

on the 11th was forestalled by a counter offensive by the enemy, who retained his dominating position almost intact, and the front became stationary, with a renewal of sapping, mining and patrolling at close quarters. In these battles of September and October the French captured 2,000 prisoners and 35 machine guns, and suffered 40,000 casualties.

In February, 1916, the Germans by surprise seized The Pimple, the only French position on the crest; early in March the line on Vimy Ridge and southwards to beyond Arras was taken over by the British, and on 21st May a sudden and violent attack, mounted by a German commander exasperated by the menace of many mines, captured 1,500 yards of the front and support lines opposite Hill 145. Throughout the summer trench warfare continued on the Vimy front, and by the time the Canadian Corps, released from the Somme battles, had assumed responsibility for the sector in October, the front lines were punctuated by an almost continuous line of craters, large and small, infested with snipers and trench mortars, the scene of frequent minor operations, of raids and encounters in the dark between patrols.

**The Allied Spring Offensive, 1917.**—Early in January, 1917, elaborate preparations for the Allied spring offensive north and south of Arras were begun. Attacking on 9th April, the Canadian Corps took the Vimy Ridge and held it for the ensuing year, with but a short absence at Passchendaele. The Ridge did not again change hands. In the final German offensive of March, April, May and June, 1918, this was the only part of the Allied line between Rheims and Ypres, a distance of 125 miles, which did not yield.

Strategically the British operations in the spring of 1917 were antecedent and auxiliary to the main Allied attack, which would be delivered a week later on the Aisne, where the French Generalissimo, General Nivelle, proposed by a swift and crushing stroke on a front of forty miles to break through the German position on the Crânone Plateau and the Chemin des Dames with the French Fifth and Sixth Armies; through the wide breach the French Tenth Army would advance towards the German communication centre at Laon, and exploit success by splitting the forces of the enemy against the rugged hills of the Ardennes. Tactically, a successful British advance eastwards from Arras would turn the right of the new positions in the Siegfried or Hindenburg line, occupied by the Germans as a result of their withdrawal after the battles of the Somme; and the conjoint capture of Vimy Ridge, besides forcing the enemy to take up a less advantageous defensive line, would provide a bastion upon which to base a further eastward thrust in the south towards Cambrai, or in the north towards Lille.

To accomplish these intentions the British Third Army with fourteen divisions was ordered to attack eastwards astride the Scarpe on a front of eight miles between Croisilles and Ecurie, while the British First Army (General Sir Henry Horne) on the left, employing the Canadian Corps, with the four Canadian and one British division, would simultaneously advance on the adjoining front of four miles and capture and hold the Vimy Ridge. Thus the British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, while he surmised that the enemy might avoid battle by a timely withdrawal from their new positions south of Arras, was certain that the German