

A TRAVELLER IN WAR-TIME

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[THIRD PAPER]

I



WOULD speak first of a contrast—and yet I have come to recognize how impossible it is to convey to the dweller in America the difference in atmosphere between England and France on the one hand and our country on the other. And when I use the word “atmosphere” I mean the mental state of the peoples as well as the weather and the aspect of the skies. I have referred in another article to the anxious, feverish prosperity one beholds in London and Paris, to that apparent indifference to the existence of a war of which one is ever aware, despite the presence on the streets of crowds of soldiers. Yet, along with this, one is ever conscious of pressure. The air is heavy; there is a corresponding lack of the buoyancy of mind which is the normal American condition. Perhaps, if German troops occupied New England and New York, our own mental barometer might be lower. It is difficult to say. At any rate, after an ocean voyage of nine days one’s spirits rise perceptibly as the ship nears Nantucket; and the icy-bright sunlight of New York harbor, the sight of the buildings aspiring to blue skies restore the throbbing optimism which with us is normal; and it was with an effort, when I talked to the reporters on landing, that I was able to achieve and express the pessimism and darkness out of which I had come. Pessimism is perhaps too strong a word, and takes no account of the continued unimpaired morale and determination—now that we have come into the war—of the greater part of the British and French peoples. They expect much from us. Yet the impression was instantaneous, when I set forth in the streets of New York, that we had not fully measured the magnitude of our task—an im-

pression that has been amply confirmed as the weeks have passed.

The sense of relief I felt was not only the result of bright skies and a high barometer, of the palpable self-confidence of the pedestrians, of the white bread on the table and the knowledge that there was more, but also of the ease of accomplishing things. I called for a telephone number and got it cheerfully and instantly. I sent several telegrams, and did not have to wait twenty minutes before a wicket while a painstaking official multiplied and added and subtracted and paused to talk with a friend; the speed of the express in which I flew down-town seemed emblematic of America itself. I had been transported, in fact, into another world—my world; and in order to realize again that from which I had come I turned to a diary recording a London filled with the sulphur fumes of fog, through which the lamps of the taxis and buses shone as yellow blots reflected on glistening streets; or, for some reason still a greater contrast, a blue, blue November Sunday afternoon in Paris, the Esplanade of the Invalides black with people—apathetic people—and the Invalides itself all etched in blue, as seen through the wide vista from the Seine.

A few days later, with some children, I went to the Hippodrome. And it remained for the Hippodrome, of all places, to give me the thrill I had not achieved abroad, the thrill I had not experienced since the first months of the war. Mr. George Cohan accomplished it; expressed, as no one else has for me, the American spirit. The transport, with steam up, is ready to leave the wharf, the khaki-clad regiment of erect and vigorous young Americans marches across the great stage, the audience strains forward and begins to sing, under its breath, the words that proclaim, as nothing else perhaps proclaims, how America feels.

"Send the word, send the word over there . . .
We'll be o-ver, we're coming o-ver,
And we won't come back till it's o-ver, over
there!"

Is it the prelude of a tragedy? We have always been so successful, we Americans. Are we to fail now? I am an American, and I do not believe we are to fail. But I am soberer, somehow a different American than he who sailed away in August. Shall we learn other things than those that have hitherto been contained in our philosophy?

Of one thing I am convinced. It is the first war of the world that is not a *military* war, although military genius is demanded, although it is the bloodiest war in history. But other qualities are required; men and women who are not soldiers are fighting in it and will aid in victory. The pomp and circumstance, the thrills of other wars are lacking in this, the greatest of all. We had the thrills, even in America, three years ago, when Britain and France and Canada went in. We tingled when we read of the mobilizing of the huge armies, of the leave-takings of the soldiers. We bought every extra for news of those first battles on Belgian soil. And I remember my sensations when in the province of Quebec in the autumn of 1914, looking out of the car-window at the troops gathering on the platforms who were to go across the seas to fight for the empire and liberty. They were singing "Tipperary!" "Tipperary!" One seldom hears it now, and the way *has* proved long—longer than we reckoned. But we are singing "Over There!"

