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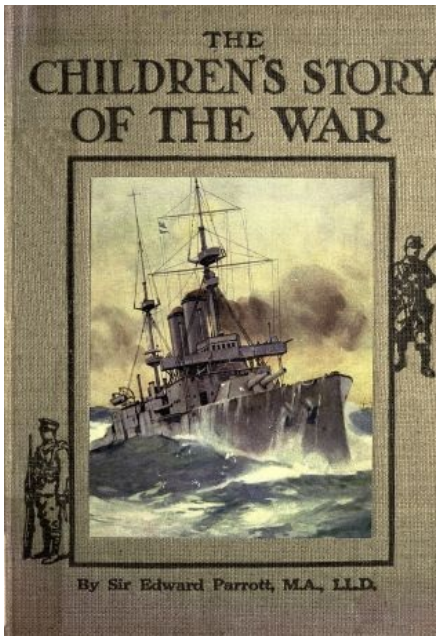

British Aeroplanes attacking the Zeppelin Factory at Friedrichshafen.

On November 21, 1914, three British aeroplanes flew from France across the mountains into Germany, a distance of 250 miles, and dropped bombs on the Zeppelin factory at Friedrichshafen, on the shores of Lake Constance. Serious damage was done, and all the pilots but one returned safely. Another daring air raid was made on Christmas Day 1914 by seven aeroplanes on German warships lying off Cuxhaven.

THE

CHILDREN'S STORY

OF THE WAR

by

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

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

From the First Battle of Ypres to the End of the Year 1914

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.

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1916

"*O hearts ever youthful, like schoolboys at play,*
So be it with you in the thick of the fray;
In the crash and the smoke and the roar of the fight,
Be it yours, if it need be, to die for the Right!
While deep in your heart a quick prayer shall arise
To Him who looks down on the earth from the skies,
For those whom you love in a faraway Home—
O! shield them, our Father, whatever may come!"

I. GREGORY SMITH.

(*By permission of "The Times."*)

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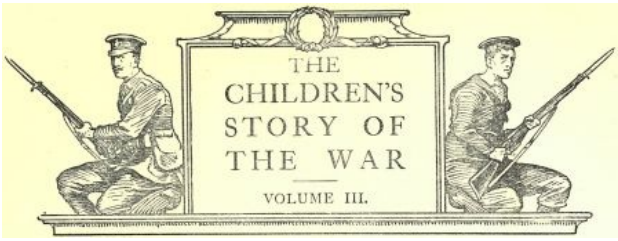


[1]

CHAPTER I.

A GLANCE BACKWARDS.

When the last British soldier, with the mud of the Aisne trenches still clinging to his tunic, detrained in Artois,[1] within fifty miles of the white cliffs of Dover, seventy-seven days of anxious and fateful struggle had come to an end. Before we follow the progress of the terrible campaign which was soon to begin, let us glance backwards and recall in brief outline the leading incidents of the crowded weeks which had elapsed since Germany unsheathed the sword and flung her legions into that "battle without a morrow" which she vainly hoped would win for her the mastery of Europe and the supremacy of the world.

In our first volume we learned how the disunited states of Germany, under the leadership of Prussia, became welded together into a great empire on the ringing anvil of war. The German Empire had been created by the sword, and Germans had been taught to believe that only by the sword could it be maintained and increased. During less than half a century they had grown from poverty to riches and greatness, and this sudden rise to wealth and power had so turned their heads that they now deemed themselves entitled to [3] world-empire. Mighty in industry and commerce, and possessed of the vastest and most highly organized weapon of war that the world has ever known, they nevertheless saw their ambitions thwarted again and again. They desired greatly a dominion beyond the seas, but colonies were hard to come by. With the failure of their attempts to expand they grew more and more embittered, until they believed that they were being robbed of their rightful due by the envy and greed of neighbouring Powers.

On their eastern border they saw the Russians daily recovering from the effects of the war against Japan, and so rapidly advancing in military strength as to be a real menace to that commanding position which they coveted. Their leaders feared that if Russia were not speedily crippled she would

"Bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus,[2] and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves."

While viewing the rise of Russia with mingled fear and contempt, they saw the British people, whom they had been taught to despise as a worn-out and wealth-corrupted race, holding dominion on every continent and in every sea, and unfurling their flag over one in four of all mankind. The spectacle was gall and wormwood to them, and they made no secret of their intention to wrest this vast empire from its present holders when the time was ripe. To this end they had built a great fleet, and their sailors drank to "The Day" when the lordship of the ocean should be theirs, and the overseas dominion of Britain the spoils of their triumph.

But the fruits of industrial strength and armed might were slow in ripening, and in 1911, when, thanks to the support of Great Britain, France became supreme in Morocco and the shadowy claims of Germany were set aside, there was bitter chagrin in the Fatherland. It was then, as we have good reason to believe, that the leaders of the German people came to the conclusion that only by war could they realize their ambitions. [4] War must be made on France and on her ally, Russia. When France was overthrown, Germany would be absolute master of Central and Western Europe. When Russia was crippled, Germany would have a free hand in the Balkans. Then, mightily increased in territory and resources, she would proceed to the conquest of Britain.

Preparations on a vast scale were at once begun. The war lords of Germany bent all their thoughts and energies to the task. The effect of heavy artillery and high explosive shells was studied, and the great armament works were ordered to turn out huge howitzers and the necessary ammunition for them. Innumerable machine guns and motor cars were built, and nothing that made for military or naval efficiency was overlooked. The Kiel Canal was enlarged so as to accommodate the heaviest Dreadnoughts in the navy; the number of trained men in the army was increased; huge stocks of all the necessaries of war were collected. The bankers were instructed to sell their foreign stocks and shares, and to collect gold with which to purchase abroad the cotton, copper, rubber, and petrol, which are all-important in modern warfare. A deep-laid plot was hatched to hamper British bankers so that they could not lend money to France and Russia. Silently and secretly, and with wonderful foresight and zeal, everything was prepared for the great adventure.

Some idea of the wonderful completeness of the German preparations for war may be gathered from the following description of a soldier's equipment:—

> "The German soldier was clothed in cloth of a colour which, on the average of European days, gave a greater degree of invisibility than khaki. This cloth was excellently woven to withstand weather and strain. Each soldier had a pocket-knife worth a week's pay of a British corporal, and carried in this pocket-knife a little equipment for mending his clothes (as also a first-aid bandage of adhesive plaster). His boots were of wonderfully strong and supple leather, such boots as only rich civilians in England can buy. His valise of cowhide, tanned with the hair on, was most ingeniously furnished with straps and removable bolts of white metal for ease of carrying and ease of packing and unpacking. Its contents, disposed in various little cupboards, gave the maximum of food-reserve and clothing-comforts for the space and weight. The order-books, the maps, the other equipment of officers and non-commissioned officers, showed the same skilful devotion to detail. During many years of preparation the German mind had evidently devoted itself with passionate industry to providing for every possible emergency of the soldier's life in the field."

A spy system of the most widespread and elaborate character had been established in all European [5] countries. The Kaiser was assured by his spies that Great Britain would not actively join with Russia and France, because her people were sharply divided on an important political question, and because they had grown so spiritless that they would prefer to make money by providing the combatants with materials of war. France was well known to be ill-prepared for a campaign, and that great, unwieldy giant Russia would be so sluggish in making ready that months would elapse before he could become formidable. By the summer of 1914 Germany had made all her military and naval preparations; she was armed to the teeth, and she knew that the nations against whom she had secretly prepared were quite unready to meet her.

The Kaiser in the Field. ***Photo: Central News.***

This remarkable Photograph shows the German Emperor directing the operations of his troops in Flanders.

Towards the end of June 1914, when the army was ready to the last gaiter button, an event took place which gave the Kaiser an excellent excuse for bringing about that war which was necessary for the fulfilment of his aims. The Archduke Ferdinand was murdered in Bosnia, and Serbia was charged with bringing about the crime. It was alleged that the heir to the throne of the Kaiser's ally, Austria-Hungary, had been foully done to death by miscreants in the pay of Russia's friend, Serbia. The Kaiser at once determined that Austria-Hungary's quarrel should be his; he would support Franz Josef in punishing Serbia—that is, in throwing down the gauntlet to Russia. This would be certain to bring about the war which his soul desired. A little more delay, however, was necessary. An army, as Napoleon told us long ago, marches on its stomach, and great supplies of food are required before it can take the field. For this reason the Kaiser decided to play for time until the harvest of the year had been gathered in. So for a whole month little was heard of the Archduke's murder, and the Powers of Europe were encouraged to believe that the crime would not lead to war.

Montenegrin Artillery in Action. ***Photo, Daily Mirror.***

Montenegro is the smallest kingdom in Europe, and consists of lofty highlands of gray, broken rock. The Montenegrins are said to be the finest and strongest race in Europe. They are born warriors, and their average height is six feet. They are of kindred race to the Serbians, and in this great war they have thrown in their lot with them.

As soon, however, as the German garners were full the Austro-Hungarian Government was urged to send to Serbia a series of demands such as had never been presented to a civilized and independent power before. They were meant to provoke Russia, and to drag her into the quarrel. What were these demands? Mr. Lloyd-George has told us, in the following burning words:—

"What were the Austrian demands? Serbia sympathized with her fellow-countrymen in

> Bosnia. That was one of her crimes. She must do so no more. Her newspapers were saying nasty things about Austria. They must do so no longer.... Serbian newspapers must not criticize Austria.... Serbia said: 'Very well; we will give orders to the newspapers that they must not criticize Austria in future, neither Austria, nor Hungary, nor anything that is theirs.' Who can doubt the valour of Serbia when she undertook to tackle her newspaper editors? She promised not to sympathize with Bosnia, promised to write no critical articles about Austria. She would have no public meetings at which anything unkind was said about Austria. That was not enough. She must dismiss from her army officers whom Austria should subsequently name. But those officers had just emerged from a war where they were adding lustre to the Serbian arms—gallant, brave, efficient. I wonder whether it was their guilt or their efficiency that prompted Austria's action. Serbia was to undertake in advance to dismiss them from the army, the names to be sent on subsequently. Can you name a country in the world that would have stood that?"

How did Serbia face the situation thus engineered? Listen again to Mr. Lloyd-George:— [7]

> "It was a difficult situation for a small country. Here was a demand made upon her by a great military Power who could put five or six men in the field for everyone she could; and that Power supported by the greatest military Power in the world. How did Serbia behave? It is not what happens to you in life that matters; it is the way in which you face it. And Serbia faced the situation with dignity. She said to Austria: 'If any officers of mine have been guilty and are proved to be guilty, I will dismiss them.' Austria said: 'That is not good enough for me.' It was not guilt she was after, but capacity. Then came Russia's turn. Russia has a special regard for Serbia. She has a special interest in Serbia. Russians have shed their blood for Serbian independence many a time. Serbia is a member of her family, and she cannot see Serbia maltreated. Austria knew that. Germany knew that, and Germany turned round to Russia and said: 'I insist that you shall stand by with your arms folded whilst Austria is strangling your little brother to death.' What answer did the Russian Slav give? He gave the only answer that becomes a man. He turned to Austria and said: 'You lay hands on that little fellow, and I will tear your ramshackle empire limb from limb.'"

The object of the Kaiser was achieved—the quarrel between Austria and Russia was now likely to provoke a European war. Our Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey, worked night and day to bring the estranged Powers to peaceful agreement, and he so far succeeded that on the 30th July Austria showed signs of drawing back. At once the Kaiser saw that all his hopes were likely to be shattered. That same evening he took steps which [8] made war certain. He ordered Russia to cease all warlike preparations within twelve hours, and France within eighteen hours. Before France had returned an answer to this impudent demand, his Uhlans were over her border.

The Germans began the campaign absolutely certain of victory. While all the talk of peace was going on, their General Staff was poring over maps of the future battlefields. France was to be overwhelmed by a mighty rush; she was to be beaten to the ground before her armies could be marshalled in strength. Short, sharp, and sudden was to be the blow; and when France lay at her conqueror's feet, the victorious legions would be entrained for the eastern front in sufficient time to meet the slow-moving Russians, who could be easily held up by the Austrians until the main German armies were free to assail them. The Germans believed that when Russia found herself alone in the struggle some arrangement could be made with her so that thenceforth she would not stand in the way of their ambitious schemes.

Such was the plan of campaign, and it will readily be seen that any long delay in invading and subduing France would enable the Russian millions to be arrayed on the eastern frontier, and to carry war into Germany and Austria. Consequently, no time was available in which to besiege the barrier fortresses on the eastern frontier of France, and to push through the difficult country behind them. The quickest and easiest route to the heart of France had to be taken, and that lay through the Belgian plain, which was so well supplied with railways that food and munitions from the German bases could readily reach the invading armies as they pushed forward. Belgium, it was true, had been guaranteed freedom from invasion by a treaty to which Prussia was a party; but in the opinion of the German Government military necessity overrode all such engagements and reduced them to mere "scraps of paper." Belgium, it was thought, would make little or no resistance. She had but few trained soldiers, and these were ill-equipped. She had powerful fortresses on her frontier, but there were not enough men to garrison them properly, and there was a grave lack of ammunition for the guns. Even if the fortresses did resist, the Germans were prepared with a plan to deal with them. [9]

So Belgium was invaded, and this terrible breach of faith on the part of the Germans shocked all neutral nations. Great Britain had been the leading Power in neutralizing Belgium, and she could not in honour desert the little country which was ready to fight to the death for its independence. Nor dared she stand by with folded arms and see France overcome. A victorious Germany in possession of Antwerp and the Channel ports of France would be in a very favourable position to attack British shores. Should Germany become master of the west of Europe, the existence of the British Empire would be in dire peril. Britain, therefore, was compelled by dictates of honour and self-preservation to declare war on Germany.

This declaration of war was a great blow to Germany; it upset all her calculations. It brought into the struggle not only the greatest naval Power in the world, but the unrivalled riches and resources of the British Empire. The British army which could be sent overseas was so small as to seem negligible to the Germans; but they could not shut their eyes to the fact that the British Empire, with its 417 millions of inhabitants, could, in the course of time, array colossal forces against them. In the meantime the British could, by means of their navy, paralyze German sea-power, and sweep German commerce from the seas, and at the same time, out of the abundance of their riches, find plentiful sinews of war for their Allies. Our declaration of war was bitterly resented in Germany, and a flood of hate against all things British began to sweep over the country.

German Soldiers leaving Berlin for the Front.

An amateur artist is drawing a caricature of General Joffre on the side of the carriage.

On 2nd August Germany demanded a free passage through Belgium; it was refused, and two days later the enemy was swarming across the frontier. Within ten days the great barrier forts of Liége were crushed into shapeless ruin by shells of such explosive power that neither steel nor concrete could resist them. Within a fortnight the greater part of Belgium was in German hands. Brussels was entered and occupied, and two and a half million men were ready to fall like an avalanche on France.

The French Commander-in-Chief was faced by an appalling problem. With forces numbering one-half of those launched against him, he had to await the German attack on a frontier 500 miles long. He was uncertain as to where the main blow would fall. Accordingly he followed Napoleon's advice: "Engage [11] everywhere, and then see." He engaged in Alsace; but the main forces of the enemy were not there. He engaged

in Lorraine, and in the third week of August suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of the Bavarians, though he was still able to keep the field in that province. On 23rd August, when the Battle of Nancy was raging, the avalanche fell on the line of the Sambre and Meuse, where French armies were arrayed to meet the shock. Namur, the pivot of the defending armies, fell; its forts were blown to atoms by the great howitzers which unwisely had been permitted to come within range. An unexpected army of Saxons pierced the Allied centre, and the French were forced to retreat rapidly or suffer destruction. The northern gate to Paris was now forced, and the eastern gate in Lorraine was threatened. For a moment it seemed that the Germans had won the campaign in two battles.

France had reserves, but they were far away in Alsace, in Burgundy,[3] and behind Paris. They could not be brought to the front in time to retrieve disaster, so the beaten armies had to hasten southwards towards their reserves.

The Germans pushed southwards with incredible speed. The British, on the left of the French, had been left unsupported, and overwhelming numbers of the enemy were striving might and main to envelop them. They were in grave peril, and at any moment the right flank in Lorraine might be turned, and the retreating French be caught between two fires. There was nothing for it but swift and desperate retreat, until a line could be reached on which a stand was possible. Here and there, during the rapid retirement, the French gained local successes, which might have tempted them to halt and put their fortune to the test once more. But the French Commander-in-Chief was proof against the temptation. He held firmly to his plan, and continued the long and depressing retreat.

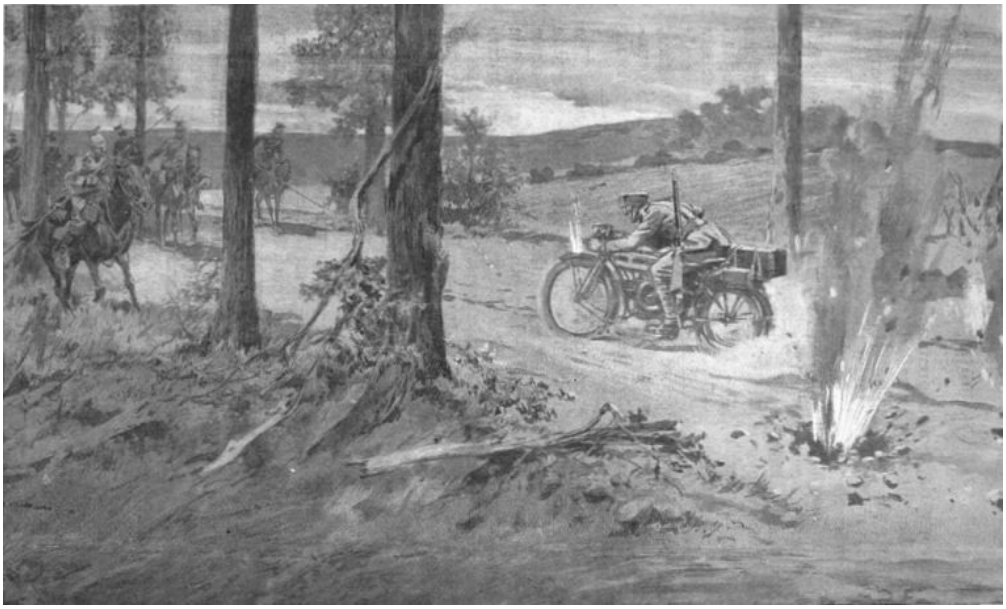
A Hand-to-hand Fight during the Battle of the Marne. ***By permission of the Sphere.***

The action here illustrated took place on the South bank of the Marne, where the Germans found themselves attacked by French colonial troops. The Germans were soon beaten back, after a fierce affray amidst burning houses and broken barricades.

Upon the devoted British fell the full force of the German shock. Hopelessly outnumbered, and with the enemy on three sides, they nevertheless struggled out of van Kluck's grasp, and made a fighting retreat that will go down to posterity as one of the finest feats known to the history of warfare. Terrible were their losses, as were those of the French armies on their right; but they were still unbroken, and were still capable of striking hard when the Allied line should be knitted up anew. In the early days of September this was accomplished; the whole Allied line lay extended from the southern outskirts of Paris eastwards to Verdun. It had been welded into strength by misfortune; it had taken the measure of the foe, and was eager for revenge. [13]

To the Germans it appeared that Paris had been abandoned, and in Berlin men confidently declared that the war was over, and that only the fruits of victory remained to be reaped. Von Kluck, sweeping irresistibly towards the capital, believed that he had only wearied and broken foes before him. He had good reason for this belief, for he could not conceive that any armies could have retreated so rapidly and suffered so severely and yet remain fit to oppose him. He was full of confidence, but it was the confidence of ignorance. He was totally unaware that a new army, fresh and unwearied, was silently concentrating in the streets of Paris.

In Britain there were the worst of forebodings. The Allied armies had been driven back helter-skelter with a terrible tale of losses, and von Kluck was within gunshot of the outer forts of the French capital. The 5th of September was the darkest hour before the dawn. Everywhere the Allied armies seemed to be on the verge of disaster. Von Kluck was wheeling his right in order to envelop the 5th French Army; farther east the Würtembergers were striking hard at the French centre; the Crown Prince, to the south of Verdun, was waiting for the huge siege guns with which he hoped to batter down the defences of that great fortress; Maubeuge was at its last gasp; and at Nancy the Bavarians, under the eye of the Kaiser himself, were preparing to break through the eastern barrier. The man in the street at home could only stifle his feelings of dismay, and hope that by some miracle victory might yet be snatched from the jaws of defeat.



Motor-cyclist Dispatch Rider breaking through a Patrol of Uhlans. ***By permission of The Sphere.***

The motor-cyclist enables communications to be kept up, and messages to be sent to and from headquarters all along the far-extended lines of the Allies. Adventures similar to that illustrated above were common in the early stages of the war.

So far the war had been one unbroken triumph for Germany. She had succeeded even beyond the expectations of her people at home. Fortress after fortress had fallen; victory after victory had been won; the capital of France was at her mercy; prisoners had been captured in huge numbers, and guns by the score. To crown all, just as Sedan Day was approaching and the fall of Paris was hourly expected, the news arrived [15] that von Hindenburg had won an astounding victory at Tannenberg, in Eastern Prussia. The whole German nation went mad with delight. Its wildest ambitions were about to be realized.

One short week later there was a sudden and dramatic change in the aspect of affairs. The Allies had made a leap forward; von Kluck, beaten and outflanked, was being harried northward through the woods of Compiègne; von Buelow, with his famous Guards reduced to half their strength, was hurrying towards the Aisne; the Duke of Würtemberg, foiled in his attacks on the French centre, was in sullen retreat; Verdun was still intact; and in Lorraine the Kaiser had seen the White Cuirassiers of Bavaria hurled back in confusion from the French line. The avalanche had fallen, but it had failed to overwhelm the Allied armies. The Germans were now, for the first time, tasting the bitterness of forced retreat.

Back they were thrust, but not in rout, to the plateau beyond the Aisne, where, in a position of great strength, they were forced to fight, against all their traditions, on the defensive. For weeks they were besieged, but day by day their entrenchments were strengthened until they resembled fortresses. All the courage and skill and patience of the attackers could not bolt them from these burrows by means of frontal attacks. Then an attempt was made to outflank them by a northward movement of the Allied left. As this movement proceeded, a similar manoeuvre was begun by the foe. Each side attempted to outflank the other, and a feverish race set in for the North Sea, where both flanking movements must perforce end. Three French armies were strung out northwards as far as the La Bassée canal; the British army was transferred from the Aisne to fill the gap beyond; and a new army was collected and hurried to the assistance of the Belgians, who extended the line to the sea. The Allies just won the race, and the Germans found themselves besieged once more, this time on a line of trenches some 450 miles in length. For months to come they strove to break through the Allied lines; with what success future pages of this history will tell.

Such, in brief outline, is the story which has been told in our two former volumes. It is the story of the most ruthless and determined assault that has ever been made upon the liberties of mankind in the whole history [16] of the world. We see master minds plotting and planning for long, secret years, watching and waiting for an occasion to swoop down upon unsuspecting neighbours and rob them of life and freedom and the fruits of their toil. We see them launching millions of men, armed with every death-dealing device that fiendish ingenuity can frame, against a little peaceful people that dares to stand in their way. The earth shakes with the roar of gigantic guns and the thunderclaps of bursting shells. Fortresses crumble to shapeless ruin; homesteads are given to the flames; temples of God are profaned and despoiled; monuments of art and piety are blotted out; cities are shattered; young and old, man, woman, and child, are given to the sword, and wherever the battle has raged there are ghastly heaps of dead and dying, "friend and foe in one red burial blent."

Onward sweep the conquering legions, with pillars of cloud by day and pillars of fire by night, and it would seem that nothing human could give them pause. Armies recoil before them; but strive as they may, they cannot overwhelm them. Victory sits upon their banners, when suddenly those whom they have hunted and harried across the fair fields of France spring forward with undaunted fire and vigour, and the torrent is stayed. Then it is swept back, and soon the invaders are hemmed in by a ring of steel, against which they fling themselves in baffled rage like a trapped tiger against the bars of his cage.

Such is the story of seventy-seven days of bloodshed, horror, destruction, and woe—days which can never be forgotten while the memory of man endures.

[17]

CHAPTER II.

SOME GERMAN THEORIES OF WAR.

Before I proceed with my story, let me call your attention to certain theories of war with which the German General Staff began the campaign. By a theory of war I mean some plan or scheme which, in the judgment of those making it, is *likely* to prove of great advantage, but which can only be *proved* to be so by actual practice. Some of the German theories turned out to be right, others wrong, as we shall see.

If you were to witness a field day of British troops you would notice that the infantry make their attacks in long, thin skirmishing lines. The men are widely spread out, and as they advance they offer a small target to the guns of the enemy. Their losses are thus reduced to a minimum. The Germans, on the other hand, believe in making their attacks with their men massed together in close formation.

Troops attacking in close order have certain advantages over those attacking in open order. First, they can begin their attack with the least possible delay. Suppose a hundred men are marching forward in fours, and are about to make an attack. If they are to spread out widely time will be needed for them to deploy. (See Fig. 2, p. 19.) But if they go forward packed close together as in Fig. 1, p. 18, they can attack much more quickly. You can easily understand that the quicker a blow is delivered, the more likely it is to be successful, for the defenders are given little time in which to make preparations for resisting it.

Then, again, an attack delivered in mass formation brings much more weight to bear on the part of the enemy's line against which it is directed than an attack in open order. If, for example, a hundred men are [18] hurled against a front of a hundred yards, the force with which they can assail it is much greater than it would be if the same hundred yards of front were attacked by fifty men. Where, as often happens, troops have to advance on a narrow front, say against a bridge, a causeway, a street, or a defile, they must attack in close order if they are to succeed.

Of course, when a massed attack is made, a very good target is offered to the enemy, especially in these days of magazine rifles, machine guns, and quick-firing field guns, and large numbers of the attackers are sure to fall. In former wars it has been found that troops so punished break or are brought to a standstill, and that their attack therefore fails. The Germans, however, believe that men can be so disciplined that, though large numbers of them are shot down, the rest will push on and carry the position. They believe that this great waste of life is worth while, because the campaign will be over all the sooner, and the total losses will probably be no greater than they would be in a long-drawn-out war carried on by attacks in open order.

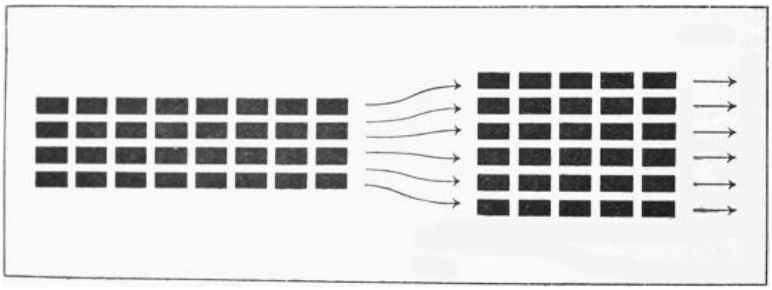


Fig. 1. Column advancing to the Attack in Close Order.

Now let us see how this theory bore the test of actual practice. You will remember that at the Battle of Mons and on other occasions the Germans made massed attacks on the Allied positions, and though their men were shot down in droves, they came on again and again, almost shoulder to shoulder. The theory that men can be so disciplined as to continue to advance in massed formation, even though they know that large numbers of them will certainly be killed or wounded, proved correct. Where the theory broke down was in [19] supposing that the men who survived the slaughter would be able to carry the position. On some occasions they succeeded, but in the majority of cases a swarm of Germans advancing against inferior numbers were reduced by one-fourth, or even by one-third, in the first few minutes of the rush, and the remainder were too few to drive out the defenders. So, as far as actual results were concerned, attacks in close formation proved to be a failure. The Germans, however, persisted in them, and this led to an immense wastage of life. They flung away life like water, but, as we have seen, they did not win that speedy victory on which they had staked so much.

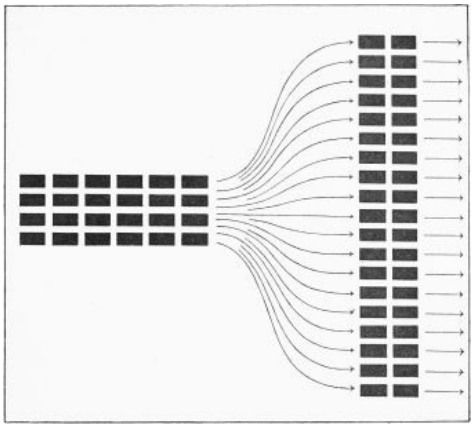


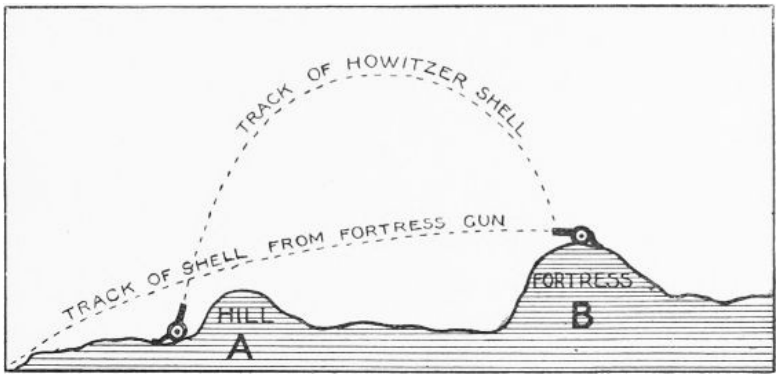
Fig. 2. Column deploying for Attack in Open Order.

Another theory of the German General Staff was that no existing fortress could withstand for more than a few days the effect of high explosive shells hurled from heavy howitzers. Up to about ten years ago it was [21] thought that fortresses mounting heavy guns, and fully supplied with men, food, and ammunition, could hold out for months against a besieging force. The fixed guns of fortresses had then a far greater range than any movable guns that could be brought against them, and they were so powerful that they could, as a rule, put out of action the artillery of the besiegers.

A German Howitzer for Siege Work. ***Photo, Daily Mirror*.**

Notice the caterpillar wheels which enable it to traverse soft roads without sinking in.

On page 200 of Volume I. you were told how a howitzer differs from an ordinary field gun. Let me repeat what I then said. The great difference between the action of an ordinary gun and that of a howitzer is the difference between a boy throwing a stone at a mark which he can see, and the same boy lobbing a stone over a wall so that it will fall on something hidden from his view. The ordinary field gun has a long, flat sweep of fire, and is therefore unable to shoot over hills, trees, or houses, or to drop shells on men lying close behind a bank or in a deep, narrow trench.



Look at this little diagram. A howitzer, A, is firing at a fort, B, from the other side of a hill. The howitzer is invisible from the fort, and the men firing the howitzer cannot see the mark at which they are aiming. But a man on or above the hill can see the fort easily, and can so direct the fire of the howitzer that it can lob its shells over the hill and drop them directly on the fort. The guns of the fort are incapable of hitting the howitzer. The shells which they throw pass right over the hill, and fall a long way behind it.

Until recently the fortress gun was master of the howitzer, for several reasons. The howitzers then in use were small, and their range was much less than that of heavy guns mounted in forts. No matter how carefully the howitzers were concealed or how frequently they were shifted about, they were sure sooner or later to be "spotted" from the fortress, and put out of action. The explosives which were then used in the howitzer shells were not sufficiently powerful to destroy the steel and concrete of the forts, and there was much difficulty in discovering, whether the aim of these high-angle guns was true. [22]

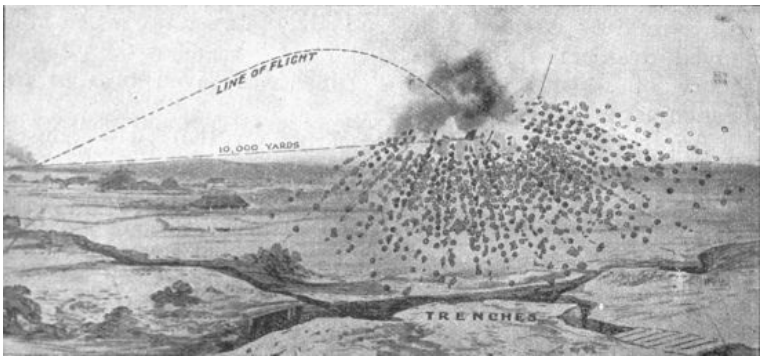
The Austrian and the German General Staff had studied all this very carefully, and they had come to the conclusion that howitzers could be constructed of such a size that they would be more than a match for fortress guns. Former howitzers were 6 inches across at the mouth; but before the war the Austrians built howitzers of from 11 to 12-inch calibre. This doubling of the calibre meant that the new weapon was *eight times* as powerful as the old one. Such howitzers could throw their shells from an immense distance, and could take advantage of steep cover so far off that the fortress guns could not reach them. Though the new howitzers were so heavy, they were capable of being moved from place to place as soon as they were "spotted".

Not only was the howitzer made much bigger than formerly, but new and very powerful explosives were discovered, and huge shells were filled with them. Experiments led the German Staff to believe that these explosives would utterly destroy the forts, no matter how solidly they might be constructed. How to aim these howitzers correctly was the only remaining difficulty. Aeroplanes and balloons solved the problem. Observers could fly high enough to see the forts, note where the shots fell, and signal to the gunners so that they could find the exact range.

The Germans believed that no fortress along the line of their advance could long resist their big howitzers and high explosive shells. The French, on the other hand, thought that such ring fortresses as those at Liége, Namur, and Verdun could hold out for a considerable time. During the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, Port Arthur, though attacked by howitzers, held out for eleven months. The French saw no reason why their forts should not resist for several weeks at least. [23]

From what you have read in the former volumes you know that the German theory was right, and that the French theory was wrong. Liége, Namur, Maubeuge, and Antwerp all fell before the high explosive shells of the huge howitzers in an astonishingly brief time. Verdun did not fall, it is true, but this was because the French turned it into a new type of fortress altogether. They made field works at a considerable distance from the old forts, and moved out the heavy guns to advanced trenches. Rails were laid down so that as soon as the guns were "spotted" they could be moved to new positions at short notice. Thus, as I told you on page 280 of Volume II., instead of fixed forts, each, say, mounted with ten heavy guns, these same ten guns were "dotted here and there in trenches rapidly established in one place and another, along perhaps half a mile of wooded vale, and free to operate, when they moved, over perhaps double that front." This is the German theory of fortification, and Verdun was saved because the French adopted it.

Another theory of the German Staff was that high explosive shells could be used with great effect not only against fortresses but against troops in the field. In former wars shrapnel[4] was largely used, but in the present war the Germans believed that high explosive shells would be more effective.[5] Modern armies, as you know, "dig themselves in" whenever they can, and fight from trenches. Against troops in deep trenches with good head-cover shrapnel is not very deadly. When trenches have been occupied for some time they become little fortresses, with strong parapets and entanglements of barbed wire in front of them. Before sending infantry to attack such trenches, the Germans determined to fire high explosive shells at them, so that the barbed wire would be torn away, the parapets of the trenches would be blown in, and the defensive works destroyed. In this respect, too, the German theory proved correct, and when the trench warfare began in real earnest the Allies had to follow the German example. Months passed, however, before their supply of howitzers and high explosive shells was sufficient to enable them to cope with the Germans on equal terms.



The Effect of Shrapnel on Trenches.

Some four hundred to five hundred balls and splinters spread forwards, downwards, and fan-wise when the shell bursts.
(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

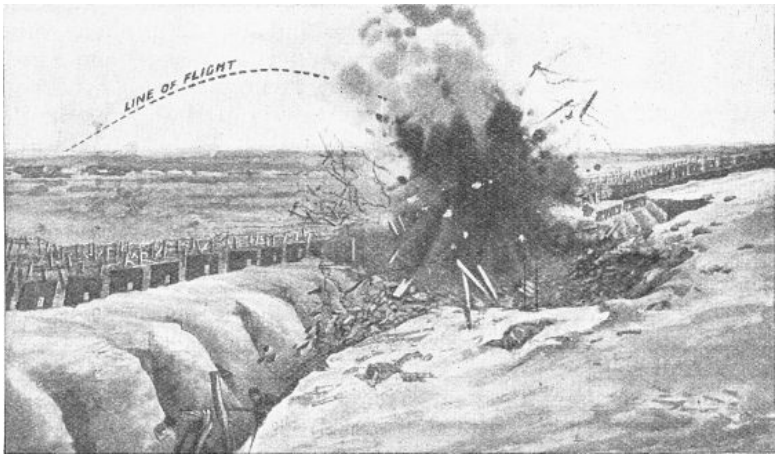
In Volume I., page 189, I gave you some account of the machine gun which, as you will remember, discharges automatically and accurately some four hundred or five hundred shots a minute. As a rifleman can only fire about a dozen aimed shots in the same time, a machine gun is equivalent to at least thirty [24]

riflemen. It discharges its bullets in a cone-shaped stream, and is even more deadly than sustained rifle fire. Prior to the war each battalion in the British army was provided with two machine guns. The German General Staff, however, provided each unit of its infantry with a large number of machine guns,[6] which were so mounted that they could be carried rapidly over every kind of ground. The result was that the Germans had a very marked advantage over the Allies in machine firing power. Here, again, the German theory was correct, and the Allies were forced to follow suit and increase greatly their supply of machine guns.

The Germans have no faith in the waiting game. They believe that constant attack is the best form of defence. It is foreign to their ideas to wait for the enemy to attack them; everywhere and always they endeavour to strike at the foe. They believe with the American humorist:

"Thrice blessed he who hath his quarrel just,
But four times he who gets his blow in fust."

In order to enable troops to strike swiftly, and, therefore, to take the enemy unawares, the Germans provided themselves with fleets of motor cars in which they conveyed their soldiers to the points where they [25] were needed. The admirable Belgian and French roads enabled the motors to travel very quickly, and this accounts in large measure for the rapid pursuit of the Allies. The motor cars were meant to be specially useful in making those flanking movements by which German generals strive to envelop their enemies. These flanking attacks, however, were not successful, perhaps because it was impossible to transport sufficient artillery along with the men.



The Effect of High Explosive Shells on Trenches.

A breach is made in the wire entanglements and the chief force of the explosion is downwards.
(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

Finally, let me deal for a few moments with a theory that proved to be hopelessly wrong, so entirely mistaken that it robbed the Germans of that speedy victory which they confidently expected, and led to a long and uncertain trench war in the West. What was this theory?

The German General Staff believed that Paris would prove to be a great trap for the French. They believed that in no circumstances would the French Government permit Paris to be abandoned by the French armies. They thought that if Paris were threatened, one of two things would happen—either the French armies [26] would be massed round the capital for its defence, or they would be divided, and some would try to hold the frontier, while others tried to hold the city. Further they felt sure that if the French Commander-in-Chief should wish to keep his armies undivided so that he could fight on the most advantageous ground, irrespective of whether Paris fell into German hands or not, the French politicians would interfere and overrule him. Then quarrels and confusion would arise; there would be no unity of purpose; divided authority would prevail, and France would go to pieces.

Whatever happened, the Germans felt confident of victory. They had more men in the field than France could possibly bring against them. If they fought pitched battles with the full strength of the French forces outside Paris, they were bound to win, because they were superior in men and guns. If the French forces were divided, their task would be still easier; and if the French politicians interfered, France would do much to destroy herself. Such was the theory; now let us see how it worked out.

From the very beginning of the struggle the French military authorities determined that they would conduct the war in their own way, and that they would not brook any interference from the politicians. They foresaw all the difficulties on which the Germans counted, and they fully realized that if they allowed their plans to be hampered by defending Paris they would fall into a trap from which there would be no escape. While, therefore, the enemy was making his great drive towards Paris, and even when he seemed to be on the point of besieging it, they did not attempt to go to its rescue, but still retreated, so that their line could be built up anew, and an advance made when the time was ripe. It is true that a new army had been mobilized in and around Paris, but it was not meant for the defence of the capital; it was intended for quite another purpose. [7]

When von Kluck was near the outer fortifications of Paris he discovered that the German theory was all wrong. He was forced to swerve in order to follow up the French and British, and in the act of swerving he was caught, and forced to retreat. Thus that rapid success in the West which was the very keynote of the German plan of campaign was rendered impossible.

[27]

CHAPTER III.

FROM ARRAS TO ARMENTIÈRES.

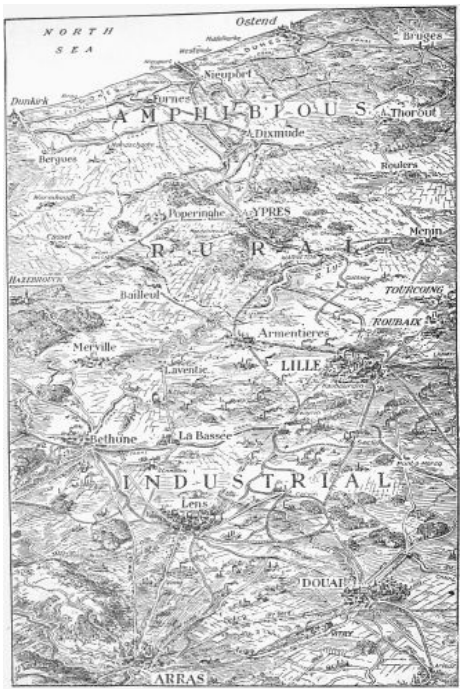
In Chapter XXXIII. of Volume II. you read something of the race for the sea. When I broke off the story the position of the Allies was as follows. Northwards from Compiègne to Lassigny extended the left wing of Maunoury's army. Still farther north, as far as the Somme, lay de Castelnau's army. Beyond it was the army of Maud'huy, which ultimately extended to the canal between Béthune and Lille. The British army was in process of being transferred from the Aisne to a position north of this canal. It was destined to fill the gap from the canal to the north of Ypres. The Belgians, assisted by the French, were to complete the line along the Yser to the North Sea.

Now the movements by which the various armies of the Allies swung into these positions are very difficult to follow, and you must give me all your attention if you are to have clear ideas about them. First of all, we must know something about the character of country in which the war was to be waged for many months to come. Within this region there are several important towns which are mentioned in your geography books. There are also numberless villages which are quite unimportant in themselves, but have become world-renowned because they have been the scene of great and stirring incidents. I shall mention these villages as they occur in the course of the story, but the general character of the country and the position and importance of the larger towns I must deal with now. Do not begrudge the time given to this and the following chapter. It will enable you to follow with intelligent interest the story hereafter to be told; and to picture for yourselves the scenes amidst which some of the most terrible struggles in all history have taken place.

[29]

Most of the region from the Somme to the mouth of the Yser is comprised within the two French departments of Pas-de-Calais and Nord, and the Belgian province of West Flanders. Pas-de-Calais is the French equivalent for the Strait of Dover, and the department is so called because its shores are mainly washed by that narrow neck of sea. The department of Nord lies to the north and east of Pas-de-Calais, and merges into the Belgian province of West Flanders.

Nearly the whole of it is a plain, and much of it is as flat as the Fen district of Lincolnshire. A line of low heights runs south-east from Gris Nez,[8] and forms the watershed between the rivers running to the North Sea and those which empty themselves into the English Channel. The most important river of the region is the Lys, a tributary of the Scheldt. It rises in the heights just mentioned, and winds across the country north-eastwards to join the Scheldt at Ghent. Notice very carefully the course of this river, for it crosses the country almost midway between the two most important towns in the region from the Scarpe to Nieuport—the French city of Lille, and the Flemish city of Ypres.



Bird's-eye View of the Country from Arras to the Sea.

From Arras to the sea near Ostend is a distance of over sixty miles. Nearly the whole of this stretch of country is a dead level. There is a crescent of low heights south of Ypres, but elsewhere, save at and near Cassel, about eighteen miles west of Ypres, there is not a hill worth mention. The hill of Cassel rises suddenly from the plain to a height of 515 feet, and from the summit there is a very extensive view. It is said that thirty-two towns and a hundred villages can be seen from this windmill-studded hill. What is called the Mont des Cats is about the same height as the hill of Cassel. It stands almost on the frontier, to the south-west of Ypres, and was of the greatest importance to the Allies, for it was the key to their position north of the Lys.

Brothers in Arms. ***Photo, Alfieri.***

A British and a French soldier chatting together in Flanders.

I have already told you something of the ancient and beautiful city of Arras.[9] It is the capital of the department of Pas-de-Calais, and stands on the Scarpe, a tributary of the Scheldt. The old province of Artois, [31] of which it was the capital, has changed hands very often during the course of its long and warlike history. It has been successively French, Burgundian, Flemish, Burgundian, German, and Spanish, and it finally came into the possession of France in 1640. You will remember that Arras, the capital, was formerly famous for the tapestry hangings known by its name. The manufacture, however, has long been extinct, and the city has now such varied industries as soap, oil, cast iron, salt, sugar refining, lace making, and the manufacture of agricultural implements. It is also one of the chief grain markets of France.

Arras, as you will observe from the map on page 28, stands in a gap in the line of hills which I have mentioned as forming the watershed. Through this gap run the river Scarpe, many roads, and the main railway from Liége by way of Namur, Mons, and Valenciennes to the Channel ports. An enemy striving to push westwards to the English Channel would naturally strive to gain possession of Arras because of its convenient road and railway communications.

Arras was formerly a beautiful little city, but it stands on the edge of perhaps the ugliest stretch of country on earth. Ten miles north of it is the town of Lens, south of which the Black Country of France begins. I have already told you that the Sambre cuts through an important coalfield. This coalfield is continued west into North France as far as the right bank of the Lys. The area of the coal-bearing region in Pas-de-Calais is about 240 square miles, and its yield is about twenty million tons per annum, which is about one-half of the total yearly output of France, but not a twelfth part of the annual production of Great Britain. You may be sure that this coal-bearing area is a busy and grimy region of pits and factories, much like the coal-mining parts of Lancashire or the West Riding of Yorkshire. There are the same straggling towns of mean houses merging into one another, the same mounds of refuse topped by the head-gear of pits, the same dirty roads, the same factory buildings, and the same criss-cross of railways and canals. The Lys, like the Irwell and the Aire, is black and foul with the grime of industry. [32]

Béthune, which may be said to mark the western limit of the coalfield, has numerous pits in the neighbourhood, and a variety of industries such as are usually found in towns similarly situated. It stands twenty miles west-south-west of Lille, and is connected with it by an important canal which runs almost directly east to La Bassée for about seven miles. Beyond La Bassée the canal continues its eastward course for another four miles, and then unites with a canal system running north-eastward to Lille. Along both sides of the canal there are important railway lines connecting Lille with Béthune and the Channel ports.

La Bassée is a small manufacturing town of 4,800 inhabitants, with no special features to distinguish it from dozens of others in this industrial region, but owing to its military importance in the present war it will henceforth enjoy a fame which many a city of old renown might envy. You already know that the canal from Béthune to La Bassée was chosen as the dividing line between Maud'huy's army and the British forces. The point where two Allied armies join hands is always considered to be the weakest part of any defensive position. You will learn, as the story proceeds, that the Germans made the most determined efforts to break through the sally-port of La Bassée, and that the British strove with all their might to push through the German lines in the same neighbourhood, so as to cut the railway by which the enemy was able to move his troops rapidly from north to south, and *vice versâ*.

Another industrial town in this region which must detain us for a moment is Armentières,[10] which stands on the Lys about ten miles north of La Bassée. Before the war it was a busy and prosperous place, with a population of some 29,000. Its chief manufactures were cloth and table linen. The Belgian frontier meets the Lys near Armentières, and continues north-eastward along the left bank of the river.

[33]

CHAPTER IV.

FROM LILLE TO NIEUPORT.

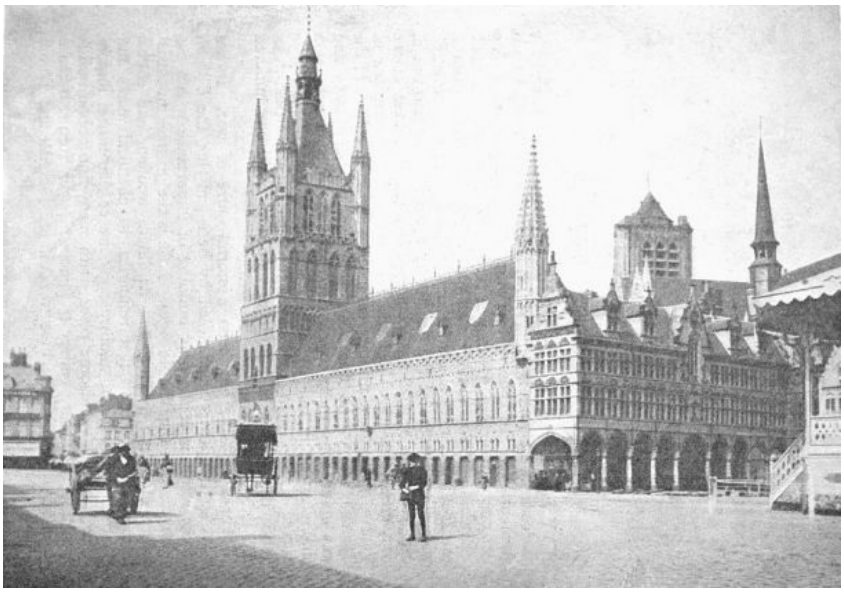
By far the most important place between the Aisne and the coast of Belgium is Lille, which is less than eight miles from Armentières. In Lille we find ourselves in a city of more than 200,000 inhabitants, which was formerly the capital of French Flanders. It stands in the well-watered and very fertile plain of the Deule,[11] a navigable tributary of the Lys, and is connected with all the rivers of the district by a bewildering network of canals. Formerly it was considered to be a fortress of the first class, and its citadel was said to be the masterpiece of Vauban,[12] the great military engineer. He was a soldier of the Spanish army, who was taken prisoner by the French, and was induced by them to join the French service. His life was chiefly spent in making and besieging fortresses. He conducted no less than forty sieges, took part in more than three hundred combats, and built or helped to build one hundred and sixty fortresses.

For ages Lille has been a storm-centre of war. It has been so frequently mishandled by besiegers that the Church of St. Maurice is the only building of importance which has survived from the Middle Ages. Lille is the greatest industrial centre of North France, and its linen, woollen, and cotton factories, its oil and sugar refineries, its chemical works and great engineering and motor shops are of the utmost importance. It is a handsome place, with many fine public buildings, and its picture gallery is famous all over Europe because it [35] contains some of the best work of the Flemish and Dutch schools.

You can now understand why Lille is a great prize of war. We shall read later that it was captured by the Germans. Its loss was a great blow to the Allies, because it not only controls seven railway lines and a great network of roads, but contains engineering and motor shops, which enabled the enemy to carry out important repairs and to manufacture many necessary implements of war within a mile or two of his front. Further, when Lille was lost, the proceeds of its manufacturing activity went to the Germans, and this rich, busy city thenceforth contributed nothing to the war expenses of France.

A little to the north-east of Lille are two other large manufacturing towns in the midst of one of the busiest industrial districts of France. Roubaix[13] is the first of these, and Tourcoing[14] is the second. In Belgium, a few miles north-west of Tourcoing, is the much smaller industrial town of Menin,[15] which stands on the Lys where the main road from Bruges crosses the river on the way to Lille.

North of the Lys we are in another world. We have left behind us the ugly pit mounds, the grimy towns, and the smoke of factories. We are now in West Flanders, in a countryside of market gardens, where every inch of ground is closely tilled, and the fields are laid out like a chessboard. There are many patches of woodland, some of them, such as the Forest of Houthulst, six or seven miles north of Ypres, being fairly large. West Flanders is not naturally fertile, but its dairy farmers and market gardeners, by dint of the greatest industry, have turned it into a rich and productive land. Six or seven hundred years ago its wealth came from a different source. Its cities were then bustling hives, in which most of the woollen cloth used in Europe was spun and woven.



The Cloth Hall at Ypres before Bombardment.

The busiest and wealthiest of these cities was Ypres, which stands about twelve miles north of Armentières. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there were some four hundred guilds of cloth manufacturers in the place, and its people numbered more than 200,000. So famous was its cloth that we find the English poet [36] Chaucer[16] referring to it in his *Canterbury Tales*. His Wife of Bath, who was one of the pilgrims, was a cloth manufacturer, and Chaucer tells us that her wares "passed them of Ypres and of Gaunt" (Ghent). Before the war broke out Ypres was a little town of less than 18,000 people, and its industries were represented by its butter market and its small manufactures of lace and linen. But within it, as in the other ancient cities of Belgium, were some of the most glorious old buildings in all the world—the houses of the rich old burghers, the halls in which they met to transact their business, and the churches in which they thanked God for their prosperity. They spent their money lavishly on these buildings and filled them with treasures of art.

The glory of Ypres, prior to the war, was the Cloth Hall, the largest and finest edifice of its kind in Belgium. It was begun in 1200, and was more than a hundred years a-building. The front was 433 feet in length, and the building consisted of three stories, with a high-pitched roof broken by dormer windows. The niches of the top story were filled with statues of Flemish counts and celebrated inhabitants of the city. On the south side rose a massive belfry, with pinnacles at the angles. The east side of the hall was formed by the so-called Nieuwerk, one of the most beautiful buildings of its kind. I am obliged to describe the Cloth Hall of Ypres in the past tense, for unhappily it is now in ruins. Ypres had also a very fine cathedral, a meat hall, and a large number of old houses with carved wooden fronts. They, too, have been destroyed, more or less, by shot and shell.

In the days of its greatness Ypres, like Manchester of to-day, needed a waterway to the sea, so that it could rapidly and cheaply import wool from abroad, and export its finished cloth to distant markets. Ypres stands on a little river which is a tributary of the river Yser, a stream almost unknown to Britons before the war began, but now inscribed on the pages of history. The Yser rises to the west of Cassel, and flows in a curving course to enter the sea near Nieuport. A canal was cut from Ypres to the Yser, which was itself canalized, and thus the city provided itself with a waterway to the sea.

On the canal, twelve or thirteen miles north of Ypres, is the village of Dixmude,[17] which is also one of the "dead cities" of Belgium. Its fine Grand' Place, its noble Church of St. Nicholas, its Gothic town hall, and its [37]
heavily shuttered stone houses, show us that it was formerly a place of wealth and importance. Now, says a recent writer, "its eleven hundred inhabitants might easily stand in a corner of the Grand' Place. The passer-by—there is rarely more than one—disturbs the silence, and one hears scarcely any sounds save the chimes in the tower or the cooing of doves on the cornices." Alas! since the tide of war rolled into this part of Belgium, those inhabitants who remain have continuously been deafened by the roar of great guns, and the towers from which the chimes rang out and the cornices on which the doves cooed have been levelled with the ground.

Nieuport, the outport of Ypres, is the last of the towns in this region to which I shall call your attention. It stands about two miles from the mouth of the Yser, and, like Ypres and Dixmude, is only a relic of what it once was. About 4,000 people were dwelling in it before the war broke out, but its long, silent streets, with their massive houses, showed plainly that it was formerly a populous and busy place. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries its quays were thronged with ships discharging wool from England for the looms of Ypres, or filling their holds with the fine cloth made in the old city. Before the war, Nieuport still retained its cloth hall, town hall, and venerable Gothic church as memorials of this busy and prosperous time. When the trade of Ypres departed, Nieuport fell into decline. Prior to the war it was a small, quiet place, visited by a few ships and by occasional tourists. Everybody knows it now as the scene of battles which will change the destiny of the world. Beyond Nieuport are the great sand dunes which line the coast of Belgium, and extend as far west as Calais. From the top of the dunes we look out on the restless and shallow waters of the North Sea.

We have now traversed the region over which warfare was to rage for many months to come.

Before I close this chapter, let me remind you that the whole region between Arras and the North Sea is filled with historical memories of former warfare. This is by no means the first time that the British have [38]
fought in West Flanders and Artois. Marlborough,[18] for example, fought the greatest of his campaigns in this region, during the long struggle between Louis XIV. of France and the allied forces of England, Holland, and Austria. I am going to tell you about these campaigns in some detail, because they have features greatly resembling those of the present struggle.

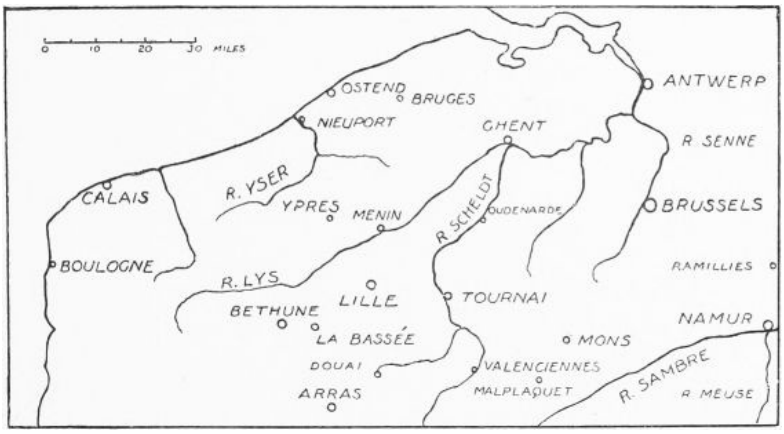
Marlborough's great aim, was to recapture the valleys of the Lys and the Scheldt, which in the year 1708 were in the possession of the French. These rivers were then all-important, because they were the great lines of communication for armies fighting in Flanders and North France. It was by means of the rivers that food and munitions were brought to the soldiers and the heavy guns were moved from place to place. What railways are to modern commanders, navigable rivers were to generals in the long ages before steam.

All the fortresses on the Scheldt were in the hands of the French, except Oudenarde,[19] which you will find on the accompanying map, thirty miles to the east of Ypres. At the time when our story opens, Oudenarde was about to be attacked by the French. Marlborough made a wonderful forced march, and fell upon them as they were advancing towards the fortress. By nightfall on July 11, 1708, he had won a great victory, and the remnants of the French army had fallen back in disorder to Ghent. While Marlborough was waiting for reinforcements to come up, some of his troops seized a French position near Ypres, and his main army encamped near Menin.

Marlborough now proposed to besiege Lille, the greatest fortress on the road to Paris. He could not bring his siege train by way of the river, so it had to lumber slowly along the roads, and while doing so was in great danger of being captured by the enemy. Thanks, however, to his skilful arrangements, his heavy guns arrived safely, and then the siege began in real earnest. Lille was very strongly fortified, and was garrisoned by 15,000 men. While the siege was in progress a French army of more than 100,000 men marched to its succour; but so strongly was Marlborough posted that it did not dare to attack him. Instead of doing so it fell [39]
back behind the Scheldt, so as to cut off Marlborough's forces from Brussels. As, however, he still held Ostend, he was able to get supplies from England.

The French now tried to seize Ostend, so that Marlborough might be cut off from the sea and bottled up. He sent forces against them; but the French fell back before him and opened the sluices of the canals, thus flooding much of the country between him and the sea. A little later they succeeded in capturing Nieuport, and Marlborough was cut off from Ostend.

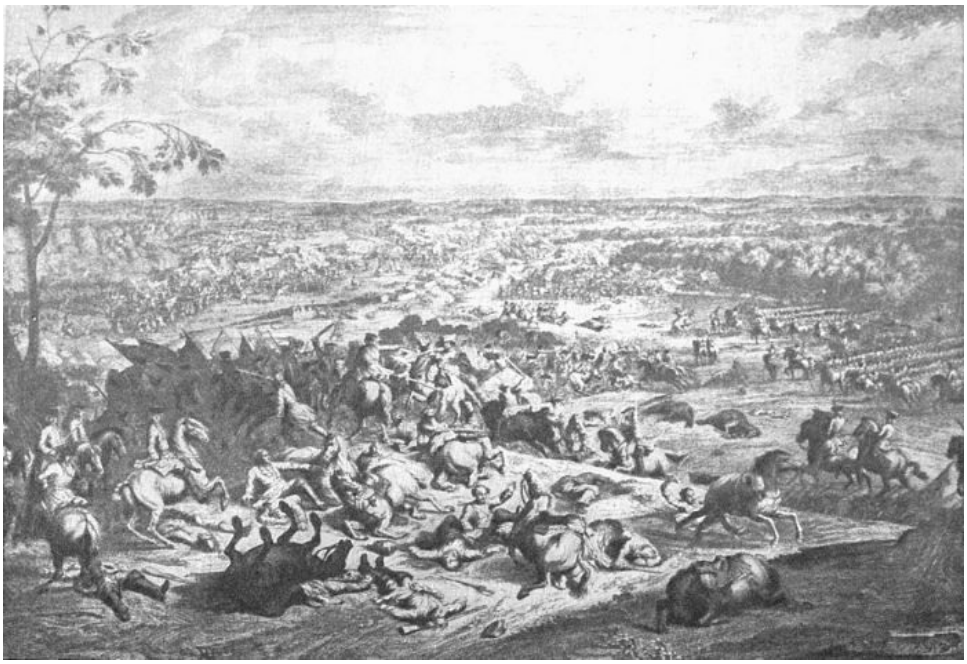
On 9th December Lille surrendered after the garrison had lost 8,000 men, and the besiegers not less than 14,000. Marlborough also captured Ghent, and at the end of December 1708 the French left Flanders altogether, and retired into their own territory. Thus the valleys of the Lys and Scheldt were recovered.



Map illustrating Marlborough's Campaigns in Artois and West Flanders.

Before I proceed with the story of Marlborough's campaigns, let me point out that during the race to the sea there was a similar struggle between the Allies and the Germans for the possession of the same valleys. The Allies were hastening north in order to push across the Lys and Scheldt and cut the German communications. Unhappily the Germans moved northwards so rapidly that this was impossible. Further, [41] when Antwerp fell, a German army was released which made a great effort to outflank the Allies by way of the coast. Each side foiled the other, and the result was the long trench war which will be described in future pages.

