fire on the breastwork in the belief that the Germans were holding it, and before the mistake could be corrected had wiped out the garrison of one bay held by the Patricias.¹

¹ Cpl. J. Wolstenholme, who with a private of the Leinsters carried back a message to the artillery, made in all five journeys (three in broad daylight) between the breastwork and "White Horse Cellars."

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Before 6 A.M. Colonel Farquhar fully realized the futility of any further attempt. The element of surprise was gone, and after the Rifle Brigade's effort was spent at 5.30 A.M. and this and other units of the 80th Brigade were withdrawn, it would have served no purpose for the Patricias to fight an isolated action to recover trenches which would be quite untenable so long as the Germans held the Mound. The Patricias, less No. 2 Company, therefore withdrew through Dickebusch into reserve during the morning.¹

Although the greater part of the lost line was regained in the counter-attack of March 15, the Mound remained in German hands; and as this was the main object of the enemy's attack he must be conceded the best of the argument, especially as the 27th Division lost 40 officers and nearly 700 men. It had not been possible to correlate the attacks of the two brigades, and later of the assaulting units within the 80th Brigade itself, and this alone condemned to failure an enterprise of great difficulty against a position of natural advantage which the Germans had found time to fortify. Later information showed that the enemy's plans of consolidation had been carefully matured and rapidly executed, and that the counter-attack was launched too late for success without artillery preparation and support. The struggle round St. Eloi lasted for many months, and during March and April 1916 was especially sharp, in engagements which won for the 2nd Canadian Division its spurs. But the Patricias never again occupied the Mound, for soon after the action of March 15 they were permanently withdrawn from the area.

¹ The Regiment had about 30 casualties, chiefly in No. 2 Company. Lieuts. C. J. T. Stewart and P. Lane were among the wounded.

The Regiment's last days at St. Eloi were very bitter. It suffered many casualties in holding the line, and as crowning misfortune lost its Colonel. On the night of March 19/20, and after the Patricias had been relieved, Colonel Farquhar was hit by a chance bullet while showing the commanding officer of the relieving battalion over the new line of defence which he had planned. He was carried safely back past Shelley Farm, which the Regiment will always associate with his name; but the wound was mortal, and he died before morning at the dressing-station in Voormezeele. He was buried the following night in the Regimental cemetery outside Voormezeele. The funeral took place in black darkness, with the roads of approach and neighbouring fields under constant fire. So dangerous was the spot that only forty of all ranks were allowed to attend; and General Fortescue with other officers and men had to approach the cemetery in little groups of two or three.

It is not a vain repetition to say once more that Francis Farquhar, with Hamilton Gault, brought into being Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. His choice was to lead them in the field rather than to accept such higher rank and command as he was entitled to by virtue of his ability and experience; and though he did not gather more than the first-fruits of his sowing and never saw the Regiment justify his methods in a general action, his example abode in regimental tradition as something living and very influential. The profound sense of loss was not confined to those who mourned a beloved commander. Messages of sympathy came from all quarters: from Princess Patricia; from the Army, Corps and Divisional Commanders; from the Minister of Militia and Defence, and from

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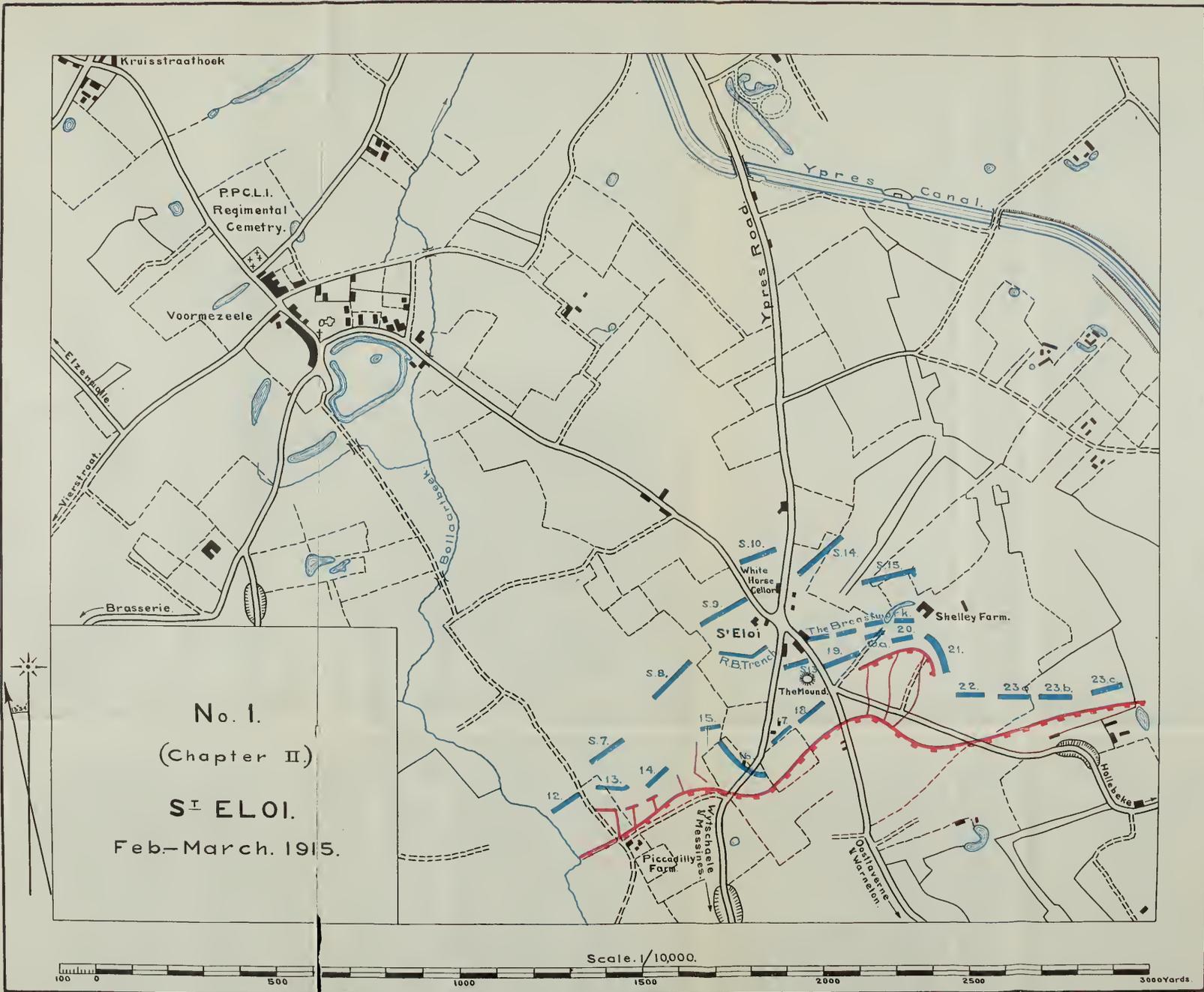
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many others. No one present at that dark, precarious burial service but was deeply affected ; and even the Brigade diary departs for a moment from its usual dry curtness : " March 20th. Brigade suffered great loss in the death of Lt.-Col. Farquhar, Cmdg. the P.P.C.L.I."

March
23.

The withdrawal of the Regiment to Poperinghe on March 23 and its transfer to the centre of the Ypres Salient closes a chapter of its history. General Smith-Dorrien, who singled out five infantry battalions for special commendation in his general report, spoke of the Patricias as already possessing a " splendid reputation." The reputation was very dearly bought. In holding the line on a difficult front for less than three months the Patricias suffered 238 casualties apart from wastage in sickness which at first was very large. Three hundred of the " Originals " were permanently or temporarily gone. Casualties among officers had been particularly severe ; 6 had been killed, and in all 17 out of 27 were no longer with the Colour, among them the Colonel and all but one of his more experienced subordinates.¹ In the absence of Major Gault, who was still under surgical treatment in England, Captain H. C. Buller, the Adjutant and the senior officer in the field, was ordered by Brigadier-General W. E. B. Smith, C.M.G. (who had succeeded Brigadier-General Fortescue in command of the Brigade) to take command. He was given the temporary rank of Lieutenant-Colonel on March 31, and this rank was later confirmed. Lieutenant H. W. Niven, whose work as Transport Officer had been specially commended, succeeded Colonel Buller as Adjutant.

¹ The casualties amongst the officers, in addition to those already mentioned, were : Lieut. F. Eardley-Wilmot, killed at St. Eloi on March 19, and Lieuts. A. M. Gow, E. O. C. Martin and H. W. Niven, all slightly wounded.



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The Regiment, after reorganization at Poperinghe, moved north on April 1. Just three weeks later the loosing of poison-gas at Poelcappelle began the Second Battle of Ypres.

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Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter :

The Distinguished Service Order : Major A. H. Gault.

The Military Cross : Lieuts. W. G. Colquhoun, C. E. Crabbe and T. M. Papineau.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal : Sgt. S. V. Patterson ; Cpls. S. Hacking and J. Wolstenholme ; L/Cpl. C. B. Nourse ; Piper J. M. Robertson.

Mentioned in Despatches : Lt.-Col. F. D. Farquhar, D.S.O. (twice) ; Major A. H. Gault ; Capt. H. C. Buller ; Lieuts. W. G. Colquhoun, C. E. Crabbe, H. W. Niven and T. M. Papineau ; C.S.M. C. Lloyd ; Pipe-Sgt. H. Laing ; and Sgt. S. V. Patterson.

CHAPTER III

THE SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES

(THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1915: FREZENBERG
AND BELLEWAERDE RIDGES)

April and May 1915

Map No. 2, unfolding opposite p. 76

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THE series of great German attacks round Ypres in the spring of 1915 had a single strategic object and are rightly grouped under a common name. Many people, especially in Canada, remember the defence of the road to the sea only in the story of six terrible days in April when the 1st Canadian Division, with a torn flank and choking with gas, stayed the onrush of immensely superior numbers at Langemarck, St. Julien and Gravenstafel. It is therefore advisable to remind the reader that the "Second Battle of Ypres" embraced two closely related but distinct German drives, and that the second of those, which began more than a week after the first had ended, was met entirely by infantry and cavalry divisions of the British Army. This book, alone among regimental histories of the early Canadian battalions, is little concerned with the gas attack on Gravenstafel Ridge and the defence of St. Julien. The attempt to reach Ypres from the north and north-east began on April 22 and had spent its force by April 27, having failed completely in its main object.

The glory of thwarting it belongs mainly to the 1st Canadian Division.

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Eleven days later Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, holding positions essential to the protection of Ypres at the point of contact between the 27th and 28th British Divisions, received the full shock of the second German effort, an attack upon the city from the east in the sector where the salient swung south-westwards in front of Hooge. In this engagement, distinguished in official terminology as "The Battles of Frezenberg and Bellewaerde Ridges," the enemy relied not upon poison-gas but upon perhaps the most overwhelming superiority of artillery fire ever concentrated upon British trenches. As on April 22, the defenders had their left flank laid bare and were almost annihilated, but stood their ground. By the fortune of war, therefore, Canadian infantry regiments were holding vital positions, with heavy odds against them, in both phases of the Second Battle of Ypres. Their success on both occasions met with generous appreciation in Great Britain, alike from soldiers and the public at large. And the battles of St. Julien and Bellewaerde Ridge first taught the world some needed lessons as to the relations between Britain and her Colonies.

The Patricias entered Ypres for the first time on April 5. On April 7 two companies moved as brigade support into mud shelters behind Bellewaerde Lake, and on the 9th the whole Regiment occupied the front line in Polygon Wood, the defence of which General Snow had taken over from the 17th French Division at the beginning of the month. This wood lies east and slightly north of Hooge, and about three and three-quarter miles due east of

April 5.

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the Cloth Hall in Ypres. As the line ran just before the Second Battle of Ypres the trenches in Polygon Wood were just south of the point of the salient. North of them the line taken over by the 28th Division bulged out to the Passchendaele—Becelaere road and ran north almost as far as Passchendaele before sweeping north-west, along the front of the 1st Canadian Division, to the junction of the V. Corps with the French at the road between Poelcapelle and St. Julien. To the south the British trenches turned towards Hooze along the southern boundary of the wood, and thence continued in a general south-westerly direction across the Ypres—Menin road and railway and on towards St. Eloi past Hill 60, which was won and held after desperate fighting by the 5th British Division a few days before the German offensive began.

For the next seven weeks the 27th Division was to occupy the angle between the railway lines to Ypres from Roulers and Comines. This angle is bisected by the high road from Ypres to Menin; and the village of Hooze on this road lies in the middle of the sector. The most striking feature of this country is less its flatness (which is common to a far larger area) than the number of woods and copses, which, with the tracks that thread through them to scattered farms, dot the map for some thousands of yards east and south of Hooze. As the war proceeded the trees were reduced to dead and blasted skeletons, but in the spring of 1915 they still were green. Polygon Wood, with the Zonnebeke racecourse in the middle of it, was the most northerly of any importance. Immediately west of it were Nonne-Bosschen and "Glencorse Wood" on the north side of the Menin road, and a network of copses lay to the south. A little nearer Ypres,

“Lake Wood” and “Château Wood” flanked the eastern and southern edges of the small Bellewaerde Lake and protected Hooge from the north, while “Sanctuary Wood,” largest of all, guarded the southern approach beyond the high road. The position of these woodlands corresponded in the main with a narrow ridge running north-west from Kimmel and Messines to Zonnebeke and Passchendaele, and the defensive salient by which the Germans were so gloriously held five months before in the First Battle of Ypres conformed generally to the ridge. The height of land ran from “Clonmel Copse” past “Stirling Castle” to Glencorse Wood and was crossed by the Menin road at its highest point, a forking road known to the British as “Clapham Junction.” The Westhoek Ridge prolonged this elevation a little farther north. Then the ground fell away through Frezenberg into the more gentle undulations of St. Julien and Langemarck. To the west the hill sloped sharply towards Ypres through Sanctuary Wood, and declined more gently opposite Bellewaerde Lake. East of the lake rose another small hill, Bellewaerde Ridge, which looked across the Westhoek valley to the Westhoek Ridge, Nonne-Bosschen and Glencorse Wood. The greatest altitude on the whole divisional front was only 210 feet above sea-level, but in so flat a country every elevation is a point of vantage to be kept in the mind’s eye. With one exception, all these changed hands between the first and second phases of the battle. The exception was Bellewaerde Ridge—smallest of them all and only 165 feet above sea-level, yet the highest point west of the main ridge in the approach to Ypres from north of the Menin road. It was to be the pivot of the engagement on May 8.

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The trenches occupied by the Patricias on April 9 faced south-east along the southern limits of Polygon Wood. The front line was in the open at the bottom of a gradual slope, and communication trenches led up the hill to a support line within the wood, which was then still thick with trees. The front line lacked traverses and fire-steps, and the shelters it contained were merely ten by eight feet dug-outs covered with sheets of corrugated iron and a foot of earth, and only one of these to each company. But the parapets were well sand-bagged and the trenches themselves passably dry; Colonel Buller wrote of them as "a paradise after St. Eloi." The weather was warm, and screens made of young trees in the support lines to keep off the sun were also good cover from inquisitive aeroplanes. There were no dug-outs in the wood, but a rustic dressing-station was put up for the Medical Officer (Major C. B. Keenan, D.S.O.), and with a few more weeks of peace the Patricias might have built a delightful row of log huts for the benefit of future Zonnebeke race-goers.

On the first and second tours the line was quiet. The enemy was preparing his blow farther north and only spared Polygon Wood a few bursts of intense shelling. An average casualty list of five a day, though it would have seemed quite serious enough in the later days of trench warfare, was small after the losses at St. Eloi. "Rest" proved more exciting than garrisoning the front line. Late at night on April 12, when the Regiment was at Vlamertinghe, Major Keenan insisted in the face of much ridicule from fellow-officers that he could hear the engines of a Zeppelin. A few minutes later six great bombs dropped, two of them very near the rest camp. Either of these would have

sufficed to demolish the Regiment but they did no actual damage. "The whole camp turned out, and those who did not fire their rifles at the Zeppelin threw stones at it." On April 17 the Patricias were relieved for the second time in Polygon Wood by the 4th Rifle Brigade and went out to billets in Ypres. Desultory shelling of the city on the 18th and 19th developed on the 20th into the intense bombardment which heralded the new German offensive. Billets in the Infantry Barracks soon proved unsafe, and early in the afternoon the reserve troops of the 80th Brigade turned out and waited in the open on the banks of the artificial water close by. The Patricias, after watching the systematic destruction of the city by the great guns until evening, went forward to relieve the Rifle Brigade in Polygon Wood for the third and last time. They remained there, unrelieved, for twelve days.

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April 20.

This unusual departure from trench routine was a by-effect of the general action around St. Julien. The German offensive did not come without warning. As far back as April 15 the report of "a reliable French agent" had put the whole line on the alert, and a captured German gave a week's notice of the intended use of asphyxiating gas.¹ It seems to

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¹ Message forwarded to 80th Brigade from 27th Division, 4.50 P.M., on April 15: "A reliable agent of the detachment of the French army in Belgium reports that an attack on the Ypres Salient has been arranged for night 15/16 April. A prisoner of the 234th Regt. XXVI. Corps taken on April 14th near Langemarck reports that an attack had been prepared on 13th. Reserves have been brought up and passages have been prepared across old trenches existing in rear of the present German trenches to facilitate bringing forward artillery. The Germans intend making use of asphyxiating gas, placed in batteries of 20 tubes for every 40 metres along the front of the XXVI. Corps. This prisoner had in his possession a small sack filled with a kind of gauze or cotton waste which would be dipped in some solution to counteract the effects of this gas. The German morale is said to have much improved lately owing to the men having been told that there is not much in front of them. It is possible that the attack may be postponed if the wind is not favourable so as to blow the gas over our trenches."

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have been expected that the attack would come on the front of the 27th Division. When it broke on April 22, not there, but five miles farther along the line to the north, a certain amount of gas was carried to Polygon Wood. It was too much diffused to be very harmful; and this was fortunate, as the only protection that had yet been issued were twenty gas veils to each regiment and some frames for fans which were mistaken for rat-traps. Throughout the great action fought by the 1st Canadian Division all the reserve battalions of the other divisions of General Plumer's Corps were either used or were held in close support at critical points of the defence, and the battalions in the line could not be relieved. So the Patricias had to be left day after day in Polygon Wood. Bombardments there were frequent and heavy, and the trenches which answered in quieter times were ill-fitted to protect the garrisons against heavy ordnance. By the end of the month the Regiment had over eighty more casualties.¹ The German long-range guns methodically searched the back areas, and on the second day the transport had to vacate its lines in Ypres and move to Busseboom.²

May 3.

This long tour in the trenches ended with a difficult retirement. By April 27 the German attempt to break through at St. Julien had failed; but the attack buckled the line so badly that the British positions on the high ground from Polygon Wood to Clapham Junction became untenable. On May 1 the British Higher Command decided to straighten the line at the first opportunity so that

¹ Capts. D. F. B. Gray and N. C. Ogilvie and Lieuts. W. H. Bothwell and B. F. Bainsmith were among the wounded. Lieut. Bainsmith was wounded again just before the action of May 8, as was Lieut. A. M. Gow.

² "The transport never failed to deliver the rations and stores throughout the heavy fighting at St. Eloi and Ypres, although they suffered heavy casualties and were constantly under heavy fire."

the 27th, 28th and 1st Canadian Divisions might be relieved from the dangers of the sharp new salient created near Zonnebeke. Orders were issued accordingly for withdrawal at 8 P.M. on May 3 to a subsidiary line (existing for the most part on paper) which was to run from the eastern edge of Sanctuary Wood past the eastern corner of Bellewaerde Lake, across the Ypres—Roulers railway to Frezenberg, and thence westward in front of Wieltje to the point where the Canadians made a junction with the French. The Patricias did not expect to take part in this movement, for the 2nd Shropshires were under orders to relieve them. But this battalion was unexpectedly sent north to support an operation of the 85th Brigade, and was not available. The Patricias, therefore, already weary with twelve continuous days in the front line under hard conditions, had now to carry out with the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade the withdrawal of the 80th Brigade from Polygon Wood to Bellewaerde Ridge.

For the last few days every man who could be spared had been working during the hours of darkness on new defences west of the main ridge, but after much digging the site of the trenches was changed, and then changed again. The ground finally chosen had until recently been used by the artillery as a battery position. A straight ditch was dug in one night 50 to 70 yards in front of the gun emplacements, and communication trenches were sketched out between this ditch, which was to be the front line, and the battery positions, which were to be converted into a support line. This was about all the preparation that the time allowed, and the new defences were still quite incomplete when the time came to use them.

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May 4.

The withdrawal of all three divisions was so carried out as to receive special praise in the Commander-in-Chief's despatch.¹ Half the troops in the line moved back at 8 P.M., then half the remainder, and finally the last quarter, except three or four men left in each trench as rear-guard. These latter kept up intermittent rifle fire to allay suspicion and withdrew at dawn, sniping as they went. By 3 A.M. on May 4 the Patricias were all back in the new line and working furiously to develop the crude positions on Bellewaerde Ridge, for they knew that behind them was nothing but the "G.H.Q." emergency line just outside Ypres. The new front trenches were very shallow, without parapet or parados to speak of, and in some places too wet to be occupied. The communication trenches had only been traced, and the support line consisted of a ditch behind a hedge and a few log huts and shelters. The position was, for that period, well wired, but there was so little other material available that the work of deepening trenches and building parapets had not progressed far when dawn broke.

The Germans discovered what had happened very soon after it became light enough to see, and immediately followed up. The 4th Rifle Brigade, on the right of the Patricias, saw the first patrols moving toward them shortly after 6 A.M. and soon the enemy came into full view all along the front of the 80th Brigade. His deployment has been described by an eyewitness as "a magnificent spectacle" and seems to have been too much

¹ Lieut.-Col. Buller was one of several senior officers decorated for their conduct of an operation in which it is believed that the V. Corps did not lose a single man. The enemy seems to have been successfully duped all along the front, and shelled the empty trenches intermittently until daybreak.

viewed in that light by the onlookers. The advance guard—"point" and "flankers"—came down over the Westhoek Ridge at the double and met an indifferent fire, while "all the men stood up on the parapet to see the show, some of them waving their arms and cheering like mad." But the advance quickly lost interest as a spectacle, for the Germans pushed machine guns within 200 yards and bullets were soon raking the parapets. The main guard was now seen coming up the far side of the Westhoek Ridge. This body presented a perfect artillery target at 1200 to 1500 yards, but few batteries could be brought to bear upon it and the movement continued uninterrupted. No sooner had the advance guard made contact with the new British front than the main guard deployed in the open at the double, with mounted officers galloping up and down directing operations, and began to dig in just on the reverse slope of the hill across the valley from Bellewaerde Ridge.

This brilliantly executed manœuvre occupied in all about two hours—from 6 to 8 A.M. About 7 A.M. the German guns came into action, quickly ranged the new trenches and bombarded them very heavily all day long. The primary intention was doubtless to keep down British rifle and machine-gun fire while the German infantry were entrenching in the open, but the gun fire also did great damage to the line, especially about the junction of No. 1 Company P.P.C.L.I. with the Rifle Brigade, at the southern end of Bellewaerde Ridge. Machine guns were blown up and whole bays of trenches were demolished. The firing was so heavy that at one time an assault was expected, and the Shropshires, who had returned to the divisional area, were warned to stand ready to

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support the front line. No attack came, but the guns worked havoc among the garrisons of the weak defences, and when the Patricias were at last relieved by the Shropshires at ten o'clock that night the losses of the last twelve days in Polygon Wood had been nearly trebled. On May 4 the Regiment had 122 casualties, by far the largest number that it ever suffered in one day in anything but a general action.

The bombardment of May 4 was indeed the prelude to battle. The Patricias were out of the line for only forty-eight hours, and so anxious was the situation that even during that time they were under warning orders for a contemplated local counter-attack much farther to the north. The stand of May 8 on Bellewaerde Ridge was made, not by fresh or even partially rested troops, but by men who had held the front line through fifteen of the preceding seventeen days under constant shelling which twice at least developed into the severest bombardment. They lost a quarter of their strength; conducted a difficult withdrawal; and did much towards establishing a new line of defence without any real respite. The Second Battle of Ypres was a test for the British of battalion morale, and to appreciate the effort of the Regiment on May 8 it will be necessary to bear in mind the extent to which the preceding fortnight had depleted the nervous and physical capital of officers and men. Moreover, the Patricias lost their Commanding Officer before the great test came. They were moved back in the early morning of May 5 into reserve on the "G.H.Q." line at the junction of the Roulers railway and the Menin road—a spot which became infamous in the war as "Hell-Fire Corner." Here Colonel Buller was struck by a shell-splinter

and was evacuated with a wound which cost him the sight of one of his eyes. Fortunately Major Hamilton Gault, D.S.O., had rejoined the Regiment during the withdrawal on May 3/4 and was available for the command. With him had come a small draft of men, who made good some of the losses of May 4, but the Patricias had a strength of only 14 officers and less than 600 men when, on the evening of May 6, they relieved the Shropshires on Bellewaerde Ridge.¹

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May 6/7.

May 7.

The Shropshires had done their best to strengthen the fire trenches and had dug the beginning of a communication trench between the front and support lines. This new work had not advanced far enough to be of much value. The depth of the communication trench was in some places only two feet and nowhere more than five feet, so that in no part of it could men stand up straight without exposing themselves. In any case it would have been of little use in a daylight action, for the higher ground on the enemy's left commanded it. The two lines of firing trenches were inadequate and ill-placed, particularly the forward line, which consisted of two unconnected trenches lying in a very exposed position along the ridge and lower slopes to the north. Two companies (No. 3 on the right, No. 4 on the left) garrisoned this first line. The other two held the support trench, which ran along the western edge of the plateau in front of a farm road winding back through Lake Wood to the northern shore of Bellewaerde Lake. The German artillery fire was still heavy, though less violent than on May 4; and the ridge was

¹ The officers were all junior subalterns except Major Gault, Capt. Agar Adamson (commanding No. 2), Capt. H. S. Hill (commanding No. 3) and Capt. H. S. Dennison (commanding No. 1).

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accurately and persistently shelled all through May 7. The day passed fairly quietly, but there were 17 casualties among the front-line companies. The only threat of attack was a massing of German infantry very close to the Menin road opposite the 81st Brigade which the British artillery dispersed. After dark the shelling seemed livelier than usual and a red rocket from the German trenches was the signal for a fusillade of rifle and machine-gun fire. But no immediate attack seems to have been anticipated, and the Patricias carried out an inter-company relief during the night of May 7/8, Nos. 1 (right) and 2 (left) going forward and Nos. 3 (right) and 4 (left) dropping back into the support trenches. This was the disposition of the Regiment when the Battle of Bellewaerde Ridge began early the next morning.

It is advisable to summarize the disposition of neighbouring battalions at the beginning of the action. The 80th Brigade's line ran from a trench forty yards north of the Menin road along the eastern edge of Château Wood in front of Hooge and across the Bellewaerde Ridge to a farm road leading westwards from Westhoek towards Bellewaerde Farm. From this road, about half-a-mile south of a Halt on the Ypres—Roulers railway, the 83rd Brigade (28th Division) continued the line towards Frezenberg. To the south the 81st Brigade lay with its left flank astride the Menin road and its right connecting with the 82nd Brigade in Sanctuary Wood. The 80th Brigade had two battalions in the front line. The 4th King's Royal Rifles were on the right in trenches running along the eastern fringe of Château Wood; and on the left—the extreme left of the Division—the Patricias held some 600 yards of line across the ridge to the road

already mentioned north of the lake, where they joined the 1st King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry of the 83rd Brigade.¹ The 4th K.R.R., like the Patricias, had two companies in the front line and two in the support trench. Behind them, Château Wood extended to the village of Hooge; while behind the Patricias the sprawling arms of Bellewaerde Lake allowed direct communication with the rear only through "Lake Wood," "Dead Man's Bottom" and "Railway Wood" to the Brigade Headquarters dug-outs in the cutting west of the Roulers railway line. It may be repeated that there were no prepared defences between Bellewaerde Ridge and the "G.H.Q." line before Ypres and 2500 yards to the rear. But immediately behind the lake the 4th Rifle Brigade lay in close support to the Patricias and the 4th K.R.R.; and behind them again the 2nd Shropshires and 3rd K.R.R. formed the brigade reserve respectively north and south of the Menin road. The divisional reserve, a composite force drawn from resting battalions of the 81st and 82nd Brigades, lay near Ypres.

The Bellewaerde plateau proved to be the key position of the defence. The Patricias had their backs to the lake and to the line of railway which ran south-west to the position at Railway Wood (second only in importance to their own) occupied by Brigade Headquarters. In front of them the German infantry of the 54th Division (XXVII. Reserve Corps) were on the farther side of the

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¹ Officers of the P.P.C.L.I. and Rifle Brigade refer in almost every report to the "Monmouths" as being on the left of the 80th Brigade. According to official records, the 3rd Monmouths (T.F.) were in support when the action began, but came up very early owing to the casualties suffered by the East Yorkshires and K.O.Y.L.I. and apparently reinforced various parts of the 83rd Brigade line, including the extreme right.

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Westhoek valley at distances varying from 300 to 600 yards. Clapham Junction and a fortified post in the wooded grounds of Stirling Castle, both of them admirable observation points for the artillery concentrated in Bodmin Copse, overlooked the Regiment on the right ; while if anything untoward should happen to the Brigade on its left, retirement would be impossible even if the Higher Command could afford to abandon the last rise of ground protecting Ypres.

May 8.

The early hours of May 8 were unnaturally quiet, but an hour or two after dawn the German artillery opened fire and the shelling rapidly became intense. At about 7 A.M. the heavier guns joined in, and so violent a bombardment began as could only announce a general action. Bellewaerde Ridge became an inferno, and to those in the trenches "the whole world seemed alive and rocking with the flashing and crashing of bursting shells." The guns gradually concentrated their fire upon the British lines between the Menin road and Frezenberg, and the 80th Brigade received its full force. Major Gault reported "very very heavy shelling," and the 4th K.R.R. warned the Brigade that "this heavy bombardment leads to supposition that attack may be coming." The Patricias were unprotected from the enfilading fire of machine guns on the high ground at the right flank and from the artillery in Bodmin Copse, and the effect of the bombardment on the bad and exposed trenches was most disastrous. Bursts of shrapnel mowed down the men, high explosive "more or less obliterated the front line," destroyed one of the Patricias' four machine guns and put another out of action, blew away the wire and cut the Regiment off from all communica-

tion with its supports.¹ Casualties came so fast that Major Gault soon ordered every "employed" man—signallers, pioneers, orderlies, officers' servants—into the support line to make good the losses. Shortly after 8 A.M. he succeeded in communicating the state of affairs to the Brigade by runner :

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Have been heavily shelled since 7 A.M. Sections of front trenches made untenable by enemy's artillery, but have still about 160 rifles in front line. German infantry has not yet appeared. Should they rush our front trenches will at once counter-attack if possible, but do not propose to risk weakening my support lines. Will advise O.C. Rifle Brigade should I require support. In lulls of gun fire there is heavy fire from rifles and machine guns. Please send me two m.g.'s if possible. I have only two left in front line. None in support.

A second message read :

Should this continue all day, would like support this evening in case of heavy night attack. Most of my wire gone.²

About the time that these messages were sent, and during something of a lull in the gun fire, particularly heavy machine-gun fire swept the Patricias to keep down the heads of the garrison, and the enemy were seen by No. 2 Company swarming out of their lines and massing for the attack. Thin as it was, the front line was still strong enough to

¹ It has been said that perhaps the only occasion when a German artillery concentration on British trenches rivalled that of May 8 was during the preliminary bombardment of June 2, 1916 (Battle of Mount Sorrel). Lt.-Col. Gault, who was with the Patricias in the bombarded trenches on both occasions, expresses the opinion that the bombardment of May 8, 1915, though much shorter, was decidedly the more intense while it lasted.

² These are apparently the last contribution of the P.P.C.L.I. to the documentary record of the day, for no other written message can be found. Much of the evidence for what followed has to be extracted from the field correspondence between the other four battalions of the 80th Brigade and Brigade and Divisional Headquarters, but all official accounts of the action appear to be incomplete.

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bring a deadly fire to bear. Every man who could handle a rifle used it with good effect and the attack was broken. Not more than 80 or 100 Germans reached cover behind hedges and in some ruined buildings a short distance in front of the British line. Most of these were soon driven out by concentrated rifle fire, and were seen crawling back over the ridge into safety. But two, or possibly three, machine-gun crews established themselves in the ruined buildings. These added point-blank fire to the enfilading guns of the artillery, which opened up again as soon as the infantry attack was seen to have failed; and during the second hour the support position was almost as badly punished as the front line had been during the first. But the front line still received its share and was now completely blown to pieces in several places, notably on the extreme right, and gradually became untenable. Most of No. 1 Company, and later the right of No. 2, had to fall back in small parties upon the support trench.

The main assault was delivered at, or very soon after, 9 A.M. "There seemed," wrote an eye-witness, "to be an astounding silence with just an occasional rifle shot, and then we realized that the German infantry were upon us." On the left, the remnant of No. 2 Company again brought a heavy aimed fire upon the open ground in front which brought the enemy to a standstill, and this though their machine guns had been buried. The Germans lost very heavily and were forced to retire. On the right, however, the front line trench in some places was obliterated and abandoned, and the enemy—"there seemed to be dozens of them"—climbed over and through the broken wire into the trench, bayoneting the wounded as they came. It

was touch-and-go for the next few minutes. Over to the left groups of men belonging to the 28th Division were seen through the clouds of rolling smoke to be falling back, and in the confusion of the moment a local withdrawal by No. 1 Company was misinterpreted. But the Patricias rallied instantly, and the Germans were pinned down to the few bays of the battered right trench which they had entered in the first rush. Even so the situation was sufficiently desperate. The Germans in the captured trench could now fire point-blank into No. 2 Company, whose position they completely enfiladed. As soon as the enemy had installed themselves they set up a row of small white flags. For a moment the Patricias thought this might be a sign of surrender ; but they soon realized that the object was to mark the extent of the advance for the German gunners, who now concentrated their fire on the support line. Toward the end of the bombardment four officers had fallen in quick succession. Major Gault, wounded early in the day, was again hit, and so severely wounded that he was unable to move about the line. He sent word by Captain H. S. Hill instructing Captain Agar Adamson to take over the command.

It was clear that the support line must be held at all costs. The right of No. 1 Company's position had long since gone and the left had by now become untenable. Captain H. S. Dennison had sent back the remnant of the garrison under Lieutenant D. A. Clarke, and himself stayed behind with Lieutenant P. E. Lane and a handful of men to cover the withdrawal. Neither Dennison nor Lane was ever seen again and few of their men survived ; nor can the tale ever be told of this rear-guard's devotion to duty. On the left, No. 2

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Company clung to what remained of their trench for some time longer, and, almost without cover, kept up a hot and effective fire upon the enemy lying massed behind the hedge and round the farm buildings in the centre of the position. At last, when they ran out of ammunition and found both their flanks being turned, they too began to fall back along the shallow communication trench. This they held until it was completely blown in, and many of them were killed as they exposed themselves during the withdrawal in places where the trench had ceased to exist or was choked with the bodies of their dead comrades. Single-handed N.C.O.'s and men covered the whole retirement from the front line with extraordinary daring. Some remained behind in trenches, others lay out in the open, others again waited at the head of the communication trench,—all sniping at every German who showed himself. Sergeant W. Jordan and Lance-Corporal J. M. Christie accounted for large numbers with their rifles; while other N.C.O.'s, conspicuously Sergeant L. Scott and Lance-Corporal A. G. Pearson, handled the withdrawal brilliantly where the officers had fallen.¹ Private J. Bushby “assisted wounded from a trench that was already in the hands of the Germans. He attempted to rescue a comrade who was half-buried in the trench although while doing so he had to keep at bay two Germans who were trying to bayonet him.” By 10 A.M., save for a few isolated posts, the front line had been abandoned.

The 4th K.R.R. on the right, who had suffered

¹ The later records of these four N.C.O.'s are striking: Pearson rose to be Acting Lieutenant-Colonel and was in command of the Regiment when the Armistice was signed; Scott for a short time in 1917 was Second in Command; Christie was Regimental Sniping Officer at Passchendaele; and Jordan was Regimental-Sergeant-Major for over a year.

from the bombardment almost as severely as the Patricias, escaped the worst of the German attack. In the lull of the artillery fire they brought a company of the Rifle Brigade into their support trenches. Another company from the Rifle Brigade pushed forward with magnificent courage a little later through the barrage to strengthen the Patricias, and reached the line most opportunely while the German attack was still in progress. The garrison of Bellewaerde Ridge cheered the reinforcements and took new heart. Well it might, for even those men of the Rifle Brigade who were laden with ammunition boxes carried half a dozen bandoliers of cartridges as well. Above all they brought machine guns. "On the 8th of May," said a wounded P.P.C.L.I. sergeant in a speech at Shorncliffe on the first birthday of the Regiment, "we saw the Angels, and they wore the letters 'R.B.' on their shoulders; and the biggest of the Angels were those who bore the machine guns on their shoulders too." Captain Agar Adamson, by this time wounded, arranged for the distribution of ammunition, decided that the machine-gun sections should remain with the Patricias unless they were urgently needed elsewhere, and then personally led the men from the Rifle Brigade in rear of the support line to his extreme left, whence they counter-attacked and not only lessened the pressure but gave some cover to the exposed left flank. This relief, however, could only be temporary. Major John Harington, commanding the 4th Rifle Brigade, came up to the ridge, crawled along the front to form an opinion of the state of affairs and reported:

P.P. have suffered 75 per cent casualties and the position is critical. Reinforcements badly wanted at once. All my battalion is up.

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“Critical” indeed—how critical the Patricias can hardly have realized, for they knew next to nothing about an immense gap that yawned on their left.

It is necessary to cast back a little in the narrative to explain how this desperate situation came about. Before 8 A.M. stragglers from the 83rd Brigade were falling back on the Shropshires with the news that the K.O.Y.L.I. had been shelled out of their trenches. As the morning advanced, 80th Brigade Headquarters realized that a general retirement of the 83rd Brigade was exposing the left flank of the Patricias. Early in the bombardment Lieutenant H. W. Niven, the Patricias' Adjutant, had established touch with the K.O.Y.L.I.; but at about 9.30 A.M. the right centre of the 28th Division, against which the attack had been pressed with great vigour, gave way near Frezenberg, and bit by bit the whole 83rd Brigade was forced to fall back. Rumours reached the 80th Brigade that the Germans had broken through and were advancing down the railway; and the Shropshires mounted machine guns in their line east of Railway Wood. The first reports proved to be false, but it was plain that an ugly gap on the left of the Patricias was far more likely to be filled by German than by British troops. The Patricias themselves were spared knowledge of how badly the day was going on their left. All the morning they were able to see movement in the trenches to the north, and twice made connection with a detachment of the Monmouths. When touch was lost for the third time they were far too weak in numbers and too busily occupied on their own front to try to fill the intervening space. It was only when the company of the Rifle Brigade came up that Captain Agar Adamson heard how

seriously the 80th Brigade command was disturbed about his left flank. Then, as already stated, he promptly utilized this company to strengthen and prolong his left. Some time later small detachments from two battalions of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (81st Brigade) moved up behind Bellewaerde Lake. By 1.30 P.M. the whole 1st Battalion and two companies of the 9th Battalion of this regiment were moving forward to support the left, the latter expressly detailed to cover the gap between the Patricias and the railway. For several hours more there was grave danger that the ridge would be turned from this flank. By noon the 83rd Brigade had fallen back more than a mile, and lay with its right flank resting on Potijze and its left on Verlorenhoek. A broad extent of country on both sides of the railway thus separated the two Divisions, and although counter-attacks were organized north of the railway, the south was wholly unprotected against a German advance. Orders were issued that the level crossing behind Railway Wood must be held at any cost, and the Shropshires moved over to the left to guard the approach down the railway and if possible to effect connection with the 28th Division. But at 2.30 P.M. the Germans again broke through, this time at Verlorenhoek, and the 80th Brigade was instructed to refuse its flank until the situation north of the railway could be restored. The Shropshires and 1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were therefore ordered to occupy a line running from the left of the Patricias past Bellewaerde Farm to Railway Wood and the level crossing.

Meanwhile the battalions on Bellewaerde Ridge, cut off from communication with the rear and therefore ignorant of these movements, were being

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very hard pressed. Both the 4th K.R.R. and the Patricias, under instructions from the Brigadier to hold the ridge at all costs, were clinging stubbornly to their single remaining line. After the first few minutes of the rush at 9 A.M., the four hours from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. were the crisis of the action. The German guns opened up again more furiously than ever and smashed anything that was left of the trenches. The few remaining machine guns had no proper emplacements and were ranged upon with astonishing accuracy, but by the greatest exertions most of them were kept in action. Two were buried and remounted, buried again and remounted again. One was dug out three times and only ceased firing with the death of every man in its crew; another was fought single-handed by a corporal until it exploded;¹ a third was kept in action by another corporal working single-handed. Captain Agar Adamson, although painfully wounded, continued to direct the defence with the utmost coolness, heartening the men by cheery words as he moved about distributing ammunition with his unwounded arm. Lieutenant R. G. Crawford of No. 4 Company, who had particularly distinguished himself both before and during the withdrawal, fell mortally wounded. Captain Dennison and Lieutenants N. A. Edwards and P. E. Lane were all missing; Captain Hill and Lieutenants A. G. Martin, M. S. de Bay and G. Triggs were out of action; and Regimental-Sergeant-Major A. Fraser (one of the first men to enlist) was killed as he stood on the parapet of the trench serving out ammunition and directing the fire in a fine con-

¹ Cpl. C. Dover of No. 4 Company. Though he lost both an arm and a leg and was buried in the explosion, he was still alive when heroically rescued many hours later, but was killed by a sniper while being carried out of the trench.

tempt of death. Lieutenant Niven and the three remaining company officers—Lieutenants T. M. Papineau, J. W. H. G. Van den Berg and D. A. Clarke—gallantly superintended every detail of the defence with admirable support from their sergeants. Many of these found independent commands thrust upon them, and “carried on” skilfully and with complete indifference to danger. Junior N.C.O.’s and men answered every call on their courage and endurance, many of them grasping opportunities for special distinction in carrying messages, distributing ammunition, and bringing in the wounded under a withering fire. The plight of the wounded was desperate. Neither Major Gault nor any other “stretcher-case” could be evacuated through the long day, but a medical corporal bravely and coolly attended them under heavy fire, did what might be done to relieve their sufferings, and several times passed through the barrage to the dressing-station for fresh supplies of morphine and surgical dressings.¹

By noon the supply of ammunition was running short again, and a message was sent off to the Brigade to urge the sending of a further supply. But still the Germans could make no headway. Several times they tried, after a short burst of particularly intense gun fire, to debouch from the captured trenches, always to be beaten back by rifle fire before their movement could become dangerous. It was the great hour of the “Originals,” and of their successors none ever grudged the honour of making

¹ See note on decorations at end of chapter. The medical corporal, E. Bowler, had distinguished himself in like manner during the bombardment on May 4. Cpl. H. McKenzie, one of those who carried messages to Brigade H.Q. “under terrific fire,” had also already distinguished himself by great coolness in saving a machine gun during the bombardment on May 4, and again earned special notice at the time of the relief and after in guiding up new troops.

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the Regiment's name to the men who held the Bellewaerde Ridge. Trenches, machine guns, all but five officers, 80 per cent of the men were gone ; there was a great gap on the flank ; the crumbling ditch that did duty for a trench was open to fire from three sides. But the iron grip on the ridge was never loosed, and the officer commanding the Shropshires reported in the heat of the fight that not one man from the Patricias was coming back except an occasional stretcher-bearer on duty.

Little by little the tension slackened. The 4th K.R.R. on the right stood their ground as gallantly as the Patricias. The Shropshires, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and 3rd K.R.R. were all instructed to support the Patricias and to watch their left ; and before 3 P.M. a platoon of the Shropshires who brought up ammunition were scattered by Captain Agar Adamson's direction along the line. A short time later the Germans made a final sally, which weakened, wavered, collapsed under the answering rifle fire. Then they fell back leaving their dead and wounded behind them. The 4th K.R.R. and the Patricias had saved the day, although, being ignorant of the dispositions that had been made behind them, they did not know for some hours that the crisis had passed. The Germans slowly lost their advantage on the left. The 28th Division began a counter-attack in force about 4 P.M., and as the 3rd Middlesex fought their way along the right of the railway the gap began to contract. Verlorenhoek was reoccupied about 5.30 P.M., and though the Middlesex were held up by machine-gun fire, the reserve troops of the 27th Division were gradually able to restore communication with the 28th Division. The counter-attacking battalions on the left could not

regain the original line, and fell back to Verlorenhoek. The 80th Brigade therefore retired its left flank upon Wild Wood during the night and completed contact on the new front.

During these hours of darkness the exhausted survivors of the Patricias were relieved. The bombardment of Bellewaerde Ridge had died away at 5 P.M. as the Germans concentrated their attention upon the counter-attack along the railway. When night fell, the Patricias began to get their stretcher-cases out, and Captain Agar Adamson went back to the dressing-station after handing over the command to Lieutenant Niven, whose gallantry and coolness all day long had been conspicuous. The battle line became quieter after dark, and at 11.30 P.M. the 3rd K.R.R. arrived to take over the trenches. The dead in the front line could not be reached, but those that lay in the communication and support trenches were buried by their comrades and by the relieving battalion. The last of the wounded were sent back, and what was left of the Regiment, 4 officers and 150 men, withdrew under Lieutenant Niven to the Lille Gate of Ypres and there occupied the G.H.Q. line in front of the ramparts which form the eastern limits of the city. On May 10, in broad daylight, they furnished such digging and ammunition parties as they could, and two days later moved back to Busseboom.

The recorded casualties of the Patricias on May 8 were 392. Four officers were killed or missing, and six were wounded.¹ Of the N.C.O.'s and men 108 were killed, 197 wounded, and 77 were missing. Of these last only a handful reached the German

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¹ Killed : Lieuts. R. G. Crawford and N. A. Edwards. Missing : Capt. H. S. Dennison ; Lieut. P. E. Lane. Wounded : Major A. H. Gault ; Capts. A. Adamson and H. S. Hill ; Lieuts. M. S. de Bay, A. G. Martin and G. Triggs.

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prison camps, so the total number killed exceeded 175. The casualties on May 8 were almost identical with those suffered in the battles of Sanctuary Wood (1916), Passchendaele (1917) or Cambrai (1918), though the proportion of deaths was higher than in any other action. But, if, as seems very proper, the losses of April, and especially of May 4, are regarded as having been dealt them in general action, the Patricias suffered twice as heavily in the Second Battle of Ypres as in any of the later engagements. The situation was particularly grave as to senior N.C.O.'s, for 21 sergeants were gone. The 4th K.R.R., who continued their magnificent defence of Château Wood under renewed bombardment for two days longer, lost 500 men in three days and came out only 100 strong. The losses of the 4th Rifle Brigade were also exceedingly heavy. But to the Patricias belongs the mournful honour of having the longest casualty list in the Division for the whole period covering the Second Battle of Ypres. Between April 22 and May 17, 700 of all ranks were killed, wounded or missing in action.¹

May 14. For a week after the action of May 8 the Patricias could get no breathing space for reorganization. At Busseboom they were formed into a composite unit with the survivors of the 4th K.R.R., and on May 14 reoccupied the line near Hooze Château. The line had been withdrawn both to the north and south of Bellewaerde Lake, but the 3rd Cavalry Division and 27th Division had yielded no ground under the murderous fire of May 12, and the Patricias found their new trenches quiet. By May 18 the Regiment was back at Busseboom in reserve and its reorganiza-

May 18.

¹ These figures include a proportion of slightly wounded. The actual number struck off the strength during April and May was just over 650.

tion began. Major R. T. Pelly returned from sick-leave and took over the command from Lieutenant Niven, who had followed his distinguished service as Adjutant on May 8 by "commanding the battalion with great ability" during the following fortnight. Major Pelly was promoted to a Lieutenant-Colonelcy, and commanded the Regiment until Colonel Buller was able to return at the end of the year.

Early in the morning of May 24 heavy shelling was heard beyond Ypres. The 80th Brigade was ordered back to the line and the Patricias moved up the Vlamertinghe road in the rear of the Brigade. After a long wait by the roadside, the Regiment passed through the southern quarter of Ypres in the early afternoon, expecting to be engaged again before nightfall. Aided by a gas attack, the Germans had captured the trenches at Hooze Château, and the Shropshires and 4th K.R.R. were detailed to counter-attack with the 3rd K.R.R. and Rifle Brigade in support. The Patricias remained in reserve near the level crossing on the Menin road, ready with tools and sand-bags to consolidate. The counter-attack gained little ground, and when day broke the line was only 1000 yards beyond the crossing. Digging-in tools were called for, and these were taken up under a considerable fire which wounded Major J. H. Lindsay (a newly arrived reinforcing officer) and a dozen of the men. The Patricias then fell back to the trenches near the Lille Gate, but moved at night into the line on the right of the Menin road to occupy a new trench which had been dug between Zouave Wood and the road. They were withdrawn on May 26, and on May 31 moved south into new country at Armentières. Almost exactly a year later they were to

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fight their second general action within less than an hour's march of the first.

Bellewaerde Ridge is the grave of the "Originals" and their reinforcements from the First Canadian Contingent. With the close of the Second Battle of Ypres Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, as a band of old Regulars and reservists, ceased to be. How deep the homage due to the men who held the ridge on May 8 it is not easy to measure, for the mind can hardly estimate, and no array of facts can fully disclose, the cruel odds which a mighty concentration of twentieth century artillery holds against isolated infantry battalions in unprotected positions. The last word had best be spoken by veteran soldiers of the Regular Army who had gained bitter knowledge during the retreat from Mons and in the First Battle of Ypres of such conditions as those under which the Patricias were engaged. Major-General Snow wrote in his report to the V. Corps: "May 8. . . . The P.P.C.L.I. were relieved that night, but only a remnant of the Regiment was left. No Regiment could have fought with greater determination or endurance. Many would have failed where they succeeded." General Plumer made special mention of the Regiment in a part of his report to the Commander-in-Chief reproduced verbatim in the latter's despatch of June 15 :

The right of one Brigade was broken about 10.15 A.M., then its centre, and then part of the left of the Brigade in the next section to the south. The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, however, although suffering very heavily, stuck to their fire and support trenches throughout the day.

General Snow wrote again of the 80th Brigade :

Twice the Brigade has found itself in a position with its left flank turned, and on both occasions there has been no retirement, but the exposed battalions have fought it out on the ground, thereby inflicting enormous losses upon the enemy. The G.O.C. deeply deplotes the heavy losses incurred, but units will find comfort in the fact that they have taken part in an episode which will figure in, and rank with any in their regimental history. He is proud to have command of a Division which includes such a "stonewall" Brigade as the 80th have proved themselves to be.

The Commander-in-Chief paid the Brigade the marked compliment of coming to address it on May 19—after his fashion, speaking in simple language as between soldier and soldier :

You held on to your trenches in the most magnificent manner under a more severe bombardment than has ever been known, and in doing so you have been of the greatest assistance to operations which the British Army was carrying out at the time. Men who have merely to lie down under a fire like that are apt to think they are undergoing war rather than making war. . . . By holding on to your trenches you prevented the Germans from obtaining an objective which it was very necessary for them to obtain. They wanted to take Ypres, and to be able to tell the whole of Europe and America that they had taken Ypres, and if they had done so this would have done us a lot of harm. This might have had the effect of keeping neutral nations out of the war. I can tell you that to-day Italy will declare war on behalf of the Allies. To remain in the trenches under a heavy artillery bombardment, to keep your heads and your discipline and to be able to use your rifles at the end of it, requires far higher qualities of personal bravery than actively to attack the enemy when everybody is on the move and conscious of doing something.

These were glowing words ; yet another soldiers' tribute was the best of all. As the remnant of the Regiment moved out after the action, their comrades of the 80th Brigade turned out with one accord,

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lined the road, swept off their caps to the Colour and cheered and cheered again.

Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the Second Battle of Ypres :

The Distinguished Service Order : Lt.-Col. H. C. Buller ; Capt. Agar Adamson.

The Military Cross : Lieuts. H. W. Niven (Adjutant), D. A. Clarke and G. C. Carvell (Transport Officer).

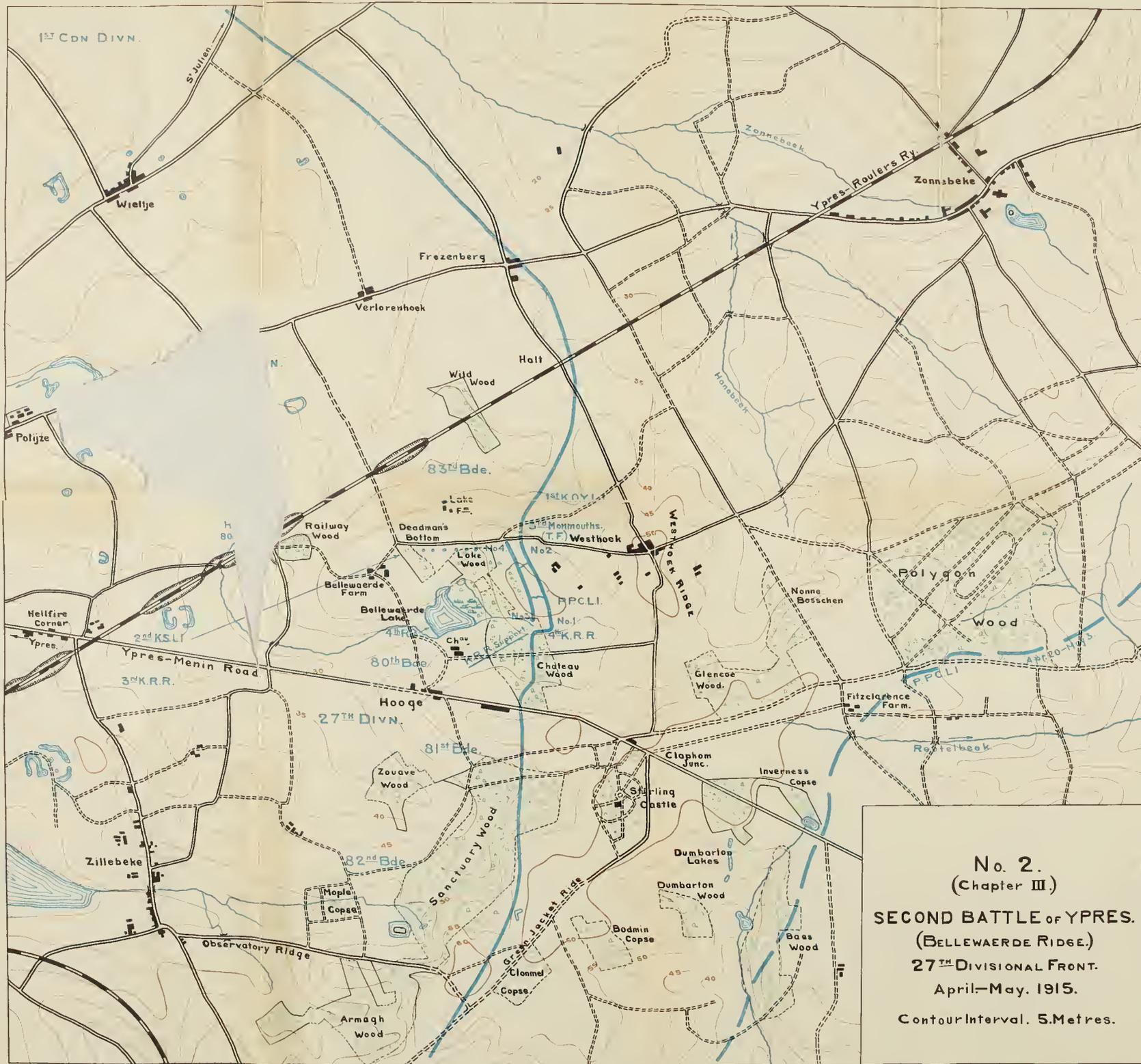
The Distinguished Conduct Medal : C.S.M. G. L. McDonnell (Div. H.Q. Transport) ; Sgts. W. Jordan, S. Larkin (Bn. Transport), J. M. Macdonald and L. Scott ; Cpls. E. Bowler, J. M. Christie, H. McKenzie and B. Stevens ; L/Cpl. A. G. Pearson ; Ptes. G. Bronquest, J. Bushby and G. Inkster.

The Russian Order of St. Anne : Major A. H. Gault, D.S.O.

The French Croix de Guerre : Cpl. H. McKenzie.

The Russian Cross of St. George : Pte. J. Bushby.

Mentioned in Despatches : Lt.-Col. H. C. Buller ; Capt. Agar Adamson ; Lieuts. G. C. Carvell, R. G. Crawford and N. A. Edwards ; C.Q.M. Sgts. A. Cordery and S. Godfrey ; Sgt. M. Allan ; Ptes. A. S. Fleming and J. M. McAllister.



No. 2.
 (Chapter III.)
 SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES.
 (BELLEWAERDE RIDGE.)
 27TH DIVISIONAL FRONT.
 April-May, 1915.
 Contour Interval, 5 Metres.

Scale 1/20,000.

1000. 500. 0. 1000. 2000. 3000. 4000. 5000. 6000 Yards.

CHAPTER IV

THE REGIMENT IN TRANSITION: FROM THE 80TH BRITISH TO THE 7TH CANADIAN BRIGADE

June 1915 to March 1916

Sketch map at end of Volume

THE Regiment did not return to Ypres for ten months. The interest of the period dividing its two defensive actions in the salient is not so much in military operations—there were indeed none of even secondary importance—as in a process of reorientation induced by widening experience and unforeseen changes. In three different sectors of the British front the Patricias continued to learn the art of making the best—and the most—of trench warfare. They traversed many miles of France's threatened territory and gained a knowledge of terrain which was to be valuable in 1916 and 1918. Meanwhile they were in part assimilating, in part adapting themselves to a new type of soldier—the young Canadian of the University Companies. Also they made new affiliations which turned the whole course of their history to the end of the campaign.

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1. ARMENTIÈRES

On the western front the summer of 1915 was the quietest of the war. Except for limited and costly advances at Festubert and Givenchy in May

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and June, and a series of stubborn engagements at Hooge where both sides strove to pursue local advantages gained in the battles of the spring, the whole line was inactive. The enemy was engrossed with his drive to the Vistula, and the attention of the Western Allies was concentrated upon the Dardanelles campaign, the production of munitions, and the mobilization, training and transportation of new armies. The calm was broken in September by the battle of Loos, but the 27th Division, then far to the south in the Amiens—Péronne area, was not used in that unlucky drive and indeed hardly felt the recoil of it. During these months the Patricias were almost literally recreated. They had emerged from the salient with barely 150 effectives and only half a dozen of their old officers. A new regiment had to be built up, not in training camps like Levis and Morn Hill, but amid all the distractions and duties of trench warfare; for it was not until the last day of August that the 80th Brigade could be withdrawn behind the line for a short rest.

June 2—
Sept. 15.

By good fortune the three months following the engagement at Bellewaerde Ridge were the most peaceful that the Patricias ever enjoyed in or near the trenches. They reached Armentières by easy marches on June 2, and left it on September 15. For thirteen of these fifteen weeks they were constantly in the line, and throughout August they were never out of the forward system, finding their own reliefs on a two-company front. Yet the casualties for the whole period were no more than 15.¹ The weather was hot and dry, pleasant for

¹ These included two officers—Lieut. J. H. Stewart, who was killed while sniping at a loop-hole on June 17, and Lieut. E. O. C. Martin, wounded behind the line on August 14.

the most part and broken only by an occasional thunderstorm. Mining operations fill the most important place in the brigade and divisional diaries for these weeks, but none of these took place on the Regiment's front. Spasmodic bursts of artillery fire on the front line in the day-time, and a certain amount of sniping and machine-gun fire at night did but little damage. The Patricias held the line first at L'Épinette, a hamlet two miles due east of Armentières, and afterwards, in August, at Rue-du-Bois, somewhat farther to the south and more nearly opposite Lille. Both positions were in low-lying ground, but the inactivity of the enemy gave opportunity for the construction of new dug-outs and for other improvements, especially at Rue-du-Bois, and the trenches soon developed into the best that the Regiment had occupied.¹ A difficult daylight reconnaissance of the enemy's wire and front-line trenches on August 4 by Major D. F. B. Gray was the only departure from routine which the battalion war diary noted during this period.

This time of respite from action was never wasted, and the main achievement of the summer of 1915 was the renaissance of the Regiment under Colonel Pelly, to whose "energy and initiative" Colonel Buller mainly attributed the success of reorganization. Colonel Pelly still had a nucleus of old officers and N.C.O.'s. Major C. B. Keenan, the distinguished Medical Officer of the "Originals," was transferred to an important hospital at Le Tréport, where later he became commanding officer. His loss was keenly felt, for by virtue of his personality and soldierly qualities he

¹ Lieut. E. J. Bevington, P.P.C.L.I., was specially commended for his skill and energy as a "foreman of works" at Rue-du-Bois.

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had been one of the master-builders of the Regiment. But several other officers whose wounds had not been serious were soon able to rejoin; and the problem of reinforcement now began to solve itself. The arrival of the first two University Companies, and the return of many of the lighter casualties of March and May, had by September 1 brought the trench strength of all ranks up to 994, a very satisfactory figure for a battalion in the field, and the highest reached by the Patricias since their first losses of January.

The idea of forming University Companies to reinforce the Patricias took shape in the early spring of 1915 in McGill University, Montreal, just before the casualties at Polygon Wood and Bellewaerde Ridge re-emphasized the difficulties of keeping the Regiment up to strength. In April two graduates of McGill University, Mr. George C. McDonald and Mr. Percival Molson, suggested to the Minister of Militia and Defence the recruiting of an infantry company from university men and their friends, but not excluding others of the student age and type who would find such a comradeship congenial. This unit, they hoped, might from the time of its authorization definitely look forward to reinforcing the Patricias. The suggestion was well received by Sir Sam Hughes and General Gwatkin (Chief of the General Staff), and was a most welcome one to the hard-pressed Regiment in France. In the first week of May the newly-formed Canadian Officers' Training Corps, consisting of strong battalions from the University of Toronto and McGill University, went into camp at Niagara for summer training; and to this camp, as part of the C.O.T.C. for the time being, came not only the early recruits enlisted by Captain McDonald but

a complete oversea company raised in Montreal and officered by McGill graduates under Captain Gregor Barclay. This latter had been raised as D Company of the 38th Battalion, C.E.F., but was attached to the McGill Contingent at Niagara for training, as the organization of the 38th Battalion was still incomplete. Thus, when the camp opened, there existed one complete oversea company under Captain Barclay at present regarded as the nucleus of a university battalion, and the beginnings of a second company under Captain McDonald which was already destined for the Patricias.

The C.O.T.C. camp at Niagara had only been in existence for a week when General Gwatkin inquired how soon the University Company could be ready to leave for Europe. Captain McDonald considered that it would take about six weeks to recruit and equip the Company (an opinion that proved to be correct). Captain Barclay's company, on the other hand, was complete, and well advanced in training. All parties concerned agreed that Captain Barclay's command should take the name of "First University Company" and should proceed forthwith to reinforce the Patricias. This company therefore sailed almost immediately, and joined the Regiment at Armentières on July 28 after a very short stay in England. Captain McDonald's company now became the "Second University Company," with orders to follow as soon as possible. The University of Toronto was at once invited to co-operate, and to nominate officers for this second company; and soon after the breaking up of the C.O.T.C. camp two officers and a full platoon of men from Toronto joined Captain McDonald in Montreal, where the McGill Students' Union was thrown open as a barracks. Recruits were invited, and came in

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rapidly from all the universities and colleges of the Dominion.¹ The establishment was complete by the second week of June, the Company sailed, and, even less delayed for finishing touches at Shorncliffe than the First University Company, reached France late in August, and joined the Regiment on September 1 at Petit Moulin at the end of the summer in the Armentières sector.

The idea had now thoroughly taken hold. Recruiting officers at the principal universities collected men and sent them forward to Montreal. The McGill buildings were used as a mobilization centre, and the training was conducted at first by Major A. S. Eve and later by Major C. M. McKergow. Third, Fourth and Fifth University Companies were recruited and despatched in rapid succession; and men from all the five companies took part in the actions at Sanctuary Wood and on the Somme in 1916. By the summer of that year it was no longer easy to secure voluntary recruits in Canada; the Sixth University Company was never quite completed, and crossed the ocean in small drafts.

Between August 1915 and the end of 1916 some 1200 officers and men reached the Patricias through the channel of these University Companies. The officers were all university men, drawn mainly from McGill and Toronto, but including graduates from most of the other Canadian universities. There were university professors both among the officers and in the ranks. A large proportion of the men in the earlier companies were university under-

¹ Both this company and its successors were popularly known, and are still sometimes incorrectly spoken of, as "the McGill Companies." Their official title was "University Companies Reinforcing P.P.C.L.I.," as the McGill men who formed the idea have frequently insisted. The personnel of the University Companies was extraordinarily representative of the whole system of higher education in Canada.

graduates and graduates, and to the end the qualification of applicants in this regard was held important. It was natural that under such conditions of enlistment many were afterwards commissioned, a few on reaching England, but most of them after service with the Regiment in France, not a few of the latter being gazetted to the Patricias. But it was not as material for officers that they were recruited, or have their greatest importance for a historian of the Patricias. They saved the Regiment from practical extinction after May 8 and before the formation of reserve depots for the 3rd Canadian Division; and it was they who beat the Württembergers in Sanctuary Wood on June 2, 1916.

While the Regiment had lost so many of the men who established its name, their tradition lingered in a new personnel as distinctive as the first. The University Companies drafts quickly found their feet. Their officers, sent out from the Shorncliffe depot as vacancies occurred, learned readily, and fought at Sanctuary Wood with the glorious steadfastness of those before them. The old soldier found much amusement in the newcomer's notion of the comforts indispensable to campaigning; but from the first they got on together—the one eager to learn, the other to teach, all that had been so hardly acquired of war-craft. The Regiment's good fortune remained with it throughout the winter; processes of adjustment went quietly forward; and the Patricias who returned to the Ypres Salient in the spring of 1916 were as fine a corps—in essentials the same, however differing otherwise—as the one which had landed in France in 1914.

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2. FRISE

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The Regiment left Armentières with the Brigade in mid-September, after a fortnight's rest at Petit Moulin Farm on the Lys. General Pulteney, the Corps Commander, in saying good-bye to this "regular Brigade of the highest repute," foretold stern fighting for it in an important new field, whither it was being sent to stiffen the new "Kitchener" Divisions of the XII. Corps (Third Army). But the 80th Brigade's days in France were numbered, and the next six weeks on the Somme was the last page in the story of the Patricias as a unit in a British division.

Sept.
18-30.

On September 18 the infantry of the 27th Division entrained at Hazebrouck for Amiens.¹ Next morning the Patricias were billeted at Méricourt-sur-Somme, and on September 20 at the village of Froissy on the Somme Canal, two-thirds of the way from Amiens to Péronne. They were held at Froissy for a week while other battalions of the Brigade took over the line from the 209th French Brigade; but by the 27th they had moved into support along the canal at Eclusier, east of Cappy, and on October 1 they took over the right of the brigade line immediately in front of the village of Frise, six miles west of Péronne. Here they remained for sixteen days, providing their own reliefs as in their last tour in the Armentières area.

Oct. 1-16.

Frise proved a much livelier sector than Armentières. Two officers, Lieutenants J. C. de Balinhard and C. B. Cowley, were wounded on the second day; Battalion Headquarters on one occasion was heavily

¹ The 27th Division was now under the command of Maj.-Gen. G. F. Milne, C.B., D.S.O., Gen. Snow having been promoted to command a corps.

bombarded by howitzers ; and the front line came in for a good deal of light-artillery and rifle-grenade fire. Towards the end of the tour a trench-mortar bombardment carried away thirty yards of parapet ; but this was the worst that happened, and once again the casualties were very light. A great deal of work was done to improve the defences of the position—an important one, for it protected the canalized Somme at a sharp bend to the south, and the P.P.C.L.I. trenches were on both sides of the canal astride the Frise—Herbécourt road.

The tour was notable for a brilliant little affair of patrols on October 7. Late in the afternoon a small party of snipers and two bombers went out from the Regiment's left trench and through the river-swamps towards the German line. Their leader was Sergeant J. M. Christie, D.C.M., a hunter and trapper from the North-West who had already been twice recommended for decoration, once for covering single-handed the withdrawal of the left flank on May 8, and again for daylight reconnaissances of a German sap before Armentières. Christie's object was definitely aggressive ; he hoped to intercept a German patrol which passed, as it was believed, each night at about 7 P.M. along the road from La Grenouillère to Curlu on the northern side of the canal beyond the marshland. Crawling through the marsh grass, the patrol reached the German side of the swamp which did duty for No Man's Land and hid themselves about twenty yards from the road. Their information was accurate and their movement well timed, for just after dusk the enemy patrol was heard coming down the road. It turned out to be a very strong party, not less than 30 and possibly 50 in number, under the command of an officer and marching along the road in close

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formation, with a flanking party in the marsh. Sergeant Christie, outnumbered by at least four to one and in danger of being cut off between the flanking and main parties, followed the boldest course, and shouted "Hands up!" His snipers took advantage of the momentary confusion to open rapid fire, and the two grenadiers pitched their bombs into the middle of the group on the road. The enemy threw themselves down to return the fire, and their flanking party closed in rapidly towards the road to catch the raiders between two fires. But this danger had been foreseen, and to meet it the two men on the right of the P.P.C.L.I. patrol faced about just in time to despatch a German who had got within two yards.

