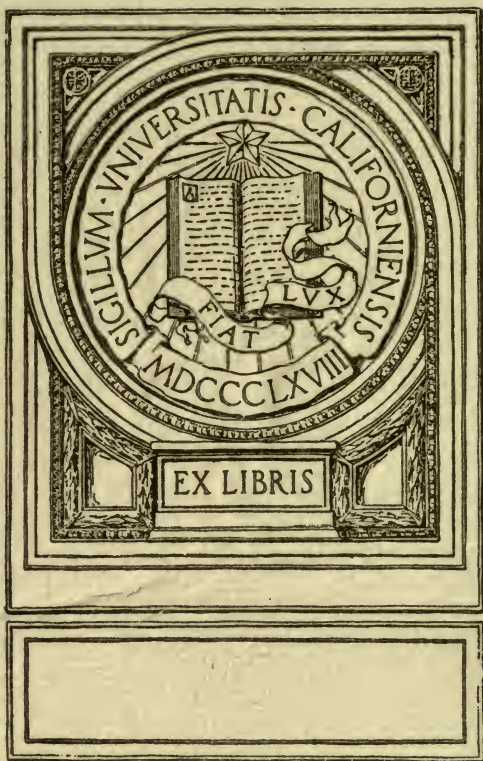


THE LATIN
AT WAR

WILL IRWIN



EX LIBRIS



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE LATIN AT WAR

THE
LATIN AT WAR

By WILL ^{iam Henry} IRWIN

Author of "Men Women and War"

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK
D. APPLETON & COMPANY

1917

7640
I7

First published
1917

THE NEW
AMERICAN

TO
THE ALPINI
GOOD HOSTS, PERFECT COMRADES
VALIANT FIGHTERS

361227

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
THE CITY OF UNSHED TEARS	1

CHAPTER II

THE ISONZO FRONT	41
----------------------------	----

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE AT ZAGORA'	75
--------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV

WITH THE ALPINI	95
---------------------------	----

CHAPTER V

THE ROOF OF ARMAGEDDON	115
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VI

	PAGE
BEYOND VERDUN	148

CHAPTER VII

A DRIVE WITH THE KID	180
--------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VIII

BEHIND THE GUNS	210
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX

THE ARMY OF EQUALS	256
------------------------------	-----

THE LATIN AT WAR

CHAPTER I

THE CITY OF UNSHED TEARS

THAT February 22 of 1916, when I re-entered Paris and the world of war, was a period of tense, hidden drama, re-echoing the louder drama of Verdun. To the group of correspondents who had hurried back to Europe from a rest at home, the great battle was not wholly unexpected. Nothing about this war has been so paradoxical as the secrecy of its minor tactics and the glaring publicity of its grand strategy. Any large movement involves long and huge preparation. Ten thousand pairs of shrewd eyes behold the signs; and where there are eyes there are tongues. Now in this case, informed people among the Germans in the United States had been saying ever since Christmas that the Allies would never take the initiative on the Western front. Early, very early, in the year, the Germans would begin a "drive on Paris." One hears many and strange things about the great war; the reporter,

picking up fragments of information along its edges, proceeds in time on the principle that any report, however bizarre, may be true, and that any seemingly authentic statement, however well backed, may be false. Parallel with a situation so great and new and strange that its events transcend imagination, runs an insane tendency toward rumour. Nevertheless, these forecasts of an early German initiative were so persistent that some of us changed our plans at the eleventh hour and sailed not to England, but directly to the Continent.

I opened my newspaper, that first morning in Paris, and behold the expected had arrived! The bald official communiqué had departed, for once, from guarded language. As formally worded as ever, it conveyed a feeling that its author was writing under strain. A bombardment of "unheard-of intensity" had opened before Verdun—the very point where any of us amateur café-strategists would have deemed the thrust least likely. The instantaneous French imagination grasped the fact in all its significance. This was the greatest German movement on the Western front since the twin battles of Ypres and of Flanders locked the line in 1914. There followed for the people of Paris, and for all who loved France, a curious week—tense, a little anxious, at times miserable.

Jump with the news of Verdun arrived a season of the worst weather that Paris has known for ten years—cold, wet winds followed by something that, for

France, amounted to a blizzard. The ten inches of snow alternately thawed and froze. At intervals rain came down on the mess—a gentle rain, but searching and cold. Paris got out its stocks of old, heavy clothes and shivered. Coal was in such demand for munitions manufacture as to make its price nearly prohibitive for the poor, and expensive even for the well-to-do. The Parisian hotels and pensions have no heating arrangements, even in the best of times, for such weather as this. We shivery Americans, accustomed to those tropical interiors which are the jest of the European, ordered up wood fires and clustered close about their hearths.

All through the worst of this weather—which scarcely changed for the better during the first vital fortnight of the battle—there came official reports from the line which might be taken as encouraging or discouraging, according to one's individual temperament. The French had fallen back to a new line. The Germans were in Douaumont Fort, but surrounded there. A few days of this, and the whole atmosphere began to change for the better. The communiqués were no more hopeful than in the beginning; yet somehow the newspapers seemed to reflect a new confidence in the people.

It is not hard to account for this. Newspapers are not the only medium for the transmission of news. In fact, the human race, until a hundred years ago, got its information without them. Officers, relieved for special

duty, came out of that hell only a hundred and fifty miles from our doors to report that what the communiqués said was true. The line had re-formed itself and was standing firm in the reserve trenches. The Brandenburgers, the Berserks of Germany, had taken Douaumont Fort ; yet what was it but a hillock after all ? The heights above Verdun, what with German dead, looked as though a whole autumn of green-grey leaves had fallen on the snow. Soldier letters straggled back through the censorship, bearing the same news. The word passed from mouth to mouth ; each letter reached a thousand people.

Visitors arriving from London, where the German end of the news gets rather freer circulation, reported that Germany had heard of a " state of panic " in Paris. If this were panic, I should like to see the French in a state of calm. Life went its usual sober way. It was not a gay Paris, though infinitely more cheerful than a year before ; but it was, nevertheless, almost normal. On the most miserable days you could find Frenchmen, wrapped up to the ears, sitting at the tables of the out-of-door cafés and following the immemorial French method of taking the air. If attendance at the theatres and cinemas was smaller than usual, it could easily be laid to the weather. There was not much life in the cafés, but that had been true all winter, or ever since Paris enforced the law forbidding cafés to serve spirituous liquors to women. No ; all in all, Paris was

as calm all through those days of crisis as any city I had seen since the war. The truth is that even the Germans at the gates would not create a panic in Paris. The French went through all that once in the anguished days before the Battle of the Marne—and even then there was no real panic.

Yet through it all ran a quiet tension which had nothing to do, I am convinced, with the fortunes of war nor with the safety of the city. The faces which glanced past you on an underground train were staring and set. Drop into a café ; there would sit a family group, trying to make the best they could of these times. You would see the women, when they dropped out of the conversation, looking out with unseeing eyes—just thinking. During those first two days—being an incurable and constitutional tourist—I travelled about, guide-book in hand, renewing acquaintance with Notre Dame, St. Etienne du Mont, St. Eustache, and some of the other beautiful old churches which I had half forgotten since I last came. I still feel about those visits as though I had intruded rudely upon private matters which were none of my business ; for all day the churches were half full ; all day the shrines of the Virgin were fringed with women and old men, their attitudes showing an intensity of anxiety and of despair.

Two or three groups stand out in memory. There was, for example, one heroic-size statue of the Virgin, set without pedestal close to the floor. Worshippers by

scores knelt about it, their heads bowed almost to the floor. Closest of all were two women and one young man. Crowded up against the statue, they were pressing hands and foreheads against the cold marble of the Virgin's sculptured robes. Again, there was a glimpse of a middle-aged woman, kneeling in a far recess of St. Eustache, her face in her hands and her figure shaken with sobs.

Still, as you watched the French, you realized that these people were not worrying and praying over the fear of the invader. France has too much faith in her army for that. The better-informed official element—I know now—felt that it was touch and go during that first week; that any night the Teuton hordes might roll through to Verdun. But the people maintained their confidence. What obsessed them was a personal dread lest the black chance of the grim German widow-makers might have fallen on their own. For some knew, in advance of the battle, that their sons or husbands were already at Verdun; and all that any corps of the French Army might be shifted at any time to the point of attack.

Yet I should not describe Paris, even in the darkest days of the Verdun action, as a city of tears, but rather as a city of unshed tears. I fancy that in the exercise of her religion alone the wonderfully heroic, wonderfully human, and wonderfully subtle Frenchwoman gives way. A Franco-American woman who knows the French

better than I can ever hope to know them said to me :

“They can’t cry. It is just too much for tears. They are working feverishly. Every woman among them is doing the job of three women. They try to wear themselves out so that they may sleep. But it’s no use. They lie awake and think—and can’t cry. But,” she added, “talk to one of them about quitting and closing up this war before Germany is beaten—and she’ll want to scratch your eyes out.”

The miraculous thing about France, in this war, is her ability to fight as nation never fought before, and still to indulge the luxury of being human. She feeds on no sugared, newspaper-made illusions about the blessings of war. She makes no pretence of liking the calamity which a dynastic ambition has thrust upon her. She throws no sentimental poses before the contemplation of her own fortitude. But she is probably all the stronger because she looks facts in the face, as the French, for all their emotional overlay, have a habit of doing.

Underneath everything, as I watched the days come and go in that curious world, I perceived how rightly this woman spoke concerning the mighty labours of the French woman. It was a city of work. In work lies salvation. Whether they belonged to the native element or the foreign, people were ashamed not to be doing something for France. Naturally, I know the American

colony in Paris better than the French, and so I speak of them first ; yet much that I say of them applies also to the natives. They are for the most part wealthy or well-to-do, and before the war they were an idle set. But now, I found women who had never before worked with their hands picking gauze in the bandage-rooms of the hospitals, or "cleaning up" after nurses in the wards. I found women who never before managed anything but their households working ten hours a day running *ouvroirs*. Women who once had nothing to do in life but entertain would invite you to dinner with a little air of apology. "You know," one said, "we have set apart Saturday night for our friends—we must relax a little!"

If the Americans were working so, how much more the French! Two readjustments were going forward even then ; the readjustment of France to a state of war was not quite finished, and the readjustment to a state whose difficulties we see only darkly—the trying period after the war had just begun. Both called for service of the hands and the brain.

The economic and social situation which brought forth all this voluntary effort was so curious in February 1916 that I despaired at the time of running a thread of thought through it ; nor has it in the least clarified some eight or nine months later, as I finish these lines. France has everything in the war ; not even Germany, I suppose, has directed so much energy toward the final

end of victory. But even this greatest of wars has not served to alter the general form of the economic and social structure. Even if it wished to do so, a nation could not wholly change from capitalism to socialism in the midst of a war. Those war-measures which the conservative denounce as "socialistic" form, after all, only a tiny item in the whole balance. Were Paris besieged now, as she was in 1870, there would doubtless be, in all the want and misery, some persons who "profited by the war"; it is the way of the modern world. And so, even when France is doing all that may be expected of a state and nation, certain classes of business are very prosperous. The firms who were ready, when the war broke, to manufacture munitions, would be returning enormous dividends did not the all-powerful military dictatorship step in to prevent. Lyons, the great silk-weaving district of the South, has suffered much from the mobilization of its male operatives. Yet certain factories have managed to keep the looms running. Though they have lost most of their European trade through the isolation of the Central Powers and the economy of the Allied nations, they have increased their exports to the American continent; they are doing well. Grenoble, centre of the kid-glove industry, prospers even more. Much of the labour can be performed by women. The war cut off the Central European market, it greatly reduced French and British consumption, but it also closed the Americas to German

gloves. If I write here in the present tense, it is because this situation remains at the end of 1916 exactly as it was in the beginning of 1916 ; and it will hold, I suppose, until the end of the war.

In fact, wherever raw materials are to be had, wherever there are markets and wherever women can be used in place of men, France marches along. And on the whole, it manages to fulfil these conditions, I imagine, better than either England or Germany. It has been a land of little, fine industries, requiring skill and the native art-sense rather than physical strength. Among these, the perfumery business is perhaps typical. It includes no processes which women and children cannot perform. And the perfumery district is in the South, far from the invader. The market is bad, of course, but there is lack neither of labour nor of raw material. The employers in this trade have felt their responsibility to France, and with what capital they can command they are piling up stocks to "dump" after the war.

Curiously—at least to an outsider—the wine business has been hit as hard as any. Obviously, the champagne branch of the industry has suffered most of all. That famous and expensive wine takes its name from a province lying along the northern lines. Much of the champagne district has been twice fought over ; the French advance in the autumn of 1915 blasted mile after mile of famous vineyards. However in the Bordeaux and Burgundy districts, hundreds of miles behind the

guns, there has come a special industrial blight of another kind. Wine-making, as practised by the French, is partly a craft and partly an art. The vinters put a lifetime of study into the business ; they have behind them ten centuries of tradition. That, more than any quality of soil, is why the United States and Algiers have never been able to compete with the French in wine-making. Now these experienced wine-makers were men, and most of them have been called to the colours. Neither women nor inexperienced men can be taught even the rudiments of that art in two years. Famous vinters refused to put their names on the 1915 product ; it was too far inferior.

Though there was prosperity in some branches of production, and almost stable conditions in others, the sum total made not toward plenty but always toward distress. And with this went a rise in the cost of living. France, having over England the advantage of self-sufficiency and over Germany the advantage of open ports, suffered less in this regard than her neighbours ; but still living did go up. In February the price of bread remained stable ; the government saw to that. A few luxuries, such as hot-house fruit, decreased in price. Meat, in Paris at least, had advanced from a quarter to a third. Away from the sea-coast, fish was scarce and dear. Fresh vegetables had advanced very little in the small provincial towns ; but in the cities, and especially in Paris, this staple had risen most of all.

It was mainly a matter of transportation, which waits always on military necessity. The price of fresh vegetables advanced ruinously during the great storm which raged through the first week of the battle at Verdun. In that period, cauliflower heads which sold normally for thirty-five centimes jumped to seventy-five; and other vegetables went even higher.

There were certain little privations during that storm which proved that we were in the midst not only of a tempest, but of a battle. One morning, there was no milk for coffee at the hotel. The snow had blocked the milk trains; and such snow-ploughs as they have in France—which is unused to such emergencies of weather—were keeping open the vital line to Verdun. So, too, needing a taxicab that day, I hailed a driver who headed a waiting line in the Boulevard des Capucines.

“*Ah, monsieur, ça ne marche plus!*” he said.

That is a literal transcript of his remark, but it cannot give his gesture and intonation. They indicated that it was frightful, it was unbelievable, it was terrific. The bottom had fallen out of the taxicab business, out of the whole world. In addition, Monsieur was going to be discommoded. But ah, life was ever thus! It was a queer old universe, wasn't it? That was what the French taxicab driver conveyed to me, the while his lips simply informed me that his cab did not march any more.

Then the rest of the line bubbled into the conversation

and vouchsafed information. Temporary military necessity had cut off the day's supply of petrol. How much lay hidden under this simple bit of information I did not know until months afterward. The Verdun front, when the battle opened, was insufficiently supplied with rail communication. The German front was perfectly supplied. In the first mad rush, when something on the French side went wrong, the German guns got in range of the single railroad line. The French, magicians at making a horn spoon out of a pig's ear, had mobilized the motor trucks of France as at the Marne they mobilized the taxicabs of Paris. And those trucks, as much as the skill and valour of their troops on the line, saved the day.

Two days later, the taxicabs were running as usual; the army had redistributed the petrol supply. France has never been short of that commodity; nor of any other essential to war or life. She is, in fact, the most self-sufficient among the Allied countries. Blockade her coasts, indeed, and she could no longer make war indefinitely; there are some essentials to munitions, like this same petrol, which she does not produce. But she could go on feeding and even clothing herself with none of those expensive and troublesome adjustments which Germany has found necessary. And the marvel to me in those darkest days of France at war, was not that little irritations and tiny privations happened, but that with all the vigorous men gone to the war, with

the greatest battle of history raging interminably on our north-eastern border, with a line of fire and steel only fifty miles away, we had clean and comfortable beds, we ate plentifully and deliciously, we were served courteously and efficiently, we had the convenience of tramways, cabs, porters, and everything else which a traveller really needs.

Yet this is only a traveller's point of view. The situation bears hard in places on the poor ; which brings me to a very tangled subject. I heard it said in Paris, by that kind of upper-class person who is always an optimist on the present condition of the proletariat, that the working class was doing better than ever before. I heard from the people who run charitable organizations that the distress was frightful. I should say that both were half-right and half-wrong. There was, for an example on one side, a woman of whose circumstances I gained accidental knowledge. She belonged, before the war, to that class of family common in France wherein both husband and wife are self-supporting. They had two children born in those institutions which France provides for working-class mothers. When the children were very young, the husband supported the entire family. Afterward, they divided the expense of the children. He went to the war. She received from the government one franc twenty-five centimes a day as a separation allowance. For the two children she received in addition a franc a day. She kept her situa-

tion, and she was living for the time being rent-free. In spite of the increased cost of living, she was on the whole better off than before the war.

Further, said these upper-class optimists, there was no unemployment. Every man excused from the line through age or physical disability could get something to do according to his powers. Indeed, that February storm seemed to prove the point. The municipality of Paris called for thirteen hundred labourers to clear the streets of snow. Only a hundred and thirty responded, and part of these were women. Before the day was over, I was regaled by the spectacle of three heavy, peasant-looking girls, dressed in black shawls and wooden shoes, pushing a snow-scraper down the Rue de l'Echelle. If the world knows anything at all about France, it knows how many women have taken over men's work. One grew so accustomed to seeing women in the act of hustling baggage, delivering groceries, blacking boots, ploughing, cleaning out stables, that he ceased to notice the thing as unusual. I do remember, however, a certain tram-car which ran past my door at Bordeaux. On the front platform was a capable-looking young motor-woman, rosy-cheeked, thick-waisted, big-handed. She wore a black skirt and shawl, topped by a peaked cap. When she started the car, she jerked the brake and laid her weight to the controller-bar with all the snap and vigour of a man. When she drew up at the terminal, she produced from

under her shawl a half-finished grey stocking and, until the woman car-starter gave the signal, set herself to knitting. As for the conductress, a black-haired, severe-faced Gascon girl, her air, as she rang her two decisive taps on the bell, said :

“I carry on these shoulders the efficiency of the Tramways de Bordeaux. I'd like to see any straggler, lallygagging lover, or drunkard disturb the order of this car !”

Yet to say that the situations outnumber the workers does not tell the story. To begin with, there are the mothers of three, four, or five children, dependent of old on the father's earnings, and that father at the line or dead. The wife's allowance will not sustain life in such times. Now any physician and most women know that in our modern world few women who have had three or four children are thereafter capable of the industrial struggle. Moreover, the French, with that fine idealism which marks their civilization, hold both motherhood and childhood sacred. Public opinion would not tolerate that such a woman should be separated from her children.

Then there are the troubles of readjustment. In the stable times of peace industry roughly arranges people according to their powers, putting the muscular at heavy jobs, the deft-fingered at light jobs. You may be a skilful *midinette*, capable of sewing a fine seam. When your old job goes because people no longer want expen-

sive clothes, it is no good to enter a munitions factory. Your hundred pounds of weight, your deft little fingers which never lifted a heavy burden, cannot stand the strain. Still further, in many lines of trade there has been a necessary reduction of wages. Employers who cut pay in two during these times are not generally to be blamed. It was a choice between that or closing up shop and throwing everyone out of work. Nevertheless, to cut a Continental wage in two is to reduce it below the standard of living in any times.

The class just a notch higher in the financial scale than those who work with their hands is the one which in any hard times seems to suffer most. The retail tradesman of Paris is doing better than during the early days of the war, but only comparatively better. In October, 1914, when I first saw France at war, probably four out of five shops were closed, with the words "*Personnel mobilisé*" written in chalk across the steel shutters. By March, 1915, when I saw the city again, they had begun to open fast. More had opened by autumn and still more by this spring. Yet always the blocks away from the central district were dotted with the grey colour of closed shutters. Last March, I made a rough inventory from the window of my hotel. The first building on the road across the street was a hotel—closed. Below stood a fashionable shop for the sale of sporting specialities—closed. Who wants such things now? Next was a cleanser and dyer—open. Next

was a shop without any sign outside of the shutters to show its character, but closed. Next was a tobacconist—open And so on.

The shops which deal in necessities, as groceries and bakeries, are running, of course, and are probably doing business above the margin of profits. Those which deal with luxuries have shut down or are marking time. In many cases madame has opened up in order to hold the business together. She has to keep the stock somewhere; perhaps she may get a customer—who knows? Along the Arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, facing the Tuileries Gardens, runs a row of shops for the sale of jewellery, Oriental curios, and such trifles as tourists buy to remember Paris. There are no tourists; the only patrons now are occasional soldiers from England or the Provinces, getting little souvenirs to send home. I passed down that row one day last spring, looking idly into the windows. From each shop popped madame, to solicit my custom with such charm and wistfulness that I must needs harden my heart.

Some of the small *rentiers*, the people living on the incomes of invested funds, are perhaps most pinched of all. Much of the capital was invested in the factories of the North. It goes without saying that Lille and vicinity pay no dividends now. I know one Frenchman who was worth five million francs before the war—manufacturing properties about Lille. One factory was totally destroyed. The rest were “ripped up”—the

machinery packed and sent to Germany. This is a sign, by the way, to indicate that the Germans were never confident of holding Belgium and Northern France. "I own the sites—that is all!" says this man.

As for those who have depended for a living on rents, and especially of tenement properties, many are hard hit. At the beginning of the war the government declared its moratorium on rent. By this measure those who could not pay might appear before the duly appointed authorities and swear to the fact, whereupon payment would lapse until the end of the war. Just how the tenants will pay accumulated rents after the declaration of peace is a matter for future adjustment. Probably the state will step in. But that brings no present relief to the property owner. Last winter a woman applied for work at sewing in one of the *ouvroirs*—a job which pays very poorly. Two years before she was living on one of those small but respectable invested incomes so common on the Continent. But the money was in stocks and real estate which had not rendered her a penny since August, 1914. She had spent all her immediate funds; it was a choice between working at the only thing a woman of her age and training could do, or charity.

And the charities of France are infinite; it is they which have given work to so many hands which never worked before. The posters, the shop signs, the banners of societies for war relief, called us from every

wall and window when I entered Paris in February ; they were calling even louder when I left in August. It is give, give, give—money, time, thought. The *Paris Herald* or the Continental *Daily Mail* was scarcely out on the streets, announcing you as registered at your hotel, before the women began to send letters or to call in person. Sister Cecilia, of the Little Sisters, came on the day after my arrival. At her special request I disguise her name and that of her order. "Publicity is against our rules," she said.

She proved to be an Englishwoman, a Londoner by birth. Choosing the hardest chair in the room, she settled down to talk of the order and of her poor. They look after working families ; first the ne'er-do-wells which any people have always with them, and then the mothers who cannot go out to earn a living because there are too many children. They hunt out these people, and go to work at their task of cleaning, of feeding, and of keeping the families together. There are more and more cases. "The French are a very saving people," said Sister Cecilia, "but, of course, savings don't last for ever, and when the money is gone they come to us." Sometimes, I took it from her account, they come rather late in the game—only when privation has broken down their pride. She told over some of her instances ; only one sticks in my memory. It was an old woman, whom they found moaning and mumbling in a fireless house. She had four sons when the war broke out ; they are all

gone, and the death of the last and youngest broke her reason.

Sister Cecilia spoke also of the militant priests of France. "They passed a law mobilizing priests in 1900 or thereabouts," she said. "Well"—Sister Cecilia's expression showed that she thought of that—"but behold the Providence of Almighty God. This affliction has come, and the priests can be a great consolation to their comrades, not only in their last moments, but always—little kindnesses, little comforts." Her order had houses in Belgium and in the imperilled or invaded districts of Northern France. Their establishment at Paris had become a clearing-house for refugee nuns. Among the thousands and thousands of war stories which she had heard, two seemed to stick in her memory; and the character of these stories is a revelation of her character.

"Our mother-house was at Rheims," she said. "The Sisters remained through the bombardment. The cathedral was full of German wounded. All the approaches were under shellfire—even the soldiers could not cross them, because the Germans dropped a shell as soon as anyone appeared on the street. That afternoon some French soldiers came to the Sisters and told them that the German wounded had nothing to eat. Someone had shouted it across the street. The Sisters themselves had only a little bread. But one of the French soldiers said: 'Some broth would be good

for them !' The soldiers went out under fire and cut four or five big pieces of flesh from an artillery horse which had just been killed by a shell. As night came on the soldiers and the Sisters made a big kettle of bouillon—the soldiers ruined a kitchen table chopping up the meat into little pieces. The soldiers did not take any of it, although they were hungry themselves. Then, when night came, the Sisters and the soldiers poured the broth into pails and carried it across under fire. One of the soldiers was wounded. The Germans were very grateful. It was quite touching," concluded Sister Cecilia, with her native English chariness of emotional expression. Her other story related to an Irish woman married to a Belgian, whose husband was arrested in Brussels. She applied again and again to see him, but she was always refused. Finally the Prussian officer in charge of the prison said: "Madame, you know probably the whereabouts of certain British subjects hiding in Brussels. If you will tell us where they are, we will let you see your husband."

The lady made no answer, but she stared at his breast. The officer glanced down. She had her eyes fixed on his Iron Cross. He coloured, stammered, and "Madame," he said, "in war one must do things for his Kaiser which he would not do for himself."

"That is the trouble with them, perhaps," said Sister Cecilia, reconciling her large Christian charity with her natural feelings—"they have to obey their

orders. I took care of one of them, wounded. He used to look at the photograph of his wife and children, and cry."

However, France does not leave the care of the poor wholly to unorganized effort. The separation allowance affords at least a basis of living to the soldier's wife. Most French towns and all the wards of Paris looked out, during the Winter of Verdun, for the most pressing need—coal. Any poor family which ran short of fuel could receive a scant but sufficient supply from the *Mairie*. In certain districts where the paralysis of industry or the difficulty of transportation created a special need, the town supplied provisions for the poor. France saw to it that no one should starve or freeze during the winter when Europe first settled down to the pace of war, and that no child should grow up stunted through privation. But the strain of maintaining the effort was heavy, and it will grow still heavier as the war goes on.

The horde of aliens and half-aliens whom France must sustain vastly complicate the problem. She has become a dumping ground for refugees. First arrived inhabitants of Northern France, driven ahead of the Germans as they advanced toward the Marne. These were no sooner distributed in Touraine, Burgundy, and the Midi, than the families of Belgian coal-miners and factory-operatives, running away from the German drive to the Yser, arrived by hundreds of thousands.

When starvation threatened the occupied districts of Northern France, the Germans began to dump the people, as their supplies gave out, across the Swiss border. The American-staffed Commission for Relief in Belgium added Northern France to its gigantic activities and stopped this exodus, but not before a hundred thousand more refugees had added themselves to the burden of Free France. In the first week of the great battle, the Germans turned their guns on the city of Verdun, and ruined it. Thirty thousand civilians came down to the Puy de Dôme country in Eastern France. There are even Armenian, Servian, and Montenegrin refugees, clamouring with the rest for food and shelter. These people intensify the embarrassment of France. Yet they must be sustained; and though the gifts from the Allies and America have been enormous, they have not nearly met the necessity.

Civilian relief is the bread-and-beef of war work; military relief is its wine and dessert. Government officials and directors of private charities warn the people continually not to forget the soldier's wife and child in their zeal to comfort the heroes at the front.

The strain of Verdun and the approach of the summer campaign put an end to the most picturesque soldier-charity of all—the *permission de poilu*. All winter, the army had been granting leaves of absence, running from five days to a fortnight. But the French Army does not believe in turning a soldier loose on the world—it dis-

turbs discipline. When he gets leave he must go to his family. Now there are in the army at least a hundred and fifty thousand men enlisted from those parts of Northern France held by the Germans. They cannot get home. Also in the French Army, as in any other, are men without relatives in France—foreign legionaries, reservists from the United States, for example. They say that it was an American woman who first proposed that French families make “godsons” of these men, taking them in, assuming responsibility for their conduct. That idea was much more revolutionary in France than it would have been in England or America. The aristocratic or bourgeois family of France forms a closed circle, and the last thing a Frenchman does is to invite an acquaintance to visit his home informally. Nevertheless, this idea became immediately popular. Everyone was doing it—even the hotels. The restaurants and cafés displayed a poster, showing a “mine-host”-looking person, standing by a full board and welcoming a bearded, helmeted soldier, who advanced in an apologetic attitude. The lettering advertised the work of the hotel-keepers and restaurateurs’ association, formed for the purpose of helping the “*permission de poilu*.”

Stories both amusing and touching were told of this work. In Bordeaux a party of us Americans sat down one night beside a family group—two middle-aged women, two middle-aged men, a delicately featured

young girl of about seventeen, and the *poilu*. He was an amusing little gargoyle of a man, with a front tooth missing, a merry eye, and a rough but animated manner. Suddenly he leaned over toward me and asked in English if he might look at my evening newspaper.

This, of course, was only an advance toward conversation, and the moment he opened his mouth I knew that he got his English in America, not England. He was, in fact, a coal-miner who had come from war to war—for he had fought with his union behind the barricades at the Ludlow strike. Sixteen years he had been mining in the United States, and five of those years on strike. But at that he preferred American mines to those about Lille, where he learned his trade. His old mother was shut up in Lille. He had heard no word of her nor of his sisters—the universal story of the Northern Frenchman and the Belgian refugee. He preferred to talk of that fight at Ludlow rather than of the fighting about Arras, through which he had come unwounded. Mother Jones—now there was a woman! The operators were afraid of Mother Jones. “I bet if that Mrs. Pankhurst had come out,” he said, “we’d ’a beat ol’ John D. Rockefeller han’s down!” So touchingly complete seemed to be his faith in militant womanhood. He had learned to play baseball in America; and because he had developed thereby a throwing arm, which he let us feel, his captain had made him a grenadier bomb-thrower.

However, the remarks of the *poilu* from Lille and Ludlow interested us rather less, on the whole, than a little drama which the women of our party worked out from the expression of the young French girl. Whenever she permitted her gaze to rest on his face, her expression ranged from disdain to deep disappointment. Plainly, when she learned that her family was going to quarter a soldier on *permission*, she had her young girl's dreams. She expected probably a handsome and refined soldier, with silky moustaches and deep, dark eyes, preferably slightly wounded, so that she could read him poetry while bathing his brow with eau de Cologne. She got—this. If the rest of the family had any sense of humour at all, they must have loved him; but he was not a young girl's ideal.

Dining at the house of an American friend, I found a *poilu* in full uniform covered by an inharmonious apron, waiting at table. He was the family butler, home on *permission*. When he learned that madame was giving a dinner, he had expressed real regret that he could not serve it, having no suitable clothes. "You might wear your uniform," she suggested. "May I?" he answered eagerly. So he served us; and it was a little incongruous—this bronzed, fit soldier, with the look of determination and of experience in his face, waiting on us pale, flabby civilians. They tell me that the desire to resume his old civilian occupation is strong in the soldier home on *permission*. During that interval

between struggles, hardships, perils, and alarms it rests him somehow. I have found waiters, elevator boys, and cabmen who proved to be soldiers on *permission*. The peasant very generally puts in his leave ploughing or setting the place to rights. None of us can realize, probably, how restful it is to work again with the old horse, the old dog, the old familiar tools; and this to me is not the smallest pathos of the Great War.

Hand in hand with the *permission de poilu* goes the institution of "godsons" at the line. French and foreign women, with a little means to spare, "adopt" soldiers without means, making themselves responsible for the little comforts which help a soldier endure his lot. That also has its amusing side. A young woman of sensibility adopted a peasant infantryman. She wrote to him, breaking gently her new relationship, and asking him what he lacked. "Since madame is so kind," he wrote back in ungrammatical French, which I cannot convey by translation, "a wool undershirt and a pair of drawers." Another wrote: "Send me only money." The hardest quandary of all, however, was put up to a wounded soldier in the American Ambulance Hospital. A little American girl, acting as his godmother, sent him a box of presents with a letter. "I am putting in," she said, "a Testament which my grandfather carried all through the Civil War." However, the Testament was not in the package. With fine French understanding for the ways of women

toward little girls, the soldier reached the conclusion that mother, in arranging the package, had quietly abstracted the valued family relic. When last heard from he was trying to compose a letter expressing proper gratitude while concealing the fact that the Testament—so valuable to mother's Protestant soul, so useless to this Catholic Frenchman—had not arrived.

These, as I have said, are the more picturesque charities. It is always more entertaining to succour a soldier fighting for his country at the front than to care for his wife, his widow, his children or his orphans. But those quieter charities are more important to the future of France; and they have absorbed the best French effort, both public and private. One large commercial house with head-quarters in Paris has branches scattered all over France. It has not made a franc since the war began; in fact, most of the branch houses are closed. Nevertheless, the heads of the firm, by liquidating some private securities, have helped their employees to weather the storm. Individuals like these have given small fortunes to fill in the chinks which private charity always leaves, the special cases not covered by any organization.

Scratch anywhere in these days, even into this matter-of-fact kind of charity, and you turn up a good story. In the autumn of 1915, an American clergyman living at Paris visited a hospital just behind the trenches. To him came the old priest of the parish. "In the name

of God," he said, "can you do something to help us? I am in charge of seven parishes. I cover them on foot—I cannot ask for a horse now. The other six priests were mobilized—three are dead. Our harvest is coming and we have no men—the women are not enough. Can you help us?" When the American clergyman returned to Paris, he found in his mail a draft from New York. "For any purpose which seems good to you," said the letter of enclosure. He met that morning a rich American and told him the story. "I'll give the other half," said this man. The next day a new American harvester started for the line; and Catholic priest and Protestant clergyman together directed a crew of old men and ex-soldiers while they saved the grain of seven parishes.

Finally, I come to the state of art in Paris, which is a condition dismal enough, though there are flashes of humour, too. From the cold view of economics, art amounted to a leading Parisian industry. How many people drew their living from the studios, no one has ever calculated, I suppose; but they must have numbered tens of thousands. When you interpret art in its broadest sense, including not only painting and sculpture, but music, the drama, and such polite literature as poetry, the account probably runs into hundreds of thousands. That first uncertain year of the war, when Europe was adjusting itself to conditions which might,

it seemed then, last no more than a year, brought a curious condition to the Latin Quarter, Montmartre and those other districts where students and practitioners of the arts most gather. Life was in a state of imperfect adjustment. Mimi of the studios was keeping house until the men-folks got back; and Mimi was caring for herself, or being cared for, by inefficient and engaging methods characteristic of the Bohemian life. There was, for example, the little flock chaperoned by the Sweet Singer of Flanders. The person who enjoys, among the British and Americans of the Quarter, that mellifluous title, is a Belgian poet with a deformed foot, which keeps him out of the army. When the men of France were mobilized, seven of his painter-chums left their sweethearts under his charge. The German invasion cut off Ghent and his income simultaneously; he abandoned poetry and got a position at small salary in a railroad office. Thereafter, he used to appear every evening at a certain café where, just after the war, the wandering Americans and English gathered before dinner. With him, he brought his flock; he ranged them at a table and waited to see whether anyone was going to ask them to dinner. If this happened, well and good; the Sweet Singer, being himself invited, always pleaded an engagement. If no one proved generous, he led his girls to the cheapest place he could find and bought their dinner himself. Another careless cavalier of the Quarter had a little allowance from home. Living

as tightly as he could, he counted up on Saturday night his remaining francs. These he invested in bags of coal, and carried his purchases himself to the little furnished rooms of the more needy models.

Other tales came out, more distressing than these. One night three Canadian officers on leave visited Paris. They had never seen the city before, and they knew no French. Wandering without guide, they brought up at a café on the left bank. Three women, young and attractive, sat at the next table. The officers made their acquaintance. Two of them spoke English. Finally, the officers proposed that they should go to dinner together. The girls parleyed for a few moments in French before they accepted, and the party adjourned to the dining-room. They had an *apéritif*, they had soup; when suddenly the girl who spoke no English seemed to go stark mad. She burst into tears, she tried to tear off her clothes, to throw herself out of the window. A French scene followed; a passing ambulance took her away to the hospital.

When she was gone, one of the girls who spoke English turned to her hosts.

“She had eaten nothing for three days,” she said—“that is the matter with her, only that. We had just found her. We were wondering what to do—for we have no money—when you gentlemen were so kind——”

“Who is she?” asked one of the Canadians.

“She was an actress, and a good one. But we are not saving in our profession—and who wants actresses now?”

Things have improved a little for some of the arts. The musicians and actresses were doing better, by the summer of 1916, than one might have expected in the beginning. The education of the young proceeds as ever; teaching music helps the musicians. Some theatres have opened, for people must amuse themselves even in such times as these; all over France, even up to the gun-positions, the cinemas are running. Your moving-picture audiences are always avid for contemporary subjects, and the demand for film-plays dealing with the war has justified producers in reopening studios in the Midi where actresses and old actors may find work. But nothing has happened to cause a demand for statuary or pictures. I make one exception to this general statement. The portrait painters are doing fairly well, because officers going to the front like to leave their pictures for their children, “in case——” Even the schools are flattened out. The Beaux Arts had 1,200 students before the war. All but 100 were called out in the first mobilization. Julian’s academy used to run three ateliers. In the spring of 1915 but one was open, and that for only half-days. The pupils, in the Winter of Verdun, included a few people too old for war-work who chose this method of taking their minds off their troubles. Among them was a retired butcher. The

English and Americans are different. With us, he would have taken to golf or pinoche.

With these permanent hard times, the Quarters have changed again. Mimi has gone away—home to her people of the provinces, or into the munition factories. The kind of model to whom her art was only an incident of a butterfly life has abandoned the struggle to those serious-minded women who regard their art as a career. In the Latin Quarter of Paris, as in Greenwich Village New York, or whatever artistic colony you may name, there was a mixture of work and trifling, of people who are heralds of to-morrow and of mere poseurs. Many of the poseurs, being unmobilized foreigners, lingered through the first winter. By the Winter of Verdun they had mostly drifted away. One sees them now only in two cafés on the Boulevard Montparnasse, still talking art for art's sake and making gestures with their thumbs. But it is the last stand of the Old Guard.

With the real artists and their families it is quite another matter. Most of the best French painters are out in the trenches or disabled; the rest are painting still for love of art; but they are desperately hard up. No one knows how they and their families would have lived but for the "canteens." These are virtually boarding-houses for painter-people and all others who depended for existence on art. One pays if he can—usually about thirty centimes a meal. If he cannot

pay, the canteen forgets it, and no one knows the difference.

The work is twofold: a large French society, supported to a certain extent from America, has a string of canteens all over Paris; and the *Appui aux Artistes*, supported entirely from America, has five such establishments.

I had luncheon one day in a Latin-Quarter branch of the *Appui*—"a typical canteen," they told me. Before the war, this was a provision shop. The painters had knocked together long wooden tables, which they covered with oilcloth. They had leased and set up a restaurant range. A réformé painter and his wife served—without pay—as steward and accountant. The women all took turns in waiting at table. The only paid employees, I take it, were the cook and the scullion. We had cabbage soup, sheep's legs stewed with vegetables, pudding, fruit, new wine, cider, and coffee. The cooking was French; therefore it was good. This meal, sold for thirty centimes, cost about sixty centimes, not including rent and overhead charges. The guests were mainly women; but there were two old men, one young fellow excused from military service because of a very bad heart, and one youth who limped painfully—he had been maimed for life at Soissons. Two perambulators, with occupants, stood in the corner. Everyone, as he sat down to his meal, gave that indescribable "ah" of anticipation with which your Frenchman approaches

the table ; and everyone was gravely cheerful, if I may express it so.

At one of the canteens a visitor heard an old gentleman remarking acidly that luncheon to-day was worse, far worse, than luncheon yesterday ; he didn't know what the place was coming to. This ingratitude appalled the visitor until he learned the facts from the *directrice*. This man has higher standing with his fellows than with the public ; although his is a famous name, he has never made any money. He is also one of those artists who are as children in practical affairs, and his wife runs his life. When everything was gone, his wife took him and the children to a canteen. But she never told him the whole truth ; for his pride would not have stooped to charity. He thinks that he is living in a co-operative boarding-house, to which Madame is paying the full price. Everyone understands this, and humours the illusion. The directors say that half their trouble lies in running down cases and persuading them that this is not really charity. Neither is it. The world is simply paying back to France the debt life owes to art.

The next evening I dined in a more picturesque canteen. He who knows Paris need not be told of the Hill of Montmartre. Its abrupt crest dominates the whole city. There, of old times, stood a hill-village independent of its great neighbour ; and until recently, when modern cafés, studios and apartment-houses began to creep in, Montmartre remained the most picturesque

part of Paris. We crept up sidewalks that were stairs ; we threaded alleys shut in by walls that had gathered moss for centuries ; we ducked through an oval door into a courtyard ; we plunged into the darkness of another wall. A door opened suddenly into a long, low room, with fifty people eating and chattering at tables lit by a big oil lamp shaded with green Chinese silk. Hung thick on all walls was a collection of pictures, prints and what not, contributed, I take it, by all the guests for the decoration of their boarding-house, and arranged with an artist's sense of the whimsical. Here was a sketch with an unusual effect ; here was a very bad painting thrown in for a joke ; here was a caricature of a studio character ; here some of those crude child-drawings always so amusing to your true painter ; here was a water colour of real merit.

