THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

By Sir Edward Parrott, M.A., LL.D.

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CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

BY

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

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

VOLUME IV.

The Story of the Year 1915

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"*How sleep the brave, who sink to rest*
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

"*By fairy hands their knell is rung;*
By forms unseen their dirge is sung;
There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell, a weeping hermit, there!"

WILLIAM COLLINS.

The Sinking of the Bluecher—January 24, 1915.

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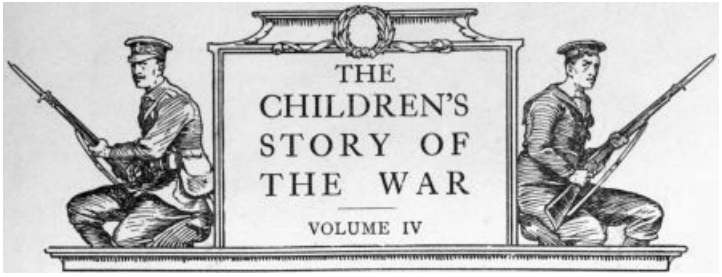


CHAPTER I.

SETTING THE HOUSE IN ORDER.

In this volume I am going to tell you the story of the war as it unfolded itself during the year 1915. It was a year of life-and-death struggle, during which two other nations were swept by the seething whirlpool into the waters of strife, and eight out of ten persons in the continent of Europe were living under war conditions. It was a year during which the three greatest empires of the world, and seven other Powers, fought fierce and bitter combats on five different battle fronts in Europe alone. It was a year in which some millions of men fell on the stricken field, and yet the issue of the vast and terrible struggle remained undecided.

It was a year in which the Allies, who were quite unready when war was forced upon them, strained every nerve to set their military houses in order; to enlist and train for the field their reserves of manhood; and to furnish themselves with those weapons and munitions in which they were deficient. It was a year in which millions of hard-earned money were spent every day, and the combatants piled up mountains of debt for future generations to pay off.

It was a year during which the Allies had good cause to thank God for the long years of peaceful industry which had given Britain great riches, and for the splendid navy which maintained for her the freedom of the seas. Britain's vast reserves of wealth enabled her to raise plentiful money for carrying on the war, and thanks to her navy her merchant ships were able to carry the products of her mines, mills, and factories to other lands. Great Britain alone of all the combatants was thus able to produce wealth in time of war, and to assist her sorely-hampered friends with timely loans.

The Modern Pied Piper.

(*From the picture by A. C. Michael. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)
You remember Browning's poem about the Pied Piper who drew the children after him by the magic of his music. This picture shows the pipers of a Highland regiment drawing men after them to the recruiting offices. "I rejoice in my Empire's effort," said the King, "and I feel pride in the voluntary response of my subjects all over the world. . . . The end is not in sight. More men and yet more are wanted to keep my armies in the field, and through them to secure Victory and enduring Peace."

During 1915 the British nation for the first time began to organize itself for warfare on a vast scale. It found itself forced to raise an army thirty times as great as it had ever marshalled before, and to equip millions of men with every weapon

known to the science of war. Moreover, it had to do this while the small forces which it had already placed in the field were struggling to maintain themselves against terrible odds. It was a work that called for every ounce of energy and determination that the Empire possessed, and it could never have been done at all had not the British people, as a whole, given willing support to their leaders.

The year was not many months old when it became evident that we could not hope to hold the enemy in check and drive him from his strongly fortified trenches unless we had an almost unlimited supply of big guns and high explosive shells. Early in the struggle the French had set their gun and ammunition factories working at high pressure, and they had taken good care that they should be fully manned with skilled workmen. Britain, on the other hand, had far too small a number of factories for manufacturing the vast supplies of war material which she needed, and many of her skilled workmen had been allowed to enlist and proceed to the front.

Committees were formed to organize all the workshops in the country capable of making weapons and ammunition, and vast supplies of machine tools, guns, and shells were ordered from the United States and Canada. While this was being done, a strong feeling gained ground that the government of the country should no longer be in the hands of a particular political party, but should be composed of the best men of all parties in the State. In May a National Government was set up, and a minister was appointed to devote himself wholly and entirely to the business of speeding up the production of munitions by every possible means in his power. Mr. Lloyd-George filled this post, and forthwith flung himself with great zeal and energy into the work. His first duty was to convince the nation of the great and crying need for more munitions. He pleaded with workmen to realize the danger, and to ally themselves with brothers in the trenches by working early and late and at the very top of their energy. Great posters appeared all over the country, showing a soldier and a workman clasping hands. Behind the one was a battery of big guns, and behind the other the smoking chimneys of a munition factory. Above was the legend, "We're both needed to serve the guns," and beneath the cry, "Fill up the ranks! Pile up the munitions!"

Unhappily, even in this time of great national danger, there were labour troubles. Masters and men quarrelled about rates of wages and hours of work, while their sons and brothers were dying at the front for lack of shells with which to keep down the fierce bombardment of the enemy. Not until laws were passed preventing masters from making undue profits out of the nation's needs, and punishing workmen who kept bad time, was the strife allayed. The Trade Unions were persuaded to relax their rules, and gradually most of the difficulties were removed. Slowly but steadily the supply of arms and ammunition increased, until in the latter part of the year the shortage was overtaken, and it was possible to meet the enemy on more than equal terms. A well-known public man who visited the trenches in November was able to say, "For every shell which the Germans throw to-day, we are throwing five." "Mr. Lloyd-George's compliments," said a British gunner to the shell, as he closed the breech of his gun, "and there's plenty more where that came from."

Britain had not only to supply the needs of her own army and navy, but to help her Allies as well. Before the year was half over, the Russian supply of rifles and shells almost gave out. Russia, as you know, is far more an agricultural than an industrial country. She has no great number of machine shops that can be turned into munition factories, nor has she anything like the number of skilled workmen required to furnish her with the enormous supplies of war material which she needs. In May, when the Germans brought against her a tremendous force of artillery and machine guns, her shortage was so great that she could not resist, and was obliged to make a long retreat from Poland and Galicia. Many of her recruits had no rifles at all, and at one time the artillery of her Second Army could only reply to the incessant fire of the enemy with two shells a day!

The Russians strove manfully to increase their supply of munitions, and Great Britain and Japan gave them much help. By November they had increased their supplies to such an extent that they were able not only to resist the enemy, but to attack him. Some idea of the spirit shown by the Russian munition workers may be obtained from the following message which was found written on an ammunition box: "Do not spare the shells; there are plenty more coming, comrades. We are working hard to keep you supplied. Cheer up!"

Poor little Serbia had all along to struggle against a great lack of war supplies. Her factories were never able to give her more than a tithe of her needs. You will remember that, but for the ammunition which the Allies sent to her in December 1914, she could not have driven the Austrians from her country. In December 1915, when the Serbian army was driven into Albania,[1] it became entirely dependent for food and supplies upon Britain, France, and Italy.

Great Britain had not only to produce weapons and other munitions for herself and her friends, but she had to enlist and

train more and more men to fill up her ranks and to repair the wastage of war. While every other nation engaged in the struggle could force men to serve in the army, she alone used no compulsion, but left each man to decide for himself whether he would take up arms or remain in civil life. Great efforts were made to persuade sound men of military age to join the army. Every blank wall was covered with posters calling upon men to serve their king and country, and recruiting meetings were as the sands of the sea for number. But though the response was wonderful, it was felt that some better method of securing men was needed. Many people thought that all suitable men should be compelled to serve, but the Government was reluctant to change the system which had served the country's needs so well in former times.

The Minister of Munitions introducing the Munitions Bill in the House of Commons, June 23, 1915. ***From the drawing by S. Begg.***

"Three millions of young men have offered their services for their country; it depends upon us at home to support them with skill, strength, and every resource of machinery and organization at our disposal, so as to drive the conviction into the heart of nations for all time to come that those governments who deceive their neighbours to their ruin do so at their peril."

At the end of June a law was passed which enabled the Government to discover exactly what resources of men and women the country contained. All persons, male and female, between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five were required to fill up a form stating their names and ages, the number of those who were dependent on them, whether or no they were married, and what was the nature of their occupation. Early in October Lord Derby, who had shown great energy in raising recruits in Lancashire, was appointed Director of Recruiting for the whole country, and speedily he put forward a new plan for bringing in men. The registration forms were sorted out; those men who were engaged in Government work were "starred"—that is, they were not to be considered as available for the army—and the names of all other men between the ages of nineteen and forty-one were placed on cards, which were handed over to joint committees of the political parties, in order that a great national canvass might be conducted.

The canvassers used all their powers of persuasion to get men of military age and sound health to enlist in one or other of forty-six "groups," which were arranged according to the ages of the men, and whether they were married or unmarried. Men were permitted to enlist in their respective groups, and remain in civil life until their own particular group was called up. Courts were set up, before which enlisted men could appear and ask to be "starred" or transferred to some later class. Only those persons without whose services the business of the country could not be properly carried on could claim to be "starred." While the canvass was in progress the Government gave notice that unmarried men

would be called up before married men, and that if the unmarried men did not come forward in sufficient numbers, they would be compelled to do so. The canvass was successful—it resulted in the enrolment of very many recruits; but whether compulsion could be staved off by this system remained to be seen. Late in November it was said that Britain would have four million men in arms by the following March.

Money, as you know, is "the sinews of war." Without money, and a great deal of it, armies and navies cannot be arrayed, or kept in the field. The British Empire, according to the statement of the Prime Minister, has a yearly income of £4,000,000,000. This sum is vast, but so was the cost of the war. In March we were spending five millions of money a day. If you work out a little sum, you will see that one year of war at this rate uses up not far short of half the total money earned in a year by the whole British Empire. Of course, in war time the Empire cannot produce as much wealth as it can in times of peace. Large numbers of men are taken away from their work, and, instead of being producers, they have to be kept and fed by the nation. Thousands of factories are engaged in making war material for the Government, and they do not, therefore, add to the national wealth at all. Our overseas trade falls off greatly, because we need many of our merchant ships for transport and supply, because we cannot produce such large quantities of goods for export, and because we cannot trade with enemy countries at all.

In time of peace the goods which we get from other countries are paid for by the goods which we send to them, by the money which we receive from foreigners for carrying goods to all parts of the world, and by the interest which comes to us from money which we have invested abroad. Usually these three items not only pay for our imports, but give us a large profit as well. In time of war, however, we are in quite a different position.

At all times we must import much material from abroad. We are always obliged to import the greater part of our food and the raw materials for our factories. During the present war we have also been obliged to import large quantities of machinery and munitions from the United States. Our imports of goods always exceed our exports of goods in value, but in time of war the imports soar up to a great height, while the exports sink. For example, the excess of imports over exports during the first nine months of 1914 was 99 millions, while for the same period of 1915 it was 256 millions.

Thus you see that, while the war lasts, our exports, the profits on our shipping trade, and the interest which we receive from foreign investments are not sufficient to pay for our imports. In order to make up the balance, we must either draw on our national savings or run into debt. If we draw on our savings, we shall have so much the less money left for the expenses of the war. If we run largely into debt, we shall find ourselves heavily burdened when the day of peace arrives.

By the end of May the Government was seriously considering the all-important question of money, and before long was urging on the people the necessity of being as thrifty as possible, and of saving every penny that they possibly could. Speakers went to and fro pointing out that householders must avoid waste and stint themselves of foreign goods if the nation was to have sufficient money with which to carry on a long war. Those who saved money, and gave up the use of such things as had to be imported from abroad, were doing a patriotic service, and were casting the "silver bullets" with which the war was to be won. In many thousands of homes these wise words were taken to heart; but, on the other hand, many people who were earning high wages showed but little desire to save. Something was also done to lessen the enormous sums wasted on strong drink in this country every year, by restricting the hours during which public-houses might be kept open, and by confining the sale of spirits to certain fixed times. The King set a splendid example, which was largely followed, by banishing strong drink from his table altogether.

Probably you think that all this talk about exports and imports, and the necessity for saving, is very dull, and you are eager to hear of stirring deeds by land and sea. We shall come to them in good time; but I must claim a little more of your patience before I begin the story of the year's fighting. Always remember that when the money which a nation possesses, or can borrow, gives out, it must cease to fight, and must make peace with its foes. That nation wins which has money to continue the struggle when the resources of its opponents are exhausted.

How do we obtain money with which to carry on the war? There is only one place where it can come from, and that is from the pockets of the British people. In time of peace the money for carrying on the government is raised by various kinds of taxes. People with incomes above a certain sum per year have to pay to the Government so much money for every pound which they earn or receive from investments. Those who have a lesser income do not pay what is called income tax, but you must not suppose that they go scot free. Spirits, beer, tea, coffee, tobacco, sugar, cocoa, dried fruits, and other things have to pay a duty—that is, a certain sum is added to their price, and this sum goes to the Government.

In time of war, when the expenses of the Government are much greater than they are in time of peace, the old taxes are

raised and new taxes are imposed. In September 1915, for example, the taxes were raised some 40 per cent. Money is also raised from the savings of the people. They are asked to lend money to the State at a certain rate of interest, with the promise that the sum which they lend shall be paid back again in full at the end of a certain period. Of course, this interest has also to be provided by the taxpayers. Three hundred and fifty million pounds were borrowed in November 1914, but by June 1915 it was found necessary to borrow more money, and a loan of nearly six hundred millions—"far and away beyond any amount ever subscribed in the world's history"—was placed at the disposal of the Government. One feature of this loan was the attempt to get persons of small means to participate in it. Vouchers for 5s., 10s., and £1 were issued, and working men, and even school children, were encouraged to buy them. Unfortunately only about five millions were raised in this way, and later in the year other arrangements were made, in the hope of bringing in more money from the savings of the working classes. In September the people of the United States lent the British and French Governments one hundred millions, and this money was used to pay for some of the munitions and other things which we were buying from America.

War brought about many changes in our national life. We became a soberer people, and we refrained largely from those sports which are so dear to us in time of peace. Expensive entertainments were frowned upon, holidays were shortened or given up altogether, and many men beyond the military age spent their annual weeks of leisure in munition or farm work. Special constables were enrolled to take the place of the police who had joined the colours, and volunteer corps sprang up everywhere.

Women's Volunteer Reserve on a Route March in London. ***Photo, Alfieri.***

From the moment the war began, British women played a noble part. Not only did thousands of them qualify as nurses, and offer their services in the hospitals at home and abroad, but many of them became munition workers, ticket collectors, tram conductors, motor-car drivers, farm servants, and letter carriers. In every town and village there were work parties busily engaged in making socks, mufflers, mittens, etc., for the men in the trenches or for the wounded in the hospitals. The neglected art of knitting wonderfully revived, and women were seen plying the needles everywhere, in trams and trains, or at lectures and concerts. When the Germans first used poison gas against our troops, and the War Office asked for half a million respirators, wagon-loads of them arrived the next day. Girls' schools, women's societies, groups of friends and families buckled to, and in a remarkably short time the War Office was able to announce that no more respirators were needed.

Thousands of charitable societies made appeals for almost every war purpose imaginable. There were flag days in every town, and singers, actors, and lecturers gave their services in every good cause. The British Red Cross Society received the most generous support, while the many Belgian refugees in Britain were carefully tended, and, wherever possible, provided with work. Money was freely given by the public in every part of the Empire to set up hospitals and send nurses, doctors, and ambulances to France, Belgium, Russia, and Serbia; and even wounded horses were not neglected. One notable gift announced towards the end of November was the sum of £10,000 sent by the Canadian Government to assist in the upkeep of the Anglo-Russian hospital. In Great Britain many country houses were offered as hospitals and convalescent homes, and on the great sporting estates game was shot for the sick and wounded. Children gathered apples for the men of the Fleet, worked in the fields for short-handed farmers, and collected eggs and sphagnum moss[2] for the hospitals. There was no lack of ready and willing helpers for every good cause.

At this time of stress and anxiety the British nation learned the noble art of giving. There was scarcely a British household in the world which did not practise some self-denial in order to be able to send small luxuries and comforts to the men at the front, or much-needed help to the prisoners in Germany. Remote cottages in the Highlands of Scotland, lonely farms in the North-West of Canada, outlying homesteads in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa were thus linked together by the same generous impulse.

Queen Elizabeth of Belgium visiting a Hospital.

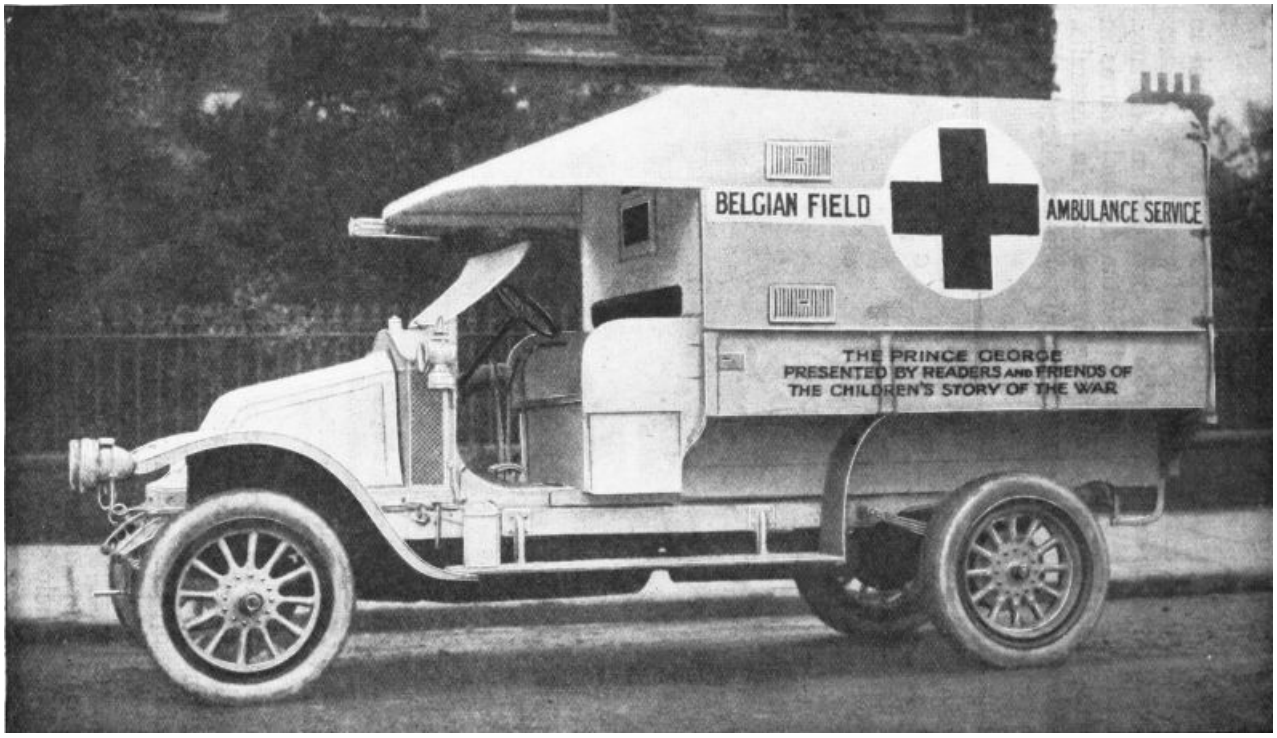
(*Photo, Newspaper Illustrations, Ltd.*)
Queen Elizabeth is patron of the Belgian Field Hospital, to which the readers and friends of *The Children's Story of the War* have presented a motor ambulance.

While I am speaking of the noble way in which our people, far from the din of strife, ministered to the gallant men who were fighting their battles, I must not neglect the small but very useful effort made by the readers of these pages and their friends. While our third volume was in the course of serial issue, it was suggested that our readers should combine in some practical work of war charity. Then came the questions, Whom shall we help? and, How shall we help?

It was well known that the story of how poor little Belgium had been set upon by the great bully, Germany, and how her gallant sons had fought and suffered and died for us, had strongly moved the hearts of children. For this reason it was decided that the Belgian soldiers who were still struggling bravely, in the last bit of their native land that was left to them, should be assisted. They were terribly poor, and they had no money with which to set up hospitals and buy ambulances for their wounded. A number of devoted British doctors and nurses had established a hospital for the Belgian soldiers who had been stricken down in battle. Their hospital—the Belgian Field Hospital—was the only one on a proper footing which was caring for the wounded soldiers of our noble little ally. What better and finer work could we do than set about collecting money to provide this hospital with a motor ambulance?

As soon as the object of our effort was decided upon, a letter was written to her Majesty the Queen, asking her to permit

the motor ambulance to be named after Prince George, to whom these pages are dedicated. The Queen, who nobly devotes herself to every good work, was graciously pleased to express her warm interest in our effort, and to permit us to inscribe Prince George's name on the ambulance. Then an appeal was printed and inserted in successive parts of *The Children's Story of the War*.



The "Prince George" Motor Ambulance.

Our readers will be gratified to see this photograph of the ambulance which they and their friends have presented to the Belgian Field Hospital. It is a 15.9 Whitlock Motor Ambulance Express, specially constructed for field service, and can be adapted either to carry four stretcher cases, or two stretcher cases and four sitting cases, or may be used as an omnibus for eight persons. Its cost complete with four stretchers is £418.

The appeal was issued on 4th September, and on 6th September money began to flow in. Our first contribution came from Prince George. Collecting papers were returned from every part of the United Kingdom and Canada, and even from Ferrol in Spain, and from the West Indies. Most of the money consisted of the pence and halfpence of the children themselves. An infant school in a very poor part of London sent 298 farthings as its contribution, while a school of poor little blind children sent a sum which represented much self-denial. Day-school and Sunday-school collections were taken up; one generous vicar gave a church offertory in aid of the fund; lectures were delivered to help it, and on no single day for many weeks did the tide of money cease to flow. Many of our collectors wrote letters expressing their pleasure at being able to help, and sending us best wishes for the success of the scheme. When it is stated that £450 were raised by more than 11,000 subscribers, it will be seen how small the individual contributions must have been.

Towards the end of November sufficient money was in hand to warrant us in offering an ambulance to the Committee of the Belgian Field Hospital. The following reply was received:—

> "*I am directed by Lord Sydenham and the Committee of the Belgian Field Hospital to thank you most cordially for your splendid efforts, which have met with so much success, in raising funds to provide this hospital with a motor ambulance. We most gratefully accept the gift.*"

The "Prince George" Motor Ambulance. Interior arranged for four Stretcher Cases.

Lord Sydenham, the president of the hospital, also wrote a special letter of thanks, in which he said, "*It is splendid of the readers of 'The Children's Story of the War' to have subscribed so large a sum.*"

Our warmest thanks are due to all who have in any way helped to make the scheme a success. We know that we shall have the unspoken gratitude of many wounded Belgians; but we did not set about this work in order to win gratitude. We wanted to be a real help to those who have helped us. We know in our hearts that we have done a little act of mercy and kindness, and that is a reward which we are all entitled to enjoy.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOSS OF THE "FORMIDABLE."

The new year opened with a naval disaster. On 31st December eight vessels of the Channel Fleet left Sheerness for a cruise in the English Channel, and by three o'clock on the morning of 1st January were crossing the fishing-ground not far from the Start Lighthouse. The ships were steaming at a moderate speed and in a single line, the rearmost ship being the *Formidable*, a pre-Dreadnought of 15,000 tons, and a sister ship to the *Bulwark*, which had been mysteriously blown up at Sheerness in the preceding November. The sea was rough, the moon was shining brightly, and a cold, piercing wind was blowing.

Soon after three o'clock the dull roar of an explosion was heard on the starboard side of the *Formidable*, and was followed shortly afterwards by another. The ship shook from stem to stern, and a cloud of black smoke and coal dust arose. She had been struck fore and aft by two torpedoes discharged by a German submarine. At once she began to list heavily to starboard; there were gaping holes in her side, and it was evident that she could not remain afloat very long.

There was not the slightest sign of panic on board the doomed ship. Captain Loxley, one of the ablest of our younger sailors, was on the bridge, setting an example to his crew of cool courage and utter forgetfulness of self. The water-tight doors were closed, the men were piped to quarters, and telephone bells were set ringing all over the ship to give warning of danger. Captain Loxley might easily have called upon his consorts to come to his rescue, but he knew that the submarine which had discharged the fatal torpedoes was still lurking hard by; so he signalled to his sister ships, "Stand off; submarines about."

A bugle rang out, and the men below sprang from their hammocks and rushed upon deck, some of them only half clad. They fell into rank on the sloping deck, and Captain Loxley gave his orders as calmly as though his ship were riding at anchor in harbour. He was smoking a cigarette, and his favourite old terrier Bruce was standing by his side. He was heard to say: "Steady, men; it's all right. No panic; keep cool; *be British*." Everything of wood that might help the men in the water was flung overboard, and finally the captain gave the order, "Every man for himself!" A survivor saw him standing with folded arms as the ship went down.

Captain Loxley giving his Last Order as the "Formidable" went down.

(***From the picture by C. M. Padday. By permission of The Illustrated London News.***)

As the *Formidable* was listing badly to starboard, it was not possible to launch boats on the port side. Owing to the rough sea a cutter was stove in; but the men stuffed their jumpers into the hole, and bailed out the water with their boots. A barge fell perpendicularly from the davits, and threw the crew into the sea. Meanwhile, the stokers had drawn all the fires and had shut off steam, so that when the ship went down there was no boiler explosion. By this time it was clear that all could not be saved. Many of the crew knew that their last hour had come. One of the survivors thus described the scene on the decks as the *Formidable* sank into the waves:—

> "On one part of the ship where the men could see there was no hope, all eyes were turned upward to the flagstaff, and then the Old Jack was saluted for the last time. The last impression of the scene left on my mind was a long line of saluting figures disappearing below the sky-line. At least half of the men got clear of the ship, but many must have been lost while waiting for rescue. It was almost dark at the time, and the water was icy cold."

Let me tell you how a bluejacket nobly gave his life for another as the ship was sinking. You shall hear the story in the words of the man who owed his life to his comrade's splendid generosity. "When everything had been done to save the *Formidable*, the boats came alongside and took off as many as possible. There were five boats, and two were swamped. All the boats had left the ship when the crew of one cried, 'Room for one more.' Two of us tossed for it, and the other chap won; but he said, 'You have got parents; I haven't. Go on—jump for it.' I did so. I had to swim for it, but I was saved."

The men in the leaking cutter, after being tossed and buffeted by the sea, drenched to the skin by the waves, and numbed by the bitter wind, were picked up by the Brixham fishing smack *Providence* about fifteen miles from Berry Head. The *Providence*, which was owned and skippered by William Pillar, was running before the gale to Brixham for shelter, but off the Start found herself obliged to heave to owing to the force of the wind. Just then one of the crew noticed a cutter tossing under the lee. An oar had been hoisted, and from it a sailor's scarf was flying as a signal of distress.

The cutter was drifting towards the smack, and every now and then was lost to sight amidst the heaving waves. Four times did the gallant smacksmen try to get a rope to the boat, while the skipper at the helm manoeuvred his little vessel with great skill. At last a small warp was thrown from the smack, and was caught by the men on board the cutter. By means of the capstan the rope was hauled in, and the cutter was brought up on the lee. The rescued sailors jumped on board; but even in the act of doing so they were in great peril, for the seas at times were rising thirty feet above the deck of the smack. The work of rescue occupied half an hour. Seventy-one men, including two officers, were thus saved.

All were on board the smack by one o'clock, and a course was shaped for Brixham. Before long the *Providence* fell in with a tug, which took her in tow and brought her safely to harbour. The residents of Brixham gave blankets, coats, and boots to the survivors, and provided them with comfortable quarters. Many of the men were utterly exhausted. For hours they had been battling with the heavy winter seas, which had almost continuously washed over them, and they had hoped against hope until the brown sails of the *Providence* had providentially come in sight.

One of the *Formidable's* boats came unaided to the shore. After tossing about for twenty-two hours in a raging sea, it drifted with the tide into Lyme Regis, with forty men on board. Nine of her crew had died of exposure, and had been buried at sea. A light cruiser also picked up some of the *Formidable's* men; but when the final reckoning was made, only 201 had been saved out of a ship's company of well-nigh 800 souls.

The splendid seamanship of Skipper Pillar, and the great courage and devotion of his crew, greatly impressed the country. On 8th February he and his men attended at Buckingham Palace, where the King pinned the silver medal for gallantry on their breasts, and handed them the money rewards which had been bestowed upon them by the Admiralty. The King addressed them in the following words:—

> "I congratulate you most heartily on your gallant and heroic conduct. It is indeed a great feat to have saved seventy-one lives. I realize how difficult your task must have been, because I know myself how

arduous it is to gybe[3] a vessel in a heavy gale."

Amongst the crew of the *Providence* was Daniel Taylor, an apprentice. In reply to the King, he said that he had been at sea for just over twelve months, and that he was seventeen years of age. The King observed, "You are small for your age, but you have taken part in a very gallant deed, and I congratulate you." Some time later, Skipper Pillar was given a commission in the Royal Navy.

I must not close this account of the disaster without dwelling for a moment upon the manner in which Captain Loxley went down with his ship. The history of the British navy is full of stories of cool, calm courage and selfless devotion in the face of death; and it is good to know that the sailors of our Navy are as true as ever to the spirit of those who built up its glorious fame in years gone by. On the very verge of doom, when men's courage is apt to fail them, Captain Loxley showed no sign of flinching. In his last moments he thought only of others. He strove manfully to save as many of his crew as possible, and he refused to endanger the lives of his comrades in the sister ships by calling them to his aid. He went to his death like the gallant gentleman that he was; and his last appeal, not only to his crew, but to you and me, was, "*Be British!*"

How kind and thoughtful he was to others is seen from the following letter, which he wrote to his old nurse just before leaving Sheerness:—

"H.M.S. *Formidable*.

"My dear old Nan Nan,—I'm afraid that my Christmas present will be a bit late. I meant to have sent it off yesterday, but forgot. Anyhow, I hope it will arrive safely. My very best love and best wishes to you and William for Christmas and the New Year, and may we soon beat the Germans.

"We are having really quite a quiet time, but you never know when anything may happen. I was out at Malta when war began, but soon came home. Had three days' leave, and then came to this ship, where I am likely to remain for the present.

"Peter [his son] has gone to school, and is just home for his first holiday, which I expect he is enjoying just as much as I did; but he was much braver going to school than I was. Every one seems well at Gloucester, but I have only seen mother once, for about ten minutes, during the last two years. With much love, yours lovingly, Noel Loxley."

One word more before I pass from this tragic story. The loss of the *Formidable* clearly showed that the lessons taught by the sinking of the *Cressy*, *Hogue*, and *Aboukir* had not been learned. Our Navy had not yet fully appreciated the fact that the only way to avoid the peril of the enemy submarines is for battleships to steam at high speed, frequently changing their course, and always accompanied by a flotilla of guardian destroyers. The eight ships that sailed down the Channel on the first day of the year 1915 steamed slowly in the bright light of the moon. They were thus a good target for the enemy's submarines, and were, indeed, courting disaster. As the year went by the Navy learned its lesson, and learned it well. Before many months had passed our sailors were more than a match for the under-water boats of the enemy, and the time was soon to arrive when the German submarines were fearlessly hunted and constantly trapped.

CHAPTER III.

THE BATTLE OF THE DOGGER BANK.

Up to the 24th of January 1915 squadrons of the German High Sea Fleet had adventured four times into the North Sea. The first occasion was on 28th August, 1914, when the Battle of Heligoland Bight was fought, and the enemy lost three cruisers and two destroyers. On 17th October a squadron of German destroyers was encountered off the Dutch coast by a similar British squadron, and before long four of the enemy ships were sent to the bottom of the sea. Twice afterwards the enemy, greatly daring, left his fortified harbours and minefields; but on such occasions his object was not to fight, but to dodge the British fleet, and inflict "frightfulness" on more or less undefended coast towns. On 3rd November he shelled Yarmouth beach; but was very uneasy during his ineffective attack, and scuttled homewards immediately he was warned that a British fleet was after him. Even on this occasion he did not escape without loss: the cruiser *Yorck* ran on a German mine, and was sunk. This raid was followed by the attack on Scarborough, Whitby, and the Hartlepools, which I described at length in Chapter XXXV. of our third volume.

Elated by their success in killing the defenceless townsfolk of unprotected towns, the Germans now prepared for another dash across the North Sea. We do not know exactly what their object was. Some tell us that an attack was to be made on the Tyne or the Forth; others say that the enemy hoped to get one or more of his battle cruisers round the north of Scotland, so that they might prey on British commerce. Whatever the object may have been, Rear-Admiral Hipper, who was in command of the Battle Cruiser Squadron detailed for the work, knew that he would probably have to meet a British fleet. If so, he intended to run for home without delay, and to lure the British ships into a trap. He enlarged the minefield north of Heligoland, and gathered there a large force of submarines. He fondly believed that he could entice our vessels into this dangerous area, where his submarines, together with the seaplanes and Zeppelins which were in readiness on the island, would make short work of them. Such was his plan. We are now to see how it failed.

The night of Saturday, the 23rd, was foggy, and our destroyers scouting east of the Dogger Bank tossed all night on the waves, scarcely able to pierce the gloom for a hundred yards around them. Sunday morning, however, dawned sharp and clear; the wind had changed to the north-east, and had swept the mists from the seas. About seven in the morning the light cruiser *Aurora* sighted the German squadron off the Dogger. At once she signalled the news to Admiral Beatty, and opened fire.

The German squadron which the *Aurora* had sighted consisted of the *Seydlitz* (which flew the flag of Rear-Admiral Hipper), the *Moltke*, the *Derfflinger*, the *Bluecher*, together with six light cruisers and a flotilla of destroyers. The first three of the vessels named had a speed of nearly 27 knots, and were armed with either 12-inch or 11-inch guns. The *Bluecher* was an older and much slower vessel; she could steam 24 knots, and her main armament consisted of 8.2-inch guns. It was clear that in a chase she would have to be left behind, and thus would fall a prey to the enemy.

To meet this force, Admiral Beatty had under his command the great battle cruisers *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, and *New Zealand*; together with the *Indomitable*, four cruisers of the "town" class—the *Southampton*, the *Nottingham*, the *Birmingham*, and the *Lowestoft*; three light cruisers—the *Arethusa*, the *Aurora*, and the *Undaunted*; as well as two destroyer flotillas. His squadron was superior to that of the Germans in numbers, speed, and weight of fire.

The Dogger Bank, off which the Germans were sighted, is a great shoal almost midway between England and Denmark, and extending to within forty miles of the Yorkshire coast. Its length from north to south is about 160 miles, its breadth is 70 miles, and the average depth of water over it varies from ten to twenty fathoms.[4] South of the Dogger is a second and smaller shoal, known as the Well Bank. Still further south are deeps, such as the "Silver Pit," where the depth is as much as forty-five fathoms.

The Dogger is the chief fishing ground of the North Sea. During the winter the waters above it are alive with trawlers,

all engaged in reaping the rich harvest of the waters. Immense quantities of halibut, soles, turbot, brill, plaice, cod, haddock, and whiting are taken, packed in boxes—to be carried off by fish-cutters to the ports, or stored in ice until the trawler is ready to return home. Somewhere near the Dogger, probably on its north-eastern edge, the Germans were encountered. The naval battle which followed was not the first to be fought near the great shoal. In 1781 an English and a Dutch fleet met in these waters, and struggled fiercely; but the action was undecided, and the Dutch claimed a victory.

When the *Aurora* opened fire, Admiral Beatty's squadron, which was not far away, steered in the direction of the gun flashes. Immediately the German scouting cruisers perceived that a British squadron was after them they turned tail and fled to the south-east. Hipper did not wait to discover the strength of his opponents, but took to his heels at once. This seems to show that his real object was to lure the British ships into the position which he had prepared for them, and there engage them on his own terms. There were 120 miles of open sea to be crossed before the mine-fields were reached.

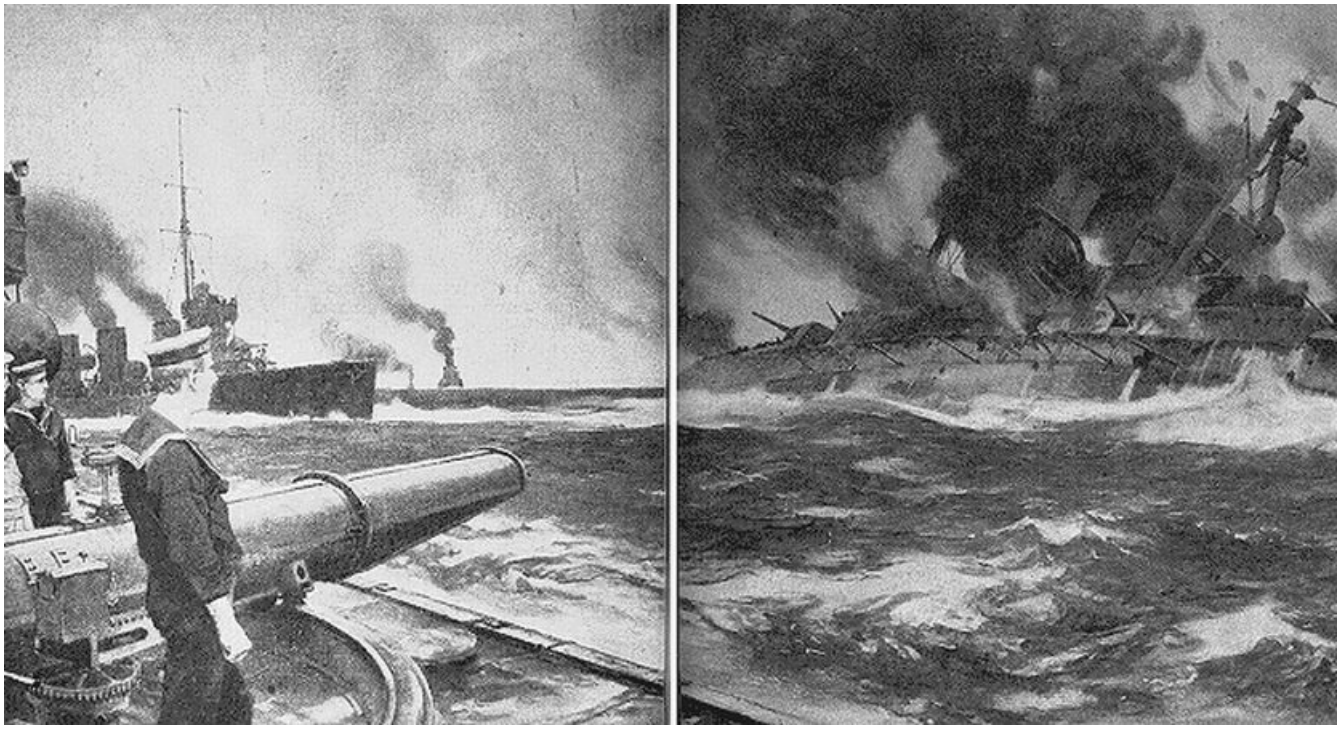
When the signal was made, "Seven enemy ships—four battle cruisers and three cruisers with destroyers—to the south-west," there was fierce glee on board the British ships. Every man was agog for the fight; all were eager to avenge the women and children who had been murdered so brutally at Scarborough and the Hartlepools. Every gun was manned with men who had vengeance in their hearts, and down below the "black squad" were striving with all their might to get every knot possible out of their engines. A commander was heard to remark, "One would think this was a game of football, the boys are enjoying it so much." The *Lion* and *Tiger* were soon racing ahead at thirty knots an hour, and were leaving the less speedy *Princess Royal* and *New Zealand* behind. At eight o'clock the situation was as follows: the Germans were moving south-east in line, with the *Moltke* leading; followed by the *Seydlitz* and the *Derfflinger*, the *Bluecher* bringing up the rear. Their destroyers were on the starboard beam, and their light cruisers ahead. Close upon them were the British destroyers and the light cruisers, which now crossed to the port side in order that their smoke might not hide the big German ships from the British gunners. The *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, *New Zealand*, and *Indomitable* did not follow directly behind the German ships, lest the enemy should throw out mines, but held on a parallel course to the westward.

By nine o'clock the *Lion* was within 11½ miles of the *Bluecher*. She fired a shot which fell short, but when the squadrons were ten miles apart she got her first blow home. Do you realize what this means? At ten miles the *Bluecher* appeared no bigger than a pin point, and she was moving at the rate of thirty miles an hour across the sea. You will agree that the British gunnery must have been superb for hits to be made under these conditions.

Soon the *Lion* overhauled the slow *Bluecher*, and in passing gave her a broadside which caused frightful damage. The *Lion's* quarry, however, was further ahead; and as she began to engage the *Derfflinger*, the *Tiger* began to hit out at the *Bluecher*. She also passed by, and the *Princess Royal*, the *New Zealand*, and the *Indomitable* in turn turned their guns on the rearmost ship of the German line, while the leading British ships were engaging the foremost ships of the enemy. At half-past nine the situation was as shown in the diagram on the next page.

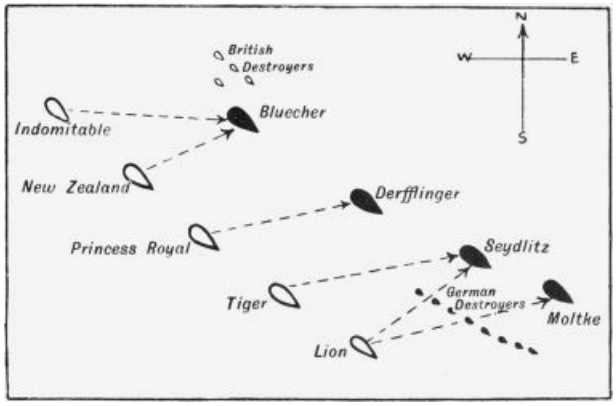
As early as a quarter to ten the *Bluecher* began to show signs of the heavy punishment inflicted on her. It was now evident that she was doomed. She had been abandoned by her speedier consorts, and her end was only a matter of time. By eleven o'clock the *Seydlitz* and the *Derfflinger* were on fire; the *Bluecher* had fallen behind, and was being mercilessly pounded by the *Indomitable*.

Meanwhile, the German destroyers had attempted an attack, but had been driven off by the British destroyers. Shortly afterwards the German destroyers got between the *Lion* and the *Tiger* and the leading enemy ships, and began to raise huge volumes of smoke, so as to screen the targets from the British gunners. Under cover of this smoke the Germans changed course, and made a half-turn to the north. Again the enemy destroyers attacked at close quarters, hoping to torpedo the *Lion* and the *Tiger*. They were, however, driven off by the 4-inch guns of our battle cruisers.



The Sinking of the German Dreadnought "Bluecher," during the Battle of the Dogger Bank, fought on January 24, 1915.

And now while the chase continues, we must return to the *Bluecher*, which had made a gallant fight, but was nearing her end. Ship after ship had turned its guns upon her with terrible effect: her upper works had been smashed to atoms, and practically every gun which she possessed had been put out of action. Shot and shell had rained upon her, and she was burning furiously.



Battle of January 24, 1915—9.30 a.m.

"We were under fire first in the action and last," said a German survivor. "Almost every British ship flung shot and shell at us. It was awful. I have never seen such gunnery, and hope that as long as I live I never shall. We could not fight such guns as the British ships had, and soon we had no guns with which to fight anything. Our decks were swept by shot, and the guns were smashed and lying in all directions, their crews wiped out. One terrible shell from a big gun I shall never forget. It burst right in the heart of the ship, and killed scores of men. It fell where many men had collected, and killed practically every one of them. We all had our floating equipment, and we soon needed it. One shell killed five men quite close to me, and it was only a matter of time when nothing living would be left upon the ship, if she continued to float. When we knew that we were beaten, and that our flag was not to come

down, many of us were praying that the ship would sink, in order that no more men would be killed. We would rather trust to the British picking us up after our ship had sunk than to their missing us with those terrible guns so long as she kept afloat."

About noon a British destroyer, the *Meteor*, torpedoed the *Bluecher*, and she began to sink. Here is an officer's description of the final scene:—

"She heeled completely over, and sank in eight and a half minutes, hundreds of men clambering over her side, and standing there, just as if it were the upper deck, waiting for the final plunge. But there was no plunge. Slowly and slowly she sank, and as she went down some were sliding into the sea, others taking running leaps. A few seconds more, and there was no sign of her left, except her dead and living clustered in the water together. We were about three hundred yards away, and watched her go down, and I was particularly struck with the ease and slowness with which she sank. Not till the waves had almost entirely closed over her did the bow heave slightly out of the water, and she disappeared stern first."

The *Bluecher* went to her doom with her flag flying. Some of the crew, while waiting the order to leap into the water, sang "*Die Wacht am Rhein*." Officers were seen to shake hands and link arms together, and thus sink into their watery grave. Though the Germans had made no attempt to save the crews of the *Monmouth* and the *Good Hope* during the fight off Coronel, and though our men were furious at the fiendish work done by the German cruisers at Scarborough and the Hartlepools, they began the work of rescue at once. Torpedo boats and pinnaces rushed to the scene to pick up survivors, and light cruisers stood by to help.

"A cry of 'Jump!' went up from the deck of the *Arethusa*, and in a few seconds the sea was dotted thickly with men swimming for their lives. Most of them were equipped with a lifebelt of inflated rubber, and this supported them in the water until the British boats were able to pick them up. Among them were men who had been wounded. The faces of all were blackened with smoke, and in some cases the nerve of the men had almost completely broken down in face of the severe ordeal through which they had passed. Their joy at escaping destruction found expression in many ways. The officers, of whom eight were taken aboard the *Arethusa*, offered their rings, watches, and money to the British sailors. Our men wished for no reward for performing a humane duty; but the officers pressed the gifts upon them, saying, 'You have saved our lives; take these as little mementos.' One of them, speaking quite good English, said, with a sigh of relief, 'It's been a terrible time, and I am jolly glad it's all over.'"

About one hundred and twenty men were saved from the *Bluecher*, and more would have been picked up but for the German aircraft, which by this time had arrived from Heligoland. To the intense anger of our sailors, a seaplane and a Zeppelin now began dropping bombs upon the rescue parties. They were careful to give a wide berth to those vessels which were armed with the latest anti-aircraft guns, and confined their attacks to the destroyers, which promptly scattered and then proceeded to drive them off. The airmen, no doubt, thought that the *Bluecher* was a sinking British ship, and this may have given rise to the absurd tale, which was readily believed in Germany, that one, at least, of our battle cruisers had been sunk.

We must now return to the leading ships of the British squadron. Shortly after the Germans had changed course, Admiral Beatty himself sighted the periscope of a submarine on the starboard bow of the *Lion*, and promptly turned to port to avoid it. At this time the flagship, though she had been under much fire, had suffered but little. At three minutes past eleven, however, she was struck in the bow by a chance shot, which damaged her feed tank. According to German accounts, the *Lion* was then about seventy miles from Heligoland. The accident, for it was no more, disabled the *Lion*. She had to reduce speed and fall out of the line. Admiral Beatty at once called up the destroyer *Attack*, and in it proceeded full speed in pursuit of the German squadron.

The *Lion* moved away to the north-west, and in the afternoon her engines began to give serious trouble. The *Indomitable*, which had by this time settled with the *Bluecher*, took the *Lion* in tow, and after some hours of great anxiety brought her safely to port. The towing home of the *Lion* by the *Indomitable* was a very fine feat of seamanship.

She could only proceed at five knots an hour, and at this snail's pace was a fair target for submarines. None, however, dared attack her; for she bristled with torpedo defence guns, and was surrounded by destroyers.

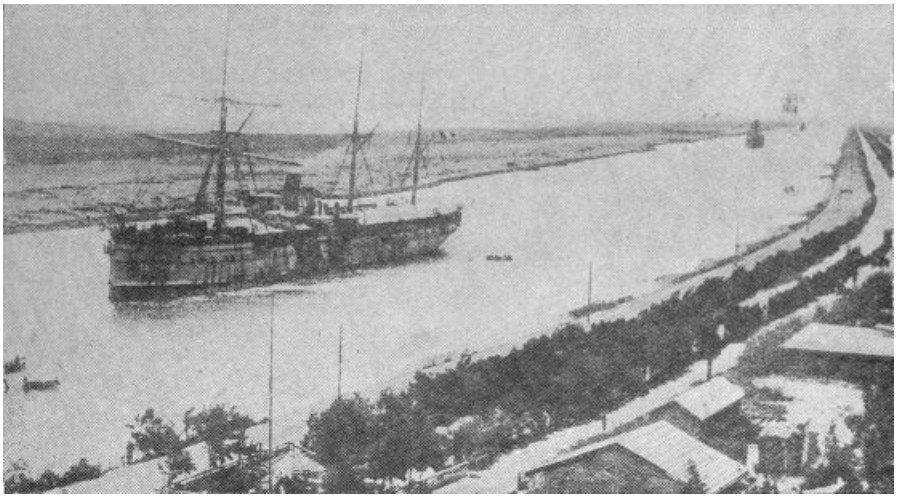
By twenty minutes past twelve the *Attack* overtook the *Princess Royal*, on which Admiral Beatty hoisted his flag. He now discovered that his squadron had broken off the fight, and was retiring northwards. We do not know exactly why the enemy was not followed up; but as the British ships were then only forty miles from the minefield, it is probable that the admiral in temporary command thought that his vessels would be endangered if he proceeded any further. After orders had been given to clear away and make for port, the grimy stokers of the *Princess Royal* swarmed on deck and greeted Admiral Beatty with a shout of "Well done, David!"

Only by sheer good luck did any of the German ships escape. Had the *Lion* not been disabled, or had the squadron included another battle cruiser, it is probable that none of the German ships would have reached home to tell the tale. There was much disappointment in Britain when it was known that only the slowest and weakest of the German Dreadnoughts had been accounted for. Our losses were few: only fourteen men had been killed and six wounded; no British vessel had been lost; the *Lion* had been hit fifteen times, and the *Tiger* eight times, but the damage was soon repaired, and when a party of journalists visited the ships in the following October they could not see the scars of battle until they were pointed out. The Germans lost the *Bluecher*; the *Seydlitz* and *Derfflinger* were very hard hit, and many of their crews must have perished.

During the remainder of the year 1915 the German Fleet wisely remained in harbour. The German High Sea Fleet had become the Kiel Canal fleet, and nothing more.

There was great excitement in the Forth ports when the good news was received, and thousands of eyes were turned seawards to watch for the homecoming of the battle cruisers. Shortly after four o'clock the sound of cheering was heard. A moment later ringing "Hip, hip, hurrahs!" echoed from vessels farther up the river, and from the misty dimness of the upper reaches. "Got 'em this time!" said a smiling old salt on board a mine-sweeper. "Hark to the boys!"

A batch of about 280 prisoners, including the captain of the *Bluecher*, was taken to Edinburgh Castle. As they were marched through the streets of the city one of the men asked the officer in charge, "What place is this?" When he was told that it was the capital of Scotland, he smiled superior. "Oh no," he said; "Edinburgh is in ruins, and the Forth Bridge is destroyed."



The Suez Canal at El Kantara.

(***Photo, Newspaper Illustrations, Ltd.***)

CHAPTER IV.

THE TURKISH DESCENT UPON EGYPT.

Two days after the Battle of the Dogger Bank we learned that a Turkish force was advancing upon Egypt. Why were the Turks about to invade the "Land of the Nile"? First of all, because they believed that the fellahin[5] of Egypt were ready to revolt and join hands with them against the British. The Egyptians are Mohammedans, and are therefore linked with the Turks by the bond of a common religion. For three hundred years Egypt was part of the Turkish Empire.

As far back as the year 1517 Egypt became a Turkish province, and fell under the sway of the Sultan of Turkey. In 1798 Napoleon tried to found a great empire of the East, and invaded Egypt as the first step. He stormed Alexandria, and won the Battle of the Pyramids; but Nelson destroyed his fleet in Aboukir Bay, and he was forced to leave the country.

Bedouin Arabs—Advance Guards of the Turkish Army which invaded Egypt in January 1915. ***Photo, Central News.***

The Turkish pasha who ruled Egypt soon afterwards made himself independent of the Sultan, and his successor, Ismail Pasha, became Khedive or Viceroy. The overlordship of the Sultan was, however, still supposed to continue, though it grew more and more shadowy as the years passed by. Ismail governed his country badly; and when it became bankrupt, Britain and France had to step in to protect the interests of those of their subjects who had lent money to the Egyptian Government. What was called the Dual Control was set up in 1879, and Britain and France became the real rulers of Egypt.

The Dual Control lasted until 1882, when an Egyptian officer named Arabi Pasha raised a rebellion, with the watchword, "Egypt for the Egyptians." The French were unwilling to take part in quelling this revolt, so the British had to act alone. Alexandria was bombarded, and Arabi was defeated by Lord Wolseley at Tel-el-Kebir. Thus, the Dual Control came to an end, and Britain stood alone in Egypt.

Right well has Britain borne the "white man's burden" in the land of the Nile. When she began her work in Egypt, the only notion of law in the minds of the fellahin was the unchecked will of the "strong man armed"—

"The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can."

It has been said that Egypt requires two things for her prosperity—water and justice. Britain has given Egypt both water and justice. The laws have been reformed, and fair dealing between man and man is assured to the people. The taxes are heavy, but they are not unfair, and Egypt now pays her way. Schools and colleges have been opened, and Britain has striven with all her might to make the lot of the people happier and better.

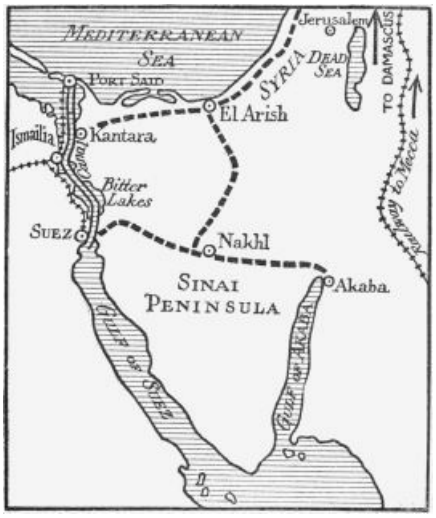
Britain has been equally careful to give the country as good a water-supply as possible. She has strengthened and altered the great dam or barrage which was built across the Nile at the point where it divides into the Rosetta and Damietta branches, for the purpose of storing up water to irrigate the Delta regularly throughout the year. The whole canal system of the country has been overhauled and greatly improved. At Assiut, and higher up the river at Aswan, huge bars of solid masonry have been thrown across the Nile, and stretches of the river have been turned into vast lakes. These dams store up sufficient water to fill the "summer canals" of Upper and Middle Egypt. Never before has the cultivated area of the Nile Valley had a supply of water for the fields during both summer and winter. Further, by conquering the Sudan, Britain has gained control of the upper waters of the Nile.

Though Britain has done so much for Egypt, we must not suppose that all the Egyptians are content with her rule. The great bulk of the people are quite satisfied to live and flourish under British control, but there are some pashas who long for the "good old days" when the people were at their mercy. Amongst these discontented persons German and Turkish agents have long been busy, trying to bribe them to rise against the British Government. By the beginning of the war they had won over the Khedive to their side, and in January 1915 they believed that the Egyptians were ready to take up arms against their rulers. As a matter of fact, the Egyptians as a whole had no intention of doing anything of the kind. They remained quite calm, even when the Turk was knocking at their gates. Very few of them wished to bring back the old days of Turkish tyranny and misgovernment.

Another reason why the Turks prepared to descend upon the land of the Nile was that, on 17th December 1914, we announced to all the world that thenceforth Egypt was a British possession. The traitor Khedive had been deposed, and a new ruler who was friendly to the British Government had been set up in his place. Up to this time the British had recognized the overlordship of the Sultan of Turkey. Now they did away with it altogether, and the Turks saw that the last vestige of their hold on Egypt had vanished.

In January our forces in Egypt consisted of Australians and New Zealanders, Territorials from Great Britain, Indian troops, and, of course, the regular Egyptian army. The Germans thought that, if the Turks made an attack on the country, Britain would be forced to keep large forces in Egypt, and that she would therefore be unable to strengthen her armies on the Western front. For these reasons, political and military, a Turkish expedition was prepared in Syria for the invasion of Egypt. It was 65,000 strong, and was led by Djemel Pasha, who cherished a deep hatred for Britain.

To reach Egypt from Syria this force had to cross an almost waterless desert, which varied in breadth from 120 to 150 miles. Across this dreary tract of rock and sand there were three routes, all of them difficult. The first ran from El Arish, on the Mediterranean coast, to El Kantara, on the Suez Canal. It was 120 miles long, and except for a few muddy wells, there was no water on the road. If you look at the map below, you will see a road crossing the base of the Sinai Peninsula from Akaba, at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, to Suez, at the southern end of the Suez Canal. This road was the old pilgrim route from Egypt to the holy city of Mecca. It is 150 miles long, and there are but few wells by the way. From El Arish you will observe another road which strikes south, and meets the pilgrim's road about midway between Suez and Akaba. This road runs through a dry valley, in which it was possible to lay down a light railway. Only by these routes could the Turks reach Egypt from Syria.



The Suez Canal and the Sinai District.

You will notice that before the Turks could set foot in Egypt they would have to cross the Suez Canal, which could not be turned, because it runs from sea to sea. If the Turks could seize the Suez Canal they would command our short route to India, and would be able to impede greatly the bringing of troops to Europe from the East. No doubt this was another of the reasons which led the Turks to make a descent upon Egypt. So important is the Suez Canal to the defence of the country that I must briefly describe it.

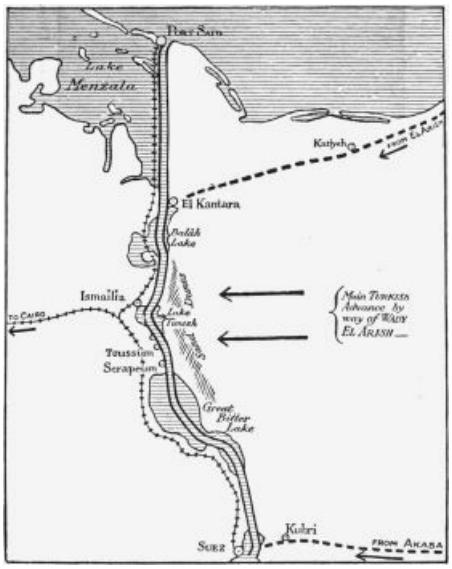
The canal is nearly 100 miles long—76 miles of it actual canal, and 24 miles of dredged and buoyed waterway through lakes. In all this length there is not a single lock! The canal varies in width from 80 to 120 yards, and it is deep enough to float the heaviest of Dreadnoughts. Begun in 1859, it was completed ten years later, at a cost of £16,000,000. It is not the property of any one nation, but the United Kingdom is by far the largest shareholder: it holds 35 per cent. of the shares.

Let us follow the course of the canal. For the first few hours the canal crosses the shallow arm of the Mediterranean known as Lake Menzala. Two long parallel embankments cross this so-called lake, which is very shallow, and is studded with rocks. When this section is passed, we have the red sands of the desert to right and left of us. Side by side with the canal runs a sweet-water canal. It is a simple ditch, and its course can everywhere be traced by the grass and trees which flourish along its margin. Except for this fringe of verdure, no vegetation but desert scrub can be seen.

At the station of El Kantara there is a ferry, and here one may sometimes see caravans of Arabs with laden camels setting out on a journey across the desert to El Arish. Later in the day we cross Lake Balâh, pursuing our way between rows of buoys. Another stretch of canal follows, and we cross Lake Timseh, and see away on our right the town of Ismailia, from which a railway strikes off westwards. Then comes another long, straight channel, with high sand dunes on the left bank. We pass the signal station of Toussûm, set in a pleasing frame of trees, and two and a half miles further on is Serapeum. We now steam across the Bitter Lakes, which are said to represent an old arm of the Red Sea. After these lakes are passed we enter the last stretch of the canal, and finally reach Suez, beyond which lies the Red Sea.

During our voyage we notice that the ground to the east of the canal is very flat, and that from the deck of our ship, or from the higher ground on the western bank, we can see far and wide over the desert across which the Turks would have to advance. Just south of El Kantara, and again between Lake Balâh and the Bitter Lakes, there are sand dunes; but elsewhere there is no cover for an attacker. The defenders of Egypt thought it probable that the Turks would make their descent upon the canal along the line of the sand dunes.

By 28th January small advanced parties of Turks had crossed the desert. One party, marching by the direct route from El Arish to El Kantara, was met and driven back by Gurkhas; another party, advancing by the road from Akaba, suffered the same fate. On 2nd February the main attack was delivered by about 12,000 troops, who had marched along the valley from El Arish towards the Sinai Peninsula. When they were about four hours distant from the canal they divided into two columns, and proceeded westwards. One column moved towards the sand dunes opposite to Ismailia, while the second and much stronger column pushed on towards Toussûm. Small flanking attacks were also made against El Kantara and Suez.



Fighting at the Suez Canal, February 2-4, 1915.

The advance of the enemy had been known for some days, and our troops were in position ready to meet it. They were full of confidence, and were quite sure that the Turks would never enter Egypt save as prisoners. As the sun sank in a flaming sky on 2nd February our patrols saw the enemy moving towards the hummocks of sand that fringe the canal. When night fell, the Turks pushed their main force through the scrub and dunes towards a gap which gave them an easy road to the canal opposite Toussûm. The Turks had dragged across the deserts in carts some twenty-five or thirty galvanized iron pontoons, each weighing about 850 lbs. When they approached the canal, the pontoons were shouldered by men and carried towards the water. By means of these pontoons, and a few rafts made out of kerosene tins with a wooden frame, the Turks proposed to cross the canal.

The first warning of the enemy's approach was given by a sentry of a mountain battery, who heard voices across the water. Soon the noise increased. The Turks were loudly encouraging each other by crying out in Arabic, "Brothers, die for the faith; we can die but once," and so forth. The defenders were on the alert, but they were in no hurry to fire. They did not even pull their triggers when the invaders were carrying the pontoons down to the canal. Not until numbers of the enemy were crowded together under the steep bank, and were pushing their pontoons into the water, did the machine guns and rifles of the British begin to rattle. Then the fire was deadly; the Turks were speedily mown down, and the pontoons, riddled with bullets, were soon at the bottom of the canal.

The Turkish Attack on the Suez Canal. *By permission of The Sphere.*

On the night of February 2nd, 1915, two Turkish columns, numbering about 12,000 in all, moved towards the canal —the front and smaller column against Ismalia; the second against Toussûm. Our illustration shows the latter attack in progress. To the right, the Turks are seen advancing under heavy shell and rifle fire, and vainly trying to launch boats. To the left are the Punjabis resisting the attack. The Turks were driven back at this point, and an attempt to cross at Ismalia suffered a similar fate. The Turks retired in good order, and unfortunately were able to march back to Syria without much molestation.

The Turks now lined the banks, and redoubled their efforts to get across.

> "They first tried to get men across by boats and by swimming, in order to hold a place as a bridgehead. Five boats filled with riflemen were rowed over; three sank with most of their occupants, and two touched the western bank. One boatload charged up the bank, but not a man reached the top. The crew of the other boat jumped into the water, and getting ashore, scraped holes in the bank with their hands to make a temporary shelter trench. Most of them were shot, and a few survivors gave themselves up as soon as it was daylight."

A little torpedo boat, with a crew of thirteen, dashed to and fro, firing point-blank at the enemy, and smashing into fragments the pontoons which lay unlaunched on the bank. The duel continued through the dark, cloudy night.

When morning dawned, the battle became general all along the canal. The enemy brought up field guns, and the British and French warships in the canal joined in the fray. A few Turks who had swum across the canal began to snipe our men from the rear, but they were soon disposed of. Those who swam across later were deserters eager to surrender.

At about eleven in the morning two 6-inch shells from the Turkish batteries hit H.M.S. *Hardinge*, an old Indian marine transport. One of the shells fell with a terrific crash on the bridge, almost severing the leg of Pilot Carew. He calmly looked down at his mangled leg, and, gripping the rail, shouted, "Bring me a chair. I am going to take this ship into port!" During the battle Pilot Carew received no fewer than eighteen wounds. The guns of the warships began to fire salvos, and soon the Turkish batteries were silenced.

Now that the pontoons of the enemy had been destroyed, the German commander had been killed, and the troops lying in cover had been shelled out of their hiding-places, the Turks realized that their attempt at invasion had hopelessly failed. Half-hearted flank attacks at El Kantara and Suez had been held up by our wire entanglements, and the time had arrived for our Indian troops to take the offensive. Excellent artillery and rifle fire cleared the greater part of the eastern bank, and by three o'clock in the afternoon of 3rd February the Turks were in full retreat. They had done nothing more than engage our outpost line.

Early next morning the British troops crossed the canal in force, and began the work of rounding up the enemy. Many Turks were found in a hollow, and some of them held up their hands when our men approached. As a British officer advanced to take the surrender he was shot down. A sharp fight with the cold steel followed, during which one of our officers engaged a Turkish officer in single combat and ran him through. Some 400 dead were counted, more than 600 prisoners were taken, and the total Turkish casualties were probably well over 2,000. For days following deserters drifted in, and by 8th February there was not a single Turk within twenty miles of the canal.

Unfortunately the bulk of the enemy, with baggage and guns, got away safely. A heavy sandstorm came on, and our Camel Corps were unable to follow up the beaten and dispirited enemy. Had this not happened, it is probable that the whole force would have been captured or destroyed. The Turks declared that their advance on the canal was merely for the purpose of discovering the strength of the enemy and the character of his defences. Whatever the object was, it was not repeated during 1915; Egypt remained unmolested for the rest of the year.

One incident which occurred during the fighting is worthy of special mention. An officer on board the torpedo boat which did such good work in harassing the enemy thus tells the story:—

"It was now 3 p.m., so we went back down the canal to finish off some boats which the Turks had abandoned inshore on the east bank. As the 3-pounder could not get on to these, we landed and blew up two. To get at the third boat it was necessary to go up a gully some fifty yards inland, where we could see the bow sticking up. The enemy held this bank, so, of course, we were under fire the whole time. I called for volunteers, and a sub-lieutenant and a petty officer landed with me in a dinghy. We left an A.B. in her, and darted up with our gun-cotton charge. I went ahead and got up to the boat, when I saw five Turkish soldiers on the other side about ten yards away. I stepped round the boat to have a shot at them, and fell into a trench full of Turks. You never saw any one so surprised in your life as they were, and I myself confess to a certain astonishment.

"I was too close to them to allow them to get their rifles on me, and, realizing that every second was of value, I gave one whoop and dived out of the trench. The sub-lieutenant shot a fellow who stuck his head over to pot me, and all three of us trekked back to the dinghy under a heavy fire at about thirty yards range. The Australian and Indian troops holding the west bank opened fire to cover our retreat, as did also the torpedo boat. It really seemed as if the air was full of lead—one long, continuous whistle overhead, and the sand all round flying up in spurts. I was still laughing from the comic expressions I had seen on the faces of the Turks in the trench; nevertheless, I got over the ground like a two-year-old. We had thirty yards to row to the torpedo boat, and, would you believe it? we all got aboard untouched. I did not blow up that boat, as I saw it had already been riddled with bullets from the other bank."

Men of "Princess Pat's" Canadian Light Infantry on the March.
Photo, Central Press.

CHAPTER V.

WINTER WARFARE ON THE WESTERN FRONT.—I.

Now we must return to the battle front in the West, and see how the Allies fared during the months of January and February. You will remember that when the year 1914 closed the rival armies were facing each other in trenches which extended over well-nigh 500 miles—from the North Sea across the flats of Flanders, through the coalfield of North France, along the ups and downs of the Oise Valley and the heights of the Aisne, through the Forest of Argonne into Lorraine, along every high valley of the Vosges, right through Alsace to within sight of Alpine snows. The cold and storms of winter had put an end to operations on a large scale, but scarcely a day passed without artillery duels and local attacks.

When General Joffre was asked to describe his operations during the winter months he replied, "We are nibbling away at them." He was not yet strong enough to pierce the German lines on a large scale, even if the weather had permitted him to do so. His policy was to wear down the Germans by provoking attacks in which they were likely to lose more men than the Allies. You know that the Germans believe in attacking, and that they consider it the best form of defence. In modern warfare the attackers always lose more men than the defenders.

Let us look for a moment at the position of the Germans in the month of January. They had overrun Belgium, and they held a very valuable part of North France; but otherwise they had made many mistakes, and had failed to accomplish what they had set out to do. They had aimed at Paris, but had never got there; they had flung away life like water to reach the Channel ports, but had failed to capture them; they had intended a short war, in which victory would be achieved before the Allies could meet them on equal terms, but they were now faced by a long struggle. Every day the Allies were bringing fresh troops into the field, and were making good their many deficiencies. Meanwhile the Germans, by their brutal treatment of the poor people who had fallen into their hands, had lost the sympathy of every civilized country.

Germany was now at the very top of her field strength. It was calculated that she was losing some 260,000 men every month, and that as time went on she would be less and less able to bring up reserves with which to repair the wastage of war. Experts declared that by the end of the year, or by the end of the following January, the supply of German reserves would fail, and the armies in the field would then begin to decline in numbers and in quality. On the other hand, the Allies had not yet come anywhere near their possible strength. The new British armies, which had been under training since September, would be ready in the spring. France was forming at least three new armies, and the Russians hoped to be able to equip their third and fourth millions and put them in the field some time in April. Great efforts were being made by the Allies to increase their artillery, and it was expected that in the early summer they would be able to strike a decisive blow. In these circumstances it was to Germany's interest to strain every nerve to win during the early months of the year.

It was thought by the Allies that the great German effort would be made in the West; but, as we shall see in later chapters, they were mistaken. The Germans launched their chief attacks against the Russians, who by the middle of the year were so woefully lacking in munitions that they were forced to retire eastwards from the Vistula for about two hundred miles; and owing to this misfortune the "big push" of the Allies in the West had to be postponed.

Now let us see what actually happened in the West during January and February. You already know that, until the new armies of the Allies were ready to take the field and the British supply of big guns and shells was greatly increased, they could do nothing but worry portions of the German front.

Such being the policy of the Allies, you will not expect to hear of big battles. The story of the fighting during January and February is the record of small things—"a sandhill won east of Nieuport, a trench or two near Ypres, a corner of a brickfield near La Bassée, a few hundred yards near Arras, a farm on the Oise, a mile in northern Champagne, a coppice in the Argonne, a hillock on the Meuse, part of a wood on the Moselle, some of the high glens in the Vosges, and a village or two in Alsace." A cartoon published in a German comic paper in January showed two French Staff officers measuring the day's advance with a footrule. No doubt the gains were small; but we must remember that our object was not so much to win ground as to take toll of the two million Germans holding the trenches, and by reducing their numbers bring the day of their exhaustion nearer.

We will begin our story with the Belgian-French forces on the Yser. They then held the bridgehead at Nieuport and the

whole western bank of the river. During January the Germans fiercely shelled the chief centres in the little bit of Belgium over which King Albert still held sway.

The German right rested on the dunes fronting the sea, and their big guns amongst the sandhills had Nieuport at their mercy. On 28th January the Allies attacked the Great Dune, which lies just east of Nieuport, and managed to win a good position from which they could sweep the east bank of the Yser and protect their own left wing. Nothing else of importance happened in this section for the next two months.

On the Ypres salient, trenches were taken and retaken during January and the first fortnight of February. On the last day of February, Princess Patricia's Regiment of Canadian Light Infantry distinguished itself in a brilliant little affair. This regiment, which consisted almost entirely of old soldiers, many of whom possessed medals for previous war service, had been equipped by Mr. Hamilton Gault of Montreal. Lieutenant-Colonel F. D. Farquhar was appointed colonel, and the founder of the regiment became second in command, with the rank of major. The regiment was named after Princess Patricia, the younger daughter of the Duke of Connaught, then Governor-General of Canada.

Canadians on Salisbury Plain. ***Photo, Sport and General.***

A portion of Stonehenge, the oldest monument in the British Isles, is seen in the background. It was ancient in the days when Boadicea called her kinsmen to arms against the Romans.

Princess Patricia embroidered colours and presented them to the regiment on August 23, 1914, when she wished the men good luck, and said that she should follow their fortunes with deep interest. In due course the regiment, which was generally known as "Princess Pat's," arrived with the Canadian contingent at Plymouth, and after training on Salisbury Plain, where most of the men had their first experience of the rain, sleet, and slush of an English winter, was dispatched to France, where the Christmas dinners were eaten within sound of the guns. By 26th January they had become inured to the hardships of the trenches, and had already suffered casualties. On the 28th of February, when they were holding a position not far from St. Eloi, about two miles south of Ypres, the regiment was ordered to capture a German trench. The following brief account of the affair is from the pen of a corporal who took part in it:—

> "On the last day of February, just before dawn, our company was ordered to attempt to force one of the German trenches. As we climbed over the parapet the enemy, by means of their magnesium flares, spotted us, and immediately opened up on us a withering machine-gun fire. We lost men—some of my best friends and comrades—but on we kept, plodding through a quagmire of mud, and when we jumped over the enemy's parapet into their trench, we had to tramp over dead men. The rest of the Huns, afraid of cold steel, fled screaming like children or went down on their knees and begged for

mercy. This, in true British fashion, was granted them."

The attack was led with great dash and spirit by Lieutenants Crabbe and Papineau, the latter of whom received the distinguished Service Order for conspicuous gallantry on the occasion. He was in charge of bomb-throwers during the attack. He shot two of the enemy himself, and then ran along the German sap, throwing bombs into it. As soon as the news of the success became known, congratulations were poured upon the gallant fellows. They were the first of all Canadian regiments to come into prominence, and they had given ample evidence of that gallantry which was soon to be exhibited on a larger scale, and to thrill the Empire with pride.

There were other similar successes on the Ypres salient, but the almost continual rain, snow, and fogs of the latter part of February made important attacks almost impossible.

The La Bassée Canal in Time of Peace.

CHAPTER VI.

WINTER WARFARE ON THE WESTERN FRONT.—II.

The heaviest winter fighting in the British section of the front took place in the neighbourhood of La Bassée. The German Emperor's birthday occurs on 27th January, and his soldiers were eager to present him with a success in order to commemorate the event. If you look at the map on page 52, you will see to the east of the hamlet of Cuinchy, south of the canal, a district marked "Brickfields." Still further east you observe a triangle of ground bounded by three railway lines. The British 3rd Brigade was holding a sharp salient in this district. Its left rested on the canal, its centre was pushed forward towards the "railway triangle," and its right was on the road running from Bethune to La Bassée. All the ground was covered with old kilns and smoke stacks, and a few hundred yards behind our first line we had constructed a "keep" of bricks.

On 24th January the Germans shelled our position, hoping to smash the canal lock, and so flood our trenches. About six o'clock next morning a German deserter came in to our lines and warned us that an attack would be made in about half an hour. Deserters had so frequently told similar tales that we took no notice of him. The man, however, had told the truth, and the half-hour had scarcely ended when a tremendous bombardment began. Our first-line trenches, which were held by half a battalion each of the Scots Guards and Coldstream Guards, were blown in, and before the damage could be repaired the Germans flung forward great numbers of men for an attack. After a severe tussle, in which our men used the bayonet with great effect, they were forced to fall back across the brickfields. The London Scottish and the 1st Camerons, with the remainder of the Coldstream and Scots Guards, were ordered up to hold the second line. These troops fought hard, and punished the Germans severely with rifle and machine-gun fire; but so numerous were the attackers that they managed to get in amongst the brick stacks and into the communication trenches on both sides of the "keep," and even to the west of it.

Much-needed reinforcements were pushed forward, and at one o'clock a counter-attack was begun. Together with the French on their right, our troops moved forward in short, swift rushes, taking cover behind piles of bricks or lying close on the soggy ground. Good progress was made on the flanks, but the centre could not advance. Late in the afternoon another battalion was sent up in support, and the struggle continued throughout the night. By the morning of the 26th we had cleared out the enemy between the "keep" and our trenches, and had partially recovered the ground lost in the morning. The Germans had paid heavily for their trifling gain. Fifty-three prisoners were captured, and over a thousand German dead strewed the brickfields.

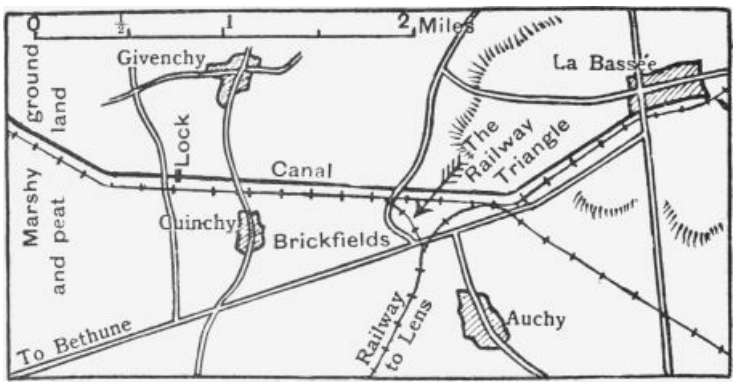
The Fighting in Givenchy Village.

(*From the drawing by Alfred Bastien. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

The mining village of Givenchy stands on high ground, and commands the highroad from Bethune to La Bassée. Our illustration shows the fierce fighting in the village on January 25, 1915, when our men in many cases fought with bayonets in their hands and even knocked out many Germans with their fists. In the above drawing, British troops, including Highlanders, are seen advancing from the left.

Meanwhile an equally severe fight was going on north of the canal. The Germans heavily bombarded the coveted village of Givenchy, which we had held ever since the second week of the preceding October. At 8.15 they swarmed out of their trenches, passed over our front trenches, and broke into the village, where a furious struggle raged in the streets and in the houses for more than an hour. "Our men," says Eye-witness, "in many cases fought with bayonets in their hands, and even knocked out many Germans with their fists. A story is told of one man who broke into a house held by eight Germans. He bayoneted four, and captured the rest, while he continued to suck at a clay pipe."

Five separate times the Germans attacked the north-east corner of Givenchy, but each time they were driven back with great loss. "On the whole," continues Eye-witness, "the 25th January was a bad day for the enemy in this portion of their line." The German birthday gift to the Kaiser was a heap of his own dead.



Sketch Map to illustrate the Fighting near La Bassée of the 1st Corps, January 25-26, 1915.

For the next ten days the struggle continued. On the 29th the Germans again attacked south of the canal, and tried to get into the "keep" by means of scaling ladders, but were beaten off with severe losses. On 1st February, very early in the morning, the Coldstreams were driven from their trenches south of the canal, and two counter-attacks failed to recover them. As the light grew better, our artillery came into action, and so accurate a fire was kept up on the lost trenches that the Germans could not hold them. At ten o'clock fifty men of the 2nd Coldstreams and thirty men of the Irish Guards, along with sappers carrying sandbags and barbed wire, rushed forward, and not only recovered the lost trenches, but seized one of the enemy's posts on the embankment of the canal. It was during this attack that Lance-Corporal Michael O'Leary won the Victoria Cross by a remarkable feat of gallantry which will be described in the next chapter.

> "Our men," says Eye-witness, "were enabled to take in flank one of the enemy's trenches to the south, and they fought their way along it, throwing hand grenades, until they dislodged the Germans from a considerable length. We thus established ourselves firmly in a good position on the canal bank and in the adjoining trenches. During the action we captured fourteen prisoners and two machine guns, also many wounded. Our losses were not severe, but the enemy suffered heavily, especially from our artillery fire. . . . Our men were in excellent spirits after the encounter, and on being relieved somewhat later, marched back to their billets singing to the accompaniment of mouth organs and the roar of guns."

About 2 p.m. on the night of the 5th-6th February the British and French artillery turned their heavy howitzers on the "railway triangle," and began a fierce bombardment. The boom of the guns and the roar of the exploding shells were clearly heard twenty miles away, and to those near at hand the noise was terrific. One lyddite shell blew a house bodily into the air; while others, exploding amongst the brick stacks, wrought awful havoc amongst the enemy. At 2.15 a.m. an attack was launched at a strong position held by the Germans amidst stacks of bricks. Our storming columns rushed the

position from three sides at once, and captured it with very little loss. Prisoners afterwards said that the noise of the bursting shells, and the thick clouds of dust which arose, prevented them from hearing or seeing our men until they were almost upon them. Other trenches were captured, and the next day the Germans tried hard to recover the lost ground. Our gunners, however, were too much for them, and succeeded in destroying one of their heavy batteries.

