

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RETREAT TO THE MARNE.

CAUSES OF THE BRITISH RETREAT—THE FRENCH FOR THE MOMENT UNABLE TO SUPPORT BRITISH—THE GERMAN PURSUIT—ACTION OF LANDRECIÉS—BATTLE OF LE CATEAU—LAUDATORY CRITICISMS OF A GERMAN STAFF OFFICER ON BRITISH FORCES—ACHIEVEMENTS OF ROYAL FLYING CORPS—FIGHTING IN THE VALLEY OF THE MEUSE FROM NAMUR TO VERDUN—BATTLE OF CHARLEVILLE—FRENCH AVIATORS DROP BOMBS ON ZEPPELIN HANGAR AT METZ—CAVALRY COMBATS BETWEEN BRITISH AND GERMANS: SIR PHILIP CHETWODE'S CHARGE—THE NEW FRENCH CABINET—INTERVIEW BETWEEN GENERAL JOFFRE AND SIR JOHN FRENCH—DECISION TO RETIRE ON THE MARNE—COUNTER-OFFENSIVE OF FRENCH ARMIES TO PROTECT BRITISH RETREAT—BATTLE OF GUISE—BRITISH CAPTURE TWELVE GUNS AT COMPIÈGNE—RETREAT OF THE ALLIES BEHIND THE MARNE—RESULTS OF THE CAMPAIGN FROM THE BRITISH STANDPOINT.

SERGEANT LOFTUS, it will be remembered, could not understand why he and the other soldiers had to retire from Mons. The reason for the retreat was this. At 5 p.m. on the Sunday Sir John French had received a "most important message from General Joffre by telegram." It appeared that three German corps—a reserve corps, the 4th and 9th corps—were moving on the British front, and that the 2nd corps was engaged in a turning movement on the left from the direction of Tournai; also the Germans had gained possession of the passages of the Sambre between Charleroi and Namur, and two reserve French divisions and the 5th French Army on Sir John French's right were in full retreat. The accuracy of this information was confirmed by aeroplane reconnaissance, and Sir John determined to withdraw his army to a position which had been previously reconnoitred. It rested on the fortress of Maubeuge on the right, and extended west to Jenlain, south-east of Valenciennes, on the left, but it was difficult to hold, because standing crops and buildings made the siting of trenches very difficult, and limited the field of fire in many important localities. Nevertheless it contained some good artillery positions.

The Germans, commanded by Von Kluck, gave the British no rest in the small hours of August

24, and continuous fighting occurred during the night, the Germans at various points employing powerful searchlights to assist their attack. To cover the retreat of Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien's Corps (the 2nd) from the line Condé-Mons, Sir John French, who had posted himself with his staff at Bavai, proposed to launch the Cavalry Division against the enemy endeavouring to turn the left of his line, while to aid the retreat of the right of the 2nd Corps from behind Mons he advanced the 1st Corps, whose 2nd Division was directed to make a powerful demonstration from the direction of Harmignies as if it was desired to retake Binche. Thus the offensive was taken at both ends of the British line. The artillery of the 1st and 2nd Divisions supported the attack of the 2nd Division, and the 1st Division took up a supporting position in the neighbourhood of Peissant.

Under cover of this demonstration Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien retired from Condé-Mons on the line Dour-Quarouble-Frameries. The 3rd Division (General Hamilton's) on the right of the 2nd Corps suffered considerable loss from the enemy debouching from Mons. By Sir John French's orders General Allenby with the Cavalry Division was operating vigorously on the left flank of Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, but about 7.30 a.m. a message arrived from Sir Charles Fergusson, commanding the 5th Division (part of Sir



FRENCH HEAVY GUN IN A VILLAGE NEAR ARRAS. [*Sport and General.*]

Horace Smith-Dorrien's Corps, the 2nd), that he was very hard pressed. General Allenby, therefore, withdrew his cavalry to Sir Charles Fergusson's support. In the course of this operation General De Lisle, with the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, charged the flank of the advancing German infantry, but 500 yards or so from the enemy was held up by wire. The 9th Lancers and 18th Hussars suffered severely in the retirement of General De Lisle's Brigade.

The situation of the British force was now most precarious. The only reinforcement it had received was the 19th Infantry Brigade, which had been hurried up from the lines of communication to Valenciennes, and on the morning of Monday, August 24, was stationed south of Quarouble to support the left flank of the Army. The 4th Division under General Snow had commenced detraining at Le Cateau on the 23rd, but it was not till the next day (the 25th) that it became available for service.

