

THE SECOND CAVALRY CORPS TO BE RETURNED TO ROOM 109
IN FLANDERS

From April 9th to May 3d 1918.

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GENERAL SITUATION.-- Since March 21st, Germany with all its available forces, had continued the "Great Spring Battle" the supreme offensive which was to break the resistance of the Allies, and to deliver against France a decisive blow before the American Forces could enter the line and put an end to the war.

Fifty divisions brought from Russia came to reinforce the 155 divisions of the West front, making a formidable mass of manoeuver in the hands of Ludendorff.

On the Oise and the Avre, the first efforts of the enemy to break the Franco-British front at the boundary line between the two armies failed. In front of Amiens, the front was stabilized and became firm in the vicinity of Hangard and Grivesnes; for the moment, Paris was out of reach, except for the monster guns; there remained Calais, the English base, ardently and constantly desired since the beginning of the campaign.

It was then in Flanders, from South of Ypres to the canal of the Bassees, on a front of 30 kilometers, where the second effort at penetration was to come. If the French reserves ~~XXXXX~~ had been able in March to fully stop the initial breach and re-establish the battle, Ludendorff hoped that in April, when we had scarcely recovered from this rude blow, that the reserves would not arrive in time, nor in sufficient numbers, to parry the new blow which was coming on the extreme left of the British front, to be delivered by the VIth German Army of Von Quast, strongly reinforced and increased from three to nine divisions.

On April 9th, between Givenchy and Bois-Grenier, on a 15 kilometer front, the Anglo-Portuguese positions were broken to a depth of more than eight kilometres.

On the 10th, the attack extended for 15 kilometers further North across the Lys and made progress everywhere.

On the 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th, the pocket grew and enlarged with frightful rapidity; Bethune, Hazebrouck, Ypres, were threatened, and the German attack developing constantly in fan form brought forth the supreme efforts of resistance of our Allies. It was time for the French High Command to intervene; on the 15th, the 2nd Cavalry Corps appeared on the field of battle.

SITUATION OF THE 2nd CAVALRY CORPS AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF APRIL.--On April 8th, General Robillot with his staff arrived at Digeon, near Aumale, and reassumed the command of his divisions, from which he had been separated for more than three weeks by urgent detached service.

Functioning as a Corps Staff and coordinating for the battle, the Infantry Divisions which were successively placed at his disposition, he had, between March 22d and April 1st, contained parallel with the 5th Corps (General Pelle) the main body of the German advance, between Noyon and Montdidier. Then, as soon as relieved, after the 4th, he had again entered into line in order to defend the gap of the Avre between Hangarâ and Rouvre, to strengthen the France-British forces. Freed on April 8th, the Commanding General of the 2nd Cavalry Corps learned at Digeon, that he was attached to the Xth Army, returning from Italy, and that this army was concentrating in the area of Picquigny -- Poix -- Foucarmont -- Blangy, and that it was preparing to cross the Somme towards the Northeast, but that nothing had yet become known as to its destination. Was it to take the offensive or simply to parry thrusts? The field was open to all suppositions. Whatever it might be, it was to be foreseen that the deep deployment of the 2nd Cavalry Corps would have to be modified during the march, and at the beginning, and the Cavalry Divisions were consequently advised as to this.

The 2nd Cavalry Corps troops recently organized on the same basis of an Army Corps and still incomplete, consisted of :

	Guns.	
17th Battalion Auto Machine)		
118th Co. Sanitary Corps, (Assembled at Digeon with HQ.
Artillery Park,)		
Supply Trains)		
1st Group of Trucks (Engineers	
The 16th Company, 11th Battalion/left at Crevecoeur with the 1st Army.		
5th Company, 27th Battalion Engineers.		
Detachment Corps Litter-Bearers,		
Balloon 77,		
1st Group of Trucks,		
The Aeronautic Sector (squadrons 24 to 279) at rest at Etrepagny.		

As to the Cavalry Divisions stationed in the area Foucarmont--Vieux-Rouen--Aumale--Formerie--Serqueux--Menorval, they were in superb condition, the strength was complete, the moral excellent. These were :

The 2nd Cavalry Division (General Lasson, HQ. at Auvilliers) returned eight days before from an interior mission in the vicinity of Lyon and Saint-Etienne; its artillery, its Howitzers, its cyclist detachment, left for some days on the Avre with the 18th Corps, joined them for this movement.

The 3d Caval^{ry} Division (General de Boissieur, HQ. at Gaillefontaine) recently attached to the 2nd Cavalry Corps, replaced the 4th Cavalry Division, which had been

seriously tried in front of Moreuil, and whose dismounted detachments had been engaged under the 1st Army. All these units were united and in good condition.

The 6th Cavalry Division, (General Mesple, HQ. at Richemont) had its artillery, but its Howitzers and its cyclist detachment had been left at Sains-Morainvillers and did not rejoin until during the movement.

THE FIRST MOVEMENTS OF CONCENTRATION. MARCH TOWARDS THE NORTHEAST.--During the night of April 9th-10th, the 2nd Cavalry Corps received telephonic information of the first movements of concentration of the Xth Army to which it belonged. This was to gain within two days, April 10th and 11th, the area of Bresle, one division complete on the right bank, the two others and the Corps troops closing up as much as possible along the left bank of the stream, all in accordance as the new billeting zones were evacuated by British troops who were still stationed on the right bank of the Bresle, and by elements of the Xth Army in process of re-arrangement. The conditions of time imposed and the requirements of billeting resulted in it being impossible to execute the movements, both on the 10th and the 11th, except in the afternoon successively by a part of the units.

The 2nd Cavalry Division on the 10th reached the area South of Blangy (HQ.), then on the 11th commencing at 12.00 Noon, the area of Vaux--Vergies--Inval--Watteblery, in which were still some British troops, which caused some difficulties, which were quickly settled. It established its Headquarters at Oisemont, posting its units with a view to continuing the movement towards the Somme, in the direction of Longpre-Les-Corps-Saints, a movement during the course of which the 6th Cavalry Division which followed, was to proceed to the left and in line with it, in the direction of Pont-Remy.

The 6th Cavalry Division evacuating part of the zone near Aumale on April 10th, slipped in rear of the 2nd Cavalry Division, between Foucarmont, Ellecourt, Haudricourt, Landes, with Headquarters at Richemont, and on April 11th, commencing at Noon closed on Bresle, with its tail at Saint-Martin-aux-Bois, Realcamps, Fallencourt, and with Headquarters at Blangy.

The 3rd Cavalry Division proceeding on April 10th toward Vatierville, la Caule-Sainte-Breuve, Ronchoise, Beaussault (with Headquarters at Saint-Germain-Sur-Eaulne), arrived on the 11th, commencing at 3.00 PM, to occupy the zone held on the 10th by the 6th Cavalry Division.

The Headquarters of the 2nd Cavalry Corps were stationed at Foucarmont. The Corps troops were echeloned on the 11th from Foucarmont to Fesques; the personnel of the Detachment Corps of litter-bearers^{bearers} up till then left at Remigny at the disposition of the 31st Army Corps, were brought in trucks to this zone.

Nothing had yet become known of the grave events which had occurred to the North. It was only during the night of the 11th-12th that, partly by telephone, partly through newspapers, we learned without other precise information of the penetration of the British front in Flanders. We then expected to see the 2nd Cavalry Corps push its march, and in fact, during the same night General Robillot was called by General Foch at midnight to Sarcus, receiving at the same time this message :

"The 2nd Cavalry Corps leaving the Xth Army should in two days (the 12th and 13th) gain the vicinity of Saint-Omer in order to take part in the battle along the Lys; in any case they must have crossed the Somme on the 12th, between Hangest and Pont-Remy, and have reached with the heads of its columns at least as far as the Doullens stream."

FIRST PERIOD : APRIL 12th to 15th.

A FORCED MARCH FROM BRESLE TO THE MOUNTAINS
OF FLANDERS.

APRIL 12th.--General Robillot returning from Sarcus arrived at Foucarmont about 9.30 AM, and issued his orders. Time was important, and it was necessary to start everybody on the way. Telephone calls to the Cavalry Divisions already oriented as to the probable direction of their march; departure at noon, each Cavalry Division evacuated its billets as soon as possible in order to facilitate the movement of troops following. At 10.15 AM the following order was issued :

Gain in two marches direct, on the 12th and and 13th, the vicinity of Saint-Omer, with the heads of the columns on the 12th, (2nd and 6th Cavalry Divisions alongside) along the Doullens stream, the tail division (3rd Cavalry Division) on the right bank of the Somme.

2nd Cavalry Division via Airaines, Longpre-les-Corps-Saints, Domart-en-Ponthieur, Bernaville, and Hallencourt, Fontaine-sur-Somme, Ailly-le-Haut-Clocher, Longvillers, Wavans.

6th Cavalry Division to the left (West) of the 2nd Cavalry Division, via Oisemont, Pont-Remy, Cramont, Auxy-le-Chateau and the Transloy, Huppy-Epagne, Saint-Riquier, Gueschard.

3rd Cavalry Division following, crossing the Bresle between Blangy and Senarpont, the Somme between Pont-Remy and Longpre-les-Corps-Saints.

While the troops marched, the Staff sought to assure the arrival of rations and shelter, and this was not a small affair. Liaison officers left for Montreuil, Doullens, Hesdin, to arrange directly for billets, circulation, supply stations, with the British Authorities, who had not yet evacuated the zone of march, and of stations of the 2nd Cavalry Corps and which required us, on the 13th, to deviate towards the West, commencing with the line Saint-Pol-Hesdin, from a part of the itinerary originally fixed. Other liaison officers arranged on the ground for the transportation by truck of detached elements which were to join, as well as for various materiel which the troops did not carry with them (forage, rations, cartridges, objects taken off packs

to lighten the horses, and which were to be returned when they were to become engaged). Another officer went to Senarpont to coordinate the movements of the Field Trains which were to draw supplies, and which were to be sent from there by their respective Cavalry Divisions to their new destination. 1100 furlough men were still in rear; by arrangement with the regulating stations they were stopped at Nogent-sur-Seine, organized and re-entrained directly for Saint-Omer, where, however, they would not arrive until the 16th. Everything was arranged, and at 5.15 PM the Cavalry Divisions could be informed of their billets, which the last elements would not reach until near midnight:

2nd and 6th Cavalry Divisions alongside in the area Estrees-les-Crecy--Fontaine-l'Etalong--Boffles--Hem--Saint-Acheul--Boufflers, separated by the road to Abbeville--Auxy-le-Chateau--Buires-aux-Bois; Headquarters of the 2nd Cavalry Division at Frohen-le-Grand; Headquarters of the 6th Cavalry Division at Auxy-le-Chateau.

3rd Cavalry Division behind, on the right bank of the Somme, in the area Epagne--Vauchelles-le-Quesnoy--Gorenflou--l'Etoile, Headquarters at Ailly-le-Haut-Clocher.

The PC of the 2nd Cavalry Corps ~~was~~ installed itself at Auxy-le-Chateau, about 9.00 PM, but only functioned there for some hours during the night, for the time necessary to issue the orders for the 13th. General Robillot had cut across several columns during his march, amongst others, those of the cuirassier brigade of the 3rd Cavalry Division, all in perfect order, and of which the fine appearance excited the admiration of the British Cavalry Corps, whose billeting zone they crossed

April 15.--Arriving during the night the Cavalry Division left before day to reach the area of Saint-Omer "which must be reached regardless of ~~xxx~~ cost". The 2nd Cavalry Division via Fillievres, Blangy-sur-Ternoise, Verchin and roads to the East; the 6th Cavalry Division, on the same line, along the axis Hesdin - Fruges, the 3rd Cavalry Division following in the trace of the 6th Cavalry Division; the artillery, the Auto-machine guns, and the cyclists were located in the column, as if we were to meet the enemy at the end of the march; the Field Trains were not to cross without new orders, the line Fruges--Arvin--Saint-Pol (2nd and 6th Cavalry Division) and the road Hesdin--Prevent (3rd Cavalry Division).

