

IN LORRAINE AND THE VOSGES

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ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

NANCY, May 13th, 1915.



ESIDE me, on my writing-table, stands a bunch of peonies, the jolly round-faced pink peonies of the village garden. They were picked this afternoon in the garden of a ruined house at Gerbéviller—a house so calcined and convulsed that, for epithets dire enough to fit it, one would have to borrow from a Hebrew prophet gloating over the fall of a city of idolaters.

Since leaving Paris yesterday we have passed through streets and streets of such murdered houses, through town after town spread out in its last writhings; and before the black holes that were homes, along the edge of the chasms that were streets, everywhere we have seen flowers and vegetables springing up in freshly raked and watered gardens. My pink peonies were not introduced to point the stale allegory of unconscious Nature veiling Man's havoc: they are put on my first page as a symbol of conscious human energy coming back to replant and rebuild the wilderness. . .

Last March, in the Argonne, the towns we passed through seemed quite dead; but yesterday new life was budding everywhere. We were following another track of the invasion, one of the huge tiger-scratches that the Beast flung over the land last September, between Vitry-le-François and Bar-le-Duc. Etrepy, Pargny, Sermaize-les-Bains, Andernay, are the names of this group of victims: Sermaize a pretty watering-place along wooded slopes, the others large villages fringed with farms, and all now mere scrofulous blotches on the soft spring scene. But in many we heard the sound of hammers, and saw brick-layers and masons at work. Even in the most mortally stricken there were signs of returning life: children playing among the stone heaps, and now and then a cautious older face peering out of a

shed propped against the ruins. In one place an ancient tram-car had been converted into a café and labelled: "Au Restaurant des Ruines"; and everywhere between the calcined walls the carefully combed gardens aligned their radishes and lettuce-tops.

From Bar-le-Duc we turned northeast, and as we entered the forest of Commercy we began to hear again the Voice of the Front. It was the warmest and stillest of May days, and in the clearing where we stopped for luncheon the familiar boom broke with a magnified loudness on the noonday hush. In the intervals between the crashes there was not a sound but the gnats' hum in the moist sunshine and the dryad-call of the cuckoo from greener depths. At the end of the lane a few cavalrymen rode by in shabby blue, their horses' flanks glinting like ripe chestnuts. They stopped to chat and accept some cigarettes, and when they had trotted off again the gnat, the cuckoo and the cannon took up their trio. . .

The town of Commercy looked so undisturbed that the cannonade rocking it might have been some unheeded echo of the hills. These frontier towns inured to the clash of war go about their business with what one might call stolidity if there were not finer, and truer, names for it. In Commercy, to be sure, there is little business to go about just now save that connected with the military occupation; but the peaceful look of the sunny sleepy streets made one doubt if the fighting line was really less than five miles away. . . Yet the French, with an odd perversion of race-vanity, still persist in speaking of themselves as a "nervous and impressionable" people!

This afternoon, on the road to Gerbéviller, we were again in the track of the September invasion. Over all the slopes now cool with spring foliage the battle

rocked backward and forward during those burning autumn days; and every mile of the struggle has left its ghastly traces. The fields are full of wooden crosses which the ploughshare makes a circuit to avoid; many of the villages have been partly wrecked, and here and there an isolated ruin marks the nucleus

ruins seem to have been simultaneously vomited up from the depths and hurled down from the skies, as though she had perished in some monstrous clash of earthquake and tornado; and it fills one with a cold despair to know that this double destruction was no accident of nature but a piously planned and meth-



Street covered with stones from shelled buildings.

of a fiercer struggle. But the landscape, in its first sweet leafiness, is so alive with ploughing and sowing and all the natural tasks of spring, that the war scars seem like traces of a long-past woe; and it was not till a bend of the road brought us in sight of Gerbéviller that we breathed again the choking air of present horror.

Gerbéviller, stretched out at ease on its slopes above the Meurthe, must have been a happy place to live in. The streets slanted up between scattered houses in gardens to the great Louis XIV château above the town and the church that balanced it. So much one can reconstruct from the first glimpse across the valley; but when one enters the town all perspective is lost in chaos. Gerbéviller has taken to herself the title of "the martyr town"; an honour to which many sister victims might dispute her claim! But as a sensational image of havoc it seems improbable that any can surpass her. Her

odically executed human deed. From the opposite heights the poor little garden-girt town was shelled like a steel fortress; then, when the Germans entered, a fire was built in every house, and at the nicely-timed right moment one of the explosive tabloids which the fearless Teuton carries about for his land-*Lusitanias* was tossed on each hearth. It was all so well done that one wonders—almost apologetically for German thoroughness—that any of the human rats escaped from their holes; but some did, and were neatly spitted on lurking bayonets.

