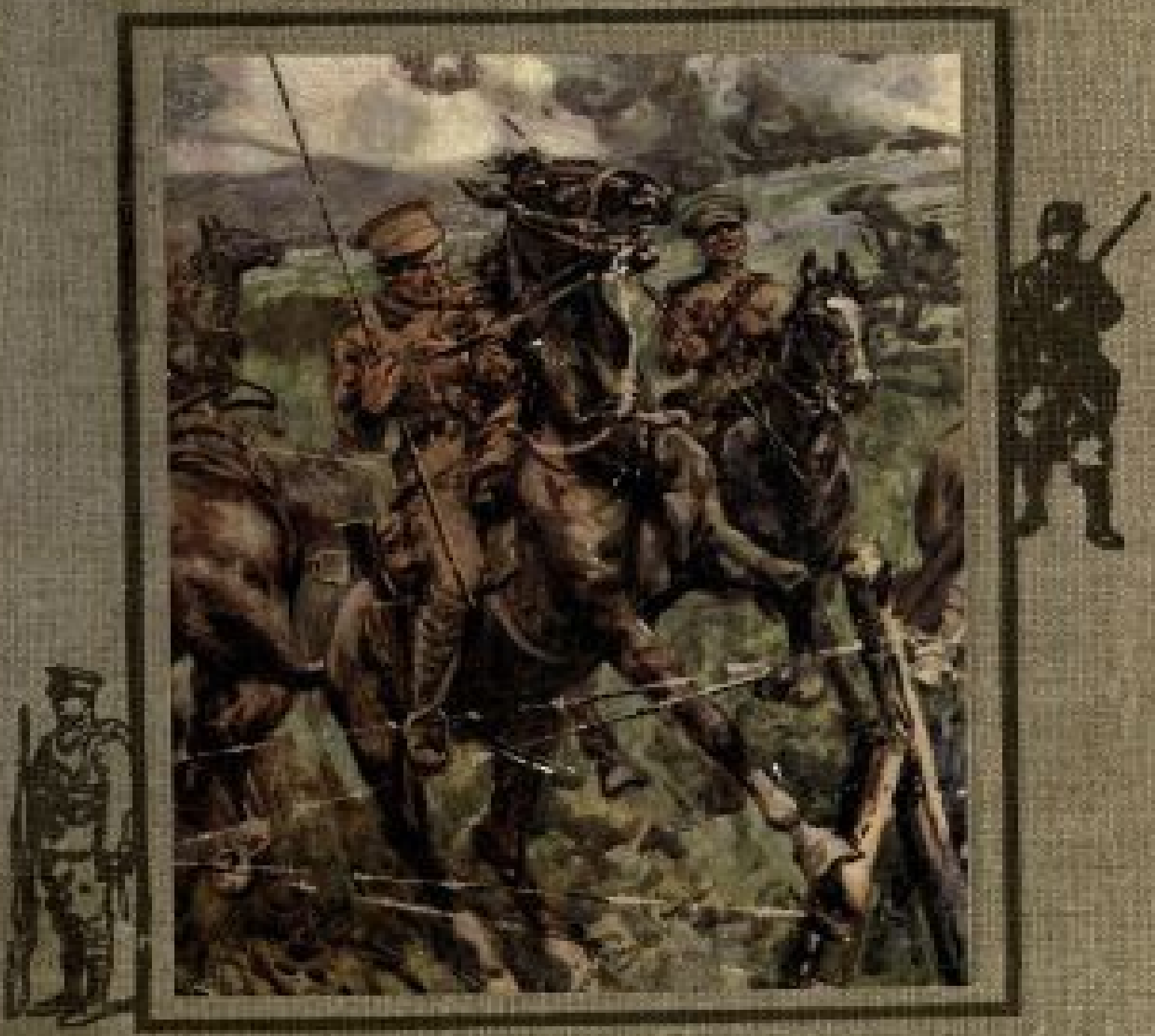
THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR



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British Soldiers crossing the Aisne. (*See page 244.*)

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 Battle of Mons to the Fall of Antwerp.

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS

LONDON, EDINBURGH, DUBLIN, AND NEW YORK

Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

Sir WALTER SCOTT

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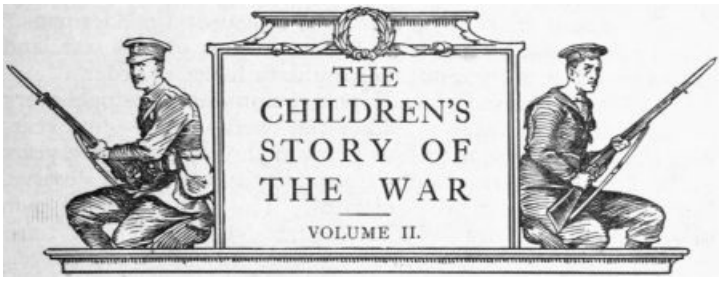
THE
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VOLUME II.

CHAPTER I.

THE FRENCH ARMY.

In Chapter XXIII. of Volume I. I told you that the French began their raid upon Alsace on August 7, 1914. At this time some of the Liége forts were still holding out, and the great German advance through Belgium had not yet begun. As the French were able to push into the enemy's country thus early in the war, you may imagine that they were quite ready for action before Belgium was overrun. Not, however, until August 22 were their preparations so far advanced that they could begin the business of war in real earnest.

Before I tell you the story of the first real battle of the war, let us learn something of the French army. In Chapters IV. and V. of Volume I. you read an account of the little man, with the pale face and cold blue eyes, who made France the greatest fighting nation of the world. He became, you will remember, master of continental Europe, and his legions marched in triumph through Berlin, Vienna, Naples, Madrid, Lisbon, and Moscow. He taught the art of war to all Europe, and France under his rule rose to the highest pinnacle of military glory.

When Napoleon fell, Frenchmen turned in loathing from the work of war. They remembered the awful waste of life and the terrible misery which had resulted from his campaigns, and they longed for peace, during which they might build up the nation anew. The French army, therefore, became a mere shadow of what it had been formerly. Under Napoleon III., however, there was a revival of military spirit. His army, as you know, fought well in the Crimea[1] and in Italy,[2] but it suffered hopeless defeat in the war of 1870-1 against the Germans.[1] The French took to heart the fearful lessons of this war, and began almost at once to put their military house in order.

In 1872 they passed a law which was supposed to compel every young man to serve as a soldier for twenty years—five years with the colours, and then four years in the Reserve; five years in the Territorial Army, and six years in the Territorial Reserve. But this law was not fully enforced. The men called up each year were divided by lot into two groups, and one of these groups, in time of peace, was let off with only one year's service in the Regular Army. Whole classes of persons, such as breadwinners and teachers, were free from service altogether, and any man could escape with one year's training by paying a certain sum of money. This plan proved very unsatisfactory, and in 1889 a new law was passed by which every young man was forced to serve twenty-five years—three years with the colours, seven years in the Reserve, six years in the Territorial Army, and nine years in the Territorial Reserve. By this means France hoped to raise her total number of trained men to 3,000,000.

Up to the year 1893 France and Germany had about the same number of soldiers on a peace footing; but very soon Germany began to forge ahead, chiefly because her population grew so rapidly. Soon it was clear that France could not hope to raise so large an army as Germany; so in 1897 she made an alliance with Russia, by which each Power agreed to take part in the other's quarrel if either of them should be attacked. In 1905 France again altered her army law by reducing the time of service with the colours to two years, and by increasing the period of service with the Reserve to eleven years. But even this arrangement did not give her all the soldiers which she needed; so in 1913 she decreed that every Frenchman found fit for service must join the colours at the age of twenty, spend three years in the Regular Army, eleven years in the Regular Reserve, seven years in the Territorial Army, and seven in the Territorial Reserve. Thus every strong and able-bodied Frenchman became liable for military service from his twentieth to his forty-eighth year. Roughly speaking, this new law enabled France to put into the field, a month or so after the beginning of war, about 4,000,000 trained men. This gave her a first line army of about 1,500,000, a second line of about 500,000, and a reserve of about 2,000,000. Germany feared that this new law would so strengthen France that she and Russia combined would be more than a match for her; and one of the reasons why she declared war on August 1, 1914, was to crush the French before the new arrangement could come into full working order.

Recruits in the Streets of Paris. ***Photo, Sport and General.***

Every year in the month of February a Council sits in Paris and in the provinces, and before it all youths of twenty must appear to pass the doctor. If they are found "bon pour le service," they are told what regiment they must join and the place where they are to undergo their training, and in the following October they join their depots. Frequently the young men so chosen pin big paper favours on their coats and hats, and, thus decorated, march about the streets. Outside the hall in which the Council is sitting there are almost sure to be a number of stalls loaded with these blue, white, and red decorations.

When the young soldier arrives at the barracks he is given three suits of clothes, one of which is his drill dress, another his walking-out dress, and the third his war dress. These clothes he keeps on a shelf above his bed, and he so arranges his garments that the French colours, blue, white, and red, are clearly seen. In summer he rises at 4 a.m., and in winter at 6 a.m., and he goes to bed at 9 p.m. all the year round, except when he is on sentry-go, or has permission to stay out late. Every day the barrack-room is inspected, to see that the beds are properly made, that the men's clothes are in good order, and that the room is clean and tidy. The "little breakfast," which consists of coffee and a roll, is served at 5 a.m.; lunch is eaten at ten o'clock, and dinner at five. The meals usually consist of soup, meat, vegetables, and fruit. On great occasions wine is supplied, and cigars are handed round. The conscript's pay consists of one sou (a halfpenny) a day, and his tobacco. Some of the men receive money from their parents and friends; others have to make shift on the trifling allowance which the Government gives them.

The men who begin their service in a particular year are known as the "class" of that year. Thus the men who joined the colours in 1914 belong to the class of 1914. Frenchmen fix all their dates by reference to "la classe." When two Frenchmen meet almost the first question they put to each other is, "Of what class are you?" When two or three men who have served their time in the same regiment come together they are like old schoolfellows; they love to recall their experiences, and chat about the jokes and tricks and scrapes of their soldiering days.

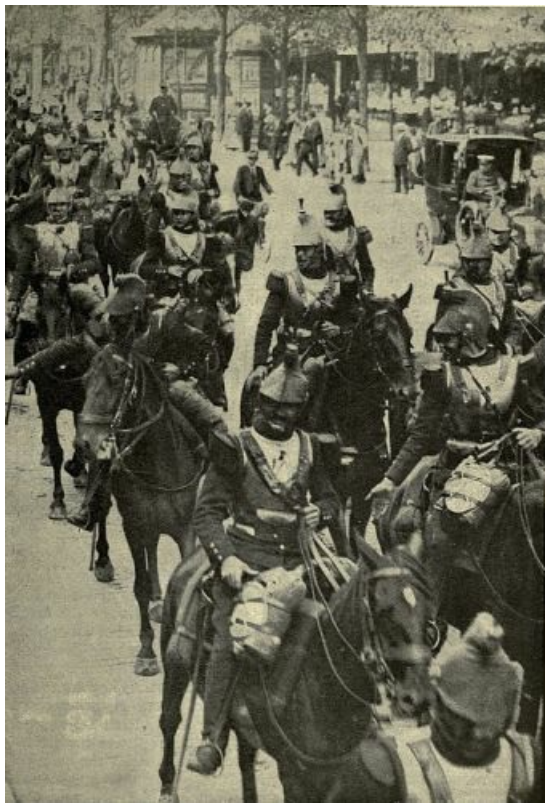
If you were to see a regiment of conscripts on the march[3] you would not be much impressed. Compared with the well-set-up, smartly-uniformed British soldiers, they would seem to you to be badly drilled and badly clothed, and to slouch along in any sort of order. You would perhaps smile at their blue overcoats buttoned behind the knees, and their ill-fitting red trousers; but you must remember that the French do not believe in the pomps and vanities of military show, but in making men fit for the actual work of war. Battles are not won by clothes, but by the men who wear them. The French soldier is very brave, a great lover of his country, and a splendid fighter, even though he may not look the part in your eyes.

The officers are educated for their profession at one or other of the great military schools, and they must pass difficult examinations before they receive their commissions. Infantry officers are trained at the famous school of St. Cyr, which was founded by Napoleon in 1806. Foreigners are admitted to this school, but not Germans or Austrians. All French officers must learn to speak German, and this knowledge of the enemy's language has more than once proved useful in the present war. Some time ago a French officer captured one end of a field telephone unknown to the Germans at the other

end. He replied in German to the questions addressed to him, and was told that a train of reinforcements would pass a certain station at a certain time. At once he made his plans, and before the train reached the station it was blown up.

You know that in the German army the officers belong to the higher classes of society, and that few if any of them have risen from the ranks. In France any man who has the ability may rise to the highest posts in the army. There is a great gulf fixed between the private soldier and the officer in Germany; but in France there is a strong spirit of comradeship between all ranks, and this knits them together far better than the iron discipline of the Germans.

The army of France is inferior in numbers to that of Germany, but it easily ranks as the second of the armies of the world. Our regular army, as you know, is trained in India; France uses her North African colony of Algeria for the same purpose. Her infantry have long been renowned for their dash and spirit, and they are, next to our own regulars, the best marchers in Europe. The Zouaves, with their baggy red trousers and short blue jackets, are picked men. They are to the French army what the Highlanders are to our army—men of the most fearless bravery, and almost irresistible at the charge. The bayonet, which the Highlander calls the "wee bit steel," is their favourite weapon; the Zouave calls it by the poetical name of "Rosalie."



Cuirassiers leaving Paris. ***Photo, Central News.***

French cavalry have always been famous, and it is said that they were never better than in 1914. The riding was good and the horses were excellent. What are known as the Chasseurs d'Afrique are perhaps the best of all French horse soldiers. At Sedan their furious charges almost turned the fortunes of that black day. The Cuirassiers[4] wear a brass helmet, from which a tail of horsehair hangs down the back. The helmet is covered with gray cloth in time of war.

French artillery is generally thought to be the best in Europe. What is known as the 75-millimetre gun[5] is a very rapid quick-firer, and is wonderfully accurate; no better piece of artillery has ever been known in the history of warfare. French generals show great ability in using their artillery to cover the advance of infantry.

What is known as the Foreign Legion is peculiar to the French army; no other army in the world has anything like it. The men who serve in the twelve battalions of this Legion are not Frenchmen but foreigners, who for one reason or another have taken service in the French army. Englishmen, Americans, Spaniards, Italians, Germans, and Russians rub shoulders in the ranks; and most of them have enlisted under false names. No questions are asked of any man who wishes

to join the Legion; if he is strong, and can ride and shoot, and is willing to "rough it," he is promptly enlisted.

Infantry of the Line leaving Paris. ***Photo, The Sphere.***

The men of this Legion have been called the "scallawags of Europe," and the story of their past is usually sad and painful. Some have committed crimes; some are bad characters who have been driven out of society or have been thrown over by their friends; others have held honourable positions, which they have lost by wicked or foolish conduct; and many of them are desperate men, who hope to find death as quickly as possible. Like the "free lances" of the Middle Ages, they are prepared to sell their swords to any country that will employ them, and they will fight as fiercely against their own land as against any other. They have only their lives to sell, and, as a rule, they are prepared to sell them as dearly as possible. They are not easy to discipline; but it is said that they are always courteous to women. One of the rules of the Legion is that its members shall always lead the "forlorn hope;" refusal to do so means the punishment of death. For this reason they are always placed in the firing line at the most dangerous point, and they ask for nothing better. In peace time two-thirds of them serve in the French possessions in the Far East, and the remainder in North Africa.

Before I close this chapter, I must tell you something about the colonial troops of France. Just as we form native armies in our overseas possessions, so the French make soldiers of the black and brown races in their colonies. Their chief colony is Algeria, in North Africa; but they also rule over Morocco, and have large possessions in West Africa and in Indo-China. The French colonial troops are chiefly Arabs and Berbers from Algeria, Moors from Morocco, and Senegambians from Senegal. The native troops of Algeria are known as Turcos and Spahis.[6] The Turcos are chiefly Berbers,[7] and they are trained on the same lines as the Zouaves.

The most picturesque of all the native troops of France are the Spahis, who are mainly Arabs mounted on white Arab steeds. The Arabs are a fiercely warlike people, and France conquered them only after a long struggle. They are Mohammedans, who believe that death in battle is a sure passport to heaven.

The Spahi is as much at home on horseback as the cowboy of the prairies, the Cossack of the steppes, or the Hungarian of the plains. As a light horseman he has few superiors. Each man wears on his head a white felt cap covered by a *haick*, or long strip of woollen gauze which hangs flat at the back of the head, covering the neck and shoulders. The haick is attached to the cap by twenty or thirty twisted coils of camel's-hair rope, and a fringe of it is allowed to fall on the forehead to shade the eyes. The body garment, or *gandoura*, is a gown of white woollen material, bound round the waist with a broad silk sash. Over all is worn a hooded cloak, or *burnous*, which is usually made of white or fine blue cloth.

Red leather top-boots complete the costume. Many of the men are very tall and of a strikingly noble cast of feature. They carry themselves with great dignity, and are very grave and sparing of speech. Their love for their horses has been the subject of many a song and story.

Arab Cavalry (Spahis) at the Front. ***Photo, Underwood and Underwood.***

Never before in the history of warfare have so many men, of such widely differing races, creeds, and colours, been gathered together into such an army as that which is upholding the cause of the Allies on the fields of France and Flanders. When the Romans were masters of Britain they garrisoned the Great Wall from the Tyne to the Solway with men from nearly all the countries of Europe; but the motley array which then struggled to beat back the "slim" Pict cannot compare for a moment with the medley of races now under arms in the western theatre of war.

Britain and France hold empires which Cæsar never knew, and they are thus enabled to draw troops from every continent on the face of the globe. Englishman, Scot, Welshman, Irishman, British and French Canadian, Australian, New Zealander, Frenchman, and Belgian, stand shoulder to shoulder with Pathan, Gurkha, Sikh, Bengali, Baluchi, Senegambian, Arab, Berber, and Moor—Christian, Mohammedan, Hindu, and heathen—all united in a vast army determined to overthrow the nation which aims at nothing less than the mastery of the whole world. Such a remarkable gathering of races in one army has never before been seen.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST CLASH OF ARMS.

I wonder whether you have ever met with the word *dinanderie*. You will find it in an English dictionary, though it is an old word which has almost gone out of use. *Dinanderie* means vessels of chased copper or brass used for household purposes. In the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries such vessels were largely made in the little Belgian town of Dinant; hence the name.

You can scarcely imagine a more picturesque town than Dinant. It stands on the right or eastern bank of the broad river Meuse as it sweeps northward from France to join the Sambre at Namur. The main part of the town lies at the foot of lofty limestone rocks, which are honeycombed with grottoes containing stalactites, or limestone "icicles," such as you may see in the caves of Cheddar[8] or Derbyshire. In the Grand'-Place, quite close to the foot of the limestone rocks, is the Cathedral of Notre Dame, a very handsome building with finely carved portals. Behind the cathedral there are four hundred and eight steps cut in the rock, by means of which you may ascend to the citadel which crowns the summit.

From this citadel, or from the top of the hill behind it, there is a glorious view of the Meuse valley. If we face the river, we shall see on the opposite bank the houses straggling up a wooded hillside, and to our right "Roche à Bayard," a bold pinnacle of rock with an ancient story. Bayard[9] was the prince of knights in the sixteenth century, a hero of the most noble and unselfish character, "without fear and without reproach." We can pay no greater honour to a soldier than to call him a "Bayard." Like our own King Arthur, he has become a figure of romance, and all sorts of magical deeds have been ascribed to him. It is said that on one occasion he defended a bridge single-handed against two hundred Spaniards. According to an old legend, he was once pursued by Charlemagne, and was only saved from capture by his gallant horse, which sprang right across the gorge of the river, and left a hoofmark on the rock which now bears his name.

I have described Dinant because it was in and around this town that the French first came into contact with the Germans. In Chapter XXX. of our first volume I told you that after the entry of the Germans into Brussels, von Kluck's army (the First Army), which was to form the extreme right of the German line, was rapidly advancing towards the Franco-Belgian border, and that von Buelow's army (the Second Army) was moving in the direction of the strong fortress of Namur. The first clash of arms between the French and Germans took place five days before the occupation of Brussels, when von Kluck's army was fighting its way towards the capital.

At that time the Duke of Würtemberg's army was marching through the wooded hills of the Ardennes towards the Central Meuse, and the Saxon army was advancing farther north towards Dinant and Namur. While these movements were in progress, the French sent a detachment northwards to occupy Dinant, which is only ten miles as the crow flies from their border. On 15th August, at about six in the morning, German cavalry and artillery of the Duke of Würtemberg's army made an attack on the town, which was only held by part of a French infantry regiment. Though the French were greatly outnumbered, they fought gallantly, and held the bridge across the Meuse stubbornly. By ten o'clock, however, the Germans had driven them off, and had hoisted their flag on the citadel. Some of their cavalry then crossed the river into the suburbs on the left or western bank.

About two in the afternoon, in the very nick of time, French reinforcements arrived. A French infantry regiment appeared on the left bank of the river, and drove the cavalry out of the suburbs. Meanwhile two French batteries took up position, and began a brisk cannonade of the citadel. One of their first shots cut the German flag in two. So hot was the fire that the enemy was forced to leave the citadel and retire along the cliffs to the south. A vigorous artillery duel was kept up across the valley; the French dashed across the river by the bridge, retook the town, and flung back the Germans, who retreated east and then south. Thus in the first battle of the war the French were victorious.

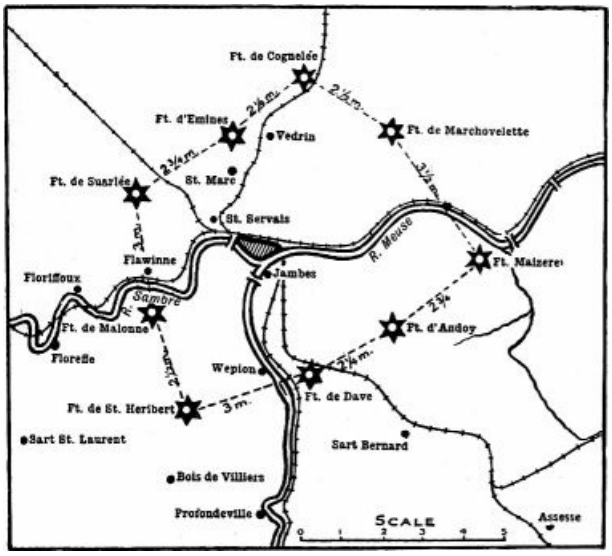
The fight at Dinant, compared with those which were to follow, was a mere baby battle. Only about eight thousand men took part in it, and there was not much loss on either side. It has, however, a special interest, because it marked the first dash of arms between the French and the Germans. Not for a week later did the war begin in real earnest.

The Battle of Dinant, August 15, 1914. French infantry recapturing the town.

Now we must visit another town of Belgium—the famous fortress of Namur, which stands on a hill in the sharp angle between the Meuse and the Sambre. Southward and eastward of it lies the trench valley of the Meuse; to the west extends the vale of the Sambre, which runs through the "Black Country" of Belgium. Standing at the meeting-point of these rivers, Namur bars the road into France, and it has been fortified from very early times. Brialmont, of whom you have already heard, built a ring of four large forts and five smaller forts round it, and about three hundred and fifty guns were mounted in them. From this little map you will see how they were placed. As most of them were on high ground, it was hoped that they would hold out for a long time.

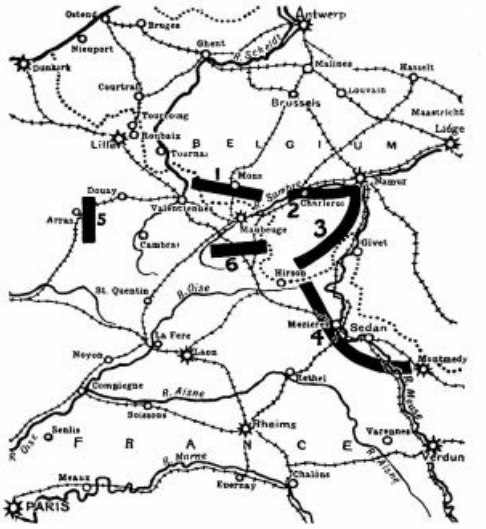
The Belgians had ten days' notice of the attack, and while the great siege trains of the Germans were slowly lumbering westward over the cobbled roads they did much to strengthen the place. About twenty-six thousand men were moved into it to hold the forts and trenches, large areas were mined, houses and trees in the line of fire were cut down, and barbed-wire entanglements, charged with a deadly current of electricity, were set up.

General Michel, who was in command, was well aware that the forts could not long resist the fierce onslaught of the German siege guns, but he hoped that before the first shot was fired the French would come to his assistance and would man the trenches for him. He had good reason for his hope, for French cavalry were already on Belgian soil, and French infantry and artillery were at Dinant, only eighteen miles away. He was not, however, well served by his scouts, and he does not seem to have learned that the Germans were advancing on both sides of the Meuse. Had he been better informed he might have struck a blow at the German siege train which was crawling slowly towards him. As it was, he did nothing, and the Germans were able to bring up their big guns and fix them on concrete platforms without being molested.



Plan of Namur Forts.

Now let us see how the Allies proposed to meet the Germans. Here is a map which you must study carefully, for it shows the positions occupied by the British and French on the evening of Friday, 21st August. The British army, which was to form the extreme right of the Allied front, lay along the line Condé[10]-Mons-Binche.[11] In reserve, behind the French fortress of Maubeuge,[12] about twelve miles south of Mons, was a French cavalry corps of three divisions, and away to the west, at Arras, was a corps of French Territorials, facing east. In the angle between the rivers were two French armies, one holding the line of the Sambre and the other the line of the Meuse. Farther south, from the French border through Mézières,[13] past Sedan, to Montmédy, was another army, also holding the line of the Meuse.



Map showing Position of Armies.

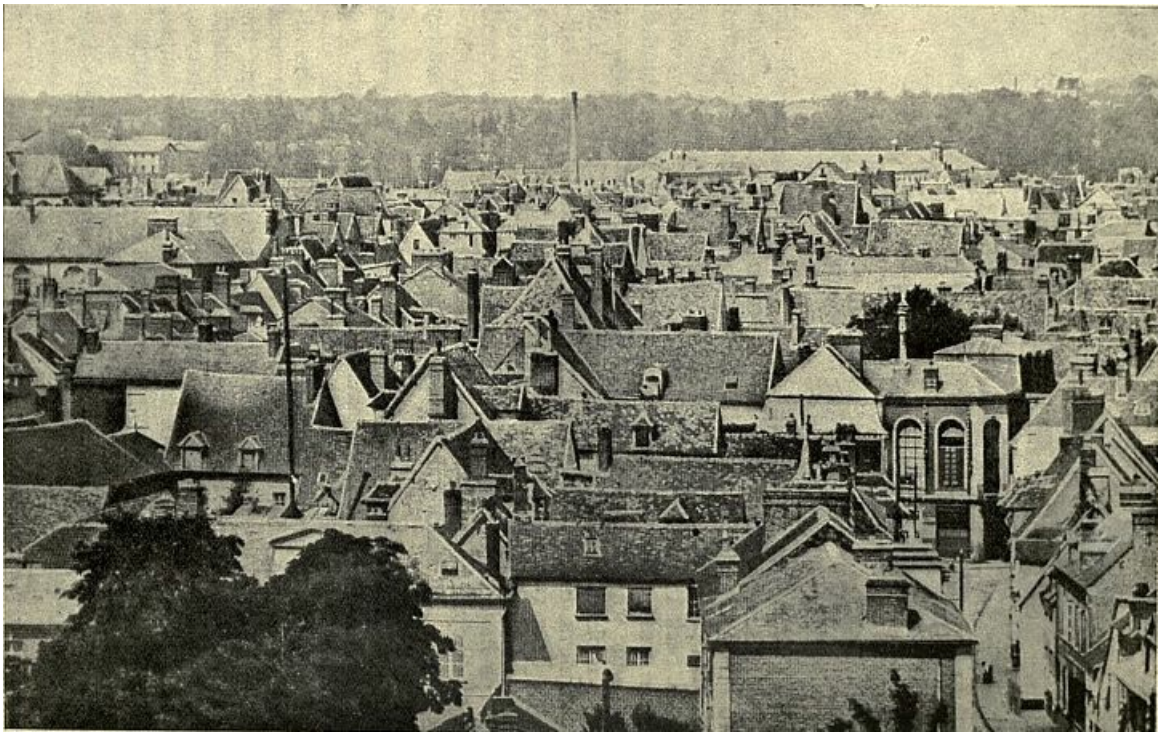
Before we go any further we must look closely at the position of the French armies marked 2 and 3 on the map. You notice that they form a sharp angle with each other. Military men call any angle less than two right angles a *salient*. I think you can easily see that the armies holding such a salient as that formed by the two rivers were by no means in a strong position. They were very much exposed to attacks on their flanks, and they depended at their weakest part—the point of the angle—on the fortress of Namur. As long as Namur held out, well and good; but if it should fall the line would be pierced, and the French would be in a very dangerous position indeed.

CHAPTER III.

THE FALL OF NAMUR.

Now let us look more closely at the position which the British were to hold.[14] Find the town of Mons, which stands to the west of Charleroi,[15] on the highroad running northward to Brussels. Mons is the old capital of Hainault, and its history goes back to the days of Cæsar. Those of our soldiers who came from colliery districts must have been strongly reminded of home when they arrived in the neighbourhood of Mons, for it is a place of busy factories, surrounded by a coalfield. Tall chimneys, the headgear of pits, huge mounds of refuse, railway lines running along embankments, and miners' cottages are the chief features of the landscape. Many of the rubbish heaps have been planted with little forests of dwarf firs, and look like ranges of low wooded hills. The country is, however, flat and much cut up with deep dykes filled with muddy water.

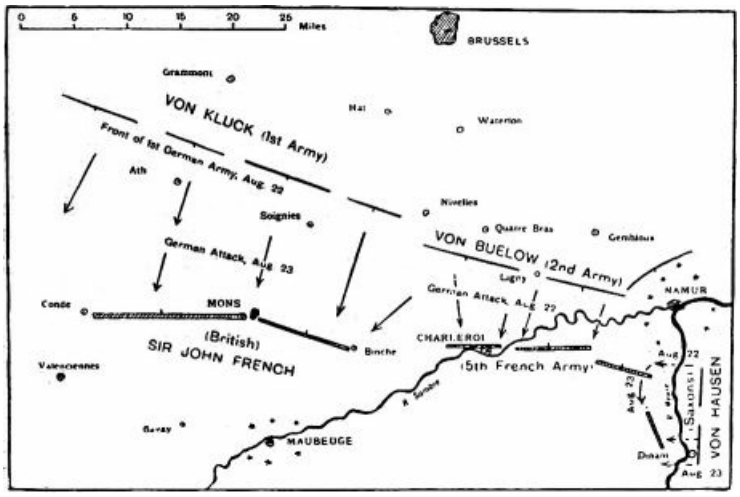
The British headquarters was at Mons, and the line which our soldiers were to hold extended to the west and to the east of that town. On the west it stretched along the banks of a canal which runs west for fifteen miles, from Mons to the village of Condé. Still farther to the west, a French Territorial battalion held the town of Tournai. Eastward of Mons the line ran for another ten miles to the village of Binche, which lies south-east of Mons. The British position, you will observe, was not quite straight, but in the form of a very flat triangle, with the apex at Mons. By the evening of Friday, 21st August, two army corps and one cavalry division of the British were in position awaiting the German attack. The 3rd Army Corps had not yet arrived.



The Town of Mons. ***Photo, Exclusive News Agency.***

The Commander-in-Chief was Sir John French, of whom we have already heard. The 1st Army Corps, which was posted to the east of Mons, was commanded by Sir Douglas Haig, a cavalryman like Sir John French, and one of the youngest of British generals. He had seen service in the Sudan and in South Africa, and had held high military positions at home and in India. The 2nd Army Corps, which was posted along the line of the canal west of Mons, was commanded by General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, also a brilliant soldier, who did fine work in South Africa. The cavalry division was under Major-General Allenby, one of the most famous cavalry scouts in the British army, and the 5th Cavalry Brigade was commanded by Sir Philip Chetwode.

During the 22nd and 23rd of August the 5th Cavalry Brigade and some other cavalry squadrons pushed far to the north, and did some excellent scouting work. They also met the advanced patrols of the enemy, and there were several small fights, in which our troops showed to great advantage. One of these fights took place at the corner of a village street, where a party of our hussars rode down a strong detachment of German cavalry. The two forces met front to front, and there were wild hurrahs as our men charged the enemy with flashing sabres. It was all over in a few minutes, and the Germans were driven back in confusion. "Men and horses were heavier than we were," wrote one of the British hussars who was wounded in the skirmish, "but our men were smarter and handier."



Map showing British and French Positions at the Battles of Mons and Charleroi.

You know that von Kluck's army entered Brussels on 20th August. An American writer who fell in with an advance division tells us that the Germans marched at a very rapid pace towards the Franco-Belgian frontier to meet the Allies. To keep up with the column he was forced to move at a steady trot. The men did not bend the knees, but keeping the legs straight, shot them forward with a quick, sliding movement as though they were skating or ski-ing.[16] Many of them fell by the wayside, but they were not permitted to lie there, but were lifted to their feet and flung back into the ranks. The halts were frequent, and so exhausted were the poor fellows that, instead of standing at ease, they dropped to the road as though they had been struck with a club. It was these forced marches which brought von Kluck's army so rapidly to the right wing of the Allies.

While our soldiers from Condé to Binche were busy digging trenches and gun-pits, and clearing their front of cover, they could hear away to the right the dull roar of cannon. Fighting was going on not only at Namur but along the Sambre. You know that von Buelow's army was marching along the north bank of the Meuse towards Namur, and that the Saxon army was moving towards the same place along the southern bank. On the evening of the day on which the Germans entered Brussels the first shots were fired at the fortress. It was a sultry evening, and behind the screen of haze the great howitzers were placed in position. They began to fire on the Belgian trenches to the north-east of the city, and all night continued to bombard them with great accuracy. Any man who lifted his head was immediately hit. The guns were three miles away, so the Belgians had no chance of rushing on the foe with the bayonet as they had done at Liége. They were forced to wait and suffer. After enduring ten hours of bursting shrapnel, which killed large numbers of them, they were obliged to withdraw, and the Germans pushed within the ring of forts and took up a position on the ridge of St. Marc north of the city.[17]

Meanwhile two of the eastern forts had fallen. Upon the fort just to the south of the Meuse the Germans guns rained shells at the rate of twenty a minute, and it was only able to fire ten shots in reply. The shells wrecked concrete and turrets alike, and nothing could resist them. The fort directly to the north of the river held out longer; but when seventy-five of its garrison had been slain, it too was forced to yield. At the same time the southern line of forts was fiercely

bombarded, and after an attack of two hours three of them were silenced, and a German force was pushed across the Meuse into the southern part of the angle between that river and the Sambre. All day long an infantry battle raged, and the Belgians hoped against hope that the French would come to their assistance.

Next morning, 22nd August, five thousand French troops, mostly Turcos, arrived from the west, but they were too late and too few to save the fortress. It was a black, dread day for the Allies. The skies were darkened by an eclipse of the sun, and the people of Namur were in a state of panic. German aeroplanes flew over the place and dropped bombs, which killed many of the inhabitants and fired their houses. The heavens thundered, the great guns roared, and Namur fell.

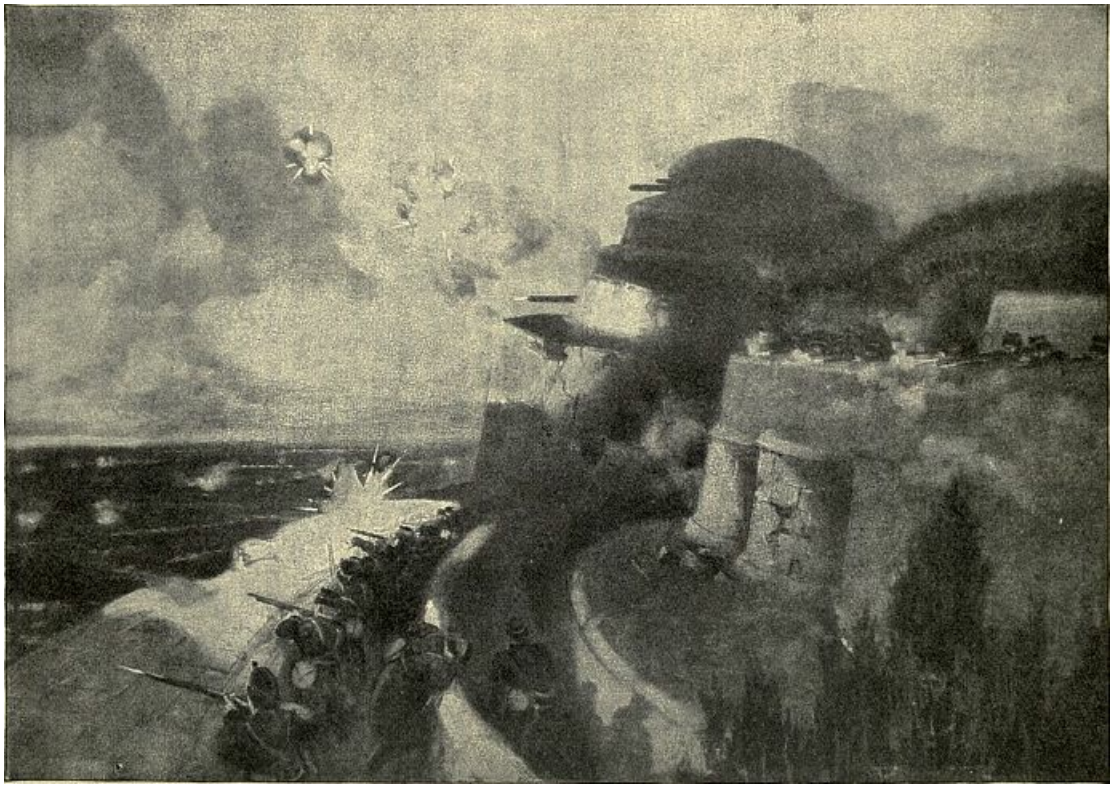
When the commander, General Michel, saw that he could no longer hold out, he tried to call in the troops from the forts and march them westward, in the hope that they might join their comrades beneath the shelter of the forts at Antwerp. Traitors or spies, however, cut his telephone wires, and he was only able to rally a portion of them for the retreat. Two Belgian regiments hacked a way through the Germans who blocked their road, and managed to join the French and reach Rouen; where they took ship to Ostend, and then joined the main Belgian army at Antwerp.

On Sunday afternoon, 23rd August, the Germans marched into Namur singing their national songs and shouting in triumph. Next day von Buelow entered, and with him was the new Governor of Belgium, Field-Marshal von der Goltz, who was described by one of the townsfolk as "an elderly gentleman covered with orders, buttoned in an overcoat up to his nose, above which gleamed a pair of enormous glasses."

The Belgians made their last stand between the forts to the north-west of the city. They held out until the morning of Tuesday, 25th August, when they left their trenches and moved into the woods on the north bank of the Sambre. Here they were surrounded, and were obliged to surrender. Only about 12,000 out of the 26,000 men who attempted to hold the fortress escaped. Large quantities of guns and stores had to be abandoned, and these fell into the hands of the Germans.

I have already told you that Namur was considered so strong that it could defy attack for a long time. It fell, as we have seen, very rapidly. The first shot was fired on the evening of 20th August; by the next night five or six forts had fallen; on the 23rd the Germans entered the city, and two days later every fort was in ruins.

Now we are able to understand the terrible peril of the Allies. The French line along the Meuse and Sambre could only be held so long as Namur was able to resist. Now that it had fallen the line was broken, and a million men were on the verge of disaster.



The Siege of Namur.

While the German howitzers were battering down the forts at Namur a fierce battle was raging round about Charleroi, on the Sambre, some fifteen miles to the east. Those who remember the story of the battle of Waterloo will recollect that Napoleon's armies crossed the Sambre at Charleroi on their way to the famous battlefield. Like Mons, Charleroi is a place of coal mines, iron foundries, and glassworks.

Less than ten miles to the north-east of Charleroi is the village of Ligny,[18] where Napoleon beat the Germans under Blücher on June 16, 1815, and forced them to retreat. On the same day Wellington beat Marshal Ney at Quatre Bras,[19] which lies a few miles to the north-west of Ligny; but because Blücher had retreated he was obliged to fall back to the field of Waterloo, where, as you know, he was joined by the Prussians, and an end was made of Napoleon. It was over this historic ground that von Buelow's army advanced towards Charleroi.

Charge of the Turcos near Charleroi. ***From the picture by Dudley Tennant.***

Not until late in March 1915 did the French lift the veil and give us a glimpse of what happened. We are told that General Joffre's plan was, in the first place, to hold and dispose of the enemy's centre, and afterwards to throw all his available forces on the left flank of the Germans. On Friday, 21st August, the French centre attacked with ten army corps. On the next day it failed, and the French suffered a severe defeat. They frankly confess that their officers and troops were unequal to the task imposed on them, that they were imprudent under fire, that the divisions were ill engaged, that they deployed rashly and fled hastily, and that the lives of the men were thrown away too early in the struggle. During the fighting the Zouaves and Turcos behaved most gallantly. Twice they cleared the town of Charleroi at the point of the bayonet, but all their efforts were unavailing. Five times the town was captured and recaptured, and every time it changed hands it was fiercely shelled. By Saturday evening it was in the hands of the Germans, who, after suffering great losses, crossed the Sambre.

Meanwhile another fierce fight was going on farther east along the line of the Meuse. On Saturday morning a German army, which had advanced through the Northern Ardennes, crossed the Meuse into the angle between that river and the Sambre, where, you will remember, the Germans had already gained a footing. This new force attacked the right flank of the French, and began to work round to their rear, so as to threaten the line of retreat. With von Buelow pressing hard on the front, and the Saxon army pressing on the right and rear, the French in the angle between the rivers were forced to give way, and in order to save themselves from destruction were obliged to retire to the south. So rapid and confused was this retreat that the French staff neglected to send news of the disaster to Sir John French until the afternoon of next day. He thought that the French line was still holding out on his right; but as a matter of fact he was without any support in that direction, and was left, as the soldiers say, "in the air." Further, von Buelow was now able to spare some of his right-wing troops and send them to help von Kluck, who was about to swoop down on the British line.

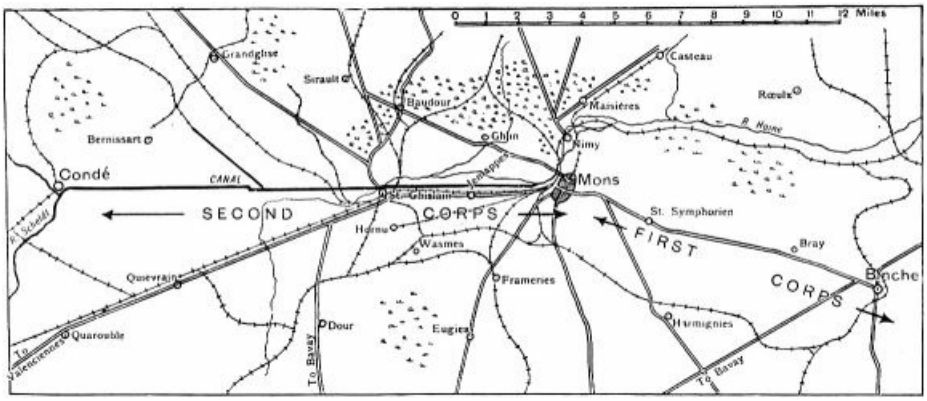
CHAPTER IV.

THE BATTLE OF MONS.

It is a peaceful Sunday morning; the sun is shining and the bells are ringing. The Belgians in Mons and the surrounding mining villages are flocking towards their churches; but in the British lines our soldiers are hard at work in their shirt-sleeves deepening the trenches and making ready to meet the threatened attack. As the morning wears on a German Taube[20] comes gliding high over the trenches like a huge vulture seeking its prey. It circles round and round, and more than one enterprising "Tommy" discharges his rifle at it. Now a British aeroplane ascends to give it battle; but the Taube makes a long curve northward, and disappears in rapid flight. Meanwhile our own airmen and cavalry scouts are coming in with the news that large numbers of the enemy are moving through the green woods towards the centre of the line, and that towards Binche and Condé other columns are on the march.

Sir John French assembled his commanders at six in the morning on August 23, and explained to them what he understood to be General Joffre's plan. He knew nothing of what had happened on his right, and he believed that one, or at most two, of the enemy's army corps, with perhaps one cavalry division, were on his front. He had no idea that the enemy outnumbered him by at least two to one, and that they were attempting to envelop him by attacking his exposed flanks.

A private in the 1st Royal West Kent Regiment tells us how the battle began. He says: "It was Sunday, 23rd August, that we were at Mons, billeted in a farmyard, and we were having a sing-song, and watching the people coming home from church. At about 12.30 an orderly had gone down to draw dinners when an aeroplane appeared overhead, throwing out some black powder. After this shrapnel began to burst, acquainting us with the fact that the Germans were in the vicinity. All was confusion and uproar for the moment, because we were not armed, and our shirts and socks were out to wash, that being the only chance we had to get them washed. It did not take us long, however, to get in fighting trim and go through the town of Mons to the scene of operations, which was on the other side of a small canal that adjoined."



The British were soon standing to arms in their position along the whole twenty-five miles of the battle-line. Hardly had they thrust the cartridges into their rifles before the terrible thunder of the German guns began. These guns were massed just outside the southern edge of the woods, behind railway embankments, roadside trees, hedgerows, and the raised towing-paths of the willow-fringed canals. The thunder of the cannonade speedily showed that the enemy was in far greater force than had been supposed. Not, however, for some hours did Sir John French and his staff realize that they were *everywhere* outnumbered.

The guns were booming, but there was no sign of the enemy. The front seemed empty of men, but an observer would have seen soft, fleecy clouds hanging above the British trenches—a sign that shrapnel was bursting over them, and that a deadly flail of iron bullets was beating down upon them. Our soldiers, who had learned to take cover in South Africa, lay close, and waited, whiling away the time by joking and by playing marbles with the shrapnel bullets that fell among

them. At first the aim of the enemy's artillery was not very good, but speedily their aeroplanes came circling over the trenches, and by throwing down smoky bombs revealed their whereabouts. Then they made very accurate shooting, and many of our men were hit. Meanwhile our artillery began to reply, and more than once silenced a battery of the enemy.

Our officers knew full well that the roar of the guns was the signal for the German infantry to advance. For a time nothing could be seen of them, for they took cover well, and their bluish gray uniforms seemed to melt into the leafy background. Our officers, who were eagerly scanning the landscape with field-glasses, only saw them when they began to open fire with rifles and machine guns.

The Germans believed that if they kept up a fierce artillery fire on our trenches our men would become so terrified that they would scuttle from their burrows like rabbits at the approach of a ferret. They did not then know of what stuff British soldiers are made. No fighters in the world are so cool and dogged; none can take such severe punishment without flinching, or wait so patiently for the right moment to advance.

And now the blue-gray masses of the Germans came into full view. They made desperate attacks near Binche, where, owing to the retirement of the French, the flank was exposed to a turning movement. Some of the troops who were to help in holding this part of the line had only just arrived, after a long and trying march under a hot sun, and were busy "digging themselves in" while the shrapnel was bursting over them.

When the infantry of the enemy began to appear our soldiers had three surprises. In the sham battles which they had fought at Aldershot or on Salisbury Plain they had learned to fire at men moving forward in a thin, extended line, with eight or ten paces between them. To their amazement they saw the Germans coming on in dense masses, as though they were parading in the streets of Potsdam. Our men grasped their rifles and waited until the enemy came within six or seven hundred yards of them. On rolled the Germans, singing their national songs, and believing that they could sweep the British out of their trenches by sheer weight of numbers. At last the word was given, and a tornado of rifle and machine-gun fire crashed down upon the dense masses.

Our men fired as steadily as though they were shooting at targets in time of peace. Not a shot was wasted; every bullet found its billet. "The Germans were in solid square blocks, standing out sharply against the skyline," wrote Sergeant Loftus, "and you couldn't help hitting them. It was like butting your head against a stone wall." Before the rapid fire and sure aim of the British the hosts of the enemy went down in heaps. "It was like cutting hay," said a private. In one place there was a breastwork of German dead and wounded five feet high, and our soldiers had to leave their trenches in order to see the foe.

The second surprise was the poor shooting of the German infantry. They fired as they marched, with their rifles at their hips. Though thousands of their bullets whizzed by, very few of them found a mark. "They can't shoot for nuts," said one Tommy; "they couldn't hit a haystack." "They couldn't hit the gas works at Mons," said another. "If they had, I wouldn't be here."

The third surprise was the vast numbers of the enemy that made the attack. Our first line did not consist, at any time, of more than 80,000 men, and against them von Kluck hurled at least 150,000 men, without counting the masses of cavalry which were moving towards the space between our left at Condé and the town of Tournai. Though the Germans were shot down in thousands, they continued to roll on like the waves of an incoming tide. "It was like the crowd leaving a football ground on a cup-tie day," was the description of one of our soldiers. For every five men which the French and the British had in the field in the early days of the war the Germans had eight.

Against these terrible odds our men fought stubbornly. Again and again the dense masses of the Germans pressed towards them, and as they did so a sheet of flame flickered along the line of British trenches, and they were beaten down like a field of standing wheat before a hailstorm. But no sooner were they swept to earth than their supports appeared, only to meet the same fate. Our men grew sick with slaughter. In some places the crowded ranks of the enemy managed to come close to the British trenches. Then our men leaped forward with a cheer and drove with the bayonet through and through the ranks, until the survivors turned and fled, followed by the pitiless fire of Maxims and field guns.

The British in their Trenches at Mons. ***From the picture by Dudley Tennant.***

One important feature of the attack was the very large number of machine guns used by the Germans. They were mounted on low sledges, so that they could be rapidly brought into the firing line and worked by men lying down. It seemed in these early days of the war as though the enemy was going to do the real fighting with artillery and machine guns, and that his infantry were only to act as supports.

You already know that von Kluck was throwing his main strength chiefly on the British right, but there were also furious fights along the canal towards Condé, where our men were holding the bridges. Frenzied attacks were made on these bridges, but they were stubbornly held. When, however, the overwhelming numbers of the enemy appeared, our troops were withdrawn to the south bank, and orders were given to blow up the bridges and the barges in the canal. The engineers did the work with the coolest courage in the face of a deadly fire.

A hundred deeds of gallantry were done that day. One bridge was held by a devoted company of the Scottish Borderers. When they saw that it must be abandoned, a sergeant and three men dashed on to it to fire the fuse. The three men dropped in their tracks, and the sergeant went on alone. He hacked the fuse short and fired it; but with the destruction of the bridge he too was destroyed.

Foiled at the bridges, the enemy now attempted to cross the canal by means of pontoons. Our guns were trained on them, and an awful scene of slaughter and destruction began. Ten separate times the Germans managed to throw their pontoons over the water, and ten separate times the guns of the British smashed them to fragments.

Stubbornly as our men were fighting, the terrible pressure of the Germans could not be resisted. About three o'clock Sir Philip Chetwode's cavalry brigade, which had been guarding the flank, had to be withdrawn; whereupon the enemy occupied Binche. Sir Douglas Haig then drew in his right, and slowly fell back to a long swell of ground south of the village of Bray. You know that the British line had been almost straight; the retirement of the 1st Army Corps swung the right half of the line towards the south, so that there was a sharp angle between it and the 2nd Army Corps, holding the line of the Mons-Condé canal. The British were now in the same sort of dangerous position as the French when they held the angle between the Meuse and the Sambre. General French saw at once that his men in Mons were exposed to attacks from the front and the flanks, and that they were in peril of being cut off; so he directed the commander of that part of the line "to be careful not to keep the troops on this salient too long, but, if threatened seriously, to draw back the centre behind Mons."

Hardly had this message been sent off before a startling telegram from General Joffre reached General French. It gave

him news which he ought to have received hours before, and made his gallant stand quite unavailing. It told him that Namur had fallen on the previous day; that the 5th French Army and the two reserve divisions on his right were in retreat; that the passages of the Sambre between Charleroi and Namur were in the hands of the enemy; that at least three German army corps were moving on the front of his position, while another was making a wide turning movement round his left by way of Tournai. Probably at this time some 200,000 Germans were about to attack Sir John French's 80,000. All this meant that the little British army, though it had done, and could still do, miracles of valour, was in peril of being cut off, enveloped, and destroyed. There was nothing for it but to hold on until nightfall, and then retreat. You can imagine the bitter disappointment of our men, who now knew that they were more than a match for the Germans.

A sergeant tells us that all day long the British defied every attempt of the enemy to dislodge them from their trenches. "After the last attack," he says, "we lay down in our clothes to sleep as best we could; but long before sunrise we were called out, to be told that we had got to abandon our position. Nobody knew why we had to go; but like good soldiers we obeyed without a murmur."

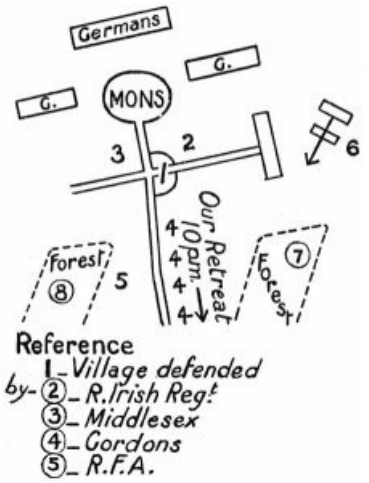
CHAPTER V.

SOLDIERS' STORIES OF THE BATTLE OF MONS.

The account of the Battle of Mons which you have just read has been built up from two main sources of information. First, and most important, is the dispatch of Sir John French. It is a plain, business-like statement, giving a broad outline of the manner in which his troops were disposed, and relating in proper order the chief features of the struggle, but not telling us much about the details of the fighting. Then come the accounts which the soldiers who took part in the battle have given of their experiences. Of course each of these soldiers only saw but a very small portion of the battle, and they knew very little of the "moves" which their commanders were making; but it is from them that we hear those details which give life and colour to the story. In this chapter you are going to read some accounts of various incidents in the battle as told by those who fought at Mons on the 23rd day of August 1914.

Here is the story told by a Gordon Highlander named Smiley. He drew a little diagram to illustrate the fighting which he saw, and I reproduce it on the next page in order that you may the more easily follow his story. You will notice that he and his comrades held a trench to the south of Mons.

"We marched out of our billets at 4 a.m. We marched up to No. 1 and wheeled to the right, which fetched us on the main Paris road (No. 4.4.4.4), with Mons itself somewhat half-left on our rear. We immediately set about clearing the foreground of willows, beans, wheat, and anything which gave head cover. About 10 a.m. we had (except buildings) a clear rifle range of quite two thousand yards. We then dug our trenches, and much labour and love we put into them.



"The ball opened at 11.30 a.m. by a terrible artillery duel by the Germans over our trenches to No. 5. This went on for some hours, until a movement of infantry was seen at No. 6. This movement was evidently intended for the Gordons, as you will see that had they managed to reach the wood in front of us (No. 7) our position would have been made untenable by hidden infantry and well-served artillery, who could have flanked us by sheer weight of numbers.

"However, we opened on them at No. 6 with a terrific Maxim fire. They advanced in companies of quite one hundred and fifty men in files five deep. Guess the result. We could steady our rifles on the trench and take deliberate aim. The first company were simply blasted away by a volley at seven hundred yards, and in their insane formation every bullet was almost sure to find two billets. The other companies kept advancing very slowly, using their dead comrades as cover; but they had absolutely no chance, and at about 5 p.m. their infantry retired.

"We were still being subjected to a terrible artillery fire. But we had time to see what was happening on our left flank (1, 2, 3). The Royal Irish Regiment had been surprised and fearfully cut up, and so, too, had the Middlesex, and it was found impossible for our B and C Companies to reinforce them. We (D Company) were one and a half miles away, and were ordered to proceed to No. 2 and relieve the Royal Irish as much as possible. We crept from our trenches and crossed to the other side of the road, where we had the benefit of a ditch and the road camber[21] as cover. We made most excellent progress until one hundred and fifty yards from No. 1. At that distance there was a small white house flush

with the road standing in a clearance. Our young sub.[22] was leading, and safely crossed the front of the house. Immediately the Germans opened a cyclone of shrapnel at the house. They could not see us, but I guess they knew the reason why troops would or might pass that house. However, we were to relieve the R.I.'s, and astounding as it may seem, we passed that house, and I was the only one to be hit. Even yet I am amazed at our luck.

"By this time dusk had set in, four villages were on fire, and the Germans had been and were shelling the hospitals. We managed to get into the R.I.'s trench, and beat off a very faint-hearted Uhlan attack on us. About 9 p.m. came our orders to retire. What a pitiful handful we were against that host, and yet we held the flower of the German army at bay all day!"

Another soldier who was present in this part of the battlefield says:—

"We were digging trenches, and were totally unaware that the enemy was near us, when all of a sudden shells came dropping all around, and the Germans bore down on us. One of the Middlesex companies was not at that time equipped in any way, with the result that they were terribly cut up. Then I witnessed what a real Britisher is made of. One of the sergeants of the Middlesex, instead of holding up hands and begging for mercy, like the Germans do, fought furiously with his fists, downing two Germans with successive blows. Other members of the Middlesex followed their sergeant's example. Later on a German sergeant-major who was taken prisoner, on viewing our numbers, said, 'Had we been aware that there were so few of you, not one of you would have escaped.'"

In scores of soldiers' letters we find references to the overwhelming numbers of the enemy. One young private wrote as follows to his father, who is a gardener: "You complained last summer, dad, of the swarm of wasps that destroyed your fruit. That will give you an idea of how the Germans came for us." Another man writes: "It looked as if we were going to be snowed under. The mass of men who came on was an avalanche, and every one of us must have been trodden to death, if not killed by shells or bullets, had not our infantry charged into them on the left wing, not five hundred yards from the trench I was in." A non-commissioned officer also refers to the odds against which our men struggled: "No regiment ever fought harder than we did, and no regiment has ever had better officers; they went shoulder to shoulder with their men. But you cannot expect impossibilities, no matter how brave the boys are, when one is fighting forces twenty to thirty times as strong." "They are more like flies," said another man: "the more you kill the more there seem to be."

Holding the Canal at Mons. ***By permission of The Sphere.***

Here is the story of Lance-Corporal M'Auslan of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, who was fighting on the Mons-Condé line. He says: "I was up in the engagement before Mons on the Saturday. We marched thirty miles, and had an engagement with the enemy, and fought a rearguard action over twenty miles for twenty-four hours. The canal at Mons must be full of German dead now. We were working two nights to prevent them crossing the canal, and we mowed them down like corn. The D Company of our regiment was cut up in about ten minutes, and Captain Ross and Captain Young lost their lives. I was with Captain Ross when he got bowled over. It was not the rifle fire that hurt us—they could not hit us at fifty yards—but it was the shrapnel fire that caused the damage. The German big gun fire was good, but their rifle fire was rotten. The aeroplanes did all the piloting. They gave the Germans the range of our guns, and they shelled us pretty successfully; but we brought down two Zeppelins and an aeroplane in the first two days of the battle."

A *Times* correspondent tells us that he was much impressed by the coolness and dash of our men, and their utter indifference to danger. "I shall never forget," he writes, "the admirable reply given by an English soldier, wounded in the hand, whom I found sitting by the roadside outside Mons, wearing an air of consternation. I began to talk to him, and asked him if his wound was hurting him. 'It's not that,' he said, with a doleful shake of the head, 'but I'm blessed if I haven't been and lost my pipe in that last charge!' I gave him mine, and he was instantly comforted."

Here is a fine story of the fights for the bridges at Condé where the canal joins the river Scheldt; it is told by Private W. E. Carter of the 2nd Manchester Regiment:—

"To deliver their attacks it was necessary for the enemy to cross two bridges. The officer in command of the Royal Engineers ordered a non-commissioned officer to swim the canal and the river, and set fuses under both bridges. He reached the farther bank in safety, and on returning he set a fuse under the river bridge. When making for 'home' one of the enemy's big guns fired on him, and blew away one of his arms at the shoulder. Another member of the same corps entered the water and assisted him to land. When the Germans had marched over the first bridge it was blown up, leaving their ammunition carts on the other side. Then the second bridge was blown up, and a German force of 25,000 was placed at our mercy. A desperate fight followed, the Germans being left with no ammunition but what they carried. They struggled heroically to build a bridge with the object of getting their ammunition carts across, but every time this improvised bridge was destroyed by our artillery fire. Though they were thus trapped, the Germans held their ground very stubbornly."

The following is an account of how some of our men were trapped. A wounded officer says: "We were guarding a railway bridge over a canal. My company held a semicircle from the railway to the canal. I was nearest the railway. A Scottish regiment completed the semicircle on the right of the railway to the canal. The railway was on a high embankment running up to the bridge, so that the Scottish regiment was out of sight of us.

"We held the Germans all day, killing hundreds, when about 5 p.m. the order to retire was given. It never reached us, and we were left all alone. The Germans therefore got right up to the canal on our right, hidden by the railway embankment, and crossed the railway. Our people had blown up the bridge before their departure. We found ourselves between two fires, and I realized we had about two thousand Germans and a canal between us and our friends. We decided to sell our lives dearly. I ordered my men to fix bayonets and charge, which the gallant fellows did splendidly; but we got shot down like ninepins. As I was loading my revolver after giving the order to fix bayonets I was hit in the right wrist. I dropped my revolver; my hand was too weak to draw my sword. I had not got far when I got a bullet through the calf of my right leg and another in my right knee, which brought me down.

"The rest of my men got driven round into the trench on our left. The officer there charged the Germans and was killed,

and nearly all the men were either killed or wounded. I did not see this part of the business, but from all accounts the gallant men charged with the greatest bravery. Those who could walk the Germans took away as prisoners. I have since learnt from civilians that around the bridge five thousand Germans were found dead, and about sixty English. These sixty must have been nearly all my company, who were so unfortunately left behind."

In the Trenches—waiting for an Attack. ***Photopress.***

One of the finest features of our army is the admiration of the rank and file for their officers, and the equally sincere admiration of the officers for their men. In letters home they are constantly praising each other. A cavalry officer writes in his diary: "Can't help feeling jolly proud to command such a magnificent body of men. Hope to goodness I am capable of doing the lads full justice. Our men ARE playing the game;" while a private pays the following striking tribute to his officer: "You know I have often spoken of Captain ——, and what a fine fellow he was. There was no braver man on the field. He got knocked over early with a piece of shell which smashed his leg. He must have been in great pain, but kneeling on one knee, he was cheerful, and kept saying, 'My bonnie boys, make sure of your man.' When he was taken away on the ambulance he shouted, 'Keep cool, and mark your man.'"

During the hot hours of the fierce fighting our men were frequently very thirsty, and longed for a cooling drink. Over and over again peasant women came up to the trenches with water and fruit for the parched and wearied men. They showed the most wonderful courage in approaching the firing line, and our soldiers were most grateful to them. One man wrote home to his mother: "I can assure you they are the bravest souls I have ever met." All honour to these noble women for their deeds of mercy in the day of battle.

