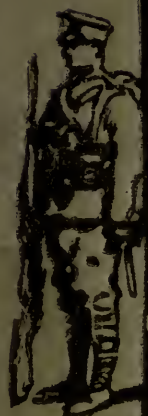


THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

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By Sir Edward Parrott, M.A., LL.D.



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Piping the Camerons into a French Village.

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THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

BY

SIR EDWARD PARROTT, M.A., LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "BRITAIN OVERSEAS," "THE PAGEANT
OF ENGLISH LITERATURE," ETC.



The First Seven Months of the Year 1917.

15.73.75:
29.11.20

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1917

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OLD BOYS.

*You, who have left the school before your time,
We would not have you back, nor seek to know
How suns arise on those far hills you climb,
What songs are sung there, and what flowers grow.*

*Not till we come! Till then, the catch you caught,
The century you made, that marvellous goal,
Your laughter, skilful verses, battles fought
Against grim bullies, on our mem'ry's scroll*

*Shall be inscribed, but come not back; the new
Bright world henceforth must claim you all in all;
You will be far ahead, but always you,
And leaving, we shall listen for your call;
Some day we slower scholars will be home—
Keep all your brave surprises till we come.*

EDWARD SHILLITO.

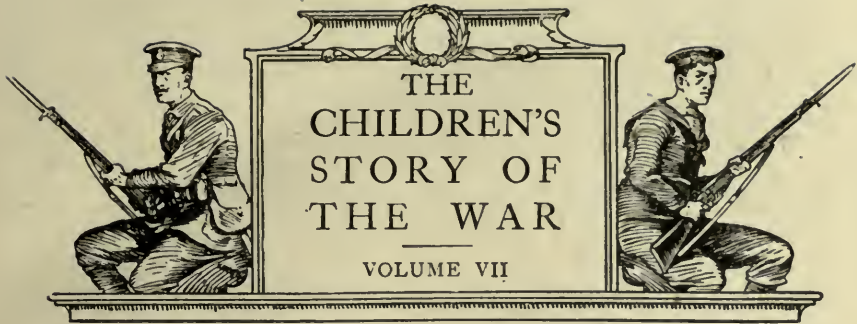
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CHAPTER I.

A GLANCE BACKWARD.—I.

“REPETITION,” said a wise man, “is the mother of memory.” If you are to have in your minds a clear picture of the war as a whole, it is necessary that from time to time the whole story should be reviewed in outline. In this chapter I propose to give you a sketch of the main movements of the vast struggle from that Sunday morning in August 1914 when the Germans tore up their first scrap of paper and invaded Luxemburg, down to that day in December 1916 when they boastfully announced that they had won the war, and demanded that the Allies should make peace with them.

Let me remind you once more that when Germany drew the sword against Russia on Saturday, August 1, 1914, and thereby involved France as well, the forces of the Central Powers were fully prepared for action. Strong, however, as Germany was, she was not strong enough, even with the assistance of Austria, to wage two mighty offensives on two different fronts at one and the same time. She was not able to deal staggering blows both right and left, and she had to decide which of her two enemies she would first assail. Should she fall upon France while holding Russia, or should she attack Russia while staving off France? She knew that two campaigns were necessary to win the war. She must consume her foes in two mouthfuls instead of one.

She decided, as you know, to launch about four-fifths of her army against France, and with the remaining fifth and the

Austrian troops push into Russia and hold the Russians in check until France was utterly crushed. The business of beating France to the ground would not, she felt sure, take long. The German navy was to help. It was to bombard the ports of Northern France, and make feints of landing troops, so as to distract the attention of the French generals and cause them to disperse their forces. Other naval operations in the Mediterranean would prevent African troops from being brought to the help of France. Meanwhile the vast German armies would deploy through Belgium, and then in a mighty encircling line sweep southward and make an end of the French. Such was the German plan, and had France and Russia alone been her foes, she would very likely have carried out her programme.

But as soon as it became apparent that Germany had torn up another scrap of paper, and had broken her plighted word to Belgium, Great Britain, the mightiest naval power in the world, threw down the gage of battle. At once the naval schemes of Germany were reduced to naught. Within two hours of Britain's declaration of war her cruisers were off the German ports. The German fleet was contained; it dared not issue forth in face of the overwhelming odds arrayed against it. At one stroke the German navy was rendered powerless, and thereafter for twenty-one months it refused to come out in force and abide the issue of battle.

When Britain entered the war there was an outburst of fury in Germany, and for the first time the Germans knew that they were not going to have a walk-over. But they had already gone too far to draw back. Their forces were already in France and Belgium. Their plan of campaign was already in progress. They meant to stand on the defensive in Alsace, and throw forward their right wing to swing like a gate through Belgium and France, so as to encircle the French armies and thus destroy them or force them into surrender. When the Belgians, to their eternal honour, refused to allow the German troops free passage through their country, a warfare which they had not expected was forced upon them at the outset. They had to hack their way through a country in which they believed that they would meet with no resistance. A whole fortnight was consumed in the work of overrunning Belgium and deploying the right wing.



The Guns of a British Dreadnought.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

This picture shows the fourteen guns of *Agincourt* firing a broadside. It is said that they develop enough force to raise 350,000 tons one foot.

Meanwhile the French were in doubt as to the part of their frontier on which the great blow was to fall. They pushed into Alsace, and were driven out again ; but a second attempt on a larger scale made good its footing. It was, however, discovered that the great offensive was to be made across the Belgian border, and forces were hurried to the Sambre and the Meuse. On 16th August, when the Germans were fully deployed in Belgium, and were ready for their rush southward, a British Expeditionary Force of two corps and a cavalry division was landed in France, and pushed forward to the right and left of Mons, where it lay on the left of the French.

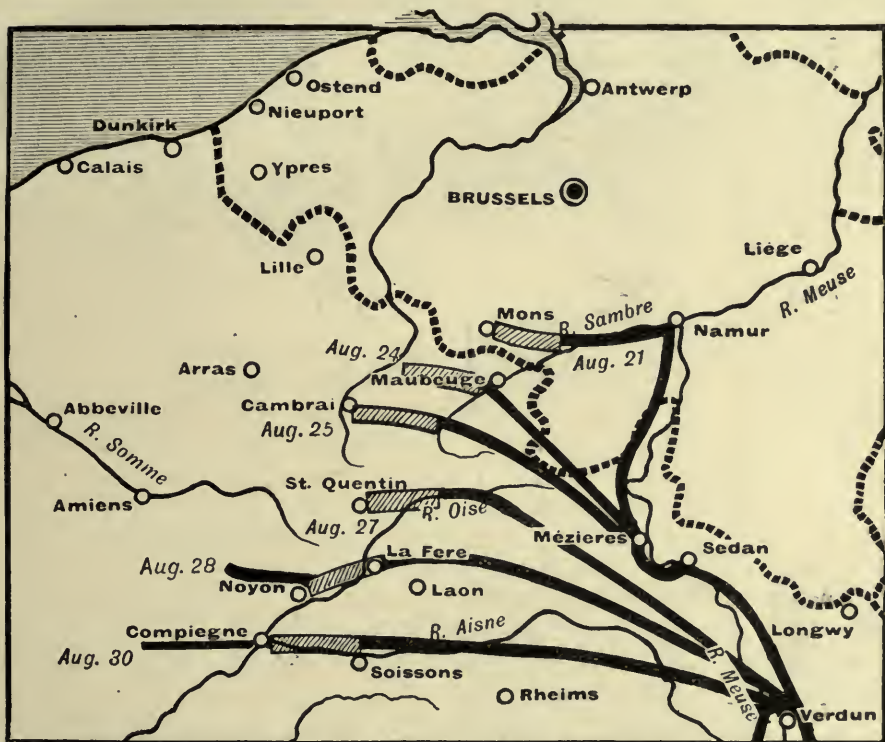
Meanwhile the Russians had mobilized much quicker than the Germans thought possible, and had advanced into East Prussia, the home of the Junkers, who are, you will remember, the great military caste of Germany and the buttress of the Kaiser's throne. Such was the position on 17th August, when a most fateful week opened.

Three days later the French in Alsace suffered a terrible defeat, and were forced to fall back to a defensive position. The French 1st Army, which was operating further south, had also to retire, and the Germans advanced in the hope of capturing Nancy. But the French were now posted on a chain of hills surrounding the city, and on this Grand Couronné they made a gallant stand. On the 23rd a three weeks' battle began ; it ended in victory.

On 20th August the French 3rd and 4th Armies lay on the eastern bank of the Meuse, while the 5th French Army lay on the north bank of the Sambre. Between these forces stood the fortress of Namur, in the angle formed by the junction of the two rivers. On the 21st the French 3rd Army moved out to meet the German 5th Army, under the Crown Prince, but was brought to a standstill by the machine guns of the enemy. Two days later General von Hausen forced the passage of the Meuse south of Namur, and at the same time launched another corps against Dinant, with the result that the 4th Army, taken in front and in flank, was forced to retreat southward. The failure of the French 3rd Army in this offensive was a serious blow to the Allies. It was due to bad generalship and to weakness on the part of certain troops, both artillery and infantry.

Meanwhile the fortress of Namur, the pivot of the French

armies on the northern frontier, had been bombarded by huge howitzers, which dropped a shell every thirty seconds on the forts. By dawn of the 22nd it was clear that the end was not far off, and next day, while von Hausen was forcing the French 3rd Army to retreat, the fortress fell. During the bombardment the French 5th Army had been holding the line of the Sambre to the west of the French 3rd Army.



Map to illustrate the Allied Retreat from the Sambre to the Aisne.

Between the 22nd and the morning of the 23rd a desperate battle was waged between this army and the German 2nd Army, resulting in the complete overthrow of the French, the capture of Charleroi, and the seizure of the river crossings.

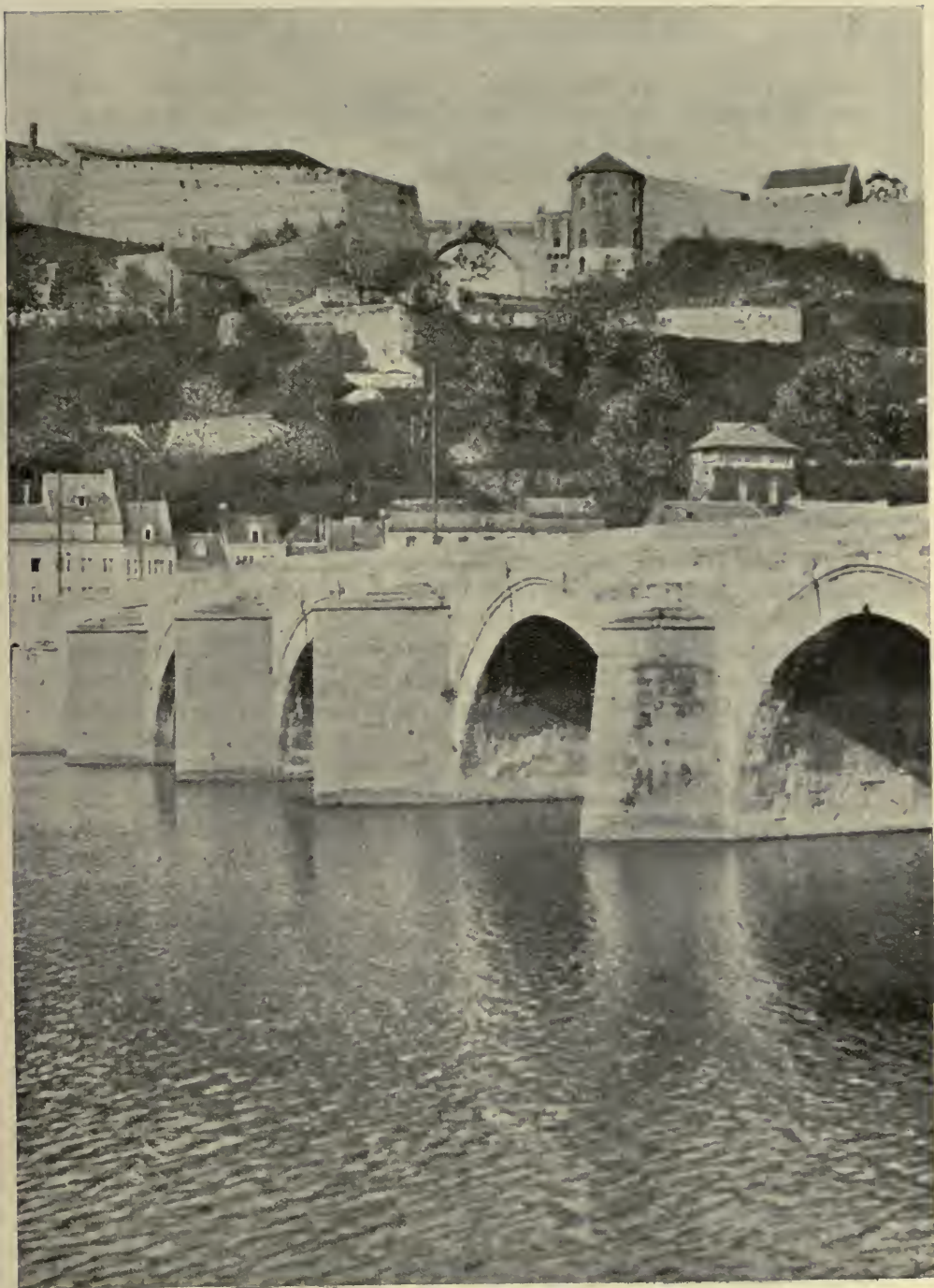
The French African troops fought most desperately, and actually forced the Prussian Guard to give way; but the arrival of reinforcements enabled the enemy's crack corps to advance

again. There were most awful scenes of bloodshed in the streets of Charleroi, which changed hands again and again. The French were finally forced to retire, and in the confusion no information was sent to the British force on the left until five in the afternoon. At this time the French retreat was in full swing, and the British forces were "in the air," without support on either flank.

Shortly before one o'clock on that day the German guns, some five hundred to six hundred in number, opened fire all along the British front. I need not describe the battle that followed. Turn to Chapter IV., Volume II., and refresh your memory. Up to five o'clock the British made a stubborn defence, though they were outnumbered and outgunned. At that hour Sir John French learned that the French were in retreat on his right, and that his flank in that direction was in danger. He also learned that at least three corps were attacking him in front, and that another corps was attempting a turning movement on his left. If his army was to escape, it must fall back without loss of time; and late at night, when his men were sleeping in their trenches, convinced that they had won a victory, they were roused, and ordered to march to the rear.

Meanwhile the Russians had won two fine victories in East Prussia, and were practically masters of the whole province. The Serbians, too, had flung back the Austrians, and had taken 4,000 prisoners, fifty guns, and a great store of material. All seemed to be going well in the East, and people in this country began to talk about the Russian "steam roller" that was to crush everything in its path. We shall, however, soon learn that the Russian successes were a mere flash in the pan.

Now we must return to the West, where the Allies were in the greatest peril. When Joffre realized that his armies on the Belgian frontier had been beaten and forced to retreat, he made a new plan. He determined to continue the retreat until he could, with the help of fresh troops from Alsace, form a line of battle capable of resisting the enemy. His headquarters staff now devoted all its efforts to the task of preparing the troops once more to take the offensive. In order that they might be able to do this, the retreat would have to be orderly, counter-attacks would have to be made on the



The Citadel of Namur. [Photo, Sport and General.]

enemy in order to keep him busy, and the line on which the armies were to make their stand would have to be chosen so that all could reach it at the same time. Further, every chance of attacking the enemy before this line was reached must be seized.

I need not describe in detail the retreat of the Allied armies. By magnificent marching and splendid endurance the British, who were in the greatest peril, managed to withdraw themselves from the jaws of the German pincers. By the evening of the 28th they had shaken off the pursuit. The French 6th Army, the "fresh troops" referred to above, were by this time forming up on the west of the British, and were in touch with them. On their eastern flank lay the French 5th Army, which had retired from the Sambre. At Guise on the evening of the previous day (27th August) this army had made a stand which checked the Germans, though it did not stop their advance. A French 9th Army was arrayed on the right of the 5th Army, and the 4th and 3rd Armies by this time filled up the gap between the 9th Army and Verdun.

Thus ended a week of misfortune for the Allies. Belgium had been overrun, though the ports on the seaboard had not been occupied; the Belgian army had been cooped up in the fortress of Antwerp; while in France a rich and important portion of the country was in the hands of the invaders. Fortress after fortress had fallen, and men feared for the safety of the capital. The French armies were still retreating, and where they would halt no man but General Joffre could say. There were, however, several gleams of brightness in the gloom. In front of Nancy the French were still making a gallant stand, and the retreating armies, though defeated, were unbroken, and were still full of spirit. The British army, which had been in hourly danger of being wiped out, had escaped, and was now fairly safe. Nevertheless the outlook was still black, and there was no sign of the great victory which was soon to be vouchsafed to the Allies.

In East Prussia the Russians had by this time suffered a heavy blow. Von Hindenburg, soon to be the prop and stay of German military might, had won a splendid victory at Tannenberg, and had smitten the Russians hip and thigh. They had lost over 200,000 in killed and wounded, and between 80,000 and 90,000 had been taken prisoners. Two days later,

however, the Russians won an important success in Galicia, where they captured the city of Lemberg, and with it an immense amount of stores, as well as 10,000 prisoners.

Meanwhile in France Joffre was continuing his retreat. Though the main armies were not greatly pressed, there were many stiff rearguard actions. At Nery, for example, our 1st Cavalry Brigade, after being in danger of losing its horse artillery, managed, with the help of some troops on their left, not only to recover a lost battery, but to capture twelve guns from the enemy.

It was on 3rd September that the Germans reached the high-water mark of their success. On that day they crushed the Russians at Tannenberg, and were almost at the gates of Paris. All Germany was in a frenzy of delight, and the people conjured up rosy visions of the whole world at their feet. One week later the situation was entirely changed. Their hope of speedy triumph vanished like a dream of the night.

By 4th September the Allied retreat was at an end. Though the French and British had suffered heavy reverses, they were now ready to fight again. The British were "ragged, footsore, bearded, dirty, and unkempt, gaunt-eyed from lack of sleep;" nevertheless they were "upheld by that invincible spirit which is the glory of the British race." By 4th September they lay behind the line of the Grand Morin. Between them and Verdun extended in order from west to east the following French armies—5th, 9th, 4th, and 3rd. The Allies were now in a position of great strength, with their flanks protected by two of the strongest fortresses in the world. Opposed to the British was the German 1st Army, under von Kluck, and continuing the line eastward were the German 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Armies.

You have not forgotten that during the retreat General Joffre had begun to collect a new army, the 6th, in the neighbourhood of Amiens. It had been brought round by rail from Alsace in the early days of the retreat. As the Allied armies further to the east were unable to make a stand, the 6th Army had fallen back from Amiens to Paris, and on 2nd September it was moved out to the north-east, so as to be on the flank of von Kluck's advancing army.

Most observers believed that the German 1st Army was marching on Paris; but early on the morning of 4th September French aeroplanes discovered that large bodies of German

infantry were moving in a south-easterly direction across the British front. Why had von Kluck swerved aside from Paris? Why was he leaving the capital unmolested when it was within his grasp?

It is very unlikely that von Kluck had any intention of attacking Paris at this time. German military writers have frequently pointed out that to utilize forces in besieging a great city while the armies of the enemy remain unbroken is the height of folly. The business of a general is to destroy the forces opposed to him. When that is done, and then only, can the enemy's towns and country pass securely into his hands. Further, since 1870 the French had set up around Paris a great girdle of forts, a ring of more than eighty miles in circumference. To encircle this fortified area, von Kluck would require at least 500,000 men. Even supposing the forts were to fall as rapidly as those of Liège and Namur, he could not find the men to surround Paris. It was too big a job for him to tackle with the French armies still undefeated. No doubt many of his men believed that they were bound for the French capital, but it is very probable that von Kluck never meant to besiege the city.

The fact was that the Germans made four bad blunders during the early days of September. First, von Kluck had allowed himself to become separated from the next German army on his left by a distance of between thirty and forty miles. Instead of delaying the advance until he could get into touch with the 2nd Army on his left, it was decided that he was to strike south-east, so as to close up with this army while continuing his advance. This was his second blunder. His third blunder was that he thought too lightly of the French 6th Army, which was massing on his right flank. He believed that it was not ready to fight, and he only left on the Ourcq a reserve corps to deal with it. His fourth blunder was in supposing that the British army had been so roughly handled during the retreat that it could not advance against him.

General Joffre, with the eye of genius, perceived these blunders, and at once began to profit by them. He saw that von Kluck had fallen into a trap, and had allowed himself to be outflanked both by the French 6th Army and the British army. He therefore ordered a general advance for the morning of 6th September. Before the evening of that day he knew



Map to illustrate the German Retreat to the Aisne and the subsequent Race to the Sea.

that the tide had turned. Valuable ground had been gained, and though in some parts of the line the Allies had been pushed back, nowhere had they been worsted. The right flank at Nancy was holding on firmly to the Grand Couronné, and on the left the French 5th Army and the British had made a leap forward. The German 1st Army was by this time streaming back across the Marne to reinforce the reserve corps, which was being forced towards the Ourcq by the French 6th Army. These reinforcements enabled the Germans to hold their own, and even to begin an offensive against the French 6th Army.

There was a little disappointment with the results next day. Von Kluck had struggled out of the trap, and was now

trying to bring off a counter-stroke on the Ourcq. He had shown great skill in withdrawing his troops to the north of the Marne, and the issue was still in doubt. Further, the German Emperor was striking hard in front of Nancy, in the hope of making a thrust which would counterbalance that of the Allies in the West.

By nightfall next day the general outlook had, however, greatly improved. Though the French 6th Army had been held in check, and was even in danger of being enveloped, a striking victory had been won in front of Nancy. Six times the Kaiser had sent forward his Bavarians, and six times they had been driven back with horrible slaughter. His attack had ended in a total failure. While the Germans in this part of the line were compelled to pause, a critical battle was being fought on the Ourcq.

Nearly the whole of von Kluck's infantry had now been withdrawn to the Ourcq, and the British and the French 5th Army were advancing rapidly towards the Marne. On the 9th, a day of high winds and drenching rain, there was a fierce fight to the west of the Ourcq, where the flank of the French 6th Army was in serious danger. All through the previous night the governor of Paris had sent forward troops in taxi-cabs to meet this flank attack. For a time the French had to retire on the extreme left; but they afterwards made a desperate stand, and the Germans found themselves unable to advance any further.

Meanwhile the German rearguard on the Marne was giving way before strong British attacks. Before the end of the day the British were across the Marne, and the French 5th Army was rapidly approaching the same river. The British army was now in a position to wheel against the rear of von Kluck on the Ourcq. Retreat alone could save him. In the centre, however, the Germans had dented in the Allied line, and on the Meuse above Verdun they had almost battered down Fort Tryon. Nevertheless, the threat to von Kluck's army was so severe that on the evening of 9th September the German Emperor was compelled to sign an order for the retreat of the five armies which lay between Paris and Verdun.*

* In the account of the Battle of the Marne given in Vol. II., Chap. XXV., great stress was laid upon the victory which General Foch won in the marshes of St. Gond on 8th September. Major F. E. Whitton, in his book



Saluting the Vanquished Foe: German Airmen forced to descend in the British Lines.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

Aviators first proved their value during the Battle of the Marne. They discovered that von Kluck had swerved away from Paris, and had placed himself in that position which afterwards led to his retreat.

Now that the Germans were moving rapidly to the rear, it was of the utmost importance that they should be followed up without loss of time, and not be permitted to re-form and leap forward again, as Joffre had done at the end of his great retreat. By the evening of the 10th it was apparent that the Germans were making for the heights on the north bank of the Aisne, where they had prepared strong positions, and would be able to make a prolonged stand. The weather was extremely bad, and pursuers and pursued had difficulty in pushing forward. Nevertheless the Germans managed their retirement very cleverly, and it was never a rout. Field guns and prisoners were captured, but the enemy's losses were not large. By the evening of the 12th the German armies had settled down in the shelter of their entrenched positions, and by so doing had confessed failure. They were now on the defensive. Their retirement to the Aisne was the beginning of the end. Thenceforward the whole character of the struggle changed. The Battle of the Marne will live in history as *the* decisive battle of the modern world.

It may interest you to know how German writers explain their great defeat. One of them tells us that in their southward rush the German armies of the right and centre had become exhausted, because they had marched almost day and night for a month, and had been weakened by the loss of many men. He also says that, owing to their rapid advance, they could not properly supply themselves with food and munitions. The delay in capturing the fortresses of Liège, Namur, and Maubeuge had held up the advance of the 1st and 2nd Armies, and had thus given General Joffre time to complete his preparations. Further, several army corps which might have turned the scale at the Marne were delayed at Antwerp.

On 13th September the Allies began the crossing of the Aisne, and, despite German guns on the heights and machine guns and rifles on the slopes, made good their footing on the northern bank. The enemy was now besieged in his strongholds; but all the gallantry and skill of the Allies failed to

The Marne Campaign (1917), agrees that General Foch's 9th Army did priceless service, but says that it *drove no wedge into the enemy's far-flung battle-line*, and did not force the retreat of the German centre. He also denies that any large bodies of German troops were overwhelmed in the marshes. The above outline of the battle follows Major Whitton's account,



French Officers questioning a German Prisoner.

(Photo, Central News.)

drive him from them. In five days of fierce fighting little ground was gained, and the wild hopes that had been cherished of rapidly driving the enemy out of France had to be abandoned. On the evening of 16th September General Joffre, now well aware that frontal attacks were useless, pushed his left northward, in the hope of outflanking the German right. At once the enemy replied to this move by pushing *his* right northward. Joffre attempted the same manœuvre still further north, only to be balked by a similar movement on the part of the enemy. Thus began and continued what is known as the race to the sea.

The northward extension of the Allied line was very rapid. By 20th September the French had reached the Somme. Ten days later the line had been pushed forward to the north of Arras.

On 3rd October the transfer of the British army from the Aisne to Flanders was begun. As the troops arrived they were thrust into the breach so as to fill up the gap and oppose German attempts to reach the French coast. Five days after the first of our men arrived, the Belgian army, which had taken refuge in Antwerp, was forced to abandon the fortress. It marched seaward, and, along with a belated British army which had been sent to assist it, filled in the remainder of the line between Ypres and the sea. Thus the Allies won the race, but only in the nick of time. The Germans were now contained, and the opposing armies faced each other in lines of trenches extending from the flats of Flanders to the borders of Switzerland—a distance of 500 miles.

CHAPTER II.

A GLANCE BACKWARD.—II.

THE Allies had now gained what they most needed—time in which to create armies and manufacture guns and munitions sufficient to oppose the Germans on equal terms. For the next five months, however, they were in the gravest of peril. The Germans were still in the first flush of their mighty strength, still vastly superior in men and guns; and it was feared that they would be able to blast their way through the thinly held lines of the Allies and reach the shores of the Channel. Had they done so, the British army would have been cut off from its bases of supply, and would perhaps have been enveloped, while the French would have been taken in flank. Their last state might easily have been worse than their first.

The defence of the Allied line from the sea to Arras for the next five months is one of the miracles of history. The Germans made thrust after thrust of the most desperate character, but all were foiled. Their attempt to break through the Belgian line was only checked by opening the dykes and flooding the country. The attacks made on the salient in front of Ypres were the most furious ever known up to that time. Even now we marvel how our pitifully small forces managed to hold on to the most unfavourable positions, despite the unceasing shell-storm and the poison gas that were discharged against them. The little British army which withstood all these assaults was literally wiped out in the task, but not before it had thrilled the world by its glorious valour and endurance; and, what is more, had given the land of its birth and pride the necessary time in which to build up its strength. No later victories must ever be allowed to dim the glory of those heroes who, like Horatius of old, beat back overwhelming odds.

Do what they might, the Germans could not break through the lines that contained them ; but not until March 1915 were the Allies able to do much more than hold them off. Meanwhile in the East, the Russians, though flung out of East Prussia, were rapidly advancing through Galicia towards the German frontier. At the beginning of October 1914 only the fortress of Cracow stood between them and Silesia, "the Lancashire of Germany." In order to draw off the Russians from Galicia, the Germans now advanced a great army against Warsaw, the key city of Poland, and the great railway centre which the Russians must hold if they were to wage war on the enemy's soil. This advance had the desired effect. The Russian commander-in-chief was forced to withdraw his forces from Galicia in order to meet the threat against Warsaw. He fell upon the Germans when they were almost at the gates of the city, and drove them back to their own border in rout. Then he was once more free to advance triumphantly through Galicia.

In November 1914 a second assault was made by the Germans on Warsaw. This time the Russians held on to Galicia, and met the enemy with their northern troops. Desperate fighting followed, and a second time von Hindenburg was foiled. At the close of the year 1914 the Russians lay along a river-line of great strength, and Warsaw was still intact.

Now we must return to the Western front, and briefly sum up the results of the fighting during the year 1915. It was a year during which Germany's might showed no sign of waning, and though the Allies were constantly waxing in strength, they were not as yet fully capable of coping with their enemy. He was still superior in artillery and in supply of munitions, and it was by this time clear to our generals that without an almost endless supply of guns and shells the Germans could not be driven from the trenchments which they had by this time turned into strongholds. New methods of warfare had to be devised, and we had to learn them at the cost of many failures. The year was full of disappointments, and it ended in gloom.

By the month of March the British were able to put four men into the field for every one who had kept the gate at La Bassée and Ypres. Guns and munitions had been greatly increased in number, and our General Staff planned an offensive which it was hoped would give them the Aubers ridge, the capture of which would open the road to the great city of



Field-Marshal von Hindenburg.

(Sport and General.)

The great popular military hero of Germany who defeated the Russians at the battle of Tannenberg, in the Masurian Lake Region. He afterwards conquered Poland, and at the beginning of 1917 was the prop and stay of German might. A Prussian by birth, he was sixty-five years of age when he won his great victory. A wooden effigy of him was set up in Berlin, and the Germans flocked to it to drive nails of homage into it. He early showed his hate for Britain, and said that he would not rest happy until Britain, Serbia, and Italy, "the three culprits," lay prostrate at Germany's feet.

Lille, and to the coal and iron-working region around it. Unhappily, owing to our lack of experience in using artillery to help infantry, and to mistakes on the part of the General Staff, we failed to carry the ridge, and suffered heavily. Very costly attempts by the French to pierce the German line in Artois did not succeed, and the great offensive which they made in Champagne during September only reached the German second line. The six separate assaults which the British made at the same time between Lens and Ypres availed them but little. The great thrust which was made between La Bassée and Lens gave us the village of Loos, but failed to do much more, although we had struck a weak place in the enemy's line. Again there was mismanagement as at Neuve Chapelle and Festubert, and our gains bore no proportion to our losses. Our generals had still much to learn.

While there was disappointment on the Western front, there was something very like disaster in the Eastern theatre of war. At the beginning of April 1915 the Russians were practically masters of Galicia. They were only fifty miles from Cracow, and they held certain Carpathian passes by means of which they would be able before long to descend upon the rich wheatlands of Hungary. The time had arrived when Germany must make a big effort to shift the Russians out of Galicia, or allow herself to be placed at a grave disadvantage.

At this time the Russians were suffering from a marked shortage of guns, rifles, and ammunition of all kinds. Treachery in high places was at work: important officials in Petrograd were either in league with the Germans, or were trying to bring about a separate peace with the Kaiser. Between them they brought matters to such a pass that the army was unprovided with many of the necessities of war and the railways were thrown into a state of chaos. The consequence was that when the Austro-Germans secretly massed a huge array of guns and a big army in front of the Russian lines in Galicia, they were able to blast their way through and force a retreat which practically put Russia out of action for the rest of the year.

The Russians had to fall back not only from Galicia but from Poland as well. The Germans, by biting into the Russian line at widely different places, created salients, and strove hard to capture or destroy the enemy within them. The Russians,

however, managed their retreat so well that they withdrew their armies intact into the interior. Fortress after fortress fell, and thousands of square miles of territory were given up to the Germans, but they did not attain their object. By the end of September the retreat had come to an end, and the Russians were lying on a line from the Gulf of Riga to the Dniester, their trenches passing some thirty miles behind the city of Vilna. In these trenches they maintained themselves until the close of the year.

Another great disappointment to the Allies was the failure of the Anglo-French attempt to force a way through the Dardanelles, in order to strike at Constantinople. The chiefs of the British navy believed that this could be done by the 15-inch guns of our Dreadnoughts; but the attempt was abandoned after the sinking of three old battleships. The naval attack had warned the Turks that, sooner or later, a landing would be made on the peninsula of Gallipoli, in order that the forts at the Narrows might be captured from the rear. German engineers at once proceeded to fortify the peninsula, which was already strong by nature. I am sure you have not forgotten the story of our splendid failure to carry the peninsula. Despite the superb valour and doggedness of our men, we only won its fringes, and in the last days of December we withdrew our forces, happily with little or no loss of life. For years to come Britons will differ as to the responsibility for this ill-starred campaign, which cost us tens of thousands of gallant lives, and left us a legacy of trouble in the East.

Finally, to end this year of disappointment and gloom, Germany and Austria, aided by Bulgaria, overran poor little Serbia, and forced her army to retreat to the sea, where it was received and succoured by the Allies, and after being restored and re-equipped, was carried to Salonika. Serbia became another Belgium.

Sorely tried though the Allies had been, they were as determined as ever to carry the war to a victorious end. Though success had not smiled on them, they knew that they were wearing down the enemy, and that the day must soon arrive when their ceaseless sapping would undermine his strength.

I now turn to the year 1916, and as the story of that year is fresh in your minds, I need not go into it in detail. It was



Britain's Sure Shield—Some of the Warships which fought at the Battle of Jutland.

[Photo, Cribb.

a year in which the whole effective manhood of the country became liable for military service, and in which the Allies began to reap the fruits of their long patience and their ceaseless efforts to build up their strength. It was also a year in which the enemy braced himself for the greatest offensive which he had yet undertaken, and staked tens of thousands of lives on a long-continued attempt to seize a fortress of no particular value. He came very near to success ; but his weakness appeared when the British and French began a mighty onslaught upon him in Picardy. No longer able to conduct an offensive and meet a determined attack on the same front at the same time, his hold slackened on the ground already won, and before the close of the year he had lost nearly all that he had gained.

Meanwhile, with a weight of artillery greater than had ever been brought together before, the Allies captured stronghold after stronghold in the stretch of country between the Ancre and the Somme. Never before had such blows been rained upon the foe. Though he resisted with great stubbornness, he was forced to yield his fortified positions one by one, until at the close of the year he was, for the first time since the trench war began, defending himself on the low ground, with the Allies firmly established on the ridges overlooking him. All his advantages had by this time vanished, and he was now faced with the prospect of steady if slow decay.

An attempt by the Kaiser's navy to win a success ended in the disorderly flight of his warships, which only escaped total destruction when heavy fog shrouded them, and night enabled them to creep home unperceived. While his underwater boats, preying upon unarmed merchantmen, were successful in inflicting much damage upon us, they roused the intense anger of neutrals, and drove them steadily towards war. The Zeppelin raids on Great Britain failed to weaken the resolution of the country, and before the year was out an effective method had been devised to deal with them.

An Austrian offensive which began in May promised success ; but when Russia, like a giant refreshed, once more pushed forward, the Austrian armies between the Pripet marshes and Rumania were smitten hip and thigh, and the largest captures of prisoners and guns known to history were made. The Austrians on the Italian border were forced to

forego their gains and speed to the rescue of their comrades in the East.

The close of the year 1915 had seen a little ally beaten to the ground, and his country reft from him. The close of the year 1916 saw a similar tragedy enacted. Rumania, which had thrown in her lot with the Allies in August, was largely overrun, and another little nation felt the hard yoke of the conqueror.

The change in the British Government which took place in December 1916 installed in office as Prime Minister the man who had organized with great success the manufacture and supply of those munitions of war without which we could not hope for victory. After the untimely and unhappy end of Lord Kitchener he became Secretary for War. As Prime Minister he set up a small committee of five ministers, in whose hands the whole conduct of the struggle was placed. It was hoped that the small body of strong, determined men would push forward the war with great energy and speedily bring it to a glorious end. At the close of the year Britain knew that, though the struggle might be prolonged, success was certain. Though the sun was only peeping above the horizon, the sky was already glowing with the promise of victory.

CHAPTER III.

THE RUMANIAN RETREAT.

IN Chapter XVI. of our sixth volume I told you the dismal story of Rumania's downfall. In that chapter I explained that her defeat was largely due to her eagerness to possess Transylvania, the cradle of the Rumanian race. As soon as war was declared she pushed across the Carpathians into the land of her desire, and by the end of September 1916 had won about one-third of it. This adventure compelled her to divide her forces and fight on two fronts—amidst the Carpathians and in the Dobrudja. The grave disadvantage of so doing, combined with her grievous lack of guns and shells and the weakness of her generals, brought about her ruin.

It is only fair, however, to tell you that there is another side to the picture. On a later page you will learn how the Russians overthrew their old unchecked form of government, and struck boldly for that freedom which we enjoy. The Tsar was a weak man with a German wife, and she surrounded him with men who were German at heart, and had no desire to see the Kaiser overcome. The President of the Council, a man named Stürmer, was eager to make a separate peace with Germany. It is said that if Verdun had fallen he meant to propose that Russia should withdraw from the war. Verdun, you will remember, did not fall, so he had to look about for another opportunity of serving his master the Kaiser.

In April 1917 General Iliescu, formerly Chief of the Rumanian General Staff, lifted the veil, and told the world how Stürmer had played false with Rumania. The general said that from the outbreak of the Great War it was certain that his country would, sooner or later, join the Allies. As far back as August 1914 she had begun to prepare, but the task

was hard and difficult. She had to increase her army to 820,000 men, train officers in large numbers, and supply herself with the munitions and machine guns which she altogether lacked. Though she worked hard she was not ready for war even in July 1916.

In that month the Russian Government said to the Rumanian Government, "Now or never," and proposed a plan of campaign in which no account was taken of what Bulgaria might do. When the Rumanian Government pointed out that Bulgaria might attack in the Dobrudja, Stürmer replied that Bulgaria would never be willing to fight against Russia. The Rumanians then asked for 200,000 Russian soldiers to guard the Dobrudja, and received the reply that 20,000 were quite enough. Twice the Rumanians asked the Russian Government to begin operations by seizing a strip of territory on the right bank of the Danube, so that Bucharest might be defended against an attack from the south. This the Russian Government refused to do. The fact was that Stürmer meant Rumania to be invaded as far as the Sereth. He then intended to point out to his people that the Central Powers had triumphed, and that the best thing for them to do was to make peace with the Kaiser. We shall see in a later chapter how this wicked plot was foiled, and how Stürmer was driven from power by the people whom he had so foully betrayed.

General Iliescu gave three reasons for the defeat of Rumania : first, the disloyal act of the pro-German Government at Petrograd ; second, the superior armament of the enemy ; and, third, the better generalship of the Germans. He was careful to explain that no blame whatever attached to the Russian troops or to their leaders. Both officers and men were excellent, and all won the admiration of their Rumanian comrades.

* * * * *

The story of the overrunning of Rumania falls into two chapters, the first of which closed with the entry of the Austro-Germans into Bucharest on December 6, 1916. Let me very briefly recall the course of events between 27th August, when the Rumanian armies were set in motion, and that black day on which they were forced to abandon their capital. The Rumanians were divided into three armies. Turn back to the map on page 146 of Volume VI., and find the river Jiu. The



A Russian Transport arriving at Braila with Reinforcements.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

Notice the mixed crowd greeting the arrival of the transport. You see Rumanian soldiers in their war-stained uniforms—some wearing their summer headgear, others the woollen caps served out for winter use. You also see a British petty officer of the R.N.A.S., which did splendid work during the campaign. Close at hand are two sisters from the Scottish Women's Field Hospital, which did noble service for the wounded. In the crowd there are many refugees—women and children who have lost everything, but who have for the moment forgotten their sufferings in their joy at the arrival of Russian reinforcements.

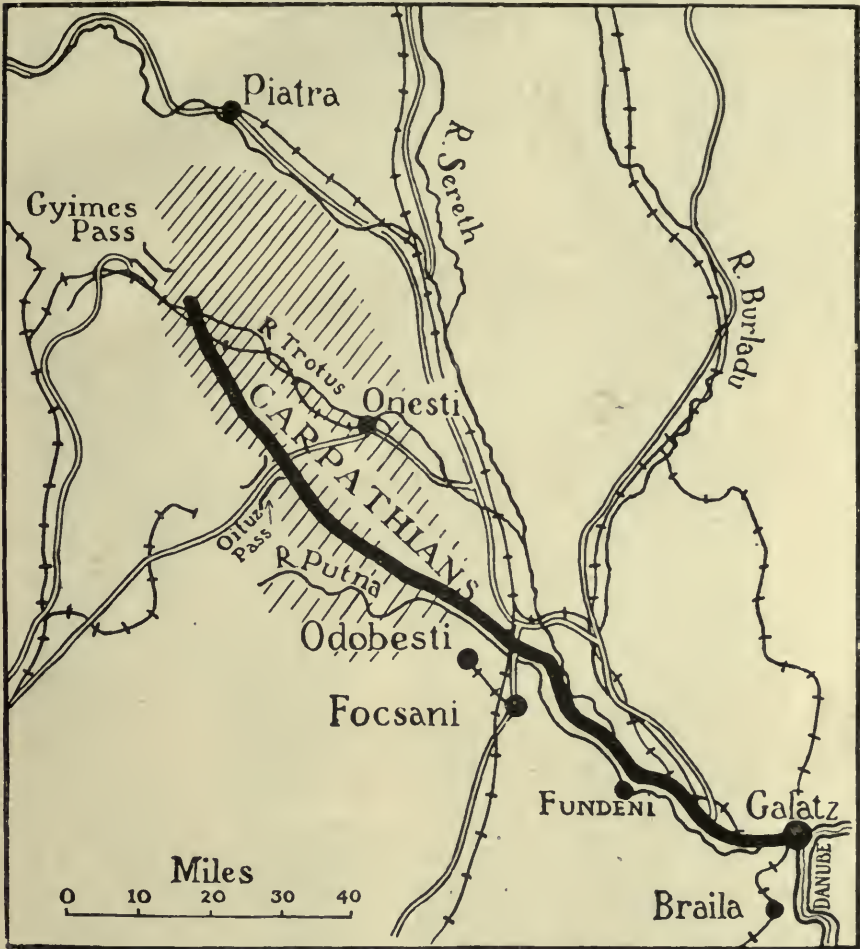
First Army was to pivot on this river, and extend towards Orsova ; the Second Army was to push through the Carpathian passes into Transylvania ; and the Third Army was to link up with the Russians, who were to advance into the same country from the south-west corner of Bukovina. The Russians, however, did not move, and thus the Rumanian plan came to naught. With the help of the Russians they had intended to push into Transylvania so far that a straight line could be held from Orsova to the Bukovina.

" Forced to fall back," says General Iliescu, " our armies for forty days fought in the passes against an enemy whose armament was superior to ours. Dislodged, the five Rumanian divisions were stationed on the Arges (Argesu) River, in order to cover Bucharest." One of these divisions was under the command of a general who at the critical moment left his troops to their own devices, and betook himself to the capital. At half-past nine on the evening of his departure the enemy attacked his position, and his men, thus abandoned, gave ground, and the line of the Arges was broken. The general who " sold the pass " was afterwards tried and condemned.

Meanwhile what the Rumanians feared had happened : the Bulgarians had taken the field, and a mixed army of Germans, Bulgarians, and Turks, under the command of the German general Mackensen, fell upon the few Rumanian divisions which had been left to guard the hundred miles of Danube front. Mackensen's big guns could not be resisted. The Rumanian divisions were destroyed or captured, and before long Mackensen was in the Dobrudja. Russians, Rumanians, and Serbians held him in check for a time in front of the railway running from Constanza to the Chernavoda bridge ; but when the capital was in dire peril it was decided to fall back and give up the Dobrudja, only delaying the enemy's advance by rearguard actions.

After the decisive battle on the Arges (1st-3rd December) the German armies moved forward on a ninety-mile front stretching across the whole width of Wallachia from the mountains to the Danube. The Rumanians retreated, and the capital was at the mercy of the invader. It was protected by eighteen forts set in a ring about six miles from the city, and provided with a circular road and railway and a telephone service. When the fortresses on the Meuse proved incapable of resisting the

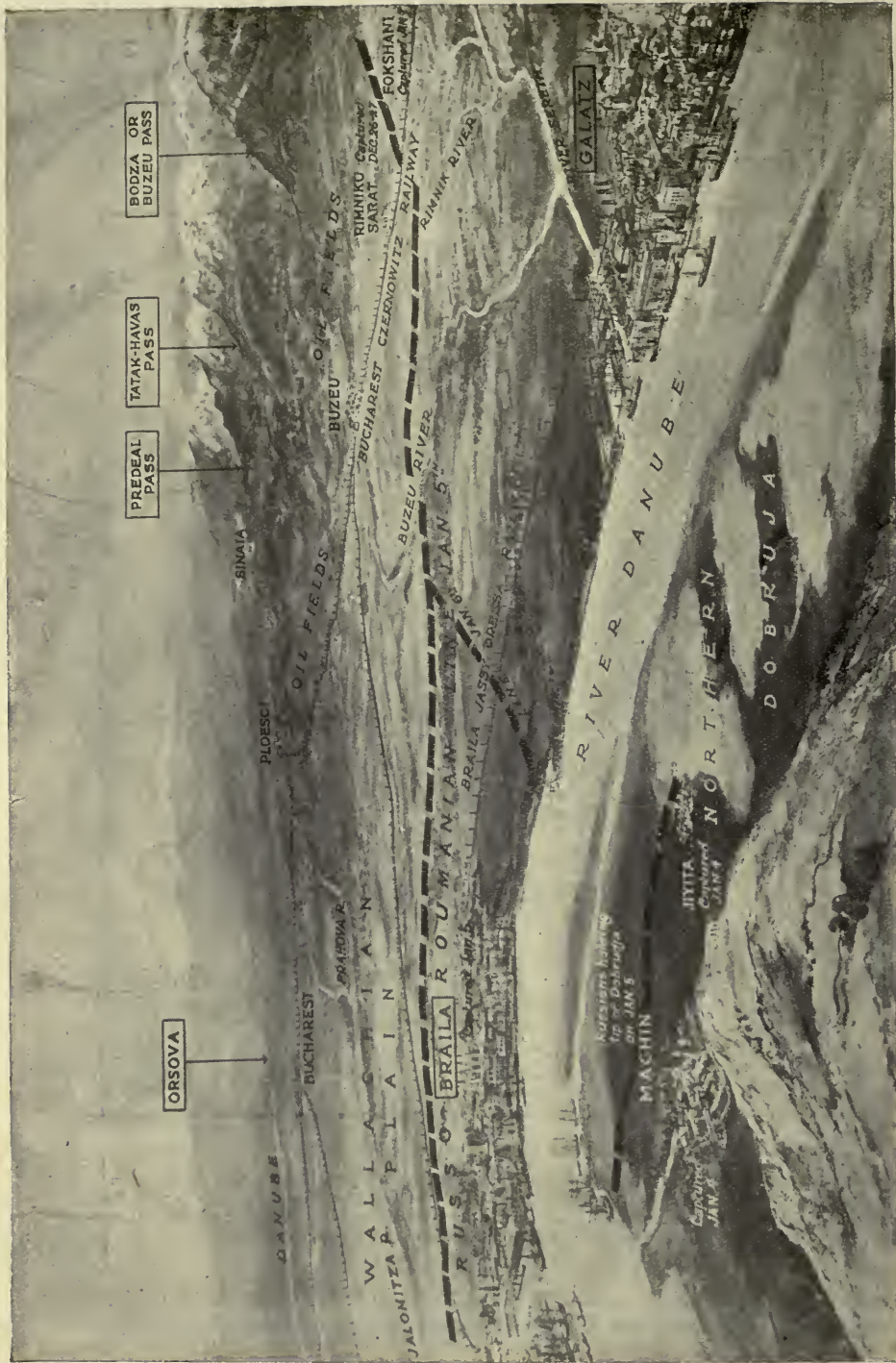
giant howitzers of the Austrians, the Bucharest forts were dismantled, and their guns were carried off for use in the field. On 6th December the Austro-Germans entered the capital



Map to illustrate the Lines of the Sereth.

Notice that these fortified lines lie behind the Sereth and its tributary the Putna. The three most important points on these lines are the city of Galatz; Fundeni, on a loop of the river; and Focsani, the main outpost. Mark the position of the Gyimes Pass and the Trotus valley, along which the Austro-Germans tried to advance in order to turn the lines.

without firing a shot. The first act of the tragedy had come to an end. The whole Wallachian plain, 50,000 square miles



How Braila and Focsani were captured by the Enemy.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

This diagram shows the Russo-Rumanian line in front of Braila on January 5, 1917. It also shows the line taken up when Braila fell. On the Dobrudja shore you see Machin, which was abandoned by the Russians on January 5. Notice Galatz, which though threatened was not captured; also Focsani, which fell on January 7.

of the richest soil in Europe, had fallen into the hands of the enemy.

After the battle on the Arges the Rumanians had decided on a general retreat. They did not intend to give battle, but meant to hold the enemy in check from time to time, in order to enable the guns and transport to be got away. The Austro-Germans followed them up rapidly, and strove to catch them in a trap. On paper the German plan looked like succeeding; but the Rumanians struggled out of the trap, with the loss of many prisoners and some guns, it is true, but with their main forces unbroken. By this time Russian reinforcements had arrived. They formed a sort of screen in the face of the enemy, and behind this screen the Rumanians retired in order to a line on which they could refit and reorganize.

Look at the little map on page 29, and find the important city of Galatz, on the Danube. From Galatz, north-west to the mountains, forty-five miles away, you will see what are known as the lines of the Sereth. They were begun in 1889, and finished four years later, as a protection against a Russian invasion coming across the Pruth. The lines run from Galatz behind the Sereth, and then behind its tributary, the little river Putna, to a mountain summit rising about three thousand feet above the level of the stream; they are then continued along the foot-hills to the Oituz Pass. There is an entrenched camp at Galatz and another at Focsani, which you see about halfway between Galatz and the pass. It was upon these lines that the Rumanians meant to end their retreat.

I want you to notice that, if the lines of the Sereth did not hold, the Russians and Rumanians would be forced out of the country altogether. Behind the lines are the railways and the roads by which alone the right and left wings of the defence could communicate with each other. Once the enemy pierced or turned the lines of the Sereth, the last hope of the Rumanians would vanish.

Look at the diagram on page 30, and find Rimnic Sarat,* which stands on the railway about thirty miles south of Focsani. † On 22nd December a Russian force took up a defensive position at Rimnic, and for five days held up the Austro-German advance. The battle was fierce and long, and the enemy suffered heavy losses, but he captured 7,600 Russians. Happily

* Spelt Rimniku on the diagram.

† Spelt Fokshani on the diagram.

the guns of the Allies were got away safely. The town was occupied, and a strong Russian counter-attack on the 28th failed to win it back again. In this fight the enemy captured an additional 3,000 prisoners. The invaders then pushed on to Focsani, where a series of rearguard actions took place.

Follow the broken black line on the diagram. It shows you the position held by the Russo-Rumanian forces on the morning of 5th January. You observe that their lines ran in front of the great grain port of Braila. If you look across the Danube, you will see the trenches which the Russian rearguard was holding in the Dobrudja on that day. The bridgehead of Machin had been lost, and only the tip of the Dobrudja remained in Russian hands. On 5th January the rearguard crossed the river to Braila, and the enemy reached the bank of the river right opposite to the city. Big guns were brought up, and before long the place was threatened with bombardment from two sides. As it had no defences, the Russians were forced to leave it. They retired to the short line which you see crossing the railway between Braila and Galatz.

That evening Mackensen entered Braila, and found himself in possession of a city of 60,000 inhabitants. He thought he had captured a rich prize, but the many huge grain elevators were empty. The Russians had destroyed the wheat in them before abandoning the city.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE RUMANIANS MADE A STAND.

BRAILA had but little military value, and its loss was not a very serious blow. Farther along the line, however, the Austro-Germans were fiercely fighting for Focsani, a position of the highest military importance. Should it fall, the advanced outpost of the last Rumanian line of defence would be gone, and the situation would be grave indeed. On the 7th January 1917 Focsani fell.

After taking Braila Mackensen gave his troops a few days' rest, and then pushed northward through the swampy ground towards Galatz. He made an advance of two and a half miles, but found himself held up on the line which you see crossing the Braila-Galatz railway (p. 30). This line was soon forced, and we in the West began to prepare ourselves for the bad news that Galatz had fallen.

Meanwhile heavy fighting had been going on in the neighbourhood of the Oituz Pass. The enemy was endeavouring to force a way through this pass and descend upon the plain behind the lines of the Sereth. He was trying to do what the Allies had done in Southern Serbia, when they turned the lines of Kenali. Amidst the mountains in the bitter winter weather friend and foe struggled for weeks. On 10th January an enemy column worked down the Trotus valley from the Gyimes Pass, and seemed to be in a fair way to reach the railway behind Focsani. The Russians, however, threw the column back, and pinned it. All hope of turning the Sereth lines in this direction had now failed.

Then followed a fierce attempt to force the Sereth lines in front of Focsani. Immediately this failed an attack was made upon the extreme right against Galatz. The Russians, how-

ever, put up a desperate resistance, and on the 17th recaptured a strong position which they had lost. Four days after the failure in front of Galatz the enemy flung his men against the loop of the river which you see on the map at Fundeni, and there managed to reach the right bank. All their struggles, however, failed to give them a footing on the left bank. Nor could a crossing be made from the Dobrudja. Russian guns on the left bank of the Danube kept up such a fierce bombardment that no troops could hope to make the passage and live.

By 20th January the enemy had done his worst in Rumania. The wave of invasion had broken on the lines of Sereth. What the line of the Yser had been to Belgium, the lines of the Sereth were now to Rumania. Day by day the Russian reinforcements were arriving, and our allies were now able to say to the invader, "Thus far and no farther."

* * * * *

In reading the story of the war you must have noticed that the Germans have never been able to carry any one of their great schemes to completion. They failed at the Marne; they failed at the Yser; they failed during the Russian retreat; and now they failed in Rumania. In the early stages of the invasion they carried everything before them; but when the Russians were able to take the field, they were held in check while the guns were carried off and the stores were removed or destroyed.

By coming to the assistance of the Rumanians the Russians had paid off an old debt. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 the Russians advanced into Turkey, but were very severely defeated at Plevna, and were compelled to retire. At the moment when it seemed as though the Turk would once more become master of the Balkans the Rumanians sent help to the Russians, and together they besieged Plevna, which was forced to surrender. This victory changed the whole situation, and enabled the Russians to march on Constantinople. Now the Russians had come to the help of the Rumanians in the hour of their dire distress, and by their fine resistance had enabled their old allies to rally their armies and take the offensive once more.

The enemy had shot his bolt in Rumania. His great advance died away in trench warfare. It was now clear that the lines of the Sereth could only be carried after a long struggle and at a

very heavy price. Spring was approaching, and with it would be sure to come another great Allied offensive in France. To prevent a breach in his Western front, von Hindenburg would need every battalion that he could muster. He had cast envious eyes on the great Russian port of Odessa, and at the moment when the lines of the Sereth defied him, his forces were actually nearer to that city than they were to Jassy, the capital of Moldavia. But between them and Odessa lay two unfordable rivers, the Pruth and the Dneister, and much time would be needed for bringing up bridging material and guns to cover the crossing operations. The big bait that dangled before his eyes was hopelessly out of his reach.

He had overrun Wallachia and the Dobrudja, but from a military point of view his gains were worthless. True, he had won one of the richest wheat lands in all Europe, but at least six months must elapse before a harvest could be reaped. Another country had been added to the conquests of Germany, and once again the streets of Berlin were bedecked with flags, and the people were bidden to rejoice. But everywhere amongst them stalked the spectre of disease and famine. Military glory, after all, was an unsatisfying diet: it could not fill hungry mouths.

CHAPTER V.

FIGHTING IN THE HOLY LAND.

THERE is no chapter of history more interesting to British boys and girls than the story of the Crusaders, those soldiers of the Cross who fought and died to deliver from the thrall of the heathen the "holy fields" which the Saviour trod. You are now to read of twentieth-century Crusaders pushing their way into the same sacred land, to free not merely a single small country but the whole world from a tyranny worse than death, and to uphold law and justice and righteousness as the rule of mankind.

In these pages the story of the war has introduced you to many strange places in widely different lands. You will now begin to read of towns and villages which are familiar to you from Bible story. For example, you will hear of Gaza and of Beersheba. The phrase "from Dan to Beersheba" will at once occur to your minds. It is equivalent to our saying "from John o' Groats to Land's End."

You associate the Holy Land with the Jews of old, living a simple life in far-off times, tilling their fields in the most primitive way, drawing their water from wells, feeding their flocks on the hills, and fishing in the lakes. It will seem strange to you to think of the modern engines of war being introduced into the Holy Land—to read of quick-firing and machine guns, armoured motor cars, wireless telegraphs, and aeroplanes operating across the country in which the Prince of Peace set before us the example of a perfect life, and where He died on the Cross for our salvation.

* * * * *

Before I tell you the story of how our new Crusaders fought in the Holy Land, I must describe how we drove the Turks

out of Egypt. In Chapter IV. of our fourth volume I told you that in January 1915 a force of Turks marched south from Syria with the object of capturing the Suez Canal, and thus depriving us of our short sea route to India, Australia, and the Far East. On the night of 2nd February two Turkish columns, numbering about 12,000 all told, advanced towards the canal, and strove to cross it by means of pontoons. They were driven off, and were pursued, but owing to a heavy sandstorm managed to make their escape. Thereafter for the rest of the year 1915 Egypt remained unmolested.

A new British commander arrived on January 9, 1916. He was General Sir Archibald Murray, an experienced soldier, who soon proved himself to be energetic, clear-headed, and



cool in leadership. His first work was to make the canal secure. For this purpose he fixed on Katia, a place about thirty miles north-east of El Kantara, for his base, and began to clear the country up to this point. Yeomanry were frequently sent out to drive off the enemy, and meanwhile roads were made, a railway was begun, and a pipe-line for carrying water was pushed forward. You will be interested to learn that later in the year the roads were made by laying down wire-netting which enabled our men to march across the deep sand without sinking in up to their shoe-tops.

By 21st April the railway had reached a point from which a serious attempt could be made to push back the Turks. Two days later the enemy made a sudden raid on Katia, in

the hope of forestalling the British advance. Though the forces engaged were not large, the fighting was very severe.

The troops in the neighbourhood of Katia at this time consisted of Yeomanry—Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire men, and Australian Light Horse. On 22nd April our airmen reported that the enemy was coming on in force. The Yeomanry held their posts very gallantly, but they were all too few to resist the strong Turkish forces that assailed them. Katia was captured, and our mounted troops had to fall back with severe loss.

About half-past five on the morning of that day about a thousand Turks with one gun attacked a post held by one hundred men of the 15th Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers. Though outnumbered by ten to one, the Scots made a splendid defence, and twice drove back the Turks. Meanwhile two companies of their comrades, lying seven miles away, pushed through the sand towards them with all speed. They arrived about half-past nine, and three hours later made a fine counter-attack, which forced the enemy to retire, leaving behind him seventy dead and thirty prisoners. At once the 5th Australian Light Horse and some of our aeroplanes went in pursuit, and inflicted further loss on the enemy. Our airmen did splendid work in this little fight, in which we lost three and a half squadrons of Yeomanry, two officers and eighteen men killed, and some twenty-five rank and file wounded.

Early in August the Turks once more made an attempt to capture the Suez Canal. By this time we had established a chain of posts extending from the coast about thirty miles east of Port Said in a long semicircular sweep. These posts were linked up with other defences, and with the canal by roads and railways. The Turks had laid their plans carefully, and had provided themselves with solidly built boats for the purpose of crossing the canal. You will remember that on their first attempt they had only rough rafts, some of them made of kerosene tins.

A neutral who saw the expedition depart from El Arish tells us that it was accompanied by fifty great pontoons, each drawn by a team of eight oxen. The same writer tells us that there appeared to be no love lost between the Germans and the Turks. Like the Jews and the Samaritans of old, they had no dealings with each other. While the Germans



General Sir Archibald Murray.

[Photo, Swaine.]

Born 1860; joined 27th Regiment, 1879; served in Zululand and in South Africa, where he was dangerously wounded. He has received many distinctions. He took over the Egyptian command on January 9, 1916.

were well fed, well clothed, and well cared for, the Turks were half starved, ragged, and ill provided with doctors and ambulances. The only two good articles which each Turkish soldier possessed were his rifle and his water-bottle. The condition of Syria, according to the same informant, was terrible. The people had been shockingly treated, and some 60,000 to 80,000 of them had perished of starvation or disease.

Why the Turks should have planned an attack at this time is a mystery. Perhaps they had learned that our forces in Egypt had been reduced in numbers; but their airmen must have known that our defensive works were now very strong. Perhaps they thought that they would take us by surprise; but if so they were greatly mistaken. It may have been that their German taskmasters ordered them to attack in order to prevent us from sending any more troops from Egypt to the West.

Look at the little map on page 37, and find Romani, a post about twenty-three miles east of Suez. About midnight on 4th August some 18,000 Turks and Germans, under Count Kress von Kressenstein, advanced against Romani. They had with them heavy howitzers for bombarding our trenches. These guns had been brought along the caravan route from El Arish in a very laborious way. Gangs of labourers carrying planks attended each gun; and laid the planks on the sand to form a track over which teams of oxen hauled the heavy weapons. In this way they were prevented from sinking into the sand.

In the fight which followed the Turks adopted the regular German plan of making a frontal attack and at the same time trying to turn our flank. While we held them in front and drove them off, the guns of our monitors in the Bay of Tana, a few miles to the north, heavily shelled them. Meanwhile our mounted men on the flank slowly retired and drew the enemy on into the sand dunes. Then in the late evening they turned on the Turks, and routed them with great slaughter. A counter-attack was then made by all arms, and was very successful. Next morning at dawn we went in pursuit of the retreating Turks, who abandoned guns, material, and field hospitals, and burnt large quantities of stores to prevent us from seizing them. The pursuit was not stayed until the enemy had been driven back to El Arish, twenty-five miles south-west of the Turkish frontier.

Our troops had won a fine victory. Some 1,250 of the

enemy had been killed and 4,000 wounded; 49 officers and 4,000 prisoners had been captured; while one Krupp gun, four mountain guns, and nine machine guns, 2,300 rifles, 100 horses and mules, 500 camels, a great quantity of ammunition, and stores of all kinds had fallen into our hands. The Anzac mounted troops had shown great courage and steadiness during the flank attack, and the Territorials had marched over the heavy sand and fought in the great heat with wonderful spirit.

A lieutenant in the City of London Yeomanry thus describes the encounter, and gives us some account of campaigning in the desert:—

“We have been in action three days, and now the Turks have gone right away, but we are still kept thirty-five miles from the canal on outpost work. Things are rather uncomfortable, and have been these last three and a half weeks. You might not think it, but Egypt is not the country for an open-air life: you need some kind of shelter during the day, something more than can be made of a sword, a scabbard, a few haybands, and a blanket. I don't think it can last many weeks more. Our little fight was very good fun; it is a pity it did not last longer. The Turks left some of the wells in a great hurry, and abandoned quantities of stuff. Some of the things picked up by our men were very interesting, but I have not found anything worth carrying away.

“We have no transport, and by the time you have tied on to the saddle two days' food for the horse and two days' food and water for the man, and climbed up yourself with all your equipment, ammunition, and personal effects, the horse has plenty to carry. In addition to this, he has to travel across soft sand over his fetlocks, and up and down sand dunes like a little Switzerland, and to crown all he may have to go all day without any water. This did occur one day when the Turks attacked our position over a well at three in the morning, and we spent most of the day working round to their flank.”

* * * * *

Look again at the map on page 37, and find El Arish, the point from which the Turks set out on that unsuccessful attempt which I have described. On the morning of 20th December the Anzac mounted troops, with the Imperial Camel Corps and the horse artillery batteries of a Territorial division, left Katia. Next day, after a rapid march, they entered El Arish, only to discover that the enemy had departed without waiting for the attack. Our troops pushed on, and next evening reached Maghdaba, about twenty-five miles east of El Arish. On the following day they discovered some 2,000 Turks holding an entrenched position of great strength. A severe fight followed, and by the evening the Turkish position was captured, and the



British Camel Corps in Egypt.

[By permission of *The Sphere*.

enemy had suffered a terrible defeat. His whole force was practically destroyed ; 1,350 unwounded prisoners were taken, along with seven guns and much war material.

The victorious British now returned to El Arish for much-needed rest ; but on the evening of January 8, 1917, "boot and saddle" was again sounded, and through the night the troops advanced towards the frontier town of Rafa. Next morning, after a swift thirty miles' march, they got within striking distance of the enemy, who was holding a fortified position covering the approaches to the town. The Turks were surprised ; many of them were asleep when the alarm was given.

For 2,000 yards the front of the enemy was devoid of cover of any kind. As our men advanced it was swept by heavy fire, especially from machine guns. Meanwhile our cavalry made an enveloping movement so as to attack the position from the east, south-east, and south. Two hours later a dismounted attack began. Our troops advanced by rushes, and one New Zealand regiment, which had been sent well to the east of the enemy's position, rode right into the town with very little opposition. This enabled other New Zealanders to get behind the enemy and assail him from the rear.

A correspondent tells us that the fight was more like the battles of Napoleon's time than the struggles of to-day.

"Mounted men could be seen galloping into action within short rifle-range, and the artillery had targets which could be seen over the gun sights. The fighting was watched by many Bedouin Arabs, some of whom actually tended their herds between our firing line and the enemy trenches. There was a freshness in the scene, and our troops, whose eyes, long used to the desert glare, welcomed the rolling green country round Rafa."

The battle lasted until 5 p.m., when the Turks, finding themselves surrounded, surrendered, after suffering heavy loss. Over 1,600 prisoners and four guns fell into our hands, besides much war material. While the fighting was going on the New Zealanders engaged a Turkish relief column, and drove it into Rafa. The whole garrison of the town was in our hands by five o'clock—little more than twenty-four hours after the troops had left El Arish. In that time they had made a thirty-mile march across country, had attacked under difficult and trying conditions, and had carried a well-fortified and strongly-held position.

The victory at Rafa practically cleared the Turks out of Egypt. The few scattered detachments which still remained were being hunted down, and by this time the whole of the Sinai Peninsula had been reconquered. Further, more than a hundred miles of waterless desert now separated the Turks from the Suez Canal. Thenceforth the vital waterway was secure.

* * * * *

"The Promised Land! After twelve months' incessant toil in the Sinai desert, sometimes fighting hard, always digging, making military works, building railways, constructing pipe-lines and roads, and for ever marching over the heavy wastes, our troops have at last come into the Promised Land. What a marvellous change of scene! They are in Palestine. Behind them is a hundred miles and more of dreary sand; before them, as far as the eye can reach, is unfolded a picture of rare beauty. No wonder, when the troops come up to Rafa and look over the billowy downs, they break into rounds of cheers. The men are freshened and uplifted by the prospect of carrying the war into the enemy's country. These cheers are the troops' expression of delight at reaching a country hallowed by the greatest events in the world's history, the birthplace of Christ and the cradle of the rights of humanity, to uphold which these soldiers of the Empire are fighting.

"Before and around us everything is green and fresh. Big patches of barley, for which the plain south of Gaza is famous, shine like emeralds, and the immense tracts of pasture are to-day as bright and beautiful as the rolling downs at home. You can truthfully compare the country to the Berkshire Downs. We do not see the buttercup and cowslip to remind us of the time when, the war being over, we shall return to Britain, but in their place there is an abundance of the most gorgeous flowers lighting up the vivid greenness of the plain, as if in welcome to an army which is to relieve the country from the oppressors' hand. There are crimson anemones, bright as any rubies, crocuses and narcissi, irises, short in the stem but brilliant in hue, a tiny sweet-pea, clover, and many common flowers in dazzling profusion, while a few specimens of an almost black arum lily have been collected. Can you not imagine the effect this enchanting scene has had upon the condition of our troops, who have now become desert veterans?"

"And what of the horses, those noble beasts whose courage and staying power helped to make possible the victories of Maghdaba and Rafa? One of the prettiest pictures I have seen for many a long day was that of an Australian Light Horse regiment out grazing. Each trooper was tending two horses. The man was enjoying the luxury of a rest on the grass, but his pleasure was derived, not so much from lying full-length on turf, as in seeing the animals revel in abundant green food. To beast, as well as to man, it is the Promised Land."

From the position occupied by the correspondent who thus writes he could look over the ground which the Turks

had abandoned towards the position which they still held. He could see the high minaret of Gaza above the dark framework of trees enclosing the town. The mosque below was formerly a Christian church; in the twelfth century Crusaders worshipped in it. And now, after many centuries, British troops were again in sight of the town. Away on the right they could see Beersheba, lying on the plain beneath the southern end of the hills of Judæa. It was in Gaza, you will remember, that Samson was betrayed by Delilah to the Philistines, and in Beersheba Abraham dug "the well of the oath."

Now let me tell you the story of the first battle which we fought in the Holy Land. The object of this battle was to clear the way for the advance of our railway into Palestine. We were no longer content merely to guard the Egyptian frontier; we were now ready to carry the war into the enemy's country.

Study the map for a few moments. Notice the Turco-Egyptian frontier which runs from Raza, on the Mediterranean Sea, to Akaba, at the head of the Gulf of Suez. From the frontier there are two routes to Jerusalem: the one runs along the coast to Jaffa, and then strikes inland; the other and the more direct route runs north-eastwards from Beersheba direct. From Jaffa there is a railway to the Holy City; from Beersheba there is a good road by way of Hebron. Between Raza and Beersheba stretches waterless desert. From what I have said, you will gather that our railway was to advance along the coast so as to reach Jaffa and link up with the railway already in existence from the port to the capital. Run your finger along the coast from Raza northwards. After about thirty miles you reach Gaza, Samson's town. We were now about to try to clear the country as far as Gaza, in order that the railway might proceed.

Soon after daybreak on the morning of March 26, 1917, our advance began. The evening before, while the western skies were aglow with a beautiful sunset, the whole plain was alive with moving troops—long lines of infantry, horse, and camels, artillery and ammunition and supply columns wending their way amidst clouds of dust. The moon had set, and the wan dawn was breaking by the time the whole force was advancing to the attack. Our first object was to capture a ravine, so as to cover the advance of our railway. The ravine



Jerusalem—the Holy City.

was occupied without a fight, and it now appeared that the enemy was bent on retiring. In order to force him to stand, the general in command determined to try to carry Gaza by a sharp, sudden attack. Our troops were so disposed as to be able to delay any enemy columns which might march to the relief of the town. Afar off at the base of the Judæan hills a dense cloud of dust showed that the Turkish cavalry were already moving out of Beersheba. Probably in all the enemy's forces numbered about 20,000.

A dense fog settled down and delayed operations until the late afternoon, when an assault was made on the enemy's first-line trenches. A correspondent writes :—

“ From the most favoured point of observation I had a splendid view of the battle, the town being visible in the background with its red roofs, whitewashed houses, and lemon and orange groves. Our bombardment was an inspiring sight. Bursts of shrapnel smudged the heavenly blue. High-explosive shells raised clouds and lifted vast quantities of earth from the enemy's entrenchments. I could see the infantry march to the attack, taking advantage of every bit of dead ground, rushing across the open, dropping to whatever cover mother earth afforded when they were faced by machine-gun fire, and pushing forward valiantly whenever an opportunity offered. But I regret that I could not see and describe how the gallant Welsh Territorials engaged the enemy in hand-to-hand grips in a bewildering maze of zigzags. As, however, they conquered the crafty foe, famed for his powers of defence, we know that they behaved in a way worthy of their race.”

The enemy's first-line trenches were captured, and more than 700 prisoners fell into our hands. Meanwhile the German commander, von Kress, moved up three columns towards Gaza to support his troops in that town. Our mounted men and armoured cars did splendid work in delaying these troops, and inflicted loss upon them at a slight cost to themselves. During this part of the fighting the commander and staff of the 53rd Division were captured.

We could, however, make no further headway ; not because the enemy was too strong for us, but because we were short of water. We were fighting in an absolutely dry district, and the only water to be obtained was that which our men carried with them. The delay caused by the morning fog had greatly reduced the supply in the water-bottles, and we could do nothing more until our stores were replenished. So we fell back on a defensive position just south of Gaza, and there we had

to meet a Turkish counter-attack next day. Though our men were parched and weary, they everywhere drove off the enemy with heavy losses. Our Camel Corps completely defeated the Turkish cavalry divisions which took part in the attack.

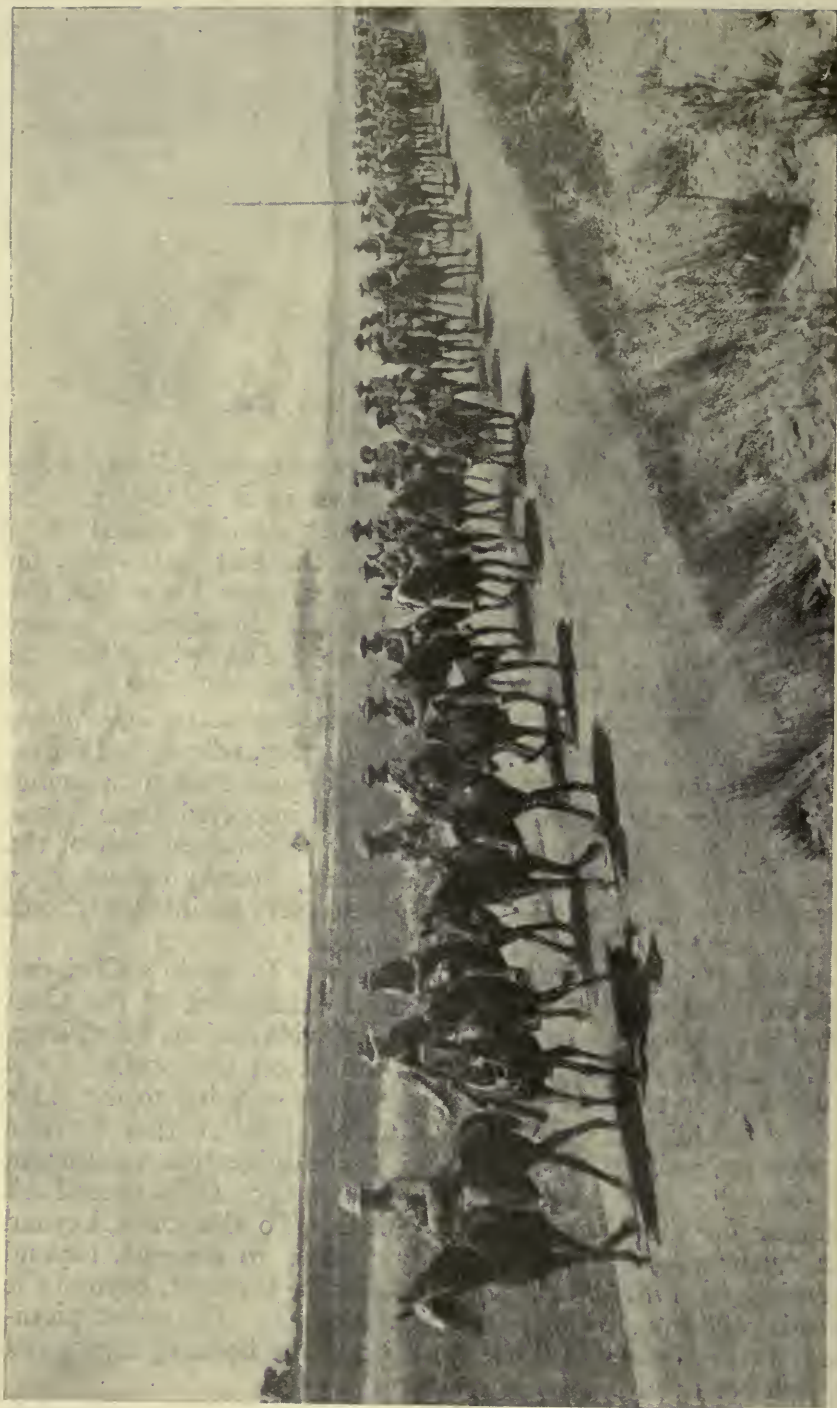
On the 28th our infantry were withdrawn to the ravine which I have mentioned; but our cavalry still remained in touch with the enemy's main position. In the fighting in front of Gaza the enemy's losses were estimated at 8,000. We captured 950 prisoners and two Austrian howitzers, and our own losses in killed were 400. A small party of our men, numbering about 200, probably fought their way right into Gaza. Unhappily they were cut off, and the gallant fellows were reported as missing.

