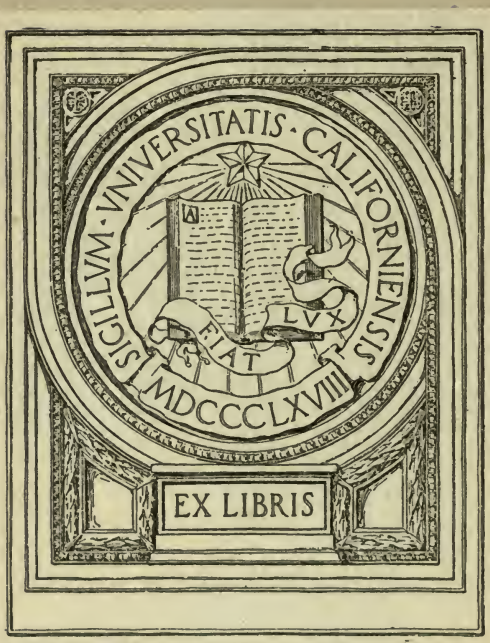
E DIGGERS

By
PATRICK MACGILL

With an Introduction by
The Rt. Hon. W. M. Hughes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THE DIGGERS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE DIGGERS

THE AUSTRALIANS IN FRANCE

BY
PATRICK
MACGILL

With an Introduction by
THE RT. HON. W. M. HUGHES

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TO
W. P.

FOREWORD

By the Rt. Hon. W. M. Hughes

My dear Mr. MacGill,—

From the day on which *The Children of the Dead End* came into my hands, I have been amongst the most devoted of your worshippers. In this and in your later books, your genius has won world-wide recognition, and no words of mine are needed to commend to your very wide circle of readers this story of the achievements of the Australian soldiers in France.

The imperishable deeds of Australia's glorious soldiers have carved for themselves a deep niche in the topmost towers of the Temple of the Immortals. The story of their valour will live throughout the ages, and future generations of Australians will speak of them as we do of all the heroic figures of antiquity, and strive to mould their lives upon the sublime spirit of self-sacrifice and

love of country and liberty which animated them. Their valour has covered Australia with a lustre that shines throughout the world, so that her name, which but yesterday was almost unknown, is now a household word in the mouths of all the peoples of the earth.

The war has made of Australia—a young community without traditions—a nation, acutely and proudly conscious of its nationality, its record in this war, and the great future which awaits it. Upon that day some four years gone, when in the grey of early dawn the Australian soldier leapt upon an unknown shore and in the face of a murderous fire scaled the heights of Gaba Tepe—a feat of arms almost unparalleled in the history of war—the young Australian Commonwealth put on the toga of manhood, and at one stride entered on a footing of equality the family of free nations of the earth. Gallipoli —scene of that most glorious attempt which though falling short of success lost nothing of its greatness—thy name is and for ever will be held sacred to all Australians! In that fiery furnace of trial, of suffering and death, was formed the mould, in which

throughout the long and dreadful years of war the young Australian soldier has been cast. From that day onwards, through the fearful horrors of trench warfare in France and Flanders, on the burning sands of the East, on land and on sea, the armies of the young Commonwealth, casting out not only fear but doubt, have dared, endured, and died, supremely confident of victory.

Through the long dark days when the skies were black with omens of disaster for the Allies, they faltered not, nor for a moment doubted that the cause for which they fought would triumph. Their record is a glorious one, and its lustre is no fitful gleam, but shines brilliantly throughout the long dread years of trial.

It is of the deathless story of the Australians before Amiens that you write, and inspired by such a theme yours will be a story to make the pulses of all Australians leap in their veins with exultation.

When in the Spring of 1918 the great German offensive pressed back and by force of numbers broke through the sorely tried British line, the Australian divisions were hurried down from the North and rushed

up to stem the German armies, flushed with triumph and supremely confident of final victory.

The story of the battles fought by the Australians before Amiens is amongst the most thrilling in the history of this great world conflict. Here was the fate of civilization decided. The great German army, marching along the road in column of route, reached the crest of high land overlooking Amiens, and with but a few miles between them and this key to Paris, were held up by a veritable handful of Australians, later reinforced as the rest of the Divisions came to hand. It was the turning of the tide; the fighting raged around Villers Bretonneux, but the car of the German Juggernaut rolled forward no more. From that day the onward rush of the enemy offensive was stayed. An impassable barrier had been set up beyond which the enemy could not pass. But the young soldiers of Australia, not satisfied with arresting his onward march, began to force the Hun back; at first slowly, and then faster and faster, until in the great offensive of August 8, when along with four Divisions of Canadians and two British, they swept

him back in headlong rout, nor gave him pause until breaking through the vaunted Hindenburg line they stood victorious at Beaurevoir.

The deeds of these brave men will remain for ever fresh in the minds of Australians. Australia has reason to be proud of her war effort; she has done great things; but she has paid a great price. That a small community of five millions all told should have recruited 417,000 men and sent 330,000 twelve thousand miles across the seas, is a great thing. The number of our dead—57,000—and our total casualties—289,723—show how great is the price which Australia has paid for Liberty.

Although I have not seen the manuscript of *The Diggers*, with such a theme it is impossible that the author of *The Children of the Dead End* and *The Great Push* can fail.

Sincerely yours,

W. M. HUGHES.

CONTENTS

The Song of Picardy (1918).

Oh! barren hearth of Picardy,
And trampled harvest field,
Say, who will light your fire at night
Or mill your autumn yield?
No more the reaper plies his trade,
The hours of peace are o'er,
And gone the matron and the maid,
And they return no more.

The poppies blow in Picardy,
The skylark sings o'erhead,
And flower and bird their vigil keep
Above the nameless dead;
But though above the dark sky lowers,
Beneath its gloom is set
The little seeds of Freedom's flowers,
To rim the parapet.

And hearts are strong in Picardy,
Where Hope is still aflame,
Where Freedom's heroes see ahead
The goal at which they aim;
Though drear and cold the ruined hearth
And barren fields are dumb,
A voice breathes soft across the earth
Of peace that is to come.

CHAPTER I

THE SOMME

IN the afternoon of October 11, 1918, I found myself with a party travelling out from Amiens and taking the straight road that runs eastwards towards St. Quentin across the war harried fields of the Somme. We had just passed through a country where the harvest was gathered in, where the hay ricks and cornstacks stood high round the ancient farmhouses, and we were now in a country where Death had reaped its sad harvest for over four years, where all was ruin and decay —a spread of demolition and destruction. This was the battleground of the Somme.

This department is level, very fertile and was at one time amongst the best cultivated districts of France. Cider was made there, poultry reared, and the locality was rich in all manner of farm produce. And it stood high in textile industries—wool, cotton, hemp,

silk-spinning, and the weaving of velvet and carpets. In addition to these industries there were also large iron foundries, beetroot sugar factories, distilleries, breweries, employing prior to the war close on seventy thousand hands. But now, at the present moment, all these industries are obliterated, the rich pastures of the Somme are barren wastes, the factories and distilleries huddles of charred wood, twisted iron, and broken bricks. All homes and hamlets are destroyed, and for miles and miles ruin succeeds ruin, until the eye wearies and the heart is heavy at the sight of the horror which has been heaped on the once fair land of France.

The land of the Somme is not alone deserted and ravaged. It is dead, utterly laid waste as if the lava of war had not alone fallen on it, but blotted it out as a sand storm smothers the landmarks of a desert. Of the great trees which lined the roadways nothing remains save the peeled stumps, that stretch mile after mile as far as the eye can see, passive relics of the hate which swept over them and broke them down. Never again will they bear a leaf or call to the dead earth for the food which gave green to their foliage.

The green which spreads out from the roadways is the green of rank weeds, thistle, nettle and dock, the rank undergrowth which rises through the tortured strands of rusty wire that were once the outer ramparts of the Hindenburg line. Up from these nettles, docks, and thistles, rises here and there a cumbrous tank which at one time fell into a shell-hole and was unable to hiccough itself out again.

By the roadside lie shells which failed to explode, shells in their cases which were never despatched on their mission of death, shells sticking nose deep in the clay with their bases showing through the weeds. Near these are gun emplacements with the guns still in their original positions pointing back towards the locality where the British troops are at present billeted in their many rest areas.

Here is a mill, its walls down, a brewery silent and deserted, a sugar refinery with its girders twisted and bent, its framework stripped of all covering, its iron bowels naked to the sky.

It is hard to picture this spread of world being other at any time than a wild desolate waste, covered with broken homes, rusty

limbers and waggons, with ghastly spiked contraptions of war, chevaux de frise, distorted entanglements, trip wires hidden in the weeds, snares for unwary feet, and grotesque ill-proportioned dug-outs, with doors askew and roofs falling in.

Elbows of trench suddenly gape by the roadside and as suddenly cease. At one time these were parts of a well-proportioned alley, set with fire-bay and traverse, boarded floor and well-built parapet, running for mile after mile in one continuous crooked line from the steep Vosges of the South to the sand dunes of the North. Here was a sap that once stretched across No Man's Land, there was a front line, and further back, crawling through holt and hamlet, all that remained of a communication trench could be dimly discerned. The hamlet was now a medley of tortured beams and fallen bricks, the holt a congregation of peeled stumps that in the distance looked like an assemblage of lepers, and sap, fire-bay and communication trench were defaced, disfigured, their shapeless ruin adding to the ravage which had deformed the face of the country.

In imagination I could picture the country

in days of peace with its rich pastures and fields of corn, its long roads lined with rows of magnificent trees, its hedgerows, dykes and canals, its populous villages where the bells of eventide called the faithful to prayer. This and much more could be pictured, the snug farmhouses, with their ricks of hay, the red-tiled cottages, the merry cafés, the shrines by the roadside, the windmills circling to the breeze, the old men smoking their long-shanked pipes, the women, bravely arrayed in mutch caps and white aprons, carrying on the work of their household, the children playing. . . . Where were the children now?

Even as I thought of this I could picture a date not so very far back, the winter of 1916–17, the most trying winter of the war. Here in this battle-wracked region the Australians were up against it. And "up against it" means everything, from the shattering on the parados of the mail bag with a letter from home, to the horrible death as men were sucked inch by inch into the rising mud of a slushy trench, sinking down into a grave where every effort to get clear was futile and where the tomb, cold, clammy and slimy, rose up to engulf the helpless victim.