Now let us return to our muttons. In the spring of 1709 Marlborough, who was now in possession of Lille proposed to march on Paris. The French knew that if he could seize Arras he would possess the gate to the capital. They therefore prepared to block his way by strongly entrenching themselves on a line extending from Douai,[20] which lies on the Scarpe about fourteen miles north-east of Arras, to Béthune. These trenches passed through La Bassée, where, as you know, the French and the British joined hands during the race to the sea in October 1914. Marlborough found these lines too strong to be carried by direct assault, so he turned aside and besieged Tournai, the town in which French Territorials, assisted by a British battery, made a very gallant stand on August 24, 1914.[21] Tournai surrendered after a siege of about thirty-seven days, and then Marlborough marched on Mons, the place where von Kluck, on August 23, 1914, vainly endeavoured to overwhelm the British.[22]



The Battle of Malplaquet (September 11, 1709).

(*From the picture by Jan van Huchtenburgh*).

While Marlborough was besieging Mons, the French, fearing that the fortress would suffer the fate of Lille and Tournai, marched an army against him. They entrenched themselves in a strong position on the edge of the broken and wooded country which fills the angle between two small rivers which unite at Mons, and were there attacked by Marlborough on September 11, 1709. After what he calls "a very murderous battle" the French were outflanked and their centre was broken through. The British encamped the following night on the French position, but they had lost so many men that they were unable to advance any further that year. You will find this victory referred to in your history books as the Battle of Malplaquet.[23]

John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough.
(*Photo by Walker and Cockerell, from the painting in the National Portrait Gallery.*)

In April 1710 the campaign was resumed. Douai was captured, but Arras and the road to France were found [42]
to be protected by a line of trenches which foiled even Marlborough. Béthune and other places fell into his hands; but during the winter the French extended their trenches from Namur on the east right to the coast, and the barrier seemed impregnable. In 1711, however, Marlborough carried out a series of movements which are said to be the most wonderful in the whole history of tactics. Early in August he approached the French lines as if about to attack Arras. The French massed their forces to meet him, and in order to do so had to weaken their hold on the trenches farther east. Suddenly, on the same night, Marlborough made a forced march of thirteen leagues to the left. Many of his men dropped from fatigue, but with the remainder he seized a portion of the trenches, and was behind the French lines while the French army was still awaiting his attack on Arras. He had completely outwitted the French general, though, for various reasons, he was unable to take further advantage of his success.

The French trenches of which you have just read ran, roughly, east and west, and were meant to stop an advance on Paris from the north. During the race to the sea the rival armies were moving from the south to the north. Each was trying to outflank the other. The Allies wished to strike eastwards, and the Germans westwards, and the result was that the lines of trenches in which they opposed each other ran from north to south.

[43]

CHAPTER V.

MAUD'HUY AT ARRAS, AND THE RETREAT FROM ANTWERP.

Two hundred and three years after Marlborough vainly tried to capture Arras, that little historic town became once more a prize for which rival forces strove fiercely. Marlborough coveted it because it was, as Louis XIV. styled it, the true gateway to Paris. The Germans, who were now to make a great effort to seize it, desired its possession because it would enable them to outflank Maud'huy's army and seize the Channel ports.

Arras had already been in German hands. During von Kluck's rush on Paris his troops drove out the weak French forces holding the city,[24] and occupied it up to the middle of September. When, however, the deadlock occurred on the Aisne, they withdrew from the quaint old place without doing it very much harm.

It was on the last day of September 1914 that Maud'huy began to extend his army beyond that of de Castelnau. Soon his left was at Lens, and his cavalry was scouring the country still farther north towards the Lys and the Yser. Several Territorial regiments attached to his army had already been sent to occupy Lille and Douai. You can easily understand that those weak forces would be in great danger if the Germans were to sweep round to the west. The Allied generals, however, believed that they were ahead in the race, and that they would be the first to overlap. They were quite mistaken: the Germans were ahead, and were now [44]
preparing to overlap by sending cavalry and infantry in motor buses towards the line of Béthune and Cassel.

On the afternoon of 1st October Douai had to be abandoned, and that very day the German guns began to thunder on the hills surrounding Arras. Von Buelow attacked Maud'huy in great force on the flats to the east of the city, while the Bavarians attempted to outflank him on the north. Though he received reinforcements he was obliged to retire behind the city and take up a position on the encircling hills. Before doing so he warned all the men of military age to leave the place. Then began a pitiful exodus to the coast.

For two days the Germans fiercely bombarded Arras: the beautiful sixteenth-century town hall, with its superb clock tower, was ruined, and the cathedral, as well as many of the historic houses, was badly damaged. Shells were rained on the place; but the French maintained a stubborn front, and refused to give way. The attack continued right through the month. A most determined assault was made between the 20th and the 26th, when the Prussian Guard came into action; but the enemy could not cross the ramparts. On the 31st a large German force was allowed to enter the suburbs, where a trap had been prepared. The result was that a battalion of the Guard surrendered, and a military train with one of the great siege howitzers was captured.

Maud'huy held the gate at Arras against all comers, and too great praise cannot be given to him and his brave troops. Had the Germans been able to sweep through the Arras gate the whole subsequent history of the war would have been changed.

On the 3rd of October, when the Germans were closing in on Arras, their patrols were reported on the outskirts of Lille, which they had also entered during their southward march,[25] but had subsequently abandoned. The mayor at once warned the inhabitants to keep cool, to avoid gathering in crowds, and to give no offence to the enemy should he enter the city. Next day the cracking of rifles was heard in the suburbs, and several shells fell in the streets, one of them striking the town hall. A new German force was advancing towards Lille from Belgium. During the morning an armoured train containing 300 Uhlans came [46]
dashing towards the station. A signalman promptly switched it on to a siding, and the French attacked it.

The surprised Uhlans tried to take refuge in the neighbouring houses and workshops, but most of them were captured next morning.

A Battle amidst the Coal Trucks of Lens.

(*From the picture by Paul Thiriat. By permission of The Sphere.*)

Nor was this the only attack on Lille that day. Some 3,000 Germans tried to force their way in from the direction of Tourcoing, while others tried to cross from the Belgian to the French side of the Lys below Armentières, but both attacks were repelled. On the 6th there was fighting to the west of Lille and on the 10th a company of Uhlans dashed into the streets. They arrested the mayor and several other citizens as hostages; but in the nick of time a party of French Chasseurs arrived, set free the prisoners, and chased the Uhlans out of the city. Almost immediately the Germans began to bombard the place, and shells fell upon it at intervals until the 12th, when an infantry attack began. The Territorials did their best to resist, but they were altogether outnumbered, and were forced to withdraw. On the 13th Lille surrendered, and the Germans, with bands playing, marched in and took possession. Thus the most valuable city of North France fell into their hands.

You already know that it was of the utmost importance that Lille should be retained by the Allies. Why, then, did not General Maud'huy send a stronger force to hold it? The fact is, that he was so hard pressed at Arras that he could not spare an additional man for the defence of Lille. He had all his work cut out to save Arras and prevent the Germans from swarming through the gap towards the Channel. But even the feeble resistance of the Territorials at Lille was of advantage to the Allies. The city was held for nine days, during which large German forces were detained. By keeping these forces busy round the city the Territorials helped to conceal the Allied movements which were going on farther to the west, and also enabled the French and British troops to reach the line of the Yser just, and only just, in time to stop the Germans from bursting through.

Now we must hurry north to Antwerp and see what happened after the tragic fall of that great fortress. In the last chapter of Volume II., page 313, I told you that a British Naval Brigade, numbering about 8,000 men in all, was sent to the assistance of the beleaguered city. It arrived too late to save the fortress, but its energies were not wasted. The defence of the city was prolonged for a few priceless days while the troops from the Aisne were being hurried up to the new theatre of war. [47]

The Belgian troops began to retreat from Antwerp on the evening of 6th October. Covered by cavalry, armoured motor cars, and cyclist corps, they moved out towards Ghent and Ostend, while a strong show of resistance was kept up by other Belgian troops and the British contingent in the trenches to the south of the city. Next day came the terrible flight of the civil population, and late that night, amidst scenes of indescribable confusion, the remainder of the Belgian troops and most of the British left the forts and trenches, cut the pontoon bridge over the Scheldt behind them, and hurried westwards, beating off attacks on their rear. Unfortunately, as you will remember, three battalions of the British Naval Brigade did not receive orders to retire until the road westwards was blocked by the enemy. Some 2,500 of them either passed into Holland, where they had to remain, or were captured by the Germans. It is said that 18,000 Belgians suffered the same fate.

The following extract from the diary of a petty officer who served with the Naval Brigade gives you some idea of the experiences of the British contingent:—

> "*October 8.*—What a night last night! Shells coming in like one o'clock. Man on my side got a bit in his leg, but says he can shoot just as well on one leg. Belgian artilleryman reports that

he and two others are all that are left of our covering fort. We seem to have nothing to do but wait for the end. These trenches would be all right against savages, but against their huge artillery, like so much dust. These shells come with a whiz like an express train, and then—crash! The spirits of our troop are top hole. No one the slightest bit excited—just smoking or yarning and dodging shells; but it's just rotten not coming alongside them. Here she comes—dip, crash! Saved again. Another 'non-stop' for Antwerp![26] When they shorten the range for us—well, cheer oh! Officer just given us the bird for laughing. 'Grin at each other, but don't speak, chapsies. In case I don't see you again, all my best love.'

"*Next day.*—About six last night we had a German attack on our left flank, and drove them off. As they had the range of our entrenchment, we had orders to clear out. So we did so. As I fell in outside, a shell exploded alongside. One man was left on the deck. We had to march back to Antwerp. City in places in flames. Everybody gone. Dead animals in the streets. Shells screaming overhead. Right through the city, over a bridge of boats, which were afterwards exploded, and marched until six this morning. Only one hour's sleep on the pavement of a small town. Thousands of men on the march back, thousands of refugees, Belgians, horses, cattle, and artillery, just like pictures of the retreat from Moscow and such like. We got a train at once, and it's now one o'clock, and we are still in it, bound for the coast. Part of our entrenchment was blown up as we were retreating, so if we had not gone I don't suppose any of us would have been alive. So, taking things all round, we had a pretty brisk time, and seem to have done nothing. Don't know how many miles we marched last night, but it is a picture which will always live in my memory. The conduct of our boys is simply marvellous—just as cool as seasoned veterans.

"*Saturday, October 10.*—Blankenberghe.[27] Arrived last night; slept at a kind of town hall. Had a meal where the refugees are staying; breakfast at hotel. Girls wearing R.N.V.R.[28] ribbons across their heads.

"*Sunday, October 11.*—Came aboard collier yesterday afternoon, and still aboard now. There are about 2,000 men here. Accommodation for none, so I slept between the funnel and the engine-room grating. Some even slept on the cylinders. Don't know when we shall shove off."

When Mr. Winston Churchill explained why the Naval Brigade had been sent to Antwerp, he said that it was [48]
"part of a large operation for the relief of the city which more powerful considerations prevented from being carried out." On the day after the Naval Brigade reached Antwerp (6th October), a part of the Fourth British Army Corps, under General Sir Henry Rawlinson, landed at Ostend and Zeebrugge,[29] and at once marched eastwards. The original object of this force, always supposing that Antwerp held out, was to join hands with the troops defending the city, and then advance across the Scheldt so as to cut the German lines of communication. On the evening of his arrival in Belgium Sir Henry Rawlinson visited Antwerp, and saw with his own eyes that the fortress could not be saved. His business now was to cover the retreat of the forces which had vainly tried to hold the city.

[49]

CHAPTER VI.

WITH RAWLINSON IN BELGIUM.

When Rawlinson's troops reached Ghent, on 7th October 1914, they fell in with the first body of retreating Belgians, and also with a brigade of French Marine Fusiliers, 6,000 strong, which had been hastily organized and rushed northwards that very morning. Most of them were Breton[30] reservists and recruits who had never fought on land before. Their chief was Admiral Ronarc'h,[31] a big, broad-shouldered, cool seaman, with eyes of Celtic blue. The Germans called these Bretons lads and graybeards "the girls with the red pompoms."[32] They were soon to discover that the Bretons were not playing at war, but that they were fighters of iron resolution and fiery courage.

When the troops under Rawlinson were disembarking at Ostend and Zeebrugge, fourteen transports, containing the 7th British Division, which had been assembled on the borders of the New Forest, were on the way to join him in Belgium. Just when the transports were off Ostend they received a wireless message ordering them to recross the Channel to Dover. A grain ship had just been blown up off Ostend, and it was feared that the transports would be sent to the bottom too. They were therefore ordered back to Dover to [51]
wait until the mines were swept up along the Belgian coast. On the day when the retirement from Antwerp was in full swing, the 7th Division disembarked at Zeebrugge, and marched to the outskirts of Bruges. The agony of Antwerp was then over, and all that could be done was to help to cover the retreat of the forces now marching away from the city.

Bavarian Troops leaving Antwerp for the Dash on Calais.

The Germans, as you know, strove hard to cut off the retreating defenders, and in the villages to the east and south of Ghent the British forces and the French Marine Brigade made a stand against an army which numbered about 45,000. When they had checked the enemy, they decided to retire westwards towards Bruges. That night, under a wintry moon, a long march of twenty-six miles was accomplished, the 7th Division and the French Marines acting as the rearguard.

After a brief rest the retreating forces turned south-south-east, the cavalry scouring the country in advance, and on the following evening reached Thielt,[33] where it was discovered that the pursuit had so greatly slackened that the weary men were enabled to get the first good sleep which they had enjoyed for several days. It is said that they owed this piece of good fortune to the mayor of one of the neighbouring towns, who deliberately sent the Germans off on a false scent. When the Germans discovered that they had been misdirected, the mayor was promptly shot.

On 13th October the Allies reached Thourout,[34] where they divided into two parts. Admiral Ronarc'h and his Marines, along with the Belgian forces which had been holding Ghent, moved west to the Yser, where they joined the remnants of the Belgian army which had retreated through Bruges. Here the undaunted King Albert, accompanied by his devoted wife, Queen Elizabeth, rejoined the exhausted army, and helped to reorganize it for the terrible struggles which lay before it. Meanwhile Sir Henry Rawlinson's forces pressed on southwards, and arrived at Roulers,[35] *en route* for Ypres, on 13th October, the day on which Lille fell into the hands of the Germans. By that time part of the German army which had been besieging Antwerp, [52] and had been released for other operations when it fell, had swept through Bruges, and had occupied Ostend. German soldiers were seen strolling on the sands which in the early days of July had been crowded with laughing bathers and merry holiday-makers. Many of the German soldiers had never seen the sea before, and they gazed upon it with open-mouthed interest, straining their eyes in the vain attempt to see the shores of that island kingdom which was so steadfastly blocking their path to victory.

Mr. C. Underwood, an interpreter who was attached to the 7th Division, which played such an important part in the fighting retreat from Ghent, tells us[36] that it was the delay caused by sending back the transports of his division to Dover that prevented Sir Henry Rawlinson from marching to the relief of Antwerp.

> "We left Roulers for Ypres," he says, "at 9.30 a.m. (October 14), and four Taubes flew over us on the road, but too high to be shot at. We arrived at Ypres at 6.30, and that evening I saw our first lot of allies, reserve dragoons dismounted in the square to receive us. The Germans had been through and stayed one night, the 7th, the day we landed at Zeebrugge. They had taken up their quarters in the famous riding school, and the first thing they had done was to break open the mess-room and cellars, and take out all the wine, after which they broke up everything and stole the mess-plate. When I saw it, a week later, the school was strewn with broken bottles—champagne, claret, port, etc., etc.—and every drawer and cupboard burst open and ransacked. They had cut all communications at the station, demanded an indemnity of 65,000 francs (£2,600), and stolen all the money they could lay hands on from the Banque National. Six thousand loaves were requisitioned in the evening to be ready next morning, failing which there was a penalty of £800 (20,000 francs). At 10.30 a.m. a Taube, with pilot and observer, had been brought down; but they were not captured till 4.30, as they concealed themselves in a wood. They were both brought in, furious with rage, as each was seized by the collar, and a revolver pointed at their heads by Belgian officers. They were driven off in a car at the rate of sixty miles an hour at least!
>
> "Next day the whole brigade marched out to Halte on the Menin-Ypres road, dug trenches, and remained in them all night. It was pitch dark in the morning when we were ordered to attack a patrol of Germans towards Menin. About a quarter of a mile beyond Gheluvelt[37] we engaged advance party of Uhlans at 8.30 a.m. in a thick fog. A file of the Bedfords

brought in a suspect, whose papers, not being in order, I escorted into Ypres. He was there detained at the town hall, and I heard no more of him. Had quite an amusing skirmish with the daughter of the proprietress of the hotel of the Three Kings. Feeling very hungry, I asked for lunch. She said she had nothing; asked for an egg, same reply; bread, the same; finally, in a fury at such disobliging conduct, I asked her whether she did not think herself most ungrateful, considering we were there to defend them against the Germans. This had the desired effect, and she asked me to come in, cooked me a splendid omelet, brought out a bottle of wine, and plenty of bread and cheese, for which she only charged me two francs."

On Sunday, the 18th, Mr. Underwood's brigade had its baptism of fire at a village a little to the north-east of [53] Gheluvelt, where a British battery silenced the guns of the enemy. All night they waited for an attack, but the Germans left them alone until the morning. Then the fighting was continued, and thus began that series of desperate conflicts—"ten Waterloos a week"—known as the Battle of Ypres. I shall give you a full account of this gigantic struggle in a later chapter.

The enemy against whom the 7th Division was now fighting consisted of four reserve corps which had left Germany on 11th October. Three of the corps had assembled in Brussels, and without losing an hour had been sent on an eighty-mile march westwards. They largely consisted of Landwehr[38] and new volunteers, and ranged from boys of sixteen to stout gentlemen in middle life. Though quite new to the work of war, they soon showed themselves as desperate in attack as the most seasoned veterans. Mr. Underwood says: "On questioning one of the prisoners, he informed me that they were all Landwehr men, fathers of families, about the age of thirty-nine and forty, who had been called up quite recently. There was no doubt that the Germans were well equipped; all their clothes were in excellent order and brand new. They seemed relieved, and evidently overjoyed, when I told them that they would probably be sent to England. They were afraid that the report which had been made to them that we shot all prisoners was true."

[54]

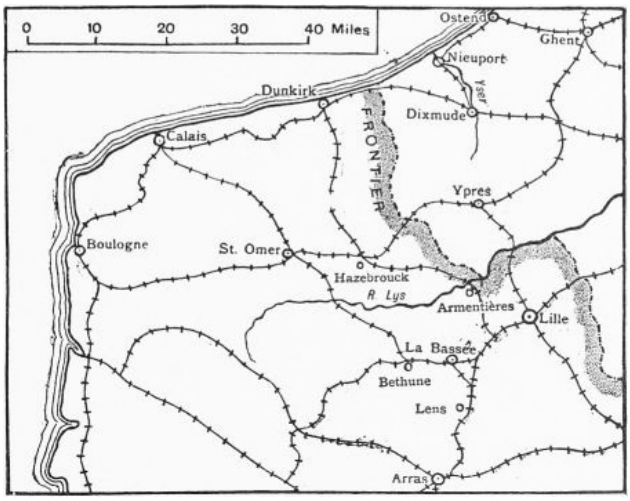
CHAPTER VII.

THE LONG, THIN LINE OF STEEL AND VALOUR.

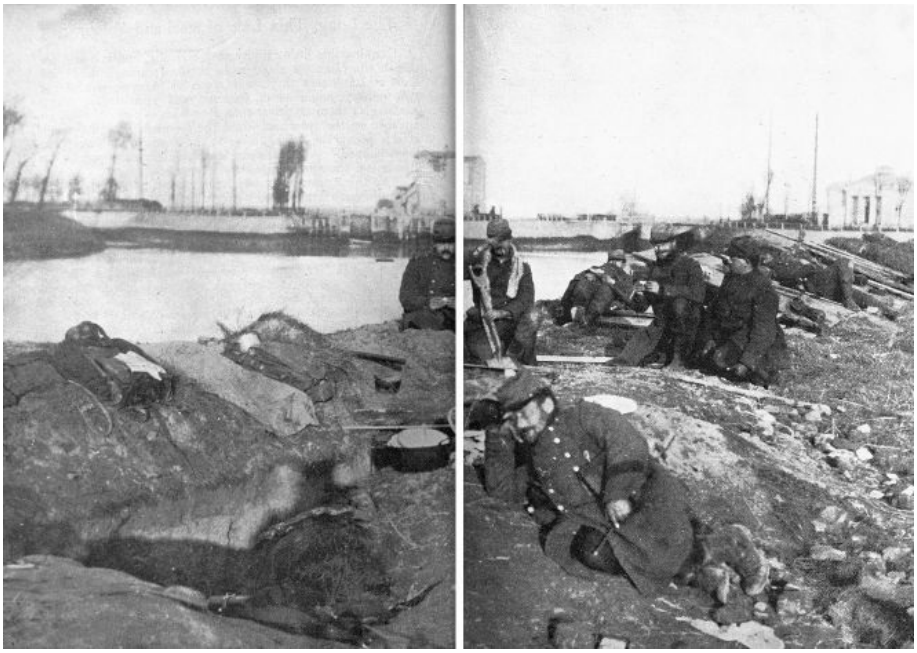
Let us look again at the sixty-mile stretch of country from Arras to the North Sea, the great danger zone during the month of October and for many months afterwards. An enemy advancing from Belgium and North France, desirous of capturing the coast of the Channel, and making himself master of the Strait of Dover, must cross this stretch of country in order to attain his object. You already know that a most determined effort was made by the Germans to push through the gap at Arras, from which the railways give access not only to the Channel ports but to Paris. As you are aware, General Maud'huy was able to say to the Germans, "No road this way."

Seventeen miles north of Arras we find the second passage by which the Channel ports may be reached by an army advancing westwards. You have already heard more than once of the town of La Bassée, which stands on the canal uniting Béthune with Lille. A great thrust through La Bassée would serve almost as well as a thrust through the Arras gap, for Béthune, which lies seven miles to the west, is the junction of two diverging railways, both of which lead to Boulogne. The more northerly of these lines has a branch which runs through the important railway centre of Hazebrouck[39] to Ypres. At Hazebrouck the St. Omer[40]-Ypres line meets the railway which comes westwards from Lille through Armentières to the coast. A little west of Hazebrouck this line subdivides: one route goes through St. Omer to Boulogne; the other runs north to [55] Dunkirk, from which Calais and Boulogne may be reached by a line along the coast.

Examine this little railway map carefully, and you will see that if the Germans could make a thrust through the Allied lines at La Bassée they would soon be in possession of the two railway junctions of Béthune and Hazebrouck, which would give them no fewer than four lines of railway for their advance on the sea-coast. Had the Germans broken through at this point, the Allied forces to the north would have been overwhelmed. We shall soon learn that the sally-port at La Bassée was the scene of long and desperate struggles.



The third passage by which the enemy might capture the coast of North France and outflank the Allies at the same time is by way of the Yser Canal and the Ypres Canal. You have already learnt how Rawlinson's army tried to block the road to Ypres and how the Belgians withdrew to the line of the Yser in order to contest its passage. Rawlinson's force was far too small to resist the numbers which were hurled against it on and after the 18th of October, and the much-battered Belgians were far too exhausted to offer more than a feeble resistance to the forces of the enemy following hard on their heels. They were strengthened by some French Territorials, but even with this support they had to fall back behind the line of the Yser on the 16th. [58]

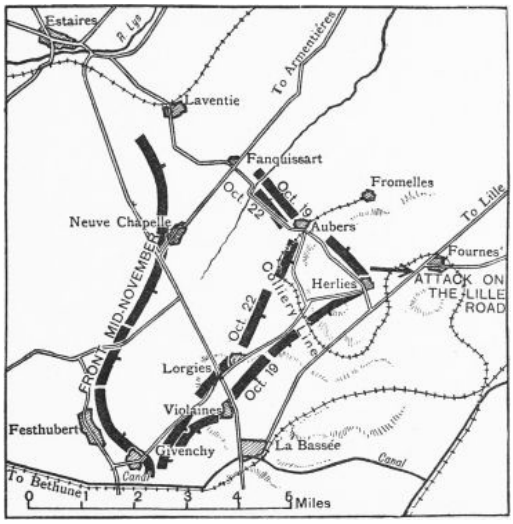


Weary Belgian Soldiers resting on the Banks of the Yser River after their Retreat from Antwerp. *Photo, Daily Mirror*.

Now, while the gates at Arras and the Yser were thus being guarded by Allied forces too weak to do more than barely hold their own, what had happened at the middle gate of La Bassée? On 11th October, two days after the Germans made their triumphal march into Antwerp, General Smith-Dorrien and the Second Corps detrained, marched to the line of the La Bassée Canal, and took up a position along its southern bank. On their right were the French cavalry, linking them with Maud'huy's army; on the left were the brisk squadrons of Gough's cavalry, who were clearing the Germans from the wooded country to the north of the Lys. The Germans were holding the high ground south of La Bassée, where the French trenches had baffled Marlborough more than two hundred years before, and were in strong force on the road to Lille. That great industrial city had not yet fallen, so Sir John French decided to make a great effort to save it.

On the morning of the 12th, in a thick fog, the Second Corps wheeled on its right, and took up a new position facing east, its left resting on the Lys and its right on the canal north of Béthune. It then advanced eastward, finding its way much impeded by the difficult character of the ground. Our soldiers from the coal-mining districts of Great Britain found themselves in familiar country—amidst the large, straggling, connected villages, the pit-heads, refuse mounds, and factories of their own homeland. They had to advance across a flat country with a patchwork of fields and hop-gardens, hemmed in by high bedraggled hedges, and cut across by interminable ditches, with frequent canals by way of variety. The roads, which were lined by scraggy poplars, were narrow, and deep in mud owing to the heavy traffic. Through this flat, depressing country in which good gun positions were few and far between, the British marched to meet the Germans. By nightfall, however, they had made some progress amidst the slippery maze of the muddy dykes, and had driven back several counter-attacks, both by steady fire and by bayonet charges.

Next day the Second Corps began to wheel. It pivoted on the village of Givenchy,[41] which stands on the north bank of the canal, less than two miles due west of La Bassée, and endeavoured to get astride of the La Bassée-Lille road, so as to threaten the right flank and rear of the enemy's position on the high ground south of La Bassée. The enemy was found to be strongly entrenched, and supported by artillery in good positions. Before long the fighting was of the most desperate character. The British advanced across the marshy fields under a fierce and devastating fire with the utmost courage, fighting pitched battles in the villages, where every house had been loopholed and turned into a miniature fortress. [59]



The Fighting about La Bassée.

Sketch map showing front held by the Second Corps on October 19, on night of October 22, and about mid-November 1914.

The 5th Division, on the right, bore the brunt of the deadly fray. At Pont Fixe, on the La Bassée canal near Givenchy, the Dorsets, led by their brave commander, Major Roper, fought hand-to-hand combats in the [60] lanes between the houses, and drove the enemy headlong before them. The Germans then turned their guns on to the place, and tore it to fragments. High explosives and shrapnel were hurled on the village, until it seemed that no living thing could survive the deadly hail. When, however, the infantry attack was launched, the Dorsets were still there, but were sadly reduced in numbers. Though their leader was killed, they held on to the smoking ruins all day, and when nightfall came they were still in possession. One hundred and thirty killed and two hundred and seventy wounded was the price paid for this village on that blood-drenched day. The Bedfords, of the same brigade, fought their way to Givenchy, but were driven out again by heavy shell fire.

That night news arrived that Lille had fallen and was in possession of the 14th German Corps. Though Lille was lost La Bassée might be won, and the Second Corps now devoted its energies to the task. Next day the 3rd Division suffered a heavy loss. Sir Hubert Hamilton, its commander, was struck by a shrapnel bullet while riding along his lines, and fell from his horse a dead man. He was one of the most skilful and beloved of the younger generals, and his loss was greatly deplored. An eye-witness thus describes his burial in the village graveyard:—

> "Owing to the proximity of the enemy absolute silence was observed, except for the low voice of the priest, advantage being taken of a lull in the attack. Just at the moment when the priest was saying the last prayer the guns began to roar again, and projectiles whistled over the heads of the mourners. The German attack was directed from a distance of a few hundred yards. The moment was well chosen, for the volleys fired by the troops of the Allies in honour of the dead, gloriously fallen for the common cause, were at the same time volleys of vengeance. Crackling reports of rifles continued round the ruined church, but the voice of the priest, reciting the last words of the requiem, lost nothing of its calm and clearness."

Next day the 3rd Division brilliantly avenged the loss of its leader. Sir John French tells us that they "fought splendidly," crossing with planks the dykes with which this country is intersected, and driving the enemy from one entrenched position to another in loopholed villages, till at night they pushed the Germans off the road leading from Estaires,[42] on the Lys, to La Bassée. On the 16th the division advanced its left flank in [61] front of the village of Aubers,[43] which lies behind a ridge of high ground and a stream which joins the Lys at Armentières. Aubers was captured by the 19th Brigade on the following day, and late that evening the village of Herlies,[44] about a mile and a half to the south-east, was carried at the point of the bayonet by the 1st Lincolns and the 4th Royal Fusiliers.

The Second Corps was now within four miles of La Bassée. So far it had been opposed by German cavalry; now it found itself up against the main wall of German defence. "This position of La Bassée," records Sir John French, "has throughout the battle defied all attempts at capture." Powerful counter-attacks began the next day, and continued right up to the end of the month. Against the masses of Germans now concentrated against them the Second Corps could do nothing but stand on the defence. Most resolutely they held their lines until the end of the month, and again and again repulsed very heavy attacks, in which the Germans lost heavily and left large numbers of dead and prisoners behind them.

All this heavy work was now telling on the Second Corps, and their losses had been so heavy that Smith-Dorrien on the evening of the 22nd was obliged to withdraw his forces to lines of entrenchments which had been prepared on a line running from the eastern side of Givenchy to a village on the Béthune-Armentières road, some seven miles south-west of the latter town. There they settled down into their new trenches; but their lines were very thin, and had not every soldier in them done the work of ten men, they could never have held the position against the swarming masses of the enemy. One day, it is said, General French visited these lines, and talked with a colonel who was hard pressed. "We can't hold out much longer, sir," said the colonel; "it is impossible." "I want only men who can do the impossible," said French. "Carry on."

Before I conclude this account of the very gallant but unavailing attack of the Second Corps on La Bassée, I must tell you one or two incidents which occurred during the fighting in October. On the 19th Major Daniell and his Royal Irish Regiment found the enemy in the village of Le Pilly,[45] about a mile to the north of Herlies. Every house in the place had been loopholed, and line after line of trenches had been dug, so that [62] the position was as strong as a fortress. With loud yells the Royal Irish dashed upon the place, and, in spite

of the shrapnel that was rained on them, carried it by storm. They then entrenched themselves, and prepared to defend the village. But next day the gallant battalion was cut off by German supports from Lille, and was surrounded, after suffering heavy losses.

Very early on the morning of the 24th there was a fierce German attack upon our new lines, but owing to the skilful work of the artillery it came to naught. Towards evening there was another heavy attack, which the Wiltshires and Royal West Kents repulsed. Later on the Germans drove the Gordon Highlanders out of their trenches, but they were retaken by the Middlesex Regiment, gallantly led by Lieutenant Colonel Hull.

While our men were "hanging on by their eyelids, some one, I am told, looked back from a trench and saw a solitary outpost, a turbaned, cloaked figure of the desert, very startling in the green, peaceful landscape, riding over a hill. Behind him nodded the turbans of Sikh cavalry, and the British in the trenches, who seemed past emotion, waved their rifles and cheered." It was the advance guard of the Lahore Division of the Indian army coming in the nick of time to reinforce the hard-pressed men who had fought almost continuously for nearly a fortnight. The Indians had been resting and preparing for a winter campaign near Marseilles, and had long been eager to play their part side by side with their fellow Britons. A few days before, Sir James Willcocks, their commander, had addressed them as follows:—

> "You are the descendants of men who have been mighty rulers and great warriors for many centuries. You will never forget this. You will recall the glories of your race. Hindu and Mohammedan will be fighting side by side with British soldiers and our gallant French allies. You will be helping to make history. You will be the first Indian soldiers of the King-Emperor who will have the honour of showing in Europe that the sons of India have lost none of their martial instincts and are worthy of the confidence reposed in them.
>
> "In battle, you will remember that your religions enjoin on you that to give your life doing your duty is your highest reward. . . . You will fight for your King-Emperor and your faith, so that history will record the doings of India's sons, and your children will proudly tell of the deeds of their fathers."

This timely reinforcement was at once sent off to the support of the Second Corps. [63]

We now know how a small army of much-tried Britons barred the way through the La Bassée postern and stretched a thin line of valour and steel northwards towards the Lys. I have still to tell you how the twelve-mile gap between Armentières and Ypres was closed. While the Second Corps was forming up near Béthune, the trains carrying the Third Corps were running into St. Omer. As each unit arrived it set out for Hazebrouck, and on the 13th the whole force moved eastwards towards the line of the Armentières-Ypres road, with the object of reaching Armentières, from which it could threaten Lille. Gough's cavalry lay to the north, and French cavalry to the south.

The French cavalry had already done much hard fighting. On 9th October it was discovered that German horsemen were holding the south bank of the Lys to the west of Estaires. They had covered the river crossings with machine guns, and had set up searchlights, which at night swept their broad beams along the northern bank. The French commander assembled his men at a point on the river where the current was very swift and the water deep. The Germans believed that the river could not be forded at this spot, and had not troubled to hold it strongly. At dusk a French trooper who was a good swimmer stripped, and, carrying with him one end of a light rope, plunged into the water and swam across the river. When he arrived on the south bank his comrades on the other side fastened a heavy rope to the end of the line which he was holding, and the dripping soldier hauled it across and tied it securely to the trunk of a tree. The other end of the rope was made fast in a similar way, and during the night, assisted by the rope, men and horses crossed the stream. At daybreak, when the Germans found that the French were on their bank of the river they retired rapidly towards Armentières.

In this force of French cavalry there was a champion rider, named Lieutenant Wallon. One day, during the cavalry fighting along the Lys two squadrons of the dragoons to which he was attached advanced across the fields in a thick mist to seize a river bridge at a village where there was an important crossing. The village was held by the enemy, and the French squadrons entrenched themselves in front of a small farmhouse, and [64] beat off an attack, during which thirty Germans were shot. After an interval, eleven men in peasants' dress, with picks and spades over their shoulders, were seen advancing towards the French lines. Supposing that they were peaceful civilians, the French refrained from firing. When, however, these "peasants" were within forty yards or so of the trenches, they suddenly dropped their implements, and, drawing concealed revolvers, opened fire. A sergeant who stood by Lieutenant Wallon laughed as a bullet whistled by, and remarked that another Boche had missed him. The lieutenant, however, had fallen. The sergeant wished to carry him to a safe place in the rear; but the dying man said, "Leave me. A wounded man is worthless. Get back to the trench; you are wanted there." The trusty non-com. could not be persuaded to abandon his leader, and dragged him to the rear, where he shortly afterwards expired. The eleven disguised Germans were captured and shot; the bridge was taken, and the village occupied.

[65]

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WORK OF THE THIRD BRITISH CORPS.

The Third British Corps, commanded by General Pulteney, first came in contact with the German outposts at a village about a mile and a half west of Bailleul.[46] It was a day of heavy rain; the thick, steamy fog prevented the aircraft from scouting, and the water-logged fields were too much enclosed for cavalry to operate. The 10th Brigade, under General J. A. L. Haldane, were the first to attack, and they made a bayonet charge in which the 2nd Seaforths distinguished themselves. By nightfall the position was carried; the Germans were driven out, and the troops were entrenched, ready to attack Bailleul next day (14th October 1914). In the morning it was discovered that the enemy had retired. Bailleul was occupied, and the signs of German pillage were to be seen everywhere. Fourteen villagers had been shot, and the inmates of the lunatic asylum had been turned out of doors. These poor creatures wandered about the countryside for days, and many of them were afterwards found dead by the roadside or in the woods. No wonder a native bitterly said, "The Germans are not soldiers so much as brigands and assassins.'"

Some very fine deeds of gallantry were done during the first day's fighting. Sergeant E. Howard, of the 1st Royal Lancaster Regiment, discovered that twelve men of his platoon who were occupying a trench had ceased firing. Amidst a very heavy fire, he crawled up to them, and found that they were all dead! Sergeant G. A. Hodges, of the 2nd Essex Regiment, led his platoon into the firing line though shot through the [66] shoulder; while Private C. Rowley, of the 1st Royal Warwickshire Regiment, crossed and recrossed from the firing line to the support trench, a distance of 300 yards, under a perfect hail of bullets, with ammunition for his hard-pressed comrades.

On the 15th the Third Corps was ordered to carry the line of the Lys from just below Estaires to Armentières. The enemy offered no serious opposition, and by evening the work was done. Next day Armentières was entered, and on the 17th the Third Corps held a line extending from three miles north to three miles south of the town. It was now discovered that the Germans were holding in strength the right bank of the Lys from a short distance below Armentières to within a couple of miles of Menin.

British Cavalry entering Warneton.

The enemy was posted behind a high loopholed barricade, which was blown to pieces by British guns; whereupon our cavalry entered the town, but could not maintain themselves within it.

Next day an effort was made to clear the Germans out of this position. Midway between Armentières and Menin is the little town of Warneton,[47] which was seized by Allenby's corps. "Eye-witness" thus describes an incident which occurred at the capture of the place:—

> "An important crossing over the Lys at Warneton was strongly held by Germans, who at the entrance to the town had constructed a high barricade, loopholed at the bottom so that men could fire through it from a lying position. This formidable obstacle was encountered by a squadron of our cavalry. Nothing daunted, they obtained help from artillery, who man-hauled a gun into position, and blew the barricade to pieces, scattering the defenders. They then advanced some three-quarters of a mile into the centre of the town, where they found themselves in a large 'place.' They had hardly reached the farther end when one of the buildings suddenly appeared to leap skywards in a sheet of flame, a shower of star shells at the same time making the place as light as day, and enabling the enemy—who were ensconced in surrounding houses—to pour in a devastating fire from rifles and machine guns. Our cavalry managed to extricate themselves from this trap with the loss of only one officer, the squadron leader wounded, and nine men killed or wounded. But determining that none of their number should fall into the enemy's hands, a party of volunteers went back, and, taking off their boots in order to make no noise on the pavement, re-entered the inferno they had just left, and succeeded in carrying off their wounded comrades."

By this time the Third Corps found itself approaching the main German position, which was far too strong for it to attack with any prospect of success. Just about the time that the Second Corps was retiring to the line [68] stretching from the eastern side of Givenchy northwards the Third Corps came to a standstill. It then lay across the Lys with a front of a dozen miles—an impossible length of line for one corps to hold. Both the Second and the Third Corps had reached the limit of their eastern advance.

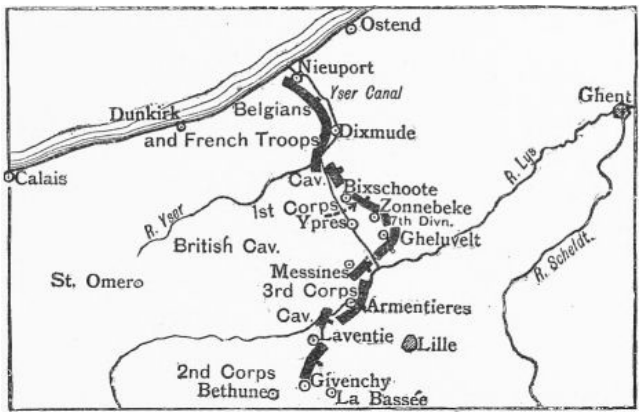
Though they could not push forward any farther, they had closed the sally-ports at La Bassée and Armentières. One more link was necessary to connect the Third Corps with Rawlinson's force holding the eastern gate to Ypres. This was provided by the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions, under General Allenby. The 1st Division (Gough's), as we have seen, had cleared much of the country along the Lys, and had secured a footing on the right bank below Armentières. On the 14th it moved north to join the 2nd Division, which had pushed back invading bands in the neighbourhood of Cassel and Hazebrouck.

Thus the line was established. Half formed, weak, and insecure, it nevertheless extended from the La Bassée Canal to the sea, and though it was opposed by overwhelming odds, it barred the western road to the Germans. The weakest place in it was the bulge in front of Ypres, where Rawlinson's harassed and overstretched division was fighting for its life. Every day the enemy flung new forces against it. More and more Germans were rushed along the Belgian railroads to overwhelm it. "They seemed to rain down on us everywhere," said a spectator; "but most of all they rained on that weak point to our left."

In Chapter VI. I gave you an outline of the doings of Rawlinson's men in Belgium. You there learned how they retreated from Ghent to Roulers, and how the cavalry division reconnoitred all the country towards Ypres and Menin, while the 7th Division battled with four reserve corps of Germans, who on the 18th of October were on the line Roulers-Menin. Rawlinson had a very difficult task to perform. He had to operate on a very wide front, and to encounter very superior forces; yet Sir John French could not spare a man to reinforce him. Sir John was very eager to get possession of Menin, for he thought it a very important point of passage which would greatly help the advance of the rest of the army. He therefore ordered Rawlinson on the 18th to advance his 7th Division, and try to seize the crossing of the Lys at Menin, so as to cut the German communications between Ghent and Lille. [69]

Rawlinson replied that large bodies of the enemy were advancing upon him from the east and north-east, and that his left flank was in danger. With his weak troops he dared not attempt such a task. Sir John tells us that Rawlinson was probably wise in not trying to capture Menin, but that the loss of it greatly helped the enemy to bring up reinforcements, and put an end to any further British advance.

You have probably been wondering where the First Corps was at this time. You last heard of it on the Aisne; so far it had not been seen in Flanders. It did not arrive at Hazebrouck until October 19. While it was detraining, Sir John had some very hard thinking to do. Should he use the First Corps to reinforce the Second and Third Corps, and thus secure the ground already won on the right, or should he send it to help Rawlinson? Between the British left and the Franco-Belgian right there was "a place where the weak spot in the bladder might bulge, and, bulging too much, break." Sir John French, "with the air," some one has said, "of a business man closing a deal," made his decision, and turned in for a little sleep. He chose to let the Second and the Third Corps continue to do the impossible. He sent the First Corps to the line about the city which has given name to this whole series of actions—Ypres. It incorporated what was left of Rawlinson's force, then prepared to dig in and hold on.



The Allied Line from La Bassée to the Sea about October 20.

[70]

CHAPTER IX.

STIRRING STORIES OF ANXIOUS DAYS.

In this chapter I am going to give you a selection of stories which illustrate the fighting from the fall of Antwerp down to the 20th of October 1914. Our first story tells how a British lady in her own yacht carried off many refugees from Ostend while the enemy was actually in the town.

Miss Jessica Borthwick steering the Grace Darling out of Ostend Harbour.

(*Photo, Sport and General.*)

"At nine," says a newspaper correspondent, "we interviewed the official in charge at the burgomaster's office. 'Fly,' he said tersely. 'The Germans will be here, perhaps, in ten minutes.'... I had already arranged a retreat. At ten o'clock we went on board the *Grace Darling*, a schooner yacht which for the past weeks has been working the British Field Hospital in Belgium. She was chartered and fitted out for the purpose by Miss Jessica Borthwick at her own expense. As will appear, the *Grace Darling* was by three hours the last vessel out of Ostend....

"The Germans were now half a mile away, and we were lying well down in the almost empty harbour. It

became necessary to get our auxiliary engine going, and make out at least as far as the harbour mouth. At a quarter-past ten the first Germans appeared—a patrol of Uhlans—trotting across the bridge that leads into the town from the Blankenberghe road.

"At this critical moment the fact emerged that the man who had shipped as a first-class engineer to work our engine for us was not an engineer at all, but an organ-grinder! The organ-grinder's efforts to start the engine were deplorable, and we were so placed we could not get a breath of wind for the sails. The decks of the [71] little yacht were covered with refugees—Belgian fathers, women, and children. They watched with a stricken calm a second and a third Uhlan patrol cross the bridge. Two escaped soldiers in plain clothes who had come on board dropped their uniforms into the water . . .

"Every moment we were expecting the appearance of the Germans on the pier. Soon after midday we sailed at a majestic one mile per hour out of the harbour with the British flag flying. Past the pierhead we found some wind, actually got the engine started, and ploughed away at a cheerful ten knots. A mile out we anchored, to await developments. Through our glasses we saw four Uhlans standing like statues staring out to sea. From over the horizon came racing a torpedo boat, got the news, and promptly poked her nose into the harbour to see for herself. After five minutes she backed out, and went away swiftly. Thereafter Miss Borthwick and several correspondents, including myself, decided on a scouting expedition of our own in the [72] launch. We plunged ahead through the green and lifting waves, raising a fine spray, till we were within a few hundred yards of the *digue*.[48] There we saw four Germans running across a little triangle of sandy beach and up on to the pier. We hung on for a moment, anxious as to what would happen next.

"The Germans ran along the pier, the end of which was only two hundred yards from us. When we saw them taking cover among the little buildings at the end of the pier we considered it time to bolt. Promptly the Germans fired a wide shot, and signalled to us to come in, but we made for the open sea. Then they opened fire seriously. We lay as flat as we could—which was not very flat, for we were tightly packed in the tiny boat —and scooted. Two of the Germans were kneeling down with their rifles resting on the rail at the end of the pier, and two standing up.

"It was an extremely uncomfortable four minutes before we were out of range. They fired rapidly, but did not even hit the boat, though they were very close above and beside us. We regained the *Grace Darling*, raised anchor, and at once made for sea."

Here is a description of one of the French regiments which fought so bravely under Maud'huy against the Bavarians round about Arras:—

"They have come a long way down the straight roads between the hills, and there is dust in their eyes and throats, and they have arrived at that moment in the march when the pack weighs heaviest, when the shoulder-straps begin to rub, when the rifle seems to wear a hole in the shoulder, and when the shoe begins to pinch. The best-hearted man in the regiment knows that it is the time for a little joke. He begins to speak about his captain, who is walking a yard away from him. 'Our captain grows a little fat, I think, my little ones.' 'Yes,' says a comrade, taking up the joke; 'it is possible that he has been eating too much.' 'And he has a great thirst, I am told,' says a third man. 'It is marvellous what a thirst our captain has! Three bottles of red wine are hardly enough to wet his throat.' 'He gets too old for war;' and so the joke goes on, every word [73] of which is heard by the captain, who finally bursts into laughter, and says, 'You are impudent rascals, all of you.' The bad moment has passed. The weight of the pack is forgotten, and presently the baritone of the regiment sings the first line of a marching song. The chorus goes lilting down the long white road between the poplar sentinels."

Few stories have appeared with reference to the fighting round La Bassée. A dispatch rider says: "There was one brigade there that had a past. It had fought at Mons[49] and Le Cateau,[50] and then plugged away cheerfully through the Retreat and the Advance. What was left of it had fought stiffly on the Aisne. Some hard marching, a train journey, more hard marching, and it was thrown into action at La Bassée. There it fought itself to a standstill. It was attacked and attacked until, shattered, it was driven back one wild night. It was rallied, and, turning on the enemy, held them. More hard fighting, a couple of days' rest, and it staggered into action at Ypres, and somehow—no one knows how—it held its bit of line. A brigade called by the same name, consisting of the same regiments, commanded by the same general, but containing scarce a man of those who had come out in August, marched very proudly away from Ypres, and went—not to rest, but to hold another bit of the line.

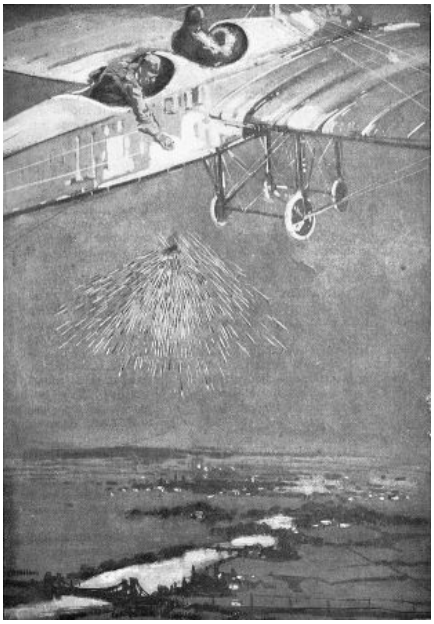
"And this brigade was not the Guards' Brigade. There were no picked men in the brigade. It contained just four ordinary regiments of the line—the Norfolks, the Bedfords, the Cheshires, and the Dorsets. What the 15th Brigade did other brigades have done."

You have just heard of the splendid endurance of the Dorsets. Here is another story concerning their doings. It is told by Private Cornelius O'Leary. "We encountered the Germans when they were making one of their fiercest attacks in their efforts to get through to Cálais. There were eight companies of us (1st Dorset Regiment), numbering 120 officers and men apiece, and the fight took place in a very large turnip field. The German artillery was in front of us, and the Maxim fire was on the right and left. It was impossible for us to make trenches, so we had to place our packs in front of us, and do the best we could. We were often [74] outnumbered by ten to one, as the Germans were almost continually being reinforced. But we defeated them with heavy loss."

Armoured motor cars, equipped with machine guns, played an important part during the fighting of October. "In their employment", says "Eye-witness," "our gallant allies the Belgians, who are now fighting with us, and

acquitting themselves nobly, have shown themselves to be experts. They appear to regard Uhlan-hunting as a form of sport. The crews display the utmost dash and skill in this form of warfare, often going out several miles ahead of their own advanced troops, and seldom failing to return loaded with spoils in the shape of Lancer caps, busbies, helmets, lances, rifles, and other trophies, which they distribute as souvenirs to crowds in the market places of frontier towns."

No man fought an armoured motor car more gallantly and successfully than Commander Sampson, the famous airman. "He is," says a correspondent, "the will o' the wisp of the British army, and he peppers the Germans according to his fancy, from aeroplane, armoured motor car, or armoured train." On one occasion two machine guns continually annoyed our advanced trenches. Eventually they were discovered; one was in a windmill, the other in a neighbouring cottage. Commander Sampson took out an armoured car with a three-pounder quick-firing gun, and one morning the Germans were surprised to see a low slate-coloured car come rushing out of the British lines, followed by heavy but rather wild rifle fire. The Germans naturally thought that the car was one of their own attempting to escape from the British, so they refrained from firing on it. Just as the car appeared to be about to enter the German lines it pulled up. In fifteen seconds the windmill, with its machine gun and crew, was blown to pieces by the shells from the quick-firer, and before the astonished Germans could collect themselves the gun had swung round, and more shells had crashed into the cottage, which was soon destroyed. Then the car shot back to the British lines, to be received not with rifle fire, but with a loud burst of cheering. It is said that the Kaiser was so exasperated at Commander Sampson's successful daring in this and many other adventures, that he offered a reward of £1,000 to any German soldier who could kill him.



The Arrows of Death.

It was during the month of October that we first learnt of the new weapon served out to our flying corps. It [76]
consists of an arrow-shaped missile of steel like a pointed lead pencil. A mechanical device spreads these missiles out as they fall from the aeroplane, so that they cover an area of about 200 square yards when dropped from a height of 500 yards. From this height the arrow of death will pass right through a man's body.

"Eye-witness" tells us that "an easy capture was effected by an engineer telegraph linesman. Returning in the dark after repairing some air lines which had been cut by shell fire, he was passing through a wood, when his horse shied at some figures crouching in a ditch. He called out, 'Come out of it!' whereupon to his surprise three German cavalrymen emerged and surrendered. He marched them back to his headquarters."

An action fought near a village less than a mile to the north of Armentières was brought about by a pig. The British and German trenches were so near that the soldiers talked with each other, made jokes, and even learnt the names of their opponents. One day a pig walked on to the strip of land between the trenches. British and Germans alike shot at him, and down he fell. Both sides wanted the pig, for roast pig is a pleasant change from the dull and tasteless round of ordinary rations. But how was he to be got in? To go out to fetch him meant instant death. Five daring soldiers lost their lives over that pig, and still he lay unreclaimed between the trenches.

There was a big fellow in the German trench named Hans Müller. He crept out of his trench in the night, tied a rope to the pig's leg, and crawled back to his trench unhurt. The Germans waited till morning came, so that the British might see their triumph, and then began hauling in the pig. It was a bitter moment for the British, and the Germans did not forget to rejoice loudly in their success. But the British had their revenge: two nights later they took that German trench with the bayonet. That is how they made things even.

[77]

The dispatch rider already quoted tells us that spies were very busy in and behind our lines. "I heard a certain story, which I give as an illustration and not as a fact. There was once an artillery brigade billeted in a house two miles or so behind the lines. All the inhabitants of the house had fled, for the village had been heavily bombarded. Only a girl had had the courage to remain, and to act as hostess to the British. She was fresh and charming, clever at cooking, and modest in manner. Now, it was noticed that our guns could not be moved without the Germans knowing their new position. No transports or ammunition limbers were safe from their guns. The girl was told of the trouble; she was angry and sympathetic, and swore that through her the spy would be discovered. She spoke the truth."

One night a man, who had his suspicions, saw the girl go into a cellar as if to bring up coal. He followed her, and, groping about in the dark, touched a wire. Quickly running his hand along it, he came to a telephone. The truth was now out. The Germans were receiving their information from the girl, who posed as the friend of the British. In a few hours she suffered the usual fate of spies.

"Battle noises," says the dispatch rider, "are terrific. At the present moment a howitzer is going strong behind us, and the noise is tremendous. It is like dropping a traction engine on a huge tin tray. A shell passing away from you over your head is like the loud crackling of a newspaper close to your ear. It makes a sort of deep, echoing crackle in the air, gradually lessening, until there is a dull boom, and a mile or so away you see a thick little cloud of white smoke in the air, or a pear-shaped cloud of gray-black smoke on the ground. Coming towards you, a shell makes a cutting, swishing note, gradually getting higher and higher, louder and louder. There is a longer note one instant, and then it ceases. Shrapnel bursting close to you has the worst sound.

"It is almost funny to be in a village that is being shelled. Things simply disappear. You are standing in an archway a little back from the road—a shriek of shrapnel. The windows are broken, and the tiles rush clattering into the street, while little bullets and bits of shell jump from side to side, until their force is spent. Or, a deeper bang, a crash, and a whole house tumbles down."

[78]

CHAPTER X.

WITH THE SECOND CORPS.

The last ten days of October 1914 were days of furious but indecisive fighting all along the line from Arras to the sea. "The Germans rocked their attack from side to side, searching for the weak spot. They gained here; they lost there; but the line remained as it had been when Haig moved up his First Corps. The British held on, and continued to dig in. These were days of incessant battering and continual losses; the hospital trains running back to the base carried as many as 4,000 wounded in one day."

The Germans, as you know, were bent on winning the Channel ports at all costs. They thought that the capture of Calais and Boulogne would create a panic in Great Britain, and make us keep our new armies at home for the defence of our shores, instead of sending them abroad for the reinforcement of our Allies. They also thought that if the Channel ports could be captured the British Navy would have to be divided, one portion keeping watch over the German naval bases on the North Sea, the other part operating in the English Channel. In this case the Germans hoped that they might fight and win a naval battle against one part of our divided fleet. There was a good deal of talk in the German papers about mounting huge guns at Calais which would command at least half of the Strait of Dover, and make the dispatch of transports very difficult, if not impossible.

I have already described the three gates through which the Germans tried to pierce the Allied line and make their descent on the shores of the Channel. You know how they were held up at Arras and at La Bassée. [79] Though they did not cease their efforts to break through these gates during the latter days of October, they began to direct a great attack on the bulge in the Allied line to the east of Ypres. Further, they also attempted to break through by way of the Yser. Military men still wonder why they continued to fling themselves against four points in the Allied line, instead of putting forward all their strength against one of them. We can only be thankful that they wasted their energies in attacking all these points, when they might have battered with all their force at one.

We will now return to the Second British Corps, which, you will remember, had been under fire for twelve days, and had become so exhausted that on 22nd October it was found necessary to withdraw it to a line running generally from the eastern side of Givenchy, east of Neuve Chapelle,[51] to a point about four miles south-east of Estaires. The Lahore Division of the Indian Corps had now arrived, and was about to receive its baptism of fire. The village of Neuve Chapelle, which was destined to figure largely in later history, is four miles north of La Bassée. It was captured by the Germans on the 27th, and its recapture was entrusted to the Indians. The 28th of October will be ever memorable in the annals of the Indian army. On that day it first showed its mettle on a European battlefield.

At Neuve Chapelle our trenches presented a salient[52] which could be swept by fire on both sides, and the Seaforths, who occupied some of them, were much exposed, and suffered heavily. The 47th Sikhs, the 9th Bhopal Infantry, and the 20th and 21st Companies of the 1st Sappers and Miners were now ordered to advance. They dashed forward with great spirit, and though they were under artillery fire for the first time, showed great indifference to the bursting shells. It was noticed that after the first few had exploded near them they hardly troubled to look around.

The fighting was of the most desperate and confused character, and the Germans flung their dead from their

trenches to make cover, under which they advanced. No sooner had the British won a hundred yards of trench than they were driven back by a counter-attack. The line swayed to and fro, now in front of the ruins of what had been Neuve Chapelle, now behind them. Trenches were dug in the streets, and sometimes were only a few yards apart. Part of Neuve Chapelle was won, but the whole of it could not be recovered. [80]

Next day there was a terrible fight at Festubert, a village less than two miles to the north-west of La Bassée. Ever since the 18th of October the German guns had been pounding the little place, which was held by the thin line of the 2nd Manchesters. In the early dawn of the 29th the Germans swarmed out of their trenches and swept down in dense masses on the British infantry, who were driven back to their supporting trench. Here they rallied, and thrust back the Germans who followed them. One of the lost trenches was recaptured by two men—Lieutenant James Leach and Sergeant Hogan, who were afterwards awarded the Victoria Cross, as you will hear later.

More Indians now arrived, and the defence of the La Bassée gate was entrusted to them, to two and a half British brigades, and most of the Second Corps artillery. Amongst the Indian infantry were the 8th Gurkha Rifles. You will remember that the Gurkhas are little men. The trenches which they took over had been dug for taller white men, and they found that they could not see out of them. The German machine guns enfiladed[53] the Gurkhas, and most of their white officers fell. Little wonder that, so placed and so strange to this new kind of warfare, they were forced back. Wandering in the dark, they managed by good luck to stumble on the trenches of the 1st Seaforths, a regiment to whom they are blood brothers.

For the next two days there was a heavy bombardment all along our position, and especially against the left wing behind Neuve Chapelle. On 2nd November the Germans again pierced the British line in one place, but a desperate charge of the 2nd Gurkhas, the famous regiment which had fought so bravely on the ridge at Delhi,[54] saved the situation.

For the next three weeks the troops in this section were engaged in beating off German attacks, which gradually grew less and less violent as the Germans concentrated their forces farther north for a great assault on Ypres. Our line was forced back till it ran from Givenchy, to which we stubbornly clung, north by Festubert, and onwards towards Estaires. After an unsuccessful attack on Givenchy (7th November) there was a fortnight's lull, during which the contest was little more than an artillery duel.

[81]

CHAPTER XI.

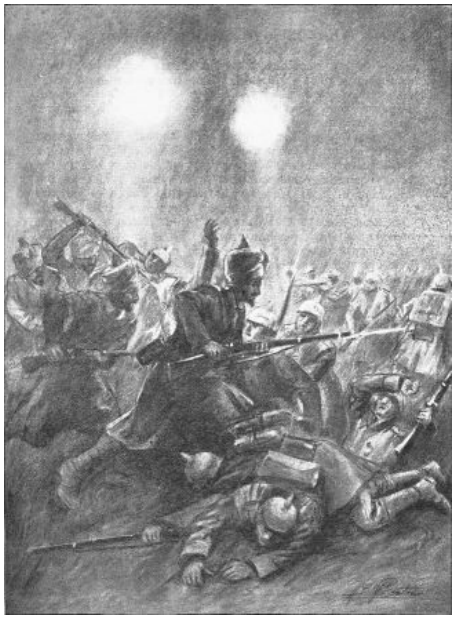
THE INDIANS IN THE TRENCHES.

Every boy and girl has heard of the wonderful valour and daring of the Sikhs and Gurkhas. Many people in this country fully believed that they would prove invincible on European battlefields. Too much was, perhaps, expected of them: they found themselves waging an entirely new kind of warfare in a cold, clammy land, which numbed their limbs and broke down their stamina. It was all so strange and new—the awful roar of the great howitzer shells, the fighting from holes in the ground, the endless stream of shrapnel, the bitter cold, and the absence of those fierce, furious charges in which they delight. At first their nerve was shaken, but they quickly recovered, and it must be remembered that when they broke they dashed forward just as frequently as they retired. Nevertheless, their splendid courage was not in doubt for a moment, and before long the enemy went in terror of them, as the following letter, published in a German newspaper, plainly shows:—

> "To-day for the first time we had to fight against the Indians, and Heaven knows those brown rascals are not to be underrated. At first we spoke with contempt of the Indians. To-day we learned to look at them in a different light.... When for three days it had rained shells and the British thought we were beaten to a jelly, they had then in store for us a visit from their brown allies. Heaven only knows what the English had put into those fellows. Anyhow, those who stormed our lines seemed either drunk or possessed with an evil spirit. With fearful shouting, in comparison with which our hurrahs are like the whining of a baby, thousands of those brown forms rushed upon us as suddenly as if they were shot out of a fog, so that at first we were completely taken by surprise. At a hundred metres (109 yards) we opened a destructive fire which mowed down hundreds, but in spite of that the others advanced, springing forward like cats and surmounting obstacles with unexampled agility. In no time they were in our trenches, and truly these brown enemies were not to be despised. With butt-ends, bayonets, swords, and daggers we fought each other; and we had bitter hard work, which, however, was lightened by reinforcements which arrived quickly, before we drove the fellows out of the trenches."

