

The Story of the Week

The War in the West

The past week was one of uninterrupted triumph for the British forces on the western front. The great offensive, whose commencement we chronicled last week, was continued with almost unbroken success. The Canadians, having covered themselves with glory by their storming of the Vimy ridge, pressed the advance until the whole ridge was clear of the enemy and command was gained of the plain which stretches towards the east. On Thursday another push by the Canadians carried the enemy trenches along a mile front south of the Vimy ridge. At the same time British troops delivered a similar blow north of the ridge. Following up these attacks, and fighting in the face of rain and sleet and snow, General Haig was able to announce on Saturday that on a twelve-mile front northeast of Arras the German defences were broken and the enemy forced to fall back, while southeast of Arras, along the road to Cambria, the British were well astride the Hindenburg line.

The effect of these operations was to bring the important town of Lens, the centre of France's greatest coal mining region, under attack. On Saturday morning the outlying suburb of Lievin was captured and the Germans, having set fire to everything that would burn, and having done their best to destroy the coal mines, prepared to evacuate the town.

Further south about St. Quentin, the British from the north and the French from the south, continued to close in. By Saturday the French troops were in the suburbs, and the British also, on their side, were within a few hundred yards of the town.

As trophies of the week's operations the British gathered in not less than 15,000 prisoners and about 200 large guns.

The Germans, of course, were not prepared to submit to all this punishment without some attempt at counter-attack. Strong reinforcements were brought up to stem the British tide and at one point—Bullecourt—our men were forced to retire from a position they had taken. The strongest counter-attack was made on Sunday morning on both sides of the road from Bapaume to Cambrai. Here the enemy succeeded in taking the village of Lagnicourt but was afterwards driven out with heavy loss.