Each guest, as he finished his course, took his plate and went into the kitchen for the next—every man his own waiter. They had borne more than their share of the war, these people. There were war-widows among them ; there were men who must return to the line when their wounds healed ; there were men who will never walk straight again ; and all were flat, dead broke. Yet, though the artist be tottering on the verge of the grave, the spirit of art remains the spirit of youth ; they were more nearly gay than any group I have seen in Paris.

A sign on the wall of another canteen expresses this

spirit. Certain neighbours must have objected because the artists made music ; for here it is, as freely translated from Parisian argot to our slang : “ In consideration for the spiritual sensitiveness and pure block-headedness of the neighbours, cut out the song—even the Marseillaise.”

War or peace, your artist is your happy man !

* * * * *

When they brought Private Leroux—as I shall call him—into the Lighthouse where they teach the blind to read and work, he smiled. He kept on smiling, until his cheerfulness became a tradition. He had less cause for smiles, perhaps, than anyone else among those victims of war’s most cruel calamity. For he had lost not only his sight but one hand. The nurses at the Lighthouse say that most of their *mutilés* cry at times during the period of adjustment to a new two-dimensional world. But not Leroux. When he began to learn the Braille alphabet, when it dawned on him that he could read again, he laughed like a boy. They have a typewriter at the Lighthouse for the mutilated blind—the spacing is done by the feet. Leroux attacked it with enthusiasm, making little jokes when the instructor read him his first results with the touch system. Everyone held up Leroux as a model to those patients who cried or sulked.

He had been a month or two at the Lighthouse when news came unexpectedly from his Commandant, at

whose side he had been wounded. The Commandant, reported missing, long ago judicially dead, had suddenly appeared in Switzerland with a convoy of prisoners exchanged because they were too badly mutilated for any use of war. He had been picked up between the lines, his face shot across behind the eyes, by the German medical corps. He too was blind, stone blind.

On the day after Leroux heard this, he sat down and wrote his Commandant a letter. He did not trust his own imperfect typewriting, but dictated it to a nurse, so that the people of the Lighthouse knew what he wrote. He told of all they had done for him, of all they could do for the Commandant. Wouldn't he come? It was a great thing to read again and to know that one might work again. "I didn't think there was any more light for me," he concluded simply, "but now I have found light. Won't you come too, my dear Commandant?" Then, every day, he waited for an answer.

The Commandant never replied to this letter. But one morning there appeared in the doorway of the Directory a tall man, "as tall," said Miss Holt, the Directress, "as tall as—as Albert of Belgium." He wore an officer's uniform, and he was leaning on the shoulder of the little nurse who had brought him all the way from Switzerland. He introduced himself as the Commandant, and asked at once for Leroux.

Miss Holt took him to the garden and sent for Leroux. Presently there came a "tap-tap-tap-tap" of a blind

man's stick nearer and nearer along the corridor, and Leroux stepped out, his stick reaching eagerly.

"Leroux," said the Directress, "here is your Commandant," and, "Commandant, here is Leroux." She led them together.

They stood silent, holding each other by the forearms. Then Leroux's good hand and his stump began to travel up, up—feeling. He reached the Commandant's shoulders, his neck, his face, until the fingers of the one good hand rested on the bandage covering that place where the eyes had been.

"My Commandant!—my Commandant!" cried Leroux. And dropping his head upon his Commandant's breast, Leroux, who had never shed a tear over his own blindness, wept like a child.

CHAPTER II

THE ISONZO FRONT

“I HAVE asked the driver to stop round that corner,” said the Lieutenant of Alpini, our guide and escort, “because I wish to give you gentlemen a new sensation. It isn’t new to me, but it is still very thrilling.” We were threading the narrow streets of a little Italian village as he spoke; now we flashed out into open country, crossed a stone bridge, and brought up beside a straggling orchard. The prospect was bright and gracious—April, sunshine and Italy—but the green fields, the peeping towers of village churches, the distant panorama of blue-and-white mountains, held no element of surprise. We had been seeing that all the morning, as we drove north toward the line. We looked at the Lieutenant, and comprehension began to dawn. He had vaulted over a door of our touring-car, and taken up his station beside the road.

He stood there—a tall, lean muscular figure, a clean-cut face blue-white in complexion, a pair of grey-brown eyes. Those eyes were dancing with the quick emotional excitement of his race.

“You have the pleasure, you friends of liberty,” he said, “of standing on soil conquered by an Allied army. That”—he pointed back—“was the old frontier. There”—he indicated a hill-vista straight ahead—“we are fighting now! Over there”—he gestured with his left hand toward the distant white rim of mountains—“we have redeemed still more territory. You will see to-day Italian courts, Italian schools where the Austrians ruled a year ago.” He mounted into the car again, and the driver started up. His eyes still danced. Then he swept his hand over the far vista in front.

“You see from here what Italy fights for: is it not so?” he said.

Indeed, as we drove northward through the newly-redeemed Italy toward the Isonzo front, our destination, it lay before us like a diagram. We were travelling across a pleasant, green country, as level as Flanders. But all round our front horizon there ran, like the edge of a flat-bottomed bowl, the vista of the Alps—mountains more precipitous and lacy than any we know on the American continent. To the right, where lay the Isonzo front, they began to heave skyward in great foothills. They rose up and up, until, far to the left, they became a tangle of peaks, crowned with eternal snow. Now that old frontier, which we had just crossed, ran mostly along the plains country. Beyond it, stretching far into the mountains, curving round the head of the Adriatic, dwelt a population mostly Italian

in language, in sentiment, in national feeling. The patchwork Austrian Empire, trying to run on Germanic ideals a mixture of Teutons, Slavs, Czechs, and Hungarians, had also been trying for many troublesome years to warp the Italians into a system which the Latin loathes by instinct. So arose discriminations, arrests, political punishments on one side, and conspiracies on the other. As in Alsace-Lorraine, there was singing of national hymns under the breath, circulation of nationalist literature behind closed doors, a current of national life running under the surface. All that morning, as we sped on toward the front, we were to behold how thoroughly this district was Latin, not Teutonic. Everywhere the names on the signboards, the designations on the public buildings, were in Italian; the churches bore campanili undistinguishable from those across the line; the people spoke the dialect of Venice. That is the first and more popular object of Italy-at-war: to rescue "Italia Irridenta"—unredeemed Italy.

We looked toward the hills, following the finger of our Lieutenant while he pointed out, in the tangle of distant mountains, peaks and passes of which we had heard only through the communiqués. The old frontier ran mostly across the plain, The last great effort of United Italy came in 1866; the occupation of Rome in 1870 was only a completion of the inevitable. When that year dawned, Austria still held the Venetian province and much else that is now blood and bone of Italy.

To get this territory, the new kingdom joined Germany in her war on Austria. Germany won, and so did Italy. But Germany won first. Garibaldi was only approaching Trent, his objective, when Bismarck made a sudden peace with Austria. The new kingdom, betrayed and tricked, had to take what she could get. It suited Bismarck's policy to make Austria a strong ally and Italy a vassal. So, as he laid out the border, he gave Austria the heights, Italy the plains; everywhere, the peaks and passes remained in the hands of the Teuton, a menace to the Latin. In any new war, the Austrians would be pouring downward, the Italians struggling upward. This condition has always been a matter of concern to the military clan, who understood that an alliance binding such remote ideals as those of the Teuton and the Latin must be artificial. So Italy is fighting not only for her unredeemed part, but for the security of her borders. That, also, became plain as the course of our automobile brought peak after peak into clearer view, as the Lieutenant pointed out old Austrian and new Italian positions with expressive stabs of his finger. He came back, presently, to the flat, fertile country which stretched about us, included it all with a wave of his arm.

“And if you only knew,” he said, “how Cadorna took this plain—forced the Austrians back until they stuck in the mountains. We could not mobilize on the border—that would have betrayed our intention. He did it

—superbly—with a handful of frontier troops. It may be ten years before we know the whole story. It was ” —he hesitated before he made the final comparison of excellence—“ it was worthy of Garibaldi ! ”

Now we were drawing on, toward the zone of operations ; and perhaps I had better begin the story of the thirty crowded hours which followed, with the music. For that day's work began with human music ; and that night's rest was to begin, most strangely, with a divine music of another kind.

A military band stood tooting and drumming full strength before a row of newly-made, whitewashed sheds, thrown together from boards, corrugated sheet-iron and building-paper. It was playing the boys home to the rest station—a regiment just back from ten days in the Isonzo trenches. They came on with the loose, easy route-step of veterans. Their uniforms, once trim and smart, had been stained and rumped in the red soil of the Carso until the original olive-grey had changed to a spotted dun-colour. They were of the swarthy South ; little, sturdy men built like wrestlers. To me they appeared like nothing so much as a gang of those Italian labourers who dig our reservoirs, build our railroads and delight our souls in the United States. Make their overalls all alike, hang them with fantastic packs, give them guns instead of shovels, and you have them —all but the expression. There is a look of the trenches,

a pinched appearance, such as I have seen on the faces of women who have watched too long beside sick beds. So they appeared until they caught the sound of the music—a gay Southern march. Their shoulders, a little bent, straightened up; their faces lightened; they began really to march again, and here and there one of these sprightly boys whistled with the tune.

We had passed them; and for miles we ran through a new-green spring landscape, wherein reigned that curious quiet which marks the middle courses of an army zone. And not alone the quiet revealed it for what it was, but visible signs. Here and there a great military balloon hung immobile in the sky, looking, with its water-grey colouring, like some fat sluggish marine creature which had wandered out of its element.

Supplies and forage were going forward. It was the baggage train of a Southern regiment, and these were Sicilian carts, their bodies painted, in primary colours, with legends of the saints and of old Sicilian knights. Next was a forage convoy, drawn by sober, plodding oxen, dirty white or pale cream in colour, armed with horns that by comparison made those of a Texas steer seem slight and delicate. Our military chauffeur slowed his breakneck speed as we passed through one or two little towns. The children, skipping out of our way, regarded us soberly from the doors and alleys. The carters neither cracked their whips, nor sang, nor dozed on the seats as is the usual fashion of the Italian

carter. The whole world seemed quiet and alert. Now we were nearing the hills ; and at their foot flowed the river.

“The Isonzo,” said the Lieutenant ; and there was the same pride in his voice as there had been an hour before when he said : “The old frontier.”

It was a gentle and gracious river, of a milky, turquoise blue like the tropic seas about Bermuda. Just beyond lay a forest in its light, spring green ; and beyond that rose low hills of a dull brick-red. A bridge spanned the river ; just across was a small town. To the left, one of those bare, red hills seemed to have burst through the forest. It ran to the water’s edge. And—

“Look !” said the lieutenant.

We had heard no sound of guns, for the wind lay in the wrong quarter, and the motor of our somewhat over-driven car had been thumping. But on a slope of this nearest hill a smoke was rising, a pillar of dust which blew away in a light fog like the morning-mist of hills. As we looked, another dust-pillar, with a spurt of angry red at its core, burst into being on the hillside. They were exploding shells—and big ones.

The chauffeur let out his last notch of speed. We shot across the bridge, and I was aware that the little town stood uninhabited, that most of its windows gaped without glass or sash, that smoke streamed from a shattered roof. We came out into a square, its pavement littered with the plaster-dust that had been walls.

A few houses stood, untouched ; from their doorways soldiers peered out at us. At a street corner stood a sentry-box, reinforced inside and out with sand-bags. The sentry craned his neck round the edge to stare at us. Farther on, soldiers were shovelling a path through a street newly covered with ruins. They paused, some of them, with pickaxes poised in air, to look and to chatter. Nearer, a squad temporarily out of employ lolled on the steps of a house so newly ruined that it was still smoking. They sat up. I heard the word *Borghesi!* (civilians!) pass in explosive Italian from mouth to mouth. We were beyond the civilian world now ; our appearance had produced a sensation.

The Lieutenant stopped to get directions ; Hiatt, the Associated Press man, and I conversed in our native tongue.

“Hello ! I speak English !” came from the lolling soldiers.

We made ourselves known as Americans. At that word, another rose, and still another ; they came forward, screwing up their faces to struggle with the almost forgotten language of their adopted country.

“I work-a four years in America,” said one.

“I work for the General Electric Company in Schenectady,” said another. “I got my job yet—I take a vacation for the war.”

“I work in New York—West Side docks,” said the third, a small and cheerful man. “Say,” he added,

“better get along if you’re going—they’re reaching for us.”

“Well, it’s a long way from Broadway,” I said as the machine started.

“Sure!” they answered in chorus, and flashed their white teeth at me. It did seem, just then, a very long way to Broadway and a flat in Stuyvesant Square and a certain club corner in Gramercy Park—and a cannon does not inspect the passports of its target.

We entered now a little hill wood. The new April green of its slender oaks and elms was shot with the darker green of severe pines. Underfoot a brook ran through tangled water-weeds, and the herbage sprang as soft and filmy as though those distant roars were the thunder of the heavens, not of man. This did not last long; for as we rounded a turn it became a goblin wood of strange, grotesque activities. There were heaps of iron stakes riveted to square plates—supports for barbed-wire entanglements. There were rolls of barbed wire. There were corded piles of timber. There were sand-bags arranged in place like masonry, or a waiting arrangement. There were trenches and barricades, and holes—just holes. Everywhere men in trench helmets or grey soldier caps and incredibly dusty uniforms toiled at the heaviest kind of heavy labour. We pulled up at a set of steps leading to a *château*.

I suppose I had better not describe too narrowly what had happened to this *château*, lest I direct Austrian

fire. It was a wreck of a thing which had once been pretentious and yet beautiful. It had been painted outside in high-coloured frescoes, after the fashion of Northern Italy, and a nymph or a grape-vine border standing here and there on a sliver of remaining wall merely pointed the desolation. Outbuildings, once of very pretty and tasteful architecture, looked like the palaces of the Cæsars. War had not left it even the dignity of ruin. It was packed with sand-bag barricades or with military structures of wood and iron, and littered with army kit. On the lawn, where once family and guests had taken their tea, a dusty rank of army mules mouthed at a cement horse-trough.

One garden wall, however, stood intact. Set at its corner was a bas-relief in marble.

“Does that strike you as curious?” asked the Lieutenant.

It did not, for a moment; I had been seeing that device in Northern Italy for many days. It was the crowned lion, symbol of the old Republic of Venice. Then I remembered that this had been Austrian soil.

The Lieutenant, with his quick Italian comprehension, saw my face light up; and he laughed.

“Yes!” he said, “and a brave man is in prison because of that. An Austrian prince of the blood owned this château. Three months before Germany brought war on the world—those fools who believe that she did not plan it—he sold this house hurriedly and cheaply to

a rich Italian living here on the Isonzo—an Italian at heart, but Austrian through persecution. While Italy waited to declare war, he put the lion of Venice into this wall. Yes, it was gloriously foolish. He is in prison for it. But it is here—and so are we!” he waved his hand over the low hills just beyond. “On the Carso.”

I had not quite appreciated, until then, what the Carso meant; I was to know more as the day went on. It is a kind of desert-patch, dropped by some freak of nature into the midst of a country which drips fertility. It is all iron-red rocks, dusted with an iron-red soil in which little grows. It rises in a range of low hills with abrupt drops here and there; and the crests are sown with bowls called “dolinos,” almost as round and regular as the craters of the moon or the bubbles in boiling porridge. We did not understand its whole conformation until later; all we saw was rocks, a forest thinning out to solitary trees as it reached the barren red soil, and grotesque military works. As we advanced, a series of near explosions punctuated the occasional dull booms from across the hill; also rocks and dirt spurted through the trees.

“Only blasting,” reassured the Lieutenant; “we have to blast our shelters and trenches in this soil.”

And now we had reached a dug-out in a hillside—just a little room like the cabin of a small yacht. The roof sloped like the peak of a cap over the low pine door, and it was made of sand-bags. A tall, lean, elderly

gentleman in the uniform of a high officer stood at the entrance. Other officers ranged themselves beside him and introduced themselves by standing at attention and giving their names—as is the etiquette of the Italian army.

They had just finished luncheon, said the Commander; had he known we were coming, he would have provided for us; but wouldn't we have some bread and cheese and coffee? We accepted; a moment later we were seated with the officers round the table, while the military servant was squeezing past us, setting out dishes. There are usually little home touches about these dug-outs, a pathetic clinging to the desires for beauty and refinement in the midst of ugliness and savagery. On the wall of this one hung an ornamental hat-rack, "borrowed" doubtless from the château; and a row of potted plants, just budding, fringed the strip of side-walk at the door. Also, among the field-glasses, revolvers, charts, military papers which littered the single shelf, were a few books and a pile of illustrated magazines. These the commander indicated.

"They're mostly English," he said; "I lived long in England, and I like their humour. It's quieter and drier than yours, isn't it? Look at this, for example;" and he opened an illustrated weekly to the latest trench cartoon of Captain Bruce Bairnsfather.

"It's hard work here," he remarked later. "The worst thing for a man of my years is lack of sleep. I

think I haven't slept two consecutive hours in a month. All day I'm on the alert ; and at night—well, it isn't so much the bombarding as it is thinking. I lie awake and plan, and wonder what that latest noise may mean. They drop them near-by sometimes, and I get up to see what's happened. They haven't hit us here, as yet ! ”

One more officer spoke English, and all the rest, save one, French ; so we gossiped ; they were pathetically eager to hear what we had to say of Rome, of Paris, of the prospects for a British drive. The one who had no language but his own was small, chunky, muscular, built like the ideal half-back. Of him the Commander spoke to his face without reserve, since he could not understand, saying :

“ He is my adjutant—and that's a soldier ! He came up from the ranks. There's his decoration for bravery, and he earned it if a man ever did ! He will accompany you to the trenches—if you go.”

This introduced a subject which had been very much in my own mind while my lips spoke trifles. On most fronts—the French and German, for example—a neutral correspondent visiting the lines goes over an exact route, laid out in advance. Not so much for philanthropy as to prevent international misunderstanding, the escorting officers play very safe with him. On the Italian front it is different. The escorting officer picks a likely place, with due regard to its sporting possibilities, and asks permission from the officer in command of the

district. The escorting officer usually loves his art ; he wants to take his special set of correspondents where correspondent never went before. He furnishes the sporting instinct ; the officer in command the caution.

“ It is quiet now,” added the Commander, “ but you can never tell when it may begin. This is an uncertain time of day.” He whirled in his chair, and faced the Lieutenant, who stood at attention. “ You may go, but I will not accept the responsibility. It is on your conscience, Lieutenant, if anything happens.”

The Lieutenant’s face contracted with some emotion—probably pride. He chewed a corner of his moustache, then he saluted.

“ Very well,” he said, “ I accept the responsibility.”

“ Then *au revoir*,” said the Commander, “ or rather, *au retour* !” For a civilian, not yet inured, as a soldier must be, to the imminent fact of death, all this was not reassuring. Then, too, as we picked our way from the approaches of the dug-out, a soldier fell in behind us. He wore a Red Cross brassard, and he was ostentatiously filling his pockets with first-aid packets.

“ *Buona fortuna !*” came in chorus from the officers at the door of the dug-out.

Let me hurry, as our party did, over the intervening terrain. No one, after the capture of Gorizia, can be so blind as to think that Italy has been marking time in this war. But many Europeans believed it then,

in April 1916. I wished, as we picked our way over abandoned military works, over broken, rusting, barbed-wire entanglements, over neat graves marked on the surface with crosses of field-stones, that such people might see this terrain. For long ago the Italians had crossed the Isonzo against the best resistance Austria could offer, had pushed on through the ruined town where first we saw the shells burst, through the goblin wood, through the château; and foot by foot, impossible position by impossible position, they had wrested two miles of this rocky desert from their enemy. The advanced trenches to which we were going made a fortress of earth and rock on the very crest of the hill.

Now we had begun to descend toward the bowels of the earth; for we had entered a communication trench. It resembled only distantly the trenches of the more Westerly front. It was not a ditch, but rather a passage between walls, made here and there of rough field stones, fitted with the skill of a New England fence-maker, and here and there hewn blocks. It was topped with rows of sand-bags. Now and again, the chunky, muscular little adjutant indicated by voice and gesture a dangerous corner.

"We are tall for the trenches, you and I," said the Lieutenant. He took off his Robin Hood hat of the Alpine infantry, lest its gay, saucy quill, bobbing over the barricade, betray us. We walked on, bent from the

hips. Once, the adjutant stopped and pointed, through a peephole in the rough wall, at graves his men had dug and filled under fire—neat little graves with wooden crosses at the head, and field-stone crosses traced on the mound. “He says,” translated the Lieutenant, “that our soldiers will risk their lives at any time to bury a comrade, or to put back the cross if it’s knocked out by a shell.”

Now and then, as we reached a passage where the wall seemed to dip, the adjutant would whisper “*presto!*” (fast!), and we would stumble over the rough path at a run.

A cannon went off. With a kind of thick emotion I realized that we had delayed in the dug-out too long, for another report followed. Somewhere a rifle whipped and a bullet sang. “*Presto!*” said the adjutant again. We ran; we rounded a curve and—there was a sharp, a dazzlingly sharp, explosion above us. I jumped and wheeled. Twenty yards or so to our left a shrapnel shell had exploded in the air. It hung there, the smoke of that explosion, a puff of white from which dropped another puff of greenish yellow, a thing as beautiful to see as any coloured rocket.

I was afraid. And this I have noticed about that combination of fear and excitement which comes in great crises of danger—it kills memory. I cannot tell what happened next, but I must have been running close on the footsteps of my guide; for now we were

descending a flight of stone steps, cut as true as the steps of a dwelling-house, and we had entered one of those accurately-formed bubble-holes in the earth which they call dolinos. Here and there, on the lower perimeter of its edge, were covered military works. Near us was a bomb-proof. An officer stood at the entrance, and all about him soldiers were rising up and peering out with the sharp, pinched expression of the trenches, exaggerated by the imminent danger. We were introduced, with all due ceremony, to the Captain and his lieutenants. We spoke the trifling language of courtesy, while all our eyes wandered toward the patch of sky outside, where the beautiful bursts of white and falling yellow, broke out with the sharp explosions of giant fire-crackers.

The Captain, remarking that we might not be very safe there, turned his back to read the signs in the heavens. Instantly—for news of unexpected visitors had already been whispered down the trench—the privates crowded round us, saying proudly, one after the other, as by formula :

“ I speak English ! ”

And as by formula, I replied :

“ You’ve been to America, then ? ”

“ Uh-huh ! ” they answered in chorus. One had worked in Cleveland and one in New York, and——

“ To the tunnel, gentlemen ! ” said the Captain in French. “ You will be safer there ! ”

“*Presto!*” said the adjutant, and we ran for it—out into the troubled sunlight, up and down steps, along passages between walls of stone and sand-bags. In a little eternity, we reached a dark, round hole, rushed into blackness.

“Give me your hand!” came the voice of the Lieutenant in the darkness. I began to stumble over obstacles. Were they feet? I put out my hand and felt rifle-barrels and the legs of men, ranged like pillars along the wall. On both sides the tunnel was lined with standing soldiers. Then we saw light from a hatchway far above, and stopped. I called out to Hiatt in English; he responded. Immediately, soft voices came from the darkness and half-light, informing me that their owners spoke English and had worked in America.

We waited a little. There were no more explosions. We pushed on, therefore, through another section of darkness, through a passage lit with full, glaring Italian sunlight, and into a trench, but a trench far different from the elaborate earth-works of the Franco-British-German front. To the rear, it was a cut in the rock, blasted and hewn with a care worthy of more permanent building; to the left it was a solid, seven-foot stone wall, with neat loopholes at intervals—plugged, now, with pieces of loose rock. Soldiers, strung along this passage, were digging or drilling, their rifles resting handily against the wall.

The Lieutenant pulled a plug from a loophole and peeped out. No one fired. He motioned me to the loophole, and I took a cautious survey.

Shall I call them sleeping serpents, or just ditches? Merely two lines of rocks and sandbags, very near, with a blasted terrain between. Under the earth in those ditches men waited to die, but they made no sign. From far, from near, I was to see line after line of trenches in the next twenty-four hours, and the thought was always the same: So quiet, so harmless in appearance, those brown stripes across the landscape, yet so deadly in effect! Nothing showing, positively nothing but a line of newly dug earth.

Beyond the yellowish ditch which was now the Austrian border, the red hills fell off to a valley; it was a magical vista, greenish-blue near-by, what with April verdure and mist, and blackish-blue far away where the valley met the hills.

Our Lieutenant had been conferring with a captain. He turned back to us.

"The Captain prefers that we should not try the front trenches," said the Lieutenant. "They're only a hundred yards away, but the passage is long, and though it's daylight there may be an attack coming. In that case, we'd be *de trop*. Besides, they're no different from these."

We were turning away, when I noticed a soldier making signals with an entrenching tool. He was a

little black gnome of a man ; a hairy wart decorated his humorously crinkled face.

“ Say,” he said, twisting his face to get out his somewhat rusty English, “ you American, or Eènglis ? I work in New York. I come here for the war——”

“ And how do you like it ? ” I asked.

“ Same as my job in America,” he said, grinning as he accepted a cigarette—“ dig, dig, all the time ! ”

We were back in the tunnel again ; it was dug, the Lieutenant explained, as we groped our way, to supplant Dead Man’s Pass, a piece of military work whose reputation lives in its name. As we stumbled again across feet or brushed against legs, voices began singing, very softly—some Italian impromptu at our expense, I imagine. But the news that we were Americans had already passed down the line ; for there came soft English—or American—phrases from the midnight walls : “ Hello, New York ! ” “ How do you like what us wops is doin’ to those Hunkies ? ” “ You newspaper man, huh ? ” “ Take care of yourself ! ” And finally, from the distance, the old race-track hailing sign : “ At-a-boy ! ” In all that strange day there was nothing stranger than these greetings from my adopted fellow countrymen, whose faces I never saw, and whom, in all human chance, I shall never see even if we all survive Armageddon.

The firing had stopped when we emerged into light ; evidently it was just a little episode of the day’s work.

The Captain at the dug-out informed us that no wounded were reported, from his dolino at least. With a feeling of leisure and security, therefore, we inspected this pudding-hole and another. Into one ran the ruins of an old trench, broken and tangled barbed wire rusting at its edges. Here, a sign-board nailed to a stick bore an Italian legend which being translated read: "Pass of the Devil." Shoving this trench forward, foot by foot, the Italians had burst finally into the dolino, had taken it, had forced back the Austrians to the crest of the hill. Every man in the detachment which led the final charge was killed or wounded. Somewhere, in this tangle of military works, was a battered dug-out which the soldiers were repairing carefully, methodically. There were fresh blood-stains on the stones; nine men had been wounded here in last night's fighting, they said. And one of the soldiers stopped his work, holding a heavy piece of granite in both hands, to ask us if we didn't come from America and if we knew Detroit? So we passed on, uncomplimented by snipers, to that hillside of abandoned, rusting military works and well-tended graves from near which we had entered the communication trench.

Here, we could see with our glasses one whole sector of the Italian front, a prospect so beautiful that it took imagination to vision a battlefield. The Adriatic was a beam of silver on the horizon; the dark dot at its head was Monfalcone, where the Italian line began.

The prospect rose gently, violet-blue in the background, green in the middle distance, to the red-brown hills on which we stood. There were towns all the way, violet-grey with flashes of red-tiled roof. One had lost by shell-fire its campanile, that bell-tower without which no North Italian town calls itself even respectable. That was the only sign of war—that and the harmless-looking series of brown and yellow threads which, with the glasses, we could trace for miles and miles.

As we neared the dug-out, there occurred a tiny but revealing incident which I feel bound to record, though its hero may not thank me. I had been a little amused at the attitude of brooding care, as over children, which the officers displayed toward us inexperienced civilians. We had to pass a certain section of wood in which, I had learned already, there might be danger at any time—when the Austrian guns had nothing better to do, they were always shelling that point. So here we ran for it. As we trotted along, the Lieutenant just in advance of us, there came two sharp explosions, and the dirt flew. Acting as suddenly as the explosive, it seemed to me, the Lieutenant threw himself between me and the danger, thrust me back. It was nothing, as we learned a moment later, but a blast of the trench-makers. But this instant action of the Lieutenant, on behalf of a stranger—we had met only the day before—I shall remember when I have forgotten more fruitful heroisms.

They had luncheon and a glass of wine waiting for

us at the dug-out; and the Commander, when we had finished, sent the other officer who spoke English—a captain—to show us the westward view of the line, as it mounted toward the foothills and the Alps. We were going farther toward the mountains that afternoon. He led us to a hill pitted with shell-craters. Some were so old that this year's poppies blew along their edges; some were new and moist. For more miles and miles of hidden struggle, anxiety and heroism, the ditches threaded a landscape changing from gentle to rugged, until their tangled line lost itself in the mountains—or what they call mountains on the Isonzo front. The Alpinists have a different name for them—"hillocks!"

The Captain remarked that this hill got its shell-shower every day.

"Here," he added almost casually, "I became a fatalist. You see," he went on, answering the inquiry in our eyes, "I came up here last month with a good, brave fellow—but new to the front and a bit nervous, of course. He saw these new shell-pits, and asked if we'd better not go. More by way of setting him an example than anything else, I stopped to take a photograph. Just then a shell came. It struck about forty metres down the path—you see the hole there now—exactly where we should have been if we'd started at once. I know now that it will come when it will come. The only way, up here, is to take sensible precautions and then go about your business without worrying!"

One's adventures behind the firing-line, as he motors at mad speed from position to position, are entertaining enough, especially among the Italians, with their engaging manners and their quick emotional response. Also, on this front—on any front for that matter—there is a special atmosphere in the zone which just runs the edge of shell-fire. The towns stand, marred only here and there by a long-range shell or an aerial bomb; but the inhabitants are gone. In their place, soldiers wait at the doorways, cluster about the town pump, or sleep in the shade. On the sidewalks, or in the public squares, lie piled the thousand-and-one strange instruments and devices of warfare. Artillery-horses doze or roll under the trees; at a gutter-stream, artillerymen wash harness. In the village blacksmith's shop, soldier smiths hammer out repairs to horse-drawn or motor-driven baggage-wagons, parked in all the vacant lots. Everything that tells of civilian life is dusty, ill-kempt, down-at-the-heel.

This zone, along the Italian front, seemed gayer to me than the same district behind the grim French line. There was a meretricious air of gaiety, indeed, in the very appearance of the soldiery. Visitors to Italy in the old, dead era of peace, always marked the variety of colour and cut in Italian uniforms. War has wiped out the colour; all regiments are dressed now in dull sage-green. But the picturesque cut remains. The *carabinieri*, those model national policemen, wear

still the broad cocked hat, an exaggeration of the head-gear which we associate with Napoleon, only they have veiled its black-gold-and-red glory with a grey cover. The *bersaglieri*, those stout little men who hold the record for marching, have taken to the same colour, but their wide, flat hats, cocked rakishly over the left ear, sport still a cluster of cock's plumes. The *Alpini*, with their Robin Hood hats decked with one long quill, their wide capes, recall always Howard Pyle's drawings of Sherwood Forest and the Merry Men. So, too, the Italian love of colour breaks out, here and there, through the grey trappings of war—a crude picture on a transport cart, a cockade at the bridle of a cavalry horse. And from the metal chain bracelets from which depend their identification tags, four soldiers out of five have hung those gold or coral luck-charms which ward off the evil eye and keep a man from harm.

All armies sing on the march; the Germans like a trained choir, the British with good individual voice, but often with ragged team-work, the French, sometimes, with gay enthusiasm. But the Italians alone seem to sing as individuals. Snatches of rich, rolling song drift from the cavalry stables when the troopers are currying their horses, from the artillery parks where the gunners are oiling bores, from the wayside cafés where the infantrymen are enjoying their hour of leave.

Let me, however, pass over our run to the next point

of action—our view of Monte San Michele from the ruins of beautiful old Gradisca. We stopped on the way to ask permission ; and that alone brought a contrast of war. We drew up at a stone wall, bordering an orchard, in as peaceful-appearing and pretty a village as one would find in all North Italy. The place seemed deserted, and the gardens looked a little unkempt ; nothing but that revealed a state of war. I jumped down, and had started for the corner of the stone wall when our chauffeur, who spoke French, stopped me. It was dangerous there, he said ; I found that hard to believe. We walked by ways he seemed to know ; suddenly we went down a flight of steps into the ground ; we were in a covered tunnel. We passed through certain other military protective works until . . . but the censor would object to further description. Ultimately we reached a certain underground headquarters, where we made on the staff the customary demand for information and passes. Often and strangely the North Italian approaches the American in looks. The grave elderly officer who gave us permission to follow our route might have been twin brother to William Dean Howells.

Gradisca, as we travelled swiftly across a dangerous approach, presented a ruined aspect of old beauty. It had been a walled town ; war after war, until this one, had spared its noble towers with their square Guelf battlements, its church, its château. Now, it was mostly a ruin. There was then, near Gradisca, a point

quite useless for purposes of military observation, but a good spot from which to see the positions about this mountain of blood. The ground where we stood under cover had been seamed and scarred by old battles, and was still occasionally shelled. For the Italians took it trench by trench and house by house in the early fighting; they crossed the Isonzo; they locked with the Austrians at the foot of that same hill of St. Michael; they forced the enemy up and ever up until he rested at last on the crest. The double line of trenches, when we visited the Isonzo, ran roughly along that ridge, sometimes over and sometimes a little on the Italian side. It had been a heroic episode in the Italian war. Once a great foreign officer stood not far from our position and watched through his glasses the lines breaking out of their trenches, wavering, re-forming, stopping, the new lines coming on, the final rush which took the Austrian positions.

“They are doing the impossible,” he said.

But Monte San Michele was a sleeping lion as we looked—only a reddish-brown blasted hill studded with projecting grey rocks. Yet it was a diagram of an old battle. For the trenches were there still, marking each successive chapter of the history which the Italian officers told us with voice and gesture. To illustrate the story of that fight, one would have needed only a panoramic photograph.

It is a sharp, abrupt ridge, nearly a thousand feet

high—what we call a hogback in Western America. It is like a man on his back, with his knees drawn up—only a man wearing a Highland bearskin bonnet, say, or having at least an enormous head. It begins to the left with a little ridge, which is the feet; it dips; it rises to make the knees; it falls to the abdomen; it rises high for the chest and head. The incredibly blue, sweet Isonzo runs before it.

Under the knees was a little town, half standing; under the highest ridge of the head was a linen factory whose tall chimney had blown no smoke for a year. On the right of this factory began a wood which ran halfway up the hill. It looked green and bright enough until we saw it through the glasses and found that the trees were mere stumps, which, still living, had put forth their spring leaves. Nature is hard to stop. They call it Bosco Cappuccio, which means Hood Wood; and there, they told us, the Italians had done their hardest fighting on this front. They had gone up and up; Hood Wood was blasted in the first autumn of the Italian War. But there was another grove near the crest; and that might have been a mere clump of poles, for all the verdure it showed.

Far to the left, below the first little ridge of the mountain, stretched a plain, rimmed in the far distance by higher mountains. On this plain lay a town, white amidst the greenery, white too against the blue background of the Alps. It was Gorizia, that key-position

of the Isonzo front. All the fighting we had seen and were to see had for its objective Gorizia.

“It’s a hard problem,” sighed the Lieutenant as we surveyed the town through our glasses. “For it’s full of our own people—oppressed Italians.” Three months later, by one of the most brilliant strokes in this war, Cadorna solved the problem ; Gorizia is with Redeemed Italy.

All this time, artillery had sounded, but so distantly that none of us paid any attention. Now came a sharp blast, and a moment later a spurt of smoke and earth, flame-hearted, leaped from the crest of San Michele. The Italian artillery was firing over us. At regular intervals the guns went off, shaking the half-ruined structure on which we stood. Flame and dirt would burst up from the crest ; a few minutes for the sound to carry, and there would follow the crack of the shell. The bursts would become puffs of dust, then mist, then nothing. Suddenly the Austrian artillery began to reply in curious rhythmic one-two-three-four series of explosions. I watched this artillery duel for half an hour ; and I saw nothing move or stir on that mountain except the puffs from the shells. Yet thousands of men, armed, brave, dangerous, lay hidden below that deadly-quiet surface.

We made our way back to Gradisca, and through it, with great caution ; there was no telling where that Austrian fire was directed. Once, we stopped under

concealment of a piazza, covered with a riot of white jasmine ; once we lingered to buy from a soldier an intact Austrian shell, whose explosive he had drawn at the risk of his life ; again we took a little side-excursion to view one of the most complete ruins I have seen in this war. Among the confused items, I remember a place where a heavy shell had dropped at a street corner. It had left a hole perhaps eight feet in diameter, and as perfectly conical as though drilled with some instrument of precision. On a certain main street stood one wall, with appended fragments of floor ; this had been a flat-house, I judge ; for on the third floor there remained a kitchen sink with a dish-mop and a set of frying-pans, now rusted by a winter's rains, hanging on their nails. There was a window above the sink. The housewife, when she prepared the last meal in that house, had twisted the curtain about the rod to get more light. It was there as she left it, though she was now dead or a refugee. An officer who had joined our party smiled reminiscently as he viewed this wreck.

“ My quarters were just across the street,” he said ;
“ I was in them when *that* went down ! ”

We dodged apprehensively through the outskirts of the town. From a house, still standing but windowless, poked the head of a big white-and-brindle mongrel dog. He trotted out, gravely accosted us. His tail wagged feebly, and his brown eyes, as I stooped to pet him, looked up at us with an expression which said :

“ Where have the people gone, and what has happened to this town ? ”

And now, on our way to a lodging for the night and directions to the next position, we saw one of those shows of this war that have been often described and are yet indescribable—a battle to drop an aeroplane.

Sailing out of a notch in the mountains through the sun-mists of a beautiful afternoon, it came toward us, trailing light. Now and then its wings would flash as the belly of a minnow flashes when he turns in the shallows. Before we knew whether it was Italian or Austrian, the firing began. A white puff appeared beside it ; another under it ; another above. A line of these puff-balls, breaking out suddenly, hanging in air as though caught on an invisible row of hooks, followed it up. And now, one of them hid it from view.

Had the Italians hit ? We waited, to see whether the wreckage would drop ; but no ; the adventurer of the air had cleared the puff—only he was sailing back. He tore on unharmed into the cleft of the mountains, the smoke puffs following him all the way. It was a magnificent spectacle. I own, with shame, that not until he turned tail did I realise there was death in it all.

Now the Lieutenant had an idea, which had been crystallizing in his mind all day. Over beyond Pleva,

just where the low-hill fighting began to resemble mountain work, lay the House at Zagora. Had we heard of it? There, the Austrians and Italians had rested, all mixed up, for five months—the Italians in one room, the Austrians in another. He was going to take us there—no other civilian, since the line locked, had seen the House at Zagora. “It will be what you call a scoop!” he said, being acquainted with the terminology of London journalism. “I think it can be done,” he added. “Of course”—as though thinking aloud—“I don’t want to kill you, but if one of you gentlemen should get a wound, just a little flesh-wound, say, think how much it would do to advertise Italy and freedom!” The fascinating idea rolled up in his mind until it became a decision. It began to fascinate me—and to perturb me, too.

So when we drew up at a certain neat and well-arranged headquarters, the Lieutenant set the adjutant to pulling out maps; and with many an eloquent explosion he traced out the position. There, the Italians had forced the Isonzo—wait until we saw the positions they had taken! The situation, now, centred about that house. The Austrians were in the front rooms, the Italians in the back; from it, the lines branched out not more than ten or fifteen yards apart. He began to talk to the adjutant in their native tongue. One who has studied Latin and French can often catch the drift of an Italian conversation. He was laying

out a plan by which we might approach the position that night. The adjutant's face clouded, and he shook his head. Then, on another appeal from the Lieutenant, he got a telephone connection, and talked for some time. "*È pericoloso!*" I heard him exclaim as he put down the transmitter. Then he explained to us in French :

"It is as I thought. In the present situation, that road is not safe for motor cars." He reflected a moment, and sketched out another plan, which involved getting up at four o'clock and taking a climb afoot.

"It will at least give you an appetite!" he said.

So we dined with the Staff. Some spoke English, and the rest French. The talk was of the Italian in America, of art, of our day's adventure, and little, very little of the war itself, except when one grey veteran started a discussion by slamming down his hand and declaring :

"You talk about strategy and tactics; one thing beats them all—barbed wire!"

Then the tongues clattered, and lively Italian gestures flew.

We were quartered on an artillery officer, who lived some distance away. Outside, it was a spring night of the poets. The moon had come up like a great drop of honey. No gun was firing, for once.