I have told you the story of these small fights to give you an idea of how the "nibbling" process was carried on. Dozens of similar encounters took place in various parts of our line, and in all of them the Germans lost more heavily than we did. You will notice that early in February our artillery was able to compete with that of the Germans. Every day more and more big guns and more and more shells were sent to the front. The time was soon to arrive when a big combined effort could be made to pierce the German line.

CHAPTER VII.

STORIES FROM THE BATTLEFIELD.

You are now to read some soldiers' stories of the fighting during the winter months. The first story tells how Algerian horsemen, by a skilful ruse, managed to get a footing in the Great Dune[6] between the Ostend road and the sea.

One morning six fine Arab horses strayed, as though by accident, between the French and German lines. The Germans did not fire on the horses, because they hoped to capture them when they came sufficiently near to their trenches. The animals, however, wandered off again. Towards nightfall on the following day twenty-four Arab horses appeared on the same ground. In the half light the Germans could only just distinguish the forms of the animals, and perceive that they were unmounted. They were preparing to seize them when suddenly a sharp cry was heard, and the horses, kicking up their heels, galloped back to the French lines.

Almost immediately twenty-four gray forms rose from the ground and dashed towards the German trench. They were Algerians, who had concealed themselves under the bodies of their horses, and had thus got close to the German line. They rushed upon the enemy, and a furious struggle took place. The Germans in the second line dared not fire for fear of shooting their own comrades. The Algerians managed to get a footing in the German trench, and shortly afterwards French infantrymen rushed up to their support. By ten in the evening a portion of the Great Dune had been won.

"Sniping" went on almost continuously during the winter. A Canadian officer thus describes his adventures while scouting in front of the German trenches:—

"Off I went, crawling through the sodden clay and branches, going about a yard a minute, listening and looking. I went out to the right of our lines, where the Germans were nearest. At last I saw the Hun trench. It was about ten yards from me. I waited for a long time, and then I heard some Germans talking, and saw one of them put his head up over some bushes behind the trench. I could not get a shot at him, as I was too low down. Of course, I could not get up; so I crawled on again, very slowly, to the parapet of their trench.

"It was exciting. I peered through their loophole, but saw nobody in the trench. Then the German behind put up his head again. He was laughing and talking. I saw his teeth glisten against my foresight, and I pulled the trigger. He just gave a grunt and crumpled up. His comrades behind the bushes got up, and whispered to each other. There were five of them. They could not place the shot. I was flat behind their parapet, and hidden. I just had the nerve not to move a muscle and stay there; my heart was fairly hammering. They did not advance, so I crept back, inch by inch.

"The next day, just before dawn, I crawled out there again, and found the trench still empty. Then a single German came through the woods towards the trench. I saw him fifty yards off. He was coming along upright, quite carelessly, making a great noise. I heard him before I saw him. I let him get within twenty-five yards, and then shot him.

"Nothing happened for ten minutes. Then there were noise and talking, and a lot of Germans came along through the wood behind the trench, about forty yards from me. I counted about twenty, and there were more coming. They halted in front. I picked out the one I thought was the officer. I had a steady shot at him. He went down, and that was all I saw.

"I went back at a sort of galloping crawl to our lines, and sent a message that the Germans were moving in a certain direction in some numbers. Half an hour afterwards they attacked the right in massed formation, advancing slowly to within ten yards of our trenches. We simply mowed them down. It was rather horrible. There were 200 of them dead in a little bit of our line, and we only lost ten.

"Our boys were rather pleased at my stalking and getting the message through. All our men have started stalking now. It is quite a popular amusement."

"The Three Musketeers" of Princess Patricia's Own.

(Painted by S. Begg from material supplied by an officer of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry present at the action. By permission of The Illustrated London News.)

"Princess Pat's Own" first went into the firing line on 5th January. The trenches in which they received their baptism of fire were only about a hundred yards away from those of the Germans, who subjected them to a very heavy bombardment. About the second or third night three of the men established themselves during the darkness on a mound a little to the rear of the Canadian position. They cut a couple of dug-outs in the base of the mound, and fortified the top with a few bricks, behind which they took cover. At daybreak they discovered that they commanded a very fine view of the German first-line trench, and of its supporting or reserve dug-outs, which were occupied by the Prussian Guard. There was no shell fire from the British at the time, and the Germans, thinking themselves quite safe, were strolling about between the dug-outs and the trench. The "three musketeers" on the mound opened a brisk fire on the Germans; whereupon they scuttled off to their holes like rabbits, but not before nine or ten of them lay on the ground, wounded or killed. All day long the men on the mound were under every kind of fire, but they "stuck it" without flinching, and in their turn kept the enemy from as much as showing a finger. When darkness fell they retired to their trenches. Only one of the men was hurt, and he had only a slight bullet wound in the hand.

Here is a strange story of how some British soldiers foolishly and recklessly risked their lives in order to settle a bet.

"Fighting had been very severe in front of one section, and during a lull an officer was surprised to see a number of khaki-clad figures fully exposed to the German bullets, should the enemy resume firing. They were peering into the trench, and were so deeply interested in what was 'down below' that they did not notice the officer's approach.

"'What have you got there?' he asked.

"'A dead German, sir,' came the reply.

"'A dead German! What on earth are you doing with a dead German?'

"Then he was told the whole story. It appeared that in the course of the attack the British soldiers had noticed a particularly tall and bulky Hun. When the fighting was over they began to discuss his proportions. He was now lying dead in front of the trench, and two of the men made a bet about his height and weight. To settle the bet, they crawled out

and risked death in order to drag the dead German in. He was found to be six feet nine inches in height, and to have a waist measurement of fifty-three inches.

"The officer gave the men a severe warning, and then asked how much the bet was. To his amazement he received the following reply: 'A bob, sir!'"

In a dispatch published by Sir John French during February he regretted that it was impossible for him to bring before the notice of the public many acts of gallantry performed by his men. Here is an account of a very brave deed done by a sergeant-major in the North Somerset Yeomanry; the story is told by a corporal of the same regiment:—

"I had a marvellous escape. A German bomb fell in the trench barely a foot from me. I did not see it coming, and nothing could have saved me, or Dick Moody, or the other fellows with us, had not Sergeant-Major Reeves made a dash for it. He picked up the bomb, pulled out the fuse, and threw it out of the trench. It was the bravest thing I have ever seen."

Later on, when our men became more used to grenade fighting, such incidents were of almost everyday occurrence. Over and over again men pounced upon live bombs, and hurled them back towards the enemy's trenches before they had time to explode.

On one part of our line the trenches of friend and foe were so close to each other, and they changed hands so often, that it was difficult to know at any particular moment whether they were held by British or by Germans. One night, after a fight, two British officers set out to discover whether certain trenches were occupied by their own men or by those of the enemy. They soon chanced upon a communication trench which seemed to lead in the desired direction. They walked down it, and came to a dug-out with a candle burning in it and German equipment scattered about. Thinking that the communication trench had been captured, they blew out the candle and pushed on. At length they reached a trench running at right angles to the communication trench. No sooner had they entered it than they were challenged sharply in German. Then came a shower of bullets, and in a moment the officers were rushing back by the way which they had come, with Germans close upon their heels. They floundered through the mud and dodged round the traverses, and, thanks to the darkness, managed to get back to their own lines unhurt, where they told their comrades how they had spent several breathless minutes in the enemy's fire trenches.

Now I must give you an account of one of the most striking deeds of gallantry ever performed by a British soldier. The *Gazette* of 18th February contained an announcement that the Victoria Cross had been awarded to

Lance-Corporal Michael O'Leary, 1st Battalion Irish Guards, for an achievement of such a character that, according to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "no writer of fiction would dare to fasten it on any of his characters."

At sixteen years of age O'Leary joined the Navy, but was discharged because he suffered with rheumatism. He soon recovered, however, and enlisted in the Irish Guards. After serving his time with the colours and passing into the reserve, he was accepted as a member of the famous North-West Mounted Police of Canada. The hard open-air life was much to his liking. All the patrol work was done on horseback, and he rode on an average thirty miles a day. As a North-West mounted policeman, O'Leary gave a taste of his cool courage in capturing two robbers, armed with revolvers, after a running fight which lasted two hours. For this feat he was presented with a gold ring, which he still proudly wears. The donor of it must have been a prophet, for he said to O'Leary when handing it over, "If you do as well on active service, you will win the Victoria Cross." At the outbreak of war O'Leary rejoined his old regiment in France. He was not then twenty-five years of age.

I am sure you remember the occasion when the Coldstreams were driven from their trenches near Cuinchy, and two counter-attacks failed to recover them. At ten in the morning of 1st February a desperate effort to win them back was

made by fifty men of the 2nd Coldstream Guards and thirty men of the Irish Guards, accompanied by sappers with wire and sand-bags. The Coldstreams went first. With fixed bayonets they rushed across the 200 yards that separated them from the German trenches. They were met by a heavy fire, which checked them a little; and then the Irish Guards went forward in support. O'Leary, fleet of foot, outdistanced his comrades. He had not gone far before he felt the ground give beneath his feet, and springing back, he saw a German bomb-thrower in a pit. He shot the man, and hurrying on to the angle of a barricade which he had marked all day, fired five shots and killed the five Germans who were holding it. Leaving his comrades to take possession of the barricade, he dashed towards a second position, sixty yards ahead, where a machine-gun section was frantically trying to turn its weapon upon the stormers. O'Leary, however, was too quick for them. A German officer had his finger on the button of the gun, and was about to release the hail of lead, when "crack" went our hero's rifle, and the officer dropped dead. Again and again O'Leary fired, and two other men fell, while their comrades, with white, scared faces, threw up their hands and begged for mercy. A few moments later and the Guards, with a wild rush through the flying mud, secured the position. "Lance-Corporal O'Leary thus practically captured the enemy's position himself, and prevented the rest of the attacking party from being fired on." He was promoted sergeant on the field.

The Great Exploit of Lance-Corporal Michael O'Leary.

(*From the picture by A. C. Mitchell. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

Sergeant O'Leary, V.C., had a great reception when he returned to London in July on leave. A demonstration was held in Hyde Park by the United Irish League, and the hero, who was presented with a purse of gold, made a recruiting speech, in the course of which he said, "There are many others who have fought and are fighting, who have attempted and have done more than I for King and country. I have had the luck." In his own country the sergeant was enthusiastically received, and was so lionized that he said he must get back to the trenches to rest. At a banquet to his honour in his native county he asked for lemonade, and when some one thoughtlessly pressed him to take wine, he refused, and said that he must "keep fit." Not only did he receive the Victoria Cross at the hands of the King, but the highest awards for valour from the French and the Russian Government.

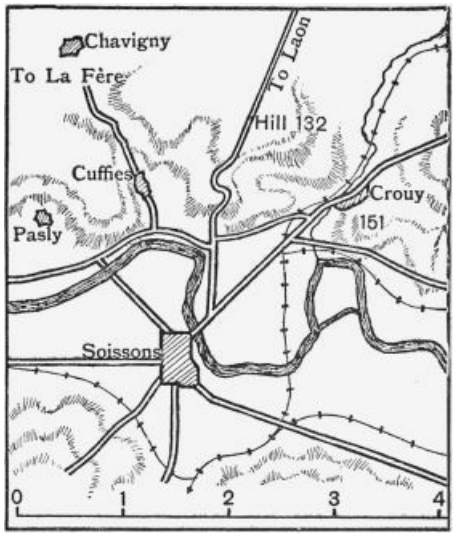
CHAPTER VIII.

THE GERMAN SUCCESS AT SOISSONS.

In this British book, written for British boys and girls, I naturally give the foremost place to the doings of British soldiers. We must, however, always remember that up to the middle of the year the British only held about one-twentieth of the Western battle-front. From La Bassée, through Arras, to Noyon, thence eastwards along the valley of the Aisne, in a wide curve round the fortress of Verdun, to the west bank of the Meuse, onwards to the Moselle, through Lorraine to the crests of the Vosges, and southwards to the borders of Switzerland—all this long and varied line was held by our French Allies. All through January and February they did not cease to nibble at the German trenches. In Champagne, in the section between the Meuse and the Moselle, and in Alsace, they were able to do more than nibble—they were able to seize many vantage points, and advance their front slowly but surely.

In January the chief centre of interest was in that part of the Aisne valley which lies to the north of the old city of Soissons.[7] You will remember that the Allies had captured the city, and the flat lands to the north of it, during the great advance in September 1914. Turn to the map on the next page and find the village of Cuffies.[8] On 18th January this village was in French hands, and so was the village of Crouy,[9] to the east of it. On the road from Soissons to Laon, and between Cuffies and Crouy, you will notice a spur of the plateau marked Hill 132.[10] To the south-east of Crouy there is another spur, marked 151. On 8th January the French made attacks on both these hills. They specially wished to capture Hill 132, because it would give them a gun position from which they could command the road to Laon.

In the drenching rain the French pushed forward, dragging their guns with great difficulty up the slippery slope. They carried three lines of German trenches, and were soon in possession of the hill. Meanwhile other troops had seized Hill 151. Though the Germans tried hard to recover the positions next day, they could not do so. Nothing happened on Sunday, 9th January; but on Monday, about noon, no less than two German corps, under von Kluck, were launched against the French, who were holding the hills. On the 12th the struggle grew very violent. The French were pushed off the eastern side of Hill 132, but with great difficulty they managed to cling to the western slopes.



During the four preceding days the weather had been very bad. Torrents of rain had descended without ceasing, and by the 12th the river was in high flood. It had been rising for days, and now it was swirling along like an angry torrent, threatening to carry away the only bridges by which the French could bring up reinforcements and ammunition. By the 13th all the bridges but two had been swept away, and the French decided to retreat across the river while they had the means of doing so.

They retired slowly and skilfully. Their batteries were withdrawn from the hills one by one, without letting the Germans know that they were being moved to the rear. The commander of one battery did not give the order to retire until the Germans were within five hundred yards of him. It was perilous and difficult work getting the guns down the steep slope.

The gunners man-handled them until they reached the foot, and then they were limbered up and taken across a shaky pontoon bridge which had been thrown across the river at Missy. Guns on the right and centre had to be abandoned, but not before they were rendered useless.

By the evening of the 14th the Germans had advanced their line until they held the whole of the north bank of the Aisne from a mile east of Soissons to Missy. By this time the French, who only numbered 12,000, had been reduced to half their strength, and they had lost about twenty guns. Von Kluck had begun well, and, under the eye of the Kaiser, he now made a great effort to capture Soissons. Had he done so, he would have been in possession of a railway junction and the best bridge over the Aisne. He would also have been able to force the French to retire from the whole line of the river.

The floods had not reached Soissons, so the French were able to pour reinforcements into the city. A great struggle took place at the village of St. Paul, on the right bank of the river, about a mile to the east of Soissons. The Germans advanced in dense masses, and won the village; but the French artillery speedily drove them out, and von Kluck found that he could advance no further.

The Germans trumpeted abroad this little success as a smashing victory; but it was of no particular consequence, for they had only slightly improved their position, and in doing so had suffered a loss of at least 10,000 men. It was not so much German guns and rifles that drove the French from the spurs which they had won as the flooding of the river. Nature had fought for the Germans, but still they could not "make good." Some writers thought that it was very clever of von Kluck to postpone his big counter-attack until his enemies had a swollen river and flooded fields behind them; but the fact was that he could not attack earlier, because his reinforcements were late in arriving. The Germans owed their success not to good generalship, but to good luck.

CHAPTER IX.

WINTER FIGHTING IN CHAMPAGNE, THE ARGONNE, AND THE VOSGES.

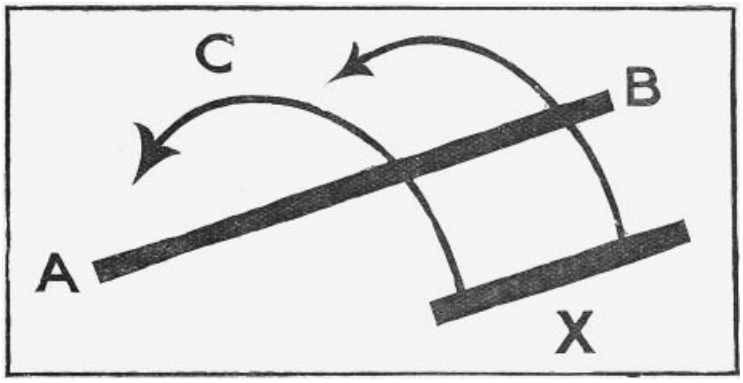
We now come to that part of the French front on which the most successful attempts of the Allies were made during January and February. You have already heard of the little river Suippe, a tributary of the Aisne. Between the upper waters of this river and the Forest of the Argonne there is a chalk plain, dotted with plantations of firs and crossed by rolling downs. In many respects it resembles Salisbury Plain, and for many years has been put to the same use. Before the war it was the great training ground of French troops and the scene of their yearly manoeuvres. The plain is sparsely populated; scattered farms and straggling homesteads are few and far between, and lack of villages means lack of roads. After heavy rain the whole district is a sea of shallow mud; but the ground does not become water-logged, and as soon as the rain ceases the ground dries very quickly. Operations during the winter were therefore possible. General Joffre decided to nibble more vigorously on this plain than elsewhere.

Look at the little map on page 70. You notice a railway running from Ste. Menehould,[11] on the Aisne at the edge of the Argonne forest, to Rheims. By means of this railway the French troops operating on the plain were supplied with all their needs. The Germans relied on the line which you see running from Grand Pré in the Argonne to Bazancourt. The object of the French was to nibble at the German lines in the hope of pushing back the enemy and seizing this railway. If it could be cut or commanded, the Germans would be obliged to fall back along their whole line. At any rate, a French advance towards the railway would compel the enemy to waste men and shells, and would force him to keep in the region large forces which otherwise would have been sent to the East, where von Hindenburg was badly in need of assistance.

I want you to fix your attention on the little towns of Souain[12] and Perthes,[13] and the farm of Beau Séjour,[14] all of which are marked on the map. Beau Séjour, you will notice, is about 3½ miles east of Perthes. At the beginning of January the French line ran through Souain, south of Perthes and south of Beau Séjour. Almost every day during January the French attacked the German positions. They won a hill to the north of Perthes, which gave them the best gun position in the neighbourhood, and on the 16th of February a general advance began. The Germans held a strong post north of the farm, on a ridge between two little glens. On this ridge they had constructed a fort, which was held by about 500 men.

The French attacked on a plan which was soon to become the regular method of puncturing the German lines all along the Western front. Let me give you some account of this plan—the only possible method of capturing the strongly fortified trenches of the enemy without a terrible loss of life. As you know, the first obstacle to an attack on a line of trenches consists of the barbed wire entanglements which are fixed up in front of them. The attackers are held up by the network of wire, and can be shot down in droves by rifles and machine guns. Then the trench itself has a strong parapet, with loopholes through which the defenders fire on the attackers. For infantry to charge the barbed wire while the parapets are held by an enemy is to court almost certain disaster.

Study the diagram on page 67. AB is a line of trenches to be attacked, and X is a line of big guns. These guns throw a shower of high explosive shells on to the enemy's trenches. So terrible is the explosion that the barbed wire is blown into a thousand fragments, the parapets are beaten down, the whole trench is utterly wrecked, and the defenders are either killed or wounded, or so stunned by the violence of the bombardment that they cannot make much resistance. When this is done, the gunners lift their sights and lengthen their fuses, and behind the trench create at C a curtain of fire through which no enemy reinforcements can possibly pass. Then the attacking infantry rush forward and occupy the wrecked trench. They work away with their entrenching tools, make a new parapet facing the enemy's second line of trenches, and prepare to beat off counter-attacks. Trenches are thus captured by gun fire alone. You can easily understand that advances made in this way will be slow. Telephone wires have to be laid, ranges calculated, and a thousand details arranged before an assault can be made.



If such an attack is to succeed, two things are necessary. In the first place, the attackers must have many big guns and an almost unlimited supply of ammunition for them; and secondly, they must bring up their guns at X unknown to the enemy, and take him by surprise. If he is able to see the big guns being brought up, he will fire on them before they can be concealed. He will also mass his own guns, and the affair will become an artillery duel on a large scale. Happily, in Champagne the French were able to mass their guns secretly. Their airmen had become so expert that they were able to beat back all the German aircraft that attempted to scout over their lines, while at the same time they could fly over the German lines without much hindrance.

Here is a description of such an attack as seen by a British observer in Champagne:—

> "Looking at the battle at a distance of about 2,000 yards from the enemy's lines, the stillness of what one sees is in marked contrast with the turmoil of shells passing overhead. The only movement is the cloud of smoke and earth that marks the burst of a shell. Here and there long white lines are visible when a trench has brought the chalky subsoil up to the top; but the number of trenches seen is very small compared with the number that exist, for one cannot see into the valleys, and the top of the ground is an unhealthy place to choose for sitting in a trench. The woods are pointed out, with the names given them by the soldiers; but it needs field-glasses to see the few stumps that remain when the artillery has done its work. And then a telephone message arrives, saying that the enemy are threatening a counter-attack at a certain point; and three minutes later there is a redoubled whistling of shells. At first one cannot see the result of this fire—the guns are searching the low ground where the enemy's reserves are preparing for the movement; but a little later the ground behind the threatened trenches becomes alive with shell bursts, for the searching has given place to the building up of a wall of fire, through which it is impossible for the foe to pass without enormous loss."

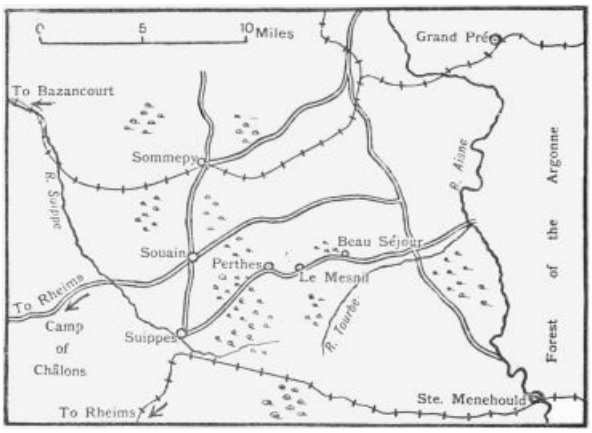
When a successful attack of this kind is to be made on a large scale, the work of the directing staff must be very perfect. Every trench in the line of attack must be thoroughly shelled at the same time. If certain trenches are left unwrecked, the infantry will be badly mauled when they move forward. Then all the guns of the attacking side must lift their sights and lengthen their fuses before the infantry reach the enemy's trenches, or the men will be caught by their own fire. Everything must work together like a well-oiled machine. A single mistake will be paid for by heavy loss of life.

French Infantry returning to their Quarters after driving the Germans from their Trenches near St. Mihiel.

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

The French infantry came back into their second line after the action with their bands playing and their colours flying. Their uniforms were covered with mud, and they were as dirty as they could possibly be. Their comrades saluted the colours with love and devotion, and the German prisoners seemed astonished to see such patriotic fervour.

Such was the general character of the attacks made by the French in Champagne during February. The ridge, which I have already described, was captured by French Colonial troops towards the end of January, after a month's struggle; but elsewhere progress was slow. About five yards a day was the average gain. One by one the little woods and ridges were carried, but as late as 24th March the French were not sufficiently near the railway from Grand Pré to Bazancourt to threaten it seriously. We must not, however, reckon the gains by the amount of ground which was won, but by the number of men which the enemy was obliged to maintain on this part of the front, and by the losses which he suffered. Some five and a half German corps, which were badly needed in the East, had to be massed in Champagne, and their losses were out of all proportion to those suffered by the French. It is said that the Germans lost 10,000 dead and 2,000 prisoners during these attacks. The famous Prussian Guard suffered very heavily at a point about three-quarters of a mile east of Beau Séjour, where two of their regiments were almost wholly destroyed. The Germans themselves admitted that their losses in Champagne were greater than those of the Battle of the Mazurian Lakes,[15] where they had some fourteen army corps engaged.



Scene of the Fighting in Champagne.

The severe fighting in Champagne drew off some or the Crown Prince's forces, and he was therefore obliged to slacken his efforts in the Forest of the Argonne. There, too, in January our Allies won a success by the capture of more than a mile of German trenches. It is interesting to note that the regiment of Italian volunteers which captured the trenches was led by Lieutenant-Colonel Garibaldi, a descendant of the famous Italian patriot who played such a large part in bringing about a united Italy. During this woodland fighting the Germans also had successes; but, generally speaking, there was a deadlock in this region. The real zones of fighting were to the west and east of the Forest.

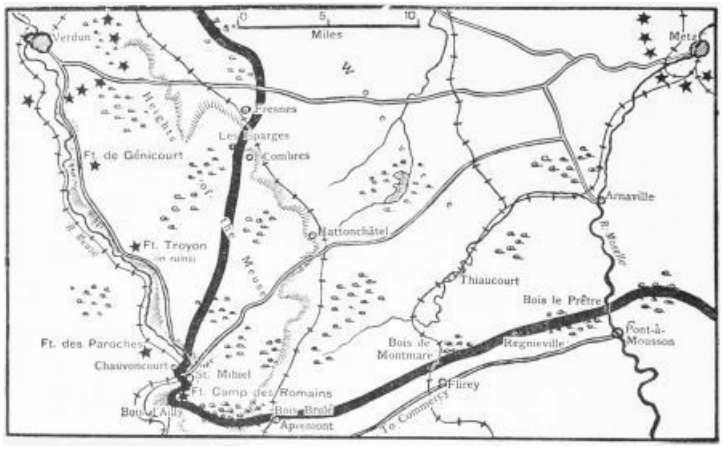
The line which the French held from Beau Séjour to Switzerland during the first four months of the year 1915 made a wide curve round the fortress of Verdun, and then ran south across a wooded plateau to St. Mihiel, on the left bank of the Meuse. At St. Mihiel the Germans were clinging to a bridgehead which they had captured as far back as September 1914. From St. Mihiel the line crosses the river to the right bank, and then proceeds eastwards to the river Moselle. It then strikes south-eastwards to the crest of the Vosges mountains.

If you look at the map on the next page, you cannot fail to notice that St. Mihiel is the point of a very marked wedge or salient, something like that at Ypres, only with the point facing westwards instead of eastwards. A mile to the south of St. Mihiel the Germans had a strong position on high ground, called the Camp of the Romans, from which they could command the country for ten miles around. If you look at the map on the next page, you will see two railways within the salient. The one runs northwards from a place about five miles east of the Camp of the Romans, and crosses the French line at a village called Les Eparges;[16] the other runs northwards from a place about fifteen miles east of the Camp of the Romans, and runs along the valley of a tributary of the Moselle, past Thiaucourt,[17] until it reaches the main river, which it follows to Metz. The Germans had constructed a field railway, which enabled them to reach St. Mihiel from Thiaucourt.

The French nibbled unceasingly at this salient during the winter. Their object was to squeeze in its sides so as to capture the railways and force the enemy to withdraw from St. Mihiel. During February there was fierce fighting at Les Eparges, which was taken by the French along with a part of the neighbouring heights. At the same time they pressed northwards along the left bank of the Moselle, and won the Wood of the Priest, from which they bombarded the railway running through Thiaucourt. They also smashed the German bridges at St. Mihiel. Day by day they were pinching the German wedge more and more, and were threatening the railways by means of which the Germans were able to maintain themselves in this region.

The French were eager to capture the heights to the east of Les Eparges, because guns on these heights would command much of the northern part of the salient. The Germans, knowing how important these heights were to the French, had turned them into a very strong fortress. They had lined the steep slopes with trenches, and had honeycombed them with shelters and dug-outs. About 4 p.m. on 5th April, when the rain was falling heavily and the hillsides were sodden, the French made a great attack on these fortified heights. They gained some ground, but next morning they were driven back. That evening they made a second attempt, and by means of bayonet charges captured 1,500 yards of trenches, and

gradually approached the summit.



The Fighting between the Meuse and the Moselle.

Next morning the Germans brought up reinforcements, and strove with all their might to hurl the French down the slopes. The French guns, however, prevented the Germans from massing, while the German guns held off the French. On the morning of the 8th the French made another bold bid. They could scarcely keep their footing in the slime, and it is said that many of them were drowned in the mud. Never was an attack made under greater difficulties. Slipping in the greasy mud, buffeted by the wind, and almost blinded by the rain, the French advanced against endless machine guns posted at carefully-chosen points. So determined were the Germans to hold the position that they had chained the machine gunners to their weapons. After an hour's struggle the French won the summit, and managed to clear the Germans off the heights, except for a small triangle at the east end.

On the morning of the 9th French reinforcements struggled up the hillside. So violent was the storm, and so miry was the ground, that they took fourteen hours to reach their comrades. In the afternoon an assault was made on the eastern triangle, and the Germans were swept from it. A fog descended, under cover of which the Germans counter-attacked, and pushed the French back. But as soon as the fog lifted the French guns came into action, and another bayonet charge was made. By 10 p.m. the French held the whole of the spur, and were able to command the northern part of the salient. They had performed a notable feat of arms during five days of tempest. The German loss was estimated at more than 30,000.

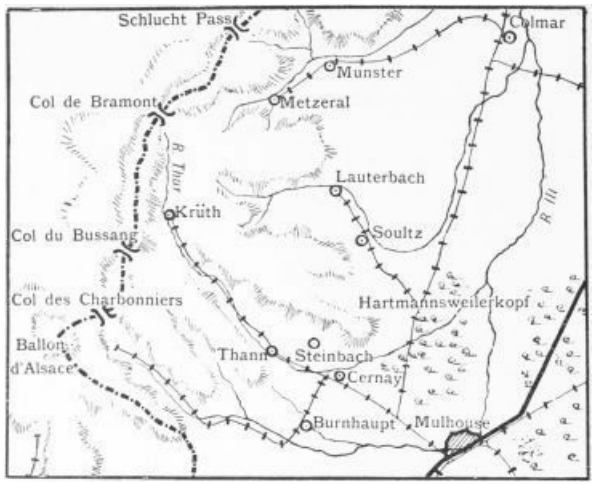
Elsewhere the French also won ground. On the south side of the salient, where the country is covered with thick, scrubby woods, the fighting was very severe. Small gains were made, and by the month of May the French were about four miles from Thiaucourt, and were able to hurl shells from their heavy guns within the outer fortifications of Metz. It seemed that any further advance would endanger the whole position of the Germans at St. Mihiel, and force them to retreat towards the highlands west of Metz. Nevertheless, when the year 1915 came to an end, the Germans were still holding St. Mihiel, and the salient was theirs, though it had worn very thin.

Now let us briefly glance at the campaign in the Vosges.

Look closely at the map on the next page, and notice the river Ill, a tributary of the Rhine. Its most important feeder is the river Thur, which runs down a long glen. It was in the valley of this river that the French made their chief advances during the winter. On 3rd January the Chasseurs Alpins, fighting their way down the valley of the Thur, captured the village of Steinbach, which stands just where the mountains fall steeply to the Alsatian plain, about ten miles as the crow flies from Mulhouse. Steinbach, which had been converted by the enemy into a series of blockhouses, was only secured after ten days of deadly combat.

The French were trying to take Mulhouse in flank, and they had therefore to capture the village of Cernay, which blocked the way. Meanwhile another force attacked Altkirch, to the south of Mulhouse, and quite close to the Swiss border.

During the fighting some of the shells actually fell on Swiss ground. The force advancing from Steinbach could not capture Cernay, so it turned to the south, and tried to seize the village of Burnhaupt in order to attack Mulhouse from another angle. The village was taken by the French; but was retaken, though with heavy loss, by the Germans. Strive as they would, the French could get no nearer to Mulhouse.



If you look to the north of Cernay, you will see a spur of the Vosges known as Hartmannsweilerkopf. It stands 2,000 feet above the plain, and consists of rugged rocks covered with pine trees. He who possesses the kopf can command a very large part of the plain, for he can shell many roads and railway lines. The French greatly coveted it, and they had already established a small advance post on it. Let me tell you how this post was lost and won again. Soon after the fighting at Altkirch, violent winter storms began to rage. Snow fell without ceasing for a fortnight, and the upper glens were choked with drifts. When the sky cleared the chasseurs donned their skis and made some daring raids on German posts in the hills. The Germans were active too. On 19th January, during a blinding snowstorm, they climbed Hartmannsweilerkopf and attacked the French post at the summit. Four companies of chasseurs made a most gallant attempt to relieve the defenders, and for two days fought fiercely amidst the icy rocks and snow-laden bushes. They could, however, make no headway, and the post was captured by the Germans on 21st January.

Not until the 27th of March was it recaptured. On that day the Chasseurs Alpins made a fierce onset and carried the last line of the German defence, which was protected by a blockhouse. Once more they were in possession. At once the Germans hurried up reinforcements from all parts of Alsace, and the order went forth that the position was to be recaptured at all costs. They attacked in dense masses with great courage, and were able to entrench themselves hurriedly on the edge of the summit and along the slopes. During the night, however, the French Alpine troops were reinforced, and by dint of tremendous efforts guns were dragged up the icy slopes to the top of the spur, and were placed in position on the right and left flanks of the enemy. Next morning the chasseurs attacked the Germans and drove them back, while the guns assailed them with a terrible fire. The enemy made a stubborn resistance and brought up fresh troops, specially trained for mountain warfare and supplied with mountain guns. For three days the struggle continued, and at the end of it the whole of the slopes were clear of the enemy. The recapture of the spur was a great feather in the French cap. Again and again during the year the Germans made efforts to seize it, and more than once it fell into their hands. Late in December the Germans claimed to have recovered the whole position, but this was denied by the French.

Chasseurs Alpins attacking a Custom House in the High Vosges.

(*From the picture by Paul Thuriot. By permission of The Sphere.*)
This incident took place in the district south of the Schlucht Pass. The blockhouse was defended by Germans. A French lieutenant rushed forward and attempted to batter down the door with his rifle, but was immediately shot. A second officer fell, and then the men rushed the house and captured it. The French soldiers shown in the picture are Chasseurs Alpins. Notice that some of them are on skis.

For the rest of the year the battle-front in Alsace showed but little change. The French held every gun position on the eastern slopes of the Vosges, and were in command of all the roads leading down to the plains. The Germans held the plain and its railways, and were able to oppose any movement from the mouths of the valleys towards the Rhine. The French had secured one great advantage. Should they wish to push towards the Rhine through the Gap of Belfort, their left flank was secure.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUBMARINE BLOCKADE BEGINS.

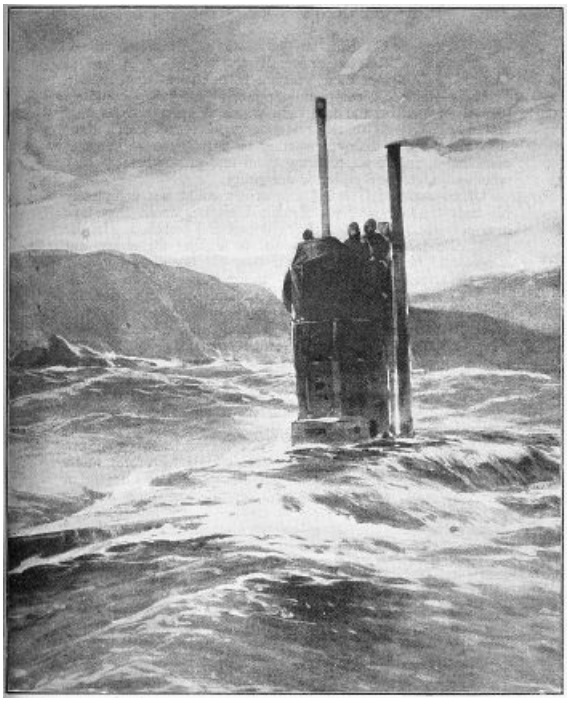
So far the Germans had failed hopelessly at sea. The battle off Coronel had been their only success, and the squadron that had achieved it was now no more. The bombardment of Scarborough, Whitby, and the Hartlepools had been hailed in Germany as a great victory, and the enemy loudly boasted that the British fleet no longer commanded the North Sea. We at home were filled with anger, but we showed no panic; while in America the bombardment of innocent townsfolk in unfortified places was held to be sheer murder, and there were many jeers at the German commanders who had struck foul blows at those who could not strike back, and had then run away. The German navy was covered with ridicule. It dared not come out and risk a battle, while to sit still and do nothing was to proclaim itself a mere sham.

The British fleet, ever since the beginning of the war, had stopped and searched all merchant ships bound for ports on the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, in order to ascertain whether they had on board contraband of war—that is, arms, ammunition, explosives, or other articles or materials which might be used against us. It is a rule of international law that if such goods are sent by a neutral to a State which is at war, they may be seized by the enemy of that State. We had sent lists to all neutrals setting forth the kinds of goods which we would not allow the enemy to receive, and our warships had discovered many vessels which were laden with such goods. These ships were taken into port, and a court sat to decide whether or not they were guilty of carrying contraband. If found guilty, they were seized by the State. You can easily understand that the trade of neutrals with our enemies almost came to an end. The exporters of New York, who were chiefly German-Americans, found their business falling off greatly, and they tried hard to stir up quarrels between the United States and Great Britain.

The United States had determined to be strictly neutral in the war. Most of the people were friendly to the Allies, but there were about four millions of Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians in the country, and many of them were strongly in favour of the Central Powers. Germany sent agents to stir up these people, and to do everything in their power to bring about quarrels between Great Britain and the States.

The Germans, as you know, were powerless on the seas, while we were all-powerful. From the States we imported large quantities of munitions of war. The Americans would gladly have sent munitions to Germany also, but as no German ship dared cross the Atlantic, the Germans were altogether cut off from this source of supply; hence their anger with the United States. We shall see later that the German agents in the States committed all sorts of crimes in the hope of stopping the manufacture of munitions and preventing their export to Great Britain.

About a week after the Hartlepools raid, von Tirpitz, who was then at the head of the German Admiralty, told the Americans that they had stopped their trade with Germany because Great Britain had ordered them to do so, and he asked them how they would like to see all trade with Britain stopped by German submarines. Then came the Battle of the Dogger Bank, in which the German vessels scuttled for home as soon as they sighted the British fleet, but in the course of their flight lost the *Bluecher*. It was after this discreditable affair that von Tirpitz decided to carry out his threat. He gave notice to the President of the United States that on and after 18th February the waters surrounding the British Isles would be considered to be within the seat of war, and that all enemy merchant ships found in these waters would be sunk by German submarines. He also said that it might not always be possible to save the crews and the passengers of these ships, and that neutral vessels within this zone of war would be exposed to danger, and might even be sunk. To this the President replied, begging Germany to consider carefully before taking any such action, and warning her that the destruction of a United States ship or the death of American citizens would be considered an unfriendly act which might lead to war. The President then went on to point out that, until a blockade—that is, a complete stoppage of sea trade—could be carried into effect, the sole right which fighting nations possessed with regard to neutrals was to visit and search their ships in order to discover whether or not they were carrying contraband, and, if so, to bring them into port, where a court would adjudge them guilty or not guilty.



A German Submarine awash. ***Photo, Central News.***

Of course, the German submarines could not completely blockade the coasts of the British Isles, nor could they take into port the ships which they stopped and searched. In the latter case they might be justified in sinking the ships, but they would be guilty of crime if they did not save the crews and passengers. A submarine cannot possibly take off the crews of merchant vessels, for it has no accommodation for them. Von Tirpitz's plan was piracy, and nothing else. In order to find an excuse, the Germans declared that all the wheat and flour coming into Germany from abroad belonged to the Government. The British now seized the cargoes of ships thus laden, because they were the property of an enemy Government. Then the Germans began to call heaven and earth to witness that Great Britain was trying to starve German women and children. Horrible pictures were painted of innocent people perishing of hunger. A German newspaper put the enemy's view in a nutshell when it said, "England wants to employ every means to shorten the war. The number of lives that would be lost if she could starve Germany is nothing to her. . . . Whether we wish it or not, we must seek to destroy England's life-nerve—namely, her merchant shipping." How she attempted to do this we shall read in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SINKING OF THE "LUSITANIA."

The Germans were quite right in speaking of our mercantile marine as our "life-nerve." In 1913 we had nearly 39,600 merchant vessels, with a tonnage of more than 14,000,000 tons. You will get some idea of the vastness of our overseas trade when I tell you that the tonnage of ships owned in Liverpool alone exceeds that of the German Empire. On an average about 1,400 merchant vessels enter and leave our ports every week. This means that the submarines which were now going to destroy our "life-nerve" were presented with about two hundred targets a day.

You must not suppose that the Germans waited until 18th February to begin their attacks on our merchant vessels. Early in February the German submarine U21 appeared in the Irish Sea, and proceeded to sink three small ships. On the same day other enemy submarines sank ships in the English Channel, one of them, the *Toko Maru*, being laden with mutton, stores, and clothing for Belgian refugees. Between "Pirate Day," 18th February, and 11th April, fifty-eight ships were attacked, most of which were sent to the bottom. Neutral as well as British ships were sunk by the submarines, several of them without warning. Sometimes the officers gave ten minutes' grace to allow passengers and crews to take to the boats; but in other cases the ships were sunk at sight, and more than once shells were fired at men in the boats who were trying to rescue their comrades struggling in the water. Frequently fast steamers escaped, and more than one vessel charged down on the attacking submarine. The *Thordis*, for example, crashed at full speed into the submarine which threatened her off Beachy Head, and sent it to the bottom.

On 1st March Great Britain declared a blockade of Germany. By this time it was apparent that as a means of reducing our food supply or weakening our determination to continue the war, Germany's submarine "blockade" had proved to be a failure. Between 18th February and the middle of August less than one and a half per cent. of our ships were sunk, and we went on our way quite unmoved. Neutral countries, however, saw clearly what Germany's command of the sea would mean to them. The American nation was soon to be roused to the highest pitch of indignation by one of the foulest crimes ever committed.

Already four American ships had been destroyed by the Germans, and several American citizens had been drowned. On 27th March the British steamer *Falaba* was sunk off the Pembrokeshire coast with a loss of 112 lives, including that of an American. The Germans did not wait until all the boats had been lowered before firing a torpedo into the steamer's side, and then, not content with sending so many helpless people to their doom, they watched them struggling in the icy waters without lifting a hand to help them. It is even said that they mocked and jeered at the drowning men and women. "This is not war; it is murder," said the *New York Times*. This crime, however, was soon to be outdone.

On May 7, 1915, the Cunard liner *Lusitania* was steaming a few miles south-west of the old Head of Kinsale, on her homeward voyage to Liverpool. She was one of the largest and finest liners afloat. She was totally unarmed, and she carried passengers and crew to the number of 1,906, many of them being citizens of the United States. Before she left New York her passengers had been warned that the Germans meant to sink her. Nobody, however, dreamed that even Germans could descend to such depths of infamy.

As the *Lusitania* approached the Irish coast she received a message from the Admiralty warning her that German submarines were in the neighbourhood. She had reduced her speed to eighteen knots, so as not to arrive at the Mersey bar before the tide was high enough to enable her to cross. An artist who was saved thus described what happened:—

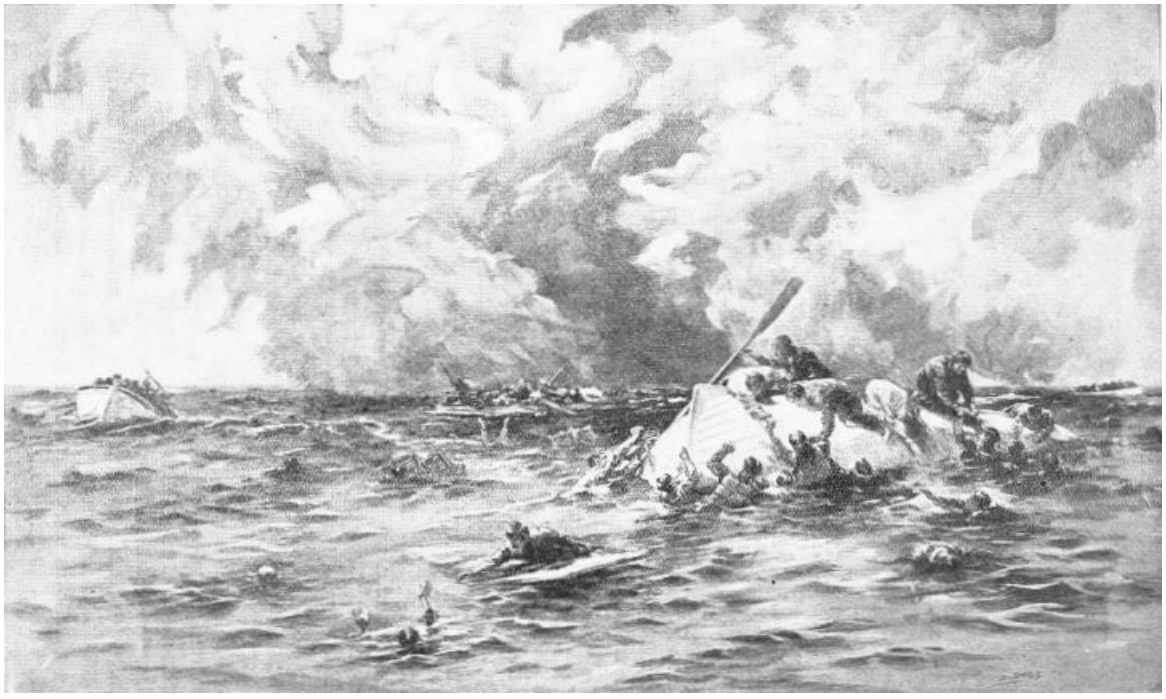
> "The voyage from New York to London was made in excellent weather. The sun shone all the way, and on the afternoon of the disaster a golden sun lit up a beautifully blue, calm sea. I think I can say that I was one of the four people who really saw the torpedo discharged at the *Lusitania*. I was in the dining-room about 2.15, and had just finished luncheon. I went out, and leaned against the starboard side of the vessel, just outside the palm lounge. I saw the periscope of a submarine about 200 yards away. Then I noticed a long white streak of foam. It gave me the impression of a frothy fizzing in the water. A lady and two gentlemen came up to me and exclaimed, 'Is that a torpedo?' I felt too sick to answer, and turned away. Almost immediately there was a terrific impact, followed by the explosion. . . ."

Steam and smoke came up between the two last funnels, and almost immediately there was a second report, probably due

to the bursting of the main steam pipe. "I at once gave the order," said Captain Turner at the inquest, "to lower the boats down to the rails, and I directed that the women and children should be got into them. The moment the vessel was struck she listed to starboard. I stood on the bridge as she sank, and the *Lusitania* went down under me. She floated about eighteen minutes after the torpedo struck her." An English passenger thus described the scene as the *Lusitania* sank:—

> "Nearly a score of the boats on the port side were filled with passengers, but it was found impossible to lower them owing to that side of the ship standing so high above the water. I managed to get across to starboard. The ship's deck was then level with the sea. I made for a boat which was just putting off, and, in fact, had one foot on the craft and the other on the ship. Then, owing to something going wrong, the lifeboat jammed, and all the occupants were thrown into the water. It was a terrible moment. The passengers in the boat, including women, screamed with terror, and soon sank. Other boats collapsed or turned over, and hundreds of people, men, women, and children, were struggling helplessly in the water, some clinging to boats which had been upset. I struck out, and managed, after swimming for about fifteen minutes, to come across a boat, into which I was dragged. Hundreds of people were on rafts, and the sea was alive with men and women."

There was no ship of any kind in sight when the *Lusitania* was torpedoed, except a Peel trawler which was lying inshore. She started at once to the rescue; but the wind was light, and she was slow in arriving. Nevertheless she managed to pick up over a hundred persons from lifeboats or rafts. So crowded was the trawler with rescued people that some had to sit with their legs dangling over the side. Other trawlers and boats from Kinsale came to the rescue, and later on the *Indian Prince*, a steamer from Queenstown, arrived, and began to pick up survivors. When the death-roll was finally made up, it was discovered that 1,134 persons had been killed by the explosion or drowned. Over a hundred American citizens went down that day.



On the Face of the Waters—after the Sinking of the "Lusitania."

(*By permission of the Illustrated London News.*)

We can never know all the acts of heroism and self-sacrifice which were performed when the passengers and crew of the *Lusitania* were struggling for life in the water, but we know that Mr. Vanderbilt, the American millionaire, though unable to swim, gave his life-belt to a woman, and remained steadfastly on the deck awaiting his end. One of the drowned sailors was found with a little child strapped to his back, and no doubt its weight cost the swimmer his life.

No incident of the war provoked more terrible indignation against the Huns. It is said that two wealthy American citizens who were saved in a lifeboat stood up amidst the scene of horror, and pledged themselves that, if the United States did not go to war with Germany within seven days, they would forswear their country for ever. The news was received with bitter anger in Great Britain, and in New York there was a hush of horror, broken only by "the sniggers of German-Americans." A coroner's jury which sat at Kinsale brought in a verdict of wilful murder against the Emperor of Germany and his Government. "Remember the *Lusitania*" became a watchword at recruiting meetings, and thousands of men flocked to the colours, eager to avenge this foul and cowardly crime.

America had declared that she would hold Germany to strict account for every American life lost as a result of the submarine "blockade." Seven days after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, President Wilson sent a very calm and moderate Note to Germany, declaring that American citizens had the right to travel wherever their business called them on the high seas, without their lives being endangered by warships, and that their Government would do everything to maintain this right. At the same time the Note suggested that the sinking of American ships and the *Lusitania* was due to mistakes on the part of the commanders of submarines, and it called upon the German Government to disavow these acts, and prevent them from taking place in the future. Germany replied in a shuffling fashion; and on 21st July President Wilson sent another Note which practically threatened war if the Germans did not cease their blockade.

How did Germany reply to this Note? On 19th August one of her submarines, without warning, torpedoed the White Star liner *Arabic* off Cape Clear. The loss of life was small, for the vessel remained afloat for ten minutes, and there was time to lower the boats. When it became known that the *Arabic* had twenty-six American citizens on board, anger flamed up anew. The wrath of Americans was raised almost to war pitch, especially when the Germans put forward a series of falsehoods in excuse. The German Minister at Washington now saw that his Government had gone too far. He begged the United States Government to wait for a report, and a little later he promised that full amends should be made. On 1st September he gave a written pledge that thenceforward passenger liners would not be sunk by submarines without warning, and without ensuring the safety of the lives of those on board, provided that the liners did not try to escape or show fight. He also declared that Germany had decided to make this change in her policy before the sinking of the *Arabic*.

The Americans were delighted with this very doubtful promise, and they believed that they had forced Germany to give up the worst features of the blockade. If you read the promise carefully, you will see that the Germans had so worded it that they could still proceed in the old way. A submarine might give passengers time to get into small boats in mid-ocean, but how could it ensure their safety? There was a case during the "blockade" of men who had escaped in a boat being afloat for four days without food and water, and some of them dying from exposure. Then, again, the promise only applied to passenger liners, and not to merchant ships. It was quite easy for a submarine commander to sink a liner, and then pretend that it had resisted or tried to escape. Above all, nothing was said about the right of Americans to sail the seas without their lives being endangered by warships. Nevertheless, the Americans were delighted with the promise, and plumed themselves greatly on having done a great service to mankind.

Three days later came a rude awakening. On the night of 4th September the Allan liner *Hesperian* was torpedoed by a German submarine *without warning*. The liner was then 130 miles west of Queenstown She kept afloat for some time, and was towed towards port, but went down at seven o'clock on the morning of 6th September. There was a small loss of life, and there were two Americans on board. It was now clear to everybody that the German promise was a mere "scrap of paper." Wrath surged up again in the United States, but it led to nothing. The Germans untruthfully declared that the vessel was sunk by a mine and not by a submarine.

During the last three weeks of August and the first week of September ships of all sorts were sunk at the rate of about sixteen a week. Then came a rapid falling off, and during the week ending 10th October only two ships were sent to the bottom. The submarine blockade was fizzling out. The Germans had changed their policy, not because of the protests of the Americans, but because they had discovered that the game was not worth the candle. Mr. Balfour, in a letter to a correspondent, gave the true reason why the Germans were bringing the blockade to an end. He said that while the losses of German submarines had been very great, the British merchant navy was stronger than when the blockade began. Though many innocent persons, women and children as well as men, had been robbed and killed, the criminals had paid a heavy toll. The reason why the Germans had changed their policy was not because the United States had protested, not because the Germans had revolted against lawless cruelty. "No. The reason is to be found elsewhere. It is to be found in the fact that the authors of the submarine policy have had time to measure its effects, and that deeds which were merely crimes in May, in September were seen to be blunders."

By the month of June the British navy had learnt the art of capturing the submarines of the enemy; and so expert had it become in this work that a U boat, once discovered, had but little chance of escape. Submarine-hunting became the great sport of the navy, and every young officer and bluejacket was eager to engage in it. We do not know how many German submarines were destroyed, but we were informed, through America, that seventy-eight of them had been seized or sunk, and that in December 1915 at least five of the Kaiser's submarines, manned by British seamen, were doing splendid work against his ships in the Baltic. The British only rarely announced their successes, and the German submarine crews were always in doubt as to the fate of their fellows. Before long their nerve failed them, and even at the beginning of their voyages they were disheartened and hopeless.

The methods by which the enemy's submarines were captured or destroyed were not revealed, but we know that fast motor boats, each armed with a powerful gun, were employed in the hunt, and that steel nets were sometimes used. When a big fish was caught the floats of the nets gave warning, and destroyers promptly arrived to deal with it. Innocent-looking patrol boats were sometimes attacked, and, too late, the biter discovered that he was bitten. There is a story that a submarine commander, approaching one of these patrols, called out, "I give you ten minutes to take to your boats;" whereupon the skipper, whipping a concealed gun round and preparing to fire, returned answer, "And I give you three minutes to go to the bottom."

No submarine loss caused such bitter chagrin in Germany as the sinking of the famous U29 late in March. You will remember that it was this boat which had sunk the *Hogue*, *Cressy*, *Aboukir*, and *Hawke*. Captain Weddigen, who commanded U29, had become a popular hero in Germany, and the Kaiser had showered honours on him. He was a good type of sailor, both skilful and brave, and it is to his credit that he was known in this country as "the polite pirate." He not only expressed his regret at having to sink merchant ships, but gave food and comforts to their crews, and towed their boats some distance towards the land. When it was known that Weddigen had gone down with all his crew in U29, the Germans put forth an absurd story that the submarine had been sunk while she was engaged in life-saving, and was unable to defend herself. One German newspaper demanded "revenge for Weddigen," and declared that no more sacrifices must be made to "the German system of humanity in war"!

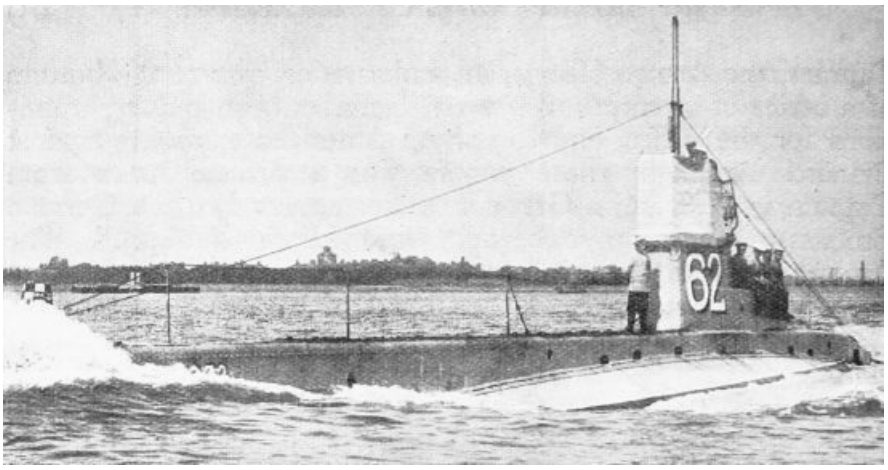
I will conclude this chapter with a brief account of the troubles and trials which the Americans had to endure because of the attempts of German agents to stir up all sorts of strife in their country. Almost from the beginning of the year there were explosions and fires in the factories which were making munitions for the Allies, and there was little doubt that these outrages, which frequently led to loss of life, were the work of German hirelings. During August the *New York World* published evidence proving that German money was lavished amongst newspapers for the purpose of getting them to publish articles in favour of Germany. It also proved that men were paid to bring about strikes in engineering shops, to blow up ships laden with munitions, and to interfere in every possible way with American affairs, so as to cause trouble between Britain and the United States.

On 6th September matters came to a head. Papers taken from an American journalist at Falmouth showed that Dr. Dumba, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, was at the bottom of a series of attempts to prevent factories from making munitions for the Allies, and to stir up American exporters against Britain. Amongst these papers was a private letter from Captain von Papen, a German soldier attached to the German Embassy. In it he spoke of "these idiotic Yankees." The Americans were indignant at these exposures and insults, and the Government demanded that Dr. Dumba should be recalled. He was handed his passports, and he left America—for America's good.

On 10th November the Italian liner *Ancona*, bound from Naples to New York, was fired at and torpedoed in the Mediterranean Sea by two large submarines, probably German, but carrying the Austrian flag. Some 500 persons were on board, and only some 260 were saved. Amongst those who perished were about 20 American citizens. At once President Wilson sent a sharp Note, demanding that Austria should disavow the crime, punish the captains of the submarines, and promise to safeguard American passengers in the future. To this Note Austria replied in a very defiant fashion, and by so doing again strained the patience of the American people almost to the breaking point. At the close it looked as though America was about to break off all relations with Austria.

In December the German Government was obliged to recall Captain von Papen and another member of the Embassy. These two men had set the American Government at defiance, and had encouraged plots throughout the length and

breadth of the country. Some of their agents were brought to trial, and were punished, and President Wilson announced that the men who were plotting to destroy property and to undermine the Government must be "crushed out." Thus, at the close of the year America seemed to be ready to put an end to the German mischief-makers who had done so much to disturb the peace of the country, and to foster lawlessness and strife.



A German Submarine half submerged.

CHAPTER XII.

STORIES OF SUBMARINES.

"*We'll duck and we'll dive like little tin turtles,*
We'll duck and we'll dive beneath the North Seas,
Until we strike something that doesn't expect us:
From here to Cuxhaven it's go as you please."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

I have told you in these pages of many daring deeds and narrow escapes on the battlefield; but for exploits which really thrill us and make us hold our breath, we must go to the men who fight in the air or under the sea. Jules Verne never imagined anything half so marvellous as their doings. When the war is over, we shall hear stories of aviators and of the crews of submarines which will make the wildest inventions of writers of adventure seem tame and colourless.

"The business of the submarines," says Mr. Kipling, "is to run monstrous risks from the earth, air, and water, in what, to be of any use, must be the coldest of blood." Submarine officers, he continues, "play hourly for each other's lives, with Death, the umpire, always at their elbow on tiptoe, to give them 'out.'" And consider the bowling and fielding in this nightmare game, where there is rarely a second innings. A bomb from a Zeppelin or an aeroplane, a shot from a 4-inch gun, a bump against a mine, a collision with a reef or the bows of a destroyer, trawler, or tramp, an accident to the complicated gear—and all is over. Nevertheless, the officers and crews of submarines soon lose the sense of imminent peril, and go about their business quite unconcerned.

The following story shows how a submarine was trapped, but managed to free herself and turn the tables on her enemy. A British boat, which was cruising under water in the North Sea, ran her nose into a net and became entangled. She rose to the surface, meaning to cut away the net and get clear. No sooner did her conning tower appear above the water than her commander saw a Zeppelin hovering right above him, and in a moment a bomb plumped into the sea unpleasantly near. He had no alternative but to go below again; but this he had to do as gingerly as possible, for otherwise the submarine would have wrapped herself up in the net still more. Steadily she sank, and by slow working and wriggling managed to get clear of the entanglement. Then she lay on the bottom, and her commander began to think out the next move in the perilous game. Should he go back to warn the other submarines, or should he wait and try to "bag" something? He knew that the Zeppelin believed him to be entangled in the net, and that it was sure to signal for destroyers to come and finish him off, so he sat tight and waited. In a few minutes he heard the screws of the destroyers churning above him. Then he rose, and at the critical moment gave the signal to let loose a torpedo. The shot went home: the destroyer crumpled up, and was taken in tow by a consort. Unhappily, as the commander had no more torpedoes, he was balked of a second victim.

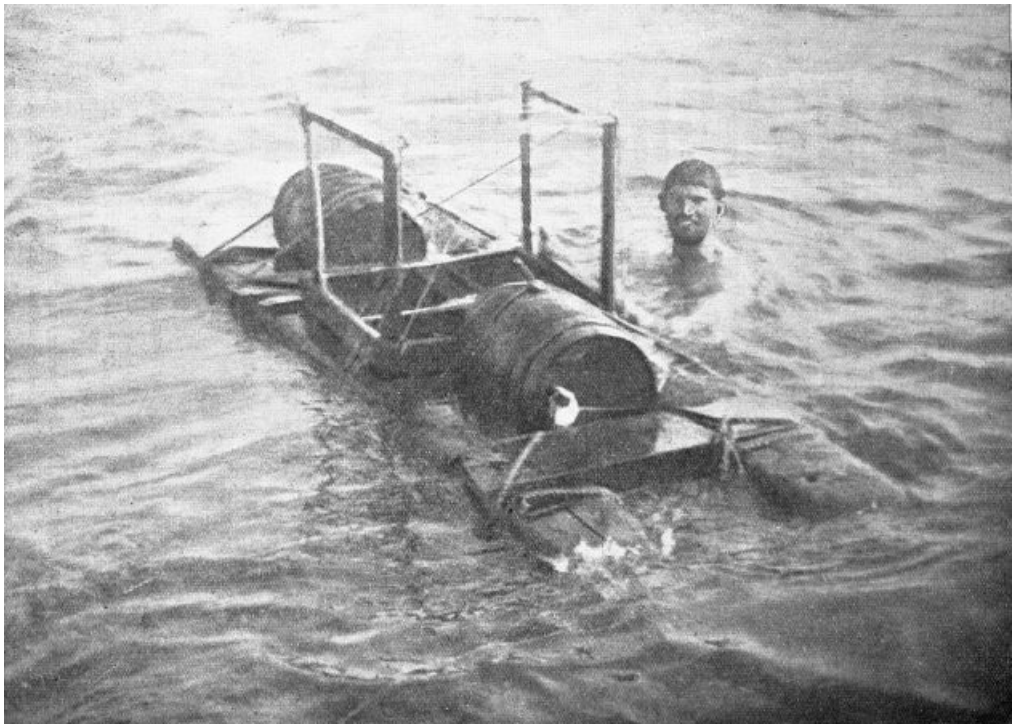
Since the war began, British submarines have penetrated into every harbour and river mouth on the coast of Germany. One day a British boat in the mouth of a German river was seen by the enemy. At once she went under; but though she lay on the silt at the bottom, she had not more than five feet of water above her. Almost any patrol boat could have hit her and destroyed her had her whereabouts been known; but somehow the Germans missed her. They meant to catch her, however, and began to sweep the river with a wire trawl. Before long the commander of the submarine heard the trawl rasping along his hull. He sat and listened, expecting every moment that it would catch on something, and reveal him to the Germans working above. The suspense was enough to turn a man's hair gray. Happily, the trawl slid off the hull, and the danger passed. At nightfall the submarine made her way into the open sea, and finally reached harbour safely.

The following story has been told of a fight between a British submarine and a Zeppelin. One day a boat came to the surface, and found herself right underneath a Zeppelin that was flying only a few yards above the sea. The commander could not see the sky, only the shining bulge of the airship. Luckily he was not under the "stinging end" of the monster. Immediately he sank till his decks were awash, and went away to windward, so that the Zeppelin had to follow him with the wind in its teeth. Then he sent a man to the gun on deck. The waves were washing over the submarine, and the man was nearly drowned; but he hung on, and whenever he saw a chance, fired a shot at the airship, which by this time was dropping bombs. One of his shots got home, and the Zeppelin was obliged to steer to leeward and give up the chase. A fortnight later she was seen with a patch on the place where she had been hit.

On page 283 of our third volume I told you how Lieutenant Holbrook won the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery while in command of a submarine which was scouting in the Dardanelles during December 1914. In these narrow waters, and in the Sea of Marmora, some extraordinary feats were performed by our submarines during the year 1915. An American correspondent tells us that our under-water boats created a reign of terror amongst the peasants and villagers living on the shores of that sea. Turkish warships and gunboats and large numbers of transports and supply ships were sunk, and navigation was almost entirely suspended. On April 27, 1915, Submarine E14 dived under the enemy mine fields and entered the Sea of Marmora. In spite of strong currents, the presence of hostile patrols, and the hourly danger of attack from the enemy, she succeeded in sinking two Turkish gunboats and two transports, one of them large and full of troops; and after cruising in the enemy's waters for twenty-two days, returned in safety. For this remarkable exploit, which the admiral at the Dardanelles declared himself unable to do justice to, Lieutenant-Commander Edward Courtney Boyle received the Victoria Cross.

Late in May the British submarine E11 had an extraordinary "bag." She succeeded in destroying one large Turkish gunboat, two transports, one ammunition ship, and three storeships, and drove another storeship ashore. Then she passed through the minefield on her homeward way; but, on sighting another Turkish transport, returned, and managed to torpedo it. In the course of her cruise she entered the Golden Horn, and actually discharged a torpedo at a transport lying alongside the arsenal. The Turks declared that the torpedo struck the quay and blew up two hundred yards of masonry. Lieutenant-Commander Martin Eric Nasmith, who was the heart and soul of these intrepid feats, was rightly awarded the highest token of valour.

Getting into and out of the Sea of Marmora is a terribly difficult business, as the "Narrows,"[18] through which all ships must pass, was strewn with mines; the shores were studded with batteries and concealed torpedo tubes. Lieutenant Holbrook, you will remember, had to dive under five rows of mines before he could torpedo the Turkish battleship *Messudiyeh*. Mr. Kipling tells us that "one boat went down the straits, and found herself rather canted over to one side. A mine and chain had jammed under her forward diving-plane. So far as I made out, she shook it off by standing on her head and jerking backwards; or it may have been, for the thing has occurred more than once, she merely rose as much as she could, when she could, and then 'released it by hand,' as the official phrase goes."



Lieutenant Guy D'Oyly Hughes starting off with his Raft.

(*Photo, Central News.*)

Perhaps the most thrilling feat of daring ever associated with submarine warfare was performed by Lieutenant Guy D'Oyly Hughes on August 21, 1915. Lieutenant Hughes had already distinguished himself during the operations of E11 which I have described above. He volunteered to make a single-handed attempt to blow up a Turkish railway. A raft was prepared, and on it were placed the charge, his clothes, a revolver, a bayonet, and an electric torch. Round his neck he carried a whistle. Towards dusk the submarine ventured within sixty yards of the land, and then Lieutenant Hughes, stripped to the skin, went overboard, and pushing his raft before him, swam to the shore. When he touched bottom he found that the cliffs were too high to scale. He therefore started off again, and swam along the shore until he reached a less precipitous landing-place. Having dressed, he clambered up the rocks, carrying his charge with him. After a stiff climb he reached the top of the cliffs, and proceeding with great caution, made his way to the railway line, which he followed towards a viaduct.

He had only advanced about five or six hundred yards when he heard voices, and shortly afterwards caught a glimpse of three Turkish soldiers sitting by the side of the line and talking loudly. After watching them for some time he decided to leave the charge, which was heavy and cumbersome, and make a wide circuit inland, so as to get to the viaduct unseen. This he did, the only incident by the way being an unfortunate fall from a wall into a farmyard, where his sudden appearance startled the poultry and disturbed the household. He was not, however, detected. When he came in sight of the viaduct he found that it was guarded. A fire was burning at one end of it, and there were men close at hand. It was impossible to destroy the viaduct, so he returned to the place from which he had started, picked up his charge, revolver, bayonet, and electric torch, and looked for a spot where he might do as much damage as possible to the line.

Searching about, he found a low brickwork support over a small hollow, and there he placed his charge. He was only 150 yards from the three soldiers, who were still sitting by the line. He muffled the fuse pistol as tightly as possible with a piece of rag; but when he pulled it the noise was sufficiently loud to be heard by the soldiers, who stood up, looked around them, and catching sight of the lieutenant, ran towards him. He fired two shots at them, but missed, and hotly pursued, beat a hasty retreat along the line to the eastward. A few shots were fired at him, but he was not hit, and after running about a mile he found himself close to the shore.

At once, without discarding his clothes, he plunged into the water, and as he did so the charge exploded. Fragments of brick and earth fell around him, and even near the submarine, which was then in a small bay behind the cliffs about six hundred yards from the shore. After swimming for four or five hundred yards the lieutenant blew a long blast on his

whistle, but the submarine did not hear it. Day was now rapidly breaking, so he turned back to the shore and rested for a short time. Then he threw away his revolver, bayonet, and electric torch, and entering the water once more, swam towards the bay in which the submarine was lying. Not until he had rounded the last point was his whistle heard.

As his comrades prepared to come to his assistance he heard shouts from the cliffs above, and saw Turkish soldiers firing on the submarine, which now came out of the bay stern first. In the morning mist he mistook the bow, the gun, and the conning tower for three small rowing boats. Thinking that these boats were manned by his enemies, he swam ashore again and began to climb up to a hollow of the cliffs some distance above him. He had not climbed more than a few feet before he saw the submarine, realized his mistake, and began shouting to his comrades. Once more he entered the water, and about forty yards from the rocks was picked up in an exhausted condition. He had swum the best part of a mile in his clothes.

Thus happily ended Lieutenant Hughes's daring adventure. I think you will agree with me that as a story of pluck, endurance, and resource it is hard to beat.

CHAPTER XIII.

MORE STORIES OF SUBMARINE WARFARE.

You must not suppose that our submarines carried out their raids in the Dardanelles and in the Sea of Marmora without loss. Several of our under-water boats came to grief. E15, for example, while trying to torpedo a Turkish ship at the Narrows,[19] ran ashore on the Asiatic side. She was undamaged, and a Turkish destroyer speedily appeared on the scene. The admiral on the station was anxious that she should not fall into the enemy's hands, so he gave orders that she was to be destroyed. The story of how she was finally blown up is worth telling. Five different methods of destroying her were tried, but all in vain. Aeroplanes endeavoured to drop bombs on her, but without success; submarines tried to torpedo her, but failed; destroyers attempted to sink her, but could not manage to do so; and two battleships fired at her, but did not hit her. The battleships aimed their turret guns from a distance of 5¼ miles, and found that the conning tower of the submarine was too small a target. As a last resort the admiral gave the following order: "Two picket boats from *Triumph* and *Majestic* are to attack E15 to-night (April 18) with torpedoes fitted to dropping gear. . . . Only volunteer crews to be sent."

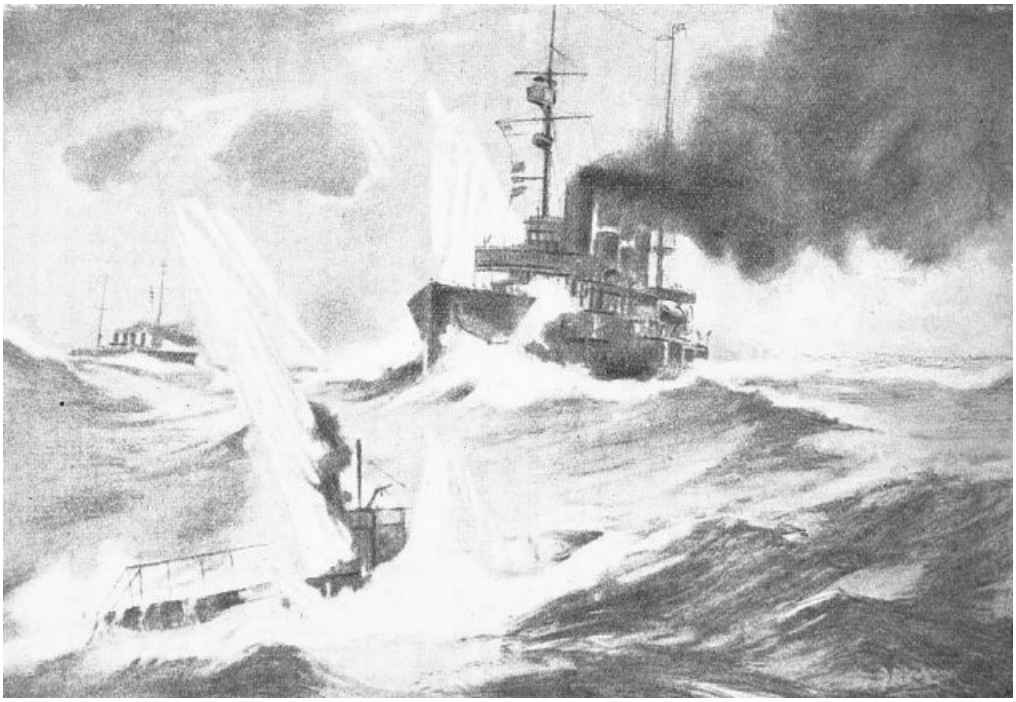
An officer in charge of the *Triumph's* boat tells us[20] that he was joined by the boat from the *Majestic* at 10 p.m.

"We steamed about eight knots, as the current was strong, and until we reached the beginning of the dangerous area we chatted—to keep up our courage, perhaps! As a matter of fact, I wasn't in much of a funk, and felt fairly cool, for I have been under fire a good many times, and I recognized that I had got a chance that does not often come in a man's life. It was a bit eerie, though, steaming along in the pitch dark, with all lights out in the boat, towards the distant searchlights, not knowing whether death or life awaited us. . . .

"We kept nearly in the centre of the channel, to avoid being spotted by the No. 7 searchlight, which was not a very high one. We had come along quite unobserved until we were abeam of it, passing the smaller searchlights without much trouble. Unfortunately the men stationed near the No. 7 searchlight saw us, and started firing 6 or 12 pounder shrapnel at us.

"Thus the ball opened. We still had three to four miles to go. We continued our way and approached the other searchlights. The alarm having been given, all the other searchlights came on and sent their beams searching round to pick us up, and as each beam struck us, bang would go another gun. A few seconds later we would hear a ping as the projectile whizzed past us, or a sharp metallic crack as a shrapnel burst just over our heads."

By the time they arrived near the stranded submarine eight searchlights were trained on them, and guns were firing at them from six different points. Presently they saw a dark mass which they thought to be the submarine, and fired a torpedo at it, but missed.



The End of a Submarine.

The cruiser has fired at the submarine and hit her, but to make assurance doubly sure, is now crashing down upon her at full speed.

"Suddenly we saw the *Majestic's* boat in trouble and the crew calling for help. It appeared that coming up behind us, and whilst the searchlights were focussed on us, one of the beams passed us and shone right on E15; and the *Majestic's* boat was luckily only two hundred yards away, and saw it. Lieutenant Godwin immediately fired one torpedo, which did not strike the object. At that moment his boat was struck by a shell under the water-line aft, and commenced to take in water rapidly. He gallantly turned his boat towards E15 again, steamed in a bit, and fired his second torpedo, which caught E15 just in front of the conning tower and on the forward whale-back of the hull, making a fine explosion. I consider this was a very brave deed, as Godwin knew he was in imminent danger of sinking, but ran in again to have a second shot.

"When we saw them their stern-sheets were awash, and it looked as if they might have to swim for it. We manoeuvred the boat to go alongside; but the current was terrible, and it made the handling a very difficult matter. The enemy saw the disaster, and redoubled their efforts. The sea all round us was a mass of splashes from projectiles, some of them fifteen to twenty feet high, whilst the water where the shrapnel burst was pitted as if by heavy rain. How it was we were not hit I cannot say; one would imagine it was impossible to come out of such a hail alive. All I can say is that God preserved us, and not a shot actually hit us, though we were one and all wet with the splashes.

"As we steamed round again before heading out, we saw a man crawling out of the other boat's stern-sheets. He had been forgotten in the hurry of the moment. It looked like suicide to go back, but of course we could not leave him there, so manoeuvred close again and shouted to him to get into the water and swim towards us, which he did, and we hauled him into the boat unconscious. . . .

"By this time we thought we had better clear out, so turned our nose towards home and steamed away at half speed, still under heavy fire. We did not like to go full speed, as we thought it would shake up the wounded man too much."

The officer who relates the story tells us that when he reached the *Majestic* the commander, "with the true old Navy touch, instead of congratulating us on the success of the expedition, and our people on their lives being saved, only asked them if they had saved any of the boat's gear!" Congratulations, however, came later, when the Vice-Admiral signalled that he had read with much pride the report of the torpedo attack on the wreck of E15, and that he considered the service which had been rendered of the greatest value.

During the early months of the war the Baltic Sea was Germany's own domain. Her merchant vessels went to and fro across its waters without molestation from the British. By July 1915, however, our submarines had got through the dangerous channels, and were busily engaged in destroying German shipping. It was no easy matter for our submarines to enter the Baltic. The Germans had laid mines in the narrow waters by which alone entrance could be gained, and had established a patrol service. They felt sure that they could keep out the British submarines, but they had underestimated British skill, courage, and caution. From that time onward German vessels were sunk at the rate of about two a day. A battleship and at least two cruisers were sunk before the end of November, and a state of panic reigned. It was all-important that the Germans should maintain sea communication with Sweden, from which they drew vast quantities of iron ore and other raw materials, and also with Denmark. You can imagine their consternation when they found that none of their merchant ships dare leave port without the risk of being sent to the bottom. I need not tell you that in every case the British were most careful to save the lives of the crews.

One of the most successful of our submarine officers was Commander Max K. Horton. He was present during the Battle of Heligoland Bight, and you have already read (page 168, Vol. II.) how on September 13, 1915, he sank the light cruiser *Hela*, and was playfully dubbed by his comrades "The Double-toothed Pirate." The next day, at great risk, he examined the outer anchorage of Heligoland, and on 6th October sank a German destroyer off the mouth of the Ems. When or how he got into the Baltic Sea we do not know, but we do know that on July 2, 1915, he torpedoed the German battleship *Pommern*, and that shortly afterwards the Tsar recognized this important service by conferring on him the Order of St. George. At the same time the cross of the same order was awarded to the members of his crew. During the Battle of the Gulf of Riga, which I shall describe in a later chapter, Commander Noel Laurence torpedoed the German cruiser *Moltke*, which, you will remember, took part in the East Coast raids and in the Battle of the Dogger Bank. She was badly disabled, and was towed away, probably towards Kiel. The Tsar awarded Commander Laurence and his crew similar distinctions to those conferred upon Commander Max Horton and his comrades.

One of our submarines, E13, ran aground early in the morning of 19th August on the Danish island of Saltholm, which lies in the Sound between Copenhagen and the Swedish town of Malmö. At 5 a.m. a Danish torpedo boat saw her, and signalled to her that she would be allowed twenty-four hours in which to try to get off. At the same time a German destroyer arrived, and remained close to the submarine until two other Danish torpedo boats came up, when she withdrew. The submarine, you must remember, was in Danish waters, and if the Germans should attack her they would commit an act of war against Denmark, which, as you know, is neutral. Nevertheless, at 9 a.m., two German destroyers appeared, launched a torpedo at the submarine, and fired at her with all their guns. The British commander ordered his men to abandon the vessel; but while they were doing so machine guns were turned on them, and shrapnel was burst above them. Fourteen of the poor fellows were killed, and not a soul of the crew would have remained alive had not a Danish torpedo boat gallantly steamed in between the submarine and the German destroyer, and thus covered the stranded vessel. This cowardly and murderous act caused great indignation not only in Britain but in Denmark. Once more German sailors had covered themselves with infamy.

Russian submarines were also active in the Baltic. The following story tells us how a Russian submarine collided with a German warship which she had just torpedoed.

Having picked up the smoke of enemy vessels on the horizon, the submarine approached them, and by means of her periscope discovered that they consisted of ten ships of the line and several torpedo boats. To prevent the enemy from seeing his periscope, the commander of the submarine steered to the port side of the squadron, where he was between the ships and the light. With his periscope six inches above the water, he approached the squadron, and then dived. When he rose again he sighted on his starboard the ram of the leading warship, which was cutting across his course at a distance of not more than sixty yards.