Long halt at Noon, in march formation in the vicinity of Verchin (2nd Cavalry Division), Fruges (6th Cavalry Division), Ruisseauville (3rd Cavalry Division) to allow the troops to rest after having covered 110 to 120 kilometers since Noon, April 12th, and to await assignment of the zone which they were to reach at the end of the day, on which the 2nd Cavalry Corps was not yet certain, and which instructions received seemed to indicate to be East of Saint-Omer.

"The Cavalry" said General Robillot in his order for the 13th, "will have to show that it has in no way lost its qualities and usefulness. As at the end of 1914, it will serve as a point of moral support before all resistance. In order to reach the battlefield, it has long marches to make; it is not sufficient to arrive in time, it is necessary to arrive with the horses in good condition. This is a question of conduct and of march discipline. The Commanding General, 2nd Cavalry Corps, counts on the support of the cavalry in everything that is grand and beautiful, to meet all situations

and to serve as an example to all".

And in fact, these forced marches which were to continue until April 13th over nearly 80 additional kilometers, and to which there was to succeed without rest, a long period of hardship and heavy fighting, were to be carried out, we may say, without any losses. Units of all arms were to present themselves in battle in superb form and animated by a fighting spirit were to be the admiration of all, once more justifying the confidence of the High Command and the high professional and moral value of all the organizations.

Contrary to all expectation, on information from the British army, the 2nd Cavalry Corps did not pass on April 13th, the area Thienbroucke--Audinethun--Fruges--Hesly (2nd Cavalry Division East of the line Fauquembergues--Crepy, with Headquarters at Radingnem, 6th Cavalry Division West of this line, with Headquarters at Fauquembergues). The 3rd Cavalry Division was echeloned in rear between Ruisseauville (Headquarters) and Hesdin, closed towards the head.

The PC of the 2nd Cavalry Corps was established at Fauquembergues at 11.00 AM, but remained there only a few hours, and on the evening of the 13th, was established at Wizernes to be nearer the source of information, and to attempt to orient itself on the situation which appeared quite serious. In fact we met at Fauquembergues during the morning, groups of ~~Portuguese soldiers~~ stampeded Portuguese soldiers.

The inhabitants were fearful and some thought to go away. Already along the roads we met groups of emigrants, of whom several stopped on seeing the blue uniforms. Our presence brought calm and confidence; "They are the French, we can remain, they will not pass!" Touching manifestations which increased during the following days only increased the morale of the troops and paid in advance for all their sacrifices.

Liaison was established during the day at Blandecques, with the staff of General Plummer, commanding the IInd British Army, who seemed quite satisfied to see us arrive to his rescue. Later we established communication with Cassel, the centre of information of this British Army.

The situation was not brilliant. The British front was broken at the point of junction of the ISt and IInd British Armies; these had made a considerable movement toward the rear and on diverging lines which threatened to create an empty space between them in the area South of Cassel. On the front of the IInd Army the line extended practically through Neuve-Eglise, South of Bailleul, Vieux-Berquin, and the enemy was continuing his attack seeking to enlarge the pocket.

This impression was confirmed by instructions received from General Foch, and dated April 12th :

"In case the German offensive should continue in the direction of Hazebrouck, and beyond, the Allied forces will operate with a view to limiting and then definitely stopping the hostile advance.

"To the South by progressively occupying the

general line Bethune--Saint-Omer, facing the Northeast.

"On the North by progressively occupying the general line Mont Kemmel--Cassel, facing to the South.

"Between these two lines held at all cost and which will block the enemy, to slow up, and then stop the enemy in his front by occupying facing to the East, lines of support...

"These lines will be in succession :

- a) "The line Bailleul -- Nieppe forest;
- b) "The line Berthen--Caestres--Hazebrouck--Aire;
- c) "The line Cassel--Eblinghem;
- d) "The line Cassel--Clairmarais forest. "

In order to coordinate the efforts , the 2nd Cavalry Corps, as well as all French troops, operating in the British zone, were placed under the orders of General Plummer, General Robillot retaining the command of all the French troops, which consisted of :

The 2nd Cavalry Corps which received orders to continue its movement on the 14th, towards Saint-Omer and, on the 15th, towards Steenworde;

The 133rd Infantry Division concentrating in the area Steenworde--Cassel;

The 28th Infantry Division on the way and debarking in the Watou area;

To these should be added the 59th Artillery (Howitzers on trucks) who, arriving on the 14th at Saint-Omer, after a tiresome journey, was ordered the same day towards Steenworde, where it would be supplied with rations and munitions by the 2nd Cavalry Corps, and placed at the disposition of the 133rd Infantry Division.

The 133rd Division (General Valentin) up to April 15* had fought in front of Moreuil, and had there suffered heavy losses; instead of being sent back to rest, it had been sent marching between April 7th and 10th, from the 1st to the 5th Army. Detrained on the 11th, at Marseille-le-Petit and Saint-Omer-en-Chasse, it detrained on the 12th and 13th at Dunkerque, Bergues and Esquelbeck, where the 2nd Cavalry Corps directed it on the 14th into the battle in the Steenworde--Cassel area.

The 28th Infantry Division (General Madelin) was on the contrary entirely fresh, it had just reorganized and had the benefit of a long rest. Brought by railroad from the Xth Army area, it had not commenced to detrain at Bergues until the morning of the 14th, when it was to concentrate in the Watou area.

*The date of April 15th appears to be a typographical error, probably April 5th was meant. C.H.L.

April 14th and 15th.--A short march on the 14th, on a gray and cold day, in order to reach the area West of Saint-Omer (Quercamps--Moringhem--Wizernes--Nielles-les-Blequin); Headquarters, of the 2nd Cavalry Corps at Wizernes, of the 2nd Cavalry Division at Wisques, of the 6th Cavalry Division at Boisdingham, or the 3rd Cavalry Division at Nielles-les-Blequin. All the elements of the Cavalry Divisions North of the line Therouanne-Ledinghem by 10.00 AM.

The march was resumed during the night of the same day, the 14th, facilitated by reconnaissances made during the day and by a system of guides which had been very well organized by the British Authorities across Saint-Omer, as well as by a complicated arrangement of the columns (1), so as to reach before 8.00 AM on the 15th, the area of Steenworde, in order to be able to enter into action if necessary on the same day. The 2nd Cavalry Division via Arques-Bavinchove--Bas-Cassel--Steenworde. The 6th Cavalry Division via Saint-Omer, Clairmarais, Noordpeene, Waemaerscappel, North of Hardifort. The 3rd Cavalry Division via Watten, Bollezeele, Zegerscappel, Esquelbecq, Wormhoudt.

On the other hand, the 133rd Infantry Division, in accordance with orders issued to it by General Robillot, on the preceding evening, advanced from the zone of debarkation towards Steenworde, and arranged to meet any requirement; its group of chasseur battalions in the vicinity of Caestre, its two other regiments echeloned in depth South and West of Steenworde, in liaison with the 15th British Corps (PC at Saint-Sylvestre) ready to intervene in the general direction of Meterem or of Merris, Headquarters of the Division at Therdegem.

The two battalions with auto machine guns of the 2nd and 6th Cavalry Divisions were placed, from the 14th, at his disposition to support his forces, and cover their flanks.

While the officers of the General Staff of the Cavalry Corps carried out ~~xxxx~~ liaisons and reconnaissances, obtained information, oriented new arrivals, supplied rations and munitions, General Robillot issued his orders with a view to initially establishing organizations at his disposal in support of the British forces who were under strong pressure on the front from Neuve-Eglise to Bailleul, and to at first arrange with them for a possible covering line.

GENERAL DISCUSSION.

It was evident that the heights in the middle of the plain, extending from Mount Kemmel to Mont des Cats, and extending towards Saint-Omer through the isolated hill of Mont Cassel, would be the main objective of the hostile efforts, advancing towards Calais, and seeking, besides, to cause the salient of Ypres to fall. Important concentrations of troops (3 new German Divisions) had, in fact, been reported by the British Information Service, as South of the railroad from Bailleul to Hazebrouck (2 divisions) and as South of Wytscnaete (1 division) and leaving it to be inferred that in a short time, concentric operations would be undertaken with a view to obtaining a foothold on the Mounts from the East, while turning them from the West:

(1) 50 meters interval between each squadron and between each group of 15 or 20 vehicles, reducing to a minimum, risks of collision.

Once master of these hills which dominate the entire country, the enemy would see opening in front of him the way to Dunkirk and Calais, and its advance would singularly compromise the British and Belgian organizations engaged around Ypres and to the North, whilst our troops would be unable to find in the plain a well defined line of resistance which they could occupy.

It was, therefore, along the Mounts that it was necessary, at all costs, in case of the breaking of the British front, to stop the assailant and immediately support the resistance by bringing up all available artillery.

That part of the front which extends from Bailleul to Neuf-Berquin appeared, according to information received, to be the most immediately threatened. The 133rd Infantry Division would be sent there, being the first one ready and the nearest.

The 28th Infantry Division, as soon as it arrived in the vicinity of Watou, would be oriented towards the North of the hills, to support the defense, assist the British to hold, regardless of cost, the salient of Ypres, which it was essential to retain, not only on account of the effect which it exercised on the facilities of manoeuvre of the enemy, but also to keep safe the corner of Belgium, of which the loss would have exercised on the morale and bearing of the Belgian Army, a serious effect.

Between these two divisions, each operating in a narrow defined zone, and disposed in considerable depth, with their heads at a distance of about two or three kilometers from the actual British front, so as consequently to afford them an immediate support, were to be placed the cavalry divisions, charged with supporting the center of defense of the Mounts, and there establishing an unbreakable line, pushing their outposts as far as the actual front of the battle.

FIRST DEPLOYMENTS OF THE ARTILLERY.

After its detraining, the 133rd Artillery Division was directed towards the Mont des Cats to there take position; it was reinforced by the 59th Artillery (Howitzers on trucks) which quickly arrived. The Artillery of the Cavalry Divisions in order to gain time, made their reconnaissances in automobiles, loaned by the Cavalry Corps staff; two batteries were immediately called upon to enter into position for action.

The Artillery of the 2nd Cavalry Division was posted two kilometers Southwest of Berthem (probable action between Meteren and Bailleul inclusive);

The Artillery of the 6th Cavalry Division was posted one kilometer West of the summit of Mont Noir (probable action between Bailleul and Dranoutre);

The Artillery of the 3rd Cavalry Division would temporarily remain in reserve and would study the possible future positions.

All the batteries, in addition to their missions for barrages and for supporting the infantry, had orders to carry out immediately and daily, considerable harassing fire against the enemy's reserves, in which fires the British artillery were to ultimately participate, as they were better supplied with heavy artillery.

The Division Artillery, with the assistance of the 2nd Cavalry Corps Artillery Information Service, organized a system of terrestrial observation, which completed a series of observation and information posts established by the 133rd Infantry Division at Monts des Cats; and by the 28th Infantry Division at Mont Vidaigne, and Kimmel; and by the 3rd Cavalry Division at Cassel.

DEPLOYMENT OF LARGE UNITS.

After the 14th, in accordance with orders issued on the evening of the 13th, the 133rd Infantry Division, echeloned between Caestre, Steenworde and Terdeghem, pushed its units forward, on the 15th; the Chasseur Battalion in part towards Fletre, and in part towards the road from Caestre to Bailleul, facing towards Meteren; the 321st Infantry between Eecke and Steenworde; the 401st Infantry in the vicinity of Terdeghem. The 17th Battalion auto machine guns of the 2nd Cavalry Corps was placed at its disposition to replace the two Battalions of auto machine guns of the 2nd and 6th Cavalry Divisions, which had been loaned on the 15th to the 33rd Infantry Division (British).

The 28th Infantry Division detrained on the 14th at Bergues, and on the 15th proceeded by regiments to the area of Watou and to the South; the 22nd Infantry went to the North of Abeele; the 99th Infantry to the South of Watou, facing towards Reningelst and Westoutre. The PC of the Infantry Division at Abeele.