By nightfall Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien's Corps, which was retiring under cover of the cavalry, held a position west of Bavai, Sir Douglas Haig being on his right. The left wing of the British Army was protected by the cavalry and by the newly arrived 19th Infantry Brigade posted between Jenlain and Bry; the right wing rested on the fortress of Maubeuge.

A paragraph from Sir John French's dispatch of September 7 will show the reader how dangerous was the position of the British

Army. "The French were still retiring," he says, "and I had no support except such as was afforded by the fortress of Maubeuge; and the determined attempts of the enemy to get round my left flank assured me that it was his intention to hem me against that place and surround me. I felt that not a moment must be lost in retiring to another position The operation, however, was full of danger and difficulty, not only owing to the very superior force in my front, but also to the exhaustion of the troops." Moreover Sir John doubted the wisdom of standing to fight on the, about to be partially entrenched, position, Cambrai-Le Cateau-Landrecies, and he had determined to make a great effort to continue the retreat till he could put some substantial obstacle, such as the Somme or the Oise, between his troops and the enemy, and afford the former some opportunity of rest and reorganization. The line Vermand-St. Quentin-Ribemont was indicated to the Corps commanders as that towards which they were to continue their retreat. St. Quentin is on the Somme, Ribemont on the Oise, Vermand to the west of St. Quentin. Behind St. Quentin and Ribemont lay the uncompleted fortress of La Fère.

The immediate problem before Sir John was to withdraw his army from between Valenciennes and Maubeuge to the road joining Cambrai and Le Cateau. From Maubeuge to Landrecies (a few miles north-east of Le Cateau

on the road from the latter place to Maubeuge) stretches the Forest of Mormal. The guns of the forts to the south of Maubeuge would not prevent the Germans from occupying the forest. General Snow's division from Le Cateau was moved up to a central position, with his right south of Solesmes and his left resting on the Cambrai-Le Cateau road south of La Chaprie.

The retirement recommenced in the early morning of Tuesday, August 25, and the rear-guards were ordered to be clear of the Eth-Bavai-Maubeuge road by 5 30 a.m. General Allenby and the cavalry were to cover the retreat. With the 1st Corps Sir Douglas Haig was to march to Landrecies by the road along the eastern border of the Forest of Mormal.

The two French Reserve Divisions were right of the British Army, and the 24th, a French cavalry corps, under General Sordêt, had been in billets north of Avesnes to the east of Landrecies. Sir John French had visited General Sordêt and earnestly requested his cooperation and support during the fighting of the 23rd and 24th. Sordêt had promised to obtain sanction from his army commander to act on Sir John French's left, but his horses were too tired to move. Sir John could, however, rely on the aid of the two French Reserve Divisions, but

not immediately on the cavalry of General Sordêt. From the west he might also expect some indirect assistance. General D'Amade was near Arras with the 61st and 62nd French Reserve Divisions. It will be remembered that the 2nd German Corps had been moving from the direction of Tournai to envelop the left of Sir John French. Further to the west a German cavalry division, a battalion of infantry, with artillery and machine guns, had occupied Lille, on which a heavy fine was imposed, and routed the French Territorials (who had no artillery) at Bethune and captured Cambrai. West of Cambrai they inflicted another severe defeat on the Territorials at Bapaume, and threatened Arras. General D'Amade, who was organizing the French defensive north of the Somme, hurried up Regular troops to the latter place. General D'Amade, one of the most illustrious French soldiers, had been military attaché with the British Army during the South African War, and he had subsequently commanded the French troops in Morocco. Sir John French could count on his attacking the right of the German forces endeavouring to envelop the British left wing.

Throughout Tuesday, August 25, the 1st Corps continued its march on Landrecies, which was reached about 10 p.m. They had been intended to fill the gap between Le Cateau and

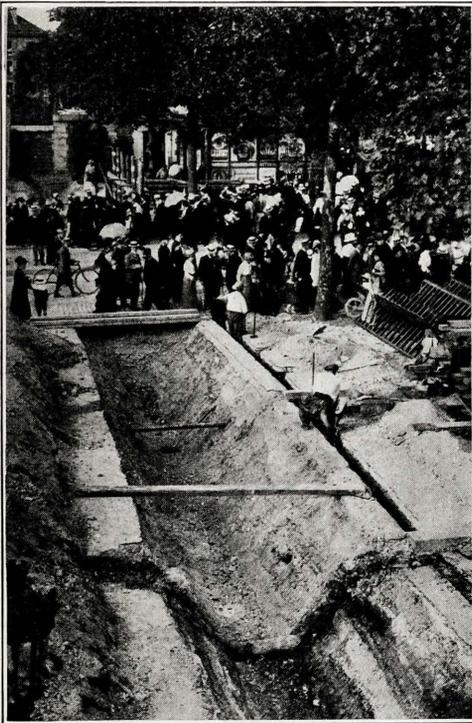


AFTER A BATTLE.

