THROUGH FRENCH EYES

BRITAIN'S EFFORT

THROUGH FRENCH EYES

*

BRITAIN'S EFFORT

Authorised Translation.

PRINTED BY EYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE, LTD., HIS MAJESTY'S PRINTERS,
EAST HARDING STREET, LONDON, E.C.

THROUGH FRENCH EYES

*

BRITAIN'S EFFORT

BY

HENRY D. DAVRAY

LONDON
CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD.
1916

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

BRITAIN'S EFFORT

I

Crossing the Channel in War-Time

BEWARE of submarines! With this warning in my ears, I take the train for London. The same warning is bestowed upon me on all sides, sometimes in a facetious tone by people of a merry disposition, sometimes with a note of distress by those prone to indulge in gloomy prognostications. In parting from the latter, I affect to share their apprehensions. I bid them touching farewells with a tremolo in my voice, though I cannot succeed in shedding tears of emotion. But how can I possibly bid a joyous *au revoir* to people in whose imaginations I am already foredoomed to provide nourishment for the fishy inhabitants of the Channel!

The people who believe that submarines are ambushed in hundreds all round the English coast are only too numerous. Let them come and see for themselves, and they will soon be disabused.

Although it is no longer possible to travel with the pleasant facility of pre-War days, and

though one has to be able to furnish passports and papers which are strictly in order and to submit to innumerable visits and cross-examinations, none the less the decks and between-decks of the vessel are soon encumbered with a crowd of passengers of all classes. With the exercise of infinite care and precaution they have even embarked several horses, with their passports attached to the front of their halters.

As we put off from the landing-stage the shore is covered with a swarm of loungers and bathers. The coloured sunshades and the light dresses glisten gaily in the sunshine.

Ahead of us the sea is so calm that a periscope might be seen at a distance of several miles. We shall not see any! In the morning, we are told, a French torpedo-boat spoiled the symmetry of one of those instruments, which was so imprudent as to emerge in its neighbourhood. And, in fact, to the west, a small warship is darting about with extraordinary rapidity beneath long streamers of black smoke. Not far off are a few fishing-boats, with all sails spread.

Our boat proceeds at its maximum speed. The air is still, and the dense smoke from the great funnels is not dispersed, but hangs suspended

like an immense hawser binding us to the land. The coast of France is still quite clear, and we can discern already the long white line of the English cliffs. We might be crossing some great tranquil lake. We are not alone: near at hand and in the distance other boats are bedaubing the sky's blue with their black trails of smoke; I can count more than fifty of them. We pass mail-boats pressing along at full speed, we pass cargo-boats—heavier and slower—and there is nothing to suggest danger in the radiant tranquillity of this sparkling sea.

Nevertheless, a practised eye would be able to detect certain unaccustomed signs. Possibly mines have been placed along the ship's course. Signals are exchanged with lightships that one had not noticed before. And, above the captain's bridge, a cask is attached to the mast, from which the lookout surveys the surroundings.

The coast of France disappears in a black haze of smoke. The high cliffs of Britain are outlined more clearly against the sky. The boats are more numerous now. From all points of the horizon they converge in the direction of the harbour. I fancy that some fifteen hundred boats a week enter the English ports, and that the German

pirates, at the highest point of their success, never succeeded in sinking fifteen in the same lapse of time. Taking the total, they destroy scarcely a half per cent. At this rate, it would take them several centuries to wipe out England's maritime trade, even on the supposition that our Allies did not build any boats to replace those which are lost; and the latter is by no means the case!

The German submarine blockade is really not very formidable, in the opinion of those who have any knowledge at all of naval matters. Moreover, the losses suffered by the Germans are very substantial. However rapidly they construct submarine craft of all descriptions, the latter are captured and destroyed in numbers which must cause them considerable uneasiness. No, England will not be starved out by this means.

The entrances to the English ports seem to be guarded with the utmost caution. A submarine, blind and submerged, would be caught in the trap set for her more surely than a herring. How are herrings caught? In nets? Well, imagine a net some miles in length, manipulated from dry land, without any danger for the operator and with certain danger for the submarine, which would be caught infallibly. All this is visible with the

naked eye. Insular England understands very well how to protect herself.

The passengers are so much interested in this spectacle that they do not appear to notice what is happening in the sky. Only a moment ago some curious objects had risen up, like a flight of large birds, startled by the shrieks of the steamboat's whistle. Aeroplanes? No; or, if so, of a strange pattern! In any case they are some kind of flying machines; they leave the top of the cliff very neatly, they manœuvre in mid-air, they ascend and descend, they pursue a torpedo-boat, they skim the waves, they come and go and point this way and that with incredible ease and rapidity. The passengers applaud and give vent to cries of admiration. I must confess that the spectacle is worthy of admiration. A gentleman by my side, who has suddenly become uneasy, asks: "They are not Zeppelins, are they?" I am able to reassure him without hesitation. These flying machines have none of the rigidity and the colossal bulk of the German monsters. They suggest, rather, immense dragon-flies, with wings too diaphanous to be visible. "A flying whale" is the more apt description of a distinguished compatriot who has been the most charming of travelling

companions. The machine, in fact, consists of a kind of elongated balloon, like the body of a whale, the apparently rigid carcase being covered with a tissue which reminds one of the silver paper round a packet of chocolate. The rays of the sun are reflected on it with a silvery radiance like a beam of light on the red-brown belly of a trout in the clear water of a stream. Suddenly, one of these machines rushes towards us. As the front part of it is larger than the back, it has the appearance now of a sphere, with a tiny boat suspended very low. It seems to mock the slow progress of our boat; it comes up to us, drops to a few yards above the sea, and sails along in our company. The two aeronauts, whose heads and shoulders we discern above the edge of the car, are greeted with acclamations. The hum of the motor diminishes, the propeller turns more slowly, the aviators wave their arms and reply to the cheers of the passengers.

Suddenly the hum of the motor is redoubled, the propeller revolves once more at full speed, and, in a few seconds, the flying machine leaves us behind, then turns, comes back to us, is off again, and we are left wondering. To right and left other machines are performing similar evolutions: they rise

swiftly high above the cliffs, hover over the clear depths of the sea, in which nothing can escape the notice of the observers, and slide down at a dizzy angle as though to hurl bombs with certain aim.

Later, from the train which has climbed the slope and dominates the town, we see them still, these prodigious insects: they skim over the innumerable white chimneypots which decorate so oddly the roofs of the English towns, or they redescend towards the harbour in the midst of a distracted flight of swallows.

Scattered over the verdant, rolling country, are tents and huts in endless succession. It is as though the barracks of the neighbouring camp had multiplied in thousands and had invaded all this charming landscape. In the streets of the town, in the country roads, over the vast stretches of turf—everywhere there are soldiers in khaki, proving that England is awake and is preparing herself.

II

The Recruiting of the Volunteers

Speeches and Bands

ANY Englishman of more than 18 and less than 40 years of age who has failed to enlist must feel remarkably uneasy in his conscience. Whichever way he looks, bills, placards, posters din into his brain the implacable injunction: "Your country needs you! Enlist immediately!" It is useless for him to turn away his head, for, in that case, not only is he elbowed by ten of his compatriots in khaki, but suddenly his ears are greeted with the warlike strains of the military band preceding a detachment on its way to some railway station or barracks.

Here are the Scotch; the bagpipes fill the air with their shrill music; the men are superb; their high white gaiters move lightly up and down, and, at every step, their pleated kilts expand like opening fans.

An instant later, in some open space—Trafalgar

Square, St. Paul's Churchyard, Covent Garden, or one of the Circuses—a band strikes up; the musicians blow in their little short bugles, to the notes of which succeed the piercing fifes, backed up by drums; the drumsticks rain down blows on the parchment, while one energetic performer, enveloped in a vast leather apron, deals vigorous alternate strokes on the big drum. And, when the band is not playing, the men themselves whistle their favourite air—the "Marseillaise"—followed sometimes by "Tipperary."

In London alone, forty of these bands are crossing the town in all directions. Each one has its itinerary, ending in some open space, where a crowd may be gathered without disturbing the traffic. Behind the musicians come the recruiters. For the most part they are soldiers, non-commissioned officers who have been at the Front, and the most eloquent of whom harangue the loiterers. Some of them exhibit an extraordinary power of rough and facetious eloquence, which reminds one of those individuals employed to advertise the attractions of fairs, or of the Paris street-vendors perched on their diminutive platform at the end of a closed way. The London recruiters have as their platform the steps of

St. Paul's Cathedral, or the enormous granite base which supports the Nelson column.

It is in Trafalgar Square that the crowds are generally largest, and that the efforts of the recruiters are most fruitful. The orators are not always soldiers. I listened more than once to speeches by some of the most popular comic actors. The public, it must be confessed, was a little disconcerted; these comedians, whom it was accustomed to see behind the footlights in their stage costume and make-up, were scarcely recognisable in conventional town clothes. One of them made a strong impression on the crowd which his presence had attracted. Instead of the droll figure, grotesquely attired, who was wont to make the whole audience rock with laughter, we saw an elegant and distinguished gentleman, who spoke with gravity and emotion. Without a single joke or witticism, this serious comedian profoundly stirred the crowd by the expression of his patriotic sentiments. He told them how, following the example of many Londoners who were past the military age, he had enrolled himself among the special constables, and that he often spent the night mounting guard at some station or railway line or factory, where some

mischief might be attempted—and what he did not mention was that, in addition to this, he spent all his leisure with the wounded, and showed the most exquisite devotion as a hospital attendant.

The women are excellent recruiters. To be sure, there are some good ladies whose activity in this direction is a little indiscreet, and who demand of all and sundry: "Why are you not in khaki?"—a practice which more often provokes a rebuff than a courteous response. But there are others who display more tact and achieve better results. The other day, a popular actress was hoisted on to the lofty base of the Nelson column; without any pose or affectation, she succeeded in saying just what was required in order to decide some of those who were hanging back to rally round the flag. In the raw daylight of the great square, before this mixed assembly, this artist expressed her admiration for those who had fought and were fighting still—her anxious tenderness for the wounded whom she visited; none but a woman could have apostrophised the slackers and shirkers in phrases of such ironical and burning scorn.

It was a woman again who was urging those who were hesitating or delaying to join the colours. She spoke without any practised eloquence, but her

short address made a profound impression on the crowd. This woman, who had been rescued from the *Lusitania*, told how her child had perished in the wreck, and she expressed her immense hatred for the assassins.

But the Canadian sergeant is assuredly the most popular of those open-air speakers. He has come back from Ypres, where his comrades have perished all round him, suffocated by the poisonous gases, and he is availing himself of sick leave to recount what he has seen. He holds forth with incredible spirit, with inexhaustible stores of argument, relating stories in turn harrowing and comic. In a few weeks this Canadian sergeant induced more than three thousand volunteers to enlist, and I strongly suspect that this result procured for him a more or less indefinite extension of his sick leave.

He is, in fact, amazingly persuasive.

After a more or less brief preamble, he comes to direct methods. He has discerned some young faces in the crowd. Let those beware who have listened to him too attentively. All at once his arm is stretched out; he is making his appeal: "Ho, you down there! Come a little nearer. Climb up here. There's room for you." And he

will not let go his man until he has induced him to fall in along the base of the column. If he makes his escape, he is accompanied by a volley of sarcasms, to which the audience add their contributions. The other day he ended his speech abruptly: "That's enough talking! We want soldiers, not parrots. Who is ready to serve?" A man of mature age, with hair turning grey, comes forward. "How old are you?" "Fifty-three." "You had better wait; we have not come to that yet! Thank you very much." And at once the Canadian sergeant turns to the crowd: "Who will take the place of that man?" And two recruits are hoisted onto the granite platform. The crowd applauds. "Quite right, boy. Well done! Good luck to you!" are shouted in cordial tones to those who have enlisted. Without any interval, as soon as the cheers have subsided, the sergeant continues:

"The other day an individual presented himself at the recruiting office. Your age? Thirty-six. Married? Yes, six times; a widower twice; three times divorced. Any children? Yes. How many? Fifteen. Well, my man! You had better go back home. You would cost too much in allowances for wives and young ones. We could get

a colonel for that price!" And the crowd laughs good-humouredly. Immediately he shouts a question: "How many Englishmen are there here? Put up your hands." A few hands go up. "If all the rest are foreigners," observes the Canadian, "I had better warn the police." And suddenly, with outstretched finger, he apostrophises a great, broad-shouldered fellow: "And you there, do you think you can make us believe you are a foreigner, with a mug like that? Come along here; we will help you up, and you will be one of us. What? You can't. You're an American? Splendid. You will not be the only one. Only last week a batch of twenty presented themselves. They were asked: 'Are you English?' Almost without accent they replied: 'Yes!' There was no need for us to be more unaccommodating than they were, and now they are in khaki. Some day, when the United States builds up an army, they will be her generals! Come, make up your mind! There's a fieldmarshal's bâton in your knapsack!"

His *flair* is remarkable, and he is extraordinarily clever in appealing to women. "Don't allow any but soldiers to pay court to you. If your lover is not in khaki, give him only black looks till he is. Why should young men fight and

be killed for the sake of him? If he persists in remaining a civilian, make him a bow, and come to see me at the recruiting office. I guarantee that all I bring there are men!"

When the meeting is ended, a procession is formed, with the band in front, and the recruits march off, accompanied by the cheers of the crowd, to the nearest recruiting office. The latter are everywhere. They have been summarily installed in empty shops, in stray huts, in premises of the most varied descriptions. There, in a simplified form, the formalities of enlistment take place, and, on a deal table, the volunteer signs his engagement. After this, he goes back home, makes known his decision to his family, and returns the next day for the medical examination and to take the oath. With the band at their head, and an escort of sergeants and officers, the recruits set out for the stations from which they will be despatched to their several destinations. Street urchins and loungers fall into step, and take up in chorus the tune of "Tipperary" or the "Marseillaise"; women—wives, sweethearts or relations—march by the side of the dear one whom they wish to accompany as far as they are allowed.

No, indeed, the English have not been blind

or deaf to the call of duty. England has enlisted in this way, to the sound of speeches and bugles, several millions of her sons, firmly resolved to make an end of the Boches.

Bills and Placards.

Without the aid of conscription, more than five million men are doing their duty. Out of this number, three millions have left their workshop, office, shop, counter or farm, in order to join the ranks of the fighting forces. The remainder are toiling to supply the equipment, armament, munitions, and all the various necessities of the army and the navy.

England possessed no constitutional provision or law conferring on the Government and authorities the power to call up her men, as Frenchmen are called up. No measure had been planned beforehand for the purpose of mobilising a population which had been absolved for centuries from every kind of military service, and had never borne arms. Whenever England had needed soldiers, she had appealed to the good will of the nation and had always met with a generous response. It was with volunteers that England fought against the Revolution and against Napoleon. It was

with volunteers that she sustained her campaign in the Crimea for more than two years, and, at the opening of the present century, her campaign in South Africa.

When the present war burst upon the world—like a thunderbolt from a blue sky, as Lord Salisbury had predicted—Britannia stretched forth her trident over the waters, and from that time her formidable Navy, supported by the French fleet, has kept the ocean routes open for the Allies.

England's participation did not cease here. While her squadrons were preventing the Germans from ravaging our coasts and from effecting a landing there and so taking us in the rear, the people of France, in arms to defend *la patrie*, pressed back the invading troops, inflicted reverses on them, and for long months, with a heroic tenacity, opposed to them an unyielding defensive, which enabled England to recruit and train her armies.

In default of conscription, which she had never needed hitherto, England had recourse to her customary method, the method to which her people were accustomed. The recruiting offices were opened for voluntary enlistment. We have

an instance of the same method in French history, when the National Convention declared France to be in danger.

It was typical of a very individual trait of the English character that, the worse the news, the more numerous were the recruits. During those weeks when things looked blackest, the men came forward in such numbers that the organisation was inadequate to cope with them.

We will examine now the curious fashion in which the recruiting is conducted, and the ingenious methods—methods which are, to be sure, somewhat disconcerting to a foreigner—by which the nation appealed to her citizens to defend her.

One could hardly reproach the English with not thinking about the War; they do not think about it as we do, that is all. As Rudyard Kipling finely expressed it: in France, we live in the War. We die of it, too, he might have added. It is not so near to the Englishman, but, in order not to think of it, he would need to be blind and deaf.

Everything reminds him that the Empire is at war. On the walls, on the monuments, on the fronts of the taxis, in the shop-windows, in the restaurants, the trains, the railway stations, on the

motor-buses, in the churches and chapels, in the theatres and cinemas, even in the lavatories, there are bills and placards of all sizes to remind him that the British Empire is defending its existence, and that "Kitchener needs more men." It is impossible not to see them and read them.

On the Corinthian portico of the Mansion House, the official residence of the Lord Mayor, an inscription in enormous letters on two immense posters reminds the crowd which, from morning to evening, surges in front of the Royal Exchange and the Bank that the country is fighting for its independence. On the bridge at Ludgate Hill is displayed the following appeal: "The Empire is at stake. Rally round the flag"; and, as you walk down Fleet Street, the home of the Press and more crowded than the Rue Montmartre, or as you come out of St. Paul's Cathedral, or as you come from Blackfriars and the right bank of the river, or by Farringdon Street from Holborn or the great provision markets, this legend meets your eye and forces itself upon your attention. In the West End it is the same thing as in the City. On the fronts of the great hotels, from top to bottom, inscriptions on calico, strongly framed, repeat, in letters a yard high, that

England is counting on the support of all her children.

A complete organisation for publicity and bill-sticking has been evolved; the bills are distributed and pasted up in millions. They are of all shapes and sizes—handbills, demy bills, long horizontal bands, narrow placards, and panels several yards high. They are of the most varied descriptions, and it would need a volume at least to describe them all. We will merely describe in detail a few of the most characteristic.

A frame of red, white and blue, the royal arms, with the French mottoes: "Dieu et mon droit" and "Honi soit qui mal y pense" between the initials "G.R."; below, in blue letters, a statement, signed by the King, to the effect that: We are fighting for a noble purpose, and we will not lay down our arms until that purpose has been achieved —followed by this appeal in capital letters: "Men of the Empire. To arms!" and, under a blue line, in blue letters: "God save the King!"

Another, similar to our official white posters, reproduces the declaration made by Mr. Asquith at the Guildhall in November, 1914. "This is going to be a long-drawn struggle. We shall never sheathe the sword until Belgium recovers in full

measure all and more than all that she has sacrificed, until France is adequately secured against the menace of aggression, until the rights of the smaller nationalities of Europe are placed upon an unassailable foundation, and until the military domination of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed."

A little further on, a facsimile of the seals and signatures appended to the treaty of 1839 which guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium is accompanied by this commentary: "Germany has trampled under foot the treaty which she had signed. Will Britons stand on one side while Germany destroys an innocent nation?"

But the majority of them are adorned with illustrations, which are sometimes very happy: for instance, a landscape with a village burning in the distance; in the foreground, an English foot-soldier, and, running towards him, away from the conflagration, a woman, with a new-born infant in her arms and dragging along a little child by the hand; above, in great red letters, these two words: "Remember Belgium." Another is even more tragic. On a vast expanse of sea, against a sunset of purple and gold and crimson, a great steamer is sinking into the waves; corpses

of women and children float on the surface of the water; arms are stretched out from the waves in despairing entreaty. In front of this tragic picture a superb Britannia stands erect, the long folds of her white robe mingle with the foam of the waves; her purple mantle floats in the wind, fastened at her shoulder and belt and encircling the rich waves of her streaming golden hair. Her eyes are dilated with horror at the spectacle; her lips are opened for a cry of abhorrence and indignation, and, with head thrown back, she extends her bare arms in a fine gesture of righteous wrath; her left hand is clenched, and her right hand clasps firmly a mariner's sword in its scabbard: "Take up the sword of justice!"

"Your King and country need you to uphold the honour and glory of the Empire" declares another placard, in the centre of which a well-known artist has planted a soldier in khaki, standing erect and vigorous on a railway platform. An old man, bent over a stick, holds him firmly by the hand, and raises up to the young man his old face, framed in a white beard. On the father's coat are pinned several war-medals, and the drawing bears this simple legend: "A chip of the old block."

Here, on a medallion, St. George, mounted on a white charger, is thrusting his lance into the heart of a green dragon, with outstretched threatening jaws and talons. Here is a Tommy, in field attire, pipe between his teeth, smiling and shouting: "Come along, boys! Enlist to-day." Further on, four Scotchmen, with bare knees, are marching abreast, laughing and singing, and above them is the order: "Form into line!" By the side, another soldier, with trumpet to his lips, is appealing: "Run, answer immediately, now, when your country needs you!" And again: "Men, still more men, until the enemy is crushed!"

There would be no end to it if one tried to enumerate them all; and I will, therefore, conclude with three of the most frequent and apparently the most popular. One represents a bust of Lord Roberts, in a frame, round which is draped the national flag. In the foreground are displayed his plumed field-marshal's hat, his sword and his cross; below are these words, eloquent in their brevity: "He did his duty. Will you do yours?" In the second, a soldier, with his gun on his shoulder, in front of a battery in action, is clasping the hand of a bare-armed mechanic; behind them is a confused mass of factories, mine-shafts and

locomotives shrouded in smoke. One line above and two lines below assert: "They need us two to serve the guns. Fill up the ranks. Pile up the munitions!" The third depicts, on the left, the stern and enigmatic countenance of Lord Kitchener, whilst, on the right, are printed a few sentences from the famous speech which the Minister for War delivered at the Guildhall. Lord Kitchener said: "Men, material and money are the immediate necessities. Does the call to duty find no response in you until reinforced—let us say, rather, superseded—by the call of compulsion?" And the inevitable formula follows: "Enlist to-day!"

These appeals certainly did not go unheeded. Volunteers came forward in numbers; but still it was not enough. Finally, a law imposed an equal sacrifice on all; compulsory military service summoned to the tasks of war all fit men above the age of 18 and below the age of 41, without distinction.

III

A Census Preparatory to Conscription

AS I am rather more than fifteen and not yet sixty-five years of age, I am obliged to conform with the regulations of a new kind of census. On a beautiful grey form, I meekly reply to a series of questions. I declare that I am not in the employment of the Government, that I am not trained for any work other than that upon which I am engaged at present, that I am not a mechanician, that I am not employed in naval construction or any metallurgic industry, that I am not a fitter, a founder, assayer, wheelwright, blacksmith, coppersmith, locksmith, wire-maker, gunsmith, etc., that I am not even engaged in agriculture, that I am not a farmer, nor a market gardener, nor a gardener, nor a shepherd, nor a stable-boy, or groom, or farm-boy or labourer,—in fact, nothing, not even, as one disrespectful wag remarked, an academician.

Having thus complied with the demands of the authorities and so saved myself from incurring the fine of five pounds imposed on the refractory, let me try to explain the aim of this inquiry before examining its results.

It was on the 5th of July, 1915, that the House of Commons, by 253 votes against 30, approved the National Registration Act, which the House of Lords adopted in its turn on the 14th of July. It was not yet conscription, but national inscription, rather in the nature of the naval inscription which Colbert introduced in France.

In his advocacy of the Government scheme, the Minister, Mr. Long, declared: "This Bill does not propose to compel anyone of these people either to serve on the field of battle or in a factory, but I frankly admit that it compels these people to declare that they are doing nothing to aid their country."

Never before in the history of the English people had such an inventory been taken. Up to the last few years, the register of the population had not been kept with the strictness with which we are familiar in France; births, marriages and deaths were recorded either in the parish registers or by a special official known as the registrar, and entirely independent of the body which bears a remote resemblance to our municipal administration. The Englishman was seldom required to furnish a proof of his identity, even for the purpose of voting, and we know that, in order for a person to cash

a money order, the formalities only require him to give the post office employee by word of mouth the name of the sender. In short, England had no experience of conscription, of that compulsory military service which obliges every Frenchman to furnish an exact account of himself in order that he may not slip through the net of the centralised administration.

It was observed by a wag that what was remarkable about this national registration was that it had never been done before. Certainly, war has overturned the good old time-worn customs of the English; they have adopted all kinds of innovations: the use of paper-money, evening strolls in unlighted streets, censorship of the Press, a Government made up from both parties,—all of which proves that England is not so much a slave to routine as has been pretended.

In reality, England is resolved to gain the victory in the great conflict in which she is defending not only her liberty, but the very existence of the British Empire. She is throwing all her strength and all her resources into the balance, but she wants to know just exactly what these resources amount to. She knows the number of her warships and of her merchant marine, the number of her soldiers,

and of the workmen who are working in munitions factories; it is essential that she should investigate the total number of combatants and workers at her disposition.

According to the result of this registration, there will ensue special appropriations of all the men and women of more than fifteen and less than sixty-five years of age. Besides, as Lord Kitchener said in his speech at the Guildhall, the authorities will obtain by this means a list of the men of from nineteen to forty years of age who are not employed in the manufacture of munitions or in indispensable agricultural and industrial occupations, and are therefore available for the Army, if they are physically fit to serve.

Regarded in this light, national registration affords an effectual and rapid means of obtaining yet more soldiers and yet more munition-makers, and ends in the complete mobilisation of the nation.

The hundred thousand volunteers — mostly women—who generously offered their services, distributed over the country, in the course of a week, thirty-two million forms, grey for the men, white for the women. According to the last census, there are scarcely more than twenty-three

million persons between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five years, and from these have to be deducted the three million who have enlisted, the sailors in the Navy, and the hundreds of thousands of workmen corresponding to our "mobilisés sur place," engaged in the maintenance of the railways and in the manufacture of military and naval necessities and of munitions.

The forms contain nine questions which, at first sight, are clearly expressed and easily answered. Nevertheless, they raised innumerable problems and were the cause of a host of perplexities. So numerous were the difficulties experienced that it was necessary, by the medium of the Press, to furnish the public with the most unexpected instructions and advice. The popular newspapers devoted whole pages to this correspondence with their readers, and they set their wits to work to classify in definite categories all the difficulties which might present themselves. This fact proves, among other things, that this special census was taken seriously, and that everyone was anxious to make an accurate reply, without, however, making unnecessary revelations of domestic secrets or of more or less irregular situations. Women wrote: "I was deserted by my husband nineteen years

ago; I have taken the name of another man with whom I lived after that, and who has died recently. It would cause me much distress if the people with whom I live were to be made acquainted with my secret." Other women confess that they have contracted a secret marriage (in England people can marry without the consent of their parents), and they ask what they shall do in order that their family, with whom they are still living, may remain ignorant of this fact.

The interrogations of these grey and white forms will provoke a feeling of humility in many people, who will perceive at length that working-women and working-men who are skilled in the most humble trades are, at the hour when each must do his or her duty, more useful than the richest of the leisured classes or than the most leisured of the poorer classes. Hitherto, the members of the aristocratic or merely wealthy classes have recorded in society year-books the clubs to which they belong and their favourite recreations. Perhaps it will soon be the fashion to record a manual trade.

To return to more serious matters. There can be no doubt that this national registration made it possible for the Government to fill up many gaps

in the organisation of the resources of England. A section of the public blamed the Government for not having adopted it earlier. But those who are charged with the responsibility as well as the direction of affairs are in a position to judge the opportune moment for introducing a measure of this nature.

We must remember that England had only the embryo of an army. If, in comparison with what was accomplished on the field of battle by the other Allies, her effort appeared slow, it was none the less formidable and unprecedented, when we consider all that had to be improvised, organised and created.

IV

For and Against Conscription

DURING the first fortnight of September, 1915, the campaign in favour of conscription was conducted in the Press with more passion than ever. Undoubtedly it was intended that the question should be put before Parliament as soon as it re-assembled, and debated in session.