One old woman, hearing her son's death-cry, rashly looked out of her door. A bullet instantly laid her low among her phloxes and lilies; and there, in her little garden, her dead body was dishonoured. It seemed singularly appropriate, in such a scene, to read above a blackened doorway the sign: "Monuments

Funèbres," and to observe that the house how, peering through a door into the stable-yard, they saw that the soldiers suspected they were within and were trying to get at them. Luckily the incendiaries had heaped wood and straw all round the outside of the house, and the blaze was so hot that they could not reach the door. Between the arch of the doorway and the door itself was a half-moon opening; and Mr. Liégeay and his family, during three days and three nights, broke up all the barrels in the cellar and threw the bits



Mr. Liégeay in his dining-room.

the angle of a lane called "La Ruelle des Orphelines."

At one end of the main street of Gerbéviller there once stood a charming house, of the sober old Lorraine pattern, with low door, deep roof and ample gables: it was in the garden of this house that my pink peonies were picked for me by its owner, Mr. Liégeay, a former Mayor of Gerbéviller, who witnessed all the horrors of the invasion.

Mr. Liégeay is now living in a neighbour's cellar, his own being fully occupied by the debris of his charming house. He told us the story of the three days of the German occupation; how he and his wife and niece, and the niece's babies, took to their cellar while the Germans set the house on fire, and

out through the opening to feed the fire in the yard.

Finally, on the third day, when they



Mr. Liégeay at his cellar door.

began to be afraid that the ruins of the house would fall in on them, they made a dash for safety. The house was on the edge of the town, and the women and children managed to get away into the coun-

try; but Mr. Liégeay was surprised in his garden by a German soldier. He made a rush for the high wall of the adjoining cemetery, and scrambling over it slipped down between the wall and a big granite cross. The cross was covered with the hideous wire and glass wreaths dear to French mourners; and with these opportune mementoes Mr. Liégeay roofed him-

light out there on the terrace, to read my paper by on summer evenings. Yes, we were too well off. . ." That was all.

Meanwhile all the town had been red with horror—flame and shot and tortures unnameable; and at the other end of the long street a woman, a Sister of Charity, had held her own like Sœur Gabrielle at Clermont-en-Argonne, gathering her flock



Ruins of General Lyautey's house in Crévic.

self in, lying wedged in his narrow hiding-place from three in the afternoon till night, and listening to the voices of the soldiers who were hunting for him among the grave-stones. Luckily it was their last day at Gerbéviller, and the German retreat saved his life.

Even in Gerbéviller we saw no worse scene of destruction than the particular spot in which the ex-mayor stood while he told his story. He looked about him at the heaps of blackened brick and contorted iron. "This was my dining-room," he said. "There was some good old panelling on the walls, and some fine prints that had been a wedding-present to my grand-father." He led us into another black pit. "This was our sitting-room: you see what a view we had." He sighed, and added philosophically: "I suppose we were too well off. I even had an electric

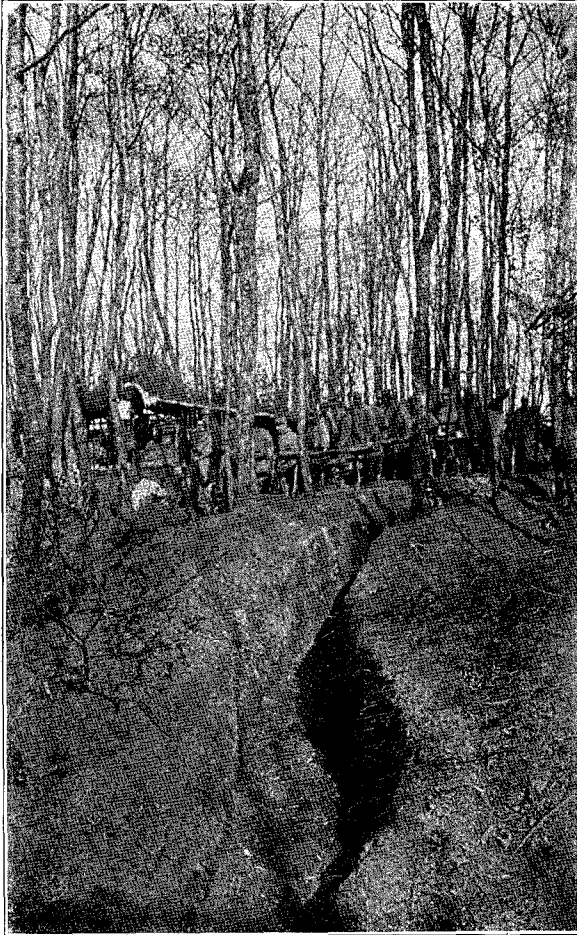
of old men and children about her and interposing her short stout figure between them and the fury of the Germans. We found her in her Hospice, a ruddy, indomitable woman who related with a quiet indignation more thrilling than invective the hideous details of the bloody three days; but that already belongs to the past, and at present she is much more concerned with the task of clothing and feeding Gerbéviller. For two thirds of the population have already "come home"—that is what they call the return to this desert! "You see," Sœur Julie explained, "there are the crops to sow, the gardens to tend. They had to come back. The government is building wooden shelters for them; and people will surely send us beds and linen." (Of course they would, one felt as one listened!) "Heavy boots, too—boots for field-labourers. We

want them for women as well as men—like these.” Soeur Julie, smiling, turned up a hob-nailed sole. “I have directed all the work on our Hospice farm myself. All the women are working in the fields—we must take the place of the men.” And