Sergeant Christie's quick decision bluffed the enemy into caution and saved the patrol. The Germans threw two or three grenades, which fell wide, and began to crawl away towards La Grenouillère, leaving several dead and wounded on the road. It seemed likely that the officer would collect reinforcements and return to the attack, and the patrol was in great danger of being cut off. Sergeant Christie therefore rapidly withdrew his party, remaining behind with one of the grenadiers (Private A. S. Fleming) to cover the retreat, and the whole party regained the line at Frise without molestation. The operation was a perfect example of a type of guerilla warfare possible in this country; the enemy's sense of security was rudely jarred, and not one of the aggressors received a scratch. Two nights later Sergeant A. Bishop and two men crossed the swamp and got close to a German sap and within forty yards of the main front-line trench. They lay among some stumps for twenty-four hours, and although they could not understand the con-

versation of the sentries (whom they could hear quite clearly), they brought back information of value about the strength of the German defences.

Frise had provided good trenches and given some opportunity for enterprise, and the Regiment was sorry to be moved away after a single tour. On October 16 it was relieved by a battalion of the Cambridgeshires, and marched down the valley to Morcourt, where it remained for a week providing road-making parties. Before the end of the month the whole Division was withdrawn, for reasons soon to appear, and by October 25 the Patricias were resting and training at Ferrières, on the outskirts of the Fôret d'Ailly to the west of Amiens.

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3. FERRIÈRES AND FLIXECOURT

The short tour at Frise, comparatively uneventful though it had been, marked a period in the Regiment's life in that it was the last time the Patricias held the line with the 80th Brigade. After a fortnight of training and rest at Ferrières, they marched away from the Brigade and the Division to join the Canadian Corps.

Oct. 26-
Nov. 8.

Although the change came suddenly to the rank and file, it had been under consideration for some time. Nothing could have been happier than the association of the Patricias with their comrades of the 80th Brigade and its commander, and the break was really and keenly felt on both sides. But it had become impossible to maintain any longer a brigade of five-battalion strength, and it was known that the Regiment could no longer be brigaded with the battalions with which it had come to France. Nor was it possible to remain in the 27th Division, which had been ordered to Salonika,

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where it was to remain for three years—much of its superb material wasted by the chances of war in “the greatest of the internment camps.” Had the choice lain between old associations and new, it is impossible to doubt what it would have been, and the *Patricias*’ subsequent history would have filled few more chapters; but the decision was between associations with another British brigade and a new Canadian brigade in the 3rd Canadian Division, to be organized in the field after the New Year. With great consideration the authorities at General Headquarters left the decision largely in the hands of the Regiment itself. Colonel Buller was consulted by Colonel Pelly and Major Gault,¹ and it was agreed to ask for transfer to the Canadian Corps. There appeared to be conclusive arguments in favour of this step. The personnel of the unit was now largely, and must soon be almost entirely, drawn from the Canadian-born; the Canadian military and civil authorities were anxious for the change; the past difficulties of recruiting a Canadian unit in an English division might well recur. Once the break was made, any misgivings as to its wisdom soon died away. The *Patricias* from first to last were happy in their comrades-in-arms. If they had to leave the “Stonewall Eightieth,” they could not have found a better home than with the “Fighting Seventh.” If they had to bid farewell to General Smith, they found no less staunch a friend in General A. C. Macdonell. If they were no longer able to campaign beside the King’s Royal Rifles, the Rifle Brigade and the Shropshires, they could not have chosen more resolute fighting companions than fortune provided in the Royal Canadian Regiment

¹ Major Gault had sufficiently recovered from his wounds of May 8 to return to the field as Col. Pelly’s Second in Command on October 17.

and the 42nd and 49th Battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

In the early morning of November 8 General Smith came to the parade ground to say good-bye. It was a day, he said, that he had hoped never to see—this day breaking up a brigade which was unique in that from the first it had five battalions, had suffered no changes in composition, and had preserved such perfect harmony between its parts. He continued :

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On May 8 the Brigade stood firm against tremendous odds, and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry by their dogged resistance made a reputation that will never die in the annals of the British Army. I had hoped that some day it would have been my lot to command the same Brigade when it should encounter the enemy under more equal conditions. Then I am confident what the result would have been, and the old Brigade would have given such an account of itself that the memory of those who have fallen would have been amply avenged. This hope will never now be fully realized, as this regiment is leaving me and the 80th Brigade for good. I feel the loss very keenly ; but I am sure that whoever may be their commander or their comrades, and whatever may be their place in the line, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry will be worthy of their past records and the best traditions of the 80th Brigade.

In thanking the General, Major Gault spoke of the pride the Regiment had always felt in the association which was now to end, and assured the Brigade and Division that the Patricias would always retain the happiest memory of their first comrades in the field. Cheers were given for General Smith, the band played "Auld Lang Syne," and the Regiment marched off to Flixecourt. The Divisional band played it away, and the streets were lined with rank and file of the 80th Brigade and

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27th Division, who came to salute the Princess's Colour for the last time, to shout good-bye and wish good luck.

For a fortnight the Regiment remained at Flixecourt, a village on the River Nièvre twenty kilometres north-west of Amiens, as instructional battalion for the Third Army Officers' School. Here a regimental officers' mess was formed at the Château upon the invitation of the owner, M. Saint;¹ and General Kentish and the staff of the school were most kind and hospitable to all ranks. Amid pleasant surroundings the strict routine of the school gave some finishing touches to the reconstructed Regiment. On November 25 it entrained for the north, and was met at Caestre, near Hazebrouck, by General Alderson and the band of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, which played it to billets at Flêtre. From this day onward till the morning of the Armistice—three years of constant fighting—the Patricias' story is found in the records of the Canadian Corps.

4. KEMMEL

Nov. 26-
Dec. 18.

The Regiment spent the first fortnight of a dismal December in Flêtre, near Bailleul. Augmented here by a first draft from the Third University Company, it reached a trench strength of 1040, all ranks; and on December 7 Lieutenant-Colonel H. C. Buller, D.S.O., was able, though he had lost

¹ A favourite tale of the officers' mess, vouched for by the one most concerned, honours M. Saint's musical ability. The officers gave a dinner in his honour, and in accordance with custom the Pipe-Major marched in during dinner and played the round of the table. He had been secretly instructed by a hardened practical joker to coax the *Marseillaise* from his pipes. Nobody discovered the resemblance except M. Saint, who rose and stood to attention. There was an uncomfortable pause before the bewildered Commanding Officer made a sign, and the rest of the party rather sheepishly got to their feet, convinced that here was one more of those incomprehensible French customs!

the sight of one eye, to return to the command.¹ Several inspectional parades took place during these first days under the new command, and the efficiency and smartness of the transport, in which the Regiment had always taken great pride, drew much comment and praise.

When the Patricias joined the Canadian Corps the first two divisions had been in the field for ten and two months respectively, and the nucleus of a third division was concentrating in the corps area. The 42nd Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada) from Montreal, and the 49th Battalion from Edmonton, Alberta, reached France on October 9, while the Royal Canadian Regiment, which had garrisoned Bermuda since September 1914, arrived at the front in the same month. It had been decided that the new division should be formed in France rather than in Canada or even at the English base; and for the time being these three battalions, with the Patricias, were designated Corps Troops and brigaded under Major-General M. S. Mercer, C.B., who was to command the new division in the field. The 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade, thus composed, officially came into existence on December 22; and the Patricias, who had moved up to La Clytte on the Bailleul—Dickebusch road, celebrated their first anniversary and second Christmas in France while strengthening the defences of Mount Kemmel—a steep and as yet densely wooded hill which rose solitary out of the low rolling ground at the extreme southern tip of the Ypres Salient. The Regiment was thus again on the edge of the Ypres fighting zone. In fact, when

¹ Shortly afterwards Lt.-Col. Pelly was given command of the 8th Royal Irish Rifles, and left the Regiment for seven months; he resumed command of P.P.C.L.I. after Lt.-Col. Buller's death, immediately before the battle of September 1916 on the Somme.

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 Dec. 1915. the men entered the trenches on the eastern side of the hill and village of Kemmel, they were only 2000 yards from the point at Vierstraat where a few—now a very few—had first gone into the line just a year before.

Jan. 1-31. The first week of the new year was spent in billets at Flêtre, and on January 9 the new Brigade (now under Brigadier-General A. C. Macdonell, D.S.O.) began to move into the line for the first time, to relieve the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade. On January 9 the P.P.C.L.I. went into brigade reserve at Dranoutre, and on January 12/13 into the front line in the lower ground opposite Wytschaete. The trenches were fairly good, but much water was lying after the rainy weather of the last two months, and a comprehensive scheme of drainage was at once worked out. Shelling was rather heavy throughout the month, but the protection was good and casualties were few. The whole tour, during which the Patricias had two periods in the front line, ended on January 29, when the Regiment returned to billets at Flêtre. Major-General Currie, under whose command the Regiment had now come for the first time, wrote of this first trench tour of the new Brigade: "The trenches, owing to the very bad weather, were not in the best of shape, but your fellows have made a great difference. . . . They have shown themselves aggressive always."

Feb. 1-28. On the last day of the month the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles (now formed permanently into the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade) went into the line, and the new division began to take shape. On February 7 the Patricias occupied the line again, this time 3000 yards immediately in front of Kemmel village, which was

then still habitable by civilians, though certain cross-roads were dangerously swept by machine guns. Headquarters was in the house of the village "doctor," and the support company lived in the picturesque Château. The line was at first very quiet, but after the middle of the month the enemy snipers became active from the high point on the Kemmel—Wyttschaete road known as "Peckham," where there was a regular fortress that could not be subdued by the Canadian snipers. On February 27 the enemy was treated to a "firework display," with a view to reminding him that there were two sides to the game of pin-pricking. A salvo of rifle grenades in the late afternoon brought no response; but the trench mortars were more fortunate in persuading two German *minenwerfer* to disclose themselves. "Net results" (says the battalion diary): "The Bosche wasted 80 or 100 rounds of 77 mm. H.E. and a dozen or so minnies. Our casualties nil: our loss, a small amount of ammunition, a few sand-bags and a little labour."¹

On the following day the Regiment went back into reserve, where games of all kinds, especially football matches with the other battalions of the Brigade, constantly took place. Life on the whole was as pleasant as very cold winter weather would allow. The trenches, which had been in British or Canadian hands for a long time, were safe, clean and comfortable. Captain C. E. Cooper-Cole, C.A.M.C. (Colonel Keenan's successor as Medical

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¹ During this tour an officer of the Royal Canadian Regiment brought in from No Man's Land a flag with the following letter attached: "My dear friend Tommy: I am sorry that I cannot speak English very fine and therefore I only wish to say that if you wish to be my friend you must stop your shelling with your great bum-bums and with your guns too or I shall coming and do make Irish stew from your bodies. Have you understand me? I hope you shall find this letter and bring answer in the same way to your affectionate comerad."

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Officer), Lieutenant E. F. Newcombe, and Lieutenant J. W. H. G. Van den Berg (a machine-gun officer whose enterprise is frequently mentioned in brigade reports) were wounded, the first severely; but casualties in the ranks were very low. In the first week of March the Regiment had one more tour in the Kemmel trenches, instructing parties from the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade (43rd, 52nd, 58th and 60th Battalions, C.E.F.) now formed to complete the 3rd Canadian Division. The weather was unusually bad during this final tour, and the men of the 9th Brigade, "a fine lot and very keen to learn," were greatly handicapped with the Ross rifle, which proved a very ill-adapted arm for trench conditions. When the Patricias first joined the Canadians their short Lee-Enfields were universally coveted, and until the standardization of this arm all through the Canadian Corps, wise men of the Regiment did not leave their rifles lying about even in billets.

March
 8-21.

On March 8 the Brigade left the Kemmel area and rested and trained in reserve for ten days. On March 20 the Patricias moved once again into the middle of the Ypres Salient, first to the camps outside Poperinghe and then, on March 21, into the trench system at Hooge and Sanctuary Wood. Every feature of the country reminded survivors from the engagement on Bellewaerde Ridge of the desperate fighting there ten months before. They were soon to have new cause to regard Ypres as the most dangerous outpost of the Western Allies.

Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter :

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The Distinguished Service Order : Lt.-Col. R. T. Pelly ; Major D. F. B. Gray.

The Military Medal : Sgts. J. Dickie (Signallers) and M. Allan (Transport).

Mentioned in Despatches : Lt.-Col. R. T. Pelly ; Major D. F. B. Gray (twice) ; Capt. D. A. Clarke ; Lieut. A. G. Martin ; R.S.M. S. Godfrey ; R.Q.M.S. F. Keble ; Pipe-Major J. Colville ; Sgts. A. Bishop and J. M. Christie, D.C.M. ; L/Cpls. G. W. Candy and T. Flintoft ; Ptes. W. Dalby and W. Stanborough.

CHAPTER V

SANCTUARY WOOD

(THE BATTLE OF MOUNT SORREL)

March to August 1916

Map No. 3, unfolding opposite p. 144

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OF the three general actions near Ypres in which the Canadians were involved, the "Battle of Mount Sorrel" is least known, for it concerned only the Canadian Corps, and was of far less strategic consequence than either the German drive for the ports in 1915 or the British autumn offensive of 1917. In a history of the Patricias, however, the course of the fighting in the great salient during the second spring and summer of the war must be set forth in some detail; for the engagement at Sanctuary Wood, where the fighting reached its height in the first week of June, is not less important in the regimental annals than the defence of Bellewaerde Ridge and the battle in the mud for the pill-boxes at Meetcheele.

1. NEW TRENCHES IN THE SALIENT

The general nature of the terrain has already been indicated. The 7th Brigade's front was separated from the line described in Chapter III. only by the Ypres—Menin road; some of the stiffest trench warfare was to centre in the village of Hooge,

a few hundred yards from the old position in front of Bellewaerde Lake; and on June 2 the Patricias were resisting the German attacks upon trenches barely a mile, as the crow flies, from the positions to which, in circumstances very similar, they had clung on May 8 of the previous year. The line had shifted but little since the withdrawal of the British at the end of the Second Battle of Ypres. The Germans still lay just west of the lake at Bellewaerde Farm, and the British line had fallen back only as far as a small copse known from its shape as "Y Wood," which at this time was the northern boundary of the 3rd Division and the whole Canadian Corps. The two trench systems converged towards the village of Hooge, where the Germans were entrenched in the grounds of the Château, with the Canadian outposts but a few yards away. The lines ran parallel through the eastern outskirts of the village ruins and across the Menin road, and then turned sharply to the south in rough conformity with the eastern edges of Sanctuary and Armagh Woods, the Germans still maintaining along Green Jacket Ride and in Stirling Castle and Bodmin Copse the advantage of ground which they had gained after the British withdrawal of May 3/4, 1915. The southern boundary of the 3rd Division was a rise in the ground known as "Mount Sorrel," which has given the official name to the engagements of the first fortnight of June. Beyond Mount Sorrel the line of the Canadian Corps turned almost at right angles towards the Ypres—Menin railway, crossed it at Zwartelen and ran on south-westwards towards St. Eloi.

A glance at the trench map of 1916 shows that Sanctuary Wood in the centre of the Division's new line had become the apex of the whole Ypres Salient.

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The British hold on this wood was dependent upon the security of the two flanks ; the village of Hooge guarded the approach to Ypres along the main road, and the high ground at Mount Sorrel alone protected the little hog's-back known as " Observatory Ridge," over which passed the road running east from Zillebeke village and lake. The possession of this high ground on the right was essential to the Allied occupation of Ypres, for if it passed into the hands of the enemy his already commanding view of the flats east of the city would be everywhere unimpeded. The battle line of the 3rd Canadian Division was therefore very critically placed at an obviously suitable point for the enemy to attack as soon as weather conditions became favourable. Hooge, Sanctuary Wood and Mount Sorrel had always to be held in force, with two brigades in the line, each on a narrow frontage. Both brigades kept two battalions in the front-line system garrisoning the first line and strong-points and trenches in close support, a third battalion in dug-outs near the western end of Zillebeke Lake, and the fourth in the cellars and barracks of Ypres and at other points near the city ; the reserve brigade was always held in the rest-camps on the Poperinghe—Ypres road. The movements of battalions and brigades during the spring, although very frequent, are easy to follow. From March until June (when the casualties and aftermath of a general action shattered all routine) the 7th Brigade always went into the line on the left sector of the Division—the extreme left flank of the Canadian Corps. Its boundaries were Y Wood on the north of the Menin road, and, on the south, the " Gourock Road " communication trench, which ran east and west through the middle of Sanctuary Wood. This brigade frontage was

divided into two battalion sub-sectors, which may for convenience be called the "Hooge" and "Sanctuary Wood" sectors. The front line of the former began at trench 75 in Y Wood and crossed the main road near the village of Hooge at trench 70. Then came a gap in the line, stretching almost to the northern edge of Sanctuary Wood. The continuation of a regular front line at trench 66 began the Sanctuary Wood sub-sector, which ran along the edge of the wood to trench 62 at the head of Gourock Road, and included two outpost trenches both connecting with the front line—"the Appendix" at trench 66 and "the Loop" at trench 63.

The whole of this front line, and more particularly the Sanctuary Wood sector, was commanded by the German position. The two systems of trenches were very close, and the enemy had a strong-point of great advantage in the "Bird-cage," a fort in the grounds of Stirling Castle from which he could enfilade the greater part of the front. It was early recognized, and by none more clearly than by Colonel Buller, that if the Germans made a determined attempt to reach Mount Sorrel and Observatory Ridge this front line could quickly be blown out of existence. The defence scheme for Sanctuary Wood and Hooge was therefore dependent chiefly on the resistance which might be provided by the second, or "R.," line. The continuous R. line began at "Outpost Farm" on the Menin road, but included an important flanking strong-point on the southern side of the road, a short trench running forward to a culvert astride the road behind trench 74.¹ The R. line proper conformed to the

¹ "The Culvert" was quite large, and formed part of the single communication system (Regent Street) between the Hooge sector and the left Battalion Headquarters at Half-way House. The Culvert trench was valuable as a machine-gun and infantry post to cover the gap in the original

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front line from R. 74 down the middle of the small Zouave Wood (which jutted out from the parent Sanctuary Wood and in effect formed part of it) to R. 63, where it connected with Gourock Road at the right boundary of the brigade defence line. Beyond this point the reserve positions became complicated by a maze of trenches which ran through Sanctuary Wood, sometimes towards, sometimes parallel with the front line between the Loop and Mount Sorrel. It will be necessary to mention a number of these trenches in describing the operations of June 2; but it will be well to point out at once the special importance to the left brigade of the trench called "Warrington Avenue," which ran from Gourock Road to trench 60, and consequently lay within the frontage of the right brigade. Warrington Avenue was a "switch" trench, fairly deep and well protected. Though used ordinarily for communication with the front line, it was really a continuation of the R. line designed particularly to meet an attack from the Bird-cage. If it were lost in a general attack upon Mount Sorrel, the rest of the defences in Sanctuary Wood could hardly hope to prevent a break-through on a wide front.

The weaknesses of the extreme left flank of the Canadian Corps were clearly appreciated by the Higher Command, and the Germans could not be expected to overlook them. These weaknesses were, speaking broadly: first, a front line which, although garrisoned as a front line, was in many places only an outpost line and could easily be rendered untenable by the enemy's guns; second, a main resistance line that would be seriously

front line between trenches 70 and 66, and later became an outpost position of great importance when the whole line fell back after the loss of Hooge on June 6.

menaced by even a local success on the flank ; and third, the lack, behind that main resistance line, of any adequate entrenched positions, and even of ground where troops could be assembled or deployed out of sight of the enemy.

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Into this area the 7th Brigade moved in the third week of March. The Patricias relieved the 3rd Battalion Rifle Brigade on March 21 in brigade reserve at "Railway Dug-outs" behind Zillebeke, and sent two companies forward to garrison "Maple Copse," a small isolated wood which lay directly east of Zillebeke Lake and on the same low level. After three quiet days, the Regiment went forward in cold and snowy weather to relieve the 49th Battalion in the right (Sanctuary Wood) sector. Now were revived memories of the discomforts and ceaseless activity of campaigning in the Ypres Salient. At first, it is true, there was no great concentration of artillery against the 7th Brigade, for the enemy was engaged in his fierce struggle farther south with the 2nd Canadian Division for the St. Eloi craters ; but the whole system of defences in Sanctuary Wood was a constant target for the German heavy guns and the enfilade fire of the 77 mm. At night the whole Regiment was engaged in every kind of labour upon the front trenches and rear defences under steady fixed-rifle sniping and bursts of machine-gun fire. The approaches to the line and the few transport roads were constantly and accurately shelled.¹ In the front line officers and men were kept on the alert ; there were no proper dug-outs ; sleep was almost impossible ; and a tour of four days in the front line was the limit of efficient

March
21-24.

March
25-28.

¹ In this first tour the Battalion Transport Officer, Lieut. G. C. Carvell, M.C., was wounded while passing through Ypres.

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Mar. 29—
April 12.

endurance for any company. Reliefs were made both difficult and dangerous by the intricacy of the trench system and the exposed ways of approach ; and at the end of its first tour the Regiment did not make the rest-camp on the Poperinghe road until late on in the morning of March 29, the relief by the 9th Brigade (then coming into the line as a unit for the first time) occupying the whole of a long wintry night. After a week's rest in divisional reserve, the Patricias moved into brigade reserve at another camp. This was nearer the line, and well within artillery range ; one night there was heavy shelling, and it was fortunate for the Regiment that one of its huts demolished by a direct hit was at the time empty. Large parties went up each evening to work in the reserve system. The weather continued wet and cold far into the spring, and little labour on trenches had been possible. Construction and repairs were now pushed forward with an activity which bears witness to a feeling of insecurity concerning the whole British position in front of Ypres.

April
13—20.

At the end of another week the Regiment moved into the front line, again relieving the 49th Battalion, but this time to the village of Hooge and the posts astride the Menin road. The object of the Brigadier in thus alternating his battalions between the two sectors was partly to familiarize the whole Brigade with both, but mainly to distribute the hardships of garrisoning the Hooge sector.

The Patricias spent but eight days in Hooge, but few positions that they ever held are remembered with less pleasure. The front line consisted of a series of posts stretching from the gap in the valley on the right (which required regular patrolling at night) to the junction of the Canadians with the Guards Division in Y Wood. The whole line was

in terrible condition; in some places, especially in trench 73 on the left centre, the trenches were full of filthy water; the outpost trenches were very wide and low, the half-buried remains of French soldiers long dead appeared above the surface whenever it rained, and dank mud and the odour of corruption combined to make trench life hard to bear. Among the buildings of the village the two systems were so close that bombs could easily be pitched from one outpost line into the other, and one of the German posts was dubbed "the Chicken-Coop," from the enemy's device of putting up wire netting to catch grenades. Before all, Hooge was a snipers' paradise, and in such places as the ruined Château stables the marksmanship was so deadly that it was hardly safe to move at all by day; while all night long the German machine guns swept the Menin road with spasmodic bursts of fire. The weather was still very wet; work upon the trenches was therefore next to impossible, and rest out of the question. The Württembergers opposite were unusually enterprising troops, and the Canadian sentries were kept constantly on the qui vive against raids after prisoners. Three such raids had been attempted recently on a single night in the stable entrenchment, and just before the Patricias took over the line this post had been attacked by a bombing party thirty or forty strong.

The tour lacked such incidents as these, but when they were relieved by the 60th Battalion on the night of April 20/21 the Patricias were almost as exhausted as if they had been in action. The week at Hooge had cost them more men than the preceding six months.¹ The bombardment was heaviest

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¹ Over 60 of all ranks were killed or wounded during this tour. Those killed in the line included Licut. A. H. Horner of No. 1 and his Company-

CHAPTER V. on the evening of April 19, when the enemy made a faint-hearted attempt to raid the stable entrenchment. Behind the line the heavy guns searched the roads for transport every night, and key points like "Hell-Fire Corner" became most dangerous for both troops and horses. This arduous tour ended with an exceptionally long and difficult relief, and the Patricias were thankful for a week's rest in the camps outside Poperinghe. On April 29/30 they moved forward again into the Sanctuary Wood sub-sector, being at first in support, as in March, in Railway Dug-outs and Maple Copse.

April 21-29.
April 30-
May 6.

The enemy had now decided upon an offensive move, and in the first week of May seriously set about the task of weakening the Sanctuary Wood and Mount Sorrel positions by bombardment and harassing operations. It was soon evident to the Canadians that something new was in the air. Guns began to register methodically day after day on every intersection of communication trenches. The shelling of the back areas suddenly increased, and for a day or two succeeded in disorganizing the transport system of the 3rd Division by barraging the exits and entrances of Ypres. Greater damage was done to the trenches than to the personnel, for in its second tour in the front line at Sanctuary Wood, from May 7 to May 14, the Regiment had only half as many casualties as in the Hooge sector a fortnight before.¹ Physical endurance and morale were, however, well tested. Between May 10 and May 14

May
7-14.

Sergeant-Major, both shot dead through the head by snipers. Regimental-Sergeant-Major S. Godfrey was killed by a direct hit on his dug-out in Halfway House; and a Company-Sergeant-Major and a Corporal were terribly wounded by the same explosion, but escaped death by miracle.

¹ 33 in all. Lieut. C. A. Pope, a very promising junior officer who had joined the Regiment with the First University Company in July 1915, was killed by a rifle grenade on the first day of the tour. Only 2 other ranks were killed, as against 18 in Hooge.

the enemy artillery fire increased greatly in volume and began a systematic destruction of the front line. By now the Patricias, like every other battalion of the Division, were grimly duelling with the German guns for the defence system in the woods. Large parties of men from the support companies worked every night on the R. line, which gradually became a good battle trench, and also in the communication trenches along the boundary dividing the two brigade sectors; while troops in the front line laboured to keep the trenches in passable repair at the Appendix and about Gourock Road, the two points where the shelling was most destructive. Towards the end of the month the German gunners registered upon all support and reserve positions, such as Half-way House, China Wall, Maple Copse, Railway and Zillebeke Dug-outs, as part of their daily programme of fire,—generally in the early morning when their observers had the sun behind them.

This systematic ranging fire served the enemy well and told later in the deadliness of the bombardment on June 2. On the British side of the line the gunners were less happy. As early as the middle of May the Canadian Brigade and Divisional Intelligence Officers were reporting that the only way to ease the situation for the infantry was artillery concentration upon the Bird-cage, but that this was becoming continually more difficult, as the enemy, with his advantage of observation, had marked down every battery position and opened up heavy counter-battery fire whenever the Bird-cage was shelled. In skill and perseverance the artillery of the Lahore Division, which was supporting the infantry of the 3rd Canadian Division, was the equal of any in the British Army in France; but its ordnance lacked the weight necessary to silence

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the enemy's heavy guns. It was some consolation to the men in the line that the issue of Lewis guns to battalions as an infantryman's weapon goaded the Württembergers opposite into shouting across No Man's Land: "Where in hell did you get all the machine guns?" Stokes mortars, now used extensively for the first time, also greatly worried the enemy, who could not follow the high-angle fire of the heavy grenades that fell into his lines in such rapid succession, and threw his search-lights uneasily about the sky for the aeroplanes which he imagined had dropped the bombs. Yet there was no disputing the fact that at this stage it was the artillery duel which mattered, and here the contest was uneven. The colossal British preparations on the Somme were far advanced, for that offensive was originally timed for June, and few extra guns could be spared for other parts of the line. In the salient, therefore, the enemy had an overwhelming advantage in weight of ordnance, which he used, very properly, mainly in preparing for the blow that he intended to deliver. He wasted comparatively few shells upon the personnel in the trenches, and, except for occasional "shoots," April and May were—for the Ypres Salient—quiet months. Only at Hooge did the Patricias suffer much of that attrition before a general action which they had experienced a year before in the Second Battle of Ypres. There can be no doubt that in the warm May weather Sanctuary Wood, where the thick foliage of the trees gave cool shade and freedom of movement, seemed far preferable to the cellars and ditches in Hooge.

From May 15 to May 23 the Patricias rested in "B" Camp on the Poperinghe road, and then moved into brigade reserve nearer the line at "F" Camp and Belgian Château, where they remained through

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another week of beautiful early-summer weather, providing large parties for night work on the trenches. When the time came round to return to the front line, it was their turn for the Hooge trenches. But chance took a hand in settling the fortunes of the Regiment. The programme of alternation was not followed: "we were given the choice after some discussion, and unfortunately chose Sanctuary Wood." As the Patricias returned to Sanctuary Wood the 121st Regiment of Württembergers, which had been withdrawn from the line for a fortnight of special training in attack, was concentrating opposite for the long-threatened blow against Mount Sorrel and Observatory Ridge. So when the engagements of June between the Württembergers and the Canadian Corps began, the Patricias found themselves just within the sphere of the main action, for they held the front line opposite the extreme right of the German assault.

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2. THE BATTLE OF MOUNT SORREL

During the first and most critical days of the Battle of Mount Sorrel, the Higher Command inevitably lost touch with many units, and the British resistance depended for hours at a time upon isolated actions fought by very small groups of infantry. The dispositions and movements of the Regiment must therefore be described by companies, and even in some cases by platoons, for the defence of Sanctuary Wood resolved itself into three and at times more small independent operations.

In the early hours of June 1 the line in the Sanctuary Wood sector was taken over by two companies of the Patricias. On the right No. 1

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Company (Major Stanley Jones) held the front line from the brigade boundary near the head of Warrington Avenue northwards along the double trench system of the Loop. On its left lay No. 2 Company (Captain H. W. Niven, M.C.), whose line extended to the Appendix, an outpost position which curved forward towards the German lines out of the left end of trench 66. Beyond it again came "the Gap"—a wet and shell-torn stretch of some 400 yards completely commanded by the enemy. Here night patrols only linked up with the left battalion, whose trench ended 150 yards south of the Menin road. The other two companies of the Patricias were in very close support. No. 4 Company (Major D. F. B. Gray, D.S.O.) held the R. line in Zouave Wood, supporting No. 2 at the Appendix. No. 3 Company (Lieutenant M. S. de Bay), supporting No. 1 on the right, was stationed in Warrington Avenue. The situation here was somewhat confused. Warrington Avenue, being to the right of Gourock Road, was not in the left brigade's territory, and had been definitely assigned in case of battle to the right brigade. It was, however, considered necessary to keep supports of the left brigade very close to the line near the Loop, and arrangements had been made for a support company of the right battalion of the left brigade always to be stationed in the Avenue and in the trenches immediately behind. In point of fact Warrington Avenue was essentially a continuation of the R. line in Zouave Wood, and was sited so as to resist enfilade attack on that front.¹ Bat-

¹ As it happened, the first German success at Mount Sorrel at once obliterated all brigade boundaries, and the most desperate and important fighting of the 7th Brigade in the action—the defence of Warrington Avenue and Lovers' Walk by the P.P.C.L.I. on the afternoon of June 2 and the counter-attack of the 49th in the early morning of June 3—took place largely on 8th Brigade territory.

talion Headquarters was at the corner of Warrington Avenue and "Lovers' Walk." This latter trench was a continuation of the R. line south from Gourrock Road, and ran through the western edge of Sanctuary Wood to join up with the right brigade system at "Border Lane," which, with "Durham Road" (running parallel to and a little south of it), connected Sanctuary Wood with Maple Copse and Zillebeke.

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On the left of the Patricias the Royal Canadian Regiment held the Hooge sector with two companies in the line, a third in the R. line near the Menin road, and the fourth, with Battalion Headquarters, at Half-way House. Isolated in the front line by the Gap, the two regiments were in touch in the R. line, and maintained connection there through almost the whole of the action. In brigade support the 42nd Battalion occupied the Zillebeke "Bund" —a row of dug-outs at the western end of Zillebeke Lake; the 49th Battalion lay in brigade reserve at the camp near Ypres which the Patricias had just left. The right sector of the 3rd Division was held by the 8th Brigade (Canadian Mounted Rifles). Connecting with No. 1 Company P.P.C.L.I. in the front line, the 1st C.M.R. held the trenches which immediately covered the frontal approach to Observatory Ridge; and beyond this battalion to the south the 4th C.M.R. held Mount Sorrel. The 5th C.M.R. (brigade support) were disposed in strong-points and dug-outs in the neighbourhood of Maple Copse and behind Zillebeke Lake, and the 2nd C.M.R. formed the brigade reserve. The 9th Brigade lay in divisional reserve near Poperinghe.

June 1 was a fine summer day. Visibility was exceptionally good, enemy aeroplanes were more

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active than usual in searching for battery positions, and at least eight observation balloons were in the air behind the German lines. There was heavy ranging fire on Sanctuary Wood both in the morning and evening, especially round Lovers' Walk; but this was now daily routine, and as once before, on the eve of the battle of Bellewaerde Ridge, the Patricias felt no premonition of what the next day would bring. The position had been made reasonably secure, and the trenches are described as being in better condition on the eve of battle than for several weeks before. Yet it is clear from the elaborate defence schemes which are among the documents of the Brigade and Division, and from the energy which had been thrown into the work of digging trenches, that an attack was expected at any time. To quote from the introduction to the divisional report on the engagement :

If he [the enemy] could take Mount Sorrel, he would be well on his way to the high ground at Observatory Ridge and on Yeomanry Post Ridge, and if pressure could also be brought by the capture of the trenches in Hooge, the German could have reasonable expectation of causing a general withdrawal. But although this was foreseen there was no immediate indication that events would develop quickly.

The statements of German prisoners captured later, that the whole operation was undertaken simply to gain credit for a divisional or corps commander, are interesting rather as an example of enemy morale than as military history.¹ The

¹ The German General who organized the attack of June 2 was said to have acted without authority from G.H.Q. He had recently been censured for failure and was endeavouring to redeem his reputation. He was congratulated on June 3, but lost his command less than a fortnight later.

German idea was sound enough, and up to a point the attack had complete success with very small losses. But the German Higher Command certainly had no such ambitions as in the First or Second Battles of Ypres. Its foreknowledge of General Haig's intentions on the Somme goes far to explain the moment chosen for a strong local attack in the salient. If the last defences of Ypres could be broken, the formidable offensive preparing at the south might be imperilled by a threatened counter-offensive at the heart of the British line of communications. The Germans may have reasonably deduced from their superiority in the artillery duels of April and May that the requirements of the Somme had deprived the Canadian Corps of heavy ordnance in the salient. At least, they might hope that the British would not be able to move in a sufficient number of guns quickly to break up a sudden artillery concentration.

The German preparations were as thorough as usual, and were by no means skimped by reason of the limitation of their purpose. For instance, the Canadian Corps Intelligence summary of the evening of June 1 reported the presence of large numbers of boards nailed to trees all along the German line, which suggests an elaborate system of signposts to aid the assembly of the assaulting units. The troops chosen for the attack already knew the ground thoroughly, and had a morale high above the average. Nine battalions of the 120th, 121st and 125th Regiments of Württembergers, young, vigorous and well-officered, had been withdrawn from the line in the middle of May to be trained in shock tactics. At the same time the point of assault was chosen, and in the last fortnight

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of the month the German battalions in the line were busily engaged in making and connecting up saps in No Man's Land, especially opposite the Mounted Rifles' trenches at Mount Sorrel, and in digging a new shallow trench near the 7th Brigade's line in Sanctuary Wood. The opinion at the time of the action, that the terrific weight of the bombardment must have been due to the arrival of a "travelling circus" of heavy artillery, was later verified from German sources, which put it past doubt that throughout the last week of May the enemy was secretly concentrating special trench mortars and big guns opposite the 3rd Division.

June 2. The night of June 1 and the early morning of June 2 were very quiet, and the absence of machine-gun fire was particularly noticed by the Patricias in Sanctuary Wood. The battle of Mount Sorrel opened with a bombardment which developed out of normal morning fire on the front line and supports, especially in Armagh Wood and about Warrington Avenue. "We had come," writes one who was present, "to look upon the German as a creature of habit with his little bursts of morning and evening hate," and, the fire not being at first so violent as on several earlier occasions, there was no idea that anything uncommon was afoot for more than half an hour. But it gradually increased in volume and extent, the newly arrived guns joined in, and by 9 A.M. the whole line from trench 45 to the Appendix rocked under a tremendous pounding from artillery and trench-mortar fire. The Canadian Corps heavy artillery and divisional guns attempted retaliation, but had no success whatever in checking the bombardment. In truth, the artillery was unable to render any great practical assistance on



LIEUT.-COLONEL H. C. BULLER, D.S.O.

KILLED IN ACTION IN SANCTUARY WOOD DURING
THE BATTLE OF MOUNT SORREL, JUNE 2, 1916.

June 2.¹ On June 5 and subsequently, especially in the general counter-attack of June 13, the guns caused the enemy enormous losses; but all the evidence goes to show that the British artillery was completely outweighed on the first day of the engagement.

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The German bombardment lasted unchecked and without pause from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Very early in the day a curtain of smoke and flame cut Sanctuary Wood off from the rear, and a barrage of bursting shells below Maple Copse prevented any reinforcement of the line. By 10 A.M. it was driven home to the Higher Command that this was no ordinary morning bombardment. The reserve battalions of the 7th and 8th Brigades were ordered to "stand to," and the 9th Brigade was warned to be ready to move up from reserve. For the moment, and as long as the intense barrage lasted, nothing could be done to help the battalions in the line. Major-General Mercer and Brigadier-General Victor Williams (8th Brigade) had been cut off from their respective Division and Brigade Headquarters while visiting the Mounted Rifles on Mount Sorrel. By 10.20 A.M. the last telephone line was cut in the centre, and the Patricias were isolated in Sanctuary Wood. It was hopeless for them to get runners through the barrage, and the only other communication with the rear was by pigeons, one of which was released by Colonel Buller and reached the 7th Brigade at 11.15 A.M. with a message that the situation was serious.

The Patricias and the Mounted Rifles were in

¹ It need hardly be said that this statement must not be regarded as in any sense belittling the efforts of the gunners, working under most disheartening conditions. In particular, the self-sacrifice of a forward section of two 18-pounders in Sanctuary Wood was one of the most heroic incidents of the battle.

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fact undergoing a trench-bombardment which in weight and duration was seldom exceeded throughout the war. Under a rain of high-explosive shells of all calibres, of trench-mortar shells, aerial torpedoes and rifle grenades, the front line was soon blotted out. Trees were uprooted, parapets demolished, whole bays of trench obliterated. Soon isolated heaps of sand-bags were all that remained, but to these the companies held, though their losses were enormous. The worst sufferers among the Patricias were the platoons of No. 1 Company in the Loop, which was a position completely exposed to the gunners in the Bird-cage. Major Stanley Jones was mortally hit early in the day, and died subsequently in enemy hands. Long before the artillery lifted for the Württembergers to attack, the Company was reduced to a handful of men, taking what cover they could in the wrecked trenches and keeping their heads cool (and their rifles as clean as might be) for the final desperate resistance which they knew it would be theirs to make. No officer, sergeant or corporal of this garrison survived the bombardment unwounded; there is no record of a written message getting back; but their story can be pieced together from fragments of information given by some who were taken prisoners and survived their wounds. Trenches and garrisons alike were practically wiped out, but a tiny remnant of No. 1 Company held. To the end they were fortunate enough to have leaders. Lieutenant A. A. Wanklyn, a young officer of the First University Company, "cheerful and bright as a cricket," scrambled up and down the mass of debris which had been a trench until at about 10.30 A.M. he went down in as gallant a death as man could wish. When the end came only Lieutenant

Hugh Macdonnell (Third University Company) and five unwounded men were left in trench 64 just north of the Loop, and together the six shared the glory of the last stand. The men attributed the confidence of their resistance to Macdonnell's athleticism—he was well known as a Queen's University hockey and football player before the war. "His eye was perfect," one of them wrote from a prison camp, "and the way we all dodged those sausages was a treat!"¹ A German officer captured some days later paid the suicide garrison a tribute not common from the enemy: "The resistance of the officer and some men who remained to the last in a portion of an almost obliterated trench was magnificent." Shortly after 1 P.M. the bombardment ceased and an aeroplane came flying across slowly and very low. The infantry followed, and gave the survivors of No. 1 a moment of revenge. As the Württembergers straggled slowly across their front, Macdonnell and his five men jumped to the remains of the parapet, faced half-right and poured rapid fire into them with great effect. They failed, however, to observe three men carrying flame-throwers, who suddenly appeared on their left and projected liquid fire against their backs. Resistance was over, and a moment later the advancing Germans rolled over the trench.²

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¹ "Sausage," "oil-can," "rum-jar," "blind" or "flying pigs" were all popular names for the trench-mortar shells thrown by the big German *minenwerfer*, which were chiefly used by the enemy for the bombardment of the front trenches on this day. "Six or seven of them could frequently be seen in the air at one time, and the grim game of eliminating from consideration those that were not dangerous, and getting away from those that were, gave the garrison the great relief of having something to do."

² Lieut. Macdonnell was hit in the lung at the last moment. For two months he was mourned as dead; but he received good attention in the German hospitals, survived his wound and was repatriated in 1917. It is pleasant to record that the wounded of the Regiment who were taken

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No. 2 Company, on the left, escaped rather more lightly from the bombardment, thanks partly to the proximity of the British and German lines at the Appendix, but chiefly because the overwhelming of their trenches was not essential to the scheme of attack, which apparently did not include the immediate capture of Hooge village and an advance along the Menin road. Captain Niven's company, however, was very early isolated, and remained with both flanks in the air for nearly eighteen hours. While casualties among the men during the morning bombardment were surprisingly light, all the officers were hit by noon. Captain Niven was one of the first, though his wound was not so serious as to incapacitate him for command. Lieutenant D. G. Hagarty, one of the officers representing the University of Toronto in the Second University Company, was killed, and Lieutenant G. Triggs was badly wounded. The right trench became untenable as the bombardment increased, but Lieutenants P. Molson and W. E. C. Irwin with great coolness withdrew their men to the left trench, which, with the Appendix, was held all through the day, and proved a very valuable position from which to enfilade the Germans advancing on the right. When the Germans came over, the right half-company under these officers held them in a short sharp fight, and Lieutenant Irwin counter-attacked with a party of bombers so effectively that the enemy advance in this direction was demoralized. Irwin fell badly wounded in both legs, but Molson

prisoners on June 2 were on the whole very well treated. Major Stanley Jones in particular fell into kindly hands. He was operated upon, apparently successfully, but had a relapse and died on June 8. A German officer wrote twice to his relatives, first to inform them of his progress, and afterwards to express regret at his death. His body was buried with military honours in the Flemish Cemetery at Moorslede.

continued to lead "a desperate and successful resistance to German attacks." He in his turn was painfully wounded in the face, and the command fell for many hours to N.C.O.'s.

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No. 3 and Headquarters Companies in Warrington Avenue, Gourock Road and Lovers' Walk received their full share of the bombardment; Major Gault estimated the losses here at 11 A.M. as 50 per cent of the total rifle strength. No. 4 Company had good protection in Zouave Wood and escaped more lightly than the rest. Its rôle appeared in an order from Colonel Buller to Major Gray at 10.30 A.M., that as soon as the bombardment of the front line showed signs of ceasing he was to move over to the right towards the junction of Gourock Road and Warrington Avenue. Colonel Buller had quickly decided that the main enemy attack would be delivered against Mount Sorrel and the Loop with the intention of breaking through to Observatory Ridge; and he had more than once insisted to his officers, in discussing defence schemes, that in such an event the defence of Warrington Avenue would be vital. The remnants of No. 1 Company could not hope to resist the attack in the Loop, and there was no assurance at this time that the Appendix would not go as well. It was therefore regarded as a certainty that a general attack would find the Germans converging upon Maple Copse from both sides of No. 3 Company's position in Warrington Avenue. Clearly the 8th Brigade would not be able to undertake the defence of this switch trench, for the losses in the 1st and 5th C.M.R. were enormous. So a German break through at Mount Sorrel would throw the whole weight of protecting the Hooge and R. line flank upon the Patricias, and the crisis of the day was not so much

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a matter of resistance in the old front line (heroic as this was) as of the efforts of No. 3 Company in Gourock Road and the Avenue, and No. 4 Company behind, to fill a gap, with their flank in the air, until reserves could be brought up to cover the line before Zillebeke.

The assault was delivered at a few minutes after 1 P.M. It appeared imminent at 12.50, and the British artillery was ordered to quicken for ten minutes. Very shortly after this the Württembergers were seen to leave their trenches and advance all along a line from Mount Sorrel to the Appendix. Most of the front trenches had been obliterated, and no serious resistance could be offered to the Germans as they passed over at an almost leisurely pace, some of them singing and laughing as they came, with their *flammenwerfer* leading the way. The 8th Brigade sector was immediately overrun. The Germans pressed forward on both sides of Observatory Ridge, and in about half an hour had reached their main objective at the centre and (Canadian) right. A pigeon message to Brigade Headquarters from Colonel Buller:—"Germans getting through on left. Holding Warrington Avenue, 1.45 P.M. Hard pressed."—meant that the Loop had gone. Lieutenant Macdonnell's party, as has been seen, were surrounded and captured at about 1.30 P.M.; and such others from No. 1 Company as survived had been forced by the gun fire and the destruction of all cover clear out of their positions and back into a disused trench in the upper end of Gourock Road. They lay here firing until the Germans came within thirty yards' range of them, and were then driven back by the liquid fire into "Charing Cross" and Lovers' Walk, to be met and rallied by Colonel Buller in his advance up Warring-

ton Avenue. Only on the left of the Patricias did the German advance fail to develop according to plan. On this flank the barrage lifted to the rear lines just before 1.30 P.M. No. 2 Company, which still held two good trenches and had not been decimated like the companies to its right, at once manned its parapets with bombers, riflemen and machine guns. Over to their right they could see the enemy "coming across in droves" and trying to work round to the left rear of Gourock Road. The Appendix was intact, thanks to the repulse of the German bombers in trench 64 by Lieutenant Molson's platoon; and it was well placed to take this advance in enfilade, for it commanded the slope down which the enemy had to move. The Württembergers, heavily accoutred for "digging in" and hampered by the fallen stumps of trees in the wood, came on slowly, and No. 2 raked them with rifle and machine-gun fire as they crossed its front. None the less, by 2 P.M. the Appendix was completely cut off from the R. line and Headquarters, and the enemy were entrenching themselves 300 yards to the right rear.

The loss of the front line at the Loop and Mount Sorrel was not in itself very serious, but it left the R. line, the Warrington Avenue system and Observatory Ridge the last substantial defence before Ypres. The Mounted Rifles were unable to hold the Ridge—the most important point of all; and everything now depended on Colonel Buller's fight to save the Avenue.

The defence of Warrington Avenue rested with No. 3 Company and such details as could be gathered up at Headquarters, for No. 4 Company had to be suddenly deflected to the duty of watching the rear. Two platoons of No. 3 Company—11 and 12—were in the Avenue when the bombard-

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ment began, the other two were stationed in neighbouring trenches at Charing Cross and "Duck-board Walk," and all suffered heavily during the morning.¹ About 1.30 P.M. the Germans entered Warrington Avenue from the front line and began to bomb down the trench. 11 and 12 Platoons contested every inch of ground at the head of the trench, while Colonel Buller and his Headquarters officers worked in feverish haste to prepare a resistance point farther back. As soon as the enemy's fire began to slacken, the Commanding Officer detailed Lieutenant Louis Scott (who was acting as battalion works officer) to collect every N.C.O. and man he could find at Headquarters, and any stragglers from the front-line trenches he met, and move up the Avenue "to support the line wherever it may be." Lieutenant Scott had got to the junction of Warrington Avenue and Gourock Road when he received a further order to build a block there to hold the German advance. Colonel Buller had evidently realized that the two platoons of No. 3 Company farther up the trench were fighting against tremendous odds and that there was in fact no longer any line to support. The block at the junction was built with some difficulty, for although the Germans were making little progress in Warrington Avenue, they were by this time well down Gourock Road and had almost reached the junction of the two trenches, again employing flame-throwers to clear their path.

While this fine piece of work by Lieutenant Scott's party and the stubborn gallantry of the

¹ Lieut. de Bay was picked up unconscious early in the day and put in a dug-out on Warrington Avenue. It was impossible to evacuate him and he died of his wounds during the afternoon. The only other officer with the Company, Lieut. G. S. Fife (one of the most promising young Canadian historians) was also killed.

platoons ahead of him were checking for the moment this frontal attack, an even graver danger threatened from the right rear. Before 2 P.M. small advance patrols of the enemy had worked forward from Observatory Ridge, and were seen moving along "Vigo Street"—a good trench running at right angles to Warrington Avenue, and connecting by "Davison Street" with Durham Lane and Maple Copse. Thus while the two platoons at the head of the Avenue were being forced foot by foot to give ground in the trench, and while Colonel Buller was rallying every man that he could find in order to reinforce them or at least to hold the block at Gourock Road, the whole position was in danger of being turned from the right rear. Reports very soon reached Headquarters that the Württembergers had been seen entering Maple Copse. It has since been established that the German advance was strictly limited to Observatory Ridge, and probably the parties which reached Maple Copse (where Württembergers were bayoneted and found dead) were only strong outpost patrols awaiting a counter-attack. The enemy indeed seems to have paid dearly for the lack of some officer who was ready on the instant to exceed instructions. The weakened 8th Brigade probably could not have denied success to an attack in force upon Maple Copse, and if the Copse had been taken and the advance pressed home strongly, it seems likely that the whole defence would have been rolled up from right to left, and that not only Nos. 2 and 3 Companies, but No. 4 in Zouave Wood, the Yeomanry Post Ridge, and perhaps even the Royal Canadian Regiment at Hooge, might have been captured or annihilated before help could have come from the reserves.

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As it turned out, the situation in and north of Maple Copse, desperate as it appeared at the time, was never beyond the control of Major Gray's reserve company, which had moved over to Lovers' Walk soon after noon. The threat of attack from the rear did however prevent the use of No. 4 Company for reinforcement in Warrington Avenue, for when vague news was received that the enemy were in Maple Copse, Lieutenant P. Mackenzie was ordered to move two platoons of this Company to the right in extended order to clear the wood. Showing great initiative and personal courage, this officer himself reconnoitred Maple Copse, and was able to report that there were only dead Germans in Border Lane and in the Copse, and that there was little present danger from this quarter. Lieutenant Mackenzie then extended his two platoons along the western edge of Sanctuary Wood with his right resting on Durham Lane, where he later established connection with a company of the 42nd Battalion—the first reinforcements that succeeded in pushing through the barrage. The half-company of No. 4 was kept fully occupied in its new position, for parties of the enemy concentrated in front along "Hill Street" and "Bydand Avenue" and threatened to attack. These were dispersed by rapid rifle fire and a fierce little sortie by the bombers, and the check thus administered was of great value in delaying the Württembergers in the quarter where they had been most successful. Before 3 P.M. the situation at the rear, thanks to the energy of these two platoons, had sensibly improved.

In Warrington Avenue a dour fight against odds had been in progress since 1.30 P.M. The retreat of Nos. 11 and 12 Platoons down the trench lasted nearly an hour and a half, and only when the last

two bays of the trench above Border Lane were reached were they able to stand fast. Hardly a man survived to tell the story of this defence, and in the Battalion papers there is little beyond an eloquent list of killed and missing. But on a subsequent inspection a senior officer of another battalion found in Gourock Road little heaps of the Regiment's dead back to back in the trenches every few yards, and his report makes it clear that the enemy was held at bay here and in Warrington Avenue by the building of block after block, and bombed from each of these until sheer weight of numbers forced the weakened defenders to give backward. One of the saddest limitations of the Battalion historian is that he is often left with the slenderest written or spoken evidence for the most heroic deeds of his Regiment. He can only say of this half-company that in giving themselves with unhesitating gallantry almost to the last man it may be that they saved the day.

As these two platoons fought slowly back, Colonel Buller himself rallied the rest of the defence in Sanctuary Wood. Some weeks earlier he had remarked to a company commander: "If the enemy attack here, there is only one thing to do—go forward and meet them"; and he now gave force to this intention. Collecting the right half of No. 3 Company, the remnant of No. 1 Company and a few Headquarters details at Charing Cross on the Gourock Road, he moved over to Lieutenant Scott's block at the junction with Warrington Avenue, and tried to work up that trench. But the Avenue was choked and battered down every few yards and the German rifle and machine-gun fire was very heavy. Considering the advance too slow for the emergency, Colonel Buller,

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directing Lieutenant Scott to lead the advance up the trench, jumped on the parados to urge forward the men and to get a better view of the ground. A minute later he fell dead. "He had called me personally," writes Lieutenant Scott, "and I, thinking he wished me with him on the parados, climbed out of the trench, but was hastily told by him to get under cover and approach along the trench, following the traverses. This was the last I saw of Colonel Buller alive, for when I had gone towards him—a matter of a few feet—his body was lying in the trench. He had been shot and his body had fallen forward into the trench at that point." Almost immediately after Colonel Buller was killed the reinforcements made touch with the last survivors of the left half-company, and the trench was held near the block made by Lieutenant Scott an hour before.

The losses were by now very serious. In three companies every officer was a casualty, and only two combatant officers were left at Headquarters. Major Gault had been dangerously wounded in Warrington Avenue soon after the bombardment ended, and lay in Lovers' Walk with many fellow-sufferers hour after hour, since none but walking cases, and very few of those, could be sent to the rear.¹ Lieutenant A. G. Pearson, D.C.M., the Bombing Officer, was wounded early in the day, and only learned afterwards how much his organization and training of the bombers had contributed towards the success of the defence; Captain P. V. Cornish, the Signalling Officer, was mortally wounded; Regimental - Sergeant - Major "Jock"

¹ Through the afternoon Major Gault managed to keep his brain clear during intervals of consciousness and once at least gave valuable help by making Lieut. Mackenzie understand that a gap on the right had been overlooked.

Anderson was tireless in rallying and cheering the men, issuing ammunition and bombs, organizing small bombing and fatigue parties, and seeing to the evacuation of wounded, until he also fell badly hit. The only senior officer left in action was Major Gray, who could not be reached and brought to Headquarters for some hours. In the interval the command of the Warrington Avenue area passed to the Adjutant, Captain A. G. Martin, who coolly and efficiently organized the defence of the new positions. With him were Lieutenant Scott, who was shortly to be detailed on special duty, Lieutenant G. S. Currie, the Lewis Gun Officer, who through four days of fighting kept every available gun in action and supplied with ammunition, and Captain J. B. McGregor, C.A.M.C. The last fully lived up to the traditions of Major Keenan. He was blown out of his dressing-station early in the action, but worked on with perfect sang-froid, patrolling the line in complete disregard of danger throughout the action and dressing the wounded wherever they fell.

By 3 P.M. the first wave of attack had subsided, and it became possible for the Higher Command to consider counter measures. General Macdonell summarizes the situation as follows :

The position on my right sector was extremely serious, not to say critical, for behind the R. line there was no support line, unless some old trenches, Dormy House Lane and Zillebeke Street, could be counted as such, until you came to Zillebeke Switch running north and south, and the Germans so to speak now held the rim of the saucer, our old front line, and actually looked down into our trenches. It was imperative that we hold on at all costs to the R. line. This I had perfect confidence my battalions would do. At 2 P.M. the R.C.R. Company at Zillebeke Bund was ordered to the R. line through Half-way House. In response to an urgent call from Major Stevens, Brigade

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Major 8th Brigade, at 1.40 P.M., I ordered two companies of the 42nd Highlanders to move from Zillebeke Bund to Zillebeke Switch and Maple Copse to reinforce the 8th Brigade, which was hard pressed from Sanctuary Wood. Coupled with the gallant defence of the C.M.R., I believe these two companies turned the scale in our favour. A glance at the map indicates how serious a break through there would have been as it would have completely turned the R. line trenches. One company 42nd which was at Belgian Château and another which was at Ypres Ramparts were also ordered at 2 P.M. to move via Ypres and Half-way House to the R. line. At the same time the 49th was ordered to move to Ypres Ramparts, the last company arriving about 8.30 P.M. At 3.10 P.M. the situation seemed so serious that I decided to ask Brigadier-General Butler, commanding the 60th Brigade on my left, for the assistance of two companies that night to hold that portion of my R. line. . . . At 7.5 P.M. our rear lines were further strengthened by two battalions of the 9th Brigade being ordered up to occupy the G.H.Q. line from the Ypres Ramparts to the Canal and to report to the 7th Brigade Headquarters. At this time Lieutenant Van den Berg reported that at 2.30 P.M. some forty Germans got into Border Lane, but were instantly bayoneted out by the P.P.C.L.I. I mention this incident to show that the famous Regiment, in spite of losses, was fighting with all its old-time dash and vigour. At 6 P.M. Lieutenant Scott reported at Headquarters with the Colour, which Major Gray deemed it wise to send back for safe-keeping. Lieutenant Scott reported as follows: "I left Lovers' Walk about 5 P.M. We are still holding trench 65 and R. line as far as Hill Street, which is held by the Germans, also Maple Copse; Border Lane is manned by one company of the 42nd. Four companies of the 8th Brigade are on the way to reinforce." . . . I received the order for the counter-attack at 5.45 P.M. from the 3rd Canadian Division.

Before dealing with this counter-attack (which, though not delivered by the Patricias, concerned them so closely that it demands more than passing reference) it will be well to amplify the Brigadier's

account with any further information that can be collected about the Regiment's experiences during the afternoon and evening of June 2.

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We have a fairly clear account of what happened to the Colour. Those originally entrusted by the Adjutant with its safe-keeping had been put out of action, when Lieutenant Scott, passing down Lovers' Walk with orders from Major Gray to make a personal report to General Macdonell in Ypres, came across the Colour in the hands of a wounded private. He assisted the man out as far as the dressing-station and then proceeded with his burden towards Ypres. It was fortunate that a cool-headed officer could take responsibility for the Regiment's most precious possession at a time when he was detailed to go out of the line, for the Colour ran perhaps the greatest perils of its history in the journey to Brigade Headquarters at the Ramparts. The Germans were either in or threatening Maple Copse on the right and Lieutenant Scott had to pass through what was now the heaviest fire zone. On the way both he and his runner were buried by a shell explosion, and had to dig themselves out; but Headquarters was safely reached, and the Colour handed over to Lieutenant G. C. McDonald, P.P.C.L.I., who was acting as Brigade Bombing Officer. The Colour remained at the Ramparts until the Patricias were relieved, and was then taken over by the Commanding Officer of what was left of them, to be carried out at their head on June 5.

It has already been mentioned that No. 2 Company, isolated in the Appendix, had a clear view of the German attack at Gourock Road. They saw the Württembergers, preceded by at least ten men operating flame-throwers, penetrate as far as "Gordon Walk" before the grenadiers and rifle-

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men of No. 3 Company began to hold them and bomb them back. Next they saw a party of the enemy digging a trench from Gordon Walk across to Gourock Road roughly parallel to the captured front line ; these called on the defenders of Gourock Road to surrender and received a burst of rapid fire by way of reply. The danger that No. 2 Company might be taken in the rear soon passed, and as no determined attack was made near the Gap, the Patricias in the Appendix and machine gunners of the Royal Canadian Regiment in Hooge were able to use their entrenched positions to great advantage. There was no lack of targets. In the lull after the attack the Germans sent back parties for wire, lumber and various supplies, and these men had to walk along a ridge 300 yards to the right of the Appendix in full view of the riflemen of No. 2 Company. It is impossible to reconcile the reports of this Company and of the Royal Canadian Regiment with the assertions of prisoners that the German losses on June 2 were negligible ; but it is probably fair to say that the enemy's complete success at Mount Sorrel and the trenches as far northwards as the Loop must have blinded him to the fact (which seems incontestable) that the little progress at the northern end of Sanctuary Wood was made at heavy cost.¹ The men in the Appendix escaped the worst of the afternoon bombardment, which fell on the support line, and dodged the aerial torpedo fire on their own position until it became too dark to see, when two shells dropped in the trench and hit six men. Most of the casualties in this quarter were from the early bombardment of the

¹ It says much for the morale of No. 2 Company that in these exciting moments Sgt. L. Robertson, who was now largely responsible for the defence, kept a pair of field-glasses in action continually to prevent his men from firing on German stretcher-bearers.

right trench ; the total for the action—about seventy—was not high for so exposed a position. The reader may for a moment leave this Company, isolated from the rest of the Battalion, with all its officers killed or wounded. He will be asked later to admire its brilliant withdrawal during the night of June 2/3.

On the right, the survivors of Nos. 1 and 3 Companies clung to the blocks in Warrington Avenue at the junction with Gourock Road and above Bydand Avenue. No. 4 Company watched the gap on the right, fired continually on carrying parties in “Cumberland Dug-outs” and Hill Street, and blocked every attempt of the Germans to take Warrington Avenue in the rear. Rumours of another gap farther to the right were confirmed by a patrol, sent down Border Lane from Lieutenant Mackenzie’s position, which almost reached Maple Copse before finding a few stragglers from several Canadian units. The gap was partly filled about 6 P.M. by a company of the 42nd Battalion ; but this still left a wide space unprotected, so Lieutenant Currie placed a brigade machine gun at the corner of Border Lane and Lovers’ Walk to command the point of danger. This gun was the sole defence at this spot for thirty-six hours—till the line was filled after daybreak on June 4 by details from the 43rd Battalion.

The two reserve platoons of No. 4 Company under Lieutenant W. E. Dunton remained isolated in the R. line near Zouave Wood until 3 P.M., when the arrival of two companies of the 42nd Battalion on their left filled the gaps, completed touch again with the R.C.R., and made it possible for the Patricias to move down the trench to within 50 yards of Lovers’ Walk. At 6.30 P.M. the arrival of another half-company of the R.C.R. from Half-

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way House freed Lieutenant Dunton's platoons to move down to Lovers' Walk into communication with the rest of No. 4 Company.¹ By the late afternoon touch had been made with right and left flanks, and the situation "was felt to be well in hand except that reinforcements were urgently needed to replace very heavy casualties."

One last incident of June 2 remains to be described—the withdrawal of No. 2 Company from the Appendix. Runners from Captain Niven brought two messages to Headquarters during the course of the afternoon, the first saying that he was still holding his three left trenches and could continue to do so, the second informing the Battalion Commander that every officer was a casualty. Major Gray, though very short-handed, detailed Lieutenant G. B. Glassco to go to the relief. Although quite ignorant of the ground—he had just joined the Regiment in the field—and compelled to crawl all the way on hands and knees, this officer arrived safely at the Appendix and took over the command from Captain Niven, who reached a dressing-station, had his wounds dressed, set off to rejoin the Company and was immediately wounded again. Lieutenant Glassco had a difficult decision to make. The men had been fighting all day, and though in fine spirits were much exhausted. They had no rations, their ammunition was running low, the chance of replenishing supplies before day was of the slightest and would vanish altogether with daylight. The walking-cases were sent back across

¹ In the whole action this Company, whose relief was completed on June 4, had 52 killed and wounded, but lost none of its officers. It suffered chiefly in linking up the reserve line at Lovers' Walk, as the untraversed communication trenches down which it had to pass were swept by enfilade fire. A number of casualties were also caused by the corrugated iron revetments of these trenches falling in on the men during the bombardment.

country in the early evening, but casualties continued to mount up, and soon only 45 were left unhurt; while the only hope of saving the lives of the severely wounded was to carry them out by night. Moreover the Württembergers, now fully aware of the isolation of the Appendix, began to pay it decided attention, and throwing down a curtain of artillery fire behind the line attacked three times during the night. In spite of dense smoke from flame-throwers and of rifle and machine-gun fire from three sides these attacks were beaten off, although the last gained a footing in a few bays of the right trench. Yet it was very doubtful whether the resistance could be maintained through the night, and certain enough, unless a counter-attack relieved the situation, that the Company would be annihilated next day. Lieutenant Glassco quietly prepared to withdraw.

This retirement of No. 2 Company deserves to be placed beside the last stand of No. 1, the blocking of Warrington Avenue by No. 3 and the defensive reconnaissance by the right half-company of No. 4, as the fourth outstanding accomplishment of the Patricias in this action. Just before daybreak, and almost as a fresh attack was developing, the Company withdrew over the open. It took out all its munitions and stores, saved its three machine guns, and carried or helped out every one of its wounded except two who were unconscious and in a dying condition; and although it had to pass over nearly 500 yards of open country pocked with deep shell-craters and through the enemy barrage covering the trenches for which it was making, it at last tumbled spent into the R. line without the loss of a man. Here it remained, attached to the 49th Battalion, until relieved at 4 A.M. on June 4, when the survivors

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made their way back to the Ypres Ramparts, having done, said General Macdonell, "all that mortal man could do."

When assured that there was no longer any immediate danger that his reserves would be needed to bolster a breaking line in Sanctuary Wood, General Macdonell planned his share of the local counter-offensive ordered by the Corps Commander, entrusting the command to Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Griesbach of the 49th Battalion.¹ In the original scheme, undertaken in conjunction with the 2nd Canadian Brigade, which was ordered to attack on the right against Observatory Ridge and Mount Sorrel, the assault was to have been delivered on a two-battalion front, with the 49th Battalion on the right and the 52nd Battalion on the left, their inner flanks meeting at Gourock Road. The 60th Battalion was to support this attack, the object of which was to recapture the front line or at least to clear the enemy out of the communication system in Sanctuary Wood. This is not the place for a description of an operation which would still have been exceedingly difficult even if the battalions from the 9th Brigade had reached the assembly point in time. As it happened, Border Lane being "crowded with dead, wounded and defenders," the only trench by which these troops could approach the R. line was the unfinished "China Wall," which gave quite inadequate protection. The 49th Battalion began to advance at midnight, moving up steadily across the open ground between Oxford Street and Zillebeke Street. Although passing through the artillery barrage and caught by rifle

¹ Major Agar Adamson, D.S.O., P.P.C.L.I., was attached to Col. Griesbach's staff for this operation. He took over the command of the Patricias on June 5.

fire from the flank, the Edmonton Regiment held its direction and reached the rendezvous at Lovers' Walk, being ready to attack by 2 A.M. But the 52nd and 60th Battalions ran into a tremendous barrage at China Wall near Half-way House. The 52nd lost both its senior officers and was pinned down. The 60th, suffering very heavily also, passed through the 52nd and eventually reached the R. line with one company of the 52nd. The immediate result of these misfortunes was to postpone the attack for five hours. Even after this delay, when it became necessary to attack in order to co-operate with the 2nd Brigade, no troops from the 9th Brigade could be used, and the 49th went forward alone without supports in a desperate attempt to accomplish with a battalion what General Macdonell considered would be a hard task for a full brigade.

The postponement of the counter-attack added to the troubles of the exhausted Patricias in Warrington Avenue, Lovers' Walk and the R. trenches. The Württembergers had seen the 49th advancing over the open country to their assembly position, and for several hours kept up rapid machine-gun and rifle fire on the new front line, together with an artillery barrage on the rear. Twice at least during the night the enemy quickened fire in expectation of attack, and at daybreak laid down a heavy barrage for 85 minutes. The Patricias in the line had borne the strain of twenty-four hours of constant bombardment and fighting superbly; but though they were still "perfectly cheerful" they were becoming physically and nervously exhausted. The shell-fire continued to claim victims, and though there was enough ammunition, food was running low. Water was the most serious problem, for it was impossible to bring it up from

June 3.

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the rear. But thanks to the forethought of Colonel Buller a supply of water in gasoline tins had been accumulated and cached by the Brigade, and this reserve, used with great economy, kept the men from the worst miseries of thirst. Captain Martin and Lieutenants E. S. McDougall, Scott and Glassco were all wounded in the latter part of the action. The only officers untouched at the end were Majors Agar Adamson and Gray, Captain McGregor, C.A.M.C., and Lieutenants Currie, Mackenzie and Dunton.¹

At 9 A.M. on June 3 the 49th attacked alone, with their left on Gourock Road and their right on Warrington Avenue. The assaulting companies, cheered forward by the Patricias, advanced in the open under withering machine-gun and artillery fire. "Officers of the P.P.C.L.I.," reports General Macdonell, "informed me that they never saw a more dashing advance." The 49th suffered terribly and were held up before they reached the old line, yet (says General Macdonell) "this attack gained for us more of Gourock Road, Warrington Avenue and Bydand Avenue, and we were able to push farther along Hill Street. The moral effect on the Germans seems to have held them back from pressing attacks on our Brigade front." Farther to the right the counter-attack of the 2nd Brigade went successfully until checked near Mount Sorrel; and

¹ Lieut. D. S. Forbes, P.P.C.L.I., who was in command of the Brigade machine guns, was hit in the face in Lovers' Walk, and although unable to speak refused to leave the trench and continued to carry on with his men. Lieut. E. S. McDougall made a hazardous journey to the rear, returned with a large number of stretchers and made possible the evacuation of the crippled wounded who were lying about the trenches. Lieut. H. T. Beecroft (an officer of the Regiment who had been seconded with the 7th Brigade Machine Gun Company) "discovered that certain parts of the line were short of food, and, not being able to spare his own men, personally carried up on his back sacks of food after daylight had broken."

although the recapture of the lost line had to be postponed for ten days, all hope that the Germans may have had of converting their early success into a general attack on Ypres must have been abandoned by noon on June 3.

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General Macdonell decided during the day that the two units which had borne the brunt of the engagement on his front—the Patricias and the 49th—must forthwith be relieved. For this purpose the 43rd Battalion of the 9th Brigade was brought up, and the 42nd Battalion, which had been untiring in filling gaps in the line, patrolling and reconnoitring, was assembled in Border Lane, Lovers' Walk and the R. line. So heavy were the barrages on the night of the 3rd/4th that a general relief could not be carried out, and only a few of the Patricias got back by daybreak; but on the night of June 4/5 the 43rd Battalion came into position on their right and, with detachments of the 60th Battalion on the left, relieved the Regiment, which marched to the Ypres Asylum and was transported by motor lorries to the Poperinghe camp.

June 4.

June 5.

Once again the Patricias suffered more heavily than any other battalion of their Brigade.¹ They had over 400 casualties in the action and came out with a total strength of 210, exclusive of transport details. Of twenty-three officers engaged, nineteen were hit. Six of these—Colonel Buller, Captain Cornish, and Lieutenants Fife, Hagarty, Wanklyn and de Bay—were killed outright or died of their wounds on the field; two—Major Jones and Lieutenant Macdonell—were desperately wounded and taken prisoners; and eleven others were

¹ In four days the 7th Brigade lost 1050 of all ranks—40 per cent of its total strength. Casualties in the 49th Battalion were almost as heavy as in the Patricias.