"They sometimes shell a position up yonder," said

the artillery officer as we walked along. "I only hope I shan't be wakened by whir-boom!"

After that, we were silent for a while, drinking in the night, and suddenly, in a thicket on the right, a bird-song burst out—a song so lusty, so wonderfully sweet, that I stopped in my tracks.

"Nightingale," said our lieutenant.

Much as I had read concerning the singer of the dewy meads, I had never heard him before—he, the bird of poets and lovers. He sang like our meadow larks of California; but the note was higher, sweeter, and infinitely stronger. We had walked on and on, hundreds of yards, before I stopped again. I could still hear him plainly; and another one, far down the glen, was answering.

I woke twice that night and listened for the sound of guns. There they were, only very far away. But the nightingales were singing still, near and loud. And so with music the day ended, as it had begun.

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE AT ZAGORA

THE foothills of the Alps would be called a little more than foothills in the Rocky Mountains, but real mountains in Scotland or our Atlantic States. As we strode on, trotting at intervals to keep pace with the long, mountain-trained legs of our Lieutenant, they began to come one by one out of the dawn. In conformation, it occurred to me, they much resembled the American Catskills or perhaps the mountains of Scotland, only that they were more abrupt. The day broke in beauty—clear skies, April and the Alps. It is not my purpose, however, to write here of scenery. And indeed, during the last part of our passage to the point where the communication trenches opened, I was indifferent to beauty. When you go down a path at a stooping run, dodging from side to side in order to dazzle a sniper, it is hard to remember that you are dodging through incomparable forest.

This is why we had come :

The Isonzo, near by, runs into a gorge. On both

sides rise mountains with occasional cliffs. The Italians, advancing here as elsewhere toward the River of Promise, had swept the Austrians down the slope of the right bank and across the Isonzo. In face of deadly fire, they had themselves crossed. They had struggled on until they forced the enemy up near to the summit on the left bank. At the hamlet of Zagora the lines locked, and affairs came to a standstill. And in Zagora stood the strangest house in all Europe, where the two armies "had contact." This situation had existed since November. The Austrians were in the dining-room, the Italians in the kitchen. The Austrians were in mother's room, the Italians in the children's.

And that mountain-side on the conquered left bank, up which we were to climb—it was a litter, a mess, of military works. I say now that nothing has so exemplified to me the mighty labour of this war as that one hillside. It was as though one had started to put in a city, and had dug the cellars, the water-mains, the street gradings and the sewers all at once. And this labour had but one object—to feed, to arm, to protect a few hundred men doing the real fighting at the actual front. Everywhere that morning we met men digging and delving, passing timber, setting blocks, sawing wood, carrying boxes slung between poles, Chinese fashion. All proved the peril of the work by wearing steel trench helmets.

Now there comes in these positions a certain hour

when you can count with fair certainty on a lull. The night has been hot and anxious, bringing one kind of deadly work. There will be work of another kind later in the day; but in this hour or so the armies, by a tacit truce—formal truces are unknown to this war—eat, clean guns, “tidy up” the trenches, and rest. One can never count absolutely on this truce, however; hence our nervousness as we came out, during one stage of our passage, into full view and rifle-range of the Austrians. An untoward incident may break it at any moment. We had timed our visit for this interval of comparative safety.

Every one thinks of modern war as a noisy business. It is, for the most part. But I had never before thought much of the cautious silences which come between action and action. That was the first thing which struck me as I came out on this hillside of workmen whose master is death. Men, men, men, a city of men dozing behind rocks or sandbags, carrying timbers, cleaning out ditches, passing with careful, stealthy feet—and none spoke a word. A skylark was soaring on his fluttering, perpendicular flight, singing his heart out as he soared. A bird-chorus answered him from the herbage of the hillside. Theirs seemed the only sound; for even the distant guns were still.

We picked our way in and out of the tangled walls, trenches, barricades, to a dug-out, set deep in the hill and furnished with a door and a window. Before it lay

a little garden-plot fenced neatly with bent willow-branches, where new-sown grass was springing. Inside was hot coffee and a warm welcome. As we ate our cheese and our good, brown-yellow war bread, a young lieutenant entered. He had come up from headquarters that morning bringing the mail—letters from wives, sweethearts and daughters. The officers excused themselves and ripped through their letters with eager eyes. The Commander opened a fat packet.

“Look!” he said, snapping its contents across the table. It was sweet-pea seed for his little garden!

But time pressed; and, since it must be done, it were best to do it while the silence held. So now we pushed forward. The Commander, guiding us personally, stopped to ask a question about the route; and, from the cookshed, but softly:

“Hello! I speak English.”

He was chef of the officers' mess; but he was also a cook at the Plaza, in New York! Ruffo was his name; a sprightly little Italian boy, with a joke for everything. “The Hudson,” he said, pointing to the blue Isonzo; and “The Palisades!” Also, he remarked that the baseball season was opening; and then, I thought, there was pathos in his eyes.

“And now,” said the Lieutenant, “our orders are to walk very gently and to whisper.”

Do not think of this as an ordinary hill, this height which the Italians have won yard by yard. It was so

steep, in its natural condition, that a man could not walk straight up, but must follow winding paths. Now, there were crude stairways everywhere. Before us lay the wreckage of the hamlet and of that strange three-story house. Its roof was gone, and much of its upper story. The buildings that once stood about it were down to the foundations ; but the lower story remained, and most of the second. We were approaching what had been the kitchen, I suppose—one of those half-cellar rooms which characterize hillside houses. Behind it was a kind of back-door yard. Everything was black with old smoke of battle and of conflagration, or grey with the heavy dust of powdered rocks.

I may not describe it minutely, although I remember it as I remember my own flat in New York. At last, I felt, I was clear beyond the world of humanly pleasant things and wholly in the world of war ; for everywhere else there had been those little human touches like the latticed lawn before the dug-out. But here—only rifles, boxes of grenades, empty cartridge cases, clips trampled into the dust ; shell-holes ; newly-made graves ; crude, battered works of war. And everywhere silence, so that the spring bird-songs came out sharply. Once the Lieutenant opened a canvas curtain. We looked in. A handsome little Italian boy grinned at us genially from over a pot of coffee boiling on a spirit lamp. We entered that cellar-kitchen. I laid my hand on the wall. A foot away, in the coal-cellar, was the enemy ! Had

I waited long in that silence I might have heard him stirring.

Just inside the entrance lay a covered man. I heard the whispered word *Morto*; and I thought that I was looking at a corpse until somebody stumbled over his foot. He gave a start and the grunt of the suddenly wakened man. A comrade clapped a hand over his mouth.

Somewhere without, a soldier climbed a ladder. He advanced slowly, taking a pause between each step. For all his heavy army boots, he was as soft-footed and sure-footed as a cat. A pleasant-spoken little soldier addressed us in Italian, and I made out that he was remarking on us as *borghesi*. No other soldier seemed especially curious about us. Everywhere else along the Isonzo front the men had lifted their heads from their work to regard us civilians, almost as miraculous, on this remote sector, as women; but not the men of Zagora.

A long time later, it seemed, we crept into the covered trenches of the first line. The approaches were deadened underfoot with sacking. We curved into a curious, dark tunnel, slashed with light from the loopholes, and from one ragged hole in the roof.

“That happened last night,” whispered in French an officer who had joined us. “A hand grenade—careful—any noise may bring another.” Here, too, there was sacking on the floor.

Between the loopholes, their rifles within handy reach,

lay the men of the advanced trench, sleeping the sleep of an exhaustion which showed in pinched faces, in occasional uneasy mutterings and turnings. Here and there stood an alert man, on watch. One of them looked us over.

“English?” he asked, “or American? I speak English. I work two years in Cleveland, United States.”

But before we could talk more, the Lieutenant beckoned me on for a cautious peep through a loophole. That wall of rock which was the Austrian trench rose in my very face. Thirty feet away—it seemed scarcely ten. Two or three quick glances, drawing my head sharply back after each for fear of an alert sniper, was all the view they permitted me; and all I wanted.

This was a curious position: at certain points, as you drew farther away from the strange House, you could see not only your own trenches running below you, but even a few yards of the Austrian. The Lieutenant and his confrère in command stopped and began to whisper. Their voices held all the expressiveness the Italian knows. I caught no intelligible word, but their tone conveyed disgust and hatred. I peered over their shoulders.

There, on the rough, rocky no-man’s-land between the trenches, lay a man in an olive-grey uniform and a helmet. He was huddled up on his knees and face, his arms outstretched, as though he had prostrated himself in death. Just beyond, a cleft of the rocks revealed a

pair of limp, inert legs. We looked through the glasses ; there were other dead.

The Lieutenant began whispering in the academically correct English of the educated foreigner.

“ Four days ago we made a little charge here,” he said. “ That is a lieutenant. He was killed, as were the others there. Our men have been trying to recover the bodies ever since. But whenever we try, the Austrians send up flares and fire. One was not killed at once. He was wounded in the legs, so that his life might have been saved ; but he died last night. This is not war ! ”

As we came down from the silent world of alert eyes, a grenade went off with its characteristic “ bang ! ” like a door slamming ; a light film of smoke rose from the trench region above. I hope we did not attract that grenade ! Then guns began to sound far away. The silent world was silent no longer ; and no longer was I aware of the birds. Men spoke again, above their breaths. The day’s work had begun.

At a turn of the path, a cook knelt behind sand-bags, ladling appetizing chunks of stewed beef into the mess-tins of a work-gang, who squatted on their haunches while they waited, and scurried crouching to cover when their tins were full. A plump, dark, pleasant-eyed little man in the uniform of a field-chaplain stood watching them. He introduced himself, and fell to talking almost immediately on the blessings of war—views which sounded strange in this setting, since we had seen that

morning if not the extreme horror of war, at least its extreme squalor.

“Gentlemen,” he concluded, “it has done wonders for Italy. Many of these men here were out-and-out Socialists before the war; now they are fighting for the right with the best of us!” More bangs like slamming doors came from above; the guns sounded nearer; a rifle or so whipped in the distance; but as we strolled back toward the dug-out the chaplain stopped to indicate leisurely a piece of battered ground, creased with tortuous military works, a few ragged sticks showing above the surface.

“Boys, boys to the last, these soldiers!” he said. “That was a little orchard and vineyard when we came. It was just beyond our trenches. The men used to creep out by night and risk their lives to get grapes and apples!”

Now remember again the position, as we saw it when we returned to the dug-out. A narrow cleft of the mountains, with peaks rising on either side, and we high up on one slope, looking back across the Isonzo at the other. The country we faced was now Italian territory; the peaks behind us were still Austrian.

We were preparing to make our adieux, exchange cards and get away, when the great whistle of a great shell sounded overhead. I cannot describe that sound, though once heard it is never forgotten. It has been compared to the rush of a fast express train, passing

close; but it has a sharper, more crackling quality. And near the crest of a mountain on the other side of the river rose a tremendous puff. A few seconds afterward, the sound of the explosion followed.

“A three-hundred-and-five,” said the Commander.

This meant one of the giant guns. Again the air above us whistled, and again the smoke-puff with a flame-red lance in its heart rose from the crest. Then came a sharper though slighter explosion. Along the Isonzo below runs a railway. A puff, small beside those giant puffs on the hill, rose from near the embankment. It was only a few hundred yards away. Regularly, big shells and little shells whistled and burst. The Commander viewed the horizon with his glasses, took a long look to the rear, and turned to us.

“Gentlemen,” he said in French, “I regret for your sake to tell you that you cannot go now. It is not safe. I must beg the honour of your company to luncheon.”

We accepted with a grace which I for one did not feel. It is not pleasant for a civilian to know that he is bottled up indefinitely on a hillside at no point immune from violent death. In danger, I have observed, one is always happiest when he is going away. As I sat on a bench before the dug-out, watching the shells burst on the mountain beyond and the embankment below, listening to the slamming noise of the grenades, I felt a hollow in the pit of my stomach and a rusty-iron taste in my mouth. The emotion indicated by these symptoms

would flash out ; and, as the shells whistled and broke more and more heavily on hill or bank, interest in the thing as a spectacle would flash in.

Somewhat reconciled to the situation, we had retired to the dug-out and were listening to some Congo reminiscences of the Commander's aide-de-camp, when a new sound pierced the symphony—sharper and somewhat nearer. The officers listened a moment, and ran outside. Even before the Commander began to talk in voluble Italian and the Lieutenant to translate, I knew what was afoot. The Italian field-guns had opened from somewhere on those shell-scarred hills across the Isonzo. It was an artillery duel.

“Come ! you will see something interesting,” said the Commander, shifting from his native speech into French. We ran, sprawling on the steeper slopes of the hillside, to a point from which we could see an Austrian position, behind their trench-line, which lay above us and to the right. At the very crest of this position rose a wall of rock, which looked as though a gigantic brown-grey hand had thrust itself out of the mountain. Below it the earth was green with bushes and low trees. As we looked, a shell burst sharply against the rock.

“We have calculated,” explained the Commander, “that there is a concealed Austrian battery there”—he indicated a certain spot in the greenery below the cliff—“and our batteries are reaching for it. *Basso !*—Low !”—for another shell had burst, this time not

very far away from the target. The Italians were firing fast; shell followed shell; and the commander of this post and our lieutenant marked each shot with quick exclamatives in their native tongue: *Basso! Basta!*—"Short! Hell!" *Sinistra! Basso!*—*Ah-h! Bravo!* For a shell had burst squarely in the chump of bushes which concealed that Austrian battery, and burst with a different sound, somehow. You felt that it had struck, had lifted something. And the fire of the Italian battery ceased, as though the work were done.

We were about to turn away when one of the Italian officers looked at me and said:

"You are cold, are you not?"

"No," I said; "not at all."

He looked at me narrowly.

"We had better go back, had we not?" he said gently.

Then I realised for the first time that I was trembling, and that he thought I was afraid. Now I had been afraid at intervals that morning, and most of all when the Commander announced that our exit was barred; but they had not observed it then. It was quite another emotion which made me tremble at this moment. I was in the throes of the same excitement that we of the sporting race feel when the half-back runs fifty yards to a touchdown or the star batsman makes a home run—only a hundred times multiplied. You who have practised athletics know that neat satisfaction of power which you feel when the curve slaps fair and true into

your mitt, the smash shoots from your tennis racquet, the drop-kick springs from your toe. That is half the fascination of manly games. There was the same satisfaction in the punch with which those shells, propelled from miles away, drove into hillside or cliff—only again a hundred times multiplied. I dislike to call my emotion the sporting sense, for the last shell, as it struck and burst against its target, probably brought death into that green patch below the cliff; but it was akin to the sporting sense.

So, with one enemy battery silenced as a beginning of the day's work, we went back to luncheon in the dug-out. It was a delicious meal; Ruffo turned out to be an artist, especially in the preparation of macaroni. We three guests made it a crowded table; so the junior officers and the chaplain were served at a little table outside. The Austrian bombardment had grown more intense as the sun climbed higher; other batteries of heavy guns seemed to have opened on a road in the middle distance. It did not occur to me until afterward that the juniors had, for courtesy's sake, chosen a position more dangerous than ours—hospitality somewhat at the risk of life. I doubt if they themselves thought about it at all. As the officer remarked on the shell-pitted hill of the Carso, one simply goes about his business, feeling that it will come when it will come.

Our coffee-cups were of fine porcelain, our napkins were clean and fresh, the wine, if new, was good, and

Ruffo and his assistant proved perfect, attentive waiters. They served in white aprons and trench helmets ; and between the cookshed and the dug-out they covered ground on the run, yet balancing plates and serving-dishes so expertly as to spill no morsel nor drop.

Now, as we sat down to luncheon and began to forget the whistling, bursting shells in the delights of good fare and lively conversation, we noted that the morning was growing misty and that a cloud was blowing across the sky behind the blue Italian mountains ; the sun was peeping and hiding. As we pushed back our black-coffee-cups and lighted cigarettes or pipes, I was aware that rain had begun to beat on our window and that a mist trailed from the mountain-tops. Another great shell burst on the crest across the river, but the bombardment of little shells had ceased.

“Good luck for you, gentlemen,” said the Commander ; “there is no cover like mist !” So he sped the parting guests, and we left the House at Zagora behind.

The world was almost silent again as we wound through a long communication trench—picturesque and interesting, but not to be described. Once, a rifle whipped from above us—perhaps some sniper had caught a movement in the trench, and was trying his luck. Once we had to stop for stretcher-bearers, carrying out a badly wounded man—first-fruit of the morning’s work. We crossed the Isonzo on a pontoon, we travelled along a

road which would have been perilous but for the mist, and called, finally, at a headquarters, where we exchanged cards, drank a glass of spirits to Italy, and begged a guide. The commander here, a Genoese with the shrewd, intelligent, powerful head and face so common in Northern Italy, spoke no English and only a little French. But he was avid for conversation with visitors from without ; we were the first strangers he had seen for many weeks. So, the Lieutenant interpreting, we chatted for half an hour. Best of all, I remember his remarks on human material.

“ Perhaps city men make the best soldiers in any nation—after they get used to hardship,” he said. “ Nevertheless, there are no better soldiers, when well led, than our Southern peasantry. They are superbly brave and willing ; and they endure anything.”

“ You know,” said another of the group, “ though we’re a Southern people, it was the Italian regiments who best endured Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow, when the enemy wasn’t powder and ball, but hunger and cold.”

I heard this statement many times on the Italian front. I know not if it has sound historical basis, but I can easily believe it. Everywhere one feels the vitality in these muscular, thick-necked little people, who seem to store the sunlight of Italy in flesh and bone, for use when needed.

Our guide strung us out a hundred yards apart, as we shot the approaches to this front ; for a gunner hesitates

to waste a shell on one man, where he will shoot instantly at a group. Presently we were beyond all signs of war, save the occasional distant rumble of a gun or the faint crack of a big shell. We were toiling through the rain up a hill-forest, with fern and violet and all pretty, tiny herbage springing from the fertile ground beneath. Dripping wet, and spent from a two-thousand-foot climb, we came at last to a plateau and found our automobile waiting. A foot-messenger in *bersaglieri* uniform had stopped to chat with our chauffeur.

“Say,” he said, as the Lieutenant rummaged about the tonneau, putting things into shape, “you come from America, huh? I work four years in America—I spik English good once, but I forget now—suah; Dayton, Ohio! So long!”

Two days later, having asked and received permission to visit the highest theatre of operations in the Alps, I visited a headquarters for my final papers. An officer popped out from the inner office. He held a bunch of fresh dispatches in his hands, and he was a little excited.

“This will interest you!” he said; and he began to translate.

President Wilson had called a joint session of our Congress to consider the submarine crisis growing out of the *Sussex* atrocity. An ultimatum was on its way. There were even the first, strong words of the President’s message.

We were going, for a week, to a region far beyond the news. When we returned to the world of baths, sanitary plumbing, hotel meals and newspapers, we might find that the die had been cast. A black wave of homesickness rolled over me. Suddenly I understood why all those Italians who had been addressing me in English along that way of dangerous toil came scurrying back to Italy when they might have worked securely in America. Something as strong as mother-love or love of woman draws your heart homeward when your own country goes to war.

* * * * *

It was market day, and about ten of a very fair spring morning, when the whistle blew the "Alerte"—a hostile aeroplane was coming. Two seconds before the whistle began, the market-place was all colour, business and normal excitement. Peasant women with thick waists, powerful hands and heavy yet vivacious faces bargained and flirted and gesticulated with soldiers and agents of the regimental messes. Women of the buying class, their social position proclaimed by the fact that they wore hats and gloves, strolled from booth to booth, gravely considering radishes, cauliflowers, lettuce, or early cabbage, and then bursting into explosive Latin gestures when the bargain was found. It was all life, vivacity and sociability. Two seconds after the whistle began, the whole market was scattering, like chickens from the shadow of a hawk, to doorways and

arcades. A few civilian stragglers, braver than the rest, tried to stand by their booths. The military police shoved them back under cover. A shop-keeper behind the arch where I stood rushed out in a sudden panic, gathered up his family and a few odd women, thrust and pulled and carried them inside his shop, and began to put up the iron shutters. A minute later, his panic going as fast as it came, he opened the shutters and let out his flock. While the people arranged themselves according to their personal courage—the braver on the edge of the sidewalk where they might see, the more timid in the doorways where they could be safe from shrapnel—there was babble and confusion. Then the noise of tongues died out; except for the wail of the whistles and the boom of church-bells joining in the warning, there was unearthly silence. So we waited.

Through the whistle and the bells there pierced a series of sounds, distant but definite—a cannon-shot, another and another. A chorus of cannon followed, the explosions increasing in frequency and intensity. Still, no one spoke; men and women gazed into the quarter-sphere of sky before us, intent and pale. No one moved, either, except the military police; they ran from point to point, shoving back eddies of the crowd which stood in danger of our own shrapnel if the firing came our way. Now, the bells and the whistles stopped; we waited; the guns rolled like drums.

And now—it came into sight, an aeroplane travelling

like the wind, growing from a speck to a tangible thing. Usually the sun catches the wings of an aeroplane, so that it shines and flashes like a minnow in the shallows. Somehow, there was no such effect this time ; it looked, with its deep, flat, grey war-paint, like a sinister, fat-bellied mosquito. And behind it trailed puff after puff of snow-white smoke. The guns were reaching, reaching—and never touching. A puff broke out just below it ; another just above, a whole trail of puffs to one side. It was heading toward us—no, it had turned ! The fire had become too hot. It struck a course at right angles to our line of vision, it went on, it lost itself behind the turreted old church at the end of the market-place. And at that instant, something like a gigantic bee buzzed overhead. We at the front edge of the crowd craned our necks upward. One of our own great armoured aeroplanes, its national device marked on the lower surface of its wings, had taken the air. It flew so near that we could see the vapour from its exhaust trailing behind it. At this new sign of reassurance, conversation suddenly bubbled out of the crowd like wine out of a bottle. We looked into each other's eyes and laughed, at first foolishly and then sociably. Gestures and jokes began to fly. A nun crossed herself with an air of great relief, and fell into animated conversation with another nun. A group of girls began to exchange badinage with the military police. A few boys tried to venture out into the square ; the police seized them by their little

waists and breeches and hurled them back into the crowd—for the whistle had not yet announced the end of danger. The mother of one of the boys indignantly shook her fist in the face of the police. The crowd, taking sides at once, began to banter the police or the mother with about equal humour and enthusiasm in both factions.

At this moment, I happened to look up and observe a proceeding which I had been seeing, without really observing, ever since the whistles opened. Across the square was an old building; on its roof stood a kind of open shed. Three women in black shawls and wooden shoes were hastily but methodically taking in their washing. At this moment they tucked the last sheet into their basket, grabbed it by the handles, and scurried for the skylight.

The whistle wailed again—a succession of short toots—“Raid over.” On this signal, the crowd broke from the arcades as runners break from the mark at the starter’s pistol. It was a race, with wooden shoes scuffling and peasant shawls flying, for the booths and custom. Two minutes later, the buying and badinage were going on as merrily as before the raid. Only our great armoured aeroplane soared low above us, with a kind of insolent swagger in its glide.

CHAPTER IV

WITH THE ALPINI

“AND now,” said our Lieutenant, whose English remains idiomatic even under excitement, “it is legs!”

He jumped down, skipping like a boy at the touch of his native mountain soil. The motor car, which had at last struck an impasse on the snowy road, whirred and coughed as the military chauffeur backed it out to a turning-place. The Lieutenant's military servant loaded himself like a pack mule with our knapsacks of Arctic clothing, and we crunched on. The spring snow had been wet and heavy all that day as we climbed by motor-car under the panoramas of the Alps. Our feet, in spite of our five-pound, hobnailed, grease-soaked Alpine boots and our two pairs of woollen socks, were churning water with every step. Now it had begun to blow up a little colder, and a wind whipped down a lighter and more piercing quality of snow from the peaks above.

We trudged on, trying to keep pace with the loose, easy swing of that exceptional mountaineer, our Lieutenant. For all that we were going into what might be

battle and would surely be a good deal of hardship, we travelled with considerable light-hearted anticipation. For this was the afternoon of Easter Day, which is to the Italian a festival as important as Christmas, and there was to be a celebration of some kind in the advanced Alpine base just ahead.

Already, at the headquarters of the Commander in the valley below, we had eaten a sumptuous midday dinner. As part of his gigantic pack, Giacomo, the Lieutenant's servant, carried a thing like a bandbox inclosing an Easter plum cake of great size and richness, which we had bought in Brescia on Good Friday as a present for the officers. In the pockets of our overcoats we had bags of bon-bons, and there was a box of cigars in the knapsack. We intended, after dinner, to survey the military situation in these parts—a situation, at this season of the year, wherein the enemy is not the Austrian, but Nature—and, if all looked well, to try to reach the battlefields of the glacier from that point. The Lieutenant was quite determined about this glacier. We must set foot on it, he declared, with the simple resolution of a man who had been conquering mountain heights all his life; but the approach did not look very favourable from this quarter.

What we had been seeing all day in the way of scenery, and what we were seeing now in the rifts of snow mist, I despair of describing. Mountains are mountains; but the Alps are more abrupt, altogether more perilous in

every aspect, than any range we North Americans know. They do not rise gently, slope after slope, like our own Rockies or our Sierras. They shoot up in gigantic hogbacks and walls and pinnacles. It is all very well to say that Mount Massive, of the Rockies, is some 14,400 feet above sea level, and the more famous peaks of the Alps only 1,000 feet or so higher; the comparison is not fair to the Alps. The peaks shoot up from low valleys, not from wide, high plateaus. That same Mount Massive is 14,400 feet high, but the city of Leadville, at its base, is over 10,000 feet high. Here, Mount Adamello, king-peak in one of the highest Alpine glaciers, had been peeping at us all day through the rifts of the valleys; and yet we had started that morning at a scant 2,000 feet. As a mountain-bred child, I had been hurt in my patriotism to hear a European say that there was no real mountaineering in the Alps of America; that climbing the Rockies was merely a matter of walking. I looked about me now, and understood. To left and right shot up great ridges, bristling with straight firs, dusted now with snow. Behind these ridges rose white precipices; behind them pinnacles of grey rock so abrupt that the snow clung only to the clefts; and farther up . . . but that was lost in the whirling snow-mists.

It was clear, however, in one direction; and there, at the very top of the landscape, was a sheer wall of white. It seemed impossible that anything which travelled on legs could scale that wall; yet beyond its very top, as

we knew, lay important positions, both Italian and Austrian. Not only had men scaled it, but they had dragged with them cannon; and somehow, every day, other men were carrying, to the fighters above, food, ammunition, all the heavy and complicated apparatus of an army in action.

The camp, when we crunched into it at last, wore what I took for a holiday air; I being unaware just then that work was going forward on this day as on every day, and that this was only the habitual gaiety of the Alpini. Officers in capes and grey Robin Hood hats, looking, as Alpine troops always do, like the Merry Men of Sherwood Forest, came running down to greet their old comrade, the Lieutenant; to pound him on the back; to wrestle with him in the snow.

Between the long barrack-sheds a squad of men in white were practising on skis. As I looked, one of them took an awkward, shambling run, leaped into the air from the top of the slope before the barracks, and brought up, a tangle of arms, legs and skis, in the snow-drift at the bottom. Another started; and he, too, spilled himself before the first man could rise. They grappled; they wrestled, with their skis performing awkward evolutions in the air; and all the rest of the camp yelled loud encouragement. While we stood with the officers, getting acquainted, troops passed by in single file, lifting themselves by their wheel-tipped alpenstocks. They were not real Alpinists, as their

caps showed, but infantry reservists—they who help feed and supply the fighters on the high cliffs above.

The tall, lean fellow in command packed a snowball and shot it into the midst of our group. Our officers, laughing, pelted him unmercifully. On a slope above, others who had just come into camp and delivered themselves of their packs caught the infection and opened a snow battle. Most Continental Europeans throw but awkwardly as compared with Americans and Englishmen, who have played baseball and cricket since childhood. These men threw well; and they learned it, I suppose, at snowballing, the sport universal of Northern peoples.

They had been all winter in this camp, and had made things comfortable and shipshape. The doctor's cabin, where I was quartered for the night, had a stove, less for warmth than for drying purposes. There was a tiny bunk of canvas slung from boards and furnished with a sleeping bag and a straw pillow; there were bookshelves; there was even a little stand for a reading-lamp. What gave it the home touch to me, however, was the finish of the walls. As in the miners' cabins of the Sierras and the Rockies, they were papered with newspapers and illustrated weeklies, stuck on by flour paste. The furniture here, as in the messroom and the offices, was made on the spot of pine boards, fashioned by soldiers glad of something to do during the long pauses of the winter storms.

When the orderly announced dinner and we plodded

through a clearing atmosphere into the mess-room, I heard the Associated Press man who preceded me utter a whoop of surprise. There stood the plain board mess-table, set out for the feast. And in the centre was the most original table decoration I ever saw. Some one had picked up the butt of an Austrian 305-calibre shell. In its centre was a hole just large enough to accommodate the inverted nose of a 75-calibre shell. This shell-nose made a bowl. The company cook had filled it with those white, lilylike edelweiss blossoms that were springing up wherever winter had melted from the hills. The Italians call this species "flower o' the snow." And in the middle of the flowers there roosted one of Rose O'Neil's whimsical little "Kewpie" figures. She had a tiny Alpine cap fitted on her bald baby head, and she smiled out upon us with foolish benevolence, recalling, in the midst of war, old studio days in Washington Square, New York.

We were a dozen at table—all except the Commander, the doctor, our volunteer lieutenant and us correspondents, in the merry, rebounding twenties. All spoke French more or less well. The hero of the party, who sat next to me, had lived in Manchester, and his English was excellent, if a little out of practice. Also, the pleasant, boyish chaplain had at least studied our native tongue. In three languages, therefore, we made very merry over an extra-special dinner, sparkling red wine, a cake with decorative frosting, and our bon-bons. We

were far enough from the enemy, so that noise did not matter, and after dinner everyone burst spontaneously into song. They sang us the song of the Alpini; that "Death to Austria" chant which has grown popular in Italy since the war; and the rousing old Garibaldi Hymn, which yields only to the Marseillaise for spirit and fighting quality.

Then there were gay Neapolitan love-songs; and one merry young lieutenant, with a rich Italian tenor, sang a little Verdi by way of variety. After which, in compliment to the guests, they tried their voices at American ragtime. "On the Mississippi" they seemed to know from start to finish. It was eleven o'clock when we broke up—a late hour for men who must rise before dawn to fight the elements. But, as the Commander remarked before we separated, there is only one Easter in one year.

All that afternoon—in fact, all the way from headquarters—we had been hearing details concerning the life and organization of these Alpini, whom circumstances made a *corps d'élite* of the Italian Army in the first months of this war; and the Lieutenant told us still more as we strolled off to bed. The men of the Alpine regions, when the time comes to do their military service, are drafted into the Alpine Corps. Already most of them have had practice since childhood in mountaineering. They have been goatherds, following their flocks up and up, with the rise of the spring grass, to the very edge of the glaciers. They have been guides, making mountain-

earing records for hardy tourists who think they made the records themselves. They have tracked and killed the chamois among the higher peaks.

By the time he comes to the army the average Alpine infantryman is learned in the craft of the mountains, which requires special senses acquired only in childhood. During his two years of army service the Alpine infantryman finishes off his education as a mountaineer. He roughs it in all weathers, "hardening his meat" as the Indians say, and learning, under expert guidance, all that he has not known already concerning the conquest of Nature in her more cruel aspects. Though the Alpini now include many men of the lowlands, such are the backbone of the corps. Incidentally many natives of the Southern districts, who had never before seen snow, weathered the Alpine winter and came out in perfect condition. As I have remarked before, there is a marvellous vitality in your Italian.

In the theory of Italian Army organisation each regiment defends or extends that border lying nearest the district from which it is recruited. The men know that sector, with its peculiarities and tricks of weather, and they fight for their homes. In the practice of war the army has been obliged to relax this rule a little; but it still holds measurably true. Once I stood on a shoulder of the mountains talking to an Alpine infantryman.

"Where do you live?" I asked.

“Down there,” he said, and pointed.

Far below, in a cleft valley, lay a little village.

The officers of the Alpini, if not all mountain-born, are usually at least from Northern Italy—Milan, Turin, Brescia, Verona, Vicenza. From the time they enter service they follow with enthusiasm what, I dare say, is the noblest sport in the world—mountain scaling. As your cavalryman plays polo for practice in horsemanship, so do they, for practice in mountain fighting, try impossible peaks or new ways of getting at peaks already conquered.

At the valley base where we rested on Easter Eve, we waited dinner a few minutes for the Commandant, who had been “up” that day, and whose return to camp had been announced by telephone. He arrived at last, a compact, round-headed little fighting man of forty-five or so with a fresh sunburn over his tan, and began to talk in animated Italian.

“It has been a quiet day up there,” the Lieutenant translated; “and so he has performed a feat. He has climbed, for sport, to a point that no one else has been able to reach this winter!”

All their active lives these Alpine officers practise the sport as a part of business. So they learn the tricks of the treacherous mountains, such as avalanches, crevasses and hidden streams, against the time when such knowledge may mean life or death for a whole company.

They love the mountains, and they hate Austria. It

is a border hatred for one thing; to Lombardy and Venetia, the old days of Austrian misrule remain a long memory. In Brescia they still show you, with hate in their eyes, the wall where the martyrs were shot during the abortive uprising, the false dawn of freedom, in 1849. All through the valleys they will point out this or that village where Garibaldi drove back the Austrians in 1866; and will describe to you, with much fire and many gestures, how Germany made her own peace and tricked them out of victory just when the Lion of Italy had Trent in his teeth.

The Italian Army stands perhaps next to the French for democracy, and in no corps is the relation between men and officers more fine and natural than among the Alpini. When, even in manœuvres, an Alpine officer goes on a piece of far and hard mountain service with his men, he must live as one of them for days at a time—wrapped in the same blankets, sheltered by the same sliver of rock. Officers save the lives of men and men of officers with equal recklessness and gratitude on both sides. It is hard to hold yourself superior to men with whom you have shared such primitive hardship and valour; and the distinction among the mountain fighters, I think, is less between men and officers than between Alpini and other people.

Italy, at the time of which I write, held a line of 650 kilometres—as long as the existing French line after the British extended their sector. Perhaps a bare third of

it is merely high-hill fighting. All the rest is Alpine work. The front of that Alpine line belongs to these born mountain fighters. The infantry of the plains supports or reinforces them ; the reservists feed them ; the territorials dig and delve for them. The diagram of the human material in the Alpine war is a pyramid, its point the Alpini, who have been wriggling for a year into Austrian territory peak by peak.

When we went to bed in our sleeping-bags that Easter night the stars were out. On the way to quarters we asked the Commander if we might go forward in the morning. He reserved his decision. When, at sunrise, I woke and looked out, it had begun to thaw a little ; and at breakfast the Commander put his foot down on our project. " It is dangerous ; it is most dangerous," he said. For a sudden thaw, following a heavy snow, brings the avalanches ; and that, in the winter fighting, is the real enemy, taking toll from both sides. In those avalanche days the army transport service performs only the most necessary labour, leaving the heavy work for a less dangerous time. Just now we could not in ordinary prudence attack the glacier from this point. However, a party of officers and men was going forward to a place where the most dangerous avalanches began. We might accompany them if we wished.

It was a long, wind-trying climb. Four soldiers went with us, to carry our coats and to be at hand in emergency. Over their shoulders they had long skis, in case there

should be work in loose snow. Although little fighting was afoot that morning, and although we heard no gun just then, the trail was lively all the way with soldiers, who trafficked back and forth, singing or calling out boyish jokes.

We mounted beyond the timber-line ; mounted until those grey crags, so sharp that the snow could not cling, fenced us on both sides, and until that white wall which was the edge of the glacier glistened in our very faces. It was a great place to study the ways and the causes of avalanches. The rock walls were cleft to their top with gigantic runways. A little way below the summit of these creases the snow began ; it had found a slope just obtuse enough so that it might pile up. Thence it spread down towards us in great funnels and half-cones. You realised how, at any time, it might begin to start and slide, as it slides from a mansard roof in town.

At a certain point the officers stopped.

“ We had better go no farther,” said the chaplain. “ There are brave men buried under there,” he added, pointing to a great domed drift in the distance, “ and we shan’t get the bodies out until spring.”

We turned back—I with relief. This trail had been carefully laid to avoid avalanches as much as possible. But no trail is entirely safe in such weather. Alpini from farther up passed us as we stood waiting to gather and go. When they entered the sector of the path which ran below the funnels, they would glance cautiously over

their shoulders at the runways above and then scurry past the dangerous point. And we scurried after them.

Just before we turned back, one of the officers pointed upward to three of the funnels.

“When one of them starts they all go,” he said.

And now, having learned the signs, we saw that there had been two or three avalanches that morning. None, however, had been great enough to cross our path. You could mark their course by the break in the even, white surface; by gigantic, irregular snowballs; and even by rocks brought down from the crags.

Once more in the safe district, we took another climb. This brought us to a natural platform in the mountain, and to the foot of a curious piece of military work, devised since the war, and of immense use to these mountain fighters. The author of this enterprise, I believe, is a young engineer of Milan. He had seen an “aerial train” at work on the dump of a mine, and he adapted it to military use.

The Italians call it a *teleferica*; and as we have no name for the device I had better follow their tongue. A *teleferica* is nothing less than a gigantic cash-carrier such as we use in department stores. A carriage, perhaps four feet long by two feet and a half wide, depends from two wheels on a wire cable. Another cable draws it up, the power being furnished by gangs of men or by motor engines. We stood on this platform and looked up to a perilous crag above. From platform to crag, perhaps

a third of a mile, ran the double thread of the *teleferica*—one strand for the upward journey, the other for the descent.

That crag, however, was only the first landing-place. From it another double wire stretched upward and lost itself in a cleft of the mountain. There were still other stages farther up, they told us; and when the supplies had shot the last stage they were within comfortable reach, by man-back or sled, of the snow-covered advanced trenches.

How useful the Italians make this device only their army engineers know. Later, and in another place, I saw a *teleferica* which makes the trip in seven or eight minutes. From its first stage to its second there is also a mule trail, hewed out of the mountain-side. The mules take two hours and a half for the climb. In still another place I heard a commander boast that his series of *telefericas* did the work of thousands of men and, what was more important, did it more quickly in emergency.

This, however, was a small hand-*teleferica*, the motive power being a wheel propelled by the sturdy arms of three reservists. Piled in one of the semi-cylindrical black sheds were supplies such as no army ever employed before this war, devices whose uses I did not understand until the chaplain explained. For example, there were "trench boots" to wear in the snow huts of the glacier. Their soles were of thick wood, studded with sharp pikes. Their white felt uppers rose above

the knee, and they were lined with the heaviest of rough wool. That tin bucket, as big as a ten-gallon oil can, was not a fireless cooker, as I supposed, but a gigantic vacuum bottle which would keep dinner for a squad warm all day. They cannot cook by ordinary means up there in the glacial trenches, where the snow drifts high over the sandbags, and where one lives like an Eskimo. That would betray the position.

Not only supplies go up that perilous cash-carrier, but men. By this means the high officers save time; by it the doctors ascend in case of emergency; and by it they bring down the wounded. An army surgeon, who but a year before was a prosperous specialist in Milan, remarked to me one day that he did not reckon, when he volunteered, on becoming an acrobat.

As we walked down, he whom I have called the hero consented to give me a modest account of his exploit, for which, to the pride of his battalion, he was going to be decorated. He was just a slim, lean, agreeable boy in his early twenties—this hero. He told his story like a true soldier, without much detail. The wonderful thing about it was the way in which he and his party had refused to accept ill luck. They had started on skis to capture by surprise an advanced Austrian position on the glacier. The attack was timed for a certain hour when light and weather would be favourable. But the ski party lost its way in a tempest of snow. When they discovered their mistake they decided not

to turn back. In spite of an unfavourable hour and unfavourable weather, they stalked the Austrian position, rushed it, made every man who survived their attack a prisoner.

The day had now come off bright and even warm—a favourable time for avalanches. And that morning I saw what the Italian officer meant when he told me that the avalanches went off all together. I was walking with the chaplain. There had been some artillery fire; and one cannon-shot among the peaks reverberates like a salvo from echo to echo. Suddenly came a duller roaring, which I took for new guns.

“Avalanche!” said the chaplain. “Look!”

I could see nothing until I used the glasses. From three clefts at once rocks, great snowballs, the snow surface itself, were racing down like an express train.

Just before luncheon, we drifted into the quarters of the Reservists—black, semi-cylindrical sheds, where the men lay close-packed on their bunks, enjoying a day of rest granted them by the avalanches. The band, practising outside, must have included some Italian-Americans, for suddenly it began Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes” march. Also, two forms arose from the bunks, announcing, “I speak English—I work in America.” From these men we got the first hint concerning the tragedy of that day. Had we heard about the Austrian deserter? they asked. Yes, a deserter was coming

down soon from the snow-trenches above. I received this news with but languid interest, merely reflecting that in these quiet times a small incident created a great deal of excitement.

