

# GERMAN GENERALSHIP

BY ALFRED G. GARDINER

## I

IN those intimate and incisive letters which he wrote to his wife during the Franco-Prussian War, Bismarck attacked the German generalship in the field with almost apoplectic fury. Apart from Moltke and 'good old Roon' — the one a Dane, the other a Dutchman — he held German generals in utter contempt, and he declared again and again that it was only the bravery of the soldiers that saved the incapable leadership from disaster. It was not a very sound judgment, for it ignored the main factor in the swift triumph of Germany. If the capacity of the German generals, apart from Moltke and Roon, was low, that of the French generals opposed to them was infinitely inferior. So much incompetence, perhaps, was never shown on so large a stage as that displayed by the French generals, and no brave people ever paid a heavier penalty for corruption and folly in high places than the French paid. But it is probably true that the victory of 1870-71 was won by Bismarck's diplomacy rather than by Prussian military genius or even French inefficiency. It was his skill in uniting Germany in a common quarrel with France, and in isolating his foe, that assured the result. He knew that Moltke's plans and the adequacy of the Prussian military machine could not fail to consummate his designs against an enemy whose unpreparedness and levity he had thoroughly appreciated.

In the present war the cautious and

far-sighted diplomacy of Bismarck has been wanting, and Germany has had to rely for success on the genius of its generals and the efficiency of the military machine. We can imagine very well the wrath with which Bismarck would contemplate the diplomacy that gambled on the quiescence of England. But what would be his judgment, and what will be the judgment of history on the military conduct of the war? So far as preparedness is concerned, there has of course been no parallel to the astonishing position of Germany when the war burst on Europe. Treated as an art, it may be claimed that the Latins have been the great masters of war; but treated in the modern sense as a science, the supremacy of Prussia has been unchallengeable. It has concentrated the genius of the most painstaking people in Europe on the single goal of military efficiency. To that end every other consideration has been subordinated. Its commerce, its industry, its financial methods, its education, its social reform, its railways, even its recreations have had in reserve that ultimate purpose of making the nation supreme on the battlefield, and its doctrine of the unprovoked war has governed all its statesmanship and diplomacy. Scharnhorst struck the keynote of scientific warfare in Prussia's darkest hour; Clausewitz elaborated the laws of that warfare; Moltke put them into practice with a shattering success that opened a new epoch in military history.

Henceforward war had to be conceived, not as a thing of swift inspira-

tions, but as a thing prepared in the scientist's laboratory. The personal factor was subordinated to the machine, and Napoleon's great maxim, 'Je m'engage et puis je vois,' became the watchword of an outworn creed. The victories of science over matter — the conquest of the air, the discovery of wireless telegraphy, the development of motor-traction, the achievements of chemistry in the matter of high explosives, and so on — tended to emphasize the change in the character of war, and worked to the advantage of the power which was at once most industrious in the practical applications of science and most concerned in making those applications subservient to the needs of war.

That a nation so saturated with the thought of war and so rightly conscious of its superiority over all its rivals should have regarded itself as invincible calls for no surprise. The confidence of the Germans in their machine had a foundation as solid and absolute as any human calculation about calculable things can have. On the spiritual side they were universally wrong. They miscalculated Belgium, they misread England, they woefully underrated France, they blundered in their estimate of the ability of Austria to hold Russia in check while France was being crushed. But on the material side they were substantially right.

If we judge German generalship by strictly military considerations, as distinct from the political and imaginative factors, we are bound to admit that its success has been complete. The machine has been a miracle of efficiency, and if preparedness for war were the final condition of victory, Germany would have been master of Europe and, indeed, of the world, in six months. The advantage with which Germany started was due primarily no doubt to the initiative inherent in the unprovoked war.

The state which lays its plans with the deliberate purpose of striking its blow when its enemy is not looking must always have the whip-hand of the state which stands on the defensive and will fight only under provocation. But apart from this advantage, the Germans came into the field with a much more deeply and truly considered theory of the mechanism of war under modern conditions than any of their foes possessed. Their system of the General Staff, in operation for generations, had brought to bear on all the problems of war a mass of learning which had no parallel in any other country and which had won for Germany the admiration of the official military class in all the neutral countries. Prussia was the military academy in which most of the generals of those countries had graduated. Even General Yanushkevitch, the chief of the Russian General Staff at the opening of the war, had received his military education in Germany.