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wounded. The N.C.O.'s and men had 388 casualties, 80 of them posted as killed, and 100 as missing. Many of the missing were subsequently reported prisoners of war, but about 150 all told lost their lives in the engagement. As Bellewaerde Ridge had been the grave of the battalion of Regular Army veterans, Sanctuary Wood was the grave of the battalion of Canadian university men.

The loss of officers, particularly of senior officers, was even more serious than in the Second Battle of Ypres. Colonel Buller had proved himself as fine a commander as Colonel Farquhar before him. For the first Colonel, beside whom he lies in the Regimental Cemetery at Voormezele, he had unbounded admiration; and, like him, he had a keen humour and a nice sense of proportion to aid him in adapting the traditions of a crack regiment to the men he was called to command, without abandoning any of the principles of rigid discipline and "form" which were so finely characteristic of him. It was typical of him that he should be the first to borrow Guards instructors to smarten up his officers and N.C.O.'s; and equally typical that he would go to the billets of a company just back from a difficult part of the line, to thank the men and tell with obvious feeling how he had been sharing their hardships in spirit though he could not always share them personally in the trenches. No one more faithfully lived up to the high tradition that an officer asks no man to go where he will not go himself; and, as General Macdonell wrote, "he fell, as he, splendid soldier and gallant-hearted gentleman would have wished, in the forefront of the battle at the head of his Regiment, all ranks of which, it is not too much to say, idolised him." Major Gault survived his

wounds, but his leg could not be saved, and he was never able to serve in front-line warfare again, though happily his career in the Regiment was not ended. Not only were the two senior officers gone but the senior Company Commander was a prisoner of war, and the Adjutant, most of the Headquarters staff, and nearly all the Company officers were casualties. Two Company-Sergeant-Majors were among the killed, and the Regimental-Sergeant-Major and fully a dozen sergeants were wounded, several of them too seriously ever to return to the Regiment. The command fell temporarily to Major Agar Adamson, D.S.O., who appointed Lieutenant Mackenzie and afterwards Lieutenant Currie to act as Adjutant until the return of Captain A. G. Martin, whose wounds were slight. One of Major Adamson's first duties was to cable news of the action to Princess Patricia, adding to a bare recital of facts :

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All ranks sympathise with you in the loss of the Colonel of your Regiment, and send assurance of their determination to keep up the high standard set by their previous commanding officers. The gallantry and endurance of the men is beyond all praise.

The Princess replied :

Thank all ranks for kind message. I feel assured that the Regiment will keep up its splendid record of which I am so proud notwithstanding the loss of its Colonel in whom we lose a very gallant officer. Please express my deepest sympathy for his loss.

PATRICIA.

It will never be possible to say what would have happened if the Patricias, isolated and without hope of immediate support in Sanctuary Wood on June 2, had either retired or had failed to guard their rear

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against a turning movement from Maple Copse.¹ An enterprising enemy might then have seriously affected the whole course of the 1916 operations. An advance into the flats of Ypres by the young, fresh and well-disciplined Württembergers, supported by the excellent German artillery, might have so jeopardized the northern communications as to force General Haig to postpone the Somme offensive or seriously curtail its scope. It is not too much to say that the defence of Sanctuary Wood by the Patricias on June 2 destroyed that possibility, for it gave the Higher Command a chance so to organize the holding counter-attack on June 3 that within thirty hours of the beginning of the action the danger had passed. Whether counted as a feat of endurance or of courage the defence of June 2, 1916, ranks beside that of May 8 of the year before; and those who fell would surely ask no better epitaph than the Regiment's established tradition: "The Patricias never lose a position."

3. AFTER THE BATTLE: THE SUMMER OF 1916

Lieutenant-General the Hon. Sir Julian Byng, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., who had been appointed to command the Canadian Corps just before the Battle of Mount Sorrel, gave instructions for the 7th and 8th Brigades to be withdrawn from the battle zone

¹ "You will be pleased to know for the sake of the grand old regiment and of your stout comrades that now with the lapse of time and with the perspective of distance, it is more than ever apparent that the Boches were held up in the Loop and Appendix region by the prompt initiative and dogged resistance of the P.P.C.L.I. The Boche must have thought there were about three battalions in front of him. We have now pretty well consolidated around Warrington Avenue, and that that trench is the key of defence there is now quite evident. Buller's judgement as to its importance was undoubtedly sound and it must have been a great factor in holding the enemy." (*Extract from a personal letter to Major Gault from a senior staff officer of the Canadian Corps, July 22, 1916.*)

for rest and reconstruction as soon as they had been relieved. This move was to have been completed on June 6, but was postponed by the final phase of the German attack; for on that day the Württembergers blew mines in Hooze and in the trenches to the north and forced the defenders back to the Culvert and the R. line. Here the 28th Canadian Battalion held;¹ and on the 7th the slender remnant of the Patricias were able to march to billets at the village of Steenvoorde on the French side of the boundary.

At Steenvoorde the Regiment rested for two or three days and then began to refit in earnest. Almost the whole of the Fifth University Company was at the depot ready for immediate service, and now that the Regiment was a unit in the Canadian Corps other reinforcements could easily be obtained from the general Canadian reserve in England. Drafts of over 500 new men arrived by June 10, and a party of 20 officers joined or rejoined a few days later. Several N.C.O.'s who had distinguished themselves on June 2 were commissioned in the field, and in little more than a fortnight the Patricias were up to full strength. The Higher Command was able to give them time to assimilate the new material before sending them again into the line. The Guards Division lent drill instructors, and the Regiment trained hard in pleasant and peaceful surroundings, while up in the line the 1st Canadian Division proved the value of the defence of June 2 by the success of a general counter-attack on the early morning of June 13. All through the next week the work of reorganization went on—company drill, bayonet fighting, musketry on a specially

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June 6.

June 7.

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8-20.

¹ This battalion of the 2nd Canadian Division had relieved the Royal Canadian Regiment in the Hooze sector on June 5.

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built range, games and sports in the late afternoon of every day. "The P.P.C.L.I. Comedy Company" was organized by Captain H. E. Pembroke, the Paymaster, and gave in the Town Hall at Steenvoorde the first of many delightful entertainments. Skits, choruses, plays—many of them almost daringly personal—were hugely appreciated, and at one bound the Comedy Company became a regimental institution. The officer commanding the Patricias was perhaps the first, among the Canadian battalions at least, to recognize officially these organized regimental entertainments after the hard day's work of training in rest camp. In quiet sectors the members of the Comedy Company were relieved of many trench duties, and generally had a new "show" ready when the Regiment came back to rest.¹

The drafts which joined at Steenvoorde were of the best type and the Patricias were fit for the line again in two weeks, thanks to intensive work under Guards instructors, to the excellent preliminary training of the new drafts (especially that of the University Companies by Captain John Collins at the R.C.R.—P.P.C.L.I. Depot in the Shorncliffe area) and to the quick willingness and enthusiasm with which the old hands, officers and N.C.O.'s particularly, put their knowledge of trench routine and tactics at the disposal of the new platoon commanders.

June 21.

On June 21 a fleet of motor buses took the Regiment back from its pleasant Flanders village to the salient, and by evening all companies were billeted in Ypres, some in the Infantry Barracks

¹ Later in the war much of the talent in this Comedy Company was merged in the more pretentious concert party of the 3rd Canadian Division, which has since become widely known in England, Canada and the United States as "the Dumbells."

(newly walled with sand-bags), others in cellars of houses in the neighbouring streets. Working-parties went up to the line each night until June 26/27, when the whole Battalion relieved the Royal Canadian Regiment in the left sub-sector, which now ran through the Culvert 700 yards west of Hooge and south along the former R. line, with the Germans several hundred yards away on the far side of the valley near what had been the Gap. The new elements in the Regiment had not long to wait for their baptism. At dawn on their first day in the new front line the right company came under severe bombardment during an unsuccessful attack by the Germans on the 3rd Canadian Brigade in Sanctuary Wood. Gun fire was heavy all day, and many shells fell near the front and support lines at Hooge; but there were no direct hits and no casualties. The rest of the tour, which ended on June 30, was quieter but not altogether uneventful. The Battle of Mount Sorrel was still smouldering, and there were small outbreaks in one part of the salient or another for several days. Most of the German bombardment was either north or south of the 7th Brigade sector, but there was one brisk hour in the early morning of June 29 when the enemy plastered the ground all round the Culvert with trench-mortar shells; he failed, however, to find a vulnerable point in this outpost, and the Regiment ended its first tour since reorganization without any losses as severe as those of its quietest trench tours in the spring.

After ten days at "A" Camp on the Poperinghe road the Patricias returned by train to Ypres on July 11 and marched up into support at the Zillebeke Bund Dug-outs behind Zillebeke Lake. Large working-parties were sent up to the line each night,

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almost the whole Battalion being engaged on work in and near the new front line in Sanctuary and Armagh Woods. The Bund was not an easy mark, and although the Germans shelled it with 5·9 howitzers on the 13th they failed to cause inconvenience otherwise than to the fish in the lake.¹ On the night of July 15/16 the Regiment moved into trenches 46 to 55, practically identical with the old Mount Sorrel line of June 2, which had been retaken on June 13. The relief was difficult, for the enemy, who was very near on Mount Sorrel, got wind of the change before it was completed and put over enough rifle grenades and trench mortar shells to kill or wound 12 men. The defences were still being rebuilt and Major-General L. J. Lipsett, D.S.O., who had succeeded to the command of the 3rd Division after the death of General Mercer on June 2, had ordered much work to be done. By night the whole Battalion worked like beavers, pushing out saps, repairing and strengthening the front line and carrying up quantities of engineers' supplies through the debris of Armagh Wood.

July
16-19.

On the night of July 16/17 Lieutenant W. H. Morris, the Scout Officer, went out in front of the Mount Sorrel trenches with Captain C. J. T. Stewart of No. 3 Company and discovered an apparently unoccupied trench between the two lines. Captain Stewart revisited this trench at dusk on the following night, taking a party of men with him to repair and hold it. The party was surprised to find the trench garrisoned by some

¹ The lake was well stocked, but was a dangerous spot for the angler in the daytime, being in direct view from the enemy's trenches. A few Mills bombs furtively dropped in at night provided the messes with several meals of very excellent fish. Unfortunately the explosions cut the telephone wires and the "fishing" had to be abandoned.

nine Germans, who withdrew when Captain Stewart threw a bomb among them. The trench was then reconnoitred for 125 yards, and found to be in good repair, provided with eight deep dug-outs, and having another trench leading out of it into the enemy's front line; and an officer's party was left to consolidate and garrison the position, which was shortly afterwards officially named "Stewart Trench." Patrolling was very active during this week, five or more parties covering the divisional front nearly every night. A brigade order of July 16 reported the information that the Germans were withdrawing troops from the salient,¹ and the Canadian Corps was considering a general attack upon the Bird-cage and the high ground between Bodmin Copse and the Menin road. The Patricias on Mount Sorrel were instructed to push forward and consolidate saps, and Captain Stewart's reconnaissance in force was a part of this work.

On the same night the Regiment took part in a lively and successful minor operation along with the 42nd Battalion and the Royal Canadian Regiment farther to the left. The bombers went out down the saps towards the German lines on Mount Sorrel at about 1.30 A.M. on the 18th, and getting quickly within range of the enemy's trenches threw some 500 grenades. Two supporting Stokes guns put about 90 rounds into the German line and the artillery also joined in. The enemy must have suffered a good deal of discomfort and his nerves were for the moment badly shaken, while the attacking party had practically no losses. But the morale of the Württembergers, as good troops as ever faced the Patricias, was not to be upset by so small an affair, and they retaliated heavily at

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¹ The battle of the Somme had begun a fortnight before.

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about 8.30 P.M. on the same day. An intense bombardment of trench-mortar shells and rifle grenades was directed for two hours upon the 7th Brigade, more particularly between trenches 47 and 50, held by Nos. 1 and 3 Companies P.P.C.L.I. This bombardment did a great deal of damage: direct hits were made on both Company fronts, three saps were demolished, and No. 1 Company had a good many killed and wounded. A few of the enemy left their trenches at Mount Sorrel when the shelling ended at 10.30 P.M., but there was no concerted attack and those who exposed themselves suffered for their overboldness. The Regiment was relieved twenty-four hours later and moved to Ypres, where it received a message of congratulation from General Lipsett on its "good spirit of offensive enterprise."¹ At Ypres the days were spent in sand-bagging the Infantry Barracks and the nights in working on the front line. On the 25th the Regiment moved back by train to the Poperinghe camps, and on the following day marched to Steenvoorde. This strenuous July tour ended with a hot and dusty march, and officers and men were tired out by the time they reached the familiar rest-camp.

July 20-24.

July 25-
Aug 3.

The Regiment, conscious of having acquitted itself creditably in its first real test since reorganization, was now ready for larger enterprises. Rumours in the air for some days now became insistent—there was even talk of the Division being sent back to England to refit for Egypt! As a matter of fact the decision to hold the Canadians ready for the second Somme offensive must already

¹ There were 46 casualties during this tour. Among the killed was Sgt. L. Robertson, who was on the point of being commissioned in the Regiment in recognition of his leadership at the Appendix on June 2.

have been taken, and the next tour in the line was to be the Regiment's last visit to Ypres in the war except in passing during the battle of Passchendaele.

At Steenvoorde Lieutenant-Colonel R. T. Pelly, D.S.O., was allowed to rejoin his old Regiment, at the special request of Major Agar Adamson, who had commanded since the death of Colonel Buller. Here also the Patricias were inspected for the first time by General Byng, and learned to respect his thoroughness through the whole morning of a hot and sultry day. The unusually oppressive weather lasted into August, and when his Regiment received orders to return to the line Colonel Pelly set routine aside and sent packs and steel helmets up by lorry to spare his men the fatigue of the last march. The tour began, as usual, with the relief of the 49th Battalion in the Zillebeke Bund. The only event of the next four days was a general alarm on the occasion of an enemy gas attack north of the Menin road. A British division suffered very heavily, but though the fumes could be felt at the Bund and masks were worn for about an hour the gas was so diluted when it arrived that there were no losses in the Patricias. On the night of August 9/10 the Patricias relieved the Royal Canadian Regiment in the left sector, which now ran from the Culvert on the Menin road to the meeting of Lovers' Walk and Warrington Avenue. The reconstruction of the line was still going forward, and though the enemy was not active (his attack of August 12 on Hill 60 did not affect the Hooge sector) the state of some of the trenches made the work slow and dangerous. In parts of Zouave Wood a shallow ditch was a poor apology for a front line trench, and movement by day was

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greatly restricted ; while patrols of the enterprising Württembergers more than once spotted working-parties at night, and by flare signals directed heavy 77 mm. fire upon them from the Bird-cage. One party of the Patricias was driven from its work on the ditch three times in less than two hours, and was fortunate to escape untouched, as the German marksmanship was very accurate. Patrolling, however, was so very hazardous for both sides under a harvest moon that the tour on the whole was quiet. The Canadians abandoned the proposed attack on the Bird-cage when they received orders to prepare for a move to the Somme.

Aug.
16-21.

The Patricias completed their last regular tour in the Ypres Salient when they moved back into brigade reserve at Kruisstraat on August 16. They were at Zillebeke Bund again on August 19, but two days later handed it over to the 1st Battalion Hampshire Regiment (4th British Division), and moved with the rest of the Brigade first to Poperinghe, and then to the delightful country allotted to the 3rd Canadian Division for training on the Franco-Belgian border near Cassel. The news was now public that at last, after twenty months at the front, the Regiment was to exchange defence for attack, and that the next weeks were to be spent in preparing for a new "drive" in the Somme valley in mid-September.

Aug. 24-
Sept. 6.

From August 24 till their departure for the Somme on September 7, all ranks trained hard for attack. Billeted in five pleasant farms near the village of Terdeghem, the companies practised crawling up behind imaginary barrages in "wave" formations, "mopping up" taped trenches, throwing forward Lewis guns as an outpost screen for

digging-parties—new methods which had been tried out (by the Australian Corps in particular) during the Somme fighting of July and August. The bulky descriptions of these tactics had to be read by the officers each day as they came in, and summarized for the N.C.O.'s and men. Divisional and Brigade Commanders continually watched the companies at work, and on August 26 General Plumer, the Second Army Commander, unexpectedly visiting Headquarters to say good-bye, saw the Lewis gun sections at work. Colonel Pelly, who held as strongly for the moral effect of smartness on parade as Colonel Buller, included much close order company and battalion drill in his course of training; and the musketry officers constructed a good range for Lewis gun, rifle and revolver practice. There was a daily route march of at least an hour to keep the men's feet in condition; new bayonet training was given by instructors who had received a special course in the use of the weapon in attack; and every man in the Regiment practised throwing live Mills bombs in the pits of the neighbouring Second Army Grenade School. From physical exercises and a smart run at 6 A.M. till the end of parades at 6 P.M. the Regiment was kept at it so hard and continuously, in good weather and bad, as to carry the memories of its few veterans back to Winchester and the days of December 1914. Much of the work was new, and spirits rose in anticipation of the coming chance to use it in attack. The little touches of "sloppiness" which six months of the dirtiest trench warfare must lead to were soon gone, and it was a very smart and confident Regiment that set off on September 7 for the Somme.

Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter :

The Distinguished Service Order : Captain H. W. Niven, M.C.

The Military Cross : Capts. A. G. Martin (Adjutant) and J. B. McGregor, C.A.M.C. ; Lieuts. G. S. Currie (L.G.O.), D. S. Forbes (Bde. M.G.O.), P. Mackenzie and P. Molson ; R.S.M. J. Anderson.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal : Sgts. A. Hill and S. Paterson ; Cpl. J. Nelson ; Pte. H. A. Craig.

The Military Medal : Sgts. T. R. Clason and J. E. McInnes ; L/Cpl. J. W. Jeakins ; Ptes. W. L. Clark, E. Rhodes, N. Scott and F. A. Williamson.

Several who do not appear in the above list were subsequently decorated at least in part for their work in this action ; while a number of N.C.O.'s who particularly distinguished themselves were rewarded by being commissioned to the Regiment in the field.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOMME: FABECK GRABEN AND REGINA TRENCH

(THE BATTLES OF THE SOMME, 1916)

September and October 1916

Map No. 4, unfolding opposite p. 188

THE battle of the Somme had just entered its third month when the Patricias moved south from Cassel. The Canadians were brought in as the right corps of General Gough's "Reserve" Army to continue, on the extreme left flank of the battle line, the pressure which since July 1 had been steadily maintained in the country lying between the Ancre and Somme valleys. The 3rd Division was to be employed both in September and October on the narrow front bounded on the north by the winding course of the Ancre, and on the south by the straight line of the Albert—Bapaume road,—river and road converging to meet at a sharp angle behind the British lines in Albert. As the left Division of the Corps, General Lipsett's command had the rôle of presenting towards the Ancre heights a defensive left flank to the general attack, and in particular of protecting the left wing of the main offensive as it pressed forward astride the Bapaume highway.

It was in this region that the Allied effort in

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Picardy had hitherto been most costly and perhaps least successful. West of the Ancre, the British had been everywhere held in the first assault of July 1, and the attack there was for the time being abandoned, while the early advantages gained farther south by the flattening of the Fricourt salient and the successes of both French and British in the Somme valley were pushed home. Sir Douglas Haig had persevered with the attack between the Bapaume road and the Ancre, but every advance was bitterly contested and slow. The German front line system was only broken by the capture of Ovillers—La Boiselle after a vicious struggle of fifteen days; and Contalmaison was cleared, at the second attempt, on July 10. Thereafter the British fought foot by foot up the slopes of the Thiepval ridge to the enemy's second line, which ran through Thiepval, Pozières, Longueval and Guillemont, following the highest ground of the whole battle-front. This height—500 feet above sea level—was at last reached from Pozières eastwards in the second stage of the battle. Pozières itself was captured on July 25 and 26 in an action which brought the Australians and the 48th (South Midland) Division great glory; and on the night of August 4/5 the Australians, this time with the 12th (Eastern) Division on their left, pierced the German system near the wreck of a windmill on the crown of the hill to the west of the main road just beyond Pozières, and held it against all counter-attacks. On the extreme left the advance towards Thiepval and upon the high ground north and east round Mouquet Farm proved even more difficult: by the end of August Mouquet Farm was at last reached and entered, though not captured; but Thiepval and the very strong point north of Mouquet

Farm known as the "Zollern Redoubt" were still in the hands of the Germans. CHAPTER
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On September 4, the day after the capture of Guillemont had driven the enemy from the last of his prepared positions east of the Bapaume road, the Canadian Corps began the relief of the Australians. The situation before General Byng was roughly as follows: Thiepval and the high ground north and east towards Grandcourt and north-west towards Beaumont-Hamel beyond the Ancre were strongly held by the Germans, and enfiladed the line of advance planned by the Fourth Army; Mouquet Farm was still to be reduced; from the Farm to the Bapaume road the German second position on the Pozières Ridge had fallen into British hands, and at the windmill the Australians had pushed forward another 150 yards before handing over; while to the right again the British trenches followed the general line of the crest to Ginchy, through High Wood and north of the hard-won Delville Wood. Sept.
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The student of the battle of Flers—Courcellette has to remember that all this country had by mid-September been for ten weeks the scene of some of the most desperate fighting in the war. The Canadians seemed to breathe a new air when they exchanged the sedgy flats of Flanders for the smiling cornlands of Picardy. They were soon disenchanted. Once beyond Albert, they found themselves pitched into attack, often without an hour to study the ground, over a terrain churned by high-explosives for months together—a slimy sea of shell-holes where no green thing remained, roads impassable or at best repaired in the rudest fashion, all landmarks gone, villages heaps of rubble, and

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the windmills, farms and spinneys of the maps blotted out of existence.

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The third stage of the battle of the Somme began with a general advance down the reverse slope of the Pozières—Ginchy ridge towards the improvised German line based on the fortified villages of the valley—Courcelette, Martinpuich, Flers, Morval. For three days before the attack the whole German line from the Ancre to the Somme was shelled by the Allied guns. And on the second morning of this bombardment—September 13—the Patricias arrived at Albert and bivouacked with many other units in the Brickfields south-west of the city.

Sept.
7-13.

The journey from Belgium had been pleasant ; nor was it a trying one for troops in hard condition. Marching north on September 7 from Cassel to Esquebec on the Yser, the Regiment entrained in the afternoon, travelled south all night and detrained at Conteville (a few miles north-east of Abbeville) at 4 A.M. on the 8th, whence it marched at the break of dawn to billets in the village of Cramont. The trek almost due east to its destination began on September 10. The Brigade moved off very early each morning in order to make billets or bivouac before the heat of the day, in weather which was excellent for route-marching. The first halt was at Pernois, where the men had a chance to bathe in the little river Nièvre running through the village. The second day brought the Regiment to Toutencourt, where the camp consisted of hutments in an orchard. To Harponville on the third day was little more than a change of billets, and on September 13 the Patricias were at Albert amid the orderly confusion of a great concentration.

Bivouacs on the eve of a modern battle must

perforce be too crowded for comfort. Tents and lean-tos, all packed with officers or men, were pitched as closely as possible. (The explosion of a single shell would have wiped out a company; but fortunately the Germans had abandoned the air for the time being and their guns did not hit the camp, although a few shells dropped dangerously near the equally crowded transport lines.) But to soldiers who had known only the routine of training camps and the surreptitious comings and goings of the Ypres Salient there were adequate compensations for all discomforts in new and exhilarating sights. The roads carried an unbroken stream of guns, limbers and men all in one direction—"up"; the cavalry were there in the hope—vain, alas—that the real break through was coming; the gilded Virgin still kept a defiant hold high on the church in Albert; and in the valley below a great gun stood out in the open, firing for all to see. Stories of a new and outlandish weapon of war no longer needed to be whispered, for some of the officers and men had actually seen the "Caterpillars" moving up on the evening of the 14th for their first appearance on the field.¹

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The Patricias remained in the Brickfields all through September 14. While they knew that a general attack was ordered for daybreak of the 15th, and that the 8th Brigade would be involved near Mouquet Farm, they had no word as to when their own turn to attack was likely to come. It seemed probable that their first tour would merely be to relieve the Mounted Rifles and hold any gains they made round the Farm. None the less Colonel Pelly, having been warned that his command "might

¹ Neither the designation "H.M. Landships" nor the name "Tanks" had yet reached the infantryman.

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be called upon to follow up the original attack in one of several places," took the precaution, most fortunate in the event, of sending forward a reconnaissance party of officers to study the approaches to the line. Several of these officers had a superb view of the last preliminaries of attack, as they looked from the high ground at the guns standing wheel to wheel in the valleys below and watched their concentrated bombardment of the "Wunderwerk" in front of Thiepval. This strong-point was captured during the night, though with heavy losses, by the 32nd Brigade (11th British Division), the operation not only serving admirably as a feint but making possible the capture of Mouquet Farm next day.

Sept. 15. The Patricias turned in that night without any great anticipations for the morrow. Very early on the fine autumn morning of September 15 they were awakened by the hurricane bombardment preceding the general assault which took place at 6 A.M. News came in fitfully, but it was soon clear that the advance was in general going well on the left, where the 1st and 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles attacked Mouquet Farm, pushed the line on the Canadian left over the slope to the east of it, and occupied the left half of "Sugar Trench." A little later came the good word that the main Canadian operation, a frontal attack by the 2nd Division, had reached all its objectives. The Sugar Factory beside the main road near Courcellette, and the trench system which guarded it (including the other half of Sugar Trench), had been brilliantly captured by the 4th and 6th Canadian Infantry Brigades, which were even pushing forward outposts into the village of Courcellette.

Meanwhile the 7th Brigade was supposed to be

“standing-to” in the Brickfields. So little did coming events cast their shadows before that the rank and file of the Patricias passed the time, to the unconcealed entertainment of neighbouring units, in donning a new issue of underclothing, blue beyond the rivalry of sky or sea—the latest gift of a beneficent quartermaster’s stores. Into the midst of this frivolous scene there came a sudden order from Divisional Headquarters for the 7th Brigade to move forward immediately, prepared to attack.

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It is now well known that the storming of Courcellette in the evening of September 15 was something of a surprise to the Canadians as well as to the enemy. General Byng had not spoken of it even to his Divisional Commanders at the conference on the night before as a considered plan; General Lipsett was not told until 8.15 A.M. to despatch the 7th Brigade through Albert; and the final decision for the evening attack was probably reached some hours later still. The remarkable success of the 2nd Division and reports of the progress of the Fourth Army opposite Martinpuich and Flers must have determined the Corps Commander to strike again while the Germans were thoroughly shaken. The result amply justified his decision, and the capture of Courcellette is remembered as one of the brilliant improvisations of the war. But it should also be remembered that this sudden decision greatly increased the difficulties of the infantry. They went into action little prepared, ignorant of the ground, and lacking co-ordination and particularly that support from other arms which was so marked a feature of later assaults upon prepared positions. It would, for instance, be unreasonable to contrast the scrambling advance of the Patricias

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on this day with their clock-work assault on Vimy Ridge in the following April.

The only orders that reached Colonel Pelly in the Brickfields bivouac at 9.30 A.M. were to assemble his command at once in battle order on the southern slope of Usna Hill, the rising ground north of the Bapaume road between Albert and La Boisselle. A small reorganizing cadre, including the second in Command (Major Agar Adamson, D.S.O.) and two Headquarters officers, with one officer and a few N.C.O.'s and men per company, was detailed to remain behind and clean the bivouac—necessarily left in some disorder—and then stand by ready to move in fighting kit at half an hour's notice.¹ In twenty minutes the Regiment was marching through Albert to the rendezvous, the Pipe Band playing it along. The head of the Brigade reached Usna Hill about 10.30 A.M.; and by 11 o'clock all units were assembled. Here the Regiment had some hours to wait; but fortunately the weather was fine, and the eager men passed the time usefully in priming many hundreds of grenades. The position, though exposed, was secure, for the enemy had not yet begun to rally from the blow struck in the morning, and while behind the British lines the sky was full of observation balloons, no German aeroplane could get across to search for concentration of troops.

By 11.15 A.M. Colonel Pelly and the other battalion commanders were in conference with General Lipsett and General Macdonell, who had

¹ An Army Order required that the commanding officer or second in command, a proportion of both Headquarters and company officers, and one-third of the N.C.O.'s and men should be left behind when a battalion went into action. It was not always possible to carry out this order to the letter and only once or twice were either of the two senior officers of the Patricia's out of the line on an important occasion; but though the order was not at first popular its wisdom was plain as the war of attrition dragged on, and it was always obeyed so far as depleted strength permitted.

been hurried with their staffs in motor cars to the assembly point. Instructions were soon coming over the telephone from the Corps, and the outlines of a further advance were received and discussed. The 7th Brigade was detailed for a holding flank attack in support of an attempt to storm Courcelette by the 5th Brigade of the 2nd Canadian Division. While the 8th Brigade held the line it had captured at Mouquet Farm and in Sugar Trench, two battalions of the 7th Brigade were to pass through its right, and through the battalions of the 6th Brigade beside it, and attack "Fabeck Graben," a fire-trench sloping down from the height of land just north of Mouquet Farm to the western outskirts of Courcelette. This movement if successful would protect the main assault on the village, which, lying in the hollow, was otherwise commanded by all the high land on the west.

These general instructions announced that five or six hours' notice of the "zero hour" would probably be given. There was a general feeling that the attack would not be delivered before nightfall at the very earliest, and Colonel Pelly ordered up his field-cookers to prepare a hot meal. But by noon the Corps Commander was so impressed by the reports from the 2nd Division before Courcelette that he issued urgent orders that preparations were to be made to exploit the success already gained by an advance to Courcelette and Fabeck Graben. The Patricias knew already that they were in the first line of attack, and Lieutenant W. H. Morris at once moved off with his scouts in search of information.

The 7th Brigade's task was now increased, for its line was to be pushed "well out in front of Fabeck Graben to the hill crest." The Higher

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Command was looking ahead to a further assault on "Zollern Graben," which ran west out of Fabeck Graben to Zollern Redoubt and formed the last of the enemy's strong positions before the high ground descended to the villages of Pys and Miraumont. The final orders emphasized the defensive nature of the 7th Brigade's attack, for while the line was to be carried forward in the low ground near Courcellette across the Zollern Graben to the sunken road beyond, towards the west it was to bend sharply back to Mouquet Farm and connect with the 8th Brigade at the left end of Fabeck Graben. This proposed arc was to serve the double purpose of protection against counter-attack, and jumping-off point against Zollern Graben next day. It was to be made by the 49th Battalion, which was to pass through the assaulting battalions when they had attained their object.

Fabeck Graben was still the main prize, and it was to be captured by the 42nd Battalion on the left and the Patricias on the right. The 42nd had on its left the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles, whose duty was to push forward the line on a short front into the extreme left of Fabeck Graben and there become the pivot upon which the 7th Brigade would swing to cover the storming of Courcellette by the 25th and 22nd Battalions of the 5th Brigade.

Sugar Trench, captured in the morning advance, was to be the starting point of this attack. But, Sugar Trench running at an angle to Fabeck Graben, the 42nd and P.P.C.L.I. would have to swing half-left in mid-advance; and this change of direction would be a particularly difficult manœuvre for the Patricias, since on their front Fabeck Graben swung away very sharply to escape the low ground round Courcellette. General Macdonell therefore

fixed an intermediate objective—"McDonnell Trench," running along the line of the road from Courcelette to Ovillers.¹ To reach the part of this road between Sugar Trench and the entrance to Courcelette village both battalions must pivot on the left company of the 42nd so that the right company of the Patricias, which connected with the 25th Battalion at the sunken road running from the windmill to the south-west corner of Courcelette, had farthest to go. The right flank then was to advance 700 yards while the left flank kept its place; but after McDonnell Trench was occupied, the whole line was to move forward to its new front for some 350 yards, storm and occupy Fabeck Graben from the entrance of the village to the junction with the 5th C.M.R. some 1400 yards farther west. Finally, with Fabeck Graben captured all along the line, the 49th was to pass through and protect the advance of the 5th Brigade through Courcelette. The Royal Canadian Regiment lay in brigade reserve; the 9th Brigade was ordered up to Usna Hill in general support.

These plans, now sketched from a study of divisional and brigade operation orders which battalion commanders probably received by word of mouth, were but vaguely comprehended by the mass of officers and men who lay on Usna Hill from 11 A.M. to 1 P.M. Brigade and even Divisional staffs had slender information about conditions in front; and no trustworthy maps of the new line of battle ever reached the attacking battalions—perhaps none had yet been issued. This added

¹ During these operations this road was frequently referred to as "the sunken road," an unsatisfactory name because of another and more deeply sunken road between Courcelette and Pozières. To save the reader from a confusion which was not altogether avoided on September 15 and 16 the name later adopted—"McDonnell Trench"—is used in this narrative.

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greatly to Colonel Pelly's difficulty in planning dispositions, which must now be made although there was no word of the time of attack except the general promise of "five or six hours' notice." The active command of the attacking line was given to Major C. J. T. Stewart of No. 3 Company. He was instructed to attack on a two-company front in the wave formation practised at Terdeghem, with his own company (Lieutenant A. G. Rosamond commanding) alongside the sunken road, and No. 1 Company (Lieutenant R. L. Haggard) on its left; No. 2 Company (Major H. E. Sullivan) was to follow in close support, and No. 4 Company (Major S. F. A. Martin) was to bring up the rear as battalion reserve.

These orders had hardly been issued—certainly they had not reached junior officers, N.C.O.'s and men—when word came to the 7th Brigade which robbed the Regiment of its hot dinner. A message from Division at 1.25 P.M., after stating in full the scope of the attack, ended: "zero hour 6 P.M." The unexpected news that General Byng was not to wait for darkness reached the battalions about 2 P.M. in the form of an order to move forward at once to the Chalk Pits between Pozières and Contalmaison—only as a momentary rendezvous on the way to the assault. "The time was short," curtly remarks the regimental battle historian of the occasion; "there were only four hours to organize the attack, draw rations, bombs and other necessary equipment and to march a distance of about five miles. Leaving a dinner which the cooks had just prepared, we marched at once to Chalk Pits, arriving at 3 P.M."¹ This march to the Pits was

¹ Perhaps the last company did not arrive at the rendezvous till more nearly 4 P.M.

comparatively slow ; an interval of fifty yards was kept between platoons ; and roads were crowded with tanks and ammunition wagons going up, and empty limbers, ambulances and prisoners of war coming down, in two unbroken streams.

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After arrival at the Chalk Pits, the Regiment had a short rest in the old German trenches of the Pozières defence system. Rations and bombs were hastily issued, a battalion "dump" was established, and most of the men managed to get hot food from the cookers which the Quartermaster and Transport Officer, with fine perseverance, had steered through the maze of traffic to the assembly point. Final orders were now given to Colonel Pelly and Major Stewart. The Patricias were to march to the junction of Sugar Trench with the Windmill—Courcelette sunken road, and then extend along the trench for about 400 yards to the left, from which point the 42nd was to occupy the trench as far as its intersection by McDonnell Trench. Sugar Trench was the "jumping-off" line, and the boundary between the two battalions was to be the communication trench running back from McDonnell Trench through Fabeck Graben into Zollern Graben. The map will show how the two battalions were faced with different problems : the Patricias had a steady descent into the low western approaches of Courcelette ; the 42nd Battalion, after a slight fall at first, must climb to assault the higher part of Fabeck Graben. The Patricias had a long first movement, after which a short but quite sharp swing half-left would bring them to the main German line ; the 42nd set out with a stationary left flank and a sharper swing, followed by a longer and more direct advance to its destination.

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Neither Colonel Pelly nor Major Stewart received a copy of General Macdonell's Operation Order No. 46, which outlined these dispositions. They were told its content at the Chalk Pits, and Major Stewart had only the briefest time to pass the instructions to his company officers. N.C.O.'s and men first heard them from platoon officers moving backwards and forwards along the line on the advance to the assaulting point. There was little indeed to go upon beyond the order of battle; the Patricias were jumping off into unknown enemy country with no guidance but a dubious aeroplane map.

At 4.30 P.M. Major Stewart led off with guides provided by the 2nd Division at the head of No. 3 Company, followed by Nos. 1, 2 and 4, and soon all the companies were moving in single file. From the first they were fighting the clock. The most important new information received at the Chalk Pits was the timing of the artillery barrage. The guns were to play on the first objective until 6.15 P.M. only, then lengthen to allow the infantry to rush the intermediate position, then barrage Fabeck Graben for fifteen minutes, and finally, lifting from this for the second advance at 6.30 P.M., were to lay down a protective barrage against counter-attack beyond the limits of the third (49th's) objective. Nothing therefore counted now but that the Patricias should reach Sugar Trench in time to begin the advance at 6 P.M. and be ready to launch the second assault by 6.15. But this proved almost beyond human power. Ninety minutes gives ample time for a march of two miles; but when men are moving in platoons in file at fifty yards' interval over unfamiliar ground where every road is blocked with guns and wagons, and when a

curtain of enemy artillery fire bars the way, an easy march may become a desperate race.

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The route taken by the Regiment ran west of Pozières, past the village cemetery, along the ridge to the windmill, and thence down the reverse slope along the sunken road to Sugar Trench. At first progress was only delayed by crowded roads near Pozières, and at 5 P.M. both P.P.C.L.I. and 42nd were passing the cemetery in assault formation, well up to time. Half an hour later, as they filed over the hill-top near the wrecked windmill, the Patricias ran into heavy barrage fire. The leading companies escaped lightly, but No. 4 suffered many casualties; Major Stanley Martin and his Company-Sergeant-Major were killed by the same shell at the head of the line, and some 40 per cent of No. 4 Company were put out of action before the assault began. The Regiment was harassed by heavy fire all down the slope and lost further precious minutes. Still, there was no fatal delay, and the leading companies, fully alive to the danger of being late, pressed on. But where was Sugar Trench?

“At 6 P.M. approximately,” says the Brigade diary, “42nd on left and P.P.C.L.I. on right assembled in Sugar Trench.” And again: “42nd and P.P.C.L.I. attacked on the dot.” There are times when the laconics of war diaries are sparing of the truth. The temperately written and more detailed Battalion narrative draws quite another picture and breathes a very different atmosphere:

The leading companies pushed northwards up the sunken road under very heavy fire. The Sugar Trench proved elusive. We never found it, and the leading companies came into action in strange ground, without realizing fully where they were. We had pictured organization in Sugar Trench, and “jumping off” at the stated time.

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Instead the attacking companies extended to the left from the sunken road and moved forward to the first objective in open order.

It seems that Major Stewart and his assaulting companies, moving up the sunken road behind their guides, missed the junction with Sugar Trench—at this point completely blown away in the morning—and just before the zero hour overran the jumping-off trench into No Man's Land. With the haziest idea as to his position, Major Stewart halted his men a minute or two before six o'clock to get their breath and fix bayonets, and went on to try to place himself while they closed up the line. Then came a stroke of good fortune—chance was with the Regiment on September 15. One landmark remained on the whole front—the village of Courcellette, not yet completely destroyed, but blazing under the artillery bombardment—and this Major Stewart and his companions picked up on their right front as they advanced in file. At once they realized that they were facing north and south instead of east and west. There was nothing for it now—it was past the zero hour—but to deploy to the west across the enemy's front and regain direction on the move. This movement had hardly begun when both the leading companies (1 and 3) suddenly discovered that they had overshot Sugar Trench. They were in the middle of the Germans, little groups of whom popped up from shell-holes only a few yards away.

By all the rules of war an infantry unit which deploys across the enemy's front at point-blank range commits suicide, and had the enemy been officered and controlled the two companies might well have been wiped out before the line was straightened. But General Byng's opinion of the

enemy morale was now proved correct. The German troops which the Brigade encountered on this day were of very poor quality, and none of them except the machine gunners had much heart left.¹ Certainly this first group that the Patricias encountered wanted no more fighting; they had been under tremendous fire all day, had been beaten in the morning, were cut off from retreat to good trenches by the British barrage, and were now lying about in shell-holes, a spiritless rabble. Hardly a shot was fired on either side. The Germans, lustily counselled to surrender by the advancing companies, were quick to throw up their hands, and some seventy-five prisoners were hurriedly passed to the rear. For a moment Nos. 1 and 3 Companies resembled nothing so much as a Canadian university football crowd in the delirium of a close finish. Next minute they were the players again, away like a pack of forwards after the ball. Taking a communication trench in their stride, they arrived at their first objective with scarcely a man down. It was now 6.15 P.M. or a minute or two later.

The advance from Usna Hill to McDonnell Trench, which may be called the first stage of the action, was of itself no small achievement in the eyes of General Lipsett :

The problem which faced the commander of the 7th Brigade was a hard one. Four and a half hours only were available to march five miles over difficult country devoid of landmarks, through enemy barrages, to deploy for attack in broad daylight in a captured and partially obliterated German trench, the whereabouts of which was not known, except from the map, to the battalion commanders, and to

¹ The 209th-212th German Regiments (45th Reserve Division) were composed of men from all parts of Prussia and Posen, and had none too good a reputation. One of the regiments was already in disgrace and under threat of transfer to the Russian front for the winter.

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launch the attack on a two-battalion front at 6 P.M. Nevertheless, owing to the previous excellent reconnaissance work of the regimental scout officers and scouts who had been sent ahead, and who met their battalions *en route*, all battalions were in their places on time, and the attack went forward punctually.

The Battalions were now in unreconnoitred territory and had to shift for themselves. The first problem for the Patricias was to fix the direction of the second advance. This was not easy, for the exact line of McDonnell Trench was impossible to discover, so severely had it been battered by the accurate fire of the Corps artillery. Major Stewart therefore rested his men for a minute or two in shell-holes near the approximate line of his first objective. He himself, accompanied by Lieutenant R. Hodder-Williams and his Company - Sergeant - Major, went forward once more to decide with his very inadequate map and without landmarks to what extent he must wheel his flank. This was not obvious, and there was no time for any careful calculations; it was already nearly 6.25 P.M. and the Patricias must be far enough forward, when the barrage lifted at 6.30, to try to rush Fabeck Graben. Over on the left the 42nd Battalion could be seen making a fine dash up the hill, and there was nothing for it but to trust to the luck of the day. And in one sense the luck held. Major Stewart swung his attack at the right moment, in the right place and to the right extent, though he always refused credit for what he maintained was a "pure accident."¹ At 6.25 P.M. the company officers jumped out of

¹ Colonel Agar Adamson notes on the author's manuscript: "This is only the modesty of a good soldier who later gave his life, always ignorant of the fact that his energy and push to a great extent saved the situation, and it is pleasant to know that the Higher Commands disagreed with him as to it being a 'pure accident.'"

their shell-holes and began to scramble forward from hole to hole with their men on their heels—straight for Fabeck Graben. Major Stewart himself, ignoring Army Orders in an emergency where everything turned on personal leadership, was well in front, moving with the bombers in the middle of the line up the communication trench which connected McDonnell Trench and Fabeck Graben in the low ground.

The second advance proved a very much more serious undertaking than the first. The companies could move only very slowly over ground which was all shell-craters, and were raked by rifle fire and particularly by a machine gun from the right flank near the village. No. 3, on the right, caught the full force of this enfilade fire which swept the whole approach to Fabeck Graben on the hillside, and No. 1 suffered almost as severely. Lieutenant Rosamond and his Company-Sergeant-Major were killed at the very outset, while both the remaining officers of No. 3 Company and two of the three with No. 1 were hit before the advance had progressed 200 yards. The centre of the attack was driven off the open ground into the communication trench, and three platoons of No. 3 Company lost most of their men in a few minutes. On the left, two platoons of No. 1 Company got a footing in Fabeck Graben, connected with the 42nd (who had reached this trench without very heavy losses), and cleared 200 yards of trench towards the junction with Zollern Graben, "gallantly assisted by nine bombers of the 28th Battalion." (Units were already inextricably mixed; "wave" formations had disappeared soon after zero hour.) On the extreme right a small party, pushing up to the head of the sunken road,

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occupied a few bays of trench near the entrance to the village, pushed their way down a sap and blocked the main trench.

The rest of Fabeck Graben could not be captured. On either side of the communication trench the enemy was still in possession on a front of some 200 yards when the barrage moved forward. The communication trench provided the only shelter from the machine guns on the right, and here the remnant of Nos. 3 and 1 rallied. Three efforts were made to bridge the gap on the right, and on each occasion every man was hit before he had crawled ten yards. Lieutenant Hodder-Williams, the last officer left in this part of the line, was put out of action, and Lance-Sergeant McG. F. McIntosh took command of the men in the trench.¹ He stood the enemy off and pushed forward so far as he dared under the cover of Mills grenades, of which, thanks to an order that each man going into the action should carry two in the haversack slung across his shoulders, there was a supply for the moment. The bombers cleared a way to fifty yards from the entrance to Fabeck Graben, and here established and garrisoned a block. This block sufficed to hold the ground gained. The Germans failed to organize a counter-attack through the gap or otherwise avail themselves of the confusion caused by their machine-gun fire, and the P.P.C.L.I. Lewis Gun Officer, Lieutenant G. M. Smith, following on the heels of the attacking companies, covered the danger zone with his guns before moving up to the front to act

¹ L/Sgt. McIntosh was commissioned on the field for his admirable leadership on this day, but had the misfortune to lose an arm on the next tour, while still officially in the ranks. He was gazetted, however, and although unable to return to active service with the Regiment, became one of the original cadre of officers in the reorganization of the Patricias as a unit of the Canadian permanent Militia in 1919.

as Major Stewart's adjutant through the rest of the action.¹

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The assaulting companies lay in the communication trench and in neighbouring shell-holes for about three-quarters of an hour. Soon after 7 P.M. it began to get dark, and the trench was cleared as quickly as possible of all wounded who could walk. No. 2 and, subsequently, No. 4 Companies came up in support with tools, and while the survivors of the right companies garrisoned the block and the communication trench, Major Stewart set Nos. 2 and 4 (reinforced later by a party from the 49th Battalion) to dig a new trench westward from the communication trench, parallel with and about 100 yards short of Fabeck Graben. Four Lewis-gun teams were thrown forward into shell-holes under Corporal A. F. Neatby to protect the diggers during the work, which went on undisturbed all night under the supervision of Lieutenant A. Le N. Dove, the only remaining officer of the assaulting companies.

Major Stewart, who seemed that day to bear a charmed life, despatched his first message to the rear about 7.30 P.M. It read :

Have not been able to take second objective. Am consolidating about centre of 29. [Map location :—*i.e.* the new trench in front of Fabeck Graben.] Have not got any touch with either flank. Would like reinforcements with more bombs. Have seen nothing of 49th yet. All officers casualties. Need S[tretcher] B[earers] in worst way. Am sending in prisoners.

Colonel Pelly's Headquarters were in an old dug-out

¹ L/Cpl. W. E. French, a bomber, although badly wounded in the leg during the attack, found a gun which had lost its crew and, held in position by comrades, enfiladed the gap for several hours. The Lewis guns proved of immense value during the whole engagement, and were all safely brought out at the end.

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near the windmill barely a mile back, but the message took four hours to reach him through the barrage, and indeed the Brigade knew the situation of the Patricias fully an hour before their own Commanding Officer. When the message at last came, Colonel Pelly at once sent forward the two reserve platoons of No. 4 Company with bombs and water. The demand for stretchers was insistently repeated by Major Stewart in subsequent messages, also by Major Sullivan (established with No. 2 Company in a captured trench on the left of the sunken road) and by the 49th Battalion; Colonel Pelly applied for stretchers and water from the Brigade reserve, but little could be done to help the severely wounded for more than twenty-four hours.

Meanwhile the 49th, detailed to establish the advanced positions before Zollern Graben, came up all along the line and passed through the 42nd between 8.30 and 9 P.M., leaving one company in Fabeck Graben. In response to a message from Lieutenant J. R. Mitchener, commanding the two platoons of No. 1 Company that had reached Fabeck Graben on the left, a platoon of the support company of the 49th was sent up by way of reinforcement and to free him to move farther to the right. Other details of this Battalion lent help in digging the new trench in the centre.

“For some time,” says the Divisional diary, “the position was obscure.” So difficult was communication that Major Sullivan still understood at 10 P.M. that the companies in front of him had been entirely successful. But about midnight a very fine reconnaissance by Lieutenant W. H. Morris gave information concerning the whole front line: a single company of the 4th C.M.R. held Fabeck Graben at the extreme left, and, connecting

with them, the 42nd Battalion had captured the trench all along their front; to the right again, a further section of Fabeck Graben was held by a company of the 49th Battalion and two platoons of No. 1 Company P.P.C.L.I. (Near this point, just north-east of the intersection of Fabeck Graben by the main communication trench connecting McDonnell Trench and Zollern Graben, two companies of the 49th had passed through and formed a protective arc, bending back to the west round a chalk-pit which lay about half-way between Fabeck Graben and Zollern Graben.) Then came a gap of 200 yards. Fabeck Graben at its junction with Zollern Graben was held by the enemy in strength, and Major Stewart's companies were furiously digging in opposite this part of the line. The extreme right of Fabeck Graben was held by an isolated party of the Patricias, and beyond them the 25th and 22nd Battalions had stormed their way to the northern outskirts of Courcelette. In the main, therefore, the 7th Brigade's assault had been successful. The Germans had been driven from Fabeck Graben except on a front of 200 yards, and from this Major Stewart promised they would be bombed as soon as he had replenished his supply of grenades. Casualties in the Brigade at large had not been excessive, but Nos. 1 and 3 Companies P.P.C.L.I. had lost nearly all their officers and more than half their men for the second time in fifteen weeks.

The German artillery kept up heavy fire all through the night. Colonel Pelly's Headquarters was persistently shelled, and the wounded had to pass through the worst barrage zone as they crossed the high ground; but the German gunners failed to find the new trench, and in spite of sniping from Fabeck Graben and Zollern Graben, the consolidat-

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ing party suffered little.¹ The gap on the right was still a source of anxiety. But from 8 P.M. touch was made on both flanks : messages passed between Major Stewart and the Commanding Officer of the 49th Battalion, while patrols of the 25th Battalion and the Patricias met every hour at the isolated post on the right, and the gap was covered all night by a Lewis gun from each battalion. At dawn the support companies retired a few hundred yards to the trench behind McDonnell Trench, and Nos. 1 and 3 Companies manned the "reasonably good" fire-trench which was the result of the night's exertions. During the morning of September 16 the enemy bombarded the support line and persistently searched the ground round Regimental Headquarters. The new fire-trench escaped. But the men garrisoning it were now living on iron rations, had but little water left, were soaked by the steady drizzle which had begun at dusk, and had had no sleep.

Moreover, part of Fabeck Graben was still to capture, and that at the earliest moment. For a new attack now planned threw further responsibilities on the 7th Brigade. While the 2nd Division consolidated its position and established posts east and north of Courcelette, the 7th Brigade was ordered to capture Zollern Graben as preliminary to a surprise attack on Zollern Redoubt from the east by the 9th Brigade. The general plan was to straighten out the advance by capturing all the uplands from the maze of the Zollern Redoubt to the Courcelette—Grandcourt road ; but the main movement could not be launched until Zollern

¹ The German communications were even more disorganized than the Canadian. For a long time the enemy's Higher Command was under the misapprehension that the whole of Fabeck Graben was lost, and bombarded his own densely packed men at the junction with Zollern Graben. Many dead Germans were found at this point next day.

Graben had been captured "far enough westwards to enable the attack on the Redoubt to form up with its flanks secured." Accordingly orders were issued at 1.30 P.M. for the 42nd and R.C.R. to storm the Zollern Graben at 5 P.M. Before that hour the troops in the line (*i.e.* the 49th and P.P.C.L.I.) were to bomb the Germans out of Fabeck Graben and block Zollern Graben on the right. Failing success in this the support companies of the Patricias were to make a frontal attack beside the R.C.R. at five o'clock.

These instructions reached Major Stewart at 3 P.M. and upset his own plans. At 1 P.M. he had reported to Colonel Pelly that he intended at 8.30 P.M. to launch a bombing attack against that part of Fabeck Graben which still held out. But in the light of the new orders this carefully prepared attack had to be abandoned for an improvisation. The 49th Battalion and the two left platoons of No. 1 Company received instructions similar to those sent to Major Stewart, and the attack "happened" at the same moment from both flanks. P.P.C.L.I. bombing squads from the communication trench and from the isolated post on the right "were feeling their way forward towards that part of the second objective still in the enemy's hands, when they discovered that the situation was favourable to attack." The 49th Battalion party under Captain Harstone appear to have come to the same conclusion at the same moment: "it is impossible to say who threw the first bomb." The whole affair was over in a minute. Attacked from three sides, the Prussians had no stomach for a fight. Sixty-two of them jumped on the parapet with white flags crying "Kamerad!", whereupon Major Stewart, whose knowledge of foreign tongues was not thorough, is said to have

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shouted back, " Ici, ici, come ici ! " " Our men in great excitement jumped out of the trench and rounded up the prisoners. Our own officers, fearing machine-gun fire, ordered all back into the trenches, and immediately sent the prisoners to the rear to clear trenches in case the R.C.R. should come forward for their attack. A captured German officer told us that the newly captured portion of the trench had been manned on the previous night by a full German company."¹

The whole of Fabeck Graben was at last in Canadian hands. The Regiment now garrisoned between 300 and 400 yards of good deep trench littered with dead, wounded and equipment. From the Fabeck—Zollern junction details of the 49th and Patricias pushed up Zollern Graben and established their block. All this had been accomplished by about 4.15 P.M. The gunfire was now heavy, and at 4.45 P.M., as the time of the R.C.R. attack approached, either British or German shells began to fall very close and the Patricias fell back temporarily into the improvised trench of the night before, returning to Fabeck Graben as the barrage moved forward. The German bombardment of Fabeck Graben continued for some hours, and accounted for most of the losses suffered by the Patricias after the first rush on the 15th.

The Royal Canadian Regiment was seen attacking on the left shortly after 5 P.M. The two left platoons of No. 1 Company and some of the 49th took part on the right of the assault,²

¹ This officer was at pains to explain to his captors that " when you are attacked from three sides the book tells you to surrender."

² In this operation Lieut. J. R. Mitchener, P.P.C.L.I., who had become detached from the Regiment early on the first day and had since been operating with a composite force of bombers and riflemen, greatly distinguished himself, but received wounds from the effects of which he died some days later.

and the companies holding Fabeck Graben on the right opened effective fire with rifles and Lewis guns on Germans who could be seen retreating across the open from Zollern Graben. But the main attack was not successful, and the "great dash and gallantry" of the 42nd Battalion and the Royal Canadian Regiment were wasted. The artillery failed to locate Zollern Graben or destroy the wire, and the enterprise was held up with heavy losses due to terrific machine-gun fire from the left flank and from "Hessian Trench" on the right front; an order to the 49th Battalion to throw itself into the attack miscarried; and the 9th Brigade's assault on the Zollern Redoubt had to be abandoned. The action of the 16th, however, had indirect results of some importance to the Patricias. They learned after the engagement that just when Major Stewart was making his final bombing attack, a continuous stream of small parties of Germans were seen by British aeroplanes moving south-east down the Grandcourt—Courcelette road and concentrating behind Zollern Graben. There seems no doubt, from this and other evidence, that the enemy was then contemplating a counter-attack from the Zollern Graben to recapture the ground held by the 49th and P.P.C.L.I., and that the attempt of the 42nd and R.C.R. forestalled and disorganized a blow which would have tried the Patricias severely; for the companies in the line were low in food and ammunition, and were exhausted from fighting and digging and from lying sleepless and unsheltered under a cold rain for over twenty hours.

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During the evening of the 16th, Colonel Pelly summed up a number of messages received from his companies in the following report :

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Our front line is dug in 50 yards to 100 yards in front of original second objective. We are in touch with the 2nd Division (25th Battalion) on our right in Courcellette and with the 49th on our left. Estimated casualties—9 officers, 300 other ranks. Enemy is holding high ground 50 yards to 100 yards in front of us. He continually shells our front line, but seldom hits the trench. Evacuation of wounded proceeding.

The plight of the wounded was desperate, for there had been little time or none to plan for their evacuation. On the night of the 15th nothing whatever in the way of medical care was forthcoming for the attacking line, and such wounded as could walk chanced it through the barrage. In some surprising way most of them got back; and once behind Pozières they came within range of the admirable casualty clearing system operating through Albert. But there were many others who had to lie where they fell for nearly thirty-six hours. The C.A.M.C. was without sufficient stretchers and had to call upon the battalions for theirs, and in spite of constant appeals from Major Stewart, Major Sullivan and Captain Harstone of the 49th, the Brigade reserve could not supply stretchers or stretcher-bearers. As soon as dusk fell on the 16th and precautions had been taken against counter-attack, the Patricias themselves made a prodigious effort to get their wounded out. Stretchers improvised of German rifles, greatcoats and rubber sheets were used to carry both Canadian and Prussian wounded, whilst patrols searched the open ground for men lying in the shell-holes. The sorely needed rations, tea and water, arrived soon after 9 P.M., and the returning ration-party helped to carry the wounded back to safety.

At 10 P.M., there being no sign of the general



Photo : Ingham, Bordon

LIÉUT.-COLONEL R. T. PELLY, D.S.O.

relief for which Major Stewart was anxiously waiting, a local relief was organized in Fabeck Graben to give Nos. 1 and 3 Companies a chance to rest; but shortly before 1 A.M. on September 17 the 9th Brigade was ordered to relieve the 7th, and this welcome news reached the front line by 2.15 A.M. Stretchers and stretcher-bearers at last began to arrive, and search of the ground once more after dawn assured the Regiment that none of its wounded were left and all its dead were buried when it withdrew. The relief, the whole of which was arranged and conducted under heavy shell fire by Lieutenant G. M. Smith, was slow and very difficult as the 52nd Battalion did not know the ground; but it was accomplished just in time, a few minutes before the break of dawn, though with the loss of another valuable officer, Lieutenant A. E. Goodeve, who was killed by a shell as his party formed up to leave the trench. Near the Chalk Pits which it had left thirty-six hours before, the Regiment was met by its field-cookers. Hot tea was served out, and the Patricias marched back to Tara Hill, north-east of Albert, where they lay in bivouac, with the Regimental Colour planted in the ground to mark Battalion Headquarters.

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The Patricias had just over 300 killed or wounded on September 15 and 16. Four company officers were killed and six wounded.¹ Casualties among

¹ The killed were Major S. F. A. Martin and Lieuts. A. G. Rosamond, A. E. Goodeve and J. R. Mitchener (died of wounds). Lieuts. R. L. Haggard and O. S. Tyndale (No. 1), M. Ten Broeke (No. 2), R. Hodder-Williams and C. C. Robinson (No. 3), and C. A. Grant (No. 4) were wounded. Major Martin (an officer of superb physique affectionately known as "the big Swede") was one of the first men singled out by Col. Farquhar to be commissioned from the ranks. Lieut. Rosamond ("Rosie") left an important business in Canada at the outbreak of war to go to England and enlist in the

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other ranks—297 in all—included two company-sergeant-majors killed, and nearly all the other senior N.C.O.'s killed or wounded; the proportion of killed to wounded was high, more than one in three, and may probably be accounted for by the point-blank machine-gun fire and the difficulties of tending and moving the severely wounded. The toll was heavier than in any aggressive action except Passchendaele and Tilloy, but considering the doubt and confusion which attended the battle was not excessive.

The action fought by the 7th Brigade on September 15 and 16 has been overshadowed in Canadian annals, and properly so, by the more spectacular storming of Courcelette village by the 5th Brigade and the long struggle for Regina Trench in October. But if the capture of Fabeck Graben has won less fame than many another incident of the Battle of the Somme, it is at least an exceedingly good example of the modern infantry battle and its vicissitudes. If not war, as war came to be understood in the later days of scientific attack, it was magnificent as a demonstration of fighting spirit and regimental morale. Attacking unknown defences across unknown ground in broad daylight, missing the way at the end of a forced march and changing direction twice to recover it in a country where every landmark had been obliterated, the Patricias took and held two objectives—one of them a strong trench over 1000 yards away—captured 150 prisoners and inflicted very heavy loss on the enemy. "The

Sportsmen's Battalion (Royal Fusiliers). After receiving his commission in the Patricias he rapidly became one of their most valuable and best-loved officers. A few days before his death in action, although one of the oldest officers serving in the Regiment, he unhesitatingly declined the offer of a staff appointment which would have taken him back to England.

performance of the Brigade," wrote General Lipsett to General Macdonell, "was regarded by the Army and Corps Commanders as one of the finest brigade feats in the war." Messages of congratulation reached the Brigade and its Battalions during the next few days from the King, from Sir Douglas Haig and from General Joffre. To the great delight of all ranks, Major Stewart, the very life and soul of the attack, was recommended for and received the Distinguished Service Order for "most conspicuous courage and skill"; and a number of decorations were awarded to junior officers, N.C.O.'s and men.

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The Regiment bivouacked upon Tara Hill from the afternoon of September 17 to the afternoon of September 19, and then moved into billets in Albert until September 22. Constant and heavy rain caused great discomfort, and all ranks were very tired; but there was as yet little opportunity for rest, for large working-parties were sent each day to bury cable at Courcelette or to labour upon road construction at Ovillers. Reinforcing drafts of 250 men, together with the cadre left behind on September 15, brought the Regiment back to fighting strength within a week of the engagement.

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On September 23 the 3rd Division was withdrawn from the line for a breathing spell. There were no rest billets within easy distance, for the battle was still raging in full fury and the villages behind Albert were packed with troops moving up to the line. The rest therefore became a route march over the pleasant Picardy downs. By easy stages of ten to fifteen miles a day, the 7th Brigade marched through Warloy and La Vicogne to Bonneville on the Doullens—Amiens railway, and thence back to the Brickfields by way of Harponville,

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OVER much of the country traversed when first approaching Albert a fortnight before. This march took six days, including a day's rest at Bonneville. On the afternoon of September 28 the Patricias moved into divisional reserve at Albert, providing large parties by day and night to work on the Ovillers—Courcellette road or to unload and pile pit-props on the railway line north of the city until, on the morning of October 2, they returned to Tara Hill.

In the interval since the battle of Flers—Courcellette the whole Thiepval Ridge had fallen into British hands, and by the end of September Canadians held the line of Hessian Trench on the reverse slope 700 yards beyond Zollern Graben. Across their front, a little farther down the hill, ran "Regina Trench," held by the Germans in great strength with picked troops, and powerfully fortified by them since they had lost the trenches on the hill. On October 1 the 5th and 8th Canadian Infantry Brigades made the first of many attempts to capture this position. The former had pushed some distance up "Kenora Trench," which ran from the Courcellette—Miraumont road ("Courcellette Trench") into Regina Trench at the extreme north-western spur of the Thiepval Ridge; but the gallantry of the Mounted Rifles had been of no avail on the left, and two battalions had dwindled to the strength of companies without penetrating the wire. When all efforts to dislodge the enemy failed, the 7th Brigade

Oct. 2-4. was sent up on the afternoon of October 2 to relieve the 8th. The Patricias were in support near the left of their old front line of September 15, and remained there during October 2, 3, and the morning of October 4. It was disastrous to the British plans

that the month broke stormy and wet; moreover, the weather told hard on the battalions in the line, especially as they came under intermittent but very heavy shell fire from the Germans. On October 4 the 7th Brigade, which had been chosen for the next attempt to storm Regina Trench, was withdrawn to clean up and organize for the attack. The Patricias were relieved by a unit of the 75th British Brigade, and moved back to the familiar unlovely bivouacking ground of Tara Hill. Twenty-four hours later the 7th Brigade relieved the 9th Brigade, the Patricias being again in support just west of Courcelette in Fabeck Graben and McDonnell Trench, where they lay through October 5, 6 and 7 under much the conditions of the previous tour, while the 3rd Division prepared for a new assault on Regina Trench.¹

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Oct. 5-7.

The attack of October 8 was planned on a two-brigade front—the 7th on the left, the 9th on the right, each with two battalions in the line. The 49th Battalion, with its left resting on “Twenty-Three Road” (which runs over the hill from the Mouquet Farm—Courcelette road in a north-easterly direction towards Miraumont), held Hessian Trench; and the Royal Canadian Regiment, with its right on the West Miraumont road, continued the line astride Kenora Trench. Beyond the R.C.R. the 43rd and 58th Battalions were in position to attack on both sides of the East Miraumont road. The Patricias and 42nd Battalion were respectively in support and reserve to the 49th and R.C.R. The instructions to the 7th Brigade were to sweep across Regina Trench, press forward to

¹ Major Agar Adamson, D.S.O., commanded the Regiment during the Regina Trench operations, Lt.-Col. Pelly being attached to Brigade Headquarters.

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the crossing of the West Miraumont and Twenty-Three Roads, and hold a line between these cross-roads and Regina Trench, as a left flank facing westward to the main objective, which was the right end of Regina Trench at the Pys road. The creation of this defensive flank was entrusted to the R.C.R. and 49th, and in event of their success the Patricias were to be ready to push out posts after dark on the night of October 8/9 to help the 49th in making secure the line of Twenty-Three Road. The Regiment's orders for the morning of the 8th were merely to send two companies into close support at Hessian and Kenora Trenches as soon as news came through that Regina Trench had been reached, in order to reinforce either 49th or R.C.R. in case of counter-attack. No. 2 Company therefore moved up from McDonnell Trench to the right of No. 4, which was already in Fabeck Graben. These two companies were given orders to advance so soon as the R.C.R. entered Regina Trench and to occupy Hessian Trench, overflowing if necessary into Kenora Trench by way of "Sudbury Trench" (which joined Kenora with Hessian). A subsequent movement of the whole Regiment up Twenty-Three Road to establish posts in front of Regina Trench as an advanced left flank of the whole attack was also planned; but as events entirely changed the task of the support battalion it would serve no purpose to explain a proposed operation which had to be abandoned early in the day.

Oct. 8.

For Regina Trench was not destined to fall to the 7th Brigade. As on October 1, wire was the great enemy. Much had been cut, but some remained, and on the night before the assault the Germans threw out a great quantity of loose wire

also; and this unexpected obstacle proved insurmountable. Nevertheless, the attack prospered sufficiently at first to bring the Patricias into action. The assaulting battalions jumped off at 4.50 A.M. on October 8, in heavy rain, which continued throughout the day. The two right companies of the R.C.R. swept forward to Regina Trench with normal losses; and by 6.30 A.M. reports reached Major Agar Adamson from two sources that "most of Regina Trench is held by us," and that Nos. 2 and 4 Companies P.P.C.L.I. were moving up. By 7.45 A.M. the two remaining companies of the Patricias had been brought up to Fabeck Graben from the reserve positions.

But while in the rear all went according to plan, everything was wrong in Regina Trench. The left of the Royal Canadian Regiment was caught by machine guns in the wire and could not advance. Worse still, the leading companies of the 49th ran into strong uncut wire, and after vain efforts to find a gap were forced into Kenora Trench with heavy losses. They tried to bomb their way thence up to Regina Trench, but the German sniping was deadly and three bombing squads were wiped out in succession. P.P.C.L.I. bombers were called up to reinforce; but the junction of Regina and Kenora was very strongly held by two machine guns, and little headway was made. At no point on the left did the attack set foot in Regina Trench, and all hope of reaching Twenty-Three Road soon passed. On the right, the left battalion of the 9th Brigade (the 43rd) could not make much way; and although the two companies of the Royal Canadian Regiment which reached Regina Trench held their ground for a time and even bombed along the trench a few yards to the west, they were

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isolated and too weak to resist a counter-attack. Soon after 7 A.M. General Lipsett ordered the R.C.R. and 49th to throw all reserves into the assault, but the enemy commanded the situation, and this effort also failed. Before ten o'clock it was clear that Regina Trench could not be taken and that the companies of the R.C.R. left in it were in great danger.

Meanwhile (at 7.25 A.M.) Nos. 2 and 4 Companies of the Patricias had arrived in the jumping-off trenches, and evidently there was some thought of throwing them forthwith into the battle line, for they were "to leave a garrison of two platoons here in any case if they were ordered to the assault." At 9.40 A.M. Major Agar Adamson was told to send out a strong patrol to connect the R.C.R. with the 43rd Battalion on the right, and at the same time received general instructions that any ground gained was to be held at all costs. After consultation with Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. Hill, D.S.O. (R.C.R.), and Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Griesbach, D.S.O. (49th), he ordered his reserve companies in Fabeck Graben immediately to reinforce the companies in front by moving as far as Sudbury Trench. On arriving there, one company (No. 3) was to join No. 2 and No. 4 in the jumping-off trench if there was room; and Major H. E. Sullivan (the senior officer in the line) was to place these reinforcements, find out whether the R.C.R. wanted assistance in Regina Trench, and send out a patrol to fill the gap on the right. Thus, some time before eleven o'clock, all four companies of the Patricias were marshalled in very close support to the line of attack, labouring to consolidate the jumping-off trenches for defence.

There remains little evidence of any kind to

show how matters stood in and about Regina, Kenora, Sudbury and Hessian Trenches during the later hours of the morning.¹ At least it is clear that the early success and the ultimate failure to get a secure foothold in Regina Trench resulted in a dangerous overcrowding of the support positions. Confusion was heaped on confusion when shortly before 11.30 A.M. the Royal Canadian Regiment was forced out of Regina Trench "by a deluge of rifle grenades, bombs, and machine-gun fire and on the eastern end a hurricane of whizz-bangs." The two companies lost very heavily in the withdrawal, but a fair number of men managed to crawl back to the jumping-off trench. This trench, already full of Patricias, now became too overcrowded for effective organization. In the opinion of the officers on the spot the deluge of rain, the general confusion, and the exhaustion of all the men made a further attempt on Regina Trench "absolutely impracticable"; and Major Sullivan, after consultation with Major Hodson and other officers of the R.C.R., decided to relieve the pressure by falling back with three companies to Fabeck Graben. No. 4, whose bombers were already engaged beside the 49th Battalion in Kenora Trench, was left behind to support that unit with instructions that "if the 49th Battalion fall back, as they obviously must," it also was to retire towards Fabeck Graben. Shortly afterwards, however, a rearrangement of the line

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¹ The documentary history of this engagement is incomplete and often contradictory. All wire communications to Brigade were cut, and messages from advance companies and small detachments were generally verbal and often picked up from a wounded runner by a runner of another battalion, with the result that they were late and inaccurate when they reached Battalion or Brigade Headquarters. It is difficult to do justice to the effort of the assaulting battalions of the 3rd Division. The R.C.R. in particular were considered by Major Agar Adamson and other officers of the Patricias to have fought magnificently throughout the engagement.