CHAPTER VI.

FIGHTING FOR SAMSON'S TOWN.

BEFORE I describe our next attempt to capture Gaza, let me tell you something about the town as it is to-day. Its modern name is Ghuzzeh. The upper portion stands on a hill about one hundred feet high; to the east and south, on the plain, lie the new quarters. You already know that the place is surrounded by orchards. There is abundance of water, and vegetation is therefore very rich. The place has an Egyptian air: veiled women walk about the streets, and Bedouin Arabs visit the market-place to buy dates, figs, olives, lentils, and other provisions, such as barley, wheat, and durra. The chief industries are the making of pottery and weaving, the yarn for the latter purpose being imported from Manchester. Most of the people suffer from inflammation of the eyes, and the English Church Missionary Society has set up a hospital for their relief. The same society maintains schools for Moslem and Christian boys and girls.

Near to the great mosque, which was formerly a Christian church, is a handsome caravanserai. South-east of the town there is a green plain, a mile and a half wide and six miles long, enclosed on the sea side by sand-dunes, on the north by the town, and on the east by a range of hills running to the ridge known as Ali Muntar. It was to Ali Muntar that Samson carried the gates of the Philistines. The ridge rises to a height of about 270 feet above sea-level. Visitors to Gaza ascend Ali Muntar for the view which it affords. To the south, beyond the cultivated land, lies the sandy desert; to the east, beyond the plain, rise the hill ranges of Judæa; to the west, beyond the broad yellow sand-hills, stretches the sea. The most picturesque view, however, is the town itself, the houses peeping out from a beautiful mantle of green.



Australian Light Horse in the Desert.

Now let us return to the British troops south of Gaza. After the battle on 26th-27th March we busied ourselves in strengthening the ground which we had won, and by the second week of April were ready to make another attempt to capture the town. The enemy at this time was holding a position extending from the sea-coast a mile or two south of Gaza, over the hill to the east of the town, thence in a south-easterly direction to a place roughly halfway between Gaza and Beersheba. The positions which we had to attack were very strong, and consisted of sand-dunes, two miles deep, between the sea and the town, and every variety of redoubt, trench, and pit. These covered the western town, while the Samson ridge, 3,000 yards to the south-west, was strongly held, and was covered with observation posts. The plain south-east of Gaza is cut across by the Wadi Gaza, a ravine with steep sides, through which the winter rains falling on the Judæan hills rush down in roaring torrent to the sea. At the time when we began our attack the ravine was dry. The northernmost part of the plain was deeply entrenched, and for two miles south-east of Ali Muntar the enemy held a number of irregular hills.

Soon after daybreak on 17th April our attack began. A war vessel assisted the shore batteries to cover a short infantry advance intended to give us good positions from which we could make further progress.

"The whole operation was brilliantly successful. We got to our mark on the sand-dunes, reached the positions in front in a few minutes, and took Sheikh Abbas Ridge by half-past seven, with very few casualties. The cavalry were out on the right during the blazing hot morning, and it was impossible to hide them because every movement raised dense columns of dust. A wet night would have been of immense advantage to us, but throughout the operations rain was denied. The ground was churned into powder, and the country is crisscrossed by tracks easily visible to the enemy aviators."

Good positions having now been secured, we were ready for the next move forward. Just as the sun lifted over the black hills of Judæa on the morning of 19th April, our guns began a heavy bombardment of the outer trenches of Gaza. From sea and land shells of all sizes tore gaps in the Turkish defences, throwing high into the air masses of earth and wire, and making Ali Muntar quake. Some of the trees on the hill were stripped of their leaves, and one outstanding tree seemed to

bend before the shell-storm. Pillars of sand arose from the dunes, and seemed to be framed in the white and black smoke of the explosives.

At half-past eight the infantry on the left were let loose, and quickly made their way into Turkish trenches, which were found to be full of the enemy's dead. Towards Ali Muntar and south of Gaza progress was slower and more difficult. Scottish troops, however, went forward with splendid steadiness, and in spite of heavy machine-gun fire advanced 2,000 yards, and dug themselves in. A good advance was also made from the Sheikh Abbas ridge.

"Between nine and ten," says a correspondent, "I saw a 'Tank' go into action against a green hill in front of Ali Muntar. She stood with her nose poised in the air across a trench down which a rapid fire was poured, right and left. Then she crossed the trench and turned south. The Austrian gunners with the Turks soon found the range, and an immense volume of high-explosive shells burst around her. For several minutes I lost sight of her, but presently she emerged and made her way towards our lines. Once more the shells began to fall around her. When the fire ceased she had disappeared: she had dropped back into a trench which we had captured. Enemy gunfire had hit her, but as the enemy had been firing into his own lines, he probably did more damage to his friends than to our machine."

During the day, and especially in the afternoon, our mounted troops were sorely tested. Five times the Turks made desperate counter-attacks on our cavalry and Camel Corps, which resisted splendidly, and suffered heavy loss. A junior officer of the Camel Corps did a very fine piece of work during this trying time. He saw the enemy gathering in strength for the purpose of breaking through, and immediately determined to hold up their advance. Along with a machine-gun team, he crawled forward up a grassy slope under heavy fire, which constantly took toll of his little company. The crest behind which the enemy was massing was lined with machine guns and hundreds of riflemen; but the gallant Britons struggled on until they were within 300 yards of the enemy. Then they opened fire. Every time the Turks showed themselves they were beaten back by a hail of bullets. For an hour and a half they were unable to push forward. Only when every man of the machine-gun team had fallen was the enemy able to advance. Eye-witnesses tell us that the men of the Camel Corps behaved like heroes that day; every one of them deserved the Victoria Cross.

Special praise must also be given to the Anzac horse-holders. While the dismounted troops were doing infantry work in front the horses were collected in a ravine. German aviators spotted them, and the Austrian gunners with the Turks quickly picked up the range and dropped shell after shell amongst them. Nevertheless there was no panic. The horse-holders moved to and fro, careless of death, quieting the horses, and by their splendid steadiness preventing a stampede.

Our troops were worn out with a heavy day's fighting in the heat, but the night brought them no respite. During the short hours of darkness they dug in on the ground which they had won. On 20th April the enemy was again engaged all along the line. Our airmen brought news that the Turks were massing for an attack. Four machines went up and dropped forty-seven bombs upon the 3,000 infantry and the 800 cavalry who were awaiting the order to move. Terrible execution was wrought, and the remnants of the Turkish cavalry galloped away to the rear.

At this point we leave our Crusaders. Gaza had not yet fallen, but its capture was only a matter of time.

CHAPTER VII.

AN OLD HEROIC STORY REPEATED.

ON a clear night of February 1852 a large troopship, the *Birkenhead*, bound for Cape Town, was sailing off the coast of South-West Africa with 632 souls on board. As the captain was anxious to shorten the voyage, and as the sea was calm, he kept as near as possible to the shore. Off Cape Danger the vessel was steaming at the rate of nine miles an hour. Suddenly she struck upon a sunken rock with such force that in a few minutes she was a wreck.

The roll of the drum called the soldiers to arms on the upper deck. The call was promptly obeyed, though every man knew that it was his death-summons. There they stood as if on parade, no man showing uneasiness or fear, though the ship was sinking lower and lower into the waves every moment.

Their commander, Colonel Seton, of the 74th Highlanders, told them that there were only boats enough to carry the women and children to shore, and that these must be saved first. No man even muttered an objection. Orders were coolly given and promptly obeyed. The boats were hove out and lowered. Everything was done quickly, for there was no time to lose. Nevertheless, no soldier showed haste or panic, or uttered a wail of despair.

The women and children were got into the boats, which pushed off, and made for the shore, landed their freight, and returned for another. Again and again this was done, till all, or nearly all, the women and children were saved. Meanwhile the soldiers gave help or looked on calmly.

All had now been done that could be done. There were no boats for the troops, and the ship was sinking so fast that it was vain to expect the boats to return in time to save any of them.



The Loss of the Birkenhead.

The soldiers stood on the deck in ranks, shoulder to shoulder, officers and men together, watching the sharks that were waiting for them, and patiently abiding the end.

It soon came. In half an hour from the time when the *Birkenhead* struck she went to the bottom, and the waves closed over a band of the truest heroes that the world has ever seen.

The following verses (by Sir F. H. Doyle) are put into the mouth of a soldier who is supposed to have survived :—

“ Right on our flank the crimson sun went down,
The deep sea rolled around in dark repose,
When, like the wild shriek from some captured town,
A cry of women rose !

“ The stout ship *Birkenhead* lay hard and fast,
Caught, without hope, upon a hidden rock ;
Her timbers thrilled as nerves, when through them passed
The spirit of the shock.

“ And ever, like base cowards who leave their ranks
In danger's hour, before the rush of steel,
Drifted away, disorderly, the planks
From underneath her keel.

“ Confusion spread ; for though the coast seemed near,
Sharks hovered thick along that white sea-brink.
The boats could hold ?—not all ; and it was clear
She was about to sink.

“ ‘ Out with those boats, and let us haste away,’
Cried one, ‘ ere yet yon sea the bark devours.’
The man thus clamouring was, I scarce need say,
No officer of ours.

“ We knew our duty better than to care
For such loose babblers, and made no reply ;
Till our good colonel gave the word, and there
Formed us in line—to die.

“ There rose no murmur from the ranks, no thought
By shameful strength unhonoured life to seek ;
Our post to quit we were not trained, nor taught
To trample down the weak.

“ So we made women with their children go.
The oars ply back again, and yet again ;
Whilst, inch by inch, the drowning ship sank low,
Still under steadfast men.

“What followed why recall? The brave who died,
 Died without flinching in the bloody surf.
 They sleep as well beneath that purple tide
 As others under turf.”

A monument to the “heroic constancy and unbroken discipline” of these brave men still stands in Greenwich Hospital.

* * * * *

Now let me tell you how this heroic incident was repeated, but with a happier ending. At 8 p.m. on the evening of February 9, 1917, the transport *Tyndareus*,* with a battalion of the Middlesex Regiment on board, was steaming off Cape Agulhas, about 105 miles south-east of Cape Town, when she suddenly shook from stem to stern. She had struck a mine.

Immediately after the explosion she began to settle down by the head. At once the “Assembly” was sounded, and the troops, wearing lifebelts, lined up on deck in perfect order. By this time the head of the ship was so far down that the propellers were well out of the water. All on board thought that the vessel must sink; all knew that they were in the presence of death; but every man was as calm as if on parade.

At this moment Colonel John Ward, a Labour member of Parliament who had taken up military service, addressed the battalion:—

“*Officers and Men,—You have now the supreme test of your lives, the one moment we all ought to have lived for. Remember that you are Englishmen. All the best traditions of your country and race are in your keeping. You are members of one of the most famous regiments in the British Army. Pray God you do no act to sully its honour. Obey orders, and we may be able to save you all; but if we cannot, then let us finish like English gentlemen.*”

Then the roll was called, and the order “Stand easy” was given. Some one started a song, “The Long, Long Trail,” and in a few moments every voice was joining in the refrain. Then came the old favourite, “Tipperary,” and for half an hour afterwards, while the deck became steeper and steeper, as the bows continued to sink, chorus after chorus swept along the lines.

Happily, the wireless had not been damaged, and S.O.S.

* According to legend a king of Sparta, father of Castor and Pollux; the former famed for horsemanship, the latter for boxing.

signals were hurtling through the air in all directions. Two attendant vessels far off were racing to the rescue, and meanwhile boat after boat was being lowered. One of the boats upset as it descended, but a young seaman immediately jumped overboard and righted it. The same man, a little later, dived from a lifeboat and saved the regimental dog, Paddy. Half a dozen privates who were engineers by profession hastened to the engine-room, and there did splendid work in the most dangerous part of the ship.



The Tyndareus after being torpedoed.
(*Photo, Illustrations Bureau.*)

By the time six boats had been lowered one of the attendant vessels had arrived, and in a few minutes the work of transferring the troops began. The other vessel appeared a little later. A strong wind was blowing, and the sea was very choppy, but the rescue work was done very quickly. Then the laden vessels steamed towards port.

Two warships took the crippled liner in tow, and though she was well down by the bows, they managed, by dint of fine

seamanship, to haul her along to Simonstown, where she arrived under her own steam, with two of her holds flooded and a third leaking.

The troops thus saved were full of praise for their officers, and especially for the captain of the ship. Though fully occupied in directing operations, he found time to encourage the men as they stood singing in their ranks. "Keep it up, lads," he kept on shouting to them—"all's well;" and the troops cheered him again and again in return.

Our King, whose heart always nobly responds to any story of heroism, sent the following message to the men who had behaved so gallantly in the face of death:—

"Please express to the officer commanding — Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, my admiration of the conduct displayed by all ranks on the occasion of the accident to the *Tyndareus*. In their discipline and courage they worthily upheld the splendid tradition of the *Birkenhead*, ever cherished in the annals of the British army."

I want all boys and girls who read these pages to ponder deeply over this story, and to determine that, if ever they should find themselves in a similar situation, they will "be British" in the same way. It is the glory of our race that the graver the danger grows the cooler we become. Fluster and flurry, panic and frenzy, in the hour of peril are not only unworthy of Britons, but they hamper all efforts at rescue. "In your patience possess ye your souls." And if God wills that succour does not come, and that death must be our lot, let us call to mind the noble words of Colonel John Ward, and

"Finish like English gentlemen."



Bird's-Eye View of Bagdad—occupied by British, March 11, 1917.
(By permission of *The Illustrated London News*.)

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CITY OF HAROUN-AL-RASCHID.

THE very name of some cities conjures up visions of splendour and fascination. One such city is Bagdad, the city of the Arabian Nights.

“ When the breeze of a joyful dawn flew free
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flowed back with me,
The forward-flowing tide of time ;
And many a sheeny summer-morn
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdad’s shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old ;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.”

The great caliph of whom Tennyson thus sings is known to every boy and girl who has read *The Thousand and One Nights*. The opening sentence of this book—“ In the reign of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid there lived at Bagdad a merchant named Ali Cogia ”—brings to mind a host of the beloved friends of nursery days : Sindbad, Ali Baba, Morgiana, Aladdin, Fatima, and so on. It recalls the wondrous beauty of the city in which they dwelt—its date-palms, citron-groves, sweet-scented waters, its cedar doors and open courtyards surrounded by piazzas, its flights of marble stairs and golden balustrades, the veiled women gliding to and fro in the streets, and a score of other visions dear to memory.

Alas ! the Bagdad of our youthful dreams has long since vanished. The city through which Haroun-al-Raschid wandered in disguise, seeking to do good by stealth, is now an open

space, part of which has been laid out as a public park and esplanade. The only relic of his city that remains is the tomb of his wife.

Here in Bagdad we are again in a Bible land. Only fifty miles to the south stood the great city of Babylon. Twenty years ago the ruins of Babylon were excavated, and sun-dried bricks were discovered bearing an inscription showing that they were made in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The Arabs of the neighbourhood still dig these bricks out of the ruins, and build their houses with them. Not far from Babylon stood the town of Calneh, which is mentioned in the tenth chapter of the book of Genesis. Some two hundred and forty miles to the north of Bagdad is the town of Mosul, which stands almost on the site of ancient Nineveh. Most people who travel from Mosul to Bagdad float down the river on rafts of wood supported by inflated sheepskins. This was the method of conveyance on the Tigris more than two thousand years ago.

In Bible times all the land watered by the Euphrates and Tigris was rich and fertile. Now for miles around Bagdad there is nothing but a trackless waste of sand, on which no blade of green is seen. All that is needed to turn this waste into a beautiful garden is—water. Along the banks of the river you see irrigated lands where dates and oranges grow in profusion. Some years ago an Englishman named Sir William Willcocks prepared plans for irrigating the whole of Mesopotamia. As a large part of the country is now in British hands, we shall perhaps see his plans carried out. If so, the country will once more “blossom as the rose.”

The modern city is built of yellowish red brick, and occupies both banks of the river, which is here 300 yards wide. Though it cannot compare with the city of the “golden prime” of Haroun, it is still picturesque, with its encircling groves of date-palms, through which gleam the domes and minarets of its mosques. A Persian poet says that the city has “a sun of gold, a river of silver, a sky of turquoise, and a soil of bronze.” Four gates still guard the entrances, the most imposing and busiest being that at the western exit, where you may see caravans starting for Egypt and Persia, and arriving from Central Arabia. A large quantity of wool is brought by camels from Persia, and they return laden with Manchester goods. A great trade is also done in liquorice root.

The narrow streets still hum with the chatter of the bazaars and coffee-houses, and men of all nations walk in them—Bedouins of the desert, Persians from Shiraz, Turks from Stamboul, Armenians and Jews. The buildings, however, are disappointing, and the place is very dirty. The only scavengers are the lean, hungry dogs that infest the streets. Certain groups of dogs occupy certain streets, and an invader from one area into another is immediately set upon and driven back. The dogs, as a rule, live and die in their own quarter. Though the glory of Bagdad has departed, the city is still a very holy city of Islam. Mohammedans all over the world look towards it with great reverence.

Bagdad is now an important business town, and since the Bagdad railway reached it, has grown largely. Its importance may be gathered from the fact that before the war there were British, American, German, Austrian, Russian, French, and Persian consuls in the city. It is the great centre of trade between Europe and Persia. Within recent years many improvements have been carried out, the most notable being the construction of a bridge over the Tigris, crossed by 15,000 persons every day. Some of the streets have been widened, and parks have been laid out. There are several Mohammedan and Christian schools. To-day the city has about 200,000 inhabitants, 120,000 of whom are Mohammedans, the rest being Chaldeans, Syrians, Jews, Armenians and other Christians, Persians and Kurds. The founders of the well-known Jewish family of Sassoon were Bagdad Jews. At a dinner given in the city some years ago seventeen different languages were spoken. The people, as a rule, are kindly and hospitable. From May to October the weather is very hot, the temperature in the shade sometimes rising to 125°. During the hot season people sleep on the roofs or in underground dwellings.

The decay of the city was due to plague and famine, and to the laziness of its Moslem citizens. The death-rate is very high indeed, for there is no sanitary system of any kind. Every kind of decaying filth is thrown into the rivers, the water of which is brought to the city by canals and aqueducts. Most of the householders, however, still obtain their supply from hawkers, who go about carrying water in goatskins.



The Mesopotamian Theatre of War.

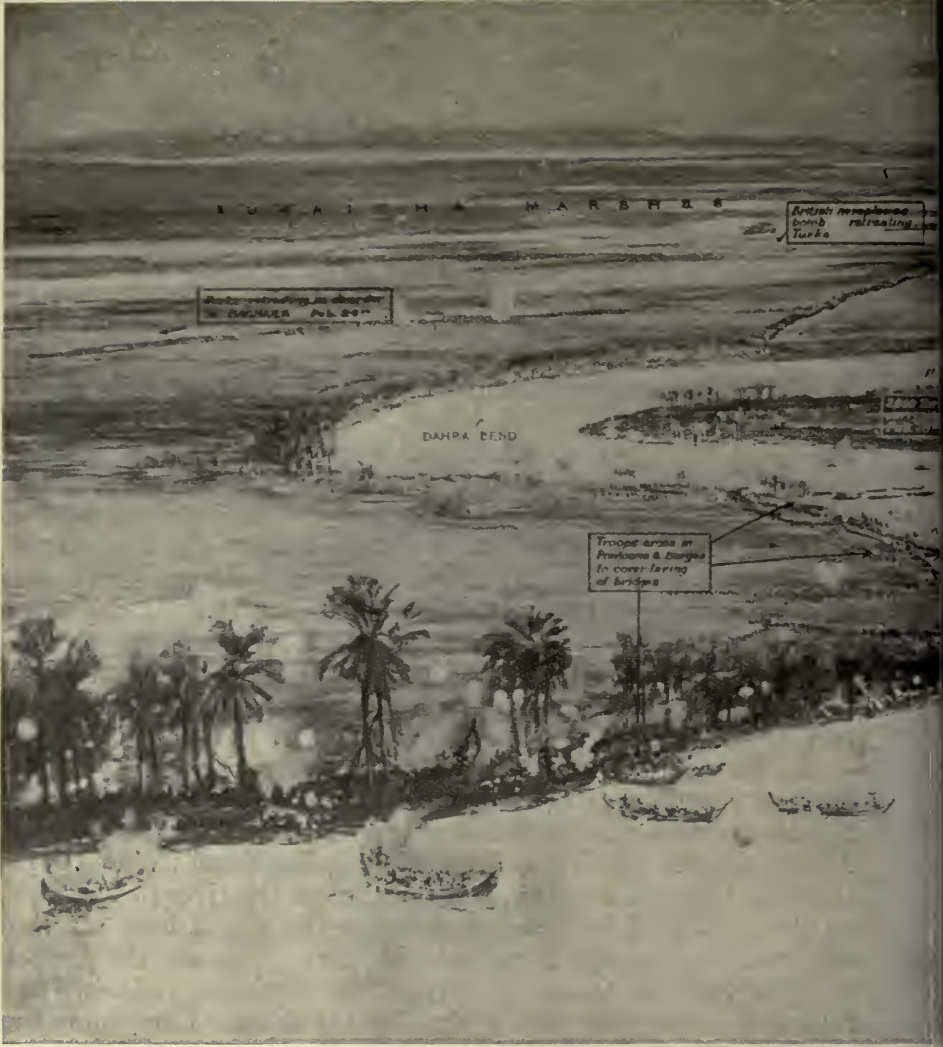
CHAPTER IX.

HOW WE CAPTURED BAGDAD.

I AM now about to describe how the fabled and holy city of Bagdad fell into British hands. In Chapter V. of our fifth volume I told you how General Townshend pushed his way up the Tigris as far as Ctesiphon, where he was fiercely attacked. Lack of water and the weariness of his men forced him to retire to Kut,* where he was besieged, and on April 27, 1916, was forced to surrender. Meanwhile a relieving force was struggling towards the beleaguered place, and on the day when it fell was only fourteen miles away. For nearly ten months we failed to carry the strong defences of those fourteen miles. Not until February 1917 did fortune begin to smile upon us in this region

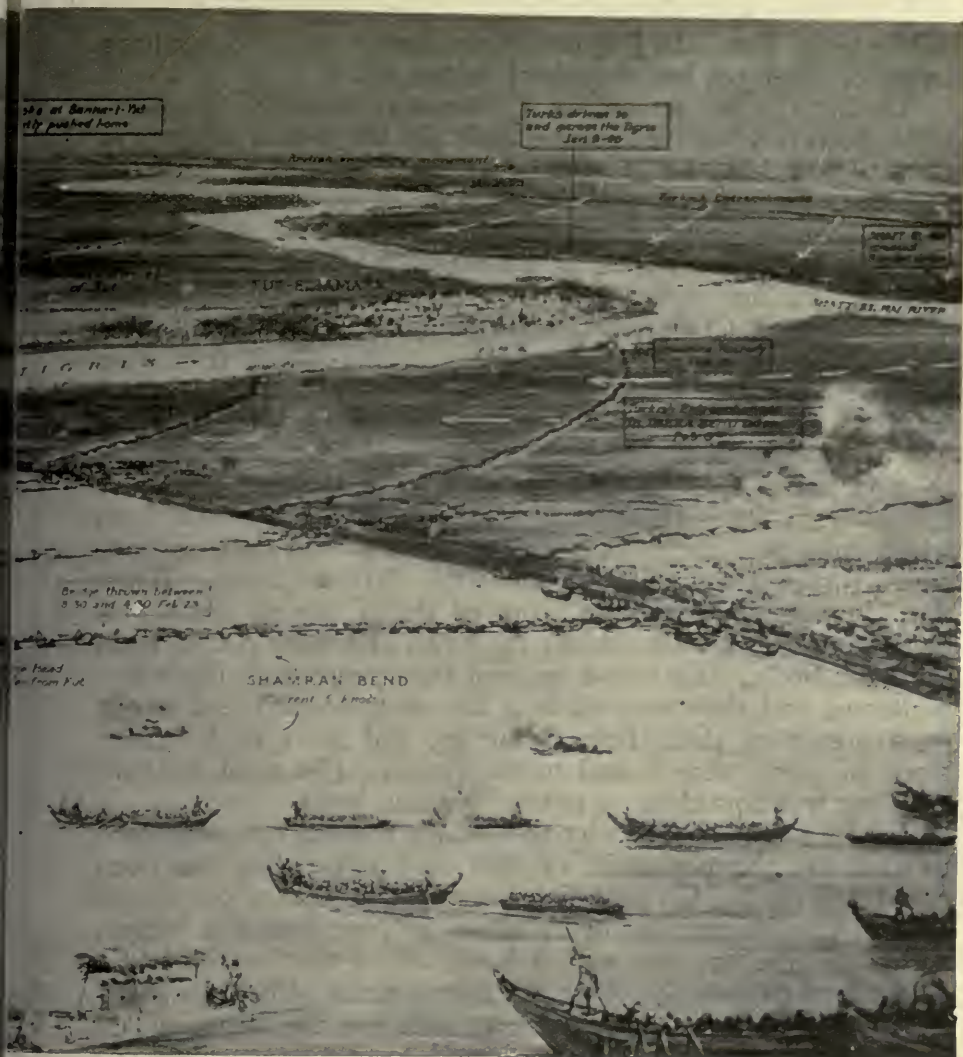
In May better news arrived from Mesopotamia. If you look back at the diagram on pages 40, 41 of Volume V., you will be able to trace the position held by our relieving force on 6th April. Notice the Turkish lines extending from the marsh on the right through Es Sinn, and then across the river to Dujailah, on the extreme left. Notice also that the Sanna-i-yat position still remained in the hands of the Turks. In the third week of May General Goringe carried the Dujailah redoubt, and thus was able to take the Es Sinn lines in flank. Later on in the month he cleared the whole southern bank as far as the Shattel-Hai, which you see winding its way to the Tigris, on the right bank. This success forced the Turks on the right bank to fall back on Kut. It also made the holding of the Sanna-i-yat position very difficult. Before the end of June our trenches were within two hundred yards of this position, and on the south bank of the river we had advanced to a position five

* Pron. *kool*.



Cutting off the Turkish Forces in Kut-el-Amara

This bird's-eye view shows the crossing of the Shamran bend by British-Indian troops on Feb. 20. It illustrates the encircling movement which brought us to the opposite shore of Kut and enabled us to capture the Turkish entrenchments in the Dahra bend. These lines were captured between 5th and 10th February. The Turkish Factory, which was seized on 10th February. Having captured this position on the right bank, our troops moved to the left bank. This operation is seen in progress in the immediate foreground of the view and to the left. The crossing was successfully carried out, and on the following morning (February 23) a pontoon bridge was thrown across the river. A line of retreat to Baghaila could be seen in front of the wide-spreading marshes. The retreating forces were hurrying along the left bank of the river.



the Dahra Bend and the Shamran Bend.

[By permission of *The Sphere*.

was this movement which forced the enemy to abandon Kut. In the background white arrows indicate the Shatt-el-Hai. In the middle distance the Turks are seen streaming across the Tigris during the night when the British forces were working still further to the west. In the middle distance are seen the three lines of the Turkish army, some two thousand Turks surrendered at the position shown on 15th February. Notice also the Turkish troops are embarked upon pontoons and barges, and undertook the difficult work of forming a bridgehead on the right bank, where brisk firing is taking place under the palm trees. This operation, screened by the night, was carried across the Shamran bend between the hours of 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. On the left bank the Turkish forces were harried by British gunboats, which helped to spread disorder among the masses of Turkish troops.

miles east of Kut. In July the Turks fiercely attacked our lines facing Sanna-i-yat, but they were driven off.

During the hot season no advance was possible. Preparations, however, were diligently made for the winter campaign. General Maude had now taken over the command, and for the first time there was a sufficient supply of men and shells on the Mesopotamian front. On December 13, 1916, he began a series of operations which, as we shall see, met with complete success. He first struck a blow at the Shatt-el-Hai River (see diagram, pages 66-67), and in little more than a month had cleared the whole of the right bank of the Tigris from this point downwards. By 10th February he had seized the Liquorice Factory in the angle between the Shatt-el-Hai and the Tigris, opposite Kut.

You notice that above Kut—that is, in the foreground of the diagram—the Tigris makes two great bends: the first, which runs northwards, is called the Dahra bend; the second, which runs southward, is known as the Shamran bend. When the Liquorice Factory was captured the Turks in the Dahra bend were driven back against the river, and were cut off from the main body. They had bridged the stream with boats and pontoons, and they now made a big effort to cross; but our guns prevented them from doing so, and on 15th February 2,000 of them were forced to surrender. The right bank of the river was now clear up to the Shamran bend.

So far so good. Now let us see how the Turks were forced to abandon the peninsula of Kut and retire into the open country beyond. On 23rd February detachments of our troops crossed the Shamran bend by means of pontoons and barges, and seized the opposite or left bank, where they established a bridgehead in order to cover the construction of bridges. Between 8.30 and 4.30 on 23rd February our engineers built a pontoon bridge across this bend, and early next morning the troops marched over. You see at once that they had now turned the whole Turkish position. The Sanna-i-yat position, which had been held for more than a year, could no longer be held without disaster. The Turks were not slow to perceive that they were in a trap, and before long they were in full retreat. By eight o'clock in the morning our cavalry were across the river, and were pursuing the fleeing enemy. By this time the Turkish depots and stores in Kut were blazing furiously.

Not only cavalry and infantry and armoured motor cars but aeroplanes and gunboats took part in the pursuit. Flying low, our aviators dropped bombs on the retreating enemy and harassed them with machine-gun fire; while the gunboats on the river, by timely shelling, kept the enemy on the run. The Turks were soon in the utmost disorder, and were forced to abandon arms, ammunition, tents, equipment, and stores of all kinds. Some of their guns, including four big howitzers, were flung into the river. Over 4,300 prisoners were taken, twenty-eight guns were captured, along with a vast quantity of other war material. The *Firefly*, one of the three gunboats which had been lost during the retreat from Ctesiphon, was recaptured. Once more Kut was in our hands. We had wiped out the blot of its surrender.

The day after the crossing the Union Jack was hoisted in Kut. There was, however, no pause in the pursuit. Our cavalry were hard on the enemy's heels, and our gunboats were helping to turn the retreat into a rout. A correspondent thus describes the litter of the retreat:—

“There was every sign of panic and rout—bullocks still alive and yoked entangled in traces, and trench-mortar carriages, broken wheels, cart equipment, overturned limbers, hundreds of live shells of all kinds scattered over the country for miles. Either the gunners had cast off freight to lighten the limbers, or they had been too rushed to close up the limber-boxes.

“Every bend of the road told its tale of confusion and flight. Here there was a field post-office with Turkish money orders circling round in the wind; there a brand-new motor car held up for want of petrol, cart-loads of small-arm ammunition, hats, boots, oil-drums; things destroyed or half destroyed. Headless carcasses of stock which could not keep up with the rout, and white columns of smoke ahead, told of further destruction. There was enough litter by the road to keep the army in fuel for weeks. Then one saw a whole battery of field guns with their breech blocks removed, but buried too hastily near by and betrayed by an entrenching tool. . . .

“By this time the enemy were moving on a broad front—a disorganized rabble. At night the last remnants of an organized rearguard made a stand at Azizie, but after dark our cavalry dismounted and attacked them; while armoured motor-car patrols advanced twenty miles beyond the Turkish camp, surprising the enemy's irregular horse, who, mistaking them for unprotected convoys, rode up with the intention of loot, and were scattered with heavy loss.”

By 28th February Azizie was passed, and by 6th March the enemy was harried out of Ctesiphon, where he had prepared strong positions. Next day British cavalry, following up the

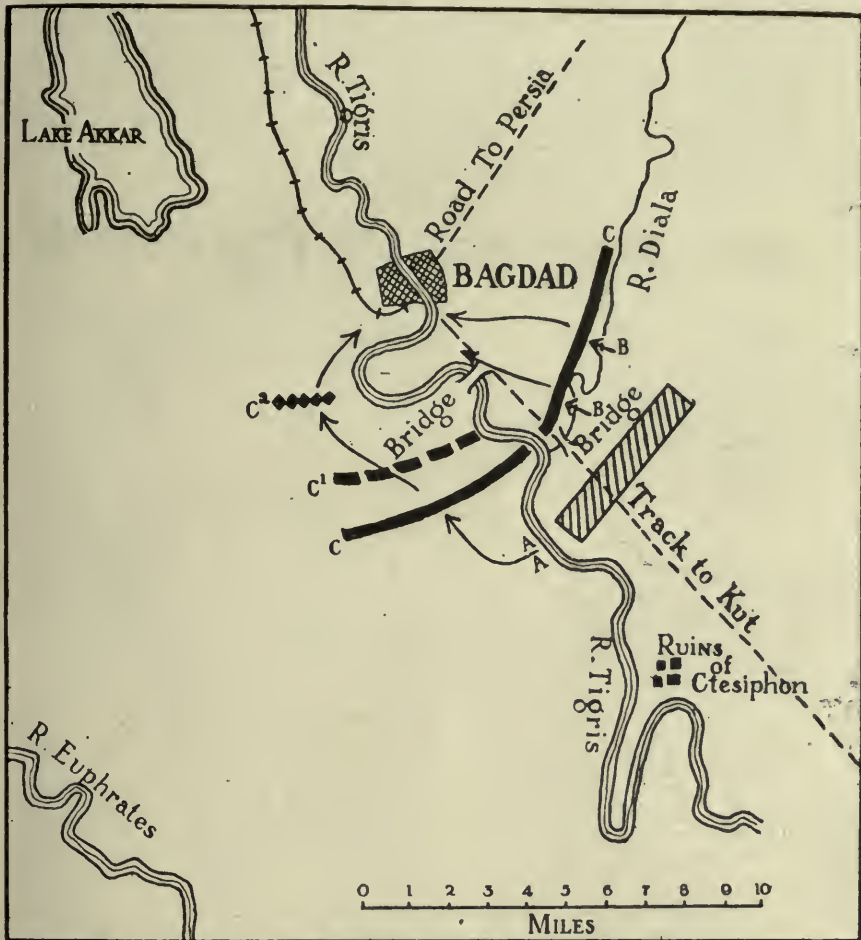
retreat, were 100 miles from Kut, and had reached the last obstacle in front of Bagdad. This obstacle was the river Diala, a stream about a hundred yards broad. At the point where it falls into the Tigris it is not more than a short day's march from the city. On the morning of 8th March, when high gales were blowing and dust storms were raging, our patrols and gunboats discovered that the enemy was holding the farther bank in force.

The map on page 71 will help you to understand the three days' battle that followed. Our object, of course, was to prevent the enemy from making good his retreat. He had only two routes by which he could retire—either up the Tigris, through or past Bagdad, or eastward to the Euphrates. If he went northward along the eastern bank, Bagdad, with its maze of narrow streets, would impede him greatly, and he would have to cross the river, sooner or later, to reach the railway which runs almost entirely on the western side of the Tigris. If he retired along the western bank, he would have to pass between the river and Lake Akkar, and in this narrow neck, which is only two miles broad, he might be so crowded that disaster would overtake him.

In peace time the track from Kut to Bagdad crosses the Diala by a bridge of boats about one hundred yards long. This bridge had, of course, been cut by the Turks. About halfway between the river and the city there was another bridge of boats crossing the Tigris; by this means it would be possible for the retreating enemy to gain the western bank and avoid the city altogether. Now let us see what happened.

You will notice that the Diala is only an obstacle on the eastern bank of the river. If our troops could cross to the western bank, they would be able to reach Bagdad without having to cross any other river. The enemy, of course, had extended his lines on the western bank of the river, and these lines would have to be carried; but if we attacked them without delay, we might find the enemy unprepared to make a determined stand. While, therefore, our gunboats kept the enemy busy, we threw pontoons across the Tigris about four miles below the confluence of the Diala.

On the night of the 7th we tried to cross the Diala, but in vain. A correspondent (Mr. Edmund Chandler) thus describes how we persevered and how we failed:—



//// Main British Position March 8 and 9.

A Crossing place of British on Tigris.

B do. do. do. do. do. Diala.

C
C¹
C² } Successive Turkish positions.

The Capture of Bagdad.

This map illustrates the operations which led to the capture of the famous city. The strong enemy position behind the Diala was turned by a British crossing of the Tigris, and an advance along the right bank of the river. The Turks were beaten back to the position marked C¹, and when this occurred the line of the Diala could no longer be held. The Turkish rearguard retreated to the final position C², but it could not stand, and on the morning of March 11, 1917, our troops entered the city.



Sixty Men of the Lancashire Regiment holding a Position on the Diala River.
(By permission of *The Sphere*.)

“Immediately the first pontoon was lowered, the whole launching party was shot down in a few seconds. It was bright moonlight, and the Turks had collected many machine guns and rifles in the houses on the opposite bank. The second pontoon had got into the middle of the stream when a terrific fire was opened on it. The crew of five rowers and ten riflemen were killed, and the boat floated down the stream. A third pontoon nearly got across, but was bombed and sank; all the crew were killed. Nevertheless, there was no holding back.

“The orders still held to secure the passage. Crew after crew pushed off to certain death. The third crossing party was wiped out in the same way, and the pontoons drifted out to the Tigris to float past our camp in the daylight with their freight of dead. The drafts who went over were volunteers. These and the sappers on the bank share the honour of the night with the attacking battalion. Nothing stopped them save the loss of the pontoons. A Lancashire man remarked, ‘It’s a bit hot here, so we’ll try farther up.’ But the gallant fellows were reduced to their last boat. Another regiment which was to cross still higher up was delayed, for their boats had to be carried nearly a mile across country to the stream.”

Next night the attempt was renewed. This time it was preceded by a bombardment, and the clouds of dust raised by the shells enabled some of our men to get across and secure a footing. The dust was so thick that a man could not see his hand in front of his face. Behind the dense curtain ten boats managed to make good the crossing. Afterwards in clear moonlight, when the dust had settled down, machine guns from the opposite bank opened fire again, and once more rowers and crews were shot down. Meanwhile the sixty Lancashire men who had crossed began bombing along the banks, and when hard pressed discovered a position behind which they had full protection. All through the night, all the next day and the following night they held this position against repeated and desperate attacks. At midnight on the 9th the Turks nearly carried the position, but the little garrison, now reduced to forty, beat them back. When at daylight next morning more of our troops got across, they found the Lancashire men reduced to their last clip of cartridges. Around them were a hundred Turkish dead.

Meanwhile, on the morning of the 8th, a strong British detachment crossed to the right bank of the Tigris, and at once began an attack on the enemy’s trenches. The Turks were pushed back to a position two miles to the rear, and now our men were on the flank of the Diala position. During the 9th, when a violent gale was blowing and blinding clouds of dust assailed them, our forces on the left

or eastern bank of the Tigris forced the enemy back to his final position opposite to the great bend of the river. This was a very fine piece of work, for the troops had to march eighteen miles under the most trying conditions. On the morning of Saturday, the Diala having thus been turned, the main body of our troops crossed the Tigris by the bridge midway between the Diala and Bagdad, and fell upon the Turkish rearguard holding the final position. Taken in front and in flank, they were forced to retreat. They had made their final effort, and it had failed. Bagdad was ours.

I want you particularly to notice the speed with which the enemy was followed up once he was dislodged from Kut. It was the rapidity of our advance which discomfited him, and gave him no chance to make a strong stand. From Kut we had pushed forward, over a roadless and railless country, 113 miles within a fortnight. To advance men, food, forage, and ammunition at the rate of $11\frac{1}{2}$ miles a day, in such a country and in face of so many difficulties, was a remarkable feat. Nothing finer had so far been done by either side during the war.

* * * * *

On the morning of 11th March our troops entered the city by a road bordered with palm groves and orange gardens. Crowds of the townsfolk came out to meet them, lining the streets, balconies, and roofs, cheering and clapping their hands. Groups of school children danced in front of them, and the women of the city wore their holiday dresses in honour of the occasion. It was clear that the people of Bagdad were overjoyed to see the British enter, and to know that the old bad days of Turkish oppression were over.

The people told our men that the enemy had given up all hope of saving the city after our crossing of the Shamran bend. Since that date the Turks had robbed the townsfolk wholesale, had looted their stores and provisions, and had sent them away by road and rail. Before leaving they had blown up the bridge of boats, and had gutted or destroyed the wireless station, the offices of Messrs. Lynch, British merchants, the railway station, the civil hospital, the army clothing factory, and other buildings likely to be useful to the victors.

As soon as the Turks left the town, Kurds and others began looting the bazaars, and almost the first persons who

met our troops as they entered the city were merchants begging for protection. Unhappily we arrived too late to save much valuable property. Before long, however, order was restored, and by 6th April business in the city was going on almost as usual.

The British pursuit had not yet ended ; but here I must bring my account to an end for the present. The fall of the city of the Caliphs was a great blow to the Germans ; their dream of dominion from Heligoland to Bagdad had been shattered. The following extract from one of their newspapers shows clearly that they quite understood the importance of our victory :—

“ The English operations in Mesopotamia have resulted in a great success. The British flag floats over Bagdad, and in all the bazaars of the East the news will resound that the *Feringhi* * have beaten the warriors of the Sultan, and have captured the city which for long centuries was clothed with the garment of story and fairy tale.”

* English.

CHAPTER X.

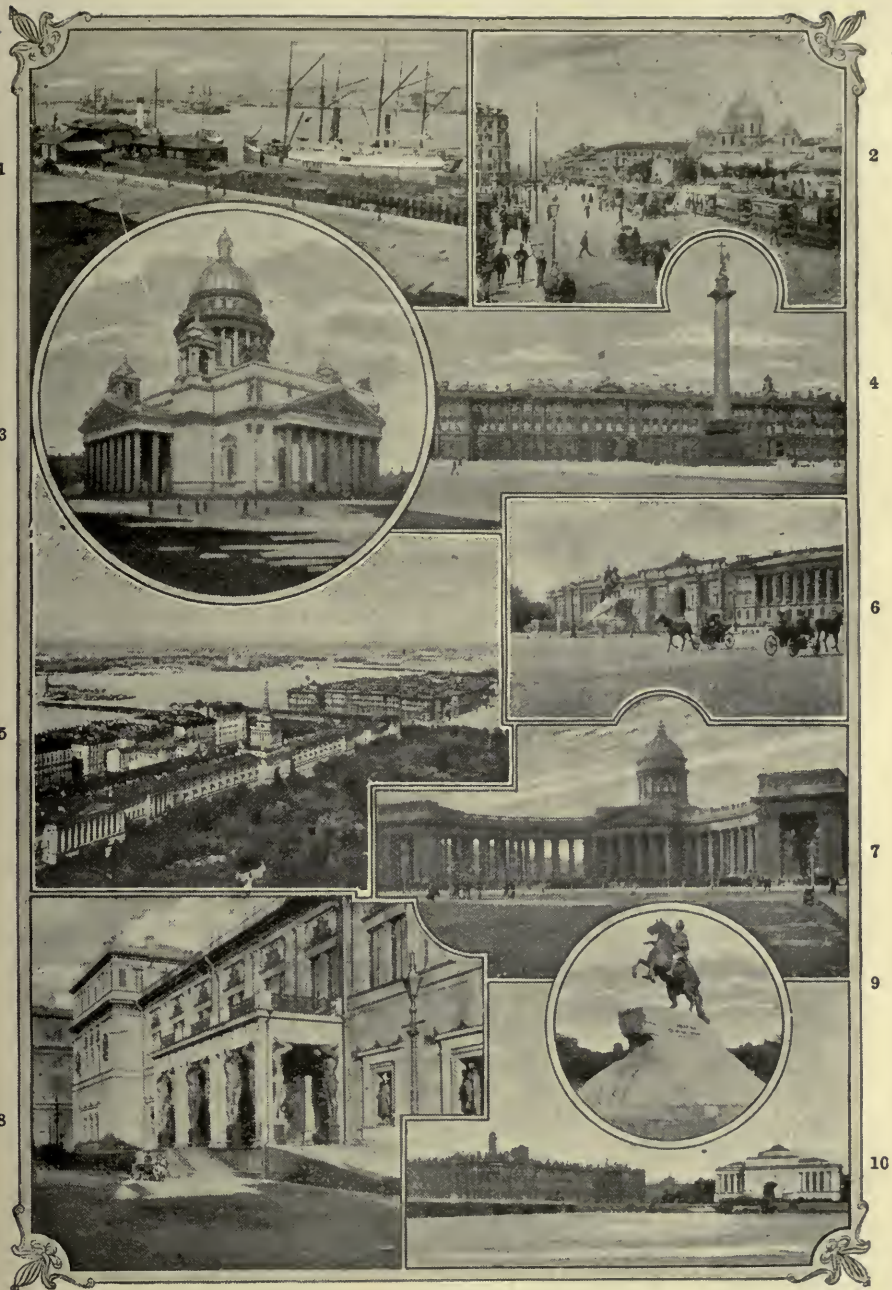
THE GREAT RUSSIAN UPHEAVAL.

TWO days before the fall of Bagdad strange scenes were witnessed in the streets of Petrograd. On March 9, 1917, dense crowds of people thronged the Nevsky Prospect, the great broad thoroughfare of the capital, clamouring for bread, of which there was a considerable shortage. A good many bread shops were wrecked, and in some places the troops fired on the people. On that day the Duma, or Parliament, debated the question of food supplies, and meanwhile the police tried to confine the workpeople to their own quarters of the city. The crowds were good-humoured, and sang patriotic and loyal songs.

On Saturday the police began to treat the people roughly, and to fire on them with rifles and machine guns. Cossacks and some infantry were brought out of the barracks, but they seemed inclined to be friendly with the people. Later in the day, however, some troops did fire a few rounds, but others mutinied. Next morning the people were warned that if they gathered in the streets they would be dispersed by force of arms. Then their temper began to rise.

The crowds in the Nevsky Prospect now grew thicker than ever, and the trams had to cease running. Shortly after three in the afternoon orders were given to the soldiers to clear the streets. Volleys were fired, and about a hundred people were killed or wounded. Still the crowds would not disperse. The people showed no ill-feeling towards the soldiers, but shouted to them, "We are sorry for you. You had to do your duty."

Then events followed each other fast and thick. To the anger of the people, the Tsar ordered the Duma to be suspended for three months. Then several of the Guard regiments



Views in Petrograd.

(Photos 2, 5, and 6 by the Photochrom Company.)

1. Nicholas Bridge. 2. Place Snamjenskii. 3. St. Isaac's Cathedral. 4. The Winter Palace. 5. Palace of the Admiralty. 6. Palace of the Senate. 7. Kazan Cathedral. 8. The Hermitage Gallery. 9. Statue of Peter the Great. 10. Winter Palace, Military Headquarters, and the Gate of the Admiralty.

mutinied, killed the most unpopular of their officers, and went over to the side of the people. Later on the Arsenal was captured, and rifles, machine guns, and ammunition were distributed to the crowd. The leaders of the Duma held a conference with representatives of the soldiers, and a committee was set up to take over the management of affairs. The President of the Duma sent a telegram to the Tsar informing him that the people demanded a new Government, and that if it was not granted at once the responsibility would lie at his door.

Meanwhile barracks, post, telegraph, and telephone offices, the law courts, Government offices, and stations were seized, and the prisons were opened. By this time the rattle of fire-arms was heard in various parts of the city. In some places the police mounted machine guns on the roofs and in the garrets of houses, and fired down upon the people. So threatening was the situation that the Council of Ministers decided to resign; but the Tsar bade them hold on, as he was sending General Alexeieff to put an end to the rising.

On Tuesday a regular battle raged in the neighbourhood of the Winter Palace, where the police and those troops which still supported the Government were fiercely besieged. Before long four-fifths of the city was in the hands of soldiers who had gone over to the Duma. That body had received no reply to the telegram which had been sent by its President to the Tsar. It now sent him a final warning, and this, too, remained unanswered. Thereupon the President, escorted by Duma troops in armoured motor cars, made his way to the palace in which the Council of Ministers was sitting. The President told the Council that the Duma had decided to set up a new Government, which would restore order and push on the war to a victorious end.

Most of the ministers seemed willing to yield, and to agree that the Grand Duke Michael, who was present at the Council, should be appointed regent; but a bluff old general declared that he would resist until he received orders to the contrary from the Tsar. The President of the Duma then returned to the Parliament House, and reported the result of his interview; whereupon it was decided to arrest the members of the old Government. By this time, however, the birds had flown, and were in hiding.

Meanwhile officers came flocking to the Duma to offer their

services. Amongst them were Cossacks, formerly the most loyal of the Tsar's supporters, and Guardsmen from the crack regiments. By the evening of this day the whole garrison of Petrograd had gone over to the new Government. It was noticed that the British Minister, Sir George Buchanan, was heartily cheered when he appeared in the streets.

On Wednesday there was still some sniping from roofs and garrets, and the residence of an unpopular minister was sacked. The names of members of a committee to act until a new Government could be created were announced, and proclamations were issued calling upon the people to refrain from riot and pillage, and urging them to support the committee in its efforts to restore order. One striking sight of that day was the arrival at the Parliament House of the Preobrajensky Guards* with their colonel and officers. The men, all giants, were drawn up four deep, and when the President of the Duma appeared they greeted him with a salute. They had come to pledge their faith and service to the new Government.

A group of twenty-two elected members of the Upper House now met, and sent a telegram to the Tsar begging him to call Parliament together at once, and to name a person who had the full confidence of the people to form a Cabinet which would govern the country in the same way as Western countries are governed. That day Protopopoff, the Minister of the Interior, and other members of the old Government, surrendered themselves, and were placed in captivity. Amongst them was the notorious Stürmer. On the evening of Thursday the new Government was formed, the Prime Minister being Prince George Lvoff, the head of the Union of Russian County Councils. General Alexeieff, the Commander-in-Chief, along with Generals Ruzsky and Brussilov, loyally promised their support to the new Government.

Thus, with a loss of some 4,000 killed or wounded, Russia shook off the shackles of her old system of government and set up the rule of the people. You cannot but marvel at the

* When Peter the Great, who reigned from 1682 to 1725, began to establish the Russian army (1698), he formed at Preobrajensky, his country seat near Moscow, a company of fifty of his servants, with young gentlemen belonging to the families of the neighbouring nobles as their officers. This company was afterwards increased in numbers, and became the famous regiment known as the Preobrajensky Guards. It was the first of the four regiments which Peter the Great formed as the nucleus of his army.

rapidity with which the revolution was carried out. The old Government fell to the ground almost at the first blow. The Duma, the army, and the people together were now supreme.

I must now tell you how the Tsar gave up his throne. He had gone to General Ruzsky's headquarters for the purpose of dispatching troops to Petrograd. There he was met by the President of the Duma and by another member of Parliament. The ill-fated monarch received them in a small, dimly-lighted room. He looked pale and careworn, but he was perfectly calm and self-possessed. Addressing his visitors, he said, "Tell me the whole truth."

"We come to tell you," they said, "that all the troops in Petrograd are on our side. It is useless to send more regiments. They will go over as soon as they reach the station."

"I know it," replied the Tsar. "The order has already been given to the troops to return to the front." Then, after a slight pause, he asked, "What do you want me to do?"

"Your Majesty must give up your throne in favour of the heir-apparent. Such is the will of the new Government, which we are forming under Prince Lvoff."

"I cannot part with my boy," replied the monarch with emotion. "I shall hand the throne to my brother."

Then speaking in a matter-of-fact tone, he said, "Have you a piece of paper?"

Assisted by friends he drew up the document. Before signing it he wrote out orders appointing Prince Lvoff Prime Minister and the Grand Duke Nicholas Commander-in-Chief.

Then bowing his head for a few moments, he dipped his pen in the ink, and for the last time signed his name as Tsar of All the Russias.

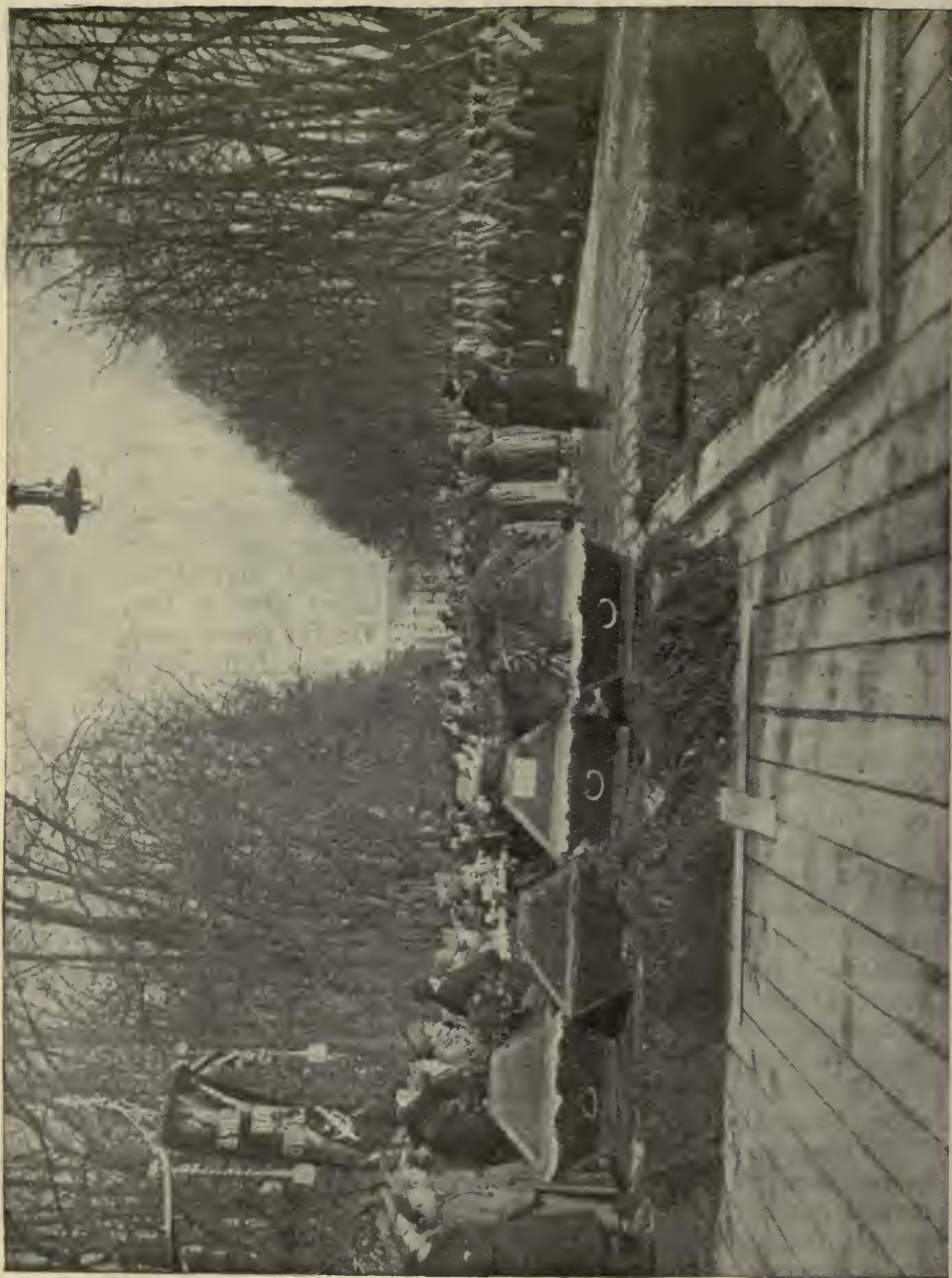
So ended a remarkable scene. It is impossible not to be sorry for the poor deposed sovereign; for at the moment when he was signing away his throne he knew that his children were seriously ill, and that his beloved only son was in danger of death.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH.

“**R**EVOLUTIONS,” says a well-known writer, “are not made with rose-water.” By this he means that a government cannot be overturned by gentle means. As a rule, when a revolution occurs there is great national excitement, which frequently leads to fierce struggles and great loss of life. For instance, the British revolution which curbed the power of the Crown was only accomplished after a long civil war and the execution of the king. On the other hand, the revolution of 1688 was carried out very peacefully. The French Revolution of 1789 was marked by the beheading of the king and by some of the most bloodthirsty scenes in all history. The Russian Revolution cost the lives of some four or five thousand people. The Tsar, however, was not put to death ; he was only required to yield up his throne.

Now let us try to understand why the Russians overturned their Government and set up a new one in the midst of the most terrible war which the world has ever known. In the first place, Russia was ruled up to March 9, 1917, on a system which properly belonged to the Middle Ages. Its sovereign was supposed to be the chosen of God, and he was head of the Church as well as of the State. All power was in his hands ; he was supreme over the lives and liberties of his subjects, and his word was law. He was assisted by ministers, but he chose them himself, and they were responsible to him alone. Until the year 1905 the people had no voice whatsoever in the management of their national affairs. The Tsar’s orders were carried out by hordes of officials whose one end and aim was to keep the people in subjection, and to fill their pockets in all sorts of unlawful ways. Education they feared ; books and



Victims of the Revolution being buried in the Grounds of the Winter Palace.

Notice the Russian troops marching past.

newspapers they regarded as dangerous ; all who thought and worked for progress and enlightenment were under suspicion. Spies were everywhere, and they frequently formed plots to bring about the downfall of those who had incurred their dislike.

Up to the year 1861 the peasants were serfs. The Tsar Alexander II. nobly set them free, and strove hard to bring Russia into line with Western nations ; but his successors, Alexander III. and Nicholas II., would have nothing to do with these Western ideas, and did their utmost to stamp out all attempts to make the Government responsible to the people. Then it was that many Russians were driven by despair to seek a way of freedom along the dark paths of murder and outrage. A reign of terror set in, and thousands of these Nihilists, as they were called, along with innocent men and women, were sent to exile in icy wildernesses.

The war with Japan (1904-1905) ended in Russia's defeat both by land and by sea, and showed clearly all the defects of the Tsar's personal government. There was much unrest in the country, and during the years 1905 and 1906 most of the people were in a state of open revolt. The Tsar was forced to give way, and to permit a Duma, or elected Parliament, to be set up. He promised that this Duma should take a constant and active part in law-making ; but when it began to assert itself he dissolved it, and ordered a new one to be elected. The rights which had been granted to it were filched away one by one, until it became little more than a shadow of a parliament. Far-seeing men knew that, sooner or later, there would be an uprising of the people which would give Russia a parliament as free and as powerful as our own.

When the Great War broke out almost every educated man in Russia outside the ranks of the officials was opposed to the Government ; but no one wished to bring about a change until the Germans were defeated. Before long, however, a struggle began between the patriotic leaders of the Duma and the ministers appointed by the Tsar. Men began to notice that "dark forces" were at work, and that a "hidden hand" was preventing the war from being pushed vigorously. The Tsar was a weak man, little more than a tool in the hands of his German wife and the traitors with whom she surrounded him. Early in 1916 these "dark forces" became so powerful

that they drove the pro-Ally statesman M. Sazonov from his post as President of the Council of Ministers, and replaced him by a certain court official named Stürmer, of whom you have already heard. His sympathies were openly with the Germans, and he was strongly suspected of being in league with the Kaiser. Patriots everywhere were much disheartened at his appointment, and they felt that it meant ruin for their country.

Stürmer filled the court with creatures of his own. At this time there was in the Tsar's household a dissolute, ignorant, unwashed monk known as Rasputin. This extraordinary person exercised such power over the Tsar and the Tsarina that I must tell you something about him. He was the son of a Siberian farmer, and at the time when he became the power behind the throne he was a man of about forty years of age. His real name was Gregory Novykh, and he won his nickname, Rasputin, which means "Gregory the Rake," because of his wild and wicked way of life. He became a "lay" monk, and, without becoming any the less of a rake, managed to make people believe that he was a man of great holiness. His advice was much sought after, especially by women, and he seems to have had the power of working on their minds and getting them to do his bidding. He first made his appearance in Petrograd about the year 1900, and his fame as a "healer" soon spread to the court. He was appointed Lighter of the Sacred Lamps in the royal palace, and was soon employed in all sorts of plots by those who were seeking to maintain the old order of government. His religion was a mere cloak; he was an impostor of the worst type. This man was perhaps the darkest of the "dark forces" which were playing false with Russia.

Now let us see how Stürmer and Rasputin and others betrayed their country. In June 1916, you will remember, Brussilov won splendid victories and made huge captures of prisoners. In the very height of his success his efforts suddenly slackened off, and all the world wondered why. Later on the reason leaked out. The pro-Germans at the court had disorganized the railways, and had put such obstacles in his way that his victorious campaign could not continue. I have already told you that General Iliescu ascribed the downfall of Rumania to the same sort of treachery.

On 14th November, when the Duma assembled, the Liberal leaders determined to strike a blow at the "dark forces"

which were working secretly against the skill of their generals and the gallantry of their men. Professor Milyukov, the leader of one of the Liberal groups in the Duma, rose in his place, and in a speech of great fearlessness and frankness laid bare the wicked plots hatched by the men round the Tsar. He declared that Stürmer's secretary was in the pay of the Germans, and that when this man was convicted of taking bribes, Stürmer brought about his release, and shared the ill-gotten gains with Rasputin. He read passages from German newspapers showing how pleased the enemy was with Stürmer's appointment: Then he accused the Tsar's friends in the Duma of hindering the war because they feared the growth of liberty. None of the "dark forces" were spared, and M. Milyukov thus ended his great speech:—

"In the name of the millions whom the war has claimed, in the name of the rivers of blood which have flowed, in the name of our sense of responsibility towards the nation which has sent us hither, we promise to fight on until we have attained our aim—a Cabinet which deserves the complete trust of the nation."

A portion of M. Milyukov's eloquent oration has thus been turned into English verse:—

"O folly and dishonour who denies
That Russia was rich in her Allies,
True friends—for us they worked, they lived, they fought,
Forgave us everything and grudged us nought;
Their blood and ours on the same field is shed,
And their dead are the comrades of our dead.
Are such our friends, O fellow-Russians, say,
Such the Allies that you are to betray?"

"You tremble, gentlemen, and well you may!
Even you, sir,* tremble as you ring the bell,
And it sounds muffled, like a funeral knell.
It will not stop my mouth; its fatal sound
Reaches my soul and bids me hold my ground.
What think you, gentlemen? The sound increases.
It is the sound of silver—silver pieces!
Pieces of silver such as Judas had.
These are wild words, yet do not think me mad;
Here in this paper are the figures cold,
The sum of shekels! Russia is sold!"

* The orator is addressing the President of the Duma.



A Barricade in the Streets of Petrograd during the First Days of the Revolution.
(By permission of *The Illustrated London News*.)

“Such was the plot, but Russia now will know,
And, being forewarned, anticipate the blow—
Stürmer and all his German gang must go!

“But one word more: if Russia would arise,
She must be faithful to her great Allies.
And whatsoever the difficulties be,
Press on with them in hope to victory.—
This is thy task, O Duma. In their need,
The dumb and suffering people wait your lead;
To this must every thought and action tend,
That peace be crowned with victory in the end.” *

The result of this great speech was that Stürmer was removed from office, and the Ministers of War and Marine appeared in the Duma and publicly thanked the speaker. Every honest man in Russia rejoiced that such words of force and wisdom had been spoken; but though the chief villain of the piece had been removed, there were other “dark forces” still powerful for mischief. Rasputin still reigned, though his end was drawing near. Early in December men whispered that the monk would certainly be killed. He, too, feared that a violent end awaited him, and he shut himself up in his house, refusing to see any one. A writer in *The New Europe* † thus describes the final scene:—

“Late on the night of December 29, 1916, a very rich and fashionable young nobleman, connected by marriage with the Imperial family, ‡ rang up Rasputin on the telephone, and invited him to a supper-party at his house. Rasputin, after a time, consented, but on condition that his host should come to fetch him, and come by the back way, so that even the porter might not know that he had gone out. The young man arrived in a motor car; Rasputin himself opened the door and went away with him. On reaching their destination, they entered together, followed by the driver, who was, in fact, a member of the Duma, unknown to Rasputin. The monk found himself in the presence, not of a party, but of these two and a certain Grand Duke.

“Many versions of what took place are current, but the following is believed to be a true statement of the facts. The three men informed Rasputin that he had to die, and he was handed a revolver with which to shoot himself. He took the pistol, but instead of committing suicide fired

* Quoted from a poem of nineteen verses in *The Morning Post*, February 26, 1917.

† February 1, 1917.

‡ Prince Yussupov Sumarokoff Elsten, a nephew by marriage of the Tsar.

point-blank at the Grand Duke, who ducked, and the bullet passed over his head. The three then shot Rasputin down. The body was placed in the motor car and driven to a deserted spot on one of the islands on the Neva, where a stone was tied round its ankles and it was dropped over a bridge into the river through a hole in the ice. . . . No attempt at concealment was made, and the first step taken by the authors of the deed was to inform the police and telephone to a newspaper, which published the news. Throughout the following day search was made for the body, but it was not found until three days later. The stone round the ankles had either dropped off or had not been heavy enough to sink the body, which had floated up and had been caught under the ice."

Stürmer and Rasputin were now out of the way, but there were still other powerful persons ready to make peace with Germany rather than see Russia win the liberty of Western nations. The patriots therefore determined to make a clean sweep of them all, no matter how highly placed they might be. The Tsar, by his weakness, had allowed the men whom his wife had placed around him to bring the country to the verge of ruin, and the patriots dared not trust him with the reins of power any longer. He must go, and with him the old system of government. Though most of the people wished for a new order of things, they were quite ready to wait for it until a more convenient season. They were not, however, prepared to see their country humbled to the dust by foes within their own household. So, you see, by their revolution they killed two birds with one stone: they got rid of traitors, and at the same time set up a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

When a country plunges into revolution the forces of lawlessness and violence are let loose, and all the energies of its leaders are absorbed in re-settling the government and restoring order. At such times men appear who urge the people to all sorts of wild courses. So it was in Russia during the months of March, April, and May.

Many persons in the West thought that by the revolution Russia had robbed herself of the power to make war for a considerable period. Others, however, felt that she would fight with a new zest and a new determination, now that she had purged herself of the "dark forces" that had hampered and thwarted her. Such persons recalled that, while the French Revolution was raging, the armies of the Republic, though ragged, ill-fed, and ill-equipped, showed wonderful spirit and

energy, and gained victories in many lands. All hoped that it might be so with Russia. Mr. Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, seemed to have no doubt on the matter, for he hailed the Russian Revolution as "the greatest service which the Russians had yet made to the cause for which the Allied people had been fighting since August 1914. "Free peoples," he said, "are the best defenders of their own honour."

At first it was thought that Russia would still be ruled by a Tsar, though he would no longer be the be-all and end-all of government, as in the old days. As time went on, however, it seemed that Russia had done with monarchs altogether, and that she was about to organize herself as a republic after the fashion of France, the United States, and China. During this period affairs in Russia were in great confusion. Discipline was broken down in the army, and at the front many of the Russian soldiers began to make friends with the Germans in the opposite trenches. The Kaiser and his ministers firmly believed that Russia would make peace with them.

Towards the end of May, however, a strong Government began to take shape, and one of its first acts was to assure the Allies in the West that Russia would not betray them, but would fight with them to the end. The new Minister of War declared that he would restore discipline in the army, and that he would push on the war with vigour. There was no time to lose.

From the beginning of the war the Germans had poured scorn on Britain and France for allying themselves with the backward, unfree empire of Russia. They were, of course, talking with their tongues in their cheeks, for they knew that in their own country they had only a sham political liberty. Now that Russia had thrown off her ancient bondage and had set up a free government their taunt had entirely lost its sting. We in the West hoped that the example of Russia might spread to the enslaved subjects of the Kaiser. Before long it had done so, and the Chancellor was forced to promise that when the war was over greater liberty would be granted to the German people.

CHAPTER XII.

RAIDING ON THE SOMME.—I.

FOR six fierce and deadly months we had maintained the great struggle on the stretch of rolling country between the Ancre and the Somme. With a weight of artillery such as the world had never seen before, we had hurled millions of shells upon the strongholds of the Germans, and had forced them back from their positions of advantage. Our splendid infantry by this time knew themselves to be better men than their opponents. With a courage and devotion unequalled in the long annals of British warfare, they had carried trenches, woods, and villages which the Germans had turned into fortresses believed to be impregnable. Day by day, week by week, and month by month the struggle had continued; our guns were never silent for more than a few hours at a time, and the enemy generals marvelled that so great an effort should show no signs of slackening. They comforted themselves with the hope that the day must soon arrive when they would be afforded a respite.

The hope, however, was vain. Though the torn and trampled ground was one slough of despond; though the shell-holes were deep lakes which would easily drown a man, and the floods were out in the valley of the Ancre; though the rain fell pitilessly, the snow descended, the piercing wind blew, and the keen bite of frost was in the air, the fighting never ceased. It was, of course, impossible to carry on a great offensive, but our men could still "nibble;" they could still keep the nerves of the enemy on edge by making raids upon his trenches. The month of January 1917 was a month of raids. Scarcely a day passed but one or more parties of British soldiers made daring "cutting-out" expeditions across

No Man's Land. The almost continuous bombardment forced the enemy to seek shelter in his deep dug-outs, from which he was rounded up by our raiding troops. In the month of January alone more than twenty-seven officers and 1,200 men were captured in local raids.

Let me tell you the story of two or three of these dashing little engagements. Early in January the New Zealanders distinguished themselves by a very fine burst into the enemy's defences. Suddenly one day our guns began to thunder louder than ever, and before long had created a barrage of fire behind the enemy's trenches. When the barrage was established, off went the New Zealanders. They rushed into the enemy's positions, captured sixty prisoners, seized three machine guns, wrecked the gun and trench-mortar emplacements, blew up the parapets, and destroyed the dug-outs. Then, taking prisoners and trophies with them, they returned to their own lines: the whole raid had only occupied thirty-five minutes. As soon as the New Zealanders had departed, the enemy tried to make good the damage; but one of our aviators spied them at work, and reported the fact to the artillery. In a few minutes the working party had been dispersed by our gun-fire.

A striking incident occurred at the end of the raid. At the moment when the New Zealanders were preparing to return, it was discovered that a sergeant was lying buried under a mass of timber and sand-bags. He shouted to his comrades, but they did not hear him, and disappeared, leaving him behind. With great difficulty he managed to struggle free; but he dared not make his way towards his own lines, because the Germans who had now returned to their wrecked trenches could not fail to see him. So for two hours he lay concealed.

At last he grew tired of remaining in a cramped position, and determined to make a dash for liberty. To his surprise he discovered that the trench was empty. While he was trying to find out the position of his own lines, he fell in with a German patrol consisting of a non-commissioned officer and four men. With perfect coolness the sergeant pointed his revolver at the officer and shot him dead. The four men hesitated a second, then threw down their rifles and held up their hands in surrender.

The sergeant, who had been reported missing, made a great sensation when he appeared in his own trench bringing four



An Evening Attack by a British Patrol on a German Machine-gun Post.

(By permission of *The Illustrated London News*.)

prisoners with him. The officer commanding congratulated him; but he said, "I don't deserve any compliment. It wasn't me who found these silly Germans; they just came along to be caught."

* * * * *

A French correspondent tells the story of a British private who, by his coolness, courage, and resource, foiled a German attack during this period of raids. I am sorry to say that the full name of the soldier is not given. It appears that the man, whom the correspondent calls "Jack," belonged to a battalion which had been sent to a certain part of the line to relieve two French companies. It is always a difficult matter to withdraw one set of men from the trenches and replace them by another in the face of the foe. If the enemy discovers that such a movement is in progress, he is sure to shell the communication trenches heavily, and to attempt an attack while the old occupants are departing and the newcomers are arriving.

Our friend Jack had volunteered for the dangerous task of acting as outpost during the operation, and he had taken up a position well in front of the trench in order to watch the German lines. A short time after the French troops had shaken hands with their British comrades, had wished them good luck, and were making their way to the rear, the Germans suddenly advanced. Jack spied them as they did so, and at once sent up a flare to give the alarm to his comrades. Then crouching behind the parapet of his post, he filled the magazine of his rifle, and calmly awaited the onset of the enemy. He allowed the first wave of men to come within thirty yards of him, and then opened rapid fire. Six of the Germans fell, and the wave broke. A second wave came on, and again Jack fired with deadly aim. Though he took heavy toll of the advancing men, they swarmed on, and he saw that he would soon be surrounded.

Not even in this perilous moment did his courage desert him. He dashed from his shelter, shouting, "Come on, men!" as if he were leading troops to the assault. The Germans, imagining that a counter-attack was being launched against them, fell back hurriedly. They soon discovered that they had been fooled, and returned again to the charge; but by this time the French 75's had come up, and had opened such a rapid fire that the Germans dared not advance. Jack's



A Typical Raid. British bombing their way into a German Trench.
(From the picture by A. Forester. By permission of the Illustrated London News.)

splendid coolness had saved the situation. Some time later a patrol went out to the post, and found him lying in front of his parapet with a wound in his breast.

