

CHAPTER XVII

BATTLE OF NEUVE CHAPELLE—*Continued*

Neuve Chapelle cleared of the enemy—Condition of the village—Work of the Sappers and Miners—Activity of hostile snipers—Camaraderie between British and Indian soldiers—Attack of 23rd Brigade held up—Gallantry of Middlesex Regiment and Scottish Rifles—Delay in bringing up reserves of 4th Corps—Attack by the Dehra Dun Brigade held up—8th Division fails to advance—General Jacob in consequence has to retire—1/4th Seaforth Highlanders—Further attack delayed by inability of 8th Division to advance—Dehra Dun Brigade relieved by Sirhind—General Jacob's appreciation of 2/2nd and 1/9th Gurkhas—Attack by Sirhind and Jullundur Brigades—Anticipated by heavy German attacks—Completely repulsed—Enemy's heavy losses—Gallantry of Captain Lodwick and Lieutenant Mankelow—Work of Signallers—Captain Collins, 1/4th Gurkhas, wins the D.S.O.—Our attack held up owing to failure of 25th Brigade to advance—Heavy losses of 1st Highland Light Infantry—Failure of our second attack—Third attack countermanded by Sir James Willcocks—Further active operations suspended by Sir Douglas Haig—Losses of British forces in the battle—Losses of Indian Corps—Material and moral results of the battle—Appreciation of Indian Corps by Sir John French—Sir Douglas Haig's special order—Telegram from Sir John French to the Viceroy of India—Curtailment of ammunition for our artillery—Improvements in enemy's defences after Neuve Chapelle.

THE Indian Corps was now firmly established in a line of trenches running down the eastern side of Neuve Chapelle and facing the Bois du Biez, the assault on which was to form the second phase of the operations.

The task of clearing the village of such of the enemy as had survived the bombardment was necessarily a grim proceeding. The houses had for

the most part been blown to bits, but isolated parties of the bolder spirits amongst the Germans still lurked in the cellars, or held the upper floors of disroofed houses, while machine guns did their deadly work from the shelter of piles of ruins. Our men went systematically through the village, house by house, bombing or bayoneting such as resisted, and taking a large number of prisoners, so that by 11 a.m. the village was completely cleared.

The effect of our bombardment resembled that of a very violent earthquake. The church had been completely shattered, and the churchyard was pitted from end to end with yawning shell holes, the graves in many cases being burst open, exposing in a very terrible fashion long-buried bodies to view. Many trees had been blown up by the roots, and over all was the stain and pungent reek of lyddite.

The rôle of the Sappers and Miners in an action is to follow up the infantry as closely as possible, and to wire and consolidate captured positions. This, as can be imagined, is no light task, entailing as it does heavy labour under constant fire. The party of Sappers who were entrusted with the work on the new line in front of Neuve Chapelle, made their head quarters in the cellars of the Brewery, on the walls of which the late occupants had written many times the benevolent phrase, "Gott strafe England." By day the company rested, spending the whole night in consolidating the line.

The Brewery, formerly a substantial three-storied erection, was a favourite target of the German gunners, who pounded it persistently with every kind of shell. Gradually the remaining walls and floors were demolished, but the gallant Sappers still

held on in their underground fastness. The climax came on the third day, when the cellar roof was split, and a "crump" bursting outside extinguished the solitary candle at the far end, and other arrangements had to be made.

The Sappers and the 107th Pioneers laboured with such a will that our new line was consolidated before that of the enemy, and we were thus enabled to bring fire to bear on the German working parties, and to break them up. To have done so before would have been to draw the enemy's fire on our men, a proceeding always to be avoided.

The German snipers were particularly active and bold at this period. On the 14th March two men of the 4th King's (Liverpools) were shot through the head soon after daylight, evidently by a sniper. There appeared to be no very suitable positions for these gentry in the neighbourhood, but a close scrutiny of the ground in front revealed a slight movement among some dead Germans lying just beyond our wire, and a further examination disclosed the presence among the corpses of a sniper, who was greeted with a volley which put a stop to his further operations.

As an instance of the different ways in which our men meet misfortune when it comes, the case of Havildar Ismail Khan of the 21st Company, 3rd Sappers and Miners, may be quoted. This havildar, while working in front of the line, was shot through both legs, one being smashed. His first expression of opinion was one of admiration for the German sniper, who, he considered, had carefully waited until his legs were in line, so as to damage both with one shot! The havildar, who expressed

his view with grave and measured approval, evidently looked upon this feat as a fine example of war economy.

The camaraderie existing between the British and Indian soldiers was very marked during the battle. Cigarettes were freely exchanged as well as friendly greetings, the latter evidently unintelligible, but apparently eminently satisfactory to both parties. Often when a detachment of Sappers was returning from work, the British would give them cigarettes and insist on their warming themselves at their fire buckets, generally heralding their arrival by the cry of "Gangway for the Suffering Miners."

The attack of the 23rd Brigade on the left had not met with the same success as that of the Indian Corps, but through no fault of their own. The 2nd Scottish Rifles and the 2nd Middlesex advanced with splendid determination against a hail of bullets from rifles and machine guns, only to find that the enemy's wire had been but little damaged by our guns.

Both battalions fought magnificently, tearing at the wire with their hands and breaking it with the butts of their rifles, but nothing could live against such fire as was brought to bear on them at a range of a few yards, and they were compelled to fall back and to lie in the open, scraping up such cover as they could. Further to their right the 25th Brigade had met with little difficulty, as the wire in their front had been completely destroyed, and they were enabled to turn the southern flank of the enemy's defence in front of the 23rd Brigade, which then succeeded in getting through to the north-east corner of the village, where they linked

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up with the 25th Brigade on their right and the 24th Brigade on their left.

The losses of the Middlesex and Scottish Rifles were fearful; the latter regiment came out about 150 strong, under the command of a second lieutenant, having lost 15 officers, including the colonel.

This would have been the opportunity to push on with the utmost possible speed, while the element of surprise still existed and the enemy was demoralized by the bombardment, but the check sustained by the 23rd Brigade had thrown the machinery out of gear, and our front had to be reorganized.

An unexplained delay also occurred in bringing up the reserves of the 4th Corps. Sir John French, in his despatch dated the 5th April, 1915, remarked, "I am of opinion that this delay would not have occurred had the clearly expressed orders of the General Officer Commanding First Army been more carefully observed. The difficulties above enumerated might have been overcome at an earlier period of the day if the General Officer Commanding 4th Corps had been able to bring his reserve Brigade more speedily into action. As it was, the further advance did not commence before 3.30 p.m."

