

indebted to the Commander-in-Chief and the French General Staff for their cordial and most effective co-operation.

As General Foch was appointed by the Commander-in-Chief to supervise the operations of all the French troops north of Noyon, I visited his headquarters at Doullens on 8th October and arranged joint plans of operations as follows:—

The Second Corps to arrive on the line Aire-Bethune on the 11th October, to connect with the right of the French 10th Army and, pivoting on its left, to attack in flank the enemy who were opposing the 10th French Corps in front.

The Cavalry to move on the northern flank of the Second Corps and support its attack until the Third Corps, which was to detrain at St. Omer on the 12th, should come up. They were then to clear the front and act on the northern flank of the Third Corps in a similar manner, pending the arrival of the First Corps from the Aisne.

The 3rd Cavalry Division and 7th Division, under Sir Henry Rawlinson, which were then operating in support of the Belgian Army and assisting its withdrawal from Antwerp, to be ordered to co-operate as soon as circumstances would allow.

In the event of these movements so far overcoming the resistance of the enemy as to enable a forward movement to be made, all the Allied Forces to march in an easterly direction. The road running from Bethune to Lille was to be the dividing line between the British and French Forces, the right of the British Army being directed on Lille.

2. The great battle, which is mainly the subject of this despatch, may be said to have commenced on October 11th, on which date the 2nd Cavalry Division, under General Gough, first came into contact with the enemy's cavalry who were holding some woods to the north of the Bethune-Aire Canal. These were cleared of the enemy by our cavalry, which then joined hands with the Divisional Cavalry of the 6th Division in the neighbourhood of Hazebrouck. On the same day the right of the 2nd Cavalry Division connected with the left of the Second Corps which was moving in a north-easterly direction after crossing the above-mentioned canal.

By the 11th October Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien had reached the line of the canal between Aire and Bethune. I directed him to continue his march on the 12th, bringing up his left in the direction of Merville. Then he was to move East to the line Laventie-Lorgies, which would bring him on the immediate left of the French Army and threaten the German flank.

On the 12th this movement was commenced. The 5th Division connected up with the left of the French Army north of Annequin. They moved to the attack of the Germans who were engaged at this point with the French; but the enemy once more extended his right in some strength to meet the threat against his flank. The 3rd Division, having crossed the canal, deployed on the left of the 5th; and the whole Second Corps again advanced to the attack, but were unable to make much headway owing to the difficult character of the ground upon which they were operating, which was similar to that usually found in manufacturing districts and was covered with mining

works, factories, buildings, etc. The ground throughout this country is remarkably flat, rendering effective artillery support very difficult.

Before nightfall, however, they had made some advance and had successfully driven back hostile counter attacks with great loss to the enemy and destruction of some of his machine guns.

On and after the 13th October the object of the General Officer Commanding the Second Corps was to wheel to his right, pivoting on Givenchy to get astride the La Bassée-Lille Road in the neighbourhood of Fournes, so as to threaten the right flank and rear of the enemy's position on the high ground south of La Bassée.

This position of La Bassée has throughout the battle defied all attempts at capture, either by the French or the British.

On this day Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien could make but little progress. He particularly mentions the fine fighting of the Dorsets, whose Commanding Officer, Major Roper, was killed. They suffered no less than 400 casualties, 130 of them being killed, but maintained all day their hold on Pont Fixe. He also refers to the gallantry of the Artillery.

The fighting of the Second Corps continued throughout the 14th in the same direction. On this day the Army suffered a great loss, in that the Commander of the 3rd Division, General Hubert Hamilton, was killed.

On the 15th the 3rd Division fought splendidly, crossing the dykes, with which this country is intersected, with planks; and driving the enemy from one entrenched position to another in loop-holed villages, till at night they pushed the Germans off the Estaires-La Bassée Road, and establishing themselves on the line Pont de Ham-Croix Barbée.

On the 16th the move was continued until the left flank of the Corps was in front of the village of Aubers, which was strongly held. This village was captured on the 17th by the 9th Infantry Brigade; and at dark on the same day the Lincolns and Royal Fusiliers carried the village of Herlies at the point of the bayonet after a fine attack, the Brigade being handled with great dash by Brigadier-General Shaw.

At this time, to the best of our information, the Second Corps were believed to be opposed by the 2nd, 4th, 7th and 9th German Cavalry Divisions, supported by several battalions of Jaegers and a part of the 14th German Corps.

On the 18th powerful counter attacks were made by the enemy all along the front of the Second Corps, and were most gallantly repulsed; but only slight progress could be made.

From the 19th to the 31st October the Second Corps carried on a most gallant fight in defence of their position against very superior numbers, the enemy having been reinforced during that time by at least one Division of the 7th Corps, a brigade of the 3rd Corps and the whole of the 14th Corps, which had moved north from in front of the French 21st Corps.

On the 19th the Royal Irish Regiment, under Major Daniell, stormed and carried the village of Le Pilly, which they held and entrenched. On the 20th, however, they were cut off and surrounded, suffering heavy losses.