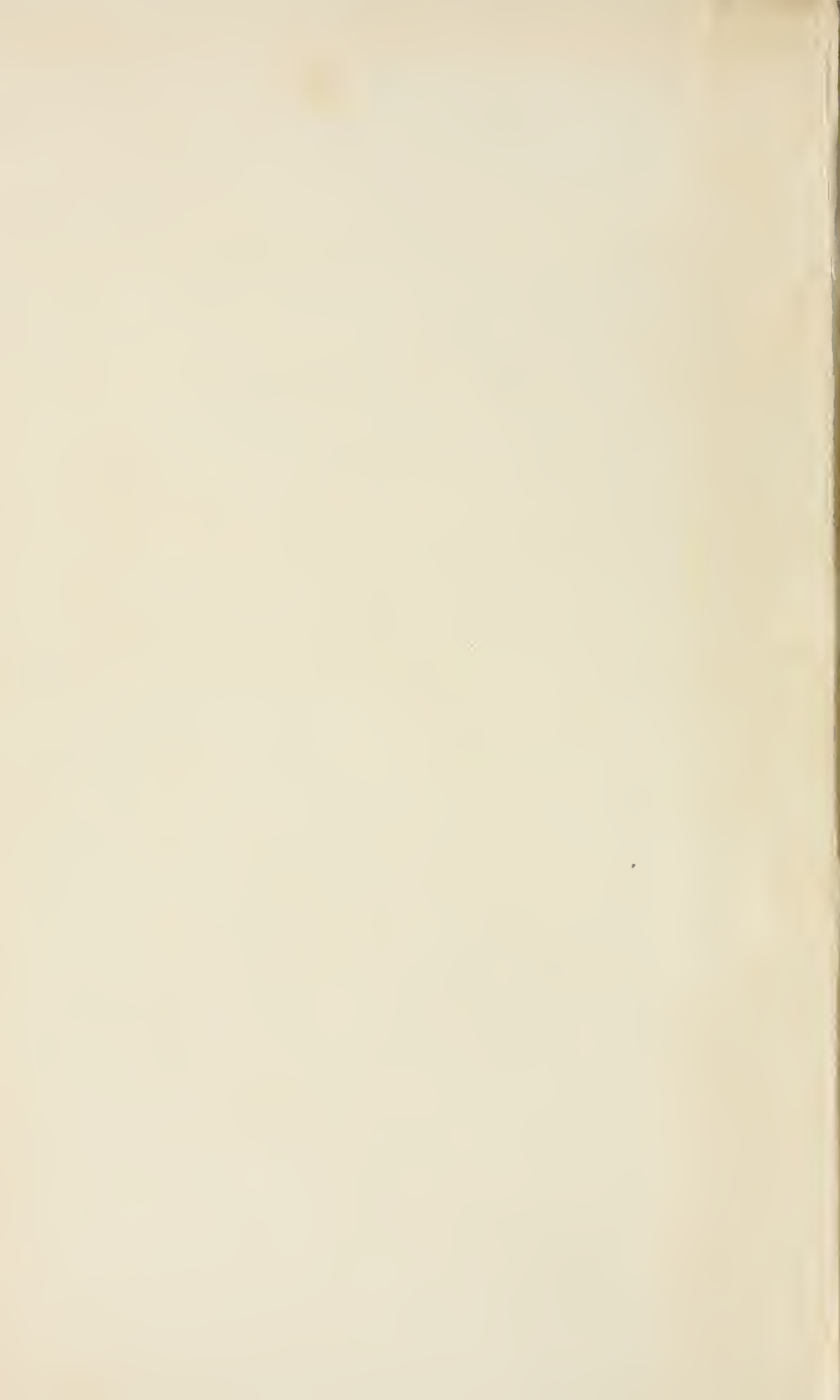


AT THE FRONT
WITH THREE ARMIES



GRANVILLE FORTESCUE





CLIVEDEN LIBRARY

Shelf A.2 *Waldorf Libran*

Number *55*.....

Date *1922*.....

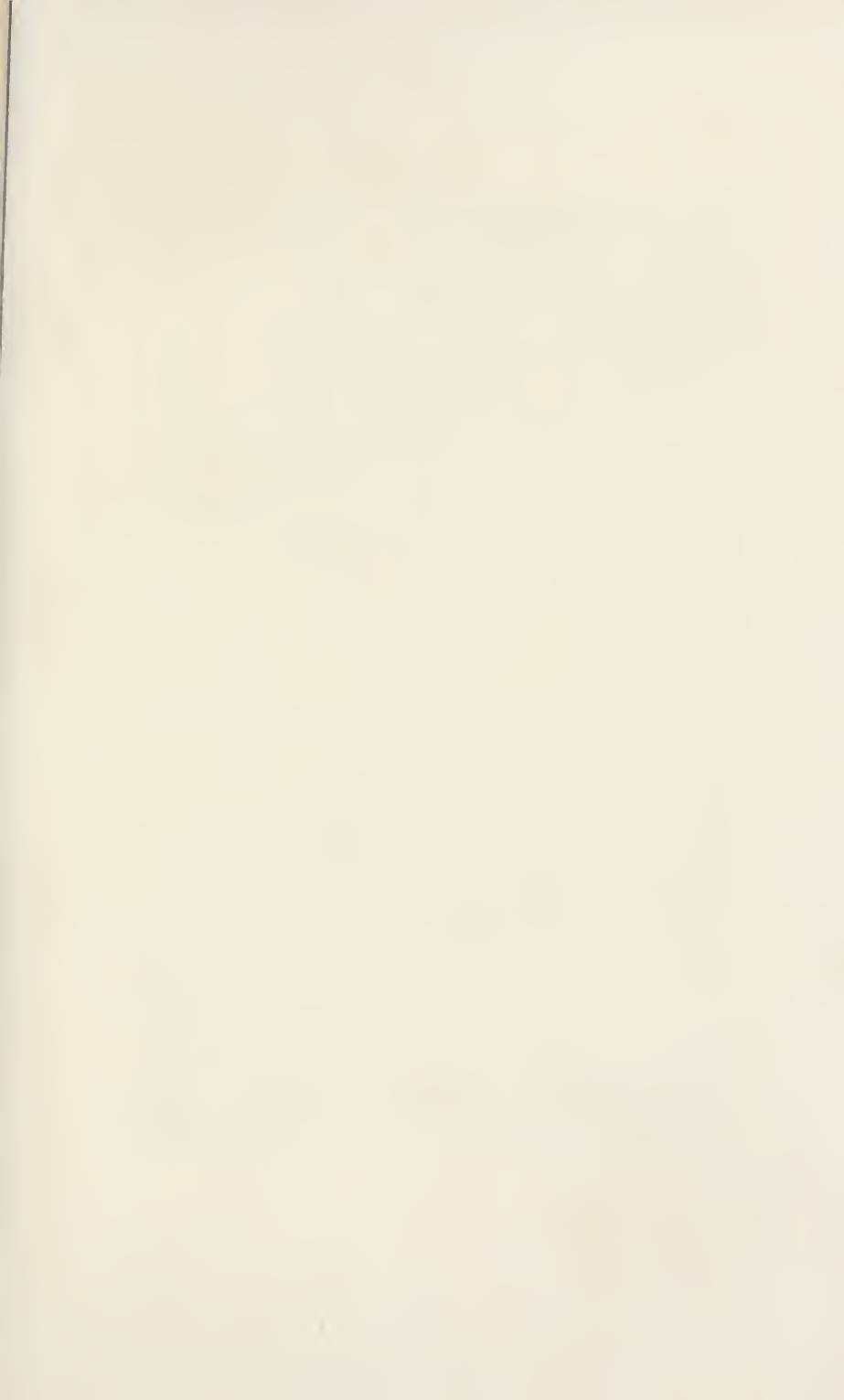
Waldorf ASTOR *Nancy*



AT THE FRONT WITH
THREE ARMIES



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation





German cyclists tore down the English and French flags from the Hotel de Ville, Bruges, but left the Belgian colours flying.

AT THE FRONT
WITH
THREE ARMIES

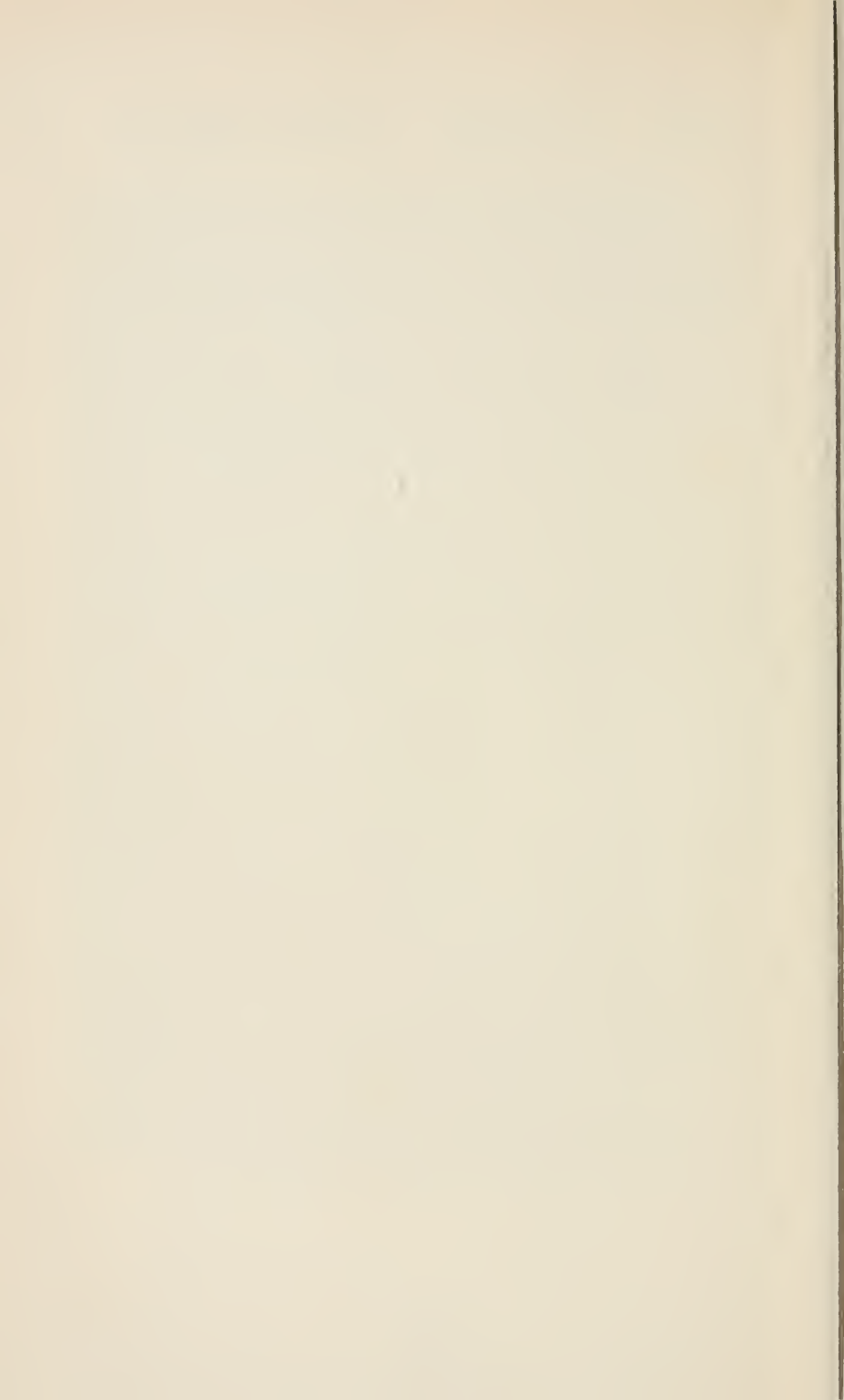
MY ADVENTURES IN
THE GREAT WAR

By

GRANVILLE FORTESCUE

Special Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*

LONDON : ANDREW MELROSE, LTD
3 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C



This book has been rigidly censored by the Press Bureau. This accounts for its publication being nearly three months belated. The object of the Press Bureau is, presumably, to prevent information from being given to the enemy. This book deals only with the first three months of the war, and in no way could some of the excised passages come under that heading.

In its uncensored form it is being published in the United States.

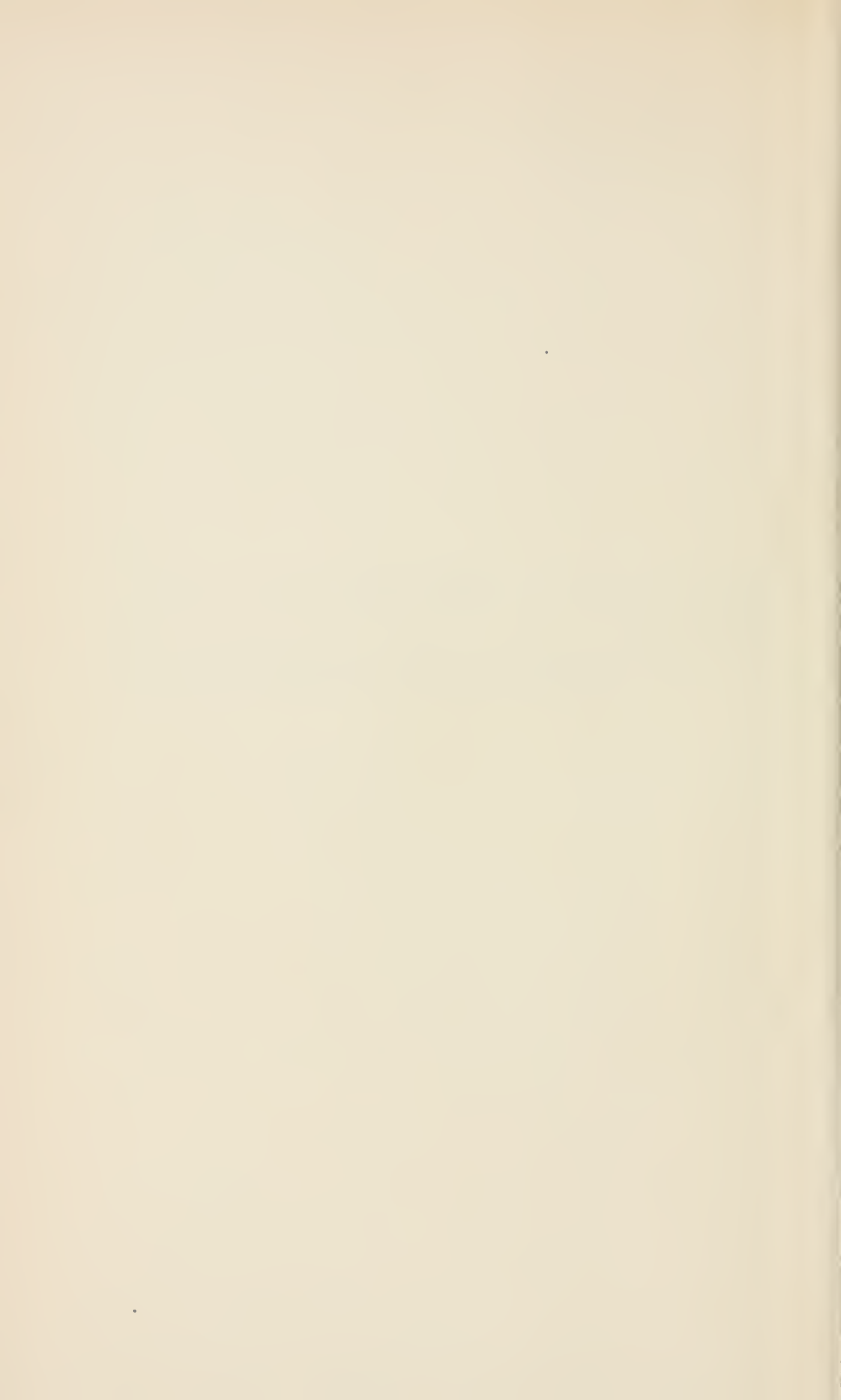
G. R. FORTESCUE.

(Much of the material used in this book appeared originally in the *Daily Telegraph*, London, *The New York American*, *The Metropolitan Magazine* and other periodicals. The author makes his acknowledgments.)

Dedication

To

THE HON. HARRY LAWSON M.P.



PREFACE

WITHOUT boasting I can say that during the first four months of the Great War I covered more mileage than any other correspondent in the different theatres of operation. When diplomatic relations were broken off between the nations which are now striving for supremacy in Europe, it was my fortune to be in Belgium. Thus I witnessed the opening of the greatest war drama the world has seen. One by one I have seen the acts of that drama pass in all their hideousness and heroism. In these pages I give a record of much that I have seen. My adventures have taken me through Belgium, France and Germany. My base was England. The tragedy of the conflict is the annihilation of Belgium. In this book I have tried to be scrupulously just in all I say of Germany. But when the desolation of Flanders comes to my mind no phrase of condemnation seems too strong for the ruthless Teuton. There is no atonement that can blot out the Crime of Germany.

I herein state the facts as I saw them. My

PREFACE

criticisms and impressions are based on those facts. It is possible that these criticisms may be modified when more information on certain phases of the war is available.

I wish to thank Mr. Brand Whitlock, the American Minister in Belgium, for his courtesy and aid in my work while I was in Brussels. To Mr. James Gerrard, Ambassador from the United States in Germany, and Dr. Henry Van Dyke, American Minister in Holland, I am also greatly indebted.

How I can thank Mr. Myron T. Herrick, American Ambassador in France, who twice was instrumental in having me released from imprisonment as a spy, I do not know. It was through the kindness of Mr. H. E. Johnson, American Consul at Ghent, that I saw much in Ostend. I also wish to thank Colonel M. T. Bridges, Fourth Hussars, and Captain Brandon, R.N., for their help while I was in Furnes.

I try in some way to acknowledge my debt to the Hon. Harry Lawson, of the *Daily Telegraph*, by dedicating this book to him.

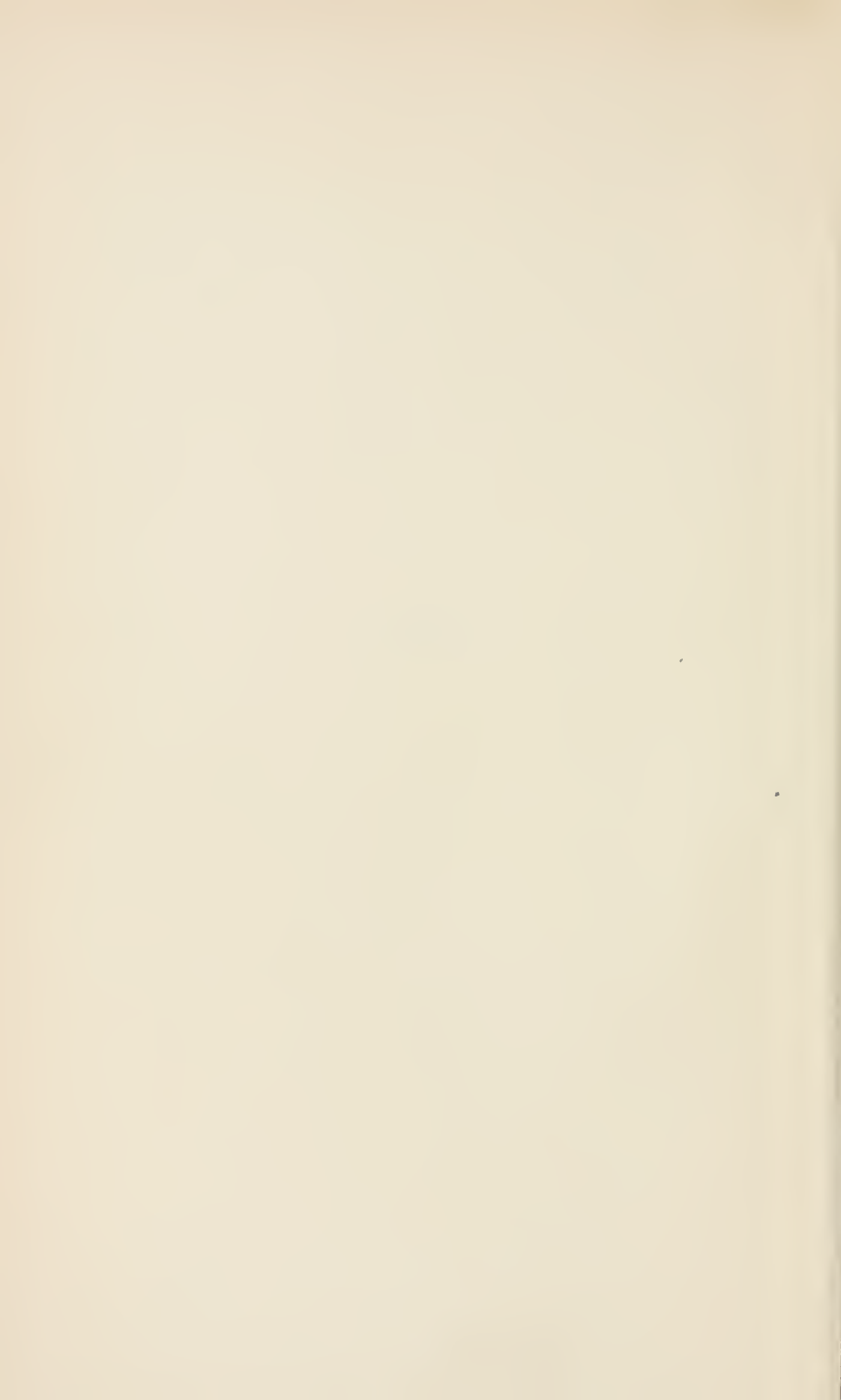
PETROGRAD,
December 1, 1914.

TABLE OF CHAPTERS

| CHAP. | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I LIÉGE | 15 |
| II BRUSSELS IN WAR TIME | 43 |
| III NAMUR | 59 |
| IV THE BATTLE OF DINANT | 71 |
| V THE BATTLE OF MONS | 95 |
| VI GERMANY IN WAR TIME | 109 |
| VII GERMANY IN WAR TIME (<i>continued</i>) | 125 |
| VIII BACK WITH THE FRENCH ARMY | 151 |
| IX THE BOMBARDMENT OF RHEIMS | 175 |
| X ANTWERP | 193 |
| XI "ANNEXING" BELGIUM | 207 |
| XII THROUGH THE FIGHTING LINES | 225 |
| XIII KING ALBERT OF BELGIUM | 239 |
| XIV IMPRESSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS | 251 |
| APPENDIX. THE SACK OF DINANT | 269 |



LIÉGE



AT THE FRONT WITH THREE ARMIES

CHAPTER I

LIÉGE

IT was the 6th of August, 1914. The clock of the Cathedral of St. Paul at Liége had struck half-past six when the first German shell fell into the city. The roar of the explosion was still in the air as I mounted the step of the refugee train, the last train out of Liége. Luckily I had a return ticket from Brussels, so I had not to wait in the terror-stricken crowd which was standing before the ticket window. I had turned the handle of the door of the third-class carriage when I heard a voice say in French :

“ Will you please help me, sir ? ”

I turned to look down on a Sister of Mercy. She wore a Red Cross on her breast. Beside her stood an old lady ; her hair was snow-white, her face was seamed with wrinkles and her eyes had taken on the peculiar glaze characteristic of the very old. She wore a black lace mantle

AT THE FRONT

over her white hair, a black silk dress, and supported herself with two black wood canes. Another woman, about thirty years old, handsome, in yellow furs, stood at her elbow.

With all care I lifted the frail figure and carried her into the coach. I placed her in a corner seat by a window. It was perhaps the first time she had travelled third class in her life. Looking around for some cushion or rug, I saw nothing but my light overcoat. This I rolled into a bundle to serve as a pillow.

“What more can I do?”

“Nothing, monsieur, merci,” answered the Sister of Mercy.

“Thank you, sir”—the woman in the yellow furs spoke in French. She was crying softly. She sat beside the old woman and took one of the thin wrinkled hands in hers and stroked it.

“How old is madam?” I asked.

“Eighty-seven on St. Anne’s Day.”

“Your home is in Liège?”

“No, monsieur, our château was in Fléron. It is burned.”

The coach is filling up rapidly. Opposite to me sits a pale, cadaverous looking youth with consumption written on every feature. He is talking baby-talk to a Griffon lap-dog he holds on his knee. I hear soft squeals, but they are not the cries of the dog he is petting. Catching my

WITH THREE ARMIES

questioning eye, he lifts the lapels of his overcoat pockets to show me, peeping out, the heads of four puppies. Two in either pocket, they whimper softly, their eyes are not opened. When the owner shows them to me, the mother dog gently nuzzles them.

“They are but five days old, monsieur, the babies. I could not leave them in Liège. The Germans would eat them.”

Across the narrow aisle is a Walloon peasant woman. She has the hard-bitten, cross-grained aspect of those who work fourteen hours each day in the fields, every day in the year save Sundays. She keeps talking to herself in the rough guttural Walloon patois. I ask my neighbour what she is saying.

“Eight sons. Five with line regiments, two with the cannon and one who rides a horse. They are all fighting the Germans.”

“Where is she going?”

“To Brussels.”

“She has friends there who will look after her?”

“No. She has no friends. But there is the King. She will tell him she has given eight sons for the country. He will take care of her.”

The carriage is crowded now. Facing me on the front seat sit two sisters, their arms around each other's waists. One is about twenty-two

AT THE FRONT

and the other not more than nineteen. They might be shop-girls. Soon the younger one pillows her head on the older's shoulder and falls asleep. The older sister holds herself stiff that she may not disturb the younger one's slumber. From time to time she strokes her hair.

On the seat behind me a priest sits reading his breviary. He is short and thin, with two days' grey stubble of beard on his face. In the poor light he is straining his eyes, through a pair of iron-rimmed glasses. Two buxom, voluble, middle-class women crowd the reading priest into the corner. They are telling their experiences of the past night, interrupted by a small boy who wants to know when he is going to get his dinner.

The last to enter the car is a tall man about forty, dressed in black. He leads four small boys, each holding the other's hands. They are dressed alike—brown caps, brown overcoats with velvet collars, brown socks and shoes. The eldest is six, perhaps; the youngest three. Mentally I christen them the Brownies. The father perches them about on various pieces of luggage, and makes each one happy with a stick of chocolate. I remembered seeing them running down the Rue de Guillemins linked together as if they were playing at horses with their father. The smallest had been snapped off into the gutter

WITH THREE ARMIES

in the path of a fast-running motor. But it had been stopped in time and the driver took in the father and the boys and ran them to the station.

While our carriage has been filling up, the one in front of us has been receiving a detachment of wounded. It is slow work lifting the stretchers through the narrow door, and when they are in, it is a problem how to dispose of them. Some are laid out on the floor, while others are arranged across the seats. Those of the wounded who can walk crowd into various corners of the coach and make themselves as comfortable as possible. They are remarkably cheerful. One with a bandaged head entertains the others with a stirring account of his part in the action of the night before. If his feats are but half true, the sturdy defence which the Belgian army is putting up against the Germans is explained. This habit of vaunting oneself, which is typical of the French as well as the Belgians, is not boasting. It is nothing more than the expression of their enthusiasm. And more remarkable is the fact that most of their exploits which are so graphically described are true. They fill the Saxon writer with envy.

The wounded show the marks of the combat. The heavy coats they wear are coated with mud, their caps are all awry, and they already have that haggard look that comes from constant watchfulness; but their spirit is undaunted.

AT THE FRONT

“What was your position last night?” I asked a soldier of the Fourteenth Line regiment, his arm in a sling.

“Splendid! I was the nearest man of my regiment to the Germans.”

And now we get another picture. The Civil Guard, with their preposterous Derby hats trimmed with red cord and their general caricature of the military appearance, march with bayonets fixed through a side door of the station. They form in double rank, opening a lane to the car behind the one where I have a place. It is a cattle-car, a solid black box-car, with only small iron gratings near the under section of the roof. One would feel sorry for the cattle that might be condemned to travel in it. The side door is rolled back. The chief of the Civil Guard gives a signal and a score of German prisoners appear.

They are mere boys. Not one of them is more than twenty-four years old, and for the most part I judge that they have not reached the twenties. Although they have stripped their dull grey uniforms of all insignia, it is apparent that they are cavalry—the dreaded Uhlans—from the clank and jingle of their spurs.

The spike and eagle of each helmet is hidden under a grey drill covering. The buttons of the uniforms have been purposely tarnished, and it is evident that an attempt has been made to

WITH THREE ARMIES

assume a service uniform as near khaki as possible. Conspicuous among them is an officer wearing the long grey German military cloak.

They are on the best of terms with their captors. Some of them are munching bread which I recognize as the Belgian ration, and when they step into the cattle-car they shake hands warmly with the Belgian soldiers who have conducted them so far. A railway attendant comes forward with a jug of water and they all swallow long draughts from it. All of them show the effects of the strain of scouting work. Their cheeks are hollow and covered with the scraggy beards of the young.

The German cavalry have been remarkably audacious. Like a pest of flies they have swarmed over the country to the north, east and south of the Meuse. Their seizure of the bridge at Visé was a daring bit of cavalry work. And I saw detachments of them working round the lines at Liége, and one squadron came into the town itself. Some hundreds of them have been captured, but if they have obtained the information that evidently the German General Staff needed, the sacrifice is warranted.

When I decided that there was to be some fighting at Liége, I was in Brussels making frantic but unsuccessful efforts to rouse the American Minister, Mr. Brand Whitlock, late Mayor of

AT THE FRONT

Toledo, to a condition of mind in which he would threaten to bring the United States into this war, unless I were given a *laissez-passer* to follow the Belgian army. In these modern days a war correspondent is about as welcome as a Catholic priest in Ulster. He is looked on as a sort of international spy. The Belgians imagine that he will give important information to the Germans if he sends out a story on the street scenes in Brussels. The English feel that he will disclose the position of the Fleet if he writes about the flight of tourists from Ostend. I suppose if I were captured by the Germans I should be condemned to be hung as a spy four times—one for each country the Prussians are fighting.

As the pass was not forthcoming, I thought of doing a little travelling on my own account. I undertook to reconnoitre in a motor car. This is an automobile war. Every one expected it to be an aeroplane war, but so far I have only seen three air craft, two of which I am sure belonged to the Belgian army, although they were reported as German.

It was a beautiful touring-car, limousine body painted a deep claret colour. When I stepped into it I thought that, after all, war-corresponding had its compensations. Very carefully I explained that we were to get to Liège, evading all pickets if possible.



Bridge of Arches at Liège, blown up by Belgians to prevent the Germans crossing Meuse River.



WITH THREE ARMIES

We tried the straight road first, hoping we should be able to make a detour around Louvain. But this was not possible. The trouble with automobiling in the field is that you must stick to the roads. And every few hundred yards you run into the Civil Guards, who have the disagreeable custom of holding a fixed bayonet on your breast bone while they put you through your catechism.

After being turned back from Louvain I tried to get through by Namur. Here I did fairly well, bluffing past a number of outposts until I met Commandant Joostens of the Sixth Artillery. Now Commandant Joostens is the man who won the international cup at Olympia last year in the military jumping class. He spends most of his winters hunting in Leicestershire. He was very kind, really a most charming man, but he has strict views on the matter of passes in war-time. I offered to take any messages to friends he might have in Liège, if he would let me through. I even offered to notify all his hunting friends with the British army of his exact whereabouts, if he could see his way to letting me pass, but, stern soldier that he is, all was in vain.

I had little more success on the north. I swear we must have violated Dutch neutrality in our efforts to evade the vigilant patrols guard-

AT THE FRONT

ing the country between Brussels and Liège. But everywhere the same thing happened; we were turned back again.

Discouraged completely, I returned to the *Palace Hotel* in the Place Rogier, Brussels. It is opposite the Gare du Nord. Looking up at the clock on the railway station, I had an inspiration. I would see if I could get to Liège by train. On the face of it the idea was foolish. But in war you never know your luck. Putting on a business-like air, I stepped up to the ticket window and asked briskly :

“What time does the next train leave for Liège?”

“Thirteen-sixteen. Single or return?”

“Return.”

Just as easy as that. It was ten minutes to one, which is thirteen o'clock in Belgium, so I had a sandwich at the station restaurant, then stepped on board the train.

“All aboard for Liège!” the guard shouted in Flemish and French, and we were off. After all the fuss they had made along the roads, stopping me at every turn, here I was travelling to the enemies' objective as easily as if I were on a Long Island local.

That journey down was a page from Guy de Maupassant. It might have been 1870. I had the corner seat facing the engine. Opposite me

WITH THREE ARMIES

there was a man with hay fever. Harvest time must be the season for hay fever. Anyway, he sneezed and blew, and sneezed again, until I thought of an awful advertisement I had once seen. It was a picture of a man sneezing and then the effect of that sneeze was painted on the atmosphere. Microbes of every genus were graphically depicted. I began to wonder if hay fever was catching. It was with relief I heard him say he was getting out at Tirlemont.

Next to Hay Fever sat a Conscript. He was not more than nineteen, and it was obvious that the red in his eyes came from much crying. He carried a few things done up in a brown paper parcel, and never said a word from start to finish of the journey.

Beside the conscript sat a jaunty man in uniform—black with silver buttons and marine blue collar and facings. It was cut in the French soldier style, and his cap was the shape used in the same army. I took him for some snappy cavalry officer. He turned out to be a veterinary surgeon.

Beside the veterinary sat a splendid looking young French priest. He was not more than twenty-two, and his light hair curled from under his biretta in a way to make a *matinée* idol jealous. And the way he talked about the war. He was full of enthusiasm. Let the Belgians only hold

AT THE FRONT

these Germans back until the French soldiers could come up, and then they would be sent scooting back to Berlin. If it were not for his vows—I am sure that a perfectly good soldier was spoiled when that boy went into the Church.

Opposite the priest sat a woman with a basket. She wore a black shawl and talked about the war of 1870. She had been a young girl then living in Luxemburg. But her recollections of the Prussians were rather vague. They were all giants, she avowed. They ate like wolves. She remembered her father had said so.

“Why are you going to Liége?” I put the direct question.

“I have a little hotel in Liége—myself and my husband. I am going back to be with him.”

“But don’t you know that the Germans may shell Liége at any moment? You must know the danger.”

“Yes, monsieur, I have been told often, but my husband is there.”

At the side of this woman sits another priest—a dark unshaven man immersed in his breviary. Next is another conscript, a fair, typical Flemish type of boy. He, too, is nursing a brown paper parcel. Then we come back to where I sit.

The talk is all on the war. I find myself of special interest, for the Belgian of the people classifies all English-speaking strangers as British.

WITH THREE ARMIES

I had to give all the details of the appearance of the British troops I could remember. But when all was said they came back to the same question—"When are you coming to help us?"

The roads that parallel the railroad are jammed with troops all moving in the direction we are. When we stop we are surrounded by them and "hurrahs" are exchanged. Nothing could exceed the enthusiasm of the soldiers. Scene after scene passes, recalling those familiar pictures of the Franco-German war. In general appearance these troops look very French. The cut of their uniform is the same as the neighbouring nation, but the colours are different. Viewed at a little distance, marching through the wheat fields, they might readily be mistaken for their allies.

I have never seen a more wonderfully cultivated country than that through which we are passing. Field after field of yellow wheat meets the eye to the horizon. Already the harvest has begun. The sheaves are being gathered.

We arrive at last at the rim of a great bowl, out of which appear the steeples and roofs of Liège. Coming into the town, I can see plainly detachments of troops clearing the ground in front of the forts. Splendid bits of wooded country are being laid bare. Suddenly there is an explosion and a house that lies in the line of fire topples over in a cloud.

AT THE FRONT

Stepping out into the station you might be in any one of a hundred of these continental towns. There is the same high-roofed building with primitive restaurant and newspaper stand. Pushing through you find the inevitable *fiacre* awaiting you; I hail the *cocher* and we start for the *Grand Hotel*—there is always a *Grand Hotel*. Hundreds of automobiles flying either the Red Cross or the Belgian flag are running about all over the place. It is the fashion to keep the muffler open, and horn sounding all the time, so the familiar noise of the auto is now as characteristic of war as the rattle of musketry or the booming of cannon. How the motors avoid the crowds swarming up and down the streets is a mystery. The main square in front of the city hall or, as they call it here, the Hotel de Ville, is crowded as if it were election night in New York, and everybody is talking at once. If you have ever been in Paris you have often watched two Frenchmen discussing politics; well, to get an idea of what the Place du Marché, Liége, looked like the evening before the assault, imagine five or six thousand Frenchmen talking politics all at once.

The Germans have been pressing in on the town all day, the last reports place them less than six miles away; it is certain that they will attack this night.