It is no part of the duty of those who are only concerned with the fortunes of the Indian Corps to examine the reasons which prevented the prompt employment of the reserve Brigade of the 4th Corps. The results, however, of this failure did much to neutralize the splendid efforts of the Indian Corps in this great battle.

It will be seen later that the successive assaults were held up by the enfilade fire of the enemy, the left flank of the Indian attack being in each case in

the air, owing to the inability of the 8th Division to advance.

At about 4 p.m. on the 10th March, the Dehra Dun Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General C. W. Jacob, which had hitherto been in support of the Garhwal Brigade, moved up and deployed along the road running south-west of Neuve Chapelle, towards Port Arthur and facing the Bois du Biez. The Brigade, which had been weakened by the detachment of the 1st Seaforths to assist the Garhwal Brigade, was supported by the 1st Manchesters and 47th Sikhs of the Jullundur Brigade, Lahore Division.

At 5.30 p.m., by which time it was almost dark, the assaulting troops advanced towards their objective, the Bois du Biez, the 2/2nd Gurkhas on the right, the 1/9th Gurkhas on the left, with the 1/4th Seaforths in close support. The front line of the 2nd Gurkhas was composed of No. 3 Double Company under Major Nicolay, with 2nd Lieutenant Clifford on the left, and No. 4 Double Company under Major Watt, with Captain Dallas Smith on the right. No. 1 Double Company under Major Sweet and Captain McCleverty was in support on the right, and No. 2 under Captain Mullaly on the left. Leading the 1/9th Gurkhas were Nos. 1 and 2 Companies, with 3 and 4 in support.

The attack at once came under fire from both flanks, a machine gun on the left being particularly active, and as each line deployed into the open, casualties occurred. Captain McCleverty was here shot through the arm and put out of action.

Luckily, the River Layes, an obstacle which it was feared would cause much trouble, was to a great

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extent in dead ground, *i.e.* not exposed to the direct fire of the enemy, and did not seriously impede the advance, as eight portable bridges had been brought up, over which the troops crossed rapidly.

Major Watt and Captain Dallas Smith led the assault with great dash, and reached the edge of the wood with few casualties. No. 3 Double Company, in attempting to keep touch with the 9th Gurkhas on the left, lost connection with No. 4 Company, and some confusion arose, which ended in a portion of No. 3 being held up by machine-gun fire. Nos. 1 and 2 Double Companies then closed up in rear, and the whole battalion began to dig itself in at the edge of the wood, sending out scouts to search the adjoining houses, from which snipers were giving much trouble.

Major Watt subsequently received the D.S.O. for the conspicuous bravery and ability shown by him in leading his company during this attack. On the following day he was wounded, but continued to command his double company until he collapsed.

Captain Dallas Smith and Lieutenant and Adjutant Corse-Scott were awarded the Military Cross for their services in the battle.

Here four Germans were captured by No. 4 Company, and another, who had lost his way, walked into the middle of No. 2 Company and was made prisoner. At about this time Major Nicolay was missing, and it was believed that he had been captured by the Germans, but subsequently it was ascertained that he had been killed in an attempt to establish touch between his position and that of No. 4 Company.

Our scouts could find no enemy or hostile trench in our immediate front, but a prisoner stated that

there were 1200 Germans on our left. While exploring the neighbourhood, a searchlight was discovered mounted on a limber, and as it could not be withdrawn it was rendered unserviceable before the subsequent retirement.

In the darkness touch had been lost with the 1/9th Gurkhas, and the position of No. 4 Double Company being very precarious, it was withdrawn to the support line outside the wood. Several German scouts were there captured, and it was found that a strongly traversed trench lay at a short distance from our front.

The 1/9th Gurkhas on the left had reached the River Laves with very slight casualties, Nos. 3 and 4 Companies moving up to try to establish connection with the 2nd Gurkhas. They arrived at the edge of the wood after a brief but sharp tussle, in which five Germans were killed and seven taken prisoners.

Subadar Mehar Sing Khattri was very prominent in this episode. He saw some Germans in the trench and sent a bomber to attack them, covering his advance with fire. The Subadar then rushed the trench, and by his gallant leading gained the 2nd Class, Indian Order of Merit.

In this position both battalions remained until about 8 p.m., the enemy continually making strenuous efforts to work round the flank of the 1/9th Gurkhas, but every attempt was frustrated by the fire of our machine guns under Lieutenant R. G. H. Murray, who met all onslaughts with such vigour that the enemy was compelled, after considerable losses, to desist. Lieutenant Murray was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry and marked ability on this and the succeeding day.

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The advance had now been brought to a standstill, and General Jacob had at once to decide whether it was advisable to hold on where he was, or to retire to a stronger line. In coming to a conclusion, he had to take into consideration several points. He had been led to expect co-operation by the 8th Division on his left, but one Brigade had been stopped by a strongly held bridgehead ; another could make no headway against machine-gun fire from the cross-roads near the village of Piètre. The 7th Division also was held up at the River Layes, and by the strength of the hostile position at the Moulin du Piètre ; the 1st Brigade, which was brought up in support from the 1st Corps, arrived after dark, when it was not considered advisable to put it in. The result was that both flanks of the Dehra Dun Brigade were in the air, the left flank especially being heavily enfiladed by machine guns. In fact, the Brigade was isolated.

Information obtained from prisoners and by our scouts showed that the enemy had rushed up reinforcements, and that the wood was strongly held, two German regiments being known to have assembled there.

The absence of the 1st Seaforths with the Garhwal Brigade had seriously weakened General Jacob's command, but in spite of this, he was confident that, had the 8th Division been able to co-operate, he could have maintained his position on the edge of the wood. As it was, he was forced to the conclusion that a retirement to the line of the River Layes was imperative, in which opinion General Anderson commanding the Meerut Division, as well as Sir James Willcocks, subsequently concurred.

The force then withdrew in good order under continual fire, but without further casualties, thanks to General Jacob's skill, to the western bank of the River Layes, all wounded who could be found being collected and removed. In the absence of any signs of activity on the part of the enemy, the troops spent the night in digging themselves in.

During the retirement Riflemen Manjit Gurung, Partiman Gurung and Ujir Sing Gurung, 2/2nd Gurkhas, gained the 2nd Class, Indian Order of Merit by attending to wounded men under fire and carrying them back, as did also Rifleman Jagtea Pun for a similar act of bravery. Rifleman Hastobir Roka earned the same distinction by bringing up machine-gun ammunition across ground swept by fire, although already wounded in the arm.