The Indians are famous for "ruses"—that is, for tricks of war. Here is a striking instance of the resource and presence of mind of an Indian soldier. He and a comrade were instructed to creep out of the trench which they were defending, in order to spy out a German position some two hundred yards distant. They crawled along in the dark, and when they were half-way to the German trench a brilliant searchlight was suddenly flashed on them. At once they were revealed. One of the men was quick-witted enough to realize that only by a trick could he save his life. He immediately rose to his feet and advanced, salaaming to the Germans. They were so surprised that they ceased fire, and after some dumb show let him enter the trench. Then began a conversation, which, as you may imagine, was not very fruitful. The Germans were trying to find out the Indian race to which he belonged. When the word Mussulman was mentioned he nodded his head; but when the word British was uttered, he made a gesture of disgust. The Germans naturally concluded that he hated the British, so they gave him some rations and a blanket, and let him spend the night with them. Next morning, by means of dumb show, he made an officer believe that there were twenty-five other Mohammedans in his trench who were eager to join the Germans. Completely deceived, the officer gave him a final cup of coffee, and sent him off to bring in his friends. Needless to say, he did not return. Unhappily, a few weeks later this nimble-witted soldier was killed in action. [82]

You must not suppose that the Indian army consists only of Gurkhas and Sikhs. There are many other Indian races serving as soldiers, and amongst them are the Pathans, fierce hillmen of the North-West Frontier Province. Somewhere south of Ypres British troops who were holding a line of trenches one misty night became aware of some hundreds of lithe gray figures silently gathering in their rear, and gliding forward [84] like ghosts amidst the trees. Shortly afterwards a score of these gray figures detached themselves from the larger body, and stealthily, like Red Indians on the trail, moved up to and beyond the advanced line of the British trenches. Under their breath our soldiers whispered, "The Indians are going out," and as they craned their necks they saw the ghostly figures disappear from view, crawling python-like towards the first German trench.



A Night Attack by Pathans.

The People of Afghanistan and the adjoining borderland of India are known as Pathans (*Pat-ans'*), and their language as Pushtu. They include all the strongest and most warlike tribes of the North-West Frontier Province, and make excellent soldiers. The Afridis (*Af-ree' dees*), against whom 35,000 British and Indian troops made a campaign in 1897-98, are Pathans. The Khaibar Pass, that great gloomy defile in the mountain barrier, through which every invader of India except the European has had to fight his way, is jealously guarded by Afridis in the pay of Britain.

What happened there no one quite knows. There was no shout or sudden cry, but in a few minutes the British saw one of the score reappear and glide back to his comrades in the rear. Then the hundreds who were waiting behind in the shadow of the trees went forward in dead silence to join the advanced party. For five minutes there was perfect quiet. Then came a few shots, followed by a wild splutter of musketry, intermingled with cries and groans. Three or four light-balls were thrown in the air, and by their means the British saw, some 600 yards to their front, a mass of wild and struggling men. They saw the gleam of steel and the whirling rifle butt as the Pathans smote down the foe.

For ten minutes they hacked and slew amongst the half-awake and wholly bewildered Germans, who had been lying down awaiting the order to attack the British trenches. The score of Pathans who had gone out in advance had silently slain the German pickets, and their main body had thus been enabled to get right amidst the sleeping foe unchallenged. The slaughter was terrible, and only ended when the Germans, thoroughly aroused to their peril, ran for their lives. The threatened attack had been turned into a ghastly defeat.

In these pages I have given you countless instances of German cunning and audacity. The Indians, being in a strange country, incapable of speaking any language but their own, and not able to distinguish between the French and the German soldiers, were thought to be easy prey. Here is a story of a piece of German deception which utterly failed. A figure, standing out clear in the moonlight, and wearing a complete Gurkha uniform, suddenly appeared one night in front of a Gurkha trench, and delivered this message: "The Gurkhas are to move farther up the trench; another Gurkha contingent is advancing in support." Puzzled by this [85] order, the officer in charge replied, "Who are you? Where do you come from?" To which the only answer was: "You are to move up to make room for other Gurkhas."

Two London Scots and a Wounded Gurkha.

(*Photo, Sport and General.*)

The English was good, but something (or many small things) excited the officer's suspicion. "Answer, and answer quickly," he said: "if you are a Gurkha, by what boat did you cross?" The question was, in the circumstances, no easy one to answer, and the German (for such he was) turned at once and fled. But he had not gone five yards before he fell riddled by bullets. Had the officer been deceived, the trench would have [86] swarmed with Germans almost before the Gurkhas had made room for them.

An officer in a Gurkha regiment relates the following amusing story: "One night our men rushed a German trench, and one of them captured a big fat German, who surrendered at the sight of cold steel.

"There is a reward for any man who brings in a prisoner, so the Gurkha started back across the open towards the British trenches with his captive. Unfortunately the little man got hit in the leg, so he climbed on the German's back, and made him carry him to our trenches, where he triumphantly handed his prisoner over, and was then carried off to hospital!"

German troops were holding a copse near a village north of the British-French position, and, fearing an attack, were in the habit of protecting themselves every night by a double line of sentinels. The copse considerably hampered the advance of the Allies, and an Indian regiment was brought up as a reinforcement. The officer in charge said that the wood would soon be captured, and without too great a sacrifice of life. A French officer who was present thought that the Indians were too big to enter the wood unnoticed, and declared that they would soon be perceived by the German sentinels. Thereupon the British officer offered to bet the Frenchman a sovereign that all the German sentinels would be removed. The bet was taken.

At eleven o'clock that night, when every one, except the sentries, was slumbering, the copse was suddenly filled with a fearful din, with occasional shots, and a few shouts. Then all was silent again.

Shortly afterwards the Indians returned. Two by two they came in and placed before their officer a prisoner tied up like a sausage, and carefully gagged. This went on until all the thirty German sentinels who had been guarding the entrance to the wood had been brought in and handed over to the officer.

[87]

CHAPTER XII.

FIRE AND FLOOD.

We will now leave that melancholy region in which Britons of the Second Corps, like the ocean cliffs of their native land, have been thrusting back the furious surges of hostile attack for long and weary weeks. Melancholy indeed is the country over which the tide of war has swept. Prosperous villages and comfortable homesteads are now crumbling walls and smoking ruins, with the decaying carcasses of horses, cows, and pigs lying around. To and fro wander those wretched inhabitants who have escaped shot and shell, striving to save something from the wreckage of their homes. "Here, blocking up a narrow side street, is a dead horse still harnessed to a trap, and beside it is stretched the corpse of a Jäger[55]; close by, in an enclosure where a shell has found them, lie some thirty cavalry horses; a little farther on is laid out a row of German dead, for whom graves are being dug by the peasants.

"The work of burial falls to a great extent on the inhabitants, who, with our soldiers, take no little care in marking the last resting-places of their countrymen and their Allies, either by little wooden crosses or else by flowers. Amidst the graves scattered all over the countryside are the rifle pits, trenches, and gun emplacements, which those now resting below the sod helped to defend or to attack. From these the progress of the fighting can be traced."

We now move northwards to the stretch of country which lies between Ypres and the sea. It is a flat, marshy [88]

land, where the inhabitants are doomed to an everlasting struggle against the thankless soil and the invading flood. More than once the district has been the bed of an ancient sea. Beet grows on the silt of old bays; seaports have become agricultural villages, and channels along which large ships formerly sailed are green polders.[56] Only a very complete system of drainage saves the country from being water-logged. It is literally seamed with canals and dykes, and crops are only raised by the unremitting labour of men's hands. The towns and villages are small, and a few highroads, consisting of narrow causeways of cobble stone with broad bands of mud on either side, serve their needs. It is a dismal land of frequent rains and white mists, though quaint and pleasing in sunshine, when its white farmsteads, whirling windmills, lofty spires, and everlasting lines of pollards and poplars seem very attractive to the foreign eye.

From Ypres seawards runs a canal which meets the Yser six miles south of the large village of Dixmude.[57] From Dixmude on to the sea, a distance of eleven miles, we find the canalized Yser, the main waterway of the district. Near the left bank of the canal, at a distance of about a mile and a half, runs a single-line railway,[58] which passes the villages of Pervyse[59] and Ramscappelle,[60] and has its terminus at the mouth of the river. No railway crosses the Yser between Dixmude and Nieuport, but the road from Bruges forks and sends one branch across the stream to Nieuport, and the other to Pervyse.

A number of small creeks of brackish water flow through the low, marshy meadows, below the level of the sea, and bring their sluggish tribute to the Yser. Along the edges of the canal are two or three "islands" of higher ground; but nowhere, until we reach the dunes of the seashore, are there any elevations or commanding positions for guns. It is a blind, sodden country, as ill-fitted for the passage of troops and heavy guns as the coast region of Essex.

To the inhabitants of this amphibious district water is a foe in peace and a friend in war. In times of great peril the sluices of the myriad canals can be opened, and the whole flat district from the railway [89] embankment to the Yser and beyond can be flooded, and thus rendered impassable for an army. You can easily understand that the Belgians would not flood the country until every other means of defence had failed; for the land so submerged would be ruined for agriculture, and years of labour would be necessary to restore it to its former condition. The sluices were opened in the days of Marlborough, and again in 1793-94. You are soon to hear how the progress of the Germans was similarly stayed in 1914. The idea of calling in the aid of water as a defence has long been familiar to Belgian soldiers, and a scheme for flooding the country had been prepared before the war broke out.

I have already described how the Allies held the avenues to the Channel ports at Arras and La Bassée. Two other efforts were made by the Germans to break through the line of defence—the one at Ypres, the other between Dixmude and the sea. All these four attacks were going on at the same time, and all were closely connected; but for the sake of clearness they must be described separately. We will now see how the Belgians and the French barred the road to Calais by way of the Yser, and in a later chapter I will describe the great struggle which took place round Ypres.

When the retreating Belgians were driven out of the Forest of Houthulst on 16th October, they retired to the eastern bank of the Yser. All that was now left to them of their native land was but one-tenth of its surface; they were battle-worn and weary; their surviving countrymen were in bondage; their wrongs cried aloud to Heaven, but their spirit was still unsubdued. No longer were they fighting alone. Britons and Bretons, Indians and Canadians, stockmen from the Antipodes, and tribesmen from the Atlas had come to their succour, and with a new heart they prepared to defend the last few miles of territory which they could call their own.

On the morning of the 17th the Belgians were strung out along the east bank of the Yser from Nieuport to Dixmude. In the ditches by the village were 5,000 Belgians and 7,000 of Ronarc'h's Marines. The total force numbered some 40,000, and against them von Beseler was now advancing with 60,000 men, while the Würtembergers were rapidly moving from the south. Early on the 17th two Belgian divisions in the centre were driven across the river, but they managed to regain the right bank in the course of the night. Early on [90] the morning of the 18th von Beseler, with his right resting on the sand dunes, began a fierce attack that was full of danger. Everybody, from general to private, knew that the critical hour had come. If von Beseler could push back the Belgians beyond the railway embankment on the west side of the Yser, he would be in Dunkirk in two days, and in Calais the day after; the last narrow strip of Belgian soil would be lost, the Allied army at Ypres would be surrounded or forced to retire, and all the bloodshed farther south would have been in vain. The prospect was enough to make the stoutest heart quail.

Fiercely the Belgians strove to hold their line in the unequal combat, but they were forced back step by step, and disaster seemed to await them, when suddenly succour came—from the sea! The guns of British warships began to rake the German trenches, and in their roar was the stern warning, "No road this way."

History was repeating itself, as it has so often done during this war. More than two and a half centuries ago, when the French and English beat the Spaniards at the Battle of the Dunes,[61] which was fought on this very coast, Cromwell's fleet shelled the enemy's wing, and greatly helped to bring about the victory.

As soon as the danger showed itself at Nieuport, King Albert begged our Admiralty for naval assistance. It was, of course, impossible to send ordinary warships to operate on this coast, because the sea is shallow, and cumbered with many a sandbank—"a very dangerous flat, and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried." The Germans knew this well; they had examined the charts, and they had no fear of molestation from the sea. They believed that no warship could come sufficiently near to the coast to get within range of their trenches.

Now it happened that when the war broke out there lay at Barrow three ships of light draught but very strong gun power which had been built for the Brazilian Government. Such ships are known as monitors, after the name of the first of the type, which was built in 1862, during the American Civil War. Really, a monitor is little more than a low, moving gun platform, carrying a little fort, in which one or two heavy [92] weapons are mounted. Each of the three monitors at Barrow displaced 1,200 tons, and carried two 6-inch guns mounted forward in an armoured barbette, two 4.7-inch howitzers aft, and four 3-pounder guns amidships. They were protected by stout armour, and as they drew only four feet seven inches of water, they could move in the shallows where ordinary ships would run aground. These ships were taken over by the British Government at the beginning of the war, and were called the *Humber*, the *Mersey*, and the *Severn*.

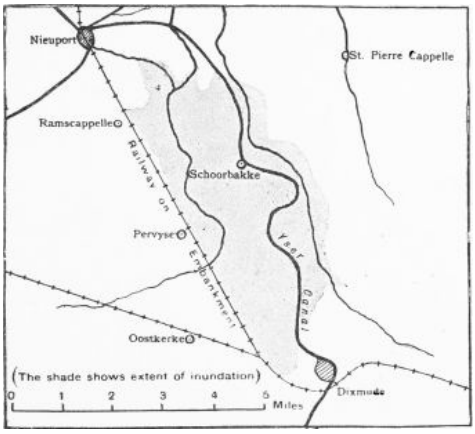
British Monitors shelling German Trenches.

Note the aeroplane and the balloon directing the fire of the monitors' guns.

On the evening of 17th October the three monitors left Dover under the command of Admiral Hood, and arrived off the Flemish coast just as the German attack began. An old cruiser, a battleship, a gunboat, and several destroyers, aided by French warships, also bombarded the coast from outside the shoals. Von Beseler endeavoured to bring his big guns to bear on them, but his artillery was completely outranged, and several of his batteries were destroyed. Every attempt to beat off the monitors failed. The German submarines were ineffective because they could not manoeuvre in shallow water, and their torpedoes, being set to a greater depth than the draught of the monitors, passed harmlessly beneath their hulls.

The guns of the monitors swept the coast for six miles inland, their fire, which proved very accurate and deadly, being directed by naval balloons, aeroplanes, and signals from the shore. The Germans could not retaliate; nor could their troops easily protect themselves in trenches, for if they faced the sea they could be enfiladed from the canal, and if they faced the canal they could be enfiladed from the sea. For ten days the big guns of the monitors blazed across the sandhills. One vessel fired a thousand shells in a single day. Heavy batteries were established by the Germans at Ostend on the 24th, but they were at once bombarded, much to the discomfort of the German officers who had taken up their quarters in the big hotels on the sea front. By the end of the month the shore batteries ceased to fire, but before that time the Germans had been forced to give up their attempt to reach Calais by a march along the shore.

During this land and sea warfare the Belgians and French struggled desperately to hold the line of the river Yser. Over and over again they beat back massed attacks of the enemy. There were frenzied hand-to-hand [93] combats and thousands of men wrestled and died on the bridges, or were drowned in the waters beneath. On Friday, 23rd October, a body of Germans succeeded in crossing the river close to Nieuport, and in forcing their way to the railway line near Ramscappelle. The Belgians, however, drove them back to their old position on the eastern bank, and the carnage was terrible. Next day some five thousand Germans managed to push across the river at the point where the road from Bruges to Pervyse is carried over the stream. On Sunday, the 25th, more Germans crossed, and the line of the Yser seemed to have been won. But as they tried to deploy from their bridgeheads the French and Belgians, entrenched in the miry fields, which are crossed and recrossed by water courses, met them with such stubborn courage that they could make but little headway. Every yard was fiercely contested, and the German loss was terribly heavy. By the 28th the Allies had been beaten back almost to the railway embankment. Then, under the eye of the Emperor himself, the Würtembergers launched a terrific attack.



From the higher ground near Nieuport the Germans advanced in dense masses, singing patriotic songs. The [95] defenders fell back, and at three in the afternoon, when the Kaiser saw victory almost within his grasp, they played their last card. Under cover of British naval guns, the Belgians at high tide had been hard at work near Nieuport damming the lower reaches of the canal. The brimming waters of the Yser, swollen by the recent heavy rains, now almost overtopped its banks. At the critical moment some of the sluices were opened, and the Belgian guns broke down the banks at several places. Slowly the water spread over the flat meadows on the left bank of the canal in great shallow lagoons. The culverts and bridges beneath the railway embankment had been dammed up so as to prevent the flood from extending westwards.

Soon the Germans between the embankment and the canal found themselves a foot deep in water; their guns sank in the mud, and whole battalions were bogged. Only on a few patches of higher ground could they maintain a dry foothold. Nevertheless they pushed on through the rising waters, in the hope of capturing Ramscappelle and seizing the railway embankment before the waters could stay them. The Emperor himself called for volunteers, and two Würtemberg brigades, composed of some of the best fighting men in the German Empire, were chosen to carry the village and win undying glory.

The Würtembergers' Attack on Ramscappelle. ***By permission of The Sphere.***

On the 30th the great attempt was made. The Würtembergers, carrying roughly-hewn platforms, floundered through the water, and flung the "table tops" across the wider channels, thus forming bridges. While so doing, they were shot down by hundreds, but still they pressed on. Numbers told; Ramscappelle was partly occupied, and the railway line was seized. Next day French, Senegalese, and Belgians fell upon them furiously. The dismounted Bengal Lancers, who had been sent to the help of the Belgians, now exhausted by fourteen hours' continuous fighting, charged with their lances and took house after house, smashing in doors and windows to get at the German marines, who had been called up from Hamburg to take part in the struggle. In vain did the German officers, with threats and blows and pistol shots, try to prevent their men from retreating and surrendering. It is said that some twelve guns and over a thousand prisoners were taken in this furious counter-attack. Before long the Allies were over the railway embankment, and the German [96] host was hurled back into the lagoons. The "seventy-fives" came up at a gallop, rifles and machine guns cracked incessantly, and soon the waters were dotted with fallen Germans.

The flood through which the Würtembergers had waded was but the advance guard of a mighty deluge that was now about to overwhelm the whole district. Every sluice in this region of stream and canal was opened, and the brown flood spread over the land like the "bore" in a narrow estuary. Men and horses were swept from their feet and swallowed up in the seething waters; others sank to rise no more in the deep mud; field guns disappeared in the ooze, and all the while the pitiless guns of the Allies poured shot and shell on the drowning invaders. Thousands fell, but some escaped, while others struggled to dry ground, only to be taken prisoners. The attack had hopelessly failed, and the Emperor, who had been watching the struggle through his field glasses, shut them up and turned away. Once more he had been foiled at the very moment when victory seemed to be beckoning him.

On 7th November a frenzied attack was begun on Dixmude, which, as you know, was held by Ronarc'h's Bretons. From the 16th of October to the 10th of November they were fiercely but unsuccessfully assailed by three corps of the Duke of Würtemberg's army. "You have to sacrifice yourselves," said Ronarc'h to his men, "to save our left wing. Try to hold out four days." They held out for a fortnight.

On the night of the 23rd and in the early morning of the 24th no fewer than fourteen separate attacks were made upon them, but every one failed. For most of the time the marines fought in trenches up to their waists in water, and, as General Joffre told them, they were in their own element. One night the Germans, driving some captured marines before them, crept silently towards the French lines. One of the prisoners shouted a warning, but immediately paid for his loyalty with his life. The wearied defenders, hearing the shout, sprang to arms and beat off the attack.

On 10th November the Germans succeeded in capturing the broken walls and torn streets of what had once been the prosperous village of Dixmude. This success, however, had come too late. Around Ypres, as we shall learn in later pages, the flower of the German armies had everywhere been driven back from the Allied lines. All the doors to the coast were now locked, bolted, and barred. Nevertheless, fierce but futile struggles continued on the Yser until early in December, when their fury abated.

[97]

The Flooded Area in Flanders. ***Photo, Daily Mirror.***

CHAPTER XIII.

EIGHT DAYS OF STRUGGLE AND ANXIETY.

In Chapter IV. I gave you a brief account of the little city of Ypres, now about to become the storm-centre of a cyclone of blood and death such as the world has never seen before. I have told you of its commercial greatness, and of the glorious old buildings with which the rich burghers of former days adorned their city. Not only were they clever manufacturers and keen traders, but gallant soldiers as well. One of the proudest stories in their history tells how the red-coated burghers of Ypres in July 1302 joined themselves to the men of Bruges and Courtrai,[62] and marched against Count Robert of Artois, who was then overrunning Flanders with 8,000 knights of gentle blood, 10,000 archers, and 30,000 foot-soldiers. Courtrai was threatened, and the burghers of Ypres, with their fellows from other Flemish towns, arrayed themselves in front of the city and behind a tangle of dykes and canals. The chivalry of France made a furious charge, and horses and riders plunged into the trap which had been laid for them. The slaughter was terrible. Seven hundred pairs [98] of gilded spurs hung in the abbey church of Courtrai as the spoils of battle, and the men of Ypres shared with their comrades of West Flanders the renown of victory.

Until a short time ago Ypres boasted a relic of warfare against the British. It possessed a flag captured from us in battle. At Ramillies[63] one of the regiments of the Irish Brigade[64] which fought for France managed to seize a British standard, which was proudly preserved in one of the city's convents at the outbreak of the war.

You already know something of the situation and surroundings of Ypres. It stands twenty-three miles from the dunes at Nieuport, on a canal which joins the Yser to the south of the large village of Dixmude. To the south and east of Ypres is a crescent of gentle heights, but for the rest the country is a dead flat land, and the spires of Ypres are a landmark for many a mile of Flemish meadow and marsh. Cobbled roads, skirted by lines of poplars, radiate from the town in all directions. Towards the east run two main highways—the more northerly leading to Roulers, the more southerly to Menin, and thence to Lille.

In Chapter VI. you read of the desperate stand made by the 7th Division between these two highroads, and in Chapter VIII. learned that on 19th October Sir John French had sent the First Corps to its aid. At this time Sir John hoped that an advance might be made to the north-east, and that Bruges and perhaps Ghent might be captured. He thought that Sir Douglas Haig would probably not be opposed by much more than the 3rd Reserve Corps, which he knew had suffered considerably in the earlier fighting, and perhaps by one or two Landwehr divisions. By the 21st he knew better. That day Sir Douglas Haig with the First Corps advanced along the road to Bruges, but could not proceed because the French Territorials on his left had been forced to retire behind the Yser Canal. At the same time the 7th Division between the two highroads and Allenby's cavalry beyond the Ypres-Comines canal were being heavily attacked. Sir John's programme was therefore [99] entirely out of the question. The Allies found themselves outnumbered by three or four to one, and Sir John himself, on the evening of the 21st, declared that the utmost that could be done, owing to the unexpected reinforcements of the enemy, was to hold the positions round Ypres until General Joffre could send a relief of French troops, which could not arrive before 24th October.

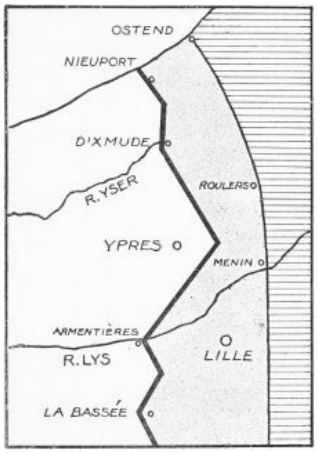


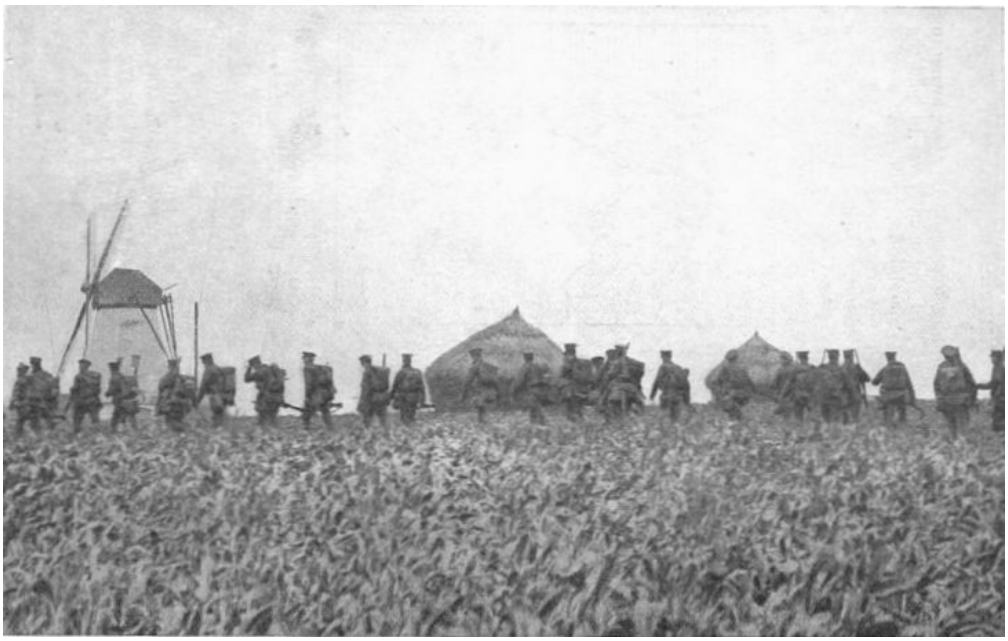
Diagram of the Ypres Salient.

The two shadings indicate two stages in the German advance.

Sir Douglas Haig had therefore to halt and hold a line from Bixschoote, close to the Ypres Canal, to Zonnebeke,[65] on the Ypres-Roulers road. The remainder of the line round to Hollebeke was also held by his infantry, and south of Hollebeke Allenby's cavalry linked them up with the Third Corps, which was lying along the line of the Lys towards Armentières. Such was the position of our troops on 21st October. We were holding, you will observe, a bulge round Ypres. Any troops so placed are very insecure. They occupy a kind of wedge thrust into the territory held by the enemy, and this wedge can be attacked on each of its faces and at the jutting angle at one and the same time. If the line is broken anywhere the bulge must give way, and the troops holding it must retire and straighten out their line or suffer destruction.

You may, perhaps, ask why the Germans chose to make a great attack on Ypres. It is not a great railway centre such as Hazebrouck or Béthune; only a single line of railway runs westwards from the city. Nor was it a depôt filled with stores and valuable to the Allies as a base. The reason why the Germans threw their [101] strength against Ypres is that it was the heart of the dangerous bulge or salient which I have just described. If the salient could have been broken through—and the task did not seem to be very difficult—the whole Allied line of defence might have been pushed back beyond Ypres and Armentières, in which case the Allies would not be able to turn the north flank of the Germans.

A frightful series of struggles soon began to rage. Day after day the gray-coated legions of the Kaiser in ever-increasing numbers swooped down on all parts of the salient, and only by almost superhuman endurance were the thin lines of the defence held against them. The line was nearly broken at Zonnebeke; it was actually pierced for a time in the centre at Becelaere, while on the extreme right a most determined assault was made against the cavalry at Kleine Zillebeke. The few reserves available were hurried to the danger points, and then began days of the heaviest possible fighting and of the utmost anxiety. One hundred thousand British, strung out along a line of twenty miles, had to hold back half a million Germans! Nor was this all: the half-million was growing in numbers every day.



British Troops advancing for an Attack. ***Photo, Sport and General.***

On Thursday, the 22nd, the defence was just maintained; but late in the evening the line was broken between Langemarck and Bixschoote, where part of the Camerons was cut off and shut up in a wayside inn. There was also a gap between Becelaere and Gheluvelt. The Germans thrust their way in between the Scots

Fusiliers and the Yorkshires, and the latter had to fight furiously and continuously on two fronts for the better part of three days in order to keep the enemy from enlarging the gap and getting through. So bitter and ruthless was the fighting that it seemed impossible that the defence could be maintained at this point. When the Bedfords restored the position on the 23rd the Yorkshires were still fighting; they had not budged. On the 30th they and the Scots Fusiliers, who had now been merged into one battalion, again saved the line, and earned the following praise from their general:—

> "You have taken part in probably the fiercest combat that the world has ever seen. I have often watched you in the trenches with special interest, and on one occasion, at the crossroads at Gheluvelt—a very precarious position—I asked who was holding that particular line of trenches, which seemed a weak spot. When I was told the 2nd Yorkshires, I knew it would be all right. I knew it was a regiment I could hang my hat on at any time of the day and night. There is not a single regiment in the whole of the division for which I have more respect. I do not say it to butter you up; I say it because I mean it." [102]

From Gheluvelt onwards towards Hollebeke there was a long line of trenches which was held by dismounted cavalry. It was one of the weakest parts of the line, and the Germans pressed it hard, but not hard enough. Farther south the Third Corps was also having a bad time. At Le Gheir, two miles south of Messines, some trenches had been lost; but they were recovered by a gallant counter-attack, in which the Essex Regiment and the Lancashire Fusiliers greatly distinguished themselves.

On 23rd October, a day of great trial, an attempt was made to win back the trenches which had been lost by the Camerons on the Langemarck-Bixschoote road. The Queen's West Surrey Regiment, the Northamptons, the 1st Loyal North Lancashires, and the King's Royal Rifles were entrusted with the task. Under Major-General Bulfin they advanced in short rushes, with great determination, against a range of buildings strongly held by the Germans. After severe fighting and a dashing bayonet attack the place was captured, the lost trenches were recovered, and the imprisoned Camerons were released. Some 600 prisoners were taken, and the old front was restored. The Loyal North Lancashires and the "Cobblers"—that is, the Northamptons—showed to great advantage in the final bayonet charge.

A special order which was issued three days later reads as follows:—

"The Brigadier-General congratulates the 1st Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, Northamptonshire Regiment, and the 2nd King's Royal Rifle Corps; but desires especially to commend the fine soldierlike spirit of the 1st Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, which, advancing steadily under heavy shell and rifle fire, aided by its machine guns, was enabled to form up within a short distance of the enemy's trenches. Fixing bayonets, the battalion then charged, carried the trenches, and occupied them, and to them must be allotted the majority of the prisoners captured. The Brigadier-General congratulates himself on having in his brigade a battalion which, after marching the whole of the previous night without rest or food was able to maintain its splendid record in the past by the determination and self-sacrifice displayed in this action." [103]

On the same day the enemy pushed a corps of their new levies against the British line near Langemarck. Most of these newcomers had scarcely been under training for more than two months, yet they hurled themselves on our trenches with extraordinary courage and doggedness. They were mown down by our fire, but they came on again and again till the front was strewn with dead. It is said that three-quarters of the [104] whole corps were put out of action on that day, and that some 1,500 German corpses lay round Langemarck that evening. Shortly afterwards French reinforcements arrived, and brought a welcome relief to the hard-pressed troops holding the salient.

Hands up! Capture of Germans near Langemarck by the Cameron Highlanders.

On October 23, 1914, about a hundred Germans had been compelled to take cover behind a mill and a small house. The house was rushed by a small force of the Camerons, who compelled the Germans to hold up their hands until a sufficiently strong guard arrived to take them to the rear.
From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.

It was on the 23rd October that Drummer William Kenny won the Victoria Cross for various deeds of gallantry, which will be related later on.

On the 24th, when the Germans were across the Yser, and the Belgians were preparing to open the sluices, [66] the enemy struck hard against the Allied line all the way from Dixmude to La Bassée. At 6 a.m. part of the 7th Infantry Division, which was holding a position near Gheluvelt, was very violently attacked. Mr. C. Underwood, an interpreter with this division, gives us a vivid picture of the terrible straits in which his brigade found itself, and of the arrival of reinforcements in the very nick of time.

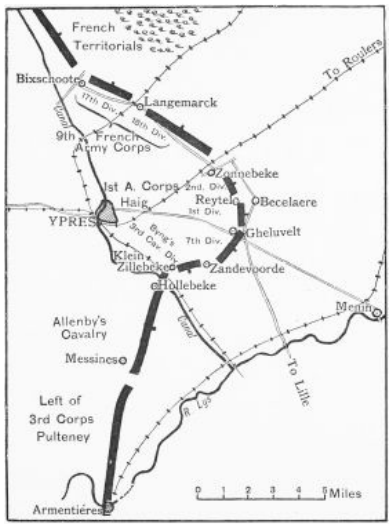
> "We got a message from headquarters," he writes in *Blackwood's Magazine*, "saying that we must hold out at all costs, as reinforcements were coming up as quickly as possible to our support. A corporal in charge of prisoners said that the Wiltshire Regiment had suffered terribly, as also the Scots Fusiliers, both having been badly peppered with 'Jack Johnsons,' which had buried many of them alive in their trenches.
>
> "At 7 a.m. next morning (the 24th) Captain Drysdale came up to me and asked me to hurry up two battalions which were expected every minute from the First Army Corps. The position was most critical, *as we had not one man left to support the firing line*, which was being very hardly pressed, and might give way at any moment. At last, then, the long-expected supports were arriving. Our men had behaved like heroes all. This was the seventh day since we engaged the Germans, one division extending over an unheard-of front of eight miles, and holding up what I understood from one of our prisoners yesterday to be a force of three army corps—that is, 15,000 to 20,000 British against 150,000 Germans! The ordeal of the last three days had been terrible. These brave fellows actually had no sleep for seven days, and had never left the trenches, fighting night and day, sticking to them until they were literally blown out of them or buried alive. They were now becoming pieces of wood, sleeping standing up, and firing almost mechanically, with the slightest support from our guns, which were now outclassed....
>
> "Having got on to the road, I found the Northumberland Hussars,[67] who had evidently been brought up with the idea of their taking possession of the trenches if the supports were not up in time. In ten minutes I sighted the head of a battalion swinging up the road, and ran down as directed to hurry them up. Found them to be the Highland Light Infantry and King's Own Scottish Borderers. I told the commanding officer the position, and he doubled them round the wood to the trenches which our fellows were holding with their last gasp."

On this day, 24th October, the point of the salient gave way. The gallant Wiltshires were driven in, and the [105]
Germans pushed into a wood west of Becelaere, where there was much desperate fighting for days to come. The Warwicks were ordered to make a counter-attack, in the course of which they lost 105 officers and men, including their colonel. He had been wounded in the foot three days before, but he nevertheless led his men in the charge with fiery courage. His horse was shot under him, but he found another, which was also shot, and this time Colonel Loring rose no more. In those dread days of struggle no regiment played a more heroic part than the Warwicks; they emerged from the ordeal a mere ghost of their former strength.

It was noticeable at this time that the Germans, though they repeatedly pierced our line, did not follow up the advantage which they had gained. Perhaps this was due to the rawness of the troops; perhaps to the fact that they were weary with much fighting; but more probably to bad leadership, for even the famous Prussian Guard, in later assaults, more than once came to a standstill after it had broken the British line. Whatever the reason may have been, the Allies had cause to be thankful that the enemy failed to "make good."

On the evening of the 25th the 20th Brigade of the 7th Division, which was then holding a position to the south of Gheluvelt, was forced to retire. The Germans broke through our lines, and the 2nd Scots Guards, after repelling the enemy, were pushed back with terrible losses. Thanks, however, to a splendid charge by the 7th Cavalry Brigade, the situation was saved. In these operations Lord Innes Ker, who led the advance guard, won great distinction. Meanwhile the Third Corps, resting on Armentières had been very hard pressed, and had been forced to fall back to a position of less risk.

A French line division and some Territorials were brought up on the night of the 24th-25th, and were [107]
concentrated about Zillebeke. Meanwhile the 2nd Division made good progress to the north-east, and captured some guns and prisoners. On the 27th Sir John French went to the headquarters of the 1st Division to inquire into the condition of the 7th Division, which had been marching and fighting for a whole month, and was becoming very weak. He broke up Sir Henry Rawlinson's command, and the much-tried 7th Division was absorbed into the First Corps.



The Front at Ypres on October 27, 1914.

On the 28th there was a lull before the coming storm. The enemy was preparing for a mighty onslaught upon our whole line. About 5.30 the next morning a wireless message was intercepted, telling us what the Germans proposed to do. The Emperor had given orders that the line in front of Ypres must be broken at all costs, and three German corps were being massed for the purpose. The critical moment was at hand.

Early on the morning of Thursday, the 29th, a mass assault was delivered against the crossroads one mile east of Gheluvelt. All morning the tide of battle ebbed and flowed. The 1st Division was driven from its trenches, and for a time the German thrust seemed to have succeeded. Mr. Underwood thus relates an incident which took place when the outlook was black indeed:—

> "As I was watching the woods on our left front towards the Gheluvelt-Menin road, I saw the Yorks retiring and the Gordons advancing. I pointed this out to the general, who immediately sent to find out by whose orders they were retiring. Presently, to our consternation, the Gordons came back farther down the road towards Gheluvelt; before we could do anything, the Yorks came streaming over the open ploughed land. The general galloped down the road to stop the Gordons, and I tried to stop the Yorks, who persisted that the order had been given to them to retire. We concluded that the order must have been given by a German officer, and formed them up along the road under a terrible shrapnel fire. They were being bowled over like ninepins, as the Germans must have seen them crossing the open. We tumbled them into the ditch alongside the road, and it was a pitiable sight to see the poor fellows who were still in the open and badly hit trying to crawl along towards our headquarters to take shelter from the hail of shrapnel bullets.... They were by now all lying out under the wall of the farm, and the place looked like a shambles. It was a splendid sight to see Lieutenant Jardine of the R.A.M.C. running out under a hail of bullets and bringing in one wounded man after another on his back.... Presently the shell fire died down a bit, and the men in the ditches alongside the road, having had time to recover, advanced once more to regain the ground which they had lost.... One poor chap of the Warwicks whom I spoke to, and had been very badly mauled, said, 'Well, sir, England can't say we did not stick it to the last.'"

In the counter-attack to which the Gordons were now advancing nearly the whole of the First Corps was [108] engaged. Some very gallant charges were made, in one of which Lieutenant J.A.O. Brooke of the 2nd Gordons won the Victoria Cross and lost his life as you will read later on. About 2 p.m. the enemy began to give way, and by dark most of the line north of the Menin road had been recovered. The same day the Third Corps was heavily assailed at Le Gheir, in what our soldiers call "Plugstreet" Woods,[68] and there was desperate fighting beneath its ragged larches. Here, again, trenches were lost and won. The Middlesex were driven out; but the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders nobly came to the rescue, and against great odds recaptured the trenches and slew almost every German in them.

The attempt to break through to the south of Ypres was repeated with even greater vigour on the 30th. In the gray dawn a heavy bombardment was begun on the trenches held by our cavalry at Zandvoorde, a village about a mile and a half south of Gheluvelt. So fierce was the fire that no living thing could remain in the trenches. One troop was buried alive, and soon the whole division was obliged to withdraw to a ridge about a mile west of the village. This meant that the troops on the right were uncovered, and were obliged to fall back to preserve the line. While this movement was going on, the situation was about as serious as it could well be. The enemy had been reinforced, and had now gained possession of Zandvoorde. The Scots Greys and the Hussars were hurried up, and the ridge was held until evening, when the 4th (Guards) Brigade arrived and took over the line. They held it in trenches with water above their knees for twenty-three days.

The salient was sharper than ever now, and therefore even more dangerous than before. The weakest place lay between Gheluvelt and the corner of the canal near Hollebeke. Had the Germans reached the canal they would have cut off the British holding the salient to the north, and nothing could have saved Ypres. The Emperor was on the field and he had told his men that if Ypres were captured the war would be over, and the victory of Germany would be complete. So desperate was the situation that Sir Douglas Haig determined [109] to hold the line from Gheluvelt to the corner of the canal at all costs. He moved up reserves to the rear of the line, and made other preparations to resist the great assault of the morrow.

Farther south there was great peril too. The cavalry had been driven out of Hollebeke, and had fallen back on the Ypres-Armentières road, where there was heavy fighting. The line of the Third Corps had been broken, but the rent had been repaired by the gallantry of the Somerset Light Infantry. Reserves were called up, and were stationed at Neuve Eglise, about three miles south-west of Messines. With these reserves came the first infantry Territorial regiment to take the field—the London Scottish.

North of Zandevoorde there was also great danger of disaster. A battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers found the troops on their right pushed back by sheer weight of numbers, and they themselves exposed to a most galling fire from machine guns on their flank. Their losses were terrible, but still they held on, and when the fight was over the battalion had almost ceased to exist. The Royal Scots Fusiliers suffered in like manner; but they and the remnant of the Yorkshires, bunched together into one battalion, held their trenches until dark. The Allied line was pushed back to the verge of Gheluvelt, and when night fell it seemed as though the Kaiser had spoken the truth when he declared, "Ypres will be mine by 1st November."

During the fighting around Ypres the Royal Flying Corps did splendid service. A *Daily News* correspondent tells of one young flying man who seemed to make a perfect hobby of his work. The following account of his doings will give you an excellent idea of how airmen direct the fire of guns. "From dawn to sunset," says the correspondent, "this young officer is up and about, doing the most wonderful things with the utmost coolness. The other morning, up ahead of the lark, he volplaned[69] from a great height right in the midst of the German lines, as though he meant to make a brief morning call for breakfast. The Germans were too astonished for the moment to do anything but gasp and gape at him, though he was easily within range. He [110] impudently stopped his engine, dropped half a dozen 'puffs' (as our Tommies call the aeroplane bombs) into a cavalry cluster, waved his hand, and off and above he went again.

"Hundreds of rifle shots whirred around him as he fled; two of them struck him; and three minutes later he was down in the British lines once more, with blood trickling through the rents in his tunic. He was patched up and bandaged, had a good, hearty lunch, and before teatime he was up again in one of his mad frolics in the air. 'Surely you've had enough for one day,' said General ——; 'have a rest at least until to-morrow. We don't want to lose these matinée performances of yours; they're too fine for anything.' But the young aviator jammed his armoured helmet on his head, and said he couldn't resist making a flight, because it was great fun, and kept him fit. So off he went again.

"That afternoon he excelled himself. There was a well-screened German battery which was doing nasty work from behind a slight rise at the back of the enemy's trenches. This was the airman's quarry. Up and up he went in quick, climbing spirals, and when he was at a height of 2,000 feet he poised for a spell to spot the lurking-place of the battery. When he had discovered it he, flew above it, and signalled to our gunners to drop their shells immediately below him. They fired; the shells fell some distance to the right. He next signalled to the range-finders to swing their guns more to the left. Again they fired, but the shells went too far. A third time he signalled, and the first of our shells that fell in the new direction wrecked the limber of the foremost German gun, smashing up horses and men alike. Good! Instantly the airman indicated that the range had been found, and then shell after shell burst over and among the battery which had been flogging us so mercilessly earlier in the day. In five minutes all that was left of it broke away from the cunning screen which masked it, and fled across country. The general, who had been watching the affair through his field glasses, cried, 'Splendid! Magnificent! The best show I've ever witnessed. That man must have a heart of steel in a body of iron.' When the daring aviator descended the general warmly congratulated him, and shook him by the hand. 'You're almost too good to last,' he said. The airman only laughed."

An Admiral of the Air. ***Photo, Cribb.***

Wing-Commander C. R. Samson, R.N. See page 74.

In the account of the fighting round Ypres nothing has been said of our artillery. Sir John French thus writes [112] concerning it: "I cannot speak too highly of the valuable services rendered by the Royal Artillery throughout the battle." He also tells us that, though the enemy brought up guns of great range and power, our artillery overmastered them. Splendid work was done by a number of young artillery officers, who in the most gallant manner pressed forward in the vicinity of the firing line in order to direct their guns at the right targets, and

at the right moment. Here is a story which illustrates the skill and courage of these young officers.

"In many instances," says a *Times* correspondent, "artillery subalterns have taken up dangerous positions well in advance of the front line of infantry, and, telephone in hand, have given the range to the gunners with perfect calmness. I was told of an incident which is typical of the splendid devotion of these men. A young lieutenant had posted himself in a tower a few hundred yards from the German trenches. He had telephoned his orders regularly for half an hour. Then he said, without any trace of excitement, to the operator on the other side, 'I hear the Germans coming up the stairs. I have my revolver. Don't believe anything more you hear.' With these words he dropped the receiver, and he has not been heard of since."

[113]

CHAPTER XIV.

TALES OF HEROES.

Before I proceed with the story of the critical day in the great struggle for Ypres, let me give you a few soldiers' stories of the fighting which took place during the month of October. Hundreds of attacks and counter-attacks were made and repelled during that terrible month, and a thousand deeds of the utmost gallantry were performed. Some of them won the highest award of valour, as we shall learn at the close of this chapter; but hundreds of others, equally splendid, went unrecorded and unrecognized, probably because they were not witnessed by superior officers. We must always remember, when we read accounts of gallant deeds done in battle, that they are but few out of many which deserve to be inscribed on the roll of fame. It has been well said that during the month of October 1914 the Victoria Cross was won a dozen times every day.

Here is a story of a boy hero, a private in the D Company of the 2nd Manchesters, of whose exploits you have already read. His name was Preston; he was eighteen years of age, and was known as the "baby" of his regiment. On 20th October the Manchesters were surrounded, and their trenches were enfiladed by German fire. First the lieutenant was wounded, then the sergeant, and the company was left without a single officer in command. While the men were wondering what to do, Private Preston threw up his cap and shouted, "Fix bayonets, lads!" The company obeyed his order, and he led them in a wild and successful charge against the enemy. Six days later this gallant and resourceful boy was killed in action.

[115]

The R.A.M.C. rendering First Aid in the Trenches. ***By permission of The Sphere.***

A private of the South Wales Borderers tells how some Germans disguised as gravediggers attempted to rush a British trench. "We knew that the Germans had a recognized corps of gravediggers," he says, "but we found that the supposed gravediggers now advancing were armed not only with picks and shovels, but with rifles also. When they came within range they fired. We did likewise, and soon saw their backs. Later we caught three of them—an officer and two privates. The officer was a tall, brawny fellow, six feet in his stockings. A little Cockney in our regiment went up to the German officer, and, not supposing that he would be understood, said fiercely, 'For two pins I'd knock your blooming head off.' Imagine his surprise when the German giant, looking down upon him, replied in perfect English, 'Don't! I can't help this war. Like yourself, I must fight for my country.'"

You have already heard from Mr. C. Underwood of the fine work done by Lieutenant Jardine of the R.A.M.C. on the Gheluvelt-Menin road during 29th October. An eye-witness says: "There was a man of small stature, Lieutenant Jardine, of the 21st Field Ambulance, who made frequent journeys from the shelter of a château

at Gheluvelt to the trenches. He continually faced a hurricane of fire, and to see the little man coming back with a heavy burden on his shoulders was a sight not to be forgotten. After he had visited the trenches a number of times he had the appearance of a butcher straight from the slaughter-house. Many men owe to him the fact that they are alive to-day." Nor must we forget the Field Ambulance men, who "time after time came into the open to carry the more seriously wounded from the trenches."

Don't forget that there is plenty of opportunity for the display of courage, even behind the firing line. The following little story illustrates the steadfastness and resource of a man in the Army Ordnance Corps—that is, the branch of the service which conveys ammunition to the places where it is needed. Five motor lorries conveying ammunition had been cut off by the Germans. The men in charge of them blew up the ammunition [116]
and made off across country. One, however, refused to leave, and remained hidden in a wood near the side of the road. The Germans, finding the ammunition destroyed, passed on, and the hidden soldier came out of his hiding-place. Finding the wheels of the lorries intact, he managed to start one of the motors. He then hitched the other four lorries behind, and slowly brought the convoy safely into the British camp.

Major Viscount Dalrymple, of the Scots Guards, the first member of Parliament to be taken prisoner, gives the following account of his adventures:—

"We came out in a great hurry in the dark and pouring rain on the night of 25th October, having heard that a trench held by Major Willie Holbeck and a platoon on the right flank had been overwhelmed. It was a beastly trench, next to the one I was in on the previous day, and by nightfall the Germans were entrenched only 100 yards in front of it. Willie was shelled and shot at in it all day, and they rushed him in large numbers in the dark of the evening. He and Corporal Maclean and a few others bolted back a hundred yards or so, and then tried to retake it with the bayonet, but failed. Major Hugh Fraser and I, with the remainder of the right flank and the left flank under Captain Fox, hurried off to the village, and when we got there we heard that a lot of Germans—more than 1,000—were marching along the street away from us.

"We were not sure whether to try to clear the village first, or whether to try to retake the lost trench. Eventually Major Fraser and Major Holbeck started up the track straight to the lost trench. When Fraser got fairly near the trench he found it full of Germans. He shouted, 'Have a go at them!' and charged practically by himself. He was shot at once, as were, I think, most of his men. Major Willie Holbeck had his right thigh bone broken by a bullet. I did not hear much firing, and had no idea of what had happened until Holbeck crawled back.

"Meanwhile I had discovered that a house near by us was full of Germans, so I sent Captain Fox along the road nearly opposite, and advanced on it myself with a platoon and a few more men. When we got within twenty yards or so they started firing at us. I shouted to the men to charge, and rushed over the hedge at the [117]
enemy. I was just going to bayonet an officer, when my men shot him, and he pulled me over by the leg as he fell. Then the Germans came out of the house, swarms of them. Some gave themselves up, while others fired at us out of a wood alongside, only about five yards away; until I got hold of a prisoner, and, pushing him round in front of me, told him to tell the others to surrender. He did so, and they surrendered to the number of 188 men and seven officers. Two of their officers had been killed, and a good many of their men; but I had two of my best sergeants and I don't know how many men killed and wounded. It took the whole left flank company to take the prisoners away, and I was not left with enough to attack the lost trench.

"About 7 a.m. on the 26th the shelling began, and there was a lot of sniping from the village at my right rear. Presently I saw about sixty Germans, who had been hiding, bolting across our rear, and I think, between our fire and the German shelling, they must have been wiped out. Then the shelling got terrific, absolutely all over us. At one time for two consecutive minutes I counted over sixty shells a minute bursting within fifty yards or so of my trench. I was twice hit by pieces, which, however, did no harm, and none of my little section were touched. Our trench got pretty uninhabitable—fired at from front and rear and on one flank, the shells coming thick all the time.

"Then word came from the trench on my left, held by a mixture of Staffords and Grenadiers and my men, that the Grenadiers on the left had retired. I shouted back that it was nonsense, and to stick to the trenches and fire whenever opportunity offered. I did not think there could be any genuine attack until they stopped shelling us.

"About 3.30 I suddenly heard a bugle sounding 'Cease fire,' or something or other, on our right, and saw the next trench on the right full of Germans, and our people surrendering. . . . The Germans were all round except on the left, and I think our people had gone from there; so I told our men to lie low in the trenches, in case the Germans did not come so far, which they unfortunately did." Viscount Dalrymple and his little force were surrounded and forced to surrender. "I was marched off with about sixty men, mostly Staffordshires [118]
and King's Company Grenadiers, only about eight of my own, and one Staffordshire subaltern. At a village some way off I found the rest of our people.

"Eight of us were in a second-class compartment for forty-eight hours—that is, every seat full—and were not allowed to lie down, stand up, or look out of the windows. If we opened a window it was generally shut again. After we had been in this compartment for about thirty hours we were given a plateful of potato soup with a little meat in it. We had not had anything to eat or drink for twenty-four hours previous to being captured, and had been under heavy fire the whole of the time."

Private G. Owen of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, who was mentioned in dispatches for conspicuous bravery on the field, thus describes the incident which won him the proud distinction:—"You will be surprised to hear about me getting mentioned in dispatches for helping a wounded comrade who had been shot in the leg and had had his thigh broken. I will tell you shortly how it happened. We had been warned to draw rations from a farmhouse just on the other side of our trenches, which was being shelled, and had a Maxim playing on it. Well, we had drawn tea for our comrades, and we had to go back for some eatables. We made a run for it. I

was first, and got through the gate into the field, when I heard a shout of 'O Jerry, I'm hit!'

"I ran back, and saw my mate lying in the road with his thigh broken by a bullet from the sniper with the Maxim. I caught hold of him the best way I could, and got him to safety with the help of the officer in charge, while the bullets and shells were screaming round for more victims."

A newspaper correspondent tells us of a little Welshman who made a great reputation as a sniper[70] during the fighting in front of Ypres. "If there is one thing," he says, "that the German soldier is beginning to be an adept in it is sniping. He has learnt many tricks, and the British soldier in the trenches pays him the utmost respect. He climbs trees, he worms along the ground, sometimes as stealthily as a Gurkha; in a field of roots [120] he sticks a turnip on the spike of his helmet, and, thus disguised, sends quick death among an incautious enemy. He shoots straight, and is not afraid. But this little Welshman is claimed by his comrades to be king of them all. He spends each night at it, and his regiment's trenches are now rarely disturbed by even the most venturesome German sharpshooters. He steals forward as lightly as a cat, fires, and, slipping aside, awaits the enemy's reply. The flashes of their rifles give him a mark. He shoots at the nearest, and repeats the performance as often as the enemy will oblige him by disclosing their positions.

"A London scoutmaster was sent out one night to ascertain the enemy's intentions. He found the Welshman ahead, and in whispers explained his object. The sniper bade him follow, and the scoutmaster quickly found himself less than twenty yards from the German trenches, undiscovered and unsuspected. This little Welshman in private life is a revivalist preacher."

An American correspondent who witnessed the British monitors[71] shelling the German trenches tells us the following story of a gallant British naval officer who fell while trying to aid the stricken Belgians. "As we watched the fighting we were joined by a Belgian captain, who told us the story of an English lieutenant[72] who had landed that morning. This officer came ashore from the monitor *Severn* with twenty men and three machine guns. Reaching Nieuport, he saw that the Belgians by losing a farm that morning had weakened their position. Accordingly he started with his twenty men across the bullet-swept area right to the trenches. Men who saw him say he walked as calmly as if on a tour of inspection, calling orders to his men, and signalling with his hands. In vain the Belgian officers shouted that their position was already occupied by Germans. Either he did not hear or he was determined to accomplish the task at all costs. When fifty yards from the coveted goal the young officer fell dead, a bullet having struck him between the eyes. The men retreated, carrying with them the guns and the memory of a hero worthy in all respects of the high traditions of the British navy."

French Officers examining a German Prisoner.

(*Photo, Central News.*)

A lance-corporal of the 2nd South Lancashire Regiment describes how he and his comrades saved a gun [121] which they were working in the loft of a cottage. Some 200 Germans having broken through the British lines, tried to rush the cottage. "I crept on my stomach," says the lance-corporal, "and made for my gun, which was nicely pointed at them, fetching them down like sheep, thinking every minute they would get at me, especially when I heard footsteps on the stairs. Two of my comrades now came to my assistance. When they saw who it was they patted me on the back, and one of them said, 'Let's have a go at the gun, Len;' which I was glad of, as I was nearly done up. My chum did splendid work, fetching the remainder down. While he was firing Lieutenant Fulcher went downstairs just in time, as five Germans had got round without being seen. The brave officer killed the five, and returned to us in the loft. . . . Then, seeing we were all right, he once more returned to headquarters.

"Half an hour later we were surrounded with shells . . . A piece struck the sergeant. Without delay we

carried him into the house and did our very best for him. It was a pity that he should come to his end, as only the day before he received a telegram congratulating him on his splendid previous work, for which he was mentioned in dispatches.

"We gave the alarm to the men down the cellar. It must have been God who told me to shout them up. In one more minute there would have been another seven killed, as no sooner had they got up than a shell burst in the cellar. I told the men to make for headquarters, which they did under heavy shell fire. How they got there without being hit I do not know. Myself and two others stopped, as we had our best friend in the roof (the gun). Another shell came and took the two men off their feet, luckily doing no harm; only I got a few splinters after the falling of the house. I found that I was the last, so I crawled out in the smoke and the dust, and made for headquarters. I reported to Lieutenant Fulcher that the sergeant was killed, and had died in my arms, and that I had been forced to leave the gun. There were tears in his eyes. He told me to lie down, but I could not, and he asked where I had left the gun. I told him, and said, 'I expect it is smashed.' He then asked for volunteers to go and fetch it, and two other lance-corporals at once offered to go with me. We [122] saved the gun, everything else being smashed, and got back without being hit. General Haldane congratulated us, and granted us six days' special leave to England."

The following story comes from the German side. There are three characters in it—a Bavarian lieutenant, Sepp his servant, and Caro his dog. "Sepp could play the mouth organ[73] beautifully, rendering folk songs, dances, etc., and we had many a pleasant hour with his music. One day, when the shells were bursting not far from us, the lieutenant said to his servant, 'Sepp, if I am ever hit, play my burial song for me, as you know how, and send my mother a remembrance. Everything else, including money, you can keep.' The dog Caro was not allowed to go into action, but had to march all day with the baggage, and at night slept at his master's door, allowing no one save Sepp to enter. Often he managed to get loose from the baggage carts, and, in spite of the colonel's scolding, reached the firing-line, where he shared the danger with his master.

"One fine day on the Yser a hostile bullet struck our dear young lieutenant in the forehead, so that he never moved again. On his face there was a pleasant smile, such as we had never before seen on the dead. Our grief was great; but a soldier never has much time for weeping. We dug his grave in a small pleasure garden, and laid the young hero to rest. We doffed our helmets, while some one said a brief prayer. On the mound we laid a last rose, and the soldiers made a cross. When the captain had said the last word Sepp at once began to play, more beautifully than we had ever heard before. No organ music had ever pleased me so much. Tears stood in the eyes of us all. Again and again he played funeral hymns and soldiers' songs, until we had to go.

"We could not get Sepp away from his master's grave. He continued to sit there, weeping and playing on his mouth organ all the songs his master had loved best. Just as we were going, up came the dog Caro from somewhere, as though he knew of his master's death. He whined and howled, while all about this farewell scene the guns thundered and rifle bullets whistled. Deeply moved, we went away. The English made an attack, but still in the twilight Sepp continued to play, until he had to be removed forcibly to prevent him [123] from falling into the enemy's hands. Only Caro remained; he would not budge.

"When, two days later, we had beaten the English and came back past the same spot, there lay the faithful Caro, dead on his master's grave. We knew not whether he had perished of hunger and grief, or whether a fragment of shell had struck him, but we found no wound on his body. We buried the faithful animal at his master's feet. Since that day Sepp has never played another tune."

I will conclude this chapter by giving you a brief account of the heroes who were awarded the Victoria Cross between October 1 and 30, 1914. They are as follows:—

Private Henry May, 1st Battalion the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). On October 22, 1914, at a village about four miles south-west of Armentières, he went out of his own free will, and under a heavy cannonade tried to rescue a wounded man who was, unhappily, killed before he could save him. Later, on the same day, he carried a wounded officer a distance of 300 yards into safety, while exposed to very severe fire.

Drummer William Kenny, 2nd Gordon Highlanders. On 23rd October, near Ypres, Drummer Kenny, an Irishman, whose parents live at Drogheda, showed wonderful bravery in rescuing wounded men on five different occasions. Each time he carried his life in his hand, and showed the most fearless courage. Twice previously he had saved machine guns by carrying them out of action, and frequently he had conveyed urgent messages over fire-swept ground. Like all true heroes, Drummer Kenny showed himself the most modest of men. Here is his own account of his repeated acts of bravery: "There were men lying about wounded, and I simply brought them in. The Maxims had to be fetched, and I did it—that's all."

Lieutenant Arthur Martin-Leake, R.A.M.C. This gallant officer was the first man in the British army to be awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in two separate campaigns. During the South African War he went out into the firing-line to dress a wounded man while forty Boers, who were only 100 yards off, rained bullets on the position. When he had done all he could for the stricken soldier he went over to a badly wounded officer, and while trying to place him in a more comfortable position was shot [124] three times. He only gave up his merciful work when thoroughly exhausted, and even then he refused water until other wounded men had been served. For this splendid self-sacrifice and steadfast bravery he was rightly awarded the Victoria Cross. During the Balkan War he served with a British Red Cross contingent, and throughout the present war, and especially at Zonnebeke between October 29 and November 8, 1914, he repeatedly went out under heavy fire to bring in wounded men, some of whom were lying close to the enemy's trenches. Again the coveted distinction was awarded to him, and a clasp was added to the Cross which he had won in South Africa.

Lieutenant James Leach and Sergeant John Hogan, 2nd Battalion the Manchester Regiment. Lieutenant Leach had only received his commission a few days before he won the Victoria Cross on October 29. "When I joined the Manchesters," he said in an interview, "there were only six officers and forty-five men, whereas the proper strength of the battalion was 30 officers and 1,100 men. The regiment had been badly cut up at Le Cateau and La Bassée. On joining the regiment I was immediately put in command of a company which was

in an advanced trench near Festubert.[74] The trench was large enough to hold thirty-five men; it was about 150 yards from the main trench, and 120 yards from the German trenches.

"At seven o'clock on the morning of 29th October I had just started to have my breakfast, when a man to the right of me shouted, 'Look out, sir, look out; they're coming,' and began firing as fast as he could. I looked over the parapet, and saw about 250 of the enemy with fixed bayonets approaching the trench at the double, firing as they came on, and making a peculiar wailing noise. Before the Germans reached the trench we shot down something like 150 of them. With only such a short distance to cross from their trenches to ours, about 100 of the enemy managed to reach our trench and jump into it. By sheer weight of numbers they carried the trench, and killed about twelve of my men.

How Lieutenant Leach and Sergeant Hogan recaptured a Trench from the Germans.

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

"At nine o'clock I called up the communication trench, and asked how far the enemy had got, and found they were occupying three of the four traverses.[75] When I went up again by myself two hours later, I found the [126]
Germans were occupying all the four traverses. Well, I thought, if we leave it much longer they will be down the communication trenches into the main trench.

"The same evening we heard we were to be relieved by the Gurkhas, and I felt it would be rather bad on my part to leave the recovery of the trench to them. I therefore determined about two o'clock to regain the trench before dark. Calling for volunteers, Sergeant Hogan and ten others came forward, and we began to crawl up the communication trench. I fired anywhere with my revolver, only exposing my hand, with the intention of pushing back the enemy along the trench as far as we could. The idea was to force them to run back to their own trenches, so that we could shoot them down as they went.

