

# BRITISH, THEN LOSE, ADVANCE UPON POSITIONS; FRENCH TAKE THREE TOWNS ABOVE YPRES; GERMAN RETREAT CEMENTS NOW IN FLANDERS

## DRYS WIN 20 CITIES; WET VOTES CARRY 19

Prohibitionists Fail to Sweep Many Localities They Counted Upon.

RECORD TOTALS CAST

Syracuse and Schenectady for Saloon, Binghamton Against It.

WESTCHESTER BARS WIN

Women Appear to Have Split Ballots Between the Two Factions.

Prohibition won in twenty of the thirty-nine up-State cities that voted on the question yesterday and on Tuesday, according to practically complete returns this morning. Except in the case of Salamanca, latest returns showed that every city that voted against the saloon license voted against the three other proposals for the sale of liquor, namely the wholesaler, the sale in hotels and the sale by pharmacists on a physician's prescription. Salamanca voted in favor of the sale by prescription.

Two of the three cities of the second class, Syracuse and Schenectady, went for the former by about 12,000. Binghamton, the other second class city, went into the dry column. The sale of liquor in the cities affected must stop on October 1.

While it was proved that the claim of the prohibitionists that the cities affected would vote against the sale of liquor was not without foundation, the returns showed that the anti-saloon sentiment among the voters of the most important cities.

Syracuse Goes Wet.

Perhaps the most striking instance was in Syracuse, which voted wet by about 12,000 majority. Schenectady, Mount Vernon and New Rochelle, in all of which places the anti-saloon sentiment was substantial, went into the wet column.

From the earliest returns it was apparent that the newly enfranchised women voters in the east threw their ballots solidly against the liquor traffic. Fairly complete returns seemed to indicate that they split their votes on the liquor traffic as the men did, and the result, so far as that element of the vote was concerned, was a distinct disappointment to the prohibitionists in many localities.

An analysis of the figures shows that the vote averaged about 70 per cent. more than the total vote cast in these cities for Governor in 1916.

Cities like Syracuse and Newburgh, where the prohibitionists expected a larger vote, the explanation was made that the newly enfranchised woman voters in the east threw their ballots solidly against the liquor traffic, despite house to house canvassing by the drys.

Dry Claims Too Large.

Together the result seems to indicate that the claim of the prohibitionists that the sentiment of the State was for prohibition was not well founded. The claim was based on the assumption that a great majority of the voters in the eight-eighth members of the Legislature outside of the city of New York would indicate a preference for home dry legislation. It was the belief of some that the fact that many voters in the cities had had a chance to express their views on the liquor question.

Hot Fight in Westchester.

Following the hottest election contest yet held in Westchester county, Mount Vernon and Westchester will continue to be wet. The men were slightly outnumbered at the polls in both cities by the women, who turned out in large numbers. It is said many women at the last moment voted against the dry because they feared property values would fall. In Mount Vernon more than 2,000 votes were cast, of which number nearly 6,000 were women's.

The majority in favor of the wet was 130 in New Rochelle. Members of the anti-saloon cause in the city favored the wet, and the fact that it was a multitude of workers in favor of the dry amendments at the last moment voted in favor of the wet.

The oldest woman to vote in Mount Vernon was Miss Elizabeth D. Reed, an inhabitant of the Martha Wilson Home. Although she is 92 years of age she insisted on walking to the polls. When asked if she was in favor of the wet she replied with some emphasis: "Why, certainly, I voted dry."

Binghamton Is Dry.

Binghamton, which was expected to be a victory for the prohibitionists, showed a majority against license of only 650 in 12,000 votes cast. The vote in the city of Binghamton, although not a city of the second class, was looked upon by the wet as a good fighting ground. But it went solidly for an over-representation of the city in the Legislature. The vote was 1,000 for the wet, 1,000 for the dry, and 1,000 for the over-representation. Republican majority leader of

## U. S. WILL RUN BARGE CANAL

McAdoo Seizes \$100,000,000 Waterway to Relieve Railroad Strain.

BIG FLEET TO BE BUILT

Boats Will Be Operated Direct From Lake Ports to New York City.

Special Despatch to The Sun.