WITH THREE ARMIES

After moving about among the crowd and hearing as much as I could, I came back to my hotel and ordered the best dinner the card offered. I have a theory that it is always best to stoke up the human engine as much as possible beforehand, when the indications are that you will not get much fuel for some time.

While eating dinner I met Lieutenant-Colonel Flibus, Director-General of the personnel of the Ministry of War, and commander of the thirty-second regiment of the line; but compared to that officer, when I asked him a few simple questions about the troops, the Sphinx was loquacious.

About half-past eleven I looked out of the window to see if there was any change in the aspect of the town. Decidedly the excitement was on the increase. The motors were going as if each driver was a speed maniac immune from arrest. The crowds in the square talked louder and gesticulated more vigorously than ever. I strained my ears to listen, and over the wild hubbub of the streets I caught the distant "boom" of artillery. I grabbed my hat and my water-bottle and was downstairs in a minute.

From a guide-book map I had a general idea of how the city lay. Also I had settled in my mind the point from which the German attack would come. So, making myself as inconspicu-

AT THE FRONT

ous as possible, I started for the Exposition bridge to the south of the city. After I crossed that I left the roads—they were too dangerous for a man travelling without a *laissez-passer* from headquarters; in the temper of the populace any stranger might be set upon as a spy. Liège is built on coal mines; I remembered reading that in my guide-book, and it is true. When I left the main road leading to the south I soon lost myself among the coal dumps. It was a weird place in the moonlight, that section of the town; beside the smelting plants there were the city electric lighting works and a small-arms factory. A dozen chimneys towered to the moon; I felt like a regular spy as I worked my way to a high point of ground from which I knew I could get a good view of the country.

As I clambered up, now and then I caught sight of field batteries galloping along the road. I knew what this meant. Already I could distinguish the beginning of the fire of the infantry. It was plain that the German objective was the bridge over which I had just passed.

I got tied up among a lot of railway tracks as I went stumbling on across country. I lost myself three times before I finally reached the top of the clinker dump for which I was heading.

From the banks of the Meuse, which flows round the southern limits of the city, the land

WITH THREE ARMIES

rises at a steep angle ; the rim of hills must be all of three hundred feet higher than the river. Once you climb this ridge you get a splendid view of the whole country to the east and south. On the night of the fifth of August, 1914, that view was startling.

In the east was the Fort of Fléron. Its curious outline, with the turrets above the walls, gave it the appearance of some monster Dreadnought set down here in the foothills. This likeness to a battleship was heightened by the searchlights. They swept the ground before the fort, as if it were the sea full of approaching enemies ; and so it was. The shadows were lit by flashes that told the story of the desperate resistance the Belgians were making. Above the fort great greenish-white shells broke like a rain of fireworks. The guns of the turrets replied, spitting out blazing flashes that bit into the darkness. Above, the full moon shone down calmly on all.

As I was watching the distant scene at Fléron, a crash of musketry sounded almost at my feet. The Germans had been discovered coming through the woods west of the Ourthe. Already the Uhlans were tangled up in the wire and the abattis defences. With my glass I could make out ghostly horsemen among the trees. The rifle fire increased. Suddenly above the crackle of musketry I heard the long wail of a shell speed-

AT THE FRONT

ing to its mark. The shell seemed to pass directly overhead. I turned and saw that the forts west of the city had entered into action. The woods are now alight with flashes such as gigantic fireflies might make. The fort at Embourg pours down what must be a telling fire on the flank of the advancing Germans. It is almost impossible to distinguish these in the moonlight. Time and again I get glimpses of what I take for battalions advancing, but they pass like shadows. Only the flaring rifles tell the position of the troops.

For hours the fight rages in the forest. The Belgians are firing at will, while the Germans continue with volley after volley that tell of their splendid discipline. In the early hours of the morning, when the sun throws its advance guard of light above the foothills, I begin to distinguish the lines of combat. And as I watch I see a battalion of Germans advancing in close order. This is against all modern theory of tactics. As they come on, they fall like standing corn before a hurricane. No discipline can stand before this blast of death. The line begins to waver; now it breaks. The Belgians redouble their firing. They swarm out of cover and now begins the repulse. So long have I been taught to think of the German infantry as invincible that I cannot believe my eyes. If, in our work at the Staff

WITH THREE ARMIES

College at Leavenworth, I had advanced the statement that Belgium might smash the columns of the Kaiser, my brother officers would have ridiculed the idea. Whenever we had studied the problems of European wars this little nation was unconsidered. But now they were justifying what Caesar had said—"Of all the peoples I have fought, the Belgians are the most sturdy."

Battalion after battalion is hurried up from the German side. But nothing can stop the Belgians now. On they drive until the firing sounds more and more distant. Boncelles Fort is literally ablaze as it rains projectiles on the retiring Prussians. As the sun shines out of a bank of clouds on a new day, that bugaboo which has frightened the world for years is laid. The vaunted German military strength has given way before Belgian fire. The claws of the Imperial eagle do not tear.

For a time during the early morning I thought that the tide of battle was against the valiant defenders of Fort Fléron. About half-past five the turret guns were silent. From the rifle fire I judged that this brought a concentrated attack at this point; and it proved to be the case as I afterwards found out. But the audacious Germans who had come to the very slope of the fort were driven back again in helter-

AT THE FRONT

skelter disorder by the Belgian infantry. The mechanism of the turrets had been put out of order by the splendid artillery fire of the Germans, but the infantry came gallantly to the rescue and held back the invaders until the guns could be repaired.

During the early morning, the firing slackened along the line. Both armies must be exhausted after the night's work. In this interval of calm I start back in order to get off my news.

Coming into the town I find all the roads blocked by refugees. Most of them have such of their household goods as they could collect bundled in sheets and pillow cases. One woman has a bird cage, another carries a cat in a basket. All push on with eyes filled with terror. No intelligent statement can be got out of any, they are so frightened.

“ Yes, the Germans have taken Fléron.’

“ The Fort ? ”

“ Yes, surely, for all night long the *obus* have dropped on the village and on the fort. Oh, our poor little Belgians.”

The road is blocked with a stream of cattle that come bellowing into the town. They pour over the bridges and into the main square. The problem is where to corral them. There is a tennis-court just below the English Consulate and one herd is turned in there.

WITH THREE ARMIES

I dropped into the English Consulate in order to tell Mr. Dolphin, the cordial British representative, that a Belgian battery has taken up a position to his right and rear, about fifty yards from the Consulate door.

The Consul is not in, but one of his clerks gives me a glass of champagne and a sardine sandwich, so I find the world a little more cheerful. While I am eating, the Consul arrives. He has been out on his motor cycle looking over things for himself. He does not believe that Fléron has fallen, and I afterwards find this to be true. Not one of the forts is in the hands of the enemy after the desperate assaults of the night. The Belgian resistance has been successful at all points.

It was not until after I got down into the town proper again that my troubles began. The first mishap was my meeting a loose lancer carrying his revolver ready for instant use. It was evidently his theory that anyone who could not speak Flemish or Walloon (I do not know which language he spoke, but I understood him perfectly) was a German spy. When I felt the point of that revolver pressing against my fifth rib, I knew exactly the answer required. The alacrity with which I produced my passport and a personal letter from the American Minister in Brussels and testified to my willingness

AT THE FRONT

to allow any one present to search me, somewhat mollified the vigilant cavalryman. Unfortunately, he could not read English or French, so he kept his gun handy until an obliging officer of the Ninth Line Regiment read over my papers and told the Lancer not to shoot me this time. He also advised me to try and not look so much like a German ; it might lead to an unfortunate mistake. That was reassuring, as the comedian would say, I don't think. This is the only face I have got, and it will have to get me through this war, even if the Belgians can't recognize its American origin.

Going down to the *Grand Hotel* I met a Civil Guard. He was never entitled to the designation civil in his life. I never met a more uncivil person. He hustled me down to the police-station while a surly crowd followed shouting "Lynch the German!" in their own language. I rather enjoyed getting into that station house. You would not think it possible that one should welcome the sight of a jail, but on this occasion I did. Once inside I had to wait among the homeless refugees, who had gathered there for protection. I was in need of a little of the same thing.

If any one ever asks you, tell him, with my compliments, that the Chief of Police of Liége is all right. He can tell an American as far as

WITH THREE ARMIES

he can see one. He saw this one four times that morning and recognized me every time. The last time I was brought in he called me "vieil ami," and asked me to stop to lunch.

I was wondering how I could acquire a flat Flemish face after my last release, when I was surrounded by another mob.

"No need to send any one with me. I know my way to the jail," were the words on my lips, when a Flemish fist nearly broke my shoulder, and some one shouted: "Vive l'Angleterre!" The crowd answered with a will that would have made stage hands jealous. I was a hero. The first of the army of the English allies.

Then I went to the bazaar and found an American flag on a toy cruiser, the only flag of our country in the shop, and I nailed my colours to my Dunlop.

When I was again foot loose I went to the Palace. A motor car had come in with two German officers to demand the surrender of the city and the forts. Of course I knew that the demand, as far as the forts were concerned would be refused. While the surrender talk was going on no one was allowed within a hundred yards of the Palace. I suppose they were afraid we would overhear the conversation. I came close enough to get a photograph, but as there was no dictaphone installed, no news leaked out.

AT THE FRONT

Suddenly, while every one was waiting without the Palace, an explosion sounded that rattled half the city. Every heart stopped beating. Then the news ran through the crowd that the bridge of arches had been blown up to prevent the Germans crossing. As there were about seven other bridges, blowing up one seemed only an inconvenience, not a hindrance.

While I was taking a picture of the wrecked bridge, some one rushed up to say that the bombardment was about to commence. Another said this was not so. It was not ordered until six o'clock; it was now only a quarter past five, but the news soon spread through the city. The savage invaders were going to shell Liège. The women and children would be slaughtered.

In a wave the people moved to the station. It was a panic. Then at the station the line at the ticket window grew. No one with authority was near to override the crass stupidity of the minor official who would collect tolls while the fuses of the German cannon burned. Never shall I forget the anguished faces as the iron wheels ground on along the rails. Hope died in the eyes that watched.

The lamp in the carriage burns dimly. We have been jolting along for hours. I have just finished scratching these notes when a droning



After days of heroic defence the forts at Liège had to surrender. All that remained when the Germans conquered.

WITH THREE ARMIES

voice calls my attention. I recognize long forgotten Latin phrases: "Absolvo te," and then a mumbling. I search my mind for the association. Like a flash it comes,—the formula of the Last Sacrament. I catch another sentence: "Ora pro nobis." Death, who marches but a pace in the rear of War has entered the coach. I turn to see the unshaven priest administering Extreme Unction to the old lady. She is anointed. The handsome woman in the furs weeps. As the voice of the priest falls, the light in the lamp flickers and goes out. We are in darkness. No one stirs. The only sound is that of soft sobbing.

Now we are approaching Brussels. With many stops and starts the train works into the city. At last we arrive in the station. It is packed with people waiting for us. They rush first to see the prisoners. There is a cheer as the grey-uniformed Germans are led between the fixed bayonets of the Civil Guard. But the cheer dies when the wounded are carried out. The Civil Guard holds open a passage, through which the line of stretcher-bearers passes. There is a solemn hush as the slow-moving column winds through the waiting throng, past the doors of the station to where the Red Cross ambulances are standing in the street. The square in front of the station is jammed with humanity. The

AT THE FRONT WITH THREE ARMIES

crowd have been shouting and singing, awaiting the coming of the train.

A hush comes over them also as the line of wounded appears. Here is the visible effect of war. But the splendid spirit of the people soon asserts itself. Suddenly a voice cries "Vivent les blessés!" And the crowd answers with a roar: "Vive la Belgique!" "Vivent les défenseurs de Liège!"

BRUSSELS IN WAR TIME

CHAPTER II

BRUSSELS IN WAR TIME

BRUSSELS during the first weeks of the Great War was confident and courageous. If there was ever a note of fear as to the consequences of the impending conflict, it was drowned in the great outcry of indignation with which the Belgians received the news of the invasion of their beloved country. Brussels is the heart of the nation, and during these momentous days it throbbed violently. Up to the very last the people hoped to avoid war and all its calamities, but no sooner had the news reached the city that the first of the German soldiers had crossed the frontier, than, with one accord, the whole Belgian nation rose in defence of their liberty. The first expression of patriotic fervour took the form of the display of the national colours. Not to hang out the brave black, yellow and red of the national flag would almost open one to the suspicion of being lukewarm in the cause of Belgian defence. Looking down the Boulevard du Nord I saw the upper windows of every shop shadowed

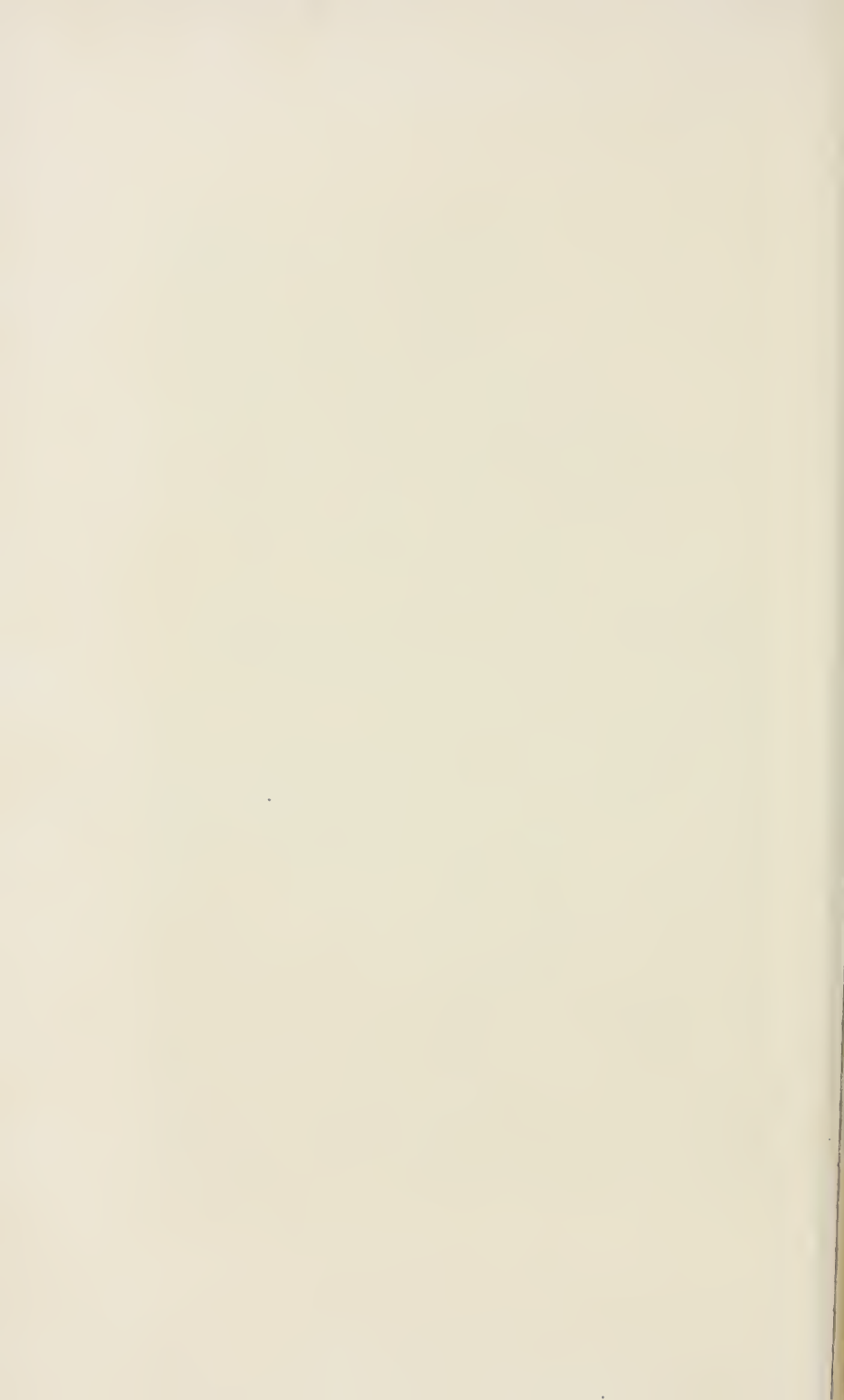
AT THE FRONT

by the national emblem, and beneath these flags a restless throng marched all day. It seems that there is something so disturbing about the thoughts of war that it produces a restless mental condition which only finds relief in movement. All of Brussels spent most of the twenty-four hours of the day in the streets during this exciting period. With extraordinary eagerness they bought up each fresh supply of newspapers as it came from the Press. The thirst for information was unquenchable, and when the news of the first successes at Liège were published the crowds could not contain their enthusiasm. I have seen the Place Charles Rogier at night packed with a dense mob awaiting the arrival of trains from the beleaguered city, and as each batch of fugitives appeared in the portals of the Gare du Nord this throng would send up cheer after cheer. They had invested Liège with a curious personality; for the people of Brussels the city "ardent," as it had been named, typified the whole Belgian nation. It would sacrifice itself even to the point of annihilation that it might hold in check the hordes of the invader.

This enthusiasm of the populace showed itself in the untiring pursuit of spies. Germany, without doubt, had a very efficient spy system throughout the length and breadth of the Flemish nation. The centre of this system was located in Brussels.



The comic uniform of Guard Civique, Brussels.



WITH THREE ARMIES

During the first weeks of war, when the Germans were beginning their now famous march through the neutral country, their spies were unceasingly active. While the Belgian authorities succeeded in running down a great many of the foreign agents, undoubtedly others kept up constant communication with the Intelligence Department of the advancing army; but the German great General Staff must have been thoroughly informed of conditions in Belgium long before the actual outbreak of hostilities. Relying confidently upon her guaranteed neutrality, Belgium had never made any effort to conceal the actual state of conditions within her borders. German investigators could have informed themselves of general and special conditions without let or hindrance; and as Belgium has been a great holiday ground for the German people, it may be assumed that they let no opportunity pass of picking up knowledge which might subsequently prove serviceable in war time. In their eagerness to eliminate the pest of spies, I am afraid the Belgians were led into a number of blunders. I, myself, had several disagreeable experiences, as it seems quite impossible for the Belgian people to distinguish between foreigners. The French they recognize immediately, but Englishmen and Americans were constantly being mistaken for the hated enemy.

AT THE FRONT

Despite the efforts of the police, there were a number of attacks on German property in Brussels. In Europe the German beer shop has become an international institution; beer-houses owned wholly or partially by German citizens are found in all the cities of the Continent. In times of peace this type of café has always been popular. However, when the clarion note of war sounded, the people seemed to forget the many pleasant hours they had spent around the little tables of these beer shops. The very sight of the word "brasserie" seemed to be a challenge. At night the crowds that marched up and down the boulevards of Brussels would stop time and again before a beer-shop bearing a German name and vent their fury on the property of the citizen of the enemy. Popular outbreaks of this kind, I know, are difficult to control, but to me it has always seemed that such attacks are the acme of cowardice. In the first place, it is unintelligent to destroy property of this kind as the shops in themselves can have no military value; then, it can be taken for granted that the average German citizen who has established himself in a foreign city has in a measure cut the ties that bind him to the Fatherland. Under any circumstances he, individually, is in no way responsible for the course taken by the powers that be in his country. In

WITH THREE ARMIES

fact, I know personally that a great many Germans established in foreign cities deplore the position of Germany in this war.

I have seen some half a dozen cafés practically gutted by the mobs that roam the streets. Not only were the brasseries attacked, but no shop known to be the property of a German was safe. A shot was fired through the window of one of the largest stores of the city and this shot in no way endangered the proprietor, but narrowly missed a Belgian employee. The municipal government quickly realized that these outbreaks should not continue, and all German property was at once put under police protection.

Of constant interest to the people of Brussels were the aeroplanes that at times hovered above the roofs of the houses. One morning the whole city was thrown into something of a panic, when at a height far beyond rifle shot, a Taube aeroplane was discovered. All the people watched with untiring gaze this messenger of the enemy as long as it was in sight. The German aviator turned off to the South and left Brussels without dropping a bomb.

There is one feature of these troubled weeks which stands high in the credit of Belgium ; that is the manner in which the expelled Germans were sent out of the country. As I have indicated,

AT THE FRONT

the hatred and indignation of the populace in the capital sought expression by attacking everything German. Knowing this, the authorities had to contrive to arrange the departure of the 4,000 odd citizens with the utmost care. The American Legation had taken over the affairs of the German Legation, so the responsibility of the welfare of these aliens was placed upon Mr. Brand Whitlock, the American Minister, in co-operation with the Belgian authorities. The 4,000 German men, women and children were got out of the country without suffering any hostile act. In fact, the Belgian troops guarding them acted more in the way of protectors and friends than enemies. With their own money they bought milk for the children, and bread and wine for the men and women.

All during this first week of war the people of Brussels were supremely confident. I could not help thinking at the time that they were over-confident. I had had occasion to study the military organization of Germany and I knew that this small determined people, no matter how brave individually they might be, could not hold back the host that Germany could pour into their land. At that time it was not believed that the Kaiser would make his smashing blow against France through this neutral nation. After the Belgians had so courageously refused the



Germany commandeered motors.

WITH THREE ARMIES

German Emperor's request to let his forces pass through their land without molestation, there were those who believed that the march of the invaders would be directed to the south. How wrong this belief was has long been proved. Again, the Belgian people were certain that France and England would put their whole forces into the firing line of the smaller nation. The unmilitary man of the people could not comprehend the physical impossibility of doing this, and of course he had no conception of the enormous blunder this would have been from the military point of view.

As I have said in another chapter, the whole nation was awaiting eagerly the arrival of the first detachments of English and French soldiers. They were certain that these soldiers would come. As day after day passed with no sign of the Allies, I heard on all sides rather acrid remarks. Even after Liège had fallen, the citizens of Brussels firmly believed their city would escape attack. It was argued that if necessary the whole Belgian army could be concentrated in front of the capital and so turn the on-marching Germans from their course. Again, the Belgians seemed to think that Germany had no distinctive quarrel with them, and for this reason they would do as little injury to their land as possible, and reserve the fury of their fighting for France. There were several American ladies in Brussels at the time

AT THE FRONT

of which I write. These ladies had been told by one of King Albert's equerries that there was no need for them to leave Brussels. They were, he said, perfectly safe in that city. It was with the greatest difficulty that, at the suggestion of Mr. Whitlock, the Minister, I persuaded these ladies to leave the Belgian capital. While I knew that there was little danger of their suffering any physical violence, yet as there could be no possible reason for their remaining in the zone of operations, the quicker they left the city the better. The censor was undoubtedly responsible for the buoyant attitude which was characteristic of both the Walloon and Flemish citizens of the country at this time. To the last they denied the German victories. I had accurate information that German troops crossed the Belgian frontier at Visé as early as August 2. This information I telephoned direct to the *Daily Telegraph*. By using the telephone I got the news into London before any rival. However, the fact of the invasion was officially denied by the Belgian War Office the next day. On August 4, they reluctantly admitted that their neutrality had been violated. I have not yet been able to fathom the motive of the first denial. This denial was certainly a political mistake. It took off the edge of the indignation that at the moment filled the nations of the earth because of this flagrant

WITH THREE ARMIES

disregard of the sanctity of treaties. How the denial could have been of any military value is not apparent. The delay in giving out the news only lulled the people into a sense of false security which made it easier for the invading Germans. The poor people in many of the frontier villages believed that they were safe, until the Uhlans came clattering down their quiet streets.

One of the bravest sights of the first week of war was the ride of the King to Parliament. At the head of a brilliant staff all mounted on splendid chargers, he rode from the Palace to the Chamber of Deputies. Wearing the field uniform of a General, King Albert was in striking contrast to the officers who followed him. His uniform symbolized war. The people saw their monarch as he would take the field at the head of the army. The grave soldier-like figure aroused intense enthusiasm. Cheer after cheer greeted the little group of horsemen at whose head rode the King.

But warm as the reception of the King was, it seemed to me that the Queen and the royal children who followed in an open carriage, came in for an even greater share of applause. One could not fail to notice the shadow of sorrow that already darkened the Queen's brow, but the children looked on it all as an engrossing show. The charming princess Marie José, with her rebellious

hair, turned her wide-open eyes from side to side as she viewed the applauding mob.

After the Royal party came the different diplomatic corps. Of these the French and English representatives received the most cordial receptions. As of allied nations this was to be expected.

Though the Chamber of Deputies met under the shadow of war there was no note of apprehension in the utterances of those assembled. All took their cue from the speech of the King. That was a short strong appeal to the patriotism of the people. It was not boastful; it was in part a simple statement of what the people must do in defence of their liberty. It was a demand for sacrifice. The world has seen how Belgium has made that sacrifice. The King ended his speech with the words "Vive la Belgique indépendante!" The whole chamber broke into wild applause.

It must be remembered that the Belgian Chamber of Deputies has as many divisions and as many animosities as any other legislative organization. In the first place Belgium is divided into two bitterly antagonistic races, the Flemish and the Walloons, which mix as readily as milk and lemon juice. Ever since the nation existed as such, these two races have been rivals for honour and place. Then this radical division of the people is complicated by the existence of three political

WITH THREE ARMIES

parties—Socialist, Catholic and Hebrew. The disputes of these parties have kept the whole nation in a ferment for years. But with the first note of war sounding, these rivalries disappeared as mist before the summer sun. It was a nation firmly knit together that met the Germans.

The business of war preparation went on in Brussels with feverish haste. Class after class was called to the colours. To supplement these there were thousands of volunteers. Whenever any body of troops marched through the streets traffic was at once paralysed. Even the comic Garde Civique came in for its share of applause. The history of the misfortunes of this force quickly turned from comedy to tragedy. Originally they were a sort of Home Guard. Their first duty was to supplement the police in the cities. Later they were given duties of a purely military nature. They built trenches, erected barricades, and I have met them doing duty as outposts. As force was not actually a part of the army, this work was out of its sphere. Finally the Civil Guard took part in several of the earlier actions. According to German standards they were civilians and not soldiers. Therefore the enemy treated them with the extreme of rigour. Captured with arms in their hands they were summarily shot.

This was a most outrageous proceeding on the part of the Germans. The Civil Guard was an

AT THE FRONT

organization with uniform and officers. The uniform, I will admit, was grotesque, yet it was distinctive. It labelled the wearer as a member of a quasi-military force. The Civil Guard of Belgium was more of a military organization than the militia regiments that form part of the armed forces of the United States. Suppose that during the war with Spain, members of the 71st Regiment, N.Y. had been captured and executed without ceremony. The case would have been similar to what has happened in Belgium. Germany had no right to deny to members of the Civil Guard the status of prisoners of war.

The truth is these civilian soldiers were a thorn in the side of the invading force. They did not understand how to cope with them. I understand the difficulty of dealing with irregular troops. It was one of the serious problems which confronted American officers in the Philippines. Yet no matter how flagrant was the violation of the laws of war, no Filipino was denied the consolation of a Court Martial. Under the theory by which Germany makes war, if she should come into conflict with the United States, only members of the regular army would be entitled to the rights of soldiers. Every other citizen bearing arms would be shot if captured. As part of the scheme to intimidate the people of Belgium as a whole by a military order, they legalized murder.

WITH THREE ARMIES

When the news of the constant skirmishing that was going on day after day along the frontier came to Brussels, the people still seemed confident the city would not be touched. Why they persisted in this belief remains a mystery. I think that the absurd censorship which kept the people in ignorance of the seriousness of the situation was responsible also for the panic that swept over Brussels when the facts became known. Long after Liège had been taken, the papers in the capital printed story after story about the gallant way the forts were holding out. With the greatest reluctance the press admitted the capture by the Germans of some of the outlying defences on August 15. Within three days, Brussels suddenly awoke to the truth. Then began the exodus.

There was something Biblical in the flight. They were as people fleeing before the wrath. No censor could suppress the news brought into the city by each new batch of refugees. From Liège, Tirlemont and Louvain they came, bringing stories of German savagery. Women wantonly shot, towns given over to the flames, the high men of the villages, men respected by all who knew them, given as short shrift as a mad dog. These and a hundred other cruelties were told and retold at every street corner. Then when the people realized that the authors of all

AT THE FRONT WITH THREE ARMIES

this misery were now riding down on the gates of Brussels, confidence and courage died. A great fear gripped all. Were they to suffer as the people of Louvain? Haunted by the stories of the thousands who had tasted the German method of making war, the citizens of Brussels incontinently fled.

NAMUR

CHAPTER III

NAMUR

TAUBE aeroplanes began to make their appearance over Brussels during the second week in August. The sight of one of these air machines turned the city into a whirlpool of excitement. The crowds in the streets pointed, gesticulated, argued, while the Civil Guard commenced a fusillade which did no harm to the aviator, but accounted for many casualties in the city when the shots let off into the sky returned in a shower of lead. During this time I had been following the movements of the advancing German columns to the best of my ability, through the reports of constant skirmishing which appeared in the local press. At that period the censorship was in no manner strict. My military training told me that the Germans were certain to come along the two main lines of communication through Belgium, and it was about this time that in Brussels we got the first news of the coming of the English troops. Stories of how hermetically-sealed railway carriages passed through certain towns in

AT THE FRONT

the night and how these were the English regiments were told round the tables of the cafés. Then the news spread that certain correspondents had stumbled on General French's army. These had been taken prisoners and only released on the solemn assurance that they would under no circumstances breathe a word of the position of the British troops.

It must be remembered that, up to this time, no one believed the Germans would make their smashing attack through Belgium. The nations of the world still had faith in the sanctity of treaties. The more I studied my maps by the light of the information which came to hand each day, the more I became convinced that where her interests were concerned Germany would stop at nothing, not even the violation of Belgium's neutrality. Every day new items appeared in the local papers telling of skirmishes taking place in various parts of the Flemish kingdom. These items could have but one interpretation. They marked the position of the advance guard of a great army pushing into Belgium. In order to assure myself I was right in believing that the Germans were advancing in force through this region, I decided to have a look at Namur and the valley of the Meuse. It was my original intention to go as far south in Belgian territory as I could and then to return for the fighting which

WITH THREE ARMIES

I had predicted in my Liége dispatches would take place before Brussels. But fate, in the person of an arbitrary French General, decreed that I should not see the fair capital of Belgium again. My belongings, I hope, are still in the *Palace Hotel*. I have not seen them since August 12, the day I left Brussels.

I had discovered that the easiest way from point to point in the theatre of operations was by rail, so I bought my ticket and started. No one made the least objection. The strictest orders had already been given about approaching the zone of operations, but it is certain that the Belgian staff did not believe Namur to be in the danger line. You must always bear in mind the fact that the Belgians had never made a serious study of warfare. By nature the Belge is no warrior. The great mass of soldiers, so-called, suddenly brought into being at the outbreak of war, were none the less peasants, clerks, shop-keepers, and so forth, because they wore a gaudy uniform. This uniform when donned did not suddenly endow the wearer with a complete knowledge of military duties. With officers it was the same case. No one has to be told that you cannot make an officer capable of fulfilling his obligations to those under his command over-night. It is not in the spirit of criticism that I am saying all this; it is only to emphasize the splendid work

AT THE FRONT

done by the Belgian army when pitted against the most perfect fighting machine in Europe. But this lack of training showed itself in the very aspect of the troops. I think I noticed it more among the regiments stationed round Namur than at any other place.

On my way I had noticed again the wonderful perfection of cultivation of the whole country. I think I have called Belgium the kitchen garden of Europe in another chapter. I cannot improve on the simile. The whole land through which I was passing smiled in consciousness of plenty. The neat farm-houses looked as if they had been recently gone over with scrubbing brush and cloth; they were so clean, they seemed to sparkle in the light of the setting sun.

When I arrived at the station I followed the crowd that was being herded into one corner of the building. No one could pass the gates until his passport had been scrutinized. The spy was abroad in the land. In this fortified city I found many more preparations for war than in Brussels. In the first place one could not move without a *laissez-passer*. Soldiers patrolled the streets and every few hundred yards you were held up and made to show your papers. The city presented all the grim circumstances of a siege except the actual falling of shells. Barricades were built to command all the main avenues into the city.

WITH THREE ARMIES

Enormous moving vans were hauled across the roadway and turned into a sort of blockhouse. The sides were pierced for rifles and inside sand-bags were piled breast high. This improvised fort gave fair protection against rifle fire. As constructed, it was useless against guns. Trenches were dug at either side of the van. As a military effort the fortification left much to be desired.

While I was in Namur I got my first clear view of a German aeroplane. Those I had seen in Brussels had flown so high above the city that it was impossible to form any idea of their exact appearance, but here, one passed overhead not more than two thousand feet up. In shape it was distinct from any other flying machine I had seen. It recalled an insect in flight. It was what I should imagine a prehistoric scarab looked like on the wing. So striking is the appearance that you never again have any difficulty in distinguishing the Taube. It is painted a sparkling white with a panel of blue through the middle of each wing. Not only is it easy to distinguish these machines by shape and colour, but also the engine makes a characteristic sound quite distinct from that of the French or Belgian aeroplane. While I watched, this machine made a circle of the forts around the city. It was under a heavy rifle fire all the time, but apparently not a bullet came near it for it never once even trem-

bled in flight. Even when some of the guns from the forts got into action it did not change its course.

In Namur I found the same anxious question which has been asked a thousand times by a thousand tongues in this kingdom. "Where are the French, where are the English?" There can be no doubt but that in spite of much vaunting of "nos petits belges" the people realized their helplessness before the German war machine. I thought at the time, and I am still of the opinion, that the Belgian army would have been immeasurably strengthened if a few corps of either French troops or English, or both, had been rushed into the Belgian line. Of course the wisdom of such a course is doubtful from a strictly military point of view, but for its moral effect nothing could have been better. I am also sure that a leaven of French or British troops mixed in with the Belgians at this time would have increased the effectiveness of King Albert's army fifty per cent.

Outside of the military precautions which I have mentioned, life went on in quite the usual way in this city. The shops were opened and in the classic phrase "business was as usual." This was quite incomprehensible to me. It certainly indicated that the people of Namur knew nothing of the danger which threatened their city. It was either that, or a supreme confidence in the

WITH THREE ARMIES

troops defending it. The Fourth Division which formed the garrison did not present the soldierly appearance of the troops I had seen in Liège. In view of subsequent events, appearances were not deceptive. Why Namur should have fallen as quickly as it did is to me one of the mysteries of this war. I had the opportunity of talking with some of the captured garrison when they were prisoners of war in Germany; but they could give no real explanation. From their description of events, three shots from the 42 centimetre guns was sufficient to demolish each of the forts in turn.

All my sympathies are with the Belgians—how could it be otherwise when I have seen the havoc wrought in the beautiful country?—but if what I write is to have any value I must enquire into facts that do not redound to the credit, from a military point of view, of those concerned. I have already said that the Belge is essentially non-military. This is in no way to his discredit. In fact, in these days when so many nations have sloughed off the thin veneer of civilization, it is more to the honour of Belgium that because she believed in the good faith of her neighbours she, in a fashion, disregarded military preparedness. The charge brought by Germany, in the attempt to justify her position in violating the neutrality of Belgium, that this nation had created an army

AT THE FRONT

for the purposes of offence is disproved by the evidence of Germany itself. A nation making ready for war would first have created trained soldiers. I have not heard who was in command at Namur. I shall read his report, if it is ever published, with much interest.

It seemed that the people of Belgium still believed that somehow the tide of advancing Germans would be turned from the country's shores.

In Namur I met M. Paul Gillan, who typifies the Belgian soldier of the improvised army. When the war broke out M. Gillan owned a very profitable preserves and sweet import business in Chatelet, near Charleroi. His warehouse had been taken over by the military. He was, of course, given a voucher payable after the war. The provisions were to go to the sick and wounded of the Belgian army. When his business thus disappeared over-night, M. Gillan reported with his automobile to the officer commanding at Namur the next day, "I hope the sweets are to the taste of the wounded," he said, as he presented himself, "and as my business no longer needs my supervision I have come to offer myself and my automobile for service." The offer was accepted forthwith.

When it was not required by the staff, M. Gillan put his motor at my disposal. Together we made

WITH THREE ARMIES

the ride down the valley of the Meuse, which was the land between the armies at the time. My companion had the *mot d'ordre* which passed us through all the lines. As we passed swiftly along the banks of the river it was hard to believe that within a few brief weeks its waters would be stained with the blood of thousands. Uhlans had made their appearance at different points on the farther bank of the river, and as our motor was commanded by those hills we kept a sharp look out for the enemy. Every few hundred paces we were stopped by fields of barbed wire entanglements. They will be the special feature of defence in this war. Wire cutters are part of the equipment of the German troops who have been captured, and the first inference was that they were to be used solely for cutting telephone and telegraph wires ; but now we know of their more effective employment. When I motored down the left bank of the Meuse the whole country was a labyrinth of wire. Every bridge was most carefully protected in this manner, but I found out afterwards that when these bridges were actually under fire the wire was not the defence expected. In the first place the German artillery was used against it with telling effect, and during the night their scouts would creep up and cut the strands with their clippers.