The controversy waxed keen. Rarely had the nation been faced with a problem of such grave consequence. Advocates and opponents were equally fierce. For various reasons, of which some were self-evident, and others, although dissimulated, were not unknown, the debate degenerated into a dispute, with the result that certain distinguished men, whose advice was sure of a hearing, had to counsel moderation, and to recommend that the ultimate decision should be left with the Government and the Parliament who were responsible.

Sensible folk were of opinion that excellent arguments deserving careful examination might be brought forward in support of either theory. But

there was no possibility of conducting such an investigation in an atmosphere of distrust and acrimony, of threats and invectives. In order to keep the country united and to safeguard the existence of the Coalition Cabinet—among the members of which there existed profound divergencies of conviction and sentiment concerning this change of system—efforts were made to put an end to the quarrel, and to restore the atmosphere of tranquillity necessary for a reasonable discussion.

The first question which presented itself was: Will conscription produce better results than have been obtained hitherto by the voluntary system? This, it was declared, was a simple question of figures.

The total number of men who had pledged their services since the outbreak of the War exceeded three millions, and, notwithstanding, the enlistments continued at the rate of twenty-five thousand a week. A year previously, towards the middle of September, 1914, they reached the figure of thirty-five thousand in a single day. The recruiting offices did not know which way to turn, and, in the hope of alleviating the situation, the authorities added two inches to the requisite

height. This was a mistake, for, according to the person who supplied me with these details, it effectually extinguished the enthusiasm. Next morning the number fell off, the measure adopted having conveyed the impression that the authorities had got as many men as they wanted. This mistake was amply repaired later, when fresh appeals were made, and, above all, when the Boches conceived the unlucky idea of coming to bombard the East coast with their cruisers and afterwards with their Zeppelins.

The medical examination also was sufficiently severe to result in the rejection of a million men as unfit. We may say then that, of the male population of England between eighteen and forty years of age, four million men had, in September, 1915, voluntarily offered their services to the army. To this number we must add a million workmen employed in the naval yards and workshops, both national and private, where they are occupied in constructing new units, and in executing repairs as soon as they are called for, in examining and refitting hulls and machinery, in manufacturing cannon, munitions, and enormous quantities of stores of every description. In this figure are not included the three hundred and fifty thousand

men serving in the Navy at the outbreak of the War, whose numbers have certainly been considerably augmented since. Also, it is not thought fit, apparently, to give any indication of the number of men engaged in the manufacture of arms and munitions.

It is difficult, therefore, to arrive at an exact total; but it is safe to assert that five million men at least were engaged in occupations connected with the War, either serving under the flag in the fighting line or in the reserves, or manufacturing the necessary arms, munitions, stores and equipment for the army and the navy. We may remark, by the way, that this total does not include the Indian troops, nor the contingents furnished by Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, etc.

Basing his calculation on the census of 1911, a defender of the compulsory system reckoned that the population included nine million men of military age, that is to say, between eighteen and forty-five years of age. Allowing for the exemption of men who are employed in national undertakings, both in the field of commerce, manufacture, agriculture and transport, as well as of administration and food supplies—four million in all—there would

still remain five million men capable of serving as combatants. The opponents of the system would retort: we have just seen that the voluntary system has yielded, up to the present, three million and a half soldiers and sailors actually under arms, and that enlistments continue at the rate of one hundred thousand a month, and that there are a million unfit. We are not very far from the five million men available for active military service.

The partisans of the compulsory system did not in any way deny the excellent results achieved up to the present by the voluntary system, but they asserted that only compulsion could bring to the colours all the shirkers and slackers, who either evaded their obligation or simply disregarded it. They therefore object against the voluntary system that it robs the nation of the flower of her sons, for those who enlist spontaneously are men of courage, enthusiasm, initiative and intelligence, men endowed with the spirit of sacrifice, while the pusillanimous, the slothful, the indifferent and the selfish remain at home. To which it was replied that it will not be a pleasant situation for anyone, after the war, to be numbered among the latter; and, as regards the value of their services, some

prudent souls questioned whether it would not be better to leave these very unwarlike spirits to hide their heads in their shops or offices?

One of the great arguments invoked in favour of compulsory service was the excellent impression which its adoption would produce in France; whilst the Germans, it was alleged, would be simply prostrated. Certainly, in such questions, the moral factor is not to be despised, but we suspect that such a measure involves results of a much more practical order.

Let us beware of tampering with the voluntary system, urged its defenders; it belongs to the national tradition; no other method is so rational, just and effective; and the majority of the public do not desire any other. Up to the present, the voluntary system has supplied soldiers more rapidly than we can arm and equip them. Moreover, it enables us to retain the necessary men for those industrial and commercial operations which are indispensable for the maintenance of economic prosperity, and upon which depends the whole financial system of the Allies. We ought not to deprive the shipbuilding yards of their trained workers, because we shall never have a sufficiently large merchant marine for the transports.

Without denying the relative justice of these arguments, the advocates of universal service replied that the necessities of the War demanded the militarisation of the whole forces of the nation, and that it was more important to beat the Germans and finish the War than to preserve the commercial prosperity of England, since a German victory would have fatal results for her. Every day they clamoured more energetically for what they deemed the fairer system—equal sacrifice for all; they declared that the bulk of the nation was in favour of compulsion, and they accused the Government of weakness, and of belonging to the pusillanimous minority who recoiled from this measure.

The more violent the attacks against the Government, the more obstinate was the defence. Thus the question trailed along for a considerable time in the rut of politics; and it is difficult to say whether these disputes hastened or retarded the opportune moment for a final settlement.

It must be admitted that the Government displayed extraordinary skill in avoiding the necessity of declaring for or against conscription. The Press declared more or less openly which Ministers were supporters and which opponents of the measure,

but none of these Ministers ever publicly expressed an opinion on the subject. The watchword seemed to be to keep aloof from all popular polemics, to avoid compromising the indispensable unity of the Cabinet, and to make the ultimate decision without appearing to yield to external pressure. This attitude, which might appear one of inertia, really preserved the independence of the Government, who were not to be restrained by any external consideration from enforcing, at the proper moment, a law which would no longer meet with dangerous opposition.

While the hostility was gradually diminishing, Mr. Asquith continued to assert, in the name of the English nation, in the name of the whole British Empire, the unswerving will to conquer, no matter what the price. In the meantime, in various ways, the army was increasing, munitions of war were being manufactured, the military organisation was being improved. After the National Register, recourse was had to Lord Derby's scheme, which achieved excellent results, despite its critics. Then, one fine day, England suddenly became unanimous in demanding that system of compulsory service which had roused so much repugnance, and Parliament refused to admit

any further compromise. The Government had only to change a few formulæ in the scheme which it had prepared, and an overwhelming majority voted in favour of the much-discussed system of compulsion. "Yes," said the more violent supporters of the project, "but it was a year too late!"—which is by no means certain.

V

The Predictions of Mr. H. G. Wells

"ILS se réalisent, les rêves prophétiques de H. G. Wells!" declared Anatole France, in an admirable article written for that beautiful "Book of France," published under the most distinguished auspices, thanks to the generous activity of Miss Winifred Stephens, and sold for the benefit of the funds in aid of our invaded provinces. By a humorous coincidence, it was Wells himself who was entrusted with the task of translating this page by Anatole France.

We know that Wells, like Jules Verne before him, has, for the last twenty years, furnished us in his works with disconcerting descriptions of future events.

Moreover, from his very first work, "The Time Machine," the great English novelist has displayed an extraordinary creative power, aided by an abundantly fertile imagination. It is this strength of imagination which Wells has placed at the disposal of his country to-day.

In a book which I helped to translate twelve years ago, Wells described, with the most amazing exactitude, what would be the nature of the next war. I have re-read this chapter of "Anticipations"; it is entitled "War in the 20th Century," and when one considers that it was written before the campaign in Manchuria, the prophetic faculty of the author seems really supernatural.

H. G. Wells has followed the vicissitudes of the present war with a passionate interest. I reminded him of that famous chapter in "Anticipations" in which he showed greater discernment than the professional theorists. He only smiled.

Then we talked:

"You have repeatedly foreseen this cataclysm. You described it, for instance, in 'The War of the Worlds,' in which you introduced the Martians to this planet, and pictured them as perpetrating the massacres and devastations which the Germans have not hesitated to commit. And in that amazing story, 'The War in the Air,' it was the Germans whom you conceived as steeping the world in fire and blood. In that book you drew an implacably lifelike caricature of the Kaiser and his heir, in which they display the arrogance of degenerates and lunatics drunken with pride. You make

them destroy the capitals of Europe and the enormous cities of the United States. You described the secret preparations of the Germans, and predicted the attack which they were premeditating . . ."

"That proves," interrupted Wells, "that, if I foresaw the Teutonic crisis, I had not guessed that the United States would remain neutral, and would exhibit so much tolerance for the intrigues of the pro-Germans. But we will say no more of my pretended vaticinations, nor exaggerate their importance."

"Pray do not let your modesty take offence. And now tell me what your predictions are at the present moment."

"Oh! Oh! You are trying to entice me on to dangerous ground. The part of a commentator on actual facts is less easy than that of the weaver of fantastic romances. The novelist has only to be logical; he confines himself to one or more propositions, which he develops according to the rules of logic; he establishes a foundation upon which he constructs eventualities which are firmly linked together. But reality is far more fantastic than imagination."

"Indeed!"

"You think that is a paradox? Yet nothing is more true. Whatever capricious fancies my imagination may conceive, I am obliged to observe the rules of logic and probability and to combine events in a conventional order. Now, in the present War, in all wars, it is the unexpected that happens. Do you believe that the Germans had foreseen the battle of the Marne? No. And by many people in your country as well as ours it was regarded as a miracle!"

"The Germans claim that they accomplished a strategic retreat."

"To be sure! But Joffre accomplished something better."

"Then, according to you, there can only be unforeseen events."

"You are too logical, like every good Frenchman, and like a novelist of imagination. I only mean that the present war exceeds all that one had imagined, all that one had feared. We had cradled ourselves in chimerical illusions; we had fancied that the belligerents would conform rigidly to the innumerable conventions of international law, just as two boxing champions respect the rules of a certain code of fighting. The champions of Kultur have changed all that. In the first place, they

asserted that, from the moment that a state of war had been declared, all promises and engagements ceased to be binding.

"Then they proceeded to commit every kind of atrocity and devastation, upon the principle that it was necessary to terrify and paralyse their adversary in this way — in which they made the mistake of judging others by themselves—a mistake from which the Allies will be able to profit when they win a decisive victory over the Boches. When the Germans are defeated, they will soon become as humbly obsequious as they were after Jena. We must not forget that Bismarck himself said: 'We Germans are a race of lackeys.'"

"And the Prussians are the swaggering masters of these lackeys."

"Yes, and will have to be replaced by the Allies for a little while. But we have not reached that stage yet! At the present moment we see them employing insensate methods for subduing the victorious resistance of the Allies. First of all, they hurled themselves in mass on a country without adequate means of defence; then they dug themselves into underground cavities; then they had recourse to chemistry — to gas and

asphyxiating shells, jets of flaming petrol and corrosive fluids . . . "

" The Germans," continued Wells, " have taken the responsibility of infringing rules which they had promised to observe, but they have no exclusive property in the means which they employ. They apply certain scientific facts which are in the public domain, and I have much more faith in the French or the English as regards genuine innovations or original discoveries. There is infinitely more wit and initiative in your nation and ours."

" And that is why you yourself have taken the initiative on several occasions ? "

" You mean that I recommend the employment of aeroplanes and airships of all descriptions by the Allies. In individual operations, as well as in concerted raids, the French and English show themselves superior to their adversaries, who rely chiefly on their vulnerable Zeppelins. I am convinced that the individual value of our airmen is very much greater than that of the Boche airmen. As for air work in squadron, it is necessary for the execution of given orders that every individual airman should be capable of initiative, decision, and independence. Our airmen furnish daily evidence of these qualities, and for this reason I should

like to see squadrons consisting of a thousand aeroplanes fly over the enemy lines, and burn and destroy the German centres, where the engines of war and munitions are manufactured, and where supplies of food and equipment are stored up. Can you picture a fleet of a thousand aeroplanes rising up from your French plains and, a few hours later, raining down thousands of incendiary projectiles on the Krupp factories, and those of Westphalia? And this first squadron might be followed, hour after hour, by one, two, three—ten similar squadrons, which would hurl yet more bombs, in thousands, to accelerate the conflagration and destruction. Doubtless, these heroic airmen would not all return; but the losses—which would certainly be less severe than those which the Allies are enduring every day—would be, to a certain extent, compensated by the enormous result obtained—a material result which would hamper the murderous activity of the Germans, and a moral result owing to the effect which it would produce: consternation and frantic and impotent wrath beyond the Rhine, hope and encouragement in the nations who are fighting against barbarism."

"Did you not also suggest the creation of a Board of Inventions?"

"Yes, and I indicated the lines upon which it might act with advantage. I hope that the same is being done with you. France is the country of inventors *par excellence;* and our men of science will compete with yours in ingenuity and learning. Here, again, it is a question of individual worth, and we must use every means of profiting by this advantage."

"No doubt, since your letters to *The Times* demanding the formation of this Board, you have been assailed with innumerable suggestions?"

"Yes, I have been overwhelmed, submerged by them! Unfortunately, three-fourths are unworkable and devoid of any practical utility. But many of the ideas are very interesting. The question of defence against submarines is one which appears to engage the special attention of our inventors. My greatest difficulty is in explaining to those who offer utterly absurd suggestions that the putting into practice of their invention would cost more than it is worth. They seldom succeed in grasping the fact that the thousands of boats of all sizes which enter or leave the ports of the British Isles and France every week run so very little risk that it is infinitely preferable to pay even a high insurance premium and save the enormous

expenses which their system of protection would involve."

"Can you see any final and rapid method of breaking through the German lines?"

"I have already suggested great flying squadrons, which should destroy systematically all the great centres for German supplies behind their lines, demolish unceasingly their roads, railways, bridges, stations, and render almost impossible the provisioning of the enemy and the transport of troops and munitions. We must construct ten thousand —twenty thousand aeroplanes!"

"What a flight of imagination!"

"Why not? It costs less money and less time to construct than a gun or a submarine, which require special factories and tools."

"Did you not somewhere describe the exploits of creatures cased in enormous cylinders who traverse the most formidable trenches and take the occupants between two fires? Why should we not have recourse to the heat ray and the tripods of the Martians?"

"For that purpose, the simplest plan would be to ask our Ministers of Foreign Affairs to confer promptly with the ministry of interplanetary relations probably existing in the planet Mars and

beg the despatch of only half-a-dozen of their formidable warriors . . . Unless German propaganda has already been active up there, and the executive has allowed itself to be hoodwinked by the partisans of neutrality at any price . . . But, without this problematic assistance, the Allies will conquer the Germans. All weapons are good against adversaries who have no sense of honour, and it will not be long before we make an appropriate answer to Germanic methods. You see every day what is being done here; you perceive with what energy the English nation and the whole British Empire are devoting themselves to the preparation of the military effort, thanks to which we shall be able to support your heroic troops on the Continent more and more effectively, while our squadrons guard the ocean routes and protect our coasts and yours . . ."

VI

Lord Kitchener inspects his Armies

IT is "somewhere in England." The country is very charming; the towns are numerous and picturesque, with interesting relics of former days; there are intersecting railways, and there are sinuous roads climbing the hills and forming a network on the plains. This delightful spot was once one of the favourite resorts of excursionists from London; in summer it was the scene of many happy holidays, of pleasant walks across the fields, in the shady woods, or on the high downs covered with heather and gorse. It was the resort of sportsmen, too, for the game is abundant . . . . .

The particular sport that is being prepared for in these districts at present has completely transformed them. You speed along in a motor-car for whole days, and at every moment you are bewildered by new sights which meet the eye. Whole towns have sprung up, whose populations have been gathered from far and wide, and who are, for the most part, clad in khaki uniform. It is a pandemonium of unimaginable activity.

From the centre which regulates the workings of this formidable machine, I made excursions in all directions, visiting, exploring, making inquiries to satisfy my curiosity, when a note arrived at headquarters just when I happened to be there. It merely announced that the "S. of S." would come the next day to inspect all the troops. There were brief indications of how the day would be spent. K. would be at such-and-such a place at between 10.45 and 11.10, at such-and-such another place at between 11.25 and 12.45, and so on until he had inspected all. I obtained permission to attach myself to the staff who were to receive and accompany the mysterious personage who is indicated by the initials "S. of S.," which stands for Secretary of State; and "K," of course, was Lord Kitchener of Khartoum—a double K. very preferable to the food-substance described by a double K. which is consumed by the Boches.

The unexpectedness of this intimation did not appear to cause the least consternation among the officers who had to order and arrange the movements of the troops for the next day. When I remarked that the notice was rather short, one of the officers with whom I was talking replied:

"That's *he*, he is always like that, and a very good thing too."

The staff set to work, steadily, calmly, with the tranquil certainty of accomplishing their task, and I could not doubt that they would succeed. For these officers do not grudge their time or their trouble. One of them said to me: "K . . . sets us an example: he works without respite and without leisure, and he knows that we do the same."

The next morning, at an early hour, we are on the road. Our motor-car is constantly obliged to stop and give way to columns of infantry, cavalry, artillery and supplies. Moreover, the direction of the traffic at all the turnings and cross-roads is admirably superintended by a special military police; wherever it is necessary, there are policemen on foot and on horseback, with a red armlet bearing the letters "M.P."—initials which are generally found after the names of members of parliament, but which, in this instance, merely indicate members of the Military Police.

The troops make their way to sites which will afford them ample space to assemble and deploy. Although this district affords very spacious plains

and moors and uplands, no one of these would be vast enough to accommodate such huge numbers of men ; for the troops whom their leader will inspect to-day are several times as numerous as the army which England had long maintained on the Continent, and which the Kaiser with such foolhardy arrogance qualified as contemptible.

Battalions and regiments go by in high spirits and good humour ; the infantry whistle and sing, and just as I had noticed among the British troops in Flanders, the " Marseillaise " is their favourite song ; I must confess even that " Tipperary " seems to have lost much of its former popularity.

We find ourselves on a road bordered with turf and straighter and broader than most of the roads in England. Some motor-cars are there already ; others are arriving, bringing the generals and the staff. Soon, two motor-cars coming from the direction of London descend upon us like an avalanche. Promptly, nimbly, Lord Kitchener alights, while, at a signal from the general in command, the vanguard of the column begins to move. There are greetings and hand-clasps ; the motor-cars draw up in front ; and we stay there, with our backs to the sun, while regiments, brigades and divisions file past under the attentive eye of the

chief. Section after section receive the same command: "Eyes left!" followed by a sharp "Eyes front!" at a suitable distance.

The officers of lower rank are all very young, but their gravity, their martial air and their sturdy sportsmanlike bearing give them a very distinguished appearance.

On the grass, at the very edge of the road, the chief stands erect, saluting the officers with his hand, whilst his eyes sweep the ranks. All eyes are turned towards him, and the men draw themselves up and march their best, so that the man to whose appeal the nation has responded so magnificently may be content with his Army. There is something very moving in the sight of all these *volunteers* who have enlisted *in time of war*, and in order to go to war. The greater number of these captains, these lieutenants and sub-lieutenants, all these men, non-commissioned officers and privates have, of their own free will, left their home, their workshop, their office, their employment, in order to go out and defend "the existence of the Empire," as a sergeant said to me, and "to prevent their children from becoming Boches."

The march proceeds without any accompaniment of bands or fifes, or drums or trumpets.

There is no parade of flags or banners, of ornaments or plumes or gold lace; the lieutenants and sub-lieutenants carry their rifles just as their men do; and also a kind of knapsack hung low on the back. The arms and equipment are impeccable; the carriages for drinking-water, the field-kitchens, all the material is in perfect trim. The khaki hue of the uniforms against the dark green of the hedges in front is not unpleasing seen in mass, as I see it now. The only patches of colour are the red bands on the caps and collars of the staff officers, and yonder, at the cross-roads, the light dresses of the women and girls who had waved their handkerchiefs when Lord Kitchener passed; some had pointed cameras in our direction, but the military police drove them off without mercy, and were even so cruel as to interpose, between these indiscreet ladies and ourselves, the far from transparent screen of their horses.

I have seen Lord Kitchener in civilian attire; I have seen him in the sombre blue uniform of a field-marshal; I saw him at the Guildhall when he delivered, or rather read, a speech on recruiting. In each case, he was a fine figure, though perhaps a little stern and unbending. "I am a soldier," he repeats, when he has to appear at these assem-

blies; and perhaps he is apologising for an embarrassment which is not discernible, but which he must feel, in spite of the cheers and acclamations which greet him. But it was in his khaki costume that Lord Kitchener really gave me the impression of a leader. Buttoned up in a dark-coloured jacket or tunic, he is the officer in mufti, whom we can recognise among a thousand; but he is a "soldier" from head to foot in his field uniform, with his spurs, his leather gaiters, his ample riding-breeches, his loosely-fitting tunic held in at the waist by a belt of yellow leather supported by a shoulder-piece. The red and gold decoration on the collar, the red band on the cap, and, on the peak, the double garland of gold leaves, are the distinctive signs of his rank.

In London, in public, the face is, so to speak, closed, the features are immobile; the solid jaw and the heavy moustache (still very fair) give an impression of strong will, the sternness of which is belied by the blue eyes, which express a kind of astonishment, doubtless the result of a strong desire to be somewhere else. As I saw him, during the whole of that day, the eyelids lowered over the eyes robbed them of that look of astonishment, and rendered them, on the contrary, keen and

penetrating. With untiring persistence he surveyed and inspected the soldiers, rank after rank, and the material drawn by vigorous teams. From the moment that the first platoons opened the procession, he began to smile, and his expression was one which none of his portraits have ever revealed. The darting glance from under the eyebrows, the motion of the jaw for the utterance of cordial words, the movement of the moustache above the smiling lips; sometimes a genuine sprightliness animated his features; the satisfaction of the chief radiated good humour.

On horseback, he has a firm and easy carriage; his left hand holds the reins, and his right hand, when the horse is walking, is laid on the haunch. As a horseman, Lord Kitchener has a very fine presence.

Twenty-five minutes are allowed for lunch. The motor-cars snort and set off. Finally, we arrive at the entrance of a circus, or rather a valley, longer than it is broad; the motor-car crosses some meadows and climbs the side of the hill. Viewed from here, the spectacle is prodigious. At the bottom of the plain, towards the West, some regiments of cavalry are grouped in a sombre mass; in the foreground, stretching right up to us,

covering an enormous expanse, some batteries of artillery, fully equipped with guns and ammunition waggons, extend their dense lines northwards up to the base of the rising ground. On the right, there is infantry as far as one can see. It is well that the inspection should conclude with such masses, in this magnificent setting, like a transformation scene—a cruel and tragic transformation scene, since all these men are armed to kill, animated by the desire to kill, and to kill as many of them as possible!—and all those grey cannon, let us hope that they, too, will kill, and that all those horses, in their furious epic gallops, will bear their riders straight to an odious enemy, whom they will hew down with the whole strength of their arms!

On the crest of some bare hills we perceive, by the aid of glasses, masses of cavalry who are performing evolutions; at the other extremity, some troops of infantry appear against the horizon and descend the slope. On the shoulder which terminates the plateau in front of us a camp of German prisoners is installed behind a strong network of barbed iron wire; since morning, on the two roads which intersect at one of the corners of their camp, they have seen the passage of those

interminable columns of soldiers, well armed, well equipped; they have seen those batteries of artillery, with their superb teams; those well-mounted cavalry, and all the fantastic equipment; in the sky, some aeroplanes are manœuvring, the hum of their machines alternately diminished and intensified by the wind; and they must have made some melancholy reflections . . .

In a twist of the valley, where once the cattle and mares with their colts grazed peacefully, we now see only the roofs of factories, from which rise up high smoking chimneys; further on, the voluminous bulk of a shed for dirigibles rises above the more low-pitched edifices, and aeroplanes pass in and out of it lightly and swiftly.

From the step of the motor-car, Lord Kitchener has transferred himself to the saddle without a moment's interval. The procession of the staff-officers sets off at full gallop towards the cavalry, and in the distance, through field-glasses, and by the aid of the standards, one can follow its meanderings through the compact formations. Then follows the review of the artillery, and already the cavalry have begun to move, forming into a column and setting off towards their barracks. Then comes the turn of the batteries, and one seems to

be watching some vast conjuring trick: those masses of cannon and ammunition waggons seem to be unwound endlessly, like miles of ribbon from the sleeve of a conjurer.

VII

Ireland united against the Enemy

WE remember that before the War a serious conflict was dividing Ireland, and certain prophets of evil predicted the gravest calamities. This was sufficient for the obtuse and crafty German to anticipate revolt and civil war, just as he anticipated them in Egypt, India, and wherever else it might be convenient.

I asked Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who has been an Irish member of the House of Commons since 1880, to explain, for the benefit of the French public, why the Irish Nationalists were so unhesitating in making common cause with England.

Keen, alert, vigorous, with a tall, erect figure and broad shoulders, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, after a brilliant academic career, entered the profession of journalism, and he has scarcely ever abandoned it, notwithstanding the absorbing activity of his political career. He founded and edited in turn *The Star*, *The Sun*, *The Weekly Sun*, *M.A.P.*, *T.P.'s Weekly*, and he has published important works on Disraeli, Parnell, Gladstone, Napoleon, etc.

In our conversation, Mr. T. P. O'Connor revived his recollections of 1870, when he was already sub-editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. The ill-advised policy of Napoleon III. had alienated the sympathies of England, and Bismarck had published diplomatic documents proving that Napoleon had proposed the partition of Belgium. Nothing could have more exasperated English opinion. Notwithstanding, the young Irish journalist was and remained from that time one of the most militant friends of France, and he recalls an evening when, after the German arrogance and excesses had reversed the popular sympathies, the " Wacht am Rhein " was hissed in a famous music-hall, while the audience applauded the " Marseillaise."

In the course of the last half-century, Mr. T. P. O'Connor has written enormously ; he has spoken even more. He is one of the most eloquent orators, not only in Parliament, but in the whole country. As a popular speaker, he has scarcely any rival. Recently, there was an Irish manifestation in London, which assumed formidable proportions. Those who took part in it marched in four columns to Trafalgar Square. An immense procession was formed. Behind a band, in which the big drum played a conspicuous part, came a landau in which

"T. P."—the popular designation for Mr. T. P. O'Connor—was seated by the side of Sergeant O'Leary—a heroic Irishman whose brilliant actions have won him a coveted decoration. In all the roads leading up to the famous square the crowd was clapping and cheering. All were wearing the green emblem of Erin, and holding in their hands a little green flag with a gold harp. The four columns blended, without any disorder, into one single column, which proceeded towards Hyde Park, through the wide aristocratic streets of the West End; and all along the route, in Pall Mall and Piccadilly, the fronts of the big clubs and luxurious hotels were crowded from top to bottom with innumerable spectators, cheering and applauding the famous orator and the heroic sergeant, who represented so well noble Ireland.

Soon, over the wide lawns of the Park, the crowd collected in unimaginable multitudes. Four trucks, decked with the colours of Ireland and the Allies, had been prepared to receive the orators, Nationalist deputies for the most part; and round these improvised platforms, almost too narrow to accommodate their occupants, the crowd accumulated. From each of these rostrums in turn, T. P. O'Connor, accompanied by O'Leary,

harangued the multitude. It was an unforgettable scene. In a powerful voice, the great orator explained why the Allies were resisting with all their might the hateful German aggression, and why it was the duty of every fit man to take up arms to fight at the side of heroes like Sergeant O'Leary.

I had succeeded in perching myself on the wheel of a cart, and as far as my eyes could reach, as far as the dark background of the great trees in the Park, I could see only a vast sea of listeners thrilled with one common emotion; and I know that, after this gigantic manifestation, the recruiting offices were besieged, and the Irish regiments were swelled by a generous contingent.

