

# HARPER'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOL. CXV

SEPTEMBER, 1907 No. DCLXXXVIII

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THE POINTED SPIRE AND CLUSTERED ROOFS OF KELMS

## A Country Under Two Kings

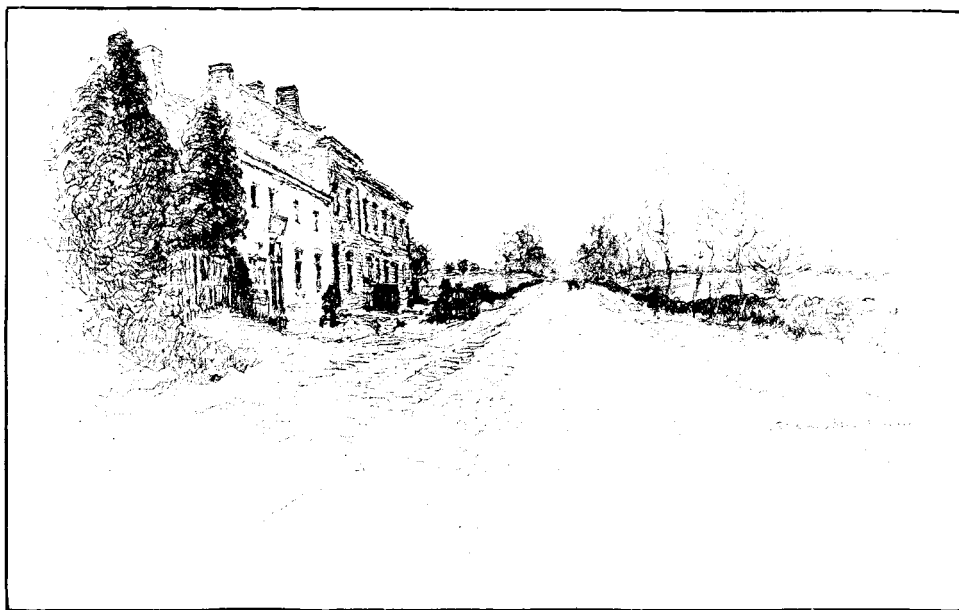
BY ROBERT SHACKLETON

WITHIN the triple encompassment of Belgium and Holland and Prussia, and in actual juxtaposition with all three, there lies a bit of land which for almost a century has been under the dual rule of rival kings. Originating in mistake, the anomaly has been perpetuated by jealousy, by the inability of the two governments to concur in partition.

There was awe in the conception of the man without a country; but in Neutral Moresnet there are 3781 without a country. "Under which king, Bezonian? speak or die," demanded Ancient Pistol; but change the threat to Moresnian and there would be 3781 unable to give the saving word.

It came about through a geographical blunder of that Congress of Vienna which,

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PRUSSIA ON THE RIGHT; THE NEUTRAL LAND ON THE LEFT

after the sending of Napoleon to Elba, parcelled out Europe anew. Through a district known as Moresnet, which under the French Empire had been assigned to the Department of the Ourthe, the negotiators drew a line, intending to make division between Prussia and the Netherlands. The northern end of this line demarcatory, the point where the departments of the Ourthe, the Meuse, and the Roenre converged, was well known, but about the southern end, so it was discovered, there were views variant. Prussia wished to stand by the description in one article of the treaty; the Netherlands claimed under another; and contingent upon which article was to have force was the status of a triangle of land, in the middle of Moresnet, some three miles by two miles by one, with an area of 850 acres.

A decision was postponed. There were more insistent problems. Part of Moresnet was unquestionably Prussian, part Netherlandian; and between the two portions should be this Neutral Moresnet, this No Man's Land. It was to be under the civil administration of both countries, but under the military jurisdiction of neither.

When the Kingdom of the Netherlands was separated into Holland and Belgium, it was Belgium that retained an interest in the Triangle; when Prussia became part of Germany, it was still to Prussia and its king that the Triangle gave recognition.

Prussia and Belgium unite in the administration and divide the taxes; the money and the stamps of either country may be used; the courts of either may be appealed to; the burgomaster is alternately from one country and from the other. And there can be no garrison and no fortifications.