Meanwhile, operation orders were issued for an attack to be made at 7 a.m. on the 11th March by the Meerut Division, with the Bois du Biez as its first objective, the Jullundur Brigade being lent as a support, while the Divisional Artillery was strengthened by that of the Lahore Division with No. 1 Group of G.H.Q. Artillery.

Early in the morning Lt-Colonel MacFarlane commanding the 4th Seaforths was wounded, and Major Cuthbert took over command. Throughout the day this officer led his battalion with great courage and ability, although he was suffering severely from a wound in the head. For their services during this battle Lt-Colonel MacFarlane and Major Cuthbert were awarded the C.M.G. and the D.S.O. respectively.

General Jacob, in his report on the part taken by his Brigade in the battle, speaks in the following terms of high praise of this splendid battalion :—

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"The 4th Seaforths, a Territorial battalion, showed itself to be the equal of any Regular regiment. They worked with a will, and with such regularity that it was a pleasure to see this battalion advance to attack with confidence and self-reliance that left little to be desired."

As showing the feeling of comradeship which existed between the British and Indian soldiers, the winning of the Distinguished Conduct Medal by Private A. McLeod, 1/4th Seaforths, may be instanced. This soldier voluntarily left his trench on the 11th March and spent a quarter of an hour under very heavy machine-gun and rifle fire in bandaging a seriously wounded Gurkha.

In addition to the attack on the Bois du Biez, the Meerut Division was ordered to seize any opportunity of advancing southwards from the Rue du Bois to co-operate with the 1st Corps, which was continuing its attack east of Givenchy. The assaulting troops were supplied again by the Dehra Dun Brigade, the 2/39th Garhwalis taking the place of the 1st Seaforths, who had not yet rejoined.

Seven o'clock on the morning of the 11th arrived, but the attack of the 8th Division was held up, and the Division was consequently unable to get into line with the Dehra Dun Brigade, whose advance, in turn, was prevented by a thick fog and by heavy frontal fire from the Bois du Biez, as well as on the left front and rear from points which could not be located.

At 9 a.m. the Jullundur Brigade was moved up to Neuve Chapelle in readiness to support. This situation continued till 10 a.m., there being still no signs of any advance by the 8th Division.

Meanwhile our guns were shelling the wood

heavily, the only response from the enemy being in the shape of machine-gun and rifle fire; but a considerable amount of movement among the Germans was observed, especially opposite the 2/39th, and it was evident that they were collecting in large numbers.

Our men were by this time in a very exhausted condition, many of them having had no food, except what they carried in their haversacks, since they left Richebourg St. Vaast on the night before the attack. The appearance of the 2/8th Gurkhas with rations was therefore very welcome. The battalion was employed to a great extent during the action in bringing up stores and ammunition to the firing line. General Anderson records that this duty was steadily carried out under heavy shell fire, with considerable casualties, and that the behaviour of all ranks reflected much credit on the regiment, the work being arduous, dangerous, and not very inspiring.

During the operations of the 11th March, the ration party of the 1/9th Gurkhas came under machine-gun fire, which caused a number of casualties. Jemadar Shibdhoj Mal saw one of the wounded men lying out under fire. Accompanied by Havildar Gambhir Sing Bohra and four men of the 1/9th, he went out and brought in several wounded men, the enemy keeping up intense machine-gun fire all the time. The Jemadar received the 2nd Class, Indian Order of Merit and the Havildar and Riflemen the Indian Distinguished Service Medal.

At 11.30 a.m. the Sirhind Brigade was moved up to Richebourg St. Vaast in case of emergency.

Meanwhile it was ascertained by General Jacob

personally, from the nearest battalion of the 8th Division, that the cause of the delay in their advance was that the left of the 25th Brigade was heavily engaged, and that the right had strict orders not to move forward till the situation was adjusted. Still more delay, until at 12.45 p.m. orders were received for the infantry attack from the line of the River Layes to take place at 2.15 p.m., provided that the 8th Division had come up; the Dehra Dun Brigade to assault the Bois du Biez, supported by the Jullundur Brigade.

From thenceforward until dark the enemy kept up a constant bombardment of our trenches, and the slightest movement at once drew heavy enfilade machine-gun fire on our front line, which, hastily dug as it had been, afforded very incomplete shelter, so that the casualties were numerous.

When 2.15 p.m., the appointed time for the attack, arrived, there were again no signs of any advance on the part of the 8th Division. The two leading battalions of the Dehra Dun Brigade were therefore precluded by operation orders from moving, but some platoons of the 4th Seaforths, out of sheer eagerness, left their support trenches and doubled forward. They came at once under heavy machine-gun fire, and, after losing a number of men, were forced to crowd into the Gurkha trenches.

It was felt that this unsatisfactory situation should not be allowed to continue, and inquiry was again made by General Jacob of the nearest battalion of the 25th Brigade as to the reason of the delay in the advance. *The reply was that nothing was known of any intended attack at 2.15 p.m.* This was reported to General Anderson, who at 6 p.m. informed General

Jacob that his Brigade would be relieved by the Sirhind Brigade.

At 1.20 a.m. on the 12th the Sirhind Brigade arrived, and Dehra Dun moved off in the pitch darkness, losing a few men on the way from shell fire.

The casualties of the various units of the Brigade during the fighting from the 10th to the 12th March were as follows :—

1st Seaforths : 1 officer and 34 men killed ; 9 officers and 117 men wounded ; 5 men missing.

4th Seaforths : 2 officers and 34 men killed ; 6 officers and 136 men wounded ; 3 missing.

1/9th Gurkhas : 1 British, 3 Gurkha officers and 50 other ranks killed ; 2 Gurkha officers and 76 others wounded ; 1 Gurkha officer and 1 man missing.

2/2nd Gurkhas : 2 Gurkha officers and 17 others killed ; 2 British, 1 Gurkha officer and 44 men wounded ; 1 British officer and 28 men missing.

General Jacob speaks in these words of the work of the Gurkhas :—

“ The Gurkha battalions (2/2nd and 1/9th) had an opportunity of making up for the terrible ordeals they had been through in the earlier days of the war, and they took full advantage of it. Their spirits were high, and nothing could stop their dash.”

Brigadier-General Jacob, who has since risen to the command of an Army Corps, was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath in recognition of the ability shown by him during the battle, Lt-Colonel G. T. Widdicombe, 1/9th Gurkhas, receiving the same distinction, while Major E. P. R. Boileau, 2/2nd Gurkhas, was promoted to brevet Lt-Colonel.

