

and the Inniskillings of the 29th Division. Suddenly, at about half-past five, there was a terrific crash of guns, and at the same moment the men scrambled up into the open and with their bayonets low went out into No Man's Land, each man's footsteps making a trail in the snow. I think it took about four minutes, that passage of the lonely ground which was a hundred yards or so between the lines, all pock-marked with shell-holes, and hard as iron after the freezing of the quagmire. There was no preliminary bombardment. As soon as the guns went off the men went, with the line of shells not far in front of them. They found no men above ground when they pierced the German line. It was curious and uncanny—the utter lifelessness of the place they came to capture. Good, too, for men attacking, for men who always listen for the quick rush of bullets, which is the ugliest sound in war. Not a single machine-gun spat at them. They knew quickly that they had surprised the enemy utterly. They found the dug-outs and called down the challenge and heard it answered. The Würtembergers came up dazed with the effect of the capture, hardly believing it, as men in a dream. One of the officers explained: "We thought it was just a morning strafe. We kept down in the dug-outs till it was over. We had no idea of an attack. How did you get here so quickly?"

They were abashed. They said they would have put up a fight if they had had any kind of chance. But they were trapped. They could do nothing but surrender with the best grace possible. On the right, from two isolated bits of trench, there came a burst of rifle-fire. A few Germans there had time to recover from the stunning blow of the first surprise and fought pluckily till overpowered. The Borders and the Inniskillings went on farther than the objective given to them, to a point 500 yards away from the German first line, and established themselves there. From neighbouring ground, through the white haze over the snowfields, red lights went up with the S O S signal, and presently the German gunners got busy. But the prisoners were bundled back to the omnibuses, and the men took possession of the dug-outs. Proper organization was difficult above ground. It was too hard to dig. From the farthest point, later in the day, the men were withdrawn to the ground given to them for their objectives and German attempts to organize counter-attacks were smashed by our