The man who could thus sway the emotions of the crowd had been in France a little while before, at the head of a deputation of Catholic Ireland to the Archbishop of Paris and the French Government. In the office, crammed with books, where he receives me, I see, on the chimney, a photograph of this delegation grouped round M. Viviani and M. Delcassé.

All at once we begin to speak about the War, and the part which is being played in it by the British Empire.

"Do not doubt," said my famous companion, "that we are ready here for every sacrifice. There has been talk of our slowness, and not without reason; but one must always allow for the temperament of a nation, its habits, customs and institutions; and when England is concerned, it is important to remember that she has never had compulsory military service, because the nation has enjoyed a sense of security behind the shelter of her coasts since the eleventh century. Those who know what it means to arouse the imagination of the people, to inculcate new conceptions into the masses, will understand why England has appeared slow to Frenchmen, who were *organised* to respond to the appeal to arms at the first moment of danger.

"Do not lose sight of this fact: that England had agreed, on the proof of a *casus belli*, to send to the Continent the contingent of troops which she had at her disposal, namely, one hundred and sixty thousand men. Well, only a year after she had placed herself at the side of France, she sent more than a million men to the fields of battle; she was engaged in campaigns in the Dardanelles, on the Suez Canal, the Persian Gulf, the Cameroons, in East Africa, while Botha's army conquered German West Africa. Her fleet paralysed the activities of

the German squadrons and of German maritime commerce. England has enlisted three million men; she will enlist four million, five million, if necessary; she will equip them; she will arm them, and they will go out and fight by the side of the French armies against the common foe.

"The Irish have made a splendid response to the appeal to arms. We have always been a nation of fighters. Our Celtic legends are stories of war and battles. The Celtic imagination has realised vividly the importance of the conflict which is raging, and we who have been fighting for so long to defend our own nationality could not but side with those who are defending the principle of nationality. This was a cause which ought to silence all dissension and provoke an absolute union. The Germans were, no doubt, very surprised and disappointed; but the Irish know that those who oppress the Poles and the people of Alsace-Lorraine, the Roumanians and the Jugo-Slavs cannot promise a liberty which, indeed, has not been asked or expected of them.

"The voluntary enlistments in Ireland have been very numerous. Villages of from three hundred to four hundred inhabitants have furnished from sixty to eighty men. In the towns, large

numbers have offered themselves for war-work and the manufacture of munitions; and the subscriptions to the War Loan still continue. More than two million and a half Irishmen in England are members of the United Irish League of Great Britain, of which I have been President for the last thirty years. Our League had branches everywhere, in more than sixty of the big towns. Well, at the present moment, it is completely disorganised because the members of our committees, no less than the ordinary members, enlisted on the outbreak of the War. We have lost in this way more than one hundred thousand members. In all, there are a quarter of a million Irish under arms.

"I could instance innumerable facts to prove how heartily the Irish are at one with the Allies. The other day, in the train for Liverpool, I met an old Irishman, who told me that his daughter, living in London, had just lost her husband, who had been killed in the Dardanelles. He had spent some days with her, and he was still very much distressed at his daughter's grief. I asked him if he did not now long for a speedy peace. The old man drew himself up, looked me straight in the face, and said, with clenched teeth: 'Ah! no; we must fight

now more than ever, right to the end, right to the goal!' They are all like that.

"Yes, all, and it is the first time that there has been such a unanimity. The South-African War encountered a violent opposition: a whole section of public opinion regarded it as a violation of the respect due to nationalities, and it is because we are now defending the principle of nationality that clear-sighted and sensible Ireland is marching with one mind and one heart against the invader of Belgium and France."

VIII

At the Camp of the Canadians

ON the first anniversary of the declaration of war, the Dominions and the Crown Colonies expressed their resolution to continue the struggle to a triumphant issue, and to support the Mother Country " to the last man and the last shilling."

In India, in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand, in South Africa, the anniversary was commemorated by unforgettable sessions of the parliaments or by enthusiastic popular meetings. The whole British Empire, with one heart and one impulse, joined with the other civilised nations who were compelled to resist Germanic aggression and to crush the enemy.

The support which Canada furnished to the Mother Country surpassed all expectations. In men alone, the Dominion furnished a contingent larger than the expeditionary force which England had at her disposal in the first month of hostilities. A portion of these troops were at the front at the end of six months. Soon after, I found myself

in their midst, in a part of Belgium which had been devastated, and I was a witness of the heroism with which these regiments of volunteers opposed a victorious resistance round Ypres to the fierce attacks of the Germans, who launched their asphyxiating gases without succeeding in breaking the Canadian front.

I obtained permission to visit the immense camp in England where the Canadian divisions are constantly training, receiving the new battalions which are despatched unceasingly from the other side of the Atlantic, and sending continual reinforcements to France.

At headquarters I presented the letters with which General Hughes, Minister of Defence, had been kind enough to supply me, and I was accorded a very friendly reception. Formerly, in peace time, I have traversed this region on foot or by means of various conveyances. I have visited this camp, one of the most important in England, frequently ; I have seen the English regiments file past on a fine Sunday morning, in their busbies and red cloaks ; but I confess that the scene is entirely strange to me now. There are the same barracks and yards, but all round, in all directions, there have sprung up a multitude of

structures, built of wood or of corrugated iron, and in the distance, on the slopes of the hills, in the valleys between them, groups of tents have been erected.

After a rapid and frugal repast at the staff mess, I get into the motor-car with the officer who is to accompany me through the maze of the encampments, and who is a French Canadian, from Quebec. It would take too much time to relate in detail all that I saw there. The Canadian army—for it is a veritable army which has come from the immense provinces of the Dominion—is undergoing in this camp the most complete and efficient training. All the corps—infantry and cavalry, engineers and artillery—are practising with an extraordinary application, whilst the organisation and material are being constructed and perfected.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the Canadian army, like the whole British army, is obliged at one and the same time to instruct the men and to manufacture all the unimaginable equipment, armament and material which are required for modern war.

I was told by professional soldiers of unquestionable authority that the work of the men

left nothing to be desired. Through all the long months of winter, spring and summer, these volunteers, full of an admirable good-will and impatient to be sent to the front, endured the fatigues of the most severe training, of marches by day and by night, and of all the arduous exercises necessitated by the methods of modern war.

Battalions or whole regiments set off in field uniform, sleeping in the open fields, along the roads, lodging with the inhabitants, engaging in lengthy manœuvres ; or else, in the neighbourhood of the camp, they dig trenches, the lines of which we can see intersecting one another, scaling the hills, and scoring their grassy flanks.

In a sunken road, very narrow in places, sturdy teams of horses are dragging along pieces of heavy artillery with perfect ease. Further on, a race-course has been transformed into an artillery park, into which the batteries re-enter on their return from manœuvres. The waggons turn without a hitch in the winding road. The superb horses obey their placid drivers. The guns are unyoked and put under shelter, and a young officer introduces me to his guns—Canadian guns—certain features of which are quite new and, so the experts say, very effective.

The French-speaking population of the Dominion has been no less eager in enlisting for the defence of the Empire. Its loyalty is not at all inferior to that of the population of English origin. My amiable companion does not fail to introduce me to his compatriots, his friends from Quebec and Montreal. At the moment of our arrival, one of the regiments has assembled, in field uniform, ready to set out for an unknown destination, doubtless for several days of manœuvres.

The colonel is on horseback, and, from his saddle, he harangues his men. The wind blows us fragments of his sentences; they are practical recommendations, hints concerning hygiene, and the speech ends with a few words on the duties of patriotism.

A few officers have joined us.

"Please tell your friends in France that we are eager to cross to the other side of the water in order to join in the struggle against the enemy. It will be a great happiness to us to be among Frenchmen, and, as you see, we shall not need interpreters! There are even a considerable number of my men who do not speak a word of English. But excuse me, we must go. These gentlemen are going to show you our quarters."

A few minutes later, battalions and companies file past us, with vigorous and rhythmic step. These volunteers, in the very prime of life, are as good recruits as any in the countries which have conscription. They have been training for nearly a year; they are, to say the least, as competent and practised as our own regiments after an equal lapse of time. And it must be remembered, moreover, that they have enlisted in order to fight, and they show the greatest eagerness to master the profession of arms in the shortest possible time, so that they may be sent against the Boches without delay.

After the departure of the regiment, we continue our investigations. Without attempting a detailed description, it will suffice to say that these camps are organised in a remarkable, one might say a perfect, fashion. When everything has to be created from the beginning, it is easy to aim at perfection.

IX

A Nursery for Heroes

FRANCE, with good reason, is proud of her military schools. The annals of the school at St. Cyr are a collection of glorious pages, the foundation of a tradition of honour which has been jealously maintained. The Saint-Cyriens of 1914 set out for the battlefield as though for a fête, fresh from the barber, wearing their plumed shakos and white gloves.

Like every noble nation, England also inculcates in her future officers those time-honoured traditions of courage and honour which win esteem and respect, even from enemies. At Sandhurst, not far from the camp of Aldershot, is the Royal Military College, where future officers of the regular army acquire the necessary training for commissions in the infantry and cavalry.

In peace time, Sandhurst had to provide officers for an army of three hundred thousand men. At the present moment, the British Army numbers more than ten times this figure; therefore, the effective force of the military college has been con-

siderably augmented. Before the war, it comprised three hundred and sixty cadets, divided into six companies, under the command of thirty officers, drill masters and professors. Among the former cadets of Sandhurst is included the young King of Spain. At the present day, the college comprises ten companies, and the effective force of each of them has been considerably augmented.

The Royal Military College was founded on the eve of the Napoleonic wars by Colonel John Gaspard le Marchand, who was a native of Guernsey. After a rather stormy opening period, the establishment received its Royal Warrant, and was given a definite constitution, in 1802, under the superintendence of a Frenchman, General Francis Jarry, who had fought in the Seven Years' War, and had been claimed by Frederick the Great as one of his pupils, and entrusted by him with the direction of the military school at Berlin.

At first the Cadets' College numbered sixteen pupils, and the Staff College thirty-four commissioned officers, whose technical education had to be perfected with a view to their admission to the staff. But soon after, England was compelled to send considerable armies to the Continent. Therefore, the effective force of the college was

increased; it comprised four hundred cadets in 1803, and six hundred in 1806. Equipped with the theoretical knowledge which they acquired in the course of their studies, the young officers proceeded forthwith to complete their training on the battlefields, where Wellington soon had at his disposal a young and experienced corps of officers, who proved themselves formidable adversaries of Napoleon's veterans.

More than a century later, we are witnesses of the same spectacle. The working classes made a splendid response to Lord Kitchener's appeal, and their patriotic ardour has been justly extolled. But some praise should also be reserved for the wealthy and aristocratic classes, whose sons have been the first to offer themselves for the defence of the Old Country.

The pupils of the Royal Military College are recruited from among the youth of the famous public schools—the traditional nurseries of the English gentleman. At the present moment, these young men, whose ages vary from seventeen to twenty-three years, only spend five months at the Military College, after which they join a regiment, undergoing a term of probation of a few months before they are sent to the front. For more than

a year, the college has been sending thus, every month, a hundred soldiers to the regular army, which makes a total of more than ten thousand young sub-lieutenants.

From the general at the head of the school and the colonel who assists him, the military professors have all served in the present war, and some have hardly recovered from the wounds which they received. The companies, who were digging trenches on a moor covered with heather and gorse, in a stony soil full of water, on a cold foggy morning, were working under the direction of captains who have spent long weeks in the trenches in France. Five months is a very short time for a training which formerly occupied eighteen months, but it has been made to suffice. The courses which were not essential have been curtailed, but the instruction in horsemanship, the night-shooting, the entire practical training for war as it is conducted at present are adequately developed. British commonsense has presided to very good purpose over the adaptation of this organisation to actual circumstances; for instance, a civilian professor attached to the school delivered lectures to the cadets of each company in turn on the causes, the consequences, the developments and the

extent of the war which the Allies are sustaining against the predatory Empires. Is it not an excellent idea to inculcate in these young men a few general ideas concerning the formidable conflict in which the destinies of civilisation are at stake? With their whole day taken up by the thorough training to which they are subjected, they lack time for reading and for keeping themselves in touch with the political, economic and even philosophic problems which confront the nations. I listened to one of these lectures, and I admired the simple and clear exposition, the ingenious and lucid reflections, the penetrating and sagacious judgments of the eminent speaker. From my seat on one of the front benches, I turned round, curious to see what sort of a reception these young athletes would accord to the lecture, and I was pleased to observe that the audience was listening with absorbed attention; all these serious faces bore witness to the interest excited by the ideas which were being suggested to them and enlarged upon in the tone of an intimate and singularly enthralling conversation.

There can be no doubt that all this ardent young manhood brings to the performance of the day's tasks the most hearty goodwill. Each one

of them knows that he is there for the shortest possible period, and that it is a question of making the very most of the time. Whether they are the heirs of the great names of the nobility, or the sons of respectable middle-class families, these cadets know that the service of their country is calling them, and that their place is already marked out in the ranks—in the front rank.

Fresh from the college, full of a newly-acquired knowledge, of which they will be as proud as they are of their physical energy, they will go out to command men who will often be considerably their seniors. In spite of the difference in age, these private soldiers and non-commissioned officers—civilians of yesterday, men of every social condition, of every trade and profession—will bow to the authority of these young men with a perfect good nature. Better still, with the deference required by military discipline, they will combine the kind of affection which an elder brother who is rather behind the times feels for a younger brother to whose knowledge and competence he submits, while at the same time he protects him from danger. This sentiment is widespread in the regiments at the front, and when one of these young officers is wounded or killed the men set

their teeth and their anger rises as they force the enemy to atone for the blood of their "little brother."

The voluntary armies of free England will not lack brave and experienced officers. They will have aviators, guns, munitions, all the weapons, old and new, which modern war requires. On the seas the British fleet is supreme. On the Continent France is stronger than ever. The power of the Allies is increasing, while the enemy is consuming the forces which were employed at their maximum at the very outset.

We await with confidence the issue, of which we have every reason to be sure.

X

England and Munitions

"GUNS! Munitions!" The same cry goes up from all the Allies. We shall see how England responded to it.

On the outbreak of the War, the factories for arms and munitions were taken over by the naval authorities, who hoped to come into immediate conflict with the German squadrons and to reduce them very considerably. But as the hostilities developed, and the three hundred thousand soldiers at England's disposal increased to double, triple, ten times their number, the problem presented itself how to furnish these armies with rifles, machine guns, artillery and munitions of all descriptions. This was the task of Mr. Lloyd George, who, starting from the embryo of an organisation, has now secured under the control of his department more than four thousand factories working exclusively for the War.

The whole country has been divided into districts—and Ireland has not been excepted—each under the direction of a local committee,

which is in direct relation with the central administration. These local committees organise the industrial manufactures and enterprises for the needs of the State; they have very extensive powers, which they exercise with the greatest energy. As a result of their labours, the industrial resources of each district are utilised in such a manner as to produce the maximum result.

The powers of the Minister were defined in the Munitions Act, which was rapidly passed through the Commons at the time of the creation of the department; and Mr. Lloyd George has given repeated proof that he knows how to make use of his prerogative. He is assisted by some remarkably competent collaborators, a whole phalanx of civil engineers, who have been transformed into officers of the artillery or the engineers, and who do not grudge either their knowledge or their goodwill.

It is not without certain formalities that permission is obtained to visit the industrial centres where arms and munitions are manufactured. Having been invited by Mr. Lloyd George to convince myself that England is now in a fair way to compete with le Creusot and our great military establishments, not including the thousands of

requisitioned factories, I commenced my tour with Birmingham.

My reception there soon became cordial—yet another proof that English coldness is one of those fables of which very little will survive after the War.

The first factory that I visited was composed of old buildings where munitions had always been manufactured, and of new buildings, larger than the old and in process of constant extension. In the workshops in which bullets are manufactured, the production in one month rose from eleven millions to twenty millions a week. The work is continued without interruption. The shifts, composed of one thousand five hundred men and two thousand women, succeed each other day and night in front of the machines, which never rest save for the few moments required for the rapid repair of a part. The manipulation of these machines may be safely entrusted to women, who adapt themselves to this routine work very readily; a few days of apprenticeship is all that they need, and, when once they have mastered it, they can continue for several hours in succession to make the same rapid movement required to maintain the even working of the machine, with no other anxiety than to increase

their speed, so as to produce to-day a higher number than the day before.

Everywhere there are displayed little flags with the colours of the Allies, fluttered by the vibration of the machines and the current of air generated by the transmission belts. Near the windows, on the ledge of the partitions, there are plants, flowers—slightly anæmic, perhaps, in their somewhat narrow pots. And there is a strange contrast in the anxiety of these women to have a few flowers in the midst of this hellish work at which they are toiling with so much courage and enthusiasm.

In the afternoon I visit an even worse inferno. The sky is obscured, the town is shrouded in smoke; in the offices of the draughtsmen, where I am shown the various kinds of fuses and other contrivances which are being manufactured here, the light falls from the ceiling through large opalescent shades which subdue the hard brilliance of the electric lamps. In the endless workshops, in the network of transmission belts and shafts, the lights are like little stars seen through the haze above the three thousand machines, the motion of which produces a deafening hum.

Further on is the foundry. In strange-looking crucibles, almost on a level with the ground, a silvery substance is seething: it is melted aluminium. The men fetch small quantities, taking it out with a sort of ladle with a long handle, from which they pour it into moulds, where it takes the form of a disc. These discs will become part of the fuses of the millions of shells which will be sent to Russia.

Under one hammer after another the little disc is curved and pointed; it is shaped and marked and tested; and it will ultimately form the cap of a shell which will do its work of destruction in the ranks of the Germans. . . .

It is a veritable inferno, this gigantic factory—an inferno in which the damned souls of the Boches are tortured in anticipation.

I had thought yesterday in front of those little crucibles, in which the aluminium for the shell fuses was being melted, that I had been vouchsafed a vision of inferno, but they were trifles compared with what I have seen to-day.

From the town of iron I proceeded to the town of steel, and I saw some of the most remarkable machines in the world for the manufacture of guns and their carriages. In all the industrial

towns of the Midlands, there is truly no other work save that connected with War. One firm which manufactured exclusively rails for tramways and railways has introduced machines which turn out shells of all sizes. Another firm which built locomotives manufactures gun-carriages and ammunition waggons, and its workshops have been extended to double their size. One of these enormous establishments was bounded on one side by the town and on the other by a river, beyond which the fields stretched to the foot of the hills. In a very short time the engineers threw bridges across the barge-laden stream, and immense sheds were erected, in which were installed machines which are now working day and night. It is easy to talk of installing machines, but who realises the enormous labour which it involves? It is not only a matter of building the workshops, but of installing the motive power, of manufacturing the special machines which are required for the production of engines of war, of collecting the workers and of training them. It is not a question of little ready-made motors, but of generators capable of working gigantic steam-hammers, scores of heavy lathes and thousands of machines of every description. An electric furnace capable of

casting a steel ingot weighing from twenty to thirty tons cannot be set up in a day. In order to give some idea of the speed with which this labour has been accomplished, it will suffice to give one example out of many. A great industrial establishment commenced, on the 23rd of October, 1914, the construction of a factory 1,300 feet long by 500 feet wide and on the first day of the following January the machines were working.

The area covered by these factories varies from about seventy-five to two hundred acres, and they extend in every direction where ground is available, on which there spring up immediately immense iron sheds where hundreds of thousands of workmen are employed upon the terrible engines of war. Between these vast structures, avenues are contrived for the accommodation of the railways. The locomotives draw trucks loaded with mineral, coal or cases of shells. Along the river and the canal, barges are being unloaded with feverish haste. One has to be constantly on one's guard against enormous motor-lorries, or heavy steam-waggons to which a truck is always attached.

These metallurgic establishments afford an example of the numerous transformations which the

raw material undergoes before it becomes a gun or a shell. From the blast furnace in which the mineral is treated, we pass a whole series of forges, steam-hammers, and rolling mills, till we arrive at the machine tools, where the last touches are given to the more delicate products. For instance, the machine for feeding the furnaces in which some melted metal is seething is well worth seeing. It is like a sort of enormous tortoise, planted on wheels, which are almost rollers. Seen at rest, it is awkward and heavy, but as soon as it begins to move it exhibits an amazing activity. With a sort of gigantic proboscis, like an elephant's trunk, it seizes the troughs filled with metal, protrudes so as to push them inside the oven, and empties them with incredible precision and rapidity. Elsewhere, an enormous crane lifts out from a great vertical furnace, ninety feet high, a white-hot cylinder more than a yard in diameter, and plunges it into a bath of oil, which is let into the ground to a depth equal to the height of the oven. Further on, I am obliged to put on blue spectacles. It is the foundry, and all at once a dazzling cascade is poured into a fireproof ladle, which emits a fantastic sheaf of sparks. The ladle travels along, suspended from a crane, until it arrives above the moulds in which

the melted substance will take its first shape. Each one of these bars of steel, whether forged or cast, can be converted, according to its dimensions, into a dainty little shell for anti-aircraft guns or a sixteen inch projectile.

After walking for a few hours through the factories, one feels overpowered by the force of these machines. A block of white-hot metal is placed on an anvil. It is a huge mass, and it gives out an insupportable heat. Above the anvil is a press, the movable part of which descends slowly, hangs for a few seconds above the block, and then, with an irresistible force, descends upon the glowing mass and compresses it; then this species of vice looses its hold, opens and re-ascends; another machine lifts up the long cylinder which has been rendered malleable by the heat, drives it forward and turns it about like a straw. The press descends again and twenty times more until the end of the cylinder is reached. At each operation a cry of admiration escapes us, and we are conscious of our own weakness and insignificance in the face of this prodigious force. The ten thousand workmen who are toiling there are ants struggling with burdens beyond their strength, but machines are docile; they are made

by man, and they are subject to him, no matter how gigantic he makes them.

The rate of production is so great that there is no room anywhere in the bays or between the machines; everywhere the products are piled up; here are shells of all sizes, from 18 lbs. to 1,800 lbs., the latter nearly two yards high; there are the various pieces which make up the field guns, the short howitzers or the innumerable naval guns.

Outside, there is the same accumulation. I spoke just now of avenues, but the wide spaces which separate the buildings have neither trees nor macadamised pavements. You tramp through a sticky black mud, to which no one pays any attention, and which is fed by constant showers. The only occupation here is that of productive labour; no one has time to look at the ground and pick his steps.

It would be interesting to give the exact figures of the production of these establishments, but that would be "information useful to the enemy," and it will not be till the War is over and the Germans vanquished that we shall know the exact extent of the English effort. We will, therefore, preserve silence on this point, since the vigilant censor would implacably strike through our figures

if we were so rash as to publish them. We may, however, be permitted to say that the manufacture of munitions and of material of war is adequate to all the necessities of the situation, and that it is increasing at such a rate that the superiority of the Allies henceforth exceeds the superiority enjoyed by the Germans at the outbreak of the War.

After the amazing spectacle of the vast factories where cartridges are being manufactured by tens of millions and shells by tens of thousands, we shall see how no less important resources have been utilised. The factories of the great metallurgic centres have at their disposal the necessary material and the necessary workers for performing all the operations by means of which a shapeless mass of metal is transformed into a shell or a gun of the largest dimensions. It is no less interesting to see what has been accomplished in towns which had never before produced the smallest projectile for the most inoffensive carbine.

Before the War, the manufacturers of Leeds produced all kinds of gas-fittings, miners' lamps, textile machines, printing presses, and machine tools. The town contains a few large factories, but most of the workshops contain no more than five to ten machines. The Ministry of Munitions

has organised the work which these workshops are capable of performing, and this organisation is as ingenious as it is effective.

It must be said at once that Mr. Lloyd George met with the most generous and eager co-operation from the manufacturers of the district. They have formed a group; the members of the local committee tender for orders and divide up the execution of them according to the machines and the workers which they have respectively at their disposal. It is only fair to the workers to mention that they supported the efforts of their employers with the utmost good will. The smaller factories assist the bigger ones. A shell is made up of several parts which may be manufactured separately and then put together.

At Leeds, there is a National Shell Factory. It was established and equipped solely by local initiative. On the 18th of June, 1915, the site was occupied by a carriage-builder's shed. Four months later, twelve hundred workmen were working there day and night at shells of one particular size. Some ground was available by the side, and new workshops, which will employ one thousand five hundred workmen, are being constructed with unceasing activity. While the windows are being

fitted, the machines are already in process of instalment—and these machines were not to be had ready made; it was necessary to design and construct them from the very beginning. It has been the manufacturers—who are all engineers—who have planned and directed this construction on behalf of the Ministry of Munitions, whilst their own establishments are controlled by the same Ministry and work only for the purposes of the War.

There is no lack of workers. A few hours' apprenticeship are sufficient for the manipulation of a lathe or an automatic machine. People belonging to all kinds of professions—even a clergyman—come to do their eight hours' shift with their gang. At the beginning the production was less than it should have been by twenty-five per cent.; this has now fallen to seven per cent., and the directors are confident of bringing it down to three per cent.

The manufacturers of machine-tools at Leeds threw up their contracts, and are working solely at the manufacture of the machines destined either for making munitions in the new factories which are springing up everywhere or for replacing machines which can no longer be utilised in the

existing factories. One of these factories employs five thousand hands, who are working day and night at the construction of amazingly-ingenious machine-tools, by means of which it is possible to manufacture with greater speed and efficiency all those engines of destruction which will win us the victory. In the new buildings attached to this factory two thousand women are manufacturing, by the aid of these new machines, bullets for the English rifles and for our Lebel. Additional buildings have just been completed, and four thousand women-workers have been engaged.

In the district of Leeds alone there are more than fifty establishments of this nature, and it is the same from one end of the country to the other.

At a little distance from Leeds, at the bottom of a narrow valley beyond which stretch the Yorkshire moors, a little industrial colony has settled on the edge of a navigable river. There, weaving machines and the plant for spinning are manufactured. There were some unoccupied buildings. A local committee was formed; machines for making shells were rapidly constructed, equipped and installed in these empty buildings, a few men past military age and a few hundred women were engaged, and the national factory

is now in full working order. Soon it will have doubled its production, thanks to the enlargement of the building. The factory is managed by the local manufacturers. They are four in number, and they meet in a very unpretentious office. One of them is a type only to be found in this part of Yorkshire: solidly built, with broad shoulders, a firm chin, and the peculiar local accent, which gives even more energy to his decisive speech. He explains to me how they created this factory in a few weeks, and how they not only keep it going but are constantly enlarging it and increasing the production. He tells us the terms of the contracts made with the State like a man of business. "It is only we who have no salaries," observes one of his colleagues. "Bah!" he retorts immediately, "then we can double them every week!" And he bursts into a hearty laugh. "What do you want us to do?" they asked Lloyd George. "Supply munitions and arms for our heroes," replied the Minister. "All right! They shall have them," said these men of action, and, at the rate they are going, they will produce an avalanche of iron and steel to be hurled at the invaders of Belgium and Serbia.

In the manufacturing centres of England, the

factories and the residential buildings are so close together that they evidently only exist the one for the other. In the centre of the agglomeration, as well as on its outer circumference, the tall chimneys rise up and spread a black veil of smoke over the neighbourhood. The atmosphere is a compound of smoke and rain, which is not particularly cheerful. There are scarcely any loiterers to be seen in the streets. Every one is going from his home to his work or from his work to his home, with a hasty step and without raising his eyes to the veil of fog which hides the heavens.

However, this morning, at Newcastle, the sun paid us the extraordinary compliment of revealing its presence in a cloudless sky, but its rays do not pierce the coating of fog which already enshrouds the town and its disc is shorn of its beams. However, there is no need to pity us. Is it not better than floundering through the drizzling rain ?