Now the night before, the officers had remarked with regret that two of their number could not join us at our Easter dinner. They were out in the trenches, on watch. Being merry with sparkling red wine, we drank their healths, toasting them in three languages.

At luncheon, some one made mention of them again ; and just at that moment a sergeant entered the mess-room, saluted, and began a report to the Commander. As he spoke, every tongue stopped and every eye darkened to a deep concern. The hero, beside me, began to translate. "The lieutenant up there—the very man we just mentioned—shot through the lung with a machine-gun bullet," he began, when the Commander stabbed him with his eye, stopped him. The sergeant finished his report, saluted, retired. Instantly a babble broke out. I could not catch any of the language, but the tone was indignant. He who had sung Verdi so beautifully at our Easter feast rose up and smote the table vehemently. I wondered again. In this war of great losses, where it is general etiquette not to mention those who have gone, why such concern, why so much talk, over one man, badly wounded though he were? The surgeon took a last gulp of wine, crumpled up his paper napkin, and started for the

teleferica. The conversation went on, an indignant exchange to which I was a wondering outsider.

We had stepped outside when the soldiers began running from the barrack-sheds across the trail, pointing upward. "*Le déserteur*," explained someone in French, and about a crag which shielded the upper trail from view came a squad, formed hollow-square about a man in white who topped his guards by a head. They led him between the barracks and the mess-room, where the officers regarded him from one side, the men from another. For a moment, the Austrian stood alone; the officers were holding debate as to who should examine him. Not only in stature but in face he contrasted oddly with his captors. Burned, like them, to a deep brown, his features were chiselled with less grace but with rugged power. He looked curiously anxious or disturbed; his eyes would wander, and then become fixed with brooding. Knowing how gallantly the Italians bear themselves toward prisoners, how gladly the typical deserter welcomes his capture, I wondered. This mystery was deepening.

I spoke to the Lieutenant in English. The deserter jumped on that, and faced me. In a perfect American accent, he said:

"Do *you* come from the United States?"

"I do—where do you come from?"

"Buffalo," he said; and at the sight of a fellow-countryman his eyes lost for the first time their wander-

ing anxiety. "I've lived there twenty years. I work for the Lackawanna Mills—do you know Lackawanna?"

"How does it happen that you're here?" I asked. "Came home to volunteer?"

"Hell, no! I'm an American. Like a fool, I never got naturalized, though. But I'd gone back to Austria to see my mother—and they grabbed me. I've been trying to desert ever since. I want to go home." Then he regarded the Italian officers, and his eyes grew uneasy again. At this moment an interpreter arrived, drew him into the shed for examination. I saw him no more.

Our Lieutenant followed him with his gaze.

"What are they going to do with him?" I asked. The sense of nationality had risen up, had given me a feeling of personal concern.

"Nothing, of course," said the Lieutenant; "we are not barbarians! But think of a fine young officer losing his life getting out a damned deserter! The lieutenant's dead—the message just came by telephone."

"So that's the trouble!" I said, comprehension dawning.

The Lieutenant nodded. "We'd held him all night," he said, "and a fog came up in the morning. So the officer tried to take him out over the snow. A wind blew a rift in the fog. The Austrians saw them and opened with a mitrailleuse. The deserter and the sergeant got away. The officer . . ." he threw out his hands with a gesture of finality.

The worst of the danger from avalanches would be over by night, the Alpini told us. Weather-sharps all of them, they squinted at the heavens and prophesied another fair day. The Lieutenant, telephoning to the valley-base where we had spent Easter Eve, learned that our friend the Commander, who had just been climbing for sport, was going, next morning, to visit a very high mountain base within easy touch of the glacier. Why not join him and go along? At a certain point on that glacier, he veritably believed, was the highest gun not only on the Italian front but in the whole war. With luck, we might make the trip in a day, because of the *telefericas*. They would take us over the worst stretches.

I had been enthusiastic until he mentioned the *teleferica*. That fatal word seemed to puncture my spirits; and my enthusiasm spilled. For I am one of those persons born with the unreasoning dread of a sheer height. I found myself making excuses to stay where we were and await safer weather. However, the Lieutenant would listen to no meretricious pleas of mine. His motto was "forward"; he was still determined that we should go where no journalist had gone before. A famous Alpine climber before the war, he still had the habit of records.

CHAPTER V

THE ROOF OF ARMAGEDDON

So we tramped back to our automobile rendezvous, and to that valley-base where we had rested on Easter Eve. The Commander there, he who made a record climb, "for sport," in the midst of war, was an old and close friend of our Lieutenant. Indeed, so quick and intense are the emotional contacts of war, so cordial and easy of approach is the Italian gentleman, that we correspondents felt ourselves already in the number of his friends. As he stood awaiting us in the doorway of that recently-built and banefully modern villa which his staff had commandeered for headquarters, he looked in all his meagre height the man and the fighter. He was little—not more, I should say, than five feet six inches tall. But he was as efficiently and compactly built as a battleship. Forty-five years of life had started the grey in his hair; twenty years of mountain sun, reflected from the snow, had trodden lines in his strong, able face. He had a firm but friendly light eye, a round head, as compact as his figure, a fine forehead. His movements were quick with controlled nervous

force ; but he showed in every step and gesture the absolute economy of motion. He was all intelligence, determination, leadership and nerve. Plainly, his staff adored him. Because he understood no English, our Lieutenant and two other officers who spoke my native tongue used to discuss him with me before his face. "The very climax of mountain strategy, his operations up here," they would say. "Such obstacles as he has met—and his engineering!" Or again—the final, perfect tribute in the Italian army—"his work is worthy of Garibaldi."

I write of him freely here because he is no more. Two months after we left him, and just when he had put on the chevrons of a general, he slipped away one night for a private reconnaissance—something about the enemy's tactics had puzzled him, and he wanted to see for himself. When he did not return, searching parties went out for him. They found him lying in the snow, shot clean through the heart by a sniper. No martyr of the newer Italy carried to his grave so many loyal regrets.

As we sat at dinner, the subject of *telefericas* forced its way into the conversation ; and the Commander, speaking French, grew epic concerning his own system. As he went on from detail to detail, illustrating by means of a table-knife slanted against a wine-bottle, he dropped the pleasing information that one flight of the *teleferica* ran a hundred and fifty metres above ground. That, I

calculated off-hand, was about as high as the average New York skyscraper; and I had never looked with pleasure out of a skyscraper window.

Now I had better stop here and describe, in the general and hazy way permitted to war correspondents, what we were about to do. The advanced base, our first destination, was a small plateau high up on the mountain; from there, as luck served, we were going to try for the glacier. To achieve the advanced base alone would have been a big feat of Alpine mountaineering in time of peace. Alpinists distinguish between summer ascents and winter ascents; and to them April and May count as winter months. Before the war, this base plateau was seldom reached in winter. Then one must have guides; he must edge his way perilously round corners of rocks; he must cut paths with an ice axe. At certain stages of the journey the party must travel linked together with ropes, after the immemorial practice of Alpine work.

War changed all that. Men by thousands, and even mule trains, are going up to that base plateau every day. It needs nothing but strong legs, wind and endurance of altitudes, together with a willingness to brave avalanches. Had we chosen to climb, however, we untrained civilians from sea level must have started at dawn; and, even with luck, we could hardly have reached the plateau by dark. This mountain work is a great tester of flaws in middle-aged men. As it was, we should

mount by mule to the foot of the *teleferica*, and take the very hardest part of the rise in a few dazzling minutes. After we reached the advanced base, our expert Lieutenant assured us, there would be no real Alpine work, unless luck and the weather enabled us to go forward to some of the front trenches on the glacier—only plain climbing.

Giacomo woke me at dawn from rapturously pleasant dreams induced by health and the clear mountain air. The couriers of the sun were staining the peaks with all colours of the spectrum ; a cool, bracing breeze puffed down upon us. What with the air and the night's rest, I found myself in better courage of *telefericas*. As we mounted the curious, elevated saddles which furnished our stolid, plodding, sure-footed little mountain mules, the party grew gay. We should be in the Arctic before noon ; but now we were passing through a temperate spring. The herbs were shooting up everywhere ; the meadows were white with edelweiss ; peasant women, their heads bound with gay kerchiefs, ploughed and planted beside the way. Strung along the valley were little villages of grey granite, tinted violet by the morning sun. In each successive hamlet civilians became less frequent. We reached one, at last, where all houses and shops were closed or commandeered for the soldiers, save a little café where a dark young Juno of a girl was selling cigarettes and giving repartee to the soldiers. The next town, cocked on the edge of a ravine, had

suffered terribly from an Austrian big-gun bombardment during the first rush of Italy. The broken granite of its buildings made heaps of ruin all along the main street. The wall of one house stood ; its gaping window-frames opening on a pile of débris. Over its door was a crude picture in primitive colours—the village church, a kneeling peasant woman in a red kerchief, a figure of the Virgin with outstretched arms, and the date “ March 19, 1885.” It recorded, I suppose, some miracle of cure or conversion ; there it had stood for six months, a reminder to the crawling armies which threaded this ruin. We turned aside, at a cross-roads marked by a great wayside Calvary, and mounted by a highway which edged a deep crease of the mountains. Presently, what had begun as a roadside slope became a precipice, on the rim of which our mules, after the confidently reckless habit of their kind, continually took desperate chances. The opposing wall of the cleft, which bristled with straight evergreen trees thrust sharply through a mottled field of half-melted snow, seemed only a stone’s-throw away.

The Commander, infected with the gaiety of the party, grew communicative and fell to talking about “ his boys ” and their war in the air. Men had never done anything like it before, he said. Hannibal and Napoleon crossing the Alps ? They crossed hundreds and hundreds of metres lower than even the artillery positions of his boys up there. Garibaldi’s famous

mountain campaign of 1866? It was fought below timber-line, and mostly without artillery. Here was the Italian army fighting, and winning too, on the very glaciers. And it was an artillery fight; mind that! So we brushed past long mule trains going down for fresh loads, past files of reservists plodding upward; and——

There was the *teleferica*!

I had been dizzy with imagination when, the day before, I saw the stretch of that little hand-*teleferica*; but my imagination had never conceived anything like this one. I should say it was at least half a mile long, and it sagged upward to a great cliff. A carriage had just started as I looked. It became a dot in the distance; it lost itself against the grey cliff; a weary time later I could see it reappear, a speck on the snow crown at the top of the cliff.

We were in the motor shed now; what with the surroundings, it resembled nothing so much as a shaft-house in the little mines of the Colorado Rockies. Now the carriage had come down, and an orderly was packing it comfortably with blankets for the first passage. This carriage is just a box, perhaps four feet long by two broad, and a foot and a half deep. Two frames attach it to the wheels which run on that slender cable, and it has scant room for two men, sitting face to face and legs by legs, with their backs braced against the frames. It is like riding through the air in a bread-basket. The terrifying thing about this carriage, to prospective

passengers, is the low side rails. They appear no more than a foot high. It seems as though the slightest jog would overturn its load.

Hiatt, the Associated Press man, used to be a sailor ; he is scornful of dizzy heights. To my acute disappointment—for I wanted to get the ordeal over—the Commander picked him as companion on the first trip. I watched them go, gesticulating over the edge of the basket as they talked, to a point above a certain tall rock that edged the deepest chasm. Presently I could make them out no more as individuals ; and then the speck reappeared on the snow at the top of the cliff.

“ Don't you think we'd better have some hot soup ? ” asked the Lieutenant suddenly.

Beside the shaft-house a cook was ladling soup into the grub-cans of a newly arrived mule train. We found spare cans and begged a ration. For the Lieutenant, as I understand now, was wise in the soldierly technic of holding men to their work. It is half the art of being an officer. He had perceived, without my telling him, that I did not like sheer heights—a very common form of personal fear—and he was about to carry me through. When we packed ourselves into the basket ; when, with an *au revoir !* from the captain in command of the shaft-house, we made a slow, halting start, gathered speed and shot away, I was still taking scalding-hot soup from a tin spoon. Just then our Lieutenant began to talk.

“ You call this broth, don't you ? ” he asked. “ In London I found they made a distinction between the word broth and the word soup. Can you tell me the exact difference ? ”

I half perceived what he was doing, and I clutched at this device for closing imagination. All through that flight we talked as hard as we could talk—upon Italian cooking, American cooking, British cooking ; upon the lack of variety in English meat-dishes and the hundred Italian sauces for macaroni ; upon corn on the cob and polenta. Once the regular speed of our carriage slackened ; but, before my imagination had time to rush to the surface and picture what might happen in case it stopped altogether, it had gathered speed and gone on.

An object rushed by us in the air. It was the other basket, passing on its downward flight. The trip was only half over, then ; I thought we had gone farther than that ! And now the Lieutenant removed his eyes from mine and began to cast cool glances to right and left. I had a secondary terror at this moment for fear he would ask me to view the scenery, and I should not have the moral courage to refuse. But he put no such test to my nerve. He let his eyes jump back to mine and continued to talk on food, drink and good cheer.

I was facing forward ; and, though I kept my gaze fixed on his, I could not help seeing what was behind him. That grey cliff seemed to be moving nearer.

Would it ever arrive? It crept and crept. Now it seemed I could have reached out and picked a bunch of sage-grey lichen which hung just behind the Lieutenant. And now there was a little jar as the wheels ran over a brace like a trolley pole. We were travelling across the snowcap at the top of the cliff. I became aware for the first time that my fingers were cramped from clutching the rail of the basket.

With the good, solid earth again under us, we trudged a mile or so across an upland plateau.

All in a burst we had come from the tree-growth of timber-line to a place as devoid of life as the moon; from a temperate winter to an Arctic winter. We could not see the higher peaks from here, for round shoulders of mountains cut them off. There was not even the relief of snow-shedding crags. It was all a gigantesque, rolling, tumbling field of white. The day had come off bright and even warm; as we walked, the easy perspiration of the mountains started on our skins so that we shed our overcoats. The sky above seemed to have changed from the heavenly Alpine blue, which we had been marking with joy at the lower levels, to a cruel slate-grey. The diamond points on the snow began to beat on our unaccustomed eyes, so that, on the advice of our Lieutenant, we slipped the orange-tinted goggles down from our grey knitted caps.

And now the Lieutenant, born Alpinist that he is, began to grow epic in his enthusiasm at finding himself

once more above timber-line—the world of his youthful adventures and his long night-watches under the stars. When he was a boy, he said, he used to climb as far up as man dares to go alone, with two days' provisions and some books in his knapsack ; and up there he used to study and dream. He had first read our English poets, he had first acquired his passion for Shakespeare, here on the higher levels. Over yonder—we should see it presently—was a peak which his party had been first to scale and to name.

We were approaching a shaft-house. Again, as the orderlies packed me into the basket, I must shut my imagination and control my breath.

Any soldier will tell you that the second time under fire is more trying than the first. I found that the same rule holds of *telefericas*. Moreover, this was longer than the first flight, and, as I learned later—I did not look to see—somewhat higher. It seemed, at the end, that the cliff would never crawl down to me. But the Lieutenant knew all this, and—tactful man—he sprang the best device in his bag of tricks, brought up his heaviest gun.

He got me to talk about myself !

He asked me what I had written ; and I wallowed in shameful egotism. Then, somewhere at about the height above-ground of all but the tallest skyscrapers, he switched the conversation to English poetry. Did I like Shelley ? A friend of his had translated “ The Sensitive Plant ” into Italian—and had kept the music of the original.

Listen ! And he quoted a few lines in sonorous, rolling Italian. Did I know Shakespeare's Sonnets ? And, taking my cue from that, I spouted :

*“ Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love——”*

(If you fell four hundred and fifty feet, would you be dead before you arrived ? The theory to that effect seemed worthy of a passionate adherence)

Which alters when it alteration finds,

(Anyway, if you hit soft snow, you wouldn't be so messy as though you hit a concrete pavement. It might be a *gentle* thump.)

Or tends with the remover to remove.

(Still, if there were rock-pinnacles under that snow—good night !)

The cliff rushed to us, rushed under us ; we were travelling again across a snowy ridge. That, as it happened, was the day after the Shakespeare tercentenary. In all the three hundred years of our ever-living poet, I doubt if he was ever quoted under such circumstances !

There were more flights to follow, but I was growing inured ; and I dared occasionally to look down. Once we passed 50 feet above a trail. The men of a mule

train stopped to gaze up at us. I could catch the glint of white teeth in their open, gaping mouths. After the heights we had already shot, this 50 feet did not seem to disturb me at all. Yet had we been dumped out there we should have died as suddenly and as thoroughly as though we had been dropped from 450 feet. Of all human emotions, I dare say, none not even love is so illogical as fear.

Now I have described this Arctic landscape as lifeless, but that is reckoning without the army ; for all the way up, even before we abandoned the mules, we had been getting glimpses of a wonderful organization, trafficking back and forth, doing in orderly fashion a hundred diverse things. Sometimes, as you stood in a bowl of the mountains, the trails seemed alive with crawling men and mules.

It kept reminding me of that old rush to Leadville in '79, when all the adventurers of the Western world packed up and climbed across the snow to death or treasure. Only in those old days of the Rockies the crowds were colourful and picturesque : flaming cowboy bandannas flashed at you along the trails ; rumbling old stage-coaches stuck beside you in the mud ; there were jingling silver spurs, carved Mexican hatbands, and the crude finery of frontier women. Here all was sober olive-grey. At one point a gang of soldier labourers dug a new road with pick and crowbar and blasting powder. At another a gang cleared, with

heart-shaped shovels, the way through an old road that had been smothered in an avalanche.

Once, in this day's wanderings or the next, I saw along a white mountain-side a long string of men, looking like flies gathered on a sugared cord. When I put the glasses on them, I found that they were dragging a gun, mounted on sledges. Up they went, making almost imperceptible progress, across a slope on which a man could scarcely stand without the help of steps. Everywhere were trains of mules packed with explosives, with shells, with food, with clothing, with that variety of supplies which civilized men need to live and fight in the Arctics of the Temperate Zone, lurching along the edges of the precipices.

You could see here the organization of an army as by diagram; you cannot see it so in flat country like Belgium or French Flanders. You understand why, for every ten men on the firing-line, a hundred are working behind, and why the man behind is more important sometimes than the man on the line.

The organization seemed to my inexperienced civilian eyes a perfect thing. I could notice no hitches anywhere, no leisurely methods, no undue haste, and no jams in the traffic. Everywhere, even to the Roof of Armageddon, I was to find the men well fed, well equipped, lacking no necessity. I remarked this to a Florentine captain I met somewhere up on the higher mountain levels, adding that the Germans, so proud of

their teamwork, should see what the Italians had done.

“Ah!” said my Florentine. “This efficiency of which the Germans are so proud—it is an attempt to conquer by mediocrity. It cannot be done. The one thing always better than efficiency—it is genius!”

He should know, this Florentine, having sprung from the little town which produced more genius in two centuries than many great nations in their whole history!

By mule, by *teleferica*, and by legs, we came at last to that point among the mountains where there was safety from avalanches, where many troops were gathered, and where we were to make our start against the glacier. We were near the higher peaks now, those grey pinnacles that shoot up above the very ice fields. To this point, as I have said, only the most hardy and expert mountaineers came in winter before the war; and they seldom and as a kind of special feat. Even in summer it was too hard and high a climb for the mountain goatherds; they kept their flocks lower down. Except for Alpinists, the only large form of higher animal life that put foot or hoof on the solitudes was the wild chamois. Shy though he be, that brave courser of the crags has not abandoned his peaks to the armies. He is still hiding and dodging, even among the batteries. Now and then an Alpine infantryman brings one down with his service rifle, and there is a feast at headquarters.

It was melting a little now, and along the path to

camp we even trod on mud. But this path must have run across a ridge ; for just behind it a soldier, starting a piece of military work, was boring through the snow, looking for a foundation. He ramméd and ramméd ; and his steel went down for 6 or 7 feet before it rang on rock.

Men were coming our way—at first a group of officers, who greeted us after the fashion of the Italian Army, by saluting and giving their names ; and then straggling files of soldiers, who had turned out from the bunk-sheds to view this unparalleled spectacle—civilians !

They might have been Gurkhas or Apache Indians, for their complexions. That glare of sun on snow, which was turning my own face a feverish lobster-red, had tinted them not only brown but almost black. The North Italian is not especially dark ; there are as many grey-eyed men among the Alpini as brown-eyed—as many brown-haired men as black-haired. But the sun spares no complexion on the roof of the world.

The camp was like other camps ; it is better that I should not describe it. Here, as elsewhere in the real mountains, we saw no aeroplanes. The highest fighting in the Alps is almost at the extreme possible elevation of flight ; the aviator who dared it would merely skim the peaks and passes, an easy target.

While we stood there, imparting news from Rome and General Headquarters, a company of soldiers with packs on their backs and ice clamps over their shoulders raced down a snowy decline into camp. They were frolicking

like boys—snowballing, washing one another's faces, coming on by great, vaulting leaps.

"They are just back from the trenches," said the officer in command.

Now I had seen many men of many armies "just back from the trenches," and the contrast here struck me at once. The others had shown the strain in pinched faces and weary movements; but the Alpini came back larking. The men of these peaks, fighting not only the enemy but Nature, weary leagues and heights away from civilization, are the most cheerful warriors I have seen in Armageddon. Why, I cannot guess—unless it be the nobility bred of the mountains.

When we had finished luncheon, which a sergeant cooked for us over a spirit-stove, our lieutenant inspected the kit and equipment of his little command and issued orders. Our great steel-barred Alpine boots were wet in spite of the thorough greasing Giacomo had given them that morning. It is hard to keep dry feet in thawing weather. Those boots must be greased again. We must put on two fresh pairs apiece of heavy woollen socks. Our big double sweaters, our masklike knitted caps and our long woollen mittens had come up in our knapsacks by *teleferica* and soldier-back. Another squad of soldiers would carry them and our overcoats up to the point where we might need wraps badly.

"It is warm enough now," explained the Lieutenant; "but you never know. And see!" He pointed upward.

From the higher peaks, in the direction of our course, tufts and whirls of white snow-mist were blowing. "There is wind and a tempest over there," he said.

Then he issued the orders of the day. The mountains rose above us, shoulder on shoulder, to the grey serrated crags which were the peaks. Between two of these crags dropped a kind of pass—an edge of the giant glacier. When we reached it we should be on the eternal ice. A path tracked in the snow ran over the slopes of the ascent until we lost it completely in the distance. All along the way were men; up toward the pass they showed merely as the faintest specks. I noticed after a time that two of these specks were moving downward, and moving fast. I got them with the field glasses. They were ski-runners, cavalry of the mountains, coasting. As I looked, the foremost reached the top of a short slope. He rose with the grace and skim of an aeroplane "taking the air." He soared; he came down in a flurry of snow, and sped on.

Our Lieutenant mentioned that it was not perilous climbing, this. We should not even need the ice clamps, those devices like the spikes of a telephone lineman by which Alpinists make sure their footing on ice. But it was going to be hard work. When we reached the pass we should see. And so, our soldier bearers before and behind, we began the climb—up and up.

On the first level we passed more soldiers just back from trench work—the same larking boys. Always

when I met a detachment of Italian soldiers I used to call out :

“ Who speaks English here ? ”

It seldom failed to bring a response, and usually five or six. Then the English-speaking soldiers would come forward to tell me that they used to work in Buffalo or Dayton or New York or Chicago. However, the Southerner, not the Northerner, is the Italian of the United States ; and when, this time, I gave my hailing call, I scarcely expected a response. But a voice replied in excellent English :

“ I do ! ”

“ Where do you come from ? ” That was the second question in the formula.

“ Leadville, Colorado,” he said. “ I work in the Johnnie Hill Mine.”

Leadville ! I was brought up in that town on the Roof of the Divide ; and all day long these mountains had been recalling to me forgotten vistas of the peaks about Mount Massive.

His name was Joe Rossi. He had worked as a miner in many places, such as Ogden, Salt Lake and Ouray ; but Leadville was the latest foothold in his wandering life. He liked the camp, he said ; he had a good time there. As we squatted in the snow, the rest of the Alpini staring as though trying to catch our strange conversation, he showed himself pathetically eager to talk commonplaces about the old home. We spoke of

how the through train stops at Malta now, and your car goes up to Leadville by a side line; of the new moving-picture shows; of the Elks' Opera House; of Ben Loeb's Pioneer Saloon. He was so avid of conversation about Leadville that he showed up later at my quarters for another talk.

As we pushed on, all our old sins of pipes and cigarettes began to be expiated in our middle-aged hearts. Soldiers climbed past us, a reproach to our feeble legs and lungs; more soldiers were coming down. We struck a very steep slope, where we must set our spiked boots carefully into the slippery trail. And here we were forced to dodge suddenly in order to escape a squad coasting without sleds. They had simply drawn their army overcoats between their legs, sat down, and let themselves go. They would coast thus until the speed grew dangerous, when they would turn their course into the loose snow, bring up half-buried, rise, shake themselves and start again. Our lieutenant yelled out something in emphatic Italian to the effect that the King, not they, had paid for those breeches; but before he finished they were out of hearing.

So we struggled on, the easy perspiration bathing our bodies. Hiatt was doing better than I, being younger and less guilty of cigarettes. Constantly he drew away from me. With that Anglo-Saxon instinct which makes of every sport a contest, I would force myself until I could go no farther; would stop; would droop over

my alpenstock and pant like a netted fish. Always the Lieutenant was holding me back, and at last he came down sharply.

“I command here!” he said. “You must wait. We have come up more than two thousand metres since morning. The heart has to accommodate itself. I can take up invalids, even people with defective hearts, if they go slowly enough. You shall not advance until long after you have finished panting.”

We seemed very near the summit of the pass now; yet each time we surmounted a ridge there was another before us. The tempest was still raging above, whirling swift snow-clouds from the peaks. And, as we looked forward, we had a strange illusion. It seemed that we were crawling to the edge of a caldron, and that the speeding mists were not snow-clouds, blown horizontally, but fumes rising from the depths of the great kettle beyond.

When, at last, we had thrown ourselves on to a sled which happened to be standing at the summit of the pass; when the ski men of our escort had bundled us in our double sweaters, our coats and our long mittens, there seemed, at first, but little to see. We were looking simply on a snow-field with a snowstorm sweeping it; here and there we could catch the rise of a grey rock pinnacle. Also, as the snow flew and settled at the mercy of the wind, we could catch glimpses through the glasses of spots where the Italians had set their trenches,

or of incredible positions they had already taken and passed. Those positions looked very near; but to reach them, our escort informed us, would take many hours. Even then it would be an uncertain venture in such weather for soft civilians.

We spoke to our Lieutenant about trying again on the morrow; strangely, considering his sportsman's enthusiasm for making records with his correspondents, he remained unenthusiastic. At the time, I was a little puzzled. However, we had seen Italian front trenches on the Isonzo, and as we considered our condition of heart and lungs, we grew reconciled. After all, we said to ourselves, we were the first civilians to reach this place since the war began. We did not know the truth until later. Three days before, an Italian moving-picture operator had reached not only the glacier but the front trenches. The swashbuckler of the camera is the adventurer without peer in these modern days.

The Adamello, spreading over a hundred square kilometres, is one of the great glaciers of the world. Now it has become a battlefield, the strangest on which man ever fought. I can give no better idea of its conformation than this homely comparison: Heap up a panful of loose, jagged, splintered rock, with many of the splinters sticking up in the air, and pour over it a pailful of white glue. The glue will settle, before it

hardens, into the spaces between the rock points ; and here and there it will pour over the edge of the pile. The splinters of rock are the glacial peaks ; the glue is the eternal ice ; the points of overflow are the passes, like the one which we had reached.

Underfoot it looked like a snow-field, no different from the others we had been traversing. However, the Lieutenant pointed to a spot, revealed now by a rift of the storm, where a series of glass-green cracks broke the flat surface. This was ice, Arctic and eternal.

“Crevasses,” he said ; “that is why we go roped together in Alpine work. Those crevasses will open unexpectedly under your feet, and if you are not roped to your party you cannot get out.”

We rested, shivering under our double sweaters and our heavy ulsters. And when our hearts grew accustomed to the new altitude there were more climbing and some perilous scrambling, until at last, with little force left in us, we reached the gun—at that period the highest, probably, in Armageddon.

Concerning this piece of artillery and its surroundings I may not write in detail ; courtesy and the censorship forbid. How the Artillery Reservists got it up to the glacier by sheer man-power—sometimes advancing only a hundred yards a day, sometimes stopped by a blizzard, sometimes following new roads blasted out by expert Italian dynamite workers from our Pennsylvania mines

—that will make a great story when the war is done. To draw it within killing range of the Austrians, many a brave man had died in the avalanches.

The crew, quartered not far away, had all the comforts one could expect in Arctic conditions. Their avalanche-proof hut was built for compactness ; in their bunks they lay like sardines. A caldron of sausages and potatoes was cooking for dinner, and the captain insisted on brewing tea, seasoned with condensed milk. An English-speaking soldier greeted us at the door—but he had learned our tongue in Australia.

However, the thing I remember best about the gun is the leaving of it. As we scrambled down, beyond sight of the glacial field, the storm increased. The gun was a black blotch against a background of whirling, drifting white. And on its breech stood a soldier singing—singing with full voice, into the teeth of the blizzard, a gay love-ballad of Naples.

Though we did not see the advanced trenches, save at a distance and through a storm, we learned here and elsewhere something of the life out there. Of course in terrain like this a continuous trench line is impossible. With a choice of positions which only a military engineer would understand, the belligerents have laid trenches, sometimes only a few hundred yards long, between this pair of peaks, that set of crevasses. The opposing trenches seem nowhere to come very close together, as they do often on the Isonzo, in Flanders, or along

the Aisne. From three to six hundred yards is a good average distance, I judge.

They have built the trench parapets of sandbags ; but even before the bags are set the barricades become snow trenches, what with the continual drift. The men live like Eskimos in an igloo, but without fire—though they have plenty of warm clothing, white for protection against enemy observation, and certain other rough comforts. Frozen feet, I may say, seem rarer here than in the lowlands. However, cold takes its toll of life in another way. A wounded man, because of lowered vitality, often freezes to death before they can get him out.

Though there are no fires for warmth, they use a little device adapted from the Japanese, to produce heat without flame. The suggestion, I believe, came from an Italian woman who has travelled in the Orient. This serves for hot tea. Also to points easy of access hot dinners come up in those giant vacuum bottles which I have described before. Otherwise the food is cold, but plentiful and heat-making. The ration includes a half-litre of wine a day.

When the great winter snowstorms rage over the glacier, they blot out all sight of landmarks. One might pass within a rod of his camp and never find it. However, the Italians have methods, not here to be described, for finding one's way in the blizzards. Still, men sometimes get lost. Once a party of four was found on the

Adamello roped together and frozen to death—only one of them wounded. Sometimes, again, the weather and the state of military operations have cut off a trench or an advanced post from all touch with the rear.

Somewhere in this sector of the Alps, they told me, a detachment was isolated for forty days. All that time they lived Eskimo-fashion, on accumulated provisions, and fought like devils. They were only a few miles from the comforts of the base and only a few more from their homes in the valley below; yet they might have been fighting at the Pole. Sometimes in that period the thermometer fell as far as 41° Fahrenheit, below zero. Yet they held the position and were relieved in the end.

When we emerged from the pass, on our return, we stepped at once from winter to spring. In two minutes of walking we felt the atmosphere change from arctic to temperate. Behind us, on the field of the glacier, the snow still whirled, while before us the sun was shining bright and hot in a cloudless sky. And now we could sit on a snow-bank and enjoy a view that not two men a year ever saw before this war, so perilous and difficult was the ascent to the Adamello—the winter-covered peaks of the Alps from above.

I do not know why I try to describe it. Some things are beyond words; when you look for the appropriate descriptive phrases you achieve only bombast. Far, far below us lay like a diagram on white paper the

advanced base from which we had climbed. Before was a forest of peaks, ghost-white except for the grey pinnacles of stratified, pipe-organ rock. They stretched away, roll and rise after roll and rise, even to stately Mont Blanc, crowned now with the only clouds in this prospect. Although we were a little lower than the highest of these crags which are famous Alpine peaks, we seemed, by the illusion of distance, to be gazing down on them.

It appeared all white and grey as we first looked, our minds vibrating with the inexpressible. Then there came out the colour of it. That white wall just before us, across the fathomless valley, was already in the shadow of the lowering sun. It was not white, but violet-blue. Bluer still were the snowy eminences in the far distance. From behind the many-pronged peak in the near distance a light mist was rising. It was pale, yellowish green, like a tint which tinges sometimes the shallows of a tropical ocean. A glacier hooded a long crest in the middle distance. That glacier below our feet seemed all flat white. This one in the distance was of the same glittering drab grey as the sides of a military balloon—it looked like a deep-sea slug lying there out of its element.

And, even if you forgot the troops of men, crawling up and down everywhere as far as you could see man, the prospect no more appeared lifeless. It was not only the ravens, followers of battles, which soared and called

above. It was not only the streams, beginning to break out here and there through the snow. There was a sense of life dwelling and bursting underneath it all—life which was going to conquer when the lordly sun entered into his kingdom of summer.

So we walked and rolled and slid back to the camp. Our Lieutenant taught us the Alpine trick of descending slopes in loose snow—jump and slide on the trail until you find yourself going too fast, then turn aside and check yourself in a snow-bank. Heights whose ascent had taken weary hours we negotiated in minutes. Wrapped in every garment we had, and then tucked into wool-lined bags, we slept under a hut on a shelf of rock. Once, Alpini going forward awakened us by their singing, and once we heard the reverberation of guns.

I woke and packed not without apprehension of the *teleferica*. I had learned by now that I was not alone in my dislike of that device. Alpini officers had confessed to me that they preferred shell-fire to “the damned thing.” As one of them put it, in very good London English, “I don’t mind any height so long as my feet are on ground ; it’s getting them off ground that bothers you.” It struck me, too, that a descent, where you would feel yourself flying out into the empyrean, might be more trying than an ascent. But when we came out at daybreak into an overcast morning, our lieutenant informed us that we should walk down.

“The *teleferica* will be rather busy,” he said. This—though descent in such weather involved avalanche-dodging—gratified me; but it puzzled me also. Suddenly, rumours I had heard from the men, together with the Lieutenant’s easy renunciation of his designs on the front trenches, matched with this fact in my mind. An attack was coming. Our friend the Commander, energetic soldier that he was, intended to start the fighting-season early. That was the reason for the heavy transport through which we toiled the day before. As we breakfasted and made our packs, the signs multiplied. Not the least of these was the subdued determination of the officers when we bade them good-bye.

With short intervals when we trudged across a high plateau, we seemed to be threading precipices all the way. The transport had increased during the night; everywhere we quarrelled for footholds with the mule-trains. Once they caught us in a ticklish position—a train loaded with high explosive on one side of the road, a precipice on the other. We had to walk cannily, here and there edging round the nervous rump of a mule. We were past this, were walking for a space on free road, when I remembered with a start that some one had called out to me :

“Look out, kid! That mule of mine has got a punch in both feet!” Often the sound of your native speech in a foreign land brings no immediate surprise, so natural does it seem at first.

There were avalanches, too, hanging from the crags, ready at any moment to let go their hair-triggers. One road criss-crossed with a dozen turns down the face of a mountain almost perpendicular ; the snow-rifts in the grooved cliff which made its summit appeared fairly to shake and tremble. We travelled fast ; and the drivers of a mule-train, going up, lashed their beasts the while they eyed that summit. Below us, a waterfall had just begun to thaw out ; its first spring waters were running over a gigantic icicle, and a skylark circled up, filling the gorge with music, until he came level with our eyes. But the snow still held in the runways at the summit.

As we reached the plateau below this slope and escaped from the menace of hanging snow, we met an officer, a slim, classic-featured little subaltern who wore his uniform like a Roman dandy and sported a gold bracelet, from which dangled his identification-badge and a jewelled luck-charm, formed like a twisted carrot, against the Evil Eye. He had just climbed from the valley-base ; he was going forward to the attack, he told us. I have forgotten exactly how many hours and minutes the journey had taken ; but the record, when he gave it, caused our Lieutenant to stare and apostrophize the twenties, "when a man can do anything with his body."

"No one killed in the avalanches yesterday," he reported, speaking French out of courtesy, "but they got five mules. The drivers swam out."

“That’s the only way to escape from an avalanche,” said our Lieutenant as the boy saluted and went on—“swim. Throw yourself face down and swim the breast-stroke against it as hard as you can. If you go with it, or if you just struggle, you’re dead.” So we trudged on to the base of the *teleferica* and the mules.

That night after dinner our Lieutenant informed us that we must return to General Headquarters alone. “I have business here for a few days,” he said. I guessed the business; but it was Giacomo who made conjecture certain.

He was unwinding my puttees that night when he said in French :

“*Pardon, monsieur*, is my master going back with you ? ”

“No,” I said, over-bluntly, “he is staying here for a few days.”

Giacomo stood still, a puttee trailing from his hand.

“*Per Dio—per Bacco !*” he said ; and then, gripping his French again, “that means a fight—a very big fight ! ”

Three days after we reached Headquarters, the news came from the communiqués : in the zone of the Adamello, the Alpini, by a series of daring manœuvres, had taken five pinnacles. A fortnight later, I heard from our Lieutenant. “It was glorious ! ” he wrote ; “my commander’s attack was worthy of Garibaldi. I

am alive not by one miracle but by many, and we are three kilometres nearer Trent ! ”

* * * * *

The concierge of that flat-house in the Rue St. Martin was severe in looks, as these glorified janitors of Paris usually are. Whenever I passed upstairs to my daily French lesson she seemed to regard me as a burglar. Sometimes a younger woman peered through the lattice where the concierge kept guard, and I noticed two quiet, well-behaved little French boys playing in the area-way with an equally quiet and well-behaved French dog.

Madame, my teacher, upstairs, used to laugh at the suspicions of the concierge. “ You are blond, monsieur,” she said ; “ you have much hair, you are foreign, and you wear spectacles. Therefore you are a German spy ! And sometimes they are very deeply distressed,” she added. “ There is much fighting about Arras, and Monsieur the Captain is there.”

“ The Captain ? ” I said.

“ He is a captain now,” she answered. Then she told me the story as though there was nothing unusual about it. In the French army, promotion goes strictly by merit. The son-in-law of the concierge, in peace-time a small clerk in a wholesale cloth house, had entered the war a private in the Reserve. He had won his sergeant’s chevrons at the battle of the Marne, had become a lieutenant at the Aisne, had risen to be a captain. France is full of such stories ; men of humble station and

small talents for the occupations of peace have everywhere discovered talent for war ; and the French army recognizes and encourages talent wherever found.

The younger woman was his wife, come to live with her mother, the concierge, in this period of stress ; the two little boys were his children. After this I regarded the concierge with more interest ; and by and by, having learned that I was only a *monsieur Américain*, she unbent. We used to discuss the war, and she told me herself about her son-in-law who was a captain. Plainly, she was as proud of him as though he had been her own son.

One day, after we had established acquaintance, the concierge barely spoke as she opened the window. There was a shade over her.

“ Has anything happened to the concierge ? ” I asked madame. Madame’s own soldier was still in Reserve, issuing clothing at Lyons. It was not unkind, therefore, to speak of casualties.

“ Nothing—perhaps,” said madame. “ It is the *communiqué*.” She picked up the copy of *Le Matin* from her work-table and pointed to this passage : “ The enemy made an attack of moderate violence yesterday in the region of Arras. It was repulsed at all points.”

“ You see, when—anything—anything happens to a soldier,” said madame, “ it is four or five days before the letter of notification comes from the *mairie*. They

know he is at Arras. When they hear of fighting there—figure for yourself ! ”

Three or four days passed ; spirits and life came back to the concierge and her daughter. Nothing had arrived from the *mairie*. I took to watching the *communiqués* myself for that word “ Arras.” It occurred once again before I left Paris that time ; and again the life went out of that little family group behind the lattice of the concierge.

Two or three weeks later I slipped into Paris again. The concierge greeted me cheerfully. Yes, Monsieur the captain was still “ par Arras.” They had received a letter, full of things very amusing. Soon he might become a major.

The next day the *communiqué* said : “ Yesterday we gained three hundred metres of the enemy’s trenches near Arras.”

I went out of town over Sunday ; and Monday morning I visited again the house in the Rue St. Martin.

No one came to the wicket. I looked inside. The daughter, in black, sat at a desk writing a letter. The concierge, also in black, was standing in the centre of the room. She had sunk her arms on the table and her head in her arms. The two little boys sat up very stiffly on the sofa in the corner, looking with wide and solemn eyes at their grandmother.

I reached through the lattice and opened the door myself. No one noticed me.