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On the relief of the Dehra Dun Brigade, the Jullundur Brigade moved up to Neuve Chapelle. This Brigade had gone through a very trying experience during the previous day, as it had been lying out in the open, exposed for the greater part of the time to severe shell and rifle fire, by which 286 casualties were caused. During the march to Neuve Chapelle, it was subjected to continued shelling by heavy artillery and field guns, which broke up the formation and forced units to disperse in search of any cover they could find; 300 casualties occurred during this short march, and some units were much disorganized.

The Sirhind Brigade, while marching up to relieve Dehra Dun, also came under shell fire, but luckily with few casualties.

The general plan of operations on the 12th March was as follows:—

Artillery fire was to be concentrated from 10 to 10.30 a.m. on the enemy's positions and on houses in front of the 8th Division, which, as soon as the bombardment ceased, was to assault and then to continue its advance in conjunction with the Indian Corps. The attack of the latter was timed for 11 a.m., to be preceded by concentrated artillery fire on the hostile positions along the road on the north-east edge of the Bois du Biez to the road junction 600 yards south-east of Port Arthur, also on redoubts and houses on the La Bassée road.

The Sirhind and Jullundur Brigades were to carry out the attack under Brigadier-General Walker, on a two-Brigade front.

The second objective was the eastern edge of the Bois du Biez; the third objective being a line through

La Hue and Ligny-le-Grand to La Cliqueterie inclusive.

The time of attack was subsequently postponed for two hours, *i.e.* to 12.30 p.m. for the 8th Division and 1 p.m. for the Indian Corps, as a heavy morning mist made it almost impossible to carry out adequate registration.

At 5.45 a.m. the Bareilly Brigade, which was still holding our original trenches, reported that the Germans were assaulting from a point slightly south of Port Arthur up to our extreme left in front of Neuve Chapelle. The Bareilly Brigade, although it did not take part in the attack, had been going through a very trying time, as the enemy's artillery had kept up an almost continual bombardment of varying intensity. During the action on the 10th March, the Brigade assisted by bursts of machine-gun and rifle fire, with a view to subduing any counter-attack on the right of our assault.

At 11 a.m. the 4th Black Watch was ordered up from Brigade reserve to take over from the Garhwal Brigade two strong points which were to be established in the captured trenches. This operation the battalion carried out with great dash and determination.

Lieutenant S. H. Steven charged at the head of the leading platoon, and gained his objective with fine courage, in spite of the heavy enfilade fire to which the attack was exposed. He was awarded the Military Cross for his conspicuous gallantry. By its behaviour on this its first appearance in the front line, the battalion gave promise of the reputation which it has since acquired.

The enemy's attack on the 12th was heralded by

a heavy bombardment of Roome's trench, Port Arthur and the "Crescent," which commenced at 5.20 a.m. At 5.45 a.m. dense masses of Germans appeared, coming on at their usual jog-trot. In the uncertain light they resembled Highlanders, their overcoats giving the appearance of kilts, but when they arrived within 100 yards of our line, the spikes of their helmets could be discerned.

It seemed at first as if no fire could stop them, so impressive was the sight of this great multitude of men. The effect of concentrated machine-gun and rifle fire must, however, be witnessed to be fully appreciated. The surging mass came on much as a heavy swell rolls towards the seashore. At one moment the very earth seemed to be advancing towards our line, and nothing apparently could save us from being overwhelmed. The next moment a furious fusillade broke from our trenches. It ceased just as daylight appeared, and where before were swelling lines of men moving on in their awe-compelling progress, now, as an officer relates, nothing was to be seen but heaps of dead and wounded Germans.

Piles of wriggling, heaving bodies lay on the ground, and the air resounded with shrieks, groans, and curses. The wounded tried to shelter themselves behind parapets formed of the bodies of their dead comrades, while some attempted to dig themselves in. For hours afterwards wounded Germans continued to crawl into our line, where they received medical attention and were sent off in ambulances as soon as possible.

The slaughter was prodigious. In front of the Leicesters, 1st Seaforths, and 2/3rd Gurkhas, some

600 dead were counted, and General Anderson in his report calculated, as a minimum, that the enemy's losses in dead alone on the front captured by the Meerut Division amounted to 2000, to which must be added heavy casualties caused by our bombardment of the Bois du Biez. One of the writers himself, on a careful estimate, counted 1200 Germans lying dead or wounded in front of a portion of our line.

The repelling of a massed attack such as this gives the machine-gun officer his own peculiar opportunity, and, as usual, he was not slow to seize it. Captain Lodwick, 2/3rd Gurkhas, gained the D.S.O. by his courage and skill in the performance of his duties as machine-gun officer of the Garhwal Brigade during the battle. In order to ascertain the best positions for his guns, he reconnoitred at great risk the whole of the captured trenches, and by his masterly disposition of 20 guns he was very largely responsible for the overthrow of this heavy attack. Unfortunately, this brave officer, like Colonel Swiney, lost his life when the *Persia* was torpedoed on the 30th December, 1915.

At 9 a.m. the enemy made a second attempt, which fared no better than the first. Similar destructive scenes were enacted, and in no place did the attack reach our trenches.

On the right of the 1/39th Garhwalis the Germans repeatedly endeavoured to work up the trench against the flank of the battalion, and even came into the open in rear, but each attempt was thwarted, largely through the instrumentality of Lieutenant A. H. Mankelow, in charge of the regimental machine guns, who had throughout the action shown the

greatest determination and ability, remaining at duty, although he had been wounded on the 10th March. For his services Lieutenant Mankelow received the Military Cross. This gallant young officer was killed on the 14th May, 1915.

Jemadar Guman Sing Negi, who was with the guns under Lieutenant Mankelow, showed great devotion to duty. The enemy were using trench mortars with much effect, and only one man of a gun team was still unwounded. The Jemadar continued himself to fire the gun, and although wounded and shaken by a bomb, he remained at his post till relieved on the night of the 13th March, receiving the Indian Distinguished Service Medal for his bravery, as did also Lance-Naik Dangwa Ramola, one of the team of another gun, who was twice shot in the head, but still went on trying to fire.

Rifleman Jawarihu Negi (1/39th) and Sepoy Baliram (30th Punjabis attached) won the same reward by their bravery during the attack in getting out in the open and throwing hand grenades at the enemy. The former also threw an unexploded bomb, which had fallen in his trench, over the parapet. He thus saved a number of casualties. The latter was killed while bombing the enemy.

