

**THE BATTLES IN
FLANDERS, FROM YPRES
TO NEUVE CHAPELLE**

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The battles in Flanders, from ypres to Neuve Chapelle by Edmund Dane

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EDMUND DANE

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TO NEUVE CHAPELLE**

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THE BATTLES IN FLANDERS

FROM YPRES TO NEUVE CHAPELLE

BY

EDMUND DANE

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PREFATORY NOTE

EVER since the middle of November last there has been on the West front in the present war what many have called and considered a "deadlock." In the account which follows of that part of the campaign represented by the battles in Flanders the true character of the great and brilliant military scheme by means of which, and against apparently impossible odds, the Allied commanders succeeded in reducing the main fighting forces of Germany to impotence, and in defeating the purposes of the invasion, will, I hope, become clear. The success or failure of that scheme depended upon the issue of the Battle of Ypres. Not only was that great battle the most prolonged, furious, and destructive clash of arms yet known, but upon it also, for reasons which in fact disclose the real history of this struggle, hung the issue of the War as a whole. No accident merely of a despot's desires caused the fury and the terror of Ypres. It was the big bid of Prussian Militarism for supremacy. Equally in the terrible and ghastly defeat it there sustained Prussian Militarism faced its doom.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE CRISIS OF OCTOBER - - -	9
II. HOW THE CRISIS WAS MET - - -	20
III. THE EVE OF YPRES - - - -	34
IV. THE BATTLE OF YPRES—FIRST PHASE -	44
V. THE BATTLE OF YPRES—SECOND PHASE	58
VI. THE BATTLE OF YPRES—THE CRISIS -	81
VII. THE BATTLE OF YPRES—FINAL PHASE -	104
VIII. THE BATTLE ON THE YSER - - -	120
IX. THE WINTER CAMPAIGN - - -	144
X. NEUVE CHAPELLE - - - -	169

CHAPTER I

THE CRISIS OF OCTOBER

AT the beginning of October there had arisen in the Western campaign a crisis with which it needed the utmost skill and resource of the Allied generals to grapple.

Both the nature of this crisis, and the necessity of reticence concerning it at the time, ought to be made clear if we are to appreciate either the momentous character of the Battle of Ypres, or the profound effect which that glorious feat of the Allied arms has had upon the fortunes of this War.

Into France at the beginning of the War the Germans threw their mighty Expeditionary Force of twenty-eight army corps, disposed into eight armies acting in co-operation. With the circumstances under which that line of armies, in part held on the French fortified frontier, was compelled to turn from Paris to the valley of the Marne and was there defeated, I have dealt in "The Battle of the Rivers." For the reasons there set out the original objective, the seizure of Paris, was seen by

10 The Battles in Flanders

the Germans when the army of General von Kluck reached Creil, to have become impossible until the French fortified frontier was in their hands. Their armies were directed upon the Marne with that aim. In the manœuvre they exposed the vulnerable point of their line, its right flank, to the powerful onset, which General Joffre, who had foreseen the situation, at once launched against it.

Defeated on the Marne, the Germans lost the military initiative—the power to decide upon their movements and to compel the enemy to conform to them. To the soldier the initiative is the practical embodiment of military superiority. It is the first great step to victory. In every war the struggle has been to seize and to hold it. More than in any war has that been the motive in this. Campaigning with armies, not only vast in point of numbers, but dependent upon a huge, varied, and costly machinery of destruction, transport, and supply, has made victory more than ever hang upon this power to direct their complex organisation to the desired end.

All that the initiative implies. It can therefore be no matter of surprise that Germany's long preparations were without exception designed to seize the initiative at the outset, and to hold it if possible. In that event the whole force of the German Empire would with the least wastage and in the shortest possible time be applied to the accomplishment of its Government's political aims. From the Great Main Headquarters Staff