On a certain day some weeks afterwards a number of high British and French officers assembled behind the lines to do honour to our hero. When his name was called out he was too weak to stand alone, and was supported by two of his comrades. A French general stepped forward and pinned on his breast the Cross of War. Then a British general placed by the side of it the Military Medal. I am sure you will agree that he had right royally won both these decorations.

* * * * *

Towards the end of the month the Canadians carried out a very neat raid against the enemy's trenches at Cité Calonne, not far from Lens. Sir Douglas Haig gave an account of this raid in his dispatch because it was interesting for several reasons. It was not a surprise attack; the enemy was awaiting it, and the fighting that took place was a good test of the soldierly qualities of both sides. Then, again, it was no hurried rush of men creeping with blackened faces through the darkness, but was made by troops in battle order. Finally, as the country for miles around was deep in snow, every movement of the attackers was clearly visible.

For about ten days our heavy artillery kept up a slow bombardment of the enemy front, with the result that all their wire was cut. Early in the morning, when the snow was falling, the Canadians assembled for what they called their "Boche-scooping stunt." A heavy cloud of smoke was sent up from both flanks of our attack, and a favouring wind blew it across No Man's Land towards the German trenches. Shortly before 8 a.m. the Canadians went over the parapet. A Manitoba corporal thus described what followed:—

"There were about four inches of snow on the ground when we went over the 'lid,' and there was a sort of fine, dry powdery stuff in the air, which was quite homelike to most of us. We didn't rush along as if we were doing a turn for the 'movies,' but just marched across as though a drill sergeant was managing the affair. It was our own choice to do the thing in the open daylight, when we could see just where we were going and what we were up against. We were asked whether we would rather go over at night, as we used to do in the early days of our raids up in the Ypres salient; but we preferred the daylight. The average depth of No Man's Land which we had to cross was about 160 yards.

"The attack was delivered in waves, or rather, I should prefer to say, in lines, for we kept our dressing beautifully. I am sure it pays to advance in this way, even under heavy fire, rather than to try to romp across, and so get straggling. The German front trench was pretty thickly held, for they were expecting us. Our first line sprang in on top of them, and while it was plying the bayonet, the second line went right through and on. We found the second line of trenches almost deserted, although a good many Germans were hiding in the dug-outs.

"The success of the whole adventure was due to the thorough way in which it had been rehearsed. We knew exactly what to do and exactly what we should find when we reached the Boche trenches. For days past we had been playing at the real thing until we were like a great band of trained actors in which every man knows his part. The Germans boast about their thoroughness. Well, I guess the Canadians have given them proof of what they can do in this way."

The Canadians had, indeed, been thorough. Their officers had studied aeroplane photographs, and had used their eyes well. The consequence was that they knew as much about the German trenches as the men who held them. The Canadian lads, as part of their training for the raid, had learned some German words and phrases. For example, they learned to say "Raus" (*rouse*), which they hoped the Germans would recognize as "Come out!" They also picked up a phrase which was intended to inform the men in the dug-outs that if they did not come up at once the worst would happen. A friendly snow-storm masked the homeward journey. There was only one disappointment. A captured German informed them that, if they had made their raid on the previous day, they would have captured the corps commander. In one dug-out twenty-eight men were taken prisoner, and elsewhere a trench mortar and two machine guns were carried off.

CHAPTER XIII.

RAIDING ON THE SOMME.—II.

NOW you must hear something of a very fine raid made by London Territorials. Before the war these men were clerks and warehousemen, and some of them were in the soft goods trade. Nevertheless, they forced German officers to admit that they were true soldiers, every inch of them. And yet most of the men had never been over the top before.

The raid took place near the famous Hill 60, of which you read in Vol. IV., page 177. At this point a minor salient full of German trenches ran into our lines. For several days these trenches were shelled, and so was Hill 60. A hail of Stokes bombs preceded our men as they went forward.

"The lads advanced up to their own curtain of 'Stokes,' which is far more trying than the work of field batteries. The Stokes bomb is most awe-inspiring, both in appearance and effect. Then the boys got to work. Each knew his particular job. Some could say 'Hands up' or 'Come out' in German. Some survivors on the German front line were waiting in an attitude of surrender, and were escorted to the rear; others, owing to the planning of the German trench system, were making off up side alleys, all unaware that our flanking parties were shepherding them, in such a way that presently they would be surrounded and brought into the fold.

"The Germans now began to grow suspicious, for they heard behind them cries of 'Tally-ho!' and 'Hark for'ard;' and they halted with their hands up, but for a moment our men took no notice of them. They rushed together from different directions, and meeting as arranged, shook hands and congratulated each other, while the Prussians looked on. They were in the third German line. Very fine going indeed!

"The men were told to give the enemy every chance to surrender. But the Germans in some dug-outs were obstinate or frightened. Not so a German officer who was busy down below with a telephone. He stoutly refused to come out—'So—er—I had to switch him off, sir,' said a corporal."

After destroying the trenches, the gallant Londoners, who had now been a full hour in the enemy's lines, turned and made their way back to their own trenches, with but slight casualties. They took with them a number of prisoners and all sorts of souvenirs. When they were well away, the enemy let loose his guns upon the destroyed trenches, and the Londoners climbed over their own parapets, laughing loudly to see the enemy's artillery making havoc of his own front.

* * * * *

Mr. Philips Gibbs tells us of a Canadian raid which afforded great amusement not only to those who took part in it, but to all who heard about it. One morning a young Canadian appeared in the milliner's shop of a French village, and asked for one hundred ladies' night-dresses of the largest possible size. The old lady behind the counter managed to supply him with what he needed, and then went out and told the strange story to her neighbours. Soon the whole village was chuckling with laughter, and everybody wondered what new game the Canadians were about to play. "It was," says the writer, "one of those jokes which belong to the humours of this war, mixed with blood and death."

When the night-dresses arrived in the Canadian trenches loud shouts of laughter were heard, and a hundred brawny young fellows were seen struggling into the garments. Some of them were adorned with blue ribbons, and all were clean and white; they were to be stained red before the end of the adventure. That night, when the moon was shining and the ground was white with snow, the Canadians in their night-dresses pushed across No Man's Land, and fell upon the German trenches. After quick bouts of bayonet work and bomb-throwing, the raiders returned with prisoners. The news of this extraordinary raid flashed along the telephone wires, and staff officers laughed as they held the receivers to their ears.

It is said that the Gordons made a somewhat similar raid during the snowy weather. They went out in white smocks* which covered their tunics and kilts, and with their steel helmets painted white.

"Their black arms and feet were like smudges on the snow. They lay very quiet, visible on the left from a strong point which was the object of

* See picture, pp. 104-105.



The Patrols meet—a Silent but Deadly Struggle.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

A sergeant or a corporal with two or three men patrol to and fro in No Man's Land during the night, in order to discover what the enemy is doing. A star-shell bursts, and the British prepare to drop into the nearest shell hole. They discover that a German patrol has already taken refuge in the same hole. A silent but deadly struggle follows.

the raid. Their rifles were loaded and their bayonets were fixed, so that there should be no rattle of arms or click of bolts. Then the Gordons advanced towards the strong point. Underneath it were German dug-outs, snow-capped and hidden. The Scots went round like wolves hunting for the way down. There were four ways in, and three of them were found low down, about four yards apart. Men were talking there excitedly. Their German speech was loud, and there was the note of terror in it.

“‘Come out!’ shouted the Gordons several times; but at one entrance only one man came out, and at another only one, and at the third twelve men who were taken prisoners. The others would not surrender. Some bombs and a Stokes shell were thrown into the doorways, and suddenly this nest of dug-outs was seen to collapse, and black smoke came up from the pit, melting the edges of the snow.”

The Scots managed to return to their trenches with their prisoners, and I am happy to say they had only a few casualties.

* * * * *

Raids such as those which I have just described in this chapter occupied our troops throughout the month of January. During February, as you will soon learn, we began feeling our way by a series of small attacks towards Bapaume. The time was rapidly approaching when the enemy could no longer maintain himself on the line which he had held so long. The unceasing attacks of the British, and the storm of shells that fell upon the Germans night and day, were more than flesh and blood could stand. British doggedness and perseverance was about to meet with its reward. In the following chapter I shall tell you how we smashed the German line and forced the enemy to retreat from positions which he had held for more than two long and terrible years.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THE GERMANS WERE FORCED TO RETREAT.—I.

IN some parts of our western coasts massive cliffs rise from the water's edge like the bastions of a citadel. Storm and tempest beat on them year after year, but to all outward seeming they remain proof against wind and weather and tossing sea. They look so firm and solid that you imagine they must endure for ever. But even as you gaze they are being slowly undermined by the eternal sapping of the water. "Here a little, there a little," the restless waves are gnawing away the softer rocks at their base. One day the whole proud cliff will come toppling down upon the shore in shapeless ruin.

Somewhat thus may we picture the German line between Gommecourt and Péronne. For six long months we had hurled an almost unceasing storm of shot and shell against it. We had carried its outworks, but to observers at a distance its main core seemed as firm and as solid as ever. Thereafter, day by day, "unhasting, unresting," and with infinite patience, we made "nibbling" attacks upon it. One by one its keystones were loosened; one by one they fell. Then came the hour when the defenders found the very foundations of their position trembling beneath their feet. Unless they were prepared to perish in the ruins of their strongholds, they must lose no time in withdrawing to the rear. This is what actually happened. On February 24, 1917, the Germans began to retreat from the great fortified positions which they had held for more than two years.

The Germans had long recognized that they would have to withdraw from their battered and shaken strongholds. They understood very clearly that the war would be lost or won in the West, and they feared the great offensive which would

soon be launched against them. They knew that the gravest disaster would overtake them if they tried to meet the new attacks in the old positions, which were now commanded by the Allies. Our aviators, sailing far over the German lines, constantly reported that in the rear they saw working parties digging and delving in frantic haste to create defensive works along which another stand could be made. A German military writer in the month of February lifted the veil and gave the American people an excellent idea of the new positions which the Germans had prepared :—

“ Before English and French charges can reach the new German trenches and earthen fortresses, they will have to destroy or pass through forests of barbed-wire entanglements of unusual depth. Either lanes must be cut through by the ‘nipper men,’ or they must be destroyed by many hours of artillery bombardment. Running from the border of Switzerland to the North Sea, westward of Ostend, there is, according to the estimate of German military engineers, enough barbed wire, between the trenches of the Germans and those of the Allies, *to go round the world twenty times!* At the beginning of the war the entanglements were often but a few feet wide. Fronting the German trenches in the west, they now vary from 150 feet to 400 feet in width, and the Germans are adding thousands of feet of barbed wire every day. Behind this barbed-wire moat the Germans will have more guns than there were in the combined artillery of the English, French, and German armies during the Somme battle last year.”

Formidable as were these new lines, our generals knew that they could not be so strong as those which they had already captured. For two years the Germans had lavished all their art and labour on the defences which the British and French had now won. Further, the positions which the Germans had lost were on the high ground overlooking the Allies. Now the situation was reversed. The Allies, for the first time, were on the high ground from which they could overlook the Germans. Marshal Haig was confident that the Germans could not stand long, even on their new line. On 14th February he gave an interview to a French journalist, in the course of which he said that the year 1917 would be the year of victory, if not of peace. The German front in the West would undoubtedly be broken by the Franco-British armies, and the trench war would give place to a war of movement in which the Allies would be at great advantage. But he did not underestimate the difficulty of the task. He assured his interviewer that while munitions were now plentiful, he was still in need of more railways and

more guns. "We shall never have too many guns," he said. It was not sufficient to equal the enemy in artillery power, but to overwhelm him altogether.

* * * * *

We are now to learn how, step by step, we brought about the ruin of the line which the Germans had held so long, and how we forced them to retire to the new works which they had prepared. Before I begin my story I must ask you to look carefully at this map. Follow the black dots which



show the line held by the British at the end of November 1916. You notice that it runs in front of Beaumont Hamel, but does not reach the height of land marked B which commands that village. It continues in front of Beaucourt to the floods and marshes on the right bank of the river Ancre. I am sure you have not forgotten the stirring fights which gave us these strongholds.* On the left bank of the little river the line zigzags behind a V-shaped series of German trenches

* See Vol. VI., Chap. XXIV.



Gordon Highlanders with White Smocks over their Kilts and
(From the picture by Christopher Clark, R.L.)



Soldiers crossing the Snow to raid German Trenches. (See p. 98.)
By permission of *The Sphere*.)

protecting the village of Grandcourt. It then proceeds to a point south of Pys, beyond which we need not follow it at present.

I want you to notice the position of Serre, which stands midway between Beaumont Hamel and Puisieux.* You have already heard of Serre as a very strongly fortified position indeed. So far it had defied us. On July 1, 1916, the first day of the great offensive, we failed to capture it; and in November of the same year we suffered a like fate, though on this occasion we reached a ridge from which our guns could bombard the position. General Gough, who commanded the Fifth Army, which was fighting on both sides of the Ancre, knew that an attempt to carry Serre by direct attack would lead to great losses, and was not likely to be successful. His policy was to push up the Ancre valley, so that he could bombard the stronghold from three sides, and thus make it "too unhealthy" for the Germans to remain in it.

Look again at the map. If Gough could push along the right bank of the Ancre and gain the height of land marked A, he would be able not only to bombard Serre from the southeast, but he would be in command of all the Upper Ancre valley. Further, he would be able to make Grandcourt, on the other bank of the Ancre, too hot for the Germans to hold. Now let us see what happened.

On the evening of 3rd February troops were assembled for an attack on the Double Trench, which you see on the map between Beaucourt and Miraumont. The night was bitterly cold; there was not a cloud in the sky, and the moon shone brilliantly on the snow-covered ground across which the attack was to be made. Long before the word was given to advance, our men had crept well forward in front of their own line, so as to shorten the journey over No Man's Land. They lay shivering in the shelter of shell-holes, waiting for the signal. It came at last, and away they went, glad to be on the move.

They followed up the "creeping barrage," and soon were in the German trenches. Then the guns lifted and made a barrier of fire behind the German first line. So rapidly had our men pushed forward that many of the Germans were wakened from sleep in their deep dug-outs by British commands to surrender. They sat up, rubbing their eyes, and

* Pron. *pwé-zyeu*.

when they understood their position, put up their hands without any show of resistance. They said there was nothing else to do. Before long, batches of prisoners were seen making their way to the British lines across the snow. Altogether about two hundred of them were captured. They said that they had no idea that they were to be attacked. Our bombardment had been so constant for months past that they paid no attention when it increased in violence. Most of the prisoners were from Schleswig-Holstein, and were soldiers of a very good type. One of them was asked, "When do you think the war will end?" He replied, "When you will it."

We had now advanced our lines eastward some five hundred yards on a front of three-quarters of a mile, and had captured about half the length of the Double Trench. The Serre salient had become sharper; the fortified farm of Baillescourt was hemmed in, and, what is more, Grandcourt was in peril. The enemy saw clearly that if Grandcourt was to be saved he must win back the ground which he had lost on the rising fields above Beaucourt. On Sunday, the 4th, and Monday, the 5th, he made no fewer than six desperate counter-attacks. Every one of them failed, and each wave of assault left prisoners in our hands. Despite every effort, the enemy could make no headway. We strengthened our positions and held on. On Monday night the Germans decided to abandon Grandcourt. They gave up the V-shaped trench which lay on the spur in front of the village, and withdrew their forces up the valley to the village of Little Miraumont. About the same time Baillescourt Farm was captured, and on Wednesday British troops entered Grandcourt. It was the fifty-third French village which had been retaken since July 1, 1916.

Now let us be clear as to what this successful little advance meant to us. It was a stage forward towards the high ground marked A, from which we could for the first time look directly over a great space of rolling land up to and beyond the railway junction near Achiet-le-Grand. If this high ground could be seized, the Serre salient would be under fire from three sides, and, sooner or later, would be bound to fall.

We were not slow to push the advantage which we had gained. On 17th February, ten days after our troops occupied Grandcourt, we made another advance, and this time captured more than a thousand yards of the enemy's defences. For

days previously our artillery had so fiercely assailed the German trenches, and had created such a violent barrage in their rear, that no supplies or reinforcements could reach them. Many of the Germans had been without food for two days when our men broke into their trenches. On the morning fixed for the attack a heavy fog shrouded the battlefield. Our observers could see nothing, nor could our aviators who ascended and plunged into the fog banks above the enemy's lines. Nevertheless the position of the German batteries was so well known that their guns were silenced.

Most of the enemy's wire had been destroyed ; but before the advance began it was discovered that the entanglements fronting one of the strongest parts of the German line were intact. A gunner officer thereupon crawled far out into a shell-hole with a telephone, and lay there for hours, directing the artillery until the last vestige of German wire had been shot away.

The attack was made both south and north of the Ancre. To the south of the river our men went over the " top " in the thick fog at dawn. They reached the German first line in record time, and the rounding up of prisoners began. Altogether, before the end of the day, some six hundred Germans had been captured, all of them Prussians, and some belonging to the Grenadier Guard. Then our men struck for the height of ground overlooking Miraumont. Some of them reached the crest ; but the line was finally drawn back just to the rear of the summit, but sufficiently high up to command the slopes, both to the east and to the west. This was a very cheering success, and, as you will soon see, it had very important results. Some of the enemy's units were wiped out altogether, and in other cases as many as eighty-five men were taken prisoners out of a single company, the rest being either killed or wounded. Meanwhile other valuable positions had been won north of the river.

* * * * *

The Germans made great efforts to recapture the lost ground. They launched a counter-attack of three waves, with strong bodies of supporting troops in the rear. Our massed batteries made awful havoc of them. The guns shattered them, and our men in the trenches had no need to pull a trigger.

A *Times* correspondent gives us some interesting information about the action which I have just described. He tells us that Londoners and Midlanders played a large and gallant part in it. Unfortunately, they had to advance after the thaw had begun.

"Our boys," says the writer, "went away on a front of two miles, several hours before sunrise, to unlock more doors in the German salient. We soon realized that their task would prove much harder than had been supposed. In the fog of a general thaw it was difficult to see what was going on. Our walking cases, however, were seen cheering the gunners and bringing back trophies. And with them came large batches of pale, miserable men dressed in field gray and covered with wet clay. Some of them had been without food for two days. The map tells you why—our guns had shut them out from Achiet-le-Grand.

"All the same, the enemy, hidden by the fog, could time and place his counter-attacks as he pleased. He did so, but succeeded in one place only. The Southerners had done more than was hoped for. Immediately south of Miraumont there is a steep hill, the possession of which means the possession of the town. Our lads gained the summit by means of a most gallant charge, and but for the weather they would be there now. But the gunners could not aid them because their observers could not see. Airmen flew desperately low, but the battlefield was invisible. The men who took the hill had to be content with its south and eastern slopes. Their skill and resolution, however, had won a splendid position."

Before I leave the story of the advance on 17th February I must tell you of one strange incident which happened during the fighting. One of our sergeants in a forward sap got too far in front, and was captured by the Germans. A little later, while he was being escorted to the rear by two privates, our barrage began to creep up to them. The Germans were terrified, and fled for their lives, leaving the sergeant to look after himself. He calmly turned to the right-about, walked through the barrage, and managed to reach his own lines, slightly wounded, but safe. He made his way to a dressing-station unaided, and was able to give valuable information as to the enemy positions.

At the end of the day we had good cause to congratulate ourselves. We were now on the southern part of Serre Hill; we had won the summit above Baillescourt Farm, and had extended our line for several hundred yards along the railway east of Grandcourt. We had also made good our footing on the hill to the south of Miraumont, the key to that village.

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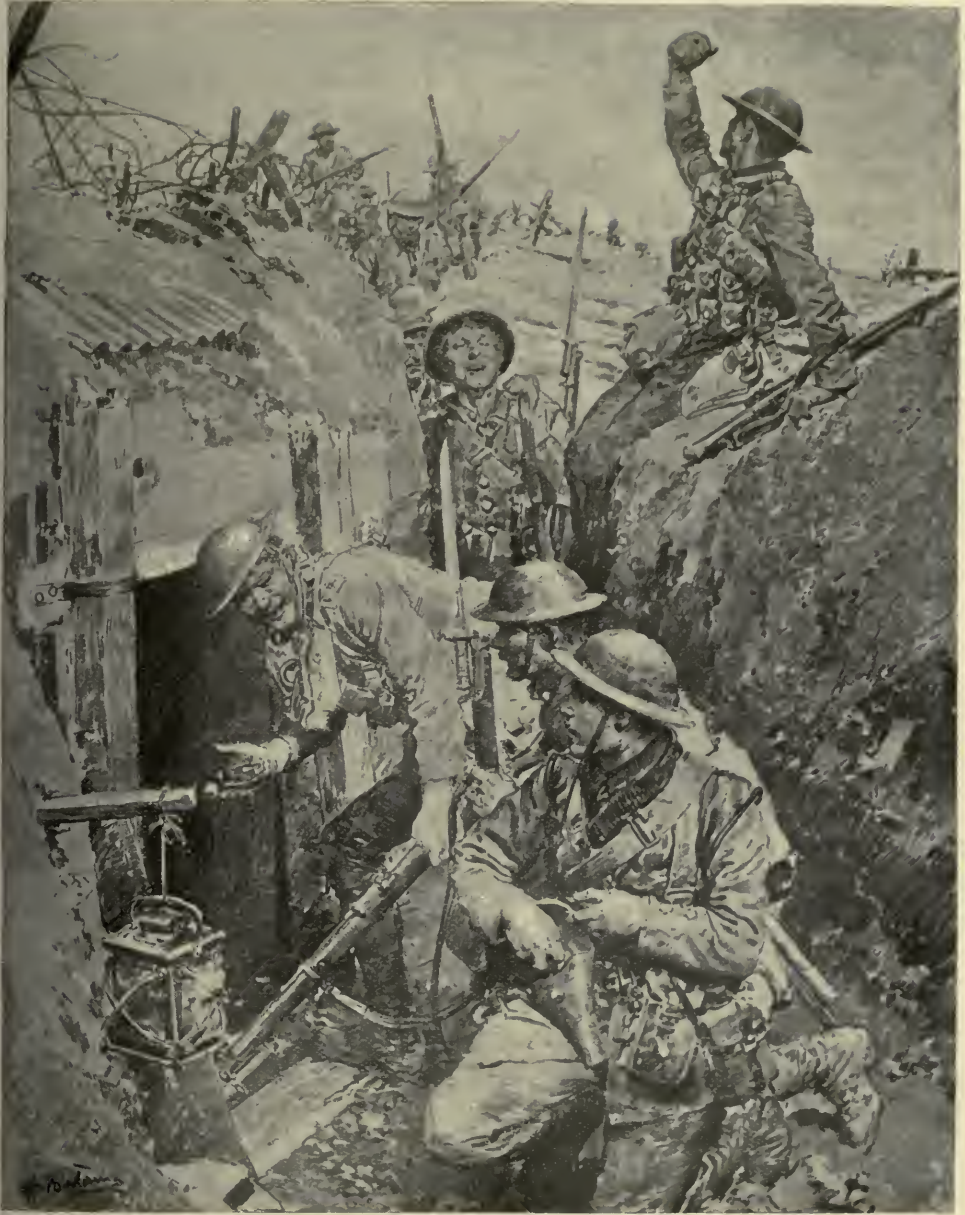
I told you that the capture of the hill marked A on our map was a very important success. I think you know why. It gave our artillery observers splendid positions from which they could overlook wide stretches of the country, and could see the effect of their shells on the important railway junction just south of Achiet-le-Grand, some eight thousand yards away. The hill looked down on Miraumont, and our guns were able to place a barrage behind it, and thus cut it off from its communications. It also gave us a view over the high bank behind Pys; we could now look into the hollow in which the Germans had massed their artillery. Hill A thus gave us enormous advantages, and the enemy quite realized what he had lost.

On Saturday, 24th February, Gough's men suddenly discovered that Little Miraumont had been abandoned; they pushed forward, and entered the village without fighting. Next day they won Serre after only slight resistance. On the 26th the withdrawal movement extended to the east, and on that same day Sir Douglas Haig reported that his troops had pushed forward two miles on a front of eleven miles.

Not until 1st March were the German people allowed to learn that their soldiers were in retreat. Then Hindenburg announced that a portion of the foremost positions on both banks of the Ancre had been given up a few days before, "in accordance with our plans." The enemy, he said, remained in ignorance of the German movements. The British were feeling their way forward in a hesitating manner, and they were being prevented by rearguards from occupying the destroyed stretch of country which had been abandoned.

The German newspapers pointed out that the state of the ground between the opposing lines was so bad—so deep in mud and so torn up by shells—that it was impossible for the operations of troops. The German garrisons were to fall back so as to take up new positions on ground which had not been turned into a morass by the feet of men and the wheels of guns, nor so deeply pitted with shell-holes as to impede their movements. The retirement would last ten days, and would come to an end on 1st March. We shall soon see how false this prophecy was.

In this country newspaper writers were much puzzled to account for the German retirement. The enemy had held on to his strongholds with such stubbornness that it was surprising



The Empty Trenches. "Come on, you fellows ; there's nobody here!"
(From the drawing by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

to find him giving them up, one by one, without serious resistance. Only handfuls of "die-hards" were left as rearguards in the villages, and their business was simply to delay our advance. Some of the writers seemed to think that the whole retirement was a trap. The British were to be lured on into new country, where the enemy would have elbow-room to turn on them and overwhelm them. It was known that the Germans had massed a large reserve force behind their lines, and some people thought that these troops were to be hurled upon our unsuspecting men when once they had got beyond the old German lines.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW THE GERMANS WERE FORCED TO RETREAT.—II.

IN the forty-eight hours of 23rd and 24th February the Germans gave up Serre, Pys, Miraumont, Little Miraumont, and that field Gibraltar, the Butte of Warlencourt, the scene of our only serious rebuff during the offensive of 1916. It must be confessed the retirement was carried on very skilfully and successfully. Hindenburg boasted that the withdrawal was conducted just as though it had been a field exercise in peace time. In some places our men did not discover for two or three days that the German trenches in front of them had been abandoned. It is said that in one part of the line some of our soldiers, looking into their periscopes, saw a British aeroplane descend behind the German lines. They waited to see shells bursting around it, and its occupants lying dead or wounded under a hail of machine-gun bullets, or being made prisoners. To their surprise the aeroplane was unmolested. The aviator left his seat and began walking about in perfect safety. Then the watchers at the periscopes knew that the enemy had departed, and they went forward to occupy the empty German trenches.

In other places the smoke of burning villages showed clearly what was on foot. But, as you know, the thaw had now set in, and the ground was so deep in mud that the guns could only be brought up by almost superhuman efforts. As soon as possible gangs of labourers were moved forward, and new roads were made. Though the work was done with great speed, there were delays which enabled the enemy to make good his retreat.

Gommecourt was abandoned on 27th February, and next day our line swung forward, and we occupied this northernmost

fortress of the Ancre defences. You will remember that for eight months Gommecourt had defied us. Our advance along the river had now made it too hot to hold, and every forward step brought the day nearer when it would be cut off altogether. During the night of the 26th and 27th February, guns, machine guns, supplies, and stores were removed, and only a few picked men remained in the trenches. By sending up flares, and by opening bursts of fire, they tried to deceive our men into thinking that there was still a strong and active garrison in the place. All the time they were destroying their dug-outs and demolishing the strongholds which they were about to abandon.

The little river Ancre, the scene of so many fierce fights, had now been left behind. Round about the village of Puisieux there was some severe fighting, but by the morning of the 28th the Germans had been cleared out of all the region between that village and Gommecourt, save for a wood which they would be bound to yield before long. Elsewhere on the front between Le Transloy and Gommecourt we pushed forward almost to the outskirts of Bapaume. Ligny-Thilloy, little more than a mile to the south of that place, had been occupied on the previous night. Since July 1, 1916, the Allies had liberated from the German yoke no fewer than sixty-three villages.

The German retreat was by no means headlong. Some newspaper writers in this country were inclined to think that the enemy intended to give up this part of North France altogether, and they painted rosy pictures of the German troops harried towards the Rhine by the victorious Allies. But the Germans had no such intention. They had, as you know, prepared a very strong line behind which they meant to retire and hold us in check, while their U boats tried to make havoc of our shipping, and bring us to our knees by cutting off our food supplies. It was at first thought that they meant to make a stand on what is known as the Bapaume ridge—that is, on positions stretching from Monchy to Bapaume.

From 1st to 9th March we were engaged in moving forward our big guns, and in placing them on the advantageous positions which we had won. Meanwhile the pressure on the enemy did not relax, and ground was constantly gained both on the east and on the west flank. For example, on 4th March we made a successful advance to the east of Bouchavesnes,



The Tricolour waves once more.

(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

This picture shows a French woman planting the national flag on the ruins of a village won back from the Germans. Between 16th March and the beginning of April the enemy was forced to withdraw from 600 square miles of French territory.

and won 1,200 yards along a two-mile front. We also captured 190 prisoners and five machine guns. A German counter-attack next day failed to move us from the ground which we had captured. Irles fell on 10th March. The village was taken by surprise ; many of the Guards holding it were slain, and 300 prisoners fell into our hands. All was now ready for an attack on the whole length of the Bapaume ridge. If the enemy had hoped for a respite on this position, he was doomed to speedy disappointment. A correspondent thus describes the torrent of fire which burst upon the ridge :—

“ On one narrow sector alone thirty thousand shells, mostly of large size, were fired on Sunday and Monday, and this is by no means a record. . . . No troops in the world could stand such gun-fire. We were the masters of our opponents, and our men were confident. I must confess that there was a time when I had little hope of witnessing such a scene. But there it was. The Germans had been battered out of their last place—they had gone to earth again ; and intent on driving them further still, we were following them across the open, where they dared not show themselves.”

For forty-eight hours the terrific bombardment lasted, and on the night of 13th March the British Commander-in-Chief was able to report that the enemy had been driven off the Bapaume ridge, which was in the possession of our troops.

The capture of the ridge threw Hindenburg's plans awry. He had meant to hold on to the position as long as possible ; but the British bombardment had been so fierce that he was forced to fall back upon the position which he had prepared. He told the German people that his retreat to the new line had been arranged “ long beforehand,” and that he was retiring “ according to plan.”

Slowly the Germans gave up village after village. Their rearguards fought stubbornly in many places, and their artillery heavily shelled our infantry as they advanced knee-deep in the quagmires. Few prisoners were taken, except those who had lost their way or had been wounded and left behind. When you think of a retreating army being followed up by victorious troops, you probably have in your mind's eye a picture of hordes of depressed, downcast men hurrying to the rear, with artillery drivers whipping up their exhausted horses, and transport, mounted men, and foot soldiers mixed up on the thronged roads in hopeless confusion. Behind them, fast gaining on them, and harrying their retreat by bursts of

shell-fire, you imagine the troops in pursuit, all in high spirits, and eagerly pressing forward to keep the enemy on the run.

No such scenes were witnessed as the Germans withdrew from those Picardy fields on which they had fought so long and so stubbornly. Their retirement was very slow and orderly, and our advance was just as slow and almost without incident. An officer who led his men into Pys described the advance as follows: "It's like searching a muddy field, and just about as exciting."

* * * * *

Before the enemy was forced to withdraw, he held a line which between Arras and Verdun formed a huge salient. Roughly, this line ran directly south from Arras to the point marked A on the map,* and then sharply turned eastward, and was continued along the heights of the Aisne, and so on to Verdun. The Germans intended to hold on to this salient as long as possible, because it covered the great industrial area of North France. As long as it remained in their hands, they were able to shut off the French from the coal and iron which this region produces, and could use its resources for themselves. While we were building up our armies and erecting our gun and munition factories the enemy had no difficulty in holding the salient. When, however, we grew to be as strong as he was in men, and better supplied with artillery and shells, we were able to thrust a wedge into his lines between the Ancre and the Somme. After nearly eight months of fighting, we had pushed so far into his positions that the whole of the salient south of the Somme was in great peril. He dared not hang on to the bulge between Arras and the point B any longer, so he determined to give it up altogether, and establish himself on the dotted line which you see marked on the map. His plan was to strike a fairly straight line from Arras in front of Cambrai, St. Quentin, Laon, and the great wooded hilly region known as the forest of Gobain, to the Aisne, some ten miles or so to the east of Soissons.

This meant giving up a stretch of country averaging six or seven miles in breadth, and nowhere more than thirty miles at its broadest part. It meant giving up Bapaume, Péronne, and hundreds of villages. While the German, true to his nature, hated to give up an inch of enemy country, he be-

* See p. 119.

lieved that on this line he could hold the Allies in check for a sufficient time to give his U-boat campaign a chance of success. You have already read a German correspondent's account of the terrific entanglements of barbed wire which lay in front of the new trenches.

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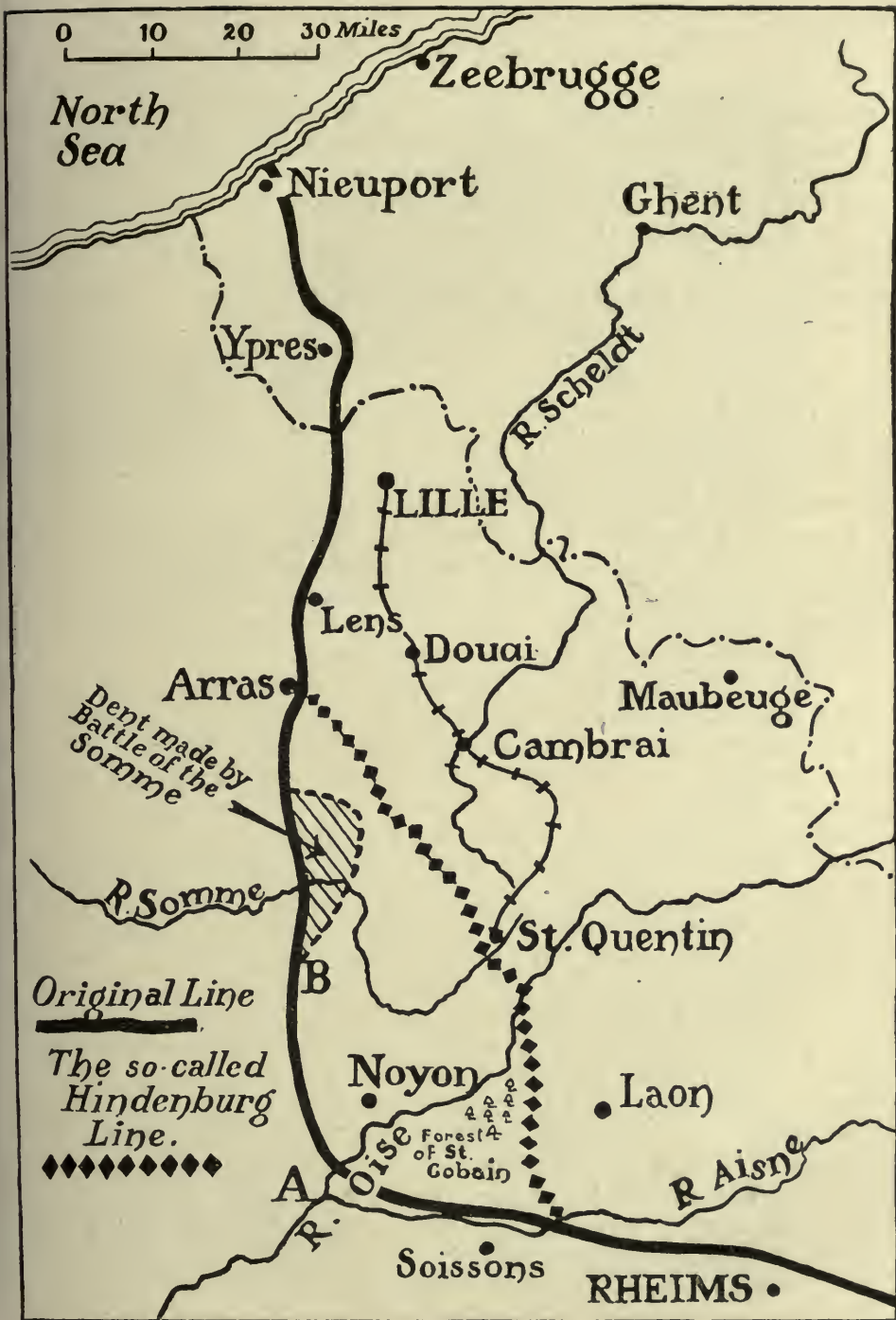
The plan which I have just outlined was supposed to be suggested by von Hindenburg, who was now Commander-in-Chief of the German armies, and was everywhere acclaimed in Germany as the one great general who could give his country an honourable peace. We in Britain spoke of the new line as the Hindenburg line. In Germany it was known as the Siegfried line. Siegfried is one of the heroes of old German romance. He won great fame and riches by slaying a terrible dragon. Afterwards he professed love for Brynhild, a Valkyrie maiden; but he tricked her into marriage with his brother-in-law. When Brynhild learnt how she had been deceived, she brought about Siegfried's murder. The story forms the plot of a series of German operas by the great composer Richard Wagner.

It is said that early in the war a well-known German tenor home from the front on leave, and wearing the Iron Cross, was playing the part of Siegfried in the Berlin Opera House. At one point in the opera Siegfried cleaves an anvil in twain with his newly forged sword, and in doing so exclaims, "Thus cuts Siegfried's sword." Instead of sticking to the words of his part, the tenor cried out, "Thus cuts the German's sword." The audience rose and cheered him to the echo, and probably this incident gave rise to the German name for the new line which had now been constructed in the West.

* * * * * * *

Now I must tell you that during the month of February we took over about twenty miles of the French front south of the Somme, and thus brought up the length of line held by British and Belgian troops to about one hundred and fifty miles. After the Germans had been driven off the Bapaume ridge they began to fall back to the south as well as to the north of the Somme. In a later chapter I shall describe how they retreated all along the eighty-mile front from near Arras to the east of Soissons. When at length they reached the Hindenburg line the whole of the salient had gone.

As the Germans retired, they did everything in their power



Map to illustrate the Salient at Noyon and the so-called Hindenburg Line.

to delay our advance. They not only piled trees across the roads, blew up the highways, made obstacles of stone and wire, but they set to work to leave nothing but ruin behind them. They blew up the villages that had sheltered them for two years, and destroyed everything that could be destroyed. Never before had a so-called civilized enemy done such wanton wickedness; the Germans made a wilderness of the region which they were now forced to give up.

Towards the end of March the French Government sent a letter to all neutrals protesting against the acts of barbarity and devastation done by the Germans in that part of France which they had abandoned. The letter pointed out that towns and villages had been pillaged, burned, and destroyed; private houses had been stripped of their furniture, fruit trees had been cut down or so treated that they would never again bear fruit; springs and wells had been poisoned; banks had been robbed, and large sums of money and thousands of notes had been carried off. Most of the people were driven to the rear, and the rest were left with very little food.

All these gross acts of barbarism were committed, not for the purpose of hampering the armies of the Allies, but with the object of ruining the most fertile region of France.

Perhaps you think that the German soldiers who committed these grave crimes acted without orders from their superior officers. Diaries were found setting forth very clearly that the soldiers were instructed to act as they did by the chiefs of the army. One such diary was kept by a man who said that the blowing up and the burning of villages was scandalous, and an everlasting shame to Germany. Even highly placed officers took part in the robbery of houses. It is said that a grand duke looted a shop and carried off the most expensive lamps and candelabra which it contained. When the shopkeeper asked him to pay, he said: "Nonsense; I have bought nothing. Everything here belongs to me, and I have just taken what I wanted." We need not wonder that a grand duke should play the part of a common thief when we recollect that earlier in the war the Crown Prince, the heir to the German throne, actually stole the valuable contents of the house which had sheltered him.



The New Man in Possession: a British Sentry in a German Sentry-box.

(British Official Photograph.)

The black and white sentry-box has long been a familiar sight to the inhabitants of this French village, but the sentry no longer wears German gray but British khaki. The villagers, half starved and badly treated during the German occupation, have eagerly welcomed their deliverers.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST STRAW.

IN former pages of this work you have learned how the chief nations of Europe were swept one by one into the welter of strife. The Central Powers, as you know, began the war at the end of July 1914 by placing Serbia in such a position that she had either to recognize Austria as her overlord or fight for her independence. Russia took up arms on behalf of the little threatened country, and so did France, Russia's ally. When Germany began to march through Belgium in order to deploy her armies for a great sweep into France, King Albert's subjects resisted, and delayed them for a full fortnight. Then Great Britain, true to her plighted word to Belgium and faithful to her friendship for France, threw down the gauntlet to the Kaiser. The tiny kingdom of Montenegro now joined Serbia, and thus, before the month of August was many days old, eight European nations were involved in war. In the same month Japan, Britain's ally in the Far East, also joined in the war on the side of righteousness and justice.

Some three months later Turkey took the fateful plunge. She had become little better than a German province, and she hoped to recover her old dominion in Europe by marching to victory with the Central Powers. In May of the following year Italy determined to win back from Austria certain border provinces which were hers by right, and for this purpose she threw in her lot with the Allies. In October of the same year the treacherous King of Bulgaria, moved by sheer greed, made common cause with Austria and Germany. The year 1916 saw Albania, Portugal, and Rumania take the side of the Allies; and thus, ere its close, fifteen nations were engaged in a deadly grapple. You are now to learn how the sixteenth

nation joined in the war, and how we gained a new and very powerful ally.

When war broke out, the President and the people of the United States believed that the great struggle in Europe would interfere but little with them. They earnestly desired to remain at peace, and they would certainly have done so had not Germany goaded them into war. For more than two years they endured every kind of outrage and insult. Again and again it seemed that war with Germany must come; but the President, with wonderful patience, staved it off. Many people in this country and large numbers of Americans were impatient with him, and he had to suffer many bitter taunts. But he knew full well that there was a large German element in the country, and that something like civil strife would have to be faced if he broke with Germany before the mass of American citizens was convinced that only by war could the freedom of the nations be maintained. He knew that he had only to bide his time, and German murders, plots, and outrages would force his nation to fight. Further, he knew that the army of the United States was small and ill-prepared, and that it could not enter the war with effect until many months had passed. For these reasons he had to be patient, and to hold his hand until the hour was ripe for him to strike.

I have already told you that on February 15, 1915, the Germans announced that they would sink all ships attempting to make their way through the "war zone" towards the ports of the British Isles. They were as good as their word. American ships were sunk and American citizens were drowned. President Wilson had already told the Germans that he would hold them to strict account for every American life that was lost; but they cared nothing for his threats, believing that, no matter what they did, the Americans would remain at peace, and continue to make money by supplying the Allies with war material.

The infamous sinking of the *Lusitania* and the drowning of more than a hundred American citizens (May 7, 1915) aroused fierce indignation in the United States, and a long, wordy warfare began between the President and the German Foreign Office. The Germans tried the patience of the President in every possible way, but he refused to let his anger get the better of his judgment. He disliked the idea of war; he knew

that his country was not ready to fight; and he thought he could do more to curb the barbarity of Germany by remaining neutral than by taking up arms. Nevertheless, he gave the German Government clearly to understand that unless these murderous attacks ceased war would follow.

The Germans replied by torpedoing the *Arabic*, with twenty-six Americans on board; and, when called to account, declared that the vessel had been destroyed because it had attacked the submarine which sank it. This was a falsehood, and the President easily proved it to be so. The temper of the American people was rising to a dangerous point, so Count Bernstorff, the German ambassador, thought it best to apologize, and to promise to pay sums of money to the relatives of the victims. He also said that thenceforward German submarines would not sink passenger liners without warning, and without trying to save the lives of those on board, always provided that the liners did not attempt to fight or escape. In this way he managed to prevent a break between the two countries; but hardly had he smoothed over the difficulty when the *Ancona* was sunk, and twenty Americans were drowned. Once more disputes began; but the Central Powers, thinking they had nothing to fear from America, refused to admit that they were at fault, and took refuge in all sorts of lies and quibbles and half-promises that they would behave better in future.

The wordy warfare about the *Lusitania* still went on. In February 1916, however, the German Government thought it wise to give way. It expressed regret that American lives had been sacrificed; promised to make up the loss to those who had suffered; and repeated the promise as to the sinking of ships without warning and without attempting to save life. The Americans rejoiced greatly at the German "surrender;" but they were soon to learn that the Kaiser's Government had left itself a loophole of escape, and that it had not the slightest intention of changing its methods. The Americans did not yet understand that German promises are like pie-crust—made to be broken.

On 24th March the cross-Channel steamer *Sussex* was torpedoed without warning, and citizens of the United States were killed and wounded, while others barely escaped. Shortly afterwards four other vessels suffered a similar fate. The anger of the people flamed up once more. The President, however,

was calm. He collected information, and then asked Germany to explain. She did so in a Note that filled all neutrals with anger and disgust. Although a portion of a German torpedo was found in the hull of the *Sussex*, and the number of the submarine which did the deed was known, as well as the name of its commander, the Germans actually declared that the vessel had not been attacked by them at all. As for the other vessels, they had been destroyed because they had tried to escape. The Americans were now fairly roused, and the President read to Congress a Note which Germany received with great surprise. It told her plainly that unless she stopped her murderous attacks her ambassador would be dismissed, and that all relations with her would be broken off. Deeds were now to follow words.

Germany climbed down, but she did it with the usual German mixture of bluster and blarney. She whined about the wickedness of the British blockade, and declared that she was only fighting to secure for all nations the freedom of the seas. Nevertheless, she promised that she would not sink any vessels, either within or without the war zone, without warning, and without attempting to save human life, unless such ships should show fight or try to escape. In return for this promise, she expected that the United States would insist on the British putting a stop to their blockade of Germany.

The Americans thought over the matter for a time, and finally decided to accept this "climb down," but to refuse to take any steps with regard to the British blockade. Then for a few weeks there was a lull in the submarine campaign. Before long, however, it began again; but vessels flying the American flag, or supposed to have American citizens on board, were spared. By October 1, 1916, the British Admiralty announced that since the *Sussex* went down no fewer than 262 vessels had been destroyed without warning. As American ships and vessels conveying Americans had not been sunk, the President, like Brer Rabbit, "lay low and said nuffin."

During the summer of 1916 a German ocean-going submarine named the *Deutschland* suddenly appeared at Baltimore. As she was said to be a merchantman, she was permitted to enter the port. Admiring crowds flocked to see her, and to speed her on her homeward way when she departed. Though the Germans reported its safe arrival at Hamburg, there is good reason to believe that it never returned at all. On 7th October

another submarine visitor (U 53) appeared in American waters, and entered the harbour of Newport. This time the underwater boat made no pretence of being a merchantman ; it flew the German naval flag, and was armed with torpedo tubes and guns. Next day, after having been visited by the inhabitants of the port, it put out to sea, and in forty-eight hours sank six vessels within sight of the American coast. In each case the ships were warned, and, thanks to the help of American vessels, the crews were saved.

The Allies were indignant, especially as some of the American warships seemed to have stood by for the purpose of saving life while the submarine did its wicked work. The matter was explained, and though the President made no public protest, he sent for Count Bernstorff, and told him that it must not happen again. This warning seems to have been sufficient, for the visit was not repeated. Ships carrying Americans were attacked during the closing months of the year, and some lives were lost ; but no action was taken. The President was biding his time ; the sands of American patience were fast running out.

By the close of the year 1916 Germany recognized that she could not win the war on land. Her only hope was to cut off the food supplies of Britain, France, and Italy, and thus starve the Allies into making terms with her. Accordingly she now determined to begin a ruthless submarine campaign, and to destroy every vessel which attempted to approach the Allied shores. This meant that she would have to break her repeated promises to the United States. On 31st January the German Foreign Secretary handed to Mr. Gerard, the American ambassador in Berlin, a Note which informed President Wilson that from 1st February onward all ships, whether enemy or neutral, found in a certain zone round Great Britain, France, and Italy, and in the Eastern Mediterranean, would be sunk at sight, and without warning. The United States, however, might send one ship a week to England, provided that it was painted in stripes and followed a certain route.

The Americans were furiously angry. Germany had broken her word, and had added insult to injury by offering to let through one American ship a week, provided that it was "striped like a convict." From the Atlantic to the Pacific men angrily demanded war. On 3rd February the President addressed



Nearing Port; a Scene on a Liner approaching British Waters.

(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

The mother is seated on deck with her two children. There is but one thought in her mind: Will they reach harbour safely, or will they fall victims to the under-water warfare of the enemy? It was this "cruel and unmanly business" which brought America into the war.

Congress, and told the assembled members that he had that day dismissed Count Bernstorff, in accordance with the promise which he had made during the *Sussex* dispute.

Count Bernstorff departed without molestation, and the British Government permitted him to return to Germany. Mr. Gerard, however, was treated very differently. While the Germans thought that they could keep the United States neutral, nothing was too good for him—he was praised and made much of; but when his country took the first step towards war, the tune was suddenly changed. He was charged with being a British spy, and was abused and insulted. An attempt was made to get him to promise that, if war broke out, German vessels in American ports should be given up. Of course he refused. From the moment he left Berlin he was shadowed by German agents, who tried hard to prevent him from reaching Washington, and made themselves very offensive at every stage of the journey. Mr. Gerard, however, bore himself with dignity and patience, and reached home, to find the great mass of his countrymen ready for war.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW THE UNITED STATES CAME IN.

IN the foregoing chapter I told you how the Germans hoodwinked and befooled the American people, and at length goaded them into taking the first step towards war. You must not suppose that the anger of the Americans was aroused solely by Germany's broken promises in regard to the submarine warfare. From the beginning of the great struggle in Europe German agents had been going to and fro in the States stirring up strikes in engineering shops, raising fires in the factories which were making munitions for the Allies, blowing up bridges so as to cripple the railways, and destroying ships laden with supplies for Britain. These men also made the United States a base for all sorts of destructive plots against Canada, for trying to raise revolts in Ireland and in India, for gathering information useful to Germany, and for smuggling rubber and other war material into that country. Before long it was discovered that the Austro-Hungarian Minister and a member of the German Embassy were at the bottom of these plots against the peace and good government of the United States. As a consequence, these persons were dismissed, and many of their agents were brought to trial and punished.

I must now tell you of a very dark and deep plot which the Germans made against the United States. It came to light early in the year 1917. At the time Mexico was seething with revolution, and there was much unrest in Cuba. Count Bernstorff and his agents thought that if they could get the Mexicans to declare war on the States, and at the same time raise a rebellion in Cuba, the Americans would have their hands so full that they would be unable to do much in the way of fighting in Europe. After the dismissal of Count Bernstorff, a letter from

the German Foreign Minister at Berlin was seized on its way to the German Minister in Mexico. This letter, which was dated 19th January, stated that, in spite of the new submarine campaign, Germany intended to try to keep the United States neutral. If this attempt should fail, an alliance was to be offered to Mexico on the following terms: Mexico was to join Germany, and was to go to war with the United States for the purpose of winning back New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. Further, Mexico was to try to get Japan to join her against the Allies, and a promise was made that Germany would supply all the money needed. The letter ended thus:—

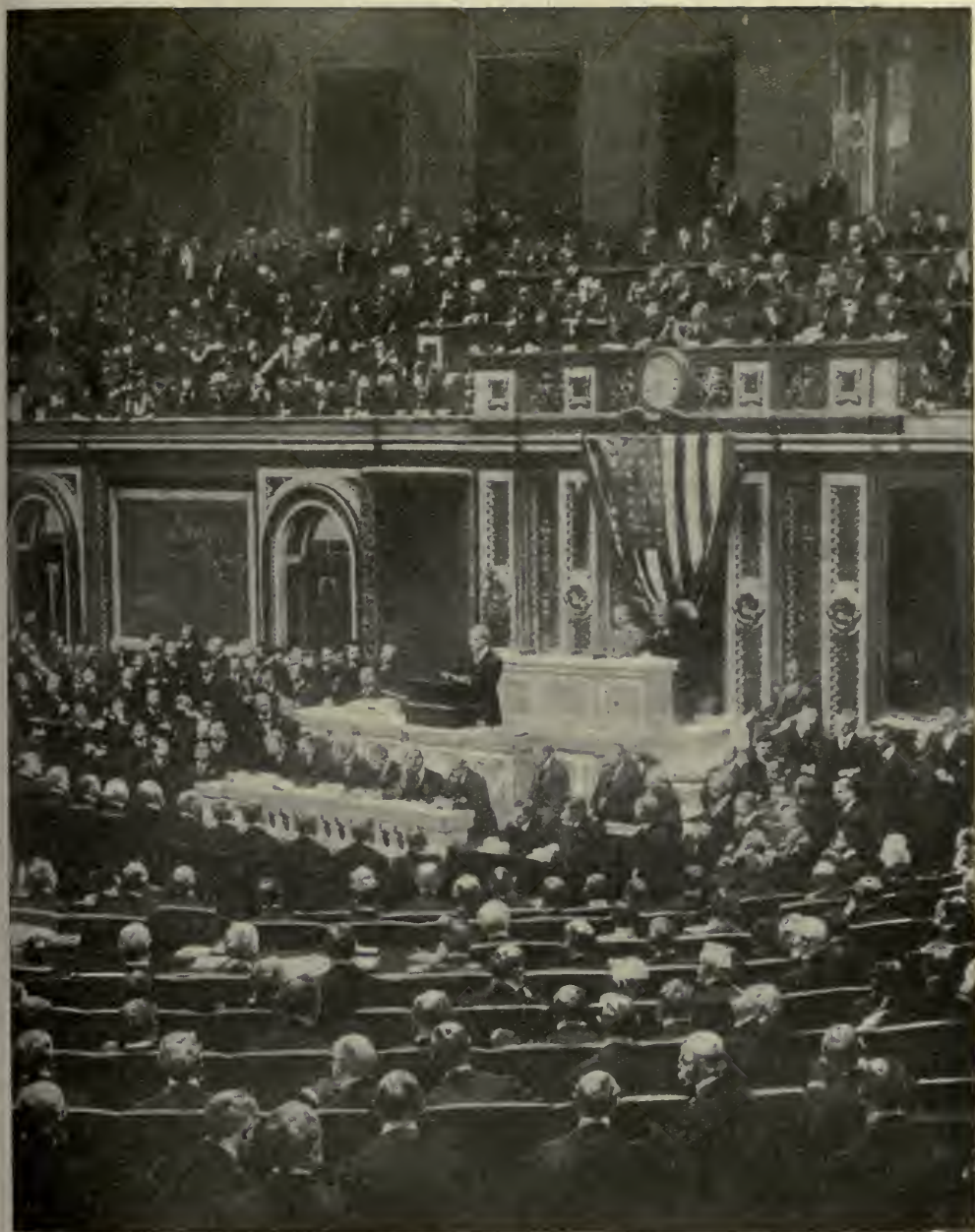
“Please call to the attention of the President of Mexico the fact that the employment of ruthless submarine warfare promises to compel England to make peace in a few months.”

I need not tell you that when this letter was made public the American people became furiously angry. They now knew the depth of German treachery, and were convinced that war could not be avoided if their country was to be safe.

* * * * *

You are now to witness one of the most impressive scenes in all the history of the United States. Let us suppose that you are looking down from the gallery of the House of Representatives at Washington on the evening of April 2, 1917. You see the members crowding the semicircular rows of seats facing the Speaker's platform, behind which hangs “Old Glory,” the American flag with its stars and stripes. The members wear an air of deep seriousness, and it is clear that matters of great pith and moment are about to be decided. Suddenly you hear the dull roar of loud cheers without. The President is arriving. Shortly after 8.30 he enters the House. At once the members rise and greet him with wild enthusiasm.

Look well at the President as he stands at the desk waiting for silence. You observe that he is a clean-shaven, strong-faced man, who looks more like a student than a statesman. Most of his life has been spent within the quiet walls of an old university. He was a college principal when the best men of his nation sought him out and begged him to place his great talents and his strong desire for good and pure government at the service of the state. So well did he play his part as Governor of New Jersey that he was speedily marked out for the highest position of power and influence in the country. He is now



President Wilson making his Great Speech to Congress.

(By permission of the Central News.)

-serving his second term of office as President, and he is about to announce to the world the reasons why the United States can no longer forbear to take part in the great struggle.

The cheers die down, and a deep hush follows. The President begins to speak in a low tone, but as he proceeds his voice grows stronger. Let me tell you in my own words the sum and substance of his great message.

Fellow-countrymen, he says, I have called Congress together because there are serious, very serious steps to be taken at once, and it is not right that I should take them without your approval. On 3rd February last I told you that the German Government had decided to defy law and humanity, and to sink at sight every vessel that sought to approach the ports of the Allies. That had seemed to be the object of the German submarine warfare earlier in the war; but since April of last year the commanders of the undersea craft have been somewhat restrained, according to the promise given to us that passenger boats would not be sunk, and that due warning would be given to all other vessels. If no resistance was offered or escape attempted, care would be taken that the crews were given at least a fair chance to save their lives in their open boats.

These conditions were haphazard enough, and there was a sad loss of life in carrying on this cruel and unmanly business. Nevertheless, some restraint was observed. Now, however, vessels of all kinds, whatever their flag, character, cargo, port, or errand, are ruthlessly sent to the bottom without warning, and without help or mercy for those on board—vessels of friendly neutrals along with those of the nations at war. Even hospital ships and vessels carrying relief to the stricken people of Belgium have been sunk. The Germans promised that the relief ships, if they bore certain marks, should be spared; but they have been sunk with the same ruthless cruelty. The present German warfare against commerce is *warfare against mankind*. It is a war against all nations.

American ships have been sunk and American lives have been taken in ways which it has stirred us deeply to learn of; but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed also. There has been no picking and choosing. The challenge is to all mankind. Each nation must decide for itself how it will meet it. The choice which we make for ourselves must be made with calmness and

without excitement. Our object in making that choice is not revenge or military glory, but to stand up for the right.

When I addressed Congress on 26th February last I thought it would be sufficient if we were to arm our ships so that they could maintain our right to use the seas without unlawful interference, and keep our people safe against unlawful violence; but that cannot be done. It is impossible to defend merchant ships against the attacks of submarines. Under-water craft must be destroyed at sight. The German Government denies the right of neutrals to use arms at all in the war zones, and we are told that the armed guards of our vessels will be treated as pirates if they are caught. Merely arming our ships to resist attack is not enough; it is worse than useless.

There is one choice we cannot make, and are incapable of making. *We will not choose to submit to injustice, and to suffer the most sacred rights of our nation and our people to be taken away from us.* The wrongs against which we now array ourselves are not common wrongs; they cut to the very root of human life.

With a very deep sense of the solemn event and the tragical character of the step I am taking, I deem it my duty to advise Congress to declare that the recent course of the German Government is nothing less than *war against the Government and people of the United States*, and that we accept the position which is thus thrust upon us, and take immediate steps not only to put the country in a more thorough state of defence, but also to exert all its power and employ all its resources to bring the Government of the German Empire to terms, and to end the war.

What this means to us is quite clear. We must co-operate with the governments now at war with Germany, and give them all the money assistance which we can. We must organize all our resources to supply ourselves with the materials of war. We must fully equip the Navy, and give it the means of dealing with the enemy's submarines. We must add 500,000 men to the army, make all men of military age liable for service, and pass laws enabling us to raise more and more men as soon as we can train them.

We must clearly tell the whole world what has driven us into war, and what our object is in waging it. We mean to maintain by our arms peace and justice in the life of the world

as against the selfish power of tyrants, and to unite all really free and self-governed peoples into a great league which will keep the peace and do justice to all. The great danger to the world's peace and freedom comes from those governments which control vast armies and rule by their own will and not by the will of their people.

We have no quarrel with the German people. We have only sympathy and friendship for them. They did not wish their Government to wage this war; they had no knowledge of it beforehand, and they did not approve of it. The war was made by their rulers, as wars were made in the old unhappy days when kings or little groups of ambitious men used their fellow-men as pawns or tools for the purpose of increasing their own power and adding to their own possessions.

Self-governed nations do not fill their neighbour states with spies; they do not plot and plan to stir up trouble amongst nations so that they can seize the opportunity to strike a blow and make a conquest. It is only possible to do these things in a country where no one has a right to ask questions. Cunning plans for deceiving the people and plunging them into war can only be worked out and kept from the light in the secrecy of courts, or where a few favoured men hold the reins of power. Where public opinion rules, and the people can insist upon knowing what is being done in their name, such underhand methods of bringing about war are impossible.

Only self-governed nations can be trusted to keep faith and be true to their plighted word. Only free peoples can hold to their purpose, and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interest of their own. The wonderful things which have been happening in Russia within the last few weeks have heartened us greatly, and have strengthened our hope for the future peace of the world. We have seen the downfall of a monarch who claims to rule by his own right, and the great, generous Russian people added to the forces which are fighting for freedom, justice, and peace.

One of the things which prove to us that the Prussian Government was not, and can never be, our friend, is that from the very outset of the war it sent hordes of spies amongst our unsuspecting people, and even managed to get them into our Government offices. These men have made plots against our peace and against our industries and commerce. The plots

were carried on with the support and even under the direction of the ministers sent to this country by the Central Powers. Even while we were checking the outrages and trying to stamp them out, we knew that the German people had no hand in them. We knew that they were the selfish designs of a Government that did as it pleased and told its people nothing. We were very patient, but at last we were convinced that the Prussian Government was not our friend. Now we know from the Note addressed to the German Minister at Mexico city that it is trying to stir up enemies against us at our very doors. We are going to fight because we know that such a Government, following such methods, can never be our friend, and that we are not safe while it lies in wait to do us mischief. *We are now about to accept the gage of battle with this natural foe to liberty*, and we shall, if necessary, spend the whole forces of the nation to bring its power to naught. The world must be safe for self-governing peoples. Its peace must be planted on the foundations of freedom. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquests and no dominion. We seek neither land nor gold for the sacrifices which we shall freely make.

We enter this war because there are no other means of defending our rights. Civilization itself seems to be in the balance ; but right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for the right of the people to have a voice in their own government, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a union of free peoples so as to bring peace and safety to all, and to make the world itself at last free.

To such a task we can dedicate our lives, our fortunes—everything we are, everything we have—with the pride of those who know the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and might for the principles that gave her birth, and the happiness and peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

* * * * *

Such in effect is the President's noble message. From time to time thunders of applause burst from his hearers. A great shout, for example, arises when he declares that the United States will not choose to submit to injustice, and the whole audience rises to its feet and cheers and cheers again when he



The Boarding of Broke in the Channel Fight.
(From the picture by A. Forestier.)

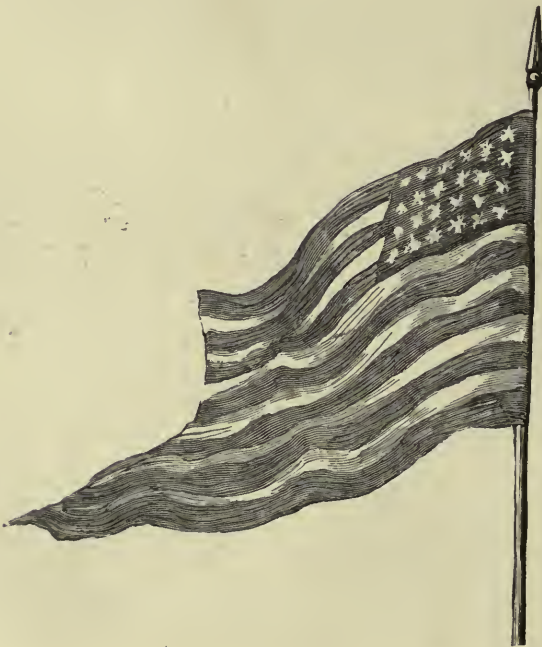


Shipman Gyles attacked by one of the German Boarders.
(Illustration of *The Illustrated London News*.)

announces that a state of war exists with Germany. When he concludes his speech there is a remarkable scene. The members wave handkerchiefs and flags, and shout themselves hoarse. "At last," says an old and honoured American who looks on, "we can hold up our heads amongst the nations."

* * * * *

Events now moved very rapidly. On 4th April the Senate passed a resolution declaring war by 82 votes to 6; and next day the House of Representatives pledged itself to use all the resources of the country to bring the conflict to a victorious end by 373 votes to 50. On Good Friday (6th April) the President signed the resolution carried by Congress. The United States was at war with Germany.



CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW "SWIFT" AND "BROKE" FOUGHT AND DEFEATED SIX
GERMAN DESTROYERS.

IN the old days of sail, and of smooth-bore cannon, boarding the enemy was an important feature in almost every sea-fight. Just as British soldiers are now famous trench raiders, so British sailors in the days of old were famous boarders. A British captain usually tried to get his ship alongside that of the enemy. When the ship was sufficiently near his boarders swarmed over the enemy's bulwarks, and fierce struggles took place on his decks. In most cases the ship was captured, its flag was hauled down, and it was taken home as a prize.

Nelson frequently led his own boarders, and inspired them by his own dauntless courage. Here is an account of how he boarded the *San Nicolas* and the *San Joseph* at the Battle of St. Vincent in the year 1797 :—

"Nelson directed his captain to put the helm a-starboard, and calling for the boarders, ordered them to board. Captain Berry was the first man who leaped into the enemy's mizzen-chains. He was supported by men who swarmed down from the sprit-sail yard, which locked in the *San Nicolas's* main rigging. A soldier of the 60th broke the upper quarter-gallery window and jumped in, followed by Nelson himself, and by others as fast as possible. The cabin doors were fastened, and the Spanish officers fired their pistols at them through the window; the doors were soon forced, and the Spanish brigadier fell while retreating to the quarter-deck. Nelson pushed on, and found Berry in possession of the poop, and the Spanish ensign hauling down. He passed on to the fore-castle, where he met two or three Spanish officers, and received their swords.

"The English were now in full possession of every part of the ship; and a fire of pistols and musketry opened upon them from the admiral's stern galley of the *San Joseph* (which then lay on the other side of the *San Nicolas*). Nelson having placed sentinels at the different ladders, ordered his captain to send more men into the prize, and gave orders for boarding

the *San Joseph* from the *San Nicolas*. It was done in an instant, he himself leading the way and exclaiming, 'Westminster Abbey, or victory!' Berry assisted him into the main chains, and at that moment a Spanish officer looked over the quarter-deck rail and said they surrendered.

"It was not long before he was on the quarter-deck, where the Spanish captain presented to him his sword, and told him the admiral was below, dying of his wounds. There, on the quarter-deck of an enemy's first-rate, he received the swords of the officers, giving them, as they were delivered, one by one, to William Fearney, one of his old *Agamemnon's*, who, with the utmost coolness, put them under his arm." *

Now that naval battles are fought at a distance of seven or eight miles, the practice of boarding is a thing of the past. The battleships hurl death and destruction at each other across miles of sea, until one or the other is so badly mauled that it can no longer resist. Then, and then only, does the victor close in and deal the disabled vessel the final blows. British ships also close in to pick up as many as possible of the survivors. You will remember that at the Battle of Coronel von Spee's squadron closed in on the doomed *Monmouth*, but did not lift a finger to save one of our men. On the other hand, at the Battle of the Falkland Islands, the *Invincible* closed in, and picked up more than a hundred of the enemy. It is said that one of the German officers thus picked up looked wildly around him, and with the cry, "British! thank God!" fell fainting to the deck. He believed that the ships which had sunk *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were Japanese!

Though I have said that boarding is a thing of the past, an instance actually occurred in the English Channel in April 1917. Let me tell you the story. About 12.30 on the morning of 21st April the inhabitants of Dover were awakened from sleep by the sound of heavy firing. Five German destroyers were making a raid on the port. The shells, however, fell in fields, and did no damage. It is said that six cows usually slept in a corner of a field that was ploughed up by shells, but that on this particular night they chose another sleeping place, and therefore escaped unhurt.

The destroyers having fired about forty shells, turned and ran for the Downs, where they hoped to attack our shipping. They were met by two of our patrols, and a short, sharp encounter began. From the shore observers saw star-shells lighting up the sky. As they burst, flashes of flame

* From Southey's *Life of Nelson*.

from the guns could be seen stabbing the darkness. What was happening ?

* * * * *

Swift and *Broke*, two of our destroyer leaders, a new type of swift and powerful warships, were on night duty in the Channel, and were proceeding on a westerly course, when *Swift* sighted an enemy flotilla on the port bow, going eastward at a high speed. The night, though calm, was very dark, and the enemy vessels were within 600 yards' range of our ships when they were discovered. The fire-gongs on board the German ships were heard to sound, and shortly afterwards, in a blaze of flashes, their guns opened fire. *Swift* instantly replied, and her commander, Ambrose M. Peck, decided to ram the leading enemy destroyer. The wheel was wrenched round, and *Swift* drove straight at the enemy. She was taking a very grave risk. The German destroyer was dashing along through pitch darkness at the rate of between twenty and thirty knots an hour, and the smallest error in steering or the slightest slackening of speed on the part of *Swift* would have meant that she would miss the target ship, and probably be rammed herself by the next vessel of the enemy's line.

As bad luck would have it, *Swift* missed, but she shot through the line without damage. She then turned like a hawk, and in doing so neatly torpedoed one of the enemy's destroyers. She now made another dash at the leading vessel ; but it managed to get out of the way, and without firing another shot made off in the darkness, hotly followed by *Swift*.

Now let us see what happened to *Broke*. She was commanded by Edward Evans, who was Captain Scott's right-hand man in the ill-fated expedition to the Antarctic. He was steaming astern of *Swift* when she attempted to ram the enemy. At once he launched a torpedo at the second boat in the line, and then opened fire with every gun that would bear. He could see the upper works of the six enemy vessels, because there was a dull glow from every funnel. He now decided to ram, and hoped to be more successful than *Swift* had been. Holding his course for a few minutes in order to gather speed for the blow, he swung round to port, and drove right into the third boat of the enemy's line, hitting her fair and square abreast of the after-funnel.

Thus locked together, a desperate combat took place at close

quarters. *Broke* swept the German deck with all her guns, and her crew plied Maxims, rifles, and pistols. Meanwhile, the remaining destroyers of the enemy poured a devastating fire upon her. The foremost guns' crews were reduced from eighteen men to six. Midshipman Donald A. Gyles, who was in charge of the forecastle, was wounded in the eye; nevertheless he kept the guns in action, and assisted the men to load.

While he was thus engaged, a number of Germans from the rammed destroyer swarmed on to the *Broke's* forecastle, and tried to rush aft and obtain possession of the vessel. The midshipman, amid the dead and wounded of his guns' crews and half blinded with blood, met the rush single-handed. His only weapon was a revolver. A German grappled with him, and attempted to wrest it from his hand. At this moment Able Seaman Ingleson sprang forward, and ran the man through with his cutlass. Before long, most of the Germans were driven over the side, and the rest were taken prisoners.

Of the original six German destroyers only three now remained in the line. Two minutes after *Broke* had rammed the third boat of the line she managed to wrench herself free from the sinking vessel, and turned to ram the fifth boat of the flotilla. This she failed to do; but as she swung round she hit the following boat on the stern with a torpedo. While she was hotly engaged with these two destroyers a shell burst in her boiler-room and disabled her main engines. She could still steam, however, though she could not follow up the fleeing enemy.

Not far away one of the raiding destroyers was seen in flames. *Broke* now steered for her, and as she came within hail the Germans sent up loud shouts for mercy. "Save! save!" they cried. Nevertheless, as soon as *Broke* was well within range they treacherously opened fire. *Broke* was now out of control, but with four rounds she silenced the enemy's guns, and, to make assurance doubly sure, fired a torpedo which hit the vessel amidships.

Now we must return to *Swift*, which also had received such damage that she could not overtake the vessel which she was chasing. She therefore turned to seek a fresh quarry, and soon sighted a German destroyer lying helpless on the water. As she drew near, her crew could hear the Germans shouting



Midshipman Donald A. Gyles, R.N.R.

(By permission of the Central News.)

Awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry during the destroyer action in the Channel, April 21, 1917.

in chorus, "We surrender! We surrender!" It was the destroyer which *Broke* had rammed.

Believing that treachery was on foot, *Swift* stood by to see what would happen. Soon the Germans stopped shouting; their vessel heeled over and sank stern first. Then *Swift* turned on her searchlights, and lowered her boats to rescue the men in the water.

A little later *Swift* and *Broke* joined company, and each told the other the story of the fight by means of a flashing lamp. When the details became known, the crews cheered each other until they could cheer no longer.

Both ships returned to port safely, and received a great welcome from the other vessels of the fleet. As the victorious destroyers steamed into the harbour, quarters were manned on board the warships, and amidst rounds of cheers and the booming of syrens they moved to their berths. Our casualties were not serious; but the Germans had lost heavily, and more than a hundred officers and men had been taken prisoners. The prisoners and the bodies recovered accounted for the total crews of two destroyers. Probably a third had also been destroyed, though the Germans only admitted the loss of two. According to their custom, they claimed that they had sunk one of our ships, and had so seriously damaged a second that it too had probably gone down. A third, they said, was badly holed and on fire, while a fourth was hit. Of course all this was pure fiction. The only British vessels that attacked them were *Swift* and *Broke*, and both returned to harbour without serious damage. The German story reminds us of Falstaff's account * of his fight with the men in buckram. By the time he had finished telling the tale, he had multiplied the two men who surprised him into fourteen.

* See Shakespeare's *King Henry IV.*, Part I., Act ii., Scene 4.