The endless, ghastly horror of that winter will never be forgotten by those who lived through it. Two things are impossible: one, the forgetting of that Somme winter by those who knew it; and the other, the inability to picture the life of the trenches by those who have never fought in them.

Take the case of the young soldier suddenly dumped into the trench of war. Let the man be a sundowner from far back, where life is hard, in the Australian scrubs, or let him be a clerk from some shop or office in Sydney or Melbourne. For both, the life that they had formerly known was comparatively comfortable when placed in contrast to the life which Europe offered them when they came there as soldiers. One came from the parched Paroo, the other from the Sydney shop; both donned the habiliments of war and after a certain period of training found themselves stuck in a stinking drain on the Continent of Europe. This drain was the trench, with a fire-bay that was a miniature lagoon, the fire-step covered with slush, the parapet and parados falling in as if they were ditches built of wet sand. Water was there, water mixed with litter and clay. It was impossible to

lie down, for the slush rose over the body, finding its way into eyes, mouth and ear. When the men slept they slept standing, to find when they awoke that it was almost impossible to move hand or foot. They simply stuck there and had to be hauled out by their mates. No fires were allowed to be lit, for the position had to be kept hidden from the enemy. Even if fires were allowed, there was no fuel, no coke, no wood and no matches.

And it was constantly raining or snowing, filling the alleys of war with slush and slime. In addition to the rain which winter brought, there was the eternal rain of scrap-iron sent across from the enemy gun emplacements. If a man was wounded he had to lie in the trench all day, for the sniper was always on the wait for the men engaged in the task of helping their stricken brothers. To move through the trench with a weighty stretcher was impossible.

At night, when the darkness covered the battle-area, the stretcher-bearers crossed the parados and carried the wounded back to the dressing station, their way beset with danger, bursting shells, hidden holes, and the trip

wire that littered the terrible fields. And the mud rose to the men's knees, threatening to drag them down into its clammy depths. But despite this, the great work of war, the deeds of mercy and endurance, were carried on by the brave soldiery who had come so far to fight, not for the glory of their Empire so much as for the freedom of the world.

The dangers which beset the men going out also beset the men coming in. Ration parties were sent to bring in food to the trench garrison, but dangers being many and the way difficult, all food was cold when it arrived. Often it never came to hand at all, and those sent for it never returned to report themselves to the battalion. They left, the men of the ration party, with steaming dixies of tea, so the head-cook in some broken-down house at the rear, reported. "But they never reached here," said the battalion orderly sergeant in the front line. And somewhere in the semi-liquid mud that stretched from the field kitchen to the trench, the ration party disappeared from the sight of their mates for ever.

Then, after long days of hardship and nights of waiting (how many days and nights had passed they knew not), the men who garri-

soned the front line were relieved and went back to support trenches for a rest. Here they would sit in a trench as wet as the trench which they had left, sleep in a shelter which hid the sky from their eyes but never kept the rain away from their sodden clothes. But despite this the trench had some advantages denied to the men nearer No Man's Land. They could light a fire and cook meals, make tea and fry a rasher of bacon. But the wood to make the fire was seldom to be obtained, and when it came to hand it was too wet to burn. Still, their own efforts to make their stay in support comfortable, helped a little to relieve the tedium of the time. The rest came to an end at the close of three or four days, and back again they went to the front line trenches.

Away home in England or in the Colonies of that Kingdom live men and women who, despite reading, report and record, cannot picture the life which was lived by these men. The limit of suffering overpassed, nothing but their imperturbable endurance nerved them to the work which was theirs. For those who live so far away, the sight of these trenches even at a distance would raise a

feeling of discomfort, to walk through these lines of mud would cause them no end of torture, mental and physical, to stay there for a day would be horrible, but to fight there in rain and snow and shell fire would be superlative in its ghastliness. Yet far away from these scenes, removed from all the agony war entails, it has been reported of some that they calmly sit down in their comfortable rooms and with smug pens and righteous speech protest against the little tot of rum which is issued now and again to the gallant soldiers who stand against the enemy, guarding the Empire which that enemy has set out to assail. Heaven send that this war waged against the foe without may help a little to cripple the smug intolerance that dwells within !

It was through the beaten land, on the road that runs from Amiens to Peronne that our car sped. Scarcely a soul was in sight, though now and again we could see refugees returning to the homes which once were theirs. We passed a woman and two children, the former dressed very neatly, with a mutch cap on her head and an umbrella under her arm. A mother and her loved ones, probably going

back to the home they had known in days of peace.

A few miles out from Amiens we saw an old man ambling painfully along in front of us, now and again coming to a halt and looking round him, taking stock of the country through which he was passing. Hearing the car following him he turned and looked at us. He was a very old man, his beard white ; he carried a stick in his hand and held a bundle under his arm. As the car came close to him it stopped and the driver inquired of the man where he was going.

" To Villars-Carbonnel," said the man, putting his stick under the arm that held the bundle, and rubbing his whiskers with the free hand.

" Your own village ? " asked the driver.

" Yes, sir."

" Come inside and I'll drive you there," said the driver.

" No, thank you," said the man. " I prefer to walk. I'm near there. Villars-Carbonnel is round the corner."

The car drove on, and my thoughts dwelt with the man who was going to Villars-Carbonnel and who preferred to walk there. In

viewing the countryside from the road he probably wanted to see all that had happened to the place since he was there before. Or perhaps he wanted to prolong the joyful anticipation of the homecoming. With the remembrance common to the old he was no doubt calling to mind the village which he had known all his life, the people whom he had known and loved when he dwelt there. What would the village be like now ? Would it be broken down like the other villages which he had passed on the road, Villers-Bretonneux, Warfusse Abancourt, and Lamotte en Santerre ? These were twisted out of all shape, their cafés in ruins, their streets piled with rubble, the roof beams of their many homes burned, and churches beaten almost to the ground. But no, his native village would not have suffered as these had suffered ! He loved it so much that the thought of irreparable ruin hanging over his own birthplace could not certainly have entered his mind. Let him have his dreams of homecoming and he was happy.

I could picture that old man in days before the war sitting in front of his house in the summer evenings with the vines trailing

round the front door and the apple blossoms blooming in his garden. In the distance the mists crept up from the Somme, the village girls leading the cattle in from the pastures came down the street ; the children played on the pavement, making the night glad with their innocent prattle. Possibly the church bell was then ringing out the Angelus, calling the devotees to worship, while the old man sat there smoking his long-shanked pipe with the tobacco piled high over the bowl and the gleaming threads falling down on the breast of his coat. Then, after a while, he might go into a café, drink his glass of red wine and play a game of draughts or dominoes with his neighbour. And he knew the village, knew every man and woman there. It was his native place, loved as only the French can love the spot of earth on which they were born, and known to him as a painter knows every tint of colour on the picture which he has completed.

We came to a cross-road and here for a moment the driver stopped to look at his map. Round us the country stretched for miles, with here and there a ruined village or farmhouse breaking the landscape. Under

us the road was a dun colour, showing that broken bricks had been used in the fashioning of the highway. Thistles grew by the roadside and through these could be seen many strands of rusted wire, with here and there a cross turning green with the rain and topped with a trench helmet or khaki cap. Flowers grew there, late flowers nodding gravely in the breeze. Not a house was to be seen, not even the ruins of a wall. Above this was a board with something written on it, and leaning over the car I could read the message. This was what it told me :

HERE ONCE STOOD THE VILLAGE OF VILLARS-CARBONNEL.

The Fighters

The loaded limbers trenchward wend, the straining horses churning
The slush upon the cobbled road that takes them to the fray,
And far ahead in lurid tints the fires of war are burning
And leprous white the poplar stumps that line the soldiers' way.

The great rage smites the heavy world and tears the sky asunder
(Oh! silent forms that bow and bend beneath the heavy load!)
The East aflame with war's red strife and riot of its thunder
(Poor weary boys that wend their way along the shrapnelled road.)

Oh! hearts that follow, wish them luck and strength in sleep and waking,
These gallant youths that come and go through all the gloomy night

To labour on the mighty job ; its stress and toil unshaking
The fire and faith of mighty souls that battle for the right.

Oh ! Heaven light their darkest hour and send them safely through it
To reach the goal of their desires and see the struggle through.
The way is rough and hard the fight. God give them strength to do it,
To weather through and finish up the work they've come to do.

CHAPTER II

VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

BROKEN walls, littered streets, charred roof-beams rising in tortured disarray over the piles of red brick rubbish, stumps of trees, rusty entanglements, battered barricades, pitted pavements, disbanded vehicles and derelict guns. This is Villers-Bretonneux, the village from which the Australians drove the Germans on the night of April 24–25. The story of the attack, of which we have read so many accounts, was again told to me by an officer as we stopped for a while in the village to see the ground over which the men of the South proved their worth in what we hope will be the last battle of the Somme.

Amiens is the last fringe of civilization. Beyond that we come into the dead world which was over-run by the German hordes in

the summer of 1918. In the late days of August when the battle lines were penetrated by them an approach to open warfare was reached. Endless streams of infantry in field grey streaked through and over the British defences and pushed forward behind light machine guns which now not alone covered the advance from the rear, but opened up a path by working from the front of the attacking soldiery. Under such protection the Germans dribbled through, taking all available shelter, fighting from behind clumps of trees and broken walls, firing from folds in the earth and newly formed shell-holes and driving the men in khaki in front of them. But Villers-Bretonneux, like a mighty rock, withstood the invasion of the war storm and here it broke itself against the barrier of flesh and blood which was Britain in arms.

The Germans trying to hammer their way through to Amiens were stopped here, but, determined to get through, they started a heavy bombardment which lasted for four hours and in which a lavish supply of gas, lachrymose, chlorine and mustard, was used. German tanks, high turreted and gigantic,

figured in this attack for the first time. The battle line extended from Villers-Bretonneux in the north to Hangard in the south, and five whole German divisions and some units from a sixth were engaged in the exploit. In this attack the Boche pushed the British back to the village of Cachy and on to the fringe of Bois l'Abbé. This was the position held on the evening of April 24. Villers-Bretonneux was in German hands, but only as Pompeii was in the hands of the Romans when Vesuvius was flooding the fated streets with streams of molten lava.

