

northern France centering on Lens, continued the race to the sea. Meanwhile the opposing armies on the Vimy front had turned to the construction of field defences. At the end of November, however, Generals Joffre, Foch, de Maud'huy, Maistre, and Pétain studied the project of recapturing the Vimy Ridge, and evolved an extensive plan: converging attacks from the west and north-west by six divisions of the French Tenth Army, covered by 34 heavy batteries co-ordinated with the field artillery in close support, would break the German line between Hill 145 and La Folie; ten battalions of chasseurs would extend the breach, and a corps of cavalry would sweep across the Douai Plain towards Cambrai, followed by infantry of the general reserve in motor vehicles. The offensive opened on 16th December; but the mud was too deep, the fog too thick, and the 1st Bavarian Reserve Corps too obstinate, for this ambitious plan to materialize: after the unsuccessful preliminary operations which cost 7,771 French casualties, the main attack was postponed *sine die* and trench warfare was resumed. Thus the first winter of static warfare began, with Lorette Spur and the Labyrinth—a growing maze of field works near Ecurie—as centres of bitter trench fighting.

The Allied spring offensive of 1915 was timed to open as soon as the miry clay of winter had dried sufficiently for the passage of troops across country. Anticipating this, the Germans attacked at Lorette on the 3rd of March and improved their position during the ensuing three weeks in spite of vigorous and costly counter-attacks by the French. A period of trench warfare followed, during which preparations for the Allied offensive were resumed. Beginning on 9th May, the French Tenth Army, now commanded by General d'Urbal, fought for six weeks a continuous battle to break through at Vimy, as the Germans had recently done on the Russian Front in Galicia: by capturing the Ridge the French reckoned to so disrupt the embryo defensive system that they could resume open warfare and drive the enemy from French soil. While the co-operating British First Army of nine divisions, including the 1st Canadian Division, was engaged at Festubert and Givenchy, the French had thrown 18 infantry divisions into the attack, a force of more than a quarter of a million men, supported by 1,160 guns and two million shells. In advancing a mile and a half on a front of five miles, they had entered Souchez, and had taken the Lorette Spur, the Labyrinth and the villages of Ablain St. Nazaire, Carency and Neuville St. Vaast. They had captured 24 guns, 134 machine guns and 7,500 prisoners, and had suffered over 100,000 casualties; but the Germans, employing nine divisions, by desperate fighting and at a cost of some 80,000 casualties, had succeeded in preventing a break through and in retaining possession of Vimy Ridge—the dominant and essential feature of the battlefield.

In the autumn of 1915, simultaneously with the French main offensive in Champagne, General d'Urbal again attempted to capture the Ridge and break through with eighteen divisions. After a bombardment of three weeks, he attacked on 25th September with nine divisions, on a front of six miles north of Ecurie, while the British delivered their flanking attack at Loos. In four days of bitter fighting, amid deluges of rain, the French penetrated to a depth of some 200 yards on the southern part of the front of attack, and were there stopped by the new and formidable position 500 yards farther up the slope; on the northern flank they captured Souchez and almost reached the crest, but the general result was the same as in May and June—the Germans, fighting as in a fortress and employing only eight divisions, still held the Ridge, although No Man's Land in some places lay along the sky line. Renewed efforts in October to gain possession of the crest north of La Folie Farm failed because of inadequate artillery preparation; the general attack