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took place under instructions from Lieutenant-Colonel Griesbach, who was acting as "forward brigadier" for General Macdonell. No. 4 Company was ordered by Major Agar Adamson to withdraw, but only slightly—to a position on the left of Sudbury Trench. No. 3 came forward again on its right, and these two companies acted as close support to the remnants of the R.C.R. and 49th still holding the jumping-off trenches. No. 1 Company sent a platoon right forward into the jumping-off trench to watch the left of the 49th and connect with a patrol of British troops on the left of the Canadian attack, and thus filled the gap left by the withdrawal of No. 4 Company. Subsequently, in response to an urgent request from the 49th Battalion, two platoons of No. 3 Company were sent forward on the right to a position astride Kenora Trench, and two platoons of No. 2 Company took their place in Sudbury Trench. Finally, the reserve bombing section of the Patricias took over the R.C.R. bombing post in Kenora Trench. And so, by 3.30 P.M. or thereabouts, three-fourths of the Regiment was forward again in almost the very line from which it had withdrawn three and a half hours before.

From all this confused counter-marching it is possible to conclude that between noon and three in the afternoon the Higher Command feared a German counter-attack in force up the valley towards Zollern Graben and Fabeck Graben. But the new line—if line it could be called—held fast, and by 4 P.M. the position was sufficiently understood for the British artillery to reopen heavy fire on Regina Trench. By 7 P.M. the 4th C.M.R. was on its way to relieve the Patricias, and during the night Major Agar Adamson, as part of a general

scheme of redistribution of the line between the 7th and 9th Brigades, withdrew all his four companies to McDonnell Trench, but left the bombing section in Kenora Trench with the 42nd Battalion (which relieved the R.C.R. and 49th). The Patricias remained in McDonnell Trench until relieved on the morning of October 9, when they marched back to bivouac on Tara Hill for the last time.

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Oct. 9.

The attempt on Regina Trench on October 8 was the bad hour of the 7th Brigade's splendid history. In the autumn of 1916 chance still ruled very largely in attack, and the luck which had been with the Patricias and the 42nd on September 15 did not follow the 49th and the Royal Canadian Regiment three weeks later. In truth, neither of these regiments had anything to show for its grievous losses but a record of great gallantry and persistent mishap. The Patricias' part in the action was a subordinate one, confined to doing "good work in the vacated front line"; but they suffered some eighty casualties (fortunately almost all light), most of them incurred during the first retirement from the jumping-off trench to Fabeck Graben in the morning. The work had been arduous, and the marching and counter-marching, as well as the rapid organization of several small operations, tested the Regiment's spirit and the competence of junior officers and N.C.O.'s.¹ Altogether the Patricias had lived up to their reputation in this first experience of attack on the grand scale, and their departure

¹ L/Sgt. J. C. Fuller was particularly commended for "fine leadership and disregard of danger for the third time in successive actions." A/Sgts. G. L. Fraser and T. Burns were brought to Lt.-Col. Pelly's notice by Lt.-Col. Griesbach for their gallantry at the block in Kenora Trench while covering the retirement of his battalion. Pte. J. W. Aylward scouted the front of Regina Trench in broad daylight, and went through very heavy fire to ascertain the situation of the brigade on the left.

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Oct. 10.

from the Somme was marked by a small incident which could not fail to gratify any commanding officer. On the march out from Tara Hill to Warloy on October 10, the Regiment happened to pass the Army Commander on the road. General Gough called Colonel Pelly to him and "personally requested him to inform all ranks of the Battalion that their clean, smart and soldierly appearance did the Battalion the greatest credit. He was delighted to see a battalion coming out of the line showing such proof of discipline and efficiency."

Next day the Patricias set their faces toward Vimy Ridge.

Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter :

The Distinguished Service Order : Major C. J. T. Stewart.

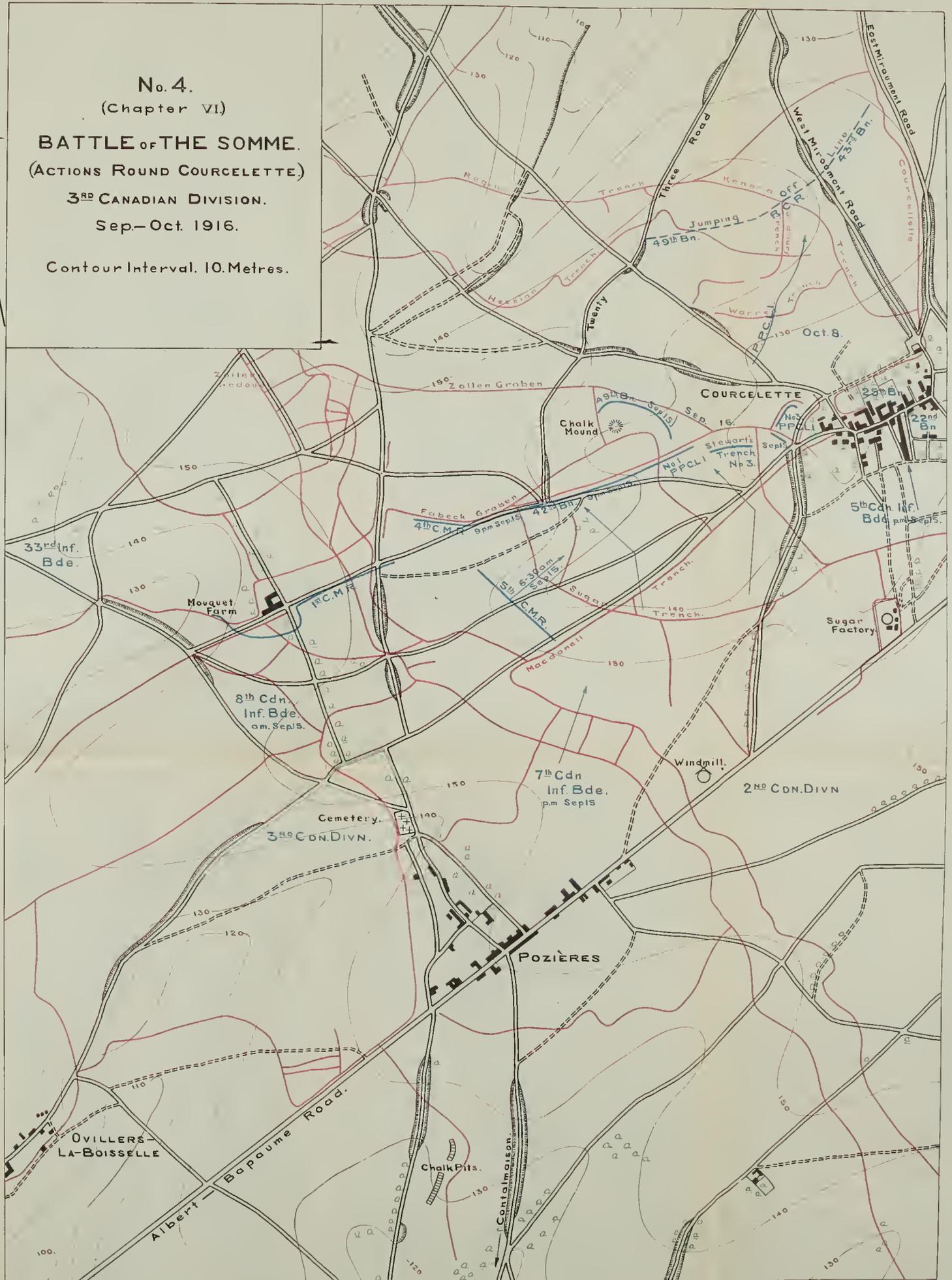
The Military Cross : Capt. G. C. McDonald (att. Bde. Staff) ; Lieuts. W. H. Morris, G. M. Smith, A. Le N. Dove and R. W. Hodder-Williams.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal : C.S.M. F. Gillingham ; L/Sgt. W. Stanborough ; A/Cpl. A. F. Neatby ; L/Cpl. W. E. French.

The Military Medal : Sgts. T. Burns, E. Cooper, J. C. Fuller, W. G. Johnston, J. C. McDowell (att. 7th Bde. M.G. Coy.), G. Taylor, J. Watt and W. Young ; A/Sgts. G. L. Fraser and R. C. Hayes ; L/Cpl. A. R. Milne ; Ptes. J. W. Aylward, J. F. Campbell, W. H. Cook, R. Jackson, J. Joslin, N. G. M. Lougheed, C. H. Meaker, N. F. Miller and H. P. Vernon.

Mentioned in Despatches (covering whole period of 1916 fighting) : Lt.-Col. R. T. Pelly, D.S.O. ; Major C. J. T. Stewart, D.S.O. ; Capt. H. W. Niven, D.S.O., M.C. ; Hon. Capt. and Quartermaster R. S. Lake ; Lieuts. W. E. C. Irwin and H. F. Richardson (Bde. Wiring Officer) ; R.S.M. J. Anderson, M.C. ; R.Q.M.S. J. G. Donald ; Sgts. E. Cooper and N. F. Sinclair ; Cpl. W. M. Draycott ; Pte. H. A. Craig, M.M.

No. 4.
 (Chapter VI)
BATTLE OF THE SOMME.
 (ACTIONS ROUND COURCELETTE)
 3RD CANADIAN DIVISION.
 Sep.-Oct. 1916.
 Contour Interval. 10 Metres.



Scale. 1/15,000.





CHAPTER VII

VIMY RIDGE

(THE BATTLES OF ARRAS, 1917: VIMY RIDGE
AND ARLEUX)

October 1916 to September 1917

Map No. 5, unfolding opposite p. 240, and sketch map at end of Volume

FOR almost a year after the fighting about Courcelette, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry lived under the shadow of the Vimy Ridge, first on the "wrong," and, after the great April battle, on the "right" side of the hill.

This famous hog's-back runs in a S.S.W. direction between Lens and Arras and is crossed by the main road between the two cities. At its highest point, 1000 yards south of the village of Givenchy and 3000 yards north by east of that of Neuville-St.-Vaast, the ridge rises to a height of 145 metres (475 feet) above sea-level. It falls away rather gently into the Scarpe valley towards Arras, but much more sharply to the east, upon which side it dominates the country as far as eye can see, to Douai and beyond. Vimy Ridge was one of the most important strategic positions on the whole western front, and had already witnessed some of the fiercest fighting of the war. The French Tenth Army stood there in October 1914, and in the following spring struggled desperately but vainly

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for control of the high ground. Some progress was made during the Battle of Loos, but the gains were not all held, and when the area was transferred from French to British command in the spring of 1916, it once more became the scene of bitter engagements in April, May and June. A series of mines were exploded by both sides, particularly by the British Third and First Armies which joined at this point. The British improved their hold on the Ridge on May 11, only to lose their new advantage and a little more in a violent German counter-attack ten days later; but since the Allies had at no time controlled the plateau, the ground lost was considered by Sir Douglas Haig as of "no strategic or tactical importance," and a new position was consolidated in rear of the former line. The high ground remained with the Germans, and was vital as a defensive position to their whole front, the more so when loss of ground on the Somme made necessary a withdrawal south of Arras. The story of the Canadian Corps during the next twenty months, with the exception of the bloody interlude of Passchendaele, deals with the preparations for the capture of the Ridge, the capture itself (one of the most brilliant strokes of the war) and the maintenance of the advantage thus gained during the terrible days of the final German offensive. In all these phases of the Vimy Ridge operations the Patricias played a successful and noteworthy part.

1. THE CRATER LINE

Oct.
12-24.

On October 12, 1916, the Regiment, now finally withdrawn from the Battle of the Somme, trekked for the third time in five weeks. The first stages of the march covered familiar country—Warloy, La

Vicogne, Berteaucourt—to Gorges, a small village near Bernaville. On October 20, after a rest of four days at Gorges, where very rainy weather curtailed parades and training, the 7th Brigade struck north across the River Authie and then north-west over the River Canche, turned east across the St. Pol—Arras road and reached the village of Écoivres on the Scarpe by the 22nd. The journey was now over: immediately in front lay Neuville-St.-Vaast, six miles north of Arras; and just beyond ran the trench lines of Vimy Ridge. In the course of ten days the Regiment had made a great circuit and now re-entered the fighting area not much more than twenty miles north of Albert. On the evening of October 23 it moved forward into Neuville-St.-Vaast and next day relieved the 2/18th Battalion London Irish of the 180th British Brigade in the left sub-sector of the new divisional front north-east of the village.

During twelve successive tours in the line (October 1916-March 1917) the Regiment was to hold a line of trenches about 900 yards long which clung to the western edge of the Vimy plateau in front of the Givenchy—Neuville-St.-Vaast road. Two craters—"Broadmarsh" at the north and "Devon" at the south—marked its extreme limits; and the whole dividing line between friend and enemy, except for about 250 yards on the left, was the series of great craters that had been blown in the fighting of the spring. At no point were the two lines more than 75 yards apart; and the outposts consisted of a large number of crater posts, connecting with intricate systems of fighting and communication trenches behind.

The frontage with which this narrative is almost solely concerned was called the "La Folie" sector,

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after La Folie Farm, which lay on the crest 800 yards north of the Lens—Arras road and about 1000 yards from the Canadian front line. This farm was the tactical feature which the Germans managed to hold when the French swept right up the slope in September 1915. The French were too weak to reach the farm and the Germans pushed forward all available reinforcements—cooks, batmen, etc.—under cover of the wood; and these hung on until more troops could be sent up, so that the French, unsupported, had to fall back down the slope. The enemy now held the whole plateau and was able to conceal the movement of troops and transport in the sharp drop through La Folie Wood into the village of Petit-Vimy on the Lens—Arras highway. Furthermore, he occupied the most commanding position for miles around—“Hill 145,” just north of the 3rd Division’s area. From here he had a wide prospect of the valley occupied by the British. The Canadian line was always strongly held: each battalion in the front system garrisoned six trench sections with the crater posts and saps leading out of them, with three companies forward and one in support.

The “crater-war” of the first months was very lively, and kept the Patricias far busier than during the previous winter. On the other hand, their movements during this period were regularized as never before or after, following the unchanging routine of front line, brigade reserve and divisional reserve, until they were withdrawn on February 11 to Bruay to train for the great assault. When in the line, they shared the same sub-sector with the 42nd Battalion in every brigade tour, garrisoning the front trenches for five days at a stretch. In brigade reserve they were always stationed in the

cellars of Neuville-St.-Vaast, and provided working-parties to help the battalions in the line. In divisional reserve they were encamped in hutments three miles farther back in the Bois-des-Alleux beside Mont-St.-Eloy. And at the winter's end they attacked the Ridge on a part of the front that they had garrisoned throughout the winter.

The early tours in this line were not important, both British and Germans being too fully engaged in the last furious stages of the Battle of the Somme to organize large operations elsewhere. The battalions in the line at first were busy mainly with patrol work. In this the Canadians bettered the Prussians opposite, and No Man's Land became a Canadian forward position for the raids which give special character to this chapter of the war's history. Working-parties prepared the defences for the winter and soon found that better trenches, dug-outs and head-cover could be constructed in the Arras chalk than in the mire of the Somme country. If there was no fighting on the grand scale, the companies in the front trenches had few uneventful days. The snipers on both sides were never off duty; and if guns were silent, trench mortars, rifle grenades and Stokes guns maintained a duel that never flagged.

The transfer of the Patricias to the Vimy Ridge coincided with a number of changes which are of personal interest to members of the Regiment. On October 30, when the Regiment was withdrawn for the first time into divisional reserve at Bois-des-Alleux, H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, just returned from Canada after a long term as Governor-General, paid his last official visit to the Canadian Corps, and in the composite Guard of Honour which met him at Corps Headquarters (and on

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whose "smart and efficient appearance" he particularly commented) a detachment of the Patricias represented the 7th Infantry Brigade. His Royal Highness's interest in his daughter's regiment never waned, and from the earliest days, when he used to watch the "Originals" training in Lansdowne Park, to the moment when he sent a farewell message to the troopship that took the Regiment home, he closely followed every turn of its fortunes.

On October 31 Lieutenant-Colonel R. T. Pelly, D.S.O., relinquished the command of the Regiment.¹ He was succeeded in the command by the senior "Original" officer available, Major Agar Adamson, D.S.O., who was later promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel as from October 31. Lieutenant-Colonel Agar Adamson, it will be remembered, had as a Captain commanded the Regiment during the greater part of the battle of May 8, 1915, was there severely wounded, and received his decoration for leadership in that action. He rejoined on September 24, 1915, and remained with the Regiment in the field continuously until March 27, 1918; thus serving in the line for over three and a half years, and holding the command for nearly eighteen months, a far longer period than any other Commanding Officer. No officer or man loved the Regiment better or cherished its traditions more

¹ Lt.-Col. Pelly was detached to England as instructor in the School for Commanding Officers at Aldershot, but he was back in France again in May 1917 as Brigadier-General of the 91st Infantry Brigade (7th British Division) and saw hard fighting in his new command at Bullecourt and Passchendaele. Thereafter General Pelly commanded his brigade in Italy—on the Piave, the Asiago Plateau, and again in the final defeat of the Austrians on the Piave. He relinquished his command on the demobilization of his brigade and shortly afterwards retired from the Army with the rank of Brigadier-General. During the later stages of the war he was made a Companion of the Bath and of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, and was awarded a bar to his D.S.O. and the Italian *Croce di Guerra*; he was seven times mentioned in despatches.

reverently. His cheerfulness under the most trying circumstances, his pride in the men, his fund of original humour, his monocle and his alpenstock, became regimental "properties" and part and parcel of the Patricias' history. Major D. F. B. Gray, D.S.O., remained for some months as Second in Command until he received a staff appointment. Major A. G. Martin, M.C., took command of a company early in the new year. After an interval during which Captain G. C. Carvell, M.C., the former Transport Officer, acted as Adjutant until his transfer to the Chinese Labour Corps (for which he had special qualifications), Lieutenant L. V. Drummond-Hay became Adjutant and retained the appointment throughout Colonel Agar Adamson's command.¹ Sergeant-Major W. Jordan, D.C.M., succeeded R.S.M. M. Allan, M.M., as Regimental-Sergeant-Major when the latter was made Transport Officer, soon after the move from the Somme.

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In the first trench tour under the new command Lieutenant J. H. Carvosso, who had been twice wounded in the ranks and had rejoined the Regiment as a commissioned officer less than four weeks before, was again wounded. This officer's casualty-sheet is an interesting example of the vicissitudes of an infantry subaltern's service. On returning after this third wound, he was again put out of action at the battle of Vimy Ridge after a single tour in the line. He rejoined once again before Passchendaele and was immediately wounded a fifth time. On this occasion he remained at duty,

Nov. 3-7.

¹ Lieut. (afterwards Major) Drummond-Hay, known to his fellow-officers as "The Rat," proved a most competent Adjutant. His C.O. says: "He could write a message in the dark, in the rain, and when moving, which was always legible. Some Adjutants have been known to lack this gift."

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but an accident shortly afterwards incapacitated him for the whole of the Hundred Days, and he was only able to rejoin in time for the last advance to Mons. While it may be granted that Lieutenant Carvosso had exceptionally bad luck, his case was not singular. Officers were constantly joining, getting wounded, and rejoining; and as seniority in the Regiment, other things equal, was given from the date of original service with a commission in France, the company commands were always changing, and inter-company transfers had frequently to be made. The reader cannot be asked to follow all these constant changes; but this opportunity may be taken to remind him that some of the best work ever done by the Regiment was accomplished under junior officers only mentioned perhaps in lists of casualties.

Nov.
14-28.

Later in the month, when the Patricias were again in the front line from November 14 to 18 and 24 to 28, the enemy became more enterprising, and snipers and Lewis gunners were kept very busy. Much was done to repair andrevet the trenches which had been damaged by constant rain and heavy enemy trench mortars, and the support company of the battalion in the line, as well as the whole battalion in brigade reserve at Neuville-St.-Vaast, was kept constantly at work. Rest was therefore very welcome at the end of each double tour of the line, and the now well-established "P.P.C.L.I. Comedy Company" was always busy preparing new entertainments and rehearsing the old favourites to amuse the Regiment each time it came to Bois-des-Alleux.¹

The enemy had an advantage of position, but

¹ One pleasant departure from routine was provided on November 22 by a march *en masse*, Colour and all, to the town of Aubigny to give everybody a chance to buy Christmas presents for friends at home.

no other. Until the raiding tactics were developed, the Stokes gun warfare was the most important form of activity, and here Canadian superiority was marked, in spite of all the efforts of "Josephine" and "Ananias"—two heavy trench mortars on the German side. The crater posts were naturally dangerous but the reserve positions were for the most part very good. "In No Man's Land," says an Intelligence report, "the enemy patrols were not anxious to wait for ours"; they would occasionally leave messages—sometimes insulting, sometimes friendly—fastened to sticks near the crater posts, but this was the limit of their daring. None the less the enemy was "very much on the alert" in defence, and although a normal casualty list for a tour of the front line was at first only three or four, trench-life during this crater warfare was never at all dull.¹ Fortunately the November weather was pleasant, bright and cold with some morning mists but few wet days.

In December the Canadian Corps began to raid the enemy's lines, and many reconnaissances in considerable force were organized all along their front during this and the following months. Either by chance or from a preference for the smaller and more frequent type of operation, the Patricias never took part in one of these larger enterprises; but their minor raids were numerous, and add a striking and dramatic chapter to their history. In the first front-line tour in December the Regiment was particularly occupied in these minor aggressions. On

Dec.
4-8.

¹ A fine rescue was made during the second of these tours by Lieut. D. MacLean and Pte. G. S. Brewer, a stretcher-bearer. Seeing a sentry badly hit in Vernon Crater they went forward from the observation line to his assistance, only to find that the state of the sap made it impossible to bring him down. The man was therefore hoisted on the officer's back and brought in overland in full view of the enemy who opened fire on them as they crossed the open, but did not prevent them from regaining the trench.

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the morning of December 5 a patrol of two officers (Lieutenants G. G. Reynolds and K. C. Burness) went out on a daylight reconnaissance in front of "Durand" and "Duffield" craters on the left centre to explore the enemy post that linked the two craters, but being observed by an enemy patrol had to withdraw. Twenty minutes later the two officers, now accompanied by Pte. S. Loptson of the sniping section, again went out to explore the same place. After throwing several bombs into the enemy's post, the raiders made a gap in his wire by removing six steel barbed-wire frames, and entered the post, to find it empty. They could therefore only damage two sniping posts by removing the plates, destroy a number of grenades, and return with a German trench pump. Not satisfied with this inanimate trophy, Sniper Loptson and two N.C.O.'s again raided the post the same evening. This time they were challenged by a sentry, whom they shot, and secured a German prisoner with the desired identification—23rd R.I.R. Reserve Division (Prussian); but as an enemy patrol of twelve came up, they were forced to withdraw. On December 6 the enemy tried to bomb Durand crater but was quickly silenced. On the same day Lieutenant D. MacLean was wounded by a sniper in the crater line while trying to bomb him out of his position. On December 7 Sergeant N. D. Dow and Private G. H. Mullin reconnoitred the enemy position at "Common" crater in broad daylight, getting within five yards of the post, in which they could hear the sentries talking. They brought back information about the condition of the wire, and next day a stronger patrol of ten men under the Bombing Officer, Lieutenant A. A. McDougall, left the line at 3.20 A.M. to raid the post. The officer

and Private Mullin crawled to within six feet of the post ; and after listening there for a minute or two Private Mullin crawled up and discovered two enemy sentries. Lieutenant McDougall decided to rush the post to secure prisoners, and brought up the rest of his party. Then, covering the sentries with revolvers, he ordered them to surrender. The sentries, however, showed fight. One of them fired his rifle, and then both threw up their hands, but at the same time dislodged a bomb from the parapet by using a foot attachment, and wounded the officer badly. The sentries were at once shot down, but, as the alarm had been given, the first consideration was to get Lieutenant McDougall back to the line. This was not an easy matter, for the officer, a man of magnificent physique and weighing 230 pounds, had both legs terribly mauled by the explosion and was utterly helpless. Four of the party, however, managed to carry him back overland while the remainder under Sergeant Dow formed a covering party for the retreat. When all were clear, Sergeant Dow destroyed the post with a carefully timed Stokes shell, which had been carried up by the raiders with no little difficulty. The whole party was back in the trench within fifteen minutes of the beginning of the raid, and the enemy's only retaliation was to bomb his own communication trench leading to the invaded post.¹ The effect of these raids on the Prussian morale was shown by an incident of the next morning : a bomb was thrown into a Canadian post at Duffield crater, and the garrison at once retaliated with six bombs ;

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¹ Lieut. McDougall's pluck cannot be passed over. As he was being carried out he remarked : " I shall be able yet to play nine holes of golf with Major Gault " ; and a week later he wrote to Colonel Adamson : " My left leg is off, my right leg is shattered below the knee, my left arm is broken, I have some shrapnel in my hip, but otherwise I am 'jake' ! "

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whereupon—so “jumpy” had the German nerves become—a sentry blew a whistle and immediately afterwards numbers of the enemy could be heard running along their “bath-mats” to stand to in the crater line. This tour was one of the most successful that the Regiment ever had, for the total casualty list was only 1 killed and 6 wounded. General Lipsett, himself a most aggressive officer, at once showed his appreciation by sending congratulations and arranging for special leave for all who had been concerned.

Dec.
13-19.

The next tour of the line (December 13-19) was very quiet until the last day, when a new diversion was thought out for worrying the enemy. Between 1.30 and 1.45 A.M. on December 19 the 172nd Tunnelling Company blew three mines in the centre of the P.P.C.L.I. front on both sides of “Tidza” crater, using 11,000 pounds of ammonal for the charge. The explosions made good lips and increased the height and extent of the crater. On a rocket signal from the Tunnellers, two parties of the Patricias, each consisting of thirty men with a Lewis gun crew (the whole under the command of Lieutenant A. G. Pearson, D.C.M.) advanced through lanes in the wire that had been cut earlier in the night, and over the shell-holes which had been spanned by duckboard bridges. The near lips of the new craters were successfully consolidated, though with nine casualties, including Lieutenant B. K. Snider wounded; and at Colonel Agar Adamson’s request the First Army Command sanctioned the official name of “Patricia” for the main crater.¹

¹ This compliment to the Regiment and its Colonel-in-Chief was paid on the second anniversary of the arrival in France. After the capture of the Ridge a wooden obelisk ten feet high was erected by the regimental pioneers, and the words “Patricia Crater” inscribed upon it.

The Patricias spent Christmas Day in the front line. There was a general cessation of artillery and trench warfare, and many of the enemy came out of their trenches, passed through their wire under cover of a white flag, and wandered in groups about No Man's Land, showing a probably genuine desire to fraternize. But untoward experiences on Christmas Day 1915 moved the Higher Command to issue instructions against meeting any such advances. The enemy were not fired upon, as it was important to give them every opportunity to desert if they wanted to seize the occasion. The men beckoned to them to come over and held up cigarettes and tins of bully-beef; but the Germans showed no desire to surrender and soon returned to their trenches. The Christmas spirit died out on December 26, P.P.C.L.I. bombers and snipers being particularly active, while working-parties were kept repairing the damage done by the enemy's trench mortars and made much progress in revetting and reconstructing trenches.

The Regiment was relieved on December 29, and celebrated Christmas and the New Year together in a general festivity on New Year's Eve in the divisional reserve camp at Mont-St.-Eloy. Cordial messages were exchanged with the other units of the Brigade, with Colonel Pelly, Major Gault, General Macdonell and Captain John Collins, who acted during many months as training officer at the English depot, and possessed a caustic wit and a parade-ground manner which brought him great fame with the University Companies and many other drafts that went through his hands at Shorncliffe and Seaford in 1915 and 1916. Princess Patricia of course telegraphed her greetings and added: "Delighted and deeply touched by beautiful

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presents just received from W.O.'s, N.C.O.'s and men of my regiment." ¹

In an informal acknowledgement of Christmas gifts which was quoted in Battalion Orders, she wrote:

The Battalion's thoughtful remembrance of me upon every occasion touches me very deeply. . . . The Warrant Officers, Non-commissioned Officers and men sent me an exquisite little enamel box studded with a ring of diamonds round a small cameo plaque on the lid, and also a gold pencil case, beautifully worked. I am more than delighted with the presents and value them as much for the thought which prompted them as for their intrinsic beauty; also the inscriptions on them add greatly to their value in my eyes. Do express again to every one my heartfelt thanks and appreciation. With once more every possible good wish for one and all for the New Year,

PATRICIA.

Dec. 31.

The New Year's Eve celebrations were most elaborate. There was a church parade in the morning, and in the afternoon the men sat down to their delayed Christmas dinners, which were augmented by plum puddings sent out by Major Gault's mother, cigarettes from Major Gault himself, and "mince pies and other well chosen tuck from some ladies of the Regiment." The men put three francs each into a fund for extra messing, and the officers provided beer. Colonel Agar Adamson and Major Gray went the round of the huts joining in the toasts and speeches. In the evening the Sergeants gave an admirably arranged dinner to the senior officers, Colonel Agar Adamson taking the Colour to their

¹ It may be mentioned here that it was a regular custom of the officers of the Regiment and likewise of the W.O.'s, N.C.O.'s and men to send at Christmas a telegram of greeting and a Christmas present to Her Royal Highness. The Princess reciprocated with presents to all ranks every Christmas. Greetings were also regularly telegraphed to Princess Patricia on March 17, her birthday.

billet. At eleven o'clock all parties converged on the Y.M.C.A. hut, where the Comedy Company, which had recently been repeating some of its old favourites by special request, put on an entirely new "show" written for the occasion. At the stroke of midnight the curtain rose on the Pipe Band playing the regimental march; the R.C.R. Band, which always co-operated in these performances, followed with their regimental march; and then the players stepped to the footlights and led a general chorus of "Auld Lang Syne" and "O Canada." The National Anthem closed the ceremony proper, but "the two bands" (wrote Colonel Agar Adamson in a vivid description to Major Gault) "played until two o'clock in the morning weird music in which, I understand, it is very difficult for a Pipe Band and a Brass Band to keep step." On New Year's morning the Regiment, with newly arrived detachments of 300 men from the English depot and the Brigade Training Battalion, was massed in a hollow square to receive presents from Princess Patricia. An inspection by General Lipsett and the presentation of the draft to the Colour followed. The anniversary ended with an officers' dinner where presents from the Lady Evelyn Farquhar's Fund were distributed.¹

Before the narrative returns to the work in the line, two reports of special regimental interest call for mention. First, the Army Director of Veterinary Services testified in a report to the particular pride which the Regiment took in its transport—a tradition, this, from the earliest days :

The F.P.C.L.I. and R.C.R. are without doubt exceptional in their proficiency in the care of their animals,

¹ The wife of the first Commanding Officer raised this special fund for the Regiment's benefit and maintained it throughout the war.

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harness, limbers and standings. The Transport Officers [in the P.P.C.L.I., Lieutenant Allan], N.C.O.'s and men deserve the greatest credit, for I have yet to see the Transport to equal that of these Battalions, either in the Imperial or Canadian Armies.

At this time also Major Logie Armstrong of the Canadian Record Office, at the instance of Lady Evelyn Farquhar, went to great trouble to prepare a statement regarding the disposition of the surviving "Originals" after the Regiment had been two years in the line. It appeared from this that nearly 500 N.C.O.'s and men were still in uniform, either in France or England—171 with the Regiment, 54 at the depot in Shorncliffe, 99 at the Casualty Assembly Centre in Hastings, 131 in military posts in England and 32 serving with other units in France.¹ This makes it clear that the wounded were constantly returning to the Regiment. When it is also remembered that the Regiment was still largely officered by men who had served under Colonel Farquhar, it is easier to understand how steadily its traditions were maintained.

Jan.
4-18.

The eighth tour in the La Folie sector, which began on January 4, 1917, was more lively than the preceding one. The two German heavy trench mortars "Josephine" and "Ananias" required special attention, and an increase of bombing brought heavier casualties, among the wounded in this and the next tour (January 14-18) being two officers—Lieutenants W. J. Taggart and A. M. Gammell. The tenth tour (January 24-28) was very eventful. At 8.20 A.M. on January 26, Major

Jan.
24-28.

¹ These figures appear to have been compiled from data available up to the time that the Patricias moved to the Somme. Information recently collected (1923) shows that after September 1916 the largest number of "Originals" ever in the field with the Regiment was 112, in March 1917.

A. Rasmussen—an officer of American origin attached to the Regiment—taking a Lewis gun, two N.C.O.'s and twelve men, entered the German lines between Duffield and Durand craters under cover of a Stokes barrage to destroy dug-outs and listening posts which had long been troubling the sentries on the Canadian side. The post was found unoccupied and the party moved down the saps towards the enemy line and bombed deep dug-outs with Mills and Stokes grenades. A bombing counter-attack was beaten off; a charge was exploded at the Durand post; and the party returned safely to their own trenches in seventeen minutes with two captured sentries, identified as belonging to the 3rd Battalion 16th Bavarian R.I.R.¹ At 4 A.M. on January 28 another party of five men under Lieutenant A. N. B. Mortimer tried to rush the enemy observation line at Birkin crater in the hope of discovering and destroying a nearby dug-out. Moon and stars were shining and there was snow on the ground; so the raiders dressed in white canvas clothing made and fitted by the regimental tailor. As the sides and bottoms of the craters were not entirely covered with snow, black patches were sewn on to the garments to make the *camouflage* complete, while boots, steel helmets and rifles were also covered with white canvas. "I saw them going over," writes the Commanding Officer, "and I do not believe that a hawk would have spotted a movement." All were armed with revolvers and bombs, four carried knobkerries, and two an am-monal charge with a 90 second fuse. Lewis guns covered the raiders' advance until they came within

¹ The Army Commander wrote: "The number of the enemy taken or killed with absence of casualties on our part point to very thorough preparation and clever execution by the officer, N.C.O.'s and men concerned. The result is most satisfactory."

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ten yards of the post, which was then rushed. Three sentries threw up their hands but one of them first dislodged from the parapet a bomb which exploded and seriously wounded Lieutenant Mortimer and Corporal B. J. Stangroom. In spite of this both the officer and the N.C.O. jumped down and after a struggle overcame the three sentries. But the garrison was now alarmed; and some twenty men appeared at the foot of the sap leading to the post. Lieutenant Mortimer and his corporal were unable to help themselves, the former being temporarily blinded by his wound, but were brought back safely by two of the party. The remaining two men (Lance-Corporal C. D. Sinclair and Private W. Davies) performed their allotted task with great coolness, Davies placing the explosive while Sinclair kept the enemy at bay by steady bombing. It was a piece of good fortune for the Germans that the ammonal, probably frozen, did not explode.

Feb. 2-7.

The Patricias were in the line once more, from February 2 to 7, before they began training for the great attack, but on this occasion the only event of interest was the blowing by the enemy of a small camouflet at "Patricia" crater, which damaged the post on the lip but did no other harm.¹

Feb. 8-
March 20.

After a week of training and relaxation at Mont-St.-Eloy the Regiment moved to Bruay and gave six weeks to preparation for the coming offensive. Instruction, particularly in the new platoon organization, was very thorough, and in the later stages included operations planned to the minutest detail over practice trenches. The Regiment was frequently inspected on parade or at manœuvres—by

¹ Trench casualties had become rather more heavy after the New Year, but the total for three and a half months was less than 100. Lieut. G. W. Little was the fourth officer wounded in January.

Sir Douglas Haig and General Nivelle, and several times by the Corps and Divisional Commanders. After the hours of training there were concerts, entertainments, brigade football matches (in which the 42nd Battalion excelled) and boxing bouts in the Bruay theatre.

On March 22 the Regiment returned via Mont-St.-Eloy to a slightly modified front line, where, during the last ten days of the month, and again from April 4 to 8, it supplied its own reliefs on a frontage of two companies. The weather was bad, but in view of the coming battle an aggressive policy was more than ever necessary, both to confuse the enemy and to obtain prisoners for identification. The artillery began to intensify its fire on the back areas, while large working-parties built machine-gun forts and other strong-points behind the line. On March 26 a raiding party under Major Rasmussen passed safely through their own wire opposite "Patricia" crater, but on coming out of a dip in the ground were detected and assailed by bombs which drove them back with six casualties, the officer being one of those wounded. Although the enemy was clearly expecting a raid or an attack in force, a second raid took place at 7 A.M. next day under Lieutenant A. F. Neatby. This time the party reached the enemy post at "Grange" crater, only to find it had just been evacuated. The same officer led a patrol at 5 A.M. on the next day again into the German line between Duffield and Grange craters. The party were observed by a sentry who threw a cylindrical stick bomb and ran down his line shouting *Heraus!*, whereupon the Germans began to man the trench. Leaving some rifle grenadiers to cover his right flank, the officer pushed down the trench with two lance-

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corporals, killed two men with his revolver and pushed up a sap towards the crater post under a shower of enemy bombs. Neatby replied with German stick bombs which he found stored in the sap, and tried to force his way to the killed men to get identification. But the enemy now numbered fifty, Neatby was hit, one of the N.C.O.'s was wounded and taken prisoner, and the attempt had to be abandoned. Artillery assistance was called for by flare signals and the retirement was covered by very effective fire from Stokes and field guns. The raid lasted over twenty minutes, and the enemy's only revenge was to shell his own observation line and craters with trench mortars.¹

2. THE CAPTURE OF VIMY RIDGE

The assault of April 9, 10 and 11, 1917, on Vimy Ridge should not be regarded as standing alone but as forming part of "the First Battle of Arras." This great offensive was intended by Sir Douglas Haig to supplement General Nivelle's unhappy attempt to finish the war with a single bold stroke on the Aisne, or, if that strategy failed, at least to retain for the Allies the initiative so hardly won on the Somme. The battles of the autumn had been followed by the masterly German withdrawal to the Hindenburg or Siegfried line at the beginning of 1917, and the German retreat to new positions between Arras and St. Quentin had been vitally protected by Vimy Ridge in the north.

¹ Lieut. Neatby was recommended by the Commanding Officer for his gallantry and *savoir faire*: "All the men who returned with him cannot say too much for his daring and resource." The work of Cpl. G. H. Mullin in charge of the covering party was also highly praised.

Four men were killed, and Major Rasmussen, Lieut. Neatby and 16 other ranks were wounded, during this tour.



LIEUT.-COLONEL AGAR S. A. M. ADAMSON, D.S.O.

Sir Douglas Haig's original plan for the spring campaign was to pinch the salient, which the drives of the previous autumn had created, by attacks of the Fifth Army on the Ancre and the Third Army about Arras. The German retirement compelled him to modify his general plan, but did not affect it in so far as the Arras sector was concerned :

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The front on the Arras side was to include the Vimy Ridge, possession of which I considered necessary to secure the left flank of the operations on the south bank of the Scarpe. The capture of this Ridge, which was to be carried out by the First Army, also offered other important advantages. It would deprive the enemy of valuable observation and give us a wide view over the plains stretching from the eastern foot of the Ridge to Douai and beyond. Moreover, although it was evident that the enemy might, by a timely withdrawal, avoid a battle in the awkward salient still held by him between the Scarpe and the Ancre, no such withdrawal from his important Vimy Ridge positions was likely. He was almost certain to fight for this Ridge, and, as my object was to deal him a blow which would force him to use up his reserve, it was important that he should not evade my attack.¹

The attack of April 9 was launched on a front of fifteen miles, from Croisilles to Givenchy. While the IV. Corps of General Allenby's Third Army dealt with the northern end of the new Hindenburg line and the ground in front of Arras, General Horne was to assault the Vimy Ridge with General Byng's Canadian Corps, holding the I. Corps on its left, ready, after the capture of the Ridge, to extend the attack north of the Souchez River towards Lens.

In a broad way the Canadians found themselves in the First Battle of Arras with much the same rôle as in the Battle of the Somme. Again

¹ C.-in-C.'s Despatch, December 25, 1917.

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the Canadian Corps was on the left flank of a general attack ; again its object was to seize commanding ground and form a defensive flank to a gigantic forward movement in which nearly a score of divisions were engaged. Further yet, the place of the 7th Brigade and of the Patricias, as at Courcelette, was almost, but not quite, on the extreme left of this defensive flanking movement.

But in detail no two engagements of the war were less alike. On this Easter Monday morning the Patricias were "standing to" in trenches which they had known intimately for six months. They were looking out upon saps and crater posts which they had watched, raided, talked about and captured in counterfeit over and over again. They were about to share in an action not merely contemplated but actually prepared all the winter long. Just behind them, for example, Brigade Headquarters occupied a machine-gun fort, the building of which had begun on November 7. This fort, which included among many other rooms a dressing-station for fifty stretcher-cases at a time, had been planned by two of the Regiment's seconded officers, Major J. W. H. Van den Berg and Lieutenant D. S. Forbes, and built during the winter by the Patricias and the other battalions of the Brigade. Already in February at Bruay, Colonel Agar Adamson had known his objective. His orders for practice attacks on the taped trenches then given differed little, even in details, from those he issued nearly two months later, on the eve of the great day. The practice attacks had been worked out to the last point ; every man engaged knew where he was to be and what he was to be about at any given moment of the action, and these "dress rehearsals" had inspired a high degree of

confidence. Had not General Byng, watching the 7th Brigade at Bruay, said to the Brigadier: "This is very good and very convincing. If this Brigade can't get through I don't know any that could"?

Infantry have never had heavier artillery support in an assault than at Vimy Ridge, with the possible exception of the Battle of Messines a few weeks later. Behind the Canadian Corps alone the massed guns of seven divisions and nine supplementary brigades were ready to clear the way, their time-table of creeping barrages worked out to the half-minute.¹ Nearly a hundred machine guns were to accompany the assaulting troops of each division or protect them with barrage fire. Through the early months of 1917, road-construction and the perfecting of every kind of communication were hurried on with great energy. On the Canadian front eleven spacious subways were constructed to make possible the concentration of troops unmolested by the fire of the heavy trench-mortar batteries opposite. The original Vimy tunnels are said to have been the work of Huguenots during the persecutions, but they were now greatly enlarged and improved under the direction of the engineers. "Grange Tunnel" was built mainly by the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade and directly served it in the attack. It was 750 yards long with three exits near the jumping-off trenches and a tram-line system passing close to its western entrance; and troops went forward and wounded passed back through it in constant streams during the battle. The tunnel had everywhere some twenty-five feet of head-cover; electric light and a water supply were installed; and there were

¹ The 3rd Canadian Division was now supported by its own artillery, which had relieved that of the Lahore Division in November.

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numerous dug-outs for Battalions Headquarters, accommodation for the men, dressing-stations, magazines for trench-mortar and other ammunition. Altogether Grange Tunnel was a worthy monument to the skill of the engineers and the labour of the battalions, and enabled the Patricias and other units to assemble without arousing further suspicions on the part of the already nervous Bavarians on Hill 145.

Sir Douglas Haig's despatches show that the French plans hastened the launching of the Arras battle, but the Vimy Ridge preparations had been so long maturing that they were little affected by the change of date. In the third week of March the artillery opened a general bombardment of the enemy front, and the fire became gradually more intense, though only half of the heavy guns were in use until a week before the battle. The enemy's wire was everywhere demolished. There was systematic night-firing on all his approaches and communications. Thélus, Vimy, Petit-Vimy and other villages were deluged with high explosives. On two occasions bombardments were ordered, both to practise the creeping barrage and by way of feint to deceive the enemy as to the real intention. It was never hoped that the enemy could be completely surprised—he was well aware that some time soon the Ridge was to be attempted. But the methods of deception adopted kept him in the dark as to the exact date of the attack, and perhaps of necessity, he did little to strengthen his ordnance in the Vimy positions. Such new batteries as were brought in were completely swamped by counter-battery fire; and, generally, the German guns were completely outweighed from first to last. The result of the preliminary bombardment was

ascertained from observation and photographs taken from the air, and on their gunners the Canadian infantry relied exclusively, for the weather never favoured the use of gas until some days after the main advance, and the crater-pocked La Folie sector was unsuited to tank warfare. "The destruction of the enemy's works by the artillery was so complete that he was unable to offer any serious resistance to the 3rd Division's assaults." The Patricias have reason to remember with gratitude the gunners not only of their own Division but of the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division who supported them in the action.

The four Canadian Divisions, assaulting side by side for the first time, attacked in order of number from the right. The 3rd Division lay opposite La Folie Wood, with the 8th Infantry Brigade on the right in front of La Folie Farm, and the 7th on the left under the shadow of Hill 145. The battalions of the 7th Brigade were also deployed in order of seniority from the right, and the Patricias thus attacked in the centre opposite the crater field between Duffield and Tidza, with the Royal Canadian Regiment on their right and the 42nd Battalion on their left.¹

The attack was planned to the last detail, in four stages, timed to agree with similar movements by the 57th (West Lancashire) Division (XVII. Corps) on the Third Army's left flank. But as the Canadian Corps formed a defensive flank, its left Divisions (the 4th and 3rd) were concerned only

¹ As the orders called for three-battalion brigade frontages, the 49th Battalion was split up into a large number of small mopping-up- and carrying-parties. This Battalion rose with splendid spirit to the least glorious task of the day, and each of the other three Battalion Commanders, as well as the Brigadier, make special reference in their reports to the Edmonton Regiment's zeal and usefulness.

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with the first two movements. These were (1) an advance at 5.30 A.M., through the crater line, the lightly-held observation line and the front line proper, which was due to reach the first objective in thirty-five minutes; (2) a further advance, at 6.45 A.M., to their final objective, a line drawn through La Folie Wood along the sharp reverse slope of the Ridge and breaking back below the crest on the left to the first objective-line of the 4th Division. The distances of these advances varied in different sectors of the attack; on the P.P.C.L.I. front the first move covered about 700 yards, the second about 500. This was all that was required of the 7th Brigade: "to consolidate a defence line on the east edge of the Ridge with strong-points in the final objective-line, and to push patrols through La Folie Wood." The 1st and 2nd Divisions had two further objectives which they were not expected to reach until 1 P.M. As to them this narrative is only concerned to say that by nightfall on the 9th the Canadian right was over the Ridge and had penetrated nearly 4000 yards into the German line at Farbus. The 4th Division on the left, as the pivot of the defensive flank, had only to reach the first objective-line. But this meant for them the storming of Hill 145, by far the strongest natural position on the whole front north of Arras. Hill 145 indeed proved a very hard nut to crack, and the delay here temporarily endangered the otherwise easy advance of the 7th Brigade under its southern slope.

The position to be assaulted was an intricate defensive system, the fruit of two years' work, utilizing to the full one of the great natural strong-points of the western front. This system included not merely a complete network of fighting, switch

and communication trenches, but labyrinthine caves and tunnels, concrete machine-gun emplacements and redoubts of great strength. To quote from the official Canadian Corps report of the battle, compiled by Captain H.R.H. Prince Arthur of Connaught and Captain T. M. Papineau, M.C., a seconded P.P.C.L.I. officer :

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The difficulties of the first ground to be traversed were peculiarly great. The protracted mining activity of both sides in this locality had resulted in a chain of great mine craters, many of them impassable, and the others presenting a difficult obstacle for infantry. In addition the unfavourable weather of the preceding days and the continuous shelling had reduced much of the earth to vast puddles of sticky mud. The deep shell craters, the maze of shattered trenches and the remnants of torn and scattered entanglements added further obstructions to the heavy-laden infantry.

The weather during the engagement was very cold and boisterous and, except in the first hours, a handicap to the attacker. After heavy showers on the 8th, the assault was launched on the 9th in a sleet storm and a strong gale, blowing, fortunately, in the teeth of the enemy. Between 10 and 11 A.M. it was snowing, "with very heavy black clouds sweeping low down over the Ridge." Later the weather cleared and the rest of the day was fine and sunny, though cold and at times misty. But on the 10th and 11th snow-storms and blizzards swept across the plateau : "at times several inches of snow lay upon the ground and the discomforts were rather those of open warfare in January than of early spring." Worse still, the guns were hampered by the heavy going and could not keep pace at a time when, with the enemy beaten and tottering, every hour lost was a golden opportunity wasted.

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Though the assault on Vimy Ridge was even less a "battalion action" than most of the other great offensives, it is necessary here to confine attention to the part played by the Patricias, noticing the movements of other battalions and brigades only in so far as they affected the Regiment's fortunes. The disposition of the companies, just before dawn on April 9 was as follows: Two companies, Nos. 1 (Lieutenant R. L. Haggard) and 3 (Captain A. G. Pearson, D.C.M.) were standing to in the line ready to go forward through the craters at "zero hour" and attack the first objective. Nos. 2 (Lieutenant M. Ten Broeke) and 4 (Lieutenant E. P. Cloran) were waiting near Colonel Agar Adamson's Headquarters in Grange Tunnel to debouch behind their respective odd numbers, follow them to the first objective, and pass through after reorganization to capture the second objective beyond the crest. The battalion frontage was approximately 250 yards, and each company was disposed in the new formation of three strong self-supporting platoons.

The 7th Brigade's first objective was the enemy defence line mid-way across the plateau. The R.C.R. were to pass between Vernon and Tidza craters, and moving slightly north of due east were to make their first halt at the junction of the two important trenches "Artillerie Weg" and "Zwischen Stellung," make touch with the 4th C.M.R. on their right and hold "Feather" Trench short of the École Commune, a fortified point.¹ The Patricias, moving forward on the R.C.R.'s left, had first to work through the numerous craters of the Duffield, Grange and Patricia—Tidza group, and then forward

¹ The trenches, etc., named in the narrative will be found on the map facing p. 240.

across "Fact" Trench and the Staubwasser Weg to the German defensive line north-west of the school. The Regiment's first objective was the line of "Famine" Trench from the junction with the R.C.R. to the meeting-point of the Staubwasser Weg with "Beggar" and "Blue" Trenches (the Staubwasser Weg being the main artery from the front line through La Folie Wood to the Lens—Arras road, and Beggar Trench running over the top of Hill 145). The 42nd Battalion was to take up a line along Beggar Trench from the P.P.C.L.I. left and join up with the 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade, which was to come over the top of the hill and form the right of the defensive flank proper just beyond the crest. A glance at the map shows that the capture of the first line would take the 7th Brigade in the La Folie sector more than half-way across the 130 metre plateau. The movement would only be possible with the support of overwhelming artillery fire, and the gain could not be made secure unless the 11th and 12th Brigades were able to take and hold the observation ground on the heights of Hill 145.

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By 4.30 A.M. all ranks of the Patricias were in position, and thanks to Grange Tunnel every man had a hot meal and his tot of rum two hours before action. It was still of course quite dark, and the men filed unobserved into the jumping-off trenches without hitch or interference from the enemy. The "zero hour" had been chosen so that there would be sufficient light for local movement and not enough for the enemy's snipers and machine gunners.

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At 5.30 A.M. the 18-pounders' intense shrapnel bombardment burst with sudden fury on the enemy's front line. The barrage fell a short distance beyond the crater posts for three minutes and

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then moved forward, 100 yards at a time, till it reached a point 150 yards beyond the intermediate objective. Precisely at 5.30 also, the leading wave of the Patricias began to climb to the lip of the crater line, the Regimental Pipers first playing the men over the top and then following as stretcher-bearers. As the barrage crept forward, "our fellows" (wrote General Macdonell) "pressed close on its heels carrying all before them with irresistible dash, and pinning most of the Huns in their deep dug-outs." There was nothing to retard advance in the crater line—the trench mortars had blown the garrisons and every shred of wire sky-high. The "leap-frogging" companies followed quite close behind in artillery formation, and although the German counter-barrage came down soon after the attack began, all the assaulting companies passed through the danger zone without casualties. The German front and support lines were in turn rapidly taken, the defences having been well-nigh obliterated by the bombardment and the Bavarians stunned beyond the power to resist. Nos. 1 and 3 Companies moved steadily and rapidly forward to the first objective. The ground was very difficult, but most of the obstacles were created by the terrible efficiency of the British and Canadian Siege Batteries. Occasionally the complete obliteration of a trench so destroyed landmarks that troops ran into their own barrage, but by 6 A.M. every unit of the Brigade was on the first objective-line and Lieutenant Haggard of No. 1 Company reported both attacking companies of the Patricias in position, few casualties, and the taking of a number of prisoners of the 262nd Regiment. Some slight opposition was met in Famine Trench itself, but this was quickly cleared and all four companies

tumbled in. The action had opened with brilliant success.

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During the first forty minutes the heavy artillery had laid a curtain barrage on a fixed line beyond the objective, and now moved forward to other lines farther back. The moving barrage of the field guns had stopped 150 yards beyond the intermediate objective, and under cover of it Famine Trench was mopped up and consolidated, outpost parties being thrown forward just short of the barrage to protect the front. This was the state of affairs for forty minutes, while Nos. 2 and 4 Companies reorganized to carry on the advance. The whole attack was going like clock-work, and the men could move back and forth overland without precaution behind Famine Trench, which was not bombarded by the Germans until the second advance was well under way at 7 A.M.

The final objective for which Nos. 2 and 4 Companies were preparing to start called for a continued advance of about 500 yards. The second objective-line traversed the upper slopes of La Folie Wood well beyond the crest of the Ridge at the right and centre, bending back on the left to the extreme eastern edge of the 130 metre plateau. To reach this line the Royal Canadian Regiment was ordered to push forward through the École Commune and astride the Artillerie Weg as far as the right end of "Britt" Trench, a short trench joining the Artillerie Weg and Staubwasser Weg just beyond the crest. No. 2 Company P.P.C.L.I. was to carry the line on northwards along Britt Trench and straight across the Staubwasser Weg (astride which they would advance), while No. 4 Company was to continue it along a road bending slightly back to the north-west as far as some cross-

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tracks on the reverse slope. Here the 42nd was to join up and bend the new line back still farther so that the left of the 7th Brigade should connect with the right of the 11th Brigade on the extreme eastern edge of the 130 metre contour beyond Hill 145. Particular stress was laid in the Operation Orders on the importance of consolidation. A defence line was to be established without delay near the eastern edge of the plateau, the Patricias being ordered to convert to this purpose "Bridle" Trench, over which they would pass on their way to Britt Trench. Each attacking company was to construct two strong-points in the new outpost line beyond the hill; and the supporting companies, now Nos. 1 and 3, were to follow up and build a more considerable machine-gun fort—S.P.6—on the eastern edge of the plateau on the Staubwasser Weg, a little north-west of the École Commune. Patrols were to push down the hill as soon as possible to find whether the enemy were holding ground on the reverse slope, the objective of the P.P.C.L.I. patrols being the tiny Bois-du-Champ-Pourri on the Staubwasser Weg north-west of Petit-Vimy. The artillery barrage was to lift at a given time so as not to interfere with these patrols.

The attack continued at 6.45 A.M., and the second objective was reached in less than an hour by the whole 3rd Division. The Patricias, advancing at a steady walk, started off with almost a parade-ground alignment. On the right, No. 2 Company ran into fire from the edge of the wood after advancing 75 or 100 yards and changed its method of progress to section rushes, one section pinning the enemy fire down while the others dashed forward. At the entry of the wood opposition stiffened. In Britt Trench there was a nest of Germans with a

deep dug-out which embarrassed the advance for a few minutes ; but Lieutenant Ten Broeke was soon at his objective and reported :

Four German officers and fourteen other ranks taken prisoners. Casualties pretty bad. Enemy resistance weak. Patrol went out in direction of Bois-du-Champ-Pourri. Flanks connected up.¹

No. 4 Company had been equally successful, but had paid a heavy price in officers. Lieutenant R. L. Sladen had been killed and Lieutenants E. P. Cloran and S. B. Plummer wounded, while Lieutenant J. T. Lownsborough, a junior subaltern who acted with great coolness after taking over the command, was also hit, but insisted on remaining with his company "until the nature of his wound compelled a senior officer to order him out of the line," and the command fell to Company-Sergeant-Major C. Baker. Lieutenant Cloran's company was held up at the very beginning by machine-gun fire near Famine Trench. In order to keep up with the barrage he did not wait to outflank the gun, but rushed it with six of his men.² Lieutenant Cloran continued to display fine resource and leadership throughout the advance, but was desperately wounded as the final objective was reached.

It is a paradox, disconcerting to the historian, that complete successes make less history (in the case of small units, at least) than does failure or partial achievement. For the Patricias the great hour of the Vimy Ridge battle was the first, when they

¹ The enemy officers had been captured in the strong-point in Britt Trench which had been stormed by Lieut. G. W. Guiou and his platoon with much bombing of dug-outs and firing at point-blank range.

² A somewhat similiar exploit was Sgt. J. J. Riley's on the right. At a moment's notice he organized a rifle grenade section which worked round the German flanks and captured a machine gun which for a short time held up the advance from the head of the Zwischen Stellung.

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captured the whole of the two objectives allotted to them with less than fifty casualties. The very completeness with which a complicated chain of orders was carried out made it superfluous to set down the specific details of accomplishment. But it would be far from the truth to say that the storming of La Folie Wood was a "walk over." It required not only the finest training and a scrupulous obedience to orders, but perfect leadership. Without good physique and the steadiest bearing no troops could have kept exact pace with the barrage in the "hummocky waste" of craters and broken wire, as they went forward jumping from shell-hole to shell-hole under hot rifle and machine-gun fire. It was an action to justify a commanding officer in the choice of his juniors, for, as in the Courcelette scramble, the leaders were bound to fall. The most junior of subalterns, like Lieutenant Lownsbrough, were found commanding attacks on a half-battalion front; junior N.C.O.'s like Corporal R. Lavers, who had perhaps never commanded a platoon except on working-parties, acted as Company-Sergeant-Majors in the critical hours of consolidation. The whole business of organizing the intermediate objective was at one time in the hands of one sergeant, while another took charge of the consolidation of S.P.6. An orderly "carried on" for his wounded officer, directing the digging of the men about him. Everywhere the story was the same; privates taking charge when their section leaders went down, runners and stretcher-bearers not only doing their work in total disregard of risk to themselves but disclosing initiative and resource in countless ways.

At 10.45 A.M. the Intelligence Officer of the 7th Brigade reported :

Outpost line continuous along road through Britt. Patrols and snipers in front. S.P.'s 5, 6 and 7 well dug in and strongly held with machine guns in front to get good sweep. Famine and Beggar held continuously. Germans retired from Staubwasser at 8 A.M. leaving occasional snipers. No shelling forward of Famine. German aeroplanes flying over lines very low down. Patrols well down towards Bracken, north of Staubwasser Weg. Sniping bad from Hill 145.

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The last sentence of this report explains the toll of casualties during the hours of consolidation. The attack of the 11th Brigade on Hill 145 had failed to reach the crest. Here alone on the whole front the enemy had shown a good fighting spirit, and had held his ground. Germans emerged from tunnels in the rear of the advancing Canadians and the 4th Division could not reach "Blue" Trench to link up with the 42nd Battalion. This failure created a dangerous situation for the left and centre of the triumphant 7th Brigade. From Hill 145 and from the "Pimple" to the north (which could not be taken until the enemy was driven from Hill 145) the 42nd Battalion and the Patricias on the plateau below suffered a gruelling enfilade and almost a reverse fire, and this disquieting situation was not relieved until the 44th and 50th Battalions gallantly stormed the hill on the following day. In the meantime the 42nd Battalion refused its left flank, and, later in the day, dug a strong defensive line across the jumping-off trench to the new line.

The Patricias had, therefore, to hold and fortify the captured ground not merely under heavy fire and the menace of a counter-attack from a particularly dangerous angle, but also in the confusion of extending their line to free the 42nd Battalion to guard the Brigade's left flank. The whole of this

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work, however, was rapidly accomplished, and General Macdonell especially complimented the officers of the Regiment for their "coolness and gallantry" during these hours. No time had, in fact, been lost after the final objective was carried. The flanks quickly made touch, for the R.C.R. and 42nd came forward as rapidly as the Patricias. Patrols were then thrown forward towards the Bois-du-Champ-Pourri. These found that although the enemy was off the Ridge he intended to fight for the Lens—Arras railway, and was concentrating in "Bloater" and "Flower" Trenches, the next line of defence which followed the low ground beyond the wood through Petit-Vimy. Immediately in front of the P.P.C.L.I. outpost line in Britt Trench the enemy was reported to be fairly strong in "Brook" and "Bracken" Trenches. Unpleasantly active snipers lay among the trees, and were difficult to spot in the mist; many men of the consolidating and wiring-parties were shot through the head, and so heavy were No. 2 Company's losses that some of these parties had to be withdrawn till nightfall. Before 10 A.M. both Nos. 2 and 4 Companies were asking for more bombs and ammunition, and supplies of both were immediately taken up by carrying-parties of the 49th Battalion. While a platoon under Lieutenant G. G. Reynolds lay deployed in front of the new position to keep down the sniping, other parties were pushed forward to construct the strong-points in the outpost line. Bridle Trench was converted into a fighting trench, and a small counter-attack emerging from Brook Trench was easily dispersed. By 11 A.M. the Patricias had made both first and second lines continuous and were wiring in front, and at 1.30 P.M. General Macdonell reported that his

whole Brigade was "dug in, traversed and wired" at its final objective and had taken 500 prisoners with comparatively light losses. Advanced B.H.Q. had moved up behind the attack; before noon Major E. S. McDougall, who had general charge of the Patricias' attacking companies, was in communication with Colonel Agar Adamson from Famine Trench.

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The spasmodic grenade attacks of the Germans in front were held in check without great difficulty, and the shelling of the new lines, which began at 8.15 A.M., was of no great account during the forenoon. But the cross machine-gun fire and sniping from Hill 145, and in lesser degree from the defences of Petit-Vimy, was still doing great damage, and this could not be checked until the 4th Division should be able to prepare a fresh attack. General Maedonell, recognizing the possibility of a counter-attack on his flank and its seriousness, asked for supports from the 58th Battalion in reserve; but the Germans were in no mood to counter-attack, and the reinforcements, although brought up, were not required. The new front line gave excellent observation towards Vimy, and enemy concentrations in the rear were reported and immediately dispersed by the heavy artillery. German gun teams in the flats below could be seen coming up and retiring the guns, but their movements proved more difficult for the Canadian artillery to intercept than those of massed troops farther back.

In the afternoon the German gun fire became much more troublesome. At the time of the Vimy action the *Albatross* and other new types of aeroplane had begun to recover for the enemy the dominance he had lost on the Somme, and, as the weather cleared, the planes which came over, flying

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very low, discovered and quickly reported the location of the new line. As a result, from 3 P.M. on the 9th till 2 A.M. on the 10th, the Canadian positions were very heavily bombarded with 5.9, 4.2 and 77 mm. shells. The Patricias suffered severely from this gun fire; much damage was done to the trenches, and the list of killed and wounded, comparatively so trifling during the assault, mounted alarmingly. The front line suffered most, especially on the right (No. 2) where every N.C.O. but one was hit before the next morning; the machine guns were kept in action but the crews were badly cut up, and a Stokes gun which had been brought up into the front line ceased firing for want of ammunition and crew. On the left, No. 4 Company had, as already mentioned, taken over a part of the 42nd Battalion frontage to allow that unit to garrison 200 yards of the 4th Division's line in Beggar Trench, but it could ill afford to extend its line, thinned as it was by continued machine-gun and rifle fire from the left flank. The Germans had also discovered the strong-point on the Staubwasser Weg which the support companies had completed with great labour before dusk. Their guns were turned upon it and flattened it out, killing or wounding many among the garrison of fifty. When the position became useless as a defensive post, Major McDougall withdrew his machine guns and placed them elsewhere in the communication trench and in the reserve line. Altogether, the afternoon and night brought a very heavy strain. So great were the losses on the right that only the untiring efforts of Lieutenant Ten Broeke kept any semblance of organization in No. 2 Company. No. 4 Company had been without officers during most of the day, and Ten Broeke sent two of his own officers across

to the left to take charge. The odd-number companies lost several officers and were hard hit by the heavy shelling of the strong-points. Losses mounted from about 50 at 10.30 A.M. on the 9th to 215 at the same hour on the 10th, by which time No. 2 on the right front and No. 3 in the left consolidating position were seriously disorganized. Furthermore the weather had turned stormy and very cold. Well might Major McDougall report that the men were "not as fresh as they might be," but General Macdonell had used up all his available troops and had thinned his line as much as he dared to make his flank secure along Blunt and Beggar Trenches. With Hill 145 still in the enemy's hands, the great successes won at the first rush seemed now in no little jeopardy.

But the Bavarians were far too busy stopping a rot to give thought to counter-attacking on a scale large enough to afford hope of recovering the Ridge. From time to time news came in that they were massing locally—for instance on Hill 145 at 3.30 P.M. and again shortly after 4 P.M. in Bracken Trench immediately opposite the Patricias, where officers were seen to ride up, leave their horses and move forward, apparently to reorganize. There was at one time also some expectation of a counter-attack in force from Bloater and Flower Trenches in Petit-Vimy. The activity of the Canadian patrols, together with the excellent communication with the artillery behind, prevented any of these concentrations from developing. Nos. 2 and 4 Companies had thrown forward scouts and patrols through La Folie Wood towards the Bois-du-Champ-Pourri to see whether the way was clear to Petit-Vimy and the Lens—Arras road, but they found that the enemy held Brook and Bracken

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Trenches in sufficient strength at least to resist these patrols. A Lewis gun was pushed forward down the Staubwasser Weg to deal with scattered snipers in the wood ; but not very much progress could be made down the hill. Patrols reported from all along the divisional front that the Germans were occupying the low ground, and their intention became clearer, as the day wore on, not to abandon the main road without a fight.

In spite of the exhaustion of men who had been fighting on battle rations under heavy fire since day-break, the work of securing La Folie Wood went on steadily all through the evening and night of April 9/10. The line was linked up, the strong-points over the brow of the hill were improved, and by 1 A.M. on the 10th the 3rd Division could assure the Corps Commander that its final objectives were everywhere held in accordance with the general plan. The 2nd and 1st Canadian Divisions had also fought their way across the high ground and lay in front of Farbus, and the Third Army had pierced the Méricourt and Hindenburg lines north and south of Arras. Over a wide front the enemy was driven from his fortified positions, and north of the Scarpe was commanded by the advancing British. Arras was relieved, Lens was threatened. Thus April 9, 1917, saw, with the possible exception of General Plumer's attack at Messines two months later, the most complete "limited objective" victory in the whole war upon the western front. It seemed to promise greater things to come. "April 10 and the following days," wrote General Ludendorff afterwards, "were critical. The consequences of a break through of twelve to fifteen kilometres wide and six or more kilometres deep are not easy to meet." But the weather, going steadily from bad to

worse, and the failure of General Nivelle's strategy on the Aisne, saved the German armies.

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April 10.

The chief event of April 10 was the brilliant capture of Hill 145 in the late afternoon by the 4th Canadian Division. This success not only gave the secure flank beyond the Ridge which was an essential part of the general plan, but made possible on the 12th the capture of the Pimple by the same Division which brought the I. Corps into the area of mining villages that extends four miles west of Lens. The loss of these two hill positions swept away the Germans' last hope of retaking the Ridge and led directly to their general retreat to the Oppy—Méricourt line.

For the Patricias the 10th was a hard and wearing day. The shell fire continued with little abatement and was particularly heavy on their right front between the Staubwasser Weg and Artillerie Weg. The men in the trenches were very tired and there was little that they could do to relieve conditions. The scouts, however, were active; in obedience to a special Corps order, patrols again attempted in the morning to work forward towards the Bois-du-Champ-Pourri and to force the enemy out of his advanced position in Brook and Bracken Trenches. Early reports spoke of the enemy moving eastward, but it soon became clear that he was not yet ready to withdraw. By 11.45 A.M. many parties were observed moving forward with light transport, and though no effort was made to counter-attack, the information of patrols and observers convinced the Higher Command that an attack in force would be needed to enter Petit-Vimy. To this end preparations were at once set on foot.

Patrols all along the line now redoubled their efforts to discover the enemy's exact position. In

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addition to sending out many small parties, the Patricias made one reconnaissance in force under the Regimental Scout Officer, Lieutenant W. H. Morris, M.C., to find the real condition of affairs in Brook and Bracken Trenches in front of their line. Lieutenant Morris organized his party into two patrols of ten men each, and moved out at 12.45 P.M. One party pushed down the Artillerie Weg on the right front and got forward about 120 yards, nearly to Brook Trench. Then they met vigorous sniping fire from the front, the bullets smacking wickedly into the parapet of the Weg. Private E. F. Bettridge, the scout who led this party, wormed forward, and looking over the parapet saw fifteen yards away 25 or 30 Germans who let fly a shower of stick bombs and sent up S.O.S. flares. Brook Trench evidently being held in force at this end, the patrol fell back to the line. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Morris was leading the other party down the Staubwasser Weg. After advancing about sixty yards along the trench the patrol fell upon two deep dug-outs very close together, each with a wide entrance. From one of these two Germans rushed out in front of Private W. G. Elder, who was in advance of the party. Unhappily, Elder's rifle missfired, and the Germans got away to warn a larger party which at once began bombing the patrol. Lieutenant Morris rushed his party past the dug-outs, himself guarding one entrance, one of his men the other. Another forty yards was made in this rush, the patrol now being fully a hundred yards in front of our line; but the Germans showed in numbers behind a breastwork, and the patrol, after killing two men, had to fall back. The officer brought up the rear and shot a third German who, thinking that the whole patrol had withdrawn,

bolted from one of the dug-outs towards his friends behind the breastwork. The two parties were out for half an hour and returned safely, having established the fact that the way was barred in front by an enemy well established in good trenches and ready to fight for them. The experience of these two patrols was the general one; the Germans were holding Bracken and Brook Trenches as an outpost position and were dug in and wired along Bloater and Flower Trenches behind. The British artillery began to bombard this line at noon, and the order came forward from Brigade Headquarters to prepare for another advance down the valley through Vimy. The attack was never delivered. Bad weather hampered the movement of guns, and by the time that everything was ready the Germans were in general retirement to new positions across the plain. Bracken Trench was finally cleared on the 12th. The 9th Brigade sent patrols through Vimy; advance guards of the 4th Division entered Givenchy; and the main body followed up until halted before the new German position guarding Avion and Arleux in the Souchez valley.