It was at night that the Australians came on to the scene of conflict, two brigades, one from the Fourth and one from the Fifth Australian Division attacking. They had marched up to their allotted positions, but neither brigade had before seen the ground which they were going to attack.

The night was one never to be forgotten, with its battle lights flaring far ahead, and the roads back from the fighting line crowded with refugees hurrying away from their devastated villages, their quiet farms and their burning homes. Old men who had not left their native place for the past twenty

years, came along the roads, leading little ponies, frightened cows, or some other animals which belong to the stock of a well-tended farm.

Women, old and young, were on the road, carrying their children away from the horrible holocaust of war. Little boys and girls, wild-eyed and terrified, plodded along through the press on the roads, not knowing where they were going, but filled with one thought—to be out of it, to hide in some humble shelter far from the ravages of the terrible Boche. Mothers wept and ran backwards and forwards through the throng of moving figures, calling for petit Jean or petite Yvette. But the little children were lost, swallowed up in the vortex of the terrible night.

What was happening? What was going to happen? Nobody knew. Only one thing was certain. The Boche was at the throat of France, putting the country to the sword, burning the churches, trampling down the little homes of the simple people. Flying from the menace of the night as children would fly from a nursery in which a gorilla was loosened, the poor people were on the road hurrying away from the village of Villers-

Bretonneux, from the town of Amiens, from the fated corners of France on which the German was pouring his hate.

And through this stream of sufferers the Australians, with eyes afire and teeth hard set, made their way eastwards. That night, above any other night, they wanted to fight, to get at the foe and send him reeling back towards the line from which he came.

On this night, the 24th, the Australians attacked, driving the enemy back into Villers-Bretonneux. The struggle was a fierce one in the dim moonlight and costly to the enemy, who disputed the ground step by step with bayonet and bomb, through the dark streets lit up by the flash of explosions, and ghastly with the shrieks of the wounded and dying. The area of battle was heavy with the gas which had been thrown into the town in the earlier part of the day and was still filling shell-hole, creek and cranny.

Neither side dared to shell the place, as the artillery of both friend and enemy were unaware what part of the village was occupied by their own troops. And so, unaccompanied by the roar of guns, the grim struggle went on in the darkness, the Germans filled with the

lust of dominance, and the Australians nerved by the sad sights which they had seen on the road of sorrow that led from Amiens to the country in the rear.

Dawn saw the village cleared of the enemy and saw, too, the dead lying in heaps on the pavement and gutters. Australians who lived through that night are of opinion that never yet has the bayonet found so many victims in one fight. And never was a battle so fierce. The Peninsula was terrible, Pozieres horrible, Polygon ghastly, but Villers-Bretonneux was sheer, undiluted hell.

The Charge

The night is still and the air is keen,
  Tense with menace the time crawls by—
The ruined houses in front are seen
  Blurred in outline against the sky.

The dead leaves float in the sighing air,
  The darkness moves like a curtain drawn—
A veil which the morning sun will tear
  From the face of death. We charge at
    dawn.

CHAPTER III

TOWARDS PERONNE

WE passed through Lamotte-en-Santerre, a village in complete ruin like all other villages on the road eastwards from Amiens. The road to Hamel branches off here, and we were shown the place from a distance, Hamel, where the Australians fought side by side with the Americans and came to know the worth of the New Allies which had entered the war.

The Australians often speak of the Americans. The former are very proud of the fact that the Yankees on their first attack were attached to the Diggers, and the soldiers of both countries fought shoulder to shoulder in the fight for Hamel. This was on the fourth of July, " some Fourth," as the Americans say. The Americans lived among the Australians for some days, and in that short

space of time they came to know them as if they were their own countrymen.

When the attack was on the Americans fought splendidly. Merged in the larger Australian command and vieing with the war-hardened Diggers in the stress and dash of the conflict they went forward as if for a race, determined to stick through it in thick and thin and not let their new friends down. Prior to the attack the officer in command of the Americans told them that they were going into action with some of the world's best fighting men, that it was an honour to battle in such company and they must show themselves worthy of it, for the credit of the United States was in their keeping.

In the fighting that ensued they showed themselves worthy of their new mates, attempted feats almost impossible and accomplished superhuman deeds. The Australians are loud in their admiration of the Americans and consider the Yankees as soldiers of muscle and mettle second to none.

In the Hamel attack they were not to be held back, and that their casualties were heavy in the fighting was to a great measure

due to the Yankees' hurry to get forward, and rush ahead under the shells of their own barrage to get on the neck of the enemy.

The tanks helped greatly in this operation, and even now, in a time when the great events of the morning are so often forgotten in the greater events of the night, the Australians still speak with enthusiasm of the work done by the steeled mastodons of war in the attack on Hamel.

Germans surrendered readily in most places here, but at one or two points nests of machine guns evaded the vigilance of the tanks and kept up a harrowing fire on the attackers. It was a case then of rushing the positions with the bayonet, and the Australians went forward in their grand, audacious manner, fighting every yard of the way. The still bodies lying on the field afterwards testified to the struggle which had taken place. And the Americans proved their worth, fighting in such a manner that the Australians were quick to regard them with admiration and look upon them as great soldiers.

" Great fighters, but damned bad moppers-up ! "

This, in one terse sentence, was an Australian soldier's opinion of the American soldiery. This Australian was a man who had fought side by side with Americans, and who gloried in the fact. He had seen them dash forward at Hamel when that part of the Western Front was captured; he had joined them in the affair, and was proud to fight alongside of them. He had also taken part in the fighting north of St. Quentin when the American troops went forth at the tail of a mighty barrage to attack the Hindenburg line.

The " Diggers " have a great fellow-feeling for the " Doughboys," whom they consider to be very much like themselves in thought and outlook. The Diggers, having fought with their splendid American comrades, dared the tremendous task of war under the same barrage and shared the same risks and dangers on the field, have come to know the new Ally, and that knowledge is filled with appreciation.

The Americans are great fighters, they will tell you, and add as an afterthought that they are " bad moppers-up."

" Mopping-up " is practically a new opera-

tion in battle, and if not altogether new it has come into great prominence in this war, especially when the enemy is retreating. The track of the flying Boche is a track of snares, pitfalls, toils, traps, hidden mines and all manner of treacherous contrivances which a cunning enemy can lay to kill his pursuers. The dug-out may conceal a machine gun, the apparently dead may be waiting for a chance to fire at the troops which have passed him by, the elbow of trench may conceal a sniper, so all suspicious objects have to be examined before being crossed over.

But the Americans, I understand, don't waste time in dealing with little affairs like these. Full of the call of battle they rush forward to get right into the thick of the struggle. Their business is in front where the fighting is hardest, and they do not care to linger in dug-outs and trenches apparently disbanded and deserted.

" They're bad moppers-up," the Australian repeated. " But they're great fighters, these Yanks."

It was in this district near Hamel that heavy fighting took place last summer,

when the grass and self-sown crops stood high on the field of battle. Here the Australians adopted a certain kind of guerilla warfare which kept the Germans in continual suspense and which greatly helped the forward penetration of the attackers. For certain periods no direct frontal attack was opened in force, but during the time the Diggers did not remain inactive. Patrols stole out through the long grass, crawling to certain localities occupied by the Boche, sunken roads, valleys, shell-holes and ruins of farmhouses. Here at various points were many encounters in which bomb and bayonet were used and in this way many nests were cleared of the enemy. Platoons and squads adopted these tactics on their own bent, stealing ground bit by bit from the Germans. Even solitary soldiers, working on their own initiative, did a lot towards chasing the enemy back. Stories of deeds accomplished by Diggers, the capturing of dug-outs, the rushing of machine-gun positions are spoken of, but as the Australian is one of the most modest of men, many stories of desperate deeds and high enterprise will never be known beyond the limits of camp and the field of war.

At various points along the route the officer conducting our party told us of various incidents, comic and sublime, which had taken place on the wide field of the Somme. Here it was the story of a one-armed Captain who went into an attack at the head of his platoon, carrying only a walking stick. Leading his men on the tail of a barrage and holding them back when they pressed too close to the bursting shells, he regulated the line with his stick like the conductor of an orchestra.

Again it was the story of a machine gun, untouched by the barrage, resuming firing when the first wave of Australian attackers almost reached it. A machine gun is a vicious little weapon, and the Australians had to fling themselves flat to avoid being cut to pieces. Then three men, a sergeant, a corporal and a private, rushed the gun from the flank, bayoneted the gunners and captured the gun. This prompt manœuvre, planned and executed in the space of time necessary for the lighting of a cigarette, saved many lives.

Another story was of a crew of desperate Germans who brought a machine gun into

the open and fired through the barrage on the Diggers. The Australians saw the gun, and a company commander without a moment's hesitation turned to two of his sergeants and put the trite question: "Are you game?" The sergeants, who were game, nodded, and without further ado the three men rushed through the bursting shells on the gun. Bullets hissed past their ears, flying shrapnel splinters wounded them, but with impetuous dash and sublime indifference to death they swept on the gun crew and destroyed it. Later one of the sergeants died of his wounds; the officer, with his shoulder badly torn, continued to lead his men and stayed with them all the next day through a heavy bombardment.

Again we were told of a private, whose crime sheet spoke of innumerable petty delinquencies. This man, when his platoon officer became a casualty and the non-commissioned officers fell, led the way to a trench where the Germans were stoutly resisting, and with bomb and bayonet drove the Germans back. Hand-to-hand fighting of the stiffest nature took place, and this private killed at least twenty-five of the enemy before

they were routed. Having accomplished this herculean task he led the Diggers to the objective line, organized and took charge of it for the two days following.

Then there are many other stories of men, eager and exultant at the prospect of making an attack and getting into grips with the enemy. There was a certain private who had been detailed for a soft job at the baths in the back area. On hearing that his battalion was going to attack he absented himself from his post without leave, joined his regiment and took part in the attack. Another man, a corporal of the same battalion, was away at some training school, did the same, but by ill-luck he arrived late and joined his men the day after the battle.

