

# THE GLORY OF NEUVE CHAPELLE

REPRINTED FROM "THE DAILY MAIL"



SIR JOHN FRENCH AS HE IS TO-DAY.  
The only photograph of the Field-Marshal taken since the war began.

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How  
Gallant  
British  
Regiments  
Broke the  
German  
- Line -

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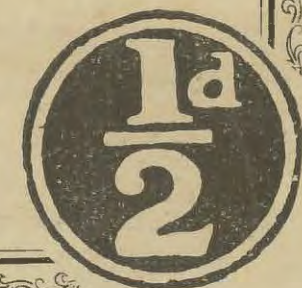
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"The lives so freely, so gallantly given, will not have been laid down in vain. Precious as they were, these lives of the best of England's sons, the lessons we learned at Neuve Chapelle were worth the sacrifice. We broke the 'German line' . . . . ."

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PRICE





# THE GLORIOUS STORY OF NEUVE CHAPELLE.

[From Sir John French's Special Order of the Day to Sir Douglas Haig  
and the First Army after the Battle of Neuve Chapelle.]

"I am anxious to express to you personally my warmest appreciation of the skilful manner in which you have carried out your orders, and my fervent and most heartfelt appreciation of the magnificent gallantry and devoted tenacious courage displayed by all ranks which you have ably led to success and victory."

*The following description of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, which was published in "The Daily Mail" on April 19th, 1915, is the first full and independent account of the engagement:*



FOR many reasons the brilliant British success at Neuve Chapelle is one of the most interesting engagements of the war. For the first time the British Army has broken the German line and struck the Germans a blow which they will remember to the end of their lives.

The importance of our success does not, however, lie so much in the capture of the German trenches along a front of two miles, the killing of some 6,000 Germans, and the taking of 2,000 prisoners. It is the revelation of the fact that the much-vaunted German Army machine, on which the whole attention of a mighty nation has been lavished for four decades, is not invincible.

Neuve Chapelle has, above all things, shown the British soldier that in him the German has met his master, and that, given proper artillery support, the offensive can be taken against the German line, strong though it is, with every chance of success.

When the German official history of the war comes to be written it will be seen how close we were to turning this brilliantly fought engagement into a victory which would have exercised a decisive influence on the rest of the campaign. The issue at stake after the capture of Neuve Chapelle on the morning of March 10th was great enough to justify far greater losses than those we sustained in the magnificently executed attempt to push forward the advantage already gained.

If we were prevented, mainly by unfavourable weather conditions, from benefiting to the full by our success, we held the ground we had won, despite repeated and desperate counter-attacks by fresh German troops hastily thrown into the field.

We were pioneers at Neuve Chapelle. Imbued with the fighting spirit of our fathers, our Army, after months of inaction, was the first to put to the test the lessons learned during the long winter in the trenches. Like all pioneers, we had to pay the price, but the lives so freely, so gallantly given, will not have been laid down in vain.

## WORTH THE SACRIFICE.

Precious as they were, these lives of the best of England's sons, the lessons we learnt at Neuve Chapelle were worth the sacrifice. We broke the German line and straightened ours. At one period in the fight we had turned the Kaiser's sturdiest and toughest fighters into a disorderly rabble.

The dawn which broke reluctantly through a veil of clouds on the morning of Wednesday, March 10th, seemed as any other to the Germans behind the white-and-blue sandbags in their long line of trenches curving in a hemicycle about the battered village of Neuve Chapelle.

For weeks past the German airmen had grown strangely shy. On this Wednesday morning none was aloft to spy out the strange doings which, as dawn broke, might have been descried on the desolate roads behind the British lines.

From ten o'clock of the preceding evening endless files of men marched silently down the roads leading towards the German positions, through Laventie and Richebourg St. Vaast, poor shattered villages of the dead, where months of incessant bombardment have driven away the last inhabitants and left roofless houses and rent doorways.

Watch the troops as they go by. Here come Indians, dark faces beneath slouch hats, kukris slung behind their waistbelts. Not Gurkhas these—they are farther down the road—but Garhwalis, a tribe akin, of similar cast of face, with a strong Mongolian strain, but men of sturdier build. Here are the Leicesters, "The Tigers" as they call them from their badge; here Territorials of the Royal Fusiliers; here the Lincolns and the Berks; the silver cross of the Rifle Brigade; the star and bugle of the Scottish Rifles; the Black Watch in their bonnets; the Northants, the Worcesters, heroes of Ypres.

Halted by the roadside are the Middlesex, the West Yorks, the Devons; every burr of Britain from Land's End to John o' Groats is heard on these desolate highways.

Two days before a quiet room, where Nelson's prayer stands on the mantelshelf, saw the ripening of the plans that sent these sturdy sons of Britain's four kingdoms marching all through the night. Sir John French met the army and army corps commanders and unfolded to them his plans for the offensive of the British Army against the German line at Neuve Chapelle.

The onslaught was to be a surprise. That was its essence. The Germans were to be battered with artillery, then rushed before they recovered their wits. We had thirty-six clear hours before us. Thus long it was reckoned (with complete accuracy as afterwards appeared) must elapse before the Germans, whose line before us had been weakened, could rush up reinforcements. To ensure the enemy being pinned down right and left of the "great push" an attack was to be delivered north and south of the main thrust simultaneously with the assault on Neuve Chapelle.

