

flashes, shooting into the air and there dividing into twin red balls—the S. O. S. call of the German trenches for artillery support. But answer there is none; our counter-battery work is too perfect; their batteries are neutralized; not an enemy shell comes across; in that murky inferno all is confusion and terror.

For a minute the din is stunning, but the ear quickly becomes accustomed. The heavens are lighted up across their broad expanse by a continuous sheet of lightning, playing relentlessly over the doomed lines. Now the faint light of dawn shimmers in the east and soon blots out the fire-works. A lark rises high, carolling. Our own men can be plainly made out walking leisurely—or so it seems—forward, tanks lumbering ahead. Already some of our field batteries gallop past hard after the infantry. It is a perfect plan working out without a hitch. The heavy batteries behind raise the barrage step by step ahead of the men. All is co-ordinated to victory. Then down comes the fog, blotting out the spectacle, but saving many casualties.

The attack is such a complete and overwhelming surprise that the enemy's initial defense is feeble. Many of his batteries fall into our hands wearing their tarpaulin hoods, their crews deep in their dug-outs. Our own artillery comes off almost scatheless, except among the galloping whizz-bangs, one too venturesome being put out of action by a direct hit at point-blank range. By nine o'clock these field-guns are three miles inside the enemy front line.

Six hours was set for the lifting of the barrage, but long before that its work is done and the enemy in headlong flight. After them go the whippet tanks—little uneasy beasts of steel and petrol that can do their twelve miles an hour across country when the going is good, and here, over these great rolling uplands and gentle valleys, it is perfect.

The fog lifts. It is eight o'clock. The cavalry, a wonderful sight, appear on the scene. They have come up from Hangest-sur-Somme and have lain over night in the great park