"All along the trench we crawled over dead and wounded Germans, so you see my revolver had been doing some execution. When we got to the left traverse I was surprised to hear an English voice round the corner shout, 'Don't shoot, sir.' I chanced this being a bit of treachery, and was surprised to see one of my own men coming round the corner. He had been captured in the morning rush, and he said a wounded German officer round the corner had asked him to tell me that they wanted to surrender.

"I went round the corner, and found sixteen Germans on their knees with their hands up, shouting, 'Mercy.' I told the officer that he and his men had got to go into the main trench. This they did after they had taken off their equipment, holding up their hands as they went. About twenty wounded Germans crawled in with them. . . . Was I surprised when I heard I had been awarded the Victoria Cross? Yes, I was. I was mentioned in dispatches, and there I thought the matter had ended."

Sergeant Hogan, when interviewed, showed the same pleasing modesty as Drummer Kenny. "I only did," he said, "what others would have done, and what others have done."

A few further details as to this remarkable feat may be added. The following account is taken from the *Manchester Guardian*:—"Lieutenant Leach and Sergeant Hogan left the main trench with ten men, and, [127]
crawling along the communicating trench, they established themselves at a point where the trench, which had been captured by the Germans that same morning, turned sharply at right angles. Leach and Hogan then advanced. The aim of the two men was to drive the Germans back along the narrow trench to the opposite end, from which there was no exit. Leach and Hogan commenced from their corner. Leach, being armed with a revolver, could reach his hand round the corner and shoot along the sections without exposing his body; whilst the German soldiers, armed only with rifles, could not fire without exposing part of their bodies.

"While Leach was shooting along the section Hogan watched the parapet to ward off attacks from above, as the Germans might crawl over from the section attacked and shoot them down from above or take them in the rear. Leach had now to fire with his left hand. When the section had been cleared by the two men, they took their stand at the next corner, and repeated the manoeuvre. As they advanced, section by section,

Hogan put his hat on the end of his rifle and raised it above the parapet, to indicate to his platoon how far progress had been made, so that his comrades would not fire at that part of the trench that had been retaken." This went on, corner after corner being captured, until the two men heard one of their comrades who had been made prisoner that morning cry out, as described above by Lieutenant Leach.

Lieutenant James Anson Otho Brooke, 2nd Gordon Highlanders. This officer received the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery and great ability near Gheluvelt on 29th October, when he led two attacks on the German trenches under heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, and regained a lost trench at a very critical moment. By his marked coolness and alertness he prevented the enemy from breaking through our line[76] at a time when a general counter-attack could not have been made. Lieutenant Brooke made the supreme sacrifice that day: he gave his life to save his fellows. [128]

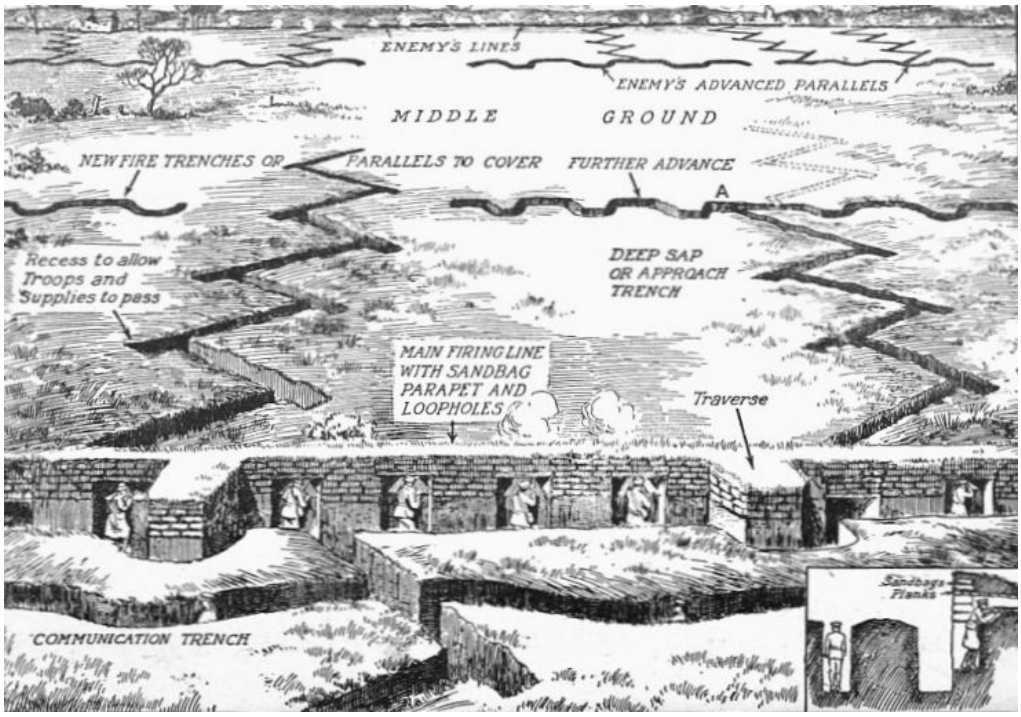


Diagram to illustrate Trench Warfare.

[129]

CHAPTER XV.

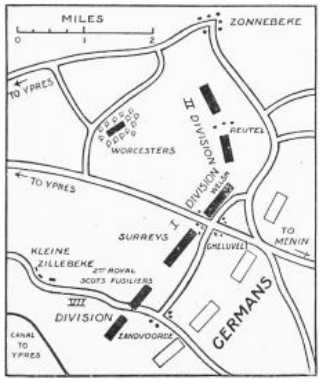
THE CRISIS OF THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES.

On Saturday, 31st October, came the crisis of the fierce and long-continued struggle. Day by day the enemy's attacks had been growing stronger and stronger. Across the lines the British could hear the Germans singing patriotic songs, as though they were working themselves up to a berserk rage.[77] An order taken from a prisoner showed that the Kaiser had ordered the British line to be smashed at all costs. "Before the sun was high on that morning," writes an American correspondent, "a British aviator volplaned down to his own lines with a wing damaged by shrapnel. He dropped from his seat pale and shaken. 'A close call?' they asked. 'It isn't that,' he replied; 'it's what I have seen—three corps, I tell you, against our First!' So he jerked out his story. He had seen the roads and ridges like ant-hills and ant-runs with men; he had seen new batteries going into position; he had seen, far away, the crawling gray serpents, which were still more German regiments going to their slaughter. 'And we're so thin from up there,' he said, 'and they're so many.'"[78]

The French and British Commanders in the Field—General Joffre and General Sir John French.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

The little map on page 131 will show you the British position against which the Germans were now about to hurl themselves in vast strength. You see that the 1st Division held the village of Gheluvelt, and lay to the right and left of the main road from Ypres to Menin. On the left of the 1st Division lay the 2nd Division, [131] extending the line as far north as Zonnebeke. The South Wales Borderers, who were on the extreme left of the 1st Division, were posted in the sunken part of the road between Gheluvelt and Reutel. The 2nd Worcesters, who belonged to the 2nd Division, were stationed in the wood which you will see to the south-west of Zonnebeke. On the right of the 1st Division, continuing the line up to the canal from Ypres to the Lys, lay the 7th Division.



At daybreak on the 31st, von Beimling, with at least 100,000 Bavarians, attacked the centre of the British line. A heavy fire was directed against Gheluvelt, and when the way was thus prepared, the infantry dashed upon the place, but were repulsed. Again and again the Bavarians advanced, but nowhere could they make headway. The big guns reduced Gheluvelt to a heap of blazing ruins; but the British could not be shifted from them. The trenches of the Welsh were searched from end to end by German shells; but still they stuck to them. Every spot in front, and even the wood in the rear where the Worcesters were posted, was raked by the murderous German fire. But every time the enemy pushed forward they were beaten back.

Having thus failed to pierce the British line at Gheluvelt, the Bavarians were ordered to fling themselves against the British to the south of the Menin-Ypres road—that is, against the 1st Queen's (Surrey) and the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers, the latter unit being the flank regiment of the 7th Division. Advancing in force, they got between the village of Gheluvelt and the Surreys on their left flank, and then, with their great numbers, were able to get round to the right flank of that regiment, which was almost surrounded and cut off. Only some seventy of the Surreys fought their way back into the woods in their rear. The British line was broken at last. [132]

What the Germans had now to do was to enlarge the breach. The retreat of the Surreys had laid open the flank of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, and the Bavarians tried to deal with them as they had dealt with the Surreys. Again they were successful, and the Scots were surrounded and cut off from their division. They would neither surrender nor give way, and only a remnant fought their way out, and followed the Surreys towards Ypres. Their brigadier, in describing the fighting, said, "I think it was perfectly splendid. Mind you, it was not a case of 'hands up,' or any nonsense of that sort; it was a fight to a finish. Why, even a German general came up to the colonel afterwards and congratulated him, and said he could not understand how his men had held out so long." The Royal Scots Fusiliers had suffered terribly. They had landed in Flanders over a thousand strong; they now numbered seventy men, commanded by a junior lieutenant.

Thus the British line was successfully broken. The 1st Division could not maintain its ground, and as it retired the 1st Coldstreams were almost wiped out. Against the exposed flank of the 7th Division a strong infantry attack was now launched. It seemed as if nothing could stay the German advance, and that the British were bound to be overwhelmed with disaster. Enemy aeroplanes discovered Sir Douglas Haig's headquarters, and a shell burst in the house. Haig himself was at Hooge, on the Menin-Ypres road, at the time, and so escaped; but the general of the 1st Division was wounded, and six of the staff officers were killed.

A day's march away from Ypres is the ford where, two thousand years ago, Cæsar was in dire peril of being overwhelmed by the Nervii.[79] In that battle he snatched a shield from a soldier, and, plunging into the fray, rallied the Roman army, and turned defeat into victory. It was now Sir John French's part to play the part of Cæsar. He jumped into his motor car and sped towards the 1st Division. He found Sir Douglas Haig riding up and down trying to learn what had happened, and to settle what was to be done. As commander-in-chief and general greeted each other, orderlies, one after the other, rode up with the news that the British line was [133] broken, that regiments were in retreat, that Gheluvelt had at last been taken, and that the Germans were advancing in overwhelming force. It was the most critical moment of the great battle.

The 7th Division was now ordered to retreat, and this exposed the left flank of the French division on their right. It was under the command of General Moussy, who was struggling hard to keep his line intact. He had come to the assistance of the British at the very moment when all seemed lost, just as the French had come to the aid of the British at Inkerman[80] sixty years before. He was now terribly assailed, and again and again it seemed that his line must be staved in. At one point the Germans nearly broke through, and without reinforcements they could not be held back. Immediately the general sent off a corporal of his escort to scour the country, and to bring up every man that he could lay hold of. The corporal dismounted the sixty-five men of the general's escort, and called on lorry drivers, motor men, servants, cooks, anybody and everybody he saw to join him. With this motley array, many of them unarmed, he hurried to the trenches, and in a few minutes his scratch force was making a bayonet charge, practically without bayonets. The Germans thought that reinforcements had arrived, and therefore retired.

This incident will remind you of the turning-point in the Battle of Bannockburn,[81] six hundred years before. While the English were struggling to break the Scottish line, they thought they saw a new army approaching. What they really saw was a band of camp followers and servants who had made banners of sheets and blankets tied to sticks and tent poles. They had formed themselves into ranks, and were now marching down a hill towards the battle. At this sight the English broke and fled. When General Moussy's corporal came up with his scratch regiment of 250 men the old incident of Bannockburn was repeated.

The Germans were now not only pressing hard from the north of Gheluvelt to the canal, but were making headway against Allenby's cavalry, who were holding the whole line from Klein Zillebeke to the south of [135] Messines.[82] Allenby's sole reinforcement consisted of exhausted Indians who had been sent up from the Second Corps. You will learn later how at this juncture Sepoy Khudadad,[83] of the 129th Baluchis,[84] won the Victoria Cross for his magnificent steadfastness in working his gun till every man of his detachment had been killed.[85]

So terrible was the pressure round Hollebeke that Kavanagh's cavalry, who had been on the Menin road behind the 1st Division, were now hurried south to hold the line at this point. Even with this assistance Allenby's men were almost at their last gasp. Two nearly fresh German corps were attacking them, and hours must elapse before other reinforcements could arrive.

The Scratch Force that saved de Moussy's Line. ***Photo, Daily Mirror.***

Now came the most critical hour of this most critical battle. Between two and three o'clock on the 31st the whole issue of the campaign in the West trembled in the balance. Just when the outlook seemed darkest, and all hope of saving the day seemed to have vanished, an orderly galloped up to Sir John French with the

startling news that the German advance had stopped. Then came another piece of good news: the 1st Division was re-forming its line, and Gheluvelt had been retaken! What had happened? I will compile my account from a narrative issued by the Worcestershire County Council:—

"Although the line of the 1st Division had been broken, the whole of it had not fallen back. The Surreys and the Scots had been practically wiped out, but the dauntless Welsh still stood firm. Posted in the hollow road to the east of Gheluvelt, where they were slightly sheltered from the German fire, the Welsh still held their ground, thus forming a pivot upon which, if reinforcements were forthcoming, the line could be re-formed and the position linked up.

"Holding back by their fire the mass of Germans with whom they were still engaged, the Welsh were covering the flank of the 2nd Division and checking the German advance. If they could hold on and keep the flank covered until help arrived, the 1st Division could re-form and the gap could be filled up. The position [136] was critical, and a very severe trial for the Welsh; but they belonged to a regiment which bore on its colours the word "Talavera,"[86] and where, as here, the British line had been broken, but the steadiness of a single regiment had saved the day. The Welsh had been told to hold the post to the last. They had done so.

"When von Beimling advanced in the morning, hurling on them attack after attack, the Welsh held the road against him. When the Germans surrounded the Surreys and drove off the Scots, still the Welsh held on, firing, steadily firing, keeping back the Bavarians. When the Germans carried Gheluvelt and the British line gave way, the Welsh remained firing and held their ground against all comers, so delaying the German advance. Now at last, when orders had been given to begin the retreat, the Welsh still remained where they had been originally stationed, just as if the line were still intact, and no retreat had been ordered. Could help be sent to them so as to enable them to reap the reward of their heroic constancy?

"Stationed in a corner of a wood about a mile from Gheluvelt, towards Ypres, near the Menin-Ypres road, was a body of some 600 men, four companies of the 2nd battalion of a regiment that the Duke of Wellington once described in a letter as 'the best regiment in his army' (the Worcesters, whose famous and well-deserved motto is 'Firm'). To them now, more than a century later, was given the opportunity for Sir John French to say whether he concurred or not in Wellington's high opinion. They were ordered 'to advance without delay, and to deliver a counter-attack with the utmost vigour.'

"No one who knew the regiment doubted for an instant that they would do it. Every one was doubtful whether they could do it with success. They were only four companies; the Germans were legion. But whether they were to be successful or unsuccessful, their plain duty was to attack the Germans, however many, with their handful of men, however few. The Welsh had to be supported; the Germans had to be repulsed. Everything depended on their advance. [137]

"On receipt of his orders Major Hankey, who was in command of the battalion, sent Lieutenant Haskett Smith with six scouts to reconnoitre the ground, and cut any wire entanglements that would delay the advance. The A company, under Captain Wainman, was sent forward to occupy and hold a trench between the wood and the village. Not the least of the exploits of the Worcesters on that day was the advance of A company to occupy and hold this trench. It was in effect asking an English company to advance, and, as it proved, to advance successfully, against the whole German force at that point. The trench was occupied, and not merely occupied, but held.

"Some 600 yards in front of the battalion was a small wood forming some sort of cover. Here B, C, and D companies deployed for the attack, in two lines. The Worcesters set out on their terrible task. For about half a mile they had to advance under a very heavy fire of shrapnel. Over part of the ground they could rush from one bit of cover to another, but at one place for about 200 yards there was no cover at all. Here they had not only the shrapnel on their front, but on their right flank the Bavarians pouring in a hail of bullets from rifles and machine guns. It looked as if no one could pass through that fire unhurt. The Germans were constantly bringing up reinforcements with fresh ammunition.

"It appeared that the Worcesters were going to certain death. The appearance was not deceptive, for in crossing the 200 yards without cover the three companies had no fewer than 100 casualties. Even this did not cause the Worcesters to flinch. They pressed onward, reached the road, and formed up on the left of the Welsh. In front of them, at a distance of some 300 yards, was a small wood filled with Bavarians. On these the Worcesters opened fire with such success that the enemy gradually retreated.

"But although the Worcesters had gained the road, supported the Welsh, and thus had enabled the 1st Division to re-form its line, their position was far from safe. Their right flank was open to the enemy, who, from the cover of the ruins of the village, was able, without much loss to himself, to pour in a continuous rifle fire. From time to time parties of Germans from the village got round the Worcesters' right flank. They became so troublesome that the Worcesters stormed the house nearest to their trench, and made it into a [138] bastion for their defence, so that the German flank attacks ceased. The effect of this charge was to change the entire position. The Worcesters were now able to threaten the right flank of the Germans, who, on perceiving this, at once desisted from any further advance. Their offensive died away."

The narrative then goes on to tell how those units of the 1st Division, which had retreated were brought back to the original line, how the cavalry cleared the Germans out of the woods, surprising and killing a good many of them, and how as it grew dark the Germans fell back. At last by 10 p.m. the British line as held on the morning of 31st October was re-formed. Thus a terrible disaster was averted by the cool courage and the devotion of the Welsh and the Worcesters. The crisis had passed; the fighting was not yet over, but the battle had been won.

The Worcesters had lost heavily, but they had covered themselves with glory, and the whole army united to do them honour. A month later Sir John French paraded all that was left of the battalion that retook Gheluvelt, and told them that though they bore on their colours the names of many famous victories, they had added lustre to their former reputation by their splendid bravery that day.

Next day (1st November) French reinforcements were hurried up, but before they could arrive the Germans had made two attacks—the one against Klein Zillebeke, the other against Allenby's cavalry around Messines. The first attack was driven back, but the second was successful, and Hollebeke and Messines were both seized by the enemy. The Germans swarmed across the low ridges, and their artillery found gun positions

from which Ypres and Messines could be shelled. The village was speedily levelled with the ground, and all attempts to retake the ruins failed. Allenby had in reserve four battalions from the Second Corps to the west of Messines, and he now called them into the firing line. Amongst them were the London Scottish, the first of all infantry Territorial regiments to go to the front. They were now about to undergo their baptism of fire. [139]

The London Scottish in civil life are clerks, young lawyers, doctors, architects, engineers, and literary men. They are a kilted regiment, clad in sober gray with blue facings, and in times of peace are remarkable for their smart uniform and their excellent drill. They were now to prove that citizen soldiers in the hour of their country's need can fight as valiantly and bear themselves as heroically as their comrades of the regular army.

The accounts of the fighting in which the London Scottish were engaged differ widely, but I think you will get a good idea of what actually happened from the following description by a dispatch rider:—

> "I was talking to some London Scottish; they had had a terrible time. They were only supposed to be in support, and had no machine guns with them, when news came of a highly critical situation, and they were led up to the trenches under shell and rifle fire over open ground—a thing very seldom undertaken even by Regulars. They made a perfect advance as if they were on parade, and then later on came an awful attack. The Germans came on in masses, with bands playing, and, as I heard later, the Kaiser in person looking on (from a safe distance); and the Scots mowed them down and down till their ammunition gave out, when they leaped out of the trenches and went for the enemy with the bayonet. They were driven back into the trenches by force of numbers, and a desperate fight took place. Their medical officer was actually bayoneted in front of their eyes while bending down attending to two wounded men. It was bright moonlight, and he had a white badge and red cross on his arm, and even a blue tunic on, and was, of course, without arms of any sort. The Germans behaved like inhuman fiends; every wounded man they bayoneted at once, and when the Scots saw this foul work they gave the order, 'No prisoners.' They drove the Germans back eventually, giving no quarter, and getting none."[87]

While the London Scots were proving their mettle, the Germans broke through the line of the 1st Cavalry Division, and captured a village about 1½ miles north of Messines, on the Ypres-Armentières road. Next day, however, this village was retaken, though Messines still remained in German hands. There was also heavy fighting that day at Le Gheir, south of Messines, and in the course of it Drummer Bent of the East Lancashires won the Victoria Cross,[88] as you shall hear later.

The Charge of the London Scottish at Messines, November 1, 1914.

(*From the picture by Dudley Tennant.*)

For five days afterwards the battle resolved itself into an artillery duel, and our weary men had a breathing space. Reserves were brought up from the Second Corps, and two Territorial battalions and two Yeomanry regiments were put into the firing line. On 6th November the Germans made a sudden attack on the Klein Zillebeke position, and drove in the French, who were holding the right towards the canal. This left the 4th Cavalry Brigade unsupported; but the Household Brigade,[89] under General Kavanagh, came to the rescue, and the French were able to recapture their trenches. Once more, however, the French were driven back, and to stem the rush Kavanagh doubled a couple of dismounted squadrons across the road. There was a moment of wild confusion, in which British, French, and Germans were mingled together in the village street. When the confusion was at its height Major Dawnay of the 2nd Life Guards led his men to the charge, and the village was cleared with great loss to the enemy. Unhappily, Major Dawnay was killed by a shrapnel shell, but not until the British position was saved. [141]

You are accustomed to think of the 2nd Life Guards in all the glory of their peace uniform, in their steel helmets with horse-hair plumes, their gleaming breastplates, their white buckskin breeches and gloves, and

their long knee-boots. Very different was the picture which they presented in the village street on that fierce day, their drab khaki uniforms splashed with mud and blood, their horses far in the rear, and they, on foot, lunging fiercely at the oncoming Germans with the bayonet. There is no pomp or glamour of gold lace, nodding plumes, and burnished steel on the modern battlefield.

Kavanagh's Brigade stemmed the torrent and held its trenches far into the night, until the 4th Brigade had strengthened its position. Next morning (7th November) our men made a counter-attack; but though German trenches were brilliantly captured, they could not be retained. It was during this attack that Captain J. F. Vallentin of the South Staffords won the Victoria Cross.[90]

Once more there was a lull. Nothing worthy of mention happened on the 8th, 9th, and 10th, but on the 11th the storm broke out again in all its fury. [142]

You will remember that at Waterloo, when the cannon of the advancing Prussians were heard in the distance, and Napoleon saw defeat staring him in the face, he staked all on a charge of his Old Guard—the Guard that "dies but never surrenders." Six thousand of these men, the very flower and pride of his army, were hurled at the long-tried British. As they rushed up the slope, the British Guards, who had been lying down behind the top of the ridge, sprang to their feet and poured a volley into the enemy. The advancing columns wavered, and our men, charging with the bayonet, thrust them down the hill in utter confusion.

The Kaiser was now about to follow the example of Napoleon and make one mighty effort to snatch victory out of defeat by launching his famous Prussian Guards against the stubborn foe. The Prussian Guards are the very apple of the Kaiser's eye; they are all picked men, over six feet in height, of wonderful discipline and unquenchable courage, and they count it the highest honour that life holds to be selected from the ordinary regiments for service as the bodyguard of the Emperor. If living men could "hack their way through," these were the men to do it.

True, the Guards had not yet covered themselves with glory. They had suffered heavily at Charleroi[91] and Guise;[92] they had been badly beaten in the marshes of the Gond,[93] and had lost many of their numbers at Rheims;[94] but now, under the eye of the Kaiser himself, they were to sweep all before them and succeed where their comrades of the line had failed. Thirteen battalions of them were brought up from the Arras district with great speed and secrecy, and on Wednesday, 11th November, they were thrust against the point of the salient to the north and south of the Ypres-Menin road. The day opened with the most furious artillery attack known up to that time. The British trenches were continuously assailed with lyddite[95] and shrapnel; [143] but our gallant men hung on, wondering how long they could exist in that tornado of spouting earth and flying shard.

For eight hours the terrific cannonade continued. About seven in the evening, when the sky was dark and rain was falling, British aeroplanes appeared overhead and began to sweep the plain with their searchlights. In their glare our men saw to their amazement the Prussian Guards advancing towards their trenches with the high, prancing step of a Potsdam parade—the officers with their swords at the "Carry," and the lines of men as steady as a rock. On they marched, with flags flying and drums beating, but never a rifle snapped from the British trenches. Already the Guards felt the thrill of approaching victory; to them it seemed that the Allied line had been destroyed by the terrible cannonade. In a few short hours they would be in Ypres; a few days more and they would gaze across the narrow seas to the white cliffs of that hated land which they had sworn to subdue.

They were eighty yards from the British trenches now, and their pace quickened. Suddenly they were caught in a whirlwind of fire; shrapnel hissed among them, machine guns clacked viciously, and French and British rifles spat death at them from front and flank. They went down in hundreds, but the gaps were filled up, and the line moved on unbroken. Battalions melted into companies, companies into platoons, and platoons into files, but still they were unchecked. Again and again they re-formed, only to see their ranks shattered once more; nevertheless their advance was not stayed.

So fixed was their resolution and so strong was the force of their assault that the Allied line was broken in three places. Our first-line trenches were swamped with the gray flood, some of which poured into the tangle of woods behind, where a wild, desperate battle raged amidst the trees for two days. Furiously counter-attacked, and enfiladed by machine-gun fire, the Guards were finally driven back to the two short sections of trench which they had won. Even here they were not secure. The "Fighting Fifth"[96] held a salient between them, and took merciless toll of them while fresh attacks were being prepared.

On the hundredth day of the war the Prussian Guard came, it saw, it was conquered. At nightfall the larger part of it lay dead in the wood—in some places eight ranks deep. The mighty effort of the Kaiser had failed; [144] the flower of his army had been flung away, yet Ypres was as far off as ever.

On the 12th and the following days there were further assaults, during one of which Lieutenant Dimmer of the King's Royal Rifles won the Victoria Cross for heroic fighting, which will be detailed later.[97] All the German efforts were fruitless, and on the 17th, when French reinforcements gave the sorely-tried British a respite, the enemy began to vent his baffled rage on the famous old Cloth Hall of Ypres. So far it had been spared in order that from its ancient walls the Kaiser might announce to the world that Belgium was his. Now that the Guard had failed, and Ypres still defied him, he spitefully ordered his artillery to batter down the historic building which seemed to mock at his discomfiture.

The story of one other German failure must be told to round off this account of the First Battle of Ypres. While the Prussian Guard was making its vain effort, the left wing of the Würtemberg army was attacking the extreme left of the salient between Zonnebeke and Bixschoote. This portion of the line was held by Zouaves, French Territorials, and cavalry. Against them was flung an overwhelming force of Germans, including the left wing of the Würtemberg army. Around Bixschoote the fight raged with such fierceness that the place was choked with dead. Had it been captured the enemy would have carried Ypres from the north. The Zouaves, always famous as dashing fighters, excelled themselves in the defence of Bixschoote, and at no point of the Allied front did the enemy lose more heavily. For nearly a month the Zouaves held the pass until the weather broke and the high winds and snow blizzards of winter set in. So the storm of battle died away in a tempest of nature's making.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE PRICE OF VICTORY AND THE PASSING OF A HERO.

In the old days a battle lasted a day or two at most; victory frequently came within a few hours, and couriers were speeding away with the news of victory or defeat before night had shrouded the stark bodies of the slain. But in this war battles have continued for weeks; one contest has merged into another, so that it is hard to say where one ends and another begins. The great series of fights which we call the Battle of Ypres began on 19th October, and did not end until 17th November; it lasted for thirty days!

The First Battle of Ypres was not only remarkable for its long duration, but also for the mighty armies that were arrayed against each other. Never before in the history of the world have such huge forces struggled for victory. During the battles of the Seven Years' War the combatants on both sides did not exceed 120,000, and in the Napoleonic wars the opposing armies at no time reached a total of 450,000. At Waterloo there were but 170,000 engaged, and at Inkerman, in the Crimean War, there were not 90,000. Some 320,000 men fought at Gravelotte[98] during the Franco-German War of 1870-71, and at Mukden, in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, the forces engaged totalled about 510,000. These numbers sink into insignificance compared with the multitudes who fought in Artois and West Flanders during the thirty days of the Ypres battle. Germany alone had not less than a million men.

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Great was the price of victory. Britain lost at least 40,000 men, the French and Belgians 70,000, and the Germans probably 250,000—that is, 360,000 in all—a number far exceeding the total of the whole armies engaged in any single battle of modern history down to the close of the nineteenth century. Whole battalions of the British army disappeared—the 1st Coldstreams, the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers, the 2nd Wiltshires, and the 1st Camerons were practically wiped out. One regiment went into the campaign 1,100 strong, and came out with only 73. Another took 1,350 to Flanders, and had but 300 when the Battle of Ypres was won.

The Defeat of the Prussian Guard near Ypres on November 11, 1914. (See page 143.)

(By permission of The Sphere.)

You have already heard how the 7th Division was reduced to a shadow of its former strength. Sir Henry Rawlinson tells us that when the division was withdrawn to England to refit it was found that out of 400 officers who set out from England there were only 44 left, and out of 12,000 men only 2,336. One general, two brigadiers, nearly a dozen staff officers had fallen, and eighteen regiments and battalions had lost their colonels. Junior lieutenants frequently found themselves in command of a battalion, while a brigadier was left with one or two companies. History records no such tale of slaughter. More men fell in the Battle of Ypres than the North lost in the whole of the American Civil War.[99]

Two striking features of this long series of contests must detain us for a moment. The first is the extraordinary valour of the boys and elderly men who formed a large part of the German levies. They charged in mass again and again, and went to death in droves. The second is the even more extraordinary defence which the British—never more than 150,000 in number—made against overwhelming odds. There have been instances of armies holding forces which outnumbered them four or five times for a single day; but the British resisted for weeks against forces five times as great. Around Ypres during the worst part of the fighting we had but three divisions and some cavalry to meet five army corps, three of them belonging to Germany's first line. For the best part of two days the 7th Division of 12,000 men held a front of eight miles

against 120,000! In all the long fighting annals of Britain no such feat had ever been performed before. [148]

The Allies merely held their lines, yet really they won a great victory, because they had achieved their object. They had defeated a turning movement and a piercing movement, and had blocked the German advance to the sea. Thereafter in the west the enemy was not free to move, save at the will of the Allies; he was besieged from the Vosges to the North Sea.

The British played the lion's part in the great struggle; but without the splendid support of the French and the Belgians they could have achieved nothing. The regular regiments of the line proved themselves to be composed of the finest fighting material in the world; the cavalry, playing the part of infantry, on foot and in the trenches, were no less wonderful; and the gunners, though outmatched in numbers and weight of artillery, showed marvellous skill and tenacity; while the citizen soldiers, called from their peaceful pursuits to the unfamiliar work of war, displayed the spirit of veteran troops. The great struggle round Ypres was a soldiers' victory. There was little room for generalship; nevertheless Sir John French, by his coolness and doggedness, by the confidence with which he animated his men, and by the cheery good will with which he encouraged them, must be regarded as the real inspirer of victory.

In the centre of Calcutta is the famous Maidan,[100] or Esplanade, a great space of turf and trees and gardens, which is the special glory of the city. Here you will find monuments to the great soldiers and statesmen who have won and kept for us "the brightest jewel in the British crown." Perhaps the noblest of all these monuments is that which commemorates the martial fame of Lord Roberts of Kandahar.[101] Frederick Sleigh Roberts was born at Cawnpore[102] five years before Queen Victoria came to the throne. He was educated in England, but when his school days were over he returned to the land of his birth, and became an officer in the Indian army. [149]

Hardly had he returned when that terrible uprising of the native soldiers which we call the Indian Mutiny began, and the first warfare which young Roberts knew was against the well-armed and well-trained sepoys[103] who had broken their oath of loyalty to the Queen, and were striving to drive the British out of the peninsula.

Some years ago, when I visited India, I went, as in duty bound, to Delhi,[104] the present capital, and the great storm centre of fighting during the Mutiny. Memorials of that terrible time abound in Delhi. About a mile to the north of the city is the "Ridge," a low, narrow hill on which a band of Britons, the mere skeleton of an army, hungry, fever-stricken, "stormed at with shot and shell," held its own against an army of sepoys during the awful heat of an Indian summer.

From the Flagstaff Tower in which the women and children took refuge during that dread time a road runs directly to the city, and on the right of it is a little garden in which stands a bronze statue to John Nicholson, [105] the hero of the siege. Close by the Nicholson statue is the Kashmir Gate, preserved in its ruinous condition to recall the marvellous daring of the six Britons who blew it up, and thus opened a way for the British troops to enter the city. Roberts, as a young subaltern of twenty-five, saw Nicholson lying wounded and dying by the side of the road not far from this gate. Nicholson was the most distinguished of that group of young men who by almost superhuman devotion saved India for the Empire during the Mutiny. It was under the influence of such men as Nicholson—men of lofty ideals of duty, of iron resolution and unfaltering courage—and amidst scenes of the most glorious heroism, that Roberts began his military career. Nicholson was his type and model. When the Mutiny was at an end Roberts was a veteran of ability and experience, and he wore the Victoria Cross on his breast.

For forty-one years he served India, taking part in all the important campaigns, and gradually rising in the service until, in 1885, he became Commander-in-Chief. He won great fame in the Afghanistan campaigns, [150] and became the idol of the Indian army, to whom he was known as "Bobs." No Indian commander-in-chief has ever been so admired and loved by the troops under his command. He never strove for popularity, but he could not escape it. His men assayed him, and found him pure gold throughout.

Earl Roberts of Kandahar.

By no means was his life-work done when he left India. When disaster succeeded disaster during the early months of the Boer War, the nation looked to him as the one man who could pluck victory out of defeat. With his appearance on the veldt came the turn of the tide, and after his great march to Pretoria[106] the issue of the contest was no longer in doubt. Full of years and honours, he might have retired from public life, conscious that he had served his country greatly, and that his fame was secure. But he ever "scorned delights and lived laborious days," and when he had long passed the allotted span he devoted himself to the task of trying to bring home to the British people the danger of allowing their young men to grow up

unprepared for that great European war which he was convinced would come within a few short years. Alas! we did not heed him, and when the day of battle arrived it found us unprepared, and forced to improvise armies while strife was raging and the fate of the Empire was hanging in the balance. [151]

Soon after the beginning of the great war which he had foreseen, Lord Roberts addressed the following message to the children of the Empire:—

"CHILDREN OF THE EMPIRE:

> "You have all heard of the war; you have all heard of the fighting forces sent from every part of the Empire to help the Mother Country. Why are we fighting? Because the British Empire does not break its promises, nor will it allow small nations to be bullied.
>
> "Now, the British Government promised, with all the Great Powers of Europe, including Germany, that no army should set foot on the territory of the little nation of Belgium without her leave; in other words, she 'guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium.'
>
> "Germany, however, was bent on war, and on dominating other nations. Britain did her best to keep the peace, but Germany (breaking her word) marched her armies into Belgium to try and conquer France.
>
> "Children of the Empire, this is why we are at war—to hold our promise, to help our friends, and to keep the Flag of Liberty flying, not only over our own Empire, but over the whole world.
>
> "God save our King and Empire."

When Indian soldiers were summoned to help the Mother Country in her hour of need, Lord Roberts felt a great desire to go over to France in order to meet them face to face once more, to greet them in their own languages, and to inspire them with some of his own dauntless courage. "I must go and see the Indian soldiers," he said. "It is the most useful thing I can do at this moment." He arrived in France on Wednesday, 11th November, and next day he saw the men to whom he was bound by such strong ties. Everywhere they greeted him with admiration and affection. On Friday evening he was found to be suffering from chill; disease of the lungs set in, and the old warrior, now in his eighty-second year, had no strength to resist the attack. He gradually sank, and at 8 p.m. on Saturday, 14th November 1914, within sound of the guns thundering around Ypres, he died.

Lord Roberts was a man of war from his youth up, and it was fitting that he should pass away on a battlefield, amidst the soldiers who adored him. Officers from every corps in the British and Indian armies, and representatives of the French army, escorted the coffin to the hall at St. Omer where the body was laid in state, and a simple but affecting funeral service was held. The Prince of Wales[107] was there, as well as [153] Prince Alexander of Teck, and all the chiefs of the army who could be spared from their duties. By the head of the coffin stood Prince Pertab Singh,[108] taking a last farewell of the warrior who was his old friend and ideal.[109] The hymns, "Now the labourer's task is o'er," and "O God, our help," were sung, and it seemed quite natural that Christian, Hindu, and Mohammedan should all join in the service.

Funeral of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts: the Procession in the Rain, on the way to St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

"It was a gloomy day," says one who was present, "with frequent cold showers; but as they took the coffin out the sun shone forth brilliantly, drawing across a dark bank of cloud opposite a vivid and most perfect rainbow. An aeroplane was flying out of the cloud into the sunshine, and the trumpets of the French cavalry rang out triumphantly. Then the minute guns started booming; the coffin, draped in the Union Jack, was placed in a Red Cross car; and so the gallant little hero went home from the war.

"I thought during the service of Lord Roberts, almost a boy, attending John Nicholson's funeral at Delhi, and of all the span of life between, and the link of simple courage and devotion to duty binding all the varied incidents of it together, and was glad of the privilege of having known him."

Last scene of all to end this strange, eventful history. Beneath the dome of St. Paul's, the resting-place of Nelson and Wellington, amidst a vast throng of the great and good of our nation, and with a sorrowing people outside, the last words of prayer and hope were said; and when all was over, thousands of citizens passed reverently by his grave.

"It is the most useful thing I can do at this moment:" this was the keynote of Lord Roberts's life—to be of use to his country. There is a lesson in these simple words for you and me. Lord Roberts was happy in his life; he would be happier still in his death were all his fellow-countrymen to ask with heart and voice, "What is the most useful thing I can do for my country now and hereafter?"

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CHAPTER XVII.

TALES FROM THE TRENCHES.

The long struggle round Ypres was a series of combats in which everything depended on the courage and endurance of the rank and file and their regimental officers. Incidents abounded, and almost every man in the firing line had experiences worth relating. Before I give you some of these experiences, let me refer again to the extraordinary courage of the Germans in pressing on against our line to what, in many cases, must have been certain death. No doubt this was largely due to patriotism and to the iron discipline of the German army, but we have evidence that frequently the men were driven forward by the revolvers of their officers. "Eye-witness" gives us the following statement of a wounded German prisoner:—

"On the 28th October my section received orders to go forward to the attack, and the officers warned us that if we gave way fire would be opened upon us from behind. This threat was carried into effect when the losses which we suffered compelled us to retire. Indeed, it was by a German bullet that I was wounded. Having fallen on the ground, I remained between the lines without food or care for two days, at the end of which time I dragged myself to a ruined house. During the whole of this time the German shells, which were short, were falling about my shelter. . . . Officers told us if we fell into the hands of the French we should be sent to the Foreign Legion,[110] and certainly massacred by Moroccans."

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In the diary of a German soldier we find a very severe condemnation of his officers for their bad leadership. "Before noon," runs the diary, "we were sent out in a regular storm of bullets by order of the major. These gentlemen, the officers, send their men forward in the most ridiculous way. They themselves remain far behind safely under cover. Our leadership is really scandalous. Enormous losses on our side, partly from the fire of our own people, for our leaders neither know where the enemy lies nor where our own troops are, so that we are often fired on by our own men. It is a marvel to me that we have got on as far as we have done. Our captain fell, also all our section leaders and a large number of our men.

"Moreover, no purpose was served by this advance, for we remained the rest of the day under cover, and could go neither forward nor back, nor even shoot. A trench which we had taken was not occupied by us, and the British naturally took it back at night. That was the sole result. Then when the enemy had again entrenched themselves, another attack was made, costing us many lives and fifty prisoners.

"It is simply ridiculous this leadership. If only I had known before! My opinion of German officers has changed. An adjutant shouted to us from a trench far to the rear to cut down a hedge which was in front of us. Bullets were whistling round from in front and from behind. The gentleman himself, of course, remained behind. The 4th Company has now no leaders but a couple of non-commissioned officers. When will my turn come? I hope to goodness I shall get home again!

"Still in the trenches. Shell and shrapnel burst without ceasing. In the evening a cup of rice and one-third of an apple per man. Let us hope peace will come soon. Such a war is really too awful. The English shoot like mad."

Now that I have shown you the Germans in an unfavourable light, let me tell you of an incident in which they appeared to advantage. Corporal J. Reardon of the 1st Grenadiers wrote home to his mother as follows: "The night our battalion got cut up the Germans shouted, 'Guards, fetch your wounded.' We did so, and they did not fire a shot. I think they were a crack regiment; anyhow they were jolly decent."

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You have already heard something of the courage and devotion of our young artillery officers, who frequently went far in advance of the guns to direct the fire of their batteries. Here is another story[111] of similar heroism:—

"Early in the day our gunners had found it impossible to locate certain German guns which were fast rendering our trenches untenable. The country was so flat that there was no possible point of vantage from which the gunners could 'observe,' except the steeple of a church. But the Germans knew that as well as we did, so the church was being vigorously shelled, and already no less than twelve lyddite shells had been pitched into it.

"It was the duty of Lieutenant Davidson to 'observe,' so he calmly went to the church, climbed the already tottering tower, and, seated on the top, proceeded to telephone his information to the battery. In consequence, German battery after German battery was silenced; the infantry, which at one time was in danger of extermination, was saved; and the position, in spite of an attack in overwhelming force by the enemy, was successfully held. The church was reduced to a scrap-heap, but still Davidson sat tight on the remnants of his tower. For seven solid hours, expecting death every moment, he calmly scanned the country and telephoned his reports.

"At dark his task was done, and he came down to rejoin his battery. As he left the ruins a fall of timber in one of the burning houses lit up everything with a sudden glare. There was the crack of a rifle—the German trenches were only a few hundred yards away—and a bullet passed through the back of his neck and out through the mouth. But without hurrying his pace he walked to his battery, gave them his final information, and then said, 'I think I'd better go and find the field ambulance, for the beggars have drilled a hole in me that needs plugging.' And he walked half a mile to the nearest 'collecting point.'

"In the infantry of the 14th Brigade men can talk of nobody else but 'Davidson of the Gunners.' They themselves face death every hour of the day and night; they themselves do unrecorded deeds of heroism worthy of the 'V.C.'; but with one voice they declare, 'Davidson is the real thing. If he doesn't get the V.C.—well, nobody deserves it.'" [157]

In telling you stories from the battlefield I always try to include one or more which show you the zeal, skill, and devotion of those whose duty it is not to take but to save life. Here is the story of a French doctor who tended the wounded during the bombardment of Ypres.

For four days, with the help of volunteer assistants, he cared for fifty-four German wounded, and the hospital had been frequently struck by shells, one of them intended to set it on fire. The supply of bread was failing, but the doctor and the nurses shared their portion with their patients. The doctor was urged to quit this dangerous post, but he said, "The mission of France is to elevate the Germans to our own level. So I shall remain here and continue to look after wounded Germans, showing them that a French doctor laughs at their shells, and only knows his duty." Unhappily this heroic man was killed by a shell on 13th or 14th November. The surviving wounded, in the sole charge of two nuns, were then removed to a safer place.

Soldiers' letters to their friends at home are full of accounts of the fierce fighting about Ypres. Corporal G. Stuart of the Camerons, one of the regiments which was nearly wiped out, thus describes how he was made a prisoner by the Prussian Guard, and how he escaped:—

"My regiment, or what was once a regiment, was holding a part of the trenches outside Ypres, and about half-past five in the morning the enemy's guns opened an awful fire on our trenches, and continued till about nine o'clock.

"To make matters worse, there was a very heavy mist on, and we could hardly see a yard in front. About this time the mist cleared up, and there, about 200 yards in front, were the Germans—the famous Prussian Guards—advancing on us, a solid mass of men.

How the Breton Marines held Dixmude. (See page 96.)

(*From the picture by Paul Thiriat. By permission of The Sphere.*)

"We immediately opened fire on them; but, rapid as it was, it was impossible to stop them. They managed to get right through on our right. Then the next thing I saw was that I was properly surrounded, with no earthly chance of escape, so I was made a prisoner. Well, what do you think the Huns did? There would be about a dozen of us, I think, made to advance in front of them, to get shot at by our own people, who had retired to [159]

take up another position. Any man who made the least sign of resenting was immediately shot, and not yet being tired of life, I went, thinking I might have a possible chance of escape.

"We advanced a few hundred yards, when they halted, and this time they made us put on their packs. Anyhow we had to advance again. This time we came under our own artillery fire, and I don't know yet how I was not blown to pieces. Really it makes my blood creep every time I think of it.

"Well, we had to lie down, and I just turned to speak to a chum, when I got one right through the neck. I rolled up in a heap, but came to myself a few minutes after, and managed to make my way to a farmhouse, where I found the Germans were dressing their wounded.

"I asked one of them to put my bandage on; but instead they made me go and look for 'Vater, vater.' I looked around for the 'vater,' but finding none, I went round to the other side of the house, and from here could see our guns just about 300 yards off. Now comes my chance. I had a good look round to see if everything was clear, so I dropped the jug I was to carry the 'vater' in, and 'hopped' it. Well, if the time was taken for that run, I bet a champion sprint winner would not have a look-in."

"I shall never forget the first night attack," writes Bombardier N. Tully of the R.F.A. "We had many guns in position—apparently more than the Kaiser's hordes bargained for. They came on out of their trenches shouting, 'Hoch! hoch! hoch!' but a few minutes afterwards they were screaming and cursing. Our shrapnel was mowing them down wholesale. . . . We gave them a bit of old England that night; the din of the guns and rifles was indescribable. We had a few spasmodic attacks the next few nights, but they gave me the impression that they were half-hearted and discouraged. I think it is the enemy who is fighting an uphill battle now. Our fellows are full of confidence in the final result.

"I am awfully glad I am British. It does one good to see how cheerful our boys are, no matter how bad the weather; but, like me, I am sure they will long for the slaughter to cease, and to return to the best bit of land under the sun." [160]

"It is the shell fire," wrote a correspondent, "which has made the Battle of Ypres a test of endurance such as no army has experienced before. Officers and men say that it has been ten times worse than on the Aisne. It has been persistent, and it has been deadly. Day and night there has been a succession of 'Oompahs,' 'Oompees,' 'Bowlers,' and 'Pipsqueaks'—'Oompahs' being the big shells, 'Oompees' the smaller ones, 'Bowlers' the projectiles thrown by trench mortars,[112] and 'Pipsqueaks' shrapnel. Atkins has a name for them all. The soil around Ypres is not a holding soil, but shifty and difficult to trench—unlike that on the Aisne—and constantly the trenches were being blown in by shells."

A private in the Honourable Artillery Corps tells an amusing story. "The first time we manned the front trenches," he says, "we had just got in—it was, of course, pitch dark—and we were peering cautiously about to see where we were. There were a few weird noises and strange lights, and I moved towards our corporal to ask him something, when suddenly a wild, unearthly wail went up apparently at my very feet. My blood ran cold, and I grasped him by the hand. 'What was that?' I cried. 'You're standing on a cat, I think,' he replied. And, indeed, I was! What it was doing there I don't know, but it remained with us off and on all day.

"Later, when it was dark, there was a German attack on our left. We were ordered to man our trench, and then suddenly the order came along, 'Sights at zero,[113] and fire low.' We waited, quivering with excitement, when all at once I saw something feeling its way cautiously over the trench in front of me. I sprang up to bayonet whatever came. It was not only a cat, but the same old cat! Twice it had pulled my leg in twenty-four hours."

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CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE TALES FROM THE TRENCHES.

A private of the London Scottish thus describes his experiences during the fighting at Messines on Halloween[114] and the following day:—

"We roused out at 4 a.m., and spent the morning wandering about from wood to wood, being followed by aeroplanes—beastly things. Finally, we entered a village, and a spy in a windmill gave them the range, and we had our first shells—horrible 'coal boxes,' and then shrapnel. We lost five men wounded there; then we went on, and finally extended to open order, and the battalion attacked up a valley, and we had to lie in a gutter about two feet deep along a road with poplars. There we stuck for two and a half hours, getting shelled all the time. It was dreadful. The big 'coal boxes' kept shaking the ground and covering us with dirt. I got a bit of shrapnel through my pack, and had my things spoilt, but wasn't touched.

"Then we had to advance across a field about a quarter-mile under fire, and get into a deserted trench. There we stopped till dark, still being shelled, and hearing the regiment snapping away in the distance. At dusk we made another trench, and seven of us went into it. There we had a fine time—moonlight, and Germans only 200 yards off. We could spot them through the glasses, and made very good practice; some of them crept down a hedge to twenty yards, but we did them in. You could hear them all talking; and twice

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they came on in force, but we beat them off, and they left any amount on the ground.

"Finally, at 12.45, they came on five or six deep, singing their national anthem, and walking quite slowly. Not liking German music, we gave them rapid fire; but they were too many. At last the cavalry had to hop it on both sides of us, and we ran like hares for our main trench; there we were thirty-two, and had the Germans in front, left, and rear five or six deep. There were thousands of them, all creeping up, and bullets everywhere. We all thought it was U P. I even took off my overcoat so as to be freer for the bayonet.

"Then they lit a farm, and the black smoke from the wet thatch blew across our front. They were only fifty yards away, still creeping; so we dashed out to the right, and all got through except six. Then we got separated, and nine of us, including our lieutenant, had to wander round, with one shot through the back, looking for the regiment or British troops. We kept running into shell fire and rifle fire, but finally got to a village, and found some officers at 4.45, very tired; there we reported, and went to join a cavalry regiment about two miles off. We had only had one biscuit and jam since the previous breakfast, except some lozenges. Well, for breakfast we had to attack the same village we had been driven out of the day before. It was most exciting—shells and bullets everywhere.

"Then we got mixed up with the Germans, and got the order to clear the houses with the bayonet. That was great sport; no shells, and only scrapping in a decent sort of way. We took four prisoners and scuppered the rest of them, about 200; then we were just examining the slain for pistols and other handy little souvenirs, when the shrapnel started again all among us. It was very hot, and we had to hop the twig behind a big bank; we were all laughing and joking. . . . One bullet turned my bonnet round on my head, and I sat down in the mud, and I got one through my kilt.

"Finally, they came behind one of our trenches in kilts, and said, 'Schotlant for effer and London Schottish;' but a volley put an end to that. At last the French arrived in force, and we had a stand easy, and were sent back for a rest. I am longing for another dig at them; it is the finest excitement going. One thing we have done—no more sneering at 'Terriers' out here by the Tommies; they are all very proud of us now, and somehow we feel different now that we have been through the hoop."

A Pleasant Scene in the Grand Place at Arras.

(*From the picture by D. Macpherson. By permission of The Sphere.*)
A correspondent says: "In the early afternoon I saw in the huge Grand Place at Arras (one of the relics of the long occupation by the Spanish) the prettiest of scenes. A squadron of French dragoons had halted there, and the men had dismounted. The long row of horses had each a new master, for the dragoons had put children into the saddle, and each child had on its head a dragoon's casque."

The following extract is from the diary of a subaltern in the London Scottish: "I have succeeded in getting [164]
hold of a motor 'bus to go for supplies. It is a London 'General.' There are dozens of them here, and it seems difficult to realize that we are so far away when we see the usual advertisements around us....

"It is a funny thing, but a fact, that our fellows bear pain much better than the Germans. To-day I had a small bugler of a British battalion with a shocking shoulder wound, who sat there simply hanging on to himself, and not uttering a sound; while a tremendous German near by, with a bullet wound in his hand, sat nursing himself, weeping at frequent intervals, and making no end of a row."

In the defeat of the Prussian Guard on 11th November the Black Watch played a splendid part, and pursued the enemy for over a mile. A *Daily Chronicle* correspondent says: "It was only when a batch of wounded and prisoners of the Prussian Guard arrived at —— that our fellows actually realized the kind of men they have been fighting during the last few days. Huge fellows they are, all over six feet in height, one of them nearing seven—an exceptional giant, of course, but still not looking so very big among his fellows. When one realizes that this magnificent regiment has now been severely handled by our troops for the third time, and that they

are looked upon as the flower of the German army, then one also realizes just what a magnificent performance our own men must have put up.

"After submitting for over eight hours to a terrible shell fire of both lyddite and shrapnel, our men, as may well be imagined, were getting very tired, and it was next to impossible to send relief to our advanced trenches until after dusk. The Germans, anticipating the condition of things, and realizing that it was now or never, massed in force their Prussian Guards and some other forces, and drove our troops back through sheer weight of numbers.

"Back they went, contesting stubbornly every trench as they vacated it. When within about sixty yards of where our artillery was hidden, our own men, acting under orders, suddenly split their line and dispersed on either side, leaving a huge gap—the break in the British line which the enemy had been trying to make for [165] weeks. Into this break came the Prussian Guard, wildly shouting and cheering—into the jaws of death came the finest of the Kaiser's troops. They had advanced within fifty yards of the muzzles of our field guns when they belched forth fire at point-blank range, while our Maxims fired into the 'brown' from either side. Imagine those shells tearing their whistling and shrieking way through masses of men who a moment before were shouting in gleeful confidence of victory already won.

"Not even the Prussian Guard could stand up to a terror like this. They broke and wavered and fled! But they had penetrated to within a few yards of our artillery. They turned back in headlong flight—a flight which was aided by a savage charge made by the Black Watch. The whole thing was beautifully timed by both artillery and infantry alike. Not only were the Germans driven back over the trenches, which but a short time ago they had taken from our men, but they were pursued by the Highlanders for over a mile beyond. The net result was that the enemy lost over 1,000 men killed and some 3,000 men wounded, as well as their own advanced trenches."

The following soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross for deeds of valour done during the period from 31st October to 30th November 1914:—

Sepoy Khudadad, 129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis. Sepoy Khudadad had the signal honour of being the first Indian to win and wear the Victoria Cross, which, prior to this war, was only conferred on British-born soldiers. On 31st October, at Hollebeke, Sepoy Khudadad showed extraordinary courage and steadfastness. Though the white officer in charge of his detachment had been shot down and the other Maxim in the trench had been put out of action, Khudadad remained working his gun until all his five comrades had been killed, and he himself was badly wounded. The King in person pinned the decoration on the gallant Sepoy's breast during his visit to the front on December 3, 1914.

How Drummer Bent saved a Wounded Comrade.

(*From the picture by S. Begg. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

Drummer Spencer John Bent, 1st Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment. On the night of the 1st-2nd November, near Le Gheir,[115] the officer, sergeant, and section commander of this hero's platoon were struck down, [167] and the unit was without a leader. Drummer Bent at once took command, and with great presence of mind and coolness succeeded in holding the position. He had previously distinguished himself on the 22nd, and again on the 24th October, by bringing up ammunition under a heavy shell and rifle fire. Again, on the 3rd November, he went out and brought into cover several wounded men who were lying exposed in the open. He rescued one of his comrades by hooking his feet under the wounded man's arms and by dragging him in this manner for twenty-five yards to the shelter of a trench.

Captain John Franks Vallentin, 1st South Staffordshire Regiment. On 7th November, at Zillebeke, Captain Vallentin very gallantly led an attack against the Germans, but while doing so was struck down. He struggled to his feet, and tried to press on, but was immediately killed. His men carried the trenches, and this was due in great measure to the confidence with which their captain's repeated acts of bravery and ability had

inspired them.

Lieutenant Walter Lorrain Brodie, 2nd Battalion, the Highland Light Infantry. On the night of 11th November Lieutenant Brodie, who was in charge of a machine-gun section, moved up to the trenches near Becelaere[116] to relieve a unit of another regiment. When darkness fell, and the men on guard had been posted, the remainder prepared to take what rest they could. Lieutenant Brodie and several men were occupying a section of the trench which formed an angle with the other sections. All was quiet, when the alarm was given, and the enemy swooped down on the trench and managed to capture a part of it. They then made a rush towards the section in which Lieutenant Brodie was stationed, in the hope of capturing his machine gun. At once the lieutenant led his men against the Germans, and there was a furious fight in the trench, during which he bayoneted several of the enemy. So gallantly did his men second his efforts that eighty Germans were killed and fifty-one taken prisoners. There is no doubt that Lieutenant Brodie, by his prompt and inspiring courage, relieved a very dangerous situation. Subsequently he was promoted captain.

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Lieutenant John Henry Stephen Dimmer, 2nd Battalion, the King's Royal Rifle Corps. As a boy Lieutenant Dimmer won a London County Council Scholarship, and was transferred to Rutlish School. Always fond of soldiering, he started a Boys' Brigade at Wimbledon, and brought it to a high state of efficiency. At fifteen he left school, and entered the office of a civil engineer; but the drums called him, and he offered himself as a recruit for the regular army. His inches were, however, against him; so he joined the 7th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifles (Militia). In his first year he was promoted sergeant, and soon after was transferred as a private to the regular battalion, which saw service in South Africa. In 1903 he was promoted corporal, and his military sketching received high praise from General Lyttelton and General Ian Hamilton.[117] In 1905 he received another step for his services as scout and signaller in the Mounted Infantry, and in the following year was sent to Belgium and Germany to study army methods. Later on he was employed abroad as an intelligence officer, and in 1908 received a commission as second lieutenant.

Major J. H. S. Dimmer, V.C.

In a letter to his mother Lieutenant Dimmer wrote a brief account of how he won the V.C. on November 12, 1914, at Klein Zillebeke. He says: "Here is how it all happened. On Thursday last, at about one o'clock, we were suddenly attacked by the Prussian Guards. They shelled us unmercifully, and poured in a perfect hail of bullets at a range of about 100 yards. I got my Maxims going, but they smashed one up almost immediately, and then turned all their attention to the gun I was with, and succeeded in smashing that too; but before they completed the job I had been twice wounded, and was finally knocked out with the gun. My face is spattered with pieces of my gun and pieces of shell, and I have a bullet in my face and four small holes in my right shoulder. It made rather a nasty mess of me at first, but now that I am washed and my wounds dressed I look quite right."

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Lieutenant Dimmer's commanding officer declared that by holding on to his gun after he had been shot five times, he saved the whole battalion, if not the whole line, on at least three occasions.

I have told you Lieutenant Dimmer's story thus fully because it shows very clearly how a man of grit and ability and devotion can win his way by sheer merit in the British army. In the German army, as you know, only men of a certain social class are appointed as officers. Major Dimmer (to which rank he was subsequently promoted) is only one of thousands who have risen from the ranks to distinction in the service of Britain. The story of his career and of how he won the highest award of valour sets a fine example to all young soldiers.

Bandsman Thomas Edward Rendle, 1st Battalion, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. In time of war bandsmen serve as stretcher-bearers, and their duty is to convey the wounded from the field of battle to the dressing stations and ambulances. How Bandsman Rendle won the Victoria Cross on 20th November, at a village about a mile and a half west of Messines, is best told in the words of an officer of the Cornwalls:—

"Two shells pitched into the trench only about thirty yards from me, and blew ten men to pieces. They also blew down the front part of the trench, and the earth filled up the dug-out part. This was very annoying, as it divided our trench into two parts, and made it impossible to get from one half to the other without running across this open piece of ground, about five or six yards wide. Of course, the Germans realized this at once, and put up a machine gun to cover this space, so that any one who crossed it carried his life very much in his hands.

"Lieutenant Colebrook was shot that afternoon, in that part of the trench which had no communications. He asked for me, so I went along to him. This meant that I had to cross the gap, but luckily they failed to hit me. We decided it was quite impossible to move him until dark, as there was no way of getting him across the gap; so I sat down to chat with him, when suddenly the Germans started again with their shells.

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"The first two went over the trench, but the next one pitched just in front and buried me with mud. This I thought was a bit too much, so I said that Colebrook must be got away. I was called away to the other end of the trench for a few minutes. In the meantime Bandsman Rendle, one of the stretcher-bearers, lay on his stomach in the gap under fire, and tried to clear the earth out of the original trench to get a safe path for Lieutenant Colebrook to pass. But another shell came that decided him to risk it. So he took Colebrooke on his back, and wormed his way across the open space on his stomach, getting him to the right half of the trench, where it was all plain sailing, and from which Colebrook was sent back to battalion headquarters."

Naik[118] Darwan Sing Negí, 1st Battalion, 39th Garhwal Rifles. Less than a month after Sepoy Khudadad won the Victoria Cross, another Indian soldier proved himself so supremely brave that the highest award of valour was given to him. On the night of the 23rd-24th November, near Festubert, the Garhwal Rifles were engaged in retaking trenches and clearing the enemy out of them. Naik Darwan Sing Negí greatly distinguished himself in this work. He was one of the first to push round each successive traverse, and though wounded in two places in the head and also in the arm, he fought on in spite of severe fire from bombs and rifles at the closest range. Great was the naik's delight when his Majesty himself pinned the cross to his breast.

Lieutenant Frank Alexander de Pass, 34th Prince Albert Victor's Own Poona Horse. Near Festubert, on 24th November, Lieutenant de Pass entered a German sap[119] and destroyed a traverse in the face of the enemy's bombs. Subsequently he rescued under heavy fire a wounded man who was lying exposed in the open. Unhappily this gallant officer lost his life on the same day in a second attempt to capture the sap, which had been reoccupied by the enemy.

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The German Colonies are marked in solid black.

CHAPTER XIX.

GERMANY'S COLONIAL EMPIRE.

About the year 1880 the rulers of Germany began to think of founding a colonial empire. There were many reasons why it seemed to them advisable that they should extend their dominion overseas. Germany had become a great manufacturing nation, and she needed new markets in which to sell her surplus goods, and tropical lands which would give her large and cheap supplies of the raw material for making them. Further, many of her people, anxious to better themselves, were emigrating to America,[120] where they were lost to Germany. It was thought that, had she possessed colonies, Germans would have settled in them instead of going to America, and thus would not have reduced the strength of the Fatherland. Many patriotic Germans wished to see their country a great naval power, and they knew that colonies could neither be obtained nor maintained without a big navy. They, therefore, were in favour of colonial expansion, because it would force Germany to become powerful on the seas.