The splendid heroism displayed by our troops in their "holding" attacks at La Bassée and elsewhere is a chapter by itself. Though the attacks north and south of the main thrust may not have been carried through to fruition, the losses we sustained were not in vain, for our



offensive at these points deceived the Germans as to the real place at which we meant to break through.

To understand the importance of Neuve Chapelle it is necessary to glance at the conformation of the ground. Just beyond the village the flatness of the plain is broken, and the land begins to rise gently towards a ridge running in a horse-shoe from Aubers to Illies—both in German hands. There is a plateau between. From this ridge the ground descends again to where Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing, three of the richest cities of France (now in German occupation), lie together in the plain.

Neuve Chapelle, defended by a great network of German trenches extending from the Moulin de Pietre on the north-west of the fortified point known as Port Arthur, situated about the cross-roads at the junction of the great Estaires-La-Bassée Road with the Rue du Bois, stood between us and the Aubers-Illies ridge. He who would gain the ridge must first carry the village of Neuve Chapelle.

The village was to be our first objective. This attained, the troops were to press on to the Bois du Biez, a wood thick in parts but consisting of trees of different ages. Simultaneously with the attack on Neuve Chapelle an assault was to be launched against the road running from the Moulin de Pietre to Pietre. Shattered houses turned into strongholds through the installation of machine guns by the Germans barred

Our artillery was to prepare the way for the assault on Neuve Chapelle. A few hours before dawn everything was ready for opening, on the stroke of 7.30, the most formidable concentration of fire from guns of all calibres that the present war has yet seen.

The battalions which were to open the attack were by now wedged together in trenches and ditches, waiting for the first gun to give the signal of battle. Behind their sandbags, a white line just visible in the half-light before dawn, the Germans kept watch, unconscious of the inferno about to break loose on them. Not all were unconscious. Prisoners taken in the fight relate that in one section of the German trenches a captain became aware of unusual movement in the British lines opposite him, and soon discovered that the enemy trenches were full of men. He sent an urgent message back to his artillery requesting the battery commander to open fire. The latter replied politely that he had strict injunctions not to open fire without express orders from the corps commander. "Also . . . bedauere sehr . . ." ("I regret extremely . . .")

### THE FIRST GUN.

#### Glance at Watches, and then the Inferno.

Of a sudden the deep boom of a British gun struck on the ears of our waiting troops. But the bombardment was not yet. For an hour or

### NEUVE CHAPELLE AFTER THE BRITISH BOMBARDMENT.



[ "Daily Mail" Photograph ]

the way to the ridge on the fringe of the wood and at the elbows of the Pietre Road.

The attack on the whole German position was entrusted to the Indian Corps on the right and the 4th Army Corps in the centre and on the left. After the first line of German trenches, in some places only eighty yards distant from ours, had been captured, the ground was to be consolidated—i.e., put in a state of defence—and the Indians were to sweep on to the Bois de Biez, while the 4th Corps, attacking from the west and north-west, were to occupy the village and then press on towards the ridge.

### ARMY RESENTS STRIKES. Need of Many Guns and Shells.

The whole experience of this war has gone to show that infantry cannot advance against machine-guns defended by barbed-wire entanglements. A machine-gun, firing six hundred shots a minute, can reap down advancing infantry like ripe corn. A great general has truly said that two men with a machine-gun can hold up a brigade. Concentrated artillery fire is therefore the indispensable preliminary to an offensive in the present trench warfare. That is why guns and shells are needed—as many as possible—and that is why the strikes which delay their production are so fiercely resented by our army in the field.

two the guns boomed intermittently, "registering," as it is called—that is, making sure of their respective ranges—rather like a cricketer having a few balls at the nets before he goes in to bat. Then dawn broke softly, the shadows melted, and the clouds drifted away, and here and there a British aeroplane sallied pluckily forth over the German lines, to be greeted by white balls of shrapnel smoke hanging motionless in the clear morning air.

Our troops are in magnificent form. During the night hot coffee has been served out all round. Some have had a warm supper. No one thinks of breakfast now. Many regiments have discarded overcoats. The sun, stealing along the line, glints off the points of bayonets fixed "for business."

Every man of those waiting thousands knows what stands before, knows that when the guns have had their say for five-and-thirty minutes he will be out in the open making for the blue-and-white line in front of him as hard as he can pelt. Heaven! how the time drags! The aeroplanes glitter aloft. Here and there a bird sings. Subalterns are glancing at their watches. . . .

Then hell broke loose. With a mighty, hideous, screeching burst of noise hundreds of guns spoke. The men in the front trenches were deafened by the sharp reports of the field-guns spitting out their shells at close range to cut through the Germans' barbed-wire entanglements.



In some cases the trajectory of these vicious missiles was so flat that they passed only a few feet above the British trenches.

The din was continuous. An officer who had the curious idea of putting his ear to the ground said it was as though the earth were being smitten with great blows of a Titan's hammer. After the first few shells had plunged screaming amid clouds of earth and dust into the German trenches, a dense pall of smoke hung over the German lines. The sickening fumes of lyddite blew back into the British trenches.

In some places the troops were smothered in earth and dust, or even spattered with blood from the hideous fragments of human bodies that went hurtling through the air. At one point the upper half of a German officer, his cap crammed on his head, was blown into one of our trenches.

