Nelson's History of the War

Volume XIII

John Buchan
1915

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NELSON'S HISTORY OF THE WAR. By John Buchan.

Volume XIII. The Position at Sea, the Fall of Erzerum, and the First Battle of Verdun.

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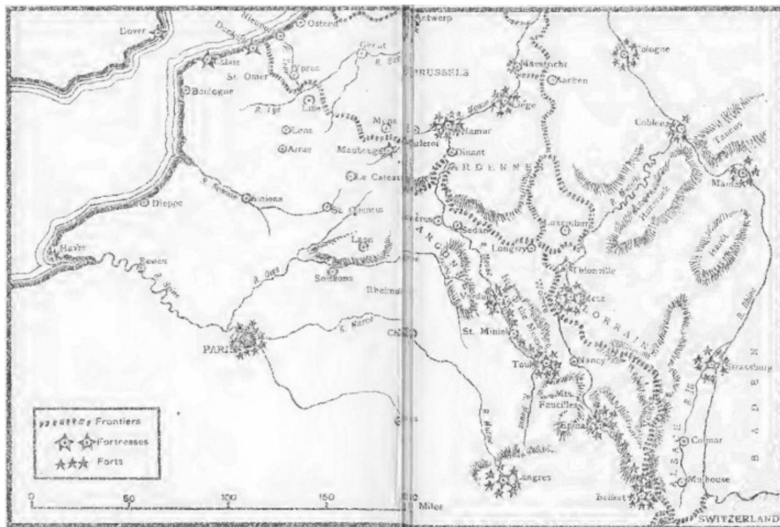

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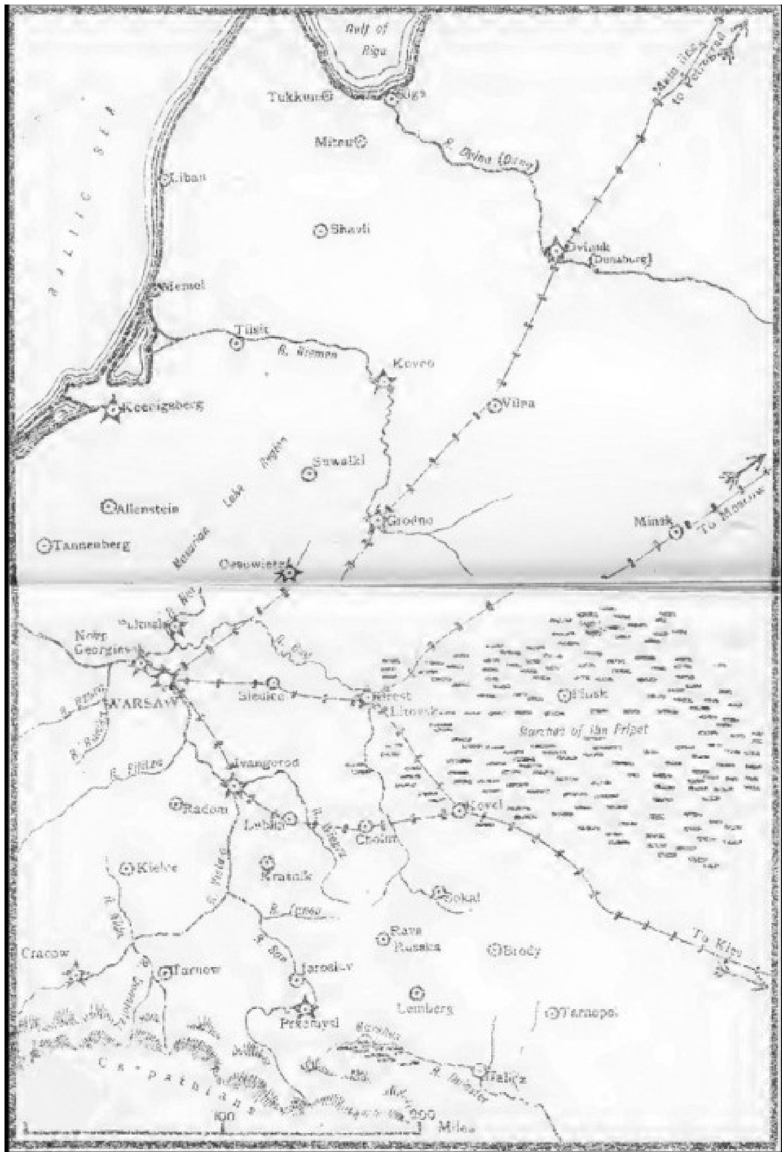

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CHAPTER XCII.

AMERICA AT THE CROSS-ROADS.

The Special Purposes of the Allies—The Common Purpose—The True Interest of Neutrals—America's Difficulty in recognizing this Interest—Her Preoccupation with Business—The War Boom—President Wilson's Attitude—Criticisms—Strength of America's Position as against Germany—Mr. Wilson's Message to Congress—His Speeches in the Middle West—The New German Demand as to Armed Merchantmen—Preposterous Character of the Claim—America declines to admit it—Letter to Senator Stone—The Greater Question—America's Chief Interest—Mr. Root's Speech.

Had a man asked for what purpose the Allies were fighting, he could not have been answered with a simple formula. They fought each of them for their own national ends. France sought to remove the particular menace which had for so long disturbed her dreams and forced her to bear the burden of a crushing military establishment, and she stood for those principles of pacific national progress to which she had never been more than temporarily unfaithful. Russia asked that her racial future should be respected, and that she should be given the chance of that unaggressive development of her vast territory which was her immediate need. Britain, standing a little outside the European family, sought the safety of her shores and of her ideal of a free Empire expressed in those famous lines of Claudian which have never yet found an adequate translator.[1] Each Power had her domestic interests, which by themselves were sufficient to justify her in the contest.

But over and above these special issues there was one purpose not national or racial, but universal. Germany had exalted Force to the throne of the universe. She admitted no rights of State or individual which could not be maintained with the strong arm. She sought to restore the rule of tooth and claw and the ethics of the Stone Age. Hitherto there had reigned a code of public conduct—vague and diffuse, perhaps, and with faulty sanctions, but none the less a priceless safeguard of peace. The question was whether this, the laborious handiwork of generations, was to be altogether destroyed. If Germany won, public Right became meaningless. The neutral nations

would be faced with a world in which nothing was granted to them, in which they could only keep what they were potent enough to hold. This meant for the smaller states a precarious future, with absorption or extinction on the horizon; and for a Power like America, an immediate arming on a colossal scale, and the entrance into that competition in fleets and battalions which she had hitherto happily avoided. On a broad survey of the situation, neutrality seemed inconceivable. All neutral peoples, great and small, had found their ease and protection under the ægis of public Right. If this were challenged, it seemed not only their duty but their vital interest to side with the constable and bring the wrongdoer to book.

It was not easy for the little European states to act upon this view, for the malefactor was too near their threshold; but it might reasonably have been expected that America, who had no cause to fear immediate bullying, would have appreciated the real point in the quarrel. America, however, as we have pointed out in an earlier chapter, was seriously handicapped from the start for a true perception of her interests. She was less a people than a collection of peoples. Her national consciousness, so far as sound political thinking was concerned, was weak. The Nation found itself frustrated at every turn by the State; her racial "integration," in spite of the efforts of her reformers, was incomplete; the centrifugal forces, to use the common metaphor, were still stronger than the centripetal; she was less a unified Power than a loose federation. It had been different fifty years before; but the America of 1916 was not the America of 1865. Her enormous increase in population had given her vast masses of men owing diverse allegiances, and, though she had absorbed them so that they soon approximated to one human type, she had not yet given them a common code of political thought. She was always in danger of becoming what Mr. Roosevelt described as a "mere polyglot boarding-house." Again, her immersion in business and her remoteness from the normal interests of the great Powers, had left her ordinary citizens singularly uninstructed in world-politics. She was insular, so far as these matters were concerned—insular in a way no island Power could dare to be. While she had produced many admirable political thinkers and international jurists, it is fair to say that the majority of her people knew less and cared less about the greater matters of world-policy than many nations far lower in the scale of wealth, intelligence, and civilization.

The main difficulty lay in that keen commercial spirit which she cultivated as her chief glory. She was absorbed by one kind of interest, and had small leisure for others; and, like all peoples and individuals in such a case, she tended to take short views even in her favourite province. If a man is set on money-making and is highly successful, the odds are that he will

forget about non-commercial problems, even those which, if neglected, will, sooner or later, tumble his mercantile edifice about his ears. Before the war American economics were in a parlous state. Labour troubles on a grand scale threatened, capitalists were regarded with general suspicion, and many of the most advertised enterprises of capital were on the verge of insolvency. The first months of the campaign looked as if they would intensify these difficulties. Then suddenly the situation changed. The sale of food and war munitions at high prices to the Allies caused an unprecedented wave of prosperity to overflow the land. In 1915 the United States had advanced a long way towards becoming a creditor nation. Her exports for the year were more than a billion dollars ahead of the highest previous total, and her credit balances were over three hundred millions sterling. She had imported over a hundred millions sterling of gold, and repurchased about three hundred millions sterling worth of American securities held in foreign countries. There was practically no unemployment, and wages had everywhere advanced. Bankrupt railroads were now paying good dividends. Her staple industries, such as the production of iron and steel, had increased by 25 per cent. their former maximum production. She had had bumper crops, sold at extravagant prices. Copper had doubled in value. There was a marked revival in shipbuilding. Even the South, though its cotton crop was five million bales less than that of 1914, disposed of it at a higher price, and its other agricultural products reached a record figure. The war had brought to America an unparalleled chance of gain, and she was busy with both hands taking advantage of it. It was on this that the thoughts of the ordinary citizen were focused, and not on the war itself. The American International Corporation was formed with a large capital to finance foreign enterprises and develop the future export trade. America seemed to herself to be about to win the whole world, and was inclined to be careless whether or not in the process she lost her own soul.

We have already sketched the attitude of Mr. Wilson.[2] On his conception of the duty of a President he behaved with complete correctness. He rightly interpreted the wishes of the vast majority of the American people. It was not an easy path to tread for a man of his antecedents, for it involved the deliberate shutting of the eye to many matters which in his past life had interested him most deeply. But he moved on the tight-rope of legality with perfect balance. Whatever defects his critics might find in him of sympathy and the larger intelligence, it cannot be denied that his conduct was resolute and, in a sense, courageous.

Facts, however, were destined to make his resolution look like weakness. If a man is determined not to fight, and his enemy knows this, it is unlikely

that he will escape without finding himself in strangely undignified positions. Mr. Wilson's mind was essentially of the juridical type. He was admirable in formal argument, and had he been pleading before an international court his case would have been good, and the judges would no doubt have found for him. But he was unable to envisage that rough-and-tumble world where decisions are won not by words but deeds. He still believed that he could secure victory by making debating points against his adversary. This remoteness from facts was shown in the three disastrous years during which, in Mr. Roosevelt's phrase, he "waged peace" against Mexico. It was most conspicuously shown in the situation created by the sinking of the *Lusitania* and by the later outrages. The President stated his case with dignity and force; he was flouted, and he did nothing. Germany, like a street urchin, regarded her mentor with her finger to her nose. Fair words alternated with foul deeds, and though eventually he won an admission of liability from the German Government on the *Lusitania* point and a promise of compensation, it was the most barren of victories, for the outrages continued. The words of the President's severest critic were not without warrant. The Germans "had learned to believe that, no matter how shocked the American Government might be, its resolution would expend itself in words. They had learned to believe that it was safe to kill Americans—and the world believed with them. Measured and restrained expression, backed to the full by serious purpose, is strong and respected. Extreme and belligerent expression, unsupported by resolution, is weak and without effect. No man should draw a pistol who dares not shoot. The Government that shakes its fist first and its finger afterwards falls into contempt."[3]

And yet, had he known it, all the cards were in the President's hands. Germany could on no account afford to quarrel with America. The American market and American money were her sole economic hopes after the war; the adhesion of America to the Allied cause, even if she did not mobilize one man, would at once have settled those financial difficulties on which Germany counted. America was immune from her attack; she was by no means immune from America's. She counted on the large German population in the United States to decide the perplexed President, and she strove by many deeds of violence to show the offensive power of this German leaven. But the menace had no serious import except for the timid. It was rumoured that a certain German statesman told a distinguished American diplomat: "Remember there are half a million Germans of military age in the United States, and that nearly all have had military training;" and that the Ambassador replied, "I calculate, sir, that we have more than half a million lamp-posts." It was the right answer.

Towards the close of 1915 a curious situation had arisen. The American Note of 5th November had shown a spirit of pettifogging criticism which contrasted strongly with America's inertia in the face of notorious German law-breaking, and which encouraged in Berlin the hope that a real quarrel with the Allies might soon arise. On 7th December the President's Message to Congress denounced German intrigues in America, and demanded legislation to deal with them. Following on this, Berlin officially repudiated the campaign of outrage on American soil, though the publication of Captain von Papen's papers, which implicated Count Bernstorff beyond possibility of doubt, gave the lie to this disclaimer. Presently Mr. Wilson set out on a speech-making tour in the Middle West. With the violence of an academic mind defrauded of its dreams, and with the enthusiasm of a convert, he preached a policy of military and naval preparedness which exceeded even Mr. Roosevelt's demands. But in his speeches he made it very clear that he was exasperated with both sides in the world-war, and this Germany took for a hopeful omen. She made haste to proffer a settlement of the *Lusitania* business, and then promptly put forward a new and exorbitant claim. Mr. Lansing, in an unofficial memorandum to the Allies, had expressed the opinion that merchantmen should not be armed. Presuming on this, on February 10, 1916, the German Government handed to the Ambassadors of the neutral Powers at Berlin a memorandum concerning the treatment of armed merchant vessels, and two days later it was presented by Count Bernstorff to Mr. Lansing, along with his *Lusitania* proposals. Germany announced that from 1st March she would treat all armed merchantmen as belligerent vessels, and attack them at sight wherever they might be encountered, and she warned neutrals that they would journey in them at their peril.

Dec. 7.

Feb. 10, 1916.

The claim was, of course, preposterous. It was preposterous in fact, since, if a submarine was not obliged to summon and search a vessel, it could not tell whether or not she carried guns. The proposal involved a campaign of complete license, and the sinking of an unarmed ship would be attributed, as before, to the mistake of the submarine commander. It was no less preposterous in law. The right of a merchantman to carry arms for defence had been for three centuries a canon of maritime practice, and had nowhere been so clearly stated as in America. It had been authorized by an Act of Congress in 1798. Chief-Justice Marshall in the *Nereide* case had laid it down that the right of a neutral to send goods in a belligerent vessel extended to armed as well as to unarmed ships. "As belligerent merchant vessels," he said, "rarely sail unarmed, the exception, if any existed as to

armed vessels, would be greater than the rule.” Jefferson had also dealt with the matter. “Though she has arms to defend herself in time of war in the course of her regular commerce, this no more makes her a privateer than a husbandman, following his plough in time of war with a knife or pistol in his pocket, is thereby made a soldier.[4] . . . Were the merchant vessels coming for our produce forbidden to bear any arms for their defence, every adventurer who had a boat, or money enough to buy one, would make her a privateer; our coast would swarm with them; foreign vessels must cease to come.”

Feb. 15.

Germany had manœuvred Washington into an awkward corner; but happily Mr. Wilson had the courage to throw over his recent suggestion to the Allies, and reject without equivocation the view of Berlin. He waived aside the *Lusitania* settlement, since it was accompanied by such a rider. On 15th February his Cabinet decided not to admit Germany’s claim to torpedo armed merchantmen without warning—a step not taken without many futile mutterings of revolt from a section of the Democratic following. In a letter to Senator Stone he put very clearly the view which had the assent of all the better elements in the nation.

“For my own part I cannot consent to any abridgment of the rights of American citizens in any respect. The honour and self-respect of the nation are involved. We covet peace, and shall preserve it at any cost but loss of honour. To forbid our people to exercise their rights for fear we might be called upon to vindicate them would be a deep humiliation indeed. It would be an implicit—all but explicit—acquiescence in the violation of the rights of mankind everywhere, and of whatever nation or allegiance. It would be an abdication of our hitherto proud position as spokesman, even amid the turmoil of war, for law and right. It would make everything this Government has attempted, and everything it has achieved during this terrible struggle of nations, meaningless and futile. It is important to reflect that if in this instance we allowed expediency to take the place of principle, the door would inevitably be opened to still further concessions. Once accept a single abatement of rights, and many other humiliations will certainly follow, and the whole fine fabric of international law might crumble under our hands piece by piece. What we are contending for in this matter is of the very essence of the things that have made of America a sovereign nation. She cannot yield them without conceding her own impotency as a nation, and making a virtual surrender of her position among the nations of the world.”

It was not, however, in these arguments on detail between the two Governments that the true centre of gravity lay. They were concerned with specific rights, but the question of the basic and primordial right—that of every nation, whether neutral or not, to the maintenance of Public Law—had been shelved by the President in the first months of the campaign when he declined to protest against the violation of Belgium. It was inevitable that it should revive as the war progressed and Germany's intentions became clearer alike in the heat of victory and the chagrin of failure. As we have seen, Germany was beginning to realize that between her and the conquest of the world lay the sea power of the Allies. Her victories by land would avail her little so long as Britain ruled the water. Once again, as of old, our Navy stood between the Superman and his dreams.

Let us briefly restate the position. Germany claimed the "freedom of the seas," which on her lips meant that in time of war all traffic should be unimpeded except enemy consignments of munitions and contraband.[5] The land Power should have the free use of its limbs, while the naval Power should be hobbled. With this claim neutrals, on a narrow view of their interests, might be inclined to agree, since the Allied control of the sea did infringe certain of their customary rights. These infringements were set forth precisely in the American Note of November 5, 1915. On the other hand, the Allies argued that new conditions must modify accepted practice; that international law, like all human law, must show elasticity and conform to facts. The neutral interests which were infringed were minor matters, the mere trimmings and fringes of the law; but the greatest of all neutral interests, the maintenance of Public Right, was the cause for which they were making untold sacrifices. If Germany succeeded, they asked, what would be the freedom of the seas under her control? In time of peace the ocean was free for all honest citizens to go their ways upon. This freedom had been won by the British fleet three hundred years before, and had been maintained by the British fleet ever since. If the Allies failed, there would be an end of such freedom, the German creed being what it was. It was true that Britain claimed supremacy on the water, but this was in no way akin to Germany's desired hegemony on land. A control exercised for the purpose of police is different from a conquest sought for aggrandizement. In the present stage of international relations the sole power capable of bringing a wrongdoer to task was the British navy. At some future period it might be possible to internationalize this duty, but for the present it must be performed by the only nation which could perform it.

Neutrals were not asked to forego their interests, but they were asked to remember their greatest interest—the protection of Public Right. No neutral

was entitled to use its lesser interests or rights to impede a Power which was struggling desperately for the greater interest and the fundamental right. A man, if the house next door has been burgled, does not trip up the constable, even if in the excitement of the pursuit that zealous officer may have trodden on his toes. President Wilson's interpretation of American interests had been too narrow. If Britain went down, America's security and prosperity would inevitably follow, or at the best she would be condemned to a feverish struggle against time to prepare armaments on a scale colossal enough to counter her enemy's. It was the British fleet, and not the Monroe doctrine, that had warned off Germany from South America. It was the British fleet that enabled her to reap where she had not sown, and to gather where she had not strawed. Where lay the true American interest? In tripping up the constable, or in taking an honest share in the policing of the world?

It was clear that during the winter this question was coming home with force to the best American minds. President Wilson had been right in the principles he had laid down, but wrong in their application. It appeared to many that a false course had been taken to gain the ends which he had so eloquently defined. There was a reaction against the narrow nationalism which had hitherto predominated, and a growing sense that the international issue was an integral part of the national interests. Some Americans, such as Dr. Eliot of Harvard and Mr. Roosevelt, had always held this view. A "League of Nations to Enforce Peace" was proposed, with men like ex-President Taft among its supporters; branches were formed in many of the States, and the propaganda was approved by a referendum vote of the United States Chamber of Commerce. The New York Bar Association, an eminently discreet body, resolved that the day for a policy of isolation was past, and criticised the aforesaid League of Nations only because it did not go far enough. Many shared this attitude who had no wish to embark on war. They were of Mr. Roosevelt's opinion that "one outspoken and straightforward declaration by this Government against the dreadful iniquities perpetrated in Belgium, Armenia, and Serbia would have been worth to humanity a thousand times as much as all that the professional pacifists have done in the past fifty years." Others, like the American Rights Committee in New York, desired a definite diplomatic breach with the Teutonic Powers. But all shades of this new thought were agreed that it was unseemly for the United States to assert its commercial interests so as to hamper the full effect of sea power used on behalf of Public Right. The tone of the Note of 5th November found few defenders among the more thoughtful classes of the American people.

It was left for Mr. Elihu Root to state this point of view in a speech[6] which was probably the most remarkable made in any country since the outbreak of war. Mr. Root was an ex-senator, had been Secretary of State under Mr. Roosevelt, and was by common consent the foremost American lawyer of the day. The speech, delivered on 15th February to the Republican Convention in New York City, was to a small extent concerned with party politics; but its significance lay in the fact that for the first time a man of great eminence stated sanely and broadly the true interests of neutrals. He put into eloquent words what had been the national ideal alike of Washington and Jefferson, of Lee and Lincoln.

Feb. 15.

"The American democracy stands for something more than beef and cotton and grain and manufactures; it stands for something that cannot be measured by rates of exchange, and does not rise or fall with the balance of trade. The American people achieved liberty and schooled themselves to the service of justice before they acquired wealth, and they value their country's liberty and justice above all their pride of possessions. Beneath their comfortable optimism and apparent indifference they have a conception of their great republic as brave and strong and noble to hand down to their children the blessings of freedom and just and equal laws.

"They have embodied their principles of Government in fixed rules of right conduct which they jealously preserve, and, with the instinct of individual freedom, they stand for a Government of laws and not of men. They deem that the moral laws which formulate the duties of men towards each other are binding upon nations equally with individuals. Informed by their own experience, confirmed by their observation of international life, they have come to see that the independence of nations, the liberty of their peoples, justice and humanity, cannot be maintained upon the complaisance, the good nature, the kindly feeling of the strong toward the weak; that real independence, real liberty, cannot rest upon sufferance; that peace and liberty can be preserved only by the authority and observance of rules of national conduct founded upon the principles of justice and humanity; only by the establishment of law among nations, responsive to the enlightened public opinion of mankind."

That Law had been shattered to pieces on the fields of Belgium. The case was not *sub judice*; Germany had admitted, defended, gloried in her wrongdoing. And that Law was America's own law just as much as any domestic statute.

"We had bound ourselves by it; we had regulated our conduct by it, and we were entitled to have other nations observe it. That law was the protection of our peace and security. It was our safeguard against the necessity of maintaining great armaments and wasting our substance in continual readiness for war. Our interest in having it maintained as the law of nations was a substantial, valuable, permanent interest, just as real as your interest and mine in having maintained and enforced the laws against assault and robbery and arson which protect our personal safety and property."

In another speech at Washington Mr. Root elaborated his argument. "Up to this time breaches of international law have been treated as we treat wrongs under civil procedure—as if they concerned nobody except the particular nation upon which the injury was inflicted and the nation inflicting it. There has been no general recognition of the right of other nations to object. . . . There must be a change of theory. And violations of the law of such a character as to threaten the peace and order of the community of nations must be treated by analogy to criminal law. They must be deemed to be a violation of the right of every civilized nation to have the law maintained."

America did not seek to interfere in the quarrels of Europe. She had a right and a duty to be neutral as to the differences between Germany and Britain; but neutrality was impossible where her own law was outraged. Then she was entitled to be heard, and she was bound to speak. "With the right to speak," said Mr. Root, "came responsibility, and with responsibility came duty—duty of Government toward all the peaceful men and women in America not to acquiesce in the destruction of the law which protected them; for if the world assents to this great and signal violation, then the law of nations no longer exists, and we have no protection save in subserviency or force." America was once again at the cross-roads. Under President Wilson's guidance, she had taken the wrong turning, but she was retracing her steps. She was again faced with a decision of incalculable significance for the world and for herself.

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[1] “Haec est in gremium victos quae sola recepit.
Humanumque genus communi nomine fovit,
Matris non dominae ritu: civesque vocavit,
Quos domuit, nexuque pio longinqua revinxit;
Huius pacificis debemus moribus omnes
Quod veluti patriis regionibus utitur hospes,
Quod sedem mutare licet, quod cernere Thulen
Lusus, et horrendos quondam penetrare recessus,
Quod bibimus passim Rhodanum, potamus Orontem
Quod cuncti gens una sumus.”

De Consulatu Stilichonis, III., 150-160.

[2] Vol. IX., pp. 131-136.

[3] “*Dogberry.* This is your charge:—you shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the prince’s name.

“*Second Watchman.* How if a’ will not stand?

“*Dogberry.* Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go; and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave.”

Much Ado about Nothing, Act III., Sc. 3.

[4] Germany would have contended that the carrying of arms did make him a soldier. She was consistent enough in her claims. She had rewritten the law of war on land to suit her interests, and she desired to rewrite maritime law to correspond. According to Germany, the non-combatant on land or sea commits a crime if he resists, or prepares to resist, the armed forces of an enemy state. That is why Count Reventlow denounced the “treachery” of the English civilians who were reported to have fired at a raiding Zeppelin.

[5] See Appendix I.

[6] See Appendix II.

CHAPTER XCIII.

THE POSITION AT SEA.

An Offensive-defensive—The German Naval Policy—British Losses—Battleships—Cruisers—Destroyers—Fleet Auxiliaries—Transports—Merchant Shipping—The *Ancona*—The *Persia*—German Losses—Turkish Losses—The Submarine Campaign—Means of Offence and Defence—The Case of the *Baralong*—The Blockade of Germany—Popular Criticism of its Effectiveness—Sir E. Grey's Statement—The "Rationing" Policy—New Ministry of Blockade—Situation in the Spring of 1916—German Mine-laying Activity—The new "U" Boat—Commerce-Raiders—The Story of the *Moewe*—The *Greif*—The Quality of the British Navy.

The Battle of the North Sea was fought on January 24, 1915. Had any one on that day A prophesied that a year would elapse without another naval action he would have found few anywhere to accept his forecast, and none in the British navy. Our sailors looked confidently for many German raids, which should culminate in the appearance of the High Sea Fleet. But the year was one of watching and waiting. Battleships were, indeed, employed in the luckless Gallipoli venture, and suffered many losses; but that was not the engagement of ships with ships, but of ships against forts and land entrenchments. Our armed auxiliaries scoured the seas and controlled neutral traffic; our mine-sweepers were busy at their thankless task from the Pentland Firth to the Channel, from the Shetlands to the Scillies; our gunboats and patrol boats hunted submarines in many waters, from the North Sea to the Dardanelles; our cruiser squadrons kept tireless watch, sweeping the sea by night and day; but our battle-cruisers and capital ships still waited for the chance that did not come. We were paying the penalty of the success we had won in the first six months of war. The enemy was driven to fight with small arms, and not with his great guns, and the warfare he chose was waged in secret and in the dark. We were condemned to the offensive-defensive, as troops who have carried a vital position are compelled to consolidate their ground and thrust back the counter-attack. Hence for that year the history of the war at sea was a history of losses. We were repelling the enemy's assault, and for the most part waging war in our own country rather than carrying it into his.

The German naval policy was not ill-conceived. It failed, but it was not futile. As planned by von Tirpitz and von Pohl,[7] it showed a shrewd perception of the economic vulnerability of Britain. In the long run, they argued, it was only the merchant shipping of the world, whether owned by Allies or neutrals, which could checkmate the great German scheme of conquest. It alone could enable their enemies to perfect their equipment, and create a fighting machine equal to that of Germany. Germany had lost her mercantile marine, but then it was less vital to her purpose. If the Allied shipping could be seriously crippled, there might arise this quandary: either Britain must curtail her military operations, which demanded many ships, or she would find her revenues shrinking seriously from lack of trade, and her population gravely distressed from shortage of food and the vast increase of prices. The Allies were using some 3,000 merchant vessels for the purposes of war; and if Germany could make heavy inroads on the remainder she might effect a vast naval success without the sacrifice of one battleship.

In framing this policy von Tirpitz counted upon two possibilities, which failed. He was using as weapons the mine and the submarine, to which there had up to date been no effective antidote devised. He hoped, therefore, to create a panic among Allied seamen, so that merchantmen would limit their activities at the mere threat of danger. He believed, too, that the British Admiralty would be slow to discover any means of defence and reprisal. In both forecasts he was wrong. There was no panic, and our Navy speedily organized a counter-campaign. But the merit of von Tirpitz's scheme was that when the thoughts of the Allies dwelt only on armies and navies, he foresaw the economic necessities at the back of armed strength, and struck at them. If he did not succeed, he certainly incommoded his foes. Up to the end of 1915, largely owing to his submarine campaign, nearly 1,000 Allied and neutral ships had been put out of use. Unfortunately, these losses could not be replaced with any readiness. It was different in the Napoleonic wars, when every little English port had its local shipbuilder; but in these days of iron and steel vessels of large tonnage there was none of this decentralized construction, and we could not make good the decline in our carrying capacity. The consequence was that freights rose very high. If we compare 1914 and 1915, we find the freights of Burmese rice increased from 21s. to 150s. per ton; Calcutta jute from 18s. to 152s.; Argentine wheat from 18s. to 150s. Even deducting the excess profit tax of 50 per cent., the net profits of the shipping industry increased by 543 per cent. One calculation, covering the first nineteen months of war, put the increased cost to the nation at £400,000,000.

Nor was the German offensive confined to blows at civilian trade. By means of mine-laying on a large scale von Tirpitz hoped slowly to reduce the strength of our Fleet, with no corresponding loss to his own. Moreover, his submarines took an active part in the only naval campaign after January 1915—that in the Eastern Mediterranean. There the achievements of von Bersing and others furnished a brilliant page in the still scanty chronicles of submarine war. The Eastern Mediterranean was no doubt an ideal ground for such operations, for our task of provisioning and reinforcing by sea a large army provided endless easy targets. But the journey thither, and the provision of bases in out-of-the-way islands and odd corners of the African coast were enterprises which did credit to the new service. It was hastily assumed by many people in Britain that the narrow entrance to the Mediterranean would enable us to detect and check the approach of submarines. But the nine miles of the Strait of Gibraltar were nearly a thousand feet deep, and their strong currents made netting impossible.

The main naval interest of the Allies in 1915 may therefore be set down as the perfecting of means of defence against mine and submarine, and the endeavour to make the enemy's attack as little costly as possible to themselves, and as difficult and burdensome as possible to him. The record of the year was one of losses on both sides—losses the majority of which fell on the Allies. But, taking into account the nature of von Tirpitz's plan and the end which he had set himself, it may fairly be said that the balance of success was not with the attack.

In an earlier chapter we have chronicled our battleship disasters in the Dardanelles, where France lost the *Bouvet*, and we the *Irresistible*, the *Queen*, the *Goliath*, the *Triumph*, and the *Majestic*. The year passed without any further wastage of capital ships, but on January 9, 1916, the pre-Dreadnought battleship, *King Edward VII.*,[8] struck a mine in the North Sea and sunk, happily without loss of life. The list was heavier in armoured cruisers. The *Argyll*, a ship of an old class, with a speed of 22 knots, and four 7.5-inch guns, stranded on the Scottish coast on October 28, 1915. On December 30 the *Natal*, one of the best gunnery ships in the Navy, was mysteriously blown up in harbour, and lost out of her ship's company over 300 officers and men. On February 11, 1916, the light cruiser *Arethusa*, which had played a great part in the Battle of the Bight of Heligoland as the parent ship of the destroyer flotillas, and had been in action during the Cuxhaven raid and the battle of January 24, 1915, struck a mine off the East Coast, and was lost. She was the first oil-driven cruiser in the Fleet, and bore one of the most historic names in our naval history. France lost a cruiser, the

Léon Gambetta, in the Ionian Sea in April 1915; and in February 1916 a very old cruiser, the *Amiral Charner*, was torpedoed off the Syrian coast.

The losses among destroyers were few, since their speed made them comparatively safe from submarines. The *Maori* was mined off the Belgian coast, the *Lynx* in the North Sea, and the *Louis* stranded in the Eastern Mediterranean. Of submarines we could trace the loss of eight—four, the E15, the A2, the E7, and the E20, in the Dardanelles or Sea of Marmora; two, the E3 and the D5, in the North Sea; one, the E13, in the Baltic; and one in January 1916, wrecked on the Dutch coast. The French lost the *Saphir*, *Joule*, *Mariette*, and *Turquoise* in the Dardanelles, and the *Fresnel* and the *Curie* in the Adriatic. The British losses in torpedo boats was small—two torpedoed in the North Sea, and one sunk in collision in the Strait of Gibraltar.

The largest roll was that of armed merchantmen and fleet auxiliaries, whose size and constant keeping of the sea made them specially vulnerable to mine and submarine. In January 1915 the *Viknor* sank off the coast of Ireland. In February it was followed by the *Clan Macnaughton*, and in March by the *Bayano*. In May the *Princess Irene* was blown up at Sheerness; in August the *Ramsey* was sunk by gun-fire in the North Sea; in September the *India* was torpedoed in the North Sea. In October the *Hythe*, a mine-sweeper, was sunk in collision at the Dardanelles, and next month the *Tara*, an armed boarding steamer, was torpedoed. On February 10, 1916, four mine-sweepers near the Dogger Bank were attacked by German destroyers, and one of them, the *Arabis*, was sunk—an episode which was represented in the German press as a victory over enemy cruisers. The French during the year lost the *Casa Blanca* and the *Indien* in the Ægean.

Transports, too, made an easy mark. In September 1915 the *Royal Eduard* was torpedoed in the Ægean Sea, with the loss of over a thousand men, mostly drafts for the 29th Division at Gallipoli. In the same month, and in the same waters, the *Ramazan* was sunk by gun-fire, and three hundred perished. In October the *Marquette*, carrying Indian troops, was torpedoed, with the loss of a hundred; and in November the *Mercian*, carrying yeomanry, was shelled for several hours by a submarine, but was able to escape with over a hundred killed and injured. In November France lost the transport *Calvados* off Algeria, and early in 1916 the *La Provence* was sunk in the Mediterranean, as she was carrying troops to Salonika. To this list may be added the British hospital ship *Anglia*, which, on 17th November, struck a mine in the Channel, and sank with considerable loss of life.

The losses among mercantile shipping need not be detailed. Up to October 31, 1915, from the outbreak of war, 264 British merchant ships, aggregating half a million tons, and 158 fishing vessels had been destroyed by enemy action. From the ordinary accidents of the sea we had lost during the same period 167 steamships, 229 sailing ships, and 144 fishing vessels.[9] The most conspicuous losses were the *Lusitania* on 7th May, the *Armenian* on 28th June, the *Iberian* on 30th July, the *Arabic* on 19th August, the *Hesperian* on September 4th, the Italian liner *Ancona* on 8th November, the French liner *Ville de Ciotat* on 24th December, and the *Persia* on 30th December. Two Japanese vessels were also sunk in the Eastern Mediterranean, with the result that Japan sent warships to those waters. The sinking of the *Ancona* was attended with peculiar brutality. She was bound from Naples to New York, carrying Greek and Italian emigrants with their families. While passing to the south of Sardinia a submarine appeared and began to shell her. Even after she had stopped the shelling continued. A wild panic was the result; many were killed on the decks by shrapnel; women and children flung themselves pell-mell into the boats, and while there were subjected to the fire of the submarine. Finally a torpedo was discharged, and the ship sank. Over two hundred persons perished in this outrage. The submarine flew the Austrian flag, and the Government of Vienna acknowledged it as their own; but there is good reason to believe that it was in reality a German boat, and that the Austrian flag was used to avoid further complications with America, and to prevent a declaration of war by Italy on Germany. The tale was one of the most horrid in the campaign, and no explanation could relieve its barbarism. Insult was added to injury by an extraordinary request made by Vienna on 7th December that special preparations should be made to protect from submarine risks certain Austro-Hungarian subjects being conveyed from India by the British steamer *Golconda*, on the ground that the majority of them were "better-class people." The request gave the world an insight into the strange, perverted mentality of the Teutonic Powers. Sir Edward Grey replied with vigour and point:—

> "I am at a loss to know why 'better-class' people should be thought more entitled to protection from submarine attack than any other non-combatants. But however that may be, the only danger of the character indicated which threatens any of the passengers in the *Golconda*, is one for which the Austro-Hungarian and the German Governments are alone responsible. It is they, and they only, who have instituted and carry on a novel and inhuman form of warfare, which disregards all the hitherto

> accepted principles of international law and necessarily endangers the lives of non-combatants. By asking for special precautions to protect one of their own subjects on board a British merchant vessel, the Austro-Hungarian Government recognizes what are the inevitable consequences of its submarine policy, and admits that the outrages, by which the *Lusitania*, the *Persia*, and numbers of other ships have been sunk without warning, were not the result of the casual brutalities of the officers of enemy submarines, but part of the settled and premeditated policy of the Governments whom they serve."

The sinking of the *Persia*, which had on board the American Consul at Aden, who travelled under a safe conduct from Germany and Austria, was attended with the loss of nearly two hundred lives. The vessel was torpedoed during the luncheon hour, and sank in five minutes. One of the most remarkable escapes in the story of the sea was that of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, who, with ten other survivors, reached Malta when all hope of his survival had been abandoned. They were in a boat which had been badly crushed, and could only be kept afloat by the most delicate trimming. The weather and the water were bitterly cold, they suffered horribly from thirst, and several dropped off or went mad during the first night. They had no means of signalling to any passing steamer. Late in the evening of the second day the one chance in a thousand occurred, and a vessel was discerned making straight towards them. The castaways attracted the attention of the crew; but no boats could be lowered, and under Lord Montagu's direction the ship lay to so as to bring herself alongside the *débris* of the boat. The rescue was made after the survivors had spent thirty-two hours without food or drink in a winter sea.

The German losses were naturally smaller; for, except in the Baltic, the German warships did not keep the seas, and there was no German commerce left to destroy. One battleship—the *Pommern*[10]—a vessel ten years old, with a displacement of about 13,000 tons, four 11-inch guns, and fourteen 6.7-inch guns, was torpedoed in the Baltic by Commander Max Horton on 2nd July; more than one transport in the same waters fell to British and Russian submarines; and in the Battle of the Gulf of Riga on 20th August Germany suffered losses in destroyers and cruisers of which the details are not yet clear. A tribute should be paid to the efficiency of the Russian Baltic Fleet, and to its skilful handling by Admiral Kannin. It held the Eastern Baltic against German warships, and operated repeatedly with success as a flank guard of the Russian armies. The new spirit introduced by Admiral

Essen—whose death was one of the greatest losses suffered by the Allies during the campaign—showed itself in a defiance of weather conditions which might have deterred the boldest sailors, in a complete intimacy with difficult waters, and in a readiness at all times to take the big hazard. With the assistance of British submarines, under commanders like Max Horton and Noel Laurence, Russia throughout the year dominated the Eastern Baltic.

In cruisers and battle-cruisers Germany had already lost heavily—the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Yorck*, *Magdeburg*, *Köln*, *Mainz*, *Nurnberg*, *Leipzig*, *Ariadne*, *Emden*, *Karlsruhe*. In the early months of 1915 the list was increased by the *Bluecher*, *Dresden*, and *Koenigsberg*. In October the *Prinz Adalbert*, in November the *Undine*, and in December the *Bremen* were sunk in the Baltic. Nine destroyers and seven torpedo boats seem to have been lost during 1915. In the class of armed merchantmen and auxiliaries, the *Macedonia* was captured in March at Las Palmas, and the *Kronprinz Wilhelm* and the *Prinz Eitel Friedrich* were interned in an American port. The mine-layer *Albatross* went ashore at Gothland in July, and in August the *Meteor* was blown up in the North Sea. Against Turkey our offensive was remarkable. If the guns of the Dardanelles forts and the German submarines took heavy toll of our large vessels, our submarines in the Straits and in the Marmora played havoc with Turkish shipping. Down to October in those waters we had sunk two battleships, five gunboats, one torpedo boat, and 197 supply ships.

It is too soon to write the detailed story of our campaign against the German submarines. The Admiralty rightly refused to publish even the estimated numbers destroyed—a refusal which showed an acute knowledge of the enemy’s psychology. A sinister silence, without a word of news, was far more trying to the nerves of the German under-sea service than any advertisement of success. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*. Famous submarine commanders went out and never returned. No man setting forth from the Elbe bases knew what he had to face. Some device which meant certain death might be waiting for him in the British coastal waters. A few of our methods of defence were known to the world. The new type of monitors—vast, torpedo-proof rafts carrying 14-inch guns—were able to operate in shallow seas with almost complete immunity from the under-water menace. Elaborate nets were constructed in the main sea-passages, in which more than one submarine was fatally entangled. We know from the narrative of Lieutenant Wenninger, commanding the German boat U17, what might happen to a submarine which fouled these steel meshes. Even when he

managed to get clear, he had to lie for hours at the bottom while our torpedo boats watched the surface.

