

the high ground northeast of the village of Passchendaele. These gains were not made without desperate fighting in which the Canadian troops engaged lost nearly fifteen thousand men.

Suddenly transferring a large striking force to his right, the British general began a surprise attack on the renowned Hindenburg Line near Cambrai. Great bodies of troops were secretly moved into an advanced position by night. No preparation by an artillery bombardment or by trench raids was made. The movement of seven infantry divisions was preceded by the advance of three hundred and sixty tanks, which took place shortly after daybreak on November 21. These powerful machines tore their way through the German entanglements and crawled over their trenches before artillery fire could be successfully directed against them. They paved the way for the advance of the infantry and cleared out many machine gun positions by an enfilading fire. Two lines of German works were carried along a front of ten miles to a depth of five miles in several places. Nearly ten thousand prisoners and more than one hundred field and heavy guns were taken. Next morning the Germans recovered Bournon Wood, the most advanced position taken by the British in the direction of Cambrai, where the trees greatly interfered with the successful operation of the tanks. On the three following days the greater part of this forest and the neighbouring village were taken by the British, but they were unable to make further progress as the enemy had brought up a superior force of artillery and infantry which eventually compelled them to abandon the village.

Two divisions of British cavalry and two brigades of Indian cavalry with many horse artillery batteries had been massed in rear of the infantry, with instructions that if the last trench line beyond the Scheldt canal between Marcoing and Masnières was carried, they were to push forward through the gap and sweep around Cambrai on both flanks. One squadron of the Fort Garry Horse actually passed the canal on a temporary bridge under machine gun fire near Masnières before it was known that the infantry had not succeeded in carrying the heights beyond. They charged and took a German field battery and came under heavy machine gun fire by which a number of officers and men were killed or wounded. It was then growing dark and they sought shelter in a sunken road until it became evident that they were unsupported. The horses were turned loose and the remnant of the squadron made their way back on foot. Lieutenant H. Strachan and forty-three other ranks succeeded in regaining their lines bringing with them a few prisoners out of a total of one hundred and twenty-three who rode off. During this retreat they were obliged to fight their way most of the time, with rifle and bayonet, dispersing several bodies of the enemy whom they encountered. For his gallantry and leadership on this occasion Lieutenant Strachan was awarded the Victoria Cross.

The remainder of the cavalry were held back and the projected dash forward was never attempted. After the failure of their last counter-attacks near Bournon the Germans made a sudden and much more successful effort on a front of seven miles in the bend of the river between Masnières and Villers-Guislain, where it had not