

CANADIANS LEAD IN TRIUMPH 5816 ENEMY IN BRITISH NET

CANADIANS PUT IN FRONT TO CAPTURE VIMY RIDGE

Strongly Supported by Some of Most Famous Regiments
in General Haig's Army—Guns of Heaviest Calibre,
Formerly Used on Biggest Battleships, Pound German
Positions Out of Recognition—Enemy Tries in Vain
to Blind Eyes of the Attacking Armies

(By Stewart Lyon, Special Correspondent of the Canadian Press.)

CANADIAN HEADQUARTERS IN FRANCE (via London), April 9.—The crest of the Vimy ridge has been carried. The strongest defensive position of the enemy on the western front has been captured by the army of Sir Douglas Haig, and the Canadian corps was given the place of honor in the great event, being strongly supported by some of the most famous of the British formations. The attack was preceded by a bombardment which continued for several days, and in which guns of the heaviest calibre, formerly used on only the biggest battleships, took part. The results, as revealed by aerial observation, were a repetition of the battle of the Somme. Airplanes, flying low, could find only shapeless masses of churned-up earth where the enemy first line had been.

By Saturday afternoon Thelus, the chief village held by the enemy on the ridge, and lying due east of Neuville St. Vaast, was pounded out of all recognition, only two houses remaining. Prisoners taken told of heavy enemy losses. Even in the deep dugouts, where the Germans had hoped to be reasonably safe in that rain of death, no safety was to be found anywhere. In a desperate attempt to blind the eyes of the attacking army the Germans on Sunday endeavored to destroy our observation balloons.

Saturday night our guns continued the work of devastation under conditions which made a spectacle that was majestic and awe-inspiring. A full moon in the east lit up the countryside with mellow beams on the horizon, while the flash of the guns made a continuous play like that of the Northern Lights in the Dominion, or distant sheet lightning. This was sharply broken now and again by a column of reddish-yellow flame where, on the ridge, high explosives were bursting.

The gunners, with tireless energy, continued the cannonade through Easter Sunday. On Monday morning came the supreme moment, that in which our infantry was called upon to go out and reap the fruit of months of preparation. They had endured, unwaveringly, the answering fire of the enemy, which, however, was not comparable to ours. Some, impatient to be at the foe, had gone out on small wars of their own, and it is recorded that in one of the individual encounters in No Man's Land a Canadian, meeting a German, pursued after emptying his revolver ineffectively at him. The Canadian cast about for some other weapon. The only one within reach was his steel helmet, and with the sharp edge of that he killed the armed German.

Such was the spirit of the infantry who, in the grey preceding the dawn, sprang from their shelters when the appointed time came. It was a great occasion, and greatly they rose to it.

VICTORY IN HALF AN HOUR.

From the craters of the scarred front, which resembled the openings made in quarrying operations, the distance to the top of the ridge ranged from twelve hundred yards to a little short of a mile. Thereafter the ground falls easterly toward the great plain of Cambrai. Up the ridge, amid the shattered Hun trenches, our men swarmed in successive waves. On the northern end a few trees along the skyline marked where the Wood of La Fere had been, and our troops advanced as through the remains of an orchard.

Within half an hour after the first German "S.O.S." rocket had been sent up, indicating a surprise attack, our objective was attained, with slight loss. The tanks which accompanied our advancing infantry had little to do, but were seen in action later near the crest of the ridge, on the extreme north of the line, at a point east of Souchez, where much fierce fighting took place in 1915, when thousands of men fell.

The enemy put up a stiff fight. Hill 145 had been provided skillfully with concealed machine gun positions, and long after they had been driven from the surrounding ground with machine guns on the hill they continued to sweep points of approach to the hill with their fire. Encouraged by this show of resistance on what otherwise was a stricken field, the enemy began to send up reserves in trains from Lens, Douai and perhaps a greater distance, with the intention of launching a counter-attack. That attack was never made. As reports came in from the front and from the aviators of this massing of the enemy beyond Vimy and the trenches in the vicinity, a tremendous barrage was turned on by our heavy guns, the range being too great for field artillery.

Probably for the first time in the war twelve-inch weapons were used for this purpose at very long range. The splendid co-operation of the artillery arm in preventing this counter-attack did much to lessen our casualties on a difficult part of the front. On the southern end of the Canadian front the Germans yielded ground more readily than in the north. Many prisoners were taken, and as for Thelus, which had been strongly held before, our guns hammered it to pieces. It did not long hold out. By 12.30 o'clock, seven hours after the battle began, no organized body of the enemy remained on Vimy ridge, save the nest of concealed machine gun sections on Hill 145.

EVEN UP OLD SCORES.

Of the casualties it can only be said this moment that they are surprisingly light, especially in view of the importance of the ground won. The prisoners taken on the Canadian part of the front probably total close to two thousand. The British troops on the adjacent part of the front captured over three thousand. Our men were splendid, and proud that they have been counted worthy to furnish a striking force in so important an operation as the recapture of Vimy ridge.

No ground in all France is more dear to the heart of the French people than the front from which the Canadians set out to drive the enemy from his positions on the ridge of Vimy, the Chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette, Souchez, and the sugar refinery there, to conquer the crumbling ruins of which men died during the war in thousands. The Cabaret Rouge, Neuville St. Vaast, the Labyrinth, are names that will be forever glorious there.

In the spring of 1915, before the tremendous dramas of Verdun and the Somme had been conceived, the army of France made the first great attempt to drive the entrenched foe from his positions. The progress made, reckoned in miles, was almost negligible, but the French learned on the ridges and in the long shelterless slopes of this difficult terrain the lessons that enabled them and their allies to win at Verdun and the Somme.