Of our direct offensive few details were given to the world. Sometimes an aeroplane was the weapon. On 26th August Squadron-Commander Bigsworth detected a submarine off Ostend, and bombed it from a height of 500 feet. In November Flight-Lieutenant Viney fell in with a U boat off the Belgian coast, and destroyed it. But on the main work of offence history must still be silent. It was conducted by hundreds of patrol boats, manned largely by fishermen, and the submarine was tracked and followed as the old whalers pursued the ringer. Science was called to our aid, and by means of improved microphones we became adepts at detecting the presence of the enemy under water. When the war is over, it is likely that from the doings of our patrols and their quarries will be written some of the strangest romances of peril and courage in all human history. For the present we can only set down the general result. In spite of many losses our commerce had not been seriously crippled; there was no hint of panic among our sea-going folk; and we had organized a counter-campaign which had left Germany aghast. It was not so much that we had depleted her submarine fleet, for her new constructions filled the gaps, but that we had put an end to many of the best and most unreplaceable of her submarine commanders, and diffused over the whole business of attack that atmosphere of terror and uncertainty which should, on Germany's calculation, have been the lot of the defence. The German navy, which had looked for immediate success, was driven to counsel patience with a wry mouth. "Only a child," wrote Captain Persius in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, "would accuse the British of being bad seamen. They know how to defend themselves, and have devised every kind of protection. It becomes more and more difficult for U boats to get near enough to hostile ships to launch a torpedo. An almost miraculous skill is required to avoid all snares, escape from destroyers, and yet make a successful attack."

One incident in the submarine campaign deserves special notice, because of its use by Germany to found a charge of barbarism against British seamen. So far as can be ascertained, the facts in the *Baralong* case were these. Early in the afternoon of 19th August the steamer *Nicosian*, with a cargo of army mules, was approaching the Irish coast some sixty miles from Queenstown. There she fell in with the German U boat which a few hours before had sunk the *Arabic*. A torpedo was fired, which struck the *Nicosian*, but without sinking her, upon which the submarine began to shell. Thereupon the captain and crew put off in a boat; but the American cattlemen who had come over in charge of the mules, having no experience of the ways of submarines, remained on board. The captain of the U boat,

desiring to economize his torpedoes, sent a boarding-party to finish off the *Nicosian* with bombs.

At that moment the *Baralong* arrived on the scene. She had been got up as a tramp, and was probably destined by the U boat as its next victim; but as she approached she stripped off her disguise, and revealed herself as an armed auxiliary, with the men waiting at their guns. She opened musketry fire on the submarine, and then split her in two with shots from her port and stern guns. Upon this the German captain and the rest of the crew put off in a boat to the *Nicosian*, intending, no doubt, to surrender there.

The *Baralong*, as it watched the submarine sink, was presently made aware that strange things were happening on the *Nicosian*. The American cattlemen, whose temper had not been improved by the shelling, observed that the boarding-party in the first boat were carrying bombs. Divining their intention, they resolved to make a fight for the ship. They allowed the German seamen to climb on board, and then rushed on them and battered in their heads with furnace bars. Presently in the second boat came the captain and the rest of the crew. They, too, were hunted up and down the ship and disposed of. When a British officer arrived from the *Baralong* he found no Germans left. The *Nicosian's* captain and crew rejoined her, and the vessel proceeded to Avonmouth.

After that the tale becomes obscure. The German Government produced a number of sworn statements by cattlemen, alleging that the men of the *Baralong* murdered the crew of the submarine as they were struggling in the water. Whether the Americans perjured themselves out of fear of the consequences of their action, or whether the whole thing was concocted by Count Bernstorff, did not appear. The only signatory whose antecedents we were able to examine was not even at sea when the events of which he claimed to be an eye-witness occurred. Germany demanded the trial of the men of the *Baralong* for murder. Sir Edward Grey answered that he was very willing that the matter should be investigated by a tribunal composed of American naval officers, provided that Germany agreed to allow the investigation by the same court of the circumstances connected with the sinking of the *Arabic*, the attack on the stranded submarine E13 in Dutch waters, and the firing on the crew of the steamer *Ruel* after they had taken to the boats. Germany replied that the three last affairs were not *in pari materia* with the first; and announced that, since Britain refused to make amends for the *Baralong* outrage, "the German Government feels itself compelled to take into its own hands the punishment of this unexpiated crime, and to adopt retaliatory measures." What these could be it was difficult to guess,

for you cannot proceed to stronger measures when you have consistently practised the last extremes of outrage. Germany had accused Britain of abandoning the first rule of warfare—to spare an enemy when he is out of action. To this charge Sir Edward Grey replied:—

> “The German Government are in error. It is true that, in the opinion of his Majesty’s Government, German methods of submarine warfare are barbarous and illegal; it is true that, acting under their Government’s orders, German sailors have bombarded open towns; have ruthlessly drowned men, women, and children—neutrals as well as belligerents; it is also true that what German sailors have done the German Press has loudly applauded. But it is not true that the British Admiralty have ever desired to retaliate by refusing mercy to ‘an enemy who has been put out of action.’ Were it otherwise, indeed, neither the German Government nor the German people would have just ground for complaint. It is not in consideration for their desserts that the Admiralty reject it. They reject it because in their opinion it is inconsistent with the traditions of the service for which they are responsible. To destroy an enemy who surrenders has never been the practice of the British navy; nor do they now propose to vary their methods of warfare merely because they find themselves in conflict with opponents whose views of honour and humanity are different from their own.”

The blockade of Germany maintained by British warships was one of our chief weapons in the campaign. We have seen the difficulties which it raised with America on points of law; towards the end of 1915 it was no less criticized by the British people on the point of fact. Critics urged that it was ineffective. Figures were quoted showing the enormously increased imports of the neutral countries adjoining Germany, principally in the way of foodstuffs. Our ring-fence was condemned as a farce, and the Foreign Office—which was not unnaturally suspected as the sole begetter of the unfortunate Declaration of London—was enjoined to hand over the blockade to the sailors, who meant business.

When these suggestions were examined they were found to fall under two heads. The first was the proposal to regularize our proceedings according to international law, and thereby placate the legally-minded America. It was urged that there was nothing to prevent a large extension of our list of absolute and conditional contraband, since we had thrown over

the Declaration of London. Further, we might now declare a legal blockade. Even if it had been impossible before—which was not admitted by those who saw in the Baltic a "closed sea" on a parallel with the American Great Lakes—the success of our submarines in those waters had enabled us now to make it effective. Ever since the summer there had been a real blockade of the German Baltic ports. We had wrecked there both the commerce and the troop transport of the enemy. It was difficult to find German or Swedish underwriters to undertake the risk. German ships had for the most part to keep within territorial waters, and this greatly increased the slowness and the risks of their voyages. The Danish press—which may be taken as an independent witness—had no doubt about the effectiveness in point of fact of the British Baltic blockade.

Why a formal blockade was not proclaimed by the Government was to many a mystery; but the answer seems to have been that it would have given us no powers which we had not already arrogated, and the proclamation, while it might satisfy a few American jurists, would make the situation still more delicate with regard to European neutrals. It was also urged that while a blockade would stop enemy trade, it would not touch neutral trade, and it was precisely with neutral trade that the trouble arose. This brings us to the second ground of criticism—that by way of adjacent neutrals a large amount of vital imports was still filtering through to Germany. It was possible for the Government to show that the figures of the critics were grossly exaggerated; but the fact remained that Germany was making desperate attempts to get seaborne food and raw materials for the purposes of war, and that our activities, while they had diminished this influx, had by no means put an end to it.

The critics could more easily prove the unpleasant fact than suggest a policy to prevent it. Talk about handing over the whole business to the Navy had little meaning, for before the Navy could act it must be given directions, and these directions were exactly what it was so hard to arrive at. What seemed to be in the mind of the critics was the action of Britain in the Napoleonic wars, when we stopped all commerce to the continent of Europe. But at that time the whole of Europe was openly or implicitly hostile, and unless we now wished to bring in all neutrals against us, this heroic remedy could scarcely be adopted. With Sweden, in particular, our relations were highly delicate; and Russia had no desire to see Sweden enter the field against the Allies, and appear with an army in Finland on her right rear. In his speech in the House of Commons on January 26, 1916, Sir Edward Grey put the point clearly:—

> "If you establish lines of blockade, you must do it consistently with the rights of neutrals. You cannot establish these lines of blockade and say that no ships will go through them at all, or you will stop all traffic of any kind to the neutral ports inside. You would stop all traffic to Christiania, Stockholm, Rotterdam, Copenhagen—all traffic whatever. Well, of course, that is not consistent with the rights of neutrals. You cannot shut off all supplies to neutral countries. You must not try to make the grass grow in the streets of neutral ports. You must let through these lines vessels *bona fide* destined for the neutral ports, with *bona fide* cargoes. Nor can you put every cargo in your Prize Courts and say it has not to go to a neutral port until the Prize Court has examined it. The congestion in this country would be such that you could not deal with it if you did that, and you have no right to say that the British Prize Court is the neck of the bottle through which all trade has to pass. If we had gone, or attempted to go, as far as that, I think the war possibly might be over by now; but it would have been over because the whole world would have risen against us, and we, and our Allies too, would have collapsed under the general resentment of the whole world."[11]

There remained, then, to discriminate between neutral imports intended for neutral use and those which might be passed on to the enemy. Such discrimination was obviously a task of immense intricacy, and involved the certainty of many mistakes. The principle of "rationing" a neutral was accepted, but this method had many grave drawbacks. If the imports prior to the war were taken as the basis, then this involved not only imports required for home consumption, but those re-exported to Germany to meet the balance of trade. It permitted, for example, the German acquisition of foodstuffs, and so was in defiance of the preamble of the Order in Council of March 11, 1915, which announced that "His Majesty had decided to adopt further measures to prevent commodities of any kind from reaching or leaving Germany." Again, if the imports of a neutral were to be rationed on this basis, why not the exports of a neutral such as the United States? If the basis were the home consumption of a particular article, then the following situation might occur. The limit from the point of view of our blockade might be reached early in any year, through a number of ships arriving in neutral ports carrying that article part of which was secretly destined for Germany. Cargoes arriving later, honestly destined for neutral consumption, we should be compelled to turn back or confiscate.

To meet these difficulties, we arranged central distributing agencies in the neutral states which had the direction of all consignments. They were responsible to us for the behaviour of their own merchants, and they formed authoritative bodies with which we could negotiate, and arrange from week to week the details of lawful commerce. It was by no means a perfect scheme; but in the circumstances, when we could only seek a balance of difficulties, it was probably the best possible. In the words of Lord Robert Cecil, who in February entered the Cabinet as Minister of Blockade, we could stop up the holes in the dam as they appeared; but it was inevitable that a good deal of water should run through while the repairs were being made. A blockade offers immense inducements to smuggling, and so long as human nature continues what it is there will be attempts to break it.

The criticism of our blockade policy was soon extended to other naval matters. On one point it was amply justified. The merchant shipping question had been allowed to drift, so that freights had risen to a crazy height, and shipowners made altogether excessive profits. It was urged that shipping companies should be made "controlled establishments," so that the whole of their surplus earnings might be taken for the nation; but this plan, while it might have augmented our revenue, would not have met the real difficulty. It would have been well if the shipping trade had been taken over by the Government, who would have paid it a fixed rate of interest on its capital and drawn up a reasonable schedule of freights. Neutral freights had naturally followed the British lead, and risen to the same extravagant height, and it was idle to hope to lower them by any of the devices proposed—such as, for example, making their coaling facilities in the ports of the Empire depend upon their adherence to a tariff—unless our British scale was lowered and systematized. The reason why some such step was not taken seems to be found in the departmentalism which is rampant in any time of stress. Every great question is interdepartmental, and no one will be settled speedily or wisely unless there is a strong central authority to colligate and harmonize the claims of the departments.

Finally, in the early days of March, the critics fastened upon naval policy itself—not, indeed, the work of the Fleets and the fighting Admirals, but the alleged supineness of the Board of Admiralty in new construction. Mr. Churchill returned from his battalion in the trenches to make a speech full of dark innuendoes, concluding with a demand for the reinstatement of Lord Fisher at Whitehall. He had a slender parliamentary and journalistic following, but those who most admired his courage and mental alertness could not but regret so ill-advised a performance. Since May 1915, it was not too much to say, for the first time for many years naval policy had been

settled by the Navy itself. Mr. Balfour was admirably fitted to be the civil head, for he could appreciate and use professional knowledge. The Fleets were the best judges of administrative competence, and the Fleets were content with the present *régime*. Journalistic cries, heroic remedies, sensational personalities, were repugnant to the minds of the most expert service in the world.

In the first months of 1916 speculation was rife, both among sailors and civilians, as to German naval plans. It was known that Germany had been busy at new construction, but it was not clear what form it would take. There were rumours of capital ships armed with 17-inch guns, of new mammoth submarines capable of voyaging a thousand miles from their bases without seeking supplies, and so beaked and armoured that they could sheer through any nets. It was believed that Germany contemplated in the near future an attack by sea and air as a complement to some great offensive by land. The most reasonable forecast seemed to be that she would lay a minefield from some point on the British coast eastwards, and under its cover attempt a raid or a bombardment of our south-eastern shores. If our battleships and battle-cruisers hastened to cut off the raiders, they would be entangled in the minefield and lose heavily. In this way she hoped to reduce our capital ships and prepare for future operations by her High Sea Fleet on more equal terms.

Colour was given to some such forecast by the very remarkable German mine-laying activity at the end of 1915 and during the first months of 1916. A new type of U boat had been specially devised for the laying of mines under water. It carried the mines in a special air-tight chamber which could be shut off from the hull of the submarine, and opened from above to the sea. As the mines descended they were automatically released from their sinker, which went to the bottom and acted as anchor. The mines, being lighter than water, floated at the end of the connecting chain, which kept them at the requisite distance below the surface. A minefield laid in this way was impossible to trace, except by its consequences, and it necessitated sweeping operations on a far greater scale than hitherto. Hence there tended to be a shortage of smaller auxiliaries, mine-sweepers, and the like, attached to the Grand Fleet. The campaign in the Eastern Mediterranean, where our lines of communication lay on the sea, required a very large number of small vessels, and the dearth of skilled labour at home made it difficult to construct new ones in the time. Undoubtedly Germany appreciated the situation, and laid her plans accordingly.

A second evidence of German naval activity was the dispatch of commerce-raiders from her North Sea ports. In December 1915 a vessel of some 4,500 tons, which had been launched as a fruit-ship and christened the *Ponga*, but had been transformed into an auxiliary cruiser carrying 6-inch guns, slipped out of Kiel harbour. She was rebaptized the *Moewe*, after a gunboat sunk at Dar-es-Salaam. Her commander was the Burgrave Count von und zu Dohna-Schlodien, who had been the navigating officer on the battleship *Posen*. Disguised with false sides to look like a tramp, and flying the Swedish flag, she slipped through our watching cruisers in the fog, and, fetching a wide circuit round the north of Scotland, arrived in the Atlantic. There she began a remarkable predatory career. She took the *Corbridge* off Cape Finisterre on 11th January, and presently added the *Author*, *Trader*, *Ariadne*, *Dromonby*, *Farringford*, and *Clan Mactavish*. The last vessel, which carried a 3-inch gun, put up a gallant fight, and lost eleven men killed. On 15th January the *Appam*, a vessel of nearly 8,000 tons, with the Governor of Sierra Leone on board, was taken in the seas off Madeira. Count Dohna, who behaved with humanity, put the crews and passengers of his different captures into the *Appam*, and sent her off under Lieutenant Berg to Norfolk, Virginia, where she duly arrived on 1st February, and raised a new legal conundrum for the American Government. Meantime the *Moewe* proceeded on her course, haunting the junction of the South American and West Indian trade routes, and added to her bag the *Westburn*, *Horace*, *Flamenco*, *Edinburgh*, and *Saxon Prince*, as well as the French *Maroni* and the Belgian *Luxembourg*. She sent the crews of these vessels in the *Westburn* to Santa Cruz, in Teneriffe, and after landing them blew the ship up. The *Moewe*, having done enough *pour chauffer la gloire*, turned towards home by the same route as she had come, and safely arrived at Kiel on 4th March. Her commander deserved all credit for a bold and skilful performance. He had captured fifteen vessels, and cost Britain at least £2,000,000. He brought home with him four British officers, twenty-nine marines and sailors, 166 men from the different crews, and some £50,000 in gold bars. He had proved that the right kind of disguise might give a ship the invisibility of the submarine, and his countrymen were entitled to acclaim his achievement.

Jan. 11, 1916.

Jan. 15.

Encouraged by his success, and before he had returned, Germany sent out another raider. This was the *Greif*, a big armed merchantman, carrying 7-inch and 4-inch guns, and fitted with torpedo tubes. Disguised as a tramp, and with the Norwegian colours painted on her sides, she made her way through the North Sea, and was steering a course for the Atlantic between

the Shetlands and the Faroes, when, on the forenoon of 29th February, she was sighted by the *Alcantara*, a Royal Mail ship of over 15,000 tons, now used as an auxiliary cruiser. The *Alcantara* overhauled her, inquired her name and destination, and lowered a boat. Suddenly the false bulwarks were dropped, and the stranger opened fire at a range of about 1,000 yards. She discharged a torpedo, but without success; and then one of her shells wrecked the *Alcantara's* steering gear, and a second torpedo found its mark. Meanwhile another British auxiliary, the *Andes*, appeared, and by her gun-fire put the *Greif* out of action. A light cruiser, the *Comus*, also joined in from a long range, and made accurate shooting. The enemy, now blazing from stem to stern, presently blew up, probably when the fire reached her cargo of mines. From the sinking *Alcantara* the two cruisers rescued all but five officers and twenty-nine men, and picked up five of the *Greif's* officers and 115 of her crew.

Feb. 29.

The work of our Fleet was so quiet and so little advertised that the ordinary Briton dwelling in the southern towns felt more remote from it than from the Flanders trenches. Only on the seaboard, especially in the north and east, was there evidence for the eye of an immense and ceaseless activity. As our Army had grown so had our Navy. Men of every class and occupation—yacht owners, fishermen, leisured people with a turn for the sea—had been drawn into the net, and the Royal Navy now included as motley a collection of volunteers in its auxiliary branches as could be found in the ranks of the new battalions. How arduous and anxious was the work only those employed in it could tell. That it was carried on in all weathers and under all discouragements with no surcease of keenness, was a tribute not only to our national character, but to the masterful traditions of the great Service. Any army, compelled to twenty months of comparative inaction and an unsleeping defensive, would have gone to pieces. But any army was a ragged and amateur business as compared with the British fleet. The ordeal was sustained partly because a ship's life in war is not so different from a ship's life in peace, partly because of the tradition of discipline and wise ceremonial, and partly because of the expertness of the profession. A modern sailor has duties so intricate and technical that they provide his mind with constant occupation. Even in peace neither body nor brain can afford to rest.

The sea has formed the English character, and the essential England is to be found in those who follow it. They have never altered since the days of

the Channel skippers who taught Drake his trade, and the adventurers who first drank bilge and ate penguins in far-away oceans. Our seamen have been unmoved by the political storms which raged on land. They have been neither Puritans nor Cavaliers, Whigs nor Tories, but plain Englishmen who were concerned with greater things. From blue water they have learned mercifulness and a certain spacious tolerance for what does not affect their craft, but they have also learned in the grimmest of schools precision and resolution. The sea endures no makeshifts. If a thing is not exactly right it will be vastly wrong. Discipline, courage to the point of madness, contempt for all that is pretentious and insincere, are the teaching of the ocean and the elements, and they have been the qualities in all ages of the British sailor.

On the Navy, "under the good Providence of God," it is written in the Articles of War, hang the peace and prosperity of our islands and our Empire. But in this struggle there were still greater issues, for on the British navy especially depended whether law or rapine was henceforth to rule the world. To one who visited the Grand Fleet there came a sense of pride which was more than the traditional devotion of Englishmen to the senior service and the remembrance of a famous past. The great battleships far up in the northern waters, wreathed in mists and beaten upon by snowstorms, the men who for twenty months of nerve-racking strain had kept unimpaired their edge and ardour of mind, were indeed a shining proof of the might and spirit of their land. But in the task before them there was a high duty, which their forefathers, indeed, had shared, but which lay upon them with a solemn urgency. They were the modern crusaders, the true defenders of the faith, doing battle not only for home and race and fatherland, but for the citadel of Christendom.

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[7] Von Pohl retired from the command of the High Sea Fleet in January 1916, and died a few weeks later. He was succeeded by Admiral von Scheer.

[8] She had been launched in 1903, had a displacement of 16,350 tons, a speed of 19 knots, and carried an armament of four 12-inch, four 9.2-inch, and ten 6-inch guns.

The Admiralty issued the following lists of unarmed British and neutral vessels sunk during 1915 without warning by enemy submarines:—

BRITISH.

Jan. 30	Tokomaru
Feb. 15	Dulwich
Feb. 20	Cambank
Feb. 23	Branksome Chine
Feb. 23	Oakby
Feb. 24	Western Coast
Feb. 24	Rio Parana
Feb. 24	Harpalion
March 7	Bengrove
March 9	Blackwood
March 9	Princess Victoria
March 11	Florazan
March 13	Invergyle
March 18	Glenartney
March 21	Carintorr
March 22	Concord
April 1	Seven Seas
April 4	City of Bremen
April 10	Harpalyce
April 15	Ptarmigan
April 18	Vanilla
May 1	Edale
May 3	Minterne
May 6	Centurion
May 7	Lusitania
May 18	Drurachree

May 19	Dumfries
June 1	Saidieh
June 4	Inkum
June 8	Strathcarron
June 12	Leuctra
June 15	Strathnaim
June 28	Dumfriesshire
July 28	Mangara
Aug. 1	Fulgens
Aug. 10	Rosalie
Aug. 16	Serbino
Aug. 19	Arabic
Sept. 12	Ashmore
Nov. 19	Hallamshire

NEUTRAL.

February 19	Belridge	Norwegian
March 13	Hannah	Swedish
April 3	Douro	Portuguese
April 14	Folke	Swedish
April 15	Katwijk	Dutch
April 17	Ellispontos	Greek
May 2	Gulflight	American
May 7	Ellen	Swedish
May 25	Nebraskan	American
May 26	Betty	Danish
June 9	Svein Jarl	Norwegian
July 14	Rym	Norwegian
August 18	Magda	Norwegian
August 27	Uranus	Swedish

[10] The *Pommern*, the loss of which the Germans admitted in the great battle of May 31, 1916, was almost certainly a brand new vessel of the largest type.

[11] See Appendices III. and IV.

CHAPTER XCIV.

THE WINTER'S WAR IN THE AIR.

The Allied Superiority at Midsummer 1915, and the Reasons for it—German Activity in Aircraft Manufacture—The Four Main Uses of Airplanes—Reconnoitring—"Spotting" for Artillery—Bomb-droppers—Raids on Stuttgart, etc.—The March Attack on Zeebrugge—The Fight at Sylt—Austrian Activity—Bombardment of Venice—Air Work at Salonika and in Egypt—Battle-planes—Different Types used—The Fokker—Its History—Allied Counter-weapons—Boelcke and Immelmann—Guynemer and Navarre—Account of a Fight with Fokkers—Second-Lieutenant Insall's Exploit—Zeppelin Construction in Germany—The New Type—Limitations of the Zeppelin—Weapons of Defence—The Winter Raids on Britain—Losses of Zeppelins—Military Value of Zeppelin Performances—The Administration of the British Aerial Force—Popular Criticism—The Proposal for an Air Ministry—France's Experience—Arguments for and against an Air Board—Lord Sydenham's View.

In an earlier chapter we brought the history of the aerial activities of the combatants to the close of the summer of 1915. We have seen that in the weeks preceding the September offensive in the West the Allied airplanes did brilliant work over the German front both in reconnaissance and in destruction. Few German machines crossed our trenches, and for a while it seemed as if the Allied predominance was to go unquestioned. This assumption was natural; but the fact had an explanation which did not warrant a too confident conclusion. In April 1915 the bulk of the German airplanes had gone eastward to assist in the great attack on Russia. Von Mackensen's assault on the Donajetz was accompanied by an unprecedented concentration of aircraft for reconnaissance and artillery direction. Each German pilot had four airplanes at his disposal, with a full mechanical staff, while the Russian pilots had but one. Day after day through the long retreat the German airmen swarmed like locusts far inside the Russian lines. Again, when the winter began, the comparative infrequence of German flights over the Western trenches was largely explained by German policy. She did not believe that the Allies could make another great assault; she regarded the

fronts as stable, and so she did not trouble to scout to any large extent over our hinterland. It was different when she came to the great February offensive which we shall presently consider. In the first days of the Verdun battle there was something like a complete breakdown of the defensive power of the French aircraft. Few things in the campaign were more remarkable than the sudden recovery of France from a situation as perilous as it was unexpected.

The truth seems to have been that Germany used the early part of 1915 to perform the same kind of feat as concerns the air as the Allies performed with regard to heavy guns and high-explosive shells. The first six months of war revealed to the Allies their weakness in what was obviously the immediate need, and the same months showed Germany that her elaborate air preparations had been on the wrong lines. She began with an immense number of planes of the "Taube" type, large machines, clumsy to handle, and they proved ineffective against the handful of Allied machines, which were superior in fighting power. The real initial success of the Allies encouraged them to improve their fleet with amazing rapidity; but Germany, too, was not idle. She started with the great advantage that her standard type of engine was already about 100 horse-power, as compared to the 50-70 horse-power engine used by the Allies. She studied the needs of the situation, freely adapting from every model known to the world. Presently the "Taubes" disappeared, and were replaced by big biplanes of the "Aviatik" or "Albatross" type, which were followed by twin-engined biplanes, and then by the great tractor biplanes which our men called "Hans" and "Fritz." Lastly, in midwinter came the famous Fokker monoplane. No praise could be too high for the German effort in construction. She had made up in an incredibly short space of time a leeway in *matériel* which at one moment threatened to handicap her whole military effort. The consequence was that the war in the air during the winter of 1915-16 was more of a drawn contest than at any time since the Battle of the Marne. The casualties in the French and British Flying Corps mounted high; young officers returning from the front reported that our old ascendancy in the air had gone; an ignorant clamour broke out among British politicians; and the pseudo-expert raged at will in the columns of popular journals.

To understand the situation during the winter it is necessary to grasp the precise tactical uses to which airplanes were now put. The old idea of unification was seen to be exploded; a machine invaluable for one task proved useless for another, and it became necessary to specialize in the construction of different types for different purposes. Aircraft were the chief means of reconnaissance; they reported the arrival of enemy reinforcements,

they determined the routes of enemy supplies, and they provided more or less accurate maps of the enemy trench lines. It was from the air that most of the “spotting” for the guns was done. Again, aerial bombardments were useful for destroying lines of transport, railway stations, magazines and bases. Lastly, if it was necessary to do all these things, it was no less necessary to prevent the enemy doing them, and consequently machines must be prepared to engage and destroy the enemy airplanes. No single type could perform these manifold duties any more than one kind of warship could conduct a campaign at sea.

We may, therefore, divide the uses of aircraft into four main classes. There was first the business of reconnaissance, both scouting over the immediate enemy hinterland and more extended journeys towards his bases. In the second place came the work of artillery direction, where speed was unimportant and immobility was the ideal. Thirdly, there was the task of destruction by bomb-dropping, which required heavy machines, powerfully engined, and capable of carrying a considerable weight. Lastly, there was the business of fighting, which required great speed and manœuvring power. Each duty needed its special type, with certain special qualities—speed in one, weight-lifting in a second, comparative immobility in a third. But the limits of attainment of each attribute were strictly set. Immobility was not compassable, since the lowest speed at which an airplane could move without falling had a fixed relation—some 50 per cent.—to its maximum speed. Again, weight-lifting capacity could not be increased beyond a certain point without lowering dangerously the speed and the consequent manœuvring power. In the words of a French expert, M. Georges Prade: “The practical limits of construction, maximum and minimum, will be obtained from the two following considerations drawn from their two special applications: an airplane is too small when it does not even permit a machine-gun to be carried; an airplane becomes too large when its increase in power and surface is not accompanied by a proportionate increase in weight-lifting capacity.”

The first class, the scouts, were the least specialized of all, and demanded a combination of qualities. They must be fairly large, and carry an observer, photographic apparatus, and one or two machine guns. They must be handy to manœuvre, so as to escape the enemy’s guns, and must have good climbing power, so as to escape from enemy planes. In short reconnaissances they must carry petrol for at least three hours’ flight; but if

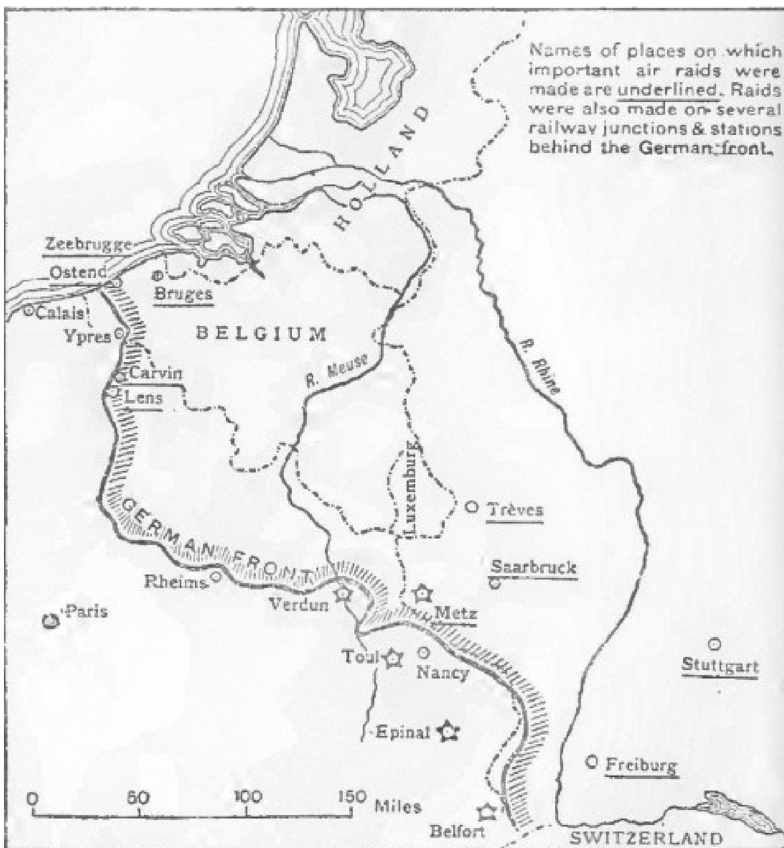
they went any considerable distance behind the enemy lines the supply must be for at least five hours. Should a head-wind be blowing as they returned, it might take treble the time to get back that it took for the outward journey. The latest type of scouting planes had motors of from 80 to 150 horse-power, and were capable in still weather of doing nearly 100 miles an hour. In the early days of the war reconnaissances were usually made at between 6,000 and 8,000 feet; but the development of anti-aircraft guns soon forced them up to an altitude of over 10,000, thereby seriously limiting their reconnoitring value. The best planes were capable of climbing with ease to a height of over 12,000 feet. In the work of reconnaissance it might fairly be said that the Allies maintained their superiority. Though the German machines for the purpose soon became excellent, and on occasions, such as the early days of Verdun, did brilliant work, yet—whether from choice or necessity—their activity was far more limited than that of their opponents. For one German reconnaissance over the Allied lines the Allies made five over the German.

The second class, the machine which "spots" for the guns, was at this time still far from perfection. A small machine was wanted which could climb rapidly and could be easily handled in all winds. It could not be heavily armed, and must rely for protection largely on an accompanying battle-plane. It must be able to fly slowly, and give the observer a clear view in all directions, and it must be fitted with wireless apparatus. In M. Prade's view the best type for the purpose was a small biplane, driven by two light and powerful rotary motors. Some protection must be given to the observation seat against trench fire, for of necessity the flight must usually be low. Possibly the ideal type of "spotter" was to be found in a German machine which appeared early in 1916, and had its body sheathed in some metal which protected it against rifle bullets, while its low altitude of from 500 to 1,000 feet made it a difficult mark for anti-aircraft guns.

The third class contained the bomb-dropper, which the French called the "*avion de bombardement*." The essential quality of this type was to have great carrying power, and be able to climb high, so that in its journeys to its objective it should escape notice from the ground. It was not till the early months of 1915 that this branch of aeronautics was taken seriously; but since then, chiefly owing to French initiative, it developed with remarkable speed. The first machines used for the purpose were the Voisin "pushers," owing to their weight-lifting power. Presently came the multiple-engined machine,

which had existed before the war in Russia in the shape of the big Sikorsky biplane, and in Italy in the Caproni type. The best type was the French Caudron, with a double engine, which had unique climbing power, and often carried its crew far inside the German lines, at an altitude of 14,000 feet or so, which no German battle-plane could reach.

Bombardments were mainly undertaken by squadrons of airplanes, for the reason that by distributing the risk there was a better chance of the larger part of the cargoes of bombs reaching their goal. The main attacks by the Allies on German bases were accomplished by squadrons containing sometimes as many as fifty machines. Some of the French planes were very large, with a wing spread of 70 feet, a company of six or eight, and an armament of four 37 mm. guns; but the usual type was much smaller, for the production of giants took time. It was a wonderful sight to watch a squadron departing on a raid, their white wings flitting far up in the blue, like a flock of ethereal doves, or returning of an evening in the eye of the setting sun, doves no more, but hawks dyed with battle.



Air Raids by the Allies on the Western Front.

Sept. 22, 1915.

The chief squadron raids of the period under consideration may be briefly enumerated. On 22nd September a French squadron flew to Stuttgart, 140 miles due east of Nancy, dropped thirty bombs on the palace of the King of Wurtemberg, and returned in safety. Other raids during September were directed on Trèves and Saarbruck, and on several of the Belgian bases. These were in the nature of reprisals for the September Zeppelin attacks on London. During the bad weather of November and December there was little to be done, but in January two squadrons raided Metz, and two planes dropped thirty-eight bombs on Freiburg, in Baden. In February Bruges and Ostend were bombarded. March was the month of greatest activity. On the 10th thirty-one British machines raided the railhead and billets at Carvin, seven miles north-east of Lens. On the 20th, early in the morning, the largest squadron yet assembled, fifty British, French, and Belgian bomb-droppers,

March 10, 1916.

March 20.

escorted by fifteen battle-planes, attacked the German seaplane station at Zeebrugge and the Houttave aerodrome. The machines carried each on an average 200 pounds of bombs. Great damage was done among the enemy aircraft, and all the raiders returned safely. On 25th March a squadron of British seaplanes were conveyed to a rendezvous near the North Frisian coast by Commodore Tyrwhitt's force of light cruisers and destroyers. The weather was bad—one of the worst blizzards of the winter—but the squadron attacked the airship sheds on the shore opposite the island of Sylt. The affair developed into a small naval battle, in which two armed German patrols were sunk. Three of the seaplanes unfortunately came down, and four officers and a chief petty officer fell into the enemy's hands.

March 25.

Beyond isolated attacks on the British coast there was little activity on the part of German bomb-droppers. They rarely attempted squadron flights. British ships were occasionally pursued, such as the *Balgownie* and the *Avocet*, which each had a brush with three German planes in November. Far greater was the raiding activity of the Austrian machines. On the night of 24th October Venice was bombarded by three Austrian planes, when one bomb fell in the Piazzetta of St. Mark, and the ceiling painted by Tiepolo in the Church of the Scalzi was destroyed. In November there were a second raid on Venice, and attacks by squadrons on Ancona, Brescia, and Verona. In February 1916 Ravenna was attacked, and a famous basilica damaged.

Oct. 24, 1915.

In all the theatres of war bomb-droppers were busy. Turkish planes attacked the British camp at Kut. On 26th March six British machines dropped forty bombs with devastating effect on the Turkish advanced base at Bir-el-Hassana, some eighty miles east of the Suez Canal. At Salonika during the winter there was an almost continuous series of attacks and counter-attacks. The Bulgarian camps at Strumnitza, Uskub, and Ishtip were bombarded during November. Then came the German air raid on Salonika of 30th December, which led to the arrest of the enemy consuls. Flying in the Balkans was no easy task, for landing-places were few and far between, and at first it was hard to find suitable ground at the base for an aviation park. In January Petritch, in the Strumnitza valley, was attacked by a French squadron, when the Bulgarian casualties were nearly a thousand. In the same month twelve German planes dropped bombs on Salonika, and forty French machines attacked Monastir and Ghevgeli, damaging the railway station, barracks, and ammunition depôts. During February and March the warfare continued, and in general the Allies had the better of the game. The enemy

March 26, 1916.

planes were at some disadvantage, for their bases were far back behind the mountains, and they had several hours of flight before they could reach their objective. It is probable that many unrecorded disasters overtook them on their return journeys through the inhospitable hills.

The fourth and last class contained the battle-planes, the specialized *avions de chasse*, which were intended solely to engage and destroy hostile machines. At first all airplanes were used as fighting machines when the occasion arose. The Allies used Voisin and Vickers biplanes with the propeller behind, which were exceedingly quick to manœuvre, and during the first year of the war established a real fighting supremacy over the enemy. The Germans replied with a big biplane, with the propeller in front, and engined up to something like 200 horse-power. The speed and the climbing power of this machine made it a deadly antagonist, and the Allies were driven to invent a special class of "chasers." These were for the most part small monoplanes, with a speed of nearly 100 miles an hour, single-seated, and carrying a machine-gun. They had their guns mounted above the engines, and fired through the propeller. These "chasers" were used as escorts for the bomb-droppers and for reconnoitring and "spotting" machines, and their speed gave them at once the advantage of the big German biplane.

The German reply was the celebrated "Fokker," which, about the beginning of 1916, obtained a Press celebrity scarcely inferior to the Zeppelin itself. Before the war a certain Dutch inventor, Fokker by name, produced a monoplane which he claimed to be uncapsizable, and offered it to the British Government. The machine was badly built, and obviously difficult and dangerous to fly, and our experts very properly reported against it. He therefore took his wares to Germany, and from his factory at Schweinigen produced a machine which was almost exactly the opposite of his old pattern. "Inherent stability" had gone to the winds, and the new monoplane was highly sensitive. Structurally it was an almost exact copy of the French Moräne, with the same type of wings. It was built of steel tubing, coated with prepared canvas, and was fitted with the Ueberursel engine, a copy of the French Gnome—something over 100 horse-power—though a few had 60 horse-power Mercedes engines. Apparently there were two types of Fokker: one—the usual type—firing with a fixed gun through its propeller, which was fitted with deflecting blades according to the fashion invented by Garros, and the other carrying its gun on a swivel.

The speed and manœuvring power of the Fokker made it at first a formidable enemy. It could attain well over 100 miles an hour, and could climb to 7,500 feet in ten minutes. Its habit was to rise high and await the coming of an enemy plane. Then it dived straight for its victim, loosing off its battery, and if its descent was spiral it produced a cone of fire with the enemy inside. If these tactics failed, it could attack its quarry from behind, endeavouring to get pilot, tanks, and engine in one line of fire, and so to manœuvre that the enemy could not shoot at it without blowing off his own tail. It gained most of its amazing speed by its sharp dives, which had the effect of doubling its horse-power.

The Fokker was a defensive weapon. It was not built for long flights over the lines, but remained on its own ground, waiting to take toll of the invader. Hence the Allies were faced with a special problem, which would not have been solved by the possession of machines of the same type. Since their reconnaissance was systematic and habitual over the German front, they did not want a mere defensive weapon, but an offensive machine which could beat the Fokker on its own ground, and at the same time would be capable of considerable flights. This problem was successfully solved in the early months of 1916, but it was solved by no one type. More powerful engines and a heavier armament, if combined with quickness in manœuvring, would be a match for the enemy; for a machine shooting through the propeller could only operate while heading straight for its quarry, whereas a plane with its propeller behind and swivel guns had a choice of tactics.

The situation by the end of the winter revealed something very like an equality in weapons between the two sides, and the determining factor became once again the skill of the pilots. The Allies beyond doubt showed a better average in human material. Even at the height of the Fokker's success, before Allied machines had been adapted to meet it, one British pilot dropped three in one day. Each side had its "star turns." Among the Germans were such men as Kandulski, who killed Pégoud, and the two lieutenants, Boelcke and Immelmann, who with their Fokkers did brilliant work during the Battle of Verdun. France had lost Garros and Pégoud; but in her young aviators Guynemer and Navarre she produced men who in skill and valour had no superiors in the campaign. Every day in their lives was filled with deeds which two years before would have been deemed too strange for the wildest melodrama. The British Royal Flying Corps did not publish names, but they were not behind their Allies in daring and efficiency. An account of one of the winter engagements deserves quotation, as illustrating the new conditions of aerial warfare:—

“One of our machines, to which another was acting as escort, was engaged in reconnaissance work over Cambrai on the morning of 29th December. They were attacked by six German Fokker machines, firing through the propeller. As a result of the machine-gun fire of the six Fokkers our escorting machine was immediately shot down, but its occupants seemed to reach the ground safely, so landing as to effect intentionally the destruction of their machine without injury to themselves. It was followed to the ground by two of the Fokkers. Our remaining machine succeeded in driving off and apparently in seriously injuring by its fire the first Fokker which had attacked it. It was out of control when last seen, and was nose-diving with every prospect of injury or death to its occupants.