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About this time the attention of the world was specially directed to Africa. The travels of Livingstone[121] and Stanley[122] and other explorers, British, French, German, and Italian, were revealing the "Dark Continent" as a new sphere for the expansion of the European Powers. Almost immediately they began to "peg out their claims." A number of clever writers in Germany began to point out to their fellow-countrymen that unless they set up a colonial empire they would be left behind in the race. Before long they had persuaded the people that overseas trade, ships of war, and colonies were the three things that Germany must provide herself with, or be content to continue as a second-rate Power. Most of the writers thought that colonies could be obtained in a lawful way, but a historian[123] who had great influence on the ruling classes taught openly that the best method of winning a colonial empire was to defeat and despoil Britain. This teaching suited the German mind exactly, and gradually it gained such ground that it became almost a national policy.

In 1886 what is known as the "great scramble for Africa" began, and Germany played her part in it. In Eastern Africa her explorers had made many important discoveries, and as far back as 1860 one of them said, "I am persuaded that in a short time a colony established in East Africa would be most successful, and after two or three years would become self-supporting." Not, however, until 1884 was an attempt made to set up a German colony in this part of the world. In that year three German political agents, in the disguise of needy travellers, crossed over from Zanzibar to the mainland, and began making treaties by which the

local chiefs signed away their country. [173]

Some of these treaties were not worth the paper they were written on, for the chiefs were vassals of the Sultan of Zanzibar, who was under British protection. Nevertheless, a German fleet was sent to Zanzibar, and the Sultan was forced, at a price of £200,000, to yield up his territory on the mainland from Cape Delgado to a line drawn from the mouth of the Umbe River to the Victoria Nyanza. The British afterwards proclaimed a protectorate over the remainder of the Sultan's African dominions.

At the beginning of the present war German East Africa covered an area of 364,000 square miles—that is, it was almost double the size of Germany, and had an estimated population of over 7½ millions, the whites numbering a little over 5,000. From the low-lying coast lands it rises to lofty and irregular mountains, which form the outer buttress of a plateau some 3,000 or 4,000 feet in height. From the middle of this plateau streams are thrown off north to the Victoria Nyanza,[124] west to Lake Tanganyika,[125] and east to the Indian Ocean. Parts of this plateau are mere desert, waterless and scrub-covered, with loose shingle, dried-up water-courses, and bare, fantastic rocks. Other parts are well watered and fertile, and in these favourable regions the Germans have developed agriculture greatly. Prior to the war, rubber, copal, bark, fibre, teak, mahogany, coffee, tobacco, sugar cane, cotton, etc., were largely grown and exported; gold, coal, graphite, iron, salt, and precious stones were mined; and ivory was obtained from the elephants, which still roam the forests in large numbers. When the war began, German East Africa was making good and steady progress.

The Germans did not win the colony without considerable fighting with the natives, and one of the risings which took place in 1904 cost East Africa the lives of about 120,000 men, women, and children. The Germans have no genius for dealing with natives; their brutal, blustering methods are certain to provoke strife wherever they obtain a foothold. They have, however, a genius for organizing, and this is seen in the [175]
towns which they have built, and the eight fairly good harbours which they have constructed on the coast. The name of the capital, Dar-es-Salaam, means "the harbour of peace;" it is a good port and a delightful place. German East Africa suffered a great shock when the Uganda railway was built by the British and the trade of the lake region was thus captured. The Germans replied by building two lines which gave the quickest access to British Central Africa and to the Southern Congo.

British Native Troops preparing to embark at Freetown, Sierra Leone, for the Kamerun.

(*Photo Central News.*)

The most valuable colonies of Germany, however, were established in West Africa. Third in order of size, but first in commercial value, is the colony of Kamerun,[126] which forms a rough wedge between British Nigeria and French Congo, with its point at Lake Chad. The colony of Kamerun has an area of 190,000 square miles, and an estimated population of 3½ millions, whites numbering less than 2,000.

The country was going a-begging when the Germans in 1884 sent an expedition which took it over. When the British agent arrived five days later he found the chiefs bound to the German Empire. He, however, declined to agree to this arrangement, and came to terms with the tribes on the British frontier; but the Home Government would not support him, and thus the Germans were allowed to become masters of Kamerun. Many of the natives refused to be taken under the wing of the German eagle, and were only persuaded to acknowledge their new masters by means of rifles and big guns. After thirty years the proud Fula[127] tribes in the hinterland still remained unreconciled to German rule.

Kamerun is a rich and largely unexplored territory, very similar in character to the southern part of our colony of Nigeria. The Germans have spent much time and money in developing the country, and have built excellent towns, good roads, and some railways. Along the coast and in the deep, long valleys between the mountains the oil palm abounds; and in the forests, which are full of elephants, there is a wealth of ebony and other valuable timber. There are great mineral resources, too, but they have not so far been largely worked. Kamerun was very rapidly advancing when the war broke out, because the traders were backed [176]
from the Fatherland, and the officials were ready and eager to do everything that would advance its interests. It must be confessed that in the work of colonial development the Germans showed an energy and resource which put Britain in the shade.

In 1883 the only unclaimed strip of West African territory between the Gambia and Nigeria was Togoland, which lies between British Ashanti and French Dahomey, and is in all respects similar in character to these countries. The coast line is but thirty-three miles in length, and the Germans having secured it, laid claim to a huge expanse of hinterland—an area of 33,000 square miles. Britain and France, after much discussion, allowed the claim, and thus Germany became possessed of Togoland, her smallest but by no means her least valuable colony. She has spent much money on roads and railways, and in building the fine town of Lomé, one of the best in all West Africa. For the last twenty years Togoland has been self-supporting. When the war began Togoland possessed one of the greatest of all German wireless stations at Kamina.[128] It could communicate direct with Berlin, and was one of an important chain which linked up the Fatherland not only with Togoland but with Kamerun, East Africa, and South-West Africa.

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CHAPTER XX.

GERMANY'S VANISHING COLONIES.

We now turn to German South-West Africa, which has an area of 322,450 square miles and a native population of about 80,000. The whites number nearly 15,000, of whom 12,000 are Germans. In 1884 Great Britain seized Walfish Bay, the only good harbour, and also some of the guano islands off the coast. Further, Cecil John Rhodes,[129] who had constantly urged the British Government to take over the territory, had obtained mining rights from the local chiefs.

Less than fifty years ago German missionaries, in the territory then known as Damaraland, appealed to the British Government to annex the country. The appeal was rejected. In 1883 a Bremen merchant, F. A. E. Lüderitz, whose name has been given to the settlement at Lüderitz Bay, set up a trading station under the sanction and approval of Bismarck. On the strength of Lüderitz's trifling commercial claims Germany annexed the country. It is said that when Rhodes heard the news he threw the papers signed by the local chiefs into a safe and slammed the iron door, with the remark, "Let them lie there until the country is British." The extent of Germany's trading interest in her new possession may be gathered from the fact that the little steamer employed by Lüderitz was known as "The Bottle Mail," because she imported full bottles of beer for the German trader, and carried back the "empties" as exports!

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Germany rejoiced in her new possession, but she had hard work to occupy it. For five or six years the Hottentots fought hard for their independence, and until they were put down there was scarcely any attempt at settlement. In October 1904 the brutal methods of the officials led to a great rising of the Hereros, the bravest of the native peoples. During this revolt the Germans did many of those deeds of shame and horror which afterwards covered their name with infamy in Belgium. It took 19,000 Germans to put down the Hereros, and they were not completely subdued until 1908.

German Camel Corps in German South-West Africa. ***Photo, Underwood & Underwood.***

German South-West Africa is not an inviting land. Much of it is waterless desert, but there are large areas of splendid grass land very suitable for grazing, and upon them the Herero raise huge herds of cattle. Sheep thrive well, and so do goats. Many Boers from Cape Colony have settled in the country, and their flocks and herds have prospered greatly. It was these Boers from Cape Colony who "made" German South-West Africa.

The Germans have done much to foster agriculture, and have opened up the country by good roads, and by railways which in 1913 had a total length of 1,304 miles. They have also bored largely for water. Despite all

their efforts, however, the colony did not pay its way until 1912, when diamonds were discovered in the Lüderitz Bay district. Copper was also found and mined, and before the war some 27,500 tons of this metal were exported annually.

When the great struggle began in Europe, the German Empire overseas covered an estimated area of over 1,000,000 square miles, of which nearly 90 per cent. was in Africa, and by far the bulk of the remainder in certain islands of the Pacific Ocean. Of the fourteen islands comprising the Samoan group, which lies 1,600 miles to the north of New Zealand, Germany held eight of the best, and America the remainder. To most people the mention of Samoa recalls Robert Louis Stevenson,[130] the sweet singer and stirring romancer who spent the last years of his life at Vailima, in a deep cleft of the mountains near Apia, in the fertile island of Upolu, the largest island of the Samoan group. Here he wrote several of his books, and worked hard at [180] clearing the rank tropical jungle and at making roads. He died in his island home Dec. 3, 1894, and was buried on the summit of a mountain. Thanks to his descriptions,[131] the Samoans and their beautiful sunny islands are familiar to the readers of English books all the world over.

Apia, near to which Stevenson lived, was the capital of the German islands; it has an excellent harbour. On March 19, 1889, when the harbour was full of shipping, including German and American men-of-war and H.M.S. *Calliope*, one of the disastrous hurricanes which occasionally sweep over the islands of the Southern Seas began to blow. The only possible way in which these ships could escape wreck was to put to sea and there ride out the storm. All the ships tried to leave the harbour, but the only one that was able to make headway against the fearful wind and sea was the *Calliope*. All the other ships were wrecked, and many lives were lost. When King George V., then Prince of Wales, visited Wellington, the seat of the New Zealand Government, he passed under an arch of coal with this inscription: "The coal that saved the *Calliope*."

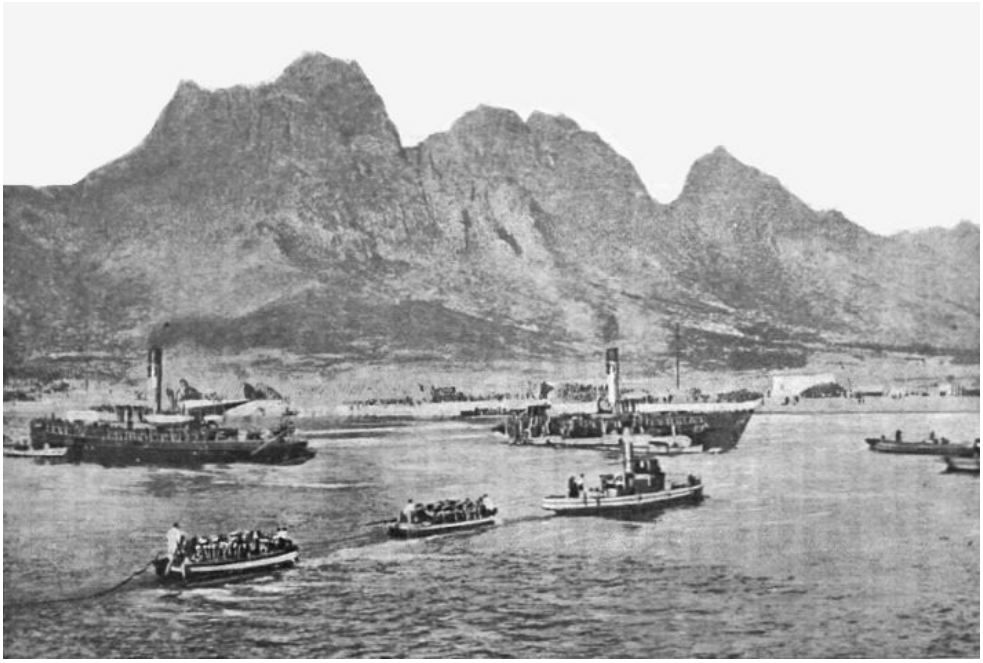
The German Samoan islands were acquired in 1899. The two largest of them have a united area of 1,000 square miles; the total population of the islands is about 35,000, and the annual trade was reckoned at £120,000. Amongst other Pacific possessions of Germany when the war began were the southern islands of the Solomon group, an archipelago of high wooded mountains, lying to the east of New Guinea. The Bismarck Archipelago, to the west of them, the coral reefs of the Carolines, Pelew, and Marianne (or Ladrone) Islands,[132] and the Marshall Islands still farther north, were also in German hands. On Neu-Pommern, one of the Bismarck group, there was a powerful wireless station.

By far the largest island possession of Germany was a portion of New Guinea. This huge, lizard-shaped island—the second largest island in the world—lies about eighty miles north of Australia, and stands like a stepping-stone between that continent and Asia. The Dutch held the western half, and the remainder was divided between Germany and Britain, the south-east part being ours and the remainder German. The [181] German portion was known as Kaiser Wilhelm Land, and had an area of 70,000 square miles. Most of it is unexplored, but there is no doubt that it is exceedingly rich in wild tropical products, and that it possesses great mineral wealth. The Germans have not made much headway in Kaiser Wilhelm Land or in the "Spice Islands," already mentioned; but they spent much money in developing the country and in fostering trade.

The Australians have long feared that the possession of part of New Guinea by an unfriendly Power would be a danger to them, as it would afford an enemy a base for operations against the island-continent. The Queensland Government tried to get a footing in New Guinea about thirty years ago, but the British Government would not then lend its support. A few years later the home authorities were brought to see the necessity of occupying that part of New Guinea which faced Australia, and in 1887 it was added to the British Empire. It is now governed by the Australian Commonwealth.

Germany had only one other possession besides those which I have mentioned. This was Kiao-chau, on the east coast of the Chinese province of Shan-tung. Germany obtained it by force and fraud, as you shall hear. In the autumn of 1895 Japan emerged as victor from a war with China, and by the treaty of peace she was to hold certain parts of the Liao-tung peninsula. The Kaiser professed to fear the growing power of Japan, and he had a picture[133] painted to point a moral to the Powers of Europe. It showed the European nations confronted with what is called the "Yellow Peril," and called upon them to defend their holiest possessions.

The German view of the Japanese has been put as follows: "It is for Europe to look continually eastward. There is a yellow cloud rising there which betokens a coming storm. Who are these Japanese who desire to control the teeming millions of China? The Japanese are highly-educated barbarians. They have fresh minds, and they are the most imitative beings on earth if one excepts the smaller species of monkeys; they are not a civilized people. You may put a clever savage into a European dress or into a European-built battleship, but he remains a savage. Races do not become civilized in twenty years. Europe cannot allow the Japanese to control the Chinese millions, for the Japanese are without a soul." Well might the Japanese retort that if the Germans represent civilization with a soul, it would be to the benefit of the world if mankind remained [183] savage.



Landing of British Forces on Tsing-tau Peninsula, September 23, 1914. ***Photo, The Sphere.***

Professing to stand forth as the champion of soulful civilization, the Kaiser persuaded France and Russia to join with him in robbing the Japanese of the fruits of their victory. He only needed an excuse to interfere, and an excuse is easily found if you set yourself to look for it. In the autumn of 1897 two persons, said to be German missionaries, were murdered somewhere in the heart of China. At once the Kaiser was filled with righteous indignation; he shook his "mailed fist," and sending his brother, Prince Henry, to China with a couple of old ships which broke down on the voyage, bade him "declare the gospel of your Majesty's hallowed person." With these ancient craft the Kaiser seized a piece of Chinese territory for himself, and demanded that it should be leased to him with sovereign rights for ninety-nine years. In this way he obtained Kiao-chau, his Asiatic "place in the sun."

The protectorate of Kiao-chau has an area of about 200 square miles; it contains thirty-three townships and a native population of about 192,000. The whites number about 4,500, the greater part of them being Germans. Before the war, Tsing-tau, the port, was a powerful fortress, a first-class naval station, and a great entrenched camp, strong both by land and sea, equipped with the latest type of forts, and defended by a strong garrison. Twenty millions of money had been spent on the harbour, fortress, and naval station. The colony was very dear to the heart of the Kaiser, and he spoke of it as "a model of German culture." From Kiao-chau German influence was to radiate throughout the Far East, until the yellow peoples stood in awe of the Kaiser's name.

The great struggle which I am describing in these pages has been well called "the World-wide War." Immediately the Kaiser flung down the gage of battle in Europe the Allies began to attack his colonial possessions in Africa, Asia, and the Southern Seas. The German fleet was bottled up in its ports; no German transport dared cross the ocean; no help could come to them from the Fatherland. The German forces in each possession had to fight their own battle with such resources as they then possessed. It was clear to [184] everybody that without sea power Germany could not hope to hold any of her colonies very long; they were bound to fall, and fall rapidly.

The Australian navy, assisted by our China squadron, put to sea immediately, and scoured the Pacific for German cruisers. A force of New Zealanders set sail from Wellington on 15th August, and, under the escort of H.M.S. *Australia*, H.M.S. *Melbourne*, and the French cruiser *Montcalm*, crossed the sixteen hundred miles of sea between them and Samoa. They reached Apia on the 28th, and the islands surrendered without a blow being struck. Before the war was a month old Robert Louis Stevenson's body was lying in British soil.

The next attack was on Neu-Pommern, the chief island of the Bismarck Archipelago, where, you will remember, there was an important wireless station. On 11th September a British force arrived at Herbertshohe, the port at the northern end of the island. A party of sailors landed at dawn and pushed through the bush towards the wireless station. The roads had been mined, rifle pits had been dug, and snipers were hidden in the trees. The British fought their way for six miles, losing ten officers and four men; but when they reached the wireless station the whole enemy force surrendered. The German flag was hauled down, the Union Jack flew triumphantly in its stead, and thus the Bismarck Archipelago was lost to the Kaiser.

Two days later our troops sailed for the Solomon Islands, which were captured without difficulty and without bloodshed. A force was then sent against Kaiser Wilhelm Land, where it was thought that the Germans would show fight. Again there was a bloodless victory, and the British flag was hoisted above the chief port, which was left in the possession of British troops. Early in November the Japanese occupied the Marshall Islands and some of the other northern groups.

By this time the Pacific possessions of Germany had vanished, save for a few small and unimportant islands, and her wireless stations had been destroyed. These rapid successes were largely due to the Australian navy, which had worked with the highest speed and efficiency. H.M.S. *Melbourne*, for example, covered no less than 11,000 miles of sea in the first six weeks of the war.

Togoland was the first of Germany's African colonies to fall. Its geographical position made it easy of attack and very difficult to hold. You will remember that it had British and French territory on its flanks, and that its sea coast was open to bombardment by British ships. So situated, and held by military forces which did not number more than 250 whites and 3,000 natives in all, it was certain to fall quickly and easily. [185]

Soon after the outbreak of war the cables connecting Togoland with Germany were cut by the British, so that only by means of wireless telegraphy could the colony communicate with the Fatherland. Native troops were rushed down from Kumasi[134] to the Gold Coast, and all Britons in Accra[135] were sworn in as volunteers. On 6th August a British advance guard pushed across the western frontier, and a few days later was followed by the main column, under Colonel Bryant. Meanwhile the French made a similar movement from Dahomey, on the eastern frontier. When the British advance guard reached Lomé, it found the town deserted, and the Germans retiring northwards along the railway line. On the arrival of the main column arrangements were made for an advance on Kamina, where the great wireless station had been established. There were two or three skirmishes on the way, but no engagement of any particular importance. On the river, south of Nuatja, the enemy was found to be strongly entrenched, and fighting continued from early morning until after dusk. During the night the enemy abandoned Nuatja, and at daybreak the British marched in. Our losses in this engagement, including those of the French troops from Dahomey, were very high.

Two days later the advance was continued towards Kamina, near the Government station of Atakpame, at the railhead. Here the enemy had dug trenches, built blockhouses, laid in provisions, and made other preparations to stand a siege. During the advance our men spent two or three nights in the mud huts of filthy native villages. Several rivers, swollen into rushing torrents by the heavy rain, impeded the advance, for the Germans had blown up the road and railway bridges. Meanwhile the advance guard pushed forward, and as they did so the enemy sent two men with a flag of truce to Colonel Bryant, offering to surrender on certain terms and with the usual honours of war. Colonel Bryant told them that they were not in a position to ask for terms, and that they must surrender unconditionally. Next day (10th August) the enemy agreed to do so. [186]

A telegraphist with the Togoland Field Force thus describes the surrender: "I rode in with the Headquarters Staff, and, arriving at Kamina, found the Germans, all white men (their native troops having deserted), drawn up in front of the acting Governor's residence, with himself, a smart-looking man, at their head, and all their rifles, machine guns, ammunition, and other weapons of war piled in front of them.

"We formed up on the other side in the shape of a triangle—the British troops on the right, French on the left, guns at the apex, and Headquarters Staff in the centre. Our adjutant, with the Union Jack in one hand and the French flag in the other, accompanied by a native soldier of each nation, planted the two flags in front of the massed troops, who all presented arms. We saluted, and in that brief half-minute, while we were at the 'present,' Togoland, which had been a German colony for over thirty years, passed into the hands of Britain and France. It was most impressive, and something I am not likely to forget. We took at this place alone 206 white German prisoners, three machine guns, hundreds of rifles, and thousands of rounds of ammunition.

"The Germans had destroyed their powerful wireless station—a tremendous place, three miles long, with nine masts 250 to 410 feet high—two days before we arrived; otherwise I might have been able to get into communication with Whitehall direct, instead of sending the news of the surrender to the Secretary of State on a little field buzzer set, tapped in on the telegraph wire by the side of the road.

"This town, Atakpame, is in the half of Togoland allotted to the French, so the British troops have left the place. It is now occupied by Senegalese (French native troops, and fine fighting men). . . . This is a magnificent country, and Atakpame is beautifully situated up in the hills. . . . This letter leaves by the last English mail out of Atakpame, which has been under three different flags in less than three weeks—German, British, and French.

"Quick work, eh?"

By this time Kamerun, German South-West Africa, and German East Africa had been attacked. I will tell you how they resisted later on, when we come to the period at which they were finally conquered.

[187]

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STORY OF THE "EMDEN."

When the war broke out there was a German squadron of ships of war in Eastern waters, its base being Tsing-tau. Admiral von Spee, who commanded it, did not attempt to go to the rescue of the Pacific islands when the British attacked them, but departed with most of his ships for the west coast of South America. Two of his smaller cruisers—the *Königsberg* and the *Emden*—were, however, detached to prey on British commerce in the East. You have read[136] how the *Königsberg* caught H.M.S. *Pegasus* unawares, in Zanzibar harbour, and disabled her. I shall tell you later how this vessel was finally destroyed. In this chapter we will learn something of the career of the *Emden*.

A ship of war can do as much mischief amongst peaceful merchantmen as a cat among pigeons. Ordinary trading ships are entirely at the mercy of a fast cruiser armed with big guns. They have no means of resisting, and must surrender when called upon to do so. During the American Civil War a ship, afterwards known as the *Alabama*, was built at Birkenhead for the Southern States. By some mistake she was allowed to leave the Mersey and proceed to the Azores, where she was fully equipped as a vessel of war. In August

1862 she began to prey on the merchantmen of the Northern States, and by June 1864 she had captured and destroyed about sixty-eight of their ships. By hoisting the British flag she decoyed them within reach of her guns, and then they were obliged to yield. In the end the *Alabama* was chased by a Northern ship of war to [188] the English Channel, and a fight took place off the French shore near Cherbourg. In an hour the *Alabama* was shattered, and her career was ended for ever.[137] Up to the time when the *Emden* left Kiao-chau, in August 1914, the *Alabama* was the most successful commerce-raider of history. The Emden, however, soon deposed her from that pride of place. In two short months she did more damage than the *Alabama* did in two years.

The *Emden* was a light cruiser of 3,544 tons displacement, and she dated from 1908. She had a speed of 25 knots, and her armament consisted of ten 4.1-inch guns, four 2.1-inch guns, and four machine guns, as well as two torpedo tubes. Her captain, was Commander Karl von Müller, who has thus been described: "Picture a young man of about thirty, tall, clean-shaven, with closely-cropped hair and keen eyes, a neatly-proportioned figure, a man with the manners of a drawing-room, possessed of a keen sense of humour and an extensive knowledge of the sea and its affairs." As the story proceeds you will learn that Commander Müller was a man of quick, ready, and inventive mind, and that for two months he played a successful game of hide-and-seek with the many Allied ships of war that were bent on his destruction.

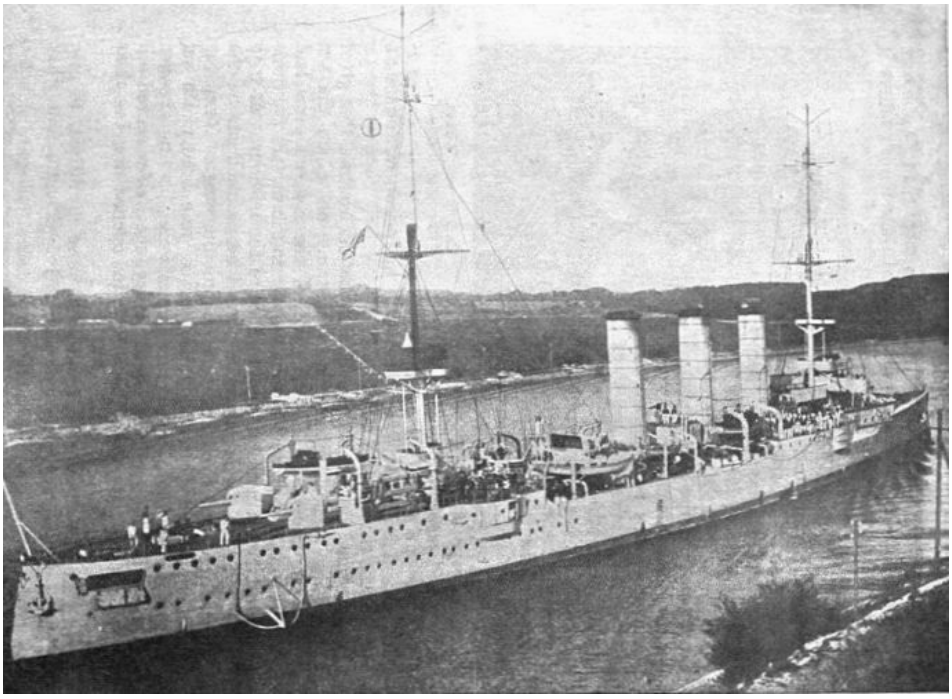
The *Emden's* adventures began almost before she was out of sight of Kiao-chau. She knew that Japanese men-of-war were near at hand, and that she was more than likely to fall in with one of them. Sure enough, a Japanese vessel was sighted; but it was not the three-funnelled *Emden*, under the black, white, and red flag of Germany that passed the enemy warship, but a vessel of four funnels flying the British white ensign. The Japanese were completely deceived, especially when the *Emden's* crew lined the rails and greeted them with three hearty British cheers. By means of this clever trick the *Emden* gained the open sea unmolested.

What she did up to 10th September we do not know. Just when the first Indian contingent was leaving for Marseilles she appeared in the Bay of Bengal and began her career of destruction. Inside four days she had [189] seized and sunk five ships, and before seven weeks were over had destroyed seventeen vessels of 70,000 tons burden, and worth more than £2,000,000. Captain von Müller fell in with some of these ships; others it is said that he decoyed by sending out the S.O.S. signal[138] in defiance of the rules of war which Germany had signed at the Hague. His practice was to close in upon his victim very quickly, destroy its wireless apparatus before the alarm could be given, put the crew on board one of his prizes, take what coal and provisions he required, and then with a mine or a few shots send the captured vessel to the bottom. It is said that when he overhauled the *Kabinga* he discovered that the captain's wife was on board, and released the ship. The captain's wife, on taking leave of him, hoped that he would soon be caught, but that his life would be spared. Commander Müller was generous to his prisoners, and in no case were they treated harshly.

Captain von Müller.

(*Photo, Record Press.*)

On 22nd September the *Emden* was off Madras, that great straggling seaport which fronts a strand on which the sea foams in unceasing billows. One of the *Emden's* crew had worked in Madras, and he pointed out to the captain the position of the oil tanks at the entrance to the harbour. At 9.30 that night the *Emden* crept in, turned her searchlights on the tanks, and fired two broadsides to find the range. Then the searchlights were turned off, and salvos were fired which set the tanks on fire. While great flames were shooting skyward and making the night as bright as day, the *Emden* retired full speed northward. The shore batteries opened fire, but their shells fell short.



The Emden, the famous German Commerce-raider. ***Photo, Central News.***

Next day the *Emden* turned her nose north-east, to give the impression that she was sailing for Calcutta, but when out of sight of land turned southwards. Off Pondicherry[139] she paused, but perceiving that the town [191] was defenceless, refrained from firing a gun. She then ran past the east coast of Ceylon to the island of Diego Garcia, in the Chagos Archipelago, a group of low coral islands between Mauritius and Ceylon. Diego Garcia was reached on 10th October. The few European families on the island had not yet heard of the war, as they are only visited by a steamer once in three months. The *Emden* coaled at Diego Garcia, and took on board supplies of cocoa-nuts and fish.

About the middle of October she lost her attendant collier, and with it her reserve of ammunition, coal, and food. By this time it was clear that her course was practically run, and that she had better do what mischief she could to the warships and war material of the enemy before meeting her doom.

Early on the morning of 28th October the *Emden* was ten miles outside Penang, in the Straits Settlements, [140] and the carpenters were set to work rigging up a dummy funnel, to make her look like a British cruiser. She then hoisted British colours and entered the harbour, in which several ships could be seen, with an unknown cruiser well in front of them. When the *Emden* entered the harbour she discovered that this cruiser was the Russian ship *Jemtchug*. Mistaking the *Emden* for a British man-of-war, the *Jemtchug* did not attempt to prevent the German cruiser from getting between her and the land. The *Emden* then let fly two torpedoes, the first of which struck the Russian cruiser just under the after funnel. The other torpedo, fired at closer range, struck her below the bridge, and caused a terrible explosion. Meanwhile the *Emden* was firing salvo after salvo at the *Jemtchug*, which made but a feeble reply; all of her shots missed, but some of them hit ships in the harbour behind.

As the *Jemtchug* sank the *Emden* turned and left the harbour at full speed. Thirty miles out she fell in with the British steamer *Glenturret*, which had signalled to the shore for a pilot, who had just reached her in his [192] launch. The *Emden* had swung out her boats to take possession of the prize when a warship appeared on the horizon. The *Emden* immediately recalled her boats and made off, as the warship appeared to be a large one. This, however, was only the effect of the early morning *mirage*.[141] At about 6,000 yards distance the newcomer was found to be the French destroyer *Mousquet*.

The *Emden* opened fire, and the *Mousquet* replied, though, of course, the destroyer was quite outclassed by the cruiser. The first few shots from the *Emden* hit the *Mousquet's* engine-room, and apparently wrecked her. "Cease fire" was then ordered, to enable the French destroyer to surrender; but instead of doing so she showed fight once more. A few more shots from the *Emden* were sufficient to sink her, bows first. About thirty-six of the crew were rescued. While this merciful work was going on, another destroyer was seen approaching from Penang; whereupon the *Emden* steamed off at full speed for the Indian Ocean. The destroyer chased her for three hours; but a heavy rainstorm came on, and the *Emden* escaped.

There was a good deal of discontent in England when news arrived that the *Emden* had sunk ship after ship, and had not been brought to account. The Admiralty explained that searching for the *Emden* over vast expanses of ocean was no easy task, and that the many thousand islands of the East Indies afforded her plenty of hiding-places, and the straits between them numberless avenues of escape. To catch the raider was a matter of time, patience, and good luck. The Germans were highly delighted that their ship had proved such a will o' the wisp, and one of their papers contained a caricature showing the *Emden* as a Jack-in-the-box that continually popped up to the annoyance of John Bull. It was inscribed, "*Emden* über Alles," and underneath was the following rhyme:—

"When you think you have him tightly,
He springs forth again so lightly."

We are soon to hear how, by a stroke of good luck the *Emden* was caught tightly and destroyed.

[193]

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST OF THE "EMDEN," AND THE SEA FIGHT OFF CORONEL.

If you look at a map of the Indian Ocean, you will see, some 700 miles south of Sumatra and 1,200 miles south-west of Singapore, a group of about twenty atolls,[142] known as the Cocos-Keeling Islands. They are covered with palm groves, and they export cocoa-nuts and copra. The "king" of the islands is Mr. Sydney Ross, a descendant of the Captain J. C. Ross who settled on them in 1825. It was to these remote islands that Captain von Müller brought the *Emden* in the early days of November. His object was to destroy the important British wireless station established on Direction Island.

On the morning of 9th November the operators in charge of the station saw a cruiser in the offing. At first they believed the vessel to be a British warship, but they were soon undeceived. Before a boat could be lowered and a landing-party sent ashore, the operators at the wireless station, with true British coolness, sent off distress signals, and warned the adjacent stations, by means of the three submarine cables which come ashore on the island, that the Germans were about to land. One launch and two cutters, containing three officers and forty men, arrived about 7.30; the wireless mast was blown up; the instruments were smashed, the storerooms and workshops were completely wrecked, and a dummy cable and one real cable were cut and a third damaged. The remaining cable was left uninjured, probably because the Germans did [195] not know that it existed. In less than two hours the work of destruction was completed. Then suddenly loud and repeated siren calls were heard from the *Emden*. Before the boats could return she was off at top speed.

She had been trapped at last. In the wireless room of H.M.S. *Sydney*, then engaged in escorting Australian transports, a message had been received: "Strange warship off entrance." In a moment Captain Glossop guessed that it was the raider that had so long eluded him. Immediately he worked up to twenty knots an hour, and with the "white bone" in his ship's teeth sped towards the island. At 9.15 the feathery tops of the cocoa-nut trees were sighted, and a few minutes later the *Emden* was seen bearing down on the *Sydney* at a great rate. Captain von Müller knew that the *Sydney's* 6-inch guns could destroy his ship at a distance too great for his 4.7-inch guns to do much mischief. He therefore tried to close in with the *Sydney*, which endeavoured to keep sufficiently far off to obtain the advantage afforded by her bigger guns.

Then began a running fight which lasted for an hour and forty minutes. At first the *Emden*'s fire was very rapid and accurate, but as the *Sydney's* shells began to burst on her decks it slackened quickly. The foremost funnel of the *Emden* was shot away, then the foremast, then the second funnel, and lastly the third funnel. She was now burning furiously, and her deck was strewn with dead and dying. A few minutes later and she was seen to be making for the beach on North Keeling Island, where she grounded at 11.20 a.m. Captain Glossop gave her two more broadsides, and then left her to pursue a merchant ship which had come up during the action.

The merchantman was overhauled, and found to be a captured British collier in a sinking condition. As she was past repair she was sent to the bottom, and the *Sydney*, with the crew of the collier on board, returned to the *Emden*, now a dismal wreck amidst the surf foaming on the reef. Her colours, however, were still flying at the masthead. When called upon to haul them down her captain replied that he would never surrender. Very reluctantly, Captain Glossop again fired at the *Emden*. Five minutes later white flags fluttered aloft, and her ensign was hauled down.

German Landing Party on the Cocos-Keeling Islands. ***Photo, The Sphere***

The yacht shown in the photograph is the *Ayesha*, in which the landing party escaped from the island.

About six o'clock that night the *Emden's* landing-party seized and provisioned Mr. Ross's 70-ton schooner, [196]
the *Ayesha*, and made off. For months they were unheard of, though all sorts of rumours were current as to their fate. On March 1, 1915, it was reported that they had reached Damascus, and were on their way to Constantinople.

Captain von Müller was captured unwounded, and amongst his officers was Franz Josef of Hohenzollern, a nephew of the Kaiser. As a tribute to the gallantry and humanity which Captain von Müller had exhibited, he was permitted to retain his sword. While the German soldiers were making their name a byword of loathing in Belgium, Captain von Müller had been behaving as a sailor and a gentleman; consequently he was regarded in Britain as something of a hero. He had fought staunchly, and although he had perhaps violated the laws of war on several occasions, his sins were forgiven him because he had been merciful to the defenceless and the captive.

The *Emden* lost some 250 killed and wounded, while the *Sydney* had four killed and twelve wounded. Only about ten hits seem to have been made on the British vessel, and the damage done was surprisingly small. Australians were overjoyed to hear that a ship of their own navy had rid the seas of the famous raider. Their satisfaction was all the greater when they remembered that the victorious crew consisted largely of young and untried sailors.

Let me tell you of a pleasing little incident that happened when the *Sydney*, with prisoners on board, returned to the transports which she and the *Melbourne* were convoying. Captain Glossop had given orders that there was to be no cheering, as he had German wounded on board, and some of them might be dying. The *Sydney* steamed past forty transports, whose decks and rigging were crowded with patriotic men; but not a cheer was raised, though all were deeply stirred by the good news. Two German officers asked Captain Glossop the reason of the silence. When he explained, they were much affected. One of them shook him by the hand and said, "You have been kind, but this crowns all. We cannot speak to thank you for it."

The news was received with great delight by our soldiers in Artois and West Flanders. At one place where [197]
the opposing trenches were close together the men cheered, and passed on the information with appropriate comments to the enemy, who replied with a vindictive volley. At Lloyd's[143] the old *Lutine* bell[144] was rung, and when, amidst tense silence, the crier announced that the *Emden's* career of destruction had ended, underwriters,[145] brokers, and clerks burst forth into excited cheering, which was repeated again and again. During the past two months the insurance companies had been heavily hit; freight for the East had been difficult to obtain, Indian tea had gone up twopence per pound, the jute trade had been paralysed, and tin and rubber had largely increased in price. All this was now over, and shipping in Eastern waters resumed its normal course.

Almost equally good news arrived the same day. The *Königsberg*, after her attack on the *Pegasus* in Zanzibar harbour, had gone into hiding somewhere along the German East African coast. A diligent search was made for her by H.M.S. *Chatham*, and on 30th October she was discovered in shoal water about six miles up a river opposite Mafia island. The *Chatham*, owing to her greater draught, could not ascend the river; but she sank colliers in the only navigable channel, so that the German cruiser could not come out. She lay amidst dense palm groves, and was aground, except at high tide. Part of her crew had been landed and entrenched [198]
on the banks of the river. Both the entrenchments and the *Königsberg* were shelled, but owing to the thick foliage shrouding the ship it was not possible to estimate what damage had been done.

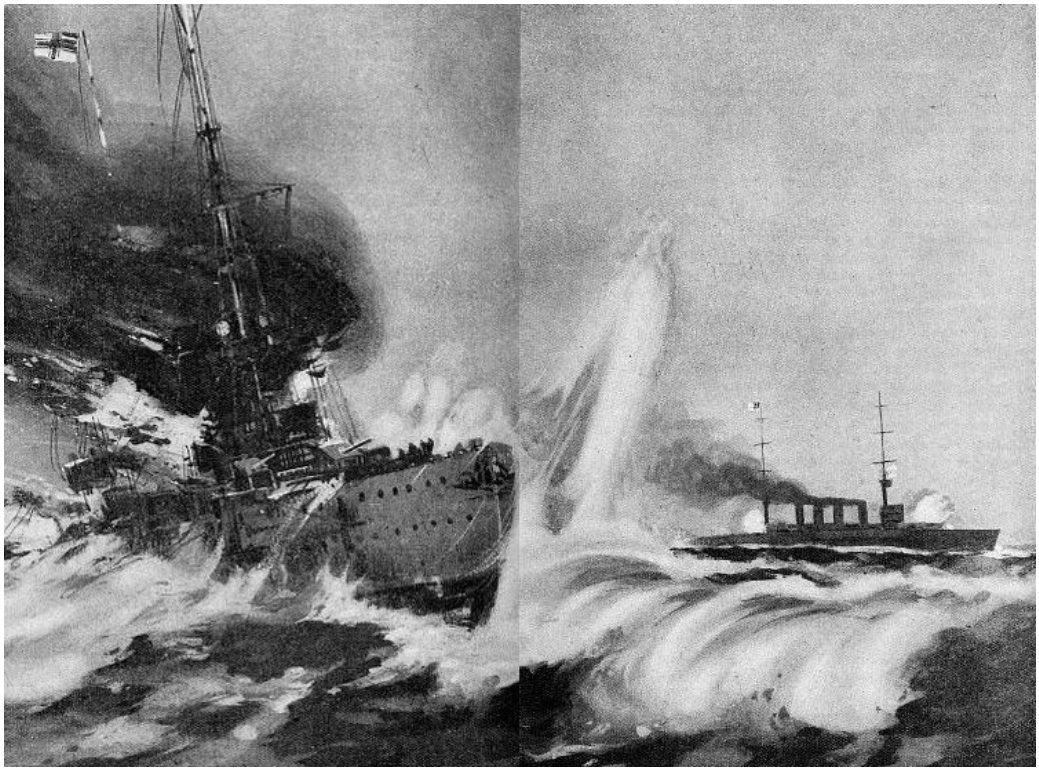
From the end of October 1914 until the beginning of July 1915 the *Königsberg* lay in this position. She was most difficult to attack, as only shallow-draught ships could get sufficiently close to engage her. In May 1915 the Admiralty decided to send to German East Africa two of the monitors—the *Severn* and the *Mersey*—which had done so much to foil the coast dash towards Calais. Aircraft accompanied the vessels, and discovered the exact whereabouts of the *Königsberg*. On 4th July the monitors entered the river and opened fire. The *Königsberg* replied, and fired salvos of five guns with great accuracy, twice hitting the *Mersey*, and causing some casualties.

The aeroplanes found great difficulty in "spotting" the effects of the monitors' fire, because of the dense jungle. For six hours the monitors continued firing, and the *Königsberg* was hit five times, though her masts were still standing. Then a salvo struck her, and she burst into flames. For a time she continued to fire with one gun, but during the last part of the engagement she made no reply, either because her ammunition had run out or because her guns were disabled. On 11th July another attack was made, and the *Königsberg* was battered into shapeless ruin.

During November 19 a British squadron approached the harbour of Dar-es-Salaam,[146] in which three German vessels had taken refuge. The entrance had been blocked by a floating dock, and only vessels of light draught could pass the obstruction. On November 28 a British flotilla supported by a cruiser entered the harbour, and after a parley the governor of the town hoisted the white flag. Commander Henry Peel Ritchie, R.N., who was in charge of the operations, now boarded the German ships, but soon discovered that the surrender of the town was a trick to destroy him and his men. A heavy fire was opened on the boats from trenches on shore, and Commander Peel Ritchie had the greatest difficulty in getting them safely out of harbour. He himself was one of the first to be hit, but he continued at his post until his eighth wound, [199]
received twenty-five minutes later, rendered him unconscious. The cockswain of his pinnace, though hit twice, gallantly stuck to the wheel until the boat was out of gunfire. For his splendid courage, and for the inspiring example which he set to his men, Commander Ritchie was awarded the Victoria Cross. The cockswain, Leading Seaman Thomas Arthur Gallagher, received the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.

We will now follow the fortunes of the German squadron under Admiral von Spee. You will remember that it left Kiao-chau early in August for the South American coast. Von Spee's squadron, which consisted of modern ships, comprised two armoured cruisers, the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst*; and three light cruisers, the *Dresden*, *Leipzig*, and *Nürnberg*. The first two vessels had a speed of at least 23 knots, and were armed with eight 8.2-inch guns, six of 5.9-inch, and eighteen 21-pounders. The *Dresden* was a sister ship to the *Emden*, the *Nürnberg* was slightly smaller, and the *Leipzig* smaller still. The object of this squadron was to prey on British commerce in the Pacific. The *Emden*, as you know, was detailed for similar work in the Indian Ocean, and the *Karlsruhe* in the South Atlantic.

I have told at length of the short and merry life of the *Emden*. The *Karlsruhe* was not so successful, but she destroyed no fewer than thirteen steamers in the course of a week or two. She was remarkable for the number of attendant vessels which accompanied her, some of them her own captures. These she employed as scouts to warn her of danger, and to give notice of vessels which might be seized. It is said that she had many hairbreadth escapes from British cruisers. Towards the end of November she disappeared, and though many rumours were afloat, nothing was certainly known of her whereabouts. In March 1915 it was reported that she had gone down off the West Indian island of Grenada.



Destruction of the German Raider Emden by H.M.S. Sydney of the Australian Navy, November 9, 1914.

You can easily understand that without a regular supply of coal and provisions the German commerce-raiders could not long keep the seas. When a fighting ship in time of war puts into a neutral port, she may not receive more coal and provisions than will carry her to the nearest harbour of her own land, and she may not obtain any further supplies at that port for three months. Some of the South American states, however, [202] were very slack in observing the rules of naval warfare, and two of them—Ecuador and Colombia—actually permitted German coaling and provisioning bases to be set up on their coasts, and allowed their wireless stations to be used for the purpose of ascertaining the movements of the British cruisers which were trying to catch the raiders. When Admiral von Spee sailed for the western coast of South America, he was going into waters where there were many harbours in which he could coal, and many friends who would see that he was well supplied. German merchants abound in Chile.

On 14th September von Spee's squadron touched at Apia, and on the 22nd two of his cruisers arrived off Papeete, in Tahiti, one of the loveliest of the Pacific Islands. A small French gunboat was sunk, and the town was bombarded. Then his squadron of five warships with attendant colliers concentrated near Valparaiso, and he was ready, like a twentieth-century Drake, to prey ruthlessly upon the merchantmen that came round the Horn.

Von Spee did not expect that he would go unmolested. He knew that Britain had a squadron which was even then cruising northwards along the coast of Chile, under the command of a renowned seaman, Sir Christopher Cradock. But this squadron was all too weak to meet him in fair fight. It consisted of two armoured cruisers, the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth*, the light cruiser *Glasgow*, and an armed liner, the *Otranto*, the latter being incapable of engaging a ship of war. None of the vessels was speedy, and none was heavily armed. The *Canopus*, a seventeen-year-old battleship, was on its way to meet him, but had not yet arrived. Von Spee could count on sixteen 8.2-inch guns, and to oppose them Cradock had but two 9.2-inch guns. When the *Canopus* joined him his big-gun armament would be increased by four 12-inch guns, but even then the British squadron would be inferior in weight of broadside to the German squadron. Nor had the British any advantage of speed. The *Glasgow* could do 26 knots an hour, but the *Monmouth* could only do 23. In big guns, speed, and armour the Germans were greatly superior. Cradock was hourly expecting reinforcements, but for some reason they were not forthcoming. One of his officers wrote as follows on 12th

October: "We think the Admiralty have forgotten their trade-route squadron 10,000 miles from London town. [203]
Five German cruisers against us. Pray that we may prevent them concentrating."

They had concentrated, as we know, and Cradock had now to decide whether he would give battle with his three cruisers or wait for the arrival of the *Canopus*. He was a dashing, fearless officer, and he took the risk. He sent off a wireless message to the *Canopus*: "I am going to attack the enemy now," and ordered speed to be increased to 17 knots. It is doubtful whether the *Canopus* ever received the message, for the enemy was "jamming the wireless"—that is, was sending out bogus messages to interfere with the messages of the British flagship. At any rate, the *Canopus* did not join Cradock, and he steamed without her towards the foe.

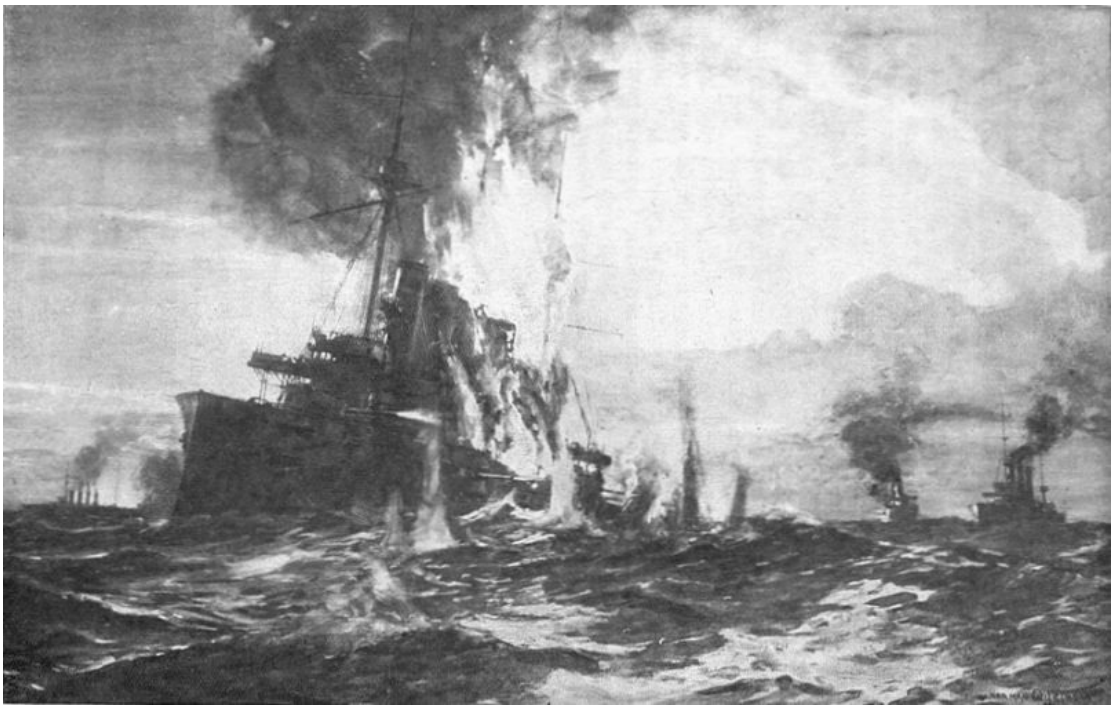
The *Glasgow* swept northward, and about four o'clock in the afternoon of 1st November sighted the enemy. She sent off wireless signals to the flagship, *Good Hope*, but they were jammed. The *Monmouth* and *Otranto* joined the *Glasgow* soon after, and at five o'clock the *Good Hope* came up. Both squadrons were now moving southwards, the Germans having the inshore course. At the head of the British line was the *Good Hope*, with the *Monmouth*, *Glasgow*, and *Otranto* following, one behind the other. The German line was headed by the *Scharnhorst*, with the *Gneisenau*, *Dresden*, and *Nürnberg* following.

Try to imagine the scene. The sea was running high; there was a stiff wind blowing, and away in the west the sun was sinking in a flaming sky of crimson and gold. Against the bright sunset the British ships stood out sharp and clear, while the German vessels were shrouded by the gathering gloom and the dark background of the land. Behind them were the long ridges and lofty peaks of the Andes, their eternal snows glowing red in the light of the setting sun. Amidst the roar of sea and wind the two squadrons raced south in the teeth of the gale. The day was speeding fast to its close, and the German admiral, owing to the superior speed of his ships, was able to choose the range at which the battle was to be fought.

The sun sank into the sea, and eight minutes later, at a range of about 12,000 yards—roughly, seven miles—the leading German cruiser opened fire with her biggest guns. Shells shrieked over and short of the *Good Hope* within a hundred yards of her, and the *Otranto* began to edge away to the south-west. The *Good Hope* [205]
and the *Monmouth* replied as best they could to the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, but their fire was ineffective; the two 9.2-inch guns of the *Good Hope* could not be brought into action, because they were mounted so near to the water's edge that the waves washed over them. Meanwhile the *Glasgow* was exchanging shots with the light cruisers *Leipzig* and *Dresden*. The shooting of the enemy was deadly, and in a few minutes all was over—the British ships were pounded to pieces by guns which quite outranged those which they carried. "It was as though a man standing at Charing Cross were attacked with deadly accuracy by a foe on Ealing Common, without any possibility of replying." Think of the horror and hopelessness of it all!

Broadside after broadside of powerful guns crashed on the British cruisers. The third salvo set the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth* on fire. The range had now narrowed down to 5,000 yards, and darkness was coming on apace. Many of the shells falling into the sea threw up huge geysers of white spray, which gleamed ghost-like in the twilight. The British could fire only at the flashes of the enemy's guns, and often even these slight indications were hidden from the gun-layers by the heavy head seas.

The *Monmouth* had been heavily hit, and was rapidly becoming unmanageable; the fore turret of the *Good Hope* was burning fiercely, and she began to fall away out of line towards the enemy. Suddenly, at about a quarter to eight, there was a roar louder than that of the booming guns; the flames had reached the magazine of the *Good Hope*, and a terrific explosion took place. A column of fire shot up 200 feet, and the sea was strewn with *débris*. The *Good Hope* never fired her guns again. Down she went headlong into the stormy deep, with gallant Sir Christopher Cradock and his crew of nearly 900 officers and men.



The Good Hope going down with her last Guns firing.

(*From the picture by Norman Wilkinson. By permission of the Illustrated London News.*)

The *Monmouth*, too, was in dire distress. She was so badly damaged by the terrific cannonade that she could no longer fire. She was down by the head, and was obliged to turn away to get her stern to the sea. The little unarmoured *Glasgow* was now left alone, and on her the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* concentrated their fire. Again and again she was hit, but fortunately not dangerously. The sea was now running higher than ever; [206] rain and mist came on, though the moon was rising. The *Glasgow* could render no aid to the *Monmouth*; she could not rescue her crew in the raging sea, and she could not contend with the heavily-armoured vessels of the enemy. There was nothing for it but to abandon the *Monmouth* and seek safety in flight. If she stayed to the end she would be needlessly sacrificing herself and her crew; and the *Canopus*, now coming up from the south, could not be warned of the destruction that awaited her.

So with a heavy heart Captain Luce swung his vessel to the north-west, and steamed off at full speed. As he did so the doomed men on the *Monmouth* gave her a pealing cheer. Before the sinking vessel was lost to sight another and another cheer was heard. At twenty minutes past nine o'clock Captain Luce counted seventy-five flashes of fire stabbing the darkness. The *Nürnberg* had come up, and was dealing the *Monmouth* its death-blows. It is said that the British ship in her final throes made a gallant attempt to ram the enemy. For a few seconds the watching men on the *Glasgow* saw the play of her searchlight. It disappeared, and all was over; the *Monmouth* had gone down with her flag flying.

"Toll for the brave—the brave that are no more."

The sole survivor, the *Glasgow*, sped away at 24 knots an hour, and as she gained on her pursuers she bore round gradually to the south. Her wireless was working in the hope of picking up the *Canopus*; but the enemy again jammed her messages, and only after several hours did she get in touch with her sister ship. At length they fell in with each other, and steamed in company southward, threaded the wild, glacier-fringed Strait of Magellan, and in due time reached Stanley Harbour, in the wind-swept Falkland Isles.

This disastrous sea fight will go down to history as the Battle of Coronel, for the little Chilian port of Coronel was the nearest place to the stretch of wild waters in which the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth* went down. We shall never learn the full details of the action, for those who played the leading part in it on the British side are no more. The Germans have called their victory "the fairest sea fight of the war." No more misleading description can be imagined—even in Germany. The enemy had swifter, better armed, and more [207] heavily armoured ships than we had, and his victory was due to superior speed and greater gun power.

Captain Luce tells us that "nothing could have been more admirable than the conduct of the officers and men throughout. Though it was most trying to receive a great volume of fire without the chance of returning it adequately, all kept perfectly cool. There was no wild firing, and discipline was the same as at battle practice. . . . The serious reverse sustained has entirely failed to impair the spirit of officers and ship's company, and it is our unanimous wish to meet the enemy again as soon as possible." We need no assurance that on that dread November day our tars fought and died as Britons are wont to do.

The Falkland Islands lie some three hundred miles to the east of the Strait of Magellan. They were discovered by John Davis, the Arctic explorer, as far back as 1592, but were first settled by the French in 1764. Seven years later they became British. The group consists of two large islands and of about one hundred islets, rocks, and sandbanks. The two large islands are East Falkland and West Falkland, and the only town of importance is Stanley, in the north-east of the former island. Berkeley Sound and Port William are the two most important sounds in East Falkland. Stanley Harbour, on which the capital stands, is a large, safe, and easily entered inlet of Port William.

If New Zealand may be said to be the most English of all British possessions, the Falkland Islands are certainly the most Scottish. In appearance they resemble the Outer Hebrides, and a large part of the population is of Scottish descent. The winters are cold and misty, but not very severe. So violent are the winds that tennis and croquet can only be played on sheltered grounds, and unless walls are erected the cabbages in the gardens are blown clean out of the soil. There is only one real tree on the islands, and that stands in the governor's garden. Penguins are so numerous on the smaller islands and in the lagoons, that the governor is sometimes nicknamed King of the Penguin Islands. The total population is about 2,300, and the people are mainly occupied in sheep-farming and seafaring. The colony is prosperous, and Stanley, which has a wireless installation, is a refitting and coaling station for ships rounding Cape Horn. [208]

When the *Canopus* and the *Glasgow* reached Port Stanley, and the defeat off Coronel became known, great was the alarm of the colonists. They felt sure that the victorious German squadron was about to swoop down on the islands. Their alarm was increased when the two British battleships were ordered by wireless to proceed to Rio de Janeiro,[147] where they were to be repaired.

One morning the church and dockyard bells pealed out an alarm; the lookout on the hill above the town had sighted a cruiser, cleared for action, and making straight for the wireless station. The volunteers paraded; non-combatants streamed out of the place, and all waited for the firing to begin. Signals were exchanged between the vessel and the shore, and the colonists breathed freely once more. It was a false alarm. The newcomer was not a German cruiser, but the *Canopus*.

Obeying orders, she and the *Glasgow* had made for Rio de Janeiro, but when two days from that port she had been instructed to return to Stanley, for a reason which we shall learn later. She came about at once, and tried to get into touch with the wireless station. As she could not do so, she concluded that the Germans had raided the island and destroyed the wireless station. Decks were immediately cleared for action; the guns were loaded and trained; and with every man at his post, ready to fight the whole of von Spee's squadron if necessary, the *Canopus* steered into Stanley Harbour. You can easily imagine the relief of the colonists when they discovered that the newcomer was a friend and not a foe.

Von Spee was a victor, but even while celebrating his victory he knew that his hours were numbered. He was well aware that the British would take good care to send an overpowering squadron against him, and that there would be only one end to the battle which could not be long delayed. It is said that when the German colony at Valparaiso gave a banquet to the admiral in honour of his victory, the steps near the door of the hall were strewn with flowers. Von Spee noticed them, and said, "I think you had better keep these for my grave; they may be wanted." He spoke the simple truth: they were wanted—in less than forty days.

[209]

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FALL OF KIAO-CHAU.

We must now hark back to Kiao-chau, and learn what was taking place in that "model of German culture." I have already told you how Germany played the chief part in ejecting the Japanese from the Liao-tung peninsula, and how, while professing to be China's friend, she stole from her 200 square miles of territory, on which she established the fortress and naval base of Tsing-tau. A few years later, when a mixed force of British, American, German, French, Russian, and Japanese troops invaded China during the "Boxer" rising, [148] the Kaiser's soldiers treated the Japanese with the utmost contempt. Japan had therefore old scores to pay off. She was Britain's ally, and, as such, was Germany's foe. Friendship for Britain and hatred of Germany made her eager to take a hand in the great struggle, though it is said that many high-placed Japanese believed that Germany would win. Nevertheless Japan did not hesitate for a moment to throw in her lot with the British. She was staunchly loyal to her plighted word; while the Germans, who scorned her, were tearing up their bond in Belgium.

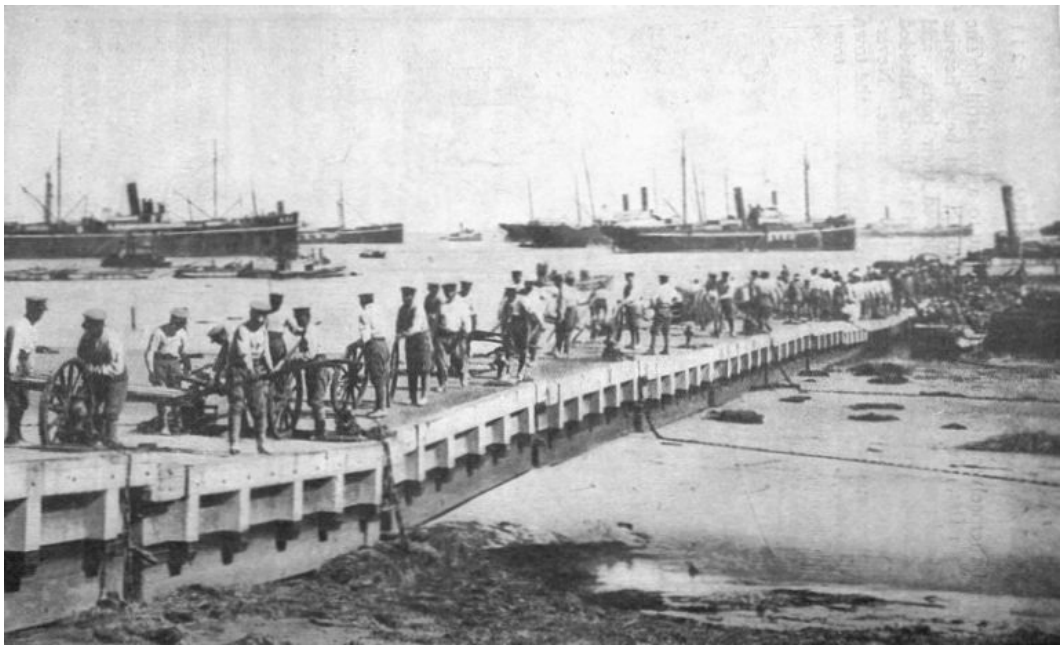
The war was not three weeks old when Japan declared war, and undertook to make a clean sweep of German sea power in the Far East. She proposed to wrest Kiao-chau from the Germans, and at the end of the war [210] restore it to China. Japan has a fine navy of six Dreadnoughts, six other battleships, four first-class battle cruisers, and large classes of other cruisers, destroyers, and coast-defence ships. A squadron of her fleet at once co-operated with the British in Eastern waters. Her army, which had been trained on the German model, numbered 250,000 on a peace footing, and could be increased to 1,100,000. It was admirably equipped, especially with heavy guns. Japan was thus formidable, alike by land and sea.

