

almost beyond description. The tall trees silhouetted against the sky stood out in great clearness, and in imagination you could discern countless eyes watching you. Although the night was chilly the mosquitoes were active. There was never a quiet moment—rat-tat-fat of machine guns, crack of snipers, dull thud of a coal-box or “Jack Johnson,” and the usual aimless desultory rifle-fire made night hideous. But the watch ends, and you creep back to the safety of the trenches and the companionship of your fellow-comrades. “What report have you to make?” One reports that enemy working parties can be seen on our immediate front as if strengthening their wire entanglements, another reports the tinkle of bells as if the enemy were fixing them to barbed wire—and I—I have no report to make! True, during the last ten minutes I seemed to be pregnant with observations—the tall grass seemed to be alive with Germans, the wind seemed to carry whisperings, and the noise and singing of the mosquitoes seemed like the tramp of armed men; had it not been for my fellow-watcher I should never have ceased sounding alarm. But in the shelter and safety of the trench these phantoms vanished; it was the strain, for the work requires great nerve—not courage, for few of us lack that—but nerve to see and hear things as they really are. It is not given to everyone.

Once back to your dug-out you can rest after a manner until the peep of day. Then comes the order—“Stand to.” Slowly the sun rises with its promise of another day. To many it will bring gladness, to many sorrow, for assuredly before it sets there will be death and maiming. It seems to look down upon us with infinite compassion. “Poor, weak, frail, erring human beings, boasting yourselves in your civilization and culture, how little you understand!” On this glorious August morning all nature seems to leap for joy; the mountains skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs. Truly we are nature’s laughing-stock.