CHAPTER VI

BEYOND VERDUN

WE did not perceive the camp of Section 3, American Ambulance Field Service, until we were close upon it ; there was too much to see in the opposite direction. For as we drove rapidly along a road which might get a shell-shower at any moment, our military guide, who was also driving the car, pointed and said : “ The Mort-Homme is over there,” and we became aware of a magnificent day-fireworks display. It was a warm, cloudless afternoon, good weather for aeroplane work. The sky above that distant, peaceful-looking ridge kept spawning lines and groups of little sudden, round clouds, which dissipated themselves only to be succeeded by other groups of little sudden, round clouds. You would put the glasses upon them and make out, somewhere near the centre of this disturbance, an aeroplane going calmly about its business. Sometimes it would lean sidewise and shift its position before it resumed its soaring. These near-by puffs were snow-white against the blue sky—French anti-aeroplane shrapnel. But the glasses revealed other and darker puffs in the distance—German

shrapnel bombarding French planes. Where it was untouched by man, the landscape rolled away as sweet and gentle as anything France knows—grassy ridges, hill forests of soft green underbrush, chequer-boarded farms. In places, however, it was horribly creased by grotesque military works; and here and there stained, battered military transport raised white dust along the roads. The guns were going in a lazy afternoon bombardment on three directions of the horizon; and far before us a black geyser spurted up now and then from the fall of a big shell.

“There they are!” said Piatt Andrew, the Big Boss of the American Ambulance sections at the Verdun front. Andrew had by chance wet his lips a moment before; they shone out red from his dust-caked face, giving the effect of a clown make-up.

We had brought up on the edge of a rolling meadow bordered by a wood. Parked at the edge of the trees were a score of little American Ford automobiles; in the foreground stood all the paraphernalia of a camp. There was a whoop from the tent, and half a dozen men in khaki came running toward us. They had the eager American face, contrasting oddly with the keen but sober French face which we had been seeing all day as we ran through the dunnage of the army. Another group detached itself from a knot in the grass. A form which seemed somehow familiar emerged from among them. This man—built, body and face, like a little

battleship—had varied the regulation uniform by a very torn and spattered football jersey, and an old pair of golf-stockings. I had seen him before in similar clothes—where? It came back: breaking the Yale line. It was Ralph Bluthenthal, the old Princeton All-American centre.

“Say, you fellows!” yelled Bluthenthal, “how did the boat-race come out?”

It was their hour of ease, at the end of ten days such as no American Ambulance section had endured yet, and I dread to think what a strict inspection-officer would have had to say about their uniforms. Price wore a very torn old yellow sweater over his khaki shirt. He had removed his puttees—“to give his legs a chance,” he said—and pulled up a pair of grey-wool soldier stockings to the edge of his military breeches. Others, also, had abandoned puttees or leggings, and the unbuttoned fringes of their breeches flapped in the breeze. Potter, who had been taking a nap by himself in the woods, came dodging through the bushes. He was clad simply in a hospital bath-robe over a khaki shirt. And every one began to talk all at once, while the guns growled on and the smoke-puffs continued to blossom and fade along the battle-edge of the horizon.

It was ten days or so since the last of our seven American sections, as a compliment to their efficiency and quickness, had been shifted to Verdun. The French put them on different runs; and Section 3, as it turned

out, had drawn probably the most difficult of all—a road of shell-holes and shell-showers, of constant perplexity and danger. They looked tired, drawn, and, for all their native American enthusiasm, a little discouraged.

“If you want to see the marks,” said one of them, “come and look at our car-hospital!”

Four of the little uniform cars, furnished with covered wooden bodies to carry stretchers, stood on the edge of the camp. The first in line had a gaping hole blown through the body just behind the driver's seat. There was another hole in the side; there were little splashy marks all over the tool-chest and running-gear. Wheeler, the driver of this car, led me round to the back. Within, along the runways which hold the stretchers, was a dark-brown stain; a pool of that stain darkened the floor.

“I was changing tires when it came,” he said; “lucky I wasn't in the seat. I heard it whistling, and spread-eagled under the car. Look!” he pointed to a dent in the steel of the tool-box—“I was standing right there before I ducked! I had the tire nearly on. I finished pumping, and started. Then we got that!” He pointed to the hole in the side. “My *blessé* (wounded man) on the top shelf wasn't badly hurt when we started. This peppered him all over, and nearly took off his foot. I drove to the Poste de Secours and we patched him up. Whew!” he concluded. Though none of the other three cars was so badly damaged as this, they were all

battered and spattered with shell-fragments and shrapnel. "And there's one out there," concluded my guide, "which will stay until the end of the war. It's lying beside the road. It was Barber's. He heard the shell coming, and crouched down. It got him in the back." Of Barber I had already learned news that day: they were keeping him at the advanced base-hospital until he could be moved to the care of his countrymen in Paris. He was out of danger; and the French had given him the Military Medal for valour.

Price, who had strolled over to point out the damaged spots on the cars, had a battered nose. It looked as though he'd been in a fight. "Shrapnel just shaved it," he said, "I paid four hundred dollars last year to get that nose fixed up, and it's a dead loss. That wasn't all. I got a ball in the book in my left breast pocket. It ought to have been a Testament, of course. But it wasn't. It was my passport and military papers!"

The camp cook shouted "Singe!" just then. "Singe" means "monkey," and is the slang term in the French army for beef stew. We adjourned to the shadow of the cook-tent for the field-rations of a French soldier—hot stew, red wine in tin cups, and brown soldier bread. As we sat eating, reminiscence began to flow, and the mood of the section became plain. They had been through ten days in the hardest corner of the Verdun sector. They had been working all night and every night at a job which involves, as I was to learn later,

intense concentration and nervous strain. Even by day there was no certain rest. At any time the call "*Blessés* up the road!" might rout them from sleep. Those day excursions, however, never took them far up the road toward the gory Meuse. You approach the lines with an ambulance only by night, when the aeroplanes and artillery cannot "spot" you.

So the conversation waxed pessimistic. "There's the *blamedest* place on that road," said one: "whew! the dead horses! One of them's lying half across the road on one side; and just past it Barber's car cuts in on the other. There's a shell-hole there, too. You have to do gymnastics to get by without jouncing your *blessés*. I wonder how many new shell-holes they'll have waiting for us to-night?"—"I was there when they hit those horses," said another; "you should have heard the poor things ramping and squealing!" Then they all came in, strophe and anti-strophe. "When I start back from the town, I just take a long breath—all right so far. But next it's that corner where they got the horses, and then it's that corner of wood where there's almost always shrapnel; and then——" "They landed one before the Poste de Secours just after I passed last night. You ought to have heard it on the cobblestones!" "Shrapnel hit the body of the car. When I could get to shelter I took a look inside. The top *blessé*—he wasn't a bad case—said: 'If you get this all the time I think I'll stay in the trenches.'" "And

gas! Two of the fellows were sick for two days with it last week. But I'd rather get the old sophisticatin' than that tear-producing stuff." "And you can't wear a gas-mask and run a car. It fogs, so you don't see the road."

Now all this time the "aerial activity" was going on above that shoulder of earth which screened from view the Mort-Homme. In the intervals of conversation you would look up to note that the little round clouds were swarming thick, here and there. In the foreground, French infantrymen, loaded like pack-mules, were trudging soberly on their way to the front position; and the skylarks kept rising, and singing their hearts out as they rose.

Suddenly, some one called sharply behind me:

"What's that? a signal?—No, an aeroplane's down!"

From the sky above the horizon, a long, black, inverted-cone of smoke was reaching toward the earth. At its point fell a dark-red flame, whirling like a pin-wheel. It passed out of sight behind the rise of the hill—all was over. Close by the base of the cone was another speck, shooting rapidly and at an acute angle toward the earth. We recognized the sharp volplane of a little fighting *appareil de chasse*. We got the glasses on it; it was a French machine, and the story of this daily war tragedy was complete. The Frenchman had engaged the German in air and brought him down with a machine-

gun. The bullets had pierced the petrol-tank or snapped the propeller, probably. When that happens, the machine breaks instantly into fire.

Now a group of us sat down on the grass, smoking and chatting of the close race in the American Baseball League—I had fresh news about that—of the chances in the boat-race, of summer in Paris, and even of politics. We were waiting for the French Lieutenant in charge of the section, who had gone for the night's orders. The Section remarked, in passing, that he was the finest officer in the French army; and the Lieutenant afterwards told me that he had the finest Ambulance section in the world. Plainly no one anticipated those orders with any joy; and I, billeted to go out with them and infected with their mood, grew pessimistic myself, indulging in reminiscences of close shaves.

Suddenly, from the door of the sleeping-tent came a sharp American cheer. The rest of the section had gathered about the Lieutenant. "We're relieved, fellows," cried some one as we came running up, "the division is going to the rest station to-night, and we go with them!" We cheered too. But the Lieutenant had not finished. "A moment, gentlemen," he said, holding up his hand: "the French section which replaces you to-night is somewhat new to the district. They may need two or three of you as guides. Who will volunteer?"

There was an instant, just an instant, of hesitation.

Then a hand went up, then every man of them raised his hand. And I, their fellow-countryman, was proud. Some one, in the joy of the rebound, picked up a baseball. The section scrambled for gloves and bats; and before we pulled out, "three-old-cat" was going on merrily while the shrapnel-clouds broke and dissipated themselves on the horizon, while the black puffs of exploding shells shot up on the distant hill, while the guns growled everywhere. And a French regiment, trudging seriously on the road to the shell-pits of the forward line, grew suddenly animated as they exchanged speculation on what those curious Americans might be doing.

So we bowled along, through a world of new ruins and shell-pits and complicated military transport, to the next section, where we would be sure to see work that night. And here let me break the narrative to tell about our ambulance men at the front.

There is the American Ambulance at Neuilly, just outside the gates of Paris, the hospital de luxe of the French medical establishment. "Ambulance" is a French word for hospital and an English word for a hospital car; so that the hospital has been somewhat confused in the public mind with the American Ambulance Field Service, which is up at the line, bringing back the freshly wounded from the dressing-stations to the zone of safety. Though the Field Service uses the hospital grounds at Neuilly for a base, the two organizations are separate. Besides this organization, two

sections under the Red Cross, known as the Norton and Harjes, operated last summer at Verdun with equal efficiency.

The work began with one little section, and grew as more men volunteered, as more cars came in, and as the French learned that we meant business. By 1916 there were five sections of twenty-five working cars each, incorporated into the French hospital establishment, attached regularly to corps and divisions.

Until May, the sections were scattered from the Vosges mountains—where Hall was killed on Christmas Eve of 1915—to the Somme. Being mostly of the sporting Anglo-Saxon breed, they had gone out for records. Once, an American driver found a captain of the medical staff in great perplexity. "I can't account for those twenty-five *blessés*," he kept muttering to himself. "Pardon me, sir," said the American, "aren't they the twenty-five we moved down a few minutes ago?" "Impossible," said the officer.

At another point occurred a bomb raid. The section was asleep when an officer telephoned them to report at the scene of trouble. "Well, well, gentlemen!" said the officer when they arrived, "you have happened in most opportunely. As a matter of fact, I had just telephoned to you. What luck!" "We know it," said the section; "we got your message, and here we are." "You devils of Americans!" said the officer, "you seem to anticipate orders!" Indeed, this same

section had the honour of being quarrelled over—two rival bodies of French troops wanted it, and wanted it badly.

I shall not let the eagle scream too loudly over all this. The ambulance men would be the last to claim that they are enduring any such chances of death or glory as their countrymen of the Foreign Legion and the Flying Service, or the plain French *poilu*. All races of men are about equally brave; also there is individual efficiency everywhere. But Americans do have, above most races, the qualities of individual speed, of initiative, and perhaps of self-reliance. Moreover, these boys are volunteers, and pioneer volunteers are always the cream of any organization.

Characteristically, they are American university men. Harvard is by all odds the most largely represented. Princeton comes second, with Yale a close third. Some of the members are "just out," and some quit college mid-course to help France. However, there are exceptions. Bartlett admits that he is forty-seven; he left villa-life in Italy to help France. So did the mature Emery Pottle. On the other hand, one of them, of whom I shall tell more later, is just out of St. Paul's preparatory school. There is in each corps a director, who runs about in an open car overseeing the job or straightening out tangles, and one or two mechanics who tinker at the bases or make repairs on the road. Most of these mechanics knew more about Greek

roots, when they enlisted in the Ambulance service, than about the inside of a motor-car.

They have grown intimate with the French, whose manners make them easy of approach, and they enjoy immense popularity both with the officers and the plain *poilu* of the trenches. A general told me with the tears starting in his eyes that no one who had seen them work could help loving America. One night Dodge of Section 8 lost his way. He found himself in the midst of a regiment just from the trenches after a terribly vicious attack. They crowded round him, chattering. Dodge admits that he is a little weak on French; and they talked so fast, and with so much trench slang, that he did not understand until one stepped forward to address him in English. "Monsieur," he said, "my comrades want to shake your hand. We all know and appreciate what you ambulanciers are doing for us!" So Dodge, a little embarrassed, had to sit there and grasp horny, trigger-calloused hand after horny, powder-marked hand—a reception under the guns on behalf of the nation and the Ambulance. Let me not go too far with all this. The Americans have only about two hundred working cars on the line, even when the sections are full—which they usually are not, owing to the eccentricities of high explosive shell. The French hospital service as a whole has thousands of cars. But still, our boys are doing their bit.

In early June this work got its recognition. The

American service, all seven sections, was gathered up and sent to Verdun, where the running was desperately hard, where to get the wounded out of a sector in which a shell might fall at any time on any spot took not only courage but self-reliance and quick thinking. One and all, the sections admitted to me that any work they ever did before was a holiday beside this.

Now, as we scooted through the long twilight of this Northern latitude, the guns were getting more lively. I noticed that we had begun to enter the wreck of a town, and noticed it only casually. During our run, we had passed so many houses ruined by the old violence of the early German retreat and the new violence of this battle that gaping holes, spattered plaster, outbuildings which rose like gaunt slivers, seemed the normal state of human habitation. But suddenly Andrew said :

“ VERDUN ! ”

It lay bowled out below us ; we were in the suburbs. And for an instant, as we shot past, it seemed to me that the stories of ruin had been exaggerated. For a church on a rise near-by still had its steeple ; and farther away the twin towers of the cathedral rose intact. Only this revealed it for what it was—dust. Every street was marked, between the houses, by a streak of grey mist. It was that same dust of ruins which so plagued San Francisco and Messina after their great disasters, here stirred up by such transport as still uses Verdun. We were past the glimpse of the city, we were running

down the road, when a bang like a giant firecracker sounded in our ears. That was not in itself so alarming ; the guns all about were making far more noise. But a wind seemed to strike us in the face, and at the roadside just ahead a crater of dust and dirt was settling. I never saw a great, high-power car stop so suddenly as we stopped. Our expert at the wheel worked his levers violently and backed out to a cross-roads where he turned into another passage, just as a firecracker sound came from behind us. At top speed, we dashed away from the city of Verdun by another route from that which we had intended to take.

There followed, shortly afterward, a perturbing episode. All the way up from Paris, our left rear wheel had been misbehaving. Near Châlons, it had blown out a tire and burned up an inner tube ; and now, at a point just behind a very loud and active battery of big guns, the tire went flat again. The guns boomed and blew everywhere as we four, all more or less inexperienced mechanics, worked jack and levers and pump. Of course we got it in all wrong, and had to begin over again. Piatt Andrew, more learned in the tricks of shells than I—he himself ran an ambulance at the front for six months—listened now and then, and remarked that all was well so far ; the noises were “ departures,” nor “ arrivals.” Arthur Gleason, my companion-reporter, who served his term as a stretcher-bearer at the Yser, agreed with him. The “ arrival ” has a much

slighter if sharper sound, and it is preceded, not followed, by a whistle. We started at last; and we had gone scarcely a kilometre when it happened again. This time there were constant arrivals in a field to one side. They seemed to be breaking two or three a minute. Under direction of our cool military driver, snapping out orders in crackling French, we toiled on. At any moment, I thought pessimistically, the Germans might take a notion to shift their fire a little and try out our road. We had half finished when we discovered a flaw in our last spare tube—it was as useless as the rest. So we decided to tighten up, and run on a flat tire. I remember that I, turning screws with a brace as fast as I could work, dared suggest at this moment that it was what I wanted to do all the time. But to run on a flat tire you must travel a slow pace. We had intended to “make” a certain army headquarters that night, and report officially. This had now become impossible, and we started for the little village where Sections 1 and 8 had their quarters.

By now, we had leisure to look back and behold a spectacle of which we had been getting glimpses all the evening. It was a black, moonless night. To our rear, the Verdun positions were like the edge of a hill-bowl. All along that bowl, illuminating now this glen or hill, now that, something like heat-lightning was playing, flash on flash. At times it lit the whole horizon—a flickering, dancing line of flame. Everywhere, in the

nearer distance, light exactly like the impermanent flashings of near-by fireflies were coming-going, coming-going. The heat-lightning was the guns; the fireflies were the bursting shells. Along the horizon-line, balls of clear white flame would break out and linger for a minute, revealing whole hill-crests before they died. In the further distance these flares seemed to last longer, I thought; and they would float in air a full minute. "The German parachute star-lights," explained Andrew. Now and then, a coloured rocket—red or blue or clear white—would streak the darkness; and always this was followed by a change in intensity of the guns, or would seem to bring them into action in another quarter. As for the sound, it varied from intermittent roars and whips to a continuous roar. Also, as we crept along, feeling our way on a flat tire and without lights, the big guns would suddenly go off from concealed positions on the roadside, making us jump almost out of our seats, in spite of anything we could do to control ourselves. Summing it all up, however, I can find no more dignified comparison than to a fireworks celebration on a monstrous scale of light and noise. Yet, as we learned later, this was a rather quiet evening, as evenings go about Verdun.

It was nearly midnight when we rounded a dark train of baggage-camions and turned up the black street of a little town. A keen young American face peered out at us from a shaded lantern. Yes, the

section was going out just before dawn, he said. What we needed now was sleep. He rummaged round among the blankets. "Mustn't use *blessé* blankets for company," he said; "sometimes they're infected."

We wrapped ourselves up on stretchers; and next, someone was shaking me. There was no light in the heavens yet and the guns were popping and growling. White, with whom I was going out for the night's crop of wounded at a far embrasure, gave me a gas mask. He warned me not to lose it, and not to take off the blue steel helmet which I had put on as soon as we entered the Verdun sector. We had a drink of hot coffee from a vacuum bottle, and cast off. As we felt our way up the road the guns growled louder and louder. Now we were in full sight of the fireworks display; we were running toward it, into it. Dawn began to struggle on the edge of the sky. It revealed a wooded space before us; here and there, the roofs of human habitations showed above the trees; even in that light you could see holes gaping against the dim light. All through that wood, great steely fire-flies were twinkling.

"Shrapnel," said White in his gentle Irish accent. "We call that Dead Man's Corner, and we always dread it." A sentry stepped out just then from a sentry-box of solid concrete, and held his gun horizontally over his head to stop us. He only wanted the pass-word. White whispered it. We shot on, White's neck craned

forward, his eyes and hands alert, and drove straight into that wood of twinkling, metallic lights. As a matter of fact, I do not know whether we "got" any shrapnel or no. When the departures are making a lot of noise, the sound of the dangerous arrivals is nearly drowned. You never know unless you have a narrow escape.

Next, we took the rise of a hill ; and dawn had really begun to break. Everything came out in quarter-light. As we neared the top of the slope, I was aware that a man had stepped out into the road, was holding up his hand in the posture of a traffic policeman. And another thing happened. Above the hills, quite dimming that edge of dawn on the horizon, a coloured rocket arose and burst.

"I think," said White, "that it's the signal for *tir de barrage*." He stopped, jammed his brakes down hard. "There's the battery—where the man stands." It was no farther away than the width of a city street.

There must have been another signal of some kind, for suddenly—it burst. A thousand guns, from every hill and glen and meadow about us, went off all together in one great salvo, and continued to go off in one great roar. It was the deadly curtain-fire, by which the French draw a line of death between the enemy and one of their own charges.

The big guns merely boom, like a gigantic blast in a

quarry. The little *soixante-quinze*—pride of the French army—booms too; but its sound has also a vicious whip like a rifle's. No instrument of destruction in this war gives such an impression of power. Always, it pierces the chorus of the heavier guns, as the note of the first violin pierces that of an orchestra. And that battery before us was of *soixante-quinzes*. Their muzzles, outlined against the dawn sky, belched and shook and belched again, as the fire ran from one to another. In the flashes, we could see the crew, working with monotonous rhythm. The curtain fire had lit the whole horizon; the blaze seemed to flicker and then to run in great waves.

They say it lasted ten minutes. How long I stood it before I plugged my ears, I do not know. It was not so much the sound-waves bursting against my ear-drums which killed my resolution to hear it through, as a curious irritation which it brought—a feeling that if it kept on longer I must do something violent, I knew not what. Then, with the same suddenness, it stopped. There succeeded not silence, but something like it; in the distance, the big guns kept growling as ever—a reluctant continuance of the noise, just as my bull-dog, after a barking fit at a night prowler, will give a series of little, growling barks under his breath. On the cessation of the sound, cylindrical objects began to fly against the dawn-sky from over the muzzles of the guns before us. The battery was throwing out

the hundreds of brass projection-cases emptied by the curtain fire.

White cranked up, and we went on, to a plateau and to a house with a great grotesque hole over its front door. It was the Poste de Secours, where we were to get our orders; Section 1 clears out two dressing-stations near the front line, and the driver is uncertain of his destination until he receives instructions there. We were going to neither post, it appeared; for just as we drew up, a blond, pleasant-appearing little French soldier, with the red cross of a stretcher-bearer on his arm, swung aboard our mud-guard and broke the news that there were *grands blessés* (heavily wounded men) at a cross-roads on the plateau.

It was getting light now; a curve of angry red edged the sky into which we were driving. The ruin of a hamlet, once a suburb of Verdun, shot up a sliver of broken grey stones against this streak of red; and the devastated plateau about us, whose very herbage, in the daytime, looks drooping and sick, was now of a gentle violet-grey colour. It was not light enough, however, but that the giant fireflies which were shells still burst out and died. "I've often thought," said White, who left a Montmartre studio to drive an ambulance, "that I'd like to paint all this. I shan't try, though: I'd be nervous." Now the workings of another sense destroyed all feeling of beauty raised by this dawn-softened picture of battle. We were running

between dead horses. The two nearest were headless ; and they were all swollen, as a dead horse does swell. Nor was that the only smell. Stronger and sharper even, was the stench of chemicals in the air—chemicals from the powder charges of the guns, chemicals from the shells, chemicals from the poisonous gases loosed by the Germans whenever the wind was right. It was these gases which had wilted the herbage.

We were still driving on toward the edge of the plateau ; and I wondered when we were going to stop ; for across that edge, I well knew, were the shell-holes which stood for French and German first-line trenches. Suddenly, we saw a soldier ahead waving at us. We drew up. We were at the cross-roads ; and the wounded, brown army blankets tucked about them, lay waiting in the poor cover of the gutters beside the road. Overhead, what had been a system of suburban telephone lines drooped in a grotesque tangle from a cracked and splintered steel pole. The nearest *blessé* lifted his head. He was a fine-looking blond peasant, about thirty-five years old. He had a pair of very big feet ; as he lay there, the toes turned out to opposite points of the compass. One leg was bandaged from ankle to hip. When he saw us coming, he raised himself on his elbow, and his yellow beard parted in a smile. The perils of the wounded are not always over when the bearers lift them into the ambulance ; but it seems so to them, if they have any capacity for thought left.

They are going back—and alive. “*Qu’il fait bon !*” (Ah, that’s good!) he kept repeating as White, the brancardiers and I lifted him to the top shelf ; and he continued to grin.

The next one, grievously wounded in the body, was past smiles or consciousness of rescue, for the time at least. His eyes were closed, his face was the colour of dirty putty, and he was as plastic to our touch, when we covered him up, as a rag doll.

We finished ; and the ambulance behind us, in which Gleason rode as a passenger, moved up for its load. While White backed up, made sure that his tires were tight and cranked the machine, I looked back toward that angry red dawn, now becoming sunrise. There was a dip in the plateau ; through it I could see the country beyond. Nearest of it all, I marked what looked like a field of deep blue, so deep that it was black in spots. Across it ran three bands of morning mist, coloured an unnatural, sickly yellow. I put the glasses on it ; I could make out no further details, except that the field of dark blue seemed unnaturally humped in places ; also, there was a distant roar from that direction. A French soldier noticed me, and perceived that I was new to Verdun. “The German advanced positions,” he said briefly. And we were off, running toward the hospital as fast as we dared with four heavily wounded aboard.

At the Poste de Secours a sergeant stopped us again.

Following him, as he stepped out on to the road, came four or five men at a weak, clumsy run. They were all bandaged as to heads or arms. "Nine sitting cases," reported the sergeant briefly, as we drew up. The nearest of them clambered on to the mud-guard beside me and asked if he might go along. White glanced at me, and I got the point. They needed my seat for a sitting case. So I jumped down, as did Gleason, to give way to the wounded and to wait for Townsend, director of the section. He had driven on ahead in his open car, to the farthest point at which this section operates—a *boyau* or sunken, covered shelter where an ambulance may find safety while it loads. We draw most of our military terms, eventually, from the French—they are so much neater and more definite than ours. So I shall follow them in calling it a *boyau*. We had been turned aside, as I have said; but we knew that when we failed to arrive Townsend would come back. White, as he pulled out, charged us to stop any outgoing ambulance and send it to the cross-roads. Our two cars had not been enough.

I had best not describe that wait too narrowly, lest I write things of use to the enemy. All about us were hills and fields in their full summer richness, yet looking, even to a casual, sweeping glance, curiously dry and unkempt. From the most unexpected places would come the "bang-bang-bang" of a *soixante-quinze* battery, taking up and dropping the fire. Seldom

could I see the guns themselves, so cleverly were they concealed ; they betrayed themselves only by the noise and, at most, by a light film of smoke. The fire would seem to ripple all about the fields and hills, to die out a little, to increase again. Here and there dust would spirt up from the hills or fields, showing that the Germans were replying. I strolled down the road, for no cover was in sight, and one place seemed as safe as another. I came at last to a battery, which betrayed itself to my sight only when the six guns in succession burst against my ear-drums. At the breeches, the crews were passing shells—loading—firing—passing—loading—firing—with the monotonous rhythm of a gymnastic team. Dramatic snap, efficiency, and nervous force infused all their movements. Those little murderers of guns, their spade-feet dug into the earth by the first explosion, shook all over as with uncontrollable passion, quivered to rest, shook again. Two or three men in reserve sat behind the gun-crew, smoking and watching indifferently. A stretcher-bearer, sent to the rear on some errand, came clumping along the road and stopped beside me to watch. We joined conversation.

“A German shell hit here last week,” he said among other things, “and took the head off a man. He was passing shells when he died. The man in reserve pushed his body away, jumped to the caisson and took his place. The battery missed only two shots.”

I walked back with him to the Poste de Secours. More "sitting cases" had arrived; they crouched weakly against the wall, the lightly wounded smoking, the others seeming to doze. An orderly of the Hospital Corps, holding the end of a bandage expertly between his teeth, was re-dressing a wound. A shell and then two more puffed on a hill near-by, the sound of their explosions lost in the universal roar. By now, what with the hammering at my ear-drums, I was in a curious state of nervous irritation.

Presently, an American ambulance drove up; it was heading toward camp with a load. The driver jumped down, and introduced himself. I had met him last at the Columbia School of Journalism in New York. He took a brief breathing-spell—he had been getting it pretty heavily that morning—before, remarking that it was a long way from Morningside Heights, he swung aboard and started on. Just then, Townsend arrived in his open car with news that there was a load in the *boyau*; and simultaneously two of our cars came up from the base. Gleason and I jumped into the open car and we led the way, past the belt of dead horses to the cross-roads.

At about this time, a great black enemy aeroplane came soaring above that notch in the plateau from which we could see the German lines, and the guns opened, as usual, with shrapnel—more shells than I had ever seen fired at one aeroplane. We were watching

our stretcher-bearers lift the last of the wounded aboard, when Townsend happened to glance upward. The aeroplane with its frame of little smoke-clouds soared exactly overhead. My first thought was that what goes up must come down; and I felt grateful for my steel helmet. On second thought, I wondered if a steel helmet would stop shrapnel falling from three thousand yards. However, Townsend had another apprehension, more alarming and more sensible.

“That Bosche may be marking for batteries,” he said. “He won’t think it worth while to direct a shell at a pair of ambulances; but we’re an open car, and we may be officers, for all he knows. We’d better hurry away.”

Yet hurry was only relatively possible on that terrible imitation of a road down which we were driving, what with its ruts and shell-pits. And whenever I looked up, the aeroplane was still a dot at the zenith, and innumerable white anti-aircraft shells were breaking exactly above. But I think we all forgot the aeroplane in time, through our fascinated interest in that road and its environs. For weeks this region had been torn and re-torn by German curtain-fire. Here was a stage-setting for the Inferno. What trees there were had been stripped bare, or broken off at the root, or splintered; yet with the strange vitality of trees the stumps were putting forth little new leaves, which served only to exaggerate their condition. What herbage there was

drooped sick from the stalk; and no flower bloomed anywhere. In places, it looked as though a shell had fallen on every square yard of ground, so thick were the pits. Dreadful dunnage lay everywhere—as wrecked motor camions, broken wheels, bones, destroyed kit. There stood a wall—no, it had been a house, for you saw the lower part of a window-frame cutting squarely into the wreck. Beside it lay a dead horse. He had been tied to a post when he got his death-stroke. He lay not on his side, but upright on his knees and hocks. Because he was tied, his head had not dropped. He looked, swollen as he was, like a plump family nag which had fallen asleep.

We were in the mouth of the *boyau*. It led to one of the famous advanced forts whose sturdy defence saved Verdun and perhaps our world. From a certain shelter peered a company of soldiers. They were caparisoned for action with steel helmets and fixed bayonets. Under the arch of sand-bags and cement, they looked like a company of mediæval pikemen guarding the castle gate.

Outside, a company on some military mission scurried along with their heads down—the attitude and motion of the trapper on the trail. I became aware, then, that shrapnel was bursting not far away. I grow weary of repeating that the guns were going all the time. There was work to do, however—we must prepare the ambulance which had trailed us in for a load of “stretcher-

cases." Under heavy fire, they sometimes back the ambulance clear into a *boyau*; but this did not seem necessary now. As we walked finally to cover, Townsend waved his hand toward a famous military work and said :

"There was a *boyau* there. One night last week, the big shells outside nearly shook the cars to pieces—actually, we couldn't start one of them until we'd made repairs. Then, when we had our load aboard, we timed the shells. We'd crank up, start the engine, and let her go fast just when the explosion came. We figured to cross the danger zone before the next one arrived. It worked—but if one of us had got stalled in a shell-hole, it would have been all off!"

There was a deep, black chamber at the foot of the *boyau*. By the light of a small lamp two field surgeons were working on a scalp-wound—not pretty this one, but not dangerous either. They paused to ask us for news of the world outside, and went on snipping and stitching. I started toward the rear of the chamber. A weak but cheerful voice from the floor yelled in French, "Step carefully, old man." As my eyes accustomed themselves to the darkness, I saw two more stretcher cases, one of them quite inert. A shadow pierced the splash of light at the far door, and a disreputable spotted trench dog, with one white eye, came cringing in. The man who sat under local anæsthetic having his crown stitched, put out a hand and touched him. He jumped

as though he had been shot. Like most dogs and cats in the zone of battle, he was a nervous wreck.

We were ready now ; and with recurrent scepticism about the efficiency of a steel helmet to stop shrapnel, I helped load up. Townsend and the boyish driver of the ambulance saw first that the wounded were well covered and thoroughly tucked in. That is a cardinal principle, pounded into all Ambulance recruits—keep your wounded warm. A chill on the road to hospital makes sometimes the difference between life and death. The ambulance, driven carefully, weaving in and out to avoid shell-holes, started back over the road along which we had come. We had no need to report at the Poste de Secours, and Townsend proposed a little excursion into the interior of a fort. It is no secret that the Verdun forts, as forts, ceased to exist long before the great battle made that town immortal. When, early in the war, the German Big Bertha guns made fortresses of the old type museum pieces, the French dismantled these masterpieces of the great Vauban, and took the guns away. The Germans, in time, did the expected. Strong positions still, they resemble nothing made by human hands. This one was now merely a great, deep bowl, the bottom littered with powdery dust, with fragments of cement, with twisted steel fragments. Gleason, always eager to take a chance, wanted to climb up the hill-like edge before us and look over at the German positions, but the officer in command, upon

being asked permission, vetoed the project—it might draw a shell, he said.

So, still in our open car, we took a short cut across that terrain of hell, straight into Verdun. It was about breakfast-time, when most armies let down a little; the guns on both sides were comparatively quiet, but only comparatively. As for the German aeroplane, it had finished its work and gone.

We entered Verdun through an undamaged street. The blinds and shutters were drawn; it looked simply, on first sight, as though the people had gone away for a summer vacation. On second glance, you saw how nature, the unconquerable, was prevailing over the works of man. For the scarlet poppies which blow in the fields of all Europe, had encroached everywhere on the formal gardens; in places their blossoms lay in banks, as the golden poppy lies on the hills of California. Then we rounded a corner, into a street—what it was before I cannot tell—which was all wrecked. I had been seeing devastated towns for two years off and on, now; but never so great a city so newly ruined. The *débris*, when it first fell, had blocked the street. A road for automobiles had been shovelled through, its borders guarded by neat walls of piled rock; in places the bank of dust, of burned wood, of shattered stones, of twisted iron, rose as high as our seats. The buildings on both sides were so nearly effaced that they lacked even those pathetic little signs of former human habitation which

one so often sees amid other ruins, as a bed in the intact corner of a broken second story, a picture on an exposed wall, a kitchen stove with the tea-kettle still on it. White, however, pointed toward a side street: "Down there's a nursery," he said, "with the front blown off. The toys are just as the children left them—a hobby-horse, a Teddy-bear, a big doll-house, and all that. Border of little rabbits and kittens round the wall-paper—you know how they fix up nurseries. And over there"—he pointed in another direction—"a shell has torn down the walls of a house and just pulverized everything in it—except one thing. There was a big statue of Napoleon in the hall. It hasn't been touched, and it stands with its arms folded, facing North and defying the Germans!"

The cathedral rose above us with its twin Gothic towers unscarred; it seemed quite intact, until we rounded it and saw where a fortuitous shell had broken off a piece of the apse-wall. However, a week or so later, news came to me in Paris that the Germans had opened directly on the cathedral, and were reducing it to the universal ruin. There could be no accident about that; the cathedral is too prominent and the German fire too well directed. I wondered then if this were not a sign that they had abandoned hope of taking Verdun. They spared the Cloth Hall at Ypres until the British checked them. The day after the battle of Ypres was decided, they reduced to junk that glory of old French Flanders.

So it has gone on other sectors of the line. In your Prussian officer is a wide streak of bad boy.

So without further incident, except a thousand explosions on our right and left and rear, we came home to camp for coffee and brown bread.

CHAPTER VII

A DRIVE WITH THE KID

PIATT ANDREW and that eminent French gentleman who acted as our guide and chauffeur turned in after breakfast; old stagers, they got their rest when they could. Gleason and I, recalling that we were in the greatest battle of the world, and that every moment was an experience, fought our drowsiness with black coffee and tobacco. We were near a main line to Verdun. All the morning, sober, determined French regiments, casques on head, packs on shoulder, gas-masks at belt, swung past us with their easy route-step toward the belt of shell-holes beyond Verdun. On another road, the transport, the perfect motor-organization which saved Verdun to France, rolled monotonously forward.

Earlier in the battle, I had travelled for a week or so about the rear of the Verdun army. Then, as now, I admired nothing the French did so much as this transport. The full story of its impromptu organization, rendered necessary when the German fire began to command the railroad, may not be told until after

the war. It needed no expert military eye, however, to appreciate its efficiency. I have stood for hours and watched the great camions, twenty seconds apart, flash regularly through a village. Never once was the line halted or broken. I have seen trains of country omnibuses, spilling over with helmeted troops, moved with the same regularity and order. Efficiency—I thought again of my Florentine captain in the Alps. Genius can always beat the machine-like efficiency of mediocrity. The French, like the Italians, have that quality—usually latent, perhaps, but bursting forth in emergency.

My wakefulness was rewarded that morning when a chance offered to go forward with a high medical officer on a trip of inspection. We passed again that “Dead Man’s Corner” where the shrapnel had made at dawn a flock of gigantic fireflies. The shrapnel was popping there still as we ran into the trees, only now the bursting shells were white, puffy clouds from which fell a gorgeous trailer of greenish gold. A corner of Verdun emerged from the thin screen of forest—hedges now merely unkempt, now levelled into brush-heaps; houses now merely closed, now roofless or ruined. In the distance stood the waiting-shed of a suburban tramway line. Three of its walls had been shot away. The fourth still held, and from it the roof, intact, swayed downward to the earth. Somewhere on that journey, whose memories come back to me confused, we skirted a

field which was banging, banging continually with hidden batteries, yet which revealed not even the muzzle of a gun. Somewhere, again, holes like the mouth of a mine-tunnel ran into a hill. Bearers were emerging in pairs, carrying between them covered forms of the wounded. At last we drew up at a structure crazy with shell-made gaps in walls, roof and foundations.

Within, the wounded lay sprawled out on an earthen floor. There seemed no orderly arrangement. They looked to me, on first glance, like flies which, overcome by some fumigator's vapour, had dropped dead on a table. Here, two surgeons worked with accurate speed on an emergency dressing. Here, a soldier-priest, a stole thrown over the collar of his uniform, was giving the last rites. Here, one drew his breath in long, struggling gasps. Here one bit his lips to keep back his moans. For the rest, they lay perfectly quiet, as though saving all energy for the struggle of healing.

When the officer my companion had received a report, given a few directions, criticized one or two details, he suggested a visit of courtesy to a certain artillery general. Our way, when finally we left the motor-car, led to a set of artificial caves in a bank. Somewhere above, gigantic guns were roaring with beats and rests like music. From the nearest cave, in the intervals of the explosions, came a sound of chanting. I glanced within. A priest was saying Mass at a tiny altar, a uniformed soldier his acolyte. The cave was packed

with kneeling figures in light blue. But near the door were two in greenish-grey who held between their hands, as they knelt, the little fatigue-caps of the German Army. Newly made prisoners, these; their guards to right and left had brought their rifles even to Mass.

The General of Artillery looked his army and his craft. He was a tall man in the effective forties, his face all intellectual fineness and power, as of a scholar transformed into a warrior. He met me with that little pose of formality which the Frenchman in any official position feels it his duty to assume at a first meeting. In measured terms he expressed his gratitude and that of France for our ambulances. Then, relaxing, he invited us inside for a bottle of wine. His headquarters made a little fortress of earth and sand-bags. A long table nearly filled it; and this, except for the corner where we drank our champagne, was set forth with ordered piles of maps, diagrams, note-books, technical treatises and sheets covered with mathematical formulæ. This general and his surroundings expressed to the eye what artillery work means in this war—exact, subtle science, developed and applied under conditions of appalling danger, hardship, and nervous distraction.

His big guns—"my bass viols" he called them—were going in orderly rhythm during all our conversation. Their salvos rattled the window-frames,

seemed even to shake that inert masonry of war, the sand-bags. He had been at Verdun since the first great attack; he showed it by the lines of sleeplessness in his face. Yet when I advanced a timid, layman's opinion that the worst of it might be over, he gave me a jovial look full of French cynicism and said that he doubted it. Subalterns came in presently, with reports. While he read them, dismissing each with a quick, decisive word, he cocked his head to listen. As a new salvo rattled even the glasses on the table, he seemed to catch something wrong or at least unusual in the music of his orchestra out there. He called his adjutant, put a quick question or so, and reached for his cap. Reading our dismissal in this, we withdrew and returned along a road of a thousand near explosions to the ambulance camp, from which the sound was only a confused, general roar.

We witnessed, that day, another tragedy of the air. Having gone afield with the men of Section 8, we were resting in a garden, where a few French soldiers joined us. In the near-by heavens swung a line of military balloons. The day was bright, but banks of puffy cumulus clouds were gathering about the edges of the sky. One of these, I noted indifferently, had swelled out until it seemed almost to touch the nearest balloon.

Suddenly we heard the rip and rattle of a machine-gun. We were puzzled for a moment, because this was

far behind all infantry action. Then some Frenchmen cried, "The sky!" and we were aware that the firing came from the cloud. Everyone ran through a hedge-gate to find a better point of observation. I retain a vision of Pinard, the camp puppy, as he raced after us dragging in his mouth a piece of clothes-line with which he happened to be playing and only aware, in his little dog-mind, that here was excitement and that his people were going somewhere.

The firing appeared to come from within the cloud; and at first we could see no aeroplane. However, the anti-aircraft guns were going. About the big cloud clustered a flock of little new ones, as though it were spawning. Then, from its farther edge emerged an aeroplane which we recognised as German; it volplaned sharply, but under control, down toward the German lines. "They have driven it off," we said to ourselves. Indeed, the French seemed to think this also, for the gun-fire stopped.