The following stories give us a capital idea of the high spirits and undaunted gaiety of our men under fire. A party of British infantry were defending a café near Mons. As often as the Germans attacked the place they were driven back, though big holes were gaping in the walls and the place was rapidly becoming a ruin. There was an automatic piano in the café, and every time the Germans appeared, one soldier would say to another, "Put a penny in the slot, Jock, and give them some music to dance to." Each time the enemy attacked this was done, and the "band" struck up.

A wounded lancer tells us that when the Germans bore down on his trench the men were singing "Hitchy Koo." "Before we were half through with the chorus," he says, "the man next to me got a wound in the upper part of his arm. But he sang the chorus to the finish, and did not seem to know that he was hit until a comrade on the other side said, 'Don't you think you'd better have it bound up? It's beginning to make a mess.'"

Captain Buchanan Dunlop, who was wounded at Mons, tells a splendid story to illustrate the pluck and undaunted spirit

of our men. He says: "I was talking to an officer of my own regiment in town yesterday. He was also wounded, and he told me about a fight in which one of his men lying just in front of him under a heavy shell fire turned to him and said, 'Sir, may I retire?' 'Why?' asked the officer. 'Sir,' replied the man, 'I have been hit three times.'"

Every boy and every girl who reads these pages has heard of the Victoria Cross, the highest award of valour known to the British army. Perhaps you have seen a man who has won it. If so, I am sure that your eyes shone as you looked at him, for there is no nobler sight in all the world than a man who is supremely brave. The Victoria Cross is a simple Maltese cross of bronze, worth about fourpence halfpenny, and it is so called because it was first instituted by Queen Victoria in the year 1856.

"Her cross of valour to her worthiest;
No golden toy with milky pearls besprent,
But simple bronze, and for a warrior's breast
A fair, fit ornament."

The special glory of the Victoria Cross is that any soldier can win it, be he general or private, son of a peer or son of a scavenger. It is given "For Valour," and for valour only. So highly honourable is it that, no matter what other distinctions a man may possess, the letters "V.C." come first after his name. It is suspended by a red ribbon if worn on the breast of a soldier, and by a blue ribbon if worn by a sailor. It carries with it a pension of ten pounds a year, which may be increased if the possessor cannot earn a livelihood.

The Victoria Cross.

Let me tell you something of the men who did such glorious deeds of valour at Mons that they were afterwards awarded the Victoria Cross.

Captain Theodore Wright, of the Royal Engineers, was engaged in blowing up one of the bridges over the Mons-Condé canal. While preparing the bridge for destruction he was wounded in the head; but he stuck to his work, and refused to retire. The fuse failed to explode the charge, and then, wounded as he was, he dashed forward under a very heavy fire and fixed another fuse, which this time did its work and blew the bridge to fragments. On 16th November he was awarded the Victoria Cross; but, alas! he had then been dead two months. He was killed while assisting wounded men into shelter.

Lieutenant Maurice James Dease, of the 4th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, was commander of the machine-gun section at Mons. Though he was badly wounded two or three times, he refused to leave his guns, and kept them in action until all his men were shot. He, too, died of his wounds, and the coveted Victoria Cross was handed to his relatives, who cherish it, you may be sure, with mingled pride and sorrow.

Corporal Charles Ernest Garforth, of the 15th Hussars, also won the Victoria Cross on that dread day at a place about three miles south of Mons. His squadron was trapped, and the only road of escape was barred by entanglements of barbed wire. He volunteered to go forward and cut the wire, and this he did while hundreds of bullets flew about him. Thanks to his dauntless courage, his squadron was able to reach safety. Twice later he did equally heroic deeds, and

never was the coveted cross more splendidly won.

Lance-Corporal Charles Alfred Jarvis, 57th Field Company, Royal Engineers, showed great gallantry at Jemappes on the canal to the west of Mons. He worked on a bridge for one and a half hours in full view of the enemy, who kept up a heavy fire upon him. For a time he had the assistance of his comrades, but finally he sent them to the rear, and then all alone fired the charges which brought down the bridge. For this deed he was rightly enrolled in that glorious band of heroes who have wrought and fought and died to make us inheritors of deathless fame.

Lance-Corporal Jarvis preparing to destroy a Bridge.

Drawn by Ernest Prater from a rough sketch by Lance-Corporal Jarvis.

Engineers destroy a bridge such as the above by fixing one or more slabs of gun-cotton in close contact with it. Wires are attached to the gun-cotton, and by means of electricity the charge is fired. The engineers must calculate the amount of gun-cotton required, and choose the most suitable position for fixing the charge, so that the explosion may have the desired effect.

CHAPTER VI

THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE.

While our hard-pressed troops are retreating from Mons before overwhelming numbers of the enemy, we must turn to what is called the Eastern theatre of war and see what is happening there. Before, however, I describe the actual fighting, I must tell you something about Russia and the Russian army.

You probably know that Russia is not only equal in extent to half Europe, but stretches right across the northern part of the continent of Asia to the waters of the Pacific Ocean. This vast empire actually covers one-seventh of all the land on the globe. Unlike the British Empire, it is continuous; you may travel from one end of it to the other by rail. You will get some idea of the tremendous railway journey involved when I tell you that the distance from the old city of Warsaw on the river Vistula to Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan is about 6,200 miles—that is, about two-fifths of the circumference of the world at the latitude of London.

Naturally you will expect this vast empire to be inhabited by vast numbers of people. In the year 1912 it was estimated that there were more than 171 millions of people under the sway of the Tsar—that is, more than one in ten of all the people on earth. I have already told you of the extraordinary variety of races which dwell beneath the Union Jack; there is almost as great a variety of peoples in the Russian Empire. There are, for example, thirty different races in the Caucasus alone. The bulk of the inhabitants, however, are of Slav race, and are descended from a people who, ages ago, entered Europe from Asia, and gradually conquered the land and settled in it. What are known as the Great Russians form the strongest and toughest race in the whole empire. They are Slavs who in early times intermingled with the Finns and set up the kingdom of Moscow. These Great Russians gradually succeeded in enlarging their borders, until their territory stretched to the Crimea and Turkestan on the south and south-east, to Manchuria in the far east, and to Germany in the west. The Great Russians are now the largest and most important of all the Russian peoples, and they occupy the bulk of the country.

The descendants of the races and tribes which the Great Russians subdued still exist, and they differ as widely from their conquerors as a northern Frenchman differs from a southern Frenchman. One of these conquered races consists of the White Russians, who represent some of the earliest Slav colonists, and live near the sources of the Niemen, the Dwina, and the Dnieper in the south-west of the country. Most of the people of the south, however, are Little Russians. They speak a dialect of their own, love dance and song, and are less fond of work than the peoples of Northern Russia.

Amongst other races in Russia are the Poles, a Slav people with quite a separate language. In Chapter III. of our first volume I told you that in the days of the English King Edward III. Poland was an important and flourishing kingdom. I also told you how the sovereigns of Prussia, Russia, and Austria conspired to seize portions of this kingdom, and how it was gradually gobbled up until the Poles, like the Jews, had no land which they could call their own. From that day to this they have yearned for the time when their old kingdom might be restored to them. On the 15th day of August, when the war was in full swing, the Tsar addressed the Poles as follows:—

"Poles! The hour has sounded when the sacred dream of your fathers and grandfathers may be realized. A century and a half has passed since the living body of Poland was torn in pieces; but the soul of the country is not dead. It continues to live, inspired by the hope that there will come for the Polish people an hour of resurrection and of brotherly friendship with Great Russia. The Russian army brings you the solemn pledge of this friendship which wipes out the frontiers dividing the Polish peoples, and unites them under the sceptre of the Russian Tsar. Under this sceptre Poland will be born again, free in her religion and her language. You will be granted Home Rule under the protection of Russia.

Polish Soldiers of the old days crossing the River Dneister.

(*From the picture by the Polish artist Juliusz Kossak.*)

"With open heart and brotherly hand Great Russia advances to meet you. She believes that the sword with which she struck down her enemies at Grünewald[23] is not yet rusted. From the shores of the Pacific to the North Sea the Russian armies are marching. The dawn of a new life is beginning for you, and in this glorious dawn is seen the sign of the Cross, the symbol of suffering, and of the resurrection of peoples."

Cannot you imagine the joy of the Poles, not only of Russia, but of Germany and Austria, when they heard these glad tidings? The Poles of Germany have always been badly treated by the Germans, and they were immediately won over to the side of Russia by this proclamation. When the day of victory arrives Germany will have to give up Prussian Poland, and Austria will have to give up Galicia; and these provinces, together with Russian Poland, will constitute the new kingdom which will rise again after being torn asunder and beaten to the dust for a hundred and fifty years.

The Poles are by no means the only subject race of the Great Russians. There are the Lithuanians and the Finns in the west and north-west, the Tartars and Bashkirs in the east, and the Kalmucks, a Mongol people, who live beyond the Volga. In addition to these peoples, there are the races of the Caucasus, and the many others who inhabit Asiatic Russia. Some five million Jews also live in the Empire, chiefly in the south-west and in Poland.

The armies of Russia are mainly recruited from the peasants. In Northern Russia the peasant is generally a tall, well-built man, with fair hair and blue eyes. In the south, as a rule, he is darker. In civil life the men wear loose shirts belted round the waist, cloth putties on the legs, and, in summer, shoes of plaited straw on the feet. They also wear peaked caps and loose knickerbockers of thin cloth. On Sundays and feast-days they dress in shirts of the brightest colours—red, blue, yellow, and salmon-pink. In winter they wear big top-boots, made of gray felt, and brown leather greatcoats, lined with sheepskin. The women do not wear hats but handkerchiefs over their heads.

The peasant thinks of himself as a member of a family, and addresses his fellows as father, brother, son, or child. He lives in a one-storied house, built of logs and thatched with straw. Inside the house there is a large high stove, on which the family sleep. On the table you will always see the samovar, a large brass urn filled with boiling water for making the tea which is so largely drunk. Meat is seldom seen, the usual fare being porridge made of buckwheat or millet, cabbage soup, and black bread. Formerly a great deal of vodka, a spirit distilled from rye, maize, or potatoes, was consumed, and this was manufactured and sold by the Government. Since the war broke out the Tsar has shut up the Government vodka shops throughout Russia. This is a great step forward, and it will certainly do much to benefit the people in body, mind, and pocket. The Government is sacrificing much money in thus striving to improve the habits of the people, for nearly one-third of its total revenue was formerly obtained from the sale of vodka. After eight months of war the Russian

Minister of Finance was able to say that, owing to the shutting down of the Government drink shops, the workmen of the country were able to produce from thirty to fifty per cent. more than formerly. Our French allies have also taken a similar step by forbidding the sale of a very poisonous spirit known as absinthe.[24]

The Russian peasant can do little work during the long winter, when the land is in the grip of ice and snow, so that he has a long period of enforced idleness every year. Perhaps for this reason he does not love continuous work. But he can, if he chooses, do a large amount of hard labour in a short space of time. When, for instance, he is putting out a village fire, or working in the fields, or intent on finishing a job, he will work like an inspired giant. At other times he is inclined to be lazy and happy-go-lucky. As a rule, you will find the peasants independent in their views—shrewd, full of common sense, and much attached to the old ways. They are very stubborn, and nothing can move them when they have made up their minds to resist.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RUSSIAN ARMY.

One very interesting Russian people must now engage our attention. North of the Black Sea we find what are called the Steppes. They are fertile towards the north, but in the south are dry deserts. In the spring they are covered with grass and flowers, but by the month of July all is parched and bare, and in winter they are deep in snow. The Steppes are the home of the Cossacks, who in early times were robbers, living on loot and fighting fiercely against the Tartars, who tried to invade their lands. Later on the Cossacks became Christians, joined the Russians, and fought against the Poles.

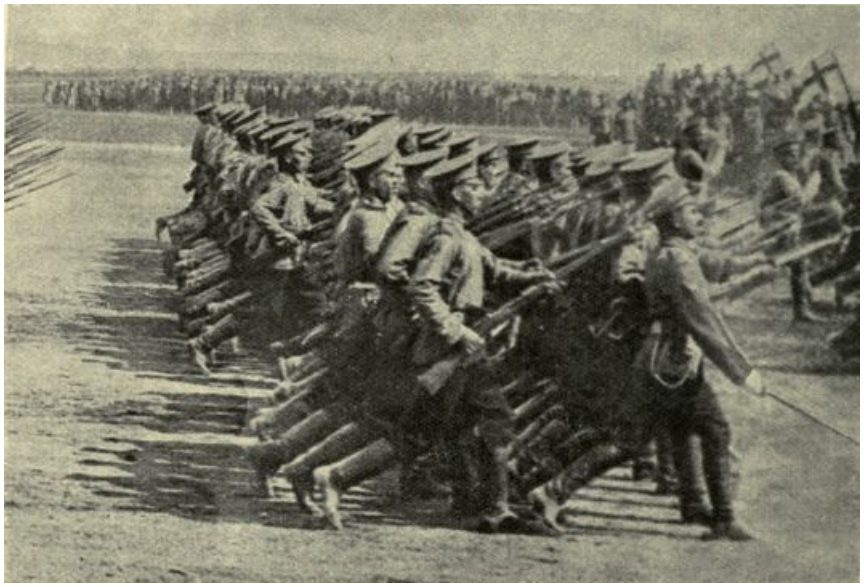
The Cossacks are found in Siberia and in ten governments of Russia in Europe, where they hold lands on what is called military tenure—that is, instead of paying rent they give service in the army whenever called upon to do so. You will remember that under the feudal system, which was formerly in force in England, men who held land of the king were forced to provide him with so many soldiers for so many days in the year. The Cossacks hold their lands under somewhat the same system. They find their own horses, uniforms, and equipment, and they are required to serve from their eighteenth to their thirty-eighth year. They are born to the saddle, and are indeed lost without a horse. They ride steeds as hardy as themselves, and there is no trick of horsemanship with which they are not familiar. Cossacks, for example, will charge down on the enemy shielding themselves by hanging between the body of the horse and the foe. They have a reputation for being brutal and cruel, because they have been largely used by the Government in putting down riots and other risings of the people. Nevertheless they are good-natured and long-suffering. Here are two proverbs about Cossacks which give you a clue to their character: "A Cossack will starve, but his horse will have eaten his fill;" "The Cossack's brother is Death."

Now let me tell you something about the Russian army, for it is, perhaps, Germany's most dangerous foe. In peace time its total strength is about 1,500,000 of all ranks, and its war strength is 5,500,000; but this by no means represents the number of men which Russia can put into the field at a pinch. Every Russian is supposed to serve in the army from his twentieth to his forty-third year. Generally speaking, he serves four years if in the cavalry and three years if in the infantry or artillery, and then is drafted into the Reserve for fifteen or fourteen years, during which period he undergoes two trainings of six weeks each. But Russia, with her vast population of 171 millions, does not need all these men in ordinary times, so she lets off large numbers of them, and thus has not so large an army as her vast population would lead us to suppose. No one can exactly say how many men she could put into the field, but probably it is at least about fifteen millions. You will remember that Herr von Jagow, the German Secretary of State, spoke of Russia's "inexhaustible supplies of men." But we must remember that while her man-power is so great, she has many difficulties to overcome in providing transport over her enormous country, and in furnishing her soldiers with arms and ammunition. Probably about seven million men represents the number which she can actually equip, arm, and feed at the front.

About ten years ago the Russians fought the Japanese in Manchuria and were badly beaten, chiefly because the officers were not well trained, and were much given to drink. Since that time the whole army has been thoroughly overhauled, re-armed, and reorganized, and it is now the equal of any army in the world. Russia has done away with her drunken, incapable officers, and has replaced them by smart, sober, intelligent men. Her General Staff is very capable, and at the head of the army is the Grand Duke Nicholas, a giant of six feet eight inches in height, who is one of the most hard-working generals ever known. His soldiers love him, and he is untiring in caring for their comfort.

Cossacks on Active Service. ***Photo, Daily Mirror.***

The great strength of the Russian army lies in its discipline and endurance. Napoleon used to say that you were never sure when a Russian soldier was dead, and it is so to-day. Russian soldiers are dour and dogged, and will bear any amount of hardship and punishment without losing heart; like Wellington's men in the Peninsular,[25] they will go anywhere and do anything. They regard this war as a Holy War; they are full of enthusiasm for it, and ask no greater privilege than to fight and die for "Holy Russia." The moment the Cossacks of Siberia received the order to mobilize, they telegraphed to the Grand Duke Nicholas, "We are coming, Father Commander."



Russian Infantry at a Review. ***Photo, Topical Press.***

I will close this chapter with a noble letter written by a Russian mother to her soldier son. You will be impressed by her warm patriotism and the high ideal which she sets before her boy. Especially you will notice that she urges him not to be led away by "blind vengeance." What a contrast between her attitude and that of the Kaiser, who encouraged his men to

repeat the burning and butchery of Attila! Here is the letter:—

"Your father was killed very far from us, and I send you upon the sacred duty of defending our dear country from the vile and dreadful enemy. Remember you are the son of a hero. My heart is oppressed, and I weep when I ask you to be worthy of him. I know all the fateful horror of these words, what suffering it will be for me and you, but I repeat them. We do not live for ever in this world. What is our life? A drop in the ocean of beautiful Russia. We shall not exist always, but she must flourish for ever. I know that we shall be forgotten, and our happy descendants will not remember those who sleep in 'brothers' graves' [soldiers' graves]. With kisses and blessings I parted from you. When you are sent to perform a great deed, don't remember my tears, but only my blessings. God save you, my dear, bright, loved child. Once more: it is written everywhere that the enemy is cruel and savage. Don't be led by blind vengeance. Don't raise your hand against a fallen foe, but be gracious to those whose fate it is to fall into your hands."

Russian Artillery. ***Photo, Record Press.***

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EASTERN THEATRE OF WAR.

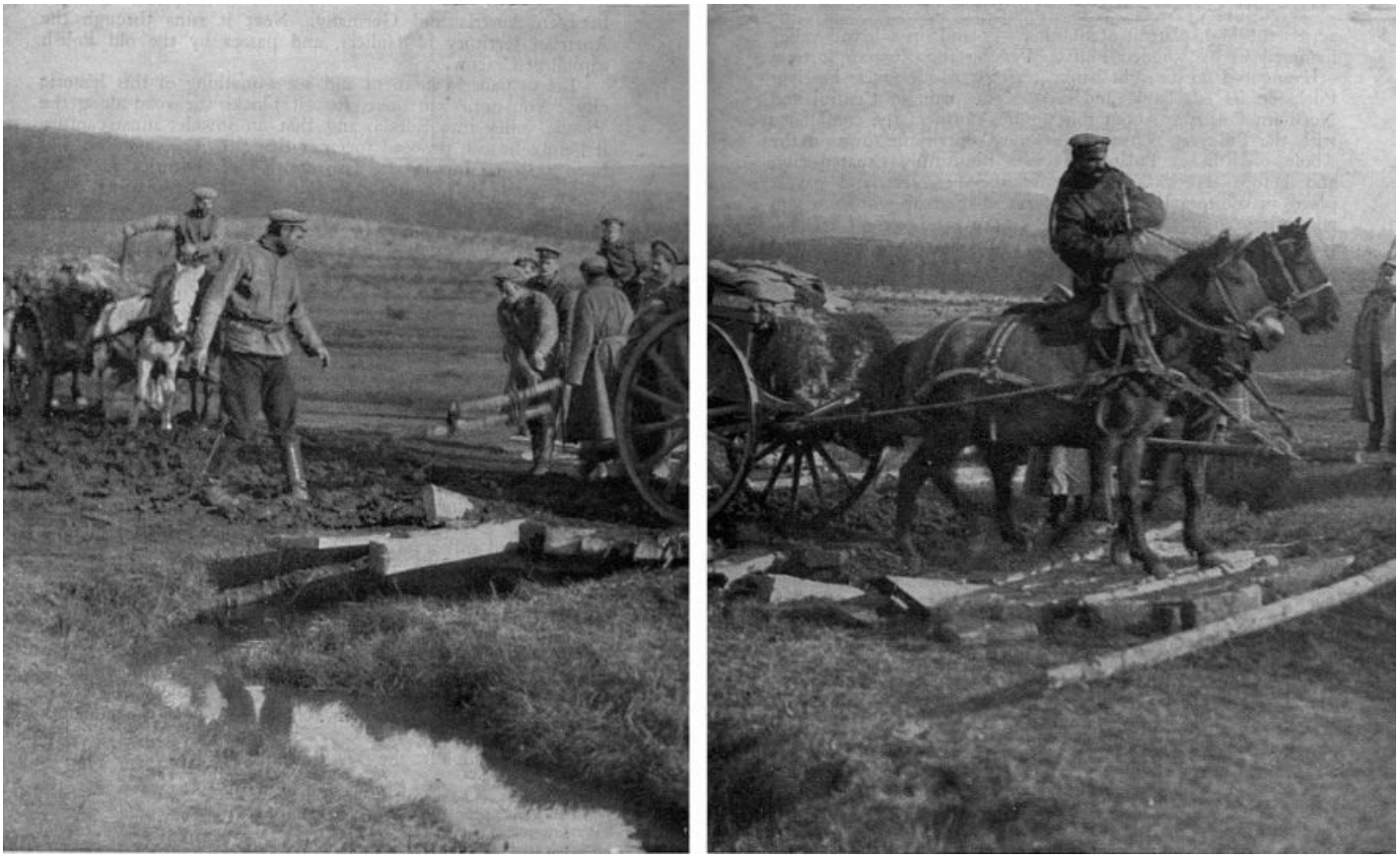
On page 59 you will see a map of Eastern Germany and Western Prussia. I want you to examine this map very carefully, because it shows the region in which the bulk of the fighting between the Russians and the Germans has so far taken place.

Follow the dotted line which shows the boundary between the two countries. You see that it zigzags south, then curves west, and straggles southward again to the border of Austria. As a rule, the boundary line between two countries follows, partly or wholly, some such natural barrier as a range of mountains or the course of a river. The Russo-German boundary, however, runs along neither mountains nor rivers. There are no mountains until you reach the Carpathians, about three hundred and eighty miles south of Königsberg; the whole region is a flat plain with scarcely a hill to break its monotony. Innumerable rivers wind their way across the country, and in wet weather overflow their banks and turn wide districts into one vast slough. The boundary line, however, does not follow these rivers, but cuts right across them. The dotted line which marks off Russian from German territory is purely artificial, and for this reason we may almost leave it out of account.

You will notice that the great river which flows right across this region is the Vistula, which we will now follow from its source to the German boundary near Thorn. So widespread are the various arms of this river, that we might call the region the "Land of the Vistula"—the name by which Poland was known of old. The river rises in Silesia, on the northern slopes of the Carpathians. It flows through a mountain valley, and then turns east and north-east, and forms part of the frontier between Austria and Germany. Next it runs through the Austrian territory of Galicia, and passes by the old Polish capital of Cracow.

Let us pause a moment and see something of this historic city. You notice, at once, that it blocks the road along the Vistula valley into Silesia, and that an invader must capture it before he can proceed to enter that province. Cracow has been a strong fortress for two and a half centuries, and now is surrounded by a circle of forts which the Austrians have strongly garrisoned. For two and a half centuries it was the capital of Poland. The finest of its thirty-nine churches is the Cathedral of Stanislaus, which stands on a rocky hill to the south-west of the old town. It was the crowning-place of the Polish kings, and within its walls are the tombs of several of the great Poles of history. Paintings, sculptures, and other objects of art adorn the cathedral, which dates from the middle of the fourteenth century. There is also a university with a rich library, and a Polish museum of art. About two and a half miles to the north-west of the city is a mound of earth a hundred feet high, which was thrown up between 1820 and 1823 in honour of Kosciuszko,[26] the great Polish hero. Because of its position, Cracow is the natural market for the exchange of goods between Silesia, Hungary, and Russia. There are coal and zinc mines in the neighbourhood.

Leaving Cracow the river runs north-east, and for about one hundred miles forms the boundary between Austria and Russian Poland. At the town of Sandomir the Vistula is joined by the San, which rises on the northern slopes of the Carpathians and flows past the fortress and busy manufacturing town of Przemysl.[27] About fifty miles to the east of Przemysl, on the railway which runs from Odessa on the Black Sea into Silesia, we find Lemberg, an old city which is now a busy place of trade, because it stands in the broadest part of the Galician plain, with excellent communications north, south, east, and west.



This picture gives you an idea of a typical landscape in Poland. Notice the difficulties which the Russians have had to overcome in bringing up food and ammunition to their armies.
Photo, Daily Mirror.

From Sandomir the Vistula runs north and north-west across the high plateau of Southern Poland, in a broad valley hemmed in by wooded bluffs. Passing the Russian fortress of Ivangorod on its right bank, it afterwards receives the river Pilica on its left bank, and crosses the plain of Central and Northern Poland. About thirty miles north of the confluence with the Pilica is Warsaw,[28] the most important town in the whole of Russian Poland. It is a beautifully situated city, and before the war was one of the brightest and gayest places in Western Europe. A glance at the map will show you why it is so important both to the Russians and to the Germans. It is the meeting-place of three great Russian railways, by which alone men and ammunition can be carried swiftly into Russian Poland. Warsaw also commands the main stream of the Vistula, which the Russians largely use for transport. Were it to be captured, the communications of the Russians would be cut, and they would be powerless to meet the foe in Poland. Were the Germans to seize it and hold it, they could keep the Russians so far back from their frontier that all fear of invasion through Poland would vanish. Warsaw is the chief stronghold of Poland, and is one of the strongest citadels in Europe.

North of Warsaw the Vistula swings round to the west, and at the fortress of Novo Georgievsk receives the river Bug, which rises not far from Lemberg, and sweeps across the plain to the east of, and almost parallel with, the Vistula for more than two hundred miles. A right bank tributary of the Bug, the river Narew,[29] is worth notice, because along it we find a chain of Russian forts. About thirty miles west of Novo Georgievsk the Vistula receives on its left bank the sluggish river Bzura, which rises within a short distance of the Warta[30] or Warthe, a northward and westward flowing tributary of the German river Oder. The Vistula now sweeps north-west past Plock, and enters Prussia some ten miles above Thorn.

If you look carefully at Russian Poland, you will see that it forms a salient which projects into Germany and Austria for about two hundred miles from north to south, and two hundred and fifty miles from east to west. To the north of this salient is East Prussia, and to the south of it is the Austrian province of Galicia. Russian Poland can be entered by an enemy from the north, from the west, and from the south. If you look at the position of the forts (marked by stars on the map) you will see how Russia has prepared to meet invasions from these directions. A chain of forts from Novo Georgievsk north-east to Grodno on the Niemen bars the way into Russia from East Prussia. Warsaw and Ivangorod hold

the line of the Vistula against an invasion from the west, and Ivangorod and Brest Litovski on the Bug stand in the road of troops advancing from Galicia. All these fortresses are linked up by railways.

The Polish Theatre of War.

When you examine the map you will be sure to notice that in all this western part of Russia there are but few railways for so large an area of country. There are also few good roads, for the country is so swampy that they are difficult to make and to keep passable. Without good roads and railways a modern army cannot keep the field; it cannot march, and it cannot supply itself with the necessary provision for men and guns. The general who has good roads and railways at his command can bring his men quickly and without great fatigue to the desired positions; he can move them rapidly to the points where he means to make his attacks, and he can supply himself promptly and continuously with food and ammunition. He can also bring up reinforcements rapidly, and carry his wounded and prisoners to the rear. Without good roads and railways he is greatly hampered. You can easily see that the Russian commander-in-chief has great difficulties to overcome because of the lack of good roads and railways in Poland.

When, however, we turn to the German side of the frontier, quite a different picture presents itself. The Germans have always paid great attention to military railways, and have planned and constructed them throughout the empire with great diligence and foresight. It was by means of their splendid system of railways that they were able to mobilize their troops so quickly, and fling them without an hour's delay into Belgium. Behind the eastern frontier of Poland they have two double lines of railway, and these are united into a perfect gridiron by criss-cross lines. By means of this railway system they can carry their troops rapidly to any part of the frontier, and can readily supply themselves with food and ammunition. As we shall see later, the German generals have been able to transfer their men from the north to the south by railway, and have thus been enabled to carry out rapid movements which are quite impossible to the Russians.

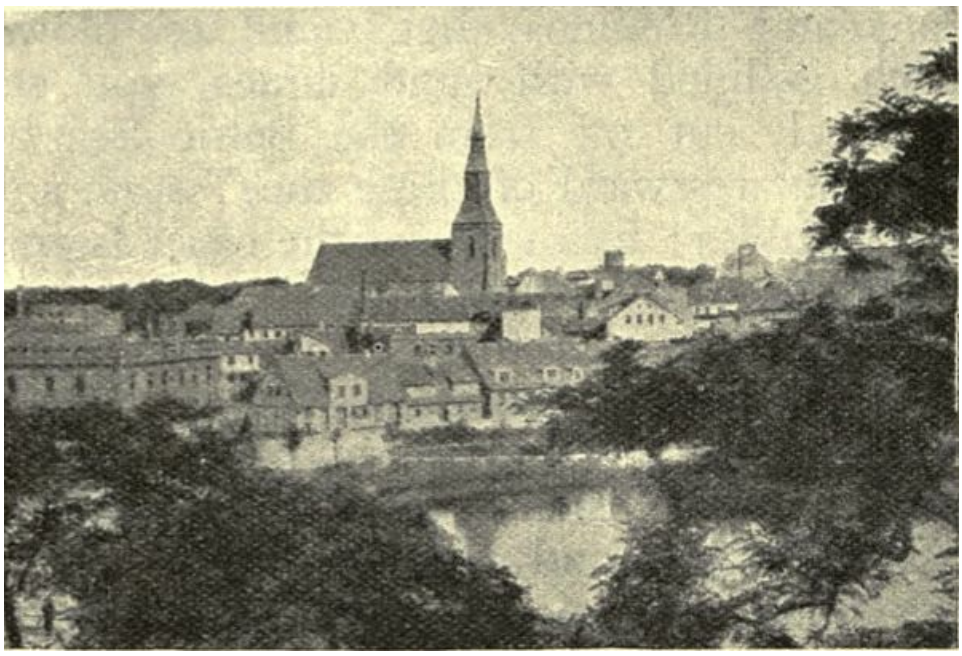
Before I close this rather dull but very necessary chapter, I must tell you something about the two provinces which form the northern and part of the southern boundaries of Russian Poland. Let us look first at the country which lies between the Lower Vistula and the Lower Niemen, the region in which the Germans and Russians first came to blows. Along the coast, which is lined with sand dunes, you see two lagoons almost entirely cut off from the Baltic Sea by tongues of land. Into the westward of these the Vistula and the Pregel discharge themselves; by means of the other lagoon the river Memel finds its way to the sea.

A large map would show you that these rivers form deltas at their mouths, and this clearly proves that the country is flat and low-lying. The rivers are sluggish, and the slightest obstacle causes them to change their beds. The deserted channels remain as stagnant pools and marshes, and in course of time have become filled with peat. A bird's-eye view of this region shows a maze of water-courses, swamps, lakes, peat bogs, dense forests, and green meadows. Farther south

the country rises to a low plateau, which is literally pitted with lakes, amongst which is the Spirding See, forty-six square miles in extent, the largest inland lake in Prussia. Some of these lakes are wide and shallow, with hard gravel floors, but others are simply a film of water above yards of mud. Bogs abound, and it is very hard to tell where the meadows end and the swampy ground begins. On the map you will notice that the lake district is called the Masurian Lake Region; it receives this name from the Masures, a section of Poles who have long inhabited the country. Round about the lakes are thick, dark forests, in which wolves, lynxes, and elks are still found and hunted.

In the valleys of the Pregel and Memel there is fertile soil, in which rye, oats, and potatoes are grown; but for the rest the country is largely sterile moor and bog. East Prussia is the headquarters of German horse-breeding, and there is a great Government establishment for this purpose a few miles to the east of Gumbinnen.[31] East Prussia has for many years past been a favourite hunting-ground of the Kaiser.

From this brief description you will clearly understand that East Prussia is neither a rich nor a very attractive country; yet it is the very apple of the Prussian eye. You will remember that it was stolen from Poland by Frederick the Great in 1772. When he was only Elector of Brandenburg he was King of East Prussia. Königsberg, which you will find near the mouth of the Pregel, was the first capital of the kings of Prussia, and to them it is almost a sacred city. They still have a residence in Königsberg, and are still crowned[32] in its cathedral. Every year the victory of Sedan is celebrated in Königsberg with great rejoicings. Most of the great Prussian families who have given their sons to the Prussian army have estates in East Prussia, where they are lords of the soil. Their farm-servants, though supposed to be free, are really their serfs, and are kept down with a heavy hand. The Kaiser and his nobles regard East Prussia as the very citadel of their power, and to lose it would be their ruin.

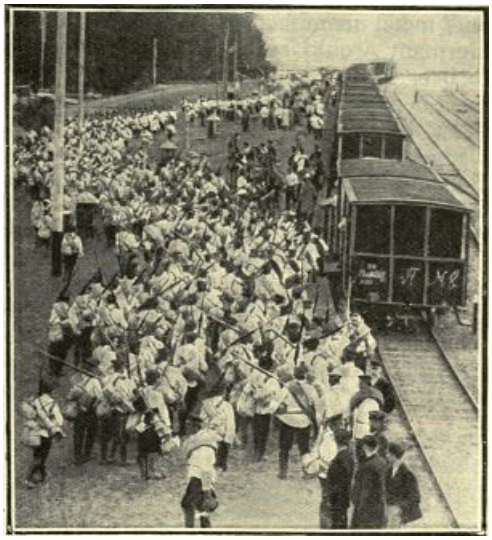


Insterburg. ***Photo, Exclusive News Agency.***

From what has been said about East Prussia you would suppose it to be the last region in which the Russians would willingly fight battles. Why, then, did they invade it? I think for two reasons. First, because they could push into it very rapidly; and, secondly, because they knew that, immediately it was attacked, the Germans must come to its rescue. You know that the German General Staff believed that six weeks at least would elapse before the Russian mobilization could be completed. In that time they hoped to beat France so thoroughly that a few army corps would be sufficient to hold her down. Then they meant to swing their victorious troops to the eastern theatre of war, and overwhelm the Russians in the same way. Such was their calculation; but, like so many of their calculations, it went all wrong.

The Russians mobilized in sixteen days, and they had sufficient troops ready for the field on 3rd August, less than three days after the declaration of war. They could not send these troops against the western Polish front, because they were

not strong enough in numbers, and they were then by no means sure that the Poles would not rise against them. They could, however, fling them into East Prussia, which was, as it were, on their doorstep. This they did, and though the invasion finally ended in defeat, it served a good purpose, for the Germans had to withdraw a number of their army corps from France and hurry them eastward to defend their beloved East Prussia. The Belgians by their gallant fight had upset the German programme; the withdrawal of these corps from the western front played further havoc with it, and no doubt did much to save France.



Russian Troops entraining for the Frontier. ***Photo, Record Press.***

Now let us look for a moment at the province of Silesia, which, you will remember, Frederick the Great wickedly tore from Maria Theresa in the year 1741.[33] You will see from the map on page 38 of our first volume that Silesia forms a wedge between Bohemia and Hungary on the south, and Russian Poland on the east. Whoever holds Silesia can turn the line of the Oder, and pass behind the barrier fortresses which Germany has built upon her eastern front. He also holds the road northward to Berlin and southward to Vienna. At all costs the Germans must defend Silesia, not only because it is the key to Germany from the south-east, but because it is the German Lancashire, a great industrial province which supplies the empire with much of its cotton, linen, woollen, and metal manufactures. Should this province be captured, Germany would suffer a blow from which she could hardly recover.

There is another but a less important reason why Silesia must be held by the Germans. Silesia is, as it were, a wedge between the Slav peoples of the east and those of Bohemia. Should Russia conquer Silesia, she would be able to join hands with the Slavs of Bohemia, and it is possible that they might rise in her favour. These Czechs,[34] as they are called, formerly dwelt in the Carpathians, but were driven westward into Bohemia about 570 A.D. They number about eight millions, and they speak a Slavonic language. About 37 per cent. of the population of Bohemia consists of Germans, and between them and the Czechs there is a bitter race enmity, which has grown greatly in recent years.

CHAPTER IX.

VICTORY AND DEFEAT.

We must now learn something of the fighting that took place between the Russians and the Germans during the months of August and September.

Believing that the Russians would be unable to attack them for several weeks, the Germans had left but three army corps to defend East Prussia. Imagine their surprise when, as early as 3rd August, bands of Cossacks came spurring across the border, raiding the frontier posts, and driving off their garrisons. The inhabitants of the villages were terrified at the very name of Cossack, and fled at their approach. These Cossack raids heralded the approach of two Russian armies. On 7th August a swarm of aeroplanes flew across the border near Suwalki,[35] and soon afterwards General Rennenkampf's army set foot on German soil. Rennenkampf was a dashing soldier, who had made a reputation in the war against Japan, and his army was just as eager and enthusiastic as he was. In the ranks were large numbers of young volunteers belonging to the best families of Russia, and it is said that it included some women who had cut off their hair and had enlisted as men. Rennenkampf marched north-east to strike at the railway which you see on the map running from Kowno[36] to Königsberg. His first object was to reach Insterburg, the junction of all the railways in East Prussia. If this town could be captured, Königsberg itself might be besieged.

At the same time another Russian army, under General Samsonov, who had won renown as the commander of the Siberian Cossacks in the war with Japan, began to push into East Prussia from Mlava,[37] which you will find close to the border line, at the south of the Masurian Lake Region. He had a large force, probably consisting of five army corps, and his object was to march northward along the fringes of the lake district towards Königsberg. Now let us see how these two armies carried out their mission.

Rennenkampf first met the enemy in force at Gumbinnen, about fifteen miles to the east of Insterburg. All round the town there are great pine woods, between which are fields of rye, studded with windmills. The Germans had entrenched themselves near the town, and had cut down thousands of trees, which they had piled up in front of their trenches to form obstacles.

The battle began on Sunday morning, 16th August. Again and again the Russians charged the trenches, and again and again they were beaten back. A fierce artillery duel raged, and it was soon clear that the Russian guns and gunners could more than hold their own against the Germans. All day the white-tunicked infantry of the Tsar hammered at the German trenches in front, while their comrades were working steadily round the left flank. Towards sunset the Germans found themselves almost enveloped; they were forced to retreat, and began streaming back towards the town, with the Cossacks hard on their rear. The retreat soon became a rout, and many prisoners and machine guns were captured.

The Cossacks vigorously followed up the flying foe, and swept all before them, cutting and thrusting at the little knots who vainly offered resistance, fighting their way through blazing villages, and keeping the beaten Germans on the run. Try as they might, the Germans could not stay the torrent of the Russian advance. They tried to rally at Insterburg, their next line of defence, but all in vain, and were obliged to fall back for safety on the fortress of Königsberg. As they retreated a new peril appeared, and their flight became so rapid that they were obliged to abandon food, stores, ammunition, and guns.

The Tsar and his Commander-in-Chief, the Grand Duke Nicholas.
Photo, Newspaper Illustrations, Ltd.

What was this new peril? While Rennenkampf was attacking the enemy, Samsonov's army had advanced northward with as much speed as the difficult nature of the ground would permit, and on 20th August his vanguard came upon the 20th German Corps strongly entrenched on a line about forty miles to the south-east of Königsberg. The Russians advanced as furiously and as doggedly as they had done at Gumbinnen, and, aided by their artillery, carried the German trenches with hand grenades[38] and the bayonet. About eleven next morning the German right was turned, and the left fled towards the south-west, while the remainder, hotly pursued by Cossacks, hurried towards Königsberg. When the news of this defeat reached the Germans who were retreating farther north, and they learnt that a new army was on their flank, they hastened with all speed towards Königsberg.

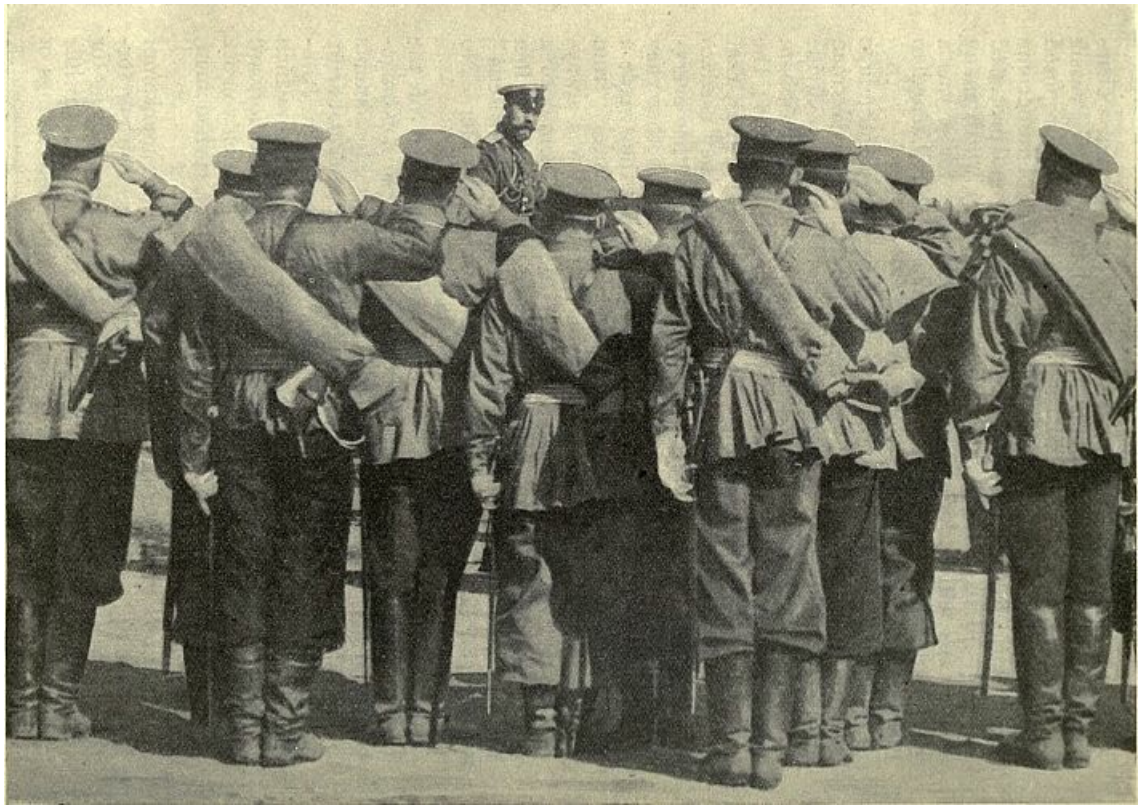
These two victories made the Russians masters of East Prussia. They occupied Tilsit, on the Niemen—where, you will remember, Napoleon and Alexander of Russia met on a raft in the river to make plans for dividing Europe between them[39]—and marched on Königsberg. There was great joy in Russia when these victories were reported, and on the 27th of August a sum of £20,000 was raised by the sale of flags in Petrograd,[40] to be given to the first Russian soldier who entered Berlin.

Now for the sequel. The loss of East Prussia was a bitter blow to the Kaiser and his nobility. The knowledge that this precious Prussian land was in the hands of the enemy could not be hidden from the German people, for there were crowds of refugees in the Berlin streets, bemoaning the loss of their farms and villages. Immediately the General Staff decided that East Prussia must be recovered at all costs. They had no need to look far for the general who was to undertake this task. There was only one soldier who could do it—von Hindenburg, a veteran of 1870, a tough, hardy man, although nearer seventy years of age than sixty. He had made a special study of East Prussia; it was his hobby, and he knew it like the palm of his hand. He had spent weeks for many years past in travelling over this wilderness of lake and marsh, sometimes on foot, sometimes in a motor car. He knew every road, every quagmire, and every bog-hole. He had tested every path by which an army could pass and every position where a gun could be brought to bear. There was not a charcoal burner or a forest ranger in the whole of East Prussia who knew the country so well as he. When it was proposed to drain the region and clear it of forests so that it might become a rich agricultural land, he went to the Kaiser

and protested strongly. This eastern wilderness, he said, was worth many army corps and a dozen fortresses to Germany, for it was a great natural bulwark against Russia. The Kaiser listened to him, and the scheme was abandoned.

Von Hindenburg had on many occasions played the mimic game of war in East Prussia, for he had commanded the German armies during manoeuvres in this region. He used to divide his troops into two armies, the one wearing a white ribbon, the other a red ribbon. The "Reds" were the Russians; the "Whites" were the Germans. When the "Reds" knew that von Hindenburg was in command against them, they used to say, "To-day we shall have a bath." They knew that everything that they could do would be unavailing: whether they attacked from the left or from the right, whether they made a frontal attack, or whether they fell upon the "Whites" from the rear, whether they were few or many, the end was always the same. Von Hindenburg was sure to drive them into a place from which they could not extricate themselves. When the signal was given to break off the manoeuvres, the "Reds" were sure to be found standing up to the neck in water. No wonder the soldiers nicknamed him "Papa Coldbaths."

A new army was gathered at Danzig, composed of the troops which had retired south-west, of the troops in Königsberg who were carried to Danzig by sea, and of reinforcements picked up in various parts of Germany. Later on several army corps were withdrawn from the western theatre of war. Altogether, von Hindenburg had about 150,000 men with which to begin the reconquest of East Prussia. He pushed forward from the line of the Vistula by the three railways which you see marked on the map. Along these three lines he rushed men, guns, and ammunition with great speed.



Russian Infantry Officers saluting the Tsar. ***Photo, Record Press.***

You know that after the battle of Gumbinnen, Rennenkampf had advanced towards Königsberg, which is a very strong fortress with an open channel to the sea. He was now waiting for his siege train to arrive before beginning to attack it. Meanwhile Samsonov seemed as if he were bent on seizing the crossings of the Vistula. In order to do this he marched his troops south towards the important railway junction of Osterode, which stands on the margin of the lake region. He had five army corps—that is, about 200,000 men—but they could not deploy owing to the lakes and swamps which lay between the roads. His columns could not, therefore, come to the assistance of each other in case of attack.

Von Hindenburg chose his ground with all the local knowledge and skill which was expected of him. He extended his line from Soldau to the north-west of Allenstein, so that his front was barred by lakes and swamps, over which his

artillery had a great sweep of fire. He made his front still stronger by a string of forts built of trees cut down in the forests. Then he stood on the defensive, and Samsonov began to attack him. Towards the end of August there was a great struggle, which is known by the Russians as the battle of Osterode, and by the Germans as the battle of Tannenberg, from the name of a little village on a fir-clad dune in the neighbourhood.

Von Hindenburg was in no hurry. He let the Russians wear themselves down by repeated attacks on his almost impregnable position, and then, when the right hour arrived, he counter-attacked. First, he forced back the Russian left, and cut it off from the one good road that led southwards to Russian Poland. Samsonov made a desperate effort to regain this road, and in order to do so was obliged to withdraw troops from his centre. He failed, and meanwhile his centre was pushed back into the terrible lake country to the east.

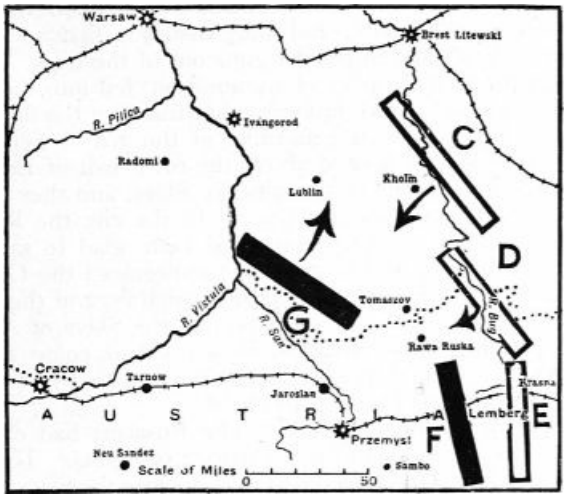
Von Hindenburg's attack on the Russian left was a feint to cover a great turning movement on the Russian right. All the time the fighting was proceeding on the left, the wily old general was busy preparing for another Sedan. Motor lorries, omnibuses, and taxi-cabs in large numbers had been collected from all parts of Germany, and these were filled with men, guns, and Maxims, and hurried north beyond Allenstein, in order to curve round the Russian right. The result was that Samsonov's right was pushed back into the almost roadless country where von Hindenburg had over and over again left the "Reds" of his manoeuvre days up to their necks in water.

I need not describe the battle in detail. By 28th and 29th August the bulk of the Russians were bundled into the mire of the swamps. As they retired, their guns sank up to the axle trees, and had to be abandoned. Horses struggled in the bogs, and whole regiments were driven into the lakes and drowned in the water or choked in the quagmires. Meanwhile the pitiless German guns were working terrible havoc on those who survived. The 31st of August was the final day of the battle. A bursting shell slew Samsonov and two of his corps commanders, while elsewhere several other Russian leaders were lying dead or wounded. The whole Russian army was smashed to ruin. Out of 200,000 men, no less than 140,000 were killed, wounded, or captured. The Germans took between 80,000 and 90,000 prisoners—about the same number which fell into their hands at Sedan. Not a Russian gun was saved, and the miserable remnants of the army crossed their own frontier as a mere rabble. Never was there a more complete and decisive victory. Von Hindenburg became the idol of the German people, and his triumph was well deserved. By his great skill and knowledge of the country he had hopelessly beaten a bigger force than his own.

Without losing a day, von Hindenburg pushed northwards in the attempt to cut off Rennenkampf's army. Rennenkampf, however, fell back steadily from Königsberg, and by rapid marching managed to reach the safety of the frontier forts.

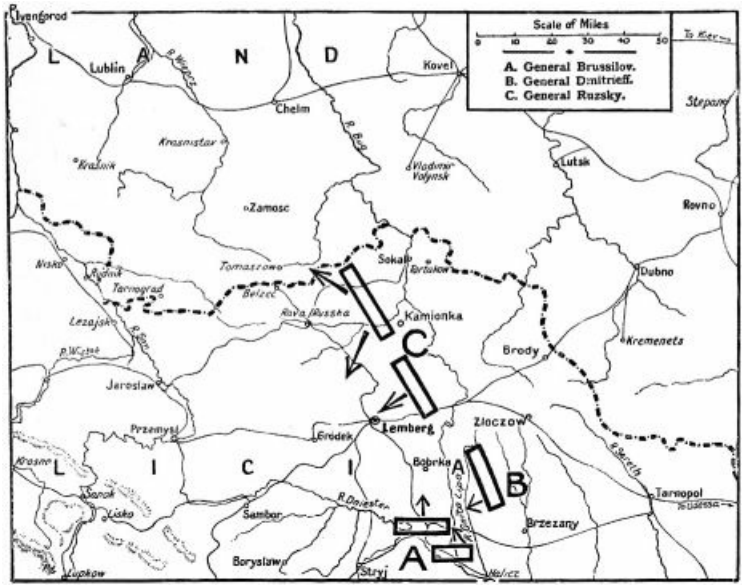
So ends the tragic story of Russia's invasion of East Prussia. The whole campaign was a mistake. Russia was not yet ready for great adventures; she had tried to do too big a job with too small a force, and she had failed. Nevertheless she had not failed in vain; she had relieved the pressure on the Allies in the west, and had learned those lessons of bitter experience which were to serve her well in the future.

Now we must turn to the province of Galicia, which projects south of Russian Poland, just as East Prussia projects to the north. Early in August, while the Russians were conquering in East Prussia, the Austrians advanced two main armies, said to consist of more than a million men, into Russian Poland. The first of these armies pushed north-east, and met a smaller Russian army under General Ivanov, who gave way before it, and retired slowly eastwards towards the valley of the Bug. The 2nd Austrian Army, which was operating to the north and south of Lemberg, had, however, to meet two Russian armies—the more northerly one under General Ruzsky, the more southerly one under General Brussilov. These armies, each of which numbered about a quarter of a million men, came into touch with each other towards the end of August, and assailed the 2nd Austrian Army both from the north and from the east. Their object was to capture Lemberg, the key of the road and railway system of Eastern Galicia. Lemberg is not a fortress; its sole defence was the 2nd Austrian Army. During the last week of August Ruzsky's army fought its way across the Upper Bug, while Brussilov's army, after a fight which lasted nearly three days, stormed the Austrian trenches and entered the town of Tarnapol, where fierce hand-to-hand combats took place in the streets. Tarnapol was captured, and Brussilov, still fighting fiercely, crossed the Dneister and wheeled northwards to Lemberg.



Map showing the situation towards the end of August.
Solid black oblongs show Austrians; open oblongs, Russians. C, General Ivanov's army; D, General Ruzsky's army; E, General Brussilov's army; F, 2nd Austrian Army; G, 1st Austrian Army.

The battle of Lemberg began on the 1st of September, and lasted two days. Brussilov struck hard on the Austrian right, while Ruzsky's right came sweeping round to the north of the city and drove in the Austrian left. So far bent back were the Austrian wings that the general decided to abandon the city and fall back through the wooded country that lay between him and the Carpathians. The Russians pursued him: the Cossacks did great execution on the rearguard, and the big guns played remorselessly on the retreating enemy. Soon the retreat became very hurried; immense numbers of prisoners and scores of guns were captured. Wherever the Austrians made a stand, they cut down tall trees and piled them up to form platforms for their machine guns, which were fixed between the branches. The Russians swept upon these obstacles with the bayonet, and the Austrians fled so quickly that they had no time to get the guns out of the trees. Scores of them, with their supplies of ammunition, fell into the hands of the Russians, and were immediately turned on the flying foe.



Russian Attack on Lemberg, September 1-2.

At half-past ten on the morning of the 3rd of September the Russian flag was hoisted above the town hall of Lemberg. Most of the inhabitants of this city are Slavs, and they greeted the victors with loud shouts of joy. In the city the Russians found huge stores of every kind, and I am glad to say there was no such looting and destruction as disgraced the Germans in Belgium. The Russians behaved admirably, and the Grand Duke Nicholas issued a proclamation to the Slavs of

Austria-Hungary, telling them that the Russians had come as their deliverers, and that thenceforward they were to live in peace and union with their brothers in blood.

"It was a glorious victory." The Russians had captured over 100,000 prisoners and more than 2,500 guns. The Austrians said that they had been defeated because the Slavs in their army had played them false; but the real reason was that the Austrian generals had calculated on the slowness of the Russian mobilization, and had advanced too far into Russia in separate armies which did not work together. The Russian generals showed great skill, especially Ruzsky, when he pushed in between the two Austrian armies, and thus divided them and threatened the flanks of both. The Russian soldiers showed wonderful spirit and endurance during the fighting. They made long and trying marches, and held out for days in their trenches with but little food. So eager were they that they could hardly be kept back from charging with the bayonet at the first sight of the enemy.

By 14th September Brussilov had sent his left wing into the Carpathian passes, and his centre and right advanced along the railway towards Przemysl. The Russians were now masters of a large part of Eastern Galicia. The Poles of Galicia received the conquerors with open arms, and all the Slav races in Austria-Hungary began to take heart of grace.

Meanwhile what had happened to the 1st Austrian Army, now completely cut off from the routed 2nd Army? You will remember that Ivanov's army had retired before the 1st Austrian Army to the river Bug. Against the centre of this army the 1st Austrian Army, strongly reinforced, made an attack about the 4th of September. The attack failed, and then the Russians advanced with such effect that the Austrians were taken in flank and forced to flee southward in utter confusion. Thus you see that while the invasion of Eastern Prussia had ended so disastrously, the campaigns in Galicia were crowned with complete success.

We must not forget that Serbia is also included in the eastern theatre of war. Though this chapter is already long, I must find space to tell you in a few words how these gallant peasant soldiers were faring. You will remember that the great war began with the quarrel between Austria and Serbia, and that on 29th July the Austrians began to bombard Belgrade.[41]

The Serbians were not ready for war, and were obliged to withdraw from their capital and transfer the seat of government to Nish.[42] Their troops took up a strong position on the hills to the south of Belgrade, and the Austrians massed their armies along the north bank of the Danube just below Belgrade, and on the line of the river Save. Other Austrian forces were stationed on the Bosnian frontier, along the line of the Drina.[43]

When Russia made Serbia's cause her own the Austrians were faced, like the Germans, with war on two frontiers. In order to meet the bigger and more powerful enemy, they were obliged to draw off many of their best troops and attempt to hold the Serbians with about 100,000 men. When the Austrians tried to cross the Danube east of Belgrade they were beaten back by the Serbians with great loss, one regiment being almost entirely wiped out. There were numerous other small fights, and in all of them the Serbians held their own.

In the middle of August the Serbians and Montenegrins advanced on Bosnia, in the attempt to reach Sarajevo, the capital; but the most serious fighting took place along the line of the Lower Save, where, on the 17th, the Austrians were badly beaten, and lost many guns and prisoners. Shortly afterwards the Austrian army of Bosnia also suffered defeat, and was driven over the Drina after a battle which lasted four days. By the end of August the Serbians were able to claim that they had cleared the Austrians out of their country, and that they were slowly advancing into Bosnia.

CHAPTER X.

STORIES OF RUSSIAN SOLDIERS.

Russian soldiers have long been famous for the contempt with which they regard wounds and death. The few stories which have been told of their exploits in the battles described in Chapter VIII. prove clearly that they have lost none of their old virtues of daring and devotion.

Our first story is that of a Cossack who attacked twenty-seven Uhlans single-handed, and managed to kill eleven of them. In this fight he received nine wounds in the chest and the back, and lost a finger. "These are not wounds," he said. "The Germans thought I was cornered. I gave them no time to attack me. An officer tried to cut me down, but he was too slow. I hit him over the head, but his helmet protected him. Then I got angry, and killed him. The soldiers were charging me with lances, so I seized one of the lances, and drove it into them, one after another. I was too angry to feel the blows and thrusts which they gave me. Then five friends came up and gave me assistance, and the Germans fled."

Let me tell you how Colonel Alexieff fought for the flag in East Prussia. When the standard-bearer of his regiment was killed he seized the flag and cried, "On, friends, after me!" and though wounded in the neck by shrapnel, still pushed ahead of his men. Bullets rained round him, but his courage so inspired his comrades that with loud cries of "For the Tsar! for our leader!" they rushed forward and routed the Germans opposed to them.

I have already mentioned that the Kaiser has an estate in East Prussia, which he visits every autumn for shooting elk and other big game. This estate comprises a model stud farm and an enormous garden. After the Russians had captured Tilsit and were pushing on to Insterburg, they occupied the Kaiser's shooting-box, and the exhausted soldiers lay down to sleep, muddy as they were, on the royal carpets. When they left this fine billet the next day they said, "Thank you, William; we slept well, but nevertheless we shall fight you." A Russian officer wrote home as follows: "After a series of terrible battles we are reposing on William's magnificent estate. Undreamt-of beauty is all round us. The place is splendidly equipped, so that we have at our disposal everything we could wish for, and we are riding his celebrated horses, and enjoying delicious dinners prepared by his man cook. Especially beautiful is the park, with its glorious shady avenues. It swarms with rare animals, and birds are flying free everywhere. By the way, our soldiers have caught a parrot belonging to William. It speaks excellent German, and our men are teaching it to say very uncomplimentary things about its imperial master."

Amongst the Russian officers was a well-known opera-singer, who was in charge of a battery. To encourage his men, he sang many military songs about Peter the Great,[44] and the soldiers joined in the choruses. On one occasion, when his guns were attacked by a strong German force, the guns were ordered to retreat. One battery was unable to do so, because the horses had all been killed or wounded. Seeing this, the singing officer shouted, "We can't leave any guns behind, boys!" He sprang upon a horse, and some of his men followed his example; then they dashed towards the stranded guns and moved them into safety.

You will be interested in the following stories, which give you some idea of the Cossack's methods of fighting. An Austrian officer says: "Our cavalry advanced to the battle with ardour, but the Cossacks fell on us like a whirlwind. Hardly were we in touch before a Cossack gave me three rapid blows—one with his lance, the other with his sabre, and the third with his fist. How he did it I do not know, but he did not even give me time to fall. He seized me by the collar,

lifted me on to his horse and carried me off. His comrades acted similarly, and a good number of our hussars were thus taken prisoners."

A Russian Bayonet Charge in East Prussia.
This picture represents an incident which took place on the evening of August 26, 1914, and was witnessed by an Englishman who was managing a great German estate in East Prussia when the war broke out. The Russians, as shown above, charged the German centre with the bayonet and put it to flight. The artist made this drawing under the guidance of the Englishman who actually saw the fight.
(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

How a Cossack put a German patrol to flight is told in the following story: "The Cossack was on the lookout, when he was surprised by a party of Germans. They saw that he was alone, and they swooped on him from a neighbouring wood, headed by an officer waving his sword. Instead of making a race for his life, the Cossack spurred his horse and dashed off right across the path of the Germans. He skilfully calculated the distance, and just as the German officer got ready to sabre him at full gallop he whispered, '*Kshi*, *kshi*,' which every Cossack horse understands. The horse stopped dead still. The German could not stop his horse at such a speed, and just as he galloped past the Cossack 'removed' him with a deadly lunge of his lance. Seeing their leader thus overthrown, the Germans turned tail and fled." This story will remind you of the way in which Robert the Bruce slew De Bohun at the battle of Bannockburn.

There seems to be no end to the ingenuity of the Cossack when he is in a tight place. Listen to the following story: "A Cossack was captured near Lodz,[45] and, with his horse, was taken to the German camp, where man and beast were objects of curiosity. A Uhlan officer tried to put the Cossack horse through its paces, but it declined to budge. 'Let me get on with you,' suggested the Cossack. There were too many German soldiers about for escape to be dreamt of, so the officer laughingly agreed. As soon as the Cossack was in the saddle he uttered a couple of words, and the horse dashed off through the astonished Germans at full gallop. No one dared to shoot for fear of killing the officer. That night the Cossack joined his company with the Uhlan officer as his prisoner."