From its ancient and still worked deposits of calamine, the hydrous silicate of zinc, the territory is sometimes known as *Vieille Montagne*, or *Altenberg*, although the "old mountain" is but a lowish hill. From "calamine" comes "*Kelmis*," the name of the town where, as if by some law of precipitation, the population has settled at the bottom of the Triangle.

Although Neutral Moresnet is but a few miles from *Aix-la-Chapelle*, and although an electric-car line will within a few months be continued from the city to its edge, it is a lost territory. It is

easily reachable from the village of Her-genrath, but this I did not easily learn. On the evening of my arrival in Aix I inquired at the hotel, at some neighboring shops, and at both of the railway stations, but no one could tell me how to reach Neutral Moresnet; they had no idea at all, or guessed at random at various impossible stations. But I set out next morning on the quest, and after some hours of travel and search was so fortunate as to find it. They love to tell, in the Triangle, of a recently appointed Prussian post-office inspector who went from Aix to visit Neutral Moresnet officially, but who, misdirected from station to station, returned baffled at night to his starting-point.

No railway has its line through the neutral bit. Tracks are in Prussian Moresnet on one side, in Belgium Moresnet on the other.

The burgomaster, above whose office door are the juxtaposed coats of arms of Prussia and of Belgium, not only dispenses punishment for petty delinquency, but is the active governing power of the Triangle. He is assisted by a Council of Ten, a Committee of Beneficence, and a Committee for Schools; but even the awesomely named "Ten" wield no real power, for counselors and committeemen are alike chosen by the burgomaster himself and exercise functions that are only advisory.

Nor have the people of the Triangle any power of voting in regard to any public matter whatever.

Yet the burgomaster is far from being an untrammelled despot. There are two commissioners, one appointed by

Prussia and one by Belgium, who visit the Triangle whenever they see fit and to whom every act of the burgomaster must be pleasing. Should the two commissioners differ, the matter must go to Berlin and to Brussels for decree.

Of the 3781, 1858 are males and 1923 females; 1642 are rated as Prussian, 1302 Belgian, 372 Dutch, 2 Italian, 2 Russian, and 1 Swiss. The remaining 460 are descendants of those who were inhabitants when the Triangle became neutral, and they are highly privileged. For their taxes remain the same as their ancestors paid in 1814, and they are free from any military service whatever. Alarmed at losing men from their armies, Prussia and Belgium some years ago began to claim a few years' service from such as entered the Triangle from their respective territories, but neither country has ever attempted to alter the status of the indigenes.



"FOUR BOUNDARY STONES, ONE FOR EACH OF THE FOUR JURISDICTIONS"

Approaching the Triangle from Her-genrath, there are seen a low-rounding hill, a pointed spire, and clustered roofs half hidden among trees; and that is Kelmis.

The houses are built to the line of cobbled sidewalk, most of them are of two stories, of brick or of brick-trimmed stone, and often a front is plastered in yellow or brown or pink; nor is the town without houses of little windows, wooden-shuttered in white or green. The floors are tiled or bricked, the kettles are copper, the crockery of ponderousness. Ratu-barrels are of monster magnitude. Mot-toes are darned in flaming colors, as, "May the good God give us good luck!"

Many a house has flowers in its windows, many a door is iron-knocked, many a fruit-tree is trained against the wall. Flowers grow freely, but not in great variety; and most prized is a yellow violet which the people deem infallible as an indicator of zinc.

When evening approaches, and the men come back from digging in the wet earth and pushing little cars on narrow tracks, the people group genially for gregarious gossip. The young folk walk together up and down, or gayly and informally dance. The children play. Music sounds from the refreshment-gardens.

