

direct observation after our first advance. But he was still trying to find the old places and hurled over big shells in a wild scattered way. They flung up black fountains of earth with frightful violence. Everywhere there were shell-holes so deep that a cart and horse would find room in them. One looked into these gulfs with beastly sensations—with a kind of animal fear at the thought of what would happen to a man if he stood in the way of such an explosion. There was a sense of old black brooding evil about all this country, and worst of all in remembrance were the mine-craters of Hooge. I stared into those pits all piled with stinking sand-bags on which fungus grew, and thought of friends of mine who once lived here, with the enemy a few yards away from them, with mines and saps creeping close to them before another upheaval of the earth, with corpses and bits of bodies rotting half buried where they sat, always wet, always lousy, in continual danger of death. The mines went up and men fought for new craters over new dead. The sand-bags silted down after rain, and machine-gun bullets swept through the gaps, and men sank deeper into this filth and corruption. The place is abandoned now, but the foulness of it stayed, with a lake of slime in which bodies floated, and the same old stench rose from its caverns and craters. Bellewacorde Lake, to the north of Hooge, is not what it used to be when gentlemen of Ypres came out here to shoot wild-fowl or walk through Château Wood around the White Château of Hooge with a dog and a gun. There are still stumps of trees, shot and mangled by three years of fire, but no more wood than that, and the lake is a cesspool into which the corruption of death has flowed. Its water is stained with patches of red and yellow and green slime, and shapeless things float in it. Beyond is the open ground which goes up to Westhoek Ridge above Nonne Boschen and Glencorse Wood, for which our men fought on the first day of battle and afterwards in many weeks of desperate struggle. The Australians took possession of this country for a time and had to stay and hold it after the excitement of advance. They came winding along the tracks in single file through this newly captured ground, carrying their lengths of duck-board and ammunition boxes with just a grim glance towards places where shells burst with monstrous whoofs. "A hot spot," said one of these boys, crouching with his mates in a bit of battered trench outside a German pill-box