Against this elaborately systematized thought directed to definite ends, the Allies had little to offer but improvised methods. They had no common strategy, no body of agreed doctrine. France had passed through a series of military convulsions which made a coherent and steadily maintained theory impossible. The Russian military system was as corrupt and inefficient as other departments of Russian official life. The revelations of the Russo-Japanese war had done little to cleanse the Augean stables, and only a few weeks before the crisis came it was stated in the Duma, and not denied, that there were 2000 generals in the Russian Army against 350 in the French Army, and that of these the vast majority had received their rank, not for military merit, but through patronage or social influence. Of the younger generals only 25 per cent had passed through the regimental mill, and of 300 colonels of most

recent promotion only one had gone through a military academy.

In England the case, for other reasons, was no better. Even in the eighteenth century Chatham had declared, 'The Navy is the Standing Army of England,' and the idea of intervention in continental warfare had almost ceased to belong to the realm of practical considerations. No army had in the last generation seen fighting in so many and such various fields as the British Army, but the fields were remote, the scale small, and the methods antiquated. Hard thinking is not a British characteristic, nor is organization a thing for which the Englishman has an affection. We had muddled through the Boer War at infinite sacrifice, and the Army was still very largely a social asset into which the sons of the aristocracy went to learn polo. Mr. Haldane, with his doctrine of 'clear-thinking' and efficiency, did something to modernize the machine and even introduced the idea of the General Staff in a modest form. It was his War Book which enabled the little British Army to play so prompt and striking a part in the first episode of the war; but that was an isolated incident. Behind it was a blank to be filled in with a fury of improvisation.

## II

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that when the clash came it was found that the Germans were easily first in their theories. Take the matter of fortifications. They had seen that the modern weapon of offense had made the fortress obsolete except as a centre of widespread operations. The same view had been put forward elsewhere by lay thinkers like Sir Sydenham Clarke (Lord Sydenham), who had advocated earthworks as against forts which offered a fixed target for great mobile how-

itzers. But France still placed reliance upon the fortresses. The collapse of Namur and the fortresses on the Belgian border was the first evidence that in military thought the Germans were decisively superior. As the war progressed, especially on the Russian front, the fact on which the Germans had calculated — that the modern gun would dominate the fort — was established with terrible emphasis. It was only on the Verdun-Toul line that the fortress retained an appearance of supremacy, but it was a supremacy based upon the fact that the country lent itself to a wide defensive system which reduced the fort to the function of a *dépôt* for the field operations of a great army. The fortress *qua* fortress had vanished as an article of military faith.

Not less sound was the doctrine of the Germans as to the use of the big gun in field warfare. The French General Staff had pinned their faith to the 75 mm. and had resisted every proposal for the employment of heavy artillery in the field. When the Caillaux ministry was in office, an attempt was made to provide the army with big guns for field work, and ten millions sterling were voted for the purpose. But though the scheme went through, it was disapproved of by the military experts, and with the fall of the Caillaux ministry it was quickly dropped. The ground of objection on the part of professional opinion was that the use of heavy guns would destroy the mobility of the army and embarrass its operations. Assuming that war was still an affair of rapid movement and swift, decisive action, this was a tenable view; but the battle of Mukden was the portent of a fundamental change of method profoundly affecting the material requirements of an army in the field. The Germans alone fully appreciated the meaning of that change. In the early stages of the war, while the armies were sway-

ing to and fro over northern France, their big guns were doubtless an embarrassment. They could not keep pace with the rapid movement, and were unable to influence events in the supreme crisis of the Marne. But when the struggle had settled down into permanent trench warfare, the big guns for the field became a factor of the first importance, and the French doctrine was found to have no relation to the warfare initiated at Mukden and rendered inevitable by the scale and equipment of modern armies.