At this period our artillery kept up a terrific fire on the Bois du Biez, causing, there is every reason to believe, very heavy casualties, as for days afterwards the enemy was observed to be removing bodies from the wood for burial in the fields behind it.

As always, the work of the Signallers at this arduous time was carried on with the utmost coolness and skill. During an action, the ground in rear of attack and defence alike is subjected to a tremendous

artillery fire, which ploughs up the earth and destroys the telephone wires connecting the front line with Brigade and Divisional Head Quarters. It is the duty of the Signallers to repair the lines at all costs, and what such work means can easily be imagined. In the midst of a tornado of every description of fire a few men are seen in the open, calmly attending to their task, repairing the wires with as much coolness as if the scene of the breakage were in a London house instead of on a bullet-swept battlefield. A man falls ; another takes his place ; and the work goes on, whatever may be the toll of life involved.

Amongst those who specially distinguished themselves was Captain C. J. Torrie, 30th Punjabis, commanding No. 35 Signal Company, of whom it is recorded that the successful work of the Division at Neuve Chapelle was to a very great extent dependent on the efficiency of the communications established and maintained by him under very heavy fire. The value of Captain Torrie's services was recognized by the award of the D.S.O.

It is only possible to mention a few of the non-commissioned officers and men who gained the Distinguished Conduct Medal by their gallantry on signal work.

Corporal W. Gurdon, a motor cyclist of the Meerut Signal Company and a member of the 2nd Presidency Volunteer Rifles, showed conspicuous bravery from the 10th to 13th March in constantly carrying important messages under fire by day and night, always with success.

Private P. E. Sones, 4th Suffolks, attached Lahore Signal Company, received the Medal for great courage on the 12th and 13th March, when he

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carried messages for 48 successive hours under very heavy rifle and machine-gun fire.

Corporal Chadwick, R.E., attached to the same Signal Company, carried messages on three occasions for a distance of $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles over ground swept by very heavy and continuous shell fire.

A volume could be filled with the deeds of these men, but the few instances cited above will suffice to show the nature of their work.

On the 12th March the enemy made frequent use of handkerchiefs tied to rifles, as white flags, often even at a distance of 800 to 1000 yards, and officers were seen in the background trying, by the persuasion of their revolvers, to induce their men to advance.

During the whole of the 12th and 13th March the Garhwal Brigade went through the terrible test of holding a line under continual heavy bombardment. An officer describes this experience as a foretaste of hell, an opinion with which others who have suffered in a like manner will agree. The enemy also kept up a heavy fire on Neuve Chapelle and Port Arthur, it being estimated that 3000 shells fell in the latter section during the 12th alone.

The Sirhind and Jullundur Brigades had been brought up during the night of the 11th-12th, Sirhind relieving Dehra Dun in the trenches, with the 1st Highland Light Infantry and 1/4th Gurkhas in rear of the portion of the line held by the 2/3rd Gurkhas, while Jullundur occupied a position in rear of Sirhind.

At about 11.30 a.m. on the 12th, it was reported that the Germans in front of the right of the 1/4th Gurkhas were showing signs of wishing to surrender. In dealing with a foe so given to treachery, it was

CAPTAIN COLLINS GAINS THE D.S.O. 259

always necessary to be on one's guard. Captain L. P. Collins, 1/4th Gurkhas, who was in command at that point, considered that the opportunity should at once be seized to attack, as the occupation of that portion of the enemy's trench was in conformity with the general plans, and would facilitate the extension of the 1/4th Gurkhas to the right.

Acting on his own responsibility, Captain Collins at once assaulted and took 150 yards of the trench with very slight loss. He then saw that a number of Germans were holding the trench further to the left. These he attacked, when about 100 surrendered and some 50 were shot as they bolted. Captain Collins's losses were slight, but they included Subadar Durgia Gurung, who could ill be spared, as his work both in and out of action had been of great value to the regiment. For his conspicuous gallantry in this affair, and for the initiative displayed by him, Captain Collins was awarded the D.S.O.

The attack timed for 1 p.m. was organized on a two-Brigade front, the Sirhind Brigade being on the right with two battalions, the 1st Highland Light Infantry and 1/4th Gurkhas in the front line, the 15th Sikhs and 1/1st Gurkhas in support. The two Brigades were under Brigadier-General Walker, Lt-Colonel Anderson, 1/1st Gurkhas, commanding the Sirhind Brigade in his place.

Originally it was intended that the Jullundur Brigade should attack on a front of three battalions, *i.e.* the 1st Manchesters on the left in touch with the 25th Brigade, 8th Division, the 47th Sikhs in the centre, and the 4th Suffolks on the right, with the 59th Rifles in Brigade reserve. During the morning, however, it was reported that the Suffolks now

consisted of about 140 rank-and-file, while the 59th Rifles numbered only some 125 men.

The cause of this very serious diminution of numbers was that the Brigade had suffered heavy casualties while lying in the open on the previous day, coming also under very severe shelling on the march to Neuve Chapelle. Great confusion arose in the darkness, and in addition to casualties, a large number of men of the Suffolks and 59th were unable to rejoin their units. The result was that in order to occupy the length of front allotted to the Brigade, the 59th Rifles had to be added to the Suffolks in the front line, thus leaving no Brigade reserve.

At noon the bombardment on the 8th Division front began, but the attack had only progressed about a hundred yards by 1 p.m. Shortly before our guns opened on the Indian Corps' front, about 100 Germans came over and gave themselves up. They were a miserable-looking lot of men, and appeared to be more or less starving, as they eagerly devoured the chupatties given to them by the Indians.

At 12.30 p.m. our artillery poured a very heavy shrapnel fire into the Bois du Biez, and at 1 p.m. the infantry attack commenced.

The Manchesters, heroes of Givenchy, advanced with their accustomed determination and steadiness, but the moment the first line of two companies appeared, the enemy opened a staggering fire, and Captain Browne, commanding No. 1 Company, was wounded, while men were falling fast. By 1.30 p.m. the leading companies of the battalion had succeeded in reaching the front line trenches held by the Garhwal Brigade, but here they became mixed up with the 2/3rd Gurkhas, while the first and second

lines and the communication trenches had become completely blocked by troops.