Again he dived, and gave the order to fire a torpedo. The order was obeyed, and was immediately followed by a collision. A terrible crash was heard. The whole submarine trembled; the electric bulbs burst; crockery and all kinds of articles flew about; something above cracked, broke, and gave way. The submarine took a list to starboard, and the crew were unable to keep their feet. What had happened? The hull of the warship had struck the centre of the submarine. The men hung on to anything within reach, and fortunately kept their heads. "Full speed ahead" was the order, and soon the submarine regained her balance.

She was 75 feet below the surface when a loud explosion was heard. The torpedo had got home. The noise was so great that the commander thought the shell of his boat had been damaged by the collision, and that it was collapsing under the pressure of the water. He therefore rose to 60 feet, but the sound of the approaching screw of a large ship forced him to dive to 80 feet. Again and again he tried to rise, but every time he heard the screws of battleships and torpedo boats above him. He now discovered that his periscope was damaged, and that his boat was leaking and losing its buoyancy. Water had to be blown out of the tanks from time to time, and this revealed the presence of the submarine to the ships above. It was not until near midnight that she dared come to the surface. She rose carefully, and, thanks to the darkness, was not seen. Soon she was making her way to the shore, having been under water for four hours without a break.

About the second week of May German submarines were reported in the Mediterranean. During the month of February the Germans completed the first of their big submarines which were capable of making the journey from Zeebrugge to the Dardanelles within three weeks. Secret bases had been established in Eastern waters, and the British Government offered a large reward for their discovery. Several of them were found on Greek islands. Before long the German submarines made their presence felt. We shall learn in a later chapter how, on 26th May, one of them managed to torpedo the *Triumph*, and the next day sent the *Majestic* to the bottom. The submarines practically put an end to the bombardment of the Dardanelles forts by our ships of war. While firing at the forts the ships were obliged to move slowly, and thus were at the mercy of an enemy under water.

Germany's new submarines in the Mediterranean mounted bigger and more effective guns than had formerly been employed on under-water craft, and they were able to destroy several vessels by shell fire. Not only British, French, and Italian vessels were sent to the bottom, but one if not two American ships. I have already told you of the sinking of the *Ancona*. Dastardly as it was, it was outdone on 30th December, when the Peninsular and Oriental liner *Persia* was sent to her doom. She was on her outward voyage, and at lunch time was off the island of Crete, when, without warning of any kind, a torpedo was launched against her. Five minutes after she received her death-blow she had vanished utterly. More than 330 out of the 501 passengers and crew were lost, and amongst the victims were a large number of women and children. Lord Montagu, who was saved, cabled home as follows:—

> "I have had a miraculous escape. The ship sank by the stern, dragging me down with her. When I was blown up to the surface again I saw a dreadful scene of struggling human beings. There was hardly any wreckage to grasp. Nearly all the boats were smashed, and only three remained afloat. After a desperate struggle, I climbed on the bottom of a broken boat with 28 Lascars and three other Europeans. Our number was reduced to 19 by Thursday night, and only 11 remained on Friday, the rest having died from exposure and injuries. We saw a neutral steamer pass close by on Thursday evening at about 8 o'clock, but she took no notice of the red flare shown by another of the *Persia's* boats. We saw a large steamer three miles away on the next day; but she too ignored our signals, probably thinking they were a ruse of an enemy submarine. Our broken boat capsized constantly, and we were all the time washed by the waves, so that we were almost exhausted when the second night began. At 8.30 p.m. we saw the Alfred Holt steamer *Ningchow* near us, and shouted as loudly as we could. On Friday night at 9 o'clock she rescued us. We had been thirty-two hours in the sea without water or food, except one biscuit, since breakfast time on Thursday."

Within a day or two of this outrage the British steamer *Glengyle* was also sunk in the Mediterranean, but happily all the passengers were saved. In the North Sea we had got the submarine danger well in hand, but in the far more extensive Mediterranean the enemy remained powerful for mischief down to the close of the year.

CHAPTER XIV.

WINTER FIGHTING IN POLAND AND EAST PRUSSIA.

In chapter XXIX. of our third volume I told you how von Hindenburg's second attempt on Warsaw was foiled, and how the Russians during the last days of December 1914 stood firm on a front of great strength. At the beginning of the year 1915 the Russian front extended from the Baltic Sea right to the border of Rumania—a distance of at least nine hundred miles. In January 1915 the Russians were holding the longest battle front ever known in the history of the world.

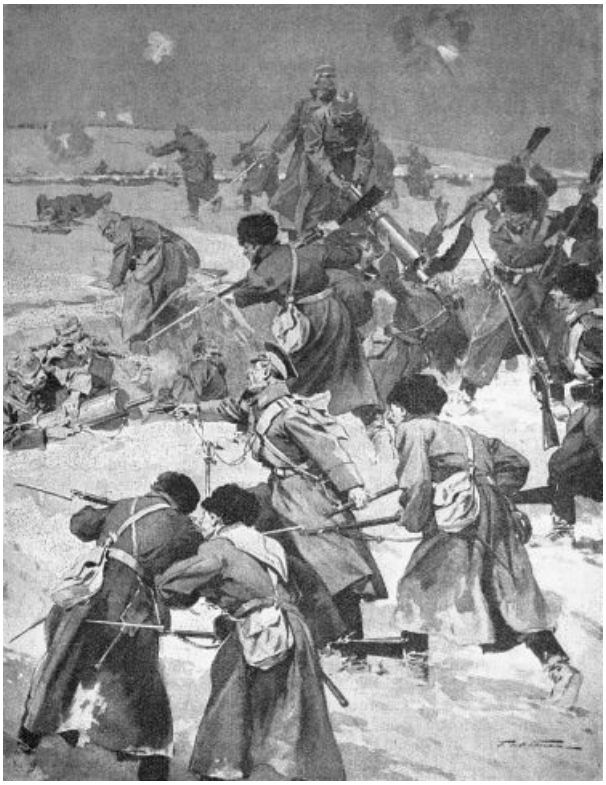
We may divide this very extended battle front as Caesar divided Gaul—into three parts. The trenches in the central or Polish zone ran from the mouth of the Bzura, on the Middle Vistula, to the Upper Vistula, at its confluence with the Donajetz, in a fairly straight line, for a distance of about two hundred miles. On either side of this central zone there were two wings which differed greatly in character. Both were bent back from the line of the central zone: the north or right wing followed a sickle shape through a region of lake and marsh from the Baltic to the Vistula, and was for the most part within the East Prussian frontier; while the south or left wing ran from the Upper Vistula to follow the line of the Carpathians.

We will now learn something of the fighting which took place in the first three months of the year 1915 on the north or right wing. For the first few weeks there was ordinary trench warfare such as was going on in the West. Attacks and counter-attacks were frequent, but there was no action of any great importance. Most of the attacks were made by night, beneath the light of rockets and star-shells and the glare of searchlights. On the Bzura River the trenches of friend and foe were only sixty yards apart, and in this section of the line the Germans tried a very ingenious method of breaking down the Russian wire entanglements. They filled barrels with clay, and rolled them down the slopes towards the Russians, who believed that men with wire-cutters were hiding behind the barrels and pushing them forward. They therefore flung their hand grenades at the barrels, only to discover that they were moving by their own weight, and that there were no men behind them. When the Russians had thus exhausted their supply of hand grenades, the Germans pushed forward and tried to rush the trenches. They were only beaten off after a furious struggle. Shells and bombs containing poison gases were also used by the Germans on this part of the line.

In Poland there was the same kind of warfare as on the Bzura. Across the plains the Germans had made a maze of very strong trenches and earthworks with deep underground chambers, floored and roofed with wood.

In Galicia, towards the end of January the bright sun melted the snows of the Carpathians, and the streams became roaring torrents which made a very effective barrier against surprise attacks. Nevertheless the enemy kept up a very heavy bombardment across the flooded waters. On the Donajetz River the Austrians broke the rules of war, and fired from their machine guns explosive bullets, which when they entered a man's body blew away half his back.

Towards the end of January the Russians began to take the offensive on the wings. At this time, you must remember, the new forces which the Allies in the West had raised were not yet ready to take the field. The "thin line of steel and valour" in Artois and Flanders was only just holding its own, and it was feared that if the Germans brought troops from the East they would be able to break through the Allied line and reach the Channel ports. The Grand Duke Nicholas was, therefore, requested to attack von Hindenburg, and prevent him from releasing troops for service in the West. Earlier in the war he had sacrificed large numbers of his men in East Prussia to give his Western Allies a breathing space. Now, although his forces were very weak in guns, rifles, and ammunition, he showed the same high courage and chivalry. He knew that, if he pushed forward into the sacred land of East Prussia, von Hindenburg would hasten to engage him, and that if he threatened Hungary, the great granary of the Central Powers, the enemy would be bound to oppose him. The Grand Duke Nicholas was well aware that he could not hope for conquest. All that he could do would be to worry the enemy and prevent him from sending troops to the West.



The Russians retaking a Trench before Bolimov.

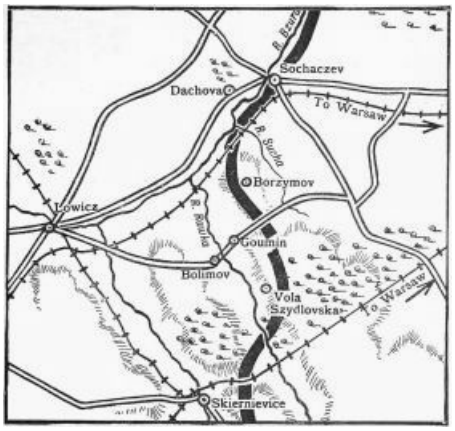
(***By permission of The Illustrated London News.***)

The following account of the incident pictured above was given by a Russian soldier:—"They did not stay long when we came down on them with our bayonets. Our artillery had dropped many shells right in the trench before we got there. The machine guns played on us until the last minute, and we paused to fire at the gunners. The few Germans who were left tried to drag the guns away with them, but our men took them away from them."

In order to provide a sufficient force for these attacks, the Russians had to draw off men and guns from their centre. Von Hindenburg knew this, and he therefore determined to make another effort to capture Warsaw by a frontal attack. The fifty-sixth birthday of the Kaiser was drawing near, and what better present could be made to him than the great Polish capital? You will remember that at this time the Russians were lying along the right bank of the Bzura and its tributary the Rawka. Look at the map on the next page and find the town of Bolimov, on the western bank of the Rawka. It is about forty miles from Warsaw, and is connected with it by a fairly good road. In front of Bolimov there are rolling downs and belts of wood. You will notice that the Russian lines cross the Rawka south of Bolimov.

On the last day of January von Mackensen, who had brought up large numbers of heavy guns all along the left bank of the Rawka, began a terrific bombardment of the Russian lines. This was done to puzzle the Russians and make them uncertain as to where the infantry attack was to be made. The Germans proposed to advance on a line of seven miles between Bolimov and the Bzura.

On the night of 1st February, when the snow was falling heavily, the German guns fiercely shelled the Russian trenches between the Warsaw road and the Bzura River. When it was supposed that the wire entanglements had been blown into a million fragments and the trenches utterly wrecked, 140,000 Germans, including Prussian Guards, advanced in masses, sometimes ten and sometimes twenty-two deep. They were mown down by Russian shot and shell; nevertheless they carried the first line of trenches, and by the evening of the 2nd February had pushed the Russians back to the crest of a ridge behind the town of Borzymov. On Wednesday the Germans looked like succeeding; but by means of the railways which you see to the north and to the south of Borzymov, and also by means of the roads, the Grand Duke hurried up reinforcements from Warsaw. They marched through the driving snow, and arrived on the scene of battle late on Thursday. By this time the Germans had been checked. They had pushed across the crest of the ridge behind Borzymov, had advanced five miles along the railway, and had very nearly broken through the Russian front.



The Battle on the Rawka.

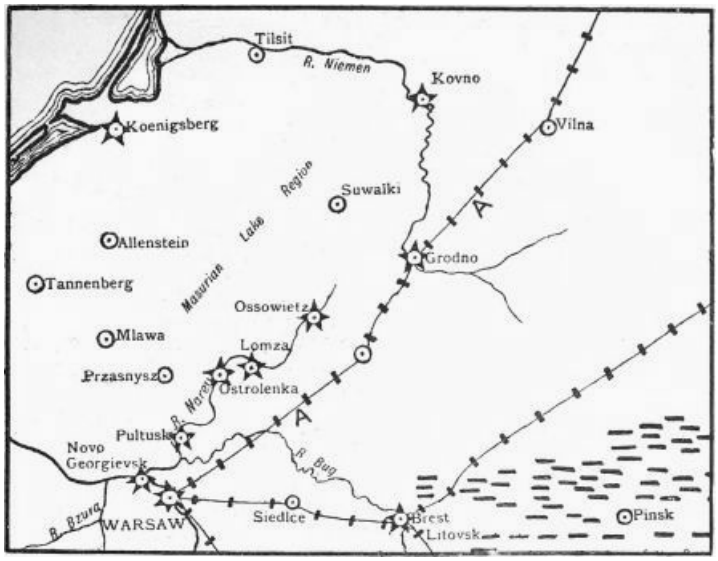
The fighting was terribly fierce, and the Germans lost heavily. Around Borzymov the slaughter was so great that the ground was cumbered with German dead, and the survivors used the bodies of their fallen comrades to build up defences. The woods to the south of the Bolimov-Warsaw road were also strewn with dead. By 8th February the Germans had been flung back to the banks of the Rawka, and the Russians had crossed the river at Dachova. The German loss cannot have been less than 20,000 men. The great attempt had failed, and it was now clear that Warsaw could not be captured by a frontal attack.

As soon as von Hindenburg saw that the Bzura-Rawka lines were too strong for him, he was ready with a new plan. He was now about to try a flank attack. Look carefully at the map on the next page and notice the railways which meet in the Polish capital. By these railways alone can a Russian army maintain itself westward of the Vistula. In front of the main railway (A A) from Warsaw to Petrograd you see a river line—that of the Niemen and the Narev. Von Hindenburg's plan was to push out from East Prussia, carry the river line, cut the railway, and thus force the Russians to retire from Warsaw, which would then fall into his hands. Meanwhile the Austrians, on the Russian left wing, were to drive back Brussilov, relieve Przemysl, and try to recapture Lemberg. If these operations should succeed, the Russians would be forced back from the line of the Vistula to the river Bug, and it would take them a year's fighting to recover the lost ground.

First of all we will follow the fortunes of the East Prussian campaign. While the fighting was proceeding on the Rawka, the Russians, who numbered about 120,000, were making headway in East Prussia. Despite the keen frost, the icy winds, and the deep snowdrifts, they pushed back the weak German forces opposed to them, until, on 6th February, their right was not far from Tilsit, and their left rested on the town of Johannisburg. Nowhere were they less than twenty-five miles within the East Prussian frontier.

On 7th February von Hindenburg sprang his surprise upon the invaders. He suddenly hurled 300,000 men against the whole line which the Russians were holding. According to custom, the German left wing made an outflanking movement. It was successful, and the Russians holding this part of the line were forced to retreat along the railway towards Kovno. The 20th Corps just to the south of it now had its right "in the air," and was obliged to retire. In the forests and marshes north of Suwalki it was broken up into parties of stragglers. The remainder of the Russian line was also driven back, but only after a stern struggle. By 15th February the Germans were on Russian soil, and were moving towards the river line which screens the railway from Warsaw to Petrograd. They were about to attack on the Niemen, the Bobr, and the Narev at one and the same time. If the river line should be forced, the railway would soon be reached and cut.

I have told you what happened in East Prussia in a few sentences; but you must not suppose that the Germans won easy victories. The Russians resisted desperately, and many of them fought to the last cartridge. Though their losses were very heavy, they performed a great feat in retreating seventy miles with a force three times as great hard on their heels. The Germans had a good railway system to help them in their East Prussian advance, but more than half of the Russian army had to retire through thick forests and drag heavy guns across a rough, broken country deep in snow and without railways.



Map to illustrate the German attack on the river line.

The Kaiser sent the following message to his people: "Russians crushingly defeated. Our beloved East Prussia liberated from the enemy. Our beautiful Mazurian land is waste. (Signed) Wilhelm." The Germans claimed that they had captured 75,000 prisoners and 300 guns, but this was false. The total Russian losses were, perhaps, 80 guns and 30,000 men.

Austrian Trenches. ***Photo, Topical Press.***

This photograph gives a good idea of the way in which trenches are constructed and manned. It will be noticed that the front and rear trench communicate by means of a narrow cutting, and that the trenches are dug zigzag so that they cannot be enfiladed along the full length.

CHAPTER XV.

A BATTLE OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

The Russians had already prepared positions on the river line, and by 19th February they had occupied them, and were waiting for the Germans to attack. Next day the enemy launched forces against the Niemen, about fourteen miles to the north of Grodno. A thick belt of wood on the banks of the river screened them from view, and some of them succeeded in crossing the river, but could not emerge from the forests on the other side. Though the railway was less than ten miles away, they were unable to reach it.

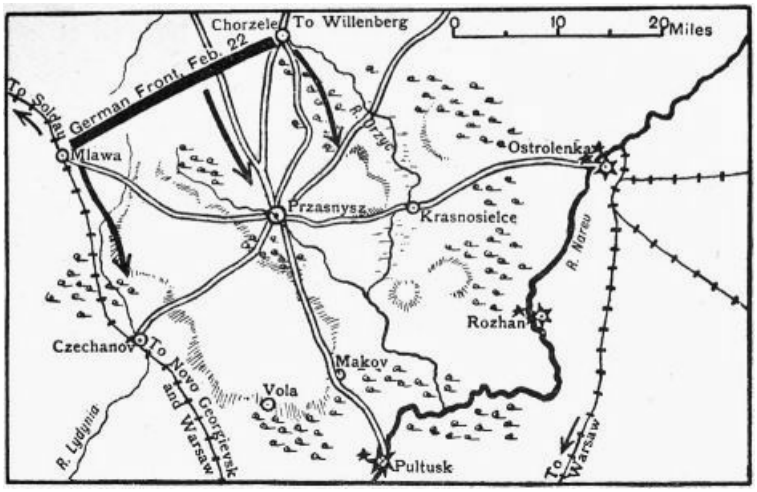
Meanwhile the fortress of Ossowietz, on the Bobr, was undergoing a second siege. You will remember that the Germans had tried to capture it in the previous September, but had failed, because the fortress stands amidst marshes, and they could not find solid ground from which to fire their big guns. Again they failed, though they used every possible device to bring about its downfall. Every knuckle of hard soil on which a howitzer could be placed was known to the garrison, and they were able to silence the big guns of the enemy before they could do much mischief. It is said that the Germans lost 15,000 dead in their attempts to storm the fortress.

Thus the attacks on the Niemen and the Bobr had come to nothing. By the beginning of March the Russians were advancing everywhere along the line from Kovno to the Narev, and the Germans were slowly retiring towards East Prussia. There was desperate fighting with the bayonet amidst the marshy woods near Augustovo, where large captures were made of German guns, supplies, and prisoners. By the middle of March the Germans were covering the East Prussian frontier, and were only ten miles within Russian territory. Meanwhile a great battle had been fought and lost on the Narev.

Look carefully at the map on p. 115; it shows you the country between the East Prussian frontier and the Narev. This river flows in a winding course through a district of marshes and heavy woods, with here and there a few ridges. To the north of the river, and to the east of the town of Przasnysz,[21] which stands midway between the frontier and the Narev, there are some fairly high hills with patches of forest on their sandy slopes. The crossing-places of the Narev are protected by fortified towns, some of which you see marked by a star on the map.

Find the town of Mlawa, of which you have already heard. On a front stretching for some twenty-five miles to the north-east of that town, and about a day's march in front of the Prussian frontier railway, the Germans massed two corps, and on 22nd February began to advance in three columns. The right travelled from Mlawa by the railway which you see marked on the map, the centre marched along the main highway towards Przasnysz, and the left followed the valley of a little river towards a road which enters the same town from the north-east. There was only a single Russian brigade in front of Przasnysz, and it was easily driven back. On the 24th the Germans entered the town, in which they seized a number of guns and captured about half the brigade which had been defending it.

On the previous day another Russian advanced body which lay on a ridge near the village of Vola, to the south of Przasnysz, had been attacked. Elsewhere the Germans were advancing without much difficulty, but on this ridge a violent battle raged, and the Russians made a most heroic stand. For thirty-six hours they held out, and on the evening of the 24th their reinforcements arrived. Four columns of Russians had advanced on Przasnysz from the Narev line, and the invaders were pressed northward on three sides. They were driven through the town in confusion, and on the 26th it was once more in Russian hands. All the next day the battle raged amongst the snowy ridges to the north-east and north-west of the town, and by Sunday morning the enemy was in full retreat for the frontier, leaving 10,000 prisoners behind him. Thus the whole attempt to capture Warsaw by a flank movement had failed.



Scene of the Fighting round Przasnysz.

The Battle of Przasnysz was more like a struggle of the Middle Ages than a modern battle. The Russians short of arms and ammunition, and they could not supply all their trained men with rifles. In this and in other fights the Russians kept unarmed troops in the rear. When the men with rifles fell, the unarmed were sent forward to take up the weapons of the dead and wounded and then fling themselves on the foe. Men rushed into the firing line at Przasnysz with a sword bayonet in one hand and two bombs in the other. They charged through rifle and machine-gun fire until they were near enough to fling their bombs, and then fell furiously upon the enemy with cold steel, utterly reckless of wounds and death. The Germans could not stand against such an onset, and fled. Thus by sheer bodily might the Russians had flung back in rout a foe superior to them in numbers, and once more von Hindenburg found Warsaw beyond his grasp.

The Retreat of the Austrians across the Uzsok Pass. ***By permission of The Sphere.***

This spirited drawing shows Russian cavalry driving the Austrians across the snow-bound Uzsok Pass. (See page 120.) In this attack the Russians fell upon the flank and rear of the Austrians during a violent snowstorm, and pursued them for many miles. Hundreds of Austrians surrendered.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FALL OF PRZEMYSL.

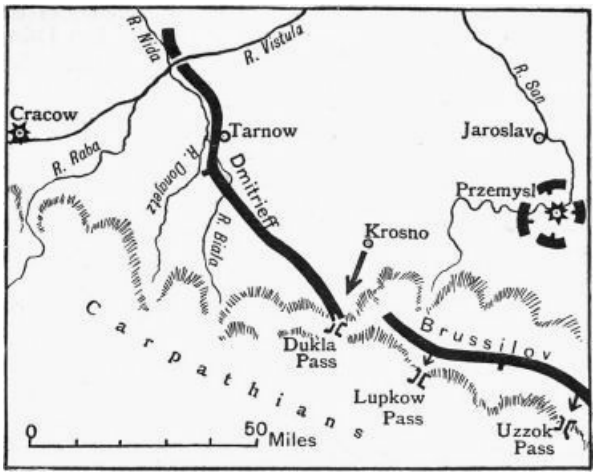
You will remember that while von Hindenburg was vainly attempting to pierce the river line of the Niemen and the Narev on the Russian right wing, the Austrians were in motion against the south or left wing. On page 249 of our third volume I gave you a map, which I repeat on page 119, showing the line which the Russians were holding in Galicia at the close of the year 1914. They then held the northern entrances to the Carpathian passes, and had pushed up the Dukla Pass almost to the crest. Newspaper readers in this country believed that before long the Russian legions would be pouring down on the Hungarian plain, and that when the great granary of the Central Powers was invaded the end of the war would be in sight.

During the month of January the Russians strove hard to push across the Galician passes, and their cavalry actually descended to the Hungarian plain thirty miles south of the mountains. Not only was fighting going on in Galicia, but in Bukovina[22]—that is, the country of the beech woods—which stretches southward from the Dneister, across the Pruth and the Sereth, to the eastern face of the Carpathians. Ever since September 1914 the Russians had held Northern Bukovina, and they now wished to conquer the whole of it, for several reasons. In the first place, it was Germany's main source of supply for petrol; in the second place, it lay on the frontier of Rumania, and it was thought that the presence of a Russian army in Bukovina would induce Rumania to join the Allies. Further, if Rumania should elect to do so, she would be able to join hands at once with the Russians. In the third place, there are several fairly easy passes from Bukovina into Hungary, and one of them is the main route from the north to the plains of Hungary.

The Russians had only a division in Bukovina, and the Austrians opposed them with a force which was not much stronger. By the middle of January almost all the country was in the hands of the Russians. They had, however, not yet secured the pass which would enable them to advance into Hungary.

The time had now come for the Austrians to make a great effort to save Hungary, and to prevent Rumania, with her large and well-equipped army, from entering into the struggle on the side of the Allies. How was this to be done? Two campaigns were necessary—the one to drive back Brussilov from the passes and to relieve Przemysl, and the other to clear Bukovina of the invaders.

Let us see how the campaign in Bukovina fared. Three Austrian corps and one German corps crossed the mountains and advanced in two columns. The Russians, you will remember, had only one division with which to meet these four army corps. They were obliged to fall back, and thus Bukovina was cleared. The Austrians captured town after town, and early in March they entered Stanislau,[23] a railway junction only seventy miles from Lemberg. They were delighted with their success, and they reported that they had made huge captures of prisoners. They had now reached a position from which they could threaten the Russian communications. Soon, however, it was discovered that the Russians had only fallen back to a point where they could be reinforced. As soon as their numbers were sufficiently increased they advanced again, and pushed the Austrians out of Stanislau, and almost back to the line of the Pruth. By doing so they removed the danger to their communications.



Position of the Russians in Galicia at the end of 1914.

Meanwhile what had happened in Galicia? Two Austrian armies had been fighting fierce battles in the deep snows and slush of the Carpathians. With infinite labour guns and transports had been hauled up the icy slopes, where a foothold could barely be maintained. Infantry attacks were difficult; the white snow threw up the figures of the men, who thus became excellent targets, no matter what uniforms they wore. Even night attacks were revealed, for on moonless nights the light reflected from the snow made all things clear. Both sides suffered terribly from the cold, but it told more severely on the Austrians than on the Russians, who are accustomed to bitter winters. In the last week of January a bright sun shone, and often the pure white snow was stained scarlet with the blood of the fallen. Blizzards swept across the mountains during February, and checked the fighting on the uplands, though it continued to rage in the foothills. Perhaps the most terrible hand-to-hand fighting known to history took place at a little village near the Uzsok Pass. Large German forces for two months vainly tried to oust the Russians, who had captured the position from them. Some idea of the awful losses sustained by the Germans may be gathered from the statement that one regiment changed from colonel to drummer boy three and perhaps four times. The village stands on a height, and during the winter is shrouded in snow. While the furious battles were raging, the height was reduced to bare soil, every foot of its surface having been ploughed with shell and drenched with blood. You can imagine the horror of trench life in this region, with the thermometer below freezing-point and the icy blizzards blowing almost daily. In some places the trenches were only forty paces apart, and so fierce were the attacks and counter-attacks that eight out of every ten men engaged in them are said to have fallen. At the beginning of February the Russians in this region destroyed a whole battalion of Germans, save the commander and twenty men.

The Austrian army which fought between the Dukla Pass and the Uzsok Pass was charged with the duty of relieving Przemysl, but it was held back by the Russians, as also was the army which was operating more to the east. During the last days of February and the first days of March Brussilov fought a fierce battle on a ridge near the Uzsok Pass. He held the heights, drove back the Austrians, and even the most desperate bayonet attacks could not force him from his position of vantage. The Austrians were held up, and the Russians gained sufficient time to reinforce their weak troops which had been driven out of Bukovina. I have already told you that they advanced again and pushed the Austrians back to the line of the Pruth.

The attempt to relieve Przemysl had failed, and on 22nd March the fortress fell. Before I proceed to tell you the story of this Russian success, let me give you some idea of the situation and importance of Przemysl. It has been famous as a fortress for a thousand years. In early times it was regarded as the key to the Hungarian plains, and in modern times it has been considered as the main outlying protection to the city of Cracow. The town claims to date back to the eighth century, and certainly is one of the oldest cities of Galicia. The river San, which washes its walls, descends in wide sweeps from the Uzsok Pass, through mountain glens filled with fir and beech trees, and then through the vales of the foothills, which are planted with groves of apricot, pear, and cherry, and are dotted here and there with brightly painted wooden houses. The valley of the San is the orchard land of Galicia.

The first modern forts of Przemysl were erected in 1871, and since then have been several times enlarged and improved, until, on the eve of the war, the fortress was one of the strongest in the country. It was a ring fortress like Liége and Namur. At a distance of six miles from the city there was a circle of outer forts with smaller works connecting them. Within this ring, about a thousand yards from the city, there was another circular series of forts. Had Russia been supplied with heavy siege guns such as the Germans brought against the Belgian and French fortresses, Przemysl would have fallen in a month. As it was, it held out, during its second siege, for seven months.

A glance at the map[24] shows you that Przemysl is chiefly important because of its situation with regard to the railways of Galicia. It stands on the main trunk line connecting Lemberg with Cracow, and it gives railway access to the Lupkow and Uzsok passes. While Przemysl held out the Russians had to send supplies to their armies by long and roundabout routes, and they could not readily mass troops for a big movement against the passes. As far back as September 27, 1914, the Russians had closed round it, and had sat tight in their trenches hoping to starve it into surrender. The town was not well supplied with provisions, and by the middle of October the defenders were on very short commons indeed. Then came a blessed respite. Von Hindenburg's first assault on Warsaw forced Ivanov to retire beyond the San, and the Austrians found themselves able to pour food, ammunition, and supplies into the besieged fortress. By the 12th of November, when the Russians had surrounded it once more, there were four Austrian army corps in the place, and these, with the townsfolk and refugees, numbered some 200,000 souls.

It is still a matter of wonder why the Austrians kept four army corps in Przemysl. To hold the twenty-five miles circuit of the fortress 50,000 men would have been ample, and every extra mouth in the place only brought the day of surrender nearer. One would have supposed that during the retreat of the Russians in October distant lines of trenches would have been flung out from Przemysl, as had been done at Verdun. The Austrians, however, showed no foresight, and the governor seems to have considered the town a capital place in which to spend the winter. When the Russians returned they had nothing to do but sit down and let the garrison eat up its supplies. When food gave out the fortress was bound to fall.

The Fall of Przemysl.

(***From the picture by H. C. Seppings-Wright. By permission of The Illustrated London News.***)
This picture, which was drawn by the artist on the spot, shows Russians advancing to occupy the fortress, and passing on the way large numbers of Austrians who had been captured in the final sortie. The town of Przemysl is

seen in the distance on the right. In the background are seen Austrian forts and a railway bridge being blown up. Almost in the middle of the picture a land-mine is exploding.

In December the Austrians made an attempt to relieve the fortress. In Chapter XXVII. of our third volume I told you how the Austrians launched two armies against the Russians, who were then threatening Cracow, and how the Russians were forced to retreat to the position shown on the map on page 119. During the Russian retreat the Austrians were so near to Przemysl that they could hear its guns thundering, and exchange signals with its garrison by means of searchlights. The time had come for the Austrians within the fortress to dash out and break through the lines of their besiegers. On 15th December five regiments did so.

They broke through the Russian lines at the south-east angle, and for four days there was fierce and doubtful fighting. The Russians, however, managed to drive the Austrians back into the town. The sortie had failed, with a loss of 3,000 killed and wounded. Shortly afterwards Brussilov cleared the mouths of the passes, and by Christmas Day Przemysl was once more girdled by a ring of iron. I have already told you how the Austro-Germans made another attempt late in January and early in February 1915 to relieve the strain on the fortress, and how it came to nought. Thereafter the fall of Przemysl was only a matter of time.

Fighting went on night and day. Many times the Austrians strove to break out, but each time they were driven back, with huge losses on both sides. The Russians counter-attacked, and won several of the forts. "These unexpected blows," wrote a Russian general, "greatly excite the garrison. Right through the night their searchlights sweep to and fro over our positions, and the long white rays rest trembling on every fold of the ground. At times something alarms the forts, and the air is instantly filled with the thunder of Austrian guns. The fire is kept up for thirty minutes to an hour before it subsides again." It is worthy of note that not a single Russian shell fell within the town itself.

But all the time famine was doing its deadly work. Up to December there was no shortage of food; but when the new year set in the rations were severely cut down, first for the civilians, then for the soldiers, next for the hospitals, and finally for the officers. The weather grew cold, and there was no firewood. Bread could not be obtained at all, and a fowl cost twenty-four shillings. Soon the cavalry began slaughtering their horses for food. By March a cow was selling for £140, and a dog for £2, 10s.

Mr. Stanley Washburn, a correspondent with the Russian army, tells us that the place was greatly over-garrisoned by patient, haggard soldiers starving in the trenches and sleek faultlessly-dressed officers living on the fat of the land in fashionable hotels and restaurants. While the garrison became thin and half starved, the officers ate three meals a day, and enjoyed fresh meat, cigars, wines, and every luxury. While soldiers were falling fainting in the streets, their officers were leading the life to which they had been accustomed in Vienna during times of peace.

On the night of 13th March the end began. The Russians pushed through the outer line of defences and began to bombard the inner forts. Four days later the Austrians strove for the last time to break out, but the Russian guns caught them and mowed them down in swathes. The survivors were driven back with heavy loss, and 4,000 prisoners remained in Russian hands. Early on the morning of the 22nd the besiegers were awakened by the noise of loud explosions. The Austrians were blowing up the forts before surrendering the city. We are told that the burning forts smoked like a circle of volcanoes. Soon a white flag was seen fluttering above the highest building in the town. Przemysl was ready to surrender. Meanwhile the officers were shooting their chargers, to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Russians, and the soldiers, crazy with hunger, were greedily devouring the raw flesh. Tons of explosives were sunk in the river, guns and rifles were destroyed, and bridges were blown up.

About nine o'clock a letter reached the Russian headquarters from the Austrian general saying that hunger had forced him to yield the fortress. A few Russian officers entered and received the surrender; but there was no triumphal parade such as had been witnessed when the Germans entered Antwerp.

> "Civilians inform me," wrote Mr. Washburn, "that they gladly welcome the Russians, and that the first troops who entered were greeted with cheers, while the garrison was frankly pleased that the siege was over and their troubles at an end. I have seen on the road and in the town tens of thousands of prisoners, and I believe the Austrians, especially the Hungarians, are first-class raw material, but that now they are utterly broken and helpless." (This he considered to be due to their wretched officers, who, if those seen in Przemysl were fair samples, appeared to be the most selfish and incompetent in

Europe.) "I have never witnessed a more unpleasant sight than that of the dapper, overdressed Austrian officers laughing and chatting gaily as they were driven in carriages to the railway station for departure, passing through columns of their own men, pale and haggard from hardships which apparently had not been shared in any particular by their officers."

So fell Przemysl. Its capture was not so much a Russian victory as an Austrian disgrace. By overcrowding the place with soldiers, and putting careless, ignorant officers in charge of them, the Austrians ensured its downfall. About 120,000 prisoners, including 2,600 officers, fell into Russian hands; about 1,000 guns were captured, 180 of them fit for use, as well as a large amount of shell and small-arm ammunition. Russia had obtained an excellent base from which to advance against the central passes of the Carpathians, and she had set free an army of 100,000 men for future operations.

The fall of Przemysl was greeted with great delight by the Allies, and it was thought that before the end of the summer Cracow would be sure to fall, Silesia would be entered, and the Russian legions would be sweeping through Hungary. Alas! these rosy hopes were soon to be disappointed. Within five weeks clouds began to gather in the East. The Russians were caught napping. The strongest army which Germany had ever mustered was hurled against them, and huge guns drove them remorselessly back from the soil which they had so hardly won. Less than forty days after the Austro-Germans began to move, Przemysl was once more in their hands. Nor was the retreat stayed until the Russians were driven far back on their own soil, and the very existence of their armies was at stake.

CHAPTER XVII.

STORIES FROM EASTERN BATTLEFIELDS.

In this chapter I shall tell you some stories illustrating the fierce fighting which took place in the Eastern theatre of war during the first three months of the year 1915. I have already told you that Russian women frequently disguised themselves as men and fought with great heroism in the ranks. A Russian girl named Alexandra Lagereva was awarded a commission early in the year for fine soldierly conduct in the field. During one of the battles fought near Suwalki her detachment was surrounded by the Germans, and forced to surrender. Alexandra noticed, from the way in which her captors looked at her, that they had guessed her secret. Perhaps for this reason they did not go through her pockets, in which she carried a watch and a compass.

The prisoners were locked up in a church, and a sentry was placed at the door. At night, when all was quiet, Alexandra formed a plan of escape. A window was broken, and the girl crept through it. She stealthily approached the sentry, whom she felled with a stone. Then several of her comrades clambered out of the window, recovered their horses, and, along with her, made off. Soon, however, a force of eighteen Uhlans barred their way; but Alexandra and her comrades managed to capture them. When the German lieutenant learned that his eighteen men had been overpowered by a girl and six Russians, he tore his hair in rage. He was found to be carrying important papers, and these Alexandra took to the nearest Russian commander, whose report on her gallant conduct led to her promotion. She was described as of middle height, slender and graceful, and by no means of that masculine character which her deeds would lead one to suppose.

Mr. Washburn, who has already been mentioned in these pages, tells us that the Russian officer looks upon his men as his children, and that they call him "father." "It is a strange relation," he says, "that one sees between them. I recall seeing a grizzled old colonel marching his much-cut-up regiment past him on the plains of Poland after an action. As each company passed the old hero called out in his deep bass voice, 'I am pleased with you, my children; you have done well,' And each company replied in unison, 'Thank you, father; we are willing to do as much again.' And then they all marched back to the trenches and took up the burden of the campaign once more."

You have already heard much about the Cossacks, who used to be considered demons of cruelty, but are now known to be much like other Russians—easy-going, kindly, and good-natured. One of the Cossack regiments is described as being clad in baggy greatcoats of undressed sheepskin dyed a deep claret colour, while other regiments sport similar garments of a bright orange hue. All wear on their heads hairy busbies about the size of a bushel measure. Each man owns his horse, and grooms it until it looks like a racing thoroughbred. The Germans go in terror of the Cossacks. A story is told that when a German soldier was captured in Poland he looked uneasily about him. On being asked what worried him, he said, "The Cossacks." He then went on to say that he and his comrades believed that the Cossacks could not be trusted alone even by the Russians. They were, he said, brought to the front in huge vans, and when an action began the vans were turned towards the enemy, and the doors were thrown open, when out leaped the Cossacks, sword in hand, and dashed upon the foe. When the fight was over, so he told his captors, the Cossacks were rounded up and coaxed back into their cages, where they were kept in confinement until the next battle!

An American doctor who offered his services to Russia because "Russia stuck to us during the Civil War," tells us that though the Germans are better rifle shots than the Russians, they cannot compare with the Tsar's soldiers when it comes to the bayonet. "When these moujiks,"[25] said the doctor, "climb out of their trenches and begin to sing their national songs they just go crazy, and they aren't scared of anything; and believe me, when the Germans see them coming across the fields bellowing these songs of theirs, they just don't wait one minute, but dig right out across the landscape as fast as they can tear. I don't think there's a soldier in the world that has anything on the Russian private for bravery. They are a

stubborn lot, too, and will sit in trenches in all weathers, and be just as cheerful under one condition as another. One big advantage over here, as I regard it, is the good relations between the soldiers and their officers."

Mr. Washburn tells us[26] how the colonel of a Russian battery "had a great laugh on the enemy. What happened was this. A German Taube flew over the line several times, and it kept coming back so frequently, and hovering over the battery, that the officers who were watching it became suspicious that they had been 'spotted.' When darkness fell the men of the battery became extremely busy, and by working like bees moved their guns perhaps 600 yards to the south, and by daylight had them in the new positions and fairly well masked. Shortly after sunrise back came the aeroplane, and when over the old position it gave a signal to its own lines and then flew back. Almost instantly shells fell fast and thick on the abandoned spot. Six hundred yards away the men of the battery watched the shells falling, and laughed their sides out at the way they had fooled the Germans. . . . From glancing at the field torn up with shell fire one begins to realize what observation means to the enemy. With modern methods a single signal from an aeroplane may mean the wiping out in a few minutes of an unsuspecting battery that has been safely hidden for months."

CHAPTER XVIII.

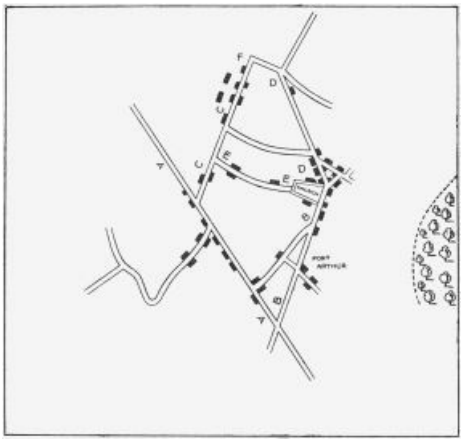
THE BATTLE OF NEUVE CHAPELLE.

We now return to the sodden plains of Flanders, where the torn and slashed fields, the riven woods, and the tattered hedgerows are beginning to don the livery of spring. Men looking out of their trenches are gladdened by the pale sunshine, the tender green of the young leaves, the songs of the birds, the patches of blue in the showery sky, and the early flowers that coyly peep out amidst the grass. These signs, which in the happy days of peace foretell the manifold delights of summer, have no such meaning for the men in the trenches; yet they are welcome, for they indicate that the long inactivity of the winter is drawing to a close. The day will soon arrive when the soiled and battered men who have watched each other so long from muddy holes in the ground will come to close grips again. Fierce, relentless warfare will begin once more; with what result only the future can tell. One thing is certain—many of those who now watch the miracle of spring will never see the glory of summer.

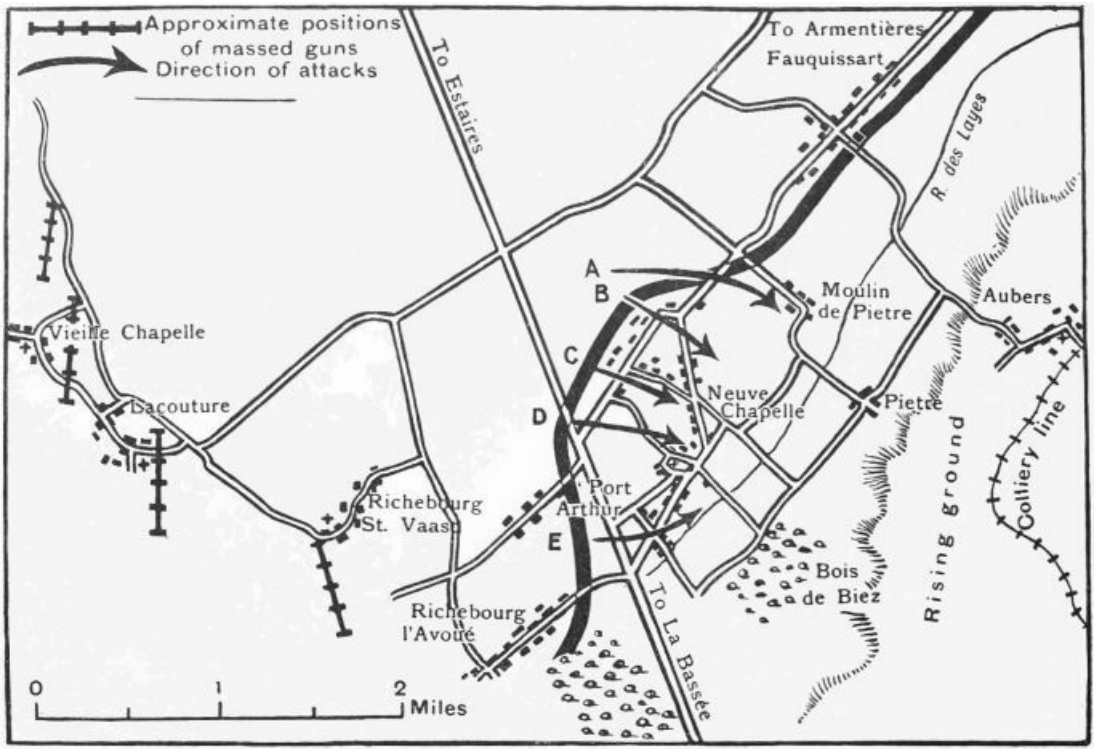
The month of March has come. The trenches are in much the same position as they were in the preceding November. The gains and losses of the last five months have been trifling. But amongst the Allies there is a feeling that their day has at last arrived. Especially strong is this belief in the British lines. New troops are crossing the narrow seas every day; the Canadians and many Territorial divisions are in the field, and before the month is over there are half a million Britons on French and Flemish soil. Never before have we arrayed such a mighty army. It is fifty-five times as great as that with which King Harry charged the French at Agincourt, twelve times as great as that with which Wellington won victories in the Peninsula, twenty-five times as great as the British part of the mixed army with which he made an end of Napoleon at Waterloo, and twice as great as that which brought the South African War to a close. Four months ago the little British army had barely been able to beat off the fierce attacks of an overwhelming enemy. By miracles of valour alone had our much-tried soldiers been able to stem the torrent in the first onset of its fury. Now, for every man who kept the gate at La Bassée and Ypres there are four. Britons and Germans have now changed parts. It is ours to attack, theirs to defend.

By the middle of February our General Staff felt itself strong enough to take the offensive. In Chapter IX. I told you how the French in Champagne had punctured the German line by means of an intense bombardment of the opposing trenches. We were now ready to make a similar attempt. If you look at the map on page 132, you will see a thick black line showing the position of our trenches about midway between La Bassée and Estaires. In front of the village of Neuve Chapelle this line makes a distinct sag to the westward. It was upon this section of the line that we meant to operate, and we hoped that we might not only capture the village and straighten out our line, but push the Germans off the Aubers ridge, from which coign of vantage the La Bassée-Lille railway line could be commanded. If fortune were kind, we might even reach Lille itself.

Though Neuve Chapelle is only a small village, its fame is now world wide, and it will figure in the history books of the future. It is an unimportant collection of houses and small farms scattered about a junction of country roads, with a church in its centre. Our soldiers looking eastward from the British front could see the long, straggling line of houses among gardens, and the white church standing up tall and clear from the flat, marshy land. Let us suppose that we are aviators flying over the pretty village. What do we see? First, we notice the broad highway running from La Bassée to Estaires (AA), and from this road see two other roads, less than a mile apart, running parallel in a north-easterly direction (BB and CC). A road (DD) almost parallel to the broad highway (AA) connects these roads, and thus forms a diamond-shaped figure which is divided into two by a winding cross road (EE). Neuve Chapelle lies within the northern half of the diamond. Along the road (DD) the houses are small, and stand close together; those along the roads CC and EE are surrounded by gardens and orchards. At the north-east of the village (F) there is a small piece of ground filled with enclosures, and bounded on three sides by roads. Here the Germans have made a strong post so as to flank the approaches to the village from the north. Between the houses and the La Bassée-Estaires road are meadows and ploughland, seamed with German trenches. At the northern angle of the diamond our own trenches are but 100 yards away from those of the Germans. In other parts of the line the distance is greater.



From our lofty eyrie we look eastward, and make out a clearly-marked ridge which is well known to us as the Aubers ridge. We see at a glance that Neuve Chapelle is the gateway to this ridge. Between the ridge and the village runs a small stream, and behind it, to the south-east, is the Biez wood. Along the stream is the German second line of defence, with strong posts at the bridgeheads. We notice that the stream crosses the La Bassée-Estaires road, and that to the north of it is a group of ruined buildings which our men call "Port Arthur." A mile eastward from the village is Pietre[27] Mill, with a tall chimney, which is a landmark for miles around. From the mill to Port Arthur runs a great network of German trenches. Earthworks are also to be seen in the Biez wood to the south-east of the stream. It is clear that before our soldiers can attain the ridge and threaten Lille they must carry this formidable line.



The Battle of Neuve Chapelle.

The black line shows the general position of the British front before the battle. A, 24th Brigade; B, 23rd Brigade; C, 25th Division; D, Garhwal Brigade; E, Dehra Dun Brigade.

On 8th March Sir John French called his commanders together and explained his plans. The main assault was to be made by the First Army, and two Indian divisions were to share in it, while the Second Army was to form a general support. In order to prevent the Germans from sending up reinforcements to the scene of the main attack, two other attacks were to take place at the same time, the one from Givenchy, the other just south of Armentières. A great mass of artillery was to

be brought up, and a bombardment four times as intense as any which we had yet made was to be undertaken. Then when the German trenches were wrecked, our infantry were to go forward and attempt to drive a deep wedge into the German line. If all went well, we might be in Lille within a few days.

On the 8th and 9th of March our big guns were brought up very quietly and placed in position. We were able to do this quite unknown to the Germans, because our aircraft had gained the upper hand of theirs. All sorts of big guns were massed together, and their positions are roughly shown on the map (page 132). Meanwhile, from ten o'clock that evening endless files of men marched silently down the roads leading towards our trenches. Watch the troops as they file by. Here are sturdy Garhwalis, with slouch hats and kukris at their belts, and farther down the road you see Gurkhas. Here, too, are the Leicesters—"the Tigers," as they are called from their badge. Yonder go the Lincolns and the Berkshires. You see the silver cross of the Rifle Brigade, the star and bugle of the Scottish Rifles, the Black Watch in their bonnets, the North Hants and the Worcesters, heroes of Ypres. Halted by the road are the Middlesex, the West Yorks, the Devons. Every British dialect is heard; men are here from Land's End to John o' Groats. All are eager for the fray; all long for the moment when the whistles will blow and the command will be given, "Over the parapet! Charge!"

Before morning our trenches were literally wedged with men, waiting in silence for the dawn. From the enemy's front there was as yet no sign of alarm, though their trenches at many points were less than one hundred yards away. A prisoner afterwards said that his captain noticed the massing of our men, and sent urgent messages to the artillery to open fire, but with no result. Before sunrise on the morning of the 10th hot meals were served out all along our line, for, as everybody knows, a Briton fights best when his inner man is satisfied. Then came another long wait in tense silence. Aeroplanes buzzed aloft, and every now and then officers looked at their watches. Every man knew that with the earliest light of morning the guns would begin to speak, and that some time later he and his fellows would be out in the open, making for the enemy's line as hard as they could pelt. The minutes dragged on. Would the dawn never come?

Away to the east the faint light of a gray and sullen day now began to appear. The heavy clouds hung low in the sky, and ahead the mist shrouded the view. Before long the Germans knew that a big attack was preparing, but they took no steps to meet it. Our artillery now began to boom; "ranging shots" were being fired, but soon all was silent again. On the stroke of 7.30 some 350 guns suddenly spoke with an overpowering din that racked the brain and split the ears. The terrific roar was incessant, and the discharges were so rapid that it seemed as if they came from a gigantic machine gun. The very earth shook as though struck by Thor's[28] hammer. The first shells that hit the German position raised huge clouds of smoke and dust, and nothing could be seen but the green fumes of lyddite and the spouting columns of red earth. Barbed-wire entanglements were blown into a myriad fragments, parapets crumbled like sand castles, and trenches on which men had worked for months were flung into shapeless ruin. Bodies of mangled men were hurled high into the air, and ghastly fragments were blown back into the British lines. Four shells were hurled on every yard of the German trenches, and more ammunition was used in the thirty-five minutes during which the bombardment lasted than in a year and a half of the South African War. Long before the awful cannonade ended the German trenches had ceased to exist. They were reduced to a welter of earth and dust.

While the bombardment lasted our troops could walk outside their trenches in safety, for the Germans were so "pinned to the ground" that those of them who remained alive dared not lift their heads. From behind the ragged clouds in the sky where the aeroplanes were sailing the sun now began to shine, making still darker the black pall that hung over the German position, and flashing back from the rows of gleaming bayonets in the British trenches. At five minutes to eight our gunners lengthened their fuses, and shells began to fall fast and furiously on the village itself. Some of the houses were seen to leap into the air. Columns of dust like the sand spouts of the desert sprang up; trees went down like wheat before a sickle; bricks and stones fell in torrents. Then came the great moment. Whistles blew; our men swarmed over the parapets and rushed towards the German trenches.

The Rifle Brigade racing headlong through the Ruins of Neuve Chapelle during the Attack on the Village.

(*From the picture by Christopher Clark. By permission of The Sphere.*)

"The village," says a writer who visited the scene a few days after the battle, "was a sight that the men say they will never forget. Once upon a time Neuve Chapelle must have been a pretty little place, big as villages in these parts go, with a nice clean church (whence it probably got its name), some neat villas, half a dozen inns, a red-brick brewery, and on the outskirts a little old white château. Now hardly stone remains on stone. It was indeed a scene of desolation into which the Rifle Brigade—the first regiment to enter the village, I believe—raced headlong. Of the church only the bare shell remained; the interior was lost to view beneath a gigantic mound of rubbish. Of all that once fair village but two things remained intact—the great crucifixes reared aloft, one in the churchyard, the other over against the château. From the cross that is the emblem of our faith the figure of Christ, yet intact, though all pitted with bullet marks, looked down in mute agony on the slaying in the village."

Five separate infantry attacks were made on the village. The first attack was made by the 24th Brigade, to the north of the village; the second, by the 23rd Brigade, against its north-east corner; the third, by the 25th Division, against the village itself; the fourth, by the Garhwal Brigade of Indians, against its south-west corner; and the fifth, by the Dehra Dun Brigade, against Port Arthur. The 25th pushed into the wreckage of the German trenches without difficulty. They were only occupied by the shreds and tatters of the dead and a few dazed and stupefied men, their faces yellow with fumes, their clothes torn from their backs, and their equipment and weapons destroyed. In some places a few machine guns which had escaped destruction kept up fire from concealed positions, and snipers took toll of our men as they advanced. The first to reach the goal were the 2nd Lincolns and the 2nd Royal Berkshires, who opened out to let the Irish Rifles and the Rifle Brigade pass through them and take the village. From a trench in front of the Berkshires came the rattle of machine-gun fire. Two German officers, alone, were working the gun, and they continued to fire until they fell beneath the bayonets of our men. Equally gallant deeds were done on the British side. A lance-corporal who had been wounded three times and had been told to lie down insisted on advancing with his fellows. Nor was he the only wounded man who plied bayonet and grenade on that red day.

The village was now only a rubbish heap; the church was a broken shell, and the very graves in the churchyard had been torn open by our shells. Strange to say, while houses and trees were falling, a crucifix at the cross roads remained

untouched, and spread its gaunt arms in mute protest above the terrible scene of slaughter and destruction. Once more our gunners lifted their sights and lengthened their fuses, and between the village and the German supports in the rear created a curtain of fire through which no living thing could pass. Then our men swept into the battered streets. Through the thick pall of smoke Germans were seen on all sides, some holding up their hands, others flying for life, and others, again, firing from the windows, from behind carts, and even from behind overturned tombstones. Machine guns clacked viciously from houses on the outskirts, and many a Briton fell a victim to them. Nevertheless, before long the village was wholly ours.

The Garhwalis to the right of the 25th were equally successful. Within a quarter of an hour after the assault began they had carried the first line of German trenches, and soon afterwards the 3rd Gurkhas met the Rifle Brigade in the southern outskirts of the village. Together they swept on past the heap of ruins which had once been the hamlet of Port Arthur into the woods at the foot of the rising ground.

Now comes the tragical part of the story. The 23rd Brigade, which attacked to the left of the 25th, advanced, you will remember, against the north-east of the village. Unhappily, the artillery had not properly shelled this part of the German position, and in a slight hollow the wire entanglements and the trenches were almost untouched. When the 2nd Devons, the 2nd West Yorks, the 2nd Scottish Rifles (Cameronians), and the 2nd Middlesex pushed forward they found themselves up against unbroken wire. The Cameronians suffered severely. A storm of bullets from rifles and machine guns assailed them, but they never wavered. Go on they could not; go back they would not. Men were seen in that zone of death tearing at the wire with raw and bleeding hands, while their comrades were falling fast around them. Those who survived were obliged to retire and lie down in the open under a tornado of shot and shell, until one company made a gap and broke through the line of defence. Fifteen officers, including the commander, Colonel Bliss, were killed or wounded, and when the terrible day was over only 150 men out of 750 answered the roll call. "You have many noble honours on your colours," said Sir John French, when he addressed the gallant remnant some days later; "none are finer than that of Neuve Chapelle, which will soon be added to them."

The 2nd Middlesex had a similar trial, and bore it with the same bravery. Machine guns were turned on them from several points, and as they pressed forward men fell at every step. Three times they strove to reach the trench, but three times they failed, and were forced to lie down in the open until a message was sent back to the artillery. Guns were relaid on the trench, and before long the entanglements were destroyed. When this was done the Middlesex, aided by a bombing party, carried the position, and were able to move forward to an orchard on the north-east of the village, where they joined the Devonshires. The 1st Battalion of the King's Liverpool, which was attached to the ill-fated division, also found itself up against unbroken wire. A company sergeant-major spent five minutes under the entanglement trying to cut it, and miraculously escaped with his life. The colonel, though wounded, refused to leave his men, and remained with them throughout the day. A young officer who had been shot down near the wire kept shouting to his men to come on until his breath failed him. In this battalion alone 100 men were killed and 119 were wounded.

Neuve Chapelle, March 10, 1915.

(*From the drawing by D. Macpherson. By permission of The Sphere.*)
This picture shows a batch of the Prussian Guards surrendering to the 2nd Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment at the first line of trenches before the village of Neuve Chapelle. The distance at this point from the British advanced line was about sixty-five yards, and our men were upon the enemy while most of them were still dazed from the effects of the terrific bombardment. The prisoners were taken in batches of thirty or forty, and were handed over to the oncoming lines of supports until they were passed back to headquarters, the captors meanwhile sweeping on with the advance.

Meanwhile the success of the 25th Brigade had turned the flank of the Germans north of the village, and when the 23rd Brigade at last managed to struggle through the orchard and join hands with the 24th Brigade, which had attacked to their left, the time had come for the combined force to sweep onward to the Aubers ridge. The Germans were still dazed with surprise, and completely paralyzed by the heavy bombardment of the morning; while our men were flushed with victory, and were eager to press forward. But at this moment there was a long delay. The telephone wires had been cut by the bursting shells, and it was difficult to get orders quickly to the first line. The check to the 23rd Brigade had thrown everything out of gear. A halt had to be called for fresh troops to come up, and they were very slow in arriving. The village was ours by noon, but not until 3.30 did the reserve brigades arrive. Had they been brought up promptly the Aubers ridge would have been won. As it was, we were robbed of a great victory. A splendid chance had been thrown away, and an unavailing sacrifice of life was to follow.

The newly-arrived brigades, all belonging to the 7th Division, which had won such glory in the October battle round Ypres, formed up on the left of the 24th Brigade, and the attack began again; but everywhere difficulties were met with. The Germans had taken advantage of the lull to strengthen their third line of trenches, and had brought up reinforcements. When our men advanced they were ready to receive them. The Indian brigades pushed through the wood towards the ridge, but could make but little headway, and suffered terrible losses. One of the Indian battalions would have been entirely cut off but for a splendid bombing attack by the 2nd Leicesters. It was at this point of the battle that the 3rd London—a Territorial regiment—made a brilliant charge to aid the front line, and won the cheers of their regular comrades by their gallantry and devotion.

Further to our left the 25th Division was checked along the line of the little river, while the 24th Brigade and 7th Division were held up by machine-gun fire from the cross roads and the defences of Pietre Mill. The line of the river could not be forced without artillery "preparation." Everywhere in this part of the line there were German positions which our big guns had not touched. To push infantry against them was simple murder. So, as the evening closed in, we

busied ourselves in strengthening the positions which we had already won. The village was ours; we had gained a mile, and had straightened out our line. We had, however, failed in the bigger business of seizing the Aubers ridge.

Not until darkness fell did the 1st Brigade of the First Corps arrive. Next morning our guns began to boom again, but they could not repeat the surprise of yesterday. The Germans had pulled themselves together; their lines were strongly reinforced, and mist prevented the artillery observers from directing the fire of their guns. More than once our infantry were caught by their own shells. We could make no further headway, and on the 12th the Bavarians advanced against Neuve Chapelle, an officer on horseback with drawn sword leading them right up to the Worcesters, who met them with a shattering fire. At another point twenty-one machine guns were turned against them, and they fell by the hundred. So fierce was the fire that the survivors were forced to protect themselves behind ramparts of their own dead.

All that day the 7th Division struggled to carry Pietre Mill, while the rest of the line attacked the bridges over the river and the German trenches in the wood. Round about the mill the fighting was very fierce; ground was gained and lost again; houses were captured and recaptured; and friend and foe were mixed up in confused hand-to-hand fighting. Here it was that the 6th Gordons lost Lieutenant-Colonel Maclean. A subaltern found him lying in the open behind the trench with a bullet in his back, and sinking fast. The young officer brought him morphia to ease his pain, and when he had taken it he said, "And now, my boy, your place is not here. Go about your duty." So died a very gallant gentleman.

Victoria Crosses were won on this part of the front by Private Edward Barber and Lance-Corporal Wilfred Fuller of the Grenadiers for a brilliant bombing attack, of which we shall read later. Further south, the 2nd Rifle Brigade managed to carry a section of German trenches, and Sergeant-Major Daniels and Corporal Noble did deeds of outstanding valour which won them the proudest decoration that a soldier can wear. Unhappily, their unit, the Rifle Brigade, was enfiladed and forced to fall back on its old lines.

By the evening of the 12th Sir John French was convinced that nothing more could be won, and he ordered the attack to be suspended for the present. All the 13th was spent by our weary soldiers in digging themselves in on the banks of the little river which they had failed to cross. So worn out were many of the men that they fell asleep while standing at their loopholes. Counter-attacks were to be expected, and they soon began, but met with no success. Only at one point, north-east of the village, did the Germans manage to get into our trenches, and their stay was brief indeed. In one of their attacks they lost more than 600 prisoners, and the captured men seemed glad to be out of the terrible fighting.

The most severe counter-attack was made not at Neuve Chapelle, but at the tiny Belgian hamlet of St. Eloi, 15 miles to the north, and at the junction of two main roads. On the 14th, when mists lay thick on the flats, the Germans, following our example at Neuve Chapelle, began a fierce bombardment of our trenches, and at the same time exploded mines on our front and on a large mound which we held to the south-east of the village. The infantry attacks of the enemy were very determined; our men were driven from their trenches, and our whole line had to fall back. Under cover of the darkness we prepared for a counter-attack, and on the morning of the 15th managed to win back most of the lost ground. The mound, which our soldiers called "the Mound of Death," was not recovered; it lay in the No Man's Land between the rival trenches, exposed to the gun fire of friend and foe.

In this action Princess Patricia's Own specially distinguished itself, and won the praise of Sir John French. It co-operated with a battalion of the Rifle Brigade in an attack on the mound, and advanced with great coolness and resolution, but was checked by a murderous machine-gun fire. Three platoons, however, held on to a breastwork, while the remainder retired across a zone of fire without leaving behind them a single wounded man. Five days later Princess Pat's lost its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Farquhar, one of the bravest and kindest of men.

You will remember that our assault on Neuve Chapelle was supported by other attacks on various parts of the German front, in order to prevent the enemy from suddenly massing reinforcements against our main attack. I need not describe these operations, for they were only "holding attacks," and were not expected to succeed. Nevertheless the assault on a hamlet to the south-east of Armentières was successful, and an advance of 300 yards on a front of half a mile was made.

Our airmen were very busy during the three days of struggle, though the weather was against them. Bombs were dropped on railway stations and bridges behind the German lines, and much damage was done. One daring aviator flying over Lille hit a house which was used as the German headquarters.

The Battle of Neuve Chapelle was not a failure, but it was not a complete success. We straightened out the sag in our line; we won the village, advanced one mile, took 2,000 prisoners, and killed or wounded 20,000 of the enemy. Our

offensive put new heart into our men, who went into battle with the utmost zeal, joking and laughing even under fire. It is said that when they crowded into the German first-line trenches and there was no room for them all to line the parapet, a man would pull his comrade down, crying out that it was his turn for a shot. The Indians greatly welcomed the opportunity of fighting in the open, and the Gurkhas and Garhwalis plied their kukris with deadly effect. Our losses were very heavy. In the three days' fighting we had about 13,000 casualties: 2,337 men and 190 officers were killed.

Our failure to "make good" at a time when the Germans were almost at our mercy was as much due to accident as to blunder. Parts of the enemy lines had not been properly "prepared," and some of our troops were shelled by their own guns. This was, no doubt, due to the dull sky and the mists, which prevented the observers from properly controlling the fire of their guns. It was our first attempt to combine artillery and infantry on a great scale, and, naturally, mistakes were made. The best result was the new ardour which inspired our men. "This time," said one of them, "it was pushing the Germans, instead of trying to hold them. You can't realize, unless you have been in it from Mons onwards, how that bucks you up."

The German people took their beating very badly. They accused us of using German prisoners to screen our advance, and they complained bitterly that we had brought such a vast force of artillery against them. "This is not war; it is murder," they said, coolly ignoring the fact that a mighty artillery onslaught had been their favourite method of attack since the beginning of the war. When they were given a taste of their own medicine they cried out in the usual fashion of the bully.

CHAPTER XIX.

SOLDIERS' STORIES OF NEUVE CHAPELLE.

As soon as the wounded men from Neuve Chapelle arrived in Great Britain, budgets of personal experiences began to appear in the newspapers. All the men dwelt upon the terrible effects of our artillery and the splendid spirit shown by our troops, not only while under fire, but when stricken down. Private Selwood of the Rifle Brigade said: "Men who fought at Mons have told me that Mons was only a tea-fight compared with Neuve Chapelle. In the half-hour's bombardment that began the day some say 400 guns were used; others, 525. The noise was terrific. Our boys went on cheerful enough, singing 'Tipperary' and anything. When we got to the dug-outs we found dozens of Germans, all dead. It was a surprise attack. They did not know it was coming off. At the third line of trenches I was hit in the leg by a bullet. I crawled back about five hundred yards, because there was too much work for the stretcher-bearers. They worked heroically, taking the most serious cases first."

A private of the 4th Black Watch thus describes a Highland charge: "We witnessed a magnificent charge of the first battalion of a famous Scottish regiment. Artillery fire ceased suddenly, and before the enemy could be reorganized the 'kilties' were over our trenches and dashing at them with fixed bayonets. It might have been a parade advance, so perfectly did each section of the line move forward. Th The first lot sprang up and over the German trenches, followed almost immediately by the rest, and in a very few minutes the trench was ours. Just before dusk I laughed for the first time that day. And no wonder! for at one point on that gory battlefield stood a notice-board inscribed with one word, 'Danger!'"

"Eye-Witness" tells us how our men behaved while they were watching the artillery bombarding the enemy's trenches and waiting for the word to advance. "They could see our shells bursting in the thick veil of smoke and dust that hung over the German trenches, and as the minutes wore on our artillery fire grew hotter and hotter, and the time grew nearer for them to rush forward. Their excitement rose to fever pitch. In some places they were seen to jump up on the parapets, brandishing their rifles towards the Germans, and shouting remarks which were drowned in the roar of the guns. When the rush was actually made our losses were trifling. It was only in the subsequent advance that heavy casualties occurred."

It is noteworthy that the enemy's wounded had to thank our men for many acts of kindness, even in the excitement of the assault. One of our soldiers, finding a wounded Prussian officer who had had his arm blown off by a shell, carried him to a place of safety under heavy fire. In one cellar a portly German was found dancing about in an agony of fear, screaming in a high-pitched voice in English, "Mercy! mercy! I am married!" "Your missus won't thank us for sending you home," replied one of our men, who took him prisoner, and his life was spared. A Rifle Brigade lieutenant, falling over a sandbag into a German trench, came upon two officers, hardly more than boys, holding their hands above their heads. Their faces were ashen gray, and they were trembling. One said gravely in good English, "Don't shoot! I am from London also." They too were spared.

During the counter-attacks of the Germans from the Biez wood their losses were very heavy. Line after line went down before our rifles. One of our Sepoys said that shooting the enemy was like cutting grain. Some of the German officers displayed the most reckless courage in leading the attacks. On more than one occasion they invited certain death by riding forward on horseback to within a few hundred yards of our line. None of those who so exposed themselves

escaped. One German officer in charge of a machine gun kept his gun in action throughout the terrible bombardment, and then, when our men charged down upon him, awaited death, calmly standing on the parapet of the trench and emptying his revolver at them.

The Indians were greatly pleased at the result of the action, and constantly asked their officers when they were going to have another fight. Many stories are told of their prowess. One Gurkha made his way into a house, and single-handed captured five Germans, whom he marched off at the point of his kukri. It was curious to see the Indians returning with articles of German equipment. When they held them up for inspection they called out, "*Souvenir! souvenir*[29]*!*"

Bengal Lancers returning from "Port Arthur" after the capture of Neuve Chapelle.

(*From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.*)
Notice the "souvenirs" which they are carrying on their lances.

Canadian infantry were not specially engaged in the fighting at Neuve Chapelle, but the Canadian artillery played an active part in the bombardment which preceded the British advance, and the infantry were ready during the battle to go forward at a moment's notice. A Winnipeg "boy" wrote home as follows: "At 5.30 on the morning of Wednesday (the first day of the Neuve Chapelle attack) our officer told us to hurry over our breakfast, as a heavy fire was to be opened by our side, and the enemy, in replying, would probably drop a few rounds in our vicinity. We had just started to line up in the road outside when 'whop!' came a shell, which burst a few yards ahead. 'Double for the trenches!' was the order, and away we went. The trenches were only about one hundred and fifty yards away, yet the Germans had our position to a foot, and sixteen rounds of shrapnel burst literally in our midst. Had they burst overhead, as they should have done, it's a very fair bet that nearly every man of us would have 'gone west;' but only one man was hit, a fellow a short distance back of me. . . . We had to stay in the trenches until evening that day, and all next day."

A wounded German officer said that the suddenness of our bombardment was "like the burst of a great storm, instantly filling all the space with countless crashes of thunder, flame, smoke, and lead. Six of your great black howitzer shells," said he, "fell within fifty yards of a trench on my right, and so completely was our trench blown asunder that when the earth fell back it buried hundreds with it. When the storm abated I crawled out, only to be bayoneted in the shoulder by, as I learned, a Territorial, and while I was lying there thousands of British pursuing our retreating battalion passed by me. But I lifted my sound arm, and they spared me—why, I do not know. It seemed to take hours for the British soldiers to pass me, and then I saw groups of my own regiment, unguarded and without guns, many slightly wounded, walking back to the British base. Such faces I did not think could be worn by human beings; they were orange with lyddite smoke. The men were palsied with what they had been through, and were too dazed to answer my call."

The part played by the 2nd Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment and the Irish Rifles in the advance towards the line of the little river is thus described:—

"Two companies of the Lincolns rushed the enemy's trenches under a pretty hot fire. Grenades were thrown at the enemy, and they ran out of their trench to the rear. There, however, Captain Peake's company threw grenades to cut off their line of retreat, and they ran back to their trench and surrendered. Captain Peake, who had advanced down the trench holding his blue flag up in the air, offered a conspicuous target to the enemy, and was shot. Meanwhile two other companies had followed through the gap caused by the charge; the enemy seemed in full retreat, and our men were very elated.

"Many who were hit continued to advance. Lance-Corporal Perry was hit rather badly in the foot three times, and, though told to take cover and lie down, persisted in going on and rallying his men. The reinforced line continued to advance until they reached a broad strip of water running right across their front, from four feet to five feet deep, and quite impassable. After a while a plank was found sufficiently long to bridge the water, and the men crossed to form a firing line on the other side. The heavy guns were shelling the Germans about one hundred and fifty yards in front, and on the Lincolns opening fire they retired.

"A few minutes after the Lincolns had recrossed the water to a slight rise behind it the Irish Rifles went through, and were given a lusty cheer. Lieutenant Graham was rallying his men with a French newsboy's horn, giving a 'View hullo' like a Master of Hounds collecting his pack. One company of the Lincolns crossed the water for the third time and assisted the Irish Rifles in making a trench. Afterwards they returned to entrench themselves behind the water."

A young officer who fought in the battle wrote home as follows: "My word, mother, yesterday we commenced a most almighty attack on the unsuspecting enemy. It had all been planned and organized for some time, and I should think it has been the finest show on record. Whether we had the advantage in the number of men I cannot say, but we certainly had in guns. You never heard such a din in all your life. All the farmhouses vibrated all day long, and during the first half-hour there were some 17,000 shells screaming towards the Bosches. Our lads who were wounded came down the road in batches of twos and threes to the dressing stations. They were very cheerful. They simply laughed and cracked jokes amongst themselves. They are a wonderful lot of Tommies. They were all so jolly brave, and keen, and determined."

A private of the Berkshire Regiment thus related his experiences: "We lost fairly heavily in the big fight at Neuve Chapelle, but the loss we inflicted on the Germans must have been frightful. They were lying all over the place. There was great rejoicing when we found that our regiment had been selected for the post of honour with the Lincolns forming the first line of the frontal attack. . . . Our boys were out like one man, and charged across to their first trench. We took that in less than five minutes, and, leaving a few men to secure the prisoners, swept on to the next. Men were falling on every side, as their machine guns and artillery were playing on us from beyond the village, and some of the sights were terrible. It seemed as though the air was full of shrapnel and bullets; but our boys were magnificent. Not one man wavered, even for a second, and nothing could have stopped that charge. The second trench was soon cleared out, and

our bomb throwers—we call them 'Tickler's Artillery'[30]—did terrible execution. On we went for the third line. This was a bit more difficult, as there were a thick hedge and some barbed wire. But the boys would not be stopped, and in a very short time the third line was ours. The Rifles now came on to take the village, and they gave us a cheer and a shout of 'Well done, Berks!' as they passed through. We gave them an answering call as they charged and captured the village."

I will conclude this chapter with a brief account of the ten heroes who were awarded Victoria Crosses for splendid deeds of valour at Neuve Chapelle.

Private William Buckingham, 2nd Battalion, the Leicestershire Regiment.

You will remember that at Neuve Chapelle the 2nd Leicesters were attached to the Garhwal Brigade, and that when a Garhwali battalion was cut off a bombing party of the Leicesters brought them timely and effective assistance. No regiment played a finer part in the battle than the Leicesters. The Victoria Cross was awarded to Private Buckingham for his bravery and devotion to duty in rescuing wounded men and in rendering first aid to the fallen while exposed to heavy fire on several occasions, notably on the 10th and 12th of March.

Rifleman Gobar Sing Negi, 2nd Battalion, 39th Garhwal Rifles.

Gobar Sing Negi was the third Indian to win the Victoria Cross. During our attack on the German positions he was one of a bayonet party which entered a main trench. Pushing on in advance of his fellows, the gallant Indian bombed the enemy from traverse to traverse, and at last forced them to surrender. Unhappily, he did not live to wear the coveted honour, but fell in a later stage of the engagement.

Corporal William Anderson, 2nd Battalion, Alexandra Princess of Wales's Own (Yorkshire) Regiment.

On 12th March, at Neuve Chapelle, Corporal Anderson led three men armed with bombs against a large party of the enemy, then in possession of one of our trenches. After he had thrown his own bombs he found that his three comrades had been shot down, and that he was alone amongst the Germans. Nothing dismayed, he took the bombs of the three wounded men, hurled them against the foe, then opened rapid fire upon them, and by his prompt and determined action kept back the Germans until his comrades arrived and drove them from the trench.

Private E. Barber, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards.

During the fighting round Pietre Mill on 12th March Private Barber, who was one of a grenade company, ran ahead of his fellows and threw bombs on the enemy with such effect that a large number of them at once surrendered. When his comrades reached him, they found him quite alone and unsupported, with Germans holding up their hands all around him.

Company Sergeant-Major Harry Daniels and Acting Corporal Cecil Reginald Noble, both of the 2nd Battalion, Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own).

On 12th March the 2nd Battalion of the Rifle Brigade was held up by entanglements near Pietre Mill, and was subjected to a heavy machine-gun fire. Sergeant-Major Daniels volunteered to go forward and cut the wire. "Come along," he called to his chum, Corporal Noble, and without a moment's hesitation the two men rushed across the forty yards that separated them from the obstacle. Lying on their backs, they cut the lower wire, and thus opened a gap for their comrades to proceed. A bullet struck Daniels in the thigh, and a few minutes later he heard a gasp, and called out, "What's up?" Noble replied, "I am hit in the chest, old man," and became unconscious. Shortly afterwards he died. Daniels dragged himself to a shell hole, where he remained until dusk, and then painfully made his way back to his own lines. When interviewed in a London hospital, he had little to say about his own exploit, but was full of admiration for the gallantry of his dead friend. "Noble and I," he said, "had done everything together since we went out in November. I trusted him, and he trusted me. It was hot work, but the worst moment was when I heard my poor chum call out that he was hit in the chest. I am more glad about Noble's V.C. than I am about my own."

The exploit of these two brave men recalls that of the famous Swiss patriot Arnold von Winkelried at the Battle of Sempach, 1386. An unbroken line of Austrian lances barred the way of the Swiss; whereupon Winkelried determined to sacrifice himself in order that his comrades might break through.

"'Make way for Liberty!' he cried;
Then ran with arms extended wide,
As if his dearest friend to clasp.
Ten spears he swept within his grasp.
'Make way for Liberty!' he cried.
Their keen points crossed from side to side.
He bowed amongst them like a tree,
And thus made way for Liberty."

Captain Charles Calveley Foss, D.S.O., 2nd Battalion, Bedford Regiment.

At Neuve Chapelle Captain Foss turned failure into victory. The enemy had captured part of our trenches, and our counter-attack, which was made with one officer and twenty men, failed, all but two of the party being killed or wounded. Seeing this, Captain Foss with eight men dashed forward through a fierce fire, and began pelting the enemy with bombs. So successful was his attack that he recaptured the position, and with it no less than fifty-two Germans. No words of mine are needed to extol the splendid bravery of Captain Foss and his gallant little company. Nine Britons retook a trench from more than fifty Germans!

Lance-Corporal W. D. Fuller, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards.

Observing a party of the enemy trying to escape along a communication trench, Corporal Fuller ran towards them, flinging bombs. The foremost man was killed, and the remainder, finding no means of escape, held up their hands and begged for mercy. All alone, Corporal Fuller received the surrender of fifty Germans! Prior to the war he was a miner of Mansfield. During a spell of leave in July 1915 he did excellent work as a recruiter. While he was telling the men of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire, that if they were not fit to die they were not fit to live, some one in the crowd challenged him to enter the cage of two African lions then on exhibition in the town. At once Fuller threw his cap into the den, and then followed it. You can imagine the excitement of the townsfolk as he calmly stood by the lions and stroked their manes. As a result of this incident many men enlisted.

Lieutenant Cyril Gordon Martin, D.S.O., 56th Field Company, Royal Engineers.