THE BATTLE OF DINANT



CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE OF DINANT

SHORTLY after we left Namur we ran into the first of the French Army of the North. This was a battalion of the 148th regiment of the line which had been divided up into detachments and detailed to guard the bridges across the Meuse. For the most part they contented themselves with building a sand-bag breast-work and covering the bridge itself with a labyrinth of wire. I was informed that all the abutments were mined, but this I could not verify myself. It was curious to contrast the French and the Belgian soldier. The latter was the stolid, serious type that in no case saw anything amusing in the incidents of soldiering. But the Frenchman met every circumstance of warfare with a smile. The strain of picket duty at night, the travail of trench digging under a broiling August sun in a uniform more suitable for winter than for summer campaigning, the sleepless nights of scouting, are all subjects for joking. I conceived a great respect and affection for the French conscript during the time I had

AT THE FRONT

the chance to see him in the firing line. He has a great soul.

From Namur to Dinant we had constant news of encounters between the patrols of the two armies, French and German. There were only a few Belgians down in this section of their country. These were Lancers who had all the burden of scouting the whole front across the Meuse. Where the French cavalry were, I have never been able to find out. The Germans were using their cavalry as a screen in the same manner as they had in the Königgrätz campaign and again in 1870. How they managed to keep the secret of their advance I shall try to explain in a later chapter. It is one of the salient points of the commencement of the war. As we now know, there were over two hundred thousand Germans all moving across Belgium from the North, and yet the aeroplanes that circled constantly overhead seemed to be entirely unaware of their presence. When we passed Yvoir we saw the bodies of five Uhlans that had been killed there the previous day. The population of the little town gathered to see the gruesome sight. This was their first view of war at close range. They did not know how soon they were to come under the iron heel of the invader.

It is the fashion to surround the science of strategy with much mystery. As a matter of

WITH THREE ARMIES

fact, the whole foundation of military success has been picturesquely summarized by General Forrest of the Confederate army, "Getting the mostest men thar fust." And it was on that principle that the Germans were working. Their grey-coated cohorts were coming on like a tide at flood. And the most remarkable feature of it all was that neither the French nor the English seemed to realize this portentous fact.

Nearing Dinant the military activity increased. The blue coat and red breeches of the Frenchman became more and more a detail of the picture. Another battalion of the 148th regiment occupied the village immediately north of the city. They were a capable looking lot. When I first saw them, they were taking a position on the heights at the back of the town which commanded the road across the river. The men of this regiment were all of the correct military age. Not one of them, save certain non-commissioned officers, was more than thirty, and they had all the esprit for which the French are famous. Arrived in the town, I took leave of M. Gillan, who went in his motor back to Namur. I have not seen or heard from him since that day; I hope that the fortunes of war have been with him.

The first thing I noticed in Dinant was the confidence shown by the civilian population in the French troops who were guarding their homes.

AT THE FRONT

I went at first to the *Tête d'Or*, a famous hostelry which nestles close to the citadel. Here I met the proprietor—M. Bourgemont, I think was his name. He did not look like a hero—no—in appearance he was the typical *bonhomme*. He wore a baggy brown suit. He was fat and pasty faced with straw-coloured hair and moustache. His eyes, however, were always bright when he spoke.

“You are on the wrong side of the river, if the Germans come.” I made this remark as he escorted me to my rooms.

“We are safe enough here, monsieur. Our French are in the citadel. They can never drive them out.” He was certain the Germans were not coming by the northern route. The commandant had “said so.”

Dinant is one of a dozen picturesque towns that dot the Meuse. It has been a Mecca of tourists for years. Here the river runs abreast of a high limestone cliff on the east, while on the west the bank slopes up to a ridge. The town itself is flat on the banks of the river. As you read later on of the fight here, remember that the limestone cliffs on the German side of the river commanded the ridge. The citadel is the pride of Dinant. It is an ancient fortress built on the cliffs with some five hundred odd steps leading up to it from the river level. These steps are cut into the solid rock.

WITH THREE ARMIES

The houses of the town sprawl on both sides of the Meuse ; a fine bridge of stone and iron led at that time from one side to the other. It was this bridge that gave the town its value to the advancing Germans. The problem of the French Commander was the defence of this bridge. What made this problem difficult with the small force at his disposal, was the citadel. This ancient fortress frowned down on top of the city ; a force holding it would have the bridge and the road beyond at its mercy. Major Bertrand could not place his main force on the heights as the peculiar character of the cliffs made it possible to cut off the citadel from the river ; also it would have been folly for him to place his troops with the river at their back. Under these circumstances he did all he could in the matter. A half company was detailed to hold the city as long as possible, in face of attack, and then retreat across the river. As the only line of retreat was down the steps cut into the side of the cliff it was easy to foresee what was going to happen to that half company if the Germans came ; but here again I was alone in my belief that the invaders were to be feared ; already the French soldiers were feasting themselves on the news of the successes at Mülhausen. The 148th were wishing themselves in Lorraine where the real fighting was going on. When I told a sergeant that he would soon get all the fighting he

wanted, he answered with a sceptical, " You think so, monsieur ? "

I spent the fourteenth of August looking over the ground. I put myself in the position of the oncoming German Commander and thought over how I could dispose an attacking force. I discovered that the street leading past my hotel was the main line of communication with the country outside the city to the east ; it was called the Rue Sainte Jacques. That evening I decided to move to the other side of the river. I had met Captain J. A. A. F. Cuff, R.M.L.I., who was here as a sort of military observer ; he had with him three or four men on motor-cycles who had been scouting the country on the far side of the river, and reported Germans advancing along every road ; Ciney was occupied, but what the number of the force was they could not estimate. The most significant happening of the day was the ambush of a French Dragoon squadron. One hundred of them had ridden out in the morning to reconnoitre on the German side of the river, and of the hundred, just thirteen rode in at night, and of these half were wounded. I was not allowed to hear their report, but they told their own story. The exhausted horses flecked with sweat showed how the survivors had ridden to save themselves ; there was no doubt now that the Germans were coming. Major Bertrand gave the order that all who

WITH THREE ARMIES

wished to leave the town should do so at once ; after a certain hour no civilian would be allowed in the streets.

It was with Lieutenant Parent, who could speak English and who therefore constituted himself my especial guide, that I inspected the defences of the bridge that night. It was a picture that might well have inspired Detaille ; hardly a ripple showed in the surface of the broad river, the clustering houses on the banks somehow reminded me of cattle crowding down to drink ; the church with its curious minaret tower smiled at us from across the bridge. I could just distinguish the white walls of the *Tête d'Or*. On the top of the citadel a sentinel stood out sharp against the sky line. The bridge with its field of barbed wire stretched away before us ; on either side, where the winged abutments turned off at right angles, soldiers in blue and red were grouped ; they had made these wall wings into a little fort, their rifles were stacked beside them, some smoked, others chatted and one sang in a low voice ; it was an old Norman folk song, Parent told me, and was cast in a mournful minor key. I had seen war ; many of these men—perhaps all of them—had not ; they had no disquieting visions of the morrow. As we turned to the town again I caught sight of a belated fisherman a few hundred yards down stream. Why not ? It was dusk now. Lieu-

AT THE FRONT

tenant Parent pointed out where the machine-guns were placed, in the upper storeys of the house bordering the stream.

“In that corner, there,” he said, pointing to a window that gave on the bridge, “is my special gun. She sweeps the road.”

I could hear the low voices of the men as they climbed to their posts, and at times I caught the sharp click of steel on steel. Sounds I had not heard for years set my nerves tingling, but to these men they meant nothing. Later, the sentinel on the citadel signalled with a lantern that all was well from that side. I crossed the bridge and sent a despatch of about fifty words. I tried to put a warning in that telegram, but when my French friends had censored it, it was innocuous. I looked up at the darkened windows of the *Tête d'Or* as I passed and wondered if M. Bourgemont still disbelieved in the approach of the Germans.

The next morning I was brought out of my bed with a spring by a loud explosion which seemed to come from the next room ; immediately there followed the most mournful wailing I have ever heard ; it was a dog in agony. While I hurried into my clothes I heard another explosion duplicating the first, and now that I was fully awake I knew the sound ; it was a small shell bursting. The shell had passed directly over the

WITH THREE ARMIES

Hotel du Nord, and smashed through the roof of the railway station within two feet of the clock which marked ten minutes past six. It did little damage except shatter a dozen windows. The third shell carried away the chimney of the hotel, leaving a great hole in the roof and incidentally spoiling the morning coffee. This seemed to worry the proprietor more than the presence of the Germans; while he was bewailing the spilt coffee, his guests scuttled to the cellar. Captain Cuff, with his escort of motor-cycle scouts, made his escape in a motor. I got little satisfaction out of watching him go.

The Germans continued the shelling of the town with little effect for nearly an hour. The population had all gone under ground and only the military showed themselves in the streets. I found a good look-out position and turned my glass on the citadel across the river. Up to this time I had heard very little infantry fire. The detachment, which occupied the ancient fortress, had not been able to locate the mountain battery that was dropping the German visiting cards within the town. The enemy's infantry had not, up to the moment, put in an appearance, so at least I judged.

About seven I noticed a good deal of movement on the crest of the citadel. In a few minutes the echo of a scattering volley drifted back to me;

AT THE FRONT

that was the beginning of the end of the little band of defenders holding the post beyond the river. I could only judge how the fight was going from the firing of the French soldiers I could see ; but it was soon evident that the Germans were attacking them on all sides. From our side there was nothing we could do. Shells continued to drop into the streets and I picked up the fuse of one of these ; it was a Dopp with the fuse cut at 4,000 metres. As it was about two thousand metres across to the citadel the German guns must be another two thousand metres beyond ; but the infantry was closing in on the fortress. Now I saw that the half company, or rather what was left of it, had drawn together in one angle of the wall. But now the Germans began to make their appearance in the main street of that part of the town that lay on the other side of the river, thus they were able to take the defenders in reverse.

Soon what was left of the French began to waver ; first one slipped down the stone steps leading down the face of the cliff and then another followed. Most of those who came were evidently wounded, and as they crawled from step to step they were fair marks for the Germans who had occupied the outskirts of the town. Word must have passed to those still holding on to the citadel, that their retreat would be soon cut off, for suddenly the group of them fired a parting volley

WITH THREE ARMIES

and dropped back to the path leading to the steps. It was then that a veritable slaughter began.

The Germans had now possession of the crest of the citadel and rained a perfect hail of death on the French ; a few stumbled on the steps and lay blocking the path of those coming behind, one rolled all the way down. Now I could see half a dozen bodies, in blue and red, stretched out at intervals down the stone staircase ; a few reached the street below in safety. At the foot of the stairs behind the church there is what in military terms is called a "dead angle." This means a position under a wall protected from hostile fire. The retreating French paused there a moment. Then they caught sight of M. Bourgemont, who stood in the open door of his hotel, waving to them frantically. He too was in a protected angle, safe from the enemy's fire. What was left of the little band ran like sheep to the *Tête d'Or*, but of the number one fell. He was not dead, for in a moment he struggled up on his knees, trying to move forward. Then a rather grotesque figure in brown ran out into the shot-swept street. It was M. Bourgemont. Stooping over the limp figure in blue and red, he started dragging it to the zone of safety. He staggered a dozen paces. Then, in the absurd way fat men do, he fell. A bullet had passed through his brain.

The citadel was now completely in the hands

AT THE FRONT

of the Germans. For the rest of the morning they concentrated their efforts on the assault of the bridge; now the whole force on our side of the river was engaged. At once I saw how few we were, and how impossible it was for such a force to hold out against the Germans. For a time it looked as if nothing could keep the enemy from passing the bridge. I had joined Major Bertrand and Lieutenant Parent, who were with the detachment holding the abutments. Lieutenant Parent's machine-gun had been spitting a leaden stream across the bridge, and not a German dared face it. The losses among the men holding the wings of the abutments had been severe. The Germans were firing lying down, and seemed to be men who could pick off a head as far as they could see it. The noise of the irregular explosions of rifles, the mechanical spluttering of machine-guns, punctuated by the explosion shock of shell fire, continued all through the morning hours. At eleven o'clock it began to rain, but this in no way affected the fighting. About thirty newly-wounded men were brought in. Things were at their worst just then, and I frankly admit I was choosing my own line of retreat in case the town could not be held.

At this juncture, when Commandant Bertrand was moving his men to the heights behind the town, there was a sudden increase in the volume

WITH THREE ARMIES

of firing from our side of the river. It was the long expected reinforcements. The 33rd regiment of the line now deployed along the line of the ridge and some of them took position in the lower part of the town. I met a sergeant and a squad of these and sent them on to the aid of the remnant defending the bridge. Soon the French fire was smothering the German, whose attack then slackened. When this happened I went back to the hotel; the proprietor had the coffee boiling again in spite of the absent chimney, and a cup was very welcome. The café of the hotel was filled with wounded, and a doctor, the local physician, was doing what he could for them. Most of the wounds were slight; one man had been hit with a bit of shell in the head, but the skull was not even cracked; others had holes through their arms, but for the most part these were little more than flesh wounds.

While I was drinking my cup of coffee, the fire having, as I have said, slackened, I saw a woman cross the open place in front of the hotel to a pillar box and drop in a letter. I would like to have asked her at what time it was written!

At one o'clock I returned to my post of observation. I saw that the Germans had hoisted their flag over the citadel. This was the signal for renewed firing. The sight of the hated colours seemed to rouse the French to renewed fury. The machine-guns barked incessantly, infantry

AT THE FRONT

fire exploded without ceasing. Suddenly I heard a new sound in this infernal chorus, eight loud detonations, followed by hissing whistles, drowned the minor explosions; it was the French field artillery. Ask any soldier his sensations when he hears the welcome notes of his own guns; no music is more pleasant. This was the first time I had heard the French artillery, and instantly I recognized that experts were handling the pieces. They found the range at the first salvo; in less than five minutes they were dropping projectiles into the citadel so fast that the Germans went out helter skelter; one shell cut right across the flag ripping the red from the black. Another infantry regiment comes up now, the 73rd, and these add the din of their rifles to the chorus. Curiously enough it was only about this time that I began to realize that troops, up and down the river from where I was, had been also engaged all the morning.

Now the action quickly turned in favour of the French. Those of the Germans who had come down into the streets of the part of the town which stood on the right bank of the river, were compelled to withdraw. After a most careful scrutiny I could not see the head of a German on the ramparts of the citadel. The shells of the mountain battery suddenly ceased to fall in Dinant, and before the station clock, which had

WITH THREE ARMIES

marked the last hours of so many, stood again at six, the first day's fighting at Dinant was ended. Another regiment came into the town, the 84th, but these were too late for the fighting. They knew what had been going forward, for the road behind the bridge is dotted with the dead ; they lie in all sorts of contorted positions, their blue coats are splashed with red, the red trousers are dyed a deeper crimson. The cheers of the troops arriving sink down as they pass this grim evidence of war.

Such was the first day's fighting for Dinant. The French had repulsed the German attack, but it was easy to see that they were not in a strong position. Their artillery had saved the day. At that time the Germans had not a single piece of field artillery in action here and the mountain battery was only a one-pounder. As a matter of fact, the action from the German side looked to me more like a reconnaissance in force than a serious attempt to carry the bridge. Of course, carried away by their first successes they naturally thought that they could carry the bridge with a rush, and had not the French reinforcement arrived just at the moment it did, there is every chance that the enemy would have taken the town that day. As it was, this was only a feat deferred.

I have heard that the French crossed the Dinant

AT THE FRONT

bridge and took the offensive against the Germans advancing from the east ; this I have not been able to verify. If it was so, it was a grave error, which can only be put down to the fact that the French still persisted in the idea that no great force of the enemy was coming across the Meuse here.

It may not be amiss to record a few impressions from a military point of view. It was the intention of the French to hold the Dinant bridge at all hazards, and with this aim they posted their strongest force behind the wings that sprang from the abutments. These were built of limestone blocks and in themselves offered good cover ; but as they were only three feet high they could have been vastly improved by the use of sand-bags for head cover. The German sharpshooters picked these men off like experts in a shooting gallery. This was a minor oversight compared with the mistake made by not constructing covered approaches to the advanced positions. The citadel, as I have already said, commanded the whole town. It was impossible for the French with the troops available, to attempt to hold that point, therefore it was all the more important to protect such positions as would come under its fire. Actually when the men behind the bridge wall were picked off and it became necessary to bring forward reinforcements, the men had to be rushed to an open field of fire where they suffered

WITH THREE ARMIES

unnecessary losses. Again, when it became imperative to change the position of the French to the ridge behind the town, they had to be marched under fire all the distance. The road over which they passed was lined with dead. They were piled in two lines at either side as close as if they had been dominoes tumbled over in a row ; there they lay in all the grotesque attitudes which men shot in action take, the first sacrifice of the French nation to Mars.

As I had seen two years' active service in the Philippines, where concealment was the first essential in all fighting, it is natural that the red breeches of the French infantryman struck me as the most incongruous uniform conceivable. This matter of conspicuous uniform is not a question of opinion as some of my French friends seem to think, it is a question of fact ; red is a more visible colour than grey or drab green, therefore it makes a better mark at which to shoot, and men in groups wearing this colour are more easily seen. The French had covered their red-topped caps but the trousers stood out as striking as claret stains on a clean tablecloth. I know that at two thousand yards it is difficult to distinguish troops wearing uniforms of any colour, but short of that distance red is the most conspicuous colour one could choose. I had an unusual chance to compare the visibility of the French and the

AT THE FRONT

German uniforms, and the superiority of the grey is incontestable. I found it difficult to pick up the individual men lined out along the crest of the citadel with the aid of a twelve-power glass; whereas the French troops I could pick up with the naked eye.

The night of the fight I started back towards French head-quarters with the intention of reporting my presence to the staff. While I was in Belgium and had passes from the Belgian authorities, I knew it was necessary to have these viséd by the French. On the way back I passed five regiments of the line all being hurried to Dinant. What struck me immediately was the seriousness of the men; they were young and I felt sure that the Gallic temperament had not changed, yet these men wore expressions of seriousness unusual with the French; not that their spirit was extinguished, but they exhibited a solemnity only equalled by Scottish regiments. This solemnity was particularly noticeable in the officers, who were as grave as schoolmasters.

What struck me most on this walk against the tide of war was the total absence of cavalry. I had been a cavalry officer, and as such, could not conceive how troops could move without a sufficient complement of the mounted army. Later I discovered the reason for the absence of cavalry, and I place it as one of the contributory causes of

WITH THREE ARMIES

the defeat of Charleroi and Mons. What was lacking in horse-soldiers was made up for in artillery, and I state without hesitation that the French artillery is the best in the world. This opinion, which I expressed at the very outbreak of hostilities, has been confirmed on every battle-field where the French gunners have had chance to show their mettle. I had the opportunity of seeing the two batteries that drove the Germans off the citadel at Dinant, in action; from the moment the officer commanding chose his position, every manœuvre was carried out with machine-like promptitude. Not a pound of lost power. One of the thrilling sights of war is to see a battery gallop into position. I had seen Grimes' battery take its place on the side of El Pozo hill in Cuba, and have always since measured others against the American gunners. Not until I had seen the French did I find their superiors. Like the United States artillery officer, the Frenchman is wholly professional. It needs but a glance to see that he belongs to a *corps d'élite*. The two batteries at Dinant galloped up, unlimbered, took the range, loaded and fired in such a splendid manner that I almost applauded, and I am convinced that the French system of a smothering fire is the correct theory for the use of field artillery. Here I saw eight projectiles all dropped in a radius of fifty yards and the Germans in sight were

AT THE FRONT

driven helter-skelter. In the moral effect this system of firing is also superior. There is no more comforting sound than the whistle of the French shell passing over your head in the direction of the enemy. That I can testify to, personally.

That night I passed in a so-called inn which boasted only four rooms. All were crowded to suffocation with soldiers. I slept for a time in the corner of the room surrounded by them. A Division General and his staff occupied the adjoining room. Earlier in the night, officer and soldier mixed in what might be called easy familiarity. Such demarcation as exists in our army does not seem to exist with the French. I heard a Major of Artillery in violent argument with the Division General on a point of tactics, and he won the argument.

Motor bus after motor bus rolled up to the little village all through the night. They had journeyed all the way from the boulevards of Paris. A detachment of red-trousered troops would tumble out and the bus would lumber off into the darkness. About midnight it rained. The troops who had not been able to crowd into the little inn now made a last effort to push into its shelter. A few bedraggled infantrymen got past the door. On the rough cloth of their blue coats the rain-drops stood out in the faint light like crystals. In vain they looked for a yard of space in which to stretch

WITH THREE ARMIES

themselves. Finally they lean up against the wall and soon nod in overpowering sleep. All night long the road without echoed with the rumble of passing cannon.



THE BATTLE OF MONS



CHAPTER V

THE BATTLE OF MONS

IN this chapter I am going to criticize freely. I know I lay myself open to the charge of squaring a grudge, but I must take that chance.

To make my position clear it must be remembered that I had traversed the Belgian-French advanced posts from Warve Gembleaux, Namur, down the valley of the Meuse to Dinant. As I have stated elsewhere I have had ten years' service in the United States, and I think I may say that I am not an untrained observer.

From the first I had been astounded at the smallness of the French force in this zone. I knew that from a strategical point of view the military occupation of Belgium by the French had its drawback, but as long as the occupation was a fact I could not understand why it was not complete. Coming down the Meuse all the signs pointed to a strong force of Germans advancing from the east. I surmise that they crossed the Meuse near Huy; but more than this, it was evident, at date of which I write,

AT THE FRONT

that an overwhelming German army was moving across central Belgium. The German cavalry was everywhere brushing aside the small groups of Belgian cavalry which attempted to oppose it. It cannot be said that after Liège the Belgian army offered any serious objection to the advancing Germans before they reached Louvain. Not that the home troops could be expected to do much in face of the enormous numerical superiority which the enemy had developed in their country. The Belgian line was too extended. Either the Belgian forces should have been brought back to the positions selected by the French to offer battle—Charleroi, Mons—or enough troops should have been sent forward from the allied armies to check at least the German advance through Belgium. As it was, the Belgian army was driven off the line it had selected without having caused any serious inconvenience to the advancing Germans. It was at this time that the crime against Louvain was committed.

The Belgian army having been eliminated, the enemy could now devote his whole attention to the other armies. By the way, I may mention that the fact that an English army had arrived in Belgium was not known in Germany until the news was published in the English papers. This I have on high German authority.

WITH THREE ARMIES

When it was known that the Expeditionary Force was in their front it became the ambition of the Germans to capture or annihilate it.

General French found himself opposed by an enormously superior force. When the Germans heard that the English were in front, they had determined to concentrate their main attack against them. There are three splendid ways of coming down on Mons from the north. Grey-coated columns were soon marching at full speed along these roads.

After spending the night at Onhaye, as described in my last chapter, I marched back to Athénée, where I was told I should find French head-quarters. I had been up to that time scrupulously careful in all my moving from point to point with the advance troops, to comply strictly with the rules governing correspondents. I had my passes stamped at every post I passed, and in the expectation that I should eventually meet the French forces, I had been careful to provide myself with a special letter from the French Minister in Brussels, recommending me to the courteous treatment of the officers of the French army.

Besides this letter I had first my passport as an American citizen. Second, I had a personal letter from the American Minister, Mr. Brand

AT THE FRONT

Whitlock, which he had given me in Brussels as an extra certificate of identification to the Belgian staff. I had next the pass issued by the Belgian Minister of War. This had my portrait in the corner and had so far taken me safely all over Belgium. Next I had my *laissez-passer* from the commandant at Namur permitting me to go to Dinant; and last, I had a pass to the Belgian General Staff at Louvain. Despite all these papers of identification General P—— made me a prisoner. The French have a most exaggerated fear of correspondents. They attribute their defeat by the Germans in 1870 to a correspondent. It was, they say, the correspondent of the *Standard* who made known the position of General MacMahon's army in one of his dispatches, a piece of information which permitted the Germans to cut this general and his army off from Bazaine, who was besieged. I think the story is told in von Moltke's memoirs. If I have heard that story once, I have heard it a dozen times in my wanderings in the war zone. General P——, in his order for my arrest, said I was held because I had seen operations of his army of an important character.

I will not go into the indignities incident to my detention. I am a great admirer of the French people as a whole, and I have many friends in France.

WITH THREE ARMIES

My place of confinement was Givet. I must say that my jailers treated me with the greatest consideration as far as their orders permitted. M. Lefort was my favourite sentry; he was a notary from Revin, which is on the line to Rheims. As for the hostess of the hotel of Le Cheval Blanc, whose name I have not in my notebook, her rum omelettes almost made me ask to have my prison period lengthened.

At last I was released and sent back to Paris. All during my confinement I had been wondering what had happened to the army of the British at Mons. The thought of their position was still with me when I crossed the Channel on my way to London. When I arrived in that city I was so astonished at the apparent indifference, or at any rate ignorance of the real condition of affairs in the war zone, that I wrote the following:—

“Solemnly I warn the people of England that this is the beginning of a time of great trial. For Englishmen must be the bone of the army of the Allies. We have a Corps d'Elite here ready for the word of fire, but more must come. The enemy is advancing like a tidal wave towards the valley of the Meuse. Many lives must be sacrificed to dam this engulfing flood. A gigantic battle may open on the morrow. Whatever its result, let England be ready.”

This appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* of August 22, 1914. Wherever I told the story of what I had seen along the front of the contending armies I was greeted with surprised protests.

AT THE FRONT

I must exaggerate. The French must know where the main German blow was coming. They must be preparing for it. Mr. Harry Lawson, the Proprietor Manager of the *Daily Telegraph*, however, understood at once the seriousness of the situation.

It was the policy of the English newspapers at that time—a policy dictated by the War Office—to avoid publishing disquieting news. The facts of the battle of Mons were not entirely known to the public until the publication of General French's stinging report. Personally I think that this concealing the facts in the earlier days of the war has had a prejudicial effect on the present state of England's preparedness. If the whole story of the fighting at Mons had been made public, if the stories of the heroism of the different regiments had been written, recruits would not have been so slow in coming forward at the beginning of the war. It seems that England needs the stimulus of defeat to arouse her real fighting blood. In the beginning this stimulus was suppressed. The volunteer army would be far more advanced to-day—I write in the first weeks of November—in numbers and effectiveness, if the story of Mons had been read in the homes of the British the day after it occurred.

I understand perfectly the necessity for the

WITH THREE ARMIES

suppression of news which will give information to the enemy. Incidentally, why was the news of the wonderful transportation of the British troops across the Channel ever published at all until after the war? What I contend is that the description of feats of bravery, even with heavy loss, instead of hurting a cause, helps it. The matter is beyond argument.

In accordance with this policy some papers went so far as to make statements which were not in accordance with the facts. It was at the time of the fall of Namur. This news came from an independent source that was reliable. While first admitted, it was afterwards vigorously denied. I was especially interested in the capture of this important point, as I had considered it as the real *point d'appui* of the best line of defence the war zone offered. It was the key of the situation. It stands at the junction of the Meuse and Sambre rivers. It was on one of the most important lines of communication of the enemy. The actual fighting lasted hardly more than two hours, when the place capitulated. After the tremendous struggle which the Belgians had given the Germans at Liège, I must say I was disappointed in their showing here. I had no opportunity of making a detailed inspection of the forts at the time of my visit, but on paper they were stronger even than those at Liège. But

AT THE FRONT

I have since come to the conclusion that any fortress constructed over ten years ago is outdated in a military sense.

The railway led directly into the city and the Germans had no difficulty in bringing as many men and as many guns to Namur as they wished. Here it was that the famous seventeen inch howitzers first made their appearance. It is certain that no gun in any of the Namur forts could approach the German mastodon pieces. What force the enemy had here is not yet certain. At least, it was two corps, perhaps more. Under the circumstances there seems, after all, some reason for the Belgian defeat. What would have been the issue if a corps of French troops had been thrown into this region, can now only be a matter of academic discussion. Yet I think the triumphal march of the Germans might have been halted again, at least as long as it had been at Liége, if this plan had been adopted.

When Namur fell, the carefully chosen battleground of the French and English became untenable. If the Allies had not already been in full retreat, they would have been compelled to retire as soon as Namur was in the hands of the enemy.

Wherever he met the Allies he was numerically superior. Add to this the high standard of morale created among his troops by their first victories, and you have an army that nothing could

WITH THREE ARMIES

stop. Kluck, the victorious, was coming down on Paris like an invading Juggernaut. He crushed all before him.

It is said that General Joffre plays the game of war as if it were chess. A contoured map of the whole war zone, some five metres square, has been modelled in papier mâché, and on this map the corps and divisions of friend and foe are represented by wooden blocks. Every feature of the terrain, hills, valleys, railroads, rivers, wagon road, forest and plain is marked to scale on the model. Thus the master sees at a glance the disposition of his own and the enemies' forces. In an adjoining room sits an adjutant who receives an average of five hundred telegrams a day. These all bear on the movements of the troops. Each new bit of information as it is received is at once communicated to the Generalissimo. He reflects alone in the map-room. He moves the blocks. The order is given, and the change is immediately effected in the theatre of operations.

On the other hand, the Germans were confident and settled in their plan. No historical record can show anything superior to the marching of the Germans during the first weeks of the war ; at that time their organization was working without a hitch. As a united force, a homogeneous military establishment, the world has never

AT THE FRONT

seen its equal. Do not think I am partial to the Germans. I hope I shall write with an unprejudiced mind; but from a military point of view I cannot help admiring the German machine.

Out of the gloom of the first weeks of war the retreat of the English army shines resplendent. . . . The greatest test of generalship is a retreat. In comparison a victory is simply organized. Remember that the plans for a retreat must be drawn up under the most difficult circumstances. Decision must be prompt, orders are immediate, and every precaution must be taken to prevent the retreat becoming a rout. For officer and private it is the most nerve-testing experience of war. I think when the scores are all added, the withdrawal of General French from Mons will count more than the victory of Kluck. With the German superiority of numbers it was no extraordinary feat to drive the English back, especially as this superiority of force was quite unexpected. General French had made no error in the disposal of his command. His cavalry which was covering his front as far forward as Waterloo sent back reports. It was only when he was in danger of being completely surrounded that he gave the command for retreat. All during this struggle the British soldier hung on with national tenacity. As usual he did not realize when he was licked.

WITH THREE ARMIES

The British Expeditionary Force, for its size, was perhaps the finest army the world has seen. Man for man no other organization could produce their physical superiors. In training they were all veterans. They were enthusiastic marksmen. The infantry was of the famous English brand which sticks till the last round. The cavalry was the best that hunting officers could make it. The artillery, while hardly up to the French standard, fulfilled its difficult rôle. The officers were the best type of English gentleman. From Mons to Le Cateau they contested every inch of the ground. The Germans were on all sides. One officer has told me that for hours his battalion marched parallel with a force of Germans. They were so far within the lines that by chance they were sometimes mistaken for friends. From Le Cateau to St. Quentin and beyond, the retirement was even more difficult. It seemed to be without end, no reinforcements appeared, and all day and night they were harried by their pursuers, yet panic never appeared in their ranks. The great retreat was a masterly performance.



GERMANY IN WAR-TIME



CHAPTER VI

GERMANY IN WAR-TIME

AFTER my return from the Belgian and French theatres of war *The New York American*, a newspaper which was anxious to get an accurate account of conditions in Germany, suggested to the *Daily Telegraph* that I might be sent to that country. It was arranged that my services should be transferred direct to the allied newspaper. It was as the military correspondent of *The New York American* that I made my journey to Berlin.

There were current in England at that time all sorts of rumours on the supposed state of affairs in Germany. It was said that the poorer classes were starving; that the country was on the verge of a revolution and that the war was highly unpopular. It was my mission to verify these rumours and incidentally get to the front if such a thing were possible.

I know there are partisans who will take exception to my simple statement of the facts as I found them, but it must be remembered that

AT THE FRONT

I am a neutral and try to see with an impartial eye. In Germany I found conditions during the first weeks of September almost normal. I say *almost* normal, because the railroad service was to some extent interrupted both by the supply trains moving to the front, and trains of wounded returning. Also, the population as a whole was responding to the electrifying stimulus of a popular war. The sentiments of the people are epitomized in the two German mottoes, "God, King and Fatherland," and "Deutschland über alles." From prince to pauper, the triumph of Germany was the thought of all.

On my way to Berlin I travelled in a train loaded with wounded. They had been sent back from Namur and Mons. All were cases which are classified as slightly wounded, although it was apparent that some of them were grievously injured. One young soldier who could not have been more than twenty-two had been struck at an angle through the left eye. It may be said that he was lucky not to have had the bullet come straight at him, yet it seemed to me that this man at least had given his share of himself to his country. But the only thing which occupied him at the moment was the question whether he would be allowed to rejoin with only one eye. He was only a second lieutenant, and one rose quickly in time of war. He told me when he

WITH THREE ARMIES

discovered my nationality, that he was one of the German Olympic Games' Team, and that he had been training under the American athletes who had been imported to Germany as instructors. Several others of the men had head wounds of minor importance, and one had been unfortunate enough to be shot through the jaw. More than fifty per cent. of the wounded, however, carried an arm in a sling. The few who had been hit in the leg sat with their limbs stretched out on the carriage seats, and it was plain that the jolting of the car was exquisite agony. But they had no complaints. All seemed to take their wounds as a matter of course. It was part of the business of war.

The plan of sending back the slightly wounded is a new departure in the German army. Sending the lightly hurt to recover in the care of their families has proved a great success. The men recover more quickly under congenial surroundings, and the government is relieved of considerable expense.

From the first I saw that in Germany war was a business proposition. Every detail was as carefully considered as it is by the American Car and Foundry Company. Nothing was too small not to be done well. I studied the bandages of these wounded, and saw that they were as skilfully applied as if the work had been done

AT THE FRONT

in a quiet hospital far removed from the conditions of warfare. To me the condition of those bandages told the story of an efficient field hospital: and an efficient field hospital is one of the tests of a well-organized army.

On the journey to Berlin what impressed me most was the matter-of-fact way in which the situation was accepted. There were no curious, cheering throngs at the different stations, no indulgence in cheap sentimentality. A few people stood gathered on the platform as the train stopped, but these were all volunteer nurses. The work was to render assistance to such of the wounded as needed it. They distributed hot soup, sandwiches, and even beer, to some of those *hors de combat*. But it was all done in a quiet way that suggested method and efficiency. I have journeyed extensively in three war areas, and from what I have seen I do not hesitate to say that in the matter of the evacuation of the wounded, no other organization can approach the German.

At one of the junction stops—Wunstorf—our train passed a contingent of Belgian prisoners. There were three train-loads of box cars filled with them. As the captives were penned in the cars, which were solid, save for a grating which was open for a few inches under the roof, they were not travelling in comfort. The cars were

WITH THREE ARMIES

carpeted with clean straw, and the sentries, who sat at the doors with their wicked-looking bayonets pointing inward, joked with the men of our train as we passed.

I could only get fleeting glimpses of the faces of the prisoners. Here and there I looked into a pair of hungry eyes staring from the blackness of the box car. But I could not distinguish the numbers on their caps to see if I had any old friend among the captives. I estimated the number of prisoners at a thousand, and heard that they were part of the army which defended Namur. The German papers were constantly boasting of the number of English prisoners they had captured, so I was on the constant lookout for captives in khaki ; but I saw none.

When our train approached Berlin, one got a picture of another side of war. Many little pathetic scenes were enacted at the different stops. The news of the coming of the wounded had been wired ahead. Mothers, wives and daughters gathered to meet their loved ones. I remember one girl—she had the air of still being a bride—almost smothering her husband with kisses. Talking like a runaway phonograph, her eyes never left his face. Her own were lit with pride and love, yet while I watched she never let her glance wander to the shattered arm her husband covered in a sling. As the train pulled

AT THE FRONT

out I saw her still smiling up at him in rapture, oblivious to the world. At other stations, women with searching eyes hurried from window to window of the train. They have come to look for those dear to them ; some are disappointed. Slowly despair creeps into the searching eyes as the train moves onward. They turn, the saddened women, the world shall not see their tears.