The Armstrong factories extend over a considerable area on the left bank of the river. For the last five months they have been continually enlarged. One after the other new workshops have been toiling to satisfy the requirements of the Admiralty and of the War Office, under the stimulating control of the Ministry of Munitions. Already,

twenty thousand workmen are working here at seventy-seven different types of shells, and are turning out thirty-six field-guns in a week, that is to say, nine complete batteries, with limbers, carriages and all accessories. We must add to these eloquent figures the heavy guns corresponding to our "105" and "155," the quick-firing guns for the Navy, the tubes for firing torpedoes, the enormous guns which are mounted in the turrets, and all the innumerable implements and projectiles which, when they have once been tested and approved, are despatched without delay to the various fronts—the front in Flanders, the Russian front, the fronts in the Balkans, in Egypt, in the Persian Gulf—wherever German madness has forced men to massacre one another.

For whole hours, in one workshop after the other, the melted or forged steel undergoes its multiple transformations: it becomes the little shell for the anti-aircraft guns—a pretty bauble—or the enormous projectile of the twelve-inch gun, which it takes three hundred hours to make. There, an incandescent bar, weighing seventy tons, is undergoing a pressure of ten thousand tons, and is being irresistibly compressed; here, all this infernal toil has resulted in a spruce, polished, glittering

gun, which the busy cranes lift up as though it were a straw and convey it, above our heads, to the trucks in which it starts on its journey to the fighting line, where, with so many others, it will hurl death and devastation on the hated enemy.

From the East coast we proceed straight to the West coast—to Glasgow—and pass from one marvel to a greater marvel. It seems here as if the whole region has been transformed into an immense arsenal.

The town contains an establishment which, together with the Vickers and Armstrong establishments, is one of the largest armament works in the United Kingdom; here, almost everything required for naval or field artillery is manufactured, from the lightest machine gun to the most enormous naval guns, with all their accessories and projectiles. After it has passed through the blast furnace, the metal undergoes all the processes which transform it into steel and fashion it into guns or shells. We pass from workshop to workshop, inspecting these titanic operations. Incandescent masses of from fifty to sixty tons pass from the furnaces under the steam-hammers; a cascade of molten metal falls into the ladle, from which it will be poured into the moulds. Enormous tubes

are taken out of the vertical furnaces to be plunged into the reservoirs of oil, which will give the metal its temper.

The head of the establishment, Sir William Beardmore, seems cheerful and satisfied, as he contemplates the prodigious activity of his workshops. "From this little shed," he explains—for this workshop is not one of the largest—"we despatch ten completely finished field-guns every week. Here is a lathe by means of which one hundred and fifty miles of flat metal wire can be wound round the barrel of a twelve-inch gun. Before the war, we manufactured shells, but this kind of work has been developed now with the utmost energy, and we are fitting up new workshops as fast as we are able to obtain the machines. We were among the first to employ women, and we are very satisfied with them."

We enter a clean, well-lighted workshop in which we perceive a network of innumerable belts.

"Here," said Sir William, "three hundred and twenty women are engaged in the manufacture of our field-gun shells, and they produce as many as ten thousand a week.

For this kind of work female labour is most satisfactory. A woman learns very quickly to

control and feed her machine with the least possible waste of time. She likes this routine work, repeated incessantly from morning to evening and from day to day. She is more persevering in it than a man, and produces better results. "When a workman has spent a week or two manipulating a lathe for boring cylinders or piercing fuses," remarks an engineer, "he comes to ask for his work to be changed or he goes on strike; on the contrary, if a woman is told that she is to be given some other work, she cries and begs that she shall not be changed."

These women stay by their machines, grave and attentive, performing rapidly, but without any appearance of haste, the exact movements required. I question a few of them. "What were you doing before the War?" One was a dressmaker; another was employed in a spinning-mill; another was serving in a tea-shop; another was doing nothing, helping her mother in the house. "Are you satisfied with your work?" The answer is always the same, with the same smile and the same proud lift of the head: "Oh, yes; very satisfied!" They are all dressed in big aprons and little khaki caps, which hold in any stray curls which might be caught in the belts or on the pulleys. There

are no ear-rings or finger-rings which might catch in the complicated machinery with fatal results.

They work in alternate day and night shifts of a fortnight's duration. "Which do you prefer —the day or the night work?" Generally they prefer the day work, but some—almost all mothers of families—prefer the night shift. "Why?" The reply is always the same: "You earn more money"—and doubtless they also have more time to give to their children.

Each is engaged on one of the numerous parts which make up a shell, or else simply cutting the groove in which will be fitted the copper driving band; and each of these tasks takes more or less time. I ask them again: "How many do you make in a day?" "I made one hundred and forty-four yesterday, but the week before I made as many as one hundred and sixty-two in ten hours."

The figures vary according to the occupation, but what does not vary is the pleasure with which these women tell me the maximum they have been able to attain, and one feels that their chief ambition is to attain it again and exceed it; not only is there emulation between them, but each tries to beat her own record.

Messrs. G. and J. Weir, of Cathcart, also had recourse to female labour. These two brothers represent just the kind of intelligent and practical collaborators which Mr. Lloyd George has succeeded in finding. One of them is in khaki; on the trimming of his cuff and on his shoulder-piece a crown is embroidered, indicating his rank of Major, and on his breast are the two white wings of the Flying Corps. He has recently returned to assist his brother in the management of their immense establishment, but this aviator-gunner tells me that he misses those batteries of his which are attacking the Boches near La Bassée. He is very modest, with an extraordinarily gentle, almost timid, expression; he gives me the explanations in a very few words; then he is silent and resumes his air of meditation. But his mind is not absent; he sees everything, answers everything, without an unnecessary step or gesture, without an idle word. A few months ago, he flew from England to Béthune, in a storm. When they started off, another airman who accompanied him was flung to the ground; he was more fortunate, and he accomplished the crossing without misadventure, but not without the painful conviction that he was making his last journey. He described this

fear, which never left him for hours, with a quiet simplicity.

The two brothers are clean-shaven, and it is difficult to judge their age. In any case, they look very young. The civilian has not the apparent nonchalance of the officer. He is precise, clear, exact, like one of those fine machines which are working in his factory. The establishment of the brothers Weir is the most modern which I have visited up to the present. The workshops are admirably light and airy and surprisingly clean. Before the war they only manufactured accessory machines, particularly steam pumps for ships of all descriptions. Now contracts of this kind are only taken when they are destined for the navy ; the available workshops were utilised only for the materials of war, and new workshops have been constructed or are in process of construction. These workshops are of such dimensions that each of them might in itself constitute an arms factory. Instead of numbering them, Messrs. Weir have given them such names as : Flanders, Argonne, Marne, La Bassée, Liége, Ypres, Albert, Mons, Béthune, Lille, Anzac. The contract for the construction of the " Flanders " factory was passed on August 15th, 1915. On the 15th of October it was in working order—that is to say,

the whole of the structure was erected, the iron framework was set up, the walls built, the windows put in, the machines designed, manufactured, despatched, erected, the motive power, lighting arrangements, etc., installed—in two months! The workers were collected and trained, and a few tens of millions of shells have already been produced and despatched.

The well-lighted and well-kept Weir establishments set themselves to construct aeroplanes. The production of these is increasing daily, and it will reach fantastic proportions when the factories and workshops in process of construction are actually at work. The energy of the brothers Weir, which gives such a powerful impetus to this formidable enterprise, is also devoted to the rapid completion of a factory for the filling of the shells manufactured in the district. This new establishment is naturally situated at a distance from the rest. The order for its construction was given on the 20th of September, 1915. Only female workers are employed, and there are three shifts, which relieve one another every eight hours.

Further on, at the foot of the snow-capped mountains, a new branch of the Armstrong firm has been installed since January in the spacious

premises of a quondam motor-car factory. Here, three thousand five hundred men and women workers produce every week thousands of shells of all sizes, and new machines are continually being installed. The engineer who superintends this immense hive has organised it so as to reduce to a minimum the movements and manipulations which impede production. The machines have been wonderfully improved, and have reached a marvellous degree of automatism. Between the vast workshops, the locomotives draw the trucks which have brought the raw material, and which take away cases full of finished projectiles.

In the national factories created by Mr. Lloyd George, as well as in the hundreds of controlled establishments, the material of war, and the projectiles which will provide those continually more effective curtains of fire against which the attacks of the enemy are broken, are being manufactured with increasing energy. We are no longer in danger of lacking guns or munitions; the English production has attained such proportions that it will ensure for the Allies a superiority so overwhelming, let us hope, that the enemy will be trapped in their trenches and enveloped in a torment of fire.

If, after expressing cordial thanks to the Minister who has allowed this reassuring visit, I might be permitted to utter a word of advice or rather a wish, I would beg Mr. Lloyd George to send a similar invitation to the neutrals who are still hesitating. They would carry away with them an impression which would perhaps decide them to declare for the Allies.

XI

Under the Dome of St. Paul's

SINCE the disc of a sun shorn of its beams first became visible through the fog, the precincts of St. Paul's Cathedral have been thronged with a crowd who are waiting for the opening of the gates. Thousands will not be able to gain admission to the building, and those whose patience will be rewarded will have to stand in the aisles, for the nave and the transept are reserved for those who have cards of invitation, but all cherish a hope that perhaps, by pressing very close together, there will be room for everybody. Some poverty-stricken women are offering, in hoarse voices, a sort of portrait of Miss Cavell, with the programme of the ceremony to be held in memory of the victim of the Germans, for the sum of one penny.

As in the case of all great assemblies of this nature in England, the crowd is admitted two hours before the ceremony begins. Those who succeed in finding a place are better there than outside, and the others can return two hours earlier to their homes or their occupations, unless they prefer to

wait for the arrival of the celebrities who alight at the side entrances from luxurious motor-cars. An hour after the public has been admitted, an orchestra—the band of the Guards—plays occasional music while those who have been invited are gradually finding their places; no one risks being late.

I make my way to the benches which have been reserved for the Press in an excellent position. My English colleagues do not arrive until much later, and their delay leaves me a choice, of which I take advantage. The vergers are dressed in black cassocks, with long sleeves hanging from the elbows and growing narrower towards the ground and trimmed with great black pompons—like pierrots in mourning. One of them is very busy. He has a thin ascetic face, clean-shaven, and a mouth without lips, as if it had been made by a clean stroke with a lancet. Respectable stewards in ordinary attire each have charge of a series of numbered benches; they are distinguished by a heavy bronze badge suspended from a broad crimson ribbon; without noise or haste, they show to their places a quiet and docile congregation, who make their way to the exact seat indicated. The sacristans in their surplices pass to and fro

with long strides; to the questions of the vergers and the stewards they reply quietly, in a few words, as is becoming in a temple. Whole rows are occupied by hospital nurses, who arrive ten and twelve at a time. The celebrities among the congregation have arrived punctually: members of parliament, ministers, high officials, dignitaries of the Church, the representative of the Lord Mayor, in great pomp, preceded by stout mace-bearers and halberdiers, who are conducted by the thin vergers with their slender silver wands.

An obliging sacristan hands us a list of the celebrities whose presence is assured, and from time to time he comes to add some verbal information. He even proceeds to cross out a name, that of the labour representative and he insists on verifying that this erasure has actually been made. The Prime Minister, the Queen-Mother Alexandra, the representatives of the King and the Queen have taken their places. The dignitaries and the clergy take their places in the choir. The memorial service begins. At the same time, the enormous dome which towers above us and which had seemed to be filled with an impenetrable fog grows clearer. The sun enters in long rays of yellowish light, which give lustre to the gilding of the balustrades

and a greater transparency to the faded stained-glass windows.

From the great organ and the thousands of voices of the congregation goes up the stirring appeal of the *De Profundis*, which resounds under the majestic vaults of the cathedral. It is no longer merely a funeral service; it is a supplication for a martyr, for Nurse Edith Cavell, whom a German in braided uniform—we cannot say a man and still less an officer—put to death as an executioner puts to death a murderer, only that here the executioner is also the murderer. *De Profundis* . . . From one end of the world to the other the revolver shot of the armed Prussian has evoked a long cry of horror. For against those who treated her simple patriotic action as a crime, Miss Cavell had no other weapon save a whole life consecrated to the relief of the sick and wounded—German wounded among them. These hundreds of nurses who kneel on the cold stone floor of the cathedral and pray for the repose of the immortal soul of the victim of the Germans, they too have no other weapon. In their simple costume, these women represent the great divine pity extended to man in the midst of the suffering which his folly has created, and it might have been expected that the most

brutal savages would have accorded them the sacred immunity due to their work of pity and charity.

The murder of a woman is an abominable crime, and, in the case of the courageous nurse who stayed behind in an invaded country, it was a premeditated murder. The German does premeditate his crimes, and Miss Cavell will symbolise all the victims of Teutonic ferocity. In Belgium and in France, in Poland and in Serbia, hundreds and thousands of women have been foully murdered, and hundreds and thousands of children have been murdered with their mothers.

The death of Miss Cavell will reveal to the English people the true character of the German, whose leaders have for generations been cultivating in him sentiments of arrogance and brutality. In the first months of 1915, in the plains of Flanders, English officers said to me: "You Frenchmen hate the Germans . . . We have not yet learnt that hatred," they added. They will understand it now, and they will understand it more and more.

How should we do other than hate those German hordes who, wherever they have passed, have not only killed women and young girls, but have inflicted on them the vilest insult and outrage? We hate the German, for he is not only a brute

and an assassin; he is also a foul animal which sullies and dishonours. Overwhelming and irrefutable evidence has been collected of the atrocities committed by the invaders, when they believed themselves sure of victory. Even now, in the blockhouses and the shelters from which the English and French troops expelled them a few weeks ago, there were found corpses of women and young girls. These are the enemies which our armies have to fight.

There are no pro-Germans in France—after all, can it be said that there are any in England? For the French soldier, the German has ceased to be an honourable adversary, against whom he is fighting honourably, and whose hand he can shake when he has vanquished him without any sense of defilement. For us, the German is a loathsome animal, who must be driven for ever from the sacred soil of France. He has robbed war of every element of nobility and chivalry. He has transformed it into a labour of base revenge, of vile envy, a cowardly war in which he massacres and destroys without reason or excuse. It is barbarism restored and eager to enslave the world.

England has been immune from invasion. She has been obliged to wage her battles on the

Continent, and so she herself has escaped the horrors of war. The enemy has not set foot on her soil, burnt her towns and violated defenceless women. After the lamentations of the hymns, I should have liked to hear the congregation join in a fervent psalm of thanksgiving for the immunity which they enjoy. The English are fighting for their honour, for the defence of their national existence and the security of the British Empire, but they do not know as we do the passionate wrath and bitterness of hate. France rose as one man to defend her honour and her life, and, if she is fighting now with rage and hatred in her heart, it is because she has to revenge towns which have been destroyed, and women who have been outraged by a lustful soldiery.

Hatred would never have entered our hearts if our enemies had respected those who are our mothers, wives, sisters, daughters. The innumerable outrages to which they have been subjected fill us with scorn and execration of an infamous and degenerate adversary. On the field of battle there is no hatred between man and man, provided that the adversaries show equal respect for the rules of the conflict and do not strike below the belt.

The Germans have slain Miss Cavell, and a wave of wrath has swept over England. From France, an immense cry of sorrow has accompanied the recollection of all the unfortunate victims of Germanic ferocity and lust.

While the drums were beating out Schubert's great "Heroic March" or Chopin's "Funeral March" with a force which seemed to shake the building, I thought of our cathedrals and our humble churches in France which the German guns select for their target. The good Catholics of Rheims, Ypres, Arras and Soissons can no longer go to their sanctuaries to address their prayers and pour out their sorrows before the God of peace in whom they trust. In St. Paul's Cathedral we were in safety, secure from cannon and asphyxiating or incendiary projectiles, or, at any rate, the day protected us, for at night the German airship visits unfortified towns in order to kill their sleeping inhabitants and destroy, if possible, their precious monuments.

For if the German is a murderer and a lustful brute, he is also a blasphemer and a profaner of sacred things. Where is the Christian or the honest unbeliever who does not experience a sense of nausea when he reads the invocations of the

Kaiser to the good old German God? The man who let loose this sanguinary war repeats on every occasion: "God is with us." In what burning lines Victor Hugo would have told him that God will never be with him until the hour of his ruin and chastisement.

The diseased madman who orders the killing and violation of women, who causes them to weep for their husbands, their sons, their brothers, may possibly enjoy playing the rôle of Anti-Christ, after having played so many other rôles less successfully with his smile and his mephistophelian moustache. But the Church teaches her faithful that none can blaspheme without incurring the divine wrath. The God to whose glory were built those cathedrals and churches which the Germans are devastating, and that eternal justice which has been so outrageously defied, will hear the cry for vengeance of the murdered women and of those who are mourning; and their wrath will descend on those who are the enemies of humanity and of civilisation.

XII

Sir Robert Borden and France

CANADA has not been content with sending a powerful army to aid in the defence of the British Empire. This immense country, which is twenty times as large as France, with more than eight million inhabitants, many of whom are French in race and in speech, is contributing to the utmost of her resources to the war of defence against Germanic barbarism.

The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, crossed over to Europe, accompanied by Major-General S. Hughes, the Minister of Militia. In London, he worked in collaboration with the Government, and —a fact without precedent and big with consequence—he was present at a meeting of the Cabinet.

Sir Robert Borden spent a week in France, where he visited the Canadian contingent. From the headquarters of Field-Marshal French, he proceeded to General Joffre, and thence to Paris, where he conversed with our Ministers and dined with the President of the Republic. He inspected the four Canadian hospitals which have been estab-

lished in France, and near the graves at Boulogne and Le Tréport, where the Canadians who have died for their country have been laid, he reverently planted some seeds of the maple-tree, the national tree of Canada.

When I begged the Canadian Prime Minister for the honour of an interview, I was not ignorant of the enormous demands upon his energy during his stay in the metropolis of the Empire; but also, as he had visited our French lines, seen our soldiers in the trenches and our civilians outside the fighting area, I was anxious to hear his impressions.

"I look upon it as a pleasant duty to express here the profound sympathy and the sincere admiration which I feel for France. When I visited the armies, I was strongly impressed by the remarkable efficiency of the military organisation. The *moral* of the troops is excellent. I found them full of an enthusiasm, a resolution, a calm and courage which was astonishing after a year of such a war, if one did not know the heroic qualities of the French nation. What struck me also was that one spirit animates the whole population. Everywhere outside the zone of the armies, where heroism has become a matter of course, I observed that

composure and that calm determination which have revealed to foreigners a France—the true France—which they did not know before. This week which I have just spent with our brave Canadians and with the French army I shall count as one of the most soul-stirring experiences of my life."

In the handsome, serious face of the Prime Minister, the blue eyes light up with a sudden flame, and through the wide bay window looking over the dark waters of the river, his glance stretches towards the lofty buildings on the Embankment as far as Westminster Palace, with its straight, severe and majestic lines.

"Yes," he says; "it is a comforting spectacle to see a whole nation in arms. All your young men, all your men of mature age, are mobilised for war, and yet throughout the country, up to a few hundred metres from the line of the trenches, the ground has been ploughed, sown, and the harvest gathered in by old men, women and children. Indeed," says Sir Robert, "it is impossible for me to express the intense emotion which I felt when I saw the courage, the patience, the seriousness and the composure of the French nation. A nation with such a spirit can never perish or be enslaved.

"We are no less proud," he adds, "to think

that our great Ally is our near relation. The Canadians of British origin have as many Celtic and Norman as they have Saxon ancestors, and there are several regiments of French-Canadians in which one scarcely hears a word of English spoken; the relationship, in their case, is still nearer, though the same desire to defend the Empire animates all the Canadians, whatever their origin. In the course of my visit to France, within the range of the German guns, I contemplated the grave and eager faces of ten thousand Canadians. Only a few days before I had looked into the undaunted eyes of a thousand convalescent Canadians. In those faces and in those eyes I read one thought only, one single unshakable determination—to defend our liberties and our institutions and the influence of our Empire in the world."

I recalled to the Prime Minister that the Germans had pictured to themselves quite a different attitude on the part of the various countries which make up the British Empire: they counted on rebellions in India and South Africa; they hoped that Australia and Canada would profit by this opportunity to proclaim their autonomy and throw off the yoke of the mother country. There was an expression of amusement on the face of my

illustrious companion, and his piercing eyes shone with satisfaction.

"Oh, yes!" he said. "The Germans have cradled themselves in a good many illusions. Their absurd hopes have been disappointed, and remember that, from the very first day, the young Dominions and Crown Colonies begged for the honour of fighting by the side of old England. As early as the 6th of August, we assembled our troops at the camp of Valcartier—a familiar name to French ears—and there I reviewed shortly after thirty-five thousand men.

"There is only one spirit in our country—a marvellous spirit of heroism and patience, a spirit of absolute consecration to the cause that we have at heart. We are not only struggling for the existence of the British Empire, but for liberty, justice and civilisation. The formidable military autocracy to which we are opposed, endeavoured to create dissension among us by treacherous talk of liberty and justice. But we recognised at once the common enemy beneath his disguise. How should he bring culture, who claims to impose his culture by means of the thunder of his cannon? And what liberty can Germany offer, when she is politically gagged and enslaved by Prussian

militarism ? We owe to the mother country free and independent institutions, and we will defend them to the last man, to the end of our resources, rather than submit to Germanic vassalage and oppression. Our fathers fought and spilt their blood for the sake of the liberties which we prize, for that ideal of individual liberty which England, as the representative of democracy, and France, as the representative of the rights of men, have propagated through the world. All these have been brutally thrown back into the balance to-day, and it is for this reason that we must not and cannot succumb in this war."

The Prime Minister told me of all the immense activity which has been displayed not only in Canada, but from one end of the British Isles to the other.

Sir Robert Borden is convinced that the Allies have taken all the necessary measures, and that not an instant has been lost. Nothing ought to discourage us he affirms ; the gigantic military effort which is being pursued without respite by the Allies, with the aid of all the resources of science, will give us, in the near future, an irresistible superiority over the enemy.

XIII

A Means of Finishing the War

THIS means has been suggested by one of the most learned men in Europe, who is in no sense a soldier. He described it in the course of an article in the *English Review* of September, 1915.

An enormous skull, a thin face, a small and fragile body, such is Dr. Dillon, who despatched his scheme to London from one of the capitals in the Balkans. His name is well known in all the chancelleries of Europe. In Paris, in Petrograd, in Rome, in Stockholm, and—before the war—at Constantinople and Berlin, Dr. Dillon had free access to the most illustrious personages. His learning is philosophic and philologic. This marvellous little man speaks and writes all the principal languages of Europe.

Profiting by his constant intercourse with those neutral States in the Balkans who believe that they hold the key of the situation without knowing in which lock to put it, Dr. Dillon tells us his conclusions.

The present war is endangering the social, political, ethical and economic foundations of Europe. As long as the neutrals are allowed to engage in trade prejudicial to our success, the victory will be long in coming and the price of it will be ruinous.

Certainly, we must have confidence, but an excessive confidence has its dangers.

Let us examine the respective situations of the two groups of belligerents after twelve months of war. On our western front, the enemy is checked by a victorious resistance; on the eastern front, his offensive is driving back the Russian armies, without breaking them, and, in fact, to borrow a metaphor from Prince von Bülow, all these formidable efforts on the part of Germany are like so many terrific blows inflicted on an eiderdown! Germany is exhausting her strength in defending herself against a coalition which her own attack has provoked; she knows herself that it is no longer possible for her to conquer, as she had hoped, and now she is merely struggling not to be defeated.

But the Allies must defeat her and they intend to defeat her, and in order to attain that end no means ought to be neglected. Dr. Dillon proposes

that the Allies should now mobilise all their economic forces for one common effort. Without waiting for the end of the war, it is important to form at once an economic league, thanks to which we shall furnish neutrals with strong motives for reflecting on the consequences of their attitude.

The conduct of certain of them is only a lucrative speculation on our final defeat. In them we must inculcate with the utmost possible energy the conviction that it is we who are going to be the victors, and then they will cease to behave with the arrogance of the ass kicking the sick lion.

Our military *entente* ought to be reinforced by an economic *entente*, which would reserve for its members the commercial, financial and other advantages which, at present, are enjoyed both by our best friends and by the most knavish of the neutral spectators.

The League once formed, the Allies would apply two customs tariffs to the importation of raw or manufactured products: one, a moderate one, would be applied to the Allied nations; the other, as high as possible, would be applied to everything coming from other States. It would then be in the interests of each of the States to join the League as soon as possible.

This customs *entente* would, at the present time, represent two hundred and seventy-one and a half millions of Allies against one hundred and forty-three millions of enemies and sixty-five millions of neutrals, without allowing for the fact that it would certainly gain the support of South America, Africa, and half of Asia. Thanks to the mastery of the seas, ensured by the naval supremacy of England, powerfully supported by the navies of France and Italy, all the nations of the globe would infallibly be drawn into becoming our privileged purveyors.

The programme of the League would not confine itself to putting prohibitive duties on merchandise coming from nations who were not members. It would be free to impose restrictive measures on coasting as well as on long-distance navigation.

The nations belonging to the League would inflict heavy licensing fees on representatives and branches of industries or business firms belonging to countries outside the *entente*.

In the sphere of finance, the banks, following the example of Germany, would organise themselves so as to favour commercial and industrial enterprises and maintain a very moderate rate of exchange and discount in the case of countries

belonging to the League who should need the assistance of our capital to develop their resources. It would not be a question of sinking capital in investments or of lending it without interest, but of a series of transactions profitable to both parties.

It is only natural and just that we should reserve for our loyal friends the material benefits of their sympathy. The others will be reduced to short commons, and even to famine, if they have to live on the crumbs which fall from the not very well-furnished table of the Austro-Turco-Germans. We are the masters of the great markets of the world, which are threatened by German greed, and it would be too foolish if we allowed free access to them to those who to-morrow, or at any moment, might declare against us.

This scheme demands an immediate examination, otherwise time, which we boast of having as our ally, may render impossible its utilisation as a factor in the present conflict. It must be systematically organised and rigorously applied, or it will share the fate of so many other projects which have been ruined through indifference, hesitation or pusillanimity. Time is on the side of those who act; it is imperative to act at once.

XIV

The Efforts of England

THE speech delivered at Bristol, at the Congress of the Trades Unions, by Mr. Lloyd George was an act of courage.

It is easier, he said, to face your foes than your friends. None the less, the Minister of Munitions did not hesitate to tell his friends some disagreeable truths. It must be admitted that the working-class organisations, at the outbreak of the war, gave proof of an extraordinary blindness. When hundreds of thousands of workers were enlisting to defend the Empire, the leaders of the various groups were insisting on enforcing the observance of strict rules and were paralysing the production, just at the moment when it was of vital importance to increase it indefinitely.

These leaders assumed a responsibility for which they will pay dearly after the war. As Mr. Lloyd George told them, they kept their short-sighted eyes fixed obstinately on the minor details of the class-conflict, like old horses which continue to wear their blinkers and cannot see to right or left.

A few of these petty tyrants adopted an overbearing attitude at the opening of the Congress. The Minister of Munitions was resolved to put these arrogant individuals in their place, and, in front of all their colleagues, he lashed their folly without mercy. His speech ought to have been posted up on every wall in England, not omitting the worthless and trivial interruptions of a few of the delegates.

"We must make, we are making the most prodigious efforts to increase our war material during the next few months, in order to give our gallant fellows fair play in the field," declared Mr. Lloyd George, and he added: "We have set up sixteen national arsenals. These we have already set up within the last few weeks. We are constructing eleven more. We require, in order to run those—the old and the new—and to equip works which are at present engaged on turning out the equipment of war, eighty thousand more skilled men, but we require, in addition to that, two hundred thousand unskilled men and women."