In those first months of the war there was, we were told, in England and France a revival of "religion," and indeed many of the books then written gave evidence of having been composed in exalted, mystic moods. I remember one in particular, called "En Campagne," by a young French officer. And then, somehow, the note of mystic exaltation died away, to be succeeded by a period of realism. Read "Le Feu," which is most typical, which has sold in numberless editions. Here is a picture of that other aspect—the grimness, the monotony, and the frequent bestiality of trench life, the horror of slaughtering millions of men by highly specialized machinery. And yet, as an

American, I strike inevitably the note of optimism once more. Even now the truer spiritual goal is taking shape in the battle clouds, has been expressed in the world-reverberating phrases of our American President. Day by day the real issue is clearer, while the "religion" it implies embraces not one nation, wills not one patriotism, but humanity itself. I heard a Frenchwoman who had been deeply "religious" in the old sense exclaim: "I no longer have any faith in God; he is on the side of the Germans." When the war began there were many evidences of a resurgence of that faith that God fights for nations, interferes in behalf of the "righteous" cause. When General Joffre was in America he was asked by one of our countrywomen how the battle of the Marne was won. "Madame," he is reported to have said, "it was won by me, by my generals and soldiers." The tendency to regard this victory, which we hope saved France and the Western humanitarian civilization we cherish, as a special interposition of Providence, as a miracle, has given place to the realization that the battle was won by the resourcefulness, science, and coolness of the French commander-in-chief. Science preserves armies, since killing, if it has to be done, is now wholly within that realm; science heals the wounded, transports them rapidly to the hospitals, gives the shattered something still to live for; and, if we are able to abandon the sentimental view and look facts in the face—as many anointed chaplains in Europe are doing—science not only eliminates typhoid but is able to prevent those terrible diseases that devastate armies and nations. And science is no longer confined to the physical but has invaded the social kingdom, is able to weave a juster fabric into the government of peoples. On all sides we are beginning to perceive a religion of self-reliance, a faith that God is on the side of intelligence—intelligence with a broader meaning than the Germans have given it, for it embraces charity.

II

It seems to me I remember, somewhere in the realistic novel I have mentioned—"Le Feu"—reading of singing soldiers,

and an assumption on the part of their hearers that such songs are prompted alone by a certain devil-may-care lightness of heart which the soldier achieves. A shallow psychology (as the author points out), especially in these days of trench warfare! The soldier sings to hide his real feelings, perhaps to give vent to them. I am reminded of all this in connection with my trip to the British front. I left London after lunch on one of those dreary, gray days to which I have referred, and rain had begun to splash angrily against the panes of the car windows before we reached the coast. At five o'clock the boat pushed off into a black channel, whipped by a gale that drove the rain across the decks and into every passage and gangway. The steamer was literally loaded with human beings, officers and men returning from a brief glimpse of home. There was nothing of the glory of war in the embarkation, and, to add to the sad and sinister effect of it, each man as he came aboard mounted the ladder and chose, from a pile on the combing, a sodden life-preserver, which he flung around his shoulders as he went about in search of a shelter. The saloon below, where we had our tea, was lighted indeed, but sealed so tight as to be insupportable; and the cabin above, stifling too, was dark as a pocket. One stumbled over unseen passengers on the lounges, or sitting on kits on the floor. Even the hatch up which I groped my way to the deck above was filled, while on the deck there was standing-room only and not much of that. *Mal de mer* added to the discomforts of many. At length I found an uncertain refuge in a gangway amidships, hedged in between unseen companions; but even here the rain stung our faces and the spray of an occasional comber drenched our feet, while through the gloom of the night only a few yards of white water were to be discerned. For three hours I stood there, trying to imagine what was in the minds of these men with whose bodies I was in such intimate contact. They were going to a foreign land to fight, many of them to die, not in one of those adventurous campaigns of times gone by, but in the wet trenches or the hideous No Man's Land between. What were the images they summoned up in the darkness? Visions of long-familiar

homes and long-familiar friends? And just how were they facing the future? Even as I wondered, voices rose in a song, English voices, soldier voices. It was not "Tipperary," the song that thrilled us a few years ago. I strove to catch the words:

"I want to go home!

I don't want to go back to the trenches no more,
Where there are bullets and shrapnel galore,
I want to go home!"

It was sung boisterously, in a defiant tone of mockery of the desire it expressed, and thus tremendously gained in pathos. They *did* want to go home—naturally. It was sung with the same spirit our men sing "We won't go back till it's over, over there!" The difference is that these Britishers have been over there, have seen the horrors face to face, have tasted the sweets of home, and in spite of heartsickness and seasickness are resolved to see it through. Such is the morale of the British army. I have not the slightest doubt that it will be the morale of our own army also, but at present the British are holding the fort. Tommy would never give up the war, but he has had a realistic taste of it, and his songs reflect his experience. Other songs reached my ears each night, above the hissing and pounding of the Channel seas, but the unseen group returned always to this. One thought of Agincourt and Crécy, of Waterloo, of the countless journeys across this same stormy strip of water the ancestors of these men had made in the past, and one wondered whether war were eternal and inevitable, after all.