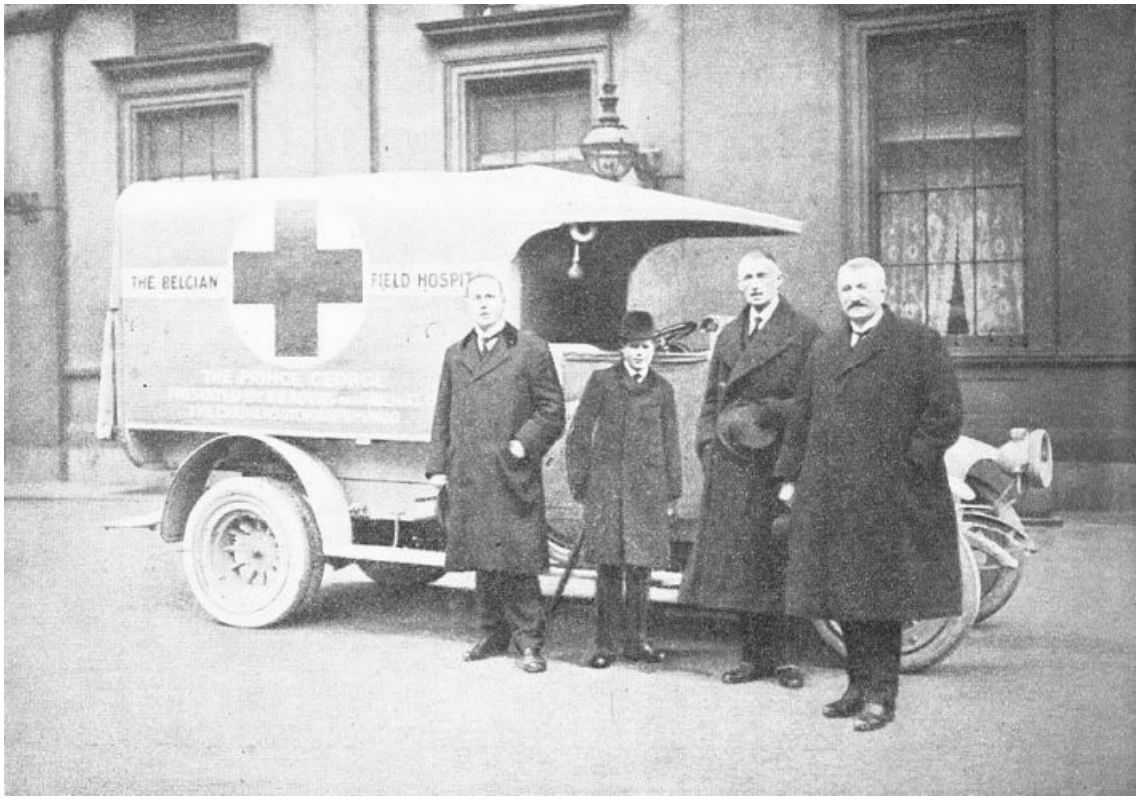
On 12th March, when in command of a bomb-throwing party of six men, Lieutenant Martin, a young officer of twenty-four years of age, was wounded, but nevertheless led his comrades into an enemy's trench and held off all attempts to recover it for nearly two and a half hours. He had already distinguished himself, and had won the D.S.O. during the retreat from Mons by gallantly capturing and holding a German trench with a platoon of engineers. He was twice wounded on that occasion, and was invalided home. He had only been back at the front a few days when he won the V.C. for the exploit described above.

Lieutenant Cyril Martin and his grenade-throwing party in the enemy's trenches.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)
In this drawing Lieutenant Martin is shown seated on the right, wounded.

PRIVATE JACOB RIVERS, 1st Battalion, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment (Sherwood Foresters).

Private Rivers was another of the bombers who won the highest award of valour during the first day of the great battle at Neuve Chapelle. Noticing that a large number of Germans were outflanking an advanced company of his regiment, he dashed forward, without waiting for orders, and flung bombs amongst the enemy with such effect that they were forced to retire. His prompt bravery undoubtedly saved the advanced company from disaster. Later in the day he performed a similar feat, but while engaged in this heroic work was shot through the heart. He was a native of Derby, and was thirty-four years of age. When the war broke out he had completed twelve years of service with the Royal Scots; but he immediately enlisted in the Sherwood Foresters, and, being an experienced soldier, was sent to France with one of the earliest drafts. He had a brother in the Grenadier Guards, and three brothers-in-law were serving in his own regiment. The cross of bronze which he did not live to wear was sent as a sad but proud memorial to his widowed mother.



The "Prince George" Motor Ambulance at Buckingham Palace.

On January 26, 1916, Prince George travelled from Sandringham to Buckingham Palace, for the purpose of receiving our motor ambulance and handing it over to the Belgian Field Hospital. His Royal Highness spent a full half-hour in examining the motor ambulance and the hand ambulance which accompanied it, and was highly pleased with all that he saw. Our readers will remember this occasion, as it was Prince George's first public function. On the left of the Prince is his tutor, Mr. Hansell, M.A. The total cost of the motor ambulance, the hand ambulance, and a supply of "spares" amounted to £456. We are deeply indebted to Her Majesty the Queen for permission to reproduce this photograph, which is not to appear in any other book or periodical.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DARDANELLES.

The year 1915 saw the beginning and the end of a campaign which will go down to history as a splendid failure. Aided by the French, the British strove to force a right-of-way through the narrow and strongly fortified channels which give access from the Mediterranean Sea to the southern shores of Russia. Two attempts were made—the one naval, the other military—but both were fruitless. Ships of war strove to batter down the forts that commanded the channels, but had to retire discomfited. Then an army was landed on the Gallipoli peninsula, and a desperate effort was made to take the forts from the rear. The army was set an almost impossible task, yet it very nearly achieved the impossible. Men still live who surmounted the last great obstacle that lay between them and victory.

How the British and French landed on narrow beaches in the face of superior numbers of the enemy; how they fought their way up the cliffs in spite of artillery, machine guns, and entrenched infantry; how with superb courage and dogged endurance they established themselves on the peninsula; how they sacrificed themselves like the Spartans of old in fierce assaults on the ridges and high hills that barred the way to their goal; and how, finally, they withdrew to their ships without the loss of a single life—all this is a story which no Briton can read without mingled pride and pain: pride in the men of his race who nobly fought and died in the hopeless struggle; pain, that so much bright and gallant life should have been given in vain.

Henceforth the Gallipoli peninsula is sacred ground. The bones of tens of thousands of our gallant fellows lie buried in its soil. In days to come, when wandering Britons shall sail by its peaceful shores, they will hush their voices and think tenderly of those who sleep their last sleep amidst its rugged hills and deep ravines. It will be strange, too, if a prayer does not arise from their hearts that the Empire may ever be defended by men of such matchless valour and lofty devotion.

Before I describe the Dardanelles and the great naval attack on its forts, you must understand why we undertook the enterprise. It was, of course, to assist the Russians, who in the early months of 1915 were running short of big guns, rifles, and ammunition, and were unable to supply their needs by means of their own workshops. The Allies wished to help them, but were prevented from doing so to any great extent; because Russia in Europe is cut off from the open sea on all sides except in the extreme north, where the coast fronts the Arctic Ocean. The only port to which the Allies could send munitions was Archangel, which for about nine months of the year is frozen up. During the winter it was impossible for our ships to enter the harbour of Archangel at all. Even if Archangel had been open, matters would have been but little improved, for only a single line of railway connected this remote and evil-smelling port with the interior.[31]

Russia has a good deal of coast and many excellent harbours at the eastern end of the Baltic Sea; but our trading ships could not enter that sea because the Germans held the upper hand in it. Their warships lay in wait for all vessels coming through the narrow Danish channels. The only remaining sea coast of Russia in Europe lies along the ice-free Black Sea; but in order to reach its shores ships must traverse the narrow sea lane of the Dardanelles, cross the Sea of Marmora, and thread the strait of the Bosporus. When Turkey took the side of Germany this route was closed. Then, the only way by which the Allies could send guns and rifles and ammunition to Russia was to carry them by sea to one of the Siberian ports on the Pacific Ocean, where they were transferred to the Siberian railway and carried right across North Asia to Russia. Before a British or a French shell could reach Poland or Galicia it had to make an eight or nine weeks' voyage to the East, and a railway journey of more than five thousand miles.

Now I think you understand why it was so vastly important that we should try to force a right-of-way through the Dardanelles. Until this was done the Allied armies in the East and in the West were more completely cut off from each other than if they had been fighting in different hemispheres. It was impossible to send reinforcements from one to the other without carrying them almost round the globe. Further, the overseas trade of Russia was terribly hampered by the blocking of the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. Millions of bushels of wheat lay rotting in the warehouses of the Black Sea ports, and vast sums of money were being lost because they could not find an outlet. If Constantinople could be captured, the Turks could be ejected from Europe, and their armies rendered powerless. When this happened, Greece and Bulgaria

would no longer listen to the tempting voice of the German. So you see that the forcing of the Dardanelles was of the utmost importance to the Allies. It was felt that once we had a clear road to South Russia the end of the war would be in sight.

Roughly speaking, the waterway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea resembles a narrow glass tube with a bulb blown in the middle of it. The Dardanelles forms the first part of the tube, the bulb is the Sea of Marmora, and the remaining part of the tube consists of the Bosporus, or Ox Ford. The Dardanelles, or the Hellespont as it was called in ancient times, extends for 45 miles; the Sea of Marmora is 175 miles in length, and the Bosporus continues the waterway for another 17 miles. On a clear day it is said that from a hill on the shores of the Dardanelles one may look right across the Sea of Marmora and behold Constantinople, nearly two hundred miles away.

Now let us suppose that we are making a voyage from the Ægean Sea to the Sea of Marmora in times of peace. When we enter the strait we find that it resembles a wide river rather than an arm of the sea; and this is not surprising, for the channel is nothing but the bed of a river that was submerged in far-off days. The channel is only about two and a half miles wide, and we can clearly see the shores on either side of us. On our right is Asia; on our left is Europe. Along the line of this waterway East and West have met since the days when the world was young.

Almost every mile of the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles recalls memories of the song and story of ancient days. We have scarcely entered the strait before we see on the Asiatic side the Kum Kale fort, and behind it the classic ground on which stood the famous city of Troy. I am sure you remember how Paris carried off the lovely Queen Helen to Troy, and how Homer's heroes fought for ten long years before the city was captured, and she was recovered and carried back by her husband to her home in Greece. Modern historians, however, tell us that the Trojan War was fought not for the fair face of Helen, but because the king of Troy almost closed the waterway by levying crushing duties on the goods that passed his shores. It is strange to note that Britons and French have shed their blood at the Dardanelles in order that wheat from the fruitful lands bordering the Black Sea might pass freely to the Mediterranean, and so to the crowded cities of Western Europe.

On the eastern or Asiatic side we see sloping gardens and rich vineyards, and elsewhere there are low, wooded hills; but the western or European side consists of a long unbroken line of barren cliffs. We are gazing at the shores of the long and hilly Gallipoli peninsula, which, you will see from the map, somewhat resembles a thumb bent at the joint. At the tip of the peninsula are the forts of Cape Tekke, Cape Helles, and Sedd-ul-Bahr. These, with the fort of Kum Kale, which I have already mentioned, guard the entrance to the Dardanelles.

As we proceed, the Asiatic shore curves inland, but the European shore continues straight and unbroken. The strait now widens to a breadth of five miles; but at Kephez Point it closes in to less than two miles. About three miles further on the "Narrows" begin. At one point the shores are not more than fourteen hundred yards apart, and for about a mile onward they are everywhere within a mile and a half of each other. Every ship that sails from the Mediterranean Sea to the Sea of Marmora must pass through this bottle neck.

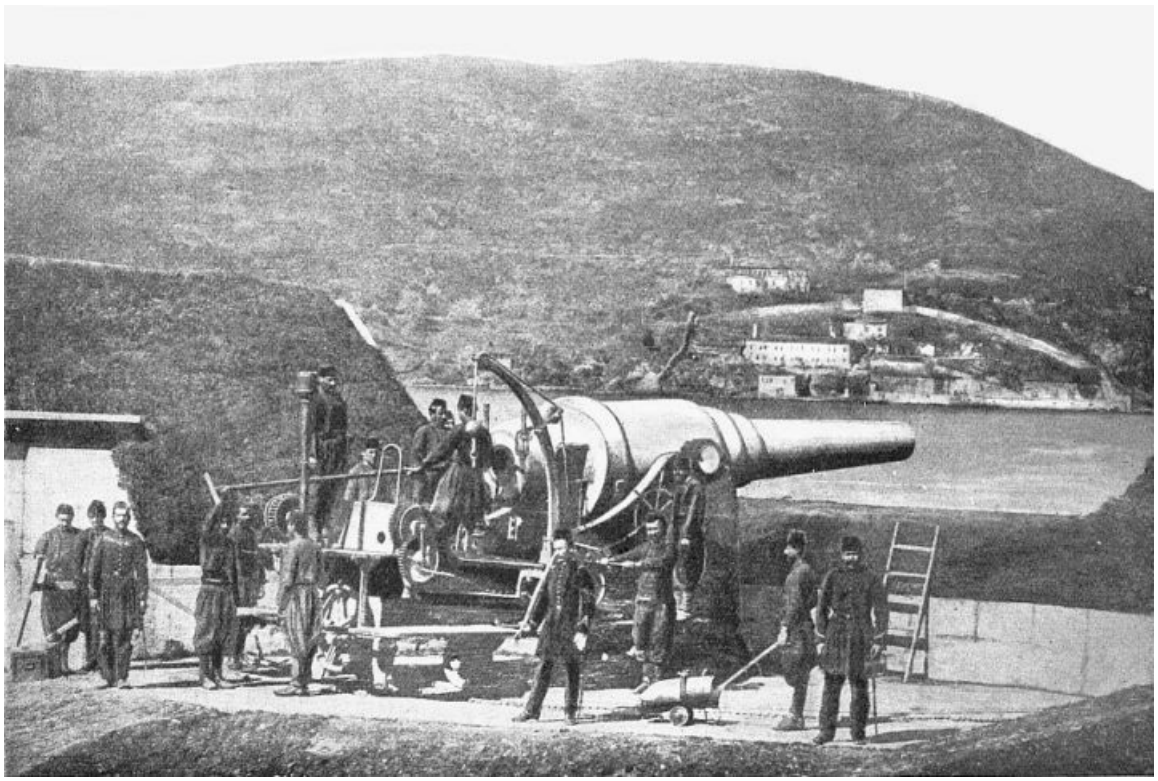
The Dardanelles in Time of Peace. ***Photo, Daily Mirror.***

CHAPTER XXI.

SHIPS VERSUS FORTS.

No part of the Dardanelles is more famous in history than the "Narrows." Across the narrowest part of the Narrows Xerxes[32] flung his bridge of boats when he set out to conquer Europe. Herodotus, "the father of history," tells us that his Persians took seven days and seven nights, going continuously without any pause, to cross the bridge. A century and a half later Alexander the Great[33] re-bridged the channel when he began his great march into Asia. An old story tells us that every night Leander used to swim the Narrows from the Gallipoli side to visit Hero, his lady-love, who dwelt at Sestos, on the Asiatic side. The lighthouse at Sestos guided him; but one stormy night the light failed, and Hero waited for him in vain. Lord Byron swam the straits at this point in 1810. It was on the Asiatic shore of the Narrows that St. Paul heard the cry from Macedonia, "Come over and help us."

We need not proceed further with our voyage. The whole problem of forcing the Dardanelles centres on the "Narrows." Once they are safely passed, the broad, deep Sea of Marmora is easily traversed, and there is no obstacle between us and Constantinople. But how to pass the Narrows? There's the rub.



A Turkish Fort on the Asiatic side of the entrance to the Dardanelles. ***Photo, Central News.***

You may be sure that the Turks jealously guard these narrow waters. As early as 1460 forts were erected to defend them. Now both sides of the Narrows fairly bristle with powerful forts, in which big modern guns are mounted. You have already heard that the forts are provided with searchlights, which play across the water at night, and reveal the movements of even the smallest craft. Not only are the shores studded with forts, but batteries of big guns are concealed on the heights behind, and hidden torpedo tubes are ranged along the water's edge. Nature has also played her part in the defence of this dangerous and difficult channel. Swift currents sweep through the Narrows, and not only make navigation difficult, but carry along drifting mines. An enemy warship venturing into the channel must run the gauntlet of big guns on the shore and deadly explosives in the sea. While the defences remain intact the waterway is barred to her. To reduce the forts was, therefore, our first task.

I have already told you that when Britain declared war on Turkey (November 5th, 1914) a long friendship was broken. Our support of Turkey arose out of our deep distrust of Russia, now our good friend and loyal ally. We distrusted Russia because we knew that ever since the days of Peter the Great she had coveted Constantinople, and we feared that if she gained possession of that city our Far Eastern possessions would be threatened. We therefore threw in our lot with Turkey, and more than once saved her from being wiped off the map of Europe. During the present war we have reaped the bitter fruits of Turkish ingratitude.

About the year 1840 it seemed clear that Turkey was going to pieces, and that the break-up of her empire was only a matter of time. The Tsar Nicholas said to one of our ambassadors, "We have on our hands a sick man—a very sick man. It would be a great misfortune if one of these days he should slip away from us before the necessary arrangements have been made." He therefore proposed to divide up the Turkish dominions, taking Constantinople for himself, and offering us Crete and Egypt as our share of the spoils. The bribe was, of course, refused.

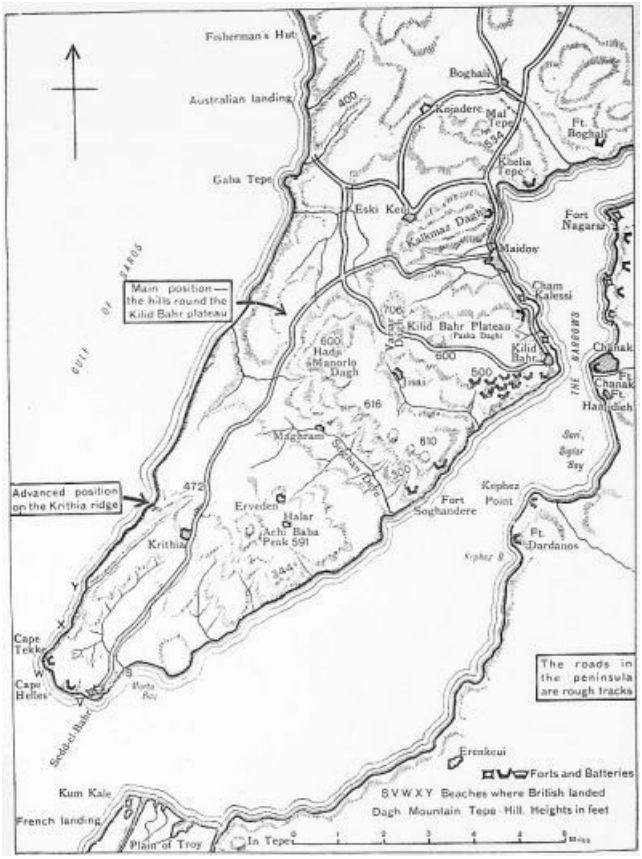
A few years later Greek and Latin priests quarrelled as to who should take charge of the holy places in Palestine. The Tsar Nicholas supported the Greeks, and the French became the champions of the Latins. Then the Tsar put forward a claim that the Sultan should recognize him as the protector of all Christians within the Turkish Empire. This demand was, of course, resisted, and in 1853 Russian armies invaded Turkey. We were not in the least interested in the trivial dispute, but we hated and feared the prospect of the Russians in Constantinople. Further, as a great trading nation, we wished to keep the Dardanelles open for peaceful commerce, and we thought that this could best be done if the straits remained in the hands of a weak Power such as Turkey. So we joined the French, and fought the Russians in the Crimea. We lost 24,000 men in the course of the war, and added £41,000,000 to our national debt; but we prevented the Russians from overwhelming the Turks.

Even this poor success was not lasting. Strife, tumult, and murder reigned in the Balkans under the cruel and blighting government of the Sultan, and twenty-four years later Russia again sent her armies into Turkey. The Russians drove back the Turks, and early in 1878 they were within a short distance of Constantinople. A cry of alarm and indignation broke out in England, and people went about the London streets shouting a popular song with the refrain, "The Russians shall not take Constantinople."

So strong was public feeling that a British fleet was ordered to the Dardanelles. The admiral was instructed to pass the straits, and, "if fired upon and his ships struck, to return the fire, but not to wait to silence the forts." On February 13, 1878, seven ships of war, under Admiral Hornby, steamed up the Dardanelles. The Turks manned the forts at the Narrows; but when the ships came up against a strong current and in the face of a blinding snowstorm, they forbore to fire their guns. There was an anxious moment when the *Alexandra*, which led the line, ran aground on the Asiatic side, within easy range of Turkish batteries. She was, however, unmolested, and managed to get off after four hours' hard work. She then joined her consorts in the Sea of Marmora, and the guns of the ships were trained on the domes and minarets of the Turkish capital.

No doubt the presence of a British fleet within striking range of Constantinople had its effect upon the Russians. They did not enter the city, but agreed to make a treaty with the Powers, by which Serbia, Montenegro, and Rumania became independent states, and Bulgaria was granted a form of Home Rule. The Christian states which have been carved out of Turkey in Europe owe everything to Russia. As you know, the Christians of the Balkans are Slavs, and are akin to the Russians both by race and religion. Russia has always been their friend and champion, and Serbia and Montenegro have stood by their benefactor during the present war. Rumania had, so far, determined to remain neutral; but Bulgaria, as we shall learn later, played a traitor's part, and before the year 1915 was out she had joined the Central Powers.

Britain has suffered greatly for her mistake in bolstering up the Turks, and in preventing the Russians from becoming masters of Constantinople. Had they been in possession of that city when the present war broke out, the work of overcoming the Germans and Austrians would have been shorn of half its difficulty. The Dardanelles would have been in the hands of our friends, and there would have been an open sea road by which Russia could have carried on her overseas trade, and received munitions and supplies from her Allies. There would have been no need for that naval attack on the forts of the Dardanelles which I am about to describe; nor should we have undertaken that land campaign in the Gallipoli peninsula which cost us more than 117,000 casualties, and ended in failure, only redeemed by the splendid gallantry of our men.



Map of the Dardanelles.

You have heard how Admiral Hornby's fleet threaded the Dardanelles in 1878 without firing a shot. Now let me tell you very briefly how a British squadron forced its way through the straits in spite of strong resistance. In the year 1807, when we alone of all the European nations were holding out against the French, it was thought that if a British fleet were sent to Constantinople the Turks might be forced to break with Napoleon. So a powerful squadron under Admiral Duckworth sailed for the Dardanelles, with orders to demand the surrender of the Turkish fleet. If the demand was refused, he was to bombard Constantinople. Those were the days of sailing ships, and it was not easy to get men-of-war and frigates up the narrow winding waters, where the winds were irregular and the currents were baffling. The "castles" at the entrance and the forts at the Narrows opened fire on the ships; but little harm was done, and they passed through and anchored off Constantinople. It now seemed likely that under the muzzles of British guns the Sultan would give way. The French agents, however, persuaded him to "play for time," so that heavy batteries might be set up on the shores of the straits, and Duckworth's ships might be bombarded as they tried to return to the Mediterranean. Duckworth, you will notice, was in a very tight place. He was cut off from the open sea, and he could obtain no fresh supplies of food, water, or ammunition. It was clear that when his stores were exhausted he would be at the mercy of his enemies. So, before he could come to any agreement with the Sultan, he was forced to retire. His ships sailed slowly across the Sea of Marmora, and when the Narrows were reached the Turkish batteries opened fire with huge balls of marble, said to be hewn out of columns found amidst the ruins of Troy. One enormous stone shot cut the mainmast of the flagship in two; a second, that hit another vessel, knocked three gun ports into one, and killed or wounded sixty men. Finally, by good luck, the ships reached the open sea in safety. All on board were convinced that the experiment was too risky to be repeated.

Our greatest sailor, Nelson, always believed that strong, heavily armed forts could resist the attack of ships. When he was asked to reduce certain forts in Corsica by means of gun fire, he pointed out that stone walls were stronger than wooden walls, and that red-hot cannon balls from the guns of the forts might set his ships on fire. Since his day wooden walls have been replaced by armour plate, and red-hot shot by high-explosive shells. Nevertheless it is still true that shore batteries are more than a match for the heaviest armed battleships afloat. Of course, weak or badly-manned forts have been overcome by the guns of ships, as in the case of those at Alexandria, which were silenced by a British fleet in

1882; but as a rule ships run a great risk in attacking forts at close range, and are more than likely to come off second best.

While a fort can only be put out of action by gun fire, a ship can be sunk not only by gun fire, but by mines or torpedoes. Forts can be strengthened to almost any extent, and protected by earthworks of all kinds, but there is a limit to the thickness and weight of the armour plate with which ships can be clad. Further, while shore batteries can be so hidden that they cannot be detected even from aeroplanes, a ship in action is in full sight of the fort, and is thus a good target. Then, again, hits made on the outer slopes of forts do but little damage. The only hits that really count are those which destroy or dismount guns, and such "direct hits" are few and far between. On the other hand, every shot that hits the ship is bound to tell, and the ship may be put out of action without a single gun being hit. You must also remember that while the fortress gunner is aiming at a wall twenty or thirty feet high and a hundred feet long, the ship's gunner can only fire at a low mound, or at a battery not more than four and a half feet in height.

Even more difficult is the task of a ship's gunner when he is aiming at forts or batteries on high ground. It is not easy for a naval gun to bring an effective fire to bear on a target at a high level above the sea. Batteries on rising ground are difficult to reach, and when they are "spotted" they can be shifted to other positions, in which case the ship's gunners have to find the range all over again. When the shells from the ship's guns strike the ground they throw up columns of dust, and it is difficult for observers on board the ship or in the air to see exactly where the shells fall; but shells from the forts or land batteries drop into the sea, and throw up fountains of water which are clearly visible, and enable the observers on land to discover and set right all errors of range.

A ship attacking a fort from the sea may silence it for a time; but when the ship draws off, as it is bound to do, the fort may be repaired and new guns may be mounted. Unless a landing-party goes ashore and utterly destroys the fort, there is no guarantee that the ship's work will not have to be done all over again. Even if forts are blown up, land batteries can be established, and resistance can be continued. Without land forces to occupy the shores on which the forts are situated, no really lasting result can be obtained by the ships.

Now that you understand the disadvantages under which a fleet attacks forts, you will naturally ask why the British Government only sent ships to break down the defences of the Dardanelles. Why was not an army landed on the Gallipoli peninsula, to get behind the forts, or to attack them in the rear while the ships bombarded them from the sea? In the first weeks of February we were not ready to fit out and send a sufficiently strong army to the Gallipoli peninsula. Why, then, were the naval attacks not postponed until the army *was* ready? Probably it was thought that if we hastened to show our strength in Near Eastern waters Greece, Bulgaria, and perhaps Rumania, might be won over to our side, or, at least, persuaded to turn a deaf ear to the tempting voice of the Kaiser. Further, some of the rulers of our navy really believed that the armament of our warships was now so powerful that the straits could be carried by gun fire alone. The idea of our Admiralty was to silence the forts at the entrance to the straits, then with a fleet of mine-sweepers from the North Sea to clear the inner waters so that warships could steam sufficiently near to the forts at the Narrows to concentrate a fierce fire on them. When they were silenced the ships would dash through.

But even supposing the forts could be thus silenced, and our warships could slip through the straits, what then? So long as the Turks held the shores they could repair the damage to their forts, mount new batteries, strew the waters with mines, and take a heavy toll of our ships when lack of supplies forced them to return. Those who planned this naval attack probably thought that the Turks would give in as soon as Constantinople was shelled. But such a happy ending to the adventure was very doubtful.

So you see that unless the ships were supported by land forces sufficient to hold at least one of the shores of the straits, all the efforts of the fleet were likely to prove fruitless. Nevertheless an unsupported naval attack was decided upon, and this was the first of the many costly mistakes which were made at the Dardanelles. When our ships began bombarding the forts, the Turks and their German advisers knew that we should have to make a land attack sooner or later. With feverish haste they therefore began to dig trenches and make gun pits on the Gallipoli peninsula. Thus, the Turks were afforded a breathing space in which to make any future land operations doubly difficult.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW WE FAILED AT THE "NARROWS."

As far back as November 3, 1914, a British and French squadron of battleships and battle cruisers shelled the forts which guard the entrance to the Dardanelles both on the Gallipoli and the Asiatic side. The attack was not long sustained; each ship only fired about twenty rounds. The forts replied, but most of the shots fell short. The sole object of this brief bombardment was to get the range of the forts. A spectator noticed that while the firing continued a heavy haze of smoke hung over the Turkish positions, and columns of dust rose high into the air, making "spotting" very difficult.

Three months elapsed before the real attack began. On February 9, 1915, five British warships, the *Inflexible*, *Agamemnon*, *Cornwallis*, *Vengeance*, and *Triumph*, along with the French cruisers *Bouvet*, *Suffren*, and *Gaulois*, and a flotilla of destroyers, turned their guns on the entrance forts once more. Behind the battle line lay the *Ark Royal*, a mother ship for seaplanes. The aircraft which ascended from her decks carried observers, whose duty it was to direct the gunnery. Long-range firing began at eight in the morning, and before long the forts seemed to be smothered in bursting shells. Hits were frequently made both on the forts at Cape Helles and at Kum Kale, on the opposite shore; but what happened to the low earthworks of the batteries at Sedd-el-Bahr was difficult to ascertain. The forts did not reply, and Admiral Carden, who was in command of the bombarding fleet, thought that they must be out of action. Shortly before three in the afternoon he ordered six of his ships to close in, and bring all their guns to bear on the forts. As they did so the silent batteries awoke to life, and shells fell fast and thick around the attacking vessels. The Turkish fire, however, was badly aimed, and not a single ship was hit. By sundown the Gallipoli batteries were again silent; but Kum Kale was still firing when dusk began to fall, and Admiral Carden had to withdraw his fleet for the night.

Next day there was bad weather, which continued for a week, and the attack could not be resumed until the 25th. The *Queen Elizabeth*, *Agamemnon*, *Irresistible*, and *Gaulois* pounded the forts at such a long range that the guns on shore could not reach them. At the end of an hour and a half the *Queen Elizabeth* had silenced the forts at Cape Helles, but not before the *Agamemnon* had been struck by a shell which killed eight men and wounded five others. Under the protection of the super-Dreadnought's fire, the *Vengeance* and *Cornwallis* now steamed in to complete the destruction of the forts. Meanwhile the *Irresistible* and the *Gaulois* had severely hammered the Kum Kale batteries and the *Suffren* and *Charlemagne* were told off to put the finishing touches to the work of their bigger sisters. By 5.15 that evening all the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles were rubbish heaps. The Turkish gunners had fought pluckily for seven hours against overwhelming odds, and their defeat brought them no discredit. So far, the naval attack had been quite successful.

When the ships ceased fire North Sea trawlers began the business of mine-sweeping. As you know, it is dangerous and difficult work; but it was admirably done, and by the morning of the 26th the first four miles of the straits were clear of mines, and all was ready for an attack on the inner forts. The *Albion*, *Vengeance*, and *Majestic* now steamed up the straits to the limit of the mine-swept waters, and began to bombard Fort Dardanos, on the Asiatic side. The fort replied, as also did certain concealed batteries at various points along the shore. Once more the aim of the Turkish gunners was uncertain, and the ships suffered no damage. The guns of the ships dispersed several bodies of troops behind the forts.

Meanwhile landing-parties of Royal Marines were sent ashore to blow up the forts which had been silenced on the previous day. Everywhere, except at Kum Kale, this was successfully done. The parties which landed on the Asiatic side were stubbornly resisted. They fought a hot little fight with the Turks, and had to fall back to their boats with a few casualties. Next day the Turks falsely announced that they had everywhere beaten off our landing-parties with heavy loss.

The entrance to the straits was now in our hands; but its capture was only the beginning of the task. I have already told you that the main defences of the Dardanelles consist of the clustering forts and batteries on both sides of the bottle neck known as the Narrows. Our ships had now to deal not only with these forts and batteries, but with drifting mines and hidden torpedo tubes. Their hour of trial was fast approaching. Strong and bitterly cold northerly winds postponed the attack until 4th March; but in the meantime the trawlers, under cover of the destroyers, swept another five miles of the straits up to within a mile and a half of the beginning of the Narrows.

On 4th March the ships were again in action, and another attempt was made by the Marines to land at Kum Kale. Once more they found a strong body of Turks awaiting them, and had to retire to their boats with a loss of nineteen killed, twenty-five wounded, and three missing. Many of the men were killed by snipers concealed in the ruins or in trees. A

midshipman of the *Ocean* tells us that a sergeant of Marines was found pierced by fourteen bullets. His comrades searched round until they found a German concealed in a wood exactly opposite to the wounded man. "He was put up against a tree and shot without a word."

Next day a squadron of battleships and cruisers began the bombardment of Smyrna, the chief city of Asia Minor, and one of the greatest ports in the Turkish Empire. Some thirty-two hits were made on the forts, which made no reply. The attack was renewed on several of the following days, but with no result. Probably it was never intended to be serious, and was only made to distract the attention of the enemy.

On the morning of 6th March the forts at the Narrows were assaulted by ships well up the straits. The attacking vessels were frequently hit by shells, but no serious damage was done, and there was no loss of life. The bombardment from the inside of the straits was not the main attack. That was made by the *Queen Elizabeth*, *Agamemnon*, and *Ocean* from the Gulf of Saros. The ships lay off the point of Gaba Tepe, and, under the direction of aeroplanes, hurled their shells on to the forts at Chanak, which you will see on the Asiatic side of the Narrows, twelve miles away. The great 15-inch guns of "Big Lizzie," as the bluejackets dubbed the monster battleship, fired twenty-nine rounds, and played havoc with the forts. A shell from the "Lizzie" blew up the powder magazine of one of the batteries. You must not suppose that the ships in the Gulf of Saros went unmolested. The Turks had concealed guns on the heights of the peninsula, and with them they made good practice. The "Lizzie" was hit three times.

The attack now seemed to be proceeding favourably. Every day newspaper readers at home expected to hear that the forts at the Narrows had been silenced, and that the guns of the fleet were within range of Constantinople. Little real progress, however, was being made. Often when forts ceased fire we flattered ourselves with the belief that they had been destroyed. What had really happened was that the heavy fumes from our shells had driven the gunners out of their casemates. As soon as the air became clear again they returned to work their guns once more. Even at Sedd-el-Bahr and Kum Kale our success was not complete. We had blown up the forts, but we had not occupied the ground on both sides of the entrance, and the Turks had strongly entrenched themselves near at hand, and had mounted guns, which were able to continue the resistance.

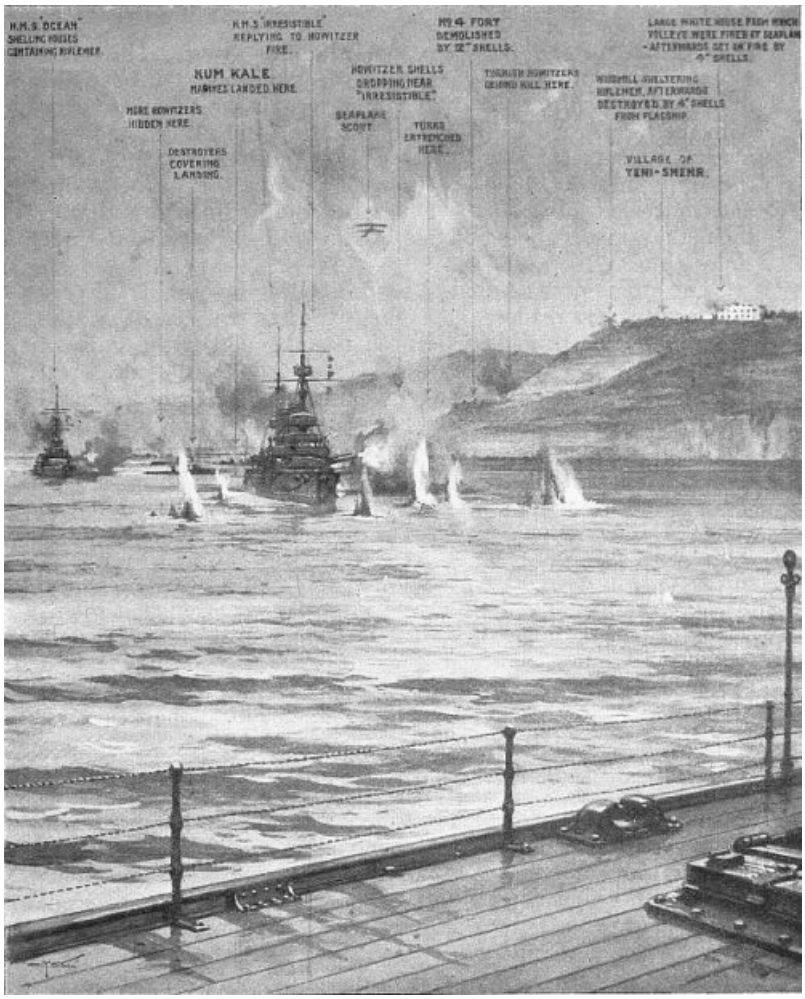
On the night of 13th March the small light cruiser *Amethyst* performed a very daring feat. She dashed into the Narrows, and attempted to rush through. Concealed batteries opened fire on her, and she was hit several times at close range. Before she could run back into safety some fifty of her men had been knocked over. At home it was reported that she had actually succeeded in passing the forts, and everybody hoped that the beginning of the end was in sight. By this time an enormous number of vessels of all sorts and sizes had been mustered. Never before had such a fleet been seen in Eastern waters. Amongst the newcomers was the Russian cruiser *Askold*, which our sailors called "the packet of Woodbines," because of her five slim funnels. On 18th March Admiral Robeck, who had succeeded Admiral Carden in command of the fleet, felt that the time had come for a big effort.

Thursday, 18th March, broke bright and clear, with a light wind and a calm sea. At a quarter to eleven the *Queen Elizabeth*, *Inflexible*, *Agamemnon*, and *Lord Nelson*, supported by the *Triumph* and *Swiftsure*, steamed up the bright blue waters of the straits, and began firing at long range on the batteries on both sides of the Narrows. Forts, batteries, howitzers, and field guns replied, and after the bombardment had lasted an hour and a half, a French squadron of four ships, including the *Bouvet*, steamed in to attack the enemy at close range. Ten ships were now hurling their missiles on the forts, and under this terrific bombardment they were powerless to reply. Then a British squadron of six ships came up to push the attack home. As this squadron steamed towards Chanak, the French ships were withdrawn from the narrow waters, in order to make room for the newcomers. Suddenly, while this movement was going on, the forts began to fire again. It was now clear that they had not been seriously injured by our heavy bombardment.

As the *Bouvet* retired an officer on a British destroyer saw three shells strike her. Almost at the same moment she blew up with a terrific explosion, and was hidden in a dense cloud of smoke. In three minutes she heeled over and disappeared. A consort rushed to her assistance, only to find bubbles rising to the surface, and a pall of black smoke slowly lifting. Out of her crew of 630, only 64 were saved. At first it was thought that the enemy's shells had destroyed her, but the real cause of the disaster was a floating mine. The Turks, seeing the narrow waterway full of ships, had dropped mines in the channel, and the current had swept them along on their mission of destruction.

This grave misfortune led to no slackening of the bombardment. An hour and a half later the *Irresistible*, a British battleship, thirteen years old, also fouled a mine. She began to list heavily, and slowly dragged her way from the firing line towards the entrance to the straits. At ten minutes to six she sank, but happily not until our destroyers had taken off

nearly all her ship's company. The rescue of the *Irresistible's* crew was a very gallant and skilful bit of work, for the destroyers were under Turkish fire all the time. A midshipman named Hugh Dixon did splendid service in picking up officers and men while shells were falling round his boat. He afterwards received the Distinguished Service Cross.



The Irresistible and the Ocean in Action.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

This picture, taken from the deck of a British warship, shows the *Irresistible* and *Ocean* shelling the Kum Kale and other forts on the Asiatic side. Both vessels were sunk on March 18, 1915, by drifting mines. (See page 175.)

The tale of disaster was not yet complete. A quarter of an hour after the *Irresistible* went down the floating mines claimed another victim. The *Ocean*, a British battleship, fifteen years old, suddenly sank; but once more the destroyers were on the alert, and few lives were lost. Nor had other ships of the fleet escaped scathless. The *Gaulois* had been holed in the bows, the fire-control station on the *Inflexible's* foretop had been shot away, and several of her men had fallen. Later in the day she received a gaping wound from a mine.

When the sun set on that disastrous day the fleet slipped out of the Dardanelles, never again to renew its attack in force. The great attempt had failed; three battleships had gone down, and the French and British navies were the poorer by the loss of many gallant men. It was now clear to all that an unsupported naval attack was powerless to force a right-of-way through the Hellespont. Though the lost battleships had been destroyed by mines, the wisdom of our forefathers had been fully justified: well-armed forts are more than a match for the gun fire of ships.

For the next month one or more vessels entered the straits each day and opened fire in order to prevent the Turks from repairing their forts. On 28th March the Russian Black Sea Fleet bombarded the outer forts of the Bosporus. There was, however, no sting in these attacks. The fleet had shot its bolt. Our war lords were now preparing for a combined

movement by land and sea.

The Victoria Cross was awarded to Lieutenant-Commander Eric Gascoigne Robinson for several acts of bravery during the operations described above. On 26th February, when detailed to destroy a fort which had been silenced by our ships, he advanced alone, under heavy fire, into the enemy's position, and blew up a 4-inch gun. He then returned to his party for another charge, with which he destroyed a second gun. He did the work single-handed, because he knew that the white uniforms of his comrades would make them a good mark for the enemy. Commander Robinson distinguished himself not only by destroying guns, but also by taking part in four attacks on mine-fields—in each case under heavy fire.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE STORY OF HILL 60.

Three miles south of Ypres, close to the railway line which runs from that city to Comines, on the Lys, stands Hill 60, now known to all the world as the scene of a furious struggle which merged into a long and fierce battle. You must not imagine Hill 60 as a towering peak, but as a gentle swell of ground not rising much more than sixty feet above the level of the surrounding country. It was, indeed, formed by the earth taken out of a railway cutting and dumped down by the side of the line. At the time when my story opens (17th April) it was a hillock of ploughed land, with woods on all sides of it. Humble as it was, the heroisms done on it have given it a fame that Mont Blanc might envy.

Hill 60 was valuable to the Germans because it overlooked the lower ground on which the British had dug their trenches. Observers on the hill could watch what was going on down below, and direct the fire of their heavy guns which were stationed a couple of miles or so to the rear. The whole hill was seamed with trenches and saps. The Germans held the upper slopes and the summit, and their positions were only fifty yards away from those of the British. They had strongly fortified the hill, because they knew that its loss would force them to give up a large part of their line. For this reason, and because it would afford us a gun position commanding much of the German front, we now prepared a bold attack upon it.

Since the Battle of Neuve Chapelle and the counter-attack at St. Eloi there had been a lull in the fighting. Of course, the big guns on both sides fired daily, and the aeroplanes of friend and foe made constant raids and observation flights; but the infantry had been but little engaged. On 1st April an Allied aviator played a practical joke on the Germans. He flew over Lille, and dropped a football on the aerodrome.[34] It bounded up to a great height, and the Germans, thinking that it was a new kind of bomb, at once scuttled away into cover. The supposed bomb did not explode, and after a time they ventured out to examine it, and discovered this inscription on it: "April fool—Gott strafe England,"[35]

In the early days of April our engineers, all unknown to the enemy, were busy driving galleries under Hill 60, and preparing mines. At seven o'clock on the morning of 17th April, when the 1st Royal West Kents and the 2nd King's Own Scottish Borderers were waiting with fixed bayonets, the mines under the hillock were exploded. There was a terrific roar, and it seemed as though the German trenches had been struck by an earthquake. Parapets, sand-bags, wire entanglements, and the bodies of the men were blown high into the air. The trenches disappeared, and in place of them yawned huge craters and mounds of piled earth. Before the dense columns of dust and smoke could subside, our guns belched forth shrapnel and high-explosive shells, so as to prevent the enemy from sending up reinforcements. In the midst of the whirlwind of shot and flame the Germans who had survived the explosions were seen falling over one another in their efforts to escape by means of the communication trenches. They were so panic-stricken that some of them forced a way to safety by charging through their own ranks with the bayonet.

Then the whistles blew, and the West Kents, closely followed by the Scottish Borderers, clambered over their parapets, and, rushing up the slope, took possession of the craters, while some of their comrades pursued the flying Germans and fought furiously with them in the narrow trenches. Barricades were erected in the communication trenches, and over these the enemy flung hand grenades. The British, however, made good their hold on the craters, and twenty minutes after the charge was made were strongly posted with machine guns on the coveted position. Hill 60 was ours.

Hill 60.

(*From a sketch made just before its capture by the British. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

Early next morning (Sunday, 18th April) the Germans in mass formation made two attacks on the hill, but they were mown down by machine guns and shrapnel. Nevertheless they kept up their assaults all day, and by 6 p.m. had won back part of the southern edge. The 2nd West Riding and 2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry were now sent up to relieve the West Kents and Scottish Borderers. Supported by heavy artillery fire, they dashed forward and drove out the enemy at the point of the bayonet. While doing so they captured fifty-three prisoners, including four officers. During this advance we lost heavily, but the Germans lost more, and the slopes were littered with the bodies of friend and foe.

For three days the struggle continued, almost without pause. The Germans fiercely shelled the hill, and hurled upon it a constant shower of bombs. Our men were exposed to fire from three sides, but they held on like limpets to a rock. On the evening of the 20th the Germans made another infantry attack, which lasted for an hour and a half, but once more they were repulsed by the stubborn British. It was during this period of fighting that Lieutenant George Roupell and Second Lieutenant Geoffrey Woolley won the Victoria Cross, as you will read on a later page.

At dawn the next morning we discovered that the Germans had dug themselves in on the north-east edge of the hill. In the afternoon they were driven off, and then their artillery literally plastered the hill with shells of all kinds, some of them containing gases which blinded and choked our men. Against a tiny table top of 250 yards long by 200 yards deep tons of metal and high explosives were flung from howitzers and field guns at close range. It seemed to observers that nothing could live in that zone of fire; nevertheless the defenders hung on for four and a half terrible days. The hill was still ours on Thursday, the 22nd. Then came a lull: the storm of battle had begun to rage over a far wider field.

The struggle for the hill did not cease with the opening of this new battle. Before every big attack which the Germans made elsewhere they delivered a furious assault on the hill. At length, on 6th May, after a series of gas attacks, they won it back, and also some trenches to the north of it. By this time, however, it had been so blown away by mine explosions and artillery fire as to be of little value. A friend of mine, who visited it a week later, "could barely detect the gentle swell among the flat meadows."

Before I pass on to describe the Second Battle of Ypres, let me relate some soldiers' stories of the fierce fighting on Hill 60. A correspondent tells us that the Scottish Borderers never lost heart during the awful bombardment to which they were subjected. "These astounding men," he says, "holding hastily-dug trenches by the side of a yawning crater full of dead and wounded, with high-explosive shells bursting all around them and often falling amongst them, actually sang as they fired over the parapets or lobbed their bombs over the barriers across the old communication trenches of the Germans. Amid the flares that lit up the hilltop as clear as day, and the shells that burst with clouds of whitish yellow smoke, they shouted in chorus, '*Here we are! Here we are! Here we are again!*' Thus a company of the West Kents, sent up in support, found them at daybreak. The Borderers had been obliged to fall back from the trench on the outer lip of the crater to a trench on its near side, so that the chasm lay between them and the Germans. Their captain lay stark and stiff in the crater, which was so full of dead and wounded that, in the words of a West Kents' officer, 'hardly a portion of the ground could be seen.'" "It's dogged as does it," according to the old saying, and never were men more dogged than the King's Own Scottish Borderers during that fearful ordeal.

The same correspondent gives us some details of the splendid advance made by the Duke of Wellington's Own (2nd West Riding) and the 2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry, when they drove the Germans off the southern edge. "At six o'clock the Duke's, as full of fight as ever, with bayonets fixed, were away over the parapet of their battered trench, followed by their fellow-countrymen of Yorkshire, some of the K.O.S.B.'s, and the Queen Victoria Rifles, a London Territorial battalion that did magnificent work that day. 'B' Company of the Duke's, on the right, reached the German trenches with only slight casualties. 'C' company, in the centre, had to cross open ground, and of the hundred men who charged only Captain Barton and eleven others got into the German trench, where, notwithstanding their small numbers, they killed or routed all the Germans there. 'D' Company, on the left, had likewise to traverse the open, and lost all its officers in passing through the heavily-shelled zone; but with the help of the gallant Yorkshire Light Infantry it managed to secure the trench. Some fine deeds of gallantry were performed on that sombre hillside. Privates Behan and Dryden, of the Duke's, became separated from their company, but charged a German trench single-handed, killing three Germans and capturing two others. When they were reinforced by a detachment without an officer, Behan took command, and showed great ability. Both men afterwards received the Distinguished Conduct Medal."

A "Gaspipe Officer,"[36] writing in *Blackwood's Magazine*, tells us that, on the evening of 17th April, a group of officers standing on a little rise watched the shrapnel bursting over Hill 60, three and a half miles away. "They were half joyful and half sick at heart. Not one of them would have confessed it, yet each had a great pride in the old division, and a great anxiety that it should do well. Had the charge been successful? Had the gains been made good? They went back into their hut, and sang . . . until it was time to go to bed.

"In the morning news came that the position had been rushed; the Germans had been filled with such panic that they had fled from the trenches on either side of the crater; they were heavily attacking; their guns and bombs were sweeping the new position; there was no wire down yet.

"About nine the same night there was much cheering in the darkness of the camp. The remains of two battalions had returned from the hill. Then first we learned the names of the fallen. Still there was no wire down. . . . It took five or six days before the wire was down and trenches properly made. During those days no battalion could remain for more than fifteen hours on the hill, and at the end of its shift it would return broken. The men could see the guns that were firing at them. . . . The hill was death. But the 5th Division never let go. They stuck to the hill while the sappers put up wire and made it defensible."

Before I close this chapter I will give you some account of the soldiers who won the Victoria Cross for deeds of

outstanding gallantry during the period between the Battle of Neuve Chapelle and the beginning of the Second Battle of Ypres.

Privat, 1st Battalion, Princess Victoria's (Royal Irish) Fusiliers.

Near Messines, on 12th April, some of our trenches were destroyed by the enemy's shell fire, and several of our men were buried in the ruins. Without waiting for orders, and under a very heavy fire, Private Morrow dug out the men and carried them one by one to places of shelter. A score of times he hazarded his own life in rescuing his comrades, and the highest award of valour was the King's tribute to such fearless self-devotion.

Private Edward Dwyer, 1st Battalion, East Surrey Regiment.

When His Majesty the King pinned the coveted cross on the breast of Private Dwyer, he was amazed at the boyish appearance of the hero. He was but nineteen years of age when he ran through the hail of death up the slope of Hill 60; yet he was already a veteran, for he had fought from Mons to the Marne, and back to the Aisne, and had played his part in many a Flanders battle. He and his comrades of the East Surreys held a trench of Hill 60 with wonderful doggedness. Quite early in the encounter Dwyer went out from the cover of his trench and bandaged several of his badly-wounded comrades. No one would have been more surprised than Edward Dwyer if he had been told that these acts of mercy were heroic. He considered them his plain duty—that was all.

Dwyer and his comrades were assailed by German hand-grenade throwers. Their bombs came hurtling into the trench, and did awful execution. Dwyer saw that unless the Germans were beaten back with their own weapons the position would be lost. Seizing a supply of bombs, he sprang upon the parapet, and flung his missiles so rapidly and with such unerring aim that he broke up the enemy's advance. At once he became a mark for the enemy's bombers and sharpshooters. Standing high on the parapet, he was an excellent target. Grenades whizzed and cracked in the air around him, rifles were fired at him, and only by a hair's breadth did he escape time after time. At last he was wounded in the head, but even then he did not cease to fling his bombs. They fell right in the thick of the Germans, who were forced back. One man had beaten back a whole company!

Private Dwyer came down from the sand-bags sorely wounded but victorious. He was still unaware that he had done anything heroic. But you and I honour him as a supremely brave man, who added to his gallantry the charm of modesty. While he was recovering from his wounds he addressed recruiting meetings with such burning words that many a man forthwith offered his services to his King and country. Before the year was out he carried the King's commission as second lieutenant.

Lieutenant George Rowland Patrick Roupell, 1st Battalion, the East Surrey Regiment.

This young officer was in command of his company in a front trench on that terrible April day when our men were clinging on to Hill 60 by their eyebrows. Though wounded in several places, he remained at his post, and led his men when they repelled a strong German assault. During a lull in the shattering salvos of fire he had his wounds hurriedly dressed, and then insisted on returning to his trench, which was soon heavily shelled once more. Towards evening, when his company was dangerously weakened, he went back to headquarters through a whirlwind of fire, and returned, bringing with him reinforcements. With these he held the position until his battalion was relieved next morning. Lieutenant Roupell was one of the few survivors of his company. It was his splendid example of courage, devotion, and doggedness that inspired his men to hold out to the end.

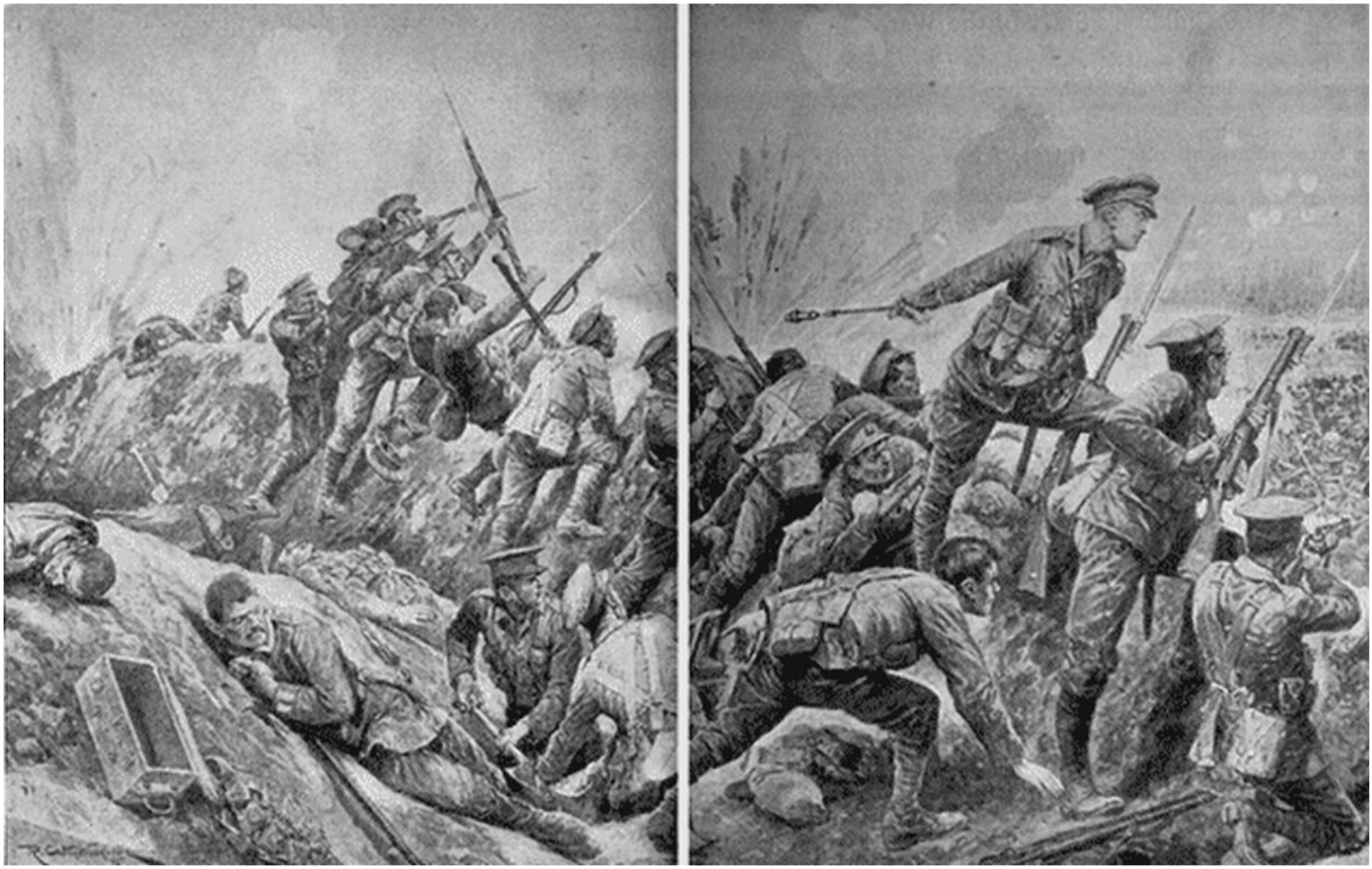
Second Lieutenant Benjamin Handley Geary, 4th Battalion (attached 1st Battalion), East Surrey Regiment.

Second Lieutenant Geary held the left crater on Hill 60 with his platoon, a detachment of the Bedfordshire Regiment, and a few reinforcements sent up during the evening and night. The crater was so heavily bombarded by the enemy that the defences were broken down, and throughout the night there were repeated bomb attacks which filled the great hole with dead and wounded. Each attack, however, was splendidly repulsed, mainly owing to the personal gallantry and inspiring example of Lieutenant Geary. At one time he used a rifle with great effect, at another time he threw hand grenades and held off the enemy. Again and again he exposed himself with entire disregard of danger, in order to see by the light of flares where the attack was to be made. In the pauses between the attacks he was busy arranging for ammunition supply and for reinforcements. Lieutenant Geary displayed all the ancient virtues of his race—alertness in seizing opportunities, courage that is heedless of self, leadership that inspires confidence, and steadfastness that never knows defeat. He was severely wounded just before daylight on 21st April. A bullet passed through his head from one side to the other,

completely destroying the sight of one eye, and seriously injuring that of the other. He made, however, a rapid recovery.

Lieutenant Geoffrey Harold Woolley, 9th (County of London) Battalion, the London Regiment (Queen Victoria's Rifles), Territorial Force.

At one time during the frenzied struggle which I have described in this chapter, Lieutenant Woolley was the only officer on the hill. With a handful of men he resisted all attacks on his trench, and continued throwing bombs and encouraging his comrades until he was relieved. All this time his trench was under heavy fire from the artillery, bombers, and machine gunners of the enemy. For "sticking it" so gallantly Lieutenant Woolley was rightly awarded the cross of valour. He had the honour of being the first of all Territorials to win this high distinction. Lieutenant Woolley was the son of an Essex clergyman, and was a student at Oxford, preparing to take holy orders, when the war broke out. Although he confessed that he hated fighting, he nevertheless felt that he must serve his country. Shortly after his exploits on the hill he was promoted captain.



The first Territorial to win the V.C. An heroic Exploit on Hill 60.

(*From the picture by R. Caton Woodville, from material supplied by men who fought in the action. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

"He successfully resisted all attacks on his trench and continued throwing bombs"—such was the exploit which won Lieutenant Geoffrey Harold Woolley the Victoria Cross. You will read the story of his heroism on page 187.

Private Edward Warner, 1st Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment.

On 1st May the Germans launched a gas attack against Hill 60, and Trench 46 had to be abandoned by our men. Though suffering agonies from the poisonous fumes, Private Warner, all by himself, returned to the trench, and prevented the enemy from taking possession of it. Reinforcements were ordered up, but they could not reach the gallant fellow owing

to the gas. He then came back, and returned with other men, who helped him to hold the trench until the enemy's attacks ceased. By this time he was completely worn out, and shortly afterwards died from the effects of gas poisoning. Thus perished a hero of heroes.

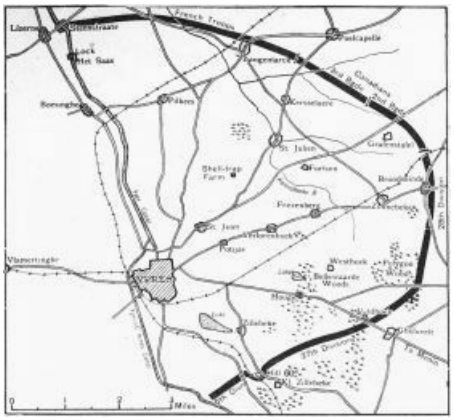
CHAPTER XXIV.

THE POISONOUS CLOUD.

While the Germans were fiercely shelling Hill 60 the tide of war rolled along the Ypres Salient, which has so often figured in these pages. The Gaspipe Officer already quoted says: "The old Ypres salient was such a silly thing. Imagine for a moment one of those old Greek theatres, semicircular. All the way round the Germans were on the top row of seats, and we were only halfway up. They could see everything that we were doing, while we, hemmed in, had to trust to aeroplanes. And down on the floor of the theatre stood Ypres, through which, or by which, nearly every road to the salient passed."

If you look at the diagram on page 189, you will see how we were holding the salient on the morning of 22nd April. Our lines ran in a semicircle from Steenstraate, on the Yser canal, about four and a half miles to the north of Ypres, right round to the Ypres-Comines canal, about two miles south of the city. Nowhere was the salient more than four and a half miles across; every part of it, including Ypres itself, was, therefore, within range of the enemy's big guns. As the Gaspipe Officer tells us, the Germans held the higher ground, and were thus in a very favourable position for sweeping all parts of the salient with their fire. All the roads to the outer rim of the salient spread out from Ypres like the spokes of a wheel. Our supply and ammunition columns were, therefore, under fire the moment they entered or passed by the city.

The British forces had greatly increased since those days of terrible trial in the preceding October and November, when, with never more than 150,000 men, we had beaten back the furious onrush of at least half a million Germans, and had blocked for ever the coveted road to Calais. We had now some 500,000 men at the front, and we felt, after our great assault at Neuve Chapelle, that we had the upper hand of the enemy, and that henceforth the attack was with us and the defence lay with him. Before, however, he sank into this secondary position he meant to make another desperate effort to reach the Channel ports. This long and fierce struggle, which I am now about to describe, is known as the Second Battle of Ypres.



Second Battle of Ypres.

Sketch showing position at the Ypres salient on the morning of April 22, 1915.

Look again at the diagram. The Allied line from Steenstraate to Langemarck was held by Turcos and Spahis, French colonial troops from Algeria. Continuing the curve for 5,000 yards was the Canadian Division, consisting of three infantry brigades, in addition to artillery brigades. The first infantry brigade was in reserve, the second (8th and 5th Battalions) lay on the right, and the third (13th and 14th Battalions) on the left, next to the French. The whole division was commanded by General Alderson; Brigadier-General Turner commanded the 3rd Brigade, and Brigadier-General Curry the 2nd Brigade. The trenches, which the Canadians had taken over from the French, were badly made and very wet, and could only be improved with difficulty, as the dead had been buried in the bottoms and the sides. The 28th Division continued the line to the south-east corner of Polygon Wood, where Princess Patricia's Own were stationed.

From the wood to Hill 60 the remainder of the salient was manned by the 27th Division.

Though the salient was well known to be a source of weakness, it was not strongly held by the Allies at this time. Probably the Germans were aware of the fact, for suddenly they launched a furious and determined attack against the forces holding it. The only warning which the Allies received was on the 20th, when the guns of the enemy began to bombard Ypres. Huge shells from the heaviest of guns fell in the streets, which were then thronged with citizens and our own reserves. Fifteen little children were killed at their play, and a number of the townsfolk perished amidst the ruins of their houses. Our generals understood at once the meaning of this bombardment. It was meant to block the roads to our lines on the salient, and make the work of sending forward supplies and ammunition very difficult, if not impossible. It was not meant to embarrass us at Hill 60, for we had free roads leading to that position from the west. It could only be the forerunner of an attack on that part of the salient extending from the Yser Canal to the Menin road—that is, on the portion held by the French Colonials, the Canadians, the 28th Division, and Princess Pat's. Our generals viewed the bombardment with anxiety; they knew that we were ill prepared to meet the attacks which were soon to follow.

Thursday, 22nd April, was a peaceful day, warm and sunny. A light, steady wind was blowing from the north-east. About five in the evening an aviator reported that he had seen a strange green cloud, higher than a man, surging across the open ground from the German lines towards the French trenches. It was the deadly poison gas chlorine, which when taken into the lungs sets up acute bronchitis and causes its victims to die in horrible agony. At every fifty feet or so along the German front a battery of twenty retorts had been established. The gas from these retorts had been pumped at high pressure into huge reservoirs from which pipes ran to the front trenches. When the nozzles were turned on, the deadly gas rushed out, and was carried by the wind towards the French lines. Special respirators had been served out to the German soldiers, who were waiting in readiness to take advantage of this foul blow. Never before had poison gas been used in this manner on the battlefield. The Germans were about to sound the deepest depths of their infamy and try to poison those whom they could not beat in fair fight.

Onward rolled the greenish-white cloud, across fields, through woods, and over hedgerows. Soon the Turcos in their trenches were gasping and choking and suffering unspeakable tortures. They were brave men; there was no mortal foe they were not ready to engage; but this creeping cloud that struck them down in agony was a devilish magic which they could neither understand nor resist. A horrible, unreasoning terror took possession of them, and they ran. Back they fled through the dusk, a coughing, blinded crowd, leaving behind them hundreds of their comrades gasping out their lives or lying dead with blue faces and frothy lips. Some of them fled due south towards the Langemarck road, and in the early darkness came upon the reserve battalions of the Canadians, who gazed in amazement upon their wild dark faces, their heaving chests, and speechless lips. Soon the Canadians began to feel the effects of the gas, and many of them were afflicted by a deadly sickness.

Stand to your Arms! ***By permission of The Sphere.***

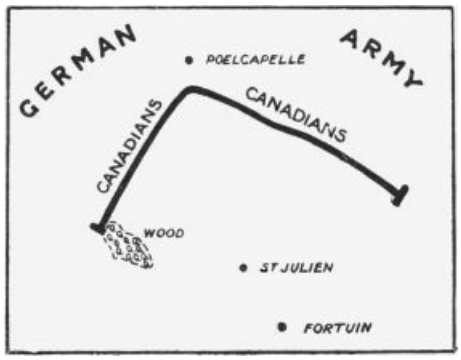
The incident pictured above occurred when the Turcos were assailed by poison gas and fled from their trenches. When the first fugitives arrived on the outskirts of Ypres, some of our reserves gathered in groups, wondering what had happened and trying to find out what was the matter. Suddenly a staff officer rode up, shouting, "Stand to your arms!" and in a few minutes the troops had fallen in and were marching to the scene of the fight. "Nothing more impressive ran be imagined than the sight of our men falling in quietly and in perfect order amid the scene of wild confusion caused by the panic-stricken refugees who swarmed along the roads, striving to flee as quickly as possible from the German menace behind them."

A great breach, four miles wide, now yawned between Steenstraate and Langemarck. On the left of the Canadians there was a huge rent, through which the Germans were preparing to advance, while their artillery pitilessly whipped the fugitives onward. The situation was dangerous in the extreme. Ypres appeared to be within the Kaiser's grasp. The Canadians were unsupported on their left; the French trenches were choked with dead and dying; and fifty French guns were in the hands of the enemy. In vain the officers strove to rally the fleeing Turcos. Meanwhile a great mob of Germans pushed through the wall of gas which was now breaking up into patches behind them, and rushed on towards Ypres. Only two miles of open country now separated them from the city of their desire.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BATTLE GLORY OF CANADA.

Every Briton may thank God that the Canadians were where they were when the cloud of poison gas sent the Turcos fleeing in panic to the rear. These sons of the eldest daughter of the Empire, who prior to the war knew little or nothing of the art and discipline of warfare, were now called upon to save the situation when all seemed lost. They, too, had been "gassed;" and though they had not suffered so severely as the French, many of them were already out of action. Against the 3rd Canadian Brigade four divisions of Germans now flung themselves. They were working round to the rear when General Turner threw back his left flank until his line ran roughly thus:—



This movement had to be carried out while the air was foul with poisonous fumes, while shells were bursting all around, and bullets were flying from scores of machine guns and hundreds of rifles. By nightfall the left wing of the 3rd Brigade was in its new position. Then, under the flickering light of burning farmhouses and cottages and the fitful rays of the moon, the men dug themselves in and prepared to hold on, come what might. By midnight two battalions of the reserve had been brought up, and the Canadians had settled down to their desperate task. So fierce was the German curtain of fire that no food could reach the trenches for twenty-four hours, and then only bread and cheese. A company of the Buffs which attempted to bring relief was altogether destroyed.

The story of the Second Battle of Ypres is mainly the story of how the Canadian Division—outflanked, and outnumbered by four to one, stormed at with shot and shell by the heaviest artillery known to warfare, stupefied by poisonous vapours, unsupported by big guns, unaided by reinforcements, and short of food and water—fought through the day and through the night, and then through another day and night, losing heavily hour by hour, but enduring gloriously, and finally retiring with the proud knowledge that by its superb endurance it had saved the day.

When the French Colonials fled from their trenches, the enemy captured four British guns in the little wood which you see to the east of St. Julien. The teams were miles away, and the guns could not be carried off during the hurry and confusion of changing position. It was gall and wormwood to the Canadians to think these guns should be lost, and they were eager to recover them. Towards midnight, Colonel Leckie and Colonel Boyle led the Canadian Scottish (the 16th Battalion of the 3rd Brigade and the 10th Battalion of the 2nd Brigade) into the wood in a desperate endeavour to win back the guns. Let me tell you the story of this fine charge in the words of an officer who took part in it:—

> "It wanted but a few minutes to midnight when we got to a hollow which was at most three hundred yards from the wood. The moon now reappeared at intervals, and we could have done without her. The shrapnel fire had completely ceased, and we had a second spell of a 'silence which could be felt.'
>
> "Whispered orders were given to fix bayonets, which were obeyed in a flash. Overcoats, packs, and

even the officers' equipments were dropped, and we immediately advanced in light order.

"Scarcely had we reached a low ridge, in full view of the wood, when a perfect hail of fire was loosed on us from rifles and machine guns, which the Germans had placed in position behind the undergrowth skirting the wood.

"Instantly the word was given to charge, and on we rushed, cheering, yelling, shouting, straight for the foe. At first the Germans fired a little too high, and our losses until we came within fifty yards of them were comparatively small. Then some of our chaps began to drop; then the whole front line seemed to melt away, only to be instantly closed up again.

"Cheering and yelling all the time, we jumped over the bodies of the wounded and tore on. Of the Germans with the machine guns not one escaped, but those inside the wood stood up to us in a most dogged style. We were so quickly at work that those at the edge of the wood could not have got away in any case. Many threw up their hands, and we did not refuse quarter.

"Pressing on into the wood itself, the struggle became a dreadful hand-to-hand conflict; we fought in clumps and batches, and the living struggled over the bodies of the dead and dying. At the height of the conflict, while we were steadily driving the Germans before us, the moon burst out. The clashing bayonets flashed like quicksilver, and faces were lit up as by limelight.

"Sweeping on, we came upon lines of trenches which had been hastily thrown up and could not be stubbornly defended. Here all who resisted were bayoneted; those who yielded were sent to the rear."

Another officer who took part in the attack described how the men about him fell under the fire of the machine guns, which, in his phrase, played upon them "like a watering-pot." He added quite simply, "I wrote my own life off." But neither he nor his men wavered. When one man fell another took his place, and with a final shout the two battalions flung themselves on the wood. The Germans were thrust back by the impetuous advance of the Canadians, who reached the far side of the wood and there entrenched themselves. They retook the guns, but were sorely disappointed to discover that the Germans had rendered them useless. They also captured a number of prisoners, including a colonel.

That night a terrible artillery fire swept the wood "as a tropical storm sweeps the leaves from a forest," and the Canadians fell back from the position which they had won at the price of many a brave life. All through the night the fighting went on without pause. The attacks constantly grew in strength, and it seemed hardly possible that the Canadians could resist much longer.

At six on the morning of Friday the enemy began an outflanking movement that looked very dangerous. In order to relieve the strain a counter-attack on the first line of German trenches was ordered. This was carried out by the Ontario 1st and 4th Battalions of the 1st Brigade, under General Mercer. The advance was made across 2,300 yards of open country, every yard of which was under hot shell fire.

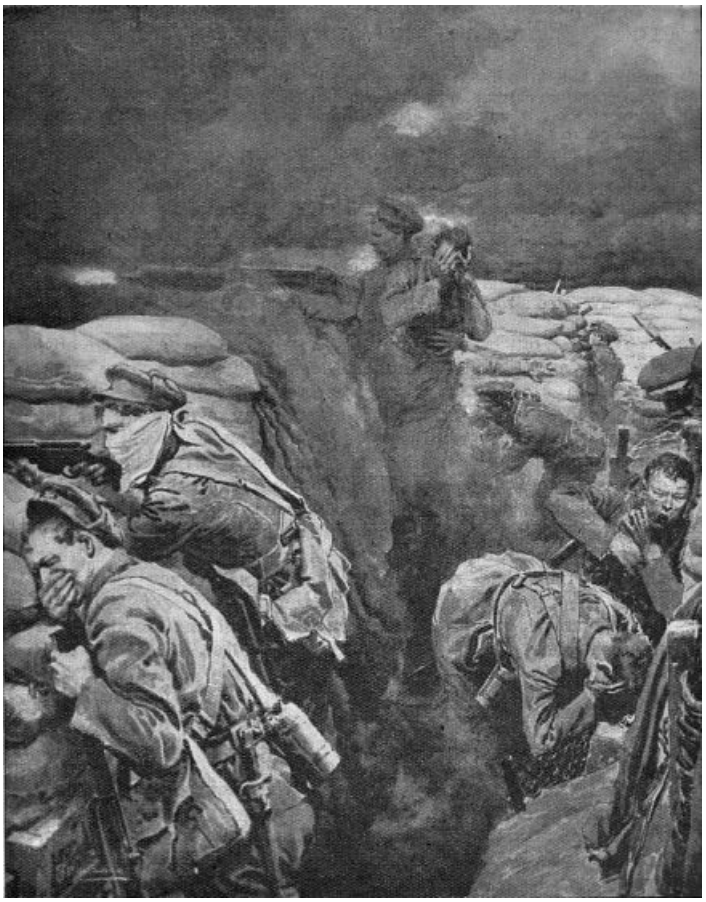
"It is safe to say," writes Sir Max Aitken, the Canadian record officer, "that the youngest private in the ranks, as he set his teeth for the advance, knew the task in front of him, and the youngest subaltern knew all that rested on its success. It did not seem that any human being could live in the shower of shot and shell which began to play upon the advancing troops.

"They suffered terrible casualties. For a short time every other man seemed to fall, but the attack was pressed ever closer and closer. The 4th Canadian Battalion at one time came under a particularly withering fire. For a moment—not more—it wavered. Its most gallant commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Birchall, carrying, after an old fashion, a light cane, coolly and cheerfully rallied his men, and at the very moment when his example had infected them, fell dead at the head of his battalion. With a hoarse cry of anger they sprang forward (for, indeed, they loved him) as if to avenge his death.

"The astonishing attack which followed, pushed home in the face of direct frontal fire, made in broad daylight, by battalions whose names should live for ever in the memories of soldiers, was carried to the first line of the German trenches. After a hand-to-hand struggle, the last German who resisted was bayoneted, and the trench was won."

The Canadian left was now safe. The German trench was occupied, and held against all comers in the teeth of every kind of deadly missile that could be hurled against it. It was still in the hands of the victors on Sunday, 25th April, when all that remained of the war-broken battalions was relieved.

At 4 a.m. on the morning of Friday, the 23rd, the Germans sent a great discharge of poison gas against the 2nd Brigade, which held the line running north-east, and upon the 3rd Brigade, which had continued the line up to the pivotal position and had then spread down in a south-easterly direction. In two minutes a cloud seven feet high rolled from the German trenches into those of the Canadians. The defenders had no respirators, but some of them wrapped wet handkerchiefs about their mouths, and thus obtained a little relief. They dared not retire, even if they had wished to do so, for the gas would follow them, and the exertion would cause them to draw deeper breaths of the deadly vapour. So, with blue, swollen faces and bloodshot eyes almost bursting from their sockets, they held on. Men went sick and giddy a thousand yards behind the line, and even the grass and trees grew white as the fumes passed over them.



Gassed!

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

"The green mist came rolling towards the parapet from the enemy's empty front trench, several hundred yards away. It looked like a vapour rising from a marsh, and the wind was strong enough to carry it rapidly towards the parapet. One battalion had time to fire two rounds through the screen of gas before it came pouring over the sand-bags, penetrating into every crevice of the dug-outs, and choking the men who lay there. It was so thick at first that objects three feet distant could scarcely be seen."

Many of the men were struck down by the fumes, and the Royal Highlanders of Montreal, 13th Battalion, and the 48th Highlanders, 15th Battalion, specially suffered. For a short time the 48th were obliged to withdraw a short distance from their trench. Soon, however, they were their own men again, and they advanced and reoccupied their old position. The Germans, as you know, had long been striving to drive back the devoted 3rd Brigade, in order to sweep round and overwhelm its left wing. In the course of the attacks a large number of the enemy managed to slip in between the wood

and St. Julien. For a time it seemed as though the Germans had succeeded, and that the last obstacle to their advance would be swept away. Not only the men of the 13th Battalion, but of every other battalion, fought like heroes to avert the danger. All that mortal men could do they did. Major Norsworthy, who had already been disabled by a bullet, was bayoneted and killed while rallying his men. Major M'Cuaig, who had been seriously wounded in a hastily-constructed trench, insisted on being left behind lest he should be a hindrance. So fierce and constant were the German attacks that orders were now given for the brigade to retire.

The men were very unwilling to withdraw, and they insisted, at great risk, on carrying with them their belongings. A wounded officer, following the example of Major M'Cuaig, refused to move, and asked his comrades to leave him alone in the trench. He begged them to give him two loaded Colt revolvers, and with these and his own weapon ready at hand, he prepared to sell his life dearly.

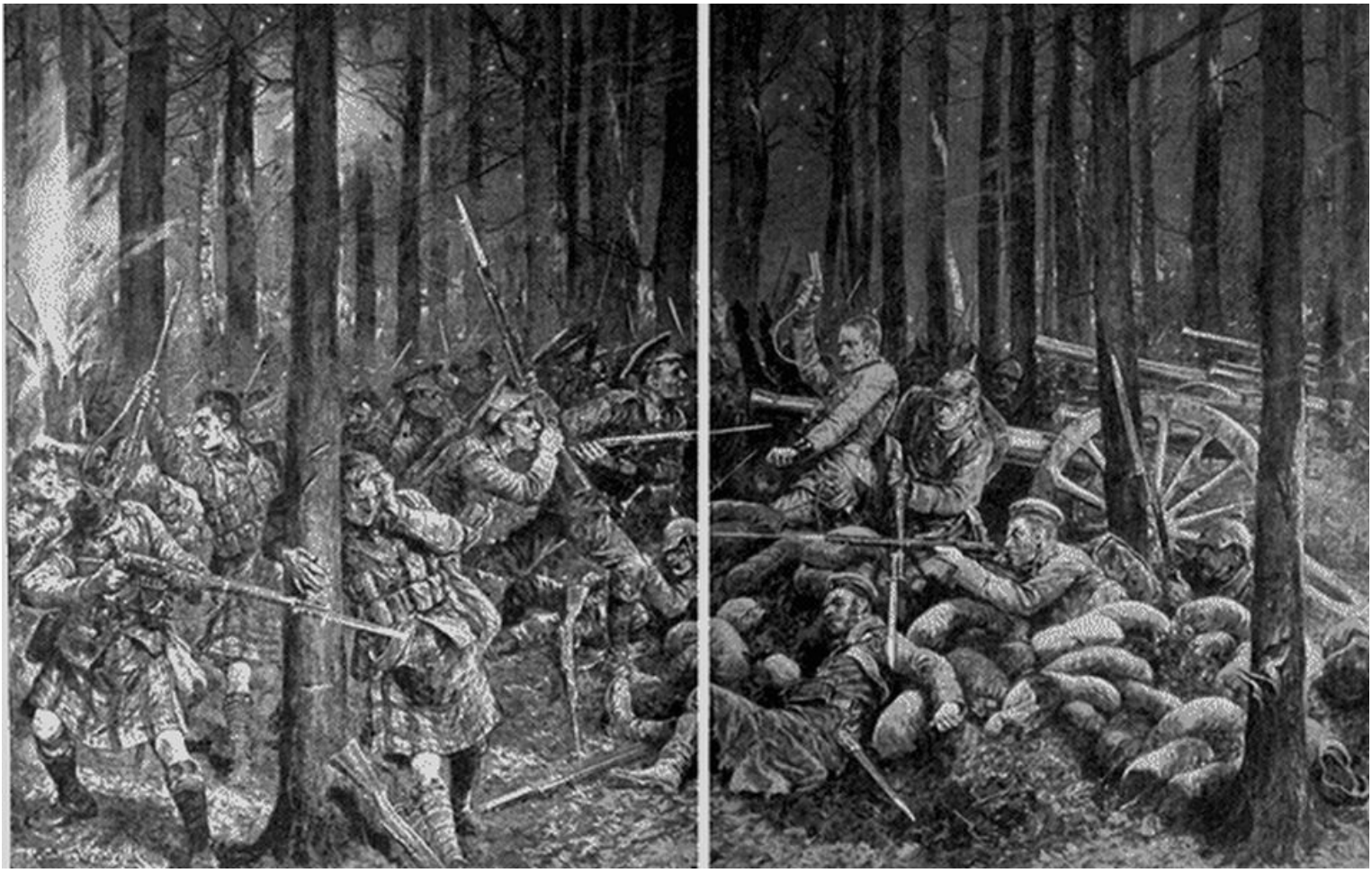
On Friday afternoon the left of the Canadian line was strengthened by the arrival of seven battalions of British troops. But the artillery fire of the enemy grew fiercer and fiercer, and it was clear that the Canadian salient could not be held against the fierce and constant attacks which were being launched against it; so, slowly and stubbornly contesting every yard of ground, the defenders fell back upon St. Julien, and then still farther south, until the deserted village was half a mile in front of their new lines. The Germans swarmed into the village, but before they could call it their own they had to reckon with detachments of the Royal Highlanders of Montreal and of the Royal Montreal Regiment, unavoidably left behind when the main body retired. What befell these devoted fellows in St. Julien we shall probably never know, but as the crack of their rifles did not cease for a long time, we may rest assured that they fought and died as worthy sons of Canada.