Pursuing his argument, and presenting the facts as he had promised, fearlessly and impartially, the Minister adds: "You can see the problem with which we are confronted. This country at the

present moment is not doing its best. It is not doing its utmost, and it is almost entirely a labour problem, and you alone can assist."

Anyone who heard the speech or who read the text of it attentively *in extenso* could make no mistake concerning the exact significance of the Minister's words.

Fortunately, Mr. Lloyd George, who had before him, in the same hall, the working-class representatives and employees of Great Britain, undertook by means of facts, and nothing but facts, not only to convince a few obstinate individuals whose resistance scarcely counts any longer, but also to enlighten the intelligent men who formed the bulk of his audience :

" Our effort is prodigious. Such as it is," he said, " we are increasing it every day. It depends on you to give the greatest return possible."

This is undoubtedly the gist of the speech. It would be unfair to extract a few words from the whole of an argument and to give them at the same time a distorted interpretation. The Germans will make up their minds to read only a certain significance into Mr. Lloyd George's words, and they will exult accordingly, but it is important that, in France, no one should be deceived. Our Press and our

public will understand that it was a question of conveying by energetic arguments to certain misguided souls that their obstruction was as criminal as it was foolish. It was a question of overcoming a resistance which was far from being general, of vanquishing certain elements of mistrust, antipathies, rancours which were intolerable at a time so fraught with tragedy, when private interests and corporate privileges ought to weigh nothing in the face of a danger which is threatening the whole country no less than the whole of civilisation.

Let us rejoice if Mr. Lloyd George's indefatigable efforts do finally extract from the nation the maximum effort of which he believes her capable. Before the war, he was one of those who fought most energetically on behalf of the least-favoured classes, and who claimed on their behalf privileges which were often judged excessive. These same classes will perhaps listen now to the man who was their dauntless champion. Democracy smiles on those who speak to her of her rights, who promise high wages, material well-being, political power. But when these same men are compelled by circumstances to speak more especially of the duties which are incumbent on the working classes as well as on the other members of the community,

there is a danger that their popularity may suffer in consequence. I am convinced that Mr. Lloyd George, conscious of the responsibilities towards his country and the Allies attached to his office, was prepared to sacrifice any popularity which could only be preserved at the expense of his conscience. He will maintain the vigorous attitude which he has adopted, regardless of any personal consequences which it may involve.

XV

The Progress of Aviation

I HAVE recently come into contact with a very curious set of people. They are not pessimists, in the sense that they do not venture to express any doubts as to the final issue of the war; they admit that the Germans will be defeated; but, as some pretext is required for their lamentations, they demand that we should defeat them immediately. And when they are told that they should do the same as every one else, that they should await the issue with confidence, they exclaim, in a tone of the deepest depression: "Ah! That's all very well!"

Happily, these melancholy folk are very few in number, although this does not prevent them from being extraordinarily irritating. It belongs to their temperament to groan and whimper and weep; therefore shun these inconsolable croakers, for nothing can cure them. When there are no more Germans in France or in Belgium, when there is no more German army and no more German fleet, when the Allies have finally crushed the German power, you will meet one of these croakers and he

will say, with an expression of grief and vexation: "Ah, yes! but it's very late in the day!"

If there were a specific against this croaking, in its more or less acute forms, it would be the sight of the troops in the fighting-area and a visit to the centres where the material of war is being manufactured. Thanks to the courtesy of the War Office, I embarked on yet another tour through the districts in England where men and women in hundreds of thousands—making up a total counted in millions—produce an inconceivable multitude of materials, substances, objects required for the task of legitimate defence, which, as a result of the methods that have been necessitated, has been transformed into a task of merciless extermination.

At the moment when war broke out, the military aviation services were almost non-existent. It was not dreamed that the aeroplane could become an instrument of war as useful for scouting as for offensive purposes. There did exist somewhere a kind of laboratory for experimentation, which employed a staff of about forty persons. However, a few far-seeing minds had predicted the part that aerial machines would play in a war which all refused to believe would ever take place. Certainly the epic conflicts described by

H. G. Wells in his "War in the Air" have not yet taken place, but who knows what to-morrow holds in store? Let us rather contemplate what to-morrow has in store for the Germans in the case of an aerial war.

Wells said that air-machines would easily overcome trenches; that it would be necessary to create fleets of twenty thousand attacking aeroplanes, which would bombard the enemy troops, the depôts of material and munitions, destroy railways and lines of communication, factories, artillery parks, aviation camps, and overturn and destroy the organisation of the enemy behind their fighting lines, while attacking their front.

It certainly seems as if the prediction of the great novelist were about to be realised. Factories have sprung out of the ground like mushrooms; they are being increased and enlarged every day. Men and women are working in them night and day; they are like immense hives, in which each is allotted his special task. When we consider that there are more than five thousand different parts in an aeroplane, we realise the number and diversity of the machine-tools which have had to be constructed and installed, and the number of workers who have had to be trained.

It is all these preliminaries which take such a desperately long time, and we are not surprised that it is long when we actually see all that has had to be done.

All this organisation is working now with a prodigious activity. In the course of the four summer months of 1915 the output increased in the proportion of one to four; that is to say, where four months ago *one* aeroplane was being produced, three months ago *two* were being produced, two months ago *three*, and in the course of the last month *four*, and the progression will not stop there. Let us hope that the same results have been obtained in the case of all the Allies.

I have seen some marvellous things in those factories, where men of science are consecrating their whole intelligence and energy to endowing the Allied armies with an incontestable superiority in the air. I also saw some splendid aviation camps, where men were being trained in the manipulation of aerial machines.

There will be no lack of pilots!

It goes without saying that the ingenuity of the learned men who superintend these services, and the constant practice which so many pilots

are undergoing, have resulted in numerous improvements that have transformed the original machines into machines which have been brought to a marvellous degree of perfection. Naturally, anyone who is granted the privilege of visiting these factories and camps is warned not to disclose anything which might supply useful information to the enemy; but for this restriction, what thrilling details these pages would contain!

Nevertheless, it is doubtless permissible to mention that there exists a biplane—I have seen it fly—which easily maintains a speed of one hundred and thirty-six miles an hour, and which can rise to a height of nearly two miles in seven minutes. This machine possesses yet another advantage, which it shares, however, with the other aeroplanes which are now being constructed, and that is *stability;* not that it is equipped with an apparatus for securing a greater or less degree of stability, but the secret of its construction renders it practically uncapsizable, even in a storm or a very high wind. As soon as it was set in motion, the hum of the motor was deafening. The machine seemed as if it wanted to rise then and there, and as soon as the props which held the wheels of the landing car were drawn aside, it flew up like an

arrow. I was lying on the ground so as to have a better view of the starting. The wheels left the ground almost instantaneously, and, at a height of less than twenty yards, the graceful and rapid insect began to mount at a very steep angle. The dartings and glidings, the leaps and the dives of this supple machine, had something supernatural, and it was so beautiful that we could not restrain cries of admiration; yet the sight has been a familiar one to me since the war, but even after the aerial battles which I witnessed at the front, and the nocturnal bombardments of the English counties by Zeppelins, the evolutions of this biplane had something magical.

The aerial factor has assumed on the front an importance which is increasing every day, and the Germans themselves recognise the superiority of our aviation. In one of the factories which I visited, and which covers several acres in a charming bit of country, where formerly there was nothing but fields and wooded hills as far as one could see, I was able to examine a German albatross which had been captured by the English intact and brought over by air. It is a machine which is fitly described by the adjectives "heavy" and "ungraceful." Elsewhere, one

of these clumsy creatures had been taken to pieces.

"It is not surprising that our aviators should find it easy to bring to the ground machines like that," observed the engineer who was conducting us.

"And you are able to copy their improvements?"

The engineer turned round quickly.

"Copy?" he exclaimed. "There is nothing to copy in their machines. At the present moment we are making something very much better than that thing."

An immense red sun is setting on the horizon; the night is falling. From all points of the sky great majestic aeroplanes and slender dragonflies with rapid and transparent wings settle, one after another, on the vast plain in front of the sheds where the men stow them away. We take leave of the amiable superintendent who has conducted us through this murmuring hive, the bees of which are holding in reserve some painful stings for the enemy, and through the dark roads, on which a few policemen stop us from time to time, we regain the immense capital over which the powerful beams of the searchlights are raking the sky.

XVI

With the British Army

DAY after day I have been passing through a district where khaki uniforms swarm in such abundance that one might fancy oneself on the other side of the Channel, in an England where all the men had enlisted, and where the women had adopted the Red Cross uniform.

It is fitting that I should first of all express my gratitude to those who, from the headquarters to the trenches, aided me in my task with so much courtesy and good nature. But this war is anonymous, and while I cherish some very pleasant personal recollections, I must confine myself to a general expression of gratitude for the welcome which I received.

The town is in the most complete darkness, further enhanced by a fog coming from the sea. If the Zeppelins can distinguish anything from overhead, their pilots must have remarkably good sight.

As a result of great efforts, I succeed in finding

quarters in a hotel full of English officers. The two vast dining-rooms are overflowing, and the two or three civilians look very out of place. Seated round a long table are some officers of mature age, wearing on their collars badges which indicate that they belong to old regiments, while the ribbons sewn side by side on their jackets prove that they have taken part in colonial expeditions, in which their conduct has earned them medals and decorations. There is a group of young lieutenants full of high spirits and gaiety. Immediately after dinner they put on their wide cloaks and stuff into their belts cans, bottles, field-glasses, pouches without end. No orderlies accompany them; they themselves carry all these accoutrements. They also fling over their shoulders enormous handles fastened by strong straps, and containing their sleeping sacks and wraps. They will not want for anything. In the narrow vestibule they jostle against and become entangled with one another, and it all adds to their amusement and good humour. Every mishap furnishes them material for a jest, and they remark in French, with the drollest accent: "C'est la guerre!"—a phrase which appears to afford them much delight.

With their baggage they crowd in groups of five or six into some antique victorias with worn-out springs, and, one after the other, these conveyances are drawn forward by the painful efforts of the lean horses, and disappear abruptly into the night.

There are scarcely any but English vehicles to be seen. In the towns and the villages there are notices to remind drivers from the other side of the Channel that, on the Continent, traffic does not keep to the left, and they learn very quickly to keep to the right.

From the sea to the firing line, on the dunes and cliffs of the coast, on the plateaus and plains of the interior, in the woods and the meadows, everywhere there are encampments under tents or light movable barracks. Not a town, not a village, not a hamlet, not a farm, not a hut which is not swarming with men in khaki, either billeted there or on duty.

The country overflows with soldiers belonging to all branches of the Service, but all in the same uniform.

The handsome uniforms with braiding and gold lace, the glitter and the pomp of war, have disappeared. The days of staff officers on prancing

horses and couriers at full gallop have passed away. Everything that shines or glitters has been suppressed. The barrels of the guns no longer sparkle, the sheaths of the sabres are enveloped in covers of drab-coloured canvas. The guns, the ammunition waggons, the carriages, and every bit of copper and steel, are covered with a coating of paint which renders them invisible at a distance. There is no display in modern war; we are very far away from the legend of the Eagle and the plumed hats of the Emperor's marshals!

The English headquarters have been installed in a district which it would be indiscreet to name. The Service motor-cars furnish the only signs of animation in the quiet provincial town, which seems to be inhabited only by English officers—tall and slim or short and thickset, but all with an air of elegance in the simple uniform which might be taken for a sporting suit.

Except in the principal roads, the town seems strangely asleep. Nothing disturbs the torpor of the little street in which lurks the frowning structure of the law courts, and there is no one but myself to admire the well-preserved porch of a large church, which appears to have suffered considerably from the ravages of men and time.

A good old lady, bowed with age and dressed in black, emerges from one of the doors, which she opens slowly; then she walks away with short steps, her eyes on the ground, as though still lost in her prayers. A priest comes out; he is tall and upright, and he steps out vigorously; each of his powerful strides sends his cassock streaming in the wind.

The life of the place is laborious and simple. There is nothing here to be compared with the splendour of the caravans of the nomad Kaiser, as described by the German reporters.

The staff are installed in buildings which are only distinguishable from the rest by the enormous bundles of telegraph and telephone wires which, to save time, have been summarily passed through ventilators or windows, the panes having been broken for the purpose.

Field-Marshal Sir John French is surrounded with men who have furnished proof of their capacity and their competence; they feel a well-deserved confidence in their leader. The Field-Marshal is not going through his first campaign. From the age of fourteen and until he was eighteen (he was born in 1852), he served as a naval cadet in the Royal Navy, in which his father was captain of

a vessel. Then we find him in the cavalry, and, as an officer of the Hussars, he went through the Soudan Campaign. He was in Natal when the Boer War broke out, and he remained in South Africa until the end, lending brilliant support to Lord Roberts in those difficult operations. It was he who commanded the cavalry of the force which relieved Kimberley and the army which subsequently seized Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Republic, and Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal. Now, he is commander-in-chief of the British forces which are co-operating in the deliverance of Brussels and of martyred Belgium.

Sir John receives me with a friendly smile. "In the course of your visit of inspection," he says, "you will have an opportunity of seeing some interesting things. While our men in the trenches are frustrating the convulsive efforts of the enemy to disengage himself from our constant pressure, you will see that in the rear everyone is doing his duty, and that the British Empire is bent on taking her full share, on land as well as on sea, in a struggle which England did all she could to prevent." And the Field-Marshal repeats, in the course of the conversation: "There can be no doubt as to the issue."

"No doubt as to the issue!" That is what I hear everywhere. From the staffs of armies, divisions or brigades down to the non-commissioned officers and the soldiers in the trenches, there is the same tranquil certainty.

And, indeed, how could it be otherwise, when every day the British contingents on the Continent are increasing in number, when the preparations are being completed with an orderliness and method which nothing disturbs, and when the superiority over the enemy is being confirmed afresh in every attack? To be sure, the Germans proclaim that the Allied armies are at a standstill, that they are paralysed with fear and dare not budge. The British Army holds quite a different opinion; they observe that it is not the Allies who are talking of an "honourable peace," or who would be satisfied with an indecisive struggle. The men who compose Kitchener's army—"the pick of the nation," as Field-Marshal French calls them—have not enlisted for nothing. They are an army of volunteers; they were not forced to obey an order for mobilisation; nothing compelled them to quit their occupations and their homes; these volunteers, recruited from every variety of trade and profession and of social class

and condition, took up arms freely, with the resolve to pursue the struggle to the end, to make an end of the hateful German menace, to avenge Belgium, to restore peace, and to enforce respect for right and justice.

Along the roads convoys are moving continuously—motor-lorries with loads of three to four tons, horse-carts loaded with blocks of straw and fodder which the hydraulic press has rendered as heavy as they are economical of space, trains of artillery and munitions, long files of motor-buses crowded inside and out with infantry on their way to the front.

On the railways there is an incessant traffic of trains to the forwarding stations. A particular destination is assigned in advance to the contents of each carriage or truck; the delay is reduced to a minimum. Cases and bales are transferred directly from the train to the motor-lorry which is to convey the supplies to the centres nearest the firing-line, where they will be divided up according to rule and distributed to the troops.

In a thousand different places, from the quays of the harbour where they are unloaded up to the trenches, this activity is pursued in perfect order,

and with an astonishing precision. "Our whole system is modelled on yours," I was told by a superior officer who was in charge of one of the important stations. You might seek in vain for any signs of disorder. At the beginning of the war we had glimpses of something quite different. Then the sides of the roads taken by the armies were strewn with a considerable quantity of lost property. In La Brie, for instance, after the passage of the English troops, who pressed back Von Kluck's drunken troops so vigorously in September, 1914, there were found everywhere abandoned motor-cars and motor-lorries with wheels sunk in the ground, with broken frames and dislocated machinery, and it was rather a shock to encounter, so far from the streets of London or Liverpool, these vehicles of all descriptions on which were still painted the names of the firms who had supplied them.

There is nothing of the kind to be encountered now. When an accident happens, it is immediately signalled to the workshops disposed all along the route. These travelling workshops are supplied with first-rate implements, lathes, dynamos, etc., as well as spare parts, and their skilled staff can execute any kind of repairs on the spot.

As far as possible it is arranged that the traffic on the roads should be all in the same direction; that is to say, there is one route for going and another for returning. By this means, delays and obstructions are avoided. The rapid motor-cars, the fast convoys, can easily outstrip a convoy of heavy waggons, or the troops of infantry or cavalry who are making their way to new cantonments.

The observance of these traffic regulations is superintended by the members of the British military police or by our own armed police, both employing a red flag similar to that used by gate-keepers at level crossings. I may add that they never have occasion to resort to force, since all submit readily to these regulations.

All this activity, all this movement of men and vehicles, all these efforts are accomplished in a serious and business-like fashion. Everyone performs, to the best of his ability, the duty allotted to him, and I am reminded of those files of ants which travel briskly and indefatigably across the paths of our gardens as soon as the summer weather allows them to resume their laborious occupations.

XVII

The Indian Contingent

ALL the illustrations in those primers of French history which are placed in the hands of schoolchildren, all the pictures in the museum at Versailles, all the battle-scenes which artists have imagined or writers have described are inadequate to give us any idea of what modern warfare really is. The actual spectacle is quite different from anything that one had pictured.

In the zone of the British army which I traversed in every direction, the formidable preparation for the offensive is as impressive by its mass and multiplicity as by the steadiness and calm with which it is accomplished. It is such an accumulation of labour, efforts, preparations, such a concentration of men and material as it would be difficult to conceive.

A close network of communications is spread over the whole region, like one of those diagrammatic figures representing the circulation of the blood in the human body, and, indeed, the constant traffic backwards and forwards which is taking place

on all these roads and railways might well be compared with the vivifying course of the blood through the system of veins and arteries.

We cease to be astonished at the fantastic sums which the war is costing when we see all that it requires in the shape of armament, equipment, and the catering for millions of men. Everything which human activity employed for the labours of peace is now applied to the labour of war. The present war has been described as " the war of railways," the " war of motor-cars," the " war of big guns," the " war of trenches or moles," the " war of petrol "—petrol in the air, on the land, under the water, etc. It is all that, and it is more : every form of motor traction has been adapted to the uses of war ; the telephone, the telegraph, with or without wires ; photography ; aeroplanes or dirigibles ; every sort of machinery, ancient and modern ; the ballistics of the middle ages and the formidable artillery of the present day ; physics ; chemistry — all the sciences joined in the effort to improve the implements of warfare and to establish a superiority over the enemy.

For the purpose of protesting against the German attack, the British Empire, taken un-

awares, is devoting all its energies and all its resources to this military preparation. From its factories and ports, all the infinite variety of objects required for modern armies are streaming to the bases which have been established in France. In a thousand places there are enormous accumulations of stores: spades, pickaxes, wheelbarrows, mattocks, pitchforks, hatchets, hammers, nails, augers, drilling machines, sapping tools, wire, tools for all kinds of trades; planks, girders, bolts and nuts for the repair of bridges; sleepers and rails for reconstructing railways; carts, lorries, motor-cars, tyres, accessory parts and spare parts; implements and materials for engineering, artillery and aviation; tons of oil and spirit for motors; harness, horseshoes, pumps and shields for the trenches, periscopes, mountains of sacks to be filled with earth, a fantastic collection of ironmongery, an inconceivable accumulation of anything which may be required in the course of the operations.

While they are organising this enormous effort for assisting in the offensive, the English are, at the same time, organising in an admirable fashion all the necessary arrangements for succouring the men whose injuries incapacitate them for further fighting. They have arranged their ambulances

and hospitals in a marvellous series. A wounded or sick man, picked up in the firing-line in the morning, may find himself the same evening, less than twelve hours later, transported into a hospital in England. From the ambulance installed near the trenches he is transferred to a clearing-hospital, whence the motor-cars convey him either to the Red Cross train or else direct to the base — generally a port — whence an admirably equipped hospital boat transports him across the Channel.

Those whose wounds are too serious to allow them to bear the crossing, as well as those who can be cured in a few days, are kept in France, in hospitals which are excellently managed and equipped. With remarkable ingenuity, factories, mills, dye-works, etc., have been transformed into immense establishments for baths, laundry and disinfecting, through which the men pass in thousands on their return from the trenches, before proceeding to enjoy a rest from the physical fatigue and depression which they experience after a sojourn in the first line. Some industrial buildings have been adapted for the reception of these weary, limping men, and after a few days of comfort and rest they are once more in a state to rejoin their

corps. Nothing is neglected which could ameliorate the sufferings or save the lives of these men who are spontaneously risking their lives for the defence of their country, right, and liberty.

By the side of this prodigious activity, another activity, of an entirely pacific character, has not been interrupted.

In the country the ploughing has been almost completed, the corn is sprouting. The labourer drives the plough, turns up the furrow, draws the harrow or the rake. With rhythmical gesture and regular steps, he scatters the fruitful seed or the powdered manure, which will sink into the ground with the next shower. They are old men and women, boys and girls, who apply themselves now to these arduous tasks. Their husbands, brothers, sons, are engaged in a stern task over there where the guns are booming; they are defending their native soil, they are watering it with their blood, they are barring the road against the brutal invader, they are driving back the hordes who had hurled themselves towards an imagined victory.

In the evening, at the farm, the peasant, returned from his peaceful labour, joins the soldier who is resting after his deadly work. In these

hours of relaxation they fraternise with and assist one another; the Tommy in khaki grasps the hand of the farmer whose sons are at the front; it is only another example of the cordial and pacific *entente*.

The green plain stretches in gentle undulations as far as one can see; big clouds with silver edges are travelling across the blue April sky. For the protection of the crop, there are placards in English proclaiming that "these fields have been sown; they must not be entered"—a recommendation which all obey with a very good will.

On the broad quay of the harbour, skates, dabs, haddocks and gurnards are being unloaded; the fishing boats have been at work regardless of submarines, which are kept at a distance by the organisation for protecting the coast. Groups of Indians are coming and going; one might fancy oneself nearer the Bay of Bengal than the English Channel.

A young Sikh, with a refined face framed by a black and curling beard, gazes at me insistently; then he comes towards me, his bronzed face lighting up with a smile which exposes his white teeth. I am a little surprised, for I have no recollection of ever having met this Oriental.

He comes straight up to me, makes me a fine salute with his hand, and points with his finger to my beard, which is also black, but has been recently cut.

"Good, very good," he says, with a broad smile. "Like God!" he adds, and I imagine that he is discovering a problematical resemblance to the divinity, which is certainly very flattering. Suddenly he makes a grimace, and with an expressive gesture, simulating a blade scraping the cheek, he confides to me this opinion: "Shave, no good, no good!" With a fresh salute and a friendly bow, he passes on, still smiling.

I proceed on my way, and now that my attention has been aroused, I notice that I am one of the few bearded individuals in this town, the inhabitants of which generally wear merely a moustache, while the majority of the innumerable English soldiers and officers are clean-shaven. But the spontaneous compliment of the Indian is a good omen, and I observe subsequently that my physiognomy wins me the sympathetic attention of the Indian warriors.

It is a very curious spectacle to see them in the villages where they have been billeted. In barns and stables, in the porches of farms, they attend

to their various tasks, prepare their food, groom their horses, clean their arms. In groups, squatting on their heels in an attitude which would give us the cramp in a very short time, they converse in strange words, of which we are unable to seize even the syllables. They make hardly any gestures, but their eyes glow in their dusky faces. They carry their burdens by preference on their heads, and they walk with perfect ease, balancing in this way saucepans full of liquid. Others come up loaded with wood, or with bundles of straw or fodder. Old men with grey beards, supple and tranquil, are strolling about with an almost feline gait.

The men on guard are in uniform. Some Gurkha infantry, wearing soft hats with turned-up brims, stand motionless with arms in position. In the hollow of the back, much as a woodcutter fastens his pruning hook when he climbs up to trim a tree, they carry the famous "kukhri" in its leather case. It is a kind of short scimitar or rather a broad hatchet, which serves all kinds of purposes —for cutting meat, for cleaving wood, and for slicing off the heads of the Boches.

Further on, a patrol of Sikh cavalry, with their beards curiously rolled up and fastened behind the

ear, pass along the side of the road at a gentle trot. With lance in hand, and, hung from the saddle, the curved sword which makes one think of the Mamelouks, they ride as if they and their horses were one.

All these Indians belong to fighting races, and they know that this time it is not a question of a rivalry between tribes, of a brief and rapid expedition, but of a war which is the conflict of conflicts. That is why they have come in such numbers—from the tablelands of the Deccan and the valley of the Ganges, from the mountains of the Himalayas and Cashmir—to take their part in the struggle in which, they say, "our raj is engaged." Like the Cossacks of the valleys of Turkestan, from whom they are only separated by the mountains of the Pamir, each soldier furnishes his equipment, each mounted soldier furnishes his horse, his harness and his arms. These Indians, whose encampments lend such a picturesque aspect to our northern villages, all own property in their own country, but there the fields, supported by walls of rock, are ranged one above the other on the sides of the mountains. Our plains appear to them immense, and they are amazed at the size of our fields and at their fertility. They ask questions

concerning all the details of the cultivation; they want to know what plants, what cereals we sow, what manure we employ, and they are very interested in the results of our harvests.

But these farmers are also warriors. When their native sovereigns summoned them to arms, a singular difficulty presented itself.

"All these young men, these simple jiwans, wanted to set off there and then," a rissaldar major with a grey beard explained to me. "That would have been obviously unjust to the older men, who have been waiting so long," he added, with an amusing accent of disapproval. "But you see, sahib, the young men fancy that they have a right to everything in the world!"

In accordance with his traditions and his sentiments, the Indian only allows his son to fight if the latter is married and, in his turn, father of a son, for he believes that if a man dies without male offspring, his soul and the souls of his ancestors perish eternally. Therefore, to ensure this survival, this immortality, the head of a family will marry several wives, and he watches very carefully over the safety of his sons, who are future husbands and the fathers of the next generation.

It is by a profound instinct, by a sound morality also, that the Indian watches over the conservation of his race.

It is a splendid day, perfect weather for watching the procession and the exercises of the Indian cavalry.

The motor-car threads its way through narrow roads, in which we are obliged to shave the ditches very close when we encounter other traffic. Everywhere, in the early morning calm, under the wide clear sky, men are at work in the fields, ploughing and harrowing; and the reins of the horses are almost always held by women. Willows with great downy buds grow by the side of the river, which meanders across the meadows where cattle are grazing and ruminating. Peasant women in their best clothes are driving carts in which a calf is lamenting or sheep are bleating. It is market day in the little town, and the rustic vehicles oblige us to advance slowly and cautiously. It is just as well, for what jolts we should have if we travelled fast along the uneven and muddy surface of these lanes!

When we emerge, we encounter more undulations, ascents and descents, and then the road follows the edge of the plateau. The Indian

cavalry are resting there in two rows between the trees. At a crossroad, which might well be named the meeting-place of all the winds, the general who is commanding the division and his staff have alighted. Like all the English officers I have met, they give me a simple and courteous welcome. The general makes a sign. Into the saddle! The column is formed, the defiling begins. The majors give a brief command: Eyes left! Each horseman turns his head towards our group, perched on a sloping bank. As they pass, the general tells me the names of the regiments and the origin of the men: Sikhs, Punjabis, Rajputs, Afghans, etc.—for they are not distinguishable from one another in their khaki uniform, and they no longer wear their sumptuous bright-coloured silk turbans. Behind the regiments come the supply and ambulance waggons drawn by mules, moving with brisk and rhythmical step, and harnessed two abreast, in the style of the rustic carts used in our sandy plains, but instead of the mules passing their heads through an iron collar fixed to the end of the pole, they support a kind of yoke made of iron rods and apparently light and strong, attached to the breast strap.