The first symptom I noticed of the war in Berlin was that the people were newspaper mad. The local sheets were selling like extras on election night ; and this went on every hour in the day up till eleven o'clock at night. Not only did the newspapers sell like hot cakes, but a pushing mob stood all day and after the electric lights were lit, outside the offices of the local papers waiting for the latest bulletins. Every bulletin was greeted with cheers. It was the time of the Russian disaster in East Prussia. First it would be stated that thirty thousand prisoners were taken, then sixty thousand, and finally ninety thousand. This feverish thirst for news went on unabated all during my stay in the German capital. After the newspaper mania, the next symptom of conflict was the change of names of certain hotels and shops. Every English and French name disappeared in one night. The *Hotel Bristol* which has a name that is a consider-

WITH THREE ARMIES

able asset, became the *Conrad Uhl*, after the manager. The *Westminster Hotel* became the *Station House* and the *Piccadilly Café* did a thriving business under the title *Vaterland*; as perhaps more beer is consumed here than in any other beer-hall in Berlin, the name was justified. One of the amusing sides of this frantic effort to eliminate everything foreign comes to the surface, when a local jeweller who had the time of the world showing on several clocks proceeded to paste out the faces of the time-pieces registering the hour in London, Paris, Petrograd and Brussels. Rather significant was the broad sea-map in the window of the North German Lloyd Office. Not a miniature vessel floated on the seascape.

In the confusion that has engulfed commerce, trade secrets are being stripped of their petty deceptions. It now comes to light that "Sheffield steel" has been for years manufactured and exported from Germany, and all the famous makes of English gloves are put together in Bavaria. It is the business man of Germany who feels the situation most. To him the war is a simple matter of economics. The more he reflects on this the more gloomy he becomes. Yet I cannot say that there was anything abnormal in the aspect of Berlin at the time of my visit. The streets were crowded, but it was

AT THE FRONT

with a holiday mob. Confidence was the note of all. In fact I may say of all the capitals, Berlin was easily the gayest I visited. The cafés were open till midnight, and some even later. They were filled most of the time, and among those crowding round the little tables sipping their beer, I could not find one with an anxious face. Even the famous night life of the German capital went on as usual. The only exception was that the branch of Maxim's was closed as well as the Palais de Glace, the notorious dancing-hall. As for any shortage of supplies, it existed only in the imagination of certain writers. I lived better at the *Adlon Hotel* than I did in Paris. What is more, the prices for rooms and food were more reasonable. At the *Bristol* the management were still serving an excellent luncheon for three marks. They could not possibly have done this if there had been any considerable advance in the price of eatables. I have been told that great misery existed among the submerged tenth. This is not peculiar, admitting that it is a fact. I cannot say that I noticed any striking lack of men in the crowds that marched up and down the Unter den Linden. There was one feature of life in Berlin that existed nowhere else; that was the continual passing of troops preceded by their bands. Why the band should have been

WITH THREE ARMIES

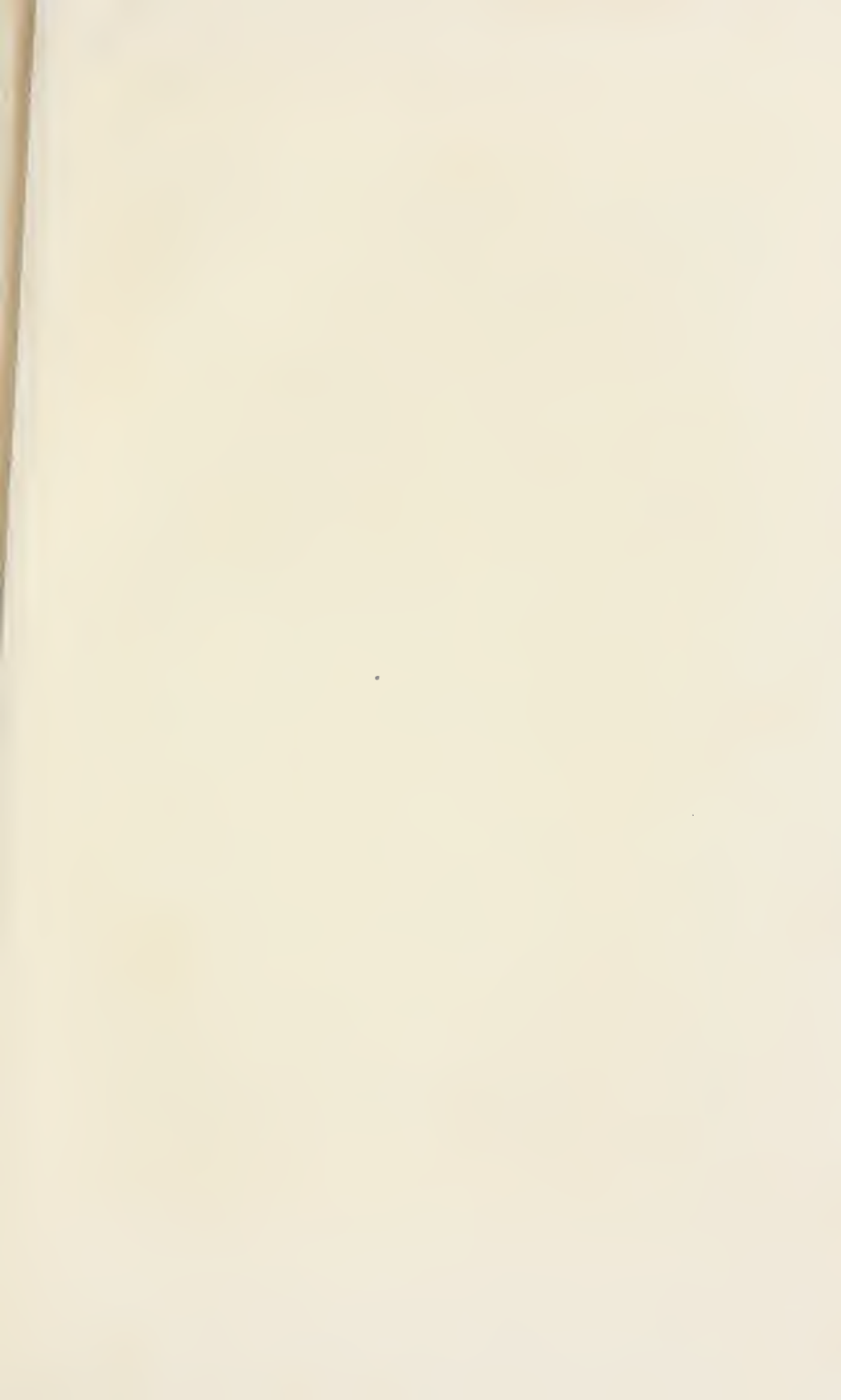
suppressed in England in this war, is something I shall never pretend to understand. If the idea is to divorce soldiering from music, I can tell those who plan it that they will never succeed; not if they want to keep up the supply of soldiers. I noticed at once in Germany what a difference the notes of a playing band made both to the men marching and those gathered to cheer them on. Why I felt the thrill of the thing whenever I marched a few paces with the columns myself, and soldiering is no treat to me. In London the troops might be marching to their own funerals. In Berlin they were going to a fête.

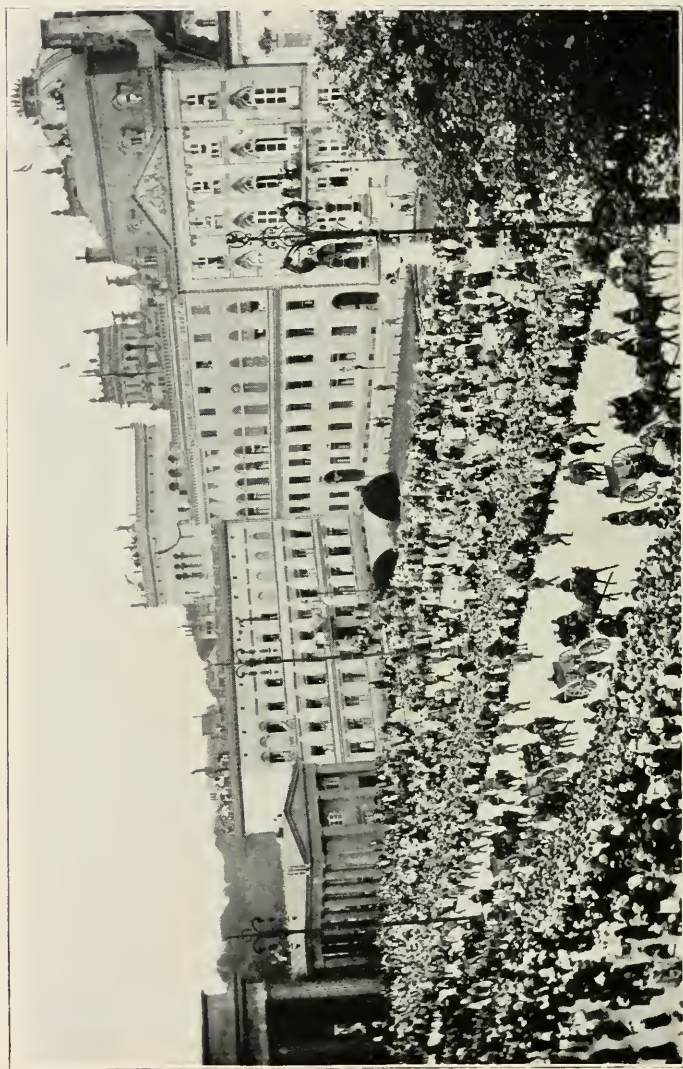
Even as early as September the story was circulated in England that Germany had called out her last man. It was said that the cities were denuded of males. This was not the fact. I saw plenty of men of the military age in the streets of the capital, too many in fact. It seemed to me that many of them might be better off in the army. Of course preparation and training was going on everywhere. One had only to take a trip out into the environs to see "cannon fodder" in the making on all sides. Potsdam was the great recruiting centre. Here the training of the embryo soldier went on from morning to night. From what little I was allowed to see, it was a very thorough process.

AT THE FRONT

Even their enemies must grant that the Germans know that art of the preparation for war better than any other people. The mobilization of the German force has been the theme of military epics. The striking feature of this almost magical summoning of the strength of the Empire was the appearance of every soldier with a complete new equipment. From helmet to boot he wore an outfit straight from the quartermaster's dépôt. Even the equipment for the artillery was replaced. Harness, shoes, extra wheels were all fresh from the Ordnance dépôt. No army the world has seen could boast such perfection of detail. In the matter of uniform the Germans sprang their first surprise. The invisible grey was a change of which the French and English knew nothing. Personally I think it the best colour for campaigning I have ever seen. Every professional soldier will enlarge on the few sentences I give to the military organization of the Germans. Without going into technicalities it is admittedly the best in the world.

Although I made diligent effort I was never permitted to see one of the famous 17-inch howitzers. It was always said that they were all in the field. I did see a photograph of one. I do not believe that there were many of these Brobdingnagian guns ready when hostili-





Sedan Day, 1914, in Berlin. Guns captured from the Russians paraded down Unter den Linden.

WITH THREE ARMIES

ties opened. Even now, I doubt if more than six are being used against the Allies. A great deal of capital has been made out of these cannon. . . . I do not believe it is yet proved that they justify themselves. Used against forts they are invaluable, but beyond this their value is problematical. To move them is a matter of immense effort of an incidental nature. Every bridge over which they pass has to be specially strengthened, every road specially prepared. In siege operations no weapon designed by man is more formidable, but sieges will be rare incidents in future wars.

I was in Berlin on the anniversary of the battle of Sedan. It was made the occasion for a tremendous celebration and display of cannon captured from the enemy. I have never seen a greater concourse of people in a given area. From the Brandenburg Gate to the Emperor's Palace the sidewalks and the two outside roadways of Unter den Linden were jammed with people as thick as caviare. From an upper window of my hotel, which was near the Gate, as far as I could see, this river of humanity stretched. They had come to see some eighteen field pieces taken from the enemy. All Berlin was surely there. On this day what ordinarily would be called confidence became arrogance. The Fall of Sedan is a proud day in German history.

AT THE FRONT

The Fall of Paris would be a prouder one. You must remember that at that time the army of von Kluck was marching relentlessly and swiftly towards the capital of France. It was even hoped that the celebration would be made a joint event. When the first of the captured artillery appeared under the Gate the cheer that rose was the sound of the sea in a storm. Two long, slender, grey French guns were given the place of honour in the procession. German soldiers mounted the horses, German soldiers sat on the caissons. After the French came some of the Bull-dog Belgian pieces. I wondered if any of my friends had manned them. Then came some machine-guns that had been taken in the fighting in East Prussia. As each new type of cannon came into view the cheering broke out anew. Soon this enormous concourse could no longer voice their emotion in mere shouting, so they burst into song. A few voices took up the words at first, then others, until the notes of "Deutschland Ueber Alles" swelled to a wave of sound that seemed to rock the walls of the houses. From the human point of view this was the most impressive thing of the war. Here I heard literally the voice of the people. They cried that their enemies should be trampled in the dust; they gloated over the mute evidence of their enemies' downfall.

WITH THREE ARMIES

The most significant bit of information on the hopes of the military party came to my knowledge about this time. With some other correspondents, I was discussing the probable duration of the war with Lieutenant von L——, of the King's Hussars attached to the General Staff. Lieutenant von L—— had put the question—"How long do you think the war will last?" Remember this conversation took place the first week in September. Guesses were ventured ranging in time from three months to three years. Lieutenant von L——'s surprise increased at every answer. Finally, when three years seemed to be the limit, he smiled and said, "I will let you into a secret. The war will be over in two weeks. I do not say that there may not be some guerilla fighting along different frontiers after that time, but hostilities between great armies will end within two weeks." Obviously he believed that Germany was going to repeat the campaign of 1870. When several of the correspondents tried to argue that this was too much to hope for, and pointed out pregnant reasons for thinking that France and England were not so nearly beaten, the Lieutenant relapsed into moody silence.



GERMANY IN WAR-TIME (*continued*)



CHAPTER VII

GERMANY IN WAR-TIME (*continued*)

PERHAPS the most interesting personality I met in Germany was Lieutenant Werner. He is the man who was the first to fly over Paris and drop bombs on the defenceless inhabitants. Yet he is not a ferocious-looking character, quite otherwise. His gaze as he looks at you through his monocle is mild; he is almost fat. I was told that he was something of a tennis player, but he must have been a bit out of condition when I saw him. Never have I seen a more harmless-looking pirate, for no doubt he is a pirate.

Lieutenant Werner—I am sorry to say he forgot to write his initials for me—of the Imperial Flying Corps, comes from Hanover, where he is well known in sporting circles, and at the outbreak of the war he had taken up flying as an amateur. At this time he had been running his machine about six months. He was immediately enrolled in the ranks of the German aviators and began his duties at once. He followed the first army to Brussels and saw

AT THE FRONT

his first action at the Battle of Mons. His description of the pictures one got of the fighting from a height of two thousand feet was fascinating. It must be the ideal position for a war correspondent. He hovered over the contending armies throughout the day, watching every phase of the fighting.

“The English fight very well; they have held their positions until I could no longer see them because of the smoke of the shells of the heavy German artillery.” Lieutenant Werner speaks with considerable accent. (“Our soldiers came on them from three sides.) I hoped they would be all captured; but at last they began to go, slowly, very slowly.” The aviator followed the retreating armies to Le Cateau, sending back messages of their every move. Here he says the English were again attacked, and when taken in the flank by heavy German fire they were compelled to retire in haste.

His very extraordinary story was of his flight over Paris. Attached to the army of General von Kluck, Lieutenant Werner was directed to fly over the French capital and drop bombs where they would do the most damage. The Eiffel Tower with its wireless apparatus was to be an especial objective.

In flights of this character, safety requires that the aviator maintains a height of from five to

WITH THREE ARMIES

six thousand feet. Werner says that at that height it is impossible to distinguish buildings. Also the smoke which always accumulates in a haze above cities adds to the difficulty of locating fixed points. But there is no trouble in distinguishing the crowds that always gather in the streets when an aviator makes his appearance over a hostile city.

“ To these people I dropped many papers saying that the report that the Russian army was at the gates of Berlin was a lie. This story many French papers had published at that time. Then when I find my little machine going over the Eiffel Tower, I drop two bombs.”

“ Did the bombs fall near the Tower ? ”

“ No, I think not. I could not stay to see. Two other flying-machines were approaching, one a Bleriot and one a double-decker Bristol. I go up at once. I know I can beat the Bristol, but the Bleriot may catch me. He is coming at an angle across the course to my lines. When I am on a higher plane I make straight for home. I must pass that Frenchman ; it is a blood-hot race, but I win. We are so close though, that we fire at one another with our Brownings ; but neither hits. It is difficult to shoot when you are flying. Soon I am well back in my own lines. The Frenchman turns. The next day I go back to Paris and drop more bombs.”

AT THE FRONT

There is the story that comes as near being a realization of Mr. Wells' *War in the Air* as anything that has happened in modern conflict.

What was in my mind during this conversation was, "Does this man know the cowardice of his deeds?" The dropping of a mangling, death-dealing projectile on defenceless women and children was not my idea of soldiering.

"Do you not sometimes drop your bombs on non-combatants?" I was trying to phrase the question diplomatically, when my pirate was called away peremptorily.

To me it was an extraordinary revelation of what discipline would do. Here was a mild-mannered, blue-eyed, fat Teuton, the type you expect to see drinking beer and rearing a large family, doing the most blood-thirsty deeds all at the call of the Kaiser. There was nothing in the outward aspect of Lieutenant Werner to make you suspect that he was the murderer of women and children, yet reduced to plain words, that is what he was. Germany is trying to hide too many crimes under the name of war; she cannot succeed in this case. How she can get her sons to do such things I cannot explain.

During the first week of my stay in Berlin, the "magnificent" plan of campaign of the Kaiser was made known to me. It was not

WITH THREE ARMIES

told me in confidence, so I have no hesitation in repeating it here. I think my informant, who held an official position, was trying to impress me.

Germany was preparing to invade England with a Zeppelin armada. As many as sixteen of the monsters of the air were at that moment ready tugging at their moorings like hounds in leash. When the French army was disposed of, which was only a matter of a week or so (this conversation took place in September, 1914), a strong German force would be sent to take Calais. This accomplished, a new "Krupp surprise" surpassing the 17-inch howitzer would then appear. This is a gun of a longer range than any in existence. It is also 17-inch calibre; but while the howitzer can throw a shell only five miles, it is solemnly affirmed that the new "surprise" can hurl a ton of explosive from Calais to Dover. Six of them mounted at the French port would play havoc with the English Fleet in those waters, and permit the aerial armada to approach the English coast undisturbed. In the consternation that would ensue the German Fleet would emerge. Here another surprise was in store for the foe. All the ships of the Hamburg American Line and the North German Lloyd Line carried guns and were protected with armour plate. This was to be expected;

AT THE FRONT

but they had been altered in outline so that at a distance it was impossible to distinguish them from super-Dreadnoughts of the German type. Thus when this enormous fleet appeared the English would not know on what ships to concentrate their fire. In the confusion, the Germans would have the British warships completely at their mercy. The Fleet destroyed, the German army would then invade England at its leisure. If I may be permitted the phrase, it was "some plan."

While in Berlin, I visited the prison camp at Alten Grabow. There were in captivity about three thousand French soldiers, two thousand Belgians and some English civilians. Alten Grabow is one of the permanent practice manœuvre grounds for the different army corps scattered all over Germany.

The prisoners of war were housed in long stables. There were sixteen of these, and in each not more than three hundred prisoners were confined. Stalls divide the stables, and each stall is floored, carpeted with two sacks of straw which serve the captives as beds. In the mangers at the heads of the stalls were ranged such few knick-knacks as the soldiers still possessed.

The sixteen long stable buildings are surrounded by a barbed-wire fence 8 feet high. Every yards along this wall of wire stands a sentry,

WITH THREE ARMIES

his bayonet glittering in the sun. Inside the barbed-wire fence the prisoners are free to wander as they will, but they hardly ever move a dozen yards from the particular stable to which they are assigned. For the most part they sit in little groups, spiritless and dejected.

I first visited the Belgian captives. They were the men of the Fourth Division who had been taken at Namur. The German officer with me, Lieutenant von Leusner, King of Prussia's Hussars, had been stationed in Washington, and only returned to Germany in time for the war. He made no objection to my questioning the prisoners.

"How long had the fight at Namur lasted?" I asked a corporal of the 13th Line Regiment.

"Not more than two hours," he replied.

"Why did you put up such a feeble resistance?"

"We were too few; outnumbered three or four to one, we were alone. The Germans overran us from three sides."

"Were there no French troops in Namur?"

"No, monsieur, not one."

"And the forts, why did they fall so quickly?"

"They were old. Three shots from the great German guns and they were finished. The Germans were too many for us and their guns were too great."

AT THE FRONT

This last sentence summarized all the explanations of the feeble defence of Namur.

I crossed to the French, and in the first stables I entered saw the slightly wounded. All told, there were about seven hundred hit, but none here showed a severe hurt. They lay stretched on their straw sacks staring straight before them with unseeing eyes. All were gaunt and yellow with privation. Not one moved as I passed down the aisle. Only their glittering eyes showed that they were alive. One remarkable feature of all the wounds was the absence of infection. In all great wars of the past, previous to the Japanese-Russian War, it was rare that wounds would heal cleanly. Gangrene appeared almost immediately, and this infection so complicated the original hurt that a bullet wound in the leg or arm meant the loss of the limb. In the thorax the appearance of gangrene meant death. To-day a man may be struck as often as five times—I have seen such cases—and yet not be classed as dangerously wounded. With ordinary care the bullet-holes heal rapidly.

Here I had a chance to contrast the uniforms. Not only does the German soldier fade into the dust, but his uniform is well adapted to the needs of his work. The French soldier is not only as conspicuous as a windmill on the sky line, but

WITH THREE ARMIES

his long coat and baggy trousers make the lightest work around camp a heavy, physical strain.

I questioned a soldier of the Hundred and Ninetieth French Infantry about the fighting at Mons and Charleroi ; here is his description.

“ It was Saturday, August 22nd, and very foggy. We did not know we were being attacked until the shells began falling from the sky. We took our places in the trenches, but could see nothing, for the fog surrounded us. Out of this invisibility bullets began to come. We could see nothing, but we knew the Germans were in front ; so we too, fired.

“ For a time the fire slackened, and we were confident we had driven them back, then, like ghosts, there came thundering down on our flank a squadron of Hussars. On their hats were the skull and cross-bones of Death. They stumbled on our trenches, and our guns drove them back. Then the artillery commenced again. We could hear the shells singing overhead.

“ All day long the fighting lasted. We shot and shot until I no longer had any feeling in my shoulder. Still the Germans came. We knew there were more and more of them from the downpour of their bullets ; yet even when the fog lifted we saw only a very few. It was fighting the unseen. Then came the order to fall

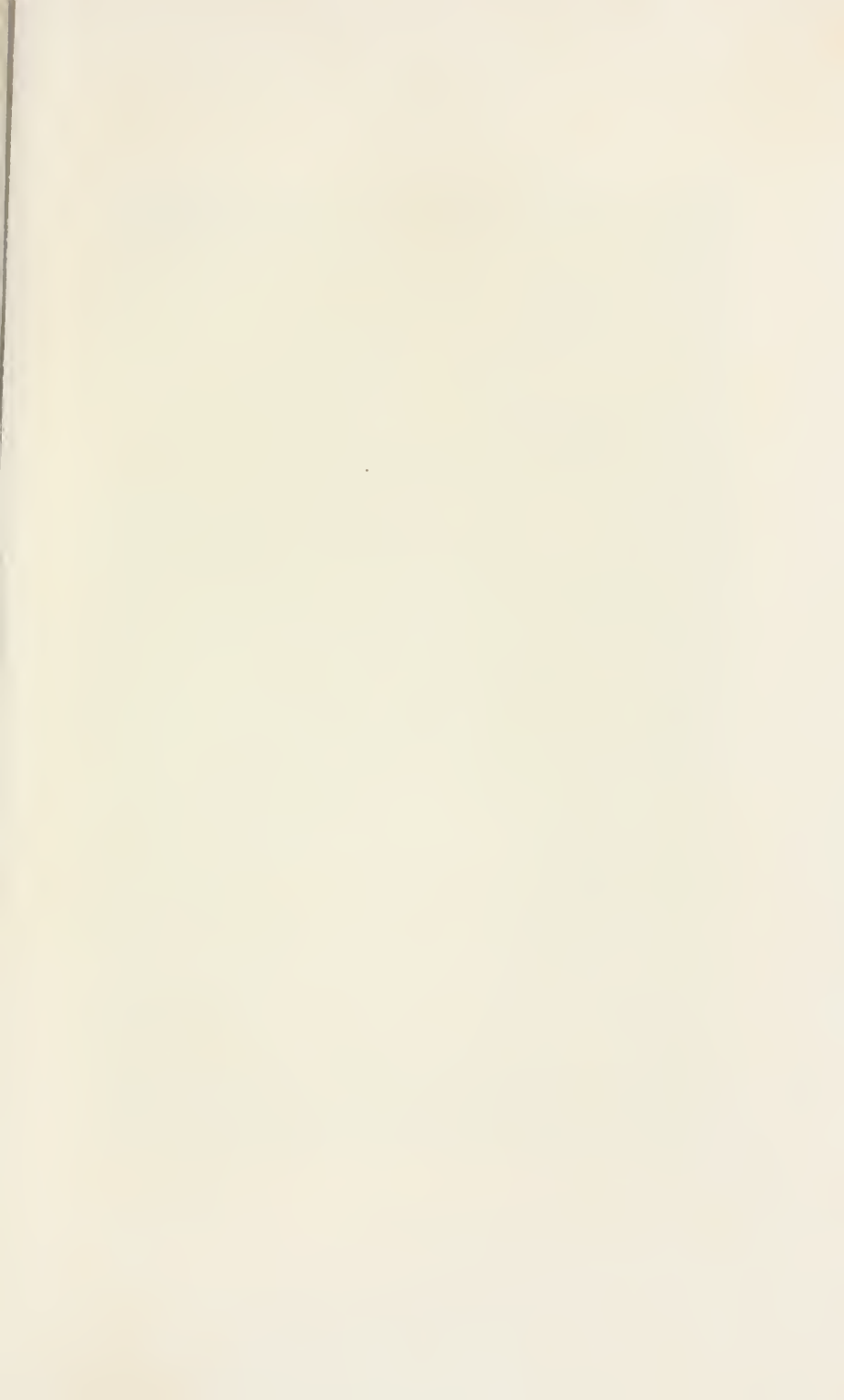
AT THE FRONT

back, but before we could move they had surrounded us. Then they brought us here.”

When I questioned him as to his treatment as a prisoner, he had but one complaint—the ration of bread was short. He had soup and coffee, all that soldiers could expect, but not enough bread. Lieutenant von Leusner overheard this. It was explained that the bakery had broken down for the day. A full allowance was promised shortly.

Conspicuous among the French prisoners were the “Turcos.” The Germans made little secret that they hated the black soldiers. I had been told that they were shown no quarter; but here was evidence to the contrary. The prison officer stated that they made more trouble than all the other prisoners combined. Among the captives were a number of alleged franc-tireurs. They were caught not actually firing—in that case there would have been short shrift for them—but under circumstances that pointed to their having aided the French. Some of these were wounded.

The sanitary arrangements of the camp were primitive but safe. Down the central open space between the stables were placed a number of washing troughs supplied with running water. Here the men could bathe if they wished, and under certain restrictions, wash their clothes.





The single British prisoner at Alten Grabow, Germany. September, 1914.

WITH THREE ARMIES

By mistake, a number of severely wounded prisoners were sent to Alten Grabow. These were housed in little lazarettos near the entrance to the camp. Their plight was pitiful. They lay very quiet. One does not move when a cruel bit of iron has torn its jagged way across your chest. While everything possible was being done for them, yet their wounds demanded all the conveniences of a modern hospital.

Despondency—that was the dominant note of these prisoners of war. They sat about in listless groups hardly talking, each one busy with his own thoughts. A few played cards, but the game went on perfunctorily. Time and again they would turn their eyes to the high fence of barbed-wire and the helmeted Prussian with his gun, pacing behind it. Then, hopelessly, their glances would come back. Escape was not to be dreamed of, and they had no news; only story after story of French defeats with which their captors fed them. This was the true refinement of cruelty.

It seems curious that with all the improvement in the general conditions of warfare, the prisoner is still as badly off as he was during the Civil War. Once captured he becomes something of an outcast. His own people take almost no further interest in him. It is simpler to enlist new men than to exchange captives. Then there

AT THE FRONT

is always a stigma attached to a surrender. So the position of the prisoners of war does not excite the sympathy it should. This is not fair. From what I have seen of them they are entitled at least to a square deal. Their existence should not be forgotten. The machinery of an exchange is, I know, complicated and slow, but that is an evil which could be cured. The intervention of neutrals is always possible. In justice to the men that fill the war prisons on all sides, a simpler and quicker method of exchange should be devised.

In Germany I found the same prejudice against allowing correspondents in the zone of operations as existed in France. I cannot leave the prisoners without mentioning an incident which might have brought me into uncomfortable complications. While I was inspecting the different French quarters I soon found myself among troops with the familiar 148 on their collars. This told me that things had gone badly with my friends after I had left Dinant. I was talking with Lieutenant von Leusner when I noticed that two of the French soldiers were regarding me fixedly. Suddenly I heard one of them whisper to the other.

“ C'est le journaliste qui était avec nous, n'est-ce pas ? ”

The soldier addressed studied me for a min-

WITH THREE ARMIES

ute—luckily I was dressed differently—then after a pause he replied:

“Non, pas possible.”

I have often wondered what would have been the effect on my German officer guide if these former comrades had openly greeted me. Yet the officials in Berlin were infinitely more considerate and courteous in their treatment of the newspaper man than the officials of the other nations. I will not discuss the general attitude of the military towards the correspondent here. I reserve that for a later chapter. I take this occasion to thank Baron von Mumm for the invariably polite reception he gave me at the time of my visits. While I never reached the actual “front” from the German side I was allowed to visit the forts of Liège. As I had seen the German assaults on the famous Belgian city, I was delighted with this chance of seeing the ground from the German side.

Eight of the correspondents who were in Berlin at the time made up the party bound for Liège, and in the stock phrase everything was done for our comfort. It was during this trip that I met Mr. Irwin Cobb of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Mr. Louis of the “Associated Press,” and Mr. John McCutcheon of the *Chicago Tribune*. These gentlemen, under the advice of a German military doctor, were taking the waters at Aix-la-

AT THE FRONT

Chapelle. Not that they were prisoners. No, even when they were in the guardhouse with a sentry standing over them, they were assured that they were nothing so low as prisoners, they were guests. Mr. Cobb told the story of their chase after an elusive battle, and it is the only bit of humour the war has yet afforded. I see in his published article that he suppresses much that was amusing in his adventures. After all, war is not a joking matter.

We went by motor from Aix to Liége. That motor trip told me more than all the stories of atrocities I had read in the Brussels papers. Here was the evidence of a crime that still cries to heaven for vengeance. Whole villages given to the flames. Towns once sheltering ten thousand peaceful people, now no more than blackened walls and rubble. God knows what had become of the inhabitants.

What proved to me more than anything else that the accusation made by Germany that Belgium was preparing for war was false, was the evidence of the feeble resistance put up by the Belgian troops along the line of the frontier. They did destroy sections of the railroads and dynamite certain tunnels, but this is not actively holding the invader in check. The country hereabouts is full of splendid defensive positions. Every road is commanded by higher

WITH THREE ARMIES

ground that would have been favourable to the defenders, and every ford and bridge offers the same chance. For some reason I am not able to understand, the Belgians preferred to make their stands in the towns along the roads. Perhaps they thought the walls of the houses preferable protection to the positions that might easily have been fortified in the open country. It was unfortunate both from a military point of view and a civil one, that the towns were made the rallying points of defence. Naturally the enemy turned his artillery against the houses where the Belgians were posted. Then when they had gained a town, they utterly destroyed it on the ground that it had sheltered fighting soldiers. It did not matter to the Germans that a citizen might have his home occupied by the soldiery through *force majeure* and that he himself wished only to avoid the actual conflict. Now, in their policy of spreading terror through the peace-loving population of the country they were going to over-ride, they put all to fire and sword. If there is a just God, Germany must pay heavily for this crime.

As Germany has been the chief war-like power she has had the making of the rules of the game. From a military point of view I see the course of German reasoning in this matter. Brutally, it is that in order to advance through an enemy's

AT THE FRONT

country with the minimum of loss, the civil population must be terrorized. In Germany I heard circumstantial stories of the attacks made by civilian men and even women on the German detachments advancing through Belgium. I do not know whether the stories were true or untrue. I think some of them were true ; but what did the Germans expect when they threw two hundred thousand of the most brutal soldiers the world has seen, into what was at the time the most peace-loving nation of Europe. It was the most conspicuous example of Might overriding Right that history records. When one reflects on the course of Germany in this war, how trivial the tomes of platitudes published from the Hague Peace Bureau seem.

Coming on Liége from the east, I realized that the difficulties of the attack were not as great as I had imagined them to be. There were plenty of gun positions, and what surprised me, a good deal of cover for troops advancing against the forts. As I have said here the country is higher than along the valley of the river. It forms a sort of tableland.

Our inspection was confined to the Forts Pontisse and Loncin. In this last fort General Leman had his headquarters during the fighting. The forts in Belgium are nothing like the popular conception of such defences. At a little

WITH THREE ARMIES

distance they look like hills dotted here and there with Brobdingnagian mushrooms. The hills are the forts proper, actually subterranean chambers where the main garrison live, and from which the turrets, the mushrooms referred to above, protrude. Of course the outline of the fort is cut with trench and sap where infantry can be placed in order to repel assaulting infantry, but all the artillery operations take place underground. Tunnels lead from one section to the other, reminding one of the cross section of an ant-heap, while faint incandescent lights show the path ahead. I had the same feeling, not altogether a pleasant one, that I had when I visited the Catacombs in going through these forts. The thought of the Catacombs came back to me more vividly at Loncin. Here, about six hundred of the garrison had been trapped underground.

Our guides took us through the magazines, and I saw that the Belgians had plenty of ammunition when they were compelled to surrender. The German officers, however, pointed out that the forts were not in a proper condition for effective defence. One of the most important features of forts of this character is the system of fire control. A telephone connexion is established leading to all the different points—offensive and defensive—of the periphery. Without this

AT THE FRONT

the commander is in the dark. At Pontisse the telephone system was being arranged while the attack was going on.