In the associated problem of the use of the high-explosive shell the Germans were equally right and the Allies equally wrong. Nothing is more remarkable as showing the obstinate conservatism of professional thought, than the precious months lost before the French and the English generals came to admit that their reliance on shrapnel in trench warfare was a fatal mistake. The great shell controversy in England developed into an attack on the politicians, but it was not the politicians either in England or France who were to blame: it was the soldiers. They seemed afflicted with an inability to see the most elementary fact of the war. In conversation, they would admit that it was the German high-explosive shell which was doing the destruction in their own lines; but in the same breath they would reaffirm their faith in shrapnel so far as the retaliation on the enemy was concerned. Indeed, it was not until the politicians intervened that this enormous heresy was got rid of. It was the appointment of Mr. Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions in England and of M. Thomas to the same position in France that brought the Allies at last into touch with the bedrock facts about big guns and high-explosive shells.

The case was much the same in regard to the machine-gun. It would

have seemed to the average man that there could be no doubt as to the importance of that weapon in any kind of warfare; but the Germans alone entered on the war with a real understanding of the part it was destined to play. In the English Army, and to a large extent in the French Army as well, the machine-gun was a sort of luxury, and for months it remained a sort of luxury. In the German Army it was from the first the real instrument of defense. At the end of nine months of war the equipment of the English was in the proportion of two machine-guns to ten on the side of the Germans, and not for a year was this dreadful handicap substantially diminished. The bearing of this fact on the course of the trench warfare was immensely important to the Germans. They were able to hold their advanced trenches with a minimum of men, while we had to hold ours with the maximum. In a word, we used men where they used the machine.

That the Germans looked confidently for a swift triumph in the field is undoubted; but that they had also foreseen the possibility of the trench warfare is evident, not only from all this preparation, but also from the promptness with which they brought into play the hand-grenade and the trench-mortar. The revival of these obsolete weapons was an inevitable consequence of the siege warfare, but only the Germans were prepared. Evidently they alone had seriously and minutely considered the possibility of the static struggle. For a considerable time after the great parallel lines from Flanders to Switzerland had been drawn, the Germans were using an abundance of perfectly manufactured hand-bombs, while their foes could reply only with crude improvisations of an extremely inferior sort.

It is still an open question whether the elaborate German method of constructing trenches is sound. The deep

excavation and the concrete linings have important advantages, but in the case of a heavy bombardment they are of very doubtful wisdom, for men have more chance of escape from a fall of natural soil than from the collapse of deep concrete structures. However, the promptness with which the Germans laid these underground fortifications for hundreds of miles is an evidence of their meticulous care and astonishing preparedness for all eventualities. It is this fact which has given the British officer so high a respect for German military thinking. 'When the Germans do something in a different way from ours,' said a distinguished officer at General Headquarters to me, 'the chances are that it is a better way than ours.'

This I found to be a generally accepted view at the front. Much scorn, for example, has been poured on the place which the German officer takes in attack. He does not lead his men, but drives them. On the face of it, this method shows badly against the French and English tradition by which the officer gives his men the example of gallantry. That example governs the whole relationship of officers and men and invests war with a spirit of chivalry and sacrifice which is an important military asset. But on the other hand, the price it exacts in the mortality of officers is a grave set-off, and the Germans, who are always realists in their methods, regard the price as too high for the gain it brings. And though the British tradition is too deep-rooted to be destroyed, I found a very widespread conviction among the British officers that, as a matter of practical loss and gain, the German system was probably right in trench warfare if not in the free action of the field.

### III

There is much less disposition to approve of another phase of German

military thought. The massed attack has, on the whole, been found to be a great and costly failure. To justify the enormous sacrifice which it involves, it must have a decisive and unequivocal success. On no occasion has it been attended with such a success. The sacrifice has been made, but the end has never been gained, and with the serious diminution in the man-power of Germany and the great improvement in the munitioning of the Allies there has been a marked tendency to avoid this reckless staking of life.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that no artillery preparation so far found to be practicable is adequate to give the gamble a reasonable chance of success.

In one sphere of the war the Germans have been decisively inferior. The Allies, almost from the beginning, have established a definite mastery in the air, and, though much alarm was caused by the feats of the Fokker, that mastery is still maintained. In this connection I refer only to the aeroplane. So far as the airship is concerned the Germans have been simply unchallenged. They had devoted immense thought and expenditure to this weapon and clearly looked to it as destined to offset, in large measure, the naval supremacy of Britain. It cannot be denied that as an instrument of 'frightfulness' it has justified itself. It has made the darkness terrible, not to London only but to all England; it has destroyed many innocent lives and created widespread alarm. But in a strict military sense it has so far been literally negligible, for it can operate only in the dark and its bombs are dropped at random, or, at best, by guesswork. Even indirectly it has had no military value. It has caused alarm and indignation, but no panic; and in a real sense it has served a useful purpose by making England realize the actualities of war. There will

<sup>1</sup> This paper was written immediately before the great attack on Verdun. — THE EDITORS.



be no labor troubles in the wake of the Zeppelin. It may be doubted, therefore, whether even in the case of the airship the Germans have really scored.