The three cavalry divisions concentrated on the 15th by 8 AM, Southeast of Steenworde; the 2nd Cavalry Division between Eecke and Godwaerswelde; the 6th Cavalry Division between Godwaerswelde and Abeele, with its advance posts as far out as the general line les Quatre-Fils-Aymon--Saint-Jans-Capelle--Mont Noir and connecting between them on the line Mont des Cats--Berthem--Saint-Jans-Capelle (PC of the 2nd and 6th Divisions at Steenworde). The 3rd Cavalry Division temporarily remained available North of Cassel, in the area of Waemerscappel--Oudezeele, ready to proceed either towards the East or towards the Southeast as necessary (PC at Waemerscappel).

The PC of the 2nd Cavalry Corps remained temporarily at Zuytpeene, but after the morning of the 15th, the future PC was reconnoitered, and later set up in a farm North of Steenworde, for any possible occurrence.

The telephone lines were actively laid during the day and night to the Division PC's. The 2nd Cavalry Corps Headquarters squadron arrived at Zuytpeene, at 7.00 PM and immediately organized a liaison service by courier posts with Watou (28th Infantry Division), Waemerscappel (3rd Infantry Division), Terdeghem (133rd Infantry Division), Steenworde (2nd and 6th Cavalry Division), Godweswaelde (9th British Corps) with relay post at Cassel. This system modified, according to circumstances and made permanent,

allowed at the hottest point of the battle, certain service at all times of indispensable liaison between large units.

With this deployment on the 15th occurred the first contact with the enemy, and the French forces found themselves engaged on the 16th by reason of the new British break, and counter attacks in which they were to participate.

Two hundred kilometers covered in sixty hours of forced marches had led the 2nd Cavalry Corps from the Normandy plains to the frontier of Belgium, on the Flanders Hills, which was the stake of the great battle which had now lasted for eight days, at the very moment when our Allies, very seriously tried, and more and more strongly pressed by forces which were constantly being renewed, ran the risk of seeing themselves torn loose by a final assault from the principal point of support of their resistance.

On this date of April 15th, the British front in front of us was held by the 9th British Corps (PC at Godwerswaelde) and by the 15th British Corps (PC at Steenworde), in liaison amongst themselves in the Bailleul area. The front lines were abundantly bombarded during the entire day, principally about Spanbroeckmolen (near Wytchaete) and in the area from Bailleul to Crucifix--Corner and Mont de Lille. At 5.00 PM, the German attack started and captured Crucifix--Corner, Ravelsberg, and Bailleul. Three new German Divisions, among which the famous Alpine Corps, entered this action.

We can judge of the morale of the British High Command at the result of this check, through the order of the 9th British Corps, issued at midnight of the 15th, and which announced the general withdrawal of the 19th, 49th, and 59th British Divisions, towards the area of the hills, under the protection of a covering detachment consisting of the 34th Division, which was already in line and in support.

On its side, the IInd British Army issued orders to burn the aviation hangars, and promised its exhausted troops a prompt relief by the French and Belgians; an agreeable outlook which besides was not without exercising immediately a healthy influence. At 1.00 AM they requested by telephone the 2nd Cavalry Corps "to advance on Boescnepe, in view of the situation, a part of the Cavalry Divisions, during the morning of the 16th". We replied that by 7.00 AM there would be at that point one brigade from each of our 2nd and 6th Cavalry Divisions, and that the main body of the Cavalry Division would not delay to follow them.

SECOND PERIOD : APRIL 16th to 24th.

Obtaining contact. -- Relief of British troops.
Partial attacks.

April 16th.--On the morning of April 16th, the situation of the French troops was as follows :

On the right, the 133rd Infantry Division, with its three regiments in echelon, was preparing, in accordance with orders issued by the Commanding General of the IInd British Army to relieve during the night of the 16th-17th, the 33rd British Division, between the mill North of Meteren and Watron, taking over this part of the front, in liaison, on the right, with the 1st Australian Division.

On the left, the 28th Infantry Division pushed forward during the night, arrived in support of the 9th British Corps, with two of its regiments in line at the head; the 99th Infantry South of Westoutre, and the 30th Infantry South of Reeningelst; two battalions of the 28th artillery covering the defile of Westoutre.

Towards Godwerswaelde and Boesenepe, the 2nd and 6th Cavalry Divisions were dismounted Southwest of Steenworde, with mounted security detachments in front as far as the first combat lines. The 3rd Cavalry Division remained in reserve between Oudezeele and Steenworde.

"The mission of the 2nd and 6th Cavalry Divisions and the 28th Infantry Division, " according to the order of 9.00 AM, April 16th, "was to prevent the enemy, at all costs, from obtaining a foothold on the heights extending from Mount Kemmel to Mont des Cats inclusive, supporting the British troops which are Southwest of these hills, and replacing them in case of necessity.

" The 28th Infantry Division between the Poperinghe--Kemmel road, and the line Westoutre--Dranoutre, including Mont-Rouge.

" The 6th Cavalry Division between this line and the line Godwerswaelde--Meteren, including the Mont des Cats.

" In each division, the troops will be so echeloned that the division reserves may intervene at the South or Southwest of the hills, either to re-enforce the line of resistance or to counter attack.

" The line at present held by the British Infantry will be considered as the line which must not be given up.

" Division Commanders will have command of all troops engaged in their sectors " .

The main bodies of the 2nd and 6th Cavalry Divisions closed as much as possible in rear of their security elements, dismounted, formed foot battalions and proceeded towards the positions, the defense of which they were charged with.

The 2nd Cavalry Division bivouaced in the woods between Godwerswaelde and Eecke, sending out the battalion of the 2nd Dragoons, (Colonel Morgon) towards the Mont des Cats, to the Trappist's convent; the battalion of the 2nd Light Chasseurs, (Colonel Rivain) to the five Green Roads; the battalion of the 12th Dragoons (Major Segerand) in reserve at Kruystraet.

The 6th Cavalry Division also occupied the South slopes of Mont Kokerel (Battalion from the 14th Dragoons) and Mont Noir with Battalion from the 6th Lancers, PC of the Infantry Division in reserve under the orders of General Forgueray, and later under Colonel Moineville at Heksken (Coucou).

Along the entire front, covered by mounted patrols who marked the line of observation, the troops arranged themselves and worked arduously to prepare the terrain, at the same time that they prepared in rear, with the assistance of the engineer companies of the 2nd Cavalry Corps (11th Company, 6th Battalion and 27th Company, 5th Battalion) a second position including the Mont des Cats and Mont Kokerel, facing South and Southeast, in view of possible attacks from Bailleul, Meteren, or Neuve-Eglise. *

While in front of our center, the front remained rather calm, except for some fluctuations among the British troops who were in front of us and who appeared to retire slightly, without it being possible to determine exactly their positions and movements, on the other hand, on our left and right the enemy continued its local attacks on the 9th British Corps, who during the morning lost the heights of Spanbroekmolen, and on the 15th British Corps who also lost Meteren.

Orders were, therefore, issued by General Plummer, about 9.00 AM to counter attack at 6.00 PM to re-establish the situation: the 28th Infantry Division on the left toward Mount Kemmel--and Messines, objective the spur between Wytschaete and Wulverghem, supported on the left by the 22nd British Corps who were to take the enemy in flank; the 133rd Infantry Division on the right, in the direction of Caestre--Bailleul, objective Meteren and the heights to the North if these were in the enemy's possession. The 9th British Corps would connect the two attacks, and maintain the continuity of the front which it occupied, and for this purpose the 2nd and 6th Cavalry Divisions would be at its disposal.

At the same time a telegram arrived from General Foch, stating:

"The French troops are to hold the battle where it now is. The Germans this morning attacked Wytschaete and will be between Kemmel and Neuve-Eglise." This was a recall to the principles of the defensive-offensive. The French troops were already oriented in this regard by previous instructions; General Robillot completed and interpreted the dispositions to be taken for attack; he had the 3rd Cavalry Division approach during the night and foresaw the employment, commencing on the morning of the 17th, of the three dismounted Cavalry Divisions, to extend and complete the offensive in case of success, in the direction of Neuve-Eglise.

The attack launched at 6.00 PM, although it did not completely succeed, nevertheless realized a certain advance. At nightfall, on the left, we re-occupied the woods North of Wytschaete, the East and South edges of that village. But the enemy still had some troops in the Wytschaete wood. On the right, we retook the houses immediately North of Meteren, without being able to penetrate into this village. The action continued during the night with harassing and interdiction

* The Engineer Companies arrived at Zuytpeene on the 15th, and were moved by trucks commencing at Noon on the 16th to Steenacker (South of Abele) and, after the 17th, under the orders of Captain Didier, started work.

fire which was succeeded, on the morning of the 17th, by concentrations on the assembly areas of the enemy, near to and in rear of his front. This firing limited by the range of the light artillery, according to reports obtained from prisoners, caused the enemy serious trouble and appreciable losses. What would these have been, had the 2nd Cavalry Corps been able to place heavy artillery in line? What results might not we have obtained with interdiction fire at long range on the few very restricted communication centers in this country, where the German reserves with considerable materiel were gathered.

But the IIInd British Army insisted on having its exhausted troops relieved.

At 3.00 PM, it ordered by telephone to "make the necessary dispositions with the 9th Army Corps as soon as possible to reconnoiter the sector of the 19th British Infantry Division, with a view to relieving it as soon as the situation will permit".

At 4.10 PM a new telephone message was received :

"Relieve the British troops with the 28th and 133rd Infantry Divisions".

Under these conditions it was necessary to give up all idea of an offensive and prepare for relief. At 2.00 AM during the night of April 16-17, General Robillot, advised, in addition, of the probability of serious attacks in the area of the hills, and particularly towards Kemmel, issued orders to consolidate positions held and to expedite the work with the greatest activity.

Preparation of the main hills which form the main points of the defense; of the secondary crests which cover the artillery and the principal observation posts; of the small knolls and points in the foreground of the zone, which will break the first rush of the adversary; a large employment of automatic arms covering approaches; permanent garrisons in the principal points of support to stop the attempts of turning or infiltration; Mount Kemmel with Dranoutre and the flanks of the Tyrone farm, the valley of Hellebeeck and its small woods, Donegal, Aercraft and the road cut Southeast of Lindenhoeck, crossing the ravines flowing into the Douve.

Lindenhoeck and la Polka crossing the valley of Haringhebeeck.

Kemmel, the farm and the small woods at the head of the ravine of Kleinkemmelbeeck.

Scharpenberg and Mont-Rouge, with Locre, Couronne-Cabaret, Brulooze, Butterilly, la Clytte.

Mont Vidaigne and Mont Noir with the Chateau park, the Croix de Poperinghe, Meulennoueck, Saint-Jans Capelle, Levrette.

Mont Kokerel with Berthen and Purgatoire.

Mont des Cats with Fontaine Hoeck, Besace, Rossignol.

We will find nearly all these names again during the course of the fighting which took place from Kemmel to Scharpenberg and to Mont Rouge, and more than one will mark the limit of the German advance.

April 17th--The night of the 16th-17th was calm, but at 5.00 AM the enemy started a general bombardment with heavy artillery and gas shell on the area North of Baillieu, which bombardment continued all morning, and was particularly heavy about 10.00 AM, with strong concentration on Mont Kemmel.

Almost all telephone lines were cut; these were replaced by wireless messages. The PC of the 2nd Cavalry Corps was immediately moved to the vicinity of Steenworde in order to more closely follow the advance. The previous dispositions taken for relieving the British troops were cancelled; both French and English were to stay at the foot of the slopes on the South side of the hills. The 3rd Cavalry Division, reserve of the Cavalry Corps, was brought up to the Brabant wood, between Abeele and Reningelst.

Besides, to better coordinate efforts and avoid a dual command, General Robillot obtained from General Plummer, authority to place in both French sectors all the troops therein, both French and English, under the orders of the French Division Commander, who was at the same time placed in command of the sector.

About 10.30 AM, the enemy twice tried to deploy from Meteren; he was stopped by our fire. About the same time two attempts made to turn Mont Kemmel from the Southwest and the Southeast, towards Lindenhoeck, were also repulsed; successive waves of attacks were drawn back with heavy losses.