"On the day when we attacked on that ridge across there an officer of the infantry came in an aeroplane to take part in the attack," said the driver of the car when we came to a momentary stop on the St. Quentin road. He pointed his finger towards a bluff that rose from the Somme and stood a little higher than the country round it. "He was an officer, hit on the head by a splinter of shell a few days before the attack, and

sent to hospital at the base," said the driver. "Word that his battalion was going to cross the bags reached him, and he implored permission to return, as his wound was healed. But the doctors wouldn't allow him to go. On being told this he went to a mate of his, an airman who was flying towards the front, and asked for a lift. He was given a lift, and got in touch with his battalion in time to get into the attack."

Isolated incidents like these show the temper of the men, their desire to be in the midst of the fighting, the devotion and enthusiasm of soldiers who have crossed miles of sea to do their bit in the great war which has tortured Europe for so many years. Of her record in the war Australia may well be proud.

The Khaki Lads

Along the road in the evening the brown
battalions wind,
With the trenches' threat of death in front, the
peaceful homes behind ;
And luck is with them or luck is not, as the
tickets of Fate are drawn—
The boys go up to the trench at dusk, but who
will come back at dawn ?

The winds come soft of an evening o'er the
fields of golden grain,
And good sharp scythes will cut the corn ere
we come back again—
The village girls will tend the grain and mill
the Autumn yield,
While we go forth to other work upon another
field.

They'll cook the big brown Flemish loaves
and tend the oven fire,
And while they do the daily toil of barn and
bench and byre
They'll think of hearty fellows gone and sigh
for them in vain
The billet boys, the khaki lads who won't
return again.

CHAPTER IV

MONT ST. QUENTIN

IT was on the bank of the Somme Canal in the early morning, Peronne in the distance, and a light railway track at our feet. The place was Brie. We had arrived there the previous night.

The railway track was torn and twisted, rails sticking into the air at oblique angles, sleepers charred, chairs smashed, the bed of the four-foot way churned and broken, with the waggons and trucks which once ran along them smashed to fragments, thrown hither and thither, out into the canal on the right or into the fields on the left side of the line. Looking at the riverscape one could see in the near distance a broken bridge with the sluggish water rippling lazily round the buttresses which yet remained, and near at hand, though

the day was chilly, three naked soldiers stood on a boat making ready to dive into the oily water.

On the other side of the Somme canal was a spread of marshland on which could be seen lines of duckboards running hither and thither, round pools and clumps of osiers, but all going in the same direction, towards the town of Peronne. It was on August 29 that the German rearguards were driven back across this portion of the Somme. British troops then seized several crossings of the canal in this locality, but the marshes beyond being impassable it was found impracticable to cross and seize Peronne.

It was therefore decided to turn the Somme barrier by an attack from the north, and to do this entailed seizing the steep promontory of Mont St. Quentin. It was from the north across a thousand yards of level pasture land pitted with shell holes and criss-crossed with trenches and lines of wire entanglements that the Australians made a famous advance, fighting all the way and seizing Mont St. Quentin. The task was a herculean one, adding undying glory to the men who accomplished it.

Our party was allowed to visit Mont St. Quentin and standing on its summit I saw the field across which the Australians made their advance. Looking from a German observation post on the promontory I could see the green field, smooth as the cover of a book, lying in front of me. Nothing could escape a vigilant eye on its broad expanse. Shorn of grass a rabbit could be seen if it crawled across the levels. It was here that the German machine gunners had their nests, and it was here that an observation post sunk into the rock gave a complete field of observation to the watcher. The post was cunningly made with a ladder leading down a shaft ten feet in depth. At the bottom was a field telephone with wires running back to battalion headquarters. All that the observer had to do was to clamber up the ladder, take stock of the field in front, go back again and 'phone his report to headquarters in Peronne.

The town, although of little industrial import, has a history dating back to the days of Clovis II. It is the burial-place of Charles the Simple, who died of starvation in a dungeon in the castle of Peronne, which castle was also the prison of Louis XI for some time.

But the castle is now no more, the Germans have slashed it to pieces. The church of St. Jean, built in 1509, is also ground to dust. In 1870 it was greatly damaged by the Boche when he laid siege to the place, but it was restored afterwards. Now, however, it is beyond restoration.

A famous incident was still, prior to this war, celebrated by the natives of Peronne. The town was once besieged by Charles V, and a woman named Marie Fouré greatly distinguished herself in the defence of the place. After a period of stiff fighting the siege was raised and Charles V departed. The anniversary of the raising of the siege was, until 1914, annually celebrated by the inhabitants, and offerings were laid at the feet of Marie Fouré, whose statue stood in the town. But now the statue, like the Castle of Peronne and the church of St. Jean, is no more.

The present war, however, has given something to replace the memory of Marie Fouré. Outside the town at the foot of Mont St. Quentin can be seen a tract of ground set apart as a site for the memorial which is to be raised to the second Australian Division in commemoration of the men who fought and

died for a great cause under the ramparts of Peronne. And in the days to come it is probable that once a year, on August 31, the townsfolk will repair thither and lay garlands of flowers at the base of the memorial that will remind them of the brave boys who fought and died for the freedom of France and for a yet greater freedom—the freedom of the world.

The capture of Mont St. Quentin was an operation second to none in the great summer drive of 1918. This natural fortress, strong as any on the Western Front, stands high over the Somme marshland and dominates all the surrounding country. On its south-eastern slope is a dense wood, now stumped and shivered, but at that time its trees stood high and green, burdened with a dense foliage that made it a splendid hiding-place for machine-gun nests. Though at that time the Germans were falling back at several points of the line it was unbelievable that they would give up Mont St. Quentin, a point of the utmost strategical value, as key to the whole Peronne area, without a bitter struggle.

That they prepared themselves to hold it is shown by the fact that the place was garri-

soned by a force of 1500 men, and after the battle captured Germans stated that they specially volunteered to hold the line against an Australian advance.

On August 29, at noon, the British held all the southern banks of the Somme, but the Australians, fired with a long chain of victories, decided to advance further. Up till then in the Somme fighting they had recovered over 125 square miles of country and forty villages. Fifteen thousand prisoners had fallen to them, 301 officers, two regimental commanders, five battalion commanders and staffs, 161 guns, 3,000 machine guns, the whole transport of one battalion and miles of light railway trackage.

On the night of August 29, when darkness fell the Australian engineers busied themselves throwing bridges across the Somme canal, south of Peronne, and some of these bridges, broken and battered, are to be seen there yet. Working hard in the gloom, despite the continuous rifle and machine gun fire of the enemy, the engineers completed their task, and in the morning of the 30th patrols essayed to cross the canal and advance through the marshes towards Peronne.

No practicable path could be found across the swampy morass; the enemy kept up a stubborn resistance and the Diggers had to desist from attempting further headway at the moment.

Meanwhile, fighting was proceeding elsewhere, and at every point the Australians were making gradual headway towards the ancient town. In the forenoon of August 30 the Omiecourt peninsula east of the village of Clery had been cleared and a bridge head held by the Germans was taken. This opening a route to the town, it was decided to advance in this direction and lay siege to Mont St. Quentin, attacking it from the north and west instead of the south.

By three o'clock in the afternoon the Australians came into contact with the German advanced positions and fierce hand-to-hand fighting took place and continued far into the night. Every inch of the ground was disputed, every path, every gully and bank became the scene of desperate fighting. Brave men went forth to meet death calmly and proudly, doing their duty with the consciousness of Right to sustain them, enduring all the risks of the night with a grim fortitude

and bearing all its discomforts as if they loved war solely for its own sake.

But it is too much to say that the men love war. No man of normal pattern loves war as it is fought here, hip deep in slush all through the day and night in an atmosphere suffocating and gaseous. If a man loves war, he is no more to be complimented on fighting than a man who loves a good dish is to be complimented on eating. But one thing is true. The Australians, certain of the cause for which they are fighting, are keen on keeping at it until a successful finish is reached, knowing that the German method of warfare, waged with all its attendant despotism and tyranny, has for its aim, not alone the breaking of the Allies, but the shattering of the moral frontier of civilization. The Australians are out, not so much to make war for its own sake as to wage it for something that is straight and clean. And never was this purpose made more manifest than at the taking of Mont St. Quentin.

In the early morning of August 31, the infantry from New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, got orders to attack. The men were then in the locality of Clery-sur-Somme,

and by a strange coincidence rations came to hand just as the attack was about to start. The mail also arrived with letters and parcels from home, but war cannot stop for matters of such little import as the reading of letters and the filling of hungry stomachs. Leaving the hot steaming dixies of tea behind them and stuffing their letters in their pockets the Australians in the cold damp morning, unaided by tanks or barrage, set out to attack. Peronne was in flames, Mont St. Quentin was impregnable, the Germans were offering a stubborn resistance. But no faltering for the " Diggers " when they were " up against it " !

The day cleared as they swept out from Clery-sur-Somme and made their way across the level stretch of land that lies between that village and their objective, fighting all the road and clearing the enemy from the old Somme trenches which lined the way. And as they fought they could see a hillock in the distance standing blank and bald, and to all seeming, impregnable. This was the steep promontory of Mont St. Quentin, the summit of which the brave soldiers of the New South Wales Brigade had to take. And to-day it

presented a most formidable appearance and inaccessible front. But the men knew no stay, they prepared their hearts for a sublime suicide. Letters as yet unread were taken from their pockets, torn to shreds and flung to the winds. Though confronted with an almost certain death they were not going to give any information to the enemy.

Wire entanglements unbroken by shell-fire blocked the way of the soldiers of New South Wales, but undaunted, they sought for openings and wormed their way through. Some took off their coats, their packs, lifted props and sandbags that lay by the way, threw these on the wires and clambered over. The promontory was stormed, the ready bayonet brought into play and the enemy was cleared off Mont St. Quentin. At this one swift assault they scooped in most of the whole German rearguard north of Peronne, and captured the great natural position overlooking the city and took 1,500 prisoners.

It was here that 250 Australians captured 800 Germans, big soldiers of the Prussian Guards. In addition to the men the colonel of the battalion was taken prisoner, an irate individual who was exceedingly annoyed

because the Australians had dared to capture him or his men. Bristling with arrogance he blustered and swore at the Australian officer who questioned him. How dared the Australians, the common Australian soldier, order him about, prod him with a bayonet when he refused to move and catch him by the collar of his coat and shove him in front of them towards the cages in the back area. He was a colonel, a scion of a noble house, an aristocrat.

