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**N.Z. DIVISION IN ACTION.**

(Extract from "Chronicles of the N.Z.E.F.," August 30th, 1918).

**THE ATTACK OF AUGUST 21, 1918.**

Following up the successful advance by the 4th Army further south and the enemy retreat on the sector described in the previous article, a blow was struck by the 3rd Army, including the New Zealanders, early in the morning of Wednesday, August 21st. The following account is the best which can be gleaned from the various correspondents, up to the time of going to press, of the part played by our men.

"The Daily Chronicle" says:—

"A blow is being struck along a front of eight or nine miles of country lying almost equally distant from Arras on the north and Albert on the South.

"It cannot be called a hilly country, but it is a fairly high plateau of sand and chalk, divided into long, low ridges by small watercourses which flow deviously into the Scrape, near Arras, on the one side, and into the Ancre, above Albert, on the other.

"I lately described the lower half of the front now concerned as seen from the terrible wood of Gommecourt on the day when one of our corps discovered that the enemy opposite them was withdrawing from the region of Puisieux and Serre. The whole region is marked by names famous or mournful in former fighting, such as Gommecourt, the two Achiet, and Thiépval, far down across the Ancre, while due east from Puisieux, only seven miles away, stands Bapaume.

"The whole region is also marked by graves, many of which date from the French resistance of nearly four years ago, and by a complicated system of French, British and German trenches, of various dates, but all equally obstructive to the movements of troops as are the miles of barbed wire which litter the surface.

"Opposite to our divisions the Germans had the 17th army under General Otto von Below.

"Their front line, as is now usual with them, was thin but deep. It was arranged not in continuous trenches out in isolated outposts and machine-gun positions one behind the other to a considerable depth.

"The night was very still, but as the hours passed a wet mist formed over the earth, though the sky remained cloudless and sometimes one could see a star. So thick did the mist become that between three and four o'clock the trees were dripping with moisture almost like rain. Towards five o'clock the first glimmer of dawn was just perceptible.

"Suddenly at five minutes to five, the foggy air shook with the outburst of our guns and orange tongues flickered in the obscurity. For nearly three hours that torrent of smoke and fire and death continued like the incessant throbbing of a gigantic mill.

"Under the barrage the men went forward in waves, not leaping out of trenches or rushing wildly on, but walking quickly forward across No Man's Land, the second wave quickly following the first.

"Some of the wounded who began to trickle back tell me that the tanks led the first line of assault by about 100 yards. It is almost impossible to learn facts from eye-witnesses in an engagement in which the issue and the personal strain is so great.

"But this morning the inevitable perplexity was much increased by the dense mist and the smoke barrage, which hung many hours upon the high ground close outside Buequoy. I was unable to see for more than 50 yards in any direction, and it was not till about 11 that the mist dissolved leaving the hot and cloudless day of early autumn.

"At first the mist was to our advantage, and one can imagine nothing more persuasive of surrender than the sudden appearance of a monstrous tank out of obscurity bearing down with all its guns blazing and booming like an old three-decker going into action. Anyhow, very few Germans stayed to inquire further; but at the same time, the mist led to some confusion as I was told, both among the infantry and the tanks themselves. By 7 o'clock little parties of prisoners began to come down the paths, many of them carrying British wounded."

"The Times" says:—

"The troops engaged were all from the British Isles except a certain number of New Zealanders, who made the first part of the attack on a section of the front, and did it admirably, taking over 200 prisoners, including eight officers, with less than that number of casualties to themselves.

"At the time of finishing my dispatch

yesterday I had heard of no case where the enemy had really fought, but it was to be expected that he would show some stoutness somewhere before the day was over. As a matter of fact, the opposition was of the feeblest character throughout the forenoon, and it may be that the hurried getting away of their guns, of which I have spoken, explains the feebleness of the German artillery. Only at certain points later did the enemy really show fight, and this chiefly on the southern part of our advance.

"Beaucourt, Puisieux, Buequoy, and Moyencville and other places offered no very stubborn resistance, and the descriptions convey the impression that the Germans were holding their advanced positions rather lightly."

The enemy counter-attacked heavily early in the day, but was repulsed. It is said that the New Zealand casualties are very light.

Captain Ross, Official Correspondent, says:—

"At dawn this morning a long line of British troops, among whom the New Zealanders were represented, attacked the enemy in a new battle south of Arras. The utmost secrecy possible was maintained regarding this operation, and the divisions concerned had to make their preparations hurriedly during the past few days. The result was that the enemy was completely surprised, his first trenches stormed before he was thoroughly awake, many prisoners taken, and considerable territory gained along a fairly extensive front. The weather was exceedingly favourable for our plans. A grey day, in which the enemy planes could do nothing, was succeeded by bright moonlight, but towards morning a heavy mist enveloped the landscape so that the assembly of our troops was unknown to the enemy. Practically all movement necessary was done by night. Under a bright moon troops marched from the back areas, with their bands playing, and sweating mule and horse teams and mechanical transports swung round a corner of our village street towards the battle front—an inspiring sight.

