

the line. A new sector on the Somme salient between Bapaume and Peronne was taken over by the British, extending their front to one hundred miles. February began with remarkably cold weather, which delayed their contemplated offensive. An attack beginning on February 17, opposite Miraumont on both sides of the Ancre river, was successful. Serre, a position of some importance, was taken on February 25, and three days later the British advanced posts were within two miles of Bapaume. On March 9 Irlles near Peronne was taken with little resistance, and it became apparent that the Germans were slowly retiring in a methodical manner. Bapaume was occupied on March 16, and Peronne and Chaulnes were taken on the 18th. The German rear guards were in some degree harassed by the British cavalry, but they effectively destroyed the roads, buildings, trees, and property of all kinds as they retired. Their new line ran through Cambrai, St. Quentin, and Laon. It was twenty-five miles shorter than the old and much stronger. They had evacuated an area of six hundred square miles, including some important towns. The Canadian cavalry brigade, with three batteries of Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, attached to the Fifteenth British corps, won much distinction in this fighting. The Germans frankly announced that the chief object of their retirement was to upset the allied plans for acting on the offensive, and they carried out the devastation of the country evacuated with such systematic and ruthless thoroughness that any advance across must be very slow and difficult. The next attacks of the Allies were directed at the supporting points between which this retirement had been made. The principal objectives selected for the British Armies were Arras and Lens, while the French directed their attack upon Laon. On the morning of April 9, after two days' intense bombardment, the British delivered an attack on a front of eleven miles extending far south of Arras. The German front lines were taken with small loss. On the same day the Canadian corps attacked and carried the commanding position on Vimy Ridge near Lens, which had successfully resisted two former assaults, and was deemed impregnable by the Germans. (See the illustration facing page 14.) The defenders clung desperately to several strong points until the 11th, when the Canadians gained the summit at the north end of the ridge and advanced gradually down the eastern slope. At the same time other British troops continued their advance along the road from Bapaume towards Cambrai, driving German rear-guards before them. Another attack near Arras on April 23 also succeeded. Considerable ground was gained and 3,000 prisoners were taken.

The French carried the German positions on a front of twenty-five miles between Soissons and Reims on April 16, penetrating to a depth of two miles and taking 10,000 prisoners and many guns. They continued their advance on the two following days and repelled all counter attacks. On April 23 the British attacked on an eight-mile front between Vimy and Croisilles, and gained ground at all points, although opposed by seven German divisions. The French attack was resumed on May 4 and 5, upon the German positions along the Chemin-des-Dames, or Ladies' Road, on the high ground north of the Aisne. The town of Craonne was taken but the southern