The last time I looked out on the great architectural setting of the Place Stanislas was on a hot July evening, the evening of the National Fête. The square and the avenues leading to it swarmed with people, and as darkness fell the bal-

anced lines of arches and palaces sprang out in many coloured light. Garlands of lamps looped the arcades leading into the Place de la Carrière, peacock-coloured fires flared from the Arch of Triumph, long curves of radiance beat like wings over the thickets of the park, the sculptures of the fountains, the brown-and-gold foliation of Jean Damour’s great gates; and under this roofing of light was the murmur of a happy crowd carelessly celebrating the tradition of half-forgotten victories.

Now, at sunset, all life ceases in Nancy and veil after veil of silence comes down on the deserted Place and its empty perspectives. Last night by nine the few lingering lights in the streets had been put out, every window was blind, and the moonless night lay over the city like a canopy of velvet. Then, from some remote point, the arc of a searchlight swept the sky, laid a fugitive pallor on darkened palace-fronts, a gleam of gold on invisible gates, trembled across the black vault and vanished, leaving it still blacker. When we



One of the “bowels.”

I seemed to see my pink peonies flowering in the very prints of her sturdy boots!

May 14th.

Nancy, the most beautiful town in France, has never been as beautiful as now. Coming back to it last evening from a round of ruins one felt as if the humbler sisters sacrificed to spare it were pleading with one not to forget them in the contemplation of its dearly-bought perfection.

came out of the darkened restaurant on the corner of the square, and the iron curtain of the entrance had been hastily dropped on us, we stood in such complete night that it took a waiter’s friendly hand to guide us to the curbstone. Then, as we grew used to the darkness, we saw it lying still more densely under the colonnade of the Place de la Carrière and the clipped trees beyond. The ordered masses of architecture became august, the

spaces between them immense, and the black sky faintly strewn with stars seemed to overarch an enchanted city. Not a footstep sounded, not a leaf rustled, not a breath of air drew under the arches. And suddenly, through the dumb night, the sound of the cannon began.

May 14th.

Luncheon with the General Staff in an old bourgeois house of a little town as sleepy as "Cranford." In the warm walled gardens everything was blooming at once: laburnums, lilacs, red hawthorn, Banksia roses and all the pleasant border plants that go with box and lavender. Never before did the flowers answer the spring roll-call with such a rush! Upstairs, in the Empire bedroom which the General has turned into his study, it was amusingly incongruous to see the sturdy provincial furniture littered with war-maps, trench-plans, aeroplane photographs and all the documentation of modern war. Through the windows bees hummed, the garden rustled, and one felt, close by, behind the walls of other gardens, the untroubled continuance of a placid and orderly bourgeois life.

We started early for Mousson on the Moselle, the ruined hill-fortress that gives its name to the better-known town at its foot. Our road ran below the long range of the "Grand Couronné," the line of hills curving southeast from Pont-à-Mousson to St. Nicolas du Port. All through this pleasant broken country the battle shook and swayed last autumn; but few signs of those days are left except the wooden crosses in the fields. No troops are visible, and the pictures of war that made the Argonne so tragic last March are replaced by peaceful rustic scenes. On the way to Mousson the road is over-

hung by an Italian-looking village clustered about a hill-top. It marks the exact spot at which, last August, the German invasion was finally checked and flung back; and the Muse of History points out that on this very hill has long



A French palisade.