The general leaps into the saddle and sets off

at a gallop in order to get a little way ahead, while I am still admiring these superb horsemen.

En route for the meeting place! The motor-car soon catches up the escort, and we adapt our speed to the latter. In the narrow wooded valley, the procession, the importance of which is indicated by the red flag of the general, brings the inhabitants out on their doorsteps, for there are a number of cottages in this humid corner. The soldiers who are attending to the work of the cantonment stand up quickly. The sentries promptly rest their guns on their shoulders and raise their free hand to the butt-end. That is the regulation salute. The horses do not seem to notice that the road is one series of holes and ruts. The motor slips about in the black mud. Very possibly it is the slime of the river, which has recently overflowed; the tortuous windings of the river are all repeated in this impossible road. Finally, by way of a steep zigzag ascent, which must be a torrent when it rains, we emerge on to a wide tableland. A portion of the ground has not been ploughed since the harvest, and this serves for the manœuvres of the cavalry.

On all sides the horizon is bordered by wooded hills, but a gap towards the north reveals ten

tall, smoking chimneys round two enormous pyramid-shaped piles.

At the base of a very gentle declivity, against a background of trees, the regiments are massed. At a sign from the general, an officer sets off at full gallop, and, in a moment, the squadrons spring forward. The charge! It is more than magnificent. The gallop of the horses is muffled in the light soil, but it makes the earth tremble; the riders brandish their sabres and their lances, at the same time uttering guttural cries, which are blent into a hellish clamour. I seem to be witnessing some devil's ride. Rider and horse are one. They are marvellous horsemen, these Indians, veritable centaurs; and the English officers leading them, who are also turbaned, seem to equal them.

The general at my side smiles.

"Now they are happy," he remarks. "They adore these exercises, and the bad weather has hindered them so often. This is our first day of sunshine. You are lucky!"

"No doubt they would prefer an actual fight," I remark.

"Yes, certainly. They are longing to charge the Boches. What we saw of the German cavalry

at the outbreak of hostilities did not inspire us with any anxiety, far from it! The German horseman is clumsy and unskilful."

That could not be said of the general's horsemen, and I am about to see the proof of it.

The squadrons face one another in two lines, separated by a space of about thirty yards. The men dismount. In the first rank are drawn up the native non-commissioned officers: daffadars, jemadars, rissaldars, all tall and vigorous, every feature in their bearded—often grey-bearded—faces is absolutely immobile.

A few country people approach who have already looked on at the charge: old labourers, little peasant boys and girls, who are leaving their work in order to lose nothing of a spectacle, of which they will certainly preserve an ineffaceable recollection; also, by the side of two gamekeepers with brick-red complexions and white moustaches, there is a venerable-looking old man who is acting as chaperone to a troop of fashionably-dressed young women and girls.

"They are going to do the *kartab*," said the general, and he explains to me that this word signifies tournament, feats of skilled horsemanship.

First of all some soldiers and non-commissioned

officers perform the ordinary jumping exercises—the hedge, the ditch, and so forth. Then a group of horsemen assemble at the head of the course, turning their backs to the sun. In the ground in front of us are planted four little boards, three fingers broad, and four horsemen spring forward, uttering cries; they lower their lances and, with a sure aim, they tear up the board. This exercise is repeated several times with the same success, and now the boards are stuck in the ground with the edge, instead of the face, to the riders. The four lances pick up their target with the same precision, amid cheers and applause.

On little stakes, pointed at each end and placed in a line, at intervals of a few yards, beetroots are fixed. Setting their horses at a gallop, the riders hang down at the side, outside the saddle, brandish their sabres, and, with a clean stroke, cut off a slice from each of the beetroots as they pass.

Next, several white handkerchiefs are placed on the ground, and they are picked up with the same ease. However, one of the horses suddenly plunges and rears; the rider falls and his foot remains caught in the stirrup; he is dragged along for a considerable distance before he can free himself. For a moment we are filled with

anxiety and distress. But the man gets up and darts off in pursuit of his mount; it is miraculous!

"All right! They are like cats!" observes the general laconically.

And the sports continue. Now there are acrobatic feats. One of them trots round the course, his hands gripping the saddle-girth and his legs straight up in the air. Another is erect, one bare foot on the back of each of two horses driven at a gallop. Then three horses trot abreast while five, then six, then eight of these equilibrists climb on each other's shoulders and form living pyramids on their backs.

Before performing these exercises, they have taken off their turbans and rolled up their thick black hair in a firm knot on the top of the head. One of them has wrapped his head in a bright red handkerchief, and when he passes, standing erect on the back of his swift horse, he makes one think of one of Buffalo Bill's redskins or a character out of one of Gustave Aimard's novels.

A murmur, shouts, laughter. Two fresh boards have been planted in the ground, and the general satisfaction is explained: on one is painted the face of the Emperor of the Boches, with his moustache

turned up to his eyes, and the squarest head that could be imagined. The other is carved out to represent the unprepossessing profile of the plundering Crown Prince.

Two bearded horsemen leap into the saddle and grasp their lances. A shout. The horses start. The two men lean forward, with jaws thrust out, they yell epic invectives, and the cut from their lance is so violent that it cleaves asunder the two abhorred effigies.

They raise their weapons and utter a shout of triumph, which is soon repeated by the twenty thousand Indian horsemen. It is an immense, a deafening clamour, which the west wind bears away over there to the enemy crouching in their burrows.

XVIII

The Aerial War

FROM the height, whence we have scared away several flights of rooks, we can see over a vast stretch of the front. Over there, the English lines join the French lines. With field-glasses we can distinguish the zigzag double lines made by our trenches and those of the enemy. In front and to the rear of these defences there is nothing but ruin and devastation. Villages have been razed to the ground, farms and factories burnt; the bridges are cut and the roads broken up with shells. The vision of this destruction makes us clench our fists. However, facing the canal and the railway, a piece of wall has been left standing, on which we can still decipher the name of a famous brand of tonic and aperient wine, painted in enormous letters!

"It is quiet enough to-day," remarks the commanding officer.

Indeed, the shots from the artillery are so infrequent that we almost forget them. But all

at once our ears are greeted with the sound of a brisk cannonade. In the sky, very high up, we see sudden brilliant flashes; they leave white tufts, which turn grey, expand, and finally become distended into heaving black masses of cloud.

They are firing at an aeroplane, and soon we can distinguish something resembling a gnat moving over our lines. Suddenly, two Allied aeroplanes approach swiftly from heaven knows where. The cannonade ceases. Our great birds are barring the road to the enemy; they surround him, tease him, cut off his retreat, and suddenly the Taube rocks, heels over and slides towards the ground, too quickly for it to be anything but a fall.

To the deafening roar of the big guns, we set off towards the front, making prudent détours by side roads, for motor-cars are often pestered by the enemy shells. We reach the point beyond which motors cannot proceed, and we continue our way on foot.

As we come out of the village, we encounter a crowd of children on the edge of a field bustling about and shouting. Girls and boys display an equal ardour. They are formed into two camps. One occupies a trench for storing beetroots, which has recently been emptied of its contents; the

other is installed in a parallel trench for storing potatoes. In these trenches a desperate conflict is in progress. The damaged roots and tubers which have been left there by the farmer serve as projectiles which have this advantage over hand-grenades, that they can be used several times over. The unwieldy beetroots and the more modestly-proportioned potatoes cross and re-cross each other incessantly. In the case of these belligerents, the problem of munitions has been solved without any difficulty, and there is a musty smell which seems to indicate that the use of asphyxiating bombs is not forbidden. Some of these projectiles, after several journeys through the air, become soft, and are sometimes crushed on the adversary, when they emit nauseating odours. No matter! The munitions are renewed inexhaustibly; it is only a matter of picking them up from the ground and hurling them at the enemy without mercy.

But the two armies are soon tired of fighting at the distance which separates their trenches. "The bayonet!" cries the beetroot general. "The bayonet!" retorts the red-faced dishevelled little girl who appears to command the mixed contingent of potatoes. The attack is simultaneous. The sides of the trenches are soon scaled and, with an

irresistible onset, the combatants hurl themselves upon one another in a heroic hand-to-hand struggle, the issue of which I did not wait to see.

The reason why the German aviators are so obstinate in their endeavours to manœuvre above our lines is that they are very curious to discover the situation of the batteries which spatter their trenches with shells and shrapnel. They are also anxious to obtain information concerning the movements of the troops, and to observe at what points the hundreds of thousands of men composing the British forces are concentrating. But the shots from the anti-aircraft guns and the rapid pursuit of the Allied aviators compel them to retrace their path, or at any rate not to descend to a distance which would allow them to photograph the district. When they do pass our defences, it is at such a height that they cannot distinguish anything of what is happening below, and still less take photographs.

In a plain across which the eye can travel unobstructed to the wide stretch of horizon an anti-aircraft gun is planted. In this spot everything is marvellously well adapted for concealing effectually the gun and the movable platform which supports it. It cannot be detected from any point

of the surroundings nor from the sky, but those who are serving it are on the watch. An aeroplane is signalled in the east. Is it an Ally coming home or an enemy venturing on an excursion? A powerful telescope reveals the fact that it is a German biplane. An order is shouted. The men come out from their straw huts and the work begins with precision and rapidity. The non-commissioned officer jumps lightly on the platform, his chart of adjustments in his hand; the lieutenant indicates an angle and gives a figure; the gun is lowered, then raised, and the fuse of the shell is set for the time of burst; one, two, three, ten shots, like so many beats on a drum, and ten shells spring into the air before the nose of the aviator who, without a moment's hesitation, turns tail and regains his lines.

The road climbs the hill almost in a straight line, and, on the other side, which slopes very gently, there is an aviation camp on either hand. There are many others in the region occupied by the British forces, and they all resemble one another; everywhere there is the same order, the same practical arrangements, the same fruitful industry. Each of these vast and marvellous

installations can be transported at a moment's notice to another position, whenever the advance of the Allies may render it necessary.

The sheds are full of machines, and a considerable number even, owing to lack of space, remain outside, exposed to the fine rain which is dimming the atmosphere and soaking the ground. There will not be any ascents until the sky has cleared, and, according to the most optimistic predictions, this will not be until after a good hour and a half, which leaves me time to visit at my leisure the various sections and structures of the camp.

A whole file of workshops fitted up on motor-lorries and containing an incredible variety of machine tools and motors are utilised for the execution of immediate repairs, and the constant examination of the motors of the aeroplanes which it is so important—in fact, essential—to maintain in perfect working order.

Staffs of skilled workmen, superintended by engineers, devote their knowledge and their enthusiasm to the task of rendering the new arm more and more effective. Thanks to them, the aviator can demand the utmost from his machine, he feels no anxiety concerning his safety, and he can accomplish with confidence those aerial

exploits of which we sometimes read in the communiqués.

In premises where one would hardly suspect their presence, workshops have been installed for the repair of the wings, fuselage, and the whole body of the machine. There the holes made by the shot and by the bursting of the shells are stopped up. The canvas is dressed with coatings of a special plaster, the smell of which—a mixture of ether, chloroform and heaven knows what—is so nauseating that I seek, in preference to this suffocation, the rain and the misty atmosphere outside.

These yards and workshops are distributed and disguised with remarkable ingenuity. Nothing reveals their situation. In order to pass from one to the other, it is necessary to make a veritable voyage of discovery. Suddenly we come upon the wireless station. The equipment is perfect. It can be taken down and transported and set up again with the utmost rapidity. For the moment, it has settled down in its present position, and is in perfect working order. Typewriting machines are making several copies of messages which have been picked up. Just now the German communiqué was intercepted. The operator is receiving the French communiqué.

After a moment, he brings me a typewritten copy ; I find it interesting, but not exciting. Moreover, the communiqués, whatever their contents, do not excite anyone in this zone of the armies. We know that they can only announce incidents, the results of local conflicts, which are of very small importance in relation to the end which we have in view. We realise that the essential thing is to complete the preparations, and that, when we do begin to advance, we shall not be content to stop short at Lille. Certainly we are pleased at the successes, which prove our growing superiority over the enemy, but, on the whole, these communiqués issued twice daily furnish the soldiers only matter for jest, and it is rare to find an officer who troubles to read them. They are convinced that the continual and obstinate pressure, the constant nibbling to which the enemy is subjected are the important elements in the struggle, that the enemy's resistance is wearing down, that it is growing weaker every day, that his most cowardly methods of attack are failing, and that, when he begins to retreat, we shall not be far from the decisive result.

The sky has certainly cleared. I return to the park, and, just as I arrive on the crest, a great

biplane ascends, followed by several other aeroplanes, among them a monoplane capable of a very high speed. These ascents take place without any useless discussion. The pilots only utter a few words; the assistants are diligent, but without any precipitation. The aviators start off without any more fuss than if they were making an excursion for pleasure. And yet some of them bear a cargo of heavy bombs, which they will drop on some German strategic point, whence they will receive a shower of projectiles; others, sentinels of the air, will make vigilant patrols to the extreme edge of our lines, in the range of enemy shrapnel. They will perhaps be obliged to engage in a fight, but they no longer trouble themselves with these conjectures. Yesterday they set off, and they returned with their task accomplished; they are setting off to-day on a task which they fully expect to accomplish; for the rest, we shall see.

XIX

Under the Shells

THERE are regions which are exposed to shell fire, and there are regions which are no longer exposed to it, but in both, as well as in those which have never endured it, the thing that strikes us is the persistency of the life in these places. However great may have been the devastation in the towns and the villages, the fields and the forests, however great it may be still, life at once resumes her rights, she closes the wounds, she heals, she resuscitates. The contrast is striking, and this is perhaps the reason why those who are fighting in these regions never experience discouragement. The spectacle of a life stronger than death is a symbol which, consciously or unconsciously, makes an impression upon all those on our side who are under arms, a symbol which inspires them with that absolute certainty in a coming victory. The labour of destruction and death undertaken by the Germans is doomed to defeat; the effort of life which we are maintaining will triumph, as the sunshine of spring succeeds the inclemencies of winter.

Life waxes vigorous and multiplies in order to kill and destroy, to devastate and crush, but she displays an equally effectual power to calm and repair, to transfigure and revive. As soon as the hurricane of devastation and death has passed, its traces are rapidly effaced. The spots from which the invader has been expelled are cleansed of their stains and their ruins restored. In several villages in the rear of the firing-line, only the marks of the shots on the front of the buildings reveal the fact that they have been the scene of a battle; the window-panes have been replaced, the dislocated shutters readjusted in their hinges, the framework and panels of the doors restored; roses and wisteria have been trained against the walls; in the gardens the trees have been trimmed, the borders have been hoed, the beds have been sown, the paths weeded; the guns can still be heard in the distance, and the faces of the people are still stern and their eyes flash, but in their hearts is the hope of victory.

Victory! The population of the districts where the cannon thunder speak the word in a grave and eager tone. It is for the sake of treating themselves to a victory against the aggressor that the children play at war. Young men and young

girls, wives and mothers, old men and old women who have bravely accomplished their heavy tasks in the fields and the workshops, pray that victory may bless the brothers, fathers and sons who are fighting yonder to crush the aggressor. To these simple and honest souls victory is the certainty that the enemy, the hateful Boche, will be chastised, that he will be compelled to expiate his crimes; it is the vague notion that these hordes who have been let loose against us, and all their leaders, will be exterminated. It is the firm conviction that reparation, compensation, indemnities will be exacted from them without pity. And when their anger rises at the sight of the pillage, the devastation and the mourning, then victory is the fierce desire that the enemy too should suffer in his property and his person; it is a passionate craving for reprisals, a cry of implacable vengeance. Victory means, too, the return of those who have gone, the end of the anxiety for their safety endured day after day, and, for the relations of those who will not return, it means peace in which to mourn them, with the consolation that they have not died in vain.

XX

In the Rear of the Trenches

ON a spot which is now outside the range of the German guns, the ruins of houses, the burnt remains of a hospital and some factories bear witness to the achievements of Germanic culture. Here the houses have not been restored so quickly; the holes have been summarily stopped up with beams, planks, rafters, against which have been nailed doors, fragments of furniture or partition walls, and inside, people are living. Beyond the bridge, a mill which has escaped injury is still working, but the dye-works have been requisitioned by the English military authorities, who have transformed them into an establishment for baths, laundry and disinfection, for the troops. Every day, eight hundred men come here, straight from the trenches, to enjoy the comfort of a thorough clean-up.

Working women, whose factories are idle, have been engaged, and the whole day they are washing, rinsing, drying, mending and folding the linen of the soldiers.

On the ground floor there are at least a hundred

of them busy in front of their tubs and mangles, and they are singing as they work . . . It is not a merry song, nor is it a plaintive dirge. I try to catch the words ; it is not easy, but it is evidently a patriotic song into which, in accordance with its unfailing custom, the popular taste has infused a note of sentimental romance. The melody is not unpleasing ; sung in unison by all these voices, it might be one of those old songs which Madame Yvette Guilbert has re-discovered and interpreted so perfectly. But the sentimental accents of this song are sometimes interrupted by an unexpected note. The women emphasise certain passages, giving them the force of a threat, intensified by a defiant lift of the head and flashing eyes. I ask one of them the name of the song.

" We sing several," she answers obligingly. " This one is called : ' The English and the French are invincibly brave ! '* One of the soldiers sent it to his mother, that old woman over there. We liked it, so we all learnt it and we sing it."

They have reached the last couplet, and almost without transition, without anyone giving the word, after only the briefest interval of silence, a

* " Les Anglais et les Français ont un courage invincible."

tall stout Flemish girl, with an enormous erection of hair, strikes up another air which is scarcely distinguishable from the previous one.

"Did the soldier send that one too to his mother?"

"No," replies the good woman. "That one is the 'Cursed Prussian.'"*

She pronounces these last words in a tone of hate and scorn, and when I thank her, she smiles, grasps energetically the handle of her mangle and joins her voice with those of her companions.

We are the first at the meeting-place. From the summit of the hill, the eye embraces the whole district. The weather is fine. The horizon above the sea is only faintly touched with mist. The vast tract of water is covered with glittering points of light. A streak of sunlight passes between the clouds like the beam of an immense searchlight and rests on the town of Ypres, forming an island of light in which the mountains rise up and stand out against the sombre background of the region beyond. The monuments are great white ruins, for the fire has eaten away the thick incrustation which had been spread over them in the course of centuries by those subtle arts of the weather,

* "Prussien maudit."

which paint the winter with grey fog and the summer with luxuriant splendours.

A group of officers come round the corner of the road. Their legs—shapely and muscular as those of a thorough-bred, if the comparison may be permitted—are swathed in leggings and puttees—that is to say, leather gaiters and strips of cloth. They cross the courtyard, which is surrounded on three sides by huts, squatting under their thatched roofs. There is no door or barrier, but the entrance is guarded by a huge spaniel, with a long silky coat, attached by a long chain to its brick kennel which is built up against the wall. This good animal grows very excited as soon as he hears the steps. He gives a few joyful barks. He has recognised friends—allies! At the sight of the group his joy is redoubled; he stands up on his hind-paws and wags his tail. The officer who is walking in front notices him at once: "Hullo, boy!" he says gaily. Turning a few steps out of the way, he goes up to the dog and caresses him affectionately with both hands; the good beast lies on the ground, rolls over, and expresses his contentment by all the means that dogs have at their disposal.

From the threshold of one of the huts, a little

child is contemplating the scene, with one finger in his mouth and his head shyly bent. By the side of the child, a lean grey cat, with short fur and long legs, makes its appearance and then crosses the court and proceeds towards the kennel. With tail erect and arched back, it rubs itself against the leggings of the officer, who exclaims: "What! you too!" and gives it a share of his caresses.

Then the child in his turn comes forward, but the officer has got up, and he joins us in a few vigorous strides. The modest emblem on his shoulder—a sword and a staff placed crosswise and surmounted by a crown—reveal him to be the general for whom we are waiting. As soon as the introductions have been made, without further preamble, the conversation begins. With a charming cordiality, and, above all, with a delightfully animated tone and gesture, the general proceeds to give us a veritable lecture on that stern struggle in Flanders, indicating the localities and supplying all the geographical and strategic particulars which enable us to judge the greater or less importance of the battles. As we listen to his vivid and detailed description, we feel that this leader, with his penetration and foresight, will always be the

master of circumstances, and will prove himself equal to every emergency. Moreover, he has served in ten campaigns in India, taken part in the South African War, in which he was seriously wounded, and he was present in the Russo-Japanese War and saw the battles of Liao Yang, Tcha Ho and Mukden. He is certainly a soldier, a man of war, but he has not given utterance to a single brutal or violent expression; he has not pronounced a single judgment of the Bernhardi type or laid down a rule bearing even the remotest resemblance to those of the "Kriegsbrauch" of the Prussian staff. Certainly, his thrilling account is free from sentimentality or affected sensibility, and he confronts the tragic consequences of war without flinching, but this English gentleman has not in any sense renounced his sentiments of humanity. When he is obliged to mention the enemy, he does not break out into words of hatred and fury; he remarks quietly how formidable the enemy is, and he observes that now the Allied troops have really gained the ascendency over him, in spite of his treacherous devices. The perfidy and treachery of the Germans only provoke from the general the remark: "Oh! they are a despicable race."

The majority of the English officers that I have talked to express the same opinion. They do not make light of the strength of the enemy or his resources, or his obstinacy. They know that they are matched against a formidable adversary, supported by a powerful organisation, an adversary who will resort to every sort of crime, to the most villainous practices. Having recognised this fact, they are on their guard, and they do not indulge in idle recriminations.

When I speak of the infamous conduct of the Germans, the general interrupts me: "That's not war; that's murder!"

The thunder of the guns continues; some aeroplanes pass and disappear. Through the field-glasses, aided by the descriptions furnished by the general, we can follow the line of the trenches. The orderly officers are gathered in front round one of their number, who is making a rapid sketch of the panorama. The little child has just joined us. Apparently he is trying to attract the attention of the general, who is entirely absorbed in his explanations. But the little creature is persistent. He has just planted himself in front of us, and, with a comical awkwardness, he makes the military salute; silent, motionless, planted firmly on his

little feet cased in shoes that are too big for them, he keeps his right hand raised to his forehead, with his plump little fingers separated, in the drollest attitude. At length the general perceives him, and he bursts out laughing at the sight of this chubby face with its comical expression of gravity. He calls one of his orderly officers, who comes up, and, on seeing the child, pulls out from the pocket of his wide cloak a handful of cakes, some tablets of chocolate and a banana! The wide open eyes of the fair-haired little boy open wider still, his pout changes into a radiant smile, he hugs all these good things in his two arms; then he resumes his serious expression; looking up at the general, he piles his treasures on to his left arm, and gravely, as an expression of his thanks, he makes a fine military salute.

XXI

The Miller

ON the towns and the villages situated a few miles to the rear of the trenches, the shells fall according to the caprice of the enemy. When you make inquiries concerning these bombardments, the inhabitants answer placidly: "It is two, three, eight days since we have seen anything;" or else: "Yesterday evening, or this very morning, they threw us some of their saucepans."

The Germans show a special vindictiveness towards the churches, towards all those lofty buildings which, in this flat country, might serve as a useful post of observation. It is a stupid vindictiveness on their part, because there are more convenient and effective means of observing them without exposing oneself to their fire. It may safely be said that you will never find a soldier in a belfry or on any other elevation which would present too easy a target to the enemy. If, for the Boches, "Necessity knows no law," in the case of the English—and ourselves—necessity breeds ingenuity, and our posts of observation are just where one would least expect to find them.

However, as mine was a purely civilian curiosity, I climbed one day on to one of those hillocks that one finds in Flanders, from which I wished to get a panorama of the district. Not far from it I crossed an encampment of sturdy and war-seasoned Scotchmen, with their plaid kilts protected under a short apron of khaki material. Some of the men were busy at various occupations, while others were playing a game of football to keep themselves in training, and another detachment were practising shooting with an improvised target, by the side of another group who were being initiated into the manipulation of machine-guns.

A stony and uneven road leads to the summit of the cone. Half-way up are three or four thatched huts sheltered from the west wind; some women cross the common courtyard carrying pails which they take to the stables. At the entrance, a big watch-dog jumps forward on his chain with a sudden bark. On the summit a large windmill with idle sails rears its carcase of greenish wood, washed by the rains of Flanders, "*la longue pluie des vieux pays, éternelle et torpide,*" as Emile Verhaeren says in one of his magnificent poems.

With a slow and even step, an old peasant

climbs the straight road, makes his way to the steps of the mill, climbs up and disappears. All at once the sails begin to move, as though half-regretful at having been roused from their torpor. The miller comes down the steps, unhooks the chain, moves off to fasten it to another post, comes back to the windlass, grasps his levers, rolls the chain on to the axle, and the whole framework of the mill revolves slightly. The sails take the wind better and better, they move faster and faster; with a wide impetuous gesture each arm descends in pursuit of its predecessor, and there is something at the same time formidable and fascinating in this obstinate chase.

This sudden setting in motion of the windmill perplexes me a little. There have been so many stories of spies who have made use of the hands of clocks and the sails of windmills for making signals. From this eminence I can distinguish clearly the sinuous line of the German trenches, and I can hear the guns distinctly. In the plain, not far off, the shells have wiped out villages, burnt down farms, demolished a tile-kiln. But to left, to right, to the rear, other windmills are turning. There is no cause for uneasiness. And, after all, why not go and see what is happening up there?

I venture up the rickety staircase. This great mill has two pairs of millstones, of which only one is working. The miller raises his head; he is a tall old man, thin, withered, with a large aquiline nose; his thick white hair contrasts with his brick-red face, the deep wrinkles of which are accentuated by the flour-dust which has settled in them; little gold rings are suspended from the elongated lobes of his ears. I bow to him. He replies with a nod. I open the conversation; he looks at me without saying a word.

"Good," I say to myself. "This good man only speaks and understands Flemish."

But, for some reason or other it occurs to me that perhaps he is merely deaf; I raise my voice:

"Have you had the Germans here?"

"Yes, sir, and they have carried off all my bran without paying me."

This purely personal grievance is uttered in a tone of bitterness. The miller glances towards the spout to see if the damsel is working and the corn falling regularly from the hopper on to the millstone.

"Were you bombarded?"

"No, they retreated too far at the beginning. But the—the—the—"

He is seeking a word which will not come, but he points to the sky, and I suggest :

" Aeroplanes ? "

He stares at me with wide-open eyes, and I repeat, raising my voice :

" Aeroplanes ? "

But still he does not understand, though his eyes follow the movements of my lips, and he repeats :

" The—the—the—"

This time I shout the word in his ear :

" Aeroplanes ? "

He seems more and more at a loss, and continues :

" The—the—"

Certainly, this man has never taken the trouble to augment his vocabulary with the name of the machines which he sees manœuvring in the sky every day, but no doubt he has ceased to take any notice of them. Suddenly, he has an idea :

" The what you call them threw bombs which fell into the fields, and one of them destroyed a roof down there."

I pass my head through the round opening in the wall, and I see a thatched cottage in ruins.

" They were aiming at the mill ? "

" Very likely ! Very likely ! " the miller admits.

With his hand he pushes the flour which is accumulating on the scuttle into the sack. Then he murmurs :

" Yes ; they took all my bran without paying for it ! "

He says this in the toneless voice peculiar to deaf people. We have come back to the point from which we started ; the good man feels a resigned indignation. This fashion of appropriating what does not belong to you seems to him an inconceivable thing. For him, it is the whole war. The bombs of the aeroplanes do not cause him any anxiety ; he is doubtless not convinced that they were intended for him. Why should anyone destroy his mill ? He does not inconvenience anyone, and corn must be ground to make bread. But if you take bran you pay for it ! The mind of the miller does not venture beyond that point. Under these circumstances, conversation is difficult, especially when one has to wear out one's lungs in order to be heard. From the threshold I survey the horizon, where, beyond the enemy lines, some tall smoking chimneys stand out. For whom are these factories working ? With his curved hand the old man is pushing the flour

into the sack; then he comes up to me and looks out towards the distance. He too, perhaps, is asking himself the same question. His mill is working, the factories are working. What does that mean? His perplexity finds expression in such an unexpected question that I stand stupefied:

"And the war? Is it still going on?"