The success of the Germans in capturing St. Julien threatened a new and dangerous attack by the enemy. In order to check it a British brigade was ordered to advance. The thrust was made through the Canadian left and centre, and as the troops went forward, many of them going to certain death, they broke out into loud cheers for Canada. There was no man in the British army who was not filled with admiration for the Canadians that day. The advance was very costly, but it succeeded. For a time the Germans were checked.

Now let us see how the 2nd Brigade fared. At five o'clock on Thursday it was still holding the whole of its original line of trenches. Now that the 3rd Brigade had retired, General Curry, who was in command, had to do as General Turner had done—that is, throw back his left flank to protect his rear. It is the glory of the 2nd Brigade that they never lost their trenches. They hung on from Thursday at five o'clock until Sunday afternoon. Then there were no trenches left; they had been wiped out by the German shell fire. General Curry withdrew his unbroken and undefeated troops from the tumbled heaps of earth and sand-bags, but not before many a deed of heroism had been done.

At Grafenstafel, the extreme north-eastern point of the Ypres salient, the position was held by the 90th Winnipeg Rifles, under Lieutenant-Colonel Lipsett. His battalion had been driven from its trenches by gas early on Friday morning, but in three-quarters of an hour it had recovered itself and retaken its old quarters. When the 3rd Brigade retired, as described above, a gap was left, through which the Germans strove desperately to force their way. Had they done so they would have been in the rear of the 28th Division, and the whole eastern section would have been in perilous plight. Colonel Lipsett, however, held on to this key to Ypres, though his left was "in the air," and kept the Germans out of the gap until the arrival of two British regiments. It is said that Lieutenant Bellew, a machine-gun officer of the 7th, stuck a loaf on his bayonet and hoisted it upon the parapet in defiance, while he worked his gun. It was smashed to pieces, but he afterwards continued the fire with relays of rifles. On Sunday evening the 2nd Brigade was relieved for much-needed rest. The 3rd Brigade had been relieved on the previous night.

Monday morning broke bright and clear, but it was a day of terrible anxiety, and every man was needed in the firing line.



The Fight in the Wood by Moonlight. Canadian Scottish and the 10th Infantry recapture lost guns at the point of the bayonet.

(*By permission of the Illustrated London News.*)

"Instantly the word was given to charge, and on we rushed, cheering, yelling, shouting, straight for the foe. . . . Pressing on into the wood itself, the struggle became a dreadful hand-to-hand conflict; we fought in clumps and batches, and the living struggled over the bodies of the dead and dying. At the height of the conflict, while we were steadily driving the Germans before us, the moon burst out. The clashing bayonets flashed like quicksilver, and faces were lit up as by limelight." (See pages 194, 196.)

Monday morning broke bright and clear, but it was a day of terrible anxiety, and every man was needed in the firing line. So the 2nd Brigade, now less than a thousand strong, was ordered back. "The men are tired," said General Curry, "but they are ready and glad to go again to the trenches." They had to cross a zone of shell fire in daylight before they regained their old position, and this was no easy task for men who had lived through such shattering days. They held the trenches all day on Monday; on Tuesday they were withdrawn to reserve trenches, and on Wednesday were relieved, and retired to billets in the rear.

In this account of a great and glorious feat of arms I have confined myself to the work of the infantry. A word must be said as to the behaviour of the other units. The signallers proved themselves cool and resourceful. During the fierce bombardment the telegraph and telephone wires were constantly cut, and in carrying out the repairs many brave men lost their lives. The dispatch carriers, as usual, showed the utmost bravery. One of them, sore wounded, gasped out his message to a passing officer before swooning away. The artillery never flagged, and not a single Canadian gun was lost in the long and confused battle. On one occasion the gunners of a battery were compelled to swing two of their guns round, and to fire on the foe in front and in the rear at the same time. Canadian engineers and the medical corps also played a devoted part, and are entitled to share with their comrades of all arms in the glory of a great achievement.

So ended the great ordeal of the Canadians in the Second Battle of Ypres. When the story of their glorious courage and endurance was flashed across the sea, Britons everywhere throughout the wide Empire were thrilled with pride. Consider for a moment what they had done. They had stemmed the onrush of an enemy which outnumbered them by four to one, and they had done it in spite of the deadly poison gas that choked and blinded and stupefied them. They had no heavy artillery to assist them; they were without reinforcements; they were unceasingly assailed; they held on for days and nights of incessant struggle and anxiety; yet so undismayed were they that they could counter-attack with fiery courage. And when, after enduring such trials, they were called from a brief rest to re-enter the zone of death, they were glad to return. Sir John French confessed that "by their gallantry and determination they had undoubtedly saved the situation." While the British Empire can boast such men, its future and its fame are secure.

Messages of congratulation were showered upon the gallant fellows. Here is the King's message, which was sent to the Duke of Connaught as representing Canada:—

> "Congratulate you most warmly on the splendid and gallant way in which the Canadian Division fought during the last few days north of Ypres. Sir John French says their conduct was magnificent. The Dominion will be justly proud.—GEORGE."

Great was the price of victory. Three battalion officers died—Colonel Birchall of the 4th, Colonel M'Harg of the 7th, and Colonel Boyle of the 10th. Only ten officers of the 5th Battalion survived; only five were left alive in the 7th, only seven in the 8th, and eight in the 10th. When the long fight was over the machine gunners of the 13th Battalion only mustered thirteen out of fifty-eight, and there was but a single survivor of those attached to the 7th Battalion. Up to 2nd May the Canadian Division had lost in killed, wounded, and missing 252 officers and 6,332 men. When the tale of losses was unfolded there were many bleeding hearts in Canada; but mingled with the grief there was a sorrowful pride, and even those who had lost their dearest and best were as resolute as ever to continue the struggle to a triumphant end.

"The graveyard of Canada in Flanders is large. It is very large. Those who lie there have left their mortal remains on alien soil. To Canada they have bequeathed their memories and their glory."

"On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And glory guards with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead."

The Charge of the 4th Canadian Battalion.

(*From the picture by Christopher Clark. By permission of The Sphere.*)

"The 4th Canadian Battalion at one time came under a particularly withering fire. For a moment—not more—it wavered. Its most gallant commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Birchall, carrying, after an old fashion, a light cane, coolly and cheerfully rallied his men, and at the very moment when his example had infected them, fell dead at the head of his battalion. With a hoarse cry of anger they sprang forward as if to avenge his death. . . . After a hand-to-hand struggle the last German who resisted was bayoneted, and the trench was won."

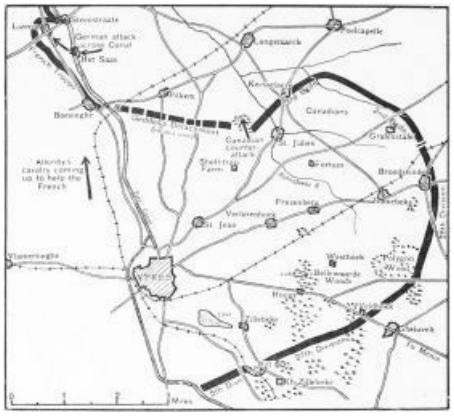
CHAPTER XXVI.

DAYS OF STRUGGLE AND ANXIETY.—I.

I have told you in the form of a continuous story how the Canadians saved the day. In doing so I have had to keep your attention fixed on that part of the British line extending from Grafenstafel to the little wood where the Canadians made their midnight charge in order to recover the lost guns. We have now to learn what took place on the left and right of the Canadian position, and to follow the fortunes of the long-drawn-out battle to its close.

You already know that when the poison gas rolled down on the French trenches and drove the panic-stricken Turcos in headlong flight, a great breach of four miles yawned in the Allied line. By swinging back their left the Canadians barred a portion of this gap, but only a portion. From the little wood on which their left rested to the line of the Yser Canal there was still an undefended gap of at least two and a half miles. Had the Germans been prompt they could have marched through this gap into Ypres, almost without firing a shot. Strange to say, they were slow in moving, and did not push their advantage. As in the First Battle of Ypres, they broke our line, but could do nothing in the breach.

Not until the small hours of Friday morning did the first British reinforcements arrive in the gap. They had been drawn chiefly from the 28th Division, which was holding the line from Grafenstafel to Polygon Wood. All the battalions that could be spared from the 28th Division were hurried across the salient, and it was a strange mixture of units that held the pass between the Canadian left and the canal. As the fighting proceeded, this force, which was commanded by Colonel Geddes, altered its character from day to day and almost from hour to hour. A grenade company of the Northumberland Fusiliers, consisting of two officers and 120 men, was added to it by accident. They had been fighting at Hill 60, and had been eight days in the trenches. On the way back to join the 28th Division, to which they belonged, these grimy, weary, and hungry warriors fell in with Geddes's force, and promptly took their places in his firing line. That night they lived up to the fame of the old "Fighting Fifth."



Second Battle of Ypres.

Position on the morning of Friday, April 23, 1915.

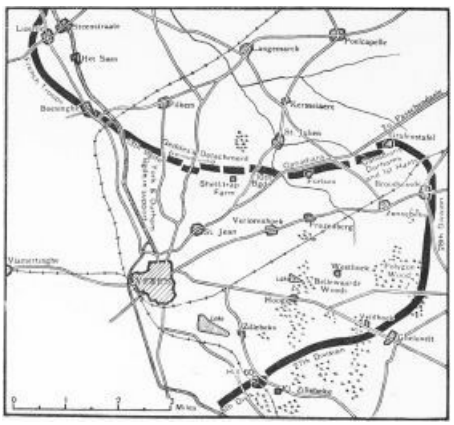
By the morning of Friday the Germans had crossed the canal south of Steenstraate, and were threatening that village, which was held by the French. Allenby's three divisions of cavalry, along with two Indian divisions, were being hurried up with all speed to help the French, who were struggling on the west of the canal. Meanwhile all along the line from Polygon Wood to the canal the big guns of the enemy were heavily shelling our lines. The fighting, as we already know, was heaviest against the Canadian 3rd Brigade, which had suffered great losses both from gas and from artillery fire. There were gaps all along our front, and in one place the machine guns of the enemy were behind our trenches.

While the Canadians between the little wood and Grafenstafel were holding on, British battalions were being hurried up as rapidly as possible. You will see from the map on page 208 that the 13th Brigade filled the gap between the canal and the Pilkem road, and that they were supported by Territorials of the York and Durham Brigade, who had arrived in

France only three days before. Between Geddes's detachment and the little wood lay the 10th Brigade, consisting of Territorials, the 1st Warwicks, 2nd Seaforths, 1st Irish Fusiliers, 2nd Dublin Fusiliers, and 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. The Durhams and the 1st Hants were holding the gap between the Canadians and the 28th Division. Such was the condition of the northern side of the salient on Saturday evening when the 3rd Canadian Brigade was retired. The Northumbrian Division took its place.

About 4.30 on Sunday morning the 10th Brigade and two battalions of the York and Durham Brigade made a great attempt to recapture St. Julien. The men reached the cottages at the end of the village, but were brought to a standstill by German machine guns. They lost very heavily in the advance, but for the rest of the day they hung on to the blood and gas stained position. Further east, at Grafenstafel, the Durhams were assailed by shells filled with gases that choked and stupefied them, and at two o'clock in the afternoon, before they could breathe freely again, the Germans charged down upon them. From two o'clock until seven the Durhams hurled back attack after attack, but as the evening wore on the pressure proved too great, and they were forced to retire with heavy losses to the little village of Fortuin. A similar attempt was made on the 28th Division, but without success. When night fell, our front was unbroken on the east as far north as Grafenstafel. That Sunday night, you will remember, the Canadian 2nd Brigade was retired only to be called up again the next day. Its place was taken by the Lahore Division of Indians.

Monday, 26th April, was a day of furious fighting and constant anxiety. The salient was greatly narrowed now, and our men were shelled on three sides. The Germans were making a curtain of fire behind our lines in order that no reinforcements could be brought up. Another fierce attack was made on the Durhams, who were compelled to fall back behind a little stream to the south of Fortuin, where they stood fast until the end of the day. Shortly after ten in the morning the Northumbrians and the Indians made another desperate attempt to recapture St. Julien. It fared ill. The Northumbrians were held up by wire, and were shot down in droves. The Brigadier was killed; 42 officers and some 1,900 men fell. Neither the Northumbrians nor the Indians could pierce the curtain of fire. The 40th Pathans, known in India as the "Forty Thieves," lost their colonel and nearly all their British officers. The famous 57th Wilde's Rifles made a most heroic advance, and though shells of all kinds fell thick and fast amongst them and their numbers were greatly reduced, the survivors managed to get within eighty yards of the German trenches, where they dug themselves in. When Captain Banks fell, his Sikh orderly, though weak from loss of blood, picked up his body and staggered with it to the rear until he fell exhausted.



Second Battle of Ypres.

The position on the evening of Saturday, April 24, 1915.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DAYS OF STRUGGLE AND ANXIETY.—II.

The Germans now opened the nozzles of the gas tubes in front of their trenches and sent a cloud of poisonous vapour against the Indians. The wretched victims suffered horribly, and the survivors had to retire through the deadly gas amidst bursting shells and the incessant fire of machine guns and rifles. It was during this retirement that Jemadar Mir Dast won the Victoria Cross, as you will read later.

That night the northern side of the salient fell back. Fighting still went on; there were attacks and counter-attacks without number, and the Germans ceaselessly shelled our front. By this time there were many Territorial regiments holding the northern face of the salient, and right gallantly did they behave. The salient was now an oblong of so awkward a shape that the front had to be shortened. "The old Ypres salient was such a silly thing;" it had always been a danger, and now it was more perilous than ever. Accordingly, preparations were made to withdraw the whole line until the salient became an easy curve, with its outer line three miles from Ypres.

Before, however, this could be done, the Germans made another gas attack, both against the French on the Ypres Canal and against our troops lying behind Fortuin. The French were ready for it, and their 75's took a terrible toll of the enemy. Our men were also ready for it: they were now provided with respirators—not yet of the best pattern, but good enough to save them from the worst effects of the gas. The 12th Brigade suffered most, and was obliged to give way a little. The 2nd Seaforths and the 10th Brigade did not move at all. The Seaforths' doctor, Lieutenant Jones, behaved with wonderful courage; although badly "gassed," he stuck to his work for two whole days. One Territorial battalion—the 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders—actually charged through the gas and captured a German trench.

Many other striking deeds of valour were done on that day. A huge shell fell into a trench held by the 1st Rifle Brigade and buried Captain Ralston alive. He was dug out only to be hit by the fragment of a shell, and by this time there were only three men left in the trench. Though shell after shell continued to drop into it, the four men still fought on until their rifles were too hot to hold. They snatched up the weapons of the dead and took the full cartridge clips from the bodies of the slain, and by so doing managed to keep up such a continuous fire that the Germans believed the trench to be held by a full company. Ralston and his men ran up and down the trench, stumbling over sand-bags, tripping over heaps of blown-in earth, and falling over their dead comrades. They fired first from one point and then from another, and in this way "bluffed" the Germans and held the trench until nightfall, when reinforcements came up. Three men and one officer had baffled swarms of Germans!

Later on we shall read how Private Lynn, of the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, won the Victoria Cross by keeping his gun in action while enveloped in the deadly gas. I could fill many pages with stories of men who did miracles of heroism during this awful time.

On 3rd May we shortened our line. The 12th Brigade at the pivot held fast. During the night, while picked riflemen from each company fired on the enemy, battalions were withdrawn piecemeal, in perfect order, and with no losses. You can form some idea of the skill with which this retirement was conducted when I tell you that in some places our trenches were within ten yards of those of the enemy. All the wounded, except a few who were too far gone to be moved, were safely carried to the rear, and in this merciful work the R.A.M.C. covered itself with glory. Long lines of stretcher-bearers bore the stricken men, swiftly and silently, from cellars and dug-outs, along the dark roads until they were out of danger from shell fire. Some 780 of them were thus carried into safety, and not one of them was lost.

"All that was left of them."

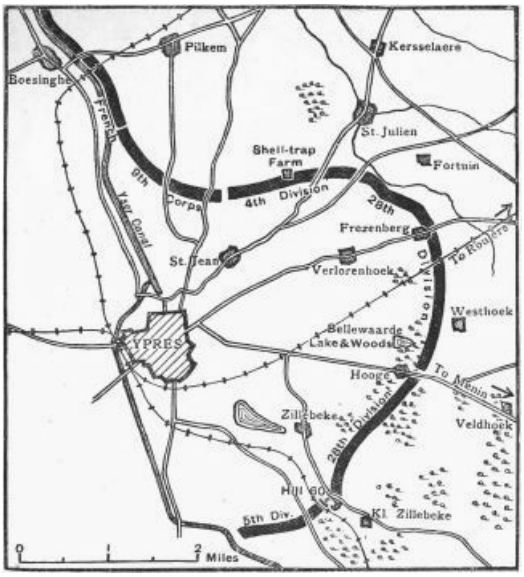
(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)
When the wearied Canadians appeared on the outskirts of Ypres after their heroic struggle, their British comrades in the town turned out in crowds, lined the streets, and cheered and cheered again. The pipers of a Highland regiment put themselves at the head of the Canadian Scottish, and amidst scenes of great enthusiasm played them through the streets into camp.

Many of our men were reluctant to leave their trenches, especially those on which they had spent much time and labour. One man solemnly cleaned and swept his dug-out before saying good-bye to it. In one trench held by a score of picked shots belonging to the 2nd Cheshires, one man did not receive the order to retire. For a whole hour he remained and continued to fire—one man against the whole army of Wurtemberg! At last he discovered that he was alone, and then, and only then, did he follow his comrades. Not until the early morning of the 4th did the Germans know that we had retired. For hours before they had been busy shelling our empty trenches.

The map on page 213 shows you how the new line ran. You will notice that it was much easier to hold than the old salient, which had been hopelessly knocked out of shape. The Germans now began to batter at the new line, and especially at the portion between the pivot and the Ypres-Menin road. On the 8th they attacked furiously, and though some of our battalions fought almost to the last man, the centre was all but driven in. The 1st Welsh, however, refused to budge. They sent message after message back that they were holding a hot corner, but that they were very comfortable and could "stick it" as long as was necessary. No fewer than 900 shells were flung into the trenches of the 9th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, but the men did not yield a single inch. On that day they lost Colonel James Clark, their well-beloved leader, who in days of peace was Chairman of the Edinburgh School Board.

It was now time to withdraw the 28th Division. It had fought without a pause from 22nd April to 12th May, and had suffered almost as severely as the famous 7th Division at the First Battle of Ypres. Cavalry divisions took over its trenches, and the weary and much-battered survivors went into billets for greatly-needed rest. Still the fierce contest

continued. The cavalry were terribly assailed, and on 13th May the artillery fire was so deadly that the 7th Brigade, lying to the north of the lake which you see on our eastern front, had to fall back, leaving an ugly rent in the line. Troops were hurried up to fill the gap, and at 2.30 the 8th Brigade, assisted by armoured motor cars, made a charge that will go down to history. The dismounted cavalrymen advanced as if on parade; they swept forward, utterly regardless of death, and won back the lost ground. But no soldiers that ever wore uniform could have held on to the position in face of the awful fire of the German guns. Our men did all that men could do, but they had to retire; and when the muster roll was read, the regiments which had taken part in this glorious but unavailing charge were found to be but shadows of their former strength.



Second Battle of Ypres.

Sketch showing the shortening of the line on May 3, 1915.

The infantry on our left were also fiercely attacked, but they managed to hold their ground. The Territorial battalions on this part of our front fought like veterans. Sergeant Douglas Belcher, with six men, repeated the exploit of Captain Ralston, and nobly won the Victoria Cross for saving the flank of his division (see page 218). The 2nd Essex cleared the Germans out of Shell-trap Farm at the point of the bayonet, and held on to the ruins all day. Like the Welsh, they were quite cheerful under their ordeal, and one of them swam to and fro across the moat carrying messages to headquarters.

The Northumberland Fusiliers (the Fighting Fifth) beating off a German Attack.

(*From the picture by Philip Dadd. By permission of The Sphere.*)

"It was in the early hours of morning that the Germans began to attack us in force. They battered our entanglements and our trench breastwork for some time, and part of the entanglements was actually blown across the trenches. Fortunately, we were able to meet them with steady and continuous rifle fire, and stopped the rush. . . . . In some cases the Germans were so bunched together that our men simply fired into the brown, it being impossible to miss them at such close range."

The great battle was now ebbing away into a series of lesser engagements. As we shall learn later, the Allies had begun to make a big thrust near Festubert and towards Lens. The Germans had been obliged to send some of their heavy guns to the south, and the artillery fire on the Ypres salient consequently slackened. But before the battle ended the Germans made one more attempt—and this the most terrible of all—to shatter our lines. Again they used the foul weapon by which they had won ground at the outset of the struggle.

On the early morning of Monday, 24th May, when the sky was cloudless and a light north-easterly breeze was blowing, they released gas against our front from Shell-trap Farm to the lake. The wind carried the poisonous vapour towards the south-west, and it rolled over nearly five miles of our trenches in a cloud which in some places was forty feet high. For four and a half hours the gas surged towards us. Where our men were quick to don their respirators, they were able to hold their ground; but where there was delay, they suffered horribly. After the gas came a violent bombardment from three points of the compass, and in various places our line was pushed in until three dangerous salients appeared. British steadfastness, however, prevailed. Except in two places, our lines remained intact. The 9th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the 2nd Royal Irish, and the 9th Lancers lost very heavily. Amongst those who fell was Captain Francis Grenfell, who had already won the Victoria Cross for a splendid deed of pluck and coolness, which I described on page 88 of our second volume.

The Second Battle of Ypres was over. It was not so full of danger to us as the first battle, but it will be ever memorable because, for the first time in the warfare of civilized men, a foul and deadly weapon had been used. You must have noticed, in reading these pages, how the Germans relied on machinery to overcome us. High-explosive shells and poison gas—these were the weapons which they believed would give them victory. During the Second Battle of Ypres the

German infantry made few serious attacks, and when they did so they were almost destroyed to a man. Cannot you imagine the anguish of our brave fellows assailed by gas and shell fire and unable to reach their foes? Many of them, goaded to madness, stood up on their parapets and challenged the enemy to come on. Some of the Germans accepted the challenge; our men cheered, and then swept them to earth. It was the Second Battle of Ypres which taught us how inferior we were to the Germans in machinery, and our bitter experience had much to do with the formation of the National Government and the setting up of a Ministry of Munitions.

We lost ground in front of Ypres, and we lost tens of thousands of gallant men; but we had something to be proud of when the end came. We knew that our soldiers, man for man, were superior to the Germans, and we were specially proud of our Territorials—not only of the Canadians, but of the miners of South Wales and North England, the hinds and tradesmen of the Scottish Lowlands, the shepherds and gamekeepers of the Highlands, the clerks and tradesmen of our great cities. A few short months ago they had been working in the mine, the field, the factory, the shop, and the office, never dreaming that they would be called on to ply rifle and bayonet in a life-and-death struggle for all that they held dear. But in front of Ypres they bore themselves as though war had ever been their business, and they fought and died with a heroism that must never be forgotten. They went down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and some of them came out of it silent, weary, sick at heart; but no man of them felt his faith falter, and all were determined that never, while God gave them the strength to pull a trigger, should the foul foe prevail.

The beautiful little city of Ypres, famous as far back as the days of Chaucer, and adorned with old-time buildings that were the gift of the ages to the modern world, was now a heap of ruins. German guns had shattered it beyond repair. It resembled a city destroyed by an earthquake—a rubbish heap, with here and there a few gaping walls and shot-rent towers brooding over the desolation like gaunt skeletons. Never while our Empire endures—and God grant that it may be for aye—can Ypres and the blood-sodden meadows that lie eastward of the city be anything but holy ground to the British people. For ever the city and its neighbourhood will be sacred to the memory of our glorious British dead.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HEROES OF THE YPRES SALIENT.

Seven Victoria Crosses were awarded for remarkable feats of courage and devotion during the great series of struggles known as the Second Battle of Ypres. You will not, I am sure, make the mistake of supposing that this little list comprises the names of all who wrought deeds of glorious valour during those days and nights of combat. Hundreds of men who received no mention proved themselves worthy of the honour, and many of those who were awarded less notable decorations fell no whit short of those who carried off the palm. According to custom, I shall now give you some account of those on whom the highest of all military honours was conferred.

Lance-Corporal Frederick Fisher, 13th Canadian Battalion.

You already know that the Second Battle of Ypres was largely Canada's battle. It is therefore fitting that the first three heroes in our roll of glory should be Canadians. On 23rd April 1915, in the neighbourhood of St. Julien, Lance-Corporal Frederick Fisher, who was in charge of a machine gun, went forward under heavy fire and most gallantly assisted in covering the retreat of a battery. Four of his crew were killed, but as soon as he had made up the number, he went forward to the firing line and engaged the enemy once more. While bringing his gun into action in order to cover the advance of supports, he was shot down and killed. Canadian boys and girls will have a warm place in their hearts for the hero who thus nobly fought and fell.

Colour-Sergeant Frederick William Hall, 8th Canadian Battalion.

On 24th April, in the neighbourhood of Ypres, Company Sergeant-Major Hall heard a wounded man, who was lying some fifteen yards in front of his trench, call out for help. A heavy enfilading fire was at that time raking the trench. Nevertheless, two men climbed over the parapet and strove to reach him. Both were shot down in the attempt, and it was feared that the wounded man could not be brought in. Seeing this, Sergeant-Major Hall went to the rescue. He reached the wounded man, and was just lifting him up when a bullet pierced his brain and he fell dead. Sergeant-Major Hall died the most glorious death that a man can die—he gave his life for a comrade.

Captain Francis Alexander Caron Scrimger, Canadian Army Medical Service, 14th Battalion, Royal Montreal Regiment.

On the afternoon of 25th April, Captain Scrimger was in charge of an advanced dressing-station which had been established in some farm buildings near Ypres. While he was attending to the wounded, the enemy heavily shelled the farm, and it was clear that all his patients would soon be killed. Despite the heavy fire, Captain Scrimger directed the work of removing the wounded to a place of greater safety, and himself carried out of a blazing stable an officer who had been badly hit. When he could carry the officer no farther he remained with him while the shells were bursting all around, and did not leave him until help arrived. Nor was this the only gallant deed to Captain Scrimger's credit. From 22nd to 25th April he was unwearied in well-doing, and never relaxed his attentions to the wounded, night or day.

Jemadar Mir Dast, I.O.M., attached to 57th Wilde's Rifles (Frontier Force).

On page 209 I referred to the splendid courage and coolness of this hero, who was the fourth Indian soldier to win the Victoria Cross. You will remember that Wilde's Rifles made a heroic advance to within eighty yards of the German trenches at St. Julien, and that the survivors of the charge dug themselves in and maintained their position until dislodged by gas. Jemadar Mir Dast remained behind, and, undaunted by the ceaseless fire that was poured upon him, collected all the men he could find, amongst them many who were slowly recovering from the effects of the gas. He kept them under his command until they were ordered to retire. As he led them to the rear he picked up many men in the old trenches and brought them in. Later in the day, while exposed to very heavy fire, and himself wounded, he assisted in carrying eight British and Indian officers into safety. He was afterwards promoted Subahdar.[37]

Acting-Corporal Issy Smith, 1st Battalion, Manchester Regiment.

On 26th April, near Ypres, Corporal Issy Smith saw a severely wounded man lying far in front of his trench. Without waiting for orders, he clambered over the parapet, and while machine-gun and rifle bullets whizzed around him, pushed forward for some two hundred and fifty yards. He hoisted his wounded comrade on his back, and succeeded in returning safely with his charge to the trench. Later on he went out again and again to rescue the wounded, and showed the most

fearless courage in ministering to them under fire.

Corporal Issy Smith also received from the Tsar the Order of St. George, the Russian equivalent to our Victoria Cross. He was a Jew, and when he returned to London the Jewish body gave him a great welcome. His fellow-members of the Berner Street School Old Boys' Club presented him with a gold watch suitably inscribed. After receiving it Corporal Smith assured his "pals" that he had only done his duty, and said that any other man would have done the same.

Private John Lynn, 2nd Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers.

When the Germans were advancing behind their waves of poison gas, Private Lynn, though almost overcome by the deadly fumes, rushed to his machine gun without waiting to put on his respirator. Single-handed he kept his gun in action all the time the gas was rolling over the trench. When he could no longer see his foes, he moved his gun higher up the parapet, and poured such a stream of lead into the advancing Germans that they were completely checked. The gallant fellow, now gasping and choking from the effects of the gas, was carried to his dug-out; but when he learnt that the enemy was coming on again, he tried to get back to his gun. Twenty-four hours later he died—a victim to gas-poisoning. "That Lancashire lad," says a writer, "died a hundred deaths. He knew his risk—saw the fume-bank rolling towards him, yet fought on in the hideous fog, resolute still, though in the clutch of a terrible fate."

Lance, 1/5th (City of London) Battalion, the London Regiment (London Rifle Brigade).

Lance-Sergeant Belcher was the second Territorial to receive the Victoria Cross. Early on the morning of 13th May he was in charge of an advanced breastwork, which guarded the flank of one of our divisions somewhere to the south-west of Fortuin. The Germans fiercely bombarded this breastwork, and blew it in. Nevertheless, Lance-Sergeant Belcher and ten men remained amidst the ruins of their position and sent back to their comrades who had retired the following message: "We're holding on, whatever happens." Belcher and his handful of "die hards" kept a close watch on the enemy, and as soon as they saw parties of Germans massing for an attack, opened a rapid and skilful fire on them. Time after time the parties were dispersed, and the Germans came to the conclusion that a whole company was opposing them. By means of this heroic "bluff" a large force was kept at bay for thirteen hours, and the flank of the line was saved. Lance-Sergeant Belcher was afterwards promoted second lieutenant.

Lance-Sergeant Belcher and his Men holding a battered Breastwork.

(*From the picture by Philip Dadd. By permission of The Sphere.*)

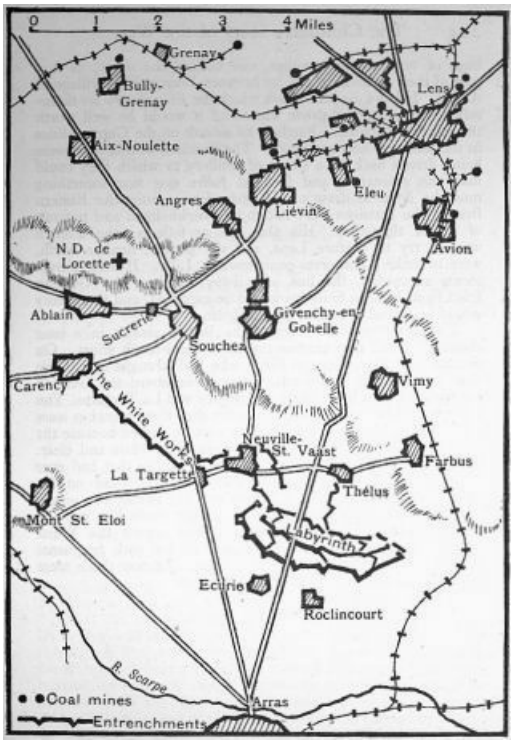
The breastwork was knocked to pieces in places, and Sergeant Belcher determined to transfer his men to the unoccupied right wing of the work. Our picture shows the heroic little party at the moment when they were moving round the traverse. (See page 221.)

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BATTLE OF THE ARTOIS.—I.

While the Second Battle of Ypres was raging, the French were making a big effort in Artois, more especially in the district between Lens and Arras. On page 223 you will see a map showing the main features of this district. Fix your attention for a moment on the high ground marked "N.D. de Lorette"—that is, Notre Dame de Lorette. You notice by the side of the name a cross; this shows the position of the church of Our Lady of Lorette. It stands on a bare ridge, broken by many gullies, and with a few coppices here and there. To the south of the ridge there is a broad hollow, from which rises Mont St. Eloi. Do not confound this hill with the St. Eloi which lies to the south of Ypres.

In the early days of May the Germans were holding a sharp salient in this district. Their lines extended from the east of the village of Loos,[38] across the broad highway which you see running south to Arras, then across the Lorette ridge, and to the west of the two villages which lie to the south of it. From Carency the German lines curved sharply back, still covering the highroad. Upon this salient the French made a great onslaught, which began on 13th May, and did not end until the close of the month.



The French Offensive between Arras and Lens.

The salient consists mainly of a chalky plateau full of hollows, each with its village or little town. The fields are hedgeless, and are cut across by many white roads. The ravines of the plateau and the many villages had been made almost impregnable by the Germans, who had set up all along their line numberless little forts, armed with machine guns, and connected by a maze of trenches. There were at least five lines of very strong trenches, one behind the other, in that part of their position which lay between Loos and the village of Ablain. It was a desperate task which the French now set themselves, but should it prove successful it would be well worth the sacrifice entailed. Further, an assault on the German lines in the west was now necessary. The Russians at this time were being driven back by a storm of artillery to which they could make no resistance, and General Joffre saw that something must be done to draw off German forces from the Eastern front if the Russians were not to be overwhelmed and put out of action altogether. His plan was as follows: the French were to try to capture Lens, and the British, further north, were to make a desperate push towards Lille. If these movements succeeded, the line of railway all along the German front from Lille to Soissons would be captured, and the enemy would be forced to retreat into Belgium.

I shall tell you the story of the British assault in a later chapter. I will now confine myself to the French effort. On Sunday, 9th May, General Foch, who had brought up no less than 1,100 guns of all kinds, began to bombard the German trenches between the villages of Carency and La Targette. You will notice from the map on page 223 that these trenches were called "The White Works." They were so named because the parapets, being cut from the chalk, showed up white and clear. The French bombardment was the most terrible that had ever been known in Europe up to that time. It went on for hours, and the French 75's, which can fire twenty-five aimed shots a minute, seemed to be pouring out shells like gigantic machine guns. When the bombardment ceased the White Works were simply a ploughed field strewn with fragments of wire and human bodies. More than 300,000 shells were hurled upon them in the course of the day.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BATTLE OF THE ARTOIS.—II.

At ten in the morning of Sunday, 9th May, the infantry advanced; the right seized the ruins of La Targette, and pushed on to capture Neuville St. Vaast, which lies in a hollow to the east of it. The big church, the cemetery, and almost every house in the place bristled with machine guns, and furious fights took place inside the buildings from cellar to garret. Nevertheless, by noon the village was in French hands. Farther north the centre had swept over the torn and tumbled ground which had once been the White Works, had crossed the highroad, and had dug itself in two and a half miles to the east of the position from which it had started that morning. Never since the trench war began had so much ground been gained in a single day. The French troops in the centre were in the highest spirits; as they surged on they plucked sprigs of lilac and hawthorn and stuck them in their caps. Had the whole line been able to advance along with the centre, Lens would have been captured that day. The left, however, was held up in front of Carency, which was now being bombarded. When night fell three lines of German trenches had been won, 3,000 prisoners had been taken, and 10 field guns and 50 machine guns had been captured.

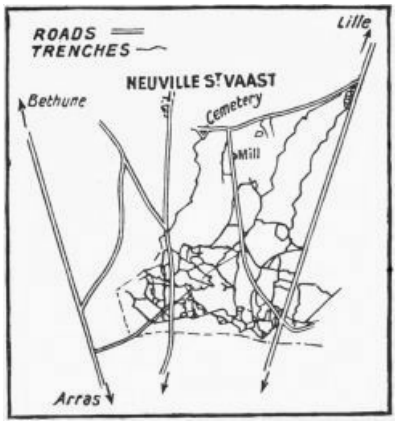
A French Bayonet Charge in the "Labyrinth."

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

In the left background is seen the cemetery of Neuville St. Vaast, through the walls of which French troops are seen advancing towards the Labyrinth. Our illustration shows the fighting reported by the French on June 6. At Neuville St. Vaast, said the report, we captured several houses, and drew closer to a redoubt on the north-west and occupied the communication trench which leads to it. We captured new trenches in the centre and in the south of the Labyrinth, and advanced a hundred yards. In this great work the struggle has continued without ceasing for eight days, and we now hold two-thirds of it.

Next day the French were hard at it again. They pushed on to the outskirts of Loos, attacked the church on the Lorette ridge, took trenches to the south of it, seized the cemetery at Neuville, and beat off the German reserves which had been hurried up in motor cars. Everywhere the fighting was most desperate, for the Germans had turned every possible place into a little fort, and each of them had to be carried by storm. By Wednesday, 12th May, the Germans in Carency were

surrounded. More than 20,000 shells had been hurled into the village, and 2,000 Germans were obliged to hold up their hands. Meanwhile the summit of the Lorette ridge had been carried, and only two or three strongholds on this high ground held out. The Germans at once rained shells on the ridge, and the ghastly scenes of Hill 60 were repeated. The French, however, clung to their trenches; nothing could move them.



On the 13th, amidst drenching rain, and in teeth of a bitter north wind, they returned to the assault. They had broken the German line; but their work was by no means done, for though the trenches had been carried, the German forts all along the front still held out, and each of them had to be besieged. The strongest position of all lay to the south of Neuville, and was known as the Labyrinth.[39] It was a wonderful network of trenches and redoubts, tunnels and roofed-in pits; it covered two square miles, and was so situated that the long-range fire of the French artillery could not get at it. Probably never before had such a stronghold been constructed. It was a cunning maze, furnished with every death-dealing device known to the science of war. It contained engines for making poison gas, machines for throwing liquid fire, scores of small fortresses, and underground passages which enabled the defenders to get to the rear of the attackers. In the background an enormous collection of big guns was in position, ready to sweep away any troops advancing upon it. Such was the Labyrinth which the French were attacking. They could not proceed until it was captured, for, as you will observe from the map on page 223, it enfiladed their advance.

By the end of May good progress had been made in clearing the Labyrinth. The German salient had gone, the French line had been straightened out, and Lens was closely beset.

An officer gives us a vivid picture of the struggle in the Labyrinth, which was not captured till towards the end of September:—

> "The war of trenches is nothing compared with the struggle of the burrows. Picture to yourselves narrow galleries, feebly lighted by flickering oil lamps, in which the foes are separated only by sand-bags, which they keep pushing against each other. As soon as an opening shows, a terrific hand-to-hand fight begins, in which grenades and the bayonet are the only arms possible. Sometimes the Germans take to knives and revolvers, and one day they even began throwing burning liquids; but in spite of these cowardly tricks, our men always had the best of it. They fought with clubbed rifles and fists when required, and their courage was never shaken, as the Germans soon saw. . . .
>
> "The passages in which we were advancing were 18 feet deep, and often 24 feet and more. The water was sweating through in all directions, and the sickly smell was unbearable. Imagine, too, that for three weeks we were not able to get rid of the dead bodies, amongst which we had to live night and day! One burrow, 120 feet long, took us thirteen days of ceaseless fighting to conquer entirely. The Germans had placed barricades, trap doors, and traps of all kinds in it. When we stumbled we ran the risk of being pierced by bayonets hidden in holes lightly covered with earth. And all this went on in almost complete darkness. We had to use pocket electric lamps and advance with the utmost caution."

The first stage of the Battle of Artois may be said to have ended with the capture of Neuville St. Vaast on 8th June. The French had done splendidly, though they had not yet won a decisive success. The German losses during the terrible month of May cannot have been less than 60,000, and the French had suffered almost as severely. They had advanced

with but few casualties; it was in the hand-to-hand fighting in the villages and against the forts that so many of their men fell. The victory was due largely to the French artillery, but the infantry did more than its fair share. It had shown itself as full of fiery courage and dashing bravery as in the great days of Napoleon.

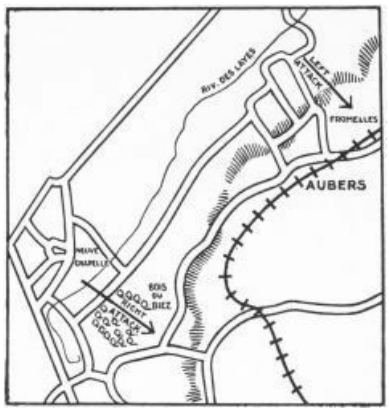
CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BATTLE OF FESTUBERT.

Suppose for a moment that, in the first week of May, a British soldier in the captured village of Neuve Chapelle is looking towards the German lines. Away to the north-east he sees a long ridge crowned by the village of Aubers. He gazes upon this ridge with eyes of desire, and recalls the many determined but, so far, fruitless efforts which the British army has made to capture it. He remembers that, as far back as October 17, 1914, the red-roofed village in the distance was in British hands, and that two days later the 2nd Royal Irish, by storming the hamlet of Le Pilly,[40] attained our "farthest east." But our grasp of the ridge was very feeble; it could not be held, and by mid-November we had fallen back behind the ruins amidst which our soldier now stands. The coveted position was as far off as ever.

Fresh in his memory is that terrible day in the second week of March 1915, when he raced through the streets of Neuve Chapelle full of hope that the goal would be reached before nightfall. Alas! he and his fellows were again doomed to disappointment. The Aubers ridge, so near and yet so far, was still beyond our grasp. And now the rumour reaches his ears that another big effort is to be made. The French are striving south of the canal to carry Lens,[41] and we are to attack for the double purpose of preventing the enemy from sending reinforcements to the south, and of reaching the ridge if possible. Once we are securely established on it the flat plain to the eastward will be commanded by our guns, and La Bassée and Lille will soon know the German no more.

Look at this map and find the wood of Biez, which, you will remember, figured largely in the fighting around Neuve Chapelle. To the east of the wood you will see a road which skirts the ridge for a mile and a half and then climbs it to pass through the villages of Aubers and Fromelles. We were now about to make a thrust through the wood and through Fromelles, in the hope of reaching the ridge. On the morning of Sunday, 9th May, the 8th Division advanced against the village, and at the same time the 1st Corps and the Indians began to push through the wood. The attacks were preceded by the usual bombardment. Our high-explosive shells wrecked the first line trenches of the enemy, but unhappily did not do sufficient damage to the second line, and our men found themselves up against unbroken wire and unbreached parapets. Some ground was gained, but it could not be held, and by the evening we had made but little progress. Many fine deeds of heroism were done during the fierce fighting of the day.

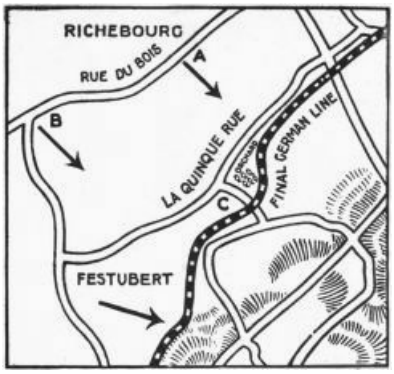


On the left the 24th and 25th Brigades behaved most gallantly, and a Territorial battalion, the 13th (Kensington) of the London Regiment, performed a feat which won high and well-deserved praise from Sir John French. The Kensington men carried three lines of German trenches with the bayonet, and held on to them until the German artillery fire became so intense that flesh and blood could no longer endure it. When they fell back they had but four company officers left.

Sir Douglas Haig now recognized that the attack against the Biez Wood and Fromelles had failed. Nothing daunted, he now proposed to make another attempt to win the Aubers ridge, this time from positions between Neuve Chapelle and Givenchy. On the map (p. 231) you will see Festubert, which is less than a mile to the north of Givenchy. From

Festubert, and from the points to the north of it marked A and B, three attacks were to be made. The Indians and part of the 2nd Division were to push forward from A; the 20th Brigade of the 7th Division was to advance from B; the 22nd Brigade of the same division, from Festubert. In front of our positions, across the wet fields, the Germans lay in three lines of trenches, all of which would have to be carried before the Aubers ridge could be reached.

All day Saturday, 15th May, British troops were pouring into the trenches, and the Germans guessed what was afoot. During the afternoon they frequently shouted, "Come on; we are ready!" In the late afternoon Sir John French rode along the line greeting his men with inspiring words, and wishing them good luck in the coming struggle. A heavy bombardment of the German front had been going on for some days. Now it grew heavier, and shortly before midnight on Saturday evening, 15th May, the order to assault was given.



As our men at A left their trenches the sky was lit up by the white glare of German flares and searchlights. The Indians soon found themselves checked by the fire of many machine guns installed in a group of farms which the Germans had turned into little fortresses. The 2nd Division, however, carried the first line trenches opposite to them, and broke into the second line. By daybreak five or six hundred yards of the first two lines of the enemy's trenches were in our hands. All day Sunday the big guns of the enemy fiercely bombarded these trenches, and created a zone of fire behind them. Nevertheless many heroes carrying supplies of ammunition and bombs crossed the three hundred yards which separated them from their comrades. Shells burst around them; the whole space was swept by machine-gun fire, and a man had to risk his life a hundred times before he could get through.

Ammunition parties of the "A" Company of the 1st King's (Liverpool), under Lieutenants Hutchison and Roberts, succeeded in this perilous work, though their casualties were very heavy. Lance-Corporal Tombs of the same regiment displayed wonderful heroism in rescuing the wounded, lying out in the open, and was afterwards awarded the Victoria Cross. On the 17th Lieutenant Hutchison led a party of bombers along a trench, partly held by us and partly by the Germans. So skilfully was this work accomplished that 200 Germans were forced to surrender, and 200 others were driven pell-mell down their communication trench. For this fine exploit Lieutenant Hutchison was awarded the Military Cross.

The attack in the centre made good headway. Though checked by a flanking fire, the 20th Brigade pushed on, and when reinforced reached the outskirts of the hamlet marked C, where it broke into the second line trenches. Late on Sunday evening the 1st Grenadiers were brought up, and their bombing attacks were successful in driving many Germans from their lairs. One company of the 2nd Scots Guards on this part of the line advanced too far ahead, and was cut off. Like the Canadians at St. Julien, the trapped Guards fought to the last man. When we took the ground a few days later the gallant fellows were found lying stiff and cold, with the enemy's dead thick around them.

The movement from Festubert was still more successful. The trenches against which the attack was launched formed a perfect maze; yet an advance of more than a mile was made. The 1st Welsh Fusiliers swarmed over the German parapets with real Celtic ardour, and drove the enemy down a long communication trench into an orchard. Company Sergeant-Major Barter of this regiment called for volunteers, and he and his eight devoted companions did miracles of heroism in the German second line. They cleared five hundred yards of trench, discovered and cut the leads of eleven mines, and captured three officers and 102 men. Sergeant-Major Barter afterwards received the Victoria Cross.

Next day rain fell heavily, but the struggle in the trenches still continued. On this day a terrible scene was witnessed at a point between A and C. The remnant of a battalion of Saxons proposed to surrender. As they advanced towards our line

they waved a white flag tied to a stick. At once their comrades opened rifle fire on them, and the guns behind dropped shells among them. In a few moments the Saxons were destroyed almost to a man.

In the evening the 21st Brigade on the right made another advance, in the course of which a Territorial battalion, the 4th Cameron Highlanders, recruited mainly from Inverness-shire, Skye, and the misty Hebrides, pushed on far before their comrades. Under heavy fire, they advanced over country liberally seamed with ditches, one of which was so deep and wide that most of the men had to swim across it. The third company reached the back end of a German communication trench; but being without bombs, and having almost wholly used up its cartridges, was soon in desperate straits. About midnight these gallant fellows were reinforced by two platoons; but as they had no machine guns, and as the Germans were fast closing in on both sides of them, and they were "in the air," they were ordered to retire. In the small hours of the morning they made their way back through a heavy rain of shells, and by the time that the weary, mud-stained battalion had regained the British position it had been reduced to half its strength.

Playing their Comrades up to the Germans: the Pipers of the Black Watch at Richebourg.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

During the general advance in May the Black Watch suffered very heavily. They assaulted the German trenches a few miles east of Richebourg (point A on the map, page 231). Their first charge in the morning only reached the German wire, and they fell in swathes under the merciless machine-gun fire of the enemy. During the afternoon other companies of the Black Watch dashed up, and by a brilliant charge captured the trenches which had defied them in the morning. It was during this charge that the pipers showed wonderful courage. The two pipers of each company played their comrades right up to the Germans. The skirl of their pipes was heard above the din and crash of Maxims, rifles, and bursting shrapnel. The lads of "brown heath and shaggy wood" rushed on to victory with the pibroch of their sires ringing in their ears.

Still the fight went on. The Canadians, who had recovered from their terrible ordeal on the Ypres salient, were now sent up to relieve the two brigades of the 7th Division. On the afternoon of 18th May two companies of the 16th (Canadian Scottish) were ordered to advance on the hamlet at C, to the north-west of the orchard already mentioned. One company

made a frontal attack, and the other proceeded along the communication trench which had been won by the Welsh Fusiliers. The advance was partly successful, and the companies dug in five hundred yards in front of the starting point.

On the night of the 20th an attack was made on the orchard itself. During the afternoon the little enclosure was heavily bombarded, and at 7.45, when the artillery fire ceased, the Canadians climbed over their parapets and dashed forward. The advance was made in broad daylight, and a torrent of fire beat down upon them. At the edge of the orchard they discovered a deep ditch full of water, with a wired hedge on the other side. Without pause, the men plunged into the water, and, scrambling up the bank, pushed through gaps in the hedges and swarmed into the orchard. On the far side there were many Germans, but they fled as the Canadians charged. Before long the orchard was in British hands.

Early on the 20th the 10th Canadian battalion made a gallant but unavailing attempt to seize a very strong German position known as Bexhill. The approach to it was defended by a redoubt strongly held with machine guns. On the evening of the next day the Canadians returned to the attack, but it was not until the early morning of the 24th that the redoubt was captured. Five hundred men of the 5th Brigade, along with 100 men of the 7th (British Columbia) Battalion, made an advance in the bright moonlight across a ditch which had been previously bridged, and by four in the morning were in possession of the stronghold. Two hours later Bexhill itself was won, and the victors received orders to "dig in and hang on." They did so, in spite of three very fierce counter-attacks.

It was now clear that we could make no further headway without more guns and more shells than we then possessed. We were meeting with the same difficulty that had beset the French in Artois. The German lines broke up into a series of little fortresses, each of which could only be captured by a separate assault. It was the Battle of Festubert which brought home to the British people the absolute necessity for providing the army with more and more big guns and an almost unending stream of munitions. Our losses were very heavy, and they would have been greatly reduced had our artillery been more numerous and better supplied. Less than three weeks after the close of the battle the Government appointed a Minister of Munitions.

The battle came to an end on the 26th, about the same time that the fierce struggle on the Ypres salient died down. The results were summed up by Sir John French as follows: "Since 16th May the First Army has pierced the enemy's lines on a total front of four miles. The entire first line system of trenches has been captured on a front of 3,200 yards, and on the remaining portion the first and second lines of trenches are in our possession." During the fighting we captured 8 officers, 777 men, 10 machine guns, and a considerable amount of war material.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HEROISMS OF FESTUBERT.

In the great struggle for the trenches which I described in the former chapter there was plentiful opportunity for our men to do deeds of individual daring. The fighting was at close quarters, and often men were engaged in hand-to-hand struggles. I could fill a volume of this work with the heroisms of Festubert alone. Let me tell you a few of the many gallant deeds done in the ten days of the battle.

I have already mentioned the exploit of Company Sergeant-Major Barter and his eight comrades. One of the men who joined his party was known as Private Hardy. While the bombing of the German second line trenches was going on, Hardy did splendid work, but was hit in the right arm, and fell fainting to the ground. His wound was dressed, and he recovered. As soon as he was on his feet again he cried, "Luckily, I am left-handed," and ran off to rejoin Barter. With his left hand he flung grenade after grenade; but the white bandage on his arm made him a good mark for the German sharpshooters, and he fell with a bullet through his head. Now comes the astonishing part of the story. Soon after the war broke out, Captain H. S. Smart of the 53rd Sikhs was granted short leave, and returned to England. He overstayed his leave, and disappeared. All inquiries failed to trace him, and his name was removed from the Army List. After the death of Private Hardy it was discovered that the dauntless man was none other than the missing Captain Smart. He had so longed to fight in France that he had deserted the Indian army, and had joined the 2nd Battalion of the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment as a private. When the story became known the King ordered the hero's name to be restored to the Army List with full honours.

During the fighting in the Festubert district one of our officers was seen lying out on our front wounded. He was on the lip of a mine crater, where he was hidden from the Germans. Our people could see him, and when he gave signs of life they determined to bring him in. Under cover of the fire of our snipers, a non-commissioned officer crawled out with a rope, which he made fast to the wounded officer, who then crawled or was gradually dragged into our trench, *his rescuer staying behind in his place*! This noble fellow was continually bombed, but at last he, too, was able to crawl back to safety.

Sir Max Aitken tells us that the Canadian artillery, shortly after the affair at the orchard, played a very effective trick on the Germans. They opened fire on the enemy's trenches, and meanwhile the infantry made a great show of fixing bayonets, rigging up trench ladders, and blowing whistles, just as though they meant to attack as soon as the bombardment was over. The Germans, according to their custom, promptly retired to their support trenches and prepared to shoot down the Canadians as they advanced. As soon as the Germans were in the support trenches, the gunners lifted their sights and began shelling them; whereupon the Germans rushed back to the front trenches. Still there was no infantry attack. When the front trenches were full once more the Canadian gunners shortened their range, and the full blast of their fire fell upon the crowded Germans, causing great havoc. Next day the world was told that the Germans had beaten off a desperate attack! The Huns in the trenches, however, knew better, for that evening one of them cried out: "Say, Sam Slick, no dirty tricks to-night!"

On the 26th Corporal Pym of the Royal Canadian Dragoons showed great self-sacrifice and contempt of danger in rescuing wounded men. The British and German lines were only sixty yards apart. An English voice in the narrow No-man's Land was heard calling for help, and Pym determined to try to bring in the sufferer. He crept out into a zone swept by constant rifle and machine-gun fire, and found the man, who had been wounded in both thigh bones, and had been lying out in the open for three days and nights. The poor fellow was in such torment that he could not bear to be dragged in. Pym, therefore, called back to the trench, and Sergeant Hollowell crept out towards him. Just as he reached the

wounded man, however, he was shot dead. Pym thereupon crawled back across the fire-swept space, to see if he could get a stretcher; but when he considered the position, he decided that the ground was too rough for him to drag a stretcher across it. Once more, therefore, he recrossed the fire-zone, and at last, with the utmost difficulty, brought the wounded man in alive.

The heroism of Sergeant Hickey of the 4th Canadian Battalion must not go unrecorded. On 24th May he volunteered to go out and recover two trench mortars which belonged to his battalion and had been abandoned in a ditch the previous day. In doing so he was going to almost certain death. Over and over again he escaped by the narrowest shave; yet, nevertheless, he found the mortars and brought them in. He also discovered the shortest and safest route by which men could be brought up from the reserve trenches to the firing line. "It was a discovery," says Sir Max Aitken, "which saved lives at a moment when every life was of the greatest value; and time and time again he guided party after party up the trenches by this route." Unhappily, this cheery, modest soldier was shot down by a stray bullet on 30th May. "And so there went home to the God of battles a man to whom battle had been a joy."

The following Victoria Crosses were awarded for outstanding deeds of bravery during the Battle of Festubert:—

Company Sergeant-Major Frederick Barter, Special Reserve, attached 1st Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

You have already read a brief account of this hero's exploits. You will remember that on 16th May, at Festubert, with eight volunteers he attacked the German position with bombs, capturing 500 yards of trench, three German officers, and 102 men. Later on he discovered the leads of eleven of the enemy's mines, situated about twenty yards apart, and cut them. Had he not done so he and his brave comrades would have been blown sky-high by the touch of a button a mile away.

Lieutenant John George Smyth, 15th Ludhiana[42] Sikhs, Indian army.

On 18th May, at the point marked A on our map (page 231), the Sikhs were holding a section of German trench known as the "Glory Hole," and a portion of the same trench was in the hands of its original occupants. Next morning the Germans brought up a large number of men, and it appeared that they were about to make an attempt to drive out the Sikhs. Shortly afterwards the Germans began a heavy bombing attack, to which the Sikhs made a vigorous reply until noon, when their bombs gave out. It was then decided to send up a bombing party from the reserve trenches, and Lieutenant Smyth was ordered to lead forward ten men laden with two boxes of 96 bombs. Dropping over the parapet they wriggled their way through thick mud, pulling and pushing the boxes between them. They had to cross rough ground while bullets whizzed around them and the air was white with puffs of shrapnel. All the time they were in full view of the enemy. The little party had now been reduced to two—Lieutenant Smyth and Sepoy Lal Singh. After fording a stream the survivors reached the trench, both untouched, but with their clothes shot through and through by bullets. The fresh supply of bombs which they had thus brought up enabled the Sikhs to beat back the Germans. Sad to relate, Lal Singh was killed shortly after reaching the trench. Lieutenant Smyth was described by a *Times* correspondent as "a short, ruddy, smiling officer lad, with merry gray eyes."

Lance-Corporal Joseph Tombs, 1st Battalion, King's (Liverpool Regiment).

On 16th May, during the fighting mentioned on page 231, Tombs of his own accord repeatedly crawled out of his trench under very heavy shell and machine-gun fire and brought in wounded men. Altogether he rescued four of his comrades, one of whom he dragged back by means of a rifle sling placed round his own neck and the man's body. So severely wounded was the rescued man that he must have died had he not been promptly brought in.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GALLIPOLI PENINSULA.

On 25th April—six weeks and four days after our naval failure at the Narrows—British forces landed on the Gallipoli peninsula. Before I relate the marvellous story of how our men gained a footing on its rugged shores, I must give you some idea of the nature of the country. On pages 248, 249 you will see a bird's-eye view of part of the peninsula. One glance at it shows clearly that Gallipoli is a natural fortress, and that it is the most unlikely bit of self-contained country in which any general would wish to conduct a campaign. In its bewildering mass of hills and ravines it resembles a portion of the North-West Frontier of India.

The peninsula is connected with the mainland by the isthmus of Bulair, which is but three miles across from beach to beach. From Bulair the peninsula runs in a south-westerly direction for fifty-two miles, and near its centre broadens out to its greatest width of twelve miles. The shores of the northern half of the peninsula slope steeply to the Gulf of Xeros from a chain of hills which extend as far south as Cape Suvla. On this part of the coast the cliffs rise up almost from the water's edge, and there are no landing-places except a few gullies which are too narrow for military movements.

Sir Ian Hamilton,[43] the accomplished general who commanded our forces in Gallipoli, tells us that the southern half of the peninsula resembles a badly-worn boot with the ankle between Gaba Tepe and Maidos; beneath the heel lies the cluster of forts at the Narrows, while at the toe we find the strongholds which were reduced by the gun fire of our ships on 25th February.

At first sight the interior of the peninsula from Suvla Bay southwards looks like a choppy sea which has been suddenly frozen. If, however, we look closely at the map on page 168, we shall be able to make out three prominent features. Running right across the toe of the peninsula from sea to sea, at a distance of three and a half miles from Cape Helles, is a ridge which rises in its highest part to the Achi Baba peak, 591 feet above sea level. Big guns on this ridge command all the toe of the peninsula, which is hollowed out something like the bowl of a spoon, so that only the outer edges can be shelled directly from the sea. The inside of the bowl is not level, but is filled up with numerous spurs and gullies.

Now look at the forts of the Narrows. Behind them is a plateau—the Kilid Bahr plateau—which rises in the peak of Pasha Dagh to a height of 700 feet above the level of the sea, and extends westwards for about five miles. The Achi Baba ridge, you observe, is the buttress and outlying defence of this plateau on the south. To the north-west of the plateau you see a network of high hills with very steep sides and deep ravines. This is the Sari Bair mountain, which forms the buttress and outlying defence of the Kilid Bahr plateau on the north. Some of its peaks are nearly 800 feet high.

I have already told you that the forts at the Narrows are the real defence of the Dardanelles. We had already failed to capture them by a naval attack. If, however, we could reach the Kilid Bahr plateau by land, we could attack the forts from the rear—the side on which they are least capable of resistance. But, as you notice, nature has made this plateau very difficult of access. An invader from the south must first carry the Achi Baba ridge before he can reach it, and if he lands south of Suvla Point he must fight his way across the Sari Bair.

You have already gathered that the peninsula is difficult to traverse even in times of peace; the few dwellers on it make most of their journeys from point to point by water. Except in a few valleys, there are no cultivated fields; and save for a few cypress and olive groves, the whole peninsula consists of bare or scrub-covered hills and ravines filled with jungle. Amidst the rocks flourish many strange and beautiful flowers. Water is scarce, and the villages and hamlets are few and far between.

Look again at the map on page 168, and follow the track which runs from Cape Helles northward through the village of Krithia and over the Achi Baba ridge. A branch of this track leads, as you see, across the Kilid Bahr plateau. On the western coast just north of Gaba Tepe you will observe a track which meets the track from Krithia. General Ian Hamilton proposed to land a force on the tip of the peninsula, and another force near Gaba Tepe. These forces were to fight their way forward until the left wing of the southern army came into touch with the right wing of the northern army. Then the united armies would advance on to the Kilid Bahr plateau, from which our big guns would be able to destroy the European forts at the Narrows. When these were reduced we should be in a position to attack the forts on the Asiatic side at short range, and if all went well, our ships would be able to dash through and, in the course of a day or two, train their guns on Constantinople.

The first business was to put our troops ashore. The line of high yellow cliffs fringing the sea was carefully surveyed, and note was taken of every place where a landing was possible. A glance at the bird's-eye view shows you clearly that good beaches are rare. On the map (page 168) you will see various spots marked by capital letters round the tip of the peninsula. Just south of Cape Tekke, where you see the letter W, there is a small sandy bay, and half a mile north of it a break in the cliffs marked X. Three and a half miles further up the coast (Y) there is a scrub-covered gully, and eastwards of W there is another sandy beach (V), about three hundred yards across. Round the corner, still further eastwards, is Morto Bay, with a small beach (S) commanded by the guns of Kum Kale. On these beaches General Hamilton decided to land his southern army. The northern army was to be put ashore to the north of Gaba Tepe, where the sandstone cliffs recede a little from the water's edge.

Not a single one of the beaches affords a really good landing-place. Almost everywhere the cliffs rise steeply from a narrow strip of shore. As you know, the Turks had ample notice of our invasion, and they had diligently and skilfully prepared for it. There were mines, barbed-wire entanglements, and trenches on the beaches, and along the cliff tops they had constructed very formidable works, in some places ten feet deep. There were snipers in every bush, machine guns were cunningly hidden in the rocks, and behind the trenches on the cliffs there were field guns, backed by heavy pieces on the Achi Baba ridge. To land on these beaches and carry the cliffs would be worse than "storming the Embankment out of Thames barges, with the enemy comfortably established with his guns on the second floor of the Savoy Hotel." The Turks believed the operation to be quite impossible, and indeed, according to all the rules, not a single invader should have left the beaches alive.

For this most difficult and dangerous enterprise General Hamilton was supplied with a weak and somewhat motley army of 120,000 men—a force far inferior in numbers to that which the Turks could bring against us. One division of this army (the 29th) was composed of two brigades of regulars and a third brigade consisting of three regular battalions and a Territorial battalion—the 5th Royal Scots; the remainder consisted of two naval brigades and a brigade of marines, the Australian and New Zealand Division, a large number of Indian troops, and the East Lancashire Territorial Division, together with French marines, French Colonial troops, and the Foreign Legion. To oppose these three army corps the Turks are said to have had 275,000 troops within reach.

Sir Ian Hamilton's army was assembled in Egypt. By the 17th of March the transports were at Tenedos. Unfortunately, they were found to be wrongly loaded, and the bulk of them had to be sent back to Alexandria, where the various units were properly redistributed amongst the ships. About the middle of April the expedition began to arrive in the Bay of Mudros.[44] Part of the force was landed on the island, and the rest remained on board ship, where night and day, under the direction of naval officers, dress rehearsals of the landing took place. By the 20th of April all was ready, and five days later the great adventure began.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BATTLE OF THE LANDING.

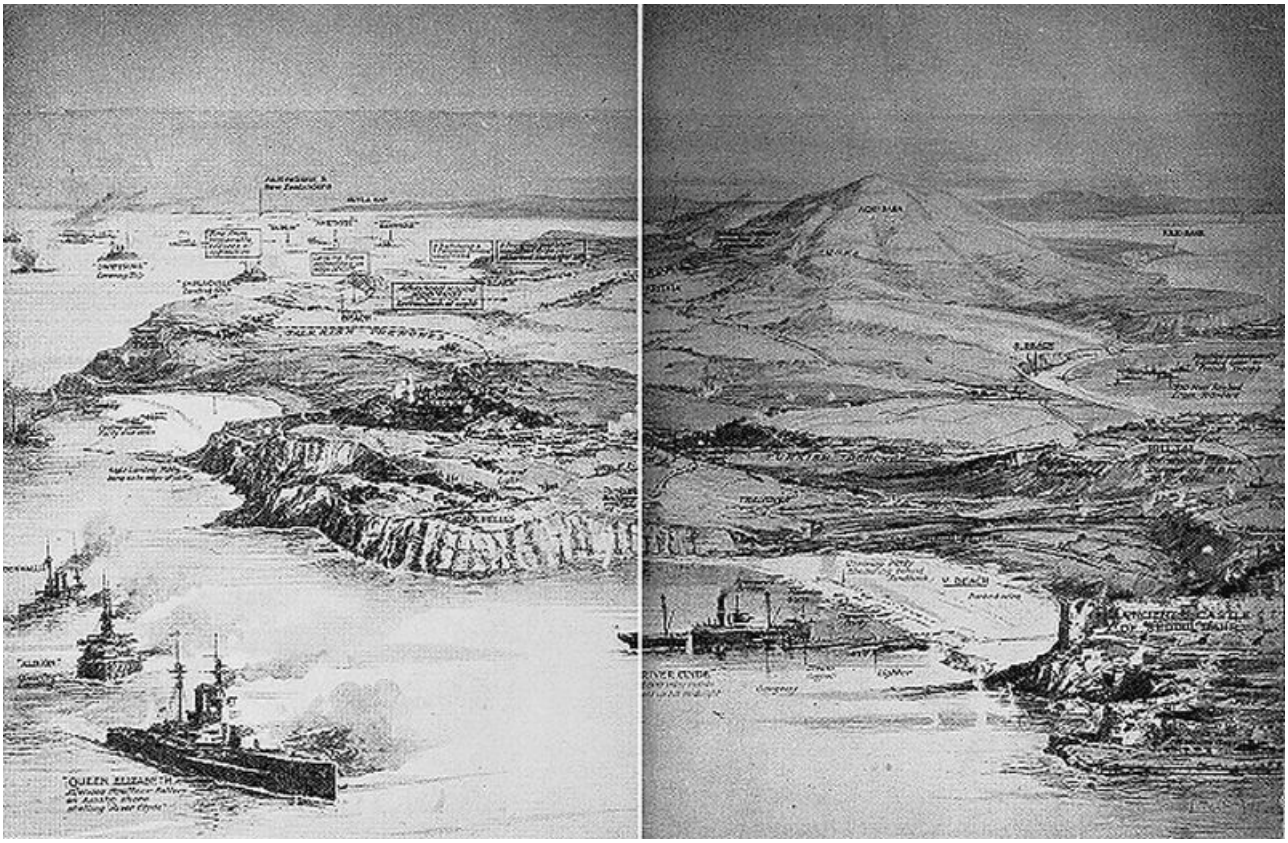
You are now to imagine yourself wrapped in the invisible cloak of the fairies, and able to move over land and sea, where you will, with the speed of thought. Thus magically endowed, you will be able to flit to and fro, and witness one of the most remarkable invasions known to history.

Dusk is falling on the evening of 23rd April, and you are hovering over the Lemnian harbour of Mudros. The haven is as crowded as the port of Liverpool. In the dim light you see a huge fleet of grim, gray warships of all classes, from the mighty *Queen Elizabeth* down to the little puffing launches that speed from ship to ship. You also notice many great transports, grimy colliers, mine-sweepers, and trawlers. As you watch, a large number of the warships, transports, and mine-sweepers cast off and move out of the harbour. Their lights disappear in the distance. They are off to Tenedos, where they will embark the troops that are to land on the beaches round the tip of the peninsula.

The morning of the 24th sees the harbour still busy and animated, though most of the ships have departed. An almost unending stream of boats, each of them packed with tall, bronzed Australians and New Zealanders, plies towards the warships and transports that remain. By noon 10,000 men are on board; all are in the highest spirits, keen and eager for the coming battle. Every man knows what lies before him. All have read or heard the Commander-in-Chief's message addressed to "Soldiers of France and of the King":—

> "Before us lies an adventure unprecedented in modern war. Together with our comrades of the Fleet, we are about to force a landing upon an open beach in face of positions which have been vaunted by our enemies as impregnable.
>
> "The landing will be made good, by the help of God and the Navy; the positions will be stormed, and the war brought one step nearer to a glorious close.
>
> "'Remember,' said Lord Kitchener, when bidding adieu to your Commander—'remember, once you set foot upon the Gallipoli Peninsula, you must fight the thing through to a finish.'
>
> "The whole world will be watching our progress. Let us prove ourselves worthy of the great feat of arms entrusted to us.
>
> "IAN HAMILTON, *General*."

We will now follow the fortunes of the gallant Australians and New Zealanders. The transports, escorted by the Second Squadron of the Fleet, steam slowly on, and by half-past one on the morning of the 25th have reached a prearranged point. The sea is calm, there is scarcely a breath of wind, the moon is shining behind the ships, and the silence of night is only broken by the throb of the propellers. The ships heave to. Swiftly, and with scarce a sound, shadowy figures climb down into boats. They are the 1,500 men who are to be the first to set foot on the peninsula. Meanwhile their comrades are being transferred from the transports to six destroyers. It is now 2.30, and the warships, together with the destroyers and the towed boats, move slowly and silently towards a point about a mile north of Gaba Tepe. At 3.30 the order is given to "go ahead and land." Away go the boats, and, forty minutes later, the destroyers follow them.



How the Five Beaches—Y, X, W, V, and S—were stormed and the British and French landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula, Sunday, April 25, 1915.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

The following units landed on the various beaches:—*Beach Y*: 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers and The Plymouth (Marine) Battalion, Royal Naval Division. *Beach X*: 1st Royal Fusiliers, together with a beach working party of the Anson Battalion, Royal Naval Division. *Beach W*: 1st Battalion, (Lancashire Fusiliers). *Beach V*: Dublin Fusiliers, Munster Fusiliers, half a battalion of the Hampshire Regiment, the West Riding Field Company, and other details. *Beach S*: 2nd South Wales Borderers (less one company). At *Gaba Tepe*: 3rd Australian Brigade, followed promptly by the 1st and 2nd Brigades and two batteries of Indian Mountain Artillery; the remainder of the New Zealand and Australian Division landed later in the day.

Now the hazy dawn begins to break, and the men in the boats see before them the loom of the steep cliffs underneath which they are soon to tread. Beneath those cliffs there is a very narrow strip of sand, about a thousand yards long, closed in on the north and south by small promontories. Near the northern end of the beach a small but steep gully runs up into the hills at right angles to the shore. At the southern end there is a deep ravine with very steep, scrub-clad sides. Between the ravine and the gully a lofty spur comes down to the shore. Such is the landing-place. The Commander-in-Chief has chosen it because he thinks the enemy would never suppose that he would dream of making a landing in such an unfavourable position. Henceforth it will be known all the world over as Anzac[45] Cove.

The boats and destroyers steal in towards the land. They are now close to the shore, and the troops perceive that they must fight for a footing. Turkish soldiers are seen running along the beach ready to give the boats a warm reception. Not a word is spoken: our men remain perfectly still and quiet, awaiting the enemy's fire. A few moments more, and bullets rain down on them. Many a man has breathed his last before the boats run aground.

The keels have not touched the sand when the Australians of the 3rd Brigade spring out of their boats. A blaze of fire sweeps against them from the Turkish trenches on the beach, but they heed it not. With fixed bayonets they dash forward, as though they mean to conquer the whole peninsula by one mighty rush. On they go, and the Turks flee before them. The beach is carried with cold steel, and in open order they dive into the scrub and scramble up the hundred feet of cliff that rises before them. The famous exploit at Wolfe's Cove, when the Heights of Abraham were scaled, is altogether

outdone.[46]

Now they are on the top of the cliff, and come under the main Turkish fire. The ground, however, gives them good cover, and they speedily dig themselves in. By seven in the morning they are holding the cliff top. Meanwhile the 1st and 2nd Brigades have come ashore, and two batteries of Indian Mountain Artillery have been landed. The enemy is now shelling the transports, and they are obliged to stand out to sea. Further artillery cannot, therefore, be put ashore just yet. By noon more than 10,000 men are on the beach, or are climbing the gully and the ravine. The thousand yards of shore is covered with busy working-parties. Stores are being landed, the Royal Engineers are making roads, and wireless stations are being erected; and all the time Turkish shells are falling fast and thick. Our warships are at work, but the morning sun is in the eyes of the gunners, and they fire at a disadvantage.

The Australians on the cliff top have not been content to remain idle in their hastily-dug trenches. They rashly push on across three ridges, and actually come within sight of the Narrows; but now the enemy is strongly reinforced, and they are driven back with heavy loss. Stretcher-bearers are stumbling down the steep paths and across the beach carrying their freight of wounded to the hospital ships on the bullet-splashed sea. There is much confusion as the advancing troops meet those who are retiring; but before noon a semicircular position on the cliffs is firmly held. Parties of the 9th and 10th Battalions charge and put out of action three of the enemy's Krupp guns.

The Turks now begin their counter-attacks, which continue far into the night. Again and again our men make bayonet charges, and the line holds fast. They have suffered terribly, but they have made good their footing, and are firmly placed at Gaba Tepe, on Anzac territory.

Now we must hurry southwards and see how matters are faring at Beach Y. Three cruisers—*Dublin*, *Amethyst*, and *Sapphire*—have covered the landing of the 1st Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers and the Plymouth (Marine) Battalion. The men have leaped ashore on a narrow strip of sand at the foot of a crumbling, scrub-covered cliff 200 feet high. They climb to the top of the cliffs by means of a number of small gullies, and there establish themselves, almost without loss. Food, water, and ammunition are hauled up. Now the Turks begin to attack them, and are fiercely resisted. Later in the day the enemy, largely reinforced, advances from the direction of Krithia, and our men have to dig in. Against them the Turks launch attack after attack, supported by heavy guns. Owing to the sharp fall of the ground behind the cliffs, our warships can render but little assistance. Through the afternoon and night the attacks continue, and our men make several desperate bayonet charges. But it is clear, even now, that they cannot maintain themselves in this position. By seven o'clock on the morning of the 26th the King's Own Scottish Borderers have lost half their number, including their gallant colonel.

The order for withdrawal is given. A small rearguard of the King's Own Scottish Borderers with desperate valour holds off the enemy, while the rest, with their wounded, stores, and ammunition, re-embark, and are safely brought round to the southern end of the peninsula. The landing at Y has failed, and our losses have been very heavy; but the plucky stand of the two battalions has prevented large numbers of the enemy from going to the assistance of their comrades at other points, where, as you will soon learn, a very touch-and-go struggle is in progress.

A short journey southward brings us to Beach X, where the 1st Royal Fusiliers have been landed. The *Swiftsure* has plastered the high ground with shells, and the *Implacable*, which has anchored close inshore, is bringing every gun to bear on the Turkish position. Without losing a single man, the Fusiliers push up a low cliff and entrench themselves. By evening they are in touch with their comrades at Beach W. A Turkish battery which gets the range of our men is knocked out by a fine shot from the *Implacable*. At Beach X everything is going well.

We now hurry away to Beach W, between Cape Tekke and Cape Helles. Here a doubtful battle is raging. The beach

consists of deep, powdery sand, and is 350 yards long, with steep ground on the flank and sand dunes in the centre. The Turks have turned this beach into a perfect death-trap. Close to the water's edge there is a broad wire entanglement running the whole length of the shore, and in front of it, in the shallow sea, there is another similar barricade. There are lines of trenches on the high ground; machine guns are tucked away into holes in the cliff; snipers lurk in the scrub, and there is not an inch of the shore which cannot be swept by deadly fire. On a hill overlooking the beach there are two redoubts, and elsewhere in the line of possible advance there are other formidable obstacles. Land mines and sea mines have been laid, and the Turks may well boast that no invader will ever remain alive on this terrible beach.

Lancashire men are now about to perform one of the finest feats of arms ever achieved by British soldiers or by any other soldiers. They are about to storm this death-trap from open boats! Hereafter, as a tribute to their splendid valour, Beach W will be known as Lancashire Landing.

At six in the morning of the 25th eight picket boats, in line abreast, each boat towing four ship's cutters packed with men of the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, approach the shore. As soon as shallow water is reached the tows are cast off, and oars are plied. The first boat touches the shore, and out spring the Fusiliers, to be met by a hurricane of lead from the Turkish trenches. Many a man receives his death-wound while waist-deep in the water, but the unfaltering Fusiliers rush ashore, and though fired at from the right, the left, and the centre, begin hacking their way through the wire. A long line of men is at once mown down as by a scythe; but the remainder, now covered by the guns of the warships, and helped by the flanking fire of a party which has secured a foothold on a small ledge of rock under the cliff, break through the entanglements, and, rapidly re-forming, hurl themselves on the Turkish trenches. Several land mines are exploded, but nothing can stem the torrent of the British advance. By ten o'clock three lines of the enemy's trenches are in our hands.

On the right some of the Fusiliers have come under the fire of a redoubt, and they can make but little headway in this direction. The edge of the wire entanglements is reached, but they can go no further. They are now lying under the scanty cover of a sand-bank, cleaning their rifles, which have been wetted by sea-water and choked with sand.

The guns of the warships boom out, and a rain of shells falls near the redoubt. About 2 p.m. the Worcester Regiment dashes forward. Men hack their way through the entanglements, and, in spite of heavy losses, carry the redoubt by storm. Now an attempt is made to join hands with the troops which are in dire peril on Beach V; but the defences are too strong to be broken through. Men are seen under an awful fire calmly snipping the wire as though they were pruning a vineyard. But the troops are worn out by their long labours under a hot sun, and the attack is perforce suspended. When night falls the Turks make assault after assault on the wearied invaders. So hard pressed are they that even the working parties on the beach have to be flung into the trenches in order that the line may be held. Happily the attacks of the enemy are beaten off, and no ground is lost. So the night passes, and the dawn ushers in another day of struggle and anxiety.

Now we hurry off to Beach V, where tragic events are taking place. Beach V resembles an old Greek theatre. There is a stretch of sand as at Beach W, and running along it is a low sandy ridge, four feet high, which affords some shelter. Beyond rise grassy terraces to a height of 100 feet. The rising ground is flanked on the one side by an old castle, and on the other side by a modern fort. On the heights overlooking the shore the Turks have massed artillery, machine guns, and riflemen. On the very margin of the beach there is an exceedingly strong barbed-wire fence, and two-thirds of the way up there is an even stronger obstacle. From all sides the defenders can pour down a deadly fire on the landing parties. So strongly defended is this beach that special arrangements have been made to cope with it. Large doors have been cut in the steel plates of a collier, the *River Clyde*, and wide gangplank have been slung from her side. These gangways slope gradually down from the doors to her bows, so that men can pass along on both sides in single file, and jump on to the lighters which she will tow in with her. Her bridge has been turned into a little fortress, and behind steel plates and sand-bags in her bows there are twelve machine guns to cover the landing. Two thousand men of the Hampshires and Munster Fusiliers have been stowed on board, and now she steams bow on to the shore close to a reef of rock. The lighters are placed in position so as to form a bridge between the gangway and the rock.