Words will never convey any adequate idea of the horror of those five-and-thirty minutes. When the hands of the officers' watches pointed to five minutes past eight, whistles resounded along the British lines. At the same moment the shells began to burst farther ahead, for, by previous arrangement, the gunners, lengthening their fuses, were "lifting" on to the village of Neuve Chapelle, so as to leave the road open for our infantry to rush in and finish what the guns had begun.

The shells were now falling thick among the houses of Neuve Chapelle, a confused mass of buildings seen reddish through the pillars of smoke and flying earth and dust. At the sound of the whistle—alas! for the bugle, once the herald of victory, is now banished from the fray!—our men scrambled out of the trenches and hurried higgledy-piggledy into the open. Their officers were in front. Many, wearing overcoats and carrying rifles with fixed bayonets, closely resembled their men.

It was from the centre of our attacking line that the assault was pressed home soonest. The guns had done their work well. The trenches were blown to unrecognisable pits, dotted with dead. The barbed wire had been cut like so much twine. Starting from the Rue Tilleloy, the Lincolns and the Berkshires were off the mark first, with orders to swerve to the right and left respectively as soon as they had captured the first line of trenches, to let the Royal Irish Rifles and the Rifle Brigade through to the village.

### BRAVERY OF TWO GERMANS.

#### Officers Serve Machine Guns to the Last.

The Germans left alive in the trenches, half demented with fright, surrounded by a welter of dead and dying men, mostly surrendered. The Berkshires were opposed with the utmost gallantry by two German officers, who had remained alone in a trench serving a machine gun. But the lads from Berkshire made their way into that trench and bayoneted the Germans where they stood, fighting to the last. The Lincolns, after desperate resistance, eventually occupied their section of trench, and then waited for the Irishmen and the Rifle Brigade to come and take the village ahead of them.

Meanwhile the 2nd 39th Garhwalis, on the right, had taken their trenches with a rush and were away towards the village and the Biez Wood. Things had moved so fast that by the time the troops were ready to advance against the village the artillery had not finished its work. So, while the Lincolns and the Berks assembled the prisoners, who were trooping out of the trenches in all directions, the infantry on whom devolved the honour of capturing the village waited.

One saw them standing out in the open, laughing and cracking jokes amid the terrific din made by the huge howitzer shells screeching overhead and bursting in the village, the rattle of machine guns all along the line, and the popping of rifles. Over to the right, where the Garhwalis had been working with the bayonet, men were shouting hoarsely and wounded were groaning as the stretcher-bearers, all heedless of bullets, moved swiftly to and fro over the shell-torn ground.

There was bloody work in the village of Neuve Chapelle. The capture of a place at the bayonet point is generally a grim business, in which instant, unconditional surrender is the only means by which bloodshed, a deal of bloodshed, can be prevented. If there is individual resistance here and there the attacking troops cannot discriminate. They must go through, slaying as they go such as oppose them (the Germans have a monopoly of the finishing-off of wounded men), otherwise the enemy's resistance would not be broken and the assailants would be sniped and enfiladed from hastily prepared strongholds at half a dozen different points.

### LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE.

#### Hardly a Stone Left Standing in the Village.

The village was a sight that the men say they will never forget. It looked as if an earthquake had struck it. The published photographs do not give any idea of the indescribable mass of ruins to which our guns reduced it. The chaos is so utter that the very line of the streets is all but obliterated. Once upon a time Neuve Chapelle must have been a pretty little place; as villages in these parts go, with a nice clean church (whence it probably got its name), some neat villas in the main street with gaudy shutters, half a dozen estaminets, a red-brick brewery, and on the outskirts a little old white chateau. Now hardly stone remains upon stone.

It was indeed a scene of desolation into which the Rifle Brigade—the first regiment to enter the village, I believe—raced headlong. Of the church only the bare shell remained, the interior lost to view beneath a gigantic mound of debris. The little churchyard was devastated, the very dead plucked from their graves, broken coffins and ancient bones scattered about amid the fresher dead, the slain of that morning—grey-green forms asprawl athwart the tombs. Of all that once fair village but two things remained intact—two great crucifixes reared aloft, one in the churchyard, the other over against the chateau. From the cross that is the emblem of our faith the figure of Christ, yet intact though all pitted with bullet marks, looked down in mute agony on the slaying in the village.

The din and confusion were indescribable. Through the thick pall of shell-smoke Germans were seen on all sides, some emerging

half dazed from cellars and dug-outs, their hands above their heads, others dodging round the shattered houses, others firing from windows, from behind carts, even from behind the overturned tombstones. Machine guns were firing from the houses on the outskirts, rapping out their nerve-racking note above the noise of the rifles.