[Sport and General.

A country cart collecting equipment of dead soldiers from the battle-fields and unloading on the station platform.

Landrecies, but the troops were too exhausted to march further. They were heavily engaged south and east of Maroilles, a few miles north-east of Landrecies, and the 9th German Army Corps, moving through the Forest of Mormal, in the evening attacked the 4th Guards Brigade stationed in and around Landrecies itself. During the fighting a German Infantry Brigade suffered heavily. It advanced from the woods in the closest order into the narrow street, which was completely filled. The British machine guns from the head of the street swept away the crown of the German column, a frightful panic ensued, and it was estimated that no fewer than 800 to 900 dead and wounded were lying in the street alone. The German officers, who were accustomed from behind to shoot with revolvers the privates who hesitated to advance, had not been able to check the stampede. The British in these encounters had received assistance from the two French Reserve Divisions on the right, but, as Sir John French said in his dispatch, it was owing mainly "to the skilful manner in which Sir Douglas Haig had extricated his Corps from an exceptionally difficult position in the darkness of the night" that the 1st Corps was able at dawn to resume their march south towards Wassigny on Guise.



PARIS.

For defensive use in case of necessity trenches were dug across the streets.

[Sport and General.

Meanwhile Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, covered by the cavalry which during the 24th and 25th had become a good deal scattered, and by General Snow's Division posted north of the Cambrai-Le Cateau road with its right south of Solesmes, had by 6 p.m. reached the line Le Cateau-Cambrai, their right being at Le Cateau and their left in the neighbourhood of Caudry. The 4th Division, which had been placed temporarily under the command of Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, had fallen back beyond Caudry towards Seranvillers, the left being thrown back.

Wednesday, the 26th, was the most critical day of the retreat. At dawn it became apparent that the enemy was throwing the bulk of his strength against Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien and General Snow. The guns of no fewer than four German Corps were in position before the British left, and Sir Horace judged it impossible to continue his retreat at daybreak in face of this attack. The 1st Corps at that moment was incapable of movement, and General Sordêt, owing to the state of his horses, was unable to help the British. There had been no time properly to entrench the position.

According to the rules of Kriegspiel the British left wing was doomed to destruction, but, as on so many previous occasions in history, the British soldier did not know when he was beaten. Outnumbered as it was by at least four guns to one, the Artillery deluged the advancing Germans with shrapnel. In vain the German commander threw his picked cavalry—the German Guard Cavalry Division—into the battle. It was thrown back by the British 12th Infantry Brigade in complete disorder.

Still there are limits to human endurance, and it was obvious that if General Smith-Dorrien was to escape annihilation he must at all costs retreat. About 3.30 p.m. the order to retire was given, and, thanks to the Artillery and the Cavalry, and the General's superb handling of his Corps, this most difficult and dangerous operation was successfully effected. "I say without hesitation," wrote Sir John French, "that the saving of the left wing . . . could never have been accomplished unless a commander" (Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien) "of rare and unusual coolness, intrepidity, and determination had been present to personally conduct the operation." The British had inflicted terrible losses on the enemy, and the German public, who had been led to expect a new Sedan, were instead to read long lists of casualties suffered by the finest regiments in



SAVING THE GUNS IN THE ACTION AT COMPIEGNE.

the German Army. From the 23rd to the 26th inclusive the British losses were estimated by Sir John French at between 5,000 to 6,000 men. Considering the enormous forces that they had baffled for four days, these figures are the most eloquent of tributes to the skill of the British commander, his officers and men.

The judgment of a foreigner—especially a hostile foreigner—is very frequently the judgment of posterity, and after ages will doubtless repeat that of a member of the German General Staff, who was conversing one day with a Dane in the September of 1914. He was referring to the Battles of Mons and Landrecies-Le Cateau; "The English," he said, "have prepared a surprise for us in this war, especially in the battles in North France.

The Englishman is cool, indifferent to danger, and to the dispensations of Providence. He stays where he is commanded. He shoots magnificently, extraordinarily well. He is good at bayonet attack, . . . and it is during these bayonet attacks when luck is against him that he is at his very best.

His endurance and marksmanship make him an opponent of high rank. It is the English we try to hit hardest in this war.