"If you don't behave yourself," said the officer, "I'll pass you on to the Diggers. At the present moment you're not with the slaves in Germany."

The Colonel blazed into another round of abuse, and the officer, losing his temper, handed the Colonel over to the Diggers, giving them orders to search the man.

And they searched him, thrust miry hands into his pockets, felt under his shirt to see if he had any papers on his person. This amused the men, but did in no way ease the temper of the Prussian aristocrat and tyrant.

The Field

The sky shows cold where the roof has been,
But the stars of night are none the dimmer.
Where the home once stood are the ruins seen,
But the brazier glows with a cheery glimmer—
The old life goes, but the new life fills
The scene of many a peasant story,
And the bursting shells on the sentried hills
Whisper of death, but shout of glory!

Gutted and ripped the stricken earth
Where the bones of the restless dead are showing,
But the great earth breathes of life and birth
And ruin shrinks from the blossoms blowing.
The old life fails, but the new life comes
Over the ruins scarred and hoary,
Though the thunder of guns and the roll of drums
But make for death while they shout of glory.

CHAPTER V

THE HINDENBURG TUNNEL

ON the day following our visit to Peronne we motored out to Bellicourt to see the Hindenburg tunnel, of which rumour and reading tell us so much. This tunnel was built by Hindenburg, we are told, and if ever the British troops crossed the German defences the enemy soldiers would conceal themselves in thousands, come out when our men had passed by, attack them in rear and cut them to pieces. The Hindenburg trenches might be crossed, but the Hindenburg tunnel would be the ruin of the Allies. This and that we were told, for war quickening the ear for rumour we believe much that in days of peace would pass by for idle tales.

The truth of the matter is that this tunnel was not built by Hindenburg but by Louis

XVI, at whose expense the work was begun, the cost of the undertaking being about £4,000,000, and through it runs the great canal of Picardy. This canal passing from St. Quentin to Cambrai had to run through a country rising so much that it was necessary to carry it under the earth for a considerable depth, and this canal tunnel in places is hewn entirely from rock chalk. The work was completed by Napoleon I in 1810 and a communication opened thereby between the river Scheldt and the extreme eastern departments of France and the Atlantic through the rivers Somme, Seine and Loire.

At Bellicourt we descended several steps covered with mud and littered with the wreckage of war, strands of barbed wire, rusty rifles, German equipments, ammunition boxes, trench helmets, sandbags, etc., all the odds and ends flung away by the German army in retreat.

Sticking through the arched entrance of the tunnel was the prow of a flat-bottomed barge and built over this was a chamber. In here we made our way, crawling up long, crooked stone stairs steeped in gloom almost impenetrable. We entered an apartment

dimly lit by an opening which let in a pale ray of light. The officer conducting our party lit a candle and we could see the room. Under our feet was a floor of boards holed in many places; some of the holes were very large. To come along the floor without a light was impossible, and one false step and a man would drop through the aperture into the canal below. On our left as we entered stood a large wheel which was at one time worked by a hand windlass. This wheel was used in lifting the sluice gates to let the freight barges through.

Further along were two large coppers filled with some thick fluid which exhaled a putrid stench. One of these coppers is now known to history, for rumour has it that when the British soldiers took the place they found a German dead and naked in the boiler, that the soldier had been dissected by a surgeon, that the oven was at that time in use for cooking meat for the German soldiery, etc.

That Germans lived there and made the place their dwelling is true, for even now in apartments leading off from the entrance chamber can be seen many beds bedded with straw and still covered with army blankets.

Belts for machine gun bullets litter the floor, and opposite an opening that looks out towards the north-west is to be seen an emplacement on which a machine gun once stood. The fact is that the apartment was used by a machine-gun crew who made the chamber their home, who lived there, sleeping in the place and cooking their food in the copper.

Up above the machine-gun emplacement is to be seen a hole slanting obliquely through the outer wall and coming to an end in the roof of the room. It is now held by some that a shell came through here, dropped in the midst of the gunners, burst and blew one of the men into the copper. Of the remainder a number were killed and two or three wounded. On the wall of the apartment can be seen many holes and dents made by flying fragments.

This is the opinion of some. Others say that soldiers attacked the place, ascended the stairs, bombed the inmates of the keep, killing many, and the force of an exploding bomb blew one into the copper.

Then there is a third party, which says that the Germans were going to use the dead man

for food. This being a most improbable story is one of the most readily believed by the public.

On leaving the canal bank and clambering up the stairs we were able to see on left and right the trench systems built by the Germans, the massive parapets, the long communication trenches, the emplacements for guns, the pill-boxes and the rows of barbed wire entanglement. How this place was stormed and taken by the British soldiery is a miracle. How they managed to lacerate the German sinews of defence, to hack their way through and batter down the lines erected by Hindenburg is one of the marvels of war.

The story can never be told. Historians will arise one day and tell how the infantry advanced taking so many kilometres of ground despite great opposition and formidable defence. At dawn they left the village of A——, the historian will tell us, and at dusk they captured the hamlet of B——. But that will never make the whole story of the operations manifest to the eyes of men. Even knowing the place on which the battle was fought, knowing it as it is now with the trenches still remaining and the lines of wire entanglements

still standing, it is impossible to tell the story of the encounter. Little details, incidents which meant life or death to one, two or a dozen men, the taking of a dug-out, the capture of a machine-gun emplacement, the scramble across the broken wire on the trail of a tank, the hand-to-hand fight in a dark cellar are forgotten, even by those who have taken part in them. Only the principal outlines and outstanding features of the gigantic contest can be portrayed by the historian. Little personal affairs, stories of squads and crews, belong, as Napoleon once remarked, "rather to the biography of the regiments than to the history of the Army." And the exploits of small bodies of men, of infantry squads, of machine-gun crews will live for a little while only when veterans of the war exchange confidences over a backyard fence in days of peace and when they fight their battles over again, tracing with their pipe shanks on their hands the lines of trench taken and held, the redoubt lost, the ground on which the hand-to-hand conflict took place and all other various little doings which were part and parcel of the greater battle.

The historian will give the mere outlines

of the struggle. In four lines of cold print he shall tell how —— Regiment left the village of A—— at dawn and in face of almost insurmountable difficulties took the hamlet of B—— at dusk. Here the regimental historian may come in and add a little, telling how "B" company was held up by the wires, how "A" company with reckless dash came to the assistance of their mates, how Sergeant —— urged the men forward, how no one faltered, how, with set teeth, they set themselves to the task of getting through and how in the end victory was gained. But still there is a lot more to be told, the pining and waiting of the women left at home, the sleepless nights when letters from the loved ones have not come to hand, the weary misery of mothers who have lost their sons, of wives who have lost their husbands. In this story of war there is laughter and tears, courage and timidity, weakness and strength, sorrow and death. Even those who have fought know very little of what took place, they have been mere atoms moving backward and forward in the vast fluctuation, blinded in the obscurity of the conflict. For them the battle has been a mirage having in it

nothing that is fixed or stable, a great hallucination.

The line was taken, but even those who took part in the operations know not how the superhuman was accomplished, how the miracle was performed.

"It was a tough nut to crack," said a Digger to whom I spoke, asking him of the battle. "But we got through somehow."

"It was damned stiff," said another, shrugging his shoulders as if to belittle the effort of men in the operations. "Damned stiff, but we had the guns and the tanks."

"For God's sake don't put your hand on that!"

It was an officer with two rows of ribbons on his breast and the gold stripe in triplicate on his sleeve who spoke. He was a veteran soldier who had fought in many campaigns and who knew war as it is waged on more than one continent. Now he was looking at one of our party who had bent to lift a German helmet from the ground near the mouth of the tunnel. The souvenir searcher held himself erect and fixed a look of inquiry on the officer.

"It may be a booby trap," the officer explained.

"That, sir?" he said, in a voice of incredulity.

"Probably not," said the officer. "But one never knows. When we took Peronne and the Diggers set about clearing the streets of dead, some of our boys found a dead German lying on a stretcher. Two of them bent down with the intention of lifting the man and carrying him to a grave. And the stretcher and the dead man on it and the two Diggers went sky high, for the contrivance was attached to a mine by a strand of wire. On another occasion an officer friend of mine went into a dug-out in the front line, recently captured from the Germans. Quite snug and comfortable. He lived in it for three days, but at the end of that time it went up, carrying him with it. It was all planned out before the Germans left. Somewhere in the roof of the dug-out was a certain acid, which fell drop by drop on a wire, eating it away. When the wire was cut something which it held up fell, struck a spark and an explosion took place. Again, a party of Americans found one of their dead lying on the barbed

wire entanglements in No Man's Land the other day and they went forward to lift him off and bury him. An engineer saved the men by rushing up and yelling to them to clear off. Then when an examination was made it was found that the soldier was tied to the entanglement with a wire and this wire was connected with an explosive."

"And that's how they wage war!" said the civilian. "The beasts!"

"It's the nature of the animal," said the officer with the air of a man pronouncing a known truth. "When Peronne was taken it was placed out of bounds for sixty days to the Australian troops, so that the engineers could have time to go through the place and remove all booby-traps. And it was filled with them. The first two Tommies who entered the place were blown up. Doors were tried by the engineers, for doors idly open or tightly shut were often death-traps. Lift the latch and something goes bang! and you go bang with it. Shut a door and hey! an explosion. 'Twas the same right through the place. A spade thrown carelessly down, a clock ticking harmlessly, a rifle flung away, a trench helmet lying on the street, each and

any of these might be traps. We have to move carefully after the retreating Germans, and mopping up doesn't always consist of clearing the Huns out of dug-outs but of clearing up the litter left on the field."

Of this and that the officer spoke, but now and again he came back to the subject of booby traps. The man, although a brave soldier, as the ribbons on his breast and the service stripes on his sleeve testified, dreaded the booby traps. He spoke of trip wires on the field, or wires in the cellars of captured villages, of wires by the roadway, in the trench and on the parapet, all connected with land mines and hidden explosives.

But the process of mopping up has humour of its own, and he spoke with relish of suspicious objects lying in towns, villages, in farmyards, and out on the open land between the lines. Men gazed at these askance, moved them gingerly only to find that they were quite harmless. Once he saw a stretcher lying in No-Man's Land, and fearing to move it he tied a rope to one of the handles, came in to the trench and got the men to pull the stretcher in. And they pulled and brought it in, but nothing happened.