### "MERCY! I AM MARRIED."

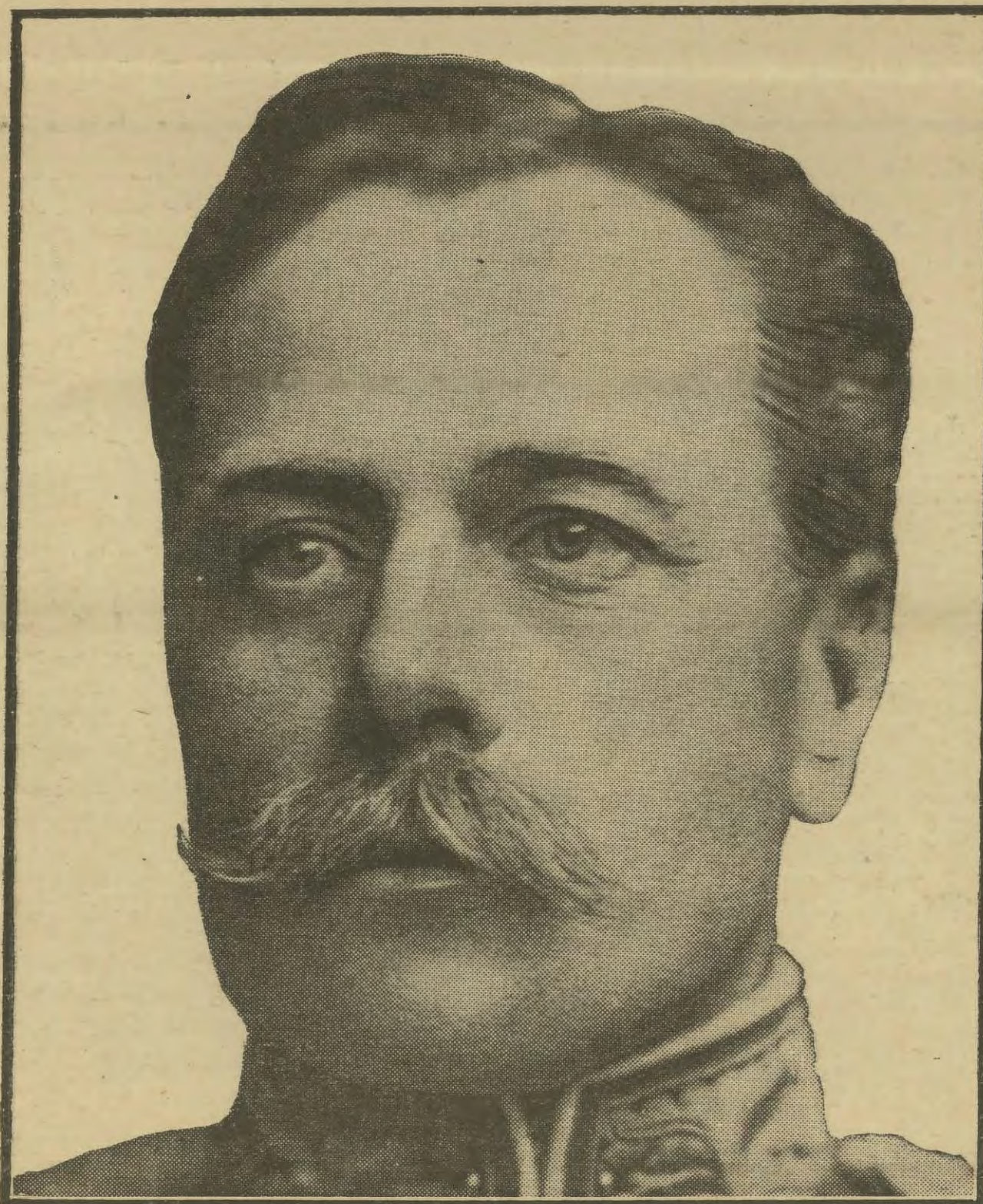
#### Tommy's Retort to a Portly German.

Many strange incidents were observed. In one cellar a portly German was found dancing about in an agony of fear, screaming in a high-pitched voice in English, "Mercy, mercy! I am married!" "Your missus won't thank us for sending you home!" retorted one of the men who took him prisoner, and his life was spared.

A Rifle Brigade subaltern, falling over a sandbag into a German trench, came upon two officers, hardly more than boys, their hands above their heads. Their faces were ashen grey, they were trembling. One said gravely in good English, "Don't shoot! I am from London also!" They too were mercifully treated.

Just outside the village there was a scene of tremendous enthusiasm. The Rifle Brigade, smeared with dust and blood, fell in with the 3rd Gurkhas, with whom they had been brigaded in India. The little brown men were dirty but radiant. Kukri in hand, they had very thoroughly

### SIR DOUGLAS HAIG.



[Photo, Barnett]



gone through some houses at the cross-roads on the Rue du Bois and silenced a party of Germans who were making themselves a nuisance there with some machine-guns. Riflemen and Gurkhas cheered themselves hoarse. Then they pushed on to where a fringe of scraggy trees on the horizon marked the Bois de Biez.

It is now half-past eight, the hour when folks in England are comfortably sitting down to their breakfast, when trim maids are bringing tea to the bedsides. Neuve Chapelle is ours, but the German resistance is not broken. Only a few hundred yards from where Riflemen and Gurkhas are fraternising in the first flush of victory Englishmen are traversing the last stern stage of a soldier's career in the field, the path of death.

"No easy hopes or lies  
Shall bring us to our goal,  
But iron sacrifice  
Of body, will, and soul.  
There is but one task for all,  
For each one life to give.  
Who stands if freedom fall?  
Who dies if England live?"

Some day maybe these splendid lines will be inscribed over the great graves where many of the heroes of the 1st 39th Garhwalis, the Scottish Rifles, and the 2nd Middlesex sleep together, officers and men, dead for England, after the most terrible ordeal that man can undergo. They

bayonet and knife, a section of trench there, only to be cut off in the upshot by the Germans in the intact trench.

On their left the Leicesters have gone through with a rush. Handy men with the bayonet, hardly a man in the battalion, the 2nd, that does not do his work. So gallantly, indeed, did the Tigers bear themselves this day that after the fight the Divisional General visited them in their billets to congratulate them on the good showing they made. The Leicesters come in for fire from the German trench which has been left intact. It is a bad gap in our attacking line and it must be closed.