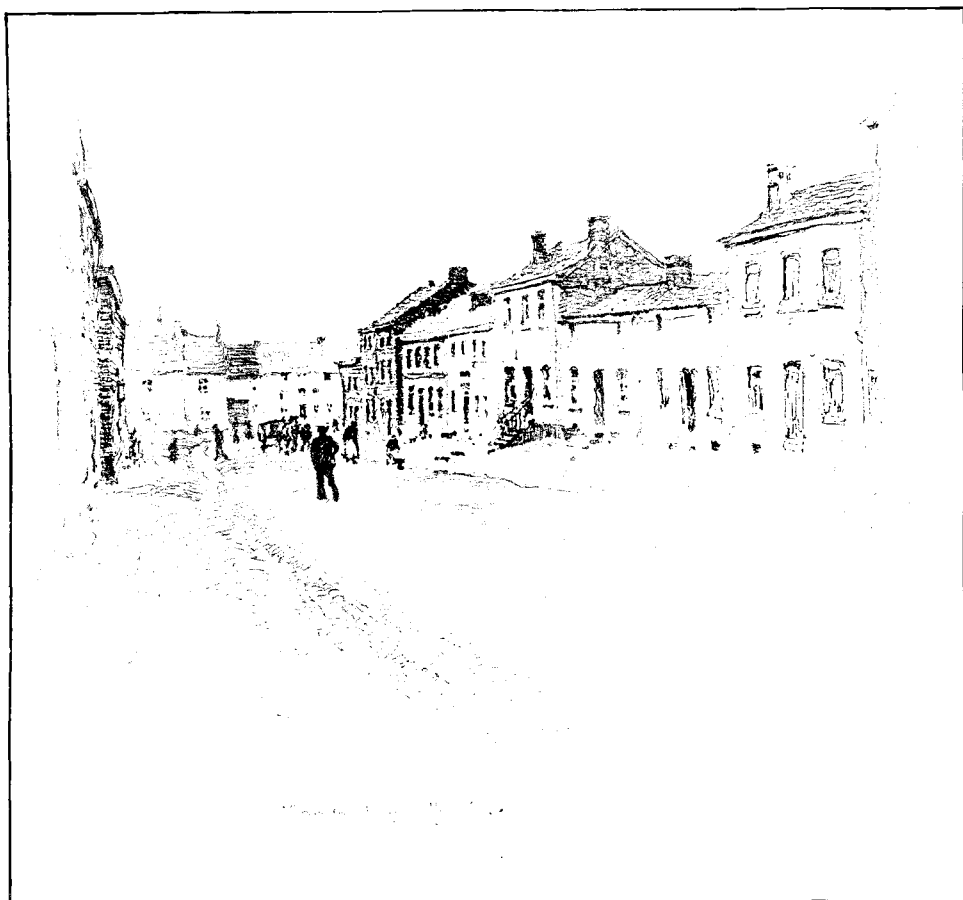
May the first is moving-day; and then the streets are filled with little two-

wheeled carts, heaped high with things of the household, and one gains the impression that nearly every one is changing his domicile—and, indeed, the citizens will tell you, with quiet complacency, that each family manages in time to live in nearly every house in town! With all the world before them where to choose, they will not leave the Triangle, but variedly find the spice of life within its slender borders.

There are many signs for the sale of oleomargarine, drugs, and drink, thus hinting at a possible procession-al cause and effect. Within this tiny acreage there are eighty places where beverages are dispensed! "*Sang und Liebe, Witz und Wein, Sind des Lebens Sonnen-schein!*" Thus, prominently letter-



"FREQUENTLY, BY THE ROADSIDE, THERE ARE SEEN THE CRUCIFIX AND SHRINE."



HOUSES OF TWO STORIES BUILT TO THE LINE OF THE COBBLED SIDEWALK

ed in one of the houses, are the desiderata of this humble Moresnau life expressed; only, in realization, the wine is generally beer and the wit is a humor rather broad.