The Lancashire Fusiliers landing on Beach W.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)
You will read a full account of this heroic landing on pages 211, 212. Three Victoria Crosses were afterwards awarded to those who had displayed the most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty, by the vote of their comrades.

Eight boatloads of Dublin Fusiliers towed by steam pinnaces make a dash for the shore. Every kind of missile is hurled at them, and the men suffer horribly. Some few manage to gain the beach and take refuge under the sandbank already mentioned. None of the boats, however, push off again. They and their crews are destroyed.

Now comes the moment for the *River Clyde*, like the horse of Troy, to pour forth its living freight; but there is grievous delay, for the current runs strongly, and there is grave difficulty in keeping the lighters in position. The splendid pluck and tenacity of the naval working-party are tried to the utmost, and many splendid deeds of heroism are accomplished before the bridge of boats holds fast. Now a company of the Munster Fusiliers, followed by a second company, issues from the ship and strives to cross the shifting and swaying bridge. The lighters give way in the current; the end one nearest the shore drifts into deep water, and many men striving to swim from it to the beach are drowned. All the time a perfect tornado of fire sweeps down upon them. A third company essays the task: the lighters are filled with dead and wounded. A thousand men have striven to land, but barely five hundred have got ashore. So hot is the Turkish fire that the remaining men in the *River Clyde* dare not emerge. A man has only to show his head to be instantly picked off.

Twenty-four hours after the *River Clyde* runs ashore there are but the survivors of the Dublin and the Munster Fusiliers and two companies of the Hampshire Regiment on the beach, and they are still crouching beneath the shelter of the sandy ridge. Early in the morning the *Cornwallis*, *Albion*, and *Queen Elizabeth* come to the rescue and begin a heavy bombardment of the enemy. Under cover of this bombardment the men on the beach push up the slopes on the bluff under a most galling fire, and capture the village, a fort, and a hill. The landing can now go forward. By the evening of Tuesday, the 27th, Beach V is in working order.

The whole scene on the beach reminds you of a gigantic shipwreck. It looks as if the whole army with its stores had been washed ashore after a great gale, or had saved themselves on rafts. All this work is carried on under an incessant shrapnel fire which sweeps the trenches and hills. The shells are frequently bursting ten or twelve at the same moment,

making a deafening noise, and plastering the foreshore with bullets. The only safe place is close under the cliff, but every one is rapidly becoming accustomed to the shriek of the shells and the splash of bullets in the water, and the work goes on as if there was not a gun within miles.

Before I conclude this account of the landing I must say a word as to the part played by the French in the operations. Their duty was to land on the Asiatic shore at Kum Kale, and engage the batteries so that they could not interfere with the landings at Beaches V and S. During a skirmish which took place on the height at Kum Kale and on the Trojan plain the French took 500 prisoners, and would have captured more had there been room for them in the boats. This French diversion enabled trawlers to land 700 men of the 2nd South Wales Borderers at Beach S. A stiff little fight followed; but the Welshmen gained the top of the cliff, and digging themselves in, managed to hold their own until the position was taken over by the French. Their landing had only cost them fifty casualties. A company was also put ashore at Camber, a little boat harbour nestling just east and under the ruined fort of Sedd-ul-Bahr. This little force, however, met with such a fierce fire that it could make no progress up the steep cliffs towards the village, and had to be withdrawn.

Thus the landing was made, and a feat believed to be impossible was performed. When we consider how strongly the Turks were posted, how skilfully their trenches were made, how completely the beaches were swept by their fire, we are lost in admiration of the superb gallantry and contempt of life displayed by our men. You will read on a later page some account of those who specially distinguished themselves; but do not forget that many heroes who deserved the Victoria Cross had laid down their lives before the tops of the cliffs were reached. We were on the peninsula at last, but our footing was very insecure. We had our backs to the sea and our faces to a stubborn foe, who was holding positions of enormous strength. In later chapters we shall learn how these positions baffled every effort of the most heroic of men to carry them. For the moment, however, we were flushed with victory, and our hopes were high.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HEROES OF THE LANDING.

Now that you have read an account of how we gained a foothold, and no more than a foothold, on the Gallipoli peninsula, you will agree with me that only an army of heroes could have performed the feat. All fought magnificently, but the Anzacs carried off the palm. A correspondent tells us that one man, renowned for his height and great strength, jumped into a Turkish trench and bayoneted five men one after the other, hurling each of them over the parapet as coolly and as easily as if he had been tossing hay. Hundreds of grim tales of this kind are told of the Australians' fierce onset. Wounded men who emerged from the struggle shouted to those who cheered them, "We are going to do better when we get back." They described the fighting as "a great game—the best game we ever had." "We made them run," said one Australian. "We wanted to let the Turks know what Australian steel was like, and they ran screeching and howling before us." Two New Zealanders were seen chasing eleven Turks, who fled in terror before them.

Bugler W. S. Manchip of the 1st Australian Imperial Force thus describes the desperate fighting in which he took part: "When we were near the shore a signal light flashed two or three times, but the boat I was in ran up the beach, and several of us were safe ashore before a rifle shot split the air. Then almost immediately a perfect shower of bullets fell around us. Fixing bayonets, the boys charged the hills without firing a shot until the light of the dawn was sufficient to enable them to make sure of their aim. Although I passed several dead Turks on my way forward, I only saw two who had been bayoneted, for most of them did not wait for a taste of that eighteen inches of cold steel, but ran, sniping at us whenever they got the chance, until we had them back about two miles, when we emerged from the undergrowth and broken country on to a stretch of flat land. There we were met by a perfect fusillade from thousands of rifles, and we had to take what cover we could, which was not much. After being under the withering fire of the Turkish rifles and machine guns, which were well entrenched, for nearly an hour, the enemy opened fire on us with shrapnel, and it was terrible, as we were unable to move, and men were falling around us by the dozen. . . . In the night they charged upon our trenches, blowing bugles and shouting, 'Allah! Allah!' When the order was given to 'Fix bayonets! Charge!' they did not wait for us, but fled back to their trenches. About four o'clock on Wednesday I was passing across an open space in the trench with a tin of water, when a bullet struck me in the back, cutting through my equipment, tunic, jersey, and braces. The latter, being made of hard leather, stopped the course of the bullet, and I only received a bruise on my back."

A writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* thus describes the landing of the K.O.S.B.'s on Beach Y: "It is no time to dwell on what might have been, but I cannot deny myself mention of the fact that we were actually on the slopes of Achi Baba that first day, thanks to the dauntless K.O.S.B.'s, who pushed through from Y Beach to Krithia almost unopposed, fought their way through the ruins on to the farther slopes—and then, owing to lack of supports, marched all the way back again under a devastating fire. In the advance the battalion's losses were small; coming back they were dreadfully punished, and at last dug themselves in on the seaward side of Krithia, to meet a force of at least five times their number." The K.O.S.B.'s, you will remember, were re-embarked and taken round to Beach W.

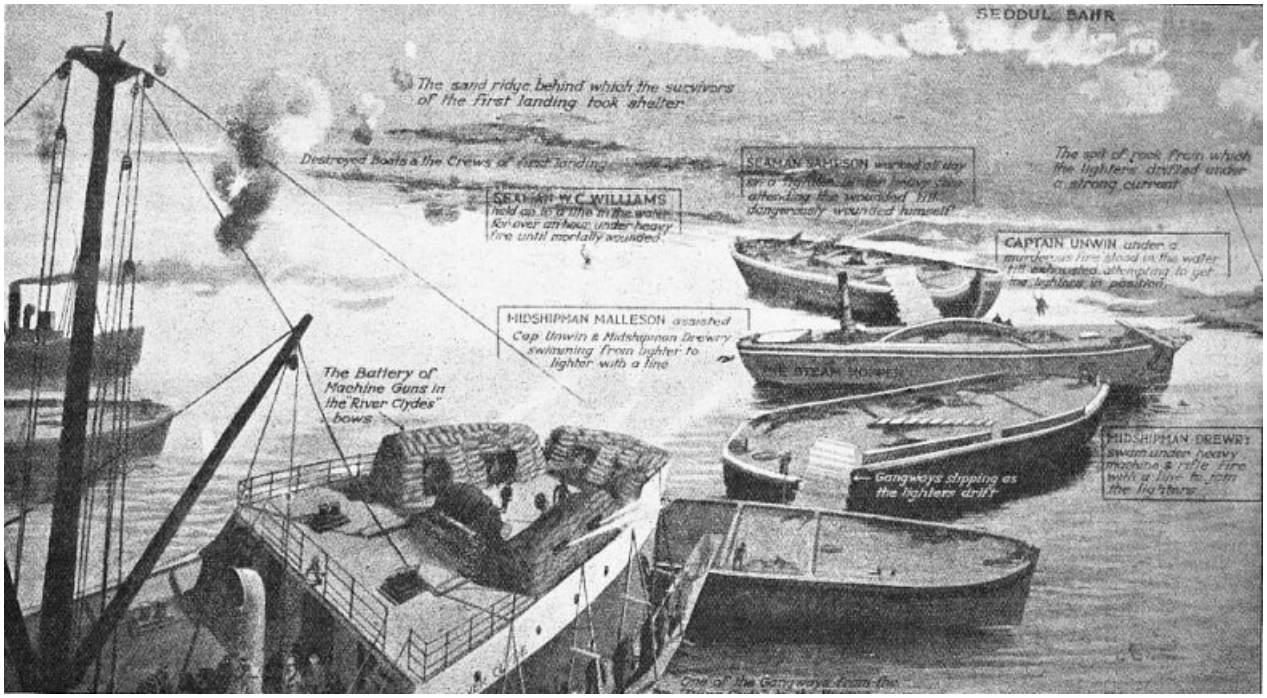
"'Could you have done anything else?' I asked a Scottish Borderer, as we sat in the scrub looking towards the hill, long afterwards.

"'Ah believe,' said he, 'properly reinforced in the rear, we could 'a taken Achi Baba by twelve noon on the day o' the landin'.'

"This is the opinion of a serving soldier, one of the eighty odd men still alive who won to the gently rising slopes of this formidable position, a bone in our throats for six deadly months—and there still."

Corporal J. Collins of the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers gives us a glimpse of the terrible scenes which took place on Beach W, where the men of his regiment covered themselves with glory. "In my first boat," he says, "there were thirty-eight soldiers and four sailors, and when we got near the shore the boat drifted about, so I decided to make for land. I got into the water, and, being a strong swimmer, I was able to pull one of my comrades on to my shoulder. Thus we struggled ashore. Then we stumbled across barbed wire. The sand and the water choked my rifle, and I was unable to use it when I landed, except the bayonet. We struggled through the entanglements, and made for the cliffs, while bullets were whistling and shrapnel shrieking all round us. While I was advancing a shrapnel shell whistled past my breast, tearing my ammunition pouch away, and reducing my clothes to tatters. The same shell killed some of my comrades farther in the line. Keeping on, we took the first Turkish trench."

Leading Seaman Gilligan of H.M.S. *Euryalus* thus wrote: "We landed the Lancashire Fusiliers, thirty-five in each boat. I shall never forget it as long as I live. It was wicked, and I, like a lot more, never expected to come through it whole. There were four boats in tow of a steam pinnace, and there was no sign of the enemy until we touched the shore. Then they opened fire, strongly entrenched above us in the cliffs, with machine guns. As soon as we touched the beach we could see the wire entanglements. The fire was terrible—just like a hailstorm. I jumped out of the stern up to my arms in water, and pushed the boat in. The sergeant jumped in front of me, and got mortally wounded. The cries of the wounded were terrible. It is without equal in this war, this landing of troops under fire. The Turks drove our men right back to the beach that Sunday night. There were 38,000 Turks, and 1,100 of our fellows held them. However, we have made progress since then, and I am proud to have had a share in it."



The Landing from the "River Clyde" on Beach V. ***By permission of The Sphere.***

An observer on a battleship[47] thus describes what he saw on Beaches V and W: "Towards Sedd-ul-Bahr (where the forts were beginning to reek with bursting shells) I saw a transport with her nose well up the beach. This was the *River Clyde*, then in the act of letting loose out of her riven side those unspeakably gallant men of the Munster, Dublin, and other regiments, whom Colonel Doughty-Wylie (amongst us only the day before) led to the capture of a strong redoubt and to his death. Between us and the *River Clyde*, in the lee of the low, scrubby cliffs, I could make out a flag-pole and a dark cluster on the beach around it. This was the point of assembly on W Beach, now christened Lancashire Landing, to commemorate the daring of those Lancashire regiments which won through here. Gradually a movement became noticeable. The cluster spread out, took the nearest dunes at a run, disappeared—and a crackling undercurrent in the din

of big guns was all that told of a fierce charge and the first trenches won. All the while the little trawlers, the tug boats, and the lighters, full of the finest soldiers, went to and fro through a deluge of bullets, which splashed the water with a hiss like the rain that comes with thunder."

The following heroes of the landing were awarded Victoria Crosses:—

Captain Richard Raymond Willis, Sergeant Alfred Richards, and Private William Keneally, all of the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers.

You have already heard of the marvellous heroism of the Lancashire Fusiliers on Beach W, and no Lancashire boy or girl will ever forget how they cut their way through the wire entanglements, notwithstanding a terrific fire from the enemy, and, in spite of unheard-of difficulties, gained the cliffs, and there firmly established themselves. Every man who engaged in this desperate struggle deserved the highest award of valour. It was quite impossible for the generals to pick and choose amongst these bravest of the brave, so the survivors were asked to elect the three of their comrades who, in their opinion, had done the most signal acts of bravery and devotion during the day of the landing. With one consent they elected the three heroes named above.

Corporal William Cosgrove, 1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers.

On Beach V, where so many of the Munsters went gallantly to their death, Corporal Cosgrove showed splendid dash and spirit. Single-handed he pulled down the posts of the enemy's high wire entanglements, notwithstanding a terrific burst of fire from the enemy. Thanks very largely to the corporal's splendid pluck the heights were at last cleared.

Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Hotham Montagu Doughty-Wylie, Headquarters Staff, and Captain Garth Neville Walford, Brigade Major, Royal Artillery.

On page 253 I told you that the Dublin Fusiliers, the Munsters, and the Hampshires, who had landed on Beach V from the *River Clyde*, were rallied and led forward to attack the village and a redoubt on a hill inland. The officer who rallied the men was Lieutenant-Colonel Doughty-Wylie, a staff officer, who ought not to have been in the firing line; but seeing that the attacking force had lost many of its officers, he sprang into the breach. He was seen with a cane in his hand going amongst the troops and encouraging them. When they charged up the hill with the bayonet he was at their head. Unhappily he was shot down, and the Victoria Cross was awarded to him after his death. Captain Walford behaved in the same heroic fashion, and he, too, lost his life during those terrible hours.

Commander Edward Unwin, R.N.; Midshipman Wilfred St. Aubyn Malleson, R.N.; Midshipman George Leslie Drewry, R.N.R.; Able Seaman William Charles Williams, R.N.; Seaman George M'Kenzie Samson, R.N.R.

No finer deeds of heroism stand to the credit of the British Navy than those which I am now about to describe. When the *River Clyde* was run ashore a floating bridge of lighters was formed. The swirling current drove the lighters adrift, and the bridge was broken. Observing this, Commander Unwin left the *River Clyde*, and, standing waist deep in the water under a murderous fire, endeavoured to get the lighters into position again. He worked on until, suffering from the effects of the cold water, he was obliged to return to the ship, where he was wrapped in blankets. Having somewhat recovered, he returned to his work against the doctor's orders, and completed it. Later on he was slightly wounded by three bullets; but as soon as the doctor had attended to him he once more left the ship, this time in a lifeboat, to save some wounded men who were lying in shallow water near the beach. He continued at this labour of mercy, under constant fire, until he was so worn out that he could no longer stand.

Midshipman Drewry assisted Commander Unwin in the work of getting the lighters into position, and toiled on, utterly regardless of the heavy fire. He was twice hit; but even when wounded he tried to swim from lighter to lighter with a line, and only gave up the effort when he was thoroughly exhausted. An observer saw him swimming to a lighter with a line in his mouth and a wound in his head, while rocks, lighters, and boats were covered with dead and dying. When he was utterly worn out Midshipman Malleson took the line, swam to the second lighter, and made it fast, thus enabling some of the men from the *River Clyde* to get ashore. Later on the line broke, and he once more took to the water with another line. Twice he attempted to reach the lighter, but all his efforts were in vain.

Seaman Samson worked all day on the lighter nearest to the shore, attending to the wounded and getting out lines. At length he was badly hit, but he made a good recovery, and when he reached Portsmouth was received by the Mayor and a guard of honour. Some weeks later the people of Carnoustie, his native place, made him handsome presents at a public meeting. Seaman Samson was the first British bluejacket for fifty years to win and wear the Victoria Cross. Seaman Williams went ashore with a line, and, waist-deep in the water, held on to it for over an hour. He was fired at constantly, and at last fell riddled with bullets. The coveted badge of valour was awarded after his heroic death.

Sub-Lieutenant A. W. St. Clair Tisdall, R.N.V.R.

This gallant officer, who in his Cambridge days was renowned as a scholar and a poet, fought as an ordinary seaman at Antwerp. During the landing on Beach V he displayed remarkable heroism. Hearing the cries of wounded men on shore, he jumped into the water, and pushing a boat before him went to their rescue. With the assistance of several comrades he made five trips under heavy fire between the *River Clyde* and the shore, and thus saved the lives of many wounded men. He was killed in action on May 6, 1915, and his Victoria Cross was not announced until the last day of March 1916.

"In files they lay, like the mower's swathes at close of day." A Turkish Column wiped out by the Inniskilling Fusiliers.

(*By permission of the Illustrated London News.*) Our illustration shows the repulse of a Turkish night attack on our trenches near Achi Baba on May 1, 1915. On the extreme left of our position lay the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and the Northern Irish Regiment, and in front of them was a small vineyard with a mud wall round it, the vine branches being entwined with a thick network of barbed wire. The Turks, led by German officers, moved directly on the Inniskillings; but the Irishmen lay low until their attackers were only a hundred and fifty yards away. Then light balls were fired from pistols, and a terrible torrent of lead swept the first line of the Turks to earth. The second line shared the same fate, and the survivors turned and fled. Several German officers were found shot amidst the heaps of slain next morning. (See page 267.)

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BATTERING AT THE BARRIERS.

The Gallipoli campaign was a diversion that did not succeed—a side-show that failed. I shall not, therefore, describe the progress of the fighting in full detail. The story is rather a footnote to the history of the Great War than part of the text. We may divide the story—as Cæsar did Gaul—into three parts. Part I. deals with the fighting from the day of the landing on 25th April down to 13th July, and tells how we battered at the Achi Baba barrier while the Anzacs strove to carry the high and rugged hills on their front. Part II. carries on the story to the middle fortnight of August, when, with the aid of five new divisions, we made a big effort to break through at Suvla and Anzac; and Part III. describes the long period of waiting until those December and January days when we "came off" the peninsula without the loss of a single life. In this chapter I shall give you very briefly Part I. of the story.

On the night of 27th April the Allies lay on a line running across the peninsula about three miles north of Cape Tekke. Next day, at eight in the morning, an advance was made on the village of Krithia; and though the Turks strongly opposed us, the 87th Brigade, on the left, advanced two miles, while the French, on the right, pushed forward a mile. By the evening of the 27th we securely held the tip of the peninsula. During the fighting the *Queen Elizabeth*, far out at sea, observed 250 of the enemy preparing to make an attack from a point where they could not be seen by the troops on shore. Immediately she dropped a shrapnel shell amongst them. It weighed 1,800 pounds, and contained 13,000 bullets. When the smoke cleared away it was discovered that the attacking party had been completely wiped out.

On 1st May, after we had been reinforced, the Turks made a fierce counter-attack, and what is known as the First Battle of Krithia began.[48] All day their big guns roared, and at night, when the moon rose, their infantry darted forward. On the right, where the shelling had been heaviest, the Turks opened a gap in our lines, but it was promptly filled up by the 5th Royal Scots, who with the bayonet cleared the Turks out of the trenches which they had occupied. All night the battle raged, and we only held on to our position with the greatest difficulty. At dawn the next day we counter-attacked, and the whole line moved forward five hundred yards. Had the French not been held up on the right by barbed wire and concealed machine guns, we should have carried Achi Baba that day. Severe fighting went on during the 4th and the 5th, and our casualties were very heavy. Between the day of the landing and 6th May we lost 14,000 men, 3,593 of whom had been cut off in the difficult country and made prisoners.

The Second Battle of Krithia, which began on 6th May, lasted for three days. Our left and centre strove to carry Krithia ridge, while the French attempted to get across the small river beyond Morto Bay which you see on the map. The French 75's and the guns of the warships opened fire, and prepared the way for the advance. Again, however, our Allies were held up by concealed Turkish trenches; but they struggled on, and by the close of the day, at the cost of many lives, pushed across the river. During the night they held their ground, in spite of a strong counter-attack. Next day the warships shelled the Turkish right, and we carried the front Turkish trenches, but could go no farther. On the right the French advanced, but, caught by shrapnel, wavered and fled. The lost ground, however, was recovered. So the fight went on, every inch being bought at a heavy price. At the close of the three days' struggle we had won a thousand yards, but had not touched the enemy's main position, which was terribly strong. We now knew that it could not be rushed.

While these battles were going on, the Anzacs were slowly gaining ground at Gaba Tepe. On the night of 18th May fresh bodies of Turks were flung against their trenches; but the cool and steady shooting of the men from "down under" kept them at bay. On that red day the Turks lost some 7,000 men, while the Australians lost but 500. The Turkish trenches were in some places less than two hundred yards away from those of the Anzacs, and the ground between was carpeted with dead. You will read on a later page how Lance-Corporal Jacka won the Victoria Cross by capturing a trench single-handed.

The third great attempt upon Krithia and Achi Baba was made on 4th June; but though our men fought like heroes, and the East Lancashire Territorial Division on the right centre made a splendid advance, we only gained some five hundred yards on a front of three miles. After five weeks' desperate struggle we had not touched the outer Turkish position. The German engineers had made it almost as formidable as the Labyrinth in Artois. It was clear that without large reinforcements we could make no headway. Already we had lost 38,636 men—more than the whole casualty list for three years of the South African War.

The British and French fleets had taken part in every attack, and so far had been almost unmolested. Now German submarines began to appear; but before they got to work a Turkish destroyer managed to sink the old British battleship *Goliath* by means of a torpedo. On 26th May a German submarine launched a torpedo which tore through the nets of the *Triumph*, and sank her in nine minutes. Next day the *Majestic*, when steaming close to the shore, was sunk in the same manner. It was now evident that our ships could no longer take part in the bombardment and escape the submarines, so most of them were sent home, and the Allied naval strength was reduced to a few of the older battleships and cruisers, together with destroyers and one of the monitors which had checked the shoreward march of the Germans on the Flemish coast. Other new monitors arrived later, and, being submarine-proof, were able to do excellent work.

By midsummer we knew, more than ever, how necessary it was that a right of way should be forced through the Dardanelles. We shall learn in a later chapter that the Russians had been forced back, and were terribly hard pressed. Without an open sea-road by which they could be supplied with munitions, it seemed likely that they would be put out of action for months to come, and that the Germans would be able to spare large bodies of troops to reinforce the Western front. We therefore determined to push on in the peninsula with renewed vigour. Reinforcements had now been landed, and it was necessary that we should strike, and strike hard at once.

During the first fortnight of June the enemy made many attempts to thrust us from the positions which we had won, and during the fighting many notable deeds of heroism were done by our men. A very determined attack by the Turks on 18th June carried some of our trenches; but they were won back by a brilliant charge of the 5th Royal Scots and a company of the 4th Worcesters. You will remember that the 5th Royal Scots had already distinguished themselves on 1st May. They formed part of what Sir Ian Hamilton calls "the incomparable 29th Division."

On 21st June we began the work of straightening out our line, which then formed an awkward salient in the centre. After a heavy bombardment the French infantry rushed two lines of Turkish trenches. Most desperate fighting followed, in which every gun that could be brought to bear was turned on the enemy. Six hundred yards were won, and the whole Allied right wing was well beyond the little river already mentioned. Though many of the French were little more than boys, they fought with the utmost dash and contempt of death.

The right wing having advanced, an attempt was now made to bring up the left. The movement began on the morning of 28th June with a fierce bombardment. When it ceased at 10.45 our infantry leaped forward, and within half an hour had won three lines of trenches between a ravine and the sea. East of the ravine the 7th Royal Scots made good progress, but the right met with a heavy fire, and could gain but little ground. A second attack which began at 11.30 was magnificently made. The men dashed forward without wavering, and before long our left wing was less than a mile west of Krithia. The whole of the ravine, which was littered with dead, rifles, bayonets, boxes of ammunition, soldiers' packs, firewood, etc., was in our hands. Much booty and about 200 prisoners were taken, and our losses were not more than 1,750.

On the last day of June there was fighting all round the peninsula. In the Anzac territory, about midnight, Enver Pasha came specially from Constantinople to see his army drive the Australians and New Zealanders into the sea. Heavy firing began, to which the Anzacs replied with cheers. At 1.30 in the morning a strong column of Turks advanced, but it was broken to atoms by the rifles and machine guns of the 7th and 8th Light Horse. Other attacks melted away before the swift and deadly fire of the defenders, and Enver Pasha returned to Constantinople a disappointed man.

Early on the morning of the same day the French had a success. They carried by storm a network of trenches at the head of the river along which they had been fighting so long, and held on to the ground which they had won. Sir Ian Hamilton thought that the Turkish losses during the five days following 28th June were over 20,000; yet all this sacrifice had availed them nothing.

The July fighting was of the same nature as that of June. On 4th July an enemy warship fired on the Australian lines, and aeroplanes tried to drop bombs on our trenches. This was followed by an infantry attack which was successful at first, but, later on, the Turks were forced to retire with great loss. We were now up against the main strength of the Achi Baba fortress, and on 12th July we made a resolute attempt to capture it.

The bombardment began at dawn, and the first attack was made by the French and the Scottish Lowland Division on the right and right centre. The Scots reached the third line of Turkish trenches, but they lost touch with the French on their right and could not hold their gains. Another and even fiercer cannonade began at four in the afternoon, and the Scots, surging forward against a great Turkish redoubt overlooking a ravine, carried it at the point of the bayonet. By dusk some 400 yards of ground had been gained. Through the night the Turks came on again and again with bombs, and the wearied

Scots were obliged to give up two lines of trenches. Next day these positions were recaptured, and there we stuck. We had reached the limit of our advance from the south. We were very near to Krithia, but the heights of Achi Baba were as far off as ever.

The following officers and men won the Victoria Cross during the May, June, and July fighting.

Lance-Corporal Albert Jacka, 14th Battalion Australian Imperial forces.

A private of Lance-Corporal Jacka's regiment thus describes the deed which won his chum the V.C.: "There were four Bendigo boys, all mates, in the 14th, and Bert Jacka and I were two of them. The 14th was stationed at Courtney's Post, which shared with Quinn's Post[49] and Pope's Hill all the worst of the fighting during the month of May. On the night of 18th May and the morning of the next day the Turks tried to drive us into the sea, and left eight acres of dead between Quinn's and Courtney's. In the middle of the scrap a wounded man crawled to our trench, and said the Turks had rushed a communication trench, and there was only one man keeping them back. There was a call for volunteers, and I was one of them. When we got near we saw Bert guarding the end of the trench with his bayonet. He looked like a mad thing. When he saw us coming, he let out a roar like a bull and rushed into the trench. I made after him, but I received two bullets, one in the side and the other in the hand. Well, down I went, and before the others got into the trench Bert had done it on his own. Five shot and two killed with the bayonet! He came to see me that night in the dug-out, and I said to him, 'Well, Bert, you've done a big thing;' all he replied was, 'I think I lost my head.'" For this most gallant deed Jacka received not only the coveted cross, but a sum of £500 and a gold medal promised by Mr. John Wren of Melbourne to the first Australian who should win the great distinction.

Second Lieutenant George Dallas Moor, 3rd Battalion Hampshire Regiment.

This young officer was not nineteen when by his splendid bravery and presence of mind he saved a dangerous situation. On 5th June a detachment of a battalion on his left which had lost all its officers was rapidly retiring before a heavy Turkish attack. Second Lieutenant Moor grasped the peril in which the rest of the line was thus placed, and, racing back for some two hundred yards, he stemmed the rout, led back the leaderless, and at their head recaptured the lost trench. In September 1914 he was a schoolboy at Cheltenham; nine months later he had proved himself a born leader of men, and had won the proudest badge of honour that a soldier can wear.

Second Lieutenant Herbert James, 4th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment.

Two fine deeds of outstanding valour stand to the credit of Lieutenant James. On 28th June he rallied a retiring party belonging to a neighbouring unit and led it forward under heavy shell and rifle fire. He then returned, gathered together another party, and once more advanced, thus putting new life into the attack. On 3rd July he headed a party of bomb throwers who pushed up a Turkish communication trench, and after nearly all of his comrades had been killed or wounded, remained alone at the head of the trench, exposed to a murderous fire, but beating back the enemy single-handed till a barrier had been built behind him and the trench secured. Lieutenant James was a Birmingham man, who enlisted in the 21st Lancers in 1908. He was of a studious disposition and had won several prizes for languages. On the outbreak of war he was granted a commission and joined the famous Worcestershires.

Captain Gerald O'Sullivan, 1st Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

This gallant Irishman threw himself into the breach to the south-west of Krithia during a critical moment on the night of the 1st-2nd July. He volunteered to lead a party of bomb throwers against a British trench which the Turks had captured. Advancing in the open under very heavy fire, he climbed on to the parapet and hurled his bombs into the crowd of men below. Of course, he was wounded, but not before his example had inspired his men to such efforts that they recaptured the lost trench. Strange to say, the day after his honour was announced he was reported missing.

Sergeant James Somers, 1st Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

On the same night that Captain O'Sullivan so distinguished himself, Sergeant Somers of the same regiment pushed into an enemy trench and bombed the Turks with great effect. Later on he advanced into the open, under heavy fire, and held back the enemy by throwing bombs until a barricade had been erected. Frequently, he ran back to his own trench for a

fresh supply of bombs. Thanks to his gallantry and coolness the lost portion of a British trench was recovered. On his return to his native village the people of North Tipperary gave him a great reception, and presented him with an illuminated address and war stock to the value of £240.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A SPLENDID FAILURE.

In his dispatch of 6th January 1916 Sir Ian Hamilton tells us that early in July 1915 he was fully aware that the Kilid Bahr plateau could not be reached from the south. Even if he could capture Krithia, which had so far defied him, he could make no further headway towards his goal. The Turks had made new and very strong works on the slopes of Achi Baba, and these works were so planned that, even if the enemy's western flank could be turned and he could be driven back from the coast, the central and eastern portions of the mountain could still be held as a bastion to the plateau. After considering every possible means of forcing a way to the Narrows, he decided to make an advance through the Anzac territory and the country to the north of it.

For three months Anzac had been an area of little more than a square mile of cliff top on the edge of the sea. Its defences consisted of a series of outposts, and these could only be reached by means of a deep ravine, Shrapnel Valley, or "the Valley of Death," as it was called, because it was enfiladed by Turkish fire, and a man took his life in his hand every time he attempted to pass through it. You have already heard of some of these outposts. Quinn's Post was named after Major Quinn, who died in defence of it during a desperate Turkish attack on 28th May. Courtney's Post, which was the scene of Corporal Jacka's famous exploit, was named after the Colonel who held it against terrible odds for seven weeks. Pope's Hill received its name from Colonel Pope of West Australia—Pope with the Pipe, as his men dubbed him, because on one occasion, when he was climbing the side of the hill, he just escaped a Turkish trap by leaping down thirty feet on to a soft spit of sand, where he landed safely, pipe and all. The path to the post of Pope's Hill was so steep that the men had to help themselves up by means of a rope.

Sir Ian Hamilton now determined to make a new landing on Suvla Bay, which lies to the north of the Anzac region. Look at the diagram on page 278 and make out the chief features of the neighbourhood. You notice that the bay, which is about two miles wide, is like the crescent moon in shape, with capes forming the horns. Along the edge of the bay runs a narrow causeway of sand, and behind it is a salt lake, dry in summer, but overflowing in winter. Lining the coast north-eastwards from Cape Suvla is the ridge of Karakol Dagh, over 400 feet high. Between the southern end of the lake and the promontory which shuts in the bay on the south side is the low hill of Lala Baba, and about one and a half miles to the east of it is another elevation, afterwards called by our men Chocolate Hill, because it was burnt brown by the shells which burst upon it.

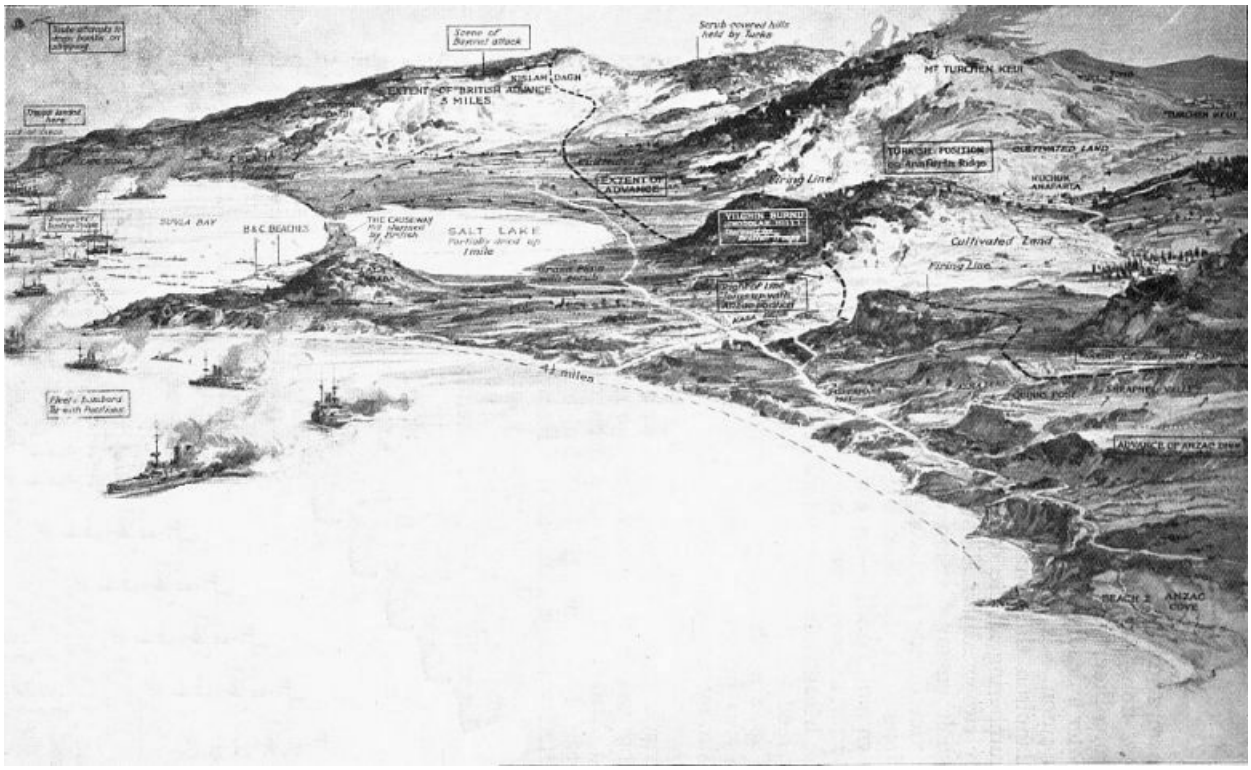
The "Anzac" Front.

The water-courses shown on the map are mostly dry in summer.

Find on the map (page 275) Azmak Dere, a ravine which lies to the south of Chocolate Hill. From this ravine northwards stretches a series of hills and flats on which there are farms and patches of dwarf oaks, and, on the seaward fall of the hills, thick scrub. Everywhere the plain is cracked by water-courses, which are simply deep, dry gullies in summer. Just north of the upper course of the Azmak Dere is one of the two Anafarta villages; the other stands two miles farther north. Between the south village and the foothills of the Karakol Dagh lie the Anafarta Hills.

At the points marked A, B, and C on the diagram (page 278), Sir Ian Hamilton proposed to make new landings; but, as a matter of fact, his troops were put ashore only at B and C. They were to try to carry the Anafarta Hills, and their right was to link up with the left of the Anzacs, who would advance at the same time. If this were done, the central crest of the spine of uplands which runs through the western end of the peninsula would be in our hands. We should then be able to command the one land route to Maidos on the Narrows; the communications of the Turks would be cut, Achi Baba would fall, and in due course we should reach the plateau on which all our hopes were centred. Such was the plan. It was a bold plan, and it had a very fair chance of succeeding.

Of course, if the Turks got wind of what we proposed to do they would make preparations to resist us, and the conditions in the south of the peninsula would be repeated. The landing on Suvla Bay was to be a surprise. We knew that the Turks had made no preparations in this region, and we hoped to take them unawares. If the landing could be made speedily, if the troops could push forward without delay, and if they and the Anzacs, working together, could join hands and gain the crest of the spine of uplands, all would be well; but if there were delays, if any of the various columns were not up to time, or failed to do the work assigned to them, the whole movement would end in failure.



Suvla Bay and the Neighbourhood. ***By permission of The Sphere.***

The landing took place on August 6-7, 1915. A beach where a landing was attempted was later abandoned, and the troops were put ashore at B and C. Notice the causeway across the Salt Lake, Lala Baba, Chocolate Hill, and Lone Pine Plateau to the south-east of Shrapnel Valley.

Before the great venture began Sir Ian Hamilton had to throw the enemy off the scent. It would never do to let him know where the new landing was to be made. At all costs he must be surprised. So on 6th August a general attack was made on

the Turkish position at Achi Baba. This was done to make the enemy believe that we still hoped to carry the ridge from the south. In the early afternoon, after the guns had prepared the way, the 88th Brigade advanced across open ground against a part of the enemy's front, which so far we had been unable to win. The attack was boldly made, but our men were held up, and suffered heavy losses. East of the Krithia road the Lancashire Territorials fared better, and gained 200 yards. Next morning the Turks, with heavy reinforcements, began their counter-attacks, and fighting raged for two days round a vineyard west of the Krithia road, where, as you will learn later, Lieutenant Forshaw of the 1/9th Manchesters won the Victoria Cross. All this fighting, you must remember, was for the purpose of making the Turks believe that we were going to "carry on" in the old way.

Now we must turn to the Anzac territory, which, as we know, was to be the scene of a great effort. On the nights of the 4th, 5th, and 6th August reinforcements were slipped into Anzac very silently during the darkest hours, and were tucked away in prepared hiding-places, quite invisible to the aeroplanes or the telescopes of the Turks. Probably never before have so many men been landed under the very eyes of the enemy, and kept concealed for three days without being discovered.

On the afternoon of the 6th, while the fighting was in progress round Krithia, a frontal attack was made on the Lone Pine plateau.[50] It was a feint to cover the advance of a division which was to move up the coast and work up three ravines in order to assault Koja Chemen,[51] the commanding summit of the Sari Bair. As soon as the bombardment ceased the Australians—every man with a white band on his sleeve—leaped forward with that magnificent dash which has given them a leading place amongst the finest soldiers of the world, and flung themselves on the deep and roofed-in trenches at Lone Pine, which you see to the south-east of Shrapnel Valley. After a deadly struggle in the dim galleries they won the whole position. It was a magnificent feat of arms, and Sir Ian Hamilton thus sums it up: "One weak Australian brigade, numbering at the outset but 2,000 rifles, and supported only by two weak battalions, carried the work under the eyes of a whole enemy division, and maintained their grip upon it like a vice during six days of counter-attacks. . . . After the first violence of the counter-attacks had abated, 1,100 corpses—our own and Turkish—were dragged out of the trenches." Seven Victoria Crosses were awarded to the victors of Lone Pine.

Meanwhile the columns on the left had occupied the ridge named Bauchop's Hill, and had climbed and seized Big Table Top, a mushroom-shaped mountain with such steep sides that it was believed no infantry could scale them. "But just as faith moves mountains, so valour can carry them." The heights were scaled, and the plateau was carried by midnight. The attacks were made with bayonet and bomb only; hardly a rifle shot was fired. Meanwhile the ridge which you see just south of Azmak Dere had also been captured, and the whole left rear of the Anzac position had been safeguarded. The grand attack on Koja Chemen could now proceed.

I must break off my story for a moment to tell you that, at dawn on the 7th, the 3rd Australian Light Horse and the 1st Light Horse Brigade pushed forward against the Turkish trenches in their front. These magnificent troopers, men of great physical strength and of the highest courage, advanced only to be mown down. Line after line of them left their parapets, but were met by a storm of fire which no mortal could face and live. For a few moments the flag of the Light Horse fluttered from a corner of the Turkish position. Soon, however, it disappeared, and of the 750 men who attacked that morning only about 100 returned. The sacrifice, however, was not in vain. The Turks in this part of the line were penned to their trenches while the great attack which I am now about to describe went forward.

If you look at the map on page 275, you will see that, in order to get from Big Table Top to Koja Chemen, our troops had to cross Rhododendron Ridge. All night the left column struggled up the two "deres" which you see to the east of Bauchop's Hill, and by a quarter to six in the morning it was on the lower slopes of Rhododendron Ridge. It then moved up the hill, and gained touch by means of the 10th Gurkhas with a column on the right, which had worked up the ravines between Rhododendron Ridge and Chunuk Bair in the face of very heavy fire and by means of frequent bayonet charges. Before nightfall our men were entrenched on the top of Rhododendron Ridge, "*a quarter of a mile short of Chunuk Bair—that is, of victory*!"

Now for the last push. The attack on Koja Chemen was timed to begin at 4.15 on the morning of the 8th. The right column was to climb up the Chunuk Bair ridge, while the left was to make for the ridge directly south-east of Koja Chemen. "At the first faint glimmer of dawn observers saw figures moving against the sky-line of Chunuk Bair. Were they our own men, or were they the Turks? Telescopes were anxiously adjusted; the light grew stronger; men were seen climbing up from our side of the ridge; they *were* our own fellows—the topmost summit was ours!" Yes, it was true—New Zealanders and Maoris had fixed themselves firmly on the main knoll of Chunuk Bair, and victory was in sight. The

position, however, had not been won without great losses. The 7th Gloucesters, for example, lost every single officer; yet they fought on from midday to sunset, commanded only by corporals and privates.

Next morning, the 9th, the attack was renewed by three columns. The whole of Chunuk Bair was to be gained, and while No. 1 column held the ground, Nos. 2 and 3 columns were to carry Hill Q. It was a day of pitiless heat, and the men suffered torments of thirst. The 6th Gurkhas of the second column scaled the summit of the ridge between Chunuk Bair and Hill Q, and for half an hour looked down upon the gleaming waters of the straits. Not only did they and some of the 6th South Lancashires reach the crest, but they began to attack down the far side of it, firing as they went at the fast-retreating enemy. But at this supreme moment, when the last obstacle had been passed and the Promised Land was in sight, the fortune of war deserted us. No. 3 column should by this time have been sweeping out towards Hill Q along the whole ridge of the mountain, but it was nowhere to be seen. It had lost its way in the darkness. There was no support for the men on the summit, who were now suddenly assailed by a salvo of heavy shells. The Gurkhas and South Lancashires were forced back from the crest and on to the lower slopes from which they had started. When at last No. 3 column appeared, the Turks had come up in overwhelming numbers, and all hope of regaining the summit had vanished.

That evening our line ran along Rhododendron Ridge up to the crest of Chunuk Bair, where some 800 New Zealanders and Maoris were holding about two hundred yards of shallow trenches unprotected by wire. During the night of the 9th-10th these troops were relieved, after they had been fighting without pause for three days and three nights. Two battalions of the New Army took the place of these devoted men, who were now half dead with fatigue. Early on the morning of the 10th the Turks made a furious attack upon them. They came on again and again, calling upon the name of God, determined to drive our men into the sea. Desperate fighting followed. The men of the New Army were simply overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers, and were driven from the crest. At the foot of the hill they were rallied, and plunged into a deadly fray in which "generals fought in the ranks, and men caught each other by the throat. . . . Our men stood to it, and maintained, by many a deed of daring, the old traditions of their race. There was no flinching. *They died in the ranks where they stood.*"

But where were the men from Suvla? Where were they at this supreme crisis, when they were so desperately needed? The New Zealanders on the crest of Chunuk Bair had seen them landing, but had lost sight of them. What had happened? Something must have gone seriously wrong.

The landing at Suvla Bay was made on the night of 6th August, under very favourable conditions. The moon did not rise until 2 a.m., and by this time our men were ashore. Except for a little rifle fire, they were quite unopposed. As you know, the Turks had their hands full elsewhere, and had no inkling of what was afoot. The men who landed at the points B and C carried Lala Baba with the bayonet during the night, and also an outpost to the north of the Salt Lake. By the time the moon rose two divisions were ashore, and were holding a line east of the lake running from Karakol Dagh to near Chocolate Hill. So far everything had gone well; but then came a fatal delay. It was essential that we should push on if we were to surprise the Turks, but no attempt was made to proceed. The men, most of whom had never been in action before, were very weary, and were tormented by thirst. The transports, containing water, stores, mules, and carts, were still sixty miles away, and no doubt the general in command of the expedition hesitated to send men forward in an arid land without a proper water supply. Further, he had but little artillery. Late that night the right carried Chocolate Hill. The New Zealanders, as you know, were now struggling to maintain their foothold on Chunuk Bair, and every moment was priceless. Unhappily, the general at Suvla Bay does not seem to have realized that the whole success of the movement depended on pushing his men forward at all costs. By this time Sir Ian Hamilton had arrived. He tried to persuade the general to advance, but in vain. By the morning of Monday, 9th August, our chance of success had almost vanished. Ever-growing numbers of the enemy had come up, and no surprise was now possible.

On the morning of the 9th a gallant endeavour was made to carry the main Anafarta ridge; but though the crest was won, the effort was too late. The Turks had now arrived in full force. About midday they fired the scrub on the hills, and the flames which were swept across our front by the wind drove us back. Nothing more of importance was done that day, and next morning our chance of succeeding had gone for ever.

During the next ten days we tried to push forward, and the famous 29th Division was brought up; but even it could not snatch victory out of defeat. On 21st August repeated but unavailing efforts were made to carry a hill to the north and

another to the south of Chocolate Hill. About five o'clock the mounted division, which had been held in reserve below Lala Baba, made a splendid advance. For two miles the gallant yeomen moved forward as if on parade through country where there was not enough cover to conceal a mouse, and amidst a rain of Turkish shrapnel. These men, from Bucks, Berks, and Dorset, charged the hill to the south of Chocolate Hill and leaped into the Turkish trenches. The Turks, however, on a higher hill brought machine guns to bear on them, and by daylight they were forced back to their old lines.

The same day the Anzacs, under their famous leader, General Birdwood, brilliantly carried one side of the topmost knoll of Hill 60, which you see by the side of the upper course of Azma Dere, the southern fork of Azmak Dere.[52] After desperate hand-to-hand fighting, nine-tenths of the summit was won. Some 250 men of the 5th Connaught Rangers distinguished themselves that day by a superb charge, and finally the whole hill passed into our hands. With this success our efforts to make headway on the peninsula practically came to an end.

"Thus was a likely plan turned into a tragedy of missed opportunity." We failed for the same reason that we failed in the whole campaign—we were "too late," and we gave time for strong forces of the enemy to take up positions of such strength that all the valour of our men could not carry them. The whole enterprise was wrecked when our troops were held in check for a whole day on the flats of Suvla Bay.

"Last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history," on 11th October Sir Ian Hamilton was asked to say what he supposed would be the extent of our losses if we tried to get off the peninsula. He cabled back that he could not even think of such a thing. On the 16th he was recalled, and another general, Sir Charles Monro, who had already advised that we should withdraw from Gallipoli, was appointed in his place. The task of the new general was to carry out the delicate and difficult operation of withdrawal. During the next two months he was busily engaged in making his preparations.

Of course, it was all-important that the Turks should be kept in ignorance of what we proposed to do. Our losses in getting on to the peninsula were very heavy, but they would be as nothing compared with those which we might suffer in getting off should the Turks be enabled to attack us while men, guns, horses, and stores were being transferred to the ships. Some generals gloomily told us that we should lose half, or at least one-third, of our troops in the process. We therefore made no sign, but carried on as though we had no thought of leaving the peninsula at all.

Local fighting still went on; mines were laid and exploded, and a trench warfare similar to that in North France and Flanders was in full swing. The storms of November broke over our men, and torrents roared down the gullies. Sickness was rife, but still "carry on" was the order of the day. On 21st December Lord Kitchener visited Anzac, and satisfied himself that the men could be withdrawn without undue loss. The hour of departure was drawing very near.

Everything depended on the weather. The small boats in which the troops were to be conveyed to the transports could not work in a rough sea, nor could the guns and animals be got off during storms. Happily, when the work of withdrawal began on 29th December a spell of light wind and smooth seas set in.

Before the men could depart the Turks had to be attacked, so as to keep them at a distance. On 29th December a British division advanced against the enemy with as much dash as if the campaign was only beginning, and next day the Turkish lines were fiercely bombarded. Meanwhile the first troops had got away. All sorts of ruses were invented to deceive the Turks. It is said, for example, that while 2,000 men were silently embarked at night, 500 were landed with great show the next morning, in order to make the Turks believe that we were actually being reinforced. For weeks guides were trained to bring down companies of men from the trenches to the beaches during the night, and so well was everything planned that every man, every animal, and every gun, with the exception of six, was safely embarked. The landing was a feat; the departure was a miracle.

The Turkish Attack on our Troops at the foot of Chunuk Bair. ***By permission of The Sphere.***

The Turks "came on again and again, calling upon the name of God, determined to drive our men into the sea. . . . Our men stood to it, and maintained by many a deed of daring the old traditions of their race. There was no flinching. They died in the ranks where they stood." (See page 280.)

A correspondent tells us that the Anzacs came down the hillside with steady, slouching gait. Except for the moonlight shimmering on the Salt Lake and the smooth waters of the bay, and the fires burning in the deserted camps, all was dark. Suddenly, four great fires sprang up, leaped into flames, and grew into one mighty bonfire. The deserted stores of the Anzacs were blazing furiously. Then, as a finale, a giant mine was exploded by electricity under the Turkish trenches. It was the Australians' "Good-bye" to the Turks. An Anzac corporal thus described the departure:—

> "On the last night we kept up the usual firing, until finally there were only sixty men from each battalion scattered along the firing-line, and through a ruse—due to the inventive faculties of Corporal Scurry, of our battalion—these last men were able to get away.
>
> "Scurry invented an apparatus by fixing a kerosene can full of water, which was allowed to drip into a large jam tin. This latter was tied on to the trigger of a rifle fully cocked and in position on the parapet. When a sufficient amount of water was in the jam tin off went the gun.
>
> "Hundreds of these were fixed all along the line, timed to go off at different intervals, so that the usual firing was kept up for two hours after the last man had left the trenches.
>
> "Some ruse—eh, what?"

"I hope, sir," said a New Zealander to his officer, as he crept down Shrapnel Gully for the last time, "that those fellows who lie buried along the 'Dere' will be soundly sleeping and not hear us as we march away." Many of his comrades, however, put aside such sad thoughts.

As the last transport steamed away early on the morning of 9th January 1916, the enemy's guns began to pour shells on our deserted trenches and on our burning beaches. A day or two later the Turks announced that they had driven the British into the sea. Constantinople blazed with illuminations, and Germany broke forth into loud rejoicings. So ended the ill-starred adventure. For more than nine months we had fought not only the Turks and the Germans in their strongholds, but disease and thirst, the droughts of summer, and the blizzards of winter. We had been foiled, and the

British Empire was the poorer by the loss of tens of thousands of bright and gallant lives; yet there was no murmuring. The nation set its teeth and turned to the next task. It recognized that there must be failures in every great war, and that one set-back does not spell defeat.

The following officers and men were awarded the Victoria Cross during the fighting in Gallipoli between 7th August and 22nd December 1915:

Lieutenant William Thomas Forshaw, 1/9th Battalion, Manchester Regiment, Territorial Force.

On page 276 I mentioned the heavy fighting which took place from 17th to 19th August around a vineyard to the west of the Krithia road. Lieutenant Forshaw and his detachment held the north-west angle of the vineyard. The Turks advanced upon them time after time by way of three trenches which all met at this point, but they could make no headway. For forty-one hours Lieutenant Forshaw not only directed and encouraged his men, but continued to fling bombs on the enemy. Eye-witnesses say that he treated bomb-throwing as though it were snowballing, and that he was happy all the time, though every moment he was in the direst peril. When his detachment was relieved he volunteered to stay on and direct operations. Three times during the night of 8th-9th August he was again heavily attacked, and once the Turks got over his barricade; but after shooting three of them with his revolver, he led his men forward and drove the enemy out. When at last he rejoined his battalion he was choked and sickened by bomb fumes, badly bruised by fragments of shrapnel, and could scarcely lift his arm, which was stiff with continuous bomb-throwing. Thanks to his inspiring example and splendid tenacity, an important position was held. Before joining the army he was a teacher in a Manchester Secondary school.

How Lieutenant Forshaw won the V.C.

(*From the picture by Philip Dodd. By permission of The Sphere.*)

Private Leonard Keysor, Private John Hamilton, Captain Alfred John Stout, 1st Battalion, Australian Imperial Force;

Lieutenant W. J. Symons, Lieutenant F. H. Tubb, Corporal Alexander Stewart Burton, Corporal William Dunstan, 7th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force.

The seven gallant men whose names appear above were the outstanding heroes of the Lone Pine plateau. (See pages 276-7.) It is impossible to describe the fearless gallantry with which they charged and captured the roofed-in trenches of the enemy and beat off countless attacks. Keysor did miracles of bombing, and frequently caught live grenades as they fell into his trench and flung them back on the enemy. During the fierce encounters Corporal Burton was killed and Lieutenant Tubb was wounded.

Corporal C. R. G. Bassett, New Zealand Divisional Signal Company.

You will remember how the New Zealanders, on 7th August, won the Chunuk Bair ridge and came within an ace of victory. While they struggled to maintain themselves against fierce and constant counter-attacks, Corporal Bassett in full daylight and under a heavy fire laid a telephone wire from the old position to the new one. More than once afterwards he repeated the same exploit.

Captain Percy Howard Hansen, 8/4 Battalion, the Lincolnshire Regiment.

On the 9th August the Lincolnshires captured the "Green Knoll" on Chocolate Hill (see page 281); but when the enemy set the scrub on fire they were forced to retire, leaving wounded behind them. Captain Hansen, with three or four volunteers, dashed forward several times into the burning scrub under a terrible fire, and rescued six of his wounded comrades.

Private Alfred Potts, 1/1 Berkshire Yeomanry, T.F.

On page 281 I told you how the Bucks, Berks, and Dorset Yeomanry made a heroic advance on 21st August. In the course of that attack Private Potts was wounded in the thigh, but not entirely disabled. He might have returned to his trench in safety; but he preferred to remain with a comrade who had been stricken down and was unable to move. For forty-eight hours he lay by his friend, and then fixed a shovel to the man's equipment, and, using it as a sledge, dragged the poor fellow back over 600 yards to his own lines, which he reached about half-past nine on the evening of 23rd August.

Second Lieutenant H. V. H. Throssell, 10th Light Horse Regiment, Australian Imperial Force.

This gallant officer held the end of a trench on Hill 60 (29th and 30th August) practically by himself. He killed six or seven Turks with his rifle, and was hit several times; but he refused to leave his post, and went on fighting until late in the evening, when the doctor ordered him out of the trenches. A comrade said, "I can see him now, the very best type of the best Australian manhood. . . . The man I want to follow, the man to lead me in a big fight—that is Throssell, V.C."

Second Lieutenant A. V. Smith, 1/5 Battalion East Lancashire Regiment, Territorial Force.

On 22nd December, during the trench fighting that preceded our withdrawal from Gallipoli, Lieutenant Smith, when in the act of throwing a lighted bomb, slipped on the wet ground and fell. The bomb dropped into the trench. He immediately shouted a warning to his men and jumped clear into safety; but seeing that his comrades were unable to get away, and knowing that the explosion of the bomb would kill many of them, he ran back, and without a moment's hesitation flung himself upon the bursting grenade. It exploded, and he was instantly killed; but he died knowing full well that by the sacrifice of himself he had saved the lives of many of his friends. Lieutenant Smith might have saved himself; he preferred to follow the Divine example and die for the salvation of others.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE STORM BURSTS.

In the basin of the great American river Mississippi one may go forth on a spring morning with the sun brightly shining and a blue sky overhead, yet within a single hour all may be terribly changed. The wind suddenly begins to roar, and in a few minutes a storm bursts in awful fury. Whole forests are laid low; houses, villages, and towns are swept into ruin; men, women, and children lie dead beneath the stone and timber that sheltered them; the pride and labour of years are destroyed in a moment, and terror and desolation stalk the land. The terrible blast sweeps on, but gradually abates its ruthless might, and by nightfall all is calm again. The stars gleam brightly from the storm-swept sky, and the moon shines with a message of cheer to the survivors, who with the morning light begin to repair the ravages which they have suffered, and to go about their business once more, inspired by that hope which "springs eternal in the human breast."

The Tornado of Fire which beat down upon the Russian Trenches on May 1, 1915.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

Somewhat thus may we picture the Eastern arena of battle during the year 1915. A mighty tornado suddenly burst upon the Russian armies, and the whole aspect of the war was changed. The smiling sky of early April was a fierce rack of roaring thunder clouds by the middle of May. The onward sweep of the whirlwind could not be resisted; the Russians reeled beneath the shock; hundreds of thousands of their soldiers were swept into eternity, and for months hopeless ruin stared the survivors in the face. They recoiled before the terrible blast, and fell back into the vastnesses of their land, leaving behind them all the gains of nine months' hard battling. Whole provinces were yielded; great cities fell into the hands of their foes, yet with sublime resolution they still plodded eastwards until the fury of the storm began to abate. By this time they had knitted up their strength anew, and were strong enough not merely to resist the failing onset, but to make headway against it. And so it came about that the dire gloom of early summer brightened into new hope by autumn, and Russia's foes, though they had reft from her enormous tracts of territory, knew in their hearts that they had failed. They had aimed at utterly destroying their enemy, but they had done nothing of the kind, and the new territory which they had won was likely to become a Pandora's[53] chest of troubles. By the end of the year they were strung out on a line of nine hundred miles, across the marshes and plains of Russia.

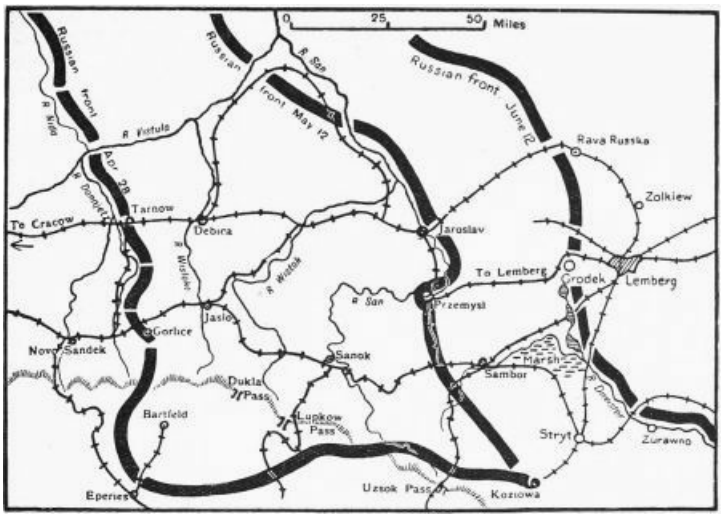
On page 125 of this volume I told you that with the fall of Przemysl on 22nd March the Allies were full of hope that before the close of the summer Cracow would fall, Silesia would be entered, the Russians would be sweeping through Hungary, and the end of the war would be in sight. But at the very moment when they were cherishing these rosy hopes, there was much weakness in the Russian armies. They were holding far too long a line for the number of men and guns which they could put into the field; their forces were not joined up, but were divided by gaps, and they had not sufficient railway lines to enable them to move troops and supplies to any point which might be threatened.

Their greatest weakness, however, was their shortage of artillery, machine guns, rifles, and ammunition. They had multitudes of men, but they could not arm them properly. Large numbers of their recruits were without rifles, and had to wait in the trenches, often under heavy fire, until they could take up the arms and ammunition of the wounded. This grave shortage of munitions was guessed at the time, but the truth was only fully known in February 1916, when the Russian Minister of War lifted the veil. He told us that prior to the outbreak of hostilities the Russians had relied on Germany for most of their war material, and for all the chemicals which enabled them to manufacture high-explosive shells. The consequence was that when the German supply was cut off, the Russians had to build munition factories, and make the necessary chemicals for themselves. It is more than likely, too, that there was serious wrongdoing in high quarters, for in March 1916 the general who was Minister of War in the early months of 1915 was brought to trial. For these reasons the Russians could not for a considerable time properly munition their armies, and this led to the great misfortune which I am about to describe.

Despite their weaknesses, the Russians were too near success for the German High Command to feel comfortable. The Russian armies in Galicia were only fifty miles from Cracow; they had won fifty miles or more of the Carpathian watershed, and in some places they commanded the southern ends of the passes. Unless they were checked, and checked speedily, they would sweep down upon the great granary of Hungary, and Germany would lose her greatest source of wheat supplies. There was no time to be lost. A gigantic effort must begin immediately, and the Russians must be cleared out of Galicia altogether.

Preparations were at once made with the utmost secrecy and dispatch, and before the Russians had more than an inkling of what was on foot, Germany was ready to strike. Never before in the history of the world have so many guns and men been so silently and swiftly brought up to an enemy's front. The secret was wonderfully kept. Train after train heavily laden with hundreds of big guns and three-quarters of all the shells that had been made in the busy munition factories of Germany during the winter was hurried to Galicia, and soon the new depots erected near the Donajetz were full to overflowing. Then followed many pontoons and much bridging material, for many rivers would have to be crossed on the line of the proposed advance. New hospital stations were established, a network of telegraph lines was erected, and great herds of cattle for feeding the armies were penned behind the German lines. Then, with the same speed and secrecy, masses of troops were hurried into Galicia, and before long there were two millions of men between Bukovina and Cracow. Not until everything was ready did Dmitrieff discover his danger.

The plan of campaign was as follows. Von Mackensen was to be provided with not less than 1,500 guns and ten army corps, and with these he was to batter his way through the Russian lines. He meant to overwhelm the Russian trenches by means of a hurricane of artillery fire, and then thrust forward his men in close order, wave after wave, and drive the broken and dazed enemy before him. He was going to do what we had done at Neuve Chapelle, but he had far better prospects of success, for the Russians had neglected to prepare second and third lines of defence, and they were woefully deficient in artillery, rifles, and ammunition. Once he could get the Russians on the run he might envelop and utterly destroy them. At any rate, he would hurl them back to the river San.



The Russian Retreat from the Donajetz to the San.

This map shows you the Russian line on 28th April. By this time Dmitrieff was aware that a mighty force of Germans was in front of him. He sent an urgent message to Ivanov, begging for two corps as reinforcements; but by some mistake the message never reached headquarters, and he was forced to meet the terrible thrust of the enemy with only his winter strength.

Von Mackensen began the action by an advance on Gorlice, and Dmitrieff was forced to weaken his centre in order to strengthen his left wing. Meanwhile the real attack was beginning farther north. Midway between Gorlice and Tarnow you will see a break on the Russian front. It was against this point that von Mackensen made his great effort. On the morning of 1st May hundreds of his big guns began to roar, and soon shells were falling fast and thick on the Russian trenches. It is said that no less than 700,000 shells were hurled against the Russian positions on that day. Nothing could live in the whirlwind of death, and speedily the Russian trenches were wiped out, and thousands of Russians with them.

Meanwhile pontoons were pushed across the river, and as soon as the bombardment ceased wave after wave of Germans in close order surged forward. By the next day they had broken through the Russian line, and the whole of the front was turned. There was nothing for it but swift retreat. Nor were the Russians able to make a stand until they were twenty miles from the position which they had occupied all winter.

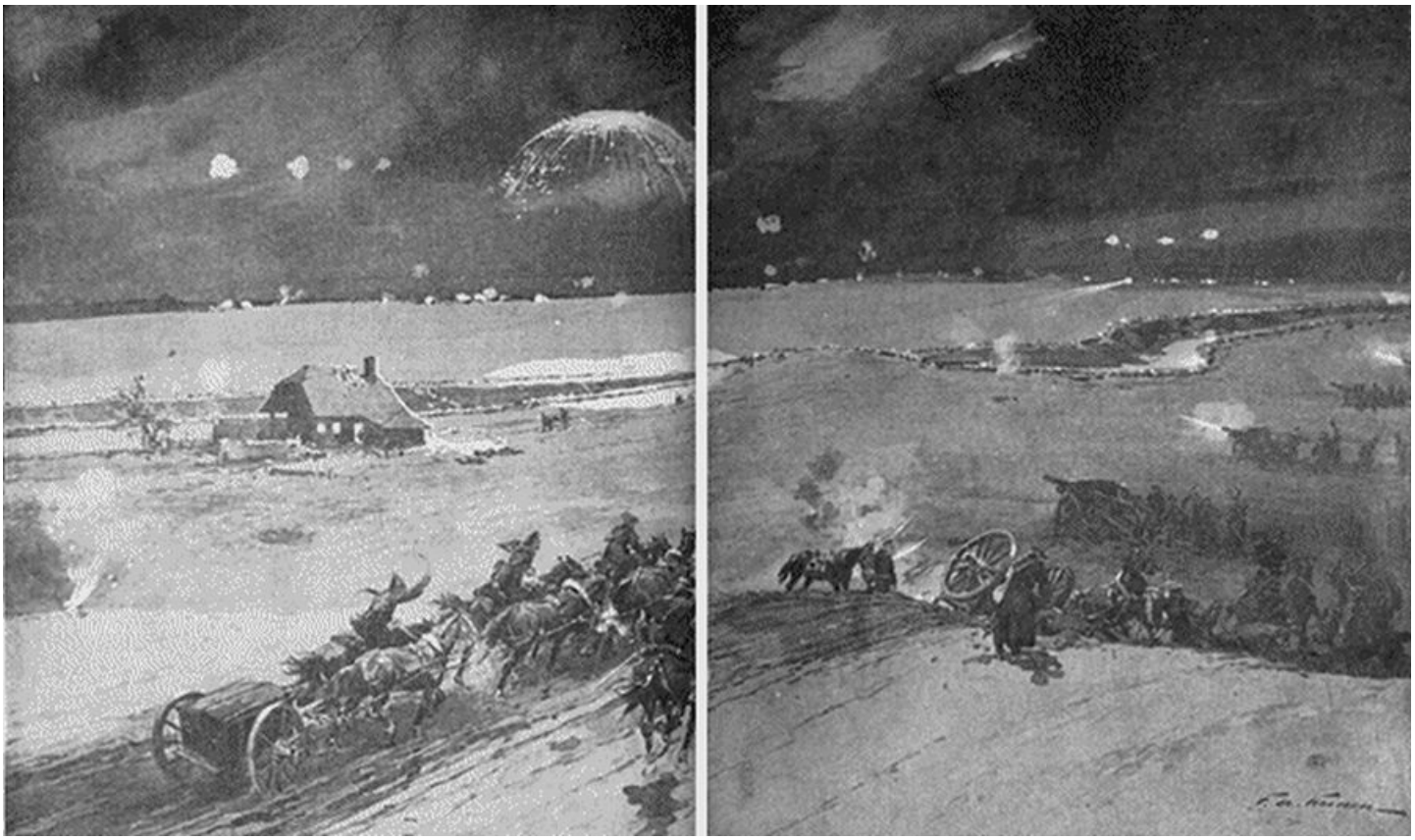
On the little river Wisloka they halted, and turned their faces to the foe. The line of the river gave them but a poor defence; but it was necessary that they should hold back the enemy if Brussilov's army, which lay along the foothills of the Carpathians, was to escape. By this time the famous Caucasian corps had been hurried up to stem the German torrent. These devoted men, though they had no heavy guns, defied the terrible artillery fire of the enemy, and at length managed to get to grips with him. They fought with supreme valour; they captured one of the German batteries, took 7,000 prisoners, and slew many thousands more. Not until they had lost 10,000 men did they perceive that no human valour could avail against Mackensen's merciless guns. For five priceless days they held out, and then were forced to retreat towards the little river Wistok.

Soon the retreat became something like a rout, and Brussilov's army was in deadly peril. For a moment it looked as if von Mackensen was about to roll up the two halves of Dmitrieff's army and achieve another Sedan. But the Russians managed to push out strong forces towards Sanok and check the advancing enemy. The five days' stand on the Wisloka and this new movement enabled Brussilov, after much desperate fighting, to withdraw his troops from the foothills, and to retreat eastwards. Many of his men who were south of the Dukla and Lupkow Passes were cut off and made prisoners.

This check enabled the Russian armies to withdraw towards the San and take up the position shown upon the map (page 293). There was now no fear of a rout, and they reached the new position in perfect order. So far all von Mackensen's efforts to roll them up had failed. He had won a great victory, it is true; in a fortnight he had pushed back Dmitrieff some eighty-five miles, and had taken large numbers of prisoners and much war material. He had loosed upon the Russians such a storm of fire as had never been known before in the history of the world, and, blasted and scorched, they had fallen back hurriedly with overwhelming numbers hard on their heels. They had suffered awful losses, but they had not been destroyed. Most armies under such terrible punishment would have broken into flying fragments, but the Russians

showed all the dourness and fortitude of their race and managed to hold together. Their rearguards freely sacrificed themselves, that the army might make good its escape. It was unbroken and undefeated at the Wistok, and the latter part of its retreat to the San was slow and orderly. The German victory was thus matched by an equally great Russian achievement. On 12th May the Russian army, after passing through an agony that seemed to promise its total destruction, lay along the San with its face still to the foe.

While the Russians were retreating from the Wistok to the San, the Grand Duke Nicholas and his staff looked the facts fairly in the face. They knew that they were hopelessly outclassed by the Germans both in guns and in number of men, and it was idle to suppose that they could resist von Mackensen's terrible thunderstorm of shell until they were equally well supplied. If they gave battle to the foe they would be utterly wiped out. As a Russian soldier put it, "We have only one weapon, the living breast of the soldier." The Grand Duke finally decided to retreat, not for leagues, but for hundreds of miles. He would draw the Germans on and on until he led them into the very heart of Russia if need be. As the Germans followed him eastwards they would leave the railways behind them and be forced to move their monster guns and heavy loads of shell over country without railways and without good roads. Thousands of square miles of territory would have to be given up to the invader, but as he pushed eastward his strength would grow less and less, and the time would be gained for Russia to supply herself with the guns and munitions which she so sorely lacked. Then, at last, her hour would strike. She would be able to turn and rend the weakened foe.



A Night Scene before the City of Warsaw. An Engagement in Front of the doomed Capital.

(***From the picture by Frédéric de Haenen. By permission of The Illustrated London News.***)

"Night fighting," says a correspondent, "is one of the splendid spectacles of war. Flashing batteries, wavering lines of musketry and machine-gun fire, make a picture painted in silver and gold on a background of black. The moon shines behind the gray clouds, shedding a soft radiance just strong enough to shape the shadows. On the western horizon flash after flash springs out of the darkness; these are the distant German guns. Nearer to us the Russian batteries are firing, each piece cutting a red flash of flame into the darkness before its muzzle. Suddenly a blazing rocket shoots up into the heavens and bursts into a shower of silver stars. As they fall slowly, the country beneath is lighted in high relief. A long arm of searchlight shoots across the heavens. A line of sparks

reveals a battalion of the advancing enemy."

Such was the Grand Duke's plan. He knew full well all that it involved. Przemysl and Lemberg, at whose capture joy bells had rung throughout all Russia, would have to be left behind. The great city of Warsaw, which had thrice defied von Hindenburg, must be abandoned. The line of the Vistula must be allowed to fall into German hands, and probably the German flag would wave above the great Polish fortresses; but if the armies could be saved, all might yet be well.

In our first volume (page 64) I told you how Napoleon, the greatest war lord that Europe has ever known, marched a great army into Russia in the year 1812, and by so doing rang his death knell. The Russians were now about to repeat the tactics of 1812, and observers in the West prophesied that the Kaiser would be led into the same trap and suffer the same fate. But we must remember that the conditions had changed in many respects since Napoleon's day. He failed chiefly because he could not obtain sufficient supplies. The country through which he advanced had been swept clear of everything but wood and water, and all the food and munitions that his armies needed had to be sent forward by horse-drawn wagons along tracks which frequently ended in morasses. When these wagons failed to reach the troops, the men starved. Nowadays every army is accompanied by engineers who can build roads and light railways very quickly, and so keep the advancing army in touch with its bases. For example, during the campaign which I am about to describe, a German general boasted that his men, who then lay within a hundred miles of Riga, were eating bread baked in Berlin the day before. He also said that his engineers could construct fifty miles of asphalted road in two days. Motor transport has largely superseded the horse, and long distances, given fair roads, can be covered very quickly. Thus you see that in our time Napoleon's great difficulty need not be fatal.

There was, however, much danger in pushing far "into the bowels of the land." As the German lines of communication grew longer and longer, supplies would take more and more time to reach the armies, and there would be more and more chances that the line might be impeded or cut. Thousands of men would have to be taken from the firing-line to hold the railways and roads along which the convoys travelled, and thus the attack would gradually lose force, and at last be unable to resist a vigorous onset by the enemy.

Now we must return to the San, where the Russian armies were lying ready to retreat when the word was given. From the map on page 293 you notice that the Russian lines bulged out in front of Przemysl. Ivanov was prepared to give up this fortress, but not until he had cleared it of everything that might be useful to the enemy. In order to gain time he fought a holding battle in the centre and struck hard on the flanks. On the morning of 15th May his right began a three days' battle, in which the Austrians were well beaten, and after losing 30,000 men had to fall back. The enemy was caught in the open and the Russians plied the bayonet with deadly effect. On the borders of Bukovina the Russian left also had a success, and the enemy was driven back as much as thirty miles. But in the centre, where Mackensen was advancing, a very different state of things prevailed. The salient round Przemysl was fiercely attacked in three places, and its sides were driven in until the neck was less than ten miles across. Attacks were also made at two places farther north. When the Russian line was pierced at these points, the Austro-Germans were able to swing southwards towards the main railway, and the days of Przemysl were numbered.

On 31st May the fortress fell, and at 3.30 on the morning of 2nd June von Mackensen entered the city. The Russians had held it a little over two months. The capture of Przemysl was a great feather in von Mackensen's cap, but it was no great prize. He found it little more than an empty shell. Guns, rolling stock, and supplies had been moved eastwards, and only a little booty fell into his hands.

Why, you ask, did not von Mackensen push on more quickly and keep the Russians on the run? You must remember that his great weapon consisted of an enormous number of heavy guns which could only be moved slowly. As soon as the great machine lumbered up, the Russians were bound to retreat, but while it was slowly advancing to a new position, they were able to hold back the enemy on the wings and send away eastward all the valuable contents of the city. The great danger was always in the centre, where von Mackensen was making his terrible thrust; on the wings the Russians were able to delay the enemy.

The fall of Przemysl compelled the Russians to give ground once more, and on 14th June their line ran as shown in the map on page 293. While the retreat was proceeding, Brussilov scored a victory. When the German right wing had

pushed through the forests from Stryj, had crossed the Dniester, and was travelling by bad country roads, Brussilov caught it at a disadvantage. A three days' battle followed, in which the enemy was flung back across the Dniester with heavy loss. Some 17 guns, 49 machine guns, and more than 15,000 prisoners were captured, including a whole company of the Prussian Guard. Successes on the wings, however, could avail nothing while von Mackensen was blasting his way through the centre.

A glance at the map shows you what a very strong position the Russians held from Grodek southward. In front of the city for fifteen miles there is a series of shallow, swampy lakes, with but few roads crossing the dry ground between them. Farther south lies a great district of marshes. The Russian lines behind the lakes and the marshes could not be forced, but they would be turned if the Germans could break through to the north of Grodek and force the line of the Dniester to the south of the city.

Von Mackensen now moved on a broad front towards Rava Russka, and as soon as his great guns began their terrific onslaught on the Russian lines, the fate of Lemberg was no longer in doubt. On 19th June he broke through, and on the same day the German right wing crossed the Dniester. Next day a fierce battle was fought for Rava Russka. Von Mackensen won it, and then swung his forces southwards in the direction of Lemberg. The Grodek position had been turned, and once more the Russians were forced to retreat. The way to Lemberg was open, and on 22nd June the Austrians entered the city. After nine months the capital of Galicia passed once more into their hands. Vienna, Buda Pest, and scores of other places in Austria-Hungary broke into loud rejoicing. Towns and villages were bedecked with flags, and joyous peals rang out from every belfry.

There was good reason why the Austrians should rejoice at the recovery of Lemberg. They had not only regained the capital of Galicia, but they were once more masters of a city that afforded them a splendid jumping-off place for carrying the war into Russia. As you see by the map, Lemberg is almost on the Russian frontier, and six lines of railway meet in it. So long as the Austrians could hold on to Lemberg, Galicia was safe. Its recapture was, therefore, a triumph for von Mackensen; but though he had reconquered a province and its capital, he had not brought the war any nearer to its end. He had neither shattered the Russian armies nor split them in twain.

It is said that one day in June, just before the fall of Lemberg, the Kaiser met von Hindenburg and his Chief of Staff, von Falkenhayn, in the castle at Posen. The Kaiser was in high spirits, and he declared that the moment had now arrived for the capture of Warsaw. He already saw himself riding into the city at the head of his troops as the conqueror and deliverer of Poland. The two generals gladly agreed with his proposal. They believed that the Western front could be held without much effort, and that with the mighty engine of artillery which they now possessed they could batter through the Russian lines, and seize the great city which had so long defied them.

After the fall of Lemberg, Warsaw formed the apex of a great salient. It could only hold out so long as the two great railway lines which meet in the city were in the hands of the Russians. The first of these routes runs north-east through Grodno, Vilna, and Dvinsk to Petrograd. The other line runs south-east through Ivangorod, Lublin, Cholm, and Rovno to Kiev.[54] Von Mackensen was already pushing northwards towards this southern line of railway, and the Russians were falling back before him. It was now the business of von Hindenburg to advance from East Prussia and capture the northern line. Once the railways were cut, Warsaw would fall. Von Falkenhayn, however, hoped to do more than merely capture the city and a few more thousand square miles of Polish ground. He hoped to make an end of the Russian armies in the salient, and this he proposed to do by carrying out a great enveloping movement. While von Mackensen was pushing on towards the southern railway, he would make a fierce thrust at the northern part of the same salient, in order to cut the Petrograd line between Warsaw and Bialystok. But this was not the whole of the plan. A German army under von Buelow had already overrun Courland,[55] and was not far from Riga. While the two thrusts were being made at the salient, this force was to hack its way south, seize Kovno and Vilna, and cut the Petrograd line far to the eastward. The Russians in the salient would thus be taken in flank and in rear; they would be squeezed between the enemy on the north and the south, and probably would be surrounded and forced to surrender. Russia would thus be crippled for many a month to come, and then the might of Germany could be flung against the Western front.