Some time before this, the Patricias had been relieved. Soon after midnight on April 10/11 an inter-company relief in the line brought the odd-number companies forward to allow the even numbers to rest in Famine Trench. A little later a message came through that a general relief of the Brigade was intended, and in the course of the day the 49th and 58th Battalions relieved the three units which had borne the strain of the attack and all that followed upon it. The Patricias were first ordered to remain in local reserve in the old front line, but later they were withdrawn with the 42nd Battalion and the Royal Canadian Regiment to rest

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at Villers-au-Bois. The relief was completed by 8.15 P.M. and the greater part of the Regiment moved back into reserve, a small party of officers and other ranks remaining behind for a few hours to guide the 43rd Battalion into the old line and show them the way into the new forward area.

Courcelette, and later Passchendaele, Parvillers, Jigsaw Wood and Tilloy, all lacked what was most characteristic of the Vimy action—the dotting of the last *i* and the crossing of the last *t* in preparation. Moreover, at Vimy only did the Patricias literally “go over the top” on the tick of the first zero hour of a great battle. At Vimy alone they swept without a check to their final objectives, and at Vimy alone were the casualties trifling in the advance itself. Yet the losses in the whole action were severe enough, though the Patricias did not suffer as much as the R.C.R., who had stiff fighting on their right front and in the taking of the École Commune, or the 42nd, who were left more exposed after the check at Hill 145. Before it was withdrawn the Regiment had lost 222 of all ranks, 83 of whom were killed or died of their wounds. These included eleven officers, of whom three—Lieutenants R. H. Simonds, R. S. Sladen and A. F. Wagner (who was attached during the action to the 7th Canadian Trench Mortar Brigade)—were killed.¹ The proportion of killed was not quite so great as on the Somme, and the total casualties were considerably less. Most of the officers were hit while leading their men in the attack, but almost all the other casualties came from the violent shell fire of the

¹ The officers wounded were Captains A. G. Pearson, D.C.M., and F. L. Shouldice, and Lieuts. E. P. Cloran, S. B. Plummer, G. C. Carvosso, J. T. Lownsbrough, W. H. W. Knapp and D. S. Forbes, M.C. (att. 7th Bde. M.G.C.).

evening of the 9th and the early morning of the 10th. The prisoners taken could not be counted, but the number did not fall short of 150, including several officers. As trophies of the action, the Regiment was able to show three trench mortars and three machine guns.

The 7th Brigade came out of the engagement with an enhanced reputation. If denied the glory of the 4th Division in overcoming great difficulties to the north, and of the 1st and 2nd Divisions in penetrating deeply into German territory to the south, the battalions of the 3rd Division had done all that was allotted to them swiftly and cleanly. The art of the scientific offensive was being learned not merely at G.H.Q. but in Battalion and Company Headquarters and in platoon billets.

Messages came from many sources. Princess Patricia telegraphed :

Congratulate all ranks heartily on their splendid part in the recent Canadian successes. I have heard of their doings with pride.

She sent a further message two days later through Prince Arthur of Connaught :

I am very proud to hear of the gallant part taken by the Regiment in the capture of Vimy Ridge and I send them my most hearty congratulations. I sincerely trust that their casualties are not heavy.

Sir Douglas Haig and General Horne in special orders fully recognized the achievement of the Canadian Corps, the latter adding :

The Vimy Ridge has been regarded as a position of very great strength. The Germans have considered it to be impregnable. To have carried this position with so little loss testifies to soundness of plan, thoroughness of preparation, dash and determination in execution and devotion to duty on the part of all concerned.

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The King telegraphed :

Canada will be proud that the taking of the coveted Vimy Ridge has fallen to the lot of her troops.

His Majesty's assertion was fully borne out by the "intense enthusiasm and admiration" shown by the Canadian forces in England and the "greatest enthusiasm throughout the Dominion" of which the new Governor-General, the Duke of Devonshire, spoke in his first congratulatory cablegram. General Byng, later to borrow his title from the Ridge that his Corps had won, wrote of the qualities that had given victory :

It has been one series of successes only obtained by troops whose courage, discipline and initiative stand pre-eminent. . . . The training undergone during the winter has borne its fruit, and it is this training, coupled with the zeal and gallantry which are so conspicuous in all ranks of the Corps, that will continue to gain results as potent and far-reaching as those that began with the capture of the Vimy Ridge.

Untoward circumstances—the Russian revolution, General Nivelles's ill success, impossibly bad weather in Flanders—robbed the victors in the First Battle of Arras of many fruits that seemed within grasp. But the value of the capture of Vimy Ridge was to appear before the end came. It is an unquestioned fact in the general history of the war that during the critical days of retreat in 1918 the British hold upon the Ridge stood almost alone between the Allies and disaster. Against so strong a position General Ludendorff hesitated to sacrifice men in frontal attack, and all his attempts to circle it were foiled. Vimy Ridge was the rock of the retreat, and had it not been in our hands even Marshal Foch could hardly have dared his counter-

stroke. The Patricias, then, may claim to have shared already on April 9, 1917, in one of the decisive victories of the war.

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3. THE LINE BEFORE LENS

The Patricias bore no part in following up the German retreat from Vimy on April 12 and 13. They remained refitting and training at Villers-au-Bois until the 15th and continued their reorganization at Gouy-Servins a few miles to the north, where they were visited in their billets and congratulated by General Lipsett. On April 20 the Regiment moved forward towards the new line. For a day or two it lay in brigade reserve near the old crater line beneath the crest of the Ridge, and on the 23rd and 24th occupied the new front trenches. The Canadian front was beyond Vimy and the railway, and the Patricias found themselves near the Mont Forêt quarries facing the defences along the Méricourt—Acheville road to which the Germans had retired. The two forces had as yet hardly settled down into position again, and patrols were numerous and active, their object being both to gain information and to deceive the enemy as to the British dispositions. On April 25 a patrol of twenty men under Lieutenant B. K. Snider and another under Lieutenant W. E. Ford worked respectively towards Méricourt and Acheville. Pushing out above 1500 yards in a north-easterly and easterly direction they encountered no Germans and got within 50 yards of the enemy's main defences—returning with one prisoner of the German Grenadier Guards who had lost his way. Throughout the tour the Regiment was busy digging new trenches. The battle in this sector was over, and except for a gas bombardment on the last day of

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the month the work was not much hampered by the enemy, who was himself strengthening his line with what speed he could.

For some weeks the Regiment saw little more of the front line. It was in Villers-au-Bois for a week, another week in reserve behind the Ridge, and another in the Vimy defences, with two companies forward under the R.C.R. command in "Totnes" Trench, about half a mile short of the Méricourt—Acheville road, where the line had come to rest.¹ From May 20 to June 6, the Patricias were back at Villers-au-Bois, training with the rest of the Brigade over taped trenches for an attack farther north between Avion and Lens. This took place on June 8/9, but the Patricias, who were in reserve, were not called upon. The attack, which extended from the Vimy—Avion railway to the Souchez River, protected the flank of the I. Corps assaulting upon Reservoir Hill before Lens on the north side of the river, and it brought the 3rd Canadian Division 800 yards forward into Avion from the south-west while the 4th Division menaced the town from the west by the capture of La Coulotte. The Patricias took over part of the line after the engagement and held the new position astride the Vimy—Méricourt road for five uneventful days; then moving into reserve at Berthonval Farm behind Neuville-St.-Vaast, there to provide

June
10-30.

¹ There was sometimes heavy shelling in the neighbourhood of the Mont Forêt quarries, and on May 12 the regimental pack train was caught while bringing up rations. Cpl. F. C. Havelock, in the rear of the train, although wounded by the shelling, caught a bolting horse by the head, rallied the other drivers, who all had trouble with their horses, and "by his prompt action undoubtedly saved the situation and stopped what might have been a general stampede."

The total of casualties from mid-April to the end of May was 75, but many of these were slight wounds attended to at the regimental dressing-station. During June only 2 other ranks were killed and Lieutenant C. A. Grant and 10 other ranks wounded.

working-parties for the consolidation of the defences before Lens. During the whole of this and the following month preparations went forward under the orders of General Sir Arthur Currie, K.C.M.G., C.B., who succeeded General Byng in command of the Corps, for an attack upon Avion and Lens from the south-west. The 7th Brigade (now under command of Brigadier-General H. M. Dyer, D.S.O., of the 5th Canadian Battalion)¹ practised hard for this attack. But it was destined never to mature, for when all was nearly ready, the Canadians had once again to be thrown into the Ypres Salient. During June also the Regiment distinguished itself in Transport and Horse Shows organized by Division, Corps and Army. The old friendly rivalry with the Royal Canadian Regiment continued. In the first two shows the R.C.R. were adjudged best, P.P.C.L.I. second best, in the Canadian Corps. In the final show (the First Army Horse Show of June 25) the Patricias got ahead of the R.C.R. and came out second to a battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers in the whole Army. General Lipsett sent a message of congratulations to Lieutenant M. Allan, M.M., and his men: "The P.P.C.L.I. have set the high standard for transport in the Division and have kept it up consistently, which is something a battalion may well be proud of."

In July the Regiment had a nine-day tour in front line and support in the western outskirts of Avion, a considerable town south of the River Souchez. Here the patrols of both sides were very energetic. During heavy shelling on the night of

¹ *Vice General A. C. Macdonell*, who was promoted to succeed General Currie as G.O.C. the 1st Division after commanding the 7th Brigade in the field for eighteen months. Both General Macdonnell and General Dyer were warm friends of the Regiment, and followed its career with sympathy and interest to the end of the war.

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July 3 the enemy knocked out a Lewis gun in an outpost and immediately thereafter raided the post in strength, found a sentry alone in a block beyond a traverse, knocked him unconscious and took him prisoner, and wounded two of the remaining four in the garrison. Efforts were made to catch this raiding party as it retired, but artillery fire came down and it got safely away with the prize—a prisoner for identification. On the 4th the Germans blew two mines a short distance in front of the same post. On the 5th Captain P. Molson, M.C., as an officer and a man peculiarly admired and beloved, and Lieutenant D. MacLean, who was standing beside him, were killed by a direct hit from a trench mortar shell which also killed two of their men and wounded several others.¹ Patrols were constantly out in front, but the German 5th Guards Division in Avion was very alert, and the protective barrages in No Man's Land saved its patrols from being engaged and effectively prevented raiding. On the last day of the tour, the 9th, a daylight patrol under Major T. M. Papineau, M.C. (who had left the Corps Headquarters Staff to rejoin the Regiment) made its way along a German communication trench and brought back across the open an enemy 3-inch trench mortar, in good condition except for damaged sights. At the end of this week all ranks were pretty well worn out; and the 39 casualties included two officers of experience and tried resource who could ill be spared.

July 10—
Aug. 19.

After the tour at Avion the Regiment was again away from the front line for several weeks, first at

¹ Captain Molson had only recently rejoined after his severe wound of June 2, 1916. He was not only a fine fighting officer but an administrator of great experience, and played a very important part in raising the University Companies.

Château-de-la-Haie, near Gouy-Servins, then in Zouave Valley behind the Ridge, and finally, from July 25 to August 19, back in the corps training area at Lapugnoy north of Bruay. Here heavy rain—the break in the weather that ruined the Third Battle of Ypres—shortened training hours, but the men had a good rest; for though the Regiment was nominally in corps reserve to any of the three divisions in the line it was not called upon to take part in the famous attack of August 15 on Hill 70, an exploit of the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions.

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The Patricias returned to the line on August 20, this time north of the River Souchez in the northern suburbs of Lens, the battle-area of the previous week. At Fosse 11 in Cité-St.-Pierre, where they lay for a day or two in brigade reserve, they suffered some twenty casualties from gas poisoning. On August 25 they relieved the R.C.R. in the line in front of Cité-St.-Laurent, where they spent by far their most trying week between the Battles of Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele, under the worst conditions of any regular trench tour since the departure from the Ypres Salient a year before. The weather was bad—driving rain with north-westerly gales. The Canadians were closing in on Lens from all sides; but the trenches among the slag-heaps and railway sidings were precarious, and in five days 50 men were hit.

Aug.
20-31.

The chief interest of the tour centres in an attack undertaken on August 26 by a small party under Lieutenant G. W. Guiou, M.C., with the object of constructing a block at the upper end of "Com-motion Trench," where the Canadian front line ran almost continuously into the enemy defences. After an artillery preparation of five hours, the party of

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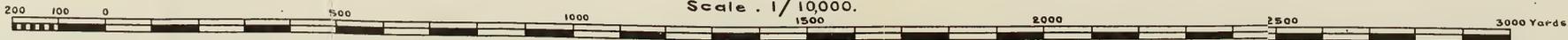
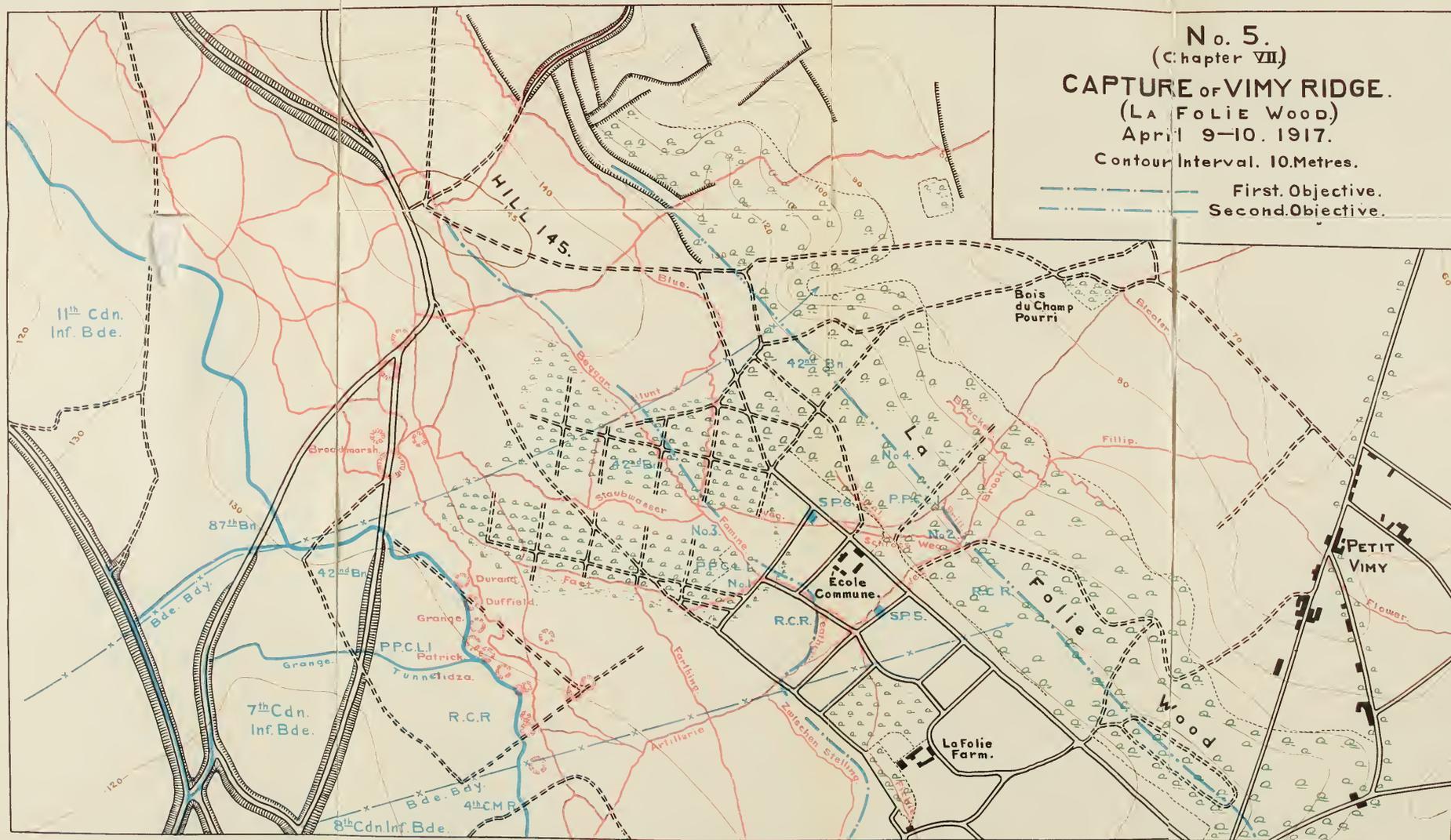
four bombers, two rifle grenadiers, four wiremen and six riflemen left "Nun's Alley" (which cut Commotion Trench) with picks and shovels at 7 P.M. and worked its way up Commotion Trench. The battalion on the right which was co-operating in the enterprise was delayed a quarter of an hour in starting and the P.P.C.L.I. party was therefore exposed to severe sniping from the flank. Regimental snipers met this emergency, small parties of Germans who threatened the exposed flank were driven back, and the position was thus secured until reinforcements arrived.¹ The supporting artillery fired a few rather short shells, which killed one of the party before operations began and damaged that part of Commotion Trench up which they had to move. The mistake added to Lieutenant Guiou's difficulties, but he advanced 100 yards up the trench and reached a block strongly manned by the enemy and not greatly damaged by the preparatory artillery fire. A bombing fight across the block brought some casualties to the Germans, but, as the enemy's fire was increasing, Lieutenant Guiou decided to withdraw 25 yards and there build his own block in the trench. This he accomplished, though the enemy tried several times to dislodge him. The covering bombers and riflemen brought all these attempts up short, and the P.P.C.L.I. snipers killed several of the enemy as they came up the shallow part of Commotion Trench to reinforce. When the work of blocking the trench was finished, a Lewis gun was posted in it and a garrison of six left behind. Throughout it all the Germans kept up an intense rifle and machine-gun fire, and in response to flare signals their artillery shelled the

¹ Lieut. J. M. Christie, D.C.M., and Private C. Ham greatly distinguished themselves in dealing with the German snipers.

No. 5.
 (Chapter VII)
CAPTURE OF VIMY RIDGE.
 (LA FOLIE WOOD)
 April 9-10, 1917.

Contour Interval. 10 Metres.

--- First Objective.
 --- Second Objective.



P.P.C.L.I. supports and Headquarters with some effect. Lieutenant Guiou, however, had not a man hit during the whole of this very successful and daring little exploit.

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This was the only visit of the Patricias to the actual suburbs of Lens during the summer. The first half of September was chiefly spent at the divisional reserve area of Bois-des-Alleux. Several important, though temporary, changes now took place at Battalion Headquarters. Major C. J. T. Stewart, D.S.O., who had been in bad health for some time, was granted long leave of absence and returned to England, "the officers of the Regiment turning out *en masse* to bid farewell to him," as there seemed little chance that he could ever rejoin. Major H. Niven, D.S.O., M.C., who had rejoined his old regiment, became Second in Command. At the same time Colonel Agar Adamson was granted leave to England, and only returned shortly before the Battle of Passchendaele. To the delight of the Regiment, Major Hamilton Gault, D.S.O., was permitted, in spite of his disability, to command the Regiment in the field during Colonel Agar Adamson's absence.¹

In the middle of September the Regiment moved forward to occupy the front line between Méricourt and Acheville, very much where they had been in May after the action of Vimy Ridge. There was little infantry fighting—for the lines ran 1000 yards apart—but much bombing from the air. The Germans succeeded in hitting and exploding an

¹ Major Gault came back to France in June as an Aide-de-Camp to Gen. Lipsett, but remained on the P.P.C.L.I. establishment. He was promoted to the local rank of Lieutenant-Colonel when he took command of the 3rd Canadian Divisional Wing of the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp after the Battle of Passchendaele, and became "Lieutenant-Colonel to command a Battalion" (*i.e.* P.P.C.L.I.) in March 1918.

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ammunition dump at the Mont Forêt quarries just behind the line, and four of the Patricias were among the forty killed or injured by the explosion. On the last day of the month the Regiment left the line, and a week later was moving north once more towards Ypres and the new storm centre at Passchendaele.

Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter :

The Distinguished Service Order : Capt. (A/Major) J. W. H. G. Van den Berg (attached 7th Bde. M.G. Coy.).

The Military Cross and Bar : Lieut. G. W. Guiou.

The Military Cross : Lieuts. J. H. Carvosso, J. T. Lownsbrough, A. A. McDougall, A. N. B. Mortimer, A. F. Neatby, D.C.M., M. Ten Broeke and A. C. White.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal : C.S.M. C. Baker.

The Military Medal : Sgts. R. C. M. Fergus, F. T. Mabson, L. H. McIntyre, S. J. Ridley and W. A. Warner ; L/Sgt. N. D. Dow ; Cpls. F. C. Havelock, A. F. Hill, R. Lavers (A/Sgt.), B. J. Stangroom and R. Savage (A/Sgt. —attached 7th Bde. T.M. Btty.) ; L/Cpls. S. H. Campbell, J. D. Graham, J. H. B. Kayss and J. Riel ; Ptes. G. E. Brewer, F. W. Crawford, W. G. Elder, P. H. Ferguson, C. Ham, H. N. Henry, F. W. Laycock, J. E. Livett, S. Loptson, G. H. Mullin, E. H. Newton, C. Porter and G. Thorndyke.

The Meritorious Service Medal : Sgt. W. T. Wylie.

The French Croix de Guerre : Lieut. E. P. Cloran.

Mentioned in Despatches : Major J. W. H. G. Van den Berg ; Capt. and Adjutant L. V. Drummond-Hay ; Lieut. (A/Capt.) A. P. Grigg (attached 7th T.M. Btty.) ; Lieut. D. MacLean ; C.S.M. C. Spurgeon.

CHAPTER VIII

PASSCHENDAELE

(THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1917)

October and November 1917

Map No. 6, unfolding opposite p. 280

WHEN the Patricias returned to the Ypres Salient in the autumn of 1917 a great battle had been raging there for nearly three months. On June 7 General Plumer's Second Army drove the Germans from their best vantage-ground in the north by his sudden blow at the Messines—Wytschaete Ridge, and Sir Douglas Haig at once prepared a general attack east and north of Ypres, planning it on a grand scale in the hope of relieving the city once and for all from three years of German encompassment. The Third Battle of Ypres—better remembered by Canadians, from its ending, as the Battle of Passchendaele—opened with bitter fighting but auspiciously on July 31. In its first leap the Fifth Army reached many positions familiar to those of the Patricias who had survived May 8, 1915, and June 2, 1916: Frezenberg, Westhoek, Glencorse Wood, Inverness Copse, Stirling Castle, Shrewsbury Forest. The First French Army to the north and the Second British Army to the south were equally successful. Then came the incalculable enemy, rain.

Early in August—fully ten weeks before the

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Patricias moved from Ypres to the attack—the Commander-in-Chief had begun to fight the eternal mud :

The low-lying clayey soil, torn by shells and sodden with rain, turned to a succession of vast muddy pools. The valleys of the choked and overflowing streams were speedily transformed into long stretches of bog, impassable except by a few well-defined tracks, which became marks for the enemy's artillery. To leave these tracks was to risk death by drowning, and in the course of the subsequent fighting on several occasions both men and pack animals were lost in this way. In these conditions operations of any magnitude became impossible, and the resumption of our offensive was necessarily postponed until a period of fine weather should allow the ground to recover.¹

The "period of fine weather" never came; "the month of August closed as the wettest August that had been known for many years"; and, far from recovering, the ground steadily became worse. An attack on August 15, though successful at Lange-marck, was held up in the centre on the northern Ypres—Passchendaele road by the new German defence-system of "pill-boxes"—field forts built of reinforced concrete many feet thick, distributed in depth all along the front, heavily armed with machine guns and manned by picked resistance troops. The rain continued intermittently through September, and kept the ground from drying. But a third attack was launched on September 20, and at last, after heavy fighting and severe losses, the British won all the high ground crossed by the Menin road, and again found themselves in the Polygon Wood from which the Patricias had withdrawn nearly two and a half years before. This important gain and the deep dent hammered in the

¹ C.-in-C.'s Despatch, Dec. 25, 1917.

line near Poelcappelle farther north were made secure during a brief spell of fine weather which followed. A fourth attack was planned for October 4, but again the rain descended. Yet the assaulting British and Australian troops made headway. To the east of Polygon Wood they went forward 3000 yards; Zonnebeke was occupied, Poelcappelle and the higher land at Broodseinde were reached; while up the valley where runs the Wieltje—Passchendaele road, the line was advanced beyond the Gravenstafel cross-roads and Abraham Heights to Berlin Wood, a little more than 2000 yards short of Passchendaele.

The result of these attacks is thus summed up in the Commander-in-Chief's despatch :

The success of this operation marked a definite step in the development of our advance. Our line had now been established along the main ridge for 9000 yards from our starting-point near Mount Sorrel. From the farthest point reached the well-marked Gravenstafel Spur offered a defensible feature along which our line could be bent back from the ridge.

The year was far spent. The weather had been consistently unpropitious, and the state of the ground, in consequence of rain and shelling combined, made movement inconceivably difficult. The resultant delays had given the enemy time to bring up reinforcements and to organize his defence after each defeat. Even so, it was still the difficulty of movement far more than hostile resistance which continued to limit our progress, and now made it doubtful whether the capture of the remainder of the ridge before winter finally set in was possible.

But there were weighty reasons for keeping up the pressure. Disasters in Russia and Italy and internal troubles in France made necessary a continued British offensive until the winter stalemate if the Allies were to retain the initiative. There were

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hopeful signs of a weakening enemy morale ; and “ there was no reason to anticipate an abnormally wet October.”

Sir Douglas Haig decided to go on ; but still the weather fought against him. The attack of October 9 reached Houthulst Forest, the final objective at the north ; but the assault of October 12 farther south, again launched after forty-eight hours of rain, was completely balked by the impassable swamp into which the valleys had been converted by swollen streams. The main attempt was perforce abandoned, and the duty of holding the initiative passed to General Byng and his concentration of tanks on the Third Army front. The Cambrai blow, however, could not be delivered for fully a month ; while “ by limited attacks made during intervals of better weather, it would still be possible to progress as far as Passchendaele.” To continue “ operations of limited scope ” in Belgium, in order to hold the enemy there while the Cambrai surprise of November 20 was preparing, new troops had to be found. The long-meditated assault on Lens by General Currie’s command was postponed, and to the Canadian Corps, with the London and Royal Naval Divisions (58th and 63rd) on its left, was entrusted the last phase of the battle. The height of land on which the village of Passchendaele stood was taken in three successive assaults on October 26, October 30 and November 6. In the second of these the Patricias played a distinguished part, but at the terrible cost of losing 80 per cent of their officers and 60 per cent of their N.C.O.’s and men.

Oct.
6-23.

From October 6 to 16 the Regiment rested at Monchy - Breton, some fifteen miles behind Vimy Ridge. Very rainy weather restricted the use that

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might have been made of the excellent training ground in this area, and several days were taken up in assimilating drafts and reorganizing companies. General Horne came to say good-bye on October 9, and on the 16th the Regiment left the First Army and moved north into General Plumer's Second Army. In the early morning it marched south to the railway, entrained at Savy, and after travelling all day arrived late in the afternoon at Caestre, on the Cassel—Bailleul road a short distance from the Belgian frontier. At the neighbouring hamlet of Le Peuplier, the Regiment remained billeted for another week, training for the battle. In this training physical exercise had an important place owing to reports of the extraordinarily trying conditions in the salient ; but much time was also given to practice in map-reading, message-writing and patrolling, and parties of officers and men went up every day to reconnoitre the fighting line.¹ The training was vigorous but generally limited to four hours a day, sports of all kinds and concerts being arranged for the afternoons and evenings. At the end of a fortnight "the men went into the line in excellent health and very keen."

Oct.
23-28.

The Regiment moved to Ypres on October 23, the companies by rail and the transport by road. The whole 7th Brigade was under orders to billet in the St. Jean area east of the city, but it happened that there was only accommodation for three battalions, and the Patricias found quarters with some difficulty in the cellars, and even in the cells

¹ The Topographical Section of the Army constructed with wonderful accuracy a ground-plan of the country to be attacked at Passchendaele, showing pill-boxes, roads, trees, woods, etc., and corrected it day by day from new aeroplane photographs. This miniature was housed in a building 400 feet x 150 feet. The men were taken to see it and to study with glasses the ground over which they were to attack.

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of the city gaol, of Ypres itself until the eve of their assault upon the Meetcheele Ridge at the end of the month. The city was very different from the Ypres that the Regiment had last seen in August 1916 as it marched away to the Somme. Little more than a shapeless mass of debris, it was no longer a safe billeting area for a reserve battalion. The bombing of infantry from aeroplanes—an art in its infancy a year before, but now practised scientifically—was added to the danger from gun fire. Enemy aeroplanes crossed the line and bombed the city every night, multiplying their flights when the moon came to the full at the end of the month. Worse still, before the Patricias had been in Ypres for twenty-four hours, they had the nerve-racking experience of being bombed in broad daylight by squadrons of attacking planes in groups of eleven and thirteen at a time.¹ Moreover the German artillery was returning the compliment of the hurricane bombardments at Vimy and Messines. The regimental diary notes that the main plank road paralleling the old road to Passchendaele (which had been rendered useless by sticky mud) was blown up between Wieltje and Gravenstafel in eight places on a single day. While the Patricias were in Ypres the shelling and bombing of the back areas was particularly severe, and on the third day the Transport Officer was forced to move his lines farther behind the city. October 26 saw the opening of the Canadian Corps' offensive. The Patricias shared in the inevitable downfall of rain with the battalions

¹ "Our planes," says the regimental diary, "seem unable to cope with these formations." It may be said of the Battle of Passchendaele as a whole that the infantry were enormously handicapped by the Germans' superiority in the air, partly due no doubt to the fact that in the mornings the enemy aeroplanes had the sun behind them and the British had it in their faces.

which attacked, and during the clear moonlit night had their full share of the enemy's retaliatory bombing. In addition to more heavy bombing the next day, the Germans turned their heavy guns upon the city, and many high-velocity shells fell about the Regiment's quarters. Ypres became a very hot corner, and any movement by day was impossible. The Patricias were perhaps unlucky in not having found accommodation in the St. Jean area farther forward, but were most fortunate in having good protection in their billets and in escaping with but three men wounded under this violent aeroplane and artillery bombardment. On the afternoon of October 28 came the orders to move forward, and the whole 7th Brigade went up to relieve the 9th at Gravenstafel with orders to renew the attack on the 30th.

The position from which the 7th Brigade "jumped off" on October 30 was determined by the events of the 26th, which must therefore be summarized. The 8th and 9th Infantry Brigades of the 3rd Canadian Division, attacking between the 63rd Division on the left and the 4th Canadian Division on the right, crossed the swollen Ravebeek stream at "Fleet Cottages," 1000 yards beyond Gravenstafel, and advanced up the Passchendaele road towards the Bellevue Spur,—the point where the ground begins to rise sharply up to the narrow spur of the Meetcheele Ridge on the western outskirts of Passchendaele itself. By a fine effort after an earlier failure the 43rd and 52nd Battalions reached Bellevue, held it in face of furious counter-attacks, and at the end of the day occupied a new line running from Laamkeek along the captured "Dad" Trench to the higher ground on the road at Bellevue, and thence slightly west of

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north behind the cross-road which ran at right angles to the direction of the advance. The front of the 3rd Division now bent back sharply on the right between Bellevue and the Ravebeek. Several attempts were made on October 27 and 28 by the 116th Battalion (9th Brigade) to straighten the line out for the next "push" by fighting forward to the cross-road reached by the 8th Brigade; but these efforts were all defeated by the strength of the pill-box known as "Snipe Hall," lying in the marshy ground on the western side of the road. This failure is important, for as a result the capture of Snipe Hall had to be assigned as an extra duty to the Patricias when they came forward to attack the Meetcheele Ridge.

Oct. 28.

The relief by the 7th Brigade on October 28 was difficult and dangerous. The Patricias left Ypres at 3 P.M. and moved up towards Gravenstafel behind the 49th Battalion, with whom they were to assault on the 30th. The roads were impassable, and the two battalions went forward in single file along a duckboard track traversing a sea of liquid mud. As they passed Wieltje both units ran into heavy German artillery fire, and the 49th began to lose men. To leave the wounded to shift for themselves in the slime would have condemned them to death. Yet every minute of delay meant more casualties, as the Patricias, who had started 1000 yards in the rear, were soon on top of the 49th and in the danger zone. With the finest spirit of inter-regimental chivalry the Commanding Officer of the 49th Battalion gave orders that every wounded man of his unit was at once to be lifted off the duckboards and supported in the mud by two of his comrades until the Patricias were safely past. Thanks to the promptness of the Edmonton Regi-

ment in carrying out this order and the speed of P.P.C.L.I. company officers in getting their men forward, twenty at a time by short rushes, the losses of the Patricias were trifling and the relief was accomplished by 1.30 A.M. on the 29th. The 49th Battalion went straight into the trenches on the left of the road; No. 4 Company P.P.C.L.I. (Captain J. R. Macpherson) took over the 116th Battalion's right position in Laamkeek and Dad Trench; and the main body of the Patricias relieved parties of the 43rd, 52nd and 58th Battalions at Abraham Heights on the Gravenstafel Ridge. At the same time, farther to the left, the 8th Brigade, on a narrower front, carried out an inter-battalion relief which brought the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles into the front line opposite Woodland Plantation.

The Patricias at once came into action. As soon as the relief was complete, No. 4 Company, as preliminary to the general attack, set about an advance from Laamkeek to the road at Snipe Hall in order to straighten the jumping-off line. Lieutenant J. M. Christie, D.C.M., the Sniping Officer, threw out his scouts in front of Dad Trench and cleared the ground of enemy patrols, while Captain Macpherson and Sergeant H. F. Christie each made a bold reconnaissance of the pill-box at Snipe Hall, the main object of the meditated attack. Snipe Hall was found very difficult of approach since its defences ran almost at right angles to Dad Trench beyond exceedingly wet ground which could be swept by the machine guns in the pill-box. However, Captain Macpherson laid his plans carefully and led his company forward to a brilliant little success. After manœuvring over 500 yards of bad ground, he drove through strongly-held positions and small isolated trenches, stormed

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the pill-box, surrounded and captured Snipe Hall and its garrison, and before daybreak was securely entrenched in line with the 49th Battalion along the cross-road. This advance, made in the face of concentrated machine-gun fire and under intense shelling, was specially noticed by General Dyer in his subsequent general report on the Passchendaele operations. It not only established a continuous jumping-off line in time for adjustment of the barrage time-table but actually made possible the success of a general attack on the following morning: "otherwise it is doubtful if the assault would not have been held up and the flanks compelled to wait for the capture of Snipe Hall."

During this night also connection was established with the 72nd Battalion (Seaforth Highlanders of Canada)—the left attacking battalion of the 4th Canadian Division beyond the Ravebeek.¹ The maintenance of touch with the 72nd Battalion was at best very difficult, and as the action developed became impossible. The Ravebeek, which separated the two divisions, was three and a half to four feet deep; its bottom was marshy, its banks had been shot away by the artillery, and the ground on both sides, from Snipe Hall through Friesland Copse to Graf Wood, was a swamp impassable for attacking troops.

The artillery on both sides was very active all through the 29th; the Germans fired a great number of gas shells and persistently bombarded the Bellevue Spur and the ground west of it. The Royal Canadian Regiment put a company into Dad Trench to support the two battalions which were

¹ This was accomplished by Cpl. J. W. Bainbridge of No. 4 Company, who also maintained a line of posts on the following night to cover the assembly for the main attack.

preparing to deliver the attack, and the other three companies of this unit lay in support on Gravenstafel Ridge, while the 42nd Battalion came up into brigade reserve at Pommern Castle. Colonel Agar Adamson held a conference with his company commanders during the morning at Otto Farm pill-box, and then, moving up to Waterloo Farm pill-box on the main road east of Gravenstafel, established his headquarters there with the 49th Battalion Commander. Final dispositions were made, and at 3 P.M. "zero hour" was announced for 5.50 A.M. on the next morning.

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The object of the advance on October 30 was to gain control of the two spurs which guard the approach to Passchendaele from the west and to secure a position overlooking the village by occupying the ground between these spurs and on the flanks. On the right front of the 3rd Division lay Meetcheele Ridge; on the left front of the 4th Division lay Crest Farm. These two divisions had the main task of fighting their way along both banks of the Ravebeek and up the Gravenstafel—Passchendaele road to the height of land. On the right the 12th Canadian Infantry Brigade (4th Division) was to carry the line forward across the high ground and the Passchendaele—Broodseinde road; on the left the 189th Brigade (63rd Division) was to come forward to "Vapour" Farm and form a defensive flank from that point; while in the centre the 3rd Division was to advance astride the road straight up the hill, carry the line 400 yards along the top of the narrow Meetcheele Ridge, and dig in just outside Passchendaele village with its left at Goudberg and its right touching the 4th Division at Graf Wood.

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The 3rd Division attacked with two brigades. On the left, opposite Woodland Plantation and Goudberg, the 8th Brigade used the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles. On the right, from Goudberg to Graf Wood, the 7th Brigade threw in two battalions, whose inner flanks met at the road which ran over the spur. North of this road the 49th were to pass Furst Farm and work up the gentler slope. South of the road the Patricias (including the road itself within their battalion boundary) were to take the defended positions of Duck Lodge, Meetcheele and Graf Farm in their stride and force the Meetcheele Ridge on their left and Graf Wood on their right. The Patricias had the shortest advance of all—2000 yards at most; but they were attacking the key position.

Colonel Agar Adamson's orders were necessarily indefinite. Detailed instructions as at Vimy could not be given: "it was useless to lay down any mode of attack to troops going over unknown and swamped lands, pitted with shell-holes filled with water." General Lipsett had written in his divisional orders: "N.C.O.'s are to be impressed that in this operation success or failure will more than ever depend upon their initiative and resource"; and there was little that a commanding officer could do beyond arranging the disposition of his companies. The Patricias attacked on a two-company frontage of about 500 yards, with No. 2 (Captain M. Ten Broeke, M.C.) on the right and No. 3 (Major T. M. Papineau, M.C.) on the left; No. 4 (Captain J. R. Macpherson) supported No. 2, and No. 1 (Captain W. H. Morris, M.C.) supported No. 3. Although an intermediate point was fixed, there was to be no leap-frogging, though this could hardly have been from a premonition that every survivor

would be in the front line by the time that the Regiment had advanced 1000 yards. In theory the leading companies were to go through to the final objective, while the supporting companies following close at their heels were to consolidate and garrison an intermediate line after the capture of Duck Lodge, where the most obstinate resistance was expected on the way to the spur. To meet the dangers of the pill-box system of defence, the support companies received detailed instructions to "mop up" all strong-points captured and passed by the assaulting companies. The equipment to be carried was various and heavy: 170 rounds of ammunition, a muzzle-protector for every rifle, a printed 1/10,000 message-map (for every officer and N.C.O.), an aeroplane flare, two iron rations, one day's fresh rations, a tin of solidified alcohol, three sand-bags, two rifle grenades and a shovel. The order to leave greatcoats in the jumping-off trench was very welcome in spite of the biting wind and driving rain in which the action was fought.

During the late evening of October 29 the companies filed forward from Abraham Heights and into battle positions. Absolute silence was kept on the march and throughout the hours that followed; but the sky was clear and the moon full, the assembly was detected, and the companies were shelled steadily all the night long. Even thus early, three officers—Lieutenants C. F. Lalor, J. MacKay and G. H. Beeston—were wounded, and men in every company were killed. However, all dispositions were successfully made by 11 P.M.: No. 4 Company withdrew from Snipe Hall to support on the right of No. 1, and Nos. 2 (right) and 3 (left) came forward to the jumping-off line. This line at first was a short

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distance behind the ground won by No. 4 Company at Snipe Hall, and No. 3 Company held it with two outposts during the night, withdrawing them at five o'clock next morning. But almost at the last moment the jumping-off trench was found to be uncomfortably close to the artillery barrage-line, and just before dawn the attacking companies were accordingly withdrawn fully a hundred yards. This was an awkward task in the last hour before the attack, but it was accomplished, although in some places barely ten minutes before the zero hour. Major H. W. Niven, D.S.O., M.C., with Lieutenant J. M. Christie and a small party of scouts and runners, moved up about this time from Waterloo Farm to Bellevue pill-box to establish an advance report-centre from which to direct the attack.

Oct. 30.

The morning of October 30 broke wet and stormy. A strong west wind did little to dry up the ground and made contact-patrolling very difficult for the Air Force. It did not rain heavily in the morning, though, in Colonel Agar Adamson's opinion, "it might just as well have done so as far as the ground was concerned," but the weather throughout the action was cold and windy. At 5.50 A.M. the British barrage came down, and three minutes later the attacking companies began to move forward in line. The formation in which the Regiment attacked at Passchendaele differed considerably from that adopted at Vimy. The attack was in "waves," but only the first wave jumped off in line, and this line was soon broken up owing to the condition of the ground. The second wave followed in artillery formation—small groups or "blobs" advancing in close order at intervals of roughly thirty yards. A third wave of moppers-

up, consisting of one platoon from each company and a detachment of brigade machine gunners under Lieutenant H. McKenzie, D.C.M., P.P.C.L.I., followed a few yards behind the leading companies. Finally came the two support companies, also in irregular artillery formation.

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From the outset the barrage, as had been anticipated, afforded far less protection to the infantry than at Vimy; for in the Third Battle of Ypres no surprise on a big scale was possible, and it was immensely difficult to get the heavy guns forward. Three minutes after zero hour the enemy's S.O.S. protective barrage came down with full force upon the advancing companies, and within half an hour shells of all calibres were falling in the Canadian support lines. The British guns played for eight minutes on the cross-road and then began to lift at the rate of fifty yards every four minutes. A speed of 750 yards an hour must surely be the low record for a charge in all the history of war. Yet it was "about right," in Colonel Agar Adamson's judgement, "for the heavy going over ground that beggared description." The infantry had to traverse the marshes of the Ravebeek, where a waste of mud had been churned and churned again for a week by constant artillery "shoots" on enemy pill-boxes, battalion headquarters, roads and counter-attacking concentrations. Beyond doubt the Passchendaele terrain was the worst ground fought over in the war. There was no cover whatever for the attacking troops wading through a sea of slime, and the pill-boxes, although their weaknesses appeared later, were probably the most effective defence the enemy could have devised to meet such an advance.

The mud denied to the Regimental Pipers the

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honour of playing the companies over the top as at Vimy, and a more dispiriting business than the jump-off would be hard to picture. The attacking companies wallowed through the marsh over the cross-road and up the valley toward Duck Lodge under very heavy fire from every arm. The artillery barrage first caught them; and then rifles and machine guns in Duck Lodge, from a pill-box on the Meetcheele Ridge and from the defences at Graf Farm, swept them like a storm of hail. Every attacking battalion began to lose heavily. To the north, the 5th C.M.R. and the Artists Rifles (189th Brigade) had great difficulty in crossing the marshes in Woodland Plantation, and in the centre of the 3rd Division the right company of the 49th was almost wiped out. The Patricias suffered wellnigh as heavily, and it was among their officers that the early losses were most severe. Captain Morris was killed the moment after he left his trench, and neither Major Papineau nor Captain R. L. Haggard got through the artillery barrage alive.¹ By the end of an hour almost every subaltern with the companies was gone: Lieutenants J. R. Riddell and M. W. Williams were killed outright; Lieutenants H. E. Agar and J. E. Almon were wounded, and afterwards killed before they could be got to the rear; Lieutenants T. I. Gibson, J. E. Pike, A. J. Robins and A. R. Chipman were wounded. On the right, the two company commanders (Captains Ten Broeke and Macpherson) were unhit,

¹ The death of these three senior officers was a most serious loss to the Regiment. Major Papineau was one of the very few "Original" officers left. (Another—Major Sullivan—was to fall before the action was over.) Capt. Haggard, another "Original," and one of the first to enlist, had seen a great deal of service, and had commanded a company both at Courcellette and Vimy Ridge. Capt. Morris had served with the Patricias as man and officer over a long period, and as Intelligence Officer both on the Somme and at Vimy had won great distinction.

but the former was the only officer left in the front line. On the left, as the odd-number companies approached the Meetcheele Ridge, only two junior officers—Lieutenants J. E. Puley and D. H. Macartney of No. 1 Company—survived to command half the battalion. The casualties among N.C.O.'s were almost as severe: over thirty sergeants and corporals were killed or wounded, many of them in the first few minutes of the attack.

In spite of the greatest precaution all telephone wires between Bellevue and Waterloo were cut soon after zero hour. The enemy barrages laid down in the valley west of Bellevue, near Marsh Bottom, Peter Pan and Waterloo were described as "vague"; but they were heavy enough to make communication by runners exceedingly slow and most hazardous; while the number of smoke shells fired by the Germans interfered with the use of the Lucas lamp, which method of signalling also proved too costly in lives to maintain.¹ By 7 A.M. it was only vaguely known that the 49th Battalion had reached Furst Farm and that the Patricias were at Duck Lodge. For several hours thereafter these regiments vanished into the mud and the unknown. The P.P.C.L.I. report after the action made no attempt to describe the advance, but merely reproduced the messages sent back from time to time on the back of message-maps; and to this day many of these maps are so bedaubed with Flanders mud that the messages are almost undecipherable.

¹ Difficulties of communication continued throughout the action. For a long time reliance had to be placed entirely on verbal reports. Lieut. J. M. Christie passed through the barrage three times "with valuable and correct information." Pte. T. MacDonald carried messages between front line and advance report centre under deadly sniping and heavy shell-fire, which killed two runners accompanying him. Pte. J. H. McLarty, a runner of No. 1 Company, also carried several important messages, helped to repair broken trenches, and organized rescue parties.

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Brigade and divisional accounts likewise consist of messages, confused and fragmentary like those of battalions, and of course even less detailed. It is therefore a nearly impossible task to give a connected account of what happened during the forenoon of October 30. But piecing together the messages, the citations of individual actions and the recollections of one or two of the fortunate survivors, we arrive at some imperfect picture of one of the most desperate yet most glorious days in the Regiment's history.

Dealing first with the course of events on the right: the very low-lying ground over which the attack began was completely commanded from the Passchendaele height of land, and it was in the first advance that the Patricias suffered their worst losses. Nos. 2 and 4 Companies, approaching Duck Lodge from Snipe Hall, encountered violent fire from rifles and light machine guns in isolated German posts—not pill-boxes, but merely holes dug about six feet apart to accommodate a pair of snipers. There was comparatively little danger from artillery fire after the first few minutes, though the advance was held up by smoke shells. But every foot of ground had to be gained by the laborious method of pinning down the enemy in front while small parties worked round the flanks and took each individual German post in the rear. Bombs, both British and German, were used by the attackers to clear the ground. There was little bayoneting by either side, but it was a great day for snipers, and most of the Regiment's losses came from this source. German accuracy ultimately had to yield to the enterprise of the Canadian marksmen, who pushed ahead, threw themselves down close to pill-boxes and machine-gun nests, and covered the

advance of the companies. Lewis gunners also gave invaluable service in the advance; and one section in particular, under Lance-Corporal W. I. Lappin, most daringly worked ahead and established itself on the flank of Duck Lodge, whence it rained machine-gun fire on that position as the companies advanced. After a sharp fight Duck Lodge was taken, the intermediate objective was reached, and the barrage rested for twenty minutes on the higher ground in front. Lewis guns were sent forward, while the companies dug in and established a support line sixty yards behind.

By this time the supports were up all along the front, and the final advance against the Meetcheele Spur was made by the Battalion in line. For the 600 who went over at 5.50 A.M., by 6.30 mustered only the equivalent of two weak companies. Captain Ten Broeke had lost very heavily. Both his company and Captain Macpherson's met desperate resistance in Friesland Copse and at Duck Lodge; but for them the worst was then over, and the second advance, to the Meetcheele road, although harassed always by oblique fire from one strong-point in the marshes about Graf Farm and another on the cross-road half-way between Graf Farm and the top of the crest, was made without anything like so much loss as the first. Beyond the Ravebeek the 72nd Battalion had swept up to Crest Farm in "one of the greatest achievements of a single unit in the war" and secured the right flank. The enemy on this Ravebeek front evidently was demoralized by the fall of Duck Lodge and Crest Farm, and the first detailed report that reached Headquarters stated that the Patricias were working forward in spite of heavy machine-gun fire, and that large numbers of the enemy were retreating along the

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roads to the north of Passchendaele in disorder and without equipment.

Meanwhile the left was making less headway, and at terrible cost. The Mounted Rifles and Artists Rifles in Woodland Plantation and beyond, and the 49th Battalion at Furst Farm, reached their first objectives only after bitter fighting, and there came under a destructive frontal fire. On the extreme left of the Division the Mounted Rifles almost reached Vanity House to find both their flanks in the air: the company of Artists Rifles on their left was almost wiped out; the marshes south-east of the plantation prevented a junction with the 49th. Ultimately the 8th Brigade had to abandon Vanity House and form a defensive flank from the eastern edge of the plantation through Vapour Farm to Source Farm. The 49th Battalion suffered very heavily from the machine-gun fire at Meetcheele, but its supports came up, and Furst Farm was taken within half an hour of the beginning of the action. Thereafter, however, the weakened 49th was unable to force its way to the higher ground, and at last dug in, with the 7th Brigade machine gunners stiffening the centre, the left flank resting on the marshes south of the plantation, and the right in touch with the Patricias at the main road just beneath the ridge.

The advance by the Patricias' left, up this main road, was leading to the most dramatic and fateful incident of the day on the 3rd Division's front—the capture of the pill-box on the Meetcheele Spur. Nos. 3 and 1 Companies had to drive straight up against the fortified positions of Meetcheele Ridge, which spat machine-gun fire unceasingly upon them. The two companies lost all their officers but two in the first advance, and while the

survivors, Lieutenant Puley in particular, showed "perfectly marvellous behaviour" throughout the action, it was particularly on the gallantry and leadership of the N.C.O.'s that the issue depended. Never in the history of the Regiment did these show a finer metal. Company-Sergeant-Major Charles Peacock of No. 3 Company, wounded in the jumping-off trench, carried on and soon found himself in command. He rallied the shattered remnant of the company—no more than forty by the time the intermediate objective was reached—and led it forward in good order; when he fell, wounded a second time, Corporal (Acting-Sergeant) L. L. Moore took command. Sergeant C. Novis, when the left flank became exposed at a critical moment, reconnoitred and gathered information of great value; Corporal T. Myers, although suffering from the effects of gas, got together the men near him and rushed a pocket of Germans who were holding up the advance with a well-placed machine gun. With such leadership as this and gallant individual enterprise on every hand the companies struggled on, desperately thinned and in no semblance of order, till before them stood only the pill-box on the crest beside the road—untouched by the artillery and raining death from every loop-hole. Hearts had not failed, but strength was all but spent.

At a moment when it seemed as though the line must waver or break utterly, appeared Lieutenant Hugh McKenzie of the Brigade machine gunners (himself an old No. 3 Company man), and Lieutenant J. M. Christie, D.C.M., and Sergeant G. H. Mullin, M.M., of the Regimental snipers. While Christie made a rush forward on the left, found a good position, and covered the advance with his

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deadly markmanship, McKenzie dashed from shell-hole to shell-hole rallying the survivors for a last effort and leading them on towards the pill-box. McKenzie was killed at the head of the men he had inspired with his own magnificent courage; but while he and his party drew the fire, Mullin was crawling forward up the slope, and he actually performed the incredible feat of taking the pill-box single-handed. "He rushed a snipers' post in front and destroyed the garrison with bombs, and crawling on to the top of the pill-box shot the two machine gunners with his revolver. Sergeant Mullin then rushed to another entrance and compelled the garrison of ten to surrender. His gallantry and fearlessness were witnessed by many, and although rapid fire was directed upon him, and his clothes riddled by bullets, he never faltered in his purpose, and he not only helped to save the situation but also indirectly saved many lives."

So it was that Lieutenant McKenzie and Sergeant Mullin won the first Victoria Crosses awarded to the Patricias in the war.¹

The crest was won. Behind the forlorn hope came the remainder of the left half of the battalion, reinforced by a platoon from No. 2 Company which Captain Ten Broeke, in spite of his own heavy losses, sent forward to work round the German flank and up to the spur; Sergeant Moore and Lance-Sergeant J. J. Corbett led the remnant of No. 3 Company; while Lieutenant Puley and Corporal (Acting-Sergeant) A. Prideaux brought up

¹ Lieut. McKenzie had been seconded for duty with the 7th Brigade Machine Gun Company as soon as he was commissioned to the Regiment at the beginning of 1917; but his long service with the Regiment as an enlisted man, and the fact that he won his posthumous honour for a strictly Regimental exploit, entitles the Patricias to regard him as their "third V.C." with Sgt. Mullin and Sgt. Spall, who won the Cross at Parvillers in 1918.

No. 1. The crest was cleared and forthwith thrown into a state of defence. Here again the invaluable Lewis guns were used with splendid resourcefulness by their gunners. Sergeant Moore posted a gun in advance, where it was subsequently the chief means of repulsing a local counter-attack; Private E. J. Mitchell, who took his gun forward alone (all the rest of the crew being dead or wounded), was buried with it in the mud, but dug himself out, collected a volunteer crew and coolly established his weapon in a well-chosen position. Private J. L. McMillan found himself in command of a section, and as soon as the pill-box was taken rushed his gun forward, placed it on the roof, and in covering the work of consolidation inflicted great loss on the enemy from an elevation that was of course completely exposed.

While these companies reached the spur the other two reached a point just short of the road, where they were held up by enemy machine guns firing from the direction of Graf Farm and from a strong-point on their left front.¹ The whole Battalion dug in parallel to the cross-road and a little behind it. There was small hope of further advance, for Graf Wood was being heavily shelled by the enemy, and the Patricias were reduced to a mere skeleton of the force that had attacked at dawn. Even on the right the attacking line had dwindled to seventeen rifles after the capture of Duck Lodge, and No. 4 Company was brought up to reinforce it beside the swamp. But though the final objectives had to be abandoned, the main position had fallen. Nos. 2 and 3 Companies established touch,

¹ In this advance also, the N.C.O.'s, especially Sgts. C. Frederickson and H. F. Christie, greatly distinguished themselves. "Pte. W. Philpott handled a section with the utmost confidence, cheerfulness and gallantry, and was a great factor in No. 2 Company's successful advance."

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and some semblance of a regular line of defence was gradually consolidated. The 72nd Battalion could be clearly seen pressing east from Crest Farm beyond the swamp and digging in on the high ground.

“ We took hold,” writes Colonel Agar Adamson, “ consolidated, and repelled two counter-attacks.” Officially, there were three counter-attacks, but the first, at 8 A.M., never advanced beyond a concentration of enemy reserves at Mosselmarkt which was dispersed by the artillery before it threatened the Meetcheele Ridge. The others were launched when consolidation was well under way. The left of the line, on the spur, was the hardest to hold, but Lieutenant Puley, placing his Lewis guns with excellent judgement, repulsed both attacks—the first at 10 A.M., the second about an hour and a quarter later. The enemy debouched in each case from “ Vindictive Cross Roads,” north of the village, and advanced in extended order between that point and “ Venture Farm ”; both movements were observed in time, and all the guns, including those of the 4th Division, were turned upon the point of danger. All immediate menace was over before noon, and the artillery dropped to a slow rate of fire.¹

Not until 9.25 A.M., nearly four hours after the action began, did definite word of the taking of the pill-box and the crest reach Battalion Headquarters; and another hour passed before the position of the new line was known, though earlier in the day urgent calls for stretchers had told how great was the cost

¹ The artillery observation was exceedingly accurate all day in spite of the difficulties of aeroplane contact-patrols in a high wind. The eight brigades of field artillery under the 3rd Canadian Division expended 40,482 rounds on October 30. Forty-one enemy batteries were engaged by the Canadian Corps Heavy Artillery, eighteen at least being driven into back positions.

of the advance. It was at 10.30 A.M. that a first message arrived from Lieutenant Puley, and immediately afterwards Sergeant Mullin himself announced the capture of the pill-box. Lieutenant Puley gave his position on the message-map: he was on the high ground immediately behind the cross-road, near the main Bellevue—Passchendaele road, and in touch with the 49th Battalion, which, held up by an enemy strong-point in front, was very slowly fighting its way forward. He reported that his fighting strength was reduced to 40 rifles. Sergeant Mullin could be more explicit: he defined the location of the captured pill-box, pointed out where the Regiment was consolidating a position on the high ground along the line of the road, and estimated the total surviving strength of the Regiment at about 225—an accurate guess at the Patricias' serious losses, for at 11.15 A.M. Major Niven informed the Commanding Officer that the actual strength in the line was 250. Reinforcements were urgently needed in view of threatened counter-attacks, and as all the Patricias were in the line, two platoons of the Royal Canadian Regiment were ordered up from Dad Trench. The R.C.R. had already sent two platoons to aid the 49th Battalion in extending its line and thus filling the gap at Woodland Plantation; and two more platoons moved up behind the Patricias soon afterwards, first to the jumping-off line and later in close support. Early in the afternoon the remaining two companies of the R.C.R. were directed to stand to, and the 42nd Battalion was ordered to Gravenstafel Ridge.

The exact depth of the advance was long uncertain; but by noon it was known that the assaulting battalions of the 7th Brigade lay in front of

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Furst Farm on the left, just west of Meetcheele in the centre, and before Graf Farm on the right—about 400 or 500 yards short of the assigned objective and somewhat nearer to it on the left than on the right. The left was cut off from the Mounted Rifles by the marsh lands of Woodland Plantation, but the Brigade's flank was guarded by the outposts at Source Farm; the right was separated from the 72nd Battalion by the trees and marshes of Graf Wood. The crest was secure. "Our position is now definite," reported Colonel Agar Adamson at 2.20 P.M. "We are established on the high ground in front of Meetcheele with the line running approximately parallel with the road running through Meetcheele across our front." By 3.15 P.M. he knew the heavy price that had been paid in officers—a major, two captains and four subalterns killed, and ten others wounded—and at once sent a message to the rear calling up Captain (Acting-Major) H. E. Sullivan and two junior officers (Lieutenants C. K. McRorie and C. J. Lightbody) to relieve the strain of command for the few remaining.

During the afternoon the situation did not change. Captain L. V. Drummond-Hay, the Adjutant of the Patricias, who was most energetic and useful as Intelligence Officer throughout the action, obtained further information as to the front line; and at 4 P.M. the S.O.S. line was laid down for the artillery between "Vegetable Farm" and the eastern edge of Graf Wood. The value of this soon appeared, for several signals for S.O.S. fire went back from the front line between 5.10 and 5.40 P.M.; but the Patricias were not under as serious threat of counter-attack as the 4th Division, and the critical moment soon passed. The final dispositions of the Patricias may be given in the

words of a report of Lieutenant Puley, despatched at 3 P.M. :

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There are about 100 men out in front of the pill-box. These are in charge of three corporals and one lance-corporal. They are supported on the right by a party sent up by the R.C.R. Position for fire is a good one. They have 2 Lewis guns.

Another party of 75 rifles command the ridge and the valley below on the left and join up with the 49th. We have 4 Lewis guns and a limited supply of ammunition.

A party of Germans approached our trench at about 1 P.M. The artillery replied to our S.O.S. and had several direct hits, dispersing the party. At present they are moving around under cover of a white flag picking up wounded.

A few minutes later a message from the same source asked for stretcher-bearers at the pill-box, pointing out that these men could safely work by daylight, as the ridge would protect them from view. Arrangements were made accordingly for extra troops to clear the battlefield of the many wounded, but heavy shelling continued all along the line of the Gravenstafel Ridge, and few of these parties succeeded in making their way up before the next day. In no engagement of the Regiment was the condition of the wounded more distressing than on this night of October 30/31.

The consolidation work upon the new position along the Meetcheele road from Graf Farm to Furst Farm continued during the evening and night. The 7th Brigade was instructed to "take further steps to capture pill-boxes and dug-outs in front," but although no real counter-attack developed, the labour of strengthening the hold upon the ridge was continuously impeded by the enemy. By 8 P.M. Colonel Agar Adamson had to cut down the estimate of his rifles to 180, a strength most insufficient to

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man a battalion front at a vital point, and, after the terrific strain of the advance, quite incapable of further attack. At 9.30 P.M. another company from the Royal Canadian Regiment was sent forward from Dad Trench to dig and garrison a line in close support of the Patricias. This reinforcement was accompanied by the officers of the Regiment who had been summoned from reserve—Major Sullivan (instructed to take over command of the whole firing line) and one subaltern each for the right and left sectors. Major Sullivan at once gathered information from every source, and reported at midnight :

I find our line consisting of shell-holes running about level with the pill-box, well held in small separate posts. Captain Wood of the R.C.R. brought up his company of 30 other ranks with me, and has dug in 50 yards behind the pill-box. There are only 8 R.C.R. left in the front line, with 2 officers. We have 6 Lewis guns in working order, and hold the crest of the ridge. The enemy have apparently dug themselves in 200 yards in front of us. One of their patrols has just come up to our line, but was beaten off. I figure I can hold this line against any counter-attack they put across. The sniping from the left is the worst feature. . . . We have about 15 stretcher-cases in the pill-box, as well as others outside. The enemy were using white flags to-day with their stretcher parties. I suggest that you send up stretcher-parties by daylight to-morrow with white flags. We want *water*, S.O.S. signals, s.a.a., bombs, a few rounds of blank.

Only a quarter of an hour after sending this report, Major Sullivan fell mortally wounded ; and as Lieutenant Macartney had been sent back in a state of exhaustion, and Captain Macpherson, Captain Ten Broeke and Lieutenant Puley were almost collapsing under the strain, the responsibility of the N.C.O.'s became greater than ever.

The night of October 30/31 passed quietly. S.O.S. signals went up on the 4th Division's front beyond the stream at 4.15 A.M., but the artillery opened fire at once, and the enemy did not attack. The Patricias knew before dawn that they must hold on for only twelve hours more. The 42nd Battalion at Gravenstafel was under orders to relieve on the evening of October 31, while the 43rd and 123rd (Pioneer) Battalions were coming up to clear the battlefield and move stretcher-cases back for medical care. This task began in earnest soon after daybreak, and both the 43rd and 123rd Battalions gave splendid service the whole day and had almost all the wounded away by 5 P.M. Even under a flag of truce the evacuation of these wounded was a most difficult and trying affair, for the mud on the field of battle, and the dreadful state of the Waterloo—Bellevue road, doubled and trebled the work of stretcher-bearers and the miseries of walking wounded.¹ At 8.15 A.M. Major Niven sent back his morning report :

Have been around all posts ; sniping not good to-day ; think shelling yesterday spoiled the Boche nerve. Could see with glasses 4th Division on our right front about 500 yards away, but swamp between makes visiting difficult. 49th Battalion along left flank to this position of Nos. 1

¹ The action of the Regiment's own medical squad and stretcher-bearers received special notice in the reports of the action. Particular mention was made of Pte. J. G. Sparling, " who hurried about the battlefield irrespective of artillery and machine-gun barrages, and remained on duty 48 hours without rest or sleep " ; and of L/Cpl. (A/Sgt.) R. Wood, who showed " magnificent courage in caring for the wounded night and day for three days," though his dressing-station was under constant shelling and the numbers to be cared for increased every hour. Honorary Major Thomas McCarthy, the Regiment's esteemed Chaplain, " twice carried wounded on his back across the battlefield. His gallant behaviour under shell-fire was most inspiring." Major Niven, as well as constantly going into the front line and reorganizing the scattered forces, personally carried out wounded men and superintended the whole work of getting them back.

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A supplementary report from Captain Macpherson dealt more particularly with the right of the line :

Owing to mixture of companies still existing here I cannot give close estimate of strength. We have about 30 of the R.C.R., whom we are using in close support just in rear of pill-box, which is H.Q. 4 Company is about 55 strong, 2 Company very weak. 1 and 3 are also very weak. Enemy observed in considerable numbers on road in front ; appeared to be in full marching order as if making a relief. Fire of Lewis guns failed to check this movement. Sniper who was in or near Graf Wood no longer active. Had house searched to-night and found it vacant. Machine guns on low ground (49th Bn. front) very troublesome, also snipers. Only a line of shell-holes held on frontage, no wire or trench. . . . No immediate attack expected, but shelling heavy at intervals.

In the afternoon Major Niven found his way through the swamp on the right and met the senior officer of the 72nd Battalion at his advance Headquarters. They agreed that it was impossible to connect the two battalions in the Ravebeek marshes, and the disposition of the line was unchanged when the 42nd Battalion came up to relieve. It may be mentioned that the pill-box at Graf Farm continued to be a thorn in the side for some days. A gallant attempt of the 42nd to capture it resulted in the annihilation of the attacking party.

The relief of the Patricias, which began at 7 P.M. and lasted till midnight, was directed throughout by lamp signals.¹ By the early hours of November 1 the shattered Regiment was clear

¹ The lamp station at Bellevue was blown up by a direct hit half an hour before the relief began, the operator (Sgt. H. Crook) being wounded. A new station was at once improvised, and communication was reopened and maintained until the completion of the relief.

and on its way out. From Fleet Cottages to the Gravenstafel Ridge it passed through heavy gas shelling, and the men, already dropping with fatigue, had to wear masks nearly all the way to Pommern Castle, which they reached about 3 A.M. One more officer, Lieutenant C. J. Lightbody, was fatally wounded here by a shell.

General Dyer came to Pommern Castle to thank the Regiment personally for its services. In his report to General Lipsett he paid the Patricias one of the most generous tributes they ever received :

The Princess Patricias earned for themselves on that 30th of October deathless glory. Fierce in attack, wise in disposition, the work of the whole Battalion on that day was of a calibre that would be hard to excel. Their casualties were very heavy, but all ranks lived up to the high traditions of the Regiment.

Language like this from the pen of the General Officer on the spot would only be weakened by other comment. But the price of victory was very high. Twenty out of twenty-five officers engaged were on the casualty list. Nine, including four senior officers of long experience, were killed ; nine were wounded ; and two (one of them the Medical Officer, Captain D. A. McLeod, C.A.M.C.) went to hospital with gas poisoning. Of N.C.O.'s and men 150 were either killed outright, reported "missing believed killed," or died of their wounds ; and 193 were wounded : a total casualty list of 363 out of the 600 who had gone into action forty-eight hours before.¹

A "Memorial Service for Officers, Non-Com-

¹ Officers killed : Major T. M. Papineau, M.C. ; Capt. (A/Major) H. E. Sullivan ; Capts. R. L. Haggard and W. H. Morris, M.C. ; Lieuts. H. E. Agar, J. E. Almon, C. J. Lightbody, J. R. Riddell and M. W. Williams.

Officers wounded : Lieuts. G. H. Beeston, A. R. Chipman, T. I. Gibson,

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missioned-Officers and Men of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (Eastern Ontario Regiment) killed in recent engagements" was held in London at Holy Trinity, Brompton, on November 15. It was attended by T.R.H. the Duke of Connaught and Princess Patricia, and by Sir George Perley (the Canadian High Commissioner), Lady Evelyn Farquhar, Captain H. Buller, R.N., and Brigadier-General Pelly, together with many officers and some hundreds of men of the Regiment. Officers of the Staff and a great number of relatives of the dead officers and men were present, and a detachment of men of the Regiment under Lieutenant-Colonel D. A. Clarke, M.C. (now commanding the base depot) acted as Guard of Honour. A newspaper correspondent records his vivid impression of the service :

The side pews were occupied by women and a few men, most of whom were in mourning. In contrast to these blocks of sombre black was the mass of khaki in the middle of the church. The altar was draped with the Canadian Ensign. The service closed with the sounding of the *Last Post*, followed by the *Reveille*. From inside the church in the stillness could be heard the commands of the sergeant bugler outside, followed by the blast of the *Last Post*. There could not have been one there who did not feel the beauty of the closing part of the service. The trumpet notes of the saddest call ever written left most with set faces, but the hopeful strains of the *Reveille* left happier thoughts, just as the last bars of Chopin's *Marche Funèbre* cleared away the shadows left by the opening periods.

C. F. Lalor, D. H. Macartney, J. MacKay, J. E. Pike, G. G. Reynolds and A. J. Robins.

Officers gassed : Lieut. G. R. Stevens ; Capt. D. A. McLeod, C.A.M.C.
More than a quarter of those who went into action were killed, and the proportion of killed to wounded was unusually high ; No. 3 Company had over 100 casualties and was practically wiped out, Nos. 1 and 2 each lost about 75, No. 4 lost 60, and the small Headquarters Company 30.

The Patricias and their immediate comrades in the storming of Meetcheele Ridge received a high compliment in a special message from the Commander-in-Chief: "The performance of the 3rd Canadian Division in particular was remarkably fine." Battalion orders for November 4 also contained the following:

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From H.R.H. the Princess Patricia of Connaught:

Just heard of the magnificent work done by the Battalion on October 30th. Heartily congratulate all ranks; deeply grieved for all the losses sustained and for Major Papineau's death.

From Major Hamilton Gault:

MY DEAR ADAMSON—The greatest regret of my life is that Army Orders prevented my being with you. God bless you all.

From Major-General L. J. Lipsett:

. . . The Battalions have done magnificently. The P.P.C.L.I. have many fine actions to their credit during the war, but I am sure none could be finer than their advance of the 30th.

From the Commanding Officer (Lieutenant-Colonel Agar Adamson):

The Commanding Officer wishes to express his appreciation of the most gallant efforts made by the Regiment in accomplishing the task set them by the Higher Command. While he deplores the great loss in all ranks, he feels assured that it will only be a greater incentive for further efforts whenever her Royal Highness's Regiment is called upon.