After we had broken through the French positions on the Belgian frontier and had got Joffre's army on the move towards the south the German Army's advance appeared to be checked. It was General French's army that had stayed the retreat. We ordered the English lines to be stormed. Our troops dashed into them with fixed bayonets, but our efforts to drive the English back were in vain. They are very good at resisting a bayonet attack. The English are strong people, athletic, and well developed. So we decided to shoot them down, but we found that they aimed remarkably well. "Every bullet found its billet," as they say.

We ordered our best shots to tackle them, but the result was not in our favour. Then we got all our artillery at work that could be spared against them. We swept the English positions with a rain of shells—a regular bombardment. When the firing ceased we expected to find the English had fled. The English artillery cannot be compared with ours or the French and we soon silenced it. We had not heard from the English for an hour.

But how can I describe our astonishment? Beyond the shell-swept zone we saw English soldiers' heads moving and they began to use their rifles again as soon as the coast was clear. The English are a cool

lot! We had to assault again and again, but in vain. We were in fact repulsed after having literally surrounded them. Their perseverance and pluck had gained their just reward. The retirement could now be carried out in an orderly way. All risk of catastrophe to the retreating army was averted.

Even the sight of the wounded surprised us and commanded our respect. They lay so still and scarcely ever complained.

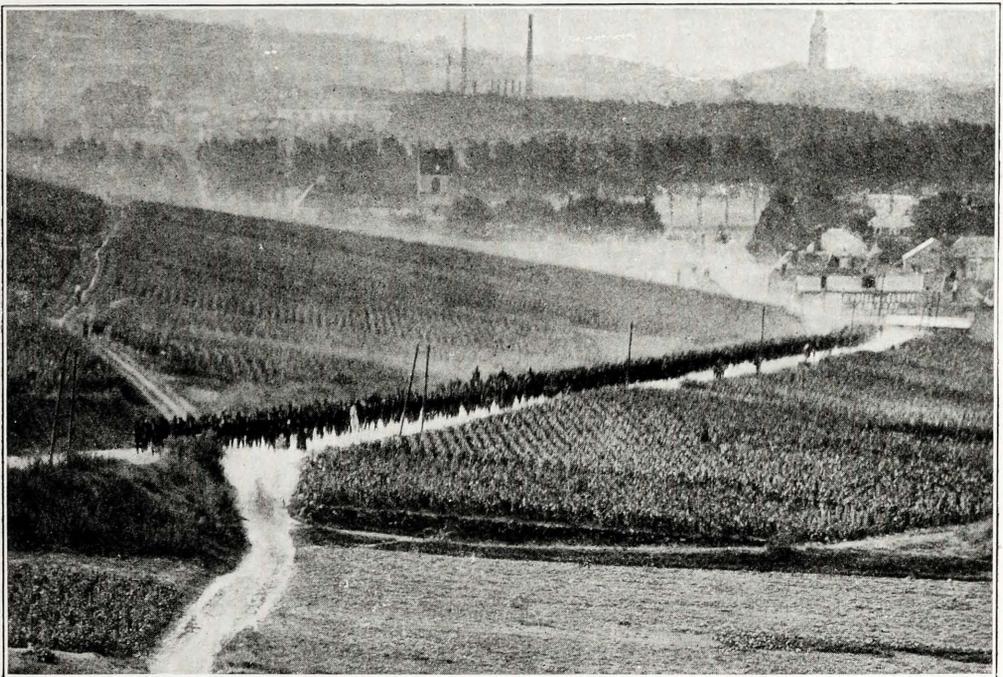
The retreat continued far into the night of the 26th and through the 27th and 28th, when the troops halted on the line Noyon-Chaunaye-La Fère. The feebleness of the German pursuit is further evidence of the efficiency with which the British troops had been handled in action, though it must be remembered that by now General Sordêt with his cavalry was relieving the pressure on the British rear, and General d'Amade with the 61st and 62nd French Reserve Divisions from the neighbourhood of Arras was attacking Kluck's right flank. No fewer than five German corps had been flung at two British corps and General Snow's Division. The German military reputation, damaged by General Pau in Alsace, had been shattered by Sir John French. Among the officers besides those already mentioned whom Sir John selected for special praise in respect of their conduct during this tremendous test of ability, courage, and endurance were his Military Secretary, the Hon. W. Lambton; the Chief and Sub-Chief of the General Staff, Sir Archibald Murray and Major-General

Wilson; the Quartermaster-General, Sir William Robertson; and the Adjutant-General, Sir Nevil Macready.

The Royal Flying Corps, under Sir David Henderson, had had their baptism of fire, and covered themselves with glory. "They have," said Sir John French, "furnished me with the most complete and accurate information, which has been of incalculable value in the conduct of the operations. Fired at constantly both by friend and foe, and not hesitating to fly in every kind of weather, they have remained undaunted throughout." They had also destroyed five of the enemy's machines by fighting in the air.