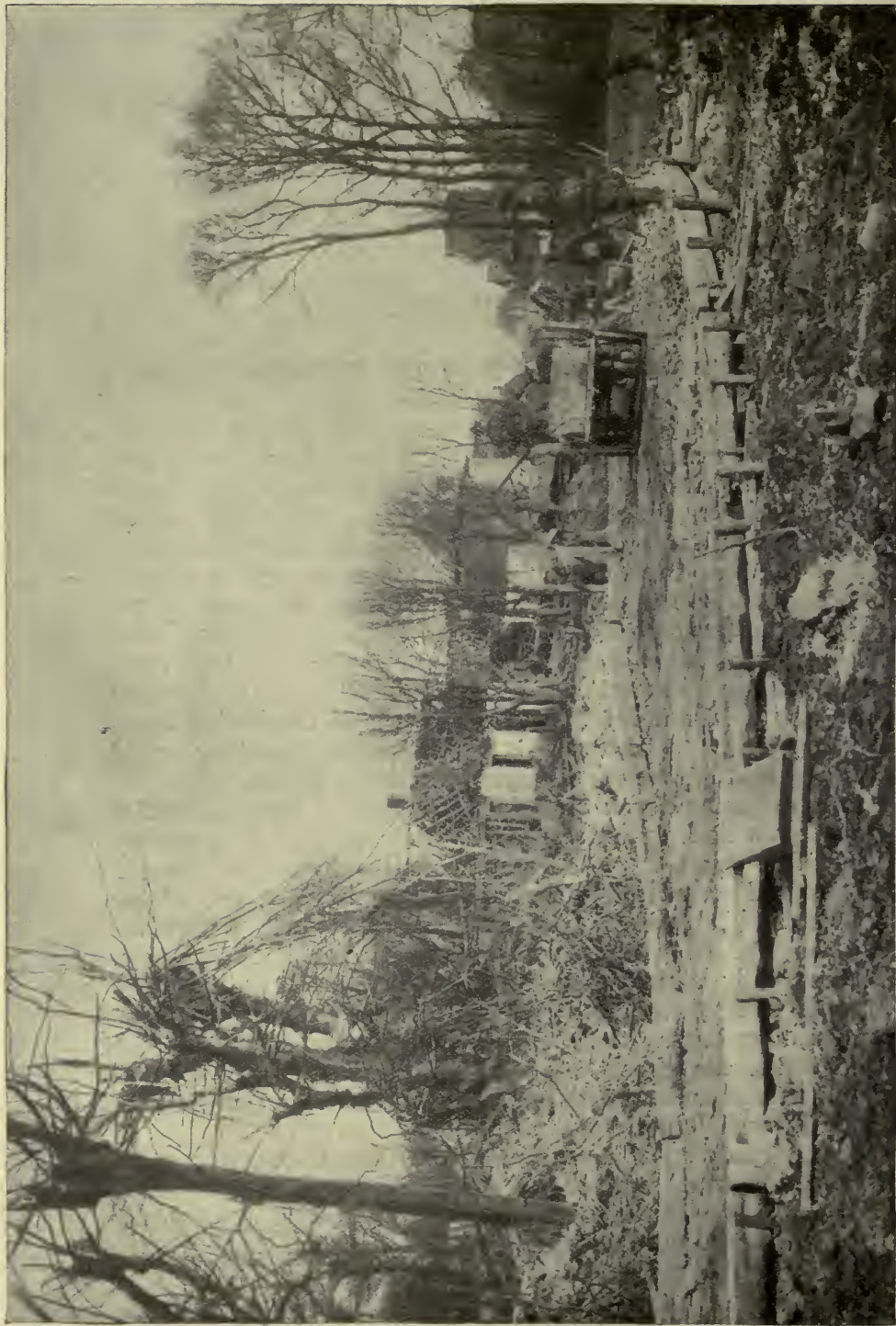
CHAPTER XIX.

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG'S ACCOUNT OF THE GERMAN RETREAT.

THE story of our struggles between the Ancre and the Somme well illustrates the old copy-book heading—"Patience and Perseverance carried the snail to Jerusalem." With wonderful patience and perseverance we fought fierce and costly battles for four and a half months during the latter half of the year 1916, and during that time we had very little in the way of conquered territory to show for our pains. Folks at home marked off our little gains on the map, and sighed at our slow advance. They pointed out that in the great battles on the Somme we had only moved our line forward three and a half miles. If four and a half months' fighting only enabled us to advance this short distance, how long would it be before we drove the Germans across the Rhine?

Let me remind you once more that in the Somme battles we were not fighting for territory. Our newspapers frequently spoke of the push towards Bapaume, and many people thought that we had set ourselves the task of winning that town. Sir Douglas Haig, however, was not so much concerned with recovering French soil as with wearing down the Germans. He was fully aware that every battle waged reduced the enemy's strength, and he was content to fight on with true British doggedness, knowing full well that the hour would arrive when the Kaiser's legions would be too weak to hold their battered and dented line. Then, and only then, would the snail reach Jerusalem.

You already know something of the German retreat. Four and a half months' struggle had given us the watershed between the Somme and the Scheldt. It had also enabled us to thrust a wedge into the country between the Ancre and the Scarpe,



British Supply Wagons entering a Village over a newly-made Road.

[British Official Photo.]

The Germans blew up the roads as they retreated, and in many cases new roads had to be made. Sometimes it was necessary for us to blow the houses in order to lay down a new road. The road shown in the photograph is partly made of planks with an edging of timber to keep them

a sub-tributary of the Scheldt. There were many signs that the Germans had been hard hit, and that they hoped for a respite during the winter months. Sir Douglas Haig, however, was too wise a man to slacken off when he had the enemy at a disadvantage. Those of you who have taken part in a tug of war know that you must pull with every ounce of your strength at the very moment when your opponents begin to show signs of weakness. It is fatal if you then give them an opportunity of recovering their breath and getting their heels firmly into the ground once more.

The British Commander-in-Chief therefore determined to keep on striking hammer-blows at the Germans throughout the winter. Rain might fall in torrents, deep snow might cover the ground, sharp frost might make it hard as iron, thaw might reduce it to a quagmire, and cloud and mist might veil the landscape—no matter what the weather, he would continue to hammer, hammer, hammer at the enemy's defences. Somewhere or other along our front we fought battles every day right through the winter. Whenever a lull set in, the Germans announced that our offensive had ceased. Hardly had they comforted their soldiers with this news than we were at it again.

I have already told you of the series of successes which we won along the Ancre valley during the winter of 1916-17. You know how we pushed forward and gained positions from which we could enfilade villages which had defied us for many long months, and cut them off from communication with the rear. The consequence was that on February 24, 1917, the enemy began to retreat from these villages. He yielded them up one by one, and only attempted to delay our advance by rearguard actions. We were beginning to reap the reward of our patience and perseverance ; we were on the road to Jerusalem.

The German retreat was well planned ; it was both slow and deliberate. Most of the guns and stores were got away safely, and we took but few prisoners. The enemy was greatly favoured during his withdrawal by the weather. There had been a long spell of frost after a wet autumn, and the ground had been frozen to a great depth. The thaw began in the third week of February, and the roads were soon in a terrible condition. The ground over which our troops had to advance became a quaking bog. On the other hand, the surface of the ground behind the enemy steadily improved as he marched to

the rear. He was helped, too, by the misty days, which prevented our airmen from spying out his movements.

The retreat, you will remember, began in the Ancre valley, but before long it extended southward as far as the Aisne. I have already told you the story in a general sort of way, and now I propose to tell it you in more detail. On June 19, 1917, Sir Douglas Haig issued a dispatch describing the whole struggle from November 18, 1916, down to April 5, 1917. I need not trouble you with the earlier portion of this dispatch, because it covers the ground with which I have already dealt. I shall confine myself to the latter portion, which deals with the period from 11th March to 5th April.

Sir Douglas Haig tells us that for some time before 11th March there were signs that the Germans were going to withdraw still further. Our airmen had discovered that the enemy was busy preparing a line of trenches which branched off from his old line near Arras, and ran south-eastward for twelve miles to Quéant, about eleven miles to the west of Cambrai. Thence the new line, which was known as the Hindenburg line, ran in front of St. Quentin, La Fère, and the hilly district of Gobain to the Aisne. Various other lines of trenches, which our men called "switches," branched off from this main line. Sir Douglas Haig came to the conclusion that the enemy meant, sooner or later, to withdraw to these new defences, and to give up the whole of the great salient between Arras and the Aisne valley.

Constant watch was kept along the whole line south of Arras, so that any movement of the enemy to the rear might be discovered without delay. On 14th March our patrols found that parts of the German front line near St. Pierre Vaast Wood were empty. During that night and the following day our troops went forward and occupied the whole of the enemy's trenches on the western edge of the wood. There was but little opposition, and by 16th March we held nearly the whole of the wood, and were close to the northern outskirts of Saily-Saillisel.

Meanwhile, on the evening of 15th March, it was discovered that the enemy's forces on our front south of the Somme had been reduced in number, and that the line was only being held by rearguards with machine guns. Patrols went out to make sure that this was so, and shortly afterwards orders were given

for a general advance all along our front from the south of Arras to Roye.

Except in a few places, where their rearguards fought stubbornly, the Germans made little resistance when we and the French, who were working with us, approached them. Before nightfall on 17th March Bapaume had been captured, and we had pushed far into the enemy's positions all along his old front. Cannot you imagine the delight of our troops when they entered the town, even though it was but a mass of ruins? Ever since July 1, 1916, it had been a point to aim at, and from the moment when we made good our footing on the high ground north of Pozières (July 14, 1916) its towers had been visible. Now it was in our hands.

On 18th March and the following days we continued to advance in this district, and the whole system of German defences, consisting of many miles of strong, well-wired trenches, which had been constructed with immense labour and had been worked on until the last moment, lay before us untenanted by a single German.

Péronne, which had been almost surrounded by our troops since the middle of September 1916, was also abandoned. To the south of the town our advanced troops pushed on to the western bank of the Somme. By ten o'clock next day our engineers had so far repaired the bridge at Brie that our infantry were able to cross the river in single file. Further south French and British cavalry entered Nesle.

By the evening of 19th March our infantry held the line of the Somme from Péronne to within three miles of Ham. All the old battlefields had been left behind, and we were drawing near to the so-called Hindenburg line.

And now our advance began to slacken. We dared not push on rapidly, for there was great difficulty in maintaining our communications. South of Péronne the bridges across the Somme had been destroyed, and north of that town there was a wide belt of ruined country, over which guns and transport could only move with the greatest difficulty. Everything that could assist us had been destroyed by the enemy. His armies were still intact, and had he caught us well ahead of our lines of communication he might have launched a heavy blow at us. Strong bodies of his infantry and cavalry kept him well informed of our progress, and screened his own movements. His

guns had already been removed to prepared positions, from which they could do us immense mischief, more especially as the awful condition of the country delayed the advance of our own guns.

In these circumstances we were obliged to be cautious and secure the positions which we had already won. Meanwhile, on the newly-gained ground, our labour battalions were as busy as bees, making roads and railways, repairing and building bridges, and establishing easy communication between our new front and our bases.

The nearer we approached the Hindenburg line the stronger became the enemy's resistance. North of the Bapaume-Cambrai road we were within two or three miles of the new German line, and in other places we were creeping towards it day by day. The enemy, now safely installed in his new trenches, began his counter-attacks. Five separate times he tried to recover a village on the Bapaume-Cambrai road, six miles from the former town, but every time he was driven back with much loss.

Meanwhile we advanced slowly and steadily, and small fights took place every day all along our front. Despite every effort of the enemy to keep us back, we continually moved forward, and almost every hour we took prisoners, machine guns, and trench mortars. In every position captured the large number of enemy dead showed how stubbornly the Germans had resisted. Our cavalry were engaged in these encounters, and on 27th March did a very fine piece of work by driving the enemy from a village eight miles north-east of St. Quentin, and capturing prisoners and guns. On 1st and 2nd March they repeated their success, and advanced our line to within two miles of St. Quentin. Once more they took prisoners and guns, and left many dead on the ground.

On 2nd April we made a bold attempt to break through the advanced defences of the Hindenburg line north of the Bapaume-Cambrai road. In the early morning we assaulted the series of villages and well-wired trenches lying between the Cojeul, a little sub-tributary of the Scarpe, and Doignies, about four miles south of Quéant. At the close of a long day's fighting we had won a whole string of villages, and had sent back to the "cages" some 270 prisoners.

In some places by this time we were right up against the

Hindenburg line ; in other places we found our way blocked by the advanced posts of the enemy. For several days we battered at these outer buttresses, and on 5th April carried another series of villages.

Before concluding his dispatch, Sir Douglas Haig gives a general description of the outstanding features of the struggle from November 1916 to April 1917. He reminds us that during the winter our men had to fight under the most difficult and trying conditions ; yet, in spite of all the hardships which they had to endure, they behaved splendidly. He gives specially high praise to Generals Gough and Rawlinson for the great ability with which they handled their troops. You will remember that Gough commanded in the Ancre area, and Rawlinson in the region from Le Transloy to Roye.

The retreat which we forced on the Germans brought about a kind of warfare new to most of our troops. For two years they had fought from holes in the ground, and had become experts in trench fighting. Now they were engaged in something like open fighting, and so well did they acquit themselves that the Commander-in-Chief looked forward to the future with confidence. All arms received high praise for their conduct during the retreat, but the laurels were awarded to the Royal Engineers for the rapid and efficient manner in which they repaired the roads, railways, and bridges which the enemy had destroyed. Thanks to their energy and thoroughness, our advance was made possible.

Perhaps the greatest feat of the Royal Engineers was the repairing of the bridge over the swiftly-flowing Somme at Brie. The enemy had blown six gaps in the bridge, some of them of great width. The Engineers set to work on the morning of 18th March, and by 10 p.m. that day had flung footbridges across the gaps so that the infantry could cross. By 5 a.m. on 20th March they had so strengthened the bridges that horse-wagons and cavalry were able to reach the other side, and by 2 p.m. on 22nd March, four and a half days after they began their work, the bridges were so firm and solid that they could support the passage of big guns. You can imagine how splendidly the Royal Engineers must have worked to bring about this result.

There was, however, one great drawback from which we suffered at this time. By the close of the 1916 campaign our



"Hullo, Mother!" British Soldiers making Friends with t

(From the picture by F. Mata...

Gone are the gray-green uniforms of the Germans, the hard rule of the invader, the everlasting of the hated Germans. The children are attracted to them as naturally as steel to a magnet, and in a soldier's meal. Even the old women who have passed through such days of terror and anxiety. It is a newer and a very perfect "entente" that is being established among the ruins of the French memory of their sufferings fades, they will still remember the cheery, generous friends who fed them at



Women and Children of a French Village recovered from the Enemy.

(Mission of The Sphere.)

Khaki-clad warriors—kindly men who laugh and jest in the midst of death—take the place newcomers the best of playmates. Some of the children are given rides on horses, others share and comforted by the gay, warm-hearted men who are fighting to win back France for them. The relations between British soldiers and the children of the country. When the youngsters grow up and they play with them.

armies had so greatly increased in number, and our material of war had become so immense, that the roads and railways were found to be too few to deal with the traffic. When winter set in the roads became almost impossible for the passage of transport, and it was clear that if the offensive was to continue railways of all kinds must be constructed without delay. The home railways and those of Canada were drawn upon for material, and the work of building new lines was pushed forward with the utmost speed. Miles of track in Great Britain and Canada were torn up, and rails and locomotives and rolling stock were sent to France. It is strange to think of a railway engine threading the cañons of British Columbia in 1916, and puffing along amidst the Picardy fields in the following year. Sir Douglas Haig pays a high tribute to Sir Eric Geddes, who was chiefly responsible for the rapid construction of the railways. Before the war he was Deputy-General Manager of the North-Eastern Railway.

Sir Douglas Haig brings his remarks to a close by referring to the friendship and good fellowship which prevailed between the Allies throughout the Somme battle. During the latter part of the period under review a large part of France was won back, and this gave great pleasure to the British troops. At the same time they were deeply grieved at the sight of the destruction which war had wrought on a once fair and prosperous countryside.

* * * * *

Before I conclude this chapter, let me tell you something about Bapaume, the largest place which we had so far won back from the enemy in Picardy. Prior to the war it was a town of more than five thousand inhabitants, and was engaged in making sugar, soap, and oil. It was regularly built, and was formerly fortified by the great military engineer Vauban. Up to the year 1723 the water was bad, but in that year an artesian well was sunk, and ever since then it has possessed an abundant supply of excellent water. The place has had a very warlike history, and before 1659, when it was finally added to the French crown, it frequently changed hands. It was a place of good omen for the French; for in the neighbourhood of the town the French general Faidherbe won a victory over the Germans in January 1871.

The town of Noyon, which stands on the river Oise

some twenty-five miles south-west of St. Quentin, was also restored to France during the German retreat described in this chapter. During the time of its occupation by the Germans, the phrase "The Germans are still at Noyon" was used by the Parisians to impress upon each other the fact that the enemy was only fifty to fifty-four miles from the capital. It is an interesting old city, its chief feature being the cathedral, which Robert Louis Stevenson likened to "the poop of some great old battleship. There is a roll in the ground, and the towers just appear above the pitch of the roof as though the good ship were bowing lazily over an Atlantic swell. At any moment it might be a hundred feet from you, mounting the next billow. At any moment a window might open, and some old admiral thrust forth a cocked hat and make an observation." Happily the cathedral was not injured.

In peace time Noyon has but 6,000 inhabitants; but when the French marched in they were greeted by some 10,000 of their countrymen. The Germans, who had driven the peasantry from the surrounding villages into the town, had abandoned the place in great haste, and had left behind them three batteries and much ammunition. Before departing they looted the stores of the American Relief Fund, and then blew up the building. All the great trees by the roadsides were cut down and carried off, and the fruit trees were destroyed.

General Nivelles himself rode into Noyon, and there was a simple ceremony to mark its restoration to France. The pomp of war was represented by a splendid infantry regiment which marched through the streets behind its tattered colours. The people had collected every tricolour flag in the place, and almost every house showed some emblem of welcome. Those who had no flag hung out festoons of red, white, and blue paper. It was a great day for Noyon. The hated Boche had gone, never to return, leaving behind him plentiful evidences of his cruelty and spleen.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CROSS OF VALOUR AND SELF-SACRIFICE.—I.

IT is time that I turned to the stories of those gallant souls whose glorious courage entitled them to the highest award of valour. In this and in the following chapter I shall give you an account of the heroes who won the Victoria Cross between the close of the year 1916 and the end of May 1917. Again you will notice that some of those who displayed the most superb courage on the battlefield did not live to wear the honours which they had so nobly won.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM ANDERSON BLOOMFIELD, Scout Corps, South African Mounted Brigade.

I have already mentioned this hero in connection with the fighting in East Africa. You will remember that I gave you some account of him on page 374, Vol. VI., but that I could not then supply details of his exploit. It appears that when he was holding an advanced post, cut off from all supports, the enemy worked round his flanks and almost surrounded him and his little band. He was obliged to fall back, and perhaps he might have been excused if he had left his wounded behind him; but his first care was for them. He got them all away safely, as he thought, and then retired to a new position, he himself being the last to withdraw. When the new position was reached, he discovered that one of the wounded, Corporal Bowker, had been left behind. Without a thought for himself, he set off for the deserted post to seek and to save his comrade. He had to cross some four hundred yards of open ground which was being heavily shelled, and as he went forward he was in full view of the enemy all the time. Nevertheless he pushed on, found the corporal, and carried him back safely in spite of the rifle and machine gun fire which opened on him. Many

times in these pages I have told you of heroic rescues; none was more heroic than that performed by Captain Bloomfield.

LIEUTENANT EUGENE PAUL BENNETT, Worcestershire Regiment.

Prior to the war Lieutenant Bennett was a clerk in the Bank of England. When the call came he bade farewell to the "Old Lady of Threadneedle Street," and soon proved himself to be a born soldier and a leader of men. During an attack in France he was in command of the second wave that advanced. The first wave was very badly cut up, its commander was killed, and the survivors began to waver. At this moment Lieutenant Bennett put himself at the head of the second wave, and by his splendid coolness and spirit led it on until it had reached the enemy's position. He had then but sixty men left. But for him the whole attack would have been a failure. In his new position he had no supports either on his right or his left, and rifle and machine-gun fire was beating down upon him like a hailstorm. He himself was wounded; but he refused to give up his command, and continued to direct and encourage his men until the post was made secure. The official record tells us that his "cheerfulness and resolution" were "beyond all praise."

PRIVATE JOHN CUNNINGHAM, East Yorkshire Regiment.

Private Cunningham was only nineteen years of age when he wrote his name high on the roll of valour. Before the war he was a hawker living in Hull. After the enemy's front line had been captured, he and some of his comrades began bombing their way up a communication trench. They were very stubbornly resisted, and all of them were put out of action except our hero. He collected the bombs which his wounded comrades were carrying, and in the most fearless fashion pushed on alone, and flung them at the enemy until he had no more. Then he ran back for a fresh supply, and again advancing along the trench, met a party of ten Germans. These he killed, and later on twenty others held up their hands and begged for mercy. In this way he cleared the trench right up to the enemy's line. "His conduct throughout the day was magnificent." When he returned to Hull and told his story, he remarked that he "always liked a bit of sport." Cunningham and others mentioned in this chapter received their decorations

from the King at his first public bestowal of rewards in Hyde Park on June 2, 1917.*

PRIVATE DAVID ROSS LAUDER, Royal Scots Fusiliers.

Before the war Private Lauder was employed as a carter in his native town of Dalry. The deed which enrolled him amongst the bravest of the brave was done in Gallipoli as far back as August 13, 1915. It was a deliberate self-sacrifice for the sake of others. He threw a bomb which, instead of clearing the parapet, fell short, and rolled back into the trench; its explosion meant destruction for his comrades. "The situation was terrible," he said, "and I knew that the fault was mine. The only thing I could do was to try to smother the bomb, so I put my right foot on it." The explosion blew off his foot, but none of his comrades suffered injury. His commanding officer said that it was "the pluckiest thing which he had seen in Gallipoli."

CAPTAIN CUTHBERT BROMLEY, SERGEANT FRANK EDWARD STUBBS, and CORPORAL JOHN GRIMSHAW, all of the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers.

No Lancashire boy or girl can ever forget the magnificent courage of the Lancashire Fusiliers at Beach W during our landing on the shores of Gallipoli. Turn back to page 251, Vol. IV., and refresh your memory by reading an account of one of the most heroic advances ever made by British soldiers. On page 261 of the same volume I gave you the names of three Lancashire Fusiliers who were awarded the Cross for superb heroism on that occasion. These men were selected for the honour by the votes of their comrades. It was felt, however, that three Victoria Crosses were all too few to mark the marvellous achievement of the Lancashire men; so early in 1917 the survivors of the landing were asked again to name three of their comrades who in their opinion were worthy of the coveted honour. They chose the heroes whose names are given above. I need not describe again the signal acts of bravery and devotion to duty which they performed.

The fate of Captain Bromley was tragic in the extreme. A friend thus told his sad story. He said that Bromley had a great influence for good upon his men. He had made the Lancashire Fusiliers the champions in all India for military training, boxing, football, and cross-country running. It was

* See illustration, pp. 168-169.



"All of us in our trench think he is one of the best."

(From the picture by Christopher Clark, R.I. By permission of The Sphere.)

Many of the chaplains, or padres as they are called, made themselves loved by our men. The above picture shows a very popular padre visiting the men in the trenches and talking cheerily with them while he shares their meal. Some of the chaplains, in addition to their religious work, assisted in bringing in wounded men from No Man's Land, and more than one of them won the Victoria Cross.

the fine discipline which he instilled into them in India which enabled them to follow him ashore at Gallipoli under a truly awful fire.

Three days later, on 28th April, Bromley and the men who loved him advanced on Krithia Wood, and were victorious where a brigade had failed. When the successful survivors reorganized under cover, he pushed ahead to spy out the enemy's situation, and while doing so was wounded in the knee. He was helped back by Sergeant Burtchell of his own regiment, and his wound was dressed. It was then discovered that he had in his back a bullet which he had received three days before, and had never mentioned except to the man who bandaged him. He was sent to Alexandria; but before his wounds were healed he was back again in Gallipoli, where he found himself in command of his battalion. How he was welcomed!

Then came 28th June. The battalion was ordered to leave its trenches in broad daylight and advance across the open. Bromley led the attack. He was hit in the foot just as he got over the parapet. Two stretcher-bearers—bandsmen, only lately band boys—jumped to him. He made them carry him on to direct the attack; and when it failed, they brought him back alive. Only ten of the original battalion were left unwounded.

Bromley was sent to hospital at Alexandria; but as soon as he could hobble he persuaded the authorities to let him go on board the transport *Royal Edward*, in order to return to the peninsula. On the way thither the vessel was torpedoed. While she was sinking he noticed that the boats could not hold all the men on board. He therefore made no attempt to take the place of a comrade, but went down with the ship. "Fine swimmer as he was—he had once swum from Gozo to Malta—he was drowned before he could be picked up; it is believed that he was struck by a piece of wreckage. Thus he died—to live now in the memory of England, placed among the great men who have deserved and won the cross of a soldier's self-sacrifice."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CROSS OF VALOUR AND SELF-SACRIFICE.—II.

LIEUTENANT HUMPHRY OSBALDESTON BROOKE FIRMAN, R.N., and LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER CHARLES HENRY COWLEY, R.N.V.R.

Two other belated Victoria Crosses were awarded in the early months of the year 1917. On page 57, Vol. V., I told you that on the night of April 24-25, 1916, a very gallant but unsuccessful attempt was made to run the gauntlet on the Tigris, and carry provisions to the besieged garrison in Kut. At eight o'clock in the evening the little ship *Julnar*, under the command of Lieutenant Firman, assisted by Lieutenant-Commander Cowley and a crew of volunteers from the Royal Navy, set off on the desperate venture. All on board knew that they were engaged in a forlorn hope, and that only by the best of good luck could they hope to win through and reach Kut alive. Nevertheless there was no flinching. When *Julnar* began to make her way upstream as rapidly as her old engines would permit, our artillery and machine guns opened a furious bombardment in order to distract the enemy's attention. She was, however, soon sighted by the enemy, and was heavily shelled.

At 1 a.m. on the 25th General Townshend reported that *Julnar* had not arrived, but that at midnight a sudden burst of heavy firing had been heard some eight and a half miles away. There was now no doubt that the enterprise had failed, and next day our airmen reported that *Julnar* was in the hands of the Turks. The two officers had been killed, and the remainder of the gallant crew, including five wounded, had been made prisoners of war. Lieutenant Firman had served in the Navy for about fourteen years, and had won the Persian and Somaliland medals, and he and



Dreadnought and Destroyer.

The battleship seen in the above picture is one of our most modern super-Dreadnoughts. In attendance on her is a fast destroyer somewhat similar to *Starb.*

[*British Official Photograph.*]

Lieutenant Cowley had done splendid work in Mesopotamia. The crosses won by these gallant men were handed by the King to their proud but sorrowing relatives.

COMMANDER LOFTUS WILLIAM JONES, R.N.

On pages 292-295, Vol. V., I gave an account of three heroes who won Victoria Crosses at the Battle of Jutland (May 31, 1916). You are now to hear the story of a destroyer commander whose extraordinary gallantry only came to light after the battle, and whose widow received the coveted emblem long after her gallant husband had given his life for his country. Commander Loftus Jones was in command of the destroyer *Shark*, and was selected to lead that attack on the German fleet which was made by our 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron under the gallant Admiral Hood (page 265, Vol. V.). You will remember that while Beatty was crossing the T of the German line, Jellicoe sent Hood's squadron to support him. As part of this movement Commander Loftus Jones at 5.30 p.m. led a division of destroyers against the enemy.*

Directly he turned to attack, one shell hit the engines and another the steering wheel. The destroyer *Acasta* (Commander J. Barron), seeing that *Shark* was badly hit, came between the enemy and the injured vessel, and signalled, "Can I give any help?" Loftus Jones signalled back, "No, look after yourself;" whereupon *Acasta* obeyed orders. At the same time the cockswain, Griffin, said, "The wheel has gone, sir." The captain replied, "Man the other wheel." The cockswain obeyed, and left the bridge, followed by the captain, who helped to connect and man the second wheel. At the foot of the bridge the cockswain was wounded in the face and thrown down. He picked himself up, and as he was going aft he met the torpedo instructor, who said that he had fired two torpedoes, and thought he had got a German cruiser. He also met Hammel, the chief stoker, who told him that the engines and steering gear were out of action, and the steam pipe blown away.

The captain, on hearing this, gave orders for all to come up on deck, go to their stations, and put out the boats. This was done, but the boats were smashed by shells as soon as the men tried to launch them. All the time *Shark* was under very heavy fire. Three cruisers were aiming at her at one time.

* See picture on p. 166.

She lay helpless between our own fleet and that of the enemy, and so received in addition all the shots which fell short.

A few minutes after the action started the fore-castle and fore-castle gun, with its crew, including the officer, were all blown away, except one man, who was badly wounded. The captain now ordered the rafts and collision nets to be hove out, he himself assisting in the work and cheering his men. He was seen about this time to drop the confidential books overboard.

He had been wounded badly in the leg when leaving the bridge, and his wound was now bound up by Hammel, and later on by another man. He noticed that Griffin had been badly injured in the eye and cheek, and said to him, "Get your eye dressed." Griffin said, "There is no doctor." The doctor must have been killed. The last time he was seen, he was engaged in binding up the arm of a wounded man. Shortly afterwards a shot exploded a torpedo in the third tube, and all the men serving it but one were either killed or wounded by the explosion.

The captain now went to the midship gun, the other guns and everything else on deck having been blown away, and there he remained until the end. More than a hundred rounds of ammunition were fired from this gun, mainly by the efforts of Able Seaman Hope, who throughout the action was remarkable for his coolness and efficiency. The captain was so pleased with him that he patted him on the back and said, "Go on, Hope; you are doing splendidly."

Ten German ships, destroyers and light cruisers, now came up out of the mist, and at a range of 600 yards opened fire on *Shark*. A few minutes later the captain had his left leg shot away above the knee. Hope rushed to him with a piece of wood, and Griffin with rope; and both tried to stop the bleeding, and thus save his life. He begged them to leave him; but Hope said, "We must do it for your good, sir."

As he sat on deck he looked around and said, "What's wrong with the ensign?" Hope told him that it had been shot down. "Then hoist another," he ordered; and when this was done and once more the British flag was fluttering in defiance, he cried, "That's good," and appeared to be content. Seeing that the ship was sinking quickly and a German destroyer was drawing near, he gave the order, "Save yourselves."

The German came up quite close and fired a torpedo. There was a loud explosion, and *Shark* went down with her colours flying. The action had lasted about an hour and a half.

The survivors helped the captain into the water. He had his life-saving waistcoat on, and this kept him afloat. The oil-tanks of *Shark* had burst, and the floating oil made the sea calm. Afterwards he was hauled on to one of the rafts. As he lay there he said, "Let's have a song, lads." The first lieutenant, who was unwounded, started "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and they all sang the hymn until they were exhausted. Some ships hove in sight, and when it was reported that they were British, the captain said, "That's good." These were his last words; shortly afterwards he died.

The survivors remained in the bitterly cold water for several hours, and, when almost unconscious from exposure, were picked up by a Norwegian steamer. In a letter to the captain's widow, the Admiralty informed her that the body of her gallant husband had been buried on June 24, 1916, in the churchyard of Fiskebakskil. The funeral service was choral, and the people of the place, who covered the coffin with wreaths and flowers, promised to erect a monument over the gallant captain's grave.

So passed away one of the finest sailor souls who ever glorified the annals of the British navy. Terribly wounded as he was and suffering agonies of pain, all his thoughts were for his men. He was cheery and helpful and hopeful to the end.

SERGEANT EDWARD JOHN MOTT, Border Regiment.

The company to which Sergeant Mott belonged was held up during an advance by the fire of a machine gun. Although severely wounded in the eye, the gallant sergeant made a rush for the gun, and after a fierce struggle seized the gunner and took him prisoner. His splendid dash enabled the gun to be put out of action and the advance to continue. But for him it would have failed.

SERGEANT THOMAS MOTTERSHEAD, Royal Flying Corps.

Sergeant Mottershead was a Widnes man, and prior to the war was well known as a hockey player. He joined the Royal Flying Corps in the year 1914, and received his certificate in June 1915. Early in 1916 he was awarded the D.C.M. for blowing up an ammunition train and bringing down a German machine. The following account of the deed which won him



The 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron going into Action at the Battle of Jutland.

(By permission of *The Illustrated London News*.)

The foremost ship is *Invincible*, and behind her are *Inflexible* and *Indomitable*. Between *Invincible* and the German line is the destroyer *Shark*, under terribly heavy fire. The material for the picture was supplied by Petty Officer W. Griffin, coxswain of *Shark*.

the Victoria Cross is taken from a letter written to his wife by his captain.

He was engaged with an enemy machine which was trying to cross our lines at a height of 10,000 feet. Just as he had shot this machine down another enemy aeroplane dived down upon him and fired its machine gun at his engine. His petrol tank was set on fire, and the whole machine began to blaze. The flames could not be subdued, and Mottershead suffered tortures from his burns. Nevertheless, with great coolness, he brought his flaming machine to the ground, and thus managed to save the life of the officer who was acting as observer. Directly the machine touched the earth it collapsed and pinned the heroic airman beneath the wreckage. Comrades immediately rushed to his rescue, and found that although he was terribly burned he was able to talk with them quite cheerfully. He afterwards died. On June 2, 1917, his widow received the Victoria Cross, which he had so splendidly won, from the hands of the King in Hyde Park.

CAPTAIN HENRY WILLIAM MURRAY, D.S.O., Australian Infantry.

Captain Murray had already received the D.S.O. for gallantry when his splendid heroism in the face of the enemy earned him the higher honour. He was in command of the right flank company during an attack. With great skill and courage he led his men to an enemy position and quickly captured it. Then followed very severe fighting. Three times the Germans counter-attacked, and three times, by dint of what the official record calls Captain Murray's "wonderful work," they were beaten off. Throughout the night the German guns were trained on the position, and the British, who were holding it, suffered heavily. On one occasion during that night of horror they were forced to give ground. But Captain Murray rallied his men, and by "sheer valour" the situation was saved. There was no moment during the day or night during which Captain Murray did not make his presence felt. He headed bombing parties, led bayonet charges, carried the wounded to places of safety, and all the time encouraged and inspired his men by his splendid example.

COMMANDER GORDON CAMPBELL, D.S.O., R.N.

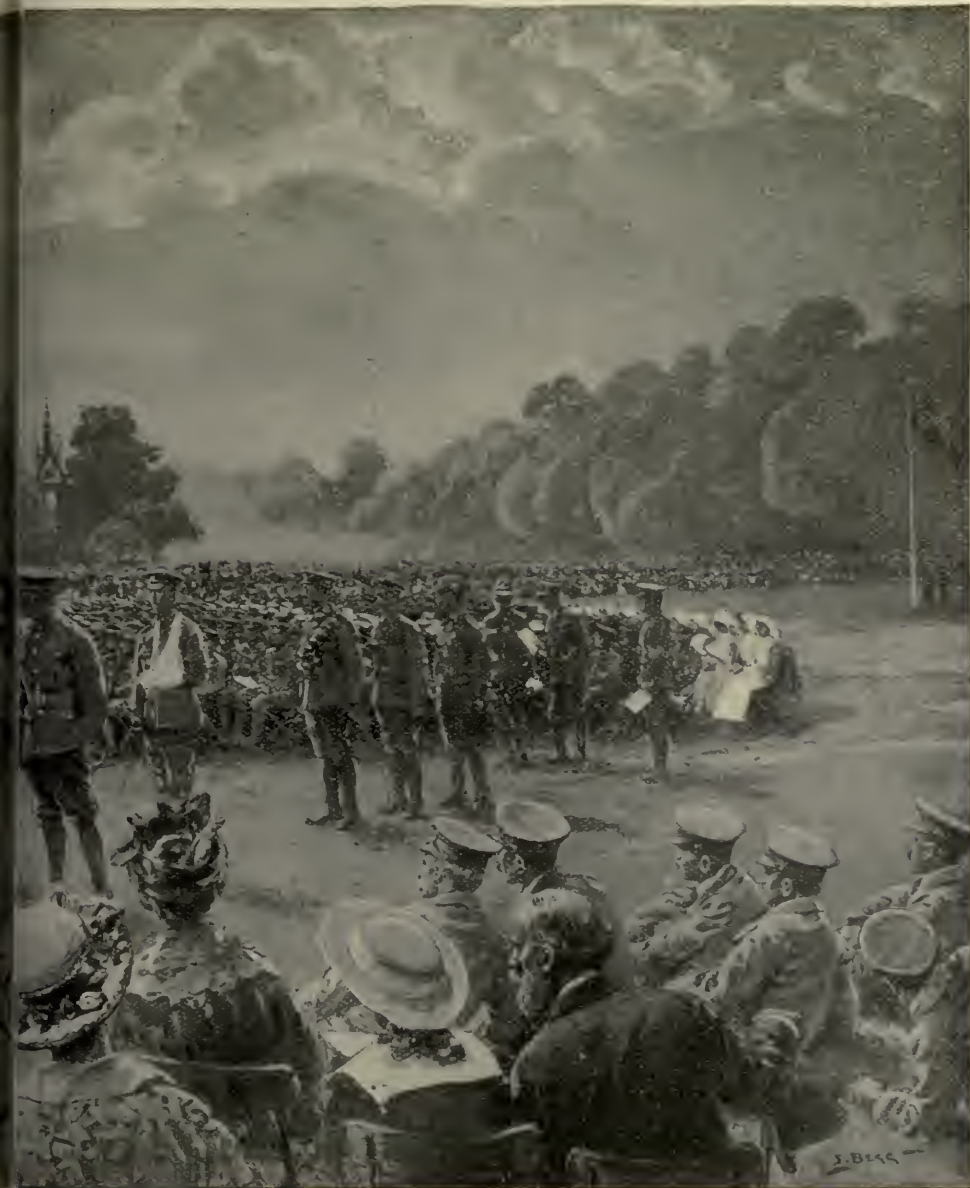
On March 8, 1917, there appeared in the newspapers an announcement that the King had conferred the Victoria Cross



His Majesty the King bestowing 351 W

(From the picture by S. Begg.

The investiture illustrated above was the first held in the open air in this country since the days the first sixty-two Victoria Crosses ever awarded. On June 2, 1917, the King, accompanied by the case of those who had not lived to receive their reward, upon their relatives. Eleven Victoria Crosses were bestowed in a grass field near the Albert Memorial, which is seen through the trees. While the ceremony was taking



Decorations in Hyde Park on June 2, 1917.

(Commission of *The Illustrated London News*.)

Crimean War. It was on a June day in the year 1857 that Queen Victoria presented in Hyde Park Queen and Princess Mary, bestowed 351 war decorations upon those who had won them or, in their stead, conferred (four on the relatives of deceased heroes). The proceedings took place in the large open space, four aeroplanes circled overhead at a height of from 10,000 to 15,000 feet.

at Buckingham Palace on Commander Campbell. Not a hint was given as to the exploit which had won him this high distinction, and people began to talk about the "Mystery V.C." Even when, on 21st April, it was stated that the Cross had been granted because of Commander Campbell's magnificent gallantry, coolness, courage, and skill while in command of one of his Majesty's ships in action, the mystery remained unrevealed. Probably it was thought that to give details would afford valuable information to the enemy. No doubt you would like to know how Commander Campbell won his great renown, but you must be content to wait until the war is over. We may, however, be certain that there is a stirring story yet to be told. Commander Campbell, who belongs to an old family of naval officers, joined the Navy as a midshipman in 1902. He received rapid promotion, and won his D.S.O. in June 1916.

LANCE-SERGEANT (NOW SECOND LIEUTENANT) FREDERICK WILLIAM PALMER, Royal Fusiliers.

Before the war Lieutenant Palmer was a member of a London publishing firm. He joined the Royal Fusiliers as a private, and in the Gallipoli campaign was awarded the Military Medal. At the time when he won the Victoria Cross he was acting as lance-sergeant. During an attack all the officers of his company were shot down, and he took command. Though a machine gun was belching bullets at him, he cut his way through the enemy's wire entanglements, and at the head of six men rushed a German trench. He then knocked out the machine gun which was holding up the attack, and built a block in the trench. Collecting stragglers from other regiments, he held the barricade for nearly three hours, during which time he beat back seven counter-attacks, in spite of an unceasing rain of bombs and rifle grenades upon his flank and front. While he was away in search of more bombs, the enemy made an eighth counter-attack, and succeeded in driving his party back, thus threatening the defences of the whole flank of the attack. At this critical moment, though he had been blown off his feet by a bomb and was greatly exhausted, he rallied his men, drove off the enemy, regained the post, and held it until relief arrived. Thanks to his splendid determination and his devotion to duty, he prevented a serious disaster to the section of the line in which he was fighting.

SECOND LIEUTENANT GEORGE E. CATES, Rifle Brigade.

Lieutenant Cates was another of the heroes who gave his life for others. While engaged in deepening a trench, his spade struck a buried bomb, the fuse of which immediately began to burn. To prevent the explosion from spreading, and thus wounding or killing all within reach, he placed his foot on the bomb and was killed. By his noble self-sacrifice he saved the lives of his comrades.

SECOND LIEUTENANT (NOW CAPTAIN) PERCY HERBERT CHERRY, M.C., Australian Imperial Forces.

Lieutenant Cherry belonged to a company which was ordered to storm and clear a village. All the other officers fell, and he took command. In spite of the fiercest opposition he led his men with great skill and determination. Held up by an enemy strong-point, he organized bombing attacks, and brought up machine guns, and in this way took the village and killed or captured every German in it. At once he prepared for the counter-attacks which he knew would soon follow. All night long waves of the enemy advanced against him, but he managed to drive them back every time. About 6.30 in the morning he was wounded, and his men begged him to retire; but he refused to leave them, and remained at his post, encouraging them to hold out at all costs. At 4.30 in the afternoon a shell fell close to him, and when the smoke of the explosion had cleared away the gallant officer was found to be dead.

PRIVATE CHRISTOPHER COX, Bedford Regiment.

Private Cox was acting as a stretcher-bearer during an attack. The front wave of his battalion was checked by heavy artillery and machine-gun fire, and the whole line had to take refuge in shell-holes to avoid being swept out of existence. Seeing wounded men lying out in the open, Cox crept out towards them across the fire-swept ground, and single-handed brought in four of his stricken comrades. Then he busied himself in rescuing the wounded of an adjoining battalion, his own life being in peril the whole of the time. On the two following days he was again prominent in the same merciful work. The official record tells us that "he has on all occasions displayed the same high example of unselfishness and valour."

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE UNITED STATES PREPARED FOR WAR.

IT is important that you should know something of the naval and military forces which the United States had at her command when she declared war on Germany. Up to the middle of the year 1916 she possessed a Regular Army and a Militia or National Guard. The Regular Army numbered about 4,700 officers and 80,000 men, only 50,000 of whom were then in the United States, the remainder being in her foreign possessions. According to law, the Militia, or National Guard, consists of every able-bodied man in the country between the ages of eighteen and forty-five; but in the year 1914 this force was only partly organized. It consisted of about 8,300 officers and 119,000 men.

When the great struggle began in Europe the United States was quite unready for war, and a cry arose that the country should prepare without delay. Steps were taken to put the Regular Army and the Militia on a war footing, and to speed up the supply of munitions. In June 1916 a new law was passed, and the land forces were organized somewhat on British lines. But at the end of June 1916 the United States could only count on about 12,000 officers and 261,500 men. You will remember that in the course of his speech in the House of Representatives President Wilson said that 500,000 men would be at once enlisted, and that all men of military age would be liable for service. It was clear that months must elapse before a large force could be trained for service at the front.

The Navy, however, was in a better position. When the Great War began the United States had thirty vessels under twenty years old, seventeen armoured cruisers, three fast light cruisers, seventy destroyers, and fifty submarines. Many battle-

cruisers were under construction, and by the time that the President signed the declaration of war, fourteen of them, all armed with 14-inch guns, had been added to the Navy. The destroyers were ready to proceed to European waters at once, in order to assist the Allies in fighting submarines. In May 1917 it was announced that American destroyers were at work in the Mediterranean and off the Irish coast. Meanwhile the dockyards became very busy. The Americans, with all the splendid energy for which they are renowned, flung themselves into the work of building up their strength as speedily as possible.

In August 1914, when the Central Powers began their great adventure, the German liners and merchant ships in American waters were instructed to hurry to the nearest port for safety. They did so, and were at once interned. When the United States declared war there were some ninety-eight German vessels, with a tonnage of over 600,000 tons, in the harbours of the Republic. Some of them were the finest vessels of the German merchant service. The *Vaterland*, for example, was a great liner of 54,000 tons, built for the Hamburg-Amerika Company in 1914. Had the United States remained neutral, these ships would have been given up to Germany when peace was declared. Now, however, they became prizes of war. The Americans seized them, and began to prepare them for sea. They were meant to replace some of the many Allied ships sunk by the German submarines.

* * * * *

At once the work of "waking up" the United States began. The President made a great appeal to his fellow-countrymen, and outlined the pressing duties which lay before them. He told them that the Navy was rapidly being placed on a war footing, and that an army was being created and equipped; but that, to see the war through worthily and successfully, every citizen must devote himself to service with an unselfish mind, and all the energy and intelligence that he could command. Abundant food must be supplied, not only for Americans but for the Allies; ships must be built by the hundred to carry to the other side of the sea, in spite of submarines, all sorts of material from field, mine, and factory; coal must be won to keep the fires going in the ships and in the furnaces beyond the sea; steel must be made in vast quantities for arms and ammunition, railways, rolling stock, and locomotives; and

mules and horses and cattle must be reared and exported in very large numbers. There must be greater production of food and raw products than ever before. The farmers especially must be busy, for upon them in large measure would rest the fate of the war. Every one who created and cultivated a garden would be helping to feed the nations, and every one who was careful and avoided waste would be "doing his bit" to win the war. "The supreme test of the nation has come," he concluded, "and we must all speak, act, and serve together."

Speakers now went to and fro in the country, explaining to the people what they were fighting for, and everywhere great enthusiasm was aroused. In some of the cities there were processions, and volunteers began to flock to the recruiting stations. Mr. Balfour, General Joffre, and M. Viviani crossed the ocean in order to put at the disposal of our new comrades the full fruits of what they had learned during the war, and to assist and advise the American Government and people in every possible way. They were received with great heartiness, and their presence did much to stimulate the Americans to the work of war.

Four days after President Wilson signed the declaration of war, a series of explosions and fires took place in several of the ammunition factories and engineering workshops. A few minutes after ten in the morning Philadelphia rocked as if shaken by an earthquake. Explosion followed explosion in the Baldwin Locomotive Works, and large numbers of people lost their lives. The Government had already declared that all enemy aliens found guilty of attacks upon munition plants or Government property would be put to death. One of its most pressing duties was to seek out and arrest spies, and in other ways to put down the foes in its own household.

By the middle of June the United States had made great strides in its preparation for war. All the men between twenty-one and thirty years of age had been enrolled, and the first 500,000 of the 2,000,000 which were to be raised had been chosen. A huge loan of 750,000,000 dollars had been raised and handed over to the Allies. Flotillas of American destroyers had been sent into the submarine zone to help the Allied navies. A division of regulars, a force of marines, and nine regiments of engineers had been ordered to France, and 10,000 doctors, in addition to many nurses, were ready to embark. Some of

the medical units had already arrived in England. Arrangements had been made for the construction of 3,500 war aeroplanes and for the training of 6,000 aviators. Shipbuilding was being pushed forward, and the interned German ships had been handed over to the French, Italians, and Russians. An agreement had been made with Canada to keep down the price of wheat, and to set up a joint system of food control. In many other ways the Americans were loyally standing shoulder to shoulder with the Allies.

While the first United States soldiers were being mobilized, General Pershing, who was to command them, crossed over to England, where he was very heartily received by the King and the British people. A few days later he was in France. Much was expected from him. He had been a soldier from his youth up, and his earliest campaign was against the Apache Indians in Arizona. During the Cuban War he was major of a volunteer regiment. In the Philippine Islands he fought as a captain of regulars, and at the end of the Spanish War Mr. Roosevelt promoted him brigadier. He was fifty-six years of age when he took the field in France, and his fellow-generals were not long in discovering that he was keen, open-minded, and full of vigour.

Had you been in a certain French seaport on the morning of 26th June when the clocks were striking six, you would have seen steaming towards the land an armada of huge transports, their black hulls showing clearly against the horizon, while the gray forms of the escorting destroyers were almost blotted out in the leaden-coloured sea. Amongst the vessels you would have noticed a great American cruiser with the Stars and Stripes at her bow. The first contingent of American troops was about to land on French soil.

By eight o'clock the transports were in the harbour, and as the clocks struck the hour every United States soldier raised his hand in salute to France. Then the landing of stores began. Negro labourers rushed down the gangways carrying tents, boxes of tinned meats, biscuits, sugar, etc., while the troops looked down from the decks. They appeared to be in the pink of condition, and the French townfolk gazed on them with admiration. Next day they landed. America was about to strike her first blow against the foe.

Other contingents followed, and when the last of them

arrived safely without the loss of a single life, there was great rejoicing in America. The voyage, however, had not been without its grave dangers. The troopships had been sent off in groups accompanied by destroyers and other war vessels, and it had been arranged that at a certain point the destroyers already in European waters should meet them and give them additional protection. At 10.30 p.m. on 22nd June, before this point had been reached, a number of German submarines appeared and began to discharge their torpedoes. Had they been successful, a great ocean tragedy would have taken place. The destroyers which escorted the flotilla were, however, sufficient to beat off the submarines, and the troopships passed on in safety.

A few days later, when the prearranged point had been passed and the waiting destroyers had been met, a second attack was made. Again it proved unsuccessful. The destroyers easily kept the submarines at a safe distance, and managed to send one or more of them to the bottom. Their guns fired grenades which were timed to explode when they sank a certain distance under water. One of these grenades which was fired at the periscope of a U-boat probably took effect, for after the explosion wreckage was seen floating around.

When the Americans learned that their transports had been attacked before reaching the prearranged point they knew that spies had been at work. It was said that there were actually German agents in the Navy Department, and that by means of wireless messages, probably sent through Mexico or Venezuela, the Germans had full information as to all the arrangements, even before the vessels sailed. So far the Americans had not considered the spy danger very important. They now knew that it might be fatal. Thenceforward the American Government set itself diligently to stamp out this dangerous pest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW THE CANADIANS CAPTURED VIMY RIDGE.

I AM now going to tell you the story of a great British victory. On Easter Monday, 1917, we began an assault which proved to be the greatest and most successful of all the operations which we had conducted up to that time. By the following Saturday we had practically made ourselves masters of the Hindenburg line, had captured over 14,000 prisoners and more than 250 guns—many of the largest size. We had also won positions which gave us immense advantages over the enemy.

You will remember that our successes between the Ancre and the Somme had forced the Germans to retire to this Hindenburg line, and to give up some 600 square miles of French territory. The new line on which he had been working for many months was linked up with the old line near Arras on the north, and touched the Aisne above Soissons on the south. It was not a strong line, nor was it completed when the enemy withdrew to it; but though it was weak in the middle it was very strong at the junction points. Buttressing it on the north was the Vimy Ridge, and protecting it on the south was the district of hill and forest known as Gobain. We might batter in the middle of the line, but we could make no real progress until we had captured the buttresses.

Now let us pay particular attention to the Vimy Ridge, the very strong series of positions at the northern junction of the old line with the new. You know that from the shores of the English Channel chalk hills stretch southward through North France. The last of these chalk hills forms the Vimy Ridge. It runs in a north-west to south-east direction for about five miles between Souchez and the Arras-Douai road. Souchez



Supply Wagons going up to the Front over Wooden Roadways.

This picture shows a party of Canadian soldiers making roads in place of those destroyed by the enemy. Until new roads are made no advance is possible.

[Canadian Official Photo.]

is a name well known to you ; it figured in the battle of the Artois, which I described in Chapters XXIX. and XXX. of Vol. IV. The map on page 181 shows you the little river Souchez sweeping round from Lens to pass between the northern end of the Vimy Ridge and its continuation to the north-west—Notre Dame de Lorette. You have not forgotten, I am sure, the very deadly fighting which took place in this region during the summer of 1915. Between Notre Dame de Lorette and the Vimy Ridge lay the famous network of deep trenches and underground fortresses known as the Labyrinth. You will remember that the French only won this great stronghold after months of struggle.

You must not imagine that the Vimy Ridge is lofty. It nowhere rises more than a couple of hundred feet above the plain. As you approach it from the west the rise is gradual, but the descent on the other side is steep. For five miles it stands up like a wall, overlooking the great coal-mining basin stretching to and beyond Lens. It looks down upon country which resembles the industrial part of South Lancashire.

The ridge is flat-topped for the most part, but it has two well-marked summits. The one at the north end is known as Hill 145, and just below it is a knoll which our men called the "Pimple." The other, near the south end, is called Telegraph Hill, because an old semaphore used to stand on it. Crossing the ridge by a slight saddle is a straight Roman road running from Arras to Lens, and then onward to Belgium.

The Germans rightly believed that Vimy Ridge *must* be held if they were to retain their line between the La Bassée Canal and the Aisne. Let us see why. If they lost it, we should be on the top of the wall, as it were, and should be able to look over all the basin towards Lens. Our artillery observers would then be in a position to see directly the targets at which they aimed their guns, and to spy out every movement of troops, trains, and transports in that region. This would be a very great advantage. Further, once our guns were on the Vimy Ridge, we could command the roads and railways by means of which the enemy supplied his front. So long as he held the ridge we could not advance along the Roman road from Arras to Lens, or along the broad highway from Arras to Douai. Once the ridge was in our hands the

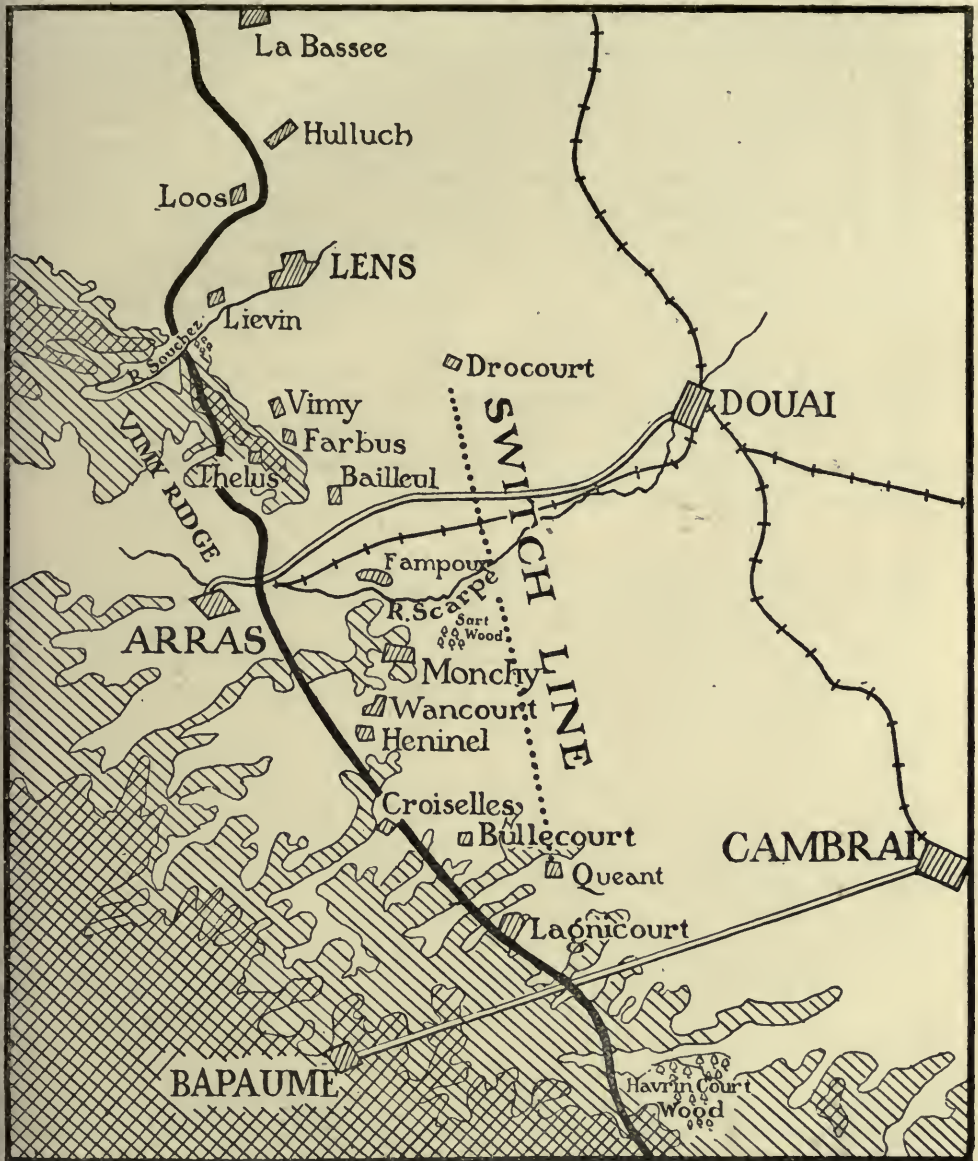
railway line St. Quentin-Cambrai-Douai-Lille would be under fire, and the enemy would be bound to withdraw or be cut off.

Look again at the map. If the ridge were ours, and we were able to push on towards Lens, the enemy would be forced to retreat from that part of his line running northward into Flanders. If he did not do so, he would find us on his flank, and he would be threatened with grave disaster. As for the Hindenburg line, we should be able to take it in flank from the southern end of the ridge, and our guns would force the enemy to fall back to the "switch" line between Drocourt and Quéant. Thus you see that the capture of the Vimy Ridge would be a severe blow to the Germans. It would lead to the breaking up of the Hindenburg line both to the north and to the south.

For all these reasons we determined to strike at the ridge with all the force at our command. We and our French friends had already done so, but without success. In May and September 1915 we made attacks upon it; but we failed on both occasions, because we had not then sufficient guns and munitions for the task. While the Battle of Loos was proceeding, the French reached the summit at various points; but when they turned over this part of the line to us, we could not hold their gains. By the end of May 1916 we had lost all that had been won.

Perhaps you think that because the slope of the ridge towards the west is gradual it is easy to carry. On the contrary, a long, bare slope, such as the ridge presents, is even harder to assault under modern conditions than a real hill. Artillery and machine guns can sweep the open ground with such fierce and continuous fire that no troops can hope to go forward and live. It was very clear to our generals that the ridge could never be carried until we could blow the Germans off it by means of artillery fire.

We made great and very careful preparations for the assault. A plasticine model was constructed, showing the whole ridge, with every rise and dip of the ground, every trench system, and the whole network of roads and tracks, railways and streams, all in due proportion, and in their exact relative position. This model took months to make, and it was built up bit by bit from photographs supplied by our airmen, and from maps and the sketches made by scouts. For hours on end, officers of



Map showing the Hindenburg and "Switch" Lines.

high rank studied the model and discussed the best methods of assaulting the ground which it represented. It is said that the Mayor of Vimy, a keen sportsman who was familiar with every inch of the country, gave great help in the construction of the model.

Meanwhile all along the fifty miles of our front one saw great camps, huge ammunition dumps, and enormous piles of stores. There was restless activity everywhere. Supply columns of food for men and guns moved forward in an endless tide. Transport mules passed in long trails, and battery after battery advanced, ready to pour death and destruction on the German lines.

For a few days before Easter Monday we bombarded the enemy's lines with ever-increasing fierceness. On Easter Sunday and all through the following night the bombardment gathered strength, and one hour before the moment fixed for the assault it became a hurricane of fire.

"In an instant, it seemed, the whole of the enemy line broke into flame. Beyond the flicker of our guns, brilliantly visible in the half light, and amid the flash and swirl of our bursting shells, the enemy's rockets, calling for help, rose from the whole circuit of the horizon—red and white and green and tall orange-coloured fountains of golden rain. One could not guess what the signal meant, but plainly the German infantry everywhere were shrieking for aid from the supports and the artillery.

"Between our guns and the front trenches of the enemy was a wood, from which a great flight of rooks rose into the dim air and swung in panic round and round. . . . Then other birds came, slowly droning, from behind us, flying very low, and headed straight for the enemy's country—our aeroplanes, their outlines hardly visible against the gray sky. As daylight grew, the outline of Arras on the right and the vague line of Vimy Ridge on the left began to define themselves. Before 6 o'clock, however, the light drizzle changed to a heavy storm of rain, which later became mixed with snow, and all the battlefield was wrapped in flying mist, driving before the wind. It was not the weather which we had hoped for, and the drying surface of the ground again became slippery and shining with moisture. But the consolation was that the rain drove on our men's backs and in the enemy's faces."

The hour fixed for the attack was 5.30 a.m. Officers stood looking at their wrist watches, just as they did on 1st July in the previous year. The eastern horizon began to brighten with the flush of dawn. A few minutes before 5.30 the guns almost ceased fire, and there was a strange and solemn hush. The men by the scaling ladders in the trenches waited with

beating pulses as the watches ticked on to the half-hour. A short, sharp order, and up they went. Then the bombardment broke out anew more furiously than ever. The enemy's artillery now joined in, and black shrapnel and high-explosive shells were flung upon our lines. Our gun-fire, however, was many times as great as that of the Germans.

Now, as a blinding snowstorm set in, our guns lengthened their range, and put up such a barrage behind the German trenches that no troops could pierce it. Meanwhile another barrage preceded our troops. The Germans in their trenches saw a vast curtain of fire behind them and another in front of them, ever creeping closer and closer. Behind that veil of death they knew that there were stalwart Britons ready with bomb and bayonet to complete their destruction. Bavarians and Guards had been brought up to reinforce the Saxons who had been holding the position, and all now lay in their dug-outs while the shells crashed overhead. At length the gray dawn slowly gave way to day.

As the Canadians drew near to the German front line innumerable machine guns opened fire on them. They were not checked; but continued to climb up the slippery bank in the mud and slush, over broken wire, up and down deep shell-holes, and through the litter of war which covered the whole hillside. "The going was awful," said one of the men. "It was impossible to do more than crawl like a snail, with their guns peppering the slope all the time."

Once the German line was reached thousands of the enemy ran forward holding up their hands in surrender. Whole battalions gave themselves up, so terribly shaken were they by our awful fire. Nearly a mile of the enemy's defences was cleared. At the northern end of the ridge, near the "Pimple," however, there was fierce resistance.

The "Pimple" is but a slight elevation, but it is so thrust up above the surrounding hills and hummocks that it forms a stronghold. In this position there were German machine gunners who had sworn to hold on until they were wiped out. All that night the struggle for the "Pimple" continued. Meanwhile further south the assault had been equally successful. We had pushed along the Bapaume-Cambrai road, and had captured several villages.

Next morning, Tuesday, 10th April, while the snow was

*La Folie Wood, on rising ground
in the distance*

*Machine-gun emplacement in front of the wood -
An iron gate is placed against the face of the emplacement*

*German soldiers surrendring through the
grace of British infantry*



Storming Vimy Ridge. A Distant View of Lens

(From the picture by A. Forestier. b)

Our drawing shows Canadian troops capturing a portion of Vimy Ridge. Through the broken trees from it towards the right in the direction of Arras. In the middle distance on the right are the shattered down on the level plain of Douai, which had been in German possession since 1914.

Couvotte Lens Novelles
 Villaines
 Courcourt Fouquieres
 Billy-Montigny Four-Belard
 1st Brigade runs 1st Division 1st Canadian Division
 1st Canadian Division 1st Canadian Division



The Railway to Arras, and the Plain of Douai.
 (By permission of *The Illustrated London News*.)

Slightly to the right of the centre can be seen in the distance the town of Lens, with the railway winding
 through the woods of Vimy and Thélus. The Canadians who carried the ridge were the first Allied troops to look

falling even thicker than on the previous day, the "Pimple" was captured, and the whole German buttress in front of Lens was in our hands. Our guns were brought up, and soon shells were falling thick and fast upon the enemy's artillery in gun-pits and in the cellars of ruined houses. During the attack on September 1915 we fired a hundred shells over the ridge on to the plain beyond, but did not succeed in silencing a single enemy battery. Now we had quite another tale to tell. Not only were enemy batteries silenced, but whenever their troops gathered for a counter-attack they were scattered by our fire. It was noticed, for instance, that masses of Germans were creeping up to Vimy village for the purpose of making a desperate attempt to recapture the northern end of the ridge. Our shells immediately crashed upon them and blew them to fragments. Again and again enemy attacks were broken up in this way. During the forenoon the Canadians poured down the steep eastern slope through the splintered woods, and struck hard at the villages lying at the foot of the ridge.

If you look at the map, you will see that the southern end of the ridge commands the valley of the Scarpe. It was impossible for us to push up this valley towards Douai until our guns could clear a path. They now did so, and our troops pushed along the banks of the little river as far as Fampoux, some five miles east of Arras. In this position they were in the rear of the Hindenburg line. Before, however, the road up the valley was secure, the height of Monchy, which you see on the map to the south of the Scarpe, must be captured. The men who had gone through the terrible trial of the first two days lay out in the snow at Fampoux all Tuesday night, ready to make an attack upon Monchy next day. Their patrols had discovered that there were strong German forces on the hill, and in the Sart Wood at its eastern end.

Though the enemy had lost the Vimy Ridge, he believed that he could hold on to Monchy, and thus stop us from advancing along the Scarpe. He was, however, given no breathing-space. On Tuesday morning our guns covered the hill with bursting shells, and our infantry swarmed up behind the usual curtain of fire and seized it. The enemy was taken unawares, and was obliged to retire, leaving behind him a great mass of war material and clothing of all kinds. On Wednesday morning our men were in full possession of the hill, and the whole

How the Canadians captured Vimy Ridge. 187

plain of the Scarpe lay spread out before them like a map. When, towards the end of the week, the weather improved, they got their first glimpse of Douai.

Monchy was so serious a loss to the Germans that they made a big effort to recapture it. In the Sart Wood, and in the grounds of the chateau which looks down upon the Scarpe, they collected troops for the purpose of a counter-attack. Our guns belched death and destruction upon them, but the attack was pressed. Happily it was beaten off, with a loss to the enemy of 4,000 men. After the failure of this attack we were masters of the Scarpe valley up to Fampoux, about five miles east of Arras. The enemy's guns were now some seven or eight miles away, and the shot-rent city began to know a respite from the everlasting shelling which had smashed it into ruin. The first train for two years steamed into the station, and the pipes and drums of the Gordons celebrated the occasion by a performance in the streets of the city.

You have already heard of the little river Cojeul, which flows in a shallow valley between the Monchy ridge and the high ground to the south of it. Our capture of Monchy enabled us to clear the upper valley of this stream. The Hindenburg line ran in front of the villages of Wancourt and Heninel, which you will see on the map to the south of Monchy. Our troops stormed these villages on Thursday with the aid of a fleet of Tanks. They found the trenches not only very strong and well wired, but so cleverly hidden that they were invisible to our men until they were close upon them. While certain of our units were bombing their way along the Hindenburg line from the north-west, others stormed Heninel from the south, and the enemy garrison found itself caught by a cross-fire. The village itself bristled with machine guns, but their fire slackened when the Tanks appeared.

“The Tanks found Wancourt, like its neighbour, alive with German machine-gun posts. They deliberately charged one after another, smashing in the fronts of houses, cracking cemented emplacements like egg-shells, never pausing in their work of destruction. They went slowly up one street and down another, driving the Germans into the cellars or across the fields, and in doing so had to run through the fire of their comrades, who showered bullets on friend and foe alike.

“The resistance at Wancourt was wholly broken, and the Tanks swung round and came back through Heninel, still playing their guns on all sides. Many of the German infantry were killed in this way, and the only survivors

in both villages were about a hundred miserable Silesians, who appeared to be thoroughly worn out. Meanwhile the British troops, bombing down the Hindenburg trenches, destroying the thick banks of new wire, and blowing in dug-outs, reached Heninel, and there was a triumphant meeting with the infantry already in possession. The Tanks were cheered as they solemnly passed. Their record deserves a place in history, for the crews had been continuously fighting and advancing for more than forty hours."

On this same day, Thursday, we also made a good advance to the north of the Vimy Ridge along the valley of the little river Souchez. We cleared the woods on either side of the stream, and in this way finally assured our hold on the ridge. Ever since the previous Monday the enemy had counter-attacked in this district, but he had lost heavily, and had gained nothing. Now he was forced to abandon all attempts to recover the lost position.

We were now ready to advance on Lens. South-west of that town and adjoining it is Liévin, an important coal-mining place which before the war employed about 4,000 men in turning out about a million tons of coal every year. The Germans had been in occupation of the place ever since the Race to the Sea. They had treated the inhabitants very cruelly, and by deliberately drawing the fire of our guns had killed many of them. When the shells were falling they jeered at the inhabitants, and told them that they were being murdered by their own countrymen. They even issued a newspaper containing indignant articles about the inhumanity of the French.

"When," writes Mr. Philip Gibbs, "the Canadians swept over Vimy Ridge, taking thousands of prisoners, and when the knolls and the northern end were captured, the enemy saw that his last chance of a successful counter-attack was foiled, and at once he was seized with fear, and prepared for instant retreat in wild confusion. Lens and Liévin had been stocked with his guns. Both towns had been very strongly fortified, and were strongholds of massed artillery. It is certain that the enemy had at least 150 guns in that great network of mines and pitheads. But they were all threatened by an advance down the northern slopes of Vimy. They were also threatened by the British advance from the Loos battlefield by way of that great pair of black slag hills called the Double Crassier,* famous in this war for long and fierce fighting.

"From prisoners we know that wild scenes took place in Lens, frantic efforts being made to get away the guns and the stores, to defend the line of retreat by the blowing up of roads, to carry out the orders for complete destruction by firing charges down the mine shafts, flooding the great mine galleries, so that French property of enormous value should not be left to

* See p. 348 and map on p. 349, Vol. IV.

How the Canadians captured Vimy Ridge. 189

France, and withdrawing great bodies of troops down the roads under the fire of our long-range guns. The enemy in Lens had hoped that the British pursuit would be held back by the German rear-guards in Vimy and Little Vimy villages. But that hope was flung from them when the Canadians swept down the ridge and chased the enemy out of those places on the lower slopes that stretch out towards Douai.

"The first hint that the Germans were in retreat from Liévin and Lens was given by the strange adventure of two of our airmen. They had to make a forced landing near Lens, and one of them was wounded in the leg. Our observing officers, watching through glasses, expected them to be made prisoners; but they were seen afterwards smoking cigarettes and slapping themselves to keep warm. It now turns out that the German soldiers did not wait to take them, and finding one man wounded left the other to look after him.

"The next sign that the enemy was about to go was when fires and explosions were seen in Liévin and Lens, and when he began to shell his own front lines outside those places. All through the night the sky was aflame with these fires. I had no need to guess the reason of all this. On the way I had met two young Alsatian prisoners just captured. They described the panic that reigned in Lens and the fearful haste to destroy and get away.

"For hours I watched the destruction while our troops were working forward through Liévin to get the better of the nest of machine-gun redoubts at the entrance to Lens, from which intense fire still came. I had an astonishing view of all this work in Lens, and it was as beautiful as a dream picture and as weird as a nightmare. Below, outspread, was a wide panorama of battle from Loos to Vimy—the great panorama of French mining country, with all its slag-hills casting black shadows across the sun-swept place, and thousands of miners' cottages, all bright and red as the light poured upon them, all arranged in straight rows and oblong blocks of streets of separate houses. To the left of Lens the tower of the great waterworks was crowned with a white dome like a Grecian temple, and to the right was Lens church, behind a hill where I saw our men fighting. It was like looking at war in Bolton or Wigan. The Double Crassier on the edge of the Loos battlefield was to the left of where I stood, curiously white and chalky as the sun flung its rays upon the two close hillocks.

"All the time I watched volumes of curly smoke rose up in Lens and Liévin. The enemy was destroying the city and its priceless mining works. Down one mining shaft they flung 20,000 hand grenades. As they exploded it looked as if the earth had opened among all this maze of works and cottages, letting forth wild clouds of fire and smoke. Meanwhile our men, advancing from Liévin and through it, were having a hard and costly task to rout out the machine-gun emplacements. Each group or collection of streets, known as a *cité*, had its own separate defences of barbed-wire and sandbag barricades, and each had its nest of machine guns."

* * * * *

So far I have told you a story of almost continuous success. You are now to hear how the Germans made a desperate counter-attack, which for a brief time succeeded, but ended in ghastly

failure. Look at the map on page 181, and find Quéant, which stood in the southerly junction of the "Switch" line with the Hindenburg line. We were now threatening this point. The Australians had made a thrust towards Bullecourt,* about a couple of miles to the north-west of Quéant, on Wednesday, 11th April; but had been driven back by a German counter-attack, with the loss of some hundreds of prisoners and a considerable number of machine guns. On the Hindenburg line, about two miles to the south-west of Quéant, stands the village of Lagnicourt, which had been captured by our men towards the end of March. On Saturday night the Germans brought up to that part of the line between Quéant and the Havrin Court Wood, a distance of over six miles, no less than four divisions—that is, between 40,000 and 50,000 men. All were picked troops. One of the divisions consisted of Prussian Guards, and there were other Guards regiments in the line as well. A large number of guns were ranged behind them, and an attack was planned for the dawn of Sunday.

A glance at the map shows you why the Germans were about to make a big effort in this part of the line. If we could push through and capture Quéant, the "Switch" line would be turned from the south, and the Hindenburg line, running southward in front of St. Quentin, would be turned from the north. It was very clear to the German High Command that, unless they could stem the oncoming tide at this point, another retreat would be necessary. It is probable, also, that they chose this part of the line for their assault because they had opposite to them the Australians whom they had caught at a disadvantage a few days before. They still pinned their faith to the Guards, though that famous corps had failed more often than any other section of their armies. The Guards had failed on the Marne, on the Austrian front, and on the Somme, where, on July 14, 1916, they had been heavily beaten. They were now about to add another disaster to their long list of misfortunes.

About dawn on Sunday morning the Germans, under cover of a barrage, surged forward against the advanced posts of the Australians. They attacked by alternate companies, one halting and firing while the other moved on. By sheer weight of numbers they rushed several of the advanced posts, and broke through the village of Lagnicourt right up to our forward field



The Grand Place at Arras.

[British Official Photo.

This picture shows the destruction wreaked upon the beautiful old houses in the centre of Arras by German shells.

guns. Our gunners were obliged to abandon their pieces, but before doing so dismantled them. Parties of the enemy were busy placing dynamite charges in the breeches of the guns in order to destroy them, when suddenly, without waiting for orders, the Australians counter-attacked.

Over and over again in these pages you have read of a German assault that began in victory and ended in defeat. The German infantry seem to lack the power to "carry on"—probably because they are not trained to think and act for themselves, and are as sheep without a shepherd when they lose their commanders. It was half-past five when they won their success; by half-past seven they were scurrying to the rear with their numbers terribly thinned.

The men of Queensland and New South Wales advanced with splendid spirit, and swept the Guardsmen before them. Before long the enemy ranks were completely broken, and hundreds went down before the Australian rifles. Our supporting troops looked on as though they were watching a football match. By the middle of the morning all our lost guns but five had been recaptured, and had been restored to working order. They were now turned on the enemy at the moment when the Germans were struggling back through a portion of their own wire which had not been cut. While they were running wildly up and down, trying to find a way through the entanglement, our guns showered shrapnel upon them, and our infantry shot them down in hundreds. Never since the days of the Marne had there been such rifle shooting. Many of our men fired more than a hundred rounds, and not a few of them returned with their pouches empty. The frenzied survivors came doubling towards our men, shrieking for mercy. The slaughter was horrible. More than fifteen hundred dead were counted on the ground which the Australians reoccupied. Some four hundred prisoners were taken during this splendid recovery.

The Germans had failed badly, but they claimed a success. They boldly announced that they had captured twenty-two of our guns. As a matter of fact they had only disabled four 18-pounder field guns and one light howitzer. They had not been able to carry off a single gun. Such was the full extent of the German "success."

CHAPTER XXIV.

SOLDIERS' STORIES.

IN the foregoing chapter I gave you an account of a week of striking victory for the British. Vimy Ridge, the main buttress of the enemy's position between Arras and the La Bassée Canal, had gone, and we were rapidly closing in on Lens. We had pushed up the Scarpe valley and had turned the Hindenburg line, which earlier in the month had been breached at Croiselles, Lagnicourt, and other places. Over 14,000 prisoners had been taken, including 285 officers; and about 200 of the enemy's guns, some of them heavy pieces, had fallen into our hands. Large numbers of others must have been destroyed during the bombardment. Some 250 machine guns were captured, and it was certain that scores of others lay buried in the ruined trenches.

