

In the fatal Loop was stationed a whole company of the Princess Patricias. As the men hung on there, grim and expectant, there was a terrific explosion; when the flying fragments had subsided a watcher from a balloon would have seen only a jagged and enormous crater — awful in its stillness. The Loop had been mined by the enemy and the entire company of brave men had perished. Another monstrous German mine exploded, but with less deadly effect.

By this time all the communication trenches were battered flat. Orders had somehow been conveyed to the troops to flee for their lives, and some few hundreds attempted to beat a retreat through the deadly barrage. Only a handful of them got through. The majority of the survivors stayed on the ground or hid in such refuge as they could find.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the barrage, two battalions of desperate men were watching for a chance to cleave their way through to their comrades in peril. But there was little hope that any in the front line of trenches survived.

By this time — it was ten minutes to one o'clock,—after four hours steady bombardment — the storm of shell ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Forthright from the opposite trenches sprang a swarm of grey-coated Huns. Fully accoutred and with overcoats and full haversacks they advanced on the run, yelling wildly. They must have been firmly convinced that amidst those rugged, battered, seared and bloody mounds and ditches, which four hours before had been the British trenches, not one single soul had escaped. For, apart from a few bombers, not a man of those advancing hordes appears to have been in proper fighting trim. They came forward gaily, light-heartedly, as victors after a victory.

It was then the most wonderful thing of the day happened. Out of the earth there sprang up a handful of wild-eyed soldiers, two officers amongst them, muddied and reeking with sweat, and running forward, with upraised rifles and pistols, bade defiance to the oncoming foe. On they ran and having discharged their weapons, flung them in the very