We will now follow the fortunes of the three great thrusts that were about to be made—the thrust against the southern railway, the thrust against the Petrograd railway between Warsaw and Grodno, and the thrust against the same railway

still farther east. Before the end of June five German armies, with von Mackensen in the centre, were moving steadily northwards to cut the southern railway line between Lublin and Kovel. They had now left the railways of Galicia behind them, and were crossing a country of forests, marshy plains, and bad roads. The great guns moved slowly, but the armies met with little opposition, and by 2nd July they were less than thirty miles from the railway.

Round about Krasnik they came into touch with the Russians, who held a strong position, with marshes and streams on their flanks. The army of the Archduke Joseph, to the left of von Mackensen, was heavily assailed, and during four days of attack and counter-attack was driven back with the loss of 15,000 prisoners, a very large number of machine guns, and heavy casualties in dead and wounded. For a week the German advance was checked. It began again on 16th July, when von Mackensen, who had bridged the marshy streams, was able to get his big guns working. Once more he blasted his way through, and on the 18th was within ten miles of the railway.

Now let us see what was going on in the north. On 14th July von Buelow's army in Courland began to push forward, and at the same time another army attacked the Niemen front. The great thrust against the Warsaw salient was entrusted to von Gallwitz, who now advanced against the line of the Narev. He made good progress, and the Russians fell back, fighting stubbornly. They retired across the Narev on the 20th, and three days later von Gallwitz won several crossings of the river. By means of one of these crossings he pushed forward until by 25th July, though the river line had not yet been won on a broad front, he lay within twenty miles of the Warsaw-Petrograd railway. Meanwhile the German heavy guns were battering down the outworks of the river fortresses, and the army of the Niemen was within sixty miles of Vilna.

The Warsaw salient was now in great peril. Spears had been planted against its breast in three different directions. At the apex a spearhead was but fifteen miles away; another was only ten miles from the southern railway, and a third was but twenty miles from the northern railway. The fortified line of the Narev had been broken through, and the salient was doomed. Once more the Grand Duke had to make a decision upon which hung the fate of the Russian armies. Should he try by means of the great Polish triangle of fortresses—Novo Georgievsk, Ivangorod, Brest Litovski—to hold the salient, or should he sacrifice Poland and fall back to the east? The second course was by far the more difficult. To withdraw his armies along the three railways left to him, while the spearheads were closing in hour by hour, and any day two of the three roads of escape might be lost, was a most perilous task. His wornout troops would have to hold the sides of the salient for some weeks while the main body retired. If the sides were forced in, it was more than likely that his armies would be utterly overwhelmed. It seemed easier to hold on to the fortresses, and hope that in some way or other the enemy might be checked.

The Grand Duke refused to take any risks; he chose the more difficult task. He determined to withdraw his armies from Poland altogether, and fall back eastward and ever eastward, until his forces could be properly fed with munitions and were ready to make a stand. It was a great resolve, and few commanders would have dared to make it. Probably no other army could have made such a retirement without losing heart altogether, and hopelessly breaking down.

The last days of July saw strange scenes in Warsaw. The whole city was stripped of everything that might be useful to the enemy. The great factories were dismantled, and their plant sent eastward. Gold from the banks, books and papers from the Government offices, relics and sacred pictures from the churches, bells from the towers, copper from the roofs, wire from the telegraph poles—all were piled on great wagons which followed each other in a long procession across the Vistula bridges. Half a million of the city's inhabitants streamed eastwards in carts and in hackney carriages. Only the Poles and the poorest of the Jews remained.

About 24th July the forces in front of Warsaw began to fall back into the suburbs of the city. Meanwhile along the Narev a fierce holding battle was being fought to enable the troops in the northern part of the salient to get away. Five days later Mackensen cut the southern line between Lublin and Cholm, and the sides of the triangle were fast closing in. By this time all the stores and guns were safe, and the troops in the centre were moving through the city. Every day German aeroplanes dropped bombs in the streets, and soon, as the German shells burst among the houses, great fires began to flame up in the western suburbs. At three o'clock on the morning of Thursday, 5th August, three loud explosions shook the city. The Vistula bridges had been blown up.

Three hours later German cavalry galloped in, and that evening Prince Leopold of Bavaria with his suite rode through

the streets on the way to the palace. On the eastern horizon he saw the red glow which Napoleon had seen—the flames rising from crops and villages which the Russians had fired as they fell back before the invader.

The Kaiser made no state entry into Warsaw. His exultation, however, appeared in the following telegram which he sent to his sister, the Queen of Greece: "My destructive sword has crushed the Russians. They will need six months to recover. In a short time I will announce new victories won by my brave soldiers, who have shown themselves invincible in battle against nearly the whole world. The war drama is now coming to a close."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

STORIES OF THE GREAT RETREAT.

A correspondent with the Russian armies tells us that no mind can picture the awful effect of the German bombardment which drove the Russians out of their positions on the Donajetz. Von Mackensen, as you know, had 1,500 guns, and many of them were monster howitzers. It is said that a thousand wagon-loads of shell were used in a single day—that is, twice as many as would have sufficed, under ordinary conditions, for the six months' siege of a great and well-provisioned fortress. Ten shells, each weighing 800 lbs., were hurled on every yard of the Russian front. An officer calculated that the part of the line which he was holding received no less than 10,000 shells in the course of a few hours. The wreckage was awful, and those who survived were dazed and stupefied, and unable to resist.

Where the Cossacks score: a Cavalry Skirmish in the Rear of the Russian Retreat.

(*By permission of The Graphic.*)

Another correspondent describes what he saw in Warsaw prior to the entry of the Germans. Day and night, he tells us, one heard the muffled roar as factory plant, too heavy or too deeply embedded in concrete to be moved, was blown up. Every fragment of the metal was carried eastwards. The newspapers made their last appearance with a notice that the city was to be abandoned, after which the lino-types were uprooted and the very floors carted away. Police and soldiers visited every printing works and newspaper office, taking away founts of type and dismantling presses. Hardly a ton of copper fittings was left in the city. . . . Warsaw knew no sleep over that week end. Through the streets passed endless columns of carts and lorries heavily laden, and all making for the bridges across the Vistula. You could only distinguish a wagon loaded with millions of roubles in paper money from those containing sacks of potatoes, by the soldiers who sat swinging their legs over the side. Day and night gangs of soldiers were seen stripping league after league of copper telegraph wires from their poles. Church doors flung open revealed the interiors filled with weeping, praying Poles and Russians, amongst whom passed priests in their rich vestments. Aloft in the towers the huge bronze bells had been unslung, lest they should become food for Krupp's furnaces. Not only the bells, but all records and church plate, precious vestments, and ikons,[56] were carted away into the interior. In the Church of the Holy Cross there was a vault, and in it

lay the heart of Chopin.[57] The vault was opened, and the precious relic was removed to Moscow. Wherever possible troops were sent out to garner the crops in the surrounding country. Where this was impossible the harvest was destroyed, and villages were burnt to the ground. Thousands of poor were ferried across the Vistula to begin their long tramp eastward.

It is said that after the fall of Warsaw the Kaiser was very much annoyed that the Russian army had been allowed to escape. "We have paid too dearly," he said to his generals, "for the privilege of walking along the streets of Warsaw. Our success has been gained under such a cloud of mourning that at present I cannot think of rewards. You are not little children to be dazzled with a toy while the Russian troops are at liberty. You have secured the cage, but the bird has flown. While the Russian army is free the problem of the war is unsolved."

A Russian journalist tells us that when the Kaiser seized the cage without the bird he began, like Jehu, to drive furiously in the hope of rounding up the retreating enemy. His soldiers were driven remorselessly. The advance guard was ordered not to beat the enemy but to detain him until the arrival of the main body. The leading detachments were hurried along so rapidly that they often lost touch with each other. Along the Vistula, on the bridges and at the fords, sentinels remained unchanged and without food for two or three days at a stretch. They were forgotten, and some of them died at their posts. All this time the Russians made great captures of their pursuers. So many Germans were seized that the captors scarcely knew how to deal with them. The prisoners when questioned said that they had been marching almost without pause for five days and nights. Each morning they were driven forward for three or four hours. Then they had twenty minutes' rest, and were again sent onward until midnight."

Perhaps you will be surprised to learn that a British boy fought with the Russians, and that he rose from the ranks to be an ensign.[58] His name was John Wilton, and he was a frail lad of seventeen when the Tsar gave him permission to serve in the ranks of the famous Petrograd Guards. He became a mounted scout, and took part in every battle in which his corps was engaged. He was one of the scouts who managed to get within eight miles of Cracow. After six months' service he was promoted ensign, and five months later was in command of the mounted scouts of his regiment. On one occasion he very cleverly withdrew his scouts from a position in which they had been ambushed by German cavalry, and got them away with the loss of only one man.

You have read more than once in these pages of women fighting in the Russian ranks. A story from Petrograd tells us that twelve schoolgirls from a Moscow college somehow obtained uniforms, boarded a military train at a roadside station, and thus reached the Austrian frontier. When they left the train for the march towards Lemberg the major discovered them, and ordered them back home; but they persuaded him to let them go on with the army. "We had to have our hair cropped," said one of them, Zoe Smirnoya, a girl of sixteen. "That is what I felt most. My hair was long, and I confess I cried. I've carried it ever since in my haversack."

The girls fought in many of the Galician battles. They never fell out of the ranks, and they shared all the hardships of the campaign. They took men's names, and their comrades treated them kindly. When von Mackensen's big guns swept away the Russian trenches they fell back with the army. An officer asked Zoe, "Were you afraid?" "Of course," she replied; "how could one help? When the big shells burst all around us we could not help crying out. Several of the girls were only fourteen, and in their terror they called for their mothers. For that matter, I think I blubbered too."

During the retreat one of the girls was killed by a shell. "We buried her on the morning after the battle," said Zoe. "We put her in a hurriedly-made grave, and set up a little cross marked with her name. On the morrow we were far away, and now I hardly remember the place where she was buried." Zoe was twice hit, and the second time was left out in the open, but was rescued by stretcher-bearers. She spent a month in hospital, and returned to the firing line as a corporal, wearing the war medal and the Cross of St. George.

Amongst the names that Russians hold in high honour is that of Michaelovna Ivanova, who acted as a nurse under her brother, a regimental surgeon. She insisted on going out to tend wounded even in the midst of a hail of bullets from rifles and machine guns. Her brother and the other regimental officers begged her to seek shelter, but in vain. When all the officers had fallen, the men lost heart for a moment and began to retire. At once the heroic nurse ran in amongst them, rallied them round her, and at their head rushed forward and captured a trench. Unhappily she was struck by a bullet, and died shortly afterwards.

Perhaps you will be surprised to learn that British seamen, with armoured motor cars, were sent out to lend a hand to the Russians. They did not take part in the fighting described in the former chapter, for they only left England late in the year. On 12th December, when they were in the Arctic Ocean on the way to Archangel, they established a record by singing "God save the King" farther north than any British field force on active service had ever been before. We may be quite sure that, under Commander Locker-Lampson, they fully upheld the honour and glory of the British Navy. It is also said that Japanese guns and gunners fought for Russia during the year 1915.

CHAPTER XL.

FROM STORM TO CALM.

When the Germans entered Warsaw the German High Command had to decide what the next move was to be. Should they entrench on the ground already won, and make the line of the Niemen, the Narev, and the Vistula a great bulwark of defence which would defy all Russian counter-attacks for many a day to come, or should they push their armies forward? There were good reasons why a halt should be called on the river line. The troops were weary with long months of fighting, and badly needed rest. On the other hand, the Russian armies were not crushed, but it seemed likely that another big push would destroy them altogether. With Warsaw gone, the southern railway cut, and the Narev line crumbling, it appeared almost impossible for the Russians to escape. The army in Courland was almost within striking distance of the Petrograd railway, and once this was captured in the neighbourhood of Dvinsk and Vilna, the whole Russian front would be split up into separate armies, each of which might be destroyed. Another great effort, and the Tsar would be on his knees suing for peace.

The die was now cast; the Germans decided to push forward. The Russians were in perilous plight; for on the right the Germans bade fair to envelop their armies, and in the centre von Mackensen was thrusting them back towards the Marshes of the Pripet, in which they might be caught. The Grand Duke's business was to get his armies away eastward, and to refuse at all costs to fight pitched battles. In this he succeeded, and by doing so wrote his name high on the roll of great generals.

You will remember that the bridges across the Vistula at Warsaw had been blown up. Prince Leopold now collected a number of the thousand-ton barges which ply on the river, and constructed a floating bridge, across which he carried a railway line. By 10th August he began to advance; but he found himself constantly held up by Russian attacks, and he made but slow progress. By 16th August von Gallwitz was across the Petrograd line, and von Mackensen was within twenty miles of Brest Litovski. The Russians had already fallen back, and were lying in front of the railway from Ossowietz through Bialystok to Brest. They were, however, still holding out in front of the old city and fortress of Kovno.

Glance at the position of Kovno. You see (page 311) that it stands on the Niemen, at the point where the course of the river swings to the south. Should Kovno fall, the other fortresses on the Niemen would be in great peril, and the enemy would have a direct route to Vilna, where they would be in the rear of the Russians. On the day that Warsaw fell, the Germans were near enough to Kovno to begin the bombardment. For twelve days they rained shells upon the forts, while the infantry fought for the outworks. By this time the city had been stripped, and its valuable contents had been sent eastwards. Nevertheless it had to be held while arrangements were made for the Russian line to retire. The gunners in Kovno stuck to their posts for twelve desperate days, and all the time the big siege howitzers of the enemy played havoc among them. Nevertheless, the Russians held on, and, what is more, continued to work their guns.

By Sunday, 15th August, the forts were in ruins, and two days later the heroic garrison yielded. The Germans claimed 20,000 prisoners and over 200 guns. The Russians, however, were fully prepared for this loss. The holding of Kovno was a forlorn hope, and the men and guns in it were sacrificed to gain time.

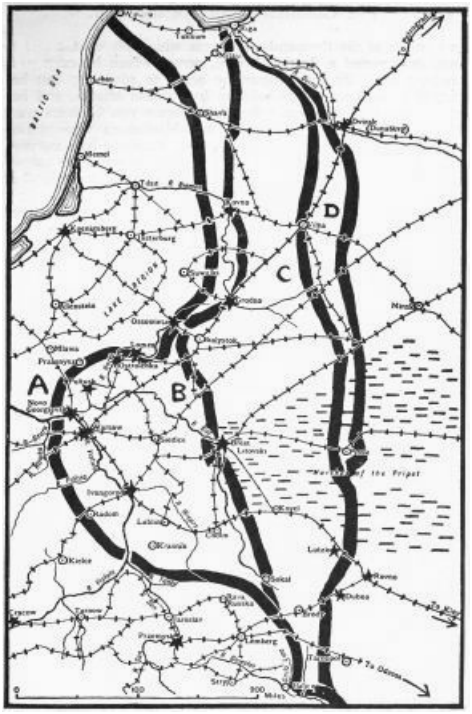
The fall of Kovno meant that the Russian right must now retire, and a day later it was clear that the centre must retire too. The Germans had cut the railway to the north of Brest, and were now attacking the western forts of the stronghold. Next day Novo Georgievsk, which had been besieged for about three weeks and was now a huddle of ruins, had to yield, and 20,000 of the garrison, along with 700 guns, most of which had been rendered useless, fell into the hands of the Germans. Shortly before the surrender, a daring Russian aviator was entrusted with the maps and secret papers of the fortress. He ascended, and though furiously assailed by the anti-aircraft guns of the enemy, managed to fly clear and carry the precious documents into safety.

Two of the three great fortresses forming the Polish triangle had now gone; Brest alone remained, and its doom was already sealed. While the Russians were preparing for a further retirement, their right, which rested on the Baltic Sea, was threatened with a new danger. On Sunday, 10th August, a German fleet tried to force a way into the Gulf of Riga; it was beaten off, but the attempt was renewed on the 15th and on the 16th. During a thick fog the Germans got into the Gulf on the 16th, and two days later tried to land troops at an unfortified port on the road to Petrograd. Four very large flat-bottomed barges, filled with troops, attempted to get ashore on the 20th; but the Russian light craft swooped down upon

them, and captured or destroyed the whole of the landing force. Meanwhile a naval battle was going on throughout the length of the Gulf. The Russians lost an old gunboat, while the Germans had eight destroyers and two cruisers either sunk or put out of action, and a submarine driven ashore. On the 21st the Germans left the Gulf. Their attempt to outflank the Russian right had failed.

During the previous twenty days the Germans in the centre had pushed forward no less than one hundred miles; but the Russian armies had eluded them, and no crushing battle had taken place. The Germans had not yet given up all hope of overwhelming the Russians, but for the time being they were anxious to secure a strong line on which they might maintain themselves during the coming winter. They had also a new campaign in view. Already they were thinking of forcing a way through the Balkans to Constantinople, so as to open a road to the east and fling such forces into Gallipoli as would drive the British and French into the sea.

Now we must return to the doomed fortress of Brest. On the day that the German warships left the Gulf of Riga, Prince Leopold was close to the western walls of the fortress, while von Mackensen, east of the Bug, was threatening to take the forts from the rear. On 25th August Brest Litovski fell. It had held out long enough to enable the Russians to get away with the guns and supplies, and only a little wheat was left behind. Soon after the Germans entered the place a mine exploded and destroyed a thousand of their troops.



Map illustrating the various Stages of the Russian Retreat.

A, after the fall of Lemberg; B, after the fall of Warsaw; C, after the fall of Grodno; D, after the fall of Vilna.

You will see from the map on page 311 that the Russians, who had been holding the front around Brest, could use two railways to help them in their retreat. Most of them, however, had to retire on foot through the Marshes of the Pripet. Prince Leopold, in following them up, had to fight his way through the great forest region which lies to the north of Brest. It is said that in the recesses of this forest the European bison, elsewhere extinct, is still found. In the woods on the edges of the marshes the Russian rearguards fought fierce delaying actions, while their comrades trudged, unhasting but unresting, eastwards. Happily, the summer had been fairly dry, and it was possible for large numbers of men and guns to cross the swamps. By the end of August the Germans were thirty miles east of Brest, and were well within the marshy region.

Meanwhile, the chief interest of the struggle lay in the north. On 28th August von Buelow began his great attack on the line of the Dvina. In all the valley of that river, from Dvinsk to Riga, there is no crossing save at the little town of

Friedrichstadt, some fifty miles from the coast. Below the town great stretches of marshy forest line the left bank of the stream, and no road follows its course on that side. On the other side the ground is harder, and along the line of the river runs the main Riga-Vilna Railway. The Russians held the left bank of the river, and von Buelow urged his men to the assault in the following words: "After the brilliant campaign on the Russian front, and the occupation of many cities and fortresses, you must make one more effort to force the Dvina and seize Riga. There you will rest during the autumn and winter, in order to march on Petrograd in the spring." On the morning of 2nd September the Russians were forced back for ten miles from the left bank of the river; but the bridgehead at Friedrichstadt still held out.

With the close of August the worst was over, and the turn of the tide had come. The tornado had blown itself out, the skies were clearing, and those who had been hurled back by the mighty blast were able to keep their feet and hold their own once more. The Russian line was nearly straight; the wings were hard pressed, but they could still resist; and the centre was too far within the Pripet marshes for easy capture. The struggle for dear life was over. Thenceforward the Russians were masters of their fate. They could retreat when and where they chose into the limitless expanses of their land. If they halted to fight a battle, it was because they saw some advantage to be gained, not because they were compelled to do so.

The Tsar and Tsarevitch with the Russian Army.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

The Tsarevitch, the eldest son of the Tsar, is the Grand Duke Alexis, who was born on August 12, 1904. He was therefore eleven years old when, on September 5, 1915, his father took command of the Russian armies. Both father and son are seen wearing the uniform of the Caucasian Cossacks.

With the passing of all immediate danger, confidence surged up in their breasts, and at this moment the Tsar placed himself at the head of his soldiers. "We shall," he said, "fulfil our sacred duty to defend our country to the last." The Grand Duke Nicholas, who had so long borne the heat and burden of the day, gladly yielded place to his sovereign. Twice before in the history of Russia had a Tsar come forward to lead his armies in the day of dire peril. What Peter[59]

and Alexander I.[60] had done, Nicholas II. now did. It was a sign to the whole Russian people that the war was to be waged to a triumphant end. The Germans were prepared to make a separate peace with Russia; they believed her to be crushed and broken and war-weary. Now came the reply: the Tsar, the head and front of Russia both in Church and in State, followed the example of his forefathers in the hour of trial and took chief command.

Look carefully at the large map on page 311, and find Grodno, on the Niemen. At the end of August the Russians were holding a salient round this fortress. September was but three days old when Grodno fell, and the Russians had to retire in order to avoid being surrounded. They had two railways to help them in their retreat—the main line to Petrograd and a line connecting with the Riga-Vilna-Rovno Railway. At all costs the enemy must be held back from these railways until the guns, troops, and stores in and around Grodno could be got away. Rearguards behind Grodno and a screen of troops farther north, where the Germans had to cross a district of lakes and forests, fought gallantly, and by 12th September the salient was clear. The Germans claimed to have captured 4,000 prisoners; but even if they did so, the price was not too high to pay for the safety of the army corps that escaped.

Now we must turn to Vilna, against which von Hindenburg had prepared a great thrust. On 2nd September a ten days' struggle began fifteen miles to the north-west of the city. By sheer weight of artillery the trenches of the Russians were carried, and a gas attack gave the Germans an important pass between a group of lakes which formed the main defence of the fortress on their left. Other forces were pushing up from the south, and retreat was again necessary. By the 13th it was clear that Vilna must fall. The Germans had cut the Petrograd railway only twenty miles from the city.

The Coming of the Big Guns that mean Victory.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

Russian artillery being hauled through the snow to the battlefield by long teams of horses. By September 1915 the Russians had managed to provide themselves with sufficient artillery and ammunition to meet the Germans on equal terms.

The forces in front of Vilna had only one good railway line by which they could retire eastward, and only one good road—a causeway running across the marshes towards Minsk. On 15th September it was discovered that some 40,000 German cavalry, with 140 guns, were sweeping round so as to cut the railway and capture the causeway. Here was a terrible danger. If the cavalry could hold the railway and the causeway, the Russians in the Vilna salient would be surrounded, and nothing could save them. Not an hour must be lost. Vilna was abandoned on 18th September, and the troops were hurried eastwards by means of the road and railway. Rearguards on the right fought desperate holding battles, but on the 20th the gap through which the Russians were retreating had shrunk to little more than fifty miles. The Minsk railway was in danger; only the causeway, densely packed with guns, wagons, convoys, ambulances, and troops, was clear.

Suddenly, in this moment of peril, the German thrust weakened. While the cavalry were sweeping round to the rear, the artillery and infantry to the west of the fortress made no push. Owing to the bad and crowded roads they could only proceed very slowly, and thus the Russians were afforded what they most needed—time. No longer were they without arms and ammunition. The Russian factories had worked miracles, and now the Tsar's armies were able to meet the enemy on equal terms. On the evening of 20th September, when the retreating Russians were thirty miles east of Vilna, their right wing fell upon the German cavalry and drove them back with the bayonet. For some days there was heavy fighting, but by the end of the month the Russian line was straight again. Once more the Germans had been foiled.

Meanwhile the army of Brest, which had never been in serious danger, had been pursued, but the pursuers were now firmly held. On the Dvina von Buelow had made but little progress, while in the south Ivanov had held his ground, and had even won victories against the German right. He had overthrown a force moving against Tarnopol and another which was advancing further south, and had won one of the most successful of the smaller battles. Of course the Germans had made counter-attacks upon him, but they had been unsuccessful, and Ivanov had advanced in some places as much as twenty miles. His captures at the end of the month amounted to 80,000 men and many guns.

Thus the end of September saw the Germans held in check. They had won Vilna and Grodno, but they had failed to cut off the troops in these salients, and had not made good the line of the Dvina. Winter was almost upon them, yet they had not found a suitable position for winter quarters. Meanwhile the Russians were growing in strength every day.

During the terrible months from May till September the nation had suffered greatly, and misfortune had been heaped on misfortune. The spectacle of troops falling back day by day, the endless stream of wounded arriving at the bases, the highroads thronged with homeless peasants, and the seeming hopeless struggle would have broken down the spirit of most nations and brought about revolution; but in Russia, though there was some unrest, there was no revolution. Even the peasants who had lost their all, and had not where to lay their heads, bore their sufferings without complaint. A correspondent who talked with some of them tells us they felt that they were playing their part in defeating the hated enemy, as their fathers had done before them. They hoped for an early winter in order that their enemy might perish of cold and starvation, and they thought nothing of the sufferings that the winter would bring to them and their children. "I have heard them say again and again: 'We must win now, regardless of the cost and the time it takes. The sacrifices we have suffered are too great for us to hesitate at anything short of victory.'"

When the German cavalry were flung back from the rear of Vilna, the retreating Russians once more breathed freely. The end of the summer campaign had come, and still the Germans had delivered no smashing blow. During the month of October von Hindenburg strove fiercely to carry the line of the Dvina, in order to secure Dvinsk and Riga as winter quarters. The Russian right lay on the sea, and behind the river stretched a wilderness of marsh and lake almost impassable for troops and big guns. Riga and the line of the river south of it were defended by great stretches of bogland, and the patches of dry ground were cut up by many sluggish streams flowing in reedy channels. General Ruzsky, who was holding Dvinsk, had learned the lesson of Verdun and pushed out his defences far from the city. In the course of a big attack on 26th September the Germans came within eight miles of the fortress, but they could approach no nearer. An attempt to reach Riga by the coast road was foiled by the guns of the Russian fleet.

On 3rd October von Hindenburg began a new series of thrusts against the line of the river, but made very little progress, and when the Russian counter-attacks began the German losses were very great. Before long 50,000 of the enemy had fallen, and their goal was as far off as ever. Von Hindenburg now saw that he could not succeed against Dvinsk, and began a determined effort to capture Riga. He managed to win a marshy island in one of the arms of the river; but here he was stayed, and soon his troops were blown off the island. He was now fighting an army that was as strong as his own and could return shell for shell and shot for shot. By the end of October all his efforts against Dvinsk and Riga had come to nothing, and he was forced to dig in for the winter in a most inhospitable land. The snows were beginning to fall, bitter north winds were sweeping over the land, and no great movement was possible until the spring.

So the tragic year came to an end. The Russians had passed through their fiery ordeal, and had emerged with a new courage and a new hope. On the map the Germans looked like victors, but actually they had failed. The Russian armies were intact; the Germans could not push on in the wilderness, and at the close of the year they lay waiting the uncertain future amidst dismal swamps and meres.

CHAPTER XLI.

MIDSUMMER ON THE WESTERN FRONT.

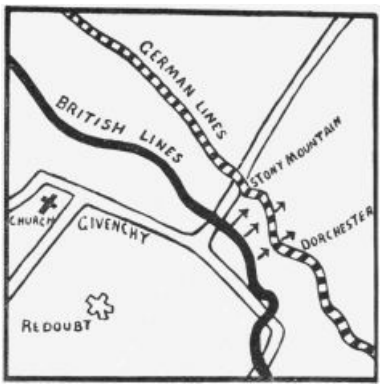
Three days after the Battle of Festubert[61] came to an end, another European nation flung itself into the welter of strife. Italy declared war on Austria. The story of why she did so, and how she fared during the year 1915, will be told in our next volume. We may safely postpone an account of the Italian campaign, for, like our great adventure in Gallipoli, it was a side-show. Nevertheless it employed no less than twelve Austrian army corps, and thus largely reduced the forces which the enemy could employ in France and Flanders and the Eastern theatre of war.

Italy set herself the very difficult task of conquering the Trentino,[62] and in order to do so had to force the barrier of the Alps. For six months she fought with great firmness and much sacrifice amidst lofty snowclad mountains, and battered unceasingly at the great Austrian fortresses established amongst them. By the end of the year her soldiers had occupied a rich and well-populated portion of what the Italians call "Unredeemed Italy," had secured their northern flank, and had firmly established themselves along the line of the river Isonzo.[63] They had also captured 30,000 of the enemy, 5 guns, 65 Maxim guns, thousands of rifles, and a great deal of other war material, and were in a favourable position for an advance in the spring. Should this advance be successful, Austria would lose her two great seaports, and, except along the coast of Dalmatia,[64] would be cut off from the sea.

July was but nine days old when good news arrived from South Africa. The Union forces under General Botha[65] had conquered German South-West Africa,[66] and the colony had passed into British hands. The story can wait until our next volume, in which we shall survey the progress of our arms not only in "German South-West," as South Africans call it, but in the Cameroons and in German East Africa as well. From the first the Germans knew that their overseas possessions were doomed. Powerless on the ocean, they were utterly cut off from their colonies. Their overseas forces were fighting, as it were, in water-tight compartments, without hope of reinforcements or supplies from the Fatherland.

We will now return to the Western front, and learn something of what happened in North France between the close of the Battle of Festubert and the great British attack of September. At home people believed that a big push would be made in the West during the summer months; but to their astonishment the Allies did not attempt an offensive on a large scale. The Russians, as you know, were then passing through a fiery ordeal; and their newspapers constantly asked why the Allies did not attack the enemy, and draw off from Russia some of the fury of the German onset. The fact was that the Allies were not in a condition to assault the German lines with any great hope of success. Though they now outnumbered the Germans on the Western front, they were still deficient in machine guns, heavy artillery, and stores of shell. The battles of Festubert and of the Artois had taught them that to hurl infantry against trenches which had not been previously wrecked by artillery fire was simply to send men to their death. They had also learned that piercing the enemy's line on a narrow front served no useful purpose. Driving tiny wedges into the German position was not only costly, but a waste of time. A big rent must be made, in order that cavalry might be launched through the breach against the lines of communication. For such an operation they had not as yet sufficient artillery, so they decided—

> "'Tis better that the enemy seek us:
> So shall he waste his means, weary his soldiers,
> Doing himself offence; whilst we, lying still,
> Are full of rest, defence, and nimbleness."[67]



The war on the Western front during the months of June, July, and August was little more than the old "nibbling." All along the line there were many small attacks followed by small counter-attacks, and in some places fierce little struggles for strongholds. Trenches were lost and won almost daily, but a week's advance could be measured by yards. In these affairs we gained little ground, but we lost many men. I cannot attempt to describe all the minor engagements of the summer months, but I must say something about the fighting around Givenchy in the middle of June.

In front of the 7th British Division there was an enemy stronghold known to our troops as "Stony Mountain," and from it to another fortified point, known as "Dorchester," ran two lines of German trenches. The 7th Division was ordered to make a frontal attack on "Stony Mountain," and the 1st Canadian (Ontario) Battalion at the same time was to carry the two lines of trenches.

At three o'clock on the afternoon of 15th June the Ontario regiment was brought up to the British trenches opposite to the position to be attacked, and the men began to beguile the hours of waiting by singing popular songs. The attack was timed to commence at six in the evening, and at a quarter to six two 18-pounder guns in the Canadian trenches opened fire on the German position. One of the guns swept away the German wire, and knocked out two enemy Maxims; but the other was wrecked by a shell. Bullets from the German trenches rained down upon the guns, tearing and twisting their shields as though they had been made of paper.

The Canadians in a Hot Corner.

(*By permission of The Graphic.*)

Lieutenant Campbell hoisted his gun on to the broad back of his companion (Private Vincent) and poured a stream of bullets upon the enemy.

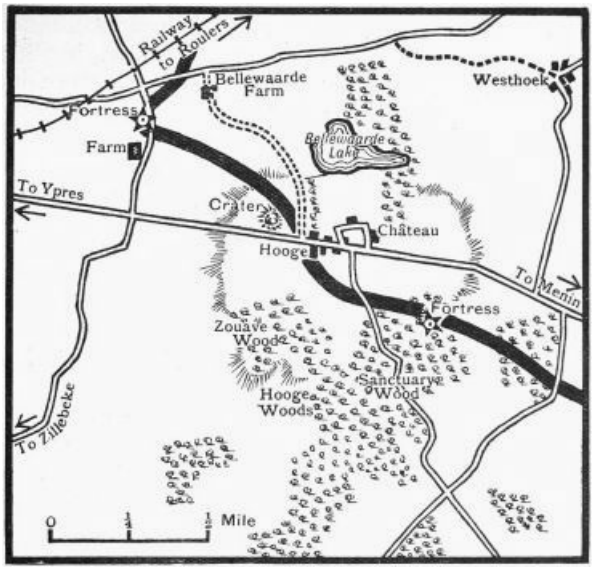
Just before six, Canadian sappers exploded a mine on their front, and several of their own bombers were killed or wounded by the force of the explosion. Immediately the leading company dashed forward through the smoke and flying dirt, and though met by a withering flank fire from "Stony Mountain," rushed the German front trench, and gained possession of "Dorchester." Those, however, who attacked on the "Stony Mountain" side were stopped by the fire of that fort, and all were killed or wounded. Bombing parties and sappers now went forward, but almost all of them were shot down. A sapper who reached the trench set out alone to bomb his way along it. He did not retire until he had flung his last bomb, and then he had no less than ten wounds in his body.

The second company closely followed on the heels of those who had won "Dorchester," and the two companies charged towards the German second-line trench, which was carried. Many of the Huns who put up a fight were bayoneted, and some prisoners were taken. Meanwhile the third company, after losing heavily in its advance, was busy putting the captured first-line trench into a state of defence. Two machine guns were hurried forward, but the entire crew of one of them was killed or wounded before the trench was reached. The crew of the other gun, now reduced to two men, Lieutenant Campbell and Private Vincent, a lumber-jack from Bracebridge, gained the position, and Lieutenant Campbell hoisted his gun on to the broad back of his companion, and poured a stream of bullets upon the enemy. Later in the day, when the Canadians were obliged to retire, Lieutenant Campbell fell wounded, but Private Vincent dragged the gun away into safety. Lieutenant Campbell crawled into the Canadian trench a dying man. "And no man died that night with more glory; yet many died, and there was much glory."

The supply of bombs ran short, and Private Smith of Southampton, Ontario, volunteered to go forward with a fresh supply. Festooned with bombs, he crawled forward on all fours, and twice handed over his load to his friends. So hot was the fire that he had to toss the bombs[68] into the trench. His clothes were shot to rags, but he escaped unwounded. But all Private Smith's efforts to supply the bombers were unavailing. Soon all the grenades were gone, and meanwhile the machine guns and rifles on "Stony Mountain" were rapidly thinning the Canadian ranks. "One unknown wounded man was seen standing on the parapet of the German front-line trench. He had thrown every bomb he carried, and, weeping with rage, continued to hurl bricks and stones at the advancing enemy till his end came."

The British division had been held up on the left, and the enemy was now gathering in strength. The unsupported Canadians were therefore forced to retire, and give up the ground which they had gained. During the retirement many men fell, and some fine deeds of bravery were done. Private Gledhill of Ben Miller, near Goderich, Ontario, though hurled out of the trench by a bomb explosion which broke his rifle but did not injure him, found another rifle, and continued to fire while his comrades retired and he was almost alone. As he crawled towards his own lines he fell over a wounded lieutenant, and offered to carry him back. "Thanks, no," said the lieutenant; "I can crawl." "Will you take me?" asked a man with a leg missing, who lay hard by. "Sure," replied the gallant fellow, and amidst a tempest of fire he dragged the wounded man into safety. Out of twenty-three officers who went into battle that day only three were alive and untouched at nightfall. The fort on "Stony Mountain" could not be captured, and all the valour and perseverance of the Canadians went for nothing.

The account which you have just read gives you a very fair idea of the midsummer fighting on the Western front. Before I turn to the great offensive of September, let me describe briefly the struggle which took place at Hooge towards the end of July and the beginning of August. It had no real importance; it was only an incident in the constant tug of war that went on along the opposing lines. Hooge is a hamlet on the Ypres-Menin road, about two miles east of the city. On the 16th of June we had attacked the enemy's line, and had captured 1,000 yards of German front trenches, a part of the line, and 150 prisoners. During the fighting the Liverpool Scottish did specially fine work.



Plan of the Hooge Area.

The black line shows German position on morning of July 30, 1915.

This map shows you the scene of the struggle which I am about to describe. Notice the chateau and the lake to the north: both were in the hands of the Germans, who had pushed their front to the west and south-west of the lake, and had thus made an ugly sag in our line. Just north of the Hooge-Menin road there is a big hollow marked "Crater" on the map. About 3 a.m. on the morning of Friday, 30th July, the Germans violently attacked our trenches to the east of the Crater. They were held by men of the New Army. The Germans had already sapped up close to our line, and now they launched a torrent of liquid fire against us. At the same time big guns on the high ground to the north-east and south-west bombarded our lines, trench mortars joined in, and bombers stormed our trenches with grenades. This terrible onset of fire, flame, and bombs could not be resisted, and the Germans carried the first line and the Crater. Our men fell back to the second line, which ran north-west from the corner of Zouave Wood. Then the enemy began to shell the second line, and Zouave Wood became a death-trap. You will read on a later page how Second Lieutenant Sidney Woodroffe won the Victoria Cross by holding his trenches in Zouave Wood to the last.

A counter-attack was made in the afternoon, but it failed. Our men were mown down as soon as they advanced into the open. The Rifle Brigade had been entrusted with the task; it pushed forward to certain death with wonderful steadiness, but was almost wiped out. During this unsuccessful attack we lost 2,000 men. No further attempt was made for ten days, during which time our gunners shelled the enemy's lines, and stopped the fire of their artillery. So successful was the bombardment that it put new heart into our men, and they were quite ready for the next act of the drama, which was timed for Monday, 9th August. Just before dawn on that day the 16th and 18th Brigades advanced from the west and from the south against the Crater. They had to push uphill in black darkness for 500 yards. The 2nd York and Lancaster issued from Zouave Wood with the 2nd Durham Light Infantry on their right. The two battalions made a race of it, and the Durhams won. Over the horrible No Man's Land, strewn with barbed-wire entanglements and the bodies of the unburied dead, the infantry swept on, and in a few minutes were busy with the bayonet and bomb amongst the sorely shaken Germans. Many of them were sheltering in their dug-outs, which were very large and deep. The two hundred who held the Crater were killed to a man.

A correspondent tells us that, on scrambling over the enemy's parapet, a sergeant lost his balance and fell on his back to the bottom of the trench, close to a mortar in charge of a sentry. Immediately the sentry rushed at him with a bomb poised in his hand. With a great effort the sergeant slewed round and dealt his opponent a kick in the ribs which sent him spinning against the parapet, where he was dealt with by a private who had followed hard on the heels of his sergeant.

When the trenches were cleared the infantry swept on to the chateau, and captured the ruins of the stables, where they dug in. The attack had been very successful, and our losses were very few, because of the searching bombardment which had preceded the attack. Correspondents describe the high spirits of our men on that day. It is said that many of the less

seriously wounded failed to report themselves, because they did not wish to miss the rest of the fighting.

At half-past nine that night German shells began to fall fast and thick on our new positions, and our men dropped fast. We lost some of our trenches north of Sanctuary Wood, and had to retire to a little way in front of the Crater. The enemy had made a curtain of fire behind our lines, and reliefs could only be brought up at great loss. The battalion which had dug in near the stables was ordered to withdraw; but four officers and 200 men did not receive the order, and hung on until relieved late the next morning. A small party of Durham Light Infantry, under Corporal Smith, held out even longer, and only retired when fresh troops took over their position.

Gradually the fighting died away. We had recovered our former position, and what is more, we had proved that, given proper artillery "preparation," the strongest German lines could be pierced. The New Army won its spurs at Hooge, but at a very heavy cost.

The Liverpool Scottish and other Regiments charging at Hooge.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)
This picture shows the British charge at Hooge (June 16, 1915) which won the whole of the enemy's first-line trenches on a front of a thousand yards and parts of his second line. By noon on the day of this charge over a hundred and fifty prisoners had been passed to our rear. (See page 327.)

The following officers and men were awarded the Victoria Cross for deeds of remarkable courage during the period between the Battle of Festubert and the end of the first week in August:—

Private William Mariner, 2nd Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps.

During a violent thunderstorm on the night of May 22, 1915, Private Mariner left his trench at a place just south of Cuinchy, for the purpose of destroying an enemy machine gun that was annoying our men. He took with him a supply of bombs, and just before starting out on his perilous mission, asked his sergeant to open fire on the enemy's trenches as soon as he had thrown his bombs. This meant that he was prepared to sacrifice himself, for he was bound to be in the line of fire from his own trench, and could only escape death or wounding by a miracle. He crept out into "No Man's Land," wormed his way through the German wire entanglements, and reached the emplacement of the gun. Climbing on to the top of the parapet, he hurled a bomb on to the roof of the emplacement. When the roar of the explosion subsided, he heard the noise of men running away. About a quarter of an hour later he heard the enemy returning. At once he climbed

up on the other side of the emplacement, and with his left hand threw another bomb. Then he lay flat, while the Germans fired round after round on the wire entanglement behind him. For more than an hour he lay unseen and unheard. If the sergeant had opened fire as Mariner had wished, nothing could have saved him. Fortunately his own people did not pull a trigger, and he was able to crawl back to his trench unharmed. He had been out all alone for an hour and a half.

Lance-Corporal Leonard James Keyworth, 24th Battalion, London Regiment (T.F.).

At Givenchy, on the night of May 25-26, 1915, the 24th Battalion made a successful assault on the German trenches, and strove to follow up their success by a bomb attack, during which fifty-five men out of the seventy-five who took part in it were either killed or wounded. During this very fierce encounter Lance-Corporal Keyworth, a Lincoln man, stood fully exposed for two hours on the top of an enemy's parapet, and threw about one hundred and fifty bombs amongst the Germans, who were only a few yards away. In a letter to his sister Lance-Corporal Keyworth thus describes the incident: "I was with the bombing party, and was the only one to come through without a scratch. I went along a ridge on my stomach, and threw bombs into the German trench, my distance being about fifteen yards. Men were shot down by my side. Still I continued, and came out safe. I was at once recommended for a decoration. It is supposed to be for bravery, but I cannot understand where it came in. I only did my duty; but how I came out God only knows." Unhappily this gallant lad, who was only twenty-two when he won the Victoria Cross, died of wounds six months later.

Lance-Corporal William Angus, 8th (Lanark) Battalion, Highland Light Infantry (T.F.).

On the night of 11th June Lieutenant Martin of the Highland Light Infantry went out with a bombing party to wreck a German sap. Suddenly a mine was exploded by the enemy, and the lieutenant fell stunned and bleeding at the foot of the enemy's parapet, only a few feet away from the foe. He was half buried, but after a night of horror managed to extricate himself from the heap of earth that covered him. As he struggled to get free, his own men saw him through their periscopes and made signs to him. He called aloud to them for water, and the Germans hearing him, flung a bomb at him. Happily it was unlighted. Our men now determined that their fallen officer should not be murdered. The best shots lined the parapet, and neither side dared lift a head. At last a German sniper shot the wounded officer in the side, and he feigned death so well that his men began to prepare a cross for his grave. About three o'clock, however, he was seen to move, and a Canadian officer proposed that, under a hot covering fire, a man should rush out with a lasso and haul him in.

Lieutenant Martin belonged to Carluke, a village in the Clyde valley; and there was another Carluke man watching him—Corporal Angus, who had just returned to the front fresh from an hospital bed in Rouen, where his leg, badly smashed at Festubert, had healed. He now went up to his officer and said, "Let me go, sir." He was assured that he would be going to certain death; but he replied, "Well, sir, *sooner or later, what does it matter*?" So saying, he crawled out, and wormed his way along the torn and heaped ground, amidst fragments of burst shells, broken wire, and the stark, still bodies of the slain, and in half an hour reached the officer, and put a flask of brandy to his lips. The two men lay side by side for a space, gathering strength for the return journey.

Suddenly the Germans lobbed a bomb over the parapet, and a cloud of smoke and dust arose, under cover of which Angus, half carrying, half dragging the wounded man, was seen staggering forward. When the smoke drifted away the German rifles cracked viciously, and more than a dozen bombs were hurled at him. Angus was literally riddled with wounds. "I could see the bombs coming," he said later. "I actually watched the one that cost me my left eye. I thought both were blown out in that awful, burning flash, so fearful was the pain in my face." The sight of the two wounded men being mercilessly pelted by the enemy aroused the fiercest indignation in the British trench, and only with the greatest difficulty were the men restrained from dashing out against the cowardly foe. A hurricane fire broke out on both sides, and in the midst of it the two men rolled into the Scottish trench.

When the heroic collier lad was sufficiently recovered to present himself at Buckingham Palace, and the King pinned the coveted cross on his breast, his Majesty murmured, "Forty wounds!" "Yes, your Majesty," responded Angus; "but *only fifteen of them serious*!" The gallant fellow's father was called into the presence of the King, who said, "Your son has won his decoration nobly. It is almost a miracle he is spared to you, and I sincerely hope he may fully recover and live long to enjoy it. May you, too, be long spared to feel pride in him and his achievement."

On a Saturday afternoon, a few days later, the village of Carluke, crowded with dwellers from all parts of the Clyde valley, made holiday, and prepared to welcome the hero who had dared death a hundred times to save the life of a friend. Flags waved, bands played, troops presented arms, and amidst loud cheering Angus limped through the streets

with the man whom he had saved supporting him on the one side, and Lord Newlands on the other. Thus did he receive the deep gratitude and the handsome gifts of his neighbours and friends, and return home to his moorland cottage to nurse his "honourable" wounds. He was the first Scottish Territorial to win the Victoria Cross.

Rushing a British Gun through the deserted streets of Ypres to a hard-pressed position on the Salient.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)
This picture illustrates the splendid dash with which the Horse Artillery bring up their guns to points of danger. It also shows the ruined condition of the beautiful old city of Ypres.

Lieutenant Frederick William Campbell, 1st Canadian Battalion.

I have already mentioned the heroism of Lieutenant Campbell and Private Vincent during the Canadian attack on the German trenches near Stony Mountain. When war broke out, Lieutenant Campbell was farming at Mount Forest, Ontario; but he was so eager to "do his bit" that he sold one of his farms, his horses, and his stock, and forthwith joined the army. He very soon made his mark as a gallant soldier, and became very popular with his men. At the Battle of Ypres he went fearlessly to and fro, smiling and urging on his comrades, with death nudging his elbow. "How is it, Mr. Campbell, this morning?" asked one of his men; and his cheery reply was, "Oh, fine—we are going to have a scrap to-day." You will remember that at Givenchy, on 15th June, he took two machine guns over the parapet, and arrived at the German first line with one gun, which he hoisted on the back of Private Vincent, and continued to fire in spite of the hail of bullets and bombs which fell around him. When the supply of bombs ran out, Lieutenant Campbell advanced still further with his gun, and in an exposed position fired about one thousand rounds and held back the enemy's counter-attack. Later on he was wounded, and died in hospital at Boulogne. The Victoria Cross, which was awarded after his death, became the proud and cherished possession of his bereaved wife and three young children.

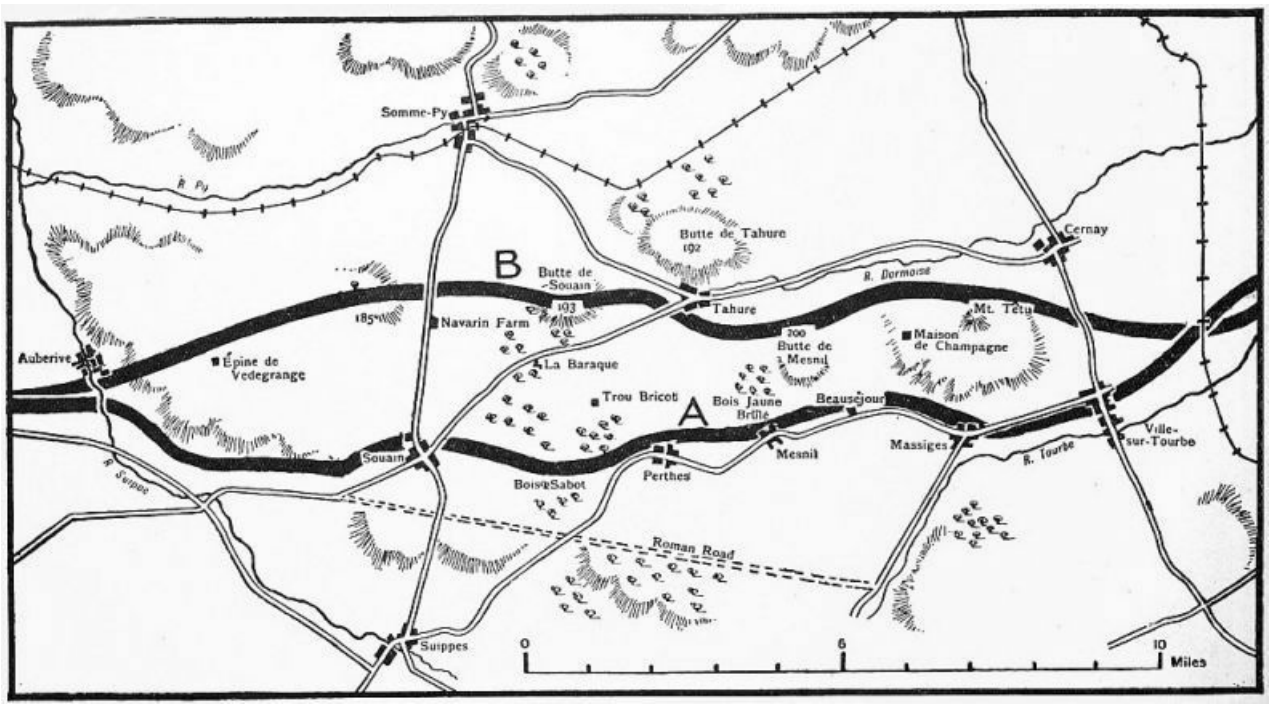
Second Lieutenant Sydney Clayton Woodroffe, 8th Battalion, Rifle Brigade.

You will remember that during the fighting at Hooge, when our men were fiercely attacked by big guns, liquid fire, and bombs, Second Lieutenant Woodroffe held a trench in the Zouave Wood. He was one of three brothers, all of them Marlborough boys, and head prefects of the famous school in their day. Sydney was still in his teens when he was called upon to resist torrents of shell, sprays of blazing petrol, and showers of bursting bombs. Despite the awful storm of fire

and flame, he gave the enemy bomb for bomb; and when his supply was exhausted, withdrew his men, rallied them anew, and at their head pushed forward once more. The gallant lad was killed in the act of cutting his way through the barbed-wire jungle of the enemy. One of his brothers had already made the supreme sacrifice at Neuve Chapelle.

Second Lieutenant Arthur Boyd Rochfort, Special Reserve, 1st Battalion, Scots Guards.

On August 3, 1915, Lieutenant Rochfort was standing with a small working party in a communication trench just south of Cuinchy, when an enemy mortar threw a bomb which landed on the inside of his parapet. He might easily have stepped back round a traverse and avoided the danger; but, shouting to his men to look out, he sprang upon the bomb, picked it up, and hurled it over the parapet, where it at once exploded. There is no doubt that his splendid presence of mind saved the lives of many of his men.



The September Battle in Champagne.

A. Showing the German front which the French attacked on the first day, September 25, 1915. B. Showing the position of the French front on September 29, 1915.

CHAPTER XLII.

IN CHAMPAGNE.

We are now to read the story of the great offensive which the Allies undertook in the West during the month of September 1915. I have already told you that the German lines were by this time so studded with skilfully placed forts, full of machine guns, that no living infantry could carry them until a road had been blasted through by artillery fire. You remember the maze of trenches and forts known to the French as the Labyrinth. The same sort of fortification extended along the whole German line. It was folly to break through the enemy's line on a narrow front, for the troops which entered the gap were at once enfiladed and exposed to a murderous fire on their flanks. This is precisely what happened in the unsuccessful attack at Stony Mountain. If the German front was to be really broken, a rent of at least fifteen miles must be made in it. In order to do this, long preparation was necessary. Thousands of guns and mountains of ammunition were required, and, above all, the part of the line to be broken must be carefully selected.

Look at the map on page 336, and note the position of that portion of the German line which extends between the Argonne on the east and Auberive on the west. The cross railway line, by means of which the Germans supplied their front in Champagne, was in some places only four or five miles from the French trenches, and the main line was not more than ten or twelve miles away. If the French could break through in this region on a wide front, they could send their cavalry forward to cut the German lines of communication; in which case the enemy would be obliged to fall back, and his retreat might easily become a rout. The French, therefore, decided to make their big push in Champagne. An advance on this part of the line not only promised success, but Champagne itself was very suitable for a great combined attack of infantry and artillery. Unlike Artois and Flanders, the country consists of rolling chalk downs, with open, bare, and shallow valleys. Guns could thus be used to the best advantage, and infantry could push forward without being impeded by villages, mounds of refuse, railway embankments, and small enclosed fields. On the dull levels of Champagne the freedom of France had thrice[69] been won. Was history to repeat itself, and was a fourth deliverance to result from the great movement now about to be made?

A writer[70] thus describes the district:—

> "There is scarcely a region in all France where a battle could have been fought with less injury to property. Imagine, if you please, an immense undulating plain, its surface broken by occasional low hills and ridges, none of them much over six hundred feet in height, and wandering in and out between these ridges the narrow stream which is the Marne. The country hereabouts is very sparsely settled; the few villages that dot the plain are wretchedly poor; the trees on the slopes of the ridges are stunted and scraggly; the soil is a chalky marl, which you have only to scratch to leave a staring scar, and the grass which tries to grow upon it seems to wither and die of a broken heart. This was the great manoeuvre ground of Châlons, and it was good for little else, yet only a few miles to the westward begin the vineyards which are France's chief source of wealth, and an hour's journey to the eastward is the beautiful Forest of the Argonne."

The French devoted most of the summer to preparations for the great attack. The British took over thirty additional miles of the line, and thus released a large number of troops for the venture. New units were formed, and the factories worked night and day to produce the immense quantity of ammunition which would be needed. Artillery of every size and pattern, from light mountain guns to monster howitzers, were gradually brought together, until nearly 3,000 guns faced the Germans. Had these guns been placed side by side they would have extended for more than fifteen miles. Every battery knew exactly the portion of front which it was to attack. About twenty captive balloons, fitted with telephones and wires, were provided for directing the fire of the guns. A network of light railways was built in order to bring up the vast supplies of ammunition, and from the railhead a highroad nine miles long and forty feet wide was constructed across the plain.

Dug-outs for men, stores for ammunition, and underground first-aid stations were constructed; and, so that the infantry could reach their positions without being destroyed by German shell fire, no less than forty miles of reserve and communication trenches were made. In some places saps and tunnels had been run out towards the German lines, so that the men making the first assault could spring suddenly from the earth. The hospitals were emptied ready for the stream of wounded that would soon flow into them. Officers and men were diligently instructed; everything was foreseen and

provided for; nothing was left to chance.

Now let us look closely at the portion of the German line which was to be assaulted. From the village of Auberive (page 336) the trenches ran eastward. Beyond Souain a series of hills lay in front of the French line, and on each of them a redoubt had been erected. The Germans had held this position since the Battle of the Marne, and for more than a year they had striven to make it impregnable. In many cases the trenches had walls of concrete, and the wire entanglements were as much as sixty yards deep. In front of the entanglements the ground had been honeycombed with mines, and strewn with sharpened stakes and obstacles of all kinds. Every German fired from behind a shield of armour plate, and at every fifteen yards along the trenches there was a machine gun. Here and there were revolving steel turrets, each containing a quick-firing gun. In some places there were five lines of trenches, one behind the other, all linked together so as to form a labyrinth very similar to that which the French had captured in Artois. Remember that these trenches only formed the first line of German defence. Behind them was a second line, and between the two were the artillery. Light railways came right down to the front, so that troops and ammunition and supplies could be moved very readily and speedily. The Germans boasted that they had created an inland Gibraltar, and they smiled superior when their aviators told them what preparations were going on behind the French lines. They were quite certain that nothing could shift them.

The Great French Advance in Champagne. ***By permission of The Graphic.***

While the British advanced between La Bassée and Lens, the French assaulted the German lines on a seventeen-mile front in Champagne. They carried all before them, and captured 21,000 prisoners and over 120 guns. A British surgeon who witnessed the onslaught tells us how the French dashed forward like an avalanche. "They are superb, these Frenchmen."

Of course it would never do for the French to attack in Champagne while the rest of the Allied troops lay quiet in their trenches. The enemy must be engaged at various points all along the line, so that he could not mass reinforcements against the great attack. Further, he must not be allowed to know exactly where the main thrust was to take place. The Allies intended, as we shall learn later, to make a big offensive between La Bassée and Lens, and to fight holding battles elsewhere.

Early in the month of September, during perfect autumn weather, a general bombardment began along the whole front. The airmen were very busy, and in the third week of the month there were no fewer than twenty-seven fights over the

British front alone. On 23rd September the bombardment began to grow very violent. The guns had begun the overture to the great drama on which the curtain was now about to rise.

All was now ready. The French trenches were packed with men, waiting for the guns to cease fire and the order to advance. Meanwhile the greatest bombardment that the world had ever known was in progress. General Joffre had instructed his artillery commanders to smash up the enemy's trenches, and to destroy their dug-outs in such a fashion "that may make it possible for my men to march to the assault with their rifles at the shoulder." It is impossible to describe in words the awful din of the guns. The sky overhead was a canopy of flying shells, and a rain of death fell upon the German trenches. Wire entanglements were blown into a myriad fragments; concreted trenches were swept into shapeless ruin, and the troops holding them were buried alive in their dug-outs. Hundreds of men went mad through sheer terror. The big shells raised huge geysers of earth and smoke wherever they fell, and the French gunners, stripped to the waist, never ceased or slackened their fire for three days and two nights. Upon and behind the German trenches a cascade of fire continued to fall; the enemy could neither advance nor retreat.

At 5.30 on the morning of 25th September the *réveillé* rang out along the French lines. It was a gray, dismal morning, but the men were in good heart. They drank their morning coffee, looked to their equipment, and waited for the word that would launch them against the foe. Every man wore a patch of white calico on his back, so that the French gunners might know their own men, and not fire upon them. At 9.5 the regimental flags were unrolled; for the first time in this war the troops were to go into action with colours flying.

At 9.15 the guns suddenly ceased to fire, whistles shrilled all along the line, and bugles pealed the charge. "*En avant! Vaincre ou mourir!*"[71] shouted the officers, and a human wave of blue-gray, fifteen miles in length and topped with steel, surged from the trenches. Onward, with hoarse cheering and snatches of song, they went, under a hail of fire from the German batteries and from machine guns hurriedly withdrawn from deep dug-outs which the French guns had not wrecked. Despite the terrible gunfire, stretches of unbroken wire still remained, and amidst these death-traps many men fell. Numerous others were shot down in front of steel obstacles which had to be blown up before the advance could proceed. Nevertheless the French infantry swept on, and plunged into the ruin of the German first line. Leaving detachments to ferret out prisoners from the deeper dug-outs, the French made for the second line. So fierce did the German fire become, that they frequently had to lie flat on the ground and crawl forward. But in a lull they rose again to their feet and advanced once more. Soon they were on the edge of the woods, where the German field guns, unable to get away, were firing at point-blank range. They flung themselves upon the guns, and in a few seconds had captured whole batteries. Prisoners were taken by the hundred—broken, stricken men, dazed and stupefied by the terrible bombardment.

In some places the assault was pushed into the second German line; in other places men still battled furiously in the first line. Battalions became mixed up, but in a short time order was restored, and the troops surged on again. Wounded men cried out to their comrades to leave them and proceed. "Go on," they cried, "don't mind us. It's only you who are whole who matter now." Then the guns came up with a thunderous rumble, and unlimbering like magic, prepared the way for a further advance of the infantry. African troops were ordered up to finish the business with cold steel, and behind them came the cavalry—dragoons, chasseurs, and Spahis—making a charge and fighting from the saddle for the first time since the trench war began. They sabred the fleeing Germans and swept up hundreds of prisoners, while the "trench cleaners," as the Algerians and Senegalese are called, scoured the ruined earthworks for the lurking foe.

The most desperate fighting was on the left, where the cavalry charged the line of wooded hills between Auberive and Souain. The French infantry on the extreme left were held up before they had advanced little more than half a mile, but, later on, they took trench after trench, and by midday were two miles in front of their starting-point. It was in this part of the line that the Colonial troops, led by General Marchand,[72] made a splendid advance, in the course of which their brave leader fell. He was standing on the parapet of a German trench, smoking his pipe and urging his men forward, when he was struck down.

All through the wet afternoon the battle continued, and only when twilight fell was it possible to reckon up the gains of the day. On a front of fifteen miles, the French had pushed forward, on the average, two and a half miles. Our allies had drawn near to the village of Tahure, but they had not captured it, neither had they seized the Butte[73] of Tahure which overlooks the railway, nor the Butte of Mesnil which you see to the south-east of Tahure. Eastward of the latter hill there

is high ground from which spurs stretch out southwards like the open fingers of a hand. On each of the fingers of this Hand of Massiges,[74] as the French called it, the Germans had constructed a great stronghold of criss-crossed trenches with forts at intervals. It was as though five labyrinths lay side by side. So strong was the position that the Germans said it could be held against a whole army by two washerwomen with machine guns. The French, however, had already carried part of it, and also the farmhouse which you see on the westward edge of the high ground. The whole German first line had gone, and large parts of the second line west of Navarin Farm and east of Tahure had been captured.

For every yard of front which the French had won they had taken an unwounded prisoner, and for every mile, nine guns. During the fighting some 21,000 prisoners were captured. The Germans surrendered by hundreds at a time. Most of them had been without food for several days and were suffering from thirst, and all of them had been completely cowed by the terrible bombardment.

Though the French had made such good progress, the battle was far from over. German counter-attacks were already preparing and might be expected any moment. At all costs the enemy must be prevented from bringing up his reserves and strengthening his remaining line of defence. So while the French infantry worked like inspired giants all through the night, digging themselves in, building parapets, and installing their machine guns, heavy batteries lumbered and swayed forward over the scarred and pitted ground, and began a new bombardment from advanced positions. On the next day, Sunday, all the summits of the downs were cleared from Auberive to the Butte of Souain. A hill facing the Butte of Tahure was captured by the evening, and the northern slopes of the Hand of Massiges were won.

By means of artillery and bomb attacks the line slowly advanced and was knitted up all along its length. The fighting during Sunday was far more trying than that of Saturday. "If you only knew what these days and nights are like," wrote an officer; "condemned to remain crouching in the mud under an avalanche of shells, under an almost unceasing rain, with but few supplies brought up, in the midst of bodies more or less mangled by shot and shell, and in our ears always the groans of the dying and the moans of the wounded."

The Germans rushed up all the men that they could spare from other parts of the line, and on Monday the Crown Prince tried to break through the French trenches in the Argonne. His troops advanced after a gas attack, but they were too weak to do more than carry a few yards. It was not necessary to draw off a single man from the Champagne armies to repulse him.

The second great French effort began on Wednesday, 29th September, when an attack was launched against the German position to the west of Navarin Farm. Already the French had pierced the second line on a front of about five-eighths of a mile. They strove hard to widen the gap so that the cavalry might push through, but again and again they were repulsed, and all that they could do was to dig shelter trenches and cling to the breach in the face of a murderous fire that assailed them in front and in flank. With this check the great battle of Champagne may be said to have ended.

The French had probably about 110,000 casualties in the five days' fighting. It was estimated that the Germans lost 140,000 men, including 21,000 prisoners, and 121 guns. Despite their great sacrifice of life, the distance gained by the French was too small to be shown on an ordinary map. But we shall make a great mistake if we measure the effect of the French effort by the amount of ground gained. The aim and object of generalship is not to occupy territory, but to foil the enemy's plans and destroy his forces. The victory at the Marne stopped any further invasion of France and ruined the German plan, while the resistance in Flanders and Artois prevented the enemy from reaching the Channel ports. The Champagne battles threw the enemy upon the defensive; it wore down his numbers and disheartened him, and proved that his most strongly fortified lines could be pierced, if the Allies were willing to pay the cost.

Though there was no great offensive on the Western front during the rest of the year, fighting continued in Champagne during October. The Germans sent reserves to this region, and on 6th October the French made an effort to carry the village and Butte of Tahure, in order that they might command the cross-railway which supplied the German front. After a long and strong bombardment by massed guns the French carried the crest of the Butte, and their guns now cut off the

Germans in the village from support and reinforcements. Then they swept from the west and south into a wood in which the enemy had constructed seven lines of parallel trenches, and, after carrying them, entered the village, where over a thousand prisoners were taken. The summit of the Butte was now in the hands of the French, and this was the farthest point they reached during the year 1915.

This success and the capture of very strong trenches to the north of the Navarin Farm drove the Germans to desperate efforts. They knew that another vigorous thrust would push them back from their railway and force them to retreat. On the night of 8th October they made a great counter-attack on the Butte, but achieved nothing. Meanwhile their hold on the Butte of Mesnil, which formed an awkward sag in the French lines, had been greatly shaken. On 24th October the French carried a very powerful fortress in this position, and afterwards beat off numerous attacks. They had thus removed a danger from their flank and were enabled to straighten out their line.

On the 30th of the same month the Germans attacked the Butte of Tahure and retook the summit, capturing 21 officers and 1,215 men. They forced the French back to the southern side of the hill, but they could do no more. Nevertheless, they had eased their position. They could still use the cross-railway for supplying their lines during the winter's lull which was soon to set in.

A correspondent who visited the battlefields of Champagne during the month of September tells us that the ground over which the struggle had raged looked and smelled like a garbage heap. "Over an area as long as from Charing Cross to Hampstead Heath, and as wide as from the Bank to the Marble Arch, the earth is pitted with the craters caused by bursting shells, as is pitted the face of a man who has had the small-pox. Any of these shell-holes was large enough to hold a barrel; many of them would have held a horse; I saw one, caused by the explosion of a mine, which we estimated to be seventy feet deep and twice that in diameter. In the terrific blast that caused it five hundred German soldiers perished."

The battlefield was thickly covered with unexploded shells, hand-grenades, and bombs. In a captured trench the correspondent saw one of the steel revolving turrets, some six feet high and eight or nine in diameter, in which the Germans had installed a quick-firing gun. The door of the turret was fastened by a chain and padlock, and when burst open the bodies of three Germans were discovered. They had been locked in by their officers, and left to fight and die with no chance of escape.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BATTLE OF LOOS.—I.

You will remember that, in order to prevent the Germans from massing their forces to resist the great French offensive in Champagne, the Allies had prepared attacks on other parts of the enemy's line. While the French were pushing forward across the miry downs of Champagne, six separate assaults were launched on the German front between Lens and Ypres—four to the north of the La Bassée Canal and two to the south of it. The four attacks which were made to the north of the canal were merely for the purpose of distracting the enemy's attention; the two attacks which were made to the south of the canal were part of the main movement against the enemy's lines of communication. While the French in Champagne strove to capture the railway by which the Germans maintained themselves in this region, the French and British tried to seize the railway junction of Lens and open a road into the plain of the Scheldt. Had these thrusts from the south and the west fully succeeded, the enemy would have been forced to retire, probably into Belgium.

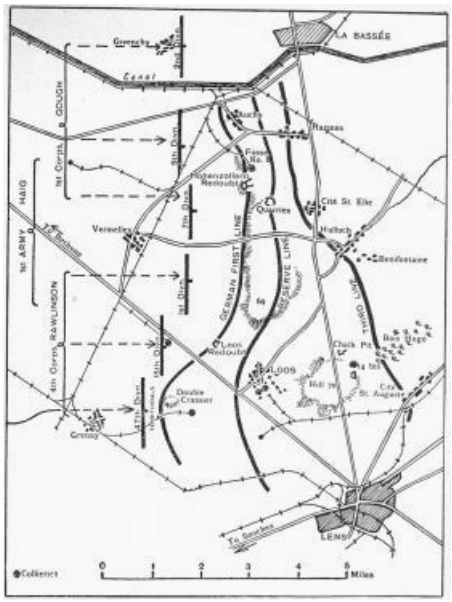
I shall not trouble you with an account of the "holding" attacks which were made to the north of the La Bassée Canal. Three of them served their purpose and resulted in some gains, but the fourth, which was made against the Aubers Ridge, came to grief. The two attacks which I shall describe at length are those which were made by the French and the British south of the canal.

Turn back to the map on page 223 and find the village of Souchez. South and east of this village you observe that there is high ground, which is nowhere more than 400 feet above sea-level. This high ground is known as the Vimy Heights, from the name of the village which you see by the side of the railway line running from Arras to Lens. On 26th September the French began to attack these heights, and by the morning of the 29th had fought their way up them foot by foot, and were in a position to command the railway from Lens to Arras. I wish I had space to describe this fine achievement fully. As, however, this book is specially meant for British boys and girls, I must pass over the splendid work done by the French in capturing the Vimy Heights, and turn to the exploits of our own men. By winning the Vimy Heights the French had cut off Lens from Arras; the British were now to try to cut off Lens from La Bassée.

Look carefully at the map on page 349 and follow the German first line of trenches from north to south. Less than a mile and a half south of the canal, and about half a mile inside the German line, you see a position marked Fosse 8, and south of it the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Fosse 8 was a great slag heap which commanded the country to the south and had been strongly fortified. The Hohenzollern Redoubt was a pear-shaped stronghold situated on a gentle rise about 500 yards in front of the line. Its broad end pointed northwards and it had a clear field of fire before it, every inch of which could be swept by the machine guns inside. The whole position was criss-crossed by trenches and resembled the famous Labyrinth. It was connected with the main line by two trenches. That which ran to the rear from the south end was called "Big Willie," and the corresponding trench at the north end was known as "Little Willie."

South of the Hohenzollern Redoubt the line ran along the western slope of the downs which you see marked on the map. Then the line curved westwards, passing the Loos Redoubt, and after crossing the Béthune-Lens road, curved back eastwards in front of what was known as Double Crassier,[75] another slag heap which had been strongly fortified.

Now look at the German reserve line, which was roughly parallel with the front line, and from less than a mile to two miles behind it. Notice the Quarries, which had been turned into a stronghold, and the mining village of Loos, which lies in a shallow hollow. Behind the village rises Hill 70, on which there was a strong redoubt.



Battle of Loos.—The Front from La Bassée to Lens.

Now follow the third line. Behind it you will see a string of mining villages—Haisnes,[76] Cité St. Elie, and Hulluch. The line crossed the Lens-La Bassée road at Hulluch and then ran a little east and south behind a chalk pit and Pit No. 14. The villages and the pits which I have mentioned were fortresses, and there were numerous other mounds and hillocks that had been turned into strongholds.

From the British front the country seemed a dead-flat plain studded with the head-gear of pits and groups of small houses, and seamed with roads. There was scarcely a tree in sight, and except for the collieries and slag heaps, the plain looked something like the South African veldt. But behind the downs which shut in the view of our men facing the northern half of the line, there were innumerable places where batteries of machine guns lay concealed.

The map shows you that two corps of the First Army, under Sir Douglas Haig, were arrayed for the assault. The 1st Corps, under General Gough,[77] consisted of the 2nd, 9th, and 7th Divisions: the 2nd Division lay north of the canal, the 9th Division opposite to Fosse 8, and the 7th Division facing the Quarries. The 9th Division consisted of Scottish regiments—Highland and Lowland, "kilties" and men wearing the trews. South of the road from Vermelles to Hulluch lay the 4th Army Corps, under General Sir Henry Rawlinson. The 1st Division of his command was posted just south of the road; opposite to the Loos Redoubt was the 15th Division, also a wholly Scottish division, composed of men of the new army. This division had been for three months or more in the trenches facing Loos, and it was well acquainted with the ground over which it was soon to charge. On the extreme right was the 47th Division of Londoners.

When the guns began to roar in Champagne, the British artillery along the whole five-mile front from Givenchy to Grenay joined in the tumult. Across the plain a tornado of shells swept upon the German positions, and in many places the trenches were pounded into utter ruin. At 6.30 on the morning of 25th September the guns lifted their muzzles, and the high explosive shells rained a deluge of fire behind the first line of German defence. Then the whistles blew, and five miles of British troops with fixed bayonets clambered over their trenches. The great advance had begun.

The Storming of Loos Road Redoubt.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)
This redoubt (see map, page 349) was a fortified tongue of land jutting out of the German first-line trench. It was semicircular in form, and was protected by a perfect jungle of barbed wire entanglements. The British guns smashed the redoubt to ruin, and on September 25, 1915, it was carried. (See page 357.)

We will first follow the fortunes of the 9th Division, now making for Fosse 8 and the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Enfilading fire from the village of Auchy streamed down upon the Lowlanders on the left, and took a heavy toll of them as they advanced. Nevertheless they pushed on, crossed the railway, and in a few minutes were thrusting and bombing in the German trenches. So fierce, however, was the fire that they could not cling to them, and slowly during the day they were driven back. Meanwhile the 26th Highland Brigade on the right had rushed the Hohenzollern Redoubt. The bombardment had wrecked it, and saps had been run up to within a short distance of "Little Willie." Our losses were heavy, but the stronghold was won.

Camerons, Seaforths, and Black Watch now advanced over a bare, shell-swept piece of ground towards Fosse 8, from which a hail of machine-gun fire beat down upon them like a thunderstorm in autumn. As the Lowlanders on their left had been held up, and their flank was in the air, the 27th Brigade was hurried up in support, and was soon busy with bomb and bayonet in the maze of trenches and cottages to the east of the Fosse. By midday we had pushed forward a broad salient on this part of the line, and had captured the chief works of the enemy, though the Germans were not entirely cleared out of them. The rear was so studded with little forts, each pouring out a murderous fire, that little further progress could be made. Our men fell fast, and as we had but few reserves, it was clear that we could not long hold on to our gains in this part of the line.

Now let us see how the 7th Division was faring. There were no great strongholds in their front, so they swept forward right across the German first line, and reached the western end of the Quarries, where for a time the Reserve Line held them up. Nevertheless the van pushed on, entered the village of Cité St. Elie, gained the highroad, turned northwards, and by ten o'clock was in the village of Haisnes. Judging from the map, you would say that the Germans still clinging to the eastern edges of Fosse 8 and Hohenzollern Redoubt were now taken between two fires, and that nothing could save them. But the vanguard, which had pushed northwards along the highroad to Haisnes, was not strong enough to hold on to the village, and by midday it had fallen back, and the front of the 7th Division lay from the western side of the Quarries eastwards to Cité St. Elie. In the Quarries was a German howitzer battery which we could not destroy and the enemy could not use.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE BATTLE OF LOOS.—II.

The 1st Division, lying to the south of the 7th Division, made excellent progress. Its 1st Brigade swept forward for a mile and three-quarters, and by noon was across the highroad, on the outskirts of Hulluch, and up against the last German line. On the right, however, the 2nd Brigade was checked by wire and trenches which our artillery had not destroyed; and it lay pinned to the ground till afternoon, when reserves were sent up through the wide rent which, we shall learn later, had been torn in the German lines by the 15th Division. These reserves cut off and captured a German detachment 700 strong, and enabled the 2nd Brigade to go forward and join the 1st Brigade in front of Hulluch.

Now we come to the most brilliant advance of the day, that which was made by the 15th and 47th Divisions against Loos. This advance resulted, as you will learn, in the capture of the village, and shook the whole German front. For a brief time the Germans thought that all was lost, and they began to move their big guns out of Lens. The 47th Division of Londoners meant to "make good" that day. For weeks they had been busy with preparations, and when the hour arrived everything went like clockwork. They had constructed a big model of the countryside, and had studied it so well that every man knew the lie of the ground, and exactly where he had to go. One battalion—the 19th London—lost all its officers; yet the men went on without them, and carried out the arranged plan without a mistake. The 18th (London Irish), the 19th (St. Pancras), and the 20th (Blackheath and Woolwich) were on the left of the attack, and the 6th, 7th, and 8th (Post Office Rifles) on the right. Cannot you imagine the amazement of the French gunners who watched the start when they saw one of the London Irish kick off a football from the parapet and dribble it towards the German lines?

British Troops swarming over the German First Line Trenches and dashing onwards towards Loos, the "Tower Bridge," and Hill 70.

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

Notice the Tower Bridge, as it was called by our soldiers. It was the head-gear of a pit, and consisted of twin towers connected by a bridge. It had been seen by our men, foreshortened over the downs, for many months past. They believed that the Germans had constructed it before the war as an observation station.

In half an hour the stronghold of the Double Crassier had been carried, and the men of the 47th Division were pushing on to the village of Loos through clouds of bursting shrapnel. Before long they had seized the cemetery, and their left was on the outskirts of the village. A few minutes later and they were surging into the shattered streets of Loos, where they joined hands with the Highlanders of the 15th Division beneath the "Tower Bridge." Then began a fierce and deadly struggle. Every ruined house was packed with Germans from cellar to garret; the muzzles of rifles and machine guns peeped out of every window and through every grating. Through the wet, slippery streets went our men, bursting through barricades, battering down doors, fighting upstairs and downstairs, bombing the enemy out of cellars, slag heaps, and pit-workings, and gradually clearing the place. In a deep cellar a German officer was discovered directing by telephone the fire of the batteries, which were smashing the ruined village to atoms. So the fierce, red work went on, and by nine in the morning Loos was won.

The inhabitants of Loos were overjoyed when the British entered the village and set them free from German bondage. Though the place had been heavily shelled for many months, some of the people had lived in their cellars all the time. When our men appeared they came out of their hiding-places, and while doing so some of them were killed. The remainder, however, were sent to a place of safety, and were given food. Some of the women greeted the Highlanders with hearty kisses. A pretty girl of eighteen, named Emilienne Moreau, was one of the first to assist our wounded. She helped to carry in the stricken men and to bandage them. As the poor, helpless fellows lay on their stretchers two German snipers in a neighbouring house opened fire on them. This was more than the brave girl could bear. Suddenly, without a word, she bent down beside a wounded officer and took his revolver out of his holster. Armed with this weapon, she disappeared down a side street and made her way to the house in which the snipers were hidden. She managed to get inside by means of a side entrance, and, taking steady aim, shot them both. Such is the story of the girl who will go down to history as "the heroine of Loos." On November 27, 1915, she was decorated with the French Military Cross. When General de Sailly pinned the decoration on her breast, he said, "I congratulate and admire you, young lady. You do honour to the women of France. You are a fine and inspiring example." And so say all of us.

The most remarkable success of the day was obtained by the 15th Division. Let me remind you that this division consisted of Scottish soldiers, and that they lay in front of the Loos Redoubt. The 44th Brigade of this division was to make its thrust direct at the village; the 46th Brigade, on the left, was to sweep round and enter it on the north side; while the 45th Brigade was held in reserve. We will now follow the fortunes of the 9th Black Watch and the 8th Seaforths of the 44th Brigade. They were now about to assault the village; the 7th Camerons were in support, and the 10th Gordons were to follow on.

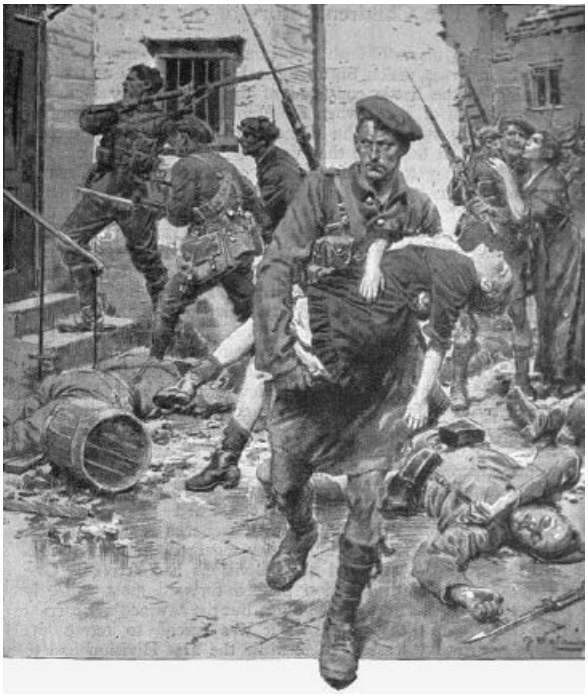
Do you remember the great gas attack of the Germans at the Second Battle of Ypres? You will remember what a shock of horror went through the civilized world when the Germans resorted to this foul weapon. We had never dreamed of sending clouds of poisoned gas against our enemies, but now we were forced to pay them back in their own coin. Many people at home thought that we ought to refrain from using gas, but our generals thought otherwise, and in times of warfare their word is law. But the gas which we were now about to use was not poisoned. It was far less hurtful than that of the Germans. Men who breathed it were rendered insensible for a time; they were neither killed nor subjected to horrible tortures. We also used, for the first time in this battle, clouds of smoke to screen our advance.