Again he spoke of an incident dealing with the capture of Peronne. A colonel walking along a street stopped to peep inside a house which had stood its beating well. This residence was apparently used by the Germans as a battalion headquarters, for a number of papers littered the floor and on the table was placed a box of cigars. But what attracted the officer's eyes was a gold watch hanging by a copper wire from the wall. His own wrist watch had got broken that morning and the officer wanted a watch. But the wire roused his suspicions. If he pulled it or tampered with it something of which he could never give a report might happen.

He decided to work warily, and finding a string he tied it round the watch, then paying out the string he walked into the open and made himself snug in a shell-hole which yawned on the street. Once there he gave the string a tug but nothing happened. He pulled again and again and still the watch held firm. But on the seventh or eighth tug the cord came away. He pulled it into the shell-hole to find nothing in the loop. Getting to his feet he went into the house. But imagine his surprise to find the wire hanging

empty from the nail to which it was attached. The watch was gone and it was a week later that he was able to solve the mystery when he found a splendid gold watch in the possession of one of his own men. This Digger happened to come along when the Colonel was tugging at the supposed booby trap, took the watch, put it in his pocket and made his exit by a back door.

Remembrance

Was it only yesterday
Lusty comrades marched away?
Now they're covered up with clay.

Seven glasses used to be
Filled for six good mates and me—
Now we only call for three.

Little crosses neat and white
Looking lonely every night,
Tell of comrades killed in fight.

Hearty fellows they have been
And no more will they be seen
Drinking wine in Nouex les Mines.

Lithe and supple lads were they,
Merrily they marched away—
Was it only yesterday?

CHAPTER VI

THE DEAD VILLAGE

IT was grey noon and we found ourselves on a flat-backed bluff that rose from the marshes of the Somme. At the base of this bluff could be seen many openings, telling of the Germans who had once dug into the place, fashioning little homes in the wet clay. The German is a burrowing animal and it is safe to say that for every shell left by him in his flight across the Somme (and they are many) he has left a corresponding dug-out. These carefully constructed shelters are to be seen in all localities, in trench, gully, bank, by roadway, churchyard and farm. His dug-outs are everywhere, heavily timbered, strongly propped, snugly roofed. In the building of these habitations of fear the German soldier has no equal. The Australian soldier may have more dash and energy in

fighting than the Boche, the English soldier more pluck and resource, the Scot more stubbornness, but none of them can fashion better dug-outs than the German. Whether the building is to him an art, profession, or instinct, the fact remains that his manifest ability in building is a thing of wonder.

Most of his dug-outs are furnished with due elegance, from the carpeted and curtained abodes of officers, to the snug hutments of the simple soldiers. The officers' chairs are covered with elegant brocade, the officers' tables are of carved oak, and here and there the officers' rooms are lined with rich tapestry. And all has been taken from the homes of France, from the château, church and cottage.

Round the bluff on which I stood and as far away as the eye reached could be seen innumerable brick red huddles, all that was left of the villages which once stood on the Somme field, all that now remains are stumps of walls, broken down churches, smashed doors, paneless windows, desolation and ruin. At points on the immense landscape can be seen black blocks of enemy hutments which have in a measure escaped the ravages of war. Gun positions can even be located, the guns

idle in their emplacements, howitzers knocked off their mountings, gun carriages stuck in the mud, lines of the everlasting wire entanglements stretching over miles and miles of fields. Here and there is a signpost with German directions telling where such and such a place can be found and where such and such a road is leading to. The village of A—— lies some distance in front, the village of B—— some distance to rear, and both heaps of ruins.

Each ruined village has an aspect peculiarly its own. Each seems to view its evil hap in its own way and the traveller becomes conscious of a distinct soul in each huddle of ruins.

Villers-Bretonneux with many walls standing and projecting beams and girders rising over the rubbish seems to groan out: "Though I am smashed and broken I am not yet beaten. They've tried to work their will on me, but for all that here I stand battle-scarred but indomitable. I have a soul that still remains my own."

Bray-sur-Somme, resting in a hollow, solitary and secluded, with its church spire down, the Christ above the church door lacerated

with shrapnel splinters, and the green grass peeping covertly up from the cracks in the pavement, wears the air of a hermit who has cast himself off from the sin and temptation of the world. In it and around it all is quiet. Not a sound, not a whisper. It seemed to me as our party motored through there one day on our way to Chingnes, that something personal stood above it, the Spirit of the village, holding up its hand saying in a whisper: "Hush! Begone!" The village detached and alone reminded me of a jungle animal in pain that creeps into a dark corner to lick its sores. The life which disturbed the repose of Bray-sur-Somme, if only for a moment, was to it a sinful reproach; every movement, every voice and footfall seemed to throw it back to brood on its own misery.

Again there is the village that has left nothing but a memory, a village like Villars-Carbonnel, utterly dead, defaced off the world as writing is wiped off a slate, as the snow is thawed from a garden seat. Nothing remains of it, not a café sign, not a cobble or a butt of wall. A sign that I have already spoken of stands there telling that it marked the place where once stood Villars-Carbonnel,

which is now as dead as the people of yesteryear. Poor little village! there are tears in its story, tears for the idle onlooker as well as for the refugees who will some day return to know the fate of their native place.

In a steep gully in Arey Wood, south of the village of Chingnes, we were shown a monster gun, with a bore of fifteen inches and a barrel fifty feet in length. The huge machinery of the mounting, its steel platform embedded in concrete was sunk into a deep pit surrounded by blackened and shivered trees. Three light railway lines ran up to the emplacement, and dug-outs for the gun crew, partially completed, were ranged round the base of the pit.

But the gun was smashed, broken at the breech, with the helpless barrel lying in the mud and the gun carriage standing helpless on its steel platform. Thus it was found by the men of the 1st Australian Division when they came forward on the heels of the retreating Germans in the early days of last August.

The shaping of this gun was certainly one of the most magnificent struggles of man against the forces of Nature, the moulding of the earth to his needs and the fashioning of

it towards a desired end. As you look at it, you can picture the men who went down into the bowels of the earth, dug and scraped the iron ore which they sent up from the blackness of eternal night to the light of day. Then followed the moment when overburdened vehicles swept towards some busy centre of labour, where the ore was shovelled into the smelting pots. Men sweated and strained there, worked hard in overheated chambers, hurrying on the job which they had set out to do.

And others, wise in their lore, pondered over plans relating to this and that, elevation of the monster when in use, the trajectory of the missiles which it was to vomit forth, the absorption of recoil and the carriage of the weapon to its desired emplacement. And these things were studied and made plain while the munition worker in the hot suffocating atmosphere of the casting room laboured to make shells worthy of the gun.

And one day when the labour was accomplished, the weapon was sent forth in secrecy and placed in a tree-lined pocket of ground behind the German trenches. Here was an emplacement prepared fit for its installation,

and on a movable carriage, a steel ribbed structure of gigantic proportions, the gun was placed, its fifty foot barrel rising to the sky.

Dynamos built in deep dug-outs waited, ready when the hour came to touch the spark that would send out the missile of death to some far off French town, Amiens perhaps, and wreak vengeance on the simple people who dwelt there.

Whether or not the shell was fired is a matter of doubt, but rumour has it that a shell never passed through the barrel of the gun. But still it had its toll of victims, for by the emplacement can now be seen fourteen graves and the crosses on these graves tell that the men buried there are German gunners. The shell bursting in the barrel of the gun served a purpose, and this was beneficial to the Allies.

Some day when the war comes to an end, report has it that the gun will be sent to Australia, where sightseers in Sydney or Melbourne will look with awe on the mighty weapon captured by the Diggers in the great struggle.

Of this matter I spoke to an Australian

soldier in London the other day, but he shook his head.

"You don't think they'll be able to remove it?" I queried.

"It's not that," he said. "It may be taken to Australia, but to what city? One place is jealous of another, and if Sydney gets the gun, what is Melbourne going to say? For my own part, I think it would be wise to leave the gun where it is."

The Grave

The cross is twined with gossamer,
  The cross some hand has shaped with care,
But by his grave the grasses stir
  And he is silent, sleeping there.

The guns are loud; he hears them not:
  The night goes by; he does not know:
A lone white cross stands on the spot
  And tells of one who sleeps below.

The brooding night is hushed and still,
  The crooning breeze draws quiet breath:
A star-shell flares upon the hill
  And lights the lowly house of death.

Unknown, a soldier slumbers there
  While mournful mists come drooping low—
But oh! a weary maiden's prayer,
  And oh! a mother's tears of woe!

CHAPTER VII

GRAVES

THERE is a certain grave near Peronne, and in it rests a German machine gunner, and though the cross over the grave testifies to the valour of the dead man it also is witness to the chivalry of the men who buried him there. The men were Australian soldiers, brave Diggers who advanced to the attack and after making rapid strides they were held up by the fire of a solitary machine gun that stood immovable in the rout as a rock in running water. Round it the retreating army was withering like snow in a thaw, the whole line bending, cracking and floating backwards.

Still this gun kept hurling its lead against the advancing Diggers, cutting great gaps in their ranks. For a full hour it kept up its

murderous fire, staying the Australians and causing them to halt. In vain they streaked out to the left or right, wormed their way along folds in the ground or took cover in natural hollows and advanced from there when the fire ceased for a space. But the moment a head showed or a khaki clad body came into view the gun found voice and swept its missiles of death across the field.

Suddenly it became silent. The advance was resumed and the gun was located. Here was found a solitary German lying dead beside his weapon with a bullet wound in his head.

"A brave man!" said the Australians, looking at the dead man who alone and unaided held up their advance for an hour. "We'll bury him!"

And there and then in the emplacement which he had guarded till death they buried the German soldier and on the cross over the man is written "Erected by the —— in admiration of a soldier."

The officer who conducted our party spoke of another grave which is near the same place, and which bears on the headstone :

"Here lie two Huns who met a Digger."