A few days later Princess Patricia sent the Regiment a further message through her brother:

I have the greatest pride in my Regiment, and while deploring your great losses I feel that the spirit and endurance of the Regiment, which I love so well, may always be depended upon to uphold the highest ideals of the Empire.

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A particularly happy example of the camaraderie of the 3rd Canadian Division appears in an exchange of letters between Colonel Agar Adamson and the Officers Commanding the 7th Brigade Machine Gun Company and the 43rd and 123rd Battalions, C.E.F. The replies of these officers were published in P.P.C.L.I. daily orders, and are worth quoting as an example of the spirit animating General Lipsett's command :

From Major J. G. Weir, commanding 7th Brigade Machine Gun Company :

The officers and men of this Company very greatly appreciate your letter regarding the unfortunate death of Lieutenant McKenzie, and also wish to thank you for your kind remarks as to the work of the 7th Bde. M.G.C. during the recent action. All ranks feel the greatest admiration for your Battalion. . . . The *esprit de corps* of the P.P.C.L.I. men with this unit is most remarkable, and you may rest assured that you will always get the best support possible.

From Lieutenant-Colonel W. B. Kingsmill, Commanding the 123rd Canadian Pioneer Battalion :

Nothing has occurred since our arrival in France that has given me more unqualified gratification than your very kind and appreciative letter regarding the behaviour of my men after your Regiment's glorious attack on the 30th October. . . . The accounts I have received of the wonderful achievement of your Battalion show how thoroughly the officers and other ranks are carrying on the splendid traditions of your Regiment. The only thing to regret is that such wonderful deeds should be at such a great cost.

From Major W. E. Chandler, commanding 43rd Canadian Battalion :

DEAR COLONEL ADAMSON—Your very kind appreciation of the work done by my lads in bearer-parties for your Regiment is more than ample praise for any small service

they rendered. . . . It may be your turn on some future occasion to help us out. The Camerons will always welcome any opportunity of doing anything they can for a Regiment for which they have so much admiration as they have for the P.P.C.L.I., and though we have never had the chance yet, we still look forward to the day when we may race the "Patricias" to their objective. May I offer my congratulations on the splendid performance of your Regiment? I am sorry your casualties were so heavy, but you shall rise again like a phoenix stronger than ever, so that the P.P.C.L.I., even if badly cut up, still remain the same old fighting dogs.

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The Patricias were to have left the zone of battle on the morning of November 1, but on their way from Pommern Castle, after relief by the 13th Canadian Battalion, were held up all day by heavy artillery fire near the Wieltje cross-roads. At night they were able to reach St. Jean, where they bivouacked, and the next day moved by train to Abeele, whence they marched into rest at Scots Camp near Watou. It was not an ideal spot for a crippled regiment; the billets—barns and tents—were scattered and crowded, there was no adequate ground for manœuvring, the constant arrival of reinforcements made training difficult, and the everlasting rain descended. None the less, the work of refitting progressed rapidly during the next week. Major C. J. T. Stewart, D.S.O., was able to rejoin as Second in Command, and brought with him a full complement of officers, many of them wounded subalterns returning to the Regiment, and most of the others old Patricias promoted from the ranks.

Nov.
1-12.

On November 6 the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions crowned the victory on the Meetcheele Spur by capturing the village of Passchendaele itself and establishing the British line firmly on the high

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ground. On November 10 the 3rd Division was again warned for the line, and on the 13th the Patricias returned by bus to Wieltje. On the night of the 14th they moved up into support, the front line being taken over by the R.C.R. and 42nd. Two companies of the Patricias in close support to these battalions manned a series of disconnected trenches and converted shell-holes near the Vindictive Cross Roads and Mosselmarkt. The other two companies were stationed at and near Dad Trench to garrison the now fortified positions of Meetcheele and Bellevue.

Here the Regiment remained from November 15 to 18, and the forward companies (1 and 2) had another gruelling experience of the horrors of Passchendaele. Except for minor operations on the left the battle was now over, but the Germans, still very nervous, put down three barrages on the night of the relief, and throughout the tour continuously shelled the whole area with high explosive and gas shells. Their aeroplanes, showing much audacity, flew as low as 300 feet and played on the uncompleted trenches with machine guns; it was fortunate that ground mists interfered with them to some extent, for the British planes had no great success in driving back the raiders. The aeroplanes were also able to direct the German guns with most uncomfortable accuracy on the exposed positions of the battalions in the line; and the Patricias, it must be remembered, were many of them under fire for the first time. The Regiment had 59 casualties in these three days, including one officer (Lieutenant G. S. Stratford) killed, and three (Lieutenants A. R. Jones, J. H. Carvosso and R. S. MacPherson) wounded. The trenches were frequently blown in, and the weather was as bad as

could be, but the new drafts under old N.C.O.'s stood up splendidly.¹

The Regiment, relieved by the 2nd Battalion Royal Berks Regiment (25th British Brigade), left Passchendaele on the night of November 17/18. This relief was exceedingly difficult, for the Berkshires were twice as strong as the P.P.C.L.I., had little knowledge of the ground, and found difficulty in securing cover for their extra men in a country quite bare of it. Captain Little, however, successfully supervised the handing over of the positions and "prevented what might have been a serious situation." The Regiment passed safely out to Wieltje, where it remained during the 18th, still under shell fire; on the 19th it moved by bus south-west to Robecq; and on the 20th it marched to billets at St. Hilaire, ten miles behind Bethune, and remained there resting and training for a full month.

The Patricias had left the Ypres Salient for good and all. Here they had first come under fire, here they had made a name, and here maintained it. Where Ypres is spoken of they shall be remembered. That which they did there shall be told for a memorial of them; and that it is deathless, the seven hundred and fifty of their dead who lie beneath the Flanders sod with dumb lips attest.

¹ Capt. G. W. Little, now commanding No. 1 Company, kept his men well in hand. Pte. (A/Sergt.) H. A. Ross did excellent work for 72 hours, organizing the men and directing the repair of trenches, supervising the evacuation of wounded under the severest shelling, and saving a number of lives by digging out men buried through shell-explosions. L/Cpl. O. Olson was also on duty continuously for 72 hours in charge of the Lewis guns of No. 1 Company, and, in addition to constantly reorganizing his gun parties, continually patrolled the line and helped to get out the wounded. Pte. J. M. McLarty distinguished himself for the second time in three weeks by carrying messages through the barrage.

Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter :

The Victoria Cross : Lieut. H. McKenzie, D.C.M. (seconded for duty with 7th Bde. M.G. Coy.), killed in action ; Sgt. G. H. Mullin, M.M.

Bar to the Distinguished Service Order : Major H. W. Niven, D.S.O., M.C.

The Distinguished Service Order : Capt. J. R. Macpherson.

The Military Cross : Honorary Major and Chaplain T. McCarthy ; Capt. and Adjutant L. V. Drummond-Hay ; Lieut. J. M. Christie, D.C.M. ; C.S.M. C. Peacock.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal : Sgts. H. F. Christie and C. Novis.

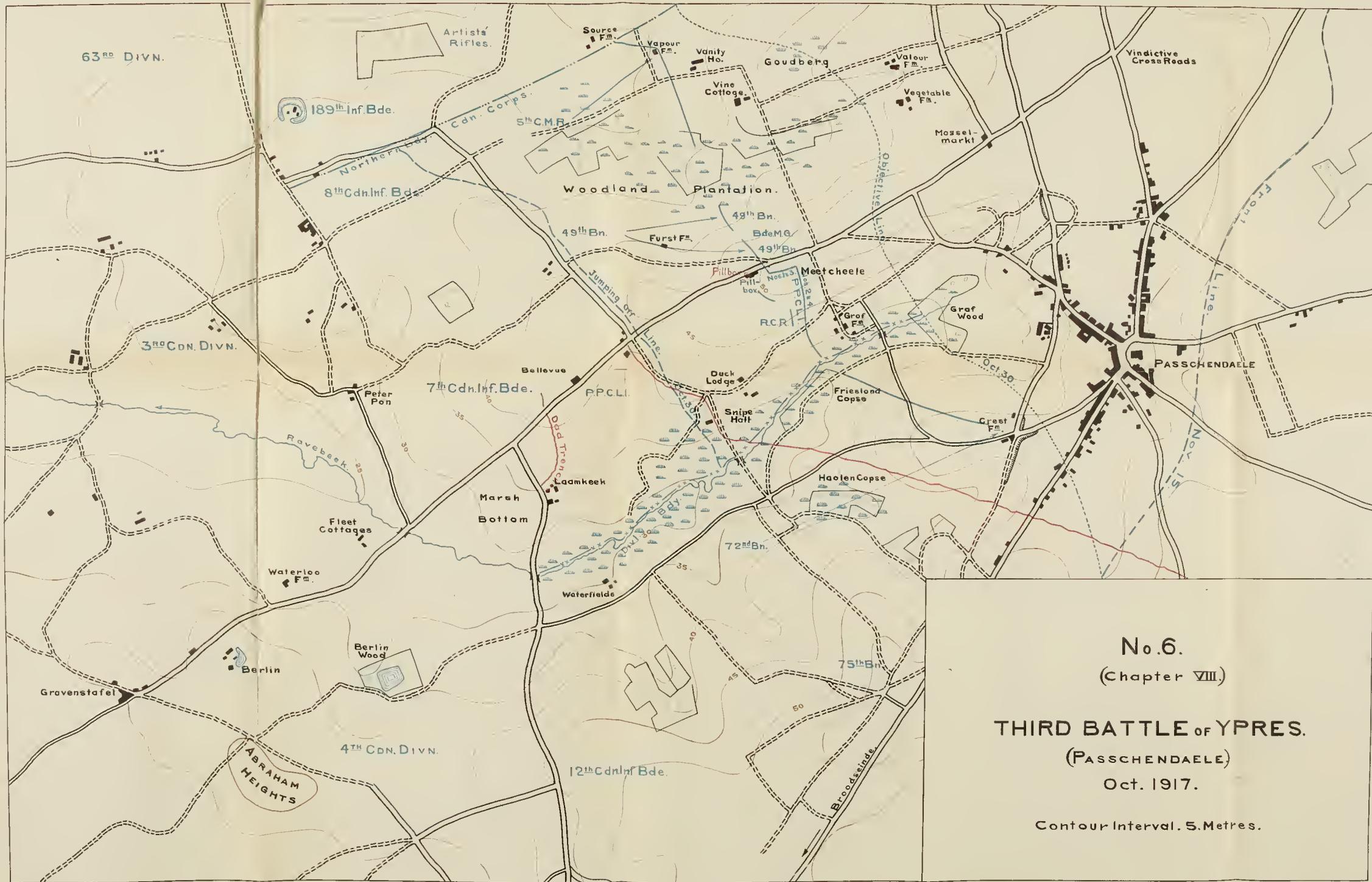
The Military Medal : Sgts. J. W. Bainbridge, H. Crook, C. Frederickson, L. L. Moore, T. Myers, H. A. Ross and R. Wood ; Cpls. O. Olson and A. Prideaux (A/Sgt.) ; L/Cpl. W. I. Lappin ; Ptes. T. MacDonald, J. M. McLarty, J. L. McMillan, E. J. Mitchell and J. G. Sparling.

The Meritorious Service Medal : Sgt. G. A. Brice ; Pte. W. Philpott.

The Belgian Croix de Guerre : C.S.M. C. Spurgeon.

The Belgian Décoration Militaire : Pte. (A/Cpl.) J. A. Turcotte.

Mentioned in Despatches : Major A. H. Gault, D.S.O. ; Capts. J. R. Macpherson and G. G. Reynolds ; Lieut. P. M. Puley ; Pte. F. J. Nichols.



No. 6.
(Chapter VIII)

THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.
(PASSCHENDAELE)
Oct. 1917.

Contour Interval. 5. Metres.

Scale. 1/10,000.



CHAPTER IX

THE LAST MONTHS OF TRENCH WARFARE

December 1917 to July 1918

Sketch Map at end of Volume

THE eight months that bridge the interval between the Battle of Passchendaele and the opening of the Hundred Days may be reviewed more briefly than any other period of the war, for the Higher Command resolutely kept the Canadian Corps out of battle and intact throughout the great retreat that it might be a sword and buckler in defence in case of crisis. It is not to be supposed that the Patricias and their comrades were inactive during the winter and the spring. On the contrary, every battalion in the Canadian Corps felt the strain of holding a critical position with a dangerously thinned line and few reliefs. But the story is almost purely one of defensive trench warfare, conducted with the object of holding the enemy until the hour should arrive for the gigantic battle of movement which was to end the war. A rapid summary of this period of trench warfare and training will suffice.¹ The work of these eight months divides itself into two parts—three periods of training and three periods in the line, each of the six periods

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¹ Members of the Regiment and others interested in following the Patricias from day to day will find details of their movements during these months set out chronologically in the war diary in the second volume.

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running from four to eight weeks. The Patricias were out of the line at St. Hilaire in December; at Bois-de-Froissart near Hersin, nine miles behind the line at Lens, in February; and at St. Hilaire again from May 3 to June 25. They were in the trenches opposite Fosse-St.-Louis in the southern outskirts of Lens just north of the Souchez River (December - January); in Avion and near the southern bank of the same river (March - April); and south of Arras at Neuville-Vitasse (June 27-July 26). This last date carries us to the preliminary movements of the Battle of Amiens.

Some of the pleasantest memories of the survivors of the Hundred Days are connected with the rest-camps at St. Hilaire and Bois-de-Froissart. The day's work was hard and very thorough, but it spurred the men on by its novelty. One early scheme for a practice attack runs: "A surprise attack on a large scale has brought us into a country very little cut up by shell fire." This gives the key-note of the training in 1918—open warfare, rapid movement, escape from trench limitations. The men took hold of the new ideas enthusiastically, and gradually the work developed from company to battalion operations, and latterly to brigade and divisional manoeuvres with tanks in movement with the infantry. There were few breaks in these courses of training, though once the Regiment had to turn to the disagreeable task of restoring order in a restive Chinese Labour Battalion. Recreation was more systematically provided than ever. The Regimental Comedy Company gave nightly concerts in a marquee at St. Hilaire. The more ambitious divisional organization—"The Dumbells"—made its first appearance and gradually absorbed the "stars" of the

P.P.C.L.I. troupe. Proposals for a Vimy Ridge University for the civil education of the men were made in December, with General Lipsett and Major G. C. McDonald, M.C., of the Patricias as moving spirits, and during the rest at Bois-de-Froissart classes in agriculture and civics were begun under the supervision of Lieutenant A. E. Potts, P.P.C.L.I. Every kind of sport was encouraged, and many inter-regimental competitions enlivened the afternoons. In a fight to the death on a 7th Brigade field day the Royal Canadian Regiment won the baseball championship from the Patricias by one run ; but the Patricias avenged themselves in a brigade rifle-shooting meeting and distance - judging competition, with remarkable scores which swept the board.

The ties between Princess Patricia and her Regiment strengthened with the years. On the third anniversary of the Regiment's arrival in France, at Christmas and the New Year, and upon her birthday, letters and telegrams were exchanged. All ranks received with delight the news that the King, on February 22, 1918, had appointed H.R.H. the Princess Patricia of Connaught to be Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment.

Early in the New Year Lieutenant-Colonel Agar Adamson, D.S.O., ended his long career with the Regiment in the field, having been pronounced by a medical board unfit for further front-line service.¹ He was succeeded in the active command by Major C. J. T. Stewart, D.S.O., the last remaining "Original" officer with the Regiment ; this junior subaltern of August 1914 receiving on March

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¹ Lt.-Col. Agar Adamson was posted to the Canadian Corps Headquarters Staff, and after the Armistice was appointed Summary Court Officer at Bonn with the Army of Occupation. He returned to Canada with the Regiment in March 1919.

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30, 1918, the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Other changes took place at Headquarters about the same time. Captain L. V. Drummond-Hay, M.C., was given his company after more than a year's highly efficient work as Adjutant, and was succeeded by Lieutenant A. R. Chipman, who held the post for the rest of the war. Major H. W. Niven, D.S.O., M.C., was granted long leave to Canada after Passchendaele, and throughout the spring Colonel Stewart's Second in Command was Major G. C. McDonald, M.C., who, after serving in the trenches with the Regiment in 1915 and 1916, had distinguished himself greatly on the 7th Brigade Staff at Sanctuary Wood and Courcelette, was badly hit in the latter engagement, and now returned to regimental duty after a long absence due to the severity of his wounds. Regimental-Sergeant-Major W. Jordan, D.C.M., with fifteen other "Originals" who had seen over three years of continuous service, was given long leave to Canada. His place was filled first by A/R.S.M. C. Peacock, M.C. (afterwards commissioned), later by A/R.S.M. S. Paterson, and finally in July by R.S.M. F. Gillingham, who remained senior Warrant Officer of the Regiment until demobilization. The rebuilding of the Patricias by Colonel Stewart and his subordinates after the losses of Passchendaele, a work much complicated by the influenza epidemic of 1918, takes rank beside Colonel Pelly's similar accomplishment in the summer and autumn of 1915.

The activities of the Patricias in the trenches during the first half of 1918 demand but a brief review. The December and January tours might be described as catch-as-catch-can street fighting. The line held by the Regiment ran through streets and railway sidings within a quarter of a mile from

the centre of the important city of Lens. The weather was cold and snowy, and neither side was in a mood to attempt anything more ambitious than an occasional raid for prisoners. The positions on either side were ill-defined and vaguely understood : " the enemy was somewhere on the opposite side of the street from our outposts." Snipers on both sides in the ruined houses kept no holiday, and both the officers and men were always busy wiring in front of their trenches. Patrolling developed as time went on ; the enemy's wire, cellars and posts were reconnoitred every night, and the Patricias were specially complimented by the Brigadier for their thoroughness in this dangerous work. As usual, on Christmas Day there was no Christmas dinner (indeed, the Regiment never during the war had a chance to observe the festival properly on the right day). Hostilities were suspended, but the Germans made no efforts to fraternize as at Vimy the year before. In January the line became busier, and one evening the Germans attempted a bombing raid against the Patricias. The fire of rifles and Lewis guns did not stop the assailants from getting to close quarters under the cover of ruined buildings near the outposts. But by a lucky accident the Brigade's trench mortars began a pre-arranged " shoot " on the German outpost positions just as the raiders crept within bombing distance, and they were dispersed with loss. Sniping, aeroplane and patrolling activity increased all round the Fosse-St.-Louis toward the middle of the month, but the doughtiest foe of both sides was " Général Janvier." Trenches caved in and parapets collapsed under a deluge of rain which lasted for forty-eight hours. Mud and water were soon waist-deep in many places, living conditions became

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scarcely endurable, and the trench outposts dangerously exposed. It was some comfort to know that the Germans were no better off, and the Regiment's snipers, always on the alert, did not allow a head to show in the opposite trench. Although the lines were very close, and the Fosse-St.-Louis strongly held, the Patricias had but two men fatally hit and half-a-dozen wounded slightly in these Lens tours.

In March and April the Patricias garrisoned the line in Avion and to the north. There they had a good deal more fighting, and suffered rather more heavily from artillery fire, especially gas shelling, than in Lens.¹ Aeroplane duels were everyday affairs in which the infantry took part by firing at the German planes with Lewis guns on the few occasions when they got by the British machines. Once the Patricias rescued a "winged" British pilot and his observer; another time their fire brought down a German plane with a wounded officer-pilot and his unwounded observer, who were taken prisoners by No. 1 Company. But patrolling was the chief occupation of the battalions in the line, and as many as 63 patrols were reported on the divisional front in the course of one week. On one occasion a party of three Patricias got within a few yards of the German front line in Avion, and, hearing a patrol of two men talking, summoned half-a-dozen comrades in the hope of capturing it. But the enemy became suspicious, fired and ran. The raiding party had a man killed and machine guns were turned upon them; they could not bring in the body of their comrade, but managed to remove

¹ Capt. C. St. Clair Dunn, C.A.M.C., the Regiment's Medical Officer, was killed in the first tour in March. The total losses were not very great—40 of all ranks in five front-line tours.

all means of identification before retiring. There was one amusing incident. On March 15, in supporting an 8th Brigade raid, Lieutenant A. C. White, M.C., and a small party crawled to the enemy's wire and, by exploding two ammonal tubes, attracted attention to a group of dummy figures set up in No Man's Land. The enemy's S.O.S. promptly went up on the wrong front, "and his machine-gun fire was turned on the dummies, 30 out of the 50 being casualties."

The great Ludendorff "drive" at the south began on March 21. Although the First Army was not directly threatened, the Canadian Corps quickly felt the distant strain in the extension of its front to set free the 46th (North Midland) Division. The Patricias came out of the line on April 13, but less than forty-eight hours later re-entered it a few hundred yards farther north. General Dyer wrote to Colonel Stewart :

At this time, when I am asking your Regiment to continue their work in the line after an already long tour, I write to tell you of my perfect confidence that all ranks will continue to show that keenness for fighting and willing readiness to do good work that has been so marked during the tour. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for the evidence all ranks have given me of the splendid spirit which permeates your great unit, more especially for the very fine offensive patrol work which has been done by you throughout. Will you please express my pleasure to all ranks ?

On the night of May 2 the Patricias were relieved by detachments of the 60th British Brigade, after a long and successful occupation of the line. They had spent over five out of eight weeks in the front trenches, and had never been farther from them than local support.

Then followed the long course of special training

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at St. Hilaire. By the end of June, when the turn of the Patricias came to reoccupy the trenches, the Germans had been brought to a standstill both at Amiens and on the Lys. But the British Army was still staggering under the blow, several divisions had ceased to exist, many more had to be withdrawn to refit. Six weeks were still to go before Marshal Foch would be ready to launch his counter-stroke, and in the meantime the Canadian and other Corps which had been held out of the battle had to stretch their line till it became dangerously thin. On June 25 the Patricias moved by train from St. Hilaire to Aubigny, but then, instead of moving east as usual across the Vimy Ridge, continued south and entered the line at Neuville-Vitasse, three and a half miles south of Arras and fourteen or fifteen miles from the old Avion—Lens sector. Here they were attached to the VI. Corps of the Third British Army, and their front extended from Telegraph Hill towards Neuville-Vitasse for 1600 yards. To occupy this immense frontage the companies were disposed in depth, with a line of observation posts garrisoned lightly but with nine machine guns, an intermediate line containing part of the support companies, and a main resistance line, 800 yards farther back along the Telegraph Hill Switch, held by half the Battalion with eight more machine guns. The Regiment was in the sector for a single tour of twelve days, finding its own reliefs. The situation was fairly quiet, with the artillery advantage on the side of the British, but the enemy's position in front of Telegraph Hill was not well known and his posts were constantly shifted, and this meant a great deal of patrol work for the Patricias. At night each company supplied a defensive patrol of an officer and twelve men with a Lewis gun to cover



Photo: Paul Laib, S. Kensington

LIEUT.-COLONEL A. HAMILTON GAULT, D.S.O.

the ground in front of the observation line.¹ Daylight patrols made a number of successful reconnaissances to examine saps and pill-boxes. One pill-box was found occupied by four men, and a lively rifle duel brought no advantage to either side. The most daring bit of patrolling was done by Lieutenant S. Loptson, M.M. (now the Regimental Scout Officer), and three scouts on the afternoon of July 5. This party entered the German line, and with great skill and daring explored first a bombing post and then a light machine-gun post. All was quiet at the first post, but two sentries found in the second gave the alarm and were shot. This brought fire upon the raiding party, but all got back to the lines safely after an absence of two hours.

The Regiment was replaced at Telegraph Hill by the 116th Battalion on the night of July 7/8, lay for a week in divisional reserve at Wailly Wood and then returned to the line, but only into support positions, for another week. It was relieved on July 25/26 by the 2/6 Durham Light Infantry of the 59th (North Midland) Division, and moved back to Dainville, immediately behind Arras. Here it stood by "under warning orders." On July 15 General Foch had attacked south of the Aisne, and a week later Sir Douglas Haig had finally decided to give preference in his own offensive to the "disengagement of Amiens." The Patricias had no inkling of what was afoot, but they had not long to wait. On July 30 they marched west all day to Ivergny near Doullens; on July 31 they travelled by train from Bouquemaision through Amiens to

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¹ On one of these patrols (July 2) Lieut. E. W. Duval was killed. Lieut. E. C. Plant, wounded a fortnight later, was the only other combatant officer hit in the period covered by this chapter. There were 9 casualties during this tour, making a total of about 60 for the period January to July 1918.

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Saleux, and late on that afternoon were billeted at Dury, three miles south of the city which was to be “disengaged.”

Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter :

The Military Cross : Lieut. S. Lopston, M.M.

The Military Medal : A/Cpl. M. Wernick, Pte. R. H.

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CHAPTER X

PARVILLERS

(THE BATTLE OF AMIENS, 1918 : ACTIONS ROUND
DAMERY)

August 1 to 19, 1918

Map No. 7, unfolding opposite p. 320

ON July 15 the Germans made in the Champagne their last bid for victory. The thrust was brilliantly parried by the Fourth French Army, and on July 18 General Mangin threw the enemy headlong back across the Marne. The day before, General Rawlinson had submitted to Sir Douglas Haig his plans for an advance by the Fourth British Army; and on August 8—"the black day of the German army" according to Ludendorff—was launched the surprise attack at Amiens which marked the opening of the Hundred Days.

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August 8 and 9, 1918, are great days in the calendar of the British Army. Nothing went wrong, the wildest hopes were realized: the cavalry went through, the trenches seemed to be left forever behind; while the tale of prisoners, the captures of guns and supplies, and the number of relieved villages, were all prodigious. The reader of General Montgomery's narrative finds himself carried away by this story of the beginning of the end.¹

¹ *The Story of the Fourth Army in the Battles of the Hundred Days*, by Major-General Sir Archibald Montgomery, K.C.M.G., C.B. This exhaustive record is quoted several times in this chapter without further acknowledgement.

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Yet, though the Canadian Corps was in the forefront of the battle, the historian of the Patricias must deal briefly with the main action if he is to observe proportion in his record. It is true that on August 8 the Regiment enjoyed "real war" as it could only be enjoyed by the infantryman experienced in three years of mud and trenches; but the four days of the battle proper never saw the Patricias actually engaged. They were never even in the front line of advance, and their part in the great game was rather that of the vaulting-horse than of the vaulter. But at the end—even more at the tail-end than at Passchendaele in the Third Battle of Ypres—the Patricias were thrown into the line. Free movement in open country was gone, and an old line became the scene of a short and sharp trench conflict. The German rot was checked; General Ludendorff brought up his picked reserves—more of them than had been expected. The thrust of the Canadian Corps with the Fourth Army was spent, but there was "cleaning up" to be done. And so between August 12 and August 15 it fell to the 7th Brigade, which had seen less of the battle than any other brigade of the Corps, to fight a stubborn and heroic minor action about the village of Parvillers. For the Patricias this subsidiary engagement was by far the most important part of the Battle of Amiens. And it differed in every respect from the swift and tremendous breaking of the line to which it was the sequel.

Complete surprise was the essential element in General Rawlinson's strategy. The strain of keeping the great secret for a fortnight weighed most heavily upon the Canadian Corps, which, after being

kept out of action throughout the great retreat, was plainly destined to take part in the counter-offensive the German Higher Command was uneasily expecting after the failure of July 15. Every unit of the Corps was a strand in the web of mystery woven by the Intelligence Section of the Fourth Army Headquarters. The Patricias were not, indeed, despatched north like the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles, who, with a nicely calculated ostentation, went into the front line at Mount Kemmel for a few days and then doubled back to Amiens forty-eight hours before the battle opened. But they shared the discomforts that attended a plan, daringly conceived and brilliantly executed, which concentrated one of the strongest corps in France in a new area at the last possible moment without letting either friend or foe into the secret. The commanders of most if not all battalions were kept in the dark until a day or two before the time they were to attack. No Canadian unit went into the line before the night of August 7/8, and the relief of the 13th Australian Brigade by the 3rd Canadian Division was only effected an hour and a half before the zero hour. This was the last move in a tremendous game of bluff played with scores of thousands of unwitting men over a space of more than a fortnight. Every movement took place at night; no large bodies of troops were allowed to expose themselves by day; all ranks were instructed not to discuss their inexplicable marching and counter-marching even with their own comrades in mess and billet; and every officer and man carried, pasted into his official "small book," a table of commandments bearing the monitory heading: "KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT!" Difficult and irritating as this must have been, the injunctions were obeyed almost to the

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letter.¹ To the eleventh hour the impression among most of the Patricias was that they were being held in reserve to go north. That the Canadians were to attack once more near Ypres was exactly what the Fourth Army Intelligence wished would find its way across No Man's Land. It has even been suggested that now and then a senior officer helped the rumour on its way with a hearty good lie.

One thing that the infantryman could hardly be expected to appreciate was the way in which units were shuttlecocked from one billeting area to another without apparent reason or purpose. The Patricias reached Dury (which was afterwards discovered to be the concentration centre for the battle) on August 1, and lay there, for the most part in open fields and under heavy rain, for a night and a day. The next night they moved to very dirty billets near by at St. Fuscien. The following night they doubled back toward Dury, and stayed at the village of Hébécourt for nearly forty-eight hours, returning then to St. Fuscien, once more in heavy rain. Here at last, on August 6, the Regiment heard some details of the coming engagement, and late the same evening it moved forward across the River Avre to bivouac on the high ground at Gentelles Wood, one of the largest of the woodlands studding the country about Amiens which make it so suitable a spot for secret concentration. The Patricias now found themselves in very pleasant country, three miles west of the River Luce. They lay, near the boundary-line between British and French, beside the Amiens—Roye road which, as the right flank of the Canadian attack after the first 4000 yards of advance, was to set the Fourth Army moving in a

¹ On one march, as the Patricias passed through a village, a soldier by the wayside so far forgot himself as to call out: "Who are you?" Quick came the shout from the ranks: "This is the Fifth Army coming back."

south-easterly direction. It was on the march up to Gentelles Wood that junior officers and men began to open their eyes to the scale of the attack in which they were to take part. The whole Corps was in motion : every road was crowded with tanks, infantry, artillery and transport. August 7 was fine though very hot, and the Patricias lay in the wood all day concealing themselves well by use of the excellent natural cover it provided.¹ At 10 P.M. they relieved a battalion of Australians in reserve positions north-west of the village of Domart, and a mile behind the River Luce, where they were ready to follow up the attack of the 9th Brigade the next morning.

The Battle of Amiens was originally intended to free the Amiens—Paris railway, but before the attack was delivered its scope was greatly extended. It was believed—a belief fully justified by the first day's overwhelming success—that the German equilibrium had been fatally disturbed by the number of troops thrown into the Marne Salient to resist the squeeze of the French pincers ; and the much broader plan was now framed of flattening the whole salient of the Somme by pressure from the south. A swift advance by the Canadians along the Amiens—Roye road, as part of a general movement on both banks of the Somme, was the substantial feature of General Rawlinson's strategy. Taking a broad view, the Battle of Amiens was the first move in one great action which carried the Fourth Army 75

¹ An officer wrote home : " I wish you could see us in our sylvan surroundings. Title : War as she is waged in the fifth year. The difference between this and camping out is that here our servants do all the work." It was now the custom of men lying in bivouac to dig themselves in a foot underground and to throw up small banks round the transport lines with the object of securing protection against the wide lateral spread of exploding aeroplane bombs. On this occasion, however, no aeroplane disturbed the peace of the waiting battalion.

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miles eastward in 96 days. But to the Canadian Corps, transferred elsewhere at the end of the first fortnight, the objective was never beyond the line of the Cambrai—Paris road between Péronne and Roye.

Regarding the Battle of Amiens by itself, it was the most considerable combined effort of oversea troops in the war. The tasks of the III. British Corps north of the Somme and the XXXI. French Corps (First French Army) south of the Amiens—Roye road were important and difficult, but subsidiary. The decisive blows were delivered by the Australians on the left centre and the Canadians on the right centre. From the Somme to Villers-Bretonneux—the scene of their brilliant counter-attack in the last days of the retreat—four Australian divisions attacked almost due east astride the Amiens—Brie road. To their right, the troops in the line on the morning of the attack were (in order from north to south) the 2nd, 1st and 3rd Canadian Divisions, with the 4th Canadian Division, the 3rd Cavalry Division and the 32nd British Division in reserve.

Both the plan and its execution may be dealt with in a few sentences. Relying on absolute surprise, a fleet of tanks and a few minutes of intense bombardment, the divisions in the line were rapidly to penetrate to a depth of about 3600 yards and thus capture most of the enemy's field-battery positions. Support brigades, passing through, were then to establish a line on good defensive ground from Mezières to Harbonnières and thence to Morcourt on the Somme. Finally, the reserves, led by the cavalry wherever possible, were to leap-frog through and enter the old outer defence system of Amiens.¹ This programme, involving

¹ In the years of trench warfare the Allies had constructed an "inner" and an "outer" defence system east of Amiens. These lines had changed hands

an advance of 14,000 yards in a single day, was carried out almost to the letter, at trifling cost, with huge prize of prisoners and guns. Only on the extreme right, where the 4th Canadian Division was held up before Le Quesnel and had to postpone the last 3000 yards of advance until the next day, was there any check. The completeness of the surprise, the weakness of the German defences, and the initiative of British tanks, cavalry and infantry made possible a deep and sudden penetration, which broke the enemy's lateral communications and temporarily paralysed the whole mechanism of his defence.

The ground which the 3rd Canadian Division attacked was a broad rolling plateau, cut diagonally by the deep valley of the River Luce. The Luce, an inconsiderable stream though unfordable, flows through a wooded marsh land 300 yards wide, from which the sides of the valley rise steeply. Numerous ravines running north and south intersect the plateau, making the ground between sometimes difficult of access. Scattered over the area are many compact and well-built villages surrounded by gardens and orchards; woods and copses dot it, and the unfenced farm land was carrying a crop of standing grain. The inner defences of Amiens were weak—"unconnected elements of trenches indifferently protected by wire." The outer defences—the British objective for the first day—were rather stronger, but the enemy relied less upon trenches than on a vast number of machine-gun posts scattered in "a fairly loose but very deep pattern."

The 3rd Division had two brigades in the assaulting line at the beginning of the action. The 1st

in the retreat. Therefore, on August 8 the old *inner* defences corresponded roughly to the German *front* line, the old *outer* defences to his *reserve* line.

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C.M.R. of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade, supported by the 2nd C.M.R. and advancing from near the village of Hangard, was to attack on the northern bank of the Luce, crossing it only just when reaching the first objective at Demuin. On the right of the Mounted Rifles, the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade was to cross the stream and marshes by the foot-bridges near Domart and assemble during the night of August 7/8 in the vicinity of Hourges. At zero a holding attack would be launched, combined with an encircling movement by three battalions to reduce the tactically important "Dodo" (or "Rifle") Wood and establish a line continuous with that of the 8th Brigade in the Amiens inner defences.¹ Here the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade, with supply-tanks carrying ammunition, bombs, water, tools and sand-bags, would "leap-frog," and later the Canadian Cavalry Brigade of the 3rd Cavalry Division, accompanied by tanks of the 4th Tank Brigade, would take up the advance. The 7th Brigade was to capture the high ground about 3000 yards farther on between the Luce at Cayeux-en-Santerre and the main road at Mezières. This "consolidation" line was first to be made secure, and the 4th Canadian Division was then to pass through the 7th Brigade to carry the outer defences from Le Quesnel to the Luce, while the 3rd Cavalry Division was seizing every chance to pursue the enemy.

Aug. 8.

On the morning of August 8 the fortunes of the 7th Brigade depended upon whether the 9th Brigade could take Dodo Wood on the south side of the road and south-east of the bridge-head, for the plateau

¹ After the first advance and the capture of Dodo Wood, the 42nd French Division was to be set in motion south of the Amiens—Roye road. General Brutinel's independent force of motor machine guns, cyclists and six-inch Newton mortars mounted on lorries, was to maintain liaison with the French and cover the flank of the cavalry along the road.

where stands this copse commands the whole valley and is protected by the marshes of the Luce. When the artillery bombardment began at 4.20 A.M. a very heavy mist made it impossible for assaulting troops to see more than a few yards; and this, though aiding the attempt at surprise and reducing the losses, made direction exceedingly difficult to keep. The tanks had been parked during the night near a bridge on the French side of the road, under cover of a "noise barrage" provided by large bombing aeroplanes flying low over the line. Eight minutes before zero hour these led off, and at zero hour the forward companies of the 9th Brigade, the whole of which had been packed into the narrow bridge-head, proceeded to deploy and seize the fringe of the plateau, in order to give the rest of the brigade dead ground in which to manœuvre. This brigade at once isolated the wood by a brilliant tactical movement in which the centre (116th) battalion particularly distinguished itself, and turned the enemy defences from the north. The wood once subdued, the remainder of the first objective-line was rapidly gained and the 7th Brigade and the French came into action on both sides of the road.

Twenty minutes after the 9th Brigade had moved forward, the whole 7th Brigade began to leave its assembly trenches and move forward to the Luce. Being in reserve, the Patricias did not reach the bridge till 6.15 A.M., in the rear of the brigade. The crossing of the foot-bridges over the swampy ground was difficult even in daylight, for though completely surprised, the Germans kept up a rather wild barrage on the Domart bridge-head for some time. In this the 7th Brigade was caught; but fortunately the ground on both sides of the road was so wet and marshy as greatly to localize ground-

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bursts, and the losses were not serious.¹ The battalions were ordered to cross certain duckboard bridges, some 250 yards long, across the river and swamp at specified times, and the whole of this movement was smoothly directed by an officer of the divisional staff with a troop of cavalry. General Dyer also specially refers in his report to the "excellent arrangements made by battalion commanders for crossing, and the splendid discipline displayed by all ranks during a most trying period." This indeed might be inferred by their speed in passing through the danger zone.

The 7th Brigade re-formed in dead ground east of Dodo Wood ready to leap-frog through the 9th Brigade. By 6.45 A.M. all were ready to go forward: the Royal Canadian Regiment with its right flank on the road, the 49th on the left, the 42nd in the centre, with the Patricias 500 yards behind it. The advance continued without any check, and the reserve battalion was never called upon. Passing Hamon Wood to the high ground between Demuin and the main road, the leading companies of the Regiment moved at 8.15 A.M. into their final reserve positions in the valley behind Hill 102. "By 9.30 A.M.," wrote Colonel Stewart in his personal report to Princess Patricia, "we had taken all our objectives and had advanced about eight kilometres with twelve casualties. It was quite easy, the most successful thing we have ever been in."

Indeed, for the Patricias, once past the artillery barrage on the Luce swamps, it was literally a walk-over. General Ludendorff has admitted that the Germans were completely demoralized by the

¹ At this point the Patricias had one killed and eleven wounded—their only casualties on this day. Lieut. J. W. Jeakins, M.M., the Assistant Adjutant, was one of the wounded, but remained at duty.

pace of the advance, and did not seriously contest any of their positions. The leading battalions swept onward: the R.C.R., with tanks co-operating in the woods by the roadside, was first to make its objective at 9.45 A.M.; the 42nd Battalion captured two batteries and by 10 A.M. had also reached its objective; the 49th Battalion met with rather stiffer resistance in the woods near the Luce, but occupied and consolidated its position on the left without serious difficulty. At 12.10 P.M. the whole 4th Division passed through, and the 7th Brigade (now become divisional reserve) bivouacked at its final objectives, and watched the cavalry emerge from the left with whippet tanks in the new glory of pursuit.

With the enemy's gun line captured, there was no more hostile shelling and the men of a battalion in reserve could move about at will. The mist had cleared and there was much to see. Saxons of the 192nd Division, Bavarians of the 14th, Westphalians and Poles of the 225th were passing back to the cages in great numbers, many identified by chalk marks on the back as the property of this battalion or that. The Patricias themselves collected about 120 prisoners, a German machine gun, two British Lewis guns which the Germans had used, and a considerable quantity of stores and munitions, with papers of importance. Even the Padre secured "quite a good German horse." But the prize of the day fell to No. 3 Company, which followed so closely on the heels of the 42nd Battalion that it managed to get up almost into the firing line, and was rewarded for its over-enthusiasm by rounding up an artillery brigade colonel and his staff of twenty-five, already overrun by the 42nd Battalion's leading waves. Early in the evening the

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Patricias assembled with the rest of the Brigade in the wood north of Mezières. By this time the 4th Division had passed far beyond, and though held up at Le Quesnel, had carried the line so well forward that the position consolidated by the 7th Brigade was no longer needed.

Aug. 9. The attack had not yet begun to lose momentum, and General Rawlinson set another distant objective for the Canadians on August 9, namely, the line of the Chaulnes—Roye railway just short of the high road between Roye and Péronne. This involved a further penetration of some 15,000 yards across the 1914-17 trench systems both of the Allies and of the enemy. Taking the front as a whole, this second "push" was scarcely less successful than that of the previous day. Particularly was this true on the British extreme right, where the Mounted Rifles of the 3rd Canadian Division made 7000 yards and were only held up after penetrating some distance into the network of old trenches that ran through the villages of Fouquescourt, Parvillers and Damery, about 5000 yards short of the railway-line to Roye.

Yet the conditions of the battle were already changing. The element of surprise, outstanding fact of the first day's triumph, had passed. General Ludendorff quickly took the crisis in hand, and was able to stop the rot more rapidly than had seemed possible to the Allied Command. The demoralization of August 8 was over by the night of August 9; picked troops, including the famous Alpine Corps, were rushed up; and between August 9 and August 14 nine fresh divisions were thrown in against the Canadian Corps alone. Very soon it became clear that the enemy was prepared to fight a desperate delaying action west of the Somme Canal, with troops in reserve sufficient for the purpose. Most

important factor of all, the terrain into which the British Army advanced on August 9 was very different from that over which it had galloped on August 8. The first dash had encountered sketchy defences designed less for resistance than as a jumping-off place for farther advance, and open country that had seen comparatively little of the ravages of war. But after the first hours of August 9, the Germans were back in the old battle-line of early trench warfare. The change to an assault upon the mazes of the two old defensive systems completely altered tactics in the second stage of the engagement. In place of open rolling plateau was the too-familiar broken ground of ditches and shell-craters. Later on, at Parvillers, we shall see a return to out-and-out trench-fighting, with its bombing parties, blocks and Lewis gun emplacements. But the character of the battle altered some days before the Patricias were thus engaged. Trenches, wire and shell-holes gradually barred the way to tanks and cavalry. By August 10 the infantry was again carrying the whole weight of the advance supported by such mobile artillery as could follow up so rapid a movement. The state of these ancient trenches, the fact that wire and parapets were often completely hidden by vegetation added fresh difficulties. The very weather told against the assailant. As August advanced the heat increased, and on August 13 and 14—two anxious days for the Patricias—it was intense. A bright moon gave the enemy his chance to supplement machine guns, rifles, gas and high-explosive shells with bombing aeroplanes and machine-gun fire from the air. Everything, indeed, seemed to conspire to save him from the consequences of defeat.

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Before returning to the Patricias, it is necessary to outline the events of August 9, 10 and 11 on the divisional front. If August 8 was the day of the 9th Brigade, August 9 was the day of the 8th. Early in the afternoon the 4th and 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles passed through the 4th Division which had just cleared the village and wood of Le Quesnel and pushed forward with great success against a stiffening resistance. Tanks aided in subduing machine-gun nests in Folies Wood and at a beetroot factory on the Roye road, and by 5.30 P.M. the villages of Folies and Bouchoir were in their hands. By six o'clock the Mounted Rifles had reached the old British trench system east of Folies, while beyond the road the French were entering the outskirts of Arvillers. This was the extent of the day's advance.

The 7th Brigade in close support was ready to leap-frog through as soon as the expected orders came. They left their bivouac in Valley Wood at 11 A.M. and advanced three miles to Beaucourt. Here they rested until evening, and at 9 P.M. the Patricias led the brigade down the road towards Roye with one company out as a flank guard. A halt was called in a field near Folies, and the Regiment prepared to move into position for attack. Instructions had been received to attack the German trench system at Parvillers, and orders to advance and pass through the Mounted Rifles east of Le Quesnoy-en-Santerre were actually issued at 4 A.M. on August 10. But these orders were countermanded at the last minute. "The 32nd Division," wrote Colonel Stewart to his Colonel-in-Chief after the action, "to our surprise and, I am afraid, disgust, went through us and we camped all day." This British division (14th, 96th and

97th Brigades) had been placed by General Rawlinson at the disposal of General Currie as corps reserve. It may be surmised that although the 7th Brigade was fresh, the other brigades of the 3rd Division had advanced so fast in exhausting heat that it was deemed advisable to rest the whole of General Lipsett's command. Whatever the cause, the Patricias found themselves bivouacked at Folies on the 10th and 11th, chafing not a little in corps reserve.

Suspicious and doubts felt on the 9th became certainties on the 10th. In the early morning the Mounted Rifles rounded off their fine performance of the day before by capturing Le Quesnoy after a sharp fight with the defending machine gunners; and between 8.15 and 9.30 the whole 32nd Division passed through towards Fouques-court, Parvillers and Damery. These troops had had a long march on a very hot morning; in front of them was a powerful and heavily-manned trench system; and their attack, though pressed with great gallantry and only abandoned when all three brigades had been cut up in the wire, completely failed to shake the German hold upon the trenches and village of Parvillers. Caught by a murderous fire in the invisible wire of the old trenches the north-countrymen of the 96th and 97th Brigades suffered horrible losses and could only advance slowly and spasmodically. Bois-en-Équerre, near Damery, changed hands four times in three hours, and progress was so slight and everywhere so costly that the attack upon the line of villages faded away. The cavalry made a great effort to reach the high ground north and east of Roye, but at last, balked by the labyrinth of decaying trenches and the old wire in the long grass, with-

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drew to the valley of the Luce. The battle of movement was for the present at an end. It is true that the Army Commander projected for the 11th a last effort to chase the Germans across the Somme Canal at Nesle before they could settle down in new trenches. But the evidence of increasing resistance was so widespread that before zero hour General Currie countermanded the orders for the Canadian Corps. The real Battle of Amiens was over on August 10. The rest of the action was local, much of it conditioned by fierce German counter-attacks.

Aug. 11.

August 11 saw bitter fighting around Fouques-court, Parvillers and Damery. The 14th Brigade was thrown into the attack in an effort to carry forward the hard-hit 96th and 97th. But the protective barrage fell too far forward and missed the enemy's machine guns, which again worked havoc among the unfortunate infantry caught in the wire.¹ Orders came from Army Headquarters not to risk heavy losses, and the attack was abandoned for the day. The Germans were now fighting finely to secure a breathing-space in which to consolidate and bring up reserves, and this must be remembered in estimating the task with which the Patricias at last found themselves confronted.

Soon after dark on the 11th the 7th Brigade was ordered to move up, with the 9th Brigade on its right, to relieve the badly mauled 32nd Division and prepare a third attempt to pierce the Fouques-court—Parvillers—Damery line. The relief was an exceptionally difficult one; the British battalions—brigades, indeed—were mixed up; the guides knew nothing of the ground; the line to be taken

¹ "We did our best," said a Scotsman to one of the Regiment's officers, "but we are such little fellows."

over was so obscure that a line farther forward was determined upon and had to be made good by a night advance; nor was it until 8 A.M. on the 12th that the 32nd Division was clear. The Patricias lay immediately in front of Parvillers when they had relieved elements of the 5/6 Royal Scots (T.) and 10th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. On the left, at Fouquescourt, was the 42nd Battalion; behind, in close support, was the R.C.R.; on the right, towards Middle Wood and Damery, the 116th Battalion. Thus on the morning of August 12 the Patricias found themselves holding the old Allied front-line trenches, everywhere decayed and much overgrown, between the roads that converge upon Parvillers from Rouvroy to the north and Le Quesnoy to the south. In front of the Regiment lay the old No Man's Land, and the German trench line running through the western end of Fouquescourt and Parvillers and thence west of Damery to the small Boiz-en-Z on the Amiens—Roye road; not one trench line, indeed, but three, and these again supported by many strong-points in the villages behind.

These powerful defences had been penetrated at two places, one on each side of the Patricias' position in the centre. On the night of August 10/11 the 44th Battalion (4th Canadian Division) had entered and occupied Fouquescourt, just to the left of the 42nd Battalion, while on the right the 32nd Division had entered the German trenches just south of the Le Quesnoy—Parvillers road, had held them against counter-attack and passed them over to the 116th Battalion, whose left was thus on the other side of No Man's Land from the Patricias' right. The rest of the German trench line was intact and firmly held, as the 32nd Division

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had discovered; and on the extreme right flank an attempt by the French to capture Boiz-en-Z had been defeated. "It was necessary completely to clear this system before a further advance could be made." Such was the object set before the 3rd Canadian Division from August 12 to 15; the Regiment's share was to subdue the trench system before it and the village of Parvillers.

At the completion of the relief the Patricias had three companies in the front line—Nos. 4, 1 and 2 from left to right—with No. 3 Company and B.H.Q. in the old living trenches west of the village. Throughout the long relief the whole area had been heavily shelled, and the German bombardment continued intermittently during the 12th. In the afternoon another attempt upon the German lines was set on foot. The unhappy experience of the 32nd Division discouraged the idea of a frontal attack, especially as there were specific orders against incurring avoidable losses; and General Lipsett determined to bring converging pressure upon Parvillers from the breaches already made in the enemy's trench system by the 4th Canadian and 32nd British Divisions. The plan involved: (i.) an attack by the 42nd Battalion from Fouques-court towards the north-western entrance of Parvillers; (ii.) the co-operation of 9th Brigade troops south of Parvillers, who were to follow along the high ground to Middle Wood and thence strike either north towards Parvillers or south towards Damery from the rear of the main German defences; (iii.) an assault by other units of the 9th Brigade on the trenches in front of Damery.

It seemed unlikely that the Patricias, in front of Parvillers, could play an important part. But battalion commanders were given much freedom

of action, and of this Colonel Stewart took full advantage. When the officer commanding the 42nd Battalion passed word that he was launching an afternoon attack from Fouquescourt, Colonel Stewart at once planned a bombing demonstration to help him. In order effectively to assist this pressure at the north, it was necessary to invade 9th Brigade territory and set off from the 116th Battalion's left, as the boundary between brigades ran along the line of the southern outskirts of Parvillers. The 9th Brigade Staff had heard that the 116th Battalion held outposts well within the German lines due south of the village to the north of Middle Wood, and these posts should be a good point of departure for the subsidiary attack. Orders were issued for No. 3 Company (Captain E. MacG. MacBrayne) to move up from support, cross the Le Quesnoy—Parvillers road into the left trenches of the 116th Battalion, assemble in the outposts mentioned, and bomb down trenches of the old German front line into the village defences. The Germans were known to be in strength in Middle Wood, and strict co-ordination with the 116th Battalion was necessary to secure this daring flank movement against counter-attack from the right rear. Colonel Stewart advised the officer commanding the 116th of his intentions, and asked permission to pass through his communication trenches. The reply came back: "Pleased to co-operate with you in the proposed enterprise. I have already sent a platoon up the communication trench to fight and hold every inch of ground they take. I shall be only too pleased to give you any assistance such as guides, etc., that I can." No. 3 Company therefore moved up across the road to the 116th Battalion's trenches.

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The assault of the 42nd Battalion from Fouquescourt was delivered at 3.30 P.M. A finely-executed surprise advance, followed by fierce work with the bayonet, gradually cleared the enemy out of his trenches on this flank, so that by 9 P.M. the whole 42nd Battalion was across No Man's Land and in possession of the German first, second and (on the left) third lines from Fouquescourt to the Rouvroy—Parvillers road. The 49th Battalion came up at night and helped the 42nd to hold this important gain against determined counter-attacks.¹

Meanwhile Captain MacBrayne was delayed. When he reached the 116th lines at 3 P.M. he found that the outposts he was counting upon for jumping off did not exist. He decided to proceed, but a prolonged reconnaissance that was now necessary postponed the attack till dusk. The 116th Battalion lived up to its promise by sending its "A" Company forward against Middle Wood to protect the Patricias' right flank.

Not until 8 P.M., when the 42nd Battalion's attack was almost at an end, did No. 3 Company go forward. At once it encountered stiff resistance, for the Germans were numerous and well provided with machine guns. On the left flank the bombers accounted for many Germans, yet made little progress. But on the right, Captain MacBrayne with a bombing section of eight men attacked down the trenches with great success. His party pushed across the Parvillers—Damery road well to the east of Middle Wood, after an advance of nearly 700 yards establishing a position that

¹ This attack was made at right angles to the left flank of the Patricias. No. 4 Company strengthened its front line, but could not give much assistance until after dark. Then its commander (Major L. V. Drummond-Hay, M.C.) sent a small carrying-party up the road with his entire supply of grenades, as the 42nd was running short.

threatened Parvillers from the south. This may be regarded as one of the most remarkable trench operations ever carried out by the Patricias. The Germans, crowded together in their trenches, made no very effective resistance to the bombers, and suffered heavy losses. At least thirty dead were counted in the captured portion of trench; the German machine guns were overwhelmed and sixteen were taken, one of them being rushed by a solitary Lewis gunner who turned it upon the retreating enemy. Resistance showed signs of breaking down altogether, and if the advance could have been pressed home the story of the next forty-eight hours might have been a very different one. "Had it not been for a shortage in the supply of bombs," reports Colonel Stewart, "Captain MacBrayne's party would undoubtedly have made a further advance." It had been a grenadiers' fight. The number of bombs rained on the enemy had been very great; an extra supply had been borrowed from other companies, and when these were exhausted quantities of the enemy's stick bombs lying in the captured trench were thrown at him as he fell back. But when, at last, this supply also failed, a halt had to be called, and the night was spent securing the positions won. A striking local success had been gained, but in its new posts the company soon found itself dangerously isolated. Captain MacBrayne was perhaps not far from the truth when he reported afterwards to the Adjutant that "what looked like a very successful fight turned out to be right the other way."

The 116th Battalion, it will be remembered, had promised protection on the right flank, and made every exertion to make good its word. But the machine-gun nests which defended Middle Wood

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were very formidable, and though the wood was won during the day it was lost in a counter-attack. Later in the evening the 116th Battalion steadily worked through it again, and by midnight seemed to have established itself just east of the wood in a position which would protect the Patricias. But in the early morning of the 13th a violent counter-attack drove it out once more to trenches 400 yards back of the wood. The right flank of No. 3 Company P.P.C.L.I. was now completely in the air, and half an hour after the attack on the 116th the enemy struck at Captain MacBrayne's detachment. At 5 A.M. the Germans, approximately a battalion strong, emerged from the woods in close formation, and attacked from the direction both of Parvillers and Damery.

The Patricias were not only outnumbered but menaced from three sides; and MacBrayne gave the order to fall back. In his desperate retreating action against overwhelming force the next hour saw one of the most gallant episodes in the Regiment's history. Two of his platoons were cut off, and their only choice was to fight their way through or surrender. The retirement was covered with rifles and Lewis guns, which did tremendous execution among the Germans at point-blank range. Two or three examples from a sheaf of recommendations will show the nature of the fighting. Sergeant M. H. Cordy climbed out into the open and stopped a dangerous rush with his rifle; Sergeant T. T. Shields held up the Germans at another point by bombarding them with their own stick grenades; Private S. Waterman, a rifle-grenadier, stalked and destroyed a machine gun that had got to close quarters. Lieutenant J. C. Fuller, when his platoon was counter-attacked on both flanks and from the

rear, covered the retirement and with three other ranks fought off the enemy until all his wounded had been cleared from the trench. He saved his platoon, and was the last man to withdraw from the enemy position. Most conspicuous gallantry of all was that of Sergeant Robert Spall. "He took a Lewis gun and standing on the parapet fired upon the advancing enemy, inflicting most severe casualties. He then came down the trench directing the men into a sap seventy-five yards from the enemy. Picking up another Lewis gun he again climbed the parapet and with his fire held up the enemy. Here he deliberately gave up his life in order to extricate his platoon from a most difficult situation." Colonel Stewart recommended Sergeant Spall for the highest of all honours, and his next-of-kin received the last Victoria Cross won by the Regiment.

The company extricated itself, and with the help of the 116th Battalion was able to make a stand in the old German line. The losses were amazingly small for such hard fighting as it had seen in the last twelve hours. Lieutenant D. A. Wright and 3 men were killed, while 21 N.C.O.'s and men were wounded. An officer, 14 other prisoners, and no less than 26 machine guns captured are to be placed against these losses. Very heavy damage had been inflicted on the enemy during the advance, and still heavier in the retreat: the killed alone must have numbered 150. If the attack was not a success, it was certainly the least humiliating of failures.

Fighting continued intermittently on this flank all day, and the Canadian position was to some slight extent bettered by evening. Meanwhile the 42nd and 49th Battalions continued slowly to clear the Germans out of their whole defensive system

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beyond the Rouvrois road. But Parvillers had still to be taken. The set-back suffered by No. 3 Company did not at all discourage Colonel Stewart from making another attempt to outflank the village from the south. During August 13 he sent No. 1 Company across the road to reinforce No. 3 and planned to continue local operations on much the same lines as on the 12th. But the evening brought orders from the Brigade that an attack in force, with artillery preparation, was to be delivered early next morning by the Patricias and the 49th Battalion. The two units were to converge upon Parvillers from the flanks and carry the whole of the defences west of the village within the angle formed by the roads from Rouvrois and Le Quesnoy. The local attack was therefore abandoned, and when, soon after midnight, definite orders arrived, the two remaining companies joined Nos. 1 and 3, so that by 3 A.M. the whole Regiment was across the Le Quesnoy road and in the old German front line, the R.C.R. coming into support in the vacated British line.

Aug. 14.

At 6 A.M. on August 14 the Canadian guns opened a hurricane bombardment, and at 6.30 Nos. 1 and 4 Companies began to push up the German trenches to meet the 49th. These trenches were heavily garrisoned, and the German artillery was still very active.¹ The stiffest opposition was expected, for the Patricias were attacking the defences which had dealt so hardly with the 32nd Division a few days before. And yet all objectives were reached in twenty minutes, and the Germans were cleared right out of their trench system with little or no difficulty. A defensive

¹ The poison gas with which the village and environs of Parvillers had been saturated by the enemy's guns was especially troublesome throughout this day and the next.

line was swiftly established from the Rouvrois road south-west to the westerly outskirts of the village, where the 9th Brigade linked up with No. 4 Company. The left attacking company of the Patricias (No. 1) at the same time made connection at the lower Rouvrois road with D Company of the 49th Battalion, which had been equally successful in its advance. Some prisoners were taken and a large number of the enemy killed and wounded. "The captured line represented a very substantial gain and had been secured with very few casualties."

No definite orders had been given to capture the village itself, but Major L. V. Drummond-Hay, M.C., of No. 4 Company (who commanded the P.P.C.L.I. attack), and the officer commanding the company from the 49th, at once sent strong patrols into the village and proceeded to exploit the success. Colonel Stewart sent orders forward to push on, and the village was occupied. There was some stiff hand-to-hand fighting in the streets, but the enemy's strong-points were subdued one by one and the village was soon cleared of the Germans with far greater losses to them than to the Canadians. Major Drummond-Hay made the village church his temporary headquarters, and all three companies moved forward, D Company of the 49th on the left, and Nos. 1 and 4 Companies P.P.C.L.I. in the centre and on the right respectively. Without more serious opposition than occasional sniping, the line advanced to the main Fouquescourt—Parvillers—Goyencourt road, and halted to reorganize in the orchards south of Blucher Wood. By 10.30 A.M. the situation was quiet, and the sniping had died down altogether.

A striking success had been won with un-

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expected ease. Unhappily its very completeness and rapidity led directly to serious misfortune. Some defect of liaison, some slowness to recognize that the situation had changed—for neither of which the Patricias seem to bear any responsibility—led to a mishap from which they suffered disastrously.

About eleven o'clock the officer commanding D Company of the 49th Battalion received instructions not to proceed through Parvillers, but to occupy the first objective—the trench line west of the village. He informed Major Drummond-Hay and fell back. Major Drummond-Hay, acting on the original orders from Colonel Stewart, decided to hold his position in the orchard. He was unaware that troops of the 79th and 121st German Divisions were concentrated in Schwetz Wood on his left front, and there was no apparent reason for surrendering the valuable gain of the strong-points in the village. The two battalions thus lost touch with one another, and the Germans in Schwetz Wood, observing the withdrawal of the 49th Battalion, seized the moment for a strong counter-attack against the Patricias. Coming through the gap that now existed on the left, they were on top of the companies in great numbers before any warning could be spread. Major Drummond-Hay himself knew nothing of the attack until he was shot at from a distance of a few yards. He and his men were in as desperate case as No. 3 Company had been the morning before. The Germans were behind No. 1 Company before it could be reinforced, No. 4 Company was attacked from the front and right, and both flanks were in the air. The two companies retired slowly and in good order, "fighting hard, almost back to back." Major Drummond-Hay was the last to leave, and handled

his rear-guard with great skill and bravery until shot and instantly killed by a sniper. Lieutenant John Christie, now taking command though badly wounded, held the men together, and earned his third recommendation for gallantry in action within a few months. As the officers fell, N.C.O.'s took charge and steadily directed the withdrawing of their platoons, contesting every inch of ground. After a bitter engagement, which cost the Germans dearly, the companies regained their first objective in the trenches west of the village and brought the counter-attack to a standstill. They had put up, as the Brigadier reported to General Lipsett, "a wonderful fight," for only two or three severely wounded men were taken prisoners. The loss of the village, though gall to the Regiment that had so brilliantly captured it in the morning, did not prove important, as it was retaken a few hours later. Far more serious was the death of a very fine senior officer, the wounding of four subalterns (Lieutenants G. Grant, J. Christie, M. L. Hancock and O. B. Rexford) and 35 casualties among N.C.O.'s and men.

Through the afternoon the Germans showed in force in the village, and Colonel Stewart prepared to resist a stronger counter-attack against the trenches captured in the early morning. But the British artillery was kept fully apprised of the enemy's movements, and its fire came down accurately and heavily on the strong-points in the village and the trenches to the north. Again the Germans suffered heavily—they got far more than they gave on the 13th and 14th—and the danger passed. The Patricias could make no further attempt to penetrate the village. The heat was very great, and Colonel Stewart writes that after the long morning's

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hard fighting "we were extremely fatigued, and although we were quite capable of a defensive action, an offensive action was out of the question for the time being." The Regiment was not called upon again. At 11 P.M. the Royal Canadian Regiment attacked, and the enemy fled in confusion, only clouds of poison gas meeting the R.C.R. as they passed through the village. By 4 A.M. on the 15th the points reached by Major Drummond-Hay's companies twenty hours before were occupied and consolidated. The Patricias, now in support, sent forward parties to mop up the village; but the greater part of the Regiment remained in the old German trenches all day, greatly incommoded by the enemy's gas and suffering some few casualties from the heavy retaliatory bombardment. The success of the R.C.R. was repeated all along the line; the 49th Battalion reached Blucher Wood, the 116th captured Middle Wood for good and all, the 52nd took Damery and "completely swamped" the counter-attack of a whole German regiment, and the 43rd with a bayonet charge across the open made it easy for the French finally to secure the Bois-en-Z that lay on the height of land commanding the road to Roye. By evening the German main line of resistance was wholly in Allied hands. On the night of the 15/16th a general relief began, and the Patricias handed over their position to the 15th Battalion (3rd Canadian Brigade) and moved out before dawn first to Folies Wood and later to Valley Wood.

The action of August 12-15 is thus summarized by General Dyer :

The operation about Parvillers was a strict return to trench warfare, and in the operation the bomb and bayonet with the Lewis gun were the chief weapons used. The

fighting was at all times difficult and practically hand-to-hand, with the enemy in a nearly ideal position. During the four days there was little or no opportunity for rest or sleep, and the greatest credit is reflected upon the troops engaged for their magnificent fighting ability and for the high spirit that they maintained throughout. During this time they cleared many miles of old trenches under the stiffest opposition and captured an area approximately 3000 yards in width by 2000 yards in depth, very strongly defended throughout with its labyrinth of trenches.

The total casualties of the Patricias during the eight days of the Battle of Amiens were 152: two officers killed and five wounded, 23 other ranks killed, 9 missing, and 113 wounded. When it is recalled that, in addition to taking part in an infinitely deeper advance than any in which it had previously been concerned, the Regiment had twice attacked, and twice had been counter-attacked in overwhelming force under most unfavourable conditions, the fact must be recorded as one of the most remarkable in its history that the losses at Amiens were far lighter than in any other action of equal magnitude.

From August 16 to 19 the Patricias bivouacked at Valley Wood in hot, cloudy weather. On August 18 the whole 7th Brigade was paraded for inspection by the French Premier (M. Georges Clemenceau), Sir Douglas Haig, General Rawlinson and Lord Derby. The Commander-in-Chief paid the troops a very pleasing compliment by declaring that he had never seen a finer march past on the field of battle. In fact, as Colonel Stewart wrote to Princess Patricia, "all said exceedingly nice things about our appearance and what we had done. The old Premier was enormously interested in your Colour, and insisted upon knowing its history." The Commanding Officer reminded his Colonel-in-Chief in the same

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letter that the Battle of Amiens was the first occasion on which the Colour had actually gone forward in open warfare, receiving its own wound, as the shaft had been broken by a small piece of shell during the relief of August 12. By August 19 the operations of the Fourth Army had temporarily come to a standstill, and the Canadian Corps was relieved by the First French Army, which extended its line north of the Roye road. The 3rd Division was the first to move out: at 8 P.M. on the 19th the Patricias marched across the Luce to Boves, and entrained at 2 A.M. on the 20th for Bouque- maison and new billets at Ivergny near Doullens.

"All through the action," Colonel Stewart told the Colonel-in-Chief, "the conduct of all our officers and men was quite up to our old standard. The Regiment is in great shape, and it would be a great pity if we don't get some more fighting." The Colonel can have had little fear of idle days ahead. The Canadian battalions were again brought up to full strength, and now lay behind the First Army's position at Arras—drawn back only to spring the better.

Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter:

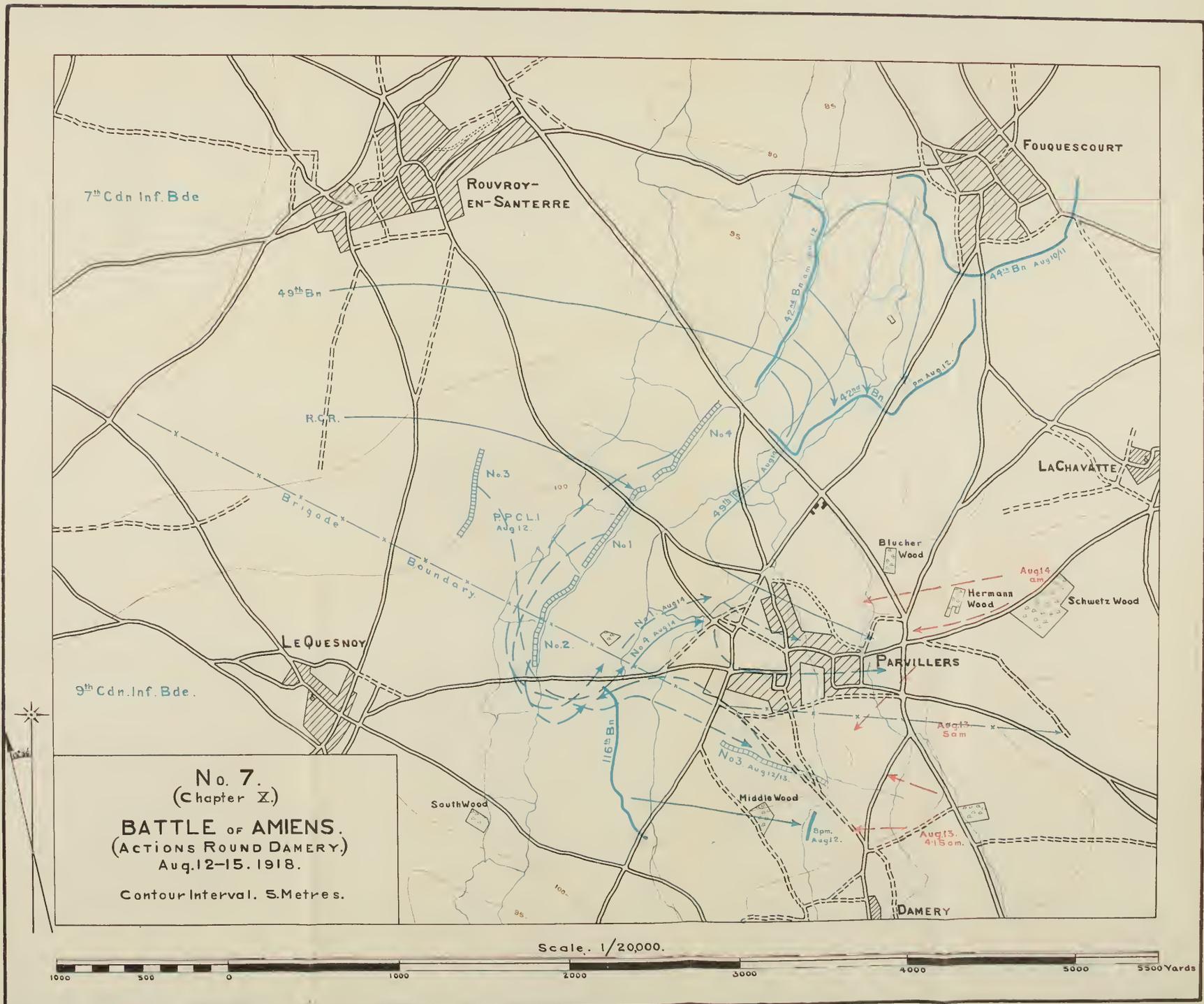
The Victoria Cross: Sgt. R. Spall, killed in action.

Bar to the Distinguished Service Order: Lt.-Col. C. J. T. Stewart, D.S.O.