It was only one of those ruses at which the Germans are so clever. As we started to turn away, a great black German aeroplane burst out of the cloud; with the dart and swoop of a hawk, it came straight toward the balloon. Its machine-gun rattled, stopped, rattled, stopped; it passed the balloon broadside-on, it shot back into the cloud. The balloon-crew below had evidently begun to wind up the cable as soon as the aeroplane appeared. The balloon started to descend.

Even after the German disappeared, it seemed untouched. Then we saw its nose rise lazily toward the heavens; and suddenly it shot out a burst of flame. Down it came, its summit blazing, its lower surfaces untouched, falling rapidly and still more rapidly. A speck fell before it.

"They've cast off the parachute!" I cried, all judgment gone, what with excitement and hope. But the nearest French soldier turned on me a face all tragic stress.

"But no! monsieur," he said, "that is the basket—God, my God!" For it was down now. The slope of a little hill concealed the finale of this tragedy from our eyes; which made it only the more terrible in imagination.

That was not quite the end of the episode, however. We learned the rest late that afternoon, when we visited Section 2 in a town back among the hospitals and the rest stations. An hour after the fight, it appeared, the German machine had returned with a companion to repeat the trick, or a variation. This time the French, being prepared, had brought them both down with anti-aircraft guns.

Section 2 was doing "jitney work," they said—merely shifting patients from hospital to hospital. Being near the end of their rest period, they appeared as eager for active work as the weary, battered Section 3 had seemed eager for rest.

They received the *Croix de Guerre* as a body, mostly for gallantry at Pont-à-Mousson, where, with the house above them going down under a shell-shower, they got out the wounded nevertheless. Also, they were at Bar-le-Duc when the German aeroplanes made their first big raid on the town. The Section was sitting down to luncheon just as the bombs began to burst. Without orders, they rushed out, cranked up, and ran into the worst of it. Barclay had a hole shot clean through the hood of his car. Graham drove up to a tangle of wounded, dying women and children—one item was a baby with its arms blown off. To make room, he pulled out his *blessé*-blankets and threw them on the ground. When he had loaded up, he hesitated, wondering if he had not better search a freshly-ruined house at one side. He made up his mind, luckily for him and his wounded, that his load was large enough, and drove on to the hospital. When he returned, he found his blankets peppered like a sieve with shrapnel. Besides the general decoration, eight members of that section have received individually the Cross of War.

We found Section 4 encamped in the ruins of a town partially burned by the Germans in the Retreat from the Marne. They were farther back than the other three sections then on active service, and less likely to receive the visit of a chance shell; at this camp the noise of Verdun varied from a distant rumble on the

horizon to a sense of unease out there to the North. They seemed, however, insufficiently grateful for that. They were approaching the end of their period at the rest-station; the past week had been full of ticklish work and narrow escapes from shells or whiffs of poison gas. Though they had experienced better luck than Section 3, which had scored three wounded, they had taken no fewer chances. Pessimistically, they explained that theirs was a damnable run—more than thirty-five kilometres, which is nearly twenty-five miles. They started so as to get into the most dangerous zone just at dark; they must get out of it before the early daylight of these short midsummer nights. And sometimes, when the work was heavy out there, they had to make two trips. One of their cars was always on wait—a twenty-four hour turn—at the first Poste de Secours, from which they got their orders.

Their task was to clean out wounded from two *boyaux* on the edge of the trenches behind the famous positions of Cumières and the Mort-Homme. Perry, the director of this section, said that he would send one of us on each of the two trips. Of what I shall call Position One, he said: "it is the sportier. But the other," he added, "is more interesting." Gleason and I were trying to decide which should be the sport and which the artist, when Perry and Andrew settled it between them. Gleason was to have the "sporty" one, and I the interesting one. From the lay of the land, as Rockwell

traced it out for me on the map, I should have called my detail "sporty" also. I had mounted the seat beside the driver, had seen, by advice, that my steel helmet fitted and that my gas-mask hung firmly to my belt, before I noticed who was to be my driver. The men go out by rote; and I had drawn Kid Allen.

Now I had met the Kid three weeks before, in a town just beyond the guns of the Argonne. I found him sitting in his car, reading a newspaper and waiting for the section mail. He had not shaved for some time, it appeared, but that made small difference; you looked twice before you saw three downy hairs. He remarked to us, then, upon recognizing our accent, that the sections were shifting to Verdun and expected a great deal doing; and he said it in the unformed but confident voice of a boy become a soldier. The Kid had been nine months in the Ambulance service since he left St. Paul's School. He expects to enter Harvard next autumn; and he admits to seventeen summers.

I wish I might tell all about that drive with the Kid; but the censorship and consideration for the safety of both French soldiers and American ambulance-men make it necessary to be hazy. There was first the long run through a perfect European evening. Night the Healer had blotted out the uglier scars of war, except now and then when we crossed the villages. Even these looked, in the dimming light, like old ruins—so old that

no one could mourn over them and the lives that once they framed. We drove on into the world of heat-lightning and giant fireflies ; we saw the horizon now flickering, now laced by the fireworks of signal rockets and flares. The Kid, regarding this lurid landscape expertly, remarked that it looked to him like a fairly quiet night. It was time, he added ; the last week had been pretty tough.

We ran into a town. All the doors of the houses which remained were framed and roofed with sand-bags. This was the place where many men had been killed by shells a few days before, and where one reserve ambulance of the American Section keeps always a twenty-four hour watch. Our reserve driver peered out from between two piles of sand-bags as we descended, and remarked that we might as well do our waiting in the *abri* (bomb-proof) ; by the law of chances, the more you stayed in bomb-proofs, the longer you were getting hit. We followed him. We were in the first story of a stout house, timbered like a mine, its walls and ceilings all sand-bags or cement. French soldiers, either stretcher-bearers or messengers, lolled about the bunks reading, smoking or dozing. A sergeant poked in his head. Addressing us as "Messieurs," he issued orders. It was indeed a quiet night. There were no wounded for the present at the Poste to which we were going. We must wait there until two o'clock ; if nothing arrived by then, we might start home empty.

Now, as we drove on into the fireworks, the Kid began to show his technique. We were running, of course, without lights—no vehicle ever uses a light, even the dimmest “trailer,” in the zone of operations. He had been dropping his little “peace car” into shell-holes, and drawing it delicately out again, all the way up to the Poste de Secours. The holes multiplied. The Kid, however, had learned the road in a week. “Now we’re coming to some bad ones,” he would say, and an instant later he would have that little tin car dodging like a dancer. The dark traffic multiplied itself along the road. Always, before I could make out anything in the darkness, his sharp young eyes would spot a heavy camion or a man; and he would toot his horn respectfully. An ambulance has the right of way over all classes of traffic except three—reinforcements, ammunition transport going forward, and food transport going forward. There was no telling when we might be encountering a vehicle of this privileged class; hence the respectful tone of the horn, and, when we came so near the enemy that horns were as dangerous as lights, of his voice. He pleaded with gentle suppliance, did the Kid at this stage of the run, imploring messieurs the chauffeurs of the army camions to give a poor little ambulance room.

Once he said ·

“That’s a big one went off then. Hold to your seat. She’s timed to do it again just as we pass her.” She

did ; the noise of her deafened me for a moment, and the blow of her was like running into a door in the dark. Twice, whole batteries opened on heights above us ; and the Kid remarked that only a few nights before, in that very district, he had passed by while both sides were doing curtain-fire. " Over me—that was lucky," he said. There was a stretch of road so picturesquely lonely, as we saw it in the flashes of the guns, that I should like to describe it with details, but shall not. Once we caught a glimpse of a black terrain not so very far away which seemed, under the gun-flashes and the starlight, like a field newly ploughed ; it looked sinister and disturbed. It was the locked lines, French and German. There were no trenches any more in that field, only shell-holes, where, sometimes, friend and enemy lay inextricably mixed. We had a swift night-vision of a ruined farmhouse. Only a sliver, like a toothpick rock, was left of a corner-wall, and it made a black slit against the far glare of twinkling batteries, flares, all the night fireworks going on along on active trench-line. Once a searchlight showed us a bank, sloping with mathematical accuracy—a German field fort across the river. And everywhere, as we looked to right, to left, forward and back, the great fireflies twinkled.

By and by we turned into a town, bumping from a shell-hole as we crawled down the narrow passage of a back alley.

" Here we are ! " remarked the Kid.

There was no light except the stars and the faint glow of battle, but I made out doorways fringed with sand-bags. I jumped down, and started to light a cigarette. Instantly the Kid and three French soldiers threw themselves upon me; a hand struck down the match, and a foot extinguished it. I passed a half-minute of unpopularity. We were very near the enemy, it appeared—how near I am not telling. A light like that might bring a shell, or worse. I waited while the Kid stowed his car, ready to take my medicine with him and the sentry in case my "break" brought trouble. But nothing happened.

We had the latest Paris newspapers. Rockwell, who threw them aboard after us when we started, had warned us not to give them all to the officers. Further, we brought joyous news, not yet in print. Information of decisive military movements, even among one's Allies, reaches the region of Army Headquarters sooner than it reaches the public press. Great things for us had just come off both in Galicia and the West. We burst into the officers' *abri* with the news, and started a pleasant French excitement, which died away only when each man crowded round the *Petit Parisien*, laid out under a dim whale-oil lamp on a map-table, to read the particulars for himself.

In the men's *abri*, where our wounded were coming—if we got any—we created even more bubble and splutter. There were bunks and chairs in this men's *abri*; and

being Frenchmen, they offered us the chairs while they crowded standing round their little lamp, one reading out loud, the others punctuating the formal *communiqués* and the remarks of "our military expert" with exclamatives of pure joy. They were just miscellaneous Frenchmen these; but for their surroundings of sandbags and *blessé*-bunks and their soldier clothes, a chance group such as you might meet anywhere in a provincial café. Indeed, that is true of the whole French army now; it is not the least endearing thing about the *poilu*. Gone, for the most part, is the military class with its unmistakable brand. Officer and soldier alike, they look like bakers, farmers, mechanics, lawyers, or business men who just happen to be in uniform. Externally, the soldier-mark goes no deeper than the linings of their horizon-blue tunics. Internally, of course, they are as determined and expert an army of fighters as the world ever saw. Were this not so, we should not have sat there that night, beyond Verdun. But one likes it that they appear civilian Frenchmen through everything.

The canvas over the door lifted, and a slight, sprightly young Frenchman, trench-hemlet on head, gas-mask at belt, came down the steps and, greeting the company with "good evening," began at once to pour out a tale to the Kid. He was a driver of the regular French ambulance, come up with a big car for "sitting cases." I translate his remarks from his argot to ours.

“Say, ain’t it the limit! They’ve just handed a cross of war to one of the biggest fat-heads in the next section to ours. He got under shell-fire, and ducked into an *abri* until it was over. When it stopped and he came out of his hole, he found a big dent in his car. Now they hang a decoration on him for gallantly running through artillery fire. Fan me, Kid, fan me!”

Whereupon the group about the lamp, having satisfied themselves that the good news was really true, came into the conversation. One stretcher-bearer who looked to me like a small town tradesman remarked that it was probably “pull.” Pull, he said, went a long way, especially in his neck of the woods. (I am still translating from argot to argot.) Another, who spoke with what I took to be the accent of the South, asked him where his town had it on any other town in *that* respect? Then conversation grew general. They asked if we thought the pressure was going to let up on Verdun now. When we said we did, they remarked that it was time; some one else ought to be standing it for a while. Taking me, from my khaki and trench helmet, for a newly arrived American ambulancier, they asked if this man “Uggs” who had just been nominated by the “Parti Républicain,” was controlled by the Germans? Also, was it true that the Germans had all the money in America? I set them right, and they assumed, at least, to believe me. They asked about the skyscrapers, and wanted to know whether we

talked the same language as the English or only a language resembling it. I was puzzled to find a reply for that question !

Presently—it was past midnight now—conversation lagged and everyone began to doze. The quick blessed sleep of youth caught both the Kid and his French *confrère*. They rolled up on the bunks into kitten-like balls. Myself, I did not sleep ; for all through the talk I had been noting firecracker-sounds—shrapnel unquestionably—outside. The Germans were doing a little perfunctory shelling, as they probably did every night. Then came noises which drowned this. Off in that direction where lay the Mort-Homme a machine-gun, then many machine-guns, began to drum. The batteries started into louder activity—the boom of the big pieces, the exaggerated rifle-whip of the *soixante-quinze*. However, sleep began to catch me too ; just as I was dropping off, a voice called at the door of the *abri* :

“ Lift the curtain, Messieurs—the curtain ! ”

I sprang up and lifted it. There appeared a stretcher-bearer, the end of a stretcher, a pair of inert feet. Immediately the whole *abri* woke to that animation, that lively human fuss, with which the French do everything. He wasn't badly wounded, it seemed, as wounds go in this war—only a torn thigh, I take it. He rose up on his elbow, grinning his relief, and asked for a cigarette.

For he had just come along a dangerous way, on

which many a man who starts lightly wounded is heavily wounded before he arrives, and many a man heavily wounded is cured for ever of all his ills. When somehow, they have got out of the shell-holes, the stretcher-bearers pick them up. The French have little two-wheeled carts for conveying the wreckage of battle. They cannot be used at this point, however; the ruins of field and house are too rough. The bearers carry the stretchers on their shoulders to a certain road, which may be swept at any time. There, they transfer their wounded to the carts and dash across to the next shelter. These men in the *abri*, these plain Frenchmen in soldier clothes with whom I had been talking politics and pull, are among the heroes of the Verdun sector. They have lost as heavily as many regiments which carry emblazoned on their banners the names of famous battles.

The curtain was lifted again. We had another case—this looked like a bad one. There seemed but little life in him; and we could not wonder when we learned that he had just been through an emergency operation. The Kid looked him over, and asked if he were in danger. The bearers answered that the surgeons said no; only he'd better be handled carefully.

Next arrived three "walking cases," all with their arms in slings. The first one flopped down beside me—a little Frenchman with brown, bright eyes. He accepted a cigarette, and showed a disposition to talk.

Just think how lucky he was, he said. He had been wounded late in the evening, when he could crawl out immediately, and behold! It was only a flesh wound, too—a machine-gun bullet through the top of his shoulder, which came out of his back! He'd walked all the way.

“But look what I got en route,” he said. The steel brim of his trench-helmet was pierced by a neatly drilled little hole. Now, he inquired, when would he get out of *here*? I assured him that a big ambulance was waiting for sitting cases, and would start before dawn; also that the road seemed all safe when I came up. Relieved, he remarked on the flavour of the cigarette I had given him—a popular American brand which can be bought in Paris. “It's an American cigarette, Turkish type,” I said. “How much do they cost in America?” he asked. “A franc a box of ten.” “*Mon Dieu!*” he exclaimed, “you rich devils of Americans!”

A head poked itself through the door to announce that another stretcher-case was coming. That made a full load for us. The Kid began to tuck in his wounded; I helped, or tried to help, load them. As I ran back for the second, I forgot to lower my head, and took from the timbering of the *abri* such a blow on the crown as would have made me a stretcher-case myself but for the steel helmet. As it was, I got neither shock nor bruise. I found at Verdun that there are many and diverse uses

for this newest and oldest device of protective warfare. Plug up the ventilation-hole at the top, and it becomes at once a wash-bowl. Carried by its chin-strap, it is a satisfactory basket. It is the perfect rain-hat. Finally, as I learned then, it pays for its keep in protecting you when you have to take cover. You need never mind your head.

As we started, a set of great German searchlights were sweeping back and forth against the zenith of the sky, hunting, I suppose, for night-wandering aeroplanes.

"They're all right where they are," remarked the Kid, "only sometimes they drop down and look you over till they read the red cross on your side. Usually they let you go; but I've known them to send over a shell or so." However, the searchlights swept only from the zenith to Orion, dimming his belt.

With a load of wounded aboard, the time had come for the Kid to show his technique. Gentle and considerate carriage between *abri* and hospital may mean a life saved. A violent bump will sometimes tear open a new wound. He ran at a snail's pace over the shell-pitted sections, weaving his agile little car in and out. Once only did we get a bump; I could feel the handles of a stretcher bound behind me, and I heard a composite grunt from within.

"Darn!" said the Kid, "that must be a new one!" It was the only time he had spoken to me for a quarter of an hour; he was strictly business now.

The traffic was all going back, but at a slow pace ; we had the speed on anything which travelled that road. Also, by the rule I have quoted before, our ambulance, carrying wounded, had now absolutely the right of way. Gone was the politely apologetic tone of the Kid. He was lord of that road, and he proposed to enforce his right. At first he did not use his horn, but only his voice. A train of great, heavy camions would make a deeper blotch in the blackness.

“ *A droite !* ” (to the right), the Kid would sing out in a voice all alarm and authority. “ *A droite—à droite—à droite !* ” I would hear the drivers shouting down the line, their singsong growing fainter and fainter. Once we made out a line of camions drawn up by the roadside. They towered above us, immobile. Something might have happened there ! Our little Ford came only half-way up to the tops of their gigantic bodies. The Kid curved his machine delicately about them, to take a look. The motion, somehow, struck me as indescribably comic. It seemed like a little boy who runs half-way round a big man, looks him over impudently, and passes on his way.

We could use the horn by now, for we were once more amidst the bellowing of near-by artillery ; and I discovered that the Kid could put more profanity into a siren automobile horn than any other driver I ever saw. “ *A droite !* ” he would yell, and follow up with a series of loud “ blank-blank-blanks,” on the horn.

Usually camions or cook-wagons began at once to shift lazily toward the gutter, but there was an independent driver here and there, who held tight to the right of way. One field kitchen, in especial, pretended not to hear and blocked a bridge before us. Just then, also, came the firecracker sound, through the booming of our own artillery, which proclaimed "arrivals" not far away.

"To the right, sacred kind of an onion!—to the right, species of a pig!" bellowed the Kid in approved French army profanity. The field kitchen curved sullenly to one side as it cleared the bridge, and the driver, leaning forth, replied in the voice and vocabulary of a Paris cabman.

Now, at last, our own guns belched no more beside our road and the twinkling, firefly lights were all behind us. Through the smell of chemical and animal mortality which hangs over all those blasted fields, there pierced a fresh scent to which we, the jungle-sprung, remain still sensitive after æons of evolution—the breath of dawn. The horizon-edge lightened a little. Just then, something happened which made us both jump and then settle down with a laugh. Two fireflies—real ones—had twinkled beside the road; and they looked to us both exactly like shrapnel!

We could talk, now. I offered the Kid a cigarette, but he refused. "I tried it a little last December,"

he said, "but then I swore off. I don't think it's good to smoke until you get your growth. But it's funny how every smoker goes right to his cigarette when he's scared, isn't it? Say, what happens to you when you're scared?"

"My mouth and tongue get dry as a bone," said I.

"My knees wobble." The Kid, observe, was enough of an experienced soldier to understand perfectly that the fearless man is mostly a myth. "It helps a lot to have an American round to josh with, doesn't it? I remember that once Southwell and I got into a hot place. A shell dropped ahead of us and another behind, and the road was blocked. When you feel you can't get out—that's toughest of all. We hadn't any wounded, so we could leave the cars. We ducked into an *abri*. We were both awful scared. Southwell came in all hunched up. When we got inside, Southwell threw out his chest and said: 'I'll show these Frenchmen that an American citizen is not afraid of a little shell!' That made me laugh, and I wasn't scared any more."

Then the Kid fell into reminiscences of old days with the ambulance before they shifted to Verdun. He told of the tricks of shell-dodging; how you get a sense for the rhythm of a bombardment and learn to run over dangerous ground between this arrival and the next. He praised the French *poilu*, his good fellowship and his gratitude. Finally he brought up a story which I

had heard many times before among the ambulance sections—the strange ride of Charlie Toms.

Toms, who has been in ambulance work ever since the lines locked on the Yser, is now mechanician for Section 4. It is his business to repair the ambulances whenever and wherever they go bad. During the very hottest days of Verdun a car broke its axle. Toms brought up a spare axle on another ambulance, which had started forward for wounded. Just as he got to work, the Germans began to shell the position. Working fast and feverishly, he made repairs. He took the wheel and started the car. It began to back up. He realized at once his mistake. He had put in the differentials backward!

The car could not be abandoned, because it had a load of wounded. And the shells began to come nearer. Doubtless the average European would have heroically rechanged that axle under fire. But Toms is an American.

“Boys!” he said, “we’ve got to run this blame car home backwards!”

He stood facing the body, and worked the steering wheel with his hands behind his back. He put his assistant on the step to man the gas and the brake. The horn had been shot to pieces; therefore the regular driver stood on a rear mud-guard to blow a whistle and curse camions out of the way. So they ran for twenty miles, the French army gaping or laughing at them as they passed. But they got their wounded back unhurt.

Dawn had broken as we drew up beside the tent hospital. Forbes, on post there, ran out to assist with the unloading. In passing he recalled to me that we had met when he was Sunday Editor of the Boston *Herald*. The bearers drew out the loaded stretchers from the shelves. What with the benevolent toxin that follows wounds, what with the relief of rescue, our *blessés* were all asleep. Only one stirred as we lifted him out; he was the "leg case" who had grinned so cheerfully when he landed in the *abri*. He looked over toward the Kid and held out a grimy, calloused hand.

"Thank you, my comrade," he said.

The Kid had found a soft tire. He fell to rummaging through his tool-box for jack and pump.

"What sort of a run did you have?" asked Forbes.

"Quiet night," said the Kid, kicking his jack under the axle. "Nothing doing—pos-i-tively not a thing!"

* * * * *

They told the United States Consul of the great French hospital-town that they had a wounded American in No. 16; so the Consul drifted over, on his first spare afternoon, to see what he could do. At the hospital, they referred him to Bed 10, Row 2, Ward 4, where he found the wounded man asleep, the blankets drawn up over his head. The Consul touched him.

"Who dah?" exploded a voice from beneath the

blankets. Off came the cover, revealing a comely black head and a row of teeth like new gravestones.

“Why, you or’nerry, no-account black hound!” exploded the Consul affectionately, “what the blazes are you doing here?”

“Fo’ the lawd’s sake, Mars!” said the wounded American with surprise and gratitude. “You’s from de Souf, ain’t you?”

When, a little later, First-class Private Eugene so-and-so, of the this-or-that infantry regiment, grew convalescent, he used to get leave as often as he could so that he might hobble into town on his crutches and visit the Consul. I also was a persistent visitor at the Consulate; and so on many an afternoon we three—Southerner, Southern negro and Northerner—sat and talked war. A year and a half at the front had made a strange creature of Private ‘Gene. He was, to begin with, a great, young black Hercules, a monument of trained muscle—when the war broke he had been making his living in England by boxing and foot-racing. But he wasn’t at all the negro we know in America. War and heroism had given him that straight air of authority common to all soldiers at the line. He looked you in the eye, and answered you with replies which carried their own conviction of truth. The democracy of the French army had brushed off on to him; he had grown accustomed to looking on white men as equals. His race, they say, has a talent for spoken languages.

Already there was a trace of French accent in his rich, Southern negro speech ; and when he grew excited he would fall into French phrases.

He held a machine-gun during the first terrible days of the Verdun battle, when the Brandenburgers were fighting for Fort Douaumont. For something he did there, a matter of going to the rescue of wounded under fire, he had been mentioned in orders, which is the first step toward the *Croix de Guerre*. He was going to work hard for that decoration when they sent him back, he told us.

He had fought at Arras ; he had been in the charges for Notre Dame de Lorette ; he had been wounded in the blasted terrain of Champagne. But all memories of those glorious and horrible old actions seemed to have been dimmed by that terrific fighting at Verdun, and especially by that day when his company held off a German charge until man could hold no more—until he knew the red rage and the hot sickness of butchery. He described that day in detail with a wealth of picturesque negro phrasing and flashes of negro wit, which no Northerner could possibly transcribe from memory. They expected the charge that day, and so they cleaned guns, got everything ship-shape, and had a good dinner of “singe” and biscuits. “If I eat much more of that stuff,” said Private ‘Gene, “I certainly will climb trees.” And then the German charge commenced. He described it not as a run, but as a steady walk—

a great crowd of men in grey coming smoothly on. His company had a nervous little sergeant, who was nevertheless willing to take advice, Private 'Gene said. He danced up and down, yelling "Feu!" before the Germans got within proper killing range. But the experienced gunners cajoled him, "joshed" him, until the enemy were massed 200 yards away. And here the narrative of Private 'Gene—I have heard him tell it several times—always grew confused, dropped into a sing-song at intervals, and flashed back and forth between French and English. "*Première pièce—feu! Deuxième pièce—feu! Rat-a-tat tat-tat tat-tat!*" he would say, imitating both the sergeant and the guns. "It was like mowing grass, boss, only the grass grew up as fast as you mowed it. When they got a little start on us and you could rightly see them, they was coming on by fours—four here, four there—*toujours quatre, toujours quatre!* You'd mow them down, and four more would be in their places. You'd look again, and one or two would be 'way forward. You'd slue the gun around and get them, and four more would be just where you'd fired before, but nearer—and you'd mow them down. *Toujours quatre—toujours quatre!* If you hadn't seen the dead where you'd piled 'em you'd 'a' got plum disheartened. When you stopped to cool, and the other gun picked up the *feu*, you could see 'em wriggling like worms in the bait-box.

“Yassir, I was sick, awful sick. Every time the sergeant yelled ‘*Feu!*’ I got sicker and sicker. They was Germans, but they had wives and children, hadn’t they?”

An afternoon, during which the drama was repeated again and again; and then they had to abandon the trench—a matter of a military accident, which need not be recorded here. Private ‘Gene destroyed his machine-gun. “There’s a place where you can do it with your hand,” he said, “but not if your hand is fumbly, an’ I sho’ was fumbly.” So he opened the breech and kicked it until he destroyed the mechanism. Then it was a confused flight, dodging from shell-hole to shell-hole, until he reached cover of a trench. From his first shell-hole he killed a German, a patrol going to certain death in order to find the French. He was making, gun in hand, straight for the shell-hole where Private ‘Gene crouched alone, when that superb piece of black flesh rose straight up before him, got in the first shot, and pumped two bullets into his chest. Private ‘Gene remembers mainly the look of surprise which the German had on his face when he died: “I bet he thought he saw the debbil!” he said.

That night he slept in a house with stragglers of two or three regiments, waiting to join their commands in the morning. “Whang! I woke up: my ears was splitting and the blood was on my face.” A shell had reached them. It blew two men to pieces. It wounded

nearly all the others. A captain, himself wounded, flew about doing what he could. But they needed the medical corps *brancardiers*, and Private 'Gene, after stopping his own little face-wound, went back through the outskirts of Verdun, crumbling under bombardment, to get them. For that, he received his mention in orders—"Private Eugene —, for obtaining help for wounded comrades under heavy fire while himself wounded," he used to recite in French from the Order of the Day. He couldn't tell us much about that trip—he was too dazed, I suppose. But next morning, his wound having proved slight, he went back to the line. From this new trench he could glimpse the Brandenburger charges up the slopes of Fort Douaumont. It was a steep slope, he said, so that a wounded man could not keep his feet. The dead and wounded, as the machine-guns caught them, rolled back into the heap which was growing in Douaumont Ravine. Three days of this, and a shell fragment came, slitting his thigh. They got him out that night, in the midst of a bombardment which shook the ambulance like jelly.

The last time I heard him tell his story of Verdun, Private 'Gene paused at the end as though trying to sum it all up.

"You wouldn't 'a' believed it, boss, if you'd seen it in a cinema show!" he said at length.

CHAPTER VIII

BEHIND THE GUNS

WE three correspondents—Corey, Gleason and I—had seen Clermont-en-Argonne on a previous trip to the devastated country behind the French guns; and twice again I had flashed past it on the road to and from Verdun. In the crushed and broken country of Lorraine and the Meuse, a ruined village is a commonplace. Once I visited in three days twenty-two such wrecks of war. But I doubt not that even without the happy and curious event which marked the fourth visit, I should have remembered the town for its beauty and its distinction in death.

We approached Clermont-en-Argonne, on that first visit, with considerable caution. It was under daily bombardment of long-range guns, our escorting officers told us. This was not the hour when the Germans usually fired. Nevertheless, a group of men in uniform may at any time draw a shell, and caution in preserving life—his own and those of soldiers or civilians under his charge—is hammered into the French officer. So we parked our car at some distance away, and trailed by covered paths through the ruined village.

Clermont has risen, since the very days of the Gallic chieftains, on a beautiful site. The historic gateway to the Passes of the Argonne, the northern tribes have always passed it in their southward marches. It crawls, terrace by terrace, up the edge of a plateau. Midway of the slope stands—or stood—a beautiful village church. When, coughing from the grey dust of walls newly ruined by the late bombardment, we came out to a terrace beside the church, we got a view which made us gasp. A green French countryside, checker-boarded with little farms, stretched out on three sides before us. Grey stone villages dotted the landscape. Here and there, what with the poor cultivation of these farms behind the guns, the fiery red poppies had conquered the fields, making brilliant strips of colour even to the horizon. Far before us, the landscape rose to a dark, thick, hill-wood—the Forest of the Argonne. First through the glasses and at length with the naked eye, we could glimpse a yellow thread, or a tangle of such threads, breaking the black-green mass of the hills. That was the Argonne section of the great battle-line. To the right was a break in the forest. That was the road to Verdun. Now and again came a noise like the bursting of a sound-bubble in the air—the great guns of the Argonne sector. And always to the right was a murmur, a disturbance of the atmosphere, from the direction where Verdun raged full force.

Of the town, nothing remained whole, except a fringe

round the edge, and one house, quite uninjured, on the main street. Peasant tradition, already weaving romance about the catastrophe of August 1914, held that this was the residence of the local German spy. The legend was untrue, as we learned later. It was spared, when the Germans burned the town, for the same reason that the Hôtel de Ville at Louvain remains to the world—it was German headquarters.

There were the old ruins of 1914, and the double ruins of 1916. Part of the walls still stood, as these thick stone walls of France will stand after a bombardment—the tiled roofs fallen in, the windows gaping, the red poppies blowing between piles of débris. But here and there the stones had been reduced to pebbles and powder by the recent bombardment. Wherever the shells had spared the soil noble trees flourished amidst the green herbage of France, the abundant.

We entered the church. It had been a beautiful thing, erected as it was by some cathedral-builder in the age before Gothic died. The roof gaped; the pillars and arches were broken, or stripped of their carving. The rains had been pouring in for two winters, and the stumps of pillars, the broken flags of the pavement, even the carved baptismal font, were thick with moss. At one place, where light from the fallen roof fell direct, a cluster of poppies grew and bloomed. The main doorway was ruined; but a beautiful side-portal, facing up the hill, had escaped undamaged, to show what the

church had been. From above the door a singularly sweet little Virgin, carved with all the sincerity of old Lorraine sculpture, smiled down upon us. So, after one last sweep of that landscape, whereon the dancing light of France fell as in globules, in great crystals, we threaded our way back to the automobile.

We were unaware, then, that a single inhabitant remained in Clermont. We learned it only by accident as we started north on another trip, for the purpose of talking first-hand with peasants and townspeople about the German occupation of 1914. Our cicerone, M. Hovelaque of the Department of Public Instruction, learned quite by chance from a confrère that M. Jacquemet, mayor of the town, and Mme Jacquemet, were standing-by. The Republic had been pleased to confer upon M. Jacquemet, already a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, the Grand Rosette of the Legion. We might, if we were going that way, inform him—the official notice would arrive in a few days. No one who has not lived in France can appreciate what such a decoration means to your Frenchman. After that, we would have missed any other town on our itinerary sooner than Clermont-en-Argonne.

We found M. and Mme Jacquemet in a hut at a little distance from the town. The site was picturesque enough ; but I shall not of course describe it. He came out to greet us from a vine-covered doorway. This man-who-stood-by proved to be old and very lame.

He walked on crutches; he had an extension on the sole of one boot. His was one of the fine, clean-sculptured, intelligent faces characteristic of the best type of Northern Frenchman. His skin had a pallor which betrayed suffering. His dark, animated wife, younger by many years, walked beside him, a hand on his shoulder. She did not look French to me; only later did I learn that her father was English and her mother half-Spanish and half-Greek. In English a little rusty through lack of practice, she welcomed us to Clermont. Then M. Hovelaque and one of our escorting officers drew the Jacquemets inside the hut. They had business with Monsieur and Madame, which it was not for us aliens to hear. The door opened presently, and the group emerged, the mayor and his wife moist-eyed and exalted, and :

“This is a fête-day for us; you must all stay to luncheon,” said Mme Jacquemet.

We protested; for entertaining unexpected guests is a difficult thing in the war zone. But officers from down the valley had informed them by courier that we were coming; and Madame had already made arrangements. Back somewhere beyond range of the German long-range guns, was a garrison with which they stood on friendly terms. The commander was lending us waiters and a cook, and two of the officers were to be among the guests. So no more protests, said Madame.

We entered the hut and sat down. Woman-fashion,

Mme Jacquemet began to speak of her old possessions. They always do, these saving, home-loving French women up there in the devastated country; it is not the smallest pathos of the situation. "Ah, Monsieur, I had such lovely tidies!" mourned an old peasant woman in a hamlet by Sermaize. "The wardrobe that my great-grandmother had for her trousseau—they burned that also," said another peasant woman to me. "The carpenter at Romilly has promised to make me another, but he is slow—he has so many orders for coffins!" So Madame Jacquemet, as she asked us to be seated, indicated two pretty brocaded arm-chairs among a half-dozen crude country chairs and a bench. "These are all I have left of my furniture," she said—though she said it almost as though it were a joke—"they happened to be out in the yard. I had been collecting old Lorraine furniture all my life, too—ah, beautiful things!"

Then, as such tales do, it came out in snatches of conversation—the story of Clermont. Mostly, Madame told it; but now and then M. Jacquemet, who understands English a little, would catch the drift and stab the conversation with a quick, nervous, descriptive passage in French.

When the enemy, on the first rush of the war, advanced through the Argonne toward Paris, there was no real fighting at Clermont, although the Germans bombarded the town. During the bombardment the Jacquemets

lived in their cellar. Once, Mme Jacquemet missed her husband. She went upstairs to find him. He occupied his regular arm-chair in the living-room, and he was reading a newspaper three days old. "My dear," he said, "I won't stay in that cellar another minute. It's entirely too damp!"

When the bombardment ended, they found that everyone was gone except the inmates of a Home for the Aged, and themselves. The Germans were coming on; and there were French wounded along the roads. Mme Jacquemet opened the town hospital and cared for them, together with the aged paupers. When the Germans entered, she added German wounded to her cares, and she and the German hospital orderlies nursed them together. The occupation, at first, was perfectly decent. The officers were brusque, but not exactly unkind.

Just before the Germans arrived, Mme Jacquemet thought of burying her silver and some of the more valuable small articles in her collections. But she was afraid that if the enemy looted her house and missed the silver, it might start trouble; so she left the house exactly as it was. And on the second day the German commander informed her, quite coolly and abruptly, that they must take the old people away; the town was to be burned, and at once. She and M. Jacquemet—who, as the only responsible male citizen remaining, had assumed the office of Mayor—protested. Had not the dozen aged paupers behaved themselves?

asked Monsieur. They had, but this was a matter of orders, replied the German. Even as he spoke, a squad began the work—proceeded from house to house lighting those incendiary lozenges which jump like fleas or live flame, setting fire to everything they touch.

No one knows why the Germans did all this. It seemed to serve no military advantage. However, M. Jacquemet has his theory, backed by pretty good proof, which I refrain from quoting lest it get some one into trouble. The headquarters of the Crown Prince, at the time, were just across the valley. The town, cocked up at the historic entrance of the Argonne Passes, was very conspicuous. He thinks—and as I say he has proofs—that the German Staff burned it to show His Highness that there was activity afoot.

Nevertheless Mme Jacquemet believes that in losing her house she has a stupendous joke on the Germans. The finest establishment in the town, it was headquarters for Emperor William I. and Von Moltke during the invasion of 1870. Here were drawn up the plans for the Battle of Sedan. Every summer before the present war, German tourists came in companies to look it over. Those who gave the orders were doubtless ignorant of this; but after the fire was over, Mme Jacquemet took great pains to remind them. By mentioning this before the event, she might have saved her house, but I fancy she scorned to preserve her own property while letting her neighbours' burn.

The ruins cooled ; the Jacquemets returned to the hospital, which the Germans had spared, along with their own headquarters. The Battle of the Marne caused the invaders to retreat on the Argonne forest, abandoning Clermont, and the pursuing French army streamed through the Passes. There followed two years of exile at home. The Jacquemets lived in the hospital, doing all they could to help the peasant folk of the region and a very few courageous inhabitants of the town who had returned. In the third summer the bombardment of the ruins became more common. Shells fell on the hospital. Finally, the soldiers came over and removed the Jacquemets to the little hut where we found them. They lived with a scant collection of household goods, honourably looted from what parts of houses remained intact among the ruins. Some peasants came up in the spring and planted them a vegetable garden ; and fruit was ripening on unpruned trees and undressed vines among the ruins. " One lives very well here," said M. Jacquemet.

As we talked, the day's work was proceeding on the line. The French long-range guns were booming in the distance, and I could catch sharper and slighter sounds from below which might have been the German shells breaking on Clermont. It is not etiquette in the war zone to ask questions about such things. A commandant and one of his staff, guests from beyond to our luncheon, strolled in and proposed a walk to the edge

of the village. From there, they said, we might perhaps view the morning's sport. "I'm going too," said Mme Jacquemet. "It may be dangerous, Madame," interposed the commandant. "A shell hasn't hit me yet," replied Madame, "and it's all luck anyway!"

The view was the one we had seen before, but the guns, though they thundered on, betrayed their presence by not even a faint mist. We were more interested in old St. Anne's Chapel, a quaint, crude, but beautiful piece of vaulted thirteenth-century work with distinguished and realistic old Lorraine statuary. Before it stands a linden which I swear is one of the finest trees in France. The records show that it was planted when the chapel was built; it has therefore passed its six hundredth year. Both tree and chapel, standing as they do a little apart from the town, escaped fire and bombardment.

We found that the orderlies, when they called us to dinner, had set two tables together and spread them with a collection of dishes, varying from plain delft to egg-shell china, gathered up in the ruins. There were enough forks to go round, but not enough knives; the officers had to use their clasp-knives. Also, we drank our wine from tin cups. It is almost superfluous to say that the fare was good; your French cook makes a creation even out of army rations. And in the excellent grey wine of the country we drank to the two Republics, to M. Jacquemet, and to his decoration.

The bombardment kept up. "Music for the feast," remarked M. Jacquemet once. But mostly we never noticed it; for the party was merry. The talk merely touched here and there on the war. We told the Jacquemets how Paris, since the German check at Verdun, the Russian successes in the Bukowina, and the advance at the Somme, had recovered a little of its old gaiety; and "Ah, Paris!" sighed our hosts. Mme Jacquemet spoke once of her four sons—three fighting at the front, one a prisoner in Germany.

An officer in the party happens to be a professor of history, a noted authority on the Revolution and the Old Régime. A question about Clermont started him riding his hobby. This was historic ground, he said—the past of France lay all about us. A little way across the line was Varenne. There, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were trapped when they tried to run away from the Revolution. Near where we sat, stood for ages the castles which defended the Passes of Lorraine. He dwelt long on a certain Yvetot of Flanders (I think that was the name), a lady of determined cruelty who was once Châtelaine of Clermont. She had unjustly executed some peasants. The prior of an abbey in the valley below sent up two curates to protest. Yvetot had them drowned in the castle moat. That put her under ban of the Church, a ban which was finally lifted when she did penance and built three chapels—one for each of the priests she had drowned, and one for the

peasants. Of these, St. Anne's, which we had just seen, alone survived. Then Condé held the castle. When, after his rebellion, he made his peace with France, the King, fearing this stronghold, levelled it to the ground.

We had to break up the party rather early, for the officers had duties and we must catch a train at Bar-le-Duc. We parted with real regret on our side, and I think that the Jacquemets were genuinely sorry to have us go. As Madame remarked, you can't think how monotonous it grows up there. On the way out we passed the Mayor's hut. Sitting on the steps, waiting for him, was the figure of a woman in black. She had drawn her country shawl over her head, but her figure showed that she was old.

Her son, it appeared, had just been killed on the Argonne line—by coincidence, his regiment was fighting near home. So she had the poor consolation, uncommon now to the women of France, of receiving back his body. The Mayor of Clermont has sometimes strange duties to perform for the peasant people who look to him; and this mourning Madonna of the fields was waiting for a coffin.

This luncheon with the Jacquemets I have described somewhat at length because it rolls together, it combines, so many features of life in the devastated country behind the French lines. We heard much, in the autumn of 1914, concerning the suffering when the Germans swept in and out. We have heard little of

the long, hard grind since then. France has had no energy left to restore to these people their homes and their industry ; so there they live, and must live until the end of the war, partly amid ruins, and almost always near the margin of actual want.