WASHINGTON, April 17.—New York's State Barge Canal, which was completed only recently at a cost of over \$100,000,000, is to be operated by the national government under an agreement reached with the State authorities. The old competition between the railroads and the canal will be eliminated and the canal operated not as a competitor but as an auxiliary of the railroads.

Announcement that the canal would be operated by the government was made to-night by Director-General McAdoo. The announcement came as the end of a series of negotiations which the committee on inland waterways of the Railroad Administration has had with the State authorities. G. A. Tomlinson of Duluth, Minn., has been selected by Mr. McAdoo to operate the canal. He will displace the State authorities.

McAdoo's Announcement.

Mr. McAdoo's announcement telegraphed here was as follows: "Director-General McAdoo announced here to-night that, acting upon the recommendations of the committee on inland waterways of the Railroad Administration, he has decided to construct as quickly as possible and put into operation a line of barges to be operated by the government on the Erie Canal. The barges will be of modern construction, of the most approved type, and will be operated in conjunction with and as a part of the general inland waterway transportation system of the country under the control of the Director-General of Railroads. This will insure the complete coordination of the Erie Canal facilities with the railroad facilities, and it is hoped will greatly enlarge the available transportation facilities throughout Eastern territory. Mr. G. A. Tomlinson of Duluth, Minn., a man of large, practical experience in lake navigation, has been appointed general manager of the canal operation, including the construction of the barges and general equipment. Under Government control of the railroads and the canal there can be direct transfer of all the traffic that can be handled to the best advantage by water, and the canal can be made in the highest degree serviceable in the present situation.

It is the plan of the government to begin immediately the construction of seven hundred 700 ton steel barges for operation on the canal. It is believed the canal can be used to transport 10,000,000 tons of freight a year under the new plan. The government will finance this program for enlarging terminals and make other improvements that may be necessary in order to utilize the waterway to its fullest capacity.

Barges to Run Direct.

Barges are to run from lake ports right through the canal. It is also planned to have the railroads transport freight to the canal in order to relieve congestion on Eastern trunk lines. In assuming the operation of the canal the Director-General has acted under the authority conferred upon him by the President's proclamation, which covered "owned or controlled systems of coastwise and inland transportation" as well as railroads.

While the agreement with the State authorities has not been made public, it is understood that it provides for a guarantee to the State of all fixed charges and operating costs, which would be met by the national government. Some delegations have appeared here to urge that the Railroad Administration operate the waterways. One of these delegations was headed by Mayor Hylan of New York city and Dock Commissioner Hurlbert. It was pointed out to Mr. McAdoo that there was no expectation that private capital would utilize the new waterway to anything like its capacity and that there was no provision in the State law by which this could be accomplished.

## PLEDGE GIVEN FOR HOME RULE BEFORE DRAFT

Government Promise Fails to Halt Irish Opposition to Conscription.

UNIONISTS WILL ACCEPT

Dublin Convention Assumes Proportions of Grave Importance.

Special Cable Despatch to The Sun.

LONDON, April 17.—Last night's debate in the House of Commons and the reception given to Premier Lloyd George after his declaration that the government would resign if the House of Lords refused to pass the Irish home rule bill make it clear that not even the fall of Lloyd George from power or a change in the government can prevent Ireland's self-government from coming into operation this year.

Sir Edward Carson pinned the government down to the fact that it was its intention to pass the home rule bill before any conscription was attempted in Ireland. Following the debate the Unionists held a meeting which a majority of the members attended.

It was agreed that although the government's Irish policy was most unpopular, it must be accepted at this critical moment in the empire's history. Sir Edward Carson's announcement that he would not even to avert the passage of the home rule bill would urge the Ulster Unionists to take any action that might make victory more remote best exemplifies the attitude of the Unionists.

Still for Conscription.

"Even if you put me under the government of the opposition of the Sinn Feiners," he declared in the House of Commons, "I would still support conscription, because I prefer anything to German domination."

To-morrow's convention at Dublin to consider Irish conscription is assuming great importance. For the first time the Sinn Fein leaders will appear on the same platform with the Nationalists, including the O'Brienites. The convention originally was called by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, but it was protested against the application to Ireland of imperial compulsory service.

