

STORMING THE MESSINES RIDGE

effects of the explosion, came forward extending trembling hands and, with the usual cry of "Kamerad," plead for mercy.

BRINGING UP THE GUNS

The winning of the front line trenches ended the first phase of the battle. The peak of the ridge had still to be stormed, but in less than three hours after the battle began the whole sector south of Ypres from Observation Ridge to Ploegsteert Wood was won and the position was being rapidly consolidated. Now came the third and final stage of the battle. For two and a half years the British guns had been stationary in front of this battleground. The commanding position of the Germans had, during all this time, enabled them to harass the crews by shells fired by direct observation, but now that the British infantry were in possession of the high ground so long held by the enemy a command was passed along to all batteries; guns were limbered up and in quick order the drivers were urging their horses up the slopes. As they rushed to the top of the ridge the infantry stood by to let them pass and cheered them wildly. Now began the assault of the rear defences which ran across the base of the salient formed by the ridge itself. Here was experienced the only strong resistance to the British attack during the battle, but by night-fall the victory was complete and the whole rear position, on a front of five miles and to a depth of three miles, was in the hands of the victors. Never was a more decisive victory won; all that the British troops set out to do was accomplished. Not only