The remainder of the battalion was held up for some time, owing to the necessity of crossing gaps in the trenches where roads and ditches intersected them. These gaps were marked down by the enemy and swept by machine-gun fire, all attempts to pass them ending only in heavy casualties. The Manchesters, however, are hard to beat, as the enemy has so often found to his cost, and Nos. 3 and 4 Companies eventually made a most gallant rush and reached the front line, but with much-diminished ranks.

The 47th Sikhs, who had so greatly distinguished themselves at Neuve Chapelle in October, 1914, fared little better. Scarcely had their advance commenced, when Captain Combe was wounded, as well as several Indian officers. Captain Hogge then took command, but was hit shortly afterwards, being succeeded by Captain Talbot, who was himself slightly wounded, as were also Captains Abbay and Cormack, but all remained at duty.

Subadar Harnam Singh was killed while leading his half-company. His bravery had been most conspicuous throughout the campaign, and had won for him the Indian Order of Merit at Festubert in December, 1914, in which action his only son was killed. The Subadar, after his death, was granted the Order of British India, 2nd Class.

Shortly after this Captain Brown was killed and Captain Story wounded, the casualties in the ranks being also very heavy, and when the front line trenches were reached, it was found to be impossible to make any further progress in face of the terrific fire.

During the advance, a wounded man was seen to be lying out exposed to heavy machine-gun fire. Havildar Gajjan Singh and Sepoy Rur Singh volunteered to attempt to bring him in, and went over the parapet. The Havildar was at once wounded, but Rur Singh managed to drag him back under cover, and went out again to rescue the wounded man by himself, but was unable to move him. Lieutenant Allardice (14th, attached 47th Sikhs) then went out, and with Rur Singh succeeded in getting the man into our trench. He had, however, been wounded in so many places while lying in the open that he succumbed. This conspicuous act of bravery was performed in a most exposed position, when any movement drew heavy machine-gun fire from both flanks. Sepoy Rur Singh received the 2nd Class, Indian Order of Merit.

For his services during the campaign, in which he was twice wounded, Lt-Colonel Richardson was promoted to Brevet-Colonel, while Lt-Colonel Gunning (35th Sikhs attached) received the C.M.G.

The 4th Suffolks, who on the 11th had lost Lieutenant Row and 19 men killed, Lieutenant Turner and 100 men being wounded, now again suffered severely, Captain Garrett and 7 men being killed, Captains Cockburn and Mason, Lieutenant Hoyland and 74 men being wounded.

The 59th Rifles were even more unfortunate. On the preceding day they had lost 1 British officer killed, 2 wounded, as well as 2 Indian officers. They went into this attack with only 5 British and the same number of Indian officers.

During the advance to the support trenches, Lt-Colonel P. C. Elliott-Lockhart, of the Guides, a most

gallant and able Commanding Officer, was wounded, and died shortly afterwards. A little later Captain Hore was killed at the head of his company, as was Captain Reed of the machine guns, and Captain Burn was severely wounded.

For some time after this quick succession of casualties the regiment was left without a British officer, as Captain Inskip, the last left, was badly shell-shocked and could not rejoin till later. The losses of the 59th in British officers, up to date, had been very heavy, amounting to 10 killed and 19 wounded out of an average war strength of 13 officers.

Sepoy Zarif Khan, throughout the 11th and 12th March, behaved with the greatest gallantry in continually carrying messages under very heavy fire. He was killed on the 12th March, while performing this duty, but was posthumously granted the 1st Class of the Indian Order of Merit. This brave soldier had already won the 2nd Class of the Order during the early days of the war.

The failure of the Jullundur and Sirhind Brigades to reach their objectives, in spite of the great dash and bravery with which their advance was carried out, was due to the fact that the 25th Brigade on their left was unable to advance, the Brigades on its left again having been held up. This enabled the enemy to bring heavy enfilade fire to bear on the Indian attack from the left, while at the same time pouring in oblique fire from a redoubt at the north-west extremity of the Bois du Biez.

The Sirhind Brigade met with more success in its attack. In the front line were the 1st Highland Light Infantry under Lt-Colonel E. R. Hill on the left, and the 1/4th Gurkhas under Major D. C.

Young on the right, the 15th Sikhs being in rear of the 1/4th Gurkhas, the 1/1st Gurkhas in reserve, and the 4th King's (Liverpools) were further back, for it was only intended to use this battalion, which had recently arrived from England, in case of emergency.

Before the attack on the first main objective, the Bois du Biez, could be developed, two hostile advanced positions had to be captured: (a) a line of trench parallel to and just north-west of the River Layes; (b) a trench parallel to and 200 yards south-east of the river.

As soon as the bombardment ceased, the Highland Light Infantry advanced with A Company on the right in the firing line, under Captain Halswelle, and B Company on the left under Captain Knight, with C and D Companies in reserve.

The Sirhind Brigade, having relieved Dehra Dun during the early morning, was already some distance in advance, and the Jullundur Brigade having been held up, the left flank of the Highland Light Infantry was exposed to a very heavy oblique as well as frontal fire from the enemy's trench at a range of about 500 yards. This caught the battalion the moment it began to advance, and a number of men fell at the start, as well as at each successive rush.

Captains Knight and Halswelle led their men with great dash, nobly seconded by their subalterns, 2nd Lieutenants Gibbs, Machan (killed), Knox and Wornham.

The advance lay over absolutely bare ground, without a vestige of cover, but the men swept on in spite of the heavy losses caused by the enemy's accurate fire. With the last rush the line of trench

MANY BRAVE DEEDS OF THE H.L.I. 265

(a) was carried, after a hand-to-hand fight, in which a large number of Germans were killed and about 200 captured. A few men of A Company under Captain Halswelle succeeded in crossing the river, and held on there until dark.

Colonel Hill then ordered his advanced companies not to attempt to proceed further until the Jullundur Brigade could come up on the left, as that flank was in the air.

An attack by the 25th Brigade on the left, which was timed for 5 p.m., did not develop, and as darkness was rapidly coming on, the ground won was consolidated.

During the action, Private Brooks, seeing Corporal Hawke lying badly wounded in the open at a distance of about 30 yards from our trench, went over the parapet and carried him in under extremely heavy fire, for which act of bravery he received the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Lance-Corporal Stewart and Private Clifford won the same decoration by their gallantry in going out under very severe fire and relaying a telephone wire which had been cut by shells, after two men had been killed in the attempt.

Sergeant-Major House also received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his gallant and valuable services in keeping up the supply of ammunition by day and organizing stretcher parties at night.