“Our machine was then attacked by the three other Fokkers, which it fought for fifteen minutes, and then, its machine-guns being temporarily out of action, its pilot decided that escape could only be sought by a very risky dive to within 20 feet of the ground —risky in that it necessitated a descent by very steep spirals at a speed of quite 100 miles an hour, with little room to recover. Only very delicate and confident handling could ensure the success of this manœuvre, which only the absence of other means of escape could justify. It was prompted by two other considerations. In the first place, a Fokker, being less handy, would not dare to pursue within 20 feet of the ground, the margin for recovery after the nose-diving being so very restricted; and, secondly, if our machine was once more to reach friendly territory in safety, it was desirable that it should conceal from armed enemies to be surmounted in its front its nationality as displayed by the rings painted on the lower surface of its planes, and this it could only do by skimming over the ground at as low an elevation as possible.

“Skimming along just above the ground, as skims a grouse under a hawk, our machine, hard pressed, turned westward for home, whereupon one of the German machines, all of which had maintained an elevation of 1,000 feet, swooped towards it, but was promptly driven off by rapid fire, one gun by that time having been repaired. The fight continued halfway to the British lines, when two Fokkers gave it up. The British pilot and observer at once started climbing to attack the single remaining Fokker, but this brought back the two companions, and our machine resumed its original elevation. The three German machines ultimately

> turned back, giving up the chase when about a mile from the German lines, before crossing which the British pilot naturally sought to climb; but, our airplane being unable to rise higher than 800 feet, owing to the engine having been hit in the fight, pilot and observer were subjected to very heavy rifle, machine-gun, and field artillery fire, which the machine fortunately survived, although its planes and spars were damaged, and more than one of its stays nearly severed.
>
> "The anxieties of the position had for long been greatly increased by the knowledge that only sufficient petrol remained in the tank to bring the machine just within the friendly lines if a direct course was pursued, so that to be driven in any degree out of that course would have been fatal. Early in the engagement the oil feed had been shot away, and, with an engine injured by rifle fire, the chances of ever reaching home had seemed remote. But an expiring effort landed the machine just within the French lines south-west of Arras."

One British feat is worth recording, as an example of the cool and resolute daring which characterized our airmen. On November 7, 1915, Second-Lieutenant G. S. M. Insall was patrolling near Bapaume in a Vickers battle-plane, accompanied by a gunner, T. H. Donald, when he saw a German Aviatik heading south. He pursued, and, avoiding a German rocket battery, dived to close range, while Donald fired a drum of cartridges which stopped the German engine. The enemy descended, followed by his pursuer, and was brought down heavily in a ploughed field south-east of Arras. The Germans scrambled out of their machine and prepared to fire, whereupon the British plane dived to 500 feet, and wounded and put to flight the two aviators. The German guns now took up the tale, but in spite of heavy fire Lieutenant Insall managed to drop an incendiary bomb which destroyed the German machine. He was well inside the enemy lines, and now headed for home, diving to increase his speed, and so getting close to the trenches. As he passed over them Donald fired at the occupying troops, and the return fire damaged the petrol tank. Nevertheless the British machine was brought safely to ground 500 yards inside our lines, and, though the enemy fired 150 shells at it, it was repaired and flown home by the two airmen. For this exploit Lieutenant Insall received the Victoria Cross.

Nov. 7, 1915.

We left off our tale of Zeppelin raids at midsummer 1915. Beginning in August, the British people witnessed a series of irregular visitations, which

grew bolder as the months passed and caused many of those who had formerly scouted the Zeppelin menace to revise their opinions. Zeppelin construction had proceeded in Germany at a furious pace, and had possibly reached the rate of one for every ten days. The old machines had been symmetrical in shape, but the new ones were thicker forward, and tapered towards the stern, thereby giving greater speed. The old type was about 140 metres long, and had a capacity of some 20,000 cubic metres; the new type reached nearly 160 metres in length, with a cubic metre capacity of 30,000. The new bomb-carrying capacity was half as much again as the old, and from six to eight machine-guns were mounted. The projectiles used were high-explosive bombs, weighing some 200 pounds, and composed of tri-nitro-toluol, and low-explosive bombs filled with "thermit," to start fires. A laden Zeppelin travelled at about 7,000 feet, but after getting rid of its load could rise as high as 12,000 feet. The main centre in Germany was Leipzig, which was far removed from enemy aerial attacks, and close to the factories of Chemnitz and Jena. The route to the western front was by Gotha, Frankfurt, Mayence, and Metz; to the eastern by Berlin, Posen, and Koenigsberg; and to Britain and the sea by Hamburg and Cuxhaven, or by Kiel and the Schleswig hangars. On all these routes hangars and lighthouses had been constructed to comfort the travellers.

Weather was the vital factor in a Zeppelin raid, and it soon became clear that only in certain atmospheric conditions was danger to be anticipated. The best weather was a dry anticyclonic spell; the worst, a period of rain or snow. The natural time to choose was the dark fourteen days in every month, during the last and up to the first quarter of the moon. The suppression of British meteorological reports did not greatly inconvenience the enemy, for from Ostend he could forecast the Atlantic weather, and could receive wireless messages from any neutral steamer.

The Zeppelin was not a weapon of precision. Though, unlike an airplane, it could steer a course at night by the compass and by wireless, yet it had the formidable difficulty of its size to face, and to pass unnoticed needed fog or a cloudy sky. Consequently it was very easy for it to miss its objective. Again, it could not drop bombs with any accuracy at a mark, for air currents in the higher spaces deflected its course, and if it came lower it became an obvious target. Hence it was usually compelled to drop its bombs blindly from some height like 10,000 feet, and to trust to fortune to hit something valuable.

But it was one thing to recognize the working limits of a Zeppelin, and quite another to provide adequate defences. Reconnaissance might give

early warning of its approach and searchlights reveal it when it arrived, but the weapons of offence were terribly limited. Quick-firing guns of large calibre, firing first luminous and then explosive shells, were the natural protection for any locality likely to be the object of Zeppelin attacks. But such guns could not be distributed over the whole country, and the Zeppelin had an immense area to manœuvre in. The "swarm of locusts," which Mr. Churchill had predicted, was hard to use, even if the machines had been there, for airplane flights on a dark night over a great city were more risky to the aviator than to the enemy. The best hope lay in attacking the monster on the out or return journey, either by battle-planes or by the fire of ships at sea. The other alternative, a counter-attack by Zeppelins, was impossible, since the Allies had none ready.

In August 1915 there were two Zeppelin raids on the eastern and south-eastern coasts of Britain. On the evening of 7th September Zeppelins attacked the suburbs of London, and next night a serious assault was made on the heart of the city. The raiders came between 10 and 11 p.m., while the theatres and music-halls were full, and dropped bombs in the City and the central districts. There were 106 casualties—20 killed and 86 injured; but the people of London behaved with praiseworthy composure, and the fires kindled were quickly subdued by the admirable work of the London Fire Brigade. The next raid came upon 13th October, early in the evening, when the streets were thronged, and the tale of casualties was the largest yet recorded—56 killed and 114 injured. The area which suffered most was a suburban residential district, and, except for one or two soldiers who happened to be in the streets, the list was civilian, mainly women and children. There were no further raids during the rough weather of November and December, but on the last day of January 1916 at least six Zeppelins made landfall on the East Coast, and went inland over East Anglia and the Midland counties. The raiders seemed to be searching for Birmingham and Liverpool, but the bombs they dropped fell mainly in rural districts and in some of the lesser Midland industrial towns. Sixty-seven were killed and 117 injured, and of these casualties two-thirds were women and children. The brutality of the business was only equalled by its aimlessness. The raiders seemed to have lost their way, and, since no danger had been anticipated in those parts and there were no defences, they wandered about for hours unmolested. One of them, the L19, sank in the North Sea on her return voyage. On the previous night Zeppelins had raided Paris, and did some damage in a working-class northern suburb.

Sept. 7-8.

Oct. 13.

Jan. 31, 1916.

Jan. 30.

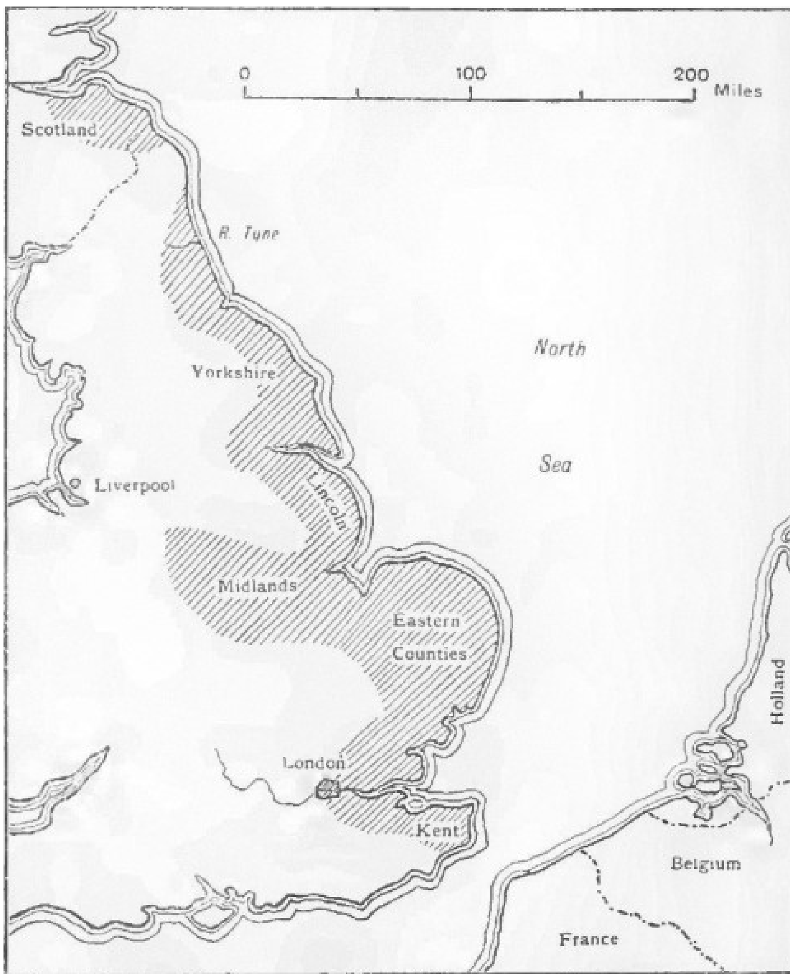
They stayed only a short time, and were hunted back by the French battle-planes.

March 5.

The next raid on Britain fell on 5th March, in a storm, when three Zeppelins visited the East Coast from Yorkshire to Kent, and left seventy killed and injured. The month was wet and boisterous, but with its close came the period of still weather which often marks the transition from March to April. On 31st March the eastern coast was again attacked, on 1st April the north-eastern counties, and on 2nd April the Scottish Lowlands, which had been thought to lie far beyond the danger zone. In the first two attempts 59 were killed and 166 injured, and in the third there were over a score of casualties. The Zeppelin L15, which took part in the first raid, was brought down off the mouth of the Thames and her crew made prisoners. Out of these various adventures the Germans wove wonderful fairy tales, of great ports wrecked, munition factories in flames, camps destroyed, and a people in abject terror. The plain fact was that no military or naval damage of the slightest consequence was effected, only the killing and maiming of innocent civilians in undefended hamlets and suburbs.

March 31.

April 1-2.



Map showing (roughly) the districts raided or traversed by the Zeppelins in the twelve months ending May 1916.

At the same time it was becoming plain that though the Zeppelins had not yet effected military damage, yet they had a real military significance. It was realized that in reconnaissance work, especially in “spotting” for the German fleet, they might have a high tactical value, while the violence and frequency of their assaults on English soil might bring about a state of the popular temper which would react harmfully on our military effort. It was clear that the Zeppelin was vulnerable, and was growing chary of visiting a place well provided with anti-aircraft guns, such as the London area. Other localities naturally asked for the same defences, but it was manifestly impossible to arm all England and Scotland without playing havoc with the

munitionment of our battle-fronts. For a moment there was a faint suggestion of some such extravagant demand, but the good sense of the country checked the incipient clamour. One consequence followed, however: the aerial defences of Britain and the whole of our air policy were submitted to a searching popular scrutiny.

The organization of our aerial forces was admittedly imperfect and empirical. It could hardly have been otherwise, since we began the war with a handful of machines, and nearly the whole of our equipment was an improvisation. The army aircraft was under Major-General Sir David Henderson, and attached to it was the Royal Aircraft Factory, which was originally intended as an experimental laboratory, but gradually took some part in the business of manufacture. The naval side was under the Admiralty Air Department, and in September 1915 a flag-officer, Rear-Admiral Vaughan-Lee, was appointed director, while the former director, Commander Murray Sueter, was given charge of the material side under the title of Superintendent of Aircraft Construction. The protection of London, by an anomaly which could neither be explained nor justified, was in the hands of the Admiralty, and after the September raids Admiral Sir Percy Scott was put in charge of the gunnery defences of the capital. The arrangement proved unworkable, and in February 1916 Sir Percy Scott relinquished his post; and the air defences of Britain were handed over to the War Office and the staff of the Home Army, now under Lord French. The situation was therefore this: the Navy and Army had each its own aircraft organization, the latter being entrusted also with home defence; but, apart from the War Council, there was no colligating machinery to enable the two services to follow a common policy. To meet this difficulty a Standing Joint Naval and Military Committee was formed to co-ordinate production, and of this body Lord Derby became chairman. Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, an acknowledged expert on the subject, was a member of the Committee.

Meantime an agitation had quickened throughout the land in favour of a complete overhauling of the whole business. It was urged that construction was haphazard and unscientific, and that gallant aviators were often sent to their death in faulty machines. Private aircraft makers had many grievances against the Government and the Royal Aircraft Factory. Behind all lay the national nervousness about aerial raids, which brought the realities of war home to the dwellers in every town and village of the eastern half of England. The popular cry was for an Air Ministry, and Lord Montagu's phrase, "One Element, one Service," seemed to many the last word in common sense. The situation became acute when, early in April, Lord Derby and Lord Montagu resigned from the Joint Committee. They had

hoped that it would grow into a true Board of Aviation, which might develop into a Ministry of the Air, but discovered that it was no more than an interdepartmental committee without executive powers.

The beginning of summer found the riddle still unsolved, though the nucleus of an Air Board was formed, with Lord Curzon as chairman; while a Commission was appointed, at Sir David Henderson's request, to examine the numerous charges brought in Press and Parliament against the administration of the service. It is interesting to note that during the same period a similar agitation had been going on in France. During the first year of the war General Hirschauer was at the head of the French Flying Corps, with the title of Directeur de l'Aéronautique. General Hirschauer was the creator of the French air service; but he came to loggerheads with some of the aircraft manufacturers and the politicians who supported them. In September 1915, accordingly, an Air Ministry was formed under M. René Besnard, an able administrator, who had to assist him an advisory committee largely recruited from the aircraft industry. It was not a success; apparently it was not sufficiently in touch with the service departments, especially the artillery branch; and after an unquiet existence of five months it ceased to be, and M. Besnard was replaced in February 1916 by Colonel Regnier, as Directeur de l'Aéronautique, the old office of General Hirschauer.

France had, therefore, tried the experiment advocated by many in Britain, but the French failure was not necessarily a reply to Lord Montagu and his colleagues. That a thing had been done ill was no reason why it might not be done well. Those who opposed a separate Board of Aeronautics argued on the analogy of the artillery and the engineers. It would obviously be undesirable, they said, to put all gunnery under a separate department, for gunnery was an integral part of the tactics of each service, and must be under the undivided control of the heads of each service. But, as a matter of fact, the old Board of Ordnance, which dealt with the provision of *matériel* to the Navy and Army, worked admirably for generations, and had never been satisfactorily replaced. An Air Board, in charge of all construction, had the best precedents on its side. Further, though the phrase "One Element, one Service" might be pressed too far, yet there were points about the air service which differentiated it from all others, and which seemed to demand a separate organization at headquarters. The air had its own tactics and strategy, auxiliary to but different from those of the Navy and the Army, and it must develop its own school of thought. Not only experiment and construction required special handling, but the initial training of the *personnel*. In the words of Lord Sydenham: "The case of the artillery and engineers is not analogous. Their recruitment, organization, and

a great part of their training closely follow those of the other arms. With the air service the difference is organic. Airmen must specialize and concentrate upon their peculiar duties from the first. When their technical training is complete, units can be handed over to the admiral or to the general to learn their business as necessary adjuncts of a fleet or an army, and will then pass under naval or military command just as trawlers and auxiliary craft, whose crews may have had no naval training, take their place in a service involving much that is new to them." A brand new Ministry of the Air was neither possible nor desirable, but the weight of argument seemed to lean in favour of some single central authority to prevent waste, confusion, and delay in training and construction.

CHAPTER XCV.

THE FALL OF ERZERUM.

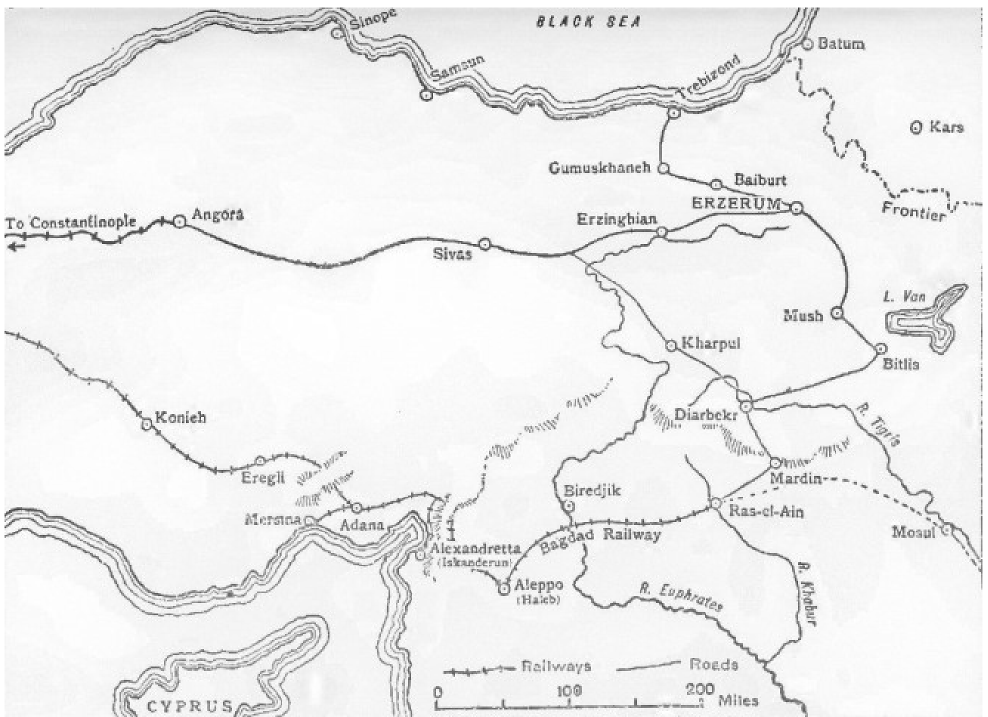
The Approaches to Erzerum—The Country around—The Strength of the Fortress—Difficulty of Communications—Russian Mastery of Black Sea—Russian and Turkish Strength and Commands—Turkish Dispositions—Yudenitch's Plan—Success of Russian Centre at Kuprikeui—Hassan Kaleh entered—Turks fall back behind Deve Boyun—Case of Erzerum hopeless—Prjevalsky takes Kara Gubek and Tafta—Fall of Deve Boyun Forts—Cossacks enter the City—The Russian Captures—Results of Fall of Erzerum.

The traveller who would reach Erzerum has a choice of three more or less arduous ways. He may embark on a Black Sea coaster and follow the northern shore of Anatolia, where the great plateau breaks down in forested steeps with scarcely a creek or bay to vary the line, till he reaches the ancient walls of Trebizond, the city to which the Ten Thousand struggled through the Armenian hills. Thence a good metalled road runs inland to Erzerum, crossing three passes, one of them 8,000 feet in height. The distance from port to fortress is 200 miles, and a week of fine weather is needed for the journey. Or he may travel a thousand miles by the Bagdad line to Ras-el-Ain, in the Euphrates valley, whence he has 250 miles of hill roads through the Armenian Taurus to cover before he reaches the city. Or he may go by railway to Angora, two days' journey from the Bosphorus. After that he will move eastwards by road through the great wheatlands of Anatolia, where dwells the flower of the Turkish peasantry and the main strength of the Sultan's armies, past the rich city of Sivas, till the Euphrates valley is reached at Erzinghian, and the real highlands begin. Erzerum lies well among the mountains, a true frontier fortress, guarding the road from Russia to the fruitful vales of the ancient Lycus and Halys, the kernel of Asiatic Turkey.

The place stands on a pocket of flat ground, 6,000 feet above the sea. South and north and north-east rise lofty mountains, through which the roads to Mush and Trebizond make their way over high and difficult passes. South-west is the vale of the Western Euphrates; east are ranges of hills forming the watershed between the Euphrates and the Araxes. The city,

therefore, stands in a much-encumbered trough which provides an avenue from Western Anatolia to Transcaucasia. Before the war it was reckoned the strongest fortress in the Turkish dominions. It had a circle of inner works forming a continuous rampart around the city, and to the east, commanding the roads to Olti, Kars, and Mush, a number of forts lined the horseshoe of hill which formed the watershed. There is evidence that before the war these defences had been allowed to decline in strength. The old inner rampart was wholly out of date, and the outer forts were for the most part too near the town. They dated back, many of them, to the last war with Russia, when Erzerum was invested, and for some time held as a hostage by the armies of the Tsar. In the early winter of 1914 an attempt was made to set the place in order. A German, Posselt Pasha, was now governor; but he left the old redoubts alone, and after the new fashion organized an outer ring of defence on the eastern horseshoe of hills. It was claimed by the Turks that in the Erzerum *enceinte* there were no less than 1,030 pieces of artillery, including 460 heavy guns from Krupp, and about 200 field and mountain guns. It seems doubtful, however, if any of the largest Krupp and Skoda guns were there, for so far as can be judged, the bridges on the various roads from the base, unless they had been extensively remodelled, would not have borne the weight of anything above a 12-inch piece.

The strength of Erzerum against an army from the east lay entirely in the horseshoe of hill called Deve Boyun, the “neck of the camel.” Its weakness lay in the fact that it was a fort pushed into the borderland beyond the area of good communications, so that it could not speedily be munitioned or reinforced from the base. The nearest available railhead was Angora, 440 miles distant as the crow flies. The way from Angora to Sivas traversed 200 miles of hilly country; thence a rough road 230 miles long ran to Erzinghian, and from Erzinghian a good road covered the seventy-five miles to Erzerum. Assuming that convoys covered on an average twenty miles a day, then two days by rail and twenty-five by road lay between the fortress and the Bosphorus; so that, allowing for inevitable delays, we may take thirty days as the minimum time for supplies to travel from that base. The ordinary line of supply was from Trebizond; and there were other roads from Black Sea ports such as Samsun, which fed the main route from Angora.

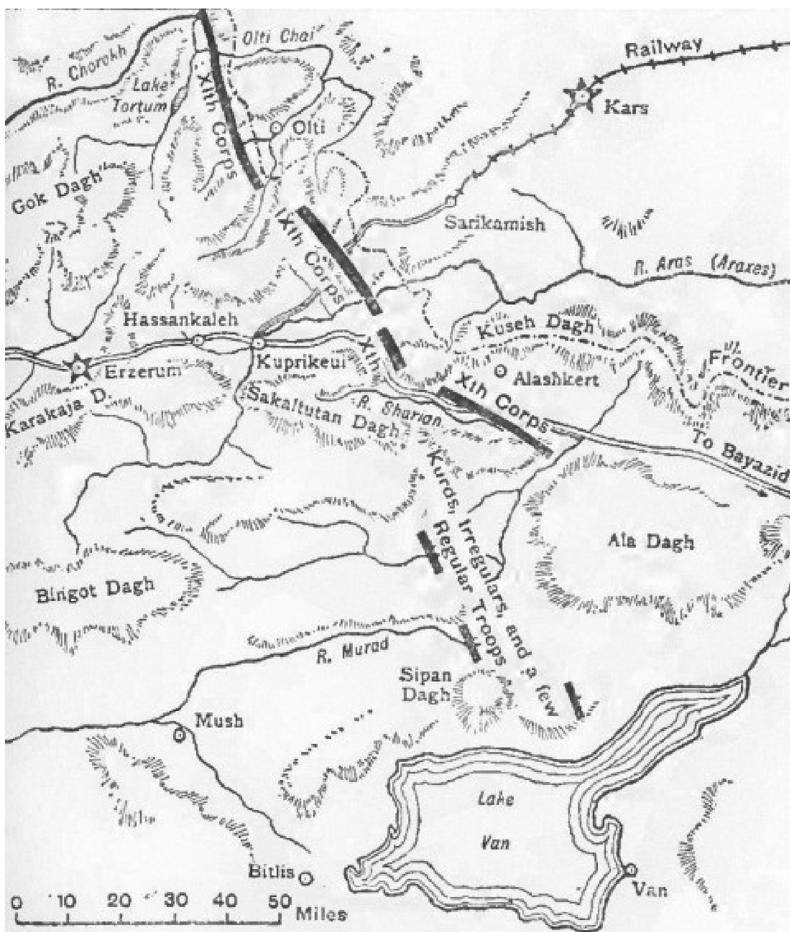


The Communications of Erzerum on the Turkish side.

These lines, however, were out of use, for the simple reason that Turkey had lost to Russia the command of that part of the Black Sea. Up to the end of February the Russian light cruisers and torpedo craft had sunk about 4,000 Turkish schooners and feluccas, many of them new vessels. In one cruise of three days, about the middle of January, more than 200 ships were destroyed. The effect of these naval operations was to cut off all the Turkish supplies by sea, and reduce the communications of Erzerum to the long and difficult land route. It should be further remembered that Turkey at the best was short of rolling stock, and that her single-line Anatolian and Bagdad railways had to serve four separate army groups in Armenia, Persia, Mesopotamia, and Syria. Also, in midwinter, the Anatolian plateau was apt to be deep in snow, and the roads, never of the best, became almost impossible for motor transport.

The Russian army was in a far more favourable position. The line from Tiflis to Sarikamish gave them a railhead only eighty miles from the Turkish fortress. Up to the arrival of the Grand Duke Nicholas as Viceroy, the Army of the Caucasus had been about 100,000 strong; but before the end of the year it received two corps as reinforcements. These came from the bases in

South Russia, where the midwinter activity had led to the projected offensive of von Mackensen, which, as we have seen, was anticipated by Ivanov. The commander of the army, under the Viceroy, was General Nicholas Yudenitch, a man of fifty-three, who had been Chief of Staff to Vorontzov-Dashkov, and had been mainly responsible for the victories of Sarikamish and Ardahan.



Position of the Turkish Army on the Armenian Frontier.

The Turkish forces on the Erzerum front at the beginning of January probably did not exceed 150,000 men. They had been increased in the autumn on the news of the coming of the Grand Duke Nicholas; but since then three divisions had been dispatched to Mesopotamia. The 3rd Army, under Kiamil Pasha, had the line from the Black Sea to south of Erzerum; while five divisions and a quantity of mounted irregulars covered Bitlis and

Mush and the country round Lake Van, where they had the assistance of Kurdish tribesmen. On the left wing of the Erzerum front, holding the mountain passes around Lake Tortum and the defiles of the Olti Chai, lay the 11th Corps. In the centre, defending the Upper Araxes valley and the direct route from Sarikamish, were the 9th Corps and part of the 10th; and on the right flank, covering the road from Hassan Kaleh to Mush and Lake Van, was the remainder of the 10th Corps. The German, Posselt, was no longer commandant of Erzerum, his place being filled by the former Turkish commander, Ahmed Fevzi.

In the beginning of January Kiamil had no suspicion of the impending attack. The Grand Duke had kept his counsel well, and the Russian command of the Black Sea enabled him to bring his reinforcements to the Caucasus without advertisement to the enemy. All winter an offensive had been maturing, and it is likely that the date originally fixed was the early spring. But in the beginning of January an event happened which compelled him to expedite his plans. On 9th January the last Allied troops left the Gallipoli peninsula, and thereby released at least five Turkish corps for service elsewhere. Part were destined for the Caucasus front, but it would be six weeks at the earliest before they could reach it. The Grand Duke resolved to strike while reinforcements were still impossible, and to fight a winter campaign, as Vorontzov-Dashkov had done the January before. It was a bold decision, for winter in the Armenian Taurus is a season of desperate rigour. The normal temperature is 25 degrees below zero, and it sinks often to as much as 40 degrees below. The roads are choked with snow, and the mountain tracks, which are often the only choice, are swept by blizzards and avalanches. Ridges must be crossed more than 10,000 feet high, and the easiest passes are only two or three thousand feet lower. In that country the people still hibernate in pits in the earth, as they did in the days of Xenophon’s Ten Thousand. A winter attack would have the merit of surprise, but it ran the risk of being broken by the sheer inclemency of nature.

Yudenitch advanced, as he was bound to do, on a broad front, for he had to guard against a flanking counter-offensive. Fully seventy miles separated the extreme horns of his army. His plan was a converging attack upon Erzerum by three columns. The right column moved from Olti—where, early in January, a Turkish assault had been repulsed—along the narrow glen of the Olti Chai to turn the flank of the Turkish 11th Corps; the central column was directed along the Kars-Erzerum road, towards Hassan Kaleh; while the left column was entrusted with an advance from Alashkert into the valley of the Sharian River to turn the Turkish right, and cut off the Lake

Van troops from the main Erzerum defence. The plan in its essence was that of Enver in January 1915, an advance by widely separated forces utilizing the mountain passes and directed towards a concentration on the skirts of the fortress itself.

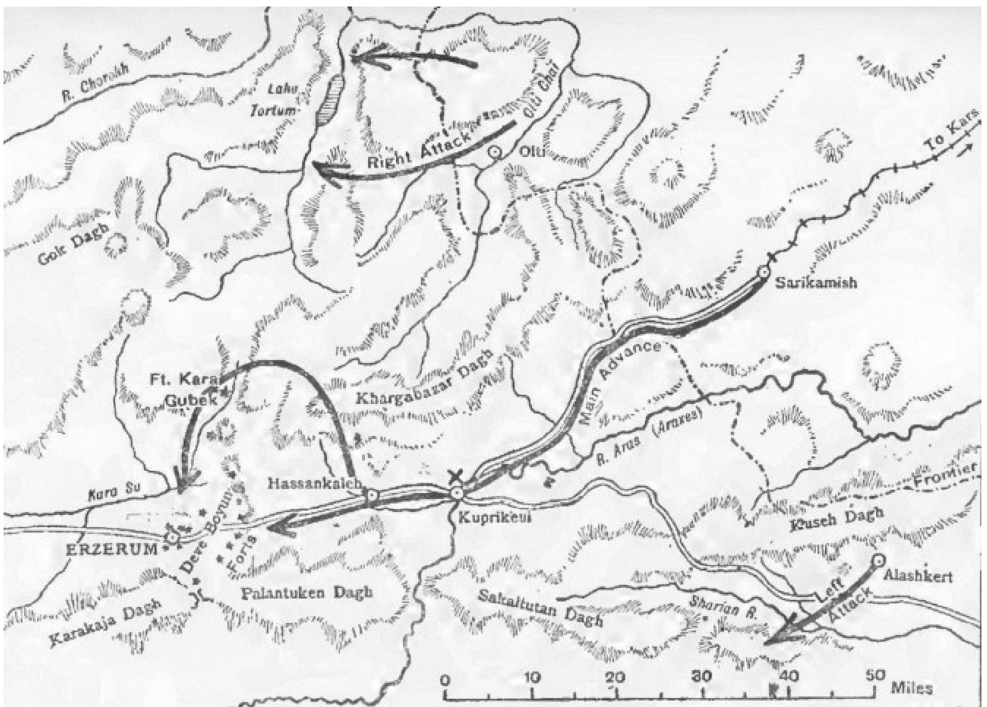
Jan. 11, 1916.

The movement began on 11th January. The first duty before Yudenitch was to clear his flanks. His right wing, taking the enemy by surprise, thrust him back upon Lake Tortum. Then, creeping over the passes of the Djelli Gol, it so encircled the Turkish left that it was compelled, in order to avoid envelopment, to fall back towards Erzerum by the upper glens of the Western Euphrates. The Russian left column followed a similar strategy. By 13th January it had cleared the upper valley of the Sharian, and waited on the advance of the centre, while farther south Russian detachments were pushing the outlying Turkish divisions west of Lake Van. Meantime the main movement, that of the centre, was progressing well. On 16th January it had reached Kuprikeui, a village which commands the bridge over the Araxes. Here for two days there was a fierce battle. The Turks held the houses and the bridgehead with machine-guns, and for a little the advance was checked. But on the evening of the 18th, in a heavy snowstorm, a Russian battalion forced the bridge, and in the early darkness the village was taken, and the three Turkish divisions defending it driven in utter rout along the Erzerum road.

Jan. 13.

Jan. 16.

Jan. 18.



The Russian Advance on Erzerum.

This battle was the crisis of the advance, and Erzerum was lost in the fight for the Araxes crossing. Yudenitch was now only thirty-three miles from the fortress, and his southern column, penetrating wild mountain ranges by crazy paths, had driven in the wedge he designed, and was rolling back the Turkish right towards Mush. The northern column had driven one division clear away from Erzerum, north of the Dumli Dagh, and had forced the remainder of the 11th Corps to a precipitate retreat, with the loss of several thousand prisoners. On the 19th Yudenitch was at Hassan Kaleh, where a spur of hill separates the upper and middle sections of the Upper Araxes valley. It was believed that this strong position would be held in force; but the Turks had been too badly broken at Kuprikeui, and they fought only a slight rearguard action. Next day the retreat had gone westwards behind the horseshoe of the Deve Boyun, and the Russians were at the gates of Erzerum—that ridge which in the last Russo-Turkish War, after the fall of Kars, had been held for months by Mukhtar Pasha.

Jan. 19.

Jan. 20.

Up to 26th January, when the final stage of the attack began, the Russian success had been swift and complete. The whole Turkish front had been driven in for fifty miles, and large quantities of supplies and guns, and at

least 4,000 prisoners, had been taken. Two Turkish divisions in the south and one in the north had been isolated from the main army, and the rest had been shepherded into the basin of Erzerum. The speed of the Russian advance, especially in the centre, had left many Turkish detachments cut off on ridges and in mountain glens, who had no alternative but to make their way to the coast or Kurdistan, or to surrender. It was Yudenitch's aim to move so swiftly that the enemy could have no time to rally or to improvise new defensive positions. Meantime, in the Black Sea, the Russian fleet was methodically sweeping up the Turkish transports. On the day of the victory at Kuprikeui it destroyed, in the neighbourhood of Trebizond, 163 sailing ships, 73 of which were laden with provisions. On 22nd January 40 more vessels shared the same fate. On the first news of the Russian advance, 50,000 troops from the Gallipoli army had left Constantinople for Angora; but it would be more than a month before they could reach the threatened city.

The case of Erzerum was now hopeless. It was short of stores, and the 100,000 men who had won its shelter could not long maintain it against a victorious enemy converging from north, east, and south. The Turkish army was seriously demoralized. The Cossack cavalry, pressing the pursuit, passed on the road hundreds of broken men, huddled together and sleeping in the snow. Parties sent to collect prisoners found many frozen to death where they lay. Arms and equipment had been flung aside by the fugitives. It was a motley and disheartened force that gathered behind the shelter of the Deve Boyun for a final stand. Rumour ran in the west that Erzerum had been invested, but such a feat was impossible. The numbers of the Russians and the topography of the place alike forbade it. It was Yudenitch's intention to carry the outer defences by assault, for, once they crumbled, the city lay open.

From the 26th of January to the 12th of February there was a pause in the main operations. The Russians had to bring up their heavy guns and ammunition, and organize the supply line for their front, and this work, performed over snow-covered mountain roads, could not be completed in a day. Meantime a steady bombardment of the Deve Boyun ridge by field guns and the smaller howitzers prevented the enemy from improving the defence. On the 10th February the column, under General Michael Prjevalsky, pouring down the valley of the Western Euphrates through deep snow and some 50 degrees of frost, arrived at the fort of Kara Gubek, which was the extreme north-east point of the Erzerum defence. The fort stands on a rib between two bold peaks which the Germans had not fortified, since they believed them to be inaccessible

Feb. 10.

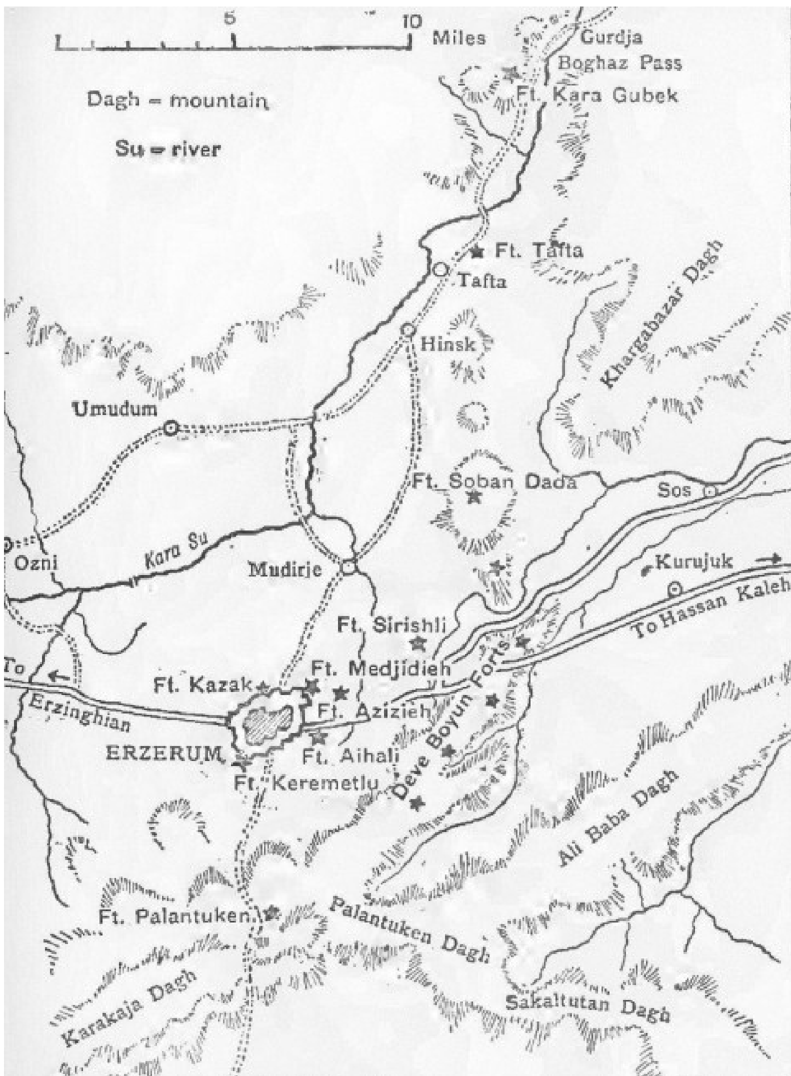
for artillery. But a Siberian division managed to work round the left rear of the place, and get their heavy guns in position on the flanking peaks. On the 12th Kara Gubek fell; and next day, with a heavy bombardment, Fort Tafta was carried, after its magazine had been exploded by a Russian shell.

Feb. 12.

The fall of Tafta gave Yudenitch a position in the rear of the main defences on Deve Boyun. During the next two days the central column pressed hard along the Kars road, and one after another of the forts on the ridge yielded. Meantime the southern column was forcing its way through the passes of the Palantuken range along the roads from Mush and Lake Van. On the evening of the 15th the position was virtually carried, and nothing was left to Erzerum but its old ramparts and neglected inner redoubts. There could be only one course for the defence—to retreat with the best speed possible. The German Headquarters Staff were the first to leave, and presently the bulk of the garrison was streaming north and west and south along the roads to Trebizond and Erzinghian and Diarbekr. On the morning of Wednesday, the 16th, at eight o'clock, the last works were evacuated, and before midday the Cossacks of the central column rode into the city, where they were joined by the southern and northern columns. Erzerum had fallen.