One of the duels in the air has been graphically described by a private of the 1st Royal West Kent Regiment. The airman was a Frenchman, but it brings vividly before us the nature of part of the work done by Sir David Henderson's heroic subordinates:—

There was one interesting sight I saw as the column was on the march, and that was a duel in the air between French and German aeroplanes. It was wonderful to see the Frenchman manoeuvre to get the upper position of the German, and after about 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour the Frenchman got on top and blazed away with a revolver on the German. He injured him so much as to cause him to descend, and when found he was dead. The British troops buried the airman and burnt the aeroplane. During that day we were not troubled by any more German aeroplanes.



FRENCH ARMY ON THE MARCH IN THE CHAMPAGNE DISTRICT.
Earthworks in the foreground.

[Central Press.]



REMAINS OF A GERMAN MOTOR CONVOY.
Which was surprised by a French battery.

[Topical.]

Leaving for a time the British, we must now turn to the Meuse side of the theatre of war.

The fall of Namur and the German crossing of the Sambre might not by themselves have obliged the British and French to retreat from the Sambre. It was the failure of the French offensive through the Belgian Ardennes, the withdrawal of the French troops to the valley of the Meuse, and the forcing, after desperate fighting, of the Meuse between Givet and Namur that perhaps decided General Joffre to retreat on the Aisne and Marne. Near Givet, the point where the Meuse leaves France and enters Belgium, the Germans had traversed the river. The possession of the triangle of country from the environs of Maubeuge to Namur and from Namur to Givet enabled them to turn the French defensive on the left bank of the Meuse. A body of Germans advanced from Rocroi on Rethel.

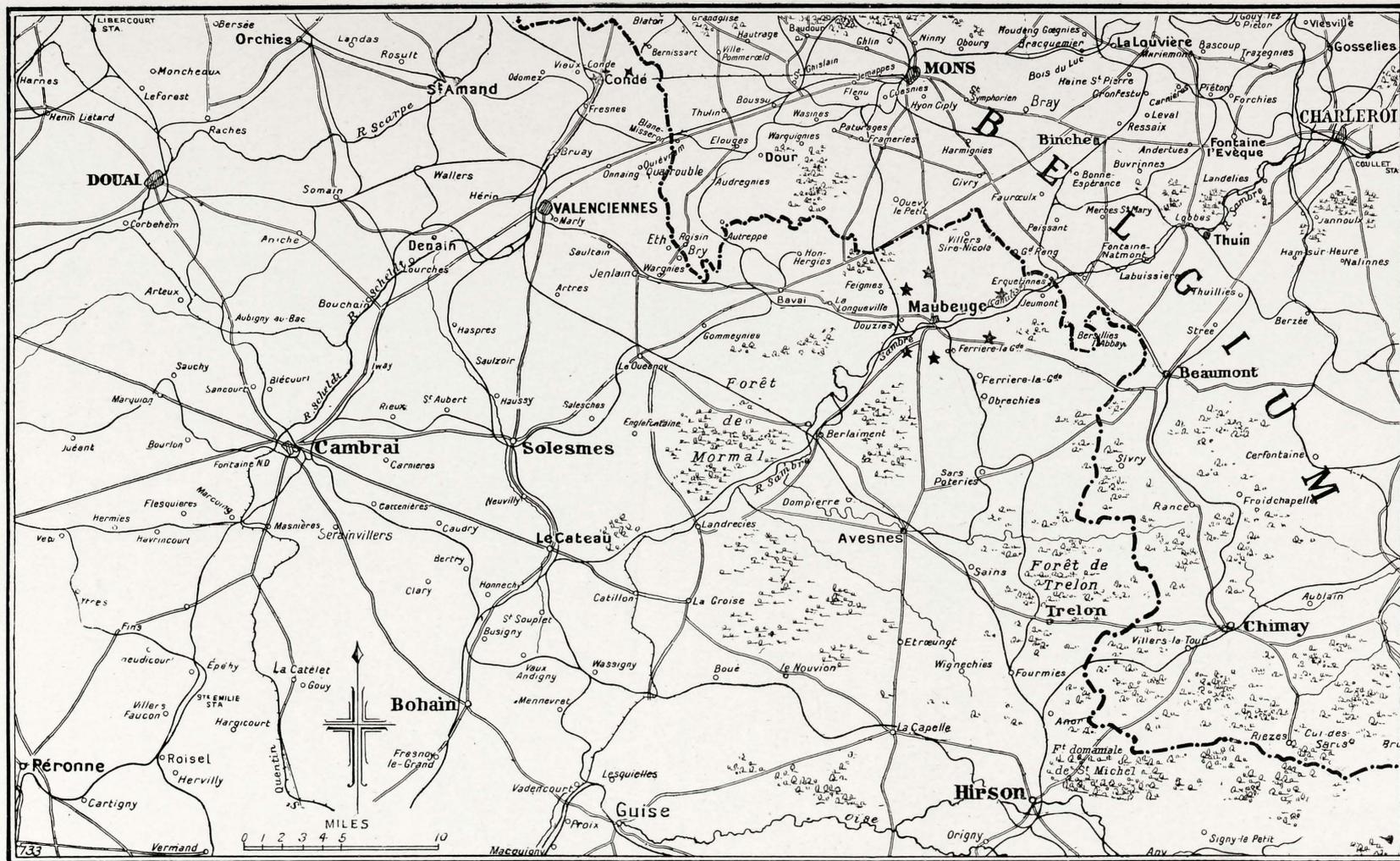
The wooded country between Givet and Mézières permitted the French to oppose a desperate resistance to the invaders ascending the Meuse. At Charleville, on the western bank of the Meuse opposite Mézières (a few miles to the west of Sedan), a determined stand was made. The inhabitants were withdrawn from Charleville and mitrailleuses hidden in the houses. The Germans reached Charleville on August 25. They were permitted to cross the three bridges into the town. Suddenly the bridges were blown up by contact mines, and the Germans in Charleville were raked by the fire of the mitrailleuses and overwhelmed with shells. Nevertheless the Germans, with reckless courage,