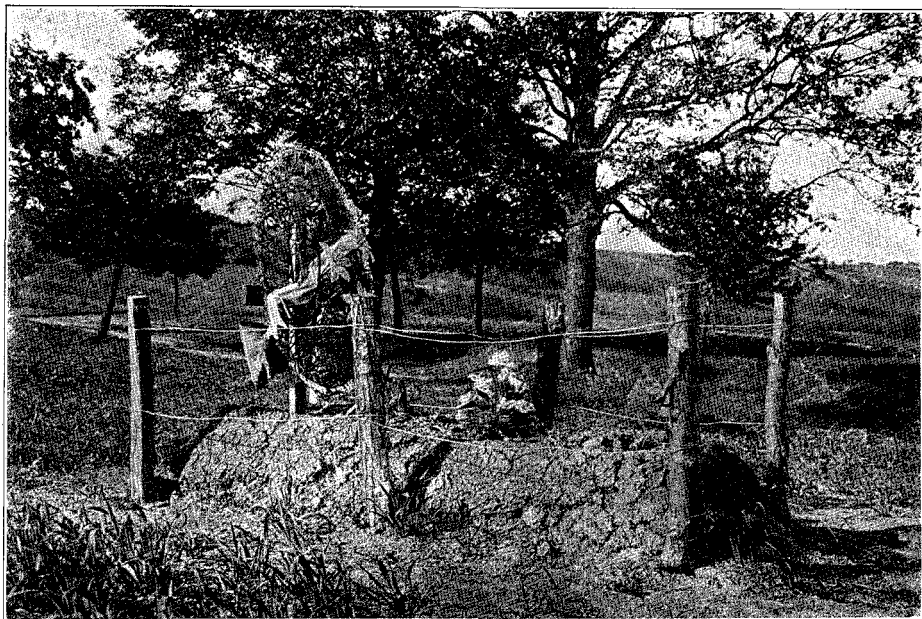
stood a memorial shaft inscribed: *Here, in the year 362, Jovinus defeated the Teutonic hordes.*

A little way up the ascent to Mousson we left the motor behind a bit of rising ground. The road is raked by the German lines, and stray pedestrians (unless in a group) are less liable than a motor to have a shell spent on them. We climbed under a driving grey sky which swept gusts of rain across our road. In the lee

of the castle we stopped to look down at the valley of the Moselle, the slate roofs of Pont-à-Mousson and the broken bridge which once linked together the two sides of the town. Nothing but the wreck of the bridge showed that we were on the edge of war. The wind was too high for firing, and we saw no reason for believing

official patterning, like the work of huge ants who had scarred it with criss-cross ridges. We were told that these were French trenches, but they looked much more like the harmless traces of a prehistoric camp.

Suddenly an officer, pointing to the west of the trenched hill said: "Do you



A war grave.

that the wood just behind the Hospice roof at our feet was seamed with German trenches and bristling with guns, or that from every slope across the valley the eye of the cannon sleeplessly glared. But there the Germans were, drawing an iron ring about three sides of the watch-tower; and as one peered through an embrasure of the ancient walls one gradually found one's self reliving the sensations of the little mediæval burgh as it looked out on some earlier circle of besiegers. The longer one looked, the more oppressive and menacing the invisibility of the foe became. "*There they are—and there—and there.*" We strained our eyes obediently, but saw only calm hillsides, dozing farms. It was as if the earth itself were the enemy, as if the hordes of evil were in the clods and grass-blades. Only one conical hill close by showed an odd arti-

see that farm?" It lay just below, near the river, and so close that good eyes could easily have discerned people or animals in the farm-yard, if there had been any; but the whole place seemed to be sleeping the sleep of bucolic peace. "*They are there,*" the officer said; and the innocent vignette framed by my field-glass suddenly glared back at me like a human mask of hate. The loudest cannonade had not made "them" seem as real as that! . . .

At this point the military lines and the old political frontier everywhere overlap, and in a cleft of the wooded hills that conceal the German batteries we saw a dark grey blur on the grey horizon. It was Metz, the Promised City, lying there with its fair steeples and towers, like the mystic banner that Constantine saw upon the sky. . .

Through wet vineyards and orchards we scrambled down the hill to the river and entered Pont-à-Mousson. It was by mere meteorological good luck that we got there, for if the winds had been asleep the guns would have been awake, and when they wake poor Pont-à-Mousson is not at home to visitors. One understood why as one stood in the riverside garden of the great Premonstratensian Monastery which is now the hospital and the general asylum of the town. Between the clipped limes and formal borders the German shells had scooped out three or four "dreadful hollows," in one of which, only last week, a little girl found her death; and the façade of the building is pock-marked by shot and disfigured with gaping holes. Yet in this precarious shelter Sister Theresia, of the same indomitable breed as the Sisters of Clermont and Gerbéviller, has gathered a miscellaneous flock of soldiers wounded in the trenches, civilians shattered by the bombardment, *éclopés*, old women and children: all the human wreckage of this storm-beaten point of the front. Sister Theresia seems in no wise disconcerted by the fact that the shells continually play over her roof. The building is immense and spreading, and when one wing is damaged she picks up her protégés and trots them off, bed and baggage, to another. "*Je promène mes malades*," she said calmly, as if boasting of the varied accommodation of an ultra-modern hospital, as she led us through vaulted and stuccoed galleries where car-yatid-saints look down in plaster pomp on the rows of brown-blanketed pallets and the long tables at which haggard *éclopés* were enjoying their evening soup.

May 15th.

I have seen the happiest being on earth: a man who has found his job.