The main honours of this great week went to the Canadians and to General Horne,* their gallant and skilful commander. The capture of the Vimy Ridge, with its innumerable tunnels and underground shelters, was a fine feat of arms, and the Dominion troops fully deserved the high praise accorded to them by the King.

* * * * *

I have before me as I write this chapter a rich crop of soldiers' stories relating incidents connected with the capture of the Vimy Ridge. Before I give you a selection from these stories, let me remind you once more that the Germans regarded the ridge as of vital importance to them. You will remember that in September 1915, while we struck at Loos, General Foch

* General Horne is said to have invented the "creeping barrage," which enabled so many of our successes to be won without undue loss of life.

made a gallant but unavailing effort to carry this all-important stretch of high ground. The Germans managed to retain it, but only at the cost of some 60,000 men. A correspondent writes :—

“ Upon the Vimy Ridge hinged the whole plan of the enemy's retreat in the West. With Vimy firmly held, he could swing the southward part of his line slowly back and back until each part of it reached the position on which he had made up his mind to stand. With Vimy firmly held, his line would still cover the French industrial towns and districts upon which he depended so much for his supplies. But with Vimy gone, the defence of these towns and districts began to waver, and they could hardly be held. With Vimy gone, the pivot of the whole retreat shifted, and gave backwards. Its timing was thrown out of gear, and it was in instant risk of fracture.”

* * * * *

Within a few hours of the opening of the great battle wounded men began to arrive in the London hospitals. Almost the first question which one of them put to the doctor after being made comfortable was, “ How are things going? Have they kept it?” “ Kept what?” he was asked. “ Why, the Vimy Ridge.” His eyes sparkled when he was told that the German counter-attacks had all been repulsed. Then he told his story.

“ I was at a bombing post on the Vimy Ridge, holding the line before our attack. The Germans put up a twenty-four hours' bombardment over us, but we gave them three times as much stuff as they sent us. It was fine, and yet terrible, to watch our shells bursting. We knew that there was going to be big fighting. We knew, too, that they would have to get off that ridge.

“ I received my wound just as the Canadians were moving towards the German trenches. But I knew by the yells of our fellows that Fritz was getting it. It was bad luck for me; but I guess I shall get back again before it is all over. The spirit of the Canadians is great. Say, is it not good to be a Canadian to take that ridge? I am one of five brothers who left a farm in British Columbia to fight in France. Shall I be pleased to get home again? Well, yes, when there's nothing more to do in Europe.”

* * * * *

In the heat of battle, while the shells of the British barrage



Tommy and his Nurse exchange Greetings while waiting for the Train to start.

(British Official Photo.)

were dropping beautifully, a loud-voiced Canadian sergeant was heard to shout, "Steady, you Canadians! Where the dickens do you think you are going?" The next moment he was crying out, "Come on, you big stiffs, let them have it!" Above the din of roaring guns and bursting shells his voice was continually heard, sometimes scolding, sometimes cheering his men. When all was over, he shook his head and said dolefully, "What a lot of souvenirs we have left behind!"

* * * * *

A Canadian private said: "We went over on Monday morning on the second wave. The first and second German lines had been practically washed out by our bombardment; but we found swarms of Boches in the third-line dug-outs, which were too deep down to be touched by our shells. These Boches in the dug-outs showed no fight; their only concern was to make us understand that they wished to surrender. Others bolted like rabbits for their own back line, and a lot of them were mown down by our Lewis guns. Our Lewis gun fire was wonderfully intense. You could hear it even above the barrage roar."

* * * * *

"We knew all there was to know about this attack before we started it," said another private. "They talk about Boche organization! I've never seen any signs of organization on their side to touch ours. Get the Boches away from their N.C.O.'s, and they've about as much organization as you get in a flock of sheep without a shepherd or a dog."

* * * * *

"I saw," wrote Mr. Philip Gibbs, "two waves of infantry advancing. They went in a slow, leisurely way, not hurried, though the enemy's shrapnel was searching for them. 'Grand fellows,' said an officer lying next to me on the wet slope. 'Oh, topping!' Fifteen minutes afterwards groups of men came back. They were British wounded and German prisoners. From these men, hit by shrapnel and machine-gun bullets, I heard the first news of progress. 'We did fine,' said one of them. 'We were through the fourth lines before I was knocked out.' 'Not many Germans in the first trenches,' said another, 'and no real trenches either, after our shelling. We had knocked their dug-outs out; and their dead were lying thick, while the living ones put their hands up.' All the men agreed

that their own casualties were not high, and mostly consisted of wounded. 'We did well,' said one lad simply. 'We've taken all that we were asked to take.' "

* * * * *

A wounded Canadian hero in an Edinburgh hospital said: "The heart is going out of the Germans. Here and there they fought stubbornly; but generally we had an easier job than we bargained for. Once we got on the move the Germans were easy prey. Large numbers of them welcomed us with open arms—lifted high above their heads. They came back willingly, and it was strange to see them acting as stretcher-bearers for our wounded. Some of them seemed to be able to do a useful bit of bandaging as well.

"We were making our way carefully along the ground, which had been terribly torn and broken by the artillery. From shell-hole to shell-hole we advanced steadily, waiting for the word to dash forward. It came soon, and in an unexpected way. One of our boys suddenly noticed several of the Germans leaving their trench and retiring to the rear for safety. At once he rose with a whoop of triumph. 'Come on, boys,' he shouted; 'they are on the run.' We rose and cheered all along the line as we went forward. Many of the Germans stood waiting to surrender, and the rest were tumbling over each other, trying to get away. They ran like hares, and as they did so, threw away their arms and kit. It was great sport."

* * * * *

"Our advance," said another Canadian, "went like clock-work. Wave after wave went forward and gained the positions which they had to take. Our barrage worked like a machine. It lifted at the right moment from time to time, and the infantry followed up at once. It was all done according to programme. I don't know what had happened to Fritz's guns, but they didn't seem to trouble us much. I fancy our artillery had something to do with that too, and must have put the lid on the German batteries. When we got on the ridge we had some trouble with snipers, but they were rounded up after a time. We are winning now, and we know it, and what helps us some is that the Germans know it too. A German prisoner said to me, 'You have the ridge now, but you won't have it in a week.' I smiled and said, 'We needn't worry.' "

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A correspondent tells us that one has only to look over the battlefield to "realize how the munition workers of Britain had helped in the victory. Ruin, utter ruin, everywhere. Bits of brick and mortar heaved into formless masses, gaping holes and new mounds of earth, dead men in gray, wrecked machine guns, powdered concrete, broken rifles, howitzers twisted at impossible angles, blackened tree stumps, bent rails, and splintered timber. The picture cannot be imagined. The wonder of it is that any living thing could survive, much less try to resist. When the British guns, hidden for miles around, began their work, every dweller in the German forts was driven below ground. While shells rained on their refuges, they sat in darkness, idle and numb, hoping vainly for the relief that never came. When the storm lifted, it was only to send their enemies sweeping into their strongholds. They came up to be killed or captured.

"I have heard from some of the prisoners the story of this captivity. They slept or smoked in their dug-outs waiting for the storm to pass. From time to time a scout would climb the narrow stairs and scan the sky. No sign of a lull. The telephones rang with angry messages from generals in safe places, but neither curses nor commands could send the gunners to their batteries while the British shells continued to fall.

"Our reply was weak," said a Bavarian gunner as he sat in the prisoners' cage. "Weak it was, but it was wonderful that we could reply at all. The British artillery was very—effective!"

"The Germans grew hungrier and more down-hearted. One battery group was penned to its dug-outs for four days and nights without food. Another howitzer battery was deserted for three days, and only fired at night when the British shells were fewer. The infantry on the Vimy Ridge ate their spare rations, and then were hungry for two days before they ate their first meal in a Canadian compound. The roads out of Douai were blocked with transports, but they could not deliver the rations.

"One column got through to the battle-front only to be captured, wagons and all. The men had breakfasted in Douai on Monday morning, and they had driven towards Vimy in time to meet the Canadians advancing from the west. By

three in the afternoon the men of this column were sampling tins of bully beef behind the British lines.

"While the opening bombardment was going on, I saw our men sleeping in the fields or lying along the roads. Then I saw them pressing forward to the attack, singing, whistling, joking, giving no thought to the uncertainty of their next hour, wholly glad to be alive, though death might march with them into the fields beyond."

* * * * *

It was noticed that there was a great lack of discipline amongst the German prisoners who passed through the cages. Veterans said their behaviour was very different from that of the men captured a year previously. They no longer seemed to stand in awe of their non-commissioned officers. Many schoolmasters were among the N.C.O.'s, but they were not able to enforce the order of the classroom on unruly Prussians who only obey those whom they fear. It was pathetic to see an anxious, pale Teuton glaring through his spectacles at a party of privates who took not the slightest notice of him, but paid the utmost attention to the British officers who were giving them food and dry clothes.

"I remember the silent and very obedient prisoners taken at Loos. They were almost dog-like in their attitude towards their sergeants. They lay in a field behind Bethune, hungry and exhausted; but when a harsh command was rasped out by an *unter officier*, they staggered to attention at once and dutifully awaited his pleasure. That was a year and a half ago. Last week two thousand other prisoners from the same districts in Prussia clamoured for water, quarrelled amongst themselves, and pushed and elbowed their way up to the wire netting like schoolboys. Their helpless sergeants ran this way and that, threatening and cursing, but without making the slightest impression on the unruly mob.

"'Get your men in a queue for their rations,' said a British captain, who was in charge of the cage.

"'I cannot make them wait their turn,' said an elderly N.C.O. 'They will not obey.'

"So the British captain—he was only a youth—plunged into the seething mass and quickly settled matters.

"The better-class prisoners admitted that Germany could not win, although some of them hoped that the U-boat cam-



A "Mopping-up" Party at Work: Bombing a German Dug-out
(From the picture by S. Begg. 3)



From which Shots had been fired at the Backs of our Advancing Troops.
(By permission of the *Illustrated London News*.)

paign would enable her to make terms of some sort. Many of the men had in their pockets pictures and cartoons cut from illustrated papers showing John Bull, lean and starving, shaking his fist in powerless rage at a smiling U-boat captain off Dover! The letters in their packets were full of hope that the submarines would soon end the war."

* * * * *

A Jock who had been hit but could still walk was ordered by his officer to go to the rear to have his wounds dressed. As he made his way back he fell in with a strange procession—a party of sixty Germans marching along in fours, with an officer at their head. Jock went up to the little column, waved his rifle, and halted them. "Who's in charge here?" he asked. "I am, Highlander," replied the officer. "We've had enough of this war." "Have ye no escort?" was Jock's next question. When the Boche told him they had none he said, "Well, then, I'll e'en tak' ye masel'." And he did, marching at their head like a sergeant-major, until he reached one of our dressing-stations, where he was able to hand over his command and get his wounds attended to.

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A correspondent tells us that both cavalry and the Tanks played a part in the capture of Monchy. When the defeated Prussian divisions were flung eastward along the Scarpe and the Cambrai road, they had been ordered by the High Command to hold the village and the high ground at all costs. When our attack began, fresh German regiments were hurried up to stiffen the exhausted troops, but they could not arrive in time. Their guns had fallen back as ours were pushed forward over the new craters towards the good roads behind. At this moment British cavalry suddenly appeared on the fringe of open country below Monchy, and began riding down the nests of snipers and the pockets of machine gunners. Although a storm of shrapnel and heavy shell was hurled at them, they worked along both sides of the Cambrai road, slept on the broken ground that night, and early in the morning joined up with the infantry and the Tanks.

Just after daybreak the combined force encircled the village and began to storm it. The infantry took the southern end of the village. Observers could see the "foot-sloggers" stumbling across the fields, shaking the snow from their greatcoats, their

heads down against the double blast of cutting wind and deadlier bullets. Men fell, but others went on. Machine guns clattered from windows and from behind ditches. The red roofs of the cottages were dotted with the gray figures of prostrate Germans firing wildly down the slope. "The bullets were like rain-drops," said a Londoner. "They couldn't miss us, and they couldn't stop us." The infantry were in among the cottages before the garrison had time to retire from the roofs, and some of them looked down rather foolishly from the gables. Others were running up the narrow streets of the village.

The eastern slope of Monchy was thick with flying Prussians. Meanwhile the cavalry were charging into the northern end of the village. They had formed under the lee of a slight dip in the ground, under a hot fire. Horses wheeled into position, and sabres flashed in the morning light. They came into view a moment later. You have never seen cavalrymen like them—mud-encased figures under flat metal hats, men with three days' beards and faces covered with grime. In no way did they suggest the smart Lancers, Dragoons, or Hussars of the old days. They had slept in shell-holes amidst mud and rain, and with no protection save their greatcoats. They were unwashed, weary, and cold; but never have troopers ridden to a charge so willingly and so effectively.

"We went full tilt," said a boy subaltern with a torn tunic, "full tilt, with a cheer for a good half-mile, into the funny old town itself." They halted in the streets with sabres and lances still shining, for not a single Prussian remained to meet them. Monchy was empty. Five dead Germans lay across the pavement, and two fallen British infantrymen were near them. Abandoned machine guns awaited their search; the German flag still hung before the door of the deserted headquarters, and the beds of the fleeing Prussian officers were hardly cold.

Two women appeared from one of the houses, running towards our men with gestures of fright. "They couldn't realize we were friends," said a young trooper, "for one of them said, 'Kamerad!' I don't talk French, and we had some trouble to pacify them. When they realized we were British they kissed all of us."

These women had seen the village in which they had spent their lives suddenly become part of the battle-front. They had seen German machine gunners take possession of their

houses, and pile furniture and timber round the windows. They had seen German officers enter their homes worn out with fatigue, and after telling an orderly to call them early in the morning, fling themselves on to the beds and fall asleep without removing their clothes. They had been called earlier than they expected, for the British had broken in and the Germans had fled, barely managing to escape. Then in the darkness of a cellar the women had sat and shivered while shells burst overhead. Finally they heard the rush of many feet, loud cheers, and the thunder of horses' hoofs, and had come up trembling to find the village in the hands of friends.

The Germans were thrown back into Sart Wood, where they were seen massing for a counter-attack. They were, however, so badly cut up before they were able to advance a hundred yards that the survivors were glad to run back to the shelter of the trees. A Tank which ploughed its way round the village helped to dislodge the pockets of machine guns, and to make many Germans surrender. The Boches had still a genuine horror of the Tanks. Prisoners said that their comrades were afraid to hold their ground when the monsters appeared, and that none of the devices which had been invented to overcome them gave the men attacked any confidence.

* * * * *

Certain Bavarians were holding a trench in another part of the line. When our men appeared they threw up their hands as if obeying an order, and shouted in chorus, "Mercy, Kamerad!" Then they formed up in single file and prepared to march to the cages. A British soldier who saw all this said, "What organizers these Fritzes are! Why, they even practise surrender drill!"

A German found in one of our support trenches said that he had lost his way. "You're all right, sonny," remarked an Irishman: "you're on your way to the cage!"

* * * * *

Here is an interesting picture of what went on behind our line during the time when our men were pushing towards Lens:—

"The scene in the farmhouse, which was the headquarters, is one of the many dramatic little pictures which we are witnessing day by day during the great advance. Little children are playing in the sunshine outside, and women stand at the

doors of their cottages, gossiping about everything but the most important event of the year. A farmer ploughs his field across the way, and a little girl is selling yesterday's newspapers down the village street.

“Round a great map in the drawing-room of the farmhouse staff officers are reading messages from the outposts pushing through the maze of slag heaps a few miles distant. Even as we watch the British front keeps going forward across the map in thick blue pencil lines which advance as messages arrive quickly one after the other.

“‘Enemy retiring through Cité Jeanne d’Arc, and giving up a strong point.’ Then, a moment later : ‘Enemy has given up the Crook (a circular redoubt at one of the four defending western suburbs of Lens), and is falling back towards Cité St. Theodore.’

“So the news comes filtering into the quiet room during the afternoon, while the traffic of the little village moves lazily along the dusty road. There is nothing of war in the peaceful atmosphere. Beyond the tall chimneys of the colliery one of the greatest incidents in this campaign is taking place—the Hun is going homeward in the bitterness of defeat ; while at the street corner two old men are wrangling about the price of a hen.”

CHAPTER XXV.

WITH THE FRENCH ON THE AISNE.

I HAVE already told you that the Hindenburg line struck the Aisne above Soissons. To be correct, it touched the river at Missy, where it made a sharp salient. The French were now about to assault this southern pivot of the line. Should they be successful in smashing it, there would speedily be an end of the Hindenburg line altogether.

A new Battle of the Aisne was to be fought, on ground where Britons and French had failed to make headway as far back as September 1914. Turn to Chapter XXIX., Vol. II., and read the story of the first battle.

On pages 248 and 249 of Vol. II. you will see a bird's-eye view of the Aisne Heights from Soissons to Braye. Really these heights consist of a limestone plateau, rising sharply from the river and deeply cut by ravines. The plateau ends in a bold promontory, on the top of which stands the town of Craonne. Along these uplands, about five miles to the north of the Aisne, runs the Lady's Road all the way from Craonne to the Oise-Aisne Canal. Craonne is famous as the scene of one of the fiercest battles fought by Napoleon during the campaign of 1814. Near the little town he routed a greatly superior army of Germans, and drove it before him.

Beyond Craonne to the east is a stretch of bare, rolling Champagne country, from every part of which the distant mass of Rheims Cathedral can be seen. This downland may be said to end at Berry-au-Bac—that is, Berry of the ferry—the place where the great Roman road from Rheims to Laon crosses the Aisne. The French proposed to attack all the way from Missy to Berry-au-Bac, and also along the line of wooded hills to the east of Rheims, known as the Moronvillers group.

For ten days the French bombarded the German lines on a twenty-five mile front between Craonne and the little town of Courcy, some seven miles northward of Rheims, on the Aisne-Oise Canal. General Nivelle had timed his attack to begin just at the moment when the enemy was hurrying his reserves northward to stem the torrent of the British advance north of Arras. On Friday, 13th March, the artillery fire reached its highest pitch. The trenches which the enemy held were very strong, for he had been sitting in them for over two years. When, however, the French dashed forward on Monday, the 16th, they carried all before them, and captured the whole of the German first-line trenches from Craonne to Rheims. In some places the German second line was passed. A good advance was also made east of Rheims, where valuable heights



were captured. In this part of the line a Russian brigade did specially fine work.

A correspondent thus describes the first day's fighting in the western section: "On the morning of the first day of the attack (16th April) the French line ran south of the woods, past Moussy and Soupir, westwards to Chavonne, where it crossed the river and followed the south bank as far as Vailly. Slopes, woods, and plateau were all covered by a network of German trenches right back to the Lady's Road, on which the enemy's artillery was massed. The battalion which attacked from the left found the system of trenches in the wood south of Braye undestroyed, and it was decided to make a flank instead of a frontal attack, and to put the operation off till next day, while the artillery dealt with the position. In the

evening, in less than two hours, two battalions made their way into the southern edge of the woods, and next morning another regiment pushed forward and reached the enemy's second position between Braye and Soupir. In spite of a determined resistance, the enemy was obliged to retire hurriedly, only just in time to save his whole force from being cut off and surrounded.

The Germans were so sure of the strength of their positions that when they did make up their minds to go it was too late to bring up the gun teams to save the artillery. There was a fierce hand-to-hand fight round the batteries; but the French were "all over" the enemy, and in the end took fifty guns with their supplies of ammunition, and nearly 2,000 prisoners, including thirty officers, besides a large haul of machine guns, rifles, and other war material. The Germans were so certain that they would not have to retreat, that they were about to sit down to a meal when the French broke in. They also discovered that none of the dug-outs and shelters had been destroyed. The enemy had had no time to touch off the mines which he had prepared.

At the end of three days the French had won all the line between Braye and Soupir, and to the east were well up to the Lady's Road. On the fourth day the salient at Missy was wiped out altogether. By the close of the fifth day, when the offensive came to an end, the French were able to announce that the front had been carried forward in some places nearly twenty-two miles, and that two French departments, more than 200 communes, and over 20,000 inhabitants had been restored to France. All this had been done with but slight losses. The total number of prisoners taken exceeded 19,000, and over 100 guns fell into the hands of the French during the five days of the offensive. A glance at the map on page 207 will show you the extent of the French territory regained. Perhaps you think that it appears unimportant; but you must remember that the Germans had been forced to give up a terribly strong series of trenches on which they had worked for more than two and a half years.

CHAPTER XXVI.

STROKE AND COUNTERSTROKE.

WHEN the month of April came to an end we were able to look back on a period of very satisfactory gains. From Lens to the Aisne, and thence past Rheims along the chalky, rolling country of "dusty Champagne" to the Forest of Argonne, there had been almost continuous fighting. We won our crowning success when we captured Vimy Ridge on 9th April. Two months later this uplift of chalk was an object of great interest to the King during his visit to the Western front. A correspondent tells us that from its highest point his Majesty looked down on Lens and the plain of Douai, both of which were still in possession of the enemy. The spires and towers of the city which gives its name to the Roman Catholic English version of the Bible were easily visible. The lines of shell-craters which pitted the ridge showed clearly the accuracy of the barrage which led the Canadians to victory. The King was able to follow the progress of the Dominion troops step by step, from the crumbling front line, through the mazes of tunnels and strong points that were cleared on that historic April day, to the highest point of the ridge. The same correspondent adds that the ridge was then losing its dead appearance. Plants and flowers were struggling for existence among the craters, and already there were vivid little patches of green and yellow and blue on the slopes where so many gallant Britons were sleeping their last sleep.

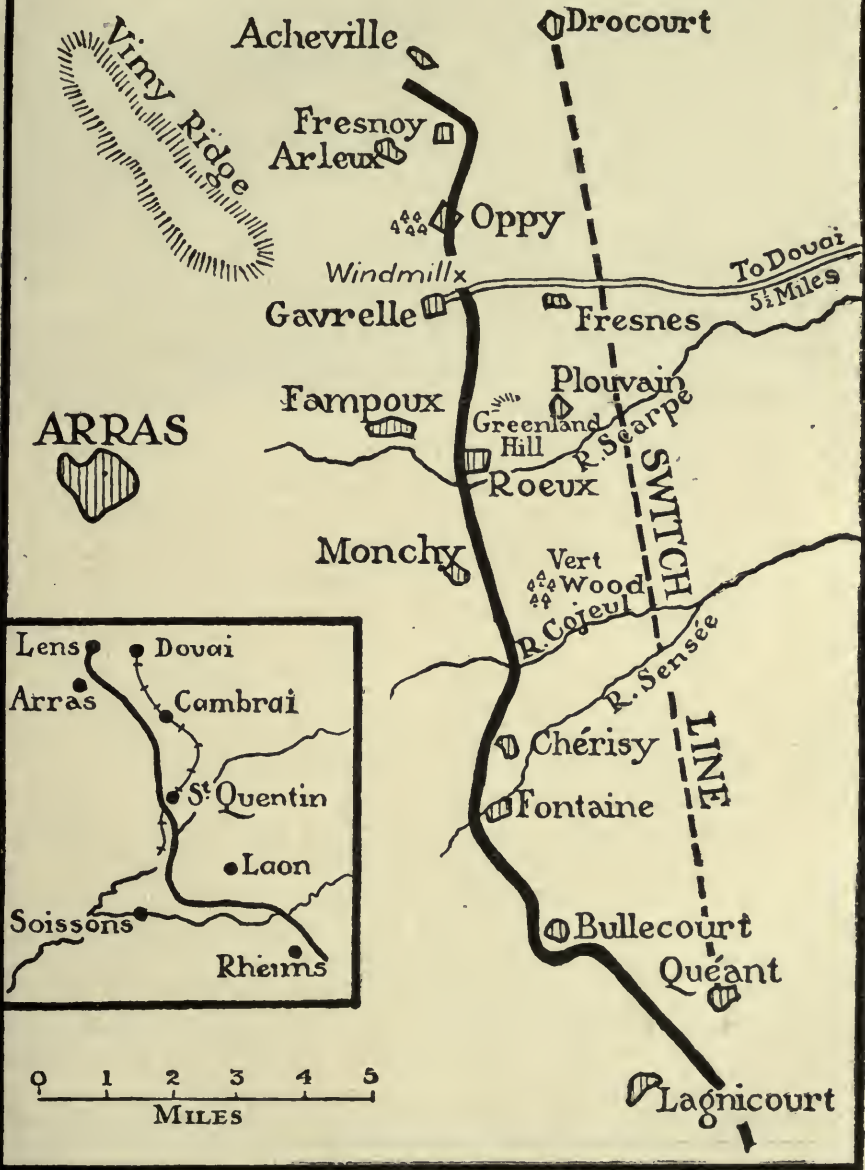
The dash and gallantry of the Canadians had broken down the northern buttress of the Hindenburg line, and had enabled us to make progress along the Souchez brook to the north and along the Scarpe valley to the south. After the capture of Monchy we had pushed forward from two to five miles on a

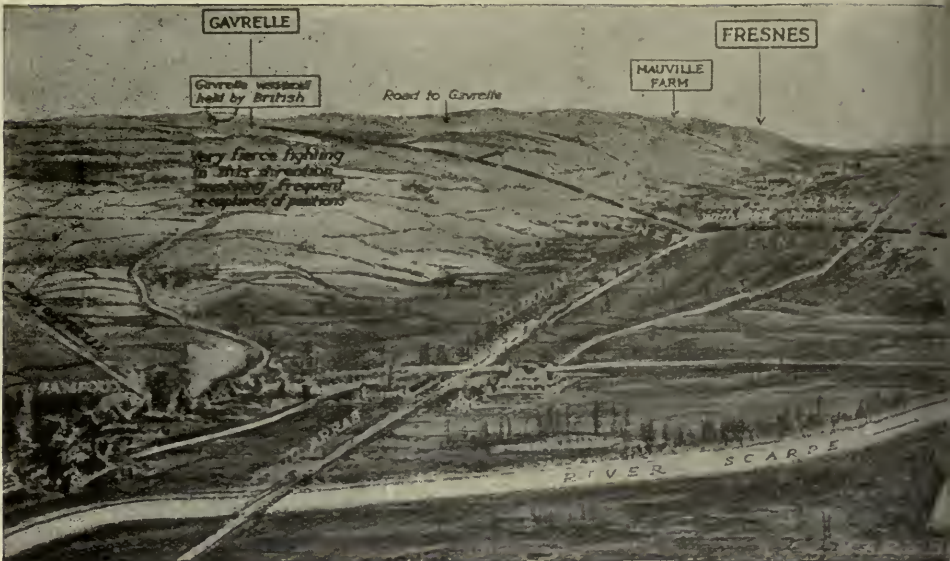
twenty-mile front, and the northern portion of the Hindenburg line was now no more. Further south, near the junction of the Hindenburg line with the Switch line, we had won and lost Bullecourt, but had seized the high ground near Lagnicourt. Meanwhile our Allies had made good progress on the heights of the Aisne, and above Moronvilliers, to the east of Rheims, had won positions of great advantage for observation. In the course of the month's fighting some 20,000 officers and men had been taken prisoners; and over 250 guns, nearly a hundred of them heavy pieces, had been captured along with a large number of mortars and machine guns. Every day there had been combats in the air, and some 369 German aeroplanes had been brought down, 269 of them by the British. Nearly all these aerial fights had taken place on the German side of the line. A writer tells us that during his visit to the front in April he did not see a single German machine over our trenches.

You already know that Hindenburg, with great foresight, had set his labour battalions preparing a line of defence for the protection of Douai. This was the "Switch" line of which you have heard so frequently. When the Canadians swept over Vimy Ridge the "Switch" line was not completed, so trenches were hastily dug and fortified to the east of the ridge. On Monday, 23rd April, we struck hard at the breach in the Hindenburg line from Croiselles, south of the Scarpe, to Gavrelle, which stands north of the river at the point where the new trenches linked up with the old. Gavrelle was captured, and the Germans were in dire peril of being forced back on the uncompleted "Switch" line.

To save themselves from this fate, which might have meant the loss of Douai, the enemy brought up seven divisions of his "storming troops," one to each mile, and launched them against us in a series of the most determined counter-attacks. At Gavrelle, for example, the Germans made eight separate attacks in the course of twenty-four hours, and employed for the purpose five or six thousand men. "Some of the attacks were broken by our guns almost before they began; others, and these are the ones in which the slaughter was most terrible, crossed a considerable space of open ground before coming under our artillery fire, when whole battalions were blown to bits. Only in a few cases did portions of waves come on to

LENS





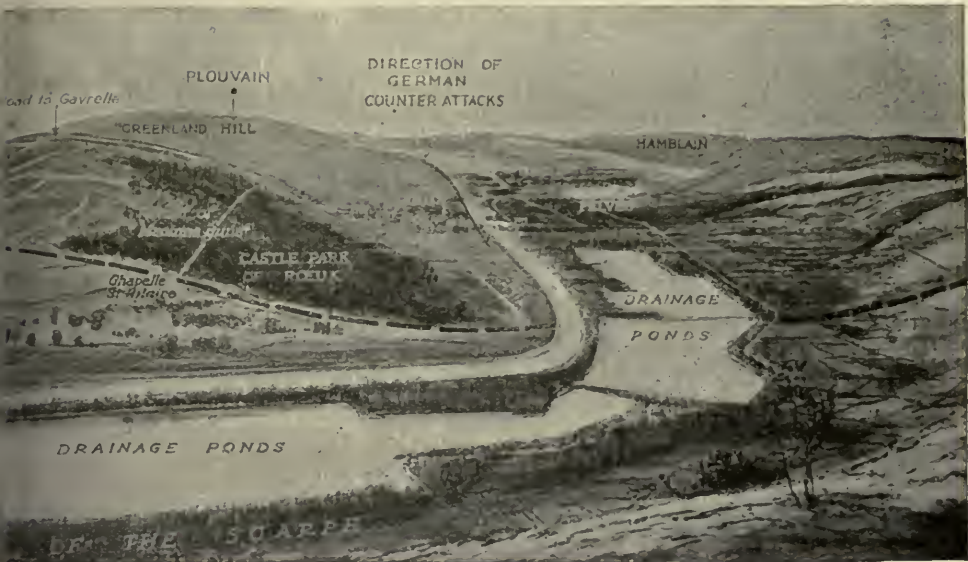
be wiped out by rifle-fire, and only in one case, and that early in the operations, did any enemy penetrate into the village."

Look at the map on page 211, and study the enemy's line from Fresnoy to the Scarpe. Notice the position of Oppy, which will soon come into our narrative, and observe that Gavrelle stands on the highroad from Arras to Douai. The latter fact explains why the Germans strove so fiercely to recover the village. South of Gavrelle, and just north of Plouvain, there is a slight slope, which our men called Greenland Hill. South-west of Plouvain, on the Scarpe, which flows through Douai, is the village of Rœux.* Its capture would outflank Greenland Hill.

Now let us return to the story of the German counter-attacks. In the open country between Gavrelle and the marshes of the Scarpe the German generals thought that their "storming troops" had a good chance to break through our barrier. As events proved, they sent men to their death in thousands. The German counter-attacks made in the summer of 1916, according to General von Armin, had "cost much blood." The counter-attacks against Gavrelle cost much more.

"The German infantry waves came over the ridges and through the copses north of Plouvain in the old familiar way. They advanced in solid

* Rue.



lines, sent forward as though by machinery. No gunner could ask a better target. The surviving Brandenburgs and Hamburgers who managed to regain their shelters were sorted and held in readiness for another attempt, and fresh battalions were summoned to undergo the same ordeal. The British garrison at Gavrelle simply sat tight behind its machine guns and killed Germans, in company with the artillery. The fields in front of them were covered with corpses. For that matter, the entire countryside around Monchy and Fontaine was likewise strewn with dead, and the enemy casualties appeared to be heavier in front of Gavrelle than at any other spot.

"Over five hundred prisoners, including seventeen officers, were captured in the Gavrelle area, as the result of our attacks on the village and the German counter-assaults. These three days of close, hard fighting proved that the Hun was still a stout though unworthy foe. When cornered, however, he was ready to surrender as soon as a safe opportunity presented itself. His wholesome fear of his own officers alone drove him forward to attacks which were doomed to failure before they began. This fact is worth remembering. Earlier in the war German troops advanced to the sacrifice willingly, even cheerfully. At times they went to their death singing songs of the Fatherland. Now they attacked because they were flung into the battlefield by a staff which regarded them merely as a stopgap. They were booted forward by an authority which they had been taught to dread. They could still charge in the old-fashioned way, even while they longed to be taken prisoner. They had no heart in the business."

* * * * *

Now let us move on to 28th April. On that day (Saturday) we delivered another blow astride the all-important Scarpe

valley. For five days the battle raged. The Canadians managed to seize Arleux* after fierce hand-to-hand fights with the Prussian garrison, and further south all the western slope of Greenland Hill. All through the afternoon the Germans made counter-attacks at intervals of two hours. Every one of them was stopped by our guns, and again the slaughter was awful. One attack, however, met with success. Our men who were holding the ruins of Oppy were driven out by a specially heavy charge. Through the following night the attacks continued. Probably in the five days' encounter the Germans came on at least twenty times, and every time they were beaten back, leaving behind them huddled corpses and many wounded.

The slight success at Oppy was all that the enemy could show for his awful waste of human life. During Sunday afternoon we captured about a mile of trenches south of the village, which by this time had been retaken. Then counter-attacks began again, only to suffer the same fate.

During these almost constant assaults many of our regiments performed miracles of resistance. In some cases small parties were trapped, and fell fighting almost to the last man. The Worcester Regiment covered itself with glory in the following way. Two great German charges had for the moment been successful, and the troops on both flanks of this regiment had been swept back. The Worcesters, however, were better entrenched than their neighbours, and were able to hold on. One enemy wave, numbering thousands, and followed by another equally strong, drove over them and past them, but no man thought of surrender. Nevertheless, they were completely cut off. Their water failed, and they suffered agonies of thirst. All the while a hurricane of shell-fire burst around them, and the dust and smoke added to their sufferings. Nothing, however, could break down their sturdy faith that the ebbing tide would flow again, though for many long and anxious hours it seemed "no painful inch to gain." They knew that they belonged to a regiment which had never deserted its post or shrunk from the great sacrifice. At last after a day and a night, and yet another day of agony, they noticed the enemy giving way, and hope surged up anew in their breasts. Another twelve or fourteen hours, however, elapsed before they

* *Arlew.*

saw the last rearguard of the enemy withdraw and heard the cheers of their comrades. Relief had at last arrived. Parched with thirst, weakened with hunger and the fatigue of long fighting, blackened and grimed by smoke and flying earth, they had shown once again that dogged endurance for which the Briton has always been famed.

On the last day of April the Germans issued a report in which they painted their trifling victory at Oppy in glowing colours. Nothing was said of the terrible expense at which they had won it. Our High Command was well content with the result: the German reserves were being steadily sucked into the mill race and ground to powder by British millstones.

* * * * *

The enemy by this time was driven back in the north to his "Switch" line; and on 3rd May, after our wearied troops had been given a few days' rest, a general attack was ordered along a fifteen-mile front from the broken Hindenburg line, across the three rivers, the Sensée, the Cojeul, and the Scarpe, and through a series of strongly-fortified roads and villages from the west of Quéant almost to the outskirts of Lens. This great blow, which might well be called the Battle of the Three Rivers, was only a partial victory for us. There was loss and there was gain, but on the whole the advantage was ours.

On 2nd May the storm of gun-fire which marks the opening stages of a modern battle once more beat down upon the German lines, destroying wire, flattening out trenches, and utterly wrecking the labour of months. Through the night until the setting of the moon in the early hours of Thursday, 3rd May, the bombardment continued. Then it suddenly ceased, and the signal was given for the attack to begin. Away went our men behind the barrage—Canadians on the north, Australians on the south, and English and Scottish troops in between. Before long our first success was won. The Canadians, who had advanced from Arleux, which they had gallantly captured towards the close of the previous month, when they carried heavily wired trenches, sunken roads, and nests of machine guns, had pushed on towards Fresnoy, four miles east of the village of Vimy, and had seized the ruins of the place in the very nick of time; for at the moment when they entered it parties of Germans were gathering for an attack which was timed to begin two hours later. The capture of



Fighting the Prussian Guard at Bullecourt—knockg

(By permission of the

Bullecourt village was the scene of most desperate fighting. It was strongly garrisoned by pic
they could not resist the doggedness of our men. Hand-to-hand fights with the Potsdam Giants, so
house repeatedly changed hands, and the place was constantly shelled by both sides. Our illustrat
This house can be seen across the open space in the centre of the picture. A trench mortar (seen on
is seen in the air. Finally our men stormed the ruins.



o a Fortified House held by the "Potsdam Giants."

(Illustrated London News.)

ments of the Prussian Guards, who had orders to hold it at all costs. They fought stubbornly, but
aged over six feet in height, were everyday incidents during the five weeks' struggle. House after
pares the moment when our infantry were held up by a fortified house bristling with machine guns.
le was brought up, and at length the fort was destroyed by high-explosive bombs—one of these bombs

Fresnoy was a very fine piece of work, especially when we remember that the Canadians had been fighting almost continuously since their great success on Vimy Ridge nearly a month ago. Few prisoners were taken, but the enemy's loss in killed and wounded was very heavy. The prisoners said that they had been horribly shelled by our guns while making their way to the village, and that many of their comrades had been killed before they could reach the shelter of their trenches.

At Oppy, the scene of the German success on 28th April, we also won ground. We managed to get a footing in the enemy's trenches in spite of the very stubborn resistance of the German Guards. The first rush carried our men right into the village and almost through it; but as the wood behind was not cleared, they were unable to make good their gains. In this part of the line the struggle swayed to and fro like a pendulum.

To Gavrelle we held on like grim death, though the enemy strove hard to retake the village. His attacks started from rising ground just north of Fresnes, on the Gavrelle-Douai road, and were aimed at the Windmill, some three thousand yards away. Though our guns made havoc of the advancing troops, some of them reached the Windmill, and a furious fight took place round its fortified stump. Four times during that day the mill changed hands; it was in safe British keeping when night fell.

Further south the Germans hung on to Rœux, though at a terrible cost, for the ruins of that village were shelled both from the west and the north. On the river Sensée you will see the village of Chérisy. Between Rœux and this village, in the Vert Wood and on the Cojeul, we made small gains; but at Chérisy itself we had a rebuff. It was a very strong position indeed; the trench lines were heavily wired; there were two awkward sunken roads; and across our front, immediately behind the village, lay the shallow valley of the Sensée, which was swept by the enemy's machine-gun fire. Nevertheless, at the first advance our troops went right through the village and across the river; but they were obliged to retire before night. The Germans launched a very heavy counter-attack, and our men had to fall back and abandon the ground which they had won. In the neighbouring village of

Fontaine, however, some six hundred yards of the Hindenburg line were captured.

While this ebb and flow was going on in the centre, the Australians were doing great things at Bullecourt. Let me remind you once more that the Hindenburg line ran from Arras through Quéant, southward to the neighbourhood of St. Quentin. Behind this line the enemy was busy fortifying the "Switch" line from Drocourt to Quéant. Already the Hindenburg line had been broken from a little north of Bullecourt to the Vimy Ridge. If we could break through at Bullecourt we should be able to turn the "Switch" line from the south, and the enemy would be flung back, perhaps, beyond Douai. The Germans were quite well aware of their danger, and were ready to make great sacrifices in order to hold on to the critical point of junction. You can now understand why they made furious efforts to retain the position. Bullecourt is now only a name, and it was never more than a trifling village; but it is inscribed for ever on the roll of history as the scene of deadly struggles and countless heroisms. In days to come veterans on sheep farms or cattle runs at the Antipodes will gather the children round their knees and tell them the breathless story of those fierce strokes and counterstrokes which, after five long and bitter weeks of fighting, firmly planted the Australian banner on the ruins of Bullecourt.

I have already told you that on 11th April the Australians seized the position. Unhappily, however, they were not supported on the flanks, and were forced to retire by a very heavy German counter-attack. When, however, the enemy's battalions tried to break through the line, they were driven off with terrible slaughter.

Early on the morning of 3rd May the Australians made their second venture. For days previously heavy artillery had pounded the Hindenburg line, and as the gray dawn broke, hundreds of field guns added their voices to the loud roar. So rapidly did they fire that the reports seemed like the roll of a kettledrum. British troops from the United Kingdom were on the left, and their duty was to capture the ruins of Bullecourt, seated on a flat promontory. To the right, on a similar promontory, hidden by the ridge on which Riencourt stands, lay Quéant, and between the two villages was the position which the Australians were to attack.

The signal was given, and away went our troops behind a barrage which stalked in front of them like a human guide. In the centre the Australians made excellent progress. They found the enemy's wire well cut, and were able to advance from position to position exactly according to timetable. In fifteen minutes they were in the first trench, and a quarter of an hour later were dropping into the second trench. The right, however, came under a withering machine-gun fire, and only a part of it reached the second trench, where all day long hand-to-hand fights and bombing combats went on.

Meanwhile the New South Wales men on the extreme left had been held up by the enemy's machine guns. A few of them, however, managed to push on, and found themselves entirely cut off from their comrades. That night, after dark, they fought down the Hindenburg line until they reached the point which they had set out to attain, and there they stayed. In this part of the line the struggle was very fierce. Sometimes the men advanced; sometimes they were forced back again, but still they held on. By midday a solid section of the Hindenburg line had been won; but now the Australians found that they had no supports on either side—both their flanks were "in the air." The troops which had been ordered to take Bullecourt had failed, though one small party had reached a position far behind the German lines, and some distance from the Australian flank. The enemy now began working round the sections of trench held by the Australians, who at one time were firing their machine guns both to the front and to the rear.

"On the right the struggle was a wild one. At noon the heads of Germans were seen at various points, and presently on they came, out of the sunken road, which our advanced troops had occupied during the earlier hours, diving from shell-hole to shell-hole, two or three hundred of them together, for all the world like a school of seals. Our men stood breast-high over the parapet with cigarettes in their mouths, and shot as they seldom have had the chance to shoot. A few brave men got within a dozen yards of them in one place. A bombing attack down the trench was made at the same time. It was met with a shower of trench-mortar bombs. One German was hoisted bodily out of the trench and flung thirty feet into the air. The attack melted away.

"The German trench mortars kept up at times a most powerful bombardment, and under it the right half of the attack was gradually forced back on to the left. A West Australian unit now took up the fight and

bombed back along the whole trench to the point previously attained. At ten o'clock at night the Germans again bombed their way furiously down the trench. We were by this time holding barely five hundred yards of the Hindenburg line, and there were signs of attack from the left rear as well as from the right.

"At that moment, when things seemed past praying for, the word to retire was passed along part of the line. The men whom it reached flung it back. 'Who said so?' they asked. 'What officer of ours gave that order?' The officers and men there had determined that if it came to the worst, and the Germans closed entirely around them, they would cut their way back to their own line. But it never came to that. The following afternoon the New South Welshmen bombed their way a full six hundred yards up the lost ground, and thus eased the pressure. For two nights the Germans continued their counter-attack, the last time with men of the Third Guard Division and picked storming troops. There were three counter-attacks on the following night, and for a time the Germans penetrated one trench. Nevertheless, though the Australians had Germans on three sides of them, and were counter-attacked day and night, they held on to the position."

After three days and three nights of almost ceaseless fighting, the Australians, by sheer dogged endurance, were still in the Hindenburg line.

On Friday, 4th May, and on the three following days, the Germans attacked our First and Third Armies, and strove to drive them out of their positions. Everywhere our men stood fast except near Chérisy, and astride the Arras-Cambrai road, where they were obliged to yield ground.

On the 8th the German commander determined to recapture Fresnoy from the Canadians, cost what it might, and for this purpose he brought up two fresh divisions of Guards and Bavarians to reinforce the division which was holding the ground east of the village. Early in the morning, after the Germans had very heavily bombarded our lines with gas and other shells, the Guards came on in solid masses. Our guns cut blood-red lanes through them, but they were not stayed. By weight of numbers they reached our trenches, only to be driven out again. As they retired scores of them were mown down by our machine guns.

The Guards had failed, and now the Bavarians were thrust into the fight. They, too, came on in dense masses. By this time our men were so worn out that they were compelled to give ground. But it was these same tired men who, a few hours later, after a breathing spell, again attacked, and recovered a large part of the ground which they had yielded. The

Germans paid a heavy price for their success, while our losses were by no means great.

Look for a moment at the position of the village of Rœux. You notice that it stands on the Scarpe, a little to the south-west of that uplift of land which our men called Greenland Hill. The capture of Rœux was the first step towards winning this hill, which was important to us as an observation station. Once we were masters of the village, Greenland Hill and Plouvain would be bound to fall. As far back as 23rd April we had made our way into Rœux cemetery, but our hold on this position and on the defences to the north and south was far from secure.

On the 11th, contrary to our usual practice, we made a night attack after a very heavy bombardment. The enemy was badly shaken, and when our men went forward they found his trenches full of dead. English, Scottish, and Irish troops were engaged, and Englishmen and Scots cleared out the cemetery, from which runs westward one of those curious ancient tunnels with large chambers which are common in this part of the country. The enemy had turned the tunnel and the chambers into a fortress of great strength; but our men took the garrison by surprise. It is said that in one of the chambers a German doctor and his staff were discovered hard at work. Our wounded were sent down to be dressed, and when the doctor had finished his bandaging he labelled each man for dispatch to a Berlin hospital. Only when he had dressed and labelled over a hundred of our wounded did he learn that he had not been attending to British prisoners, but that he himself was a prisoner, and had been giving medical comfort to the victors.

While we attacked at one point, a party of 200 Germans started running from their trenches to the rear. We opened fire on them, and many fell. The rest stopped, held up their hands, and ran into our lines, from which they were sent to the cages as prisoners. By half-past nine on the morning of the 14th Rœux was wholly British. The capture of this village was a set-off against our loss of Fresnoy.

That night the Germans made two counter-attacks in the midst of a thunderstorm and a heavy downpour of rain. They were both beaten off; but a third assault early next morning, after a very violent bombardment, broke through our line along

the Arras-Douai railway. There was a great deal of confusion in the half-light of dawn, and the officers of a neighbouring Scottish battalion only knew that our line had been broken when the colonel came up from his dug-out and to his great surprise saw Germans in his rear. At once he collected what men he could, pressing into service sentries, orderlies, runners, headquarters clerks, and the like, and started off after the enemy. The Germans managed to get into a short trench, and there the colonel's motley array fell upon them. Many of the enemy were slain, and the rest were captured. The third attack was as futile as the other two, and before long our line was knitted up again.

Many very remarkable incidents took place during the fighting for Rœux. For example, our men north of the Scarpe had rushed a position from which they could look down upon and enfilade an enemy trench on the other side of the river. In the dim light they saw that the trench was full of Germans, and at once turned their machine guns on them. The men in the trench, however, seemed to pay no attention to the fire, and our gunners were greatly mystified. Only when the sun rose did they understand why the Germans had not taken cover under the hail of bullets. They were all dead.

I have already told you that during the course of the attacks and counter-attacks described in this chapter parties of our men were frequently cut off and surrounded by the enemy. This unlucky fate overtook some forty Kentish men during the fighting for Rœux. They went beyond the rest of the line, and, losing direction, found themselves in a little copse, a good thousand yards ahead of their comrades. They were well in the enemy's country, and they knew that they were surrounded. They had, however, a machine gun, and were determined to do what damage they could before the end came.

Strange to say, they were not noticed by the enemy, and no direct attack was made upon them all day, so at nightfall they decided to cut their way back to their own line. Between them and the haven where they would be were scattered posts and two trenches of the enemy. Under cover of the dusk the Kentish men reached the first trench without being detected. As they looked into it a German officer with a drawn sword, and with two orderlies by his side, challenged them and called upon them to surrender. One of the Kents at once shot the officer

with his revolver, while others dealt with the orderlies. The sound of the shooting woke up the Germans slumbering in their dug-outs; but before the sleep was out of their eyes our men had sprung into the trench, and were out of it again on the other side. They sprinted for the second trench amidst a hail of bullets and bombs, and reached it. As it was narrow they took it, as it were, in their stride. They had now a zone of fire to cross before reaching their own lines. Many fell during this perilous passage; but finally half the gallant little company reached home safely, most of them unwounded.

Very gallant deeds were also done by the Devons and the Surreys during the fighting on the Scarpe. The Devons carried one of the strongest positions which we had to tackle, and won their ground by hard hand-to-hand fighting, in which every man proved himself a hero. Again and again they were counter-attacked, but nothing could shift these fellow-countrymen of Drake and Sir Richard Grenville. Nor were the Surreys a whit behind their comrades from the land of clotted cream. After doing dashing work in the early stages of the battle, they had to hold newly won positions which the enemy strove fiercely but vainly to recover.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON THE LADY'S ROAD.

RÆUX was now firmly in our hands, and the higher slopes of Greenland Hill were dotted with khaki-clad men. Seven days later Sir Douglas Haig was able to announce that the other fiercely contested village, Bullecourt, had completely passed into our hands, after five weeks of the fiercest stroke and counterstroke so far recorded.

The manner in which our men continued to make headway despite set-backs here and there was surprising. A German officer who surrendered at Bullecourt excused himself by saying that there was nothing else to do, as he had been attacked by overwhelming numbers. When he was told that small parties of our troops had won the village, he refused to believe it. The statement was proved, and then he said, "How could it be? We came in last night 2,000 strong." This was quite likely, as the prisoners taken outnumbered the whole of our attacking force. Among the captured men were many convicts who had been released from gaol and sent into the firing-line.

After the capture of Bullecourt there was a lull on the Lens-St. Quentin front during the remaining days of May. Our troops needed rest after their heavy fighting. Though we won no such striking successes in May as we had won in April, we had shaken the Hindenburg line by repeated hammer-blows, and, what is more, had forced the enemy to hurry up his reserves in order to prevent a fatal breach in his defences. He had been obliged to "milk his line" in the East in order to provide troops for his many but vain counter-attacks in the West. Slowly but surely he was bleeding to death. In every counterstroke he had lost more men than the Allies. To hold us off the "Switch" line he was obliged to pour out life like

water, especially at Rœux and Bullecourt. His only hope was that he would be able to continue his resistance sufficiently long to give his U boats a chance of raising the spectre of famine in our midst, and thus of forcing us to make terms with him. It was a vain hope, but it was his only hope.

* * * * * * *

I must now say a few words about the French offensive during the month of May. You will remember that during April our Ally had carried nearly the whole of the high ground near the village of Moronvilliers. This block of upland, of which Mont Haut is the central citadel, had been seized by the Germans after their retreat from the Marne, and had been very strongly fortified. So long as they held on to this high ground Rheims was in danger. Its capture was, therefore, a fine feather in the cap of the French. On 25th April they were able to announce that during the month of April they had taken 20,730 prisoners, 175 guns, 412 machine guns, and 119 trench mortars.

On 4th May, the day following the opening of our general attack from the west of Quéant to the Acheville-Vimy road, the French sprang forward once more. In brilliant fashion they carried the village of Craonne; * but shortly afterwards four of their divisions, while attempting to break through the German lines near Berry-au-Bac, were flung back with heavy losses. Nothing daunted, however, they attacked again the next day, and were rewarded by victory. The unconquered part of the Lady's Road was won, and by the evening of 5th May French troops were looking down the northern slopes of the Craonne promontory. On their left they attacked the new salient formed by the Hindenburg line, and succeeded in flattening it out. As the result of two days' fighting they were masters of the crest on which the Lady's Road runs for more than eighteen miles, and had taken nearly six thousand prisoners, along with seven guns.

The spirits of the French rose with their victory. What the capture of the Vimy Ridge had been to the British, the seizure of the Lady's Road was to them. They now felt, as our men did, that no matter how deeply the Germans dug their lairs, they could be beaten out of them into the open field. Hindenburg might boast of his "iron wall," but it could not stand against the iron valour of the Allies.

* See map, p. 207.



General Petain, Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies of the North and North-East.

At a Cabinet Council held in Paris on May 15, 1917, General Petain succeeded General Nivelle in the chief command of the northern groups of armies. Petain was the most popular general in France. When he was given the command at Verdun, a general expressed the feeling of the army when he said, "Now all will go well." And so it did. Verdun was saved. Petain was 61 years of age, and a colonel when the war broke out. After the fighting at Charleroi he was appointed Brigadier-General. After the Battle of the Marne he was placed in command of an army corps. In the Artois offensive of May 1915 his corps took 10,000 prisoners and 30 guns. As Commander of the Second Army he organized the Champagne offensive. Then came his appointment to Verdun, and finally his promotion to the chief command.

For the rest of the month the French stood on the defensive along the Lady's Road, and contented themselves with beating back the almost constant counter-attacks in which the Germans wasted their men. Some of these attacks were very fierce, especially that which was made on 2nd June, when, after an "intense" bombardment, they launched five successive assaults against the Craonne plateau. The Germans did not mention this battle in their reports; but the French told us that at certain points they came on shoulder to shoulder, and that their losses were terrible. At the end of that long, red day the French had not lost a trench, and in front of them the ground was strewn with German corpses. Perhaps you wonder why they were so anxious to shift the French off the Craonne plateau. So long as the French could hold on to the Lady's Road, Laon, upon which the whole Aisne front depended for its supplies, was in peril.

On 15th May the French Government announced that General Nivelle was no longer Commander-in-Chief, and that General Petain had been appointed in his stead. I need not remind you that Petain had already won deathless fame by saving Verdun. The whole French army believed in him, and admired his splendid stubbornness. It was said at the time of his appointment that he was opposed to costly offensives, and that he meant to let the Germans wear out their strength by counter-attacks. His policy, it was said, was to stand on the defensive until the Americans were able to reinforce him. Then, superior to the enemy in numbers all along the line, he would be able to strike that blow which, it was hoped, would for ever free the fair fields of France from the hated invader.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE THRUST AT TRIESTE.

WE must now leave the battle-grounds of Artois and Champagne for the Italian front. What a change! We have left far behind us a ruined wilderness of huge shell-holes, wrecked villages, blasted woods, and the ever-present marks of ravage, and are now gazing up at Alpine peaks soaring into the azure sky, their tops shrouded in the stainless white of everlasting snows. These solemn uplands, with their craggy peaks, wide-spreading glaciers, deep ravines, and foaming torrents, would seem to be the chosen abode of peace; but the occasional roar of a gun waking a thousand echoes amongst the high hills reminds us that even here men stand in battle array thirsting for the blood of their fellow-creatures.

The spring has slipped away, and the Italians have made no great effort. While furious fights have raged in France, there has been a lull on the Italian front. General Cadorna has been ready and willing to strike, but prudence has bidden him hold his hand. There has been good reason for believing that the Austrians and Germans have planned an attack upon him in great force, and he has been obliged to maintain the bulk of his troops in the Trentino, ready to meet the threatened assault. But the danger has passed. The Allied attacks in Artois and Champagne have tried the Germans to the utmost. They have been forced to throw their reserves into the breaches, and they have none to spare for adventures on the northern frontier of Italy. The month of May is fourteen days old before the Italians dare withdraw many troops from the Trentino to the banks of the Isonzo and there prepare for a determined thrust at the great seaport of Trieste.

Look at a map of Austria and note the position of Trieste. You observe that it stands at the north-east angle of the Adriatic Sea, on a gulf which bites deeply into the northern portion of a wedge-shaped peninsula forming the greater part of the coast-line of Austria proper. From the port of Monfalcone, soon to be in Italian hands, Trieste is distant only twelve miles.

This city of desire is built on terraces at the foot of the Carso hills, and is divided into an old and a new town, connected by a broad and handsome street known as Via del Corso. The old town nestles about a hill up which narrow, steep, and irregular streets climb to the castle, which is said to occupy the site of the Roman Capitol. The new town lies on the shores of the crescent-shaped bay, and is partly built on ground which has been reclaimed from the sea. Trieste has many fine squares with statues and fountains. Some of the buildings—such as the cathedral, a church in the Eastern style, the exchange, and the town hall—are very fine. One of the arches is known as the Arco di Riccardo, and is said to have been so named after our Richard of the Lion Heart.

If you were to visit Trieste after touring Italy, you would say, "This is an Italian town." You would notice the Italian names of the streets, and you would hear Italian spoken by the passers-by. Three-fourths of the inhabitants are Italians. I have told you in earlier chapters of this work that the people of Italy have always looked upon the district in which Trieste stands as properly belonging to them. They have never ceased to demand that it should be handed over to Italy. One of their main objects in fighting Austria was to recover those districts beyond their northern frontier which they call Unredeemed Italy.

The Allied generals in France aimed at no particular town; their object was to wear down the strength of the Germans by constantly engaging them, and provoking them to costly counter-attacks. They were not so much bent on winning ground as on putting Germans out of action. It was otherwise in the case of the Italians. They were now about to make a bold thrust at the city of Trieste. Why? First of all, because they desired its possession, and because they knew that if they captured it the spirit of their people would be fired to still greater efforts. Then, too, they knew that if they captured Trieste they would strike a very heavy, perhaps a fatal,

blow at Austria. It is the first port of Austria, the centre of its overseas trade, and a great industrial city as well. It contains the most important shipbuilding yards of the country. Before the war one of these yards was fitted out with the latest and best machinery for the construction of warships, and employed over five thousand workmen. Further, the city had many petroleum refineries, iron foundries, chemical and other works. If Trieste could be won, Austria would be practically cut off from the sea. Two other smaller ports, Pola and Fiume, would remain, it is true; but the former would be isolated from the mainland altogether, and the latter could be so closely blockaded that no Austrian ship could enter or leave its docks.

The fall of Trieste would mean that the Central Powers would no longer have a port on the Mediterranean Sea, and that Austria's warships would have no base from which to operate. As no goods from overseas could enter the country, Austria would be thrown entirely upon her own resources, and upon those of Germany and the Balkans. By winning Trieste the Italians would not only secure a great prize, but they would hamper Austria greatly in her work of waging war.

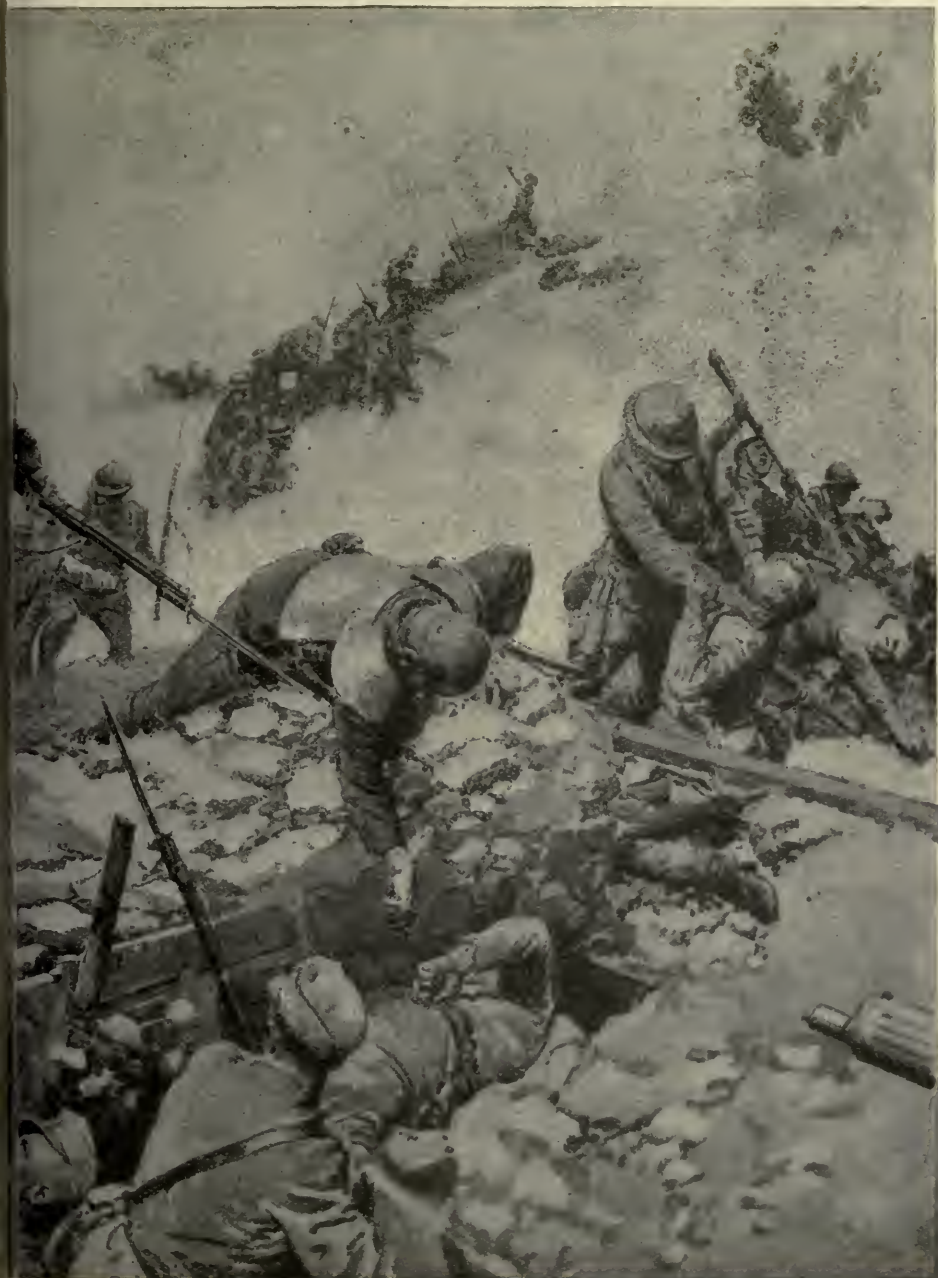
Let us look for a moment at the map on page 235, which shows you the Isonzo front. You notice that it consists of three sections—one mountain, one plain, and one plateau. From Tolmino to the neighbourhood of Gorizia the Isonzo is a torrent flowing through a deep gorge in the last foothills of the Alps. Gorizia stands on a hill in the northern part of a plain which stretches on both sides of the river, between the northern heights and the great limestone plateau of the Carso. The third section consists of the Carso itself. Two main roads lead from the Isonzo to Trieste: the one follows the coast line; the other goes up the valley of the Vipacco, a tributary of the Isonzo, and reaches Trieste from the north. Between the two is the Carso, high and rugged, pitted with deep holes and seamed with defiles. This great limestone plateau, some ten or twelve miles broad, forms the real defence of Trieste, and a very formidable defence it is. (See Vol. V., pp. 367, 368.) The coast road is commanded along its entire length by the cliffs which form the southern edge of the Carso. The Italians could not hope to make progress along this coast road until the overhanging heights had been cleared.



Italian Soldiers, wearing the Breastplate and Shoulder

(From the picture by F. Matan.

For making frontal attacks on enemy trenches the Italian army supplies its soldiers with armor.
the *hastati*—that is, the picked young men who formed the first line of battle under the Cæsars. The



Forces, capturing an Austrian Trench on the Carso.

(By permission of *The Sphere*.)

When men are detailed for this purpose they don breastplate and shoulder pieces, and thus resemble the dress is also similar to that worn by the soldiers of old Rome.

At the beginning of May the Italians held Gorizia, the fringe of plain below it, and the western half of the Carso. They now set themselves to win the whole of the gorge of the Isonzo, and to push forward on the Carso so as to seize the heights of Faiti, from which their observers could look eastward over the whole plateau. Afterwards they hoped to carry Hermada Hill, the key to Trieste. Let us first give our attention to the gorge section of the Isonzo front. The Italians had long ago seated themselves firmly on the western ridges. Their object now was to carry the ridges on the other side of the river. These ridges rise from the river some fifteen to sixteen hundred feet, and in the south have three heights with very steep slopes covered with scree and brushwood. The heights in order from north to south are Kuk, Vodice, and Monte Santo—the latter height being the highest, Kuk the next in elevation, and Vodice, with its twin peaks, the lowest of all. If these heights, and especially that of Monte Santo, could be seized, the Italians would secure their flank, and would be able to command the road leading to Trieste.

On Saturday, 12th May, the Italian guns suddenly began to roar on a twenty-mile front all the way from Tolmino to the sea. Everywhere the fire was intense, but specially so to the south of Gorizia. Along the coast British monitors shelled the southern edge of the Carso, and elsewhere British gunners plied their heavy pieces with great effect. The Austrians evidently expected the attack to be made in this region, for on the hills east of Gorizia they had massed 1,500 guns. By Sunday night the heavy artillery and the trench mortars of the Italians had smashed up the Austrian front line. On Monday morning the Italian troops were let loose. In the north they succeeded in bridging the Isonzo below Plava, where a bridgehead had been seized in the first weeks of the war, and at 11.15 the infantry began to cross the river. A correspondent thus describes the scene:—

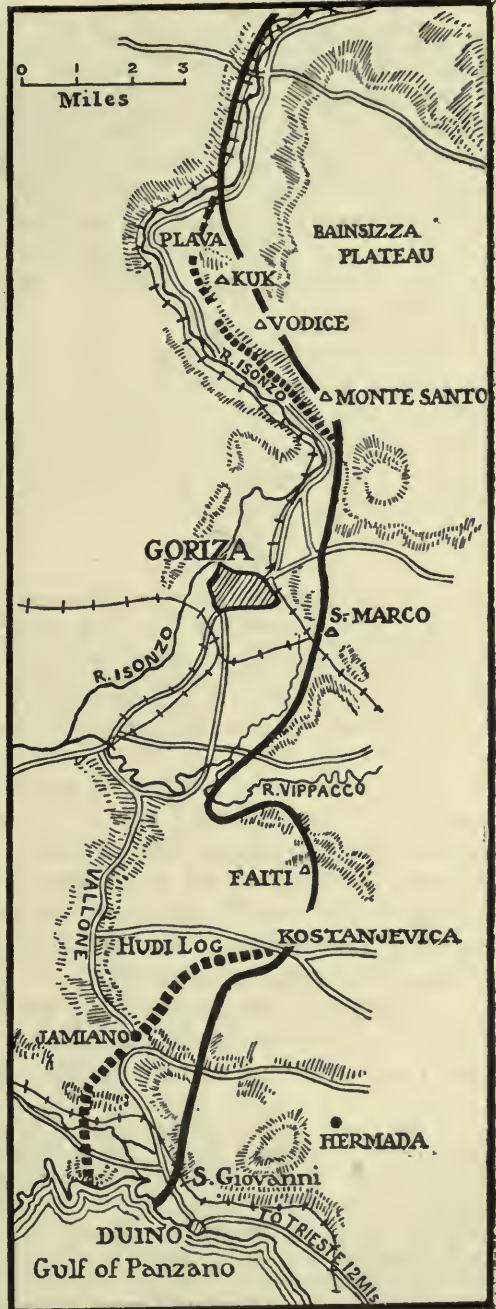
“The narrow gorge of the Isonzo filled at once with shrapnel clouds, and big Austrian shells began to fall all about the crossing-place; but the stream of infantry never ceased, though often it slackened, and for a moment almost failed. At 11.30 the Italian trench mortars redoubled their efforts. Half an hour later a new note was added to the clamour of the guns and the whistle and rumble of the shells that sailed overhead. Machine guns broke into a furious clatter as the Italians launched their attack.

“A great part of the first-line trenches fell almost immediately, and

the Italians swarmed up the steep wooded slopes of Monte Kuk, on the northern half of the long ridge that ends above Gorizia, in the famous Monte Santo. The ascent is very steep, but on the right the Italians climbed up quickly to the Austrian second line, which ran along the hillside about eight hundred feet above the river.

"Here there was a check. The attack was faced by a cluster of three strong redoubts, which looked like rubbish heaps, but bristled with machine guns. And on the left, at the southern limit of the old bridgehead, the Austrian front line was still intact. The battle seemed to hold its breath for a moment, and as I moved back to another point of vantage the cuckoo shouted in the woods behind."

The attack was renewed in the afternoon. One of the redoubts was stormed, but the others held out; nevertheless, nearly all the second line fell. On Tuesday morning an Austrian counter-attack retook the lost redoubt, but only for a moment. The Italians worked round the flanks, and finally captured the whole position. Shortly after midday troops from Florence, the loveliest of all Italian cities, reached the northern summit of Kuk, where they were



Map of Isonzo Front.

joined by their comrades who had captured the redoubt. The whole crest was now in Italian hands. At four o'clock the Austrians made a big effort against the southern summit, and the Italians were driven back; but twenty minutes later they were on the crest of the hill once more. Gradually they pressed the Austrians down the hillside and along the ridge towards the neighbouring peaks of Vodice. A little later Kuk was clear of the enemy, and the sappers were hard at work striving to make the positions which had been won capable of defence.

The Italians had begun well. They had crossed the Plava, and their guns had destroyed the Austrian defences, many of which were cut out of the living rock. They had also carried Kuk, the most northerly of the three heights overlooking the plain of Gorizia and the road to Trieste. Meanwhile useful progress had been made on Monte Santo. Our observer says:—

“To the north, in the narrow valley of the Middle Isonzo, the scene had a real if terrible beauty. The narrow valley green with woods, the lofty crags, the gray-blue waters of the river swollen with the melting of snows, the fleecy shrapnel clouds, the towering plumes of bursting shells, combined to present a wonderful spectacle, and the sight of the advancing troops crossing the river and scaling the heights stirred the blood.”

In the Gorizia plain and on the Carso the bombardment was very fierce. The bare red hills became a mass of volcano spouts, and the plateau was overlaid with a pall of dust and shell-smoke, through which fresh bursts of shrapnel, the explosion of big shells, or the blowing up of small ammunition dumps showed but faintly. In the first phase of battle over three thousand prisoners were taken.

On the 18th the Italians stormed Hill 652, the key to Monte Santo. Our correspondent tells us that he watched the attack and counter-attack as though from a seat in a theatre.

“We could see the Italians lying in wait and the crouching Austrians moving to the counter-attack. We could see a famous leader standing on the very summit of the mountain and addressing his troops before a bayonet attack. We could see men throw up their arms and fall, and others rush madly down the mountain. Those who were seen running were easily recognized as Austrians by their long greatcoats, which they insisted on wearing despite the mildness of the air. We heard the megaphone orders shouted across to those who were far ahead of the telephone lines. We

saw these orders obeyed. The battle rose and fell like the waves of the sea, but there was also a general movement which never failed to advance."

At nine in the morning, amidst a terrible cannonade, three columns climbed up to the first summit of Hill 652. At the same time attacks were made on the centre and the right, and by midday the position was won. From Hill 652 and Monte Santo there is a saddle from which the Austrians had been driven by the Italian artillery on the previous day. Already more than one daring Italian had crossed this saddle, and had reached the summit of the coveted mountain. As the troops moved forward they could see on the summit the figure of a dead infantryman of the line, holding aloft in his lifeless hands the signal to advance. By the evening of the 18th a firm footing had been secured on the south-west face of the plateau, and in five days' fighting more than six thousand prisoners had been captured.

Now that Cadorna had secured the gorge of the Isonzo, he turned his attention to the Carso. While the First Army was clearing the Kuk-Santo ridge, a violent bombardment was going on from Falti Hill to the sea. For ten days the cannonading never ceased, and at four o'clock on 23rd May the guns lifted, and the Third Army went forward. The Austrians, in their deep caverns, suffered but little from the bombardment, but in many cases their refuges proved to be traps. The Italians, careless of machine-gun and artillery fire, dashed forward, and the men in the deep dug-outs had no option but to come up and surrender. Before nightfall the village of Jamiano and a series of strongly fortified heights had been seized.

It was a great day for the Italians. They took 9,000 prisoners, including more than 200 officers, and inflicted great loss in killed and wounded on the enemy. Fierce counter-attacks were at once begun, and the Italians had hard work to hold them off. On the stone tableland of the Carso entrenching tools are of no use for digging in. When enemy lines are captured there is no shelter for the victors save in the battered trenches which have been won. Only blasting can create new positions. Though the Italians suffered much from Austrian gun-fire, they held on to most of their gains. "I think, Signore," said a pious Italian soldier, "that some saint is watching over us."



I must now tell you that the Italians won their victory not only by outfighting the Austrians, but by outwitting them as well. When in the previous November the Italians broke through the main Austrian line that runs due north from Kostanjevica, the enemy thought that the next move would be an attempt to break through the salient thus formed, and all through the winter they prepared very strong defences to meet an attack from the north. Before the battle the Austrian line formed three odd steps. It ran westward from Kostanjevica, so as to cover the village of Hudi Log, then turned sharply south almost as far as Jamiano, after which it ran westward again for about a mile, and once more bent round sharply to run southward to the sea. These were the main lines; behind them, and linked up with them, were numerous other systems of trenches and caverns.

The Austrians were much puzzled by the attack which was made against the Kuk-Santo position, and in order to meet it were obliged to send northward most of their reserves. While they were engaged in the north, and were awaiting an

SEAWARD RIDGE OF THE JULIAN ALPS



attack against the salient at Kostanjevica, the Italians suddenly smashed in on the flanks further south. The surprise was so complete that a general with all his officers was surrounded and captured. On 24th May King Victor Immanuel thus addressed his troops :—

“The third year of war begins amid the booming of cannon. For some days a severe battle has been going on against a numerous enemy, strongly entrenched, and well provided with artillery, who contests with you foot by foot a most difficult ground. Already brilliant successes have crowned your admirable efforts, and victory must reward your splendid bravery.

“Soldiers on land and sea,—Remaining equal to the renown which you have won in the past, you will always, I am certain, be worthy of the name of our Italy, who follows you with unshakable confidence in the path of glory.”

On the same day some account was given in our newspapers of the British monitors which, along with Italian warships and aeroplanes, were attacking the rear of the enemy's lines. It is said that our vessels approached near

enough to the coast to be able to bombard the railway and the south-west slopes of Hermada Hill, the highest summit of the Carso, and a view-point which gives splendid observation over all the country round about. It was this hill which the Italians now set themselves to win.

On 25th May several heights were seized, and more prisoners were taken, bringing the number up to more than 22,000. On the same day the Austrians were driven out of Hudi Log, and St. Giovanni, near the coast, was occupied. By the evening of the 27th the Italians were firmly established amidst the foothills of Hermada itself, and it seemed that before long the frowning wooded ridge would be captured, and the road to Trieste would be open. But the Italian offensive now came to an end.

The Austrians were so greatly alarmed at the onset of the Italians that they sent to the Russian front for reinforcements, and when these arrived began a series of counter-attacks of the utmost fury. On 31st May they struck hard all the way from Gorizia to the sea. Their high explosives worked great havoc on the Italians, who had not yet been able to entrench themselves properly, and at several points, notably at Faiti Hill and amidst the foothills of Hermada, our Allies had to fall back. Most of the lost positions were, however, rewon.