Before I describe the blockade, siege, and storming of Tsing-tau, let us have a clear idea of its geographical position. The map on the opposite page shows you the German protectorate of Kiao-chau and the surrounding country. Kiao-chau Bay, which has an area of about 200 square miles, is almost land-locked. At the southerly point of the peninsula on the eastern side of the bay you see the fortress of Tsing-tau, from which a railway twenty-two miles long runs north, skirting the shore and sweeping round the head of the bay to the station at Kiao-chau. The peninsula itself is flat and low-lying, except along the south coast; but here and there a number of low hills rise from the plain, and these the Germans had strongly fortified as the outer defences of Tsing-tau. You will see several of them on the map; one is marked Bismarck Hill, another Moltke Hill. Several rivers cross the peninsula, the most important being the Chang-sun, which enters the sea almost opposite to Potato Island in Kiao-chau Bay. The ground is marshy in the course of this river, and also along the coast farther north.

On 27th August an Allied fleet appeared off the south coast of the peninsula. A small island was seized as a naval base, and the sea was diligently swept for the mines with which the Germans had strewn it. So thoroughly was the work done that only one Japanese vessel was blown up by mines during the whole of the operations. The line of warships now extended east and west, so that all communication with the fortress by sea was cut off. Then the bombardment of the forts and harbour began.

On 2nd September the Japanese were ready to begin their land attack. The Gulf of Pechili lies directly to the north of Kiao-chau Bay. On the Shantung coast of this bay you will find Lai-chow. It was near this place that the first Japanese force landed. You will notice that the Japanese had to cross a strip of Chinese territory [211] before reaching the boundary of German territory. When they crossed the boundary they found themselves held up and brought to a standstill. The autumn rains, always heavy in Shantung, had been heavier than usual; all the rivers had overflowed their banks, and had spread out into wide lagoons. Until the floods

subsided it was impossible to reach Tsing-tau by this route. Nevertheless the Japanese by 13th September had reached the town of Kiao-chau, and had seized the railway station, twenty-two miles from Tsing-tau. General Kamio, who commanded the force, sent aeroplanes over the fortress, and bombs were dropped on the wireless station, the electric power station, and on the ships in the harbour. Soon the floods began to [213] fall, and Kamio found himself able to advance. By the 27th he had reached Prince Henry Hill, the chief of the outer defences of the fortress. Next day he assaulted and captured the hill, from the crest of which all the forts around Tsing-tau could be bombarded. He was now in much the same position as the Germans when they had broken through the outer line of the Antwerp defences and were enabled to shell the inner forts. Prince Henry Hill was the key to Tsing-tau, and it is surprising that the Germans did not make a greater effort to retain it.



Landing of the Japanese at Laoshan Bay. ***Photo, Record Press.***

Meanwhile the Japanese had made another landing at Laoshan Bay, on the south side of the peninsula, where they were within the boundary of German territory. Japanese engineers erected a solid pier, by means of which men, guns, and stores were brought ashore, and on 23rd September transports arrived with a British force consisting of 1,000 of the South Wales Borderers and 500 Sikhs, under General Barnardiston, who was in command of our troops in North China. The British force was landed easily and rapidly, and all was now ready for a march on Tsing-tau itself. You will notice that the Allied force at Laoshan Bay had only a short distance to march before joining hands with General Kamio's men. The floods were no longer a great obstacle, and the advance was not delayed. On the evening of 28th September, just after the capture of Prince Henry Hill, the Allied forces were only five miles from Tsing-tau; and their lines stretched right across the peninsula, so that the fortress was shut in both by land and sea. German warships in Kiao-chau Bay attempted to do what British monitors afterwards did on the Belgian coast—that is, shell the right wing of the enemy. Japanese aviators, however, showed such skill and daring that the warships were driven off.

The Kaiser had ordered his troops to defend Tsing-tau as long as breath remained in their bodies. The feeble defence of Prince Henry Hill did not seem to show that they were disposed to hold out to the last man. During the next month General Kamio was inclined to think that their defence was largely make-believe, for they fired their shells in the most wanton and reckless fashion, sometimes discharging 1,000 to 1,500 projectiles a day. He therefore determined on a grand assault instead of a long, slow siege. [214]

From the sea a vigorous bombardment was kept up, and on 15th October the Japanese general offered a safe-conduct to all non-combatants who cared to leave the fortress. The American consul, several ladies and children, and a few Chinese took advantage of the offer. On 31st October, 140 Japanese siege guns were in position, and as it was the Emperor's birthday a royal salute was fired with live shells. Before, however, the guns were fired, the Japanese signalled, "Are you now quite ready, gentlemen?" The reply came in the shape of a whizzing bullet. Then the shells began to whistle. All the forts were bombarded; fires broke out near the harbour; the oil tanks were speedily in flames, and black smoke filled the heavens. The forts were assailed by guns of practically the same calibre as those with which the Belgian fortresses had been battered down. A British officer who witnessed the bombardment said, "It really was a wonderful sight, and the Japanese shooting was magnificent. . . . Every shell seemed to find the mark. There was hardly a stick left in the forts and redoubts; concrete platforms, trenches, guns, and barbed-wire entanglements, all were destroyed. Our small force did their full share."

The German warships in the harbour replied, but before evening one of them had disappeared, and a second sank two days later. On 1st November H.M.S. *Triumph*, in seven shots, silenced the forts on Bismarck Hill; on 2nd November Fort Iltis was put out of action, and the Allies drove the Germans off a hill which they were holding. Next day the electric light station and the wireless station were wrecked; and, under heavy shell and rifle fire, the besiegers advanced still nearer to the fortress. By the night of the 6th the Germans were almost ready to surrender.

Throughout the darkness the guns of the enemy roared at intervals. The Allies, however, pushed on and occupied central positions on the main line of defence. By this time they had dug their trenches to within a score of yards of the redoubts. When the Germans attempted to leave one of their strongholds they found enemy rifles and machine guns covering the only exit. Early next morning (7th November) all was ready for

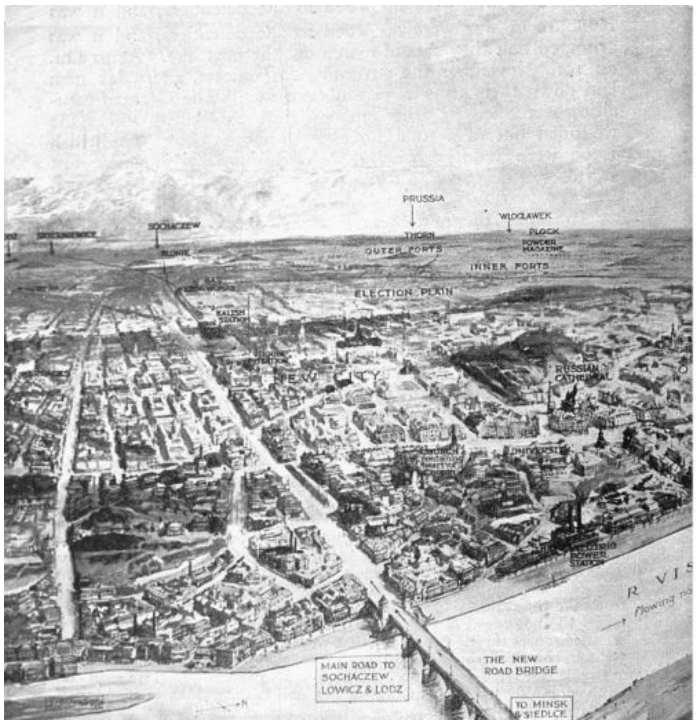
the final assault. Between six and seven o'clock, while the troops, in tense silence, were awaiting the order to storm, white flags appeared above the observatory and several of the forts. Then the little Japanese soldiers broke into loud shouts of "Banzai![149]" Tsing-tau had yielded, and the Kaiser had no longer an Asiatic "place in the sun." [215]

At 7.50 in the evening terms of surrender were signed. Honours of war were accorded to the defenders, and it was arranged that they should march out the next day. At 10 a.m. on 10th November the governor, 201 officers, and 3,841 men laid down their arms as prisoners of war. The German casualties were heavy; the Japanese lost 236 killed and 1,282 wounded out of a total force of about 23,000; the British 1,500 were reduced by 12. In addition, the Japanese lost a cruiser, a destroyer, a torpedo boat, and three mine-sweepers.

In Japan the news was received with delighted surprise. There were great rejoicings in the island kingdom, and when General Barnardiston reached Tokio he was accorded a welcome such as had never before been given to any stranger. He was greeted by parades of troops and thousands of cheering school children. The whole Japanese nation made holiday to rejoice in its victory, and the capital was gloriously decorated and illuminated. The National Assembly was called together, and the greatest enthusiasm prevailed. The German officers had been allowed to retain their swords, and the people showed them the utmost kindness.

The rapid fall of the fortress was a great blow to German pride. One of the newspapers wrote as follows:—

> "Tsing-tau has fallen. The history of the German leased territory is henceforth at an end. It was short but glorious. From a decayed Chinese fishing village had been made a shining testimony to German culture. That the most beautiful, the cleanest, and the most progressive town in the Far East had sprung up in a couple of years from the soil was calculated to awake the jealousy of the slit-eyed people of the East. Never shall we forget the bold deed of violence of the yellow robbers or of England that set them on to do it. We know that we cannot yet settle with Japan for years to come. Perhaps she will rejoice over her cowardly robbery. Here our mills can grind but slowly. Even if years pass, however, we shall certainly not often speak of it, but as certainly always think of it. And if eventually the time of reckoning arrives, then as unanimously as what is now a cry of pain will a great shout of rejoicing ring through Germany. 'Woe to Nippon.'"[150]



The city of Warsaw looking north-west across the Vistula, which here flows under the three bridges connecting the city proper with its suburb, Praga.

Warsaw is beautifully situated on the left bank of the Vistula, which is here about as wide as the Thames at Gravesend. Most of the city is built on a low hill which rises from the broad plain to a terrace 120 feet above the river-level. Though dating from the Middle Ages, Warsaw is very modern in appearance. It is a large manufacturing centre, but has none of the smoke and grime which characterize most industrial towns. There is no livelier or gayer city in the east of Europe. Its buildings are fine, and its well-laid-out public gardens are a great attraction. In Sigismund Square is the former royal castle, round which the life of the city is centred. Four main thoroughfares radiate from it, and on or near these are the chief public buildings, churches, and statues. The Church of the Holy Ghost contains the heart and monument of the great Polish musician Chopin. The population of Warsaw in 1911 was 872,478, one-third of the people being Jews. Praga is the junction of six great trunk lines which converge from Vienna, Berlin, and Danzig on the one side of the frontier, and from Petrograd, Moscow, and Kiev (South Russia) on the other.

[218]

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIRST ATTACK ON WARSAW.

It is high time that we returned to the Eastern theatre of war. In Chapter XXXIV. of Volume II. you were told that at the end of September 1914 the Russians, after their crushing defeats of the Austrians, had advanced through Galicia to within a hundred miles of Cracow. At that time it seemed to us in the West that the Russian left would be almost certain to capture the great Galician fortress, and advance into Silesia and across the Carpathians towards Vienna within the next few weeks. Meanwhile we believed that the Russian right would be over the German frontier in full march for Berlin. It was rumoured—falsely, as we now know—that the Austrians shared our belief, and that their Government had decided to leave Vienna for Salzburg[151] or Innsbruck.[152] Though the Allies in the West were held up by the Germans on the Aisne, the prospects of their rapid and complete success in the East seemed very bright indeed.

Then suddenly came a great disappointment. We learnt that, instead of advancing on Cracow, the Russians were retreating from Galicia. By the middle of October they were back again on the San, with nothing to show for their victories and their weeks of hard fighting. Why had they retreated? They were not pushed back by the Austrians; they were retiring of their own accord in order to meet a new and dangerous movement which the Germans had begun to make in Russian Poland. [219]

On the frontier of East Prussia there was a deadlock, and von Hindenburg had come to the conclusion that all the victories that could be won in that deadly region of lake and swamp would avail him nothing. His business was to destroy the Russian armies, and that could not be done by even a dozen successful campaigns in East Prussia. He must strike hard at the Russian centre—somewhere across the Polish plain, which was then but lightly held by his enemy.

At what point in the Russian centre should he try to break through?—that was the question. There was one point that seemed to beckon him with the promise of full and speedy success. I have already told you that on the Vistula, half-way between the German fortress of Thorn and the Galician frontier, stands the great city of Warsaw.[153] It is not only a great place of manufactures, but a powerful fortress and the capital of Russian Poland, which contains twelve million people—Poles, Germans, Russians, and half a score other races. Amongst these mixed peoples Germany had many friends who would spy for her, and otherwise help her to win the city. Though the Tsar had promised to set up the old kingdom of Poland again if all went well with his arms, nobody yet knew whether the Poles would be loyal to Russia, or whether they would throw in their lot with the Germans. The Kaiser's agents had been secretly at work amongst them, striving hard to show that Codlin was their friend and not Short.[154] They believed that if the Germans could seize the capital of Poland the Poles would declare for them.

There was another and more important reason why von Hindenburg should launch his attack against Warsaw. The city is a great railway junction. Four railways, with cross lines to relieve the pressure on any one line, meet at Warsaw. One of these lines runs northwards to East Prussia; a second goes north-east to Petrograd; a third eastwards to Moscow; a fourth south along the right bank of the Vistula to Novo Alexandra, where it sweeps eastwards, and links up with the main system of South Russia. If Warsaw could be seized the Russian communications would be cut; a wedge would be thrust in between the northern army [220] and the southern army in Galicia, and, so divided, they would be an easy prey. Clearly, Warsaw was the place at which the Russian centre must be broken.

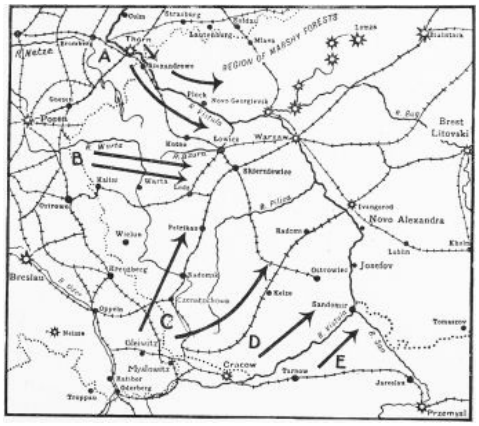
The task was by no means easy. Warsaw itself lies on the west bank of the Vistula, with strong forts and lines of entrenchments in front of it; but the main railway stations are on the east bank of the river in the suburb of Praga, which is connected with the city proper by three bridges—the fine Alexander Bridge, for foot passengers and ordinary traffic, in the middle; the new road bridge to the south of it; and the railway bridge, protected by the guns of the citadel, to the north. Between the city and the main railway stations flows the river Vistula, broad, deep, and rapid—the greatest military obstacle in Eastern Europe. The capture of the city alone would not be sufficient for von Hindenburg's purpose. If the Russians could hold the eastern bank they could still bring up reinforcements, and could still maintain communications with their armies to the north and south. If, however, the stations in Praga could be seized, the Russians could not use their railways, and, as you know, a modern army cannot live long without railways. Further, the Germans would be in an excellent position to carry the whole line of the Vistula; and, once this was won, the Russians could be kept at bay by means of comparatively small forces, and prevented from making war in Poland until they had retaken the line of the river. The bulk of the German armies would then be able to leave the Eastern theatre of war and fall in strength upon the Allies in the West.

Now, it was highly important that von Hindenburg should capture Warsaw without loss of time. The autumn rains were setting in, and the Polish roads, never good, would soon be quagmires, through which heavy guns and wagons could only be hauled with great difficulty. The Russians believe that General Winter always fights for them; in Poland, General Mud is their equally good friend.

In the early days of October, by means of the gridiron of railways which Germany has constructed on her eastern border for the express purpose of invading Russia, von Hindenburg massed about a million men all along the frontier from Thorn southwards, and soon they began to move across the rolling ridges and low [221] boggy valleys towards the Vistula. The left (A) advanced towards Warsaw along both banks of the Vistula; the centre (B) pushed eastwards from Kalisz; while the right (C) moved north-eastwards from Silesia. The right consisted of three columns, the most southerly of which was composed of Austrians, who were to push along the Upper Vistula. This Austrian column was to work with the column on its left, and both were to strike at Josefov, which stands between the confluence of the Vistula and the San and the fortress of Ivangorod.

A glance at the map below will explain why an attempt was to be made to force the river at this point. There

is no railway on the eastern bank of the Vistula between Novo Alexandra and the San. The railway strikes off south-east from Ivangorod, and the nearest point on it to Josefov is Lublin, thirty-three miles away. All the [222] roads in this region are bad, and the forces fighting in it are at a great disadvantage, because they have no railway by which to bring up troops, food, ammunition, and big guns. The Russians defending Josefov had no railway on the eastern side of the river within thirty-three miles, while the Germans had a railhead about ten or twelve miles away on the western side.



Von Hindenburg's First Advance on Warsaw.

If von Hindenburg could force the river at Josefov, and cut the railway at Lublin, while his northern columns seized Warsaw, the Russians would be in a bad way. They would have to retreat from the line of the Vistula, and for months to come would be unable to take the offensive in Poland. The German plan was excellent if only it could have been carried out secretly. The Russian cavalry, however, soon let the Grand Duke Nicholas know that the German columns were advancing, and he was clever enough to guess exactly what von Hindenburg was trying to do. He knew that if his armies remained to the west of the Vistula they would be badly supplied with food and munitions, because the railways of the Polish plain are few and far between, and also because his forces might easily be divided by the German centre, one column of which was pushing along the north bank of the broad, muddy river Pilitza. He determined to risk nothing, and leaving a screen of light horse west of the river to keep in touch with the enemy, ordered the rest of his forces to fall back behind the San and the Vistula. The march on Cracow had, therefore, to be abandoned; the grip on Przemysl to be loosened; and the Russian army in Galicia brought back for fifty miles, as you have already heard.

All Russian Poland west of the Vistula was thus given up to the enemy. The Russians have always had the courage to retreat when the way of safety lies to the rear, but they only recoil for a stronger and fiercer leap forward. They were not greatly disturbed even when the German centre entered Lodz, the Manchester of Poland. The capture of this great industrial city was, of course, a great loss to Russia, but an attempt to hold it would have resulted in disaster. Nor were they dismayed when the German right centre, pushing through Radom, reached the Vistula below Ivangorod, and began to cross.

The German advance was slow, but it was very thorough. As the columns proceeded eastwards they felled whole forests to form corduroy roads by which their guns could cross the marshes. Even the gauge of the [223] railway from Kalisz by way of Lodz to Warsaw was altered so that German rolling stock could be used. They advanced as though they intended to occupy the country for all time.

They were full of confidence. Captured Poles had told them that the Grand Duke did not intend to defend Warsaw, and that he meant to give up the valley of the Vistula. German aviators reported that they had seen troop trains moving from the capital and from Ivangorod eastwards. Van Hindenburg was completely misled, and began to dream of a new Tannenberg.[155]

By 15th October the Germans were attacking the line of the Vistula in force. An attempt was made to cross the river between Ivangorod and Warsaw. Raft after raft crossed the stream, and soon two battalions of infantry were drawn up on the eastern bank waiting for their fellows to arrive. Suddenly from the woods and coppices the Russians sprang forward in overwhelming numbers. The two battalions were wiped out, and the crowded rafts on the river disappeared as the Russian shells crashed down upon them. A strong assault on the bridgehead at Ivangorod met with the same terrible fate. A pontoon bridge was thrown across the stream, but when it was thick with marching men, shrapnel began to burst above it. The river ran red with blood, and the stream was choked with corpses.

These two attempts to cross the river were but feints. The real attempt, as we know, was being made at Josefov, where the river narrows. The eastern shore seemed to be held lightly; there was no sign of the enemy, and a large German force with guns crossed the river by means of pontoons, and pushed on towards the railway from Ivangorod to Lublin, fully believing that it had turned the Russian left. Then came a rude awakening. On 21st October General Ruzsky fell upon them at a village in the midst of swampy flats, eight miles from Novo Alexandra. The Russians plied the bayonet with deadly effect, and few Germans escaped to tell the tale. Next day Ruzsky was over the river, driving the Germans before him.

He counter-attacked both north and south of Ivangorod, and thus was able to cut off the German centre and left from the German right. The invaders were now in two groups, the one to the north and the other to the [224] south of the Pilitza. Advancing with great spirit, the Russians thrust the enemy out of the open country near the river into the great spruce woods which extend westwards for ten miles. Countless hand-to-hand engagements took place in their marshes and forest glades. The slaughter was terrible. At a village north of the railway between Radom and Ivangorod, the Russians buried 16,000 dead, their own and the enemy's. When the tide of war had rolled by, the forest seemed as though it had been swept by a hurricane. The Germans were forced into the open country beyond the woods, and as they emerged the Russian guns caught them and mowed them down in thousands.

The Germans fought desperately, but every attempt to make a stand was crushed, and the remnants were forced back. By the 25th they were at Radom, and the Crown Prince, who had been waiting to enter Ivangorod in triumph, boarded the train which was waiting with steam up, and hurried westwards into safety. The Russians gave the retreating enemy no rest day or night. Near Kielce[156] they stood at bay. The strongest position in their line was a graveyard, with a little white church in the middle. The Caucasians[157] poured like a torrent over the wall and seized the gate, which was the only outlet. In the darkness, amidst the graves, men fought with clubbed muskets and cold steel until the ground was literally soaked with blood. Ringed round by foes, the Germans and Austrians strove with the fury of despair, but they were no match for the Caucasians. The enemy's loss was very heavy, and 12,000 prisoners and fifty guns were taken. At one o'clock on 4th November the Russians, horse, foot, and artillery, poured into Kielce. Meanwhile the extreme left of the Russians had won Sandomir[158] after storming a triple line of defences, and the routed enemy was flying south-west towards Cracow.

[225]

CHAPTER XXV.

VON HINDENBURG FOILED.

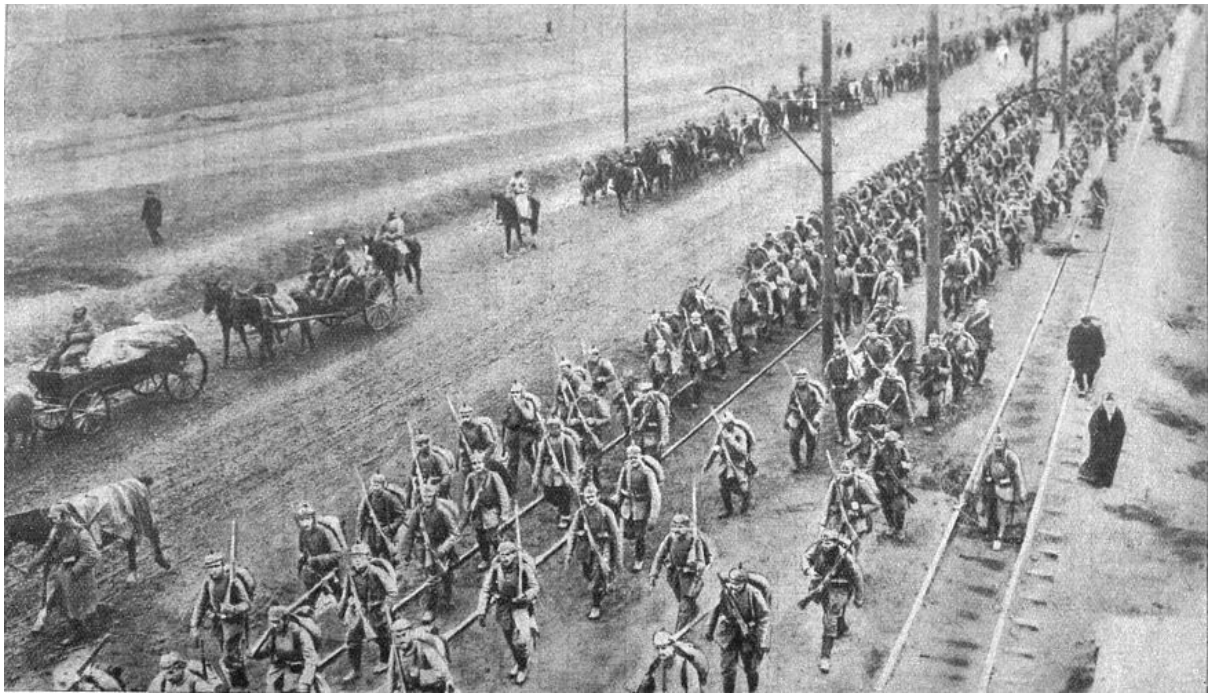
Meanwhile, what was happening at Warsaw? The coming of the enemy was heralded by airships and aeroplanes, which hovered over the city, dropping bombs on the railway stations, and showers of leaflets urging the Poles to take sides with the Germans. The city was full of spies, and many of the Jew inhabitants were friendly to the enemy. Spies were shot and hanged daily. The coming of the aircraft created a panic, but the terror soon passed away. Then Uhlans appeared eight miles from the centre of the city, and numbers of well-to-do residents fled into Russia. Despite these "excursions and alarms," most of the people in Warsaw went about their business or pleasure quite unmoved.

On Friday, the 16th, the fight for Warsaw began. Von Hindenburg himself directed the operations of the five army corps which were to make the grand assault. On Sunday, the 18th, the Germans were on the edge of the city, and the shells from their field howitzers were bursting in the suburbs. The windows of Warsaw shook with the roar of guns, and at night the western sky was bright with the flashes of artillery and the flames of burning homesteads. Fierce warfare was raging only a few miles away, but the citizens seemed as gay and light-hearted as ever. They thronged the pavements, the cafés, and the cinema shows in the old accustomed way, and save for the cannonading, the streams of wounded, the occasional appearance of a Taube, and the soldiers in the streets, there was nothing to indicate that a desperate battle was being fought five miles away.

[227]

Outside the forts to the west of the Vistula the Grand Duke had dug lines of trenches; but when the fight began they were but thinly held. It is said that there was a period of seven hours during which the Germans might have entered the city unopposed. Along one of the main roads leading directly to Warsaw there were no Russians capable of holding back the enemy for a single hour. For some unknown reason the Germans failed to take advantage of this gap in the line of defence.

Just at the critical moment reinforcements arrived, and the people poured into the streets to welcome them. The first corps to reach the city consisted of Siberians, who were so eager to meet the enemy that they leaped down from the cars and formed up without a moment's delay. In a very brief time they were swinging over the Vistula bridge, through the main street, and on their way to the trenches. These men had been brought by rail from Moscow. The people cheered them to the echo, flung flowers amongst them, and pressed cigarettes and other gifts on them.



German Infantry moving across the Plain towards Warsaw. ***Photo, The Sphere.***

The big stubborn Siberians bore the brunt of the German attack, and made a most determined defence. They were assisted by their old enemies and present friends, the Japanese. Several batteries of heavy guns, served by Japanese gunners who had travelled from the Far East by the Siberian railway, now came into action. Nevertheless, the situation was still full of peril.

More reinforcements followed, and soon the Russians were so strongly entrenched as to defy all von Hindenburg's efforts. Many of the newcomers had marched from Galicia amidst terrible weather along the right bank of the Vistula, over roads deep in mud or flooded by swollen streams. We do not know exactly the strength of the relieving army, but a Russian writer tells us that in one day "four columns, each 250,000 strong, crossed the Vistula over sixteen pontoon bridges," and deployed on the left bank ready for an advance.

By the evening of Monday, the 19th, the German attack slackened and died away, and "on Tuesday there returned to the city thousands of tired-out, woe-begone Siberian Cossacks and Caucasian cavalrymen—the soldiers who had turned the scale. All Warsaw turned out in the rain to give them cakes and cigarettes, handshakes and cheers." [228]

Why had the Germans given up their attempt on Warsaw? The Grand Duke was not content with merely holding Warsaw. While the German guns were hurling their shells at the Russian trenches, General Rennenkampf[159] was making a flank attack on the Germans from the fortress of Novo Georgievsk, lower down on the Vistula. We do not know exactly what happened in this part of the battlefield, but one thing is certain—the German left was attacked with crushing force. It was rolled back from the Vistula, but was still fighting hard; but when Ruzsky, on the 22nd, began to carry all before him south of the Pilitza, it was bound to retreat. Rennenkampf followed it up and retook Lodz, while von Hindenburg sullenly retreated towards his frontier, fighting innumerable rearguard actions by the way. Thousands of his men were sacrificed to prevent stores and guns from falling into the hands of the Russians, and the whole country over which he passed was turned into a desert. In one case the lives of 2,000 men of the rearguard were thrown away in order to save a convoy. The roads which von Hindenburg had made during his advance were blown up; railway lines, stations, bridges, and towers were destroyed, and even the rails were twisted into the shape of corkscrews.

When the Germans ran short of explosives they found other means of destruction. A water-tower, for example, was destroyed by sending a railway engine full tilt against it. Telegraph wires were cut into sections, the posts were broken or sawn through, and the insulators were smashed in pieces. It looked as though the Germans did not intend to travel that road again. But there was method in von Hindenburg's madness. He was devastating all Poland *except the northern quarter*. This he left intact, because he meant to make another advance through it when the time was ripe. For this reason he retreated, not through the northern quarter of Poland, but towards the south-west.

What were the Austrians in Galicia doing while disaster was thus overtaking the German armies? In the first two months of the war they had been badly led, and had suffered much. But under new leadership they proved themselves far more successful. They swept through Galicia, seized Jaroslav, relieved Przemysl, and nearly recaptured Lemberg. The starving garrison at Przemysl received food and supplies, and was thus [229] given a new lease of life. When, however, the Germans farther north were forced to retreat, the Austrians were bound to do so too. They were, however, in no hurry to retire. They only withdrew to the south of the Upper Vistula when the Russians were beginning to envelop them.

The Grand Duke Nicholas.

Thus ended the first attempt to capture Warsaw. The nut was too hard for von Hindenburg to crack, though he had by no means given up his attempts to crush it. He had been foiled; but, as we shall learn later, he was to come on again and again with wonderful perseverance. For the moment, however, he had failed, and failed badly. While the Allies in the West were only just holding back the desperate assaults of the enemy from Arras to the sea, the Russians were rejoicing in victory, and British newspapers were painting rosy pictures of the Grand Duke leading his triumphant armies within a few short weeks into the German capital. Alas! the hope was vain; rivers of blood were to flow before that happy day was even in sight.

Homeless and Ruined. ***Photo, Daily Mirror.***

The Germans have burned down the houses of these Polish peasants, and have destroyed their little all. The latter are here seen raking over the ground in the hope of finding something which has escaped destruction. The bitter Russian winter is rapidly approaching, and they have no where to lay their heads.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

STORIES FROM THE BATTLEFIELDS.

During the Russian retreat to the Vistula it was necessary to destroy a bridge over which the Germans must pass. It had to be done at the moment of their crossing, and no body of men could be spared to remain behind for the purpose. A simple soldier, well aware that only a miracle could save him, offered to do the work alone. Breast deep in icy cold water, he placed the charges of dynamite beneath the bridge, but

had no time to fix wires to the fuses and lead them away to a safe distance. Still in the water, he waited for the Germans; and when they were tramping across the bridge above his head, he fired the fuses, and the whole structure crashed into fragments. Strange to say, he escaped unhurt, and swam ashore miles down the stream. When he told his tale he simply added, "It wasn't meant for me to be killed just yet."

On another occasion four sappers with their officer were told off to blow up a bridge immediately the Russians had crossed it, and before the Germans, who were close on their heels, could reach it. There was no time to make the usual preparations. The officer handed out charges to the men, who fixed them to the bridge. Then he gave each of them a cigarette and took one himself. They lighted their cigarettes and lay down, each man close to his charge. "Mind, boys," said he, "that the cigarettes don't go out. Smoke quietly till the enemy reaches the bridge; then when I say 'One, two, three!' put them to the fuses and run if you can." [232]

The men smoked quietly as they watched the Germans rushing down the bank towards the bridge; then, as the officer counted, "One, two, three," they placed their cigarettes to the fuses and ran for their lives to the Russian bank. In a few moments there was a loud explosion, and the bridge simply disappeared. The baffled Germans opened a furious fire, but to no purpose. Their path was blocked by a deep, rapid river.

Here is another story of heroism at a bridge. When the Russians were following up the Germans during their retreat from the Vistula, they reached a bridge across a tributary of the Warta. The fact that it was standing was clear proof that it was mined, and that sappers had been left behind to blow it up as soon as the Russians began to cross it. The rearguard of the Germans had trained guns on the bridge. A Russian engineer officer thought that it might be cleared of mines and preserved. He therefore called for volunteers to undertake the delicate and difficult task. Everyone of his Caucasian sappers volunteered, but he only chose those who had no parents alive.

It was ten o'clock at night, and quite dark, when the attempt was made. In the thick gloom the seven chosen men silently wormed their way on to the bridge. They groped about, and discovered that it was covered with planks nailed on to it in various directions. At once they guessed that the charges were laid under these planks. Almost noiselessly they removed the boards and the charges, and then cleared away every inch of the fuses round the woodwork under the bridge. To do this they had to hang down over the water, holding on with one hand and unfastening the interlacing fuses with the other. In some places they hung by their feet, head downwards, in order to have both hands free.

Their comrades waited breathlessly on the bank for a full hour, and then the seven men who had been working on the bridge reappeared and quietly said, "The way is clear." Thanks to their extraordinary skill and devotion, the bridge was now safe, and the Russians crossed without mishap.

The Grand Duke Nicholas, the Commander-in-chief of the Russian armies, is a man of the most fearless courage and the idol of his soldiers. A correspondent says: "During the terrific fighting to the north of the [233] Radom-Ivangorod railway, the Grand Duke's motor car, marked by a blue and white flag, drove slowly down a road on which German shells were falling. The Siberians, with whom the Commander-in-chief is particularly popular, raised such a cheer that their comrades in the trenches imagined that a great victory had been won. The omen was fulfilled, for next day the Germans were driven along the Pilitza, and were obliged to abandon four guns. 'Big Nicholas' let down the roof of his motor car and praised the soldiers as '*Molodsti*' (fine fellows)—the usual salutation of a general. A chorus of '*Radi staratsa*' ('We are delighted to do our best') was the reply."

You will remember that there were very fierce struggles in the woods which lie to the west of the Vistula and to the north and south of the Radom-Ivangorod railway. A correspondent[160] thus describes the fighting in the woods, and their condition when the Germans had been driven out of them:—

"Day after day the Russians poured troops in on their side of the wood. These entered, were seen for a few minutes, then disappeared in the maze of trees, and were lost. Companies, regiments, battalions, and even brigades were quite cut off from each other. None knew what was going on anywhere but a few feet in front. All knew that the only thing required of them was to keep advancing. This they did, foot by foot and day after day, fighting each other hand to hand, taking, losing, and retaking position after position. In all of this ten kilometres[161] of forest I dare venture to say there is hardly an acre without its trenches, rifle pits, and graves.

"Here one sees where a dozen men had a little fort of their own, and fought furiously with the enemy a few feet away in a similar position. Day after day it went on, and day after day troops were poured into the Russian side of the wood, and day and night the continuous crack of rifle fire and the roar of artillery hurling shells into the wood could be heard for miles. . . . The forest looks as though a hurricane had swept through. Trees staggering from their shattered trunks, and limbs hanging everywhere, show where the shrapnel [234] shells have been bursting. Yard by yard the ranks and lines of the enemy were driven back, but the nearer their retreat brought them to the open country west of the wood the hotter the contest became; for each man in his own mind must have known how they would fare when, once driven from the protecting forest, they attempted to retreat through the open country without shelter.

"The state of the last two kilometres of the wooded belt is hard to describe. There seems scarcely an acre that is not sown like the scene of a paper-chase; only the trail here consists of blood-stained bandages and bits of uniform. Here also there was small use for the artillery, and the rifle and the bayonet played the leading part. Men, fighting hand to hand with clubbed muskets and bayonets, fought from tree to tree and ditch to ditch. . . .

"But at last the day came when the dirty, grimy, blood-stained soldiers of the Tsar pushed their antagonists out of the far side of the belt of woodland. . . . Once out in the open, the hungry guns of the Russians got their chance. Down every road through the wood came the six-horse teams, with the guns jumping and jingling behind, with their accompanying caissons[162] heavy with shrapnel. The moment the enemy were in the clear, these batteries, eight guns to a unit, were unlimbered on the fringe of the wood, and were pouring out their death and destruction on the wretched enemy, now retreating hastily across the open."

The Russians, as perhaps you know, are a deeply religious people. A soldier thus tells us how he went into battle during an assault:—

"Our hearts were beating wildly. I felt a choking sensation in my throat, and my spirit boiled up within me. I heard myself shouting, and in my brain something was urging me to 'run, run' against the enemy. Some one in the front ranks began to sing the majestic hymn,

'O Lord, save Thy people.'

Before he had finished the first line the rear ranks have taken it up and continued it, [235]

'And bless Thine heritage.'

The waves of the melody seem to dash against the faces of the enemy. At first only a few voices joined in the hymn. More and more began to sing. The whole column seemed to give forth one vast wave of sound. It seemed as though even the dying lying around joined in with their last breath. A dark-faced Jew lad who ran beside me joined in too. I saw his open mouth and heard his rich baritone voice. Death seemed to have no terror. We felt that our death was necessary, as is the death of the autumn leaves which fall from the trees to fertilize the soil for the future harvest."

You have heard of General Ruzsky, who commanded the army which wiped out the German troops across the Vistula, and then flung his legions across the stream to drive the enemy before him in rout. He was then a man of sixty years of age, with wrinkled brow, gray hair and moustache, and a stoop in his shoulders. In battle he exposed himself without fear, believing that his example would inspire his men. Not only was he famous as a fighter, but also as a student. At home, he lived a simple life in a small flat at Kiev.[163] He did not drink or smoke, and his spectacles gave him the look of a professor. Ruzsky drove about in a motor car with orange-coloured tyres, which caught the eyes of his soldiers and told them that their general was amongst them.

Siberian Cavalry crossing a River. ***Photo, Record Press.***

Russian boys were very eager to go to the war, and some of them followed regiments to the front. A group of three rosy-cheeked schoolboys from Petrograd—Pete, Jack, and Eustace—carrying home-made pistols roughly carved out of chunks of wood, with cartridge cases for barrels and wire hooks for hammers, hung on to a detachment of Guards, and actually reached the war zone, but were caught by a policeman as they were hiding behind a railway embankment, cooking porridge at a fire. The policeman took them to the nearest officer, who asked,—

"Where did you get those weapons?" [237]

"I made them," Jack explained. "I can cut one out in three hours."

"And why," inquired the officer, "have you a pistol without a barrel?"

"It flew off when I fired," replied Eustace.

The officer laughed, and the policeman searched the would-be-soldiers' pockets. He found in them some home-made gunpowder, a pipe-lighter, and a bottle containing some liquid. He discovered that the pipe-lighter was for the purpose of making a fire, and that the bottle contained spirit to put in the pipe-lighter. The boys had come prepared with everything for the campaign. To their great distress they were taken to the railway station and sent back to their parents. The Russian writer who tells the story thus concludes: "God grant, little children, that you may preserve the fire of your loyal little hearts till the day when you are men, and then Russia will have need of you."

You know that the Germans and Austrians made great efforts to win over the Poles by all sorts of lavish promises. Professor Bernard Pares, an Englishman with the Russian army, tells us that most of the Poles remained faithful to the Tsar, and that they were confident that he would set up their old kingdom again when he was victorious. "I saw at Kielce," he says, "ample evidence of the enthusiasm of the Poles for the Russian cause. They show the greatest courtesy and kindness to Russians, especially in the villages. I am told on good evidence that when a German soldier defaced a portrait of the Tsar, a Polish official struck him in the face, and for this was bound to a telegraph pole for two days, and then taken down and shot. . . . Yesterday the commander of a Russian army corps at Radom,[164] where the Germans had remained over a month, issued the following letter of thanks to the people of the town:—

> "'Poles,—Our wounded officers and soldiers, and also our prisoners who had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and had passed through the town or province of Radom, speak with deep gratitude of your cordial treatment of them. You have tended the wounded, fed the starving, and clothed and sheltered from the enemy those escaping from captivity. You have given them money and guided them to our lines. Accept from me, and from all ranks of the Army entrusted to me, warm and hearty thanks for all your kindness, for your Slavonic sympathy and goodness.'" [238]

A correspondent thus describes the touching spectacle which was to be seen every day at the Sacred Gate of Vilna,[165] when the fate of Warsaw was hanging in the balance: "Above the gateway is a chapel with wide open doors showing a richly-gilded and flower-decked image of the Virgin. At one side stands a row of leaden organ pipes, at the other stands a priest. Music is wafted through the air with incense and the sound of prayers. Down below in the narrow, muddy roadway kneel many poor men and women with prayer-books in their hands. They are Poles. But through the gateway come incessantly, all day and all night, Russian troops going to the front. And every soldier or officer as he comes lifts his hat and passes through the praying throng uncovered. This is beautiful. Let Russia always be so in the presence of the Mother of Poland."

The following story illustrates the doggedness of the Russian soldier. "A detachment of twenty Russian cavalry met a hundred of the enemy's horsemen, and, being so greatly outnumbered, decided to beat a retreat. One of the Russians, however, was slightly wounded, and thrown from his horse. As he lay on the ground he took up his rifle and began to pick off the Germans who were pursuing his comrades. His shooting was so good that he killed three of them. Peasants came up and offered to carry him to a place of safety; but he said, 'No, I will not hide from Germans,' and went on firing. Meanwhile the enemy, suspecting an ambush, gave up the chase. When they returned and found that they had been foiled by a single man they at once finished him off. He died happy, knowing that he had by his self-sacrifice secured the safety of his comrades."

Here is a grim story which illustrates the splendid patience and uncomplaining endurance of the Russian wounded:—

"A tall, thin soldier stopped near. 'You are wounded, old chap?' inquired the general. [239]

"'Yes, sir,' the man replied, not recognizing the general in the gloom. 'How do I get to the hospital?'

"'You ought first to find your regiment, and give up your rifle and cartridges. But can you get there? where are you wounded?'

"The soldier threw open his cloak, and the general examined him with a pocket electric torch. The entire shirt and the inner part of the cloak on the breast were soaked with black blood. One knew that underneath was an enormous gaping wound. The soldier stood erect, slightly supporting himself on his rifle.

"'Go to the hospital,' said the general. Then he turned to me. 'You saw? That is what they are like, and all are the same.'"

Professor Pares gives us the following picture of the Russian soldiers on the march:—"We travelled in the midst of troops all hurrying forward to participate in the taking of Kielce. They moved slowly along the road in straggling groups like an enormous family on its way to a huge picnic; but the unit of each regiment is never lost, and all meet at 'the appointed place.' When they come to a barrier in the road they show great readiness and resource in removing it, and all work together like brothers. Any number of men run up from their loose ranks to push a motor or cart or transport wagon over a marshy stream, and those who are so assisted call back, 'Thank you, brothers.' It is like a current that slows up and takes thought against some barrier, but whose general movement seems not even to be checked. Some of the side-tracks looked very bad indeed, but every one somehow got through, no matter what the size of their carriage. Often at such points there were companies that rested along the grassy banks of the road; in other places one saw by the side large numbers of gray transport wagons. Those carrying straw for the bivouacs were in front;

sometimes one came upon a resting battery. The brotherhood between officers and men is another notable feature of the march of a Russian army."

"The next day we returned to Radom, occupying seats in the motor of a Russian general. The great stream of troops was still flowing on. There were troops of all kinds. We called to ask the names of each regiment, [240] which they always gave in a kind of jovial chorus. There were food transports, field kitchens, pontoons, and, not least important, the post. At one point we saw a large body of Austrian prisoners sitting by a wood drinking water with their very small escort. These men helped some of our motors over difficult places. The great current of men and wagons still flowed on. Teams of white horses which, because they can be so clearly seen, are only allowed to serve in the transport, were dashing through mud and water with an ardour as great as though they were on the field of battle. At one place a bread wagon dropped all its cargo and turned over on its side; but horse and driver, evidently not noticing, carried it on into the stream without checking the pace, one wheel flying in the air and the other broken beneath the wagon.

"Our general spoke frequently with the men, who helped us in getting our motor over difficult places. When the trouble was over he said heartily, 'Once more, thank you, brothers.' Nothing will remain with me longer than these endless, irregular lines of big, sleepy, almost stupid-looking men, moving at a walk which might last for ever, and all in one direction, and all with set eyes—the people that lies down to sleep at the roadside, that breakfasts off stale biscuit soaked in water, that carries nothing but what it can put to a hundred uses, that will crouch for days without food in flooded trenches, that can die like flies for an idea, and is sure sooner or later to attain it—the people that never complains, the people of brothers."

[241]

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SECOND RUSSIAN ADVANCE ON CRACOW.

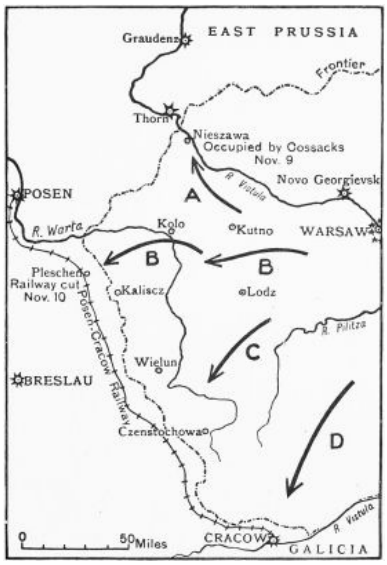
At the close of Chapter XXV. we left the Germans, who had been beaten north of the Pilitza, retreating rapidly towards the Warta, and those who had suffered defeat south of that river hurrying towards Cracow. As you know, they wrecked the roads, railways, and bridges on their line of retreat, and the work was done with such thoroughness that a whole army must have been detailed for the purpose. So rapidly, however, did the main bodies of the Germans move that they did not even pause to bury their dead properly. Consequently, they left behind them but few prisoners and guns. In some places they had prepared strong positions, but these they abandoned almost without striking a blow.

You know that the Germans had set their hearts on Warsaw, because it would enable them to control the sheaf of railways by means of which the Russians were able to maintain their armies in Poland. The Russians, on the other hand, had set their hearts on Cracow, because it would give them a road along the river Oder to Berlin, and another across the Carpathians to Vienna. Now that the Germans and Austrians were in retreat, the Grand Duke was able to advance again towards Cracow. When the Germans attacked him along the line of the Vistula he had four armies, which we will call A, B, C, D, holding that river. The army A extended from the fortress of Novo Georgievsk to the south of Warsaw; the army B continued the line to the south of Ivangorod; and the armies C and D lay still farther south up to the junction of the San with the Vistula. Along the San was Brussilov's army, which had retreated from Galicia. [242]

The Grand Duke knew that while Brussilov advanced again through Galicia he must protect Brussilov's flank, so that the Germans could not interfere with his movements. In order to do this he must hold the Germans who had retreated towards the Warta by means of armies A, B, and C. If fortune favoured him he might, by means of the army A, roll up the left flank of the Germans, and hem them in between C and his fourth army, D, which was now marching south-east towards Cracow. He therefore hastened the advance of his troops all along the line. Army A advanced along the Vistula towards Thorn, and the cavalry screen of Cossacks, riding hard, was not twenty miles from that fortress on 9th November. Army B struck at the Warta in the neighbourhood of Kolo, and on 10th November its vanguard was actually across the German frontier, and had cut the railway from Posen to Cracow. Meanwhile Army C was striking at the Upper Warta, while Army D was pushing south-east. By 12th November the cavalry of this fourth army had got within twenty miles north of Cracow. While these movements were going on Brussilov was pushing westward once more, and had already reached and reoccupied the main passes of the Western Carpathians.

Everything was going well, and many people in this country fully believed that the Russians would be in Cracow before long. But wiser folks wondered what new move von Hindenburg was about to make. It was not likely that the Germans would sit still under the terribly rough handling which they had recently received. They had lost very heavily, and they had been beaten back to their frontier, but they were still full of fight. On 13th November it was evident that they were going to make a very powerful counter-attack.

Let me remind you of two facts which it is important that you should remember. The first is, that along the Polish frontier the Germans possess a network of railways which enable them to move troops from north to south very rapidly; the second is, that though the Germans had devastated much of Poland they had kept the roads and railways intact in the northern quarter of the country. As soon as von Hindenburg had withdrawn his left and centre behind his own frontier, he put his troops into trains, and hurried them northward to the [243] neighbourhood of Thorn, where he had large reserves. Some of these reserves came from Germany, and some were brought from the Western front. Altogether he gathered in an astonishingly brief time a striking force of about 800,000 men, and behind them he had many thousands more. He now began to push eastward on a forty-mile front between the Warta and the Lower Vistula towards Warsaw once more.



As the roads and railways in this region were good, he hoped to make a rapid advance, and fall on Warsaw [245]
before the Russians could bring up reinforcements along the broken railways and ruined roads farther south. Even if his centre were heavily attacked he had the means of retiring rapidly. It was a very ingenious plan which he was now about to carry out. General von Mackensen was to command the armies in the field.

The Russians, you will observe, were very badly placed to meet the sudden thrust that was now about to begin. They were strung out upon a huge curve of a thousand miles in length, and their communications were bad. As the railways had been destroyed, reinforcements from the south would take a long time to come up, and before they could appear von Mackensen hoped to be in Warsaw. The Army A which he had to meet was only about 200,000 strong. Of course it might be strengthened by new forces brought up from behind Warsaw, but in this case, too, there would be much delay. Everything promised a speedy victory for the Germans.

In the next chapter we will see how they fared. In this chapter we will follow the fortunes of the two armies that were advancing on Cracow. I have already told you that the cavalry of Army D under General Dmitrieff, a Bulgarian, who fought bravely in the Balkan War and afterwards offered his sword to Russia, was twenty miles north of Cracow on 12th November. At that time the main body was about sixty miles behind. For three weeks it pushed on slowly but steadily, and meanwhile Brussilov had recaptured Jaroslav, had again besieged Przemysl, and, leaving a force to mask that fortress, was pushing into the passes of the Carpathians, which, as you know, form a great natural barrier between Galicia and the Hungarian plain. As the Carpathians figure largely in this and in future fighting, I will give you a brief description of them now.

The Tatra Range of the Carpathians. ***Photo, Exclusive News Agency.***

The Carpathians curve for 1,000 miles like a huge sickle round the Hungarian plain from the deep trench of the Danube, known as the Iron Gates, to what is called the Moravian Gate, beyond which lie the Bohemian mountains. The southern portion of this range, which barricades Hungary against Rumania, consists of high and bold ridges and lofty rocky tablelands; it forms a stronghold so well fortified by nature that it has been [246]
called the "Eastern citadel of Central Europe." That portion of the range which overlooks Galicia may be called the "waist" of the Carpathians, for here it is at its lowest, and is crossed by a number of passes, over which roads and railways have been made. Still farther west, fronting Silesia on the north is the loftiest and boldest part of the range—the High Tatra. Here we find a great mountain wall of granite, with steep, rocky ramparts and jagged crests, varied by beautiful lakes, which lie in the cup-shaped hollows. The High Tatra is

as grand in its way as the Alps of Switzerland. Nowhere, however, do the Carpathians reach the snow-line, so the range contains no glaciers such as you find in the Alps. The lower slopes are generally covered with forests of beech, oak, and fir; but higher up, amidst the rocks, even the hardy pine can find no foothold. In the forests of the High Tatra the bear, wolf, and lynx are still to be found.

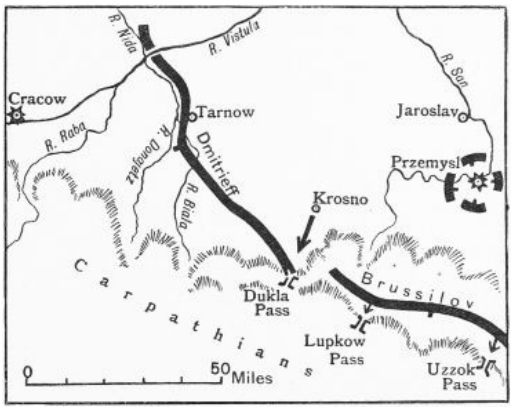
The part of the Carpathians which chiefly concerns us now is neither the high, bold ridges which look towards Rumania, nor the great rocky wilderness of the High Tatra, but the "waist" which lies between Galicia and the Hungarian plain. No great range of mountains is so easily crossed as this section of the Carpathians. It consists mainly of sandstone, which, for the most part, affords easy slopes, rounded tops, and wide valleys. Here we find the five principal passes by which traffic across the range is maintained. All of these passes are low and easy. They rise from flats in the foothills, which are themselves one thousand to twelve hundred feet above the sea-level, and the highest of them does not rise two thousand feet higher. The summits of one of them, the Dukla Pass, are less than six hundred feet above the last flats of the foothills.

As these passes will occur again and again in the course of our story, it is necessary that we should know their position and something about each of them. The first of them to the east is the Delatyn Pass, the highest of all; then, going west, we reach the Beskid Pass, across which the railway from Lemberg runs down to the Hungarian plain. Still farther west is the Uzsok Pass, which is less than three thousand feet above the sea-level, and carries a good road and a railway. It is probably the most difficult of all the passes to force. The next gateway in order is the Lupkow Pass, which is not two thousand feet above the sea, and is also crossed by road and railway. About twenty miles to the west is the Dukla Pass, which is the lowest and [247] easiest of all. Though it does not carry a railway, it is nevertheless the key to the Western Carpathians. Its saddle is only 1,500 feet above the sea; it is ten miles wide, and can be crossed even in winter by a large army. Whoever holds the Dukla Pass can turn all the passes to the east against an invader coming from either north or south.

Now let us return to the Russian armies invading Galicia. While Brussilov was seizing and holding the Uzsok, Lupkow, and Dukla Passes, Dmitrieff, commanding what I have called Army D, was pushing his way towards Cracow. As he moved westwards he had some heavy fighting to do. He carried a strongly fortified town by [248] assault, and his men waded up to the neck in ice-cold water through the river Raba in the face of a heavy fire. One bitter day they carried trenches and wire entanglements at the point of the bayonet. They were seasoned by forty-five days of almost continuous struggle, and were in the highest spirits. By the end of the first week in December his Cossacks were in the suburbs of Cracow, and his main force was about twelve miles east of the fortress. His right was preparing to wheel round so as to close in on the city from the north, where it was hardest to defend. On 4th December it was only three and a half miles from the outer fortifications.

A month previously, when the Russians were within a hundred miles of the fortress, it was ill prepared to stand a siege. While they were retiring to the San and advancing again, the Austrians had been busy strengthening its defences by making a wide circle of trenches around the city, and putting big movable guns into them, as the French had done at Verdun.[166] No field army, however, had been placed in these trenches, because it was hoped that Mackensen's new move on Warsaw would be sufficient to cause the Russians to retire again. By the end of the first week in December it was clear that Brussilov and Dmitrieff were not going to be drawn off by any threat in Poland, but were going to leave the defence of Warsaw to the other Russian forces. The Austrians now saw that they must attack the Russians in Galicia, unless they were prepared to see Cracow fall into the hands of the enemy.

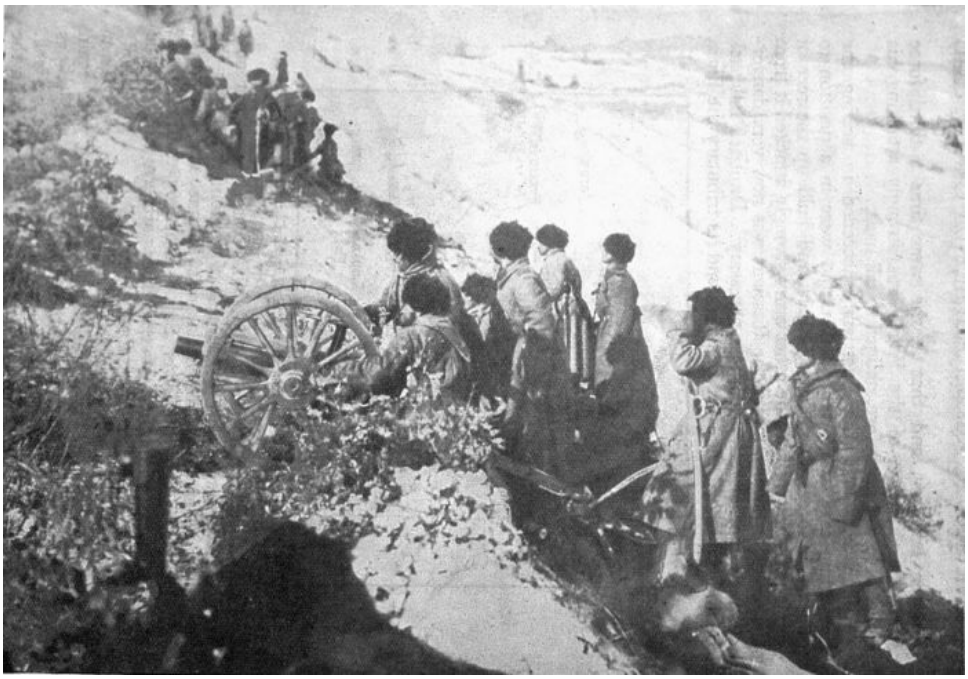
Two armies were, therefore, launched against the Russians. The first army, which consisted largely of Hungarians, pushed up from the plain to the south through the Carpathian passes in order to sweep Brussilov out of them and then threaten the Russian rear and its lines of communication. Meanwhile a second Austrian army moved from the south-west amongst the foothills of the Carpathians, and struck at the left of the Russians in front of Cracow. The two armies attacked at the same time. On 8th December, while Brussilov was heavily engaged in the mountains, Dmitrieff fought a battle on the outskirts of the city. He [249] held his own well, but he found that the Austrian right was working its way through the higher glens so as to reach the valley of the river Donajetz[167] and threaten his rear, and that at the same time a third force from the direction of the Warta was strongly attacking his right. He was, therefore, obliged to fall back.



Position of the Russians in Galicia at Christmas.

Four days later the Austrians succeeded in seizing the broad and easy pass of the Dukla, and were in a position to pour their forces down upon Galicia, and hold up the rear of Dmitrieff's army while the other army strongly attacked it from the west. The position of the Russians was now very dangerous, and another retirement was necessary. Dmitrieff fell back behind the line of the river Donajetz and its tributary the Biala, so as to cover the mouth of the Dukla Pass. His front now curved from the Vistula to the east of its confluence with the Donajetz, Tarnow on the Biala, past Krosno, and almost to the head-waters of the river San. Brussilov continued the line south-eastwards, and covered the northern exits of the Lupkow Pass and the Uzsok Pass.

There was great disappointment in France and Great Britain when the news arrived that the Russians were again retreating. So far, however, there was no disaster. As long as the enemy could be held in the passes all might yet be well. If, however, the Uzsok Pass, which carries a railway from the Hungarian plain to Przemysl and Lemberg, could be captured by the Austrians, Brussilov would have to retire northwards, in which case the enemy would be able to regain the besieged city of Przemysl. While the struggle was raging in the mountains, the Russians heavily bombarded the city, in the hope of capturing it and setting free the troops that were around it. Unhappily, the bombardment had no effect. [251]



Russian Artillery in the Carpathians. ***Photo, Record Press.***

A few days later the Austrians seized the crest of the Lupkow Pass, and began fighting hard for the Uzsok Pass. Before, however, they could become really dangerous, Russian reinforcements arrived, and a counter-attack began. About 20th December, when the snow lay thick on the mountains and icy blizzards were sweeping across the passes, the Russians once more advanced. The left, swinging south-west from Krosno, seized the mouth of the Dukla Pass, and cut off and captured more than 10,000 Austrians. Meanwhile the centre and right moved forward to the position shown on the map (p. 249), and by Christmas Day Brussilov was holding the mouths of the Lupkow and Uzsok once more. He did not fear fresh attacks by way of the passes, for the wild wintry weather forbade the passage of troops even across the lowest gaps in the chain. At the end of the year the Russians were still besieging Przemysl, and their right was within forty miles of Cracow.

The city had been saved by the valour of the Hungarians. But for their stubborn fighting in the passes, Dmitrieff would have eaten his Christmas dinner on the banks of the Oder, and his joyful toast to his soldiers would have been, "Onward to Berlin."

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SECOND ASSAULT ON WARSAW.

We must now learn how von Mackensen made his swoop on the threatened city of Warsaw. When the Cossacks in Galicia were within an easy day's ride of Cracow, and North Poland was shrouded in white, clammy mists which no eye could pierce for more than a few hundred yards, his troops set out from Thorn on the second great venture. The first had failed, but the second might be a triumph. Who could say?

About 13th November Ruzsky's outposts along the Vistula were driven in, and his scouts reported that a very strong force of Germans was advancing along both banks of the river. The Russian general had far too few troops to meet the large numbers now flung against him, and, as I explained in the previous chapter, he could not expect reinforcements either from the south or from beyond the Vistula for a considerable time. He was, therefore, forced to retire, and by the 16th November the Germans were fifty miles to the east of their frontier, and half-way to Warsaw. No doubt during their advance they captured many prisoners and many guns, but owing to the straggling character of the Russian march, which was described on page 239, the losses of our ally were not so high as they would have been in the case of a Western army. The Turkomans, [168] mounted on fine horses, and wearing orange and scarlet sheepskin coats, flashed to and fro in the midst during many rearguard actions, and managed to delay the enemy's advance. One of these delaying fights [253] took place on the night of the 15th-16th November, and was claimed by von Hindenburg as a great victory. He reported that he had captured 28,000 prisoners, and Berlin went mad with delight. The commander-in-chief was at once rewarded—he was made a field-marshal.