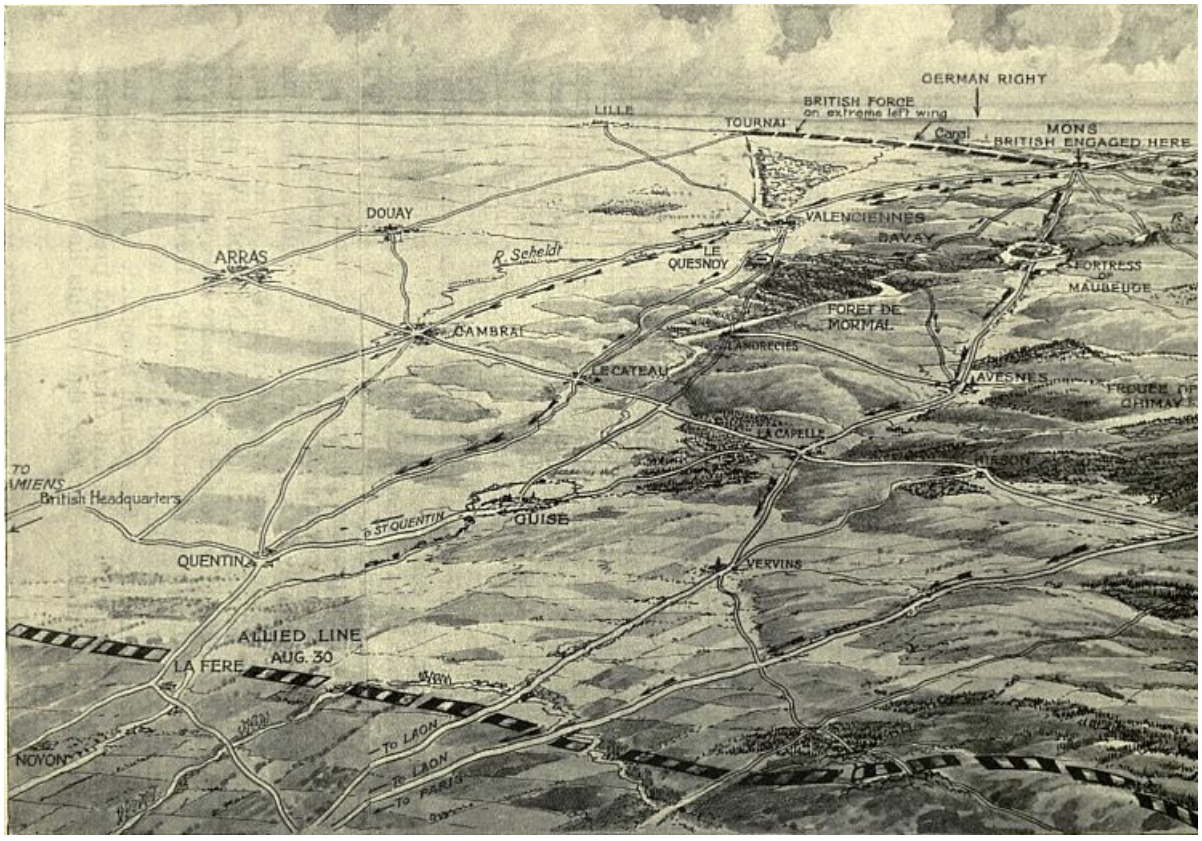
CHAPTER XI.

THE FIGHTING RETREAT.

While I have been telling you about the course of events in the eastern theatre of war, you have, I am sure, been eager to know how our brave fellows were faring at Mons. At the end of Chapter IV. you learned that Sir John French had decided to retreat. No true soldiers ever like to retreat, least of all British soldiers; but retreat could not now be avoided unless our little army was to be completely cut off.

You will remember that Sir John received a very belated and most unexpected telegram from General Joffre at five o'clock on Sunday afternoon, August 23, 1914. This telegram informed him that the French on his right were everywhere in retreat, and that the British forces were threatened by overwhelming numbers of the enemy, who were not only advancing on their front, but were trying to turn their flanks. By this time Sir John's air scouts had assured him that General Joffre's information was correct. To hold on any longer in his present position would have been reckless folly. The only way to retrieve the fortunes of the Allies was for the British to fall back to a strong position and there make a stand.

Every prudent commander prepares for a retreat, for no general can possibly be sure of winning any battle. Napoleon once said that the general who went forward without having prepared a line of retreat deserved to be shot. Wellington, you will remember, retreated from Quatre Bras, and afterwards won one of the greatest battles of history. He had previously arranged to meet Blücher and give battle to the French at Waterloo, where there was ground favourable to him. In the same way General French had chosen and prepared a second position some miles to his rear, and to this line he now prepared to retire. In his first dispatch he tells us that the new position extended from the fortress of Maubeuge on the east to Jenlain on the west. It was not a good position, because there were so many standing crops and buildings that the trenches could not be well placed, and the field of fire was impeded. There were, however, a few places where the big guns could be posted well.



Bird's-eye View of the British Line of Retreat from Mons to La Fère ***By permission of the Sphere.***

A general order was issued that the troops were to move to the rear at sunrise on Monday, 24th August; but many of them were roused from their sleep and sent on their southward march before midnight on the 23rd. Already the heavy transports and the ambulances filled with wounded were moving as rapidly as possible towards the new position, so that the roads might be free for the infantry next day. You can easily understand that, if the British had been suddenly withdrawn, the Germans would have swooped down on them while they were marching in columns and unable to resist. Before the retirement could begin in real earnest our troops must check the Germans, and thus gain sufficient time to reach the new position before they were again attacked in force.

You will remember that Binche had been abandoned, and that Sir Douglas Haig's force had fallen back to a long swell of ground south of the village of Bray. In the gray dawn of Monday morning the British troops, who had done a certain amount of fighting during the night, stood to arms. The Germans were preparing for a great attack on the British right, and in this direction Sir John French determined to check them. He ordered the 2nd Division of the First Corps, with a strong support of more than 120 guns, to advance and make an attack on Binche, as though they were determined to recapture it. Meanwhile Smith-Dorrien's Second Corps, which had held the line of the canal, was to fall back some distance and there form a new battle line, behind which the 1st Division, which had been so hard pressed during the previous day's battle, might retire to the new position. When this division was well upon its way, the Second Corps was to retreat and form up upon its left.

From this brief account of what Sir John proposed to do, you will understand the great difficulty of the task imposed upon his army. There is nothing so difficult in warfare as to make a fighting retreat when pressed by superior numbers. Think of what it means. While one division is beating back the enemy, another division is marching to the rear; and when it reaches a certain point it faces about and takes up the work of holding the foe, while the first division marches to *its* rear and prepares to bear the brunt of attack, in order that the second division may retire and begin the business all over again. In a fighting retreat there is not a moment's rest for anybody. While one part of the army is fighting, another part is marching; and no matter how weary the marching men may be, they must be ready at any moment to form a firing line, while their comrades in front scramble out of their trenches and hurry to the rear.

In such a fighting retreat as this the greatest skill and judgment are required of the commanders. If they withdraw their men from the firing line too soon, the superior numbers of the enemy will drive them back on the marching columns and involve both in a common ruin; if they keep their men too long in the firing line, the enemy will probably destroy them or cut them off. Any error of judgment on the part of the commanders during such a retreat is almost sure to be fatal. The men, too, must be as steady as a rock. They must hold on to their positions, however hopeless the task may seem, and not budge until the word is given, even though their comrades are rapidly falling around them. Happily, in this retreat our commanders were cool and skilful, and our men were seasoned soldiers, capable of holding on with grim determination like British bulldogs.

Several times during the retreat small British detachments failed to receive the order to retire. Probably the messengers carrying the order were shot or captured on the way. Nevertheless, these groups of men fought on with never a thought of retreat, until they were reduced to a mere handful, and further resistance was useless. Other small bodies of British soldiers lost their way, and some of them wandered into the German lines and were made prisoners. One man, David M. Kay, of the 5th Lancers, strayed from his comrades, and, worn out with fatigue, fell exhausted on the road. Later on he found a resting-place in a deserted carriage. Thirty-six hours went by, and then the Germans appeared and fired on him. Though he was alone against an armed host, he returned the fire and shot down six German officers before he fell, riddled with bullets. The French in the village hard by were so impressed by his dauntless courage that they buried him where he fell, and above the mound that marks his last resting-place set up a wooden cross. For days afterwards they strewed his grave with fresh flowers.

And now the 1st Division of the First Corps began its feigned attack on Binche. One hundred and twenty British guns thundered forth, and the infantry moved briskly towards the enemy. No doubt this attack came as a great surprise to the Germans, who thought that the British had been largely reinforced in the night. While the guns were busy belching shrapnel on the Germans, the 2nd Division of the same corps was marching southwards. The attack continued until this division was well on its way, and then came the time for the 1st Division to retire. For the rest of the morning it slowly moved to the rear, holding back the enemy by powerful artillery fire, and acting as the rearguard to the whole of the

British right. It reached its new position about seven in the evening.

Now we must see what was happening on the British left, where, as you will remember, the Second Corps was stationed under Smith-Dorrien. Early in the morning he fell back some five miles from the line of the Condé Canal, until his right rested on the mining village of Frameries.[46] Here he picked up a British infantry brigade, which had been brought by rail from the lines of communication, and sent it to support his left flank. His task was to hold back the enemy until the British right had arrived at the Maubeuge position. He was to keep the enemy busily engaged all day, so that they could not follow up the British retreat; and to break off the battle at the most favourable moment, so that he could retire to the part of the new line which he was to hold.

It was by no means an easy task. He had only between 30,000 and 40,000 men, while the Germans numbered more than 100,000. His position, however, was a good one. He found a low railway embankment which gave him a ready-made rampart for the right of his line, and a clear field of fire all along the front. To his left were many colliery lines, with similar embankments and buildings that gave a good deal of cover, and beyond them fields of standing corn.

All the long morning the British held their front against attack after attack of the enemy, though an awful storm of shrapnel continually burst upon them. The weakest part of the line was the left, where the Germans were trying to work round the flank. So fiercely were our troops also assailed round about Frameries, that about half-past seven in the morning their general sent an urgent message to the Commander-in-chief begging for support. Sir John French had no reserves except General Allenby's cavalry division, and these he now sent to help the hard-pressed division.

The first of the cavalry to go into action were the 4th Dragoon Guards, the 9th Lancers, and the 18th Hussars, who were under the command of Colonel De Lisle, the hero of many a dashing charge in South Africa. At first the troopers fought on foot, but soon Colonel De Lisle thought that he saw a good chance of charging the flank of the German infantry. The men of the 9th Lancers were ordered to mount and prepare to charge, while the other cavalry regiments acted as supports.

The Charge of the 9th Lancers at Audregnies. ***From the picture by Dudley Tennant.***

Away galloped the lancers, shouting with joy at the prospect of coming to hand-grips with the enemy. Alas! all unknown to them the Germans had protected their flank with many lines of barbed wire. When the lancers were about five hundred

yards from the enemy's flank they found themselves held up by this terrible entanglement. They tried hard to break through, but in vain, and all the while a death-storm raged about them from rifle and battery. "We simply galloped like rabbits in front of a line of guns," said a lancer who survived, "men and horses falling in all directions." The enemy could not be reached, and nothing could live in that zone of death. The lancers were forced to retire, and as they did so the guns caught them on the flank and made awful havoc amongst them. Only a hundred lancers returned out of eight hundred and fifty. It was the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava all over again—just as gallant, just as thrilling, and just as useless!

The remnants of the regiment, including the squadron of Captain Francis Grenfell, found shelter under the lee of a light railway embankment. Here they found an artillery officer and a dozen gunners of the 119th Royal Field Artillery, whose battery had been put out of action by German shells. They were the sole survivors. Captain Grenfell had already been badly wounded in the hand and the leg, but he was determined to prevent the guns from falling into the hands of the enemy. He rode out amidst the hailstorm of shot and shell to see if there was a way by which they could be withdrawn to the British lines, and having discovered a road, walked his horse back so that his men might not think the risk too great.

As soon as he was back under the shelter of the embankment he called for volunteers. He reminded his lancers that the 9th had saved the guns at Maiwand,[47] and had more than once come to the rescue of artillery in South Africa. Every man responded to his call; all were eager to have a hand in this glorious exploit. Leaving their horses behind them, they rushed out to the stranded guns; and, working with a will, hauled one of them over the dead bodies of the drivers, on and on, until it was safe from capture. Again and again they returned under a merciless fire, until every gun was out of danger. Hardly had the last gun been moved into safety when the German infantry appeared. The guns had been saved in the very nick of time.

Captain Grenfell was afterwards awarded the Victoria Cross for this splendid deed of courage and resolution. Hats off to Captain Grenfell!

By midday the First Corps was so far in the rear that Smith-Dorrien could safely begin his retreat. He fell back slowly and steadily, now and then halting to beat off an attack, and by nightfall reached his new position, after having suffered great losses. The First Corps lay to the right of the French village of Bavai, a place of ironworks and marble quarries. Its flank was protected by the fortress of Maubeuge. The Second Corps lay to the left, holding a line which extended to the village of Jenlain. The fortress was a sufficient defence for the right flank, and Allenby's cavalry division covered the left flank.

On that Monday evening, when some of our men were beginning to entrench themselves, and to hope that a stand would be made against the enemy on the morrow, they learned, to their great disappointment, that by five the next morning they were to be on the road again, trudging towards another position which lay to the south-west. They were under the impression that their retirement was at an end, and that the next day would see them making an advance. Little did they know that they had only begun their retreat, and that they would have to tramp many a long, weary mile before that happy hour arrived. Their disappointment soon vanished when they heard that Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien appeared as bright and cheerful as ever. "Things can't be bad," they said, "or the general would be looking more glum than that."

Why was a further retreat necessary? The Commander-in-chief knew what his men did not know—that the French on his right were still retiring, and that von Kluck was bringing up more and more men in the hope of turning his left. He knew that unless he continued his march southwards he would probably be forced into the fortress of Maubeuge, and his knowledge of history assured him that once an army takes shelter behind the guns of a fortress, and is there shut in, it runs but little chance of ever getting out again. You remember what happened at Metz in 1870. Bazaine was forced into that fortress, and was so hemmed in that he had to surrender with 170,000 men. Sir John French was not the man to take any such risk, so he ordered the retreat to continue.

By sunrise on Tuesday morning our wearied soldiers were tramping along the dusty roads towards the south-west. As the sun rose higher and higher in the sky the heat became more and more intense, and the men felt the strain very much; but they plodded on with that stubbornness which they always display when they are in a tight place. The First Corps marched by roads to the east of the Forest of Mormal, a woodland about one-fifth of the area of our New Forest, and the Second Corps by roads to the west of it. Allenby's cavalry, which covered the exposed western flank, had a few skirmishes with Uhlans; but the Germans did not harass the retreat to any great extent.

An army chaplain gives us a very vivid account of what he saw during the retirement. He writes as follows:—

"Horses and men, transport and guns, an endless procession they passed, blackened with grime, bearing evident signs of the past few days' fighting. But the men were in good spirits. They were retreating, but this was not a defeated army. 'Wait till we get to a position we can hold, and then we'll give them socks,' was the sort of thing one heard from the ranks as they passed. It was simply glorious country through which we marched—the forest of Mormal, picturesque villages, quaint old farmhouses, and village churches dating from the twelfth century; and everywhere the roads lined with fine avenues of trees—sometimes tall poplars, and at other times apple and plum trees laden with fruit. But the country was deserted, crops standing in the fields, the villages empty, the houses locked and barricaded."

While the columns were on the march German aeroplanes frequently flew over them. A private of the 1st Royal West Kent Regiment thus describes a sight which greatly interested him and his comrades:—

"I saw a duel in the air between French and German aeroplanes. It was wonderful to see the Frenchman manoeuvre to get the upper position of the German, and after about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour the Frenchman got on top and blazed away with a revolver on the German. He injured him so much as to cause him to descend, and when found he was dead. The British troops buried the airman and burnt the aeroplane. During that day we were not troubled by any more German aeroplanes."

CHAPTER XII.

A GLORIOUS STAND.

The position to which the British were now slowly retiring was in the neighbourhood of Le Cateau,[48] to the south-east of Cambrai.[49] Your geography book tells you that Cambrai gave its name to the fine linen or muslin which was first made in the fifteenth century, and is known as cambric. Le Cateau has important woollen and merino spinning-mills, and figures in British history as the place where peace was signed between England, France, and Spain in the second year of Queen Elizabeth's reign. The proposed British lines extended from Cambrai through Le Cateau to Landrecies,[50] on the Sambre. Landrecies is famous as the birthplace of Dupleix,[51] who founded French power in India. There is a bronze statue to his memory in the little town.

The ground had been partly prepared and entrenched on the previous day; but Sir John French tells us in a dispatch that, owing to the ever-increasing numbers of the enemy, he had grave doubts as to the wisdom of making a stand before he had shaken off the foe. Early as the start had been, it was late in the day before the first of the troops from the north reached the new line, and night had fallen when the last of them came in. By this time a new British division had reached Le Cateau. It had been brought up by train, and was now hurried off to protect the left flank of the retreat.

The moment our weary men reached their position they were set to work entrenching their front. Then they had supper, and lay down for that long sleep which they sorely needed. There was a gap in the British line which Sir John French meant to fill up, but "the men were exhausted, and could get no farther on without rest." By nine o'clock all was peaceful along the front of the Second Corps, and on the right the men of the First Corps were settling down for a night's rest. Half an hour later there came a sudden alarm. The silence was broken by the zip-zip of rifles, the roar of guns, and the whine of shells as they flew towards our lines. The Germans were making a night attack in force on the British right.

The night was dark; the sky was thick with clouds; a drizzle of rain set in, and soon developed into a downpour. Behind their cavalry screen the enemy had pushed forward a vanguard of North Germans, who had marched rapidly through the leafy shades of the Forest of Mormal, where they were hidden from our airmen, and were able to advance with less fatigue than along the sun-baked roads amidst clouds of choking dust. The Germans were, therefore, fairly fresh when they formed up along the margin of forest which lies close upon the outskirts of Landrecies. They advanced in heavy column through the pouring rain and the blackness of the night, holding their fire and drawing nearer and nearer, confident that the harassed and worn-out British could make no long stand against them.

The 4th British Brigade, consisting of the 2nd Grenadiers, the 2nd and 3rd Coldstreams and the 1st Irish Guards, held Landrecies. About 9:30 the pickets of the Coldstreams, who were guarding the road from the forest, heard the dull tramp of armed men. They cried out, "Who goes there?" and a voice replied in French, "We are the French. Do not fire." The interpreter with the British was not satisfied with the accent of the man who replied, and he asked the officer to repeat the challenge. This he did, and was at once knocked off his feet by the foremost "Frenchman." Then the Germans rushed forward, swept away the pickets, and poured into the narrow streets of the town.

For a few minutes there was confusion amongst the Guards, who were caught unawares. Then their splendid discipline told. They opened a brisk fire, and soon the first line of the Germans was hurled back. On they came again in enormous numbers, until the streets were thronged with them. The Guards lay on the ground across the road, and a stream of bullets flew from their rifles; while the machine guns, some on the road and others on the housetops, tore blood-red lanes through the dense masses of the advancing enemy.

The Germans were beaten back, but they rallied and came on again, while other columns tried to work round to the rear of the town through side streets. Everywhere they found their way blocked by the British, and all night long the fight raged. Hand-to-hand combats were frequent, and terrible struggles were witnessed in the flickering light of the houses that had been fired by the German shells.

Men of the 9th Lancers saving the Guns. (See p. 88.)
From the drawing by Dudley Tennant.

German batteries pushed up close to the town. Some of the guns began firing at the Coldstreams almost at point-blank range. For a moment, in the midst of this death hail, our gallant fellows wavered. A major, however, rallied them. "Don't retire, boys," he yelled; "come on up." And the men advanced again. Well-aimed shots killed the enemy's gunners, and the bodies of a thousand German dead cumbered the streets.

Von Kluck's vanguard had been checked; it had hoped to rush the town easily, but it had miscalculated the strength of British valour and endurance. Shortly after midnight the Germans knew that they had failed, and gradually their firing died away. Then the Guards flung themselves down amidst the flaming houses and the dead and dying, and snatched what slumber they could.

While the Guards at Landrecies were adding a new and glorious page to their proud record, there was heavy fighting at Maroilles,[52] a little to the north-east, where Sir Douglas Haig's 1st Division was holding a difficult position. A message was sent to Sir John French begging for reinforcements. He had got into touch with two French reserve divisions on his right, and now he urged them to come up with all speed. To the men struggling desperately at Maroilles the French seemed terribly slow in arriving. At length, to their great relief, they heard the sound of distant firing, and knew that support was at hand. Partly by the help of the French, but mainly owing to the skilful generalship of Sir Douglas Haig, the First Corps was withdrawn from its perilous position.

At Cambrai, the newly-joined brigade which was protecting the left flank was also in action. A soldier of the Connaught Rangers thus describes the fighting in which he was engaged:—

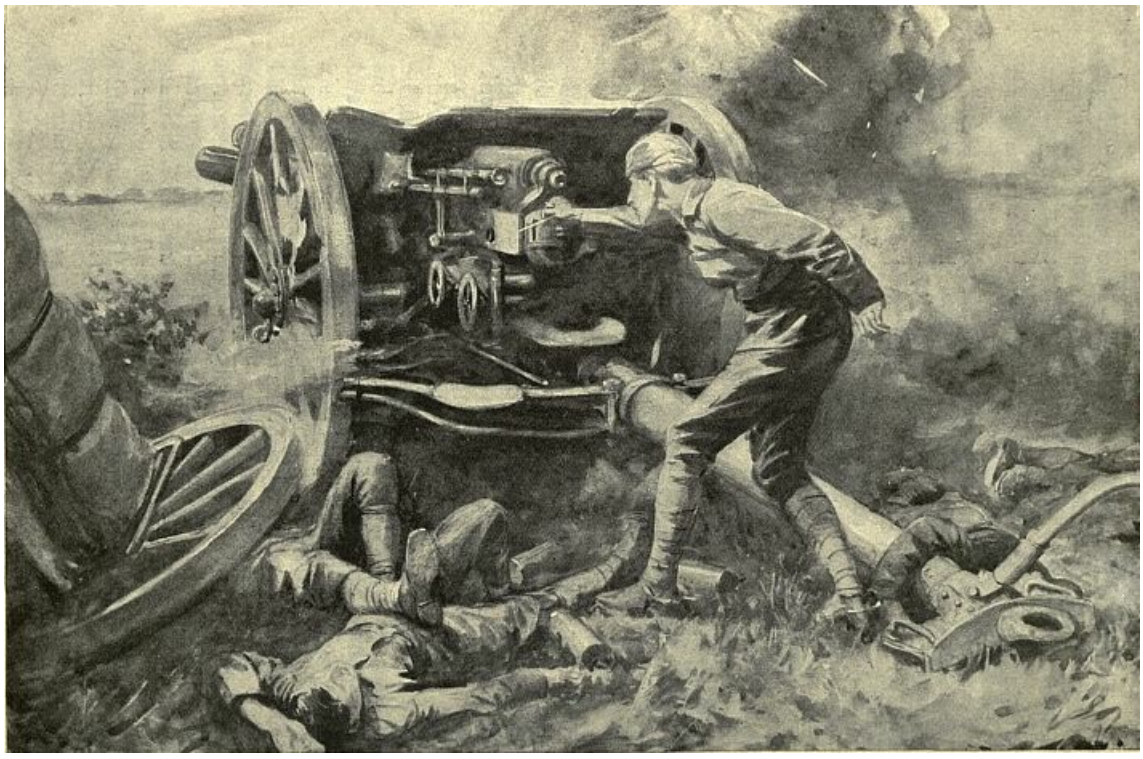
> "It was a grand time we had, and I wouldn't have missed it for lashins of money.
>
> "It was near to Cambrai where we had our best time.
>
> "The Germans kept pressing our rearguard all the time, and at last our colonel could stand it no longer, so the word was passed round that we were to fight. There were at least five to one, and we were in danger of being cut off.
>
> "With that up got the colonel. 'Rangers of Connaught,' says he, 'the eyes of all Ireland are on you to-day, and I know you never could disgrace the ould country by allowing Germans to beat you while you have arms in your hands and hearts in your breasts. Up, then, and at them, and if you don't give them the

soundest thrashing they ever got, you needn't look me in the face again in this world or the next.'

"And we went for them with just what you would know of a prayer to the Mother of our Lord to be merciful to the loved ones at home if we should fall in the fight. We charged through and through them, until they broke and ran like frightened hares in terror of hounds.

"After that taste of the fighting quality of the Rangers they never troubled us any more that day."

While our worn and wearied men were sleeping the death-like sleep of exhaustion, Sir John French spent some of the most anxious hours of his life. He had intended that the retreat should be continued before dawn, and that Smith-Dorrien's corps, with Allenby's cavalry, should hold back the enemy on the left while Haig's corps on the right pushed southwards. Now he knew that this was impossible. Before daybreak he learnt that the enemy was preparing to throw the bulk of his strength against Smith-Dorrien; some three hundred thousand Germans were moving up to encircle his little force, while six or seven hundred guns were being brought into position against it. Sir John had no supports to send to his left, and he had earnestly besought the commander of a French cavalry corps on his right to come to his aid. Alas! the horses of this corps were worn out, and the general was unable to move. Smith-Dorrien's corps must depend on itself, and stand or fall by its own exertions. If it fell, nothing could save the British army from destruction or surrender. The left of the Allies would be gone, and the retreating French would be at the mercy of hordes of Germans. The prospect was enough to make the bravest man tremble.



The Lonely Gunner.

This picture illustrates an incident during the retreat. A half-battery of the Royal Field Artillery, in a rather exposed position, greatly galled the Germans by the accuracy of its aim, and a combined attack was made on it by the enemy. One by one the British guns were silenced, and the men who had been serving them lay dead around. At last one man alone was left, and he went on working the gun steadily and calmly until he was called away by an officer. Similar instances of resistance to the last man abound in the history of the Royal Field Artillery.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THE MOST CRITICAL DAY OF ALL."

Now dawned the fateful morning of 26th August 1914. The rain had ceased; the bright sun shone out; thin mists rose from the wet fields and gave promise of a sultry day. At sunrise the German guns began to thunder, and a shrapnel fire burst upon the British as though "turned on through a hose." The Germans were now determined to make an end of the British army. It had thwarted them again and again; it had refused to be beaten, and it would not yield. To-day, however, was to see the end of it. By nightfall the news of another Sedan would be flashed to all parts of the rejoicing Fatherland.

Our men had no time to entrench properly. Most of them lay in unprotected fields; nevertheless they showed, as Sir John French tells us, "a magnificent front" to the terrific fire that burst upon them. Smith-Dorrien had been ordered to break off the battle and retire at the earliest possible moment, but he soon saw that he could not obey orders without the gravest risk. He must fight on and beat off the Germans before he could retire in safety.

All day long the British infantry stood firm, firing steadily, and hurling back attack after attack of the enemy. Six times the Germans tried to break the British line, and six times they were foiled. German cavalry attempted to charge them, and once the horsemen of the famous Prussian Guard—the proudest and finest of all the Kaiser's troops—burst through an opening in the German firing line and dashed down on them, only to retire with heavy loss. Another German cavalry regiment rode right into the 1st Brigade, and was only driven back after a desperate hand-to-hand struggle, in which men and horses were mixed up in frightful confusion.

Allenby's cavalry made several gallant charges, and so did Chetwode's 5th Cavalry Brigade, consisting of the Scots Greys, the 12th Lancers, and the 20th Hussars. An officer tells us that they went through the enemy "like blotting paper." Though the German cavalry were big men and well mounted, they could not stand before the onset of our horsemen.

Upon our gunners fell the heaviest task of all. They were hopelessly outmatched by at least four to one; yet they made a splendid fight, and inflicted great losses on the foe, though they suffered terribly both in men and horses. German shells frequently smashed gun carriages and wheels to matchwood, and strewed the ground with dead and mangled men. Some of the most heroic deeds ever known were done by our gunners that day. In one battery, towards the end of the fight a single gun remained with only one lieutenant and a man to work it. Nevertheless, they stuck to their posts, and fought their gun to the last.

The terrible day was wearing on; our men were holding their own, but at a great sacrifice of life and limb. While the Germans were making their frontal attacks, large bodies of their cavalry, infantry, and artillery were sweeping round both flanks, and the new Sedan was hourly expected. Unless the whole British force was to be wiped out, it must retreat; so about 3.30 in the afternoon Sir John gave the order, and the rearward movement was begun. It was full of danger, and while it was in progress our losses were very heavy.

The artillery now made a great effort to cover the retreat, and by almost superhuman exertions managed to hold off the enemy while the infantry drew back. Then came the turn of the guns to retire, and to cover them Allenby's cavalry flung itself against the enemy in a series of furious charges. Several Victoria Crosses were gloriously won at this stage of the battle. Thanks to the artillery and the cavalry, all that was left of the Second Corps got away, and without resting dragged itself southwards through the August night.

I am sure you will be interested to know what a German officer thought of our gallant men during this anxious and perilous time. Here is a report of his conversation with a Dane:—

"After we had broken through the French positions on the Belgian frontier, and had got Joffre's army on

the move towards the south, the German army's advance appeared to be checked. It was General French's army that had stayed the retreat. We ordered the English lines to be stormed. Our troops dashed into them with fixed bayonets, but our efforts to drive the English back were in vain. They are very good at resisting a bayonet attack. The English are strong people, athletic and well-developed. So we decided to shoot them down; but we found that they aimed remarkably well. 'Every bullet found its billet,' as they say.

"We ordered our best shots to tackle them, but the result was not in our favour. Then we got all our artillery at work that could be spared against them. We swept the English positions with a rain of shells—a regular bombardment. When the firing ceased, we expected to find that the English had fled. . . . We had not heard from them for an hour.

"How can I describe our astonishment? Beyond the shell-swept zone we saw English soldiers' heads moving, and they began to use their rifles again as soon as the coast was clear. The English *are* a cool lot! We had to assault them again and again, but in vain. We were, in fact, repulsed after having actually surrounded them. Their perseverance and pluck had gained their just reward. Their retirement could now be carried out in an orderly way. There was now no fear of disaster to the retreating army.

"Even the sight of the wounded surprised us, and commanded our respect; they lay so still, and scarcely ever complained."

I think you will agree with me that the German who paid this tribute to our men was a generous foe and a true soldier.

Here is an extract from the diary of a cavalry officer of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade. It gives you an excellent idea of the way in which the cavalry covered the retreat.

"Up and ready to move off at 4.30 a.m. Moved back to Le Cateau. Did not enter the actual town, but went round the high ground to the south of it, and took up a position on the west of it. Great battle going on. Fifth Infantry Division having a bad time of it, and retiring. We cover their retirement. My squadron on high ground overlooking a railway embankment. See German infantry advancing towards it in columns. G.O.C.,[53] on my reporting this, sends me a section of guns under 'John' G. Pointed out target to him, which he picks up and gets the range at once; smartest bit of R.H.A.[54] work one could wish to see. . . . Every shot seems to have effect. I was carefully watching through my glasses; they must have lost at least a couple of hundred. I could see their dead and wounded lying all over the field. Anyhow, they stopped their advance in that direction, and our infantry opposing them were enabled to get away. Awfully impressed with the way this section of R.H.A. was handled by 'John' G. . . .

"We retire in a westerly direction, and manoeuvre on the flank of the 5th Infantry Division. Late in the afternoon we see in the distance a division of Uhlans. The general tells us he has decided to take them on; but we shall charge at the trot, as our horses are dead beat. We, the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, manoeuvre and get the favourable ground; and the Uhlans, after having a look at us, refuse the fight we offer and disappear. Cowards! Fancy a division refusing to take on a brigade! Great disappointment among all ranks, as we are all longing for a cavalry fight. . . .

"We retire to ——, where we arrive about 11 p.m., and halt to water and feed the horses. Get some food. Every one awfully tired—raining hard. The orders come that we are to march at 1 a.m. Explain to the men we are in rather a tight place, and that in spite of fatigue every one must buck up. Men lie down on the pavements and hold their horses. What a sight! Men and horses absolutely exhausted, but yet there is that spirit of cheerfulness which never fails Tommy Atkins even under such conditions as these. It is apparent to every one that we have taken the I 'knock;' with most armies one would say beaten, but with Tommy Atkins you can't say that, as it would not be true, as the only way to defeat him is to kill him; otherwise, he just goes on suffering every hardship *without* a grumble, and then, when you think he is absolutely done, he turns round and hits you. People at home don't realize and understand what heroes the men are—brave, suffering every hardship without a grumble, loyal, and in

the highest sense true, typical Britons."

The fateful day had passed; the little British army, though its ranks were sorely thinned, was still unbroken and undefeated. Smith-Dorrien's corps had made a stand which will go down to history as a triumph of valour and endurance. It had resisted an army that outnumbered it by ten to one, and it had handled it very roughly indeed. All honour to the men who fought and died at Le Cateau that day, and all honour to the cool, determined, and unconquerable general who commanded them! Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien has written his name high on the scroll of fame, and henceforth he stands in our annals side by side with Sir John Moore[55] of undying memory. His proud boast is that he saved the left wing of the British army, and by doing so made the German conquest of France impossible.

General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, G.C.B., D.S.O. ***Photo, Russell.***
Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien commanded the Second Army Corps during the retreat from Mons. Sir John French, in his dispatch of September 7, ascribed to him the salvation of the left wing of the British army, and described him as "a commander of rare and unusual coolness, intrepidity, and determination." Had the left wing been rolled up, the rout of the whole Allied army would probably have followed.

Sir John French tells us that the retreat was continued far into the night of the 26th and through the 27th and 28th. The cavalry officer quoted above gives us a vivid picture of the weariness of his men and horses, and from the stories of others who took part in the retreat we learn that it was just as trying as the battle itself. The night was black dark, the rain was falling heavily, and the narrow roads were choked with guns, transport, and infantry. The men had to be shaken out of their sleep, but once on their feet they marched steadily.

> "There was never a halt nor a pause, though horses dropped between the shafts, and men sat down exhausted by the roadside. A heavy gun overturned in a ditch, but it was impossible to stay and get it out; so it was rendered useless, and the disconsolate gunners trekked on. When the horses could draw their loads no longer, the loads were cast by the roadside. . . . I cannot give a connected account of that night. The overpowering desire for sleep, the weariness and ache of every fibre, and the thirst! I had forgotten to be hungry, and had got past food; but I thirsted as I have only thirsted once before, and that was in the desert near Khartum."

On moved the columns, almost at the last gasp, but still undaunted and bent on winning through. When the dreadful night was over, and dawn broke over the hills, men looked at each other and marvelled at the change wrought in their appearance by the terrible experiences which they had undergone. They were as worn and gaunt as though they were recovering from a serious illness.

Let me tell you a little story, to show the splendid self-restraint of our men even when they were suffering agonies of thirst.

> "Soon after sunrise," says an officer, "we came up with two of our ambulance wagons and one of our filter water-carts. The wounded were in such a state of exhaustion with the long trek and the awful jolting of the wagons that it was decided to make some beef-tea for them, and a major rode ahead to find some farm where water could be boiled. He had hardly gone when a battalion of exhausted infantry came up, and as soon as they saw the water-carts made a dash for them. Hastily I rode up to them, and told them that there was very little water left in the carts, and that it was needed for their wounded comrades. 'I am thirsty myself,' I said, 'and I am awfully sorry for you chaps; but you see how it is—the wounded must come first.'
>
> "'Quite right, sir,' was the ready response. 'Didn't know it was a hospital water-cart;' and, without a murmur, they went thirsty on their way."

All night long the Germans pressed closely on the British rear, and they were able to capture stragglers and detachments that had missed their way. Amongst these was a battalion of Gordon Highlanders who had taken the wrong road. Between one and two o'clock in the morning, when they were marching down a narrow lane, they were fired at from the left. They were under the impression that they had been fired on accidentally by the French, whom they supposed to be near at hand. They were mistaken. Dark shadowy masses of the enemy closed around them and attacked them in front, rear, and flanks. The Gordons made a gallant resistance, but in vain. They were shot down in heaps, and in a few minutes all were killed, wounded, or prisoners.

Still the British army dragged its slow length along the belt of low upland on which the Scheldt and the Sambre take their rise, and on Thursday morning, August 28, arrived a little to the north of St. Quentin,[56] which stands on rising ground on the right bank of the Somme. By this time the weight of the enemy's pursuit had been shaken off, and the wearied men could rest for a time in safety. The four days' battle, which began at noon on Sunday, 23rd August, had ended. The British army had emerged with fresh laurels from a great ordeal.

How the Guards held Landrecies on the night of August 25, 1914.
A description of this incident is given on pp. 93 and 94. As a result of this magnificent defence the German vanguard was checked. "It had miscalculated the strength of British valour and endurance."

CHAPTER XIV.

STORIES OF THE RETREAT FROM MONS TO ST. QUENTIN.

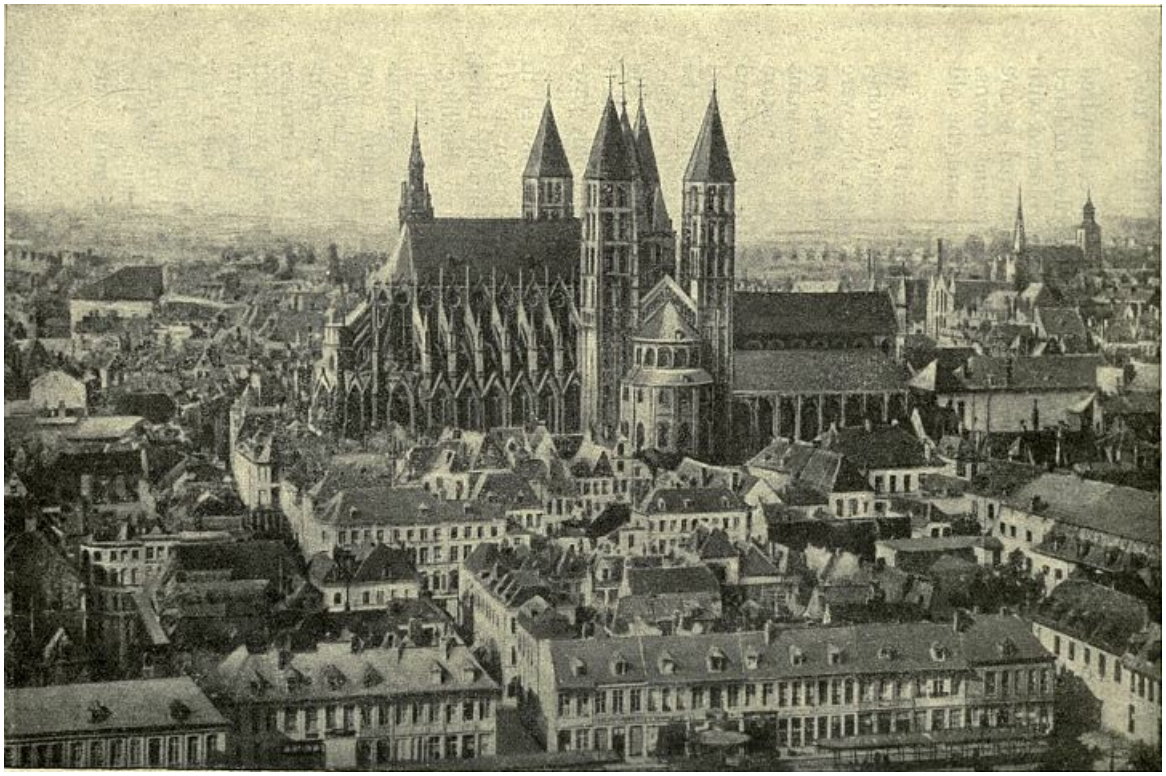
From what you have read in the two previous chapters you will gather that, during the four days' battle which was fought between Mons and St. Quentin, incident crowded upon incident. You may be sure that our soldiers had much to say of their experiences when they wrote home, or when they arrived on this side of the Channel to nurse their honourable wounds. Before, however, I tell you some of their stories, let us learn what happened at Tournai. You will remember that while our men were holding the Condé-Mons-Binche line a French Territorial battalion was defending Tournai. It was by way of this town that von Kluck was trying to turn the British left. In order to help the French in Tournai, the British Commander-in-chief sent them twenty-two pieces of field artillery, two heavy guns, and a force which only numbered seven hundred all told.

Tournai[57] is one of the most ancient cities of Belgium. It is as old as Cæsar, and its history is very warlike. Few towns have borne the brunt of so many sieges, and have changed hands so often. The Duke of Marlborough captured it in 1709. It contains one of the noblest cathedrals in Europe; a fine Cloth Hall, which is now a museum and picture gallery; a belfry with a set of chimes; and other interesting buildings. In 1653, near one of the old churches, a tomb was discovered containing the sword and other relics of Childeric I.,[58] one of the early kings of the Franks, a group of tribes which settled in the Lower Rhine valley about 250 A.D., and afterwards gave its name to France. Amongst the relics in the tomb were three hundred small figures in gold, resembling bees. When Napoleon ordered the robe in which he was crowned, he had it embroidered with gold bees instead of the usual French lilies. Tournai is one of the cleanest and pleasantest of Belgian industrial towns. The quays on the Scheldt are planted with trees, and the old walls have been turned into promenades.

A civilian who witnessed the fighting at Tournai tells us that the French Territorials, who were only one thousand strong, had barely arrived, after an eleven miles' march, when they were fired on by German guns. The firing began at 8 a.m. on Monday, 24th August, and shortly afterwards the Germans entered the town. He saw them in the garden of the station square taking cover under the bushes and behind the statues, and firing along all the streets that radiate from it. Then he heard the quick, continuous reports of the machine guns, which, he says, sounded like the noise of a very loud motor-cycle engine. The French made their last stand before the bridges of the Scheldt. They were mainly men of forty, but they held their ground the whole morning against a deadly fire, and only gave way when they were surrounded by the Germans.

Our seven hundred British with their guns were posted to the south-west of the town. An artillery duel began at 11, and continued fiercely until 2.30. Shrapnel continually burst over the trenches and batteries; but there was no flinching, and the gunners took a fearful toll of the advancing foe. Reinforcements had been promised, but they failed to arrive. Swarms of German cavalry, not less than five thousand of them, now swooped upon the little band of British, who fought desperately, and used the bayonet with deadly effect. After an agonizing struggle of an hour and a half, during which the Germans rode right up to the muzzles of the guns, "all that was left of them," some three hundred men, fought their way from the field, and escaped by the Cambrai road. "The last I saw of one of our officers," said a survivor, "was that he had a revolver in his hand, and was firing away, screened by his gun. He alone must have accounted for a dozen Uhlans. They were falling on all sides of him." The British guns were captured.

Such was the fine feat of arms performed by a handful of Britons at Tournai. They were assailed by a force that outnumbered them ten to one; but they stood their ground, and made a defence worthy to rank with that of Rorke's Drift.[59] The British soldier is never so great as when facing "fearful odds."



The City of Tournai. ***Photo, Central News.***
The scene of the heroic stand described on page 107.

I have already told you how the Belgian and French townsfolk and villagers looked upon the British as their deliverers, and how readily they gave them food and lodging. I am sure you can understand the anguish of these poor people when they saw the British retreating, and leaving them to the mercy of the dreaded Uhlans. In many places they made little bundles of their most precious belongings, and, locking up their houses, fled southwards. Here is an amusing story of a British officer's experience with a family that remained:—

"After the Battle of Mons we were billeted at a large farmhouse, the inhabitants of which did not seem very pleased to see us. We had not touched any eatables for several hours, and I made the housewife understand that we wanted some food. She looked at us in a way which was not altogether an expression of friendliness, and pointing to the table, round which a number of men were gathered, to whom she was serving their meals, she said, 'After my workpeople.'

"We waited patiently till the men had finished their meal, and then asked once more for food. But the woman merely remarked, 'After us,' and she and her husband prepared to eat their supper. It is rather trying to see somebody making an attack on a hearty meal while one has not tasted any food for a long time. So I demanded, in the name of the King, that we should be supplied with foodstuffs immediately, the more so that the woman seemed so unwilling to grant our wishes. The only answer she made was that if we were in want of food we should have to look for it ourselves, and try to prepare it.

"The situation was rather awkward, and I was wondering why these French peasants were so extremely unkind towards British soldiers.

"Suddenly it entered my mind that perhaps she thought we were Germans! At the same time I had something like a happy thought in order to prove that we were not. One of our men, a tall, heavy chap, who was still outside the house, was ordered to substitute a German helmet for his own cap, and to knock at the door. He did: the door was opened, we dashed forward, and made 'the German' a prisoner.

"The whole scene changed all of a sudden. The whole family embraced us, almost choked us. Food and wine and dainties were supplied at once, and we had a most glorious time."

The following story of the retreat is told by Private Stewart of the Royal Scots. "After Mons," he says, "the hardships of fighting on the retreat began. We had little time for sleep; both day and night we retreated, and as they marched the men slept. If a man in front of you happened to stop, you found yourself bumping into him. At one place where we halted for the day the lady of the farmhouse was washing, so some of us took off our shirts to have them washed. While they were hanging up to dry the order came that the troops had to move on, and the wet garments had to be put on just as they were. Mine was dry next morning."

A party of Royal Scots which was cut off from its main body joined up with the Grenadier Guards, and fought in the streets of Landrecies. The Germans called on them to surrender; but a Royal Scots officer replied, "British never surrender! Fix bayonets! Charge!" So well did they charge that the Germans went down before them in large numbers.

Here is a fine story of a young soldier of the King's Own Scottish Borderers. While trying to cross two planks over a canal that was being peppered with machine-gun fire, the youngster received a flesh wound, and was about to fall. Colonel Stephenson gripped him to save him from falling into the canal, and said, "You had better go back to the hospital, sonny." So he did; but scarcely had he reached the hospital when the Germans began shelling it, and he and the other patients had to beat a quick retreat. Some time later he was on sentry go by a wayside shrine, and was waiting for the reliefs to come round, when he saw Germans in the distance. He fired at them once or twice—"for luck," as he said—but almost immediately received another wound in the body. This time it was so serious that he had to be sent home.

Colonel Stephenson, who is mentioned in this story, was the hero of another life-saving episode. During the fighting at Le Cateau one of the captains of his regiment fell in front of the British trenches. Without a moment's hesitation the colonel rushed out to carry in the captain, and in doing so exposed himself to a fierce fire. As he entered the lines with his unconscious burden the men gave him a rousing cheer. Later in the day he was hit, and was assisted into an ambulance wagon; but shortly afterwards he came out of it, in order, as he said, to make room for men who were worse wounded than himself. Almost immediately afterwards the retreat was continued, and the colonel was picked up and made prisoner by the Germans.

There was scarcely an hour during the whole retreat which was not marked by some noble deed of self-sacrifice. A private of the 1st Cheshires tells us admiringly of the great pluck of a wounded lieutenant of the A Company. "I only know his nickname, which was 'Winkepop.' He had been shot through his right leg and left foot, and we cut off his boots and attempted roughly to bandage his wounds. As he rose to his feet, he saw one of our privates in distress about fifteen yards away, and seizing his gun, he rushed or hobbled forward to bring him in, which he managed to do on his back, under a murderous fire from the enemy. Having dropped his rifle and sword in this courageous act, he made his way back for them, and we missed him after that, and indeed he has not been seen since."

In an earlier chapter we read of the splendid spirit of comradeship shown by officers to men and men to officers in the British army. A good instance is afforded by the letter of a private of the Yorkshire Light Infantry, who thus writes to General Wynn telling him of the death of his son, Lieutenant Wynn: "I have been asked by friends of ours to let you know fuller particulars of your son's death. He was my platoon officer, and he met his death at Landrecies. Sir, these are a few of the instances which made your son liked by all his men. He was a gentleman and a soldier. The last day he was alive we had got a cup of tea in the trenches, and we asked him if he would have a drink. He said, 'No; drink it yourselves.' And then, with a smile, he added, 'We have to hold the trenches to-day.' Again, at Mons we had been fighting all day, and some one had brought us a sack of pears and two loaves of bread. Lieutenant Wynn accepted only one pear and a very little bread. We noticed this. I had a small bottle of pickles in my haversack, and asked him to have some. But it was the usual answer, 'You require them yourselves.' Our regiment was holding the first line of trenches, and Lieutenant Wynn was told to hold the right of the company. Word was passed down to see if Lieutenant Wynn was all right, and I was just putting up my head when they hit me, and I heard from a neighbour that Lieutenant Wynn was hit through the eye and died

instantly. He died doing his duty, and like the officer and gentleman he was."

Ready, aye ready! ***Photo, Daily Mirror.***

CHAPTER XV.

VALOROUS DEEDS AND VICTORIA CROSSES.

A story of heroism which ought not to be forgotten is told by a drummer of the 1st Battalion Royal Berks Regiment. The British were attacking a canal bridge held by the Germans near Cambrai, and during the attack several men slipped down the steep river embankment and fell into the water, where they were in danger of drowning. Corporal Brindall of the Royal Berks, who was an expert swimmer, immediately plunged in and rescued four of them who could not swim. He left the water, and was climbing the embankment, when a German shell exploded close to him and killed him instantly. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Here is the story of a 1st East Lancashire private, who was considered by his comrades the luckiest man in the war. "I got hit," he writes, "by three bullets in about a minute. One went through my cap, one smashed the magazine of my rifle, and one flattened five rounds of ammunition in my belt. Nearly all my company wanted to shake hands with me, telling me that I am the luckiest man in the war. I think it was a record myself. They wanted to keep the cap, ammunition, and magazine; but I am keeping them myself to show you when I come home. So you see I have not to be shot with rifle bullets—at least, that is what they say here, and I think so myself."

We have to piece together from various sources the story of a modest hero, named Jack W. Pape, of the Signal Company, Royal Engineers. In a letter to his relatives in Leeds he wrote: "You can say to —— that on 26th August, in the big fight on that day, I kept my end up, and have since been personally congratulated by General Smith-Dorrien, commander of the Second Army Corps." That is all we hear of the business from Pape himself. A sapper thus tells us why he received the congratulations of his general: "Men were dropping all round, whether shot or for cover I know not. I remember seeing one poor fellow shot through the eye. He was gallantly carried off the field under fire by Pape of Leeds, but has since died." Another comrade describes the parade at which our hero was honoured by his general: "This morning a general parade was ordered at nine o'clock ('as clean as possible'). This was a tall order, owing to the very wet weather we have been having lately—up to the eyes in mud. Anyhow, we were marched up to headquarters, and paraded before the whole of the staff. When formed up, General Smith-Dorrien read from a paper some particulars. Then he congratulated the Signal Company on the splendid work they had done for his command. After this he said that for gallantry in the field J. W. Pape was promoted. He then brought him out in front of all the troops, shook hands with him, and congratulated him. Then followed congratulations from the sergeant-major down to the boys, who were proud that the Signal Company should be so honoured." Writing home a little later, Pape said that General Smith-Dorrien had promoted him "King's Corporal."[60]

A London doctor who was with the R.A.M.C.[61] tells us how gloriously brave and splendidly uncomplaining our men are. "If," he says, "the people of the United Kingdom could see the conditions under which our fellows fight, how they fight, and how they die, I swear every head would uncover to the colours[62] of any regiment bearing the name of a battle, because the name has been won through the blood of real heroes. Believe me, the Victoria Cross is won over and over again in a single day. They *are* brave!

"What if you were to see how the wounded act after the excitement of battle! They suffer their wounds, great and small, without a murmur; they get their wounds dressed, take chloroform, give consent to have their limbs amputated, just as if they were going to have their hair cut. They are gloriously brave.

"Men who have been in the thick of the fight all day, seen their chums wounded and killed, their own lives not worth a second's insurance—still, these men cook their food and go off to sleep, and, most wonderful of all, go back to the thick

of it next day."

We must not imagine that all German soldiers are brutal and treacherous. Let us always remember that they are very brave, and that many of them are worthy foes. There is a little story which illustrates the chivalry of a German lancer and the gratitude of the man whom he spared. "At Le Cateau," said a wounded corporal of the Coldstream Guards, "I made a bayonet thrust at a German lancer, and fell. He scorned to take advantage of my accident, and we parted. I made up my mind to repay the debt if ever I met the man again. Some time later I came upon him. He had been wounded by a splinter of shell, and was in urgent need of assistance. I managed to get him to the hospital, and he told me he was well repaid for sparing my life on the first day we met."

The Welsh Guards and their Regimental Colour.

In the British army, when war broke out, there were four regiments of foot guards—the Grenadier Guards, the Coldstream Guards, the Scots Guards, and the Irish Guards. You will notice that England, Scotland, and Ireland had their special regiments of Guards, but not Wales. This slur on the Principality has now been removed: a new regiment of Welsh Guards has been formed, and on St. David's Day (March 1, 1915) it was specially appointed to do sentry-go at Buckingham Palace, and was afterwards marched to mount guard at St. James's Palace. ***Photo, London News Association.***

Now let me tell you how a British soldier returned good for evil. During the retreat a British artilleryman, slightly wounded, asked a German for water and was refused. Some weeks later the artilleryman recognized the same German amongst a party of wounded who were crying for water. He went up to the man, who knew him at once, took off his water-bottle and handed it to him without a word. The corporal of the Highland Light Infantry who told the story adds, "You never saw anybody look so shamefaced as that German."

It was during the retreat from Landrecies that the Munster Fusiliers added to their fame by making a most gallant stand against an overwhelming German attack, but at a great loss of killed, wounded, and missing. Some weeks afterwards the War Office published a list of 688 Munsters whose whereabouts were unknown. Later on it was learned that many of them were prisoners in Germany. The Munsters formed part of the 1st Army Corps, which retreated southwards along the left bank of the Oise. They reached Guise without being much molested by the Germans.

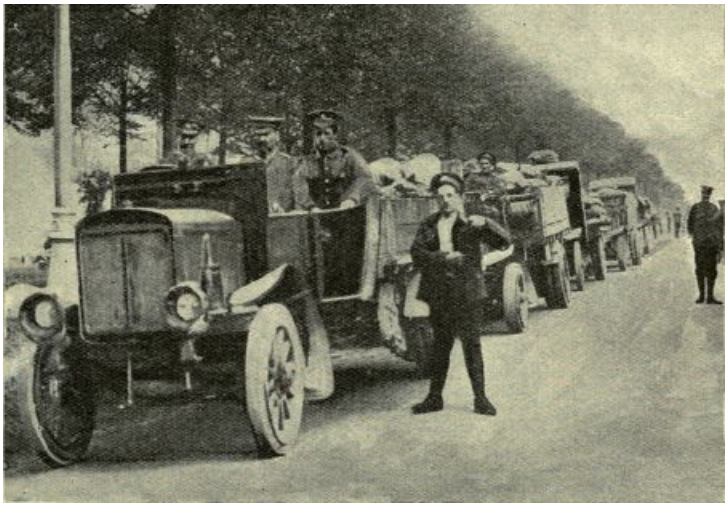
Guise is a very old town, with an ancient castle, which figures in British history. In 1338 Edward III. laid claim to the French crown in right of his mother, and the Hundred Years' War began. In the next year John of Hainault, with a body of English troops, assaulted the castle. Strange to say, the wife of the lord of this castle was John of Hainault's daughter. As the husband was away from home, the defence of the castle was entrusted to the wife, and John expected that she would readily give it up to him. Imagine his surprise when his daughter refused to surrender it. She made such a stubborn defence that her father, though he burned the town, was unable to capture the castle, and was forced to depart. Guise gives its name to the noble French family from which the ill-fated Mary Queen of Scots was descended.

The Munsters halted at Guise on the night of the 26th, and formed the extreme right rear of their corps. A dispatch rider had been sent by the general with the order that they were to march early the next day. This dispatch rider, unfortunately, lost his way, and was taken prisoner, so the order to retire never reached the Munsters. They remained at Guise while their comrades were miles away on their southward journey. They had been left behind, without supports or the hope of reinforcement.

The advancing Germans rolled down upon them, and they soon discovered that they were surrounded. "They came at us," says one of the gallant fellows, "from all points—horse, foot, and artillery and all—and the air was filled with screaming, shouting men, waving swords, and blazing away at us like blue murder." The brave Irish lads fixed bayonets, and prepared to sell their lives dearly. "We were," wrote an officer, "about three-quarters of a battalion fighting six German battalions, and without any chance of relief. I think we really did our best. We had one section of artillery and two machine guns with us, which helped a lot; but they were very soon knocked out. Our colonel was a wonder to see—he had absolutely no fear; and I followed him, and helped him all I could in every charge, but he was killed in the end by a shell. We had, I think, ten officers killed, five wounded, and the remainder prisoners. I was wounded in two places. . . . Well, although we were well beaten, I believe we gave as good as we got. We killed and wounded a great many Germans, and they say themselves that we made a gallant fight of it." The Munsters did not surrender until they had lost most of their officers and a large number of the rank and file, and had shot away all their cartridges. They only yielded when they no longer possessed the means of defending themselves. Let us honour the brave but unfortunate Irishmen who strove so nobly at Guise.

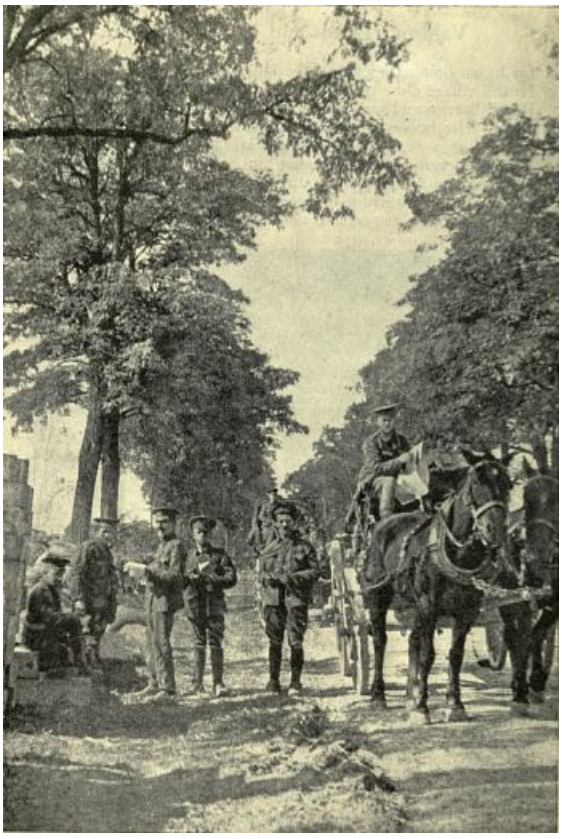
The valour of the British troops during the retreat extended to every arm of the service. You have already heard of the Army Service Corps, whose duty it is to supply food, stores, and ammunition to the troops. During the present war the Army Service Corps has done its work splendidly. Except during the retirement, not a single day passed upon which food did not reach our men. Even during the retirement food was brought to the line of retreat, and left on the ground to be picked up.

For the purpose of bringing up supplies, large numbers of motor lorries and horsed wagons are used. When the Germans were following hard on the heels of the retiring British, they were very anxious to capture our food and ammunition train, for by so doing they would be able to hamper us very much. Near a village close to St. Quentin the colonel in charge of the British lorries and wagons learned that Uhlans were only a mile away. His horses were almost dead beat, and he could only proceed at a snail's pace. Night was drawing on, and there were no fighting troops to assist him. He had to depend upon his own men to beat off the threatened attack.



British Motor Transport. ***Photo, Topical Press.***

The wagons and lorries were drawn up in the village street in the form of a laager, and the wearied men took cover behind them, and prepared to make a stubborn resistance. The people of the village were in a great state of terror, and the colonel advised them to go to church. They did so, and the curé[63] held a service. While our men were strengthening their defences and looking to their rifles and cartridges, they were greatly cheered by the hymns which the villagers sang.



With the Army Service Corps—horsed wagons which carry supplies to the men in the firing lines. ***Photo, Photopress.***

Dark night set in, and the sound of guns was heard. The horses grew restless, and it was feared that they would stampede. Had they done so, all would have been lost. The drivers, however, quietened them down, and held their heads till the break of day. In the morning they discovered that the Uhlans had missed them. The Germans imagined that the convoy was far ahead, and had advanced to the right and left of the village, quite unaware that it was drawn up in the

streets.

On several other occasions British convoys managed to escape capture. Frequently horsed supply wagons on their way to the troops have to pass along roads under artillery fire. Often shells burst among them and destroy the wagons, while the drivers fall with bullet wounds. There is an old story of an Army Service Corps man who raised a howl of derision amongst a group of "Tommies" by declaring that he was always to be found where the bullets were thickest. The laugh was on his side when it was discovered that he drove an ammunition wagon. During the present war men of the Army Service Corps driving their wagons towards the firing line have actually been where the bullets fell thickest.

Very early one morning during the retreat a convoy drove up to a brigade of artillery with rations. In a few moments the officer in command learned that he was being quietly surrounded by German cavalry. Rather than let the enemy capture his wagons, the officer was prepared to burn them, but before doing so he determined to try to make a dash for safety.

Off went lorries and wagons at top speed until they reached a bridge over a railway. There was some delay in getting them across; but all passed over except thirty motor lorries, and these the officer thought he would be obliged to abandon, as the enemy was hard on his rear. A determined effort, however, was made, and twenty-eight of the thirty were got across. Then the bridge was blown up, and almost before the roar of the explosion had ended the two remaining lorries were in the hands of the Germans. It was a very near thing. The German pursuit was checked by the wrecked bridge, and the convoy, almost intact, drove on into safety.

I will close this chapter by giving you some account of the heroes who won the Victoria Cross during the retreat from Mons to St. Quentin. You will notice that four of them belong to the Royal Field Artillery. This alone is sufficient to show you how splendidly the artillery fought during that critical time. It is not too much to say that the retreat would have become a rout had not every gunner played a hero's part.

Captain Francis Octavius Grenfell, 9th Lancers, was the hero of the stirring episode of which you read on page 88.

Private Sidney Frank Godley, 4th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, City of London, won the highest award of valour for his coolness and gallantry in continuing to fight his machine gun, though hotly assailed for two hours, and suffering from a wound received at Mons.

Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest Wright Alexander, 119th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, greatly distinguished himself on August 24, 1914. When the 5th Division was retiring to the Bavay-Maubeuge position, Major Alexander, as he was then, handled his guns so skilfully that they did great execution on the Germans; and when they were threatened with capture by overwhelming numbers of the enemy, he and three men moved them into safety by hand. The splendid stand which he made enabled the 5th Division to retire without serious loss. On a later date he rescued a wounded man under heavy fire, and on every occasion when he was engaged showed the greatest gallantry and devotion to duty. For these noble services he was awarded the Victoria Cross and received promotion.

Captain Douglas Reynolds, Driver Job Henry Charles Drain, and Driver Frederick Luke, all of the 37th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, showed magnificent courage during "the most critical day of all," 26th August. When it became clear that the corps holding the Le Cateau position would be utterly wiped out if a retirement were not attempted, the Royal Field Artillery covered the retreat with almost superhuman courage and devotion. At one stage in the retirement all the men working some of our guns were shot down, and the pieces were on the point of being captured by German infantry, then only a hundred yards away. Captain Reynolds called for volunteers to save the guns, and drivers Drain and Luke were amongst those who answered the call. Two teams dashed forward amidst a terrible rifle and shrapnel fire, and limbered up two of the guns. Thanks to the devoted courage of Captain Reynolds and the two drivers, one gun was got safely away. In a later engagement a German battery was holding up a British advance. Captain Reynolds crept forward under a

heavy fire, and got so near the German guns that he was able to discover their position, and bring his own guns to bear on them until the battery was silenced. Eight days later he was severely wounded.

Major Charles Allix Lavington Yate, 2nd Battalion the King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry), did superb deeds of heroism at Le Cateau. His battalion formed part of the 5th Division, which was the last to retire. Major Yate commanded one of two companies that remained to the end. All the other officers had been killed or wounded, and there was no more ammunition left. Rather than surrender, Major Yate called upon the nineteen survivors of his company—every man of whom deserved the Victoria Cross—to fix bayonets and charge. They did so with furious gallantry; but, unhappily, Major Yate was shot down. As he lay on the ground, severely wounded, he was picked up by the Germans and made a prisoner of war. He did not live to receive the coveted honour awarded him, but died in the hands of the enemy.

Lance-Corporal Frederick William Holmes, of the same regiment and battalion, also proved himself supremely brave at Le Cateau. He carried a wounded man out of the trenches under fire, and later on, when he saw a gun in danger of capture, sprang into the saddle of a driver who had been wounded and helped to drive the gun out of action into a place of safety.