Quiet was gradually restored towards evening, and so well that at 6.00 PM it was possible to issue orders to the 28th Infantry Division to relieve the 19th British Division, General Madelin taking over the command of the sector, at 6.00 AM on the 19th, the relief was ended. All the British Artillery was to remain in place, and passed under the orders of the 28th Infantry Division. In addition, as a measure of precaution, the 3rd Cavalry Division permanently kept one brigade and its cyclist group at the Brabant woods, as a possible support to the 28th Infantry Division.

The check met by the Germans was more serious than was believed. "Four times already, on the 16th" read the memorandum book of an officer of the 8th Battery of the 3rd Battalion, 31st Field Artillery, captured on April 20th, South of Lindenhoeck, "the attack on Mont Kemmel failed. On the 17th a new unsuccessful attack behind a rolling barrage. On the 18th a new infantry attack without preparation had the same result";

"Three regiments of the 2nd Bavarian Division" reported a soldier of the 11th Company of the 22nd Bavarian Infantry, captured on the 19th, on the road from Neuve-Eglise to Dranoutre, "were tried before Kemmel. The Company had only 17 riflemen commanded by a sergeant. All the officers had been wounded. The losses affected the morale, and the Division having received orders to carry the slopes Southwest of Kemmel where were very dangerous machine guns, did not attack".

The German offensive, therefore, suffered in this way a notable slowing up, and these few days of respite were to allow relief of the exhausted British Divisions without difficulty, and to place in line the new French

Divisions arriving to the rescue, and without interruption until complete stabilization occurred.

FORMATION OF THE ARMY DETACHMENT OF THE NORTH
UNDER THE ORDERS OF GENERAL MITRY. ORGANIZATION
OF THE FRONT INTO TWO CORPS SECTORS. PARTIAL
ENGAGEMENTS.

April 18th to 24th.--Three new French Divisions were on their way to Flanders, the 34th Infantry Division (General Savatier), which came by trucks, detrained between Steenworde and Abeele (Headquarters at Watou, PC at Abeele). The 154th Infantry Division (General Breton) was to detrain in the area of Saint-Jans--Ter--Biesen, while the 39th Infantry Division (General Massenet) was reported at the railroad stations of Bergues, Rousbrugge and Esquelbeck. The artillery of the two first divisions were called to go into position as soon as possible, and that of the 34th Infantry Division during the same night of the 18th-19th, on Mont Kokerel and to the North of Scharpenberg. At the same time GHQ decided to form the "Army detachment of the North" (April 17) under the orders of General Mitry, who arrived on April 19th at Esquelbeck, to assume command. On and after April 21st, the French front in Flanders was extended from Bailleul to Wytschaete, between the 15th British Corps on the right and the 22nd British Corps on the left, and having four infantry divisions and two divisions of French cavalry divided into two corps sectors. One Division of Infantry and one Division of French cavalry were in army reserve. Some heavy batteries, British Howitzers and guns scattered throughout the whole French front, cooperated in the defense, and were under the orders of the French command.

There resulted between the French and British Divisions mixed on the front, a series of movements, which the inaction of the enemy permitted to be carried out to a satisfactory end.

The 133rd Infantry Division which occupied the Meteren sector was relieved during the night of the 19th-20th by an Australian division; while during the same night the 34th Infantry Division relieved the 49th British Infantry Division in the Kemmel sector, between the 49th British Division and the 22nd British Corps. The 154th Infantry Division, in its turn, during the night of the 22nd-23rd, was placed between the 34th and 28th Infantry Divisions, who thus gained use of a part of their troops, the 34th Infantry Division at the same time extending towards its right and taking over a part of the front previously assigned to the 133rd Infantry Division.

From Noon of April 21st, General Nollet, commanding the 36th Corps, assumed command of the two right divisions :

133rd Infantry Division on the right, between the line Caestre--Fontaine--Hoeck--Bailleul Church (boundary of the 15th British Corps) on the West, and Godwerswaelde, Saint-Jans-Capell, on the East (PC at Kruystraete).

34th Infantry Division on the left of the 133rd Infantry Division, as far as the line Boeschepe--Mont Vidaigne--Dranoutre (PC at la Montagne);

2nd Cavalry Division (dismounted) on Mont des Cats, Mont Kokerel and Mont Rouge (PC at Godwerswaelde in second line);

PC of the 36th Corps at Steenworde.

General Robillot retained the command of the two left Divisions with PC at Watou.**

The 154th Infantry Division in liaison, on the right, with the 34th Infantry Division as far as the line Westoutre--Wulverghem (PC at la Loge, Southwest of the Brabant wood).

28th Infantry Division, on the left of the 154th Infantry Division as far as the boundary line of the 22nd British Corps, to the East (Reningelst--la Clytte--Wytshaste), with PC at Abeele.

3rd Cavalry Division dismounted, on Mont Vidaigue, Mont Rouge and Scharpenberg in second line, with PC at Coucou--Heksken.

In army reserve, the 29th Infantry Division (Headquarters at Winnezele), with its regiments echeloned facing East in the probable future direction, either against Poperinghe, Neuve-Eglise or Bailleul, and the 6th Cavalry Division (mounted) in the area of Oudezele (Headquarters) after it had been relieved on the hills on the 23rd by the 3rd Cavalry Division.

Artillery.--The 36th Corps had at its disposal the 59th artillery (truck) one battalion of British heavy artillery (12 to 16, 6" Howitzers) attached to the 133rd Infantry Division.

The artillery of the 2nd Cavalry Corps, 2nd, 3rd, and 6th Cavalry Divisions, of the 28th and 154th Infantry Divisions; of two battalions of 105 mm guns (heavy artillery of the 2nd Cavalry Corps), of two battalions of British heavy artillery, same composition as above, were attached respectively to the 28th and 154th Infantry Divisions.

The detachment of heavy British artillery (General Mackenzie) (one battalion of two 60-pounder guns and two batteries of 6" guns) fired harassing and counter-battery fire over the entire front of the two corps.

This general reorganization of the front was completed by re-arranging the rear areas and utilities, which in accord with the British authorities, greatly contributed in establishing some order in the going and coming of all the large units. On our example the British Command abandoned the system, up to then in force on this part of the front, of combat zones distinct from zones of stations, the first of which were organized perpendicularly to the front, while the second were determined according to the bulletin resources,

**After his arrival at Watou, on the 18th, and on account of the lack of proper camouflage, the PC of the 2nd Cavalry Corps was attacked about 11.00 PM by several hostile planes, who dropped bombs about the occupied barracks, luckily without causing any losses. An anti-aircraft defense organized the following day with the Cavalry Corps auto machine guns together with a service of information, resulted in keeping the hostile planes at a sufficient distance.

and which resulted in each partial relief, an inextricable mix-up.

The one-meter guage railroad from Esquelbeck to Steenworde, which was placed at our disposition, the control of the munition depot near Poperinghe, well served by a temporary railroad built by the English, but little used by them on account of its proximity to the front, and a regular service by trucks, allowed an intensive supply system, thanks to the devotion of the maintenance personnel taken from the automobile transports and some available territorial troops.

The incessant bringing up of munitions allowed an increase of the artillery fire in place of a decrease. "The allowance for 75 mm guns for April 20th-21st had been 17,000 rounds, or 100 rounds per gun, while 80,000 rounds had been brought up to the depot; we could, therefore, fire twice as much". "Whatever the attitude of the hostile artillery, the fire of our artillery should retain the character of extreme violence, under the sole condition of having an assured supply of ammunition".

The general instruction of General Robillot, dated April 19th, and commenting on the tactical instructions issued by General Foch, determined to all, the mission of the French troops fighting on the British front, as being: "To assure at any cost occupation of the mountainous hills, and if possible, to extend this by retaking at first the low slopes, and then, if possible, the heights of Neuve-Eglise--Wyttschaete and Bailleul, by a series of offensive actions with limited objectives, which were to serve as a base for new advance."

The dispositions taken as a whole, the arrangement of the large units, the choice of successive positions to be prepared; the employment of the artillery and the daily program of harassing, interdiction, and counter-battery fire; the making of partial and sector counter-attacks; the mission of the Cavalry Divisions as second line troops, furnishing safety garrisons on the hills and as mobile reserves, under the orders of the Cavalry Division Commanders,** all these measures were approved by the Commander of the Army Detachment of the North, on his assuming command, and were to contribute to give to our front as soon as the reliefs were completed, a character of increasing activity up to the great German attack of April 25th. Only the lack of long range heavy guns would not permit to have as much as wished, artillery fire on the narrow pocket of Bailleul, where the German reserves accumulated and where their supply system must have been singularly precarious.

**This method of employment of Cavalry Divisions has given excellent results, it has not caused any exaggerated measures on the part of Infantry Divisions, anxious to save their own troops, and the energetic intervention of cavalry units, principally during the grand attacks of April 25th to 29th, proved that they were always ready to quickly come into action and to generously support the infantry as required.

On their side the Germans limited themselves during the days from April 18th to 24th, to artillery fire followed by some partial actions, tending to consolidate their previous gains on the crest of Bailleul--Neuve-Eglise--Vulwerghem, which constituted for them a new base of departure for a further offensive. There was a very clear impression that the Germans were moving their forces in the rear towards the East, with a view to relieving the congestion of the Bailleul pocket, and that they were more and more accumulating their most powerful means of attack in the region of Kemmel--Lindenhoeck--Spy farm; the advance posts of Kemmel were, on their part, after the 18th, the objective of repeated attacks, all repulsed.

In view of a great battle which appeared imminent, General Robillot multiplied his precautions and did not fail to excite the activity of his subordinates. Work on the second positions was pushed with vigor, the arrangement of communications, of de-laid roads, the improvement of liaisons and their duplication by couriers, mounted messengers and relays; the utilization of the terrain with steep slopes as an initial protection against bombardment; the preparation of counter attacks prepared in detail according to possible future events; the reciprocal support of the artillery of different sectors and the placing in position on their arrival of re-enforcing batteries; the bringing up of ammunition and providing a security service for first line troops, especially required his attention, while along the entire front, minor combats took place, where the initiative was sometimes with us, and sometimes with the enemy.

Thus in the area South of Kemmel, our troops who had failed the previous day in an attempt against Spanrockmolen, captured on the 19th, Donegal and Aircraft farms, objectives previously assigned to their activity. On the next night they repulsed a hostile attempt against Fletre. On the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, there was no infantry action, but an increase of the artillery fire, and a great activity of the enemy's air service which was clearly superior to ours, and machine gunned our lines at low altitudes. On the evening of the 23rd, there was a slight withdrawal of the 34th Infantry Division on our right after a lively attack.

April 24th--The battle continued on the morning of the 24th, included in the area from Kemmel to Locre, with an artillery activity which ceased during the afternoon; but towards 6.40 PM, the bombardment recommenced with violence against the summits and North slopes of Kemmel, soon extending to Scharpenberg and to the village of Kemmel; our artillery replied energetically.

While the 34th Infantry Division re-established its line by a successful counter-attack about 8.00 PM, our two Infantry Divisions (28th and 154th) which had received orders to enlarge our positions, seized Daylight Corner and Vina Corner and continued on beyond. At 10.00 PM at a slight distance beyond these places they encountered violent machine gun fire and dense occupation. They, nevertheless, held on under the protection of a barrage and with the assistance of some local reserves.

"20"

From prisoners taken during this action it became known that a general attack with use of gas was to take place at 4.00 AM on the 25th. This information was received by the 28th Infantry Division at midnight, was confirmed at 1.30 AM and was immediately transmitted to the Cavalry Corps, to neighboring units, and to all the artillery who, commencing at 2.45 AM, started their COP fires and neutralizing fires on the few German batteries that had up to then been located. This was the beginning of the great battle which continued without cessation until April 30th, for the possession of the hills, at the foot of which the enemy's formidable efforts were to be broken.

Already, the evening before, on information received as to the presence in rear of Kemmel hill of the Alpine corps, General Robillot had intensified and doubled the harassing fires previously ordered, this was so thoroughly done that during this night of the 24th to the 25th, and commencing at 2.45 AM on the 25th, COP, barrage and neutralizing fires succeeded one another without interruption. Our artillery fired fully during nearly the entire night, in spite of the enormous superiority of the German heavy artillery which, since the beginning, had been cruelly felt.

