

## 358 FROM BAPAUME TO PASSCHENDAELE

miles of slime there has been from six o'clock this morning enough human heroism, suffering, and sacrifice to fill an epic poem and the eyes of the world with tears. It is wonderful what these men of ours will do. But in telling their tale they smile a little grimly in remembrance, or say just simply : " It was hell ! "

There is more in a battle than fighting. What goes before it to make ready for the hour of attack is as vital, and demands as much, perhaps a little more, courage of soul. Before this battle there was much to be done, and it was hard to do. Guns had to be moved, not far, but moved, and out of one bog into another bog—those monsters of enormous weight, which settle deeply into the slime. To be in time for this morning's barrage, gunners, already worn, craving sleep and silence, dog-weary of mud and noise after weeks and months of great battles, had to work like Trojans divinely inspired to win another day's victory, and they spurred themselves harder than their horses in this endeavour. They were often under shell-fire. Not only the gunners, but all the transport men, all the pioneers and working parties have done their utmost. Battalions of fighting men, busy not with their rifles but with shovels and duck-boards, worked in the mud—mud baulking all labour, swallowing up logs, boards, gun-wheels, shells, spades, and the legs of men, the slime and filthy water slopping over all the material of war urgently wanted for this morning's " show." The enemy tried to harass the winding teams of pack-mules staggering forward under a burden of ammunition boxes, rations, every old thing that men want if they must fight. Those mule leaders and transport men do not take a lower place than the infantry who went away to-day. They took as many risks, and squared their jaws to the ordeal of it all like those other men. The fighting troops went marching up or driving up in the rain. Far behind the Front the roads were filled with dense surging traffic, which we out here will always see and hear in our dreams after peace has come, the great never-ending tide of human life going forward or coming back, as one body of men relieve those who have gone before. Rain washed their faces, so that they were red with the smart of it. It slashed down their mackintosh capes and beat a tattoo on their steel helmets. On the tops of London buses, the old black buses which once went pouring up Piccadilly before they came out to these dirty roads of war,