Imprisoned in his impenetrable deafness, the old miller hears nothing of the intermittent cannonade with which is mingled the resounding boom of the big guns and the sharp, rapid volleys of the light artillery and the anti-aircraft guns; nor does he hear the rifles of the Scotchmen, nor the vicious smacks of the machine-guns at the base of the hills. When I have recovered from my amazement, I articulate distinctly, syllable by syllable:

"Yes, certainly it is still going on!"

He had evidently hoped for a different reply, for his eyes grow melancholy and his lips curve in a grimace of disapproval; he gives a long shrug. His gnarled hand pushes the corn on to the smooth plank of the scuttle. Resigned to the present and perturbed for the future, the old man inquires again:

"And what do you think about it? Will they go away soon?"

The question is almost in the tone of a prayer; it expresses at once a fear and a hope. His face which, a moment ago, was so placid now wears an expression of suffering. He turns round, glances at the clack, which is working away indefatigably, pushes into the sack another handful of the warm corn which was lingering on the scuttle, and his eyes look at me questioningly. There is something very moving in the anxiety of this old miller pursuing his peaceful occupation. Why should not he, too, have an experience of that confidence in the final issue, which is shared by everyone else here, from the commander-in-chief to the soldier in the trenches?

With all the conviction that I can put into the words I answer him:

"Yes, *they* will be going away soon—soon!"

And we all know that the old miller will not be disappointed.

XII

At The Front

THE clouds have now disappeared from the sky, and the mists have lifted from the horizon.

"You are lucky! I really think I have never seen the weather so clear," says the general.

As far as the eye can see we can distinguish now the smallest objects—clumps of trees, villages, farms, roads, railways, canals. It is like a map spread out beneath our eyes, and, with field-glasses, we can extend it beyond the German lines.

If it were not for the fact that, after an interval of calm, the guns are again booming vigorously, there would be nothing to indicate that for months this country has been the scene of vast and desperate conflicts.

It is a war of the blind, an invisible war, a war of concealment, disguise, of digging and burrowing. Everything which I have encountered along the roads—all the troops, the material,

the convoys—are so effectively hidden that, from the slight elevation on which I am standing, I can no longer distinguish anything. The batteries of artillery which I visited, no matter what their size, have also disappeared.

And my thoughts revert once again to the great pictures at Versailles, on which the artist has been able to depict the two belligerent armies under the eyes of the commander and his staff, who are curvetting in the foreground.

The country which stretches beneath our eyes has been the scene of many battles, from the time of halberds and arquebuses, from Philip Augustus down to Louis XIV. and Napoleon. The opponents met as though by common consent and they engaged in battle as if it were a game of chess, in which they were careful to observe the rules of the game.

I venture to make the following observation to the general:

"If we were a hundred years younger," I say to him, "you would be on this hill, surrounded by your aides-de-camp and couriers, your troops would be drawn up beneath your eye, your reserves protected by clumps of trees; not a vestige of the operations would escape you, and night

would put an end to the conflict, with victory for one of the adversaries. Now, everything is organised from a distance; the cannon aim at targets which are invisible to the gunners, motor-cars have replaced the prancing horses, the telephone has replaced the courier. We no longer see war; we hear it, and the battle continues for weeks and months.

"To be sure, we are far from the time when a man bowed to his adversary and begged him to shoot first," agrees the general, with a smile and a merry twinkle in his eye. "It is no longer a war of gentlemen, no longer an honourable match in which the stronger triumphs by honest means. We have learnt to be prepared for anything from an enemy who does not revolt from any kind of infamy, and whom no umpire can disqualify. Bah!" he adds. "One can get the better of any braggart."

"It is at your own risk," I am told, when I receive permission to visit the trenches.

I am given an identification disc, by which I may be identified in case I should be killed. I am quite unconcerned with regard to the risk, and I do not believe the expedition to be very perilous.

"Take this too," and I am handed a little rectangular packet wrapped in grey canvas; it is a packet containing medical appliances, with instructions how to use them. This time I burst out laughing.

"While you are over there," I am told with perfect seriousness, "there is nothing to ensure that a mine will not burst under your feet, or that the enemy will not send a hail of shells to prepare the way for an attack. Besides, at X——, you will only be thirty yards away from the Germans, and that is within the reach of occasional hand-grenades and bombs."

Very possibly, but I will not abandon my project. I fasten the disc round my neck, I put the packet in my pocket, and I settle myself in the motor. "En route!" First of all, we go to the headquarters of the —th Army to obtain the necessary permits and authorisations. The general in command of this army is tall and vigorous, with keen eyes which look you full in the face, a pleasant manner of speaking, and a ready laugh; his radiant good humour is very attractive.

"I am going to send you in the direction of Neuve Chapelle," he says.

At this name, I prick up my ears. I do not

forget that, among other instructions to be observed during my visit, is the recommendation that I should not engage in any indiscreet conversation with the officers or soldiers. But with a general commanding an army? I venture to speak of the operations which took place in this sector. The English Press has been exhibiting a certain nervousness on this subject, but, without much pressing, the general begins to relate what happened. It is an amplification, and at the same time a confirmation, of the sober accounts published by the military authorities. I listen with passionate attention, and I follow, on the maps and plans pinned to the walls, the developments of the struggle. In spite of a set-back, the British troops carried the position in an hour and a half, although the resistance had been expected to last a day, and they preserved it in spite of ferocious counter-attacks.

Nothing could be more fascinating than this description, with its abundance of illuminating details. For the last few moments, the distinguished staff officer, whose duty it is to keep an eye on journalists, has been exhibiting a certain alarm. He is uneasy at the preciseness of the general's description; he respect-

fully ventures a humorous remark on the brazen curiosity of the representatives of the Press. The general at once perceives the allusion; he laughs heartily at the officer's apprehensions, and replies good-naturedly that he trusts to the discernment of his auditors to keep silence concerning anything which might afford information to the enemy.

"And after all, my dear fellow," he says, "the censorship is not there for nothing!"

He finishes his explanations, which bring me to this conclusion: that the English generals and their staffs are equal to their laborious task, and that the English soldier is a fighter of indomitable courage, whom the enemy fear to such a degree that they reserved for him their first experiment with asphyxiating gas.

A brief "Thank you," a hand-clasp, and we are in the street.

"Pop in! Pop in quickly!" urges the officer, who is always anxious not to lose a moment.

And we are soon speeding along, passing convoys and troops and traversing innumerable cantonments. At a certain point we have to leave the motor, which is carefully concealed with a

view to a possible visit of an enemy aeroplane; through roads furrowed with ruts, and paths across fields, we make our way to the old trenches which the English occupied before their victory. They could only reach them at night, and then by a roundabout way along a path marked out by boards planted obliquely in the ground, at intervals, and painted white so as to be visible even in the darkness. Thence carefully protected communication trenches lead to the actual trenches.

For a certain distance the old trench has been dug in the ditch by the side of a road, the water being drained away by an ingenious system. It passes in front of the site of what must once have been a very important farm, to judge by the piles of ashes which are all that is left of it, any bricks that remained having been used to pave the bottom of the trenches. Even so, we are up to our ankles in mud. When the farmer returns (if he has not been massacred by the invaders), all that he will find of his farm will be the ashes, together with some bent pieces of iron and the dilapidated carcase of a threshing-machine.

A little further on are the remains of a more modest dwelling, the home of some farm labourer.

Some pieces of wire fastened to rotten and half-overturned posts still mark the boundaries of a garden in which the shells have made much havoc; only one of the bee-hives is still standing, but the bees have ceased to visit it. Of the dwelling itself nothing remains: the fire has destroyed it entirely; but we can see the place where the cellar used to be. Almost buried under some remains of half-burnt thatch, a heap of potatoes is rotting and germinating in the fine rain; they are the winter store of the labourer who has taken refuge Heaven knows where. He must have owned a cow or two also, which his wife attended to in addition to her household tasks and the care of her children, for a skimmer is lying overturned under the rubbish, by the side of a headless wooden horse. In the corner is a weighing-machine which does not seem to have suffered at all.

We walk for a long time in these dismantled trenches, in which there still remain objects of all kinds, left behind after the attack which advanced the front by several miles; there are empty cartridge cases, pouches, broken bayonets, fragments of shells, dirty rags which were perhaps stained with blood. There are several telephone wires, fastened to poles or to the trunks of trees,

which have often been stripped of their branches and splintered and pollarded by the machine-guns. A grave and silent Indian draws his hand along one of these wires, to which he affixes, from time to time, a distinctive sign, which he draws out of a deep pouch; a little while after a European soldier proceeds to make a similar inspection of another wire.

Sometimes we encounter entrenchments of earth and turf, forming veritable fortresses; some of the occupants are cooking a meal, while others are sleeping in shelters filled with straw. At intervals, in front of loopholes at which the rifle is always held in readiness, there are sentinels on guard by the side of the formidable machine-guns. Sacks of earth are heaped in front of and above the metal shield protecting the loop-hole. The shield has an opening for the barrel of the gun, which is closed by means of a drop like that over a keyhole. In front of this hole, through which one of the enemy's bullets occasionally penetrates, the sentinel stands, grave and attentive, and he scarcely turns round as we pass. His patient immobility during the whole days when nothing happens reminds me of the resigned vigilance of an angler.

Like everyone else, the Englishman likes to amuse himself. If British humour differs from our French joviality, it none the less conduces to laughter, and our friends are never slow to enjoy a good jest, a practical joke, as they say.

For instance, I was told of an exploit accomplished on the 1st of April by a British aviator as fearless as he was skilful. He had to perform on that day a series of daring reconnoitres, thanks to which he was able to furnish the staff with information concerning the movements of the enemy's army corps. When he sets off, he is observed to place in his machine a football, well blown out and firmly tied in its leather envelope. To the pleasantries of his colleagues he only replies with a knowing smile.

When he returns from his excursion, he prepares to fly over an important enemy encampment which he had already taken note of in the course of the previous days. Arrived at a convenient distance, he makes a lightning descent and, at a given moment, drops the football over the edge of his machine, re-ascends swiftly, and gains a safe height from which he observes the effect produced.

Continuing its descent, the football falls in

the very middle of the camp, but, instead of exploding with a crash, it begins to re-ascend noiselessly towards the sky, a phenomenon which fills the Boches with amazement. This prodigious bomb has rebounded to such a height that it can scarcely be distinguished, but lo! it begins to descend once more, touches the ground, rebounds several hundred feet, re-descends and rebounds in a series of extravagant leaps; it is driven this way and that, according to the conformation of the ground, it leaps forward, it comes back again, and the amazement of the Boches is transformed into panic. In a frenzied horde, they flee in all directions, they jostle one another, they stumble, they fall; the horses join in the panic, men and beasts in their terror overturn cooking-pots and tents; the encampment is a scene of hopeless disorder, whilst the gambols of the football become slower and slower and finally cease. Then, a heroic Boche ventures to go up and examine this jumping bomb. Cautiously, revolver in hand, he advances towards it, sheltering himself behind anything which might afford him protection. At a distance of twenty paces, he fires! His last ball hits the mark and produces a violent explosion. All throw themselves face downwards, but

the fragments of the projectile in their turn must have jumped very high and have lost themselves in the upper air, for they do not return to the ground. It is becoming more and more amazing! When at length the bolder spirits make up their minds to approach, they find on the ground a few fragments of leather, to one of which is still attached a parchment label bearing the words: "April fool, 1st April, 1916. God strafe England!"

It was only a sham, and yet how thrilling it was! Outside the little town, the fields have been transformed into an exercising ground. There are streams to cross, clumps of trees in which to take shelter, huts in ruins in which to entrench, all the various peculiarities which are liable to be encountered in this siege war. Trenches have been dug, parapets have been raised, and the troops are practising at attacks and counter-attacks, just as they are being practised only a few miles away against the actual enemy.

I gladly accept the proposal of the general that I should be present at a practice, since it is probable—at least, so he hopes—that the enemy will not attack the front trenches while I am there. At first I am shown the various contrivances

employed, in addition to the guns, for the purpose of preparing an offensive. An artillery lieutenant, who looks not more than eighteen years of age, explains the action and the manipulation of mortars, bomb-throwers, projectiles of all sizes, grenades of all patterns—in short, the most unheard-of pyrotechnic devices. Of these projectiles, the majority are manufactured here, on the spot, out of jam-tins charged with an explosive, and furnished with a wick which can be lighted at a cigarette.

"Some of these bombs," says the general, "are intended to produce what is called a moral effect." He gives instructions for one to be experimented with then and there. The lieutenant hurls it vigorously; the bomb explodes with an infernal crash; it is, indeed, appalling; it seems to torture one's whole organism. I can very well imagine that, after a day of that music, I should gladly accept the hospitality of the regimental doctor in his tranquil refuge for those put out of action. I try the weight of the brass and bronze grenades; they are a species of cannon ball, marked with grooves which facilitate their explosion into small fragments. Others, in the form of a club, have a wooden handle which is used for throwing them; at the end of these are fixed

two stout strips of cloth, two fingers broad, which ensure that they fall with the big end downwards and do not fail to explode. And this young lieutenant, pink and fresh, graceful and smart in his neat uniform, describes in his refined voice the various advantages of these dangerous objects, which the men carry in large pouches attached to their belts.

After the theory comes the demonstration. The men take up their positions, and we place ourselves behind a rampart of earth, from which we shall have a view of the whole spectacle. The enemy trench is copiously sprinkled with bombs and grenades. Following the example of the officers, I stop up my ears, for this tremendous uproar shakes the drum of my ear as if it would break it. All kinds of explosions are mixed together; the smoke is constantly broken with flashes. Fragments of earth and turf fly in all directions. It seems as if nothing could withstand it. I imagine a horrible devastation and destruction, and not without anguish of heart I think that our men, too, have sometimes to endure a similar deluge. The general soothes me by assuring me that all this hurly-burly produces a great deal more noise than damage.

I shall have occasion to verify this fact the next day at X——, when I visit the wounded who have been brought away from a trench which was attacked in this fashion by the enemy. These unfortunate men appear to be hopelessly disfigured ; covered as they are with mud and dirt, their faces seem no longer human ; their heads are bathed, they are washed, and it is a relief to discover that most of the injuries are only superficial. The major even informs me that a great many of them are not to be sent away any further, and that, if it were not for the fact that they are terribly stupefied with the noise, they would be fit to rejoin their company at the end of a few days.

It is quite clear that this fearful racket, these formidable explosions produced by such diminutive implements, must so dumbfound, stupefy and bewilder the enemy as to render him incapable of resistance. And while the bombs are bursting, the men hurl themselves forward and jump into the trench which has thus been prepared. They consolidate their position, hurl a fresh shower of projectiles into the next trench, penetrate into that, and thus seize the whole position, whilst a portion of their number oppose the enemy who have

left their second line trenches and are advancing rapidly to the rescue. The crack of the guns is incessant, and the enemy is held in check. The capture of this trench has been effected without losses, but it will be readily conceived, from the above description, that it needs some resolution and courage to attack and to seize such defences.

With our ears still humming, we go back to the little town, which must have been very prosperous before the war. The principal street is very wide, bordered with fine trees, and the fronts of the houses are very elegant—or rather were once elegant, for they have suffered considerably from the bombardment; not a single pane left in the windows, walls broken in, gables shattered, while here and there on the roadway traces of holes recently stopped up mark where the enemy's "saucepans" have fallen.

It is at the other end of the town, round the church, that the damage is most considerable. The Boche gunners made the belfry their target, and they appear to have been lavish of projectiles. Owing to the distance, they used their big guns, and a hole which has not yet been filled up, just in front of the church porch, testifies that the shells were of formidable proportions. The nave

and transept have collapsed, but the tower is still standing, and although a shell has pierced the central rose window, it still supports the belfry, on the summit of which the weather-cock continues to turn in the wind. At irregular intervals a few shells continue to be aimed at the obstinate spire, but they do not succeed in hitting it. It is the neighbouring houses which suffer.

They were houses of two and three storeys, to judge by the few carcases which are still standing, and the fragments of furniture indicate that they were not inhabited by poor people. The roofs and floors have fallen in, and, in many cases, the walls have collapsed on top of them; some of the beams have got jammed so as to form buttresses which have protected the corner of a dining-room, where the sideboards are now covered with dust, or a bedroom where the bed-clothes are soaked by the rain that has filtered through the coating of rubbish; the beds still have their coverings and pillows; here and there, on the remnants of the walls, there still hang pictures, portraits, a holy water vase, with twigs of box; on the second storey, a marble chimney remains intact against the wall and still supports a clock, candlesticks, vases,

and various knick-knacks. In a kitchen, some of the ruins have crushed the saucepans on the stove, and on the sink there is some plate and some unwashed crockery. It is a heart-breaking sight. These homes have been hurriedly abandoned. The unfortunate inhabitants have been obliged to take flight at a moment's notice, taking with them just what they could lay their hands on in the first shock of the alarm—sometimes costly, but often strangely useless, articles, as was the case with those refugees whom I encountered in La Brie in August, 1914, grasping a bundle of umbrellas tied together, or an empty cage, or pushing a child's perambulator filled with the most incongruous objects—a saw, a basket for holding bottles, some plates, a stool!

"We had better not stay here," advises the general. "It's not a very healthy place."

But at this moment I perceive, about fifty yards off, some smoke mounting straight up in the rain; it comes from a chimney projecting slightly above the summit of a roof, the slates of which are almost all broken. I point out my discovery to the general.

"Someone is living there! I must go and look at it."

"Better not," says the general, who, however, confines his opposition to giving me this warning. He advises me to return as soon as possible to rejoin the party, which is turning back, and I cross the open space, making a zigzag to avoid the excavations of the shells.

I arrive in front of a narrow house; it is just the width of its one window and door, with a single storey and a low garret. Its modest size has saved it from a more complete destruction. On each side it is supported by more opulent dwellings, which have been hit by the shells and have collapsed. A chaos of ruins now props up this hut, the front of which, towards the top, has been perforated by fragments of shell. A beam from the neighbouring house has fallen across the door and supports a pile of fragments of walls and floors which form a barricade. The shutters of the narrow window have been repaired and strengthened with thick pieces of boards, and this work is of recent date, for the heads of the nails have scarcely commenced to rust.

I knock at this window several times. No one replies. I take up half a brick and knock louder still. Nothing. I try again. A hoarse

voice, half-muffled, as though it were ascending from a cellar, cries :

" Who's there ? "

" Someone who would like to speak with you."

" Who ? "

" You will see. It is not a Boche. Do not be uneasy."

In reply, I hear only an " Ah ! " uttered in a tone of mingled indifference, incredulity and resignation, with a hint of astonishment. Then, nothing more. I call again :

" Which way can I enter ? "

" I am coming ! " growls the harsh voice.

The good man does not hurry himself, but I have made up my mind to be patient ! All at once, on the site of the neighbouring house, under a kind of lean-to formed by some fallen rafters, a head appears ; a man ascends, comes towards me, and, without further preamble, asks me this question :

" What do you want me for ? "

I apologise for having disturbed him, and I indicate my desire to know the impressions of the only inhabitant who has stayed in his house under the threat of a destruction the terrible marks of which are before my eyes.

"I stayed in my house," replies the man briefly, and he buries his two hands in the huge pocket of a coarse blue apron.

At first he stares at me fixedly, with a slow, stupefied gaze: not a feature of his face moves; his lips are covered with a thick, almost white, moustache, his abundant hair is black on the top of the head and turning grey at the temples. When he has examined me sufficiently, he turns away his eyes slightly and appears to be contemplating a corner of the square which the fire has left almost bare.

"You have not left the country since the war?"

"No, I stayed in my house." And he gazes mournfully at his hovel.

"But your neighbours have all gone?"

"They had to; the shells were falling on their houses. But I—I stayed in my house."

"During the bombardment, where did you shelter yourself?"

"In my house, to be sure!"

"But you ran the risk of its falling on top of you . . . You risked your life by staying there!"

"What else should I do? It is my house!"

His house! This refrain is disconcerting, and I fear that I shall not be able to extract anything else from this unfortunate man. One more try, however:

"It is yours, this house? It belongs to you?"

"Oh, yes. It is mine; it is my house."

"I see . . . And what do you do?"

"Why, I stay in my house."

My question was badly expressed; I put it more precisely:

"What is your trade?"

"My trade? I am a shoemaker."

Possibly this shoemaker was talkative before the war. In that case, he has lost all trace of it; the months during which he has lived alone "in his house" have made him laconic, and have strangely limited the field of his ideas. Surrounded with burnings and dilapidations and terrific explosions, the shoemaker does not seem to have succeeded in convincing himself that, in the midst of this fearful devastation, he and his house have been spared. As if by a miracle, they are the sole survivors of this disaster, and he will not leave "his house" as long as it stands upright, as long as it can afford him shelter. The war will end

at last, and the diaphanous smoke mounting up towards the sky from the chimney of this little house seems to me like the symbol of an unconquerable hope—the hope that the ruins will be restored, that the homes will live again, that peace will be re-established, and just as the shoemaker repeats persistently: "It is my house," so we shall all say, indomitably: "It is our France!"

Once again I obtain permission to visit the trenches—two whole days at the extreme edge of the front, in the region where the Germans are making desperate efforts to break the English lines. In spite of their surprise attacks with asphyxiating gas, which procured them a temporary advantage, their efforts are in vain, their offensive is powerless. "They shall not pass!" That is the certainty that one feels after having *seen*, seen with one's own eyes, the strength of the British lines, the enthusiasm of the troops, and the firmness of their *moral*.

Now we are going down there, "somewhere in Belgium," and our tour will be interrupted with several halts.

After crossing a village of old grey houses, we come out in a new quarter in front of the station.

A wide bridge spans the canal, along which is passing a squat-looking tug, doubtless requisitioned by our Allies, since a vast Union Jack, the British flag, is flying at the stern. On the edge of the canal, a file of motor ambulances are drawn up. They have brought the wounded to the depôt installed in a vast and recently-constructed factory. An officer belonging to the sanitary department shows us the interior arrangements of these vehicles, which are of very various makes and patterns. These have been in use since the beginning of the campaign, and they have undergone certain modifications, practice having revealed inconveniences which theory had not foreseen. The improvements suggested by experience are now systematically introduced into the new cars. Both as a whole and in every detail, the most recent cars are perfect; they are most admirably adapted for their purpose as ambulances.

This skill in adaptation is also exhibited in all the details of the depôt for the wounded, organised in the neighbouring factory by a distinguished major. The many-coloured ribbons which discreetly adorn his khaki jacket indicate that this is not his first campaign; in fact, the hair of

this major (an Irishman) has turned white in harness, and he has seen service in India and South Africa, where, he says, he was far from having at his disposal the manifold resources afforded by our northern provinces. However, as a result of the difficulties which he had to overcome in that distant country, he has acquired ingenuity and resource and despises nothing that can be turned to account. For example, at the head of each stretcher-bed is a bedside table, very skilfully contrived out of the boards of old chests. Everywhere there are little things which testify to an astonishing ingenuity. This officer, aided by a staff as devoted as himself, has succeeded in accomplishing a great deal with scanty materials, although the authorities do not let him want for anything.

Yonder, behind a partition of stretched canvas is a reading-room, with books, reviews, newspapers, writing materials, and even a piano, on which, without a moment's intermission, a soldier is playing various pieces, or perhaps he is improvising. Only the cases of sickness or slight wounds are brought to this establishment ; a large number of these men are merely suffering from shock, from the nervous depression resulting

from a battle, from a prolonged stay in the trenches, amid the deafening explosions of the mines and shells. A few days' rest in this clean, cheerful, well-lit hospital will suffice to put them right, and they will ask of their own accord to rejoin their comrades, to go back to the fighting, since it was for that they enlisted.

Those who have the use of their limbs are employed on useful tasks, though they do not continue these to the point of fatigue; but the days spent in idleness are long, and work is the best cure for prostration and melancholy.

"This incessant coming and going of patients must entail a good deal of complicated organisation," I say to the major. "I am appalled at the idea of the number of letters, accounts, auditings, inventories, lists, files and registers that you must have to keep up to date. I should be interested to see your offices."

"We shall pass there presently. I will show them to you," replies the major, leading the way into the workroom of the hairdressers and chiropodists, who are kept very busy attending to a constant stream of customers, for the men are very particular about being closely shorn and

shaved, and, as his feet are as useful to a soldier as his head, they too are looked after with equal care.

"Ah! Here are the offices," says the major, and he pushes a little door, opening into two rooms of moderate size, in which three men are busily employed at some deal tables. "That is all."

"We simplify," remarks the major briefly. "It is very necessary. Our volunteers enlist for active service and not for sedentary posts . . . There is no time for attending to accumulations of papers."

"It is perfect; but how do you manage about the supplies of materials, medicines, clothing, food, bedding, which must be required for the hundreds of men who pass through your depôt?"

"I give large orders at a time. I am allowed initiative and comparative autonomy. I make the best arrangements I can; every one does his bit and you see the result."

And I notice that every one is really "doing his bit," that every one is helping in a spirit of order and goodwill, so that the whole may work smoothly and efficiently. No bureaucratic formalities; no piles of papers; abolition of all the machinery that can be dispensed with. Everything here is arranged with a view to the end

to be attained. This major is very stout in figure, but he is active and nimble, and his whole personality reveals the practical man, the energetic and indefatigable organiser, always ready to take a judicious initiative which will not be discouraged by any clumsy administrative intervention.

I congratulate him as I take my leave, but some ambulances are entering the spacious court and already he has ceased to listen to me.

What is the front exactly? The definition is more or less elastic, but we shall use the word here in its restricted sense. First of all, imagine a long strip of territory extending from Alsace to Nieuport, along the middle line of which the parallel lines of the French and German trenches extend like a double seam. By the front is meant the line of French and British trenches against which the enemy has been bruising himself and exhausting himself so long. The outer edges of this ribbon are determined by the extreme limit attained on our side by the enemy shells, and, beyond the German trenches, by the range of our artillery.

This width may sometimes be temporarily extended by the hazardous and ineffectual trips

of the enemy aeroplanes and Zeppelins, as a result of which the most peaceful inhabitants of Paris and London have several times had the honour of being "at the front"—or by long-distance bombardments; for instance, on the occasion when we dropped several shells on the forts at Metz.

On the whole, the front is the strip of territory in which one is exposed to shell-fire. There is no apparent demarcation to warn you that you are passing into the danger zone. Only the cavities in the fields and on the road and the burnt and dilapidated houses indicate that the "saucepans" sometimes fall in this neighbourhood.

It is in this zone that I have the impression that something is going on. I leave the motor-car for some hours, return to it, leave it again, and in this way I traverse the devastated region, from village to farm, from fort to trench, whilst the sonorous voice of the guns thunders sometimes far off, sometimes near. I hear them, but I cannot see them. Frequently I passed in front of batteries without guessing that they were so near. It is impossible to find them without a guide, unless a sudden activity reveals their presence.