Feb. 15.

Feb. 16.



The Defences of Erzerum.

There remained only the sweeping up of the slower remnants of the garrison. Western Europe was filled with tales of mighty captures—100,000 men and 1,000 guns. The reality was much less; but, even so, a remarkable achievement. According to the Russian official statement, 235 officers and 12,753 unwounded men were taken, besides many sick and wounded; and of *matériel*, 323 guns, nine standards, and vast supplies of ammunition and stores fell into their hands. If we take the whole action from its beginnings on 11th January down to 17th February, the Turkish casualties cannot have

been less than 60,000, and five divisions were believed to have been entirely destroyed as fighting units.

The conquest of Erzerum was one of the most brilliant strategical episodes in the war. Yudenitch had adopted a plan which demanded careful timing, under conditions where it was almost impossible to work to a time-table. By his three separate operations on different lines, he laid himself open to dangerous counter-attacks on one or other of the six flanks he offered to the enemy. It was a scheme, too, which made immense demands on the resolution of his men. To drag 8-inch guns over rocky saddles clogged with snowdrifts, as Prjevalsky did before Kara Gubek, was a feat which must rank high among the achievements of mountain warfare, and in this campaign was only paralleled by some of the operations on the Italian front. Splendid, too, was the drive of the centre which won the bridge at Kuprikeui, and scarcely less memorable were the doings of the southern column, which moved with amazing speed in a wild tangle of pathless hills. It is a striking proof of the vitality of Russia that, with the enemy far inside her borders, and a main front to defend of over 700 miles, she was able to organize and bring to success an operation so arduous and intricate and bold.

In assessing the results of the battle, too much weight must not be given to the possession of Erzerum itself. It was an important centre, and its fall meant the loss of Turkish Armenia. The country where the record of Turkey was blackest was, by a stroke of dramatic justice, the first to be reft from her hands. Russia had pushed her way to the gates of Anatolia; but she had not yet entered them, for Erzerum, as we have seen, was a border fortress situated well in advance of the rich lands it was designed to guard. Not till Erzinghian was passed, and the plain of Sivas was reached, would a blow be struck at the true heart of Asiatic Turkey. Again, in any such advance the flanks must be pushed forward; Trebizond must be taken, and the Russian left must hold the Armenian Taurus and the roads from the south. Yudenitch was not yet clear of the mountains, and he had many difficult miles before his brilliant strategy could reap its legitimate fruits. What he had achieved was a crushing blow at the Turkish field forces. He had gravely depleted them, and so lessened their power of mischief elsewhere. But he had still to face the divisions released from Gallipoli, and his next steps must be slow and deliberate.

For an immediate strategical influence on the general campaign the chief hope lay in the Russian left. It was in Mush, and was moving upon Diarbekr. Once that town were reached, it would be in a position to threaten the main Turkish communications with Mesopotamia by the line of the Bagdad

railway. But it was still winter, and the hills were heavy with snow. No swift and dramatic movement was possible which would draw off the enemy from that beleaguered village on the Tigris, where, now for eleven weeks, a slender British force, broken with sickness and short of every supply, was waiting patiently for the succour which did not come.

CHAPTER XCVI.

THE CONQUEST OF THE CAMEROONS.

Position at end of June 1915—Problems of the Campaign—Commands and General Strategy—Cunliffe's Attempt on Mora Mountain—Gorges takes Wum Biagas—Mayer takes Sende and Eseka—Gorges takes Dschang Mangas—Mayer takes Mangeles—Gorges enters Yaunde—Cunliffe's Northern Movements—Capture of Banyo Mountain—Crossing of the Sanaga—Brilliant Converging Movement—Germans relinquish the Colony—Mora Mountain capitulates—Summary of Campaign—Fine Work of West African Native Troops—Importance of African Campaigns in General Strategy of the War—Germany's African Colonies and their Purpose.

We left the Cameroons campaign at the end of June 1915, when the French in the south had captured Lomie, the Franco-British column in the north had taken Garua and Ngaundere, and the main force, moving up the midland railway, had reached Eseka and a position short of Wum Biagas, while the whole northern railway was in our hands. The Franco-British force had now grown to some 9,700, consisting of British, French, Belgian, and Indian native troops, trained and led by white officers and non-commissioned officers. The German strength was at the outset 3,000, including some 250 white officers, and though it was well munitioned, especially in the way of machine-guns, the disparity of numbers suggested a short and simple campaign. But the Germans had potent allies in the country and the weather. A territory half as large again as the German Empire in Europe had to be methodically "driven" so that no enemy resistance should anywhere remain, for it was impossible to bring matters to a decision by any one battle. It was a *terrain* created by nature for the defence. Food was abundant; there were few roads; the lines of communication for the attack stretched out alarmingly, and every fresh mile lessened their safety. Practically all supplies had to be transported by native carriers, whose loads were from 50 pounds to 60 pounds per man, and to defend the routes blockhouses had to be established every twenty miles whose garrisons greatly depleted the strength of the advancing columns. The country everywhere was difficult to move in, and well-fitted for surprise attacks by the defence. In the coastal area there were dense dripping forests, choked

with undergrowth, and seamed with broad and deep rivers. In the interior the savannahs were covered with elephant grass, sometimes twenty feet high, and broken up by rocky heights whose boulder-strewn slopes were natural entrenchments and redoubts. The climate, too, especially in the coast districts and in the south, was hostile to rapid movement by white men. Tropical diseases, such as malaria, blackwater fever, and dysentery, waited to take toll of the over-fatigued and the underfed.

Nevertheless the Cameroons expedition was well within the experience of both France and Britain. It was the kind of campaign with which any Power with a long colonial record was familiar. The problems involved—leadership of native levies, improvisation under difficulties, swift marches through awkward country, the complex tropical transport—were those which Britain especially had faced for two hundred years. In the European theatre we were met by something new in our history, new indeed in the whole history of war.

> "Far other is this battle in the west
> Whereto we move, there when we strove in youth
> And brake the petty kings."

But in the Cameroons we could apply a knowledge which our Allies had learned in Algiers and Tonkin, and we had acquired in a score of campaigns from Burma to Ashanti.

The Allied forces were under the command of Major-General Sir Charles Dobell, whose plan was a converging movement upon the German seat of government, which should in its progress sweep up the outlying centres of resistance. It was the same plan which had already been crowned with victory in German South-West Africa. The difficulties were indeed many. The enormous area and the lack of most modern forms of communication made accurate timing impossible, and left the details of each section of the fighting largely to the subordinate commanders. After the occupation of Duala on September 27, 1914, the seat of the German Government was transferred to Yaunde, a station on the edge of the interior plateau, south of the Sanaga valley, and about 120 miles from the coast. Yaunde was obviously the proper object for the converging movement, and in March 1915 General Dobell arranged with General Aymerich, the officer commanding the French southern columns, for a general advance upon this point. The difficulties of the country held up the attack, and towards the end of June it became necessary to withdraw Colonel Mayer's French force, which had advanced to Eseka and beyond Wum Biagas, to the line of the Kele River. After this came the inevitable lull caused by the rainy season. At

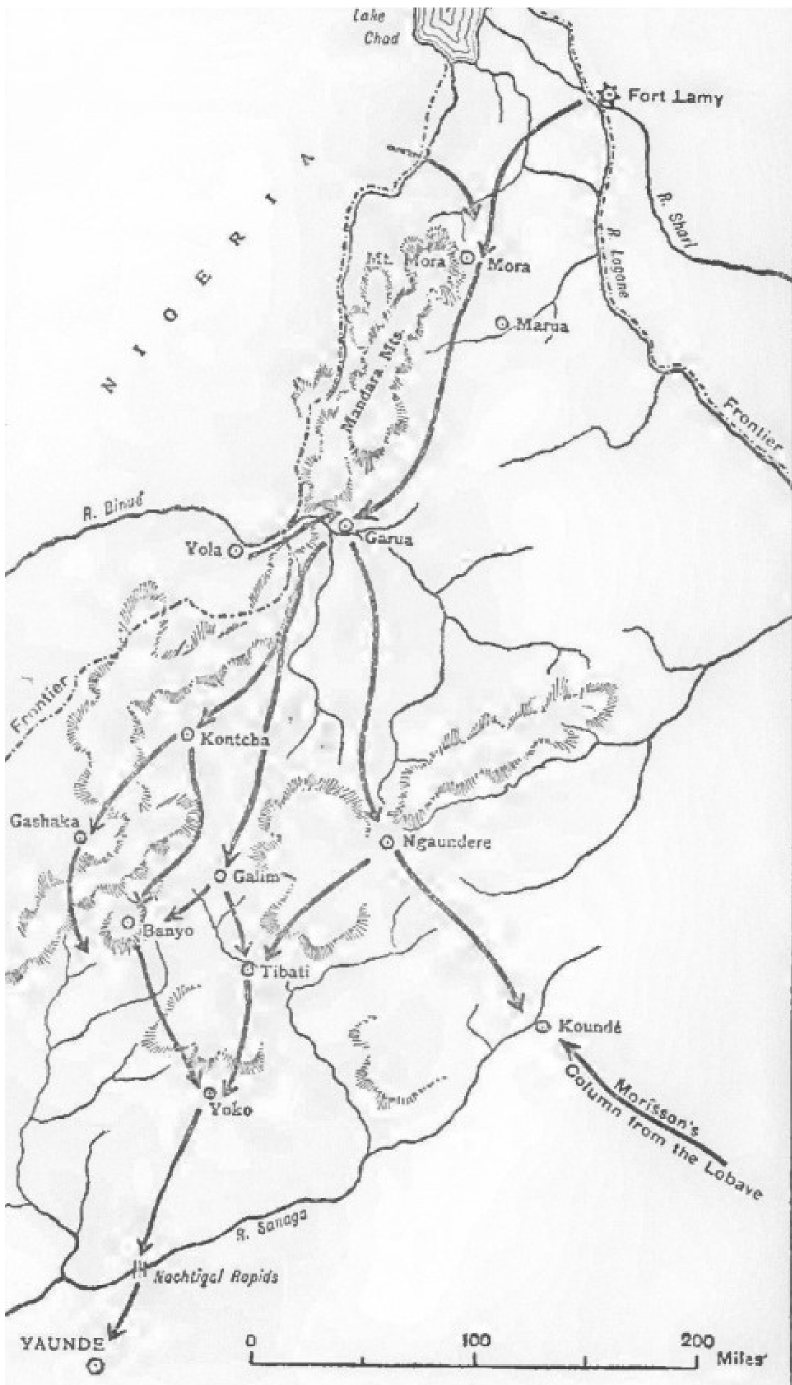
the end of August a conference took place at Duala between the Governor-General of French Equatoria, General Dobell, and General Aymerich, in which a plan for future operations was arrived at.

The different forces and their position at the moment may be briefly summarized. The main army under General Dobell was composed of two columns—the British, under Colonel Gorges, on the Sanaga River; and the French, under Colonel Mayer, farther south, on the Kele River. This represented the main thrust at Yaunde, and at the time was within fifty miles of the town. On the northern railway a British force under Lieutenant-Colonel Cotton was at Bare, and a detachment under Major Crookenden was at Ossidinge, twenty miles from the Nigerian border. Farther north, Brigadier-General Cunliffe's force, which included the French column under Lieutenant-Colonel Brisset, which had marched from Lake Chad, was on the line Ngaundere-Kontcha-Gashaka, on the high ground above the upper streams of the Sanaga. The country in its rear was not wholly cleared, for a strong body of the enemy was holding out in the Mountain of Mora, at the northern extremity of the Mandara range. In the south two main forces, under the direction of General Aymerich, had marched up the northern affluents of the Congo. On the east what the French called the Column of the Lobaye, under Lieutenant-Colonel Morisson, had moved west and north-west, taking Bania and Gaza; and another farther west, the Column of the Sangha, under Lieutenant-Colonel Hutin, had gone due north, taking Nola and Lomie. The two forces had now joined hands, and were holding Dume and Bertua, about 130 miles east of Yaunde. Finally a detachment under Lieutenant-Colonel le Meilleur was marching up the east side of the Spanish *enclave* of Rio Muni, to cross the Campo River and attack Ebolowa, which lay about sixty miles south by west of Yaunde. The German stronghold was therefore in the position of being ringed round on all sides. The enemy force nearest to its gates was General Dobell's main army; the farthest off was General Cunliffe's northern columns towards Ngaundere.

The real operations could not commence till early in October, but in the meantime General Cunliffe took advantage of the better weather in the north of the colony to make an attempt to reduce the mountain Mora, and so release the investing force for operations farther south. Mora, as he described it, "has a base perimeter of about thirty miles; it rises precipitously to a height of 1,700 feet, and its sides, which are so steep as to be accessible only in a few places to men using both hands and feet, are covered with huge boulders, affording excellent cover to the defenders." He arrived four miles from the fort on 23rd August, and resolved to make the attack from Onatchke, a hill to the north, the summit of

Aug. 23.

which was nearly level with Mora and separated from it by a deep valley 600 yards wide. From Onatchke three separate attacks were launched. In the third a part of the 1st Nigerian Regiment reached the summit, but were stopped by a redoubt, which they attempted with the bayonet, but failed to carry. They remained in the position without food or water for forty-eight hours, till they were withdrawn. General Cunliffe decided that to take Mora he needed more artillery and more time, and as he was due to co-operate in the main advance he was compelled to relinquish the attempt for the present, and leave troops behind to invest it.



Operations of the Northern Forces under Cunliffe.

The main movement against Yaunde began on the 9th of October, when the Nigeria and Gold Coast troops of Colonel Gorges' column captured Wum Biagas. Meanwhile Colonel Mayer, advancing from the Kele River, occupied Sende on 25th October, and Eseka five days later. There was a short lull which was occupied in improving the routes. The bush track from Edea to Wum Biagas was converted into a good motor road, and railway communications with Eseka were all but completed. Where the country did not permit of motor or rail traffic, a force of 7,000 carriers was employed.

Oct. 9.

Oct. 25-30.

The next advance was on a wide front, Colonel Gorges aiming at the point Dschang Mangas, and Colonel Mayer at the road which connected Yaunde with the coast village of Kribi. The forest part of the advance was hotly contested; but by the beginning of the third week of December Colonel Gorges had reached open country, and on the 17th Dschang Mangas was taken. Colonel Mayer had an ordeal no less severe; but after five days' fighting he took Mangeles on 21st December. Meanwhile the British column had pushed on, finding the resistance of the enemy everywhere slackening, and on the first day of 1916 it entered Yaunde.

Dec. 17.

Dec. 21.

Jan. 1, 1916.

In the north there had been some spirited campaigning. General Cunliffe directed Colonel Brisset's French column to move on Tibati, Lieutenant-Colonel Webb-Bowen's column on Galim, and Major Crookenden's force from Ossidinge on Bamenda. Meanwhile Lieutenant-Colonel Cotton moved from Bare against Dschang. General Cunliffe's main body advanced from Kontcha against the mountain Banyo, which was one of the strongest German positions in the colony. On 22nd October Crookenden reached Bamenda, and on 6th November Cotton took Dschang. The two forces then moved on Fumban, which they took on 2nd December with the assistance of a detachment of General Cunliffe's troops. Cunliffe himself had been engaged in the reduction of Banyo Mountain, a stronghold of the type of Mora, and succeeded at daybreak on the 6th of November after an action which, in the words of his report, "may be justly described as one of the most arduous ever fought by African troops." A letter from an officer serving in the force is worth quotation as a description of a very fine feat of arms:—

Oct. 22.

Nov. 6.

Dec. 2.

Nov. 6.

> "From Banyo the enemy's position on the mountain looked grim and stupendous, huge rocky boulders standing out

prominently right up to the very top, and the sides of the mountain bristling with strongly built ‘sangars.’ We began our attack early on the morning of 4th November. The infantry, advancing from different directions, covered by the fire from our three guns, worked their way up slowly and doggedly foot by foot, climbing over rocks and tearing their way through the thorny scrub and long grass, under a heavy rifle and Maxim-gun fire from the enemy’s ‘sangars’ and concealed snipers among the rocks. By the evening most of the companies had managed to struggle halfway up the hill, there getting what shelter they could from the incessant fire of the enemy aided by the light of fireballs and rockets. Officers and men, exhausted and drenched with rain, hung on determinedly to the ground gained.

“At dawn on the morning of the 5th they started climbing once more. Our troops having got directly under the first line of ‘sangars,’ the enemy, in addition to rifle and Maxim-gun fire, started rolling down rocks and throwing dynamite bombs. All that day our men gradually worked their way up, capturing a small stone redoubt and ‘sangar’ here and there. Owing to the paucity of gun ammunition, the covering artillery fire could not afford the infantry the essential assistance so imperatively necessary on these occasions. Fortunately a convoy arrived on the afternoon of the 5th bringing with it two hundred more rounds of gun ammunition, which, hurriedly sent out, enabled the guns to fire somewhat more rapidly till the upward advance of the infantry and their proximity to the summit rendered it too dangerous to continue their fire.

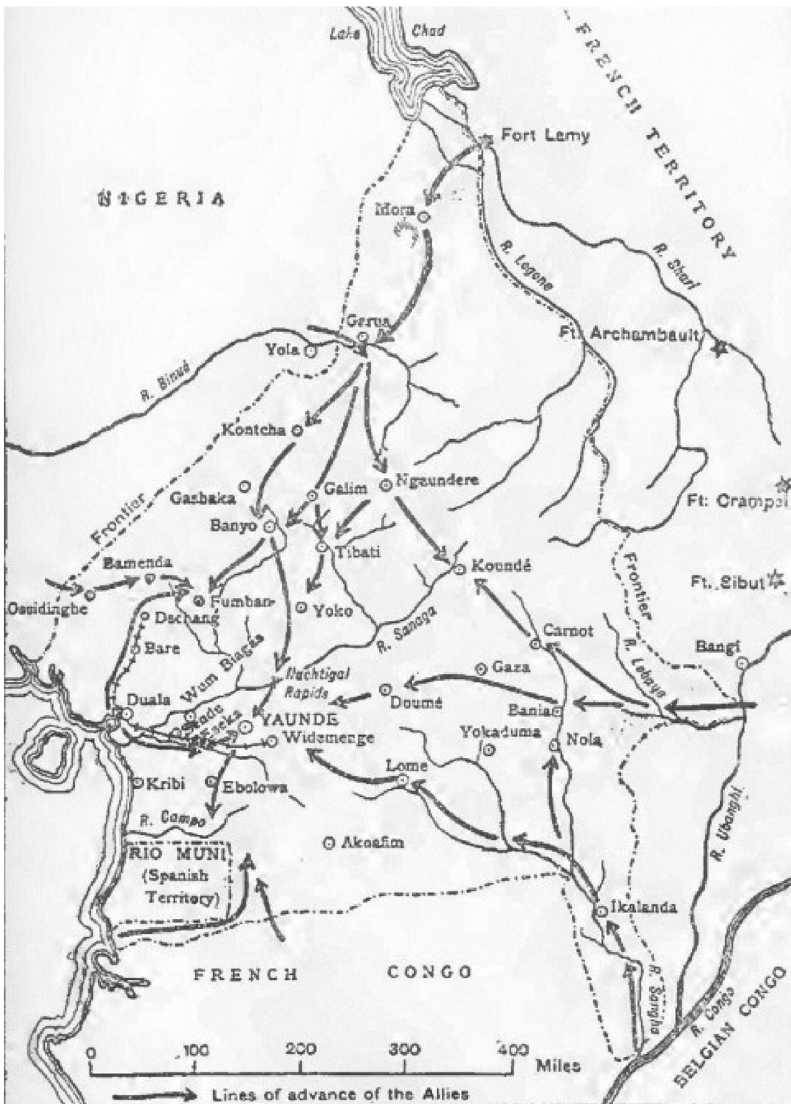
“Darkness set in early that evening—at 5 p.m. Heavy clouds rolled up from the west, and an hour or two later a terrific thunderstorm burst over the mountain. Heavy firing and the explosion of bombs and fireballs still continued. There seemed reason to fear that owing to the exhaustion of our men from want of sleep and violent physical exhaustion they would never succeed.

“A misty morning prevented our seeing what was happening as dawn broke on the morning of the 6th, but as only intermittent firing was going on success seemed assured, and sure enough as the mist dispersed a white flag could be seen on the top of the hill and our men silhouetted against the skyline.

> “The enemy, completely demoralized by the determined advance of our men despite heavy losses, had during the night of the 5th-6th broken up into small scattered parties and fled in several directions. Owing to the darkness of the night, the noise of rain and thunder, and their knowledge of the intricate nature of the country, the majority of the enemy parties had managed to worm their way down the hill without being intercepted by our infantry, only, however, to run up against the detached posts of our mounted infantry who were guarding all roads in the vicinity. These enemy parties then fired a few wild shots and scattered into the long grass which covers the whole country, and where it is difficult to follow up and capture them.
>
> “On the top of the mountain an extraordinary sight presented itself. Scattered in all directions were broken furniture, burst-open trunks and tin boxes, blankets, bedding, clothes, tins of food, broken bottles of wine and beer, smashed-up rifles, gramophones, telephones, and a medley of every conceivable sort of thing. There were two fine cement-built reservoirs of water, a vegetable garden, caves converted into granaries and filled with mealies and guinea corn, cattle, pigs, and sheep browsing about, and chickens galore. This was very clear and conclusive proof of the conviction of the Germans that the mountain was impregnable, and that they meant to hold it indefinitely and continually worry us.”

During the action at Banyo the two columns of Colonel Brisset and Colonel Webb-Bowen had entered Tibati. General Cunliffe’s forces were now converging on the Sanaga River by way of Yoko, which was entered by Brisset on 1st December. On January 4, 1916, the crossing of the Sanaga was seized at the Nachtigal Rapids, a point only forty miles north of Yaunde, and connection was established with General Aymerich on the east. Brisset and Webb-Bowen entered the German capital immediately after General Aymerich, and only a few days after the place had fallen to Gorges. Such precision in concentration would have been admirable in any campaign; it was especially admirable in one involving such vast distances and precarious communication. “It is, I think, a remarkable feat,” wrote General Dobell in his dispatch, “that troops that had fought and marched for a period of seventeen months should have converged on their objective within a few days of one another.”

Jan. 4, 1916.



The Conquest of the Cameroons.

The rest was merely a matter of sweeping up. The bulk of the German troops not already prisoners fled south-westward towards Spanish territory. Ebolowa was occupied on 19th January, and Colonel Morisson with a strong French force chased the remnants over the Campo River inside the borders of Spanish Guinea. Among the fugitives was the German Governor, Ebermaier, and the German Commander-in-Chief, Zimmermann. There only remained the mountain Mora in the far north, where the garrison still held out. Generous terms were

Jan. 19.

offered—officers to be allowed to retain their swords, native ranks to be released and given free passage to their homes, all Europeans to go to England as prisoners of war—and on 18th February Captain von Raben, the commandant, surrendered. There were now no Germans left in the Cameroons, and the conquest of the country was completed.

Feb. 18.

Had the Cameroons campaign been the only hostilities in which Britain at the time was engaged, its happy issue would have been a cause of pride to the whole Empire, and would have brought great honour to the men who contrived it. It was economical, well-conceived, and admirably executed. Few tropical wars have involved more intricate problems of transport or more toilsome marches. Take the case of General Cunliffe's northern force. When it entered Yaunde in January it had marched and fought continuously over 600 miles since the 18th of September, and its line of communication with the base at Ibi was 400 miles long. The campaign revealed the fine fighting qualities of the West African native troops, both French and British; General Dobell paid tribute to the bravery and unshaken cheerfulness of the Senegalese, and the Nigerians of the West African Frontier force, to whom "no day appears to be too long, no task too difficult." General Cunliffe's testimony is worth quoting:—

"This report would be incomplete were I to conclude it without a word of praise to the native rank and file of the Nigerian Regiment, who have borne the brunt of the fighting, as well as to those natives, the transport carriers, who have toiled incessantly under heavy loads, and at times also under heavy fire, to keep the troops in the field supplied with food and munitions. The Nigerian Regiment is composed of men of many different tribes—their characteristics, traditions, and even their language differ as widely as does the food to which they are accustomed. They have been called upon to take part in a great struggle, the rights and wrongs of which they can scarcely have been expected dimly to perceive. They have been through the, to them, extremely novel experience of facing an enemy armed with modern weapons and led by highly-trained officers. Their rations have been scanty, their barefoot marches long and trying, and their fighting at times extremely arduous, yet they have not been found wanting either in discipline, devotion to their officers, or personal courage."

In the case of such troops everything depended upon the leading. They were like great school-boys, and, if properly handled, would go anywhere and do anything. The campaign proved that France and Britain had not lost

the art of providing the type of regimental officer who by his tact and courage can win and retain the affection of savage tribesmen.

The German garrison of the Cameroons—as was clear from captured documents—had confidently believed that they could hold out till the end of the European struggle. Their hopes were disappointed. Germany's grandiose African enterprises had by the middle of February 1916 been reduced to the single colony of East Africa, where General Smuts's columns were already pressing in upon the interior railways. If such far-away happenings seemed trivial compared to the desperate contest on the main battle-ground, the conquest of the German colonies had none the less a vital bearing upon the policy of the war. In striking at German Africa the Allies were not attacking irrelevant and half-forgotten dependencies, but an integral part of the German scheme of world-empire.

In an earlier chapter we have seen why Germany first came to Africa, and how she won her footing. German colonization was a reasoned policy, not the haphazard work of individuals which gradually grows into a national purpose; and, like all reasoned policies, in its first stages it marched fast. She had a clear aim—to provide producing grounds for raw material, military outposts, and observation stations. Such an aim, be it said, was not colonization, which is more than a chain of plantations, and much more than a string of garrisons. Colonization involves *settlement*—the adoption of emigrants of the new land as their home, the administration of that new land with a view to its own future, and not with regard merely to the ambitions of the parent country. Mere exploitation is not colonization, as the Dutch and the Portuguese found. The inhabitants must get their roots down, must acquire a local patriotism as well as a patriotism of origin. The duty to the land itself must be recognized, and not less the duty to the older masters who continue to live side by side with the new. A true colony is a slow business, an organic growth rather than a mechanical construction, and true colonies the German possessions had never been, for the root of the matter was neglected.

Further, the German colonies, being what they were, were a constant menace to their neighbours. If one man is digging trenches to drain his farm, and another digs to make the foundations of a fort, there is nothing in common between the two, and no possibility of harmonious neighbourship. The German colonies were part of the Pan-Germanist propaganda, like the Bagdad railway or the fortress of Tsing-tau. They represented one side of the plan of expansion, as the control of Mesopotamia represented the other. There was this difference between the two sides, that while the extension

south-eastward of the Central European Powers might be possible by military strength only, the maintenance of armed colonies demanded a navy. Again and again the enthusiasts of the German Navy League used the colonial argument to support their pleas; Germany in her striving after *Weltmacht* must have her oversea garrisons, and an omnipotent navy was needed as a link between them. Given that navy, their strategic value would have been great. German East Africa was on the southern flank of the road to India, as Mesopotamia was on the northern. With German influence on both sides of the great waterway to the East, the most vital interests of Britain would have been menaced. The *Drang nach Osten* was largely and subtly conceived.

Shortly after the fall of the Cameroons Professor Ernst Haeckel added to the gaiety of nations by discoursing in an American magazine on Germany's future plans. The world had not hitherto associated Professor Haeckel with high politics; but in these bad times all the *gelehrten* were mobilized, and the venerable author of *Welträthsel* with the rest. He explained that Germany needed an empire, not like England from lust of gold, or like France for vain glory, or like Italy from megalomania, or like Russia because of sheer barbarous greed, but because she was overcrowded at home, and wanted a dumping-ground for her surplus population. Africa was to be a substantial part of that empire; the Congo especially, which would come to Germany as a consequence of the espousal of Belgium. The whole of Central Africa from sea to sea would be German, while the Cape would be restored to Holland, and Egypt to the Turks, and perfidious Britain would depart from the continent altogether.

The plea for settlement was out of date, for Germany in recent years had shown no desire for settlers, and the tide of her emigration had long ago ebbed. Professor Haeckel's dream could only come true if the Allies were beaten to the ground. The doom of the German colonies was sounded with the first gun that roared on the Belgian border. Their continuance was forbidden by every consideration of strategy and common sense, by the Allies' knowledge of what Germany aimed at, of the purpose which she had destined her colonies to serve. She had never shown the true colonizing spirit. As there is an honourable *camaraderie* among pioneers in wild countries, so there is a certain freemasonry among those Powers which have experimented in colonization. Their object is to make a garden of the desert, to create a new land which, while owing allegiance to the motherland, shall yet be free to follow its own natural development, and shall be administered for its own advantage. If a tropical country, it owes duties to the soil and the former inhabitants; if a white man's land, it seeks settlement and the advent

of a new nation. But a colony which is used as an armed post and a point of vantage in some great strategical game is outside this comity. It is eternally a spy, an alien, and a potential disturber of the peace. During its life it will be regarded with just suspicion, and its end will be unlamented.

CHAPTER XCVII

THE FIRST BATTLE OF VERDUN.

The Allied Position in January—The German Alternatives—Reasons for a German Offensive—The German Plan—Concentration of Troops and Guns—Preliminary Fighting along the Front—German Activity in the Air—The French Difficulties—The Lines at Verdun—Description of the *Terrain*—Strength and Weakness of French Position—The German Bombardment—German Dispositions—The Attack begins—The Fight of 21st February—Loss of Haumont—Death of Colonel Driant—Brabant and Herbebois relinquished—Loss of the Pivot of Ornes—French retreat to Poivre-Douaumont Line—Description of Positions—Attack of Friday, 25th February—Petain arrives—The Struggle for Douaumont—The Charge of the Brandenburgers—Balfourier's Counter-attack—Importance of the Movement—The Fighting in the Woëvre—Change in German Plan—French Line on West Bank of Meuse—Description of *Terrain*—Bombardment of Avocourt-Forges Line—Attack of Monday, 6th March—Germans carry the Goose's Crest—Struggle for the Crows' Wood—Attack on Vaux—The Attack on Mort Homme, 14th March—Failure of Frontal Attack—German Position in Middle of March—New Dispositions—First Attack on Avocourt, 20th March—The Struggle for Hill 304—French Counter-attack—Malancourt relinquished—New Attack on Vaux—The Fight for Caillette Wood—Haucourt surrendered—Combined Attack on Mort Homme, 9th April—The Attack fails—Attacks during Last Weeks of April—The Battle begins to ebb—Marshal von Haeseler recalled—Complete Failure of German Plan—Losses—German Mistakes—The Achievement of France—Petain's Generalship—The Work of the French Soldiers.

I.—Preliminaries.

In January 1916 the Allies seemed in a favourable position for the campaign of the New Year. They had considerably increased their strength in men and material. France had trained her 1916 and 1917 classes, but had not yet used them at the front; Britain had by the Derby scheme and the

Military Service Act provided, along with troops in home camps, a potential force nearly twice the size of that which she had in the field; Italy had large numbers at her depôts, and had not yet called up the greater part of her possible reserves; Russia was only waiting for small arms to bring forward reinforcements as great as her field army, and her recruiting ground was still enormous. In Britain the manufacture of munitions, as we have seen, was very different from the lean days a year before; and in France, where trade union restrictions were wholly set aside, and the question of fatigue and the workers' capacity was really understood, the daily output exceeded even her past records. Germany and Austria were already pressed for men. In Germany the 1916 and part of the 1917 class were now included in the field forces; Austria-Hungary had already used up most of her 1916 class, had called up the 1917 class as early as October 1915, and had warned her 1918 class. Further, in both countries the incorporation of elderly men had been carried to lengths undreamed of among the Allies. On the other hand, it was clear that the Teutonic League had made an immense effort during the winter to provide stocks of munitions. The poor type of German shells which was noticed on our front about this time was a bad omen; the same thing had happened in the preceding year before von Mackensen's supreme effort on the Donajetz.

In the matter of general policy the Allies had made it clear that the combat must be *à outrance*. All talk of peace had met with the chilliest reception. Germany, who claimed that she had already won the war, was curtly informed that the real struggle had not begun. Certain overtures to Belgium—probably unofficial—were answered by a solemn renewal of the Allied engagements. The Ministers of France, Britain, and Russia informed King Albert's Government:—

> "The Allied and Guaranteeing Powers declare that, when the moment comes, the Belgian Government will be called upon to take part in the peace negotiations, and that they will not end hostilities until Belgium has been restored to her political and economic independence, and liberally indemnified for the damage she has sustained. They will lend their aid to Belgium to ensure her commercial and financial recovery."

Germany was not in a position to sit still for long. We have seen in an earlier chapter that before Christmas there was some disposition among her leaders to deprecate any new large offensive. But the facts of the situation overbore them. She had her own people to consider, now growing impatient

of victories which brought no decision and the hope of peace deferred. She had the prestige of her dynasty to think of, and the whole military and bureaucratic system built round it. She had in her mind two wavering neutrals, who must be constantly presented with new proofs of her might. Above all, she was faced with her dwindling man power, and an economic stress which could not be indefinitely endured. It was becoming clear that the first great movement of 1916 would be undertaken on her initiative. She was confronted by two alternatives. She might stand as before on the defensive in the West, and look to the East for a decision; or she might attack in the West, and then turn in triumph to take order with Russia.

The arguments leaned in favour of the second. A Russian winter was no good time for an offensive, more especially an open winter where thaw and frost alternated. Moreover, a great authority like von Hindenburg was of opinion that it was little use to advance further into Russia for the present. He considered that the Russian army was virtually out of action, so far as any offensive potentiality was concerned, and that this state of affairs would continue long enough to allow Germany to neglect the Eastern front till she had won victory in the West. It is probable that the inspiration for the coming Western attack came largely from the conquerors of Poland. They believed that the triumph of the Donajetz could be repeated by the same methods. They thought that Verdun and Toul and Epinal might be made to go the way of Kovno and Brest. They believed that Germany had never yet brought into play on the West the full resources of her great artillery machine. No front, they argued rightly, is impenetrable, and they were determined to put this faith to the test.

If we attempt to put down the German reasons for the new great enterprise, we shall find the argument work out somewhat as follows. There was at least a chance of piercing the French front and winning a complete victory. It was true that even under the happiest auspices that attempt had failed in the past—at the Marne, for example, and the First Battle of Ypres. But Germany had learned the lessons of her failure; above all, she had learned the lesson of the Allied check the previous September; and she believed that her new plan, based on a certain use of artillery, would put the odds in her favour. That the possibility was seriously accepted is beyond doubt. General von Deimling, commanding the 15th (Strassburg) Corps, told his men that the coming offensive was the last that would be undertaken against France. He did not mean his words as a counsel of despair, but as an encouragement. The plan was to take Verdun speedily with fifteen divisions. Such an achievement, it was believed, would take the heart out of France’s

resistance, and the launching of fifteen other divisions against Paris would complete the victory.

In the second place, even if the major purpose failed, one certain result could be looked for. The German armies would take some famous city, and Verdun was clearly indicated. It was more noted than Ypres or Arras; besides, it was still intact, and these were shells. It was called a fortress, a title no longer given to Rheims. It had been desperately battled for already, hence its conquest would give the greater glory. It was less than eight miles from the German lines. It was in the area of the Crown Prince's command, so that its fall would raise the waning prestige of the dynasty. It would be possible to present to the German people and to the neutral nations the glorious news that the most famous fortress of Eastern France, the key of the eastern gate, had fallen to the valour of German arms.

This was mainly a political consideration, for the taking of Verdun could not be rated as a military success of the first order. But there was another reason, which of the three was the most important, because, unlike the first, it dealt not with the possible but the probable, and, unlike the second, it was based on purely military considerations. A strong offensive in the West might induce the Allies to make a premature counter-attack. Germany was well aware that, as soon as Russia was ready, France, Britain, Russia, and Italy would make a great concerted offensive, exactly timed, so that the old device of rushing reinforcements across Europe would be forbidden her. She feared that attack, and she wished to prevent it, and take her different enemies one at a time. If Verdun were threatened, the Allies would be induced to throw in their main reserves to defend it, to shoot away a large part of their stores of shells, and to make an advance elsewhere on the Western front to ease the pressure. The great offensive of 1916 would then go off at half-cock, and would have the support of neither Italy nor Russia. If Germany repulsed it, as she believed she could, there would be small danger from the Western Allies for many a day. She counted on this result, counted on it securely, as was proved by her dispositions. During the battle which we are about to consider she had more than ninety divisions lying quiescent at other parts of the front. There was no subsidiary movement to aid the great stroke at Verdun. Now that was not the German theory of war, it was in flat defiance of the teaching of Clausewitz and Moltke, and it was at variance with her previous practice in the campaign. There could be only one explanation. Those ninety odd divisions were destined to meet and take heavy toll of the expected Allied counter-attack.

The first step was a gigantic concentration of artillery, brought from the interior factories and the Eastern front, and consisting mainly of the more mobile howitzers—between six and twelve inches—though a certain number of the large siege pieces were also present. Some of the best corps in the West, such as the 3rd of Brandenburg, were taken out of the line and rested, to prepare them for the great effort. The Crown Prince was holding his section at Christmas with two corps. During January he received the equivalent of three new corps, including one of von Mackensen's divisions from Serbia. By the middle of February at least thirteen new divisions had appeared mysteriously in the West, and seemed to be located in and around the Champagne, Argonne, and Lorraine fronts. It was an extravagant concentration on a section which did not exceed twenty miles. The Crown Prince was in immediate command, but he had as his adviser the old Marshal von Haeseler, at one time the tutor—and the trenchant critic—of the Emperor in military affairs. Von Strantz, commanding the Army of Metz, shared also the direction of the movement. The major strategy was von Falkenhayn's, and it was based upon two principles. The first was that no first-class artillery effort had yet been made against the Western entrenchments, and that, with an adequate concentration, the guns might be used to win the battle. The great movement was divided into stages. Each stage should be conquered by the artillery, and then occupied by the infantry with—it was hoped—insignificant losses. Again, for each infantry advance against a new position fresh troops were to be used—an endless wheel of reserves, so that every stage would have the support of an unexhausted human impetus. There was to be no vain hurling of men against unbroken positions. The infantry should only advance to occupy the ground conquered by the guns.

As a preliminary the enemy must be puzzled and distracted, so from the first week of January the Allied front was "felt" in all its length from Nieuport to the Alps. In an ordinary campaign each of these attempts would have been reckoned a substantial battle, but now they ranked as no more than episodes, and must be briefly chronicled. The French line was attacked in Champagne at the Butte de Tahure, at Massiges, near Navarin Farm, and east of the Tahure-Somme-Py road. There were attempts to cross the Yser in the neighbourhood of Steenstraate and Het Sas, and heavy fighting near the Hohenzollern and Hulluch, and on the Vimy heights. South of the Somme, between Frise and Dompierre, there were violent bombardments and a considerable German success. There were an attack on the Aisne front north of Soissons, considerable fighting in the St. Dié district, and some activity in Upper Alsace. The Allied High Command was uncertain how to regard these

adventures, whether as feints or as an honest "feeling" of their front to find a weak point. It was noticeable that all the places attacked were salients which might form a reasonably good starting-point for an enemy offensive. As it turned out, these diversions were not "feelers" but feints, for the *terrain* of the main attack had long been decided upon. Under their cover Germany continued to accumulate troops and *matériel* in the Verdun hinterland.