And near it, in terse and forcible language is inscribed on a second headstone :

"*Here lies the Digger.*"

Whether this is true or not is impossible to say. The officer who told me of it merely got the story of the affair from some other man who had not seen the headstones, but who heard of them from a mate. In this way is rumour carried from mouth to mouth on the field of battle. But if the story is true, it shows the grim humour which is the soldier's ; if not true, it shows the same humour as it takes form in the imagination and makes itself manifest in dug-out drollery and war mentality.

The Somme is a land of ruins and graves. These graves are everywhere by the Amiens-St. Quentin road, by the road from St. Quentin to Cambrai and the road from Eitenham to Bray. Not alone by the roadside are the brave resting, they sleep in folds of the earth, on little hillocks, in the shade of broken spinneys, by the banks of canals and on the verge of disbanded trenches. Over one heap of earth can be seen a bayonet topped with a helmet or cap, over another a rifle with its barrel stuck in the ground. Crosses stand to

unknown soldiers, British, French or German, crosses with names stand singly or in clusters, telling of the men who have given up their life in the great war. None of these are secure from the leprosy of time; the wind, weather and rain turn them black or green, blotting out all record or detail. The grass and weeds grow up around them, covering them and hiding them from the eyes of men. The French graves have their red rosettes, the British graves their black lettering, and amongst these latter many Australians are buried far away from the land that gave them birth.

In the churchyard of Peronne are several crosses telling of British soldiers buried there. The inscriptions on the crosses are written in German and all are couched in a similar manner:

"Here rests in God, Private —— of the —— Regiment."

"The only kindly thing I've ever seen done by the Germans," said an Australian officer who was with us as we looked at the graves.

A Soldier's Prayer

Givenchy village lies a wreck, Givenchy church
is bare—
No more the peasant maidens come to say their
vespers there ;
The altar rails are wrenched apart ; with
rubble littered o'er,
The sacred sanctuary lamp lies smashed upon
the floor—
And mute upon the crucifix He looks upon
it all,
The great white Christ, the shrapnel-scourged,
upon the eastern wall.

He sees the churchyard delved by shells, the
tombstones flung about,
The dead men's skulls and yellow bones the
shells have shovelled out,
The trenches running line by line through
meadow fields of green,
The bayonets on the parapets, the wasting
flesh between—

Around Givenchy's ruined church the levels, poppy red,
Are set apart for silent hosts, the legions of the dead.

And when at night on sentry-go, with danger keeping tryst;
I see upon the crucifix the blood-stained form of Christ
Defiled and maimed, the Merciful, on vigil all the time,
Pitying His children's wrath, their passion and their crime—
Mute, mute He hangs upon His Cross, the symbol of His pain
And as men scourged Him long ago they scourge Him once again—
There in the lonely war-lit night to Christ, the Lord, I call
"Forgive the ones who work Thee harm. O Lord, forgive us all."

CHAPTER VIII

CAMBRAI AND AMIENS

WE went to the town of Cambrai on October 13, a famous day in the history of the town, for it was then that the British handed the town, captured by them from the Germans, over to the French. Sir Douglas Haig and Premier Clemenceau were there: the French troops furnishing a guard of honour.

In the distance, while the French were playing the Marseillaise on the town square, we could hear the dull thud of shells bursting in the fields outside the city.

In the afternoon a solemn thanksgiving for the relief of the town from the Germans was held in the old cathedral amidst the wreckage of war, Abbé Thuliez, the heroic priest who stayed in the town whilst it was

in the occupation of the enemy, officiating. On entering the cathedral it could at once be seen that the Germans had left a trail of ruin over the sacred house of prayer. Seats were broken and overturned, a chair was attached to the sanctuary lamp and hung there idly, the pipes of the organ have been wrenched out and taken away, and candlesticks looted from the altar were found, on the entry of the British, tied up in bundles ready for removal.

Walking through the wide but irregular streets one was forcibly reminded of the cunning of those who had been in occupation. Here and there attached to the doors of houses were notices put up by the British engineers. One says "Dangerous," meaning that suspicious objects in the house are not to be touched lest they explode a booby trap, other houses bear the legend "Suspicious," and a third notice says "O.K.," meaning that the engineers have examined the house, removed anything dangerous and rendered it safe for habitation.

The big Town Hall is blown down and gutted with fire. Nothing remains save the bare walls. The ground floor is littered with

rubble, curtains have been taken down and carried away, statuary and pictures have been removed.

We visited a large château on the outskirts of Cambrai, which was once the residence of the German Crown Prince. Inside one could see where the hand of the spoiler had been busy. Chairs and sofas were stripped of their tapestry, valuable books had been taken away and books of lesser value had been tampered with, slashed with knives and destroyed. In an upper corner of this building was a nursery with the children's dolls and rocking horses torn and lacerated, the doll's tea service broken and trampled to the ground.

Outside the house runs a light railway under a line of tall trees. These trees have been cut down and placed on the rails, blocking all transport and destroying the picturesque glory of a beautiful esplanade, on which stands the statue of Baptiste, the first maker of cambric, from which Cambrai has taken its name.

Many ancient towns of France famous in history and acquiring a fame even more lasting in their downfall, were visited by our party in turn. Yesterday it was Peronne,

to-day Cambrai, Albert and Amiens to-morrow. Of Peronne and Cambrai we have spoken, but of the history of Albert we can say nothing, knowing so little of its past. And the Albert of to-day is humbled to the dust, its cathedral burned to the ground, its leaning Virgin gone.

On our way back to England we stopped for a night at Amiens, the one-time capital of Picardy, the town in which Peter the Hermit, Apostle of the First Crusade, and Ducange, the greatest of French scholars, were born.

Amiens was up till quite recently the objective of enemy guns and the dumping ground of bombs emptied from German aeroplanes. At the present time the refugees were again returning and many were already busy at the work of putting the city once again in order. But great harm has been done to Amiens, and here and there blocks of houses are levelled to the ground. Even the cathedral, begun in the early years of the thirteenth century, has not escaped the missiles of war. A German shell has come through the roof, but by good luck the shell was a dud and did no injury to the place

beyond breaking a few tiles on the roof and smashing a flag on the floor.

Shells have fallen all round the building, smashing many houses in the immediate neighbourhood and particularly outside the main entrance, where a café has been levelled to the ground. In the big building itself a great deal of stained glass has been broken, its walls and flying buttresses are scarred and pitted with splinters from bursting shells. Within, the choir stalls of the Cathedral, the high altar, the pictures, pillars and statuary are protected by high sand-bagged walls that reach almost to the roof. It is said that the Germans did their utmost to spare the building. But judging by the number of houses in the vicinity knocked down by shell fire and broken by bombs, it looks as if the Germans tried to save the sacred pile by just missing it with the narrowest possible margin.

Though but three days had passed since we came through Amiens on our way to the front, a great change had taken place in the town. Three days ago it was practically deserted, for most of those who had gone away in the face of the big German advance

had not yet returned. Windows were then shuttered, doors boarded, no traffic was to be seen in the street. Lamps were broken and the shattered glass lay on the pavements. Amiens was a dead city lacking light and radiance by night, movement and sound by day. Mourning and stupor lay like a pall over the town. But now on our return we could see that a great resurrection had taken place. Lights showed in the shops, women served in the cafés where the red and blue bottles flung back the reflection of many lamps, children were playing on the pavements, and newsboys were shouting out the daily papers, English and French, at every corner. Amiens with usual French perseverance was accommodating itself to the new life and settling down again to its ordinary every-day round of business.

Having seen Amiens Cathedral in the darkness, we returned to our hotel to find a number of fresh visitors who had joined our party. One was Mr. Hughes, Premier of Australia, who was visiting the troops then billeted in the back area, drilling and getting fit for further encounters on the battlefield. For the night he was stopping in Amiens at our

hotel and on the morrow he was going back with us to London.

On our entrance to the dining-room we found one of the officers telling the story of the bayonet, which he held to be the greatest weapon used by the fighting man.

"The best weapon of all," he said. "Other weapons do their bit, the tank, the big gun, and the rifle, but none are as effective as the cold steel. When in the early days of the war the British soldiers went back from Mons 'twas the bayonet that saved them many a time. The gun did a share, the barbed wire entanglements were of some service, but when it came to hand-to-hand fighting there was only one weapon called into play, the bayonet."

"The Germans don't like it," some one said.

"Not they," said the officer, "it's cut and run when they are up against the steel. But with the Turk it's a different matter. When he's cornered he'll fight for his life and make a good fight of it. He's a splendid man, Johnnie Turk, a damned good fellow, and one that can give you a run for your money when you come in contact with him. And he has

such a queer way of fighting with the steel. Twists and whirls his bayonet round in a queer tantalizing manner, and you never know where you are, whether he's doing it for a joke or not. But there's some plan in his capers, as we saw out on the Peninsula. Some of our boys were inclined to laugh at Johnnie's capers, but they knew better after a while, for suddenly the beggar would stop his gyrations and sweep forward and slash upwards and probably get home. I saw many of the Diggers fall to the Turks' bayonet, but never from a straight thrust forward. Johnnie always cut upwards.

"The surgeon has never dressed a bayonet wound," he added. "The weapon is always fatal."

During the evening we talked of many things, of incidents of war and peace. The Premier told us many entertaining stories of his life in Australia, and one I particularly remember.

Mr. Hughes in his early days was put forward as a political candidate for some little township. This was a place where party strife was rife and where now and again matters of import were decided not by peace-

ful argument and gentle discussion, but by the heavy fists of angry men. One party put Mr. Hughes forward, another party brought another person into the limelight and said that he should be a candidate in preference to Mr. Hughes. Eventually, it was decided to put the matter to a vote.

While the voting took place Mr. Hughes was in some other part of the town dealing with other affairs. He happened to be sitting in some house looking out on the street when he noticed a man in shirt sleeves coming tearing towards him, his face and neck beaded with perspiration.

" What's wrong ? " Hughes exclaimed.

" The voting," was the answer. " You're chosen. Run for your life ! "

The Old Platoon

Soft the night on the black field's face,
  And under the lonely moon
The white cross marks your resting-place,
  Mate of the old platoon.

Hazards many we both have shared,
  Enduring as men endure—
With faith and fire all risks we dared,
  Knowing the end was sure.

" The cause is worthy," you often said.
  You said, " We're out to win,"
As we looked to the great new day ahead
  That ushered Freedom in.