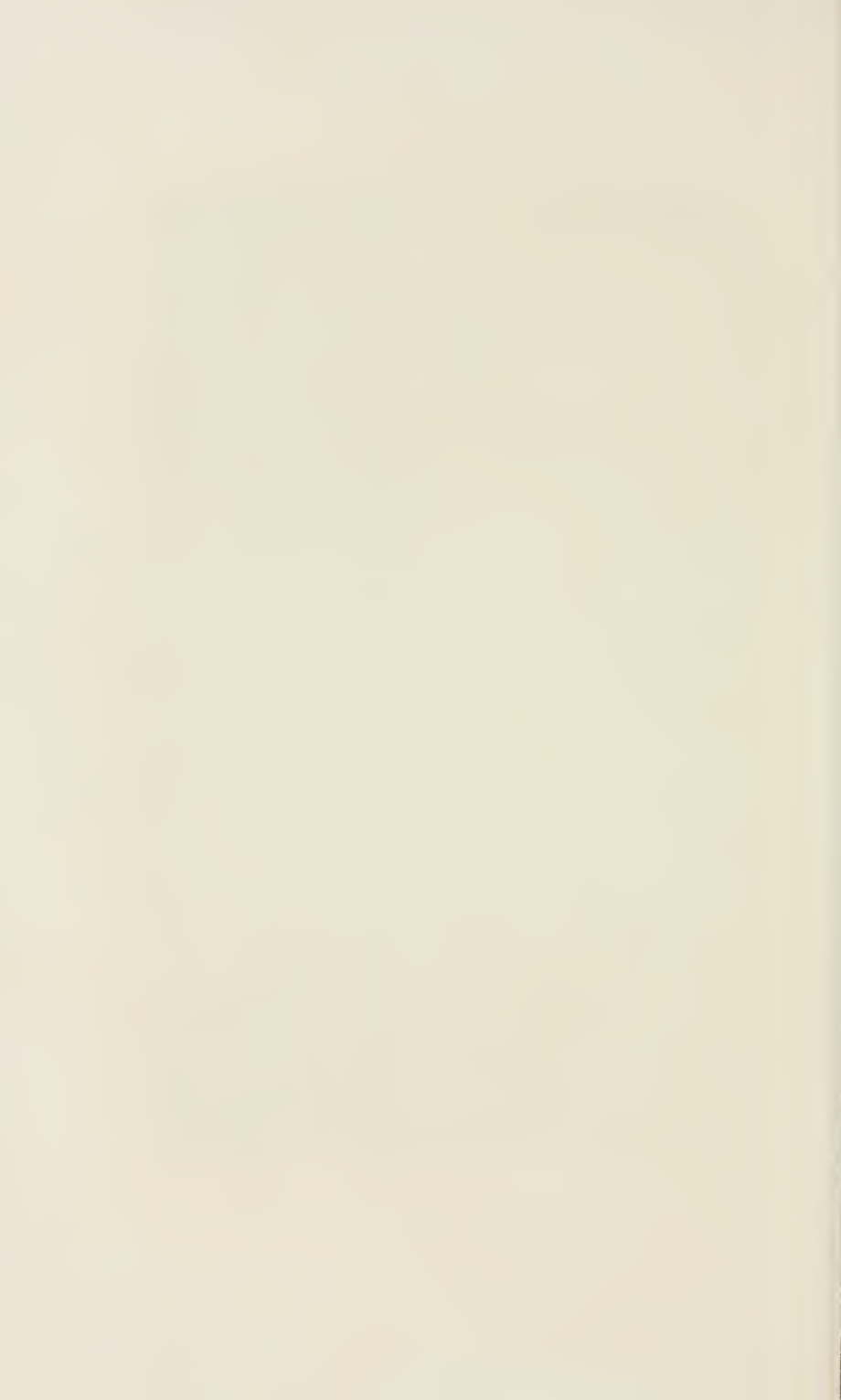
The turrets are the unique feature of this type of forts. From the outside they resemble a huge iron mushroom. From the inside they almost duplicate the gun chamber of a battleship. Here are all the mechanical devices used on shipboard—the ammunition hoist, the sighting mechanism, a bewildering battery of levers and screws and electrical switches. Right beside the position of the gun-pointer hangs a telephone receiver. Through this receiver he gets his orders and clamps his piece accordingly. Projectile and powder come up out of the darkness below. One follows the other into the breech. It is closed and locked, then the turret-turning and lifting mechanism is put into operation. The iron mushroom revolves—pushes out from the side of the hill—comes to a stop: a bursting explosion, and it sinks back like a turtle withdrawing his head.

All of the turrets I saw contained two six-inch guns. I did not see any piece of larger calibre. I do not think that there are any guns of larger size at Liége. If this is so it makes the resistance put up by the Belgians all the more praiseworthy. When we were surveying the country from the tops of the fort, the German major of



Fort Pontisse, Liège.

Notice mushroom turret where men are standing. Guns there.



WITH THREE ARMIES

artillery who was in charge of the party pointed out the different positions occupied by their gun batteries. The emplacement of their seventeen-inch howitzers was not more than five miles distant. The whole hillside which composed the face of the fort was peppered with huge craters marking where the attackers' shell had struck. At Pontisse I did not see any evidence of extraordinary damage done. The dents made in the turret covers were of no importance, while projectiles landing on the hillside must have exploded harmlessly.

At Fort Loncin one got a very different picture of the effect of German artillery fire. Here a shell had penetrated to the magazine, and wrecked the fort more thoroughly than an earthquake could have done. Nothing now remains but a mass of iron and rubble. The cement walls of the underground passages were reduced to so much slag. The conning towers were tossed about like old stove-pipes. The face of the hill looked as if it had suffered a landslide. As I made my way cautiously over the débris I recognized a smell I have come to know too well—the odour of corruption. Under ruins over which I climbed were the bodies of the entrapped garrison. Here and there I saw a bit of uniform—a cap, a torn coat, a shoe—mute evidence of the human side of this struggle. For the six hun-

AT THE FRONT

dred brave soldiers of Belgium who lie here entombed, Fort Loncin is a glorious monument. I have not been able to reconcile the differences in the date given by the Belgian staff and that given by the Germans for the fall of Liége. The Germans told me that they were in full possession on the eighth of August. The Belgians insisted that the forts were still holding out as late as the fifteenth.

The amount of damage done to the city of Liége was inconsiderable. A number of shells had fallen into the central portion of the town, but as they were from the smaller German field guns they left little mark. A few houses had been destroyed. These, our guide told us, had belonged to a band of Russian students who had defied German authority. One saw the burnt houses ; one could picture what had happened to the students.

It was easy to see that the people here were a conquered race. Sullen looks followed the grey motors of the Germans everywhere. The women did not attempt to disguise their glances of hate and rancour. Woe betide the Germans if this civil population gets the chance to pay off old scores.

In Liége I saw the arrogance of the German to his enemy. The attitude of the swaggering junkers must have been particularly galling to

WITH THREE ARMIES

these people. Not only had they been compelled to pay an enormous ransom, but now they must harbour the enemy who had made the city an advanced base, and watch in impotence the many preparations going forward for the making of war against their own kin and their allies.

Here it was that the German major showed his brutality by violently upbraiding the waiter who served us at lunch for misunderstanding his order given in German. He stormed and swore in the proverbial fashion of the trooper, insisting that the poor Fleming knew German perfectly and only pretended ignorance in order to show his hatred of the conquerors. In fairness I cannot say that I saw many similar incidents.

The two things which met the visitor on all sides at this time in Germany was first the supreme confidence of the whole population in their ultimate success, and next the virulent hatred of the English. Nothing was too vile to say of the British people, no adjective too contemptible for the little army from England which had checked them. This hatred showed itself in the ridicule heaped on the prisoners of the Scottish regiments, and distinction in the treatment given to the English captives and that given to the French and Belgians.

The last two days of my stay in Berlin saw a startling change in the aspect of the city. The

AT THE FRONT

singing, shouting, enthusiastic mob that had thronged the streets during the previous fortnight suddenly divided into hundreds of little groups that stood about discussing the news of the day in low, concerned voices. The stream of humanity that nightly coursed up and down Unter den Linden had changed its character. It had lost its boisterousness. Some subtle alchemy was at work.

The change came about slowly. It began with the news of the Battle of Lemberg. Despite the claims of the bulletins from Austria, it was soon whispered about that the army of Franz Josef had been smashed. The bulletin which stated that "for strategic and humane reasons the Austrian forces had been withdrawn to a stronger position in the rear," told its own story. Why they should withdraw for "humane" reasons except through concern for the lives of their own soldiers, was not explained.

Shortly after the battle of Lemberg the Austrian cavalry officers, General von Uexhel, and General Paar, an aide-de-camp of the Emperor, passed through Berlin on their way to the Great General Staff. They carried the Austrian cry for help against the Russians, and it was the answer to this call, the transposition of certain army corps from the West to the Eastern theatre of operations, that ruined the German campaign in France.

WITH THREE ARMIES

Immediately there followed a change in the dispositions of the armies of the North. Two corps from General von Bülow's army entrained and were hurried across the Empire. Every other railroad in Germany stood still while this movement was carried out. The depleting of the forces in France at this time was a vital error. It is said that it saved Vienna. This is doubtful, as Vienna was not in imminent danger, but it surely lost the Germans Paris.

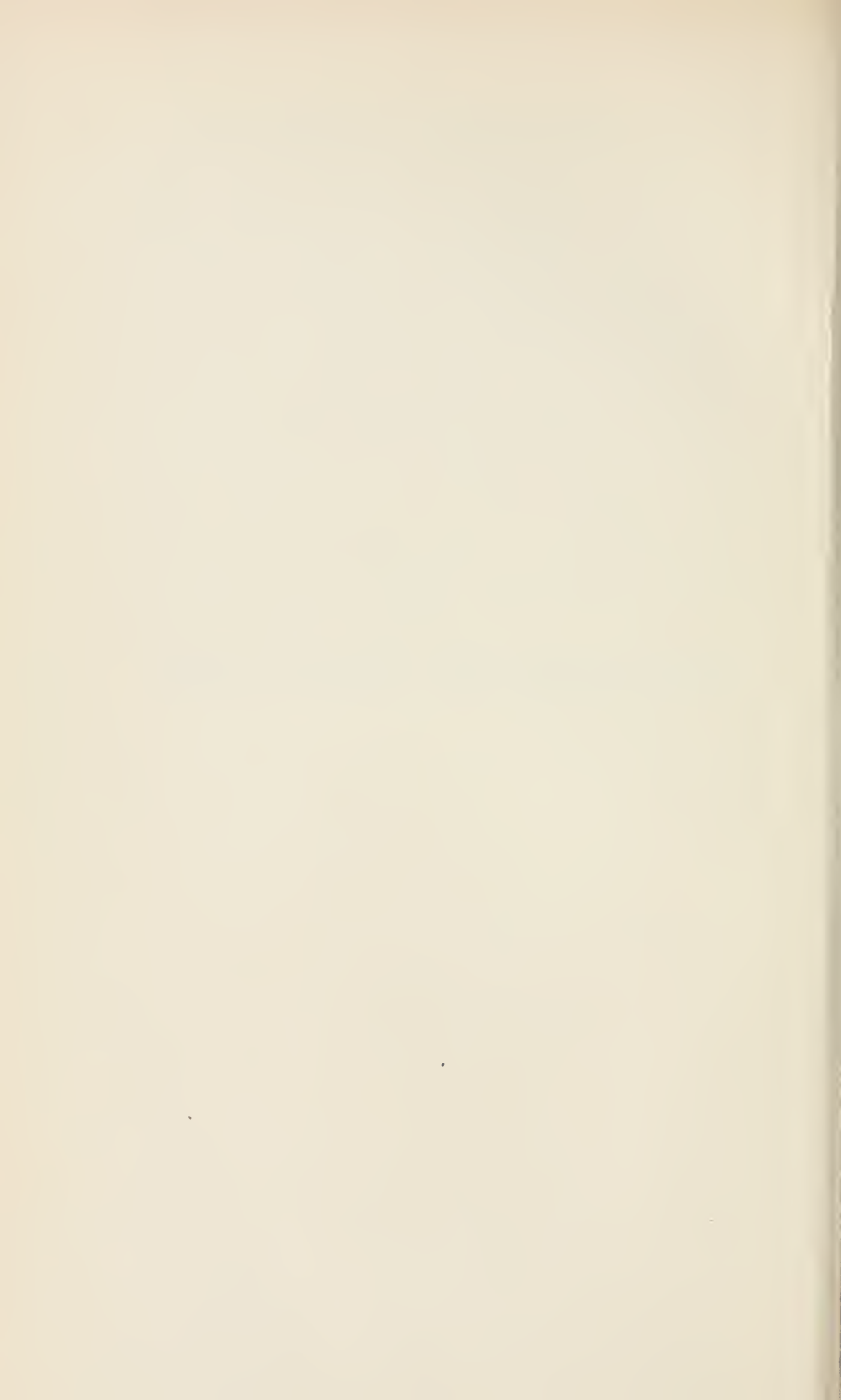
The news of von Kluck's reverse came at the very moment when the Berliners were expecting to read of the capture of the French capital. The wording of the bulletin from the General Staff on the subject, while not alarming, was significant. But it came as a shock. The people had been told that von Kluck's cavalry patrols were under the walls of Paris. Why then had it not fallen? Accustomed as the populace were to the accounts of success following success, the news of a check was doubly disquieting. Bulletins stating the total number of prisoners of war—some two hundred and twenty thousand—brought no cheers from the crowds outside the newspaper offices. They wanted Paris.

There is another side to the picture of life in Berlin. Mourning is more and more in evidence, and I noticed each day more and more death-

AT THE FRONT WITH THREE ARMIES

cards "For King and Fatherland" among the advertisements in the newspapers. A son, a husband, a brother was lamented. These cards appeared in the journals throughout the Empire. I saw them in newspapers published in Hanover, Cologne, and Aix-la-Chapelle, all using almost the same phraseology. The Germans had a rather cruel way of sending news of a soldier's death. One morning a mother, a wife, or a sister would receive back a letter she had sent to the loved one in the firing line. In red ink across the face of the envelope was written the one pregnant word, "Gefallen."

BACK WITH THE FRENCH ARMY



CHAPTER VIII

BACK WITH THE FRENCH ARMY

AS there seemed little chance of my being allowed to witness the operations of the German army for some considerable period, I was recalled to London. It would not be just if I did not record the fact that all the time I was on German soil I met only with courtesy and civility from the authorities. I also feel sure that the gentlemen of the Foreign Office made every endeavour to have me attached to the head-quarters in the field. But the military who were in the saddle in German affairs could not be bothered with correspondents at that moment. I regret that I had not the opportunity of seeing the German going into action from his own side. It might have thrown some light on certain of his tactics which seemed entirely unsound.

I did have the chance of making some study of the German supply organization, and their system for the evacuation of the wounded. In general terms these two important factors in an army's success could not be improved upon. In

AT THE FRONT

fact the whole German military organization seemed to me to justify all that I have heard our enthusiastic attachés say in praise of the marvellous war machine. If the Prussian fails the fault will not lie here.

When I got back into France I found the whole situation changed. The Battle of the Marne had been fought and the victorious onslaught of the Germans checked. If it were not for the fact that one of the most difficult of military feats is to turn a losing army into a winning one at a moment's notice, I think General Fuchs, when he pierced the German line, might almost have fought his way clean through.

The mix-up along the enemies' front at this time, makes it impossible to come to definite conclusions as to what might have happened if the initial success of the Allies could have been pressed home. At any rate Paris was for the time safe, and the Germans could be defeated. These were the important facts.

I hope I may never see Paris again under the same circumstances. I could not have believed that the light-hearted capital of the French could have been so transformed. It was a veritable *morgue*. It might have been a city suffering a terrible pestilence. All the shops were closed, the heavy iron windows never being lifted during the twenty-four hours of the day. The few people who passed on the



French soldier with proclamation of capture of Rheims issued by German General.



WITH THREE ARMIES

streets hurried by as if they were afraid some one might accost them. The effects of the panic that ensued when the Government deserted the capital, were visible everywhere. Yet behind the despair that showed in the faces of the people was an invincible courage. The French were a people with their backs to the wall.

Such a thing as getting a pass to follow the French armies being entirely out of the question, correspondents had to take all sorts of chances in order to do their duty by their papers. My original *modus operandi*, which was to place myself where I expected the "front" to come and there await developments, had become more and more difficult. The Germans were no longer advancing. And the French troops had monopolized all the means of communication. When I finally managed to get near the field of operations, I found that the modern battle had two distinct drawbacks. It was too long in time, and too long in space. The battle of the Aisne was still going strong after twelve days of uninterrupted fighting, and it was being fought along a front of one hundred miles. This was fairly early in the combat. How long it finally lasted, and how much ground it covered, I have never been able correctly to decide—and the authorities differ. If a correspondent attempted to tell the story of such a battle completely he would fill a large

AT THE FRONT

volume. Unfortunately he can only see a limited section of the field, and what he reports is merely of local interest, one might say. If I were a censor I would let all the correspondents get right into the trenches with the troops. That is, if I wanted them to send back news that could not be of the slightest use to the enemy. The man who attempts to paint word scenes of modern-day battles can only produce miniatures.

After twelve days of continuous fighting, it is not to be expected that infantry will advance with dash. In battle formation they crawl forward. On the Aisne it was approximately five miles from the German gun positions to the French emplacements. The French infantry took a full day to cover half that distance. This was about the rate of progress of the whole French army. During the later operations, when the infantry was in contact all along the front from Belfort to Nieuport, an advance of less than this meant a prolonged battle wherever it was attempted. The armies were like tired wrestlers struggling for each inch of advantage without apparently moving, while they are making the most violent efforts. Seen apart, the engagement one day at Soissons would in any other age have been classed as a considerable battle. To-day it is only an incident in a series.

Under the present conditions of modern war-

WITH THREE ARMIES

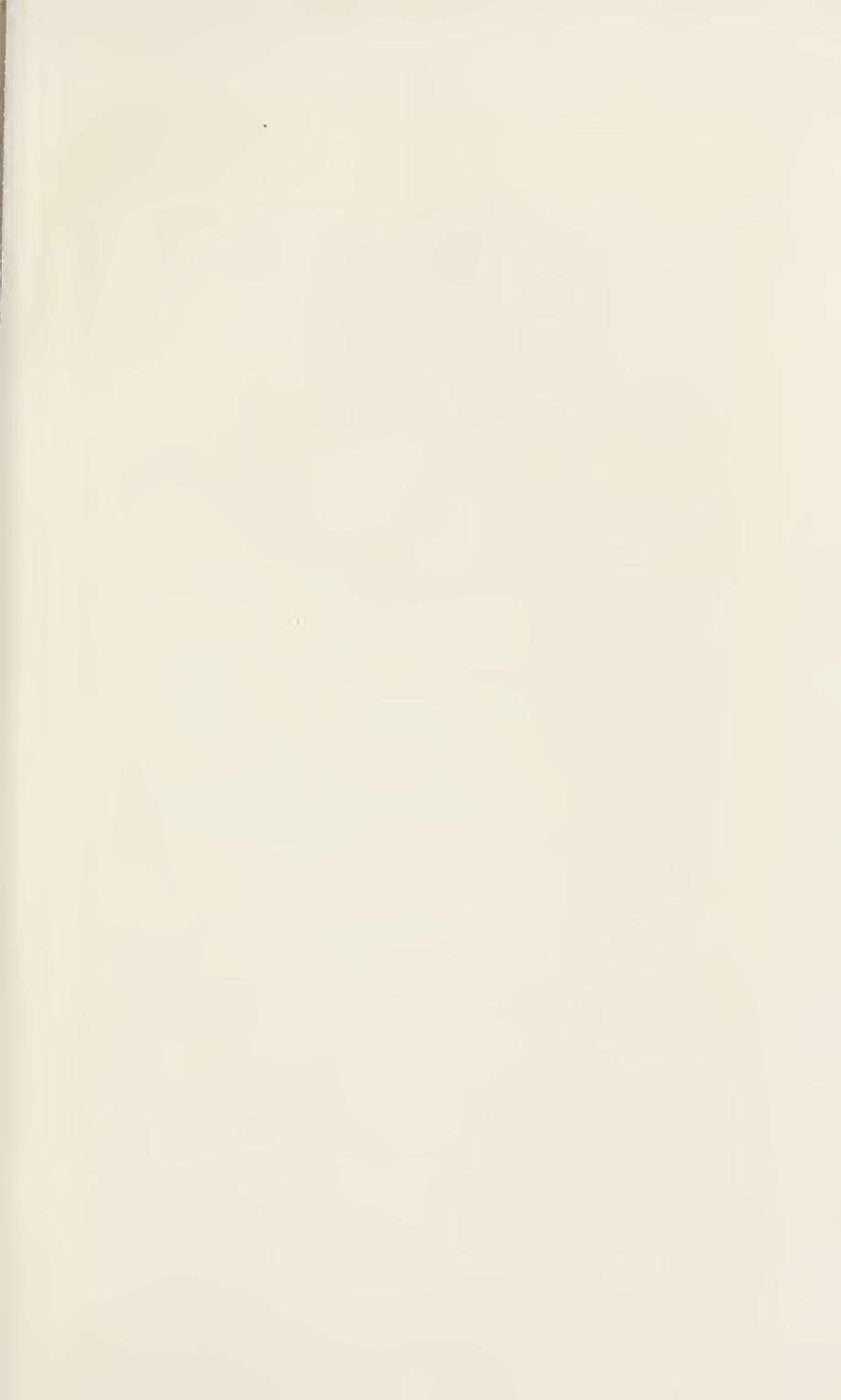
fare, military movements are carried on at a snail's pace. The cavalry soon loses its snap. Luckily, as the lines close it is no longer needed to develop infantry positions. The work of scouting is somewhat relaxed as the general position of the enemy is known. Then soldiers become veterans after a month's fighting of this nature. Everything becomes a matter of dull routine. The man becomes accustomed to warfare. The artillery loses the feverish haste which marked its operations during the earlier days of campaigning. Batteries take their stand to cover infantry advances with deliberation. Pieces are loaded, sighted, fired, and loaded again slowly and mechanically. With the artillery the matter of range-finding has been greatly simplified since the era of the aeroplane. Whenever a battery commander takes position, he turns his glasses skyward to see if he can discover any of his air scouts to spot for him. It is the duty of aviators to hover over the gun position of the enemy, and so disclose the point of fire for their own artillery. When an artilleryman sees one of his own flyers cutting figure eights off on the horizon, he trains his guns below him. Then in a manner most leisurely he opens fire. As with the old system, while the friendly artillery attempts to silence the guns of the enemy, the infantry forms its line of battle. The men go to their positions

AT THE FRONT

with just as much hurry as labourers going to work. Once under the protecting salvoes of the artillery, they go forward, but not as the charging mass pictured in the illustrated papers. Rather do they give one the impression of weary men who have a difficult and disagreeable task before them and who are determined to carry it through. These are the impressions of war as one sees it waged to-day.

I found nearly all the doors closed to the writer in France. That is, the writer of the news of the war. How the French Government was able to forbid not only the foreign correspondents but their own journalists in the war zone is beyond understanding. The French are a nation of writers, and here, day by day, material was being produced which would give men with but a modicum of talent the chance to shine as bright lights of literature, yet the French newspapers carried less war news than any in the world, I dare say. Personally I look on this as a great loss. I do not believe that the suppression of the little information which under the censorship in vogue might leak out, would make up to France for what she has lost to literature by forbidding her writers the fields of battle.

In my own case I decided to make myself as inconspicuous as an ant. Yet I fear I hold the record for arrests. Three times have I been held





German prisoners in street in Sexanne. September 19,

WITH THREE ARMIES

in durance vile, as the phrase goes, and those two words describe the situation accurately.

Remarkable as it seems, I found in all countries where the war was in progress, that the easiest way of getting from place to place was by train. Invariably when I travelled by motor I was stopped. But when I decided on the point which promised the most favourable field, and then bought a ticket to the nearest town on the railroad to that point, I always got there. The train service was kept up as well as could be under the circumstances, which was certainly a godsend to the correspondents. At the time of which I write, the second week in September, much space had been devoted to the battles directly in front of Paris, but little had been written concerning the operations in the East beyond Châlons-sur-Marne. These were grouped together under the title the Battle of the Marne, but they were distinct in result and bearing on the future plan of the Germans. As this had been the country where Napoleon had fought a very interesting campaign, the field was doubly interesting. With the object of covering this field I bought my ticket to Sézanne, and started early one morning for as near the front as circumstances would permit.

I remember when I arrived in the unpretentious French town that the landlady said luckily I

AT THE FRONT

could have a room. The officer who had occupied it had died the day before, and as the *Hôtel du Boule d'Or* seemed to suit me, I occupied the unfortunate officer's bed, but I don't think I had any bad dreams. The hotel was a sort of unofficial hospital, and I was continually meeting orderlies carrying meals to the upper rooms.

From all sides I heard rumours of the doings of the German Crown Prince, who commanded the invading armies in this section, and for a brief time he, with his staff, had occupied the Château de Mondemont. I motored out to the Château, which is about ten miles north of Sézanne, and there I was able to compile the story of the repulse of the army of the Crown Prince.

The Château of Mondemont was a tornado centre of attack and defence during the battle. When the fighting began it sheltered the staff of the German army. In the next three days it was taken and re-taken four times. Bullet-spattered walls, the shell-rent roof, great craters of fresh-turned earth that peppered the lawn, trees split and shivered across the road, testify to the smothering of shot and shell it had suffered, and gaping round holes four feet in diameter had been opened by the giant projectiles in the Château garden walls.

When I was there, blood-stained uniforms—the blue and red of the French and the grey of the

WITH THREE ARMIES

German—still littered the lawn. Piles of empty cartridge-cases, rifles broken at the stock, bits of leather, and here and there an unexploded projectile, tell a story of fighting more fierce than that which raged around the farm of Hougoumont at Waterloo.

Mounds of newly-turned earth spot the roadside. Crosses, from which a *képi* or a *casqué* hang, mark these graves of friend and foe. Such is the grim testimony of their heroism.

Inside the Château is evidence of another kind. In every room, amid the débris of fallen plaster and shattered woodwork are dozens of empty champagne bottles. The old concierge who leads me from room to room tells of the nights of revelry enjoyed by the German staff. He describes the dinner of the night before the French attack. The countryside was ravaged to furnish the table of the Germans. I tried to get the old man to describe the Crown Prince, whom he served so often, but he could say no more than that he was very young and very proud.

While the Allied Armies were carrying through the splendid offensive movement at Meaux and Soissons on the left and left centre, the right centre was also advancing irresistibly against the enemy. Roughly, the army of the Crown Prince occupied the front from Fère-Champenoise to a point east of Epernay. The advance guard

AT THE FRONT

was on the road Sézanne-Epernay, and the Crown Prince is supposed himself to have slept in the Château de Mondemont the night before the French took the offensive. The German army is estimated at five corps d'armée.

The country between Sézanne and Epernay presents problems that would tax the ingenuity of the most astute strategist. Rolling with a few wood-covered hills, here and there villages joined by fair roads, it looks on the surface entirely practicable for all operations. But it is a death-trap. The valleys are wide swamps. And into these swamps the enemy was finally driven. While I was at the Château a dozen starving German soldiers—some of whom were wounded, came out of hiding in the marshland and gave themselves up. They had been concealed for days; in the *moraines*, as the swamps are called, are sunk some forty pieces of German artillery.

According to a copy of the order of battle issued by the commander of the French Army Corps, the "Division du Maroc" had the honour of the assault on Mondemont. The soldier who was my guide over the battlefield ran short of adjectives in describing their bravery. The savagery of war is pure joy to the "Turco."

When the order to assault came, like a pack of wolves they struggled up to the German position. On they pushed, smashed by the rifle

WITH THREE ARMIES

fire, but always advancing. As they drew nearer many threw away their guns and rushed at the foe, armed only with the vicious French bayonet. Nothing human could stand before them. Fighting stubbornly the Germans fell back. But no sooner had the French entered the Château than they in turn came under the German shell fire. With this protection the enemy came closer and closer. The infantry crept from the bottom to the top of the hill, and slowly the French retired. Every square yard of the walls of Mondemont shows a dozen bullet scars. The wooden shutters of the windows are starred with holes, and these marks of battle are almost equal on the east and west faces of the building. The Germans held the place but an hour, when the French retook it. Then an annihilating gunfire drove them out. But they would not be baulked of their prey. Reforming in sheltered ground, they took up the counter charge. Now the 75 centimetre guns of the French play havoc with Mondemont. With a yell the gallant "Division du Maroc" charge and retake it. Troops of the second line are rushed to their support. For the second time that day the Château is in the hands of the rightful owners.

There is a pause in the fighting. Both armies are literally panting from their labours. The head-quarters of the French corps begins work

AT THE FRONT

among the débris of torn papers left behind by the German staff. A new order of battle is issued. Its final words are "*Résister à l'outrance*"! Such is the spirit of the French in their fighting. But like gluttons for war the enemy comes back to the attack next morning. Under a superbly gauged gunfire the grey-coated light infantry move forward on Mondemont. They outnumber the French. Bit by bit the latter give way. For the third time the enemy holds this key of the battle-ground.

Then the whole story is repeated. Again the "Turcos" dash into the murderous fire coming from the Château. The supports from the line regiments follow on their heels. The Germans fall back, the Château de Mondemont again flies the tricolour of France.

With this break in the centre the whole line of the enemy wavers. The French press forward at every point. The Germans gradually withdraw, converging on the road Châlons-sur-Marne-Verdun. In this withdrawal they stumble into the swamps.

The artillery dashing across country for the roads in the rear first fall into the quagmires. The horses flounder about in the mud up to their cinches, while caisson follows gun into the marsh. The retreating infantry comes to the assistance of the gunners. They manage to bring a little

WITH THREE ARMIES

order out of the chaos. Fighting a rear-guard action, the proud army of the Crown Prince makes good its escape. It had been within sixty miles of Paris when it was defeated.

I have put together this story of the defeat of the Crown Prince from the testimony of eye-witnesses. Soldiers who were in the fighting, peasants who viewed it from afar, an intelligent curate and the veteran keeper of the Château have contributed parts of the picture. The rest I have seen for myself. When there I still saw the débris of battle. Piles of brass cartridge cases marked the artillery positions, empty small-arms shells told where the infantry had fought. In itself, the ruin of the Château spoke more vividly of ruthless war than anything I had heretofore seen, except the newly-filled-in trenches marked at both ends with rude crosses. As I stood before one of these reflecting, my soldier guide said in a low voice—

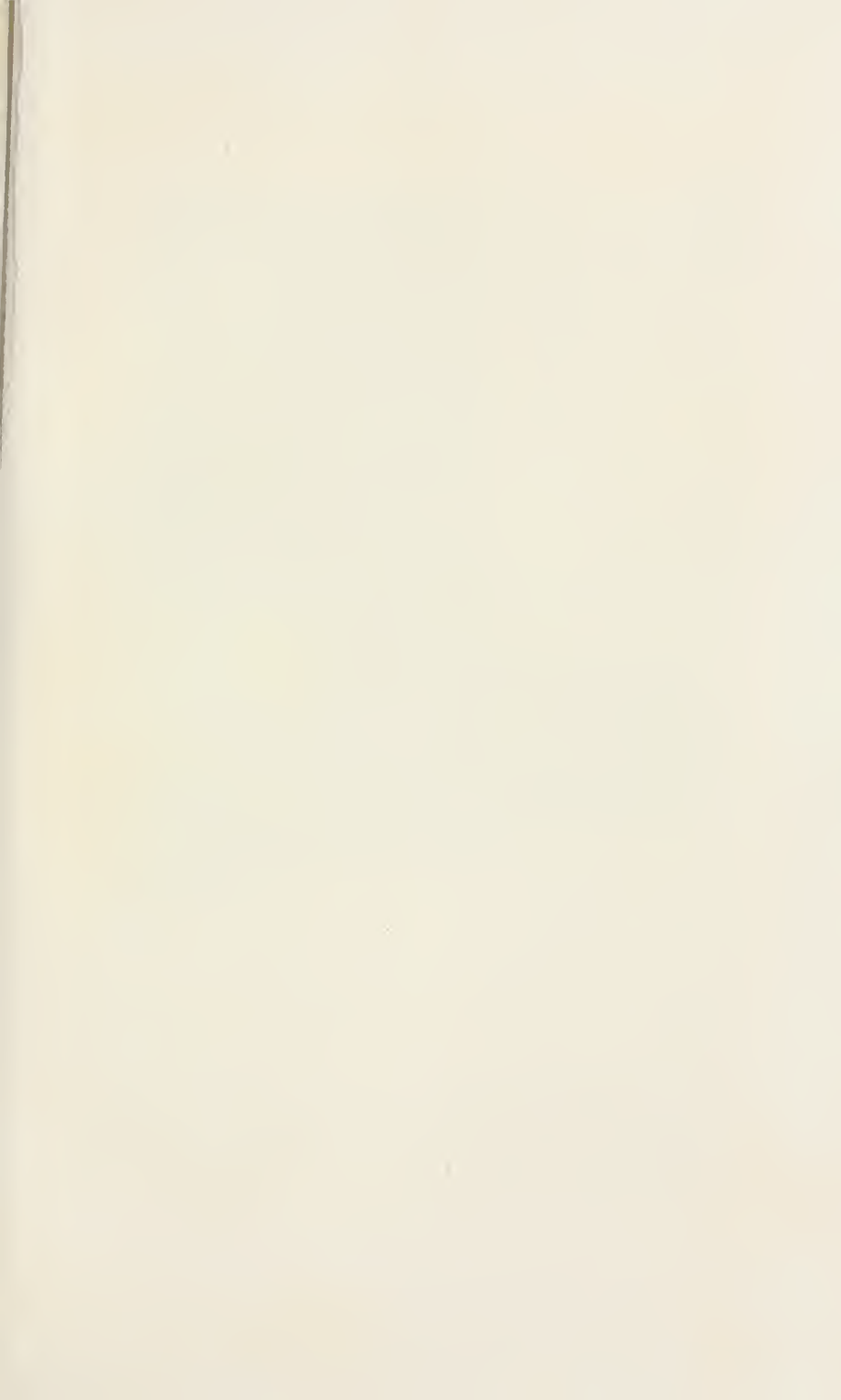
“Sixty of us lie there, monsieur,” and this was but one of hundreds of these graves that marked the countryside.

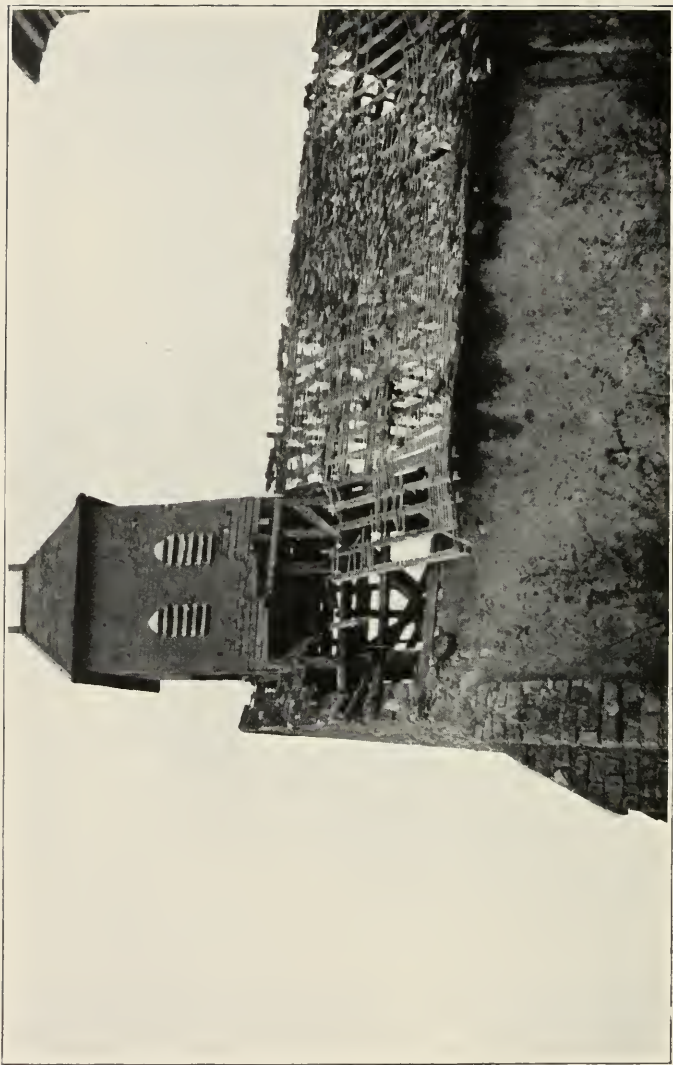
I made a special study of the terrain in this part of the war zone, as the attack here seemed to me of special significance. If the French had not stopped the army of the Crown Prince, Paris would to-day have been in the hands of the Germans as Brussels is. I do not say that the

AT THE FRONT

French would have given up the fight. I think they would have retired to Bordeaux, and kept up the struggle just as Belgium is doing. General Joffre, while the Germans were coming through France like a plague of locusts, said, "I shall await them on the Seine." He is supposed to have decided that as his enemy was advancing in an arc, he would wait until that arc was sufficiently extended before giving his decisive counter attack. According to his view the enemy would not be spread enough until his forces had reached the Seine. I think it was a lucky thing for France they were checked at the Marne. In my opinion the first army to be thoroughly whipped on French soil was that of the Crown Prince. This saved Paris. At the time of the victory of Sézanne, the French did not know the extent of the damage they had inflicted on the enemy. In fact they did not make claim to a decisive victory. In the official communication the most they claimed was a drawn battle. Actually they had smashed the flower of the German military power. Of course the Germans have enormous recuperative powers, and with their superb organization they soon recovered from the blow.

I think, contrary to the general impression, that the great battles round Paris did not begin with the defeat of General von Kluck. That commander's misfortunes were due directly to the





A little church near Sexanne.

WITH THREE ARMIES

retirement of the German left wing on the night of September 6-7. The mystery which has surrounded the movements of the German armies disappears when we know that the main body of the Crown Prince's army retired nearly forty kilometres during that night, and the following day. Such a retreat almost amounts to a rout.

In the plan of the German operations the path that promised the greatest glory was reserved for the Crown Prince. This was in accordance with the policy of bolstering the fast-fading popularity of the House of Hohenzollern. Throughout Germany he had been acclaimed as the Hero of Longwy. His futile demonstration against Verdun had been magnified into a series of glorious assaults. In the official bulletins he was declared to have inflicted a serious defeat on the French here. I had read this in the papers while I was in Berlin. As a matter of fact the French army opposed to him had been carrying out a splendid defensive retirement. Opposed by superior numbers they had contested with stubbornness every inch of the ground lost; and in the end they assumed the offensive in a most effective manner.