And what does Tommy think about it—this war? My own limited experience thoroughly indorses Mr. Galsworthy's splendid analysis of British-soldier psychology that appeared in the December *North American*. The average man, with native doggedness, is fighting for the defense of England. The British Government itself, in its Reconstruction department for the political education of the wounded, has given partial denial to the old maxim that it is the soldier's business not to think but to obey; and the British army is leavened with men who read and reflect in the long nights of watching in the rain, who are gaining ideas about conditions in the past and resolutions con-

cerning those of the future. The very army itself has had a miracle happen to it: it has been democratized—and with the cheerful consent of the class to which formerly the possession of commissions was largely confined. Gradually, to these soldier-thinkers, as well as to the mass of others at home, is unfolding the vision of a new social order which is indeed worth fighting for and dying for.

III

At last, our knees cramped and our feet soaked, we saw the lights of the French port dancing across the veil of rain, like thistledowns of fire, and presently we were at rest at a stone quay. As I stood waiting on the deck to have my passport *viséd*, I tried to reconstruct the features of this little seaport as I had seen it, many years before, on a bright summer's day when I had motored from Paris on my way to London. The gay line of hotels facing the water was hidden in the darkness. Suddenly I heard my name called, and I was rescued from the group of civilians by a British officer who introduced himself as my host. It was after nine o'clock, and he had been on the lookout for me since half past seven. The effect of his welcome at that time and place was electrical, and I was further immensely cheered by the news he gave me, as we hurried along the street, that two friends of mine were here and quite hungry, having delayed dinner for my arrival. One of them was a young member of Congress who had been making exhaustive studies of the situation in Italy, France, and England, and the other one of our best-known writers. They were bound for London, and we sat around the table until nearly eleven, exchanging impressions and experiences. Then my officer declared that it was time to go home.

"Home" proved to be the big château which the British Government has leased for the kindly purpose of entertaining such American guests as they choose to invite. It is known as the "American Château," and in the early morning hours we reached it after a long drive through the gale. We crossed a bridge over a moat and traversed a huge stone hall to the Gothic drawing-room. Here a fire was crackling on the hearth, refreshments

were laid out, and the major in command rose from his book to greet me. Hospitality, with these people, has attained to art, and, though I had come here at the invitation of his government, I had the feeling of being his personal guest in his own house. Presently he led the way up the stone stairs and showed me the room I was to occupy.

I awoke to the sound of the wind whistling through the open lattice, and looking down on the ruffled blue waters of the moat I saw a great white swan at his morning toilet, his feathers dazzling in the sun. It was one of those rare crisp and sparkling days that remind one of our American autumn. A green stretch of lawn made a vista through the woods. Following the example of the swan, I plunged into the tin tub the orderly had placed beside my bed and went down to porridge in a glow. Porridge, for the major was Scotch, and had taught his French cook to make it as only the Scotch know how. Then, going out into the hall, from a table on which lay a contour map of the battle region, the major picked up a hideous mask that seemed to have been made for some barbarous revelries.

"We may not strike any gas," he said, "but it's as well to be on the safe side," whereupon he made me practise inserting the tube in the mouth, pinching the nostrils instantly with the wire-covered nippers. He also presented me with a steel helmet. Thus equipped for any untoward occurrence, putting on sweaters and heavy overcoats, and wrapping ourselves in the fur rugs of the waiting automobile, we started off, with the gale on our quarter, for the front.

Picardy, on whose soil has been shed so much English blood, never was more beautiful than on that October day. The trees were still in full leaf, the fields green, though the crops had been gathered, and the crystal air gave vivid value to every color in the landscape. From time to time we wound through the cobble-stoned streets of historic villages, each having its stone church and the bodkin-shaped steeple of blue slate so characteristic of that country. And, as though we were still in the pastoral times of peace, in the square of one of these villages a horse-fair was in progress, blue-smocked peasants were

trotting chunky ponies over the stones. It was like a picture from one of De Maupassant's tales. In other villages the shawled women sat knitting behind piles of beets and cabbages and apples, their farm-carts atilt in the sun. Again and again I tried to grasp the fact that the greatest of world wars was being fought only a few miles away—and failed.

We had met, indeed, an occasional officer or orderly, huddled in a greatcoat and head against the wind, exercising those wonderful animals that are the pride of the British cavalry and which General Sir Douglas Haig, himself a cavalryman, some day hopes to bring into service. We had overtaken an artillery train rumbling along toward the east, the men laughing and joking as they rode, as though they were going to manoeuvres. Farther on, as the soldiers along the highroads and in the towns grew more and more numerous, they seemed so harmoniously part of the peaceful scene that war was as difficult to visualize as ever. Many sat about smoking their pipes and playing with the village children, others were in squads going to drill or exercise—something the Briton never neglects. The amazing thing to a visitor who has seen the trenches awash on a typical wet day, who knows that even billeting in cold farms and barns behind the lines can scarcely be compared to the comforts of home, is how these men keep well under the conditions. To say that they are well is to understate the fact: the ruddy faces and clear eyes and hard muscles—even of those who once were pale London clerks—proclaim a triumph for the system of hygiene of their army.