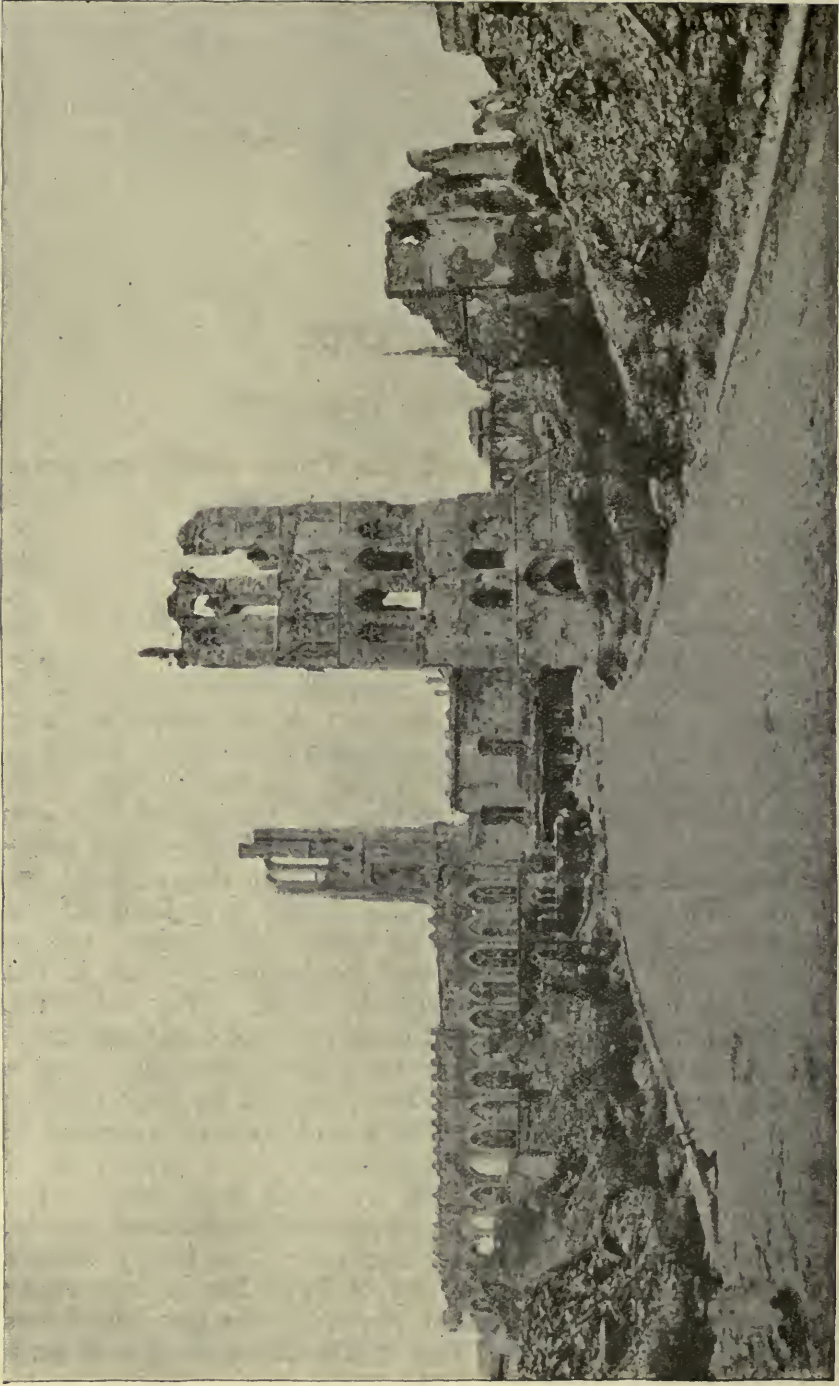
The results of the Italian offensive were somewhat disappointing. Ground had been gained, but not so much as might have been expected when we remember that thirty-five Italian divisions had been employed. Our Allies had taken 24,000 prisoners, but the Austrians had captured 27,000. The casualties of the attackers were heavier than those of the defenders. When trench warfare was resumed Trieste was still twelve miles away, and there were very strong positions to be captured before an advance could be made on the port. Had Russia been able to attack at the same time, the scale would probably have been turned, and the Italian colours would have waved from the towers and spires of the chief Austrian seaport on the shores of the Adriatic Sea.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE YPRES SALIENT ONCE MORE.

AGAIN, after a long interval, the Ypres salient reappears in our story. No British boy or girl must ever forget the meadows which lie to the east of the old city, for they are to us what the uplands of Verdun are to the French—battle-grounds on which a nation was saved by the superb heroism and endurance of its devoted sons. During the Race to the Sea the Germans, with shrewd foresight, established themselves on all the rising ground from the Aisne northward to the shores of the Channel. Seated on ridges overlooking our positions, and supplied with bigger and more guns than had ever before been used in warfare, they opposed us with such storms of shot and shell that to this day we marvel how our men resisted. Most of those who thus battled against overwhelming odds now lie beneath the sod, but they did not die in vain. They foiled the German in the first flush of his mighty strength, and held him off while their nation buckled on its armour. Their memory will be fresh and green in the hearts of all loyal Britons for ages to come. They saved the land of their birth and pride ; themselves they could not save.

In the early days of October 1914 this Ypres salient was a low-lying stretch of watery meadows, crossed by little streams and broad highways, and dotted here and there with farms and country houses. Now the whole region is a wilderness of desolation. Wherever you look you see deep shell-holes, straggling lines of battered trenches, stark, splintered woods, and heaps of bricks and mortar that were once happy villages and pleasant homes. The old city of Ypres lies in utter ruin ; there is not a whole house in the place, and the last inhabitants have long since departed. The noble Cloth Hall, that once



Ypres : the Ruined Cloth Hall.

[British Official Picture.

delighted lovers of beauty all over the world, is a roofless shell, its blackened walls pierced with gaping holes. There is no sadder sight in the world ; it is a monument to the vicious fury of the baffled Hun.

You already know that in front of Ypres our lines made a bulge eastward. While we lay on the plain, the German lay on the uplifts of ground that commanded it. From these positions he could spy out every movement of our troops and transports, and there was no corner of the salient which his guns could not rake with deadly effect. It was as though he sat in the dress circle of a theatre and fired down at us in the pit.

I am sure you have not forgotten the two great struggles in which the enemy almost managed to smash through our thin lines and reach the Channel ports. Some writers consider the First Battle of Ypres (October and November 1914) as second only in importance to the Battle of the Marne. Our British regulars, woefully few in number, then beat back the enemy by sheer valour and devotion. Again and again the line was broken ; again and again our devoted men saw the enemy all round them ; again and again all seemed to be lost. But those dauntless sons of Britain, with all the doggedness of the race, fought on, refusing to recognize defeat, and in the end were able to bring the deep-laid plans of the enemy to naught.

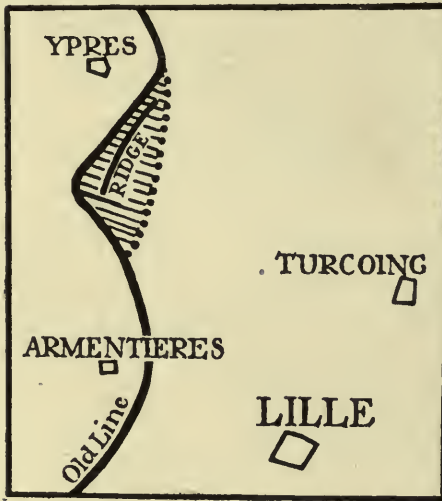
The Second Battle of Ypres, which continued from the last week of April until the middle of May 1915, was also very critical. You remember that in the early stages of this battle the Germans first used poison gas against the Allies. When the deadly cloud descended, thousands of the terror-stricken colonial troops of France rushed to the rear, leaving great gaps in the line, through which the Germans might have marched to Calais without firing a shot. Their fatal inability to follow up a success, and the glorious stand of the Canadians, who though gasping in agony refused to budge, saved the day. We lost ground, and for a time the issue hung in the balance, but we never let the salient go. From that time onward there were many other local struggles on the same battle-ground, but meanwhile the main tide of war had set southward.

Look carefully at the little sketch map (p. 244), which shows you the general run of the British line in the early days of June

1917. You notice that from the north of Ypres to Armentières this line is shaped like a pot-hook. To the east of Ypres there is a bulge eastward, and to the south of Ypres there is a bulge westward. Now in the westward bulge just south of St. Eloi, which has figured many times in our story, there is a ridge running north and south, and known by our men as Whitesheet or Messines Ridge, because on it stand the twin villages of Wytshaete and Messines.

You are not to suppose that this ridge is as well marked as the Albert Ridge, which we won during the Battle of the Somme, or the Vimy Ridge, which the Canadians so gallantly captured during the Battle of Arras. Really it is hardly a

ridge at all. Approaching it from the west, all you see is a long, low, gentle slope, nowhere more than about one hundred and thirty feet above the level of the country to the north and south. It is an ignoble rise, but it shows a fairly clear-cut skyline, and is the final uplift of land before the plain of Flanders is reached. You see from the diagram (pp. 252-253) that this ridge commands the Ypres salient, and that from it artillery



observers can direct the fire of guns so as to sweep right across the bulge in front of the old city. For more than two and a half years our men holding the Ypres salient had been terribly harassed by the enemy on this ridge. No troops, transport, guns, or even individuals could move by the roads south of Ypres without being directly seen by German observers on the ridge. The German guns were "registered" on all the roads, and there were certain points which were always so "unhealthy" that a man could only pass them at the risk of his life. You can easily see that, if we could capture the ridge and advance our line beyond it, we should remove a constant menace to our positions in front of and around Ypres.

Nor was this the only or even the most important advantage which we should gain. If we could fling the enemy off the ridge, we should no longer be on the flats and he on the high ground, but the position would be reversed. We should be on the heights and he on the flats. Once the ridge was won we should be able to command the plain of the Lys, and for the first time overlook all the country to the north of Lille. This plain of the Lys is a sort of gateway into the Low Countries. It is, of course, not a perfect level—here and there small heights rise up from the plain—but its general appearance is that of a great flat, and from the Messines Ridge, low as it is, one can gaze upon the country below as though one were examining a huge map.

Ever since the great offensive, which began on July 1, 1916, we had been engaged in pushing the Germans off the high ground, and robbing them of the advantages which they had gained during the Race to the Sea. As you know, we had pushed them off the ridges between the Ancre and the Somme, and off the Vimy Ridge. They were soon to be pushed off the Messines Ridge as well.

Before I describe the battle which gave us the Messines Ridge, I must tell you that the plain which it overlooks is an old British battle-ground. In the year 1794, when we were at war with the newly established French republic, our troops were engaged in several important battles on this plain. At Tourcoing, Warneton, Menin, and many other places, which can all be seen from the Messines Ridge, they fought with fine discipline and courage. At the battle of Tourcoing (May 17-18, 1794), when we were allies of the Austrians, the Austrian commander-in-chief deliberately tried to destroy our forces. He sent them against a village where they would have to fight against overwhelming odds. On the 18th May our troops were driven back with heavy loss, but, owing to their superb quality, were not destroyed. In the next chapter we shall learn how our citizen soldiers lived up to the fame which their sires won on these Flemish fields more than one hundred and twenty years ago.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW WE TOOK WHITESHEET RIDGE.

FOR the first time I am able to describe a British offensive on the Western front which was perfectly organized and perfectly successful. Slowly but surely we had built up the mightiest engine of destruction ever known to man, and, what is more, had learned how to use it. In the capture of Whitesheet or Messines Ridge we pressed into service every device which ingenuity could suggest and money could buy. We laid our plans with the utmost care, and we neglected no detail. The consequence was that we won great advantages without great loss of life. The capture of Whitesheet Ridge by General Plumer's Second British Army will be described in the military text-books of the future as a model for soldiers to study and emulate.

Like every modern battle, the engagement began with a long-continued bombardment, which utterly destroyed the enemy's wire and flattened out his first-line trenches. Our bombardment raged from Observatory Hill, south-east of Ypres, all the way to Plugstreet Woods, a distance of nine or ten miles. It lasted for seven days, and was "terrific beyond words." Long before it ceased woods had been blasted out of existence, hill slopes had been stripped bare, and whole villages had disappeared. Meanwhile by night raiding parties had crossed No Man's Land to discover the extent of the havoc which the guns had wrought. Irish troops made five such raids in forty hours. The enemy knew that we were on the eve of a big adventure, for he could not fail to see from his look-out posts on the ridge the thousands of guns that we were bringing up, the twenty divisions of troops which were being massed, and the amazing network of light railways which

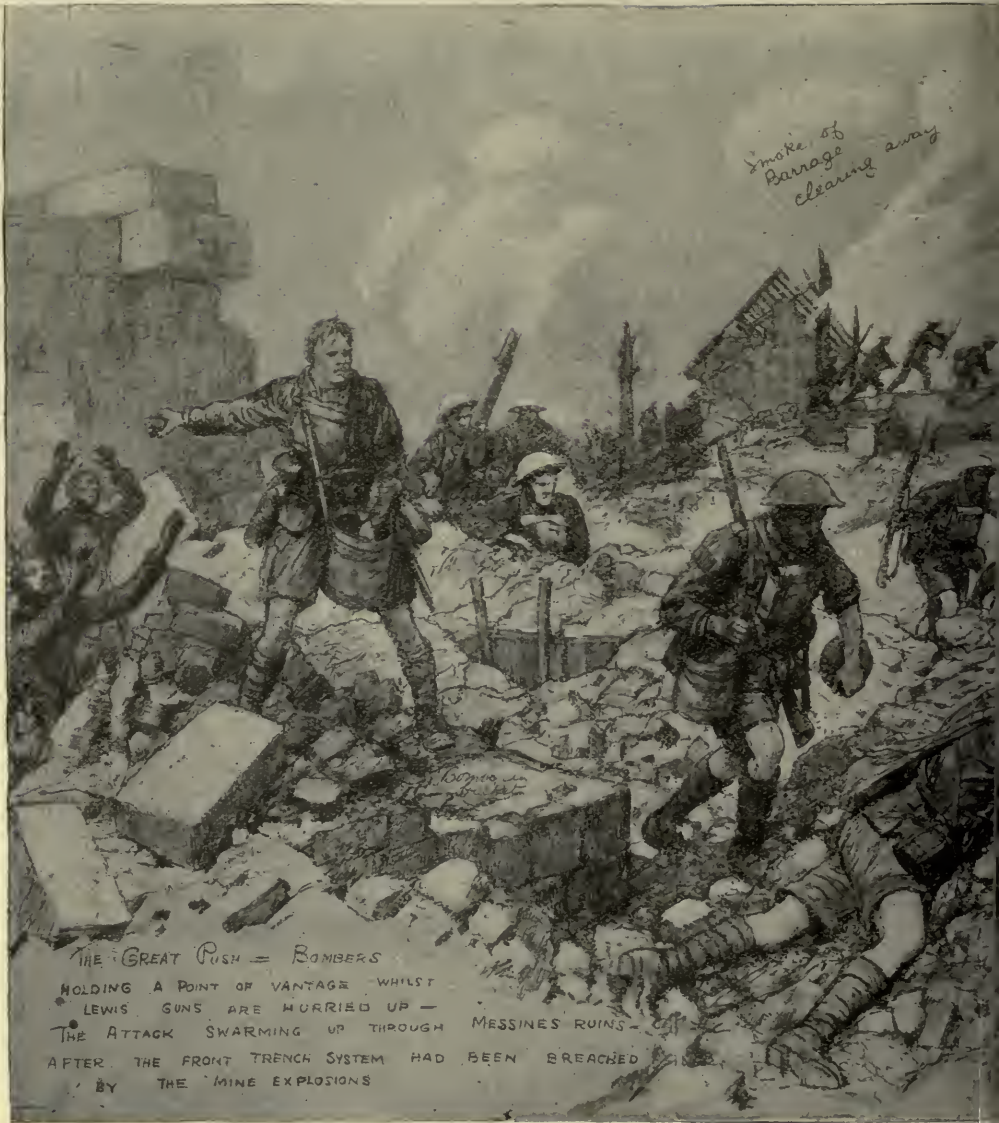
we were constructing to carry ammunition to all parts of the threatened front.

While the bombardment was going on, the troops which were to "go over the top" were assembling for the great adventure. New Zealanders were given the honour of capturing the southern village of Messines, and to Irishmen was assigned the northern village of Whitesheet. While the Government at home was trying to bring Irishmen of all parties together, so that they might agree to put an end to their old feuds and work together for the good of their distracted country, Ulster Protestants and Irish Catholics were standing shoulder to shoulder in Flanders, eager to press forward against the common foe. There was only one question at issue between these long-sundered Irishmen, now comrades in arms, and that was, which division should get to the top of Whitesheet Ridge first. Between the New Zealanders and the Irishmen were some of those staunch English regiments which had done excellent work in the earlier stages of the war.

On the evening of 6th June the fine weather of the previous weeks broke, and a thunderstorm added its deep rumble to the roar of the guns. Torrents of rain descended, and the sky was overcast with low, heavy clouds. Those who were present that night will never forget the scene. All the way from Ypres to Messines the skyline shimmered with the white, yellow, orange, and green flames of bursting shells and signal rockets, while the flashes of the guns tinged the overhanging clouds with fiery red.

At half-past two on the morning of 7th June the guns suddenly ceased, and in the strange hush that followed a night-ingale was heard singing. Suddenly the silence was broken by a series of terrible explosions which shook the ground thirty miles away, and actually wrecked some of our own trenches. What had happened? Nearly a score of mines had been touched off under the enemy's trenches. Huge masses of earth rose skywards, and vast pillars of smoke arose. No such sight had ever been seen before.

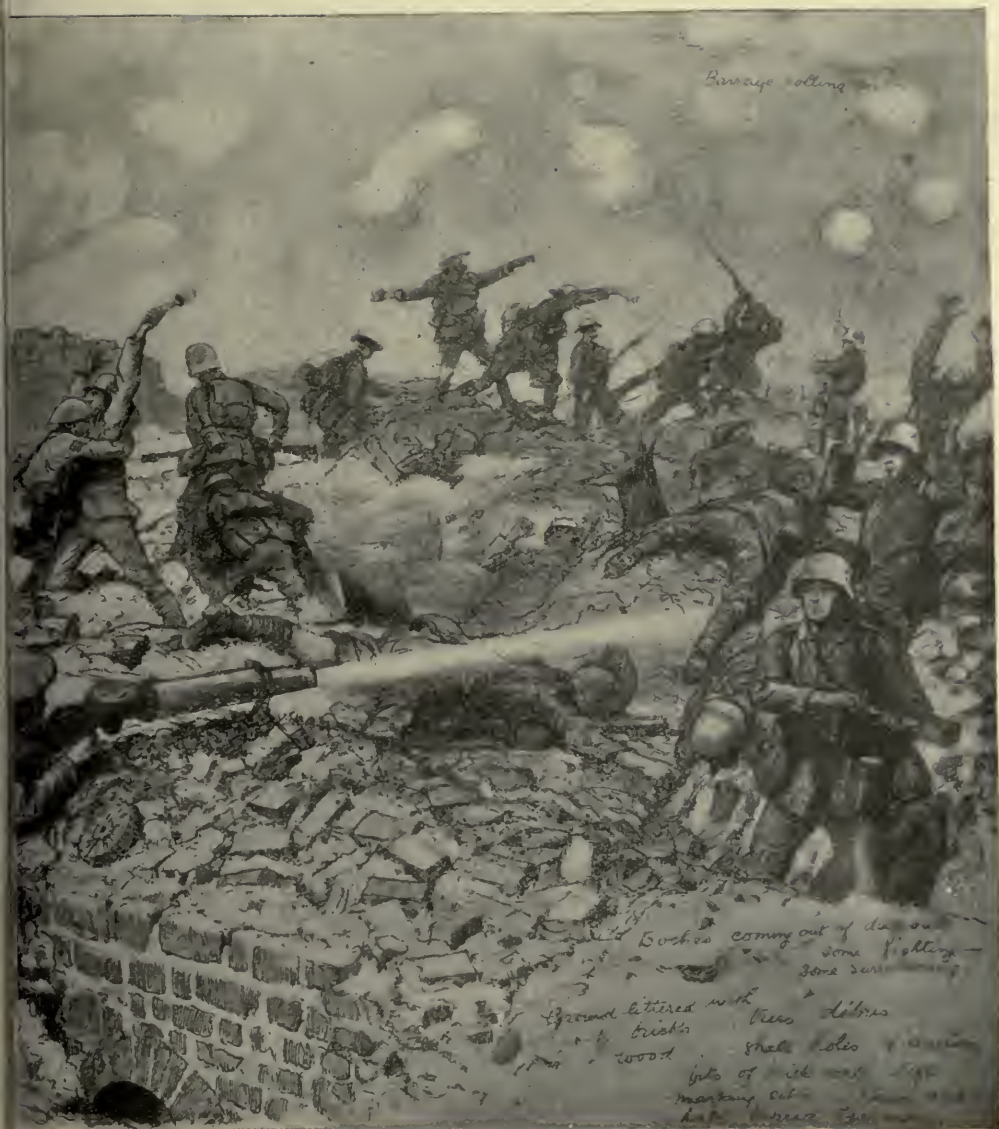
For many months past English and Welsh miners had been working underground like moles, tunnelling forward yard by yard, and creating chambers which they filled with aminol, one of the most destructive of high explosives. It is said that some six hundred tons of bursting charges were used in the mines exploded that day.



British Bombers and Lewis Gunners holding a Point of

(Drawn from material supplied by an eye-witness)

Here we see New Zealanders swarming up the ridge through the ruins of Messines village. Bombers foreground Germans are seen coming out of their dug-outs, some fighting, some surrendering. In the beginning of the attack the whole of Messines was captured, and the ridge from north to south was in



Vantage at Messines after the Explosion of the British Mines.

By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

are holding a point of vantage while Lewis guns are being hurriedly brought into action. In the right background the smoke of the British barrage is rolling off towards the right. Three hours after the our hands. The offensive was perfectly organised and perfectly successful.

"Can you imagine what over six hundred tons of explosives in twenty or so blasts along an arc of ten miles looks and sounds like? I cannot describe it for you. Personally I can only vouch for having seen nine of the great leaping streams of orange flame which shot upwards from that part of the front immediately before me, each one of the nine a huge volcano in itself, with as many more volcanoes going off at the same moment beyond them, hidden by their flames and out of sight, and each vast sheet of flame, as it leapt roaring upwards, throwing up dense masses of dust and smoke, which stood like great pillars towering into the sky, all illuminated by the fires below."

The Germans had been tunnelling too, and had bored a long shaft 120 feet below our positions. Their mines were ready, but as they believed our attack would not come off until the King's birthday, we were beforehand with them. Some day strange and uncanny tales are told of the adventures of our miners while excavating towards the ridge. On one occasion they had to cease work and wait to see whether the Germans would burrow above or below them.

You may form some idea of the terrible destruction wrought by the 600 tons of aminol when you learn that in the year 1885 140 tons of explosive in New York harbour shattered nine acres of hard rock, and flung enormous masses of water 200 feet high. What must have been the effect of the sudden discharge of more than four times that amount? German prisoners said that one of the mines buried a whole company, and that elsewhere there was great loss of life, while terror reigned all along the front. Many Germans went mad under the strain of the awful explosions and the terrible bombardment. A correspondent who visited the front a few days later tells us that the crater formed near Whitesheet was 70 feet deep and 100 yards across, while that at St. Eloi was 50 or 60 feet deep and 90 yards in diameter. You will remember that during the fighting in June 1916 we exploded mines round St. Eloi, and that subsequently there was much fierce fighting for the craters. These pits were mere pigmies compared with the huge quarry holes formed by the mines on the Messines Ridge.

The shock of the explosion was actually heard in South England. Mr. Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, slept at Walton Heath on the evening of the 6th, and gave orders that he was to be called at 3 a.m. Shortly after he woke he distinctly felt the shock of the explosions on the Messines Ridge, almost a hundred miles away.

Before the echoes had died down the guns had begun again, and at 3.10 our men went forward behind a barrage which crept forward and guided them to their objectives. By the middle of the day the whole of the blood-soaked, battle-scarred ridge was ours.

A correspondent thus writes :—

“ An officer reined in his horse and leaned over his saddle to speak to me. ‘ It was a great day for Ireland,’ he said. Yesterday another man, with an arm in a sling, also used the words ‘ a great day,’ but said, ‘ It’s a great day for New Zealand.’ And another officer, speaking of the way in which all our men went forward to victory, English troops advancing with their old unbroken courage in spite of hard fighting through a year of war, said : ‘ This is the best thing our armies have ever done, the most complete and absolute success. It all went like clockwork.’ ”

By this time parties of prisoners, exhausted and nerve-broken, were making their way towards our lines along the roads and across the fields in a glare of sunlight. The cages began to fill up.

“ I saw in one cage over five hundred Germans, who until three o’clock this morning were in arms against us, now happy as schoolboys in captivity and scrambling for cigarettes which the British Tommies were throwing to them over the barrier of the cage. The officers were in a separate compartment of the cage, with high canvas sides. They, when I saw them in their privacy, were also laughing as they sat on the grass, and ate biscuits, and drank out of tin pannikins, and dived into bully-beef tins with their knives. Many of the prisoners wore shrapnel helmets covered with sacking. There were spectacled clerks, square-headed peasants, elderly artisans, and young boys, all very well disciplined and obeying the orders of their officers while preparing to be searched, ticketed, and examined as though early morning mine explosions and wholesale surrenders were all part of the day’s work. Four officers sat sulkily on the grass of the canvas-sided paddock, staring at the peasants, who surveyed this pleasant scene from their cottage doors beside the dusty road.”

By this time Messines and Whitesheet were occupied, and our men, pushing down the eastern slopes, stormed the rear line of the German trenches. There was heavy fighting at Oosttaerne,* in the centre of the position ; but by nightfall that village was in our hands, and we had made a total advance of 5,000 yards. Everything had gone well. Our troops had been brought up in the right way to the right place, and the enemy was taken by surprise, although he had long known

* See map, p. 255.



that we were about to attack. You may judge of the splendid energy of our men when I tell you that after fighting hard all day the New Zealanders slaved through the night, and in six hours completed three lines of new trenches, all cleanly cut on the crest of the ridge, six to eight feet deep. Elsewhere similar feats were performed. The victory was a triumph equally for the Irish troops, for the historic line regiments of England and Scotland, and for the staunch battalions of Australia and New Zealand. It was a triumph for a fleet of Tanks, for the innumerable airmen who dotted the sky at dawn and ruled it thereafter, and for the plodding sappers and miners who had laboured for months to create the tunnels and chambers and fill them with aminol. It was also a triumph for the gunners, whose true and deadly barrage paved the way to victory.

While the ridge itself was captured without much difficulty, there was hard fighting further north. A London regiment was hard pressed in Battle Wood, and at the White Château, which had formerly been a pleasant country house with lawns and shrubberies and an artificial lake. The Ger-



mans had strongly fortified the ruins of the house and grounds, but they had to give way before the intrepid Londoners, though near Kleine Zillebeke they claimed to have won a few yards. Hill 60, that mound of death which we had won and lost, had been turned by the enemy into a warren of underground tunnels. Here, too, there was a fierce struggle; but before the moon rose on the morning of the 8th the whole German system from Hill 60 to the Potterie Farm, less than two miles west of Warneton on the Lys, had been seized.

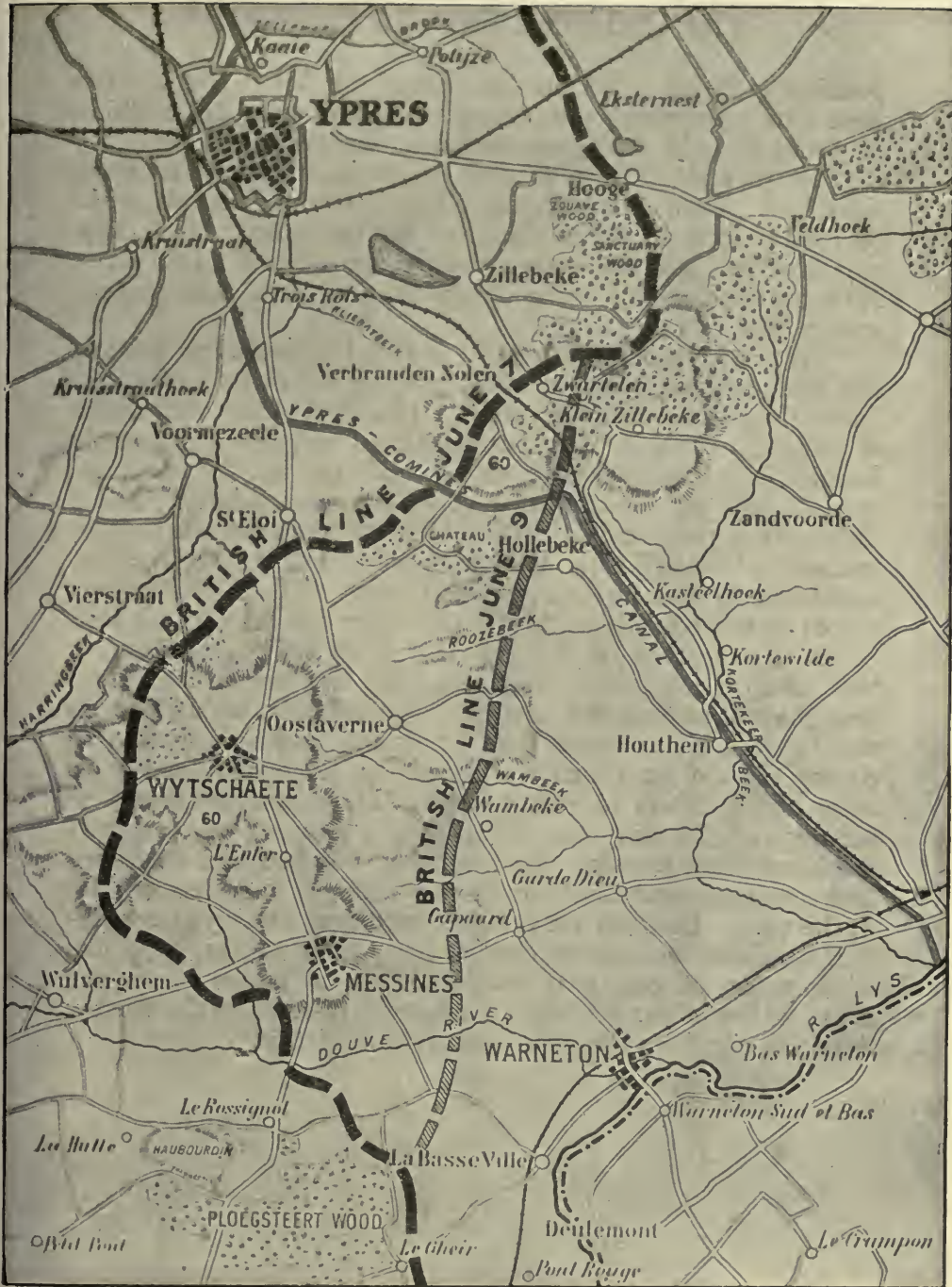
All through the night our men worked like inspired giants to make the newly captured positions capable of withstanding the counter-attacks which were hourly expected. Strange to say, the Germans made no effort to oust us from our new trenches for thirty hours. Nothing shows more clearly how hard they had been hit, and how exhausted they must have been with the day's fighting. You must remember that it is fatal to delay a counter-attack, because every hour that passes gives the enemy time to make his new positions secure. If your return stroke is to succeed you must make it at once.

At seven in the morning of the next day the Germans made a fierce assault to the south of Messines and near Kleine Zillebeke, but everywhere they were driven off. On the 9th and 10th we made further progress south-east of Messines, and on the 11th we stormed the enemy's trenches near Potterie Farm. On the 12th Plumer pushed on so far in this direction that the enemy's positions east of Plugstreet were threatened. Three days later the Germans, fearful of being surrounded, withdrew, and we promptly advanced our lines from 500 to 1,000 yards. There was another counter-attack on this day, but it too failed, and then came a lull. The Battle of Whitesheet was over, and a striking British victory had been won.

Between 7th and 13th June we captured 7,342 men, including 145 officers, 47 guns, 242 machine guns, and 60 trench mortars. The German casualties have been very heavy, while ours did not exceed 10,000—a small price to pay for so great a gain. As usual, the enemy tried to make light of his defeat. He told the world, "Our brave soldiers were withdrawn to positions prepared in advance." In one respect the report spoke the truth—over seven thousand of these brave soldiers had withdrawn to the cages which *we* had prepared in advance for them.

It was a bitter defeat for the Germans, who were well aware that the possession of the ridge was vital to them. After the battle orders were found impressing on the soldiers that strong points must not be allowed to fall into the enemy's hands, even for a time; they must be held to the last man. One of these orders informed officers that they must march in the rear of their men, to prevent them from falling out. This strange position for an officer reminds me of an incident during a time of tumult in Paris. A crowd was seen marching through the streets smashing windows and looting houses. Behind them was a frightened, distracted man. When asked who he was, he replied, "Oh, I am the leader!"

What had we gained by this victory? First of all, the western bend in our line had disappeared, and our front now ran straight from Hill 60 to the river Lys. The ridge, which had been a thorn in the side of General Plumer ever since he took over the command of the Second Army, had now passed into our hands, and no longer could the Germans harass our communications round about Ypres. The enemy had lost a



Map to illustrate the flattening out of the Ypres Salient.

position quite as important to him as the Vimy Ridge. We were now overlooking the plain extending to and beyond Lille. In order to hold that great industrial centre it was necessary for him to maintain bridgeheads on the northern bank of the river Lys. From the Messines Ridge these bridgeheads could be clearly seen all down the river for ten miles. The ridge which we had won had screened them for two and a half years. Now we could direct our guns against them, and thus prevent troops from crossing the river.

"It was a glorious victory." Before the battle our soldiers felt that they were better men than the Germans; after the battle they knew that they were. The enemy was well aware of what was coming. Our bombardment had given him ample warning. It was as though we had said to him, "I challenge you. I will try to carry this very important position, and I defy you to prevent me." The challenge had been accepted, and we had made good. We had proved ourselves his superior, and he knew that he had met his master. When your enemy comes to this conclusion, it is pretty clear that his cause is lost.

In his dispatch of 8th June Sir Douglas Haig gave us a hint as to the splendid work done by our airmen. He said that they prevented the enemy's aviators from taking part in the battle. Never were they so daring and so effective as during the day on which we seized the ridge and held it in spite of all efforts to recapture it. They won the complete mastery of the air, and while they prevented the enemy's machines from crossing our lines they bombed and destroyed and scattered confusion and dismay amongst the Germans far in the rear. Between 1st and 6th June they destroyed twenty-four machines and drove down twenty-three others, at a loss of only ten of our own machines. It is said that on one occasion five of our machines fought twenty-seven of the enemy, wrecking eight of them, and then returning safely.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SOLDIERS' STORIES OF THE BATTLE.

NO men were more gratified at the victory than those who had toiled for months to prepare the mines which were exploded at the opening of the battle. These men, you must remember, ran just as much risk of death as the infantrymen who ploughed their way along No Man's Land amidst bursting shells. They bored deep down in narrow winding passages, in some cases no more than three feet wide and three feet high, delving in semi-darkness, breathing foul air, facing all sorts of hidden dangers, advancing a foot at a time, always on the alert, with their ears strained to catch the slight sounds which betrayed the presence of the enemy. Many of them, coming up to breathe the fresh air at the close of a hard day's work, fell victims to German shells.

Beneath Hill 60 Australian miners made an elaborate network of galleries and chambers. They worked with fierce energy, and were so sure of the result that they spoke of Hill 60 as "our hill." So stealthily did they do their burrowing that the Germans who were countermining beneath the same hill never discovered them, though from time to time the blows of the German picks could be heard. The enemy actually got within forty feet of the main charge beneath Hill 60, and within twenty feet of the gallery, without knowing it.

On one occasion the enemy dug so close to the Australians that a landslide occurred in our workings, and dirt rolled down into one of our chambers, in which tons of high explosives were stored. Happily no harm was done. On another occasion only a thin layer of earth separated the rivals, and our men could actually hear the Germans talking to each other.

Hidden springs of water suddenly gushed forth, and at one time a hundred miners were pumping in a stretch of 400 feet. While the work was proceeding, the Huns blew in our front line and raided our trenches. The miners, however, sprang from the dug-outs without waiting to put on their boots, and with showers of bombs chased the raiders back to their own lines. A week before the battle the enemy blew in one of the new mine galleries, and buried alive two Australian listeners, one for seventeen hours and the other for forty. While they lay covered with earth these heroic men, with wonderful coolness, continued to note every sound that they heard. They were dug out unhurt.

Just before dawn on the morning of 7th June the Australian miners gathered in the trenches and dug-outs to watch the effect of their labours. One man who ought to have been in hospital begged almost tearfully to be allowed to remain and see the mines explode. "I have been under it so long," he said, "that I am going to be on top for once." An officer waited with them, his watch open in his palm. He said that the second hand seemed to drag slower and slower round the dial during the final two minutes. It was still quite dark, with misty moonlight deepening the shadows of the plain. Had it been lighter, the night watchers on the hill might have seen thousands of figures lying or crouching on the ground between the trenches. They were our troops, called up from the safe and spacious caverns below that they might bear the tremendous shock better in the open air.

In a dug-out a group of officers stood around a strand of wire and a lever of brass that held it.

"I thought," said one of them, "that the final thirty seconds would never finish. Slower and slower the tired hand of my watch crawled up the last quarter of the dial; the sixty seconds were complete—it was ten minutes past three. 'Fire!' The young officer who had his steady hand on the lever jammed it down. Then the ground under us billowed and seemed to turn liquid, while the noise of the explosion died away in a mighty cheer.

"The men couldn't help it. They had been ordered to keep silence, but when the mines exploded, and they realized that all their work had been a glorious success, they couldn't help cheering. I am sure the Huns didn't hear them. They



A British Mine exploding.

(By permission of *The Illustrated London News*.)

A huge mine explosion, such as is illustrated in this picture, looks like a series of enormous poplar trees. They seem to project themselves into the air and remain sharply defined against the sky for almost a minute. Then the earth trembles and heaves, and roar upon roar is heard, and great columns of smoke roll away on the wind, while tons of *débris* descend in showers.

were past hearing, even those who were alive and unhurt after the shock."

Two great craters were blown in the hill, completely wrecking its defences and almost destroying a Wurtemberg regiment. Only two men were found alive when our men swarmed over the hill. Some of the survivors thought that at least a mile of Belgium had been blown off the map. One of the first prisoners to come out of the ruins was a fat, bald-headed captain, who was helped by an escort to a dug-out, where he arrived hatless, blackened with dust, and still panting and dazed. "How do you feel?" asked a British officer. "I am very bad," he replied in excellent English. "Did you see us fire those mines?" asked the other. "When they went off," said the Wurtemberger slowly, "I lost all interest in everything." He was a sorely-shaken, sorely-puzzled man.

The Australian miners were the first of our men on Hill 60, and they hoisted a flag over the largest crater in token of their victory.

* * * * *

I have already given you some idea of the terrible bombardment with which the battle opened. "I cannot tell you," writes a correspondent, "how many guns—15-inch to 15-pounder—were in action on the Messines battle-front; but it amazed me that so many guns could be hidden so skilfully in such little space. You must understand that the guns were not suddenly loosed off. The Huns were deluged with shells day and night for more than a week before the attack was launched. At times the hurricane would ease down into a steady shower, but never did it wholly cease. A barrage was laid nicely across their avenues of approach. You will remember how the guns blockaded the German garrisons before Arras, until some of the prisoners whom we took were nearly starved. The same thing happened to the Prussians and Bavarians at Wyttschaete and Messines. Incoming reliefs were badly cut up by high explosives, and the frayed regiments whose place they took dreaded the journey to their rest billets even more than their ordeal in the front line.

"Our patrols raided the Hun for a whole week. They went over in daylight, and came back with twenty, thirty, forty, and on one occasion with more than seventy prisoners, whom they had kidnapped in view of their comrades. Our airmen added

to the terror. Flying on an average 660 hours a day, they watched every movement of the enemy.

"About an hour before dawn the storm ceased. The silence was uncanny. At ten minutes past three the ground opened below the brim of Wyttschaete. The mines had been fired. The scarred face of Hill 60, a score of redoubts, and long banks of wire vanished in the night, and when dawn came there remained only dreadful gaps, the fissures in the naked earth, where our men found embedded the remains of many of their enemies. The earth rocked as though a giant hand had roughly shaken it."

* * * * * * *

You have constantly read in these pages of the barrage* behind which our men advance in a modern battle. Here is a very clear explanation of it taken from an American paper: "Let us suppose that the hour of assault is set for 10 a.m. To the second, a certain number of guns shift their target to about twenty-five yards in front of their own trenches. There they play for sixty seconds. Promptly at 10.1 they lift their range twenty-five yards, and at the same time the infantry swarm out of their trenches. They have one minute in which to crawl, creep, or walk forward twenty-five yards. One minute later the curtain of fire jumps another twenty-five yards, and the soldiers move forward, always between fifty and twenty-five yards behind the curtain of their own fire—a fire so intense that no Germans, should they leave their trenches and try to make a hand-to-hand fight of it in 'No Man's Land,' could live for a moment. So this 'creeping barrage,' as it is called, moves forward until it meets and joins the standing barrage which has been plunging directly on the enemy's trench. Then both jump forward to the rear of the position to be captured, and the advancing soldiers leap into the enemy's trench plying bomb and bayonet."

"The barrage," said a wounded soldier, "ran in front of us, whipping up the earth in spray, just as you see a heavy rain-storm splashing off an asphalted pavement. We followed, so close that some of our men got tickled up with clods of earth, and we were coughing with the smoke. We all marvelled at the way the gunners worked it."

The gunners at Messines said that if they had the price of

* See page 270.

the million shells which they discharged against the ridge they could all live in Park Lane for the rest of their lives and own race-horses. One gunner said, "If we had the price of the copper bands round the shells that we put over in one day we should be rich men."

* * * * *

"The Irish and New Zealanders," writes a correspondent, "can claim the best trophies of the ridge—the villages of Wytschaete and Messines. I have heard many tributes paid to the splendid work of all the troops engaged in this attack, and to-day I spent some hours talking to the Irishmen—Home Rulers and Orangemen—who went up the cracked and furrowed slopes of this historic ridge, and hearing how they swept through the dug-outs and ruined villages carrying everything before them. I walked this morning over the battlefield, which was until yesterday morning well within the German defences, and is now given back to Belgium by the sacrifices of the Irishmen who passed over the craters at the heels of the barrage. I saw some of them lying where they fell—a sergeant of the Royal Irish Rifles at the bottom of one great crater, apparently asleep, with an opened water-bottle beside his outstretched hand, and a wound in his side. I also saw some of the victors tramping back down the rugged, shell-strewn fields below the dust-heap of Messines, on the way to enjoy rest and sleep for the first time in nearly forty-eight weary hours.

"It is not the first time that the Irishmen have fought and won battles, but there is something very appropriate in the manner in which they took Wytschaete and the ground round it. Dublin men went with that barrage shoulder to shoulder with their comrades of Orange Lodges in North Ulster. There were Munster lads raking through the brick piles and shivered concrete cellars of Wytschaete, and Irish riflemen pinning down stubborn 'no surrender' Prussians among the stumps of Wytschaete Wood. I walked through a gap in the German front line, and followed in the footsteps of Belfast and Antrim men. . . .

"The Irishmen did not have continuous and dogged fighting all the way up. In some places the Germans ran to meet them with hands upraised, but frequently they stumbled on strongly held defences that had been cut off but had not surrendered. The Wytschaete Wood was one of those strong-

holds. There were many tunnels to cover the rapid movement of the garrison from one threatened point to another. The wood was full of broken entanglements, holes, masses of timber and *débris* of all kinds, and there were many concrete redoubts. Some of these had been blown in, but sufficient remained to keep the wood in German hands for a longer time than the Irishmen wished to remain there. Finally, they passed out through the upper edge of the wood into a riddled field and gained a footing among the cellars of Wyttschaete village."

There was sharp fighting for a time round about an enemy redoubt which a party of men from the south of Ireland, led by a gallant officer, actually stormed. They bayoneted or took prisoners all the Prussians holding it. The officer was killed, but it was his sacrifice which prevented a costly delay which would have meant many lost lives. The Ulstermen had much the same experiences. Deeds of heroism were common; all the men were splendid.

* * * * *

The stiffest fighting took place on the extreme left. Crossing this part of the battlefield is the Ypres-Comines canal, along the southern bank of which stretch the grounds of the White Château. Along the western edge of the estate runs the Wyttschaete-Ypres road, and on the western side of it the Germans had created what they called the Damstrasse, a defence of such strength that our officers thought it could resist any attack. It consisted of a street of concrete houses built of great blocks, six feet thick and so enormously solid that its constructors thought the heaviest shell-bursts could not destroy it. North of the canal there were two heaps formed of earth dug out of the canal. These harboured nests of machine guns, and all the ground round about them was tunnelled so that the defenders could rapidly move from one threatened point to another.

London troops were sent against the White Château and against the positions north of the canal. When they advanced against the Damstrasse they discovered that the violence of our shell-fire had been so great that many of the blockhouses were blown in, and that the garrison was so cowed that hundreds were ready to surrender. Immediately beyond the Damstrasse the advancing battalions found themselves skirting



Repelling a German Counter-attack: Waves of Enemy Infantry

(By permission of The

This drawing illustrates the repulse of one of the three German counter-attacks made on capture of the foreground on the left, with some Germans holding up their hands in surrender. On the right the second wave is seen scattering under heavy fire. Behind them to the left the third wave is seen advancing bursting beneath them.



Advancing under the Fire of British Artillery and Machine Guns.

(Illustrated London News.)

renches between Gavrelle and Rœux (see p. 211). A British advanced post with a Lewis gun is seen in
dies of Germans marking the spot where the first wave of attack was broken. A little further back the
German kite-balloons are seen in the air; also British aeroplanes with shells from German "Archies"

the remains of the highway and confronting a machine-gun fort, which in the days before the war was a roadside tavern. It was occupied by a party of Germans determined to sell their lives dearly. They poured a hot fire into our men, many of whom fell, but the rest took what cover they could and riddled the place with shot. After a time the fire of the defenders slackened. Then the Londoners charged the ruins and captured all those who still remained alive.

The Londoners now swept into the grounds of the château. The ruins of the house were held by at least a company and a half of Germans, who plied machine guns and flung bombs with great vigour. A gallant British platoon crept up to the walls and fought its way into the ruins, but had to fall back again. The place could not be rushed, and slower and surer methods had to be adopted. The house was surrounded, and for nearly an hour bombs were thrown into the cellars. At length the Huns hoisted a white flag and came out of the dense smoke with their hands up. The stables, out-houses, and orangery were soon cleared, and the Londoners took some four hundred and fifty prisoners.

Adjoining the ruins of the château was Ravine Wood, in which Prussian troops had constructed dug-outs and had made strongly defensive in other ways. West Kentish men now came up and pushed into the woods amidst the torn tree stumps and the litter of broken branches. A very fierce struggle took place, and for a time the battle swayed to and fro. The Prussians attempted a counter-attack; but our men fixed bayonets, and at the word of command made a quick, grim dash at them. The morning sun gleamed on the steel of friend and foe as the bayonets crossed. The men of Kent went through the enemy, thrusting and stabbing, and as they advanced many Prussians dropped their rifles and held up their hands, crying "Kamerad." Nowhere else on the front did the Germans resist so fiercely as in Ravine Wood.

North of the canal there was also hard fighting, and the Londoners suffered from the machine-gun fire which swept down upon them from the heaps of earth which I have already mentioned. One of these heaps was captured and eighty prisoners were taken; but many of the defenders escaped to the other heap, where they continued to hold out until the end of the battle. In Battle Wood, north of Hollebeke, we expected a

determined resistance ; but a strong redoubt in the centre was quickly silenced, and the greater part of the wood was captured with but little difficulty.

* * * * *

Tanks took part in the fighting, but our infantry went forward so splendidly that they were hardly needed, and never had a good chance of showing their mettle. The Germans had boasted that their "anti-Tank batteries" would soon put an end to the monsters. One of these batteries was "spotted" by an airman, and our artillery was directed on to it, with the result that five of the six anti-Tank guns were knocked to bits. What happened to the other batteries we do not know, but it is almost certain that some of their guns were included in the half-hundred pieces which we captured during the day.

* * * * *

A body of Germans gave trouble in what was known as Huns' Walk, on the Messines Road, where there was a belt of uncut wire. When the Australians arrived they asked, "What are we going to do about that?" "Leave it to me," said a young Tank officer. "I guess my old rattletrap can roll that down." The Tank soon got on the move, and crawled along the hedge of wire until it laid it flat. Then it passed on searching for strong posts to destroy.

* * * * *

The Cheshires deserve mention for the very fine work which they did during the battle. Certain English troops that had fought very bravely on the Somme made the advance against the southern end of the ridge. They started on their perilous journey from in front of the village of Wulverghem, which lies about two miles, as the aeroplane flies, west of Messines. Across their front ran the shallow valley of a rivulet, and our men believed that, as they descended its long hither slope, they would be exposed to a fierce machine-gun fire from the opposite side. Nor would their difficulties be then over. They would have to push up the other slope and carry a plateau which was swept from every direction by the enemy's guns. Before this plateau could be reached they would have to make a journey of over two thousand yards, carry fortified farms and woods, and no less than five lines of trenches.

When they descended into the valley they found, to their surprise, that their progress was far less difficult than they

had supposed; for, thanks to our artillery, the long-prepared defences of the Germans had been swept away. Not one of the machine-guns which the enemy had installed on the farther slope ever got into action. Our guns simply smothered them and blotted them out. In five minutes our men had reached the plateau.

Crowning the opposite slope was a wood. Two waves of our attack had swept by it when about a hundred Germans came out hoping to take these troops in the rear. Our next wave, however, broke up the Germans with machine guns, and a platoon from one of the great manufacturing districts of England went for them with the bayonet. It is believed that not one of them got away.

It was in the south-west of this wood that the Cheshires distinguished themselves. They were sent up in support of other troops, and they began the day's work by capturing trenches which were not in the programme and seizing fifty prisoners and fourteen machine guns. Then they drove the enemy out of two farms and cleared another machine-gun post. On their right they saw a trench which the barrage and the earlier waves of infantry had overlooked. This they took in their stride with a loud whoop, and proceeded to capture another farm from which the enemy was making himself offensive.

Then they dug in, and with their rifles and a machine gun settled down to deal with a German counter-attack. By good musketry they completely shrivelled it up. Now came the interval between the first attack and the second advance. In this interval the Cheshires saw the enemy running from one of the trenches ahead. Off they went in pursuit. They killed a good many of the fleeing Germans, and occupied their trenches a good half-hour before the time fixed for them to do so.

They were now in a very tight place. They were in front of the barrage instead of behind it. Before long they saw the curtain of bursting shells creeping up behind them. In a few minutes it would be sweeping over them and blotting out both them and their trenches. The officer in command at once got his men into shell-holes in the open, where they scooped out hollows and did their best to hide themselves. Then came the barrage creeping up and over them, and in a few minutes the trench which they had captured was no more. Then they crawled out of their shell-holes and followed the line

of smoke and flame to final victory. Their escape was almost miraculous.

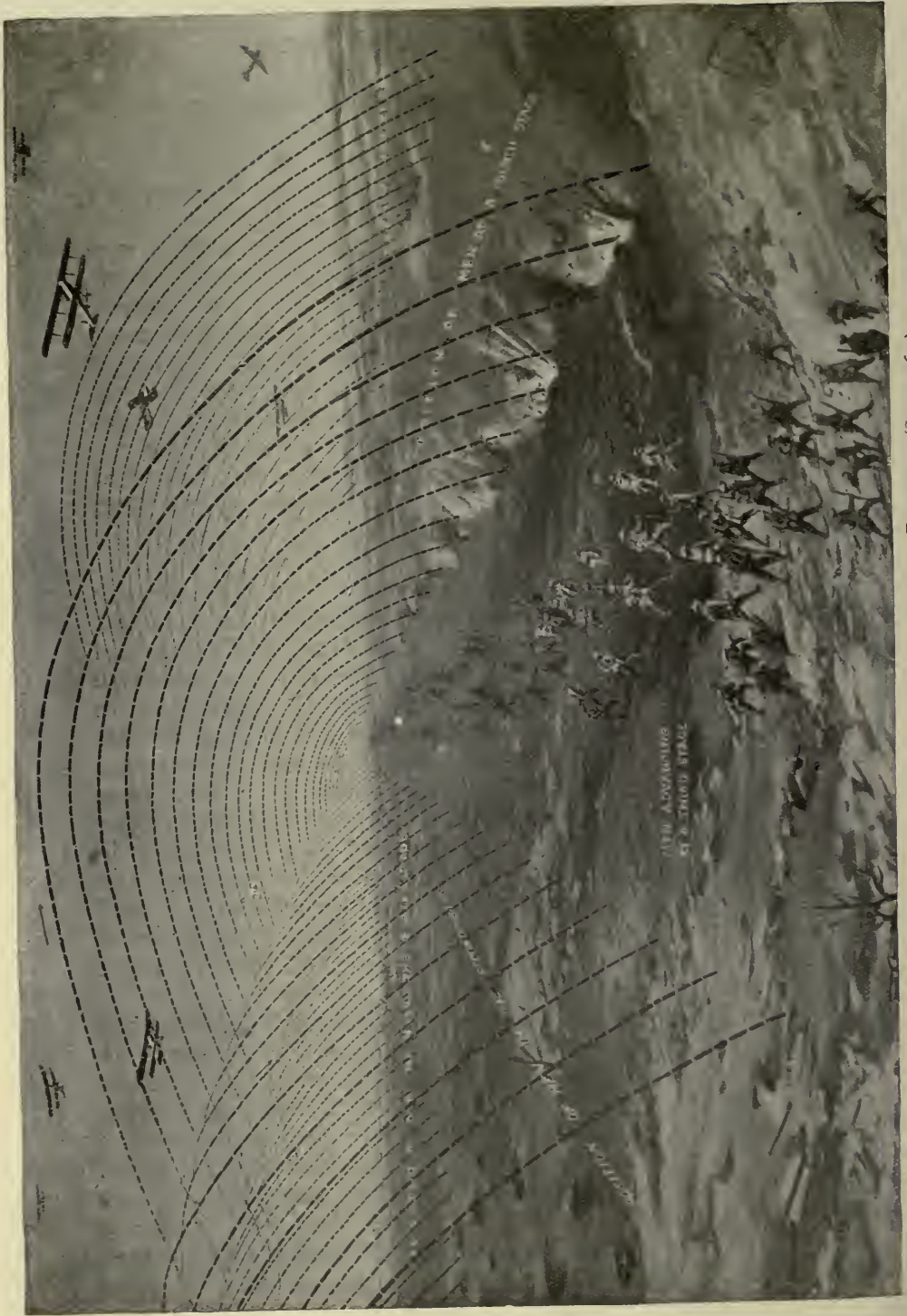
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A certain machine-gun major who took part in the same attack deliberately pushed through the rain of shells which led the way. He saw in the distance that the enemy was hurrying up teams of horses for the purpose of getting away certain threatened guns. At once he called for volunteers. The crews of two machine guns answered his call, and away went these devoted men through our own barrage. By great good luck most of them escaped. As soon as they were through, they opened fire, and managed to shoot down the men and horses who were engaged in removing two of the guns. Before the end of the day these guns were in our lines. You will read many stories of heroic deeds before you happen upon a finer instance of pluck and quick wit than this.

* * * * *

In the German front line there were two trenches running south-eastward from a little east of Wytschaete to a little east of Messines, and known to our men as October Trench and October Support. When our men advanced against these trenches they found the wire uncut and the Germans ready to resist. At the close of the battle the wire was still uncut, and how the troops got over or through the entanglement under fierce fire they themselves could hardly remember. They were helped by a couple of companies of other troops, which slipped round on the right, outside the wire, and took the enemy in flank. But the main body went over the wire in front, and in that way swooped down upon the trench, in which they found more than three hundred German dead. During the hours of darkness they dug a trench 1,050 yards long and four feet deep, and in it rested comfortably.

They were very weary at the end of the day's fighting, and I have no doubt that some of them "groused" when they were set to the task of digging. But the trench saved them. Next morning the enemy opened fire on them with guns from concrete emplacements well in front. Our field batteries were turned on to these guns, and before long had silenced them. When, later in the day, our troops took the position, they found every man in the emplacements shot dead, and our shrapnel bullets inside the barrels of the enemy's guns.



British Soldiers advancing under an Artillery Barrage. (See p. 261.)

(By permission of *The Sphere*.)

From this you can guess that the shooting was wonderfully accurate.

* * * * *

Mr. Philip Gibbs tells us that an Australian was going up to the front line with a kerosene tin full of water. His friends in the advanced trenches were very thirsty, and so were the men whom he passed by the way. "Can't you spare us a drop?" they asked. "Fellows up in the front want it badly," said the Australian, "and I promised to get it them; but if you'll take just a sip—" Some of the men who begged for water were wounded and others were parched; but none of them did more than moisten their lips. One man shook his head and said, "Take it to the fellows in front." It was the old Sir Philip Sidney touch, and it is not rare amongst our fighting men.

* * * * *

Here is a pretty story from the battlefield. It is taken from a letter written by an officer to friends at home. "I remember some while ago sitting in a shell-hole; it was the place I had chosen for my work, and I was some days and nights there. The 'show,' during which the earth seemed little more than a chaos of flame and bursting shells, was over—that is to say the *strafing* had become no more than usual. I was resting, feeling very done up with excitement and fatigue. Presently I heard a small sound, and saw a little spot of earth being pushed up from beneath. I watched, and a little field-mouse appeared, his tiny, beady eyes looking at me alertly. I kept still, and he hopped out and played about, and presently the little beggar was frisking about at the bottom of the shell-hole, doubtless searching for my rations. When he found that he was not interfered with, he grew quite tame, helped himself to odds and ends of food, and crawled round the collar of a man who was asleep, much to the amusement of the others. I blessed that little field-mouse; I think it made every one feel cheerful, after a hard night's work, to see him playing about in the early morning."

* * * * *

Amongst the many brave men who fought and fell during the attack on Messines Ridge, I must single out a gallant Irishman for special mention—Major William Redmond, an Irish Member of Parliament, and brother of John Redmond,

the leader of the Nationalist party. In his young manhood Major Redmond had been a militia officer, but had resigned in order to take part in the Land League movement. He spent his twenty-first year in Kilmainham gaol as a "suspect." When the war broke out he did excellent work in calling upon his countrymen to join the army, and received a commission in the Irish division which he had so largely helped to raise. He was promoted major, and proved to be a very capable officer. In March 1917, when home from the front, he took part in an Irish debate in the House of Commons. He told the members that in France and Flanders Irish Protestants and Roman Catholics were on the best of terms; that each side recognized and admired the good qualities of the other, and that both were united in Britain's cause. He pleaded very earnestly that Irishmen at home should emulate their brothers at the front; that they should lay aside their differences, and combine to give Ireland a government which would enable her to become a happy and prosperous part of the British Empire. This noble speech had a great effect on the House of Commons.

A few months later he went "over the top," leading his men to the attack in Whitesheet Wood. A fellow-officer says that he was in high spirits. "He had a joke and a smile for every man, and as we flew over the parapet to shouts of 'Up the County Clare,' Major Willie showed us a clean pair of heels. At this moment there was a hurricane of shells, one of which exploded almost beside him. He fell, but at the moment we thought his wound was not serious." It was fitting that he who had striven to reunite his countrymen should be picked up by an Ulster ambulance, and should breathe his last in an Ulster hospital. In the words of Mr. Balfour, "he died the death of a hero and patriot." Every member of Parliament, including the writer of these lines, listened with deep sympathy to the noble tributes paid to his memory by the present and the former prime ministers, and by Sir Edward Carson, the champion of the Ulster party.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE AEROPLANE IN WAR.

YOU already know that our airmen surpassed themselves during the battle for the Messines Ridge. "Even the ranks of Tuscany* could scarce forbear to cheer." The Germans themselves were forced to admire, and perhaps to envy, the skill and daring of our fliers. One of their newspapers said :—

"Quite extraordinary were the numbers of the enemy airmen who directed the fire and attempted to hinder our observation. Picked squadrons of airmen from the whole British front were gathered together on this small section of about ten miles. They flew in several layers, one above the other, from 16,000 feet down to a few hundred feet. They planed by night close over our trenches, and seemed, on the morning of the 7th, a few minutes before the mines were fired, to be looking into our trenches to discover whether they were still occupied."

I think you will be interested to learn how our air services reached the state of efficiency described above. When you were small boys and girls the aeroplane was no more than a toy. Not until the beginning of the year 1908 did a flying man manage to keep the air for 1 minute 28 seconds. Progress, however, was rapid, and by September of the same year a flight was made which lasted nearly forty minutes. Four years later a Frenchman flew from London to Manchester, and this was thought to be a wonderful performance. Now it would be considered a very small outing indeed.

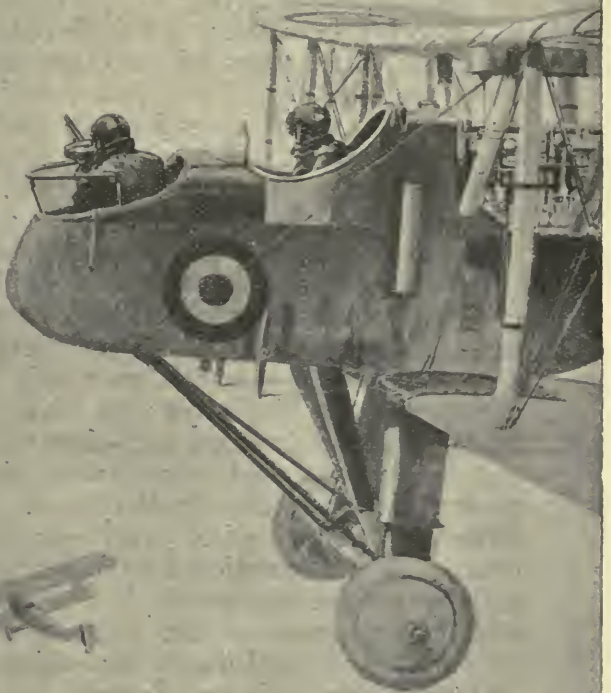
By 1914, when the war began, we had established a Royal Flying Corps for the army and an air service for the navy. The Army Flying Corps then possessed about a hundred

* Quoted from Macaulay's *Horatius*. Tuscany was in the time of Horatius the chief enemy of Rome.

machines, all of which were slow, and most of which were unreliable. Fortunately, however, there were some very able officers in the Flying Corps, and even with these poor machines they did excellent work. A few dozen of them who accompanied the British troops which retreated from Mons managed to spy out the movements of the enemy, and thus save our men from disaster. Aeroplanes proved their great value from the very beginning of the war, and soldiers were not slow to understand that, given a sufficient number of them, no army need fear surprise. At the Battle of the Marne their eagle eyes discovered the whereabouts of the German columns and the direction of their march, and furnished General Joffre with that information which enabled him to strike the blow which drove the enemy to earth and changed the whole face of the campaign. Again, when the Race to the Sea began, they kept the Allied generals informed of the northern movements of the enemy, and thus did much to prevent him from breaking through to the Channel ports.

Before the war was a month old we had set ourselves to build many improved machines, and to train large numbers of airmen. The best engineers were soon at work, inventors were encouraged, and the art and science of navigating the air made startling strides. It is not too much to say that the war made aviation. The toy of 1908 became an essential instrument of war seven years later.

In the earlier part of the struggle the Royal Naval Air Service was specially favoured. It had the best airmen and the best machines, and soon began to carry out bomb raids on the enemy's coast. So rapidly did this branch of the service expand that it was able to send squadrons to the Dardanelles, to Africa, and to Mesopotamia. It was also able to establish a base at Dunkirk, from which raids were made on important military places in Belgium, and even on German towns. You have not forgotten, I am sure, the destruction which was wrought on the Zeppelin sheds at Friedrichshaven (see frontispiece to Vol. III.), or the fine raid which was made on Cuxhaven on Christmas Day 1915. As machines improved and airmen grew more skilful, even more daring and destructive raids were made. Zeebrugge, the German base for U boats, destroyers, and aircraft, was bombed almost weekly, and in 1917 successful attacks were made along with the French on German



"Kamerad!" at 12,000 feet. A German Airman surrendering.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

In the course of a duel, which took place 12,000 feet up, between a British and a German machine, the latter's machine gun jammed and became useless. Seeing himself helpless and at the mercy of his adversary, the German threw up his hands in token of surrender.

munition works. The Royal Naval Air Service grew to be very efficient, and some day we shall hear amazing stories of how it scouted for the fleet, chased Zeppelins, and hunted U boats.

Important as was the work of "the navy that flies," that of the Royal Flying Corps was still more important. At first, however, it was stinted of machines, and its duties were confined to scouting. For a record of what the airman saw he had to trust to his memory and to a few rough sketches. When, however, the long barrier of trenches put an end to open movements, the Royal Flying Corps came into its own. It grew vastly in numbers and power. Aerodromes were set up behind our lines, older types of machines were done away with and were replaced by steady, fast machines, which enabled our airmen to do many things formerly undreamt of. For example, they mapped out the intricate network of trenches and saps in which the enemy defended himself. It was very difficult to do this from a height of 2,000 feet; but the sketches which the airmen made proved very useful.

Then photography came to the aid of our aerial observers, and our gunners discovered that new spheres of action were open to them. Some of our machines were fitted with special snap-shot cameras, which were able, in the twinkling of an eye, to make a bird's-eye plan of the enemy's defence works far below. Each airman snap-shotted the area assigned to him, and the various photographs were pieced together to form a perfect picture of the whole system. Every trench line, every stretch of barbed wire, every gun position, no matter how concealed, was revealed by the searching eye of the camera; and by comparing one day's photographs with those of the next, the progress of the enemy's works could be followed. Our artillery learned the exact position of the enemy's batteries, and were thus able to silence them. The photographs also showed the whereabouts of places which might be bombed with success. It was only after aerial photography came into use that we were able to discover the position of German supply stations in Belgium and North France and make raids upon them.

In the first year of the war our airmen could not drop their bombs with a correct aim unless they were flying very low—say a few hundred feet above their objective. Indeed, in those days it was impossible for our machines to climb more than

from 4,000 feet to 7,000 feet, and consequently they often returned from a raid with a hundred or more bullet-holes in them. Frequently they were within the range of anti-aircraft guns, and many of them did not return at all. Now, the machines are fitted with sights which enable the bombs to be dropped from any height, and it is not uncommon for bombing to be done from an altitude of from 12,000 to 20,000 feet.

Meanwhile the aeroplane was rapidly becoming the handmaid of the artillery. It "spotted" for the guns—that is, it observed the bursting of the shells, and directed the gunners till they found their target. At first signals were made by lamps or Véry lights, or by letting fall a smoky bomb; but soon these makeshifts were replaced by wireless apparatus, which was carried by the observing machines. It was now possible to hit targets which could not be seen from the ground, and to range the guns on positions entirely hidden from the most advanced observer. When the number of machines and airmen increased, every trench and strong point of the enemy's lines was "registered," so that these positions could be shelled at will. Every section of the British front had soon its own artillery aeroplanes.

Beginning as scouts, our airmen became bomb-droppers, photographers, and artillery "spotters." Before long they were fighters as well. In the year 1914 the only weapons carried by pilots and observers were revolvers and rifles. In the aerial fights in those days the machines circled round each other and tried to get to close quarters, so that a shot might be fired with effect. It was very difficult in these circumstances to "bring down" an enemy's machine or "drive it down out of control," though it is on record that a very gallant officer, who afterwards lost his life, killed two German pilots within five minutes with his revolver.

Aerial fighting on a large scale and at a considerable distance only became possible when the machine gun was adapted to the aeroplane. The Royal Flying Corps adopted the Lewis gun, a light and handy weapon; but the machines which were then used for scouting and "spotting" were so built that the crews had only a small sweep of fire. In the spring of 1915 special fighting planes appeared on the Western front, and then began that bringing down of aeroplanes which figured daily in our own and the enemy's reports.

All through the war there was a constant rivalry between us and the Germans as to which country could produce the best and fastest machines. In the late months of 1915 and the early months of 1916 the Germans built Fokker aeroplanes, which for a time were superior to ours, and led to the loss of many of our observing machines. Our aeroplane builders strove might and main to construct machines which should be superior to the Fokker, and they were so successful that during the summer and autumn of 1916 we had the whip hand of the enemy. Then the Germans made another bid for mastery with new types of machine; but we were able to meet them on equal terms, thanks chiefly to the skill of our pilots and the way in which our air service was organized. Throughout the Somme offensive we were superior to the enemy; but we fell behind again in the spring of 1917, when the Germans organized and fought with squadrons of from twelve to fifteen fast scouts. Against these our older types of machines had to struggle hard in order to carry out their regular work. By the middle of the year, however, we were able to put into the air scores of new machines which more than placed us on a level with the enemy.

Up to the close of the fight for the Messines Ridge the British and the German air services lost about the same number of machines. Perhaps you think that this shows that neither side could claim the mastery of the air. I must remind you, however, that three-quarters of the aerial fighting took place over and behind the German lines. The great object of this air fighting was to enable our observers to see as much of the enemy's territory as possible, and at the same time to prevent the German airmen from examining our territory. As we could justly claim to have done this, I think you will agree that the palm goes to the British airmen.

A writer in the August number of *Blackwood's Magazine*, from which I have taken most of the facts in this chapter, gives us the following account of an airman's day during a "big push":—

"Throughout the night preceding an advance, several parties, laden with heavy bombs, steer by compass to Hun headquarters or other objectives, and return no longer laden with bombs. The first streak of daylight is the herald of an exodus from west to east of many score fighting craft. These cross the lines, hover amongst the 'Archie' bursts, and drive back

or down all black-crossed strangers within sight. Some of them go farther afield, and attack the Boche above his own aerodromes. Such enemy craft as manage to take the air without meeting trouble from the advanced offensive patrols are tackled by the scouts near the lines. The few that travel still farther westward with the intention of swooping on our observation machines, or of themselves gathering information, receive a hearty welcome from our defensive patrols. The British two-seaters are thus free to direct the artillery, link the attacking infantry with headquarters, and spy out the land.

"As soon as the early morning light allows, a host of planes will be darting backward and forward over the trench lines as they guide the terrific bombardment which goes before an attack. Other machines are searching for new emplacements and signs of enemy preparation in his rear. Several squadrons are engaged in discovering where the enemy's troops are placed in an area stretching from the lines to a distance of twenty miles east of them, and further parties are examining the railways, roads, and canals that link the actual front with bases from thirty to ninety miles behind it."

The writer also tells us that when the infantry go over the top and follow up the barrage, what are called "contact patrol" aeroplanes fly low above them, and keep them in touch with the gunners and with headquarters. Should a troublesome nest of machine guns be discovered, the airman informs our artillery, so that it can be wiped out without delay. From time to time the observer carefully notes the positions held by the attackers, and sends information to brigade headquarters by flying back and dropping a bag containing a message. If he sees the enemy preparing for a counter-attack, he reports the movement, and thus prevents his own troops from being taken unawares. In these and in other ways he "mothers the infantry," and acts as the eyes of the force.

When a further advance is to be made, machines fitted with cameras fly over every inch of the new positions taken up by the enemy, and bring back complete and accurate pictures of their trenches and other defences. Meanwhile other airmen are watching the enemy's lines of communication, so as to note the arrival of reinforcements and the direction from which they are to be flung into the fight. The artillery "spotters" are busy too, directing the guns which are pounding the new line or are trying to silence enemy batteries. Bombing craft are also at work, making onslaughts on railways, supply depots, garrison towns, headquarters, aerodromes, and any other targets that offer themselves.

Then there are free-lance craft which carry on what are



Airmen victorious over Infantry and Guns

(By permission of the War Office)

During the fighting south-east of Arras a squadron of British aeroplanes returning from a raid on a trench where a counter-attack was never launched. Our aeroplanes dropped bombs on the troops, and fired thousands of machine-guns into the trenches, our aeroplanes, having broken up the counter-attack, successfully reached home, where they were met by a hail of anti-aircraft fire. On 15th of May 1917 it was stated that 713 machines were brought down on both sides, 442 of them being British.



British Aeroplanes breaking up a German Formation.

Illustrated London News.)

behind the enemy's lines discovered a German brigade which had assembled for a counter-attack. The rounds of machine-gun ammunition on the men closely packed in the trenches. Despite heavy fire from dropped messages for the artillery, which completed the destruction of the brigade. During the month German.

known as "ground stunts." Their pilots are constantly on the lookout for troops on the march, transport or ammunition wagons, trains, or even stray motor cars, and these they assail with machine guns. These free-lance attacks were as common as blackberries in the year 1917, but were unknown a year previously. They were an outcome of the contact patrols, which were introduced when the creeping barrage became a regular feature of our attacks.

Prior to the Somme push of 1916 the task of keeping touch between advancing infantry and the guns was very difficult. A battalion which went over the top and disappeared into the enemy lines might be in dire need of reinforcement, or might be held up by some strong points which would have to be smashed by the guns before the advance could proceed. The attackers at that time could only make their wants known by means of field telephones, carrier pigeons, or runners. Telephone wires were frequently cut by the enemy's shells, carrier pigeons often went astray, and runners were shot. When General Horne's "creeping barrage" was introduced, it was clear that some surer and more rapid means of communication must be devised if our infantry were not to be mown down by their own shells. After many trials we hit upon the plan of fitting certain steady machines with wireless apparatus, and what are called Klaxonhorns, and sent them along with the infantry to watch their movements, signal back directions to the gunners working the barrage, and by means of message bags inform headquarters of the progress made and of enemy movements behind the front line. At the first sign of a counter-attack these contact patrols called up the gunners, who dropped shells upon the assembling troops, and thus nipped the movement in the bud.

Many fine stories are told of these contact patrols. One observer saved two battalions from destruction by summoning reinforcements in the nick of time. Another observer saw two Tanks making their way into the ruins of a village long before the time fixed for its capture. The men in our trenches would have known nothing of this unexpected advance but for the observer in the contact machine. He sent them the news, and they instantly went forward, and, by completing the work of the Tanks, seized the village two hours before the time laid down in the programme.

On another occasion the pilot and observer of a contact "bus" saw two Tanks moving towards a troublesome German trench, one on its right, the other on its left. They also noticed a German officer, who peeped round a corner, and saw to his amazement one of the new steel beasts advancing towards him. At once he hurried to an observation post round a bend in the lines, and when he arrived there got the shock of his life. Another monster was waddling towards him. Alarmed and unnerved, he ordered the trench to be abandoned. Our airmen at once flew back to headquarters and dropped a message. Shortly afterwards our men advanced, and the trench was peacefully occupied.