Brave deeds were many on this trying day. Amongst others may be mentioned that of Private Duffy, Highland Light Infantry, who voluntarily went out from his trench and brought in eight wounded men under heavy fire, for which he was rewarded with the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Of the officers, whose gallantry and leading had been of the highest order throughout, Lt-Colonel Hill, Captains Halswelle, Knight, Tarrant, Stewart, and Lieutenant Cowan were mentioned in despatches.

The losses of the battalion during the action were very heavy, 8 officers having been killed and 5 wounded, while there were nearly 250 casualties amongst other ranks.

The right half-battalion of the 1/4th Gurkhas, which had captured a section of the enemy's trench under Captain Collins earlier in the day, had reformed with their right in touch with the Leicesters, the left half-battalion coming up shortly afterwards.

At about 2 p.m. a number of casualties occurred among the British officers of this battalion in their endeavour to rescue a wounded private of the Leicesters, who was lying about 20 yards in front of the Gurkha parapet. Major Young, Jemadar Gangabir Gurung and Rifleman Wazir Sing Burathoki went out together to try to bring the wounded man in. In doing so, Major Young was mortally, and the rifleman severely, wounded. Captains Hogg and McGann, without a moment's hesitation, rushed out to help, but both were at once hit. Captain McGann managed to crawl back unaided, and Jemadar Gangabir with the help of some Gurkhas eventually succeeded in bringing Captain Hogg back. For their gallantry and devotion, the Jemadar and Rifleman Wazir Sing Burathoki received the 2nd Class of the Indian Order of Merit; the latter was also subsequently awarded the Russian Medal of St. George, 3rd Class.

It is typical of the spirit of the Corps, and indeed

OUR SECOND ATTACK SMOTHERED 267

of the British Army, that three British officers and a number of Indian soldiers should have risked their lives to bring to safety a single private soldier of the Leicesters.

The battalion remained in readiness to attack, but as the left of the line was still held up, the assault was not delivered.

The 15th Sikhs in support got up close behind the Garhwal trenches, where they lay down under cover. Captain Waterfield was wounded in getting out of the trench at the very commencement of the advance; Subadar Gajjan Singh was killed and one Gurkha officer was wounded, there being 60 casualties amongst other ranks.

The 1/1st Gurkhas, moving up in close support, escaped with Captain and Adjutant G. S. Kennedy, one Gurkha officer and 15 other ranks killed, and 51 wounded.

Insistent orders were now received from the 1st Army to press on the attack on the Bois du Biez. In consequence, the Dehra Dun Brigade, which had just got back to well-earned billets, was recalled to Richebourg St Vaast, and the whole Lahore Division, now placed under its own Commander, General Keary, was ordered to push on to the wood at all costs.

At 5.50 p.m. our guns bombarded for 15 minutes, when a second attack was attempted; this, however, could not debouch from the trenches, being smothered by the enemy's frontal and enfilade fire.

In view of the urgency of the orders from Sir Douglas Haig, General Keary arranged for an attack by the whole of the Lahore Division to take place at 10.45 p.m., preceded again by 15 minutes'

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bombardment. This operation was vetoed by Sir James Willcocks, as not being feasible in pitch darkness, over unknown ground, and with such a large body of troops. No competent critic who has studied the facts will question the wisdom of this decision.

At 10.5 p.m. on the 12th, orders were received from Sir Douglas Haig, to suspend further active operations and to consolidate all positions gained. The Sirhind Brigade was then placed at the disposal of the Meerut Division, the Jullundur and Ferozepore Brigades being withdrawn.

So ended the battle of Neuve Chapelle, the first action on a large scale during the war in which the British had a predominance in artillery as well as in men.

The losses of the British forces engaged were: 190 officers and 2337 other ranks killed; 359 officers and 8174 other ranks wounded; 23 officers and 1728 other ranks missing; making a total of 12,811 casualties.

Included in these losses were the following casualties of the Indian Corps:—

	British officers.	Indian officers.	Other ranks (British).	Other ranks (Indian).
Killed . . .	41	22	364	408
Wounded . . .	91	36	1461	1495
Missing . . .	1	2	87	225
	—	—	—	—
Total . . .	133	60	1912	2128

The question as to whether the success achieved was worth the losses involved has been much argued.

The material gain consisted of an advance of our line on a front of two miles to a depth of 1000 yards.

By this advance the dangerous salient known as Port Arthur was straightened out, thus, in Sir James Willcocks' words, removing a considerable source of anxiety to the various Corps which had been responsible for its safe custody.

To this gain in ground must be added the losses of the enemy in men and in moral. On the front captured by the Indian Corps alone the German dead numbered at least 2000, while many men were buried by the enemy behind the Bois du Biez. In addition to these, Sir John French mentions, in his despatch before quoted, that he was in possession of positive information that upwards of 12,000 German wounded were removed to the north-east and east by train. It is possible that this estimate was exaggerated, but it is certain that 30 officers and 1657 other ranks of the enemy were captured, the share of the Indian Corps being 12 officers and 617 men. It is not improbable that the German losses approached the number of 18,000, leaving a balance in our favour.

As regards the question of loss of moral by the enemy, there can be no doubt that this sudden turning of the tables by the employment of overwhelming masses of artillery had a most demoralizing effect on the Germans, who, accustomed to view with exultation the effects of their superior concentrations of guns, were loud in their denunciations of similar practices by us.

The effect was felt far behind the hostile line, for it is known that at Lille the state of affairs was much akin to a panic. The principal hospital was removed to Tournai, to which place went many officers and the paraphernalia of the German Head

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Quarters, while the inhabitants of Lille openly expressed their joy at the prospect of the arrival of the British.

On the other hand, the change from the unutterable weariness of the winter months in trenches to the activity of a vigorous offensive put new life into our men. They were cheered too by the thought that the old, bad time had come to an end, and that in future the adequate support of our guns would enable them to give as much as they got. How far this belief was justified will be seen, but at least it was beneficial.

On the whole, then, the battle of Neuve Chapelle, on a strict balancing of accounts, was not entirely a failure. We attained our first objective at a cost which might well have gained us a further goal.

The mistakes which occurred were, perhaps, to be looked for in a first attempt at the adoption of the French methods of attack. The artillery preparation, almost perfect on the Indian front, was not everywhere so efficacious, as witness the effect of the bombardment on the 23rd Brigade front. In some cases, mostly due to the cloudy and foggy weather, artillery observation could not be adequately carried out, with the result that our guns sometimes shelled our own troops, leaving the enemy's line untouched.