The Military Cross: Capts. E. MacG. MacBrayne and K. C. Burness; Lieuts. John Christie, J. C. Fuller and C. F. Lalor.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal: Sgt. T. T. Shields.

The Military Medal: Sgts. A. A. Bonar, W. J. Burfield, T. D. Cairns, M. H. Cordy, G. M. McKiel and S. S. Tunnicliffe; Cpls. E. N. Bird and C. McLean; Ptes. W. F.



7th Cdn Inf. Bde

ROUVROY-
EN-SANTERRE

FOUQUESCOURT

49th Bn

R.C.R.

Brigade

No 3

PPCLI
Aug 12.

No 4

42nd Bn
Aug 12

44th Bn
Aug 10/11

42nd V Bn
9m Aug 12.

LACHAVATTE

Blicher Wood

Aug 14
am

Hermann Wood

Schwetz Wood

LE QUESNOY

No 1

No 2

No 1
Aug 14

No 2
Aug 14

No 3
Aug 12/13

PARVILLERS

Aug 15
Som

9th Cdn Inf. Bde.

South Wood

Middle Wood

8pm
Aug 2.

Aug 13.
4-15om.

DAMERY

No. 7.
(Chapter X.)
BATTLE OF AMIENS.
(ACTIONS ROUND DAMERY.)
Aug. 12-15, 1918.

Contour Interval. 5 Metres.

Scale. 1/20,000.



No 7
(Class - A)

BATTLE WAGON

(A-1000) Radio Car
No 1298 1917

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Cartwright, F. E. Conley, E. G. Gawley, L. H. Kennedy, M. Milatovich, R. E. Shuttleworth, W. J. Thomson and S. Waterman. CHAPTER
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The French Croix de Guerre : Lt.-Col. C. J. T. Stewart, D.S.O. ; Lieut. J. W. Jeakins, M.M. ; Sgt. H. C. Rickaby (Signallers) ; Cpl. P. D. Ham ; Ptes. R. Fenton and J. Garscadden.

CHAPTER XI

JIGSAW WOOD

(THE BATTLE OF THE SCARPE, 1918 : MONCHY-LE-
PREUX AND JIGSAW WOOD)

August 20 to 31, 1918

Map No. 8, unfolding opposite p. 348

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THE success at Amiens brought within the range of possibility an advance to the Hindenburg Line with St. Quentin—Cambrai as the strategic objective, and Sir Douglas Haig at once extended his operations northwards between the River Somme and the River Scarpe. During the week that followed the withdrawal of the Canadians from Amiens the Third Army joined in, and, attacking with the Fourth, forced a crossing of the River Ancre in the stubborn engagement which is officially known as the Battle of Albert. Bapaume was captured on August 29, almost at the end of this second phase of the grand offensive. Some days before this, the Third Army drove the Germans from the Mercatel Spur on the Arras—Bapaume road, and thus made a secure southern flank for an attack due east of Arras along the banks of the Scarpe against the commanding heights of Orange Hill and Monchy-le-Preux. On August 26 the offensive was further widened out to the north. This new advance, conforming with that of the Third Army, was to drive the enemy from the

high ground south-east of Arras, clear the whole Arras—Albert railway line, and threaten Cambrai. The Commander-in-Chief's hope was that a sudden and successful blow, of weight sufficient to break through the northern hinge of the famous defences upon which the enemy was retiring, might turn the Hindenburg line from this flank, cut the German system of railway communication, and cause a general retreat. Around Arras lay the First British Army, with one corps (XVII.) south of the Scarpe; but just before the day set for the beginning of the new effort the XVII. Corps was relieved by General Currie's command. With this new right corps General Horne was to strike. The 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions were in the line, from right to left. The 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade was given an important part to play in the coming operation; and the Patricias were one of the assaulting battalions.

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The Regiment did not rest long at Ivergny. Two fine warm days were occupied in refitting, and then it marched on the night of August 22 north-eastwards to Givenchy-le-Noble, due west of Arras.¹ The heat-wave was breaking up with violent thunderstorms as the Regiment moved on August 23 to the concentration camps just outside Arras on the road to Aubigny. Instructions for the offensive were received on the 24th; and on the evening of the 25th the Regiment went forward

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¹ August 1918 was remarkable for excessive heat, and the men were much exhausted after this march of less than ten miles. In these fatiguing moves the Pipers could show their influence upon the morale of troops on the march, and rose nobly to their opportunity. It is recorded of a single march that the Pipe Band "played forty-two times, and never the same tune twice," and that once, greatly daring, it broke into "Marching through Georgia" as it passed through a village full of American soldiers.

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through Arras into positions in the old British front line on the Arras—Cambrai road near Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines, ready to attack the next morning.

The ground over which the 3rd Division was to fight so desperately for the next three days is bounded to the north by the canalized Scarpe flowing sinuously in a general east-and-west direction, and to the south by the straight tree-lined high road which runs from Arras to Cambrai. The Scarpe was the northern boundary of the Canadian attack, and the movements of the 51st (Highland) Division beyond it were subsidiary, and dependent upon the success of the main advance. On the other flank, the Arras—Cambrai road became, as a result of a sudden change of plan made after the capture of Monchy-le-Preux on the first morning, the boundary between the 3rd and 2nd Canadian Divisions. The Patricias were not directly affected by this change, for they were involved from first to last almost at the extreme left. It is important, however, in an appreciation of what they accomplished, to point out the wide-spreading effect of a readjustment of frontage carried out at short warning in the midst of very bitter fighting. The course of the Arras—Cambrai road is much to the south of east; and so General Lipsett, coming against increasingly well-organized resistance as he penetrated farther, was also attacking on an ever-widening front. He had no option but to throw his reserves into the line. By the third day almost every battalion of his three infantry brigades was actually engaging the enemy on a fighting line more than twice as long as that from which the Division jumped off on August 26, and the original supporting battalions and brigades had lost their character as reserves to be called upon in emergency.

On the night of August 25/26 the German trenches within the angle where the Scarpe and the Cambrai road converge ran north and south some 7000 yards east of Arras. The commanding features of the country were the village of Monchy and Orange Hill just west of it—both more than 330 feet above sea-level. The position had already won fame in the war. While the Patricias were capturing La Folie Wood on April 9 of the year before, British infantry and cavalry took Monchy in a blinding snowstorm, and a battalion of the Essex Regiment, the Newfoundlanders and a Brigade Headquarters' Staff held it against the counter-attack of a whole division. It was retained by the British for nearly a year and lost again on March 23, 1918—the third day of the great retreat. The whole of the high ground “honeycombed with a powerful trench system” was now in German hands. Slopes to the west gave machine guns the field of fire of a natural glacis, but on the northern side the ground was more broken. Three irregular valleys converge upon Monchy from the flats of the Scarpe, and on this flank there was consequently some cover from the machine guns which fenced the whole German position. Rejecting a frontal attack as “a very hazardous and costly operation,” General Lipsett resolved to turn the defences of Monchy from the north with an attack along the southern bank of the Scarpe. Once alongside the heights, “which did not appear to be so well organized for defence on the north flank,” he hoped to roll up the enemy line on the high ground by wheeling fresh battalions sharply to the right up the valleys into the village. The heights and village taken, the 3rd Division would at once press forward across the valleys lying to the north-east into the

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irregular woodlands of "Victoria Copse," "Jigsaw Wood," "Hatchet Wood," and the somewhat larger Bois-du-Sart, and so to the enemy's next defences, part of the trench system known as the Fresnes—Rouvroy Switch, between the village of Boiry-Notre-Dame and the river bank. To do this "it would be necessary to refuse the left flank along the crest of the ridge running east from Monchy to avoid enfilade fire from the high ground north of the Scarpe." It was this part of the plan which particularly concerned the Patricias.

The general disposition of the Division for assault was as follows: the 8th Brigade was to deliver the assault against the high positions; the 7th Brigade was to exploit its success; the 9th Brigade was held in reserve. After a hurricane bombardment in the early morning the Mounted Rifles were to recapture the old British line running along the eastern slopes of Orange Hill from the Cambrai road to the Arras—Douai railway near Fampoux, wheel half-right to consolidate along the old British wire west and north of Monchy, and wheel again to the right in an attack on Monchy from the flank. Meanwhile the 7th Brigade was to come up behind, as at Amiens, wait until the line of consolidation east and north of Monchy was secure, and then leap-frog through the 8th Brigade (leaving Monchy to its care), and "exploit eastwards as far as a line through Boiry [*i.e.* the Fresnes—Rouvroy Switch already mentioned] northwards to the River Scarpe, refusing their left flank in so doing." A parallel advance was mapped out for the 2nd Canadian Division south of Monchy and astride the Cambrai road. On the left, the 51st (Highland) Division had no definite objective, but was to be ready to turn to account any success gained south of the Scarpe by sending

patrols along the northern bank to gain possession of observation points like Mount Pleasant and Delbar Wood and to clear the ruined village of Roeux.

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The beginning of the battle was most auspicious. Jumping off at 3 A.M. the 2nd and 4th Battalions of the Mounted Rifles easily carried the first objective. The 2nd C.M.R. then wheeled south and took Orange Hill from the north, while the 1st C.M.R. passed through, swung half-right, and turned the Monchy defences from the northern flank and penetrated the village from the valley while the 5th C.M.R. made a frontal attack from the west. The German resistance was weak and gave little evidence of the stubbornness which it was to develop in the reserve positions; and the hills were taken without any serious fighting.¹ By 7.40 A.M. the whole 8th Brigade was at its objective, and had captured Monchy; and soon afterwards the 5th C.M.R. passed through the village.

Aug. 26.

Meanwhile the 7th Brigade had moved up behind the advance. It will be possible to explain the Patricias' movements by reference to the operations of this one brigade during the remainder of the action. It should, however, be premised that the extension of divisional frontage already mentioned took place an hour or two after the clearing of Monchy, and that this made necessary an attack by the 42nd Battalion to protect the 7th Brigade's right flank by clearing the trenches between the village and the Arras—Cambrai road, and the calling up of the 9th Brigade to Orange Hill before 5 P.M. on the 26th. The reader must regard all

¹ The statement of prisoners may perhaps be accepted that the attack had been to some extent foreseen and that the German main force had been withdrawn about 2000 yards the day before. P.P.C.L.I. Company Commanders reported later in the day that they found no munitions or stores in the captured trenches.

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three brigades as attacking in line through the greater part of the next two days.

At 6.45 A.M. on the 26th the 7th Brigade received orders to pass through, and assembled on the western slope of Orange Hill. Its attacking line consisted of two battalions, supplemented by a special force of half a battalion detailed to protect its left flank on the bank of the Scarpe. On the right the Royal Canadian Regiment, leaving Monchy to the Mounted Rifles, was to occupy the next German trench system in the small copses to the east of the village and then move on through the centre of the Bois-du-Sart against the enemy defences at Boiry-Notre-Dame. On the left the Patricias, conforming to these movements, were first to occupy the German trenches crossing the road running north-east from Monchy to the village of Pelves on the Scarpe. These trenches—"Faction," "Fuel" and "Cartridge"—ran uphill from north to south, the junction between P.P.C.L.I. and R.C.R. being almost on the height of land. When this position was secured, the Patricias' right was to push along the high ground beside the R.C.R. through the northern part of the Bois-du-Sart, while their left advanced across the undulating country south of Pelves through the sharp depression of Jigsaw Valley, in an attack upon the quaintly-shaped Jigsaw Wood and the trenches just beyond. On the extreme left two companies of the 49th Battalion were generally to protect the left flank of the brigade from exposure to the high ground north of the River Scarpe and more particularly to screen the left company of the Patricias, since the northern boundary of the main attack ran nearly 1000 yards short of the river bank and Pelves village. The other half of the 49th Battalion was

in reserve to the Patricias; the 42nd Battalion, as brigade reserve, followed 800 yards behind the R.C.R. In the later complications of the action the movements of the R.C.R., 42nd and 49th were exceedingly involved. But the Patricias were engaged upon a single task throughout the three days—an advance due eastward from Orange Hill to the eastern edge of Jigsaw Wood, a distance of approximately 5500 yards as the crow flies. The ground to be traversed was cut by several lines of trenches with subsidiary defences; while it was dominated on the flanks by the spur east of Monchy and the high ground north of the Scarpe. The ruins of Pelves, the Bois-du-Sart, and above all Jigsaw Wood gave admirable cover for machine guns, in the lavish use of which the German now chiefly placed his trust.

The Patricias were ordered forward with the rest of the Brigade as soon as it became clear that the attack on Monchy was succeeding. Marching from their overnight position at 6.45 A.M., some time before 8.30 they were on the western slope of Orange Hill in assaulting formation—No 1 Company (Major J. R. Macpherson, D.S.O.) on the right, No. 2 Company (Captain M. Ten Broeke, M.C.) on the left, No. 4 Company (Captain A. C. White, M.C.) in support, with No. 3 Company (Captain J. N. Edgar) in reserve.

At 9.30, in heavy rain, the 7th Brigade's attack began. The advance to the trench system running due south from Pelves offered few difficulties. The Patricias passed through the Mounted Rifles in "Milan" and "Musket" Trenches, just north of Monchy, and, though meeting stiff opposition beyond, took a number of prisoners with trifling loss. Faction Trench was occupied by 11.15 A.M.,

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and the attacking companies pushed forward their scouts towards the second line of this system—Cartridge Trench on the left, and up Fuel Trench towards “Keeling Copse” on the spur at the right. But Cartridge Trench was found to be strongly held, and the scouts had to withdraw. The northern end of “Friction” Trench was also full of Germans, and the Patricias had to content themselves for the moment with building blocks in Friction and “Stokes” Trenches to ward off counter-attacks. The nature of the action now changed completely. All along the line the fighting became very severe, for the advance had outrun the protective troops on the flank and came under heavy fire from both sides. A retirement of the enemy behind Jigsaw Wood had been reported by observers early in the action, but, if this actually occurred, it must soon have been checked by the arrival of reinforcements; and for forty-eight hours after 11 A.M. on the 26th every foot of ground had to be fought for. The action of companies became very confused in the hand-to-hand fighting which followed and was attended with very serious casualties, especially among the officers. The story has to be pieced together from the numerous messages that passed between Colonel Stewart and his officers in the line in the next few hours, and, while the general results are clear, the details can only be offered with some reserve, the messages being in some cases contradictory, in others not “timed.”

Faction Trench and the general line of the first objective were quickly reached, but by 11.30 A.M. Major Macpherson on the right realized that there was trouble ahead. He reported: “Strong machine-gun and rifle fire from spur about Fuel Trench. Enemy reinforcing down slope from

Quarry Wood. Progress very slow. In my opinion Fuel Trench should be attacked from right flank after a barrage." This was Macpherson's only message; the Regiment lost one more company commander of ripe experience and a most gallant fighting officer when he was hit by a shell and killed in Faction Trench half an hour later. At 11.30 casualties had been "not very heavy." At 12.15 P.M. Lieutenant C. F. H. Biddulph, who took over the command on this flank, reported that they were "severe." Fuel Trench had been occupied:—"Advance going all right on right. We are moving ahead." But the R.C.R. were having great difficulty on the high ground, and the 2nd Division astride the Cambrai road had not yet come up.

While No. 1 Company was losing officers and men under machine-gun fire from the heights, No. 2 Company had come under equally heavy fire from the low ground on the left. Here the main advance had considerably outrun its protective flank, for the two companies of the 49th Battalion had not yet reached the western of the two roads from Pelves to Monchy. The whole of Faction Trench was enfiladed from the ruins of Pelves village, which was a hive of machine guns. A battery of two guns was firing point-blank from the outskirts of the village, the gunners running from piece to piece in full view of No. 2 Company. Captain Ten Broeke fought his command forward with great skill. At 12 noon, Captain White of the support company (by this time part and parcel of the firing line) reported that No. 2 was progressing fairly well, had crossed the sunken Pelves—Monchy road, and was pushing on towards Cartridge and Stokes Trenches. In view of the "very stiff opposition—several machine guns"

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both from the left flank and from the Bois-des-Aubérines on the spur at the right of No. 1 Company, Captain White called upon two tanks that were supporting the Patricias to go forward and deal with the machine-gun nests. The two tanks had been allotted to the Regiment to provide for just such a contingency, and might indeed have proved invaluable at this moment in leading a dashing infantry advance and smothering the enfilade fire which was taking the sting out of the 7th Brigade's blow. But the Patricias had no luck where tanks were concerned: both were hit and put out of action before they reached the line held by the infantry, one of them astride a captured trench.¹ This was a serious misfortune. The companies were now under a double enfilade fire, and both their flanks were in the air. "This check," reported Colonel Stewart, "occurred at about 12 noon and we advanced no farther that day."

As an actual fact the Patricias did keep moving for about an hour more. Captain Ten Broeke brought the whole of No. 4 Company into Faction Trench and was promised artillery support on Jigsaw Wood. Informed that the two companies of the 49th Battalion and the two tanks were on their way up, he tried to press on. But he was quite unprotected against the machine guns in Pelves and had already suffered heavily: "My left flank, if I continue to advance," he reported, "is right up in the air. Two batteries are also firing up the valley from the direction of Pelves and Jigsaw Wood. No signs of 49th and the two tanks." An encouraging reply came from Battalion

¹ Their crews jumped out, dismounted their machine guns, and "materially assisted" by using them during the rest of the action beside the P.P.C.L.I. in the trenches.

Headquarters: "The C.O. is much pleased with the way you are handling a very difficult situation. 49th are working up as fast as they can and we are getting all artillery we can on the wood." But the 49th could not "work up"; and No. 2 Company, which had by now lost most of its officers and N.C.O.'s, was so weakly placed that it awaited the expected counter-attacks from the concentration ground behind Jigsaw Wood with grave apprehension.

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On the right company's front the state of affairs was worse still. Vague news of heavy casualties among officers came through early, and Colonel Stewart instructed Captain White to go forward, gather information and take command. At 2.55 P.M. a report came from this officer that he had found "remnants of 1, 3 and 4 Companies on right, very confused." Major Macpherson and Lieutenants N. F. Gammell and Biddulph were dead, and the right of the line was being held together by the bravery and coolness of a platoon-sergeant. Incessant machine-gun fire from the low ground about Cartridge Trench and Stokes Trench was causing very heavy casualties indeed; and the Germans were also strong and active on the spur at the right. "To make any further determined advance new troops would be necessary. As long as Boche holds left flank we cannot make very big headway." General Lipsett's later summary of operations bears out this report from Captain White: "The Germans were holding the trenches east of Monchy in strength, and the extension of our flank to the south made the advance [on the 7th Brigade front] difficult." There were, in fact, no "new troops" available. Two battalions of the 8th Brigade had moved across to watch the right flank. The 49th Battalion was

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holding the left flank and carrying rifle-ammunition and bombs to the Patricias. The 42nd Battalion was told to side-step 1000 yards, and at 4.30 P.M. delivered a bombing attack on the right of the Royal Canadian Regiment at Bois-du-Vert. The 9th Brigade was under orders to continue the advance south of Boiry when it could get into position. As the result of all these movements and developments, the Patricias, from noon of August 26, so far from having new troops to relieve them, were almost without reinforcements to call upon in case of counter-attack.

And the expected counter-attacks were not long delayed. Captain Ten Broeke reported that large parties of the enemy were entering the trenches on his left from Pelves village, and that he was "looking after his left flank." Captain White saw Germans "trickling up on our front," and formed a defensive flank to the north. The line on the right was rallied by Lance-Corporal A. J. Weir, who searched the shell-holes for men and organized them into small posts, with Lewis gun support wherever possible. Captain White reported that he was "pushing up any available men to hold the crest," and at one time understood (and reported) that an isolated party from No. 3 Company had reached it and was hanging on. But this rumour he had later to contradict; neither P.P.C.L.I. nor R.C.R. could reach the spur, and by 4.15 P.M. the line was reported as running along part of Friction and Faction Trenches to join the R.C.R. in "Cigar Copse," with posts forward in Stokes and Fuel Trenches. Captain White succeeded in establishing two posts in saps leading from the junction of Cartridge and Fuel Trenches to Keeling Copse, but the copse itself proved untenable, for the R.C.R.

were badly punished, had their right flank in the air and enjoyed no better luck with supporting tanks than their comrades on the left. The best Captain White could do was to leave parties under Lieutenant H. S. Partridge of No. 3 Company and Lieutenant D. H. Macartney (the only surviving officer of No. 1) "to hang on to the position in the saps and push out patrols and get on the crest again"; and to instruct Lance-Corporal Weir to hold on to Faction Trench and establish the line there towards the right. He reported to Colonel Stewart that No. 1 was apparently cut down to 25 rifles, and the reinforcements from No. 3 to 35; that he needed another defence line in rear—"nothing behind me but an odd detail or two"; and that no further advance was possible for lack of men.

This conclusion had already been reached at Headquarters, and Colonel Stewart sent up word that all troops were to hold on to Friction, Faction and Fuel Trenches as far south as Cigar Copse. The boundary on the left remained indefinite. It was understood at B.H.Q. that early in the afternoon the 49th Battalion had established a position on the left of No. 2 Company; but in fact the two companies of this battalion on the extreme left of the attack had not been able to make connection with Captain Ten Broeke. Herein lay the great danger and obstacle to the Patricias' advance. Colonel Stewart wrote, after the action :

Our left flank continued in the air during the whole of the day, and was subjected to heavy machine-gun fire. An interval of 1000 yards existed between the left flank and the river, and the enemy held a position to the immediate left and somewhat to the rear, directing not only machine-gun fire but also artillery fire from 5.9 guns

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in Pelves, which remained firing until our artillery came up to co-operate and neutralized their fire about 3 P.M.

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Throughout the afternoon and evening the whole Regiment was under violent fire and in a thoroughly unsound position. The German counter-bombardment, spasmodic in the morning, became systematic after the check at Faction Trench. Eight-inch and 5.9 projectiles were rained upon the village and neighbourhood of Monchy; Battalion Headquarters in Musket Trench was a very hot corner, and the Second in Command (Major G. C. McDonald, M.C.) was severely wounded. So heavy did the shelling become that early in the afternoon Colonel Stewart moved No. 3 Company out of the barrage zone into close support at "Devil's Trench," and under a very heavy fire a telephone line was run to Captain Edgar's headquarters by a signaller. The greater part of this company was soon absorbed into the thinning firing line, a platoon at a time. No. 4, the original support company, had long since been used up in reinforcing Nos. 1 and 2. Thus, some time before the main counter-attack came, the Regiment was awaiting it in practically a single line, without reserves.

The afternoon wore on, and by 5.30 P.M. both company commanders in the line had yet worse news for Colonel Stewart. No. 2 had lost fully one half of its riflemen, two officers, the company-sergeant-major and three platoon-sergeants. It still hung on to Friction and Stokes Trenches, but bullets were hitting the parados from the left rear, and it was also under fire from a dominating position in "Haversack Lane" 250 yards in front, where the enemy was strong and well supplied with machine guns. Captain White sent word from the right that Lieutenant Macartney was killed and Lieutenant

Partridge, the other officer in the Fuel Trench posts, wounded. He was expecting a counter-attack in force and reported a shortage of S.O.S. signals and ammunition.

The Germans counter-attacked all along the line between 6.35 and 7.30 P.M., waves of infantry debouching first from the Bois-du-Vert on the right and afterwards from Jigsaw Wood. They came in the full strength of two battalions, and had they got to grips it would have gone hard with the thin and exhausted line—flanks in air and entirely unprotected. Fortunately warning could be given to the Canadian gunners, whose liaison with the infantry was splendidly efficient all day, though the weather made contact aeroplane work almost impossible. The shells smashed down upon the German concentration, especially in front of the Patricias in Jigsaw Wood, and crumpled up the attack before it really got under way. Not a German reached the Canadian trenches, and there were no further counter-offensive operations until after dark. Early in the evening the 1/6th Gordon Highlanders, advancing north of the river, carried Mount Pleasant and entered Roeux; and, later, "B" Company of the 49th Battalion was able to push forward and form a defensive flank on the Patricias' rear across the western Monchy—Pelves road, about 1000 yards south-west of the latter village. Thus at nightfall on the first day P.P.C.L.I. and R.C.R. were in possession of a more or less continuous line down Friction, Faction and Fuel Trenches to the Monchy—Boiry road. The 42nd Battalion lay before Bois-du-Vert farther to the right. The enemy held Pelves, the northern end of Friction Trench, the whole of Grenade and Cartridge Trenches, Jigsaw Wood, Bois-du-Sart, Boiry and Bois-du-Vert.

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The Patricias fought continuously through the night to maintain the partial success of the day. During the hours of darkness "at least five unsuccessful bombing attacks in force" were launched against No. 2 Company. The dead tank stranded in the trenches at noon now came in very useful. As a weapon of offence mere scrap-iron, in defence it was an ideal bombers' block under the exigencies of the moment :

All these attacks were successfully repulsed with large casualties to the Boche, at one period only the tank being between the attacking party and our men, bombs being thrown over the tank. For a considerable part of the time the enemy's party occupied a position on the east side of the tank, while the left company held their position on the other side. On one occasion a party of the enemy were seen 300 yards in rear, firing on a stretcher-party. They were engaged by Lewis gun fire and retired, leaving one prisoner in our hands.

Aug. 27. Towards morning the situation became "quiet except for enemy bombing parties coming up Stokes Trench, machine-gun fire active." The word "quiet" seems to have been used in a comparative sense.

The Patricias' right was less troubled by the night firing, and its listening and machine-gun posts were adequate protection against surprise. But on this flank—as Lieutenant C. A. Grant, sent up from the rear, reported early in the night—the men, and especially the N.C.O.'s, were "absolutely played out." Yet reorganization had to go forward on the spot, as gaps required filling, though there were few officers or N.C.O.'s to take it in hand. Efforts were made to clear the wounded, but there were not enough stretchers to take care of the many serious cases. Before morning Captain White had

brought some kind of order to the right half-battalion (or rather to the right half of the front, since there were by now in Fuel and Faction Trenches elements of all the four companies). Lieutenant Grant was given charge of the two very weak platoons now left out of No. 1, with the Company-Sergeant-Major as his second in command and the two surviving sergeants as platoon commanders. To this rather pitiful little force was assigned the difficult ground on the extreme right. A platoon and a half from No. 3 held the centre, with part of No. 4 on their left. Captain White estimated the rifle strength on the right half-battalion front at 140 rifles. On the left, Captain Ten Broeke had some 80 men of Nos. 2, 3 and 4 Companies left under his command in Friction, Stokes and Faction Trenches. The effective strength of the Regiment was thus below 300, nearly all in the line, with the Headquarters' details a few hundred yards to the rear.

On the night of August 26/27 General Currie, in congratulating the 2nd and 3rd Divisions on the first day's progress, sent this message: "It has paved the way for greater success to-morrow. Keep constantly in mind Stonewall Jackson's motto 'Press Forward.'" But chafe as he might at the situation, Colonel Stewart was unable throughout August 27 to attempt any open fighting. The main attack of the 3rd Division was launched some distance to his right by the 9th Brigade, reinforced by the 42nd Battalion and one battalion of the Mounted Rifles. The final objectives — Boiry-Notre-Dame and "Artillery Hill" — were not reached, but very considerable headway was made on what had now become the centre of General Lipsett's front. The Bois-du-Vert was carried before

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dawn, and by 7.15 A.M. Captain White reported that the 58th Battalion was clear of the Bois-du-Sart. At this point the advance was stopped by the defences of the powerful Fresnes—Rouvroy Switch. During the day the divisional line was linked up through the north of the Bois-du-Sart to “Trunk” Trench and Keeling Copse by a company of the 49th Battalion breaking abruptly back to the P.P.C.L.I. position in the old German trench system.

Important as this penetration of the enemy's line at the centre was to prove next day, it brought little or no relief to the Patricias on August 27. During the early morning in particular, the untoward conditions of the 26th still ruled on the left front. The German machine guns were continually enfilading No. 2 Company. This company had fought without intermission all the night long and was much exhausted, but kept going under the gallant example of Captain Ten Broeke and his few remaining N.C.O.'s, who were tireless in seeing to the distribution of rations, water and ammunition. But the flank was still unprotected, and must remain so until the enemy was squeezed out of Pelves, since that position commanded the ground over which the Patricias must move in any attempt to reach Jigsaw Wood. From the right Captain White reported: “The situation is far from satisfactory. . . . We are being subjected to sniping and machine-gun fire from our left front. This is preventing any movement in the open. The enemy is searching round with 5·9's. Any advance by us would mean heavy casualties.”

The 7th Brigade was not in fact cast for such a part in the plans for this day. Yet any assault upon the Boiry defences must be accompanied by an

advance through the woods and copses to the north. After the capture of the Bois-du-Sart, therefore, the Higher Command turned its attention to the situation at Pelves. At about 2 P.M. Colonel Stewart received instructions to try to bomb his way into the village by attacking northwards from Faction Trench up Friction Trench and along Cartridge Trench up Grenade Trench. It was believed that the Germans intended, if they had not actually begun, the evacuation of Pelves; and the development of the Patricias' attack would depend upon the resistance encountered.

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The organization of this attack was entrusted to Captain Ten Broeke, who decided to send out two parties of fourteen men each. One, from No. 4 Company, under Lieutenant M. J. Robb, was to fight its way along Friction Trench; the other, from Nos. 1 and 3, under Lieutenants H. B. J. Ogilvie and R. G. Barclay, was to move in parallel along Cartridge and Grenade Trenches. Starting at about 6 P.M., Lieutenant Robb's party made 200 yards to the north before meeting any opposition, and for some further distance encountered few Germans. But as they progressed up Friction Trench towards the village, opposition became very decided, and "many lively bombing encounters ensued in which severe casualties were inflicted on the enemy." Fighting all the way, the P.P.C.L.I. bombers cleared nearly 1000 yards of trench; but it became apparent that although Pelves was only a few hundred yards away, the party could not hope to reach the village, much less to clear it. There was no sign of evacuation; the attackers were greatly outnumbered; their bombs began to run short; and they were raked by machine-gun fire from the left and front. Heavy protective fire by

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Lewis guns failed to hold back parties of the enemy who began to enter the trenches in their rear, and Lieutenant Robb had to withdraw to avoid being taken in a trap. He faced about with some of his bombers to deal with the threat from his rear, and under cover of his Lewis guns, one of which he supported on his shoulder until the man operating it was killed, brought his party back into safety with very few casualties, though the enemy followed on his heels throughout the withdrawal. The other party, led by Lieutenant Ogilvie (who insisted on remaining with his command although wounded), moved up Cartridge Trench and overcame an equally stiff resistance, though falling a little short of Lieutenant Robb. Conforming to the retirement of the left party, it now fell back down Cartridge Trench. Here also the Germans followed up, but they were stopped by a line of snipers posted to enfilade the trenches along which the enemy had to move. Other snipers were placed to cut off any Germans who might try to retreat overland, and so many targets presented themselves that a Lewis gun was brought up from the main trench. Very great damage was inflicted upon the Germans in this way and also by the bombing parties.¹ As the total losses of the bombing parties in killed, missing and wounded were only 9, the operation might have been classed as a highly successful raid. It was not, however, as a raid that it had been designed. "The opposition," candidly reported Colonel Stewart, "was still strong, and this operation had not improved our position."

¹ The Germans were wearing packs and in full marching order, and it was at first thought that they had been caught at the moment of abandoning Friction Trench. But prisoners gave the information later that the P.P.C.L.I. attack had coincided with a machine-gun inter-company relief; this fact helps to account both for the resistance met with and the large number of casualties which the enemy suffered.

Preparations of broader scope were, however, going on during the day to release the Patricias and to carry them forward the next morning on the wave of a general attack in force against the Fresnes—Rouvroy Switch. The British heavy guns pounded Pelves all through the afternoon of the 27th; a battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders cleared Roeux and came up into line beyond the river; and the front between the Scarpe and the Cambrai road was wholly reorganized during the afternoon and evening—very necessary as a preliminary to further action on a grand scale, since battalions and even brigades of the 3rd Division were badly mixed up after the close fighting of the last two days. In the 7th Brigade only the Patricias remained in their positions of August 26. The 42nd Battalion came up on their right. The whole of the 49th Battalion was concentrated on the left with orders to capture Pelves and the high ground to the east. The Royal Canadian Regiment fell back into brigade reserve. The plan of attack for August 28 was to strike a blow of great weight at the Fresnes—Rouvroy Switch between the Sensée and the Scarpe. Almost every battalion of the 3rd Division was thrown into the assault: the 8th Brigade was to take Rémy and swing south across the Sensée; the 9th had as its objectives Boiry-Notre-Dame and Artillery Hill immediately north of it; the 7th was to essay once more its former task of carrying Pelves, crossing Jigsaw Valley, clearing Jigsaw Wood and the neighbouring copses, and forming a defensive left flank to the entire movement.

During the night of August 27/28 the bombardment of Pelves was renewed; and before dawn the Germans had evacuated the village, after a defence

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which had won them valuable days in which to recover from the loss of Monchy. At 2 A.M. the 49th moved forward on the extreme left and took the trenches south of the village. Captain Ten Broeke and Lieutenant S. Loptson, M.C., M.M., made a reconnaissance of Friction, Grenade, Cartridge and Stokes Trenches, found that the enemy had retired, and reported the fact to Battalion Headquarters; and by five o'clock the 49th Battalion had occupied Pelves itself. Two hours later this battalion had passed well beyond with orders to establish a line along "Hat" and "Kit" Trenches on the western slopes above Jigsaw Valley between the Hamblain road and "Artillery Lane." By 10.30 A.M. it had occupied and consolidated a position about Haversack Lane. The Patricias were then ordered to advance towards Jigsaw Wood, with the 49th conforming to their movements on the left. A sniping patrol under Lieutenant Loptson moved along Stokes Trench for 500 yards, and thence overland towards a strong-point in Haversack Lane which gave a good field of fire into Jigsaw Valley. There was an exciting race for the post between the P.P.C.L.I. scouts and a party of ten or twelve Germans who were making for the same position. Lieutenant Loptson's party won the race by 100 yards, broke up repeated attacks of the Germans, and after a very sharp little encounter drove them off with loss. A runner was sent back to Captain Ten Broeke and brought forward under heavy fire a Lewis gun party to occupy the post. When this was secured, a corporal went forward into enemy territory and sniped at the machine guns planted thick in the valley. The main body of the patrol now moved to "Tusk" Trench and along it to the edge of the valley at the

south, whence they saw and fired upon large numbers of the enemy, who retaliated with a light trench mortar and forced them to withdraw. They reported a massing of German troops in Jigsaw Valley; but the main body of the Patricias now came up in artillery formation and their Lewis guns united with the artillery in making Jigsaw Valley and Wood a death-trap for the Germans. Later in the day the Patricias found both valley and wood strewn with the enemy's dead and wounded.

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By 10.30 A.M. the Patricias were well clear of the German system of trenches and were moving forward again across Haversack Lane and Tusk and Trunk Trenches. At eleven o'clock came orders for the Patricias to assault and capture Jigsaw Wood, the 49th Battalion protecting the left flank, the 42nd Battalion attacking alongside on the right, with two companies of the Royal Canadian Regiment acting as close support in the centre.

This time the attack had complete success. By 11.15 A.M. a strong advance guard was already in occupation of the last of the trenches west of the valley. The left of the Patricias came under severe machine-gun and light trench-mortar fire on the high ground between Haversack and Artillery Lanes, but the companies (2 and 4) found cover in Artillery Lane, where a large number of prisoners were taken. The junction of Artillery Lane and Jigsaw Valley also came under heavy fire from light trench mortars, but the two companies passed safely through the danger zone by sectional rushes, deploying again in Jigsaw Valley before attacking the wood. Elsewhere the Regiment met with little serious opposition, and during the advance through the valley and wood added 175 prisoners to the

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100 captured on the first two days. By 1.20 P.M. the right company had entered Jigsaw Wood at the southern end and was in touch with the 42nd Battalion, which had come through Hatchet Wood. The two centre companies were then moving across the valley to the wood without much opposition, and No. 2 Company on the left was faring as well. Captain Ten Broeke made a daring reconnaissance and at 2.30 P.M. sent the following message to the Adjutant from his position ahead :

I have got through Jigsaw Wood except one little copse 50 yards in front of me. No opposition. I have a Lewis gun with me with 3 men and 2 other men only. My left is absolutely in the air as the 49th did not come up. I am on the extreme left of wood watching the flank. Went through wood and got in touch with MacPherson [*i.e.* Lieutenant R. S. MacPherson] and 42nd Battalion. MacPherson is rounding up all men in the wood and we intend going just through east end of wood and consolidating. Only one machine gun firing at us from the front and two from the left. Could go on if we had the men. Enemy just started shelling wood. Companies are all mixed up but I guess we can hold out. *s.a.a.* is *very short*. Do something about the left flank. Casualties few considering.

The wood was quickly captured and communication was established between companies and with B.H.Q.¹ Colonel Stewart arranged for a company of the Royal Canadian Regiment to fill the gap in the valley between the left flank of the Patricias

¹ Lamp signals were used throughout the rest of the action, except during a short period when the smoke was so thick as to obscure the flash. Then runners carried messages through under heavy fire. A signal station was maintained near the wood until after the relief next morning, the N.C.O. in charge (L/Cpl. L. F. Heise) and his assistant (Pte. J. W. Lynch) remaining all day and night in a very exposed position, often under intense fire, and the communications, especially important during the difficult relief, never once broke down.

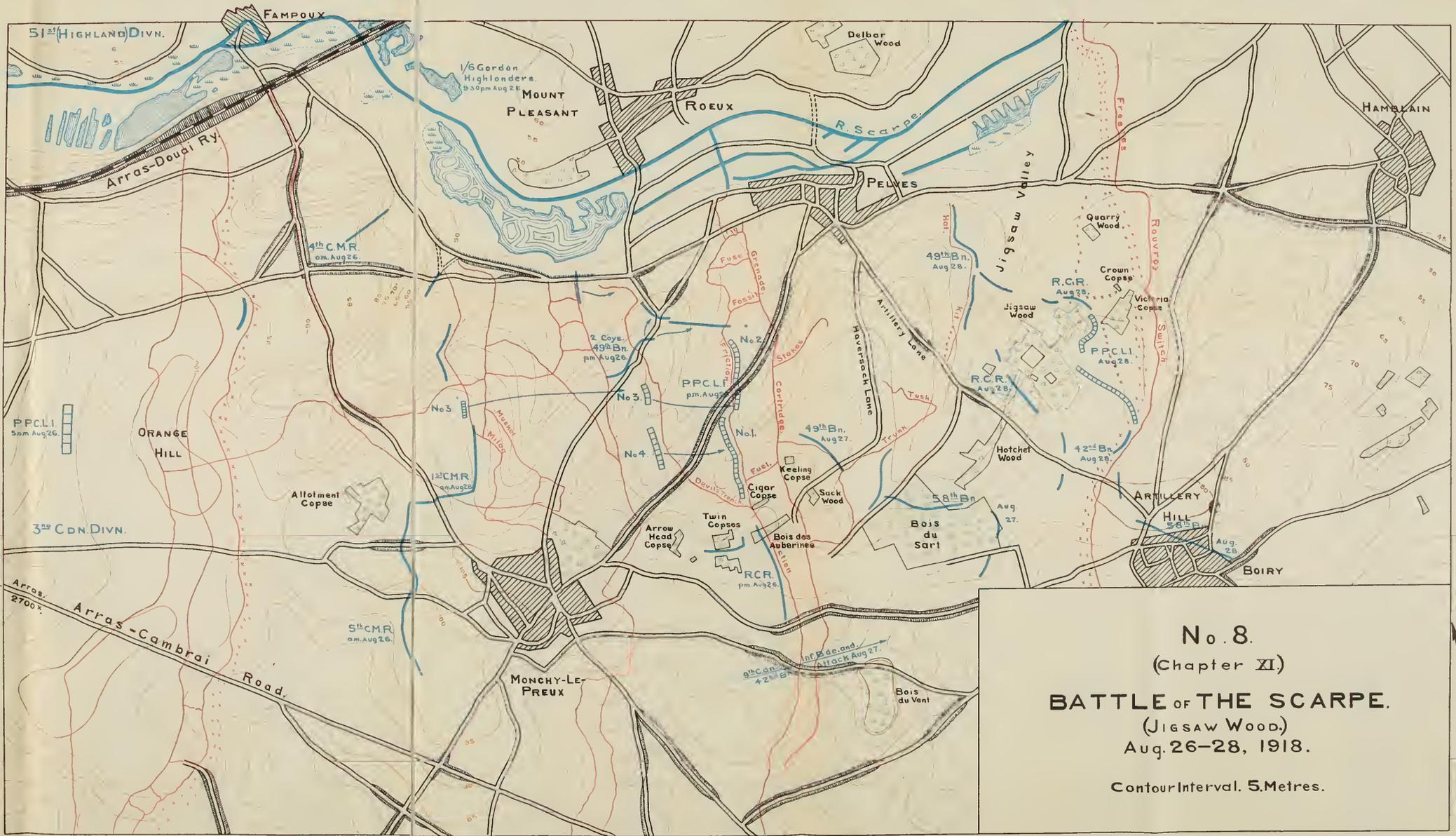
and the 49th Battalion, and for the first time in the action the flank was comfortably secure.

The Regiment still pushed onward. On the east side of the wood the right companies encountered five fences of wire about fifteen feet apart and were checked by machine-gun fire from a sap in this wire; but the obstruction was rushed under cover of the Lewis guns, a pill-box was occupied and a light gun there captured was turned upon the enemy. Once fairly through the main wood, the Patricias worked over somewhat to the left. The enemy were reported by No. 4 Company to be retiring, and good trenches which the Germans had just evacuated were at once seized. Progress was somewhat slower in other parts of the line, but there was nothing more difficult to deal with than the keeping of touch in the wood. The enemy had withdrawn 1000 yards and more beyond the edge of the woodland and the Patricias were soon seen "filtering forward to Victoria Copse," clear of Jigsaw Wood. For a short time the infantry outran the artillery, and with British shells falling unpleasantly short the forward troops were withdrawn a short distance and disposed in shell-holes on the eastern and northern outskirts of Jigsaw Wood. The final objective laid down for August 26 was thus at last in the Regiment's grasp. The right company consolidated a position about 400 yards beyond the wood and connected with the 42nd Battalion at the entrance of the German trench system on the slope of Artillery Hill; the left company bent back round the north-eastern and northern corners of the wood over against Victoria Copse; and the defensive flank between the wood and the Houblain road was completed somewhat later, as already

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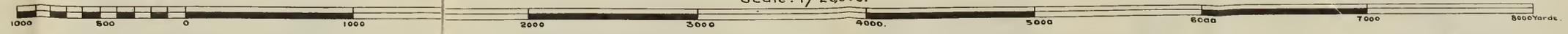
noticed, by two platoons of the R.C.R. at the north of the wood and the 49th Battalion in Jigsaw Valley and Hat Trench. The Patricias alone had taken 175 prisoners, 2 medium trench mortars, 4 light trench mortars and very many machine guns. Their losses during this advance were strikingly moderate.

General Lipsett's bold tactics were equally successful all along the line, for the advance of the 7th Brigade was really but the finishing touch to a very big day's work. All the artillery had first supported the 9th Brigade, which had stormed the German defence line farther south in the very early morning, taken Boiry, and then turned Artillery Hill from the right. Next the guns turned attention to the right flank, where the 8th Brigade pierced the Switch line at Rémy. And finally they concentrated on Jigsaw Wood for the benefit of the 7th Brigade. During the afternoon the German guns retaliated with an intense bombardment of the 7th Brigade's new positions, high-explosive shells uprooting the trees in the wood and filling the valley with gas and smoke. By evening the Patricias were thoroughly exhausted; after continuous desperate fighting for sixty hours, officers and men alike had reached the end of their tether. This was fully recognized by the Higher Command and a general relief was ordered at 4.30 P.M. At dusk word reached the companies in the line that they might expect relief before morning. After dark the shelling died down and the night was quiet, which was fortunate, for the relief was peculiar and troublesome. There was no infantry to replace the companies in the line, the relieving troops being the motor machine-gun batteries, trench-mortar batteries and cyclists of



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 Contour Interval. 5. Metres.

Scale. 1/20000.



the Canadian Composite Brigade. This enhanced the confusion of a manœuvre inevitably difficult after general action, and it was not until nearly 9 A.M. on the 29th that the last of the machine-gun companies were in place and B.H.Q. could flash the appropriate code-word "Jake" to the signal station in the wood. Each company of the Patricias moved out of the line independently on receiving this release; the last of them did not reach Arras until almost noonday; and the battalion diary admits: "every one very exhausted." The shambles of Arras, where the Regiment spent the usual days of reorganization, was an unhappy billet for weary troops. The officers dwelt in the cellars of the ruined Hôtel de Ville, the men among the debris of the neighbouring houses. There was a great deal of rain at the end of the month, the billets were insanitary and comfortless, and Arras was often shelled. Here, however, the Patricias had to remain and make the best of it until they moved forward on September 4 towards the Drocourt—Quéant line.

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The blow struck in this engagement on the banks of the Scarpe was exceedingly severe. The position had been desperately defended, and the enemy's losses were proportionately heavy. In three days the 3rd Canadian Division engaged and almost annihilated two complete German divisions (the 214th and 35th) and part of a third (the 26th Reserve). The Patricias alone took prisoners from six different regiments, and their capture of unwounded prisoners greatly exceeded their own casualties. The thirty odd machine guns and trench mortars which they turned in after the action represented only a small part of the real

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capture of *matériel*, for an uncounted number of machine and other light guns were taken in Jigsaw Wood and Valley and left for relieving and salvage troops.

The cost of the Regiment's achievement was slightly less than 200 casualties among all ranks, but once again the loss in officers was disproportionately high.¹ Five officers were killed outright—Major J. R. Macpherson, D.S.O., and his three subalterns in No. 1 Company (Lieutenants C. F. H. Biddulph, D. H. Macartney and N. F. Gammell) and Lieutenant I. L. McKinnon, who had been especially useful during the first attack in keeping touch between his Company (No. 2) and the main body on the right. Lieutenant M. MacKay, also wounded on the 26th, died of his injuries two days later, and Lieutenant C. A. Grant, wounded in the final advance, lived but five days. Eight officers were wounded—Major G. C. McDonald (who was only able to rejoin after the Armistice) and Lieutenants B. M. Benson and C. F. Lalor of No. 2, Lieutenant R. G. Barclay of No. 4, and all four subalterns of No. 3 (Lieutenants H. S. Partridge, R. L. Daniel, J. C. Fuller and H. B. J. Ogilvie). Of the N.C.O.'s and men, 47 were returned as killed, or missing believed killed, and 135 as wounded. No. 1 Company, as might be inferred from the narrative, had to be reconstructed from top to bottom after the action. But No. 2 and No. 3 as well lost almost all their officers, and in the final advance to Jigsaw Wood Captain Ten Broeke had only two N.C.O.'s under him.

¹ The Regiment went into action with 24 officers and 582 other ranks: the casualties among officers and other ranks respectively were just over 60 per cent and just over 30 per cent.

The spirit and tenacity of the Patricias in the battle of the Scarpe testify to the way in which the morale of the Regiment was sustained to the very end of the war. Many individual acts of bravery and enterprise were reported, and a large number of decorations were awarded. A quotation from General Lipsett's report of operations—the last he was to frame—may well serve as epilogue and appreciation. After specially referring to the “commendable enterprise and initiative on the 26th and 27th shown by the P.P.C.L.I.” he wrote of his whole command :

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Every battalion in the division was engaged on August 28. I know no finer example of what can be done by courageous and determined men than this attack. All the battalions had been heavily engaged and had done a great deal of marching ; some had been engaged with very little sleep since 3 A.M. on the 26th ; and still all responded to the call for a final effort and captured and cleared up a strong German system on a front of 4000 yards, and cleared the flank to the north on a front of 2000 yards.

Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter :

Bar to the Military Cross : Capts. M. Ten Broeke, M.C., and A. C. White, M.C.

The Military Cross : Lieuts. A. J. Kelly, H. J. B. Ogilvie and M. J. Robb.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal : Sgts. G. M. McKiel, M.M., and M. D. Schell.

The Military Medal : Sgts. W. C. R. Bradford, D. McMillan, G. Morrison and R. C. E. Robinson ; Cpls. F. M. Fisher, J. F. T. Kelly and F. E. Woodard ; L/Cpls. L. F. Heise, E. A. Summers, C. E. Thompson and A. J. Weir ; Ptes. F. Bunting, J. J. Burns, V. F. Gianelli, J. W. Lynch, S. L. Norrish, C. E. Phillips, T. B. Rankin, F. L. Williams and W. G. Wood.

CHAPTER XII

TILLOY

(THE BATTLE OF THE CANAL DU NORD)

September 1918

Map No. 9, unfolding opposite p. 380

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THE Battle of the Scarpe started the First Army well on the road to Cambrai. Four days after the relief of the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions in the Fresnes—Rouvroy line, and in direct sequel to the operations described in the last chapter, the 1st and 4th Canadian Divisions stormed and broke the Drocourt—Quéant line. September 2 is one of the red-letter days in the history of the British Army on the western front. No other single day's fighting had more far-reaching results. It turned from the north the defensive system upon which the German occupation of France rested; Douai and Cambrai, and with them the whole of the enemy's lateral communications, were threatened; and the German armies were forced to fall back over a wide front upon their last great fortified positions along the general line of the St. Quentin, Scheldt and Nord Canals.

The British, following up, came first to the Canal du Nord trench system guarding Cambrai. The Canal had been under construction when the war broke out, but parts of it were still watered.



Photo: Lizzie Caswell Smith, The Gainsborough Studio

LIEUT.-COLONEL C. J. T. STEWART, D.S.O.

KILLED IN ACTION DURING THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI,
SEPTEMBER 28, 1918.

It was very powerfully fortified, and a new attack had to be prepared. Battle Orders were received by the Canadian Corps on September 14, but it was some days before the Third Army, delayed by a spell of boisterous weather, could traverse the area vacated by the enemy after his forced abandonment of the Drocourt—Quéant line. On September 27 the Commander-in-Chief engaged the Germans along the whole of their great line of defences in “the Battle of Cambrai and the Hindenburg Line,” which raged without pause until October 5, and on part of the front until October 8. Both sides fought desperately: the one to force, the other to avoid, a decision before another winter’s stalemate. The Canadian Corps, the Patricias with the rest, found Cambrai itself a hard nut to crack. There were checks in many places, heavy losses everywhere. But at last the line yielded:

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The great and critical assaults in which during these nine days of battle the First, Third and Fourth Armies stormed the line of the Canal du Nord and broke through the Hindenburg line mark the close of the first phase of the British offensive. The enemy’s defence on the last and strongest of his prepared positions had been shattered. The whole of the main Hindenburg defences had passed into our possession, and a wide gap had been driven through such rear systems as had existed behind them. The effect of the victory upon the subsequent course of the campaign was decisive.¹

This chapter deals with the contribution of the Patricias on a tiny part of the tremendous battle-line towards the crowning victory of the war.

The reorganization and refitting of an infantry battalion after action was in 1918 no longer an affair

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¹ C.-in-C.’s Despatch, December 21, 1918.

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of weeks. The Patricias, after three days of wretched billets in the cellars of Arras, moved back to Haute-Avesnes on the Aubigny road on September 1; but the next day found them once again at the old British front east of Arras. The weather was wet and cold, and they lived under every condition of discomfort: "The stink is something awful," wrote Colonel Stewart to a fellow-officer in hospital. On September 4 the whole division moved forward to relieve the 4th Canadian Division in the line so brilliantly captured on September 2. The Patricias bivouacked in the open near Vis-en-Artois, and next day moved into the Drocourt—Quéant switch-line at a point just south of the Cambrai road between Dury and Villers-lez-Gagnicourt. Here the Regiment camped in brigade reserve for the next fortnight, "carrying out such training as was possible," which was not much. The Canadians had a narrow and difficult front, with a long exposed flank through the Sensée marshes, and were constantly harassed by the German guns. The 49th Battalion, in the forward position, held a series of posts overlooked by the very strong defences of the Canal du Nord, and they, as well as the R.C.R. and 42nd and 116th Battalions, and subsequently the 8th Brigade, suffered a good deal; but the Patricias were fortunate enough to escape serious losses from intermittent shelling of the back areas and aeroplane bombing by night, or in the many working-parties that they sent up during these two weeks. The weather was very bad; rain fell almost every day, and there were several violent thunderstorms. Everything, in short, was unpropitious for absorbing and training new drafts. However, the Regiment quickly got into shape again, and incidentally earned a new

Brigadier's commendation for conscientious salvage work in the switch-line during this period of rather trying inaction.¹

On September 19 the 56th (London) Division relieved the 3rd Canadian Division, and the Patricias marched back to Vis-en-Artois and Croisilles, took train to Dainville, and went into rest-billets at the Bernaville huts south-west of Arras. Here they remained until the eve of the Cambrai action, not far enough back, however, to escape the attentions of the German bombing aeroplanes, for on the 24th a daylight raider scored a direct hit, killing three men and wounding two others. A week of unsettled weather passed without other incident. The plans for the new offensive were outlined and discussed by the Brigadier and battalion commanders, and on September 26 the 7th Brigade received orders to move forward to Bullecourt and to hold themselves ready to follow up the 4th Canadian Division's attack on the Canal du Nord with which, on the next day, the great battle was to open.

Those familiar with the strategy of the Hundred Days will remember that perhaps the heaviest part of the blow against the Hindenburg line was delivered against the defences of the St. Quentin Canal on the Fourth Army front by British, Australian and American troops. But the battle opened farther north. The Third and First Armies had

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¹ A number of changes of personnel which affected the Regiment now took place. Major M. Ten Broeke, M.C., became Colonel Stewart's Second in Command *vice* Major McDonald. Brigadier-General H. M. Dyer was succeeded by Brigadier-General J. A. Clark, D.S.O. To the deep regret of officers and men alike, General Lipsett was transferred from the command of the Division he had led with such conspicuous success since June 1916 to that of a British division. He was succeeded by Major-General F. O. W. Loomis, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., who had long commanded the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade.

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to take the strong positions which covered the approaches to Cambrai between the Nord and Scheldt Canals before the Fourth Army could attack with reasonable expectation of success. The assault of the Third Army was directed eastward against the line of the St. Quentin and Scheldt Canals and the defences of Marcoing across the Canal du Nord. The specific task of the First Army (and especially of the Canadians, the only entire Corps which General Horne employed at this stage) was to protect the left flank, first of the Third Army advance and afterwards of the general assault on the Hindenburg line. The direction of the Canadian attack was therefore well north of east, paralleling the Bapaume—Cambrai road and crossing the Arras—Cambrai road from south-west to north-east.

The Canadians were really assigned two objectives in the action, which, in so far as their corps was concerned, fell into two distinct engagements of very unequal length and difficulty. In the early morning of September 27 the 1st and 4th Divisions were to cross the Canal du Nord, storm the system of trenches based upon it, occupy the high ground beyond, and clear Boursin Wood, of tragic memory in the 1917 campaign. Then they were to swing north-east to make room for the 3rd Division to come up on their right. On the second day, all three divisions were to advance upon a second and ultimate objective, the line of bridges over the Scheldt Canal north and east of Cambrai, and the high ground overlooking that canal on the right front and the valley of the River Sensée on the left. Thus the Canadian attack was to begin with an advance due east towards the angle formed at the entrance to Cambrai by the junction of the roads

from Arras and Bapaume, and then, with the advent of the 3rd Division on the second day, was to turn sharply north-east along the high ground north of Cambrai, while the Third Army beyond the Bapaume road cut the city off upon the other flank by crossing the Scheldt Canal to the high ground at the south. The first movement—making this arbitrary division of a single plan for the sake of clearness—took a matter of hours ; the second involved a week of fighting as bitter as any in the course of the campaign.

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The ground over which the 3rd Division fought during the second phase of the attack is easily described. Bourlon Wood lies high above the Canal du Nord. East and north-east of the wood the terrain is “ a series of crests and draws ” until you reach the steady descent into the Scheldt Canal and the northern environs of Cambrai. The principal crest of this undulating country runs in a general way through the villages of Fontaine-Notre - Dame (on the Bapaume road), Raillencourt (on the Arras road) and Haynecourt. Along this hill line ran the strongly fortified Marcoing line, but east of that the maps disclosed no prepared positions. The rolling country dips towards Cambrai and is under full observation from church spires and high buildings in the city and its north-western suburbs of St. Olle and Neuville - St. - Rémy. In the lower ground the high road from Cambrai to Douai crosses the front in a north-westerly course, while the broad-gauge Cambrai—Douai railway bends sharply west after traversing the canal, and then turns north in a sweeping curve through a series of short cuttings past Sancourt into the valley of the Sensée. To the east of the railway and due north of Cambrai, at the junction of roads from

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Sancourt and Blécourt, lies Tilloy. This is little more than a hamlet, and consists of small groups of buildings about the meeting-places of several converging roads, with a good-sized farm just north of the principal junction. The situation of Tilloy is important. It lies on ground that rises sharply from the valley of the Scheldt Canal to a commanding spur running north-eastwards from the forking roads at the northernmost point of the village. The reader who consults the map will note that this spur, which we may call "Tilloy Hill," dominates the surrounding country in all directions:—the Cambrai—Douai road and railway, the villages of Tilloy and Blécourt, and, above all, the whole line of the Scheldt Canal from Cambrai to Ramillies with the chief bridge-head east of Tilloy, the Pont d'Aire. The Marcoing line once passed, Tilloy Hill became the one capture tactically essential to the advance of the 3rd Division.

Sept. 27.

Generally speaking, the Patricias had no particular occasion to quarrel with the fortunes of war, but in this last great engagement their luck was out. Before ever the action began, the 7th Brigade, through no fault of its own, was in difficulties. Its orders were to move to its assembly area near Bullecourt on the afternoon of September 26 by train. At the eleventh hour an engine ran off the track and completely dislocated the railway traffic. Buses were hastily procured, and the R.C.R. and P.P.C.L.I. (the two battalions which were to lead the attack) were crowded into sixty of these and began their journey at 9.30 P.M. The night was very dark and rainy, roads were blocked with traffic, the destination was slightly changed *en route*, and many of the buses lost their way. It was

7 A.M. on the 27th before the Brigade was assembled and breakfasting at Bullecourt, and the 4th Division's advance was by that time in full swing. The troops who were to follow up, pass through and go forward to a distant objective thus went into action after a tiring journey and lacking an all-important night's sleep. It may be mentioned in momentary anticipation that the handful of Patricias who made the final effort at Tilloy on September 30 had gone almost sleepless for a hundred hours.

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At 5.20 A.M. on September 27 the 1st and 4th Canadian Divisions stormed the Canal du Nord from Mœuvres half-way to the Arras—Cambrai road. The 4th Division cleared Bourlon Wood with a rush and both divisions began to swing northwards according to the plan. On the left, the 1st Division made remarkable progress and entered the Marcoing line beyond Haynecourt; in the centre, battalions of the 4th Division were brought to a standstill only a short distance west of this line and at night were lying astride the Arras—Cambrai road in front of Raillencourt and Sailly; but on the extreme right the same division was delayed by having its right flank exposed and by stubborn resistance in the village of Fontaine-Notre-Dame. The day's advance, taken as a whole, was not less strikingly successful than the combined effort of the same two divisions against the Drocourt—Quéant switch three weeks before.

Meanwhile the 3rd Division came up, ready to throw its weight into the attack. The crossing of the steep-banked Canal du Nord was difficult; and as the original front of the Canadian Corps assault was very narrow—only 2600 yards—the supporting division had been disposed in depth, with the

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7th Brigade leading and keeping touch with the 12th (4th Canadian Division) in front of it. The congestion of guns and troops at the canal crossings would be so great, especially in the event of the slightest check, that brigades followed far less closely on one another's heels than in the earlier engagements of the Hundred Days. No troops of the 3rd Division passed east of the Drocourt—Quéant line until the Canal du Nord was safely in the hands of the assaulting divisions. Even then the orders were for a very cautious advance; no battalion was to start crossing the canal until Bourlon Wood had fallen, or to advance beyond Quarry Wood (west of Bourlon Wood) until the Marcoing line was reached. The 7th Brigade, therefore, went forward during the morning by easy stages. It passed north of Quéant at about 8.30 A.M., and as news came back of continued successes it advanced to Inchy, and later crossed the Canal du Nord to Quarry Wood, where it remained during the remainder of the day's progress to the Marcoing line. At 6 P.M. the Brigade began to deploy north-east of Bourlon Wood and to make its way up in battle order to the front line. This was accomplished slowly—there was no reason for haste—and it was only at 3.30 A.M. on the 28th that the Patricias were reported assembled in rear of the 85th Battalion (12th Canadian Infantry Brigade) ready to support the Royal Canadian Regiment in an attack upon the Marcoing line between Raillencourt—Sailly and the road to Bapaume. The original intention of the Higher Command had been that 2000 yards of the 4th Division's front should be taken over by the 3rd Division before the second phase of the advance. But on the night of September 27/28 the right of the 4th Division was still

closely engaged in the struggle for Fontaine. The orders were therefore slightly modified: The 7th Brigade was now instructed to lie behind the line during the night and leap-frog through the 4th Division at dawn, while the 9th Brigade came up beside them to complete the capture of Fontaine.

The very ambitious task allotted to the 7th Brigade for September 28 must now be outlined. Passing through the 11th Brigade, with the rest of the 4th Division on its left, and the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade (in Fontaine) and the 57th (West Lancashire) Division on its right, the 7th Brigade was to force the Marcoing line from Sailly to the south in the angle of the Arras—Cambrai and Bapaume—Cambrai roads. This accomplished, the Brigade, moving always to the north-east, was to pass by the northern outskirts of Cambrai, cross the Douai road and railway, take Tilloy and Tilloy Hill and finally descend into the valley at Ramillies, capture the canal crossings, “and if possible secure the village of Ramillies and establish bridge-heads over the Scheldt Canal.” It is easy to see after the event that such a programme underrated both the opposition that the Germans would put up to save the bridge-heads, and the immense strength of their prepared positions on railway and hill. But the Higher Command, now definitely committed to a decisive action which should end the war, could not take the risk of letting the enemy get away by imposing narrow limits on the advance of assaulting troops. It is obvious that the reaching and capturing of positions three miles away is a wholly different affair from such “limited objective” operations as Vimy or Passchendaele; and that an attack upon unreconnoitred positions would invite

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local disaster if the enemy's morale should be underrated.

The attack was planned in two parts. At zero hour the R.C.R. were to assault and clear the Marcoing line defences, pass on across the Arras road towards a light railway which zigzagged east and west through the low ground, and establish a line along the Haynecourt—Cambrai road east of Sailly. The Patricias, and behind them the 49th Battalion, were to move forward in close support. When the Marcoing line was taken, the 49th was to come up on the right of the P.P.C.L.I. and take over a single-company frontage of about 400 yards. The two battalions were then to leap-frog through the R.C.R. at the light railway, take up the running in the afternoon across the Douai road, and make for Ramillies and the canal crossings. They were first to make good in conjunction the line of the broad-gauge railway west of Tilloy and north-east of Neuville-St.-Rémy. Thereafter, in the exploitation towards the final objective, the Patricias were to be responsible for the main thrust at Tilloy Hill while the 49th refused the right flank to the enemy in Cambrai and seized the bridge-heads to the south-east. The 42nd Battalion was held in brigade reserve.

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The first part of this plan was successfully carried out. The Royal Canadian Regiment jumped off at 6 A.M., the 43rd Battalion on their right having by then finally cleared the enemy from Fontaine. Aided by a very effective barrage the R.C.R. were in the front line of the Marcoing system by 7 A.M., and sent back a considerable number of prisoners. Even thus early, however, there were sure signs that the Germans would fight a desperate delaying action for Cambrai and the

canal bridge-heads. On the right the 52nd Battalion was held up on the ridge north of the Bapaume road, and on the left the speed of the R.C.R. slackened perceptibly as soon as they were fairly into the Marcoing line trenches. The front line was cleared by 9 A.M., but the support line held out, and for a time no progress was made on the left around Sailly, enfilade machine-gun fire from the St. Olle hill being very severe.

Under such circumstances, the Patricias were at once thrown into action. Nos. 1 (Captain E. MacG. MacBrayne, M.C.) and 4 (Captain F. L. Shouldice), which were following the left of the attack, came up to support the assault upon the second line. Two platoons of No. 1, which was leading, were diverted slightly to the right to stiffen the left centre of the R.C.R., and Captain MacBrayne, with the rest of this company and supports from No. 4, worked to the left and pushed through the southern part of Raillencourt and Sailly with the object of turning the German trenches south of the road. Finding that the R.C.R. had only a very small foothold in the second line, MacBrayne brought the rest of No. 4 Company into Raillencourt and tried to loosen the German grip by a flank attack down the trenches on his right. At first he was unsuccessful; artillery and machine-gun fire compelled him to report that with his present forces and supplies he could do no more than establish a line. Between eleven o'clock and noon, however, the Royal Canadian Regiment broke through on part of its front, and working forward on the right began to destroy the machine guns that had checked the advance. At the same time Nos. 1 and 4 Companies P.P.C.L.I., circling still farther to the left, cleared up the

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divisional boundary about Saily and made connection by means of a Vickers gun party with the 47th Battalion attacking north of the village. "The situation," according to the battalion report of operations, "offered no great difficulty, and was soon put right." The whole Marcoing line was mopped up, and early in the afternoon the Patricias had all companies assembled along the light railway. The 49th Battalion, after a sharp brush with a pocket of Germans still holding out in the trench system, came up into line, with their right flank resting on the outskirts of St. Olle. The two battalions then swung into position for the advance through Tilloy. Thus far the action had developed as favourably as could have been expected.

But already it was a black day for the Patricias. About 9.30 A.M., while coming up in the open a little south of Raillencourt, Colonel Stewart was hit by a German shell and instantly killed.

Around the very unusual personality of the Patricias' sixth commanding officer there has grown up something of a legend, not alone in his own Regiment but among a large number of the Canadians who served in France, for "Charlie Stewart" was one of the best known battalion officers in the Canadian Corps. The endless tales of his life as a rolling stone, as a Royal North-West Mounted Policeman, as a campaigner in France and Belgium, of whimsical dare-devilry in the four corners of the earth, may not all be true, but none of them are quite impossible. His military record is peculiarly the property of the Regiment he loved, that worshipped him; for he was the last Original officer with the Patricias when the Hundred Days began; and his actual service with the Regiment in the field was not less than thirty-two months, though a series of odd

chances—stock jests of the mess-table which he enjoyed to the full—lost him part in the major actions of 1915, 1916 and 1917, except the Battle of the Somme, where he won his first decoration. Devoted to Colonel Farquhar (whose example he never tired of quoting) and to the “Originals,” he quickly appreciated the qualities of the reinforcements from the Universities, and his services in bridging the gaps between the several generations of new troops and preserving continuity in the Regimental tradition cannot be estimated. Commanding throughout the battles of Amiens and the Scarpe with great distinction, he died, as he hoped to die, in the tumult and glory of battle, at the head of the Regiment whose honour and repute he guarded so jealously. His body lies in the Ontario Cemetery between Burlon Wood and the Canal du Nord. But if ever a soul marched on, the undaunted spirit of Charles Stewart led and inspired his men for the next three desperate days.

The loss of this gallant and experienced officer at such a time was a hard blow. Major Ten Broeke, M.C., had gone to England, only two days before, to take a commanding officers' course, and Captain G. W. Little, the next senior officer, was on his way back from an instructional appointment in England and had not yet reached the line. The command fell unexpectedly to Captain J. N. Edgar, who was leading forward Colonel Stewart's old company, No. 3, on the right. The morning's shelling put three other officers out of action: Lieutenant A. J. Knowling was killed, and Captain G. W. Guiou, M.C. (who was succeeded in command of No. 2 by Lieutenant A. N. B. Mortimer, M.C.) and Lieutenant A. P. Linnell were wounded.

The necessary rearrangements were made during

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the afternoon, and preparations for the assault upon the railway cutting and embankment were completed. In view of the stiffening resistance the Regiment's objective was now restricted to the line of this railway. The Higher Command indeed turned the afternoon attack into a new operation, covered by an artillery barrage directed in particular upon St. Olle on the right—the object of the 9th Brigade's assault. Zero hour was at first fixed for 3 P.M., but the artillery found difficulty in co-ordinating, and in supplying the field guns with ammunition. The assault was finally launched at 7 P.M.

There is little to say of the Regiment's first attack on the Douai road and railway except that it failed. The Divisional General's report, concerned with the achievements of the battle as a whole and emphasizing the partial revenge of September 30, leaves this abortive attempt to inference. But the failure is easily explained; the facts are set out in the battalion report, and the very bluntness of statement makes them more tragic, though assuredly not inglorious. The barrage seemed at first to be "most effective," but it was undoubtedly incomplete, for General Clark reports that "enemy bombing planes working very heavily and accurately are interfering with batteries firing my barrage." The Patricias attacked behind the barrage, with Nos. 2 and 3 Companies in the front line and 1 and 4 in support. At first all went well. The Regiment swept forward some 2000 yards north-eastwards up the track to the Douai road with such ease that the embankment objective seemed well within its powers. Numbers of prisoners were captured from the 207th and First Guards Reserve Divisions;

and there was every indication that the Patricias were "going strong." Then they ran into wire. Along the south-west side of the Douai road were stretched two belts of heavy uncut wire. These were not shown upon any map, and, personal reconnaissance being impossible, the obstacle was entirely unforeseen.¹

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The Patricias now learned the grim lesson, taught in blood to so many a fine battalion before, that infantry caught in wire are helpless against machine guns. Nos. 2, 3 and 4 Companies were raked by the guns which commanded them from the railway and Tilloy Hill and enfiladed them from the south. There was a single obvious gap in the wire and every one made a dash for it; but this proved to be a trap, for the German guns were trained upon the spot and mowed down the men as they tried to rush through.² Every desperate effort to find a way through failed, and the three companies, terribly mauled, were forced back some distance behind the road. No. 1 Company found another gap, rushed the road, and pushed on almost to the railway. There it was completely isolated, and Captain MacBrayne, as senior officer in the line of attack, gave the word to withdraw behind a large engineers' dump and saw-mill on the Douai road. At 10.35 P.M. this officer reported to Captain Edgar :

We are not in touch with the 49th and have just located

¹ Subsequent examination showed that the wire had been in position for a long time. The aeroplane photographs upon which the Intelligence Branch had in the main to rely probably failed to show it because it was overgrown with vegetation.