Ruzsky's idea was to fall back in good order behind the river Bzura, which rises near Lodz, flows northwards for twenty or more miles, then runs eastwards for about forty miles, and finally flows north to join the Vistula, some ten miles below Lowicz.[169] During its eastward course the river flows through a great belt of marshes, which lie partly in the course of the river and partly to the west of it. The marshes are crossed by a few small paths totally unfitted for the passage of large bodies of men with heavy guns. All the bridges along the river had been broken down, but in its upper reaches the river could be forded. Look at this little map. You will find on the railway from Thorn to Lowicz the town of Kutno, and almost due south of it, beyond the Bzura, you will see Piatek. Between these two places the marshes are crossed by a great causeway, along which the heaviest traffic can make its way. From what I have told you of the Bzura, you will gather that an army lying behind the marshes of the river would be in a very strong position to meet a frontal attack. They could only be assailed in front along one road—the causeway already mentioned. They might, of course, be outflanked by a force crossing the river below Lowicz (A), or fording the stream to the south of the marshes (B). The Germans, as we shall see, made not only a frontal attack along the causeway, but also flanking attacks at A and B.

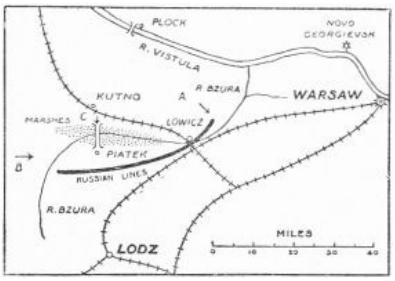


Diagram showing the Russian Position behind the Marshes of the Bzura.

Notice the causeway leading from Kutno to Piatek. Along this causeway the Germans made their frontal attack.

About fifteen miles to the south of Piatek is Lodz, the "Manchester of Poland." It contains half a million people, and has grown more rapidly than any other city of Europe. Its chief industry is cotton, but there are [255] also large factories in which silk, woollen, and linen fabrics are made, as well as numerous dye-works, flour mills, distilleries, and machine shops. The Germans had captured it during their first march on Warsaw, but had lost it during the retreat. They were now to make a bold bid for it again.

Accordingly the German right now pressed hard against the Bzura at B, south of the marshes. While the right was crossing the river at B, the extreme left moved towards Plock, so as to outflank the Russian position by crossing the river at A. The main attack, however, was to be made not on the flanks but in the centre, across the causeway at C. Now I want you to notice that if Russian reinforcements could have come up from the south, the German flanking forces at B would have been hemmed in between the Russians to the north of Lodz and those advancing on the city from the south. Von Hindenburg, however, felt quite sure that the Russians from the south could not arrive in time owing to the broken roads and railways. Long before they came up he hoped to be in Warsaw.

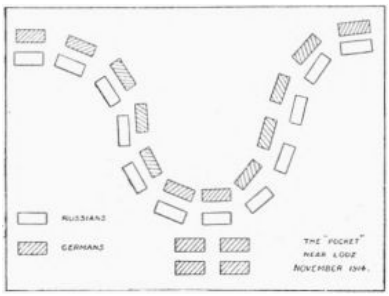
A German Battery overwhelmed by Cossacks.

This grim picture illustrates the fate of the Germans who were trapped in the "pocket" as described on page 255.

An extraordinary state of things soon occurred. At first the Russians beat off attacks on the causeway, and held the German army in the villages north of the marshes. But on 19th November von Mackensen made a huge effort. He crossed the causeway, and pushed the Russians well south of Piatek. For the next four days his troops tramped across the causeway, and the Russians fell back more and more, till there was a deep sag in their line east of Lodz. Von Mackensen pushed this sag deeper and deeper, and wider and wider, until it resembled a pocket, and on 23rd November the bottom of the pocket fell out, and the Russian army was split into two parts, as shown in the diagram on the next page. The Germans burst through the gap, and the Russians were now in a most dangerous plight, especially as the enemy was bringing up strong forces both from the south-east and the south. Lodz was now being attacked from the front, from the flank, and from the rear. The Germans appeared to have succeeded beyond their wildest dreams.

"There's many a slip between the cup and the lip," says the old proverb. The Germans now expected to envelop the divided forces of the Russians, and make an end of them altogether. But when the cup was [256] almost at their lips, the slip took place. The Russians had hastily summoned guns and men from Asia, and troop trains had been rolling for weeks past at top speed along the Siberian railway. The Siberians were detrained at a station on the railway south of Lowicz, just as reinforcements from the south were at last coming up. On the 24th the Siberians appeared on the field; another day, and they would have been too late —the Russian left would have been destroyed for ever.

Ruzsky, now reinforced, did his utmost to close up the mouth of the pocket, and thus cut off the 90,000 Germans who were within it. For two days he pressed together the edges of the top of the pocket, and more and more shut in the trapped corps. More troops were needed to close it completely, and Rennenkampf, on the extreme right, was ordered to push forward with the utmost speed. Unhappily, he arrived a day too late, and the pocket was never wholly shut up.



Von Mackensen strove hard by bringing up reserves to force back the Russians who were pinching him on either side, and by doing so managed to provide an exit for his trapped troops. From 24th to 26th November a furious struggle continued night and day. Battalions were broken into fragments, and the men roamed about the frozen and deserted land "like a pack of hungry wolves." By the 26th something like 40,000 men had escaped, and had reached their own lines. Amongst them was a remnant of the Prussian guards. Not only had thousands of Germans been killed and wounded, but multitudes of prisoners were in Russian hands. A few days later Warsaw was swarming with them. But for Rennenkampf's late arrival Russia would have accomplished a new Sedan.

CHAPTER XXIX.

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WARSAW AGAIN SAVED.

Fresh troops were now brought up from Germany, and a determined effort was made to envelop the Russians by striking hard at their left while the rest of the line was strongly held up. The Russian left wing was pushed back, chiefly because it had broken roads and railways behind it, and was farthest from its base of supply. Lodz, to the rear of the Russian lines, now formed an ugly salient, much like that at Ypres. Ruzsky knew that if he were forced to retreat through the seven miles of the Lodz streets he could only march slowly and in crowded formation, and would probably be badly cut up in the process. It was a risk which there was no reason to face. Lodz was of no value in his plan of campaign, though, of course, it was valuable to the enemy because of its resources. Ruzsky therefore determined to give it up, and to straighten out his line by falling back. Accordingly, on the 27th he slowly retreated. His withdrawal lasted more than a week. German shells began to fall in the streets of Lodz on 5th December, and the next day the enemy entered the city, and were received with great joy by their fellow-countrymen, who form a large part of its population. For the second time the Germans were masters of Lodz.

There was much joy in Berlin, and the capture of the city was acclaimed as a great victory, in which "we did not lose a single man." As we have seen, the Russians gave it up of their own accord, because the game of holding it was not worth the candle. As a matter of fact, there was no battle and no victory. It is said that for [259] fifteen hours the Germans shelled empty trenches, from which the Russians had withdrawn on the previous day. Nevertheless they still speak of the Battle of Lodz, and consider it a feather in their caps.

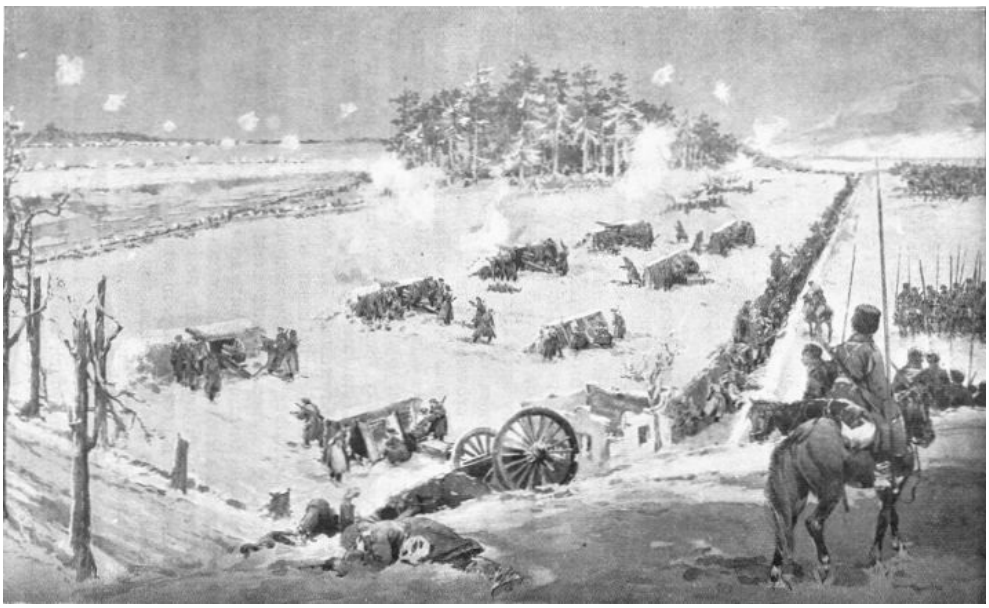
A few days later von Hindenburg thus addressed his men:—

> "In the course of severe fighting, lasting several days, my troops have brought to a standstill a Russian army superior in numbers. Over 60,000 prisoners, 150 guns, and about 200 machine guns have fallen into our hands. But the enemy is not yet annihilated. Therefore, forward, with God, for King and Fatherland, till the last Russian lies beaten at our feet."

No doubt the Germans had made large captures, but so had the Russians. Von Hindenburg, though he called upon his men to rejoice, knew that he had really failed in his object, which was to make the Russians retire from Galicia and come to the help of their hard-pressed comrades in North Poland. They had done nothing of the sort. As you know, the Galician campaign went on without interference.

Von Hindenburg had promised his troops that they should eat their Christmas dinner in Warsaw. He was still seventy miles from the city, and December was already six days old. There was no time to be lost if his promise was to be kept.

He now hurled his left against the Russian right wing, which lay north of the Bzura and well east of Lowicz. At the same time he increased his forces in East Prussia, and ordered them to march southwards from Mlava so as to cut the main railway from Warsaw to Petrograd. Had this move succeeded, the Russians would have been obliged to abandon Warsaw. Happily, a force advanced from the fortress of Novo Georgievsk, and drove back the Germans from East Prussia almost to their frontier. For the time being, the Russian right flank was secure.



The Battle of the Bzura. Russian Field Artillery in Action.

By permission of The Illustrated London News.

The Russian wing just south of the Vistula was not, however, well placed to meet the other attack. It was cut into two by the river Bzura, and its communications were very bad. So, with great wisdom, Ruzsky determined to withdraw this wing behind the Bzura and its tributary the Rawka, which flows north to join the Bzura, a few miles east of Lowicz. Behind these rivers he would have good communications, by means of [260] which he could easily bring up food, munitions, and reinforcements. So far the winter frosts had not been severe; there was only a thin coating of ice on the Polish bogs, and the Vistula and the Pilitza were still open for river traffic. Just when Ruzsky was planning his retirement a complete thaw set in, and in a few days the

whole countryside was one slough of despond. The Germans advancing against his new position would have to flounder through many feet of mud to get at him.

For a fortnight the Russians slowly fell back all along the line, and the towns to the west of the line of the Bzura and the Rawka were occupied by the Germans. By the 18th of December the Russians were in their new position, which soon proved itself to be as strong as the Allied position from Arras to Nieuport. The same kind of warfare now took place both in East and West. The Russians dug themselves in close to the shallow, muddy streams, and on the other side the Germans occupied the fairly high bank which marks the rim of an old channel.

Attacks and counter-attacks were nightly incidents of the struggle. When the early darkness set in, the Germans, in close formation, crashed through the cat-ice along the shore, waded breast-high through the bitterly cold waters, and, in spite of severe losses, frequently gained the Russian bank. Sometimes they captured an advanced trench, but rarely could they hold it, and all the time they were losing heavily. Warsaw was only thirty-five miles away, and the roar of the German guns was clearly heard in the city. But there was no panic; the Russian lines were proof against every assault. By Christmas Eve the enemy was doing no more than hold his trenches. In East and West alike stalemate had set in.

A writer thus describes Christmas Day in the Russian lines: "The Bishop of Moscow," he says, "arranged a solemn Christmas Day service, with trained singers who were serving in the army. He later visited the hospitals, giving short and plain addresses, and blessing each branch of the service in turn. There was a great Christmas tree in the station, where presents were distributed to the wounded. Gifts were also distributed under fire by the hospital workers to the soldiers in the trenches. In the evening I took part in a [261] Christmas gathering in one of the big hospitals. Every one's health was drunk in turn; the persons toasted were mentioned by their Christian names, and all was woven into a long song. Afterwards we sang songs of the Volga."

The failure of the second attempt to capture Warsaw brings us down to the end of the year 1914, and the moment is convenient for summing up the work of the Russian armies during the first five months of the war. In common with her Allies, Russia was not ready to take the field when war was declared; most of her soldiers had yet to be called up, and she had not sufficient rifles, ammunition, and uniforms for them. Further, by means of her very imperfect railway system, she had to transport such forces as were ready many thousands of miles before they could reach the theatre of war. In spite of all these difficulties, she had a force prepared to strike a full fortnight before the Germans believed that she could put her men into the field.

While the Kaiser's hosts were swinging through Belgium, in the hope of overwhelming the French and the British, the Russians, though still too weak for the purpose, invaded East Prussia, the sacred land of the German squires, and by doing so relieved to some extent the strain in the West. Dearly did Russia pay for this act of chivalry. She suffered one of the most terrible defeats in her history at Tannenberg; but she was still undismayed. In Galicia, on the other hand, she crushed the Austrians in two mighty battles before the Germans could come to their aid, and captured the whole eastern half of the country.

Her troops were rapidly approaching Cracow, which alone barred the road to Silesia and Berlin, when the Germans, who from the first were greatly superior in numbers, made a dangerous move against Warsaw, the great railway centre which it was essential for Russia to hold if she was to maintain the war on the enemy's frontier. To meet this grave threat, the Grand Duke ordered his forces to fall back from Galicia, and hold the long line of the Vistula against the determined invader. Then when von Hindenburg had made his furious thrust, and had been flung back almost from the gates of Warsaw, the Russians sprang forward once more, and drove the Germans in rout behind their own frontier. Again they swept into Galicia, and there they were maintaining themselves when the year 1914 came to a close. [263]

By means of the network of railways on the German frontier von Hindenburg rapidly massed troops for a march across the undevastated north of Poland towards the city which had already foiled him, hoping that this new threat would have the former effect. It failed in its purpose. The Russians met his many with their few behind the marshes of the Bzura, and the late arrival of Rennenkampf's troops alone saved the Germans from being completely wiped out. As it was, they suffered terribly, but reinforced, made another frenzied attempt on Warsaw. Again the Russians retreated, and behind a river front of great strength defied the Germans to do their worst. By Christmas Eve the Germans had failed, for the second time in three months, to capture the city of their desire.

Christmas in the Trenches of Poland. ***Photo, Alfieri.***

This photograph shows an advanced trench in Poland as held by the Germans on Christmas Day. It will be noticed that two sentinels in full marching order keep watch, and that the rifles of the defenders lie in position, ready to be discharged at a moment's notice. A typical German officer is seen sleeping close to the sentry in the foreground.

Such in the briefest possible outline is the record of Russia's part in the war during the year 1914. The Russians had most loyally supported the Allies; they had sacrificed thousands of men in order to draw against them the greatest number of Germans, and by their stubborn and persistent efforts they had caused the enemy after 15th November to abandon his offensive movements in the West. Their commander-in-chief and most of their other leaders had shown fine generalship and great resolution, and their soldiers had given fresh proof of the dogged courage for which they have always been renowned.

All this came as a great surprise to those who remembered that the Russian armies had been utterly baffled and overthrown in the war which they had waged ten years before against Japan. Then they were badly trained, badly equipped, and badly led; but Russia had taken to heart the bitter lessons of defeat, and during the intervening years had so thoroughly reorganized her forces that they were now able to inflict defeats upon the foremost military nation of the world. As an armed power Russia had been born anew.

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CHAPTER XXX.

AT WAR WITH TURKEY.

At the beginning of the great struggle King George sent a message to the Sultan, in which he referred to the friendship which had existed between the United Kingdom and Turkey for more than a century. Two days before the fall of Tsingtau this old friendship was broken; we were forced to declare war on the Power which we had so often befriended during more than a hundred years. The fact was that Germany had become all-powerful in Turkey, and the Sultan was merely a puppet in the Kaiser's hands.

I have already told you how the Kaiser courted the Sultan in 1889,[170] and won for Germany many important industrial and commercial advantages in Asia Minor. In July 1908 an event took place in Turkey which seemed at first to be a great blow to Germany. Up to that time the government of Turkey had been Oriental; the Sultan was absolute; there was no parliament, and bad governors robbed the people right and left. Western ideas, however, had gradually been gaining ground, especially amongst the younger men. In July 1908 the Young Turks, after long preparation, rose in rebellion under a vain but very pushing man named Enver Bey. The Sultan, the Kaiser's friend, was deposed; his younger brother was placed on the throne, and a new form of government, in which the people had some share, was set up. Before long, Enver Bey became the most powerful man in the country. He was a simple captain when the reform movement began, but he rapidly rose to be Chief of the General Staff and Secretary for War.

[265]

This revolution seemed to have overturned Germany's plans, and to have robbed her at one blow of all the power and influence which she had gained in Turkey. Thanks, however, to the army which von der Goltz had drilled and trained and officered, Germany managed to retain her influence. Enver Bey and other leading Young Turks were won over, and Germany continued to hold the reins of military power. Then came the war with Italy, and in 1912 the sudden and unexpected Balkan War, in which the German-trained Turkish army was badly beaten. When all was over, Turkey had been reduced to a little country less than twice the size of Wales.

After this disaster the Turkish army was practically handed over to Germany, lock, stock, and barrel.

German officers were poured into the army, and nearly all the divisions and brigades had German commanders. In January 1914 General Liman von Sanders became commander of all the thirteen corps of the Turkish army.

Now, I think you can understand that when the great European war broke out it was highly improbable that Turkey would remain neutral. We were most anxious to keep Turkey out of the fight, and on 7th August Sir Edward Grey promised, on behalf of Great Britain, France, and Russia, that if she would refrain from war we would guarantee her independence, and would see that she lost no territory when the struggle was over. We also undertook to make no change in the government of Egypt, which, as you know, was then supposed to be under the overlordship of the Sultan.

When we declared war on Germany there were in this country two men-of-war which Messrs. Armstrong, Whitworth, and Company had built for the Turkish Government, but which had not been handed over to their owners. According to what is called International Law,[171] a nation going to war has a perfect right to acquire any warships which have been built or are building in its ports, but have not left the country. Our Admiralty very properly bought these vessels from the builders. Sir Edward Grey telegraphed to the Sultan [266] on 25th August, expressing his deep regret that the Government had been obliged to take this course, and promising to restore the ships at the end of the war if Turkey would remain strictly neutral. There seemed to be a good deal of angry feeling against Britain in Constantinople when the Turks learnt that we had taken over their ships. The Turkish Prime Minister, however, assured us that this angry feeling was largely pretence, and meant nothing. Turkey, however, was soon to show herself in her true colours.

In Chapter XXI. of our second volume I told you that the two German cruisers *Goeben* and *Breslau* were chased by a British squadron in the Mediterranean, but that they managed to escape, and on 10th August took refuge in the Dardanelles. It was the duty of Turkey as a neutral Power to see that these ships did not pass through the Strait, and that they were either sent off to sea again in the course of twenty-four hours, or were disarmed and interned until the end of the war. Next day, to the astonishment of the world, the Turks announced that they had bought the cruisers from Germany because Britain had seized the ships which had been built for them on the Tyne. I have already told you that Britain had every right to take over the Turkish ships. On the other hand, Turkey had no right whatever to buy warships from a nation that was at war with another nation. To do so was a friendly act to Germany and an unfriendly act to Britain, France, and Russia. If the Turks had acted according to international law, they would have ordered the *Goeben* and *Breslau* out of their waters, in which case the Allied ships in the Mediterranean would have captured them. By buying them, the Turks prevented Britain from reducing the enemy's naval strength, and at the same time they assisted Germany by paying over their price. By means of these ships the Turks hoped to make themselves masters of the Black Sea.

This unfriendly act in itself afforded Great Britain good grounds for declaring war on Turkey; but she was very patient, and confined herself to protests. The Turkish Government promised to send away the German officers and crews of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, but did not do so. All the while the Turkish Prime Minister was protesting that Turkey wished to be neutral; but he was merely playing for time. Attempts were being [267] made to stir up rebellion in Egypt and India, and Turkey was holding her hand until the Moslems in these countries should be ready to rise.

Towards the end of October the British Government learned that Turkish ships, without any declaration of war, and without warning of any kind, had wantonly attacked open, undefended Russian towns on the Black Sea. It was well known, too, that Enver Bey, the Turkish Minister of War, was strongly pro-German, and that since the war began German officers in large numbers had poured into Constantinople. Certain rights enjoyed by foreigners living in Turkey had been abolished; the army had been mobilized, and there was no doubt that an attack was being prepared against Egypt. On 29th October a horde of Bedouins[172] invaded the Sinai Peninsula,[173] and seized certain wells. The same day Turkish torpedo boats raided Odessa, sank and damaged several ships, and bombarded the town.

Next day the ambassadors of the Allies had interviews with the Sultan and his advisers. The Sultan and the Prime Minister were in favour of peace, but Enver Bey and the military party overruled them. On 1st November the ambassadors left Constantinople, and four days later the King issued a proclamation which began as follows:—

"*Owing to hostile acts committed by Turkish forces under German officers, a state of war now exists between Us and the Sultan of Turkey.*"

Before I describe the part played by Turkey in the war during the year 1914, let me tell you something about the army which she was able to put into the field. Every man in Turkey is supposed to serve, but as a rule only Mohammedans are called upon to do so. The conscript belongs to the army for twenty years—nine in the Nizam, or first line; nine in the Redif, or Active Reserve; and two in the Mustafiz, or Territorial Militia. Probably, at a pinch, the Turks could put into the field between 700,000 and 800,000 men, providing there was equipment for them. Their artillery had suffered heavily in the Balkan War; but since then Turkey had [269] bought many quick-firing guns from Krupp and the famous Austrian firm of Skoda. Germany had also provided the Turks with a number of heavy batteries.

The Turkish foot-soldier has always been famous as a fighting man. He is, as a rule, strong and well built, his nerves are steady, he is very stubborn in defence, and he can bear fatigue wonderfully well. But, as you know, he did not come off with flying colours during the Balkan War, probably because the German discipline to which he had been subjected had robbed him of his old dash and go, and because he was not in full sympathy with the German officers who commanded him. As a soldier, he was half Turk, half German; he had lost many of his Turkish virtues as a fighting man, and had not fully acquired those of Germany. Nevertheless, he is still brave, still dogged, still much enduring, and will always prove a formidable foe.

An American caricature of the time showed the Sultan laying his head upon a block and chopping it off with his own hand. Most observers in Western Europe felt that by acting as the cat's-paw of Germany, Turkey was deliberately committing suicide. She was solving the century-old problem—Shall Turkey remain a European Power? However the war might end, Turkey was bound to be wiped off the map of Europe as an independent state. There were many people in this country who were deeply sorry to see a brave people thus tricked into disaster for a cause which they could not understand, and for which they had no sympathy. Before long, however, the children of Osman[174] were fighting and dying amidst the snows of the Caucasus or on the sands of the desert in their old fearless, uncomplaining fashion—fighting and dying for no purpose save to

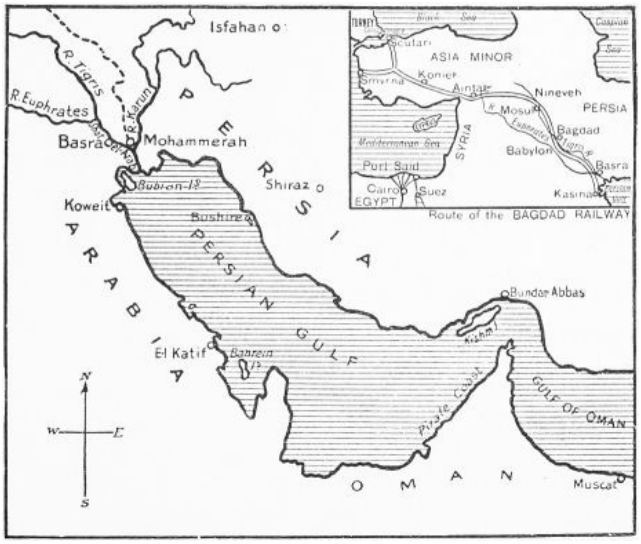
ensure the destruction of their race as a ruling power.

Constantinople, the ancient Byzantium. ***Photo, Exclusive News Agency.***

Naturally the Turks wished to fight in the Balkan Peninsula, and to recover, if possible, some of the territory which they had lost during the recent disastrous wars. This, however, they could not do, because Greece and Bulgaria, their neighbours, remained neutral. The Germans wished to use the Turkish army to create [270] diversions—that is, to attack the Allies at a distance from the main theatres of war, and thus compel them to divide their forces. The frontiers of Turkey in Asia touch that wild, mountainous region in which Russia holds sway beneath the towering masses of the Caucasus; they also touch the bounds of Egypt, in which Britain is supreme, and draw near to the head of the Persian Gulf, which for generations we have watched and guarded in the interests of our Indian Empire, and have long regarded as a British sphere of influence. In these three regions the Turks might be of real assistance to their German masters. If they fought in Transcaucasia, they would draw off Russian troops from the thousand-mile line which the soldiers of the Tsar were then holding from the Niemen to the Dniester. If they attacked the Suez Canal, they might bar Britain's short road to India, and force her to keep a large army in Egypt. Further, when the Turks advanced, their Moslem brethren in Egypt and India might rise in rebellion, and force Britain to withdraw troops from the Western front to put them down. Then, again, the Turks might push down to the shores of the Persian Gulf, and obtain a foothold from which India might be threatened and the oil fields of Persia secured. The Turks, therefore, attacked on the Persian Gulf, in Transcaucasia, and in Egypt. With their descent upon the Suez Canal I shall deal in our next volume; in this and the next chapter I will describe the fighting at the head of the Persian Gulf, and afterwards I will tell you something of the operations in Transcaucasia.

South of Transcaucasia lies the Armenian plateau, which consists of lofty ranges of sterile mountains, with fertile vales and wide plains between them. The highest peak of this plateau is Ararat, on which it is said that the Ark rested after the flood. Ararat stands where the Russian, the Turkish, and the Persian empires meet, and from its southern slopes that famous river the Euphrates goes leaping through the mountain gorges on its way to the distant Persian Gulf. In the mountains to the south-east of Ararat rises the Tigris, which also flows towards the Persian Gulf, and gradually draws nearer and nearer to the Euphrates, with which it finally unites. Between the two rivers is Mesopotamia, which in early times was a wonderfully fertile country, [271] but under the blighting hand of the Turk has become a wilderness, though it might again "blossom as the rose" if the waters of the rivers were properly distributed over the land.

On the plain of the Euphrates and the Tigris are the ruins of cities which were famous at the very dawn of history. Near the busy town of Mosul, on the Tigris, is the site of the ancient city of Nineveh; and near the Euphrates, not far from the town of Hilla, are the ruins of Babylon. Two hundred miles below Mosul is Bagdad, which recalls the "Arabian Nights." Above Basra, the city of Sindbad the Sailor, the Euphrates and the Tigris unite, and the combined stream flows for about seventy miles to the Persian Gulf as the Shat-el-Arab. On the eastern side of its lower course is Abadan Island, on which about 1,000 tons of crude oil are refined daily. The oil comes down a pipe line from the wells, which are about 150 miles north-east of the refinery.



The Persian Gulf.[175]

The region between Basra and the Persian Gulf is the ancient land of Chaldea, the original home of Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people. Britons and Turks were now to meet in warfare on the river flats where the written history of the world began. [272]

You can easily understand that the refinery at Abadan and the pipe line from the oil wells would be open to attack if we should go to war with Turkey. To lose this great source of supply would be a grievous blow to us, for more and more of our warships now raise their steam with oil instead of coal. As soon as the European war began the Government of India dispatched an Anglo-Indian force, consisting of the 2nd Dorsets and of Indian infantry and artillery, to the Persian Gulf. This force was landed on the island of Bahrein, but when war was declared with Turkey it re-embarked, and on 7th November reached the bar at the mouth of the Shat-el-Arab, near the village of Fao. A gunboat bombarded the mud fort of this village, and reduced it to silence in about an hour. A force of marines was then landed, and the place was occupied.

The transports then sailed up the estuary, passing Abadan on the left bank, and after a voyage of about thirty-five miles, disembarked, unopposed, at the Turkish village of Sanijeh,[176] where trenches were dug. While General Delamain, who commanded the British expedition, was waiting for reinforcements he was attacked by a force of Turks from Basra. The Indians quickly checked them, and later in the day showed the utmost gallantry in turning them out of a village in which they had established themselves.

On 13th November, soon after daybreak, two Anglo-Indian brigades, including the 1st Oxford Light Infantry and the 2nd Norfolks, arrived, under the command of Sir Arthur Barrett, off the bar of the Shat-el-Arab, and by the 15th were ready to disembark at Sanijeh. It was no easy task to get men, guns, and stores ashore on the slippery mud banks of a broad tidal river, but the work was accomplished before sunset. Meanwhile General Delamain attacked the village of Sahain, four miles to the north. A short, sharp action took place; but the 2,000 Turks who were posted in a date grove were not entirely cleared out of it. On the 16th the newly-arrived forces rested, and received the news that the Turkish garrison of Basra was advancing to give battle. There were Europeans in Basra, and General Barrett was eager to capture the place speedily, lest evil should befall the foreign residents.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

FIGHTING IN CHALDEA.

On the morning of the 17th the British advanced to the village of Sahain,[177] only to discover that the Turks had abandoned it. Nine miles farther up the river, at a place called Sahil, the enemy lay in force ready to attack. An officer with the expedition thus describes the Turkish position:—

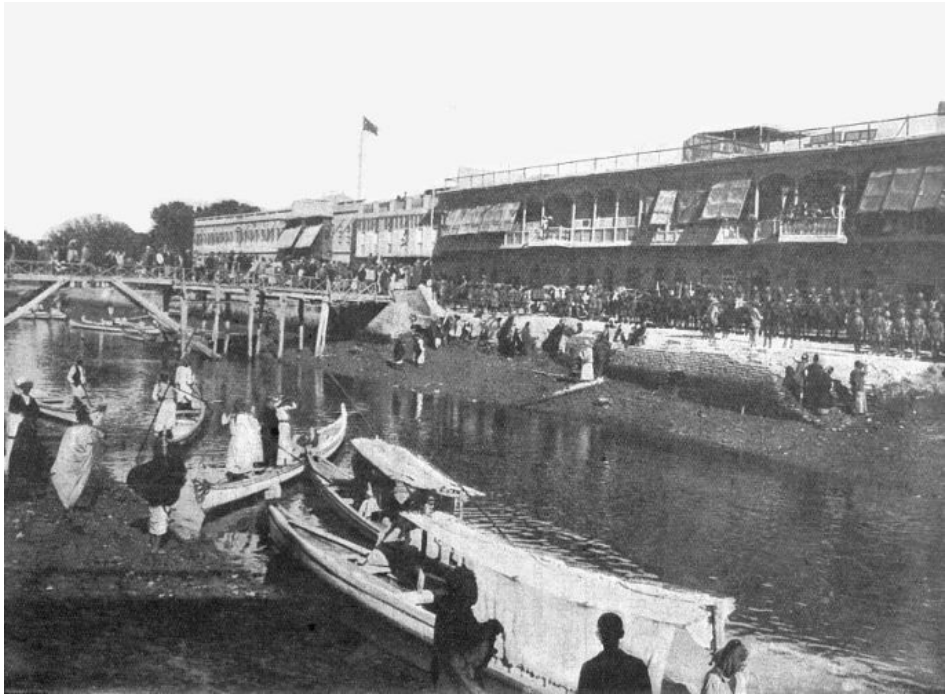
> "Imagine a billiard table, only, of course, thousands of times bigger, and instead of being green cloth it is sandy desert. Imagine that one end of the table is high ground held by the Turks with guns in position, and the infantry entrenched, and then imagine us attacking them from the other end. Not a scrap of cover of any kind; absolutely flat and unbroken; no cover for the guns or infantry advancing, no cover for the hospital or wounded as we advanced—nothing; simply a wide, flat, sandy plain!"

To make matters worse, recent rains had made the plain a slough, so that the cavalry and guns could scarcely proceed at more than a walking pace.

Early on the morning of the 18th our batteries and gun-boats began bombarding the Turkish trenches. The artillery of the enemy replied, but the marksmanship was bad, though General Barrett had a narrow escape from a shrapnel shell which buried itself in the ground at his feet. The Turkish infantry, however, made excellent practice, and their bullets swept the front with a withering fire. Nevertheless, our men advanced with admirable steadiness. The honours of the day went to the 2nd Dorsets, who, without a moment's wavering, crept nearer and nearer to the enemy, until they were near enough for the final bayonet charge. [275]

When they leaped to their feet and dashed forward the Turks broke from their trenches, and, flinging away their arms, ammunition, and even their clothes, fled to the rear.

Owing to the soggy nature of the ground and to a mirage which screened the flight of the enemy, pursuit was well-nigh impossible. About 4 p.m. the little battle was practically over—the trenches, two guns, and the camp of the enemy were in our possession. The Dorsets lost 130 men in this engagement out of a total casualty list of 353, which included three officers and thirty-five men killed. More than 1,500 Turks were dead or wounded.



Hoisting the Union Jack at Basra. ***Photo, Illustrated London News.***

On the 21st news arrived that the Turks had abandoned Basra, and that Arabs were looting the place. A British force was at once embarked on river steamers, while other troops were sent forward across the desert on foot. About eight miles beyond Sahil the Turks had attempted to impede the navigation of the river by sinking ships in the fairway; but the business had been badly done, and our gunboats, after silencing a battery of Krupp guns on the bank, got past the obstruction. About ten on the morning of the 22nd the river force entered Basra without opposition. Later in the day the desert column arrived; the German flag was hauled down, and the Union Jack was hoisted in its stead. During the remainder of the month the British prepared a base camp a few miles up the river.

At the beginning of December news arrived that the Turks had reassembled at Kurna, some forty-nine miles above Basra, and were about to put their fortunes to the test once more. The sketch map on page 277 shows you the position of Kurna, the highest point on the river to which ocean-going steamers can ascend. You will notice that the old and now partly-blocked-up channel of the Euphrates unites with the Tigris at Kurna, and that the town occupies a strong position in the angle between the rivers, with broad waters on two sides of it. Some people tell us that Kurna stands on the site of the garden of Eden, though others say that the abode of our first parents lay to the north-west of Bagdad.

Not much opposition was expected at Kurna, so only a small force, including a detachment of the Norfolks, was sent upstream on 3rd December. It was accompanied by three gunboats, a yacht, and two launches, all armed. Next morning the troops were landed on the eastern bank about four miles below Kurna, while the [276] gunboats went ahead to engage the Turkish artillery and to shell the town. By midday the British force was looking across the three-hundred-yard-wide stream towards the palm groves which surround Kurna, and was attacking the village of Mezera, which stands about a mile from the left bank of the Tigris. The Turks were driven out of the village, and withdrew to the bank of the river, where they kept up so heavy a fire that our men were compelled to retire. It was now evident that the Turks were holding the place in force, and that the task of the British was much harder than had been supposed.

The attackers dug themselves in, and sent back to Basra for reinforcements, which arrived on 7th December. On that day the action of the 5th was fought over again, but with far better results. Mezera was recaptured, the Turkish trenches on the bank of the river were cleared, and the survivors escaped across the stream. The gunboats did excellent work, and several of them were hit.

It was now clear that Kurna could not be taken by a frontal attack. The only way was to cross the river above the town and fall upon the place from the rear. Early on 8th December two battalions with two mountain guns were marched a long way up the river; some daring sappers swam the stream carrying with them a wire. Snipers fired at them repeatedly, but they managed to get across safely, and construct a sort of flying bridge. By this means, and also by the use of a dhow which had been seized, our troops and their guns crossed the river. By evening they had entrenched themselves amidst the trees to the north of Kurna. All was ready for the final assault.

It was never delivered. On the night of the 8th

> "a small steamer came down from Kurna showing all her lights, so we did not fire on her. She turned out to be carrying three Turkish officers who had come to offer the surrender of

Kurna! Of course we knew we could get into the town, but thought most of the garrison would escape up the river Euphrates. They wanted to be allowed to march out with their arms, but, of course, we would not agree to that, and after about an hour they agreed to an unconditional surrender."

Thus Kurna fell into British hands. The whole garrison surrendered, and the Turkish officers gave up their swords; but as a compliment to the commander his sword was returned to him. Chaldea was now in our possession, and we were well placed to beat off attacks from the north. There were still, however, many Turkish troops in the neighbourhood, but they did not make any serious attack on us. We had achieved our purpose, and had built up a strong barricade against an enemy advance to the Persian Gulf and a threat to the security of India. [277]

Basra and Kurna.

"We are now," wrote an officer on December 13th, "in a big entrenched camp outside Kurna. . . . Although this is my own regiment, and one is naturally proud of it, I must say they have behaved splendidly. They are a jolly good lot, always merry and bright, and never any trouble. By the way, I heard a rather funny remark last night by one of the men. The mosquitoes are rather bad here, and in the middle of the night, about 1 a.m., I woke up and heard the man say to his neighbour: ''Ere, Bill, if this is the garden of Eden, I wonder what Adam and Eve did with these 'ere mosquitoes a-buzzin' around them.'"

[278]

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CAMPAIGN IN THE CAUCASUS.

While Anglo-Indian troops were winning easy victories on the desert sands of Chaldea, Russians and Turks were locked in deadly combat amidst the rocky uplands of the broad isthmus that extends between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The most striking natural feature of this region is the great chain of the Caucasus, the most stupendous mountain mass of Western Eurasia. It strikes from north-west to south-east right across the country like a huge frowning wall, and in this respect resembles the Pyrenees, though its peaks are vastly higher and much of it is crowned with perpetual snow. So formidable and complete is this great natural barrier that no railway crosses it, and only two main roads have been constructed over its passes. The railway which carries the traveller from the north to the south of the chain has to creep round by way of the strip of low land between its eastern end and the Caspian Sea.

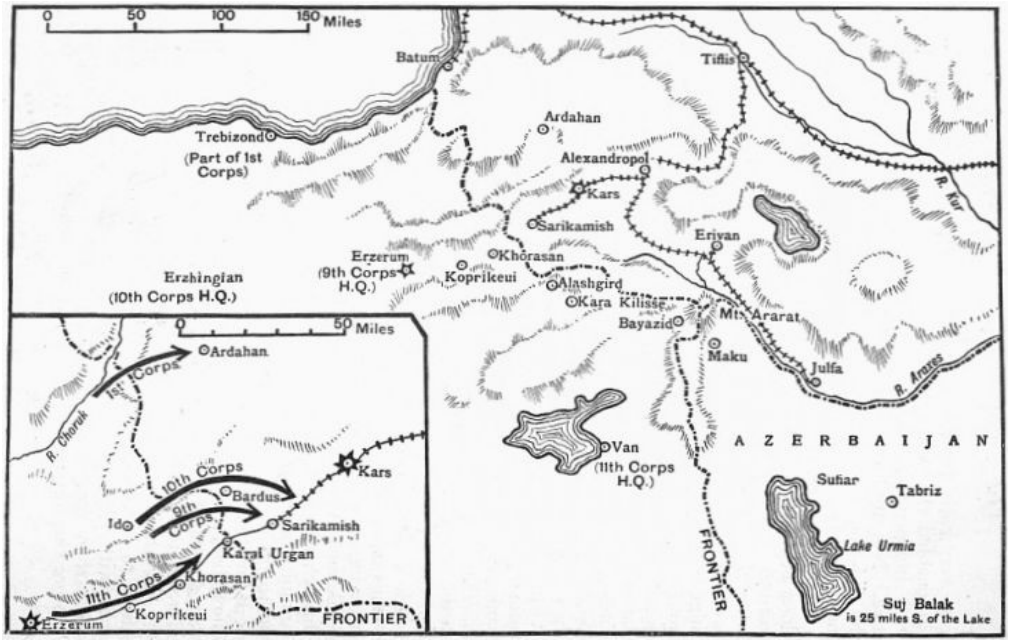
One would suppose that this huge barrier would mark off race from race, civilization from civilization, and religion from religion; that Europe would stop short on its northern slopes, and Asia begin on its southern side. This is true in a general sense, but the whole tangled region of lofty mountains, with its maze of spurs and plateaus and foothills, with towns and villages five or six thousand feet above sea-level, is inhabited by many more or less Christian tribes, and is part of Russia. It forms the government of the Caucasus, and its southern boundary marches with Turkey on the west and with Persia on the east. The Turkish fortress of Erzerum is only about seventy miles from the Russian frontier. [279]

This mountainous region has been a cockpit of struggle from very early times, but the difficult nature of the country has enabled the wild and turbulent highlanders to maintain their independence against Turk and Persian and Russian alike. Not until 1835 did Russia begin to annex the country; she did not come into full possession of it until more than forty years later.

Before I describe the actual fighting let us look a little closer at this Russian government of the Caucasus. [178] Its main features are the great block of the Caucasus range and the lower mountain region to the south, known as Georgia. Between the two, at a distance of about sixty miles from the high ridge of the Caucasus,

is a natural trench which rises gradually from the Black Sea for 3,000 feet to the watershed, and then slopes down to the Caspian Sea. Along this depression from Batum, on the Black Sea, to the great oil town of Baku, on the Caspian Sea, runs the railway which I have already mentioned. On it, about half-way between Batum and Baku, and also on the chief road which crosses the Caucasus, is Tiflis, the capital. It stands on the valley floor, surrounded by gray heights rising from twelve to fifteen hundred feet above it, and occupies both banks of the river Kur.

The fighting which I am going to describe all took place to the south of Tiflis, between the depression mentioned above and the Turkish border. You will notice that a railway runs south from Tiflis amidst the Georgian mountains, and then swings eastwards to the frontier. This railway has to climb two ridges of fairly high mountains, and at its railhead of Sarikamish it is 6,000 feet above sea-level. The whole country through which it passes is a wild confusion of high hills with summits of 10,000 feet in elevation, and deep gorges, leading up to the Armenian plateau which I mentioned on page 270. It is impossible to get from one valley to another, except by the railway, without climbing steep and snow-clad ridges. You can scarcely conceive of a more difficult country in which to carry on the operations of war.



The Campaign on the Caucasian Frontier.

(Inset—The Turkish Advance.)

For the Caucasus campaign which the Turks were now about to begin they collected at Erzerum an army of 150,000 men with which to oppose the Russian army, which was not more than 100,000 strong. The object of [281] the Turks was to capture the fortress of Kars, and thus open the way to Tiflis and to the Caspian oil fields at Baku. In order to do this they proposed to entice the Russians from Sarikamish across the frontier, and hold them at some point as far from the railhead as possible. While the Russian front was thus held, the Turks intended to make a wide encircling movement with their left centre and fall upon Sarikamish. At the same time, their left was to push up the Choruk River, cross the mountains to Ardahan, follow the road to Kars, and thus take the fortress in the rear.

Fighting began in the first fortnight of November. The Russians advanced from Sarikamish, and crossed the frontier to within about forty or fifty miles of Erzerum. Now that they were sufficiently far from their railhead, the great Turkish plan was put into operation. You will understand more clearly what the plan was if you study the little inset map on the opposite page. The 11th Corps was ordered to hold the Russians in the direction of Erzerum, while the 10th Corps, at Id, was to follow a bad mountain road which crosses the passes and comes down to the railway between Sarikamish and Kars. Between the 10th Corps and the 11th Corps a third corps, the 9th, was also to strike across the mountains directly at the railhead.

Meanwhile the 1st Corps was carried in transports to Trebizond, on the Black Sea. It was to follow the valley of the Choruk until it came to a mountain road which climbs a pass of more than eight thousand feet, and runs to the town of Ardahan, from which there is a fairly easy road to Kars.

About the middle of December the 11th Corps took the offensive, and, after fierce fighting, pushed back the Russians for about a dozen miles. On Christmas Day the Russians made a stand. At that time they were strung out along the railway and the road that runs by the side of it for about thirty miles. Meanwhile the 9th and 10th Corps had struggled over the high hills, and were descending upon Sarikamish and the railway to the east of it; while the 1st Corps, on the extreme Turkish left, had climbed the mountains at the head of the Choruk valley in the teeth of fierce blizzards, and had reached a position from which in the pauses of the storms they could look down on Ardahan. On 28th December it seemed as if the Turkish plan had succeeded. [282]

But the forces which had toiled over the mountains and had battled with the furious storms and the deep snow were worn out and utterly incapable of meeting the Russians. Their transport and big guns could not follow them over the rocky steeps; so they were without artillery, ammunition, and a proper supply of food. Many of the men were starving, and their hands and feet were frost-bitten, while thousands of others could only crawl along in a dazed and numb condition. It was impossible for these hungry, cold, and toil-worn men to make a great united attack, and the Russians were therefore able to deal with them piecemeal.

First they dealt with the 10th Corps. On January 1, 1915, after three days of hard fighting on the railway,

they forced this corps to retreat into the hills. This retreat left the 9th Corps unsupported. The Russians had pushed forward their right in pursuit of the retreating enemy, and at the same time their left had advanced, so that the 9th Corps was taken on both flanks. It fought with the fury of despair, and on January 3, 1915, when it had almost been wiped out, the remnants laid down their arms. It is said that the Turks yielded rather to cold and hunger than to the onset of the Russians; that they surrendered as much to the Russian field kitchens as to Russian steel.

Meanwhile the 1st Corps had entered Ardahan, but could not advance any farther. The Russian force which had been detached to cope with it drove the worn-out Turks from the town, and thrust them back in complete rout into the mountains and towards the Choruk valley, by which they had advanced. The 10th Corps, now in flight, was also heading in the same direction. The 11th Corps, which had been holding up the Russians on the road from Erzerum to Sarikamish, now made a big effort to save the situation. It had been unable to rescue the 9th Corps, but it might do something to cover the retreat of the 10th Corps. Accordingly it attacked vigorously, and pushed back the Russians to within twenty miles of Sarikamish, where three days' heavy fighting took place amidst the snowdrifts. By January 17, 1915, the 11th Corps had also been broken, and was forced to retreat on Erzerum, with a great loss of men and guns.

While this struggle was going on, the Russian right was pursuing the 1st Corps and the remnant of the 10th [283] and was driving them towards Trebizond. The Turkish navy attempted to bring reinforcements and stores to these harried corps; but Russian warships sank several of the transports and provision vessels, and hunted the *Breslau* and the *Hamidieh*, which accompanied them, back to Constantinople. The *Goeben* had already been crippled and put out of action for several weeks.

So, in hopeless and utter failure, ended the great adventure in the Caucasus. The plan of campaign had been prepared by German generals, who worked from the map without any actual knowledge of the terribly difficult country in which the troops were to operate. They did not foresee that the mountains and gorges, the broken tracks, the fierce storms, the deep snow, and the biting cold were of themselves sufficient to defeat any army, however brave and determined. Neither did they foresee that the Turks would have to fight when worn out with marching and privation. They set their allies an impossible task; but the Turks fought like heroes. More than 50,000 of them were killed or wounded, or led away into captivity. For many months to come, Russia had nothing to fear from the Turks in the Caucasus.

Immediately war was declared on Turkey several of our submarines were sent to the Dardanelles, to destroy, if possible, some of the Turkish warships. Submarine B11 was most successful in this work, and its commander,

Lieutenant Norman Douglas Holbrook, R.N., was awarded the Victoria Cross for a conspicuous act of bravery on 13th December. On that day he entered the Dardanelles, and, notwithstanding the difficult current, dived his vessel under five rows of mines, and then torpedoed the Turkish battleship *Messudiyeh*, which was guarding the mine-field. After this exploit he brought his vessel back safely, though it was fiercely attacked by gun fire and torpedo boats. So beset was he that on one occasion he had to submerge the submarine for nine hours.

[284]

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BATTLE OF THE SERBIAN RIDGES.

During some hundreds of pages I have told you nothing about the part which gallant little Serbia was playing in the great struggle. On page 76 of our second volume I briefly summed up the situation at the end of August 1914. At that time the first Austrian invasion had failed, and the country was almost clear of the enemy. The Austrians had suffered a serious set-back.

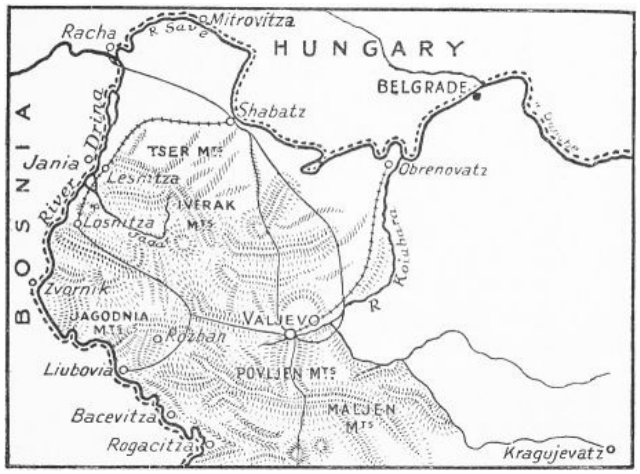
Early in September they prepared a second army of invasion. Before I follow its fortunes, I want you to look closely at the little map on the opposite page. You notice that from the railway uniting the Lower Drina with Shabatz on the Save, right away to the southern frontier, the country is criss-crossed in all directions by great uplands, almost as difficult for an army to traverse as those of Georgia. The river valleys alone give access to the interior, and afford railway routes. There are a few good government highways, but most of the roads are mere tracks, which in wet weather become quagmires. When once the autumn rains set in, the work of transport in Serbia is greatly hampered.

All the lowland parts of Serbia lie along the right bank of the Save and the Danube. This district is open, though hilly. East of Shabatz the lowlands form a rough triangle, with the course of the river Save as its base, and the highland town of Valjevo, on the river Kolubara, as its apex. It was across this triangle of easy country that the Austrians made their second invasion. [285]

The Serbians did not wait for the Austrian attack, but pushed over the plain, and in the darkness of night on 6th September crossed the Save at several points, and made a dash on the Hungarian town of Semlin, opposite Belgrade. They occupied the place on the 10th, but were unable to hold it, and were driven back with heavy losses into the Tser Mountains, which you see marked on the map.

The Austrian commander-in-chief proposed to turn the Serbian left, and at the same time hurry forward mountain troops to Valjevo, and thus cut off the retreat of the Serbian army. During September and October attacks and counter-attacks were constant, but neither side made much headway. The Austrians could not drive the Serbians off the crests of the mountains, and the Serbians could not drive back the Austrians, who were advancing up the Drina to turn the Serbian left. At length, however, the Serbian ammunition began to fail, and the Austrian numbers began to tell. On 6th November the enemy won the summits of the Tser

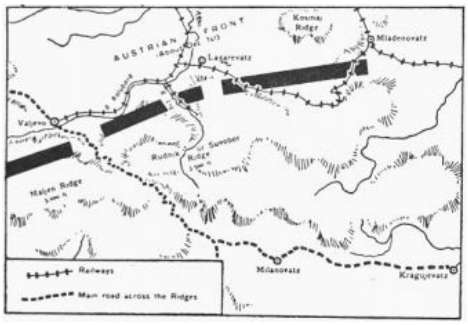
Mountains, and the Serbians, in order to avoid being enveloped, were forced to retreat eastwards. This they did in perfect order.



Map to illustrate the Campaign of November and December 1914.

The Austrians pushed on, and occupied Valjevo on 14th November. While the Serbians retired to the summit of a range south of Valjevo, the invaders pillaged the whole Kolubara valley and their line of march was [286] marked by fire and massacre. Belgrade was abandoned, and on 2nd December the Austrians made a state entry into the undefended capital. Telegrams of congratulation were sent to old Franz Josef, and Vienna was full of rejoicing. The Austrians boldly declared that the campaign was over, that the Serbians were finally defeated, and that the fruits of victory were about to be reaped. So certain of success was the Austrian general that he sent back three of his corps to help his fellow-countrymen, who were now about to begin their attack on the Carpathian passes from the south.

For a whole fortnight the Austrians dallied in Valjevo and on the skirts of the ridges occupied by the enemy. During this period the Serbians were by no means idle. Every available man was brought up, gun positions were prepared, and trenches were dug and strengthened. Best of all, the Western Allies sent them ammunition for big guns and small arms, and these supplies now reached the hard-pressed Serbians, despite the efforts of Turkish and Bulgarian bands to capture them.



Serbia was about to make her last stand. Everything had to be staked on the issue of the coming battle. If the Serbians should be driven back they would be almost certain to lose Kragujevatz,[179] their arsenal and chief industrial centre, and without it they could scarcely continue the struggle. They would also lose Nish, the old capital, now the sojourning place of the government. The Serbians, however, held a very strong position on the Maljen ridge, to the west of the main road leading from Valjevo to Kragujevatz, and were also posted on the still higher Rudnik ridge to the east of this road.

The plan of the enemy was to advance its centre against the Rudnik ridge along the single-line railway which runs up the valley of the Lig, a tributary of the Kolubara. At the same time the right was to move up the head waters of the Kolubara and attack the Maljen ridge, while the left was to swing round in a wide sweep, and [287] thus enclose the Serbian army. By 3rd December the Austrian centre had gained the western part of the Rudnik ridge, and the wings were making good progress.

The critical hour has struck; the fate of Serbia hangs in the balance. Old King Peter rises from a sick-bed and joins his soldiers, to die, if need be, with them. He addresses them in burning words which recall the speech of King Henry before Agincourt[180] and that of Robert Bruce before Bannockburn. He recalls the bitter struggles of their forefathers, recounts the ancient glories of their race, and paints the bright future which waits upon victory. Thus nobly he concludes:—

> "Heroes, you have taken two oaths—one to me, your King, and the other to your country. I am an old, broken man, on the edge of the grave,[181] and I release you from your oath to me. From your other oath no one can release you. If you feel you cannot go on, go to your homes, and I pledge my word that after the war, if we come out of it, nothing shall happen to you. But I and my sons stay here."

Every Serbian feels himself uplifted by the noble words of his leader; not a man leaves the ranks; all are

ready to do and die with their king. The weary and ragged soldiers pledge their faith anew, and steel their hearts to sweep the cruel hordes of invaders from the soil which they have profaned.

At sunrise on 3rd December the two centre divisions of the Serbian army begin to advance across the bare, sharp ridges, now thinly powdered with snow. Fog hides them from the Austrian battalions which are descending from the plateau which they occupy to attack the Rudnik ridge. The sun shines out and dissipates the fog. Suddenly the Serbian guns, which have been dumb for many days, begin to speak, and the soldiers, fired with new courage, dash forward. So fierce is the onset that the Austrians, unable to deploy, fall into confusion. Panic seizes them, and they fly back a terrified mob to the plateau from which they advanced a few minutes ago full of confidence.

Fresh Austrian troops are hurried up, and for three days the battle rages fiercely. On the afternoon of 5th December the left centre breaks, and crowds of discomfited men stream northward down the Lig valley. The [288] fugitives think only of their own safety; they fling away arms and equipment, and on the mountain roads and in the deep ravines abandon their artillery and baggage. Then the Austrian centre suffers the same fate, and the road to Valjevo is crowded with beaten troops hurrying into safety. There is good news, too, from the Serbian left, where a great victory has been won, and the enemy is in full retreat along the head waters of the Kolubara. By the dawn of the 6th the Austrian centre and right have everywhere given way, and the routed enemy is a mere panic-stricken mob, hot-foot for the frontier.

The Serbians follow up the pursuit with great vigour, and sweep the Austrians over the Drina and the Save with fearful slaughter and the capture of thousands of prisoners and many guns. The Austrian left tries to make a stand, but all to no purpose. It is thrust back to a position already prepared on the crescent of hills to the south of Belgrade. Here it holds out till the 13th, when it, too, is broken, and its remnants strew the streets of Belgrade with rifles and equipment, and stampede wildly over the Danube bridges whipped by the merciless flail of the Serbian guns. A rearguard sacrifices itself in the northern suburbs to cover the retreat, but all is over; and on the 15th old King Peter is on his knees in the cathedral, giving thanks for the great victory vouchsafed to his arms. A few days later, and the Serbians are able to boast that not a single armed Austrian remains on their soil.

King Peter watching the Battle of the Ridges.

[289]

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BATTLE OFF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS.

The disastrous battle off Coronel took place on 1st November. Ten days later, in silence and secrecy, the *Invincible* and the *Inflexible*, the first two battle cruisers built by Britain, left Plymouth, and steamed at full speed across the Atlantic to the West Indies. On board the *Invincible* was Vice-Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee, who was to take command of the avenging squadron. On his voyage to the Falklands he picked up the three armoured cruisers the *Carnarvon*, the *Kent*, and the *Cornwall*; also the light cruiser *Bristol*, the *Glasgow*, now repaired, and the *Macedonia*, an armed liner. He was thus in command of a very formidable force. Each of his two battle cruisers carried eight 12-inch guns, so mounted that they could be fired on either broadside.

How to get into touch with the German squadron was the problem that Sturdee set himself to solve. It is said that he managed it by means of a remarkable piece of "bluff." While his ships were steaming south he sent off a wireless message ordering the *Canopus* to proceed to Stanley, where she would be perfectly safe under the new guns which had been sent out to strengthen the forts. This message was picked up by the Germans, as it was meant to be. They believed that it was a trick intended to mislead them as to the safety of the *Canopus*, and that all the talk about forts and new guns was simple nonsense. But one thing the message did tell them, and that was that the *Canopus* was proceeding to Stanley Harbour, where she would have only the remnants of Cradock's beaten squadron to support her. Von Spee thought she would be an easy prey. He [290] therefore resolved to capture her, and while Sturdee's squadron, all unknown to him, was speeding towards the Falkland Islands, he headed for Cape Horn, and steered towards Stanley.

The British squadron arrived in Stanley Harbour on the morning of 7th December, and coaling at once began. Within the inner harbour lay the *Canopus*, *Glasgow*, and *Bristol*; in the outer gulf were the battle cruisers and the remaining vessels of the squadron. All were perfectly hidden from an enemy in the open sea.

At 7.30 on the morning of 8th December the look-out on Sapper's Hill reported as follows: "Eight ships sighted about twelve miles off, south-east, all making for Stanley." It was von Spee's squadron descending upon Stanley to smash up the unprotected *Canopus* and destroy the wireless station. The German admiral proposed, when that was done, to dash across the Atlantic to the coast of German South-West Africa, and prevent the landing of a force from Cape Town.

Speedily the great good news that von Spee was walking straight into the trap laid for him reached the British warships. Officers were roused from sleep, and the flag-lieutenant of the *Invincible*, so the story goes, dashed down to the Admiral's cabin clad only in pyjamas. Sturdee was shaving, and he received the information with the utmost calmness. "Well," he said drily, "you had better go and get dressed. We'll see about it later." I hope this story is true, because it recalls the famous incident when Drake was informed that the Spanish Armada was in sight.

Screened by the land, Sturdee waited for the Germans to draw nearer, so as to make victory doubly secure. At about a quarter to nine the *Kent* steamed down the harbour, and took up a position at the entrance. The advance ships of the enemy came boldly on, anticipating an easy victory against the feeble force which they imagined to be in the harbour. Then they turned broadside on, with the intention of destroying the wireless station. Directed by officers on the hills above the town, the *Canopus* from her moorings opened fire over the narrow neck of land, and five shots in quick succession fell around the German ships, which immediately hoisted their colours and wheeled round to close in with the other three vessels of their squadron. Soon the [291]
British admiral knew that the ships in the offing were the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg*, and *Dresden*. He could hardly believe his good luck. He had come out to seek this very squadron, and it had come to find him instead.

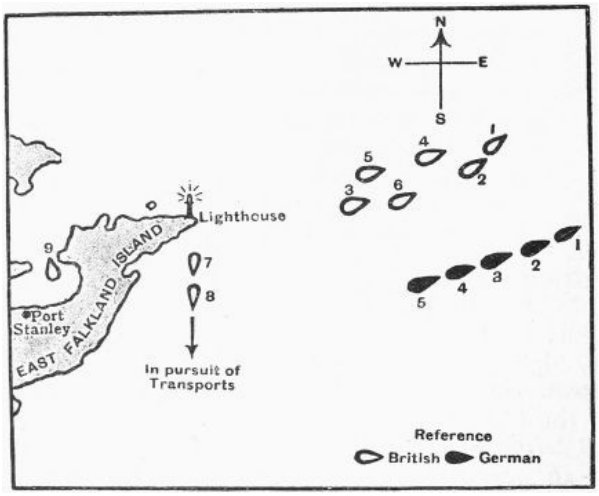
A few minutes later the two leading cruisers of the enemy altered their course and made directly for the harbour mouth, where the *Kent* was ready to engage them. Meanwhile the British battle cruisers were rapidly raising steam by means of oil fuel, and while doing so were sending up dense clouds of smoke with which to shroud themselves. Nearer and nearer came the leading ships of von Spee's squadron, and soon their commanders and crews had the surprise of their lives. They could now see the masts and funnels of the battle cruisers, and they knew for the first time that the British were waiting for them in great strength. Van Spee was well aware that he could not cope with such a force. The British ships were faster, and their guns were heavier and of longer range. He had played into the enemy's hands, and only a miracle could save him. Immediately the ships of his vanguard changed direction and hurried back to their consorts.

It was a beautiful morning. The sun was bright, the sky was clear, and the sea was calm—one of those rare days which come to the foggy, wind-swept islands like angels' visits, few and far between. Leaving the *Canopus* in harbour, Admiral Sturdee about ten o'clock ordered the chase to begin, and the *Glasgow*, followed by the *Kent*, *Invincible*, *Cornwall*, *Inflexible*, and *Carnarvon*, steamed out to sea. The colliers and supply ships of the German squadron at once retreated to the south, and the *Bristol* and *Macedonia* followed them up. The remainder of van Spee's ships turned tail, and at top speed hurried away eastward. Their only hope lay in flight.

