

STORMING THE MESSINES RIDGE

fury of gunfire, before the troops, lying in those dark fields, should stumble forward.

The drone of a night flying airplane passed overhead. The sky lightened a little and showed great black smudges like ink blots on a blue silk cloth where the British kite balloons rose in clusters to spy out the first news of the coming battle.

The cocks of Flanders crowed, and two heavy German shells roared over Kemmel Hill and burst somewhere in the British lines. A third came, but before its explosion could be heard all the noise there had been, all these separate sounds of guns and high explosives and shrapnel were swept into a tornado of artillery which now began.

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE

The signal for its beginning was the most terrible, beautiful thing, the most diabolical splendor I have seen in the war. Out of the dark ridges of Messines and Wytshaete and that ill-famed Hill 60 . . . there gushed up enormous volumes of scarlet flame from exploding mines and of earth and smoke, all lighted by flame spilling over into fountains of fierce color, so that the countryside was illuminated by the red lights." The earth trembled and quaked; the British soldiers waiting to rush the first line trenches were "rocked up and down, this way and that," as if "in an open boat in the rough sea." The gigantic explosion, which was heard by Lloyd George at his country home in England, 140 miles away, levelled hills, made mincemeat of trenches, dugouts, and wire entanglements and blew the defenders high in air