There's a weapon less on the rifle-rack
  And gone from the parapet,
Still you guide us now on the cobbled track,
  The mate we can't forget.

To the hour ahead our way we wend:
  Let it come late or soon,
We know you're with us to the end,
  Mate of the old platoon.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE CAFÉ

THE café was crowded, for the Diggers out of the trenches were making the most of their short stay in the back area. To-morrow or the day after they would be going back again and anything might happen up there. "Laugh and be happy, for to-morrow we die," seemed to be the motto of the evening.

The place was crowded, principally with Australian soldiers, though here and there in the room, sitting at tables playing dominoes, were a number of Frenchmen. Cordial relations bind the poilu and the Digger in terms of friendship, for the Australians love the French, and the French love the Australians.

The Diggers appreciate that everyday good-humour, generous warmth and eager hospitality which gives tone and colour to the lives

of the French people. This courtesy and kindness is not for a certain occasion with these people, it is their very nature. They seem to like to see everybody happy and in good spirits, and go out of their way to befriend and succour the men in khaki when these latter are in need of help. Nothing goes farther to show the temper of a people than their behaviour in matters of trifling importance, for when all is said and done trifles make up the great sum of human existence; take them away from life and what is left?

The civilian population of France show their appreciation of the Australians in many ways. They are ready at any moment to give rooms in their homes to men back from the lines, to prepare hot meals for them, dry their clothes, wash and mend their underclothing.

On one occasion the Prefect of the Department of the Somme on behalf of the French Government conveyed to the Australian Commander the admiration and appreciation of the French people for the Australian Army, not only for the work done by the soldiers in the field when they fought against the invaders of France, but also for the behaviour

of the troops when quartered in the back area with the civilian population, and the care taken of all property belonging to the people.

Wherever the Diggers go they seem to win the universal affection of women and children. An officer told me how these big men, rough in many ways, fiery in language and frank to the point of brutality at times, when they came to the ruined homes near Villers-Bretonneux, set themselves during lulls in the fighting to the kindly job of repairing the houses, salving the property, setting the religious pictures at correct angles on the walls and mending the broken shrines. They placed cradles and children's toys in the safety of the cellars so that these might be ready to hand when the little ones returned to their homes again. Having done this they took up the fighting again, so that the country might be made ready for the home-coming of the refugees.

Among the soldiers in the café were many of those who had fought at Villers-Bretonneux and made history in defence of Amiens. But at present a distance removed from the scene of war they were absorbed in amuse-

ments and games that caused them to forget all about the life of the firing line.

At one corner of the room half a dozen men were playing "Two up," winning and losing much money, others were talking of past operations on the field, tracing with beer-wetted fingers the lines held by themselves and the enemy. A tall dark man sat by the stove, his half-empty glass on the floor at his feet and a big bowled pipe in his mouth.

"What's your battalion?" he suddenly inquired, fixing his eye on a man near him, one whom he had never met before. This Digger, a youngster with a slight fringe of down on his upper lip, was leaning both elbows on the table and gazing contemplatively at the empty glass which stood in front of him.

"I'm fifth——" was the answer.

"Know old Harry C——?" inquired the tall man.

"Should think I do," said the other. "Knew him in Brighton. Played football against his team. Fine fellow, old Harry."

"Killed?"

"Ay. On the Peninsula. Met him there one day," said the youngster. "God's truth! You could have knocked me down dead.

'Harry!' I said. 'Where have I struck you?' he asked me. 'I've kicked some goals against your team,' said I. 'And to meet you here. But wait till we go back again and have another game of football. I'll kick your head off.' 'Not much chance of a boose here,' said Harry, 'might as well be cinder humping in hell.' That was all at the time. He was going up to the front line, but he promised to call round and see me when he came out that night. We were supports. And I waited for old Harry. 'Twas dark when his platoon came out. I went to meet him. 'Where's Harry C——?' I called to the fellows. 'The footballer?' some one asked me. 'Yes, old Harry C——' I told the man. 'He's killed,' said the man, 'blown to pieces.'"

"It's hard when you look back on it," said the tall dark soldier by the stove. "So many. . . ."

At this moment a man rose from a table near the door and commenced to recite a poem. All stopped their various pursuits to listen, for the Australians love poetry, especially when it recalls memories of the land they have left. The game of "Two up"

was discontinued and the French soldiers stopped their draughts and dominoes to listen.

The man who stood on the floor spoke his lines in a manner exalted and serious, his hat thrust back on his head and the movement of arms and hands accompanying the recital adding to its force and passion. In the utterance it was impossible to discover anything beyond the deep feeling which he had called up to interpret the spirit of the poem. The verses written long ago had in them a gift of prophecy. They told of a war to be, the war in which the Australian soldier was now taking part.

"All creeds and trades will have soldiers there—give every class its due,
And there'll be many a clerk to spare for the pride of the jackeroo,
They'll fight for honour and fight for love and a few will fight for gold,
For the devil below and for God above as our fathers fought of old,
And some half blind with exultant tears and some stiff-lipped, stern-eyed
For the pride of a thousand after years and the old eternal pride—

The soul of the world they will feel and see
in the chase and the grim retreat,
They'll know the glory of victory—and the
grandeur of defeat."

This was but a beginning. Other men rose and declaimed verses that told of life in the homeland. One poem after another was recited. "The Old Whim Horse," "Out Back," "Sheedy Was Dying," poems dealing with the swagman, shearer and sundowner and telling of the Paroo parched with long drouths or blooming with the wattle blossoms. For the moment all the company were back there, and the patronne, with bottles red and blue gleaming on the shelves over her head, viewed the big boys with eyes that from time to time were moist with tears.

For did she not know them, those who were now for a moment under the roof of her café, who would leave to-morrow night, go up to the trenches, and come back again in a week or a fortnight. But not all. In that was the tragedy: some would come back again. But not all. Some would remain up there resting for ever near the lip of the trench. She knew of the grim tragedy of the trenches and felt

for the boys. Her own husband dead and buried at Verdun! But it was war.

And at that moment the tall, dark man by the stove rose, squared his shoulders, gave a preliminary cough and started a poem.

"East and backward pale faces turning—
That's how the dead men lie,
Gaunt arms stretched with a voiceless yearning—
That's how the dead men lie.
Oft in the fragrant hush of nooning,
Hearing again their mother's crooning,
Wrapt for aye in a dreadful swooning,
That's how the dead men lie. . . ."

It was now on the verge of closing time and military policemen were already standing at the door, listening to the poems and loth to put a stop to the performance in the café. A young giant, in the making of whom the gods forgot none of their ancient craft, was standing in the centre of the room telling the story of "Clancy of the Overflow."

"In my wild erratic fancy visions came to me of Clancy
Gone a-droning down the Cooper where the Western drovers go.

As the stock are slowly stringing Clancy
rides behind them singing,
For the drover's life has pleasures that the
townsfolk never know . . ."

The poem told of an incident of years far back and the young reciter, if he had once wrought as a clerk, was living a life now such as Clancy of the Overflow had never known and never would know unless, as perhaps was the case, he had given up shearing and taken to the life of soldiering.

But away here in a café of the back area, where the patronne sold weak red wine and weaker beer, the Diggers' thoughts were of home, of the land they left and for which they were fighting.

These men who dwell in France are creating for Australia a national sentiment, and gaining for themselves a wide outlook in their travels and accomplishments afield. At present the war waged ten thousand miles away from the Southern Continent is welding together the people's outlook, aspiration and sympathy. Men from all parts of the continent, from out back and from the sea-coast are grouped together in one great brotherhood,

fighting for a common cause, and the ground over which they fight is the one central point on which all eyes of Australia are directed. Back home many voices are raised in declamation or praise of this or that political move or industrial policy, but on one point there is complete and unanimous acquiescence, and that one point is the prosecution of the war towards a successful conclusion. It must be waged till the end, until Germany is beaten and the wrong done to the world, to France and Belgium, righted.

And so the Australians make great battle in the mud of France and Flanders, fighting with heroic persistence, carving the way to victory. As we remember what the Diggers have done at Gallipoli, Polygon, Pozieres and Peronne, we may quote the famous couplet from the prologue to "The Revenge," played by a company of convicts in Sydney, 1796, and thereto add two lines of our own making:

True patriots all, for be it understood
We left our country for our country's good.
Their children we and back again, we feel
That we've returned for that country's weal.

L' Envoi

(Written on the day the British Fleet entered the Dardanelles)

From Suvla Cove to Sed-el-Bahr
  In gullies, clefts and dells,
Beneath the shade of Sari Bair
  They watch the Dardanelles.

To other lands their mates have fled
  Fresh fields of war to find,
They sleep, but sleep uneasily
  The men who stay behind.

What drums upon the narrow seas
  That run by Sed-el-Bahr
Come, Digger, up! Come, Tommy, up!
  A British man-of-war!

A sailor singing on the deck
  The tale of conquest tells. . . .
Lie down again! Sleep easily!
  Beside the Dardanelles.

SIXTH EDITION.

THE RAT-PIT

By PATRICK MacGILL, Author of "Children of the Dead End." Crown 8vo. Price 6/- net. Inland Postage 6*d*. extra.

"CHILDREN of the Dead End" came upon the literary world as something of a surprise; it dealt with a phase of life about which nothing was known. It was compared with the work of Borrow and Kipling. Incidentally three editions, aggregating 10,000 copies, were called for within fifteen days. In his new book Mr. MacGill still deals with the underworld he knows so well. He tells of a life woven of darkest threads, full of pity and pathos, lighted up by that rare and quaint humour that made his first book so attractive. "The Rat-Pit" tells the story of an Irish peasant girl brought up in an atmosphere of poverty, where the purity of the poor and the innocence of maidenhood stand out in simple relief against a grim and sombre background. Norah Ryan leaves her home at an early age, and is plunged into a new world where dissolute and heedless men drag her down to their own miry level. Mr. MacGill's lot has been cast in strange places, and every incident of his book is pregnant with a vivid realism that carries the conviction that it is a literal transcript from life, as in fact it is. Only last summer, just before he enlisted, Mr. MacGill spent some time in Glasgow reviving old memories of its underworld. His characters are mostly real persons, and their sufferings, the sufferings of women burdened and oppressed with wrongs which women alone bear, are a strong indictment against a dubious civilisation.

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