The crews of the contact machines could hardly help playing an active part in the fights which they were observing and directing. They saw the Germans down below, and they could not resist the temptation to swoop down and strike terror into them. Greatly daring, they shut off their engines, glided across the enemy's trenches, and while doing so fired off drums of machine-gun cartridges. These attacks were not planned beforehand, but were undertaken on the spur of the moment. So successful were they that before long machines were specially set apart to carry out these "ground stunts." They were manned by the most daring and enterprising of our airmen.

One of these machines actually captured a German trench. The pilot steered his plane along the length of the trench, while his observer fired drum after drum of ammunition at the crouching Germans. A headlong scramble followed, and then a strange sight was seen. An irregular line of white appeared above the trench. The Huns were waving handkerchiefs and other strips of white material in token of surrender. The victorious aeroplane called up the infantry, and soon the trench was in our possession. This may appear to be a "tall" story, but it is true. The facts are set out in the Royal Flying Corps section of the daily report issued by General Headquarters—a publication known to irreverent airmen as *Comic Cuts*.

"Ground stunts" soon became a craze with the men of our fighting air squadrons. One of our machines descended to within a few hundred feet of a train, chased it for miles, drove it off the rails, and peppered the coaches with bullets. Another spiralled down over a train, put the engine out of action with one bomb, and with four others completely wrecked the coaches. On

one occasion an observer happened to see what looked like an important inspection of German troops going on down below. He lost no time in swooping down upon the assembly, and had the satisfaction of seeing the ranks broken and the soldiers and officers alike scurrying like rabbits to cover. When during the Somme battles a detachment of cavalry broke through the enemy's lines, our horsemen were amazed to see one of their own biplanes forming their vanguard. It darted to and fro, pointed out the best positions to attack, and whenever it had the opportunity made great play with its Lewis gun.

One misty day a British machine was flying low so as to get a clear view of the ground, when the observer saw a German general in all his glory riding along in a motor car. The pilot at once dived down on the car, and the observer fired on it. The driver stopped the car, and he and the general jumped down and rushed at top speed through a field into a wood. Their hasty retreat was so funny that the pilot and the observer went home roaring with laughter.

The writer of the article from which I gather these stories tells us that at the end of a three-hour patrol his pilot would often descend to less than a thousand feet, cross No Man's Land again, and zigzag over the enemy trenches in order to loose off his surplus ammunition. On dull days he would fly just above the clouds, until the "bus" was east of the enemy's lines, when he would turn round and dive suddenly through the cloud screen in the direction of the enemy trenches, firing his front gun. Then when he flattened out again and steered along the Hun front line the writer would set the rear gun to work.

"I remember the first trip across the lines made by a pilot who had just arrived from England. He had been sent up to have a look at the battle line with an old-hand observer, and had been told not to cross the trenches. However, he went too far east, and found himself ringed by 'Archie' bursts. These did not frighten him, but made him furiously angry. He dived towards Bapaume, dropped unscathed through the barrier of anti-aircraft shells, fired a hundred rounds into the town square from a height of 800 feet, and raced back over the Bapaume-Pozières road pursued by flaming rockets. The observer recovered from his surprise in time to loose off a drum of ammunition at Bapaume, and three more along the straight road to the front line, paying particular attention to the village of Le Sars."

I could fill many pages with thrilling stories of similar

deeds done by our airmen, most of whom, you must remember, were very young, many of them little more than boys fresh from school. For example, Captain Albert Ball, of whose exploits you will read on a later page, and who brought down no less than forty-three enemy machines before he lost his life, was but twenty years of age when he became the pride of the Royal Flying Corps. Let me tell you one or two incidents which prove the deathless valour of our air-fighters. A pilot and an observer were attacked by a squadron of twenty-eight enemy machines. The pilot was badly hit in the leg, and one of his eyes was so badly injured that it only hung by a thread. Despite his agony of pain, he did not falter. He kept control of his machine and landed safely. He was dying when he was helped on to a stretcher and brought home to camp; but he made his report very clearly and calmly until he was overcome by the last faintness of death.

A French correspondent on the British front told the following story. A British air patrol fought twelve engagements, one after the other, near Douai. On its return two of the aeroplanes missed their way, and found themselves above the enemy's lines. One of the machines engaged, from the height of 200 feet, a squadron of Pomeranian hussars, killed about twenty of them, and dispersed the remainder. The other machine, from the same height, used its machine gun upon a squad of one hundred Germans who were unloading trucks in a railway station, and wiped out the lot. Finally, three aeroplanes flew along the main street of Lens, on a level with the roofs of the houses, and bombed a regiment of Bavarian infantry which was marching with swinging strides on the road of retreat.

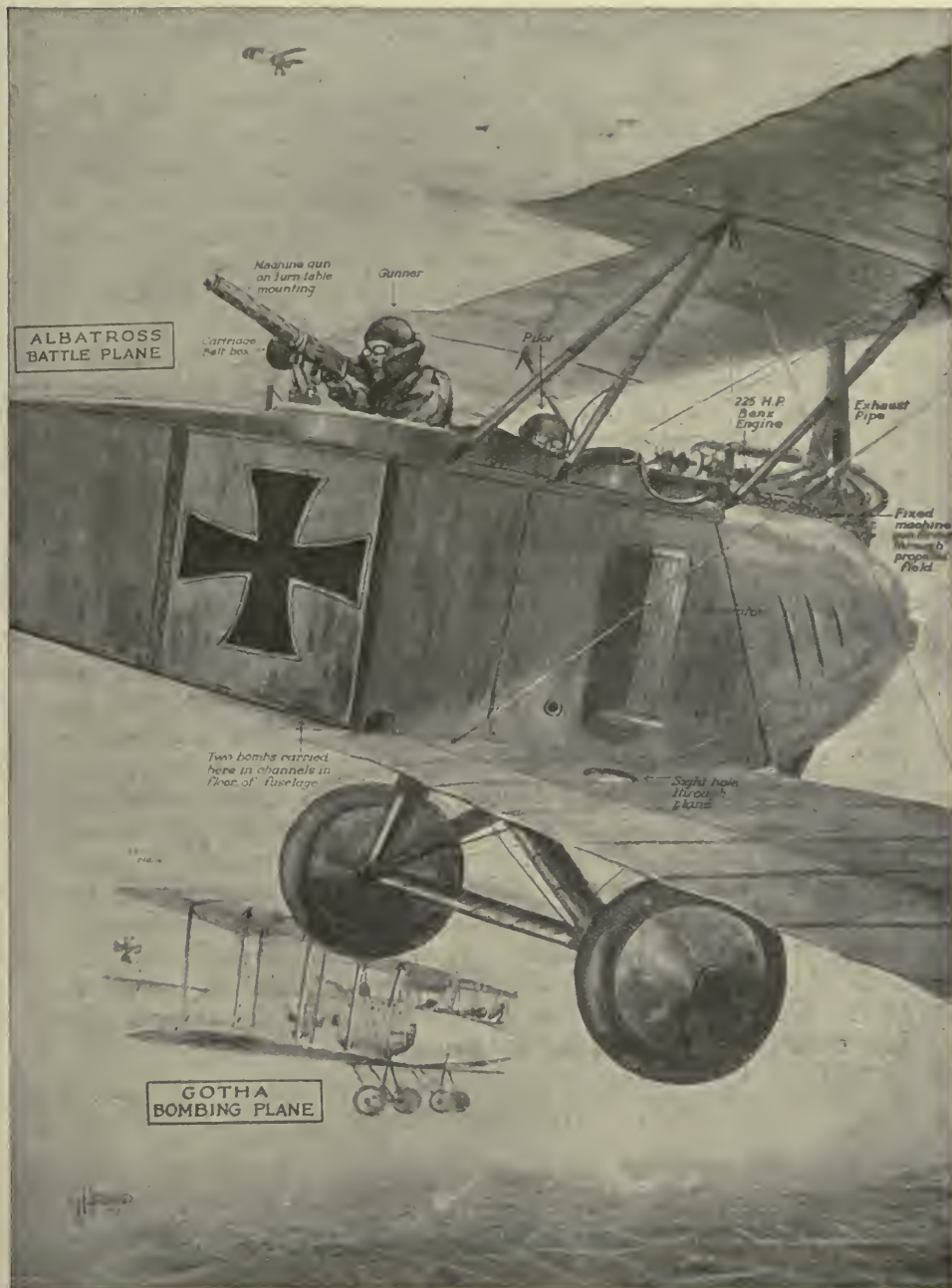
Here is a story of how one of our airmen engaged nine Albatross scouts which were trying to interfere with British flyers. Lieutenant X peppered one of them at close range. He saw the German's left wing break off, and the wreck crash to the ground. Then he turned and fired into another enemy aeroplane only sixty yards away. This machine also lost a wing, and went whirling earthwards. Later, the same officer engaged four more enemy machines, and drove down two of them. Then he joined in a fight between a number of British planes and fifteen of the enemy's machines.

Captain Y was flying seventeen miles behind the enemy's

lines with " Archie " bursts all round him, when he saw seven German aeroplanes on the ground of an aerodrome below him. He wheeled and waited. Up came a Black Cross Hun to give him battle ; but before the enemy was more than sixty feet up, Captain Y engaged him, and sent him crashing down. A second Hun left the ground, and Captain Y, who was still hovering above like a hawk, immediately dived at the newcomer and poured machine-gun bullets into him. Down he went into a tree with both wings broken. Two other enemy machines now ascended. Captain Y climbed slowly up to a thousand feet, and the Huns followed him. Suddenly and swiftly he turned and sent his nearest foe spinning wildly to earth. The fourth machine was destroyed in the same way. Then Captain Y, his work done, sailed home and landed safely, though his machine was pitted with bullets in a hundred places.

* * * * *

You have now some idea of how the Royal Flying Corps developed almost from nothing into an all-important and very efficient branch of the Army. I wonder whether you realize the immense amount of hard work, deep thought, and engineering and organizing skill which were needed before this result could be attained. Busy factories, fitted with special machinery, had to be set up, and filled with tens of thousands of skilled workers, before machines could be supplied at all. Hundreds of the cleverest engineers in the country had to devote themselves to the task of designing new types of planes and engines, and of adapting wireless and photographic apparatus for their equipment. An aeroplane consists of thousands of parts, and all these had to be thought out and manufactured before a single machine could be built. Further, the designers had to be ever ready with new ideas, so as to keep pace with and surpass the Air Service of the enemy. They had to fight with their wits the keenest brains and the most skilful hands in all Germany, and they knew that it would be fatal if the Huns were allowed to produce machines which could travel faster and climb higher than our own. Then you must think of the aerodromes and aircraft depots that had to be erected, and of the thousands of pilots who had to be trained in all the branches of war flying. You must also think of the immense amount of work necessary to keep up the supply of machines. The best of aeroplanes has but a very short life. A type of



Two Types of Enemy Air Raiders.

The upper picture illustrates the Albatross battleplane, which is a handy machine to control and manoeuvre. It has a speed of ninety miles an hour. During air raids the Albatross is used to protect the more unwieldy bombing machines. The lower picture shows one of these bombing machines. They are armed with three machine guns and carry 60-lb. bombs.

machine which is good for a few months of active service just holds its own for a few months longer, and then is quite out of date, and only useful for training purposes. Even in July 1917, when 958 firms and 120,000 persons were employed in producing 4,000 aeroplanes a month, there were complaints that we had not enough machines to supply all our needs. For the Air Service in the year 1917 we set apart 115 millions of money.

Every day that passed saw some improvement. In the middle of the year 1917 we possessed machines which could fly from 130 to 140 miles an hour, and climb 1,000 feet a minute. Experts prophesied that before the end of the war a speed of from 160 to 200 miles an hour would be attained, and that our machines would be able to carry heavier armament, more powerful bombs, and more accurate bomb-sights. It was thought that, by means of machines equipped with guns which could be fired downwards, victory might almost be secured by aircraft alone.

Almost as soon as the Americans declared war they set themselves to train thousands of aviators, and to lay plans for manufacturing tens of thousands of aeroplanes for bomb-dropping, artillery-spotting, air-fighting, and submarine-destroying. Their splendidly fitted machine shops and their remarkable ingenuity seemed to promise very rapid construction and striking new types of machine. They were prepared to spend 120 millions of money on this work. Men dreamed of the day when swarms of aircraft would sweep across the German lines, producing such havoc on factories, strongholds, and lines of communication, and inspiring such terror in the minds of the German people, that they would call back their armies into their own land and sue for peace.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LENS AND LOMBARTZYDE.

FOR nine long and bitter months the main interest of the great struggle in the West was confined to the region between the Ancre and the Somme. Our gains on the rolling country between these two rivers were so important that the enemy was forced to retreat to a new system of defences which we have agreed to call the Hindenburg line. On April 9, 1917, the Canadians, with splendid dash and determination, carried Vimy Ridge, the northern buttress of this line; and thereafter, during the remainder of the month, our fighting arena lay between the northern end of the ridge and the village of Quéant, where the new German trenches linked up with the old defences which the Germans had occupied for more than two and a half years. The Hindenburg line was carried, and the enemy was forced back on what is known as the "Switch" line, between Drocourt and Quéant.

The British sphere of battle had thus moved northward. By 7th June, when the Messines Ridge was captured, it had reached the southern limit of the Ypres salient, and before the month was out our men were fighting on the shores of the English Channel. We shall learn in a later chapter that the capture of the Messines Ridge, and the later operations which enabled us to straighten out the Ypres salient, were necessary before we could launch on 1st August that great offensive between the Lys and the Yser which smashed the well-constructed trenches on which the Germans had spent thirty months of labour and advanced our line by more than two miles.

From 9th April to the end of July there was a lull on the British front, broken only by the two incidents which I propose



In the Village of Vimy: a Shell bursting in a Street.
(Canadian War Records Photo.)

to relate in this chapter. First, I will tell you how we tightened our grip on Lens, and then I will relate the story of a British disaster. You already know that when we established ourselves on Vimy Ridge we had the important mining centre of Lens at our mercy. Perhaps you wonder why we did not press on and capture the town. Its possession would be very valuable to us for two good reasons. It is the meeting-place of roads from all the large neighbouring towns—from Lille, Bethune, Arras, and Douai—and once we could get it firmly into our hands we should be able to make a bold bid for these towns, and especially for the great industrial city of Lille, which was priceless to the Germans because of its great metal factories and machine shops. Further, Lens was the northern outpost of the "Switch" line, which we could not turn from the north so long as the Germans held the town.

The Canadians, flushed with their victory at Vimy, were eager to rush Lens; but General Horne held them back. He knew that the place was packed full of machine guns, and that if they had attempted to push into it our losses would have been far greater than the value of the victory. At any moment his guns could smash the place to atoms; but the French did not wish to see Lens destroyed. They hoped that we should be able to hem it in, and force the enemy to give it up as a habitable town and not as a heap of ruins. For this reason the town itself was not bombarded by us, and our troops began the hard and dreary work of closing in upon it. The hope of saving the town was vain; the Germans would be sure to destroy it before they retired.

You have already heard of the Souchez brook, which sweeps round the northern end of the Vimy Ridge and cuts it off from the similar ridge of Notre Dame de Lorette. We had already pushed the Germans back along the banks of this brook, but ever since 14th April they had held a position astride of it on a front of about two miles. On 26th June General Horne ordered an attack to be made on this position. Our first object was to capture Hill 65, which lay about five hundred yards in front of our line and about twice that distance north of Souchez.

The Germans knew that this hill was the key to their own position, and that should it fall they would be pushed back on Lens itself. They therefore entrusted its defence to a

Prussian division. English troops from the South Midlands made short work of them, and took the slopes of the hill without difficulty. The Prussians were encouraged to try to recapture it by the promise that if they succeeded they would be taken out of the line and given a rest. Despite this bribe their counter-attack utterly failed. From Hill 65 we pushed forward along both banks of the stream, and about seven o'clock in the morning, after a short, sharp bombardment, captured the village.

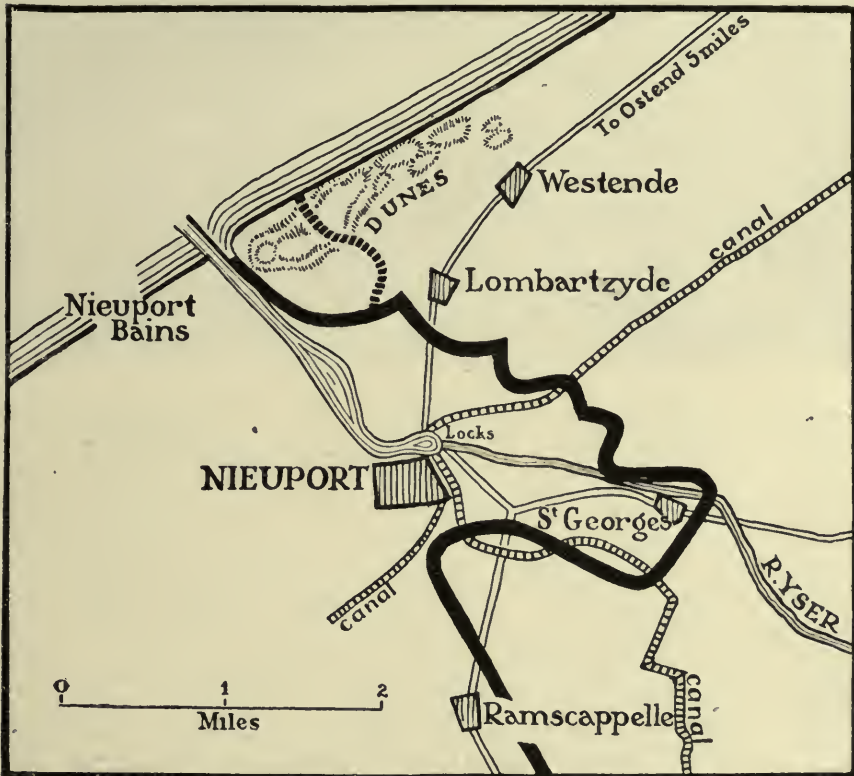
Before noon the Canadians were less than half a mile south of the suburban village of Avion. Between this place and Lens the flat land had been flooded to impede our advance, and the western suburb of the town had been levelled with the ground. Other spaces running back towards Lens itself had been cleared in order to give the enemy an open field of fire. A correspondent tells us that at this time the walls of Lens were still standing, but that it appeared to be no more than the husk of a city. The work of plundering, destroying, and blowing up had gone on for two months, and little now remained to be ravaged.

On the same night the Canadians fought their way into Avion, and continued to work slowly forward on the west and south-west sides of Lens. On the Lens-Arras road they were now only about half a mile from the city. They could not advance quickly because of the flooded land, the blown-up roads, and the felled trees which lay in their path. There was some stiff fighting on the outskirts of Avion, but the Canadians would not be denied. They were pinching Lens tighter and tighter every day, and it seemed that ere long they would crown their victory at Vimy with its capture. The place, however, was still holding out when the tide of battle swept northward to the shores of the Channel.

* * * * *

During the month of June there was much shifting about of British troops. On the 21st of that month Sir Douglas Haig reported that an enemy raid had been beaten off in the neighbourhood of the Belgian village of Lombartzyde, which stands about one mile north of Nieupoort, on the road between that place and Ostend. From this report we learned for the first time that British troops were on the Belgian coast. We also learned about the same time that the Portuguese were fighting with us in Flanders. Our men were now engaged on the ground

where the Germans had made their great effort to reach Calais by way of the coast during the early months of the war. Turn back to Volume III., and in Chapter XII. read how General Beseler tried to reach Nieuport by advancing along the Dunes, and how he was flung back by the superb gallantry of French marines and the fire of our monitors from the sea. You will remember that the Germans nearly broke through by way of



Ramscapele, and that the Belgians were forced to flood a large area to save the little strip of native land on which they still retained a foothold.

If the enemy was to be prevented from reaching the northern coast of France, the line of the Yser must be held at all costs. The French division which had locked, bolted, and barred this gateway to Calais was now reinforced by another division, and the British took over the line from the



sea to Lombartzyde. Our position ran about one thousand yards to the north of the river, and the seaward half of it crossed the Dunes, which extend inland for about half a mile or more. These dunes consist of gullies and wind-swept hillocks rising about sixty feet above high-water mark. The whole district is dotted here and there with patches of green, which scarcely hide the sandy ground. You can easily understand that this portion of our line was most difficult to hold. The trenches had to be dug in the sand, and they could afford but little protection from the howitzers of the enemy. If you study the map on page 293 and the diagram on this and the next page, you will see at a glance that the Germans could capture the triangle of land between the Yser and Lombartzyde at any time if they brought up sufficient guns for the purpose. On the left of our men lay the sea; on their right, beyond Lombartzyde, was the canal; and behind them the river Yser. Should the enemy open a very heavy fire on them they would be forced to retire. If the bridges over the river were destroyed by the enemy's shells, the plight of the defenders would be most perilous.

The front trenches between Lombartzyde and the sea were held by two battalions—the King's Royal Rifles at the seaward



end, and the Northamptonshire Regiment continuing the line to the village. About six o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, 10th July, the enemy artillery began a heavy bombardment of this front line, and after fiercely shelling it for an hour the range was lengthened, and the ground on the other side of the river was fiercely swept for another hour. Under this shelling the bridges over the Yser were destroyed, and it was impossible for reinforcements to be brought across the river. Then the guns shortened range again, and shells once more fell fast and thick on the front line. The enemy had brought up many 5.9 howitzers, and their fire was directed by numerous aeroplanes, which darted to and fro, and showed much activity.

Under this bombardment our defences suffered severely, many of our men being driven out of their trenches and forced to find fresh shelter in the gullies between the hillocks. By two o'clock shells were dropping on the battalion headquarters of the King's Royal Rifles, and the staff had to abandon the place and take refuge under a tunnel nearer to the sea. The breast-works of the trenches towards Lombartzyde were levelled, and it was now seen that an infantry attack would soon be made.



The British Approach to Lens;

(By permission of The

This drawing shows a typical scene during the fighting described in Chapter XXXIII. The total Battle of Messines Ridge, was officially given as 8,686, of whom 175 were officers. Constant trench raids



German Prisoners being brought in.

(Illustrated London News.)

Number of German prisoners taken by the British army during June, including those captured in the local attacks, such as that here illustrated, accounted for a large number.

A sergeant of the Northamptons volunteered to make his way through the storm of shot and shell and warn the King's Royal Rifles that they were in danger of being cut off.

The gallant fellow was soon hit ; but he managed to reach the river, and in spite of his sufferings swam down stream until he reached the King's Royal Rifles. No sooner had they received the warning than they threw up a bombing barrier, and put their machine guns into position.

At three o'clock the bombardment grew very intense, and for the next three hours was kept up with hurricane force. Then suddenly the guns playing on our trenches lifted, and German marines were seen advancing in strong waves. They moved along the coast and along the Ostend road towards the old Lombartzyde lighthouse, which stands in a little lagoon. Their object was to outflank our men and catch them in a trap from which there could be no escape.

Never did our troops fight more valiantly. They were much cut up, and the enemy was in overwhelming strength ; but they still fought on. The Northamptons, on the right, managed to check the German advance south of Lombartzyde, and by so doing saved Nieuport. On the left, however, the King's Royal Rifles had no chance. Two platoons which kept touch were surrounded, but they fought until the last man fell amid a circle of dead and wounded. German bombers and soldiers with flame apparatus made for the tunnel in which the staff lay. The last scene showed six British officers, back to back, coolly firing their revolvers at the enemy and awaiting death with that calm courage which is the proudest heritage of the race.

Fighting all the way back, a number of our men were pressed on to the river bank, where such of them as could swim dived in and reached the opposite shore in safety. But there were many who could not swim, and to try to succour them a soldier performed a magnificent act of heroism. With bullets hissing around him, he plunged into the Yser, breasted his way across the stream, climbed the opposite bank, and ran off in search of a rope. One end of it he made fast to a post, and, taking to the water again, carried the loose end across the river. In this way he enabled many of the non-swimmers to escape with their lives.

By about seven o'clock the Germans had cleared the Dunes

right up to the river, but they did not attempt to cross. They thought it prudent to establish a line about three hundred yards east of the Yser along our old support trench. Then they issued a glowing report in which they claimed a "great and magnificent victory." The enemy, so they said, had been driven back over the Yser, and over 1,250 prisoners, including twenty-seven officers, had been brought in. The British losses on the heavily shelled ground between the sea and the river were very high, but this report was, as usual, untrue. The total number of our troops between the sea and Lombartzyde cannot have been more than 2,000.

The set-back which I have just described was very regrettable, and it cost the lives and liberties of many gallant men, but it had no serious consequences. What the Germans had done on the Yser we had done over and over again on the Somme. They had first shattered our defences by turning many heavy guns upon them, and then had put up a barrage of fire between the defenders and their supports, so that reinforcements could not reach them. The Germans followed the usual plan, and succeeded, but we knew that we could oust them whenever we thought the operation worth while. No explanation was given as to why our navy did not help our sorely beset men from the sea.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

EXIT CONSTANTINE.

IN Chapter XXXI. of our sixth volume I told you how King Constantine of Greece played the traitor to his country, and, in the interests of his brother-in-law the Kaiser, practised every art of trickery and treachery against the Allies. They were very patient—too patient, many people thought—and as a consequence Constantine believed that he could go to any length and still retain his throne. When, on November 16, 1916, he ordered his troops to fire on the landing-parties of the Allies, it was clear that while he remained in power our forces at Salonika would be in dire peril.

Even this act of open enmity was forgiven. The Allies forced him to salute their flags, and thus do penance, but they still hesitated to remove him. In May 1917 he was as defiant as ever. Bands of irregular soldiers maintained by him and his friends threatened our lines of communication. The Greek General Staff gave lectures and wrote articles proving that we had failed in the West, and that the German submarines would soon bring us to our knees. The Royalist newspapers declared that the day would soon arrive when it would be safe for Greece to enter the war as an ally of Germany. Nevertheless, the Allies did not move, and Constantine and his "dark forces" still checked and thwarted their plans. It was clear, however, that the sands of their patience were rapidly running out.

On 7th June M. Jonnart was sent to Athens as High Commissioner of the Protecting Powers of Greece. He had a long conversation with M. Zaimis, the Greek Premier, and told him that the Allies meant to buy the crops of Thessaly, the granary of Greece, and distribute them fairly among all the Greek provinces. This step was to be taken because it was feared

that the crops would find their way into Germany by way of Bulgaria. There were ugly rumours abroad that the Royalists were prepared to burn the standing crops if they should be prevented from reaping them and handing them over to the enemy.

French troops were landed at Corinth, and a Franco-British column entered Thessaly to protect the crops. Meanwhile large numbers of Greeks had joined Venizelos. In some regions nine-tenths of the people had thrown in their lot with the national cause. Constantine, however, was still a stumbling block.

On Sunday, 10th June, M. Zaimis went on board a French cruiser lying off Athens, and met M. Jonnart, who told him that the Allies had decided that the King must resign. That day the Greek Prime Minister saw Constantine and broke the news to him. The pair tried to find a way by which the King might save his throne, and they parted not without hope. Next morning Zaimis again boarded the cruiser and tried to persuade M. Jonnart to give the King another chance. It was too late; he was told very firmly that Constantine must give up the throne within forty-eight hours.

By eleven o'clock he was back in Athens. He went straight to the palace, and informed the King of his fate. Constantine listened calmly, and then said, "I desire the Crown Council to be summoned." Zaimis, much distressed, left the room; and the King retired to his study, where, some minutes later, one of his aides-de-camp found him deep in a chair, his head bent on his hand, and thinking deeply. At 11.30 the members of the Council met.

When they were seated the King read to them the demands of the Allies, and when he came to the article which called for his resignation he turned towards them and waited for them to express their opinion. The leading pro-German half rose and said, "Impossible! It is impossible that—" The King stopped him, raised his hand, and said, "I have decided to accept."

The ministers left the Council Chamber with the air of doomed men. One of them, a former premier, under whose directions Fort Rupel had been handed over to the Bulgarians, was pale and shaking, and had to be helped into his motor car. Meanwhile the Allies sent out a notice that if the King

departed quietly and no riots occurred, the blockade would be raised and food would be distributed to the people. The news was received without tumult of any kind.

In the palace the King had gone to luncheon with the members of the royal family. The meal was taken in silence. As soon as it was over he told the company that he was to be forced to give up his throne, and that the Crown Prince, his eldest son, must abandon his rights. The Queen burst into tears, fell on a couch, and spoke no word. Well might she be overcome. She had been the evil genius of the King, and had brought her husband to ruin, just as another German princess had compassed the downfall of her husband, the Tsar.

Constantine and the royal family passed the night and the following day in the summer palace outside Athens. Many officials and high persons came to bid them farewell, and the King was deeply touched by their words. He said that his sacrifice would be for the good of the people. Next day he and the royal party left the palace unobserved, and made their way to the little fishing village of Oropos, on the Gulf of Eubœa, where the King's yacht lay. Constantine got slowly out of his car, and made his way to a motor launch in the presence of a small group of country folk and officials, including Zaimis, the Prime Minister.

He was pale, but was quite composed, and he took from the hand of a child a small bouquet thrust out to him. Some of the bystanders cheered quietly, and the peasants knelt on the jetty as the King and Queen passed them. Some of the court attendants wept as the boat carried the ex-sovereigns to their yacht.

In a proclamation to his people the King wrote :—

“ I am leaving my dear country with the Crown Prince, leaving my son Alexander on the throne. When far from Greece, the Queen and I will always preserve the same love for the Greek people. . . . In order that my bitter sacrifice for my country may not be in vain, I exhort you for love of God, for love of our country, and if you love me, to maintain perfect order and quiet discipline. . . . May God protect Greece.”

The new King referred to above was Constantine's second son. Born on August 1, 1893, he was barely twenty-four years of age when the duties of kingship were thrust upon him. His elder brother, Prince George of Greece, who was



Constantine's Farewell to Greece.

(By permission of The Daily Mail.)

Constantine left Greece on Thursday, 14th June, in the royal yacht *Sphacteria*, on which he embarked at Oropos, a little fishing village some forty miles north of Athens. "He arrived at eleven precisely, driving in an open car with his elder son, like him shorn of his rights and ordered to exile. Holding his tall figure upright, he walked to the little landing-place, saluting and shaking hands with all alike."

seven years older, was barred from the throne because of his strong pro-German sympathies. The new King swore to rule according to law; but raised doubts in the minds of the Allied peoples when, in his proclamation, he expressed his grief at being separated from his "well-beloved father," and announced that he intended "to follow the lines of his brilliant reign." However, down to the period when this volume closes, he had done nothing to make them regret that they had allowed him to succeed to the throne.

The people took the change quietly, and it was very clear that most of them had gradually been won over to the side of Venizelos, who, as you know, had raised an army to serve with the Allies. On 26th June we learned that Zaimis had resigned, and that Venizelos was to form a new Cabinet and preside over it as Prime Minister. He landed at the Piræus on 27th June, and was received with loud cheers by the Athenians. On the same day he took the oath of office, announced the names of his new ministers, and proceeded to drive the pro-Germans out of the public service. The great patriot, after taking his life in his hands and suffering manifold persecutions, had come into his own. From the first he had refused to consider the treaty with Serbia a "scrap of paper." He had risked all to preserve the honour of his country, and he had at last triumphed.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE BEADROLL OF BRITISH HEROISM.—I.

ONCE more I return to the inspiring task of recording those outstanding deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice which glorify the work of war. There was not a single hour of any day during the fierce fighting described in the foregoing pages which was without its act of supreme courage and devotion. Only a few of these deeds came to the notice of those in high places whose business it is to award honours and distinctions. Thousands of men who flung themselves into the breach and gladly risked life and limb that their fellows might advance, that their gains might be held, or that some stricken comrade might be rescued from lingering agony, did their gallant work unseen, and so received no reward except the greatest reward of all—the knowledge that they had not failed the land of their birth and pride in its hour of need.

In this and in the following chapter I propose to give you brief accounts of those soldiers and sailors who were awarded the Victoria Cross between the beginning of June and the end of July 1917. The list comprises the names of forty-eight heroes, thirteen of whom did not live to wear the coveted honour. No fewer than eight Australians and five Canadians are included in this glorious company.

MAJOR EDWARD ELMERS DELAVEL HENDERSON, North Staffordshire Regiment.

While acting as lieutenant-colonel in command of his battalion, Major Henderson was ordered to push forward and reinforce the troops holding two of our front-line trenches upon which the enemy was making very heavy counter-attacks. In several places the Germans had broken our line, and the



Dragging a captured German Field Gun into a new position in order to use it against the Enemy.
(From a painting by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

situation was very dangerous. The five hundred yards between the trenches held by the North Staffordshires and our front-line trenches were swept by machine-gun fire and by high-explosive shells which flung great columns of earth into the air. In order to encourage his men to advance into that zone of death, Major Henderson leaped on to the parapet of his trench; and though immediately shot through the arm, went forward alone. His men followed him, and though many of them fell during the perilous passage, a sufficient number reached the first-line trenches to bring the sorely beset defenders much-needed relief. A second time the gallant major was wounded, but he refused to fall out and hand over his command to another. Finally, he led a bayonet charge which drove off the attacking Germans. A third and a fourth time he was hit, and soon after was carried to the rear, where he died the death of a true hero.

MAJOR FREDERICK WILLIAM LUMSDEN, D.S.O., R.M.A.

I can best give you the story of Major Lumsden's fine feat in the words of a non-commissioned officer who shared the danger and glory of his exploit. "Our troops," he said, "had swooped down on the enemy with such suddenness that a battery of field guns was cut off. The enemy strove desperately to save these guns. They opened a furious fire on us, in spite of the fact that while doing so they were certain to kill their own gun teams. So hot was the fire that we thought it was certain death for any man to approach the guns. Major Lumsden came up and saw what was going on. He said that the guns had to be taken somehow. He organized a party with horses and tackle, and then went forward alone to give the men confidence. He was quickly followed. Quite close to us were enemy snipers who opened a hot fire and aimed again and again at the major and those who were with him. He took not the slightest heed of the bullets. He walked about rubbing shoulders, as it were, with death, and was just as cool as if it were all part of the day's work. Bullets were spitting and spluttering all round him as he moved about giving orders and adjusting the tackle. He must have had iron nerves to stand it.

"The first of the guns was limbered up, and the major gave the order to get away with it. Immediately the enemy brought a heavy fire to bear on the gun, and down went horses

and men. The major walked up, just as cool as ever, and helped to pick up some of the wounded.

"Another team came along and moved off with the gun. As they galloped out of range they were peppered right and left, and the major seemed to be in the thick of it. Nevertheless, he got the gun away safely, and then went back for the others. The snipers moved nearer and redoubled their efforts to prevent the pieces from being carried off. At this time they were not more than a hundred yards away, and their shots buzzed in the air like angry bees around the major and his comrades. The second gun was rushed out of danger, to the intense anger of the baffled snipers. In order to save the last four guns they tried to rush us, but they were beaten off. Major Lumsden himself covered the withdrawal of one of these guns, and kept the enemy at bay until it was well on its way to our lines."

I am sure you will all agree that no honour could be too great for the cool, gallant, and determined man, who thus carried off a battery under the very nose of the enemy.

MAJOR GEORGE CAMPBELL WHEELER, Gurkha Rifles, Indian Army.

Major Wheeler, accompanied by a native officer and eight men, carried out a remarkably daring raid. They crossed a river and, under a heavy shower of bombs, a hail of machine-gun bullets, and a tornado of artillery fire, rushed an enemy's trench. As soon as they gained a footing in it they were counter-attacked by a strong enemy party preceded by bombers. With a brother officer and three men, all with fixed bayonets, Major Wheeler pushed into the open, and he and his little command fought so stubbornly that the enemy was dispersed, and the trench so gallantly won was thus finally secured. Major Wheeler's prompt action in charging the enemy saved the situation. Although wounded, he remained at his post, directing his men in the work of strengthening the position and encouraging them to hold it until reinforcements arrived.

CAPTAIN THAIN WENDELL MACDOWELL, D.S.O., Canadian Infantry.

Captain MacDowell added his name to the proud roll by an exploit of such a daring and dashing character that even the writer of a boys' book of adventure would hesitate to ascribe it to his hero. An enemy strong point, armed with two machine guns, was holding up our forces, and was taking a very

heavy toll of our men. With the help of two runners Captain MacDowell set himself the almost impossible task of knocking out the machine gunners and capturing the position. In spite of great difficulties he succeeded, and not only seized the guns, but made prisoners of two German officers and seventy-five men. Three Canadians, you observe, were actually superior to twenty-five times that number of the enemy! If you were to come across an incident such as this in the course of a tale, you would call it a very tall story indeed; but truth is often stranger than fiction. For five days afterwards Captain MacDowell held on to the position which he had won. He was wounded in the hand, and the enemy's shells constantly fell around him and his comrades, but nothing could make them let go. At the close of five days of fierce struggle and heavy trial the three gallant Canadians were relieved by their battalion.

CAPTAIN JAMES ERNEST NEWLANDS, Australian Infantry.

On a former page I told you the story of Bullecourt, which will ever remain glorious in the military annals of Australia. In the course of a bitter struggle for this village Captain Newlands, on three separate occasions, showed the most remarkable bravery and devotion to duty. On the first occasion he led his company in a bombing attack, and when it suffered heavy casualties, rallied the remnants, and with them pushed on and seized the important position assigned to him. On the following night, when he was holding the captured position, he was very heavily counter-attacked; but so well did he resist, so careless was he of danger, and so skilfully did he use his reserves, that though driven out he managed to disperse the enemy and regain the position. On a later occasion, when the company on his left was overpowered and his men were threatened from the rear, he drove off a combined attack which was renewed again and again. Every time it failed, thanks to the splendid example which he set his men and the dogged courage which inspired them. The official record says: "The stand made by this officer was of the greatest importance, and produced far-reaching results."

CAPTAIN OSWALD AUSTIN REID, Liverpool Regiment and Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

Captain Reid was holding a small advanced post on the bank of a river opposite to the main body stationed on the other side. Between him and his battalion was a frail bridge

of pontoons. The enemy shelled these pontoons, and when they sank Captain Reid found himself cut off and swarms of Germans beginning to make fierce attacks upon him with bombs and machine guns. Repeated attempts to send relieving parties across the river failed. For thirty hours, however, Captain Reid held out, until his ammunition was almost exhausted. During the following night the bridge was repaired,

and troops crossed to his assistance. Thanks to the stubborn resistance of Captain Reid, a valuable post was retained.

FLIGHT COMMANDER CAPTAIN ALBERT BALL, D.S.O., M.C., Notts and Derby Regiment and Royal Flying Corps.



Flight Commander Captain Albert Ball,
D.S.O., M.C., V.C.

I shall now tell you the story of one of the youngest and most successful of our airmen. He was known as the "wonder boy" of the Royal Flying Corps. This name was given to him by the French, who were the first to tell us of his wonderful feats. The officers and men of the Royal Flying Corps have no desire to see

their names in the newspapers. They "do good by stealth and blush to find it fame." Captain Ball was the son of Alderman A. Ball, ex-mayor of Nottingham, and was described by a fellow-townsmen as a laughing schoolboy, small in stature, dark, clean-shaven, fresh complexioned, and always up to some prank. Though at the time of his death he was not twenty-one years of age, his name was known to every airman in Germany. The Hun fliers greatly admired him, and at the same time went in terror of him. In the year 1916 he brought down thirty enemy aeroplanes in single-handed fights, and during the first four months of 1917 added another thirteen to his record. He wore the Distinguished Service Order with two bars,

which means that he had really won the order three times, and also the Military Cross. The latter distinction was awarded to him for having attacked six enemy machines in one night when he was miles behind the German front-line trenches. He drove down two of them and beat off the others. On his return home Nottingham conferred upon him the freedom of the city. So you see that, though he had not yet reached man's estate, he was well known to fame both at home and abroad.

He was once asked if he was frightened when he went up for an aerial combat. "Yes," he said, "I am sometimes frightened. I don't want to be hit if I can help it. I realize the danger and try to avoid it. My favourite dodge is well known to the Huns. When I get to close quarters I generally pretend that I am going to attack from above. The Hun gets ready to fly up at me, and then I suddenly dive under his machine and fire a drum of cartridges into his petrol tank, and down he goes.

"To bring down a lot of Huns you have to be very patient and practically live in the air. Sometimes you may make ten flights in one day and never get one fight.

"On a few occasions I haven't had time to put my clothes on, and have gone up in my pyjamas. It was jolly cold, I can tell you. I can't pretend that I have ever brought down a machine when dressed like that.

"I remember once meeting a very fine Hun fighter. We tried all our dodges, but neither of us could get the position we wanted; so we kept on firing, without doing any damage, until our ammunition was gone. The fight lasted half an hour, and when we could not fire any more we both burst out laughing and flew together side by side for a little distance. He was a real sporting Hun, like Bolcke. I should have been sorry had I killed him, and I think he would have been sorry had he finished me."

After one of his exploits he received the following little note from the commander-in-chief: "Well done!—D. H."

A friend said that he was a most popular officer, and that he had never met a man who had become so successful in such a short time and had remained so modest and reliable. Before returning to France, at the end of April 1917, a little girl called at his father's house and gave him the figure of a black cat cut out of velvet. She begged him to fix it on the



Back to Blighty—nearin

(From painting by S. U)

This picture shows British soldiers crossing the Channel for a short leave at home. They have just arrived and are wearing cork jackets in case the vessel should be torpedoed by a lurking German submarine. It is one of the most important of tons of material without any serious hindrance from the enemy.



the Shores of Old England.

By permission of The Sphere.)

sighted the white cliffs of old England, and are raising a cheer. You notice that some of the men are the glories of our navy that it was able to pass to and fro across the Channel millions of men and millions

front of his aeroplane as a mascot. He promised to do so, and after his return to the front wrote home to say that it had brought him luck. He had a high opinion of the German airmen, and when a friend spoke scornfully of them he said: "They are decent chaps, who are doing their best for their country, just as I am."

After bringing down his fortieth victim he wrote: "I am getting tired of living to kill. I begin to feel like a murderer, but I feel that God is taking care of me." To his father he said, when home on leave for the last time: "They are sure to get me sooner or later. You have only to go up often enough."

Now let me tell you the story of some of his fights. Between April 25 and May 6, 1917, he took part in twenty-six aerial combats and destroyed eleven enemy machines. He also drove down several others. At daybreak one morning he set out for the enemy's lines. Shortly afterwards two albatrosses made for him, but the pilot of one of them recognized him and turned tail and fled. The other attempted to do so; but our hero opened fire, and sent him crashing to the earth in flames. Then he sailed on, and when over Cambrai was met by five enemy aeroplanes. He soared up to 13,000 feet, but the five machines soared up too, and managed to get between him and his own lines. The Huns now thought that they had trapped him. But he was not to be so easily caught. He made straight for the nearest enemy machine, brought it down by machine-gun fire, and then darted through the midst of the rest of them and returned safely to his aerodrome. The left wing of his machine was riddled with bullets.

On 5th May, while patrolling, he sighted two hostile craft, and as he was fairly low he flew away from them, climbing steadily. When the German aeroplanes were quite near his tail, he swerved sharply, slid underneath one of his opponents and turned on his machine gun, with the result that the German fell to the ground out of control. Then he turned to attack the second machine, which flew straight at him, with its gun going. Captain Ball awaited its onset, firing steadily. Just when the two machines appeared to be about to crash into each other, the enemy plane suddenly dropped like a stone. As no other hostile aircraft were in sight, Captain Ball dived down, and saw both German aeroplanes lying completely wrecked within four hundred yards of each other. He then flew homewards.

and as he did so fell in with two other enemy planes. He would gladly have engaged them, but he had no more ammunition; so reluctantly was forced to "put his nose down" and return to the aerodrome.

Next day he was out as usual, roving the sky for battle, when, at a height of about two miles, he came on four red albatross scouts of a new type. He dived straight into the middle of them, broke up the formation, then tried with success his usual trick. He slipped under the nearest machine and fired into its petrol tank until it dropped down out of control. This was enough for the other three albatrosses. They turned tail and fled.

On 7th May he went up for the last time along with a patrol squadron which engaged five enemy machines. One of his friends, whom we will call Captain X, destroyed one of these machines and returned in a fainting condition to his own lines, shot through the wrist. What happened to Captain Ball we do not know. He was reported missing, and on 3rd June news was received from the Germans that he had been killed on 7th May. The same day it was announced that the French Government had conferred upon him the Cross of Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.

So perished a gallant young hero, the bravest, most skilful, and most daring airman of his time. His life was very brief, but it was brimful of those "crowded hours of glorious strife" which the poet tells us are "worth an age without a name." Peace to the ashes of this "wonder boy!"

LIEUTENANT FREDERICK MAURICE WATSON HARVEY, Canadian Forces.

This officer was awarded the Victoria Cross for a superb piece of heroism which resulted in the capture of an important position. While his regiment was attacking a village a number of the enemy ran forward to a wired trench just in front of the place and opened rapid rifle and machine-gun fire on the advancing Canadians. Many of them fell, and it was clear that no progress could be made until the machine gun was put out of action. At this critical moment, while the Germans were keeping up an intense fire, Lieutenant Harvey dashed forward towards the enemy's trench. He leaped the wire, sprang into the trench, shot the machine gunner, and captured the gun. His men were then able to advance and clear the village.

LIEUTENANT DONALD MACINTOSH, Seaforth Highlanders.

Lieutenant Macintosh was the only son of Colonel Donald Macintosh of Glasgow. He was educated at Fettes, and was only twenty-one when he fell on the field of honour, after displaying the utmost bravery and self-sacrifice. A sergeant of his regiment wrote as follows :—

“ Without exception, Lieutenant Macintosh was the bravest officer who ever led men into action. But for him we should have been wiped out that day (April 11, 1917). As soon as we went over the top it began to rain shells, and as for machine-gun bullets, there were enough flying around to give every man of us a round dozen and still leave plenty for the next comers. We had just got into our stride when the lieutenant, who now commanded the company, was hit. He went down, and the men hesitated ; but from where he lay he shouted, ‘ Never mind, Seaforths, keep it up.’ Then he got on to his feet, and, though in great pain, persisted in hobbling towards the position which we had to take. He led us straight at the enemy parapet, and with the assistance of two privates got into the trench. The enemy were forced back, but returned to the attack later, driving before them a company of ours which had lost its officers and was out of hand. The lieutenant rallied them, and under his leadership they recovered their confidence and repelled repeated counter-attacks. Then the lieutenant was hit again, and lay unconscious for a few minutes. The men dragged him to safety, and propped him up against a dug-out, from which position he directed the operations. Soon he saw that if the line was to be held a part of the enemy's trench must be seized. Limping painfully, he led a file of men against the post which it was necessary to rush. It was the strangest sight you ever saw. A doubly wounded man, with the nervous twitching of his face telling the agony he was enduring, toiling painfully along, and encouraging his men as he went. The little band rushed the position, and drove out of it three times their own number of the enemy. It was in this moment of success that Lieutenant Macintosh fell. He tried to get up again, but was too weak from loss of blood to do so. He would not hear of any of us assisting him until the position was safe. Only when there was no fear of the enemy winning back the ground which we had gained did he consent to be moved. He died later. He was one of the bravest. The men would have followed

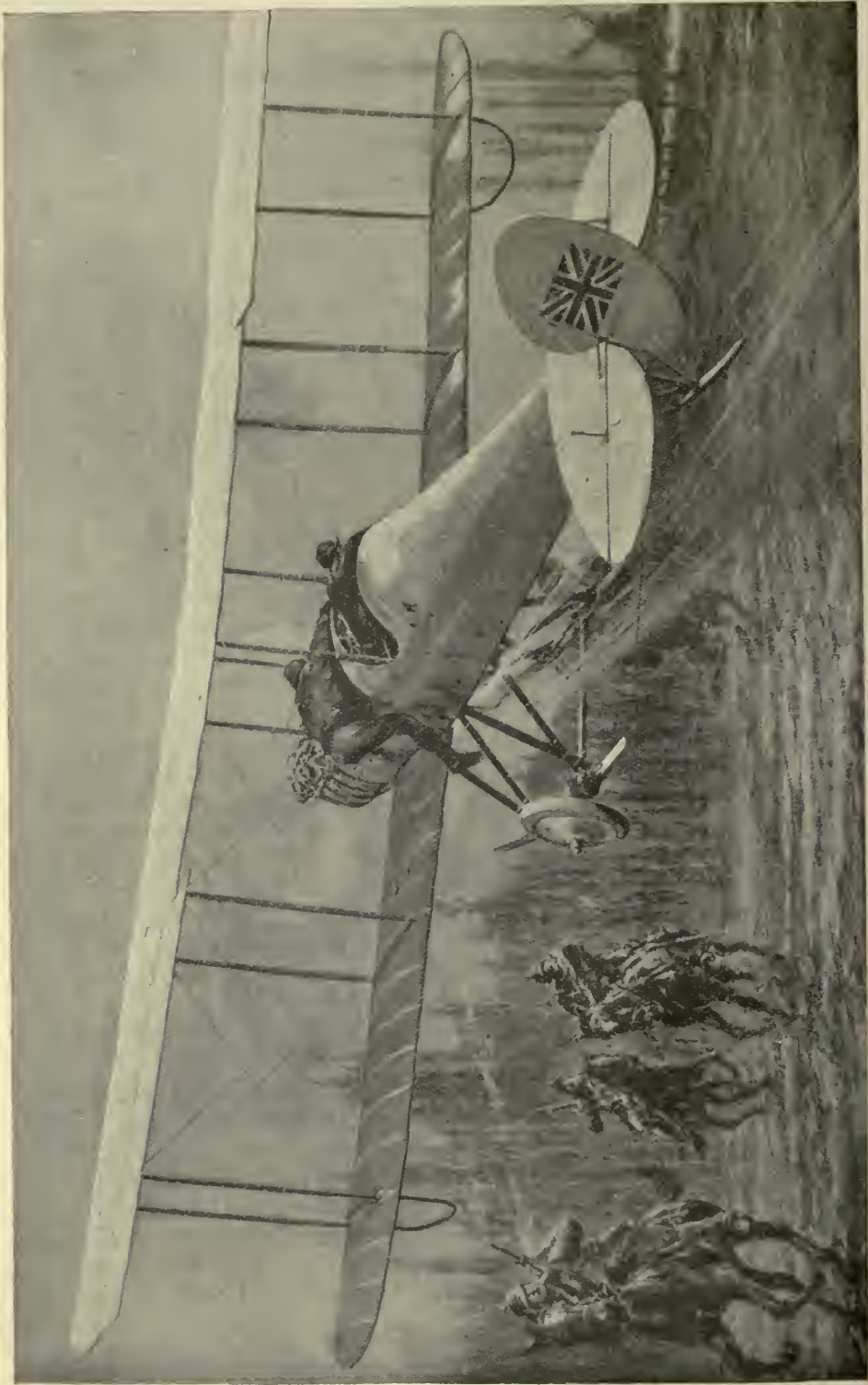
him anywhere at any time. He was always thinking of them, and doing all that he could to make things easy for them."

LIEUTENANT FRANK HUBERT M'NAMARA, Australian Forces R.F.C.

I am sure that by this time you have come to the conclusion that the great romance of modern war lies in the air. Let me tell you the story of how an airman most gallantly rescued a comrade in distress. While one of our air squadrons was bombing a train behind the enemy's lines, a British pilot was forced to land. As he reached the ground, Lieutenant M'Namara looked down from his machine and saw enemy cavalry advancing to take the pilot prisoner. At once he determined to try to save his brother officer. He descended, and as he did so enemy bullets whizzed about him. One of them severely wounded him in the thigh. He landed about two hundred yards from the damaged machine, and the stranded pilot at once ran to him and climbed in. An attempt was made to rise, but the lieutenant discovered that, owing to his disabled leg, he could not keep his machine straight. It turned over, and flung out the two men. All the time the enemy's horse-men were drawing nearer and nearer. The airmen picked themselves up, and having set fire to the machine, made their way as rapidly as possible to the damaged machine, into which they climbed. Happily, they were able to start it and to rise out of range just as the Germans reached the spot. Finally, Lieutenant M'Namara, though very weak from loss of blood, flew the machine for seventy miles back to the aerodrome, and both officers descended in safety. For this very gallant rescue, made in the very difficult circumstances which I have described, Lieutenant M'Namara received the highest award of valour.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT EDWIN PHILLIPS, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

For the first time in this chapter I am able to give you an account of a hero who won the Cross for saving life, not for destroying it. A counter-attack had been ordered, and the Warwicks went forward, led by their colonel. He fell, and lay mortally wounded in the open. Nothing could be done for him at the moment ; but when the counter-attack succeeded and the position was won, Lieutenant Phillips went out in the midst of the most intense fire to his assistance. The lieutenant



Escaping from a German Patrol.

This picture illustrates the exploit related on page 317, which won Lieutenant M'Namara, an Australian aviator, the Victoria Cross.

knew that there was very little chance that he would ever return alive, but the fear of death did not deter him. After a time, with the help of a comrade, he succeeded in bringing in his colonel. This was but one of many brave deeds which he did that day.

LIEUTENANT CHARLES POPE, Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force.

Lieutenant Pope was placed in command of a very important advanced post in the sector held by his battalion, and was instructed to hold it at all costs. The enemy, in vastly superior numbers, advanced upon the post and surrounded it. The gallant Australian and his equally gallant comrades fought with the utmost determination, and soon found that their ammunition was nearly exhausted. Men were sent back for more; but before they could return the situation became desperate. Then Lieutenant Pope called upon his comrades, and together the little band charged right into the mass of the enemy, where they fought and fell almost to the last man. "By his sacrifice Lieutenant Pope not only inflicted heavy loss on the enemy, but obeyed his order to hold the position to the last. His body, together with those of most of his men, was found in close proximity with eighty enemy dead—a sure proof of the gallant resistance which had been made."

SECOND LIEUTENANT REGINALD LEONARD HAINE, Honourable Artillery Company.

Before the war Second Lieutenant Haine was an articled pupil with a firm of accountants in London. He was educated at the County School, Richmond, where he lived, and was gazetted second lieutenant in December 1916, after having served abroad with his battalion since September 1914. Let me tell you how he came to win the coveted cross. Our troops were holding a sharp salient which was repeatedly attacked by the enemy. Had the salient been captured the garrison would have been surrounded and either destroyed or forced to surrender. The enemy attacked from a strong point in the neighbourhood, and came on again and again. Second Lieutenant Haine at once formed a block on his trench, and for the whole of the following night was engaged in beating back the most determined efforts of the enemy. On the following morning he reorganized his men, and attacked and captured the strong point. By doing so he forced back the enemy for several

hundred yards, and thus relieved the situation. "Throughout these operations this officer's superb courage, quick decision, and sound judgment were beyond praise, and it was his splendid personal example which inspired his men to continue their efforts during more than thirty hours of continuous fighting."

SECOND LIEUTENANT ALFRED OLIVER POLLARD, M.C., Honourable Artillery Company.

Another young Surrey man belonging to the same fine old volunteer corps also won the Victoria Cross, and was gazetted at the same time. When the war began he was a clerk in a London Insurance Company. He went to France with his regiment in September 1914 as a sergeant, and in September 1915 was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for bravery at Ypres. In January 1916 he received his commission, and soon afterwards won the Military Cross and a bar. He had thus made a reputation as a gallant soldier before he received the crowning honour. The troops of various units on the left of his battalion had suffered severely from shell fire, and had become disorganized. Perceiving this, the enemy pressed his attacks with very large numbers, and drove back our men in confusion. The situation was very serious, and might have meant a retirement all along the line. Lieutenant Pollard at once sprang forward, and with only four men started a bombing counter-attack, which was so successful that it broke up the enemy, "stopped the rot," and enabled his company to regain all the ground that had been lost. Further, the enemy was forced to withdraw, and in doing so he lost many men. I am sure that you cannot but admire the force of will, dash, and presence of mind of this gallant officer. He "infused courage into every man who saw him." Of such stuff are heroes made.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE BEADROLL OF BRITISH HEROISM.—II.

SERGEANT FREDERICK CHARLES BOOTH, South African Forces and Rhodesia Native Regiment.

The story of how Sergeant Booth won the Victoria Cross carries us far from Flanders and North France to the great spreading wildernesses of German East Africa. An attack was being made by native troops on an enemy position in the midst of thick bush, and our men were driven back by heavy rifle fire. One of them, dangerously wounded, lay out in the open, and ran the risk of falling into the cruel hands of the German native levies. Sergeant Booth, seeing the poor fellow's plight, went forward alone, and brought him in. Later on he rallied his natives, and led them to the attack once more. The official record says: "This N.C.O. has on many previous occasions displayed the greatest bravery, coolness, and resource in action, and has set a splendid example of pluck, endurance, and determination."

SERGEANT HARRY CATOR, East Surrey Regiment.

The first line of the enemy's system of trenches had been captured, and Sergeant Cator's platoon was busily engaged in putting the position into a defensive condition. While the men were working, an enemy machine gun and enemy riflemen caused many casualties among them. The sergeant saw that desperate measures were necessary. With one man he advanced across the open, in full view of the enemy and under heavy fire. His comrade was killed almost immediately, but he pushed on. Happily he managed to pick up a Lewis gun and some drums of ammunition on the way, and thus armed he reached the northern end of the enemy's trench, and began to ply his gun

with excellent effect. Meanwhile one of our bombing parties was seen to be held up by a machine gun. Sergeant Cator crept forward to a position from which he could sight this gun. He opened fire, and killed the whole team, including the officer, whose papers he brought in. Then he turned his attention once more to the trench, the end of which he held with his Lewis gun. Thanks to his splendid courage and resource, our bombing party was able to work along the trench and capture 100 prisoners and five machine guns.

SERGEANT WILLIAM ORMSBY, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

While acting as company sergeant-major, this hero was largely responsible for the capture of an important village. Throughout the attack he set a fine example to his men by the cool, undaunted manner in which he faced heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. After clearing the village he pushed on, and drove many snipers out of positions further forward. When the only surviving officer was wounded, he took command of the company, and led it on for four hundred yards to a new position in which he resisted all enemy attacks until he was relieved. The sergeant proved himself a born leader, and by his influence and example greatly inspired his men.

SERGEANT JOHN WOODS WHITTLE, Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force.

The platoon which Sergeant Whittle commanded was holding a small advanced trench. The Germans suddenly turned their heavy guns upon it, and deluged it with fire. Then they advanced, and by sheer weight of numbers forced the defenders to withdraw. The sergeant, however, went to and fro collecting all sorts of stray men, and at their head charged the interlopers and flung them from the trench. On another occasion the enemy had broken through the left of our line. The sergeant's little command was suffering heavily, but his splendid coolness kept them well in hand. Glancing out of the trench, he saw the enemy bringing up a machine gun to enfilade his position. He knew that if the gun opened fire he and his men would be done for. At once he rushed out alone, and flung bombs at the gun crew with such sure aim that he killed the whole of them. Then he seized the gun and carried it triumphantly into his trench. I am sure you will agree that he had worthily won the Victoria Cross twice over.



"One, Two, Three"—waiting for the Exact Moment at which to throw the Bomb.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

This modern grenadier is holding a pine-apple bomb in his right hand. A little smoke indicates that it is fully alive and working, and will in a moment or two explode. If it is thrown too soon it may be picked up by the enemy and hurled back.

LANCE-SERGEANT ELLIS WELWOOD SIFTON, Canadian Infantry Battalion.

An almost similar act of daring and devotion was done by Lance-Sergeant Sifton. During an attack on enemy trenches his company was held up by the fire of a machine gun. Men were falling fast and thick, when the sergeant charged the gun single-handed and killed the crew. Shortly afterwards a small party of the enemy advanced down the trench. Again the sergeant sprang into the breach and held them off till our men had completely captured the position. While engaged in this gallant work he was killed, to the great sorrow of his comrades, who recognized that they owed their lives and the success of their operation to his superb valour.

LANCE-SERGEANT THOMAS STEELE, Seaforth Highlanders.

The story of how Sergeant Steele won the Cross was well told by a comrade who was wounded in the first stage of the fight. "We had just made ourselves comfortable in the captured position when the enemy attacked and tried to shift us. They had at least six men for every one of ours, and, moreover, they were fresh, while we were a bit fagged. Before the first onslaught our chaps recoiled, and the enemy pressed on, thinking that he was victorious. Steele was along the trench putting things right when the attack developed. He came up to my gun team, which had been wiped out except one man. He saw that the enemy rush had to be stopped at all costs. With the one unwounded man he went forward with the gun. They got it into position, and set it going full blast at the enemy.

"The Boches tried to rush the gun; but the sergeant stuck to his post, and drove them back every time. They rained bombs on him, and their snipers tried to pick him off; but he didn't seem to mind the least bit. His plucky act saved the day, for our chaps got back their confidence, and began to rally all over the place. In a very short time other machine guns were brought up; and the enemy was thrown back. There is no doubt that by holding the whole of the enemy force in check he saved the line, and for that alone he earned the Cross.

"He got a few hours' rest, and while he was taking it easy in a captured dug-out with some of the wounded, the Boches renewed their attack. It was one of the most furious I have ever seen, and it was not surprising that our men began to waver. Steele ran out among them, and called on them to

remember that Highlanders never gave way like that. This steadied our chaps. They gradually got together again, and under his leadership stopped the enemy's advance. Not content with that, Steele led his men forward, and, after a hard fight, the enemy was driven out of the trench altogether.

"It was at this period that he was wounded. He had led his party along the trench for about a hundred yards or so, when the enemy, who had been retiring, suddenly turned at bay and made a furious rush at us. With a cry of 'Now, Sea-forths, let them have it hot!' he sprang forward to meet the new attack. The men replied with a cheer, and dashed after him. The sergeant was hit. He fell, but quickly got on his feet again, and continued to run towards the foe. He couldn't keep it up. He lay down by the side of the trench, and from there directed the operations. The men were very angry when they saw Steele fall, and vowed vengeance. They surged forward, and nothing could stop them. The enemy attack was smashed before it could develop. The fight raged for hours after that; but Sergeant Steele had the satisfaction of knowing that his leadership had saved the day once more."

CORPORAL JOHN CUNNINGHAM, Leinster Regiment.

This gallant Irishman was in command of a Lewis gun section on the most exposed flank of our attack. The enemy managed to enfilade him and his crew, and nearly all of them were killed or wounded. He himself was hit, but he continued to go forward, and almost alone reached his objective with his gun. In spite of much opposition he got it into action, and made excellent practice. A party of twenty of the enemy counter-attacked him, but he held them back until he had exhausted all his ammunition. Even then he would not retire, but, in full view of the enemy, began hurling bombs at them. He was wounded again, and fell, but picked himself up, and continued to fight single-handed until he had no more bombs. He then made his way back to our lines with a fractured arm and other wounds, from the effects of which he afterwards died. The official record says: "There is little doubt that the superb courage of this N.C.O. cleared up a most critical situation on the left flank of the attack."

CORPORAL GEORGE JARRATT, Royal Fusiliers.

Corporal Jarratt is numbered with that glorious company of heroes who freely gave their lives for others. He had been



In Billets in a Farmhouse of Northern France—1917.
(From a drawing by S. Ugo. By permission of *The Sphere*.)

taken prisoner along with some wounded men, and had been placed under guard in a dug-out. The same evening the enemy were driven back by our troops, who began throwing bombs into the dug-outs. One of these bombs fell into the refuge where Corporal Jarratt and the wounded men lay. Without a moment's hesitation he placed both feet on the bomb, which exploded and blew off both his legs. The wounded were afterwards removed safely to our lines, but Corporal Jarratt died on the way. He had sacrificed himself for his wounded comrades, and

“So espoused to death, with blood he sealed
A testament of noble-ending love.”

LANCE-CORPORAL THOMAS BRYAN, Northumberland Fusiliers.

Lance-Corporal Bryan won the soldier's proudest decoration by stalking a machine gun which was holding up an advance. No forward movement was possible until it was rendered incapable of further mischief. Though wounded, Lance-Corporal Bryan set off alone to do the deed. With great skill he made his way silently and unperceived along a communication trench and approached the gun from behind. With a bomb he killed two of the team, and the rest abandoned the gun. The corporal's skill and gallantry enabled the advance to proceed and the second objective to be won.

PRIVATE MICHAEL HEAVISIDE, Durham Light Infantry.

While this hero's battalion was holding a block in the line, a wounded man was seen in a shell-hole, some sixty yards in advance of our position and some forty yards from the enemy. The poor fellow was making signals of distress, and was holding up an empty water bottle. Owing to snipers and machine-gun fire, it was impossible to send out a stretcher party to him during daylight; nevertheless, Private Heaviside at once volunteered to carry water and food to the wounded man. He crawled out, and though fired at all the way, managed to reach the sufferer, whom he found to be almost mad with thirst. He had been out in the open for four days and three nights, and would certainly have died had not water been brought to him. Heaviside remained with the wounded man until dark, when, with the assistance of two comrades, he brought him in safely.

PRIVATE JORGAN CHRISTIAN JENSEN, Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force.

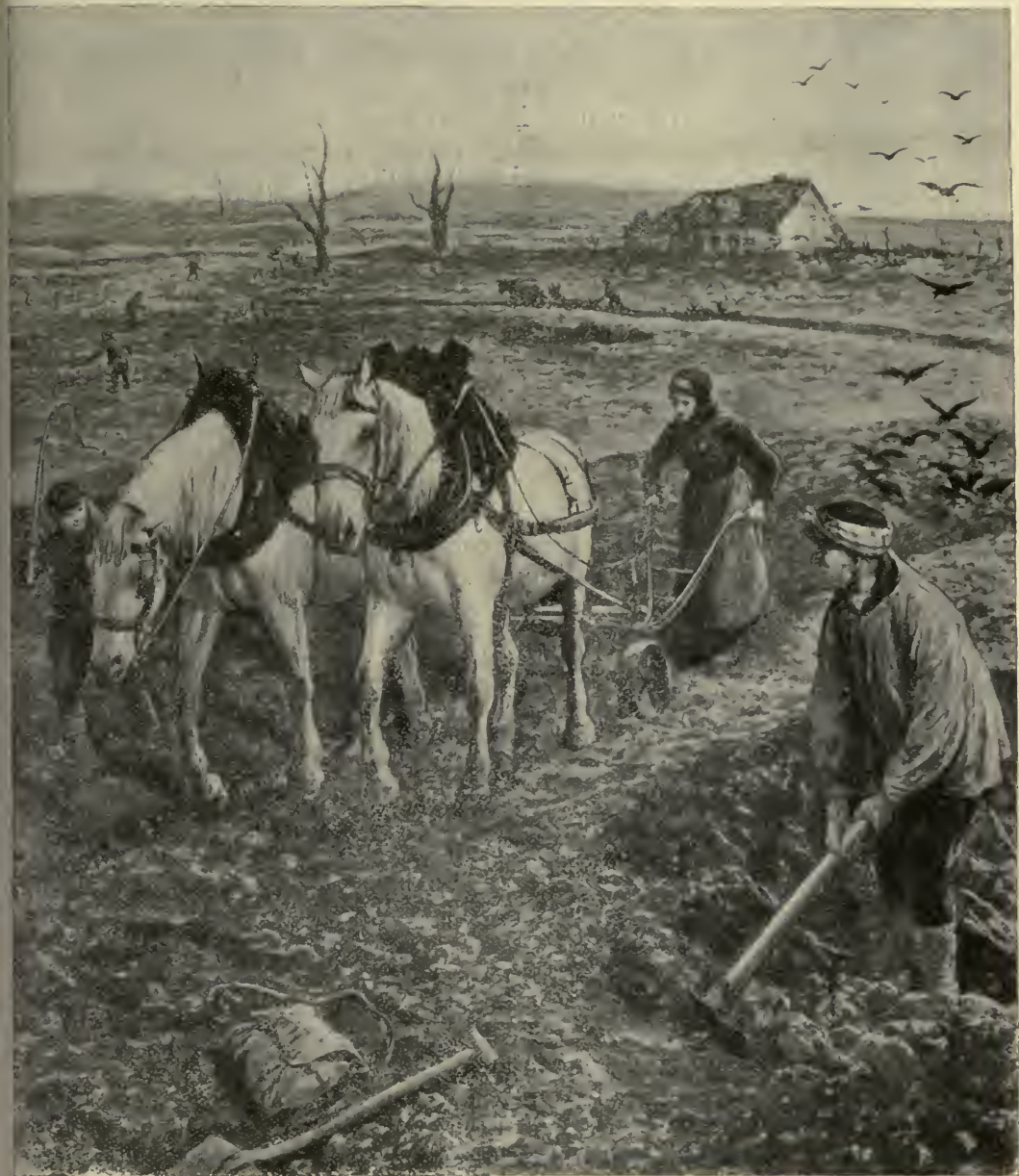
Some forty-five of the enemy with a machine gun were holding a barricade. Jensen with five comrades attacked the barricade in the most determined fashion. One of his party shot the gunner, and Jensen, single-handed, rushed the post and threw in a bomb. He had a second bomb in his other hand and a third in his pocket. With the disengaged hand he took the bomb from his pocket, drew the pin with his teeth, and thus threatened the enemy with two bombs, at the same time telling them that they were surrounded. At this they surrendered. Then he sent one of his prisoners to a neighbouring enemy party, ordering them to surrender as well. They did so, but by some mistake were fired upon by our troops; whereupon Jensen, utterly regardless of personal danger, stood on the parapet, and by waving his helmet signalled back to our men to cease firing. Afterwards he sent his prisoners back to the cage. You cannot but admire the wonderful bravery and determination of this fearless Australian.

PRIVATE THOMAS JAMES BEDE KENNY, Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force.

Frequently in these pages you have read accounts of men who by a desperate dash managed to put out of action a machine gun which was barring the way and taking heavy toll of our men. It was an exploit of this kind which won Private Kenny the premier decoration. An enemy strong point was holding up the attack, and our men were falling rapidly. Private Kenny dashed alone towards the enemy's position, killed a man who tried to stop him, bombed the post, captured the machine-gun crew, slew an officer who showed fight, and seized the gun. All this he did in the course of a minute or two, and thus enabled his platoon to occupy a position of great local importance.

PRIVATE WILLIAM JOHNSTONE MILNE, Canadian Infantry Battalion.

Before emigrating to Canada, Private Milne was a farm worker at Herdshell, Newmains. He enlisted at Moose Jaw in September 1915, and had been nearly a year at the front when he performed, at the cost of his life, the very gallant deed which placed his name on the beadroll of British heroes. As he and his comrades approached the front line of German



Back to the Land.

(By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

This picture shows you French peasants at work ploughing the shell-riven ground from which the Germans have been forced in retreat. A woman is ploughing with a pair of horses in the foreground, and near to her an old man is filling up a shell hole. In the background a man is seen ploughing with a yoke of oxen, and boys are removing and rolling up the barbed wire of broken entanglements. The whole countryside is a picture of despair, but the French peasants are so patient and hard-working that before long their fields will be ploughed and sown. Many years, however, must elapse before the once-smiling countryside resumes its former aspect.

trenches, he observed a machine gun which was causing many casualties amongst our men. He crawled on hands and knees towards it, and when he arrived within range threw bombs which killed the crew and enabled him to capture the gun. When the line re-formed to advance against the support trenches, he saw another machine gun which was working similar havoc. Again he crawled towards it, and once more succeeded in putting the crew out of action and seizing their weapon. Shortly afterwards he was killed. The official record says, "His wonderful bravery and resource on these two occasions undoubtedly saved the lives of many of his comrades."

PRIVATE ERNEST SYKES, Northumberland Fusiliers.

Private Sykes was one of those who won everlasting fame by saving the lives of wounded comrades. During an attack, when the enemy by fierce gunfire held up our troops some 350 yards in front of our lines, Private Sykes went to and fro through the zone of death and brought in four wounded men. He made a fifth journey under conditions which promised certain death, and calmly set to work bandaging those who were too severely injured to be moved. "These gallant actions," says the official record, "were performed under incessant machine-gun and rifle fire, and with an utter contempt of danger."

PRIVATE HORACE WALLER, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

Private Waller and his party had formed a block in the enemy's line. A very violent counter-attack was made on them, and though five of the defenders were killed, our hero continued to throw bombs for more than an hour, and finally drove off the enemy. The same evening another attack was made on the survivors, and all fell but Waller, who held the post by himself for half an hour, until he fell mortally wounded. "Throughout the engagement he showed the utmost valour, and it was due to his determination that the attacks on the important post were repulsed."

LIEUTENANT RUPERT VANCE MOON, Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force.

Lieutenant Moon was ordered to advance against a position beyond an enemy's trench, then to capture the trench from the rear and join in a further assault on a strong point some distance

ahead. He was wounded in the first advance, but captured the advanced position. Then he led his men against the trench, and in doing so was a second time wounded and for a brief time put out of action. He soon recovered, and then so inspired and encouraged his men that the trench was captured. With the survivors he pushed on to join in the general attack. Once more he was wounded, but the attack was pressed home and the strong point was captured. While it was being placed in a condition of defence he was wounded a fourth time. Then and only then did he consent to retire. By his glorious pluck and determination he had helped to overcome superior numbers, had safeguarded the flank of the attack, and had captured many prisoners and machine guns.

CAPTAIN DAVID PHILIP HIRSCH, Yorkshire Regiment.

On the way to the position which his company was ordered to take, Captain Hirsch was twice wounded; nevertheless he pushed on at the head of his men. When the position was captured, he twice returned over fire-swept slopes to satisfy himself that his flank was being properly defended. So intense was the machine-gun fire that his men were inclined to waver. To and fro he went from one part of the line to another, encouraging them to dig with all their might and hold their position like true Britons. To steady them and to give them confidence, especially when a fierce counter-attack was made upon them, he stood on the parapet fully exposed to the fire of the enemy. Thus standing up clear in the face of the foe he was an easy mark, and before long he fell mortally wounded. The official report thus concludes: "His conduct throughout was a magnificent example of the greatest devotion to duty."

LIEUTENANT JOHN HARRISON, M.C., East Yorkshire Regiment.

Before the war Lieutenant Harrison was an assistant master at Lime Street Elementary School, Hull, of which city he was a native. He was greatly admired by his scholars, not only because he was an excellent teacher, but because he played wing three-quarter back for the Hull Northern Union Club, and proved himself a record scorer. In November 1915, at the age of twenty-four, he joined the Inns of Court O.T.C., and was given a commission in August 1916.

During a big attack on May 3, 1917, he was ordered to advance against a dark wood. Night had settled down, and

the smoke from the enemy barrage and from our own still further obscured the view. In these circumstances it was impossible to see when our artillery fire lifted off the enemy's front line. Nevertheless Lieutenant Harrison led his company against a German trench, but was driven back by heavy rifle and machine-gun fire. Nothing daunted, he reorganized his command as best he could in No Man's Land, and again in thick darkness advanced against the position which had defied him. Again he and his men were met with terrific fire, and again he had no success. Then turning round, he made a dash all by himself against a machine gun which was holding up his advance, and strove with all his might to knock it out and thus save the lives of his followers. What happened to him we do not know. He was reported "missing, believed killed." "His self-sacrifice and absolute disregard of danger set an inspiring example to all."

