

Bad going ; but our battalions went well, keeping close to their whirlwind barrage of fire and keeping out of the water-pits as best they could, and scrambling up again when they fell over the slimy ground. Manchesters and Lancashire Fusiliers, Cheshires, Gloucesters, and Royal Scots ; Northumberland Fusiliers, Suffolks and Norfolks, Essex and Berkshires—how good it is to give those good old names—went forward yesterday morning in the thick white mist, and took all the ground they had been asked to take whether it was hard or easy. It was hardest to take, and hardest to hold, on the right of Houthulst Forest and on the left of the Ypres—Staden railway. Here the enemy held his line in strength, and protected it with a fierce machine-gun barrage and enfilade fire from many batteries which were quick to get into action.

Houthulst Forest, in spite of all the gas that has soaked it, was full of German troops of the 26th Reserve Division, under stern orders to defend it to the death, with another division in support, and the Marines on their right. They had many concrete emplacements in the cover of the forest, from which they were able to get their machine-guns into play, and along the Staden railway there were blockhouses not yet destroyed by our bombardment, which were strongholds from which they were not easily routed. There was hard fighting by the Royal Scots for some huts along the railway, and after holding them they had to withdraw in the face of a heavy counter-attack, which the enemy at once sent down the line. Elsewhere the Manchesters had a similar experience, coming under heavy cross-fire and then meeting the thrust of German storm troops. They and the Lancashire Fusiliers behaved with their usual fine courage, and were slow to give ground at one or two points, where they were forced to draw back two hundred yards or so. The Cheshires and the Gloucesters were severely tried, but the Gloucesters especially held out yesterday in an advanced position, with the most resolute spirit against fierce attacks and great odds, and still hold their ground. At daybreak to-day, after all the exhaustion of yesterday and a cold wet night and heavy fire over them, they met another attack, shattered it, and took twenty prisoners. That is a feat of courage which only men out here who have gone through such a day and night—and there are many thousands of them—can properly understand and admire. It is the courage of men tried to the