"Men
May bear the blazon wrought of centuries, hold
Their armouries higher than arms imperial; yet
Know that the least their countryman, whose hand
Hath done his country service, lives their peer,
And peer of all their fathers."

French Infantry retreating. ***Photo, Record Press.***

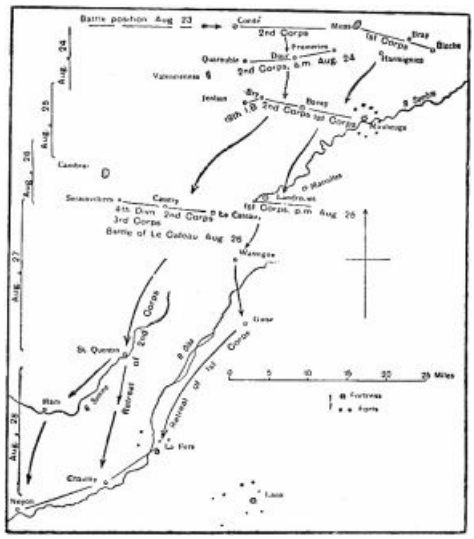
CHAPTER XVI.

ARRAS AND AMIENS.

While our sorely-tried army is halting for a brief rest at St. Quentin, let us follow the fortunes of the French on the west and the east of the British line of retirement. We have not much information to go upon. A French official account of the retreat was published in our newspapers on March 22, 1915; but it was a mere outline of the course of events, with many gaps which can only be filled up when the war is over and many facts now hidden are brought to light.

First, let us look at the German movements on the west of the British line of retreat. You already know that von Kluck was pushing forward his extreme right through Belgium and North France with the utmost speed. The force which he used for this purpose consisted of cavalry, horse artillery, and machine and quick-firing guns mounted on motor cars. His infantry were carried on motor lorries, and the whole force was thus able to cover great distances in a day. He had two objects in view. In the first place, he wished to cut the railway communications between the British army and its bases at Boulogne and Havre, and by doing so make the task of supplying it with reinforcements, food, and ammunition from these places impossible; and, in the second place, he wished to outflank the British, and drive them eastwards into the arms of von Buelow.

I have already told you of the gallant stand made by a small British detachment and a French Territorial force at Tournai. When these were overcome, von Kluck had no difficulty in advancing; for, with the exception of a corps of French Territorials at Arras, there were no soldiers to oppose him but groups of British guarding the lines of communication. Many of these detached parties were driven off or captured, and the story of their misfortunes gave rise to rumours of terrible British defeats. As a matter of fact, the operations in the west were all on the fringe of the real fighting which was going on in the centre and in the east.



The British Retreat from Mons to the Oise (Aug. 23-28).

Daring Uhlans rode towards the Channel, and in Belgium it was thought that they would seize Ostend, and thus cut off England from Antwerp, where the Belgian army was preparing to make a stand. To prevent Ostend from falling into the hands of the Germans, a body of British marines was hastily carried across the Channel to hold the town.

Von Kluck's swift-moving forces occupied Lille.[64] It is a handsome and attractive town, with important linen and woollen manufactures, and its fortress was supposed to be very strong. Nevertheless the Allies did not attempt to defend it. The Germans occupied the town without firing a shot. Then they marched south towards Arras, where, as you know, a French Territorial corps was stationed. Arras is a very old town, which has played an important part in French history. After the battle of Agincourt (1415) peace was signed in Arras by the English and French. In the Middle Ages the town was so famous for the tapestry with which the rough interior walls of castle rooms were then covered, that such hangings

were known by its name. You will remember that in Shakespeare's play *King John* Hubert was sent to tell poor Prince Arthur that his eyes were to be put out. At the opening of the scene he said to the executioners who accompanied him: "Look thou stand within the *arras*"—that is, behind the curtain of needlework hanging on the wall.

Arras stands on the main railway which runs from the ports of Calais and Boulogne to Amiens. If the Germans could cut this line, the British would not be able to use either of these ports as a basis of supplies. If they could seize the important junction of Amiens,[65] they would cut the British off from Havre, and would force them to seek fresh bases somewhere on the west coast of France. This, of course, would entail a longer voyage for the transports and supply ships, and men and stores would have to make a long journey across country before they could reach the place where they were needed. Now you understand how important Arras and Amiens were to the Allies. As soon as Arras was threatened, the railway officials hurried away southwards every supply and ammunition train which was either on the line or on the sidings at Boulogne.

The French Territorials took up a position to the south of the town, and there prepared to oppose the German advance. For a time they held their own; but they were hopelessly outnumbered, and were soon in peril of being cut off. Two of their batteries had been captured, and they were nearly surrounded when a British detachment came to their rescue. Where it came from we have never been told, but probably it had been guarding the lines of communication at Amiens. It arrived in the very nick of time, and was able to hold the enemy, while all that was left of the French Territorials got safely away.

Without delay the Germans pushed on towards Amiens. Meanwhile the railway officials of that city were sending all the engines and carriages in the station southwards, so that the enemy might not seize them. I have already told you that the capture of the railway at Arras had made Boulogne and Calais useless as bases of supply for our army, and that the seizure of the line at Amiens would cut it off from all the Channel ports. A new British base had to be chosen, and St. Nazaire,[66] at the mouth of the river Loire, was selected, an advanced base being established at Le Mans, on the Sarthe, about fifty miles to the north-east of the port.

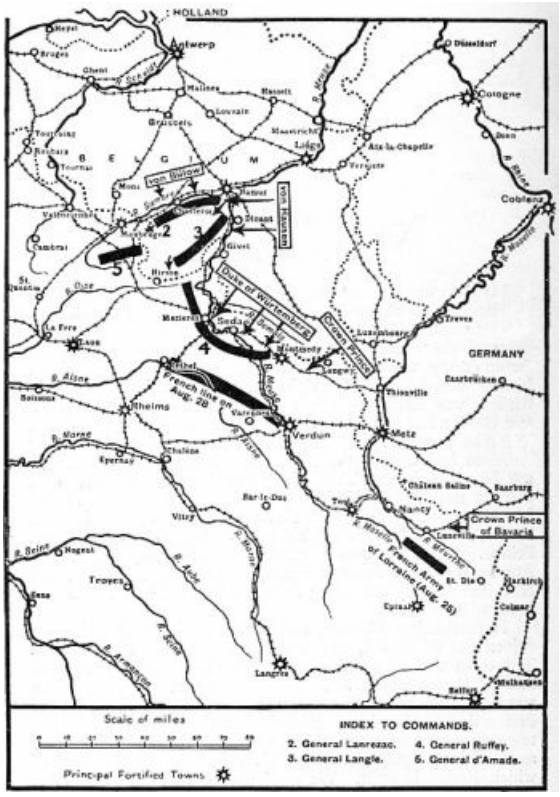
Outside Amiens there was a fierce artillery duel; but when the Allies had fired their last shell they were forced to retreat, and the city surrendered. Between nine and ten on the morning of 31st August the war-stained German soldiers poured into the place, but by evening they were all out again, following up the pursuit. The retreating French blew up the bridges across the Somme, and endeavoured in this and other ways to delay the German advance.

Amiens is a busy town of cotton and woollen mills, and contains one of the most glorious Gothic cathedrals in all Christendom. The western front is wonderfully adorned with reliefs and statues, and double rows of medallions representing scenes from Holy Scripture. John Ruskin, the great writer of art, calls these carvings "the Bible of Amiens." Happily the Germans were advancing so hurriedly that they had no time to do any mischief to this miracle of architecture.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FRENCH RETREAT.

Now we must learn what happened on the east side of the British line of retreat. Look carefully at the map on page 130. On 22nd August von Buelow crossed the Sambre, and defeated the French army No. 2. About the same time the Saxon army under von Hausen crossed the Meuse above Namur, and fell upon its right flank. Taken in front and in flank it was forced to retreat to the south-west. Meanwhile von Hausen had also been engaged with the left wing of No. 3. While he was driving in the left of this army some of his other divisions had crossed the Meuse at Dinant, and were attacking No. 3 in front. Thus No. 3 was forced to retreat. Von Hausen now fought his way along the western bank of the Meuse, and at the same time No. 4 Army was attacked in front by the Duke of Würtemberg's forces and by those of the Crown Prince. No. 4 was also forced to retreat; but by the 28th of August the three defeated French armies had regained touch on a line roughly extending from near Rethel[67] to the Meuse north of Verdun.



Map illustrating the Retreat of the French Armies from the Sambre and the Meuse (Aug. 22-28).

Hard fighting followed, and on the 29th the French were driven out of Rethel, and were forced to retreat once more. The town was set on fire by bursting shells, and more than half of it was burned. A Saxon officer, whose diary afterwards fell into the hands of the French, blamed them for the destruction of the place. He said that the French burned the town in order to prevent the Germans from pushing their ammunition wagons across the river Aisne, on both sides of which Rethel is built. We need not pause to apportion the blame. The inhabitants fled, and then the Germans looted and destroyed to their hearts' content. "The place is a disgrace to our army," wrote the Saxon officer.

The Germans now crossed the Aisne, and the French fell back rapidly.

Now let us leave this main line of retreat for a few moments and follow the fortunes of a French army which had been

pushed into Lorraine as far back as 14th August, in order to hold the Bavarians, who were operating south of Metz. Up to the 20th of August this French army did very well, but on that day it was badly beaten by the Bavarians at Château Salins,[68] a place about twenty-five miles south-east of Metz. In this battle the Bavarians claimed to have captured thousands of prisoners and 150 guns. No doubt they won an important victory.

The French now fell back to the Vosges mountains, not far from Nancy, and on the 23rd and 24th the Germans, largely reinforced, advanced into the region of Luneville. This forced the French to retire south. On the 25th, however, they made two successful counter-attacks, one from the south to the north and the other from the west to the east, and forced the enemy to fall back. For fifteen days they held up the Bavarians, and by the end of that time the turn of the tide had come, and the French were advancing all along the line.

All these operations involved much fierce fighting, and the Germans were not always victors. Some of the French counter-attacks during the retreat were very successful, and the Germans were checked again and again. For example, on 24th August, near Spincourt, north-east of Verdun, the French had a real success. They drove back the Germans, pursued them with great effect, and captured a number of guns. Nevertheless, by the evening of the 27th, all the strongholds in North France, except Maubeuge, were in the hands of the enemy. Montmédy and Mezières surrendered, almost without firing a shot; but Longwy,[69] though it was an out-of-date fortress, and had but a small garrison, made a heroic resistance, and held out for twenty-four days.

A tragic story connected with the capture of Longwy appeared in one of the leading French newspapers at the end of March 1915. It may not be true, but I think you would like to hear it.

The German Emperor, surrounded by his Staff, was dining at an hotel in Luxembourg, and was awaiting the arrival of the general who had just captured Longwy (27th August). As soon as he arrived the Emperor, frantic with rage, addressed him as follows: "How is it that to capture this fortress, defended only by a few battalions, you have uselessly sacrificed thousands of our best soldiers?"

The general went livid, and knowing that a superior officer visited by the wrath of the Emperor in the presence of his equals is condemned for ever, drew himself up and made this daring reply: "Your Majesty, if my soldiers advanced in close formation against Longwy, and were thus uselessly massacred, it was by the command of your scamp of a son, who, at a safe distance of twelve and a half miles behind the front, kept on sending me telephone orders, 'To the assault,' always to the assault."

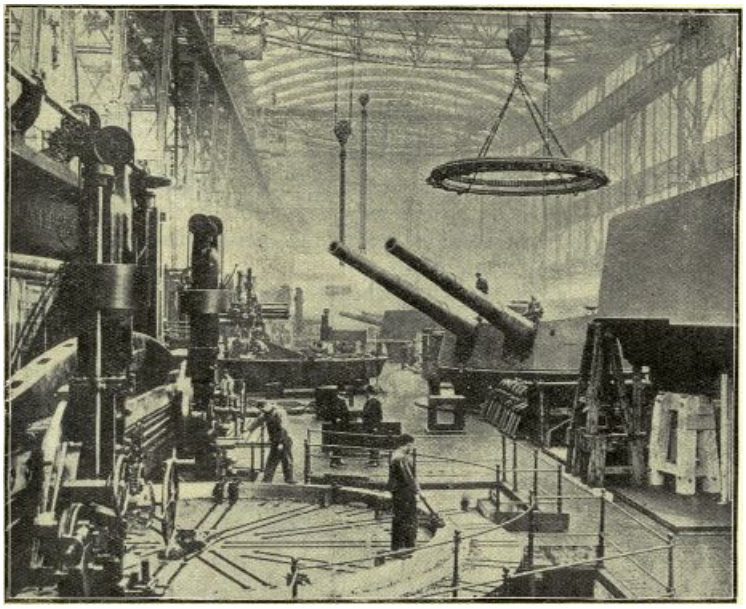
Having thus spoken, the general left the imperial presence amidst the dumb amazement of the assembly, and on the pavement outside the hotel shot himself. A week later a postcard was on sale throughout Germany, bearing the portrait of the Crown Prince, with the words, "The victor of Longwy."

The German Crown Prince.

When Longwy fell the tricolour alone flew from the fortress of Maubeuge, which was better able to stand a bombardment than almost any other stronghold of France. Its outlying defences had been strengthened with concrete and

armour plates, and heavy guns had been mounted in steel turrets. The Germans were very anxious to capture it, because it gave them command of a good railway line from Aix right through the Meuse valley.

The siege began soon after the British retreat from Mons. The French commandant had thrown up lines of earthworks between the forts, and had garrisoned them with soldiers. Just before the German guns began to thunder at the forts, detachments of French from the No. 2 Army that had been beaten at the Sambre came to reinforce the defenders, and further assistance was rendered by a British field battery that had been cut off when our line retired. The commandant had about 30,000 men to defend the place, and right nobly was it held. Not until the 7th of September did it yield. The outlying forts had then been battered down by 11-inch guns, throwing a 760-pound shell.



A View in Krupp's Works, Essen, where the Big Guns are made. ***Photo, L.N.A.***

A story went the round of the papers that, long before the war, a Belgian had bought land near Maubeuge, and on it had begun to build a factory for making railway engines. It was said that the real owner of the land was Krupp, the great manufacturer of guns and armaments for the German Government; and that while the factory was being built, concrete gun platforms had been constructed, on which the Germans mounted their siege guns as soon as they arrived. The story, however, had no foundation. The guns which the Germans used in the siege of Maubeuge were smaller than those which battered down Namur. They did not need concrete foundations, but could be fired from an ordinary road or from a platform of sleepers. The story, however, was widely believed, and alleged gun platforms were actually discovered in innocent British factories!

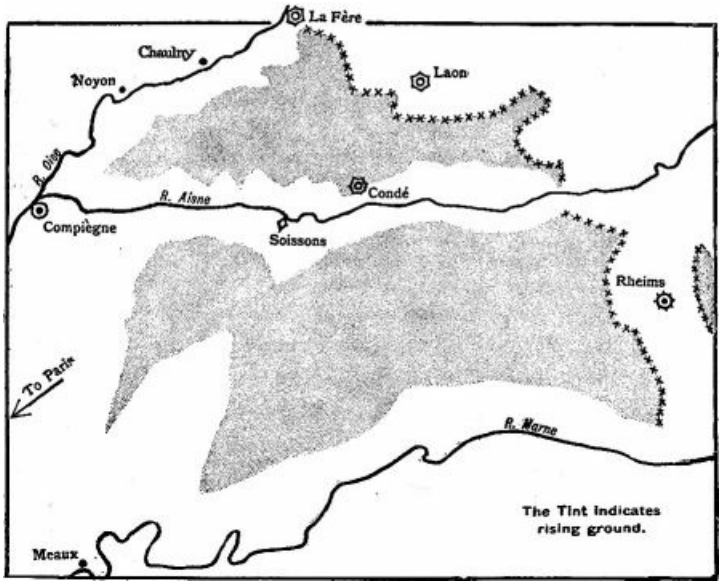
The French official account of the retreat tells us that, when the defence of the Meuse collapsed, General Joffre decided on a general retreat, but determined to make a series of counter-attacks whenever opportunity offered, so that the enemy might be kept busy. He had to choose a position where the retreat was to end, and this position had to be so chosen that the different armies could reach it at the same time and be ready without delay to advance. If, however, he found that he could begin his forward movement before this point was reached, he was prepared to alter his plans.

After the war of 1870-71, when the French began building fortresses to guard their eastern frontier, they arranged that if the enemy should capture Montmédy, Mezières, Hirson, Maubeuge, and Lille, as they had now done, a stand was to be made for the defence of Paris along an undulating plateau of chalk which rises gently from the valley of the Marne, but falls steeply on the north-east to the plains of Northern France. These uplands, as seen from the north, resemble the Surrey and Sussex Downs, and are known as the Heights of Champagne. On them grow the grapes which make the sparkling wine known as champagne. Several streams, the largest of which is the Aisne,[70] cut their way through the

plateau; stumps of trees and belts of woodland are common, and on the western side towards the Oise there are wide stretches of forest.

The French Army in the Champagne Country. ***Photo, Farringdon Photo Co.***

The little map on the opposite page will help you to understand the defensive character of the Heights of Champagne. Notice the two towns which were fortified to defend the scarp of the heights against attack from the north and north-east —La Fère,[71] on the Oise, an entrenched camp, with a circle of forts on both sides of the river; and Laon,[72] an old city built on a long spur which encloses a remarkable V-shaped valley, partly wooded and partly covered with gardens and vineyards. The carriage road to the upper town of Laon ascends in curves from near the station, but foot passengers may climb to it by means of a stairway of 260 steps and a series of inclined planes. On the highest part of the hill stands the ancient citadel, and towering above its ramparts are the bold and graceful towers of a beautiful cathedral. The forts erected round this city were so placed that their fire crossed that of the forts at La Fère. Lines of defence extended along the steep north-eastern face of the plateau, and also along its eastern side to the valley of the Aisne. Beyond the Aisne valley the eastern system of defences was continued to the valley of the Marne. About midway between the two rivers, but to the east of the plateau, is the fortress of Rheims,[73] one of the most interesting cities of France, and the chief centre of the trade in champagne. Rheims stands on the plain, and behind it rise the vine-clad uplands. In front of it is the bold wooded hill known as the Mountain of Rheims. This hill, at the time of which we are speaking, was strongly fortified.



Sketch of Defensive Line of the Heights of Champagne.

Such was the position chosen in 1874 as the great line of defence against an army advancing on Paris. While the French retreat was in progress, many persons in this country thought that a great stand would be sure to be made in this region; but, to their surprise, the French continued their southward march.

Now, why was not a stand made at the Heights of Champagne? The fact was, that the German armies were advancing so rapidly that the French had no time to pause and reorganize their line so that it could meet the enemy with any chance of success. The French had reached the plateau by the 29th August; but they dared not halt their columns, because the enemy was hard at their heels.

By this time von Kluck had passed the confluence of the Oise and the Aisne, and a cavalry corps on his left had actually reached the Marne. This movement threatened the left flank of the French, and they were bound to continue their retreat to prevent themselves from being turned in this direction. At the same time von Buelow was at Laon, on the edge of the plateau, and farther east von Hausen had crossed the Aisne, while other German armies were in contact with the French between Vouziers[74] and Verdun.

Had the French accepted battle at the Heights of Champagne they would have done so very recklessly. If they had suffered defeat, they would have been cut off from the British on their left, and from a new army which was being formed near Paris. General Joffre therefore decided to continue his retreat until he could engage the enemy in a better position. He did so, and on 5th September lay along the Seine and the Aube, with the British gathered between the Seine and the Marne, and on their flank the newly-created army. All the units of the Allied forces were now linked up, and the moment had arrived when General Joffre could order an attack. On the evening of the 5th he addressed the following message to the commanders of his armies: "The hour has come to advance at all costs, and to die where you stand rather than give way."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"THOSE TERRIBLE GREY HORSES."

Late in March 1915 General Joffre told an interviewer that his army was not crushed in Belgium by overwhelming numbers. "That," he said, "is quite wrong; our army was numerous. We ought to have won the Battle of Charleroi.[75] We ought to have won it ten times out of eleven. We lost it through our own faults of command.

"Before the war broke out I had already noted that among our generals many were worn out. Some had appeared to be incapable—not good enough for their work. Others inspired me with doubt, and I made up my mind to replace them with younger men. I should have done so, but the war came too soon. Besides, there were others in whom I had faith who have not responded to my hopes. . . . Their merit turned out to be below the mark. I had to remedy these defects. Some of these generals were my best comrades. But if I love my friends much, I love France more. I relieved them of their posts."

I have already told you how the French were crushed in Belgium; how they retreated, remedied their defects, re-formed their line along the Seine and the Aube,[76] turned their faces to the foe, and prepared to advance. All this happened between 21st August and 5th September. The account is not, however, complete, for you have yet to learn how the British army continued and ended its southern march. When I broke off my story to relate the misfortunes of the French, our gallant lads, you will remember, were making a brief halt in the neighbourhood of St. Quentin. We must now rejoin them, and see how they fared during the latter part of their retreat.

If you turn to the map on page 16, you will notice a French army marked 6, lying to the south of the fortress of Maubeuge. This army was a cavalry corps of three divisions, held in reserve. It had taken no part in the battle on the Sambre, but now it came into action on our left rear, and brought relief to Allenby's hard-worked horsemen, who had been struggling almost night and day to beat back the German advance. Some of the Territorial divisions of the 5th Army, which had retreated to the Oise, also came to the assistance of the British. They closed in to the west of Smith-Dorrien's corps, and von Kluck, seeing his right flank threatened by them, was obliged to detach a strong column to hold them in check. Further, some divisions of the 2nd French Army, which had been beaten at Charleroi and had retreated south-west, now appeared, and struck severe blows on the enemy at Guise[77] and St. Quentin. This removed some of the pressure from Haig's corps. The British were thus able to retreat without much molestation, and by the evening of Friday, the 28th, they were assembled along the Oise from La Fère to Noyon.

It was a very weary army which reached this position. It had fought and marched incessantly for six days, but it was still undaunted, and was eager for the moment when it should receive the order, "Right about turn! quick march!" You can form some idea of the great feat which it had performed when I tell you that besides fighting many rearguard actions it had marched more than eighty miles—that is, on an average, at least fourteen miles a day. After such an experience most armies would have been a complete wreck. Not so the British. The rank and file were now fully aware that, man for man, they were more than a match for the Germans, and they were heartened by the knowledge that they had foiled the frenzied efforts of an army that vastly outnumbered them, and had striven with all its might to overwhelm them.

Though the general pursuit had slackened, von Kluck's cavalry were still on the heels of the British rear. On the Friday afternoon on which our men reached the La Fère-Noyon position two columns of the enemy's horse moved south-east from St. Quentin in the attempt to attack our flank at La Fère. Allenby, with two of his cavalry brigades, rode out to meet them. The German column on the left consisted of Uhlans and of the cavalry of the famous Prussian Guard. General Gough, with the 4th Hussars and the 5th Lancers, charged down upon these much-vaunted horsemen, and drove them back in headlong flight. Against the other column, which was advancing further to the right, Sir Philip Chetwode led the Scots Greys, the 12th Lancers, and the 20th Hussars.

Scots Greys on the March. ***Photo, Newspaper Illustrations, Ltd.***
The Colonel-in-chief of the Scots Greys (2nd Dragoons) is the Tsar of Russia, who wrote to the regiment as follows: "I am happy to think that my gallant regiment, the Royal Scots Greys, are fighting with Russia against the common enemy. I am convinced that they will uphold the glorious traditions of the past."

If you are a Scottish boy or girl, you will be certain to maintain that the Scots Greys are the finest cavalrymen in the world. Your English friends may not, perhaps, agree with you; but even though they may prefer the 9th Lancers or some other English regiment, they will be quite willing to give very high praise indeed to the Scots Greys. They have a glorious record, and every one remembers how famously they bore themselves at the Battle of Waterloo, where they charged down upon the French with the Gordons clinging to their stirrup-leathers, horsemen and footmen shouting, "Scotland for ever!" Napoleon knew them well, and always feared "those terrible grey horses."

A friend of mine has talked with wounded officers and men who took part in the engagement at St. Quentin, and has given me the following account of the part played by the Scots Greys in the fight:—

The column of German cavalry opposed to Sir Philip Chetwode's brigade must have numbered about 10,000. The main body was stationed behind a wood, between which and the British brigade there was a slight valley. When the attack began our men dismounted and opened a brisk rifle fire on the advance guard of the Germans, who were hidden amongst the corn stooks at the top of the opposite slope and amongst the turnips in a field that lay behind. They had a machine gun with them, and their horses were picketed at the rear of the wood.

For a time our horse artillery shelled the wood, and our men continued their rifle fire. Our shells burst over and beyond the wood, and stampeded the picketed horses. Then came the order to mount and charge. The 12th Lancers went first, bearing to the right of the wood, and the Scots Greys followed, bearing to the left. With a wild hurrah they topped the slight rise, and crashed into the Germans, some of whom were on the knee trying to defend themselves with their long lances. Others held up their hands in token of surrender, and the first line of the gallant Greys dropped the points of their sword and spared their lives. In many cases, after the first line had passed, the Germans who had pretended to surrender fired with revolvers, and shot the chivalrous Scots in the back. The second line of Greys, however, made them pay dearly for this treachery. They cut down all within reach without mercy, and, making their horses rear and plunge and lash out with their fore feet, knocked down and trampled many others. Before the wood was reached, the German machine gun had been captured, and five hundred of the enemy had been killed or taken prisoners. They were big men, and evidently belonged to one of the Kaiser's "crack" regiments.

One of the Greys now reconnoitred the wood, and at the sight of him the men left in charge of the picketed horses bolted.

The Grey followed them, and to his amazement saw the main body of the German cavalry in full and disorderly flight. You may be sure that the Greys and the Lancers were much disappointed that they had no chance of coming to grips with the fleeing horsemen. By this time they had nothing but contempt for the German cavalry. You will remember that at the beginning of the retreat a German cavalry division had declined "to take on" a British brigade. Sir John French tells us that already our cavalry had established "a decided superiority over that of the enemy."

The Uhlan's Last Ride.
Armoured motor cars containing sharpshooters play an important part in the war. This picture shows a car giving chase to a Uhlan patrol. One man has already been laid low.

This exploit won some respite for our men, and the pursuit was shaken off for a time. The Germans were weary with much marching and fighting, and our engineers had checked their advance by blowing up all the river and canal bridges as soon as they were crossed. That evening our much-tried men enjoyed comfortable meals, the refreshment of a bath, and a good eight hours' sleep.

The German pursuit, however, was soon continued with great vigour. At one o'clock on Saturday Sir John French knew that at least two corps of the enemy were advancing towards his front. At this time he received a visit from General Joffre, who brought him good news. He had ordered the 5th French Army on the Oise to move forward and attack the Germans on the Somme, and this meant less pressure on the British. But the best news of all was that, quite unknown to the enemy, a new 6th French Army had been formed on the British left flank, and was ready to be launched against von Kluck as soon as the whole Allied line should be in the required position. There was still a good deal of retreating to be done before the word to advance could be given, and that morning the British forces retired to a position a few miles north of the line Compiègne[78]-Soissons,[79] along the river Aisne.

Compiègne is an interesting country town near the junction of the Oise, and in the midst of heavily forested country. It was a favourite residence of French kings, and is perhaps known to you as the place where Joan of Arc was taken prisoner by the Burgundians in 1430. A monument to her memory stands in front of the fine Hôtel de Ville. At the end of the town near the forest there is a royal palace, which was built in the reign of Louis XV. The forest itself is fifty-nine miles in circumference, and has many beautiful walks. In the summer it is a favourite resort of Parisians.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STORY OF BATTERY L OF THE R.H.A.

The retiral of the British army from the La Fère-Noyon line was the signal for the Germans to advance. Small rearguard actions were continually fought, and on 1st September there was an engagement of a very fierce character, during which Battery L of the Royal Horse Artillery covered itself with glory. I must tell you the story in detail.

Gunner J. C. Eyles, one of the survivors of L Battery, says: "After bivouacking at Compiègne some of us had a fine river swim, and, what is more, we washed our underclothing for the first time since we left England in August. And it wanted it, too! I was a bit unlucky, for my clothes were still wet when I was ordered to take outpost duty at night. Therefore I had to pack my wet things on the front of my saddle, and do duty in only my tunic and riding pants. It was just a bit cold.

"On the following day we had a long, weary march until dusk, when I had the misfortune, while giving my horse water from a stream, to lose trace of my battery. Making the best of a bad job, I tracked towards what I thought would be our lines. While trudging along with my horse, my revolver in my hand, I heard the sound of galloping hoofs. I pulled into the grassy slope on the side of the road, thinking that my time had come, and that that would be a good place to face it. Dismounting, I awaited events, and after a minute or so I was relieved to see two of the 2nd Dragoon Guards, to whom I shouted in good old English. It was lucky I did, too: I had been unconsciously walking straight towards the German lines, and the two British soldiers were, as a matter of fact, being chased by a large patrol of Uhlans. In a second I was riding off with the dragoons, and, like them, escaped."

Battery L of the R.H.A.
"One lone gun in the dawn."

The gunner rejoined his battery, and found the men exhausted but looking forward to advancing against the foe. Early on the morning of 1st September Battery L was at Néry,[80] a little village about two and a half miles south of the southern edge of the forest. It was a chilly morning, and the surrounding country was heavily veiled in fog. About 4 a.m. the battery received the order to unsaddle and rest the horses. Overnight a ridge about 600 or 800 yards away had been

occupied by French troops, but during the darkness they had retreated. No order to retire had reached L Battery, probably because the Germans had cut the telegraph wires.

About 4.30 many of the gunners and drivers were lying on the ground with their tunics off, and others were shaving and washing. The horses were unsaddled, and had their nosebags on. Suddenly ten or a dozen German guns galloped up to the ridge, unlimbered, and opened a heavy fire on the battery; while Maxims, which had been brought up on motor cars, enfiladed them with a murderous rain of bullets. The first volley killed most of the horses, and strewed the ground with dead and dying men. The survivors attempted to reach their guns and make a reply; but three of the guns were so battered by the enemy's shells that they were useless. The other three, however, were brought into action; but before long two of them were silenced, and the gunners shot down.

"Captain Bradbury, who had been walking behind the guns giving orders and encouraging the men to fight to the last like true R.H.A. soldiers, was killed. Lieutenant Giffard, although seriously wounded, continued at his post of duty, telling the gunners to 'stick it,' and refusing to leave until he was practically forced by some of our men to seek cover behind a haystack. All the other officers were killed, and all our sergeants were dead with the exception of one. But a fine last stand was made at that last gun by Gunner Derbyshire and Driver Osborne, under the orders of Battery Sergeant-Major Dorrell. Quite unconcernedly they continued their duty—Driver Osborne, although wounded in the back, supplying the ammunition; and Gunner Derbyshire firing the gun, apparently unaffected by being hurled from his feet two or three times, owing to the great force of impact as shells struck the ground near at hand.

"Other survivors had been ordered to take cover, and it was no pleasant experience to crawl like snakes, as we did, through a very muddy mangold-wurzel field, especially when you have only shirt and trousers on. However, that didn't hurt us. Meanwhile I Battery of the R.H.A., stationed about two miles to our rear, evidently realizing the true state of affairs, gave the Germans a hot taste of British gunnery—so hot, in fact, that everyone of the Kaiser's guns was silenced. Then cavalry (of the 1st Brigade) and a force of the Middlesex attacked; the German guns were captured, and over six hundred prisoners were taken. To the end Gunner Derbyshire and Driver Osborne held out, and although the only comment of each is, 'I only did my duty,' the battery is naturally proud that they have been recommended for the Victoria Cross."

I cannot leave this incident without quoting the fine verses which appeared in the *Times* shortly after the glorious valour of Battery L was reported in England. They are worth learning by heart.

BATTERY L.

Battery L of the R.H.A.—
Oh, the cold gray light o' the dawn—
Woke as the mists were wreathing pale,
Woke to the moan of the shrapnel hail;
Battery L of the R.H.A.
Sprang to their guns in the dawn.

Six guns all at the break o' day—
Oh, the crash of the shells at dawn—
And out of the six guns only one,
Left for the fight ere the fight's begun,
Battery L of the R.H.A.
Swung her round in the dawn.

They swung her clear, and they blazed away—
Oh, the blood-red light o' the dawn—
Osborne, Derbyshire, brave Dorrell,
These are the heroes of Battery L,
These are the men of the R.H.A.
Who fought that gun in the dawn.

Ay, that was a fight that was fought that day,
As the gray mists fled from the dawn,
Till they broke up the enemy one by one,
Silenced him steadily gun by gun—
Battery L of the R.H.A.,
One lone gun in the dawn.

JAMES L. HARVEY.

On the same day, at a place about fifteen miles east of Néry, another fierce rearguard action was fought. The Germans surprised the 4th Guards Brigade—Grenadiers, Coldstreams, and Irish—amidst the woods. They were in a field by a stream, preparing for a long-delayed "tub," when the first shell crashed into them. At once the bugles rang out, and the Guards, angry at being balked of their bath, scrambled into their trenches and loaded their rifles, eager for the enemy's onset.

The German cavalry dashed out of the woods in great strength, and drove forward the British left, thinking that they had only to walk over a broken and defeated army. They were soon undeceived. The Guards held their fire until the enemy was well within effective range, and then the rifles rang out and the Maxims got to work. Many German saddles were emptied; the horsemen broke and fled.

Meanwhile the German guns were worming their way nearer and nearer to the British line, and behind them the infantry were coming on in close-knit ranks. Our artillery now opened fire, and rifles and guns swept lanes of death through the ranks of the enemy. They wavered and retired.

Again the enemy, reinforced by machine guns and artillery, with cavalry on the flanks, bore down upon the British. At this moment our cavalry appeared, and the Guards, leaping to their feet, doubled towards the top of a neighbouring hill which the Germans were bent on seizing. The enemy reached it first, dug himself in, and brought up his guns, which immediately began a furious cannonade. Our men went to earth at once in hastily-made trenches. Three German cavalry regiments now flung themselves at the thin khaki line of the Irish Guards; but these gallant fellows were quite undismayed. With wonderful coolness they fired continuously on the advancing foe, and at the word "Charge!" swept forward with gleaming bayonets, singing "God save Ireland." For a few minutes there was a mad confusion of plunging horses, whirling sabres, and stabbing bayonets, and then all was over. The German horsemen turned tail, and the Irishmen, dropping to earth, picked them off as they retired. The German infantry behind the retreating cavalry hesitated to advance; but their artillery moved up to new positions, and fired upon our men with deadly effect. The British horsemen were loosed at them: some of the guns limbered up and dashed off into safety; those that remained were captured and their gunners were sabred. This done, the British cavalry charged into the German masses again and again.

The enemy had been soundly thrashed, and the British continued their retreat unmolested. For five days they marched southwards without attack. On 3rd September they crossed the Marne, blowing up the bridges on their line of retirement. That day our left was almost within gunshot of the eastern forts of Paris. Two days later the British army lay south of the Grand Morin,[81] a tributary of the Marne. The long retreat was over.

It is impossible to overpraise the indomitable spirit of the British army during its retirement from the Belgian frontier. Our men bore the heavy fighting, the weary marches through chilly and often wet nights, the awful strain on nerves and temper, with wonderful fortitude. All that they asked was to be allowed to stand and "go for" the enemy. An officer thus describes the talk of the men during the last days of the retreat:—

"'Hang it all, sir,' one man said to me, 'if we can do thirty miles a day without food and sleep in a retreat, we could do fifty in an advance.' Constantly the question I was asked was, 'When are they going to let us halt and have another go at them?' or, 'How soon do you think it will be before they let us turn and get a bit of our own back?' or, 'I suppose it's a trap we're leading them Germans into. We're the bait, so to speak, and the French all this time are getting in behind them.' It was fine to listen to and watch them—ragged, footsore, bearded, dirty, and unkempt, gaunt-eyed from lack of sleep, but upheld by that invincible spirit which is the glory of the race."

From Mons to the Grand Morin our men had tramped 135 miles, as the crow flies, in fourteen days. For the British troops the long days of the retreat "had been like a moving picture seen through a haze of weariness and confusion. Blazing days among the coal heaps and grimy villages of Hainault, which reminded our north countrymen of Lancashire and Durham; nights of aching travel on upland roads through fields of beet and grain; dawns that broke over slow streams and grassy valleys upon eyes blind with lack of sleep; the cool beech woods of Compiègne; the orchards of Ourcq[82] and Marne now heavy with plum and cherry. And hour after hour the rattle of musketry and the roaring swell of the great shells; the hurried entrenchments and the long, deadly vigils; or the sudden happy chance of a blow back, when the bayonet took revenge for dusty miles and crippled bodies and lost comrades. On the evening of the 4th the van of the retreat saw from the slopes above the Grand Morin a land of coppice and pasture rolling southwards to a broad valley, and far off the dusk of many trees. It was the forest of Fontainebleau[83] and the vale of the Seine. The Allies had fallen back behind all but one of the four rivers which from north and east open the way to Paris."[84]

CHAPTER XX.

MORE STORIES OF THE RETREAT.

The stories which you have read in these pages have been told by British soldiers. I am sure you would now like to read some French stories of various incidents which occurred during the retreat. The following story relates how a French cavalryman received the surrender of three hundred Germans.

One fine morning in August, during a sharp engagement in a small village of Alsace, a French hussar was captured by the enemy. The Germans, who numbered three hundred, were then holding the village. Shortly afterwards French artillery began to shell the place, and it was evident that an infantry attack would soon follow.

When the French infantry were seen advancing, the German officer sought advice from the captured hussar. "If you resist," said the Frenchman, "your whole command will be shot down." To this the German replied, "We are willing to surrender, but we are afraid that your people will put us to death." The hussar gave his word of honour that no such fate would overtake them, and assured them that in France the rules of civilized warfare were always observed. "You need fear nothing," concluded the hussar; "you will be well treated by my countrymen."

A sigh of relief escaped from the lips of the officer, and he said, "Such being the case, we will surrender." At once the hussar placed himself at the head of the column, gave the order to march, and with three hundred Germans at his heels led the way to the French lines, where he handed over his prisoners.

Here is a story in praise of German courage. It is told by a British artilleryman. "The grandest thing I saw out there," he says, "was the fight of a handful of Germans. These chaps were the last of a regiment to cross a stream under a fiendish rifle and artillery fire.

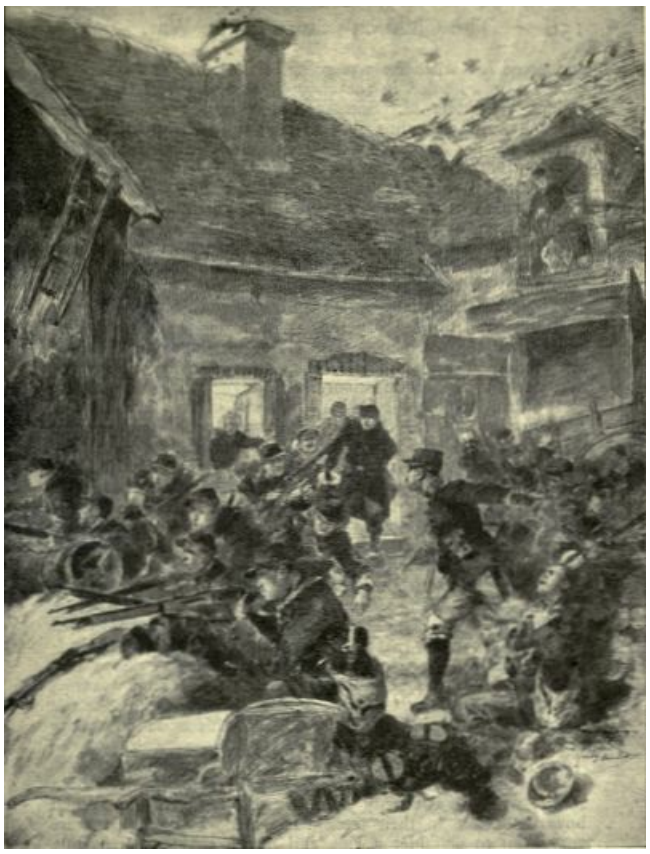
"They were hotly pursued by French cavalry and infantry, and when they saw that it was all up with them, the remnant made for a little hill and gathered round the regimental flag, to fight to the last. The French closed round them, and called on them to surrender; but not they! They stood there, back to back, until the last man went down with the flag in his grasp and a dozen bullet wounds in his body.

"Then the flag was captured by the French; but there was no shouting over the victory, and every soldier who passed that way, and knew the story of those chaps, bared his head to the memory of brave men."

In your history books you read of the Battle of Fontenoy, which was fought five miles south-east of Tournai in the year 1745. In that battle, so the story goes, an English general shouted to the enemy, "Gentlemen of the French Guards, fire first." To which they replied, "The French Guard never fires first; fire yourselves." Strange to say, an incident which recalls this exchange of courtesies took place on August 28, 1914, when a French infantry battalion entered Mezières in order to defend the bridges over the Meuse. On reaching the railway bridge, the French lieutenant commanding the detachment learnt that a German patrol was hiding in the station. Taking some men with him, he hurried off to the station and dispersed the patrol. The German officer took refuge in an engine shed, and was discovered by the lieutenant hiding behind a tender. The German prepared to sell his life dearly. The opponents, revolver in hand, stood facing each other. "Pray shoot," said the Frenchman; whereupon the German did so, and missed. The Frenchman then fired, and shot his adversary dead.

How a young French bull played a soldier's part is told in the following story. Early in September, when the Germans were approaching a village between the Marne and the Seine, the inhabitants opened their cowsheds and set the animals

free, so that they might not easily be captured by the enemy. Among the cattle was a steer, which was so terrified by the sound of guns that it charged directly at a German infantry company which had taken up a position on a mound. Mad with rage, the animal dashed into the midst of the Germans, knocking them over like ninepins. Several men fired at him; but the bullets only maddened him the more. He did not fall until he had laid eighteen Germans low.



Hard Pressed. ***By permission of The Sphere.***
This picture illustrates an incident at La Fère during the retreat. The French, after snatching a few hours' sleep, were shelled in the gray of the dawning, and were obliged to rush hastily from their billets to resist the German onset. After taking a heavy toll of the enemy they continued their retreat.

A very interesting story is told of a young Frenchwoman who was a servant in a girls' boarding-school situated in a village on the line of German advance. When war broke out the pupils were sent away to their homes, and she was left alone in the school, with an old deaf lady who had lost the full use of her limbs. When the Germans entered the village they went through the girls' school from cellar to attic, collecting all the linen and bedding for the use of their wounded, whom, for some reason best known to themselves, they installed, not in the main school building but in the adjoining chapel.

The servant girl tended the German wounded with great devotion, for two reasons: first, because she was very tender-hearted; and secondly, because she had a special reason for wishing to stand well with the invaders. She had a secret, and it was this. Down in the grotto at the foot of the school garden she had concealed ten British "Tommies," who had lost their way, and had arrived hungry, weary, and footsore just an hour before the Germans entered the village. "They will be here in a moment," said the British officer, not wishing that the girl should run into danger on their behalf. "Never mind," she said; "I'll hide you somewhere, and look after you." Then she led them to the grotto.

The soldiers found their quarters narrow, damp, and very uncomfortable. The girl was anxious to give them better accommodation, so in the night she managed to get them into the house and instal them in the unoccupied rooms on the top floor of the school.

The ten "Tommies" were now in comfortable quarters; but how to feed them was a difficult question. She gave them her

own food, but that was not enough. Then she went to and fro amongst her friends and relations, begging a piece of bread here and some vegetables there. When the Germans saw her with a heavily-loaded basket they were suspicious, and asked her what she was going to do with the food. "It is for your wounded in the chapel," she said, and their suspicions were allayed. She appointed herself cook for the Germans, and was thus able to pick up all sorts of broken victuals for her friends on the top floor. British soldiers, as you know, are very fond of tobacco, and the girl was anxious to provide them with something to smoke. The Germans had made a rule that no one was to buy more than two sous' worth of tobacco at a time. This made her task very hard, but it did not daunt her. She got together some boy friends, and sent them to buy small quantities of tobacco at various shops each day. In this way the "Tommies" on the top floor were able to enjoy their pipes while they remained in hiding.

A hundred times a day they were in danger of being discovered by the Germans. The clever girl knew this, so she provided them with a rope, which they hung down through trap doors to the ground floor. She advised them to practise escape drill, so that they might get away if the Germans discovered them. This they did, and were soon quite expert. "Just imagine!" said the girl when she told the story: "my Englishmen after a few days were able to strap their haversacks and all slip down the rope noiselessly in less than five minutes."

Happily the "Tommies" were never discovered, and there was no need for them to use their rope as a means of escape. Some time afterwards the Germans were obliged to leave the town, and the British soldiers were able to reach their own lines in safety. Before they departed they gave the girl their names and addresses, and begged her to come to England when the war was over, so that they might repay her for all her kindness. The French paper which reports the story says that one of the ten was a nobleman, a relative of King George, and that his name was—Lord Smith! Can't you imagine the merry face of the rogue who gave the girl this astounding piece of information?

I have already told you that every French boy must be a soldier when he is twenty years of age. Many of the French boys who were in their teens when the war broke out were very keen to shoulder a rifle and march against the enemy. When the Germans drew near to Paris, a boy named André, who was only twelve years of age, felt that he must do something to defend his country. One day he disappeared, leaving behind him the following letter:—

> "My dear Father and Mother,—I am starting for the war. Don't worry about me. I have my savings-bank money.—Your loving son,
>
> "André."

A fortnight passed, and the anxious parents heard nothing of their boy. Then one morning he reappeared, very hardy and sunburnt but very sorrowful, and gave this account of his adventures. He had travelled many long miles before he reached a regiment of the army. He told the men he had come to help them. They laughed at him, but they had not the heart to send him away. So he had marched with them, shared their rations, and slept in their bivouacs or billets at night. At last the colonel noticed him, and made him give an account of himself. The upshot was, that he was sent home to wait until he was some years older and could join the army in the proper way.

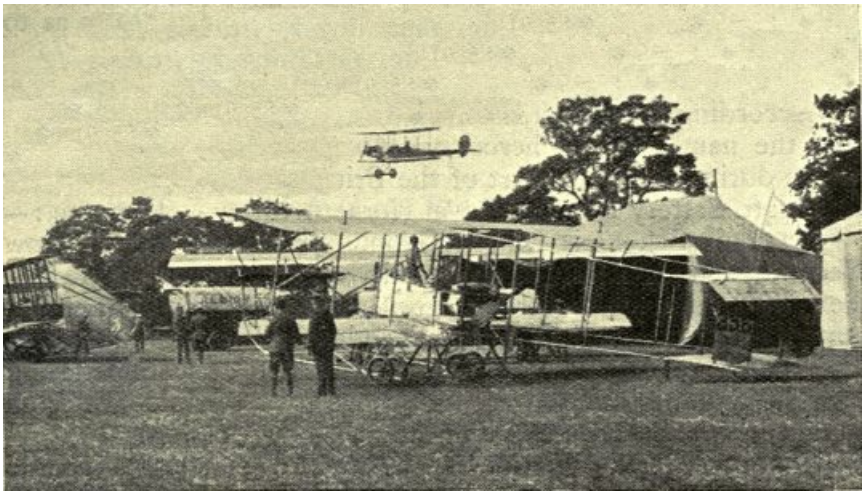
Now I must tell you some British stories. Lance-Corporal Nolan of the Scots Greys, who formed one of a reconnoitring party, was preparing to engage a German patrol when a scout came up to say that a whole division of the enemy was at hand. The Greys attacked the patrol; but our hero had his horse shot under him, and he received a bullet in the right arm. A sergeant gave him a lift on his horse, and together they tried to gallop into safety. As they dashed on through the streets of a village, the Germans fired at them from the windows, killing the horse and wounding the sergeant. Both men were captured, and the Germans stripped them of everything but their trousers and shirts. One man snatched from Nolan the revolver which he had taken from a German officer, and was about to rob him of his shirt, when the very German officer from whom he had taken the revolver appeared, and said, "You are the man who took my revolver. Let me have it back instantly." Nolan replied, "I haven't got it. One of your own men has taken it." "Then come with me," said the officer, "and find the man who took it, and I will have him shot." "I went round with him," said Nolan, "as a matter of form; but I was not having any. Even if I had found the chap who had taken the revolver, I should not have peached on him, as I

knew what his fate would have been." Nolan was afterwards taken to hospital, and was left behind when the Germans were driven off by a British cavalry brigade. Finally his comrades took him back to his own lines.

Many stories are told of brave fellows who have gallantly dashed through a storm of bullets to carry important messages to their comrades in other trenches. A wounded corporal of the Gloucester Regiment gives us an instance which occurred during the retreat. "Orders had been given to a battalion holding an advanced position to fall back. The only way to get the order through was for a man to run the gauntlet of a murderous fire. Volunteers were called for from the Royal Irish Fusiliers. All wanted to go, but by tossing for it a choice was made. The man on whom the lot fell was a shock-headed fellow, who didn't look as if there was much in him; but he had grit. Ducking his head in a way that made us laugh, he rushed into the hail of shot and shell. He cleared the first hundred yards without being hit, but in the second hundred they brought him down. He rose again and struggled on for a few minutes, but was hit once more, and then collapsed.

"Two men now dashed into the fire and rushed across, while the Germans were doing their best to pot them. One picked up the wounded man and started back to the trenches with him, while the other took the dispatch and ran ahead with it. Just as the wounded man and his mate were within a few yards of our trenches, and we were cheering them, there came another hail of bullets, and both went down dead. Meanwhile the man with the dispatch was racing for all that he was worth. He got through all right, until in the last lap he was brought down like a felled ox. He was seen from the other trenches, and half a dozen men rushed out to his aid. They were all shot down, but he was now crawling towards the trenches with his message. With assistance he reached them, and, d, thanks to him, the battalion was safely withdrawn to a new position."

In the dispatch describing the first part of the retreat from Mons, Sir John French said: "I wish particularly to bring to your lordship's notice the admirable work done by the Royal Flying Corps, under Sir David Henderson. Their skill, energy, and perseverance have been beyond all praise."



A British Aviation Camp.
Photo, Newspaper Illustrations, Ltd.

Here is a story which shows you the resource and coolness of a British flying man in a very tight place. During the retreat to the Marne a squadron commander, with a passenger, made a long scouting flight over a part of the country from which the British had withdrawn while he was in the air. On his return he descended in a field which seemed to afford him a good landing-place, and was, as he thought, within the British lines. As his machine was running along the grass

and about to come to rest, he saw to his amazement two mounted German officers galloping towards him, and behind them large numbers of infantry, who had been hidden behind the trees.

Fortunately, the propeller of his aeroplane was still revolving, so he opened the throttle and set the engine going again at top speed. Instead of rising rapidly from the ground, he flew along quite close to the German officers, waving his hand in friendly greeting. His passenger at once grasped the situation, and followed the pilot's example. The Germans thought that they were two of their own air scouts, and cheered them heartily.

The pilot turned and flew back across the German front again, waving his hand and showing other signs of friendliness. Slowly he rose, higher and higher, and circled round and round, until he was high in the air, when he headed for the safety of the Royal Flying Corps camp. He had completely deceived the enemy, and had obtained valuable information as to their numbers and the positions which they held. You will be able to appreciate fully the cleverness of this flying man when I tell you that there was a Union Jack painted on the wings of his aeroplane. He very skilfully turned and "banked" his machine so that the near wing-tips pointed down to the Germans, and the underside of the wings which showed the Union Jack were thus hidden from view, until he was so far up in the air as to be out of range of their guns.

According to custom, I will conclude this chapter by giving you the names of the heroes who were awarded the Victoria Cross during the latter part of the British retreat. All of them belong to Battery L of the Royal Horse Artillery. They are:—

Battery Sergeant-Major George Thomas Dorrell (now Second Lieutenant). I have already told you (see pages 147-8) how he continued to serve a gun at Néry on 1st September until all the ammunition was expended. You will remember that all the officers of his battery were killed or wounded, and that he and his mates were subjected to a terrible fire from guns and Maxims at a range of only six hundred yards.

Sergeant David Nelson (now Second Lieutenant). While under heavy fire at Néry, and severely wounded, he helped to bring the guns into action, and remained with them until all the ammunition was used up, although he had been ordered to retire to cover.

Captain Edward Kinder Bradbury. You read on page 147 how gallantly he rallied the men of his battery, and directed their fire until he was shot down. Unhappily, the Victoria Cross was not awarded to him until after his lamented death.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR AT SEA.

While our gallant soldiers are resting after their long retreat, we will make for

"The sea! the sea! the open sea!
The blue, the fresh, the ever-free!"

and follow the fortunes of our sailors during the first two months of the war. In Chapter II., Volume I., you learnt that our first line of defence was fully prepared for active service the moment that war broke out. From the first we had the command of the seas. Our British Home Fleet was fully forty per cent. stronger than any fleet that the Germans could bring against it in the North Sea, and besides this we had many other squadrons scouring the oceans of the world, and the assistance of the French and Japanese navies. On the sea the Germans and Austrians were hopelessly inferior to the Allies.

Such being the case, the Germans, though they had long toasted "The Day" on which they were going to destroy our naval supremacy for ever, dared not leave their harbours and show fight. They were very wise in this respect. They knew that pitched battles could only end in one way—the entire destruction of their navy.

You read in Chapter XVII. of Volume I. that their plan was to strew the North Sea with mines, in the hope that our ships would bump upon them and be blown up. In this way they hoped that our strength would be slowly reduced to their own level. The Germans meant to keep their fleet in safety until they could fight us upon even terms. They believed that our sailors ploughing the sea day after day in search of an enemy that could not be found, and going in constant terror of floating mines and submarines, would grow stale and dispirited. Then when many of our ships had gone down, and our men were worn out in body and in mind, they meant to sally forth and crush British sea-power once and for all. It was an excellent plan—on paper.

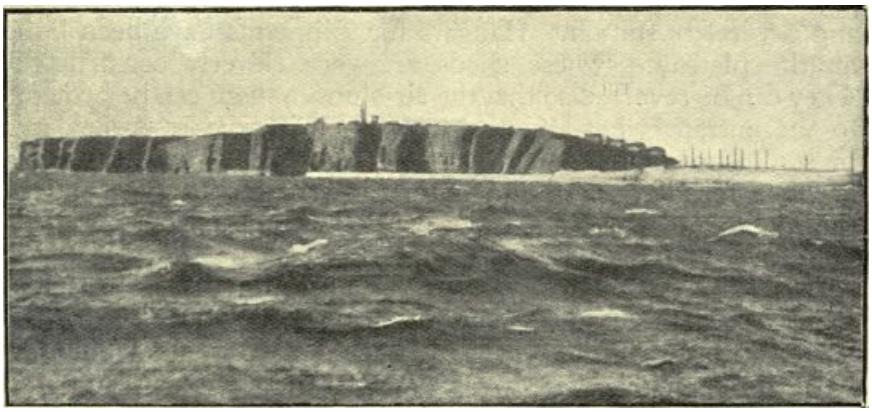
Before I pass on to describe the first sea fight of the war, let us look for a moment at the coast line of Germany. It is, as you know, entirely confined to a strip on the North Sea, and to a long stretch on the Baltic Sea. On both these sea fronts Germany had to meet a naval power—the British in the North Sea, and the Russians in the Baltic. You were told on page 141 of Volume I. that, in order to enable German warships to pass rapidly from one front to the other, the Kiel Canal has been constructed. The work of widening and deepening this canal was completed some six weeks before the outbreak of war.

The German coast on the North Sea is only about a hundred miles from west to east, not counting indentations; and it is washed by very shallow waters, which are much impeded by sandbanks. The sea is gaining on the shore, as you may notice from the long line of fringing islands which were formerly part of the mainland. Close to the Dutch frontier, on the estuary of the Ems, is the port and manufacturing town of Emden. The Germans have spent much money in constructing at Emden a harbour big enough and deep enough to accommodate the largest liners and warships. Between the mouth of the Ems and the Jade there is a long, sandy stretch of coast, backed by dunes and broken by tidal creeks. On the west side of the Jade estuary stands Wilhelmshaven, the great North Sea naval base of Germany. It was established by the present Kaiser's grandfather in 1869, and is very strongly fortified. It boasts two harbours, several wet and dry docks, coaling basins, and a large naval barracks. In time of peace the First Squadron of the German High Sea Fleet is stationed at Wilhelmshaven.

On the east side of the estuary of the Weser is Bremerhaven, with three large harbour basins and several docks, including the dry dock of the North German Lloyd steamers. About twenty miles north of Bremerhaven, at the mouth of the Elbe, is Cuxhaven, which between 1892 and 1895 was turned into a port capable of berthing the largest ocean-going steamers. It is the outport of Hamburg, the greatest seaport on the Continent of Europe, and the Hamburg-America steamers make it their headquarters. Nature has already fortified the ports along this coast, for the estuaries on which they stand consist of a network of mazy channels winding amidst deadly sandbanks, which can only be threaded safely by pilots who spend their lives in the work. The Germans have, however, not trusted solely to this natural protection, but have set up very strong forts at all points where there is danger of attack.

The whole coast is followed by a double line of railways, built not for trade but for purposes of war—probably for an

invasion of England. The Germans watch the coast most jealously, and will not allow visitors to approach the chief forts. In the year 1911 they imprisoned a British Territorial officer, Captain Bertrand Stewart—the first to give his life in the war—on the false charge of spying out the defences of the towns and islands along this precious seaboard.



The Island of Heligoland. Part of the harbour is shown on the right.
Photo, Exclusive News Agency.

About the centre of the North Sea line of coast, thirty-five miles to the northward of Cuxhaven, is the island of Heligoland, which is the fortified outer guard of the Kiel Canal and the key to the German coast defences. For eighty-three years the Union Jack waved over it, but in 1890 it was ceded to Germany. It is a sandstone islet, one mile in length and 650 yards in breadth, with almost vertical cliffs on all sides. So soft is the sandstone that the sea makes great inroads on it. In the year 800 A.D. the circumference of Heligoland was 120 miles, but by 1300 A.D. it had been reduced by the everlasting gnawing of the sea to forty-five miles. Now it is but three or four miles round. The Germans have surrounded it with a concrete wall, so that the sea can no longer eat it away.

In the heart of the rock, underground passages, chambers, and galleries have been excavated, and the whole island has been turned into an impregnable fortress. The many batteries are invisible from the sea, and the plateau on top of the island has been made bombproof. Only on the north side of the island can the cliffs be scaled by an invader, and the possible landing-places are all commanded by guns. On the highest point of the island—245 feet above the sea—are a lighthouse and a wireless station. Hangars for Zeppelins have been built on the plateau. These sheds are very cleverly constructed. They can be revolved so that the air-ships in them can be brought to the entrance, head to the wind, and, if necessary, they can be sunk into a valley out of sight of the sea. There is a large harbour for destroyers and submarines at the eastern end of the island, and also a small dockyard for repairing light craft.

When Heligoland passed into German hands a Russian soldier said that thenceforth a blockade of the North Sea German coast would be extremely difficult. A British blockading fleet would not only have to expect attack from the front, but both its flanks would be constantly threatened. Thus the German vessels would be able to slip out, make raids on the estuaries and ports of the east coast of Britain, and attack British ships in their own waters. We shall see later that this prophecy came true. Meanwhile the Germans strewed their own coast with mine-fields, and thus made it almost impossible of attack.

Immediately war broke out our Grand Fleet disappeared. It melted into space, as it were, and nothing was seen of it but the ships patrolling the coast. But though a thick veil was drawn over its movements, it made itself felt at once. It forced the Germans to keep their most powerful ships in harbour, and it put an end to all talk of invasion. In the year 1910 Sir Arthur Wilson, who was then First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, said that the really serious danger that we had to guard against in war was not an invasion of our shores, but the stoppage of our trade and the destruction of our merchant shipping. Our overseas trade is extremely important, and the destruction of our merchant shipping would, as you know, rob us of our food and compel us to starve or surrender. The Germans know this very well, and just before the war they

sent out cruisers and armed liners to fall upon our peaceful merchant ships and sink them.

Sir John Jellicoe on board his flagship, the Iron Duke. ***Photo, Alfieri.***

We had, of course, prepared against such attacks on our shipping. Our cruisers were in every quarter of the globe, and we immediately began to sweep the German commerce raiders from the seas. Our Government believed that we should lose 10 per cent. of our vessels, but by the beginning of October we had only lost 1¼ per cent., while Germany and Austria had lost 10 per cent. of their total shipping. This was a remarkable state of things, and quite contrary to our experience in former wars. During the year 1813, when the British navy was at the height of its power, and we were at war with the United States, the ships of the enemy captured 650 British vessels. From 4th August 1914 to 10th March 1915 the Germans only captured or sank 90 of our ships. By the end of October the trade routes were practically as free as they had ever been. British trade passed to and fro almost as freely as in time of peace. Our food supply was hardly molested, and though prices rose there was no shortage. It was said very truly that every British child ought to repeat this grace before meat: "Thank God for my good dinner and for the British Navy."

Before I tell you how the German commerce raiders came to grief, you shall hear the story of two German cruisers, the *Goeben*[85] and the *Breslau*. They were in the Mediterranean Sea, off the coast of Algeria, when war broke out. Probably they had been ordered to the Mediterranean to assist the Austrians, and also the Italians if they should elect to take a hand in the war. As you know, the Italians refused to fight along with their allies, because they believed that Germany and Austria had provoked the war. The *Goeben* was the fastest ship in the German fleet, and the *Breslau* was only slightly inferior in speed. The two ships began operations by shelling some of the unprotected coast towns of Algeria, and then turned northwards, with the object, it is believed, of making for the Strait of Gibraltar. They were headed off by a British fleet; but they outdistanced their pursuers, and early on the mornings of 5th August appeared off Messina. Here the captains and the officers made their wills, and handed them over, along with their valuables and signed portraits of the Kaiser, to the care of the German consul. Then the decks were cleared, and the bands struck up, and out they steamed, as everybody thought, to give battle to the British fleet.

Unfortunately for us, they evaded our ships. When, however, they were going full steam to the eastward, and were off Cape Matapan, the British cruiser *Gloucester* sighted them. Though she was only one ship against two, she gallantly engaged them, and did some damage to both. They took to their heels, and were next heard of in the Dardanelles, where, contrary to all the rules of war, they were sold to the Turkish Government. Such was the inglorious exploit of Germany's crack cruisers. It was a bad beginning for the German navy, but there was worse to follow.

The first of the German commerce raiders to go under was the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*[86]—far too big a mouthful for the British sailor, who promptly christened her "Billy the Grocer." She was a fine fast liner of 14,000 tons, and had been armed with 4-inch guns. Her business was to hold up sea traffic between Great Britain and the Cape of Good Hope. She captured and sank a few ships, amongst them the *Kaipara*, belonging to the New Zealand Shipping Company. Shortly after sinking the *Kaipara* she was attacked by H.M.S. *Highflyer* (August 27). The fight was fast and furious, but the guns of the *Kaiser Wilhelm* were easily outranged. The first shot from the *Highflyer* disabled the German's port gun and tore away part of her bridge. Shortly afterwards she sank riddled with shot. Our losses were one man killed and five slightly wounded. The German captain had placed his prisoners of war on board a collier before the duel began, and this and previous acts of humanity won him the approval of our Admiralty. When the news was flashed by wireless to Whitehall the Admiralty sent the following message to the *Highflyer*:—

"Bravo! you have rendered a service not only to Britain, but to the peaceful commerce of the world. The German officers and crew appear to have carried out their duties with humanity and restraint, and are therefore worthy of all seamanlike consideration."