The great gray warships tore through the sunlit seas, the white foam streaming from their bows as they furrowed the waves. The *Invincible* and the *Inflexible* soon drew ahead, but had to slacken off to enable the slower cruisers to keep up with them. At about eleven o'clock the position of the ships was as shown in the diagram on the next page.

Von Spee now saw that he was being slowly but surely overtaken, and that he could not escape by flight. He therefore detached his three light cruisers, the *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg*, and *Dresden*, which made off towards the [292]
south, followed by the *Kent*, *Cornwall*, and *Glasgow*, while the two British battle cruisers and the *Carnarvon* steadily gained on the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst*. They were soon within striking distance; 15,000 or 16,000 yards of sea separated them from the enemy. Admiral Sturdee however, was in no hurry to engage, and ordered his men to dinner. He even gave them time for a comfortable smoke after their meal. Just after a quarter to one he made this signal: "Open fire and engage the enemy."

The men flew to their stations, and with the utmost eagerness obeyed the short, sharp orders. The ranges were signalled, the big guns were aimed, and suddenly the air quivered with the thunder of their discharge. There was a gleam of fire at their muzzles, followed by dense clouds of smoke, as the shells screamed over the sea. The morning promise of a fine day had gone. The sky became overcast, and the air was thick with a drizzle of rain.



Battle off the Falkland Islands, December 8, 1914.

We will first follow the fortunes of the British battle cruisers now engaged in a fierce duel with the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst*. About two o'clock it was discovered that the British vessels were diverging [293] from the enemy, who, seeing this, turned to starboard, in the hope of getting away. At once the British ships turned starboard too, and this brought them again within effective range. The smoke was now impeding the firing, so Admiral Sturdee worked up to top speed, and got on the other side of the enemy, from which position the *Scharnhorst* was pounded mercilessly. You can picture the scene for yourselves: the roar of the guns, the scream of the shells, the loud crashes as shots went home, the wash of the waves, the whistle of the rising breeze, the grinding of the hydraulic machinery as the turrets swung round, the throb of the engines—all uniting in a chorus of deafening and incessant noise.

The *Scharnhorst* was soon in the throes of her last agony. Clouds of smoke rose from her, and spurts of bright flame. Shot after shot struck her, and though she returned the fire, the British vessels were too far away for her shells to do much damage. Her 8.2-inch guns could not cope with the 12-inch monsters of the battle cruisers. At three o'clock Admiral Sturdee, seeing that the end of the *Scharnhorst* was near, sent out this signal to his ships: "God save the King." By 3.30 the masts and funnels of the enemy had been shot away, and at five minutes past four she listed to port and turned bottom upwards. In a cloud of steam and smoke she disappeared amidst the swirling waters, her propellers still going and her flag still flying. Seven hundred and sixty brave men and their gallant admiral had gone to their doom.

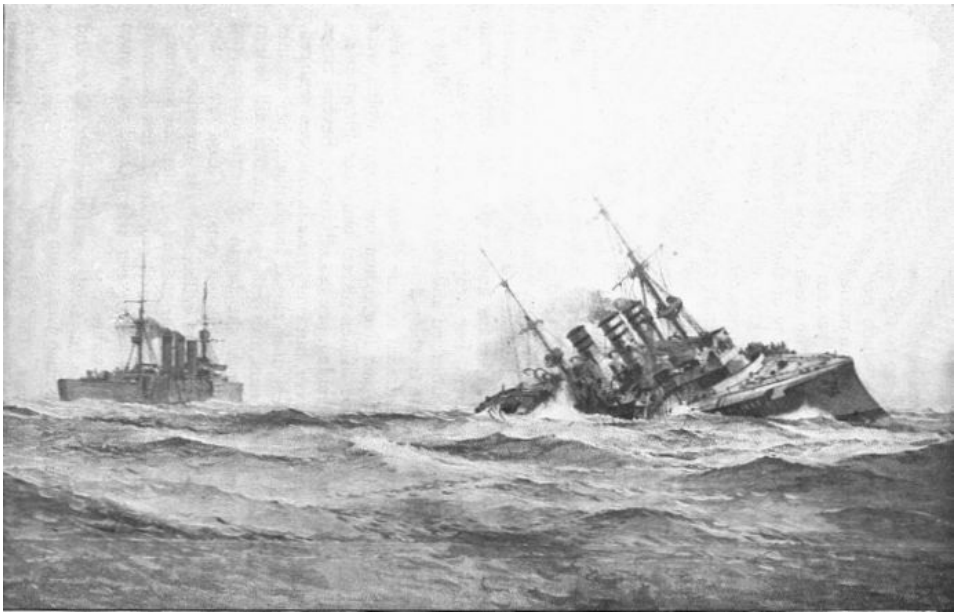
Fire was now concentrated on the *Gneisenau*, and soon she was done for. At half-past five, when her upper works were a total wreck, when one of her turrets had been blown overboard and flames were raging, she ceased firing. Several times her flag had been shot away, but every time it had been replaced. The three British vessels now closed in on her; her engines were smashed to fragments, but with one gun she still fought on. Soon after six o'clock she began to settle down, and Admiral Sturdee signalled to his consorts, "Cease fire." Six hundred of her crew had been killed, and the survivors were now lined up on deck waiting for the end. Then she suddenly heeled over, her stern rose high in the air, and a few moments later she too disappeared. The sea was dotted with men battling for life amidst the waves.

An officer on board the *Invincible* thus describes the errand of mercy on which the British were soon engaged:—

> "Now came the awful part. The *Inflexible*, *Carnarvon*, and ourselves hurried up to where she had disappeared, shown by slightly discoloured water, and on coming up close saw a good amount of wreckage with men clinging to it. Never shall I forget it: they were mostly calling out, and it sounded like a wail to us. We all lowered boats as quickly as possible, and picked up as many as possible; but heaps must have sunk, as the water was 40 degrees and they were all numb. It was awful being on the ship, because when all the boats were away they kept floating past, some swimming, some unconscious, just beneath the water. We lowered people down on bow-lines, and hauled them up the ship's side; some of them were quite dead when they came in. Altogether this ship saved about 115, of which fourteen were dead."

Meanwhile what had happened to the *Dresden*, *Nürnberg*, and *Leipzig*, which were being chased by the [295] *Glasgow*, *Kent*, and *Cornwall*? The battle between these light cruisers was more equal than the fight which I have just described. All day the struggle continued. The *Kent*, which was chasing the *Nürnberg*, got far out of sight of land, and lost touch with her consorts. It was feared that she had been lost, especially as no reply was received to the numberless calls sent out to her. Late in the afternoon of the next day she returned safely to Stanley with her wireless shot away, and showing every mark of fierce combat. Her silk ensign and Jack, presented by the ladies of the county of Kent, had been torn to ribbons.

The *Nürnberg* could steam a knot faster than the *Kent*, but the British stokers and engineers worked like heroes. They piled her furnaces high with fuel, and strained her engines to the utmost. When the engineers reported that coal was running short, the captain replied, "Very well, then; have a go at the boats." Accordingly the boats were broken up, the wood was smeared with oil and passed into the furnaces. Shortly afterwards the wooden ladders, doors, and almost everything that would burn followed the boats. She managed to work up to 25 knots—a knot and a half more than her registered speed—and slowly but surely came within range of the enemy.



The Sinking of the Nürnberg by the British Light Cruiser Kent.

(Drawn by Montagu Dawson from a sketch by an eye-witness. By permission of The Sphere.)

The *Nürnberg* was well fought, and the *Kent* was hit several times. A bursting shell set fire to some cordite charges, and a flash of flame went down the hoist into the ammunition passage. Sergeant Charles Mayer instantly picked up a charge of cordite and hurled it into safety. He then seized a fire hose, and by flooding the compartment averted all danger. But for this heroic action there would have been an explosion, and the [296] *Kent* would probably have been put out of action, if not destroyed altogether. By about seven o'clock the *Nürnberg* was in flames, and less than half an hour later she sank, her guns firing to the last. As she disappeared some of her crew waved the German ensign from the quarter-deck.

The *Glasgow* and the *Cornwall* came within range of the *Leipzig* about three in the afternoon, and for six hours they engaged her. From time to time she turned and fired a salvo at her pursuers; but though shells fell fast and thick around the *Glasgow*, there were few casualties, though many narrow escapes. Not till nine o'clock was the *Leipzig* finally disposed of. As the darkness of a wet night closed in, she heeled over and went down. The German transports and colliers had been sunk and their crews saved earlier in the day by the *Bristol* and the *Macedonia*. Of von Spee's squadron, only the *Dresden* and the armed liner *Eitel Friedrich*[182] remained.

The battered *Dresden* had managed to escape early in the fight, and she was lost sight of for many weeks. Ultimately she was cornered by the *Kent* and the *Cornwall* off Juan Fernandez[183] on March 18, 1915, and after a five minutes' action was forced to hoist the white flag. When her crew were taken off she was in flames. Finally her magazine exploded, and she sank.

Such was the first decisive naval battle of the war. It was a triumph not only for the officers and men of the British squadron, but also for the Admiralty, which had so skilfully and secretly planned the whole enterprise. The British victory was well-nigh complete; only one warship escaped, and our loss was small. The *Invincible* had no casualties; the *Inflexible* had one man killed. The *Kent*, which fought the most stubborn engagement, lost four men killed and twelve wounded; while the *Glasgow* had nine killed and four wounded. The German loss was terrible. Some 3,000 men must have perished, including von Spee and two of his sons. Let us do honour to those of our foes who sank beneath the waves on that dread day. "The German admiral fought as Cradock had fought; the German sailors died as Cradock's men had died. There can be no higher praise."

[297]

CHAPTER XXXV.

NAVAL RAIDS ON THE EAST COAST OF ENGLAND.

Every British boy and girl remembers Campbell's stirring lines:—[184]

"Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep."

In these days of fast warships, aeroplanes, and airships, we can no longer say that "Britannia needs no bulwarks, no towers along the steep." While it is probably true that no invasion of Great Britain could be successful while the British Navy remains undefeated, it is likewise true that the Navy in war time cannot

guarantee that an enemy with bases on the North Sea will not be able to make sudden swoops upon certain parts of the British coast. During the darkness of night or amidst the obscurity of fog, fast warships can dash across the North Sea, turn their guns on seaside towns for a short time, and then hurry back to the safety of their own waters before a British fleet can catch them. Aeroplanes and airships can also fly across by day and drop bombs on coast towns by night. Of course, such attacks can never decide the war. At the best they can only cause panic and spread dismay amongst the people. The British, however, are not easily frightened or dismayed. Those who know the British temper best will tell you that such naval raids and air attacks can only make our people more determined than ever to defeat the enemy. [298]

Perhaps you think that the Navy ought to protect coast towns from sudden raids. You must remember that the business of the Navy is to destroy the fleets of the enemy, and that it must always be ready to give battle whenever occasion offers. Were our warships to be strung out along the coast for the protection of towns, they would be an easy prey; they would be quite unable to concentrate rapidly in order to meet the enemy when he came out in strength or to fall upon him in the open sea on his way to or from an attack on our coasts.

During the month of October, when the German guns thundering against Ypres could be heard across the Channel, we began to prepare seriously against raids and even invasion. Mine fields were laid along the threatened shores, and within easy reach of all possible landing-places Yeomanry and Territorials were stationed, trenches were dug, wire entanglements were erected, and anti-aircraft guns were mounted. Over and over again there were false alarms that the enemy were coming. In the early days of November he made his first appearance.

Late on the afternoon of 2nd November eight German warships steamed out of the mouth of the Elbe, and cleared for action, ready for a descent upon the east coast of England. Probably some of the many German spies who then swarmed in the eastern counties had reported that the coast was clear, and that a sudden swoop had every prospect of success. The squadron consisted of the *Seydlitz*, the *Moltke*, and the *Von der Tann*, battle cruisers; the *Bluecher* and the *Yorck*, armoured cruisers; and the *Kolberg*, the *Graudenz*, and the *Strassburg*, light cruisers. All but the *Yorck* could steam 25 knots an hour, and the battle cruisers mounted 11-inch guns. Early on the morning of the 3rd they ran through the nets of a fishing fleet about eight miles east of Lowestoft, and sighted an old coast patrol boat, the *Halcyon*. Shots were fired at her, but she managed to get away unpursued, with her wireless apparatus, bridge and funnel damaged, and one man wounded.

By eight in the morning the German ships were ten miles off Yarmouth, and had begun to aim their guns at the wireless station and the naval air station. Their shells ploughed the beach or plumped harmlessly into the sea. For a quarter of an hour they kept up their cannonade without doing any damage. Then they retired, [299] and while doing so threw out mines to prevent pursuit. Later in the day a British submarine, D5, ran on one of these mines and was blown up. Before the voyage ended the engineer was hoisted on his own petard.[185] The *Yorck* collided with another of the mines, and went to the bottom with all her crew.

The destruction of von Spee's squadron off the Falkland Islands aroused much anger and bitterness in Germany, and many Germans loudly complained that their great and expensive fleet did nothing but skulk in its ports. Stung by these reproaches, and eager to avenge the defeat in the Southern Seas, the German naval authorities now prepared a raid upon the Yorkshire coast. The distance between Heligoland and Scarborough is about 320 miles. A ship leaving Heligoland at five in the evening, and steaming between 20 and 25 knots an hour, can easily reach Scarborough about eight in the morning, spend an hour in shelling the town, and be back again at its base before midnight.

On the evening of 15th December, seven days after the Battle off the Falkland Islands, a German raiding force steamed westward from Heligoland. We do not yet know exactly what ships were included in it, but probably Rear-Admiral Funke had with him most of the vessels which took part in the former raid, as well as the *Derfflinger*. Before daybreak, when a thick, cold mist lay low on the coast, the squadron arrived off the mouth of the Tees. There the forces were divided. The *Derfflinger* and the *Von der Tann*, with another vessel, probably the *Bluecher*, were sent north against the Hartlepools; while two light cruisers, along with, probably, the *Seydlitz* and the *Graudenz*, sailed south against Scarborough.

According to the laws of war, which Germany has undertaken to recognize, unfortified towns may not be bombarded. Nobody in his senses could possibly call Scarborough a fortified town. On a green promontory there are the picturesque ruins of a castle, now crumbling to decay, and formerly there was a battery below it. But when the German ships appeared off Scarborough, its only weapon of defence was an old 60-pounder Russian gun captured in the Crimea, and sent to the town as an interesting relic. True, there was a wireless [300] station on a hill behind the town, and some battalions of the new army were in the neighbourhood. Otherwise the Germans had not the shadow of an excuse for attacking Scarborough.

A few minutes before eight o'clock, when the all-the-year-round bathers were taking their morning dip, four strange warships were seen looming through the mist, and a few moments later the booming of guns was heard. Shells began to crash on the coastguard station and in the castle grounds, and shortly afterwards the ships steamed in front of the town to within five hundred yards of the shore. Quite unmolested, they proceeded to bombard every large object within sight. The Grand Hotel was struck by three shells; churches, public buildings, and hospitals—one of them flying the Red Cross flag—were hit, and large numbers of private houses were wrecked. Many shells were directed against the wireless station and the gas works.

For forty minutes the bombardment continued, and probably some five hundred shots were fired. Eighteen persons, chiefly women and children, were killed, and about seventy were wounded. One house was struck by a shell which glanced off a railway bridge about twenty yards distant. The whole place crumpled up as though struck by a giant's hammer, and a child of nine, another of five, the mother, and a soldier son, were instantly killed, while the father and another son were severely wounded. The number of narrow escapes was great. In some cases roofs were torn off and walls crushed in, yet the occupants remained unharmed. By a quarter to nine all was over, and the hulls of the raiding vessels disappeared round the castle promontory.

Some fifteen miles north of Scarborough is the pleasant seaside resort of Whitby, built on both sides of the estuary of the little river Esk. Those of you who have spent your holidays in the town will remember the red-tiled cottages of the fishermen, the gray walls of the quays and houses, the little bridge, and the ships sailing

up the river at high tide. Most of the town is on the West Cliff, and across the river, on a high, treeless headland, are the roofless ruins of an abbey on the site of an older monastic building, which has always been regarded as the cradle of English song. It was on this spot that the first English poem composed in England flowed from the lips of Caedmon, a humble man who, in the seventh century, tended the cows and slept in [301] the byre of the monastery, which was then under the rule of the abbess Hilda. For this reason Whitby is sacred all the world over to lovers of English literature. This quiet seaside place, without a vestige of fortification, was now to receive a visit of destruction from the sailors of a nation which has always professed to reverence art, learning, and literature.

About nine o'clock the coastguard at Whitby saw through the haze two warships rapidly steaming up from the south. Ten minutes later they began firing at the coastguard station on West Cliff, where many townsfolk gathered to watch the bombardment, which continued for a quarter of an hour. Some of the shots damaged the coastguard station, destroyed the western gateway of the ancient abbey on the East Cliff, and wrecked a number of private houses. Shells fell at Ruswarp, a mile inland, and damaged a school at Meadowfield. Happily, the scholars, who had just begun their morning lessons, were unhurt. In all, three persons were killed and two were injured. After the bombardment the cruisers turned northwards, and were quickly lost to view in the haze.

The Bombardment of Hartlepool, showing shells falling on the Battery at the end of the Pier.

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

Meanwhile the other division had visited the Hartlepools, which stand on Tees Bay, to the north of the wide estuary of the Tees. West Hartlepool and Hartlepool proper are really one town, with important docks and shipbuilding yards, which at this time were busily engaged on Government orders. The port is defended by two small batteries of 6-inch guns, so the Germans were able to say that they were attacking a fortified place. West Hartlepool had no defence whatever—it was without a single gun. There were some companies of the new army in the town, and in the bay a gunboat, a destroyer, and a submarine were stationed.

About the time when the bombardment of Scarborough began this British flotilla encountered the *Derfflinger*, the *Von der Tann*, and the *Bluecher* about eight miles from the coast, on the north side of the peninsula on which Old Hartlepool stands. The British flotilla was, of course, hopelessly outclassed by the German cruisers, but with great gallantry it tried to close in and torpedo the enemy. Shots were exchanged, and the British patrol vessels were obliged to run for safety, with some five men killed and twenty-two [303] wounded. The German cruisers now approached within 2¼ miles of the shore, and their guns opened fire. At once the two batteries, which were manned by Territorials of the Durham Garrison Artillery, who had never before fired a shot in anger, engaged the German ships with the greatest gallantry, and fought like veterans; but their 6-inch guns could not cope with the 8-inch and 11-inch guns of the enemy. Shells from the German warships burst in and around the "Heugh" battery, and killed several men.

The *Bluecher* now engaged the batteries while the other vessels moved farther north, shelled Old Hartlepool, and fired over the peninsula at West Hartlepool and the docks. Both the shore batteries claimed to have made hits. The streets of the old town suffered greatly; many houses and the gas works were destroyed, churches, hospitals, workhouses, factories, schools, and private houses were struck, and one of the shipbuilding yards was damaged. The docks, however, were untouched, though seven ships in them were injured. The streets were full of people when the bombardment began, and little children going to school and mothers with babies in their arms were killed. The total death-roll was 119, including nine men of the King's forces, and over four hundred persons were injured. Some six hundred houses were damaged or destroyed.

At 8.50 the fire ceased, and the cruisers disappeared, throwing out mines to prevent pursuit. That night three steamers making for the port struck some of these mines, and went down, with much loss of life.

The temper of the townsfolk was admirable. There were confusion, of course, and some panic, but for the most part the people remained calm and collected. The girls at the Hartlepool Telephone Exchange, for example, worked on steadily through the cannonade. The moment the danger was over the work of rescue and relief was begun, and the ordinary business of the day was resumed. It is said that one old lady, hearing the crash of the bursting shells, asked what was happening. When she was told, she remarked, "Hey! is it

only Germans? I was frightened it was thunder!" Many of the little children who had been injured by the bursting shells or by the fall of houses showed wonderful courage in their agony. [304]

Between nine and ten o'clock on that December morning the German vessels came together again, and started on their homeward voyage. Unhappily they managed to escape, but only by the skin of their teeth. Before the first shell was fired our Grand Fleet knew that the German squadron was off the Yorkshire coast, and immediately two battle cruisers and half a dozen battleships were sent off to engage the enemy. The fog, however, thickened as they ran south, until it stretched across the waters in a series of belts. Nevertheless the battle cruisers came within eight miles of the German vessels, which at once changed course. Just when it seemed that they were at our mercy the fog grew denser, and in the obscurity they made good their escape.

Though the German warships had escaped, they had certainly suffered. The captain of the *Bluecher* afterwards confessed that he had ten killed and twenty wounded, and two guns put out of action. The *Von der Tann* probably suffered even more severely, and the *Seydlitz* did not go scot-free.

When the news reached the Fatherland that a German squadron had bombarded English coast towns and had returned in safety there was great rejoicing. Soon, however, America and other neutral nations began to express their horror that undefended towns should have been attacked, and the Germans tried to excuse themselves by declaring that they had only attacked fortified places and an important naval signal station. As you know, the only town of the three with a semblance of defence is Hartlepool. As a matter of fact, the Germans simply killed unarmed and peaceful townsfolk in order to terrify the British people, and convince them of the hopelessness of continuing the struggle with Germany. The only result was to send a flock of recruits to the colours, and to heap further disgrace on the German Government. Mr. Winston Churchill summed up the situation exactly: "Whatever feats of arms the German Navy may hereafter perform, the stigma of the baby-killers of Scarborough will brand its officers and men while sailors sail the seas."

[305]

CHAPTER XXXVI.

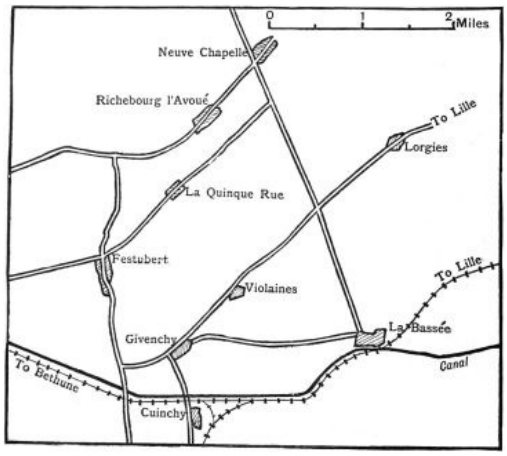
WINTER IN THE TRENCHES.

We must now return to the Western front and briefly follow the course of the fighting down to the end of the year. With the failure of the Kaiser's great and costly effort to break through the thin British lines before Ypres the critical moment had passed. Thenceforward through the rain and sleet and snow of winter the armies faced each other in trenches, and though the guns were rarely silent, and there were attacks and counter-attacks without number, nothing decisive took place. On both sides the combatants were more anxious to make their positions secure than to win new points of vantage.

During the closing days of November there were several gallant assaults on the German trenches by British troops, and in some of them Victoria Crosses were won. On the 23rd the Germans captured 800 yards of the trenches held by the 34th Sikh Pioneers, but a desperate counter-attack across the frosty snow in the darkness won them back again. It was in this fighting that Naik Darwan Sing Negi, as related on page 170, won the highest award of valour.

In December the trench fighting was keener and more frequent. In the first days of the month the French captured the ferryman's house on the east bank of the Ypres Canal, between Dixmude and Bixschoote. For weeks they had striven to secure this post, and it was only won by much bloodshed. Shortly afterwards information was received that the German lines had been weakened by the withdrawal of troops sent to help [306] von Hindenburg in the East, and that a good opportunity afforded itself for an attempt to improve the Allied position, especially where it was weakest—that is, from Klein Zillebeke to Messines, where the Germans were posted on low ridges which gave them good gun positions. On 14th December at seven in the morning, our guns heavily bombarded two wooded spurs to the north of Messines, which were then in possession of the enemy. The Royal Scots advanced against one of these spurs, and the Gordon Highlanders against the other; but though they showed the greatest gallantry in the attack, only the western edge of one position was won. Neither we nor the Germans could make headway in this direction.

It was in the neighbourhood of La Bassée that the most extensive operations were undertaken. On the first two days of December Maud'huy's left wing carried the Château of Vermelles,[186] three miles south of the canal. Guns posted at the château forced the Germans to retire behind the railway and abandon a village. It was at once occupied, and a gain of a mile and a half was registered.



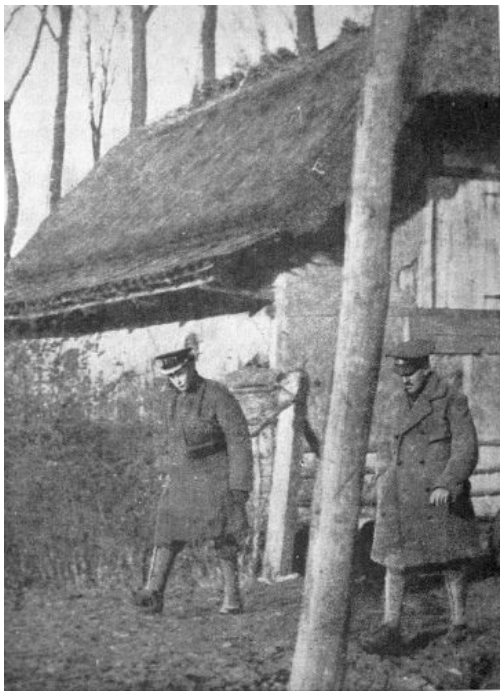
The Fighting near La Bassée, December 19, 1914.

Sir James Willcocks now decided that the time was ripe for an attack by the Indian Corps on the advanced [307] trenches opposite to them. Two Indian divisions then held a position from Cuinchy[187] across the railway and canal through Givenchy, and east of Festubert to Neuve Chapelle. The brigade on the right attacked at 4.30 on the morning of 19th December, and carried two lines of trenches, but found at daybreak that it had no supports on either side. It held on until dark, when it had to retire. The same fate overtook the brigade on the left. At first successful, it was finally driven back to its own lines.

Next day, 20th December, the Germans attacked the whole Indian front. Big guns and trench mortars prepared the way; then the German infantry swarmed out of their trenches and attacked the brigade which lay north of Givenchy. The Indians were forced to fall back, and by ten o'clock the Germans had captured a large part of the village. Farther south our line stood firm; but the capture of Givenchy was a serious blow, for it formed the pivot of our front. Reinforcements were hurried up, and to the 1st Manchesters, the 4th Suffolks, and two battalions of French Territorials was assigned the task of recovering the lost position. At five in the evening the Manchesters and Suffolks dashed upon the village, retook it, and cleared the enemy out of two lines of trenches to the north-east, though they could not dislodge them to the north.

Meanwhile General Macbean with an Indian force delivered an attack on the German position; but it failed, and the whole of his troops were driven back. Farther north there was serious trouble too. The advance of the Germans north of Givenchy had exposed the right of an Indian brigade, which included the 1st Seaforth Highlanders. All the afternoon of the 20th the Germans shelled the Indian left fiercely, and the troops suffered severely. Sir John French tells us that they were "pinned to the ground by artillery fire." North of the Seaforths a battalion of the 2nd Gurkhas gave way, and though the 2nd Black Watch managed to close the gap, there was a dint in our line which became a serious danger.

That afternoon Sir Douglas Haig was ordered to bring up the whole of the 1st Division to the support of the battered line. His troops attacked with great vigour, and by nightfall on 21st December most of our original [309] trenches from Givenchy to Festubert had been won back. Meanwhile the 2nd Brigade was fighting hard farther north, and by 10 p.m. had carried the support trenches of those from which the 2nd Gurkhas had been driven. The fire trenches which the Gurkhas had occupied had been utterly destroyed by the enemy's shells, and could no longer be used. By the evening of 23rd December the whole line had been restored, and there was no longer any immediate danger. The Indians who had given way had only done so when worn out with two months' struggle, and when they had lost some ten thousand men. Thanks to Sir Douglas Haig's prompt help, the situation had been saved.



The Prince of Wales making a Tour of the British Lines in Flanders.

(*Photo, Central News.*)

The following Victoria Crosses were awarded for outstanding deeds of gallantry during December 1914:—

Private Henry Howey Robson, 2nd Battalion Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment). On December 14, 1914, near Kemmel,[188] during an attack on the German position, Private Robson gallantly left his trench under a very heavy fire, and brought in a wounded non-commissioned officer. Later on he attempted the rescue of another man, and though wounded, persevered in his efforts until a second shot rendered him helpless. Private Robson, who belonged to South Shields, subsequently received the freedom of his native town as a tribute to his splendid bravery.

Private James Mackenzie, 2nd Battalion Scots Guards. On the 19th December, near Fromelles, about five miles south by west of Armentières, a stretcher-party tried to reach a wounded man lying in front of the German trenches, but was compelled to abandon the attempt owing to the fierce fire of the enemy. Private Mackenzie thereupon went out in the midst of a storm of bullets and succeeded in bringing the poor fellow into safety. Later in the day he tried to rescue another wounded man, but unhappily was killed in the attempt. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Lieutenant Philip Neame, Royal Engineers. On the same day, near Neuve Chapelle, Lieutenant Neame, under a very heavy fire and a shower of bombs, held back the enemy, and succeeded in rescuing all the wounded men whom it was possible to move. For this display of courage and devotion he was rightly awarded the highest token of valour. [310]

Private Abraham Acton, 2nd Battalion Border Regiment, and Private James Smith, 3rd Battalion Border Regiment. These two soldiers on 21st December, near Fromelles, volunteered to go out and bring in a wounded man, who for seventy-five hours had been lying exposed close to the enemy's trenches. They succeeded in rescuing him, and later in the day again left their trench, in order to bring another wounded man into cover. While carrying him into safety they were under fire for a full hour, and every moment of it they ran the risk of being shot down.

On the last day of November our troops were greatly delighted to hear that his Majesty the King had come to visit them. The Prince of Wales, who was a student at Oxford, and an enthusiastic member of the Officers' Training Corps when the war broke out, had already been at the front for some months as a member of Sir John French's Staff. Britons all over the world were delighted to know that the heir to the throne had set such a fine example to the young manhood of the nation, and that he had thrown himself into his military duties with great zeal and devotion. From the moment our troops left British shores the King's thoughts had been with them, and as soon as circumstances permitted he crossed over to France to cheer them by his presence, to show his personal interest in their welfare, to visit the wounded, and to pay the highest compliment in his power to our gallant Allies. Never since George II. had fought at Dettingen, in 1743, had a British sovereign taken his place among his troops on the field of battle.

Accompanied by the Prince of Wales, his Majesty first visited the hospitals, where he spoke with great sympathy to many of the wounded men, not only British but German. Many a poor fellow lying on his couch of suffering found himself better able to bear his pain because he knew that his King had a kindly thought for him. His Majesty also visited the Indian hospital, and talked with many of the men, who were delighted to learn that in some cases he knew the circumstances under which they had been wounded. One Sepoy sprang from his bed as his Majesty appeared, and called out in the only English that he knew: "God save the King!" [311]

Later on, his Majesty made a tour of the whole British front, and inspected all the troops who were not actually in the trenches. It is said that he also visited the bivouacs by night, and in every way made himself acquainted with the conditions under which the men were living and fighting. He also presented the Distinguished Service Order and Distinguished Conduct Medals to a number of soldiers who had been mentioned in dispatches, and conferred the Victoria Cross on some of those who had won the award early in the war. An officer of the Royal Engineers thus describes the inspection of his division:—

> "Punctually at 1.30 the sound of distant cheering announced the arrival of the King. The troops all along the road gave three cheers, by regiments. . . . The King then walked right round the line of troops, through mud and slush. I found myself bringing up the rear with the Prince of Wales just beside me. Not a word was spoken all the way round; it was really a most impressive sight—one of those showery days with spells of fine weather and blue sky; all round the field warriors with fixed bayonets and drawn swords; in the centre the King and his suite; and up above, against the blue, two British aeroplanes, purring away, keeping off the hostile Taubes. . . . After this inspection, the King presented the medals. The men came up in turn, and the King pinned the medal on each and said a few words to each with a smile; they *did* look proud as they went away. As soon as the presentation was over the troops gave the 'Royal Salute, Present Arms,' which the King graciously acknowledged from the middle of the field. . . . At 2 p.m. all the guns in the line let off a round in his honour."

Another account tells us that the King was specially interested in the Leicesters, who had only come out of the trenches the previous midnight.

> "They were in a lovely state of mud and unshavedness. The King simply revelled in them. He stopped and chatted to quite every one man in three, wanted to know all about trench fighting, and didn't seem to mind a bit their being covered in mud and unshaved for days. The Prince was just as interested. He wandered about at will, chatting with all and sundry. One man was wearing a pair of German boots, which interested the King very much. He spent quite twenty minutes with the Leicesters, and they deserved it. They have done splendidly all through."

During the visit the King was taken to a commanding point on the line between Gheluvelt and Messines, from which he could see a wide stretch of Flanders and many of the places associated with the recent fighting. On his left he saw much-battered Ypres, and could clearly distinguish the Cathedral and the Cloth [313]

Hall. Afterwards he saw the woods east of Ypres, in which some of the hardest fights had been fought, and where so many British and their brave allies rest for ever from their heroic labours. He also met the President of the French Republic, General Foch, and other French generals, and conferred the Order of Merit upon General French. His final act before leaving for England was to confer the Order of the Garter on King Albert. Belgian troops were drawn up to receive him in the little town of Furnes, and he told them how greatly he admired the courage and constancy which they and their King had displayed during their terrible ordeal. So ended a visit which not only put new heart into our men, but welded the Allies into still closer friendship. It was felt by all who were present that the enemy's guns would boom in vain against an alliance so strengthened by the presence of Britain's King at the battle front.

"Three Cheers for the King!"

His Majesty the King, followed by the Prince of Wales and the Staff, passing along the lines of British troops drawn up to greet him.
(*Drawn by F. Matania from a sketch by an eye-witness. By permission of The Sphere.*)

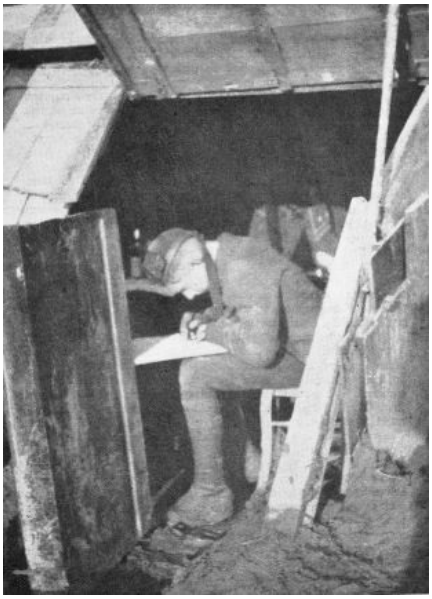
Before I close the record of the year, something must be said of the fighting between the French and the Germans during the month of December. We must not forget that the British then held less than one-tenth of the Allied line in the West, and that the French trenches extended from La Bassée to the borders of Switzerland. During December, save for continuous sniping and artillery duels, there was little fighting except in the Argonne, along the Moselle, and on the steeps of the Vosges. In the Argonne, the left wing of Sarrail's army of Verdun and the right wing of the Crown Prince's army struggled in the wooded country between Varennes and Vienne.[189] You will remember that during October the Germans had made a bold bid to capture this pass which enabled Sarrail to join arms with Langle's army in Champagne.

In the wooded country, and in the hamlets north and south of the road crossing the forest, the Germans made many attacks during the winter, but all failed, and in the intervals the French showed that dash and enterprise for which they have long been famous. Some day wonderful tales will be told of scouting enterprises amidst the dark trees, where every figure showed up against the white ground; of adventurous snipers concealed in the branches of lofty firs; and of fierce night assaults amidst the snowy glens and frosty ravines. Verdun was safer than ever. Almost every week Sarrail pushed his lines out farther, till on the east he threatened the railway by which the Germans were supplied, and they had to build another, out of range. At some places the opposing trenches were only twenty yards apart. The Germans still clung to the bridgehead at St. Mihiel, on the west bank of the Meuse, but they could advance no farther. [314]

The army of Lorraine, strongly entrenched on the east bank of the Moselle, not only maintained itself, but on the left wing gained ground; while in the Vosges the Chasseurs Alpins,[190] mounted on skis, made fierce attacks on the crests amidst the deep snow, and by their mountaineering skill and dashing enterprise carried many of them. In this section of the front there was no trench warfare, but open fighting such as the French love. When they won a German signal station on one of the crests they advanced with bugles blowing, singing the *Marseillaise*, and carrying before them the tricolour. Over and over again the Chasseurs, making sudden descents along mountain tracks, fell upon the enemy, and caught him unawares. They hauled their guns into almost impossible positions, and bombarded him from unexpected quarters. They gave him no rest, day or night.

Elsewhere, however, trench warfare was the order of the day, and something must be said about its main features before I conclude this volume. Let us pay a visit to the Flanders front in December. We find that the hastily-constructed trenches of October have been turned into a series of strong fortifications. We notice that the advanced firing line consists for the most part of a number of short, separate trenches,[191] each of which the enemy must win before he can advance and all of which he cannot command by flank fire. Many of these advanced trenches, though at least five feet deep, are not more than two or three feet wide. They are connected with the next line of trenches by means of zigzag communication trenches, and are but lightly

held, being employed chiefly as observation posts. [316]



Christmas Greetings from the Trenches. ***Photo, Photopress.***

The stronghold of each series of trenches is the main firing trench in which the bulk of the defenders live. These trenches are wide and deep, and are floored with wood or hurdles. Each trench is divided into sections by means of a wall or traverse, jutting to the rear, and leaving but a narrow passage round it. By means of these traverses each section of the trench becomes a separate trench, and the whole of it cannot be enfiladed. The front towards the enemy consists of a parapet of sand-bags with loopholes, from which the men fire. As a rule, each trench is supplied with one or more machine guns.

In many places the trenches are so close, and so keen a watch is kept, that it is highly dangerous for a man to show his head above the parapet. The enemy is observed through an arrangement of mirrors called a periscope. Some of the main trenches are roofed to afford head cover, and in the walls or in pits a little to the rear are the "dug-outs"—that is, caves into which the men retire to sleep or to take shelter when the shelling becomes hot. Some distance in front of the parapet there is a strong wire entanglement. If the wire has not been previously destroyed by artillery fire, it must be cut before the enemy can get into the trench itself.

You notice that the trenches are not a fixture. Both sides "sap" towards their opponents' line, and drive mines forward until they are close to, or even under, the opposite trenches. In these mines charges are fired, and if successful, part of the trenches is blown in, and an infantry attack follows. More than once the miners of one side have found themselves separated from the miners of the other side by a mere wall of soil. Then there is feverish haste to fire a charge before the other side can do so.

All through the day "snipers" are busy on both sides. They occupy pits, or craters made by shells, or ensconce themselves in ruins, or hide amidst the branches of trees, and try to pick off all opponents who show themselves. At night patrols steal out to the "No Man's Land" between the lines, and sometimes fall in with an enemy patrol and rush it with the bayonet. What are called "listening patrols" creep as near as possible to the opposite trenches, and try to overhear conversation, and find out what is going on in the [317] enemy's lines. Each side burns flares to light up the darkness and make visible all movements in "No Man's Land."

Bomb-throwers at Work. ***By permission of The Sphere.***

In this war every device which science can suggest is in use. In trench fighting, however, we have gone back

to the ways of our forefathers. Mortars are employed to throw bombs into the enemy's trenches, and hand grenades, such as those used by the earliest grenadiers, are flung by each side. A correspondent of the *Times* thus describes the bomb-throwers:—

> "Around their middle they carry some twenty or thirty bombs, little cylinders fastened on a long stick, around which fall streamers of ribbon. The clothing of ribbons suggests a mixed breed of Scotsmen and Red Indians who have taken to wearing the Red Indian head-dress as a kilt. In action they are stranger still. Crouching down among the barbed wire, the bombers, with their supporting infantrymen with fixed bayonets, raise themselves a little from the earth, and seizing one of these rocket-like bombs from their belts, grasp it by the stick and hurl it high above the parapet. It twists and travels uncertainly through the air, and then finally the streamers settle it in its flight, and it plunges straight as a plumb line down into the trench. There is a noise as though a gigantic Chinese cracker were jumping along the zigzag trench, and clouds of greenish smoke rise up, through which hurtle lumps of earth and stone and fragments of the outer iron ring of the bomb which constitute its shrapnel."[192]

Life in the trenches must always be uncomfortable, and may be very trying indeed. During the winter West [318] Flanders was a huge bog; the canals and rivers overflowed their banks, and many of the trenches were always knee-deep in slime and icy water. Large numbers of our men suffered from frost-bite in the feet. Though they were clad in sheepskin coats, and everything possible was done for their comfort, they had to bear trials and hardships such as few troops have ever endured before. The cheerfulness of our men during those bitter, dreary, and trying days was amazing. The British food supplies were excellent and unfailing. Never before has an army been fed so well. Arrangements were also made for giving the men a hot bath and a change of clothing when they returned from the trenches to their billets in the villages behind the firing line.

So the year wore on, and the season of "peace and good will towards men" arrived. On Christmas Eve a hard frost set in, and Christmas Day broke cold and misty. On that morning every officer and man in the field received a card from the King and the Queen, bearing portraits of their Majesties, and this greeting copied from the King's own handwriting: "With our best wishes for Christmas, 1914. May God protect you and bring you home safe.—Mary R. George R. I." The special card for the sick and wounded bore these words: "May you soon be restored to health." From Princess Mary's Soldiers' and Sailors' Christmas Fund came a box with an embossed cover, and inside a small gilt casket, containing a photograph of the Princess, and a card [319] on which was printed: "With best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Victorious New Year from Princess Mary and friends at home." Smokers found a pipe, an ounce of tobacco, and a packet of cigarettes in the box; while non-smokers discovered a supply of chocolate. An immense number of parcels containing other Christmas gifts also arrived, and everywhere Christmas fare was abundant.

Strange scenes were witnessed in parts of the firing line during the festive season. A member of the London Rifle Brigade says:—

> "We had rather an interesting time in the trenches on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We were in places less than 100 yards from the Germans, and held conversation with them across. It was agreed in our part of the firing line that there should be no firing and no thought of war on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, so they sang and played to us several of their own tunes, and some of ours, such as 'Home, Sweet Home,' 'Tipperary,' etc., while we did the same for them. The regiment on our left all got out of their trenches, and every time a flare went up they simply stood there, cheered, and waved their hats, and not a shot was fired on them. The singing and playing continued all night, and the next day (Christmas) our fellows paid a visit to the German trenches, and they did likewise. Cigarettes, cigars, addresses, etc., were exchanged, and every one, friend and foe, were real good pals. One of the German officers took a photo of English and German soldiers arm in arm with exchanged caps and helmets.
>
> "On Christmas Eve the Germans burned coloured lights and candles along the top of their trenches, and on Christmas Day a football match was played between them and us in front of the trench. They even allowed us to bury all our dead lying in front, and some of them, with hats in hand, brought in one of our dead officers from behind their trench, so that we could bury him decently. They were really magnificent in the whole thing and jolly good sorts. I have now a very different opinion of the Germans. Both sides have started the firing, and are already enemies again. Strange it all seems, doesn't it?"

So with a soldiers' truce ended the first five months of the war. In the West, deadlock had set in; Allies and Germans were facing each other over a front of well-nigh five hundred miles from the sodden fields of Flanders to within sight of Alpine snows, winning here and losing there a few yards of fiercely-contested ground, and enduring with what patience they could command the icy showers and the biting frost of winter. In the East, from the East Prussian wilderness of lake and morass to the wind-swept passes of the Carpathians, there was the same deadlock. On both of the main fronts of war the forces of the Central [320] Powers were held up, and their dream of a swift and easy conquest had vanished. Nevertheless, with nearly all Belgium, a large part of industrial France, and a considerable portion of Russian Poland in their possession, they felt confident, at least, of an advantageous peace.

Amongst the Allies, however, there was no thought of peace. Unprepared for war, they had, nevertheless, foiled the first and most dangerous onslaught of a foe that, according to all the rules, should have swept them away like chaff before the wind. They had gained time in which to make up for their lack of readiness, and they now began to realize that they must put forth every effort if they were to defeat the mighty forces arrayed against them.

In Britain men flocked to the colours, and on every open space in the country drilling was going on. Already we had a million men in arms, and within six months we hoped to put double that number into the field. Time was with us. Every day saw us growing greater in men and resources, while every day the enemy was bound to decline in strength. So the Allies, strong in friendship and undaunted by their heavy losses, faced the future with unshaken courage and undaunted hope. "We shall never sheathe the sword, which we have not

lightly drawn," said the Prime Minister, "until Belgium recovers in full measure all, and more than all, that she has sacrificed, until France is safe against the fear of invasion, until the rights of the small nations of Europe are placed on an unshakable foundation, and until the military tyranny of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed." Such was the determination of Britons all over the world at the close of the year 1914.

END OF VOLUME III.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] *Ar-twa´*, former province of France, now forming the greater part of the department Pas-de-Calais. Its name is derived from Arras, its capital.

[2] The Colossus of Rhodes was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was a huge figure of brass one hundred and twenty feet high, and it strode across the harbour mouth.

[3] This old province of France lies between the Aube on the north, the Rhone on the south, the Meuse on the east, and the Loire on the west.

[4] See Vol. I., p. 197.

[5] See diagrams on the following pages.

[6] It was said that the Germans had 56,000 machine guns at the beginning of the war.

[7] See Vol. II., p. 201.

[8] *Gree-nay* (gray nose), headland of Pas-de-Calais, the nearest point of the French shore to that of England (South Foreland).

[9] See Vol. II., p. 127

[10] *Ar-mon-te-air´* (*n* nasal).

[11] *Dool.*

[12] *Vō-bān´*, born 1633, died 1707.

[13] *Roo-bay´.*

[14] *Toor-kwan´* (*n* nasal).

[15] *Meh-nan´* (*n* nasal).

[16] Chaucer, "the morning star of English song," born 1340, died 1400.

[17] *Diks-müd´.*

[18] The most brilliant, and perhaps the greatest, of all English generals, specially famous for his genius in tactics; born 1650, died 1722. (See *Highroads of History*, Book VI., Chaps. VII. and VIII.). Mr. Winston Churchill (First Lord of the Admiralty from October 1911 to May 1915) is a direct descendant of the great general.

[19] *Ow-den-ar´deh.*

[20] *Doo-ay´.*

[21] See Vol. II., p. 107.

[22] See Vol. II., pp. 26 ff.

[23] *Mal-Pla-kay´.*

[24] See Vol. II., p. 127.

[25] See Vol. II., p. 126.

[26] These high explosive shells were nicknamed "Antwerp expresses."

[27] Seaside resort of Belgium, 11 miles north-east of Ostend.

[28] Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

[29] That is, Sea Bruges. *Zā-brug´ge*, the port of Bruges, with which it is connected by a ship canal seven miles long.

[30] Inhabitants of Brittany, a former province of France, forming the extreme north-west. The people are of Celtic stock, and their language is allied to the Welsh. Brittany was partly settled from England and Ireland in the fifth and sixth centuries, and thereafter was called Britannia Minor. Brittany has always been famous for its sailors. Jacques Cartier, the discoverer of the St. Lawrence, was a Breton.

[31] *Ron´ark.*

[32] French sailors wear a red pompom on the top of their caps.

[33] *Teelt*, 15 miles south-east of Bruges.

[34] *Too-roo´*, 11 miles south-south-west of Bruges

[35] *Roo-lare´*, 20 miles south by west of Bruges, a textile manufacturing town of 25,000 inhabitants.

[36] In *Blackwood's Magazine*, March 1915.

[37] Village on the Ypres-Menin road, four miles east of Ypres.

[38] See Vol. I., p. 146.

[39] *Ăz-brook´*

[40] *O´mare.*

[41] *Zhee-van´shee* [*n* nasal].

[42] *Es-tayr´*. See map, p. 59.

[43] *Ō-bayr´.*

[44] *Her´lee.*

[45] *Pee´ye.*

[46] *Bay-yule´*, a small village seven miles north-west of Armentières.

[47] *Varn-ton´* (*n* nasal).

[48] Harbour wall.

[49] See Vol. II., pp. 26 ff.

[50] See Vol. II., p. 91.

[51] *Noove Sha-pel´.*

[52] See Vol. II., p. 16.

[53] Took them in flank and raked them from end to end.

[54] During the Indian Mutiny. The story of the capture of Delhi is told on p. 149 of this volume.

[55] German rifleman or sharpshooter.

[56] Meadows reclaimed from the sea.

[57] See p. 36.

[58] See map on p. 93.

[59] *Pair-veez´.*

[60] *Rams-ka-pel´.*

[61] Fought in 1658. Dunkirk was afterwards handed over to the English, and remained in their possession until 1662, when Charles II. sold it to France.

[62] *Koor-tray'*, 27 miles by rail south-west of Ghent, on the Lys; famous for its linen and lace manufactures. The "Battle of the Spurs" (1302) was fought outside its walls.

[63] *Rā-mē-yee´*, 29 miles south-east of Brussels; scene of one of Marlborough's victories (1706).

[64] Formed of Irishmen in the service of France. They fought gallantly against Marlborough; at Malplaquet the 18th (Royal Irish) Regiment and the Irish Brigade fought with each other, and the Royal Irish were the victors.

[65] You will find these and other villages mentioned in this chapter on the map on p. 103.

[66] See p. 95.

[67] The Northumberland Hussar Yeomanry rejoice in the proud distinction of being the first of all Territorial regiments to go to the front in this war. They left England about September 15, 1914.

[68] Ploegsteert, about three miles north of Armentières.

[69] Shut off his engine and glided down in zigzags.

[70] Sharpshooter, who hides himself outside the trenches and fires on the enemy when occasion offers.

[71] See p. 92.

[72] Lieutenant Wise.

[73] British soldiers are also fond of performing on the mouth organ.

[74] See map, p. 59.

[75] A study of the diagram on p. 128 will explain the meaning of "communication trench" and "traverse." Lieutenant Leach's company was holding a trench such as that marked A on the diagram.

[76] See p. 108.

[77] In olden days Norse warriors, or *berserks*, worked themselves up before a battle into a fierce madness, known as the "berserk rage."

[78] Quoted from Mr. Will Irwin's account of the battle in the *Daily Mail*.

[79] In Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*, Act iii., Scene 2, Mark Antony, in the course of his speech over the dead body of Cæsar, says, "That day he overcame the Nervii." They were a tribe of Belgic Gauls holding territory from the Sambre to the North Sea. Cæsar overcame them B.C. 57.

[80] Fought during the Crimean War on November 5, 1854.

[81] Fought 1½ miles south of Stirling on June 24, 1314. The bore-stone in which it is said Bruce's banner was fixed still exists on Brock's Brae.

[82] *Mes-seen´*, between four and five miles south of Ypres.

[83] The name is equivalent to our Theodore, "gift of God."

[84] So called because recruited from Baluchistan, a British territory between Afghanistan and the Arabian Sea.

[85] See page 165.

[86] Forty miles west by north of Toledo, Spain; scene of the famous battle (July 28, 1809) in which Wellington defeated Joseph Bonaparte.

[87] See also the account given on pp. 161-3.

[88] See p. 165.

[89] So called because they form the sovereign's escort. The Household Cavalry consist of three regiments—1st and 2nd Life Guards, and the Royal Horse Guards (The Blues).

[90] See p. 167.

[91] See Vol. II., pp. 23-25.

[92] See Vol. II., pp. 117, 118, 139.

[93] See Vol. II., pp. 213, 214.

[94] See Vol. II., pp. 282 ff.

[95] A high explosive, consisting of picric acid, used as a bursting charge for shells.

[96] Northumberland Fusiliers.

[97] See p. 167.

[98] See Vol. 1., pp. 102, 104, 105, 107.

[99] Fought between the Northern and Southern States of what is now the United States of America, mainly on the question of slavery in the Southern States, during 1861-65.

[100] *My´dan.*

[101] Important city of South Afghanistan. In 1880 British troops in Kandahar were besieged, but Roberts made a great march from Kabul and relieved them.

[102] City of North India, on the Ganges; the scene of two tragedies during the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

[103] Native infantry soldiers of the Indian army. The native cavalry soldier is a "sowar."

[104] On the right bank of the Jumna. It was created capital of India in place of Calcutta in 1911.

[105] British general, of great physical strength and lofty, winning character. Born 1821, killed at Delhi 1857.

[106] Capital of the Transvaal. Entered by Roberts on June 5, 1900.

[107] The Prince of Wales went to the front as a member of Sir John French's Staff in the middle of November 1914.

[108] Ruler of Jodhpur, the largest state of Rajputana, India. He was born in 1844.

[109] In his book *Forty-one Years in India*, Lord Roberts gives us a story showing the valour of this most famous of Indian soldiers. Roberts had wounded a boar, which attacked Pertab Singh, whose horse had fallen with him. The prince held the boar with his bare hands until Lord Roberts was able to come up and dispatch it. The boar's head was presented by the prince to Lord Roberts, and became one of his cherished possessions at his country house of Englemere, Ascot.

[110] See Vol. II., p. 7.

[111] From *With French in France and Flanders*, by an Army Chaplain.

[112] The *Minenwerfer*, or trench-mortar used by the Germans, has a range of some 500 or 600 yards, and throws a bomb loaded with high explosives, weighing up to 200 lbs. It is fired at extreme elevation from the bottom of a pit in the trench.

[113] No elevation.

[114] The eve before All Saints' Day (1st November).

[115] About two miles south of Messines.

[116] About a mile north-east of Gheluvelt.

[117] Appointed commander of the British forces in Gallipoli in March 1915.

[118] Corporal in the Indian army.

[119] A narrow ditch or trench burrowed out towards the enemy's lines.

[120] In the nineteenth century more than 3½ million Germans emigrated to America and became citizens of the United States.

[121] The great missionary explorer, discoverer of the Zambesi, the upper course of the Congo, Lake Nyassa and other Central African lakes; also founder of Nyassaland. Born 1813; died 1873, at a village south of Lake Bangweolo. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

[122] Sir Henry Morton Stanley, who did for the Congo what Livingstone did for the Zambesi, and further verified and added to the great discoveries already made. He made what has been called "the greatest journey in African exploration." He laid the foundations of the Congo Free State. Born 1841, died 1904.

[123] Treitschke (*trysh´ke*), German historian and bitter enemy of Britain. Born 1834, died 1896.

[124] Great lake of equatorial Africa, 26,000 square miles in area, discovered by Captain Speke in 1858, and circumnavigated by Stanley in 1875 and 1889.

[125] Lake lying south-west of Victoria Nyanza, 13,000 square miles in area. Its only outlet is to the Congo.

[126] Spelt in many British maps, Cameroons.

[127] Fulas or Fulahs, the ruling native race in Nigeria, French Sudan, Kamerun, etc.

[128] Near Atakpame, at the head of the railway which runs north from Lomé for a hundred miles.

[129] Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902), for nearly a quarter of a century the most powerful man in South Africa. Rhodesia was named after him.

[130] Born 1850, died 1894. Scottish novelist and poet. All boys and girls should read his *Treasure Island*, *The Black Arrow*, *Kidnapped*, and *Catriona*. Many of his verses are in the earlier books of the *Highroads of Literature*.

[131] See Stevenson's *A Footnote to History*.

[132] With the exception of Guam, the largest, which belongs to the United States.

[133] Reproduced in Vol. I., p. 142.

[134] Capital of Ashanti.

[135] Capital of the Gold Coast.

[136] Vol. II., p. 170.

[137] She left, however, a legacy of trouble. The United States said, with justice, that the British Government was responsible, for the ship ought never to have been built by a neutral Power nor permitted to leave a neutral harbour. In the end, Britain had to pay the United States three millions of money as damages.

[138] The wireless signal sent out by ships in distress, calling for immediate help.

[139] Chief French settlement in India, 90 miles south-south-west of Madras.

[140] British Crown colony in and off the Malay Peninsula, in south-east Asia. In the Straits Settlements are included Singapore, Malacca, the Dindings, Penang, and Wellesley Province.

[141] Caused by the rays of light being bent in their passage through layers of air of differing density, and therefore giving a delusive appearance to objects.

[142] Coral islands, consisting of a more or less oval belt of coral rock, within which there is a lagoon.

[143] At the Royal Exchange, London. The chief business of Lloyd's is connected with the insurance of ships.

[144] *La Lutine*, a 32-gun frigate launched in 1785. It originally belonged to the French navy, but was captured by Admiral Duncan.

It sailed from Yarmouth Roads on the morning of October 9, 1799, for Hamburg, and was wrecked the same night off the island of Vlieland, one of the Frisian Islands. All on board were lost, except one man.

The frigate had on board a large amount of specie—gold and silver—the destination of which appears to be somewhat of a mystery. If the specie was merely sent by London Merchants to Hamburg on purely commercial transactions—as is alleged—how was it that a frigate ship was employed, and how did it come to be so near the Zuider Zee? To explain this some say that the specie was intended for the pay of British troops then in the Netherlands.

Up to the present, treasure to the value of £100,000 has been recovered; but it is estimated that gold and silver worth a million pounds still lie buried in the shifting sands north of the Zuider Zee.

Various attempts have been made to recover the specie. On July 17, 1858, divers brought to daylight the bell of the frigate. It was well preserved, and weighed 80 lbs. It now stands at the footboard of the table in the library at Lloyd's, where other relics of the *Lutine* are also to be found.

[145] Men who undertake the insurance of ships.

[146] See p. 173.

[147] Capital of Brazil, on the beautiful bay of Rio.

[148] Europeans gave the name "Boxers" to members of a widespread society in China which had for its object the ridding of the country of foreigners. The German Minister at Pekin was murdered in 1900, and several of the legations were besieged. The expedition referred to above relieved the besieged on August 14, 1900, and exacted a penalty of sixty-four millions from the Chinese Government.

[149] Literally, ten thousand years; "Japan for ever!"

[150] The Japanese Empire.

[151] Picturesque town on the Eastern Alps, 155 miles west by south of Vienna.

[152] Capital of the Tyrol; on the Inn, a tributary of the Danube.

[153] See Vol. II., p. 58.

[154] See Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop*, chap. xix. Each of these worthies tried to prove to Little Nell that he was the friend to be trusted and not the other.

[155] See Vol. II., p. 71-72.

[156] *Kyel´tseh*, on the railway, about eighty miles as the crow flies south-east of Ivangorod.

[157] Natives of the Caucasus, a Russian territory between the Black Sea and the Caspian. The Caucasians are very fierce and warlike.

[158] On the left bank of the Vistula, a few miles above its junction with the San.

[159] See Vol. II., p. 65.

[160] Mr. Stanley Washburn, special war correspondent of the *Times*. The quotation is from his "Field Notes from the Russian Front."

[161] Between six and seven miles.

[162] Ammunition limbers.

[163] Or Kieff, chief town of Little Russia; on the Dnieper, 660 miles south of Petrograd.

[164] On the railway, about thirty miles west of Ivangorod.

[165] Town of Russia, on a tributary of the Niemen, 190 miles east of Königsberg in East Prussia.

[166] See Vol. II., p. 280.

[167] *Doon-a-yetz´*, rises in the Carpathians and flows north to the Vistula, about forty miles east of Cracow.

[168] Natives of Russian Central Asia.

[169] *Lo´vitch*, 44 miles west-south-west of Warsaw.

[170] See Vol. I., p. 148.

[171] A name given to all those usages which civilized states have agreed to observe in their dealings with each other. It is not real law because there is no superior power to enforce it.

[172] Arabs who wander with their flocks and herds from place to place. They are found in the Syrian and Egyptian deserts, in Mesopotamia, and especially in Arabia where they form one-seventh of the population.

[173] The southern half of the triangular and hilly tract of country between the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Akabah, northern arms of the Red Sea.

[174] Osman I., founder of the Ottoman Empire, born 1258, died 1326. Every new Sultan is invested with the sword of Osman, which is preserved in a mosque at Constantinople.

[175] For some account of the Bagdad railway (shown in the inset map), see Vol. I, p. 148.

[176] See map on p. 277.

[177] See map on page 277.

[178] See map on next page.

[179] *Krar-goo´ye-vatz.*

[180] See Shakespeare's *Henry V.*, Act iv., Scene 3.

[181] King Peter was born in 1844.

[182] She was afterwards interned at Newport News, on the northern shore of the estuary of the James River, Virginia.

[183] Rocky island belonging to Chile, 400 miles off the coast of that country. Alexander Selkirk lived four years on this island, and his story formed the basis of De Foe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

[184] From *Ye Mariners of England*.

[185] A proverb meaning caught in his own trap. The petard was a kind of bomb employed for blowing open gates, etc.

[186] *Ver-mell´.*

[187] *Quin´she.*

[188] Five miles south-south-west of Ypres.

[189] See Vol. II., p. 281.

[190] French soldiers specially trained for fighting in the Alps. They are splendid mountaineers, and were quite at home on the high crests of the Vosges.

[191] See diagram, p. 128.

[192] Sometimes bombs are made in a rough-and-ready fashion out of jam-pots and bully beef tins charged with explosives and loaded with stones or scraps of iron.

Transcriber's Notes:

hyphenation, spelling and grammar have been preserved as in the original

Page 1, Pas de Calais ==> Pas-de-Calais [Ed. for consistency]

Page 29, Pas de Calais ==> Pas-de-Calais" [Ed. for consistency]

Page 38, Book VI., Chaps. ==> Book VI., (Chaps."

Page 59, A Pont Fixe ==> At Pont Fixe

Page 62, Wilcocks ==> Willcocks

Page 109, Zandevoorde ==> Zandvoorde

Page 150, June 5, 1900 ==> June 5, 1900.

Page 163, decent sort of way ==> decent sort of way.

Page 198, See p. 173 ==> See p. 173.

Page 228, garrison at Przemsyl ==> garrison at Przemysl

Page 264, Tsingtau ==> Tsing-tau [Ed. for consistency]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CHILDRENS' STORY OF THE WAR, VOLUME 3 (OF 10) ***

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