persisted in their enterprise. The French guns from the hills round Charleville swept away the heads of their columns, but the Germans threw pontoon bridges over the river, and ultimately the French gunners had to retire.

South-west, between Mézières and Rethel, near Signy l'Abbaye, there was another fierce encounter. Mézières itself was abandoned by the French.

Meanwhile, the French invasion of the Belgian Ardennes and the Duchy of Luxembourg, from the region between Mézières and Verdun, had, like the invasion of the Belgian Ardennes from the valley of the Meuse, been unsuccessful. The French crossed the Semois, a tributary of the Meuse which enters it below Mézières, and advanced towards Neufchâteau. They were repulsed by the Germans, commanded by Duke Albrecht of Württemberg.

At the opening of the war a large body of German cavalry had descended from Luxembourg, and endeavoured to slip past Longwy and cut the French line between Verdun and Mézières. But the garrison of Longwy, led by the heroic Colonel d'Arche, had held them in check and driven them back with heavy losses. Longwy, though its defences were out of date, did not surrender till August 27, and the magnificent resistance of its garrison seriously retarded the advance of the German Army (based on Treves) under the command of the Crown Prince. Near Spincourt, north-east of Verdun, the French repulsed a German attack (August 10-11) and captured three guns and three mitrailleuses.



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE FIRST PART OF THE BRITISH RETREAT FROM MONS.



STEINHAUER.
The Kaiser's Master Spy.

[Record Press.]

The French troops victorious near Spincourt pursued the enemy, and their artillery on the 12th surprised and destroyed a regiment of dragoons. Two aviators from Verdun, Lieutenant Cesari and Corporal Prudhommeau, flew over Metz and dropped bombs on a Zeppelin hangar. At Virton, north-east of Montmédy, the French 6th Corps inflicted a considerable defeat on the Germans. In the environs of Nancy on the 25th there was a desperate battle between the French and the Crown Prince of Bavaria's Army. The 15th Corps, surprised in the battle of August 20 (referred to in Chapter XXIII.), executed a brilliant counter-attack (August 25-26). The Germans suffered heavily.

In spite of the French successes, between Mézières and Verdun, the French, owing to the failure of the operations on the Sambre and the northern Meuse, and in the Belgian Ardennes, had to withdraw to the valley of the Meuse. On the 27th Longwy capitulated. A regiment of Germans who were crossing the river near Dun were driven into it. In the region between the Meuse and Rethel there was a great battle on August 31. But, as General Joffre had decided to retire on the

Marne, the line of the Meuse between Verdun and Mézières was abandoned, and the Germans advanced to the Forest of the Argonne.

Thus pursued by the German Armies commanded by Kluck on the west, Bülow from Charleroi and Namur, Hausen from Dinant and Givet, the Allied forces by August 28 had been pushed back to a line stretching roughly from Amiens to Mézières, while their forces east of the Meuse, between Mézières and Verdun, were retiring before Duke Albrecht of Würtemberg and the Crown Prince, and to the south-east of Verdun the Crown Prince of Bavaria was being headed off the gap of Nancy.

