

the armistice of December, 1917, Germany was preparing to seek an early decision on the Western Front before the weight of the American forces could make itself felt, and on 21st March, 1918, the great battle opened; in a week the Germans had penetrated to a depth of thirty-five miles towards Amiens.

On the 28th the consequent German attack, known as "Mars", struck the British line at Arras; it was intended that after a sudden bombardment the German Seventeenth Army should attack astride the Scarpe with twenty divisions, throw back the British line and capture Arras, and next day, in conjunction with a frontal attack by the Sixth Army, wheel northwards and recapture the Vimy Ridge. Once more in German hands the Ridge would secure the flank of the final thrust that would split the Allies and drive the British into the sea. But the artillery of the First and Third British Armies, taking advantage of the effective ground observation afforded by the Ridge, broke and disorganized the dense masses of assembling German infantry, whose repeated assaults were brought to a stop before nightfall and before reaching Arras or the Ridge. The attack was not resumed, and possession of the Ridge was never again disputed: Canada still holds the crest.

Significance of the Memorial.

Approaching the Memorial there, the pilgrim will find engraved on the walls the names of over ten thousand of the Canadian dead who have no known grave. Standing on the wide stone terrace, he will read on the towering pylons the names of the battles which nearly 425,000 of his countrymen (about one in ten of the total male population of Canada in 1917) went overseas to fight: he may well have seen the same names emblazoned on the colours of the local Militia unit in Canada. Looking out across the broad fields and rolling hills he can see many of the battlefields which these names commemorate: far to the north and out of sight lies Ypres, where Canadians withstood the first poison gas attack, there also are the ridge of Passchendaele, the woods of Mount Sorrel and the swamps of St. Eloi. Nearer and to the north-east are Festubert and Givenchy, and nearer still Hill 70 and the town of Lens. Beyond the southern skyline lies Amiens where the final advance to victory began in August, 1918, and the low hills between mark the battlefields of the Somme in 1916. Eastwards from Arras the long straight road runs by Monchy-le-Preux, and through the Drocourt-Quéant position of the Hindenburg Line, and on across the Canal du Nord by Bournon Wood to Cambrai. Farther still, beyond the eastern horizon, are Valenciennes and Mons, on the road to the Rhine.

When the war was over the soldiers returned home to be citizens again: all the complex machinery of the overseas military forces of Canada, together with the highly-organized Canadian Corps, was dissolved into half a million component parts. After four years of fighting, these soldiers brought back with them a heritage, bought at a great price—a heritage of endurance, self-sacrifice and loyalty—a high tradition that pilgrimage to the battlefields of France and Flanders will strengthen and renew.