On September 4 came news of disaster. The *Speedy*, a British torpedo gunboat of an old type, bumped against a mine and foundered. Next day H.M.S. *Pathfinder* was steaming northward on a calm sea, and was about twenty miles from St. Abb's Head, when suddenly a terrific explosion blew her almost to fragments. She had been torpedoed by a German submarine, the periscope of which was seen shortly before the explosion. The skipper of a trawler who witnessed the disaster said that he saw the ship surrounded by a cloud of smoke, and that when it cleared there was not a trace of her to be seen. He hurried to the rescue, and so did other fishing vessels in the neighbourhood, and by their exertions some of the crew were saved, but 250 men and 9 officers perished. For a few days the Admiralty kept back the news from the public, in the hope that one or more of the submarines in the neighbourhood might be trapped. Later on, it was reported that these venturesome craft had been scouting as far north as the Orkneys. German wireless news informed us that the *Pathfinder* had been sunk by the U22.[87]

The British navy had its revenge twelve days later. Submarine E9,[88] commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Max K. Horton, an officer of the greatest daring and skill, of whom we shall hear more later, pushed into the Bight of Heligoland, and, six miles south of the island, fell in with the German cruiser *Hela*. He discharged two torpedoes at her, one striking her at the bow and the other amidships. She burst into flames and sank in an hour, most of the crew being saved. When E9 returned to Harwich, flying a little yellow flag, and beneath it a white flag with the skull and cross bones, all seafaring men knew that she had been victorious. She had a great reception; the crews of the warships in the harbour cheered her again and again, and Lieutenant-Commander Horton was playfully dubbed by his comrades "The Double-toothed Pirate."

The Exploit of E9: the Sinking of the Hela.

On 20th September came the news of a serious misfortune. Since the outbreak of war H.M.S. *Pegasus* had been working from Zanzibar along the coast of German East Africa. She had destroyed the port of Dar-es-Salaam,[89] and had sunk a German gunboat and a floating dock. At 5 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, 20th September, she was lying at anchor in Zanzibar harbour, cleaning her boilers and repairing her machinery. Suddenly the German cruiser *Königsberg* appeared, and caught her unawares. The German ship was armed with guns which outranged those of the *Pegasus*, and she immediately began a fierce bombardment. The *Pegasus* discharged her broadside; but the Germans disabled her guns with three shots, and then for a quarter of an hour rained shells upon her, while she was helpless to reply. After a lull the *Königsberg* opened fire again, and the *Pegasus* by this time was able to return shot for shot. When the German steamed off to the southward the British ship was found to be badly holed, and was towed away and grounded on a sand spit. She had lost 25 killed and 80 wounded out of a crew of 234.

During the fight the British flag was twice shot away. It could not be nailed to the mast as in the days of Nelson, for masts are now made of iron; yet it had to fly in sight of the enemy, for without it the ship would seem to have surrendered. Rather than let this dishonour attach to them, two marines seized the flag and held it up while a new flagstaff was being rigged. It was still fluttering its defiance when the *Königsberg* steamed away.

I have told you in these pages of scores of heroic deeds; in the multitude of them let us not forget the brave and devoted men who kept the flag flying in Zanzibar harbour, and thus showed the enemy that the British navy of to-day is still inspired by the old unconquerable spirit of Blake and Nelson.

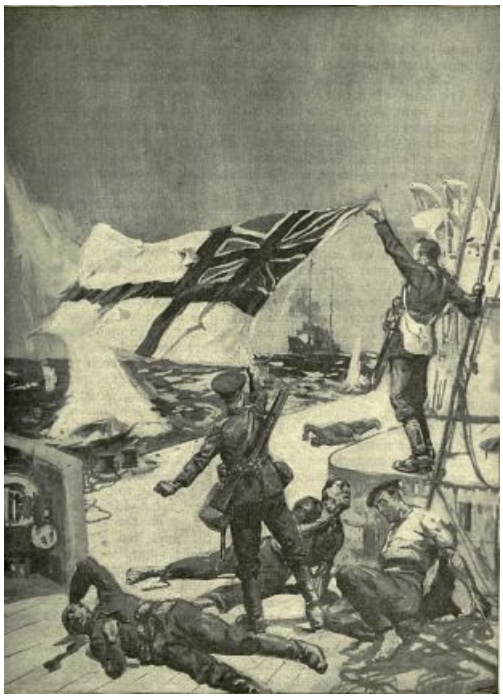
Early in September we first heard of the famous German raider the *Emden*. She had been on the China station when war broke out, and now she appeared in the Bay of Bengal and began her career of destruction. I will tell you her full story later on, when I come to the day when she was sunk.

Now we will learn how the German commerce raider *Cap Trafalgar* was sent to her doom. She was a fast liner, armed with eight 4-inch guns and machine guns. Strange to say, her victorious opponent was a British armed liner, the

Carmania, of the White Star line. Liverpool boys and girls are sure to have seen the *Carmania* lying in the Mersey, or at the Prince's landing-stage, for she has regularly crossed the Atlantic since 1905.

On 14th September the crew of the *Carmania* were just sitting down to their midday meal when the lookout men sighted a strange vessel. She was a liner as big as the *Carmania*. She was not at first recognized as an enemy, because she had rigged up a dummy funnel, and made herself look something like a Union Castle liner. The British captain, however, was suspicious, so he ordered a shot to be fired across the stranger's bows as a signal to heave-to. No sooner had the shot plumped into the water than the stranger opened fire, and the German flag fluttered to her masthead.

The *Carmania* let fly her port guns, and soon both vessels were fighting hammer and tongs. Both were big ships, and very good targets: the *Carmania*, for example, is 675 feet long and 60 feet out of the water, and aiming at her is like shooting at the side of a street. The *Cap Trafalgar* hit the *Carmania* more than three hundred times, but only two of the shots were serious. For the most part the shells flew high, and only damaged the *Carmania's* rigging and upper works. The British gunners aimed low, and her captain so manoeuvred the ship that she was end on to her enemy most of the time.



How they kept the Flag flying.

Shot after shot hit the *Cap Trafalgar* on the water line, and soon she caught fire. After the duel had lasted one hour and forty-five minutes she heeled over at such an angle that the men on the *Carmania* could actually look down her funnels. Then there was an explosion, and her bows went under; another explosion followed, and she slowly disappeared. Many of the men struggling in the water were rescued by the empty collier that accompanied her. The *Carmania* was prevented from sending her boats to the rescue because she was on fire forward. Our loss was nine men killed, five seriously wounded, and twenty-one slightly wounded. The following message was received from the Admiralty soon after the news reached London:—

"Well done. You have fought a fine action to a successful finish."

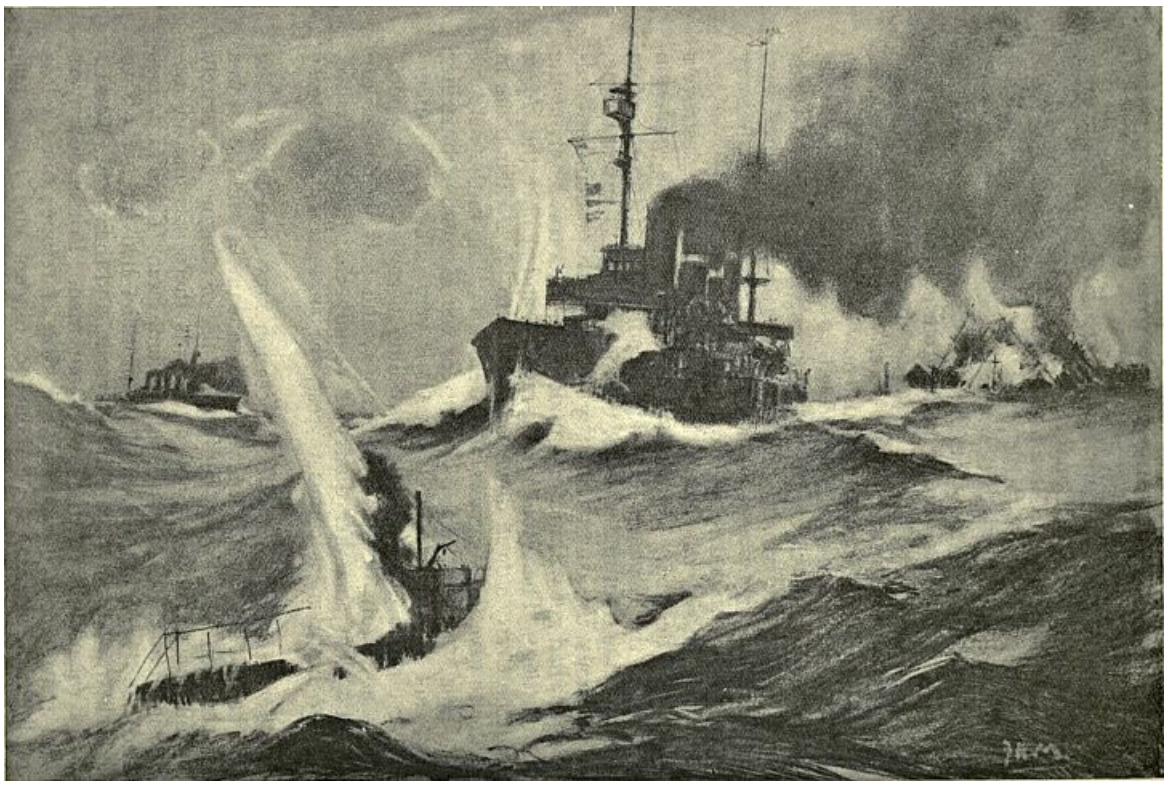
On the night before the Battle of Trafalgar Nelson knelt in his cabin on the *Victory* and wrote a beautiful prayer, in which he besought, "May humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet." It has always been so, and it will always be so. I must now tell you of an action in which humanity *before* victory led to a great disaster. On 22nd

September three British cruisers, the *Aboukir*, *Hogue*, and *Cressy*, were cruising off the coast of Holland. They were old ships, and they were at sea for the last time; the Admiralty had already decided to sell them for breaking up.

The weather was bad, and the usual escort of destroyers had been delayed. Suddenly there was a terrible explosion on board the *Aboukir*. She had been hit by a torpedo from a submarine right under one of her magazines. The submarine, the famous U9, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Weddingen, had got within range under cover of a trawler flying the Dutch flag. The *Aboukir* sank rapidly, and at once the *Hogue* and the *Cressy* slowed down, and began to lower their boats in order to save the survivors who were struggling in the water.

This was a splendid chance for the German submarine; for, as I have already told you, it is very difficult for under-water craft to torpedo a ship travelling zigzag at a high speed. She has to aim herself at her target, and only by chance can she do this when her quarry is rapidly changing its course. When, however, it comes to rest, the submarine has an easy task.

Two torpedoes in quick succession now sped towards the *Hogue*, and five minutes later she had gone under, and the sea was dotted with men swimming for dear life or clinging desperately to bits of wreckage. Soon afterwards there was another explosion, and the *Cressy* suffered the same fate. Three torpedoes had been fired at her, and two of them had hit her. Two Dutch trawlers now came to the rescue, and their crews worked like Trojans to save the lives of our men. British destroyers also arrived, and took part in the work of rescue; but the loss of life was very great. About 60 officers and 1,400 men were killed or drowned. The ships themselves were no great loss, but the 1,460 brave and highly-trained men who went down on that fateful day can never be replaced. "The conduct of the crew," says the commander of the *Cressy*, "was excellent throughout." "There was no panic of any sort," wrote the commander of the *Hogue*, "the men taking off their clothes as ordered, and falling in with hammock or wood. . . . All the men behaved extraordinarily well, obeying orders even when in the water and swimming for their lives. I witnessed many cases of great self-sacrifice and gallantry. Farmstone, able seaman, of the *Hogue*, jumped overboard from the launch to make room for others, and would not avail himself of assistance until all men near by were picked up; he was in the water about half an hour."



The sinking of the Aboukir, Hogue, and Cressy.
This illustration shows the Cressy making a gallant attempt to ram the submarine.

The Admiralty afterwards sent a message to the Fleet, pointing out that though this heavy loss of life was due to the natural desire of our sailors to save their fellows in distress, it ought to have been avoided, and would probably not have

taken place if the *Hogue* and the *Cressy* had kept on their courses, and left the work of succour to small craft. The stoppage of these vessels was no doubt a mistake, but I think that we shall all be ready to forgive those who made it when we remember that they laid down their lives while trying to save their comrades from a watery grave.

A sailor who was saved tells the following story:—

"The best thing I saw was the coolness of a little cadet. Not more than fourteen he looked. He drifted near me; he and a seaman clinging with their hands and elbows to the same bit of wood. I never saw anything as calm as that lad. He was talking to the seaman with him. 'Well,' he says, 'we've got to carry on like this, and if we die we shall die game.' And with that he begins to talk about everyday things on the sunken ship. 'What's the new engineer like?' he says, and chats about the little incidents in the mess. Only fourteen—a little light-haired boy. I hope he was saved."

So do we all. If he was rescued, we all hope that in days to come he will command one of the King's ships, and play his part as nobly as he did when floating on the sea, face to face with death.

There were about sixteen midshipmen on board the three ships. Some of them were cadets at Osborne or Devonport when the war began. All the older boys were hurried off to the sea, and were proud and happy to go. Some of them have kept the "Watch on the Brine" all through the long and bitter winter; others have helped to patrol distant seas and capture enemy ships; some have fought a good fight in the naval battles; all have done their duty, and many have died for their country.

There was a very lucky middy on board the *Aboukir* when she went down. One of the survivors asks: "What do you think of this regarding one of our brave midshipmen? He was on board the first ship which was struck, and as she was settling down he jumped overboard and swam clear of the swirling water caused by the sinking vessel. He was picked up by another of the cruisers; but she also was struck, and in her turn began to sink. The midshipman was uninjured by the explosion, and again he jumped and cleared the downward suction. He was picked up and put on board the third cruiser; but before long she, too, received her death wound. Again he got clear, and clung to a piece of wreckage, from which he was finally rescued."

A ship's carpenter on board the *Aboukir* had a similar experience. He was on board all the three cruisers when they were torpedoed. When the *Cressy* went down he swam to a raft, which towed him along for some distance, until a ship's boat picked him up.

A middy of the *Cressy*, a lad of sixteen, named Cazalet, commanded a whaler which was engaged in the work of rescue. He was actually the means of saving some eighty-eight lives. Altogether he picked up three boatloads of men, and not until there were no more survivors in sight did he seek refuge on board a Dutch trawler.

A fifteen-year-old drummer boy of the Marines managed to keep his head above water for about four hours. An empty rum cask floated by him, and he seized it and clung on to it until he was rescued. Strange to say, he suffered no harm from his long bath in the stormy sea.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BATTLE OF HELIGOLAND BIGHT.

In the first few days of the war there were rumours that a big naval battle had been fought in the North Sea, and that the bulk of the German fleet had been sent to the bottom. The wish was father to the thought. Most British people expected that there would be big sea fights, and they had no doubt of the result. We already know that the Germans had no intention of coming out in force to meet Sir John Jellicoe's ships. Their policy was to stick close to their own coasts, and try to wear us down by mines and torpedo attacks. As day after day went by and there was no startling news, impatient people began to ask, "What is the Navy doing?"

The Navy, though it had vanished into the unknown, was very busy, and was doing its work wonderfully well. Our light cruisers, destroyers, and submarines were continually watching the movements of the enemy. They are, as you know, the "eyes and ears" of the Fleet, and it was their business to inform Sir John Jellicoe the moment that enemy ships attempted to leave their harbours, so that he might bring them to action. Further, our warships had to prevent commerce raiders from slipping out and creeping into the ocean between Norway and the Orkneys in order to prey on the trade routes. Many of our warships were busy night and day examining neutral ships, to see that they did not smuggle what we call contraband of war[90] into Germany, while others acted as convoys to troopships and supply ships, or as pilots to friendly traders passing through the mine-fields. Fleets of trawlers, as you know, were engaged in sweeping up mines. The Navy, you observe, was fully occupied in the North Sea, "bottling up" the German fleet, and preventing war supplies from reaching the German ports; while, out on the ocean, our cruisers were policing the trade routes, capturing the enemy's merchant ships, and chasing his commerce destroyers. The best proof that the Navy was doing its work in the best possible way was the absolute helplessness of the Germans to impede our overseas trade, or to interfere with the movements of our troops in all parts of the world.

A British Destroyer in action.

Though there was no chance of a Trafalgar in the North Sea, there was an engagement in the month of August 1914 worthy of the name of a battle. I have kept the story of this sea fight for the present chapter. Three hours after we declared war two British submarines, E6 and E8, were on their way to the Bight of Heligoland on a scouting mission, and from that time onward a constant watch was maintained on the doings of the enemy's fleet in his own waters. Our submarines pushed right into the mouth of the Elbe, discovered the numbers and movements of the enemy's patrols,

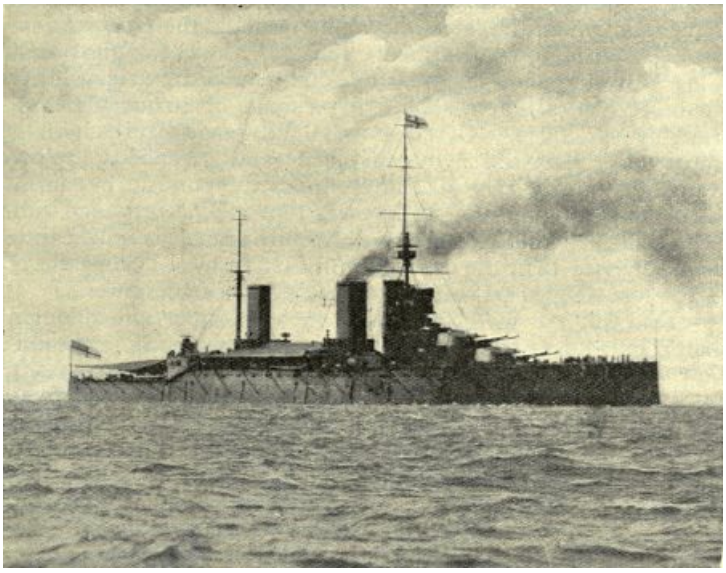
examined his anchorages, and picked up much useful information. Of course the Germans did not allow them to do this work in peace. They were constantly attacked by gun fire and torpedoes, and hunted by destroyers.

The submarines discovered that every night a flotilla of German light warships and destroyers was in the habit of coming out from Heligoland, or from one of the ports behind it, and cruising for some hours in the North Sea. As soon as Sir John Jellicoe heard the news, he made plans for a great "round up" of this night-cruising flotilla. His object was "to cut off the German light craft from home, and engage them at leisure in the open sea."

The command of this expedition was given to Rear-Admiral Sir David Beatty, one of the youngest admirals in our Navy. He was born in County Wexford in 1871, and is thus an Irishman, like Lord Kitchener. He entered the Navy in his thirteenth year. His mettle was first proved in an expedition that was sent to reconquer the Sudan in 1898. In command of the gunboat flotilla on the Upper Nile, he did such brilliant work that he was at once marked out for promotion. Two years later, at the early age of twenty-nine, he became a captain. In the same year he took part in the fighting against the Chinese Boxers, and at thirty-nine was promoted rear-admiral. For two years he was naval secretary to the First Lord of the Admiralty, and on the outbreak of war was placed in command of the First Battle Cruiser Squadron. Never before in the history of our Navy has so young a man held so high a rank.

Rear-Admiral Sir David Beatty. ***Photo, Central News.***

"Look well at this man as he paces backward and forward across the airy platform out among the smoke and rigging and sea wind." He is a little man, but very well proportioned and remarkably full of vigour. "You feel that energy has been poured into him at enormous pressure, that it is working and boiling within him, and that some one is sitting on the safety-valve." His face is heavily lined, but his features are clear cut, and his gray eyes are quick and searching, like those of a bird. "There is, indeed, something birdlike about the whole man—in his quickness, his neatness, his smooth plumage, his effortless exercise of strength, and appearance of happiness and light-heartedness. His voice is deep and resonant—strangely deep to issue from so small and slim a body; and as he snaps out an order to his flag-lieutenant —'G16'—and as, on the word, the signal flags run up to the yardarm, and the white bone[91] that each ship carries in her teeth spreads wider and bigger as the speed of the squadron is increased to sixteen knots, you realize a little what an admiral's word stands for, and what powers are entrusted to him."



The Battle Cruiser Lion. ***Photo, Symonds and Co.***

Sir David Beatty's flagship was the battle cruiser *Lion*. You will hear much about battle cruisers in the following pages, so let me now tell you how a battle cruiser differs from a battleship. There are two distinct types of modern warships of the largest size—namely, the battleship and the battle cruiser. The battleship, sometimes called a Dreadnought or super-Dreadnought, after the name of the first of the type, has thicker armour and less speed than the battle cruiser; that is practically all the difference between them. You may call the battle cruiser a cross between the battleship and the cruiser; she has the big guns of the former and the speed of the latter. She gains this speed by having a less weight of armour, and, as a rule, a smaller number of guns.

The most powerful weapon used in our Navy is the 15-inch gun, with which the latest of our battleships, the *Queen Elizabeth* (launched 1915), is armed. This gun, which weighs ninety tons, throws a shot weighing five-sixths of a ton at a velocity of more than a mile a second for a range of 10,000 yards, or roughly six miles. Of course the full range of the gun is much more than this. It can make good practice at 20,000 yards, or roughly 11 miles; at six miles the gun can be laid so as to hit the target practically every time. The 13.5-inch gun, with which the battle cruisers are mainly armed, is only a little less powerful than the 15-inch gun. It throws a projectile of 1,400 lbs. weight, and can be discharged twice a minute.

You will see in what ways a modern super-Dreadnought battleship differs from a battle cruiser if you examine the following figures

Queen Elizabeth (super-Dreadnought).—Length, 620 feet; tonnage, 27,500; horse-power, 28,000; speed per hour, 25 knots;[92] armour, belt of 13½ inch thickness; armament, eight 15-inch guns and sixteen 6-inch guns.

Lion (battle cruiser).—Length, 660 feet; tonnage, 26,350; horse-power, 70,000; speed per hour, 31 knots; armour, belt of 9¾ inch thickness; armament, eight 13.5-inch guns and sixteen 4-inch guns.

The *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Queen Mary*, and *Princess Royal* are the four most powerful battle cruisers in existence.

Cruisers, of which we possessed 121 when war broke out, are the fighting scouts of the Fleet. What are called armoured cruisers, such as the unfortunate *Cressy*, *Aboukir*, and *Hogue*, are protected by belts of armour plate, varying from 6 inches to 8 inches in thickness. Protected cruisers have decks of armour plate instead of belts. The most modern cruisers, which are known as light armoured cruisers, have been described as "destroyers of destroyers." The light cruiser *Arethusa*, for example, has a belt of armour plating from 3 to 3½ inches thick. She is 410 feet long, displaces 3,600 tons, and has turbine engines that give her a speed of thirty knots. Like all the most modern warships, she consumes oil in place of coal. She mounts two 6-inch, six 4-inch, and four machine guns, with four torpedo tubes.

Next in importance to the cruisers come the destroyers, of which we possessed 227 at the beginning of the war. These vessels may be said to correspond with the armoured motor car used by the Army. They are all built for speed, and most of them can steam over thirty miles an hour. The *Swift*, the largest destroyer in our Navy, has actually done over forty-

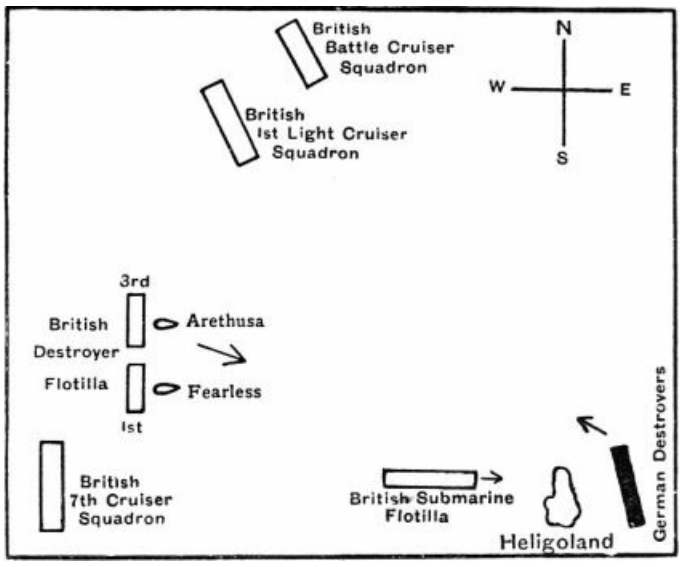
four miles an hour; the *Tartar*, however, carries off the record, with a speed of nearly forty-six miles an hour. The *Swift* displaces 2,170 tons, and is almost as big as the smallest of the light cruisers. Destroyers of the "L" class displace 965 tons, have a speed of about thirty-three miles an hour, and carry three 4-inch guns.

Life on board a destroyer is very strenuous. Destroyers act as policemen of the seas, and they must go on their beat whatever the weather may be. If you have not seen one of these small craft riding through a gale, you can have no idea of the way in which wind and waves play pitch-and-toss with them in foul weather. Officers and men alike must wear heavy sea-boots and oilskins, for they are often up to their knees in water, and drenched with the spray that breaks freely over the decks. As a destroyer usually goes through the waves rather than over them, she is built with a raised fore part, from which in rough weather the water streams away like a little Niagara. In bad weather everything must be tightly battened down, and this means that while the deck hands are swept by cold, wind-driven sheets of water, the men in the engine rooms have to work in a very hot and stifling atmosphere. A destroyer always travels at high speed on patrol work, and she dances about on a zigzag course in order to avoid the deadly foe lurking beneath the surface. Trying though the life on a destroyer is, many men prefer it to service on a big ship. There is extra pay, which Jack calls "hard-lying money," and there is more freedom in various ways.

The remaining class of warships consists of submarines. I described these vessels in Chapter XVII. of Volume I.

I must now return to the story of how the enemy was rounded up in Heligoland Bight.[93] At midnight on 26th August a squadron of submarines left Harwich accompanied by two destroyers, which escorted them to positions near the enemy's coast, and began scouting diligently for the under-water craft of the enemy. At five o'clock next evening (27th August) the First and Third Destroyer Flotillas steamed out of the harbour. Earlier in the day the Battle Cruiser Squadron, the First Light Cruiser Squadron, and the Seventh Cruiser Squadron had put to sea. All were under orders to meet at a certain position early on the morning of 28th August. I think you can imagine the feelings of our men as the ships crept forward, with no lights showing, through the night. They were about to penetrate the enemy's waters and fall upon him unawares.

Position at 7 a.m.



Battle of the Bight of Heligoland (Aug. 28).

The morning of the 28th broke calm and windless. There was a thick haze over the waters, and the keenest eyes in the fleet could not pierce the mist for more than three miles around. Just before 7 a.m. the gaunt island of Heligoland, with its forts, painted lodging-houses, and crumbling sea cliffs, loomed out of the fog. This diagram will show you the

position of our various squadrons at this time. The submarines, you will observe, were close to Heligoland; but they made no attempt to conceal themselves, as the sea was like a mill-pond, and their periscopes were plainly visible. Approaching rapidly from the north-west were Commodore Tyrwhitt's two destroyer flotillas, led by the *Arethusa* and the *Fearless*. The *Arethusa*, which I have already described, was a new ship with an old and honoured name. She had just left the builder's yard, and was now about to undergo her baptism of fire. Perhaps you have heard or read the famous old song "The Arethusa;" it tells how a British man-of-war in June 1778 was attacked by four French ships, and how she gallantly drove them off after a fight which lasted two hours.

"The fight was off the Frenchman's land;
We forced them back upon the strand,
For we fought till not a stick would stand
Of the gallant *Arethusa*."

The new *Arethusa* was now about to prove herself worthy of her ancient renown.

Behind the destroyers, and a little to the south-west of them, was the Seventh Cruiser Squadron. To the north-east of the destroyers lay the First Light Cruiser Squadron, and Sir David Beatty's Battle Cruiser Squadron, consisting of the *Lion*, *Queen Mary*, *New Zealand*, and *Invincible*.

The submarines near Heligoland were the decoy ducks. They were probably first sighted by a German seaplane, and shortly afterwards a number of German destroyers, two cruisers, and some submarines came out from behind the island to attack them. When our submarines saw them they and their attendant destroyers fled westward, and the German destroyers followed them, and thus were drawn away from the island into the open sea. Soon, however, they sighted the British flotillas bearing down on them from the north-east. Then they turned tail and tried to make for home; but our destroyers and the two cruisers altered their course to port, so as to cut them off. For about half an hour the *Arethusa* and the destroyers were engaged with the German destroyers; but at 7.57 a.m. two enemy cruisers, one with four funnels and the other with two, appeared, and the nearest of them, the one with two funnels, was engaged. She was the *Ariadne*, and the other was probably the *Strassburg*. Both of them attacked the *Arethusa*, and for about a quarter of an hour she received the heavy fire of both ships. Then the *Strassburg* turned her attention to the *Fearless*, and left the *Ariadne* to cope with the *Arethusa*.

During the action the *Arethusa* was hit many times, and was much damaged. All her guns were out of action except one 6-inch gun, with which she replied to the enemy's fire. About 8.15 one of her shells wrecked the forebridge of the *Ariadne*, whereupon she turned tail and made for Heligoland. Meanwhile the *Fearless* had driven off the *Strassburg*, and the destroyers had sunk the German commodore's destroyer, and had damaged some of the others. With that humanity which has always distinguished British seamen, the destroyers lowered their boats and attempted to save the lives of the German sailors struggling in the water. While engaged in this work of mercy a German cruiser fired on them, and two of the boats could not be picked up. Later on, when these open boats were twenty-five miles from the nearest land, and that land the enemy's fortress, with nothing but fog and foes around them, they were wondrously saved. "Suddenly," writes an officer, "a swirl alongside, and up, if you please, pops His Britannic Majesty's submarine E4, opens his conning tower, takes them all on board, shuts up again, dives, and brings them home 250 miles! Is that not magnificent? No novel would dare to face the critics with an episode like that in it, except, perhaps, Jules Verne; and all true."

All the British ships were now ordered to turn to the westward and reduce speed to twenty knots. The *Arethusa* was badly in need of repair. A water tank had been hit; all the guns but one were for the time being out of action, and a fierce fire broke out which was only got under with difficulty. She soon repaired herself, however; got nearly all of her guns into working order; and brought ammunition on deck, ready for the next bout.

The bulk of our fleet had kept out of sight, and the Germans believed that they had only submarines, destroyers, and two cruisers to fight. Here was a glorious chance to wipe out the two British cruisers. About ten o'clock two of our destroyers reported that they were being chased by three cruisers of the enemy—the *Mainz*, the *Köln*, and a heavier vessel, probably the *Strassburg*. The *Arethusa*, with the *Fearless* and the First Flotilla, at once made for the three German cruisers, and about eleven o'clock sighted the *Strassburg*, if that was her name. She opened a heavy fire at once, and the poor, battered *Arethusa* was again in peril. Thanks to a vigorous attack by the *Fearless* and the destroyers, the *Strassburg* drew off and disappeared in the haze. Ten minutes later she appeared on the starboard quarter, and again attacked the *Arethusa*; but her shots fell short. No such mistake was made by the British gunners; both the *Arethusa* and

the *Fearless* hit the German ship repeatedly, and so badly damaged her that she finally drew out of the fight and ran for home.

Four minutes later the *Mainz* appeared, and was at once set upon by our cruisers and destroyers. So severely was she handled that in less than twenty-five minutes her engines had stopped, flames were leaping up from her decks, and she was sinking.

The Sinking of the Mainz.

When the news that several enemy ships had joined battle reached Sir David Beatty, he saw at once that the situation was critical. He had already sent off the Light Cruiser Squadron to help the destroyers; now he decided to take the Battle Cruiser Squadron into action. At 11.30 his ships turned their heads east-south-east, and rapidly worked up to full speed. It was a risky business to take his cruisers through a mine-strewn sea infested by submarines, but in warfare risks must be taken if battles are to be won. He had no fear of submarines, however, as he was travelling very quickly, and the sea was so calm that periscopes could be easily seen. He considered that his force was quite powerful enough to deal with any enemy ships that might come out to meet him, except a battle squadron. If he made a dash into the fight, the whole business would probably be over before a battle squadron of the enemy had time to arrive on the scene.

Just as the *Mainz* was seen to be sinking, the Light Cruiser Squadron arrived, and their shells rained down upon the devoted ship. She was completely riddled by shot, and her end had come. An officer who saw her sinking wrote:—

"The *Mainz* was absolutely gallant. The last I saw of her, absolutely wrecked alow and aloft, her whole midships blazing and fuming. She had one gun forward and one aft, still spitting forth fury and defiance, like a wild cat mad with wounds."

While the *Mainz* was sinking, the *Köln* appeared on the starboard, and broadsides were discharged at long range. At this moment the British battle cruisers, with the white ensign streaming from their bows, were seen looming through the mist. They had arrived just at the right moment, and the worn and wearied men of the *Arethusa*, black with the grime of gun-fire, knew that victory was at hand. Commodore Tyrwhitt, of the *Arethusa*, pointed out the *Köln* to Sir David Beatty, and his 13.5-inch guns got to work. At 10,000 yards he hit her again and again, and she turned to flee, with the flames

streaming out from her like blood-red pennons.

The *Ariadne* now hove in sight, coming from the southward. Two salvos from the terrible 13.5-inch guns were enough for her; she disappeared in the mist, burning furiously and in a sinking condition. Then the battle cruisers circled north again to finish off the *Köln*. Two salvos were fired, and she sank like a stone with all on board.

At 1.40 the battle was over. The battle cruisers turned to the northward, and the *Queen Mary* for the second time that day was attacked by a submarine. Again she avoided a deadly torpedo by a quick turn of the helm. The great gray monsters covered the retirement of the destroyers, and by 6 p.m. all were making for port. Before midnight the whole British force was safely back in its own waters.

The enemy had lost two new cruisers—the *Mainz* and the *Köln*—and an older vessel, the *Ariadne*. The vessel which I have called the *Strassburg* was seriously damaged; one destroyer was sunk, and at least seven others suffered greatly. Some seven hundred Germans perished, and about three hundred were taken prisoners, amongst them the son of Admiral von Tirpitz, the chief of the German navy.

Our casualties were thirty-two killed and fifty-two wounded, and we did not lose a single ship. The *Arethusa* was badly damaged, it is true, but she was ready for sea a week later. Every British ship that took part in the battle was entitled to paint upon her honour-board in letters of gold the words, "Heligoland, August 28, 1914." As a tribute to the gallant part which the *Arethusa* had played in the fight, the Admiralty ordered the famous old song to be engraved on a brass plate and set up on the ship. The first verse runs as follows:—

"Come, all ye sailors bold,
Whose hearts are cast in honour's mould,
While English glory I unfold.
Huzza for the *Arethusa*!
Her men are staunch
To their favourite launch.
And when the foe shall meet our fire,
Sooner than strike we'll all expire
On board of the *Arethusa*."

Before we leave the story of the Battle of Heligoland Bight let me try to describe the experiences of the men behind the big guns. "Gun crews, stand to your stations!" comes the terse order. Instantly every man drops his job, whatever it may be, and the various squads fall in and march off to their barbettes or casemates, straining their eyes as they go to catch a sight of the enemy. All the wooden fittings which are likely to catch fire, or form what sailors call "shell traps," have been thrown overboard, the stanchions and the davits and the chains around the decks have been unshipped, and the vessel is now a mere skeleton of its former self. Everything that might get loose and "take charge" has been securely lashed. The guns and torpedoes have been made ready; the ammunition has been carefully examined and arranged, so that it can be quickly hoisted to the guns; and the engines have been overhauled. Hose pipes have been run along the decks, and everything likely to take fire has been plentifully soused with sea-water.

Probably you know that each pair of big guns is mounted on a revolving platform within what is called a turret—that is, a chamber of thick armour-plate which revolves with the guns. Beneath this turret is a working chamber, some nine or ten feet in height, and from it a thick steel tube descends through the decks to the magazines below. Inside this tube, which revolves with the gun platform, are "lifts," which hoist the shells up to the barbette.

The crews enter the barbettes by means of massive steel doors, which are firmly closed behind them. When the doors are closed, it is impossible for them to know what is going on in other parts of the ship, except for the little that they can observe through the sighting-hood of the guns. The steel chamber in which they are stationed is lighted by electricity, and the guns, the platform, and the hoists are worked by water power. The crew set the machinery working, and bring up a supply of shells, one of which is placed in the yawning breech of each great gun.

Presently a telephone bell rings, and a voice is heard asking "if it takes a week for the barbette to get ready for action." It is the gunnery lieutenant, who is talking "sarcastic." He is in what is called the "fire-control station," which is a steel chamber high on the top of a tripod mast. In this chamber are the range-finders and all the other apparatus necessary for directing the fire of every big gun on the ship. Around the steel walls are telephones, speaking-tubes, and electric

buttons. By means of very wonderful devices the officer in the "fire-control station" ranges and sights every gun in the ship. The men in the turrets have merely to obey his instructions, and fire the guns when he gives the word.

"Prepare to open fire at twenty thousand yards," snaps the voice at the telephone. The machinery clangs, and the guns raise their noses high in the air. "Revolve to ten degrees on your port bow," comes the next order; and, as though by magic, the whole turret swings itself round to the required position. Then comes a pause, which the men declare is more trying to the nerves than anything that happens during the actual fighting. Little or nothing can be seen from the barbette; from the "fire-control station" the target is a mere speck on the horizon about eleven miles away.

Presently the telephone rings again. "Let go with No. 1 gun" is the welcome order. The men cheer and fling themselves face down on the floor, and push home the cotton wool with which they have previously plugged their ears, to prevent the risk of deafness. The captain of the gun pulls a lanyard; there is a "kick" that makes the barbette reel, then a deafening report, as a shell weighing nearly a thousand pounds speeds over the waters on its deadly mission.

Instantly the men spring up, the breech is thrown open, a jet of water is sent along the barrel, and another shell is thrown in. Meanwhile the officer in command of the barbette calls out, "Stand by for No. 2 gun." When No. 2 gun has been fired the telephone bell rings, and the voice from above is heard to say, "Both miles wide; try to hit something next time." "We are here to fire the gun, not to range it," mutters the captain of the turret as he makes a few hasty calculations and some adjustments. "Both guns at once, dead line ahead," comes the next order. Round spins the barbette again on its axis, and then a terrific jerk and an awful roar as the two weapons go off together. At once every eye is turned to the indicator which shows the result of the shots. "One well home, the other a trifle short." The gunners caper about in huge delight.

By this time the whole of the big guns of the ships are barking away, all under the careful eye of the little group of officers perched up aloft. "Salvo firing[94] on signal" is now the order, and the range, elevation, and direction of the guns are given. Once more the silence is tense. Suddenly the indicating needle of every big gun on the ship begins to move in unison. FIRE! Then there is a mighty roar, and the ship shudders and pauses on its onward course. "Nasty one for somebody," says a bluejacket as he wipes the perspiration from his face and bare chest. "Hope they liked it," chimes in another as the guns are loaded again.

Now there is a loud report, followed by a crash of bent and battered metal not far off. "Pretty near one that," says a gunner. "Wonder if it has done any damage." There is no time for further inquiry; damage has been done. A large shell from the enemy has hit another barbette, and has exploded. The lieutenant in charge has been glancing through the sighting-hood; he drops like a log, and two other men have fallen beside him. A few bolt-heads have been crisply shorn off by the immense jerk of the impact, and they have fled across the steel chamber like rifle bullets; one poor fellow is killed, and a second has a leg broken. It is the price of Admiralty, and without pause a midshipman takes the lieutenant's place and "carries on."

Still the firing continues, and the air in the turret by this time is almost stifling. The electric fans have failed owing to some damage below. Presently, however, comes the welcome order, "Enemy's ship out of action. Out of the barbette, and muster on deck." A loud roar of cheering goes up; the great doors are pushed back, and the men take up their stations and watch the last throes of the enemy's ship as it lurches and sinks beneath the waves. Nothing but the work of rescue now remains. All undamaged boats are manned and hoisted out, and away they go on their errand of mercy. The battle is over and won.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

When the army of von Kluck was sweeping through Northern France like a roaring flood, most people thought that he was aiming at Paris, the heart and centre of the country. In Chapter X. of our first volume I told you that after the great surrender at Sedan the Germans swooped down upon the beautiful capital, and began to besiege it. I also told you how, after four months of hunger and misery, it yielded, and the hosts of Germany marched through its streets in triumph.

Was Paris again to be besieged?—that was the question. The Parisians were quite sure that they would soon be ringed round by the Germans. They knew that von Kluck was rapidly approaching, and on the afternoon of 30th August they saw the first of his war hawks come swooping over the city. It dropped five bombs; but only one person was killed, and the damage done to property was slight. Attached to a sandbag which was dropped from the aeroplane was the following message: "The German army is at the gates of Paris; there is nothing left to you but to surrender." This was not quite true, but a few days later German cavalry actually were within cannon shot of the northern forts; they were as near to the towers of Notre Dame[95] as the battlements of Windsor are to the dome of St. Paul's. Scouts in motor cars were reported only nine miles from Paris itself, and it is said that German officers who had American lady friends in the city sent them notes arranging to come to tea with them!

Trenches in the Streets of Paris. ***Photo, Sport and General.***

Four days before the first German aeroplane was seen a new government came into power, and included in it were the leading members of all the parties in the country. The same day a new governor, General Gallieni,[96] was appointed to take over the defence of Paris. The French capital, as you know, is one of the most strongly fortified places in Europe. It is protected by an outer ring of forts, which are built at distances varying from six to ten miles from the centre of the city. This ring is eighty miles round, and within it are three entrenched camps—one on the north, another on the east, and a third on the south-east. A railway, more than sixty miles in length, connects all the works and supplies them with ammunition and stores. All this sounds very formidable; but we know that the strongest forts cannot stand against modern siege guns and high explosives. Further, the guns of the Paris forts were by no means up to date, and the trenches

between them were not properly protected. General Gallieni worked night and day to remedy these defects; but the time at his disposal was all too short.

One of the leading citizens proposed that Paris should be given up to the Germans, in order that its monuments and treasures of art might be saved from destruction. General Gallieni would not listen for a moment to any such craven proposal. He said that Paris would defend itself, even though it should suffer the fate of Louvain. The Parisians were with him almost to a man.

Gallieni diligently prepared for a siege. He had trenches dug in the streets on the outskirts of the city, and he collected vast quantities of provisions within the fortified area. Thousands of cattle and sheep were coralled on almost every green space within the ring of fortifications, and the Bois de Boulogne[97] became one vast stockyard. Meanwhile long strings of people waited before the doors of the shops to buy stocks of provisions. Over a million Parisians deserted the city for the towns and villages of the south; and though large numbers of refugees flocked in from the north, Paris lost its busy appearance, and took on an "early morning" air.

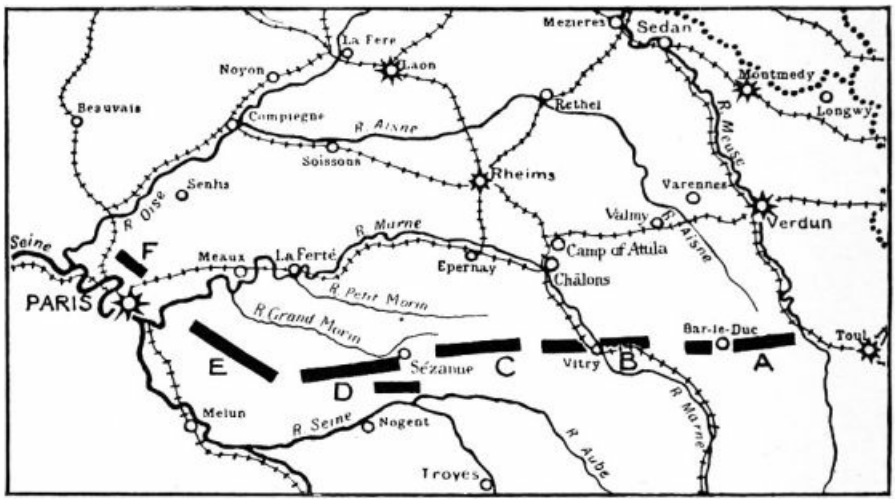
In ordinary times Paris is the most brilliantly lighted city in Europe, and at night the glare illuminates the sky for scores of square miles. Had its myriads of electric lamps gleamed out while the Germans were so near at hand, the safety of the city would have been endangered by bombs from Zeppelins and aeroplanes. Consequently, Paris by night became a city of gloom. All the cafés and shops were closed by eight in the evening, and the lamps were veiled and only lighted on one side of the street. On the roofs of most of the chief public buildings search-lights were installed, and all through the night they flung their dazzling rays across the darkness. On 3rd September 1914 the Government was removed to Bordeaux. "It only leaves Paris," said a proclamation, "after having taken all precautions in its power for the defence of the town and of the entrenched camps. It knows that it need not recommend calm and resolution to the admirable Parisian population, which shows every day that it is equal to its greatest duties."

Hardly had the Government left the city when tidings arrived which showed clearly that there was to be no siege of Paris just yet. Some of the Parisians professed to be disappointed: they had filled their houses with tinned sardines, preserved fruits, bags of coffee, and bundles of vegetables, and had prepared themselves to stand the longest siege known to history —and now the Germans would not play the game! But, really, they were overjoyed when they knew that they and their city were free from attack for some time to come.

What was the news which had thus relieved the minds of the Parisians? On 3rd September von Kluck was at Chantilly,[98] the great racing centre of France, twenty-five miles from the gates of Paris. Two days later, aviators reported that he was twenty miles to the east of Paris. Instead of bearing down on the city he had marched south-east—that is, away from it. Why?

Parisians watching German Aeroplanes.
Photo, Central News.

In 1870, you will remember, the Germans did not attempt to besiege Paris until Bazaine's army had been shut up in Metz and MacMahon's army had surrendered at Sedan. Before Paris was besieged the armies of France had been hopelessly defeated. To encircle Paris needs half a million men, and no sane general would dare to detach such a large number of troops for this purpose while his enemy was capable of taking the field against him. It is true that the Allies had been forced to retreat from the Belgian border, and that von Kluck believed the British to be a broken, panic-stricken mob; nevertheless he could not think of investing Paris until he had destroyed them. As his enemy was then moving south-east of Paris, he had to move south-east too, in order to keep in contact with him. Paris could wait until the Allies were thoroughly beaten. So von Kluck turned away from Paris and marched south-east.



The position of the Allied Armies immediately before their advance.

On 5th September 1914 the Allied armies were in the position in which General Joffre wished them to be. Let us look at the line which they then held. The 3rd Army (A) stretched from the Upper Meuse, south of Verdun, westwards to Bar-le-Duc, and facing it was the army of the Crown Prince. The 4th Army (B) was on its left, astride of the Upper Marne, looking north across the plain towards Châlons. Westwards to Sézanne[99] was the 9th Army (C), and facing it was von Buelow's army. Still farther to the west were the 5th French Army (D) and the British (E); while north of the Marne, moving towards the Ourcq, was the 6th French Army (F), which, all unknown to the Germans, had been organized in Paris, where it was safe from the prying eyes of their airmen. Later on we shall study the position of the Allied armies on the left wing (D, E, F) more closely.

Before we do so, however, I will try to give you some idea of the kind of country in front of the French line. Let us imagine that you are travelling westwards from Verdun in early September. Leaving behind you the narrow vale of the Upper Meuse, you traverse an upland country of many ravines and much undergrowth, with here and there small woods and pastures. Then you cross a small stream, and, looking southwards, see the deep woods that stretch towards Bar-le-Duc. The road now rises, and to the northward is the plateau of the Argonne,[100] a long, low ridge of clay, which forms the natural bulwark of north-east France; west of it runs the Aisne and east of it the Aire, a tributary of the Aisne. A small river cuts its way through it in a deep furrow. A French writer says that if we leave out of account the lengthwise furrow through which the river runs, the plateau may be compared with a wave just when it curls and is about to break on the shore. The summits of the plateau range in height from about 450 feet to 1,000 feet.

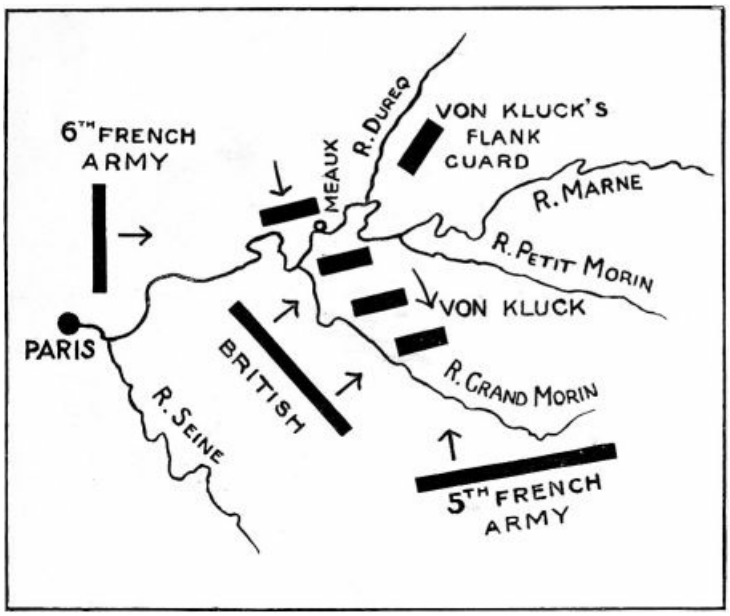
An extensive forest is always a bar to an invader. In the days when the English were conquering Britain, a very dense and trackless forest, 130 miles long by 30 miles broad, covered that part of South England between the North Downs and the South Downs which we call the Weald. For many years this forest prevented the South Saxons, who had occupied the coast, from pushing their conquests northwards to the Thames. In the same way the Forest of the Argonne checked early invaders of France from the east. No other part of France is so thickly wooded, and in its deep recesses wolves are still found. Two roads and one railway cross it from west to east; but otherwise there are only a few forest paths, which lead nowhere. This difficult region was the scene of desperate fighting during many months of the war.

For a hundred miles to the west of the Argonne stretches a region of chalky moorlands, crossed by many ridges, and broken by heaths, coppices, and fir plantations. This is the Salisbury Plain of France, and men have long foretold that on its dreary levels the Armageddon of Europe would be fought. Still travelling west, we come to the Heights of Champagne, which I have already described. South of the deep-cut valley of the Marne, which, you will remember, marks the southern limit of this chalk plateau, is a region crossed by the Petit Morin and the Grand Morin, both tributaries of the Marne. These tributaries, though not rapid, are so deep that they cannot be forded, but they are well provided with stone bridges. Much of the district through which they flow is well wooded, and dotted with country houses. Round about Sézanne we find rolling downs, and to the north of it the extensive marsh of St. Gond.

The whole region between Paris and the Upper Meuse is very famous in French history. From Domremy, on the Meuse, came Joan of Arc to revive the broken spirits of her countrymen, and inspire them to drive the English out of France. It was in Rheims Cathedral, you will remember, that the Maid had her great hour of triumph, when she knelt at the feet of the Dauphin and greeted him as King of France. At Valmy, twenty miles north-east of Châlons, there is a pyramid which commemorates a great French victory over the Prussians in the fateful year 1792; and on the old Roman road north of Châlons is a huge oval mound, known as the Camp of Attila. It is said to mark the spot where his merciless hordes were overcome in the middle of the fifth century. On the wide flats in the neighbourhood of Châlons the Romans and Goths were hurled back in ancient times, and there, too, "furious Frank and fiery Hun" strove for the mastery. Once more the fate of France was to be decided on these historic fields.

Now we must return to von Kluck, and pay particular attention to his movements, for on them depended the fortunes of the whole German army. Study the diagram on the next page closely, and you will see how he thrust his head into the lion's jaws. When we left him at Chantilly, twenty-five miles from Paris, he was to all intents and purposes marching directly on the city. Suddenly, as you know, he swerved to the south-east. Why he did so nobody exactly knows, though many reasons have been suggested. I have already mentioned the most probable one—namely, that a siege of Paris before the enemy was thoroughly routed would have been the height of folly. Some say that as certain army corps had been sent to East Prussia, it was necessary for the Germans to close in on the left. Whatever the reason was, von Kluck

suddenly began marching south-east. He crossed the river Marne, and continued in this direction, with the object, it is supposed, of cutting off the French centre from Paris.



A glance at this diagram shows you that when he was marching in this oblique direction his right was exposed to attack from the armies on the Allied left—the French 5th Army, the British Army, and the new 6th Army issuing from Paris. If the British attacked him during this march, his columns could offer no effective resistance until they deployed and faced the British line, and while doing so they would be sure to suffer greatly. If they did not deploy, the 5th French Army could attack them in front; and if they did deploy, they would then have that army on their left flank. Meanwhile the new 6th French Army, by crossing the Ourcq, could cut off the German line of retreat. It was a most dangerous move, as you can easily see, and even now we wonder why von Kluck made it. There is little doubt that he believed the British and the 5th French Army to be so weary and dispirited that they were of no account.

Von Kluck seems to have had some inkling that there was a new French force on his flank, for on 4th September he placed a flank guard along the Ourcq; but he does not seem to have known how strong this French force was. Next day (5th September), when he was across the Marne, he learnt the truth: the surprise army lay west of Meaux, and was marching on the Ourcq. On the 8th he realized his danger, and sent back two of his army corps to meet it. This, of course, weakened his advancing columns. Soon he found himself in an almost hopeless position: he was in hourly peril of being enveloped. This is what I meant when I said that he had thrust his head into the lion's jaws.

Von Kluck's Artillery passing through a French village on its march towards Paris.
Photo, Topical Press.

The fighting began at dawn on Sunday, 6th September, when the whole Allied line from Paris to Verdun was set in motion. We will first give our attention to the surprise army, which on that tropically hot day was slowly moving towards the western bank of the Ourcq, across the low plateau which rises to the north of the little town of Meaux. It was a smiling country through which the soldiers passed—the roads lined with tall poplars, the fields golden with ripe wheat, and the orchards heavy with fruit. The many villages on the tableland were in the hands of German outposts, and the main body lay on the eastern bank of the river, which here flows in a deep channel. The surprise army consisted of at least eight divisions. To meet it the Germans had five divisions. All day the French were engaged in hand-to-hand struggles with the German outposts in the villages, and were assailed by "Black Marias"[101] from the heavy German batteries beyond the river.

Meanwhile the British, to their great joy, were ordered to march north-eastwards towards the Grand Morin, along a gently-rolling country of orchards and cornfields and scattered woodlands, crossed here and there by small rivers and streams. For the first time our men were advancing, and they were in the highest spirits, thoroughly rested, and eager to get back "a bit of their own." By noon they were within touch of the enemy's advance guard, which was well supported by batteries. An engagement took place, and late in the afternoon the German trenches were carried at the point of the bayonet. By evening the British army occupied a line extending across and south of the Grand Morin. Thus you see that on the west the enveloping movement was making excellent headway.

Now let us see what the 5th French Army was doing. It was moving northwards towards the upper reaches of the Grand Morin, and was heavily engaged with the bulk of von Kluck's army. Again and again it made frontal attacks, but little ground was gained. Farther to the east the 9th French Army was struggling with that of von Buelow near Sézanne, its right being opposed to the right wing of the Saxon army. The 4th French Army, still farther to the east, was being violently attacked by the Duke of Würtemberg, who was trying hard but in vain to pierce the Allied centre. On the Allied right the Crown Prince was more successful: he was able to push back the 3rd French Army for a little distance.

On the whole the fortune of the day seemed to rest with the Germans. But von Kluck now knew that he was in deadly peril. The surprise army had turned his right wing; the British were attacking him on the right flank, and the 5th French Army was holding him in front. He knew that he was in the tightest possible place, and that he would need all his skill and resolution if he was to escape from the trap laid for him. The Crown Prince might be rejoicing, but von Kluck was in "doleful dumps."

General van Kluck.
(*Photo, Central News.*)

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CROSSING OF THE MARNE.

Early on Monday morning, 7th September 1914, the guns of friend and foe began to thunder in the river valleys of the Ourcq, Marne, and Petit and Grand Morin. As the sun rose higher and higher in the sky the cannonade grew fiercer and fiercer. Over the peaceful hills, the shining water, the stubbles, the pastures and wheat fields, delicate white balloons of bursting shrapnel were constantly seen. At a hundred different places along the far-flung battle line Allied infantry were worming their way towards the enemy, anon rising from their cover at the sound of a shrill whistle, rushing ahead, and dropping again into concealment amidst the rattle of rifles and machine guns. A desperate conflict was in progress from the Ourcq to Verdun, a distance of wellnigh one hundred and fifty miles.

Let us confine our attention for the present to the Allied left, where alone an advance was made on that day. The 6th French Army was working its way towards the Ourcq, driving in the enemy outposts on the western bank. The Germans had occupied most of the villages on the plateau, and the French were thrusting them out with the bayonet, amid the smoke of burning haystacks and farm buildings. It was a day of hand-to-hand combats. When night fell, the whole plateau was strewn with dead and dying, and the ghastly scene was illuminated by the glare of flaming villages.

Long before daylight on this day the British were astir, and by five in the morning the little town of Coulommiers,[102] on the Grand Morin, had been captured. Our infantry drove back the four German divisions opposed to them, and pushed them across the river beneath an accurate and galling artillery fire. All the bridges were down, and the Germans strove feverishly to fling pontoons across the stream. Time after time floating bridges were erected, only to be blown to splinters by our guns. It is said that one British battery came into action within easy range of a bridge fast approaching completion. As the gun-layer was sighting his piece, he asked his officer, "Which pontoon, sir?" "Number one," replied the officer, and in a few moments it was smashed to pieces. "Number two," said the officer, and that pontoon shared the same fate. Then, in turn, numbers three and four were blown to smithereens. Another bridge was built; but at the moment when it was thronged with crossing infantry British shells burst upon it, and the stream was choked with dead and drowning men and heaps of wreckage.

The British crossed the river, and their cavalry was let loose on the retreating Germans. By this time the northward road was a mass of moving men, wagons, and guns. General De Lisle's brigade, consisting of the 9th Lancers and the 18th Hussars, spurred in amongst the dense throngs, and in the lanes, the clearings, and the villages made havoc of the foe. While this cavalry pursuit was in progress, thirty Hussars came upon a strong force of Uhlans. The British had no time to take cover; they seized their rifles, flung themselves off their horses, and, lying prone on the ground, opened a brisk fire. Before long the Uhlans were in full flight, with British bullets whistling about their rear. This same section also carried a farm strongly held by Germans with artillery. Despite a hailstorm of lead, the Hussars dashed forward, killed or drove off the Germans, and seized their guns.

In another part of the field the Royal Irish Lancers captured a supply train, which was escorted by cavalry outnumbering them by five to one. The Irishmen managed to get into ambush along the road by which the convoy must pass. As it came up they opened fire. The Germans believed themselves to be attacked by an army, and fell into hopeless confusion. Then the lancers mounted, and crashed into the disordered throng of men, horses, and wagons. The supply column was captured, and the remnants of its escort surrendered.

Meanwhile the British right was rapidly moving towards the river some ten miles to the east, and the 5th French Army was fighting a fierce frontal battle higher up the stream. Taken in flank and in front, von Kluck could no longer hold the line of the river. On the 7th the Allied advance was continued, and on the 8th the Germans strove hard to make a stand against the British on the high ground to the north of the Grand Morin. Heavy guns had been posted on this high ground, and during the morning an artillery duel raged between the German rearguard and the advancing British. A stubborn resistance was made, but the Germans were dislodged, though not without considerable loss.

About midday the last of our infantry were across the Grand Morin, and were pushing on rapidly through a beautiful country of orchards and cornfields towards the Petit Morin. Late in the afternoon the enemy made another and even more desperate stand. Savage attacks were made on Haig's 1st Corps, which suffered severely. Again and again the Germans bore down on the British in close-packed ranks; but though they flung away life like water, they could make no headway.

British rifle fire and British bayonets were too much for them. Before sunset the British had a firm hold of the north bank of the river.

On the 9th they crossed the Marne below Meaux,[103] and took in flank the German forces which were defending the line of the Ourcq. You know that the 6th French Army had been for the last few days attacking these forces in front. On the 8th von Kluck had hastily reinforced his army on the Ourcq by two corps drawn from the south. These corps made attacks of such violence that the French had hard work to resist them. Nevertheless they held their ground well, and in one action took three of the enemy's standards. They were now reinforced, and on the 10th they advanced with great spirit, while the British, now across the Marne, attacked the German left flank. Fearful of being enveloped, the Germans retreated from the line of the Ourcq, and immediately the British army went in pursuit. For the first time the Germans were on the run.

The crossing of the Marne by the British had been no easy task. If you look at a map of the Marne,[104] you will see that between Meaux and La Ferté[105] the river winds about a great deal, and makes a big bend very much like that of the Thames between Windsor and Henley. At La Ferté our 3rd Corps found the town held by the Germans, who had posted their guns on the hills behind, and were thus able to sweep the stream with shell fire, while a strong force of infantry on the south bank resisted the passage at closer quarters. All day long the British attacked; slowly, and with great loss, they forced back the Germans to the brink of the stream. The bridges had all been blown up, and the enemy had to cross on their frail pontoons. Some got across safely, but many were drowned or killed by the fire of British guns. "We harried them before the crossing," said one of our soldiers, "and drowned them during it."

The Rifle Brigade was one of the regiments thrust at the rear of the retiring Germans. It advanced from a belt of trees about half a mile from the river banks, and doubled towards the enemy. As it did so, it discovered a French infantry regiment bent on the same errand. French and British made a race of it, and the Rifle Brigade won by a head. Both parties now fell upon the Prussian infantry with the bayonet; but, as Private Duffy of the Rifle Brigade tells us, "they didn't seem to have the least heart for fighting. Some flung themselves into the stream, and tried to swim for safety; but they were heavily weighted by their equipment, and worn out, so they didn't go far. Of the three hundred men who tried to escape, not more than half a dozen succeeded in reaching the other bank, and the cries of the drowning were pitiful in the extreme." Elsewhere on the river similar fighting was taking place.

The enemy had now been cleared from the southern bank of the Marne, but the battle was far from over. The British had yet to cross the fire-swept stream. Our Engineers began to build bridges, but the German guns smashed them again and again. All through the afternoon the Engineers laboured on, only to see their work blown away. Nevertheless they persevered, and by evening a bridge spanned the stream. In the darkness the British began to cross. The passage of the Marne had been won.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BATTLE OF THE MARNE.