It is believed that the government's commitment to the policy of home rule before conscription is extended to Ireland will exercise considerable influence upon the attitude of the convention. In an analysis of the figures shows that the Sinn Fein leaders planned to bring to an international tribunal to pronounce judgment upon the claim of Ireland for the right of self-determination in her local affairs. It was believed that plans were made to induce President Wilson to use his good offices in support of the Irish demand that the question of conscription be left to an Irish parliament.

Resistance Hardening.

News from Ireland shows that the opposition to the imposition of home rule by the Nationalists and Sinn Feiners is hardening. From meetings all over the country, from public platforms the Sinn Fein leaders are being urged to position to the measure. Reiterating resentment against conscription and urging passive resistance Archbishop Walsh of Dublin in a public letter says that the only home rule bill, coupled with conscription, that can be supported by the Nationalists is a bill that would give the law and order brought into existence an Irish parliament and that the only conscription bill acceptable is one framed by that parliament.

The Sheffield Daily Telegraph, a strongly conservative organ, does not believe that the government's program will solve the Irish question. "This is not the time," says the Telegraph, "for flouting friends and courting enemies who raise their voice with every concession."

"The Irish like the will of the people, now that Home Rule is promised to them, say that it must be given to them before conscription is put into effect, and say that in fact only an Irish Parliament is entitled to impose it. Raising their peace terms in 1914 on the Home Rule act when it was agreed that all

## GERMANS PAY COSTLY TOLL FOR THEIR GAINS

OTTAWA, April 17.—"The last twenty-four hours have been anything but a good time for the enemy," says Reuter's correspondent at British headquarters in a despatch filed to-day. "Ludendorff is doubtless telling the Germans to look at the map. The answer is: Tell them to look at their casualty lists."

"On shortening of the Passchendaele salient and the giving up of the ground won last autumn has not been in vain, since it played a large part in wearing out the enemy, the last phase of which we are now entering on."

"The withdrawal was accomplished with mastery skill, unhampered by the Germans. Our power of resistance has greatly stiffened, while we have forced the enemy to lengthen his communications across ground which he would infinitely sooner be without."

"The bitter intensity of the fighting lulled during the forenoon, the hurricane artillery duel subsiding to spasmodic outbursts with long intervals of comparative calm."

"We have taken numerous prisoners in the last two days."

## BAKER REPORTS VICTORY AHEAD; ARMY IS SUPERB

Secretary Is Surprised That Any Pessimism Should Exist Here.

OUR TROOPS MAKE GOOD

Want to Get Into Fight and Remain Abroad Until Job Is Done.

Special Despatch to The Sun.

WASHINGTON, April 17.—Secretary Baker, who resumed his duties to-day at the War Department after his trip abroad, informed President Wilson and the War Council this afternoon of the results of his first hand observations in Europe. It is understood that he is full of confidence in the ultimate success of the allied and American plan to crush German militarism and that he expressed considerable surprise that any pessimism should have permeated certain circles here.

He fully appreciates the magnitude of the task confronting the nation and the need for far greater participation of this country in the military operations than was expected, but Mr. Baker is said to feel that the role which America is now called upon to play is by no means impossible of fulfillment.

The meeting of the War Council was held in the White House and was attended by the President, Secretary Baker, Secretary Daniels, Chairman Hurley of the Shipping Board, Bernard Baruch, chairman of the War Industries Board, Fuel Administrator Garfield, Food Administrator Hoover, Chairman Skeel Williams representing the railroad administration.

Baker Outlines Situation.

No statement was made following the meeting, but it became known that Mr. Baker had given the various heads of important war agencies an outline of the situation and his observations, and that some time was taken up in discussion of a threatened coal shortage.

Secretary Baker had a talk this morning with the newspaper correspondents and the following transcript of the Secretary's comment was later made public:

"So far as our own forces are concerned, any man who goes to France will have an increasing sense of admiration for the magnitude, the thoroughness and the speed with which the American army has done its work; and, of course, I refer chiefly to its organization of lines of communications, lines of supply, its positions and its outstanding facilities, the schools organized for the training of the special arms and the special officers."