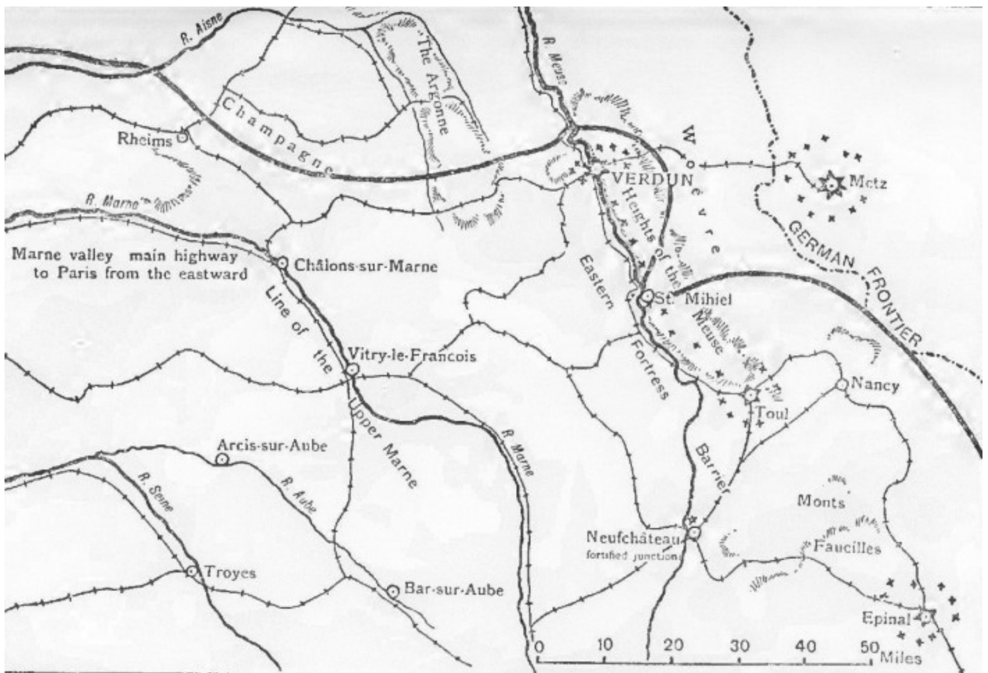
It was vital for the enemy to prevent our aerial scouting over his lines. In January, as we have seen elsewhere, the Fokker appeared—a German copy of the French Moräne machine—which, from its high speed and quickness in rising, made an admirable weapon of defence. It scored many successes against British and French airmen, and it was observed that the German machines had become bolder, and were frequently inside our front. As before the Allied attack of September 1915, attempts were made to bomb from the air the line of communications and all nodal points of transport. The fact that these energies seemed to be concentrated on the district between Châlons and Verdun was sufficient in itself to give a clue to the German plans. Zeppelins were also busy in that sector, and on 21st February, the first day of the battle, one of them was destroyed by an anti-aircraft gun near Revigny, on the Vitry-Bar-le-Duc railway. An incendiary shell kindled a fire in the stern of the airship. This was extinguished, and she slewed round, when a second shell raked her from stern to bow. In a moment the great machine was a crooked wisp of flame, and there fell to the ground a tangle of *débris* and some charred human remains.

It seems probable that for some weeks the French Staff had more or less divined the German plan of attack. Rumours had come through of the Kaiser's presence at Mézières, and of a great rehearsal held behind the front, much as the British 47th Division rehearsed before Loos. Deserters, awed by the impending carnage, crept over the lines and brought tales of unexampled preparations. Our aircraft revealed a strange activity between Metz and Mézières. The lure of Verdun was obvious enough, and the problem of an attack there had long been kept in mind. Arrangements had been made for supplying a force of 250,000 men on the west bank of the Meuse should the occasion arise. At the time the Verdun area was held by part of General Humbert's Third Army, and Verdun itself was under the charge of General Herr with a very modest detachment. It was not immediately reinforced. The attack on Verdun might be only a feint to prepare for an attack elsewhere, and it was necessary to keep the French reserves mobile. Besides, the concentration of which we had evidence might be used equally for an assault in Eastern Champagne, in the Argonne, and north of Nancy. There was nothing for it but to be ready for any event. In the third week of February all

along the Allied front there was a restless anticipation. A blow was imminent, its general character could be diagnosed, but its exact incidence was still unproved.

Verdun since the days of the Romans had been a famous city. A prince-bishop had his seat there in the Middle Ages, when the place was under the German Empire. The Constable de Montmorency in the time of Henry II. conquered it for France, and under Louis XIV. Vauban fortified it with his system of bastions, revelines, and ditches. In 1792 it surrendered readily to the Duke of Brunswick, and was consequently the indirect cause of the September massacres in Paris. But in the war of 1870 it made a stout resistance. Waldersbach in vain tried to batter his way in; but the place held out for ten weeks, and fell only when the investment was complete and supplies failed. After the loss of Alsace-Lorraine it became, along with Belfort, Toul, and Epinal, one of the eastern bulwarks of France, and was a vital point in the defensive plans of Seré de Rivières. In 1875 the entrenched camp of Verdun formed the left wing of the fortifications of the Heights of the Meuse. It barred the crossing of that river on the main line of advance from Metz to the passes of the Argonne and the Upper Marne valley. It was the meeting-place of the great road from Paris eastwards, and the highway which followed the Meuse. It was the junction of five railway lines. It was only a day's march from the German frontier and the fortress of Metz.

Verdun, therefore, was naturally made the strongest of the four entrenched camps. It was fortified with an inner line of redoubts—Belleville, St. Michel, Belrupt, La Chaume, and de Regret. Beyond this an outer line of forts and batteries was pushed out in a circuit of some thirty miles. These were, on the east, Chatillon, Manezel, Moulainville, Eix, Mardi Gras, Laufée, Vaux, and Hardaumont, with Tavannes in their rear guarding the Metz-Verdun railway; on the north, Douaumont, Thiaumont, Belle-Épine, Marre, Bourrus, and Bruyères; on the south, Rozellier, St. Symphorien, and Haudainville; on the west, Germonville, Bois de Sartelles, Bois du Chapitre, Landrecourt, and Dugny, with Choisel, Chana, and Sartelles in support. In all there were thirty-six redoubts of various sizes, and at its greatest the diameter of the camp was nine miles. It was the last word in the old science of fortification, and it had not been neglected like Lille and Rheims and Laon. Before the war all the forts had been brought up to date: concrete and steel had replaced the former masonry and earthworks, and heavy guns after Brialmont's fashion had been mounted in sinking turrets.



Sketch Map to illustrate the Strategical Importance of Verdun.
(The black line shows the general line of contact of the opposing fronts before the great battle.)

The first month of the campaign, which saw the famous “*dégringolade de forteresses*,” put Verdun in dire jeopardy. Hastily it was attempted to construct entrenchments far in advance of the forts, and the work had scarcely begun when the Crown Prince was at its gates. The city was held by Sarrail with his field army, and was all but invested when the German failure at the Marne compelled the general retreat of the invader. During the battle of the Aisne the Crown Prince attacked from Montfaucon, and held the Argonne as far south as the Vienne-Varennes road. Von Strantz won a bridgehead at St. Mihiel, but the effort failed to link him with the Crown Prince’s right. Since then there was for long no serious attempt on Verdun. In the spring of 1915 the French won Les Eparges, which gave them an advanced position in the Woëvre, but they could not cut off the St. Mihiel salient. The Crown Prince hammered for sixteen months in the Argonne, striving for his old objective—an advance sufficiently far south to join hands with von Strantz at St. Mihiel. But in spite of some small successes, the German front at Verdun remained a horseshoe and not a ring.

The city lies on both sides of the river in a pocket of plain. East and north on the left bank rise at some distance low hills, of which the nearest and most conspicuous is the ridge of Charny, bearing the outer works of de Rivières' system. On the right bank the Heights of the Meuse rise steeply from the stream to some five hundred feet above the water-level of the valley. These heights from west to east are five to six miles broad, and break sharply down to the clayey flats of the Woëvre. They are not a range of hills but a plateau, showing a gentle rise in places to inconsiderable crests. The summit is largely cultivated, and diversified with great woods of beech, oak, and chestnut. The ravines which descend to the Meuse and the Woëvre are deeply cut and filled with scrub. Little villages and farms are scattered over it, and several roads follow the natural hollows of the tableland. One, which was conspicuous in the coming battle, runs from Vacherauville, on the Meuse, by Beaumont, to Ville and Chaumont in the Woëvre; another follows the crest of the heights from Bras by Louvemont to Herbebois and Ornes. The Metz railway tunnels the range to Eix; a little line crosses by the gorge of Vaux, and skirts the east side of the hills to Damvillers and the vale of the Loison; the main line to Sedan and the north follows the western side of the Meuse trench. The inner circle of forts keeps the first crest of the rise; the outer circle is farther over on the tableland, corresponding to what is its line of greatest elevation. A man standing in February on the summit of the Côte de Froide-Terre saw to the north a rolling level almost flat to the eye, and broken up here and there with the grey-brown of winter woods. Behind him Verdun, with its old citadel and walls, smoked far down in the hollow. West and north-west lay the river valley, with low ridges running to the dark hump of the Argonne. East the blue plain of the Woëvre, blurred with forests, and showing the glint of meres and streams, ran into the haze which was Germany.

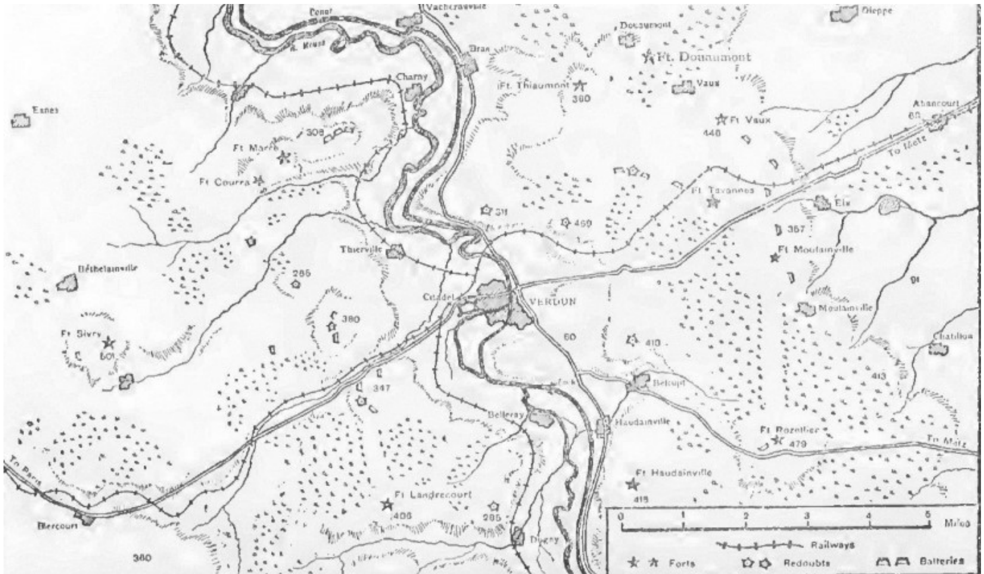
Such a spectator would not have seen the French lines. On 20th February they lay nine miles north of the city, and eight miles to the east, right out in the Woëvre flats. They represented the limits of success won by Sarrail's far-flung defensive. From just south of Boureuilles, on the east side of the Argonne, the first position curved north-eastwards in a broad salient. It held Forges and the glen which falls to the Meuse, but not the Wood of Forges on the north side. Crossing the Meuse, it ran just south of Consenvoye, covered Brabant and Haumont and the Wood of Caures, skirted the north side of the Wood of Ville, and passed along the eastern heights to Herbebois and Ornes. It then struck out into the Woëvre, covered Fromezey, came within a mile of Etain, followed the Orne valley to Buzy, fell back to cover Fresnes, and then by the ridge of Les Eparges regained the highlands, across which it bent to

the river at St. Mihiel. The second position may be defined by the points Samogneux, Hill 344, Mormont Farm, Beaumont village, the Woods of Fosses, La Chaume and Les Caurières, Bézonvaux and Dieppe. The third position was roughly the outer line of de Rivières' forts—Bras village, Douaumont, Hardaumont, Vaux, Laufée, and the village of Eix. Between the second and the third position intermediate lines had been prepared on the Côte de Talou, commanding the angle of the Meuse, on the Côte du Poivre, and on the southern slopes between Louvemont and Douaumont, around the farm of Haudromont.

Bird's eye view of Verdun. By Louis Torquier.

It was a strong position, and in the early winter of 1914 Sarrail had laboured to make it impregnable. A network of wire had been stretched at all points of danger, gun positions were carefully chosen and cunningly concealed, sheltered roads were constructed, the old forts were dismantled and their guns used to arm the outer lines. A fort was now no more than a few yards of ground in a defensive position; the true fortification was the labyrinth of trenches. But no forethought could altogether get rid of the difficulties of the position. It was a pronounced salient, and therefore was at once a threat to the German front and a temptation to their attack. The Germans, holding the Wood of Forges on the west and the two humps called the Twins of Ornes on the east, had good flanking observation posts and a shelter for dangerous gun positions. Moreover, it was a bridgehead. Verdun was, like Ypres, the neck of the bottle. All supplies and reinforcements for the lines on the heights must cross the bridges of Verdun and go through its gates. Moreover, the railway communications of Verdun might be menaced. The main Meuse valley line was cut at St. Mihiel, the Paris line by St.

Menehould was exposed to the enemy’s long-range guns, and there remained only the little branch line from Bar-le-Duc. It was, indeed, a position which invited a grand attack, since the French would be caught in a wedge of upland, with at their back a bombarded city and shattered railways, and a river swollen to a width of a thousand yards by the winter rains.



Defences of Verdun.
(311, 265, etc. Heights are shown thus in feet measured from the mean level of the Meuse at Verdun, which is 670 feet above the sea.)

The danger of the salient was not forgotten by the French Staff. As we have seen, they had long before prepared a scheme for handling a force of a quarter of a million men on the right bank of the Meuse, for supplying it by motor transport, and, if necessary, for withdrawing it to other positions south of the city. But in the meantime quiet reigned, and the lines prepared by Sarrail tended to be a little neglected. The tides of war had flowed elsewhere, and while in Champagne and in the Artois and around Ypres the defence was never idle, at Verdun it perforce grew stagnant. The front there was held mainly by Territorials, and held thinly. A trench line needs many men to keep it in perfect order, and the men were not there. The communications connecting the different positions fell out of repair; there was some apathy in making new trenches and in all that day-to-day supervision which the security of a position demands. The High Command had provided admirably for the grand tactics in the event of an attack, but the most skilful tactical plan takes for granted a particular state of the local

defences. The condition of these defences was assumed to be the same as in the days of Sarrail; but it would appear that this assumption was wrong.

A desultory bombardment began on Wednesday, 16th February. It was nothing unusual, but it was noticed that the German guns were busy on a long front—from Montfaucon on the left to Fromezey on the right, a curving front of some twenty-one miles. Verdun, too, was bombarded by heavy pieces, and the Governor of the city cleared it of its last civilian inhabitants. The French guns replied, trying to search out the enemy's batteries, which seemed to be massed in the Wood of Forges, the big Wood of Consenvoye, and in the Forest of Spincourt, in the Woëvre. French airmen reported that in the little Wood of Gremilly, north of the Twins of Ornes, the batteries were massed as close as apples in a basket. The omens portended some mighty effort, but as yet there had been none of that dense "preparation" which had preceded the Allied attacks. The French waited for that, as a sure and final proof that Verdun was the enemy's objective.

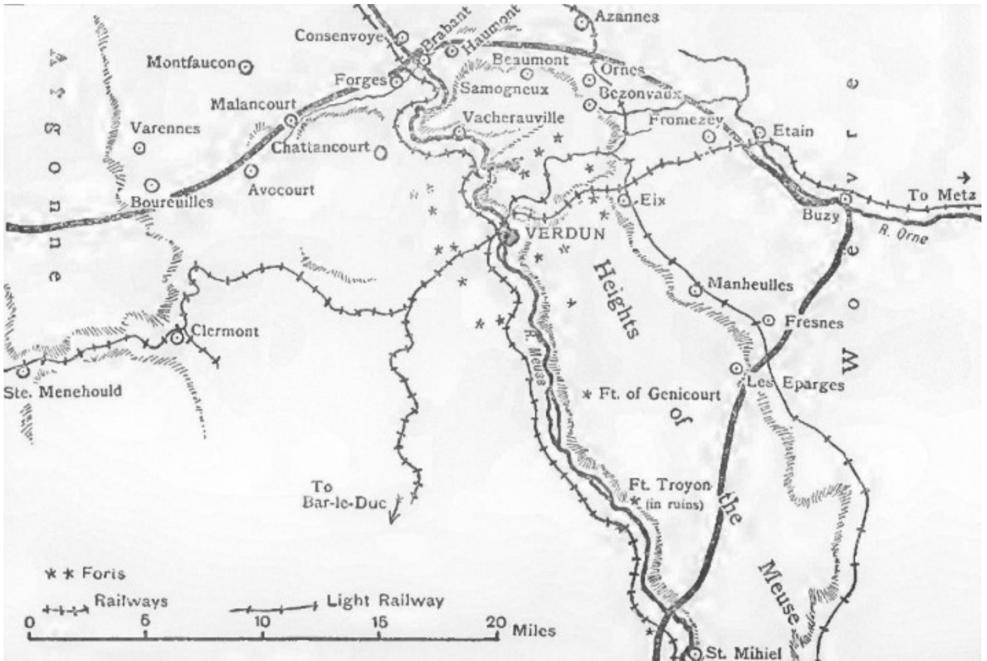
It did not come. The Germans had resolved to replace the usual forty-eight hours' preparation by a short period of intense fire—far heavier and intenser than our famous thirty-five minutes before Neuve Chapelle. Their immediate aim was only the first French position; for the second there would be a new bombardment. They had their troops ready—fourteen divisions against the three of French Territorials who were holding the seven miles of centre between Brabant and Herbebois. The order of battle on that front was, from west to east, the 18th Corps of Hesse, the famous 3rd Corps of Brandenburg, von Deimling's 15th Corps of Alsace—the heroes of Zabern—and a Bavarian Ersatz division. Their flanks were guarded on the right by the 7th Reserve Corps and the 14th Reserve Division, and on the left, in the Woëvre, by the 5th Corps of Posen, the 5th Landwehr Division, and the 3rd Bavarian Corps. The attack mustered not less than 230,000 bayonets.

Feb. 21.

At a quarter-past seven on the morning of Monday, the 21st, the true bombardment began. The smallest gun was 4-inch, the commonest 7-inch, but the big Austrian 13-inch also played its part. History had never seen so furious a fire. It blotted out the French first lines, it shattered the communication trenches, it tore the woods into splinters, and altered the very shape of the hills. Following hard upon it, the German infantry moved forward to what they had been told would be an easy and uncostly triumph. They looked to be in Verdun in four days.

II.—The First Stage.

The vale of the Meuse is a nursery of winter fogs. From the Woëvre clay and the deep trench of the river they rise to cloak every fold of the intervening plateau. On this February morning the air was thick and damp, and a raw wind blew from the east. The short season of premature springtide, which the early weeks of the month saw, had given place to the cold brume of November. It was perfect weather for the German attack. Their guns, massed far behind in the open wheel to wheel, were firing by the map, and had the exact range of the French line. The French guns could not find them to speak back, for the limit of visibility was low. We are to picture a sudden overwhelming blast of fire, precisely directed and fed from accumulations delivered by no less than fourteen new strategic lines, suddenly unloosed upon a front prepared for no more than the average field bombardment. Its success must be immediate and overwhelming. The French first line disappeared, and the German infantry, when at noon they advanced, promenaded into possession.



The French Front on February 21st.

A front on which there has been much fighting bears a strange appearance on the map. It is curiously distorted, and its shape represents not the decision of the High Command, but the accidents of battalion successes

and failures. The Brabant-Herbebois front was cut up into angles and loops, salients and re-entrants, as had been the Champagne front before the September battle. Behind the fire trenches 100 yards off were the support trenches, which had a more regular outline. Behind them again, and still part of the first position, was a third line, which was intended to be the true reserve line in case of an attack. The wise French habit had always been to hold their firing trenches and first support lines lightly, to fall back from them under a bombardment, and let the enemy occupy them, and then to deal with him faithfully by means of the 75's and an infantry counter-attack from the reserve position.

Under the blast of that terrible Monday morning the thin screen of Territorials, Chasseurs, and Colonials who held the front fell back, not without loss, to the reserve lines. But now appeared the consequences of neglect. These lines were poor, they gave bad cover for assembling troops, and the ways up to and out of them were ill devised. Hence the counter-attack, when the moment for it came, was handicapped. But at the best in this kind of battle the immediate odds are with the assault. It has the range determined; its guns are concealed; it is moving against a fixed object from a fixed base. It is only when the objective becomes mobile and the batteries of the attack wheel forward that there is a chance for the counter-stroke. The success of the first movement was assured. The German artillery was brilliantly handled; by the testimony of the French gunners, its work had not been surpassed in the campaign. The barrage of fire held off for the moment any aid from the French rear. The German infantry, when the guns lengthened range, advanced in scouting parties to reconnoitre the effects of the bombardment. Then came a screen of bomb-throwers and pioneers to prepare the new position, and then the troops to occupy it. It all went by clockwork in the first stage. The firing trenches and most of the first support lines were carried in the centre, in the Wood of Haumont, and the Wood of Caures.

The counter-attack was launched late in the afternoon, and it won back the lost support lines in the Wood of Caures, where two battalions of Chasseurs, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Driant, the Deputy from Nancy, held the front. The flanks of the French centre, Brabant and Herbebois, were still intact, and since the old line had been a blunt salient, the immediate effect of the German onslaught was only to straighten it. The order was for the troops in front to resist till the last moment, while preparations were made for falling back to new ground, for by now the weight of the enemy's effort was correctly understood. The next day or two must be one long rearguard action, for no serious counter-stroke was

possible with such slender numbers or from such unstable positions. But advance might be made a costly thing for the enemy. Not all his "preparation" would keep him from being caught *en route* by the French guns, and the trenches which had ceased to exist as defences might still hold men who would dispute every inch of ground with the new occupants.

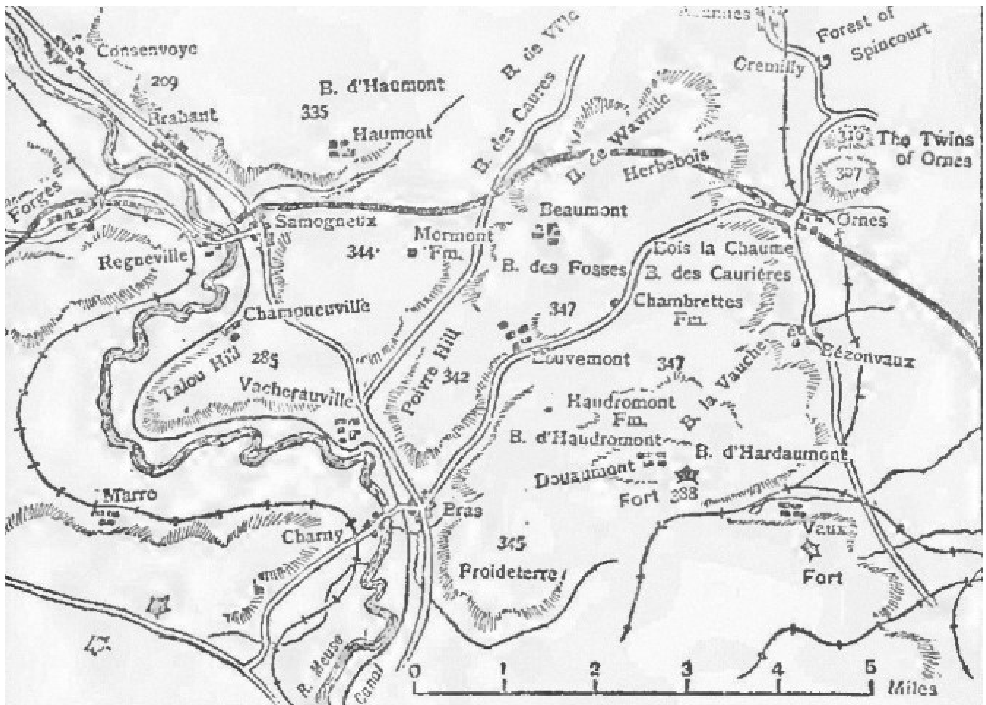
Feb. 22.

Before dawn next day, Tuesday, the 22nd, a fresh bombardment began. On the left, in the woods around Brabant, there was an attack with liquid fire, and on all the front there was a torrent of shrapnel, high explosives, and lachrymatory shells. Once again the wings held, though the north-east corner of the Herbebois position fell into German hands. The French counter-attacked in the Wood of Haumont, but without avail, and the day resolved itself into a desperate struggle for the southern halves of the Haumont and Caures Woods on both sides of the Vacherauville-Longuyon road. Every point in rear of the French was drenched in shells, and the hamlet of Haumont was soon destroyed. Nevertheless its defenders clung on amid the *débris*, and it was not till six o'clock in the evening that the first Germans fought their way into its ruins. Farther east, in the Wood of Caures, wave after wave of the enemy's infantry was slowly pressing the defence southwards towards the shallow depression where lies Beaumont village. Here Colonel Driant's Chasseurs made their final stand. The order for retreat had been given from headquarters, and the commander insisted on being the last to go. In the darkness he fell, with many of his famous 1st Battalion around him. He was such a deputy as might have been looked for from that city which for so long spoke with the enemies of France in the gates.

That night a further retreat was resolved, and this time it must be on a greater scale. We must regard the French centre at this period as pivoting on Ornes. There the hills fell steeply to the plain, and the maze of gullies around the glen of the Orne stream provided shelter from the German guns in the Forest of Spincourt. With this as its eastern pivot, the line had slowly bent south, keeping also a fixed point in the west at Brabant. But now the loss of Haumont had made Brabant a perilous salient, and during the darkness of that night of the 22nd it was evacuated. When morning came the French had fallen back to an almost straight front, running from Samogneux on the Meuse, and cutting the Longuyon road just north of Beaumont village. Thence it bent a little north, taking in part of the coppice of Wavrille and the south end of Herbebois. Roughly the position covered two broad lumps of plateau, separated by the valley at Beaumont, up which runs the Longuyon road, and defended at the extremities by the steepness of the ground. It was a stage in the retirement of

Feb. 23.

which the preparation had been begun on the first day of the attack, but it was only a stage, and no continuing city. The French aim was with each phase of the German assault to fall back a little, but to take heavy toll in each phase; then, when their final position had been reached, to stand at all costs, after the edge had been taken off the enemy's impetus.



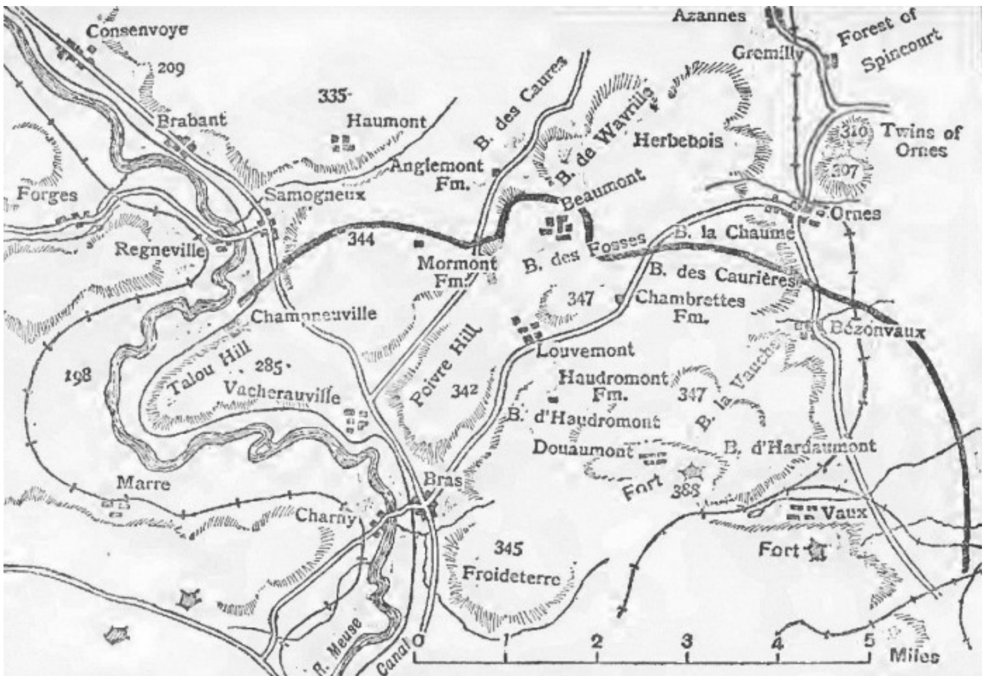
The French Position on the Morning of February 23rd.

Wednesday, the 23rd, saw an intense bombardment of the new lines, but necessarily without the deadly precision of the first day. At Samogneux a counter-attack was tried, but the artillery fire broke it up. All the positions in the front suffered, especially the farm of Anglemont, and on the right, from 6 a.m. onward, there was fierce fighting around Wavrille and Herbebois. In these hours the French were to all intents fighting in the open—"*la guerre en rase campagne*." Their guns served them wonderfully in breaking the advance of the enemy's infantry; but masses poured on where masses fell, and by the evening, while the wings held fast, all the centre was in a state of flux. The Germans were close upon Beaumont village, and on the northern skirts of Fosses and La Chaume. As the darkness closed in the French line was Samogneux-Hill 344-Beaumont-Ornes, and it was a very bad line. Meantime the posts far out in the Woëvre were being menaced by an

increased artillery bombardment. That night must see a drastic retirement if the defence was not to crumble prematurely.

Accordingly it was decided that the pivot of Ornes must be relinquished. During the darkness Samogneux was evacuated, save for a small rearguard. The line in the Woëvre was drawn in close to the skirts of the hills, an average of four miles. The flanking points of the centre were now the village of Champneuville, in the crook of the Meuse, and a ravine in the Wood of Caurières north-west of Bézonvaux. On the morning of Thursday, the 24th, the Longuyon road around Beaumont was the theatre of desperate fighting. The French counter-attacked towards Wavrille; but in the afternoon the enemy had penetrated to the east of the Fosses Wood, and Beaumont was isolated. By that evening the Fosses and La Chaume Woods were gone; Ornes was given up, and its garrison managed to reach Bézonvaux; and on the west, after losing thousands, the Germans carried the crest of Hill 344, between Samogneux and Louvemont. More deadly still, the enemy's centre just at the darkening attacked between Louvemont and the point marked 347 on the Vacherauville-Ornes road. This was getting very near the final French position, and that position the French had not yet occupied.

Feb. 24.

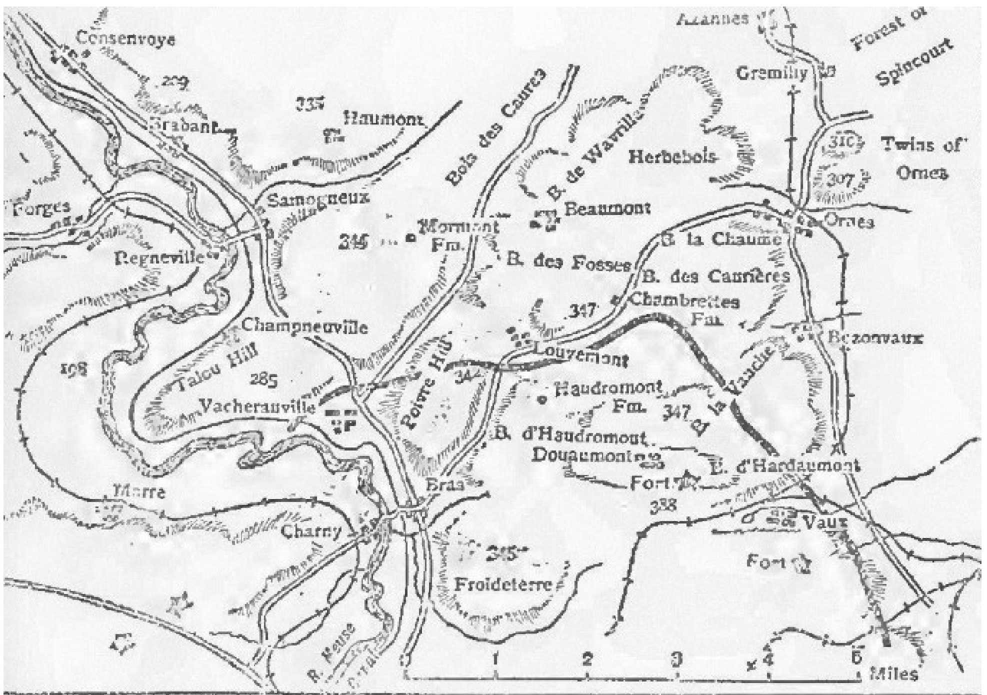


The French Position on the Morning of February 24th.

That night of Thursday, the 24th, represents one of the great efforts of the first stage of the battle. The same troops, which had been in action without a rest for four days against five times their strength in men and ten times their strength in guns, made a supreme rally, which permitted the High Command to carry out successfully the culminating stage of the retreat. Positions had been prepared upon the Côte de Talou and the Côte du Poivre. The first, situated within the bend of the river, was of small use to either side. It was destined to become no-man's-land, being swept at will by the opposing guns. Champneuville was given up, and only a small detachment left on the Hill of Talou. The new position ran from the Meuse at Vacherauville along the Côte du Poivre, just south of the village of Louvemont and the farm of Les Chambrettes, and then south by the woods of La Vauche and Hardaumont to the edge of the hills at the gorge of Vaux. It represented roughly the highest ground on the plateau. It represented also the last French defensive position covering Verdun. Not, indeed, all of it, for the ground held on the morning of Friday, the 25th, was for the most part a little in advance of the actual keys. These were the Côte du Poivre and the Douaumont plateau. If from direct or flank attack either should be lost the defences of Verdun must crumble.

Feb. 25.

Early on Friday morning the snow began—a heavy, dead fall, with little wind, but accompanied by a grinding frost. With the first light the German batteries opened, and on all parts of the front the assault began. The French were in a slightly better case, for this was a prepared position skilfully chosen, and they had more cover from the incessant shell-fire. Moreover, they had their strength increased by two brigades, the first arrivals from the reserve. It was now the fifth day of the battle, and the Germans were behind their time-table. According to schedule they should that day have been in Verdun. They knew as well as the French that this was the last position, and they flung themselves on it with the certainty of speedy conquest. Always fresh troops moved forward for every effort, and the total German divisions on that narrow front had now grown to eighteen. The French were still the same remnant that had taken the first shock—a remnant now most pitifully reduced. Supports were on their way, but, save for the two brigades, not yet in line. For another twenty-four hours they must hold the fort.

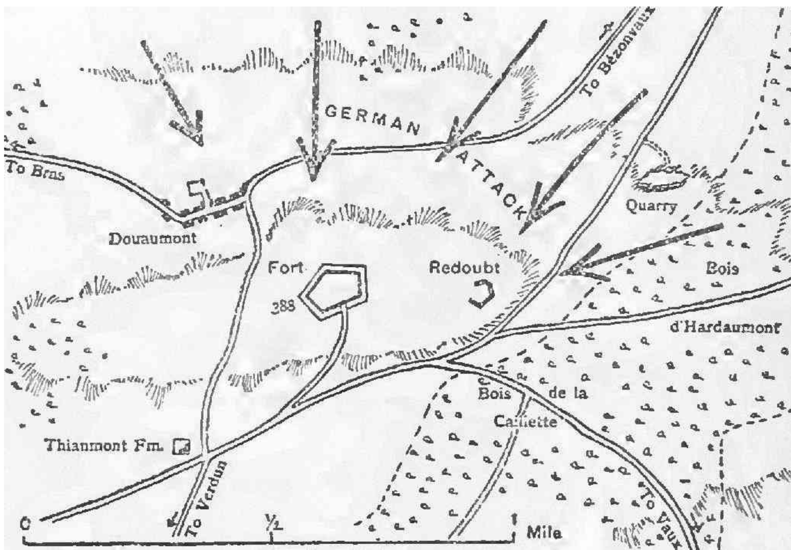


The French Position on the Morning of February 25th.

The *terrain* of the great central attack was now limited to a space of some four and a half miles—from the Côte du Poivre to the spur of Hardaumont, above the gorge of Vaux. For a clear understanding of the battle it is necessary to grasp the details of this strip of plateau. On the west the slopes of Poivre are steep above the river. In the hollow between it and Talou runs the road from Vacherauville to Beaumont, while another track climbs from the Meuse and follows the crest to Louvemont. South another road runs from Bras to Louvemont, and sends off a branch to Douaumont and Bézonvaux. Poivre is itself a spur of the big Louvemont plateau, and due east of it, across a slight dip, is another spur, on which stands Haudromont Farm. East, again, is the long stretch of what we may call the subordinate plateau of Douaumont. To the north-east it sends out spurs, separated by deep ravines, to the glen of Bézonvaux. These spurs are muffled in trees, and the most western is called the Wood of La Vauche, and the most eastern the Wood of Hardaumont. Just south of the plateau is the gorge of Vaux, through which runs the Verdun-Damvillers line. The whole plateau is as fantastic as a jigsaw puzzle, but Douaumont itself is a clear feature. The village of one street lay at the cross-roads—a little place which held in peace some three hundred inhabitants. About six hundred yards

south-east of it was the Fort of Douaumont, one of de Rivières' main positions, but dismantled these many months. Two hundred and fifty yards east, again, stood a redoubt, which was a position in the French field line. Douaumont had a good field of fire to north and north-east, where the ground sloped gently to the edge of the tableland. It was nearly six hundred feet above the level of the Meuse, the highest point in all the neighbourhood, and from it the eye had an unimpeded view of the towers of Verdun, less than five miles distant.

The German attack on that Friday was directed against the two ends of the position—Poivre and Douaumont. The French withdrew their last men from Talou, and held their lines a little on the south side of the Poivre crest. The big retreat of the night before meant that the enemy had to bring his guns forward and get new ranges, and consequently his bombardment took some time to reach its height. The attack on Poivre was doomed to failure. The ground on west and south-west was too steep, and, moreover, it was commanded by the French artillery on the Charny ridge across the river. The advance from the north across the west end of the Louvemont plateau was broken up time and again by the French gunners. Nevertheless the attempt was made all through that snowy Friday, with the result that Louvemont village was occupied about 3 p.m.; but its violence was less than the simultaneous assault on Douaumont in the east. There the enemy pushed along the ridge between the woods of Fosses and Caurières, up the woods on the spur of La Vauche, and up the tributary gullies from Bézonvaux glen. It was a day of unceasing and futile slaughter. Often the German infantry reached the rim of the plateau, only to be hurled back by the thin line of the defence. For a moment in the afternoon it seemed that Douaumont village was encircled by the 6th Division of the 3rd Corps, but a counter-attack eased the situation. In that stand the 3rd Regiment of Zouaves won great glory, and splendid, too, was the work of the French gunners. A French officer in an observation post has described the scene.



The Attack on Douaumont.

"Beyond, in the valley, dark masses are moving over the snow-covered ground. It is German infantry advancing in massed formation to the attack. We telephone through to the batteries, and the ball begins. The sight is hellish. In the distance, in the valley and up the slopes, regiments spread out, and as they deploy fresh troops come pouring in. . . . There is a whistle over our heads. It is our first shell on its way. It falls right in the middle of the enemy infantry. We telephone, telling our batteries of their hit, and a deluge of heavy shells is poured on the enemy. Their position becomes critical. Through glasses we can see men maddened, men covered with earth and blood, falling one upon the other. . . . The first wave of the assault is decimated—the ground is dotted with heaps of dead; but the second wave is already pressing on. It tries in vain to get through our fire. It is driven back, and again discovered by our guns; once more our shelling carves awful gaps in the ranks. Nevertheless, like an army of rats, the Boches continue to advance. . . . Then our heavy artillery burst forth in fury. The whole valley is turned into a volcano, and its exit is stopped by the barrier of the slain."

That day General Petain arrived. General de Castelnau had preceded him, and had come to the conclusion that Verdun could be held and must be held, so he summoned to the task his ablest lieutenant. Petain was one of the younger generals, and his reputation was the newest. At the beginning of the war he had been a colonel, commanding the 33rd Regiment of infantry at Arras. He had first won his spurs in the summer fighting in the Artois, and had been given the Army of Reserve in the Champagne battles of

September, where he greatly distinguished himself in the capture of the Hand of Massiges. Since then his fame had grown, and he was looked on as one of the foremost of the French fighting commanders, the man to lead the army of assault in the coming offensive. Now he came alone by motor car without his army. The main reserves were following fast, but he was in advance of them. His task was to do as de Castelnau had done at Nancy in September 1914, and hold the eastern gates of his fatherland.

He did not arrive an hour too soon. In four days four miles of ground had been lost, and with them gun positions which made the task of the defence almost impossible. He had to reorganize communications which were already terribly threatened, and reconstruct and perfect entrenchments which had been neglected. He had to bring up supports over difficult ground to meet the greater man-power of the enemy, and to organize the French artillery to counteract the hammer-blows of the colossal German concentration of guns. All this he had to do against a stronger enemy who believed that victory was already won. This new “Constable of France” had need of a stout heart and a cool head, if he was to foil the mighty offensive. Already the enemy was surging against the last position, for if Douaumont at that period of the battle fell Verdun must follow.

On the evening of his arrival came the crisis. The attack on the two miles of the Douaumont front reached a pitch of unprecedented violence. It was the culmination of the German effort, the last blow before which the fortress must crumble. The order had been issued that at all costs Douaumont must be taken, since Douaumont was the key of Verdun. The Kaiser with his Staff was somewhere on the Twins of Ornes, watching through his glasses the scarp of the plateau where the German shells were bursting. Victory was taken for granted; it was already bruited in Berlin, and the capital only waited the word of confirmation to fly its flags and make holiday.