THE BATTLE OF KEMMEL APRIL 25th - 30th.

April 25th.--On the morning of April 25th, the front of the 2nd Cavalry Corps was organized as follows :

154th Infantry Division on the right:
 413th Infantry on the right with two battalions in line and one in support;
 416th Infantry on the left with two battalions in line and one in support;
 414th Infantry in reserve, with three battalions echeloned Northwest of Wesoutre.

In rear :

Three dismounted battalions of the 3rd Cavalry Division, under General Forqueray:

One battalion on Mount Vidaigne,
 One battalion on the Scharpenberg,
 One battalion in the Brabant woods.

28th Infantry Division on the left :

30th Infantry on the right, two battalions in line and one in support.
 22nd Infantry on the left, two battalions in line, and one in support;
 99th Infantry in reserve on the slopes of the Scharpenberg.

The nearness of the enemy almost at the first slopes of Mount Kemmel, the absence of sure communications between the Scharpenberg and Mount Kemmel, required us to maintain the local reserves and the PC of the Infantry Division, on or beyond the North slopes of Mount Kemmel, in order to occupy the crest in case of attack, before the enemy could obtain a foothold there.

The 2nd and 6th Cavalry Division Artillery, as well as one battalion of the 28th Infantry Division Artillery had been brought, on the evening before, in position to support the attack against Daylight Corner and Donegal.

In front of us the Germans had utilized the preceding days to arrange in place, before a restricted objective, extending from Dranoutre inclusive to the Polka inclusive, an extremely powerful artillery, with heavy trench mortars and the regular troops of four specially chosen Infantry Divisions: 50th Infantry Division to the North, 4th Bavarian Division, the Alpine Corps, and the 22nd Reserve Division. Movements had been made at night. During the day a very dense aviation barrage prevented observation, already hindered on account of a persistent fog and the late arrival of our air squadrons (April 21st - 22nd). At night the hostile airplanes bombed and machine gunned our rear areas, cutting the telephone lines and interfering with supply arrangements.

About 2.00 AM during the night of the 24th to 25th, the violent bombardment started from the front directed against batteries and rear areas, and participated in by very heavy caliber guns (380mm), and with a large proportion of toxic shells, with apparently the employment of a new stupefying gas, which bombardment, commencing at 3.00 AM, became so intense, that witnesses stated they had never seen another like it.

At 4.30 AM the enemy started an attack on our left against the 28th Infantry Division and the British troops; at 5.00 AM, on our right, against the 154th Infantry Division and its junction with the 39th Infantry Division; finally, at 7.00 AM, at the center, against Mount Kemmel, against the 28th Infantry Division, which would thus have to support almost the entire effort.

Our first lines without cover severely tried by the bombardment as a result of the attack against Daylight Corner and Donegal, were almost everywhere submerged; a large part of machine guns and automatic rifles were broken. Our barrages made in front of Daylight Corner in the course of our attack, lost their effectiveness on account of the uncertainty as to where the front line lay in view of the enemy's advance. They must have inflicted serious losses to the assailant, particularly during his last preparations, but they were distant from the slopes of Mount Kemmel and no longer reached the first attack waves.

"About 5.30 AM," states the Commanding General of the 28th Infantry Division, in his report of April 27th, "a rolling barrage by trench mortars of all calibers was added to the artillery fire and succeeded in annihilating the greater part of the combat groups of our first line; at the same time an intense machine gun fire opened up along the entire front and, towards 6.00 AM, the elements of support of the 28th Infantry Division were in contact with numerous German groups, advancing to the attack. Under the fire of our machine guns, the first German wave was stopped on the first slopes of Mount Kemmel and remained there for nearly an hour, covered by a double barrage which swept the East and North slopes of Mount Kemmel and the crest itself, which fire gradually reduced our machine guns to silence and destroyed all the communications.

"The Lieutenant-Colonel Commanding the 30th Infantry seized this moment to lead a counter attack along the South slopes, which pushed to beyond the first hostile line, but it met a second wave which was itself advancing to the offensive, and which wave was accompanied by automatic rifles, trench mortars, 37mm guns and even some 77 mm guns. The few machine guns which on our side were still in condition to fire, nevertheless succeeded in breaking the second wave, except on our left where it reached the front of the Kemmel village--Polka--Rossignol wood. The German barrage was held between the slopes of Mount Kemmel and the valley of Kemmelbeck.

"A third wave then reached the crest of Mount Kemmel where a bloody hand to hand fight started between Germans and the 99th Infantry Battalion holding Mount Kemmel, to which, all elements of the 30th Infantry still in condition to fight, joined in. Rallying one company, the 10th, ^{the} Lieut-Colonel charged in a counter-attack against the East slopes of Mount Kemmel, where the enemy was progressing with a view to enveloping the movement. Returning to his PC, he found it occupied by the enemy, and was obliged to fall back to near Butterfly Farm.

"Between 7 and 8.00 AM, the Germans again attacked Kemmel village and the Rossignol wood which they passed, occupying the Siege farm, by surrounding the defenders (one company of the 99th Infantry and one machine gun company of the division territorial Battalion sent from la Clytte to establish liaison with the English). After a bloody resistance which excited the admiration of the British, the troops decimated and almost annihilated, were overcome by numbers; towards 9.00 AM Mount Kemmel and the Rossignol woods were in the hands of the Germans.

"During this time, on the right, some German units forcing the line of defense towards its junction with the 416th Infantry of the 154 Infantry Division, penetrated into the valley of the Kemmelbeck, and after 6.30 AM invaded the 2nd and 6th Cavalry Division batteries, then the British Batteries (Russel and Campbell light artillery battalions) who defended themselves with rifle and revolver fire. Torn by machine gun fire and unable to remove all their pieces, a part were destroyed (16 French and 25 British Guns) and the troops then disengaged themselves after bloody hand to hand fights within the batteries themselves.

"The attack on the 164th Infantry Division was made under similar conditions. After a violent bombardment, the entire front of the Division was by 5.00 AM reached by the German waves, which at first, as in the case of the 28th Infantry Division, advanced against those elements of the front line which were not yet destroyed, but soon gained ground against the pass between the big and the little Mount Kemmel, passing the East flank of the 416th Infantry, which was also uncovered on the right by the withdrawal of the 415th Infantry. The left battalion of this regiment, which

which was, in fact, very severely pressed, was overwhelmed by 9.00 AM in spite of a counter attack by the supporting companies which did not succeed in stopping the enemy's advance, while the right battalion, in view of very heavy losses, succeeded in holding on at Dranoutre.

"At 9.15 AM, the Lieutenant Colonel commanding the 416th Infantry, who was with two battalions cramped on little Mount Kemmel reported the loss of the pass; at 9.50 AM he reported that he was surrounded in his PC but was continuing to defend himself, and that the battle in fact seemed to be continuing from this point during the entire morning, and possibly for part of the day. Turned and surrounded around the North slopes of Mount Kemmel, the battalions of the 28th Infantry Division offered a determined resistance and defended themselves until worn out. The support units and the local reserves which were on the North slopes of Mount Kemmel vainly counter-attacked to drive back the enemy: the 154th Infantry Division on the West, the 28th Infantry Division directly, with a support of a detachment of dismounted cavalry (auto machine gun cyclists and one battalion from the 3rd Cavalry Division).

In fact, after 9.00 AM, the Commanding General of the 2nd Cavalry Corps, informed of the withdrawal of the left of the 28th Infantry Division towards the Rossignol wood and of the engagement of a part of this Division, without any precise news from the right of the 9th British Division, had advanced all the available forces of the 3rd Cavalry Division toward Millekruiss, under the orders of General Forqueray, with orders to stop and drive back any hostile advance between Mount Kemmel and the Dicksbusch lake, to re-establish liaison between the 28th Infantry Division and the 9th British Division, and to hold under any condition, the general line :Lake Dicksbusch -- La Clytte until the arrival of the 39th Infantry Division, the intervention of which was to be asked from the Army in order to counter-attack in the area Millekruiss--Northeast of Mount Kemmel.

At the same time orders were issued to the 154th Infantry Division to close in to the left on the slopes of Mount Kemmel, and to establish itself on the switch line between the North part of Mount Kemmel and the elements of the 28th Infantry Division holding the Scharpenberg, so as to limit at any cost the German advance.

At 10.30 AM, the 39th Infantry Division, placed at the disposition of the Cavalry Corps, received orders to proceed to the area North of the Scharpenberg, in order to recapture Mount Kemmel; zone of attack between the road Reningelst--Kemmel on the East, and the line Bruloose--Cabaret--Donegal Farm, on the West; first objective, the North slopes of Mount Kemmel; second objective, cross roads on the slopes; third objective, the old front, through Donegal Farm and Daylight Corner.

Taking as a base of departure the line occupied on the South Slopes of the Scharpenberg by parts of the 28th and 154th Infantry Divisions, the attack was to be supported and covered on the left in the direction of the Polka by Forqueray's detachment (at Millekruiss), and on the right in the direction of Locre--Donegal by the reserve regiment of the 154th Infantry Division, not yet engaged, with the assistance of the artillery of the 39th Infantry Division, and all available French and British artillery of the 28th and 154th Infantry Divisions. Unfortunately this attack could not be launched until the morning of the 26th, instead of the evening of the 25th as had been hoped for.

If the local counter-attacks, led on their own initiative after 8.00 AM by the 28th and 154 Infantry Divisions to recapture the lost terrain, taken by being flanked or from the rear, did not succeed in re-establishing the situation, they at least succeeded in establishing a line of resistance, and after 10.00 or 11.00 AM, the battle proceeded in place without anyone thinking of retreating. The box fire fired by the Germans on the South slopes of the Scharpenberg and Mount Rouge, as soon as they had established themselves on Mount Kemmel, prevented besides any movement to the rear, as well as interdicting the advance of fresh troops.

At Noon, the French front passed through a point 300 meters Northeast of the edge of Dranoutre--Locre hospital--Bruloose--the Kemmelbeck, where it connected, 1 kilometer Southeast of Millekruiss, with the British troops holding the line Scheapside--Wiestraat, and the large wood North of Wytchaete, which they lost during the afternoon after an obstinate resistance.

It was not possible to determine the length of the resistance of the troops surrounded on Mount Kemmel. Deep dugouts existed there; possibly the defenders had taken refuge therein during the bombardment; in that case they would have been blockaded or taken. The last message, certainly identified, arrived at Headquarters and was dated at 9.50 AM, coming from the Lieut-Colonel Commanding the 41st Infantry, and stating that he was surrounded in his PC.

Other messages whose source was more than suspected, transmitted by the British Air Service, several times reported during the day that "the French troops are still fighting on Mount Kemmel....they are lying down on the North slopes...., they are proceeding down the South slopes....". These reports which strangely coincided very closely with the points fired at by our artillery, were never confirmed by our ~~reconnaissance~~ planes, whose requests for indicating the line held were never answered.**

**In consequence, and especially on the 29th, while the British artillery was energetically bombarding Mount Kemmel, a similar message arrived at the British army, stating that "the French have retaken Mount Kemmel", then another to an artillery ~~reconnaissance~~ Major "cease fire along the entire line".

As this may be, and in spite of the failure of all the morning counter-attacks, which were broken under the machine gun and artillery barrages, new attempts were made during the day and up until nightfall, to disengage, if there was still time, the defenders of Mount Kemmel.

The detachments furnished by the 416th Infantry, and by the cavalry battalions of Lasalle and Guerard, attempted to advance towards the village of Kemmel and Mount Kemmel; they struck the hostile outposts established along the Kemmelbeck, who were equipped with machine guns, and were stopped. The arrival of the 39th Infantry Division toward evening, succeeded in supporting on the Scharpenberg the remaining elements of the 28th Infantry Division, but, under the hostile artillery fire which hammered the South slopes and summits of the Scharpenberg, and searched our rear areas with ^{out} cessation, no concerted counter-attack of this division was possible. Mount Kemmel was lost, but its defenders had done their duty; the greater part had been captured or killed on the ground, and very few had been able to retreat to the rear.

