

La Grande guerre du XXe siècle  
Source gallica.bnf.fr  
Maison de la bonne presse, appeared monthly

[page 316]

A l'assaut de Vauquois (28 fevrier-5 mars 1915)

Since the end of September, the Germans have been in Vauquois, a village on the eastern edge of the Argonne Forest. For our enemy, this position has the advantage of hiding their operations north of Varennes and allows them to supply their troops in the Ardennes, the most important of which are those in the Bois de Cheppy.

And even more important, Vauquois is a great observation point. From it, the enemy can direct its long-range artillery fire on the villages, supply routes and troop movements in the valley.

And so the capture of Vauquois was of the highest importance for us, but it was also clear that it was going to take a great effort.

In effect, the position had become a veritable fortress. The cellars in the village, hewed from solid rock, offered the enemy a shelter from the effects of our field artillery.

Our earlier attacks had brought our front line to a point about mid-slope at Vauquois, when, on 28 February, the order to attack the village was given

On 1 March, everyone, both officers and soldiers, were resolved to finish the job. Four times we rose to attack Vauquois; four times we were repulsed by the withering fire of the Germans.

The attack was resumed at dawn with more soldiers.

At 1400, despite the intense fire of our adversary, elements of three regiments, although frightfully disorganized, left their trenches and recommenced their ascent to the plateau.

And all of a sudden our men were on the outskirts of Vauquois. The persistence of their effort, which continued without interruption for twenty-four hours, visibly impressed the enemy who, instead of clinging to their front line trenches, abandoned them and fled into the village. All of the positions in front of the houses were in our possession.

At 1430, with a magnificent elan, our battalions penetrate the ruined village and installed themselves there. At the same time hand-to-hand combat took place in the streets and between the ruined houses.

[page 317]

At 1500, 1600, 1700 and 1730, four counterattacks occurred and were repulsed. After having inflicted large losses on the enemy and taken two hundred prisoners, we installed ourselves along the main street that cuts Vauquois in two parts.

During the night from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, our men attempted twice to seize the center of the enemy's resistance in the church, but the attacks broke against the enemy's resistance along the main street, the enfilading fire of machine guns and the firing from cellars.

An arrival of reinforcements in the trenches to the west of the village was observed, and they

were immediately brought under our fire. But no counterattack occurred. We maintained our positions.

The days of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> were mostly spent reorganizing the units and consolidating our gains. The enemy did not attack. The Germans were visibly fatigued. Their morale had been weakened. They still clung to what they retained of the village, but they were not able to do anything more. On our side, we drug a cannon to the top of the plateau and, at point blank range, inflicted severe losses upon the enemy.

However, during the night of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup>, and during the day on the 5<sup>th</sup>, the Germans attempted some new counterattacks but were repulsed.

From that moment, the enemy ceased to try and chase us from Vauquois. Here we are, and here we're going to stay.

(Bulletin des Armées, 14-17 March 1915)