

all the steel helmets were tilted sideways as the wind struck aslant the muddy brown men with upturned collars on their way up to the fighting-lines.

But last night was fine. The sky cleared and the stars were very shining. Orion's Belt was studded with bright gems. It was like a night of frost, when the stars have a sharper gleam. Away above the trees there was a flash of gun-fire, red spreading lights, and sudden quick stabs of fire. The guns were getting busy again. "A great night for bombing," said an officer; "and good luck for to-morrow." Our night patrols were already out. In the garden where that officer spoke there was a white milky radiance, so that all the trees seemed insubstantial as in a fairy grove where Titania might lie sleeping. Far off beyond the trees was a white house, and the moonlight lay upon it, and gave it a magic look. Perhaps the work being done inside was the black magic of war, and men may have been bending over maps strangely marked, and full of mystery, unless one knows the code which deals with the winning of battles. "For once we may have luck with the weather," said another officer. About midnight there was a change. Great clouds gathered across the moon. It began to rain gustily, and then settled down to a steady, logging downpour.

Our luck with the weather went out with the stars, and this morning when our men went away the ground was more hideous than it has ever been this year, and that would seem a wild exaggeration to men who tried to get through Inverness Copse and Glencorse Wood on the wet days of August. They went into swamps everywhere, into the zone of shell-craters newly brimmed with water, and along tracks without duck-boards, where men went ankle-deep, if not knee-deep or waist-deep.

The enemy was expecting them. There seems no doubt of that. An hour or so before the attack he began to barrage the ground in some parts, and in their blockhouses the German machine-gunners got ready to sweep the advancing battalions. Our own barrage thundered out shortly before six from all the guns which had got to their places after the great struggle in the mud. On the right the ground about Polderhoek Château was flooded down in the hollow below that ruin, which is perched up on a rise. Our men of the 5th Division—Devons, Scottish Borderers, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry—were not far away from it, a few hundred yards, but it was a difficult place to