At ten minutes to six on the morning of 25th September the nozzles of the gas cylinders in front of our trenches were opened, and the men watched anxiously as the whitish cloud moved slowly upwards towards the German lines near the crown of the slope. A very light wind blew from the south-west, and in the hollow where Loos stands formed an eddy which blew back the gas on to the 46th Brigade. Our men were wearing their gas helmets, but for a moment the choking cloud caused them to hesitate, whereupon Piper Daniel Laidlaw climbed the parapet and played a march that put new heart into his comrades. You will learn on a later page that he received the Victoria Cross for this fine deed.

The Highlanders saw before them the line of green-gray sandbags which they had watched through their periscopes day by day for months past. The parapets of the enemy, which had so long barred their way, were soon to be the starting-point for their advance. Now the great guns got to work, and in less than half an hour the barrier was crushed and

pounded into ruin. The wire was blown into a million fragments, and the parapets were utterly destroyed. The strong redoubt of Loos was raked fore and aft, and the German trenches were full of dead.

At 6.30 the whistles blew; the Highlanders scrambled over the parapets, and with a rush dashed into the wrecked trenches. At five minutes past seven the whole of the German first line position, several trenches deep, was in their hands. Even in the first rush many men were mown down by the machine guns which desperate Germans had hidden in deep dug-outs and had brought into play when the bombardment ceased. But nothing could stay the Scots. On they went, cheering and singing, through the reeking cloud of gas and smoke, and in a few minutes were rushing down the slope towards Loos. The entanglements of the reserve line had been broken in many places, but here and there patches of uncut wire remained, and the Black Watch had to cut them under heavy fire. The ground was carpeted with their dead, but they did not waver; they swarmed over the reserve line, and at twenty minutes to eight, an hour and ten minutes after they had left their trenches, they were shooting and stabbing and hurling bombs in the four rambling streets and in the gardens and enclosures of Loos, along with their comrades of the 47th Division, who had entered from the south. One Cameron sergeant was seen with a machine gun on his shoulder, pouring a stream of bullets into window after window. The 46th Brigade was rapidly closing in from the north. Two and a half hours after the advance began, Loos was clear of the enemy.



A Scottish Highlander rescuing a French Girl in the Village of Loos.

Many moving incidents took place when the British entered Loos. Many of the inhabitants, who had been living in the cellars, came out to heap blessings on the head of their deliverers. A Highlander is here seen carrying a fainting French girl into a place of safety.

The Highlanders, however, were not content. It was their business not only to take Loos, but to capture the broad down marked on the map as Hill 70, and some of them believed that when it was won supports would follow them, and they were to push on as far as they could. The remnants of the Highland Brigade, with Camerons and Gordons leading, now rushed up the western slope of Hill 70, and were at once met by a fierce fire. The Germans came out of their trenches as if to attack, and at the sight the Highlanders streamed up the hill like hares, the green tartans of the Gordons mingling with those of the Camerons. They were fired at from front and flank, but on they swept, carrying all before them, and by nine in the morning they were on the summit of the hill.

They stormed the redoubt at the top, and many of the garrison surrendered. Without pausing to secure the place, they sped down the eastern slope and reached the outskirts of the village of Cité St. Auguste. They were now right through the last

line of German trenches, and were in a district where every fold in the ground sheltered a machine gun. By this time they were reduced to a few hundreds; they had no supports south or north, and no reserves were following them up. The redoubt on Hill 70 opened fire again, while from several strongholds in the neighbourhood streams of lead played upon them. In the course of three hours they had advanced nearly four miles, and the last line of the German defence was in their rear. Had reserves been available, and had their flanks been secure, Lens must have fallen and the Germans must have retreated.

The Highlanders had gone too far, and they were now hidden in the fog and smoke of the eastern slope from the eyes of their comrades who were battling against the redoubt on the hill. They must be recalled, and two officers volunteered to go forward with the order to retire. Both fell on the way, but the order reached the stragglers, who turned and began to fight their way back through the encircling fire. Few of them returned to the British lines on the hill. "All down the slope towards Lens lay the tartans, Gordon and Black Watch, Seaforth and Cameron, like the drift left on the shore when the tide has ebbed."

You will probably ask, Where were the reserves at this time? Why were they not brought up promptly, so that the gains of the Highlanders might be made good? There was a whole army corps in reserve. Where was it at this critical time? Sir John French tells us that he kept it under his own command, so that he might throw it into that part of the line where the need was greatest. On the night before the battle two divisions of this corps were about five miles from our old firing-line; another division—the Guards—lay nearly twenty miles from Loos, while other divisions were still more remote. All the reserves which Sir Douglas Haig possessed at the beginning of the battle consisted of the 3rd Cavalry Division. After the fall of Loos, when the Highlanders were in front of Cité St. Auguste, Sir John French sent him the 21st and 24th Divisions. At that time they were about eight miles from our front, and they could not possibly arrive before the German counter-attacks began. Long before they appeared the enemy was hurrying up fresh troops and flinging them against our worn and weary men. All through the drizzling rain of the afternoon until the sun set in a stormy sky our men were heavily assailed. They were clinging to their gains; but their hold on Fosse 8, on Pit 14, and on Hill 70 was weakening.

Through the wet, dark night two divisions of the Eleventh Army marched towards the firing-line, in order to relieve two brigades of the 15th Division. They were quite new to the work of war, and some of them had only landed in France a few days before. Sir John French had reviewed them, and had been struck by their fine martial appearance, and he now proposed to send them into the thick of the fighting. On the morning of Sunday one of these divisions began to advance towards the trenches across open ground under a terrible fire. It was an ordeal too great for any unseasoned troops, and they gave way.

The German counter-attacks continued all night. The 7th Division were driven out of their trenches at the Quarries, but in the afternoon of Sunday they regained the lost ground. By this time the 21st and 24th Divisions had arrived. One brigade of the 24th Division pushed forward most gallantly between Hulluch and the Chalk Pit; but the advance was carried too far, and in the afternoon it was forced to retrace its steps with heavy losses. Meanwhile the 21st Division had to bear the brunt of a very heavy German attack. The men had been without food and water for many hours, and were worn out with much fighting. Three times their officers rallied them, but they were forced back, and our advanced positions towards Hulluch were lost. Some of the trenches on Hill 70 had also been recaptured, and it was feared that we could not hold on to the rising ground much longer. Many a British soldier, half dead with fatigue, his eyes bloodshot and bleared with powder smoke, looked anxiously to the rear and muttered beneath his breath, "Will the reserves never come?"

The Guards were coming up, but they were then eight miles away; and were not being hurried, for they were intended to carry on the next stage of the advance. The fate of the two new divisions had upset all the plans, and troops that had been withdrawn from the trenches had to be sent back again. The 45th Brigade of the 15th Division was ordered to retake the lost ground on Hill 70. It advanced, but was met by a terrible shell fire, and could not proceed. Four times Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Hamilton led forward the Camerons; he fell at the head of the fifty men who alone survived. The position of affairs was now desperate, and it continued to be so all that day and all through the following night. So weak were our lines during the hours of darkness that the Germans could easily have driven us out of Loos had they made an attack in force. Not until Monday at noon did the Guards arrive and take over the front from the heroic 15th Division. In the two days' fighting it had lost more than 6,000 men. The fiery spirit of the Gael and the dogged endurance of the Lowlander had added new glory to the fighting fame of Scotland.

Nothing was more surprising in the Battle of Loos than the high spirits of our men, even in the darkest hour of trial. Even

the badly wounded came out of action singing and waving blood-stained bayonets. Those who were sent back to billets woke from their much-needed sleep ready and even eager to plunge again into the fray. During the wet and misty Monday Sir Douglas Haig was reinforced by the 28th Division; but before it could arrive we had lost Fosse 8, and the Germans were bombing our men out of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

In the afternoon the news spread like wildfire that "the Guards were going in." They were now to take the field for the first time in this war as a division, and great things were expected of them. They were to win back the three-quarters of a mile of ground which we had lost between Hulluch and the Loos-La Bassée road, and right nobly did they do it. The 1st Brigade carried all before it, and reached the road; the Irish Guards and the Coldstreams of the 2nd Brigade also crossed the road, and, facing a terrific fire, which lost them their colonel and eleven officers, carried the Chalk Pit; while the Welsh Guards and the Grenadiers of the 3rd Brigade, advancing as though on parade, swept through Loos, and advanced through a storm of gas shells towards Hill 70. As they pushed on, the wearied Londoners and the other troops holding our line cheered themselves hoarse. The Guards gained the crest of the hill, but being too much exposed to fire from the Redoubt, dug in about a hundred yards to the west of it.

Next day a very determined effort was made to carry Pit 14; but it failed, and the much-debated ground became a No Man's Land which neither side dared cross. The battle was now drawing to a close. While the enemy continued to shell our trenches we laboured to strengthen our lines. On a front of 6,500 yards we had everywhere carried the enemy's first line, and broken up his reserve line, while in one case we had pushed through his last position. We had captured over 3,000 of the enemy and more than fifty of his officers. Twenty-six field guns and forty machine guns, as well as much war material, had fallen into our hands. Some of these guns were afterwards exhibited in London and in other parts of the kingdom as trophies of war.

The Battle of Loos was a real success. It had resulted in useful gains, and it had proved that our infantry were second to none in the world. But even in the midst of our rejoicings we could not help feeling disappointment. Much had been done, but more might have been done. We had struck a weak place in the enemy's line, but we were not ready to take full advantage of our good luck. Our first push had given us much ground; but we could not proceed because our reserves were not ready to follow up the advance. For twenty-four hours—from Saturday at midday until noon on Monday—broken and weary brigades clung heroically to the positions which they had won, waiting for supports to arrive. There was mismanagement somewhere—the same sort of mismanagement which we had suffered at Neuve Chapelle and Festubert. Our generals had not yet fully learnt the lessons of the new warfare. They were learning them in the best possible of all schools, but at a great cost of human life and effort. Between the 25th of September and the 1st of October we lost about 45,000 men, many of whom, however, were only slightly wounded. The French Staff calculated that the Germans had lost in the September battles not less than 200,000.

For the first time for hundreds of years there was widespread mourning throughout Great Britain. The men of the new armies came from every class in the nation, and many households which had never before had a soldier son were plunged in grief. Three commanders of divisions fell, three Members of Parliament, and many who had distinguished themselves in civilian life as scholars or as captains of industry. But we know that all who fell, whether distinguished or undistinguished, generals or privates, played their parts like men for the land of their love and pride. Somewhere in Flanders there is a grave above which a wooden cross bears these words:—

> "Tell England, ye that pass this monument,
> That we who rest here died content."

Equally content were those gallant men who fell in Artois during the closing days of September.

The results of the fighting in the West from 1st October to the end of the year may be summed up very briefly. Both in Champagne and on the British front between the La Bassée Canal and Lens, the Germans made fierce counter-attacks; but nowhere did they win more than momentary successes. On the 8th of October they assembled behind the Chalk Pit, and came on in four great waves, marching shoulder to shoulder, only to be shattered to fragments by our fire. Five days later we launched an attack against the German line between the Hohenzollern Redoubt and Hulluch; but though we won a thousand yards of trenches we could not remain in them. By this time nearly all the Redoubt and Fosse 8 had been

recovered by the Germans, and on 13th October we began a three days' attack upon these positions. The North Midland Division covered itself with glory during two crowded days of incessant battle. The most desperate hand-to-hand fighting took place, and many notable deeds of gallantry were done. We won the main trench of the Redoubt, but no more. At the end of October our line was a little farther forward than it had been at the beginning of the month; but when we came to reckon up the losses of friend and foe, it was hard to say on which side the balance lay. Thereafter, to the end of the winter, both sides settled down to the long weariness of trench warfare.

CHAPTER XLV.

BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE.—I.

The fighting on the Western front from the beginning of the September offensive to the close of the year abounded in heroic incidents, and many Victoria Crosses were won. In this and the next chapter I shall give you brief accounts of those who received the highest award of valour.

Captain Anketell Montray Read, 1st Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment.

Near Hulluch, on the morning of 25th September, Captain Read, though suffering from gas, went out several times to rally men who had lost their units and were retiring. Utterly regardless of danger, he formed them up and led them back to the firing-line. While carrying out this gallant work he was mortally wounded. On several former occasions he had shown outstanding bravery.

Lieutenant George Allan Maling, M.B., R.A.M.C.

During the great offensive of September, Lieutenant Maling slaved unceasingly for twenty-six continuous hours in attending the wounded out in the open and under heavy fire. He ministered to no less than 300 men, but was at last flung down by the bursting of a high-explosive shell that killed several of his patients, wounded his assistant, and stunned him. When he had recovered, a second shell covered him with a torrent of earth; nevertheless "his high courage and zeal never failed him, and he continued his gallant work single-handed."

Second Lieutenant Frederick Henry Johnson, 73rd Field Company, R.E.

During the attack on Hill 70, Second Lieutenant Johnson, though wounded in the leg, stuck to his duty and led several charges against the redoubt. At a very critical time he rallied the men near him, and by his splendid example and cool courage saved the situation. He remained at his post until relieved in the evening.

Sergeant H. Wells, 2nd Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.

On 25th September, when his platoon officer had been killed, Sergeant Wells took command and led his men forward to within fifteen yards of the German wire. By this time he had lost nearly half his platoon, and the remainder were much shaken. Nevertheless, with the utmost coolness and bravery he rallied them and led them forward. Again, when but few of them were left, he stood up and urged them on once more, but while doing so was killed. Rarely has a soldier shown a more splendid example of courage and devotion to duty.

Piper Daniel Laidlaw, 7th Battalion, K.O.S.B.

When Piper Laidlaw bade farewell to his wife, she said, "Mind you bring back the V.C." He thought it a fine joke—the V.C. was for heroes, not for pipers; but his opportunity came, and he nobly seized it. When on the morning of 25th September an eddy blew back the gas fumes upon the Borderers, some of the gasping, choking men were not ready to advance. "Laidlaw," shouted Lieutenant Young, "pipe 'em together." Without a moment's hesitation Laidlaw mounted the parapet and, marching up and down, played his company out of the trench. "I began," he said, "with the regimental march, 'Blue Bonnets over the Border.' My, but there's fire in the old tune, and the lads set up a cheer, sick as they were from the gas and the terrific pounding. I ran with 'em, and soon the whole line was advancing. I changed to 'The Braes o' Mar'—and then my shell burst." Lieutenant Young fell dead, and a fragment of barbed wire tore the piper's feet and brought him down. But even this did not put an end to his piping. He still played on, and many a lad felt his courage mount high as the old familiar tune rang in his ears. "Laidlaw," said the Colonel, when all was over, "you've done well this morning!" The gallant piper thought nothing of his exploit, but mourned for the young officer who had been stricken down by his side. In due course he returned home, proud to show his wife that he had obeyed her parting behest.

Piper Daniel Laidlaw outside the British Trench playing "Blue Bonnets over the Border" to hearten his comrades to the Attack.

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

Private George Peachment, 2nd Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps.

Near Hulluch, on 25th September, Private Peachment saw his company commander lying wounded, and crawled out to assist him. He knelt in the open by the side of his officer, and while bandaging him was struck first by a fragment of a bomb, then by a bullet which found its billet. Private Peachment was one of the youngest men in his battalion.

Private Arthur Vickers, 2nd Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

During the advance on the first line of German trenches the Warwickshires found themselves held up by wire. Without waiting for orders, Private Vickers ran forward through very heavy shell, rifle, and machine-gun fire and cut the wire. It was broad daylight, and as he stood up to do the work, he was in full view of the enemy. Thanks to his fine pluck, a way was opened for the battalion to advance again.

Lieutenant-Colonel Angus Falconer Douglas-Hamilton, 6th Battalion, Cameron Highlanders.

You will remember that on Sunday, 26th September, the Germans flung their reserves upon our worn-out men, and the situation was desperate. On Hill 70, when the battalions to the right and left had retired, Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas-Hamilton rallied his men again and again and led them forward three times. There were now only about fifty of his brave lads left; nevertheless he cried, "Come on, men. We will show them how to charge." As they pressed forward he fell —"the bravest man the Camerons have lost."

Rifleman Kulbir Thapa, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles.

This gallant Gurkha, though badly hit, found a wounded man of the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment behind the first-line German trench, and strove to help him in. The British soldier urged him to save himself; but the Indian refused to leave his white comrade, and remained with him all day and night. In the early morning of 26th September, when a mist hung over the battlefield, he managed to get the Leicestershire man into a sheltered place. He then went out again and brought in two wounded Gurkhas. Finally he returned to the British soldier, and in full view of the enemy staggered with his

burden across the zone of fire into safety.

Private Robert Dunsire, 13th Battalion, Royal Scots.

Private Dunsire, who was a collier before the war and had only been married six months when he enlisted, was one of that noble band who freely risked limb and life to save others. He was sitting on the parapet of a trench on Hill 70 when he saw a wounded comrade crawling painfully along. At once he made a dive out of the trench, got the wounded man on his back, and brought him in. A quarter of an hour later, he spied and rescued another poor fellow in distress. "This time," he said, "it was worse than the first, as the shells were bursting all around, and the snipers kept up a continuous fire." Early in February 1916 the sad news arrived that he had been killed.

Corporal James Dalgleish Pollock, 5th Battalion, Cameron Highlanders.

About noon on 27th September, when the enemy's bombers in superior numbers were working up the "Little Willie" towards the Hohenzollern Redoubt, Corporal Pollock got out of his trench, and walking along the top edge reached a position from which he was able to bomb the bombers from above. He was under heavy machine-gun fire the whole time, but was not wounded for a whole hour, during which time he prevented the Germans from advancing.

Corporal Alfred Alexander Burt, 1st Battalion, Hertfordshire Regiment (T.F.).

At Cuinchy on 27th September Corporal Burt's company had lined the front trench, ready for an attack, when a bomb from a trench mortar fell amongst them. In a moment Corporal Burt rushed forward, put his foot on the fuse, wrenched it out of the bomb, and threw it over the parapet, thus rendering the terrible missile harmless. His presence of mind and great pluck saved the lives of his men in the traverse.

Second Lieutenant Alexander Buller Turnbull, 3rd Battalion (attached 1st Battalion), Royal Berkshire Regiment.

On 28th September, when his regimental bombers could not make headway at Fosse 8, Lieutenant Turnbull went along a communication trench practically alone, and threw bombs so quickly and accurately that he drove back the Germans about 150 yards. By his gallantry he enabled the reserves to advance and to cover his regiment in its retirement. Unhappily this hero died shortly afterwards of wounds.

CHAPTER XLVI.

BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE.—II.

Second Lieutenant Arthur James Terence Fleming-Sandes, 2nd Battalion, East Surrey Regiment.

Lieutenant Fleming-Sandes saved the situation at Hohenzollern Redoubt on 29th September, when his own men and the troops on his right were beginning to retire owing to the heavy fire and their lack of bombs. Collecting a few grenades, he leaped on to the parapet and flung them at the Germans, then only twenty yards away. An enemy bomb wounded him, but he struggled to his feet and went forward, still hurling his missiles at the enemy. Again he was hit, and this time was put out of action; but his gallant example had put new heart into his men, and they beat off the attack.

Private Samuel Harvey, 1st Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment.

Private Harvey was in the "Big Willie" trench on 29th September, when the enemy were heavily attacking and our supply of bombs ran short. He volunteered to fetch more, and went to and fro across the open, under fearful fire, carrying boxes of grenades. He managed to bring up no less than thirty boxes before he was wounded in the head. By his cool bravery he enabled his comrades to drive back the enemy.

Lance-Sergeant Oliver Brooks, 3rd Battalion, Coldstream Guards.

Near Loos on 8th October, when a strong party of the enemy had captured 200 yards of our trenches, Lance-Sergeant Brooks, without waiting for orders, led forward a party of bombers with such fine dash and determination that the ground was regained. On 28th October the King, who was visiting his troops at the front, was thrown from his horse, and was badly bruised and shaken. His Majesty bore his sufferings with great fortitude, and while lying in a hospital train on the way home, desired that Lance-Sergeant Brooks should be brought to him to receive the Victoria Cross. The soldier knelt on the floor of the saloon and bent over the prostrate King; but his Majesty was so weak that he could not pin the decoration on the hero's breast. The incident was most touching—the King, helpless and suffering, yet determined to do honour to a gallant soldier who had served his country nobly. King and soldier, each in his sphere, thus set the nation an inspiring example of devotion to duty.

His Majesty the King and Lance-Sergeant Oliver Brooks.

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

Second Lieutenant Rupert Price Hallowes, 4th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment.

At Hooge, between 25th September and 1st October, Lieutenant Hallowes over and over again inspired his men by his bravery and untiring energy. On one occasion he climbed on to the parapet and risked immediate death to encourage his comrades. Frequently he went forward into German positions during the night to spy out the land. During one of the attacks he went back under a heavy fire and brought up a fresh supply of bombs. Even when mortally wounded he continued to cheer his men and urge them to hold on.

Sergeant-Major John Crawshaw Raynes, "A" Battery, 71st Brigade, R.F.A.

When taking leave of his comrades before setting out for France, Sergeant-Major Raynes said to a chum, "I'll bet you a shilling I win the V.C." The wager was taken, and on 11th October, near Béthune, the sergeant won his bet. His battery had been very heavily bombarded, and when "Cease fire" was ordered he went out under a burst of heavy shells and bandaged Sergeant Ayres, who lay wounded forty yards in front. He then returned and worked his guns once more. During a pause in the firing he again went out to his friend and carried him into a dug-out. A gas shell burst at the mouth of the dug-out, and the wounded man was in peril of being suffocated. Seeing this, Sergeant-Major Raynes ran back across the open to fetch his gas helmet, which Sergeant Ayres donned and thus saved his life. Then the gallant Sergeant-Major, now badly gassed, staggered back to serve his guns once more. On 12th October he was buried in the ruins of a house, but was the first man to be rescued. He had been wounded in the head and the leg; nevertheless he worked might and main to save his comrades. As soon as his wounds were dressed he returned again to his battery.

Second Lieutenant C. G. Vickers, 1/7th (Robin Hood) Battery, Sherwood Foresters.

You will remember that on 13th October a division, consisting of Territorials from Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, Grimsby, and other North Midland towns, was ordered to assault the Hohenzollern Redoubt. "It is a story of men attacking machine guns, of rushes across the open with no spot of cover, of fierce work with bomb and bayonet in a narrow trench. What flesh and blood could do they did." The Sherwood Foresters were sent in on the afternoon of the 13th, and bombing encounters went on all night. When reliefs were arrived at one o'clock on the morning of the 14th, Lieutenant Vickers was discovered holding a barrier against fierce German attacks from front and flank. All his men but two had been killed or wounded, and single-handed he was beating back the foe while his men built a barrier behind him. At last he was badly wounded, but not before he had secured the safety of his trench.

Corporal James Lennox Dawson, 187th Company, R.E.

Prior to the war Corporal Dawson was a science master in Hill's Trust School, Govan. On 13th October, at Hohenzollern Redoubt, we prepared a gas attack against the enemy. Corporal Dawson, who had already proved himself a gallant and resourceful leader, discovered that three of our gas cylinders were leaking, and that many of our own men would soon be rendered insensible by the fumes. Under a heavy fire he rolled the cylinders one by one out of the trench, and then returning, lay down and fired at them with a rifle. The cylinders were broken open, and the gas escaped towards the enemy. There is no doubt that by his cool gallantry he saved many men from being gassed. You may be sure that when the hero visited his old school he was received by his former pupils with rapturous applause.

Private Thomas Kenny, 13th (Service) Battalion, Durham Light Infantry.

On the thick foggy night of 4th November Lieutenant Brown and Private Kenny went out towards the German lines on patrol. They were sighted by the enemy, and Lieutenant Brown was shot in both thighs. He begged his companion to leave him, but Kenny would not do so. He took the wounded officer on his back, and for more than an hour crawled about under heavy fire, trying to find his way back. At last, when quite exhausted, he reached a ditch which he recognized, and, placing the lieutenant in it, went on alone to look for help. At last he came across a listening patrol, and with help brought in the wounded man. During the last part of the journey the Germans fired on him with rifles and machine guns, and threw bombs at him from a distance of thirty yards.

Private John Caffrey, 2nd Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment.

On 16th November Private Caffrey and Corporal Stirk, R.A.M.C., started out to rescue a comrade lying about three or four hundred yards in front of the enemy's trenches. They were beaten back by shrapnel fire, but nothing daunted they

pushed out again, and in spite of the bullets of snipers and machine guns reached the wounded man. A bullet struck Corporal Stirk in the head just as he was lifting the man on to Caffrey's back. At once the gallant private put down his burden, bandaged Stirk, and helped him into safety. He then returned and brought in the other wounded man. Three times he had crossed the zone of fire on his errands of mercy.

Corporal Samuel Meekosha, 1/6th Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment (T.F.).

On 19th November, near the Yser, a platoon was holding a trench close to the German lines when the enemy's shells burst upon it, killing and wounding thirteen men and burying the rest. At this terrible moment Corporal Meekosha took command, sent a runner for assistance, and in full view of the enemy dug out his comrades and saved at least four lives.

Corporal Alfred Drake, 8th Battalion, Rifle Brigade.

Corporal Drake was out on patrol with an officer and two men on the night of 23rd November. When close to the German lines the party was discovered. One man who was shot down was carried off by his comrades, and when the officer fell Corporal Drake remained with him. When last seen, he was kneeling beside the officer bandaging his wounds, quite regardless of the heavy fire. A rescue party crawled out later on, and found the officer unconscious but alive, and Corporal Drake beside him, dead and riddled with bullets.

Shoeing-Smith Charles Hull, 21st Lancers.

Somewhere in Flanders, when the Lancers were under heavy fire, Captain Learoyd's horse was shot under him, and he fell to the ground. Shoeing-smith Charles Hull, seeing his officer's peril, galloped into the storm of fire, and taking up the captain behind him, dashed back into safety. It was a striking deed, and the shoeing-smith fully deserved the highest award of valour for his prompt and gallant rescue.

Private Harry Christian, 2nd Battalion, Royal Lancaster Regiment.

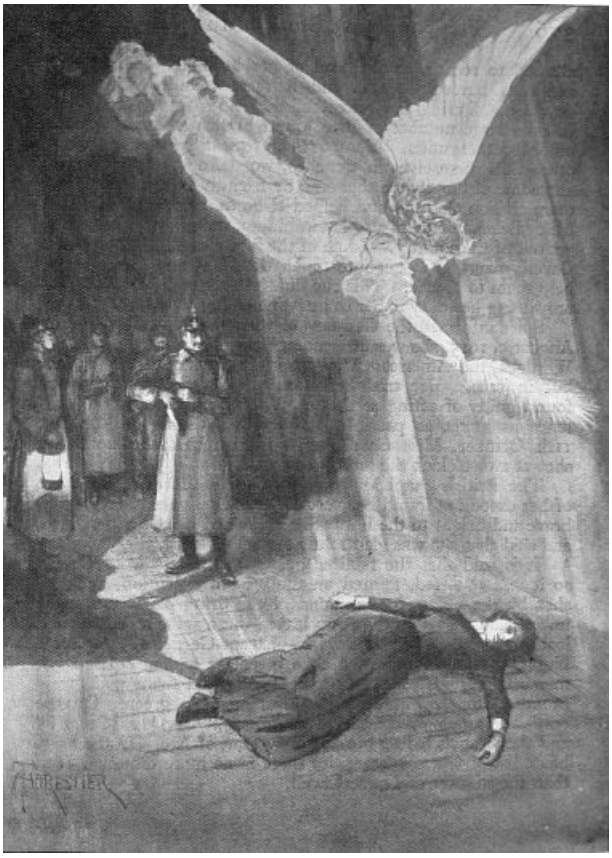
The Germans had opened fire with trench mortars on five or six of our men who were holding a crater. When the order was given to withdraw it was discovered that three men were missing. At once Private Christian returned to rescue them. While bombs were continually bursting on the edge of the crater, he dug out the men from under a heap of earth, and carried them, one by one, into safety. Later on, he placed himself where he could see the bombs coming, and directed his comrades when and where to seek cover.

Private William Young, 8th Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment.

On 22nd December, seeing that his sergeant had been wounded, Private Young went out under a very heavy fire to rescue him, and almost immediately received terrible injuries, both his jaws being shattered. Nevertheless, with the help of a comrade, he brought in the sergeant. At the dressing-station, to which he went unaided, it was discovered that this most gallant man had also received a bullet in his chest. Happily, he survived.

Nurse Cavell—Heroine and Martyr.

The heroic woman whose tragic story I am now about to relate finds a fitting place in this roll of heroes. Miss Cavell was the daughter of the Rev. Frederick Cavell, for forty years Vicar of Swardeston, Norfolk. She was trained as a nurse at the London Hospital, and in 1900 became head of a nursing institution in Brussels. Every one who knew her admired her noble character; she followed in the footsteps of the greatest of all nurses—Florence Nightingale.



The Martyrdom of Edith Cavell.

(*From the picture by A. Forestier. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)
When the news of Nurse Cavell's murder was received, the following message was sent to her mother: "By command of the King and Queen I write to assure you that the hearts of their Majesties go out to you in your bitter sorrow, and to express their horror at the appalling deed which has robbed you of your child. Men and women throughout the civilized world, while sympathizing with you, are moved to admiration and awe at her faith and courage in death."

When the Germans occupied Brussels Nurse Cavell was allowed to remain at the head of her hospital. She and her assistants nursed German and Belgian wounded with equal devotion. During the retreat of the Allies from Namur and Mons a large number of British and French soldiers were cut off or lost their units. Many of them were discovered and shot; others hid themselves in trenches, woods, or deserted houses, and some of them were sheltered by friendly farmers, who gave them civilian clothing and helped them to escape into Holland. Many Belgian soldiers also lay in hiding, waiting for a chance to get out of the country. Some of the fugitives, hearing of Nurse Cavell, managed to get into touch with her, and asked her to help them to escape. This she did. She believed that she was only doing her duty to her country in coming to their assistance.

Spies informed the Germans of what she was doing, and on August 5, 1915, she was arrested and put in prison. Mr. Brand Whitlock, the American Minister in Brussels, pleaded for her, but in vain. Her trial began on 7th October, and she was found guilty of acting as a spy. The Germans kept the sentence as secret as possible, and on the evening of Monday, 11th October, Miss Cavell was informed that she would be shot at two o'clock the next morning.

The British chaplain who visited Miss Cavell on the eve of her execution found her very calm and resigned. "She was brave and bright to the last. She professed her Christian faith, and said that she was glad to die for her country."

It is said that the final scene was horrible. Miss Cavell, so it was reported, fainted on the way to execution, and was shot by the officer in command of the firing party as she lay unconscious. When the news leaked out a wave of horror and loathing swept over all the world—except Germany. At home Nurse Cavell was mourned alike in palace and in cottage. A memorial service was held in St. Paul's, and many plans were proposed for keeping her beautiful memory green. On

the battlefield our men charged with the cry, "For Miss Cavell!" and the French hailed her as a new Joan of Arc. In the long, black list of German atrocities there is no more inhuman deed than the murder of Nurse Cavell.

CHAPTER XLVII.

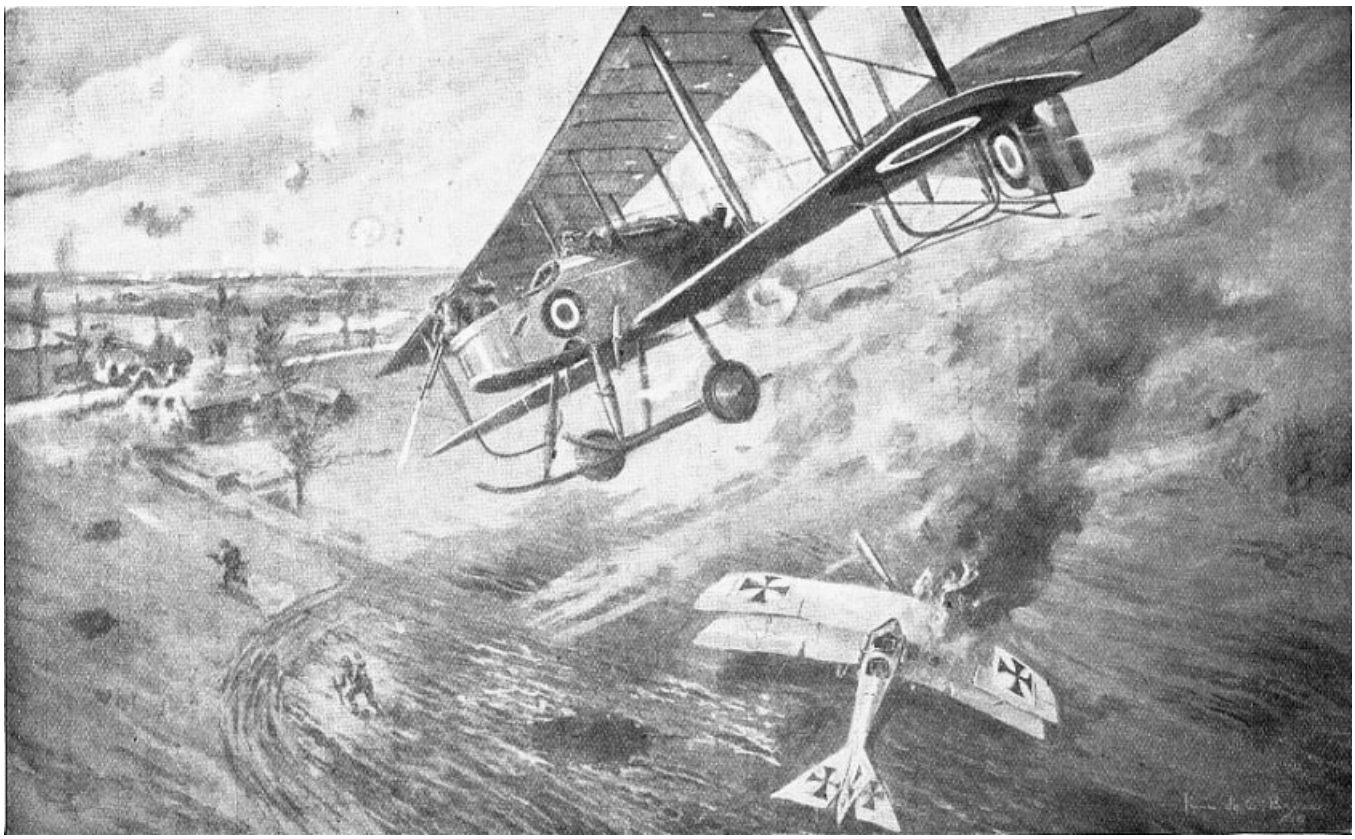
THE WAR IN THE AIR.

Over and over in these pages you have read of "airy navies grappling in the central blue." Every soldier, fighting his battles over again by the home fireside, loves to describe the aeroplanes that hovered above his trench while white, fleecy clouds of shrapnel burst around them. No returning soldier but can thrill his hearers with stories of deadly combats in the high heavens. The exploits of aircraft in this war open a new chapter of military history.

Nothing is more remarkable than the rapid progress which has been made in the conquest of the air. In October 1897 a daring man succeeded in flying about three hundred yards; in October 1915 men frequently made flights of hundreds of miles. Twenty years ago the aeroplane was unknown; to-day it is a recognized arm of warfare. No army or navy dare enter upon war without its air service.

Our French allies were the pioneers of these new powers of the air, and when war broke out they were well equipped with aircraft. It is said that at the close of the year 1915 they possessed more than three thousand aeroplanes, and that the number was being constantly increased.

French aircraft are divided into three classes, according as they are to be used for scouting, for fire control, or for bombardment. The scouting machines are of various kinds, and include a new type of small machine known as the "Baby" Nieuport. This machine, which only carries a pilot, is no more than 25 feet wide, but it has a motor of 80 horse-power, and can attain the amazing speed of 120 miles an hour. The "Baby" Nieuports can rise higher and quicker than an eagle.



A German Machine brought down and fired by a British Battle-plane.

(*From the drawing by John de G. Bryan. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)
This picture illustrates the splendid feat by which Second Lieutenant Insall won the Victoria Cross. **(See page 384.)**

The machines used for directing artillery fire are bigger, and carry one or more observers as well as the pilot. They usually have two motors, so that they can still fly if one of them is put out of action. For making raids still bigger machines are used. In 1915 the French pinned their faith to a giant triplane, which well deserved to be called "the Dreadnought of the Air." It was 63 feet from wing to wing; it was driven by four powerful motors, carried two quick-firing cannon and four machine guns, as well as 1,200 pounds of explosives, and on a raid was manned by a crew of four men.

You have frequently read in these pages of the scouting work done by aeroplanes. When they fly over the enemy's lines they have huge cameras fitted to the bodies of the machines. Exposures are made, and the machine speeds back to its own lines, usually amid a storm of bursting shrapnel. Every aerodrome has a dark room in which the plates are developed. An enlargement is made, and the staff is thus provided with a picture of the German trenches as seen from above. If a good photograph is taken, the positions appear as clear as daylight; even the barbed wire and the situation and number of the machine guns can be seen. Poor photographs, however, do not show the details, and cannot distinguish a trench from a watercourse. Sometimes large kites are used for photographic purposes.

You can easily understand what a great change the aeroplane has produced in warfare when I tell you that during the Russo-Japanese War the Japanese fought for weeks, and sacrificed thousands of men, in order to capture the top of a hill from which their observers could overlook Port Arthur. Nowadays an aeroplane can supply all the information needed in a single hour, and howitzers can be directed from the air so that their shells will drop on the required position, though the gunners cannot possibly see their targets.

A modern general would be almost lost without his air service. From dawn to dark aircraft hover over the enemy's position, photographing his trenches, "spotting" his batteries, noticing the movement of troops and trains, and bringing back priceless information. More than once French aeroplanes have landed spies behind the German lines, and have returned to pick them up again days later.

We British were the last of the great European nations to apply themselves to the air, but by the outbreak of war we were well equipped. The British Royal Flying Corps consisted of a military and a naval wing. Each wing was divided into squadrons, consisting of twenty-four aeroplanes and twenty-four pilots, under a major or commander. The squadron was in turn divided into six flights, each flight comprising four machines. Every squadron had its own motor wagons and armoured motor cars. Our airmen, if they were not so skilful as the French, were competent and very daring, and had been trained to act with other arms. The Germans at first gave most of their attention to airships, but they were also provided with a strong force of aeroplanes. The Austrian service, though it contained some skilful pilots, was much inferior to that of Germany; while the Russians were short of machines, though they possessed giant biplanes which could carry over a ton weight of explosives.

As far back as Christmas Day, 1914, our airmen made raids upon fortified places in Germany. Seven seaplanes, escorted by cruisers and submarines, flew over Cuxhaven, where German warships were lying, and dropped bombs which, it is said, destroyed one or more Zeppelin sheds. Three of the aviators returned to the escorting ships safely; three others, who were rescued by submarines, had to destroy their machines in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy; and the seventh was picked up by a Dutch trawler. On January 22, 1915, another raid was made by two of our aviators on the new German naval base of Zeebrugge. A submarine lying in the harbour was destroyed, and probably other damage was done. Commander Davies, one of the two British aviators, had a most adventurous home journey. At one time he was surrounded by seven of the enemy's craft. He managed to elude them, however, and returned safely, but slightly wounded.

Raids such as these increased in number as the year advanced. On 11th February thirty-four of our seaplanes and aeroplanes made another attack on Zeebrugge, under the leadership of Commander Samson, whose daring has already been mentioned in these pages.[78] Great damage was done, and five days later the visit was repeated. Forty machines, including eight belonging to the French, dropped bombs on various batteries and gun positions, on an aerodrome, and on mine-sweepers off the shore. During the Battle of Neuve Chapelle the railways in the rear of the German lines were bombarded, and the junction at Courtrai, seventeen miles east of Ypres, was destroyed. On a later page I shall tell you how Second Lieutenant W. B. Rhodes-Moorhouse won the Victoria Cross and lost his life during this raid. On 7th June two of our airmen destroyed an airshed and a Zeppelin north of Brussels.

It is impossible in these pages to describe all the air raids of the year. Each was much like the other, except for the

number of the machines engaged and the extent of the damage done. As an illustration, I will give you a brief account of the great French raid on the German city of Karlsruhe on 3rd June. It was made in retaliation for Zeppelin raids on open French and British towns, and was the biggest enterprise of the kind so far undertaken. Twenty-three aeroplanes set out at the first flush of dawn. Mr. E. A. Powell in *Vive la France* thus describes the progress of the raid:—

> "So rapid was the pace at which the aeroplanes were travelling that it was not yet six o'clock when the commander of the squadron, peering through his glasses, saw, far below him, the yellow gridiron which he knew to be the streets, the splotches of green which he knew to be the parks, and the squares of red and gray which he knew to be the buildings of Karlsruhe. The first warning that the townsfolk had was when a dynamite shell came plunging out of nowhere and exploded with a crash that rocked the city to its foundations. The people of Karlsruhe were being given a dose of the same medicine which the Zeppelins had given to Antwerp, to Paris, and to London. . . . For nearly an hour it rained bombs. Holes as large as cellars suddenly appeared in the stone-paved streets and squares; buildings of brick and stone and concrete crashed to the ground as though flattened by the hand of God; fires broke out in various quarters of the city and raged unchecked; the terrified inhabitants cowered in their cellars or ran in blind panic for the open country; the noise was terrific, for bombs were falling at the rate of a dozen to the minute; beneath that rain of death Karlsruhe rocked and reeled."

Of the four squadrons which set out for Karlsruhe only two machines failed to return. The Germans were furious, and the Kaiser telegraphed his "deep indignation at the wicked attack on beloved Karlsruhe." He had conveniently forgotten the murderous raids of his own Zeppelins.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HEROES OF THE AIR.

Before I describe very briefly the Zeppelin raids upon England, let me set down the names and exploits of the five gallant airmen who were awarded the Victoria Cross during the year 1915.

Second Lieutenant William Barnard Rhodes-Moorhouse, Royal Flying Corps.

The first Victoria Cross ever conferred on an airman was won by Lieutenant Rhodes-Moorhouse, for extraordinary daring and endurance during the raid on Courtrai, which I mentioned on page 381. While dropping his bombs he descended to 300 feet, and was furiously assailed by anti-aircraft guns, which seriously wounded him in the thigh. He determined to save his machine at all costs, and made for home, flying at a height of only 100 feet. Though again wounded, he did not lose control of his machine, but flew thirty-five miles to his base, where he landed and made his report as if nothing had happened. Shortly afterwards he died in hospital of his wounds.

Flight Sub-Lieutenant R. A. J. Warneford, R.N.

On the morning of June 7, 1915, Lieutenant Warneford, who was flying in a very light monoplane, sighted a Zeppelin between Ghent and Brussels, and made straight for it. While approaching it he was too low, and was fired at by the Zeppelin's guns. Keeping to the rear of the airship, he climbed upwards by a series of jerks, until he was well above it. Then he swooped down until he was only fifty feet above the great gas bag, and dropped six bombs, the last of which burst the Zeppelin's envelope. A loud explosion followed, and the airship fell to the ground in the midst of smoke and flame. The force of the explosion turned his machine upside down, but he succeeded in righting it. Shortly afterwards his pressure pump failed to work, and he was obliged to come down in the German lines. He got out of the machine, repaired the pump, scrambled in again, and soared off. For two and a half hours he continued flying, and then he came down, happily behind his own lines. He was so weary that he fell fast asleep by the side of the machine, and was finally discovered by French soldiers only twenty yards from the cliffs of Gris-nez.[79] The story of his brilliant feat was flashed over the world, and his name at once became a household word in two continents. He had, by superb courage and skill, destroyed the first of the Zeppelins in flight. The Allies vied with each other in doing him honour; but, alas! his career, which promised so much, was soon brought to a close. Ten days later, while trying a new machine at Versailles, he was thrown out and killed.

Captain Lance George Hawker, D.S.O., Royal Engineers and Royal Flying Corps.

On 19th April Captain Hawker dropped bombs on a German airshed from a height of only 200 feet. He was under heavy fire all the time, and ran terrible risks. To avoid the shells hurled at him, he took refuge behind a German captive balloon, and was enabled to make good his escape. For this feat he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. On 25th July, when flying alone, he fell in with three German aeroplanes, and attacked them one after the other. The first escaped, but he damaged the second and third so badly that they were forced to descend. For this splendid feat he received the V.C.

Captain John Aidan Liddell, 3rd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and Royal Flying Corps.

During a scouting flight from Ostend to Ghent an enemy shot broke Captain Liddell's thigh, smashed the control wheel, and otherwise damaged his machine. For a brief time he was unconscious, and his machine dropped nearly 3,000 feet. With a great effort he pulled himself together, and, though continually fired at, managed to bring his aeroplane into our own lines half an hour after he had been wounded. Only an airman can appreciate the extraordinary skill and determination which the wounded officer displayed.

Second , No. 11 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps.

On 7th November Lieutenant Insall was out patrolling with a mechanic as gunner, when he was sighted and attacked by a German machine. With great skill he got to close range with his opponent, and his gunner fired a drum of cartridges which brought the German aeroplane to the ground. When the Germans scrambled out of their machine Lieutenant Insall dived towards them, and his gunner opened fire on them and they fled. An enemy party now fired at him; but, undeterred, he dropped a bomb on the fallen machine and set it on fire. He then flew over the German positions, and descended so

low that his gunner was able to fire on the German trenches as they passed over them. His petrol tank was damaged, and he was forced to land in a wood inside our lines. At once the enemy's artillery opened fire on him, and some 150 shells fell around the machine as it lay on the ground. That night, behind screened lights, he repaired his machine, and at dawn flew home safely with his gunner.

Squadron Commander Richard Bell Davies, D.S.O., R.N.

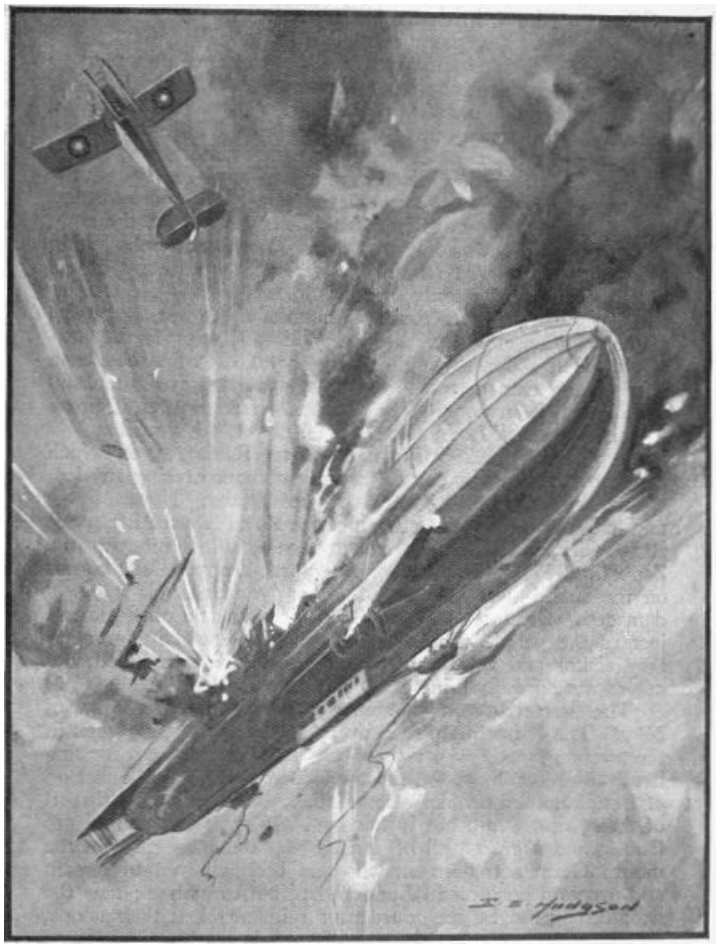
Commander Davies was the hero of one of the most striking incidents known to aerial warfare. On 19th November lieutenant Smylie made a raid upon the Turkish railway station of Ferijik, on the Turkish river Maritza. He planed down over the station, and dropped all his bombs but one. While doing so his machine was badly hit, and he had to come to earth in a neighbouring marsh. In order to prevent the enemy from capturing his machine he set it on fire. He had hardly done so when he saw Commander Davies coming to his rescue. Fearing that the commander would descend near the burning machine, and thus run the risk of being blown up by the remaining bomb, Lieutenant Smylie took out a pistol, fired at the missile and exploded it. Then Commander Davies swooped down, picked up the lieutenant, and hurried off with all speed into safety. Seldom, if ever, has such a feat of pluck and gallantry been performed.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE COMING OF THE ZEPPELINS.

On page 144 of our first volume I gave you a brief account of the great airship invented by Count Zeppelin and called after his name. It is said that the newest type of Zeppelin is about 700 feet long, and has eighteen compartments, which hold about a million cubic feet of hydrogen. Each compartment is a separate balloon, and in theory the airship can remain afloat if two of the balloons are damaged. The framework is of wood and aluminium. The engines, guns, stores, and crew are contained in two cars or gondolas, which are built into the framework of the airship, almost flush with its keel. The engines are four in number, and drive the propellers, a pair being coupled to each car, two forward and two astern. When they are working they make a terrible din, and a Zeppelin thus advertises his approach.

Some of the latest vessels have a speed of from forty to sixty miles an hour. Two sets of rudders are provided—one set for steering the ship horizontally, and one set to guide it when ascending or descending. It can ascend with remarkable speed—it is said that a modern Zeppelin can soar upwards at a speed of 4,500 feet per minute, and can reach the safety zone of about 12,000 feet almost before artillery on the ground has secured the range. A large Zeppelin can carry about seventeen tons, of which about two tons consist of explosives. All Zeppelins are fitted with powerful searchlights, and a car which can be let down from the gondola by steel ropes so as to enable the men in it to make observations from a lower level. The weakest part of a Zeppelin is its upper envelope. Attacking aeroplanes always endeavour to rise above the airship in order to drop bombs upon it. You will remember that Warneford destroyed his Zeppelin in this way.



Sub-Lieutenant Warneford bombing a Zeppelin in Mid-air.

(*By permission of The Graphic.*)

A description of this exploit, which won Sub-Lieutenant Warneford the Victoria Cross, is given on page 382.

Before the war a Zeppelin had travelled 1,800 miles on a single journey, and had remained in the air for thirty-five hours at a stretch. I have already told you that the Germans had built great airship sheds on the island of Heligoland. From this base to Yarmouth, on the east coast of England, is a distance of only 280 miles. It was, therefore, clear that, given suitable weather, a Zeppelin could not only cross the North Sea and return, but could sail over large areas of Great Britain as well. The Germans had long dreamed of making Zeppelin raids on London and destroying it by means of big bombs; but most people in this country laughed at the notion. We pinned our faith to the aeroplane, and believed the Zeppelin to be little more than an expensive failure. No real efforts were, therefore, made to cope with the threatened danger. A few anti-aircraft guns were stationed round the capital, searchlights were installed, street lamps were obscured, and windows were darkened, but that was all.

On the evening of January 19, 1915, the people of Yarmouth were startled by the sound of loud explosions in their streets. The Zeppelins had at last arrived. Bombs were dropped, two persons were killed, houses were wrecked, and holes were blown in the streets. The raiders then flew to Sandringham and King's Lynn, at both of which places bombs were dropped. Happily the King and Queen had left their Norfolk home for London on the previous morning. At King's Lynn four houses were destroyed, several others were damaged, and the widow of a soldier and a boy of fourteen were killed. People stood aghast at this new form of German "frightfulness." It was directed not against fortresses or places of military importance, but against peaceful civilians in open, unprotected towns. It was sheer murder, and was intended to terrorize the British people and bring them to their knees. The Germans have never been able to understand our national temper. They had still to learn that such blows only weld us the more firmly together, and steel us to greater resistance. Every Zeppelin raid brought flocks of fresh recruits to our banners.

A month later a German aeroplane appeared over the Essex coast and dropped bombs on and near Colchester, but no lives were lost. The summer air campaign began in earnest on 14th April, when airships appeared on Tyneside and attempted to destroy the great shipbuilding yards. Bombs were dropped, but almost at random, and very little damage was done, probably because the pilot was out of his reckoning. There were three other raids on the East Coast in the same month; but though houses were wrecked, no lives were lost. On 10th May Southend was attacked. At the first alarm people left their beds and rushed into the streets half dressed. They could see the body of the Zeppelin outlined against the sky, and the bombs falling like balls of fire. Many houses were destroyed, and others blazed furiously, but only one person was killed—the wife of a labourer. During the first nine months of the war the results of the air raids must have been very disappointing to the Germans. Half a dozen people had been killed, a few had been injured, and damage to the extent of some hundred thousand pounds had been done. The Germans were soon to improve on this record. "London has not felt it yet," they said.

A week later a Zeppelin passed over Ramsgate, on which it dropped two dozen bombs, happily without causing any loss of life, and then over Broadstairs and Dover. News of this raid had been sent to the station of the Royal Naval Air Service at Dunkirk, and eight seaplanes at once set out to intercept the Zeppelin. Flight-Commander Bigsworth dropped four bombs on the airship, but it managed to get home, though seriously damaged. On 26th May there was another raid on Southend just as the people were leaving places of entertainment. A lady visitor and a little girl, seven years old, were killed, and others were gravely injured.

The first attack on London was made on the last day of May. The Zeppelins passed over Colchester at ten o'clock in the evening, and twenty-three minutes later were dropping bomb after bomb on the most crowded part of the East End of London. Six people were killed, amongst them a little girl of three, who was burnt in her bed. Many houses burst into flames, and a great deal of damage was done. Earlier in the month German tradesmen, who had been allowed to remain and carry on business in London, had been mobbed; now the people, angered by the murderous raid, attacked their shops, and in many cases wrecked them. In June the raiders once more visited the East and North-East Coast. On 6th June they reached a town on the East Coast during the night and dropped many bombs on it. A large drapery house was destroyed, but a beautiful Norman church hard by escaped almost uninjured. Twenty-four persons were killed and about sixty others seriously wounded during the attack. The outrage was speedily avenged by Lieutenant Warneford, who, you will remember, destroyed a Zeppelin in Belgium the next day.

On 15th June there was another raid on the North-East Coast. A number of workmen ran out of their shops to see the Zeppelins, and were caught by the bomb explosions. Some sixteen of them were killed, while thirteen others were injured. Only one raid, and that an unsuccessful one, took place in July; but in August there were three, all of them on a large scale, and all on the eastern counties. On 9th August Zeppelins swept over a large area and killed one man, nine women, and four children, besides wounding at least fourteen others. One of the Zeppelins was damaged, and on the

homeward voyage was attacked and destroyed by our aircraft.

On the 12th the visit was repeated, and three men, eleven women, and nine children fell victims to the bombs, while many others were badly injured, and numerous houses were wrecked. One bomb fell into the middle of a little crowd of old men, women, and young children standing at a street corner in a little country town, and worked frightful havoc. Though the Zeppelins were attacked by anti-aircraft guns, they succeeded in escaping. The third raid was on 17th August, when ten persons were killed and thirty-six persons were injured, including three children. In this case, too, the Zeppelins came under the fire of our guns, and perhaps, as in the former case, one of them was hit.

By this time it was evident that we were without proper means of defence against the enemy airships. They could come and go almost at will, and scatter death and destruction amongst us almost unchecked. After every raid the German newspapers published glowing accounts of the destruction which had been wrought. One of them said, "We cannot rain bombs enough on England." Our Government had given us only the briefest accounts of the raids, and people began to ask why they could not be told the whole truth. Mr. Balfour said that it was necessary to keep the Germans in ignorance of what they had done, and it would be folly to give them information which would help them on future voyages. Up to the end of August, he told us, no soldier or sailor had been killed, and only seven had been wounded. Only on one occasion had damage of military importance been done.

Raids were made on London on the evenings of 7th and 8th September. On the first night outlying districts were attacked, and on the following night bombs were dropped in the very heart of the city. The Zeppelins arrived between ten and eleven o'clock, when the places of amusement were open, and the streets were full of people. Suddenly the sound of explosion after explosion was heard. An American writer thus described the scene:—

> "Traffic is at a standstill. A million quiet cries make a subdued roar. Seven million people of the biggest city in the world stand gazing into the sky from the darkened streets. . . . Among the autumn stars floats a long, gaunt Zeppelin. It is dull yellow—the colour of the harvest moon. The long fingers of searchlights, reaching up from the roofs of the city, are touching all sides of the death messenger with their white tips. Great booming sounds shake the city. They are Zeppelin bombs—falling, killing, burning. Lesser noises—of shooting—are nearer at hand, the noise of aerial guns sending shrapnel into the sky. . . . If the men up there think they are terrifying London, they are wrong. They are only making England white-hot mad."

Many people were killed, great fires arose, but no important public building was damaged. The Germans reported that they had practically wrecked London; but though they had done mischief enough, the result fell very, very far short of their boastful claims. Shortly afterwards Admiral Sir Percy Scott was placed in charge of the air defences of the capital.

There were four raids on the East Coast in September, and on 13th October London and parts of the eastern counties were again attacked. In London alone thirty-two persons were killed and ninety-five injured, and the total casualties of that night were fifty-six killed and one hundred and thirteen wounded. A cry now arose that our aircraft should treat German towns to a dose of their own medicine; but there were many who believed that we ought not to repay evil for evil, and that reprisals would not bring the war any nearer to its close.

The October raid was the last which took place during the year 1915. On twenty several occasions during that year the Zeppelins had paid visits to various parts of the East Coast of England. They had murdered no fewer than 199 people, and had inflicted injuries upon 421 others.

CHAPTER L.

THE OVERRUNNING OF SERBIA.

December 1914 saw Serbia gloriously victorious; December 1915 saw her plunged in hopeless defeat, the remnants of her army on alien soil, her people in bondage, her aged king a fugitive. Since that August day when the Austrians "let slip the dogs of war" her peasant soldiers had fought like heroes. Thrice had Serbia been invaded, and thrice had she flung back the invader; but every success had drained her of lifeblood, and had brought the hour of her downfall nearer. She must have lost 150,000 men in action, and disease and pestilence had robbed her of another 50,000. The Serbian army was now only 200,000 strong, and there was no possible hope of increasing it. The Allies could not spare her reinforcements, nor did she ask for them. She felt that she could still hold her own, and perhaps she might have done so had not a neighbouring nation treacherously joined the enemy and flung a large and well-equipped army upon her flank.

Serbia's eastern neighbour is Bulgaria. I have already told you that Bulgaria owes her very existence to Russia. In 1878, when the Russians were nearing Constantinople, they agreed to a treaty by which the province of Bulgaria was to be formed into a new state. In the next year the Bulgarians elected a German prince as their sovereign; but his attempts to increase his territory brought about a quarrel with Russia, and in 1886 he was forced to give up the throne and leave the country. A new prince was elected—another German, Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. In 1908 Ferdinand declared Bulgaria an independent kingdom, and became its first king.

On page 313 I told you that just before the fall of Brest the Germans prepared to force a road from Austria to the Bosphorus. What was the object of this new move? The Germans were in much the same position as the British and French: they were cut off from their Allies by hostile country. As you know, we undertook the ill-starred expedition to Gallipoli in order to open up communication between the Western Allies and Russia. The Central Powers were now about to invade Serbia in order to open up communication between Austria and Bulgaria and Turkey. If they could get into touch with these Balkan Powers, they could provide Turkey with munitions and supplies; they could send reinforcements into Gallipoli, and generally direct the operations of the Bulgarians and the Turks. Further, they could secure a right of way into Asia Minor, which would enable them to attack Egypt and perhaps advance to the Persian Gulf and threaten India. It was also hoped that new supplies of food, cotton, metals, and men would be tapped.

Look carefully at the map on page 393. Follow the main railway line, which runs from the Austrian town of Semlin on the Danube through Belgrade, Nish, and Sophia, the capital of Bulgaria, to Constantinople. If the Central Powers could capture this railway, they would secure a through route from Germany to the shores of the Bosphorus. The whole aim and object of the invasion which I am about to describe was to get possession of this railway.

What was the plan of campaign? Von Gallwitz, with the great artillery engine which had driven the Russians back from Galicia into the marshes of the Pripet, was to cross the Danube between Orsova on the Rumanian border and Belgrade, and blast his way through the triangle of country between the railway and the Bulgarian frontier. At the same time the Austrians were to strike south to the west of Belgrade, and while these two movements were in progress Bulgaria was to fall upon Serbia from the east. The little Serbian army was to be taken in front and in flank at *nine* different points by forces which outnumbered it by at least three to one. The invaders were furnished with huge guns and vast supplies of ammunition, against which the Serbians could not hope to stand. The moment that the blow was launched the fate of Serbia was sealed.

Map to illustrate the Campaign in Serbia.

In 1897 Bulgaria proposed to form a league uniting Greece and the Balkan States against Turkey, and in 1912 the league was formed. Shortly afterwards the First Balkan War began. Turkey was badly beaten, and much territory was taken from her; but when the time came for dividing up the booty the victors fell out and fought amongst themselves. Greece and Serbia took the field against Bulgaria, and overcame her. Ever since that time Bulgaria bitterly hated Serbia. Her king, Ferdinand, was a vain and cunning man, without a spark of personal courage, but with a keen eye for the main chance, and with no scruples to prevent him from seizing it. During the present war he watched and waited, and bided his time. When he saw the Russians retreating day after day, and the British and French making no progress in Gallipoli or in the West, he felt sure that Germany would win. He was a German himself, and he was now prepared to range himself with the Central Powers—at a price. On 17th July he signed a treaty by which, as a reward for joining the two Kaisers, he was to receive Serbian Macedonia, Salonika,[80] and some Greek territory. All August and September he was busy making his preparations, and by the beginning of October he was ready to obey his masters' orders, and fall upon Serbia.

Why did not the Allies hasten to the defence of threatened Serbia? "Thereby hangs a tale." On 11th September the Greek Premier, who believed that his country ought to stand by its treaty with Serbia and enter the fray, asked France and Britain for 150,000 troops. About a fortnight later the Allies agreed to furnish these troops, and the Greek army began to mobilize. Ferdinand had already called up his armies, but he told the world that he had only done so for the purpose of self-defence, and that he had no intention of making war on his neighbours. Serbia, however, knew better, and towards the end of September she informed the British that she was not going to wait until the Bulgarians were fully prepared, but was about to attack them at once. The British Government persuaded her not to do so, because it still had hopes that Bulgaria might be persuaded to stay her hand. You will soon learn that Serbia, by taking the advice of the British Government, suffered terribly.

By agreement with the Greek Premier, the Allies began to land troops at the Greek port of Salonika in the first week of October. The Greeks objected, but did not hinder us; indeed, they helped our army to occupy the place. Then came a remarkable change of front on the part of the Greek king. He had married the Kaiser's sister, and he went in fear of his brother-in-law. Probably he believed that Germany was going to win; he knew that Bulgaria was strong and Serbia weak, and that the 150,000 troops of the Allies could not turn the balance in his favour. So he informed his Prime Minister that he had never consented to fight on behalf of Serbia; whereupon the Prime Minister resigned, and a new Government was formed. It declared that Greece meant to remain neutral, though it was very friendly to the Allies.

While our transports were crowding the harbour at Salonika and the Allies were busy putting the place into a state of defence, Ferdinand threw off the mask. A week later, on 12th October, when his advance guards were over the border, he declared war on Serbia. Four days later Britain declared war upon Bulgaria. Von Mackensen had already crossed the Danube, and was pressing against the Serbian front with 200,000 men; a quarter of a million Bulgarians were moving eastwards against the exposed right flank of Serbia; and in Salonika there were 13,000 French and British troops

preparing to march inland against the Bulgarian left. Such was the position of affairs on 15th October.

Now let us return to the Danube and briefly follow the stages of Serbia's agony. By means of the great river, which is linked with the canals of the Elbe and the Rhine, barges full of big guns and supplies had been conveyed to the scene of action. On 19th September, before the big guns arrived, Austrian batteries opened fire on Belgrade; but the Serbians and the British sailors who were fighting with them prevented a crossing. On 3rd October the enemy's big guns were placed in position, and the Serbian trenches were pounded to dust. It was the Donajetz bombardment all over again. Belgrade could no longer be held, and by the 8th of October the Austrians and Germans had crossed the Danube and the Save at six places between Shabatz and Belgrade. There was a desperate struggle in the streets of the capital, but on the morning of the 9th the place was in the enemy's hands. The lesson of Warsaw had been learned, and all that was valuable in the city had been carried off.

By 11th October the Austro-Germans held a hundred miles of front on the south banks of the Save and the Danube. The Serbians had fought desperately, but they could not stand before the mass of artillery brought against them. The Serbian left had been forced back towards the hills on which it had made its first stand against the third Austrian invasion, the centre had fallen back to a ridge seven miles south of the capital, and the right was being harried across the river plain and up the valleys of the Morava and the Mlava. On the Serbian right Mackensen moved his big guns slowly. He was waiting for the Bulgarians to take the Serbians in flank and in rear. On the 12th the Bulgarians attacked the Serbians at five different points, and it was clear that, if the Serbians were to avoid being completely surrounded, they must retreat, as the Russians had done. But, unlike the Russians, they had no vast land into which they could retire. Their only line of withdrawal lay to the west and south-west, into the bare, rugged highlands of Montenegro and the wilderness of Albania.

The French and British in the south were by this time struggling northwards in the attempt to reach Uskub, the great meeting-place of all routes in Southern Serbia. They were, however, too late: the Bulgarians entered Uskub on 22nd October, and the Allies were thus cut off from all communication with the interior.

The Serbians were now in a desperate plight. Along every road and track left open to the south-west thousands of old men, women, and children trudged wearily onward, bearing with them the few household goods which they could carry off. Food was scarce, carts could not be obtained for love or money, and on the desolate hills thousands of wretched peasants perished of cold and hunger. By 26th October the whole north-east corner of Serbia was in the hands of the enemy. The Serbian army which lay between the Drina and Nish was cut off from that which lay in the shape of a half-moon in front of the southern Bulgarian army. There was no more fighting for the northern army; it was slowly but surely being enclosed, and was now in full retreat along the valley of the river Ibar on the road to Montenegro. Meanwhile the southern army made a last despairing effort to stem the Bulgarian advance in the passes between Prisrend and Monastir, and, having failed, retreated into Albania.

Look at the railway line running from Uskub to Mitrovitza and find the pass of Katchanik. If the northern army was to get away safely into Montenegro, the Bulgarians must be prevented from pushing to their rear and swinging to the north to cut off the retreat. It was therefore necessary to hold the enemy at Katchanik Pass. Five thousand men, all that was left of the garrison at Uskub, along with three regiments from the north, now prepared to make a stand. Their guns were on the heights, and they had sufficient ammunition for a battle of several days. The Bulgarians advanced on a fifteen-mile front, but the Serbian guns drove them back. On the third day the Serbians attacked with bombs and the bayonet. All night the desperate struggle continued, and after twelve hours' fighting the Bulgarian line was pierced. But the enemy in overwhelming strength formed up behind the gap and began to enclose the little Serbian force. It fell back fighting and joined the retreating northern army. But it had done its work—the danger of disaster was over.

Another stand was made at the Babuna Pass, which you will see on the map, about fifty miles south of Katchanik Pass. You will notice from the map that if the Bulgarians could get to Prilep no supplies could reach the Serbians from the south. If, too, the Allies could retake the town of Veles,[81] Uskub would be threatened, and the Bulgarians would not be able to follow up the northern army. In the first days of November some 5,000 Serbians actually held the crest of the Babuna Pass for more than a week. The Allies, however, could make no headway from the south, and the gallant rearguard, finding six divisions of the enemy before it, was forced to fall back into Albania.

What of the Allies in Salonika? On 12th October General Sarrail arrived to take command of the French 2nd Division, which had been brought from Cape Helles. Before our 10th Division from Suvla was ready to move, the French moved up country in the hope of joining hands with the Serbians in the neighbourhood of Uskub. You will see on the map a railway running up the Vardar to Veles. Along this railway Sarrail moved his troops. It was a single, grass-grown track, quite inadequate for the advance of an army. Ninety miles north of Salonika, at a point marked **X** on the map, it begins to run through a narrow gorge with steep rocky walls, called the Iron Gate. If the Bulgarians once gained this ravine, the Allies would be held up and unable to advance. Early in the month of October Bulgarian raiders cut the railway at **X**, but on the 19th the French advance guards reached the place and drove them out. Four days later the rest of the division arrived, and detachments which were ferried across the Vardar seized positions on the left bank of the river, which was then swollen by the autumn rains. Meanwhile the British 10th Division extended the French right to Lake Doiran. It was now proposed to capture a steep wall of mountain which commanded the valley. In order to reach it the French left had to cross the swollen river once more. It had no pontoons, but by means of an old ferry-boat a detachment got across. The French scaled the summit, drove off the Bulgarians who held it, and dug themselves in. On 4th and 5th November the Bulgarians made a strong attack on the summit, but were repulsed after fierce fighting at close quarters.

Now that the French commanded the valley southward, they began to push on towards the Babuna Pass in order to join hands with the Serbians who were holding the crest. By the time they were within ten miles of the Serbian position the Bulgarians were flinging 125,000 men against the heroic rearguard. The French dared not proceed further. Supplies could only reach them along a hundred miles of single-line railway, which might be cut any day; their only means of crossing the Vardar was by a crazy wooden bridge, and there were twenty miles of bad road in their rear. The Serbians had already retreated from the Babuna Pass, and an advance could be of no service to them. Further, the Bulgarians were trying to cut them off from the bridge. They were, therefore, obliged to retreat; no other course was open to them. The Allied endeavour had come to nothing. The French and British fell back on Salonika, and there remained throughout the winter.

"Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow."

(*From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of the Sphere.*)
This picture shows old King Peter and his court retreating on foot through the snows of winter into the wilds of Albania.

In those November days heartrending scenes were witnessed on the Serbian hills, now white with the first snows of winter. Fugitives in ox wagons, in country carts, and on foot, men, women, and little children, thronged the roads—a long procession of woe. The army which, a year ago, had flung the Austrians out of the country, was now a mere remnant of 150,000 famished and weary men. With it marched our British Naval Brigade and its guns. The devoted doctors and nurses, who had for nine months been ministering to the wounded and diseased, were scattered far and wide. By roundabout roads some of them reached the Allies at Salonika; others gained the Adriatic coast; and some, such as Lady Paget, remained and trusted to the tender mercies of the Bulgarians. Retreating with the army were the officials of the Court and the Government. Perhaps the most pathetic figure of all was the Serbian King, racked by rheumatism and sore of heart because his age and infirmities prevented him from fighting in the ranks with his heroic people. But behind all his sorrows there was a ray of hope. His army, though but a remnant, was still an army, and not a broken and dispirited mob. It would live to fight again.

So, for the Allies, the year 1915 closed in gloom. A visitor from Mars, presented with a map of the German conquests, might have been pardoned had he proclaimed the two Kaisers victorious. From the Yser to the Dvina, from the Baltic to the Bosphorus, and thence to the Tigris, they and their fellow-conspirators were masters of 177,000,000 people. They had driven the Russians before them; they had made another Belgium of Serbia; the French and British had failed in their Eastern enterprises, and could not break through in the West. The Germans loudly boasted of their triumph; but, to their amazement, there was no sign of war-weariness or faint-heartedness amongst the Allies. Conscious that the enemy had passed the first flush of his mighty strength, the Allies endured the heaviness of the night, and, while waiting for the morning,

"Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph;
Held, we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

END OF VOLUME IV.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1]Wild and mountainous country of the Balkans to the west of Serbia, with its coast on the Adriatic Sea.

[2]Sphagnum or bog moss occurs in large patches of a pale green or reddish colour on moors, and sometimes fills up small lakes or pools. The growth of bog moss has played a large part in the formation of peat. There are many varieties of bog moss, and some of them have now been put to practical use in our field hospitals.

The story of the discovery of the properties of the moss is interesting. One day in a peat moss litter works some distance from Kiel a worker met with a serious injury. There were no appliances to deal with the case at the works, but the men did the best

they could. They took a quantity of the article which they manufactured, peat moss litter, and laying it on the wounds tied bandages over it. The injured man was then conveyed to Kiel, and taken to a hospital. When the doctors undid the bandages, and found the dirty-looking moss litter in the wound, they were horrified, and declared that the injured limb would have to be cut off. Very soon, however, their horror gave way to surprise, and they said, "Ah, here is something which we do not know about!" They found that, far from the poisoning which they had expected, the injury had been beautifully cleaned by the rude dressing, and had actually begun to heal. With German thoroughness, they made further experiments, and so "discovered" sphagnum moss from the surgeon's point of view.

[3]To change from one tack to the other without going about; to shift a fore-and-aft sail from one side to the other when the wind is aft or on the quarter.

[4]A nautical measure = 6 ft.

[5]Plural of *fellah*, an Egyptian or Syrian peasant.

[6]See page 46.

[7]See Vol. II., p. 237.

[8]Ku´fee.

[9]Croo´ee.

[10]Unnamed hills are numbered on the map by their height above sea-level. Thus Hill 132 means a hill which is 132 metres, or 440 ft., in elevation.

[11]*Sant meh-nou´.*

[12]*Soo-ahn.*

[13]*Pert.*

[14]*Boh say-joor.*

[15]See Vol. II., chap. ix.

[16]*Lays-ay parge.*

[17]*Tee-ō-koor.*

[18]The narrowest part of the Dardanelles, 14 miles from the Mediterranean. The width of the strait at the Narrows is about three-quarters of a mile.

[19]For an account of the Narrows, see Chapter XX.

[20]*Blackwood's Magazine*, October 1915.

[21]*Pshas´nish.*

[22]*Boo-ko-vē´na.*

[23]*Stan´is-low*, 75 m. S.S.E. of Lemberg. It has extensive railroad shops.

[24]Vol. III., p. 247.

[25]*Moo´ziks*, Russian peasants.

[26]*The Russian Campaign, April to August*, 1915, by Stanley Washburn.

[27]*Pee-aitr.*

[28]The Thunderer; the blacksmith god of the ancient Norse. He is represented as wielding a hammer.

[29]The French word for a keepsake.

[30]Some of the earliest hand grenades used by our men were made of jam pots which came from the factory of Messrs. Tickler; hence the nickname.

[31]During 1915 Russia was busy developing the ice-free port of Alexandrovsk, at the mouth of the river Kola, but it was not available at the close of the year.

[32]King of ancient Persia from 485 to 465 B.C. He crossed the "Narrows" with a vast army in 481 B.C.

[33]King of Macedonia from 336 to 323 B.C. He conquered all Western Asia, and even the north of India. As a soldier few of the great generals of history can compare with him.

[34]Aviation ground with hangars or sheds in which aeroplanes are stored.

[35]German for "God punish England"—the common curse of the Germans at that time.

[36]Military cyclists are known at the front as Gaspipe Cavalry.

[37]Native captain in the Indian army.

[38]*Loce*, about a mile to the north-west of Lens.

[39]According to the old classical story, there was in Crete a building constructed for King Minos, in which dwelt the terrible beast known as the Minotaur. This building, which was known as the Labyrinth, contained many winding passages, arranged in such a fashion that a way out was most difficult to find.

[40]See Vol. III., p. 61.

[41]See Chap. XXX.

[42]City and district of the Punjab ("land of five rivers"), North-West India.

[43]Born 1853. He had for forty years served with distinction in every British war, and had been present with the Japanese in Manchuria. He was an excellent writer and something of a poet. Since 1910 he had been Inspector of Oversea Forces.

[44]In the Turkish island of Lemnos, one of the largest islands in the Ægean Sea. It is about sixty miles as the aeroplane flies from Gaba Tepe.

[45]Made up of the initial letters of the words—Australian New Zealand Army Corps.

[46]On the night of September 12-13, 1759, General Wolfe's army of 4,000 men climbed a wooded precipice on hands and knees, and next day defeated a French army on the plateau (Heights of Abraham) to the south-west of Quebec. This victory gave us Canada.

[47]*Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1916.

[48]Refer to map on p. 168.

[49]Quinn's Post lay at the head of Shrapnel Valley, the Valley of Death referred to on page 273. Pope's Hill lay to the left front of Quinn's Post, and Courtney's Post was on the right of Quinn's Post.

[50]See diagram, p. 278.

[51]See map, p. 275.

[52]See map, p. 275.

[53]*Pan-dō´ra*. In ancient Greek story, a goddess who possessed a box containing every kind of ill; this was opened, and the ills escaped and spread all over the earth, Hope alone being left at the bottom of the box.

[54]For these railway lines, and other places mentioned in this chapter, see map, p. 311.

[55]Or Kurland, Baltic province of Russia between the Gulf of Riga on the north and the province of Kovno on the south. It has many small, scattered lakes, and almost one-third of the surface is covered with forest.

[56]Sacred pictures found in all Russian churches and houses.

[57]*Shō-pan´*. Frédéric François Chopin (1809-49), great Polish musical composer and the finest pianist of his time. No man has ever excelled him in writing music for the piano.

[58]Equivalent to our second lieutenant.

[59]In 1707, when Charles XII. of Sweden invaded Russia and bade fair to overrun the country, Peter the Great put himself at the head of his army, and on July 5, 1709, inflicted a great defeat on the Swedes and drove them out of the country.

[60]In 1812, when Napoleon invaded Russia and marched to Moscow (see Vol. I., p. 64), Alexander I. placed himself at the head of the army, and by wasting the country forced Napoleon to retreat.

[61]See chap. xxxi.

[62]South Tirol, on the north-east frontier land of Italy; part of Austria, but inhabited chiefly by Italian-speaking people, and therefore claimed by Italy, which also claims the coast-lands round the head of the Adriatic Sea.

[63]River rising at the junction of the Julian and Carnic Alps and flowing southwards in a winding course to the Gulf of Trieste. Its length is about seventy-five miles, of which but little is navigable.

[64]Austrian territory along the eastern side of the Adriatic Sea.

[65]Louis Botha, born 1863, commanded Boer forces during the South African War; became first prime minister of the Union of South Africa (1910); and in 1914 was appointed commander-in-chief of the Union defence forces.

[66]For an account of German South-West Africa, see Vol. III., p. 177.

[67]Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*, Act IV., Sc. iii.

[68]As the safety pins were not withdrawn, they did not explode.

[69]In 451, when Attila, the King of the Huns, was overthrown; in 1430, when the English hold on France was shaken by the victorious progress of Joan of Arc from Orleans to Rheims; and in 1792, at Valmy, where the Prussians were beaten and the young republic of France was saved.

[70]Mr. E. A. Powell in *Vive la France*.

[71]"Forward! Conquer or die!"

[72]French officer who crossed Africa from the Atlantic coast to the White Nile in 1898 and claimed Fashoda for the French. He was met by Lord (then Sir Herbert) Kitchener, who said to him, "I congratulate you on all you have accomplished." "No," replied Major Marchand, pointing to his troops, "it is not I but these soldiers who have done it." Kitchener surrounded Marchand's forces and ordered him to withdraw his troops or to haul down his flag. For a moment there was a chance of war between Britain and France, but the French Government decided to withdraw the troops, and the incident ended with an acknowledgment of our right to the Nile valley.

[73]French word for rising ground, knoll.

[74]*Mass-seige*.

[75]*Krass-e-a*.

[76]*Haine*.

[77]Killed by a chance bullet on October 24, 1915.

[78]See Vol. III., page 74.

[79]*Gree-nay′*, French cape fronting the Strait of Dover.

[80]*Sa-lo-nēka*, port of Greece on the gulf of the same name, 12 miles to the east of the mouth of the river Vardar. After Constantinople it is the chief port of what was formerly European Turkey. The harbour is safe and roomy, and before the war the town had a population of over 160,000. Salonika is the Thessalonica of the New Testament.

[81]*Ve-leze*.

[The end of The Children's Story of the War, Volume 4 by Parrott, Sir (James) Edward]