So far as the aeroplane is concerned their inferiority has been unquestioned. The reason for this is obvious. No amount of thinking and organization can secure the command of the air unaided. Given equal inventiveness — and the French and the English are certainly not inferior in this respect — the governing factor of the war in the air is the quality of individual daring and independent resource. In this quality the Germans are indisputably inferior. Their system relies upon a collective discipline. The individual is merged in the mass, and, divorced from the mass, he is the inferior fighting animal. Bernhardt realized this grave defect of the Prussian system and urgently advocated the cultivation of individual initiative in the soldiery; but the war has shown that his advocacy has been vain. Indeed, the development of the individual is obviously incompatible with the harsh mechanism of the Prussian system, and it is that fact which will govern the final verdict on German military thought. It sacrifices the man to the machine. In a war of sudden impetus the perfect machine wins; the longer the war lasts, however, the more does the human factor assert its authority. It is possible in the course of a prolonged struggle to equalize the machinery of war, but not to equalize the human element. The Allies have learned the science of war from the Germans, and, having learned it, they possess a superior quality of material with which to apply it.

If the Germans, on the whole, started with the sounder theories as to the methods of war, their advantage in the matter of strategy should have been even more decisive. That advantage was founded, not merely on the pro-

found study which the General Staff had for a generation devoted to the problem. In that study they had the advantage which belongs to a deliberate policy of aggression. They laid their plans for a war which would come at their own time and in their own way, and in which they would have the element of surprise and the command of the initiative. In a very real sense they alone had a strategy conceived on large and comprehensive lines and based on really calculable considerations. The Allies had never discussed the strategy of a possible war in a collective way. Beyond the secret understanding between England and France that, in the event of the invasion of Belgium, the British Army should go to the defense of that country, there was no strategic preparation on the part of the two countries, and the idea that England would raise an army on the continental scale was never contemplated. Her task was the command of the sea and the defense of her own shores. Italy, so far from being involved in the general strategy of the Allies, was at that time nominally an ally of Germany. The relations between France and Russia had been more intimate, but in so far as they had discussed a common strategy it was the strategy of defense in unknown circumstances at an unknown time. It conceded the initiative to Germany as the corollary of unalterable facts.

Those facts were not limited to the known supremacy of the German military machine. The geographical position of Germany alone was a decisive factor in the dictation of the initiative. She had her ally, not separated by land or sea, but solidly at her back, and, working on interior lines, she could calculate on dealing with her enemies in detail, and on bringing the whole weight of her resources to any given point with a minimum of delay. This advantage

was enhanced by her wonderful system of military railways. That system, by giving an unrivaled mobility to her armies, practically duplicated their value. She could always have her men where she most needed them. She had not only mass, but volition, and could strike her blow where she pleased.

The measure of this intrinsic superiority was only slowly realized by the Allies as the war progressed, but it had been the basic fact from which German strategy started. Its value was highest in the early stages of the struggle, when the Allies were staggering under the shock that came with such frightful suddenness; but it continued to dominate the war far into the second year, and at the time of writing it may be said that the initiative is still in the hands of the Germans, though the command of exterior lines, the evolution of a common strategy, and the slow development of superior resources are visibly changing the balance in favor of the Allies.