On August 28 the British Army was retiring from Noyon and La Fère on Compiègne and Soissons. Two columns of German cavalry from the neighbourhood of St. Quentin were in hot pursuit. The western column, led by the Uhlans of the Guard, was charged by General Gough at the head of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade and routed. The column to the east was attacked by General Chetwode with the 5th Cavalry Brigade. The 12th Lancers and Royal Scots Greys rode down the enemy, spearing large numbers of them. The Scots Greys were apparently acting in conjunction with the Black Watch. Imitating the Greys' tactics at Waterloo, they plunged straight into the ranks of the enemy, a soldier of the Black Watch hanging on to each horseman. The Germans, completely surprised, were broken up and repulsed with tremendous losses. "Our men," said a wounded soldier who was a witness of one of the charges, "came on with a mighty shout, and fell upon the enemy with the utmost violence. The weight of the horses carried them into the close-formed ranks of the Germans, and the gallant Greys and the 'Kilties' gave a fearful account of themselves."

Still the position of the British was critical in the extreme. For six days they had been marching and fighting continuously—by day under a blazing August sun, and by night in a heavy, stifling atmosphere—in a country the features of which were unfamiliar to them and the inhabitants of which spoke a language which most of the soldiers could not understand.

At Paris the Cabinet which had prepared for the war was being replaced by another and a stronger one. It was presided over by M. Viviani; the ex-Socialist, Briand, was Minister



MAUBEUGE.

[Central News.]

A Cupola fort after the bombardment.

of Justice ; Delcassé—to whom France and Great Britain owed such a debt of gratitude—held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, and Millerand was Minister of War. Two days earlier (August 27) General Gallieni had been appointed Governor of Paris. A few days later the President of the Republic and the Ministry were to leave Paris for Bordeaux.

The moment had come for a consultation between the French and British Commanders. Should the retreat be continued, or, as the French and British peoples would have preferred, should the offensive be resumed? On the 25th Lord Kitchener had delivered his first speech in the House of Lords. The Empires, he had said, with whom the British were at war had called to the colours almost their entire male population. The principle the British on their part would observe was this, that while the enemy's maximum force underwent a constant diminution, the reinforcements prepared by the British would steadily and increasingly flow out until they had an army which in numbers not less than in quality would not be unworthy of the power and responsibilities of the British Empire. A speedy victory was needed by Germany. The Russians had mobilized more quickly than had been expected; they had invaded Galicia and Eastern Prussia, while the Serbians on the 22nd had severely beaten the Austrians. There was no need to

play into the German hands by a premature offensive.

At 1 o'clock on August 29 Sir John French was visited by General Joffre. The French Commander-in-Chief, whose plans for invading Germany through the Belgian Ardennes and the Duchy of Luxemburg, while General Pau was seizing Alsace and Southern Lorraine had, owing to the capture of Namur and defeats in the Ardennes, been rendered impossible of execution, had changed his strategy with a rapidity and coolness which would have delighted Napoleon himself. To the German offensive he had opposed a defensive which recalls Wellington's retreat in Portugal before Massena, Barclay de Tolly's before Napoleon in 1812. "His strategic conception," says Sir John French, "was to draw the enemy on at all points, until a favourable situation was created from which to assume the offensive." From day to day, owing to the development of the German plans and the vicissitudes of the immense combat, he had had to modify the methods by which he thought to attain his object. In General Joffre and the cool, eloquent President of the Republic, Raymond Poincaré, was personified the spirit of the new France, that France which, while retaining its pre-eminence in arts and literature, had given to humanity a Pasteur, a Curie, and the greatest mathematician of his day, Henri Poincaré,

that France whose aviator Blériot had been the first to fly the Straits of Dover, whose champions in the world of sport, Carpentier and Bouin* had just won the admiration of every sportsman and athlete.

The meeting of the silent, thoughtful British Commander and the calm, resolute engineer, who for the second time had seen his native land ravaged by the hordes from beyond the Rhine, will remain for ever memorable. "General Joffre was most kind, cordial, and sympathetic, as he has always been," wrote Sir John French to Lord Kitchener. The lines of the Somme and Aisne, together with the half-fortified La Fère, Laon, and Reims, it was decided, were to be abandoned, and the retreat was to be continued to the Marne. To this movement the French forces in the east were to conform.

The British were provisionally to occupy the line Compiègne-Soissons, while the German pursuit was to be checked by a French counter-offensive on the west and north-east of the British positions. General Joffre had already directed the 5th French Army (consisting of four corps) behind the Oise between La Fère and Guise to attack the Germans on the Somme. Commanded by General Pau, who had been recalled from Alsace, it engaged the

*This magnificent athlete, one of the finest long-distance runners that has ever appeared, was to be a victim of the Kaiser's ambition.