Suddenly we came upon a house with a great round hole in its wall, and then upon several in ruins beside the village street. Meanwhile, at work under the wind-swept trees of the highway, were strange, dark men from the uttermost parts of the earth, physiognomies as old as the tombs of Pharaoh. It was, indeed, not so much the graven red profiles of priests and soldiers that came to my mind, but the singing fellaheen of the water-buckets of the Nile. And here, too, shovelling the crushed rock, were East Indians oddly clad in European garb, unmindful of the cold. That sense of the vastness of the British Empire, which at times is

so profound, was mingled now with a knowledge that it was fighting for its life, marshalling all its resources for Armageddon.

Saint Eloi is named after the good bishop who ventured to advise King Dagobert about his costume. And the church stands—what is left of it—all alone on the greenest of terraces that juts out toward the east; and the tower, ruggedly picturesque against the sky, resembles that of some crumbled abbey. As a matter of fact, it has been a target for German gunners. Dodging an army-truck and rounding one of those military-traffic policemen one meets at every important *carrefour* we climbed the hill and left the motor among the great trees, which are still fortunately preserved. And we stood for a few minutes, gazing over miles and miles of devastation. Then, taking the motor once more, we passed through wrecked and empty villages until we came to the foot of Vimy Ridge. Notre Dame de Lorette rose against the sky-line to the north.

Vimy and Notre Dame de Lorette—sweet but terrible names! Only a summer had passed since Vimy was the scene of one of the bloodiest battles of the war. From a distance the prevailing color of the steep slope is ochre; it gives the effect of having been scraped bare in preparation for some gigantic enterprise. A nearer view reveals a flush of green; nature is already striving to heal. From top to bottom it is pockmarked by shells and scarred by trenches—trenches every few feet, and between them tangled masses of barbed wire still clinging to the “knife rests” and corkscrew stanchions to which it had been strung. The huge shell-holes, revealing the chalk subsoil, were half-filled with water. And even though the field had been cleaned by those East Indians I had seen on the road, and the thousands who had died here buried, bits of uniform, shoes, and accoutrements and shattered rifles were sticking in the clay—and once we came across a portion of a bedstead. How it got there is a mystery. Painfully, pausing frequently to ponder over these remnants, so eloquent of the fury of the struggle, slipping backward at every stop and despite our care getting tangled in the wire, we made our way up the slope. Buttercups and

daisies were blooming around the edges of the craters.

As we drew near the crest the major warned me not to expose myself. "It isn't because there is much chance of our being shot," he explained, "but a matter of drawing the German fire upon others." And yet I found it hard to believe—despite the evidence at my feet—that war existed here. The brightness of the day, the emptiness of the place, the silence—save for the humming of the gale—denied it. And then, when we had cautiously rounded a hummock at the top, my steel helmet was blown off—not by a shrapnel, but by the wind! I had neglected to tighten the chin-strap.

Immediately below us I could make out scars like earthquake cracks running across the meadows—the front trenches. Both armies were buried like moles in these furrows. The country was spread out before us, like a map, with occasionally the black contour of a coal mound rising against the green, or a deserted shaft-head. I was gazing at the famous battle-field of Lens. Villages, woods, whose names came back to me as the major repeated them, lay like cloud shadows on the sunny plain, and the faintest shadow of all, far to the eastward, was Lens itself. I marked it by a single white tower. And suddenly another white tower, loftier than the first, had risen up! But even as I stared its substance seemed to change, to dissolve, and the tower was no longer to be seen. Not until then did I realize that a monster shell had burst beside the trenches in front of the city. Occasionally after that there came to my ears the muffled report of some hidden gun, and a ball like a powder-puff lay lightly on the plain, and vanished. But even the presence of these, oddly enough, did not rob the landscape of its air of Sunday peace.

We ate our sandwiches and drank our bottle of white wine in a sheltered cut of the road that runs up that other ridge which the French gained at such an appalling price, Notre Dame de Lorette, while the major described to me some features of the Lens battle, in which he had taken part. I discovered incidentally that he had been severely wounded at the Somme. Though he had been a soldier all his life, and a good soldier, his

true passion was painting, and he drew my attention to the rare greens and silver-grays of the stones above us, steeped in sunlight—all that remained of the little church of Notre Dame—more beautiful, more significant, perhaps, as a ruin. It reminded the major of the Turners he had admired in his youth. After lunch we lingered in the cemetery, where the graves and vaults had been harrowed by shells; the trenches ran right through them. And here, in this desecrated resting-place of the village dead, where the shattered gravestones were mingled with barbed wire, death-dealing fragments of iron, and rusting stick-bombs that had failed to explode, was a wooden cross, on which was rudely written the name of *Hans Siebert*. Mouldering at the foot of the cross was a gray woollen German tunic from which the buttons had been cut.