The district of which I speak, and in which, all told, I spent a fortnight talking to the people, comprises what is known loosely as French Lorraine, the Department of the Meuse, and the old battlefield of the Marne. If you care to look it up on the map, French Lorraine is the district about the city of Nancy, the Meuse district lies back of Verdun to a point south of Bar-le-Duc ; while the battlefield of the Marne runs south of that point almost to Paris. Here, the German armies, advancing toward Paris in August 1914, made an irregular, impermanent new frontier, according to the plan of campaign and to the abilities of the French armies opposed to them. For instance, they never quite reached Nancy, though it is only fifteen miles or so from the old "frontier of 1870." There was fought the Battle of Lorraine, second to the Marne for slaughter and heroism. Below Verdun, they poured on for nearly fifty miles, until the Battle of the Marne drove them back to their entrenched positions near the border.

The whole story of German atrocities in this temporary occupation may never be told. I use the overworked word atrocities deliberately ; I have seen the evidence and talked to the witnesses, and the performances of

the Germans were just that. A kind of mystery surrounds the whole affair. As I have said before, I once went through twenty-two ruined Lorraine towns in three days; and in the same journey I glimpsed many others at a distance. Here would be one town wiped out of existence, deliberately burned, and usually with some slaughter of the inhabitants. Over in the next valley would lie a town untouched—not even looted. Why was one destroyed and the other spared? The Germans would answer, possibly, that in the “bad” town someone had shot at their soldiers. But this does not answer the question. In certain places there was sniping; in certain others, like Clermont, there was, I am sure, no sniping whatever. I am inclined to think, myself, that it all goes back, as the atrocities in Belgium go back, to the orders of the German War Department. Under those orders, an officer had liberty amounting to licence in treating with a subject population. If he were a decent man, well and good. If he happened to be a natural brute, if he entered the town drunk with wine or battle or in a state of nerves over *francs-tireurs*—good-bye to another French village. This is my only theory, at present, to account for the tragic, damnable things which happened in such towns as Gerbéviller and Nomeny and Lunéville, while neighbouring communities escaped untouched.

Of the facts, I am no longer in doubt. I have talked to the relatives of the dead by dozens. They spoke

about these old griefs with a curious lack of apparent rancour. It was as though the destruction had been wrought by some force of nature, like flood or lightning. Yet almost always, somewhere along in the narrative, the tears would fill their eyes. There was the mother of Gerbéviller whose boy, thirteen years old, did not come home after the night of slaughter in that most heavily punished of French towns. So at dawn she and her friend went like Mary Magdalen and the other Mary to the place of the dead. He was there, his hands tied behind him with a tent-cord, "and they would not even give me his body, Messieurs!" They had hanged him. She keeps yet the rope the French soldiers took from his neck when at last the Germans were gone. There was the Préfet of Meurthe-et-Moselle, who stood under the death-tree on the edge of Gerbéviller and told us about the hostages who fell on that ground—fifteen of them, the youngest sixty-five. He had gone next day to view the bodies—no one had dared take them away. The Germans shot these old men against the tree in batches of five. One had been rolling a cigarette as he died; probably he was trying to keep his nerve. Here the voice of the Préfet broke. Again, it was the old lady of Lunéville, summoned to the Mayor's office to tell us how her twelve and thirteen-year-old grandsons died when the Germans, in some sudden panic not uninspired by alcohol, mauled the Jewish quarter and its environs. It was a rainy day;

she and her five-year-old granddaughter, who came with her, were carrying flimsy little country umbrellas with foolish little dogs' heads for handles. When we began to question her, she burst into tears. The little girl caught the infection, as children will ; for five minutes grandmother and grandchild stood holding their umbrellas and crying into their shawls as though their hearts would break. There was the girl who had been dishonoured. She wept too ; and between her brows was a set, unnatural furrow such as marks the insane.

Their stories, in detail, have probably reached the English-speaking public long ago, for there were daily newspaper correspondents on this trip. However, I must linger on one ; and this I remember most because Mlle Procès, the surviving girl-victim, did not weep as she talked. She told her story dully and briefly, this quiet, pretty young daughter of the Provincial aristocracy, as one who has sustained a grief as much too deep for remembrance as for tears. But Father Paul Viller, the village curé of Triaucourt, an external witness of this tragedy, told it more at length ; and I follow his narrative.

He had become, by right of character, the acting Mayor of Triaucourt. After the bombardment, which killed a few citizens, the Germans came ; and at first, bar a little looting, there was comparative order. Then, one morning, a German officer came down the street in

charge of a German private, of this Mlle H el ene Proc es and of her mother. The women were crying.

“What is the reputation of these women in the village?” asked the officer.

“It is the very highest,” replied the priest.

“I thought so,” said the officer. “This soldier has been annoying this girl. I will have him reprimanded.” And he released the women, who went home.

“I noticed the soldier then,” said Father Viller, in his nervous, expressive French, “for his face—so brutal, gentlemen, so fierce, so savage!”

A quarter of an hour later, as the priest was giving the last rites to a dying soldier, he heard firing, growing in intensity, near the Proc es residence. The Germans were burning and killing in the row of houses across the street.

M. Proc es was at the war with the Territorials. In the house of Mme Proc es lived Mlle Mennhaud her sister, the elder Mme Proc es, her mother-in-law, and H el ene her daughter. The four women gathered their valuables together, and ran out of the back door. Their yard is bordered by a wire fence. Mlle H el ene Proc es, younger and swifter than the others, put up a step-ladder and scrambled over this obstacle. She was helping her aunt across, when a rifle began to whip from a balcony near by. Mlle Mennhaud tumbled into her niece’s arms; literally, her whole brain was blown out. Mme Proc es, her mother, fell dead across the fence; her

aged grandmother crumpled up, dead also, in the yard. Mlle Procès cannot remember what happened next, except that she crawled a long time through the cabbages of the next yard, with the bullets splashing about her. When it was all over, when the neighbours dared venture out, they found Mlle Procès in a state of temporary madness. To complete the tragedy, it was nearly a year before M. Procès got leave and revisited the spot where his home, his mother and his wife had been when he marched off to war.

The German excuse was the customary one—somebody fired on them. The townspeople declare that the soldier “of ferocious aspect” who was reprimanded for insulting Mlle Procès, himself fired the shot which gave occasion for starting the massacre. But no one ever alleged that any shots came from the Procès’ house.

All that happened in the first month of the war. Perhaps the atrocity feature of the German stay in Lorraine and the Meuse has been proved to the world, and I have no need to deal further with the matter. Nevertheless, it is the historical background to-life in the devastated regions.

It is one strength of the French in this war that they are rooted in the soil. They love the home acre as they love their families. They often embarrass their army by sticking to bombarded villages when in all prudence they should go away. Still, most of them did get out

during the bombardments which preceded the German occupation, during that occupation, or during the period when the enemy upon withdrawal was destroying the towns. The dust had hardly settled from the German retreat, the ruins were scarcely cold, when they began to crawl back again. Usually there was nothing left but the cellars; and here is a peculiarity of French building which has served the people well in troubled times. A cellar, in Northern France, is not one of our cemented holes in the ground. It is a stout vault of brick and concrete. It survives, usually, a bombardment which blows up every stone of the superstructure. Roofed over, so as to turn the rain, it serves very well for a human habitation.

In the existing state of France there was neither money nor labour to rebuild. But the people managed somehow. They doubled up in the few houses which had escaped destruction. They patched the outbuildings or parts of houses not so far destroyed but that they were susceptible of jury repairs. Such towns as had depended on small factories for their existence shrank in population, because the factories were destroyed or closed. But the little agricultural centres came back to something like their old population, minus, of course, the able-bodied men between eighteen and forty-seven years of age.

No one in France could help them much to restore their homes; but there came help from outside. The

British Society of Friends—the Quakers—disbelievers in war, barred by their creed from taking part in military work, started to put the devastated towns back on the map. The job is so enormous that they have not been able to go very far—if you want a parallel, imagine that a private association had tried to rebuild San Francisco. Nevertheless, they have accomplished a great deal. Sermaize-les-Bains stands as an example. This town, of about 2,700 inhabitants, was a watering-place before the war; it had also a beet-sugar factory, handling the crops of the surrounding region. The Germans spared the factory. I have wandered a great deal, first and last, in the Belgian and French territory devastated by the Germans; and while I never heard of their sparing a church, I noticed that they often spared the factories and always the breweries. Further, a big, flimsy, wooden bathing-hotel near the springs was a German barracks, so that escaped. Sermaize was a good town in which to begin operations, for its sugar-factory was vital to the peasants. The Quakers quartered in the hotel all the people they could; and then, whenever the military granted them freight-cars to haul materials, they began to set up little block-like brick houses of one or two stories. No one has had the time to clear away the ruins, and these ugly but comfortable structures rise grotesquely amid the tangled wreckage of fine and often beautiful old stone houses.

The church here, like that at Clermont, was a fine

and irreplaceable example of country Gothic. The fire took the long nave; only the bases of the pillars are left, together with some sculptured inscriptions in black letter marking the resting-place of old lords of Sermaize. But though the roof of the transept fell in, its walls stood. These restorers of another faith erected a new roof. On a June Sunday of this year I saw the little girls of Sermaize sitting in white veils on benches made of boards and boxes, while the priest instructed them for their First Communion.

As a result, Sermaize after two years was back where a part of San Francisco was after six months. The people are living among ruins, but they have shelter and they are resuming industry. They tell you with pride that there are 2,200 people back in town out of the original 2,700, and that the number of men mobilized for the war almost makes up the difference.

By contrast, there is Sommeilles, a village unique in that every house was destroyed. Conflagrations seldom make a clean sweep. There are usually islands in the midst of the fire, or unscathed houses on the edge. Here the Germans persevered, restarting the fires as they died out. Part of the church tower remained, including the face of the clock. The hour-hand pointed to 9; and a sparrow had for two years built her nest on that hand.

The Germans burned the town "in reprisal," because a bridge near by, over which the French had just re-

treated, was blown up. They declared that the peasants did it. The peasants say that it was the work of an engineer squad, left for that very purpose behind the French retreat.

Sommeilles depends strictly on agriculture. This country is so thickly inhabited that a peasant proprietor usually lives not on his land but in a village near-by ; and these farmer people were the characteristic burghers of the town. We came upon it in a melancholy twilight, which made it seem the very abomination of desolation. An old peasant labourer whom we met at the cross-roads stopped to chat with us of crops and business in general. There was plenty of work, he said ; in fact, too much. No one had enough men for the ploughing and the harvest. Then, too, it had been a bad, cold summer. But they could manage the man-problem with the help of soldiers. The real trouble was lack of horses. The war had taken most of them ; the rest, even the very old ones, were worked to death. In the next village I found a proof of this shortage. An official Government placard announced a public sale of "réformé" horses—beasts wounded in action but still useful for some civilian purpose. They were divided into two classes. First were those so badly crippled that they could be used only for food. These were offered wholesale to butchers. Second were those who could be worked. These would go strictly to the highest bidder, but no person who had ever dealt in

horses was allowed to bid, and no bidder might have more than two.

The Quakers had done a little housing work here ; though there were still people living in cellars. It takes labour and expense to set down a new house exactly on the ruins of an old ; mostly, these little, bare brick structures stood on what used to be a vacant yard. One young woman, so housed, had cleared away the débris of her ruined home, had filled in the space above the vaulted cellar with fresh loam, and was growing a flourishing vegetable garden.

An old couple came over, presently, to welcome the visitors, and to chat about their present state. He was seventy-eight—so old that he took everything, even his grandsons on the Great Line, with the numb philosophy of age. She, twelve years his junior, kept her spirited French interest in life. “If I can only live long enough, gentlemen, to see how it all turns out !” she said. “What will it mean ? Is civilization ended ?”

As he told us about his affairs quite simply and frankly, we realized that we were talking to a ruined man. He had been of wealth and consequence in the community ; he lived on the rent of several houses. They were all gone. His own house, exclusive of land, had been appraised by the Government at 45,000 francs. The couple were living in a kitchen left partly intact when the rest of the house went up in smoke. The great fireplace, characteristic of these French peasant dwellings,

was their sole fireside ; its mantel held a few homely ornaments and the holy statues which Madame had rescued somehow when the Germans began their burning. Burnished copper kettles hung along the walls ; the floor was waxed until it shone.

“ It’s better than the fields where we camped when the Germans came,” said Madame, “ or than the cellar there where we lived afterward. But oh, I had so many pretty things ! ”

Then, for a further stage of ruin and desolation, there is Gerbéviller—the “ martyr town,” the French call it. About that riot of massacre and rapine which marked the stay of the Germans, whole volumes have been written in France. I shall not repeat the story. Here dwells—and rules—Sister Julie, the heroic old nun whose combination of courage, mother-wit and practical peasant intelligence saved her hospital and a few surrounding buildings from the universal destruction. Every civilian privileged to travel in that region feels it his duty to visit Sister Julie, that he may see the Cross of the Legion of Honour which President Poincaré himself pinned on her habit. Her friends say that Sister Julie has grown very weary of telling her story ; but weariness has not spoiled the effectiveness of her performance. Her fine old face, with its mixture of spirituality and peasant shrewdness, grows dark with horror and loathing or lights with humour and triumph. At the dramatic climaxes, she holds the pose of her

fine, dark eyes like a Bernhardt. It is true romantic drama, this narrative of Sister Julie ; for laughter chases tears as you listen to the tale of the massacres and the ensuing recital of what she said to the Germans.

Now Gerbéviller was a rich residential town. It had no industries except a small brewery—spared of course. The brewery still makes a little beer. A restaurant stood in that quarter which Sister Julie saved from the Germans, and some one has set up, on the broken foundations of a small hotel, a structure of slabs and rustic poles called the “Café des Ruines.” Here the soldiers regale themselves on native beer. Also, a few shops ministering to necessities have opened in houses which the fire missed. Otherwise, Gerbéviller seems as dead as on the day when the Germans left. Nature is already healing the gashes of man. The Château of the Marquis of Lambertine, pride of the region, looks after two years as old a ruin as the Baths of Caracalla. The French have a way of training fruit trees over the walls of houses and gardens. Trees have a strange vitality. Even the hot flames of Gerbéviller failed to destroy these wall growths. In the very spring of 1915 they blossomed ; in the autumn they gave fruit. And these green branches, climbing and crawling over ruins, lend a further air of antiquity to the relics of a recent disaster.

The whole job, of course, is too big for the Quakers. They have been able to give relief only here and there.

And like Gerbéviller are the greater number of those ruined villages—wrecks for the present, their inhabitants still marking time in cellars or in corners of ruins.

The thing which, to the casual eye, moderates the desolation a little is the presence of the soldiery. Every one, probably, knows by now the routine of the trench warfare on the Western line—so many days in the front trenches, so many in the reserve trenches, so many in the rest station. For twenty miles or so behind the line many villages which serve no more immediate military use are rest stations where soldiers, recuperating from the grind of the trenches or the Hell of battle, quarter themselves as best they may. At least, there is some variety about this life of desolation. Regiments are for ever coming and going. Inhabitants of other French departments, as remote to your home-staying French townsman as China, march in, talking strange dialects, to tell marvellous things. They chum with the town dogs. They gather flowers with the village children. Of evenings they get a little pathetic imitation of home-life about peasant firesides.

They are gone presently; and a new lot comes to take their places. All day, most likely, army camions, field-kitchens, ambulances, travel forward loaded and return empty. Regiments march past, the buglers, if it be not too near the line, saluting the inhabitants with marching-tunes like the "Régiment de Sambre-et-Meuse," or the "Chant du Départ."

Also, war has brought variety of another kind. Wherever there are soldiers, there also may be bomb-raids. Often enough, this happens where there are no soldiers at all, or very few; and, aerial bombs being foolishly inaccurate, more civilians than soldiers suffer.

The day we took testimony at Lunéville, there was a bomb raid. The town, a substantial place, stands near the present line. Every scouting German 'plane which manages to get past the French guard seems to drop an incidental load of bombs on Lunéville.

As we approached the town, we saw a black German aeroplane dodging from cloud to cloud, with the familiar little white puffs from anti-aircraft guns following it. There was scarcely any one on the streets as we rolled along. I remember only one woman, marching with her head erect as though defying the German lightning; but she presently turned into her own doorway. We stopped at a police station to inquire our way to the Mairie. There came, just then, four sharp but distant explosions, and we could make out the aeroplane, very high up, running into a cloud.

The largest church of Lunéville stands beside the Mairie. A big funeral was going on as we passed; the Mass was over, but the hearse waited, hitched outside, while the mourners, like people who had taken refuge from the rain, were gathered inside the church door, craning their necks at the heavens. As we entered the Mairie, all the bells began to toll—"raid over."

The mourners emerged, fell into line, marched away ; the street grew lively again.

M. Keller, the Mayor, was beginning the story of Theodor Weil, the celebrated German spy, when a policeman entered, saluted, and handed him, on a printed form, the report of the bomb raid. There had been no damage, except a few broken paving-stones.

“ You didn’t notice many people on the streets, did you ? ” said Mayor Keller, rubbing his hands together with great satisfaction. “ We’ve arranged all that ! ” and he pointed to a proclamation on the wall. It announced that, henceforth and until further notice, whosoever was found on the street, after the official warning of a bomb raid, would be punished with fine, and, in case of repeated offence, with imprisonment. “ That stopped it ! ” said M. Keller. “ We couldn’t make them stay indoors before, but now they’re afraid of the fine ! ”

I had intended, on beginning this article, to avoid detailed stories of what happened two years ago ; but I cannot refrain from touching upon the tale of Lunéville. When the Germans came, the townsfolk recognized among them an old acquaintance—one Theodor Weil, German commercial traveller, who had been “ making ” Lunéville for fifteen years, and was as well known to the business community as any resident. He wore, now, the uniform of the German Secret Service. He directed very expertly the quartering of the in-

vaders. He seemed to have more information about the town than the natives. When, after a few days, the Germans decided to blow and loot some strong-boxes, Herr Weil knew exactly where to go and how much money to expect.

The German commander made on M. Keller, the Mayor, the customary demand for hostages—five of them he wanted, the richest people in town. “I offer myself,” said the Mayor. “Ah, but you’re already a hostage,” said the German; “we always consider the Mayor a hostage, apart from the rest.”

M. Keller hesitated, for he was in a quandary. The two richest people of Lunéville, a man and a woman, were both more than seventy years old, and very feeble. Should he lie? But Herr Weil, who knew so weirdly much about the town, would nail the lie at once. So he came out with the truth, adding:

“These two are very old. In common humanity: you should take others in their places.”

“We want the richest people—not talk!” said the German. And the two old people were marched off with the rest.

Then followed a curious episode. A German soldier was found dead. The Germans laid it to the townspeople. They were about to execute the hostages and burn that quarter of the town where the body was found, when Weil the spy proved that a German comrade had murdered him in a quarrel over a woman.

So things rested until Saturday night, when a good many of the garrison got drunk. The commandant came to the Mayor. "You and the other hostages are to die," he said; "your citizens have fired on us—on me!" "What is your proof?" asked M. Keller. The commandant led him to the Jewish quarter. There lay an old labourer of the town, dead of a bullet-wound.

"I was standing near this man when he was shot," said the commandant; "the bullet was undoubtedly meant for me!"

"And you would kill us on such evidence as that!" said M. Keller. "Here—put a German cape and helmet on me, and let me walk beside you through the town—if you dare. At the first shot—kill me!"

The commandant accepted the challenge. There was no shot. Nevertheless, though they spared the hostages, they took vengeance on the Jewish quarter. In some manner, they calculated that the shot which killed the old labourer came from the house of M. Weil, the elderly rabbi of the synagogue—the identity of his name with that of the spy is merely coincidence. They sent out a destruction squad, and set fire, with incendiary tablets, to the Weil house. Rabbi Weil and his fifteen-year-old daughter tried to escape. The Germans thrust them back into the house at the point of the bayonet. They took refuge in the cellar, where they were suffocated. On succeeding events, our witnesses held so confused a memory that we could not patch together a consecutive

story. The Germans burned most of the quarter and the "reprisal" turned into a massacre. Everyone who appeared at a window or doorway became a target. Mme. Kahn, ninety-eight years old, was killed in her bed. Her son, seventy years old, tried to escape, and fell dead on his door-sill. Twenty-eight people, mostly Jews, were killed, and nearly a hundred houses burned.

Who shot that old French labourer, no one knows. Before the Germans came, M. Keller had his policemen gather up every weapon in the town, from a sporting shot-gun to a rusty sabre. These were delivered to the Germans, who made a search on their own account. The Jewish men of vigorous years, like their compatriots of Gentile blood, had all gone to the war. Whoever knows the law-abiding character of the Jews, and whoever knows the repressed condition under which they still live in Continental towns, will hesitate to believe that the murderer was a Jew, and especially a rabbi.

This happened in the last days of August. On September 5 began the Battle of the Marne. By September 8 the advanced German army was in retreat. The people of Lunéville, cut off from the world, did not know this, but the Germans, thoroughly informed, must have realized that their stay was probably brief. For suddenly, on September 8, the German commander demanded, to requite the crime of shooting at Germans, a ransom or fine, or whatever you may call it, of 650,000 francs. It must be paid in gold within forty-eight hours,

said the officer who brought the demand. Otherwise they proposed to loot and burn the city. "And if the sum is short," said the officer, "I will return and take extreme measures!" "What if the shoe is on the other foot? What if we give you too much?" asked M. Keller, quite naturally. "Don't joke with me!" said the German.

Now, in the nature of things, there was not much money in Lunéville. M. Keller and his city officials collected and counted for two days and nights. The bank gave the nucleus of the sum. One woman, hitherto supposed to be poor, brought 21,000 francs in gold to the Town Hall. A washerwoman gave two francs. When, on the stroke of the forty-eighth hour, the German officer arrived for the ransom, M. Keller handed it over in full. The German officer refused to give a receipt until his men had counted it.

Next day, the officer was back with a note signed "V. Losser, Chief of Staff," which M. Keller has framed on his wall. It set forth that the sum was 180 francs 35 centimes short. Moreover 4,560 francs was in Austrian and Russian gold, "which is valueless in our eyes." The sum must be replaced. "Tout sera l'affaire," concludes the note, "*d'un quart d'heure*" (All this is a matter of a quarter of an hour). If the sum was not made up by that time, the bearer of the note implied, the town would be looted and burned as a reprisal.

Possibly the Germans, who had all day been packing

to leave, counted on this flaw in the ransom as an excuse for blowing the rest of the strong-boxes and safes, under Weil's direction. If so, they overlooked one fact: M. Keller is President of a bank, and has at any time access to its vaults. He rushed over, found enough good French gold to make up the difference, and counted it into the hands of the German before the quarter of an hour had elapsed. Hard on this, the bugles blew, the garrison fell into line, and the Germans marched away to their prepared positions on the border.

Six months later, a German agent named Theodor Weil was caught instigating insurrection among the Moroccan tribes, condemned by court-martial, and shot. The people of Lunéville believe, naturally, that he was their old acquaintance, to whom for fifteen years they had given confidence and hospitality.

The ransom, together with the looting, put Lunéville in virtual bankruptcy. It was two years before the schools could be reopened.

Nancy, ancient capital of Lorraine, is a story by itself. This city of 110,000 inhabitants, close up by the "frontier of 1870," is one of the prettiest towns in France and one of the most engaging—a provincial capital with ways and customs all its own. The line above Nancy was pushed back, by the Battle of Lorraine, to the very border, where it still rested when I saw Lorraine two years later. Beyond the town is a certain plateau, pitted

with the old shell-holes of 1914 and the new ones of 1916. From this vantage-point, one day in June, I stood and saw The Line threading glen and forest almost below my feet. Over beyond, so close that I could make out individual houses in the villages, was that which the geographies called Germany after 1870. On the horizon to the left lay a dark dot—the cathedral of Metz, capital of Lost Lorraine.

Now Nancy is situated like Dunkirk on the other extremity of the eastern front; it can be reached from across the German lines by the gigantic 380-millimetre guns. On New Year's day of 1916, the enemy opened with a gun of this kind, on Nancy. At long and irregular intervals, they have been doing it ever since. The people of Nancy understand that the Germans keep their big gun in a cave, concealed from prying airmen, and draw it out when they are ready to shoot. So in Nancy they have named it "Fafner," after the great dragon in *Siegfried*. For the explosion of its shells, they have borrowed a slang phrase from the sadly harassed people of Pont-à-Mousson; they call it "Zanzan."

That gun has a twenty-mile range. It fires mainly at night. Without aeroplane direction, such a fire is necessarily inaccurate. The gunner simply shoots at Nancy, as the amateur huntsman shot at the moose—"all over." It seems to serve no military end, save perhaps terrorism.

When "zan-zan" strikes a house, even the largest and finest house, the structure simply melts to dust, to broken stones, and to fragments of walls. When it bursts on hard pavement, it ruins the buildings on both sides of the street. I am asked not to mention how many men, women and children of Nancy have been killed by this intermittent bombardment. As one citizen of the town put it :

"If the Germans find they have killed fewer than they expected, they may try more often; if they find they have killed more, it may whet their appetite."

It is quite impossible for the alien outsider of Nancy to go to bed in his comfortable, modern hotel without remembering that before morning he and the whole surrounding scene may be eliminated. At twenty minutes past three a.m.—I timed it on the luminous dial of my wrist watch—of my last night in Nancy, I was wakened by the clatter of bells, by a sound of running feet on the pavement outside, and by an explosion. My heart clutched and stood still. But that explosion was followed, in rapid succession, by three more. I realized then that it must be an air raid; for it takes ten minutes or so to load and fire a 380 m.m. gun. I was so relieved that I turned over and went to sleep again, illogically oblivious of the fact that an air-bomb is itself a good eliminator. At Nancy as at Lunéville, the passing German aeroplanes always take a few shots.

Because it is a large city, and therefore inflammable, they often use incendiary bombs.

Certainly the people of Nancy, these canny, shrewd Lorraine who have been called the Scotchmen of France, live in terror of Fafner. But living in terror is a different thing from acting on the impulse of terror. Few people have left the city. The tram-cars run, the cinema shows are open, the shops—served usually by the women—offer all the necessities and most of the luxuries.

Yet it is impossible to keep the thought of Fafner entirely out of one's intelligence. I dined there one night amidst charming company in a gracious French household. It was rather a gala occasion; with the present restrictions on travel, visitors from the world without are a little uncommon in these beleaguered districts. Now and then, amidst the gay and wise conversation, the thought would recur: Quite possibly in one blinding, bursting instant, the tasteful old house, the fine collections of Lorraine antiques, the ancestral portraits, the hosts, the guests, the aged family butler, the pretty daughters—all that made this picture of charming social intercourse—might vanish into atoms and primordial chaos.

As a matter of fact, there have been some narrow escapes from larger loss of life. By great good-fortune, the first shells of Fafner's bombardments have generally struck open places, giving the inhabitants warning to

run for those vaulted cellars which are in these days the strongholds of civilian France. Once, on the first shell of a bombardment, M. Léon Mirman, the Préfet of the district, ordered all the schools and workshops to be cleared. As the shells fell, the police reported the results either in person or by telephone. So the news came that a certain girls' primary school was struck. M. Mirman glanced at the list of schools and factories before him, and his blood ran cold. Whoever made up the list had omitted that school!

He was frozen with horror as he jumped into his automobile. It was true; the school was only a mass of broken stones. The ruins still smoked; but he and his policemen rushed into the wreckage. From somewhere at the back, a woman's voice hailed them. She was standing at a cellar trap-door, which the bombardment had not covered. And inside the vaulted cellar were all the little girls, quite unhurt. The woman principal had moved them, at the sound of the first shell, to this place of refuge. So loud were the other explosions that when this one wrecked their school the children only said:

“That came pretty near!”

As most observers have remarked, Paris has few idle hands since the war. Not to be working at something for the Republic in her time of need figures as a minor disgrace. If this is true of the capital, it is doubly true of Nancy, mother-city to a stricken province, a

gateway to the Great Line. The unhoused people of the devastated district have poured into this Provincial capital. Near the town, in an old barracks, the private charity of Nancy, with help from outside, is maintaining 3,500 refugees. There are, for example, the people of Nomeny, a town where the Germans behaved exceptionally badly at the beginning, and which is now so near the front that it has been nearly eliminated by the guns. There are the children of Pont-à-Mousson. That city is crumbling too. We were to have seen it, but on the morning fixed for our visit the staff officers would not let us go, the town was under such heavy bombardment. Nevertheless, its stout, home-loving burghers mostly refuse to leave. However, they have sent out their children to this refugee home. Volunteer woman teachers of Nancy are running schools for them, and for the other child-refugees in this camp. Such men among these guests of Nancy as are not too old for work can get employment in the fields. The younger women have gone to the munition works. The older are knitting or sewing for the army. There is a chapel; there is an amusement hall, with a "movie" show nearly every night. Heaven bless Thomas A. Edison for inventing the moving picture! He can never know how much he has done to relieve the strain of this war.

There is a story of infinite pathos and tragedy, and often, so curious is war, of infinite humour, in every refugee at this camp. Most picturesque of all is the

tale of Charles Derlan, a straight, pleasant, sixteen-year-old boy, whom we found in the hospital helping his mother nurse the wounded. He wore a natty soldier uniform, with the Cross of War on the left breast; the two notched chevrons above his left biceps showed that he had served more than eighteen months at the front, the corresponding single chevron above his right, that he had been wounded and returned to his command.

He lived at Pont-à-Mousson. In the first month of the war his father fell in action near that town. Thereupon young Derlan, only fourteen at the time, offered himself to the regiment in his father's place. They could not enlist him legally, but he was so persistent that at last they gave him a uniform and made him a messenger. He got his wound and his Cross of War for valour under fire; he went back—this time, by another breach of the rules, to carry a gun. His second wound was in the abdomen; the surgeons ruled that it made him useless for military purposes, and "reformed" him. But he is not taking that for a refusal. He believes that he can still act as a motor-cycle messenger, and he has applied for the job.

As an example of the picturesque war-charities proceeding at Nancy, I cite only this among many. One evening a committee of ladies showed me a collection of marvellous French needlework—table-cloths, napkins, handkerchiefs, infants' clothes and the like—going to Cleveland, Ohio, for sale. Every piece bore in the corner

that device of a turreted bridge which is the arms of Pont-à-Mousson.

“The women there are making them in the cellars,” said one of these ladies. They have nothing else to do, poor things. On days when the bombardment isn’t heavy, one of us goes up by automobile to take in the linen and bring out the finished work. Look here,” and she showed a set of half a dozen fine handkerchiefs—“the woman who made these wrote us that she was sorry her consignment was late. She had half a dozen ready last week, but a shell struck her house and destroyed two of them—‘which I had carelessly left upstairs,’ she wrote—and she had to make two more!”

Somewhere, in the confusion of British and American comment on the war, I have come across the remark that the physical destruction of Armageddon is after all infinitesimal compared with the whole wealth of Europe. This, I take it, is a fairly misleading statement of a situation which will be a problem for many years. The property loss in the San Francisco disaster was infinitesimal compared with the whole wealth of the United States. Yet the elimination of property values, the wealth drawn from normal uses for the rebuilding, was a contributing cause, if not the main cause, for the American panic of 1907. Success and failure, prosperity and poverty, proceed in this modern world by narrow margins.

Let me confine myself for the moment to this region behind the eastern French front. Such statistics as there are would go to prove that in population affected, in number of houses destroyed, it was a lesser disaster than that of San Francisco. I have a general impression—there are no complete statistics as yet to prove or disprove it—that the Lorraine disaster was perhaps even greater than the San Francisco disaster. The Great Fire wiped out a number of skyscrapers; there is no parallel for them in Northern France. On the other hand, the characteristic dwelling-house of the old American city before the fire was of flimsy redwood, while the characteristic dwelling-house of Northern France was of stout stone construction, built for all time. Nowhere in America do we erect so substantially.

There is another factor which I have never seen mentioned in print. The roads of France, the model roads of the world, were a great national asset. They made agricultural transportation easy, and France is pre-eminently the agricultural nation of Western Europe. During the past fifteen years they had brought great wealth of another kind. These highways, together with the excellent wayside inns, had created in France the motorist's paradise, to which all the wealthy of two continents came for their touring.

Now San Francisco lost a few miles of city paving. France, besides some city paving in such towns as Verdun and Pont-à-Mousson, has lost, in the Lorraine

sector alone, hundreds and hundreds of miles of these great roads. Along the whole line, she has lost thousands of miles. For continuous army traffic simply murders roads. The army, it is true, keeps them in a kind of temporary repair for its own use. But before they can ever be brought back to their former state, they must be built again from the foundation up.

Another factor is the destruction of the irreplaceable. In the San Francisco disaster no irreplaceable property was lost except a few paintings. Everywhere, in the Armageddon disaster, have perished things like the old church at Clermont-en-Argonne, like the better-known Rheims Cathedral, which can never be restored to France. Irreplaceable art is a financial asset. Italy, viewing the subject in terms of pounds, shillings and pence, could better afford to lose most of her northern factories than two or three square miles of Florence.

Still further, San Francisco managed to resume business and production almost at once. In Lorraine, after more than two years, all industry except agriculture is still paralyzed and must be so until the war ends.

This takes account only of the section behind the Verdun, Lorraine and Argonne lines. But the wreckage of calamity stretches from Belfort to the sea. There is the district about Soissons, as wantonly devastated as Lorraine. The line runs for 400 miles, through village after village; a belt say ten miles wide, in which few works of man will be standing when the truce comes.

As I write this, the British and French *communiqués* mention daily new towns reconquered; by the time they are taken, there remains of them only ruin. There is Rheims (110,000 inhabitants), of which one-quarter to one-third is ruined, with the rest going fast. There are Verdun and Pont-à-Mousson. There is Ypres (25,000 inhabitants), virtually all gone; there is the knot of Flemish towns, like Hasbrouck, about Ypres. There is Belgium, from whose hills, when the Germans came through, I sometimes beheld villages smoking as far as eye could reach.

In all this there are many San Francisco disasters. The work of the Quakers is only a beginning; and the physical restoration of France should be the concern of a world for whose liberties, along with her own, the Heroine of the Nations has fought so valiantly.

* * * * *

He was a sailor from the prairies of South Dakota; which sounds paradoxical, but is the cold truth. That was not the only odd thing about this tall, Viking-looking person in the uniform of the Foreign Legion. He had, for example, the strangest accent I ever heard. For his father was a Swede. From him he got his straight, almost Greek line of the nose and brow, his stature and his long, fine limbs, which seemed athletic and able even as he stood balanced on his crutches. His mother was Scotch, and from her he got his sandy complexion. So his father's native speech sounded in

his "j's," with which he had trouble when he grew excited, and all Scotland burred in his "r's." But he had run away to sea at the conventional age of eleven, serving under a succession of Yankee and English masters, so that he had both a Yankee twang and a Cockney squeeze in his speech. Twice wounded, he was awaiting the issue of that torn and broken leg to see whether he was going to be "reformed" or sent back to the line. "I enlisted for experience," he said, "and by Yee, I got it!"

He told of his two great battles, of brushes in the trenches, of his funny chum from Texas who always kept him heartened up with jokes; but time after time he came back to his one great adventure in life and death, and always he peered into my face as though looking for some justification, some approval, of a deed quite outside any moral standards which he had ever been taught—a deed which belonged to a region of new and special morals.

His regiment had attacked, gloriously and successfully. He had gone in without rifle, as a bomb-thrower. The Germans had been driven out; his company was "consolidating" the broken, shell-torn, flesh-strewn ground, which had been a series of trenches before the French opened that terrible, concentrated artillery fire of theirs.

"We came to a bomb-proof," he said; "it was all wrecked. I heard somebody talking or groaning—making a little bit of a noise. We sneaked up and

listened. They were groaning in German. We looked in. I said in English, 'For God's sake.' The fellow nearest me turned his head and said: 'For God's sake, Kid, give me some water!' Just like that—plain United States. 'I ain't got no water for myself,' I said. 'Twas the truth. Charging is dry work. My canteen was empty, and my tongue was as dry as a bone. 'Where do you come from, to be talking United States?' I said. 'From all over the States,' he said—'born, lived there most of my life!' He didn't say it straight off like I'm saying it. He was groaning and grunting all the time—and weak. 'Then if you got no water,' he says, 'stick a bayonet into me, Kid. I'm suffering horrible, and there ain't no chance for me. For God's sake! I'd do the same for you!'

"His legs—well, I couldn't fix my legs the way his was. All twisted like a corkscrew. But he kept talking about his back. I turned him over and looked. They—they hung out of his back like ropes. There were two others. One had his brains leaking—he was as good as dead a'ready. The other was rattling in his throat. When the Deutchers go away, their brancardiers leave them as have no chance—for us. 'Twould be hours before our brancardiers would come along with dope to ease up their last minutes.

"Then he raved, and begged me.

"Well, I couldn't. I might 'a' shot him if I'd had a gun, but I couldn't stick him. I couldn't do anything

to ease him. He was past first aid, and I hadn't any water.

"My mate was a Greek. I told him in French what was the matter.

"'There's some grenades back there,' he says.

"We went back and found the grenades—loaded our pockets. We sneaked up to the bomb-proof sudden, so he wouldn't know we were coming, and primed 'em and threw 'em all inside. After we'd got through, there couldn't be anything alive in there.

"I'd 'a' thanked him to do it for me if I'd been in that fix. Wouldn't you?"

And his eyes again searched my face, for sympathy and justification.

CHAPTER IX

THE ARMY OF EQUALS

THOSE who dare prophesy mid-course of such an event as Armageddon say that Verdun will be reckoned its turning-point. English writers have commented, time and again, upon the resemblance between the General European War and the American War of Secession. Here is another analogy. In the older war, the decisive battle was Gettysburg, a defensive action. The losing army was neither captured nor scattered. The South fought on for two years more, but with no more chance of victory. So, probably, will Verdun look to the future historian.

Only, Gettysburg was a skirmish compared to Verdun. The American battle lasted three days, the European five months. The Americans lost fewer men in the whole action than the French and Germans in the first rush. For numbers engaged on a narrow front, for intensity of artillery fire, for slaughter and for valour of all kinds, the world never saw its equal, until the British on the Somme took up their own burden of death and heroism. Within a fortnight of the first attack,

hardly a fighting trench was left in the five miles between Douaumont Plateau and the city of Verdun. The front line became a series of interlocked shell-holes. The advanced communication trenches, by which reinforcements reach the front in comparative safety, were caved in or ruined ; regiments moved from rest to action under a battle-hail of shells. The glimpses which artillery observation officers have given me, are almost too appalling for repetition. They have seen whole German battalions, caught by curtain-fire and machine-gun fire which stopped either advance or retreat, "milling" in a circle like cattle, until all lay piled up, dead. They have seen German regiments charge into a wood which gave a little cover, and break out from both sides, facing bullets rather than what they beheld within. For five months the Verdun sector gave out a continuous roar, audible twenty miles away.

Against such terrible, concentrated fire, the French held until the British were ready at last, until the Germans could do no more. The Germans were ever attacking, the French waiting and defending. The German losses were, therefore, the heavier—how much so we may not know for years. Yet every soldier understands that to wait under a rain of death is harder than to charge into death—that the test of *morale* is not action, but passivity. After the first rush, when something went wrong, when the Germans, by getting the railroad under their fire, gave the French a bad

week, the defending army yielded nothing essential. Never once was their *morale* shaken. They hung on by teeth and toe-nails, but still they hung on. In the later days of the action, I watched the troops going forward to position; and I talked to some of them. They went expecting to die, but resolved to fight until the end.

Now in this battle, as in the whole course of the war, the Germans have enjoyed most of the material advantage over France. They had more people by 60 per cent.; they had infinitely more national wealth. They had been dreaming war, preparing for war, during a period of forty years. To them, the army was a thing of pride and great public interest; whereas to France it was a burden. In the year before the struggle opened, three hundred books on war were published in Germany, and perhaps fifty in France. The German war-books enjoyed a large popular sale; the French circulated only among military men. Germany had been building up a great industrial system; and always as she built she planned ways of turning her industrial machinery into war-machinery when Armageddon should begin.

She was prepared, in a material way, as nation was never prepared in the history of the world. I saw the German army of invasion, the new machine with the oil and fresh paint still on it, pass through Belgium on its way to take Paris. It seemed perfection. I could write pages on the completeness of every detail, and

chapters on the co-ordination of every part. We who disbelieved in their cause carried away the uncomfortable thought that nothing could ever stop it. There came among us war correspondents who had seen the advanced French forces on the Belgian border. They pictured an army ill-prepared and ill-munitioned. "Beside this, the French look like a gipsy train," said one of them.

Until recently the Germans have had over the French the advantage of strategic railroads, of shells, of arms. Even at Verdun, I believe that they owned more guns, were able to expend more ammunition, than the French. Forty years, during which the best brains of Germany thought war while the best of France thought art, served to perfect a system of co-ordinated parts which is the despair of imitators.

Yet the French army, beaten at the first rush by power of superior preparation and by the violation of the Belgian border, won at the Marne, with inferior forces, one of the few real victories in this war. The Germans retired to the positions laid out in case of defeat—another instance of their long preparation—and the interminable period of trench warfare began. Since when, no one has been able to say whether the French army or the German is the better, man for man, gun for gun, franc for mark. Some neutral experts lean to one opinion, and some to the other—largely

according to their hopes and feelings. But no one gives much margin to either side. Let us say for the sake of argument that the two armies, proportionate to their numbers, are about equal in efficiency and power.