The infantry of the 3rd and 15th Corps poured up the wooded spur of La Vauche and the side ravines, using the cover of the splintered trees, won the edge of the plateau, and then struggled to advance across the deadly glacis, 300 yards broad, to the French position on the crest. Again and yet again the French guns caught them in the open and stopped them. But there could be no going back under the Emperor’s eye. It was noted that the first ranks seemed to be dazed and insensitive, moving forward, singing, with glassy eyes, as if under the influence of the drug which the Old Man of the Mountain gave to the Assassins—mere cannon-fodder, to screen the picked troops behind them. Wave after wave rolled on, broke, and ebbed, and then one mightier than the rest covered the glacis and reached the French

trenches. The 24th Regiment of Brandenburg thrust in a wedge where stood the ruins of the old fort, and overflowed beyond the crest of the position. To the west the French still held the village, and to the east the redoubt, but at the fort itself and its immediate area the Brandenburgers had broken their position. It was, on a smaller scale, the same as that breach made in the last German lines in Champagne on 29th September. The French front had been pierced by a spear-point, but not carried. But it was enough for the watching Emperor. The tidings were flashed to Berlin, and promptly came the proud announcement that Douaumont, the key of the last defence line of Verdun, was in German hands.

That night it was bitter frost, and the wounded left out were corpses in the morning. Looking from the parapets in the faint light, both sides saw dark figures apparently crawling in the white no-man's-land between the lines. At first they suspected a night attack, but soon they saw it was an army of the dead.

The capture of the fort was a splendid feat of arms; but it was destined to be a barren success. For the wearied lines which had been bending back for five days had now been reinforced. General Petain, on the morning of Saturday the 26th, launched the counter-attack. The famous 20th Corps of Nancy—the men who, with de Castelnau, had held the Grand Couronné at the crisis of the Marne battle—swept from behind the crest and drove back the invaders. The two divisions, under General Balfourier, pushed the Brandenburgers to the rim of the plateau, all except a handful who held out in the ruins of the fort. The situation in September at the Hohenzollern was repeated, when the British held the redoubt and the Germans the communication trenches.

Feb. 26.

The successful counter-attack of Balfourier's Bretons and Lorrainers represented the end of the first stage of the great fight. It was in itself the most critical incident of the whole battle. The French had been assailed on a difficult and somewhat neglected position, and though their High Command had prepared for the contingency, it would have been folly to concentrate all reserves instantly on the Heights of the Meuse, since the objective of the enemy was not at first completely proven. Accordingly the weak divisions yielded yard by yard, exacting a heavy price for all they gave. The German aim was by one torrential assault to sweep the defence off the heights before it could be reorganized and supplemented. Had the French yielded, as they might well have done, to this terrific momentum, Verdun would have fallen in less than the four days of the German schedule. But they fell back only at the last extremity, and compelled the enemy to split his endeavour into small

stages, each of which required a fresh infantry attack and a new artillery preparation. After the first day the chances of the offence grew less certain. Their guns were now firing from positions where they had not registered; the unequalled French gunners could reply, and the momentum did not gain but declined. Henceforth the battle was to be fought by the French with fresh troops and an ampler munitionment, and under the eye of a brilliant and tireless general. But let all honour be paid to that forlorn hope which took the first shock of the onslaught and held the gap long enough to check the tide.

At the same time it cannot be denied that the French command cut it very fine—too fine, perhaps, for prudence. Troops were too highly tried, and it was more by good fortune than foresight that that Saturday morning on the Douaumont ridge did not see a calamity. The tenacity of a few, as at Le Cateau and the First and Second Ypres, had upset the reasoned calculations of war. Had the Brandenburgers been able to make their great effort on the Friday morning, or had Balfourier been less swift in his counter-stroke, Douaumont would have gone, the whole position on the Heights would have been turned, large masses of troops would have been cut off, and Verdun would have been in the enemy's power. Such consequences would not have broken the Allied front, but they would have given Germany a substantial triumph, and would have sensibly decreased the Allied strength. It was only by the slenderest margin that they were averted.

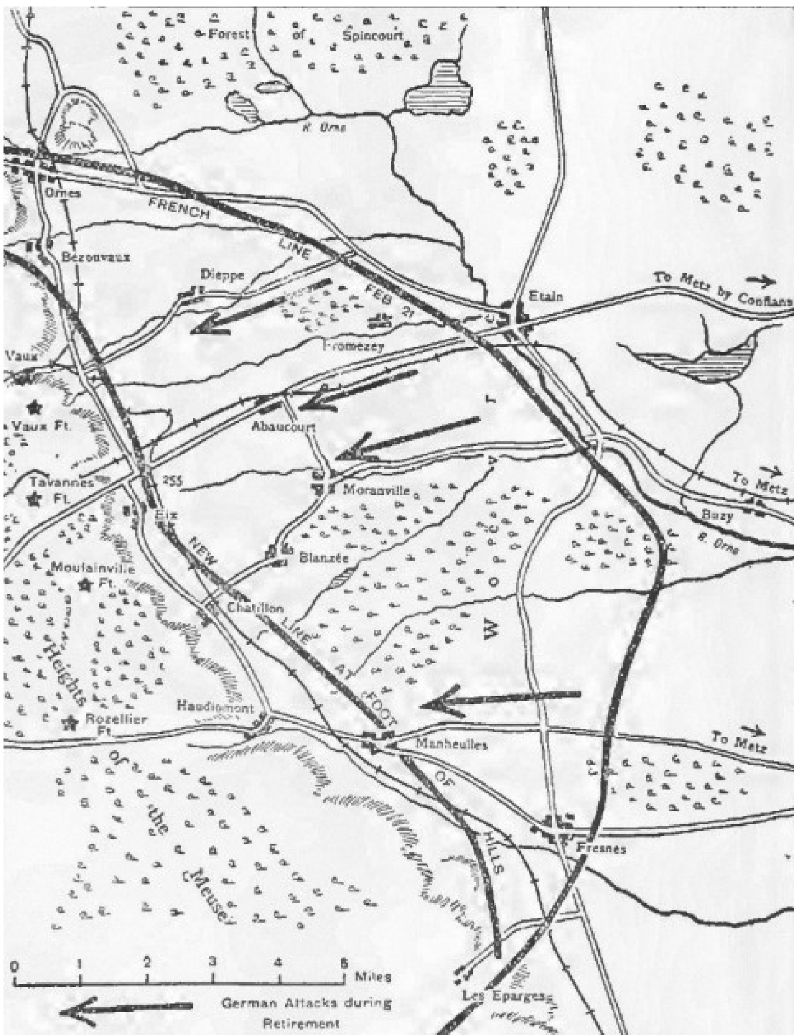
III.—The Second Stage.

On the afternoon of Saturday, 26th February, the German assault had failed on the two wings at the Côte du Poivre and at Douaumont. The great advance which began on the Monday before was stayed, but as yet they did not know it. All they perceived was a check to the movement on their flanks, and they attempted to counterbalance this with a blow by their centre, where the farm of Haudromont marked the westernmost spur of the subsidiary Douaumont plateau. At the same time with their left they attacked the most easterly spur, where the Wood of Hardaumont looked over the Woëvre. The tactics were not unlike those of Wagram, if we take the central attack as corresponding to Macdonald's advance with the 5th Corps on Süssenbraun, and the attack on the spur of Hardaumont as paralleled by Davoust's assault on Markgrafneusiedl. The struggle raged far into the night, but everywhere the French lines held. Meantime, on the extreme French right, the drawing in of the Woëvre posts was successfully completed.

That night the snow fell heavily, and all Sunday, the 27th, and Monday, the 28th, the combat continued. On the west the attack on the Poivre ridge came to a standstill, largely because of the French guns on the left bank of the Meuse, which dominated every movement on the western slopes. The French held the south side of the ridge and the Germans the end towards Louvemont, but neither side could advance, since the German guns around Beaumont and the French guns on the Charny height between them compelled a stalemate. The isolated hill of Talou had long been untenable by either side. A violent artillery attack was made on the Douaumont position, and the two divisions of the Brandenburg Corps attacked successively, but without avail. An attack on the Wood of Hardaumont likewise failed, and the battle lines lengthened southwards, where the 5th Corps of Posen and the 3rd Bavarians strove to turn the French right in the Woëvre. On the Sunday the enemy, advancing along the Metz railway, came in contact with the French holding the station of Eix, about a mile and a half from the village of that name. South of the station is a hillock marked on the map 255 metres, about seventy feet above the level of the plain. The French held this height against all attacks during the Sunday and Monday. On the latter day the Bavarians pushed against the village of Manheulles, six miles south of Eix, where the road from Metz joins that which follows the skirts of the hills, and against Fresnes, a mile to the south-east. About half Manheulles village fell into their hands, but with this success they had to content themselves. Their aim was clear. If they could advance on to the heights by way of the Fresnes-Verdun road they would have won a position in rear of the main defence.

Feb. 27.

Feb. 28.



The Withdrawal of the French Line in the Woëvre.

Now at the close of February fell one of those lulls which are a notable feature of modern battles. The German assault on the Verdun salient had followed a different method from their many salient battles on the Eastern front. There they had endeavoured to strike in from the flanks and cut at the roots; at Verdun they drove straight on the apex, as they had done during the early stages of the First Battle of Ypres. The reason is not far to seek. The Verdun salient was shallow, no more than a bulge in the front, and it provided no tempting re-entrant angles, save at St. Mihiel, where the precariousness of the German communications made a great forward movement difficult. But it made up for this disadvantage by being split in

two by a broad and swollen river. All that part on the eastern bank of the Meuse formed, so to speak, a salient within a salient. If the French could be driven back in confusion there would be a desperate muddle on the few roads and a desperate congestion at the neck of the bottle, the bridges of Verdun. It therefore seemed wise to them to hammer in this segment by frontal attacks as being the shorter and simpler road to their goal—the possession of Verdun and the cutting off of large numbers of French troops and guns.

That frontal attack all but succeeded. But by the end of February it had clearly failed, so far as any hope of instant success went. The carefully planned stages of the battle had somehow miscarried. They had been too slow to have the proper cumulative effect. Between each the French had rallied, and each new step had to be taken against a prepared and wholly undemoralized opponent. Why, with their weight of men and guns, the Germans did not succeed better is still a mystery. Partly it may have been that in that winter weather and difficult upland country there was undue delay in the succession of the stages, in moving forward artillery, in bringing up shell supplies, and in refitting troops. Partly it may have been, as the French maintained, that the infantry attacks, in spite of their complete disregard of human life, were not delivered with the fire and resolution which bears down all opposition. The German troops had been told that the guns would do the work for them; but when the guns stopped short of destroying a position they were puzzled and dispirited. They died heroically, but they did not exact the full price of their sacrifices. Again, it is clear that the untouched French gun positions on the left bank of the river unduly narrowed the German front in attack, and prevented the wings from giving the proper support to the centre. A frontal attack is all very well, but it must have its flanks safe.

Accordingly, at the end of February, the German High Command revised its plan. Slowness to revise has never been a fault of German strategy, even when it meant an arduous readjustment of details. The heavy howitzers had been fixed in their emplacements in the Woods of Spincourt and Hingry, and could scarcely be moved, but many mobile batteries were taken across the river to the woods of Septsarges, just east of Montfaucon. The main German route of supply for the whole front was the railway from Metz to Conflans and Spincourt, whence a new line had been constructed westwards to Dun in the Meuse valley, on the Verdun-Sedan line. A branch had been recently made from Dun to Montfaucon. So far as communications went—and without them the great guns could not be munitioned—the Germans were well equipped for fighting on both banks of the river. The new plan was to

strike at the French positions on the left side of the salient, drive them in, and menace Verdun from the north-west. Such a stroke would get rid of the handicap to the central advance from the French artillery on the left side of the Meuse, and would, moreover, if pushed even a short mile, threaten the main rail and road communication of Verdun itself. At the same time, as the battle developed, the right side of the salient at Vaux should be attacked. The German plan was now a return to a favourite battle-order of Napoleon's—blows on each flank, followed at the proper moment by a thrust at the centre. For it is clear that, as the consequence of this flanking operation, the German Staff still looked to a victory on the Poivre-Douaumont front, in the unlikely case of the French troops on the heights not having voluntarily retired as the clouds darkened.

It may be asked why the Germans did not contemplate a turning movement from the Woëvre against the French right. As we have seen, they attacked at various points on the edge of the heights; but from a casual survey of the map it might appear that a movement, say along the Verdun-Fresnes road, would have given them better and speedier results than an advance up the western bank of the Meuse. The latter would drive in a wedge on Verdun's flank, but the former would take the whole position in rear. The reason must be found in the configuration of the Woëvre itself. It has a stiff clay soil, which in an open winter makes it a mass of swamps and brimming ponds, so that, as in Poland, the only routes for heavy transport are the causewayed roads and railways. The map will show that, besides the Damvillers and Metz railways, there are from Vaux southwards to Fresnes four roads which run up to the edge of the hills—the Vaux-Dieppe road, the main Verdun-Longuyon highway through Etain, a little road from Chatillon to Moranville, and the great Paris-Metz road which goes through Manheulles. Along each of these highways the Germans attacked with their columns, but the soft soil on both sides did not permit of easy deployment. Worse still, the whole plain was under observation from the heights, and all the roads and cross-roads were commanded at long range by the south-eastern forts of the Verdun *enceinte*. Hence the German attack, being delivered in winter conditions, was perforce confined to the northern, north-western, and north-eastern sections, where their communications were ample and well-screened, and they had underfoot the dry soil of the hills.

March 2.

On Thursday, 2nd March, it was noted by the French command that the German guns had become active against their front between the Argonne and the Meuse at Forges. The French lines, unchanged for many months, ran from the river up the narrow marshy valley of the Forges brook, covering Forges village. The

Germans had the Wood of Forges just north of the debouchment of the stream; but farther west the French had the ridge on the north bank, covered Bethincourt, and turned north-westwards in a salient to within two miles of Montfaucon, the isolated hill which had once been the Crown Prince's headquarters. They covered Malancourt and Haucourt, turned south through the Wood of Malancourt, passed between the Wood of Cheppy and the Forest of Hesse, covering Avocourt, and then by way of Vauquois reached the Aire at Boureuilles, and joined the Argonne front toward the Fille Morte and Haute Chevauchée. It is important to note the configuration of the ground just inside the French lines. The brook of Forges splits at Bethincourt into two branches, one coming from Malancourt in the west, and the other running due north in a well-marked valley from the village of Esnes and the Wood of Bourrus. This latter branch needs some attention. On its right bank, between it and the Meuse, is a long ridge of hills which is known as the Goose's Crest. At its western end this ridge has various summits, of which the chief one is Mort Homme, 295 metres high, and to the north, just above Bethincourt, the lesser height marked 265. From these points the ridge runs eastwards, with a mass of woodland, the Wood of Cumières—called in its northern part the Crows' Wood—clothing its southern flank, and just peeping over the crest. It sinks steeply to the Meuse at Regnéville, opposite Samogneux, and on the south of it, at the bend of the river, lies the considerable village of Cumières. On the other side of the southern branch of the Forges brook is a slightly higher ridge, rising at one part to 304 metres, separating it from the woods between Avocourt and Malancourt.

In any attack upon the French position west of the Meuse this ridge, called the Goose's Crest, must play a deciding part. If it fell, then there could be no halting for the French short of the ridge of Charny, nearly four miles distant, on which the outer line of de Rivières' forts protected Verdun. Such a retreat would not necessarily lead to the fall of the city—for that the Charny height must be forced—but it would have one immediately beneficial result for the German attack. It would strip from the west bank of the river all those artillery defences which had prevented any outflanking of the centre by way of the Côte du Poivre. It would then be possible to swing south from the Louvemont plateau and take the Douaumont position on its left flank. But to obtain this result it was necessary to carry the Goose's Crest in its entirety; and especially the Hill of the Dead Man, which was its highest point. For this operation there were only two possible ways, since the right flank above the Meuse was too steep for any large movement of troops and guns. There could be a frontal attack from the line of the Forges brook, between Forges and Malancourt; or there could be a flanking

movement on the west from the Avocourt Woods against the summit 304, which, as we have seen, confronted the Mort Homme across the southern branch of the Forges stream. Either, if pushed to a finish, would give the Germans Mort Homme, but without Mort Homme no success could be final. It was the key of the western bank, as the Douaumont crest was the key of the eastern heights.

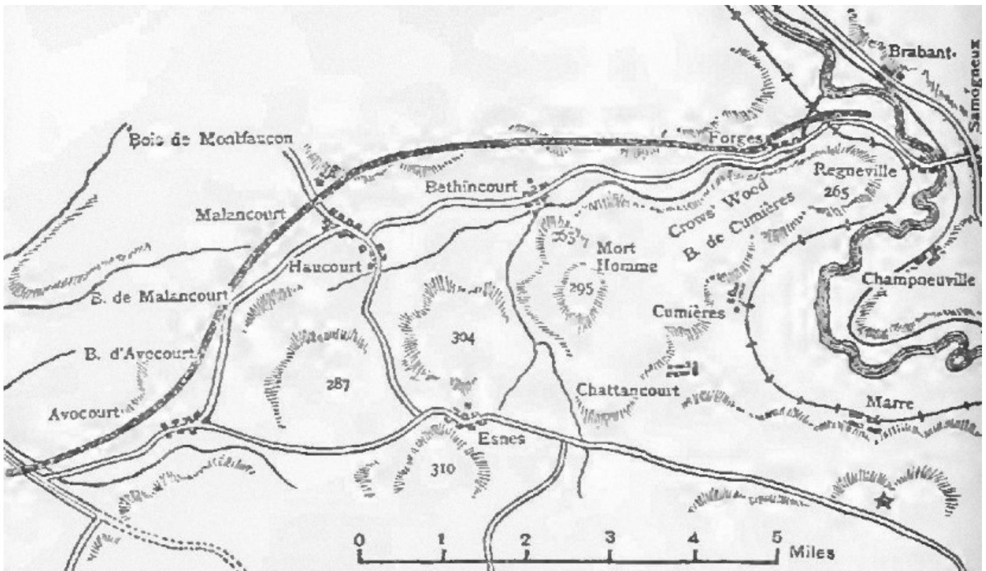
The bombardment which began on 2nd March from the batteries in the Woods of Forges and Septsarges was directed at the French firing trenches along the Forges Glen, at Forges itself, at Malancourt, at the reserve lines on the Goose's Crest and Mort Homme, and especially at the Crows' Wood and the Wood of Cumières, which concealed the French guns. Moreover, all the hinterland was "watered," and the Clermont-Verdun railway, for long in danger, became impracticable. The French transport was now almost wholly by road and motor, and an endless chain of convoys passed and repassed between Verdun and railhead. It was a task which involved a terrific strain for the men. A letter from a French mechanical transport driver gives some notion of the work:—

"Each outing represents for us from fifteen to twenty-five hours at the wheel—when it is not thirty—and for our lorries 150 to 200 kilometres. This night and day. On arriving here, we did the journey twice almost without stopping—that is to say, forty-eight hours without sleep, and almost without food. It was so hard that it was decided that there should be only one chauffeur per lorry, and that we should take it in turns. Can you imagine what it means to drive one of these lorries, weighing five tons, and carrying an equal weight of shells, either during a descent of 12 or 14 in the 100, and with a lorry just in front and one just behind, or driving during a frosty night, or without lights for short intervals when nearing the front? Can you see the driver alone on his lorry, whose eyes are shutting when a shock wakes him up suddenly, who is obliged to sing, to sit very upright, to swear at himself, so as not to sleep, or throw his lorry into a ravine, or get it stuck in the mud, or knock the one in front to pieces? And then the hundreds and hundreds of cars coming in the contrary direction, whose lights blind him!"

For four days the bombardment continued. It was a clue to the enemy's purpose; but in order to prevent the reinforcement by the French of the Malancourt-Forges line, a vigorous attack was made on the Douaumont position. The main advance was against the village itself, and from the Wood of Hardaumont towards the hamlet of Vaux. The Germans got into Douaumont village, now only a heap of ruins; but the French held the higher slopes to the south, for the village is well short of the crest of the plateau.

During the remainder of the week there was a series of small actions between Haudromont and Hardaumont. These were, from the German point of view, containing battles, while the main stroke was preparing elsewhere. The bombardment was now general on the whole front, from Fresnes to the Argonne. German aircraft attempted to bomb the villages west of Verdun, where the French reserves were accumulating, and the city itself was heavily attacked by the long-range howitzers and naval guns. General Petain had correctly divined the enemy's plan, and had made all preparations to meet the threat on the west bank. At dawn on Monday, 6th March, the guns fell silent, and two divisions of the 7th German Reserve Corps descended upon the Forges Glen.

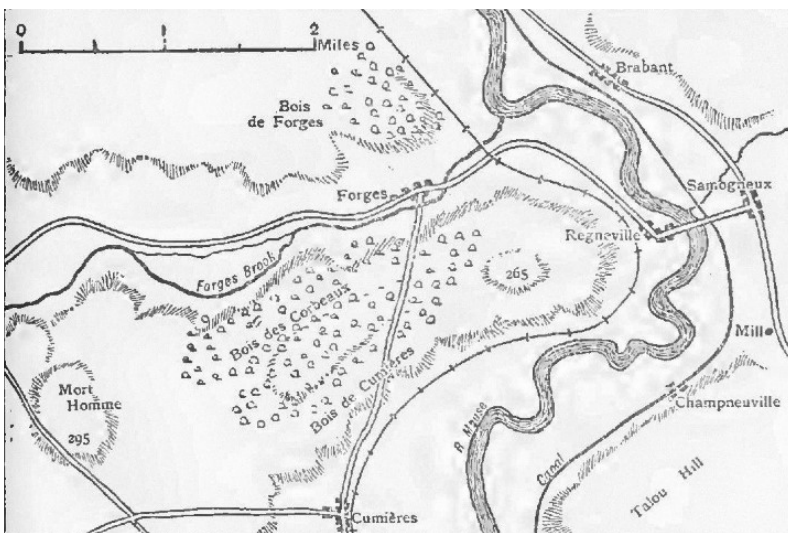
March 2.



French Position west of the Meuse on the Morning of March 6th.

The French first position was clearly untenable in an attack. Its right flank was in the air, for across the Meuse from Forges the Germans held all the bank for three miles up to the debatable land of the Côte de Talon, and so could assail the French wing with converging fire. Accordingly the French fell back, fighting obstinately, to their prepared position behind the Goose's Crest. Forges fell by midday, and the Germans, pushing along the railway, took Regnéville by the evening, and had advanced some way up the slopes of the ridge. Before the darkness had quite fallen they had won the eastern crest, the point marked 265 metres—which must be clearly distinguished from the other Hill 265 at the western end north of Mort Homme—and had penetrated the Crows' Wood, all that portion of it which overflows on the

north side of the ridge. On Tuesday morning the French still held Bethincourt, but had been forced back from the Forges Glen across the Goose's Crest at the Crows' Wood, and held the southern slopes of that ridge through the Wood of Cumières to a point on the Meuse between Cumières and Regnéville. It was a repetition of what had happened on 21st February between Brabant and Herbebois. The covering troops were withdrawn with little loss from the first lines to the position where they proposed to make their stand.



The Goose's Crest (Côte de l'Oie).

March 7.

Next day, Tuesday, the 7th, came the first attack against the new French line. It was supported by two subsidiary movements on the east—an attack on Fresnes, which took the place and several hundred prisoners, and a successful assault on the redoubt in Hardaumont Wood, which gave the enemy a position against Vaux. But the main fighting was at the Goose's Crest. There the French counter-attacked, and won back most of the Crows' Wood, but had to face a fierce German pressure east and west of Bethincourt. Next day, the 8th, the struggle for the Crows' Wood continued, and the French recovered all of it except the eastern end, while they continued to hold their ground at Bethincourt. That night the German effort swung to the other flank, according to their fashion, and centred on Vaux.

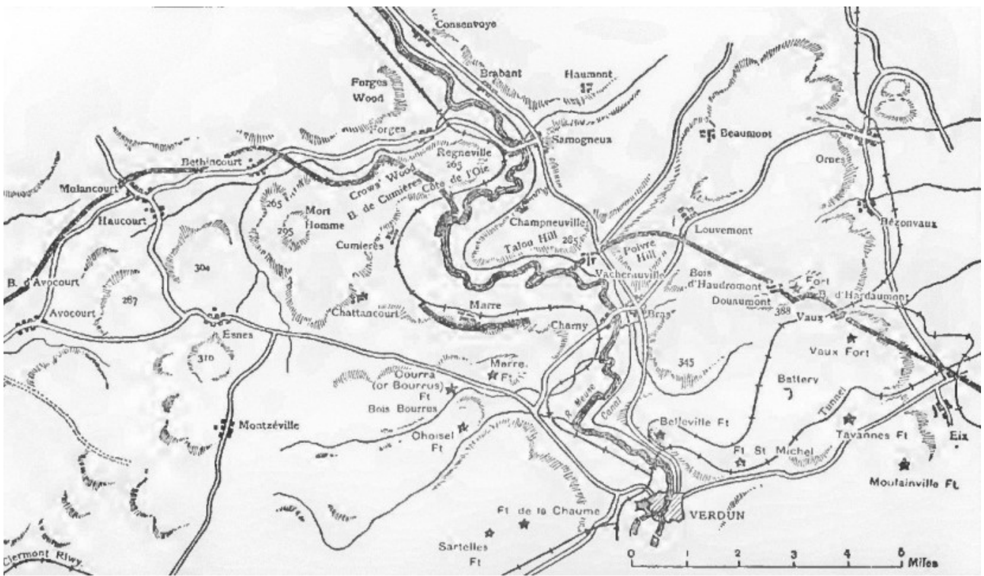
March 8.

Looking up from the Woëvre flats, the traveller sees a small glen, like one of the folds in our own South Downs, with steep sides crowned with clumps of wood. A railway and road run up the hollow, and halfway there is a straggling village of one street with a church at the eastern end. To the north rises the Wood of Hardaumont, and peeping over its summit a little to the left he catches a glimpse of the round top of the Douaumont Fort. On the south side the height is capped with the old fort of Vaux, around which stretches the Chenois Wood. On that Wednesday night the Germans held the Hardaumont crest, and so could safeguard any advance up the glen from flanking fire. Just after midnight, when the moon had set, the 3rd Brandenburg Corps, now replenished from the depôts, and an infantry brigade of the 9th Reserve Division, containing the 6th and 19th Posen Regiments, attacked up the ravine, and for a moment carried the ruins of Vaux village. The French counter-attacked, and promptly drove them out with the bayonet. When daylight came the Germans returned to the charge, advancing not only against the village, but to the south up the steep slopes of the Chenois Wood against the old fort on the escarpment. The attack was delivered with great resolution, but by the evening it was checked, and no ground was gained. That day saw the end of the Brandenburgers as a unit so far as this battle was concerned. They were withdrawn from the line in a state of utter disintegration. On Friday, the 10th, the enemy, now largely reinforced, came on again, but was caught by the French guns before he could get to close quarters. Saturday, the 11th, saw the final effort. In the early morning the Germans swept up the ravine and took the eastern end of the village and the ruins of the church. On their left they pressed up the hill, losing heavily on the slopes, but their impetus slackened before they reached the crest, and they were stayed at the wire entanglements round the fort. Next day there was no infantry fighting, but only an intermittent bombardment.

March 9.

March 10.

March 11.



The French Lines on March 8th.

The attack on Vaux, had it succeeded, would have turned the Douaumont position as successfully as if the Côte du Poivre had been carried. Simultaneously all along the Woëvre side there were attempts to advance, notably in the woods south-east of Damloup, at Eix, and at Manheulles. All were unsuccessful, and like clockwork the effort seesawed to the other wing. The German strategy was that of a woodcutter who strikes first on one side of the trunk and then on the other. But his method is useless unless each stroke of the axe cuts out a substantial wedge, and this the German blows had failed to achieve. It was as if a forester, after cutting off the loose bark, had come to an inner core so hard that it turned the edge of his tool.

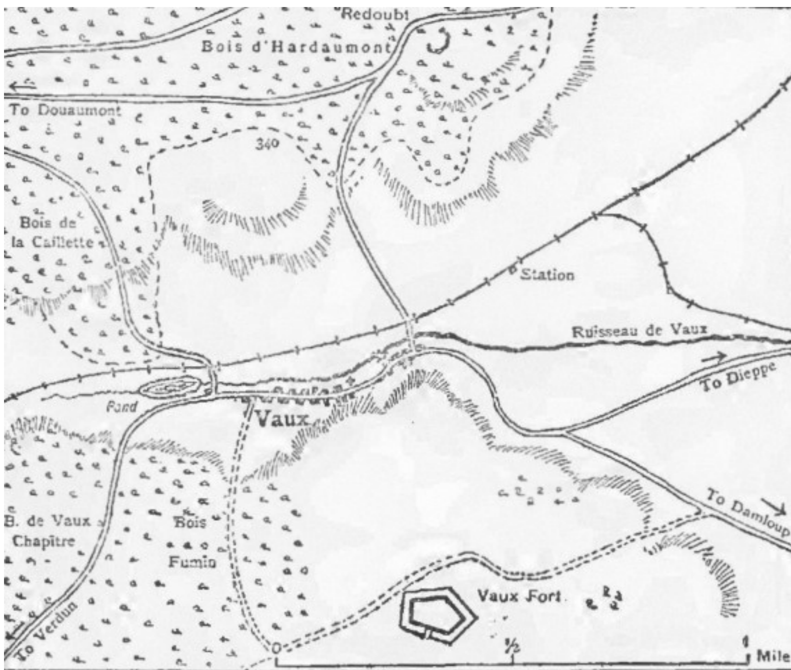
From Thursday, the 9th, to Tuesday, the 14th, the struggle went on between Bethincourt and the Goose's Crest. On the 10th a fresh division was launched against the Crows' Wood, and the Germans advanced their front to the edge of the Wood of Cumières. Next day the French first line, running from Bethincourt south-east up the slope of the ridge on the Cumières road, was carried, but the French regained part of it by the evening. On Sunday the 12th, there was a great bombardment of all the ground from Bethincourt to the river, especially the French lines in the Wood of Cumières below the Goose's Crest. Next day it was discovered that the bombardment was extended at long range to the Charny ridge and the Wood of Bourrus, as if to cut off French reinforcements preparatory to a general

March 12.

March 13.

attack. That night the artillery never ceased, and on the morning of Tuesday, the 14th, came the expected thrust for the Mort Homme.

March 14.



Vaux and its Neighbourhood.

The French line at that moment formed a salient, of which Bethincourt was the apex. From Bethincourt it ran in front of the country road leading over the shoulder of the Goose's Crest to Cumières. This road, a mile and a quarter south-east of Bethincourt, crosses the spur of the Mort Homme marked 265 metres. The French lay on the northern slopes of this, and then bent back over the Goose's Crest, behind the Crows' Wood, and so to the Meuse. The Germans based their attack on the Crows' Wood, which they now held, and directed it south-west towards the point 265 behind the French trenches. A Silesian division advanced in the centre, while a brigade moved on the right up the slopes of 265 from the Forges brook, and another brigade on the left advanced directly against Hill 295, the highest point of the Mort Homme *massif.* A total of some 25,000 men was in the striking force.

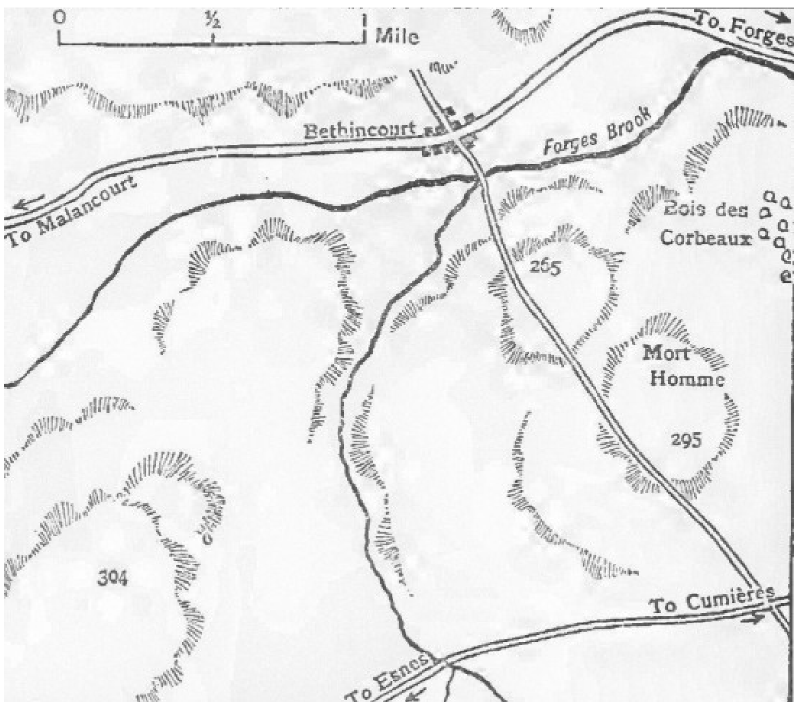
The centre, coming on in five successive waves, pushed back the French behind the Bethincourt-Cumières road. Their flank was caught by the French guns and checked, but the Silesians managed before nightfall to win

two positions just under the crest of Hill 265, which made that hillock no longer tenable. The mile of ground between it and the Crows' Wood was now in their hands. Berlin announced the capture of the Mort Homme, but the news was false. The French still held the key position, and all that had been lost was an outlying spur. There was a lull on Wednesday, the 15th; but that night a new artillery preparation began, and at three o'clock in the afternoon of Thursday, the 16th, a second attack was made on the same method as the first. It was caught by field and machine-guns in flank, and completely broken up. A counter-attack by the French right drove part of it in disorder with heavy losses back to the shelter of the Crows' Wood.

March 15.

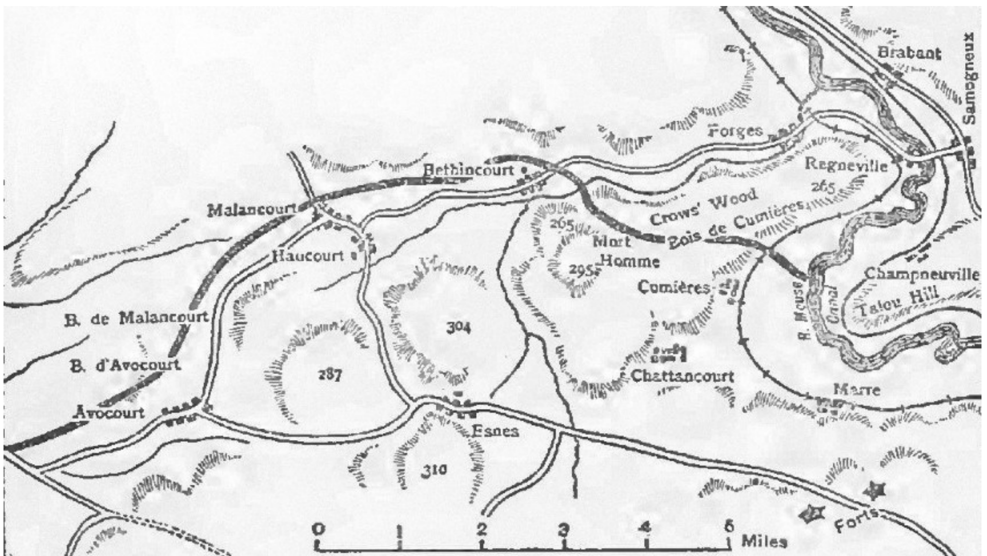
March 16.

That same night there was a new assault on Vaux. Twice the ruins of the village were attacked, but the enemy was held back just west of the church. Three other attacks, based on the cemetery, attempted to scale the slopes to the fort. They were caught by the French searchlights from the heights, and broken up by the French guns. The woodman's strokes on both sides of the trunk had struck an adamantine core.



Mort Homme and Hills 265 and 304.

So closed the second stage of the battle, on the twenty-second day since the guns had opened between Brabant and Herbebois. The result of the blow on the west bank of the Meuse had been to win a triangle, less than a mile deep, between the brook of Forges and the Bethincourt-Cumières road. It had sharpened the Bethincourt salient, but it had not yet secured the key point of the Mort Homme. On the east bank most of the Wood of Hardaumont had gone, and the Germans were up to Vaux village, but they were no nearer carrying Douaumont. Up to now the attack had lost at least twice as many men as the defence, and, if we take the second stage only, the proportion was nearly four to one. But the Germans could not cut their losses and break off a barren struggle. They had claimed victory too brazenly, and must go on for very shame's sake till they won some apparent decision. They were faced with a new syllogism: Verdun depended on Douaumont and Charny; these in turn depended upon the Mort Homme; the Mort Homme refused to yield to a frontal attack, therefore an effort must be made to take it in flank.



The French Line west of the Meuse on March 16th.

March 17.

As we have seen, only one flank was possible. Accordingly, on Friday, the 17th, the German guns opened in a fresh bombardment between Avocourt and Bethincourt. The new assault on the key point was coming from the west.

IV.—The Third Stage.

With the opening of the third stage the great struggle changed its character. The original plan had gone to pieces. The Battle of Verdun, as conceived by von Falkenhayn before 21st February, was lost by the end of the first week. The swift surprise which would have given the Germans the city—and thereby a resounding advertisement for German arms—and which in certain circumstances might have broken the French front, had died away into a war of trenches. Verdun might still be won, but its winning would have small military meaning. It was not a key point but merely an insignificant heap of ruins, since the French front was held not by fortresses but by entrenched field armies. Its capture would be a certain gain, but only if the price exacted were reasonable. Had the Crown Prince entered it on the 26th of February he would have paid much for his victory, but it might fairly have been considered to be worth the cost. By the middle of March it was very clear that Verdun, even if it fell next day, would have been bought far too high. The essence of war is to win something from the enemy at a fair price. In every battle both sides have losses; if the loss to one side, whether in position or in men, is greater than the loss to the other, then the latter has won. If a man at a sale bids fifty pounds for a picture and secures it, he may have got a good bargain; if he pays a hundred pounds it may still be worth while; but if the price is run up to a thousand, and he persists, he will have blundered into sheer folly. The analogy is not exact, for a buyer at an auction is not compelled to pay unless he gets the coveted object, whereas in the case of Verdun the enemy paid cash down at every bid, and had no security of any gain.

The Allied counter-attack, for which the rest of the German front was waiting, did not come. The great armies of the north and centre remained fast in their trenches, and save for an inconsiderable attack at the Navarin Farm in Champagne, there was no auxiliary movement during these days to divert Allied reserves or confuse the Allied strategy. It is clear that on this point the German High Command was completely outmanœuvred. What they had counted on did not come to pass, and they sat still in the expectation of it, while with every hour their chances of victory declined.

The struggle on the Meuse Heights could only have been justified at this stage if the attack were taking toll of the defence out of all proportion to its own losses. But the opposite was the case. Regiment upon regiment was flung desperately forward, hideously mauled, its gaping ranks replenished from local reserves, and sent in again. In many cases as much as 60 per cent. of the effectives perished.[12] That was inevitable from the nature of the fighting. What was more important, the original tactical plan was relinquished. The artillery bombardment, which should have made the

infantry advance easy, grew less complete as the days passed. There was less precision in registering, greater delay in bringing up supplies of heavy shell, and the halts between each stage enabled the defence to prepare for the next blow. The fresh troops used for the attack became patently inferior in quality, since the best had been used up with appalling speed, and there was not now the promise of swift victory to give heart to the assault. Again, the general advance on a broad front, which had been the original intention, was growing impossible. Armies tire like individuals, and the great sweep, once it had been checked, could not be easily repeated. Accordingly we find a series of local attacks at widely separated sections, which could not correctly be said to have any cumulative effect. Had the salient been narrow the blows at its neck might have been formidable, but the Verdun position was not properly a salient at all. The base was too broad for the cutting-off tactics which had served Germany well in the Eastern campaign. The battle was now to all intents a frontal attack upon the French lines. It had resolved itself on the German side into an effort to create little salients, and then push them in. If we return to the simile of the woodcutter, we may say that the attempt to cut great wedges on each side of the tree had failed, and had been replaced by a number of small and casual gashes. Such a method may serve to bring down a sapling, but in this case the trunk was broad and hard, and its roots deep.

Strategically the French held the command. In General Joffre's Order of the Day to the Verdun defenders, issued during the first weeks of March, the situation was accurately described:—"For three weeks you have been undergoing the most formidable assaults which the enemy has yet attempted against us. Germany counted on the success of this effort, which she believed to be irresistible, and to which she devoted her best troops and much powerful artillery. She hoped that the capture of Verdun would revive the courage of her allies, and convince neutral states of German superiority. She had reckoned without you. Night and day, in spite of a bombardment without precedent, you have resisted all attacks and maintained our positions. The struggle is not yet at an end, for the Germans need a victory. You will succeed in wresting it from them." *The Germans needed a victory.* Such seems the only explanation of a strategy which refused to count its losses, and persisted in a game which under no conceivable circumstances could be worth the candle. Such needs, in essence not military but political, are in war the fruitful parents of disaster.

Tactically, too, Petain was master of the situation. He followed the traditional French practice of holding his first line lightly, of surrendering it under attack, and of winning it back, if necessary, with the counter-stroke.