It will be the task of the historian to discover why, with so overwhelming a superiority of men, material, preparative study, centrality, and mobility, the Germans did not succeed in shattering the Allies before they collected their strength. The programme was simple and apparently easily within achievement. France was to be crushed in one overwhelming movement; Russia, held up temporarily by Austria, was to be disposed of at leisure, and the war was to be over in six months. Three things vitiated the scheme: (1) The rapidity of the Allied retreat through France led the Germans to outrun themselves, so that when they came to deliver the fatal blow at the Marne they were an exhausted army; (2) the Russian raid into East Prussia disarranged the plan of campaign; (3) the collapse of Austria fundamentally changed the problem of the war. The subsequent failure to reach Calais finally left the original

strategy of Germany in ruins. Thenceforward a new plan of campaign had to be devised. And it was in the second phase of the war that German generalship revealed its strength, its boldness, its breadth of conception, and its resourcefulness. It had failed when its advantages were at their maximum; it recovered when those advantages, though still great, were declining.

The fact is due, I think, mainly to the part which personality still plays in war. Germany entered the struggle, not with the wrong strategy, not with unsound ideas of relative values, but with the wrong men in command. The contrast between events up to the disastrous failure of the attempt on Calais, which led to the deposition of Count von Moltke, and the events of 1915 is the most striking fact of the war. It is not easy to say how far Moltke was responsible for the failure of the first four months and how far he was over-ruled by the Supreme War-Lord. It is clear, however, that both before Paris and before Calais there was a very remarkable indecision—the result, apparently, of sharp divergences of view. This was especially true in the attack on Calais. No military authority has defended the reckless squandering of effort on four separate attempts to break through the Allied line—on the coast, at Arras, at Armentières, and finally at Ypres. It is agreed that the episode revealed a collision of political and military aims and a serious conflict in the higher command. Moltke was never more than the shadow of a great name, and it is generally assumed that his power was entirely subordinated to the will of the Kaiser, who, though a cavalry commander of very considerable ability, is far too impulsive and neurotic for the large operations of war.

And if the higher command in this stage of the war was defective, it was no less obvious that the commands in the

field were in indifferent hands. The Crown Prince was a mere popinjay whose incapacity was notorious and whose extravagances and improprieties were a legend of irresponsible folly or worse. The Crown Prince of Bavaria was conspicuous only for the venom of his tongue; the Duke of Württemberg was a name and nothing more. Hausen vanished after the Marne, and Kluck is remembered only for his vain boast that he had the British Army in 'a ring of iron' at Maubeuge, and for his fatal attempt to march across the British front at the Marne when the reinforcements from Paris appeared on his flank.

## IV

It is to the appointment of Falkenhayn as Chief of the General Staff and to the emergence in the field of Generals Hindenburg and Mackensen that the remarkable revival of German prestige during 1915 was due. Of these three men, not one was in a position of great authority when the war began. Indeed, only one, Mackensen, was in active service at all. Hindenburg was in retirement at Hanover; Falkenhayn was in the political position of Minister of War, and Mackensen was in command at Danzig, where he had come into serious collision with the Crown Prince and was in consequence under a cloud.

Of the three reputations made by the war, that which has had far the greatest *réclame* is probably least important. Hindenburg's victory in the Masurian Lakes district was certainly one of the few decisive incidents of the war. It was a victory in that complete and final sense which has become so unusual under modern conditions. It was a victory, too, due entirely to superior generalship. Hindenburg had been something of an oddity in the Army owing to his obsession on the subject of the military importance of the lake dis-

trict of East Prussia. When it was proposed to drain that region he fought for his marshes as a wild animal for its young, and finally stampeded the Kaiser himself on the subject by the energy of his advocacy. The region had been his favorite theatre of study, and in the manœuvres there he unfailingly engineered his foe into the marshes. 'We're going to have a bath to-day,' was the saying of the soldiers when 'old Hindenburg' was against them. But when the war broke out Hindenburg was neglected, and his application for a post was ignored until the Russian invasion of the sacred soil of East Prussia spread panic in the capital and throughout the country. Then the boycott collapsed. 'Suddenly,' he said, after he had become the national hero, 'there came a telegram informing me that the Emperor commissioned me to command the Eastern Army. I really only had time to buy some woollen clothing and make my old uniform presentable again. Then came sleeping cars, saloon cars, locomotives — and so I journeyed to East Prussia like a prince. And so far everything has gone well.'

It had. On the ground that he knew so thoroughly he manœuvred Samsonov's army into the swamps and achieved the most sensational victory of the war. He became the savior of his country and in the popular imagination overshadowed every other figure. He had the whole nation at his feet, and being rather a breezy, simple-minded man who had never before known what popular acclamation was like, he reveled in the sunshine with the frank enjoyment of a schoolboy.