Now that the British were across the Marne and on the flank of the Germans defending the Ourcq, von Kluck's forces were bound to retreat without a moment's loss of time. The Allies followed them up with the utmost speed, and drove them onwards towards the Aisne in confusion, though the retreat cannot be called a rout. Before they reached the river the British had captured thirteen guns, seven machine guns, and two thousand prisoners, besides much transport. The 6th French Army was by this time across the Ourcq, and was striving to get to the north of the Germans and cut them off. By night the Zouaves were hurried to Senlis in taxi-cabs, and almost before the brakes had been applied these swarthy, baggy-trousered warriors were falling furiously on the surprised Germans. They literally flung them out of the town, in which they had behaved in the most disgraceful fashion. When the Zouaves attacked them they were sleeping off the effects of eighteen thousand bottles of champagne which they had looted.

Still farther to the north there was fierce fighting in the woods of Compiègne, where it is said, though with what truth I do not know, that the Allies repeated the trick practised on Macbeth[106] in the battle which laid him low. You will remember that Macbeth in Shakespeare's play had been warned by a spirit that he would never be vanquished until Birnam[107] wood should come to Dunsinane Hill.[108] When Macbeth's enemies marched against him they made the saying of the spirit come true. They cut down branches from the trees of Birnam wood, and bore them aloft. Macbeth's soldiers were dismayed at the sight, and in the battle which followed the murderer king was slain. In the open country on the edge of Compiègne woods it is said that the Allies provided themselves with bushes and branches, and used them as screens behind which they advanced on the trenches of the foe. When they were fifty or sixty yards away, down went the branches, and forward dashed the soldiers who had been hidden behind them. The Germans were driven from their trenches and fled.

German Infantry advancing to a new position. ***Photo, Sport and General.***

So the great drive continued, and every hour of the day furious rearguard actions were fought. The Germans had taken to heart the lesson of the Allies' retreat, and on every possible occasion their rearguards stood and fought in order to delay

the pursuit. They lost heavily in killed, wounded, guns, and prisoners; but they were prepared to pay this price rather than suffer their main bodies to be overwhelmed. The line of German retreat was strewn with the wreckage of men, horses, weapons, and equipment.

A British artillery officer gives us a good idea of what this rearguard fighting was like. He is describing the crossing of a little river.

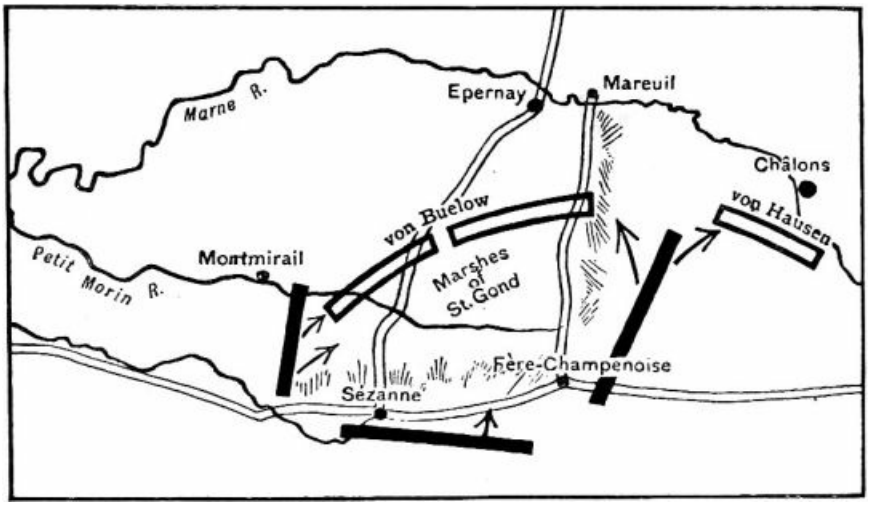
> "The Germans were holding the opposite bank, a very steep bluff, with a battalion of riflemen and eight machine guns. These guns were trained on the road where it was fully exposed for about one hundred yards, and nothing could cross. One section of my battery was trying to locate them and knock them out. So I took my section up a hill behind these, and waited for any targets to appear. Our advance guard had been working well. By taking cover in the woods they had managed to get down into the river-bed and round the flanks. From there they opened a hot fire on the German machine guns. From my position I could see a portion of the road on the opposite bank. I had just got the range for this when a German machine gun came galloping up. I fired two rounds at it. The first was over and just behind; the second short. However, I had never seen anything move quicker than that gun. By now our infantry had forced the German riflemen back, and we had orders for a general advance. As we crossed the bridge I heard that seven of their machine guns had been captured. We wound up and up, and on all sides saw evidence of our fire. In one place an ammunition wagon had been hit. Both horses were blown over into the ditch. A bit higher up was a young boy, hit in the back. All that we could do was to give him water. He told me that his orders had been to stay till shot or captured. These German infantry are a brave lot."

Now we must hark back and see how the French armies to the right of the British were faring. The 5th French Army, which was next to the British on their right, had a threefold part to play. It had to support the British on its left and the 9th French Army on its right. Further, it had to throw back the Germans facing it. On the 7th it made a leap forward, and during the following days, after desperate fighting, reached and crossed the Marne. In its advance it captured many guns, howitzers, machine guns, and more than a million cartridges.

You know enough about strategy to be aware that when von Kluck retreated he left the right wing of von Buelow's army exposed. You may be certain that General Joffre ordered this wing to be attacked without delay. When the enemy perceived that his right was in danger he made a desperate effort, which lasted from 7th September to 10th September, to pierce the French centre, to the west and east of a place known as La Fère Champenoise,[109] on one of the upper streams of the Grand Morin. We must pay particular attention to the fighting in this region, for the result of it was to set the whole German line retreating.

General Foch.

Look at the little map on the next page and find the town of Sézanne. From this place the 9th French Army extended for about twenty miles to the east. It was a newly-created army, which had not yet been engaged; and it was under the command of General Foch,[110] a brilliant writer on the art of war. It was now to be seen whether he was as good in the field as he had proved himself to be in the study. On the 8th of September Foch's army was violently attacked by the famous German Guard, and his right was forced back a few miles. Early next morning he made a further retreat, and at the same time drew back his left, so as to maintain his line. Although he had retreated he was full of fight, and he ordered an attack to be made the same day.



To the north of Sézanne you will see a region known as the Marshes of St. Gond. This stretch of swampy ground was the scene of a great fight which forced the retreat of the German centre; we must, therefore, look at it more closely. In the plateau to the north of Sézanne is a basin of clay, ten miles long from east to west, and varying in breadth from one to two miles. The streamlets which give rise to the Petit Morin run across it, and the whole ground was formerly a bog. It has long been reclaimed; the streamlets run in deep ditches, and some of them have been turned into canals. In ordinary dry weather most of the district is open country, with a good deal of pasture for cattle, though here and there traces of its marsh character are still to be seen in the rush-covered levels. After a few hours of heavy rain the streams overflow, and flood the roads and tracks; the ground becomes a swamp, and the highways are deep in mire.

The early part of the night between the 8th and 9th of September was clear and starry, but later the weather broke; the rain came down in torrents, and soon the marshes of the Gond were wellnigh impassable for wagons and guns. Nothing could have been more fortunate for General Foch. He knew that, as the German right was in retreat, he might safely strike at the right of the army which was facing him, and thus drive in a wedge between von Kluck and von Buelow. He advanced towards the Petit Morin with the Morocco Division, and, deploying in the direction of the Marshes, met a furious assault of the Germans, who now perceived the perilous position in which they were placed. The Moroccans fought like heroes, and drove the Germans into the Marshes, where they found that they could not move their guns or wagons, which were up to the axle-trees in mire. Foch captured many prisoners and at least forty guns—the largest number which had so far been taken at one time by the Allies.

History had repeated itself. In the campaign of 1814 German troops had been driven into the self-same swamp; a hundred years later a similar disaster had overtaken them. This success greatly elated Foch's army, and it was eager for the next move.

A wedge had been driven between von Kluck and von Buelow; it now remained to drive a similar wedge between von Buelow and von Hausen, whose forces continued the German line to their left. Foch's airmen had told him that there was a considerable gap between the left of von Buelow and the right of von Hausen. He now moved the division which had driven von Buelow's right into the Marshes to the right of his line, and having thus reinforced it, made a flanking movement on the left of von Buelow and on the right of von Hausen. It was one of the boldest moves ever made, and it took the enemy completely by surprise. The German Guard made but little resistance. Von Buelow knew that he was outflanked on both sides, and that there was no safety except in retreat. Foch followed him up, and on the 11th drove him across the Marne in disorder. The losses of the Germans in this part of the retreat were enormous; it was said that the 9th

Army buried ten thousand German dead.

To the right of Foch was the 4th French Army, facing the Duke of Würtemberg's forces. This French army had a hard struggle; and it was not till the 10th, when it was reinforced by an army corps from the west, that it gained ground. Next day it forced the Würtemberg army to give way; but the rearguard kept up a tremendous artillery fire, and moved back very slowly. On the 12th, however, the Germans retired more hurriedly.

The Germans in Retreat. So hurried was their march towards the Aisne that at certain times it "had the appearance of a rout."
From the drawing by Dudley Tennant.

To the right of the 4th French Army were the 3rd and 2nd French Armies, opposing those of the Crown Prince and the Bavarians. The left of the Crown Prince's army was in touch with the outer forts of Verdun, and was attacking Fort Troyon, the first of the forts along the heights of the Meuse between Verdun and Toul. The little garrison was in dire straits, and was about to surrender when the French movement which I am about to describe began.

General Joffre sent orders that the French 3rd and 2nd Armies were to move to the west against the Germans operating between the Upper Meuse and the Upper Aisne. The orders were carried out, and the French artillery won a great success. No less than eleven batteries of the Germans were destroyed. There was fiercer fighting on the 10th; but the French made progress, and on the 11th advanced still farther. A wedge had been thrust in between the Crown Prince and the Bavarians, and the Crown Prince was bound to retreat. This meant the salvation of Fort Troyon. It had been bombarded for five days. Most of its guns were out of action, and the forty-four survivors of the garrison were huddled in the bomb-proof shelters of the central works, when suddenly the German guns ceased firing and French cheering was heard. The fort was saved at the very moment when all hope seemed to have vanished.

Before I conclude the story of the battle of the Marne I must say something about the 2nd French Army, which was facing the Bavarian army in Lorraine. The French army was drawn up across a gap in the Vosges Mountains known as the Gap of Nancy,[111] and its object was to hold back the Bavarians, so that they could not attack the right flank of the Allies. A second French force was now moved into Lorraine, and it took up a position to the south-east of the army holding the

Gap. The commander of the 2nd Army erected very strong field works on the heights in front of Nancy, and from the 23rd of August onwards gallantly held his own. On the 6th September the fiercest of fighting began. The Kaiser himself came into the field, and by his presence and his speeches urged on the Bavarians to a desperate assault. For three days the battle raged without ceasing. The Bavarian troops were thought to be second to none in the German army, and their White Cuirassiers were amongst the flower of German cavalry. On the 7th the Kaiser took up a position on a neighbouring hill, and watched the attack which was to overwhelm the French. He had made ready to enter Nancy in triumph that evening.

Picture him on the hill, in his long gray cloak and silver helmet, peering through his field-glasses into the valley, and confidently expecting to see his Bavarians drive the French before them. He sees the White Cuirassiers charge, and, as the brave men cheer and gallant horses thunder towards the enemy, he feels that nothing can resist them. To his dismay, they are hurled back with great slaughter, and a miserable remnant alone remains. Then the pitiless French guns begin to speak, and he sees his infantry mowed down like wheat before the reaper's sickle. He looks for victory; he sees defeat. Now the French begin to attack, and his Bavarians give way before their fierce onset. The time has come for him to seek safety in flight. A strange fatality seems to accompany him. Wherever he appears and commands in person, there you may look for disaster—whether in France or in Poland. He is a melancholy figure, flitting from East to West, feverishly inciting his armies to die for the Fatherland; dreaming great dreams of world conquest which can never be realized.

"Such," says the French official account, "was the seven days' battle in which more than two millions of men were engaged. Each army gained ground step by step—opening the road to its neighbour, supported at once by it, taking in flank the adversary which the day before it had attacked in front—the efforts of the one fitting in closely with those of the other.

"To give this victory all its meaning, it is necessary to add that it was gained by troops who for two weeks had been retreating, and who, when the order to attack was given, were found to be as ardent as on the first day. These troops had to meet the whole German army, and from the time they marched forward they never fell back again. In spite of the fatigue of our men, in spite of the power of the German heavy artillery, we took colours, guns, Maxims, shells, more than a million of cartridges, and thousands of prisoners. A German corps lost almost the whole of its artillery, which, from information brought by our airmen, was destroyed by our guns."

The battles of the Marne marked the turning-point in the campaign; the torrent of German advance had not only been stayed, but driven back. "The day of Sedan," 1st September, saw the German armies flushed with success, and confident of victory as rapid and complete as that of 1870. Nine days later their hopes were shattered: they were retreating northwards at full speed. Von Kluck's error of judgment, the fiery zeal of the British and French, General Foch's brilliant victory in the centre, and the wonderful working together of the Allied armies had wrought the miracle.

The retreat of the Germans was very skilfully conducted, and though they lost many men, guns, and wagons, they were neither broken nor defeated, and their losses, when all was said and done, were small. Von Kluck fell back thirty-five miles during the last two days of the battle, and the German centre cannot have retired less than fifty miles. In its way the retreat was as famous as that of the British from Mons.

The successes of the Allies filled them with a newborn confidence. They had taken the measure of the enemy; they knew their own strength, and were now sure that they were more than a match for the enemy. Given anything like equal numbers, they had no fear of the future.

Undoubtedly the Germans had by this time come to respect the British army. Ever since the days of Bismarck it had been the custom in Germany to regard our brave little army with scorn and contempt. When some one suggested to Bismarck that it might be landed in Germany, he remarked, "If it does, I shall ring for the police and have it locked up." Von Kluck believed that he had pierced the feeble British lion to the heart, and then vaingloriously thrust his head between its jaws. To his dismay, they met with a deadly snap, and only a quick withdrawal saved him from destruction.

CHAPTER XXVI.

STORIES OF THE BATTLE OF THE MARNE.

While the British and French were retreating from Belgium to the Seine, they were passing through country which had been untrodden by the foot of the enemy. Now that they were pushing him back on his tracks they saw at every stage the awful destruction which he had wrought. They found country houses burned and looted, smiling gardens and orchards trampled into mud, farms and villages laid waste, humble cottages in ruin. They saw towns riddled with shot and shell, churches and public buildings with broken, tottering walls, and houses stripped of all their valuable contents. From townsfolk and villagers alike, the Allies heard tales of shame and horror, and as they heard them a fierce anger was kindled in their hearts against the cruel and ruthless foe who had done such wicked and senseless deeds.

An officer of the Salvation Army tells us how the pretty town of Senlis fared at the hands of the Huns. When the Germans had been driven out of the town the Salvation Army officers entered it. They found the railway station gone, and scarcely a house along the whole line of march fit for habitation. Yet, in the middle of wrecked and ruined homes, they sometimes came across a house which had been untouched. On such houses was written in chalk, "Spare these people; they are good."

Here is the story of Jean Bauer, keeper of the prison at Senlis. He was an Alsatian, and had been forced to serve in the hated German army. After his time was up he left Alsace for France, and chanced to visit Senlis. The town pleased him, and he remained in it. After a time he was placed in charge of the prison. It was a small lock-up, just a square brick building, with a large garden all round, in which he grew cabbages. He was a kindly man, and the few prisoners who came into his hands did not find their lot very hard.

Then suddenly came the war. One morning Senlis was filled with the blue-coated, red-trousered soldiers of France. An hour or two later they had gone, marching northwards. Some days passed, and they returned, hurrying southwards, weary and worn, with ragged, soiled uniforms, some bleeding and bruised, but none dismayed. Then there was a lull, and breathless townsmen came hurrying to the mayor with the terrible news that the Germans were coming! The mayor and the curé bade the people be calm, and do nothing to resist or hamper the enemy. They listened to his words, and gave up their hidden guns. Soon afterwards sixty thousand Germans marched in, seized the mayor as a hostage, and for two days remained in the town, mingling with the people, playing with the children, and behaving themselves well.

All this time there lay hidden in the attic of a house overlooking the main street six dusky sons of Algeria, soldiers of France, who had been trapped by the coming of the Germans. Their rifles were in their hands, and there was revenge in their hearts. There they lay, waiting for a chance to strike a blow against the enemy.

The chance soon came. The Germans paraded one morning, ready for their southward march. The mayor was released; the word was given, and the blue-gray legions tramped through the streets. As the rear of the long columns passed the Algerians in the garret aimed their rifles and fired. Six loud reports were heard, followed by two shrieks of pain and two heavy thuds on the cobbled road below.

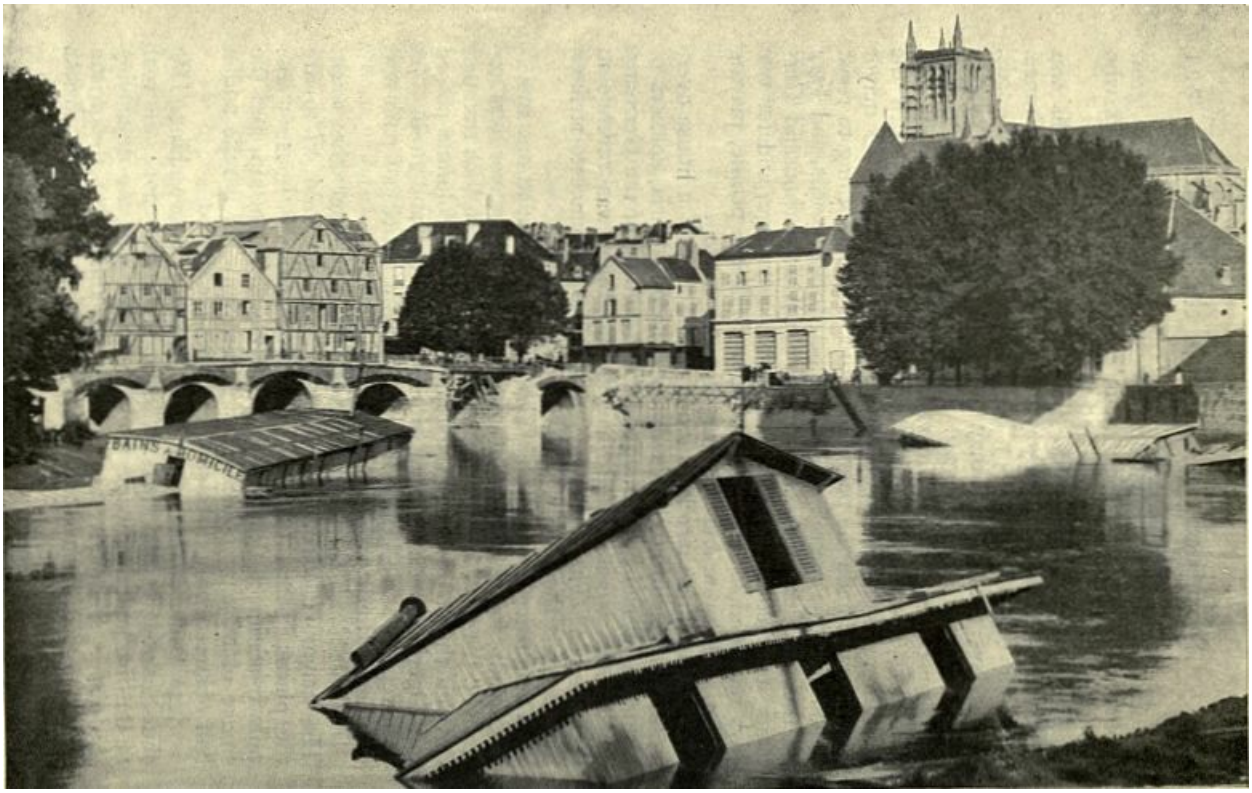
"Halt!" The Germans turn and re-enter the town. The mayor is led out and shot; parties are told off to fire the place; petrol bombs are thrown into the houses; the railway station is destroyed; fierce flames spring up, and the smoke of burning homes rises to heaven. In a mile and a half of streets only three small cottages are spared.

Jean Bauer at the prison sees the flames approaching. He shuts himself in and waits. Nearer and nearer come the roar of the fire and the hoarse shouts of those who are destroying the place. Suddenly, as he begins to think that the prison will be spared, crash!—a bomb bursts through the roof. Bricks and beams fall about him, and a cloud of dust arises. He is pinned beneath the débris, and cannot move. He shouts; no one hears. For a day and a night he lies amidst the ruins. At last his feeble voice is heard, and kindly hands tear away the bricks and beams, and rescue him. A few days' care, and he is well again. But Senlis is a wilderness of desolation. It can never be the same again.

The town of Meaux, on the Marne, was also in German hands for a time. Meaux is a very interesting city, with a

cathedral dating from the twelfth century. In 1681 a very celebrated man, named Bossuet,[112] became bishop of Meaux. He was one of the most eloquent men who ever lived, and fully deserved to be called "the golden-mouthed." Not only was he the first of French orators and one of the greatest masters of French prose, but he was brave and fearless as well, and strove earnestly to make men appreciate the littleness of earthly greatness and the greatness of heavenly joy.

When the Germans entered Meaux they found that the bishop was a man after Bossuet's likeness. The mayor and the chief officials had left the city, but the bishop remained. He was entreated to fly, but he replied, "My duty is here. I do not think the enemy will hurt me; but if they do, God's will be done. I cannot leave my cathedral or those of my flock who remain." The brave bishop met the German general, and obtained a promise from him that the invaders would behave well. They did so. Meaux owes its preservation to the good bishop.



The City of Meaux after the German Retreat. ***Photo, Sport and General.***

Another little town which the Germans held until they were driven northward towards the Aisne was Château-Thierry,[113] round which there was much fierce fighting during the Allied advance. Château-Thierry stands on the right bank of the Marne, and, prior to the war, was a bright, cheerful place. Near the bridge is a statue to La Fontaine,[114] the great writer of fables which must be familiar to many of you. Close by the ruined castle, which is reached by a flight of 102 steps, is the house in which he lived. It now contains a library and small museum.

In his book of Fables La Fontaine says:—

"These fables are much more than they appear—
The simplest animals are teachers here.
The bare dull moral weariness soon brings;
The story serves to give it life and wings."

As La Fontaine made animals teachers of wisdom to men, it is very appropriate that the three chief hotels in his native town should be "The Elephant," "The Giraffe," and "The Swan." The latter hotel was battered to pieces by French shells when the Allies crossed the river; but the owner was so proud of his countrymen's prowess in gunnery that he quite forgot to bemoan his loss. When he was showing his house to a stranger after the battle, he said, "See how splendidly

true our gunners' aim was!"

During the retreat a body of weary Germans halted for rest in a little town, and noticed that the church clock had stopped. Perhaps you know that signals can be made by moving the hands of a clock in various ways. When the Germans saw that the clock had stopped, they felt sure that somebody was signalling to the French that they were in the town. They therefore sent for the curé, and ordered him to set the clock going again. Along with two choir boys, he ascended the tower and wound up the clock, which immediately began to strike. The suspicious Germans believed that this was another trick, so they arrested the curé and the boys, and told them that they would be shot next morning. The old priest was overwhelmed with grief, for he felt that he would be the means of cutting short two young lives. He suffered agonies of remorse during the night. Early next morning the Allies rushed into the town, and the Germans fled. The curé and the boys waited long for the coming of their gaolers. At last the old priest opened the door of the prison, and stepped out into the sunshine for the purpose of making a last appeal to the Germans to spare the lives of the boys. Imagine his surprise and relief when he saw the familiar blue and red uniforms of French soldiers, and learnt that the Germans had departed for good and all.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MORE STORIES OF THE BATTLE OF THE MARNE.

Here is the story of a plucky boy who did his country good service in Lorraine. Look at the map on page 130, and find Metz. At this town the river Seille,[115] which forms part of the boundary between France and Germany, joins the Moselle. In August 1914 French troops arrived at a village on the French side of the Seille, and the captain asked the people if they had seen any Germans. "Yes," was the reply; "they have been here, but our soldiers from Nancy have driven them back across the river." "Are the Germans there now?" inquired the captain; but no one knew. All that he could learn was that no German had been seen for several days. "I must be quite sure as to their whereabouts," said the captain, "before I cross the river. How can I manage it?" A boy of twelve who stood amongst the villagers came forward, and, saluting the captain, said, "I can find out for you, sir, if you will let me." "You!" said the captain, greatly astonished. "Yes, sir," replied the boy. "I know all the country round here very well. My grandmother lives on the other side of the river, and I know a roundabout way to get to her house." "If the 'Boches'[116] catch you, they will kill you," said the captain. "I know that," returned the boy, "but I am not afraid."

The lad seemed very anxious to undertake the mission, so the captain asked the villagers what they knew of him. One and all assured him that the boy was very plucky, and could be depended upon. "Off with you, then," said the captain, and away went the boy on his perilous errand. He crawled on all fours across a wooden bridge that spanned the stream, and was soon lost to sight. Hours went by, and the villagers began to think that he would never return. At last, however, they saw him crossing the bridge once more.

French Detachment retaking a Village. ***Photo, Illustrated London News.***

He went up to the captain, saluted him, and made his report. While passing through a wood on the other side of the river he had been captured by a couple of Uhlans, who shut him up in a hayloft, and said they would shoot him if any French appeared. The coming of the French would be a proof that he had been scouting for them. After lying quietly in the hayloft for some time, he managed to get out of a little window, and crawl through the enemy lines without being seen. Once clear of the Germans, he took to his heels and ran towards home. He was able to give the captain a rough idea of

how many Germans there were on the other side of the river, and how they were placed. The captain thanked him warmly, and said, "You are an honour to France." "Perhaps," said the youngster, shaking his head; "but all the same I didn't manage to call on granny!"

As the Germans retreated northward after the Battle of the Marne, they looted the villages through which they passed, and shot down many unarmed peasants. In a cottage lay a bedridden woman, who was tended by her ten-year-old daughter, Henriette. Most of the neighbours had fled, but it was impossible to move Henriette's mother. "When they see how ill she is," said the little girl, "they will pity her, and do us no harm." The child little knew the temper of the Huns. A Bavarian sergeant broke open the door and demanded money. He threw the poor woman off the bed, and searched her mattress in vain. "Well," said he, "if you have no money, there is wine in your cellar, and we will have that." Forthwith he and seven of his men descended to the cellar, where they drank from a cask of wine till they were hopelessly drunk. When Henriette saw this, she quietly closed the trap-door leading into the cellar, and piled all the heavy things in the room on top of it. Before long French soldiers appeared in the village. Henriette beckoned to them, and, pointing to the trap-door, said, "The cellar is full of Germans, all drunk." The furniture was removed, and the drunken Bavarians were hauled out.

Now I must explain that Henriette's father had been seized by the Germans a few days before, and had been carried off to a neighbouring town as a hostage. As the French officer was marching off with the prisoners whom he had captured in the cellar, Henriette said to him, "Tell the Germans that if they will bring my father back I will ask you not to shoot them." The officer told the Germans what Henriette had said, and the least drunken of them offered to go to the neighbouring town and bring the father back safely. In a few hours he returned, bringing Henriette's father with him. Great was the child's joy at seeing her father free once more, and great was his pride in his clever little daughter.

I have already told you the story of the gallant defence which Fort Troyon made. When the Crown Prince's army was marching towards the fort, an advance party seized a village close to the outer works, and forbade the villagers to leave their houses under pain of death. The advance guard hoped to be able to reach the fort without being seen, and to capture it by surprise. A little girl of twelve years of age, named Louise Haumont, overheard her parents say that if the commander of the fort could be warned that the Germans were coming, he might be able to save it from capture. Watching her opportunity, she slipped out of the house, crept through the cornfields, and, after a weary journey, reached the fort unnoticed by the enemy. A sentry saw her, and challenged her, and was much surprised when he learnt that she had a message for the commander. She was taken to him, and you may be sure that he was very grateful for her timely warning. Without delay he mustered his men, attacked the village, and drove off the advance guard. Louise was greeted by soldiers and friends alike as a heroine, and I am sure you will agree that she deserved the highest praise that could be given to her.

Let me tell you a story of a French boy's splendid courage during the time when the 6th Army was fighting its way through the villages to the west of the Ourcq, in order to attack von Kluck's rearguard. As a French regiment was passing through one of these villages, a boy named André went up to the colonel, and begged hard to be allowed to join the soldiers. He was refused; but being a lad of very determined character, he waited until the soldiers were some distance on their way, and then stealthily followed them. When he reached them they told him to go back; but he took no notice, and remained with them, making himself useful in all sorts of ways. Two or three days later the colonel saw him, and said to a sergeant, "Who is this boy marching along with us?" "He is a fine, soldierly lad," replied the sergeant; "he does odd jobs for the men, and we find him very obliging and useful. We *must* keep him. We cannot send him back now; the distance is too great." So André, to his joy, was allowed to remain.

A few days later the regiment attacked the Germans. Shot and shell fell thickly, but the boy did not flinch. Suddenly he saw his friend the sergeant fall wounded. Off dashed André. He reached the wounded man, helped him to his feet, and

supported him as he struggled to the rear. Soon an ambulance came by, and the sergeant was carried off to hospital. André was a happy boy that night; he had paid his debt of gratitude to the man who had befriended him.

When the Germans reached Soissons, on the Aisne, in the course of their retreat, they found that the mayor had left the place, and that there was no person of authority with whom they could make arrangements. A certain Madame Macherez,[117] the widow of a former senator of France,[118] presented herself, and declared herself ready to take over the government of the town. The German commander agreed, and Madame Macherez managed everything admirably for twelve days, though she had hard work to satisfy the invaders. They demanded 200,000 lbs. of food and flour and 40,000 lbs. of tobacco, and informed her that if she did not supply them with these goods at once they would burn the town to the ground. Madame told them quite plainly that they might just as well ask for the sun and the moon, but she promised to give them all the provisions that she could collect. The Germans accepted her offer, and, thanks to her courage and energy, Soissons was not then destroyed. A few days later she had the joy of seeing the arrogant Germans leave the town in haste, with the British hard on their heels. She continued to act as mayor, and during the bombardment of the place, which the Germans began almost immediately, devoted herself to Red Cross work. Three times her house was hit by German shells. One shell fell while she was at lunch, and destroyed a wing of her house. Madame laid down her napkin and went to see what had happened. "There is not much damage done," she said, and then she calmly sat down and finished her meal. Soissons, you may be sure, was very proud of its cool, courageous lady mayoress.

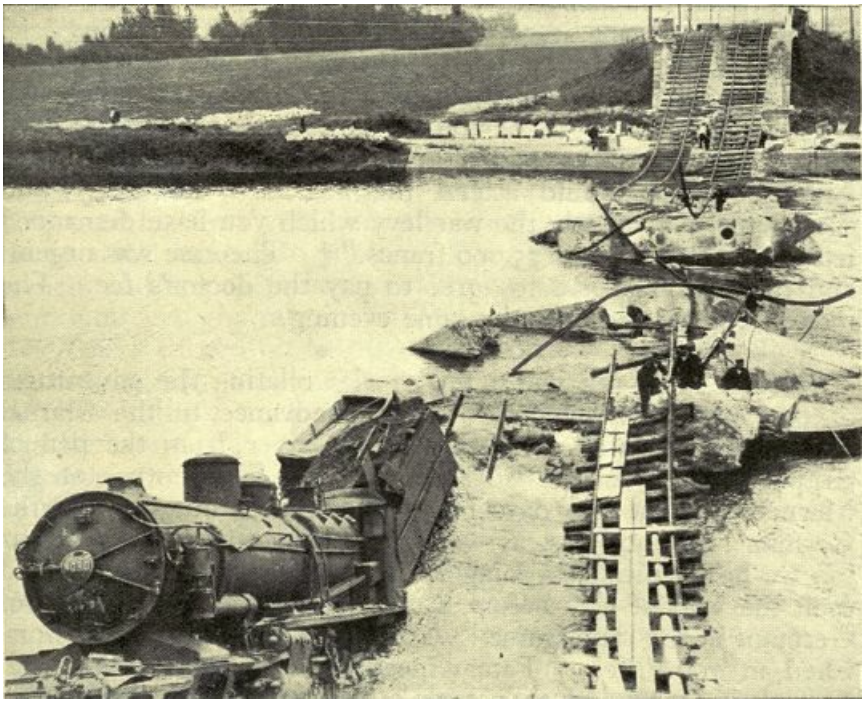
A French boy, Gustave by name, went through several battles with the French troops, and was wounded. He wrote an account of his adventures, from which the following extract is taken:—"I had been at the advanced posts for two days when it occurred to me to climb into the loft of a house in order to observe the enemy's positions. Inside the house I discovered the kits and rifles of German soldiers. I had to get out of the house, but I was unable to reopen the door. I therefore broke the window, and thus escaped. Then I loaded my rifle, fixed my bayonet, and got in again. Nobody downstairs. Went upstairs, and discovered—guess what? Seven 'Boches' sound asleep.

"I fired my rifle. The German soldiers woke up and looked at each other, wondering what had happened. Hidden behind some straw, I observed them. Then I rushed at them. They did not resist, but threw up their hands.

"'Get down,' says I to them; and they went downstairs, quite happy to surrender. I handed them over to my comrades."

When the boy's officers heard of the exploit they praised him warmly, and the general invited him to his table.

A young French cyclist named Berger took part in the Battle of the Marne. He saw his colonel lying wounded, and started to carry him to the rear. A British officer who lay near by called out that he was thirsty. Berger shouted encouraging words to him, and promised to return in a few minutes. He carried his colonel into safety, and then came back to the wounded Briton with food and a flask of wine. Bullets from rifles and machine guns were whistling about him, but he heeded them not. He was just raising the British officer's head when a bullet struck him in the hand. Though he was suffering great pain, he put the flask to the wounded man's lips; but at that moment he was struck by a second bullet, which entered his back. The two men lay on the sodden field until dawn, when the battle began again. Soon they saw the Germans advancing, and a body of Uhlans rode by. Berger hailed the officer, and begged him for something to drink. The officer dismounted, gave them drink from his own water-bottle, saluted them, and went on his way. For almost the whole day the two wounded men lay on the wet, miry ground, while the battle raged around them. The Briton by this time was almost unconscious. In spite of his own wounds, Berger partly dragged, partly pushed his fellow-sufferer along until they reached the Allied lines, where by good luck they fell in with stretcher-bearers, who conveyed them both to hospital. As the British officer was being placed on the stretcher he grasped the young Frenchman's hand, and said, "If I live through this I will do my best to get you the V.C. If ever a man deserved it, you do."



At Méry-sur-Marne a French Red Cross train was blown up by the Germans just as it was crossing the river with its load of wounded. This picture shows the scene after the explosion. ***Photo, Sport and General.***

A French newspaper says that after the Battle of the Marne, when the Germans were in full retreat, one of the imperial princes was severely wounded. He was at once conveyed to Epernay,[119] which was still held by a few German troops. No German surgeon could be found, so a staff officer went to a French surgeon who resided in the town and offered him a large fee if he would attend the prince. "My fee," said the doctor, "is exactly the war levy which you have demanded from my native city—175,000 francs."[120] The case was urgent, and the Germans had to agree to pay the doctor's fee. The money was handed over the same evening.

Now I must tell you a few stories relating the adventures of our own countrymen during the advance to the Marne. Here is an account of fighting on the river, from the pen of Sapper Gilhooly of the Royal Engineers: "Last week on the Marne we spent two days on a long mine[121] out towards the German lines, and just as we were getting to the close of our job we heard pickaxes going as fast and hard as you like, and then the wall of clay before us gave way, showing a party of Germans at the same game! You never saw men more astonished in your life. 'Fancy meeting you!' was written all over their faces, and they hadn't recovered from their shock when we pounced upon them. One German was just caught in time with a fuse, which he was going to apply, with the mad idea of blowing us all up! One of his mates was the first to rush on him. They weren't having any 'death or glory,' and I don't blame them. There's a Highlander beside me who is rigged out in the boots of a Belgian infantryman killed at Mons, the red trousers of a Frenchman, the khaki tunic of a Guardsman, and the glengarry cap of his own corps. When he wants to look particularly smart he wears a German cavalryman's cloak. The other day we came on a party of the enemy washing their shirts in a river, and we were on them so fast that they had to fly, leaving shirts and everything else behind. One chap, however, managed to collar his braces!"

The splendid devotion to duty of our doctors on the battlefield is well illustrated in the following letter, which was written by a fellow officer to the brother of Dr. J. O'Connell, of the Highland Light Infantry:—"I am only too pleased to tell you anything I can about your brother, as he was one of us, and in all your life you can never have a prouder boast

than that you were his brother. Our first show was near Mons, where he at once came into notice. He personally went into the trench, and helped to carry out the wounded, though the German guns had the range to a T, and were raining shells on it. Then they turned on to his cottage, which was fixed up as a dressing-station, and knocked it to bits. He carried every one out, not losing a single man. During the retreat your brother had the worst of it, because he had to do with the footsore and the sick, who could not keep up, so he was usually behind the rearguard; but he always kept cheery when cheerfulness was worth far more than pluck.

"Then on the advance up to the Marne, when it was pitch dark and pelting rain, and three thousand Germans lay dead or wounded on the field, your brother insisted on staying out there to do what he could for the enemy. It was almost certain death, but he remained there among them for six hours. Next day I lost forty-one men before noon. Your brother, without waiting for food or sleep, came up to look after them, and stayed there for two days while we hung on. When I myself was being tied up I mentioned to your brother that a young subaltern was dying on the field. He at once insisted on going to see if he could do anything for him, although it was within close range of a well-constructed German trench, and while doing this he was killed by a rifle bullet through the head."

What a glorious death to die! Dr. O'Connell had no thought for himself; he freely gave his life to bring succour and comfort to the wounded and dying. There is no higher and nobler heroism than this. "O selfless man and stainless gentleman!"

"Baby Rose" such is the nickname bestowed on the smallest of French soldiers, who appears above. He is a great favourite with the Zouaves, one of whom is seen accompanying him. ***Photo, Daily Mirror***

A bold adventure during the advance to the Marne is thus described by a major of the Royal Field Artillery:—

"At last we came to the edge of the wood, and in front of us, about two hundred yards away, was a little cup-shaped copse, and the enemy's trenches with machine guns a little farther on. I felt sure this wood was full of Germans, as I had seen them go in earlier. I started to gallop for it, and the others followed. Suddenly about fifty Germans bolted out firing at us. I loosed off my revolver as fast as I could, and —— loosed off his rifle from the saddle. They must have thought we were a regiment of cavalry, for, except a few, they suddenly yelled and bolted. I stopped and dismounted my lot to fire at them to make sure they didn't change their minds. I held the horses. I then suddenly saw there were more men in the copse, so I mounted the party and galloped at it, yelling, with my revolver held out.

"As we came to it I saw it was full of Germans, so I yelled 'Hands up,' and pointed the revolver at them. They all chucked down their rifles and put their hands up. Three officers and over forty men to ten of us with six rifles and a

revolver. I herded them away from their rifles and handed them over to the Welsh Regiment behind us. I tore on with the trumpeter and the sergeant-major to the machine guns. At that moment the enemy's shrapnel and our own howitzers, thinking we were hostile cavalry, opened fire on us. We couldn't move the beastly things, and it was too hot altogether, so we galloped back to the cup-shaped wood, and they hailed shrapnel on us there. I waited for a lull, and mounted all my lot behind the bushes and made them sprint to the woods where the Welsh company was. There I got two fellows to help. We ran up to the Maxims, and took out the breech mechanism of both and one of the belts, and carried away one whole Maxim. We couldn't manage the other. The Welsh asked what cavalry we were. I told them we were the staff of the ---- Battery and they cheered us, but said we were mad. The funniest thing was the little trumpeter, who swept a German's helmet off his head and waved it in the air, shouting, 'I've got it,' wild with excitement. He is an extraordinarily brave boy."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE AISNE VALLEY.

In Chapter XVII, I described the undulating chalk plateau known as the Heights of Champagne. You will remember that this ground was chosen by the French in 1874 as the best place for making a stand against an invader marching on Paris. The rapid advance of the Germans prevented the French from rallying on these heights, and forced them to withdraw much farther south before they were able to form their line and advance. During the Battles of the Marne, you will remember, they drove the enemy northwards from 6th to 11th September 1914. Bad weather caused them to slacken the pursuit on the 12th, and the Germans were enabled to cross the Aisne unmolested. While their rearguards were fighting stubbornly, the main bodies were strongly entrenching themselves on the heights north of the river.

It was not the first time that a German army had held this position. When Marshal Blücher was fighting in France at the end of February 1814, he was driven on to this plateau by Napoleon. So greatly was the ground in his favour that Napoleon was unable to dislodge him. German generals are great students of geography, and they were fully aware that the heights beyond the Aisne afforded them a very strong defensive position against an enemy moving from the south. When, therefore, they were obliged to retreat, they made for this high ground, where they dug deep trenches and gun-pits, and created a great fortified zone according to a plan long previously prepared. Many people said that the trenches had been dug before the Germans crossed the Marne, but the French Government tells us that there is no foundation for this statement.

Before I describe the fierce fighting on the banks of the Aisne I must try to give you some idea of the surrounding country. The Aisne runs from east to west across North France through a wide grassy valley. It is a sluggish stream, 170 feet broad, 15 feet deep in the middle, and not unlike the English river Trent in character. All along its valley are villages, farmhouses, unfenced fields, and poplar-lined roads, with here and there a little town.

The most important place in the valley is Soissons, which has already been mentioned in these pages. It is a very ancient town, with a history that goes back to the days before Cæsar conquered Gaul. When, in later times, the Franks set up a kingdom to the west of the Rhine, Soissons became its capital. Few places have had so martial a history and have been so often besieged. In 1870 the Germans bombarded the town for three days before they were able to capture it. Prior to the war it was a quiet country place, with a considerable trade in grain and haricot beans. It boasted a beautiful cathedral, three fine old abbeys, and a town hall containing a large library. One of the abbeys sheltered Thomas à Becket for some time in the year 1170.

Looking across the valley from Soissons, we see the hills rising up from the river like a wall. They vary in height, from 200 feet in the west near Compiègne to 450 feet in the east near Craonne.[122] A nearer view of these hills shows us many spurs dipping down sharply into the vale, and between them steep-sided ravines and deep, narrow water-courses carved out by the short and rapid brooks. All the way from Compiègne to Craonne the wall of heights continues, with sometimes a bolder spur and sometimes a deeper ravine. In many of the valleys there are quarries which have been worked for centuries. The hollows from which the stone has been taken, the underground passages, and the heaps of refuse afford abundance of ready-made cover. The top of the plateau cannot be seen from the valley, nor from the high ground on the southern bank of the river, owing to the woods, which dip over the edges of the slopes and descend towards the stream. The lower slopes are, for the most part, steep and grassy, with enclosed coppices here and there. As you know, the plateau stretches northwards to La Fère and Laon, where it drops steeply to the plains of north-eastern France. The villages on the plateau are strongly built of stone.

On the high ground, at an average distance of two miles from the stream, the Germans had dug their trenches. The position was perfect. It could not be seen from the high ground on the south side of the river, and it commanded the bridges crossing the stream and most of the roads leading to them. Along the crest runs a good highway, known as the "Route des Dames"—that is, the Ladies' Road; by means of this road the Germans were able to supply their line readily with food and ammunition. At the eastern end of the heights the ground falls away behind the road, and forms a deep hollow running parallel with it, thus providing excellent cover for the supports of the troops holding the crest.

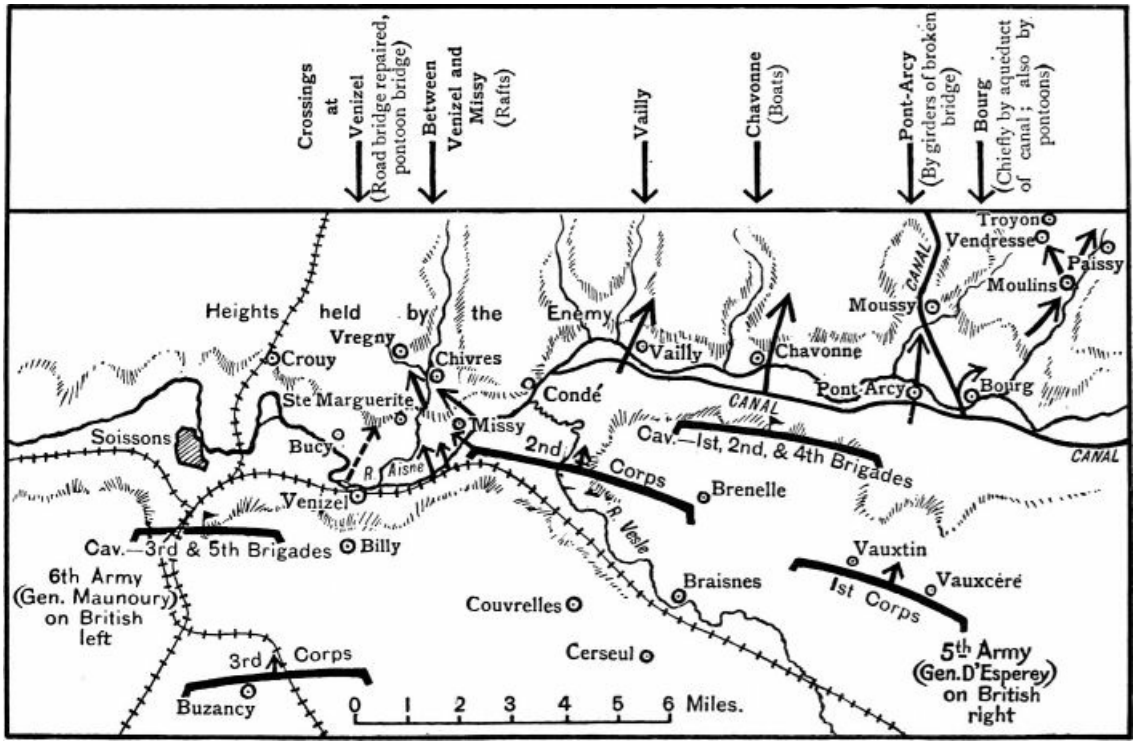
Von Kluck occupied the western section of the position, from the forest of Compiègne to the large village of Craonne. Beyond that place, at the old ferry of Berry-au-Bac, the German line crossed the river and continued along a flat ridge

parallel with the right bank of the Suippe,[123] a tributary of the Aisne. This ridge, which was held by von Buelow's command, curves to the south-east, and runs about fifteen miles east of the city of Rheims. No better position for artillery could be desired than the crest of the ridge, for the slope in front of it is quite open and bare, and it can be swept by the guns in all its breadth. In some respects this position was stronger than the line of heights, for there was little or no cover for troops advancing upon it. Still farther to the east the German line rested on the Argonne, where the army of the Crown Prince was operating. Along this front, which was more than a hundred miles in length, two million men were now to engage.

Von Kluck was opposed by the 5th and 6th French Armies and the British army. The 6th French Army lay between Soissons and the Oise. Its left wing was extended along the Oise, in case von Kluck should attempt, as of old, to envelop the Allies' left. The British army lay east of Soissons, with a front of about fifteen miles. On the right of the British army was the 5th French Army. Von Buelow, who at this time also commanded the Saxon army, held the ground to the east of von Kluck, and opposed to him was the 9th French Army, under General Foch. The Duke of Würtemberg and the Crown Prince continued the German line to the Argonne, and against them were arrayed the 4th and 3rd French Armies. The French who were opposed to the Crown Prince at once set to work entrenching themselves in a semicircle about the fortress of Verdun. They dug their trenches sufficiently far away from the forts to prevent the German howitzers from dropping shells on them. The first of two other French armies lay between the Meuse and the Moselle, while the 2nd Army held the Bavarians in Lorraine.

Now let us look more closely at the section of the Aisne which the British were to attack. A study of the map on page 240 will show you what a heavy task was assigned to our army. Along some parts of the front our soldiers could not approach the river at all, because there were broad stretches of open ground which could be swept by the enemy's long-range artillery. Clumps of wood, farmhouses, and sunken roads afforded the only cover there was.

It was on Saturday, 12th September 1914, that the enemy was discovered holding the strong position which I have described. At Soissons they were in possession of both sides of the river, and they also held an entrenched line on the hills to the north. There were eight road bridges and two railway bridges crossing the river within the British section, but all had been completely destroyed except one road bridge at Venizel which our engineers repaired. The first business of the British was to get a footing on the south bank, and then to construct bridges by which they could cross the river and attack the Germans on the heights. The longest battle of history was about to begin.



British Position on September 12, on the Eve of the Battle of the Aisne.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CROSSING OF THE AISNE.

On Saturday, September 12, 1914, the 6th French Army managed to secure several good artillery positions on the south bank of the river, and all day long there was a long-range duel with the German guns on the other side. Our Third Army Corps, working from west to east, gained some high ground east of Soissons, and their guns now took part in the duel. Until near midnight the rival guns hurled shot and shell at each other, while German searchlights flashed their broad beams to and fro searching the Allied positions. During the night our Third Army Corps and the right of the 6th French Army managed to capture half of the town of Soissons.

If you look at the picture-diagram on pages 248-9, you will notice that a little tributary, the Vesle, joins the main stream near Condé. While the Third Corps was attacking Soissons our cavalry was busy driving the enemy out of the valley of the lower Vesle.[124] Throughout the previous day (11th September) Allenby's men had been working through the woods and along the roads, clearing the ground, and preparing for the advance of the infantry. At Braisne,[125] which stands on the Vesle, they found the Germans in force, holding the little town, the bridge, and the surrounding heights with infantry and machine guns. In the brisk fight which followed the Queen's Bays greatly distinguished themselves. About midday our cavalry won the town, and began driving the enemy to the north. Some hundreds of prisoners were captured, and the Germans retreated so hastily that they were obliged to throw a large amount of gun ammunition into the river. It could clearly be seen under two feet of water. By the evening of the 12th the valley of the Vesle was clear, and both the Second and First Corps were approaching the main stream. The Second Corps lay across the Vesle, with the First Corps to the east of it. The Allies were now ready to undertake the tremendous task of crossing the river Aisne.

Sunday morning, 13th September, saw the great task begun, and the evening saw it successfully ended. As the Allies moved out towards the river the whole line of heights fronting them seemed to flash fire. From hundreds of German howitzers and field guns a storm of shot and shell raged along the south bank of the river, and from line after line of trenches hidden in the trees on the steep slopes sped a hurricane of bullets from machine guns and rifles. The bombardment was terrific; the whole valley appeared to throb as the shrapnel burst and the huge shells flew into fragments with a deafening roar. It seemed as though nothing could live in that zone of death. Nevertheless the Allies, crouching amid the bushes, doubling from one spot of shelter to another, moved swiftly forward in long, thin, skirmishing lines. Meanwhile British and French guns played upon the German trenches, and to some extent kept down the rifle and machine-gun fire.

Already the Allied engineers were engaged on the most dangerous and difficult work known to war. The river was swollen with the recent heavy rains, and its muddy torrent roared along, bearing on its surface the wreckage of many broken bridges. Near Soissons the engineers tried to push pontoons across the stream. Calmly and coolly they constructed their bridges under a deadly fire, only to see them splintered to matchwood by the guns of the enemy. As they worked, German rifles and machine guns blazed at them from short range across the river, and the enemy, encouraged by his success, attempted to build bridges of his own. As, however, the first bridge section approached the stream, a British shell burst above it, and immediately the section and its bearers were no more. So fierce, however, was the fire of the enemy that our engineers had to give up trying to bridge the stream at this point. All attempts to silence the German batteries which were doing the mischief proved vain.

German Sharpshooters on the Heights of the Aisne.
Photo, Newspaper Illustrations, Ltd.

Farther west, however, the French, in the gray of the morning, threw two bridges across the river, and immediately infantry and guns of the 6th Army swarmed across them. By the afternoon the French were fighting their way up the ravines on the other side. A little distance to the east of Soissons you will notice that the river forks, and in two channels flows round an island. At this point British engineers were also successful in throwing pontoons across the river, and the 11th British Brigade dashed across them, and began to dig themselves in on the other side.

Smith-Dorrien's men, the Second Corps, were lying astride of the lower Vesle. As they advanced against the line of the Aisne they suffered heavy loss, especially on the left, where there was much open ground. Stubborn attempts were made to bridge the river opposite to the village of Missy, but they failed again and again. Nevertheless, by the afternoon rafts had been constructed, and these, laden with troops, were hauled to and fro across the stream. By this means two brigades gained the other side, and immediately lined out in the woods, where they fought for the rest of the day. Meanwhile Smith-Dorrien's 3rd Division was struggling hard to cross at Condé.[126] On the other side the Germans were lying in tiers of trenches on the steep slope, and some of them were sheltered behind the ramparts of an old French fort at Condé. So fierce and continuous was their fire that our men failed to cross the river at this point. The Germans held Condé all that day, and for many weeks after.

Haig's division, on Smith-Dorrien's right, attacked the enemy along a front of about six miles. You will notice that they had to cross, first a canal, and then the river. The canal was easily bridged, but the flat ground between the canal and river was terribly swept by German fire, and here again it was found impossible at most points to construct pontoon bridges. The men, however, were got across by means of boats and rafts.

Still farther east an iron road bridge had been blown up by the Germans; but they had not made a complete job of it, and one of the broken girders which remained above the water formed a kind of switchback across the stream. In the middle it was under water, and the muddy river swirled fiercely around it. The upstanding girder was discovered by one of our men, and immediately an attempt was made to get troops across it. Ropes were stretched from bank to bank, to give the men something to hold on by, and across this quivering plank of steel they made their way in single file. At one point they were nearly up to their waists in water. Despite rifle and machine-gun fire, a small force crossed the river by this perilous path, and as it pushed forward the engineers were able to strengthen and enlarge the frail bridge for the passage of the remainder. The crossing of the river by means of this broken girder was one of the most stirring incidents yet

recorded. (See Frontispiece.)

It was on the right of the British line that the greatest success was achieved. At a place called Bourg (see map on page 240) a branch canal is carried across the river by means of a low aqueduct with a broad towing-path. By some happy chance the Germans had not destroyed this aqueduct, and were holding it with only a small force. When, however, the British cavalry prepared to cross by means of the towing-path, shrapnel and bullets were rained upon them. The horsemen, however, dashed across, and infantry followed hard behind them. Meanwhile the engineers were busy building a pontoon bridge by the side of the aqueduct, where they were sheltered from the enemy's fire. The rest of the 1st Division was got across by means of the pontoon bridge, and in the evening was partly entrenched two miles north of the river. The 5th French Army was by this time across the river too, and the Moroccans were covering the British flank.

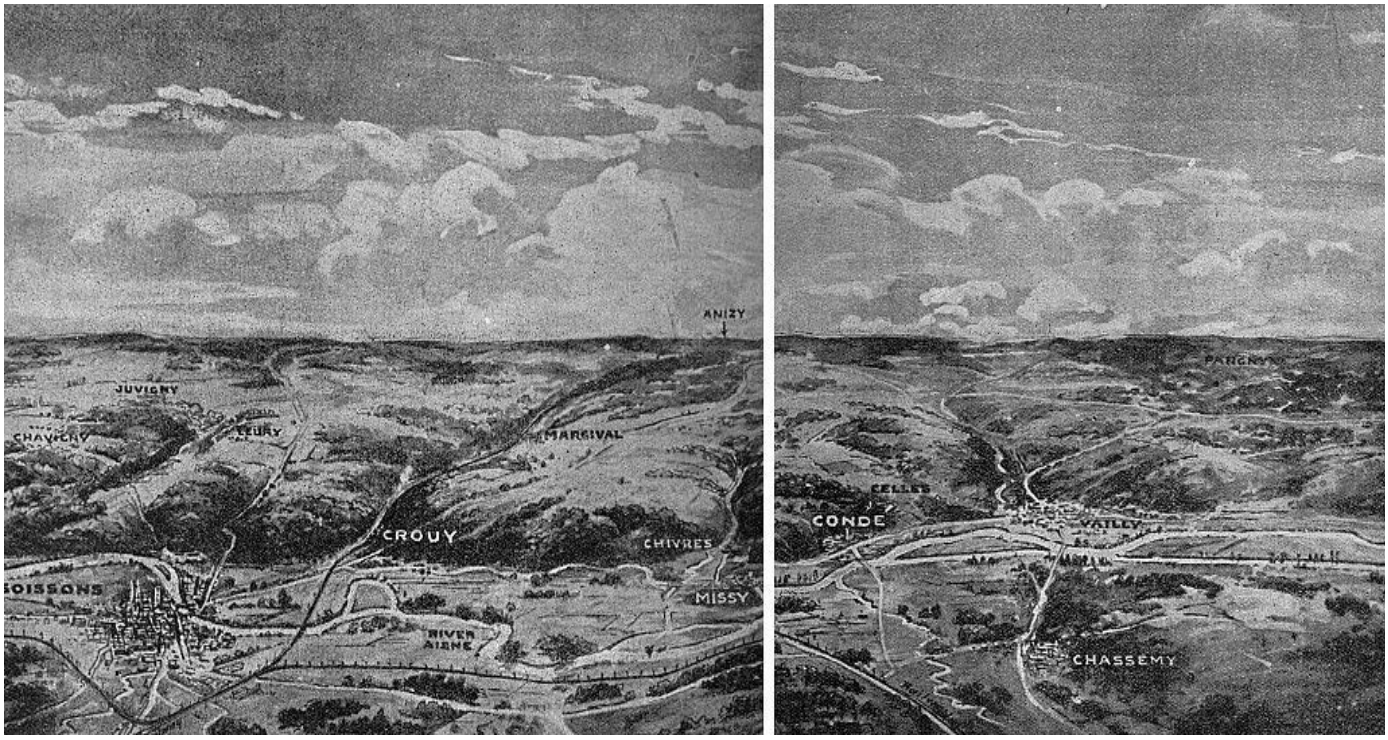
A thousand deeds of cool and daring courage were done on that September morning. If you are to form an idea of what our men had to face, you must try to imagine them creeping nearer and nearer to the river through a deadly hail of shot and shell—the engineers working calmly on the bridges while marksmen hidden in the woods were picking them off, and the machine guns and artillery of the enemy were making havoc amongst them; the frail rafts, crowded with men, being hauled to and fro, and death taking its toll every passage; the infantry crawling forward yard by yard up the steep slopes, in spite of the fire from above, and all the while huge shells from the German howitzers hurling up fountains of water from the river or tearing vast holes in the ground. Sudden and hideous death faced our men every minute; yet they "stuck it" with bull-dog courage, and the river was crossed.

"He sat down in full view of the enemy, and poured a hail of bullets on the advancing Germans."
From the picture by F. Gardiner.

One splendid deed of heroism must not be forgotten. Near Soissons, where the howitzer fire of the Germans was fierce and continuous, 150 men of the West Kents, Black Watch, and Scottish Borderers were told off to guard a bridgehead. Suddenly the Germans in great force opened fire from the surrounding woods, and a dense column advanced at a run towards the bridge. The little British detachment checked them for a time, but at a heavy loss. A ring of dead lay around the machine gun which was holding back the German advance, and the crew being laid low it ceased to fire. At this fateful moment a big Highlander jumped up from cover, ran forward, seized the Maxim, swung it, tripod and all, across his shoulder, and ran with it to the bridgehead, where, all alone, he sat down in full view of the enemy, and poured a hail

of bullets on the advancing Germans. Under this withering fire the column wavered and fled for cover to the fields on either side of the road. As the last of the enemy retired the brave Highlander fell forward on to his gun, riddled with thirty bullets. He had, however, like Horatius of old, saved the bridge, for just as he fell British reinforcements doubled up and put the final touches to the rout of the enemy.

By the end of that Sunday evening only the 19th Brigade of the Third Corps, which was operating near Soissons, and some brigades of the Second Corps, lying more to the right, had failed to cross the stream. The bulk of the British had made the passage, and were now entrenched well up the slopes on the farther side. Never before in the history of the British army had so broad a river been so quickly crossed in the face of such a great and strongly-posted enemy. It was a remarkable feat of arms, and the credit was mainly due to the artillery and to the engineers. In the face of almost certain death, our sappers worked as calmly and coolly at their bridges as though engaged in peaceful manoeuvres at home.



Sermoise Spur R. Vesle ***By permission of the Illustrated London News.***

Diagram of the Aisne Valley showing the part of the River attacked by the British.

In his dispatch of October 8, 1914, Sir John French thus describes the Aisne valley:—"The Aisne Valley runs generally east and west, and consists of a flat-bottomed depression of width varying from half a mile to two miles, down which the river follows a winding course to the west, at some points near the southern slopes of the valley, and at others near the northern.

"The high ground both on the north and south of the river is about 400 feet above the bottom of the valley, and is very similar in character, as are both slopes of the valley itself, which are broken into numerous rounded spurs cut into by ravines. The most prominent of the former are the Chivres Spur on the right bank, and Sermoise Spur on the left. Near the latter place the general plateau on the south is divided by a subsidiary valley of much the same character down which the small river Vesle flows to the main stream near Sermoise. The slopes of the plateau overlooking the Aisne on the north and south are of varying steepness, and are covered with numerous patches of wood, which also stretch upwards and backwards over the edge on to the top of the high ground. The Aisne is a

sluggish stream of some 170 feet in breadth, but being 15 feet deep in the centre, it is unfordable. Between Soissons on the west and Villers on the east (some 3 miles south-east of Soupir) there are eleven road bridges across it. On the north bank a narrow-gauge railway runs from Soissons to Vailly where it crosses the river, and continues eastward along the south bank. From Soissons to Sermoise a double line of railway runs along the south bank, turning at the latter place up the Vesle Valley.

"The position held by the enemy is a very strong one, either for delaying action or for a defensive battle. One of its chief military characteristics is that from the high ground on neither side can the top of the plateau on the other side be seen, except for small stretches. This is chiefly due to the woods on the edges of the slopes. Another important point is that all the bridges are under direct or high-angle artillery fire.

"The tract of country above described, which lies north of the Aisne, is well adapted to concealment, and was so skilfully turned to account by the enemy as to render it impossible to judge the real nature of his opposition to our passage of the river or accurately to gauge his strength. But I have every reason to conclude that strong rearguards of at least three army corps were holding the passages on the early morning of the 13th. On that morning I ordered the British forces to advance and make good the Aisne."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

When Sir John French came to think over the operations of the day, he was uncertain in his own mind as to the intention of the enemy. Did they mean to make a great stand on the Aisne heights, or were they merely fighting a rearguard action in order to gain time in which to prepare for some new movement? It was most important that the Germans should be made to reveal their plans; so Sir John decided to put the matter to the test on the morrow by making a general advance.

All night long the engineers were hard at work strengthening the new crossings and repairing the old bridges, so that they would bear the weight of heavy guns and lorries. The infantry were no less busy, digging themselves in on the ground which they had won the previous day. The real attack was to be made by the First Army Corps, under Sir Douglas Haig, and we will now follow the fortunes of his command. On September 13 he had fought his way northward for about two miles, and was now holding the hillsides and the woods around the village of Troyon, directly to the north of Bourg. You must not confuse this Troyon with Fort Troyon, which was mentioned in Chapter XXVII. Fort Troyon is an outlying fort of Verdun, on the right bank of the Meuse; the Troyon of which I am now speaking is a tiny village about three miles north of Bourg, on the Aisne. To the north of Troyon are steep wooded slopes, and to the west is an undulating and densely-wooded country, rising towards high hills. Dense woodlands lay between Troyon and the position which the First Corps now held.