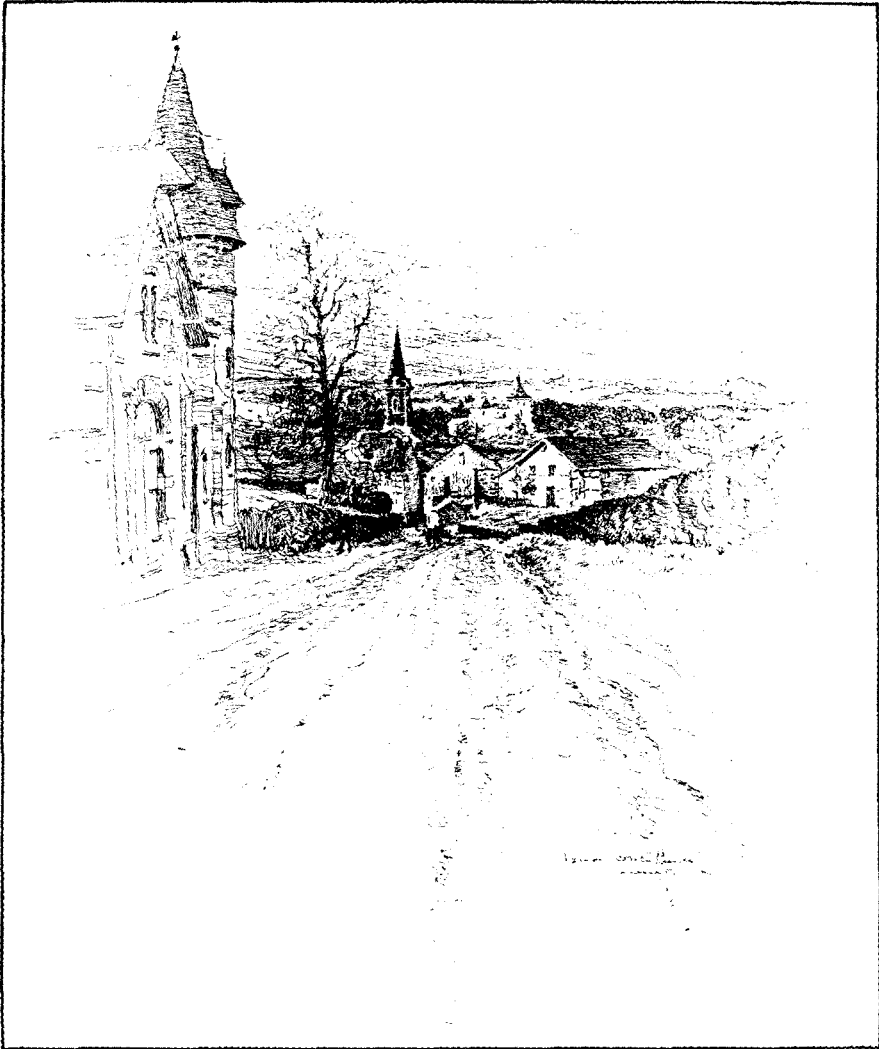
Taxing is done with cheerful freedom. Restaurants and cafés naturally bear an important share, and every dance, every little concert, is a taxable occasion. Dogs, too, are taxed; but only dogs of harness—"les chiens de trait"—the poor "dog Tray." Yet taxes, in all, seem to be a little lower than in Prussia and only a little higher than in Belgium.

The solitary policeman of the Triangle, jocularly known as the "Secretary of War," goes about with hurried assiduity, stooping under his responsibility. Diligent in his business, he stands for two

kings. But in cases of need the soldiers of Belgium or of Prussia may be called in; and, indeed, Prussian soldiers, patrolling with slung rifles, are a familiar sight along the border-line. They are watching the custom; for although Moresnet is the only place in Europe where there is not the slightest customs examination for articles entering, everything which goes out is carefully scanned!

On the whole, it is an honest sort of place. "A man can go safely anywhere, night or day," declares the burgomaster; and it is doubtless mere exuberance of heed that leads the barber to take in every evening the gleaming basin of brass that twinkles in front of his shop as the outward and visible sign of his calling.

The Prussian Eagle and the Belgian



JUST OVER THE BORDER IN BELGIAN MOPESNET

Lion have lain down together, but one intangibly gains the impression that the lion has not held the lion's share. Prussian governmental influence seems to be stronger. There is a preponderance of the flaxen hair and blue eyes of Germany. Although Walloon, Dutch, Flemish, French, and German are all spoken, the number of languages being inversely as to the population, German has practically conquered the rest; but it bears the marks of the tongues it overcame.

The vaccination of the children is a function civil and military. The burgo-master keeps the record. A Prussian soldier marshals the throng. The lining-up, the registering, the baring of arms, the incision, the relegation to the drying rows—all is swift, methodical, capable, amusing.

There have been numerous plans for partitionment. A guide-book, taking a tentative decision for the deed, recently stated that partition was accomplished.

Another plan is now under active consideration, and it is possible that while this is being written the final decision has been made.

In 1903 the absence of definite rule attracted the attention of men who wished to establish a great gambling resort; it was decided to locate here, large sums were spent in preparation, and gambling on an extensive scale was actually begun. The Code Napoleon, still operative in the Neutral Territory, prohibits the gathering of more than twenty persons for such a purpose, at one time, without specific authority. But the gambling promoters proceeded with much circumspection. They first decreed that no inhabitant of the Triangle should be permitted to gamble, and thus there was to be no local injury. And they arranged to play in relays of twenty! They believed that the burgomaster and Belgium favored them, and that so long as the law was observed they could ignore Prussia.