"To get the impression of the American army in France as a beehive of the most energetic people, and everybody is doing his job with enthusiasm and sacrifice, and there is generally speaking no limitations on labor; no hours and no rest the most done possible, and the amount done is an amazing story."

Soldiers' Morale High.

"The condition of our soldiers in France is a thing that I am very happy to have an opportunity to tell in the widest possible way. Our boys are well physically, strong, robust and healthy, and they are well equipped in every way. Their spirits are high, their behavior is most admirable, their relations with the French people and the French soldiers and the British soldiers to the extent I saw of them were cordial and sympathetic. The healthfulness and wholesomeness about the American army over there is generally speaking the most sane and sane army I have seen the most done possible, and the amount done is an amazing story."

Eager to Get to Front.

"The boys receive the information that they should prepare for duty at the front with the greatest enthusiasm; one regiment of engineers ordered out cheered so loudly that you could hear them over the telephone."

"The information I went to France to get I got, and the picture of the actual application of all this effort, and I am now equipped with the means of judgment and feeling the kind of cooperation that the War Department in America can give to the army that would not have been possible without the visit to the actual field of battle. It will undoubtedly lead to a very much better cooperation between the Department and the army in France."

"The big thing for America to do is to support the war—support it financially, support it in sentiment, belief, confidence and courage. The right arm of America is in France and it is bared ready for action and striking hard. The rest of the body is over here and we must support and invigorate that arm, and that means subscriptions to the Liberty Loan and the means of adoption of the sort of confidence in our army in France which its own activities justify and deserve."

## WAITING FOR A BLUCHER, SAYS MAJOR-GEN. MAURICE

British Director of Military Operations Calls Battle a Waterloo Multiplied a Hundredfold—Explains Giving Up Passchendaele Ridge.

LONDON, April 17.—Major-Gen. F. H. Maurice, chief director of military operations at the War Office, said to-day:

"As mentioned in Field Marshal Haig's communique, we made a withdrawal to a new line in the Ypres salient. The withdrawal was carried out partly on Sunday night and completed on Monday."

"It is a regrettable military necessity which forces us to give up ground which we won [in 1917] at such heavy cost. On Tuesday the Germans were still shelling trenches which we had left the day before."

"Preparations for shortening our line there were made some time ago and the decision to carry it out was reached before the fall of Baillieux owing to the danger offered to our positions in the salient from a flanking movement. The withdrawal was not dictated or governed by the adverse course of events around Baillieux, but by more general considerations."

Awaiting the Modern Blucher.

"What of the whole battle situation? Our army has been going through a very severe strain, and that strain has been reflected at home. The situation has had its critical moments and still is decidedly anxious. But remember we have accepted the consequences of that principle. We must look at the whole battle not from our army's sacrifices and sufferings, but from the standpoint of the whole Entente."

"The British army is playing the role which it often has played before. It is fighting a Waterloo while Blucher is marching to the battlefield. Multiple

## CONVICTS TAR MAJOR BIRKNER

400 Give Him Coat of Feathers and Lead Him With Rope Around Neck.

HE IS HELD AS A SPY YPRES BATTLE REOPENS

Superintendent of New Mexico Prison Goes to Aid of German Born.

SANTA FE, N. M., April 17.—Four hundred convicts in the State penitentiary this afternoon tarred and feathered and led around with a rope about his neck John M. Birkner, who was in New Mexico, N. M., held in the penitentiary as a Federal prisoner. He is charged with violation of the espionage act.

Major Birkner, who was born in Nuremberg, Germany, but who had been in the American military forces for more than thirty years, was arrested last Friday at Camp Cook, where he was an officer in the 127th Field Artillery. His home is in Lincoln, Neb.

Birkner was allowed to go out into the prison yard in company with the convicts for exercise. The wardens knew nothing of what was going on until he heard loud cheering and rushed out in the yard to find Birkner stripped and covered with tar and feathers. The prisoners with hoots were leading Birkner about the yard by a rope around his neck.

Assistant Superintendent Dugan rescued him. The convicts, evidently in accordance with a prearranged plot, had obtained the feathers from their pillows. It is here that the tar came from is a mystery.

Birkner is alleged to have made disloyal utterances, such as "You can't beat the Hun," and "The Germans will sink American transports as fast as they are sent over." He contended that the charges were spite work by disloyal officers whom he had displaced.