"Among the reasons which might explain the Germans' success during the 25th", says Major Muller, GHQ, in his report of April 30th, "the first and most important was their very great superiority in heavy artillery and their air service, thanks to which, they not only submerged our positions under a bombardment of shells of all classes and sizes, of which the witnesses stated they had never yet seen the like, but they also caused the fire of our batteries, by a neutralization fire, to be of very poor quality. Our batteries were limited to firing COP and barrage fires, the density of which should have been sufficient to prevent the advance of the hostile infantry, provided observations had been practicable and batteries had been protected by a proper counter-battery service. **

"Another reason was the lack of depth of the defense. The imperative condition of defending this line regardless of the cost had resulted in an accumulation, in addition to the permanent garrisons, a large proportion of our means. The only deep dugouts existing were on the North side of the hills. It is believed that the men who probably took refuge there in large numbers were blockaded by the bombardment and were unable to get out in time at the moment when the German Infantry attack had passed over them. This would explain the large numbers of prisoners.

"However this may be, we can estimate that the 28th and 154th Infantry Divisions, which had already suffered through the losses of the preceding days and were now subjected to an attack of extreme violence, opposed to the enemy a resistance worthy of admiration".

**

The light artillery alone fired a little more than 70,000 rounds.

Our losses were heavy: the 26th Infantry Division, which had lost most, was reduced by evening of the 25th, to 17 Officers and 1,560 men, field trains included, allowing for the losses received before the attack, which on the 24th, amounted to 25 Officers and 1,034 men. **

The fall of Mount Kemmel was a serious check for our forces, it deprived us of an important advance post and of very useful observation posts which the Germans were to utilize as the base for a new attack, but in fact nothing was compromised as long as we still held the principal chain of hills Mount Rouge--Scharpenberg, the last barrier bordering the plain and on which was to be definitely broken during the succeeding days the enemy's supreme efforts.

- April 26th to 28th.--On the 26th, the attack of the 39th Infantry Division, which had extended on the 25th as far as the Scharpenberg, in the sector of the 28th Infantry Division, was started at 3.00 AM, with the objective of both big and little Mount Kemmel.

Four battalions were in first line, two battalions in second line, three battalions in reserve.

The attack was extended and supported on the right by the 154th Infantry Division, with two battalions of the 414th Infantry in the first line, one battalion of the 416th Infantry in reserve, towards Donegal; on the left, by the 25th British Division, towards Kemmel village.

The 25th British Division succeeded in reaching the North edge of Kemmel village; our troops crossed the Kemmelbeck, but were soon stopped under machine gun fire coming from the line Butterfly--Beaver Corner, and were unable to advance further. The 39th Infantry Division relieved the 28th Infantry Division which reorganized in rear.

At 9.00 AM, the enemy assumed the offensive in his turn, driving back the British troops towards Wierstraat and the Kemmelbeck, and strongly pressed the 154th Infantry Division in the direction of Locre. The cavalry troops were then called upon to re-enforce the line; those of the 3rd Cavalry Division (General Forqueray), on the left of the 39th Infantry Division to assure liaison with the British, those of the 2nd Cavalry Division under the orders of General d'Epenoux, to support the 154th Infantry Division.

General Forqueray brought two battalions forward, the cyclists and one detachment of auto machine guns, under the orders of Colonel Moineville, who ~~became~~ became partially into action on the left of the 39th Infantry Division, in the vicinity of Millekruiss.

**In fact, the losses were less than were indicated by the first reports received at the end of the day. A certain number of men first reported as missing joined their commands during the succeeding days.

General d'Epenoux sent the 2nd Dragoon Battalion under Pommeroy toward Mount Vidaigne, the 2nd Battalion of Light Chasseurs under Kerautem, and the 12th Battalion of Dragoons under Segerand to Mont Rouge. Colonel Waddington assumed command of these troops, established his PC on Mont Rouge, and immediately advanced in support of the first line, two companies of Segerand's battalion (Companies of Appert and Cordon), who in close connection with the Infantry troops took part during the entire day in an active battle which was particularly not on this side.

The village of Lochre, captured by the enemy, after three unsuccessful attempts, finally remained in our hands as a result of a brilliant counter-attack led by the 414th Infantry and Segerand's battalion which, at 8.45 PM, advanced as far as Dranoutre and Lochrehof.

It will be necessary to follow, hour by hour, during the days from the 26th to the 30th, the incessant combats which took place at Lochre and its vicinity, causing in this direction a constantly unstable situation, which seriously preoccupied the Command. Lochre, on account of its position on a spur, at the foot of the hills, commands their approaches and particularly a depression which, on the East, forms a line of approach toward the Scharpenberg and Hyde Park. The advance which the Germans were able to realize in this depression was restricted, as long as we held Lochre, but, on the other hand, this advance permitted them in turn to approach by the flank or in rear by a series of attempts on our advance points, and even on the edges of the village itself. This, therefore, explains how this point of support changed hands, both sides strenuously seeking to retake and hold it. It was not, in fact, until after the recapture of Butterfly on May 4th, that we could reduce this threatening salient.

On the evening of the 26th, our front slightly increased towards the West, passed through Koudekot to the 34th Infantry Division, Lochrehof (154th Infantry Division), Fernoy farm, line of the main Kemmelbeck, one kilometer South of Millekruiss.

The day of the 26th was marked by a continuation of the German attack, following its success the previous day, and on our side by a more energetic reaction and by counter attacks. If these did not gain all their objectives, they at least resulted in stopping the progress of an adversary who was very superior in number.

On the 25th, six German Divisions attacked on the front of the 2nd Cavalry Corps (from North to South: 56th Infantry Division, 233rd Infantry Division, 36th Reserve Division, Alpine Corps, 4th Bavarian Division, 117th Infantry Division); On the 26th, the 38th Infantry Division was inserted in line between the Alpine Corps and the 4th Bavarian Division, and these seven divisions, supported by an extremely powerful artillery of all sizes, only succeeded at the cost of heavy losses, and after two days of battle, in gaining the maximum depth of $2\frac{1}{2}$ kilometers.

On April 27th and 28th the German Infantry, exhausted by its big efforts of the two preceding days, and besides ~~preparing~~ having in preparation a new attack, appeared less aggressive. The artillery fight continued with violence, but we commenced to be able to reply to it under less disadvantageous conditions, in view of re-enforcements received (253rd Artillery Howitzers, one battalion of 145 mm guns, one battalion of 155 L guns).

On our side we took advantage of this relative rest to actively carry out our defensive works (Switch line from Bretelle-Scharpenberg--Goet-Moet-Mill, connecting on the left with the 8th British Corps); to reorganize our organization and establish reserves (General d'Epenoux assumed command of the right sub-sector, Mont-Rouge--Mont Vidaigne; General Dhers that of the left sub-sector; Moineville detachment, less one battalion attached on the preceding day to the 154th Infantry Division to assure liaison with the 39th Infantry Division, was brought back in reserve near to Reningelst); to proceed to a new organization of the Artillery Command made necessary by movements required by the battle, and the arrival in line of new batteries, to increase the counter-fire batteries which now consisted, ^{of} in addition to the Command of the British General Mackenzie : one Battalion of 155 GPF's, one Battalion of 145 mm guns, one Battalion of 155 L guns, which arrived on the 19th, one Battalion of 120 mm guns, two Battalions of 105 mm guns; to better the circulation in back areas.

In view of the approaching new effort of the enemy, the COP and interdiction fires were made more and more dense, and were regulated more carefully on the possible lines of departure, zones of assembly and lines of approach.

This attitude which was provisionally defensive did not, however, result in losing sight of the principle that a defense is not well made except by taking the offensive, and the Command again determined in detail the essential points which it was necessary to recapture by local attacks : Maison du Pompier, Butterfly, Bruloose, Lochre Hospital.

On April 28th, the 31st Infantry Division (General Martin), recently detrain^d in the area of Winnezele-Steenwoorde, where it was in army reserve, commenced to move its first elements towards the front in order to be able to relieve during the night of the 29th--30th, the 154th Infantry Division, and this relief was to be effected in order to carry out a small operation to enlarge the front, if the enemy allowed us the initiative.

April 29th--New indications and more and more precise information received from prisoners indicated that a new attack was imminent. In fact, at 3.00 AM the enemy opened on our front lines a extremely dense artillery fire, of which the violence much exceeded, according to witnesses, the hardest period of the big battles of Verdun. At the same time our COP fires

were started by our perfectly organized barrages (artillery and machine gun) followed up by harassing fires and by concentrations started since nightfall, taking under fire the first lines and the back areas of the enemy. Unfortunately these fires did not have all the effect which we had the right to expect, as the Germans to escape from them had audaciously installed their attack troops, as we later learned, immediately after nightfall, in the open fields on the North slopes of Mount Kemmel, while our snells were without cessation covering the ravines of the terrain and the covered places which might serve as assembly points.

At daybreak, the German air squadrons took complete possession of the air; we could regularly count on 20 planes at low altitude, and sometimes double this number; our back areas were strongly machine gunned, despite the relative protection given by our not very numerous auto machine guns.

Toward 6.45 AM, the German attack started, preceded by a rolling barrage, on a line between Mont Vidaigne, Mont Rouge and Westoutre. The German Infantry starting from a line 500 meters South of the road Locre--Bruloose, started the attack in the direction of Hyde-Bark and the Scharpenberg. Our Infantry at first energetically resisted along the Locre--Bruloose road, while the dismounted Cavalry (Company de Vries of the 4th Dragoons and S.M. Achard) resisted at the West edge of Locre; but toward 8.00 AM a small break appeared further North, breaking the liaison between the 154th Infantry Division and the 39th Infantry Division, and the Germans advanced towards the Couronne-Cabaret.

Immediately a counter-attack ~~was made~~ by La Porte's Company of the 4th Infantry Division, and by some re-organized men from de Vries Company started from the South part of the village. All the officers of La Porte's Company were put out of action; Captain de Vries charged personally, a shovel in his hand, at the head of some men of his Company who were grouped around him and who took as arms anything that they could find.

Towards 9.00 AM, the Germans re-enforced by about two Companies entered Locre and started to infiltrate towards Mount Rouge. The Battalion of Lamarque (who had succeed^d de Keratem, seriously wounded) was now sent forward about 10.00 AM. The Bougon Company by an irresistible bayonet charge threw back the Germans on the Locre Hospital, while the three remaining companies took in flank the hostile forces advancing towards the Couronne-Cabaret, between Mont Rouge and the Scharpenberg. The right continued sometime around Locre and Locre Hospital, which finally remained, after noon, in the hands of the cavalry, supported by parts of the 414th and 416th Infantry.

The cyclist detachment of the 2nd Cavalry Division, the last fresh reserve, arrived after 10.00 AM to re-enforce the left of the 414th Infantry; on its side, the 39th Infantry Division supported its right

towards Hyde-Park, with two Companies and one half-Company, of machine guns, and the liaison, for a moment threatened between the 154th and 39 Infantry Divisions was solidly re-established.

At 10.00 AM also the 31st Infantry Division (general Martin) placed at the disposition of the Commanding General of the 2nd Cavalry Corps, by the North Army Detachment, was brought forward in echelon. Towards Noon its leading elements arrived in line with Abeele. General Robillot confirmed the instructions which had been given to General Martin during their advance, and directed him to counter-attack as soon as they came in contact, in order to drive the Germans from the South slopes of the Scharpenberg.

At this moment the general situation had not yet been well determined.

It was known that the battle was proceeding violently around Lochre, and Lochre Hospital, which we had just retaken, but the day was not ended. The Germans might attempt new efforts; it was necessary to take advantage of the arrival in line of this fresh division to change the situation and again obtain the advantage. The artillery of the 154th Infantry Division received orders to support with all its available batteries, the action of the 31st Infantry Division, whose own artillery was itself advanced and established liaison with other artillery already in action.

The unforeseen possibilities, the influence of attacks ordered before, the slowness of execution due to the terrain, due to lack of detraining of troops just out of trenches, and also the gas with which the Germans profusely showered the slopes and roads North of the hills, resulted in the 31st Infantry Division not becoming engaged that same day. It limited itself to relieving the 154th Infantry Division during the night of the 29th to 30th.