But great as the achievement was, it was not so great as the public estimate, inflated by the panic that preceded it, conceived it to be; and those who have followed the campaigns on the Eastern frontier with expert knowledge and have examined the battles in detail



have a higher regard for the genius of Mackensen than for that of Hindenburg. Like Hindenburg he was ignored at the beginning of the campaign. His troubles with the Crown Prince at Danzig had culminated earlier in the year in a request to the Kaiser that either he or the Prince should be removed. Mackensen remained and the Prince was recalled to Berlin; but when the war broke out it was the latter who was in command of the central army in the West, while Mackensen was left to cool his heels in obscure tasks. Not until some months had passed with their tale of disappointed hopes did he emerge as the second in command to Hindenburg on the Russian front.

His name first came into prominence by his skillful extrication of his army when its envelopment east of Lodz was regarded as complete; and thenceforward every task of critical importance was committed to his hands. It was he who delivered that smashing blow on the Dunajec which opened so sensationally the new and most formidable phase of German attack. The series of operations that followed by which he forced the Russian left back to the Privit marshes revealed a grim power not inferior to Hindenburg's and a constructive subtlety which, except on the ground that he had studied all his lifetime, Hindenburg has not rivaled.

The campaign in Serbia was on a smaller scale, but again the strategy was of that fresh and original character that commands the respect of the student of war. It is, I believe, true to say that no campaigns in connection with the war are being studied by the military experts with so much attention as those of Mackensen. Like Hindenburg, Kluck, Bülow, and most of the German generals, he is nearer seventy than sixty. He won the Iron Cross in the War of 1870, and the Iron Cross was relatively a much less famil-

iar reward then than now. It really indicated work of rare individual courage, which is not necessarily the case to-day. Indeed, there are few things more significant of the change which has come over the temperament of Prussia than the contrast between the parsimony with which decorations were given in 1870 and the lavishness with which they were given in the early phases of the present war.

Unlike Hindenburg, Mackensen is a man of silent, almost morose habit. It is popularly attributed to the blow which the loss of a much-loved wife inflicted on him, but it is in reality the natural habit of a singularly absorbed and self-contained character. His brevity of speech is the expression of a ruthless temper, and in the severity of the demands he makes on all who come under his iron will, as well as in his cold and concentrated silence, he is reminiscent of Lord Kitchener. Miracles have been performed by soldiers and civilians alike during his advances, not because of the affection they have for him, but because of the fear of his merciless hand. He has been said (with what truth I do not know) to have Scots blood in his veins, but in all his characteristics he is typical of the Prussian mind, manner, and thought.

But the true key to the renaissance of the German cause after the failure of 1914 is to be found in Falkenhayn, who was appointed Chief of Staff on the fall of Moltke. Falkenhayn is, apart from the royal leaders, considerably the youngest of the generals in high position in the German army. He is 54 — the same age as General Haig. He is a man whose ambitions are as unlimited as his powers to achieve them. Four years or so ago he was unknown to the German public, and his promotion from an obscure provincial command to the position of Prussian Minister of War is supposed to have been the result

of one of those court intrigues which play so large a part in Prussian public life. He had family influence in the Kaiser's household and his advancement was not unconnected with that fact.

But he had brains as well as influence, and an aggressive personality disguised by the arts of the subtle and far-sighted intriguer. From his advent to the Ministry of War he set himself to undermine Moltke. It began to be hinted that Moltke was 'getting old,' that the General Staff needed new and young blood, and so on; and when the Zabern incident occurred, Falkenhayn made a bid for popularity with the army by his emphatic approval of the infamous action of Colonel Reutter and Lieutenant Förstner. It was his hand more, perhaps, than another that forced the declaration of war prematurely, in face of the hesitation of the Kaiser and the opposition of Bethmann-Hollweg; but when the war came it was Moltke who remained in the position on which Falkenhayn had set his heart. The ambitious minister waited for his opportunity. He had Moltke's measure, knew that he was unlikely to survive, opposed his strategy regarding Belgium, and, on the collapse of the campaign at Ypres, he knew that his moment had come.