But the man behind the sword cut the cleverly tied Gordian knot of strict legality. The Prussian King declared that unless gambling should instantly cease the territory would be partitioned and the neutrality should end. So the gamblers vanished, and the neutrality remained.

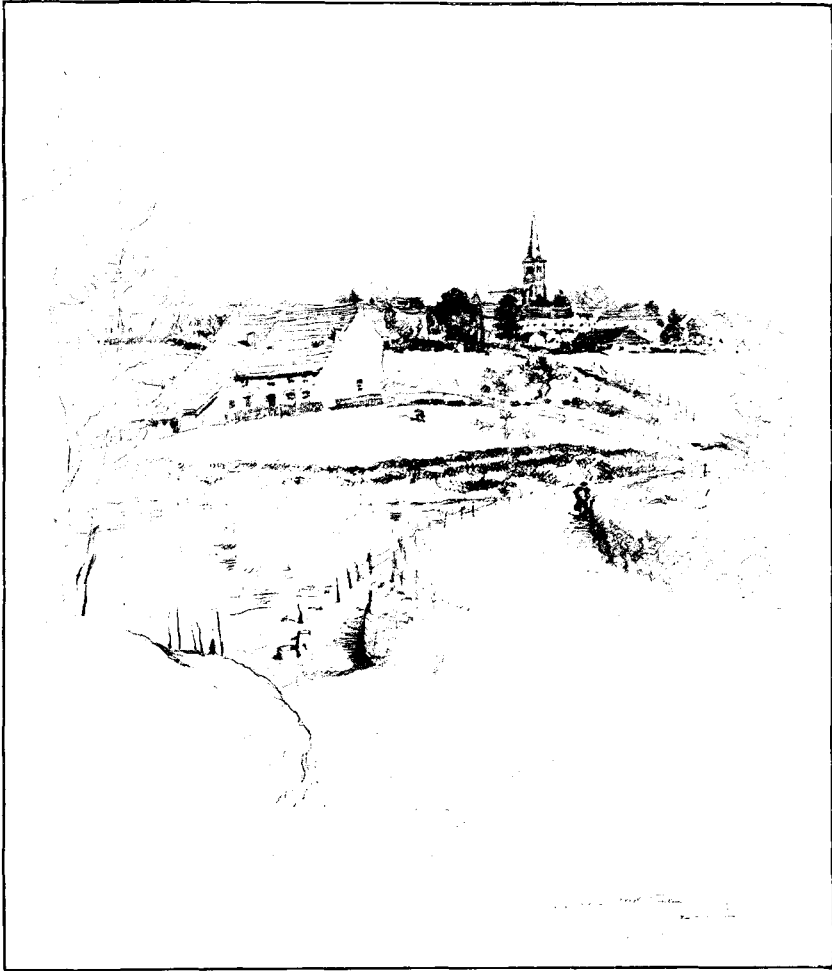
Within Neutral Moresnet there is no court except the petty tribunal of the burgo-master. A plaintiff may bring his suit in either Prussia or Belgium, as he may prefer. The Code Napoleon, altered

from time to time by mutual edicts of the two kings, forms the basis of law, but this law must be administered in accordance with the procedure of Belgian or Prussian courts. Pregnant of perplexity, all this. To Belgian Aubel or Prussian Eupen, to the court of Verviers or that of Aix-la-Chapelle, on appeal to Liège or Cologne—such is the whimsical alternativeness. A criminal may find himself before a Prussian or a Belgian court.

My advent caused a genuine flutter. That I could be merely an American, travelling unofficially, seemed incredible; and officials, Belgian and Prussian, and even an English consul from a Belgian



CHATEAU OF THE STORY OF CHARLEMAGNE, EMMA, AND EGINHARD



THE NEUTRAL TERRITORY (FROM THE SOUTH)

town, kept dropping in, one after another, acknowledging to me, over tall beakers, that they had been anxiously wired ancient my presence there.