LANSING, Mich., April 17.—Major John M. Birkner, who was tarred and feathered by convicts at the New Mexico State penitentiary to-day, was prominently identified in the Nebraska National Guard for more than thirty years. At one time he acted as assistant Adjutant-General.

Major Birkner's wife, who lives in Lansing, said to-day that she recently received a letter from the Major, in which were statements showing that he was loyal. She declined, however, to make the letter public.

## 2,000 GERMANS FALL PREY TO POISON GAS

British Gunners Play Fatal Trick on Enemy.

PARIS, April 17.—The evolution of the use of gas shells has taken a surprising form in the present battle. One new method is to fire heavy shells densely packed along a front, the shells exploding in the air, filling in the alternative spaces with quickly dissipating poison fumes.

The British gunners at one part of the line threw shells charged simply with a stinking composition. The Germans after a few hours discovered that the gas was non-poisonous and began laying aside their masks. After these shells had been fired for another twelve hours there was a sudden change to poison gas. About 2,000 Germans were caught without their masks and suffocated.

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They Win, Lose and Again Regain Wytschaete and Meteren in Day.

FRENCH IN THE BATTLE

They Join British Near Merris, Where Germans Also Report Small Advance.

Special Cable Despatch to The Sun.

LONDON, April 17.—After minutes of a footing in the village of Wytschaete on Meuse ridge, captured by the Germans yesterday, the British were unable to maintain their position there and retired to-day under exceedingly heavy German onslaught. The same thing happened at Meteren, just west of Baillieux, where the British took Meteren and drove the Germans half way to Baillieux, only to be forced back later to the west of Meteren.

The recapture of Wytschaete and Meteren was effected jointly by the British and French, of whom reinforcements have arrived on the British battle front and went immediately into action. After these places were given up again and the British and French troops had retired to the high ground back or north of them the Germans made repeated assaults on the new positions, all of which were repulsed, and very heavy losses were inflicted upon them.

Gain of Little Value.

The ground gained by the Germans in the battle, as their advance brings them under the direct fire of the Allied artillery on the higher ground, has been of little value, as it is on a slope that of Baillieux, as it enables the Germans, by regaining possession of Meuse ridge, to attempt to turn the line of the ridges from Mount Kemmel to Cassel.

It should be remembered, however, that the French and British are now back on the line held by the British before the capture of Meuse ridge last June and that for two and a half years the British held the Ypres salient despite successive attacks by the Germans, who then possessed, as they do now, Meuse ridge.

Despite the heavy fighting on the whole line of nine miles from Wytschaete to Meteren, the Germans had enough troops to deliver a sudden attack to the north of Ypres, where there has been no fighting for some time. Offensive, and captured the villages of Langemark and Ploesbepelle. British reinforcements have reached the French lines and the British advance which Gen. Maurice reported is regarded as significant despite the fact that it failed to carry the villages of Meteren and Wytschaete after desperate efforts.

The second retirement of the British from these points means, according to army experts here, that the assault will be renewed by British reinforced by French at an early moment.

The fact that the Germans have been driven from Mount Kemmel, towering 490 feet from the low ground about Wauwaterghem, is a sign of encouragement. It is somewhat offset by the German official report claiming the capture of Ploesbepelle and Langemark to the northeast of Ypres.

Ypres Fight Reopens.

Indications to-night are that the fighting, both the British and French, are pushing the Ypres salient back to the line held by the British before the capture of Meuse ridge. The fact that the British are going to fight out the issue in this locality with all means at his command rather than yield positions to the enemy which would necessitate a general withdrawal of the British.

In a general way the British have followed the tactics which military experts here predicted as essential. They have struck back at once for possession of the heights of the Meuse ridge, which is admitted to be the pivot on which has rested the British line extending northward. Possession of this vantage point now appears at least open to the British. The victory which was expected to have won yesterday is forthwith challenged, and the net result of the continuous fighting still hangs in the air.

The first reports reaching here with respect to the withdrawal of the British position before Ypres to a new line were received a week ago by the British who at first believed that Haig's decision of contesting the heights of Meuse ridge with the enemy and had begun the withdrawal of his line to the north. It was not clear whether the British Ypres had been evacuated or not. Army men here fully realized that the British withdrawal from the Ypres salient were giving up ground which had only been won at enormous cost and after considerable time.

