

## The Second Battle of Ypres.

It was at the commencement of the Second Battle of Ypres, on the evening of April 22nd that the enemy first made use of the asphyxiating gas, which Sir John French described as "a cynical and barbarous disregard of the well-known usages of civilised war, and a flagrant defiance of the Hague Convention."

### THE COMING OF THE GAS.

Following a heavy bombardment on the 22nd, the enemy attacked the French Division, holding the line from Steenstraet to the east of Langemarck, as far as the Poelcappelle Road. At about 5 p.m. thick yellow smoke had been seen issuing from the German trenches between Langemarck and Bixschoote. The French reported that two simultaneous attacks had been made east of the Ypres-Staden Railway, in which asphyxiating gases had been employed.

What followed is best described in the words of Sir John French :

"The effect of these poisonous gases was so virulent as to render the whole of the line held by the French Division mentioned above practically incapable of any action at all. It was at first impossible for anyone to realise what had actually happened. The smoke and fumes hid everything from sight, and hundreds of men were thrown into a comatose or dying condition, and within an hour the whole position had to be abandoned, together with about fifty guns."

### THE STAND OF THE CANADIANS.

The left flank of the Canadian Division was left dangerously exposed to serious attack in flank by the crumbling of the French Division, and there appeared to be a prospect of them being overwhelmed and of a successful attempt of the Germans to cut off the British troops occupying the salient to the east.

In spite of the danger to which they were exposed, the Canadians held their ground with a magnificent display of tenacity and courage ; and it is not too much to say that the bearing and conduct of these splendid troops averted a disaster which might have been attended with the most serious consequences.