

destroying their channels so that they slopped over the low-lying ground. The rains enlarged this area of flood, and so saturated the clayey soil that it became a vast bog with deep overbrimming pits where thousands of shell-craters had pierced the earth. Tracks made of wooden slabs fastened together were the only roads by which men and pack-mules could cross this quagmire, and each of these ways became taped out by the enemy's artillery, and very perilous. They were slippery under moist mud, and men and mules fell into the bogs on either side, and sometimes drowned in them. At night in the darkness and the storms it was hard to find the tracks and difficult to keep to them, and long columns of troops staggered and stumbled forward with mud up to their knees if they lost direction, and mud up to their necks if they fell into the shell-holes. It was over such ground as this, in such intolerable conditions, that our men fought and won their way across the chain of ridges which led to Passchendaele. I saw some of the haunting scenes of this struggle and went over the ground across the Pilkem Ridge, and along the Ypres—Menin road to Westhoek Ridge, and up past Hooze to the bogs of Glencorse Wood and Inverness Copse, and beyond the Yser Canal to St.-Jean and Wieltje, where every day for months our gunners went on firing, and every day the enemy "answered back" with scattered and destructive fire, searching for our batteries and for the bodies of our men. The broken skeleton of Ypres was always in the foreground or the background of this scene of war, and every day it changed in different atmospheric phases and different hours of light so that it was never the same in its tragic beauty. Sometimes it was filled with gloom and shadows, and the tattered masonry of the Cloth Hall, lopped off at the top, stood black as granite above its desolate boulder-strewn square. Sometimes when storm-clouds were blown wildly across the sky and the sunlight struck through them, Ypres would be all white and glamorous, like a ghost city in a vision of the world's end. At times there was a warm glow upon its rain-washed walls, and they shone like burnished metal. Or they were wrapped about with a thick mist stabbed through by flashes of red fire from heavy guns, revealing in a moment's glare the sharp edges of the fallen stonework, the red ruins of the prison and asylum, the huddle of shell-pierced roofs, and that broken tower which stands as a memorial of