Shortly after midnight on 14th September Haig mustered his 2nd Infantry Brigade, which was billeted in the village of Moulins,[127] about a mile to the south of Troyon. Rain fell at intervals, and heavy mist made the dark night still darker. Silently the battalions of the King's Royal Rifles, the Royal Sussex, the Northamptonshire, and the Loyal North Lancashire regiments, with the 25th Artillery Brigade, took their places, and waited for the word of command. The German position which they were about to assault was the strongest along the whole line. The enemy had dug deep trenches and gun pits, and the ranges were well known, so that a fierce struggle might be expected. Both sides were on the watch, and every now and then the crack of rifles and the screech of shells broke the silence, while searchlights from the heights swept the scene. Brigadier-General Bulfin, who was in command, had sent out a patrol of officers to discover the position and strength of the enemy. Shortly before 3 a.m. it returned, and reported that the enemy was strongly posted near a sugar factory to the north of Troyon.

Then the word was given, and the King's Royal Rifles and the Royal Sussex Regiment moved forward in silence. There was no talking in the ranks; the orders were given in whispers, and were quickly passed along the line. Everything depended on taking the enemy by surprise. As the British moved on in dead silence there was a sudden sharp cry of pain. A stray shot had hit a man in the arm, and he could not repress a cry. But the brave fellow silenced his moans immediately by thrusting a piece of turf between his teeth. He held it there until he was sufficiently recovered to crawl back to his own lines.

The German outposts were now reached. The British moved rapidly forward, and soon drew near to the factory near which the Germans were posted. They were met by a fierce fire from the factory and from the guns in the entrenchments near at hand. Our men flung themselves to the ground, and began creeping forward, taking cover with great skill. It was a scene worthy of the brush of Rembrandt.[128] Away on the left rose the dusky heights; in front the factory loomed darkly against the sky; from windows and loopholes came thin sparks of flame; all around were wooded slopes wrapped in gloom. Along the British front the darkness was relieved by flashes of light from the rifles of the widely-extended infantry. From the distant trenches came the thunder of guns. All the time a light rain was falling, and a soaking mist made the darkness more obscure.

The German fire was so hot that the British were brought to a standstill. Shortly afterwards the Northamptons appeared on the east, and began moving towards the hills. Very slowly they gained ground, but all attempts to oust the Germans from the factory failed. The darkness, the mist, and the sodden ground prevented our artillery from lending effective aid.

The eastern sky began to pale; the shadows slowly fled from the woods, and dawn was at hand. The thin British line could not be expected to hold its own when the full light of day revealed them to the German marksmen and gunners, so reinforcements were hurried up, and a desperate attempt was made to advance. But little headway was made until the

Guards' Brigade arrived. The Grenadier, Coldstream, and Scots Guards, as you probably know, rejoice in a long and proud record of military glory. For two hundred and fifty years they have played a leading part in our wars, and on their colours are blazoned some of the most glorious victories in British annals. Every man of the Guards' Brigade who advanced in the gray of that September morning was eager to prove himself worthy of the name and fame of his regiment. "Fix bayonets!" was now the order, and away swept the British, unsupported by artillery, towards the enemy's trenches. There was fierce hand-to-hand fighting for a few minutes. Then the Germans, unable to stand the fierce onset and the thrust of cold steel, broke and fled, leaving five guns and more than three hundred prisoners in the hands of the victors.

The factory, however, still held out. It was a solid stone building, with every door bolted and barred, and every window lined with rifles. The Loyal North Lancashires, who lay before it, heard the shouts of their victorious comrades to the right and left, and now strained every effort to win a like success. Towards midday some of them rushed a door of the factory, battered it down, and forced their way in over barricades and the piled corpses of the slain. In a few minutes the factory was in British hands. The Loyal North Lancashires poured into it, and held it throughout the day.

In the full light of that cold and windy morning, the British saw clearly that the task before them was enough to make the stoutest heart quail. The Germans had retreated to a line of trenches on a stretch of rising open ground. To carry these trenches meant an advance through a tornado of lead from rifles and machine guns. Behind the trenches was concealed German artillery, which was dropping shells on them so fast and furiously that advance was impossible. There was a great sigh of relief when, about nine o'clock, British shells began to whistle over the heads of the infantry. At last the artillery had come to their aid.

Now we must leave these gallant men for a moment and see what was happening to the Allies on either flank. To the right of the 1st Division the Moroccans, who had already taught the Germans to fear them, were holding their trenches valiantly. To the left of the 1st Division was the 2nd Division, advancing towards Braye, which you will see on the extreme right of the picture-diagram (page 249). Its right wing had been checked by German artillery and rifle fire, and was now held up. Between the firing lines of the 1st and 2nd Divisions there was a stretch of ground left open, and Sir Douglas Haig saw at once that the enemy would probably try to thrust in a wedge at this point. He therefore hurried the 3rd Infantry Brigade into the gap, but only just in time. Almost immediately it was fiercely shelled, and a strong force of Germans was seen advancing. Two battalions of the 3rd Brigade at once dashed towards them; a battery of field guns galloped up, and opened fire at short range, and the enemy hastily withdrew.

Later in the day the enemy actually gained a footing between the First and Second Corps, and threatened to cut the communications of the latter. Sir Douglas Haig at this time was very hard pressed, and he had no reserves. The only reinforcements which Sir John French possessed consisted of three brigades of Allenby's cavalry. They now galloped up, dismounted, and took their places in the firing line. By their timely help the enemy was driven back, and the danger was averted.

Desperate fighting continued the whole of the morning and far into the afternoon. Attack and counter-attack continued almost without a pause. The Germans rolled forward in waves, only to be beaten back; the British advanced in their turn, only to suffer a like fate. In each case it was as though lines of breakers were dashing against the cliffs of a rocky seashore. Big guns thundered; Maxims and rifles cracked unceasingly. Huge siege guns, with a range of 10,000 yards, also hurled their enormous shells upon the British. These were the guns which had battered down the forts of Maubeuge a few days before.

About four in the afternoon the German counter-attacks grew so weak and infrequent that Sir Douglas Haig thought the time had come for a general advance. Our men pushed forward gallantly, but every inch of ground had to be won at a heavy price of dead and wounded. The officers suffered very severely; one brigade lost three of its four colonels. By this time the long day's struggle was beginning to tell upon our gallant fellows. Nevertheless before night fell a long stretch of difficult and dangerous ground had been won; six hundred prisoners and twelve guns had been captured. For the first time our men occupied an entrenched position on the plateau itself. In his dispatch Sir John French pays a high and well-deserved tribute to Sir Douglas Haig and the First Army Corps. He says: "The action of the First Army Corps, under the direction and command of Sir Douglas Haig, was of so skilful, bold, and decisive a character that he gained positions which alone have enabled me to maintain my position for more than three weeks of very severe fighting on the north bank of the river."

Very briefly I must sum up the work of the French on 14th September and the following days. The 6th French Army, to the left of the British, had made good progress on the 14th; but by the evening of the 15th had been driven back to within only a few hundred yards of its crossing places. Soissons had been heavily shelled, and part of it had been burned down. The French left, however, was still moving up the Oise towards Noyon.

The 5th French Army, to the right of the British, had crossed the river on the 14th, and had begun its assaults on the plateau above Craonne. If it could seize the long, steep-sided spur of Craonne, it would be able to turn the German positions on the whole line of heights. The Germans, however, stubbornly held their own, and the French could make no progress.

The 9th French Army, which had played such a leading part in the Battle of the Marne, had driven the Germans into Rheims, from which they fell back almost without firing a shot. The French were elated at the capture of this historic city. But von Buelow had not been defeated; he had moved back for the purpose of protecting the left of von Kluck's position on the heights of the Aisne. He halted, as we know, on the ridge along the northern bank of the Suippe, and Foch's attempts to force him from this position not only failed, but he himself was driven back by the Germans towards Rheims. The enemy captured the hill of Brimont, north of the city, and brought up heavy siege guns to bombard it at long range. More important still, the Germans had worked round on the east, and had won another hill to the east of the city. They could not, however, capture an adjoining hill, which was part of the defences of Rheims.

Eastwards of Rheims the 3rd and 4th Armies were fighting hard with some of the Saxon and Würtemberg troops, and also with the army of the Crown Prince. South of the Argonne the German retreat on this part of the line had also come to an end, and here, too, the invaders were holding an entrenched position of such strength that it resembled a fortress.

The next day, 15th September, was not so favourable to the Allies as the preceding day. On the British left two of our divisions were severely handled, and one of them was forced back at evening almost to the line of the stream. The 3rd Division, however, retook some high ground from which it had been thrust back on the previous day. On the British right there were constant attacks and counter-attacks, and the Guards' Brigade did yeoman service. It was during this part of the fighting that Bombardier Ernest Harlook, of the 113th Battery, R.F.A., won the V.C., as we shall read later.

Next day there was not much fighting on the British front. News arrived that the French 5th Army had been obliged to fall back, and that the Moroccans, on the British right, had retired, and thus left open the flank of our First Corps. Next morning (17th September), however, there was good news from the left. The French 6th Army had won back all the ground which it had lost, and was now in a strong position on the edge of the plateau. The British divisions which had been driven back to the stream were not molested; but the 1st Division, perched high up on the plateau at Troyon, came in for a bad time.

The Northamptons, on the extreme right, had clung to their positions, in spite of every effort to dislodge them. On the morning of the 17th the Germans in the opposite trenches showed a white flag as a token of surrender. They were called upon to come forward, and they did so, right to the edge of our trenches, and then most treacherously poured in a hot rifle fire. Many of our men were shot down; but happily there was a British machine gun, manned by a detachment of the Queen's, on the flank of the trench, and only 400 yards away. It opened fire at once, cutting a lane through the mass of the Germans, and killing three hundred of them. About one hundred of the survivors held up their hands and were made prisoners, while the rest fell back to their own trench. The trap had failed. Shortly afterwards a battalion of the Guards arrived, and drove them still farther back, with more loss.

On the next day (18th September) there was a lull in the fighting, though the 1st and 2nd British Divisions made a general attack, during which the Gloucesters, charging through the darkness, carried a line of the enemy's trenches. The whole French line to the east was making no progress, and it was now clear that the German positions could not be carried by a frontal attack. In five days' furious and deadly struggle but little ground had been gained. The forces opposed to each other were too evenly matched, and the trenches of the enemy were too strongly defended to be captured without a terrible loss of life. All that the Allies could do was to dig themselves in deeply, and slowly and painfully creep forward to the German lines by sap and mine.

It was clear that the Germans had recovered from their retreat, and were now in such a position that they could defy our

attacks. A deadlock had set in all along the line. All dreams of rapidly driving the enemy out of France had been rudely dispelled. General Joffre, however, was equal to the occasion. He was ready with a new plan. What it was, and how it succeeded, we shall learn in a later chapter.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SOLDIERS' STORIES OF THE BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

The Battle of the Aisne was a "soldiers' battle." It was, you will remember, a series of attempts to drive the enemy out of strong positions by attacks along his front. In this kind of fighting there is but little scope for what we call "generalship." Everything depends upon the courage and resolution of the rank and file and their company officers. The following stories will show you how nobly our men bore themselves during the perilous crossing of the river, and in the many fierce fights that afterwards took place on the slopes of the plateau.

As the engineers played such a gallant part in the battle, our first story must be the experiences of a sapper. In a letter to his friends at home, Sapper S. Johnson, of the Royal Engineers, wrote as follows:—

"I have got through so far, but I have had a great deal of luck. There was one time, at the Battle of the Aisne, when the shells were dropping all round us. We had just finished a pontoon bridge. There were seven of us standing at one end, and the lieutenant told us to spread out. I had not taken ten paces when a shell killed four and wounded one. I and the other sapper were blown off our feet with the concussion. It was a marvellous escape.

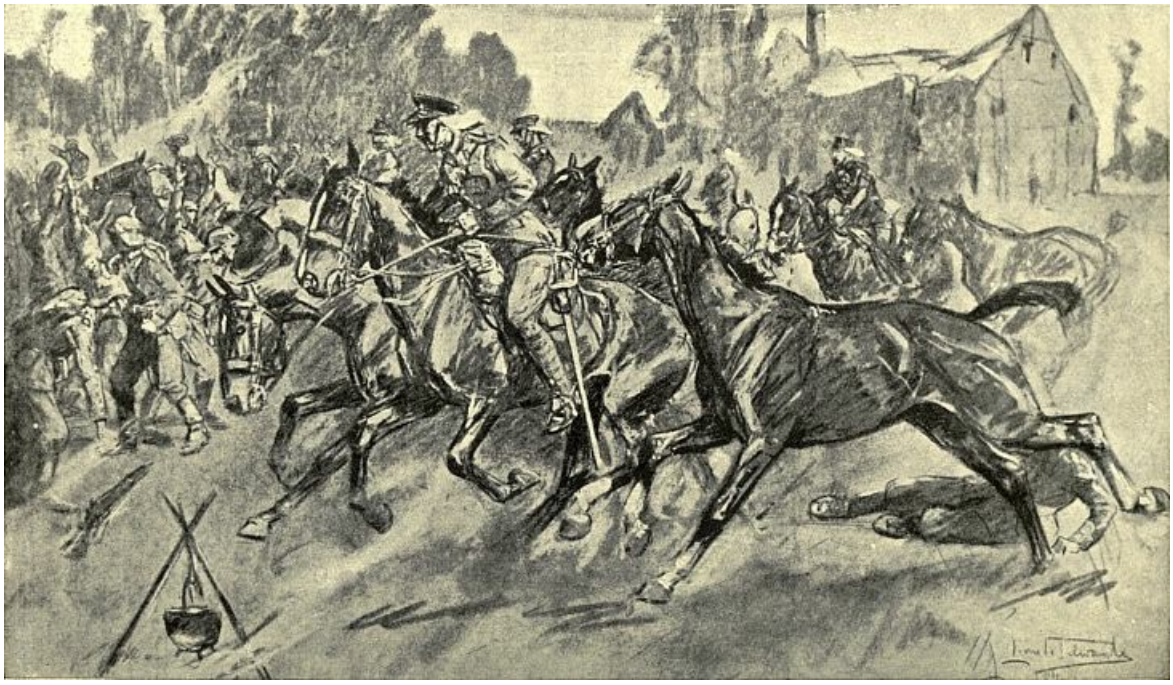
"Then we got into the shelter of a small bridge across a canal. Nine of us sat behind a wall, and the Germans shelled that bridge for all they were worth, and hardly missed it. But we were safe behind the buttress. It would have been certain death if any of us had moved.

"Our major wanted us to retire along the bank; but we told him we would rather chance crossing the bridge, for we should not have got fifty yards without being shelled. Well, we had to dash across, one after the other, and every time a man dashed out there was a hail of shells. We left one man on the bridge. He was shot, and I was the last to leave him. We could not do anything for him. When we returned at night he was dead."

Private J. Green of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment writes as follows:—

"We came to the river Aisne in the early hours of the 14th, and found that, with a single exception, all the bridges had been blown up. The engineers immediately set to work with their pontoons; but the Germans from a sheltered position had the range perfectly. As quickly as one raft was got into position the poor fellows were knocked over like ninepins by the most murderous fire. When one man fell into the water another took his place, and the river was full of wounded struggling in the water. We fished out all we could. Six times our bridge was destroyed before they were able to get across. The bravery of the chaps was magnificent."

The "Eye-Witness" with the British forces tells us a remarkable story. After our troops had advanced to the Aisne, many small parties of Germans were discovered hiding in the woods behind the British line. One of our officers, who was in charge of a number of riderless horses which were being led along a road, learnt that Germans were in the neighbourhood. He at once gave the order to charge, and the enemy, seeing horses galloping towards them, imagined them to be cavalry. At once they threw down their arms and held up their hands. Three officers and 106 men surrendered as a result of this extraordinary charge.



A Riderless Charge. ***From the drawing by Lionel Edwards.***

Here is the letter of a German officer:—

"My dear Parents,—Our corps has the task of holding the heights south of Cerny[129] in all circumstances till the 15th Corps on our left flank can grip the enemy's flank. We are fighting with English Guards, Highlanders, and Zouaves. The losses on both sides have been enormous. For the most part this is due to the too brilliant French artillery. The English are marvellously trained in making use of the ground. One never sees them, and yet one is constantly under fire. The French airmen perform wonderful feats. We cannot get rid of them. As soon as an airman has flown over us, ten minutes later we get their shrapnel fire on our position. We have little artillery in our corps. Without it we cannot get forward. Three days ago (14th September) our division took possession of these heights, dug itself in, etc. Two days ago, early in the morning, we were attacked by immensely superior English forces, and were turned out of our positions. The fellows took five guns from us. It was a tremendous hand-to-hand fight. How I escaped myself I am not clear. I then had to bring up supports on foot. My horse was wounded, and the others were too far in rear. Then came up the supports, and, with help of the artillery, drove back the fellows out of the position again. Our machine guns did excellent work. The English fell in heaps. In our battalion three Iron Crosses[130] have been awarded—one to the commanding officer, one to the captain, one to the surgeon. Let us hope that we shall be the lucky ones next time. During the first two days of the battle I had only one piece of bread and no water; spent the night in the rain, without my greatcoat. The rest of my kit was on the horses, which have been left miles behind with the baggage; which cannot come up into the battle, because as soon as you put your nose out from behind, the bullets whistle. The war is terrible. We are all hoping that the decisive battle will end the war, as our troops have already got round Paris.[131] If we first beat the English, the French resistance will soon be broken. Russia will be very quickly dealt with. Of this there is no doubt. We received splendid help from the Austrian heavy artillery at Maubeuge. They bombarded one of the forts in such a way that there was not thirty feet of parapet which did not show enormous craters made by shells. The armoured turrets were found upside down."

It was during the fighting of 14th September that Captain Mark Haggard, while leading the Welsh Regiment in the 3rd Brigade, met his death. Private Derry of his company thus tells the story:—"The Welsh were ordered to advance. When about twenty yards from the crest of a hill Captain Haggard ran forward to the top, saw the Germans, and shouted, 'Fix bayonets, boys; here they are!' We fixed, and were prepared to follow him anywhere; but we were checked by a storm of Maxim fire. We knew by the sound that we were up against a tremendous force. There was only one game to play now—bluff them into the belief that we were as strong as they were. So we were ordered rapid firing, which gives an enemy the impression that the firing force is strong. We popped away like this for three hours, never moving an inch from our

position. Just near the men was lying our brave captain, mortally wounded. He had charged on to the enemy's Maxims, and had been hit as he was laying out the enemy with the butt of an empty rifle, laughing as he did it. As the shells burst over us he would occasionally open his eyes, so full of pain, and call out, but in a very weak voice, 'Stick it, Welsh! stick it, Welsh!' So our brave lads stuck it until our artillery got in action, and put 'paid' to the score. Captain Haggard died that evening, his last words being, 'Stick it, Welsh!' He died as he had lived—an officer and a gentleman."

When his men were forced to retire to a new position, they had to leave him behind; but his soldier-servant, Lance-Corporal Fuller, ran out from the new trenches and, under a heavy fire, carried him into his own lines. For this deed, as you will hear later, the gallant soldier received the Victoria Cross.

Gunner Thomas Joy, of the Royal Field Artillery, thus describes a night attack on the Aisne:—

"'It's a fine night for the Germans' is what we say out there when it's so dark that you can hardly see your finger before you; and it was just on such a night that I got nicked while serving my gun. The enemy had been quiet all day, for a wonder, and we were just taking a well-earned rest after the hot time we had been having. Just about two in the morning, when the faintest traces of light were to be seen creeping across the sky, there was a heavy rattle of rifle fire on the hill where our advanced men were posted, and soon the whole camp was alive with noise and bustle as the men sprang to arms.

"We always sleep beside our guns, so as to be ready for anything, and in five minutes we were at our posts waiting for information about the range. That came later, and then we began plugging away for all we were worth. We caught sight of a mass of Germans swarming up a slope on the right, to take cover in a wood there; but they didn't know what we knew. We dropped a few shells into them, just to liven things up a bit and keep them from thinking too much about the Fatherland; but we had to be careful, because some of our own chaps were posted in that wood.

"The Germans kept rushing along gaily, and there was not the slightest sound from the wood where our men were securely posted behind the felled trees. Now the German searchlights began to play all around, and the air was lit up with bursting shells. We could see the Germans get nearer and nearer to the wood.

"Suddenly the whole side of the wood was one big sheet of flame, as our hidden men sent volley after volley ripping through the ranks of the advancing Germans. They were fairly staggered by the suddenness of the fire, and before they had time to collect their wits a big body of our chaps were into them with the bayonet, thrusting right and left, and sweeping the Germans away as a scavenger sends the mud before his brush on a dirty day.

"Just when this little show was in full blast, the Germans obliged us with more limelight, and we saw it clearly. We spoiled the German appetite for breakfast in that part of the field; though, from what we learned later, there was no doubt that this was the point where they expected to break through. They cleared off quickly.

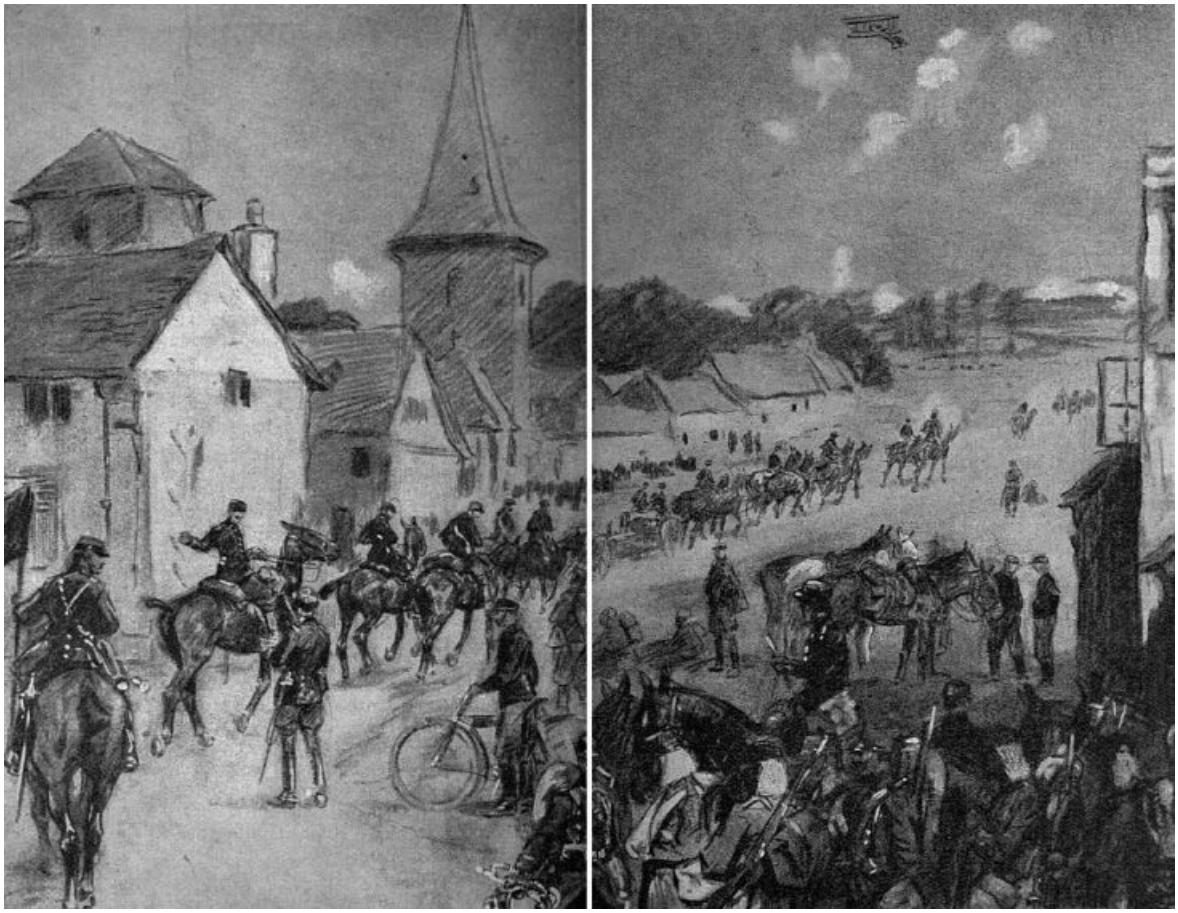
"Then they began to press their attack in another part of the field, and there was some dandy bayonet work within the trenches as the Germans tried to rush them. Our boys were on the lookout, and gave it them hot. Our artillery found the German infantry advancing to the attack—a fine target—and we tore holes in their tightly-packed ranks that it would take some tinkering to make right again, I can tell you. Their artillery did all their gunners knew to silence ours and help their attacking parties; but it was no good, and by six o'clock they drew off, leaving us nice time to get breakfast."

A private of the 12th Lancers gives the following account of a ride for life. He does not tell us where the incident took place, but it may have been at Bourg.

"We had," he says, "to cross a river and canal by means of pontoon bridges, as the permanent iron ones were blown away by the enemy. Half of the brigade got safely across, when the enemy started shelling the bridges with six big guns. The half that had not yet come over returned to safety; not so we. We were trapped in the town, and had to take shelter as best we could along the street. It was about the worst experience one could have gone through. To see those sixty-pound shells hit houses twenty and thirty yards away, and explode in the centre of troops, was awful.

"One shell burst in a garden ten yards from where I was standing, but luckily there was a heavy wall between. I was knocked flat by the shock of the explosion; and soon the place became too hot to hold us, as it was in flames. Then the ride through death took place. One by one we had to retire at full gallop across a pontoon with six big guns trained on it, and two or three explosions taking place every half-minute. I was next man after the colonel to cross, so I set my horse to it, murmured a prayer, and won through. What a cheer from the chaps when we got back to safety! They had given us up for lost; but, thank God! we came across with but few casualties, although it seemed impossible."

Let me now tell you how the youngest soldier of the 127th French regiment of infantry won the military medal, which is the French equivalent to our Victoria Cross. His name was Léon Lemaire, and he was twenty years of age. During the Battle of the Aisne it was necessary to send a message to the captain of one of the companies in an advanced trench. Lemaire was chosen for the purpose. He had no sooner shown himself on the level ground, ready to run forward on his errand, than the Germans, whose trenches were at short range, fired volleys at him. First, a bullet passed through his greatcoat; then his cap was struck; his haversack and water-bottle were riddled with shots; and a hole was bored through the scabbard of his bayonet. Through this hurricane of fire Lemaire advanced with great coolness, and actually reached the trench without a wound! Some days later his regiment was paraded in his honour at a place behind the firing line. His general pinned the little silver medal for valour on his breast, embraced him, and placed him by his side, where he remained while the whole regiment, with colours flying, and the band playing the "Marseillaise," marched past him and saluted. Thus does the French army honour its heroes.



A French Aeroplane discovering the Position of German Guns.

One of the main duties of the Royal Flying Corps is to discover the position of the German batteries. An aeroplane is sent over the suspected area as a decoy, and is almost sure to draw the fire of the enemy's guns, thus giving the range to the Allies' artillery. Our picture shows French artillery moving out of a village to bombard a

German position thus discovered. The drawing was prepared under the direction of an officer who was in the village and witnessed the incident. ***Drawn by Lionel Edwards.***

A young soldier of the 24th South Wales Borderers, who was wounded near Soissons and carried into safety by a lance-corporal of his regiment, thus describes the incident:—

"My company officer was standing up with an orderly near a tree, and twelve of us were lying resting in a field under a roaring cannonade. Suddenly I saw a shell coming, and shouted to him to look out, just as it burst over and a little behind the tree. Neither of the two standing was touched, but eight of us got it. I felt as if something had come up through the ground and jolted my leg, and when I tried to get up I could only use one foot. I asked if I could be moved, and my lance-corporal took me on his back and walked straight across one hundred and fifty yards of ground on which shells and bullets were falling fast. How he got across I don't know. When we were safe on the other side he cut off my trouser leg, gave me a first dressing, and put a waterproof sheet under me; and there I lay for about fifteen hours, under the rain most of the time. If ever I find that man again I shall know how to thank him."

Here is a pathetic story of a wounded man who gave his life to save his comrades. The story is told by a Northumberland Fusilier.

"We occupied an exposed position on the left at the Aisne, and one night only escaped being wiped out by mere chance, combined with as fine a deed of heroism as I have ever heard of. There was a man of the Manchester Regiment who was lying close to the German lines, badly wounded. He happened to overhear some conversation between German soldiers, and being familiar with the language, gathered that they intended to attack the position which we held that night. In spite of his wounds he decided to set out and warn us of the danger, so he started on a weary tramp of over five miles. He was under fire from the moment he got to his feet, but he stumbled along and got out of range. Later he ran into a patrol of Uhlans; but before they saw him, he dropped to earth and shammed death. They passed without a sign, and then he resumed his weary journey. By this time the strain had told on him, and his wound began to bleed, marking his path towards our lines with thin red streaks. In the early morning, just half an hour before the time fixed for the German attack, he staggered into one of our advanced posts, and managed to tell his story to the officer in charge before collapsing in a heap. Thanks to the information he gave us, we were ready for the Germans when they came, and beat them off. But his anxiety to warn us had cost him his life. The doctors said that the strain had been too much for him; and next day he died."

The coolness of our men under fire is, well illustrated in the following story.

"Out on the Aisne," says Trooper G. Hill of the 17th Lancers, "I watched a man of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, who lay in the trenches, quietly firing away at the advancing enemy as coolly as if he were in a shooting gallery at home. After each shot he turned for a pull at a cigarette lying by his side on a stone. When the enemy got so close that it was necessary to use bayonets, he simply laid his cigarette down and walked out of the trench to engage them with the steel. When the attack was beaten off, he walked back for his cigarette. 'Oh, it's smoked away, and it was my last!' was all that he said."

Probably the youngest sergeant in the world is Prudent Marius, a French boy of fourteen, scarcely four feet in height. On the outbreak of war he attached himself as cyclist scout to a certain regiment passing through Alsace-Lorraine. So useful did he prove to be that the regiment adopted him, and he acted as ammunition bearer, dispatch carrier, and generally as Jack-of-all-trades. By the time the Germans were drawing near to Paris he had been made a corporal, and had been wounded in the leg. Near Soissons, during the Battle of the Aisne, he was attached to the artillery, and while handing shells to a gunner was again wounded, this time in the face. Soon afterwards he was made a full-blown sergeant. A correspondent who saw him describes him as a curious little figure in his dark-blue coat and red trousers, with two gold

stripes on his arm. In spite of his youth, he was quite indifferent to shell and rifle fire.

So many stories of treachery, bad faith, and cruelty are told of the Germans that it is good to know that all of them are not cast in the same mould. It is said that in one of the towns held by the Germans near the Aisne a certain French gentleman lay sick unto death. A German army doctor, who, of course, was not required to attend on civilians, heard of the case, and knowing that there were no French doctors in the town, offered his services to the sick man. This in itself was an act of great kindness, but the manner in which it was done raised it to the level of a deed of chivalry. The German doctor knew that the sick man hated the Germans, and that the visit of a German doctor would excite him and do him harm. So he took off his uniform, put on private clothes, and pretended to be an English doctor. I am sure that we all honour this German doctor for his kind heart and thoughtful good nature.

Now let me tell you of the glorious courage and devotion shown by Dr. Huggan of the R.A.M.C. He was a native of Jedburgh, and played three-quarter back in the England *v.* Scotland Rugby match at Edinburgh in March 1914. Colonel Drummond Hay, writing to a friend, says that on the 14th of September Dr. Huggan organized and led a party of volunteers who removed a number of wounded from a barn which had been set on fire by German shells. Dr. Huggan and his party rushed to the barn under a very heavy fire, and managed to save all the wounded, who were in danger of being burnt alive. For this very gallant deed he was recommended for the Victoria Cross. Two days later he was killed.

Here is an extract from a letter describing the conditions under which the Army Service Corps brought up stores to the men fighting on the Aisne:—

"The whole road from here to the river Aisne is under very heavy shell fire all day, and it is only possible to move out at dusk. Even then we often come under shell fire; the guns are laid by angles; the distance is, of course, known, and at frequent intervals during the night shells are fired on the road or at the villages on the way, or at the bridgehead, four and a half miles from here. The enemy in his retirement blew up the bridge over the river, and our engineers have built a pontoon bridge to replace it. This bridge is under the enemy's guns, which shell it with great accuracy. Last night, on starting out—a pitch-dark night and raining hard—we could see the frequent flashes of the enemy's artillery, and hear and see the bursting shells. The whole of the road is lined with dead horses, and the smell is too dreadful for words. We had to halt some little time, as a village through which we had to pass was being shelled. These high-explosive shells make a most terrifying noise, and do dreadful damage when they hit something. When the shelling stopped we moved on, and finally reached the river.

"It was impossible to get loaded wagons across a very shaky pontoon bridge in pitch darkness, with very steep banks down to it, and no side rails on it. The supplies had, therefore, to be dumped on this side. This was a matter of great difficulty in the dark and wet—a very narrow road, choked in places by dead horses, ambulances, and pontoons waiting to go forward, and a perpetual stream of wounded men being carried or helped past in the opposite direction. So black was it that I could not see my hand before my face; the only things which showed up were the white bandages of the wounded.

"To add to the difficulty, we were waiting every second for the enemy to resume shelling. One shell among that congested crowd would have had dreadful results. We had not left the place more than half an hour when we saw the flashes of guns behind us. . . . We got back to this town at 3.30 a.m. This is what goes on every night—leaving at dusk, getting back at 3.30, and hoping the enemy will refrain from shelling until we are back."

In the German Trenches on the Aisne.

This picture appeared in a Leipzig illustrated paper; it is drawn from a sketch by an eye-witness.

The following officers and men were awarded the Victoria Cross for deeds of outstanding gallantry during the fighting on the Aisne in September 1914:—

Captain Harry Sherwood Ranken, Royal Army Medical Corps, received the highest award of valour for tending wounded in the trenches under rifle and shrapnel fire on 19th and 20th September. He continued his merciful work after his thigh and leg had been shattered. Unhappily, he died of his wounds before the Cross was awarded to him.

Captain William Henry Johnston, Royal Engineers. At Missy, on 14th September, he worked with his own hands two rafts on the river from early morning till late evening under a heavy fire. He ferried ammunition across and brought back wounded, and thus enabled a brigade to hold its own in an advanced position on the north bank of the stream.

Bombardier Ernest George Harlook (now Sergeant), 113th Battery, R.F.A. At a little village south of Troyon, on 15th September, Bombardier Harlook's battery was under heavy shell fire. He was twice wounded, and was forced to retire to have his wounds dressed; but on each occasion he returned, and worked his gun again.

Lance-Corporal William Fuller, 2nd Battalion, Welsh Regiment. On page 261 I told you how Lance-Corporal Fuller, at the risk of almost certain death, carried poor Captain Haggard, who was mortally wounded, into cover. Never was the Victoria Cross more worthily won.

Lance-Corporal Frederick William Dobson, 2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards. On the 28th of September, at Chavonne on the Aisne, Lance-Corporal Dobson twice went out under heavy fire, and brought into cover wounded men who were lying exposed in the open.

Private George Wilson, 2nd Battalion, Highland Light Infantry. Prior to the war Private Wilson was a reservist who made a living by selling newspapers in the streets of Edinburgh. The extraordinary exploit for which he was awarded the coveted Cross took place on 14th September, when the 5th Brigade was in action at a village north of Bourg. All along the trench where Wilson lay the men were continually falling, and he could plainly see that it was a machine gun about 750 yards away, and a little in front of the main body of Germans, that was doing most of the mischief. He determined to silence the gun, and a private of the 60th King's Rifles volunteered to go with him. They crawled out of their trench and wriggled along; but they had not gone a hundred yards when Wilson's companion rolled over, riddled with bullets. Wilson, however, continued his journey, and managed to get within a short distance of the gun. Then he levelled his rifle, and one by one shot down the officer and the six men who were working it.

Crawling up to the gun he had a surprise, for a German officer who had only been slightly wounded jumped up and emptied his revolver at him. But, as luck would have it, the officer missed, and Wilson promptly *bayoneted* him. Then he crawled back to his trench, where he fainted. He soon recovered, however, and asked if the gun had been brought in. When he learned that it had not been captured, he ran out again, and succeeded in bringing in the gun. Though he had been so long under fire, he escaped with only slight wounds.

Private George Wilson, V.C.

Private R. Tollerton, 1st Battalion, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, was awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on 14th September. He carried a disabled officer under heavy fire into a place of safety, and although wounded in the head and the hand, struggled back to the firing line, where he remained until his battalion retired. Then he returned to the wounded officer, and lay beside him for three days until both were rescued.

CHAPTER XXXII.

VERDUN AND RHEIMS.

The first and worst part of the Battle of the Aisne may be said to have ended on 18th September 1914. By this date it was clear to all that the fighting for weeks to come would be a dull and stubborn affair of trenches. The Germans boasted that they could hold their positions for three months if necessary; and the boast was no idle one, for the hills, woods, and quarries which they occupied were natural fortresses, made almost impregnable by every art known to the military engineer. In some places there were eight or nine lines of trenches, the one behind the other, all of them cleverly constructed and carefully concealed. Wire entanglements and lines of rabbit fencing, both in the woods and in the open, protected the trenches from attack, and every line of approach, whether from the front or from the flanks, was covered by the cross-fire of rifles, machine guns, and artillery. Behind the woods on the top of the plateau were heavy howitzers, which hurled shells at long range into the valley and right across it.

You will remember that, as early as 11th September, General Joffre had sent the left of the 6th French Army along the Oise in order to prevent von Kluck from trying an outflanking movement. The Germans believe greatly in this form of strategy, and it was to be expected that they would try it again, now that they were held up on the Aisne. On the 18th of September Sir John French was informed that General Joffre was about to try an enveloping movement himself. He was about to attack the enemy's right flank, in the hope of driving him from his trenches. While this movement was preparing, it was necessary that the Allied lines along the Aisne should be strongly held, so that the Germans could not break through.

Fighting in the Argonne. ***Photo, The Sphere.***

Some of the fiercest fighting in the war has taken place in this region. Our illustration shows the French recapturing a trench and meeting a determined counter-attack of the Germans.

To our men life in the trenches was a dull and dismal experience after the stirring days of open fighting in which they had recently been engaged. There were many attacks and counter-attacks; but for the most part the opposing armies lay in their trenches during the day, watching each other while the shells of friend and foe hurtled overhead. Between the trenches was a No Man's Land, strewn with wounded and the unburied bodies of the dead. The moment any attempt was made to rescue the wounded a heavy fire broke out; so the poor fellows lay on the sodden ground in torment, within a

few yards of their own trenches, for days together. In some places the British and the German lines were so near that the soldiers could exchange remarks.

As a rule, each side shelled the other by day, and at night the Germans, after a fierce bombardment, were in the habit of attacking some part of our lines. They crept forward in the early hours of the morning, hoping to dig themselves in, so as to be able to reach our trenches at a single rush. While they were so engaged, searchlights played upon our positions, in order to dazzle the eyes of our marksmen, and from dusk to dawn "snipers" were busy picking off all who showed themselves. Nevertheless, the attacks were constantly beaten off, and at close quarters our men did great execution with the bayonet. Frequently they made successful counter-attacks.

During the first fortnight the weather was very wet, and our men were drenched to the skin. For days at a time they were knee-deep in a mixture of water and a peculiarly sticky, chalky mud which filled their eyes, ears, and throats, and could not be kept out of their food. Despite these discomforts they were as cheery and high-spirited as ever. They welcomed German attacks as a relief from the long, trying hours of waiting under a fierce and almost continuous bombardment.

The heavy guns of the enemy fired shells of eight or nine inches in diameter, which roared through the air like an express train, and exploded with a terrific report, throwing up columns of greasy, black smoke, and tearing craters in the ground big enough to hold the bodies of five horses. The Germans fully expected that these terrifying shells would drive our men crazy with fear. It was soon discovered, however, that their bark was worse than their bite, and familiarity with them bred something like contempt. Our men christened them "Black Marias," "coal boxes," and, best of all, "Jack Johnsons." They built bomb-proof shelters and "dug-outs," in which they took refuge from these monster missiles.

During those weeks on the Aisne we were at a great disadvantage because we had so few heavy guns capable of coping with those of the Germans, and because we were hopelessly outnumbered in machine guns, of which the enemy seemed to have an endless supply. On 23rd September some heavy batteries arrived from England, and enabled us to make some sort of reply; but for every shell fired by our guns the enemy fired twenty. We also suffered greatly from German spies. Disguised as peasants, they infested our lines, and as they mingled with the villagers and refugees it was very difficult for our soldiers to detect them. Frequently women were discovered acting as secret agents.

On 25th September a disaster befell the 1st Cameron Highlanders. They had suffered heavily during the retreat and in the action on the 18th, in which they lost 17 officers and over 500 men. On the 25th they were sent to relieve the Black Watch, and took over their battalion headquarters in one of the caves which occur in the chalk of the plateau. During the morning a German shell blew in the roof of the cave, and buried the inmates. A few were rescued, but the fire of the enemy was so fierce and continuous that it was not until evening that a party of Royal Engineers was able to dig out the remainder. Five officers and thirty men were found to be dead. No British regiment suffered so severely in the first two months of the war as the Camerons.

The British casualties during the fighting between 12th September and 8th October were very heavy. Sir John French estimated that in killed, wounded, and missing we lost 561 officers and 12,980 men. Most of these losses were incurred during the advance of the First Corps on 14th September. Great as these losses were, those of the Germans were still greater. It is said that not less than 50,000 Germans were put out of action in one way or another during the fighting on the Aisne.

Do you remember the famous interview between Sir Edward Goschen and Herr von Jagow on the evening of Tuesday, August 4, 1914?[132] In that interview the Kaiser's Secretary of State revealed the German plan of campaign. He explained that the Germans were forced to advance into France by way of Belgium because it was a matter of life and death to them to strike a decisive blow at the French as soon as possible. "If they had gone by the more southern route, they could not have hoped, in view of the fewness of the roads and the strength of the fortresses, to have got through without formidable opposition, entailing great loss of time." Let us look for a moment at this strong chain of fortresses, which the Germans were unwilling to attack because the necessary operations meant delay.

The Barrier Fortresses of France.

The most southerly of them is Belfort,[133] which you will find standing on a plain within fifteen miles of the Swiss border. This plain is called by soldiers "the Gap of Belfort," and it is the only real break in the hill frontier that covers France all the way from the Mediterranean to Flanders. You can see at a glance that if the Gap were not strongly fortified an army could easily march into France from the direction of the Rhine. To block this easy road the French have constructed the very strong ring-fortress of Belfort. It was besieged during the Franco-German War, and yielded on February 13, 1871; but its defenders made such a gallant resistance that they were allowed to march out with what are called the honours of war—that is, with their drums beating, their flags flying, and their arms in their hands. To commemorate the siege, a huge lion has been carved on the face of the precipice below the castle by the sculptor of the statue of Liberty in New York harbour.[134] One wonders why the Germans did not take over Belfort after their conquest. Had they done so, they would have provided themselves with an ever-open door into France.

Rising steeply from the Gap, and running north-north-east for 150 miles is the highland region known as the Vosges Mountains. Since 1871 the frontier between France and Germany has run along the crest of these mountains for about fifty miles. The Vosges consist chiefly of granite rocks, and everywhere there are signs that they were once covered with glaciers. We still see the old moraines, consisting of the heaps of rock and soil that were left behind when the glaciers melted, and the lakes that were scooped out by the great ice fields that slowly crept over the mountains in bygone ages. We also see the rounded summits which the French call *ballons*. The highest of these *ballons* are over 4,000 feet in elevation, and are to be found about twenty miles north of Belfort.

The Vosges fall steeply to the Alsatian plain, but descend gradually to the west. No single railway crosses them between the Gap of Belfort and the gap which you see to the north of Strassburg, but many carriage roads traverse the passes. The whole region is very picturesque; the lakes are surrounded by forests of pine, beech, and maple; there are many green meadows, which provide pasturage for large herds of cattle; numerous ruined castles stand on the spurs, and the lower slopes are studded with vineyards.

From what you have read you will readily understand that the Vosges are a formidable barrier to invasion from the east. To the west of the main chain you see another ridge of heights, and beyond them the valley of the Upper Moselle. On this river, not far from its head-waters, is the second great barrier fortress of France—Epinal.[135] To the north of Epinal, and about ten miles west of Nancy, is the third fortress—Toul.[136] The fort of St. Michel, about twenty miles north-west of Toul, is the key to the circle of forts that defend the entrenched camp, and the strongest fort on the frontier. If you were to visit Toul you would see little or nothing of the batteries, for they are hidden in brushwood and stunted woods high above the vineyards.

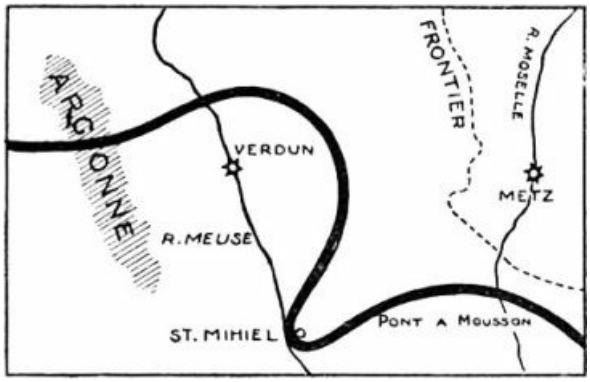
Farther to the north, about thirty-five miles west of Metz, is Verdun, which has already been mentioned in these pages. As Verdun is the only barrier fortress which was seriously attacked by the Germans during 1914, let us learn something

of its story. Verdun is a great entrenched camp, contained within a ring which measures thirty miles round. There are sixteen large forts and about twenty smaller forts on this ring, and the most distant of them is about nine miles from the centre of the city. All these defences have been constructed since the Franco-German War, during which the city was bombarded on three different occasions. It yielded early in November 1870.

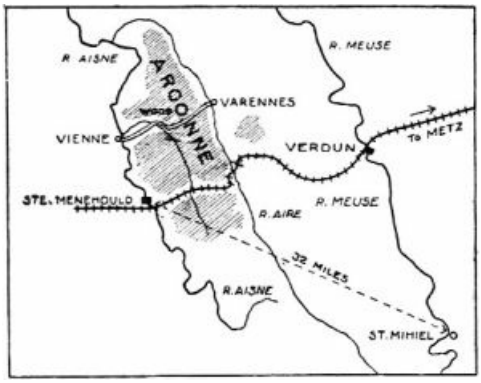
During the Battle of the Marne the Crown Prince made a great effort to capture Verdun. I have already told you that he battered down Fort Troyon,[137] but was unable to capture it, though it lay in ruins. Between the 10th and 12th of September the Crown Prince's army, along with the other German armies, was forced to retreat. It fell back two days' march to the north, and immediately the French general, Sarrail,[138] prepared Verdun to stand a long siege. Seven thousand civilians—"useless mouths," as the French soldiers call them—were ordered to withdraw, and the food supply for the garrison was regulated.

General Sarrail was well aware that if the great howitzers of the Germans were once permitted to come within range of the forts they would succumb as speedily as those of Liége, Namur, and Maubeuge. He therefore pushed out his circle of defences for twenty miles from the city. By means of earthworks and trenches he made a great fortified zone, which encircled the forts at such a distance that the German howitzers were kept out of range. Every height and valley was seamed with defences, and some of the hillsides became a maze of barbed wire. The heavy guns of the forts were moved out to the advanced trenches, and rails were laid down so that as soon as they were "spotted" they could be moved on to another position. Thus, instead of fixed forts, each, say, mounted with ten heavy guns, these same ten heavy 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."

The result was that the army of the Crown Prince found itself held up in the form of a semicircle, as shown in this diagram. Against these outer lines of defence seven German army corps were launched, but with no success.



In the third week of September the Bavarian army made a determined attack on the little town of St. Mihiel,[139] which stands on the Meuse, midway between Toul and Verdun. North to Verdun and south to Toul, between the Meuse and the Moselle, is the district known as "the Plain of the Woëvre."[140] It is crossed by the Heights of the Meuse, which form a plateau about three hundred feet above the river, and fall steeply towards the east in deep ravines and wooded knolls. On 20th September the Bavarians pushed through the Woëvre and drew near to the Meuse. Two forts blocked their way, one of them being on the site of an old earthwork known as the Camp of the Romans. The Bavarians got their heavy guns into position, and by the evening of 22nd September the Camp of the Romans was in ruins. The garrison, however, made such a gallant resistance in the outer works that the German general permitted it to retire with the honours of war. As the French marched out of the fort the Germans cheered them, presented arms, and dipped their flags. Shortly afterwards the Bavarians seized St. Mihiel and its bridgehead,[141] on the western side of the water. A French cavalry detachment prevented them from advancing any further, and they were forced to entrench themselves on the edge of the river.



What was the object of the Germans in capturing St. Mihiel? The Crown Prince's army was trying to push through the Verdun defences from the Argonne, and at the same time the Bavarians were trying to advance by way of St. Mihiel. Should these movements succeed, Verdun would be completely encircled, and long before this happened, the French army holding the semicircle about the fortress would be obliged to fall back. "The wedge at St. Mihiel was a sort of buckle to which the Germans desired to fit the strap by pushing down from the north-west." Happily General Sarrail had enough, but only just enough, men to prevent the strap and the buckle from meeting. For a day or two, however, he was in grave peril.

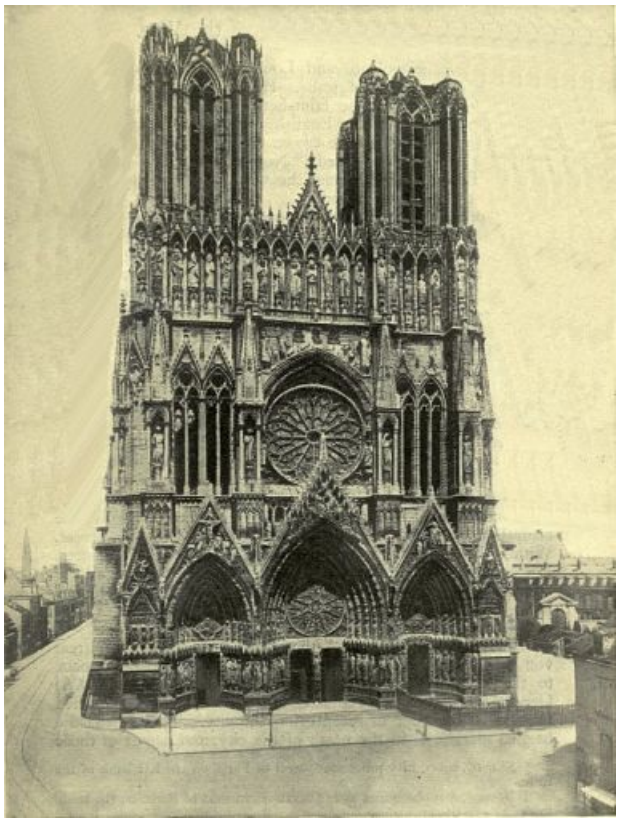
As time went on the Germans found their position in the Woëvre more and more uncomfortable. They had no railway within fifteen miles of St. Mihiel, and the main road to that place was in the hands of the French. Nevertheless, they hung on to the little town and the bridgehead for months, though the wedge of country which they held was constantly attacked both from the south and from the north. Soon, however, there was a war of entrenchments in this region, just as there was on the Aisne.

On 3rd October the Crown Prince made a desperate attempt to break through the French lines round Verdun. He marched his men from Varennes,[142] on the eastern edge of the Argonne, along a forest road to a place called Vienne,[143] on the Aisne, in the hope of capturing his former headquarters of St. Menehould,[144] from which he might strike south-eastwards to St. Mihiel. In order to reach Vienne the Germans brought their guns through a wood lying to the north of the road. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of this wood the French fell upon the Germans, and drove them back in rout to Varennes, which they afterwards captured. Thus they won the road right across the Argonne, and were able to get into touch with the right of their 4th Army.

Now we must move westwards to Rheims,[145] and see what was happening in and around that ancient city. Rheims, as you know, is perhaps the most interesting of all the historical towns of France. It stands, you will remember, on the right bank of the Vesle, in a plain bounded by vine-clad hills, and is the chief centre of the trade in champagne. Even under the Romans it was an important town, and if I were to tell you its history since Roman times, I should need many pages which I cannot now spare. But I must dwell on one or two incidents in its long story. You have already heard of Clovis, who succeeded his father as king of the Franks in the year 481 A.D. He was a pagan, and during his wars he burned and ruined many of the churches of France. In 493, like our own King Ethelbert of Kent, he married a Christian princess. She tried hard to convert him to Christianity, but for three years without success. At length he was attacked by the Goths, who lived between the Vosges and the Rhine, and was very hard pressed. In the thick of the fight he swore that he would be converted to his wife's God if He would grant him the victory. His foes were overcome, and on Christmas Day, 496, in the cathedral at Rheims, Clovis and three thousand of his men were baptized by the bishop. "Bow thy head meekly," said the good old man to the king; "adore what thou hast burned, and burn what thou hast adored." This excellent piece of advice might well be given to that arch-Goth whose legions destroyed Louvain, and were now about to ruin the most glorious monument of Christendom.

The cathedral at Rheims is the Westminster Abbey of the French nation. From the latter half of the 12th century to the year 1825 all the sovereigns of France, with the exception of Henry IV., Napoleon, and Louis XVIII., were crowned within its time-honoured walls. Here it was that Joan the Maid, having inspired the faint-hearted Dauphin to free his land from the thrall of the English, stood by the high altar in white armour, and when the crown was placed upon his head,

kneeled at his feet and cried, "Now is the will of God fulfilled." To every Frenchman the walls which witnessed this scene must be for ever sacred.



The Cathedral at Rheims before bombardment.
Photo, Sport and General.

The present cathedral stands on the site of that in which Clovis was baptized, and was begun early in the thirteenth century. It took seventy-five years to complete, and has long been considered the most perfect example of the architecture of the Middle Ages. The front of the cathedral is wonderfully beautiful, and is referred to in the following couplet, which mentions the most striking features of the four noblest of French cathedrals:—

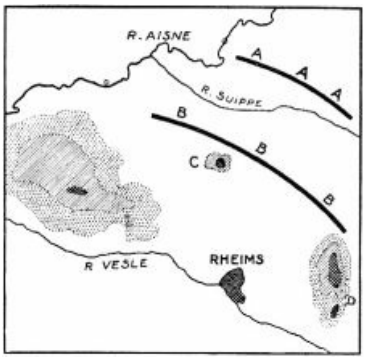
"Bell-towers of Chartres,[146] nave of Amiens,
Choir of Beauvais,[147] portal of Rheims."

The front is adorned with a multitude of statues and sculptured scenes from the Scriptures. One of the scenes shows the Day of Judgment; another illustrates the baptism of Clovis. The most beautiful of the statues is that of our Lord, and is known as "Le Beau Dieu." Over the portal, before the bombardment, were three large stained-glass windows, the central one, a magnificent rose window, nearly forty feet across. Within the cathedral were many rich and priceless treasures. For centuries lovers of art and students of history from all the corners of the world have made pilgrimage to Rheims to rejoice in the beauty of this exquisite temple.

I have already told you that during the German retreat von Buelow had withdrawn from Rheims, and had fallen back to the ridge beyond the Suippe. From this ridge (AAA) General Foch had been repulsed, and the Germans had pushed forward in the hope of recapturing the city. They seized the heights marked C to the north of the city, and a part of those marked D to the east of it, and occupied the line marked BBB. The heights marked C are but 9,000 yards from the city, and from these points of vantage the Germans, on 18th September, began a terrific bombardment. Many civilians were

killed, and large sections of the city were destroyed by flames. It was during this bombardment that the Germans for ever disgraced themselves by shelling the cathedral. Their excuse was that the French had set up signal stations on the roof and tower, and were firing guns close to the building. The French had done nothing of the kind. When the shelling began the Red Cross flag flew over the cathedral, and within it were many wounded, chiefly Germans. There can be no excuse for von Buelow; the cathedral was not in the zone of fire; he deliberately trained his guns upon it—probably out of sheer spite. Neutral nations were shocked when they heard of this senseless and barbarous outrage; but a German officer, writing in a German newspaper, explained the German state of mind.

> "It is of no consequence if all the monuments ever created, all the pictures ever painted, and all the buildings ever erected by the great architects of the world were destroyed, if by their destruction we promote Germany's victory over her enemies. . . . The commonest, ugliest stone placed to mark the burial-place of a German grenadier is a more glorious and perfect monument than all the cathedrals of Europe put together. . . . Let neutral peoples and our enemies cease their empty chatter, which is no better than the twittering of birds. Let them cease their talk about the cathedral at Rheims, and about all the churches and castles of France which have shared its fate. These things do not interest us."



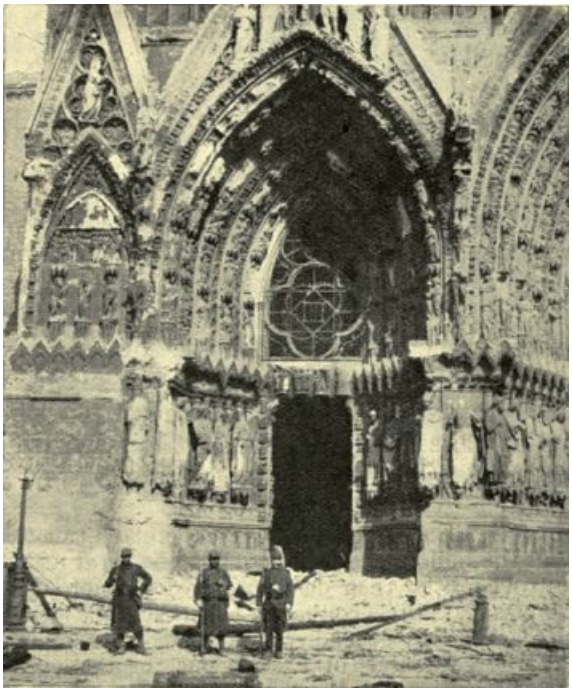
How the destruction of a noble work of art could promote Germany's victory over her enemies is difficult to understand. It is worthy of note that a hotel close to the cathedral remained untouched: it was kept by a German.

For some months the north-east tower of the cathedral had been under repair, and when the bombardment began it was surrounded by scaffolding. On 19th September a shell set fire to the outer roof; the fire quickly spread to the scaffolding, and then to the wooden beams of the portal. An American correspondent tells us that, when the flames gained on the building, the Archbishop of Rheims and a party of volunteers rushed inside and carried out the wounded Germans on stretchers. The rescuing parties were not a minute too soon. Already from the roofs molten lead was falling. The blazing doors had fired the straw on which the wounded lay, and the interior was like a prairie fire. Splashed by the molten lead, and threatened by falling timbers, the priests, at the risk of their lives and limbs, carried out the wounded, numbering sixty in all. But after bearing them to safety their charges were confronted with a new danger. Inflamed by the sight of their own dead, four hundred citizens having been killed by the bombardment, and by the loss of their cathedral, the people of Rheims who were gathered about the burning building called for the lives of the German prisoners. "They are barbarians," they cried. "Kill them!" The archbishop and one of his clergy placed themselves in front of the wounded.

"Before you kill them," they cried, "you must first kill us!"

Surely this noble deed will live in history. There can scarcely be a finer picture of heroism than that of the venerable archbishop, with his cathedral blazing behind him, facing a mob of his own people in defence of their enemies.

The same writer gives us some idea of the havoc wrought by the German shells: "The windows, that were the glory of the cathedral, were wrecked. Statues of saints and crusaders and cherubim lay in mangled fragments. The great bells, that for hundreds of years have sounded the Angelus[148] for Rheims, were torn from their oak girders and melted into black masses of silver and copper, without shape and without sound. Never have I looked upon a picture of such wanton and wicked destruction."



Portal of Rheims Cathedral after Bombardment.
Photo, Central News.

In the square in front of the cathedral stands a fine statue of the Maid on horseback. Strange to say, though the square was ploughed up with shells, the figure of the Maid was uninjured; only the horse's legs were chipped and scarred. A French soldier had placed a tricolour in the outstretched hand of the figure. All through those days of terror and destruction the French flag was upheld by the arm of France's ancient deliverer.

On the morning of 28th September the German attack on Rheims was more violent than it had ever been before. From all parts of the Allied line came the same story of desperate attempts to break through, of hand-to-hand fighting, and terrible losses. That same evening the French, pushing forward, drove the Germans from their position. The whole French front moved forward, and, for the time being, Rheims was safe from capture, though big guns still rained shells upon it.

On September 29, 1914, the first batch of Indian troops arrived at Marseilles. As the transports hove to in sight of the gleaming limestone cliffs that flank the port a message from the King was read to them. "I know," wrote his Majesty, "with what readiness my brave and loyal Indian soldiers are prepared to fulfil their sacred trust on the field of battle, shoulder to shoulder with their comrades from all parts of the Empire. Rest assured that you will always be in my thoughts and prayers."

As the vessels approached the quays they were greeted with loud cheers from crowds of townsfolk, most of whom had never seen an Indian soldier before. They marvelled at the dark faces, the turbans, the soldierly bearing, and the fine equipment of our Indian brothers. Later in the day the troops were marched through the city. As our dusky warriors, with their bright eyes and gleaming teeth, swung along the streets, the people shook them by the hand and cheered them again and again. Young girls showered flowers upon them and pinned roses to their tunics and turbans. Perhaps it was the little, sturdy, smiling Gurkhas who aroused the greatest enthusiasm. As they advanced behind their pipers, men, women, and children clambered on to the tables and chairs of the cafés to catch a glimpse of them, and the air rang with shouts of "*Vivent les Anglais!*"[149] "*Vivent les Hindous!*"

The men were afterwards marched off to a rest camp, where they remained for a few weeks, preparing for the fiery ordeal that awaited them.

Sikhs marching through Marseilles.
Photo, London News Agency.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RACE TO THE SEA.

There was now a deadlock on the Aisne. The rival armies faced each other in trenches that had become almost as strong as fortresses, and both sides were powerless to advance. Every day there were attacks and counter-attacks, but they were very costly in life, and the ground gained was measured in yards. General Joffre had foreseen this as far back as the 18th of September, when he had informed Sir John French of his plan to bolt the Germans from their burrows.

Now he proposed to send two new armies, numbering in all some 300,000 men, to extend the line of the 6th Army, and fall fiercely on von Kluck's right flank.

From the 11th of September onwards there was continual fighting on the right bank of the Oise. While this was going on, Joffre was slipping new forces to the north by rail. At first he took every man that could be spared from the fighting line along the Aisne. These troops, however, were not numerous enough to cope with the Germans, so two new armies were formed and pushed northward. One of them was commanded by General Castelnau,[150] who, you will remember, had so grievously disappointed the Kaiser by beating the Bavarians on the heights near Nancy.[151] His army was to lie to the north of the 6th French Army, with its centre crossing the river Somme. At the same time another new army was being formed at Amiens. It was under the command of General Maud'huy,[152] who was a brigadier in the army of Lorraine when war broke out. Joffre had seen in him a soldier of the highest promise, and in three weeks had promoted him through all the grades to be the commander of an army. Not even in Napoleon's time had any soldier been advanced so rapidly. Maud'huy's army was to march eastwards on St. Quentin and strike at the rear of the enemy.