We kept the road to the top, for Notre Dame de Lorette is as steep as Vimy. There we looked upon the panorama of the Lens battle-field once more, and started down the eastern slope, an apparently smooth expanse covered now with prairie grasses, in reality a labyrinth of deep ditches, dugouts, and pits; grew some remnants of the battle lay half-concealed under the grass. We walked slowly, making desperate leaps over the trenches, sometimes perforce going through them, treading gingerly on the "duck board" at the bottom. We stumbled over stick-bombs and unexploded shells. No plough can be put here—the only solution for the land for years to come is forest. Just before we gained the road at the bottom, where the car was awaiting us, we were startled by the sudden flight of a covey of partridges.

The skies were gray when we reached the banal outskirts of a town where the bourgeoisie houses were modern, commonplace, save those which had been ennobled by ruin. It was Arras, one of those few magic names, eloquent with suggestions of mediæval romance and art, intrigue and chivalry; while upon their significance, since the war began, has been superimposed still another, no less eloquent but charged with pathos. We halted for a moment in the open space before the railroad station, a comparatively new structure of steel and glass, designed on geometrical curves, with an un-

inspiring, cheaply ornamented front. It had been, undoubtedly, the pride of the little city. Yet finding it here had at first something of the effect of the discovery of an office-building—let us say—on the site of the Reims Cathedral. Presently, however, its emptiness, its silence began to have their effects—these and the rents one began to perceive in the roof. For it was still the object of the intermittent yet persistent fire of the German artillery. One began to realize that by these wounds it had achieved a dignity that transcended the mediocre imagination of its provincial designer. A fine rain had set in before we found the square, and here indeed one felt a certain desolate satisfaction; despite the wreckage there the spirit of the ancient town still poignantly haunted it. Although the Hôtel de Ville, which had expressed adequately the longings and aspirations, the civic pride of those bygone burghers, was razed to the ground, on three sides were still standing the varied yet harmoniously similar façades of Flemish houses made familiar by photographs. Of some of these the plaster between the carved beams had been shot away, the roofs blown off, and the tiny hewn rafters were bared to the sky. The place was empty in the gathering gloom of the twilight. The gayety and warmth of the hut erected in the Public Gardens which houses the British Officers' Club were a relief.

The experiences of the next day will remain forever in my memory, etched, as it were, in sepia. My guide was a younger officer who had seen heroic service, and I wondered constantly how his delicate frame had survived in the trenches the constant hardship of such weather as now, warmly wrapped and with the car-curtains drawn, we faced. The inevitable, relentless rain of that region had set in again, the rain in which our own soldiers will have to fight, and the skies were of a darkness seldom known in America. The countryside was no longer smiling. After some two hours of progress we came, in that devastated district near the front, to an expanse where many monsters were clumsily cavorting like dinosaurs in primeval slime. At some distance from the road others stood apparently tethered in line, awaiting their turn for exercise. These were the far-famed tanks. Their

commander, or chief mahout—as I was inclined to call him—was a cheerful young giant of colonial origin, who has often driven them serenely across No Man's Land and into the German trenches. He had been expecting us, and led me along a duck board over the morass, to where one of these leviathans was awaiting us. You crawl through a greasy hole in the bottom, and the inside is as full of machinery as the turret of the *Pennsylvania*, and you grope your way to the seat in front beside that of the captain and conductor, looking out through a slot in the armor over a waste of water and mud. From here you are supposed to operate a machine gun. Behind you two mechanics have started the engines with a deafening roar, above which are heard the hoarse commands of the captain as he grinds in his gears. Then you realize that the thing is actually moving, that the bosses on the belt have managed to find a grip on the slime—and presently you come to the brink of what appears, to your exaggerated sense of perception, a bottomless chasm, with distant steep banks on the farther side that look unattainable and insurmountable. It is an old German trench, which the rains have worn and widened. You brace yourself, you grip desperately a pair of brass handles in front of you, while leviathan hesitates, seems to sit up on his haunches, and then gently buries his nose in the pasty clay and paws his way upward into the field beyond. It was like sitting in a huge rocking-chair. That we might have had a bump, and a bone-breaking one, I was informed after I had left the scene of the adventure. It all depends upon the skill of the driver. The monsters are not as tractable as they seem.