"At five minutes to five, summer time, our guns all along the line opened a thunderous barrage and troops followed close upon it. There was no preliminary bombardment; the mist was almost like a London fog, and even from an advanced position it was impossible to see anything of the battle. Later on the sun made two or three attempts to break the veil. For five hours we waited and marched nearer the front without seeing anything, but we could tell from the absence of machine-gun fire, except in a few isolated spots, and from the feeble reply of the enemy artillery, that the surprise was complete. Early in the morning the first batch of prisoners loomed through the fog in charge of a sturdy New Zealander. They were Bavarians and seemed not sorry to have been captured. The New Zealanders gathered about them and we listened to amusing attempts at conversation. Both these and others whom we saw later gazed about them with incredulity when we told them of the recent successes of the Allies and the large hauls of guns and prisoners. This news had been kept hidden from them. One wounded man, to whom I gave a piece of chocolate, seemed greatly astonished and remarked: "We have not had that in Germany for a long time now." They said that food was getting scarce, but that the soldiers had enough. Generally speaking, the prisoners were a good lot and well clothed. Another thing they would not believe was the number of Americans in France.

"Never before have I seen a battle in which for so many hours fighting was so one-sided. At an early hour we heard that the New Zealanders had captured their first objective and that their losses had been extremely little. On our right and left other troops were going well. One on our left attacked on a broad front and other fresh troops followed it and went on, on the same breadth of line. The New Zealanders attacked in dashing style in a dense fog and forced their way into the enemy defences, surprising the enemy, killing and wounding some, and capturing others who did not show fight. One or two pockets which had been overrun in the fog gave some trouble for a time with machine-guns, but these were quickly dealt with and their gun crews either wiped out or made prisoner. In company with the London Correspondent of the New Zealand papers I walked along our front line. By 10 o'clock the sun had pierced the mist, which rapidly disappeared, and the remainder of the day was blazing hot. A damaged tank and some dead Germans in a shell hole just beyond the German front line indicated where the battle had begun. The air was now alive with our planes, the stutter of machine-guns overhead announced a fight in the air, and the

blue sky was punctuated with black bursts of hundreds of shells from the German anti-aircraft guns. Other German gunners had now warmed to the work, and four balloons we could see distinctly ahead were evidently directing their fire. In a hollow were some of our tanks held in leash. Others which had gone on ahead, and which we could see on the crest of a ridge, became a target for German gunners, and our advancing troops and reserves were also being shelled. Other shells screamed overhead into what was now our back area, and a 5.9 battery crumpled the trench close at hand on our right, the instantaneous fuse bursts sending the fragments almost to our feet, but this latter at least was ineffective shelling, for there was nothing living there to hit. Almost all the wounded we saw were Germans from which we gathered that our own casualties were light. Indeed, at mid-day we came upon two horse ambulances well up towards the front which had been waiting for four hours without having anything to do. By mid-day the New Zealanders had captured over 200 prisoners and several machine-guns. Our own artillery and machine-gun companies and trench mortars did good work. Early in the day we saw howitzers and other guns moving forward, and there was considerable traffic on the roads which, earlier that morning, had been enemy territory."

Mr C. E. W. Bean, Official Correspondent with the A.I.F., says:—

"The advance started in a mist. By mid-day the New Zealanders and the British were well past Achiet le Petit, and the British had reached the railway near Achiet le Grand. Some of us walked out over that old battlefield, from which now for the second time the Germans are retreating. Relics of the four years of war are thick over the countryside. The graves of the British and Germans of 1916, 1917 and 1918 are side by side. In the foreground the magnificent New Zealanders were holding the trenches allotted to them, confident that they could have gone farther if allowed.

"On the horizon, capping the hill, there looked down on the battle the very same wood which looked down on Flers, Lesars, and even Pozieres. Its name is Loupart Wood, which in old days held murderous batteries.

"The New Zealanders said they saw Germans running from it to-day. It is only a few miles from Bapaume, the trees of which are again plainly visible. What stirred an Australian more than anything was that away to the south, only a few miles beyond the flank, and just above the nearer hill, could be seen the bare eastern slope of that famous ridge on which stood Pozieres. The old trees of Courcellette were plainly visible."

Later on the "Daily Chronicle" Correspondent says:—

"I am now at last allowed to mention that New Zealand troops hold a most distinguished place in the Third Army, and Australians in the Fourth. Both these bodies of Overseas troops have within the last two or three days maintained their remarkable reputation for the qualities which count in war, and there is hardly anything to choose between them."

"North of Miraumont the New Zealand Division, in the centre of the attack, struck in the direction of Bapaume. Advancing with irresistible dash and determination, it carried the defences of Loupart Wood, taking 400 prisoners. Pressing forward with great gallantry it captured Grevillers and Biefvillers, and reached Avesnes-les-Bapaume, on the outskirts of Bapaume."

**LEST WE FORGET!**

As we plough our way across the sea  
And home thoughts fill the mind,  
Do we ever think of the days that are gone  
And the cobbers we've left behind?  
Of the lessons we learnt on battle-scarred fields,  
And the mates we found and lost,  
Of days of sorrow and days of fame,  
And all that our victories cost?

As we gaze out on the silvery deep  
And watch the crested wave,  
Do we ever think of the men who sleep  
Deep down in an ocean grave?  
Of the harvest vile of the submarine  
And the toll of the lurking mine,  
The struggle grim and end unseen  
Of the heroes who've crossed the line?

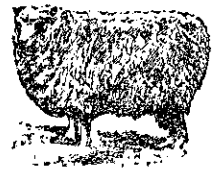
—By R.C.S., in "Homeward Bound."

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