Subsequent explanations have sent the withdrawal in a somewhat different light. It is believed that the withdrawal had been deliberately planned before the fighting in the Meuse area because it was not to be executed under any pressure, but was undertaken as a matter of general strategy.

The Allies feared that the Ypres salient might be awkward to defend because

## 18 SHIPS, NEW-YARD ORDERED

Government Programme for Steel and Wooden Vessels Thus Completed.

SCHWAB ON JOB TO-DAY

Construction Records Are Being Broken Under Speed Up Orders.

Special Despatch to The Sun.

WASHINGTON, April 17.—With Charles M. Schwab about to assume active control and direction of all ship construction in the United States the Emergency Fleet Corporation let a contract to-day for the Carolina Shipbuilding Company for the construction of the fourth big Government steel shipbuilding yard and eighteen large steel steamships. This contract completed the government building program for steel and wooden ships for the present at least.

Mr. Schwab will officially take hold of the construction end of the shipping programme to-morrow morning. He will be in charge of yard construction as well as of ship construction and will supervise this new plant, to be located at Wilmington, N. C., as well as the Hog Island project.

The new Director-General spent the day in New York attending to personal affairs and those of the Bethlehem Steel Company. He will pass to-morrow with Vice-President Pletz of the Fleet Corporation.

Piez to Award Contracts.

The law prohibiting an official from letting contracts in which he has direct or indirect interest will not affect his work. All contracting will be done by Vice-President Pletz. In addition it was pointed out that with the signing of the contract to-day American yards, except for projected contracts planned and signed up for work to carry them for upward of three years, at least up to 1920.

The Carolina Shipbuilding Company is a subsidiary of the George A. Fuller Contracting Company. The new plant that it will construct is to have six slipways, contracts for sixteen steel ships of an authorized 10,000-ton displacement were let with the contract for the yard construction. Each vessel will be 8,500 tons, the standard size.

The record type of steamship was developed by the United States Steel Corporation. The Emergency Fleet Corporation asked to use the plans and specifications offered to pay for their use in the government yard. President Hurley received them to-day with a note from James A. Farrell, president of the Steel Corporation, turning them over to the government with his compliments. This type of vessel is the simplest of the fabricated designs and many of the plates and parts are interchangeable.

Post-Bellum Preparations.

Changes in the design of a number of the larger steel vessels to make them available after the war for passenger service is under consideration.

Shipbuilding records are being broken one after another as the American yards are being speeded up. The Skinner & Eddy Co., Seattle, has just delivered the standard freighter Osmeke to the Shipping Board, 109 days after the keel was laid. The same company some time ago established a record with the freighter Seattle, which slid into the water 64 days after the keel was laid. It was 137 days, however, before the vessel was completed and turned over.

The record for fast construction was temporarily taken by the Columbia River Company of Washington, on March 23 when it delivered the freighter Canoga 113 days after the keel was laid.

In previous times it took between a year and eighteen months to turn out a vessel of the size of any of these—2,800 tons.

## HERE'S A WAY TO HELP OUR TROOPS OVER THERE

YOUR thoughts, your hope and your prayers are centred on our soldier boys at the front this morning. Good, as far as you go, but these things are not enough. Back up your words with deeds!

You can help the fellows by giving them what they really, genuinely want, and that, according to their own repeated statements, is smokes! Fix it that when the victory is won you can conscientiously take a little credit for yourself. But don't delay. Delays are dangerous—to them and to you. See page 7.

## STATE TITLE HOLDS TITLE TO CANAL

Albany Officials Approve Federal Operation.

ALBANY, April 17.—Government operation of the canal in the direction of the Railroad Administration of New York State's barge canal system will not interfere with the construction work on the system now under way or contemplated, was stated by representatives of the State Department of Public Works.