The Germans after the taking of Longwy—an obsolete fort—advanced on the line Verdun-Ste. Ménéhould-Châlons-sur-Marne. Their progress was exceedingly rapid. When the Uhlans of

AT THE FRONT

von Kluck's forces were in Chantilly the main body of the Crown Prince's army was yet two hundred kilometres away. Then this army was ordered to push on with all speed. The order of march up the Champs Elysées was being drawn up, and as the Crown Prince was to head this historic march, undoubtedly dressed in the uniform of his pet regiment, the Death's Head Hussars, the French troops opposing him must be brushed aside.

The left wing of the Germans gave battle on Sunday, September 6. The fighting began at daybreak and continued with unprecedented fury until dark. The artillery fire went beyond anything the history of warfare has hitherto recorded. Shells were timed to be falling at the rate of thirty in thirty seconds. I have this record from a trustworthy source. In this day's fighting the French guns were served with undeniable superiority. The loss they inflicted on the Germans can never be approximately estimated, but I hardly credit the figures of one hundred thousand as the total German casualties. Great as the French victory was, this loss was not sustained. It is said that twenty thousand were killed in this action round Sézanne, but this probably includes the loss on both sides.

It must be remembered that the German army was advancing on a front nearly forty miles in

WITH THREE ARMIES

extent, and the country north-east of Sézanne is the most treacherous in all France. Acres upon acres of marshlands line the valleys. Here, as I have already described, the enemy suffered the most.

But the French also made severe sacrifices. The famous — Corps was almost wiped out of existence. Spurred by the knowledge that they were fighting for the very existence of Paris, each French soldier was as three in this battle line. Against such desperation the Germans could do nothing. After the first day's fighting neither army could claim much advantage in position gained. The French had made certain advances, but also they had fallen back at other points. An enormous quantity of ammunition had been used up. The total French expenditure is put at four thousand shells—hundreds of caissons were empty.

Then on the night of September 6-7 began the mysterious German retirement. The fighting still went on along the whole front, but the main forces were withdrawing.

From the information at hand there are but two ways of explaining this retreat. First, there may have been a sortie from Verdun. Such an operation put through while the main force was engaged, would have wrought havoc in the German army.

AT THE FRONT

The second theory is that for some unknown reason the German transport service broke down completely. Granting this to have been the case, after the enormous expenditure of ammunition during the first day's action, unless this supply could be immediately replenished, the Crown Prince's army must fall back, or be captured.

The circumstances of their precipitate flight incline me to the last explanation. Of course the fighting on this wing continued for several days, but the Germans were only trying to save what was left of a badly crippled army from complete destruction.

With the Crown Prince retreating, there was nothing else for von Kluck and von Bülow to do but execute the same manœuvre. This brought about the battle of the Oise, and all the subsequent fighting along the Marne. From that time the French began to achieve certain successes.

It is remarkable to note that from the moment the French took the offensive against the German left wing, that army almost disappeared from the theatre of operations. It is said that it was moved in a body to the extreme right when General Joffre began his extraordinary flanking movement. At any rate this army, which at one time was headed straight for the Avenue de l'Opéra with the purpose of following the footsteps of their

WITH THREE ARMIES

fathers in the march of 1870, no longer appears as a factor in the German attack.

While I was at Sézanne I heard constantly the rumour that the Crown Prince had been wounded. I did not believe this. When I questioned the keeper of the Château closely about this (he was responsible for the story), I found that his tale did not fit well with the facts. I think he endowed the heir of the Hohenzollerns with a mysterious hurt in order to please popular demand. From the papers published in Berlin the Crown Prince was removed to the Russian theatre of operations shortly after his failure before Paris. It is surmised that he was sent to a field that was supposed to offer better opportunities for potential heroes. But from what happened in Poland it seems that the unfortunate heir-apparent again failed in his ambition.

With the battle of the Marne the tide of German success began to turn. After General von Kluck's first retirement they were never able to regain the ground lost. Corps upon corps was jammed into the angle of the Allies' line at Ribécourt in a desperate attempt to pierce it. But it was a vain effort. Grey-coated soldiers were fed into the French field of fire like corn into a hopper. They were ground to dust.

It was about this time that what I shall call the Siege of Germany began. Many had already

AT THE FRONT

marvelled that modern battles could last two weeks without cessation. As a fact fighting continued in the same area for months. It was not the same battle, although some writers delighted to head their stories "the fortieth day of the battle of the Aisne." This conveys a wrong impression to the untechnical. Infantry and cavalry do not advance during such time. What happens is that the troops of the contending armies "dig themselves in" whilst the artillery continues an uninterrupted fire. The men in the trenches are relieved as often as circumstances permit, but this kind of fighting, as one officer described it to me, is "living in hell."

The German field fortifications in the rear of their original line of battle were splendidly planned and painstakingly constructed. Their trenches not only give shelter from the enemy's projectiles but from the elements. Their bombproofs deflect shells and keep out rain and cold. And the weather played an active part in the campaign.

I think the fact that winter was approaching influenced the Germans in attempting the suicidal counter-attacks which characterized the second stage of their operations. Nothing short of the most decisive victory could bring the war to an end, and Germany was willing to make any sacrifice to achieve such a victory. In the beginning of October, despite their genius for organization,

WITH THREE ARMIES

the lines of communication began to be seriously congested. The evacuation of the wounded and the return of "empties" interfered with the replenishment of the ammunition supply, and as blood is to man so is ammunition to an army. Then, in addition, the situation was complicated by the necessity of providing the troops with winter kit. When it became imperative to tax an already over-burdened transport with a million blankets for distribution throughout the German front in addition to an uninterrupted ammunition supply, the greatest military advance the world has ever seen, and let us hope ever will see, came to an end.

At this time I saw a vast improvement in the French soldier. The recruit whom I had seen on the Meuse was a veteran on the Marne. When I compared the regiments I met beyond Sézanne with the troops I had seen in Dinant I was astounded. The men were bronzed and looked hardened to a degree. Not only were they physically fit, but they worked smoothly in the grooves of military routine. The improvement in *morale* was marvellous. The dread of the German military bogey was dead.



THE BOMBARDMENT OF RHEIMS



CHAPTER IX

THE BOMBARDMENT OF RHEIMS

HOW any commander could have trained his guns on the Cathedral of Rheims passes human understanding. If it had been in Bible times that such wanton sacrilege took place a plague would have overtaken the guilty people. The gun-pointer would have been struck blind as he took aim. Since the days of Divine retribution are past, it remains for human agencies to punish the sacrilegious offender. But what punishment will suffice? It is one of those crimes which are so great that they stand outside the human catalogue. For this scandalous sacrilege there is no atonement.

I reached Rheims while the city was still being bombarded. When I had climbed to the highest window of the north-east tower two shells aimed at that tower fell not twenty yards away in the street below. The Germans were not satisfied with the damage they had already accomplished. It seemed as if their fury could not be appeased while the noble towers of the revered "poem in

AT THE FRONT

stone " still rose above the blackened ruins of the cathedral walls.

Fortunately for the world and future generations, the damage as first reported proved on careful examination to have been exaggerated. The grand church is not a pile of smouldering rubble. Irreparable as is the hurt to the detail of the structure—no hand of modern times could restore the broken statues of the façade,—yet the four walls, the roof and the towers stand. The damage to them is great but not beyond repair.

During the first bombardment the cathedral was under fire for an hour. How often it has been fired on since I cannot say, but it was during this first chastisement that the building suffered most. It was not that the shells in themselves did very much damage, but they set the woodwork of the building on fire and thus indirectly brought about serious destruction. A complication which played an important part in the conflagration was a scaffolding which had been built up against the face of the structure on the tower in the north-west angle. Repairs were in progress at the time of the outbreak of the war, and this scaffolding served in the work. Although the Abbé Chinot, who is the rector of the cathedral, made all possible effort to check the fire at the outset, he failed, and soon sparks which had fallen in the building on the straw which served as bedding



Rheims Cathedral.
Notice broken glass windows.

WITH THREE ARMIES

for the wounded, set all in flames. The church being considered sanctuary, harboured the wounded that had been found in the city when the French had re-taken it. A red cross flag floated from an improvised flag-pole on the north-east tower, but this emblem did not prevent the Germans firing directly among the disabled. It is difficult to write of the scene that ensued in the cathedral when its walls burst into a sheet of flame. As I stood before the charred bodies of those unfortunates who, broken in body, were caught in this holocaust, it seemed that these Germans had paid the price for all the harm their comrades had done. Singed and blackened bodies lay in odd corners of the towering nave. Other bodies also charred are stretched in the ashes of some out-houses. Think of the moments of agony suffered by these men as they lay helpless with blazing timbers falling about them.

These prisoners were in the cathedral. The Archbishop, aided by the Abbé Chinot, broke through a door on the north of the edifice to find some fifty of the German wounded gathered in the centre of the nave. They looked about with bewildered eyes as if deciding which end were preferable, the flames or a bullet. The priests, making those who could walk bear the badly wounded, led the way to a place of safety. But hardly had this pitiable procession appeared

AT THE FRONT

outside the cathedral when "Death to the Barbarians!" shouted some. "You must kill us first," quietly said the men in holy orders. Some of the prisoners in mortal fear rushed back into the veritable furnace the building now was. The others, under the protection of the Archbishop, were led to a printing-shop near by. When they were there, the mattresses on which the badly hurt were lying were found to be smouldering.

All during this scene the shells from the German howitzers sailed screaming overhead. Remarkably few of them hit the mark. One landed fair on the roof of the structure, and soon that part of the cathedral was in flames. Another struck one of the flying buttresses on the north-east and tore it from the wall. Some of the beautiful windows were completely destroyed by shrapnel. Here was the irreparable loss. These windows were of stained glass which had been placed by the hands that built the cathedral in the twelfth century. They were an artistic inheritance beyond price. Now shattered and torn from its leaded setting, the wonderfully tinted old glass litters the stone floor. Can Germany repay for these?

Another artistic loss that can never be repaired is the destroyed figures that were originally carved in the walls of the cathedral. These figures were unique in architecture. Now they are charred and blackened stone.

WITH THREE ARMIES

It was in fact the fire which caused the most damage to the building. As in all such edifices the stone roof was surmounted by a wooden one. When the fire spread to this, falling sparks caught all other inflammable matter in or about the cathedral, thus adding fuel to the fire. The galleries under the eaves of the roof were still burning when I climbed over them.

But all this damage was little compared with the destruction of the beautiful façade. Nothing more wonderful than the front of the Cathedral of Rheims existed in ecclesiastical architecture. Students from every quarter of the globe had been here to admire its magnificence of conception, and the skill with which it had been executed. It was an elaborate carving of groups of the holy saints of the church all gathered round a carved descent from the Cross. The figures of the saints were cut into the detail of the doors and windows of the cathedral, making an *ensemble* without parallel for its beauty of design.

The havoc among these carvings beggars description. Here stands a nun with her head broken off—another shows not only the head gone but the breast and upper part of the body wholly destroyed. Other figures have lost an arm, a leg, or have in some manner been hurt so that no hand can restore them. The figures that surround the scene of the Crucifixion are split and, when I

AT THE FRONT

last saw them, ready to fall from their place. The columns that framed the windows were broken. And the wonderful rose window that makes the main feature of the façade was partly shattered. It made one's heart sick to see such wanton outrage. When I climbed to the bell towers I found they had been melted by the great heat. While the noble building stood it had suffered much.

I have been witness of much of the savagery of the Germans in war, yet with all that I have seen I cannot bring myself to believe that they fired on the Cathedral of Rheims through pure maliciousness. Whenever I have found other outrages, there has always been present the cloak of military necessity to cover the multitude of their sins. It is my aim to be fair in all I write, so I give here an incident of my stay in Rheims and my explanation of the outrage.

While I was in the window of the highest tower of the cathedral two shells, evidently fired at that tower, missed it luckily, and fell twenty yards away in the street below. These were the only two shells that fell in that part of the city that day. Of course the tower was the one nearest the German lines, and an artillery duel had been in progress all morning. Needless to say I came down from the tower in a hurry. When I thought the matter over it seemed to me that it was very



The Abbé Chinot, French soldiers and correspondents in Rheims Cathedral during second bombardment.

The Germans claimed that these soldiers were using cathedral as an observation point.

WITH THREE ARMIES

curious that all during the day only two shells should have fallen near the cathedral. Although the incident made splendid copy and I looked on it as a unique experience, yet I felt that the shells had not been fired with the object of giving me copy and a sensation. When I began to try to reason out cause and effect, I remembered that of our party who were inspecting the ruins, my colleague, Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett, who was formerly an officer in the Guards, wore his old service uniform, and I also brought to mind the fact that two French officers of the Aviation Corps, in uniform of course, stood with us in the window while the Abbé pointed out the German positions. There were thus, at the time the shells fell, three uniforms framed in the window. It may be only coincidence, but to me it seems that the uniforms were the reason for the shells.

I could picture the German artillery officer with a powerful glass trained exactly on the tower, and two of his guns aimed at the window. It is a fact that the French were supposed to have used the towers as posts of observation that brought the first projectiles in this direction. Could it not have been possible that, seeing what he supposed to be a party of officers studying his positions, the German fired again? If this were so, I can believe that they saw uniforms on the tower in the first place. I can readily believe that the French

AT THE FRONT

soldiers or officers who climbed to the highest point within their lines during the early days of their occupation of Rheims, were merely sight-seers ; but of this the distant German artilleryman could not be certain. The fact that Rheims lies in a hollow and that there is no available bit of high ground in the vicinity from which the defenders could watch the effect of their shells, would always make German gunners think French officers seen on the tower were more than idly curious visitors. An agreement had been reached by the French and German Staffs which placed the cathedral in a neutral zone, so long as it was not used for military purposes.

In the first week of the French return to Rheims they had placed a searchlight and a machine gun on the highest angles of the tower, in order to fight off the aeroplanes that constantly hovered over the town. On condition that these war implements were taken down the Germans promised not to shell Notre Dame de Rheims. The case has only been fought out in the newspapers and the most important witnesses have never been summoned, so judgment must be reserved until the war is over. The Germans have enough on their consciences without this crime. Let us hope they can clear themselves.

At the time of my visit, September 21, although the city had been under fire all the previous day,



View of damage, main entrance, Rheims Cathedral.



WITH THREE ARMIES

and intermittently, before that time, it was the section in the vicinity of the cathedral that seemed to have suffered. Here I saw houses that had been set afire by German projectiles, and where the houses were not entirely destroyed, great gaping holes in the walls showed where shell had smashed through. In this bombardment over one hundred non-combatants (among them women and children) had been killed. Rheims had been taken by the Germans on September 5, the anniversary of the day it had been entered in 1870. On that day I sat talking with Baron Mumm in the Foreign Office in Berlin. He himself told me the "good news." As a member of the famous champagne family he was delighted that his countrymen held the Mumm plant. Although it has thrived in France for years, the organization was entirely under German control, and nearly all of the stock was held in Germany. When the German army in this theatre of operations assaulted the city and its environs, the House of Mumm was immune.

The war year will be famous as a champagne vintage. All the vine culturists classed the grapes as the best in quality grown for many years. But who would gather the grapes under shell fire? Unless the Prussians are driven off, one of the finest harvests Champagne has seen must rot on the vines.

AT THE FRONT

No great harm had come to the champagne which was already bottled in the cellars of the planters. While the Germans were in possession of Rheims they paid for all that they drank and as an answer to the many accusations of their intemperance, left fifty million bottles untouched in the caves of the six most renowned houses in the world.

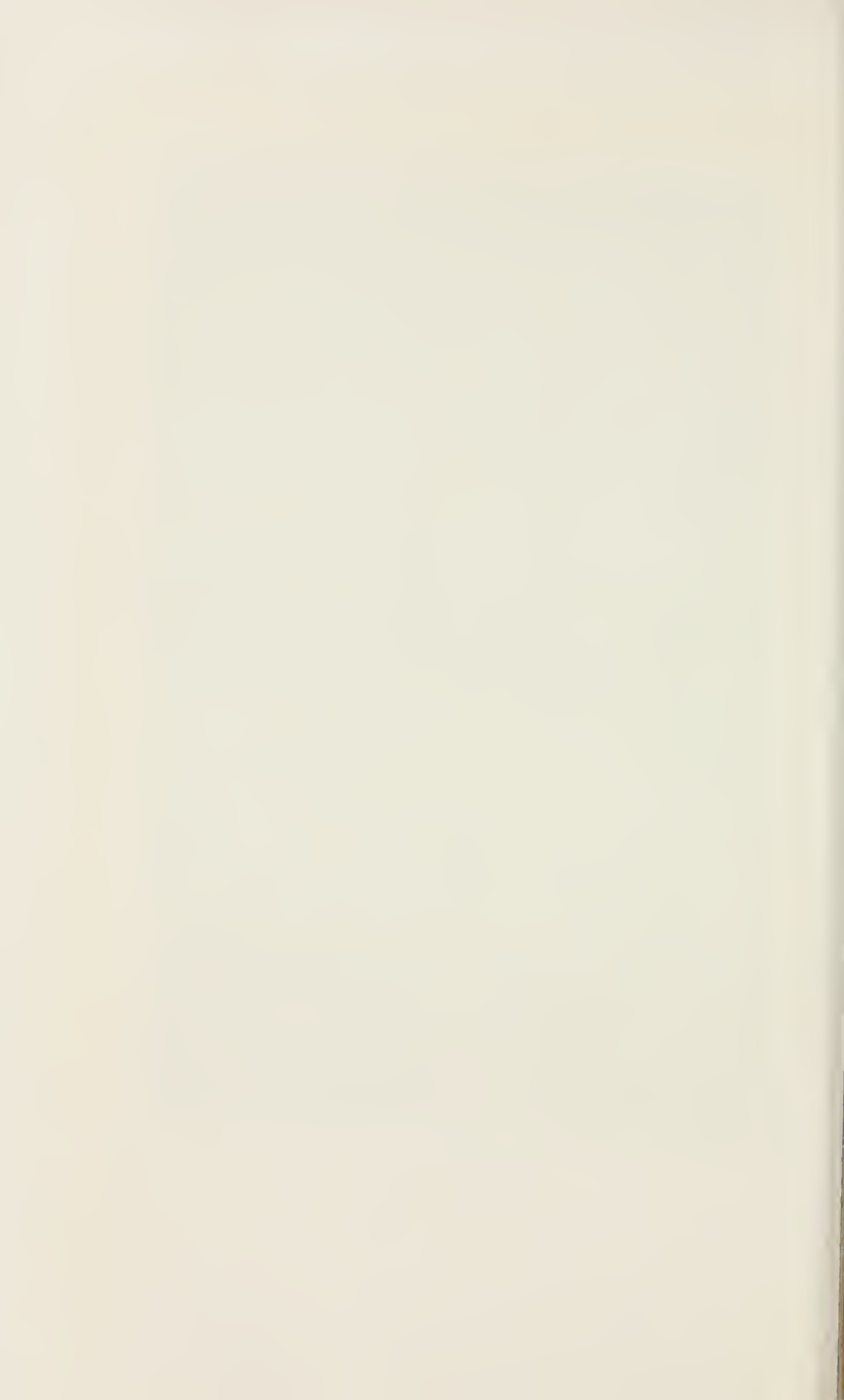
I am writing of Rheims and the cathedral as I found them in September. Since I was there the city has been under fire almost without cessation. What its present condition is I cannot say. More damage to Notre Dame is reported, but the details have not yet been made public.

It is the condition of the women and children in a city under bombardment that always makes the strongest appeal to me. I have so often seen them crushed between the grinding wheels of the war machines, that to my mind their case needs a strong advocate before future peace conferences.

Every road leading from Rheims was crowded with old men, women and children. They were fleeing in mortal terror from the fire and iron that rained upon the city. The distress brought upon them innocent victims of men's savagery beggars description. Only those who have heard the terrifying shriek of the shell, and seen the havoc projectiles make when they crash through the walls of houses, can understand the fear that



Rheims Cathedral.
The roof of the cathedral was burned off.



WITH THREE ARMIES

racked the souls of the women and children of Rheims. Many of them were plainly the victims of hysteria. At every sharp sound they would crouch and tremble. Thousands trudged along the roads not knowing where they were going, or how they were to live during the days that followed. Their only thought was to escape the hurtling iron. For days and nights these fugitives lived in the open fields, dividing carefully the little hoard of food they had been able to carry with them. When this food was gone they starved or begged from others, but what had others to give? In such an extremity each must fend alone. The plight of the old, the young, the tenderly nurtured, was pitiable. Some sat by the roadside staring straight before them with unseeing eyes. Fear and grief had hypnotised them. Despair had darkened their minds. One is so helpless in the face of such misery. I have heard that since this war began an organization has been founded with the object of caring for non-combatant sufferers. In France and Belgium such an organization is an urgent necessity. The distress of the unfortunates who live in the theatre of operations calls for practical relief. Hundreds are to-day dying from exposure and lack of food.

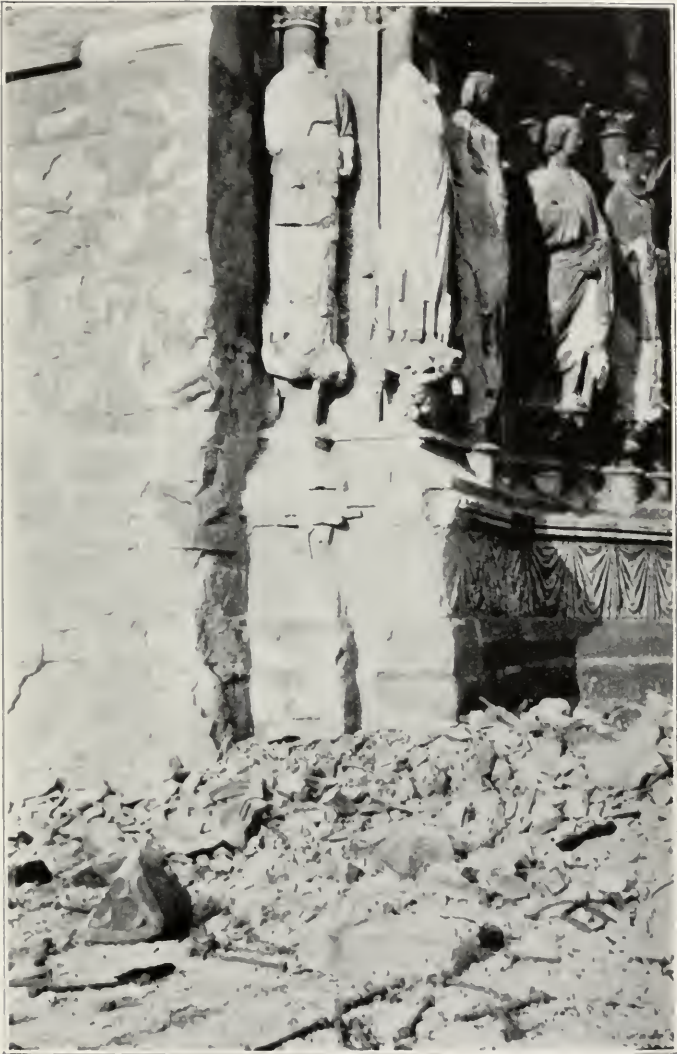
Coming away from Rheims I was, for the second time in France, arrested as a spy. Our motor,

AT THE FRONT

which was large, handsome and conspicuous, got caught in the columns of the Corps d'Armée, which was changing front. We were not interested in the manœuvres of this corps and only chafed at the delay. We wanted to get the story of Rheims back to the waiting world. I say "we," for my friends Richard Harding Davis, Gerald Morgan and Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, were my co-adventurers. When the motor was held up we tried to convince a very smart general officer, first, that we were not spies, and second, that it was mostly for the sake of France that the story of the ravage of Rheims should be cabled to the fifty million people who got their news from the papers we represented. His only reply was that there were plenty of well-dressed spies travelling through the French lines in motors. When we asked to go on to Paris, under guard if he wished, that we might be identified by the American Ambassador he only answered that it was impossible.

When our motor was confiscated and we were turned over to the gendarmerie, we could only wait for the next turn of events.

In the meantime my friend "Dick" Davis provided a picnic lunch. Davis is the best man in the world to go campaigning with. Not so much for his charming personality, his fund of reminiscences, which are many, as he has reported every reputable war—and some disreputable ones



Rheims Cathedral.



WITH THREE ARMIES

—since he was twenty-one, but because in the field he is always the generous provider. Davis starts out with a bigger pack than anybody else. It is necessary. Everybody else lives on him. This time he produced a bottle of champagne. Under the circumstances could anything be more fortunate? Also some tinned herrings, cheese, biscuits and sandwiches. I contributed a splendid appetite and a generous appreciation. Assuming attitudes of indifference and ostentatiously drinking the champagne, we disdained our captors. After lunch we went to the “guardhouse,” a villainous stable. Here three other correspondents had been in confinement for three days.

For some reason it was suddenly decided to send us back to Paris. General A— must have realized that the case was one which could not be handled there. So in three motors, under guard, we started back for the capital. We had to show the way to our guards.

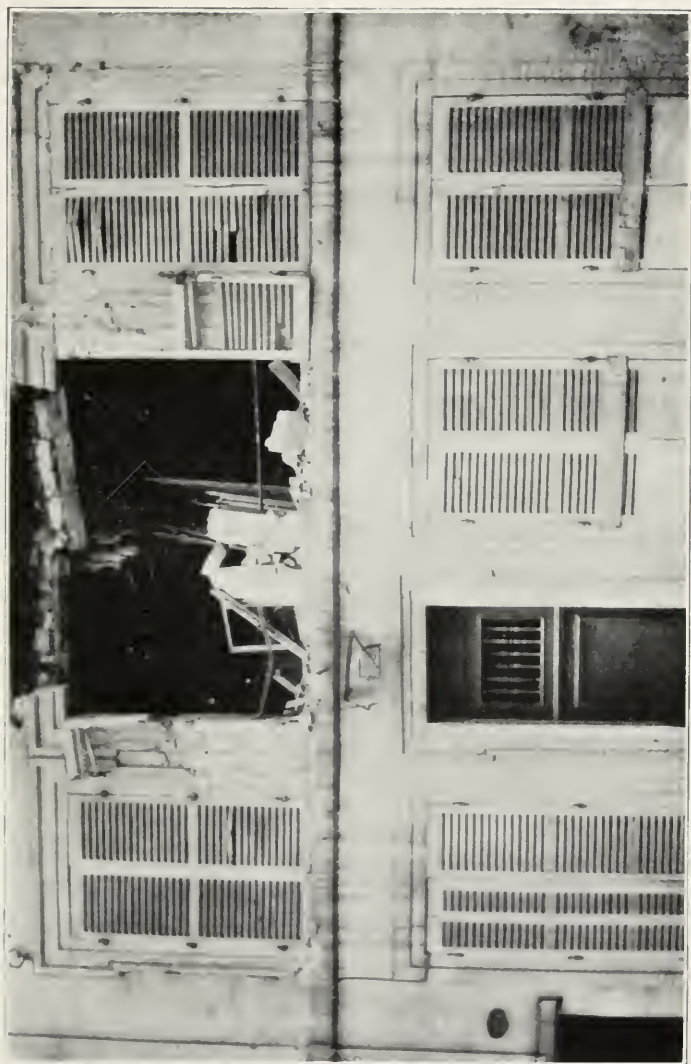
When we arrived in Paris after some delay at General Headquarters, we were ordered to the Cherche-Midi prison. This is the prison that figured prominently in the Dreyfus Case. I refused point blank to go, insisting on my right to see the American Ambassador. Then Major — called a couple of gendarmes. I executed a “strategic retirement.” The Cherche-Midi prison is as gloomy as the Bastille. I feel sure that

AT THE FRONT

never before did three motor loads of prisoners drive so noisily up to its doors. Once in the prison we took possession of it like a lot of political delegates arriving at a Chicago hotel. Most firmly did we object to the cells. The poor gaoler was most apologetic. They were the best cells in the house. Some very high French officers had occupied them. No, they did not suit. And dinner? We wanted dinner. He was very sorry, but he must send out for it. At this Ashmead-Bartlett drew out about three thousand francs in paper, and selecting a bill said, "Send for the best dinner in Paris." At this the whole prison staff got busy.

I did not stay for that dinner. But it was historic. Even now the warden of the Cherche-Midi and the underwardens tell and retell the tale. They were all invited. The prisoners were waiters—that is the regular prisoners, not my companions. No German banquet in a captured château could have surpassed it. The gaoler of the Cherche-Midi longs for some more American prisoners I believe.

My protest had done some good, for shortly after we arrived at the gaol, two officers of the General Staff came and took me to the American Embassy. We arrived after the Ambassador had gone to bed, so we went around to the apartment of the Military Attaché. He identified



The effect of shell fire on a private house in Rheims.

WITH THREE ARMIES

us and asked for our immediate release. After a good deal of quibbling, the Staff officers agreed to hold us under guard in the building of the General Staff that night and decide if we could be released in the morning. We had been ordered under arrest for eight days, as we had seen movements of troops of great importance. Just because his old army corps got in our way on the road from Rheims to Paris! The next day Mr. Herrick procured our release, but not until we had been sentenced not to leave Paris for eight days. It was not an arduous sentence.

ANTWERP.



CHAPTER X

ANTWERP

ALL passes having been refused to military correspondents in France, and the French making themselves daily more disagreeable to the journalists whom they picked up in the war zone, my paper, the *Daily Telegraph*, determined to send me to Russia. But before I could make arrangements for going to this new field, events took a definite turn at Antwerp, so I was hastily ordered to cover that beleaguered city.

When I arrived in Flushing it already harboured several thousand refugees. Pale, haggard, and many of them still with nerves vibrating from the sound of the shells, they crowded into the little Dutch port, hoping to find there a haven of safety. Every train from Roosendal brought more of the refugees. All day, boat after boat had steamed down the river crowded to the rails with those who wanted to escape from Antwerp.

As yet the city had not fallen, but the Germans had brought guns that had a range of five miles up to their advanced positions, and with these

AT THE FRONT

they could reach well into the centre of the city with deadly projectiles. Somehow the news that the English and Belgian forces that were defending Antwerp were about to evacuate the city, leaked out, and the citizens thinking themselves abandoned to the enemy, became the victims of their own terror. Escape was their only thought. When the bombardment began it was the signal for such an exodus as before seemed impossible outside some sensational book of fiction.

Men and women fled before a fear of death in frightful form. That fear was plainly written in the face of every citizen of Antwerp. I remember seeing a young, pale, but rather pretty woman who sat alone in the station refreshment-room. This room had been the centre of a clamouring throng for hours. I noticed her sitting alone, and as I entered the refreshment-room for the first time, a solicitous waiter placed coffee, a sandwich and some scrambled eggs on the table before her. She did not seem to notice the food—her dark eyes looked steadily off into space as if picturing some vivid terrifying scene of the bombardment. After getting something to eat myself, writing a dispatch and taking it to the local telegraph office, all of which occupied a couple of hours' time, I again returned to the refreshment-room. There was the girl (she was in the early twenties), sitting as I had first seen her, the food untouched;



Ships were full to overflowing with Antwerp refugees. October 9, 1914.

WITH THREE ARMIES

her unseeing eyes turned back on the scene of the night before.

From the moment the first shell fell in Antwerp the whole population was seized with panic. The streets leading to the railroad station were crowded with a frightened struggling mob, pressing onward to escape the hail of iron and fire. Actually, the shells reached only the southern section of the city, and did little damage there. The great oil tanks which stood in the danger zone had been emptied, the petroleum being turned into the river Scheldt. They had been set on fire, however, and what remained of the petrol was burning murkily. A few houses had caught fire from the hail of projectiles.

One of the most pathetic among the many little groups of refugees was a woman with two small children, girls, four and three years old. In the flight from Antwerp the rule that holds on a sinking steamer was put into effect—"Women and children first!" Because of this rule a number of women found themselves without male protection, stranded in a foreign country. The woman to whom I refer had been, with the two children, pushed on an already overcrowded lighter as it was towed away from the wharf. With a voice of anguish she asked advice of me as how she might again find her husband. I could only suggest that she should advertise in the local

papers. While she told me the tale of the bombardment as she had witnessed it, she spoke of the soul-piercing shriek of the shells and the never-ceasing boom of the cannon. When she said cannon, the elder girl looked up, tears sprang to her eyes, and she said piteously, "Pas plus de canon, maman, pas plus de canon."

When I arrived in Flushing the information I gathered from the refugees led me to believe that Antwerp would not be evacuated for two or three days. Therefore I arranged with an old Dutch tug master to take me up the river to the besieged city the next morning. It was arranged that we should start at daybreak. It was still night when I stumbled down to the wharf-side and clambered over two other crafts to the deck of that tug *John Bull*. Mysterious and ghost-like, the crafts crowded into the little harbour looked in this hour. Not a star showed, and where I knew the river flowed, was abysmal blackness. I was still sleepy, so using my dress-suit case for a pillow I lay down in the stern-sheets of the tug.

Soon I saw a sturdy short figure emerge from the bowels of the tug, looking for all the world like a gnome. I recognized Captain Hermans. With the first streaks of grey dawn the tug churned its way out into the broad mouth of the Scheldt. Steaming up the river under a leaden sky, the bow of the tug cutting through the waters like a knife,

WITH THREE ARMIES

I witnessed a panorama of history. As far as the eye could see a stream of vessels rushed down upon me. In the distance they looked like a ghostly armada. Every type of craft was there—transport, tender, lighter, trawler, collier, coaster, yacht and hulk, followed in a procession that lost itself where the sky met the waters. All the ships followed the same course. Over the quiet waters came the distant boom of cannon. The ships were fleeing from that sound. With my glass I was soon able to make out the human freight the vessels carried. They swarmed over the decks. Some even climbed into the rigging. Soon the *John Bull* was among them. I could see the faces of haggard women. I could hear the cries of frightened children. All stared in wonder as we passed. Some shouted the question where we were going.

“To Antwerp,” answered Captain Hermans.

“Turn back! it’s burning! The Germans are there! Turn back!”

The words carried over the water a wailing note of alarm. Without heeding this warning we kept on. I had hopes of reaching the city before it fell. When the *John Bull* arrived at Lillo, hardly seven miles as the crow flies from our goal, we heard that Antwerp had fallen. A captain of a Belgian river patrol boat stopped us to give us this unwelcome news and forbade us to go

AT THE FRONT

further. As the spire of the famous cathedral of Antwerp was in sight, to turn back was indeed a disappointment.

From Belgian soldiers I learned that the British and Belgian forces which had been holding the city began their evacuation the previous night. In the confusion of this night march, part of the English force wandered over into Holland and were there interned. The main body of the defenders retired in a most orderly manner, reluctant to leave this city which they had so gallantly defended. Among the very last to depart was the King Commander.

In my opinion the holding of Antwerp was a strategic error.

When the Belgian army retired to Antwerp it was supposed to be falling back on an impregnable position, from which it could threaten the enemy's lines of communication. In fact, Antwerp was not impregnable, as was conclusively proved, and the Belgian forces made only two *sorties* against the German communications. Thus during the period when it would have been a factor of importance if joined with other French or English Corps, because it was isolated, its influence on the development of the early campaign was almost negligible. This is a lamentable fact. Not for one moment did this considerable force check the onrush of von Kluck, or weaken the blow aimed



The first German to enter Bruges.

When we motored into the town the citizens were crying in terror, "The Germans will kill you," but he is a harmless-looking fellow.

WITH THREE ARMIES

by the German advance against any part of the French line. This inactivity, however, is forgotten in the splendid fighting of the Antwerp army in the defence of the Yser.

As a further reason for the abandoning of Antwerp, I advance the theory that a fortified city is a military weakness. This has been proved time and again in the present war. Liège, Namur, Maubeuge, and Antwerp indicate the truth of my contention. Since the extraordinary range of modern artillery has made it possible for siege batteries to pour shell down upon a defenceless populace from positions far beyond the outer ring of defending forts, all fortified cities have become hopelessly vulnerable. Now that the homes of inhabitants may be inflamed by fire bombs, what is gained by surrounding any city with walls and ramparts?

The engineers who planned the defences of cities twenty years ago, failed to reckon on the genius of Krupp. They could not foresee the devilish ingenuity of the German. In fortification we have a modification of the armour-plate and projectile penetration problem. Ramparts erected a score of years ago were proof against any shell that artillerymen could then conceive of. They never dreamed that it would one day be possible to hurl a ton of iron and explosives a distance of ten miles. Yet this is what is claimed for the German 17-inch mortar. And what is the

AT THE FRONT

value of any fort when air-craft of every sort can fly over them and drop bombs at will?