Still, the reference to the behaviour of the Corps made by Sir John French, in his despatch dated the 5th April, 1915, shows that, whatever mistakes may have occurred in other parts of the field, the Indian Corps had every reason to be satisfied with its share in this battle. He remarks :—

“ While the success attained was due to the

magnificent bearing and indomitable courage displayed by the troops of the 4th and Indian Corps, I consider that the able and skilful dispositions which were made by the General Officer Commanding First Army contributed largely to the defeat of the enemy and to the capture of his position."

In the same despatch Sir John French continues:—

"I can best express my estimate of this battle by quoting an extract from a Special Order of the Day which I addressed to Sir Douglas Haig and the First Army at its conclusion: 'I am anxious to express to you personally my warmest appreciation of the skilful manner in which you have carried out your orders, and my fervent and most heartfelt appreciation of the magnificent gallantry and devoted, tenacious courage displayed by all ranks whom you have ably led to success and victory. My warmest thanks to you all.'"

In publishing this order of the day, Sir Douglas Haig added the following appreciatory remarks:—

"I desire to express to all ranks of the 1st Army my great appreciation of the task accomplished by them in the past four days of severe fighting. The 1st Army has captured the German trenches on a front of two miles, including the whole village of Neuve Chapelle, and some strongly defended works. Very serious loss has been inflicted on the enemy, nearly 2000 prisoners are in our hands, and his casualties in killed and wounded are estimated at about 16,000. I wish also to thank all concerned for the careful preparation made for the assault. Much depended on this thoroughness and secrecy. The attack was such a complete surprise to the enemy

that he had neither a Corps nor an Army Reserve at hand, and had to draw on the adjoining army for help.

"The absolute success of the operation of breaking through the German lines on the first day is not only a tribute to the careful forethought and attention to detail on the part of the leaders, but it has proved beyond question that our forces can defeat the Germans where and when they choose, no matter what mechanical contrivances or elaborate defences are opposed to their advance.

"The results of the successful action just fought are not, however, confined to the material losses sustained by the enemy. The organization of the German forces from Ypres to far south of the La Bassée Canal has been thrown into a state of confusion. Reinforcements available to oppose the French in the battle which is taking place at Notre Dame de Lorette or destined for other parts of the line have been drawn into the fight opposite the 1st Army, and, in many cases, very severely handled.

"The losses sustained by the 1st Army, though heavy, are fully compensated for by the results achieved, which have brought us one step forward in our efforts to end the war; and the British soldier has once more given the Germans a proof of his superiority in a fight, as well as of his pluck and determination to conquer. The spirit and energy shown by all ranks augur well for the future, and I feel confident that the success achieved by the 1st Army at Neuve Chapelle is the forerunner of still greater victories which must be gained in order to bring the war to a successful conclusion."

In an order of the day dated the 14th March,

1915, the following telegram, received from Field-Marshal Sir John French, was published by Sir James Willcocks :—

“I have cabled following to Viceroy, India. Begins: I am glad to be able to inform your Excellency that the Indian troops under Sir James Willcocks fought with great gallantry and marked success in the capture of Neuve Chapelle and subsequent fighting which took place on the 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th of this month. The fighting was very severe and the losses heavy, but nothing daunted them; their tenacity, courage, and endurance were admirable, and worthy of the best traditions of the soldiers of India. Message ends. Please make this known to the Corps under your command. Accept yourself and repeat to all Troops my warm and hearty appreciation of their services, and my gratitude for the help they have rendered, which has so much conduced to the success of the operations.”

In common, then, with the other troops engaged in this memorable battle, the Indian Corps had every reason to be proud of itself. The general recognition of their valiant efforts encouraged officers and men to further deeds of courage and endurance. Moreover, fresh heart was put into the troops, so long accustomed to possess their souls in such patience as they might under the constant torment of an overpowering hostile artillery, by the exhibition of the power of our own guns so strikingly given at Neuve Chapelle. They felt that at last they had come into their own, and that the nightmare of the past months could not be repeated.

Their hopes were doomed to disappointment, for within a few days of the end of the battle, the state

of affairs was as bad as ever. The German guns again kept up their never-ceasing hideous din ; again were our parapets battered down ; once more our guns were almost silent ; and this was to continue for months, save for our partially successful but costly attacks of May, 1915.

At the cause of this disheartening state of things the ordinary officers and men could only guess ; presumably the supply of ammunition was insufficient. How far this was the case can be gathered from an order dated the 16th March, 1915. By this order the only guns for which the expenditure of ammunition was unrestricted were the 2·75, 60-pounder, and 6-inch ; but even in regard to these the greatest economy was enjoined. The 3-pounders were put on a miserable ration of 2 rounds per day ; 15-pounders were absolutely to hold their peace ; 18-pounders, the ordinary field guns, were allowed to speak three times in the 24 hours ; but no high explosive was available ; and so on up to "Mother" and "Grandmother," the 9·2 and 15-inch howitzers, whose venerable mouths were on no account to be filled.

It is not strange that the troops began to doubt whether the nation was aware that it was at war with Germany, and not with some small tribe on the Indian Frontier.

A further result of our lavish expenditure of big-gun ammunition at Neuve Chapelle was the enormous improvement and strengthening of the enemy's defences. The trenches captured by us from the Germans in March, 1915, were on the whole hardly as good as our own. The enemy, however, never slow to learn, at once set about rendering his

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defences, as far as possible, safe against artillery fire.

In May and September, 1915, the positions taken at the battles of Festubert and Loos were very different from those of Neuve Chapelle. Every art of the military engineer had now been called into play. Heavily armoured machine-gun emplacements had been made; the dug-outs were no longer the old simple affairs, but elaborate underground systems, strengthened in every conceivable way with concrete and steel girders. It has therefore sometimes been doubted whether the battle of Neuve Chapelle was an unmixed blessing, or whether it would not have been wiser to have left the Germans in their innocence until we were prepared in every way for a violent and sustained effort. Further, had we succeeded in our aim of occupying the high ground commanding the approaches to Lille, Turcoing, and Roubaix, the enemy would have been compelled to run grave risks in order to readjust the situation.

Could we, in face of the serious shortage of artillery ammunition, have held the captured positions?

To reply to this question it is necessary to await the fuller information which may be available at the close of the war; but it is permissible to doubt whether we could have clung to our success.

Casualties up to the 1st April, 1915:—

	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.
British officers . . .	147	265	42
Indian officers . . .	66	144	35
Other ranks, British .	726	2876	662
Other ranks, Indian .	1364	6253	1936
Total .	2303	9538	2675