Five of the Garhwalis' officers are dead now, killed in the first line after prodigies of bravery. In this fight the battalion is to lose twenty officers and three hundred and fifty men killed and wounded. The Germans have started to shell the Garhwali trenches. But the men, though without officers, are steady. These stout little hillmen have seen their officers fall, fearlessly exposing themselves. They remember that and it keeps them firm.

### TERRITORIALS' CHARGE.

#### London Lads Plunge Forward with a Cheer.

Now the Leicesters are going to effect a junction with the marooned Garhwalis. A bombing party is creeping down the communication trench to pelt the Germans into the open. Cricket is good training for bomb-throwing, and the Tigers fling their bombs into the crowded German trenches as fast and true as though they were throwing down

## THE HAVOC WROUGHT BY THE BRITISH GUNS.



[“Daily Mail” Photograph.]

died because, in their British way, they did not know when they were beaten and because when “Advance!” was the order they advanced, though barbed wire and machine-guns barred the way.

### MEN WHO NEVER WAVER.

#### Leading Companies' Officers all Killed.

When I think of their heroic death it seems to me, so tenacious were they until the end, that in distant days the peasants who cross these barren plains at night will see their pale shades in the moonlight, still hacking at the barbed wire, stabbing, smashing, falling—yes, falling all the time before the inferno of fire belched at them by the German machine-guns.

If you would hear the manner of their death then follow me first to the extreme right of the line to that sinister group of ruined houses known as Port Arthur. We are with the 1st 39th Garhwalis, a tough regiment that showed its worth in Burma and in the Tirah campaign.

Whistles blow, the men leave their trenches. Instantly they are withered by a fearful blast of fire. The German trench is untouched. So is the barbed wire, two hundred yards of it. The Garhwalis never waver. All the officers of the leading companies are killed right ahead of their men. The battalion staggers under the blast of fire, loses its direction, swings to the right, and captures, after fierce in-fighting with

a wicket. As the Germans are driven out into the open they are shot or bayoneted or slashed with the kukri. The captain lays out five Germans with his revolver.

The day is wearing on. The attack has dragged badly at this point in the line. The Seaforths, with kilts flying, are despatched to execute a flank attack on the German trench. From the front a Territorial battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, the 3rd London Regiment, delivers a splendid charge. The men come tearing across the pitted fields strewn with dead, bayonets well down, cheering as they go.

They drop men as they plunge along—but who cares in such a charge under the eyes of the élite of the Army?—the Regulars cheer them as they swing past, and they carry in their stride the last German stronghold, and the gap is closed. As the sun sinks blood-red behind the grim skeleton that was once the village of the New Chapel our men dig themselves in on the new line we have won between the village and the Biez Wood.

You who read these lines may never have heard of the Scottish Rifles, as the 2nd Battalion of the Cameronians likes to be designated. A fine, proud corps, the old 90th Light Foot. The Scottish Rifles “do not advertise,” as they will tell one in the accent of Lanark or of Aberdeen, but they are “the only regiment in the British Army that can lay claim to three commanders-in-chief and two field-marshal”—Lord Hill, Lord Wolseley, and Sir Evelyn Wood, to wit.

In a few hours of martyrdom the Scottish Rifles at Neuve Chapelle



showed that they have lost nothing of the spirit which won them fame at Lucknow and at Spion Kop. All their officers, save one, were killed or wounded, the colonel, Lieutenant-Colonel Bliss, and his adjutant falling side by side bravely leading the first line.

The losses among the men were in proportion. A hundred and fifty odd were all that their sole surviving officer, a second lieutenant of the Special Reserve, could collect after the German position had been won. But, though all their officers were gone, the men remained as steady as on parade, "moulding themselves," as one who went all through the fight put it, "on the glorious example given them by their officers." And the Scottish Rifles showed the Germans how a Scot can handle a bayonet.

It was the barbed wire again, a section of German trench which our artillery had unaccountably missed. The right-hand leading company, "B," got through without much opposition, but "A" Company on the left was literally mown down by machine-gun and rifle fire. The men who returned alive from that tornado hardly remember anything save tearing at the barbed wire with their hands, jabbing at it with their rifles, stamping on it.

Finally, the men had to lie down in the open, swept by machine-gun fire and sprayed by high explosive shrapnel that bursts with a hideous double effect—Woof! Woof!—while the bomb-throwers of "A" Company crept through the trench captured by "B," and eventually managed to drive the Germans out.

### MIDDLESEX AT THE WIRE. Undying Glory for a Line of Dead.

This attack was launched from a short piece of the Rue Tilleloy, a bare, ugly highway, where, with the Scottish Rifles, the Middlesex, Devons, and West Yorks were gathered. On the right of the Scotsmen the Middlesex underwent a similarly terrible ordeal with the same unflinching bravery. In front of the section of the German line allocated to them for capture the ground dips a little, and the barbed wire entanglements concealed in this fold of the ground escaped the shells of our field guns.

On getting out of their trenches the Middlesex were a little crowded. As they pressed forward to the attack they were suddenly swept by a diabolical fire from two machine-guns posted at either end of the German trench so as to cover with their converging fire a patch of about 200 yards front. In this zone no man could live. But the Middlesex were men of grit. They did not stop. They got as far as the wire. They hacked at it, tore at it till their hands were raw and bleeding and their uniforms rent to tatters.