Another handicap of the fortified city is the fixed line of defence. This line it is certain is well-known to the enemy. The German gunners' map of Antwerp have ranges accurately scaled off from the forts to every possible gun position before them. This makes for a fight between the seen and the unseen. When the turret of Fort Waelham was destroyed, not a German had been seen by the men in it—that is if we except one in a Taube. The Belgians there first knew they were under fire when two or three random shells fell in the vicinity. Then the air-craft circled over their heads. Down came a naphtha bomb, fair in the wall of the fort. A cloud of stinking smoke marked the spot. This made a perfect target. In five minutes the turret cracked under a rain of iron. The shells fell like meteors from a cloudless sky. Such is the effect of indirect fire. It is difficult even for the trained eye to discover the positions of howitzer or mortar battery using high angle fire. Under it a novice artilleryman is helpless.

Again, the one-time advantage in calibre and range which fortress artillery possessed has disappeared. In fact, the siege artillery brought into action by the Germans has nearly always been superior to the defenders' cannon. This is another

WITH THREE ARMIES

strong argument against fortification, at least against fortification that has not kept pace with gun improvements: and no fort I have seen in Belgium can be classified as modern. A great deal of misinformation has been published on the strength of the fortified cities that have been so easily taken by the Germans. It may have been policy to overrate these forts in order to deceive the enemy, but the misinformation had the effect of creating confidence in the impregnability of the defended cities that events did not justify.

When this confidence has been destroyed by German success, the moral effect on our people and even on our troops has been bad. The impression among the Belgians and French is even worse. Since Antwerp fell, the unthinking will consider German artillery as more destructive than an earthquake.

Is it not better to admit that the turret and concrete fort, as conceived and built by General Brialmont has proved to be a complete failure? Concrete, even when reinforced, cannot stand against modern shells of large calibre; and in the peculiar type of fort that defends Antwerp, once the concrete is cracked, it becomes impossible to operate turret machinery. Thus one well-placed shot will put two guns completely out of commission. There are two guns in each turret. The concrete chips get into the groove in which the

AT THE FRONT

steel semi-spherical hood revolves, and jam until it is no longer possible to turn it. This one defect should be sufficient to condemn this kind of construction.

But the concrete fort has two other fatal weaknesses—the first is the mistake of making the fire-control and observation tower serve also as the searchlight station. What better target could one want at night than the glittering disc of a searchlight? and if your light is hit, your observation station is destroyed. This error in fortification building is nothing compared with the final fault of the Brialmont turret fort. This is the light shaft. After devising an intricate system of subterranean tunnelling in his fort, and covering it with a heavy wall of concrete, Brialmont leaves a sort of chimney 2 feet square opening into the very heart of the defence. The light shaft opens directly over the ammunition cell. I saw Fort Loncin at Liége after a shell had dropped down the light shaft. It could not have been more disrupted by an earthquake. Nothing remains but a heap of rubble. Both turrets were torn from their foundations and up-ended. The concrete walls were so much slag; perhaps this was a lucky hit. Even so, other lucky hits will find the same vulnerable mark. A soldier of the Namur garrison told me that much the same thing happened in the fort he was in.



All that I saw of Antwerp.



WITH THREE ARMIES

Again, no gun I have seen in a turret fort was larger than 15 cm. calibre. I understand that larger guns were ordered for the forts at Antwerp, but as war opened before they were delivered, Herr Krupp has kept them for home use. Also the concrete for many of the Antwerp forts had not arrived before the city was invested. The turret at Fort Waelham and Fort Wavre, Ste. Catherine were defended by sand-bags only. Under the circumstances it was brilliant work that they held out as they did. At Fort Waelham a copper brewing vat was set up as an imitation turret, and it drew considerable German fire.

But leaving the special defects and getting back to the general question of fortified cities, the fatal defect in the whole theory is that it leaves the garrison exposed to capture. The war of 1870 demonstrated this, time and again, and in this war many good soldiers were made prisoners when Maubeuge fell. Luckily the handful of English and Belgians holding Antwerp found a safe line of retreat when the forts crumpled beneath the enemy's fire. Those interned in Holland are but a small part of the defending force.

I have already mentioned the weakness of the civil population in a fortified city. Since the Germans have degraded the noble profession of arms by throwing shell and shrapnel among women and children, the inhabitants of the city

AT THE FRONT WITH THREE ARMIES

open to bombardment are doubly unfortunate. It is hard to keep the terror that spreads among them from lowering the *morale* of the defending garrison. Very rightly General Paris directed that all civilians should leave Antwerp.

In the taking of Antwerp, the Germans achieved more of a moral than a material victory. Under the present circumstances the city has only a limited strategic value. The neutrality of Holland destroys the city's military worth, but how long will Germans respect that neutrality ?



A squad of German cyclists took possession of Bruges on October 14.

“ANNEXING” BELGIUM

CHAPTER XI

“ANNEXING” BELGIUM

RELUCTANTLY I turned my back on Antwerp. It was my good fortune to have been in the vicinity of all the eventful scenes of the war up to this time, and being barred from seeing the bombardment was a disappointment. In this war the correspondent works under so many difficulties. It is not a question of getting to the front—the best we can do is to place ourselves in a certain position, and wait for the front to come to us. In the early days of the war this was easy. As the German inundation advanced this became more and more difficult. Soon the whole continent was crowded up with soldiers. However, working on this principle, I trans-shipped to a refugee boat bound for Ostend. It was one of the mail boats that ordinarily run from Folkestone to Ostend. It had made two trips to Antwerp, carrying off fleeing citizens. On these two voyages its larders had been emptied. For twenty-four hours I suffered all the physical anguish of the refugee. His mental anguish I

AT THE FRONT

escaped. Two apples and a stick of chocolate was all I had to eat during these twenty-four hours. My bed was the softest place I could find on the deck. There were not enough cabins for the women and children. In the middle of the night it rained, but when I felt sorry for myself I thought of the plight of those around me, then I would forget my own troubles. Picture yourself in an overcrowded steerage, then fill the minds of the passengers with haunting fear and you can imagine what it was like on that refugee ship.

From talk with some of the passengers I learned that the Belgian government was already in Ostend, so I knew the army would eventually come to that city. When after many delays our ship did arrive at the popular seaside resort I made a curious discovery. Although I had eaten almost nothing for twenty-four hours I was not hungry. I had no inclination to make up for my lost meals, a new and curious experience for me.

Ostend presented a most inspiring picture of military activity. Motors filled with Belgian, French or English soldiers flashed back and forth along the Digue. Men in every type of uniform from the Highlander's kilt to the Frenchman's red pantaloons hurried up and down the narrow streets. Detachments of Belgian dog artillery were packed in the main square. It was a picture to gladden the heart of any war correspondent.



Belgian dog transports in Ostend.

WITH THREE ARMIES

As I walked along the Digue to my hotel I saw that the Kursaal, the great gambling casino, had been turned into a hospital. The roulette table had been replaced by the operating table, and instead of the continuous call of the croupier one sometimes heard the low moan of the suffering wounded.

When I arrived in Ostend I found enough troops here to hold back a German army ; at least from their unceasing activity one got this impression. My hope was that they would decide to hold Ostend. This seemed a remote chance, however, for an acquaintance with that part of the coast convinced me that there were no defensive positions worthy of the name.

The Belgian army which had evacuated Antwerp was still wending its way into the town. Artillery columns clanged through the streets and all day long I heard the uneven tramp of tired infantry. Carefully watching the indications, I soon saw that no stand was to be made here. I kept watch on certain British transport columns that were camped just over the canal bridge and when one night it " folded its tents like the Arab, and silently stole away," I began to suspect that no fight would be made here.

The rumour that Ostend was to be abandoned to the Germans spread in the mysterious way that such news does. British and Belgian troops

AT THE FRONT

were still as far beyond the town as Ghent, when the Ostend populace began to make its preparations for flight. When I found there was to be no conflict I decided that the only "story"—as newspaper men call it—the situation offered, was from the German side. I had been to Ghent with Mr. H. E. Johnson, the American Consul, who had temporarily removed to Ostend and on the road there I saw an English division moving out of Eccloo and still long columns of Belgian troops marching tiredly westward.

In Ghent I talked with some officers of the Belgian armoured motor detachment, who I discovered were acting as rearguard. They had captured a motor belonging to the German Aviation Corps and were proudly putting it in order for their own service. There had been a rearguard skirmish that morning.

It was apparent that the Germans were to be allowed to sweep across Belgium with no opposition. Two days I motored into Bruges to meet them.

I found the inhabitants fleeing in terror. "They'll shoot you! They'll shoot you! The Germans are here!" Here was proof indeed that Germany had succeeded only too well in putting the fear of her wrath into the hearts of the simple Belgian people.

I had placed an American flag above the wind-



The London 'bus, a long way from home. Cathedral Square, Ostend.

WITH THREE ARMIES

shield of my motor and confident in this protection, I drove into the central square of the old city, and drew up before the famous restaurant Panier d'Or. In little groups many of the people of the town hurried across the square flying before the invaders.

Soon, however, it was realized that the Germans were entering peacefully, assuring the populace that so long as they showed no hostility they would not be molested. I watched a detachment of about forty cyclists in grey with long guns slung over their shoulders ride in and take possession of the town. They were not the arrogant type of Teuton soldier I had seen in other fields—mostly they appeared to be older, more settled men. All were smoking. Some drew deep draughts of blue vapour from china bowl pipes, while others puffed at long black cigars. Their first act on entering Bruges was to tear down the English and French flags that were flying from the Hotel de Ville. The Belgian black, yellow and red colours they did not touch. By some sort of military magic, posters in four languages, German, French, Flemish and Walloon, suddenly appeared on all the hoarding of the town. These told that Bruges was now a German city and called on the citizens to obey strictly the orders of their new masters. These posters were signed by General von Beseler.

AT THE FRONT

By this time the advance-guard had scattered to take positions on the different roads leading out of the town, and certain of the city fathers there had been taken as hostages.

I was very much impressed with the business-like manner in which the German soldiers went about their work. I knew the duties of an advance-guard entering an enemy's city and could appreciate the difficulties of this manœuvre. But these men went through with the task in that systematic thorough manner characteristic of the whole German military organization.

I went around the town in my motor without let or hindrance, some of the soldiers even saluting my American flag. They even posed for their photographs and showed a most friendly spirit in every way.

It is the fashion to represent the German soldier as an ogre. I know that as a class he has done some unforgivable things in this war. Yet the individuals whom I met on many occasions were far from being awe-inspiring monsters. The troops that came into Bruges that afternoon were all the steady father-of-family type.

After an hour in the town during German occupation I turned my motor back towards Ostend. I went unquestioned, and hardly two miles outside Bruges I ran into the last stragglers of the fast retreating Belgians. Late that night I was once more in Ostend.



Belgian soldiers spying British monitors, Ostend, October 11.

WITH THREE ARMIES

In the seaside town I found the preparations for departure far more advanced than when I had left. I saw outside English head-quarters motor after motor, loaded with impedimenta, snort off down the Digue and disappear in a cloud of dust. I lived at the *Hotel de Phare* where it was possible to watch the departing staffs without difficulty.

When on the following morning I saw the French general having breakfast in the hotel, while his motor with baggage strapped behind stood waiting at the curb, I knew that the final chapter of the evacuation of Ostend was about to begin. That day the city began to empty itself as a theatre where some one has shouted " Fire ! " The roads to Holland and France were soon dense with the fleeing multitude. On they trudged, each carrying some bundle with all that the war had left them. The exodus continued for three days. During this time there was the greatest confusion among the crowd that struggled in the boat station and on the quay. Here thousands stood close packed waiting their chance to board departing steamers. Many of these were women and children. They waited here from daylight to dark, to daylight again, without food or drink. Several children died. Vessel after vessel was loaded far beyond the danger-mark with human freight, and left for the hospitable shores of Eng-

AT THE FRONT

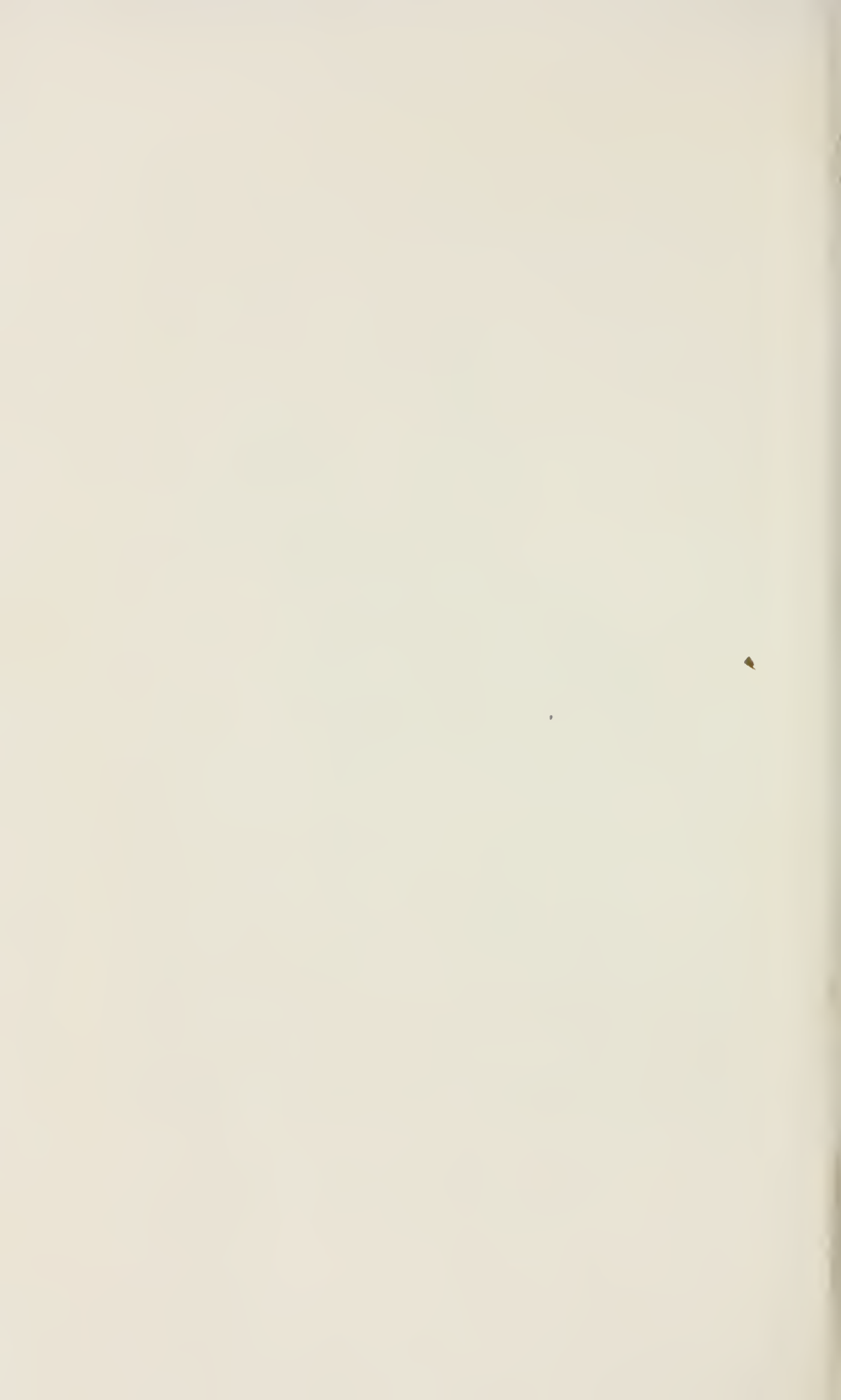
land. But still the crowd thronging on the wharf never seemed to dwindle. When the last ship cast off, those despairing ones in the rear who saw their last chance of escape slipping away, pressed forward frantically. The scenes of this flight now come back to me as the vision of some frightful nightmare. The dread in the faces of the fleeing women, and the pathetic helplessness of the children are haunting memories.

Out of the confused impressions one picture is clear. By the roadside I see the body of an old man. His dead fingers still clutch the little bundle of his belongings. Unheeding the crowd rushes by.

Since I have left Belgium I have sometimes heard the question as to what indemnity the people of the ravished kingdom will ask when war loosens its grip on their beloved country. To me the question is absurd. There is no money, not all the wealth of the world, that can wipe out the misery or efface the memory of those terrible days and nights. Three English women stayed in Ostend doing their best to help the stricken people. Two of these were members of the English Red Cross. Almost alone they transferred more than two hundred gravely wounded Belgian soldiers to a waiting train, and started them to the French base hospitals. These two women worked without stop for twenty-four hours to



The first German to enter Ostend.
He knew the way well, as he spent every summer for the last seven years
there. October, 1914.



WITH THREE ARMIES

empty the improvised hospital. When the Germans entered they found it bare.

Another work of distinct merit was that carried on by the Double White Cross Society, under the direction of Mr. Batonyi, Secretary of the American Consul, and Mrs. Coster. The broad aim of this Society is to aid all non-combatants in the war zone, irrespective of nationality. From daylight to dark Mrs. Coster laboured, distributing food and clothing to the peasants who paused here in their flight from the oncoming Germans.

Ostend was now held by but a handful of the Belgian rearguard. In aspect it was a city of the dead. Every house showed a blank face of close-drawn shutters. Every shop had lowered its iron window. As I tramped the deserted streets my footsteps echoed at every corner. A little beyond the circle of the centre of the town, house after house stood empty. Some stood wide open just as the owners had left them. The city brought to mind a visit to Pompeii. I looked in one house. A pot of jam with half a tin of biscuits stood on the table. A vase of dead flowers graced the mantel. The floor was littered with bits of twine and brown paper, the débris of hasty packing. Another that had been empty was occupied by a newly-arrived family of refugees.

I came back to the fish market. Here two days before a German aviator had dropped three

AT THE FRONT

bombs, and I stood making careful study of the little damage done. Suddenly I heard the clatter of hoofs on stone, and turned to see a Belgian cavalryman galloping down the Digue shouting "The Germans are here! The Germans are here!" Beating his tired mount with the full length of his rifle he disappeared down the coast shouting the hoarse-voiced warning. Within five minutes a lieutenant and six Uhlans trotted into the square in front of the Hotel de Ville, and took possession of Ostend. These were followed by about twenty men of the Cyclist Corps, who rode up and down the streets exploring the town. As is usual in war, the horses of the cavalry had been used up and the cyclists made a very good substitute for horse soldiers. Nearly all the Germans smoked long black cigars. The few people left in Ostend watched in ill-concealed alarm as if expecting momentarily an outbreak of savagery. The startling feature of the performance was the absolute silence that reigned. The shouting of the exploring soldiers was the only sound in the streets.

It was evident from the first that these invaders had no intention of harming any of the inhabitants. One or two made friendly advances and the Belgians were soon clustering about them in questioning groups. After a time they even joked together. The whole attitude of the con-



Before the Germans had been in Ostend more than a few hours, they were the centre of interest to the Belgian populace.

WITH THREE ARMIES

querors had changed. No longer did they want to plant fear in the hearts of the Belgians. Conciliation was in their very word and act. I later found out in a talk with one of the junior officers, that the order had come from head-quarters that stern measures were no longer to be used against the people of Belgium. That this was a policy dictated by the expectation of annexation there can be no doubt.

Within half an hour General von der Goltz motored into Ostend and entered the Hotel de Ville. He is still straight after fifty odd years of soldiering. He held a conference with the Burgomaster, the Chief of Police and the American Consul. Very briefly he stated what he expected of the citizens of the town, and directed the Burgomaster and the Chief of Police to see that no German soldier was hindered in the performance of his duty. The American Consul was to serve the interests of the many neutrals and non-combatant enemies still in Ostend. In this difficult task Mr. Johnson acquitted himself admirably.

The first excitement of the occupation ended, I returned to my hotel for breakfast. The breakfast-room looks out on the sea, and while here I witnessed a thrilling drama in two acts.

A low mist, as fleecy as steam, hung over the water. German cyclist soldiers in soiled grey uniforms and helmets awry rode silently up and

AT THE FRONT

down the Digue, as the brick road on the seashore is called. After the confusion of the last three days the city was for the first time peaceful. Suddenly out of the mist appeared a vessel flying the French flag. As she came straight on towards the long pier I made her out to be a destroyer. Slowly she steamed into the unknown danger. She was well on the long pier before any of the German cyclists saw her. A crowd stood on the Digue watching tensely. Suddenly a man ran out to meet the destroyer. We could see him waving his arms. Now he is abreast of the French war vessel. But two grey-coated cyclists are pedalling after him. We can see the gallant citizen haranguing the captain of the destroyer. Slowly she comes to a stop. In a moment the water in her wake is churned to white foam and she is running full speed astern. The German soldiers pedal swiftly along the pier, but when they arrive at the end, the destroyer has put a hundred yards of green water between them. The soldiers waved and shouted, but the low hull of the French war vessel soon disappeared in the mist from which it had so mysteriously come.

Here I expected to be an eye-witness of a "German atrocity." The citizen who had warned the captain of the destroyer was now walking calmly back the length of the pier. More German cyclists, with long guns slung across their backs,

WITH THREE ARMIES

were approaching. As the man had openly aided an enemy, according to the German laws of war he should be shot. I expected to see him made to stand with his back to the sea on the edge of the pier, while a squad of soldiers fired at his breast, but to my surprise the Germans never noticed him. I think he must have had a thrilling moment when they passed. In my opinion this unknown citizen of Ostend deserves the highest rank of the Legion of Honour. He unquestionably saved the French destroyer and took his life in his hands in doing it. Under the circumstances I consider his act one of the "nerviest" I have ever witnessed. It will ever remain a mystery to me why he was not summarily executed.

Half an hour later a ship's launch appeared out of the mist, but this boat turned before it came within a thousand yards of the pier. Watching German soldiers waved to it to come on, but as the invitation was declined they opened fire. After firing some fifty rounds they gave up hope of a naval victory.

Hardly more than a company of Germans occupied Ostend the first day. But as rooms were engaged for forty officers at the *Hotel Royal Phare* it was evident that a considerable force would enter on the morrow.

In justice to the German officer and soldier against whom so many charges have been brought

AT THE FRONT

I must put down the fact that in Ostend I found him to be civil, courteous and even friendly. Most of the men—it was a reserve corps—looked like middle aged fathers of families. Sentries on post were often surrounded by children to whom they were showing all the delightful mysteries of their equipment. The officers were all willing to talk with me and never resented my questioning, which was sometimes rather direct. Of course they boasted of the prowess of Germany, and of what they were going to do to the English, but that was natural. On the whole they were just like the same class in any other land. Certainly there was nothing to stamp them as the monsters certain members of the press made them out to be. It was hard for me to believe that these were men of the army that had sown such desolation throughout Belgium.

In my conversation with some of the Hussar officers, I found out that heavy columns of troops were expected at Ostend. “We have a hundred thousand men on the way to open the road to Calais, and if they are not enough another hundred thousand will follow.”

While I was not advertising the fact that I was a war correspondent, the statement of this officer was an indiscretion, even to a casual neutral. His companion remonstrated strongly. In view of the future developments of the campaign along



German officers have their first look at the sea. Ostende dique, October 16, 1914.



WITH THREE ARMIES

the coast my protesting Hussar knew what he was talking about.

The next morning I watched the columns of the Third Reserve Corps march into the town. As has been always the case whenever I have seen the German army I was strongly impressed. These were undeniably efficient fighting men, and being a reserve corps most of the men were over thirty. My own experience has convinced me that the soldier between thirty and forty-five is more reliable on a long campaign than the younger man. As they marched across the canal bridge these bearded grizzled Germans impressed an onlooker as tried veterans.

The only point I could find to criticize with this corps was that it seemed not to have its complement of artillery. I saw only certain batteries of machine guns with the column of the main body. It is quite possible, however, that the field artillery did not enter the town.

The occupation of north-western Belgium by the Germans was a skilful political and military move. From the political point of view, holding practically the whole of the country gave Germany a splendid advantage in any trading that might take place during peace negotiations. For this reason the kingdom was to all intents and purposes annexed. I noticed, however, one significant fact, which only future developments can explain.

AT THE FRONT WITH THREE ARMIES

In almost every instance of German occupation there was no substitution of flags. The Belgian colours always floated from the official quarters, even though Germans were handling all the administrative machinery.

It was the German hope that they would be able to fortify this part of the coast without being molested. They hoped that as Ostend, Blankenberg and Zeebrugge were the towns of an ally, they would be immune from bombardment from the sea. As long as it was possible, England respected the property of her Belgian friends. But when stern military necessity compelled it, the British ships turned their batteries on these seaside towns.

THROUGH THE FIGHTING LINES

CHAPTER XII

THROUGH THE FIGHTING LINES

IN Ostend my wife had joined me and she shared my subsequent adventures. The seaside town had again taken on all the bustle of war preparations. The scene was much the same as it had been two days ago, except that German officers filled the hotels, German soldiers crowded the streets, and the musical note of the German automobile horn had taken the place of the raucous call of the English and Belgian cars.

Although Americans were popular with the Germans, I knew that according to their regulations I should not be allowed to remain long in the firing line. I knew that I could get a pass to Brussels without difficulty. What I wanted, however, was to rejoin the Belgian army. I determined to ask openly for a pass to Dunkirk. The idea was perhaps rather presumptuous.

When I came to make the request, I found some forty officers of the Staff enjoying a royal breakfast at my hotel. If there was any truth in the old adage that a man is more approachable after

AT THE FRONT

he has eaten, surely this was my opportunity. The best of fish and fowl that Ostend afforded was being served. Magnums of Irroy and quarts of Burgundy lined the centre of the long table. When I made my simple request to the German adjutant, he was certainly taken aback.

“Dunkirk is not yet in our lines. If you wish to go there, I shall have to ask the General.

I had, of course, explained that I was an American seeking to escape from the battle area. I watched the adjutant as he interrupted General von Beseler just as he was drinking a toast. Without a moment's hesitation he replied :

“Ach! let them go.”

While the adjutant was scribbling my pass, I noticed that every other one of the officers assembled wore the coveted iron cross.

We lost no time in getting into the motor. Our baggage was already strapped on, and with a farewell blast of my horn we started on our dash through the lines.

My only worry at the time was gasoline. This precious fuel had become so scarce that it was impossible to purchase any. Every gallon had been commandeered by the military authorities. Only the generosity of a Belgian ambulance chauffeur made it possible for me to move the car I was running.

It was a damp, hazy day, and twice before I had

WITH THREE ARMIES

reached the outskirts of the town, ghostly detachments in grey came out of the fog and halted me. The first time it was a cavalry patrol that examined my papers. Our second challengers were a platoon of infantry, carrying their rifles at the ready. The officer who stopped me had his revolver drawn. These men showed that they expected to meet their enemies at any moment.

Speeding along the road that runs parallel with the sea, we passed the last German outpost at Middlekirk. After scrutinizing our pass, they cheered us on our way. Two miles beyond, on the Ostend-Nieuport road, we were halted. My wife prepared confidently to present our pass.

"For God's sake, not that one," I whispered. "He's a Belgian!"

With skilful sleight of hand she got rid of the incriminating German paper, while I produced my tattered permit signed by M. de Broqueville, the Belgian Minister of War. The lone sentry nodded. He signalled me to pass.

"The Germans are coming," I told him.

"Let them come," he answered.

That is the spirit of the whole Belgian army. This soldier, who stood alone facing the might of Germany, typifies Belgium. Searching his eyes, I saw there that he had already determined upon his sacrifice. He made nothing dramatic out of this dogged devotion to duty. That he should

AT THE FRONT

give his life for his country was as inevitable as it was right. The shot that struck him would be the warning to his friends.

Two hundred yards farther down the road, at Westende, our way was blocked by a Belgian machine gun detachment. A trench had been dug across the macadam, out of which emerged the blue barrel and brass stock of the rapid fire gun. This was just an advance position held in defence of the road. I studied the faces of the men holding the post. Each soldier had that look of grim determination which told that they had looked on death and despised its terrors.

The pluck of the Belgian army must pass into proverb. For over three months they have borne the brunt of the German advance through their own country. Harried from point to point by an enemy infinitely stronger and better organized, they have given way only when it was not humanly possible to resist longer. It must be remembered that within their own boundaries heretofore the Belgians have received little or no support from the English or French. Few Belgians took part in the battles of Mons or Charleroi. At Liége, Namur, Louvain, Termonde, they have met the enemy single-handed.

In Nieuport the motor stopped. Mentally I pictured the neat little town after the German attack. I had seen so many of these villages in

WITH THREE ARMIES

the wake of the Prussian. Nothing but blackened walls and rubble remained.

Leaving Nieuport, we found the road blocked by a stream of refugees. In this crowd there were those who had walked from distant Antwerp. Before arriving at Furnes, we met on the road a detachment of sappers returning from having blown up an innocent-looking villa with a concrete foundation. So elaborate was this foundation, that it would have served admirably as a gun emplacement for artillery attacking Dunkirk.

Arriving at Furnes, we found there the headquarters of the Belgian army. The little town was the scene of unceasing military activity. An unending stream of transports crossed the square diagonally. Every conceivable kind of motor, from the rakish armoured car to the runabout, had been pressed into service and now served the constant demands of the Belgian army. Smart town cars with elaborate limousines were filled with loads of bread. Trucks with the name of some well-known Brussels brewery carried consignments of ammunition to the trenches. All day and night without interruption this stream of supply ebbed and flowed. In the darkness I watched the unending procession of head-lights which made one think of fabulous, fiery-eyed monsters of fairy tales. Companies of infantry changing position marched in and out of the town.

AT THE FRONT

Cavalrymen tended their sore backed mounts in every stable. In the centre of the square the transports of the Staff took part.

Among the confusion of Belgian uniforms I had noticed certain officers in khaki. Afterwards I met two officers who had been attached to Belgian head-quarters. They were at this time planning the attack which developed into the Battle of the Yser.

While in Ostend I had seen British warships, cruisers, destroyers and monitors hovering off the coast. With my glass I had studied the guns that poked out of the turrets of the monitors. Seconding these was a battery of bulldog howitzers. My thought at the time was that these ships were to be used in bombarding the coast if the Germans should take possession. I now found that my guess was only partly right. In Furnes the British officers I had noticed and a young, light-haired lieutenant from one of the destroyers, held several councils of war. I was fortunate to be there at the time. Here the plan of bringing the monitors and destroyers to the aid of the land troops was worked out.

King Albert was informed of the plan of attack, and he entered into it with enthusiasm. And when the word got about among the Belgian troops that they were to attack the enemy under the protection of the British naval guns, there was

WITH THREE ARMIES

a sudden change in the atmosphere of Furnes.

I was at Furnes only during what might be called the prelude to the Battle of the Yser. At this time I had been received in audience by King Albert, and it was imperative that I should get that interview back to the office of the *Daily Telegraph* in London. To do this I had to go myself.

It was a clear Sunday morning when ammunition motors, loaded with their deadly missiles, one by one left the square for the front. The men on the armoured motors which looked so formidable, began polishing up their cars with that care and affection supposed to be the exclusive characteristic of sailors. Shortly these motor-cruisers lumbered out on the road marked "To Ostend." After these followed the cavalry. They rode as jauntily as if bound for their first engagement. Hardly had the clatter of the hoofs of the cavalry died out across the bridge, when the field artillery rumbled through the town. The horses, a bit tired and jaded, moved slowly. But the men seated on the caissons looked fit and fresh.

The heart of all the Belgian soldiers in the trenches thrilled when they received the order that they were to take the offensive. They knew that beyond them, scarce two kilometres distant, they should meet the grey-coated enemy. It was a clear, sunshiny day. Suddenly a deep boom

AT THE FRONT

sounded across the water. Then a ball of white smoke rose and hovered a moment above the decks of one of the monitors. The whistle of a shell cut through the air. Another boom came as an echo of the first, and a shell burst right among the enemy. Lovie and Slype were the targets of the gunners. There is a sort of blockhouse near the first village that the enemy occupied. This point received special attention.

After the ships' batteries had searched the country south of Middlekirk for some time, the order was given for the Belgian infantry to move forward. As with one impulse the men sprang from the trenches and crept forward on the invader. The rattle of the machine gun supplemented the noise of the naval Long Toms. Then the field artillery added to the chorus. But all this noise could not drown the irregular rat-tat-tat of the infantry.

The country here is flat and criss-crossed by a most complicated system of canals. The river itself is a magnified canal. The Belgians of course knew every foot of the country and were seen moving in a long line straight on the enemy's position. The news had arrived early in the morning, telling of a splendid British fight on the right; it was known that they had forced the Germans back far east of Dixmude. With this in mind it seemed to be the ambition of the

WITH THREE ARMIES

Belgians to outdo the achievements of their ally. It was plain to be seen that the Germans did not relish the shells of the warships dropping in their rear. Now actually caught between two fires, their line began to waver. As the determined Belgian infantry pressed onward, slowly the enemy gave way. It became apparent that they were not present in as great numbers as had been first reported. The cannonading from the sea increased, the infantry fire redoubled. The whole German line resting on the sea was now in full retreat. The Belgians pressed home their advantage, and when night fell they found themselves well in advance of the positions they had occupied in the morning.

The Battle of the Yser marked a crisis in the war. As the Battle of the Marne proved the turning-point of German success in the first stage of the campaign, so this contest for the canal through the north of Belgium signalled the failure of the second German offensive plan. The figures are not yet available, but I think when the cost is counted, it will be found to have been the bloodiest battle of the war. Perhaps in the Russian theatre of operations there will be battles in which the losses are greater, but up to the present I think the Battle of the Yser holds the record. The credit of holding the Germans back at this most vital point belongs in the first place to the remnant

AT THE FRONT

of the Belgian army. I have followed that army from Ghent to Bruges, from Bruges to Ostend, from Ostend to Nieuport. Though they were retiring from Antwerp, there was nothing about them to suggest a defeated army. I must again record my admiration of the rank and file of this valiant little force. I have been fortunate in having unusual opportunities of observing it on the march and in the field of battle. Against the heaviest odds it has fought with extraordinary tenacity, but nowhere did it show more spirited courage than when defending this last angle of Belgium. There is no higher degree of courage than that shown by the army of the Yser.

On the right of the Belgians, along this line of defence, was the famous British Expeditionary Force. I did not have the chance of seeing the splendid fighting they put up at Dixmude. But in Furnes I heard many details of the struggles going on in that district. And it must be said that the example of the Allies spurred the Belgians to the limits of bravery. The two almost unconsidered armies held back the might of Prussia.

It was imperative that I should return with my copy of the interview with the King of the Belgians to London. My paper, the *Daily Telegraph*, had been collecting funds for the relief of the needy in Belgium, and this fund was to be placed at the disposal of the King. The plan had greatly

WITH THREE ARMIES

pleased His Majesty. He had sent his thanks for this work to the proprietors of the *Daily Telegraph* through me. It was with the greatest reluctance that I left Furnes.

Hardly had I crossed the French frontier, than I was again arrested as a spy. Twenty-nine of them, by actual count, surrounded me, presenting their bayonets at my chest.

How I was released after a short arrest, which was shared by my wife, is a matter of detail. A complete apology was offered by the French officials.

KING ALBERT OF BELGIUM

CHAPTER XIII

KING ALBERT OF BELGIUM

WHILE I was in Furnes I determined at all costs to get an interview with the King who leads his own army. As a man and a soldier he had won the admiration of the world, and he was a personality of extraordinary interest. Through the intercession of a friend an audience was arranged for me. I was to be received after luncheon. During that luncheon I drank a silent toast to my luck.

Escorted by two officers of the crack Belgian cavalry regiment, I was ushered into the long oak hall of the Hôtel de Ville. It was a moment before my eyes were accustomed to the dim light that filtered through the leaded windows. Then I saw standing before me, his hand extended, the King of Belgium. As we shook hands I noticed that he wore the regulation blue general's uniform. I looked in vain for ribbon or glittering order. Standing before the great open fireplace of the hall, the light threw the grave lines of his face into deep relief.

My interview was concerned first of all with the Christmas Fund for the Belgian refugees which is

AT THE FRONT

being collected by the *Daily Telegraph* of London. King Albert speaks English perfectly but slowly.

“I have been deeply touched by this other proof of the generosity of the English people. Again they give substantial evidence of their great sympathy.” The King paused. When he spoke again his voice was lower. “Poor Belgium, now merely the edge of a nation, appreciates most sincerely all that her generous ally is doing.”