A Charge of French Light Cavalry at Lassigny.

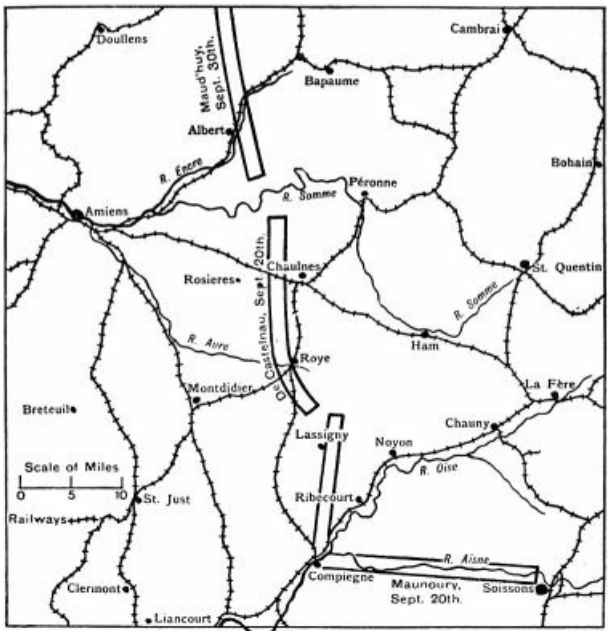
(***From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.***)

You may be sure that the Germans were not asleep while Joffre was making his preparations. They saw at once what his object was, and they did not lose an hour in making ready to parry his blow. They had plenty of men to spare, for their

trenches on the Heights of the Aisne were so strong that they could be held by a very thin line of troops. The General Staff at once began shuffling its armies to and fro, while new forces were hurried up from Germany. The interest of the struggle had now passed from the front on the Aisne to the right flank of the enemy.

By the 20th of September the 6th French Army, under General Maunoury, was lying south of the village of Lassigny, a day's march to the north of the confluence of the Oise and the Aisne. Von Kluck had already extended his right to meet the French attack. Amidst the wooded hills which lie between the village and the Oise there was very heavy fighting, which lasted several days. The Germans had occupied Lassigny, and were drinking themselves drunk with the red wine and cider which they found in the village, when the French burst on them with the bayonet and tumbled them pell-mell out of the place. Next morning the tables were turned. German guns shelled the village, and German cavalry swept the French out of its ruins. The rival forces dug themselves in, and soon the conditions on the Aisne were repeated.

Meanwhile de Castelnau had got into position to the north of Lassigny, and fierce fighting was raging about Roye, which was lost and won, taken and retaken. If either side could break through at Roye or Lassigny, it would be able to turn against one or other of the armies to its right or left and roll it up. Neither side, however, could gain and keep a yard of ground at this "death angle." Again the line was extended; by the 30th of September Maud'huy's army was advancing eastwards to the north of the Somme, only to find itself opposed by von Buelow's command. Every new French force brought up to extend the line was met and checked by a corresponding German force. Everywhere the enemy showed wonderful energy. While they were holding Maud'huy's army their troops were being hurried northwards behind their lines, and they were nowhere caught napping. Maud'huy dug himself in on the Albert plateau, and von Buelow could not drive him back. Here, too, there was deadlock.



Sketch Map to illustrate the Extension of the Allied Left.

Once more the French line was extended farther north, and as it extended so did the corresponding German front. Each side was attempting to outflank the other, and it was clear that the double movements could only be stopped by the sea. So the rival armies went clawing northwards. Between the Oise and Arras the French were holding their own with difficulty; in the Arras position they were fairly strong, but round Lille, which was held by French Territorials, they had but a mere ribbon of troops.

In the closing days of September the French learnt that the Germans had begun a new and very dangerous move. Masses of German cavalry were sweeping across the Belgian flats into France. Uhlans were within sight of the sea, and were threatening Maud'huy's left flank round Lille and among the colliery villages to the north of Arras. There were rumours of many troop trains moving through Liége and Namur and Brussels, and it seemed that the cavalry on Maud'huy's flank were but the vanguard of a huge army which was about to be flung against the French rear.

Nor was this all. The Germans had begun to besiege Antwerp. No one could say how long it could hold out. After the experience of Liége and Namur its chances were small, but it was hoped that the Belgian army might make an obstinate stand outside the circle of forts. No risks, however, could be taken. New armies must be moved without delay to the extreme left of the Allied line, in order to check the new German attack, and also to hold out a helping hand to the defenders of Antwerp.

To this post of honour Sir John French now laid claim. At Mons his army had been on the left of the Allied line; now it was in the centre. This meant that it was far from its base, and could only obtain its supplies by cross-country routes which ran through the lines of communications of the French armies. Sir John now asked to be transferred to his old position on the extreme left wing, where he would be near the coast, and could be readily supplied with food, ammunition, and reinforcements. His fine, seasoned soldiers were wasted on the Aisne, where the fight had dwindled to a series of artillery duels, with here and there a sharp struggle in the advanced trenches. If, as seemed likely, the Germans were about to make a dash for the coast, in order to capture Calais and the Channel ports, and thus threaten England, the British army desired nothing better than the chance to stop it. In these circumstances, General Joffre agreed that the British army should be carried northward by train, and should take up a position on the left flank of Maud'huy's army, which early in October 1914 had reached the south bank of a canal running westwards from Lille through La Bassée to Bethune.[153]

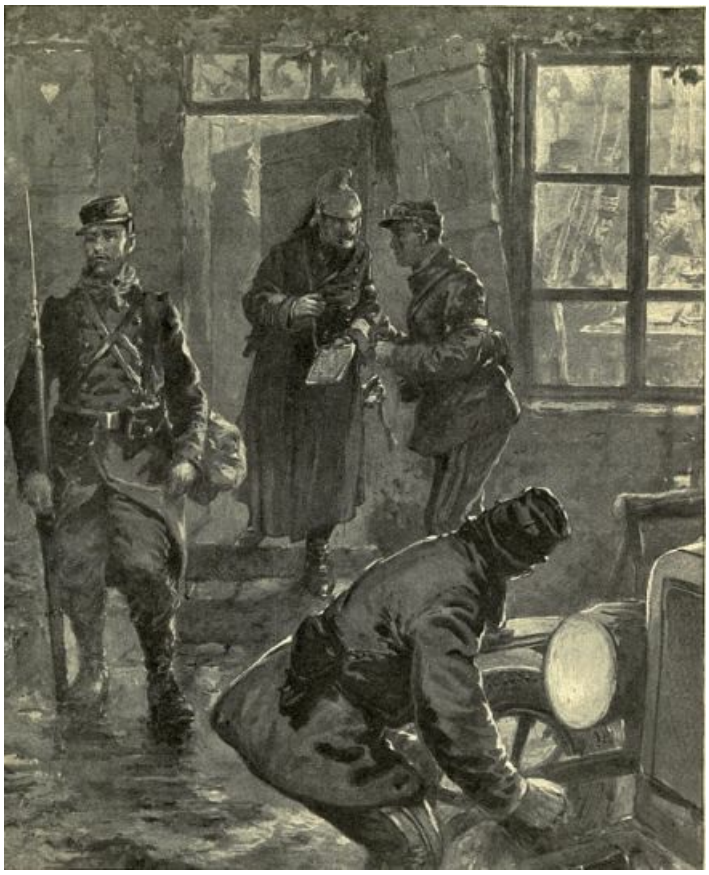
I need not tell you that the transfer of an army from the Aisne to the Franco-Belgian border was a very difficult and delicate operation indeed. Our trenches on the Aisne were in many places only about 100 yards from those of the enemy yet, platoon by platoon, battalion by battalion, and brigade by brigade, our men were shifted out of their trenches at night, and French soldiers were slipped in to take their places. The transfer began on 3rd October, when the 2nd Cavalry Division, under General Gough, marched to Compiègne, where it took train through Amiens to St. Omer, which lies to the west of Bethune. For sixteen days the business of withdrawing our men from the Aisne and sending them northwards by train continued, and all the time the Germans were quite unaware of what was going on. They had one of the greatest surprises of their lives when they discovered that the British army was opposing them on the Franco-Belgian border. German prisoners could not believe their eyes when they saw that their captors wore the familiar khaki. They firmly believed that the British army was in the trenches of the Aisne valley.

An officer writing home thus describes the transfer of the British army:—

> "We left the river Aisne, and now we are a long way north of that position. It was a wonderful move. French troops appeared out of the darkness and took our places. They had marched many miles, but were quite cheerful and calm, their only desire being to get into our 'dug-outs' and go to sleep. Then we marched down the hill into a comparative peace, and, joy of joys! were allowed to smoke and talk. It was a bitterly cold night, and we were dreadfully sleepy. We nodded as we trudged along. And so we entrained, and slept, closely packed indeed, but on beautiful soft cushions instead of the mud of a trench; the men were comfortable, being wedged by forties in covered trucks with clean straw for beds. We awoke in Paris. We passed slowly through, and slept again until we stopped for water at Amiens.
>
> "Our journey continued as fast as a train holding 1,000 men and their transport wagons can travel, and we were at Calais by evening. But a murrain on the foggy weather, which prevented us from catching a glimpse of the heights of Dover town! However, at another stopping-place there was a charming English girl giving the soldiers cigarettes, and the sight of her and a word or two made us doubly brave."

The Second Corps was timed to arrive on the canal to the west of Bethune on 11th October. It was to connect up with Maud'huy's army holding the line south of the canal, and Gough's cavalry was to hold back the Germans until it was in position. Next day the Third Corps was to arrive and detrain at St. Omer. Then the cavalry was to clear its flank, and hold back the Germans again until the Third Corps was in position. Finally, it had to do similar work until the First Corps could arrive and take its place in the long northward line. Such was the plan; and, thanks to the splendid manner in which the French and British staffs worked together, it succeeded. By 19th October 100,000 British soldiers had been silently and secretly withdrawn from their trenches on the Aisne, almost within eyeshot of the Germans, and had been carried 150 miles by rail to their new positions. During the journey some of our men passed near enough to the Channel to see British warships far out on the gray waters.

We won the race to the sea, but only by a short neck. How the Germans poured across Belgium, and how the remnants of the Belgian army, aided by a small British force, kept them at bay until the situation was saved, will be told in our next volume. The transfer of the British army from the Aisne to the Franco-Belgian border marks the close of the third great chapter of the war. Thenceforward, for many months, war was to be waged along a line of trenches extending from the wind-whipped dunes of the narrow seas to within sight of Alpine snows, a distance of more than 450 miles.



A Meeting of the Generals.

(*Drawn by Paul Thiriat. By permission of The Sphere.*)

The French artist who painted this picture writes:—"At night, somewhere near the front, inside an abandoned farmhouse in the midst of fields, two men are together—those on whom we set all our hopes, who give all their knowledge, their lives, for the freedom of the world. You never know where they are, and, if you do see them, still you must not know where you met them. They are nowhere and yet everywhere. Very often only a single sentry betrays their temporary shelter. The motor cars wait, panting, to carry them as quick as possible to wherever their presence is needed."

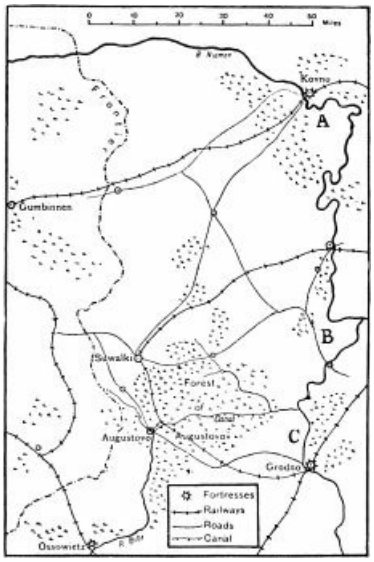
CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FIRST RUSSIAN ADVANCE TO CRACOW.

In Chapter IX. of this volume you learned something of the first clash of arms in Eastern Europe. I told you how two Russian armies beat a German army in East Prussia, and overran the greater part of the province. This success, you will remember, was short-lived. Von Hindenburg destroyed Samsonov's army at Tannenberg, and Rennenkampf's forces barely managed to escape. In Galicia, however, the Russians carried everything before them. They smote the Austrians hard, and for a time put them out of action. There were people in this country who believed that in a few weeks the Russian right would be across the Vistula, marching triumphantly towards Berlin; while the Russians in possession of Cracow would be advancing into Silesia and Hungary. Let us see what really happened.

When I broke off my story von Hindenburg was following up Rennenkampf, who was rapidly falling back from Königsberg towards the Russian frontier. On 7th September 1914 the German general made a great advance towards the Niemen. His right moved along the railway from Gumbinnen towards Kovno, his centre pushed forward by way of Suwalki,[154] while his right, which had detached troops to besiege the fortress of Ossowietz,[155] on the Bobr, swept towards Grodno. The country through which he was now moving is one tangle of bog and lake; it is traversed by only three railway lines, but the roads are few. The troops moving east from Suwalki had to cross a causeway which threads the marshes to the east and south-east of that town. An army traversing such a country is at a great disadvantage. Men and guns and transport have to move along narrow roads, with bogs and lakes on their flanks. It is almost as difficult to cross marsh roads as to cross the passes of a great mountain chain. The Russians had already learnt this by their bitter experiences in East Prussia.

The country through which von Hindenburg was now advancing is famous in history as the theatre of a campaign by one of Napoleon's armies in 1812. But whereas Napoleon invaded the region in midsummer, the Germans were advancing through it on the stormy eve of a Russian winter, and were hampered by much more transport than that which accompanied the French army.



Map to illustrate von Hindenburg's Advance to the Niemen and the Battle of Augustovo.

Rennenkampf was unable to offer much opposition to von Hindenburg as he pushed forward, nor would he have resisted him if he could. His object was to lure von Hindenburg on towards the Niemen, where he felt sure he could put an end to his advance. If he could force the Germans to retreat, he would be able to fall upon their rear as they marched back along the narrow roads with the deadly swamps and quagmires around them, and revenge Tannenberg. He therefore let the enemy come on, and only delayed him from time to time by a little rearguard fighting. The German troops which travelled by railway moved fast. On 20th September the siege of Ossowietz began, and next day the main bodies of the

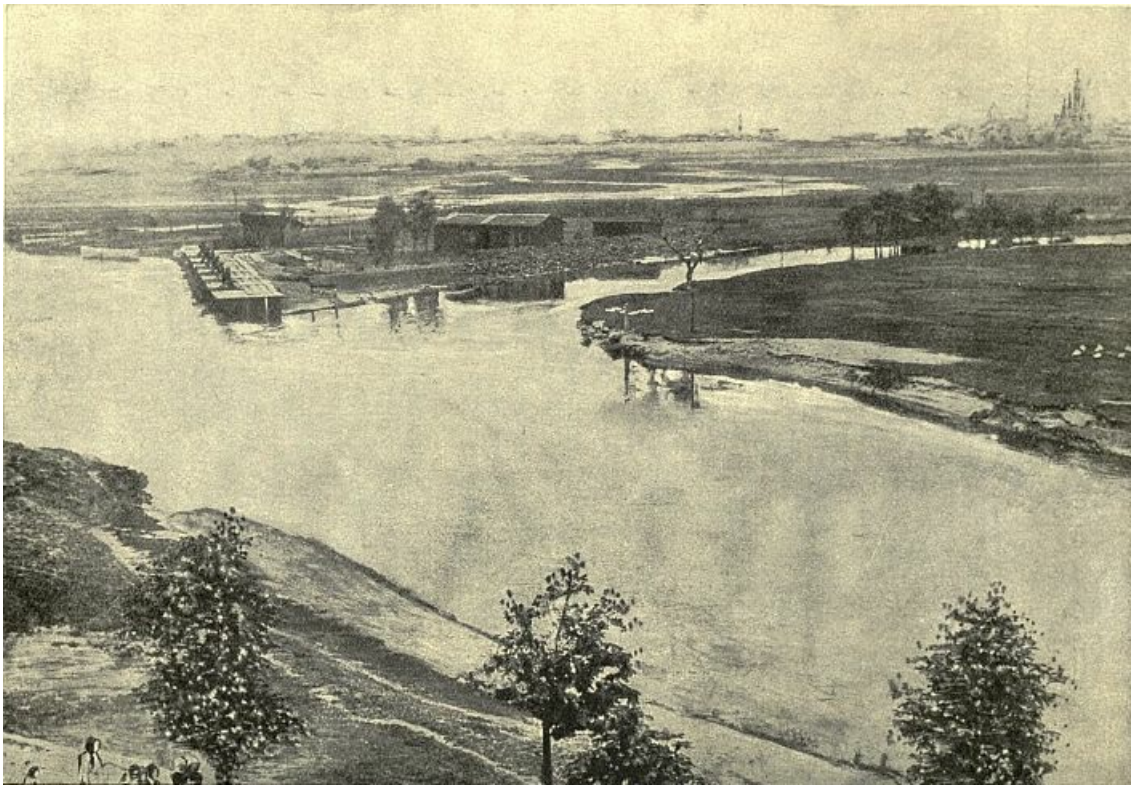
enemy reached the Niemen at three points, marked A, B, and C on the diagram. Rennenkampf by this time had got most of his men over the broad stream, and they were now lying in deep trenches on the low eastern shore. He had received large reinforcements, and he was now confident that he could prevent the Germans from crossing.

On the morning of 26th September von Hindenburg's heavy howitzers began to throw their shells across the river at B, while his engineers built pontoon bridges. As soon as a bridge was completed, concealed Russian guns blew it to pieces. All day long the howitzers boomed, but there was no reply from the Russian side. At nightfall von Hindenburg felt sure that he had driven his enemy out of their trenches, and that next day he might safely attempt to cross the river.

On the morning of the 27th bridges were again built and swung across the stream. The Russians waited until the Germans were on them, and then their guns smashed them to fragments. There was terrible loss on the German side, and nowhere could they make headway. At all points along the river they were held up in the same way. Meanwhile the siege of Ossowietz had hopelessly failed: in the spongy moss surrounding the "island" of solid ground on which the fortress is built no firm positions could be found for the big guns.

The Russians were too strong for him, and on Sunday, 27th September, von Hindenburg gave the order to retreat. He now realized that he could not cross the Niemen, and that even if he could, his success would not force the Russians to withdraw troops from Galicia. The retreat was a difficult matter; but von Hindenburg, as you know, was a master of marsh warfare. Only in the centre, where he had to cross the swampy country to the east and south-east of Suwalki, was he in difficulties.

Rennenkampf instantly followed him up, and by flinging his left well south towards the valley of the Bobr, endeavoured to cut off the German forces between Augustovo and the causeway leading to Suwalki. He had to push through the Forest of Augustovo, a region much like that in which von Hindenburg had destroyed Samsonov's army. Guided by the foresters of the district, his men slowly threaded the matted woods, and by 1st October had seized Augustovo. For two days there was a fierce rearguard action in the woods, and the Germans lost heavily in guns and prisoners. Rennenkampf claimed that 60,000 Germans had been killed, wounded, or captured; and if his estimate is correct, he had fully revenged Tannenberg. Von Hindenburg, however, managed to get the bulk of his force away, and by 9th October they were all back again in East Prussia, whither Rennenkampf could not follow them without the risk of being entrapped in the woods and lakes and marshes where Samsonov had suffered disaster in the last days of August.



"Three Emperors' Corner." ***Photo, Central News.***

Here three empires meet—the German, Austrian and Russian—three empires that between them hold sway in Europe over more than 375 millions of people, Teutonic and Slav, and exercise authority over nearly 2½ million square miles of territory—about two-thirds of the whole continent. In the foreground is seen a portion of German Silesia, on the right is Austrian Galicia, and in the background Russian Poland. The broad river is the Prgemeza; the smaller river is a tributary which here separates Austria from Russia.

Von Hindenburg's great advance to the Niemen had failed. It had achieved nothing; and meanwhile, as we shall soon hear, the Russians were advancing towards Cracow, and were drawing nearer and nearer every day to Silesia. A great effort had now to be made to check them, and von Hindenburg was ordered southward to undertake the task.

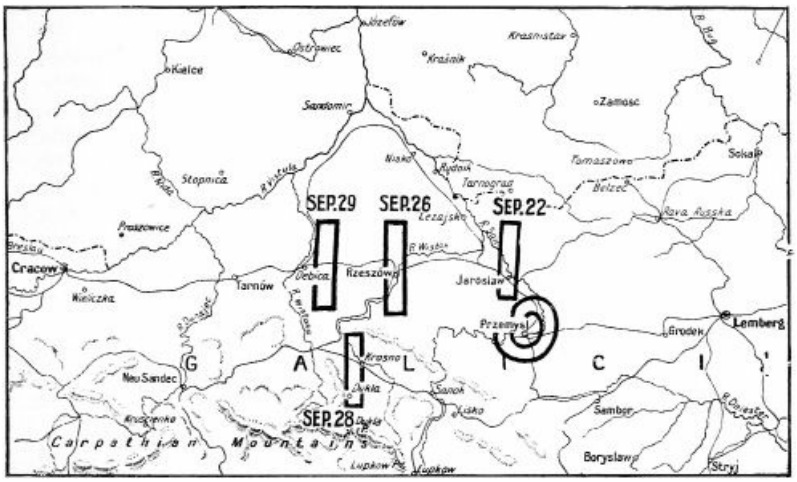
Now let us return to the Russians in Galicia. In the third week of September 1914, Russian armies appeared before the two chief fortresses of Central Galicia—Jaroslav and Przemysl. Both these strongholds are on the river San, and a glance at the map on page 303 will show you that before the Russians could move either on Cracow or across the Carpathians into Hungary both of them must be captured. At one time the Austrians had meant to make Jaroslav a first-class fortress; but they had not finished the fortifications, and it was now defended by a strong circle of entrenchments and a number of redoubts on both banks of the river. Jaroslav was expected to offer a stubborn resistance, but it fell within three days. Przemysl, however, was a very much harder nut to crack. It stands in a strong natural position amidst the foothills of the Carpathians, and its forts and lines of defence were very strong indeed. For weeks it had been preparing for the impending siege. The "useless mouths" had been sent away; gangs of workmen had been busy strengthening all the weak points, and a large store of ammunition had been collected. The garrison numbered about 30,000 men. On 22nd September the Russians closed in on the place, and soon completely surrounded it. As the Russian commander was short of big siege guns, he determined to starve the place into surrender. It was known that the supply of food within the city was not large, and the fortress was expected to yield in a few weeks at most. It held out for fully six months.

Leaving an army to mask the fortress, the remainder of the Russian forces in Galicia pushed on towards Cracow, which I have already described in Chapter VIII. of this volume. Cracow stands, as you know, on the northern edge of the Carpathians, at a point where the Vistula is as broad as the Thames at Windsor. The hills on the north and south were strongly fortified, but the real defence of the city was the circle of deep entrenchments, pushed so far out from the town that the siege guns of the enemy could not get within range of it. While the Russians were advancing, the Austrian garrison of at least 100,000 men laboured night and day to make the fortified zone impregnable.

They knew—none better—that Cracow was the key-fortress of Eastern Europe. If it fell, the Russians would be able to advance both into Germany and into Austria. Forty miles west of Cracow they would be in Silesia, the largest and most important manufacturing area of Germany, and the seat of its chief coal and iron mines. One-quarter of all the coal mined in Germany comes from Silesia, and it has some of the richest zinc deposits in the world. Its chemical and textile manufactures are the most extensive in all the Fatherland, and it has well been called the German Lancashire. If the Russians could enter Silesia and begin to lay waste its crowded industrial towns, a blow would be struck at the very heart of Germany. Berlin, too, would be in peril, for a road to the capital would be opened along the river Oder and behind the line of frontier fortresses.

The capture of Cracow by the Russians would not only imperil Germany, but it would make them complete masters of Galicia. You already know what a very important part petrol plays in modern warfare. Motor cars, aeroplanes, and submarines must have petrol, or they cannot move. The petroleum of the world is chiefly found in America, round about Baku on the shores of the Caspian Sea, in Galicia, and in Rumania. The British navy had stopped the exports of petroleum from America; the Caspian oil fields were in the hands of Russia, and German supplies could only be obtained from Galicia and Rumania. The Galician oil fields, which are amongst the richest in Europe, lie along the northern slopes of the Carpathians. Once the Russians were masters of Galicia these oil fields would be in their hands, and the only other possible source of supply for the Germans would be in Rumania. Before the war began the Germans had provided themselves with huge supplies of petrol, but even in September 1914 these stocks were rapidly shrinking.

Once the Russians captured Cracow they could begin the great task of pushing across the Carpathians into Hungary. You know that there is no love lost between the Hungarians and the Austrians. Should Hungary be threatened, and the Austrians be unable to send armies to drive back the invader, it seemed more than likely that the Hungarians would break away from the Germans and Austrians, and try to make peace on their own account. Nor was Hungary alone threatened. One hundred miles to the west of Cracow is the "Gap of Moravia," through which the river March flows to the Danube. It is the old highway from Germany into Austria, and along it runs the great railway which connects Silesia with Vienna. Thus the capture of Cracow would open a road not only to Berlin but to the capital of Austria as well.



First Russian Advance towards Cracow.

Now I think you can understand why the defence of Cracow was so important. You will see from this map how far the Russians had advanced towards the city by the end of September. On the last day of the month Russian cavalry were within a hundred miles of Cracow, and high hopes of speedy success seemed about to be realized. But just when everything was promising well the Russians began to retreat, and by the second week of October they were back behind the San. All the ground that had been gained to the west of the river was lost. The Russian retirement was not caused by defeat, but had been made necessary by the movements of the Germans farther north. Von Hindenburg had launched huge armies against Russian Poland, and the Grand Duke now needed all his forces to stem their advance. The story of the great struggle that followed must be left for our next volume.

A splendid deed of heroism was done by a Russian gunner during the fighting in Galicia. Most of the guns in his battery had been smashed by the shells of the enemy, and he and his surviving comrades were ordered to retire with the remaining guns. As they sullenly retreated, the gunner saw a baby girl toddling from the doorway of one of the houses of the village right into the road on which the shells were falling fast. At once the brave fellow ran to the child's rescue. Just as he reached her a shrapnel shell burst overhead. Instantly the man threw himself down, and shielded the child's body with his own. One bullet passed through his back, injuring him so badly that he could not rise from the ground. Two of his comrades went to his assistance, and carried him and the little girl into a place of safety. For this fine deed of dauntless courage all three men received the Cross of St. George.

Here is the story of a heroine—the daughter of a Russian colonel. She cut her hair short, and, donning the uniform, accompanied her father's regiment. During the battles in the Augustovo woods she acted as orderly, scout, and telegraphist, and was afterwards appointed to command a platoon. On one occasion while she was working the telegraph she tapped a message from the German Staff giving details of a movement about to be begun against the Russian centre. Thanks to her, the German plan was foiled. When her regiment passed through Vilna crowds gathered at the station to

greet her, but they were unable to distinguish the girl officer from the rest of her comrades.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ANTWERP AS IT WAS.

In the first half of the sixteenth century Antwerp was the commercial capital of the world. The great historian of the Dutch Republic[156] says, "Venice, Nuremberg,[157] Augsburg,[158] Bruges were sinking; but Antwerp, with its deep and convenient river, stretched its arm to the ocean, and caught the golden prize as it fell from its sister cities' grasp. . . . No city except Paris surpassed it in population; none approached it in commercial splendour."

Close to the great and beautiful cathedral of Antwerp is the Grand' Place, in the middle of which there is a monument representing a running warrior flinging into the river a huge hand which he has just cut off from a prostrate giant's arm. This monument is intended to explain the fanciful origin of the city's name. Two centuries before the fall of Troy—so runs the story—a savage giant, named Antigonus, held sway over the river Scaldis—that is, the Scheldt. He built himself a castle on the river bank, and levied tribute on every vessel that passed up and down the broad stream. The tribute was very heavy—no less than half the merchandise in the passing ships. If the mariners refused to pay the tribute he seized them, cut off their hands, and flung them into the river.

A Bird's-eye View of Antwerp. ***Photo, Topical Press.***

This photograph was taken from one of the towers of Antwerp's magnificent cathedral—the largest and most

beautiful Gothic church in the Netherlands. Its north tower rises to a height of more than four hundred feet. On the south side of the cathedral is the Place Verte (Green Place), with a statue of Rubens, whose famous picture, "The Descent from the Cross," formerly hung in the south transept. In the north transept was another of his great paintings, "The Elevation of the Cross."

At length a deliverer arose, one Salvius Brabo, a man of such valorous renown that the province of Brabant received its name from him. Brabo challenged the giant to single combat, slew him, cut off both his hands, and flung them into the Scheldt. Thus *Hand-werpen*—that is, "hand-throwing"—became the name of the great city. In the coat-of-arms of Antwerp you still see two severed hands flying through the air over a castle. Probably the real origin of the city's name is found in the old Flemish words *'an t' werf*, which mean "on the wharf."

The city began to decline during the reign of Philip II., who was King of Spain and master of the Netherlands. In 1576 Spanish soldiers whose pay was in arrears broke into mutiny, and stormed and sacked several of the richest towns of Flanders, including Antwerp. Early in November of that year they entered the city, burnt more than a thousand houses, slew more than eight thousand citizens, plundered right and left, and behaved with the utmost cruelty. Such was the "Spanish Fury," which still forms a landmark in Flemish history. With the help of William of Orange,[159] the Spaniards were driven out of Antwerp.

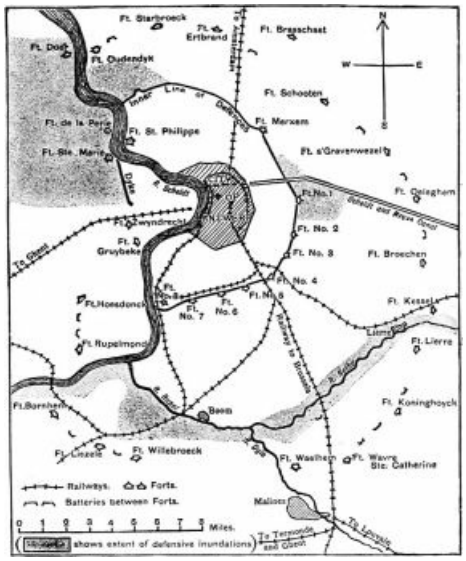
In 1648 the city received another grievous set-back: it fell into the hands of the Dutch, who closed the Scheldt against sea-going vessels. Then for a hundred and fifty years it remained only a shadow of its former self. In 1706 it surrendered to Marlborough after his victory at Ramillies. The real restorer of its prosperity was Napoleon I., who, you will remember, regarded Antwerp as "a pistol aimed at the heart of England." He constructed a harbour and new quays, and opened the port to the ships of the world. Almost at once the trade of the city revived in an astonishing fashion. The French remained masters of Antwerp down to the year before the Battle of Waterloo, when the British, Prussians, and Belgians besieged and captured it.

In 1830 it once more fell into the hands of an enemy. During the civil war of 1830-32, when the Belgians were striving to throw off the yoke of Holland and make themselves independent, Antwerp was the scene of a very curious kind of strife. A Dutch garrison held the citadel, and day by day bombarded the city. For two years the Dutchmen defied all the efforts of the Belgians to dislodge them. At last a British and French force was sent to turn them out. The French bombarded the citadel for twenty-four days, while a British fleet blockaded the river. In December 1832 the citadel surrendered, and when it fell Belgium had won her independence.

Such, in brief, is the stormy history of Antwerp down to the autumn of the year 1914. A visitor to the old city in the early days of July would have imagined that its peace was secured for ever. No one could believe that in less than three months this haven of peaceful trade was to be a place of slaughter, destruction, and desolation. The "Spanish Fury" was soon to be out-Heroded; the "German Fury" was already preparing.

In July 1914 Antwerp, with its population of 400,000 souls and its vast trade—which exceeded in value £100,000,000 per year—was not only one of the great business cities of the world, but was considered to be one of the strongest of all fortified places in Europe. Before an enemy could capture the city he would have to break through four distinct lines of defence, each of which, prior to this war, was considered strong enough to oppose any force which could be brought against it.

The outermost line of forts began at Lierre,[160] and swept round in a great circle south through Fort Waelhem to the Scheldt, and north through Fort Schooten to near the Dutch frontier. Two to three miles within this outer line of forts was a second line of defence formed by the rivers Nethe[161] and Rupel, which, along with the Scheldt, make a great natural waterway defending three sides of the city. If need be, the valleys of these rivers can be flooded, and thus form an additional barrier to the approach of an enemy. Some six miles within the line of the Nethe and Rupel, and about three miles from the centre of the city, was another chain of forts girdling it from the Scheldt on the south to the Scheldt on the north. Outside this inner line of defence, towards the north and west, were two other areas, which could be flooded in order to keep back the enemy. From the moment that the first German soldier set foot on the soil of Belgium, the military authorities were at work night and day strengthening the defences, and clearing away all the trees and buildings that lay in the line of fire of the guns in the forts.



The Entrenched Camp of Antwerp.

Barbed-wire entanglements connected with the electric supply of the city covered acres of ground; stakes were driven point upwards to form obstacles; man-traps innumerable were constructed, and the fields all around were sown with mines. Preparations were made to blow up the bridges over the network of canals and rivers to the south of the city; machine guns and quick-firers were mounted everywhere; and at night searchlights swept over the zone of destruction, and made it bright as day.

In this way Antwerp prepared to stand its latest siege.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SIEGE AND FALL OF ANTWERP.

The main bodies of the Germans swept through Belgium into France in the last week of August 1914, and the Belgian army, overwhelmed but undismayed, retired on its great national bulwark of defence. Yet not until 28th September did the curtain rise on the first act of Antwerp's tragedy. Many people in this country thought that Antwerp would be left alone until the conquest of France was complete. The Germans, indeed, made a proposal to King Albert that, if he would promise to keep his army quiet within the fortifications, the city would not be attacked. You know enough of King Albert to be quite sure what his answer was.

Why did the Germans besiege Antwerp? Chiefly because they were well aware that the Belgian army, now within the shelter of its forts, was in a position to fall on the German flank whenever the chance might arise. While Antwerp stood it was a source of serious anxiety to the German Staff. All the country between Antwerp and the sea still remained in Belgian hands, and thus Britain might send reinforcements to Belgium at any moment. If she did so, the Germans would have to fight not only in France but also in Belgium, where their communications were in danger of being cut. While the Belgian army remained in being, a large German army had to be kept in the country, and thus forces that were badly needed elsewhere were not available. Further, the capture of this great port would be a feather in the German cap, and would greatly hearten the subjects of the Kaiser. There was need of a new victory to give them cheer, for the retreat of their armies, and the deadlock that had now set in on the Aisne, had dashed their hopes of that speedy success which they had expected.

More than a month before the siege began, Antwerp had a foretaste of her fate. "At eleven minutes past one o'clock on the morning of 25th August death came to Antwerp out of the air." A Zeppelin suddenly appeared overhead, humming like a swarm of angry bees. A few minutes later something like a falling star dropped from it. Then there was a rending, shattering crash, followed by another and still another. Buildings fell as though a giant had hit them with a sledge-hammer. Ten people were killed and forty wounded, and nearly a thousand houses were damaged. One bomb was dropped within a hundred yards of the royal palace, in which the king and queen were sleeping, and another fell within two hundred yards of the Staff headquarters. It is said that one of the bombs fell on the German club and destroyed a statue of the Kaiser!

On the same day the Belgians moved out of Antwerp and attacked the Germans. They drove them out of Malines; but though they fought like heroes, they were overpowered by the large numbers of fresh troops that were hurried up. The Belgians were forced back once more, and at the beginning of the last week in September the Germans in real earnest set about the work of reducing the forts. They brought up their howitzers south of the river Nethe, and on the 28th, at a range of seven and a half miles, began to drop their shells on Forts Waelhem and Wavre Ste. Catherine. There was not a gun in these forts that had a range of more than six miles. The German fire was directed by observers in captive balloons, and was very accurate.

All day the roar of big guns and the crash of bursting shells were heard. Meanwhile the Belgians fought hard to the south of the Nethe, and had some success. But it was clear to everybody that the forts would soon be a heap of ruins. On the 29th Fort Wavre Ste. Catherine was smashed beyond repair, and the magazine blew up. Waelhem was badly hit, but managed to resist all day.

Next morning the German guns gave their full attention to Fort Waelhem and Fort Lierre. The air was filled with shrieking shell and bursting shrapnel. When the big shells, which the Belgians called "Antwerp expresses," fell in a field, they threw up a geyser of earth 200 feet high; when they dropped in a river or canal, a huge waterspout arose; and when they fell on a village, it crumpled into complete ruin. A shell that flew over Fort Waelhem fell on the waterworks and broke down the embankment of the reservoir. The water poured into half a mile of the Belgian trenches, and flooded out the defenders, who were thus prevented from carrying supplies to the fort. Meanwhile the citizens were short of water, and had no means of putting out any fires that might arise. On Thursday, 1st October, all the southern forts were destroyed, and by nightfall the Belgians had fallen back to the northern bank of the Nethe, where trenches had already been prepared. Here, on the second line of defence, they made a most stubborn stand. Within the city there was still hope. Although the citizens could hear the faint thunder of the guns, though they saw the dead and the wounded being brought in, and German aeroplanes circling above them, they still hoped that the enemy might be held off until the British

could arrive and save the city.

Belgians intrenched on the Nethe. ***Photopress.***

By the afternoon of 3rd October the prospect was black indeed. Forts Waelhem and Lierre had been pounded into silence, and a strong German force was striving to cross the Nethe. Already several pontoon bridges had been built, but in each case they had been blown to pieces before they could be used. Nevertheless every soldier knew that unless help came the Germans were bound to be over the river before long. The Belgians, who had been fighting desperately for a fortnight, were now weary and heavy-eyed from lack of sleep; the hospitals were overflowing with wounded; and the citizens began to lose heart. Preparations were made to transfer the government to Ostend, and many of the well-to-do inhabitants departed for Holland or England. The next day, however, brought good news—a British force was coming with heavy guns.

At one o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday, 4th October, Mr. Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, reached Antwerp, where he remained for three days. He persuaded the authorities to continue their resistance, and went out to the trenches, where he had a rather narrow escape from a burst of shrapnel. His arrival awakened a new spirit of hopefulness in the townsfolk.

Late that evening the vanguard of the British force arrived by train from Ostend. It consisted of a brigade of marines, 2,000 strong. Without an hour's delay the men were marched off to the trenches on the Nethe, where they lay to the left of the weary Belgians, who were inspired to fresh efforts at their coming. Next day the whole of the British force, 6,000 in all, arrived. Four battalions of marines were the only regulars in the force; the remainder were volunteers, many of whom had never before handled a rifle. Some of them had no pouches or water-bottles or overcoats, while others had to stick their bayonets in their putties or tie them to their belts with string. Each of the two naval brigades into which the force was organized consisted of four battalions named after famous admirals. The 1st Brigade consisted of the Drake, Benbow,[162] Hawke,[163] and Collingwood[164] battalions; the 2nd Brigade, of the Nelson, Howe,[165] Hood,[166] and Anson[167] battalions. There were many London naval volunteers in one of the brigades. Though their equipment was very imperfect and their training had scarcely begun, they fought in the trenches with all the cheerfulness and doggedness of their race.

The Flight into Holland. ***From a picture by Allan Stewart.***

Much was expected from a British armoured train which had been built in Antwerp, and was mounted with four 4.7-inch naval guns, worked by Belgian gunners under the direction of British bluejackets. Unfortunately it had but little opportunity of harassing the enemy.

That night the Germans tried hard to cross the river, but were driven back by the British marines. Late on Monday, the 5th, there was a terrible bombardment of the Belgian centre, and some thousands of Germans either swam or waded across the stream, and dug themselves in on the northern bank. Early on Tuesday morning the passage of the Nethe had been won, and the defenders had been driven back upon the inner circle of forts. The guns of these forts were out of date, and were hopelessly outranged and outclassed by the howitzers of the enemy. The end was drawing near.

By this time all the country between the inner forts and the Nethe was a wilderness of death and desolation, of blackened ruins and smoking haystacks, of torn and slashed fields, strewn with the bodies of the slain. On Tuesday evening the situation was hopeless, and the government left in haste for Ostend. The German general sent a flag of truce with a demand for surrender, and threatened to bombard the city should it be refused. The Belgians, however, would not yet give in.

That evening the great oil tanks on the western side of the Scheldt were fired lest their contents should fall into the hands of the enemy. A dense black mass of smoke drifted over the city, and the smell of burning filled the air. The machinery of several large ships that might prove useful to the enemy was also wrecked, and all munitions of war were sent out of the city by rail.

Not until next morning did the citizens learn that the government had departed. The newspapers announced that steamers were waiting at the quays to carry the inhabitants into safety. In the great Zoological Gardens keepers were busy shooting the fiercer wild animals. The Germans had given notice that the bombardment of the city would begin at ten o'clock that very evening. Then and only then did the courage of the townsfolk fail. They saw their own soldiers streaming across the bridge of boats towards the western bank of the river, and they knew that all was lost. Then began an exodus from the city, the like of which has probably never before been seen in all the world's history. Wellnigh half a million fugitives, not only from Antwerp but from all the countryside for twenty miles round, poured along the roads into Holland, or struggled on the quays to escape by water. Every vessel, no matter of what description, was pressed into service, and the broad stream was choked with tramps, dredgers, ferry-boats, barges, yachts, tugs, and even rafts, all packed with terror-stricken men, women, and children, and the little belongings that they could carry with them. For hours the overloaded craft lay in the stream, while the crowds on board watched the flames leaping up from the buildings of the city, which

had been fired by bombs. As each bomb burst, a great sigh of terror went up from the homeless, helpless thousands.

Even more terrible were the scenes along the highways, where soldiers and civilians were mixed together in frightful confusion. An American correspondent says:—

> "By mid-afternoon on Wednesday the road from Antwerp to Ghent, a distance of forty miles, was a solid mass of refugees, and the same was true of every road, every lane, every footpath leading in a westerly or a northerly direction. The people fled in motor cars and in carriages, in delivery wagons, in furniture vans, in farm carts, in omnibuses, in vehicles drawn by oxen, by donkeys, even by cows; on horseback, on bicycles; and there were thousands upon thousands afoot. I saw men trundling wheel-barrows piled high with bedding, and with their children perched upon the bedding. I saw sturdy young peasants carrying their aged parents in their arms. I saw women of fashion in fur coats and high-heeled shoes staggering along clinging to the ends of wagons. I saw white-haired men and women grasping the harness of the gun teams or the stirrup leathers of the troopers, who, themselves exhausted from many days of fighting, slept in their saddles as they rode. I saw springless farm wagons literally heaped with wounded soldiers with piteous white faces; the bottoms of the wagons leaked, and left a trail of blood behind. . . . The confusion was beyond all imagination, the clamour deafening; the rattle of wheels, the throbbing of motors, the clatter of hoofs, the cracking of whips, the groans of the wounded, the cries of women, the whimpering of children, and always the monotonous shuffle, shuffle, shuffle of countless weary feet."[168]

British Naval Brigade in the Trenches outside Antwerp.
Photo, Newspaper Illustrations, Ltd.

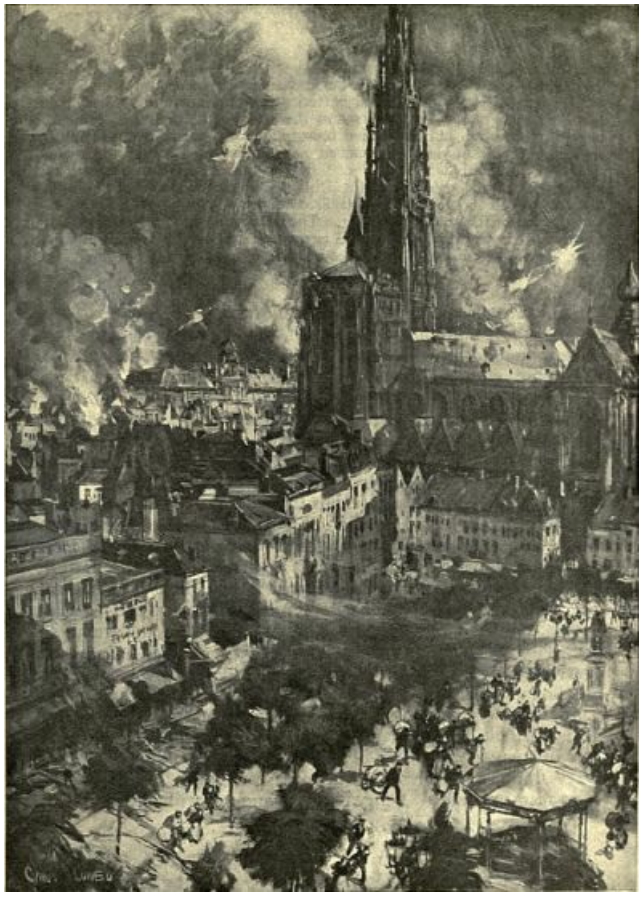
At least 200,000 of the refugees crossed into Holland, where they were kindly received, and were provided with food and shelter. Some sought refuge in England; but thousands of others fell by the wayside, where they perished of exposure and starvation.

The remainder of the pitiful story is soon told. Once the German guns were across the Nethe there was nothing left for the defenders to do but to make for the coast with all speed, so as to escape from being cut off by the enemy. By the morning of Friday, the 9th, nearly the whole of the garrison was across the Scheldt. Three battalions of the British force delayed their departure, and arrived on the bank of the river, to find that the bridge of boats had been destroyed. They managed to cross on rafts and barges; but one party, believing itself to be headed off by the Germans, marched north into Holland. Another party was forced to surrender, and a third sailed down the river and landed on Dutch territory. Of course those who took refuge in Holland were interned.[169] The British losses were 37 killed, 193 wounded, nearly 1,000 missing—that is, prisoners—and 1,560 interned in Holland. About 18,000 Belgian troops were also driven across the frontier, and many were captured by the Germans. Thus in disaster and gloom ended the gallant attempt to save Antwerp.

Two hours before midnight on the evening of Wednesday, 7th October 1914, the great shells began to fall on the doomed city. It was almost as deserted as a city of the dead. There were no lights in the streets; but, as the shells exploded, lurid flames began to arise. On the Scheldt barges were burning, and the waters beneath them glowed blood-red in the light of the flames. As the huge projectiles struck the buildings they collapsed like houses of cards, and soon there was scarcely a street in the southern quarter of the town which was not battered into shapeless ruin. The historical buildings of the city, however, were spared.

In the gray dawn of October 9th the bombardment ceased. Between eight and nine o'clock the burgomaster went out to surrender the city. About one o'clock the Germans marched in and tramped along the deserted streets. Sixty thousand men in review order passed the new governor, but there was not a living soul to greet them. Not a single spectator stood on the pavement; no face was seen at a window; not a flag waved. The American correspondent already quoted thus describes the march past:—

> "Each regiment was headed by its field music and colours, and when darkness fell and the street lamps were lighted, the shrill music of fifes, the rattle of drums, and the tramp of marching feet reminded me of a torchlight parade. Hard on the heels of the infantry rumbled artillery, battery after battery, until one wondered where Krupp found time or steel to make them. These were the forces that had been almost in constant action for the last two weeks, and that for thirty-six hours had poured death and destruction into the city; yet the horses were well groomed and the harness well polished. Behind the field batteries rumbled quick-firers, and then, heralded by a blare of trumpets and the crash of kettledrums, came the cavalry, cuirassiers in helmets and breastplates of burnished steel, hussars in befrogged jackets and fur busbies, and finally the Uhlans, riding amid forests of lances under a cloud of fluttering pennons. But this was not all nor nearly all. For after the Uhlans came bluejackets of the naval division, broad-shouldered, bewhiskered fellows, with caps worn rakishly and the roll of the sea in their gait. Then Bavarian infantry in dark blue, Saxon infantry in light blue, and Austrians in uniforms of beautiful silver-gray, and last of all a detachment of gendarmes in silver and bottle-green."



Antwerp under Bombardment.

(*From the picture by Cyrus Cuneo.*)

The curtain descends upon the tragedy of Antwerp, and as we rise from its contemplation two pictures remain fixed in our memories—the one, a march of triumph, with all the pomp and circumstance of war, the fanfare of trumpets, the rattle of drums, the gay uniforms, the gallant chargers, the nodding plumes, the stir and movement of victorious legions; the other, long, long trails of anguished men, distraught women, and sobbing children, bereft at one stroke of home, kindred, and possessions, driven forth to perish of hunger by the wayside, to begin life anew as exiles in a foreign land, or to return to their ruined homes as the subjects of a pitiless conqueror. Never were the terrible contrasts of war thrown into sharper relief; never was the ruthlessness of armed strife so painfully brought home to the onlooking world. A mighty nation, drunk with the lust of empire, had trampled to ruin a little, toiling people, innocent of offence in the sight of God and man. It had dared to defend itself, and for this heinous crime an overwhelming foe "slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age." The blare of trumpets and the roll of drums may stop the ears of men to every cry of agony, and deaden their hearts to every impulse of mercy; but they can avail nothing before Him who has said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."

END OF VOLUME II.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1]See p. 89, vol. i.

[2]See chaps. x. and xi., vol. i.

[3]See p. 8.

[4]See p. 5.

[5]See p. 199, vol. i.

[6]This is really the same word as "sepoys," by which the native soldiers in India were first known to Europeans.

[7]Original inhabitants of Algeria and Morocco. Three-fifths of the Algerians are Berbers.

[8]Village of Somersetshire, famous for its limestone cliffs and caves.

[9]Born 1475, died 1524.

[10]Kon-day.

[11]Bànsh.

[12]Mō-būzh.

[13]May-ze-air.

[14]See map, p. 19.

[15]Shar-leh-rwa´.

[16]Ski (*shē*) are long, narrow pieces of wood, from 7 to 12 feet in length and from 2½ to 3 inches wide, which are bound to the feet with leather straps, and are used for travelling rapidly over snow. The Chasseurs Alpins—that is, the French soldiers who operate in the Alps—wear ski.

[17]See diagram p. 15

[18]*Leen-ye´.*

[19]*Katr-bráh.*

[20]Dove. A German aeroplane is so called.

[21]Slight arch or upward bend.

[22]Subaltern, officer below the rank of captain.

[23]Place in East Prussia, also known as Tannenberg. A battle was fought there in 1410, when the Teutonic Knights, who were then masters of East Prussia, suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Russians.

[24]*Ab´sant* (give a nasal sound to the *n*.)

[25]The Peninsular War was fought between August 1808 and June 1814. Wellington, the British general, drove the French out of Spain into France, and in March 1814 invaded that country and reached Toulouse.

[26]*Kosh-tsyūsh´ko*, born 1746, died 1817. In 1794 he raised the standard of Polish independence at Cracow, defeated the Russians, and defended Warsaw for two months. He was defeated, and, after being imprisoned, was released and retired to Switzerland, where he died.

[27]*P´shé-mee-sell.*

[28]*Var´show.*

[29]*Nā-ref´.*

[30]*Var´tay.*

[31]*Goom-bin´-nen.*

[32]See p. 80, vol. i.

[33]See p. 44, vol. i.

[34]*Che<u>ch</u>s*. Pronounce the *ch* underlined as in the Scottish word "loch."

[35]*Soo-val´kee.*

[36]*Kov´no.*

[37]*M'lā´var.*

[38]Hollow balls of iron filled with explosives, and burst by means of a lighted fuse. They are usually thrown at the enemy by hand. The grenadiers were so called because they were specially trained to throw grenades.

[39]See p. 63, vol. i.

[40]The German name of St. Petersburg was changed to the Russian form, Petrograd, by order of the Tsar on September 1.

[41]See p. 32, vol. i.

[42]130 miles south-east of Belgrade. It was the birthplace of Constantine the Great.

[43]See map on p. 8, vol. i.

[44]The greatest of all the Russian Tsars; born 1672, died 1725. He travelled abroad for two years, during which he learned shipbuilding in Holland and England. It was he who built St. Petersburg in order to have "a window looking out on Europe."

[45]Great industrial town of Russian Poland, about 75 miles south-west of Warsaw.

[46]*Frā-meh-ree´.*

[47]Place 35 miles west of Kandahar, Afghanistan; the scene of a British defeat by the Afghans, July 27, 1880.

[48]*Leh-kā-to´.*

[49]*Kam-bray´.*

[50]*Lon-dreh-see´* (*n* nasal).

[51]*Dū-play´* (b. 1697, d. 1763), governor of the French Indies. It was Clive's brilliant defence of Arcot which brought about the failure of his plans and led to his recall.

[52]*Mā-rwāé.*

[53]General Officer Commanding.

[54]Royal Horse Artillery.

[55]British general (b. 1761, d. 1809), hero of the famous retreat from Astorga to Corunna (1809). He was shot at the moment

when the British, in sight of the sea, faced about and drove off the French, and was buried in the citadel at Corunna, in the north-west of Spain. See the famous verses, *Burial of Sir John Moore*, by Wolfe.

[56]*San-kan-tan´* (the *n*'s are sounded nasally).

[57]*Toor-nay´*.

[58]Reigned from 463 to 481; the father of Clovis, who founded the kingdom of the Franks. His capital was at Tournai.

[59]On the Buffalo River, Natal; scene of heroic stand by a handful of the 24th Regiment after the Zulus had cut up our troops (January 22, 1879).

[60]Privates are only promoted to this rank for gallantry on the field.

[61]Royal Army Medical Corps.

[62]Every regiment of every army has a flag which we call the "regimental colours." British colours are usually of silk, with tassels of mixed crimson and gold, and are carried on a staff eight feet seven inches long, surmounted by a golden crown on which stands a lion. The colours are carried on parade by two junior lieutenants, and are guarded by two sergeants and two privates. The flag itself is of the colour of the facings of the regiment, except when these are white, in which case the body of the flag is not plain white all over, but bears upon it the Cross of St. George. Whatever the colour, the flag carries in its upper corner the Union Jack, and in the centre the crown and title of the regiment, around which are the devices or badges or distinctions of the regiment, and the names of the battles in which it has played a gallant part. The flag of a regiment is the outward and visible sign of its honour and renown, and to lose it in battle is considered a great disgrace. It is always held in great reverence, and when too old for further service it is set up on the walls of a cathedral or church. Probably in your own town there are one or more of these tattered and perhaps bullet-torn colours, along with flags captured from an enemy. In the old days every regiment marched into battle with its colours proudly flying, and there were many stirring fights for the flag. Nowadays our soldiers do not take their colours into battle. The Russians and Germans, however, do so.

[63]*Kū-ray´*, French parish priest.

[64]*Leel*, 26 miles north-north-east of Arras, and 155 miles by rail north by east of Paris.

[65]*Am´e-enz*, 84 miles north of Paris, on the Somme.

[66]*San Nah-zair´*, 40 miles west of Nantes.

[67]*Reh-tel´*, 23 miles south-west of Mezières.

[68]*Shah-tō´ Sa-lăn´* (*n* nasal).

[69]*Lon-vee´* (*n* nasal), 40 miles north-north-west of Metz.

[70]*Ain*, joins the Oise (*Waz*) near Compiègne (*Kom-pe-ain´*).

[71]*La Fair*.

[72]*Lon* (*n* nasal).

[73]*Reemz*.

[74]*Voo-ze-ay´*.

[75]See page 25.

[76]Tributary of the Seine (right bank), rising in the Langres plateau.

[77]*Gweez*.

[78]*Kom-pe-ain´*.

[79]*Swa-son´* (*n* nasal).

[80]*Nair-ee´*.

[81]*Mo-ran´* (*n* nasal).

[82]*Oork*, tributary of the Marne. From this stream flows the canal of Ourcq to Paris (67 miles).

[83]*Fon-ten-blō´* (fountain of beautiful water), town 37 miles south-south-east of Paris. It contains a famous palace beloved of French kings, and its forest, the most beautiful in France, covers 66 square miles.

[84]Quoted from *Nelson's History of the War*, by John Buchan.

[85]Named after the Prussian general August von Goeben (1816-80). He commanded the 8th Army Corps in the Franco-German War, and distinguished himself at Gravelotte and elsewhere.

[86]Emperor William the Great.

[87]U stands for *Unterwasserboot*—under-water boat.

[88]The various classes of British submarines are indicated by a letter of the alphabet. Boats of the oldest class constructed are

lettered A.

[89]Seaport, military station, and capital of German East Africa, fifty miles south of Zanzibar.

[90]Goods such as arms, ammunition, explosives, and other articles for use in war. If a neutral tries to send such goods to a state which is at war, they may be seized by the enemy of that state. Nations at war give notice of what kinds of goods they will not allow their enemy to receive. These goods are known as contraband of war.

[91]The foam at the cutwater of the ship.

[92]One knot = 1-1/7 miles.

[93]Channel about 18 miles wide, some 7 miles north-east of Heligoland.

[94]All the big guns that can be brought to bear are fired together.

[95]"Our Lady;" the great historical cathedral of Paris.

[96]*Gal-le-ay´ne.* Born 1849; commander-in-chief in Madagascar (1896-1905).

[97]*Bwā d'Boo-lon´* (*n* nasal), the great public park (2,158 acres) of Paris.

[98]*Shŏn-te-ye´.*

[99]*Say-zân´.*

[100]*Ar-gon´.*

[101]Huge explosive shells which send up a dense mass of black smoke. Our soldiers also call them "coal boxes" or "Jack Johnsons."

[102]*Koo-lom´mee-ay.* This was the most southerly point reached by the main body of von Kluck's army. His cavalry patrols reached the banks of the Seine.

[103]*Mo.*

[104]Page 198.

[105]*La Fer-tā´.*

[106]Scottish noble who murdered King Duncan (1040) and became king in his stead. He reigned seventeen years, but was slain in battle (1057) by Malcolm, Duncan's son.

[107]Near Dunkeld, in Perthshire.

[108]Hill of the Sidlaws, Perthshire, eight miles north-east of Perth.

[109]*La fair shom-peh-nwaz´.*

[110]*Fock.* Born 1851; was professor of strategy and tactics at the French School of War.

[111]*Non-see´* (*n* nasal).

[112]*Boss´ū-ā.* Born 1627, died 1704.

[113]*Shā-tō´ Te-er-ree´.*

[114]Born 1621, died 1695. His *Fables* were published in 1668. They have been translated into almost every European language.

[115]*Say.*

[116]*Bosh*, term of contempt used by the French for the Germans, and meaning fools or blockheads.

[117]*Ma´sh-e-ray.*

[118]The French Senate is the upper chamber of the French Parliament, and roughly corresponds with our House of Lords. The members, however, are not peers, for republican France does not possess a peerage.

[119]*Ay-per´nay*, near the left bank of the Marne. It is a great centre of the champagne trade. The wine is stored in vaults hewn out of the chalk on which the town is built.

[120]£7,000 (£1 = 25 francs).

[121]Gallery dug by engineers, in which an explosive is placed and fired.

[122]*Kray-on´.*

[123]*Sweep.*

[124]*Vail.*

[125]*Brain.*

[126]*Kon-day´* (*n* nasal).

[127]*Moo-lan´* (*n* nasal).

[128]Born 1606, died 1669; one of the greatest of painters, and the glory of the Dutch school. Many of his pictures are in deep shade, and suggest the mystery that lies under the surface of things seen.

[129]Five miles north-west of Laon.

[130]Prussian military order (Maltese cross of iron edged with silver). It has been awarded in profusion during the present war. More than 30,000 German soldiers are said to have received it during 1914.

[131]He was, of course, misinformed. The nearest German troops to Paris on September 14th, 1914, were at Compiègne, about 43 miles away.

[132]See Vol. 1., p. 170.

[133]*Bay-for´*.

[134]*Bartholdi*, French sculptor (1834-1904). The statue of Liberty referred to is 200 feet high, and was presented in 1886 to the United States by the French Government to mark the hundredth year of American independence. It stands on Bedloe's Island, at the mouth of New York harbour.

[135]*Ā-pee-nal´*.

[136]*Tool*.

[137]See p. 215.

[138]*Sar-eye´*.

[139]*San Mee-yel´*.

[140]*Vo-āvre*.

[141]In French, *tête-de-pont*, a fortified position covering that end of a bridge nearest to the enemy.

[142]*Vā-renn´*.

[143]*Ve-en´*.

[144]*San Men-oo´*.

[145]The French spelling is *Reims*.

[146]*Shar-tr´*, town, fifty miles south-west of Paris, on the left bank of the Eure.

[147]*Bō-vay´*, fifty-five miles by rail north-north-west of Paris, on the route from Paris to Calais.

[148]Bell rung thrice daily in Catholic countries, at the sound of which the faithful pray.

[149]*Vee-ve lays Ang-lay* ("Long live the English").

[150]*Kas-tel-no´*.

[151]See p. 218.

[152]*Maud-wee´*.

[153]*Bay-toon´*.

[154]*Soo-val´kee*.

[155]*Oss-o-vets*.

[156]John Lothrop Motley (1814-77), American historian, whose most famous work, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, was published in 1856.

[157]Ancient city of Bavaria, 95 miles north-west of Munich, the capital.

[158]City of Bavaria, on the Lech, tributary of the Danube. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was the great centre of trade between Northern Europe, Venice, and the Levant.

[159](1533-84.) Known as "the Silent." He headed the opposition in the Netherlands to Philip of Spain, and became the founder of the Dutch Republic. He was assassinated.

[160]*Le-air´*, town, 10 miles south-east of Antwerp, at the confluence of the Great and Little Nethe.

[161]*Nā´teh*.

[162](1653-1702.) Frequently defeated the French between 1690 and 1694, and in 1702, almost single-handed, fought a French fleet in the West Indies for five days. He died from injuries received in the battle.

[163](1705-81.) His chief battle was a victory over the French in Quiberon Bay (1759)—one of the most daring and successful actions on record.

[164](1750-1810.) The great friend of Nelson, to whom he was second in command at Trafalgar.

[165](1726-99.) His greatest exploit was a crushing defeat inflicted on the French, from whom he took six ships, on "the glorious First of June" 1794, off Ushant.

[166](1724-1816.) He won many naval victories.

[167](1697-1762.) Not only a great fighting admiral, but a circumnavigator of the globe. The story of his *Voyage Round the World* is still worth reading.

[168]Quoted from *Fighting in Flanders*, by E. R. Powell.

[169]A neutral state which receives in its territory troops belonging to one or other of the armies engaged in war, keeps such troops in its own hands until the end of the war, and must prevent them from escaping. It clothes and feeds them, and the expenses so incurred are made good at the end of the war by the Power to which the troops belong.

Transcriber's Notes:
original hyphenation, spelling and grammar have been preserved as in the original
Page 172/173, "slightly wounded The" changed to "slightly wounded. The"
Page 267, 'that he said.' changed to 'that he said.'"
Page 285, "Europe put togethe" changed to "Europe put together"

[The end of The Children's Story of the War, Volume 2 by Parrott, Sir (James) Edward]