From their starting-point right up to the wire they left a deep lane of their dead and dying 120 yards long, a sight so poignant that men, coming suddenly on that bloody trail, broke down and wept at the sheer pity, at the undying glory of it. Three times the 2nd Middlesex tried to burst through and silence those machine-guns that barked death at them.

Their efforts were in vain. So the Middlesex lay down there in the open among their dead, among the whizzing bullets and the bursting shrapnel. Their colonel managed to get a message back to our guns to turn their fire again on the German trench in front, and presently our guns opened fire and destroyed the wire. In the meantime a bombing party of the Middlesex had cleared some Germans out of the environs. The Germans had been sniping from cross-roads and had signified their readiness to surrender. On noticing, however, that the bombing party consisted only of an officer and six men, they ducked down in their trench again and reopened fire. The bombing party pushed on and pelted them out into the open, where the machine-gun officer of the Middlesex was waiting for them with his Maxim.

The Middlesex were now able to get on to their objective, a large orchard north-east of the village, where serious resistance had been anticipated. The Devons had got in there already and made mincemeat of the Germans. There the Middlesex stayed and consolidated the position.

All during the fighting the co-operation between the trenches and our batteries had been greatly impeded by the continual interruption of telephonic communication, owing to the destruction of the wires in the incessant rain of bullets. The Signalling Corps displayed the greatest bravery in going out repeatedly into the thick of the fight to repair the wires, which were cut again almost as soon as they were mended. Artillery observation was rendered difficult owing to the flatness of the country.

The Worcesters, the East Lancashires, the Sherwood Foresters, and the Northants, advancing from the Rue Tilleloy, followed up the attack. The Worcesters had a fine "scrap" with the Germans in an orchard round a farmhouse due north of Neuve Chapelle, the last stronghold of the position held by the Germans.

The Worcesters "had their tails up" with a vengeance. They chased the Germans up and down that muddy field like terriers after rats. They pursued them with the bayonet round the trees. One German

bolted into the farmhouse and was found trying to propel his portly form up the chimney. He was pulled out and made prisoner.

By 1.30 in the afternoon village and environs were in our hands, but the advance was still delayed by the "dragging" of the brigades where the battalions had been held up by the barbed wire. The conditions were ideal for a further advance towards the Aubers Ridge. The Germans were on the run. The total demoralisation of the prisoners proved that.

Few of the dead found up to that hour were fully equipped. The prisoners were panic-stricken. They were not second-class troops either, not pot-bellied, be-spectacled Landwehr or Landsturm, but fine, upstanding young Westphalians, clean and in good uniforms. Most of the prisoners seemed heartily relieved at their capture.

The Border Regiment bagged a Prussian colonel. He was delighted to be taken. On his own initiative he formed up his men, bawling at them in the most approved Prussian barrack-yard style, and marched them off through the British lines. The Borderers say the men seemed more scared of their colonel than of the "hated English."

Nothing could be more characteristic of the difficulties of fighting in these flat plains, dotted with groups of isolated houses and seamed with a network of trenches, than the delay caused to our advance by the resistance of small parties of Germans posted at one or two points with machine-guns. If it had been possible for the attack to have been pushed home immediately after the capture of the village the ridge would probably have been ours. The few hours' delay enabled the Germans, with reinforcements scraped together from all over the region, to organise a stubborn resistance along the Pietre road and on the fringe of the Biez Wood.

In point of fact, it was not till 3.30 that the advance could proceed. At this moment the enemy's opposition was still so paralysed that our men were able to form up unscathed in the open outside the village before advancing. Opposite the wood the soldiers got out of the trenches and walked about. The whole of our left attacked the Pietre road, but the German machine-guns posted in the houses on the road held us up. The Gurkhas on the right penetrated into the Bois du Biez, but a German stronghold at a bridge over the little stream known as the Riviere des Layes enfiladed the Indians, and the Gurkhas were unable to retain their advantage.

### FIRST COUNTER-ATTACK. All-Day Shelling of our New Line.

Just before dawn the next morning the Germans made their first attempt to deprive us of our capture. Their counter-attack was driven off with heavy loss, and we pursued them till we were checked by those fatal strongholds on the Pietre road.

In the meantime our artillery had been steadily shelling the wood, with a view to hindering the arrival of the German reinforcements which were known to be en route. Two German regiments posted in the wood are believed to have been decimated. For days afterwards the enemy was observed to be bringing dead bodies out of the wood and burying them in the fields in the rear.

All that day the Germans shelled our new line. Our troops stood it imperturbably as ever, though we had some losses. During the night the expected German reinforcements began to arrive—Bavarian and Saxon regiments which had been resting at Tourcoing after a spell in the German trenches round Ypres.

Dawn had not broken on the morning of March 12th when the Germans opened fire on Neuve Chapelle. Everybody in the British lines knew that this was the harbinger of a counter-attack, one of those thrusts en masse beloved of German commanders. At 5 a.m., sure enough, before it was light, surging masses of grey coats appeared in front of our left, east of Neuve Chapelle and south of Port Arthur on our extreme right.

This German counter-attack was a ghastly business. The few prisoners who were taken say they were told that there had been "a slight mishap," and that "a few British soldiers" were in Neuve Chapelle, and had to be driven out. The attack was ill-timed and ill-prepared. The German Staff work seems to have been at fault, for their troops appeared to have expected to find us much farther back. In front of the Worcesters the enemy—they were Bavarians—advanced in column of route, an officer on horseback with drawn sword in their midst. A non-commissioned officer was seen driving the men along with a whip, as though they had been a herd of cattle!