This afternoon we motored southwest of Nancy to a little place called Méné-sur-Belvitte. The name is not yet intimately known to history, but there are reasons why it deserves to be, and in one man's mind it already is. Méné-sur-Belvitte is a village on the edge of the Vosges. It is badly battered, for awful fighting took place there in the first month of the war. The houses lie in a hollow, and just beyond it the ground rises and spreads into

a plateau waving with wheat and backed by wooded slopes—the ideal "battle-ground" of the history-books. And here a real above-ground battle of the old obsolete kind took place, and the French, driving the Germans back victoriously, fell by thousands in the trampled wheat.

The church of Méné is a ruin, but the parsonage still stands—a plain little house at the end of the street; and here the curé received us, and led us into a room which he has turned into a chapel. The chapel is also a war museum, and everything in it has something to do with the battle that took place among the wheat-fields. The candelabra on the altar are made of "Seventy-five" shells, the Virgin's halo is composed of radiating bayonets, the walls are intricately adorned with German trophies and French relics, and on the ceiling the curé has had painted a kind of zodiacal chart of the whole region, in which Méné-sur-Belvitte's handful of houses figures as the central orb of the system, and Verdun, Nancy, Metz, and Belfort as its humble satellites. But the chapel-museum is only a surplus expression of the curé's impassioned dedication to the dead. His real work has been done on the battle-field, where row after row of graves, marked and listed as soon as the struggle was over, have been fenced about, symmetrically disposed, planted with flowers and young firs, and marked by the names and death-dates of the fallen. As he led us from one of these enclosures to another his face was lit with the flame of a gratified vocation. This particular man was made to do this particular thing: he is a born collector, classifier, and hero-worshipper. In the hall of the "presbytère" hangs a case of carefully-mounted butterflies, the result, no doubt, of an earlier passion for collecting. His "specimens" have changed, that is all: he has passed from butterflies to men, from the actual to the visionary Psyche.

On the way to Méné we stopped at the village of Crévic. The Germans were there in August, but the place is untouched—except for one house. That house, a large one, standing in a park at one end of the village, was the birth-place and home of General Lyautey, one of France's best soldiers, and Germany's worst enemy in Africa. It is no exag-

geration to say that last August General Lyautey, by his promptness and audacity, saved Morocco for France. The Germans know it, and hate him; and as soon as the first soldiers reached Crévic—so obscure and imperceptible a spot that even German omniscience might have missed it—the officer in command asked for General Lyautey's house, went straight to it, had all the papers, portraits, furniture and family relics piled in a bonfire in the court, and then burnt down the house. As we sat in the neglected park with the plaintive ruin before us we heard from the gardener this typical tale of German thoroughness and German chivalry. It is corroborated by the fact that not another house in Crévic was destroyed.

May 16th.

About two miles from the German frontier (*frontier* just here as well as *front*) an isolated hill rises out of the Lorraine meadows. East of it, a ribbon of river winds among poplars, and that ribbon is the boundary between Empire and Republic. On such a clear day as this the view from the hill is extraordinarily interesting. From its grassy top a little aeroplane cannon stares to heaven, watching the east for the danger speck; and the circumference of the hill is furrowed by a deep trench—a "bowel," rather—winding invisibly from one subterranean observation post to another. In each of these earthy warrens (ingeniously wattled, roofed and iron-sheeted) stand two or three artillery officers with keen quiet faces, directing by telephone the fire of batteries nestling somewhere in the woods four or five miles away. Interesting as the place was, the men who lived there interested me far more. They obviously belonged to different classes, and had received a different social education; but their mental and moral fraternity was complete. They were all fairly young, and their faces had the look that war has given to French faces: a look of sharpened intelligence, strengthened will and sobered judgment, as if every faculty, trebly vivified, were so bent on the one end that personal problems had been pushed back to the vanishing point of the great perspective.

From this vigilant height—one of the intentest eyes open on the frontier—we

went a short distance down the hillside to a village out of range of the guns, where the commanding officer gave us tea in a charming old house with a terraced garden full of flowers and puppies. Below the terrace, lost Lorraine stretched away to her blue heights, a vision of summer peace: and just above us the unsleeping hill kept watch, its signal-wires trembling night and day. It was one of the intervals of rest and sweetness when the whole horrible black business seems to press most intolerably on the nerves.