The nearness of Aix-la-Chapelle, the favorite city of Charlemagne, tinges the entire region with fascinating historical color; and here, at the very edge of Neutral Moresnet, is Ennaburg, which was his favorite resting-place. A little stream goes bending about the rock on which the château stands; and one vividly realizes that the brook has gone on, unchanged, throughout the thousand years that have passed since the time of Charlemagne and Emma and Eginhard.

Emma was the Emperor's daughter, Eginhard his secretary. A poet, a scholar, a musician, handsome, ingratiating, one whom Charlemagne himself trusted—small wonder that Emma and he fell in love. But, Eginhard being only a secretary, they did not dare to meet except in secret. On one occasion the princess allowed the young man to remain until well toward morning—"And then they parted; but at parting, lo! they saw the palace courtyard white with snow!"

Confronted by such an emergency, Emma acted with a readiness and decision worthy of her illustrious parentage.



She had certainly been imprudent in her entertaining of Eginhard with her father unaware; but her speeding of the parting guest was beyond all praise. For she promptly took Eginhard upon her shoulders and carried him to where his footsteps would not be evidence condemnatory!

But Charlemagne, unknown to them, was a spectator from one of the tower windows! Yet it all came out right, just as a sweet old tale ought to do, and they married and lived happily ever after. The sour Carlyle speaks derisively of it. "Charlemagne with wanton daughters carrying secretaries through the snow," he jibes; but his intemperate pluralization shows how bent he was upon avoiding all sweetness and charm.

The château has been much bewindowed and largely rebuilt, but tradition holds that the most prominent tower was standing in Charlemagne's time, and there is no reason to doubt that the lines of the courtyard are unchanged.

Trees are attractively massed about Emmaburg, yet do not hide it from the view of Kelmis. Even within Kelmis itself there is a general aspect of trees and greenery. To the northward the Neutral Territory is covered thick with woodland, as are portions of Holland and Belgium and Prussia there adjoining.

At the extreme northern point of the Triangle are clustered four boundary-stones, one for each of the four jurisdictions.

In the midst of the woods, southward from this, I chanced one day upon an ancient stone, hidden among trees and bushes. It bore the date of 1615 and was blazoned with a defiant inscription and a long-forgotten coat of arms. Men fought, three hundred years ago, to place that stone there and maintain it. And now, so completely forgotten! stumbled upon by a stranger, and lost to all other knowledge.

I found even this tiny territory to be not without its own exemplification of the truth, which the traveller should always remember, that the foreign mind works differently from his own. After vainly trying to be pleased with the assimilation of lukewarm coffee, I explained to the excellent waitress that I desired it hot. Really, my German was right enough—but she fetched me not hot coffee, but a cup heated to untouchableness!

On the first morning of my stay there I laid out a roll of laundry. After breakfast I looked for it, to give to a messenger; but it had disappeared! The maid, so I found, had thought the articles, laid together, to be the American sleeping-complement, and, with imaginable wonder at what she must have deemed an embarrassing multiplicity, she had tucked everything out of sight at the foot of the bed.

The charivari is prominent among the diversions of the Triangle. Not always invoked for the delectation of the newly wedded, this, but, by a humorous perversion, even more for the distinguishment of such as have not married! The most popular music at these open-air concerts is that made by holding a great scythe against the tire of a revolving wheel; and so excruciating is it as to make a lapse from virtue a matter for serious regret.

Religious feast-days transcend in importance the celebration of any secular festivals. Even in secular recreations the religious element is likely to be conjoined; in parades, priestliness and playfulness may affiliate; and there is no better place for a secular outing than one of the stations of the Cross. Frequently, by the roadside, alike within the village and in the wild-woods, there are seen the crucifix and shrine. "Yet the people are not too good," says the priest, with subtle and tolerant philosophy.

For the First Communion the entire population joins in the celebration. Great banners are hung on the outward walls, and in the cool light of early morning the streets are thronged. Led by a band, playing a stately march, the children come in procession around a corner and, the priest leading, circle through a grove of trees toward the entrance of the church.

I saw not only the First Communion, but the Last. One day I met the priest going on his way to the death-bed of a woman. The kuster—the sacristan—preceded him, dolefully ringing a little bell and bearing a light which glimmered strangely beneath the hot sun in its cloudless sky. Following was a constantly augmenting group, and each man's head was bared, and all were awed and still. They came to a village house, and the priest went in, and the women silently followed, and the men stood reverently



OLD DWELLINGS IN KELMIS

at the door. And with candle and water and sprigs the last communion was administered, and a few great tears rolled from the eyes of the woman dying there.

