

our first waves before their own death. Whatever their motive had been, many of these men had come out, and they lay in heaps, mangled by shell-fire that came across the fields to them in a deep belt of high explosives. Here under the sky they lay, a frightful witness against modern civilization, a bloody challenge to any gospel of love which men profess to believe. Over Nonne Boschen and Inverness Copse, and Polygon Wood beyond, and the long claw-like hook of the Passehendaele Ridge, the sky was clear at times and the water-pools reflected its light. But these places had no touch of loveliness because of the light. Once in history meek-eyed women walked in Nonne Bosen, which was Nun's Wood, and in Inverness Copse, as we call it, maids went with their mates in the glades. Now they are places haunted by ghastly memories, and there rises from them a miasma which sickens one's soul. Yet bright above the evil of them and clean above their filth there is the memory of that youth of ours who came here through fire and flame and fell here, so that the soil is sacred as their field of honour.

In the first phase of the battle of Flanders the new system of German defence was formidable. It was that "elastic system" by which Hindenburg hoped to relieve his men from the destructive fire of our artillery by holding his front line thinly in concrete blockhouses and organized shell-craters with enfilade positions for machine-gun fire, keeping his local reserves at quick striking distance for counter-attack. Our first waves of men flowed past and between these blockhouses in their struggle to attain their objectives, and were swept by cross-fire as they went forward, so that they were thinned out by the time they had reached the line of their advance. The succeeding waves were sometimes checked by German machine-gunners still holding out in undamaged shelters, and our troops in the new front line, weak and exhausted after hours of fighting, found themselves exposed to fierce counter-attacks in front while groups of the enemy were still behind them. For several weeks there were episodes of this kind, when our men had to give ground, though the line of advance seldom ebbed back to its starting line, and some progress was made however great the difficulties. Still the "pill-box" trouble was a serious menace, costly in life, and new methods of attack had to be devised during the progress of fighting when the area of the