

positions on the right bank. General Gouraud then moved along the Aisne, taking Neufchatel and other towns. Vouziers was captured on October 12, and a further advance made in the direction of Rethel. The German retreat on that part of the line had become general, but was accomplished in good order.

The communications on the British front were rapidly improved and it was soon possible to undertake further important operations. On October 17 the Fourth Army attacked on a front of ten miles from Le Cateau with two British and one American corps, acting in conjunction with the First French Army on its right. The Germans held a line running through a wooded undulating country in great strength, and were well supported by their artillery. Their resistance was obstinate, but by the night of October 19 they were driven across the Sambre and Oise canal at nearly all points south of Catillon. This success was followed up at two o'clock next morning by the advance of six divisions of the Third British Army and one division of the First Army along the line of the Selle river north of Le Cateau. Supported by a number of tanks, which succeeded in crossing the river, the infantry overcame a very stubborn resistance and repelled vigorous counter-attacks. The objectives on the high ground east of the Selle were gained while the other troops of the First Army advanced on both sides of the Scheldt canal and occupied Denain.

Another large operation was undertaken on a front of fifteen miles shortly after midnight on the morning of October 23, in which four divisions of the Fourth and the same number from the Third British Army were engaged. Next day three divisions of the First Army extended the line of attack for five miles further northward to the Scheldt. Unfavourable weather had made it difficult to locate the enemy's batteries, and their fire was heavy and well directed; still, in the course of two days' fighting, an advance of six miles was made through difficult country. Many woods and villages were stubbornly held by the opposing troops, and one of the latter was not taken until the afternoon of October 24, by an enveloping attack of two divisions. The western outskirts of the Mormal forest were reached and in the course of minor operations in the three following days, a large section of the railway running from Valenciennes to Le Quesnoy was seized. In the course of the fighting between October 17 and 25 twenty-four British and two American divisions had engaged thirty-one German divisions, from whom they took twenty-one thousand prisoners and four hundred and fifty guns, and carried their objectives at all points. It became apparent that the German infantry and machine gun troops were no longer reliable, and in several instances they retired in front of the British artillery barrage without fighting. The difficulty of replacing their heavy losses in guns, machine guns, and ammunition had enormously increased, and the German reserves of men were almost exhausted. The capitulation of Turkey and Bulgaria and the approaching collapse of Austria rendered their military situation desperate and their troops had become thoroughly disheartened. It still seemed possible that if their armies were allowed to withdraw to shorter lines near their own frontier, they might protract the contest during the winter.