The guns are admirably placed, crouching in their holes in an attitude of perfect readiness. With throats stretched straight towards the enemy, with their mechanism oiled, polished and beautifully kept, they seem like some complex living organisms enjoying the perfect exercise of their functions. Resting on their light wheels, propped on the carriage, they resemble living creatures, at once fragile and robust; they inspire a sense of confidence and sympathy, though, at the same time, one feels them to be formidable and merciless for the enemy as soon as they set to work. Seeing them like this, I can understand the peculiar affection which their gunners feel for them, like the affection which an engineer feels for his locomotive, and I understand it better still when all at once the telephone operator transmits a message from the observation officer. The officer gives a few brief orders; promptly, but without haste, the men approach the guns, the gunner instals himself on the seat fixed to the carriage, and manipulates his cranks and levers. Now the gun is really living; it is wonderful to see how supple it is, how docile, how powerful and yet how tranquil. The tangent sight is regulated. The breech closes noiselessly on the shell, which has been snapped

up, swallowed without greediness; I do not know why I think of a well-bred person swallowing a pill without a grimace, without any ugly smacking of the lips, without any affectation, like an epicure consuming a succulent dish which will melt in his mouth.

All stop up their ears; the gunner, with a rapid gesture, pulls a string, without any more effort than if it were the click of an instantaneous photograph. At the same moment, the explosion shakes me from head to foot; I have scarcely time to see the sudden convulsion, the violent leap backwards, the terrible recoil, in order the better to deal the mortal blow, and, after this fearful shock, the slender delicate trunk re-adjusts itself on its powerful haunches with a glide as slow and gentle as a caress. The gun has resumed its peaceful posture on the carriage; then two, three, four times, according to the indications of the observation officer, it thrusts forth its throat and belches its deadly missile; and again it is silent, ready to respond to a new invitation with the same docile and formidable tranquillity.

By instinct as well as by order, the soldier in the firing line mistrusts the civilian. I do not

blame him for this mistrust, although it is hardly probable that a spy would incur the suspicion attached to civilian clothes when he has so many facilities for attiring himself in khaki. However that may be, I have noticed several times that any stranger is stopped and questioned without any hesitation.

I was stopped in this way twice in succession, on the same day, in the space of a few minutes.

I had retraced my steps as far as the motor in order to fetch a pair of field-glasses which I had left in it. I lingered somewhat, so that my companions had gone on in front under the conduct of the staff officers, whose caps and collars, with their scarlet trimmings, were our guarantee. The muddy road wound through the plain; thickets and hedges enclosing gardens, roofless huts and dilapidated farms cut off the view. The place is deserted, but twenty feet in front of me a rough cart emerges from a cross-road. It is drawn by a sturdy English horse, one of those powerful draught horses, with large shoes and fetlocks adorned with long tufts. A short thick-set Tommy is leading it by the bridle. Four soldiers, also short and thick-set, follow behind, and they seem very astonished to see me.

My motor-cap, my spats and my muddy boots are not a uniform, and neither is the wide great-coat which protects me from the frequent showers, and the sleeve of which conceals my armlet. My whole attire reveals one of those civilians to whom this sacred zone is forbidden ground. These men evidently have not seen the group which preceded me. The Tommy stops his horse and comes resolutely towards me, and, in the tone of one who is sure of a good haul and is rejoicing somewhat prematurely at having captured a too daring spy, he addresses me:

"Hi, there! Tell me, I am terribly curious to know what has brought you here."

He appears prepared to receive with absolute incredulity the lying explanations which he is expecting. I content myself with replying:

"Temporarily on active service," which is the actual phrase inscribed on the pass which was presented to me at headquarters, and which I hasten to exhibit, together with the special authorisation to visit this region with which I was furnished.

"Excuse me," says the vigilant carter politely, and he bows and takes up the bridle again.

I hasten my steps, reflecting that the rest

of the party must have got still further ahead of me during this colloquy. Two hundred yards further on, a large farm has fared rather badly. A projectile has destroyed the right side of the gate and smashed to pieces a cart sheltered under the portico. The dove-cot is only a heap of bricks; most of the farm buildings have been mutilated, and the cracked walls are threatening to collapse. By the side of the farm, a dwelling house constructed on a basement is no less damaged, although it is sheltered by a thicket which forms a screen between it and the enemy. But these tall trees only served as a target for the Germans, who succeeded in pollarding them, fearing that they might be used as a post of observation. For all this bit of country is flat, and I cannot help feeling that a man would need to be strangely attached to his bit of soil in order to build a house of this style for himself in a situation so inexorably devoid of picturesqueness. Flanking the house, a tower has been decapitated of the belfry or terrace which surmounted it, and from which it must have been possible to see a long way, although no doubt no one ever had the curiosity to ascend it. An iron railing on a stone base surrounds a flower garden with two clumps

of shrubs, in the midst of which some laburnum trees display their yellow tassels. The front of the house is gashed with a rent which must have been produced by a shell entering slantwise, and a wistaria, partly torn from its support and hanging down over the door, is still flowering. On the first floor, the rags of some crimson curtains hang down through the windows, which have lost all their panes. Through a bay window on the ground floor, I can see a large sideboard overturned in the midst of a litter of plate. The chandelier has fallen down, and the round table has been broken away from its foot, and has capsized against a broken sewing-machine.

Suddenly I hear voices and the sound of a pump-handle. I advance a few steps, and I see two English soldiers, who are utterly amazed, though not at all disconcerted, at my appearance. Concluding that I cannot have fallen from the clouds, one of them hastens to ask me, in no very cordial tone, where I have come from. As the rain has now ceased, I remove my cloak, thereby revealing the armlet which adorns my arm. This band is of the same shade of green as the cover of a billiard table, and on it are embroidered these

two words: "War corpt.," with scarcely any space between them, so that the whole, on account of the bold abbreviation of "correspondent" into "corpt.," has the appearance of some Germanic word, and at once arouses the suspicion of the soldier. I hold out my arm, repeating the phrase, "Temporarily on active service." But the soldier is not so easily satisfied.

"What does that mean?" he asks, pointing to my armlet. I explain:

"War correspondent."

His suspicion is still awake; he repeats the two words in an incredulous tone, then retires a couple of steps and calls to someone who is hidden from me by the gable of the house. It is a non-commissioned officer, who comes forward; on his shoulder is a sociable little cat which has refused to forsake its bombarded dwelling, and his head is bent down towards it.

I no longer cherish any illusions concerning the effectiveness of the armlet, and, anxious not to prolong an interview which is delaying me, I produce the passes, duly stamped and initialled, and I hand them to the newcomer, who examines them. He gives them back to me almost imme-

diately, and, turning to his subordinate, he declares reassuringly :

" It's all right," and he raises his hand to his cap and makes a rapid salute, whilst the cat arches its back and rubs its head against the sergeant's ear.

XXIII

In the Trenches

WE have to cross a series of fields and meadows which are wholly exposed to the German observation officers. We cross them in single file at a distance of fifty yards from one another. The grass is green and abundant, but the ground is so soaked that our feet sink in it to the ankles, and it requires an effort to pull them out again. There could be no question of running in such a bog as this, and still less of making paths, since these would soon be transformed into streams. Here and there the water covers the surface, and, in order to prevent people from sinking in, an extempore pavement has been made by scattering bricks and rubbish, on which one risks spraining one's ankle at every step. At the same time, walking is less difficult on this track, and we get along more quickly unhampered by the flip-flop of our muddy soles.

We are making for a wood occupied by the British troops, round which bends the line of the trenches. But the German observation officers are watching this neighbourhood, and doubtless we were perceived by one of them while we were following

the path which runs by the side of the thicket before penetrating under the cover of the trees, or when we stopped in a group to examine the topography of the place; suddenly, there is a whistling sound above our heads, and, an instant after, a shell does brutal havoc among the trees a considerable distance to our rear. A second whistle; a shell bursts near a wash-house with a zinc roof nestling in a dip of the meadow at the edge of the stream. Two more almost simultaneous whistles, and two projectiles fall, one to the right, the other to the left—not near enough to be alarming, but indicating all the same that we are being encircled. And we do not have to wait long for the fifth. It would be futile to wait here until the range was rectified. Besides, the enemy decides that he has expended enough—five shells on five men, none of whom have been hit. Behind the curtain of mud, the observation officer has not seen us make our escape, and, taking the lumps of earth and turf for the fragments of our dismembered bodies, he doubtless imagines that we have been utterly destroyed.

The wood also is a bog, and the numerous ditches which have been dug to draw off the water have not availed to drain it. We make our way

along foot-bridges. Some stout trunks of trees have been laid in two long parallel lines, and pieces of wood of various sizes have been nailed across them so as to form a sort of lattice. Since the trunks have not been squared and the cross-pieces have not been levelled, it is something of an acrobatic feat to maintain one's equilibrium on these rude bridges.

For the construction of the lattices, the trees massacred by the cannonade have been turned to account. The principal constituent is the oak. Some very fine specimens had had their tops amputated by the shells below the first branches, so that they fell down straight against the trunk and replanted themselves in the ground. It is as sad as an unsuccessful acrobatic feat, especially as the branches of the other trees are putting out buds, while these beautiful stricken giants are dead.

The shelters for the troops scattered in the wood are built with a view to avoiding an inundation; instead of digging caves, they have piled up earth to form a sort of terrace, on which a hut has been constructed, the walls being composed of trunks of trees and the roof of interlacing branches. The whole is covered with a thick

coating of clayey earth. In this species of lake-dwelling, the soldier is almost dry, and he is also sheltered from fragments of shell. He might even fancy that he was inhabiting a fortified castle, since he needs a bridge to cross the ditches which are full of water. What a terrible quagmire this wood must have been a few months ago, in mid-winter, exposed to the incessant rains of this humid region! At the present moment, beneath the warm rays of the sun, these stagnant waters, in which the men have thoughtlessly thrown all kinds of remains of food, not to speak of other kinds of filth, have become fœtid sewers, infested with flies and mosquitoes.

At the points where the bridge-paths bifurcate, signboards with facetious inscriptions indicate the directions. Here is one: "Road to the castle," and below, "Please do not walk on the grass." This latter warning appears to be entirely superfluous; all around, the soil is black and miry, and it is evidently long since any grass has grown there, but at the foot of the board I suddenly perceive a minute tuft of green grass; this, it is explained to me, is the grass on which we are entreated not to walk! As soon as it has pined away in this filthy water, the soldiers of the neighbouring

cabin are very careful to plant another, which they procure from the meadow beyond the wood.

Each cross-road has its sign-post. One of these, carved at one end into the shape of a hand with an outstretched finger, like those seen on the English roads, is inscribed: "View-point for tourists." Another is in imitation of one of those conventional signboards announcing that a certain route is dangerous for motor traffic.

There is scarcely a hut, moreover, which has not its own distinctive name, like the suburban villas of London or Paris. One is called "The Tabernacle," another "The Law Courts." On the latter, the motto "*Sic transit gloria mundi*" (Thus passes away the glory of the world) indicates that the inhabitants accept this extempore dwelling with a stoical resignation, after having been accustomed to a more opulent, or at any rate a more comfortable, abode. On the former, with equal erudition and more lofty aspiration, the occupants have painted in stern characters: "*Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum!*" (May justice triumph, though the skies fall!)

Shortly before we arrived, the post had been distributed, and almost all the men we see are either absorbed in reading long letters or else hidden

behind the pages of a newspaper. A great deal of reading-matter is sent to the soldiers: they get whole bundles of newspapers, and their families send them a profusion of periodical publications —illustrated papers, weeklies, magazines, and reviews—the number of which published in England is very considerable.

In addition to devouring quantities of novels in cheap editions, the Englishman cannot dispense with this piecemeal reading, these popular articles, these chronicles and commentaries on events of the day which have formed his intellectual food from infancy. For in England, the people do not spend so much of their leisure out of doors as is the case with us. The climate is not propitious, and the people have formed other habits. Nowhere in England do we find those cafés with terraces where the City-man spends his evening after the office or dinner. In the English towns, after the labours of the day, the people return to their homes, which are seldom flats, for, even in London, each family occupies a separate house; this secures more privacy and a more spacious home-life, and the people read to pass the time. In the more modest houses, the occupants of which in France would be contented with a daily paper,

in England they are not satisfied without several periodicals. The father has his review, the mother has hers, and the children have their magazine. In the capital, in the great provincial centres, in the small towns, villages and farms, the people read much more than they do with us, and this explains the extraordinary variety of periodical publications, and ensures for them an enormous circulation. Therefore it is not surprising to perceive on the straw of the huts and on the rough tables with which they are furnished every variety of newspaper, review and magazine, the illustrated covers of which are sometimes of very startling hues.

A signboard warns us that we are approaching a "level crossing," and, in fact, a hedge composed of large bundles of sticks, firmly held in place by stout posts arranged at intervals, suddenly bars the way. Near an opening are the officers' quarters, preceded by a platform, on which are set out a genuine table and a few patched-up chairs.

A placard invites us to visit the museum: "Permanent Exhibition, constantly increased by fresh contributions." Some very queer-looking objects collected in the neighbourhood of the wood are set out on slopes of earth, for lack of shelves and show-cases. They naturally include every

variety of fragments of shells and shrapnel, fuses, cartridges, sockets, several short bayonets, the butt-end of a gun, a damaged revolver, various empty jam-pots, a knife with broken blades. In a prominent position are displayed the busts of the Kaiser and the Crown Prince, modelled in caricature in clay, and in front of them, as if in burlesque homage, is an ancient watering-engine, dug out of Heaven knows what rubbish heap. Each article is furnished with a label adorned with amusing descriptions, some of which are rhymed. Most of them were, it seems, very witty, and I am content to believe it, since the damp and the rain have rendered the inscriptions illegible.

After crossing the hedge, we are obliged to proceed in silence, for the German trenches are near by, and their irritable occupants fire at a venture across the wood. We have not far to go. The thicket is now less dense, but, to screen the pathway, a kind of curtain of branches has been constructed, behind which we advance to the outskirts of the wood. Here we have to walk in a stooping attitude behind a solid rampart of sacks of earth, and in this way we arrive at the first house of a hamlet—or, rather, at what was the first house of a hamlet which has disappeared.

All the buildings in this part of the country are brick, and a few shells are sufficient to demolish them. The fragments of wall which are still standing have been formidably strengthened on the side facing the enemy by the most divers and ingenious methods.

In what remains of the rooms, the soldiers have installed themselves in comparative comfort, turning to account anything capable of utilisation —mattresses, palliasses, chairs and benches, instruments and tools, kitchen utensils, and a little crockery which has survived the devastation.

It is only rarely that a piece of roof or ceiling has remained, capable of affording shelter from the rain ; but it is certainly less trying to walk on the floors of the barns, on the pavement or tiling of the kitchens and halls, or the parquet flooring or boards of the rooms, than to tramp through the sticky mud of the woods and meadows.

Here and there we have to pass in front of gaps through which the projectiles of the enemy might penetrate obliquely. The important thing is not to allow oneself to be immortalised in one of these gaps. With a jest, we make two or three long strides preparatory to a spring, and then, with a leap, we reach the opposite rampart, in the

shelter of which we feel a sense of security all the greater after the moment of danger.

The sentinels, serious and attentive, posted at the loopholes of the parapet, keep watch over the bare space, with its iron-wire entanglements. With motionless faces and set lips, they scarcely turn their eyes as we slip behind them.

Winter has passed over these ruins, and from their appearance they might date from a very remote epoch. Is it because there is scarcely any rubbish left? There must have been a street between the houses, but how would it be possible to distinguish it in this chaos? One would guess it to have been over there in front of those gardens which have been ploughed up with shells, and doubtless it passed before that cracked front of a house, across which hangs this sign: "À ma tranquillité: estaminet" ("At my ease: Coffee-house"). There is a sinister irony in the inscription.

However, before the war, this village, sheltered on the borders of the wood and the plain, was probably very peaceful, and the customer of the coffee-house might indeed consume at his ease his chop and his foaming amber-coloured beer, or his mug of coffee, flavoured with rum or gin—generally

both at once, with the addition of a little glass of cognac or of plain brandy.

The ground rises in a gentle slope, and here wide trenches have been dug which are soon the height of a man. We are walking on the muddy bottom of a canal paved with bricks. At the places where the men are stationed, bridges have been constructed like those in the wood, out of great branches and logs, which give way at every step beneath our feet, so that we sink up to our ankles in the muddy water.

Most of the trenches are sufficiently wide to allow of the construction of a sort of shelf, which the men use alternately as a seat and a table, and on which the sentinels perch themselves, so as to be on a level with the loop-holes in the parapet.

There are cavities dug in the wall of the trench; some, of modest dimensions, are used as receptacles for provisions or munitions; others are veritable grottoes, strengthened by woodwork; these serve as bedrooms, dining-rooms or reading-rooms. In these, individual ingenuity has free play; the soldier displays an extraordinary skill in turning everything to account, and sometimes he produces amazing inventions or makes unexpected discoveries.

In places, it is necessary to stoop and to be

careful that no part of one's person projects above the edge of the trench, under pain of being perforated by a hostile bullet. But, for the most part, sacks of earth piled one on top of the other form a high parapet, behind which there is no necessity to bend one's back in order to be concealed.

From time to time the shells pass over us with a smooth whistling sound, and involuntarily we raise our heads quickly in the vain hope of seeing them. The men and the officers, more inured to war, do not swerve from their path, but they recognise the bird as it passes by the sound of its flight: "Another from our X—— battery, aimed at V——!" or "Ah! the German is answering back."

Through the loopholes, or the holes in the shields for taking aim, it is only possible to get a very restricted view. We can distinguish the slope of the enemy trench at a distance of sometimes not more than thirty yards. In order to obtain a more extended view, it is necessary to have recourse to a periscope. There are various patterns. The one that is handed to me is rather large, and I am advised to raise it very slowly and cautiously in order that its sudden apparition may not

attract the attention of the enemy lookout, for, in the latter case, it would certainly be fired at. I am very careful to obey these prudent recommendations. With my elbows on the sacks and my chest against the parapet, I gaze in the mirror at the space separating the two lines of trenches. A lieutenant kindly points out to me the most remarkable features, and gives me the benefit of his experience. We speak of the firing, and I ask him casually:

"Do the bullets sometimes pass the parapet?"

"Sometimes," he replies calmly, and certainly not without a mischievous intention.

"Thank you!" I say to him, suddenly reflecting that I am leaning against this vulnerable parapet.

I turn my instrument towards the right, and there, against a network of iron wire, three corpses are lying. They are the bodies of some German soldiers who ventured out one night to repair their defences; the beam of an inquisitive searchlight suddenly revealed their presence, and they did not regain their trench that night, nor yet the next.

As we were talking, I must have clumsily jogged the top of the periscope, for the rifles opposite us begin to speak. "Pfuitt, pfuitt, dzeepp, dzeepp."

Bullets whistle above our heads; others bury themselves in the sacks of earth. I hasten to lower the periscope, which has not been hit, and the firing ceases.

Progress through the trenches is not particularly easy; you jump and ascend and descend, and tack and stumble and slip and recover your balance; at every three steps you wedge yourself against the side, in order to pass in front of men with muddy uniforms who are patiently waiting on guard. The trench is occupied by soldiers who have already been under fire, and who belong to one of those distinguished regiments which have nicknames won on the battlefield, such as the following:—the Old Toughs, the Bloodsuckers, the Bloody Eleventh, the Cherry-Pickers, the Rib Breakers, the Slashers, the Steel Backs, the Die Hards, the Old Dirty-Shirts, the Sweeps, the Cheesemongers, the Death or Glory Boys.

Sturdy and phlegmatic, they talk in whispers, smoke their light coloured tobacco with its insipid scent, read newspapers and magazines, write letters. Here they are preparing tea by the side of a tin box full of dry biscuits; there, a slice of meat is sizzling in butter on a charcoal stove.

A gallery brings us to the other extremity of

the muddy wood. We once more proceed along bridges, which are so narrow that it is impossible to pass anyone on them. In order to allow the passage of a supply of water which is being conveyed along our path, we are obliged to descend into the bog, taking care to plant our feet on roots and stumps so as not to sink in. We follow for a little while a raised road bordered with lagoons; the ruts are so deep that carts must sink in them up to the axle. By the side, hidden under the branches, is a huge tank supported on two large trunks of trees. As there is no drinkable water in the wood, a spring near a farm has been appropriated, and a motor, installed in the ruins, pumps the clear, pure water through iron pipes into the tank.

Crossing the spongy surface of the meadow, we regain the road, and, after half-an-hour of quick walking, we resume our seats in the motor-car with a sense of satisfaction. We have escaped gunfire and rifle-fire and sinking in the bog, and it is an extraordinary relief to be able to stretch our legs, which are exhausted after their acrobatic feats on the perilous woodwork of the bridges.

XXIV

How War has Transformed the English

THERE can be no question that the present war has entailed and will entail one of the most formidable revolutions that humanity has ever known. When a sufficient time has elapsed to enable us to judge present events in perspective, comparisons will be more easy; then the disturbances of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars will seem like purely local agitations. At the present moment, the conflict let loose by German folly is shaking the whole world, from Japan to Canada, from Australia to South Africa, from Persia to Morocco, from Algeria to the Congo; it may be said that all the continents and all the oceans are playing their part in it. Not a single nation but is experiencing the effects of it, even those who are displaying the greatest ingenuity in order to preserve a pitiful neutrality.

In time as well as in space, the most profound reverberations are prolonging themselves, just as waves pursue and outstrip one another

under the lash of the storm, and at last dash their foaming crests, in a raging surf, against the rocky cliffs. In their delirious arrogance the Prussian military clique did not realise that, by stirring up the waters of the great pure lake of civilisation, they would raise up avenging storms; in their mad aberration, they forgot that no water is so stagnant but that the least pebble may produce in it an infinite series of ripples stretching to its banks. And at the present moment *everything* is at stake: the foundations and pillars of the social edifice are threatened by the German theories that treaties are scraps of paper, that necessity knows no law, and that might overrules right.

From the dawn of time, when the first gleams of the human intelligence were kindled, the whole effort of all that is best and noblest in man has tended to oppose implacably these abominable claims of the barbarous and savage instinct in the primitive brute. From the most remote antiquity up to the present day, in every country of the world and in every civilisation, the laws elaborated by the rulers of the people at the wish of the people themselves have aimed at subjugating might to right, at imposing respect for contracts, and at compelling necessity to conform to honour

and justice. It is for this end that we have a penal code, and prisons and jails in which to confine malefactors and murderers who have infringed the laws designed to protect the honest members of the community.

In the society of nations, militarist Germany has chosen for herself the rôle of assassin and pirate, and the Allies have taken on themselves the task of chastising the crime and preventing its recurrence. As for the attitude of the neutrals, we will leave them to judge themselves.

When the United Kingdom declared war on the Germanic Empire after the latter had made its monstrous assault on Belgium, the French respected the Englishman for his noble regard for honour and justice, and not only the Englishman of England, but the citizen of Great Britain, the citizen of the British Empire, of Canada and Australia, of New Zealand and South Africa, whatever the name by which he is known.

But a contrast was at once apparent between the English and the French conception of participation in the war. In France, where compulsory military service was regarded by the whole nation as a simple, intelligible, just and unavoidable duty, the men rose up and set off,

in a grave and resolute spirit, to defend the sacred soil of *la Patrie* against the criminal invader. But this word "*Patrie*" does not exist in English: *la Patrie*, with a capital, and of feminine gender, which conjures up in our minds a symbolic figure of our mothers, our wives, our sisters and our daughters, all those for whom we feel, with all the strength of our being, the most ardent and respectful love, in all the noble forms that it may take—passion, tenderness, fidelity, adoration, sympathy, devotion and sacrifice. It is possible to make any demand of the Frenchman in the name of "*la Patrie.*" Our great and tender Verlaine said, in words which are like a caress:

"*L'amour de la Patrie est le premier amour*
Et le dernier amour . . ."

To the Englishman it was necessary to appeal in other language. The unanimity in his case is based on the words "honour" and "justice." When the rights of Belgium were so shamefully trampled underfoot, the whole English nation regarded this monstrous assault against a weak nation which she had undertaken to defend as a personal outrage. The Englishman might perhaps have remained blind and deaf to his own interest when it was a question of participating

in the war, but as soon as it became a question of honour for him, he no longer felt any hesitation, and he took the field as a champion of justice. And this will be one of his most famous titles of glory, one of the noblest pages in the history of the British Empire.

For if, for the sake of convenience, we generally speak of England, it ought not be forgotten that it was the whole British Empire which rose up against German treachery. The Dominions did not wait for a summons from the mother-country; they spontaneously offered their generous co-operation in this gigantic struggle in order that the reputation of the Anglo-Saxon race might be guarded from any reproach. "Dieu et mon droit" is the proud motto of the English escutcheon—"Honi soit qui mal y pense." Who will ever dare to speak again of "perfidious Abion"? It is against "loyal England" that the wrath of crafty and perfidious Germany has been expended with such vehemence.

For a long while the Englishman clung to this idea: that he was fighting for honour alone, and he agreed in advance to every sacrifice. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the violence of the Boche fury finally made him realise that

the conflict was not as disinterested as he had thought and that his very existence was at stake. The bombardment of the English coasts, the raids of Zeppelins and aeroplanes, the threats against Egypt clearly showed that the ultimate aim of Germany was to attack the British Isles and to shake the foundations of the Empire.

The Dominions had been more clear-sighted than the mother-country. From the outset they had understood that German envy was watching them, and it was for the upholding of the threatened Empire that they furnished their contingent. The reason of this is that the Englishman in the Dominions has ceased to be "insular"; he knows that the silver girdle of the sea which surrounds the United Kingdom is only an illusory protection against the terrible weapons which modern science has placed in the hands of the assassins. Before reproving or ridiculing this belief in a security which no longer exists, we must remind ourselves that, since the Middle Ages, England has never had to defend her territory against invasion, and that her military traditions are based on continental and colonial campaigns carried out by small numbers of troops and improvised armies.

When the Englishman, by a slow process, did

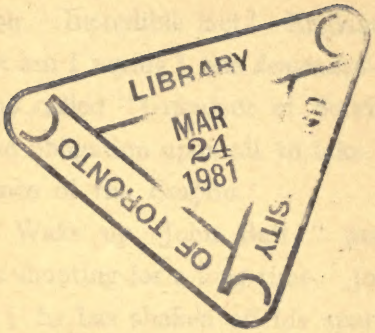
finally realise the vital importance of the German menace, we see him take a firm resolution and adapt himself to the unforeseen conditions which he is forced to confront. In the history of no other country in the world do we find an example of so radical and rapid a transformation of custom and opinion. The Englishman gradually renounced his habits, his prejudices, his most cherished principles, his ways of thinking and of acting—in a few months he accomplished stages of mental development which have taken other nations scores of years.

Certainly, when we consider the imperious necessities of the present war, we realise the tragic urgency of striking quickly and strongly, not only to keep back the enemy already so far from his frontiers, but to drive him from the countries which he has invaded, and to inflict on him such defeats as will alone deal the deathblow to his militarist frenzy. And from this point of view the military participation of England may have appeared slow to those impatient souls who only see the superficial aspect of things. But it would be a supreme injustice to be content with such an inconsidered judgment. The evolution of England since the present war is a unique example in history.

While Britannia, the unconquerable, still holds firmly the trident which the German pirate dare not defy, John Bull, too, has thrown aside his riding-boots, his whip, his skirted coat and his low-crowned hat, to clothe himself in khaki and bury himself in the trenches. And this is not the least part of the transformations, if it is the most visible. Incredible fact! England has accepted—what am I saying? has *demanded*—what Alfred de Vigny called "Grandeur et Servitude Militaires"—the obligation upon all to take up arms for the defence of the Empire.

"Wake up, John Bull!" many people have been shouting for a long time. John Bull is awake now; he has shaken off his apathy and sluggishness, and if we have reason to admire the revelation of republican France confronting the enemy, we must also recognise, with the admiration it deserves, that the Englishman of the United Kingdom no less than the Englishman of the far Dominions, has proved himself equal to the hardest sacrifices in the sacred cause of humanity and civilisation.

THE END.


LIBRARY
MAR
24
1981
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO