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VOL. XXII., No. 167

FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK, SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1916

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BRITISH HOLD GROUND WON IN GREAT OFFENSIVE MOVEMENT

British Troops Hold Gains Of Second Line Trenches

Huns Making a Stubborn Resistance and Toll of Ammunition is Great---German Prisoners Acted as Stretcher Bearers for the British.

PARIS, July 15.—A violent artillery duel continues in the Fleury sector, the War Office announced today. A German attack on a trench north-east of the Avocourt redoubt was repulsed, the official statement asserts, and German attempts to undertake attacks in the Apremont forest were checked by a curtain of fire from our batteries.

BRITISH FRONT IN FRANCE, July 14 (via London, July 15).—At the end of a long day's unbroken struggle, the indications are that the British are holding their gains of the morning, when along a front of about four miles they attacked the German second line, capturing several important positions. The infantry, which went into action shortly before dawn, anticipated a most determined resistance, and expected to pay high toll in casualties. Their experiences during many night trench raids had served as excellent preparation for their daring moonlight assault, where co-ordination was necessary for success.

An unexpectedly small number of wounded came into the clearing stations during the morning hours. Many were borne by German prisoners, who acted as litter bearers.

These prisoners said that no attack had been expected and that the assault before daylight came as a complete surprise. The British rushed the shambles in the Trones wood where the Germans had previously regained part possession. Through the tangle and over fallen tree trunks they swept in the face of persistent sniping and machine gun fire, under conditions where it was considered amazing that they could tell friend from foe.

Germans, Confident That Their Counter

Attacks Would Save Them, Refused to Yield

The Germans, building barricades and digging for shelter among roots, refused to yield, confident that coming counter attacks would effect a rescue. Among them were wounded, who, unable to stand, still could fire their rifles.

The British advance was made on a frontal sweep up slopes into the German second line and the villages of Basentin Le Petit, Basentin Le Grand and Longueval.

At this hour tonight it appears that there is only one point in these German trenches where the machine guns have not been put out of action and demolished completely.

Some Prisoners Taken Belonged to Corps

Rushed to the Battle Front Since July 1st

For a space of 200 yards the British swept past a section of the trench where the Germans, refusing to yield, held out desperately for some time in a fashion characteristic of the fighting on the Somme.

Some of the prisoners taken today belonged to a battalion from different sections rushed to the scene since July 1. They seemed to lack the usual efficient organization.

Where the British found the going good they carried their attack beyond the second line, taking guns and more prisoners and seeking to gain higher points on the ridge.

Against these advance parties the Germans began to develop stronger resistance.

All of the Objectives of the British

Were Captured in Less Than an Hour

The success of the morning has won for the British a depth of three or four miles of Terrain since July 1. This means also commanding British positions which obviously conform the German line in the Thiepval sector into a bad salient.

Virtually all the objectives were captured today in less than an hour. Two German colonels and a regimental staff and other prisoners found themselves in British hands before daylight had fairly broken.

SWEDISH MINISTER PROTESTS.

LONDON, July 15.—The Swedish minister at Petrograd has been instructed to protest to Russian government against the capture of the German steamers Worms and Lizzaben. It has been announced in Stockholm, says a despatch to the Post from that city. The protest is made on the ground that the steamers were captured in Swedish waters.

BELGIANS DISPLAYING ACTIVITY

London, July 15.—On the French portion of the Somme front, no action of importance was recorded but the official statement for Friday announced that the bombardment of German positions on the Belgian front had reached a point of the greatest intensity.

This announcement receives additional significance, as for more than a week the Belgians have reported a persistent and destructive bombardment directed against the German fortifications.

These bombardments were similar to those made by the British preceding the opening of their great offensive, and may possibly indicate that another big forward movement by the Allies may be attempted at the extreme eastern end of the battle line.

Collier's Crew Rescued by Boats

Charleston, S. C., July 14.—Officials at the navy yard here late tonight announced that the crew of the naval collier Hector, reported sunk off here, had been taken off in small boats. A wireless message, it was said, had been sent out asking all vessels to watch for the boats.

BRITISH OFFENSIVE RESUMED

London, July 15.—The British offensive was resumed today. The War Office announced that at one point the Germans were forced back to their third line positions. More than 2,000 prisoners were taken.