The end of the day had besides been more calm, except towards 4.00 PM, when the Germans renewed their attempts against Lochre, and partially entered that place, but they were again drawn out by a counter attack which gave us at the same time the Couronne-Cabaret and the wood to the East. All their efforts to obtain a foothold on the Scharpenberg failed, especially in the vicinity of Hyde-Park, where we maintained our positions, but not without difficulty. All the reserves of the Infantry Divisions had been engaged, as well as the cyclist Detachment of the 3rd Cavalry Division, the last available unit of the Cavalry Corps.

The 31st Infantry Division arrived at this time.

April 30th.--At the end of the relief, about 2.00 AM, this Infantry Division in liaison on its left with the 39th Infantry Division attempted to advance from Locre and Locre Hospital, but like its neighbor it was stopped by the dense fire of machine guns which swept its approach.

In fact, these local attempts were nothing like the attack which the High Command had counted on, and in view of the meagre results obtained, the Commanding General of the North Army Detachment directed that the attacks be renewed during the same morning, and continued without cessation on the 30th and the days following, until the supporting points which had been taken from us had been recaptured, viz : MON du Pompier, Locrenof, Bruloose, Butterfly.

An attempt made at 9.00 AM failed like the preceding ones; on their side the enemy reacted with vigor. We lost, during the day, the Locre Hospital which the Germans took from us as a result of a new attempt on our part to push forward; on the other hand in front of Locre all their efforts to again gain a foothold in this village were vain.

These were the last parts of the attack of the 29th, directed against the Scharpenberg. Our obstinate and aggressive resistance in which the dismounted troopers of the 2nd Cavalry Division, particularly, took such an important part, definitely stopped the enemy who was not able, at the price of serious losses, to realize anything, but an insignificant advance. The barrier of the hills remained intact and all the activity of the following days was with a view to gradually disengaging the edges.

Two new Infantry Divisions arrived for duty; the 32nd Infantry Division, detached on the 19th, in the vicinity of Saint-Janster-Biesen, in rear of the 2nd British Corps, on our left, and the 27th Infantry Division which just completed concentrating around Steenworde, in rear of our center. A third division, the 129th Infantry Division, was announced as soon to approach.

Artillery superiority passed to our side with the arrival of :

- 1 Battalion , 264th Artillery (220 mm T R)
- 2 Battalions, 313th Artillery, (155 mm Schneider
Howitzers).
- 2 Battalions, 313th Artillery (155 L.)
- 1 Battalion, 155 GPF,

and some days later there arrived the artillery of the 129th Division, and the 272nd Artillery (Howitzers on Trucks).

After May 1st, the active role of the Cavalry Corps was nearly ended. There remained on the front for several days, only the divisions of artillery, two battalions of dismounted cavalry from the 6th Cavalry Division, who formed the only fresh reserves of the 39th Infantry Division, and were under this Commander

to co-operate with the Infantry Division in local operations, and the staff of the 2nd Cavalry Corps, which retained until Noon May 5th, the Command of the Sector and the direction of the battle on the left wing.

Thrown into the battle, after a period of 10 to 12 days of forced marches, outposts and heavy work by day and by night, under a continuous, and at times singularly violent bombardment, the cavalry regiments and, especially those of the 2nd Cavalry Division, who were more severely tried "gave equal proofs of the energy, resistance, and comprehension of the requirements of the situation and of the battle in a war of movements, and an absolute disregard for death, which are worthy of being cited as an example***".

If during the last days of the battle, certain cavalry regiments were more engaged than others in the infantry actions, the troops concentrated, who supported without failing the crushing effect of artillery fire of unprecedented violence " had a more difficult roll and at least as troublesome a one as those who were in immediate contact with the enemy's line, and to whom occasions offered themselves which were so ardently awaited and desired by all, to intervene with cold steel and a hand to hand fight***".

LAST OPERATIONS MAY 1st to MAY 5th.

The last days were marked by the withdrawal of the cavalry divisions which were progressively brought to the Saint-Omer area, and by the entry in line of the two Infantry Divisions: the 32nd Infantry Division, relieved the 25th and 49th British Divisions during the nights of the 3rd to 4th, and the 4th to 5th, thus extending the French front towards the East, as far as the line Godesonne Farm--Hallepast Farm, and the 129th Infantry Division which relieved, commencing on May 4th, the 39th Infantry Division. The withdrawal of the cavalry divisions as foreseen on May 1st was only partly carried out on this date. In view of the circumstances, the cyclist detachment of the 3rd Cavalry Division was left at the disposal of the 39th Infantry Division until the morning of May 2nd.

The dismounted elements of the 6th Cavalry Division remained in reserve in rear of our left in the Reningelst area, until May 5th, and took part in several raids of the Infantry troops. Only the mounted detachments of the three divisions and the trains moved on May 1st, in order to clear the back areas and make room for the two re-enforcing Infantry Divisions which commenced to detrain.

The 2nd Cavalry Division went to the area of ~~Saint-Momelin~~ Quelmes (Headquarters) via Broxeele and the Saint-Momelin bridge, which was crossed by the rear elements at 9.00 AM.

***Report of General d'Epenoux on operations from April 15th to 30th.

The 6th Cavalry Division went to the area of Tilques(Headquarters) via Wemaerscapell, which was reached by its head at 9.00 AM, and then via Saint-Momelin following in rear of the 2nd Cavalry Division.

The 3rd Cavalry Division went to the area of Arnecke(Headquarters) which it reached at Noon.

The Corps troops and the Staff of the 2nd Cavalry Corps also withdrew towards Wormouth(Headquarters) Tedergnem(Supply Train) and from there towards Wizernes; the remount depot went towards Saint-Momelin, and then continued with the 2nd Cavalry Corps to which it was temporarily attached.

The squadrons of the 2nd Cavalry Division, which were still more or less engaged on the hills on April 30th, were relieved on May 1st, by trucks, and brought towards Boescnepe, and thence to the area of the Cavalry Division; the same course was followed on May 2nd for the cyclists of the 3rd Cavalry Division, and on May 5th for all dismounted combat troops of the 6th Cavalry Division.

On his side, the enemy severely tried during the preceding battles, as all witnesses reported, and constantly subjected to our artillery fire, did not renew his attacks during May 1st and 2nd. His artillery, nevertheless, remained very active and appeared to be further re-enforced. He also proceeded to local reliefs, and according to statements of prisoners, received re-enforcements, and prepared for new operations. From one source or another, it appeared that he was observing and preparing for battle, which period of preparation was utilized on our part by a renewal of activity which brought us some gains of terrain.

As a result of the attempts of the preceding days, and local attempts, which only gave us insignificant and generally precarious results, there succeeded some real raids prepared and carried out with care, with a view of re-occupying terrain which will permit a real effective artillery preparation at those places where our lines were in too close contact with the enemy.

Thus on May 3rd, one Company of the 146th Infantry, and two Companies of dismounted cavalry of the 6th Cavalry Division, attacked Bruloose and Bruloose-Cabaret, and, although they did not succeed in retaking these two points of support, they nevertheless reduced the menacing salient, which, since the 25th, had existed in our line in the direction of Hyde-Park.

At daybreak on the 4th, an operation carried out in connection with the 36th Corps, with good artillery support, put in our hands the Lochre Hospital, Butterilly, Bruloose, and the Pompier farm, which the enemy, however, recaptured, except the Bruloose farm which definitely remained in our hands.

At the same time our artillery, more and more informed by its observation service, could act with greater precision on the nests of hostile batteries which were most troublesome and disturbing. It thus took under fire, commencing on May 2nd, a nest of 12 batteries of 77mm guns reported on the slopes of Mount Kemmel to which they had advanced, and fired against each of them about 500 well observed rounds; the same action was taken against the entrances to the Kemmel tunnel and the observation posts, and the ruins of the village of Kemmel, where the number of German batteries increased from ten to thirty.

As information from British sources indicated a possible attack on May 4th, we increased our harassing and COP fires, and the General Commanding the 2nd Cavalry Corps advanced the two leading regiments of the 129th Division (General de Corn) which was placed at his disposition, in line with Abeele, East of the railroad, available for any purpose, while at the same time he delayed until the 5th the departure of the dismounted elements of the 6th Cavalry Corps. In fact, the 4th passed quietly. The relief of the 39th Infantry Division was carried out without difficulty on the night of the 4th to 5th, as had been intended, and at Noon on the 5th, General Robillot turned over to General Corvisart, commanding the 16th Corps, the command of the sector which now contained three infantry divisions in line: 32nd Infantry Division on the left, PC South of Poperinghe; 39th Infantry Division, in the center, PC at Abeele, in process of being relieved by the 129th Infantry Division; 31st Infantry Division at the right, PC at at la Loge.

The artillery of the 16th Corps took position during the night of the 3rd to 4th, relieving the artillery of the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions, which were billeted on the 5th at Bavincove. The 6th Cavalry Division of dismounted men were embussed after the Bruloose affair, on the morning of the 5th, at Steenworde and Abeele, and taken to Tilques. The 11th Company, 6th Engineer Battalion, and the 5th Company, 27th ~~ENGINEER~~ ~~ENGINEER~~ Engineer Battalion, of the 2nd Cavalry Corps, on the 6th, after turning over their orders to the 16th Engineer Corps, were also embussed and taken to Wizernes (Headquarters of the 2nd Cavalry Corps) their Engineer and Field Trains proceeding by road with the 5th Train Company, 18th Battalion, of the 2nd Cavalry Corps.

The 2nd Cavalry Corps left a stabilized front to its successors, solidly supported on several lines of successive defenses in process of completion, and supported by a strong artillery; sure communications, large dumps of munitions and material of all kinds; troops well in hand, full of confidence in success, proud of having broken one of the most redoubtable efforts of the enemy and of having already retaken a part of his gains.

On May 6th, the entire 2nd Cavalry Corps reorganized in the vicinity of Saint-Omer, left there to march to the area of Neufchatel-en-Bray (Headquarters of the 2nd Cavalry Corps), which was assigned them to reorganize.

Normal marches, with rest every four days, across the British zone, until the 12th of May, following in general the same lines as during the advance in the rich Bray country,

where men and horses were to find the rest which they so much needed after twenty days of intensive efforts, of nervous tension and of bloody combats.

In leaving the region of the hills so strongly disputed, the 2nd Cavalry Corps received from General Godley, commanding the 22nd British Corps, the precious testimony that its assistance had been warmly received by our Allies, of which we ourselves had so highly appreciated the tenacity as well as the loyalty and comradeship of battle.

"In my name and in the name of my Corps" said this General in a letter sent on May 6th to General Robillot, "I wish to express my profound sentiments of regret which was felt by all ranks on the occasion of your departure and that of your splendid cavalry corps, which came so rapidly to our assistance at a critical moment".

"The magnificent march or approach which they accomplished under the most difficult circumstances will long remain in the memory of all.

"I would very much appreciate if you would inform your divisions and your staff of my thanks and warm admiration for all that they have done to assist us while we were neighbors in battle".

Our losses during the period of April 19th to 30th were as follows :

	Officers			Men		
	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Killed	Wounded	Missing
2nd Cavalry Division...	10	18	-	128	448	7
3rd Cavalry Division...	6	11	2	92	428	27
6th Cavalry Division...	1	2	-	43	177	3
Corps Troops				6	31	2

	T O T A L	
	Officers	Men
2nd Cavalry Division	28	586
3rd Cavalry Division	19	548
6th Cavalry Division	3	223
Corps Troops	-	39
GRAND TOTAL	50	1,393.

To these totals we must add, for the period of May 1st to May 5th (dismounted elements of the 3rd and 6th Cavalry Divisions, still on the front):

19 killed, 92 wounded, 7 missing.

Or in all for the 2nd Cavalry Corps :

50 officers, 1,511 men killed, wounded, or missing, out of an effective combat strength dismounted of three small battalions of 400 men each, and a cyclist detachment of 120 men for each cavalry division, or in round numbers 4,500, including the artillery and engineers.

The Infantry Divisions lost during the same period of April 15th to May 5th, officers and men, killed, wounded, or missing, approximately :

28th Infantry Division	4,800
154th Infantry Division	4,460
59th Infantry Division	1,990
31st Infantry Division	1,000

If our sacrifices were heavy, the losses to the enemy were still greater.