Below the village the road wound down to a forest that had formed a dark blur in our bird's-eye view of the plain. We passed into the forest and halted on the edge of a colony of queer exotic huts. On all sides they peeped through the branches, themselves so branched and sodded and leafy that they seemed like some transition form between tree and house. We were in one of the so-called "villages nègres" of the second-line trenches, the jolly little settlements to which the troops retire after doing their shift under fire. This particular colony has been developed to an extreme degree of comfort and safety. The houses are partly underground, connected by deep winding "bowels" over which light rustic bridges have been thrown, and so profoundly roofed with sods that as much of them as shows above ground is shell-proof. Yet they are real houses, with real doors and windows under their grass-eaves, real furniture inside, and real beds of daisies and pansies at their doors. In the Colonel's bungalow a big bunch of spring flowers bloomed on the table, and everywhere we saw the same neatness and order, the same amused pride in the look of things. The men were dining at long trestle-tables under the trees; tired unshaven men in shabby uniforms of all cuts and almost every colour. They were off duty, relaxed, in a good humour; but every face had the look of the faces watching on the hill-top. Wherever I go among these men of the front I have the same impression: the impression that the absorbing undivided thought of the Defence of France lives in the heart and brain of each soldier as intensely as in the heart and brain of their chief.

We walked a dozen yards down the

road and came to the edge of the forest. A wattled palisade bounded it, and through a gap in the palisade we looked out across a field to the roofs of a quiet village a mile away. I went out a few steps into the field and was abruptly pulled back. "Take care—those are the trenches!" What looked like a ridge thrown up by a plough was the enemy's line; and in the quiet village French cannon watched. Suddenly, as we stood there, they woke, and at the same moment we heard the unmistakable Gr-r-r of an aeroplane and saw a Bird of Evil high up against the blue. Snap, snap, snap barked the mitrailleuse on the hill, the soldiers jumped from their wine and strained their eyes through the trees, and the Taube, finding itself the centre of so much attention, turned grey tail and swished away to the concealing clouds.

May 17th.

Today we started with an intenser sense of adventure. Hitherto we had always been told beforehand where we were going and how much we were to be allowed to see; but now we were being launched into the unknown. Beyond a certain point all was conjecture—we knew only that what happened after that would depend on the good-will of a Colonel of Chasseurs-à-pied whom we were to go a long way to find, up into the folds of the mountains on our south-east horizon.

We picked up a staff-officer at Headquarters and flew on to a battered town on the edge of the hills. From there we wound up through a narrowing valley, under wooded cliffs, to a little settlement where the Colonel of the Brigade was to be found. There was a short conference between the Colonel and our staff-officer, and then we annexed a Captain of Chasseurs and spun away again. Our road lay through a town so exposed that our companion from Headquarters suggested the advisability of avoiding it; but our guide hadn't the heart to inflict such a disappointment on his new acquaintances. "Oh, we won't stop the motor—we'll just dash through," he said indulgently; and in the excess of his indulgence he even permitted us to dash slowly.

Oh, that poor town—when we reached it, along a road ploughed with fresh obus-

holes, I didn't want to stop the motor; I wanted to hurry on and blot the picture from my memory! It was doubly sad to look at because of the fact that it wasn't *quite dead*; faint spasms of life still quivered through it. A few children played in the ravaged streets; a few pale mothers watched them from cellar doorways. "They oughtn't to be here," our guide explained; "but about a hundred and fifty begged so hard to stay that the General gave them leave. The officer in command has an eye on them, and whenever he gives the signal they dive down into their burrows. He says they are perfectly obedient. It was he who asked that they might stay..."

Up and up into the hills. The vision of human pain and ruin was lost in beauty. We were among the firs, and the air was full of balm. The mossy banks gave out a scent of rain, and little water-falls from the heights set the branches trembling over secret pools. At each turn of the road, forest, and always more forest, climbing with us as we climbed, and dropping away from us to narrow valleys that converged on slate-blue distances. At one of these turns we overtook a company of soldiers, spade on shoulder and bags of tools across their backs—"trench-workers" swinging up to the heights to which we were bound. Life must be a better thing in this crystal air than in the mud-welter of the Argonne and the fogs of the North; and these men's faces were fresh with wind and weather.

Higher still... and presently a halt on a ridge, in another "black village," this time almost a town! The soldiers gathered round us as the motor stopped—thronged of *chasseurs-à-pied* in faded, trench-stained uniforms—for few visitors climb to this point, and their pleasure at the sight of new faces was presently expressed in a large "*Vive l'Amérique!*" scrawled on the door of the car. *L'Amérique* was glad and proud to be there, and instantly conscious of breathing an air saturated with courage and the dogged determination to endure. The men were all reservists: that is to say, mostly married, and all beyond the first fighting age. For many months there has not been much active work along this front, no great adventure to rouse the blood and wing the

imagination: it has just been month after month of monotonous watching and holding on. And the soldiers' faces showed it: there was no light of heady enterprise in their eyes, but the look of men who knew their job, had thought it over, and were there to hold their bit of France till the day of victory or extermination.