The slaughter was sickening. In front of one of the brigades the Bavarians, coming along at the ambling trot adopted by the German infantry at the assault, and bawling "Hourra!" in the approved fashion, blundered into the fire of no fewer than twenty-one machine-guns. The files of men did not recede or stagger. They were just swept away. One moment one had the shouting, ambling crowd before one's eyes; the next moment where it had been lay a writhing, convulsed pile of bodies heaped up on the brown earth. When day broke, amid the rattle of machine-gun and rifle fire, the German corpses were seen to make ramparts behind which the wounded took cover. In one case at least the Germans, feverishly digging themselves in, were actually seen to use the corpse of one of their comrades to finish off the parapet of their trench.

All through the morning the German wounded crawled into the British lines, where they were well cared for and sent down in our ambulances. The Gurkhas stood up on the parapet and called to the



Germans to come in. A man in the Rifle Brigade who had crawled out of the trench came back with nine Germans gingerly tailing behind him on all fours.

### TO THE LAST STRONGHOLDS.

#### How Colonel Maclean of the 6th Gordons died.

It was now clear that the preliminary to any successful advance must be the destruction by artillery of the three German strongholds—the two on the Pietre road and the bridgehead over the River Layes. But the weather allied itself with our existing difficulties. The clear atmosphere prevailing during the first day of the fighting had given way to mist, impeding the artillery observation work and making it increasingly hard to distinguish friend from foe amid a network of trenches which in some places were only fifty yards apart.

With hopes high and courage undaunted our troops went forward again against the German line protecting the ridge. The 2nd Scots Guards, the 1st Grenadiers, the Borderers, and the 2nd Gordons, with their Territorial battalion, the 6th, were among the regiments taking part in the assault. With incredible tenacity, using grenade and bayonet, part of the attacking troops worked their way right up to the houses about the Moulin de Pietre.

Here it was that the 6th Gordons lost their colonel, Lieut.-Colonel Maclean. A subaltern, hearing he had been killed, hastened to his side, and found him still alive, lying in the open behind the trench, with a bullet in his back and sinking fast. He was suffering grievously. The young officer fetched the colonel some morphia, which eased his

themselves efficaciously. The new trenches were very wet, and a biting wind added to the general discomfort. In many cases the men fell asleep standing up at their loopholes, and a sergeant tells how he went down the line of his trench after dark, tugging at a leg here and there to make sure that the men were still awake. More than once he found himself plucking the boot of a dead German. On the 14th most of the troops which had taken part in this historic engagement had been relieved.

A bright page in the splendid story of British heroism is the conduct of the doctors. As always, they distinguished themselves by their fearlessness under fire, gallantly supported by the stretcher orderlies. Their losses were heavy, for they exposed themselves without thought of danger. They were worthy of their patients, and their patients were worthy of them. Wounded, our men displayed the same fortitude as in advancing to the assault.

Here is a little scene enacted in a barn where a field ambulance had been installed, on the iron roof of which the bullets kept up a devil's tattoo. It is night, and the doctor is going his rounds among the closely-packed files of wounded. "Doctor," says a faint voice, "could you give me a little morphia? My leg is shattered." "Right, my man," says the doctor, "but where are you?" "I'm moving my hand, doctor," the voice went on; "I can't move anything else." The man had his morphia, and when his suffering had eased a little he said to the doctor, with a wan smile: "Well, there's one thing about it, doctor. That's cured my water on the knee." And a ripple of laughter ran down the files of wounded men, Gordons, and Warwicks,

### A GERMAN FRONT-LINE TRENCH AFTER NEUVE CHAPELLE.



["Daily Mail" Photograph.]

pain. "Thank you," said the dying man. "And now, my boy, your place is not here. Go about your duty!" So he dismissed him and died a little while later, a very gallant gentleman.

Orders to our troops were to break down the German barrage of fire at all costs. All that human men could do against the German line they did with that self-sacrifice and steadfast courage that they had shown throughout the two days' fighting. At half-past twelve the Rifle Brigade went forward in the face of the most devastating fire, and actually managed to reach the trench in front of it, a hundred yards away, at heavy cost. The German fire was so terrific and continuous that the wounded who strewed the ground did not dare lift their heads for fear of being shot. At five another attempt was made to get forward, but the front-line only succeeded in reaching the same ground as the Rifle Brigade already held. There we remained until nightfall, when, it becoming apparent that no advantage was to be derived from holding the flooded trenches we had gained at the cost of so many valuable lives, the order was given to fall back on the position from which the afternoon attack was made.

The fighting was now practically over. The Germans had apparently realised that the recapture of Neuve Chapelle and their trenches opposite the Bois du Biez was impossible, and settled down to strengthen their positions protecting the Aubers ridge. Nevertheless, throughout the 13th they kept up a violent bombardment of our new line without, however, achieving any success.

The 13th was a hard day for our army. The troops were worn out with three days' fighting. In many cases they were in very insufficient cover, though they worked feverishly, dog-tired as they were, to entrench

and Guardsmen, packed together in that place of pain. Such is the spirit of our fighting men.