That field in which the tanks manoeuvre is characteristic of the whole of this district of levelled villages and vanished woods. Imagine a continuous clay vacant lot in one of our Middle Western cities on the rainiest day you can recall; and further imagine, on this limitless lot, a network of narrow-gauge tracks and wagon roads, a scattering of contractors' shanties, and you will have some idea of the daily life and surroundings of one of our American engineer regiments, which is running a railroad behind the British front. Yet one has only to see these men and talk with them to be convinced of the

truth that human happiness and even human health—thanks to modern science—are not dependent upon an existence in a Garden of Eden. I do not mean exactly that these men would choose to spend the rest of their existences in this waste, but they are happy in the consciousness of a job well done. It was really inspiring to encounter here the familiar conductors and brakemen, engineers and firemen, who had voluntarily, and for an ideal, left their homes in a remote and peaceful republic three thousand miles away, to find contentment and a new vitality, a wider vision, in the difficult and dangerous task they were performing. They were frequently under fire—when they brought back the wounded or fetched car-loads of munitions to the great guns on the ridiculous little trains of flat cars with open-work wheels, which they named—with American humor—the Federal Express and the Twentieth Century Limited. And their officers were equally happy. Their colonel, of our regular Army Engineer Corps, was one of those broad-shouldered six-footers who, when they walk the streets of Paris, compel pedestrians to turn admiringly and give one a new pride in the manhood of our nation. Hospitably he drew us out of the wind and rain into his little hut, and sat us down beside the stove, cheerfully informing us that, only the night before, the gale had blown his door in, and his roof had started for the German lines. In a neighboring hut, reached by a duck board, we had lunch with him and his officers—baked beans and pickles, cakes and maple syrup. The American food, the American jokes and voices in that environment seemed strange indeed! But as we smoked and chatted about the friends we had in common, about political events at home and the changes that were taking place there, it seemed as if we were in America once more. The English officer listened and smiled in sympathy, and he remarked, after our reluctant departure, that America was an extraordinary land.

He directed our chauffeur to Bapaume, across that wilderness which the Germans had so wantonly made in their retreat to the Hindenburg line. Nothing could have been more dismal than our slow progress in the steady rain, through the deserted streets of this town. Home after home

had been blasted—their intimate yet harrowing interiors were revealed. The shops and cafés, which had been thoroughly looted, had their walls blown out, but in many cases the signs of the vanished and homeless proprietors still hung above the doors. I wondered how we should feel in New England if such an outrage had been done to Boston, for instance, or little Concord! The church, the great cathedral on its terrace, the bishop's house, all dynamited, all cold and wet and filthy ruins! It was dismal, indeed, but scarcely more dismal than that which followed; for at Bapaume we were on the edge of the battle-field of the Somme. And I chanced to remember that the name had first been indelibly impressed on my consciousness at a comfortable breakfast-table at home, where I sat looking out on a bright New England garden. In the headlines and columns of my morning newspaper I had read again and again, during the summer of 1916, of Thiepval and La Boisselle, of Fricourt and Mametz and the Bois des Trônes. Then they had had a sinister but remote significance; now I was to see them, or what was left of them!

As an appropriate and characteristic setting for the tragedy which had happened here, the indigo afternoon could not have been better chosen. Description fails to do justice to the abomination of desolation of that vast battle-field in the rain, and the imagination refuses to reconstruct the scene of peace—the châteaux and happy villages, the forests and pastures, that flourished here so brief a time ago. In my fancy the long, low swells of land, like those of some dreary sea, were for the moment the subsiding waves of the cataclysm that had rolled here and extinguished all life. Beside the road only the blood-red soil betrayed the sites of powdered villages; and through it, in every direction, trenches had been cut. Between the trenches the earth was torn and tortured, as though some sudden fossilizing process, in its moment of supreme agony, had fixed it thus. On the hummocks were graves, graves marked by wooden crosses, others by broken rifles thrust in the ground. Shattered gun-carriages lay in the ditches, modern cannon that had cost priceless hours of skilled labor; and once we were confronted by

one of those monsters, wounded to the death, I had seen that morning. The sight of this huge, helpless thing oddly recalled the emotions I had felt, as a child, when contemplating the dead elephants in the battle pictures of the armies of Babylonian and Persian kings.