The practical side of the Sovereign showed itself as he continued: “I know already how hospitably my people have been received in England. In this respect I hope the Belgian men who are there will be given work. This is the first requisite, for I do not wish that any able-bodied citizen of my country should become a charge upon a friendly people. Let them not be pauperized. It has been the misfortune of these men that they were compelled to leave their country that they might lead those dependent upon them into safety. In England I know the unfortunate women and children of my country are safe.”

“Has Your Majesty any suggestion as to how the Belgian refugees can best be helped?”

“The need of the present is food and clothing for those who have been driven from their homes. In the future it will be necessary to rebuild those homes. Then we shall want every aid to repair the havoc wrought by the enemy.”

WITH THREE ARMIES

At these words, spoken so feelingly by the King of these stricken people, there flashed into my mind the many scenes of desolation and ruin I had witnessed. The burnt homes, the devastation of the battlefields, the fleeing multitudes clutching their bundles, all seemed to pass in review in the dim light of this improvised audience chamber. Even now the distant guns of Dixmude made a low accompaniment to our talk.

“Has not your Majesty a message for the American people?”

For a minute the King was thoughtful.

“I hope that the American people will remember that Belgium has been scrupulously exact in carrying out its obligations as a neutral country. It has never been our policy to interfere in international politics. Like the United States, we have been concerned only with our own problems. Belgium is fighting to defend her neutrality, and she will fight as long as that neutrality is invaded.”

This was the answer to the calumnies I had read in certain papers which tried to justify the invasion of Belgium. I remember the charge that Belgium was undertaking war-like preparations. This charge I knew to be false. I had lived in the country for two months before the fighting began. I knew that the army was not on a war footing. More than that, I had seen that it was concentrated in the centre of the country far from any

AT THE FRONT

frontier. This was not the position of an army expecting invasion. I remembered that Belgium was accused of making secret treaties with certain neighbouring nations. The frank, blue eyes of the man before me was enough assurance that this accusation was baseless. He continued speaking.

“No nation has more hospitably entertained foreigners than Belgium. Year after year we have received them, always treating them as the best of friends. Our greatest boast in Belgium is our liberty, and this liberty extends to all who live within our borders. The Germans who have lived with us in Antwerp, Brussels, Ostend, have enjoyed this liberty to the fullest.” Once His Majesty hesitated, as if weighing his words. “Even after the war began, the German citizens found within our borders were treated with kindness and care. The American Minister, Mr. Brand Whitlock, and the Secretary of the Legation, Mr. Gibson, can testify how, when the four thousand German men, women and children were waiting at the Gare du Nord on their way to Germany, it was my Belgian soldiers who went and bought milk for the children and bread for the men and women.

“I hope that the American nation as a neutral will not forget how the neutrality of Belgium has been violated. When the war is ended, this fact should bear heavily on the terms of peace.”

When our talk was about ended, a questioning

WITH THREE ARMIES

look came into the King's eyes. With an aspect of sadness deepening on his features, he asked: "Is it true that Belgium has been annexed?"

I was glad to be able to respond "No!"

For the first time King Albert smiled.

* * * * *

As before the blast of pestilence, the peaceful people of Belgium fled from the invader. The women, the children, the old and the afflicted saw the serried grey ranks approaching, and their hearts chilled with terror. Some instinct told of the afflictions that were to come. But these afflictions have proved greater than any could have pictured.

Imagine the emotions of the villagers of Visé when they heard the wail of the first shell. Think of their terror when this ball of fire and iron crashed through the roof of a house and the first home was given over to the flames. When that happened, in a flash all understood the scourge of war.

In July no country in Europe gave a more composite picture of peace than Belgium. I have watched the men and women toiling in the fields, and have marvelled at their industry. From before sunrise until dark they laboured. I have even seen them at work by moonlight. These were the people of the few contented acres. And they had tilled every available inch of soil, until the whole country seemed a vast market garden. The industry the Belgians showed in farming was

AT THE FRONT

duplicated in the mills and the lace factories. No nation was more devoted to the arts of peace.

Having seen this side of the picture, the contrast that came with war was all the more appalling. I remember standing on the Fragnoe Bridge in Liège, the morning after the first German night assault. Women with fear written in their eyes hurried past me. Each carried a bulging sheet slung over the shoulder. That sheet contained all that war had left them. With the women came children, pale girls who trembled as they walked, and small boys who sobbed unheeded as they stumbled onward. These had been caught between the fighting armies. Their homes lay in the path of the invaders. For this they suffered. A house that stood in the line of fire was ruthlessly razed. It did not matter how innocent the owner may have been of any active part in war ; it was a crime that his property should impede the killing that was going forward.

The human stream I watched crossing the bridge had lain all night under the shower of shell and shot of both armies. Many of those in the crowd had seen a vagrant bullet kill or maim some one dear to them. One woman had her grey-haired mother struck down at her side. All had heard the terrifying screech of missiles overhead. The night they had passed left them filled with the fear that is born of some mighty cataclysm.

WITH THREE ARMIES

After the stream of frightened non-combatants—yes, among them—came a herd of lowing cattle. These were driven forward into the ranks of the refugees. They knocked against carts that some of the more fortunate were trundling. The carts held the wreck of the household gods. A mattress, a clock, kitchen pots and pans, a bird-cage, an old dilapidated trunk, a basket of vegetables, some trussed hens, and always an image of the Madonna and Child Christ.

As far as I could see along the winding road stretched this river of refugees—women, children, men, cattle, carts—all flying from the danger that threatened. So might a crowd have fled before the rumble of an earthquake, or the boiling lava of a volcano. Fire and shell were sweeping athwart the country that only a week before smiled in fruitful harvest.

All this was but the beginning of the horrors that accompany war. More dreadful trials were to follow. Those villages that stood between the lines were the scenes of constant skirmishing. A patrol of Uhlans would ride down some village street. Their lances, painted slate-grey, they carried ready for attack. Every blind of the houses they passed was drawn, every door barred. The villagers huddled in the cellars. If the faint echo of clattering hoof-beats came to their ears, they trembled. Sometimes a patrol of Belgians

AT THE FRONT

would gallop down on the Uhlans. There would be a fight in the village street. Carbine bullets would tear through the plaster of the walls of the houses. The shouts of the battling men, the scream of wounded horses, the clash of sabre on lance, broke the deathlike quiet of the street.

Soon the clangour of the conflict would pass. Silence reigned again in the streets. Here and there a fearful face appeared, ready to withdraw at any further sound of danger. A few of the terrified inhabitants would steal into the streets. Tremblingly they would approach the scene of the conflict. Their own dead they would carry off for reverent burial. But they dared not touch any grey-coated corpse that lay in the village street.

After the Uhlans had passed the infantry of the Germans would come. Whenever they found the body of one of their own men in or near a village, they claimed that he had been done to death by franc-tireurs. For this crime they demanded the lives of ten of the men of the village. Try and picture the agony of those who took part in this gamble with death. With brutal rapidity the victims were singled out. Torn from their families, they would be marched to the wall of the village graveyard. The crying women and children of the town would hear the echo of the volley. After that they might drop their tears on the bodies of their loved ones.

WITH THREE ARMIES

Is it to be wondered that thousands fled panic-stricken to Liége? But they were not safer there. On came the ever-pursuing Germans, hurling iron-cased death before them. To the terror of each was now added the terror of the many. All who could clambered aboard the last trains to leave the city. The rest swept like an ever-increasing tide westward towards Brussels. In this flight mothers lost their children and wives their husbands. As they toiled onward they sought frantically for the missing ones. But dread was stronger than their love, and the fear of what followed kept them from turning back.

Whenever they might stop and rest, they told and retold the stories of their harrowing experiences. In this way the alarm that filled each breast grew tenfold. It was, indeed, a pitiful crowd that surged into the nation's capital. But again the invaders were on their heels. They could not rest here. As they once more took up their weary pilgrimage, the red flames of burning villages lit the night behind them. Within a week the world shuddered as it read of the wanton destruction of beautiful Louvain. Nothing is so typical of the brutal savagery of the German method of warfare as the destruction of this ancient city.

At last the flying throng were halted by the sea. They crowded into Ostend, a weary band of homeless wanderers. The already crowded town

AT THE FRONT WITH THREE ARMIES

had no place for them. The bathing machines were drawn back from the beach and lined along the streets, and in these cabins the homeless found shelter. It is beyond the power of pen to picture the tragedy that now filled the spot once known only for gaiety and lightness. The gambling Casino was changed into a hospital: surely the wheel of Fate had turned.

Those who still remain in Belgium are in a pitiful plight. Through no fault of theirs their livelihood has been suddenly wiped out; and it must be remembered that these are people of industry and thrift. Through their own efforts they had built up one of the most prosperous nations of Europe. Now they are a broken nation, crushed under the heel of the invader. The kingdom that has been brought to this pitiful estate through fighting for the cause of humanity has a right to our help. You who are sheltered from the grim actualities of war, remember the people of Belgium.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPRESSIONS

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPRESSIONS

THE initial German campaign, so splendidly planned, failed because of two circumstances: the delay at Liége, and the moving of certain corps from the western to the eastern war zone during the last week of August. The unexpected strength of the Belgian army was of the highest military importance. In the first place it gave France time to complete her mobilization and to hurry an army forward for the defence of Paris; in the second place it gave the English army time to mobilize and land on the Continent. In accomplishing these results the Belgians rendered signal strategic service. Also the defence of Liége inflicted heavy losses on von Kluck's right wing. This must have had an effect which showed itself at the time this body was so close to Paris. Again, the check at Liége had a wonderful moral effect. In Belgium this effect was astounding. Untried troops considered themselves the superiors of the most vaunted soldiers of the Continent. It was the fact that the Belgians fought so splendidly at Liége which gave them the spirit for making so many sacrifices

AT THE FRONT

in subsequent encounters. I think also the moral effect of the holding back of the Germans by this army of King Albert led the soldier of England and France to say to himself, "If the Belgians can take it out of the enemy in this manner, why, we can do the same."

At the time of the attacks on the Liège forts, I wondered why one retaining force was not left at this point and the main army of Germany pushed on along their path of invasion. This would have been easily practicable and was obviously the better plan, when we know how important was the factor of time. I have since heard that it was by command of the Emperor himself that the German forces remained at Liège until every fort had fallen. His theory was that the war should begin with a striking victory. It is said that he persisted in his theory despite the strong suggestions of the Great General Staff.

The second circumstance, the sudden reduction of the fighting strength of the armies advancing on Paris, certainly saved that city to the French. In the ordinary course of events, taking the military situation as it had developed, there is no reason to believe that von Kluck and von Bülow's armies could not have overrun Paris almost as easily as they had the north-east section of France. I do not say that this would have meant the end of the war, for I know that the

WITH THREE ARMIES

French people were ready to make supreme sacrifices, and that the French army had learned from the bitter lessons of 1870 that they must not be caught within city walls. Grant that Paris would have been taken, General Joffre's army as it had been deployed would still have kept the field. To have ended the war in France, it was necessary for the Germans to meet and decisively defeat this army. But the enthusiasm which would have been aroused in Germany if Paris had been taken, and the depression that would have ensued throughout France, are factors that might have had a strong bearing upon the subsequent course of the war. These speculations, however, are of little value.

Information on this whole subject is so scanty that it is very difficult to discuss the strategic side of the early campaign intelligently. Of the several other circumstances of the war, the one which created the strongest impression at the time was the fact that the German troops advanced in line of battle in close order; in other words, shoulder to shoulder. As this was contrary to all accepted ideas on tactics, I questioned one of the officers on the German Staff for an explanation.

"We consider," he said, "that close order develops intensity of fire at a given point. If, for instance, we wish to break through an enemy's line, and our troops are massed and he is in open

AT THE FRONT

order, we smother opposition under superiority of fire. It is a simple mathematical problem, and victory should rest with the greater number of guns concentrated in a specified area. Then we also think that the moral of troops fighting shoulder to shoulder is vastly heightened. Courage is contagious. Also at the critical stages of a conflict it is much easier for an officer to direct troops massed than those deployed with considerable intervals. In a charge this is most advantageous. I know that you will contend that the casualties are higher in our formation; but granting that the ratio is higher, it is not in such percentage as to offset the advantages which I have mentioned. Besides, with the modern bullet so many of the wounds are of such slight consequence as often not immediately to incapacitate men for duty. Those who are knocked out generally get back in the fighting line within five weeks, if they ever get back at all."

The official lists of wounded published in Germany show that 8 per cent. of soldiers hit are unable ever to fight again; 36 per cent. after a short stay in the hospital return to service with their regiments; 56 per cent., although not immediately available for duty, are used as instructors at recruiting depôts. Eventually these men also return to the front. This calculation does not account for men killed in action.

WITH THREE ARMIES

From a military point of view the question is extremely interesting. In the first place, as Germany is the most advanced nation in the field of theoretic tactics, it can be taken for granted that this formation has not been adopted without study. The case for close order, as outlined by the German officer, has its merits. But I think, from what I have seen and from what I have learned from men long in the firing line, the Germans have overlooked one important factor—the machine gun. Wherever this weapon could be effectively brought into play, the havoc it wrought in closed ranks far exceeded German calculations. At the Battle of Mons one machine gun handled by a sergeant, who kept his piece in action even when wounded, held back a German column and contributed signally to the successful retreat of the division it covered. At Dinant machine guns were also used with great effect; and the wave of German invasion in north Belgium was surely smashed through the agency of the machine guns handled by the Belgians on the Yser. Mounted on armoured motor-cars, these weapons are the ideal support for reconnoitring troops.

When I was in Berlin the German General Staff laid before me their side of the evidence of the case of dum-dum bullets. They showed me original packages, unopened, which proved to contain the regulation French bullet with the

AT THE FRONT

nose bored out. This was certainly a very effective method of dum-dumming. At the time I told the officers of the General Staff that as I myself had not seen these packages of cartridges in the possession of the French soldiers, I could not testify that the bullets had been used by those troops. I will give here, however, the *ex parte* evidence, as it was presented to me, upon which Emperor William based his letter of remonstrance to President Wilson. The so-called dum-dum bullets were supposed to have been found on the persons of prisoners captured at Longwy. They were of four types. The first, to which I have already referred, was an ordinary infantry rifle bullet which carried a projectile made of soft lead with a covering of white metal. The point of the projectile had been drilled through the white metal covering to the soft lead. Thus the nose, instead of being convex, was concave. Treating a bullet like this of course destroys its range and its accuracy beyond two or three hundred yards. Up to that distance, however, it has high "stopping" power. According to the German reports, the French troops had ten of this type of bullet in every hundred rounds of ammunition. It was supposed that they were to be used against charging troops.

The three other dum-dum bullets were simple mutilations of the regulation French copper-

WITH THREE ARMIES

jacketed projectile. Two of these had the fine pointed nose of the bullet drawn out as one might pull out putty. The other had a nick just below the point. The Germans claim to have captured tens of thousands of this type of bullet. I, however, never saw more than the two samples which were brought for exposition in Berlin. As additional evidence that the practice of using dum-dum bullets was common with the French army, the German Staff claim to have captured the drill used in mutilating the projectile. I asked that I might be allowed to see this drill, but it was not shown me. My request that I might be allowed to visit that part of the fighting line where the dum-dum bullets had been found on French prisoners, the wounded and the dead, was refused.

The German complaint against the British revolver bullet cannot stand. I have been informed that all British officers and non-commissioned officers captured with this revolver ammunition on their persons were summarily shot. If this is so, the Germans have committed a gross breach of military law. The British bullet is nothing more than the ordinary pistol cartridge that has been in use for years. In size, material and shape it closely resembles the American service revolver ammunition. The projectile is lead. It is very nearly the weight of the Colt "44" bullet. Wicked-looking though it is,

AT THE FRONT

it conforms in every way to the requirements concerning ammunition as laid down by the Hague Conference. To take exception to this bullet and classify it as "dum-dum" is mere quibbling. The range of the revolver is limited, and in the British army its use is limited to the officers and non-commissioned officers of mounted troops. That the service rifle ammunition used by the British is anything but regular cannot be questioned.

There was a claim made by the French that the character of the wounds received by their troops at Dinant proved that the Germans were using an expanding bullet. I do not believe that this is correct. Many of the wounded I saw here had the typical lead pencil hole which the modern bullet makes, and if there were any tearing wounds, I think they were due to ricocheting shots. As the French were fighting from a limestone ridge, many of the German bullets were deflected.

On this point—the use of dum-dum bullets—I feel sure there has been much misunderstanding. From my own experience I have found that under certain circumstances it is almost impossible to prevent individual soldiers from mutilating their cartridges. This may have happened on both sides in the present war. If it is so, one can only charge it against the perversity of human nature.

The question of censorship in time of war and

WITH THREE ARMIES

the treatment of correspondents is one I approach with considerable hesitation. Unquestionably the moves of armies in the field should be inviolable secrets. Censorship which suppresses news that may be of value to the enemy is necessary. It should be of the most rigid character. But the suppression of all news from the front is a hardship both on the men in the fighting line, and on those who are dear to them at home. There are so many details of life at the front of no military importance, yet of enormous interest to the friends and families of the soldiers, that ruthlessly to cut off news of this character is simple officiousness. My complaint of the censorship is that it is unintelligently conducted. I will illustrate what I mean by "unintelligent." The news of the transportation of the Expeditionary Force to Belgium was a splendidly kept secret. There were, of course, rumours, and certain details were perhaps known before the English force arrived on French soil. Once in the war zone, however, the English censor seemed to think it was no longer necessary to suppress the fact that this force had landed in Boulogne. Columns appeared in all the English papers boasting of the success of this movement, and giving innumerable details which would be of great value to the intelligence officers of an enemy. I have the word of two officers of the

AT THE FRONT

German General Staff, one of whom had spent much time in England, that they were not certain in Germany that a British force was opposed to them until they read this news in English newspapers. Knowing the main facts, it was not difficult for them to piece all the information together and locate exactly the position and composition of General French's army.

The fact that correspondents were forbidden to witness any of the engagements of the British army has worked great injustice to the troops of the Expeditionary Force. General French's reports are all splendid, but a commanding General has not the time to spend on elaborating his reports so that they may include the exploits of different regiments; neither has he the inclination for this work, as it savours somewhat of boasting. The acts of heroism shown by the different regiments at Mons and Le Cateau which have gone unrecorded are a loss to English history never to be remedied. No country is more proud of the splendid sacrifices made by her sons than England. And no country has greater right to such pride. Yet who are to be the examples for the coming generation, if there is no one to tell of the gallantry of the officers and men who held back the Prussian tide at Mons? Another unfair effect of this censorship has been recently shown in the tremendous advertisement given

WITH THREE ARMIES

to the London Scottish Regiment. I do not begrudge these Territorials one line of praise that has been bestowed upon them, but why should no word of the splendid work done by the Second Dragoon Guards or the Lincolnshire Regiment, or any other of the units that have been fighting since the war began, ever be published?

As a specific instance of how inconsistently the censorship works, I give another personal experience. I arrived from France in London on Saturday, October 3. I had at that time a dispatch of about five hundred words, which dealt in general terms with the movement on the French left flank. I handed in to the office of the *Daily Telegraph* the original of this dispatch on Saturday night, at the same time giving a carbon copy to the correspondent of the *New York American*, in order to make it available for the Sunday edition of that paper. The dispatch as originally written, with some very minor excisions, went through that night to New York, and was published broadcast Sunday, the 4th. The *Daily Telegraph* does not publish on Sunday. When I opened my Monday morning paper and saw no line of my dispatch, I surmised that the censor had been busy. Arriving at the office about eleven o'clock, Mr. Le Sage showed me my original message entirely blue pencilled, and returned with the note: "Nothing of this can

AT THE FRONT

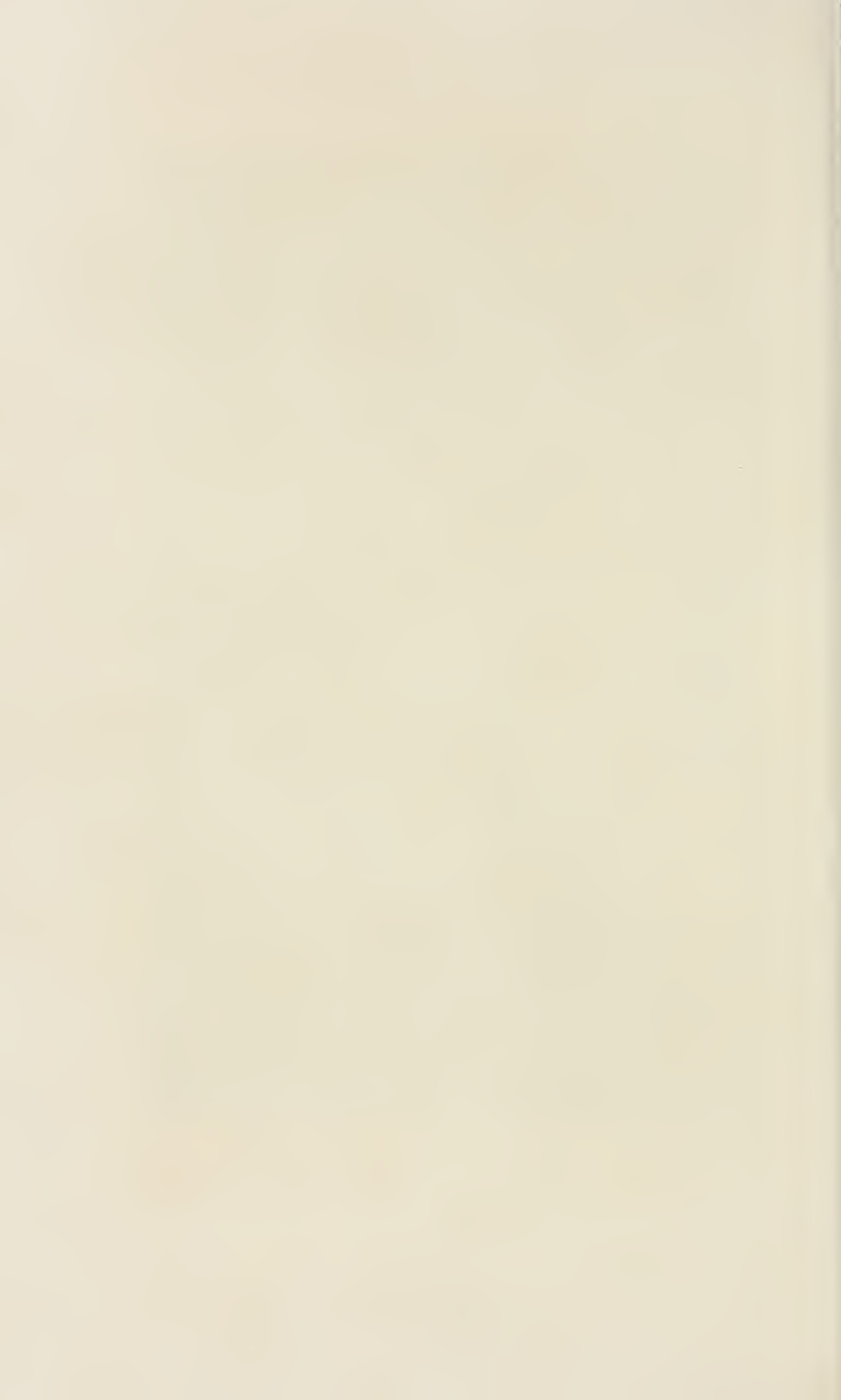
be published." Seeing that the news was already published in sixteen of Mr. Hearst's newspapers in America the previous day, why should the censor have forbidden its publication in London?

I will summarize the French attitude towards the correspondents in a sentence. They look on all journalists as pariahs.

Again and again I have been questioned about the atrocities in Belgium. Although I made assiduous search, I must say that I nowhere met evidence, which I considered sufficient, of any of the cruelties said to have been committed by the German troops. I did not have the opportunities afforded the Belgian committee of investigation, and I cannot add testimony of individual cases of savagery to the long indictment they present. What I can testify to is that entire towns near the German frontier have been wiped out of existence. On the main road from Aix-la-Chapelle to Liège in every village the houses are gutted. I never would have believed such devastation possible, had I not seen it myself. Of the little town of Battice, with a population of about ten thousand, not more than six houses remain untouched. In street after street, nothing remained save the débris of what had once been the homes of thrifty, peaceful people. Hervé has passed out of existence. The same conditions are found in every one of the small towns which bordered the roads



The poxmarks on the walls show where a German air assassin dropped a bomb successfully, killing an old man and wounding a little child,



WITH THREE ARMIES

which the German army used. They have left behind a trail more terrible than the plague.

I attach as an appendix the description of the massacre of Dinant, which is typical of the German treatment of the population in the frontier towns.

Another feature of this great war which must be regularized is bomb-dropping. The plan pursued by German aviators of dropping bombs indiscriminately on non-combatant populations is to my mind the acme of cowardice. The aviator need take no more risks in war than he does in peace. In fact, I think that the men of this corps are in the safest positions in modern warfare. When they operate over large cities, dropping death-dealing missiles on women and children, their work is so dastardly as to merit the severest condemnation. I was in Paris during one of these air raids. Three or four bombs were dropped in different parts of the city. One of these killed an old man and blew off the leg of a small girl. I think the aviator who accomplished this may well be proud of his morning's work, but how he can pretend to call himself a soldier I do not know. Assassin is his title. To drop death on the innocent from an impregnable position is surely no soldier's work. That the German Emperor sanctions this character of warfare, I know from Lieutenant Wiener. Bomb-dropping should be considered a greater crime than piracy.

AT THE FRONT

The actual damage done by the projectiles dropped from aeroplanes is inconsiderable. Unless one is unfortunate enough to be directly under the falling missile, one is safe. In Ostend a Taube dropped three shells within a hundred yards of where I was standing. No one was harmed. The bombs fell in the fish market, which fortunately was empty at the time.

There is a question that I have been asked a great many times: "How long do you think the war will last?" Before stating what I think on this subject, it must be distinctly understood that I cannot pretend to be a prophet. What I put down here may be modified by what happens to-morrow. All that I say is simply what I think at the moment. When there are so many factors to be considered, opinions change constantly.

In the first place, I want to warn all those who are in sympathy with the Allies not to underrate the strength of Germany, who possesses to-day the most marvellous military organization the world has ever seen. This organization is the result of years of study and preparation. The best brains of Germany have been devoted to this work. An organization built on such a foundation does not topple easily. Next it must be remembered that Germany is heart and soul and undivided for victory in the war. I have nowhere seen the enthusiasm and outward expression of

WITH THREE ARMIES

patriotism as it exists in Germany duplicated in any other of the fighting countries. Russia alone approaches the same spirit. With a nation so determined on victory, and one that has carried the war into the territory of its foes across all its boundaries, it is difficult to fix a date of defeat.

My original idea was that the war would last only six months. I considered that financial conditions would make it impossible to carry on such a tremendous conflict for a longer period. But the success of the recent war loans has caused me to modify my first guess.

Again it seemed to me that the violent efforts made by Germany to occupy the territory of the Allies was an indication that the Emperor was placing himself in the most favourable position from which to negotiate peace terms. This is mere surmise. It cannot be said that Germany is the loser in the actual field of operations. Our maps tell us a different tale. Where Germany has suffered is in her commerce. The Berlin business man is in the gloomiest possible frame of mind. Even should his country emerge victorious, he cannot see how he is going to stave off ruin much longer. Despite this, he is heartily in favour of the war. Deluded they may be, but the German people believe that this war was forced upon them. Under the circumstances

AT THE FRONT WITH THREE ARMIES

they are willing to go to any lengths to achieve victory. That the country is suffering from lack of food, men or money, I do not believe. That they have some splendid strategists has already been proved. There is no want of ammunition. How, then, are they to be defeated?

The first thing necessary for the Allies is to achieve numerical superiority. Under the conditions developed by modern warfare, no decisive victory can be expected where the forces engaged are equal or nearly equal. When the French, British and Belgian armies are sufficiently strong to take up the offensive with success, then we may say the beginning of the end of the war is in sight. I do not take into consideration the Russian frontier, and the forces engaged there, as I have not sufficient data on which to base judgments of conditions on that side.

But even with a greater force, the defeat of the Germans will not be a matter of weeks. Granting that they are driven back to the line of the Rhine, they only lose what they have already taken. Carrying the war into Germany would be a task calculated to daunt any general. The thought of the sacrifices demanded will make the attacking nations pause. As far as I can see, there is only one factor that will defeat Germany, and that is exhaustion.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A REPORT drawn up by a member of the Commission of Inquiry on the Violation of the Rights of Nations and the Laws and Customs of War, has been communicated by the Belgian Legation in London.

SACK OF DINANT

The town of Dinant was sacked and destroyed by the German army, and its population was decimated, on August 22, 23, 24 and 25. On Friday, the 21st, about nine o'clock in the evening, German troops coming down the road from Ciney, entered the town by the Rue St. Jacques. On entering, they began firing into the windows of the houses, and killed a workman, wounded another inhabitant, and forced him to cry, "Long live the Kaiser." They bayoneted a third person in the stomach. They entered the cafés, seized the liquor, got drunk, and retired after having set fire to several houses and broken the doors and windows of others. The population was terrorized and stupefied, and shut itself up in its dwellings.

Saturday, August 22, was a day of relative calm. On Sunday morning next, the 23rd, at 6.30 in the morning, soldiers of the 108th Regiment of Infantry invaded the Church of the Premonastrensian Fathers, drove out the congregation, separated the women from the men, and shot fifty of the latter. Between seven and nine the same morning the soldiers gave themselves up to pillage and arson, going from house to house and driving the inhabitants into the street. Those who tried to escape were shot. About nine in the morning the soldiery, driving before them by blows from the butt ends of their rifles men, women and children, pushed

APPENDIX

them all into the Parade Square, where they were kept prisoners till six o'clock in the evening. The guard took pleasure in repeating to them that they would soon be shot. About six o'clock a captain separated the men from the women and children. The women were placed in front of a rank of infantry soldiers, the men were ranged along a wall. The front rank of them were then told to kneel, the others remaining standing behind them. A platoon of soldiers drew up in face of these unhappy men. It was in vain that the women cried out for mercy for their husbands, sons and brothers. The officer ordered his men to fire. There had been no inquiry nor any pretence of a trial. About twenty of the inhabitants were only wounded, but fell among the dead. The soldiers, to make sure, fired a new volley into the heap of them. Several citizens escaped this double discharge. They shammed dead for more than two hours, remaining motionless among the corpses, and when night fell succeeded in saving themselves in the hills. Eighty-four corpses were left on the square and buried in a neighbouring garden.

The day of August 23 was made bloody by several more massacres. Soldiers discovered some inhabitants of the Faubourg St. Pierre in the cellars of a brewery there, and shot them.

Since the previous evening a crowd of workmen belonging to the factory of M. Himmer had hidden themselves, along with their wives and children, in the cellars of the building. They had been joined there by many neighbours and several members of the family of their employer. About six o'clock in the evening these unhappy people made up their minds to come out of their refuge, and defiled, all trembling, from the cellars with the white flag in front. They were immediately seized and violently attacked by the soldiers. Every man was shot on the spot. Almost all the men of the Faubourg de Neffe were executed *en masse*. In another part of the town twelve civilians were killed in a cellar. In the Rue de l'Ile a paralytic was shot in his arm-chair. In the Rue Enfer the soldiers killed a young boy of fourteen.

In the Faubourg de Neffe the viaduct of the railway was the scene of a bloody massacre. An old woman and all her children were killed in their cellar. A man of sixty-five

APPENDIX

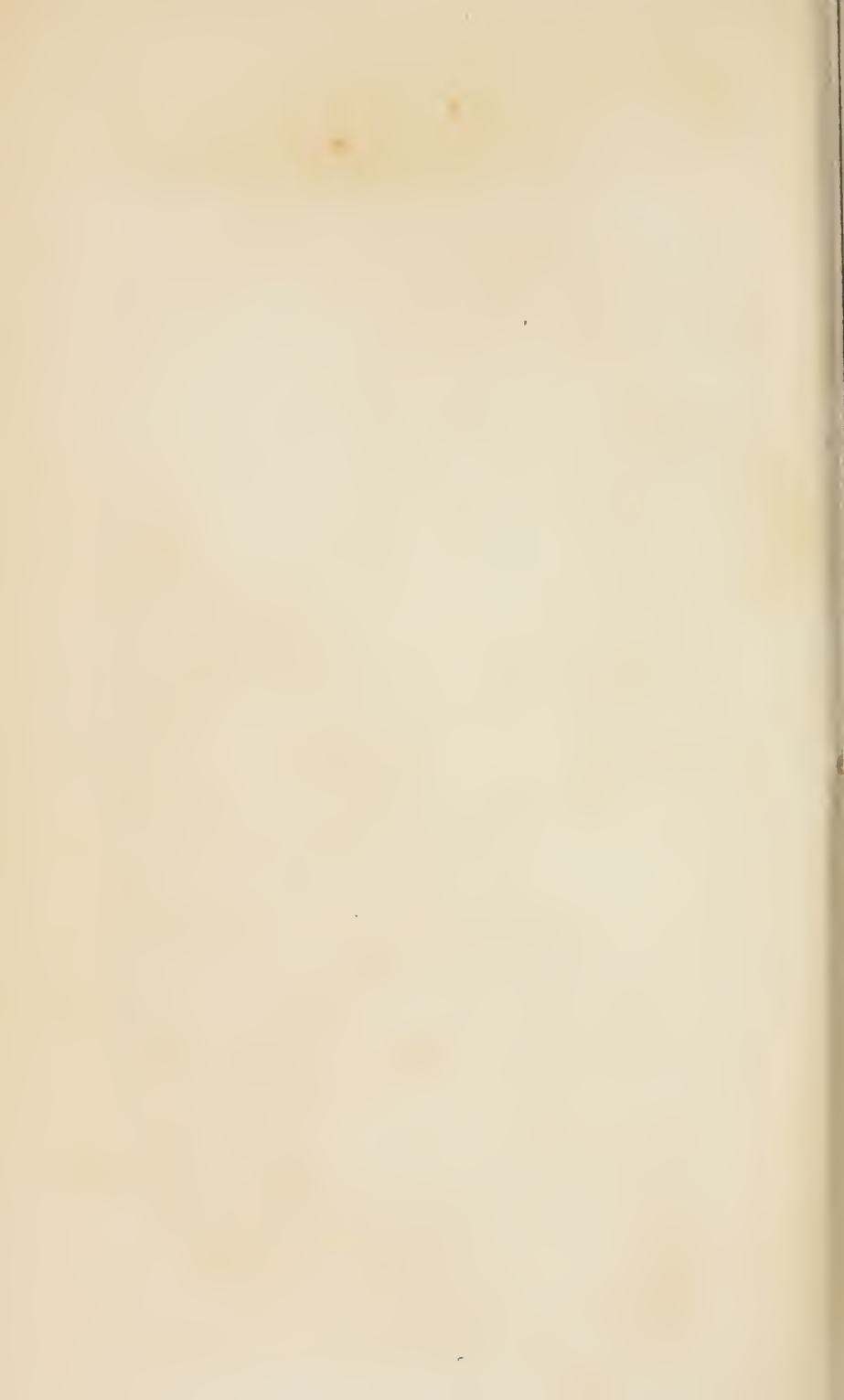
years, his wife, his son and his daughter were shot against a wall. Other inhabitants of Neffe were taken in a barge as far as the rock of Bavard and shot there, among them a woman of eighty-three and her husband.

A certain number of men and women had been locked up in the court of the prison. At six in the evening a German machine gun, placed on the hill above, opened fire on them, and an old woman and three other persons were brought down.

While a certain number of soldiers were perpetrating this massacre, others pillaged and sacked the houses of the town, and broke open all safes, sometimes blasting them with dynamite. Their work of destruction and theft accomplished, the soldiers set fire to the houses, and the town was soon no more than an immense furnace.

The women and children had all been shut up in a convent, where they were kept prisoners for four days. These unhappy women remained in ignorance of the lot of their male relations. They were expecting themselves to be shot also. All around the town continued to blaze. The first day the monks of the convent had given them a certain supply of food. For the remaining days they had nothing to eat but raw carrots and green fruit.

To sum up, the town of Dinant is destroyed. It counted 1,400 houses. Only 200 remain. The manufactories where the artisan population worked have been systematically destroyed. Rather more than 700 of the inhabitants have been killed; others have been taken off to Germany, and are still retained there as prisoners. The majority are refugees scattered all through Belgium. A few who remained in the town are dying of hunger. It has been proved by our Inquiry that German soldiers, while exposed to the fire of the French entrenched on the opposite bank of the Meuse, in certain cases sheltered themselves behind a line of civilians, women and children.





544
-6

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388

Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.

QL APR 10 2001

REC'D (RL) JAN 08 '01

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 294 417 1