² Next day Capt. Little at this point found the bodies of Lieuts. G. Triggs, A. J. Robins, W. T. Ramsay and about 40 men in an area of 20 or 30 yards. Lieut. S. Loptson, M.C., M.M., a scout with a fine record as man and officer, died of the wounds he received at the wire; and Lieuts. M. J. Robb and E. C. Workman were among the many who were wounded there.

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the 44th [the 4th Division unit attacking on the left] about 600 yards on my left rear. Have sent out officer and one other rank to reconnoitre, and shall in all probability have to get in touch with 44th by retiring. Have no stretchers. Line I am holding at present merely dug in and not much of a defensive position. No. 1 Company alongside Douai—Cambrai road, which has several lines of wire and has trenches camouflaged and good fighting positions for the enemy.

Captain Edgar soon decided that the position of his companies was untenable; the 49th Battalion on the right had been held up in a like way and was not quite abreast of the Patricias; the 116th Battalion beyond were fighting hard in St. Olle; the 4th Division had come forward very little; his own command, terribly weakened by casualties, lay with both flanks exposed in a bad defensive position. It would mean pointless slaughter to remain at the road, and he therefore sent orders for the Patricias to conform to the rest of the line. In the very early morning all four companies fell back to positions slightly more than 1000 yards in front of the original jumping-off point, and later to the light railway behind. The losses among all ranks from machine guns at the wire and from gas shelling had cut the Regiment down to less than 300 rifles. To sum up: the Regiment had lost its Commanding Officer and nine others, with 60 per cent of its total rifle strength. And it was still very far from its objectives. Officers, N.C.O.'s, Lewis gunners and riflemen alike had behaved with the greatest gallantry from first to last, more than one man going back to the wire again and again for wounded comrades. But the German grip on Tilloy was unshaken and it has never been suggested that the first attack of the Regiment at Tilloy was anything other than a costly failure.

Throughout the next day the Patricias remained near the light railway reorganizing, but still under great strain. This was taken off for a short time by an attack upon the Tilloy position at 8 A.M. on the part of the 42nd and 49th Battalions. But September 29 was a day of small successes which did not bring the 3rd Division much nearer its goal. The 8th and 9th Brigades on the right cleared St. Olle. The 49th Battalion, attacking on the same front as before, reached the line of the Douai road by 11 A.M. but was prevented from crossing the road by very heavy machine-gun fire from the north-west of Cambrai. The 42nd Battalion had somewhat more success, though at tremendous cost. Some of the wire had been cut by a preliminary bombardment and the Royal Highlanders did get across the road on what had roughly been the P.P.C.L.I. front the night before, but again the German machine guns in the railway cutting took heavy toll. Advanced troops got a footing on the embankment in the afternoon, but the main body of the 42nd was, like the 49th, checked some distance short of the objective, and only about 200 yards beyond the point reached by the Patricias on the 28th. There was heavy fighting all through the afternoon and evening. The German was now putting up a very stout defence "with the machine guns of which he had an abnormal quantity." Some balance of success rested with the Canadians: the 4th Division reached the Douai road south-west of Sancourt, and by 7 P.M. all the 9th Brigade's objectives had been captured, St. Olle, Petit-Fontaine and the Marcoing Line as far south as the canal being in Canadian hands. A counter-attack upon the 7th Brigade was broken up by field guns, and the 42nd and 49th held their small

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gains. But even the railway still held out, and Tilloy, Tilloy Hill and the Pont d'Aire seemed almost as far away as they had been thirty-six hours before. A third attempt was therefore decided upon for the following day.

Again it was the turn of the Patricias. The Regiment had some respite during the 29th, for the artillery fire was not excessive, and the continuous machine-gun fire which harassed them from the buildings of St. Olle died down as the attacks of the 8th and 9th Brigades progressed. During the afternoon Captain G. W. Little came up and took over the command from Captain Edgar, who had conducted all the operations of the 28th very skilfully and with marked personal courage and endurance. Captain Little had gone into the whole situation with General Clark at Brigade Headquarters and brought with him orders for an attack upon Tilloy, to take place in the early morning of September 30.

The Tilloy position had proved so unhappily capable of defence that the whole plan of attack was recast. So elaborate were the battle orders and so intricate was the situation that the details can only be understood by those who were on the spot, and only a summary will be attempted here.¹

1. The Canadian line on the night of September 29/30 ran from the Sancourt—St. Olle road (4th Canadian Division) along the eastern side of the Douai road (42nd Battalion), and then along the western side of this road (49th Battalion) towards Neuville-St.-Rémy (8th Canadian Infantry Brigade).

¹ The direction from which the new effort should be launched was decided after consultation with the commanders in the line. Capt. Little consulted the Officer Commanding the R.C.R., and a frontal assault was rejected in favour of the one here outlined. Capt. Little had neither time to study the ground nor opportunity to consult his company commanders before writing his orders.

2. The Germans held the railway cutting between the Douai road and Tilloy, and Neuville-St.-Rémy. Behind this line they controlled the whole approach to Pont d'Aire and Ramillies from Tilloy Hill.

3. The 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade was assigned the main attack (with support from the 9th and 12th, on the right and left respectively) while the 8th kept in touch with the enemy in the outskirts of Cambrai. The three main points to be captured were the railway, Tilloy and Tilloy Hill.

4. The artillery was ordered to roll a barrage forward across the high ground on the left, and then to swing it sharply to the right down the hillside to the canal. The infantry, following behind, was to turn the position from the northern flank.

5. The Patricias were to lead off and capture the village of Tilloy and the western tongue of the spur beyond, establishing themselves along the main Blécourt—Cambrai road. Then they were to push patrols up the hill, while their main body advanced along the low ground to the Pont d'Aire. The Royal Canadian Regiment was to come forward on their left, protect them by taking Tilloy Hill, and then descend upon Ramillies to help seize the crossings of the Scheldt Canal. The 42nd and 49th Battalions were held in reserve.

6. The Patricias planned to carry the railway cutting and village by a flanking attack, so as to allow the Royal Canadian Regiment to pass east and north-east to the high ground, while they turned southwards into the valley. Such an attack could not be delivered through the positions held by the 42nd and 49th Battalions, and both P.P.C.L.I. and R.C.R. side-stepped to the left into the 4th Division's area, the Patricias forming up facing

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due east as close behind the Douai road as possible, with the R.C.R. beside and a little behind them.

By 3 A.M. on the 30th they were in position. The order of companies from right to left was 4, 1, 2, with 3 in close support to 1 and 2 on the left centre. Captain Little's orders were to cross the Douai road behind the rolling barrage in a north-easterly direction and seize the railway embankment. Then the outer flank was to swing, and Tilloy was to be approached by a movement east and south-east in the general direction of the Blécourt—Cambrai road. No. 4 (Captain Shouldice) was to turn sharply to the south-east, clear the eastern edge of the railway embankment at the curve south of Tilloy, and then work over the low ground in the southern part of the village with a view to consolidating the Blécourt road from the railway crossing to the centre of the village. No. 1 (Captain MacBrayne) in the centre, keeping touch with this movement on its right, was also to move south-eastwards, clear Tilloy Farm and the northern part of the village, and carry the line northwards at the Blécourt road as far as the forking roads just south of the spur. No. 2 (Lieutenant Mortimer), moving due east, was to occupy the line of the road across the spur. No. 3 (Captain Edgar) was to pass through No. 2 at the road and send patrols over Tilloy Hill. These various objectives were all more distant than those which had been allotted to the Patricias and afterwards to the 42nd Battalion on the 28th and 29th. With the enemy in strength at the railway and on the dominating hill, this attack would have severely tested a strong and fresh battalion. Yet the Patricias had to be called upon

to deliver it after three days of battle, with a rifle strength of very little more than a full-sized company.

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The assaulting companies jumped off at 6 A.M., and although at once met by heavy machine-gun fire from the many nests on Tilloy Hill which had escaped the barrage, they crossed the road and pierced the line of railway without serious check.¹ Retaliatory artillery fire was heavy from 6.5 to 6.15 A.M., but then died away. The German machine guns were the only real obstacle to the advance, and a corporal of No. 2 Company dashed ahead of the line and covered the advance on the embankment by capturing two of these, turning them on the enemy and so keeping down his enfilade fire. By 7.30 A.M. the Regiment was reported as being well into Tilloy. A company commander and two privates reached it in the first rush, and saw straggling groups of the enemy retreating from the village. The Patricias had already captured a battery of 77 mm. guns, 50 machine guns and a number of prisoners.

According to plan the two companies on the right swung sharply south after crossing the embankment. No. 4 reached its objective by a fine enveloping movement, though not without hard fighting. At 9.30 A.M. Captain Shouldice reported that he had secured the roads through the centre of Tilloy. A timely reinforcement of 75 men from the 49th Battalion enabled him to send out patrols and secure the Blécourt road northwards from the railway crossing. By this time few Germans were left in the village proper, but Shouldice and his men

¹ The short preliminary bombardment of the railway was tremendously effective, and Stokes guns dropped shells into the cuttings "with ghastly accuracy." Experienced officers said afterwards that they had never before seen so many dead or so much wreckage in a small space.

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were under heavy fire from machine guns in the buildings at the forks on his left. An hour later (10.30 A.M.) he reported the village clear except for a single machine-gun position. The Germans were now shelling the north side of the village and had blown up the railway bridges over the two roads to Neuville on his right, and although the 26th Division had reinforced the 207th their defence was generally dispirited. The P.P.C.L.I. objective line in the low ground was secured and held with no great trouble until the 9th Brigade passed through on the following morning.

On the left, however, the three weaker companies had far more bitter fighting and poorer success than No. 4 on the right. From the first the machine guns on Tilloy Hill commanded them. The left flank was completely exposed all day, the Germans had a fine field of observation and fire, and here their gunners fought steadily. As soon as the Patricias were clear of the embankment, the R.C.R. came up and attacked the high ground. At first their advance promised very well, as their forward troops soon reached the Chapel on the high ground south of Blécourt. But this was the extent of their success, and the gain could not be held. The 4th Division could not get forward far enough to protect the left flank against murderous machine-gun fire from Blécourt, with the result that the Chapel had to be abandoned, and the R.C.R. fell back to the eastern side of the Sancourt—Tilloy road. This check seriously affected the turning movement of the Patricias' left, now exposed to the full fury of the machine guns on the high ground. Captain Little's report, that "we had great difficulty in swinging our left flank into Tilloy—in fact we were unable to do so," is a laconic summary of a

period of furious and most courageous fighting. The German light artillery was firing over open sights, and Tilloy Farm lay in a little wood (not, as had been expected from Intelligence reports, among a few scattered trees) where the very thick undergrowth gave cover to many machine guns. The line swung back and forth. The three companies got safely as far as a track west of the farm, but, caught on both flanks by the machine guns at the Tilloy forks and on the hill to the north and north-east, were forced to withdraw to the railway. Once again, at a critical moment, tank support failed, the three tanks assigned to this part of the front all being put out of commission very early. This was disastrous—decisive perhaps, so far as ultimate objectives were concerned.¹ Officers not thoroughly versed in machine-gun tactics could not use the guns attached to the companies to their full advantage; and although the Lewis gunners fought hard and with great effect they were both outweighed and outnumbered by the many nests that were discharging belt after belt of cartridges into the unprotected infantry. The Patricias were soon reduced to numbers quite inadequate to force an advance against such opposition. A message from Captain Edgar to Captain Little is eloquent: "Mr. Heaslip [Lieutenant T. S. Heaslip of No. 2 Company] reported to me with 11 other ranks. Whether these are all the outstanding men or not I cannot say. *But I sincerely hope not.*" Most of the officers and almost all the N.C.O.'s were casualties, and the companies were "badly disorganized."

However, General Loomis had ordered General

¹ In Capt. Little's opinion: "the machine-gun nests which held up our left would undoubtedly have been effectively dealt with had the tanks remained in commission."

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Clark to hold his gains at all costs, and Captain Little sent Captain Edgar the following message :

It is absolutely essential that all troops that have got over the railway embankment to the western edge of Tilloy should be formed into strong patrols and sent round village on the west to gain a footing in the main Tilloy road, getting into touch on right with the 49th and working up road as far as possible towards Chapel. Do not attempt to work out on to higher ground. The road and road alone must be made good.

Captain Edgar, his junior officers, N.C.O.'s and men responded in this crisis of the action, and their effort to carry out these orders is worthy to rank with many feats of arms recounted in the earlier pages of this book. A little party of two officers, two N.C.O.'s and two private soldiers sallied forth and cleared a thousand yards of the embankment, turned captured machine guns on the Germans, made a number of them prisoners and forced the rest to retire. Captain Edgar rallied the rest of the men—there were perhaps not as many as 70 in all—reorganized under hot fire and led them forward once more : “ It was entirely due to his magnificent work,” says the citation for his Military Cross, “ that the village of Tilloy remained in our hands after a day of continuous sharp fighting.” For this final effort was rewarded with success. Gradually the men pushed through the farm and surrounding buildings until they connected with the 49th Battalion and formed a defensive arc round the north of the village, at last almost wholly invested except at the forking roads. This fine advance was made, it must be remembered, with the left flank entirely in the air and under tremendous fire from commanding positions on three sides.

Farther the exhausted Regiment could not go. Two attempts were made to get forward to the

road and the hill beyond, but in spite of assistance from the support company of the 49th the companies were now too weak to do more than protect their gains in the village. These were safely held against counter-attacks, thanks largely to the leadership of Lieutenant A. J. Kelly, M.C., the Regiment's Intelligence Officer, who after helping Captain Edgar to reorganize at the railway came forward with the final advance and superintended much of the defence. At 1.30 P.M. this officer reported the line as running from the position of No. 4 Company and the 49th Battalion reinforcements on the Blécourt road across to the centre of the village and thence in a sharp curve north of the farm to the railway. He added :

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There are no troops farther advanced than the railway cutting on our left. Battalion strength at present about 150 all told. Many of the men are mixed up with R.C.R. and other units. 49th have about 40 men and are on our right along road. It looks as if it would be impossible for us to do anything further than hold the village with nobody on either flank. Present intention to shove out outposts and hold the village.

This was done during the remaining hours of daylight. By 9.40 P.M., as Captain Edgar reported, "the remnants of the Battalion might be considered as a company, and holding a line of outposts through the village of Tilloy." The posts were strung along the Blécourt road for about 500 yards north from the railway and thence north-west and west so as to include Tilloy and the farm well within the line and offer a defensive flank against the high ground at the Chapel. This left flank was still in the air, but farther to the north the 42nd and R.C.R. made connection with the 4th Division along the Sancourt road. On the right

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the 8th Brigade was in touch with No. 4 Company near the railway line.

When it became possible to estimate the losses of the Regiment it was found that in spite of the violence of the fighting they were surprisingly smaller than those of the 28th. Lieutenant R. de L. Millyard (No. 2 Company) was missing, and his body was afterwards found near the railway embankment; whilst Lieutenant J. MacKay (No. 4) was mortally wounded. Captain MacBrayne and Lieutenants A. R. Jones and R. Paton were wounded; and there were about 70 casualties in the ranks, few of them fatal. As always, the casualties among the N.C.O.'s were very severe—one company had only a single N.C.O. of any rank at the end of the action. The total strength of the Regiment, including all Headquarters details, was less than 175.

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A tremendous ordeal was over. At 11 P.M. the 9th Brigade was ordered up to continue the attack from Tilloy village. In the very early morning the P.P.C.L.I. posts were drawn in, and at 5 A.M. the 43rd and 52nd Battalions passed through to a fresh attack upon the high ground and the canal valley. The high ground was captured, but the other battalions of the 9th Brigade, on going through, were stopped on the hill slope by withering fire and lost very heavily. It was indeed not until October 9 that Pont d'Aire fell, to troops of the 2nd Canadian Division. On that day also the 8th Brigade entered into the smoking ruins of Cambrai unresisted, and the Battle of the Hindenburg Line was won and lost. But long before that time the Patricias had been withdrawn. The morning of October 1 was spent in searching for the dead and wounded and in re-forming the

shattered companies. A few more casualties were suffered from the enemy's shelling; but at 2 P.M. the Regiment passed back one hundred and forty strong to the area west and north-west of Bourlon Wood, where it remained during the rest of the battle.

The total losses of the Patricias in the Battle of the Canal du Nord were the highest in a division which lost over 4000 men all told. Eight officers were dead, nine wounded.¹ Of the N.C.O.'s and men 38 were killed, 20 were missing, and 284 were wounded or gassed. This casualty list of 359 of all ranks was almost exactly as long as that of the Regiment at Passchendaele, but the proportion of killed and missing to wounded—20 per cent to 80 per cent—was notably smaller, and this leaves Tilloy a somewhat less bitter memory than might have been.

Regret for the dead Commanding Officer was naturally the saddest note in the messages that reached the Regiment in the next few days. Princess Patricia telegraphed :

I am more deeply grieved than I can say over Colonel Stewart's death during your magnificent fighting. My deepest sympathy is with the battalion in his loss and your other casualties. I am following your progress with keenest appreciation.

Among the sheaf of other messages was one from General Horne expressing his "sympathy with the Canadian Corps and especially with the officers, N.C.O.'s and men of the P.P.C.L.I. in the loss of

¹ Killed and died of wounds : Lt.-Col. C. J. T. Stewart ; Lieuts. A. J. Knowing, S. Loptson, J. MacKay, R. de L. Millyard, W. T. Ramsay, A. J. Robins and G. Triggs.

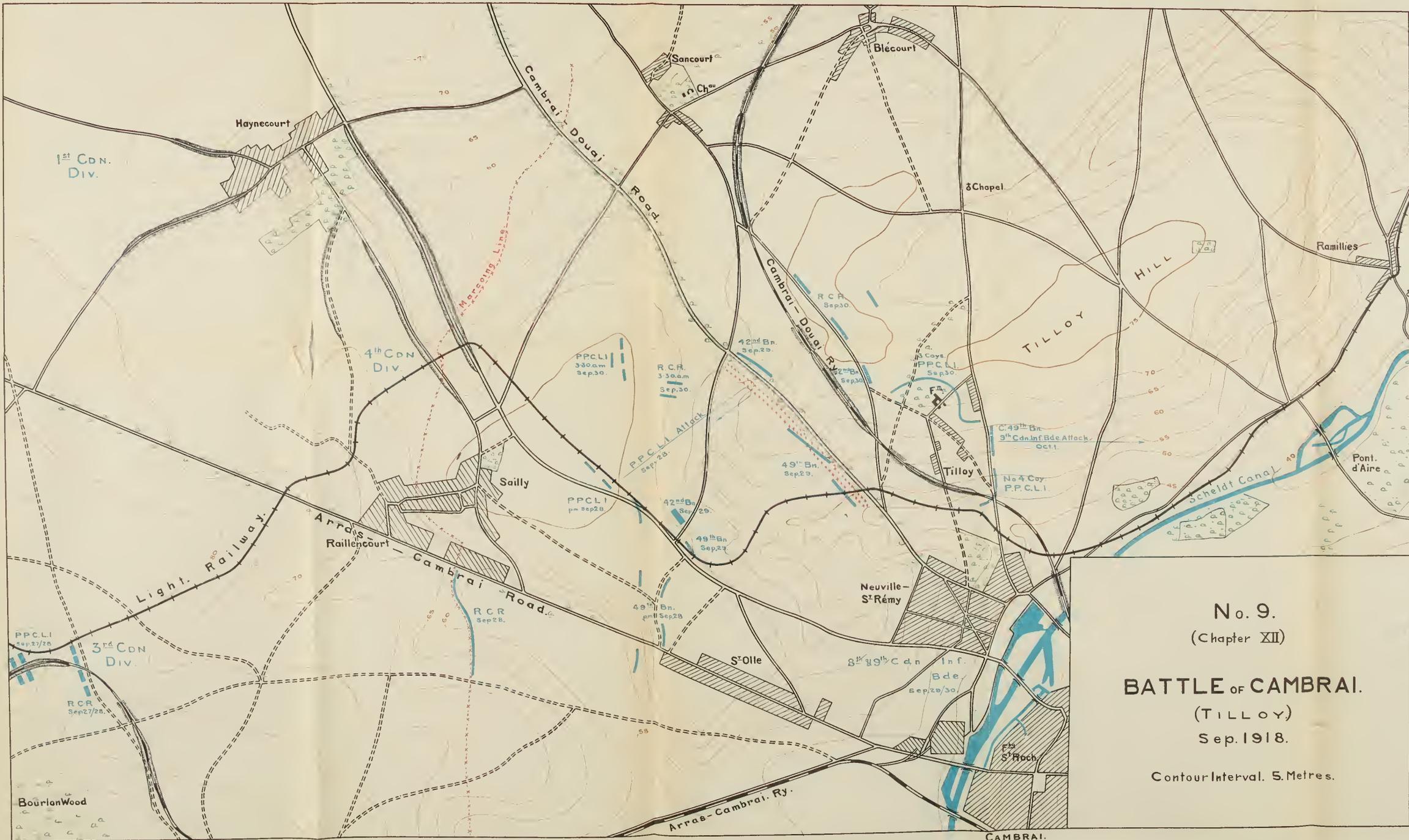
Wounded : Capts. G. W. Guiou and E. M. MacBrayne ; Lieuts. A. R. Jones, H. T. I. Lee, A. P. Linnell, R. Paton, H. E. Rowlands, M. J. Robb and E. C. Workman.

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their gallant commander." General Clark wrote more particularly of what had been accomplished :

In four attacks the Brigade defeated eleven enemy regiments and succeeded in taking many strong positions against overwhelming odds. My one conclusion is that no officer has ever had finer troops to command.

The deeds of the Regiment in its last major engagement need little further comment. Uncontrollable circumstance sent officers and men into action much fatigued. They lost their Commanding Officer almost at the very outset. They were diverted *en route* to assist their comrades of another battalion to subdue a powerful trench system. They delivered their attack on a strong natural position, well defended and inadequately subdued by preliminary bombardment, were beaten by uncut wire, and were driven back with very heavy losses in every company. Again attacking, driven back again, they ultimately captured and held almost the whole of the ground allotted to them, though thrown on the last day upon their own resources, for twelve critical hours with both flanks in the air, and fighting with little more than a single-company strength against a determined and desperate foe. Their capture of men and guns were large, how large it is not possible to say, for there was never time to count the one or the other. But these were not the things most important in the victory at Cambrai. That battle was, beyond every other action of the later years of the war, a fight to a finish ; and the Patricias were one of those many units on a far-flung line whose endurance in the last pinch surpassed that of a dogged enemy. There were engagements in which the Regiment's part was perhaps more



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brilliant, more decisive ; but none in which its traditions of discipline and tenacity were more gloriously upheld. Individual leadership and gallantry were deservedly recognized in the thirty-five decorations awarded to the Patricias for this one action. But the bravest deed of officer or man is to be reckoned as little beside the spirit of a Regiment which does not know when it is beaten.

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Decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment in connection with the period reviewed in this chapter :

Bar to the Military Cross : Lieut. A. J. Kelly, M.C.

The Military Cross : Capts. G. W. Little, J. N. Edgar, and F. L. Shouldice ; Lieuts. C. Frederickson, M.M., and H. T. I. Lee.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal : Sgts. A. A. Bonar, M.M., and G. I. Pringle ; Cpl. W. Miller ; Pte. J. J. Cooney.

Bar to the Military Medal : Sgts. J. G. Sparling, M.M., and R. Wood, M.M. ; Ptes. C.E. Thompson, M.M., and F. J. Williams, M.M.

The Military Medal : C.S.M. J. Crawford ; Sgt. G. R. Bailey ; Cpls. A. S. Keith, D. W. McKay ; L/Cpls. L. Cowell, D. E. Foster, A. Kay, C. A. B. Laidlaw, A. A. McGrory, A. B. Saunders and G. M. Torrie (A/Sgt.) ; Ptes. G. W. Allison, A. H. Dreyer, A. F. Dubreuil (attached 7th T.M. Btty.), J. E. Duggan, H. G. Gammond, A. Groves, F. Orchard, F. Taylor, M. T. Walsh and J. H. Young.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FINAL ADVANCE: MONS

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Map No. 10, unfolding opposite p. 400

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THE end of the tale draws near. The development and exploitation of the Battle of Cambrai, broken only by short periods of comparative inactivity due to the great depth of advance and the incidental difficulty of maintaining communications, carries us to the morning of the Armistice. Not till almost the last days did the Canadians again become conspicuously involved, for during October the rôle of the First Army was to follow up the retirement, gradually degenerating into rout, which the great attacks to the north and south forced upon the enemy. The Patricias were to all intents and purposes out of action for the five weeks after the Battle of Cambrai. But it was their good fortune to be in at the finish.

The attack of the Fourth and Third Armies towards Le Cateau on October 8 made possible the capture of Cambrai on the next day and severed the German lines of communication from the Sensée to the Oise. The simultaneous launching of the last Battle of Ypres, and its corollary the Battle of Courtrai, pinched the enemy out of Lille and Douai and brought about a general retirement. The First Army followed up closely, until by the

evening of October 22 the enemy had straightened his line again along the Scheldt, abandoning Tournai but holding on to Valenciennes and part of the large Fôret-de-Raismes, from the latter of which however he was forced during the following week. Meanwhile the Fourth and Third Armies struck again in the Battle of the Selle (October 17-23), and again threw the Germans back.

By this time the rapid succession of heavy blows dealt by the British forces had had a cumulative effect, both moral and material, upon the German armies. . . . The capitulation of Turkey and Bulgaria and the imminent collapse of Austria had made Germany's military situation ultimately impossible. If her armies were allowed to withdraw undisturbed to shorter lines the struggle might still be protracted over the winter. The British Armies, however, were now in a position to prevent this by a direct attack on the vital centre, which should anticipate the enemy's withdrawal and force an immediate conclusion.¹

Hence the final action, known officially as the Battle of the Sambre. Opening with an attack upon Valenciennes and the Scheldt bridge-heads on November 1, this engagement developed into the "decisive attack" of the Fourth, Third and First Armies—a gigantic movement on a front of over thirty miles northwards from the River Sambre near Le Cateau. When the "Cease-Fire" sounded on November 11, "the strategic plan of the Allies had been realised with a completeness rarely seen in war." In the delivery of the *coup de grâce*, when the enemy was "capable neither of accepting nor refusing battle," by happy chance the Patricias found themselves in the position of honour as one of the battalions which led the British Army back into Mons.

¹ C.-in-C.'s despatch, Dec. 21, 1918.

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The last chapter of the Regiment's fighting history thus falls into two parts: the five weeks following its withdrawal, desperately crippled, from Tilloy; and the last five days of the war. From October 1 to 9 it bivouacked near Bourslon Wood, and from October 10 to 19 still farther back in the Hindenburg line. Several of the old officers returned, and the officers' cadre was soon complete again, but the losses in men were only partially made good; and it was a weak battalion that chased the Germans into Mons the following month. Never thereafter was the Regiment brought up to anything like normal battalion strength.¹

Training for open warfare was almost impossible at Bourslon Wood. It was more seriously attempted at Quéant and occupied most of the time spent there. Three events noted in the battalion diary should be mentioned. On October 15 all the officers and 100 other ranks represented the Regiment at the funeral of General Lipsett, who, only a few weeks after exchanging his command, lost his life through that personal intrepidity which the 3rd Canadian Division had learned so greatly to respect and admire. At a 7th Brigade inspection by the Corps Commander the Regiment showed its faculty of recuperation, for General Currie "expressed the opinion that the Battalion was the best on parade." On October 18, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales paid an informal visit, took tea with the officers, and saw them defeat the Brigade Staff at baseball.

Among the returning officers was Captain (T/Major) A. G. Pearson, D.C.M., who as senior officer took over the command from Captain Little, and was shortly afterwards given the rank of

¹ The total number on the strength in France on Nov. 11 was 744, but over 100 of these were not with the Battalion.

“Acting Lieutenant-Colonel pending approval.”¹ This he relinquished after the Armistice, when Lieutenant-Colonel A. Hamilton Gault, D.S.O., whose appointment as “Lieutenant-Colonel commanding a battalion” dated from March 28, 1918, was able to return to the Regiment. Colonel Gault had kept himself in closest touch with the unit while Commandant of the 3rd Canadian Divisional Wing of the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp, although prevented by his physical disabilities from fighting in the line. When the end came, he was allowed to rejoin; and the Regiment was most fittingly brought home by the man who founded it and had originally declined its command.

On October 20 the 7th Brigade moved towards the front, now fast receding eastwards. The troops were transported in buses as far as Auberchicourt, on the Douai—Denain road. Here they found the bridges blown up by the retreating Germans and had a short march to their billets in the deserted houses of the neighbouring villages. The next day they continued north-eastwards, and spent the night at the western outskirts of the forests of Vicoigne and Raismes. On October 22 the Brigade took its place in the line. The Patricias, in reserve, moved in the morning to Cataine on the River Scarpe, and in the afternoon through the Fôret-de-Vicoigne and along the road from St. Amand towards Raismes, as far as Fosse-du-Prussien, a group of deserted houses between the Vicoigne and Raismes forests. Here the Regiment lay during the five days of the Brigade’s first tour under the new conditions.

These marches were full of strange incident, foreshadowing what was yet to come. Only a few

¹ Major Pearson happened to be on leave in England during the last advance, and for the second time the command of the P.P.C.L.I. in action fell to Capt. G. W. Little, M.C.

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days before, the area had been won back by the 1st and 4th Canadian Divisions, which crossed the Sensée Canal on October 14 in hard pursuit of the Germans. In every village the rejoicing civilians turned out to watch the Canadian battalions, with bands playing, march through their flag-decked streets. Medical officers and their staffs were kept very busy caring for the sick, especially the children. As yet the German evacuation was systematic and thorough, and the transport had all it could do in the way of distributing rations to the people of the countryside.

When the 3rd Canadian Division joined in the advance, the 1st Canadian Division had reached the St. Amand—Valenciennes road; the 4th Canadian Division lay to its right before Anzin; while the 8th British Division continued the line to the left in the marsh land beyond the Scarpe. The first duty that fell to the 3rd Division was to clear the Fôret-de-Raismes, a low-lying tract of woodland fifteen miles in extent. It took but little time to force the Germans out of the greater part of this, and by noon on the 22nd the 7th and 9th Brigades passed through the 1st Division, from the Scarpe to the Douai—Valenciennes railway. The 42nd Battalion and the Royal Canadian Regiment led the 7th Brigade, and the former had some difficulty in outflanking the high ground south-east of St. Amand; but by the end of the day a line was established beyond the forest to the south-east (outside Valenciennes), and near its eastern edge upon the rest of the front. The Brigade had to refuse its left flank near St. Amand, as the 8th British Division north of the Scarpe was not up in line. This state of affairs continued on the left until the very eve of the Armistice, becoming more marked as the advance continued, so that the Patricias at the end of the

following week had an exposed left flank of prodigious length.

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On October 23 the battalions in the line entirely cleared the forest. By October 25 they reached the general line of the Scheldt Canal between Valenciennes and Condé except as to their left flank in front of the latter town, and the Germans held a line beyond the canal and the flooded land to the east. The 3rd Division, which had advanced seven miles in three days, now received orders to remain west of the canal until Valenciennes and its bridge-heads were taken. The action thus paused to prepare the concerted attack across the canal from Condé to Le Cateau and beyond—the Battle of the Sambre.

The Regiment played a humble but useful part in the operations so baldly sketched above. On the first day it moved very quickly to its destination at Fosse-du-Prussien, the Division accomplishing the noteworthy feat of advancing 7000 yards through woodlands in fifteen hours. Thereafter the reserve battalion found plenty to do. The enemy, not yet broken, was retiring in very fair order and systematically destroying the railways, so that all British ammunition and ration transport (the latter enormously swelled by the task of feeding thousands of Allied civilians) had to go forward by road. The German sappers and gunners had done their best to make this impossible, and the Patricias with every other available battalion were metamorphosed into road-making gangs.

In the week that followed this advance to the Scheldt Canal there was only minor activity on the 3rd Division's front: reconnaissances, the selection of routes, the assembling of bridging material at convenient points. To accord with the modified

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tactics of a deep distribution of strength and of keeping few troops in the forward area, the 7th Brigade was sent back on the night of October 27/28; the Patricias going into billets at Aremberg, somewhat more than two miles to the rear on the Douai—Valenciennes railway. After three days in reserve the Brigade moved forward into support at Vicoigne and Raismes. Here the Regiment remained until November 3, constantly supplying parties for road-making and other purposes. The work was not without risk, and two officers (Lieutenants C. W. Ismay and W. J. Popey) and several men were wounded either at Fosse-du-Prussien or among the slag-heaps of Raismes.

When the Canadian and XXII. Corps opened the Battle of the Sambre with their attack upon the bridge-heads in Valenciennes and the high ground south-east of the city, the 3rd Division held a long frontage of 9000 yards along the line of the Scheldt between Valenciennes and Condé. In accordance with the principle of attacking in depth, this frontage was allotted to a single brigade, the 8th, with the 7th in support at Raismes and the 9th in reserve. The enemy's position was well chosen and defended. The retaining walls of the canals had been cut and dams constructed, and the level of the water was thus raised some six feet. Fields and roads were inundated, and for several miles the country was transformed into lakes intersected by railway embankments and canal banks. Culverts, roads, railway and canal bridges were demolished, and buildings blown up. Wire had been thrown out freely about the bridge-heads, and mixed groups of trench mortars and machine guns were concentrated in key positions under the shelter of trees and hedges.

These preparations undoubtedly increased the difficulty of advance, not only for the Mounted Rifles at the beginning of the action, but also for those who followed. But as defences they seem to have availed the Germans very little. On the morning of November 1 the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade rushed the canal near Anzin on their right and also at Thiers in their centre, thus snapping the main defences of the Scheldt at a single blow. The 4th Canadian Division fought the Battle of Mont Houy and entered Valenciennes, while patrols of the 3rd Division gained a footing east of the canal north of the city. The 52nd (Lowland) Division on the left drew up a little next day (November 2) and the 8th British Division took over part of the 8th Brigade's long line on the night of November 2/3. The northern boundary of the 3rd Division and the Canadian Corps henceforth ran north-east from the Scheldt Canal at Fresnes to the Franco-Belgian frontier at St. Aybert. Here it touched the Mons—Condé Canal, which is due east and west in its direction between the two towns, and this became the theoretical left boundary of the Canadian attack for 17,500 yards east from St. Aybert to Jemappes. At this point the boundary crossed the canal towards the north-east, and thus the whole of Mons and its environs came within the area of the Canadian advance.

The attack of November 1 was preliminary. On November 4 the main engagement began along the whole line of the three Armies. The 8th Brigade, with three battalions in the line, advanced five miles, meeting brisk opposition, but sweeping it aside; and the 4th Division made a corresponding gain to the right. At the end of the day the Mounted Rifles were in Onnaing and almost at

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Vicq, which fell before them on the early morning of the 5th. The worst of the marshes north of Valenciennes were now safely passed, and the 7th Brigade began to move up. The Patricias and the 49th Battalion were at Anzin on the 4th, and the next day received general orders to prepare to take over from the 8th Brigade. On the morning of November 6, the 4th and 3rd Divisions again attacked with the 78th, 5th C.M.R. and 2nd C.M.R. (from right to left), while the 4th C.M.R. stood fast to form a defensive flank, as the 52nd Division was still west of the canal before Condé. The assault was again completely successful: the Franco-Belgian frontier was crossed, Quiévrechain was taken, and the bridge-heads across the little river Honnelle west of Quiévrain were secured with the main road-bridges intact. The whole 7th Brigade came up to Onnaing in close support.

The 52nd Division being still blocked at Condé and on the line of the Scheldt to the north, the left flank of the Canadians was becoming dangerously exposed. To make it secure, the 3rd Division was instructed to press the attack northwards as well as eastwards, and (ignoring its left boundary) to cross the Mons—Condé Canal and clear the country for two miles north of the canal to the woods parallel with it. As a first move the 8th Brigade extended its patrols to the north of the Mons road and occupied the villages of La Croix and Hensies.

Nov. 7. On November 7, a partial relief was carried out: the 7th Brigade took over the frontage between the Mons road and La Croix; the 8th Brigade remained on the northern and defensive flank; the 9th Brigade in reserve moved to the neighbourhood of Onnaing and Vicq.

Now, and almost to the end, the Patricias found

themselves in the van of the advance. On November 6 they were moved forward into close support on the right of the line; the intention being that they should go through the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles the next day and attack along the Mons road. But soon after the Regiment had reached its leap-frogging position it was ordered to relieve the Mounted Rifles. The relief was only carried out with a good deal of difficulty; the 4th C.M.R. were holding a wide frontage and the Patricias were much the weaker battalion. However, the manœuvre was carried out under cover of darkness, though at the cost of a night's sleep. The morning of the 7th found the Regiment in Quiévrain, with Nos. 1 (right) and 4 (left) Companies in front, 3 in support, and 2 in reserve.

Nov. 7.

At dusk on the 7th its advance began. A barrage time-table had been worked out, but Lieutenant A. J. Kelly, M.C., and the regimental scouts, who moved off some time before the main body, found that the first point of resistance was already abandoned. The reader must now strive to depict for himself a kind of warfare which the preceding four years seemed to have rendered hopelessly old-fashioned. After November 7 artillery barrages were impracticable, and would have been more dangerous to friend than to foe. Liaison between companies and Battalion Headquarters was intermittent, between Battalion and Brigade Headquarters or supporting battalions almost non-existent. The Patricias were now a composite force of all arms moving in a highly irregular formation. All four companies were frequently engaged at the same time; not "in the line"—for there was no semblance of a line—but pretty well independently. All that Battalion Headquarters could

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hope for was some occasional word as to progress ; all it could do was to urge one company to catch up the rest or implore another not to go too fast. Even this amount of direction was seldom forthcoming. The sum of impressions on the collector of the data (admittedly most incomplete) is of a series of nearly isolated advance-guard actions by detachments of a battalion about 350 strong steeplechasing in front of a main body that was soon many kilometres behind. It was not war in any civilized sense of the word, and the rules laid down in the text-books seldom applied ; but it was a glorious chase, brilliantly pursued till the quarry was downed. An advance-guard action it was, for the force was literally one of all arms : with Battalion Headquarters was a section of artillery firing over open sights upon machine-gun positions and clearing away resistance as it went, using shrapnel to spare unnecessary damage to civilian property ; within hail rode that squadron of the 5th Lancers which was to represent "the Contemptibles" in the parades in the city square of Mons on Armistice day.

But to return to details. The Patricias' patrols moved off from Quiévrain along the Mons road at 6.45 P.M. on the evening of November 7. Reports at once rapidly came back calling for the companies to advance, and Thulin and Montrœul were cleared early in the night of the 7/8th. The entry into Thulin by Lieutenant Kelly and his scouts about 11 P.M. was a complete surprise to the enemy. "Their arrival at this hour," says General Loomis' report, "was evidently quite unexpected by the enemy, and in spite of efforts on the part of their officers to rally the men, the entire garrison, estimated at 300, fled in disorder." By 6.30 A.M. on

Nov. 8.

November 8 the whole Regiment was in Thulin with an outpost line thrown out on the east side of the village, and No. 2 Company came up on the right of No. 1. The advance continued at amazing speed. The village and wood of Hainin fell to Nos. 1 and 2 at 8 A.M., and thanks to the "energetic and skilful assistance" of the mobile artillery the companies broke through the next line of defence and late that night reached Boussu. During the afternoon advance the Patricias encountered a good deal of machine-gun fire, but the total losses for the day were 3 men wounded and Lieutenant B. Stevens, D.C.M., wounded and taken prisoner.

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On the night of November 7/8 the 52nd Division had taken Condé, and during the 8th the Canadian Mounted Rifles cleared St. Aybert, preparatory to pushing across the Mons—Condé Canal on the night of the 8/9th to protect the left flank as designed. By this time the Patricias were fully six miles farther eastward, with their flank entirely exposed, and No. 4 Company with one platoon of No. 3 (which had hitherto been more or less in support) was detailed to form a defensive flank along the southern canal bank. Late the same night, however, the 49th Battalion arrived after a splendid forced march, and one of its companies took over this duty and relieved the Patricias of anxiety. On the morning of the 9th, the whole 49th Battalion, under the cover of patrols, crossed the canal and advanced first north and then east through Tertre until their patrols reached the line of the woods beyond Baudour and Ghlin. This position was held until the afternoon of the 10th, when it was handed over to a brigade of the 52nd Division which had been rushed up by way of Valenciennes in motor buses.

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The result of this well-executed movement was to clear the whole of the country to the north of the canal, and secure the northern flank. The Patricias were free to throw their whole strength—it was not very great—into opening the way to Mons along the main road and through the villages on either side.

Nov. 9.

On November 9 the advance reached its peak. Boussu was clear before daylight. Hornu, St. Ghislain, Wasmuel, Quaregnon, Jemappes and Flenu were all occupied by early afternoon. By 5 P.M. the patrols were far ahead of Jemappes; the 8th Brigade C.F.A. was in the eastern outskirts of this town firing over open sights at the enemy machine guns on the Mons—Maubeuge railway embankment near Cuesmes; and the left company of the Patricias disposed of a machine-gun nest north of the canal at St. Ghislain with smoke and rifle grenades. On the right the machine guns at the railway resisted somewhat obstinately, but Cuesmes, too, fell before dark, and the patrols cleaned up the embankment. By nightfall all the companies had foothold in the western outskirts of Mons; but the advance was slowing up, and a stiffening resistance showed that without reinforcements and a fresh effort the enemy was not to be driven from the city.

The Patricias, in a little more than forty-eight hours, had advanced well over ten miles on a frontage more than two miles wide. The list of French and Belgian villages retaken gives a broad indication of the German breakdown. The fact that the Royal Canadian Regiment had to march nineteen kilometres at a stretch to relieve the Patricias shows the pace of the pursuit. But it will never be possible to collect much military detail about the advance up the road to Mons.

There was little fighting, and no severe engagement. Some sharp bouts of shelling once or twice from field guns, and the stand of the machine gunners at Boussu and the Cuesmes embankment are the sum of serious German resistance up to the final struggle to save Mons on November 10. The recommendations of the Commanding Officer of the Regiment show, as might be expected, that many opportunities presented themselves for individual acts of gallantry and intelligent leadership, especially to the patrols. As instances: Company-Sergeant-Major J. Crawford, M.M., came upon a large body of the enemy near Jemappes, rushed forward, fought them single-handed and captured several. Going on alone, he stalked two outposts and made the men prisoners. Later yet, he broke up a larger enemy patrol; and on the night of the 9/10th, in the suburbs of Mons, "he remained at a point of great danger and encouraged the men to hold their position until daylight against four counter-attacks." Company-Quartermaster-Sergeant A. G. Meachem distinguished himself by standing at the head of ration mules while they were being unloaded under heavy machine-gun fire in the outskirts of Mons, and thus preventing a stampede. Corporal J. G. Tapp rushed a machine gun in the Bois d'Hainin on November 8 under cover of the rifle fire of his section and demolished it and its crew, while later on, although badly wounded, he led his section into the outskirts of Mons "with the utmost fearlessness." Signalling Lance-Corporal F. Sealey maintained telephonic communication between the scout screen and Battalion Headquarters, working night and day through the advance under machine-gun and shell fire, and found spare time to salvage telephone wire,

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of which there was constant need. Private C. G. Schmitt, "with cool daring alone reconnoitred the enemy's main defence position on a bridge, having to pass over 100 yards within the enemy lines to do so." A little party of scouts attacked a large body of the enemy on November 9, killing three and forcing fifty more to abandon the houses which they were holding. These are but random instances taken from a large docket of citations to show both the quality of the fighting and the fine spirit in which the advance was pressed.

But in this last week of the war the French and Belgian civilians also provide the historian with material which may not be wholly neglected. The Patricias came on the scene at the moment when retreat was turning to rout. In the first villages they entered (Thulin and Montrœul) the number of civilians and the unusual sight of cattle and poultry made it clear that the hard-pressed enemy was abandoning his former policy of systematic evacuation. The Regiment appeared as liberators not only of Belgian villagers but of French townspeople, for every hamlet was swelled with refugees from Valenciennes and its neighbourhood. The deepest impression left on the minds of the advancing Patricias was neither of the rapidity with which they were moving nor of the enemy's demoralization, but of the enthusiasm and almost delirious excitement shown by the civil population. Emotions pent up for years were loosed upon these avenging demi-gods in khaki.

The inhabitants of Thulin were as surprised to see the Canadians as were the Germans, and were too dazed to make any demonstration before the Regiment was away again. But the news spread like fire in prairie grass through villages and

countryside. At each succeeding place the Belgian flags hung from every window as the Patricias entered and the Germans departed.¹ The villagers showed their delight by forcing upon the troops what few luxuries they had saved and concealed. It was all too clear that the people in this district had been badly treated by the invaders. They were impoverished and hungry to the point of cutting up dead artillery horses where they had fallen by the roadside. Being rid of the German soldiers, the Belgians expressed themselves forcibly enough: "Their cries of joy for relief by us," writes Captain Little, "were very much mingled with threats against their recently departed hosts. I personally had experience with one man who made an attempt to 'do in' one of our prisoners with a large bunch of wires, folded and twisted up to resemble a club; and one German was struck down from behind by an old woman with her wooden shoe."

The Belgians were eager to assist the advance. By the morning of the 8th the Patricias had out-run their communication with the Brigade, and the pace was so hot that it was only with great difficulty that touch could be maintained between companies and Battalion Headquarters. The Intelligence Officer with his men strove hard to lay wire, and, their own supply failing, gathered up large quantities abandoned by the enemy. In this the inhabitants felt that they could be useful. They too began to gather wire; and "Kelly found that no sooner had he laid a section of wire for his own use than some enthusiastic peasant would carefully go and gather it up for two or three hundred yards

¹ So numerous were these flags that the Regiment maintained the theory of a last bit of profitable trade on the part of the Germans in selling them to the people.

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behind him, rush after him, and present it with a beaming smile." Nearer Mons the scene began to change. In such suburbs as Jemappes the large mining population had been properly fed so that it could continue to work. But while not unnaturally the hatred of the German was less acute, the coming of the British was hailed with the same delight. One company of the Patricias enjoyed a very practical manifestation of gratitude. After the relief on the morning of November 10 it was billeted near a brewery at Jemappes. The proprietor insisted on the men living in the brewery with a continuous supply of beer "on tap," and established the officers in his own house. His attitude was not hard to explain; as one of the prominent citizens he had been forced to march at the head of the German troops in 1914 and had been very badly wounded in the arm. The German confiscations had been very thorough: no brass or bronze fixtures were anywhere to be seen when the Regiment arrived, though a few came out later from false ceilings and other hiding-places. This digression seems to be compelled by the emphasis that officers and men have laid upon their reception everywhere during November 7 to 10. But it is now time to take up the story of the Regiment's part in the capture of Mons.

By the night of November 9/10 the Patricias were "very, very tired and quite ready for relief." The Royal Canadian Regiment left Quiévrechain at 7.30 A.M., arrived at Jemappes in the afternoon, and at night came forward to take over the line. The relief was not allowed to proceed smoothly, for the capture of Mons was to be a very different task from the overrunning of the villages and the clearing of the suburbs. The German batteries

were carefully placed and had the advantage, in that the British "in order to avoid blowing down the whole city to find two or three guns which were annoying us" now were using only shrapnel. Under these changed conditions the enemy machine gunners and infantry plucked up courage and made a vigorous fight in the streets. During the night, which was very cold, the Patricias slowly worked forward to the banks of the canal which surrounds the heart of the city, losing far more heavily than they had been doing of late. The centre of resistance was the Faubourg de Bertal-mont. From this stronghold the Germans delivered five counter-attacks before morning against No. 1 Company. There was some fierce fighting, but the company, led by Captain K. C. Burness, M.C., and his N.C.O.'s, beat off all five attacks with loss and captured a machine gun. The R.C.R. completed the relief of Nos. 1, 2 and 3 Companies by 10 A.M. on the 10th, and these withdrew to Jemappes. No. 4 still remained in the line.

The Germans made an obstinate stand all day, but the 7th Brigade slowly and surely closed in upon the heart of the city. The 42nd Battalion came up from reserve; the 49th Battalion, relieved on the northern flank by Scottish battalions, concentrated in Jemappes; and the Royal Canadian Regiment drew the encircling net tighter by the capture of Ghlin. No. 4 Company, P.P.C.L.I., now in sight of Mons railway station, came under heavy fire from artillery and machine guns placed in houses to cover the approaches to the main part of the city, and was sharply engaged all day. In the afternoon a company of the 42nd Battalion was sent forward in relief with instructions to force its way into Mons if this could be done without

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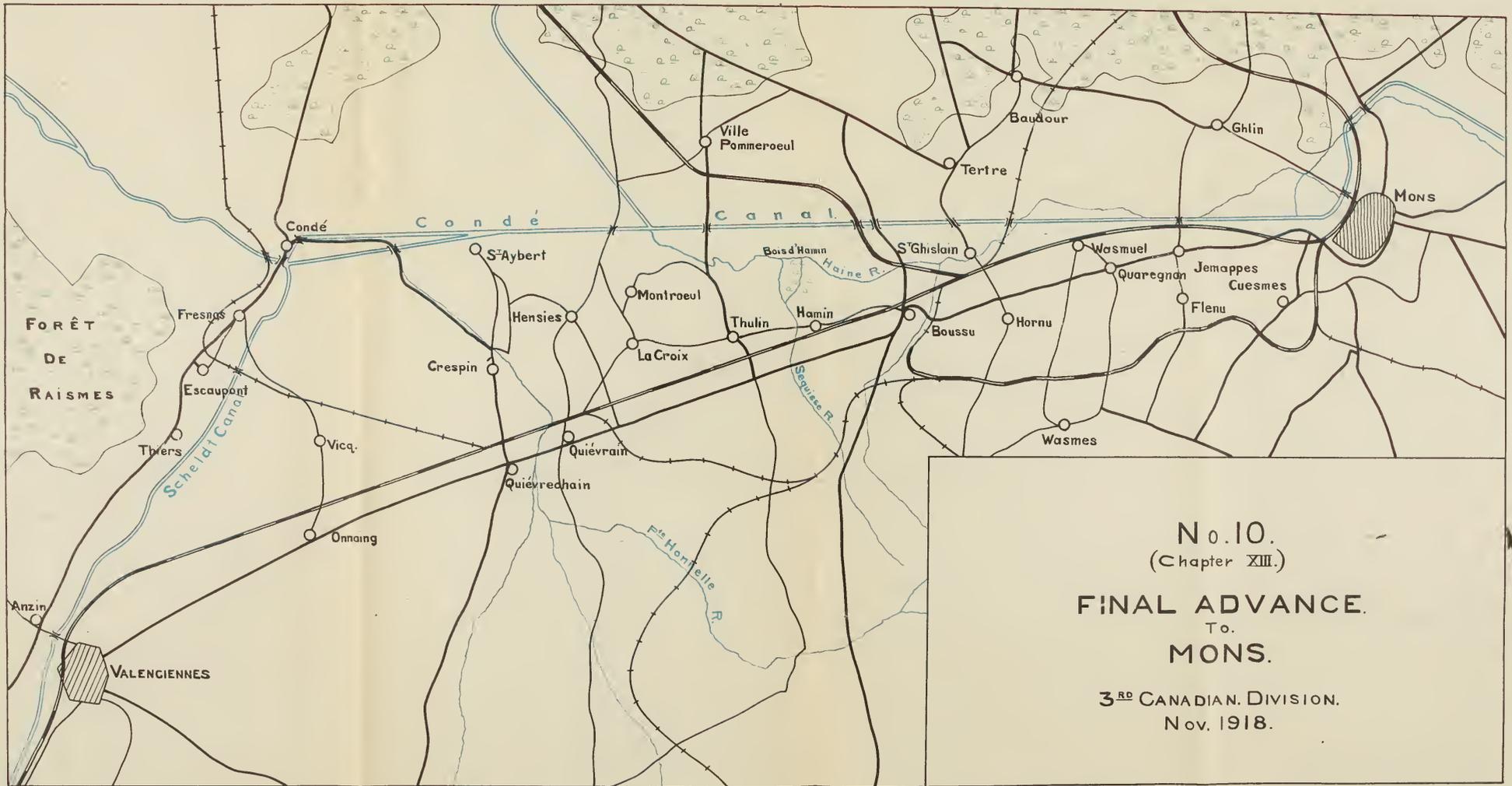
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undue loss. But No. 4, though technically relieved, was anxious to be in at the finish and was allowed to remain by courtesy of the 42nd Battalion. Severe machine-gun fire and shelling continued until 5 P.M., bringing more casualties, but the patrols gradually dislodged the enemy from his posts near the canal, and before dark took up positions close to the railway station. With night-fall the end came quickly. The 42nd Battalion, No. 4 Company of the Patricias, and a company of the Royal Canadian Regiment all broke across the canal bridges between midnight and 3 A.M. The few machine-gun and sniping detachments left behind as a rear-guard were killed, captured or dispersed by 6 A.M.; and just after daybreak the pipers of the 42nd played their Battalion through the streets of the city, "creating the wildest enthusiasm."

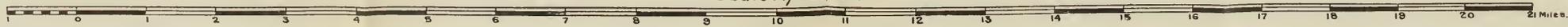
Returning to the Patricias' advance from Quévrain to Mons—rather overlooked in the excitement of the final triumph, the sense of relief that the end had come, the reviews, the entertainments and the plans for demobilization that followed November 11. It is not amiss to record the opinion of one senior officer outside the Regiment that it was as brilliantly improvised and executed a piece of work as anything in the war. There is no action in which the Regiment was engaged which affords any comparison. But in the ease of accomplishment it must not be forgotten that the physical strain was tremendous, that the problems to be faced were new, and that the rifle strength of the Regiment was as small as the frontage was great. It is indeed no little tribute to the discipline and adaptability of officers, N.C.O.'s and men alike, that between October 22 and November 11 they had but 5 killed and 43 wounded.



No. 10.
 (Chapter XIII.)
FINAL ADVANCE.
 To.
MONS.

3RD CANADIAN DIVISION.
 Nov. 1918.

Scale 1/100,000.





The message announcing the Armistice reached Battalion Headquarters about 9 A.M. on the morning of the 11th, but both Captain Little and his Adjutant, not long in bed for the first time in days, "were so tired out that they did not realize for a while just what was meant," and, after passing the word on, turned over and went to sleep again. They were not allowed to sleep long. The news was everywhere in a few minutes; Jemappes went mad with enthusiasm; and instructions soon arrived for a Brigade parade in Mons.

The march of four miles from Jemappes to Mons was a festal procession. The Patricias had the music of the Royal Canadian Regiment as well as their own to play them along, and their path was strewn by the Belgians with the chrysanthemums that bloom in such profusion round Mons in the late autumn. "The joy of every one (particularly of the older women) was wonderful to watch. They did not know how to cheer, and it looked very queer to see those aged people dancing around on the roadside with their wooden *sabots*." The 7th Brigade's parade in the City Square was a thrilling but soldierly finale, with the romantic touch provided by the presence of a detachment of the 5th Lancers, who had been at Mons in August 1914.

There was some regret in Great Britain that the whirligig of fortune did not bring back to Mons at the last some infantry representative of the "Old Contemptibles." Is it an immodest pretension that one battalion parading that day in the City Square was linked through its "Originals" with almost every unit of the old British Regular Army?

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Final list of decorations, etc., awarded in the Regiment, in connection with the final advance and after the Armistice :

Member of the Victorian Order : Capt. G. W. Little, M.C.

Bar to the Military Cross : Capts. K. C. Burness, M.C., and J. N. Edgar, M.C. ; Lieut. J. H. Carvosso, M.C.

The Military Cross : Major A. G. Pearson, D.C.M. ; Lieuts. M. L. Hancock and R. S. MacPherson ; R.S.M. F. Gillingham, D.C.M.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal : C.S.M. C. Spurgeon ; C.Q.M.S. G. Rowley ; Pte. J. Randall.

Bar to the Military Medal : C.S.M. J. Crawford, M.M.

The Military Medal : C.Q.M.S. A. G. Meachem ; Sgts. G. Coops and W. Dick ; Cpls. G. I. Brewster, J. Callahan, C. Shuttleworth, R. Symons and J. G. Tapp ; L/Cpl. F. Sealey ; Ptes. J. H. Barnes (attached 7th T.M. Btty.), L. E. Belney, C. Collins, S. A. Christofferson, D. M. Cunningham, H. B. Essery, A. Y. Grieve (attached 7th T.M. Btty.), S. W. Lake, C. W. Peterson, C. G. Schmitt, G. Stewart, W. J. Wilson and H. Woodacre.

The Meritorious Service Medal : R.Q.M.S. E. L. White ; C.Q.M.S. A. G. Meachem ; Sgts. F. M. Gerrie and J. Ritchie ; Ptes. A. M. Francis, C. Joy and W. T. Pidduck.

The Belgian Croix de Guerre : Cpls. T. R. Brasnet and A. des Forges.

Mentioned in Despatches (covering period of 1918 fighting) : Lt.-Col. C. J. T. Stewart, D.S.O. ; Hon. Capt. and Quartermaster L. M. Johnstone ; Major A. G. Pearson, M.C., D.C.M. ; Lieuts. A. R. Chipman and N. D. Dow.

CHAPTER XIV

THE REGIMENT'S HOME-COMING

November 1918 to March 1919

THE war ended for the Patricias with General Sir Arthur Currie's entry into Mons on the afternoon of November 11. Three days later the Regiment moved from Jemappes to billets in the city, where it remained nearly a month, while the divisions chosen for the Army of Occupation moved forward to the Rhine and the complicated machine of demobilization was being constructed. The Armistice celebrations occupied much of the time for a fortnight. On November 14 there was a reception at the Hôtel de Ville, followed by a gala performance by "The Dumbells"; on November 15, General Sir Henry Horne made his formal entry and inspection (150 of the Patricias parading in the composite Guard of Honour) and attended a *Te Deum* in the Cathedral; on November 16, after another thanksgiving service in the Cathedral, the townspeople entertained the officers at the Hôtel de Ville; on November 27, the Patricias were among the battalions lining the road for the return to the city of the King of the Belgians; and on November 29 the officers of the Regiment gave a ball in the Hôtel de Ville. Lastly, on December 5, King George paid an informal visit to Mons, and the Patricias turned out to a man to cheer him. The King made his

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headquarters at Valenciennes and the Patricias had the honour of being ordered to provide the Royal Guard from the Canadian Corps for the week of November 29–December 4.¹ During the last week of November and the first week of December officers and men settled down again to regimental life. Route marches and close-order drill occupied them during the mornings, and sports and games were organized to fill the afternoons. Classes, especially for the study of French, were held in the Conservatory of Music under the supervision of Captain G. G. Reynolds, a combatant officer of the Regiment, and were well attended.

Dec. 12–
Jan. 3,
1919.

The Patricias bade adieu to their kind hosts in Mons on December 11 and moved off in the direction of Brussels. After three days at Nivelles they marched to Genval, near the field of Waterloo, where they spent Christmas. On December 27 began their trek towards the sea, and every day of the next week saw them in new billets a few miles farther from Germany, till the march ended on January 3, 1919, at the village of St. Leger, on the Belgian side of the international boundary, just east of Roubaix. Here the Regiment remained for nearly a month, and but two events during this time, both of them having to do with the Colonel-in-Chief, need be recorded. On January 4 the Regiment heard of the betrothal of Princess Patricia to Commander Alexander Ramsay, D.S.O., R.N., and Colonel Gault sent congratulations from all ranks. Also Colonel Gault decided that the Colour should be consecrated and thus changed from a Camp to a

Jan. 4–
Feb. 1.

¹ The Camp Commandant wrote to Colonel Gault that the Guard so acquitted itself "as to again show the military spirit of your Regiment." Capt. Little, the Officer Commanding the Guard, was made a Member of the Victorian Order by His Majesty on the relief of the Guard by an Australian unit.

Regimental Colour while the Regiment was still in the field. On January 28 Major the Reverend T. McCarthy, M.C., Chaplain to the Regiment during the greater part of the war, officiated at the consecration service, which was attended by the entire Regiment and the Divisional and Brigade Commanders. The Regiment formed up on the snow-covered parade ground in a hollow square with the Colour resting on the drums; after the ceremony it was received again by the senior subaltern (Lieutenant A. N. B. Mortimer, M.C.), kneeling on one knee. The battalion re-formed in line facing the Colour Party, and gave the general salute while the Pipe Band played a slow march and the consecrated Colour was borne to its place in the line.

This was very fittingly the last parade of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry upon European soil. In the next two days all stores were turned in; and on February 1 the companies marched out of Belgium and entrained at the border village of Baisieux for Havre, Colonel Gault and his Headquarters Staff following two days later. The Regiment, after two cold and rainy days at the Canadian Embarkation Camp, on the afternoon of February 7 embarked on the *Dieppe* and sailed from the port at which it had landed fifty months before. The term of its service in the field had exceeded that of any fighting unit from oversea on the Western front and of most battalions raised in the British Isles after the outbreak of war.

After a rough crossing, the *Dieppe* lay in Weymouth harbour by two o'clock next morning. At 9 A.M. the Patricias disembarked and marched to the railway station, arriving at the Canadian Camp at Bramshott late in the afternoon. Here they spent the rest of the month in cold, snowy

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CHAPTER weather, working out the tedious processes of de-
 XIV. mobilization, with its medical boards and the filling
 Feb. of innumerable forms. The Patricias, however,
 1919. might account themselves exceedingly fortunate in
 Feb. 8- being one of the first battalions sent home; and
 March 8. the monotonous three weeks at Bramshott were
 broken by the memorable farewells which the
 Regiment bade its Colonel-in-Chief.

Feb. 21. On February 21, Princess Patricia, accompanied
 by Prince Arthur of Connaught and Lady Evelyn
 Farquhar, motored to Bramshott Camp from
 Clarence House to say good-bye to her Regiment.
 The review at Liphook, "in a little field, hedge-
 enclosed, surrounded by copses and wooded knolls—
 just one of those gracious green fields of England
 which were kept safe from the barbarian at such
 proud cost," seemed to the sympathetic corre-
 spondent from a London newspaper "a family re-
 union rather than a military pageant." Among
 some 500 on parade, two (Colonel Agar Adamson
 and Colonel Hamilton Gault) were officers, and
 42 others were rank and file, of the "Original"
 battalion to which the Colour had been entrusted
 at Lansdowne Park, Ottawa, four and a half years
 before. Colonel Agar Adamson received the Colonel
 in-Chief with her party, and also the Divisional,
 Brigade and Camp Commanders, upon their arrival
 on the parade ground, and conducted them to where
 the Regiment was drawn up in line. Colonel Gault
 gave the word of command for the royal salute, and
 then Princess Patricia, accompanied by the two
 Colonels—General Pelly was unfortunately not yet
 home from Italy—inspected the Regiment; after
 which the men rallied on the Colour to hear their
 Colonel-in-Chief's farewell address.¹ The Regiment

¹ See Appendix II.

then re-formed line for the greatest event of the day. The Colour was paraded, and the Princess reverently decorated it with a wreath of laurel in silver gilt bearing the inscription :

CHAPTER
XIV.
Feb.
1919.

To the P.P.C.L.I. from the Colonel-in-Chief,
PATRICIA, in recognition of their heroic
services in the Great War, 1914-1918.

Colonel Gault gave voice to the Regiment's appreciation and gratitude : " This is the highest honour that can ever be paid to the Battalion, and we should ever be deeply grateful not only for this signal mark of your approval but also for the kindly interest you have ever taken in the Regiment and in the welfare of the personnel of which it has been composed." Concluding, and on behalf of all, he alluded to a coming event in these words : " May I, on the occasion of your approaching marriage, be permitted to wish your Royal Highness and Commander Ramsay long life and every happiness in the future years." Then, turning to the ranks, he called for cheers, and every steel helmet went skywards on a bayonet in honour of the Colonel-in-Chief. Finally the Princess took the salute from her Regiment as it marched past in column of route. The Princess visited the men at their dinners and then lunched with the officers ; and at three o'clock drove through the streets of Bramshott Camp, cheered on her way by every officer and man of the Regiment.

Her Royal Highness was married in Westminster Abbey on February 27. It was the day of their Colonel-in-Chief, and therefore of the Regiment. Every officer of the Regiment was a guest of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught at the wedding. Forty N.C.O.'s of the Patricias and a party of seamen from Commander Ramsay's ship H.M.S. *King*

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George V. lined the aisles during the ceremony. The Regiment supplied the Royal Guard of Honour of three officers and a hundred men under Major M. Ten Broeke, M.C.¹ Throughout the day the Guard was royally treated. Accompanied by its Pipe and Brass Bands and arriving at Waterloo Station early in the morning, it was played to Wellington Barracks by the band of the Welsh Guards. The Guard mounted at 10.30 A.M. on the Wellington Barracks parade ground, and the Welsh Guards played it past Buckingham Palace, Clarence House, and along the Mall and Whitehall to the Abbey. The great crowds gathered for the occasion greeted it with warm enthusiasm, for the Regiment and its Colour were well known in name and fame. When the King and Queen, the Prince of Wales and Queen Alexandra arrived at the west door of the Abbey the Colour was lowered, and the Royal Salute given. The same compliment was paid to the Bride.

King George had signified his intention of inspecting the Guard after the wedding. But the crowd was tremendous, and the police cordon was unable to hold it as the Bride and her husband drove away. The Guard, taken in the rear, was overwhelmed in the rush for the carriage, and though the Patricias struggled valiantly to keep their ranks, they were fairly carried off their feet. Lady Patricia Ramsay, writing to Colonel Gault a day or two later to thank the Regiment for its wedding present of a bronze statuette by Tweed,²

¹ The choice of Major Ten Broeke to command the Guard was a particularly happy one. He had seen long service with the Regiment as an enlisted man; and as an officer he fought and led his company with conspicuous gallantry in every important action from the attack at Courcellette to the capture of Jigsaw Wood. Major Ten Broeke later became Second in Command of the P.P.C.L.I. in the Permanent Force.

² The statuette represents a typical N.C.O. of the Regiment "standing easy." The model, chosen by the company commanders and the artist, was

remarked happily of the incident that "it was, indeed, the only occasion in history on which the Regiment lost its ground!" The King at once despatched a message of regret to the Regiment through his Equerry in Waiting :

CHAPTER
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Feb.
1919.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE,
27th February 1919.

DEAR COLONEL GAULT :

The King wishes you to tell all ranks of the Guard of Honour of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry how sorry His Majesty was to be deprived of the privilege of inspecting them outside Westminster Abbey this morning.

The enthusiasm and loyalty of the crowd in pressing forward to see Princess Patricia made this impossible.

I am to add that it would have gratified the King immensely to walk down the ranks of the splendid body of men under the command of Major Ten Broeke, M.C., on this auspicious occasion.—Yours sincerely,

CLIVE WIGRAM.

The Guard marched back to Wellington Barracks to its own music, and returned to Bramshott in the afternoon. Colonel Gault entertained the N.C.O.'s of the Regiment to lunch, and in the evening gave a farewell regimental dinner at the Carlton Hotel, at which were present all officers of the Regiment, Generals Dyer and Clark, and the Commanding Officers of the Royal Canadian Regiment, the 42nd and 49th Battalions.

The Patricias, spared a long wait for demobilization, sailed home before the blaze of glory reflected

Cpl. V. F. Gianelli, M.M. At the same time a silver replica in miniature of this statuette was presented to the Lady Evelyn Farquhar "in recognition of her distinguished services to the Regiment during the war 1914-1918."

CHAPTER
 XIV.
 March
 1919.
 March
 8-19.

upon them by the royal marriage had quite died down. On March 8 the Regiment embarked at Liverpool on the *Carmania*, sped on their way by a final message of good luck from the Duke of Connaught ; and a pleasant voyage ended in Halifax harbour on March 17, the birthday of their Colonel-in-Chief. Colonel Gault received innumerable telegrams of welcome, one of which, sponsored by Mr. Andrew Carnegie and other well-known citizens of the United States, urged the Regiment to go to New York and parade down Fifth Avenue. But even a similar invitation from Montreal, with which the Patricias had such close associations, had to be declined, for the Regiment received the order to proceed directly to Ottawa and demobilize. Throughout the journey, and especially at Moncton, the train was greeted with uproarious welcome ; and when, on the morning of March 19, the Patricias re-entered Ottawa popular enthusiasm broke all bounds. At the station the Regiment received an address of welcome from the Mayor and the citizens of Ottawa, who saw to it that neither officer nor man that day should lack what the city could offer. The men were its guests and were made free of all its amusements ; the officers were dined by friends at the Country Club, where the Minister of Militia and Defence and many others came to do them honour.

March 19. The last parade, the last dismissal. The address of welcome had been received in comparative calm, but officers and men were hard put to it to keep their ranks as, led by a detachment from their own Veterans' Association, they marched to Connaught Square to be inspected and addressed by the Governor-General, and thence through shouting crowds to Lansdowne Park—the birth-place of the

Regiment on August 11, 1914. It was remarked on all hands, and General Gwatkin particularly commented on it, that the welcomes of friends and kin did not for a moment shake the steadiness of the Regiment's bearing. "The discipline was magnificent," the Regiment showed itself a Regiment to the last; and so, on March 20, 1919, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry passed out of existence as a unit raised for service in the Great War.

But the Regiment did not die. Such of the officers, N.C.O.'s and men as chose to re-enlist became the nucleus of a permanent force in the Canadian Militia. And they guard for themselves and their scattered comrades a war-worn Colour, laurel-crowned,—symbol of honour and victory, of a tradition that shall not perish, of great days and great deeds.