German forces from Peronne on the Somme to Guise on the Oise. The German Guard, its reserve corps, and the 10th Corps were decisively beaten south of Guise, and the Guard and the 10th Corps were rapidly driven by the French Army across the Oise. But the left wing of the French was unsuccessful, and Amiens and the line of the Somme were evacuated.

General Joffre informed Sir John French that the 6th French Army, composed of the 7th Corps, which had been railed up from the south to the east of Amiens, of four reserve divisions, and of Sordêt's cavalry, was forming up on the British left. The right wing of this army rested on Roye, north-west of Noyon. In the space to the right of the 5th Army (which had beaten the Germans at the Battle of Guise) and to the left of the 4th Army, which was retiring through the country between the Oise and the Meuse, a new army (the 9th) under General Foch, made up of three corps from the south, was operating.

Such was the situation on August 29. The retirement once more began, and the 2nd Corps of the British Army withdrew through Compiègne, the city where Joan of Arc was taken prisoner, and where at the Palace Napoleon I. and Napoleon III. had held their Courts. In the forest to the south of Compiègne the 1st



FRENCH WOUNDED SOLDIERS DETRAINING AND BOARDING A HOSPITAL SHIP. *(Topical.)*

Cavalry Brigade after momentarily losing a Horse Artillery battery, with the help of some detachments from the 3rd Corps (which were now at the seat of war) operating on their left, defeated the pursuing cavalry, recovered the guns and captured twelve of the enemy. The 1st (Sir Douglas Haig's) Corps, which was retiring from Soissons to the east, also fought a rearguard action at Villers-Cotterets on the road from Soissons to Paris. The 4th Guards Brigade in this engagement suffered severely.

As the British retreated they blew up the bridges across the rivers and streams crossed by them. By September 3 they were behind the Marne, between Lagny and Signy-Signets, but General Joffre decided that they should not halt there, but place the Seine between them and the enemy. The Germans threw bridges over the Marne and threatened the line of the British Army and of the 5th and 9th French Armies to their right. On September 5 the British were beyond the Seine, and on that day Sir John French saw General Joffre, who explained to him that he intended at last to take the offensive. The President of the French Republic, the Ministers and the Diplomatic Corps had left for Bordeaux on the 2nd. The news had arrived of a decisive victory by the Russians over the Austrians in Galicia. On the 4th the Germans appeared to have suspended their movement on Paris, and their armies to the east were west of the Argonne. Maubeuge had not yet fallen.

It was obvious that Von Kluck was moving to join Bülow and Hausen and avoid the danger of a gap in the German line. The Allied army now rested to the west on Paris, and to the east on Verdun. The moment had arrived when a blow could be struck against the German communications. Von Kluck's Army (the 1st) was moving east, the 2nd German Army, after taking Reims, was advancing south-west to the Marne, the 4th German Army was west of the Argonne, and the 7th German Army had been repulsed by a French corps near D'Einville.

The British losses in the operations from Mons to the Marne were estimated at 15,000

killed, wounded, or missing. Drafts amounting to 19,000 men had reached, or were reaching, the Army, and lost material had been replaced. The moral results were summed up by the Press Bureau in the following words:—

There is no doubt whatever that our men have established a personal ascendancy over the Germans and that they are conscious of the fact that with anything like even numbers the result would not be doubtful. The shooting of the German infantry is poor, while the British rifle fire has devastated every column of attack that has presented itself. Their superior training and intelligence has enabled the British to use open formations with effect, and thus to cope with the vast numbers employed by the enemy. The cavalry, who have had even more opportunities for displaying personal prowess and address, have definitely established their superiority. Sir John French's reports dwell on this marked superiority of the British troops of every arm of the service over the Germans. "The cavalry," he says, "do as they like with the enemy until they are confronted by thrice their numbers. The German patrols simply fly before our horsemen. The German troops will not face our infantry fire, and as regards our artillery they have never been opposed by less than three or four times their numbers."

Our troops held their own in the prolonged trial of the retreat because they were ably handled, because our methods of using infantry were superior to those of the Germans, because our field artillery was more than the equal of its opponents, and because when the time came for the cavalry to thrust itself into battle it rode home and proved itself far superior to the German. Never before had the British horseman shown himself to be such a master of his trade. For this he has to thank his instructors, Sir Evelyn Wood, who always preached its value, French, Haig, Allenby, Remington, Chetwode, and others, who taught it and enabled it to gain the honours it reaped in the operations in France.