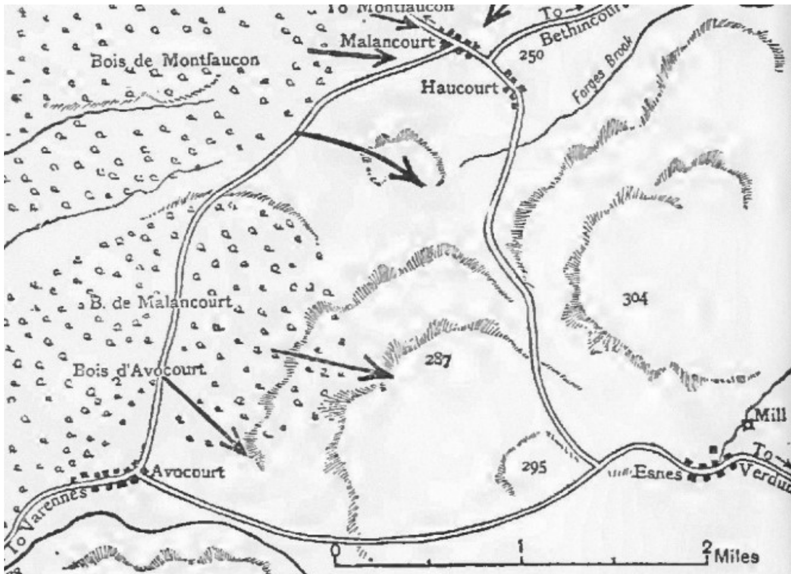
When a desperate push was made he was prepared to fall back a little, provided he could take sufficient toll of the enemy. In such fighting the losses of the defence were a half or a third of those of the attack. In certain cases, such as the Douaumont crest or the Mort Homme, where the position was vital for his plan, he was prepared to push the counter-attack with resolution, and lose men on the same scale as the enemy. But his general purpose was to incur no needless losses, and to make the enemy pay heavily for every yard of ground surrendered. His attitude was that of the trader who has wares to sell to any one who will give his figure. He regarded no village or crest, not even Verdun itself, as immune from this grim bargaining. The Germans may have any ground they want—so ran his argument—provided they pay a high enough price. It was the destruction of the enemy's forces, not the sacrosanctity of a strip of land, which would gain France the victory.

By the middle of March not less than thirty German divisions were on the front between the Argonne and St. Mihiel. Eight divisions, drawn from the 6th and 10th Reserve Corps and the 16th (Lorraine) Corps, were on the left bank of the Meuse; on the right bank were twenty-two divisions, the Poivre-Vaux front being held by the 5th and 7th Reserve Corps, while the 15th (Alsace) Corps and a Bavarian Ersatz Division lay south towards Fresnes, and the 5th (Posen) Corps and the 3rd Bavarians continued the line to St. Mihiel. The 3rd (Brandenburg) and the 18th (Hesse) Corps had been taken out to refit, and of those still in line no less than twelve divisions had been already withdrawn and sent back. Of the fresh troops brought up since the beginning of the battle one division at least came from von Mackensen's now depleted army in the Balkans, and two, including a division of the 1st (Koenigsberg) Corps, from the Russian front. In all, including the auxiliary services, some half-million Germans had been engaged or were now engaged on a shallow arc of which the chord measured thirty miles.

The new bombardment on the west bank of the Meuse, which began on 17th March, reached its height by midday of the 20th. That afternoon the first infantry attack was made on the Avocourt-Malancourt line. The Mort Homme, as we have seen, was the key of the left bank, and, since the frontal attack had failed, an effort was to be made to take it in flank. There was only one flank accessible, the western, and of that the key was the Hill 304. That hill, again, could only be approached from the west and north-west, where it sent down long gentle slopes to the upper feeders of the Forges brook. On the west the Wood of Avocourt covered the slopes of an underfeature marked Hill 257, which ran

March 20.

up to Hill 304. To the north, in the hollow, lay the conjoined hamlets of Malancourt and Haucourt, at the foot of another easy spur. If the Germans could take the Wood of Avocourt, they would have won a position well up the slopes of 304, and would have excellent cover for the final rush for the summit. If at the same time they could press beyond Malancourt and Haucourt, and win the northern slopes, the hill, which was the key of Mort Homme, must presently be in their hands.



The Attack on March 20th from Avocourt.

On that Monday afternoon, the 20th of March, a Bavarian division, supported by an emission of liquid fire, fought its way into the eastern part of the Avocourt Wood. By night fresh troops were brought up—chiefly Wurtemberg Landwehr—and towards evening, in spite of the brilliant work of the French batteries at Esnes, the German line was pushed to the edge of the trees where the hill pastures began. All Tuesday the Germans were busy putting a barrage behind Hill 304, and hammering at the point of the Malancourt salient. On Wednesday they built a redoubt in the captured Avocourt Wood as a base for the next advance on the hill, and their infantry attacked on a line between the corner of the wood and Malancourt village. There they gained a footing on the little hill south-west of Haucourt, but failed to win the French redoubt there. On Thursday and Friday the bombardment continued, and a few more trenches were won at Haucourt.

March 21.

March 22.

The Malancourt salient was now being pinched very thin, and the vital point —the west slope of 304—was gravely threatened by the enemy.

March 25-27.

Then came a short lull. From Saturday, the 25th, to Monday, the 27th, there was nothing but intermittent artillery fire, which by the Monday evening had grown to that intensity which heralds a fresh attack. On Tuesday that attack came at Malancourt, where battalion after battalion was hurled on the weak French troops in the village. In this fight the French heavy guns played a great part, and the waves of the assault, descending the slopes to the Forges Glen, were terribly shattered by their fire. The real danger-point was not there but at the Avocourt Wood, and on the Wednesday afternoon Petain resolved on one of those rare counter-attacks which he used only to win back some vital position. It was completely successful. The Wurtembergers were driven in for more than 300 yards, and the redoubt they had made fell into French hands. Counter-attacks followed, but they failed to retrieve the loss. Meanwhile at Malancourt the Germans managed to fight their way into the north-west corner of the village. Next day there was a pause, broken only by futile counter-attacks from the Avocourt Wood. But during the night, having brought up reinforcements, the Germans again flung themselves on Malancourt. The French garrison repelled the first attack at 9 p.m. with heavy loss to the enemy, and again at 11; but about 1 p.m. in the morning of Friday, the last day of March, the invaders won the south-west corner of the hamlet.

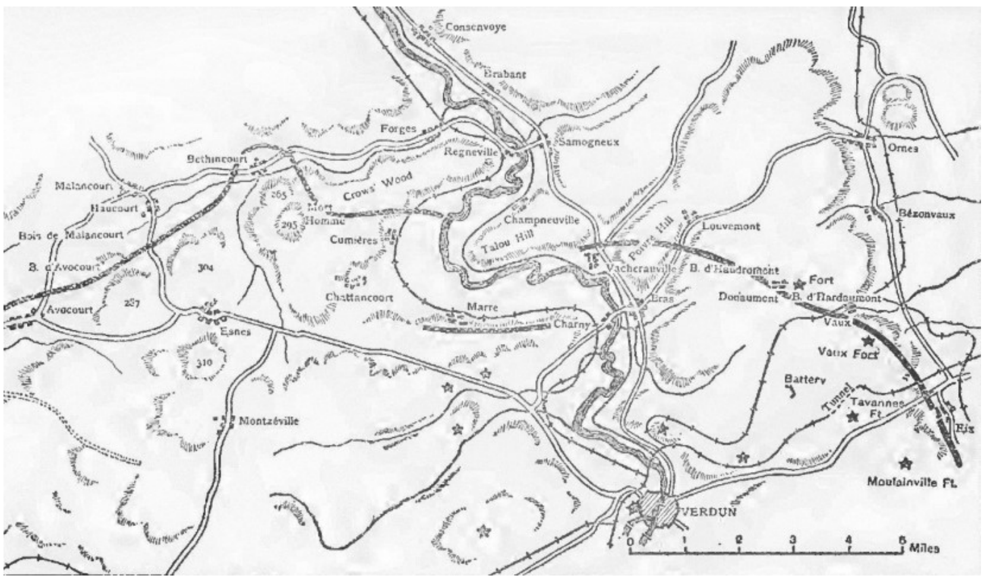
March 28.

March 29.

March 30.

March 31.

The loss of Malancourt was now only a matter of hours. The strength of a full division had been used against its kilometre of front, and the price had been paid which the French required. Fighting desperately among the ruins, the garrison fell back to Haucourt, and the capture of Malancourt was announced in Berlin. Petain went farther. On that Friday night he quietly drew his troops at Haucourt across the little stream to a strong position on the lower slopes of Hill 304. The Germans were ignorant of this move, and for several days continued to bombard empty trenches. The salient had been blunted, the French lines adjusted, and the enemy could make nothing of his gains. He could not debouch from his new position because of the French command of Hill 304 and Mort Homme. In that bare little glen there was no friendly Crows' Wood to give him cover.



The French Line on April 1st.

On the night that the French were filing silently across the Forges stream, a new attack was launched on Vaux. There had been two abortive assaults on the Thursday night, and from midday on Friday a heavy bombardment had been loosed along the front from Poivre to Hardaumont. Late on Friday night the enemy returned to the charge, and the second of two attacks gave him the western houses of Vaux village, up to the point where the roads fork around a little pond. The one on the right climbs steeply between the Hardaumont and Caillette Woods, and reaches the plateau near the old fort of Douaumont. On the morning of Saturday, 1st April, the enemy struggled to advance up this road, which is carried in a shallow ravine among the trees, but the French guns from the south held him. Next day, Sunday, on that narrow front of little over a mile, he launched the equivalent of a division in four columns. He penetrated most of the Caillette Wood, pressing up the ravine, and also from the Wood of Hardaumont. This was a substantial success, for he had made of the French lines behind Douaumont village a difficult salient, and he had also made a salient of the old Vaux Fort and the bluff it stands on.

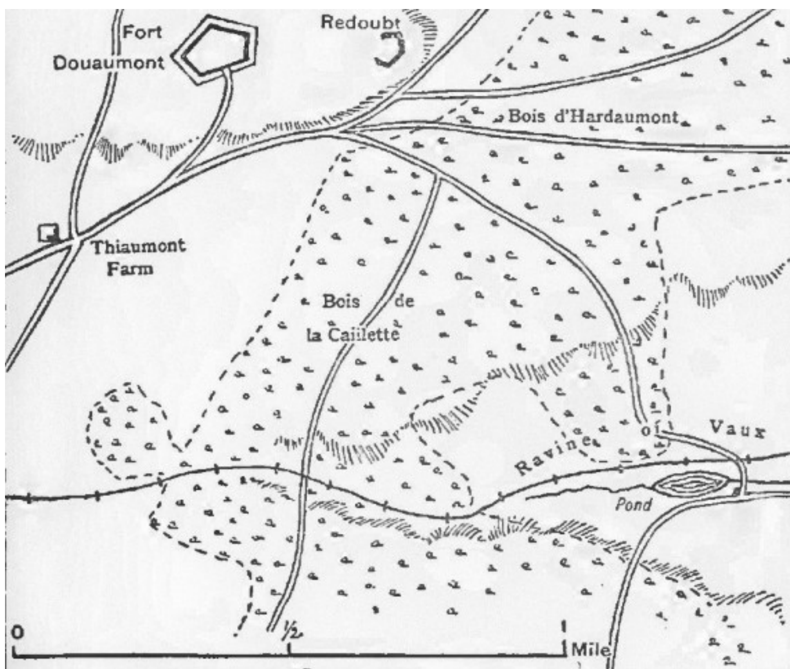
April 1.

April 2.

As at Avocourt the French counter-attacked with purpose, for the ground must be won back to safeguard this position. That night their guns were active, and at dawn on Monday, the 3rd, General Mangin's division pressed the invader out of the Caillette Wood—all

April 3.

except the slender horn of it close to the Douaumont redoubt—recovered the ravine and the ground round Vaux Pond, and with a last fine effort won back the western skirts of the village. That day's fight was one of the severest struggles in the whole battle. The narrow glen of Vaux, up which the German columns moved, was soon a charnel-house, choked with the dead and dying. Through these human barriers the German heavy guns blasted a road for the reinforcements that came on time and again to breast the hill. In the advance which gave them the Caillette Wood and—for a moment—the rim of the plateau, the Germans lost incredibly; but in the subsequent counter-attack the French, after their fashion, spent their strength freely to redeem a real tactical loss. On the balance the enemy had paid the heavier price, and he had no gain to counterbalance it.



The Caillette Wood.

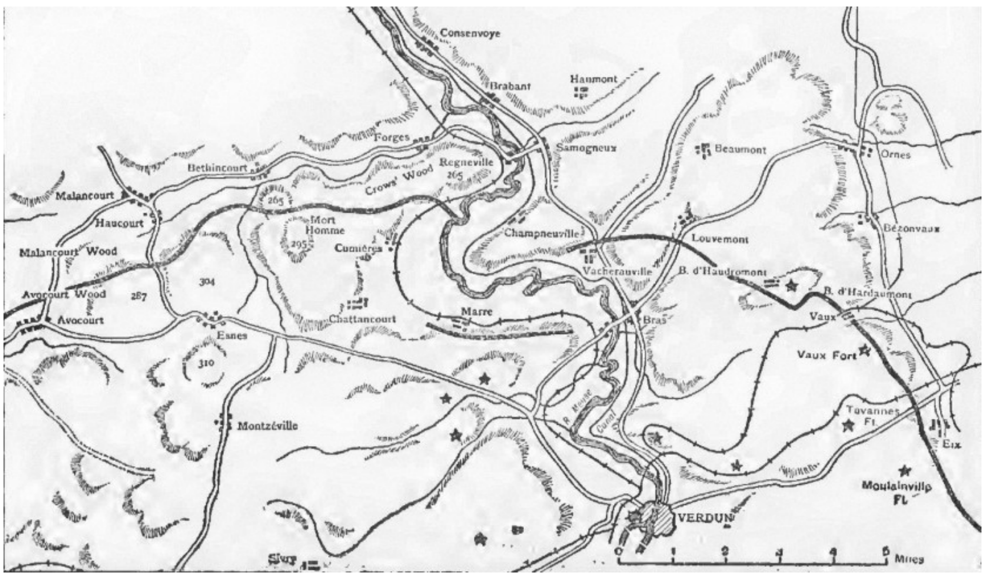
Meanwhile the battle had been resumed on the western flanks. On Monday, the 3rd, an attack on the line Haucourt-Bethincourt took the Germans into the trenches north of the Forges brook, which the French had evacuated on the last night of March. Something like a fiasco occurred, for the enemy rushed the empty trenches in close formation under heavy French shelling. For the next two days there was a lull; but on Thursday, 6th April, in the afternoon, the Germans finally entered Haucourt village, and attacked

April 6. *April 7.* *April 8.*

Bethincourt, which was now the apex of a perilous salient. That night part of the French first-line trenches were carried between Bethincourt and Hill 265 along the Cumières road, and all the next day was filled with a new and intense bombardment. Under its cover during the night the enemy flung his horns south and east of Haucourt, and the Silesian and Bavarian Landwehr gained a footing in two small woods situated between the village and the spur of Hill 304. That day there was also fighting at Bethincourt, which, it was very clear, must soon be relinquished. When darkness fell the garrison was drawn out, and on Saturday morning the Germans were in possession. The French front now ran from the redoubt in Avocourt Wood, along the slopes of Hill 304, to the Forges stream north-east of Haucourt, and thence to a point a little south of the Bethincourt-Esnes and Bethincourt-Cumières cross-roads. It continued just south of Hill 265, and behind the Goose's Crest to the Meuse, north of Cumières. Since 17th March, when the flanking attack on Mort Homme began, on the average less than one mile of ground had been relinquished on a front of six.

April 9.

The adjustment of the French lines was completed just in time, for on Sunday, the 9th, an attack was delivered on the Mort Homme position, which, except for that Saturday in February at Douaumont, saw the fiercest fighting of the battle. On the Friday Petain was aware of a great concentration behind the heights which run from Forges to Malancourt. It was not less than five divisions strong, and two of these divisions had not yet appeared in action. Hitherto the Germans had attacked Mort Homme first from the north and east, and then by way of Hill 304 from the west. But now they aimed at a general assault on the whole front west of the river, the first of the kind since the main effort for Douaumont failed on 26th February. Two divisions were to push through the Avocourt and Malancourt Woods against Hill 304, and they were to be followed by two divisions moving from the Crows' Wood directly on the Mort Homme. These two main assaults were to be supported by efforts on the extreme flanks, against Cumières on the east, and Avocourt on the west. At the same time, across the river there was to be an attack on the Côte du Poivre, and a constant bombardment of the east bank was designed to mislead the French as to the true point of danger.

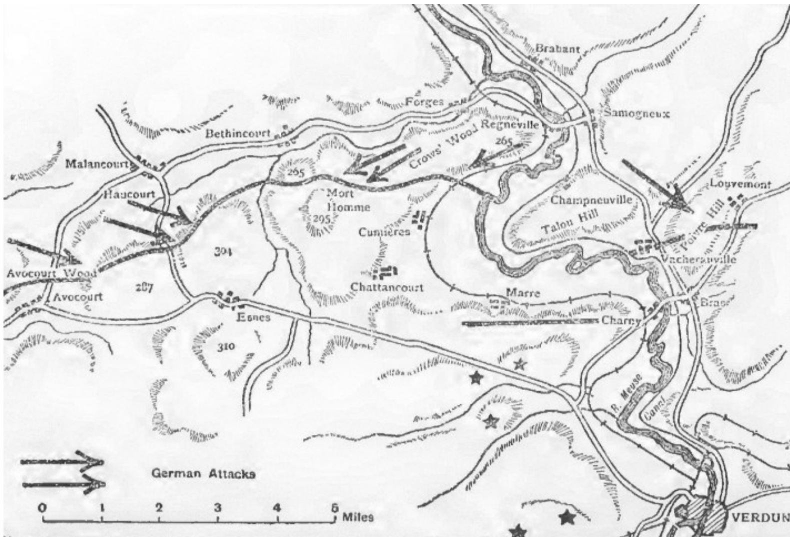


The French Line on the Morning of April 9th.

At eight o'clock on the Sunday morning the attack from the Wood of Avocourt began, an attack in dense formation after the familiar German pattern. It never got out of the trees, it never even reached the French trenches. It was driven back by the French field guns and the big pieces around Esnes. But it was well covered, and its retirement was probably free from heavy losses. At 10 a.m. came the attack from the Crows' Wood, the old theatre of the first bid for Mort Homme. This effort failed disastrously, and the troops were mown down in swathes. Presently came the first flank assault, along the flat riverside meadows between Regnéville and Cumières, between the Goose's Crest and the Meuse. It penetrated into the ruins of Cumières, but was broken up and destroyed before it found a lodgement. All the afternoon these attacks were repeated, and at one point on a front of about 400 yards the first French trenches were carried at the Mort Homme. There the contest was fierce till the darkness, and great glory was won by the 151st Regiment of the line, by the 16th Battalion of Chasseurs, and by the 8th, that famous battalion which on September 22, 1843, had held Sidi-Brahim as the Spartans held Thermopylæ. Late in the evening, while the world was lit by a fantastic sunset, came the assault on the extreme western flank at Avocourt by a Bavarian brigade. This had some of the elements of a surprise, but the ground it won was regained by a counter-stroke before the darkness fell.

Next day the battle still raged all along the front, and at the Côte du Poivre the Germans won a ravine on the south-eastern edge. But by Tuesday, the 11th, it was clear that they had signally failed. They had used some nine divisions; indeed, they had used them up. At every point the great assault was held and checked, and the constant supplies of new troops only added to the carnage. The general assault was no more fortunate than the local assaults, flank attack had failed like frontal attack, and no one of the key points of Verdun was in the enemy's power.

April 10-11.



The Attack of April 9th-11th.

The 9th of April marked the end of the third stage—the lateral movement on Mort Homme. The repulse by Petain's 2nd Army of the combined effort from Avocourt to Poivre marked the end also of the main German plan. Each item of that grandiose strategy had crumbled. The scheme which was to give Verdun into their hands in four days had failed to give it in forty-eight. Henceforth system went out of the German tactics. Wild rushes were diversified by spells of inert weariness, and in both action and inaction they were bleeding to death.

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[12] The 3rd (Brandenburg) Corps is a case in point. It started on February 21st with over 20,000 bayonets. By February 28th it had lost two-thirds of its officers and non-commissioned officers, and more than half its effectives. Between February 29th and March 8th it was taken out for rest and refitment. On the latter day it went again into action, still—in spite of drafts—some 40 per cent. below strength; and two days later was withdrawn from the battle a mere shadow of its former self. It had lost in ten days' fighting 22,000 men, or rather more than its total original strength.

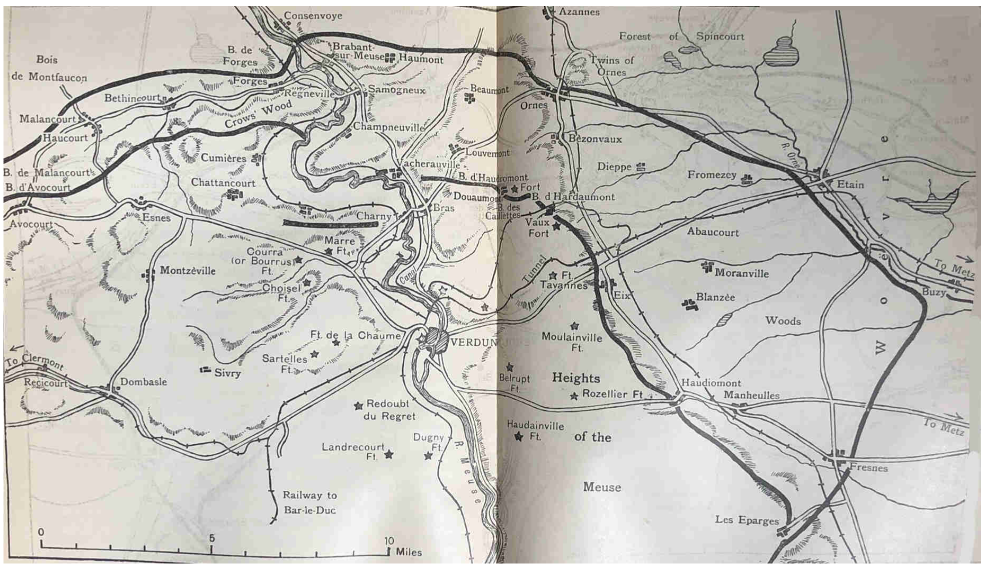
V.—The Ebb.

In modern war a battle has rarely a clean and satisfactory close. Some never end, or end only with the campaign. Fighting did not cease at Ypres and Loos, Champagne and Arras. But there comes a moment when the chances of the attacker's main purpose have gone, when the initiative in any real sense has departed from him, and when he is compelled to look for some means of breaking off the engagement without a naked confession of failure, or of continuing it on different lines. The advent of such a moment may be guessed from various signs: the lack of a serious strategical purpose in attack—fighting, so to speak, only to pass the time; the supersession of generals; lengthy official explanations that the purpose of the movement is something quite different from what was clear at the start; a claim of victory with bogus figures added in proof; the sudden resumption of activity elsewhere.

If we look for these signs we shall find some of them apparent about the middle of April. The great attack of April 9-10 was not the end of the battle, but it was the culmination of the German effort. "The Germans will without doubt attack again," said Petain in the Order of the Day. They did attack during the following weeks—at the Chauffour and Caillette Woods around Douaumont, at the ravine between Poivre and Haudromont, at Mort Homme, at Hill 304—violent attacks, sometimes mustering a strength of two divisions. The tide of battle rolled as far south as Les Eparges, where, on 19th April, three fruitless efforts were made to pierce the French position. But these assaults were no more than a local offensive; they were not colligated and directed by any conceivable strategical plan. The first battle for Verdun had gone against them. Presently came other proofs. Marshal von Haeseler, the Crown

April 19.

Prince's mentor, returned to Berlin a discredited man, and more than one corps commander followed. The German Press was filled with long *exposés* of the true objects of the Verdun struggle, which, it was claimed, had succeeded. Sour grapes were cried: Verdun itself was of no importance, and whether or not the city fell was immaterial to the High Command; what they had done was to weaken the French field armies and use up their reserves. Following on this, totals of unwounded prisoners were published, and the German Staff indulged in frank mendacity. Figures were given for certain days and areas in which the number of French prisoners claimed greatly exceeded the total French casualties, and fell little short of the troops actually engaged. Finally, by the middle of April the French themselves began to take the offensive—at Vaux, at Haucourt, at the Mort Homme. It was no general counter-attack—that was not the French strategy—but only the winning of a position here and a position there to ease the front. A wrestler, when his opponent's fierce effort has begun to slacken, will shift his grip a little to lighten the strain and get a better stand.



Map showing the French Fronts at the beginning the Battle and after the great Attack in April.

So ebbed the First Battle of Verdun, so far the longest continuous battle in history. It had stretched from the snows of February into the spring sunlight of April. When the first shots were fired the copses of the Meuse Heights were brown and leafless, but by its close young green was breaking in waves over the scarred soil, the almond trees were blooming, and the

waterside meadows were gay with marigolds. No less spectacular battle was ever fought. On that arc of thirty miles a million men stood to arms, but to the observer from any point—from the ridge of Charny, or the southern forts, or the shattered Verdun streets—they seemed to have been swallowed up in the earth. Only the dull unceasing rattle of the guns, the fleecy puffs of shrapnel on the ridges, and at times mushrooms of dark smoke told of the struggle. These, and the endless stream of transport choking every road, where the might of France moved up to the lines of her defence.

The result had been a signal French victory. If Verdun represented a less critical moment than the Marne, it was a far more deadly struggle, and it bit deeper into the enemy's strength. Of all that she had set out to win Germany had gained nothing. She had not broken the French front; she had not set foot in Verdun city, and thereby won the right to proclaim the fall of a famous fortress to her expectant citizens and dubious neutrals; she had not lured the Allies into a premature offensive; she had not even taken considerable toll of the French ranks. She had hoped—it is now clear—to deliver such a blow as would shake the nerve of France and compel a separate peace. But the spirit of France never burned brighter and stronger than when her armies lay on those shattered heights, weary but unconquered. Germany had compelled the expenditure of large stores of shell, and thereby delayed the Allied offensive, and she had won a few square miles of barren highlands. It was the sum of her achievement. As against it, she had proclaimed certain victory on the housetops, and suffered the discredit of those who anticipate successes and fail. And she had lost armies that she could never replace.

The question of losses is the crucial one in deciding the net results of a modern battle, but it is idle at the present stage to hope for accurate details. All estimates must be approximate, and the fruit of analogy rather than calculation. The Germans claimed at the lowest equal casualty lists. Popular French estimates placed the enemy's loss in the neighbourhood of 300,000, undoubtedly an exaggeration. Between these two extremes the truth lay. We shall probably be correct in putting the French loss up to the end of April well under 100,000, and the German loss well over 200,000. The British army at Loos lost in a week between 40,000 and 50,000, fighting with nine divisions on a front of four miles. The Germans at Verdun attacked for more than eight weeks on a front of thirty miles with, approximately, thirty divisions. Moreover, their methods, except in the first three days, were wasteful of human life. Their massed attacks—necessary, perhaps, since their ranks were diluted with so much imperfectly trained stuff—courted heavy losses, and their habit of sending in the same unit again and again

destroyed the *cadres*, the continuing elements, of their best divisions. Many a famous corps left Verdun a shadow which could never again in the campaign regain the old substance.

If we ask the secret of Germany's failure we shall find it largely in the neglect of that military doctrine which preaches the economy of force. Her tactical plan was sound, but the soundest plan may miscarry, and when the immediate success was denied her, she continued to spend herself for a victory which was every day of diminishing value. Verdun to her was worth a price, but it was not worth any price; and it was beyond doubt not worth the price she offered after 26th February. Her political commitments prevented her from cutting her losses and following the true principles of war. She was wrong in her premise, for even if she had succeeded in her aim she would not have dealt a fatal blow to the armies of France; but she would have won a solid and marketable success. Failing that success, she could not go back to where she began; the absence of victory meant for her a gross and indubitable defeat.

Tactically it may be said that she overrated the power of artillery in action. Her successes in the East against an ill-equipped foe had distorted her vision. She inclined to regard her infantry as if it were a mere escort for the guns. But it is infantry which wins the decision; its *rôle* is the principal one; it is still the "queen of battles." An artillery "preparation" can never be more than the means to the occupation by the infantry of the enemy's trenches. It is clear that time and again her men had not the stamina or the *élan* to complete the work which the guns had begun. A French observer, watching one of the attacks, declared that French and British forces would have succeeded where the Germans failed. Small blame to the German infantryman. He was tried too high; his nerve was weakened by impossible demands; his units, through their misuse and grave depletion, lost all corporate vigour. Germany treated her human material as if it were a lifeless mechanism, and outraged human nature reacted and foiled her plan.

The achievement of France was brilliant in the highest degree, whether we regard her generalship or the fighting quality of her men. With perfect clearness Petain grasped the situation on that hectic 25th of February, and with admirable coolness he made his schemes to meet it. He declined to be hustled into irrelevant counter-strokes, even when a tempting chance offered; he refused to be misled by the enemy's feints; calmly he made his plan, and resolutely he abode by it. His aim was to hold Verdun at the minimum cost, and to spend men only when he could make the enemy spend in a fourfold ratio. But for all this generous parsimony he never let a

strategic position slip from his grasp; he would give up an irrelevant mile, but strike hard to win back an essential yard. During the battle he drew on many divisions from a wide section of front, but he wasted none of them. When one had done its part it withdrew, and fresh troops took its place. The close of the fight saw a field army in no vital respect weakened. He was equally adroit in his handling of artillery. The 75's far forward in the line of battle again and again broke up the enemy's advance, and the heavy guns, cunningly placed among the folds of the hills, and served by excellent observation posts, defended from afar the key positions.

What shall we say of the French soldiers themselves, who for two months rolled back the invader? Not the Ypres salient or the nightmare Labyrinth was more dreadful than those shattered Meuse uplands, churned into grey mud by the punctual shells, till they seemed like some lunar desert where life was forbidden. It was a struggle on the defensive, a contest of stark endurance waged with the knowledge that ground must some time be ceded, but with the resolve that the cession should be dearly bought. Such a task puts the sternest strain on human nature. It requires not the exhilaration of hot blood and high spirits, but cold patience and disciplined sacrifice. The glib commentators who before the war praised French *élan* and denied French fortitude were utterly put to shame. It was the fortitude and the stoicism of the French that were their most shining endowments. They showed it under de Castelnau at Nancy and under Maud'huy at Arras; but Verdun was the apotheosis of the quality. "*Passeront-pas*" sang the soldiers, and held the gate, a living wall stronger than concrete or steel. Through days of giddiness and torture, when the solid earth seemed crumbling around them, they maintained their ground. Advanced posts, as at Malancourt and Haucourt, drew on the enemy and stood at bay, with odds of one to six, till the precise moment arrived for which retreat was designed. Nor did the long doggedness of defence impair the spirit of the offensive; when a counter-attack was needed it came as if from fresh troops who had never in their lives done anything but move forward.

Conspicuous among the merits of the French infantry were the discipline and initiative of the smallest units, even of individuals. Men had constantly to act without orders, at any rate in the first days of the battle, and they showed that austere conscience as to what was personally required of them which belongs to an army which is no mechanism but a living weapon. Left to himself to decide, the *poilu* in nine cases out of ten chose the more arduous duty. In some words to his Chasseurs before his death at the Wood of Caures Lieutenant-Colonel Driant spoke of the task which was before each man. "In a struggle like that which awaits us, far-stretched and

parcelled out, no one can entrench himself behind the absence of orders and remain inert. Often there will be occasions when fractions of units will be left to their own devices. To stand fast, to stay the enemy by every means, must be each man's dominant thought." Again, this active intelligence and responsibility was maintained, not for hours or days, but for weeks and months. That was the immense achievement of the French. They did not weary in well-doing. They could preserve on the defensive that fine tenacity of spirit which wears down the enemy as the harder metal wears the softer. The poet Charles Perrot, on the eve of his death on the battlefield, wrote: "*On n'a jamais fini de faire son devoir*." The phrase was the keynote of the whole struggle. Soberly and methodically the French faced a sacrifice to which there could be no limits, a duty which knew no ending.[13]

They did this cheerfully and without complaint, because their minds were utterly made up. There was no alternative but victory. The whole race was ready to perish on the battlefield sooner than accept a German domination. There was something so matter-of-fact in this resolution, which appeared in every word and deed of the nation, that the casual observer forgot how great it was. Its completeness gave them peace and confidence. The renunciation was so absolute, the offering so unreserved, that no one doubted of the issue. Many would die, but of a surety France would survive.[14] Such faith seemed to be less a human thing than some slow and secret process of nature which, like spring or morning, insensibly renews the world, a spirit at once quiet and resistless and benign. It was the endowment of all ranks in that amazing army of men who, in George Meredith's phrase, moved

> "Lyrical on into death's red roaring jaw-gape, steeled
> Gaily to take of the foe his lesson, and give reply.
> Cheerful apprentices, they shall be masters soon!"

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[13] The Military Correspondent of the *Times* found these words scribbled on the wooden casing of a bomb-proof shelter in the French firing-line:—

“Mon corps à la terre,
Mon âme à Dieu,
Mon cœur à la France.”

They are almost translated by Sir Walter Scott’s lines:—

“The body to its place,
The soul to Heaven’s grace,
And the rest in God’s own time!”

[14] The last words of a dying soldier are recorded: “*Nous sommes un moment de la France éternelle*.”

APPENDIX I.

THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS.

The following statement was made by Mr. Balfour in an interview with Mr. Edward Marshall, an American journalist, for publication in the United States.

The phrase “freedom of the seas” is naturally attractive to British and American ears. For the extension of freedom into all departments of life and over the whole world has been one of the chief aspirations of the English-speaking peoples, and efforts towards that end have formed no small part of their contribution to civilization. But “freedom” is a word of many meanings; and we shall do well to consider in what meaning the Germans use it when they ask for it, not (it may be safely said) because they love freedom, but because they hate Britain.

About the “freedom of the seas” in one sense we are all agreed. England and Holland fought for it in times gone by. To their success the United States may be said to owe its very existence. For if, three hundred years ago, the maritime claims of Spain and Portugal had been admitted, whatever else North America might have been it would not have been English-speaking. It neither would have employed the language, nor obeyed the laws nor enjoyed the institutions which, in the last analysis, are of British origin.

But “the freedom of the seas” desired by the modern German is a very different thing from the freedom for which our forefathers fought in days of old. How, indeed, can it be otherwise? The most simple-minded must feel suspicious when they find that these missionaries of maritime freedom are the very same persons who preach and who practise upon the land the extremest doctrines of military absolutism.

The German Ideal.

Ever since the genius of Bismarck created the German Empire by Prussian rifles, welding the German people into a great unity by military means, on a military basis, German ambitions have been a cause of unrest to the entire world. Commercial and political domination, depending upon a gigantic Army autocratically governed, has been and is the German ideal.

If, then, Germany wants what she calls the freedom of the seas, it is solely as a means whereby this ideal may receive world-wide extension. The power of Napoleon never extended beyond the coast line of Europe. Further progress was barred by the British fleets, and by them alone. Germany is determined to endure no such limitations; and if she cannot defeat her enemies at sea, at least she will paralyse their sea power.

There is a characteristic simplicity in the methods by which she sets about attaining this object. She poses as a reformer of international law, though international law has never bound her for an hour. She objects to "economic pressure" when it is exercised by a fleet, though she sets no limit to the brutal completeness with which economic pressure may be imposed by an army. She sighs over the suffering which war imposes upon peaceful commerce, though her own methods of dealing with peaceful commerce would have wrung the conscience of Captain Kidd. She denounces the maritime methods of the Allies, though in her efforts to defeat them she is deterred neither by the rules of war, the appeal of humanity, nor the rights of neutrals.

It must be admitted, therefore, that it is not the cause of peace, of progress, or of liberty which preoccupies her when in the name of freedom she urges fundamental changes in maritime practice. Her manifest object is to shatter an obstacle which now stands in her way, as more than a hundred years ago it stood in the way of the masterful genius who was her oppressor and is her model. Not along this path are peace and liberty to be obtained. To paralyse naval power and leave military power uncontrolled is surely the worst injury which international law can inflict upon mankind.

Not a Relief from Armaments.

Let me confirm this truth by dwelling for a moment on an aspect of it which is, I think, too often forgotten. It should be observed that even if the German proposal were carried out in its entirety it would do nothing to relieve the world from the burden of armaments.

Fleets would still be indispensable. But their relative value would suffer change. They could no longer be used to exercise pressure upon an enemy except in conjunction with an army. The gainers by the change would, therefore, be the nations who possessed armies—the military monarchies. Interference with trade would be stopped, but oversea invasion would be permitted. The proposed change would therefore not merely diminish the importance of sea power, but it would diminish it most in the case of nonmilitary States, like America and Britain.

Suppose, for example, that Germany, in her desire to appropriate some Germanized portions of South America, came into conflict with the United States over the Monroe Doctrine. The United States, bound by the doctrine of "freedom of the seas," could aim no blow at her enemy until she herself had created a large army and become for the time being a military community. Her sea power would be useless, or nearly so. Her land power would not exist.

But more than this might happen. Let us suppose the desired change had been effected. Let us suppose that the maritime nations, accepting the new situation, thought themselves relieved from all necessity of protecting their seaborne commerce, and arranged their programmes of naval shipbuilding accordingly. For some time it would probably proceed on legal lines. Commerce, even hostile commerce, would be unhampered. But a change might happen. Some unforeseen circumstances might make the German General Staff think it to be to the interest of its nation to cast to the winds the "freedom of the seas," and in defiance of the new law to destroy the trade of its enemies.

Could anybody suggest, after our experience in this war, after reading German histories and German theories of politics, that Germany would be prevented from taking such a step by the mere fact that it was a breach of international treaties to which she was a party? She would never hesitate—and the only result of the cession by the pacific Powers of their maritime rights would be that the military Powers would seize the weapon for their own purpose and turn it against those who had too hastily abandoned it.

International Law and Authority.

Thus we are forced to the sorrowful recognition of the weakness of international law so long as it is unsupported by international authority.

While this state of things is permitted to endure, drastic changes in international law well may do more harm than good; for if the new rules should involve serious limitations of belligerent Powers, they would be broken as soon as it suited the interests of the aggressor; and his victim would be helpless. Nothing could be more disastrous. It is bad that law should be defied. It is far worse that it should injure the well-disposed. Yet this is what would inevitably happen, since law unsupported by authority will hamper everybody but the criminal.

Here we come face to face with the great problem which lies behind all the changing aspects of this tremendous war. When it is brought to an end,

how is civilized mankind so to reorganize itself that similar catastrophes shall not be permitted to recur?

American and British Co-operation.

The problem is insistent, though its full solution may be beyond our powers at this stage of our development. But surely, even now, it is fairly clear that if substantial progress is to be made toward securing the peace of the world, and a free development of its constituent nations, the United States of America and the British Empire should explicitly recognize, what all instinctively know, that on these great subjects they share a common ideal.

I am well aware that in even hinting at the possibility of co-operation between these two countries I am treading on delicate ground. The fact that American independence was wrested by force from Great Britain colours the whole view which some Americans take of the "natural" relations between the two communities. Others are impatient of anything which they regard as a sentimental appeal to community of race; holding that in respect of important sections of the American people this community of race does not, in fact, exist. Others, again, think that any argument based on a similarity of laws and institutions belittles the greatness of America's contribution to the political development of the modern world.

Rightly understood, however, what I have to say is quite independent of individual views on any of these subjects. It is based on the unquestioned fact that the growth of British laws, British forms of government, British literature and modes of thought was the slow work of centuries; that among the co-heirs of these age-long labours were the great men who founded the United States; and that the two branches of the English-speaking peoples, after the political separation, developed along parallel lines. So it has come about that whether they be friendly or quarrelsome, whether they rejoice in their agreements or cultivate their differences, they can no more get rid of a certain fundamental similarity of outlook than children born of the same parents and brought up in the same home. Whether, therefore, you study political thought in Great Britain or America, in Canada or in Australia, you will find it presents the sharpest and most irreconcilable contrast to political thought in the Prussian Kingdom, or in that German Empire into which, with no modification of aims or spirit, the Prussian Kingdom has developed. Holding, as I do, that this war is essentially a struggle between these two ideals of ancient growth, I cannot doubt that in the result of that struggle America is no less concerned than the British Empire.

Now, if this statement, which represents the most unchanging elements in my political creed, has in it any element of truth, how does it bear upon the narrower issues upon which I dwelt in the earlier portions of this interview? In other words, what are the practical conclusions to be drawn from it?

“Behind Law there must be Power.”