In the military sense it is indisputable that his promotion has been triumphantly justified by events. A new and more masterful spirit pervaded German strategy from the moment of his assumption of the control of military policy. There was no longer any sense of conflict between political and military aims, still less of any evidence of the collision of wills. The disastrous experience of the first four months of the war had aged the Kaiser and modified his imperious self-will. He was in the frame of mind to forget that he was the Supreme War-Lord and to distrust his own judgment, and Falkenhayn had the force and the adroitness to

avail himself of this fact. He established over his master an intellectual authority which left him the practical dictator of military policy. This ascendancy has been confirmed by the success which attended his far-reaching and powerful strategy throughout 1915, and in presenting him with the Order of the Black Eagle the Kaiser used terms of flattery which almost touched the level of obsequious reverence.

General Falkenhayn has fortified his position by an artful policy of excluding possible rivals from access to his master. In an unusually informing analysis of the forces around the Kaiser at the present time, published in *Le Temps*, Mr. Hendrik Hudson, who, as a neutral, has spent a long time in Germany, declares that Falkenhayn is the most powerful man in the country. 'The power of General Falkenhayn,' he says, 'comes from the extraordinary influence, inexplicable even to those who know this personage, which he wields over the Emperor. He is very jealous of his authority, and keeps away from headquarters all who he thinks might seek to gain the confidence of the sovereign. This isolation of the Emperor is an important fact, as the sovereign learns only what General Falkenhayn wishes him to know. William II is the prisoner of his military camarilla.'

It is not the first time that the Kaiser has been the prisoner of a camarilla, as the revelations of the Eulenburg case witness. But it is not improbable that he is on this occasion a willing prisoner. In the vast disaster that has befallen him, when his

cloud of dignity

Is held from falling with so weak a wind,  
That it will quickly drop,

he turns for succor to the man whose strength gives him confidence and whose success offers him still the refuge of hope in a world that is reeling beneath his feet.

# THE MACHINES

BY WILLIAM J. ROBINSON

WHEN the British blockade was tightening its coils about Germany, a sigh of relief went up from the Entente powers, and their press proclaimed that with gasoline and rubber cut off from the enemy the war would soon come automatically to an end. I am not concerned with the failure of these prophecies to reckon with German chemical ingenuity; they merely throw light on the interesting fact that modern warfare, with its demand for swift-striking movement in every branch of the complicated military organism, could not exist without the motor-vehicle in its various forms.

Through the illustrated weeklies and the moving pictures, Americans have become familiar with the Skoda howitzers, taken to pieces for travel, rumbling along behind great Mercédès traction-motors. They have seen the London motor-busses, loaded to bursting with grinning Tommies on their way to the front, flaunting Bovril and Nestlé's Food signs against an unfamiliar background of canals and serried poplar trees. They cannot realize, however, because they have not witnessed with their own eyes, the vast orderly ferment of wheeled traffic that fills the roads on both sides of that blackened, blasted battle-line between the armies of Western Europe. Where once the task of fulfillment fell to straining horse-flesh, the burden is now laid on wheels winged by gasoline. From the flashing wire spokes of the dispatch-rider's motor-cycle to the clanking, crushing 'feet' of the caterpillar tractor

that pulls the big guns into action, the incredibly complicated machinery of war is now dependent on an element which, at the time of the Spanish-American War, was unknown to military use.

It was chance which got me into the British Army; it was also by chance that I was attached to the staff of a captain of the 5th Dragoon Guards and sent off to Belgium five days after my enlistment, without the usual weary months of training in the riding-school. On October 8, 1914, our regiment landed at Ostend; this was the beginning of 13 months of service, during which I passed from my regular duties in the Dragoon Guards to the Army Service Corps as motor-driver to General Byng, and was subsequently attached to the Headquarters Staff of the 5th Army Corps. While in this, I saw service in an armored car of the Royal Naval Air Service, went into action with the Motor Machine-gun Section, and also acted as a dispatch rider. This enabled me to get a fairly good first-hand idea of the use made by the British Army of the various types of motor-vehicle; and if some of my experiences left me in doubt as to the ability of the human nervous system to stand up under the racking, killing pace demanded by these branches of the service, I came away from my term at the front full of admiration for the men behind the organization which is responsible for the smooth functioning of the motor-vehicle wing of the British Army.

My first good opportunity to see this