Meanwhile, they had made the best of the situation and turned their quarters into a forest colony that would enchant any normal boy. Their village architecture was more elaborate than any we had yet seen. In the Colonel's "dug-out" a long table decked with lilacs and tulips was spread for tea. In other cheery catacombs we found neat rows of bunks, mess-tables, sizzling sauce-pans over kitchen-fires. Everywhere were endless ingenuities in the way of camp-furniture and household decoration. Farther down the road a path between fir-boughs led to a hidden hospital, a marvel of underground compactness. While we chatted with the surgeon a soldier came in from the trenches: an elderly, bearded man, with a good average civilian face—the kind one runs against by hundreds in any French crowd. He had a scalp-wound which had just been dressed, and was very pale. The Colonel stopped to ask a few questions, and then, turning to him, said: "Feeling rather better now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. In a day or two you'll be thinking about going back to the trenches, eh?"

"I'm going now, sir." It was said quite simply, and received in the same way. "Oh, all right," the Colonel merely rejoined; but he laid his hand on the man's shoulder as we went out.

Our next visit was to a sod-thatched hut, "At the sign of the Ambulant Artisans," where two or three soldiers were modelling and chiselling all kinds of trinkets from the aluminium of enemy shells. One of the ambulant artisans was just finishing a ring with beautifully modelled fauns' heads, another offered me a "Pickelhaube" small enough for Mustard-seed's wear, but complete in every detail, and inlaid with the bronze eagle from an Imperial pfennig. There are many such ring-smiths among the privates at the front, and the severe, somewhat archaic design

of their rings is a proof of the sureness of French taste; but the two we visited happened to be Paris jewellers, for whom "artisan" was really too modest a pseudonym. Officers and men were evidently proud of their work, and as they stood hammering away in their cramped smithy, a red gleam lighting up the intentness of their faces, they seemed to be beating out the cheerful rhythm of "I too will something make, and joy in the making." . .

Up the hillside, in deeper shadow, was another little structure; a wooden shed with an open gable sheltering an altar with candles and flowers. Here mass is said by one of the conscript priests of the regiment, while his congregation kneel between the fir-trunks, giving life to the old metaphor of the cathedral-forest. Near by was the grave-yard, where day by day these quiet elderly men lay their comrades, the *pères de famille* who don't go back. The care of this woodland cemetery is left entirely to the soldiers, and they have spent treasures of piety on the inscriptions and decorations of the graves. Fresh flowers are brought up from the valleys to cover them, and when some favourite comrade goes, the men, scorning ephemeral tributes, club together to buy a monstrous indestructible wreath with emblazoned streamers. It was near the end of the afternoon, and many soldiers were strolling along the paths between the graves. "It's their favourite walk at this hour," the Colonel said. He stopped to look down on a grave smothered in beady tokens, the grave of the last pal to fall. "He was mentioned in the Order of the Day," the Colonel explained; and the group of soldiers standing near looked at us proudly, as if sharing their comrade's honour, and wanting to be sure that we understood the reason of their pride. . .

"And now," said our Captain of Chasseurs, "that you've seen the second-line trenches, what do you say to taking a look at the first?"

We followed him to a point higher up the hill, where we plunged into a deep ditch of red earth—the "bowel" leading to the first lines. It climbed still higher, under the wet firs, and then, turning, dipped over the edge and began to wind in sharp loops down the other side of the ridge. Down we scrambled, single file,

our chins on a level with the top of the passage, the close green covert above us. The "bowel" went twisting down more and more sharply into a deep ravine; and presently, at a bend, we came to a fir-thatched outlook, where a soldier stood with his back to us, his eye glued to a peep-hole in the wattled wall. Another turn, and another outlook; but here it was the iron-rimmed eye of the mitrailleuse that stared across the ravine. By this time we were within a hundred yards or so of the German lines, hidden, like ours, on the other side of the narrowing hollow; and as we stole down and down, the hush and secrecy of the scene, and the sense of that imminent lurking hatred only a few branch-lengths away, seemed to fill the silence with mysterious pulsations. Suddenly a sharp noise broke on them: the rap of a rifle-shot against a tree-trunk a few yards ahead.

"Ah, the sharp-shooter," said our guide. "No more talking, please—he's over there, in a tree somewhere, and whenever he hears voices he fires. Some day we shall spot his tree."

We went on in silence to a point where a few soldiers were sitting on a ledge of rock in a widening of the "bowel." They looked as quiet as if they had been waiting for their backs before a Boulevard café.

"Not beyond, please," said the officer, holding me back; and I stopped.

Here we were, then, actually and literally in the first lines! The knowledge made one's heart tick a little; but, except for another shot or two from our arboreal listener, and the motionless intentness of the soldier's back at the peep-hole, there was nothing to show that we were not a dozen miles away.

Perhaps the thought occurred to our Captain of Chasseurs; for just as I was turning back he said with his friendliest twinkle: "Do you want awfully to go a little farther? Well, then, come on."

