

fields, and what was bad ground is now worse ground. There is no aeroplane observation this afternoon, and the Canadians, who are holding the captured positions, can no longer be seen by the hostile air squadrons. This morning they flew very low over the infantry in places, dropping bombs and firing their machine-guns at groups of men. The battle is one of those called "a minor operation," but the ground taken by heroic effort is the gateway to Passchendaele.

XXIV

LONDON MEN AND ARTISTS

OCTOBER 31

WE still hold the high ground about Crest Farm and the Meet-scheele Spur, from which Passchendaele is only 400 or 500 yards distant, and the Canadians have consolidated their positions there, and with the help of the guns have beaten off the enemy's counter-attacks. Up there the ground is dry, and the Canadian soldiers are on sandy soil above the hideous swamps of the valleys and beeks. The enemy's batteries are shelling our new lines with intense fire, and are attempting as usual to harass our tracks and artillery. To-day, after the battle, the weather is clear and beautiful again, as it was on the day after the last battle—a tragic irony which makes our men rather bitter with their luck—and in the sunshine and fleecy clouds there are many hostile aeroplanes overhead and many air combats between their fighting-planes and ours. I saw the beginning of one over Ypres this morning before the chase of the enemy machine passed out of sight with a burst of machine-gun fire, and all through the morning our anti-aircraft guns were busy flinging white shrapnel at these birds, who came with prying eyes over our camps, their wings all shining in the sunlight and looking no bigger than butterflies at the height they flew. Yesterday, during the battle, it was almost impossible to fly, owing to the strength of the gale, and impossible to see unless a pilot almost brushed the earth with his wings. One of our airmen did fly as low as that, as I have told, and went ten times on his business up and down the Canadian lines. But elsewhere, above the dreadful swamps of the Paddebeek and the Lekkerbolerbeek, the airmen had an almost hopeless task.