LONDON PRESS COMMENT ON GREAT BRITISH OFFENSIVE

Situation of the German Army is Very Critical Says The Telegraph---A Sensational Crumbling of the German Lines is Not Expected;

LONDON, July 15.—The new British advance on the western front provides the theme for exultant comment in the morning papers.

"The situation of the German army is very critical," declares the Telegraph.

The Daily News, under the caption "The Breaking Lines," says: "The comparative ease with which the second lines have been forced lends countenance to the belief that they were not as strong as the first lines undoubtedly were. It may be that the worst and heaviest task was achieved with the carrying of the first lines, which the Germans are said to have held to be impregnable."

Not Intended for a Knockout.

"The important thing is to retain in true perspective the nature and objects of the western offensive. It is not intended to be a knockout blow and if the German lines do crumble sensationally that will be a success contemplated in the original design. That design is to wear down the enemy partly by the mere slaughter and capture of his effectives and partly by forcing him to keep his slender reserves continually in motion to meet incessant attacks delivered in widely distant areas."

As far as can be judged, this plan of operations is succeeding perfectly. While the note of the editorials is optimistic they generally add the customary warning to the British public not to attach too much importance to this success.

Must Not be Too Sanguine.

The Express comments: "It is necessary once more to warn the over-sanguine not to under-estimate the enemy's capabilities of resistance. The Germans are a brave, stubborn and highly organized people, bred in traditions of war. Our goal is almost in sight, but the last round of the fight will be the hardest."

TERRIFIC POUNDING OF GERMAN FIRST AND SECOND LINE TRENCHES

British Troops Formed a Junction at Ovillers---Bad Weather Has Hampered Operations Somewhat---British Attack Was a Complete Success In Every Respect.

LONDON, July 15.—The correspondent of the Daily News at British headquarters in France, under date of July 13, in recording the preparations for yesterday's advance, mentions the persistent severe shelling of the German main and second lines beyond Contalmaison and the Mametz wood, and also the solid and rapid progress at Ovillers.

"The British, pushing in from both sides, made a junction in Ovillers," he says.

"We hold all the west, northwest and southwest parts. There is, however, a strong German position on high ground on the eastern side of the town, to which we have worked close up, but which we have not yet been able to carry."

"From this position machine guns command a stretch of the Albert-Bahau road, and the lower ground beyond."

German Front Line Trenches Have Been Unmercifully Pounded by the British

"More important than any actual movement has been the heavy pounding to which we have been subjecting the German front line trenches on this part of our new front."

In the course of a long review of the operations since July 7, the correspondent says:

"We so far have been in general pushing up a slightly rising slope to a low plateau, the whole distance being full of hollows and stubbed all over with little clumps of woodland, there being in addition big German held woods like the Mametz wood, and various villages in German possession. The open ground is everywhere seamed with trenches arranged as cunningly as the Germans can arrange them to cope with just such an advance as has taken place."

Huns Have a Carefully Interlaced and Commanding System of Defensive Positions

"Everywhere at the connections between trenches and a commanding situation, machine gun positions and strong points have been made, the whole being a carefully interlaced and connected system of defensive positions, every one of which is commanded from a greater or lesser number of others."

"There has been hardly a point we have taken from which an advance has been possible except under the fire of some other positions not more than fifty yards away."

Weather Conditions Were Bad for the British and Men Suffered From Thirst

One feature of the operations has been the difficulties owing to weather. In the earlier days of the advance the heat was extreme, it was very hard to get water to the men in front, and they suffered from heat and thirst. Then there were tremendous rains and the hardships from the cold and wet were even worse than the heat.

"The condition of the trenches became indescribable and progress along them was sometimes impossible, even when the water had subsided the mud being deep and tenacious. It still remains so deep that in many cases the men have wrenched their feet out of their shoes."

"The bombers found it impossible to throw bombs with any effect because they were fixed immovable up to their knees in liquid glue. The mud is so sticky and glutinous that many believed that it was doctored in some way by the enemy—a suspicion which has deepened, if it was not created, by the fact that it seems to produce a great many sore feet."

PIRATES IN ALAND SEA.

LONDON, July 15.—For the first time this summer, German submarines have appeared in the Aland Sea, according to a Stockholm despatch to the Daily Telegraph. The heavy traffic between Sweden and Finland in these waters is becoming increasingly precarious.