The amusements of Neutral Moresnet are important and numerous. There are associations musical, associations gymnastic, associations theatrical, associations for bowling, for dancing, for shooting at the mark.

These people, small though their territory, will not be cabined, cribbed, confined. There are two clubs for the training and flying of carrier-pigeons! And I met a man whose delight is the gathering of newspapers in the languages of all the world.

For the men there are twenty clubs, but for the women there is none! "They cook, they work, they make their children's clothes," said the priest, gravely

outlining their diversions. "On Sunday they go to church. On Sunday afternoon they walk out with their husbands and children. They know nothing else. They wish nothing else. They are content. Is it not well?"

Yet one need not deem them to be always under repression. I remember hearing a morning quarrel with the milkman; and—such are the geographical advantages of the place—not only the Neutral Land, but Prussia and Holland and Belgium as well, listened perforce to the woman's side of the argument.

There is general pervasiveness of content. There is a sort of *al fresco* freedom of life, an untrammelledness which comes naturally from long-continued absence of centralized restraint. The people only fear the possible impermanency of their pleasing status.

# A Sermon and a Sinner

BY FORREST CRISSEY

FROM the meadow, between the road and the West Woods, came the sweetly shrill note of the meadow-lark and the riotous warblings of bobolink. But these finer voices of the resurrected year fell sadly upon the heart of the boy, heavy with its dreadful burden of secret sin.

Although perching in desperate discomfort on the slippery edge of the oil-cloth cushion, wedged between his parents on the narrow buggy-seat, Ezra was keenly sensible of the spell of the spring, the jubilant gushing of lark and bobolink. Under their magic his being seemed trembling and expanding with life like that which thrilled the lushed earth.

The very mystery of these impressions multiplied their power and intensity—but the grim shadow of his sin could not be dispelled, even by the vernal gladness about him.

At the cross-road from Thompson's Woods to the cheese-factory, the glistening tombstones of the graveyard came into view.

The presence among them of a man standing knee-deep in a grave which he was digging gave the child a keen shock. Death! And on such a morning as this! At all times terrible, its shadow on the peace of this Sabbath morning made him shiver. He counted the shovelfuls of earth the sexton threw upon the slowly growing mound at his side.

How many shovelfuls would it take to empty the grave? Who were they going to put in that black hole? Was it one who had died a Christian? When would they dig his—Ezra Rue's—grave? Was *he* a Christian? And all the time he counted the shovelfuls of earth! Suddenly it came to him:

"If I don't see him throw out twenty more shovelfuls I shall die this year!"

"One—two—three—four," he counted, denying in each interim the claim of the

suggestion, but still counting with tragic earnestness. How slowly the man moved! Oh, if only Totman would get out the twenty shovelfuls! Ezra almost prayed that the old horse would move slower or the sexton faster—but in his soul he felt either to be hopelessly impossible.

"Fourteen—fifteen—sixteen," he continued.

The man rested on his shovel; the boy held his breath. Would he never begin again?

"Seventeen—eighteen!"

A cloud of butterflies arose from a drying puddle; the horse started into a trot, and a corner of the woods shut off the boy's vision of the sexton just as the nineteenth shovelful dropped upon the mound.

Thompson was backing his horse into the shafts of his democrat wagon as they passed.

"D'y' know Sassman's Will died last night?" he called out in cheerful tones.

After halting for "the particulars," the Rues drove on, discussing with unsparing realism the details of death by this awful contagion, while the child's soul winced under the cumulative terrors which found their visible exponent in the grave-digger. For Death which could invade such a morning as this and lay its majestic silence upon the lips of his noisiest playmate, instead of those of some old man or woman, was more terribly near him than ever before. And he had not seen that twentieth shovelful of grave-dirt fall upon the pile!

He recollected the last time he had seen Will—pitching horseshoes. Now he was in *Eternity!* The word spelled itself in the child's imagination with letters greater than capitals—something like those the stars might make, on a clear night, if they should all suddenly rush together into the eight great blazing letters!

At the church his mother shook out the front of her skirts, stepped inside