Under the constitution of the State the canal is a public property, and remains with and is maintained by the State. Director-General McAdoo's announcement was interpreted to mean that the Railroad Administration would simply direct the operation of freight and the disposition of barges and boats. It was pointed out that under Federal control it would be possible to lease, purchase, build or even commandeer

## GERMANS TAKE THREE TOWNS ABOVE YPRES

French Retreat Cements Now in Flanders

PASSCHENDAELE RIDGE GIVEN UP, THUS LEAVING YPRES EXPOSED TO THE ENEMY.

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It should be remembered, however, that the French and British are now back on the line held by the British before the capture of Meuse ridge last June and that for two and a half years the British held the Ypres salient despite successive attacks by the Germans, who then possessed, as they do now, Meuse ridge.

Despite the heavy fighting on the whole line of nine miles from Wytschaete to Meteren, the Germans had enough troops to deliver a sudden attack to the north of Ypres, where there has been no fighting for some time. Offensive, and captured the villages of Langemark and Ploesbepelle. British reinforcements have reached the French lines and the British advance which Gen. Maurice reported is regarded as significant despite the fact that it failed to carry the villages of Meteren and Wytschaete after desperate efforts.

The second retirement of the British from these points means, according to army experts here, that the assault will be renewed by British reinforced by French at an early moment.

The fact that the Germans have been driven from Mount Kemmel, towering 490 feet from the low ground about Wauwaterghem, is a sign of encouragement. It is somewhat offset by the German official report claiming the capture of Ploesbepelle and Langemark to the northeast of Ypres.

Ypres Fight Reopens.

Indications to-night are that the fighting, both the British and French, are pushing the Ypres salient back to the line held by the British before the capture of Meuse ridge. The fact that the British are going to fight out the issue in this locality with all means at his command rather than yield positions to the enemy which would necessitate a general withdrawal of the British.

In a general way the British have followed the tactics which military experts here predicted as essential. They have struck back at once for possession of the heights of the Meuse ridge, which is admitted to be the pivot on which has rested the British line extending northward. Possession of this vantage point now appears at least open to the British. The victory which was expected to have won yesterday is forthwith challenged, and the net result of the continuous fighting still hangs in the air.

The first reports reaching here with respect to the withdrawal of the British position before Ypres to a new line were received a week ago by the British who at first believed that Haig's decision of contesting the heights of Meuse ridge with the enemy and had begun the withdrawal of his line to the north. It was not clear whether the British Ypres had been evacuated or not. Army men here fully realized that the British withdrawal from the Ypres salient were giving up ground which had only been won at enormous cost and after considerable time.

Subsequent explanations have sent the withdrawal in a somewhat different light. It is believed that the withdrawal had been deliberately planned before the fighting in the Meuse area because it was not to be executed under any pressure, but was undertaken as a matter of general strategy.

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## 2,000 GERMANS FALL PREY TO POISON GAS

British Gunners Play Fatal Trick on Enemy.

PARIS, April 17.—The evolution of the use of gas shells has taken a surprising form in the present battle. One new method is to fire heavy shells densely packed along a front, the shells exploding in the air, filling in the alternative spaces with quickly dissipating poison fumes.

The British gunners at one part of the line threw shells charged simply with a stinking composition. The Germans after a few hours discovered that the gas was non-poisonous and began laying aside their masks. After these shells had been fired for another twelve hours there was a sudden change to poison gas. About 2,000 Germans were caught without their masks and suffocated.

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French Retreat Cements Now in Flanders

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GERMANS PAY HEAVILY

They Win, Lose and Again Regain Wytschaete and Meteren in Day.

FRENCH IN THE BATTLE

They Join British Near Merris, Where Germans Also Report Small Advance.

Special Cable Despatch to The Sun.

LONDON, April 17.—After minutes of a footing in the village of Wytschaete on Meuse ridge, captured by the Germans yesterday, the British were unable to maintain their position there and retired to-day under exceedingly heavy German onslaught. The same thing happened at Meteren, just west of Baillieux, where the British took Meteren and drove the Germans half way to Baillieux, only to be forced back later to the west of Meteren.

The recapture of Wytschaete and Meteren was effected jointly by the British and French, of whom reinforcements have arrived on the British battle front and went immediately into action. After these places were given up again and the British and French troops had retired to the high ground back or north of them the Germans made repeated assaults on the new positions, all of which were repulsed, and very heavy losses were inflicted upon them.

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