Presently, like the peak of some submerged land, we saw lifted out of that rolling waste the "Butt" of Warlencourt—the burial-mound of this modern Marathon. It is honeycombed with dugouts in which the Germans who clung to it found their graves, while the victorious British army swept around it toward Bapaume. Everywhere along that road, which runs like an arrow across the battle-field to Albert, were graves. Repetition seems the only method of giving an adequate impression of their numbers; and near what was once the village of Pozières was the biggest grave of all, a crater fifty feet deep and a hundred feet across. Seven months the British sappers had toiled far below in the chalk, digging the passage and chamber; and one summer dawn, like some tropical volcano, it had burst directly under the German trench. Long we stood on the slippery edge of it, gazing down at the tangled wire and litter of battle that strewn the bottom, while the rain fell pitilessly. Just such rain, said my officer-guide, as had drenched this country through the long winter months of preparation. "We never got dry," he told me; and added with a smile, in answer to my query: "Perhaps that was the reason we never caught colds." And it may be, when the history of this war is all written, that this battle will prove in one great respect to be the most dramatic and significant of all. In it not only the mettle of the British army but that of the British nation and empire were tested. In that summer of 1916 Britain was ready to strike. One recalls the prophetic exclamation of the German General von Buelow before the blow fell: "If we lose this battle, it will be fatal!"

When we entered Albert, the starting-point of the British advance, there was just light enough to see the statue of the Virgin leaning far above us over the street. The church-tower on which it had once stood erect had been struck by a German shell, but its steel rod had bent and not broken. Local superstition de-

clares that when the Virgin of Albert falls the war will be ended.

IV

I COME home impressed with the fact that Britain has learned more from this war than any other nation, and will probably gain more by that knowledge. We are all wanting, of course, to know what we shall get out of it, since it was forced upon us; and of course the only gain worth considering—as many of those to whom its coming has brought home the first glimmerings of social science are beginning to see—is precisely a newly acquired vision of the art of self-government. It has been unfortunately necessary—or perhaps fortunately necessary—for the great democracies to turn their energies and resources and the inventive ingenuity of their citizens to the organization of armies and indeed of entire populations to the purpose of killing enough Germans to remove democracy's exterior menace. The price we pay in human life is appallingly unfortunate. But the necessity for national organization socializes the nation capable of it; or, to put the matter more truly, if the socializing process had anticipated the war—as it had in Great Britain—the ability to complete it under stress is the test of a democratic nation; and hence the test of democracy, since the socializing process becomes international. Britain has stood the test, even from the old-fashioned militarist point of view, since it is apparent that no democracy can wage a sustained great war unless it is socialized. After the war she will probably lead all other countries in a sane and scientific liberalization. The encouraging fact is that not in spite of her liberalism, but because of it, she has met military Germany on her own ground and, to use a vigorous expression, gone her one better. Britain's democratized army is better supplied and more scientifically organized than the despot-led forces that oppose it. Taking all factors into account, there is now no finer army in the world. In 1914, as armies go to-day, it was a mere handful of men whose officers belonged to a military caste. Brave men and brave officers, indeed! But at present it is a war organization of an excellence which the

Germans, even at the height of their efficiency, never achieved. I have no space to enter into a description of the amazing system, of the network of arteries converging at the channel ports and spreading out until it feeds and clothes every man of those millions, furnishes him with newspapers and tobacco, and gives him the greatest contentment compatible with the conditions under which he has to live. The number of shells flung at the enemy is only limited by the lives of the guns that fire them. I should like to tell with what swiftness, under the stress of battle, the wounded are hurried back to the coast and even to England itself. I may not state the thousands carried on leave every day across the channel and back again—in spite of submarines. But I went one day through Saint Omer, with its beautiful church and little blue château, past the rest-camps of the big regiments of guards to a seaport on the downs, formerly a quiet little French town, transformed now into an ordered Babel. The term is paradoxical, but I let it stand. English, Irish, and Scotch from the British Isles and the ends of the earth mingle there with Indians, Egyptians, and the chattering Mongolians in queer fur caps who work in the bakeries.

I went through one of these bakeries, almost as large as an automobile factory, fragrant with the aroma of two hundred thousand loaves of bread. This bakery alone sends every day to the trenches two hundred thousand loaves made from the wheat of western Canada! Of all sights to be seen in this place, however, the reclamation "plant" is the most wonderful. It covers acres. Everything which is broken in war, from a pair of officer's field-glasses to a nine-inch howitzer carriage is mended here—if it can be mended. Here, when a battle-field is cleared, every article that can possibly be used again is brought; and the manager pointed with pride to the furnaces in his power-house, which formerly burned coal and now are fed with refuse—broken wheels of gun-carriages, sawdust, and even old shoes. Hundreds of French girls and even German prisoners are resoling and patching shoes with the aid of American machinery, and even the uppers of such as are otherwise hopeless are cut in spirals into

laces. Tunics, breeches, and overcoats are mended by tailors; rusty camp cookers are retinned, and in the foundries the precious scraps of cast iron are melted into braziers to keep Tommy in the trenches warm. In the machine-shops the injured guns and cannon are repaired. German prisoners are working there, too. At a distance, in their homely gray tunics, with their bullet-shaped heads close-cropped and the hairs standing out like the needles of a cylinder of a music-box, they had the appearance of hard citizens who had become rather sullen convicts. Some wore spectacles. A closer view revealed that most of them were contented, and some actually cheerful. None, indeed, seemed more cheerful than a recently captured group I saw later, who were actually building the barbed-wire fence that was to confine them!