In five weeks' trench warfare recently a single British division lost 1,257 men killed and wounded, a not inconsiderable fraction of our total casualties in the four fierce days of Neuve Chapelle. As the result of the staggering blow our army dealt the Germans there, the casualties in the trenches have been very considerably diminished, so that our losses at Neuve Chapelle are compensated to this extent.

More than this, as Sir Douglas Haig pointed out in his order to the 1st Army, issued after the battle, our successful surprise of the enemy totally disorganised the forces from Ypres to far south of the La Bassée Canal, and prevented him from withdrawing troops from our front to send against the French in the fighting at Notre Dame de Lorette. Lastly, to quote Sir Douglas Haig, "the British soldier has once more given the Germans a proof of his superiority in a fight as well as of his pluck and determination to conquer."

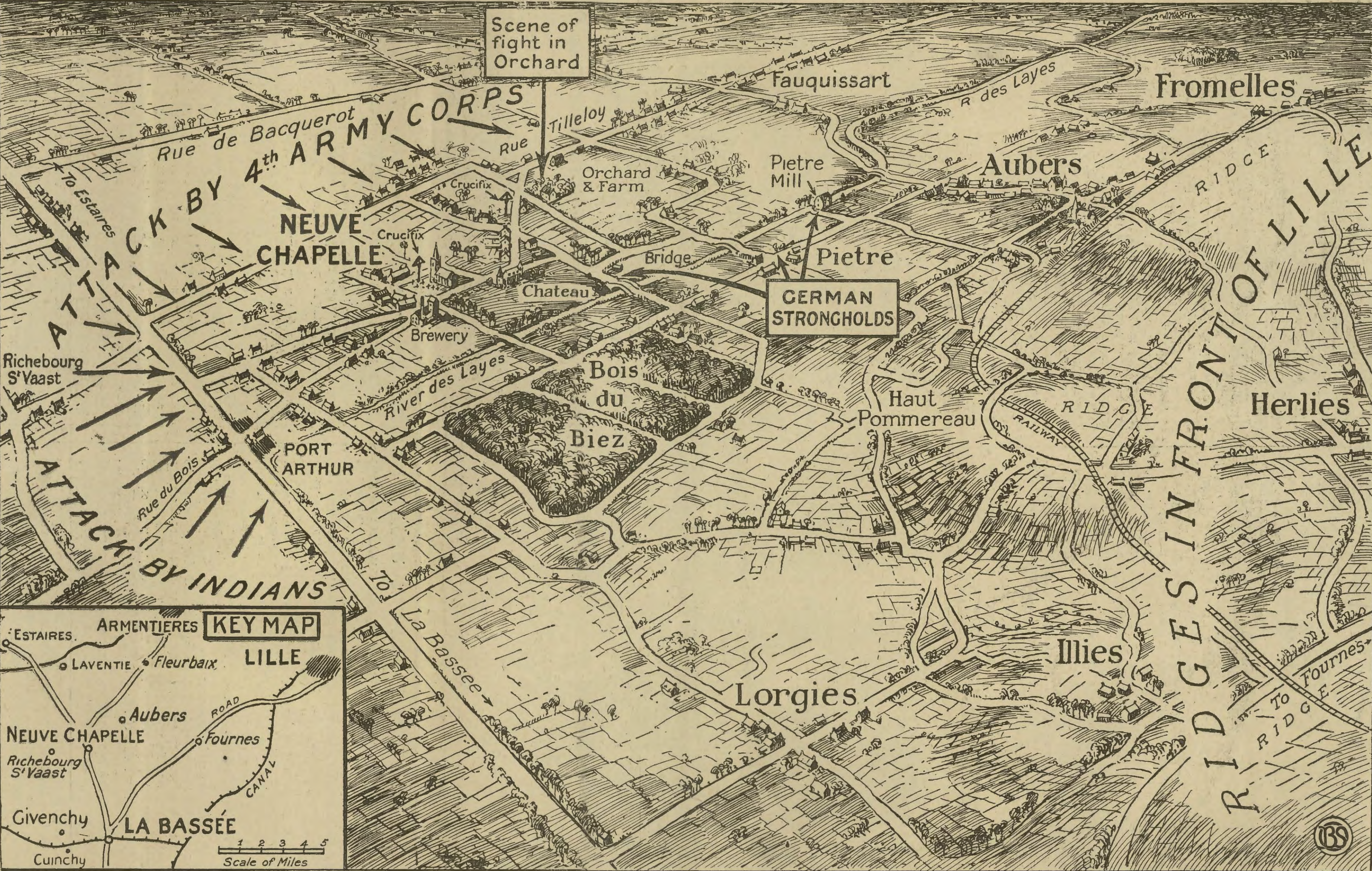
The victory of Neuve Chapelle has welded the British army in the field even closer together than before. The Army unites in mourning for the brave men that died, as in admiration for the countless deeds of individual heroism the fight brought forth and satisfaction at the important results achieved.

No one rejoices more at the splendid manner in which the Army stood the test than Sir John French, who, in a stirring special order to the 1st Army, expressed his "fervent and most heartfelt appreciation of the magnificent gallantry and devoted, tenacious courage displayed by all ranks." With his eulogy will be mingled the warmest thanks of England.



# PICTURE MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE BATTLE OF NEUVE CHAPELLE.

The Glorious Story of Neuve Chapelle.



The large map indicates the approximate lines of advance of the British and Indian troops against Neuve Chapelle. The small map shows the position of Neuve Chapelle in relation to Lille, the great French manufacturing town held by the Germans.

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