On April 16th, at the moment when the 2nd Cavalry Corps engaged its first troops in counter attacks against Meteren and the Spanbroockmolen (Southwest of Wytschaete), the enemy had in line from North to South: the 7th Infantry Division, the 49th Reserve Division, the 15th Reserve Division, the 36th Reserve Division, the 11th Reserve Division, the 117th Division, the Alpine Corps and the 81st Reserve Division, or 8 divisions on a front of fourteen kilometers with the greatest density on the wings.

On the 16th, the German effort was continued along the entire line, but it was more intense on the side of Wytschaete, where three divisions (7th Division, 49th Reserve Division and the 17th Reserve Division) were engaged; toward Bailleul--Meteren, which were attacked in front by the 117th Division, the Alpine Corps, and the 81st Division.

On the following day, the 17th, the Alpine Corps and the 117th Division were relieved and replaced by the 38th Division and the 22nd Reserve Division.

On the 18th, in order to continue the attack towards Mount Kemmel, to the 36th and 49th Reserve Divisions already in line, there was added the 31st Division and two companies from the 4th ~~Assault Battalion~~ Assault Battalion. Three times these troops were sent against the South slopes of Mount Kemmel without being able to advance. During the night of the 18th and 19th, the 31st Division and the 4th Assault Battalion were withdrawn to the rear.

From April 20th to 23rd, interior reliefs increased the density of the troops between the Spanbroockmolen and the Dranoutre--Neuve Eglise road in front of our 28th and 133rd Infantry Divisions, which found in front of them three complete German Divisions (31st Division, 36th Reserve Division, 11th Bavarian Divisions) and parts of the 49th Reserve Division and the 117th Division.

During April 23rd, the Alpine Corps relieved the 31st Division, the 4th Bavarian Division relieved the 11th Bavarian Division, the 22nd Reserve Division relieved the 11th Division; on the 25th two new divisions came into line, the 56th Division replacing the 36th Reserve Division, and the 19th Reserve Division replacing the 49th Reserve Division; so that at the moment of the attack of Mount Kemmel there were five fresh divisions in line and two regiments (450th Infantry attached to the 56th Division, and the 94th Infantry Division attached to the 4th Bavarian Division) assaulting on a front of six kilometers.

After the fight of the 25th and the withdrawal of our front between the Locre Chateau and 1,500 meters South of la Clytte, there remained in front of us on a front of about four kilometers, in order from North to South : a part of the 56th Division, the 233rd Division, the Alpine Corps, the 4th Bavarian Division, and part of the 22nd Reserve Division. It was these troops which attacked on the 29th towards Locre -- Hyde-Park the South slopes of the Scharpenberg; their efforts were broken by our fire, our counter attacks retook Locre and Hyde Park which had at first been captured.

Very much tried, as statements of prisoners from the Alpine Corps and the 4th Bavarian Division stated, and according to lists of casualties found in memorandums, these large units were successively relieved; on April 30th, the 10th Bavarian Division relieved the 4th Bavarian Division; on May 2nd the 233rd Infantry Division replaced the 29th Division; on May 4th, the 22nd Reserve Division was replaced by the 121st Division, and on May 5th, the Alpine Corps was replaced by the 214th Division.

Between April 16th and May 5th, 130 batteries had been noted in action on the 2nd Cavalry Corps sector, of which approximately one-half were of large or of medium caliber.

Out of the 20 divisions engaged by the enemy between April 16th and May 5th, four divisions (4th Bavarian Division, 56th Division, 22nd Reserve Division, 11th Bavarian Division) and the Alpine Corps, were severely tried. Nine other Divisions (233rd Division, 117th Division, 7th Division, 17th Reserve Division, 49th Reserve Division, 36th Reserve Division, 38th Division, 81st Reserve Division, 10th Ersatz Division), less tried, nevertheless for the moment seemed incapable of carrying out a new assault.

CONCLUSION.

During the period from April 12th to May 5th, the employment of the 2nd Cavalry Corps may be divided into four phases :

1st from April 12th to 15th.--The 2nd Cavalry Corps proceeded with forced marches to the zone of intervention without losing either a horse or a man. This was a splendid movement, considering the strength engaged and the rapidity of the march, which was far ahead of movements of large cavalry units in past history, even in that of the Empire. It marvelously fulfilled the mission of "strategic reserves" rapidly and easily moved at the wish of the High Command.

2nd - From April 15th to 25th.--The establishing and support of the British forces by a cavalry screen clearing up the situation and connecting the front elements of infantry thrown into battle. Stoppage of local attacks of the enemy North of Meteren and Bailleul, and relief of British troops.

The covering position established on the hills, commencing on April 16th, had been by advance guards occupying the crossroads and the principal points of support with their net of reconnaissances and mounted patrols, with their service of liaison by officers and couriers. The main body in rear available prepared for the occupation of the terrain, with a view to establishing a barrage position. If this covering zone had not had to become immediately engaged it at least served to inform the Command as to the precarious situation of the moment, to connect the poorly joined British and French units, to support by its presence and the assurance of a prompt re-enforcement, a front which was trembling under the first heavy blows which it met.

With the precious guarantee that the important heights which extended from the Mont des Cats to the Scharpenberg would, in case of need, be at least closely disputed with the enemy, it brought to the High Command the feeling of security which it needed in order to re-assume the direction of the battle, reorganize its reserves, bring up at the desired time and proper manner new forces hastening to the battle, and thus proving that the cavalry had lost nothing of its importance as a body of manoeuvre, and that its employment resulted in open warfare in its reassuming all its value.

3rd - From April 25th to 30th.--The French troops met and stopped the main German blow of two strongly prepared attacks. The dismounted cavalry fought and worked in intimate liaison with the infantry; its ardor for work, its aptitude in adapting itself to all the circumstances of the fights, its endurance under fire, its offensive spirit which was shown by the intensity and promptness of its counter-attacks, but the intelligence and fruitful initiative of its subaltern grades often called upon to themselves decide in the midst of the events of the battle, have given an example in similar circumstances to the Infantry units.

4th - Finally from May 1st to 5th. -- Consolidation and organization more and more complete of the terrain, extension of the front, counter-attacks to retake the lost terrain and obtain space to prepare for a resumption of offensive operations of greater importance, which would confirm the definite stop of the enemy and cause him to lose the momentary benefits of his first successes.

The breach was closed, the large infantry units well posted on the terrain, in possession of all their means, took over the battlefield in their turn; the march of the cavalry was ended on this particular part of the front; it served temporarily as a reserve, then was withdrawn to re-organize and to be ready at the first notice to assume a new roll in another part of the theatre of operations.

REMARKS.

During these various operations, three points merit more special attention :

1st - Whilst the cavalry operated as cavalry in covering missions as well as in obtaining contact, and while it was not engaged in a battle too strictly divided up, where it then acted as infantry, the units of cavalry, brigades, regiments and squadrons, maintained the capacity for manoeuvre which is essential to them. It was losing time to form dismounted battalions in order to reform them and disperse them almost immediately.

The proceeding at first consisted in the occupation of a series of supporting points, often quite distant from one another. The advance guards dismounted when they could no longer advance; in rear of them and re-enforcing them if necessary by generally prolonging the line to the right and left, came other mounted commands of variable strength, who operated in the same manner to reach the objectives assigned to them, with the sole preoccupation of liaison both laterally and in depth, an essential condition in order that the Command might be informed and able to act without loss of time. Certain units were later regrouped, others were re-enforced or had their lines prolonged, and the command of the dismounted units was organized on the ground, not in a rigid uniform manner, but in a variable one adapted to circumstances. More than anyone else, the cavalry leader can himself command and see, thanks to the distance to be covered, and the rapidity and even the security which the horse gives.

2nd -- This rapidity and regularity of liaisons by mounted men, even in the zone of the battle itself, was fully brought out in the operations about Mount Kemmel. While telephones, the wireless or observation posts were destroyed by bombardment, while dismounted runners failed to connect the units or lost considerable time, mounted officers and couriers, intended and maintained for the liaison service, were able to rapidly cross, almost without loss, the barrage and gas clouds. Especially in the 2nd Cavalry Corps, it was mounted couriers who without any relays permanently assured during the entire battle, the communications between the first lines, the crests of the hills and the PC of the Infantry Division. For this it was only necessary to make in advance certain reconnaissances of the terrain to determine practicable routes; the intelligence of the troopers and their energy did the rest. Avoiding areas temporarily shelled by making slight detours, making up for time lost by increasing the gait, they always succeeded in passing, in spite of the distance to be covered which was sometimes quite considerable (7 to 8 kilometers). Outside of the zone of normal bombardment, the relay posts established by the Cavalry Corps at intervals not exceeding three or four kilometers, ~~still~~ continued the line of communications towards the rear as far as the PC's of the Divisions and Cavalry Corps. Few infantry units during the campaign thought to utilize in this manner their infantry scouts and their division squadrons, which were often absorbed in minor missions.

3rd -- When the 2nd Cavalry Corps arrived everything had to be organized : the liaisons, supplies, evacuations, circulation, and the difficulties were increased by the fact that our troops were fighting among British troops in a British zone.

Nevertheless the 2nd Cavalry Corps was able to meet the situation required of it by dismounted combat; in a short space of time it utilized and engaged in the battle its three regular Cavalry Divisions and eight French Infantry Divisions. It succeeded at all times in supply^{ing} these and in providing abundant munition dumps for them.

On the arrival of the 2nd Cavalry Corps in the Cassel area, the supply of artillery ammunition found consisted only of six lots of 75 mm at Dannes-Camiers and of 25 lots at Audruicq, which were reserved for the Portuguese Army. Of infantry ammunition and fireworks, there was a small quantity at Pont d'Oye. Along the front there was no dump of any kind.

During the battle the daily demands practically increased from six to twelve lots of 75 mm with an entire supply for heavy artillery ammunition which amounted by May 12th, to 1900 tons of shells. The supply provided in advance dumps, organized by the 2nd Cavalry Corps, at Boesenepe, Steenworde, Hoograaf, Wippenhoeck, Saint-Jans-ter-Biesen and in the batteries, vary from three to four and one-half days fire for 24 Battalions of 75 mm guns or 155 mm Howitzers and six Battalions of heavy artillery, and the daily supply of shells for these amounted to 1200 tons.

For the infantry two million rounds of cartridges and a corresponding amount of grenades, fireworks, etc., placed at Abeele and along the Watou--Abeele road, allowed all the infantry munition details to completely resupply themselves and in addition to organize a reserve amounting to one-half of the normal supply.

The supply of the dismounted Cavalry Battalions which were in line 35 kilometers from the area where the horses were, the successive arrival of the 34th, 39th, and 154th Infantry Divisions, and heavy artillery, required considerable truck movements, as much by reason of the absence of rations at the point of detraining, which occurred with certain units, as by the fatigue of the horse trains and the distance of the supply depots which at the beginning were more than 50 kilometers away. In spite of the heavy traffic over the roads and the delays due to the difficulties of using these one-track railroads from Dunkirk to Bergues, all the troops were abundantly supplied in time.

Two collecting stations at Arnecke and Haerigen, were organized and operated by the Medical Service of the 2nd Cavalry Corps; the orders and policing for circulation purposes were made in agreement with the British Authorities.

If we consider besides the considerable work performed by the General Staff offices and the heavy work

required for conducting operations, organizing information service, employing the artillery, organizing the battle-fields, we can readily see that in such circumstances it was necessary to have something else than improvised staffs. It is not sufficient to put cavalry and infantry units alongside of one another to add at the moment of need, artillery, air squadrons, and all the materiel of modern warfare, it is necessary that the Commander should have a staff organized in advance, and the Chiefs of Service indispensable for the proper functioning of the entire command.

The organization of the Cavalry Corps and their staff, which was more than rudimentary at the beginning of the campaign, and which was changed, completed and progressively improved during the war under the pressure of events, has been, since the cessation of hostilities, the subject of lively controversy. The study of the operations which occurred on the French front between March and November 1918 indicate what services were given and might again be given in the future by large cavalry organizations, under the most variable circumstances of war.

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