Now, if the Germans have had all along the superiority in equipment, in resources, in preparation, and in co-ordination of parts, the French must have something in their favour—some element of superiority which brings them to a par. What is it? Individual efficiency? Probably not. For while in the realm of intellectual ideas the French are the clearest thinkers in the world, the Germans have always seemed more at home with practical ideas. The French are the philosophers of humanity, the Germans of machinery. And war is not a matter of intellectual ideas but of practical ideas. Again; on the purely physical plane, the French may have more nervous force, but the Germans have the stronger bodies.

There remains only one factor; and this must account for the French parity. The French and German systems of handling men—what soldiers call discipline—differ widely. While each nation is using a method suitable to its national character, the French has worked better. The heroine of the nations has been able to counteract superior industrial organization, an older and better worked-out system of strategic movement, and the higher mobility given by strategic railroads, because democratic discipline, applied to a people who love

democracy, has worked better than an autocratic system applied to a people who love authority. To one nurtured in democracy, this is an encouraging, a thrilling fact.

We have heard a great deal, recently, about the democracy of the French army, and all the more because we Americans suspect, in this period of talk about preparedness, that our democracy has made a mistake in modelling its army discipline somewhat upon the German system instead of the French. What we have heard is mostly true. The French army is the most democratic the world ever saw, except perhaps its forebear of the Revolutionary Armies, which swept Europe off its feet, or ours which fought the Civil War. It is democratic to a degree which shocks, on first sight, the officers of most other nations. Let me, a citizen of the other Great Republic, examine their system to see how it works, and how France maintains it in face of the tendency toward snobbery which always goes with rank.

All the non-German world is in a state of intense admiration, just now, for France and her works. In that frame of mind, enthusiastic British and American writers have been calling them the most democratic people on earth, have been declaring that, as compared to them, even America and the British colonies know nothing at all about the idea upon which the republic was built. We applied formulas to the French before the war. Their detractors, building impressions upon

two or three square miles of night-blooming Paris, and upon the over-frank modern French literature, called them "immoral"; and even their friends called them "excitable." Now, no immoral people could have developed that vigour of soul which they have shown in this war; and for two years they have been as excitable as a field-rock. Yes, we tried to describe them by formulas, just as the European tries to describe America by the formula "materialistic." That will never do with any people. And there is danger that we shall go in the other direction and apply a new formula—"absolutely democratic"—as far from the truth, and therefore as unfair, as were its predecessors.

I suspect that if we could weigh the qualities of nations as we weigh a chemical, we should find that the French and the Americans—or at least the Americans of old native stock—are about equally democratic, though in a different way. There are social strata in France, very set and definite. A man—or a woman—climbs from one stratum to another less frequently in French life than in American. There is the old *haute noblesse*, people living on the memory of a past nobility and the hope of a new monarchy, who keep up religiously that system of caste which the law does not recognize. There is a provincial aristocracy with manners, sanctions and opinions of its own. There is a gay, flashing *haut monde* of Paris. There is the great, productive and somewhat stuffy middle class—the *bourgeoisie*. There

are the peasant proprietors and the simple peasants. Apart from all this, springing from all classes and yet a class by themselves, stand the artists. All the greater circles are broken up into innumerable little, close, sub-circles.

Usually, as all the world knows, marriage in France, at least among the middle and upper classes, is arranged by the parents. What we call misalliances are therefore less common in France than in England, for example. In marriage, the Frenchman keeps to his class.

French family life is exclusive. A Frenchwoman of conservative turn will boast that her family is "a closed circle"; that it has never been stained by the presence of unrelated outsiders, except for a very few lifelong friends. To invite a man to your house suddenly and informally—as Anglo-Saxons are always doing—would seem a barbarous proceeding to most Frenchmen. One lives, characteristically, in his own circle, giving himself otherwise only to a few friends, preferably old ones. The relatives in the first, second or third degree furnish sufficient intimate human companionship for many Frenchmen and perhaps for most Frenchwomen.

On the other hand, the men of France keep their snobbery or exclusiveness, or whatever one may call it, for strictly home consumption. When your Frenchman steps out into the great world of production or business or politics, he assumes quite a different attitude; and it is not a pose, either. The French Revolution,

which left such a lasting impress on this brilliant, charming and strangely stiff-necked people, had for a cardinal principle "equality." It is necessary, the Frenchman feels, to assume equality if he have it not. The guide-books warn British visitors that "titles of deference such as 'Monsieur' must be employed to persons far down the social scale." In England the washerwoman is called simply by her last name—"Scruggins" or "Jones." In France she is always "Madame." Your butcher or baker, no matter how humble, is "Monsieur" to you, though you carry the blood of Hugh Capet.

On a certain tour of the front my guides were two French officers, one a graduate of Saint Cyr—the French West Point—and the other, before he donned horizon blue, a university professor. They found it necessary, at a certain town near the guns, to ask directions and information of an ignorant, slatternly and very poor woman who had crawled back to remake a home in the ruins. I was not much interested in the matter of their conversation; what struck me was the manner. Nothing in their words, their gestures or their tones indicated that they were anything but neighbours, come to ask a small favour. She might have been a woman of "their own sort." They were neither deferential nor patronizing. Neither, for that matter, was she. "If a Count talks to a ploughman in France," said a member of the old, high nobility, "the one of

the pair most likely to be abrupt is the ploughman—and that simply because his training in manners is bad.”

In the older towns of New England the butcher or the milkman often has on his wall at home a quartering from the *Mayflower*. The butcher and the milkman consider themselves as good as any man or woman alive, and expect treatment on that basis. If the “Summer people” accept them on that basis, well and good. But the outlander who assumes the “my good man” attitude never lasts long in the community. He finds that he cannot, somehow, seem to get meat or milk, and that all the desirable cottages are “spoken for next year.” The same thing, I have heard, happens to superior strangers in the small towns of France. These strangers, however, are never French—they know better.

So it seems generally to go in France—exclusiveness within the home, pleasant and easy democracy without. In this principle lies the final answer to the democracy of the French army; basically it is so because the French are that kind of people.

The French army, indeed, has always been a democratic organization—at least since the Revolution overthrew the old régime, and left its permanent impress upon France. The Revolutionary armies swept out to roll back the forces of Royalty with “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” on their banners. The officers were “Citizen” Jacques or Louis or Jean, like the privates. Napoleon, who understood how to strangle the Revolu-

tion while turning its fire and fervour to his own uses, did not destroy that spirit. He rather fostered it, treating his grenadiers with familiarity, encouraging his officers to do the same, promoting from the rank and file wherever he found merit. He made marshals of France out of shoemakers and tailors. By the time that Waterloo ended twenty years of war under Napoleon, this idea of army discipline was ingrained. The successive monarchies and even the Empire of Napoleon III, with its artificial glitter and parvenu titles, did not destroy the spirit. The army entered into the period of the Third Republic and of universal conscription a working democracy.

Of course, conscription, which takes men of every class and makes them plain privates, may be, if left alone, a great leveller. The Germans have not left it alone; they have consciously made and kept their army aristocratic not because of conscription, but in spite of it.

Now France has had within her always the seeds of a military caste. War is the profession of an aristocracy. As elsewhere, the old nobility feels it obligatory to have at least one officer in the family. Moreover, there are genuine military families, where the profession is passed along from father to son. Generals Pau and Castelnau, who have borne so much of the burden in this war, spring from such stock. Men in power always want more and more power. Doubtless there would be now

in France, as in Germany, an effective hereditary military ring, but for the occasional interference of the Government and the steady interference of a force more powerful than government—custom and national feeling. And those precautions against a military caste begin with the French system of selecting officers.

There are two great military academies in France—St. Cyr and the Polytechnique. St. Cyr educates the officers of cavalry, infantry and the staff ; Polytechnique the officers of the artillery and engineer corps. The French believe in specialization ; when I tell their officers that at West Point we give the same education to artillery officers as to cavalry and infantry officers, they shake their heads. Both these institutions are open to all applicants. However, there is not enough room for all who apply ; and entrance is settled by competitive examination. Even at St. Cyr these competitive entrance examinations are very searching. Besides mathematics and several branches of liberal learning, the prospective St. Cyrian must be instructed in the manly arts of war, such as riding, shooting, and fencing. For an examination admitting five hundred students three thousand candidates frequently present themselves. The appointments go to those who pass highest on all qualifications. Generally, these boys have been trained all their lives with a view to entering Saint Cyr. Special preparatory schools exist for this purpose.

The Ecole Polytechnique requires a more thorough preparation and a higher individual standard. It is as keen and advanced a school of high engineering as exists in the world; from it France gets her best civilian engineers, since a graduate of the Polytechnique may resign and return to civil life, subject to call in case of war, after five years' service in the army. So keen is the struggle for appointment to the Polytechnique that he who passes the entrance examinations must be a young mathematical marvel.

“The successful candidate for the Polytechnique,” says a Franco-American engineer whom I know, “has more mathematics than the average honour-graduate in mathematics of an Anglo-Saxon university.” Here is a proof that the prize scholar of the schools is not as a rule a failure in life; for Joffre and several other men who have risen by merit to leadership in the French army were honour-men at the Polytechnique.

To educate a boy at Saint Cyr or the Ecole Polytechnique, therefore, takes money, just as it does to educate him at an American or British university. And this, in itself, would tend to aristocratic feeling in the army. Our American system, whereby every West Pointer is educated at Government expense, seems more democratic. However, there are several counter-currents. Saint Cyr, the Ecole Polytechnique and their preparatory schools, have a very liberal system of scholarships, whereby poor boys of talent and ambition may get

their education free. Joffre was educated mainly by scholarships. His father was a cooper of the Pyrenees, and his mother helped out the family income by dressing vines.

Further, until recently every officer had to serve a year in the ranks. Sometimes he took his examination for Saint Cyr or the Polytechnique just before coming up for his military service, and sometimes after completing that service. About five years ago that system was abolished, because the French felt that the officer, in the growing specialization of his profession, could not afford to lose a year from his studies. I once questioned a former professor of St. Cyr, whom I found serving in an entrenched camp behind the lines, upon this point. "Aren't you afraid that this will make against democracy?" I asked.

"It was much discussed among us at the time," he said, "but we concluded that the officers didn't really need it—that the democratic spirit was ingrained in the French. You know, we teach it constantly at St. Cyr. And an additional year in technical training is very useful."

They have, like most nations, a service school—an academy, wherein "rankers" who have shown exceptional ability and who wish to make arms their profession are educated at state expense as officers.

All this applies to the regular army officers. In peacetime this corps takes each year's class as it comes to the

colours, trains it, leads it during its period of military service, and then takes up a new class. In event of war, this active young army with these professional officers forms the first line of defence.

Aside from this body, and really more important, are the reservists and territorials, all of whom have been called out in the course of this war. The first lines of France and Germany were badly cut up at the beginning. The heaviest work is being done now by these two classes of older men. After a conscript has served his two—or three—years with the colours, he becomes a reservist. For the first three years he is in the “active reserve.” At the age of thirty-five he passes on to the territorials. It was hardly supposed, anywhere, that the territorials would be called upon to fight in the trenches. In the advanced plans of campaign, they were assigned to guard the lines, garrison the towns and dig reserve trenches. But the war has gone to such unexpected lengths that the territorials are facing fire with the boys. The first line, including the regulars and the active reserve, comprises men from twenty-one to twenty-six years of age; the reserve, men from twenty-seven to thirty-five; the territorials, men from thirty-five to forty-seven. These figures show how important numerically the two bodies of older men have become in comparison to the regular first-line army.

Now St. Cyr and the Polytechnique do not furnish much more than enough officers for this first-line army.

Therefore the officers who will take out the reservists and territorials in case of war are trained from the ranks during their period of military service. The regular officers select privates who have the ambition and ability to make reserve officers. They are hurried along to the grade of sergeant, and finish the last part of their military service in a special school for reserve officers. Upon leaving the army they are expected to do a certain amount of "home study"; and they must henceforth serve at manœuvres for at least twenty-eight days every two years. When the mobilization comes, they take command of the men, their neighbours, with whom in youth they were called to the colours as private soldiers.

As the system works out practically, the position of reserve officer falls usually to the "intellectuals" of the district. These men have a general education, which counts here as everywhere. Further, the position of reserve officer brings burdens which not every peasant or shopkeeper is willing to assume, whereas the young professional man assumes them willingly as part of his standing and advancement. The rising young lawyer of a provincial town, the manager of the local factory, the son of the largest landed proprietor, is likely to be a reserve or territorial officer. Schoolmasters and university professors are largely represented in this body. These men have standing and leadership in their own towns. That leadership—democratic always

—helps when the company or regiment meets the strain of battle. This is not a rule, only a tendency. A great many men of humble occupation were reserve officers before the war.

So it was when France entered Armageddon. There followed the unexpectedly heavy losses of this war of slaughter. Further, some of the reserve officers proved incompetent to command under battle conditions. New officers had continually to be supplied. And France supplied them from the ranks, choosing on no standard except military talent, courage and leadership. Probably the educated men have fared best in this process of selection, but it would be hard to say absolutely. The instances of humble men raised to command are so many that I would become wearisome if I quoted all I know. Here, however, are a few:

The little hotel at which I stayed in Paris when the lines were being locked on the Aisne had a pretty young chambermaid in a state of constant anxiety about her husband. They had married only six months before; he was the "boots" of the hotel. I asked about her the other day. She had left, they said. Her husband was a lieutenant now, and she was living on his pay. An American corporal in the aviation corps keeps his wife and children in Paris. Last week their nursemaid left. "Why?" asked her mistress. "My husband has become a lieutenant," she replied. "Besides, my brother-in-law is a major, and I've been thinking for

some time that I shouldn't be working for a corporal's wife." A wounded officer remarked to me: "One officer in our company was a priest before the war, one was a St. Cyr graduate, the son of a shopkeeper, one was a pork-butcher, and I—I am a Count." The manager and owner of a large department store in a provincial city finds himself grubbing in the trenches under command of his youngest shop-walker. A captain, in private life a land-owner and a Count, escorted a party of correspondents to the line. He excused himself one day to have a talk with a major at a certain headquarters. "He is such a good soldier," said the Count, "that he always gives me ideas." It came out later that the major, before the war, was the jeweller who used to repair the Count's watches. My escorting officer on a recent journey to the French front was a university professor; he entered this war a sergeant. Later, I was treated with equal courtesy and efficiency by an officer who was a peasant farmer. I know, or know of, weavers, hotel-porters, waiters and barbers who are wearing the galons of officers, along with the service ribbons of decorations for valour.

In cases of exceptional merit or exceptional emergency men have been promoted at the front and have taken office at once. This, however, seldom happens. The company or staff officers pick the man who seems worthy of promotion. He has already learned at the front, of course, things which officers in peace-time

never learn from their theoretical training. But he needs theory, too. A few months of intensive education, during which the incompetents are weeded out, and the new officers take up the sword of command.

So much for the present situation: but now let me turn back to the long period of preparation in peacetime.

On the face of it, St. Cyr and the Polytechnique should turn out a body of officers less democratic than our own, since West Point is a free school while these require tuition. Practically the system does not work out that way. While the sons of titled France tend toward St. Cyr, the members of the great middle class seem fascinated with the idea of having an officer in the family. Of late years, for example, policemen have more and more educated their sons as officers. Further, there is the scholarship system. A St. Cyrion tells me that if it were possible to average the social standing of St. Cyr officers, it would be found to lie somewhere in the lower middle class. "We are a bourgeois body," he says.

The sons of the aristocracy of wealth and the aristocracy of birth tend to elect certain crack cavalry regiments which have always been a little apart from the main current of army life. These regiments live expensively and rather gaily. No officer elects them unless he can follow the pace. For the rest, French barrack life is dull and monotonous. Perhaps most of the

officers marry women with little dowries; but so do most French lawyers, doctors, engineers, business-men and what not. The "mercenary marriage" is still an all but universal custom in middle-class France—an outsider is tempted to say that it is the curse of France. However, this supplement to the forty dollars a month which a second lieutenant gets in peace-time and to the hundred and twenty dollars a month of a captain, is on the average not large. Their incomes usually permit comfortable and simple living, and no more. No great army has less etiquette of a formal kind and less expensive or necessary entertaining than the French.

During times of peace, German barrack life is traditionally gay. No regular officer lives on his pay. It cannot be done. They must have money, or marry a good deal of money, in order to "keep up." Money begets the habit of idleness. The entertaining of German regiments takes time. In the corresponding time the French officer is working with his profession. They are the closest students of things military in all Europe. "When an officer leaves St. Cyr, his education has only begun," says an officer of the General Staff. "A successful physician doesn't stop with his graduation. He subscribes for the medical journals; he attends clinics. He is a student to the end of his days. So are our officers."

Yet perhaps I have said nothing so far which gives to the reader a complete reason why the French army

is so essentially democratic. I must come back to the reason I advanced in the beginning : it is so because the French are that kind of people. As a matter of fact, both the force of public opinion and the law of the land have been necessary at times to keep it democratic. There was one period during the troubled days of the Clemenceau Ministry when an army clique, desirous of a kind of army suzerainty over France, became powerful. The Ministry solved this by a device which might not have been effective with us, but which worked wonders with the French. They ruled that at all public functions the civil authorities must have precedence over the military. I saw the funeral of General Gallieni, Minister of War, the Military Governor of Paris who sent out the famous taxicab army to the Marne. Military hero though he was, the representatives of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Municipality marched at the head of the procession. Again, there was a time when the army wished to rule that the colonels of regiments must give their approval before a subordinate could be married. This, reduced to final terms, meant the beginning of an army aristocracy. It is the system which prevails in the German army, for example. The colonel sanctions only marriages with "women of one's own class," or at least with women of wealth who can help the officer keep up his position. In either case it comes to the same thing, because every aristocracy is in the beginning an aristocracy of wealth. The Ministry

and the Deputies killed that order dead. Now, an officer on passing the building of the Chamber of Deputies in Paris must salute, just by way of honouring the power from which he derives his authority—the elected representatives of the people.

However, custom has, as usual, been the stronger force of the two. The French corps of officers could not have changed, even if it wished to do so, the attitude of the Frenchman toward the army, of the private soldier toward his superior. Young officers of aristocratic tendencies watched the German army at manoeuvres. They saw the absolute, unquestioning obedience of the German private, the soldierly "click" with which everything was done, the machine-like quality of the whole organization. Among themselves in barracks they might whisper their wish that the French army could be like that, voice their suspicion that the German system would prove better in action than theirs. They could not turn these opinions into working formulas. Such a system would not go down in France, they knew perfectly well, because of the French character and tradition. They must work with the national spirit as they found it. And their more understanding superiors never wanted any other system. They understood its advantages, and were turning them to use.

To begin with, the French staff, realizing the democratic attitude of the private, realizing also that they had smaller resources of men and material than Germany,

tried to omit all unnecessary pomp and parade, and to use the time thus saved for more intensive training in the technique of fighting. Goose-steps, pretty evolutions, drills wherein the whole company moves as one man—these belong to an aristocratic society. The ideal of absolute monarchy is primitive ; primitive ideals need a visible show of pomp and power. The ideal of a democracy is intellectual. It needs no such trappings. They produced a rather ragged-appearing army, whose real power and efficiency did not show. Two years before the war, I saw several regiments of French troops line themselves up along the Champs Elysées to welcome Queen Wilhelmina to Paris. I remarked at the time to a Franco-American friend, with whom I stood on relations of friendly quarrelsomeness, that their drill would be a disgrace to a school. “ You are complimenting the French army,” he said. A fortnight later, my civilian ignorance was enlightened on what he meant. In a city of the Puy-de-Dôme region, I watched the young recruits in their first week or so of training. The non-commissioned officers were not troubling about drill. They were teaching the men just enough to get them to their destination in orderly fashion, and no more. From the first, the main attention was devoted to entrenching, to skirmishing tactics, to marksmanship, to bayonet work, and the like.

Beyond that, the staff knew the national character

well enough to understand that your Frenchman will not work in the dark. He wants to see what he is doing ; he wants a little play for his individuality. In training, in manœuvres and now in war, the French soldier demands to be told why he is making this attack, defending that position. He is a citizen of France, as good in his public character as any other man : he feels he has a right to know. His officers grant him that right ; in addition, they develop his individuality and leave as much as they can, consistently with good team-work, to his own initiative—the antithesis of the absolute, blind obedience inculcated by the Prussian drill-master. The hope and possibility of promotion they dangle always before his eyes. Not only are the non-commissioned officers taught how to take command in case the officers are killed, but the chiefs of squads, and finally the “ chief ” of a squad of two men ! Those young fellows who have been promoted from the ranks since the beginning of the war are not entirely new to the art of command. They learned something of it in their early military training.

The democratic theory of army discipline is a part of the teaching at St. Cyr. The young officers, far from being instructed that they are the upper crust of the earth, are taught that they are only the comrades of their men, chosen for command simply because they know more. They must rule, the instructors teach, less by fear than by friendliness. On the intractable

man, who occasionally crops out in any organization, they must come down hard ; and French military law provides the apparatus for doing this. But such procedure must be the exception, not the rule. The officer must be a sort of father to the private—a relation expressed by the term *mes enfants* (my children) in which he most commonly addresses them. By no other system does it seem possible to get results out of Frenchmen. And by it the staff has got, in this war, the best results possible.

It remains to be said that there are all kinds of men in command of the French army, as there are all kinds of men everywhere ; I speak of the rule and not the exception. Veteran officers comment with amusement on the conduct of a few young sub-lieutenants, lately promoted from the ranks, who have become beggars on horseback, tending toward superiority and over-strictness. It may be noted also that such mistakes of the promotion system do not last long at the front.

Both the army and the populace resent this superior attitude. In the anxious days of Verdun, a bearded *poilu* of a sergeant appeared on the Boulevard des Capucines, Paris. He was wearing a stained uniform and a dented helmet, and he carried a ragged kit. All Paris knows this phenomenon, and smiles upon it indulgently—he was “home on leave,” Now, he was new to the capital, apparently, and as he gaped at the cafés, the buildings, and the pretty girls smiling upon

him, he failed to notice a lieutenant of the transport service in a spick-and-span new uniform. The officer accosted him :

“Here !” he said, “why don’t you salute ? Go back six paces, advance, and salute as you pass !”

The sergeant obeyed to the dot ; but as his hand came down from his cap, he said : “In the trenches, Monsieur, we shake hands with our officers.”

This happened before the Café de la Paix, that geographical centre of the universe, from which the Parisian watches the world go by. The crowd had noticed the episode, and when the sergeant said this, they rose up with some of the old Parisian mob-spirit and shoved the dandy lieutenant into the gutter. He was new to his galons ; that was the matter with him. Now I can imagine a crowd behaving so in the United States. I cannot imagine it in Germany. It would be characteristic only in France.

They say that in the trenches the officers usually begin the day by shaking hands all round and asking the men how they passed the night. Through little things do we know the character of a people or of an army ; and I record these impressions received during one trip to the front, wherein we travelled much of the way within sound of the Verdun guns.

At a point where all civilian clothes except peasant garb are conspicuous, we passed in our automobile a company of cavalry which had just saddled and pre-

pared for the day's work. They saluted correctly. I chanced to look back. Some one, probably the captain in the centre of the group, had made a joke at our expense. The troopers about him were laughing and joking in their turn ; it was all simple and natural and human. We dined that night in an important advanced base on the road of the Verdun transport. At the next table sat two lieutenants and two privates, having a very good time. The talk shuttled back and forth between personal gossip and warm discussion of military affairs. These men, it came out, were going home on leave ; they had come out of the Verdun trenches only that morning. We had occasion, next day, to visit an artillery position. It was necessary to pick our route carefully, since we might show ourselves to the German artillery observers and receive the compliment of a shell or so. Two private soldiers, going our way, offered to guide us. We were in charge of an officer stationed near this position. Salutes exchanged, the officer and the two soldiers fell into easy conversation, so full of army slang that I could no more than catch its drift. On parting they all saluted formally again ; then they shook hands and the officer opened his cigarette case, offering it as to a friend in his club. One of these privates appeared to be a rather illiterate though intelligent peasant. The other was a man of education. On parting, the officer gave us his card. He is a baron. That afternoon, in a town scarred and pitted from a

recent air raid, our party took refuge from a violent rain-storm in a doorway. Presently, a private came dodging in. He saluted, correctly, upon seeing our lieutenant. The salute finished, they fell into easy conversation about things in general—just two Frenchmen together, on a basis of mutual esteem and mutual interest in the job.

War intensifies all emotions, even the softer ones ; and the system has worked out, in practical effect, to a strong affection between sword and bayonet, the *poilu* and his commander. I have seen officers home on leave eaten up with emotion no more noble than pure jealousy. Each was afraid lest that fellow whom he had left in charge would get away the affection of his *poilus*. As for the soldiers in the characteristic French regiment, they have usually a fierce and affectionate loyalty as great in degree as the blind loyalty of your ideal feudal retainer, but quite different in kind. It proceeds from a faith in the squareness of the French system as they see it at work. The officer, they think, has been chosen officer because he is abler than they—because he knows more, has greater power of leadership. Sometimes their solicitude for the health and safety of their leaders is both amusing and touching. A convalescent captain tells me that one night, during the early, open fighting, he grew suspicious concerning a certain point at his front. He determined to inspect it for himself. He was on his way, when he heard a

rustling behind him. He turned, on the alert, to behold six or seven of his own *poilus* crawling after him.

“Why are you out here, *mes enfants* ?” he whispered.
“Go back !”

“No,” replied the one who first got tongue, “you must not go out there alone—we have come to look after you.”

Said another officer :

“I picture my men as always hanging to my coat-tails. Whenever I take a peep over the trench, whenever I do anything dangerous, they say : ‘But, my captain, if you should get killed, which of us would know enough to lead ?’”

I know a lieutenant of a Breton regiment, now “reformed” from army service. His face, as you see it first, seems merely a little peculiar ; there is an indentation somewhat too deep under the lower lip, and there are one or two small scars, now fading away. It is hard to believe, however, that he has no lower set of teeth at all. “I’m not the man I was,” he remarked with his French *blague*. “You see, when the surgeons began by moving my chin front under my left ear to its proper position, they asked the family for a photograph, to see how I should look. The family made a mistake and sent my brother’s photograph. He favours mother’s side of the family, and I used to favour father’s !”

He was hit in a hot attack during the German retreat

to the Aisne—shot four times through the head. In those days of horrors unrecordable, the medical corps worked short-handed. Often, they had to leave behind the men who seemed to have no chance, that they might get out the others. They looked over this lieutenant. He remembers—for he kept consciousness, though he could neither move nor speak—that they said “No chance” and went away. However, a stray litter-bearer informed his Bretons that the lieutenant was “out there,” a hopeless case, and that they had been ordered to leave him. Under rifle and machine-gun fire, a squad of the Bretons made a rush and got him. Being simple-minded men, these Breton peasants were afraid that they had disobeyed orders; and so they hid him under a pile of blankets. Just then came the command to march—the general was shifting that brigade. The Breton company found a wheelbarrow, dumped the lieutenant into it, covered him with trappings, and told the officers some lie to account for this strange bit of transport material. All night, they took turns at trundling the wheelbarrow at the foot of the column. Next morning, they attacked. Before going into action, they took him out and propped him against a tree, so that he might have air. The attack over, they loaded him into an empty compartment of a camion. Just then a high regimental officer came along, looking for baggage space, and insisted upon inspecting that wagon. They tried by tact to prevent him. Their guilty looks

made him suspicious, and he tore off the covers. "You see," stammered the Bretons, "it is our lieutenant. We—we didn't want to leave him behind." He went straight to the hospital, of course.

On the other hand, the better kind of French officer holds toward his privates and non-coms. the attitude of the dying Sir Philip Sidney—"thy need is greater than mine!" A young Irishwoman of Paris used, during the early, confused period, to feed the wounded as the hospital trains rolled through Paris. Often, these men had not eaten for a day. "The officers," she said, "no matter how badly wounded, used to say, 'my men first.' The trains only made a short stop, so that generally they got nothing at all."

An American ambulancier remembers that on his first day under the guns of Flanders, he started to carry out a squad of wounded. His instructions were to move the more heavily injured first. He looked over the *blesés*, and determined that a captain with a pair of crushed legs needed the most immediate attention. The American and his mate picked him up. He began to pour out a flood of French. The Americans, understanding the language not at all, thought he was merely delirious, and started to load him into the ambulance. Suddenly the officer drew his sword, thrust its point against the wall of the ambulance, and pushing with all his strength, kept himself from being lifted. Then a Frenchman ran up and explained. He refused,

positively, to be taken to hospital before his men. He would run his sword through his own body first, he said ! I heard that story early in the war, and it struck me then as remarkable ; but instances of the kind have become commonplaces to me now, so many do I know.

By contrast, another American ambulance-man remembers a case where he had to transport a lot of German prisoners. He loaded aboard a private, badly wounded. The next case in line was a Prussian officer. He rose up on his stretcher and said in English :

“ I will not go in there with privates. I am an officer and a baron.”

“ I told him,” adds the American, “ that I was a first-class private and an American citizen, and just for that he'd go on the top shelf ! ”

In fact, testimony from those lively young American ambulanciers, the members of the American Ambulance Sections, may be pertinent.

“ It's this way,” said one of them. “ The French officer just looks you in the eye and talks to you man to man. Once, I remember, we were taking the wounded out of the Champagne. We'd been working for seventy-two hours with only snatches of sleep. We were getting to the point where, when we'd try to park the machines, we'd run into each other. Just then a French officer came along. ‘ Messieurs,’ he said, ‘ I almost feel I have no right to ask any more of you, you have worked so long and so bravely. But what can I do ? Our

wounded will die if they don't get to the hospitals.' Well, we'd have gone to hell for him, and we told him so. We braced up and worked twenty-four hours more!"

The more I see of the French army, indeed, the more I am reminded of the old cattle days in the Far West. The life of the cowboy involved danger and hardship, bravely borne. There had to be in a cow-camp, as in any other working association of men, a system of discipline. The officer was the foreman. He held his job, usually, because he had technique, courage, and leadership. If he failed in those qualities, he did not last long. The cowboys obeyed him because they recognized his abilities. He put on no airs over his men. He was leader among them, but also one of them. Your ideal ranch-foreman was nearly equivalent to the ideal officer under the French system.

Or again, it resembles in its social common sense one of our great and well-directed business concerns. The personnel of such a business comprises many men of many kinds. The heads of departments are picked because they know the job best—they have gone forward through ability. If these heads of departments do not associate a great deal with subordinates out of office hours, it is only because they have more in common with other heads of departments. Nothing in the nature or custom of the business prevents them from inviting a subordinate

to dinner now and then. Some of them do this very thing by policy—just like the wounded brigadier-general, who said the other day in Paris :

“ I never dine at the front without having one of my *poilus* with me at table ! ”

I drew this comparison once in presence of an eminent Frenchman. He answered a little impatiently :

“ Ah, but war isn't a business ! It is something nobler. We are dealing with life and death and one's country ! ”

Which is true ; the nobility raised up for a time in the individual being the factor which makes the lie of war a half-truth. Unlike a commercial organization, an army must prepare men not only to work intelligently but to die willingly. The force producing this final effect in the French army is the spirit of cordial affection between officers and men, which is linked, somehow, to their common, burning love of country.

To sum up the whole matter : it is no accident that the terminology of etiquette is nearly all French. They, more than any other people, understand the art of personal contacts. They know, best of all races, how human beings should behave toward each other. They have made of this understanding a military force.

All this gives the reason why the French army can meet the better-prepared, better-backed German army on equal terms. In willingness to die, a great end of

army discipline, the autocratic German and the democratic Frenchman stand about on a par. In other ways, the advantage is all with the French. A conscript army embraces all kinds of men. Not every intelligent private among them can be made an officer. Young fellows who, if their lives be spared, will create the artistic, scientific and political future of the next generation, are serving in the French, German and British ranks. In the German army this exceptional private can use his brains so far, and only so far. The Frenchman of this class, allowed greater play for his intelligence, can use them very far, if he wishes. If any private in the French army has a useful suggestion, almost any officer in the French army is willing to listen. This is exactly the practice of some great industrial companies, like the Northcliffe newspapers, for example, where prizes are offered for the best weekly suggestion. A German private who would step up before action, salute, and say: "Pardon me, Captain, but hadn't you better look out for this point?" would doubtless be knocked down on the spot. But such a suggestion has often saved French companies, and, if a story I have heard be true, has at least once prevented a brigade from making an unsound movement. Indeed, the German private is in no position to conceive suggestions. He knows only dimly what his company, his regiment or his brigade is doing. The French soldier usually knows exactly. The full strategy of an impending movement

is passed down the ranks until the plain *poilu* understands all that he is capable of understanding. So, in the unexpected emergency, he knows how to act, as the German often does not. The French army may have on the average no more intelligence than the German, but by its system it releases more of that intelligence for use.

Many of the French distrust democracy ; the question is by no means wholly settled in the public mind. "The rottenest absolute monarchy that ever existed is better than the best Republic," I have heard a reactionary say. And before the war certain more moderate Royalists, while agreeing that democracy worked best in time of peace, said that it could not exist for long, because autocracy would always beat it in time of war. The French people have refuted that theory. Democracy, handled intelligently by an intelligent people, has proved the better way. This is not least among their triumphs.

* * * * *

The General of the British Royal Army Medical Corps admitted that he had one weakness, which in his lighter moments he described as the curse of his race. He had to have his tea at four o'clock. He could live without breakfast, luncheon and dinner, he said ; he could dine on roast beef, or truffles, or tinned mutton, or hard-tack ; but tea he must have, and at four. He had knocked off now from a sixteen-hour stretch of the most

anxious and exacting work for a cup of that private stock Ceylon which his servant keeps for him like a treasure. Tea-time was the hour to visit the General. He was a pleasant, elderly gentleman, doing his job of repairing the wrecks of war with all the greater zeal because he abhorred warfare. By preference he talked, in these sessions, either Indian civil government, of which he knew a great deal, or anthropology, which was his mild and gentle hobby. Only occasionally did he touch upon the war. As now; for I had brought up a question agitating the British authorities in this harbour base.

The hospital trains discharged at the Gare Centrale. From that point the wounded were carried by automobile ambulance. It was a half-mile or so to the nearest hospital; and all the way the ambulances must run across old-fashioned cobble-stones. To jolt across those cobbles was hard enough on well people. It was torture sometimes to the wounded. Whereupon the British offered to repave the streets with cement or asphalt.

The town authorities, touched in their pride, responded that they would repave as soon as they could afford it. In the meantime, they hinted, they would take no charity, even from allies.

“I like them for it,” said the General. “The French are gentlemen. I didn’t know it before the war. I’d lived mostly in India, and I’d never seen much of them

close at hand. I'd thought they were unstable and excitable, and all that—you know. When we came up from Boulogne to the border in the beginning, the French cheered us and fed us and gave us drinks all the way. The girls came out and pinned flowers on us. We looked like the forest in Macbeth. They were most polite, too. They said we'd come to rescue France. We, with our two little army corps! Then came the retreat from Mons . . ."

The General paused here. He never said much at any time about the retreat from Mons, perhaps because he would have had to tell about his own not inglorious part in it, and that would have been "swanking," which is the eighth cardinal sin to a Briton. Ask any soldier who was in it, and he will answer, as by pattern: "It was hell—just hell!" With an enemy advancing thirty kilometres a day, the problem of the Medical Corps was not only to attend the wounded, it was to rescue them and to keep them from the enemy. The surgeons took daring chances. The General lost two assistants on the way back, one killed, one captured. He himself just missed both death and capture while he stayed behind to get out the last man at St. Quentin and Le Cateau. The General left all that to my memory and my imagination as he sweetened another cup of tea.

"We weren't in the confidence of the staff," he pursued, "and we thought we were badly whipped. So

did the French. And all the time I had only one idea, beside work: What were the French going to think of us now? We had come up to help France, and we were beaten from the first. Not much leisure then to do any real thinking, you understand. It just buzzed in the back of my head, as a foolish little thing will when you're in action.

“Well, for a day or so I didn't find much time to talk to the French. But the night of Le Cateau, when I hadn't slept for twenty hours, I thought I'd take a breathing-space for a few winks. My servant found me a billet in a house on the edge of a town. He guided my machine in the darkness. We drove up to the gate. The house was all lighted up. I knocked, and madame came to the door. And honestly I didn't want to face her. It's curious how those little ideas take hold when a man is in an abnormal state.

“She was crying. And when she saw my uniform she put out both her hands and said:

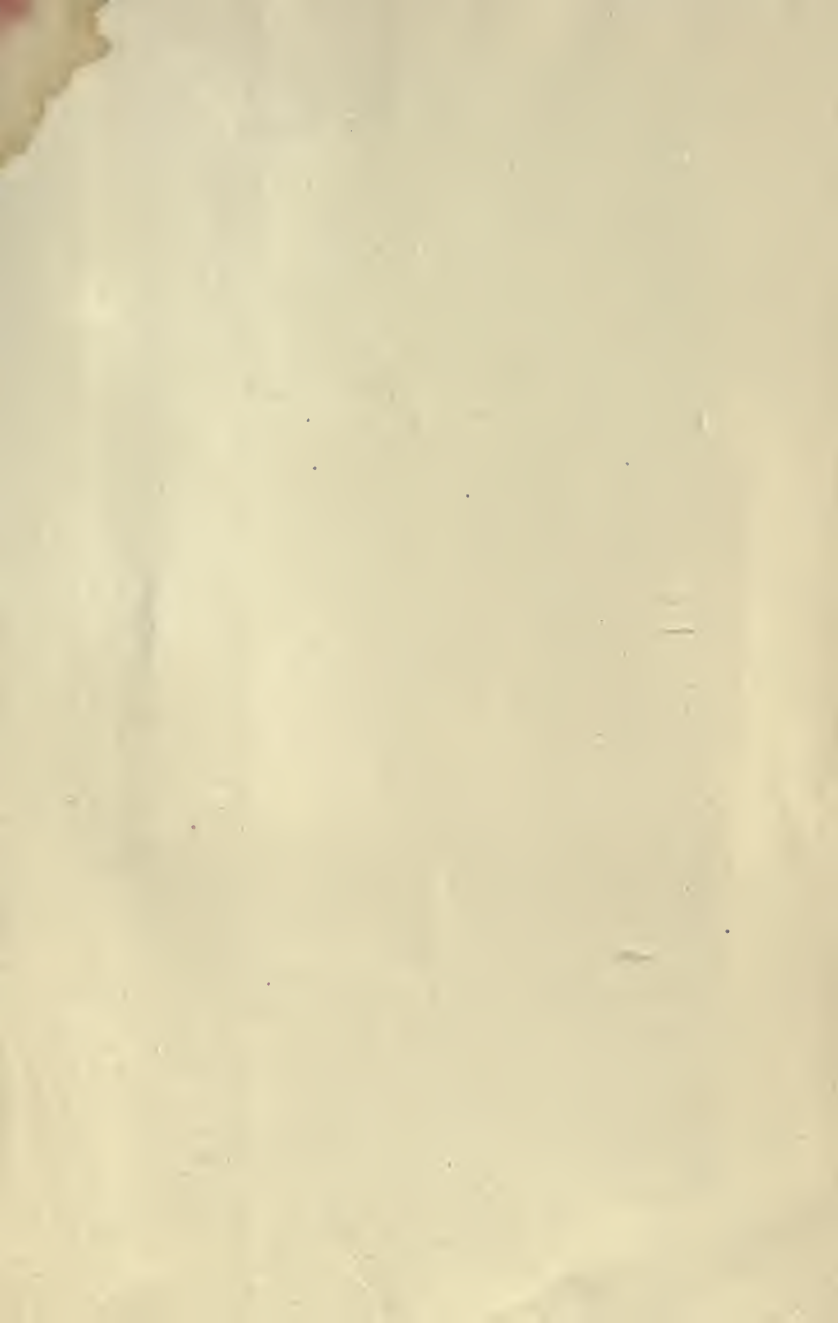
“‘Oh, my poor friends, are you beaten? What can I do?’ She had expected our coming, and she had set out a supper for us. There were even flowers on the table!

“That's how it went—all the way back to Paris—no word of reproach, ever. I didn't meet a man, woman or child who wasn't willing to do everything. One's own people couldn't have been half so kind. That's the test of people, isn't it—standing by!”

The General pulled himself up at this point. He had been showing emotion, which is shameful for a Briton.

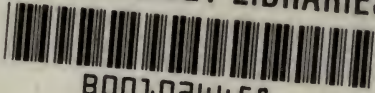
“Another cup?” he said. “Really, you Americans should learn to take tea. It’s much better for one than your cocktails—isn’t that what you call them?”

THE END



YC 28878

*ibk at
pte 4.*

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES

8001024458

361227 D640
I7
Lawrence

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