My last visit in this town was to the tiny hut on a "corner lot," in which the Duchess of Sutherland has lived now for some years. As we had tea she told me she was going on a fortnight's leave to England; and no Tommy in the trenches could have been more excited over the prospect. Her own hospital, which occupies the rest of the lot, is one of those marvels which individual initiative and a strong social sense such as hers has produced in this war. Special enterprise was required to save such desperate cases as are made a specialty of here, and all that medical and surgical science can do has been concentrated, with extraordinary success, on the shattered men who are brought to her wards. That most of the horrible fractures I saw are healed, and healed quickly—thanks largely to the drainage system of our own Doctor Carrel—is not the least of the wonders of the remarkable times in which we live.

The next day, Sunday, I left for Paris, bidding farewell regretfully to the last of my British-officer hosts. He seemed like an old, old friend—though I had known him but a few days. I can see him now as he waved me a good-by from the platform in his Glengarry cap and short tunic and plaid trousers. He is the owner of a castle and some seventy square miles of land in Scotland alone, yet for the comfort of his nation's guests, he toils like a hired courier.

A LEADING LADY OF THE DISCARDS

By Stuart Rivers

ILLUSTRATIONS BY O. F. SCHMIDT



AFTER each frequent station the train-crew hurried back into the warmly lighted coach, slatting the water from their caps, turning down the collars of their coats, and cursing softly at the vileness of the weather. Rain in torrents swashed against the windows, while the wind shrieked in answer to the screams from the fighting engine. Blurred circles of light, spotting out a lonely farmhouse, appeared in the outside blackness, then went out as the cars lurched around a bend. The one passenger-coach was deserted save by a few belated travellers whom stern necessity forced out into the storm. In front of where the trainmen sat a stout lady tried vainly to catch a few winks of sleep, her head resting against her hand. Farther forward a man hunched himself into his overcoat and stared moodily at the axes and crowbars in their glass case, and a dozen seats ahead of him came a small group of travelling actors, three women and two men, their suitcases filling the racks overhead and overflowing to the seats in front and to the side.

The man who had been hunched into his overcoat rose stiffly to his feet and walked forward to the water-cooler, where he braced himself against the wall while he juggled with a paper cup, the other occupants of the car watching him in languid half-wonder, marvelling that any one could think of water on such a night, much less drink it; but the man, unconscious of their thoughts, emptied the cup three times before he started back down the aisle. Half-way back to his seat his eyes were attracted by a crumpled newspaper and dropping down on the nearest cushion he attempted to forget his boredom in a perusal of the news. After a time he became conscious of voices and he glanced over the top of the paper at the man and girl in the seat ahead.

"I'll get my chance some day, Jim, you see if I don't," the girl was saying.

"That's what I'm goin' on for. If I didn't think that, I'd stop. I'd want t' quit right now, 'cause what'd be the use of goin' on? But you wait and see; some day I'll be on Broadway, and have my name up in electric lights too."

The man with the paper showed his interest in the speaker by leaning forward in an effort to catch a glimpse of her face. All he could see was one rounded cheek and a bit of her neck as it disappeared into the cheap fur collar.

"I know how you feel about it, Beth," the girl's companion answered. "I use t' feel that way myself, before I was shoved into the discards, but after eight years of one-night stands most of the glimmer o' Broadway has got dimmed, at least it has for me."

"Actors," thought the man with the paper; then he added, with a little shake of his head: "Poor devils."

"It ain't so bad," the man in front continued, turning his head so a trifle more of his thin, bony face was visible. "It ain't so bad if you look at it right. Nights like this is the worst, but then—I don't care what you're doin', nor no matter what kind of a job you're up against, you'll always get nights like this mixed up with the soft moonlights. The way I look at it is this—a feller's got to take what's comin' to him."

"Oh, don't get away with the idea that I think life up top's all joy and bliss!" the girl exclaimed. "I've been long enough with the game to know there's some hard work to it, no matter how big you get to be. If it was only the work I'd rather be a stenographer, or a clerk. They think they have it rough, but it ain't nothin' to our job. It ain't that, it's somethin' different than that. I know every one gives you the loud laugh when you come anything about art, but that's what I mean. I'd like to get a chance to see if I could put it over. You know the stuff we've got to hand out—"

"I ought to," answered the man inter-