We went past the soldiers sitting on the ledge and stole down and down, to where the trees ended at the bottom of the ravine. The sharp-shooter had stopped firing, and nothing disturbed the leafy silence but an intermittent drip of rain. We were at the end of the burrow, and the Captain signed to me that I might take a cautious peep round its corner. I looked

out and saw a strip of intensely green meadow just under me, and a wooded cliff rising abruptly on its other side. That was all. The wooded cliff swarmed with "them," and a few steps would have carried us across the interval; yet all about us was silence, and the peace of the forest. Again, for a minute, I had the sense of an all-pervading, invisible power of evil, a saturation of the whole landscape with some hidden vitriol of hate. Then the reaction of unbelief set in, and I felt myself in a harmless ordinary glen, like a million others on an untroubled earth. We turned and began to climb again, loop by loop, up the "bowel"—we passed the lolling soldiers, the silent mitrailleuse, we came again to the watcher at his peep-hole. He heard us, let the officer pass, and turned his head with a little sign of understanding.

"Do you want to look down?"

He moved a step away from his window. The look-out projected over the ravine, raking its depths; and here, with one's eye to the leaf-lashed hole, one saw at last . . . saw, at the bottom of the harmless glen, half way between cliff and cliff, a grey uniform huddled in a dead heap. "He's been there for days: they can't fetch him away," said the watcher, reglueing his eye to the hole; and it was almost a relief to find it was after all a tangible enemy hidden over there across the meadow. . .

The sun had set when we got back to our starting-point in the underground village. The chasseurs-à-pied were lounging along the roadside and standing in gossiping groups about the motor. It was long since they had seen faces from the other life, the life they had left nearly a year earlier and had not been allowed to go back to for a day; and under all their jokes and good-humour their farewell had a tinge of wistfulness. But one felt that this fugitive reminder of a world they had put behind them would pass like a dream, and their minds revert without effort to the one reality: the business of holding their bit of France.

It is hard to say why this sense of the French soldier's single-mindedness is so strong in all who have had even a glimpse of the front; perhaps it is gathered less

from what the men say than from the look in their eyes. Even while they are accepting cigarettes and exchanging trench-jokes, the look is there; and when one comes on them unaware it is there also. In the dusk of the forest that look followed

us down the mountain; and as we skirted the edge of the ravine between the armies, we felt that on the far side of that dividing line were the men who had made the war, and on the near side the men who had been made by it.

"TEN THOUSAND HORSES"

By George Hibbard

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEORGE WRIGHT

HE looked blankly at the envelope which lay before him on the café table. Dully he read the name upon it as if it were the name of another, though it was his own.

Alan Harwood, Esq.,
American Embassy,
7 Rue de Chaillot,
Paris,
France.

So this was the end of a dream. When he glanced at the page which he held in his hand he anticipated something unpleasant. The fact was more uncomfortable than he had expected. The dismissal as correspondent of the newspaper for which he had come to Europe was brief, emphatic, and conclusive. He had made the venture largely upon his own responsibility, entering into no regular contract with the journal into whose service he had been taken, merely with the understanding that he would supply what material might be possible. The quantity and quality of the news which he was able to send back had not been satisfactory. With so much going on about him which the world was burning to hear, he could telegraph or write nothing. The forbidden land of the "war zone" was as inaccessible to him as Mars. A small boy without the price of admission gazing helplessly at the big tent was as powerless, and he recognized that he felt much of the same fury of exasperation as he thought of the inaccessible wonders beyond.

The end had come. The chimera had

vanished. The will-o'-the-wisp which he had pursued had gone out. He looked aimlessly before him. The rain was dripping heavily from the awning of the Café de la Paix above his head. Nevertheless, the throng pressed by in the same endless stream of varied humanity always there at the hour of the *apéritif* at that most marvellous corner of Paris and of the world.

A man, yellow-gloved, with a monocle and sealskin coat, was followed by a blind beggar led by a black *caniche*. Two *trotins de modiste* in simple black frocks and hatless, passed a young woman who, heedless of the dripping pavement, tripped onward in silk stockings and thin, high-heeled shining shoes. A lavender-and-red *chasseur à cheval* saluted a superior officer with four bands of gold about his cap, seated at a neighboring table. A small girl with bright, fresh face darted through the crowd crying shrilly, "La Liberté," "La Presse," and holding out the sheets for who might buy. An Arab in flowing robes walking with stately calm brushed against a group of darkly uniformed Belgian officers with soft, pointed hats, serious-faced and soldierly. Next followed on the instant three slouchy figures in the shabby and nondescript habiliments of the Foreign Legion. Some young Americans, the drivers of cars at the American Ambulance at Neuilly, came briskly up, easily to be mistaken in their brown uniforms for English officers until the small bronze shields with the stars and stripes above the visors of their caps became visible; while in and out among the rest mingled the usual heterogeneous multitude