SERGEANT DONALD FORRESTER BROWN, Infantry Battalion, New Zealand Forces.

During an attack Sergeant Brown's company came under heavy machine-gun fire, and suffered severe casualties both in officers and in men. Along with a comrade he pushed forward to within thirty yards of the gun that was doing the mischief and hurled bombs at it. Four of the crew were killed, and the gun was captured. Then the advance proceeded, but shortly afterwards was held up again by another machine gun. Sergeant Brown and his comrade repeated their former exploit, rushed the gun and killed the crew. When the second position was won the company came under very heavy shell fire which tried it greatly. Sergeant Brown's contempt for danger and his remarkable coolness inspired his men, and they held on. On another occasion he attacked a machine gun single-handed, with the same success. Later on, while sniping the retreating enemy, this very gallant soldier was killed.

SERGEANT WILLIAM GOSLING, Royal Field Artillery.

Sergeant Gosling was in charge of a trench mortar which was firing bombs at the enemy. Owing to a faulty cartridge, one of the bombs fell ten yards away. Its explosion would certainly have killed or wounded all within reach. In a moment Sergeant Gosling sprang out of the trench, lifted the nose of the bomb which had sunk into the ground, unscrewed the fuse, and threw it to a distance, where it immediately ex-

ploded. "This very gallant and prompt action undoubtedly saved the lives of the whole detachment."

ACTING-LIEUTENANT WILLIAM EDWARD SANDERS, R.N.R.,
LIEUTENANT NEIL STUART, D.S.O., R.N.R.; and SEAMAN
WILLIAM WILLIAMS, R.N.R.

Two naval officers and a seaman were rewarded with the Victoria Cross during the months of June and July 1917. We know nothing of the exploit which won Lieutenant Sanders this high distinction. He is a "mystery V.C.," and we shall have to wait for his story until the end of the war. The official record only tells us that the honour was awarded "in recognition of his conspicuous gallantry, consummate coolness and skill in command of one of H.M. ships in action."

All we know about the heroism of Lieutenant Neil Stuart and Seaman Williams is that they were selected for the high honour by the officers and ship's company respectively in recognition of "services in action with an enemy submarine."

LANCE-CORPORAL WALTER RICHARD PARKER, Royal Marine Light Infantry, Royal Naval Division.

Lance-Corporal Parker's honour takes us back to our "splendid failure" at Gallipoli. On the night of April 30-May 1, 1915, a message asking for ammunition, water, and medical stores was received from an isolated fire trench at Gaba Tepe. A party of non-commissioned officers and men was detailed for the purpose, and, in response to a call for a volunteer from among the stretcher-bearers, Parker at once came forward. During the previous three days, while in charge of the battalion stretcher-bearers, he had shown remarkable courage and energy under heavy fire. It was no easy task which these devoted men were about to undertake. Several parties had tried to reach the fire-trench, but had failed with heavy loss. Four hundred yards of open ground swept by rifle-fire had to be crossed, and every man who showed himself was a mark for a hundred sharpshooters. It was already daylight when the party emerged from shelter. At once one of the men fell wounded. Parker organized a stretcher party and brought him in. Then along with the water and ammunition carriers he began the passage of the death zone. All his comrades were shot down, and he alone succeeded in reaching the trench. Without delay he set to work to dress the wounds of the stricken, and all through the day showed extreme courage and great

coolness in very trying circumstances. Finally the trench had to be abandoned, and during the retirement Parker did heroic work. He helped to remove and attend to the wounded, and while doing so was badly hit.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT GRIERSON COMBE, Canadian Infantry Battalion.

During an attack the enemy placed a barrage behind the trench against which Lieutenant Combe was leading his men. So hot was the fire that the men hesitated. Lieutenant Combe at once rallied them, and pushing on at their head reached the trench with only five followers. Then with great coolness and courage he began bombing the enemy and inflicting heavy loss upon them. Afterwards he collected small groups of men, and with them captured the trench and eighty prisoners. He repeatedly charged the enemy and drove them before him, but while leading his bombers was killed by a sniper. "His conduct inspired all ranks, and it was entirely due to his magnificent courage that the position was carried, secured, and held."

COMPANY SERGEANT-MAJOR EDWARD BROOKS, Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry.

During a raid on the enemy's trenches Sergeant Brooks, who was in the second wave, saw that the front wave was checked by an enemy machine gun. Quite regardless of the risk, he rushed forward against the gun, killing one of the gunners with his revolver and bayoneting another. The remainder of the gun's crew then made off, leaving the gun in his possession. He at once turned it on the retreating Germans, and when they were out of range carried the weapon back to his own lines. By his courage and resource he saved many lives and greatly added to the success of the operation.

SERGEANT ALBERT WHITE, South Wales Borderers.

Prior to an attack the position of a machine gun which was likely to hold up the advance had been spied out. Sergeant White determined to put it out of action, and without a thought of the risk involved dashed ahead of his company. He was within a few yards of the gun when he fell riddled with bullets. Though he did not succeed in capturing the weapon, he willingly sacrificed his life in the hope of making the advance easier for his comrades.

CORPORAL EDWARD FOSTER, East Surrey Regiment.

Again a captor of machine guns appears in our record.



The Runner.

(From the painting by W. W. Wollen. By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

“His fearlessness and determination to deliver his message at any cost proved of the greatest value to his battalion at a critical period.”

Corporal Foster, who was in charge of two Lewis guns, took part in an attack on a portion of a village in which two enemy machine guns were entrenched and strongly covered by wire entanglements. The corporal managed to enter the trench and engage the enemy guns, but shortly afterwards the enemy captured one of his guns. With reckless courage he ran forward, and by bombing the enemy recovered it. Then with both guns at work he killed the crews of the machine guns and took possession of their weapons. In this way he enabled the advance to proceed successfully.

CORPORAL GEORGE JULIAN HOWELL, Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force.

Seeing that a party of the enemy was likely to outflank his battalion, Corporal Howell, without waiting for orders, climbed on to the top of the parapet, and though all alone and exposed to heavy fire, proceeded to bomb the enemy and press them back along the trench. When he had used up all his bombs he took to the bayonet, and continued his attack until he fell severely wounded.

LANCE-CORPORAL JAMES WELCH, Royal Berkshire Regiment.

Lance-Corporal Welch was a machine gunner. On entering an enemy trench he killed a man after a severe hand-to-hand struggle, and then, armed only with an empty revolver, chased four others across the open, and captured them. Having thus begun the day's work, he handled his gun with the utmost fearlessness, and more than once went out into the open, fully exposed to heavy fire at short range, to search for and to collect ammunition and spare parts in order to keep his gun in action. For five hours he maintained a hot fire, and only desisted when he was wounded by a shell. Throughout the engagement he showed splendid valour and resource.

PRIVATE TOM DRESSER, Yorkshire Regiment.

Private Dresser was a runner who had to convey an important message from battalion headquarters to the front line of trenches. Twice on the journey he was badly wounded, but in spite of the great pain which he suffered, he pushed on, and delivered his message, after which he fell exhausted. "His fearlessness and determination to deliver his message at any cost proved of the greatest value to his battalion at a critical period."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BEADROLL OF BRITISH HEROISM.—III.

PPRIVATE JACK WHITE, Royal Lancaster Regiment. Private White was a signaller on board a pontoon which was attempting to cross a river. By the time the pontoon reached mid-stream every one of his companions was either dead or wounded, and it was impossible for him to control the clumsy craft without assistance. He promptly made fast a telephone wire to it, jumped overboard, and towed it to shore. By so doing he saved an officer's life, and brought to land the rifles and equipment of the other men who lay dead or dying in the pontoon.

CAPTAIN ARTHUR HENDERSON, M.C., Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

On page 214 of this volume I told you that parties of our troops were cut off by the enemy, and that they fought and died almost to the last man. A most heroic stand was made by men of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who after a deadly struggle against great odds were able to beat off the enemy and escape. The hero of this fight was Captain Arthur Henderson, whose story is thus told by a private of his regiment:—

“When we went over the top Captain Henderson was in command. He was absolutely fearless. He led us like a lion. Several times the attack was held up, and the position seemed hopeless; never more so than when Captain Henderson was hit and fell. He was on his feet at once, and without having his wounded arm attended to, he led us on until we swept over the enemy parapet carrying all before us. The Germans fled in terror. . . .

“The excitement and the pain of his wound had tried Captain Henderson greatly; but he refused to retire, and immedi-

ately set about getting the position ready to withstand the strong counter-attacks which the enemy were preparing. The position wasn't very bright. Against our company of Argylls the enemy was now massing the best troops he could get hold of, and was pushing men around our position in the hope of cutting us off. Captain Henderson foresaw these moves, and prepared with his single company to meet the attacks of an enemy ten times as strong. He didn't spare himself. His white, drawn face was always about among us, and he never ceased to inspire us with some of his own courage.

"The Germans launched their last attack just as assistance was on its way to us. We met the enemy with a stubborn resistance, and smashed the attack. After that the Boches let us have a bit of a rest. Captain Henderson might have claimed the right to leave the line, but he refused to do so. He remained, looking after the wounded. While he was seeing what could be done to assist the troops advancing to our assistance, he was hit for the last time. He sank to earth without a word, and we buried him behind the line with the honours due to a brave Highlander."

PRIVATE JOHN READITT, South Lancashire Regiment.

This very brave soldier was one of a company which was set the task of working along a broad, deep watercourse on the left flank of an attack. Five times in the course of an hour he went forward with his fellows in the face of very heavy machine-gun fire at close range, and each time he was the sole survivor. The result of these advances was to drive back the enemy's machine guns, and secure 300 yards of the watercourse. In one of the attacks the officer was killed. Then Private Readitt stepped into the breach and organized several other advances. During one of them he reached the enemy's barricade, but was forced to fall back by a counter-attack. He retreated slowly, throwing bombs all the time. Supports reached him, and he and his comrades with their bombs held a forward bend in the line until the position behind them was strengthened and firmly held. "The action of this gallant soldier saved the left flank, and enabled his battalion to maintain its position."



British Troops resting after taking part in an advance.

(British Official Photo.)

These men, who appear very weary, are snatching a brief rest after capturing the town shown in the background. You notice that it has been terribly battered by shell-fire.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AIR RAIDS ON LONDON.

THE great feature of the air raids made upon England by the enemy during the first seven months of the year 1917 was the substitution of aeroplanes for Zeppelins. Only twice during that period did Zeppelins appear off the coast. In the first case they did little or no damage, and in the second case the result was disastrous to the raiders.

I told you in Chapter XVII. of our sixth volume that about the middle of the year 1916 we discovered a very effective method of dealing with the enemy's airships. Before their inventor died he knew that his lifework had been a failure. He had dreamed of fleets of Zeppelins hovering above London, Paris, Brussels, and Petrograd, and raining down death and destruction upon these cities. But before he breathed his last he was well aware that his dream was vain. The simple device which we had invented made the Zeppelins more dangerous to their navigators than to people on the ground below. It was the story of David and Goliath all over again. The shepherd boy prevailed over the giant with a sling and a stone: British airmen prevailed over the monsters of "frightfulness" with a small but very deadly weapon.

On 24th May four or five enemy airships approached the coast of East Anglia shortly before midnight. The weather was overcast, and a thick bank of rain cloud made observation difficult. Four of the ships proceeded inland; but as they dropped their bombs in country districts, it was plain that they had lost their way. They were pursued by our aeroplanes, but the thick clouds enabled them to get away. One man was killed in a Norfolk village, but the damage done was very slight.

The first important raid of the year 1917 took place four

days later, when a large squadron of enemy aircraft, numbering sixteen or seventeen, attacked the south-east coast of England. The aeroplanes arrived in broad daylight about 5.15 in the afternoon, and remained for three-quarters of an hour. Bombs were dropped on a number of places, but nearly all the damage occurred at Folkestone, where sixty bombs fell.

The attacking aircraft advanced on the town in perfect formation. There were three groups, each of five machines, and, in addition, a plane which acted as scout or leader, with another alone in the rear. The aeroplanes flew high, and as they were practically unmolested they did not hurry over their deadly work. The bombs were dropped without any plan, and though no military damage was done, many shops and houses were wrecked, and many of the townsfolk were killed or grievously wounded.

“ It was an evening of golden sunshine, and of blue skies without a cloud. Mothers had brought out their children, and the little ones, with no thought of danger, stayed on the pavement while the women did their shopping. Marketing was going on very actively at a greengrocer's shop with an open front, when an aerial torpedo fell and burst, causing an appalling loss of life. The victims had practically no warning of the peril which threatened them. Before an explosion occurred the droning of aeroplane engines had been heard; but as our own machines often circle over the town, the noise had not aroused misgivings. The dropping of a bomb half a mile away gave the alarm; but few of the people in the street could seek shelter. Shop assistants crouched behind counters, a few fled into cellars, but the terrific explosion which came within a few seconds of the warning mowed down nearly seventy defenceless children and adults. The street was like a shambles. Little ones, left without their mothers, were blown to pieces; a butcher's shop collapsed, and customers and assistants were buried in the ruins.”

The attack lasted about eight or ten minutes, and during that time there was a continuous roar of exploding bombs, followed by a crash of glass, the noise of falling masonry, and the moans of the injured. As soon as their work was done, the aeroplanes, still preserving their formation, made off seaward in the direction of Calais. Not until they were in mid-Channel did our aircraft engage them. Three of them were shot down; but this was no consolation to the people of Folkestone. They complained loudly that they were afforded no protection, and expressed much anger at the absence of our own machines while the bombardment was going on.

The aeroplanes which the Germans used in these and in later

raids were of the Gotha type,* and were so built that twelve large bombs could be carried inside the body of each machine. The bombs were placed in racks, one above the other, in such a way that when the lowest one was released, the next above slipped down and took its place. Each of these machines had a crew of three men—a pilot and two gunners. The forward gunner, who used the bomb-sights and discharged the bombs, was provided with a machine gun mounted on a turn-table. The rear gunner had two weapons, one mounted forward, and the other so placed that by lying prone on the floor he could fire through a large arc below him.

On Sunday, 18th June, the Germans again dispatched their Zeppelins for a raid on our coasts. Just after two o'clock in the morning an enemy airship appeared above a town in East Anglia. As she came in from the sea she seemed to be flying in the midst of shrapnel bursts from our anti-aircraft guns, which were so well aimed and so quickly fired that the raider was completely baffled. For forty minutes it hovered above the town, and all the time appeared to be in a helpless condition. Probably it was hit. The finishing touches, however, were given to it by a British airman.

The Zeppelin, afterwards discovered to be Z48, drifted in a northerly direction, apparently out of control, for it dived and twisted, ascended and wobbled in the strangest fashion. Suddenly a bright red glow appeared on its top, and soon afterwards it burst into flames. The whole framework buckled up and then fell to earth, leaving a long trail of smoke behind it. The tangled mass fell into marshy ground, and every man of the crew of fifteen perished.

An airship which raided the Kentish coast at about two the same morning dropped six bombs on a coast town. Three persons were killed, and some twenty were injured, while many houses were wrecked. This raider managed to make good its escape. Zeppelin 43, which had been encountered in the North Sea on the previous Friday, had, however, been brought down by our naval forces, probably with the assistance of a seaplane. Soon after the Zeppelin was attacked she burst into flames, broke in two, and fell into the sea. No survivors were seen.

On 13th June a very daring and destructive raid was made

* See p. 287 for illustration.

on London. Except for the visit of a solitary aeroplane, no enemy craft had previously ventured over the capital in broad daylight. Zeppelins had paid many visits by night, and Londoners were accustomed to the roar of exploding bombs in the darkness. On 13th June the murderous visitants appeared in a noonday sky of unclouded blue. There was no warning. The first bomb fell before the great bulk of the people had any idea that raiders were over the city. Then reports came fast and thick, and mingled with the crash was the rapid rolling thunder of our anti-aircraft guns. Far up in the heavens the raiders were seen glinting in the sunlight like tiny specks of silver, ringed by a halo of smoke from bursting shrapnel. Thousands of people were in the streets when the bombs began to fall. Many sought shelter in doorways, under arches, and in cellars; but many more remained in the roadways or climbed on to the roofs, their curiosity getting the better of their prudence.

The raiders flew over the city further west than they had ever done before. The writer of these lines was working within a hundred yards of a small square into which a bomb fell. The fronts of the surrounding buildings were blown in, two boys were killed, and the pavements were thick with the fragments of glass from shattered windows. Strangely enough, a horse that was blown out of the shafts of a cart by the explosion of a bomb picked itself up almost uninjured.

In a station which was bombed two carriages of a standing train were smashed to matchwood, and a number of men were killed outright, while others were terribly mangled. To add to the horror, fire broke out, and some of the victims were burnt to death. It was noticeable that even while the bombs were falling and the shrapnel was bursting, porters, soldiers, and others gave themselves up to the task of rescue.

Terrible scenes were witnessed elsewhere, but the most moving tragedy of all was enacted in an East End Council School. Playtime was over, and the children were all in their classrooms, when a bomb fell on the building. It made a big hole in the roof, and crashed through one floor after another. Few of the children in the upper floors were injured, but in the Infants' Department on the ground floor the bomb burst in the room where the "babies' classes" were held. Some one hundred and twenty of these little children were either killed

or injured, and in some cases were blown to atoms. Amidst all the deeds of infamy and horror done by the Germans, there is nothing to equal this awful slaughter of innocent babies. The Mayor of the borough said; "These boys and girls have died as truly for their country and for everything worth dying for as any of our men at the front or on the high seas."

A well-known member of Parliament, Mr. William Crooks, along with a number of bluejackets, at once entered the school and offered help. As one of these fine, burly fellows gazed on the poor maimed bodies of the little victims, he said, "I could have stood it if it had been grown men like you and me. But these little children—it is too much." Mr. Crooks spoke with pride of the lady teachers, who were cool and collected throughout the raid. When the noise of the explosions was heard, they instructed the children to shelter beneath the desks; and when the death-dealing aircraft had passed on, lined up the children and marched them into the playground in perfect order. Mothers and fathers came running to the school from the neighbouring streets, but there was no panic. Mr. Crooks said that he heard no one in the crowd—man, woman, or child—cry out for peace at any price.

Immediately the news reached Buckingham Palace the King ordered his motor car and set off for the district which had suffered most. As he slowly drove through the streets the people were much touched at this evidence of his sympathy, and cheered him loudly. One hundred and four persons were killed, 154 were seriously injured, and 269 were slightly injured during the raid.

Londoners at once demanded that they should receive warning when hostile aeroplanes were on their way to the city. It was, however, feared that the hooting of sirens or the ringing of church bells would do more harm than good in the case of daylight raids; for these warnings would be sure to bring people flocking into the streets, instead of sending them to seek shelter. Further, it was difficult to say at what stage warnings should be given. For example, on the 14th of the month enemy aeroplanes approached a certain point on the East Coast, but were turned back before they reached land. Had the people of London been warned on this occasion, there would have been a great and unnecessary interruption of business, and much useless alarm. All felt that no amount of



Have they gone?

(From the picture by D. Macpherson. By permission of *The Sphere*.)

A scene in London. During the attacks of 7th July the streets cleared as if by magic. Buses stopped dead, and the passengers made for the nearest cover.

warning could save London from a serious death-roll whenever hostile aircraft, laden with bombs, flew over the city. The best way to stop the raids was to attack the raiders before they could reach London. This also was most difficult, for aircraft flying at the rate of about two miles a minute could be over the city before our machines had time to spiral upwards and engage them.

Encouraged by their success, the enemy airmen made another daylight raid on 7th July. At 9.30 that morning a large squadron of about twenty-four aeroplanes in V or "duck" formation appeared over Essex and Thanet. At the apex of the V there was a leading machine, and behind it the other planes spread out like a fan. Along the sides of the V were battle-planes, and between them were the bombing machines. There was also a rearguard of battle-planes. The squadron followed a westerly course roughly parallel with the north bank of the Thames, and when twenty miles from London came under the heavy shrapnel fire of our anti-aircraft guns. At a point about nineteen miles from the city a British aviator ascended, and shortly afterwards twenty-two of the hostile aircraft turned back.

The remainder of the squadron approached the city from the north-east, flying above a bank of bright mist. By this time British machines were amongst them, and a running fight began, in which it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Over London the enemy bombing craft dropped through the mist and discharged their bombs. They crossed London from north-west to south-east, and by 10.45 had completed a horse-shoe course, and were making their way rapidly seaward.

The story of the beginning and ending of this raid was well told by a writer in the *Morning Post*. He says :—

"Suddenly, just before half-past nine o'clock, the firing increased greatly, and we at once realized that something more serious than practice was afoot. At first we pictured a naval engagement somewhere off the not-distant Nore ; but going out into the garden we were able to distinguish a drone as of many threshing drums, and we knew at once that the murder birds were out again. Soon the flock was in full view, flying moderately high and fast from the north-east, with a following wind. First by the aid of field-glasses and then with the naked eye, we were able to count and check their number half a dozen times—two-and-twenty of them—keeping perfect formation, so far untouched by the anti-aircraft guns.

"Passing directly over our roof, the squadron next picked up the tall spire of a church in a town about ten miles away. Some minutes before

the raiders passed overhead the heavy artillery of anti-aircraft guns had ceased their fire, and we realized that short of a miracle most of the raiders would be bound to reach London, then only twenty miles away. At this moment we heard the muffled hum of British machines, and we saw eight of our airmen coming along in swift pursuit—four directly in the rear of the pirates, two more flying wide to the westward, and two more big, black-looking fighting machines flying at a great pace, and coming up hand over hand. The pilot of one of these, with his engines all out and going on by himself, was soon within striking distance, as we could hear by the rattle of his machine gun.

“One against twenty-two! What splendid courage, but how futile! As the sound of the shots from the machine gun died away and the enemy squadron disappeared from view, the renewed firing of the anti-aircraft guns and the roar of exploding bombs told us of the damage that was going on in London.

“After an anxious and trying interval of about twenty minutes we could see the returning aeroplanes again approaching us from the south-east, like a swarm of hornets. In the blurred distance there seemed at a rough guess to be about fifty of them; but as they came nearer their number was gradually reduced. From the noise I gathered that a battle was going on in the air. I could not, however, see plainly for the volumes of black smoke in which some of the machines were shrouded. When the enemy squadrons came into full view again, they appeared to have shaken off the pursuit. Shortly afterwards the coast batteries opened fire, and all the raiders were lost to sight. The ‘All clear’ signal was given at 11.15 a.m.”

As a result of this raid some forty-three persons were killed and 197 injured in London and the Isle of Thanet. Amongst the victims were five children killed and fifty-two wounded. In the pursuit of the enemy four of his machines were brought down. Two of them fell into the sea some forty miles from the East Coast, a third dropped in flames, and a fourth was forced to land on the beach near Ostend in a damaged condition.

You notice in the *Morning Post's* account of the raid a reference to the British machines which went in pursuit of the raiders. One of our pilots, Second-Lieutenant Wilfred Graham Salmon, lost his life in this venture. As he was descending, he appeared to lose control of his machine, which fell heavily to the ground. It was discovered that fifty-five rounds of ammunition had gone from his magazine, and it was thus clear that he had not perished without engaging the enemy.

Many of those who watched the flight of the enemy's aeroplanes said that they flew at a very low height, and so slowly that they appeared to hover or remain almost stationary. The



The "Duck" Formation adopted by the German Air Squadron as it approached London at 10.30 a.m. in July 1917
Most of the machines were twin-engined Gothas.
(By permission of *The Sphere*.)

experts, however, denied this. They said that the machines were never less than 12,500 feet above the ground, and that they travelled at the rate of from seventy to eighty miles an hour. The mistakes made by observers were due to the large size of the enemy's Gothas, which are about three times as big as single-seater machines. One of these Gothas at a height of 15,000 feet would appear quite as large as a single-seater machine flying at an altitude of 5,000 feet.

Londoners were again indignant that they should have been raided in broad daylight without warning, and that the enemy should have escaped with such small loss. The Government was blamed for negligence, and a secret session of Parliament was held. An official report of this session was afterwards published. The Prime Minister assured the House that complete protection in the air could never be secured, and he reminded the members that every day on the Western front our machines regularly crossed the German lines and bombed places in the rear, in spite of anti-aircraft fire and very powerful German air squadrons. If this could be done by us in the battle area, we must not be surprised that the enemy could break through our air defences on this side of the Channel. The best way to put an end to air raids was to make them so costly that they would not be worth the Germans' while.

He also pointed out that during the last four or five months our naval bombing aeroplanes had dropped seventy tons of explosives on the German aerodromes in Northern Belgium, and that on the night before the London raid they had visited the same aerodromes, and had dropped six tons of explosives on them. The total amount of explosives dropped by the enemy on London was only about two tons:

The first duty of the Government was to see that the army in France was sufficiently supplied with aeroplanes, for they were the eyes of the army, and no advance could be made without them. The casualties which had been suffered by the civilian population of London were greatly to be regretted; but unless the troops at the front were properly supplied with aeroplanes, the death roll there would be immensely greater. The Germans by their raids on London were trying to make us withdraw aeroplanes from the front, and we should be playing their game if we did so.

The army must come first, and he was certain that if the



A German Airman's Photograph of the Raid on London, July 7, 1917.

This photograph is reproduced from a German weekly paper. It was taken by an enemy airman flying at a great height ; nevertheless it shows the part of the city which was bombed. Few of the buildings can be clearly seen except St. Paul's Cathedral. According to the man who took the photograph, the points hit were the General Post Office, the Charterhouse (C), artillery barracks, Cannon Street Station (CS). The Bank of England is marked by the letter B and Liverpool Street Station by the letter L.

people of this country realized that, for the moment, all our strength had to be put into the air in order to win victory at the front, they would be prepared to take risks which, after all, were not to be compared with those run by our soldiers. If they were told that it was necessary to run some risks for a short time for the sake of the gallant fellows in France, they would do so cheerfully. He was confident that before long we should not only secure supremacy in France, but also provide such air strength at home that if the Germans came over again they would deem it the part of wisdom not to repeat the attempt.

Later in the debate the Chancellor of the Exchequer replied to those who urged that we should treat the Germans to a dose of their own medicine. He pointed out that the French section of the front was much nearer to important German cities than ours, and that it was natural that the French should play a larger part in offensive operations against those cities than we could do. He told the House that during the last few days eighty-four French machines had heavily bombed six German towns, and had returned with only two casualties.

By such comforting speeches the Government succeeded in allaying the indignation of Londoners. After refusing for some time to give warning of approaching enemy aircraft, the Home Office at last decided to discharge rockets from fire-engine stations as the signal of danger. The Prime Minister's speech encouraged the belief that the air menace would soon be grappled with; but we shall see in the next volume that during the months of August and September 1917 the enemy returned again to London, and when he found our patrolling aircraft getting the better of him, made a series of moonlight raids that were very destructive of life and particularly difficult to cope with. One great satisfaction, however, was the calmness of the people. They still refused to be terrorized by hostile aircraft, and showed no signs of weakening in their determination to carry the war to complete victory.

Before I conclude this chapter, let me give you some account of the French raid to which the Chancellor referred. The object of this raid was to bomb railway stations, munition factories, and gun emplacements in and around Treves, Coblenz, Essen, and other towns in the Rhine Valley, and thus prove

to the enemy that at any moment, if they wished, the Allies could do even greater damage to German towns than the Germans could do to English and French towns. Eighty-four aeroplanes were dispatched, four of which made for Essen, which contains the great Krupp munition factories.

The hero of the raid was Sergeant Gallois, who was a hardware merchant before the war. Being considered too old for active service, he was placed in charge of a hospital for sick horses. At his own earnest request he was afterwards allowed to join the air service and qualify as a pilot.

Soon after 9 p.m. on 6th July he left his base. Flying up the valley of the Moselle past Metz and Treves, he struck the Rhine, shining clear in the moonlight. As he passed by Coblenz he saw the other members of his squadron furiously bombarding the city. He, however, was bound for Essen, so he continued his journey. From Coblenz he turned northward, and soon reached a part of the valley of the Rhine where the whole country was lighted up by the blazing fires of munition works. When he reached Essen he saw what looked like brilliantly-illuminated cliffs stretching for miles on each side of the town.

Above Essen he rose to a height of 6,000 feet, and though fiercely bombarded by anti-aircraft guns, circled round and round, and let drop his ten bombs. Then when his work was done, he started on his homeward voyage, and in due time sighted a signal which showed that he had reached his own aerodrome. In landing, his machine met with an accident, though happily he was unhurt, and none the worse for his adventure.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LADIES' ROAD.

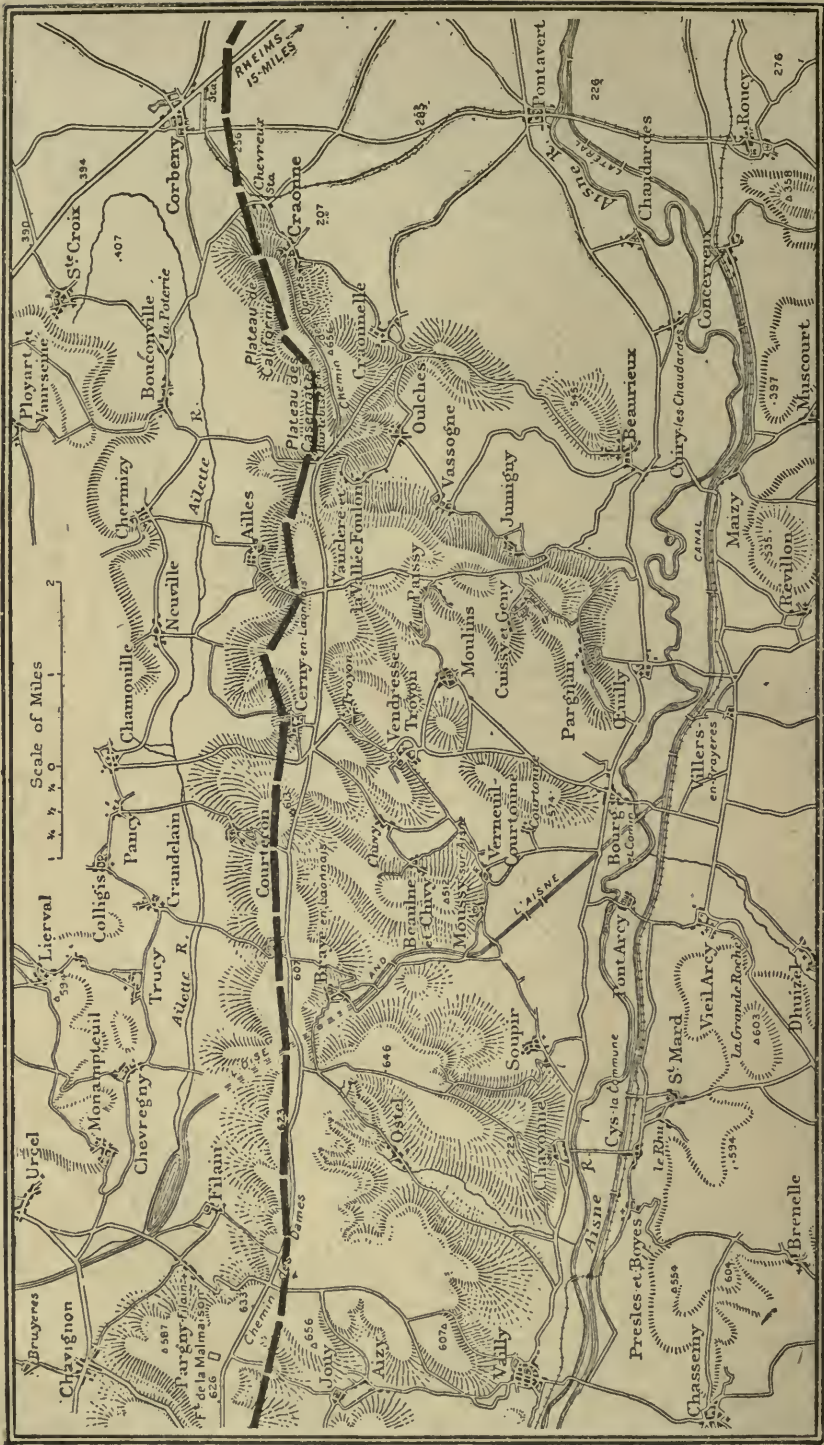
*" In silks and satins the ladies went
Where the breezes sighed and the poplars bent,
Taking the air of a Sunday morn
Midst the red of poppies and gold of corn—
Flowery ladies in gold brocades,
With negro pages and serving maids.
In scarlet coach or in gilt sedan,
With brooch and buckle and flounce and fan,
Patch and powder and trailing scent,
Under the trees the ladies went—
Lovely ladies that gleamed and glowed,
As they took the air on the Ladies' Road.*

*" Boom of thunder and lightning flash—
The torn earth rocks to the barrage crash ;
The bullets whine and the bullets sing
From the mad machine guns chattering ;
Black smoke rolling across the mud,
Trenches plastered with flesh and blood—
The blue ranks lock with the ranks of gray,
Stab and stagger, and sob and sway ;
The living cringe from the shrapnel bursts,
The dying moan of their burning thirsts,
Moan and die in the gulping slough—
Where are the butterfly ladies now ? "*

PATLANDER.

(By kind and special permission of the Proprietors of "Punch.")

IN Chapter XXVII. I told you that during the month of May our gallant French allies succeeded in carrying nearly the whole of the hill group of Moronvillers, which lies to the east of Rheims. It had been seized by the Germans after their retreat to the Marne, and had been strongly fortified. Its value was that it formed a great "observatory," dominating that plain of Châlons on which Attila and his Huns suffered



Map to illustrate the fighting on the Ladies' Road.

the defeat which saved France as far back as the year 451. For thirty-four days the French made attack after attack on the deeply entrenched slopes and subterranean redoubts, winning and losing and winning again certain points of vantage. By 20th May they were firmly established on the heights, and though they had to meet fierce and constant counter-attacks for months afterwards, their hold remained unshaken.

Meanwhile the struggle had grown in intensity along the heights of the Aisne. The Second Battle of the Aisne had begun—a battle which in its fierceness and long duration was to rival Verdun itself. I told you in Chapter XXVII. that early in May the French carried the heights of the Aisne and captured the Ladies' Road, which runs westward from Craonne for more than eighteen miles. The Germans were very loath to give up the road—for several good reasons, which will appear later. They made furious attempts to recover it, and in the hundred days from 4th May to 20th August used up some forty-eight divisions. The wastage of men was awful, and the French captured over 8,500 prisoners.

It is said that on every thousand yards of front the enemy brought up from ten to a dozen batteries, and that frequently two hundred batteries were at work at the same time. Aeroplanes and captive balloons directed the fire. During the long battle there was no device of destruction which the Germans did not employ. They tried to flood the French artillery positions with gas shells, they frequently used liquid fire, and their trenches were full of mortars which were rarely silent.

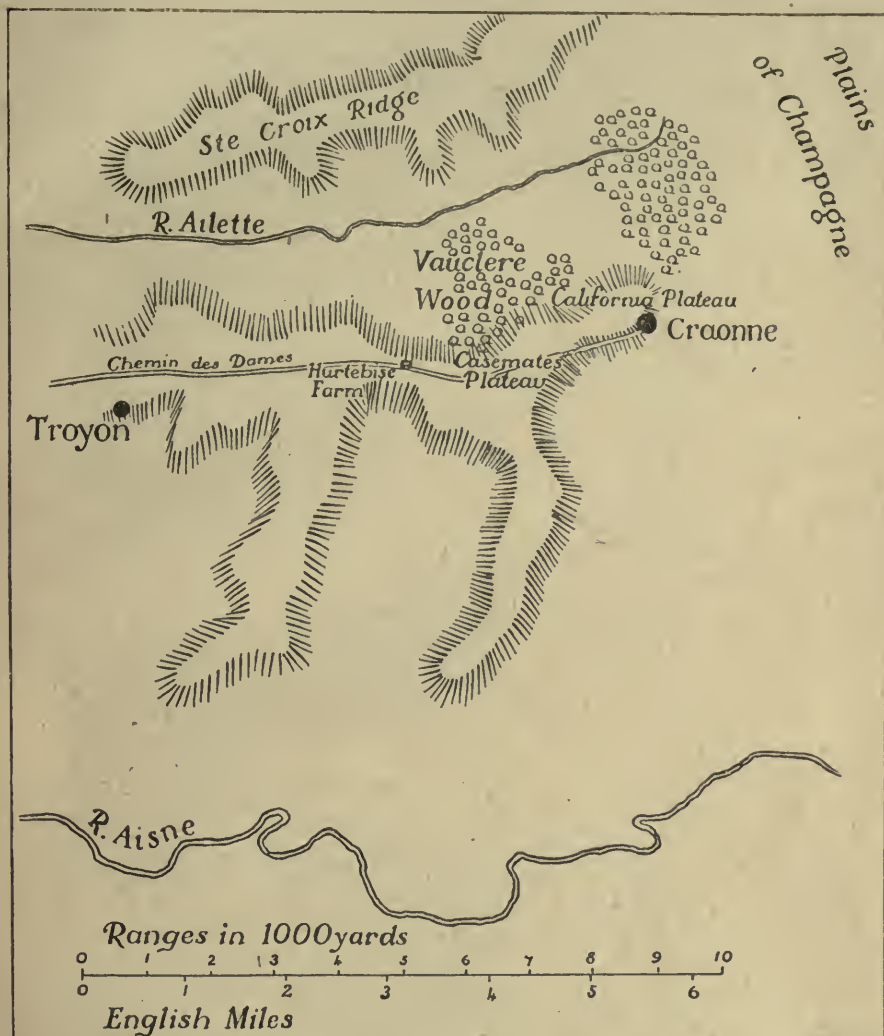
The Ladies' Road is but a ribbon of earth, from a hundred to three hundred yards in width; yet it was fought for as though it were paved with rubies. Why, you ask, did the Germans waste the lives and energies of tens of thousands of men in the vain endeavour to recapture it? Look at the map on page 354. You see that the road runs along the crest of the hills. Northward it descends sharply to the Ailette valley. It is, as it were, the coping of a curtain wall to the strongest natural fortress in North France, the tumbled country of flat-topped hills surrounding Laon. While the Germans held the road they could see through their field-glasses everything the French were doing above ground, and their gunners had a direct view of all the French positions. When they lost the road they lost this great advantage, and the French, in turn, were able

to spy out the German positions in the Ailette valley, and to threaten the stronghold that lay beyond.

For these military reasons the Germans were eager to recover the road. The Crown Prince, whose grievous failures at Verdun had badly tarnished his laurels, was anxious to restore his lost prestige, and the High Command believed that a long series of fierce attacks would wear down the French, who were supposed to be near the end of their resources. The French, however, had lost nothing of their old spirit, and were determined to fight to the last man in defence of their beloved country. The Germans, with all their boasted philosophy, have never been able to understand other nations. They were just as wrong in supposing that they could break down the courage and endurance of the French by constantly attacking them, as they were in thinking that they could undermine British determination by U-boat attacks and aircraft "frightfulness."

The fiercest fighting took place in the neighbourhood of Craonne, where the Ladies' Road comes to an end. In the first days of May the French gained a footing in the village at two points. It had still to be cleared of Germans who were installed with machine guns in the cellars of the houses. Craonne occupies a rather remarkable situation. Behind the houses on the north rises a hog's-back of ragged yellow-brown hills, with an almost sheer face to the south. To the west of the village two small tablelands jut out from the hog's-back—the nearer to Craonne being known as the California Plateau, and the other, further west, as the Casemates Plateau. The French planned an attack all along the line of the Ladies' Road for 5th May; but before it could have a chance of success they must secure Craonne. The ugly cliffs behind the village had to be scaled, so that the troops detailed for the assault on the Ladies' Road could work in line with their comrades on the left.

On 4th May two French companies rushed the village, and then, in two groups, one from the right and the other from the left, worked their way up to the top of the ridge. The face of the bluff was bristling with machine guns hidden in the caves which the enemy had hollowed out in the chalky soil; but the onrush of the French was not stayed. In one cave they captured three hundred prisoners, and after sending them hurriedly to the rear, gained the California Plateau, and at once



prepared for the inevitable counter-attack, which, happily, they beat off. They were now ready to take part in the concerted attack planned for the next day.

The attack all along the line of the Ladies' Road was a splendid success. In the course of two days' fighting a large part of the coveted position was in the hands of our gallant ally. By the evening of 5th May French troops were looking down on the Ailette valley. Almost immediately the counter-



French Infantry advancing from the Ladies' Road.
(By permission of *The Illustrated London News*.)

attacks began. In the hundred and seven days between 4th May and 20th August the Germans launched twenty big attacks, and the French retaliated with about the same number, so that during this period forty serious engagements took place—that is, rather more than one in every three days.

Nothing could exceed the desperate character of these assaults against the crest-line, and especially against the eastern half of the road from Cerny to Craonne. At Hurtebise Farm, where the hog's-back narrows to a mere neck of ground from fifty to one hundred yards wide, the struggle was fiercest of all. The area to be won was so narrow, and the distance over which the enemy had to advance was so short, that hand-to-hand fighting was of everyday occurrence. The drop of the ground to the north is so steep that the Germans could not precede their troops with a barrage. They bombarded the French trenches furiously for twenty minutes or so, and then sent their men rushing forward, only to be swept away again and again by the French guns.

Meanwhile the enemy plastered the whole of the position for days on end with shells, until the plateau and its face were covered with smoke, as though the hills were in eruption. When the French advanced they had no shelter but shell-holes; on those bare slopes it was impossible to dig real trenches and establish a proper system of defences. On one occasion a battalion commander who had reached his objective, and was being heavily shelled, sent back a message to his general, saying, "We are here, and will stay until death." Five minutes later he was killed by a shell. Another commanding officer had better fortune. As he crouched in a shell-hole in the thick of the fight, the runner who was with him deliberately fell upon him to shield him from a bursting shell.

May and June passed, and still the struggle continued. The Germans attacked with such concentrated fury that from time to time the French were forced to yield small portions of ground, but for the most part the enemy was never able to hold his gains for more than a few hours. The assaults were made by picked "storm troops," who suffered terribly under the French fire. On 3rd July ten or twelve fresh battalions of these "Stosstruppen" were pushed forward with the greatest determination at 3.30 in the morning. Their approach was heralded by a torrent of fire from guns of all calibres, bombs,

and aerial torpedoes. Before it ceased, the Germans were seen advancing. Contrary to custom, they had their knapsacks on their backs, and this, together with the fact that they were followed by engineers carrying material for organizing positions, showed that they meant to hold on to any ground that they might win.

The French guns at once opened fire, and their shells caused awful havoc in the ranks of the advancing Germans. Nevertheless, in the first shock of surprise the French, who were assailed with liquid fire, lost their front trenches over a front of about two miles, and some of their battalions suffered heavily. They were greatly outnumbered, their supplies were uncertain, and their shelter was scanty; nevertheless, the unwounded Chasseurs within ten minutes began counter-attacks by advancing slowly from shell-hole to shell-hole. Reserves were hurried up, and by evening most of the lost ground had been recovered.

A correspondent tells us that the fighting was of the most deadly character. The French were maddened by an attempt on the part of the enemy to play the "Kamerad" trick, which resulted in the death or wounding of several of their men. A German appeared above a French trench with his hands in the air, shouting "Kamerad!" In each hand he had two small grenades concealed, and when a group of French officers approached to capture him, he flung the grenades into the midst of them. After that the French gave no quarter.

A handful of Frenchmen who were captured by the enemy in the first rush were put for safety into one of the numerous quarry-caves of the region. In this cave they found a supply of bombs, which they seized, and hurled at their captors. After driving them off they made their way back to their own lines. The counter-attacks which won back most of the lost ground were mostly made with bombs.

I have described the attack of 3rd July thus fully in order to give you an idea of the character of the fighting which almost continually raged. On Thursday, 19th July, the enemy, after a week's artillery preparation, attacked early in the morning on the old blood-soaked front of two and a half miles. East and west of Hurtebise they completely failed; but on the narrow neck where the ruins of a farm stand they obtained a footing in the demolished trenches. The few yards of ground thus

seized were fiercely assailed by the converging fire of the French on the wings, and later on a counter-attack drove the enemy back to his former position on the slopes. At half-past eight in the evening the Germans returned again to the assault, and all night long there was a violent hand-to-hand struggle along the whole two and a half miles.

Next day the enemy threw new troops into the fight ; but they too were shattered. Then the guns, more than two hundred heavy pieces, began the most terrible bombardment which as yet had been known on any front. During the night between Friday and Saturday, fresh " storming troops " advanced again and again ; and though some of the regiments lost half their number, they managed to carry the front-line trenches on the California Plateau, and, a little later in the day, also obtained a footing on the Casements Plateau.

The French retaliated with a crushing bombardment of the newly taken positions, which caused awful havoc amidst the ordinary troops who had followed up the " storming troops," and had occupied the trenches which they had won. On the morning of the 24th they launched their counter-attack with such effect that the Germans were flung back again down the northern slope, and all their gains, except about a hundred yards of trench on the California Plateau, were snatched from them.

Twenty-four hours later, shortly after dawn on 25th July, the Germans made a bold attempt to retrieve their loss. They failed, with very heavy losses. Nothing daunted, however, they advanced again on Thursday evening with two divisions on the same two and a half mile front. Try to think what this means. On some four thousand yards they massed together more than twenty-four thousand men—that is, six men to the yard ! As a result, they won trenches beyond Hurtebise, but soon lost them again. In over twenty attacks they failed to reach the road which the French had won three months previously. The road, however, no longer existed ; a few broken stumps here and there marked the line of poplars which formerly fringed it on either side, but the surface was a chaos of battered trenches and gaping shell-holes.

When the period with which this volume deals came to a close, the struggle was still going on. Neither side dared to retire, for the possession of the crest was vital. To the Germans

its permanent loss meant dire danger to the southern arm of the great angle which they were holding across France; to the French it meant the chance of pushing the enemy out of the country altogether.

A correspondent, writing early in September 1917, drew an interesting comparison between the Second Battle of the Aisne and that part of the Battle of Verdun which I described in Chapter XXVIII. of our sixth volume. He pointed out that the length of the front at Verdun and on the Ladies' Road was much the same. On May 5, 1916, the French had in front of them at Verdun twelve German divisions. On the same day in the year 1917 there were fourteen enemy divisions on and behind the Ladies' Road. During the period from May 5 to August 20, 1917, thirty-five fresh German divisions were flung into the battle, making forty-nine in all. During the same period of 1916 the enemy had twenty-five divisions engaged on the Verdun front. At Verdun, between May 5 and August 20, 1916, the French captured 5,860 prisoners; on the Ladies' Road in the same period of 1917 they took 8,550 prisoners. From these facts he deduced that the wastage of the Germans on the Ladies' Road was almost twice as great as at Verdun.

* * * * *

Before I close this chapter, let me set down the official figures of the captures made by the Allies on the Western front during the thirteen months from the beginning of the great Somme offensive to the close of July 1917. They are worthy of the bold type in which I shall print them.

165,000 rank and file ;
3,500 officers ;
948 guns, heavy and field ;
780 trench mortars ; and
2,500 machine guns.

CHAPTER XL.

THE HERO OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

THOSE of you who have spent a summer holiday on the east coast of Northern Britain will remember mornings which broke bright and fair, with the sun shining from a sky of unclouded blue. But before midday a dense white mist had stolen in from the North Sea, blotting out the sun, obscuring the sky, cloaking the landscape, and bringing cold, clammy disappointment in its train. Somewhat thus may we picture the effect of the Russian Revolution on the Allies of the West. The first news of the upheaval heartened and inspired them all. They rejoiced to see Russia breaking her shackles and stepping out of the gloom of bondage into the sunlight of freedom. They gloried in the thought that treachery and corruption in high places had vanished like an evil dream, and that for the first time Russia was free to use all the might of her strong right arm against the common foe.

As the days went by the Allies watched and waited for the fulfilment of their hopes. They eagerly scanned the eastern horizon for signs that a new, purified, and powerful Russia was rising on the ruins of the old corruption and tyranny. Men recalled the fiery spirit which animated the people of France more than a century ago, when they shook off their ancient yoke and scattered their enemies like chaff before the wind. All hoped to see the Russians dealing with their foes in like fashion. For a brief moment the Allies had reason to believe that a similar miracle would be wrought. They saw the Russians make a good beginning and gain valuable ground. Then suddenly came deep and bitter disappointment. The armies of Russia became paralyzed; discipline broke down;

the enemy triumphed, and the long-hoped-for day of victory was as far off as ever.

* * * * *

“The hour finds the man.” The hero of the Russian Revolution was a lawyer named Alexandre Feodorovitch Kerensky. He was thirty-six years of age, tall and slender, with a clean-shaven pale face and deeply sunken eyes. His father was a schoolmaster, who, when the lad was of school age, became head of a public school at Tashkent, the capital of the Central Asiatic province of Russia. Young Kerensky was educated in his father's school, and in due course entered Petrograd University as a law student.

During his course at the university he became deeply interested in social and political questions, and was a frequent speaker at the students' debating societies. Had Kerensky been at Oxford or Cambridge, he would probably have become President of the Union, and afterwards a brilliant young lawyer with a seat in Parliament. In Russia, however, there was no such career open to him. There was no Parliament when he left the university; all power was in the hands of the Tsar and his myriad officials. Kerensky felt deeply the wrongs of his countrymen, and he became a Socialist. He supported himself chiefly by defending in the police and other courts those who were charged with what were called “political” offences.

As you already know, the Tsar was forced to grant his people an elected Parliament, or Duma, in the year 1906. Four years later Kerensky was returned to this Parliament as member for the city of Saratoff. His supporters were a number of Socialist peasants banded together as the Party of Toil. Kerensky became the leader of this party in the Duma. He threw in his lot with the peasants because he had deep sympathy for them, and was eager to improve their lot.

I told you on page 79 that when the Revolution triumphed a stop-gap Government was set up, with Prince Lvoff at its head, and that General Alexeieff, the Commander-in-Chief, and Generals Ruzsky and Brussilov promised it support. The members of this Government were thoughtful, liberal-minded men of moderate views. They desired to make the new Government fully representative of all parties in the State, so they invited the Socialists to join them. The chief Socialist body



Alexandre Feodorovitch Kerensky.

(By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

The strong man of Russia. His creed was summed up in the following words:—"I recognize all that Russia is called upon to bear, but I have faith in her powers to face and overcome her formidable difficulties in this hour of trial."

at this time was the *Soviet*, or Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates, of which Kerensky was then a leading member. The Council refused to join the new Government; it preferred to remain outside and criticize and even control the Government without sharing in its responsibility. Kerensky, however, felt that it was his duty to help the Government by every means in his power; so he broke away from the *Soviet*, joined the Government, and became Minister of Justice.

In this post he showed great wisdom and fairness. Some of his former comrades demanded that the ex-Tsar, his family, and his ministers should be flung into prison under the conditions that obtained before the Revolution. Kerensky refused to listen to them. He said that as long as Russian justice was in his keeping the prisoners should not be treated harshly, and that they should all have a fair trial. By this time Russia was in a frightful condition of disorder and unrest. The country had suffered terribly during the war; millions of men had either been killed, wounded, or made prisoners, and their families had undergone awful privations. The Russian peasant is not a warrior by nature; he loathes bloodshed, and would gladly see war abolished, so that he might give all his time to his farm, his family, and the affairs of his village. Under the rule of the Tsar he was forced to fight, and, as you know, he fought well; but it was not love of country that sent him into the ranks. He shouldered his rifle because the Tsar bade him do so, and the Tsar's will was law.

When the great upheaval took place and the Tsar's grip was loosened, he believed that he was free to do what was right in his own eyes. A new form of government and a new state of society were being set up, and every man who could talk was on his feet stirring up the people to demand impossible things, and promising a new heaven and a new earth if only his ideas were carried out. The people listened eagerly, and believed all that they were told.

Germany, true to her nature, now set herself to use this state of unrest for her own purposes. You will always find her fishing in troubled waters. While Kerensky and his fellows were striving to build up a government which would secure the confidence of the people and enable the war to be continued, she sent across the frontier thousands of secret



Death or Victory!

(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

Russian soldiers parading Petrograd, and bearing a banner announcing that they mean to continue the war to the end.

agents and large numbers of Russian prisoners, whom she had won over to her side by gold and promises of freedom. These rogues went to and fro amongst the soldiers and sailors, most of whom were ignorant, unlettered men, telling them what blessings they would enjoy if only they would make peace with the Kaiser. Traitors in plenty were bribed to aid in this work, and many members of the *Soviet* gave them support. The consequence was that the soldiers laid down their arms, refused to obey their officers, and made friends with the enemy in the opposite trenches. There were outrages in the streets of Petrograd, and the garrison of Kronstadt, which protects the sea approaches to the capital, declared their island independent.

From the first Kerensky knew that Germany was *the* enemy, and that Russia could never be free until the military power of the Kaiser and his nobles was utterly smashed. He knew, too, that while all this loose and dangerous talk about peace was going on the armies of Russia were powerless. Towards the end of May he was appointed War Minister, and at once devoted himself to the task of stopping the dry rot that was threatening the army with decay and the country with disaster.

He started on a thousand-mile tour of the front, and for several weeks made a dozen passionate speeches a day, calling on the soldiers to stand fast for all that they held dear. Never did man plead more earnestly and at such a great cost to himself. Nature had not given him a strong constitution, and every speech brought him to the verge of collapse; but still he struggled on, begging the soldiers to rally round the new Government, and imploring them not to be led away by the traitors and dreamers who were promising them land and freedom if only they would make peace with Germany. "Advance!" he cried; "advance in serried ranks, united by discipline and duty, and by an unbounded love for the Revolution and the country!"

CHAPTER XLI.

THE FATAL CANKER.

FEW people believed that Kerensky would be able to restore discipline in the army by his speeches, but he actually did so. His tour was a great success. Wherever he went, whether in towns or in villages or at the front, men and women were stirred to the quick by the torrent of eloquence which poured from the lips of this pale-faced man with the wistful eyes. One speech was sufficient to make a division honeycombed with disaffection return to its obedience, and beg its commanders to lead it against the enemy. Everywhere he went he was hailed as the spirit and hope of New Russia.

Let me give you one example of his wonderful power as an orator. One day he was addressing a large body of men who had been completely won over by traitors in the pay of Germany. He began his speech by telling them that they could only win freedom and prosperity by advancing against the merciless invader, and that if they did not do so they would lose their land and all that liberty which they had won and were yet to win. The men interrupted his first sentences with shouts of "Down with the war!" and "Down with the Government!" but before he had ended all were wildly cheering him except one man.

This fellow stepped forward and said, "You tell us that we must advance against the Germans in order to secure for ourselves land and liberty. But if we advance we shall be killed, and a dead man wants neither land nor liberty. So what is the good of our advancing?"

The man who had thus spoken looked round with the air of one who has put forward an argument that cannot be answered. For a moment the officers present thought that



A Trench Meeting: Discussion instead of Duty.

(Photo, Central News.)

These Russian soldiers have been persuaded by traitors to refuse obedience to their officers, and discuss the question of retiring and giving up their trenches to the enemy. Notice the British officer (carrying a cane) and a few other British soldiers. They earnestly strove to get the men to return to their duty.

Kerensky would be unable to reply, and that the good effect of his speech would be destroyed. But they did not know his force of character and his ready wit.

"Silence when your War Minister speaks!" he shouted in a shrill voice. Then when order was restored he turned to the commanding officer and said, "Colonel, my order is that this man be instantly dismissed from the Russian Army and branded as a coward unworthy to wear Russian uniform."

The soldier, it is said, fell to the ground in a swoon, and when he recovered begged to be reinstated, and to be allowed to win back his honour in battle.

Though Kerensky was thus bringing the soldiers back to their senses, several of the army chiefs thought the position hopeless. Alexeiev, the Commander-in-Chief, resigned, and so did Ruzski. Nothing daunted, Kerensky appointed Brussilov to the head of the army, and ordered all deserters and absentees to rejoin by 28th May. Though he had restored discipline in many places, there were still sections of the front where the troops could not be trusted. Early in June four regiments refused to obey orders, and arrested their officers. Kerensky at once ordered the ringleaders to be court-martialled and the regiments to be disbanded. Meanwhile he and Brussilov were working night and day to equip the army for an advance in Galicia.

In Chapter XIV., Vol. VI., I gave you an account of the wonderful offensive which the Russians made in July, August, and September of 1916. Let me remind you of what happened during that campaign. After a big salient had been pushed into the enemy's front between the Kovel-Lublin railway and the Galician frontier, Brussilov tried to surround the army of General Bothmer, which was then holding the line of the Upper Strypa astride of the Lemberg-Tarnopol railway. His right wing was to seize Brody and threaten Lemberg from the north, while his left wing, moving from Bukovina, which had been subdued, was to march up the right bank of the river Dniester, and attack Bothmer from the south. (See map, page 135, Vol. VI.) Meanwhile a third Russian army was to hold Bothmer in front until the enveloping movement was complete.

In the course of this offensive some marvellous successes were won. Nearly 8,000 officers and more than 358,000 men,

together with 450 guns, nearly 1,400 machine guns, and a huge store of other war booty fell into the hands of the Russians. It was said that the enemy's losses in dead and badly wounded were twice as many as the number of prisoners taken. Had the great enveloping movement been successful, it would have ended in the capture of all Bothmer's forces. Unhappily it did not succeed. At the last moment Bothmer retreated, and thus escaped from the trap.

The great Russian offensive of 1916 suddenly came to an end in September. Treachery in high places was at work. The Russian High Command was in the hands of men who were in league with Germany, and they had become alarmed at Brussilov's success. Consequently they stinted him of shells, and hampered him in other ways, so that he was forced to bring his brilliant campaign to a sudden close.

The Revolution had swept away the "dark forces" which had saved the Austro-Germans, and Kerensky by his energy and his eloquent speeches had restored in some degree discipline and obedience to the Russian army. It was now about to put its fortunes to the test, and to strike its first blow for freedom and the New Russia.

When Brussilov took the field on July 1, 1917, he found Bothmer holding the line shown in the map on page 373. You see that it was almost straight, and that it extended from the north of Brody, which was in Russian hands, past Brzezany,* which the Austrians held, to the Dniester, near Halicz, where the enemy had a strong bridgehead on the other side of the river, and so on to the Carpathians. Brussilov had several new generals under his command, the most important of them being Korniloff, a Russian Cossack, who had been captured by the Austrians, but had escaped from a prisoners' camp. He had walked right across Hungary, and during the long trek had frequently been without food for days. A correspondent described him as a little man of homely appearance, but very popular with his men. We shall hear more of him later. The 8th Russian Army, which had won fame in Bukovina during the campaign of 1916, was then lying south of the Dniester, and Korniloff was placed in chief command.

You will not be surprised to learn that Brussilov meant to make his bid for victory in Galicia. It was on this ground that

* *Bzhe-zha'nee* (a as in *far*).

he had won his successes in the previous September, and the armies there stationed were the most reliable of the Russian forces. Further, a stroke in Galicia promised important results. The enemy had massed his troops to cover Lemberg, the capture of which city would give Brussilov command of the railways necessary for his advance towards the German frontier.

The Austrians, Germans, and Turks who were defending the line which I have described were very strongly entrenched along high wooded hills and ridges, broken at intervals by deeply sunk river channels. The line was strong by nature, and had been made stronger still by art. On 29th June the Russian artillery began a fierce bombardment along the whole front. Between Halicz and Brzezany the bombardment was specially violent, and before it ended the Austro-German trenches were in many places wiped out.

Early on the morning of Sunday, 1st July—a day of good omen for an offensive to begin—the Russian troops went “over the top,” carrying red banners with the motto, “Long live Free Russia, Kerensky, the land, and our will.” They attacked north and south of Brzezany with the object of capturing the bridge-head at that place, and forcing Bothmer to retreat behind the line of the next river to the west. On the south side the fighting was desperate, but the Russians managed to capture some of the German trenches, and to hold their own against strong counter-attacks. On the north side they were far more successful. Storming waves of Siberians, Finlanders, Slavs, and native races from Russian Asia pushed forward despite





Where most of the British Casualties occurred.

(Photo, Central News.)

This picture shows you officers of the machine-gun section of the British armoured cars division. They held their trenches on 1st July, when the great Russian break-away took place, and suffered many casualties.

the heavy fire of the enemy, and broke through the opposing lines on a front of three miles. A strongly fortified village and three lines of trenches were captured. By the end of the day 173 officers and more than 10,000 men, with seven guns, had fallen into the hands of the Russians.

British naval armoured cars, under the command of Commander Lockyer-Lampson, took part in the fighting. One of the squadrons advanced ahead of the Russian skirmishers, and others of our men served machine guns in the trenches. This was the first time that British and Russian troops had fought side by side in the trenches. A strong bond of comradeship sprang up, and the Russians were loud in praise of their British allies.

Next day, 2nd July, the battle extended towards the north-west, where the Russians captured three more lines of trenches, and forced the enemy back over the Little Strypa. An excellent start had been made, though Brzezany had not been captured. In the two days' fighting the total captures were 300 officers, 18,000 men, and 29 guns.

There was now a lull of two days, and in the interval Russian women covered themselves with glory. Seeing how reluctant their brothers and husbands were to join the fighting forces, a band of patriotic women formed an armed force for active service. The woman who raised the corps and was its first commandant was Madame Botchkareva, the wife of a Siberian soldier who had been killed. When her husband fell she obtained permission to take his place, and fought so bravely with his regiment that she won two Crosses of St. George.

On 4th July the colours of the Petrograd Women's Contingent, which she had raised, were blessed in the square in front of St. Isaac's Cathedral. The colours were a light gold with black lettering, and a cross in the centre. In one corner was the name of the commandant. Two hundred women and girls, with their hair cropped, wearing full men's uniform, and with rifles in their hands, took part in the parade. They afterwards marched along the Nevsky Prospect with a guard of honour composed of Cossacks. On some of the banners which they carried were the words, "Better is death than shame," and, "Women, do not give your hands to traitors." They also carried a portrait of Kerensky, which was loudly cheered. Later on in the month a crew of women offered to train for service on a battleship.



A Destroyer Action in the North Sea off Zeebrugge.

(By permission)

You have heard but little of the doings of the Navy in this volume. Nevertheless our destroyers and tration shows a fight off Zeebrugge on May 10. On that day our aircraft made a heavy attack on the this force was sighted by British light cruisers and destroyers. "Our forces immediately closed, and smoke screen. Chase was continued for one hour and twenty minutes, and the enemy was engaged at German destroyers to within range of the batteries at Zeebrugge. Enemy destroyers were seen to be within range of the German shore batteries. The eleven enemy destroyers are seen in three divisions,



Four British Destroyers chasing Eleven of the Enemy.

of The Sphere.)

patrol boats were constantly busy chasing submarines and maintaining the blockade. The above illustration shows the moment when the four pursuing British destroyers came within their funnel smoke stretching along the horizon. The above illustration shows the moment when the four pursuing British destroyers came within their funnel smoke stretching along the horizon. The above illustration shows the moment when the four pursuing British destroyers came within their funnel smoke stretching along the horizon.

The Women's Contingent did not confine itself to parading the streets of Petrograd. It was prepared to die for Holy Russia, if need be, in her dark hour of peril. On the way to the front crowds at the platforms of railway stations greeted the Amazons with ridicule. "Why are you going to fight?" they jeered. "Because you men are cowards!" the women shouted back. Before long they were in the thick of the fighting, and only about fifty of the two hundred came out of the battle unwounded. Twenty were killed, and eight were taken prisoners. You must not forget this episode, for nothing like it has been known in the annals of war since the days of Joan of Arc.

Contrast the behaviour of these noble women with that of a certain division of 10,000 men which refused to take part in the advance of 1st July. After persuasion six thousand of them consented to go forward. The remainder entrenched themselves on the outskirts of a forest, and after a last appeal was made to them, guns were brought up, and a salvo of shrapnel was fired over their heads. Nobody was killed, but the gunfire brought the mutineers to their senses, and they laid down their arms.

Now I must return to the fighting in Galicia. On Friday, 6th July, the battle was renewed with great violence. Ground was gained, but the resistance of the enemy was so stubborn that the troops were drawn off. While this indecisive battle was going on, General Korniloff set his troops in motion from the Dniester to the north-eastern slopes of the Carpathians. The attack was successful, and on Sunday, 8th July, the Austrian trenches were stormed to the west and north-west of Stanislau. The town of Jezupol, overlooking the Dniester, ten miles below Halicz, was captured, and so too were several strongly fortified villages. The Austrian front was broken, and the enemy was forced to retreat. For the first time for a whole year, the breach in the enemy's line was so wide that Korniloff was able to send his cavalry in pursuit. His Cossacks did not slacken rein until they were some eight miles beyond the broken Austrian line. Some 130 officers, 7,000 men, and 48 guns were captured.

Next day the Germans hurried up reinforcements to stiffen their failing allies, who rallied, and turned on the Russians, hoping to check their advance. Flushed with their success on the previous day, the men of the 8th Army pushed the enemy

back once more, and added to their captures 1,000 men and a great quantity of war material which the Austrians had abandoned. Halicz was entered, and the bridgehead across the river was secured. On the 10th the Russians went ahead again. In three days' fighting they had taken 150 officers and 10,000 men, with 80 guns and other war booty.

The Germans now clearly perceived that Brussilov was trying to reach the Stryj valley, in order to cut the communications of the Austrian armies with Hungary. It was a very grave menace, and the Germans knew that they must meet it at all costs. Reinforcements were brought up, and a stubborn fight began. Korniloff still pushed on, but his progress was slow, and after the 16th he was compelled to give up Kalusz, which he had captured, and withdraw behind the river Lomnica.

So far all had gone well. Korniloff had pushed a salient of some twelve to fourteen miles deep into the enemy's front. He had captured Halicz, and had cut the railway between two of the Austrian armies. The spirits of the Western Allies rose, and they greeted the Russian success with great satisfaction. Then, in the moment when hope stood high, came bitter disappointment.

The effect of Kerensky's speeches had by this time largely vanished. As soon as his back was turned thousands of Germany's secret agents, and those Russians who were openly or blindly playing her game, set to work to undermine his influence. In vain did the Workmen's and Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates issue such appeals as the following :—

“The offensive has begun. Our brothers are shedding their blood for the common weal. The time has come for all dissensions to cease. All are obliged to assist those who stand in the front line under the fire of the enemy. To refrain from coming to their assistance at this moment is to deliver them up to destruction, to betray the Fatherland and the cause of the Revolution. . . .

“There are newspapers here which by their articles and appeals are creating confusion in the hearts of those who are ready to hasten to the assistance of our heroic army. . . . You ought to know, comrades, that these ill-advised articles and appeals are being used by scoundrelly spies and police in order to accomplish their treacherous business of calling upon you to betray your brothers who are giving their lives for the common cause.

“Comrades in war,—Listen only to the calls of the All-Russia Council. Fulfil all the military instructions of your officers. Be prepared each of you to respond to the first appeal to help our brothers, and let them know that behind them is all Russia.”

This and other similar appeals fell on deaf ears. A quarrel divided the Ministry, and four members of the Government resigned. Even in the hour of dire peril they were stiff-necked in their opinions, and unable to compose their differences. On the very day of Korniloff's withdrawal, soldiers in Petrograd broke into revolt as a protest against the disbanding of mutinous troops at the front. They marched up and down the Nevsky Prospect firing their rifles, while motor lorries, full of soldiers and sailors and the traitors who were leading them astray, strove to prevent Kerensky from leaving the station. They were joined by mutineers from Kronstadt.

Then came graver news still. Certain of the regiments in Korniloff's command refused to obey their officers, and deserted their trenches. Whole units gave up their positions, and began streaming away to the rear. Long files of deserters, armed and unarmed, men in good health and robust, who had lost all sense of shame, were seen in confused retreat. Orders were given to fire on these runaways, but even this did not prevent them from leaving the battlefield.

The Austrians, knowing well that the leaven of disaffection was at work, suddenly advanced, and under this pressure the whole Russian front yielded. A German officer who had been captured a fortnight before foretold the disaster which spies and traitors had brought about. "You will see," he said, "that your troops will run away when the time comes, and we shall have a walk-over." The evil genius of this pitiful treachery was one Lenin, who, it is said, had received £25,000 in German gold to betray his country.

A correspondent with the army tells us that strange scenes were witnessed on the road eastward. A man on a white horse dashed through a town yelling: "German cavalry are behind; save yourselves." He was afterwards arrested, and proved to be a German spy. Terrible confusion followed. A multitude of deserters and transport carts, lorries, and ambulances headed eastward at top speed. The roadway was littered with rifles and knapsacks, and other things thrown away by the fugitives. Through the panic-stricken crowd, amidst burning dust and under a scorching sun, the correspondent and his British friends had to fight their way, using their sticks and fists, and brandishing their revolvers at the deserters, who repeatedly tried to storm their cars. At length they got ahead

of the rout, and, placing lorries across the road, dammed the tide of panic.

A wounded British officer says :—

“ Thousands of men were struggling to get away. They seized motor transports bringing up food and equipment, and, flinging the contents on the road, turned the wagons round and fought like demented men to escape. . . . We held the enemy for thirty-six hours. When we were compelled to retire, sixteen of us, including myself, had been wounded. . . . I was placed on a hospital train at Tarnopol, which was due to leave at ten o'clock that night. As there was no sign of the train moving out at one o'clock next morning, we sent to know the reason, and were told that the driver and firemen had run away, and that Cossacks were searching for them. At eight o'clock next morning a driver was found, and we left ; but before we had gone twenty miles we had over three thousand people, most of them soldiers, on board. They were fighting for places on the buffers and on the footboards, and hundreds climbed to the roof, to which they clung during the journey.”

British officers and men did yeoman service in trying to stop the rout. In one place they managed to rally some 800 men, and station them along the road at intervals in order to deal with approaching German cavalry ; but meanwhile more than three whole divisions had abandoned vital positions, and the enemy was free to advance at his will. The gunners, the Cossacks, and the cavalry alone stood their ground, and, along with British and Russian armoured motor cars, held the line until all hope of saving it had gone. It is said that the gunners fell on their knees and begged the infantry to save the guns, but all to no purpose. They did not even wait to destroy their stores. In ten days the enemy advanced sixty miles, and all, and more than all that had been won was lost.

It was now felt that there was only one man in the country who could prevent Russia from committing suicide. Prince Lvoff resigned, and Kerensky became Prime Minister and practically dictator. Kerensky strove might and main to bring order out of chaos, and for a time succeeded. But the canker at the heart of Russia had bitten too deeply even for him to root it out. For many a long day Russia was practically out of action.

CHAPTER XLII.

THREE YEARS OF WAR.

THE close of the period with which this volume deals practically brings us down to the end of the third year of war. As August 4, 1917, drew near, men everywhere were asking themselves the questions, "Are we winning? Are we entitled to be confident that victory will crown us in the end?"

The outlook much resembled an April day. There were dark and threatening clouds in the sky, but there were also many gleams of sunshine. Those who were best qualified to judge were assured that the storm clouds, dark and threatening as they were, would be dispelled, and that sunshine would at length prevail. On the West, the front of victory or defeat, there was high promise; on the Eastern front the forces of the Allies were practically out of action. Whether they would be able to recover, and when they would be in a position to take the offensive once more, no man could say. But in spite of this very heavy handicap, France, Italy, and Britain were convinced of their ability to win, and were determined to go on with the war, no matter how long it might continue and how costly the necessary sacrifices might be.

What of Germany? She and her dupes had been hard hit. She had lost four and a half millions of her best fighters;* her maritime trade was dead, and all her colonies were lost. Her finances were in a state of disorder, and she had no longer any hope of making subject nations pay off the immense debts which she had incurred. She looked abroad, and saw every great nation loathing and despising her. She looked at home, and saw her people hungry and exhausted, and sick of the

* The total death roll of all the combatants at the close of the third year of war was estimated at ten millions.

war. While she saw with relief that Russia was for the time being out of the fight, she saw also a new and terribly strong ally join her foes. The entrance of the United States into the quarrel was the bitterest blow which she had suffered since the day when she learned, to her indignant amazement, that Britain had flung down the gage of battle:

To keep up the failing spirits of his people, the Kaiser and his ministers protested that America could do nothing. They strove by all sorts of knavery to incite the German-Americans to secret and open strife, in order to paralyze the United States; but met with little success, and they trembled, even while they boasted, at the thought that they would soon be face to face with a new foe, mighty in resources, bent on victory, and fresh in the fray at the very moment when they were bleeding to death. Their one and only hope lay in the U-boat campaign; but already many Germans were convinced that they were relying on a broken reed.

What of Britain? She had made many mistakes, both in the council chamber and in the field, but the great bulk of her people had played their part nobly. At home and abroad men and women of the British race had bravely and cheerfully shouldered their responsibilities and borne their burdens. They had endured without a murmur the loss of their best and dearest. They had spared nothing to help their Allies even in moments of their own grave need. They had stood united against the common foe of mankind, and even when death hurtled upon them from the air there had been no craven cry. So far they had not suffered privation, and they saw with pride that no single inch of British territory was in the hands of the enemy. At the close of three years of war they were just as determined on victory as on that August day when the trumpet note of duty called them into the field.

Would this spirit continue to the bitter end, despite all the trials and sufferings which were bound to come when the war entered upon its last and most desperate stages? At a great meeting held on the third anniversary of the declaration of war, the Prime Minister (Mr. Lloyd George) thus addressed a great multitude :—

“ Let there be one thought in every mind. If you sow distrust, discontent, disunion in the nation, we shall reap defeat; if, on the other hand, we sow the seeds of patience, confidence, and unity, we shall garner

in victory and its fruits. The last ridges of a climb are always the most trying to the nerves and to the heart ; the real test of great endurance and courage comes in the last few hundreds or scores of feet of a climb upwards. The climber who turns back when he is almost there never becomes a great mountaineer, and the nation that turns back and falters before it reaches its purpose never becomes a great people.

" You have all had experience of climbing. Any mountaineer can start ; any sort of mountaineer can go part of the way ; and very often the poorer the mountaineer, the greater his ardour when he does start ; but fatigue and danger wear out all but the stoutest hearts, and sometimes even the stout-hearted fail when they come to the last slippery precipice. But if they do turn back and afterwards look up and see how near they had got to the top, how they curse the faint-heartedness which bade them give up when they were so near the goal.

" No one has any idea—no one in Britain, France, Italy, or Russia, nor in Germany, nor in Austria—how near the top we may be. A mere crag may hide it from our view. And there are accidents. Russia may have staggered for a moment, but she is still on the rope ; she in due time will be up again, climbing, strong-limbed and firm of purpose, and together we shall reach the summit of our hopes."

" Patience, confidence, and unity "—these were the watch-words of all Britons worthy of the name at the close of three years of war.

END OF VOL. VII.

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