My own conclusions are these:—If in our time any substantial effort is to be made toward ensuring the permanent triumph of the Anglo-Saxon ideal, the great communities which accept it must work together. And in working together they must bear in mind that law is not enough. Behind law there must be power. It is good that arbitration should be encouraged. It is good that the accepted practices of warfare should become ever more humane. It is good that before peace is broken the would-be belligerents should be compelled to discuss their differences in some congress of the nations. It is good that the security of the smaller States should be fenced round with peculiar care. But all the precautions are mere scraps of paper unless they can be enforced. We delude ourselves if we think we are doing good service merely by passing good resolutions. What is needed now, and will be needed so long as militarism is unconquered, is the machinery for enforcing them; and the contrivance of such a machinery will tax to its utmost the statesmanship of the world.

I have no contribution to make to the solution of the problem. Yet this much seems clear. If there is to be any effective sanction behind the desire of the English-speaking peoples to preserve the world’s peace and the free development of the nations, that sanction must consist largely in the potential use of sea power. For two generations and more after the last great war Britain was without a rival on the sea. During this period Belgium became a State, Greece secured her independence, the unity of Italy was achieved, the South American republics were established, the Monroe Doctrine came into being.

To me it seems that the lesson to be drawn from history by those who love peace, freedom, and security is not that Britain and America should be deprived, or should deprive themselves, of the maritime powers they now possess, but that, if possible, those powers should be organized in the interests of an ideal common to the two States, an ideal upon whose progressive realization the happiness and peace of the world must largely depend.

APPENDIX II.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF FREEDOM.

Extracts from a Speech delivered by Elihu Root, Ex-U.S. Senator, in New York City, 15th February 1916.

. . . The events of the last few years have taught us many lessons. We have learned that civilization is but a veneer thinly covering the savage nature of man; that conventions, courtesies, respect for law, regard for justice and humanity are acquired habits, feebly constraining the elemental forces man’s nature developed through countless centuries of struggle against wild beasts and savage foes.

We have been forced to perceive that a nation which fulfils the conditions on which alone it can continue to exist, which preserves its independence and the liberty of its people, and makes its power a shield for the rights of its citizens, must deal with greed and lust of conquest and of power and indifference to human rights. We have seen that neither the faith of treaties nor the law of nations affords protection to the weak against the aggression of the strong.

We have begun to realize that America, with its vast foreign trade, with its citizens scattered over the whole earth, with millions of aliens upon its soil, with its constantly increasing participation in world-wide efforts for the benefit of mankind, with a thousand bonds of intercourse and intimacy uniting it to other nations, is no longer isolated; that our nation can no longer live unto itself alone or stand aloof from the rest of mankind; that we must play some part in the progress of civilization, recognize some duties as correlative to our rights.

For the first time within the memory of men now living, the international relations of the United States, long deemed of trifling consequence, are recognized as vital. How can this nation, which loves peace and intends justice, avoid the curse of militarism and at the same time preserve its independence, defend its territory, protect the lives and liberty and property of its citizens? How can we prevent the same principles of action, the same policies of conduct, the same forces of military power which are exhibited in Europe from laying hold upon the vast territory and practically undefended wealth of the new world?

Can we expect immunity? Can we command immunity? How shall we play our part in the world? Have selfish living and factional quarrelling and easy prosperity obscured the spiritual vision of our country? Has the patriotism of a generation never summoned to sacrifice become lifeless? Is our nation one, or a discordant multitude? Have we still national ideals? Will anybody live for them? Would anybody die for them? Or are we all for ease and comfort and wealth at any price? . . .

THE ERRORS OF AMERICAN POLICY.

When we turn to the Administration's conduct of foreign affairs incident to the great war in Europe we cannot fail to perceive that there is much dissatisfaction among Americans. Some are dissatisfied for specific reasons, some with a vague impression that our diplomacy has been inadequate. Dissatisfaction is not in itself ground for condemnation. The best work of the diplomatist often fails to receive public approval at the time and must look to a calm review in the dispassionate future for recognition of its merit.

The situation created by the war has been difficult and trying. Much of the correspondence of the State Department, especially since Mr. Lansing took charge, has been characterized by accurate learning and skilful statement of specific American rights. Every one in the performance of new and unprecedented duties is entitled to generous allowance for unavoidable shortcomings and errors. No one should be held to the accomplishment of the impossible. The question whether dissatisfaction is just or unjust is to be determined upon an examination of the great lines of policy which have been followed and upon considering whether the emergencies of the time have been met with foresight, wisdom and decisive courage. If these are lacking as guides, all the learning of the institutes and the highest skill in correspondence are of little avail.

A study of the Administration's policy toward Europe since July, 1914, reveals three fundamental errors.

First, the lack of foresight to make timely provision for backing up American diplomacy by actual or assured military and naval force.

Second, the forfeiture of the world's respect for our assertion of rights by pursuing the policy of making threats and failing to make them good.

Third, a loss of the moral forces of the civilized world through failure to truly interpret to the world the spirit of the American democracy in its attitude toward the terrible events which accompanied the early stages of the war.

DEFENCELESSNESS.

First, as to power.

When the war in Europe began, free, peaceable little Switzerland instantly mobilized upon her frontier a great army of trained citizen soldiers. Sturdy little Holland did the same, and, standing within the very sound of the guns both have kept their territory and their independence inviolate. Nobody has run over them because they have made it apparent that the cost would be too great.

Great, peaceable America was further removed from the conflict, but her trade and her citizens travelled on every sea. Ordinary knowledge of European affairs made it plain that the war was begun not by accident, but with purpose which would not soon be relinquished.

Ordinary knowledge of military events made it plain from the moment when the tide of German invasion turned from the battle of the Marne that the conflict was certain to be long and desperate. Ordinary knowledge of history—of our own history during the Napoleonic wars—made it plain that in that conflict neutral rights would be worthless unless powerfully maintained. All the world had fair notice that, as against the desperate belligerent resolve to conquer, the law of nations and the law of humanity interposed no effective barriers for the protection of neutral rights. Ordinary practical sense in the conduct of affairs demanded that such steps should be taken that behind the peaceable assertion of our country's rights, its independence, and its honour should stand power, manifest and available, warning the whole world that it would cost too much to press aggression too far.

The Democratic Government at Washington did not see it. Others saw it and their opinions found voice, but their arguments and urgency were ascribed to political motives; and the President described them, with a sneer, as being nervous and excited.

But the warning voices would not be stilled. The opinion that we ought no longer to remain defenceless became public opinion. Its expression grew more general and insistent, and finally the President, not leading, but following, has shifted his ground, has reversed his position, and asks the country to prepare against war.

God grant that he be not too late. . . .

IDLE THREATS.

When Germany gave notice of her purpose to sink merchant vessels on the high seas without safeguarding the lives of innocent passengers, our Government replied on the 10th of February, one year ago, in the following words:—

> “The Government of the United States . . . . feels it to be its duty to call the attention of the Imperial German Government, with sincere respect and the most friendly sentiments but very candidly and earnestly, to the very serious possibilities of the course of action apparently contemplated under that proclamation.
>
> “The Government of the United States views those possibilities with such grave concern that it feels it to be its privilege, and indeed its duty, in the circumstances, to request the Imperial German Government to consider before action is taken the critical situation in respect of the relations between this country and Germany which might arise were the German naval forces, in carrying out the policy foreshadowed in the Admiralty’s proclamation, to destroy any merchant vessel of the United States or cause the death of American citizens.
>
> “. . . . If such a deplorable situation should arise, the Imperial German Government can readily appreciate that the Government of the United States would be constrained to hold the Imperial German Government to a strict accountability for such acts of their naval authorities and to take any steps it might be necessary to take to safeguard American lives and property and to secure to American citizens the full enjoyment of their acknowledged rights on the high seas.”

By all the usages and traditions of diplomatic intercourse those words meant action. They informed Germany in unmistakable terms that in attacking and sinking vessels of the United States and in destroying the lives of American citizens lawfully travelling upon merchant vessels of other countries, she would act at her peril. They pledged the power and courage of America, with her hundred million people and her vast wealth, to the protection of her citizens, as during all her history through the days of her youth and weakness she had always protected them.

On the 28th of March, the passenger steamer *Falaba* was torpedoed by a German submarine, and an American citizen was killed, but nothing was done. On the 28th of April, the American vessel *Cushing* was attacked and

crippled by a German aeroplane. On the 1st of May, the American vessel *Gulflight* was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine, and two or more Americans were killed, yet nothing was done.

On the 7th of May, the *Lusitania* was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine, and more than one hundred Americans and eleven hundred other non-combatants were drowned.

The very thing which our Government had warned Germany she must not do, Germany did of set purpose and in the most contemptuous and shocking way. Then, when all America was stirred to the depths, our Government addressed another note to Germany. It repeated its assertion of American rights, and renewed its bold declaration of purpose. It declared again that the American Government "must hold the Imperial German Government to a strict accountability for any infringement of those rights, intentional or incidental," and it declared that it would not "omit any word or any act necessary to the performance of its sacred duty of maintaining the rights of the United States and its citizens and of safeguarding their free exercise and enjoyment."

Still nothing was done, and a long and technical correspondence ensued; haggling over petty questions of detail, every American note growing less and less strong and peremptory, until the *Arabic* was torpedoed and sunk, and more American lives were destroyed, and still nothing was done, and the correspondence continued until the Allied defence against German submarine warfare made it unprofitable and led to its abandonment, and the correspondence is apparently approaching its end without securing even that partial protection for the future which might be found in an admission that the destruction of the *Lusitania* was forbidden by law.

A FUTILE DIGNITY.

The later correspondence has been conducted by our State Department with dignity, but it has been futile. And admission of liability for damages has been secured, but the time for real protection to American rights has long since passed. Our Government undertook one year ago to prevent the destruction of American life by submarine attack, and now that the attempt has failed and our citizens are long since dead and the system of attack has fallen of its own weight, there is small advantage in discussing whether we shall or shall not have an admission that it was unlawful to kill them.

The brave words with which we began the controversy had produced no effect, because they were dead in the light of two extraordinary events. One

was the report of the Austrian Ambassador, Mr. Dumba, to his Government, that when the American note of February 10 was received, he asked the Secretary of State, Mr. Bryan, whether it meant business, and received an answer which satisfied him that it did not, but was intended for effect at home in America.

The other event was the strange and unfortunate declaration of the President in a public speech in Philadelphia the fourth day after the sinking of the *Lusitania* that "a man may be too proud to fight."

Whatever the Austrian Ambassador was in fact told by the Secretary of State, the impression which he reported was supported by the events which followed. Whatever the President did mean, his declaration, made in public at that solemn time, amid the horror and mourning of all our people over the murder of their brethren, was accepted the world over as presenting the attitude of the American Government toward the protection of the life and liberty of American citizens in the exercise of their just rights, and throughout the world the phrase "too proud to fight" became a byword of derision and contempt for the Government of the United States.

Later, in another theatre of war—the Mediterranean—Austria, and perhaps Turkey also, resumed the practice. The *Ancona* and then the *Persia* were destroyed, and more Americans were killed.

Why should they not resume the practice? They had learned to believe that, no matter how shocked the American Government might be, its resolution would expend itself in words. They had learned to believe that it was safe to kill Americans—and the world believed with them. Measured and restrained expression, backed to the full by serious purpose, is strong and respected. Extreme and belligerent expression, unsupported by resolution, is weak and without effect.

No man should draw a pistol who dares not shoot. The Government that shakes its fist first and its finger afterward falls into contempt. Our diplomacy has lost its authority and influence because we have been brave in words and irresolute in action. Men may say that the words of our diplomatic notes were justified; men may say that our inaction was justified; but no man can say that both our words and our inaction were wise and creditable.

THE MORAL DÉFAILLANCE.

I have said that this Government lost the moral forces of the world by not truly interpreting the spirit of the American democracy.

The American democracy stands for something more than beef and cotton and grain and manufactures; stands for something that cannot be measured by rates of exchange, and does not rise or fall with the balance of trade.

The American people achieved liberty and schooled themselves to the service of justice before they acquired wealth, and they value their country's liberty and justice above all their pride of possessions. Beneath their comfortable optimism and apparent indifference they have a conception of their great republic as brave and strong and noble to hand down to their children the blessings of freedom and just and equal laws.

They have embodied their principles of government in fixed rules or right conduct which they jealously preserve, and, with the instinct of individual freedom, they stand for a government of laws and not of men. They deem that the moral laws which formulate the duties of men toward each other are binding upon nations equally with individuals.

NO LIBERTY BASED ON SUFFERANCE.

Informed by their own experience, confirmed by their observation of international life, they have come to see that the independence of nations, the liberty of their peoples, justice and humanity, cannot be maintained upon the complaisance, the good nature, the kindly feeling of the strong toward the weak; that real independence, real liberty, cannot rest upon sufferance; that peace and liberty can be preserved only by the authority and observance of rules of national conduct founded upon the principles of justice and humanity; only by the establishment of law among nations, responsive to the enlightened public opinion of mankind.

To them liberty means not liberty for themselves alone, but for all who are oppressed.

Justice means not justice for themselves alone, but a shield for all who are weak against the aggression of the strong.

When their deeper natures are stirred they have a spiritual vision in which the spread and perfection of free self-government shall rescue the humble who toil and endure, from the hideous wrongs inflicted upon them by ambition and lust for power, and they cherish in their heart of hearts an ideal of their country loyal to the mission of liberty for the lifting up of the oppressed and bringing in the rule of righteousness and peace.

To this people, the invasion of Belgium brought a shock of amazement and horror. The people of Belgium were peaceable, industrious, law-abiding,

self-governing and free. They had no quarrel with any one on earth. They were attacked by overwhelming military power; their country was devastated by fire and sword; they were slain by tens of thousands; their independence was destroyed and their liberty was subjected to the rule of an invader, for no other cause than that they defended their admitted rights.

There was no question of fact; there was no question of law; there was not a plausible pretence of any other cause. The admitted rights of Belgium stood in the way of a mightier nation's purpose: and Belgium was crushed. When the true nature of these events was realized, the people of the United States did not hesitate in their feeling or in their judgment. Deepest sympathy with down-trodden Belgium and stem condemnation of the invader were practically universal.

BELGIUM.

Wherever there was respect for law, it revolted against the wrong done to Belgium. Wherever there was true passion for liberty, it blazed out for Belgium. Wherever there was humanity, it mourned for Belgium. As the realization of the truth spread, it carried a vague feeling that not merely sentiment but loyalty to the eternal principles of right was involved in the attitude of the American people. And it was so, for if the nations were to be indifferent to this first great concrete case for a century of military power trampling under foot at will the independence, the liberty, and the life of a peaceful and unoffending people in repudiation of the faith of treaties and the law of nations and of morality and of humanity—if the public opinion of the world was to remain silent upon that, neutral upon that, then all talk about peace and justice and international law and the rights of man, the progress of humanity and the spread of liberty, is idle patter—mere weak sentimentality; then opinion is powerless and brute force rules and will rule the world. If no difference is recognized between right and wrong, then there are no moral standards.

There come times in the lives of nations as of men when to treat wrong as if it were right is treason to the right.

The American people were entitled not merely to feel but to speak concerning the wrong done to Belgium. It was not like interference in the internal affairs of Mexico or any other nation, for this was an international wrong. The law protecting Belgium which was violated was our law, and the law of every other civilized country. For generations we had been urging on and helping in its development and establishment.

We had spent our efforts and our money to that end. In legislative resolution and executive declaration and diplomatic correspondence and special treaties and international conferences and conventions we had played our part in conjunction with other civilized countries in making that law.

THE BROKEN LAW WAS OUR LAW.

We had bound ourselves by it; we had regulated our conduct by it, and we were entitled to have other nations observe it. That law was the protection of our peace and security. It was our safeguard against the necessity of maintaining great armaments and wasting our substance in continual readiness for war. Our interest in having it maintained as the law of nations was a substantial, valuable, permanent interest, just as real as your interest or mine in having maintained and enforced the laws against assault and robbery and arson which protect our personal safety and property.

Moreover, that law was written into a solemn and formal convention, signed and ratified by Germany and Belgium and France and the United States in which those other countries agreed with us that the law should be observed. When Belgium was invaded, that agreement was binding not only morally but strictly and technically, because there was then no nation a party to the war which was not also a party to the convention. The invasion of Belgium was a breach of contract with us for the maintenance of a law of nations which was the protection of our peace, and the interest which sustained the contract justified an objection to its breach.

There was no question here of interfering in the quarrels of Europe. We had a right to be neutral and we were neutral as to the quarrel between Germany and France, but when as an incident to the prosecution of that quarrel Germany broke the law which we were entitled to have preserved, and which she had agreed with us to preserve, we were entitled to be heard in the assertion of our own national right.

With the right to speak came responsibility, and with responsibility came duty—duty of government toward all the peaceful men and women in America not to acquiesce in the destruction of the law which protected them; for if the world assented to this great and signal violation of the law of nations, then the law of nations no longer exists and we have no protection save in subserviency or in force.

ACQUIESCENCE IN LAWLESSNESS.

And with the right to speak there came to this, the greatest of neutral nations, the greatest of free democracies, another duty to the cause of liberty

and justice for which America stands: duty to the ideals of America’s nobler nature; duty to the honour of her past and the hopes of her future; for this law was a bulwark of peace and justice to the world; it was a barrier to the spread of war; it was a safeguard to the independence and liberty of all small, weak States. It marks the progress of civilization. If the world consents to its destruction the world turns backward toward savagery, and America’s assent would be America’s abandonment of the mission of democracy.

Yet the American Government acquiesced in the treatment of Belgium and the destruction of the law of nations. Without one word of objection or dissent to the repudiation of law or the breach of our treaty or the violation of justice and humanity in the treatment of Belgium, our Government enjoined upon the people of the United States an undiscriminating and all-embracing neutrality, and the President admonished the people that they must be neutral in all respects, in act and word and thought and sentiment.

We were to be not merely neutral as to the quarrels of Europe, but neutral as to the treatment of Belgium; neutral between right and wrong; neutral between justice and injustice; neutral between humanity and cruelty; neutral between liberty and oppression.

Our Government did more than acquiesce, for in the first *Lusitania* note, with the unspeakable horrors of the conquest of Belgium still fresh in our minds, on the very day after the report of the Bryce Commission on Belgian Atrocities, it wrote these words to the Government of Germany:—

> “Recalling the humane and enlightened attitude hitherto assumed by the Imperial German Government in matters of international right, and particularly with regard to the freedom of the seas, having learned to recognize the German views and the German influence in the field of international obligations as always engaged upon the side of justice and humanity, etc., etc.”

A LOST LEADERSHIP.

And so the Government of the United States appeared as approving the treatment of Belgium. It misrepresented the people of the United States in that acquiescence and apparent approval.

It was not necessary that the United States should go to war in defence of the violated law. A single official expression by the Government of the United States, a single sentence denying assent and recording disapproval of what Germany did in Belgium would have given to the people of America

that leadership to which they were entitled in their earnest groping for the light.

It would have ranged behind American leadership the conscience and morality of the neutral world. It would have brought to American diplomacy the respect and strength of loyalty to a great cause. But it was not to be. The American Government failed to rise to the demands of the great occasion. Gone were the old love of justice; the old passion for liberty; the old sympathy with the oppressed; the old ideals of an America helping the world toward a better future; and there remained in the eyes of mankind only solicitude for trade and profit and prosperity and wealth.

The American Government could not really have approved the treatment of Belgium, but under a mistaken policy it shrank from speaking the truth. That vital error has carried into every effort of our diplomacy the weakness of a false position.

Every note of remonstrance against interference with trade, or even against the destruction of life, has been projected against the background of an abandonment of the principles for which America once stood, and has been weakened by the popular feeling among the peoples of Europe, whose hearts are lifted up by the impulses of patriotism and sacrifice, that America has become weak and sordid.

A BLIND STUMBLING TOWARD WAR.

Such policies as I have described are doubly dangerous in their effect upon foreign nations and in their effect at home. It is a matter of universal experience that a weak and apprehensive treatment of foreign affairs invites encroachments upon rights and leads to situations in which it is difficult to prevent war, while a firm and frank policy at the outset prevents difficult situations from arising and tends most strongly to preserve peace.

On the other hand, if a Government is to be strong in its diplomacy, its own people must be ranged in its support by leadership of opinion in a national cause worthy to awaken their patriotism and devotion.

We have not been following the path of peace. We have been blindly stumbling along the road that continued will lead to inevitable war. Our diplomacy has dealt with symptoms and ignored causes. The great decisive question upon which our peace depends is the question whether the rule of action applied to Belgium is to be tolerated. If it is tolerated by the civilized world, this nation will have to fight for its life. There will be no escape. That is the critical point of defence for the peace of America.

When our Government failed to tell the truth about Belgium, it lost the opportunity for leadership of the moral sense of the American people, and it lost the power which a knowledge of that leadership and a sympathetic response from the moral sense of the world would have given to our diplomacy.

When our Government failed to make any provision whatever for defending its rights in case they should be trampled upon, it lost the power which a belief in its readiness and will to maintain its rights would have given to its diplomatic representations.

When our Government gave notice to Germany that it would destroy American lives and American ships at its peril, our words, which would have been potent if sustained by adequate preparation to make them good, and by the prestige and authority of the moral leadership of a great people in a great cause, were treated with a contempt which should have been foreseen; and when our Government failed to make those words good, its diplomacy was bankrupt.

APPENDIX III.

THE POLICY OF BLOCKADE.

SIR E. GREY'S SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, JANUARY 26, 1916.

The hon. member who has just sat down made a most interesting speech, full of great knowledge founded upon personal experience. He is one of those, of whom there are several in the House and many outside, who have been giving most devoted service on committees to carry out the policy of the Government with regard to contraband. From the beginning of the war a number of people of great ability, great knowledge, and great experience have given their services voluntarily on those committees, and their services have been of great value. I think the House will gather from the hon. member's speech that the subject with which we are dealing is not really so simple, and cannot be made so simple, as might appear from some of the speeches made upon it and some of the articles which have appeared upon it outside. It is a most difficult and complicated subject, and I gather from the debate that there is real misapprehension in the House as to what is the present state of things with regard to the amount of trade passing through neutral countries to the enemy, and also real misapprehension and a vast underestimate of what the Government is doing through its various agencies to prevent that trade.

AMERICAN TRADE STATISTICS.

In the first place, I must deal with some of the figures which have been scattered broadcast lately in some organs which have created a grotesque impression of the amount of leakage through neutral countries which is quite untrue, figures which will not bear examination, but the conclusions founded upon them undoubtedly have done great harm. The figures consist, so far as I have seen them, of statistics giving the amount of exports from the official returns of the United States to certain neutral countries in Europe in a normal year of peace. Figures are then given which purport to be the excess figures to these same neutral countries at the present time, these figures being greatly in excess of the peace figures. The peace figures are subtracted from the figures for last year, a time of war, and the conclusion is drawn that the whole of the surplus has gone to Germany, and upon that various attacks upon the Government are founded. The figures which have been published

in this way do great injustice to the Government. These figures take no account of the fact that in many of these articles in time of peace neutral countries do not draw the whole of their supplies from the United States. They draw them from enemy countries or from sources which are not available to them in time of war. Therefore to take the exports from the United States into these countries, and to assume, because these exports have risen, that, therefore, the large surplus which has been imported into the neutral countries has gone into enemy countries, entirely leaves out of account the fact that in many cases the increased exports from the United States have been for real consumption in those neutral countries, and have taken the place of the supplies which in peace time have been drawn from sources other than the United States which are not now available.

In the next place, the figures of exports from the United States give the amount of stuff which left the ports of the United States. These do not necessarily correspond with the amount of stuff which arrived in the neutral ports. What is all the trouble and very great friction there has been with the meat packers of the United States? It is because a large amount of the produce coming from the United States consigned to neutral ports, and which we believe was destined for the enemy, never reached the neutral ports. It is in the Prize Court here. So at one and the same time the Foreign Office or the Government is having sometimes a very warm contention indeed with neutral Governments or groups of people in neutral countries, on the ground that we have put their produce into the Prize Court here and detained it, and at the same time we are being attacked in this country on the ground that that very same produce has gone through neutral countries into the enemy country. Some figures have been published in the Press to-day giving a very different impression of the true state of the case as regards the neutral countries and the enemy—figures published by the War Trade Department. I recommend that those figures should be studied, for they, at any rate, reduce the thing to very different proportion.

Wheat and Flour.

But I have had some other figures supplied to me, out of which I am going to take two striking instances. The statement has been made in one organ of the Press that the exports of wheat from the United States to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands collectively rose from 19,000,000 bushels in the first 10 months of 1913—that is a year of peace—to 50,000,000 bushels in the corresponding period of 1915—that is to say, an excess of 31,000,000 bushels. The conclusion is drawn that all this has gone to the enemy through those neutral countries. It is almost incredible if the

figures supplied to me are reliable, and I believe they are, that a statement of that kind could have been made. Those 50,000,000 bushels from the United States are the figures given under a collective heading in the United States returns, which is called not merely these four Scandinavian countries, but "Other Europe," including Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Malta, so that those 50,000,000 bushels go, not only to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland, but include the exports to Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Malta. The exports to Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Malta alone amounted to 23,000,000 bushels. That is a very large part of the whole increase. Why do those countries take so much? Because, no doubt, they depended, I presume, in ordinary years very largely on grain coming from Black Sea ports which have ceased to be available. Therefore there is no need to assume that Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Malta were importing in order to pass on to the enemy; they wanted it to take the place of grain which they would have got in normal years from other sources. From the figures that remain some millions of bushels must be deducted which have been allowed to go through under special international arrangements to the Belgian Relief Fund. When you have deducted those, you find that these Scandinavian countries and Holland, which were supposed to have sent 31,000,000 bushels on to the enemy, as a matter of fact have not imported at all in excess of their normal requirements, and there is no reason to suppose that any of those bushels got to the enemy.

Then I take the figures quoted in the Press with reference to wheat flour. The figures quoted there suggest an increase in the exports of wheat flour from the United States to Holland and the three Scandinavian countries in the first 10 months of 1915 over the corresponding period of 1913 of 3,700,000 barrels, the assumption again being that all that had gone to the enemy. This increase includes not only what went to those four countries, but includes also an increase to France of 1,400,000 barrels and to Italy of 250,000 barrels. In addition, there was something over 1,000,000 allowed to go through to the Belgian Relief Fund, making with the increases to France and to Italy a total of 3,000,000 barrels. Therefore out of 3,700,000 barrels supposed to have gone to the enemy there is accounted for 3,000,000 barrels. The actual increase to the three Scandinavian countries is thus reduced from 3,700,000 barrels to over 650,000 barrels. In view of the deficiency of the whole production of wheat in Scandinavia in 1914, this increase, according to the information supplied to me, cannot be regarded as excessive. That puts the thing in a very different light.

The Unavoidable Leakage.

Leakage, of course, through neutral countries there has been and will be, whatever you may do. If you adopt every suggestion made in this House you cannot prevent some leakage. You cannot take over the administration of neutral countries. You cannot prevent smuggling even against the regulations of the neutral countries themselves. It is not in our power to do that under whatever system you have, whether you call it blockade or whatever name you give to it. You have still to let through to neutral countries the things which they really require for their own consumption, and you have, therefore, to distinguish between the things which they need for their own consumption and the things imported with a view to being passed on to the enemy. Nobody could have listened to the speech of my right hon. friend the member for East Worcestershire without realizing how impossible it is to do that perfectly. Every sort of ingenuity is brought to bear to make it difficult for you to distinguish, and make it absolutely impossible, whatever the Navy may do, whatever strict provision here may be made, to make sure that in no case will a cargo or part of a cargo go through a neutral country which is apparently destined for consumption in that neutral country but is really destined for the enemy. Some leakage there will always be.

We have been anxious about that leakage. We have done what we can to get real information as to what is going on. The other day Lord Faringdon, who was well known in this House a short time ago as Sir Alexander Henderson, went over to make inquiries on the spot. He is, at least, as well qualified by ability, if not by experience, to ascertain the facts as any one else who could be sent on behalf of any unofficial body. He has produced a report. Of course, that report does not say that there is no leakage, but I think on the whole it is a very satisfactory report, and in my opinion it shows that the leakage in the amount of trade passing from overseas through these neutral countries to the enemy is, considering all the circumstances, much less than might have been supposed. The general tendency of the report is to show that the maximum is being done which can be done without serious trouble with neutral countries founded upon the fact that you are really interfering with their supplies. . . .

The Foreign Office and the Navy.

I pass from those figures to another charge which is made, not I understand in the debate here, but in some organs of the Press and by some persons outside, in a most offensive form, grossly unfair and untrue. It is that the Navy is doing its utmost to prohibit goods reaching the enemy, and the Foreign Office spoils the work of the Navy; that when ships are brought

in by the Navy to a port with goods destined for the enemy, the Foreign Office orders those ships to be released and undoes the work which the Navy is doing. I must give the House an account of exactly what the machinery is. I do not say that in the first three months of the war, before we had got our organization complete, there was not a certain amount of confusion and overlapping, and that things were as well done as they are now. I will take the whole of last year up to now. What is the procedure? One of our ships under the Admiralty brings into port a neutral merchant vessel carrying a cargo which the naval officer thinks may be destined for the enemy. They have no means of searching that cargo on the high seas. It has to be done in port. You cannot until you have got that vessel in port really form an opinion of what the probable destination of the cargo is. The ship is brought into port by the Navy. But if that ship turns out to have goods destined for a neutral port, not merely for a neutral port, but for *bona fide* consumption of a neutral country, without which goods that country would be starved of some supplies which it has every right to have—if it has that cargo it obviously ought to be released and not put in the Prize Court at all. If, on the other hand, there is reason to suppose that that cargo is not destined for *bona fide* neutral use, then undoubtedly it ought to be put in the Prize Court. That is settled by the Contraband Committee. The Contraband Committee is presided over at present by the hon. and learned member for Leamington (Mr. Pollock), who is one of those giving invaluable service to the State. Before he undertook the chairmanship it was presided over by my right hon. friend who is now the Solicitor-General, who, of course, had to give up that position when he became Solicitor-General, because it was impossible to combine it with his official work. How is that committee otherwise composed? It is composed of one representative of the Foreign Office, one who represents the Board of Trade and Customs combined, and two representatives of the Admiralty, and that committee, which has acquired very great experience in the course of its work, settles the question of whether the ship or any part of the cargo in the ship ought to be put in the Prize Court, or whether it ought to be released and go forward. I believe that committee has done its work admirably, and that neither the country nor the Navy has any reason but to be exceedingly grateful for the knowledge and ability it has shown and the pains it has taken.

Of course, a decision of the committee can be interfered with. The Government can say in any case whether such or such a ship which the committee thinks ought to be detained or for reasons ought to be released, should be dealt with in the way recommended. I have made what inquiry I can, and I think in the last year there have been three cases when ships have

been dealt with or undertakings about ships have been given without consulting the Committee. Two of those ships were cases of ships which were released and sent back. Those two cases were discussed twice by the Cabinet, and those two particular ships were released for special reasons.

The "Stockholm."

The third case is that of a ship which was brought into port the other day, the *Stockholm*, a Swedish vessel. It is a ship to which the Swedish people attach great importance. It is, I believe, the first ship of a new line, a passenger vessel. The detention of it must cause great inconvenience, but it had on board a cargo which the Contraband Committee had reason to suppose—I think rightly—was not all destined for use in Sweden, and might be sent on to the enemy. Anyhow, the detention of the vessel caused great inconvenience, and a special appeal was made by the Swedish Government in regard to that particular vessel, and with regard to one part of the cargo a special assurance was given. Of course, these things have to be done rapidly if they are to be done at all. If you are to release a vessel, if you wish to avoid inconvenience, you must release it quickly, and, after consulting the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty, I sent a telegram to Stockholm saying that if we could receive assurance from the Swedish Government that the cargo which seemed to us suspect was destined for *bona fide* use in Sweden, and that none of it would go on to the enemy, or set free an equivalent amount of corresponding material to go on to the enemy, the ship, in order to avoid inconvenience, would be released at once. That undertaking was given without consulting the Contraband Committee. I am sorry to say, as far as I am concerned, we have not received an assurance, and no action has been taken. That is the sort of case in which, unless you are to forfeit entirely the good will of neutrals, unless you are to take what I consider an unduly high-handed and provocative action, you ought to say to a neutral country which makes out a special case of inconvenience caused in regard to a ship, "Give us assurances with regard to that cargo, and rather than cause that inconvenience, we will be prepared to release that ship." That, I believe, represents the extent of interference with the Contraband Committee with regard to the release of ships in the last twelve months.

Reckless Statements.

Now I would ask really is it not time after that that these reckless figures and these reckless statements should not be made with regard to the action of the Foreign Office or any Department of the Government? What is it

supposed is the effect upon the Navy of making charges of that sort? If the charges made were true and I was a naval officer I should want to shoot the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, but that is not the thing that matters. The thing that matters is the dispiriting effect it has on our seamen. There never was a time in the whole history of this country when we—and when I say "we" I mean our Allies too—have owed a greater tribute of gratitude and admiration to the Navy than for the work done during this war. For those of us who have to bear the brunt of much work, and face much difficulty, the knowledge of the efficiency, the courage, the spirit, and the patriotism which animate the whole Navy is an upholding and supporting thought, and there ought not to be statements of that kind, entirely unfounded as they are, put about, leading the Navy to suppose that the work which they are doing for the country or any part of their work is being undone by the Government or any Department of the Government.

The task of the Foreign Office in this matter is a much more complicated one and much more burdensome than people know. The Foreign Office is not burdened as a Department with deciding about the release of particular ships. That, as I have shown, if it is not done by the Contraband Committee is done by the Cabinet, or in special cases, after consultation with some members of the Cabinet. But it is not done departmentally now.

The Functions of the Foreign Office.

What is the work the Foreign Office has to do? The Foreign Office has to do its best to retain the good will of the neutrals. Supposing you know at the Foreign Office that the War Office, the Admiralty, the Ministry of Munitions, and perhaps one or more of our Allies are specially anxious that you should maintain open communication with some particular neutral country for strategical reasons, or for the sake of supplies which you get from them, what should be done? We are constantly being told that certain supplies which come from abroad are absolutely essential for the Ministry of Munitions, and the Board of Trade know that certain other supplies from abroad are absolutely necessary to carry on the industries of this country. The business of the Foreign Office is to keep the diplomatic relations such that there shall be no fear of these supplies being interfered with, and we have got at the same time to defend, to explain, and to justify to neutral countries all the interference that has taken place with trade destined for the enemy which cannot be done without some direct or indirect interference also with neutral countries. That is not an easy matter. It is one in which the Foreign Office is constantly engaged, and I think the House must recognize when members are pressing, as they are quite right in pressing, this question

of supplies to the enemy, and saying quite rightly that the interests of this country come first, that you must also be very careful that you do not unduly or wrongfully interfere with the rights of neutrals to get supplies which are necessary for their own consumption. You have no right to make neutrals suffer.

The Rights of Neutrals.

Now I would like to consider what more can be done than is being done consistently with the rights of neutrals and also with effect. The hon. member who moved this motion sketched out what he thought ought to be done, and I think the hon. member who seconded the motion agreed with him. The suggestion of the mover was that there should be three lines of blockade, one extending to the coast of Norway, one across the Channel, and one across the Straits of Gibraltar. Now, if you establish those lines of blockade, you must do it consistently with the rights of neutrals. You cannot establish those lines of blockade and say that no ships shall go through them at all, or you will stop all traffic of every kind to the neutral ports inside. You would stop all traffic to Christiania, Stockholm, Rotterdam, Copenhagen—all traffic whatever. Well, of course, that is not consistent with the rights of neutrals. You cannot shut off all supplies to neutral countries. You must not try to make the grass grow in the streets of neutral ports. You must let through those lines vessels *bona fide* destined for the neutral ports with *bona fide* cargoes. Nor can you put every cargo in your Prize Court and say it is not to go on to a neutral port until the Prize Court has examined it.

The congestion in this country would be such that you could not deal with it if you did that, and you have no right to say that the British Prize Court is to be the neck of the bottle through which all your trade has to pass. If we had gone, or attempted to go, as far as that, I think the war possibly might be over by now; but it would have been over because the whole world would have risen against us, and we and our Allies too would have collapsed under the general resentment of the whole world. If you establish those lines, then a ship in a neutral port with a *bona fide* neutral cargo must be allowed to go through. Therefore, what I understand is meant when you say blockade, you are going to discriminate and not stop everything that is going through your lines, and only stop what is destined to the enemy and let go through what is for neutrals. That is what is being done at the present time, and that is actually the action of the Admiralty to-day. The ships when brought in are dealt with by the method which I have described, and no ships are going through to German ports at all.

We are, I think, as one hon. member said, filtering the trade which passes through with the object of stopping all the enemy trade. We are stopping the trade coming out, and we are also stopping the imports; more than that you cannot do. You cannot do more than stop all imports into the enemy country and all exports coming out. We are applying the doctrine of continuous voyage, and it is being applied now. On what other grounds are goods to neutral ports held up but on the ground of continuous voyage? Do not let it be supposed by adopting the actual proposal made this afternoon we are going to prevent goods reaching Germany more effectively than at the present time except in one respect. If you had established the old technical blockade you would no doubt have been entitled to confiscate more largely ships and goods than at the present time. While you stop them now and detain them, and do not let the goods go through, you do not confiscate as largely as you would if you had had the old technical blockade. One of the reasons why this stage is recommended is that it is going to be more palatable to the neutrals, but you are not going to make it more palatable by making the penalties more severe. What we want to do is to prevent goods reaching or coming from the enemy country, and that is what we are doing. We want to do it, and we believe that under the Order in Council it is being done. Do not let it be supposed that the Order in Council does something special either to validate or invalidate. The mover of this motion spoke as if an Order in Council was one thing and a blockade was another. What would have happened if we had adopted his plans would be that we should simply substitute one Order in Council for the present one. The blockade would be established by the Order in Council. An Order in Council does not make a thing good or bad; it is merely our way under our form of Constitution of announcing to the world what we are doing.

Co-operation of the Allies.

If we all declare a blockade, the French Government would declare a blockade in their own way, according to their Constitution, and we should declare it in our way. What is happening at the present moment to carry out the policy of last March is that certain instructions are issued to the British Navy. The French Government issued precisely the same instructions to their Navy, and so if we and the Allied nations declare a blockade they would issue their own proclamation of a blockade and we should issue ours. The French have issued exactly the same proclamation on their behalf as we have in regard to our proclamation of March. The only thing is that under the British Constitution you call it an Order in Council, although other people may call it whatever they please. You would not have any change in

that respect. I quite agree that you want common action with your Allies, and that is precisely what we have been having ever since last March with the French Government. If any one wishes to realize the justification for our present policy, they have only got to read the correspondence which has been published with the United States already. If they wish to read the objections taken to it and the objections which any sort of policy might lead to, they can read the Notes from the United States Government to this country, especially the last Note, which has been published and which has not yet been answered. We are going to answer the last Note of the United States Government, but we are considering the whole question, and we are going to do it in consultation in the first instance with the French Government, who are concerned in this matter. That consultation is taking place at the present time and with a view to pursuing not merely the same policy, but justifying it with the same arguments and putting the same case before the world. We may also consult, perhaps, with some of the other Allies, who may have to be actively concerned in carrying out the policy. At present we are in consultation with the French Government on the subject.

Advice to Neutrals.

I can only say with regard to neutrals that we are perfectly ready to examine any method of carrying out the policy of last March. That is, what we believe the belligerent right of stopping enemy trade, either to or from enemy ports. We are ready to examine any method of carrying that out, other than the one we are now adopting, which we are convinced will be effective and which in form is likely to be more agreeable to neutrals, or in practice less inconvenient to them, so long as it will be effective. But do not let us hastily adopt changes of form unless we are quite sure that they are not going to impair the effectiveness of what we are doing, and not going to involve us in legal difficulties more complicated than those which at present exist. Now, Sir, I must say to the House that at the present moment one of the greatest concerns of the Government is to explain and justify to neutrals what we are doing to avoid friction with them, and to get such agreements, not with their Governments, but with the various people interested in trade, as will make it easy to distinguish between goods destined for the neutrals and goods intended for the enemy.

I said just now that we have not any right to make neutrals suffer. By that I mean that you have no right to deprive neutrals of goods which are genuinely intended for their own use. Inconvenience it is impossible to avoid, and you cannot help it. We cannot give up this right to interfere with enemy trade; that we must maintain and that we must press. We know, and it

has always been admitted, that you cannot exercise that right without in some cases considerable inconvenience to neutrals, delay to their trade, and in some cases mistakes which it is impossible to avoid. What I would say to neutrals is this: There is one main question to be answered by them. Do they admit our right to apply the principles which were applied by the American Government in the war between North and South—to apply those principles to modern conditions and to do our best to prevent trade with the enemy through neutral countries? If they say Yes, as they are bound in fairness to say, then I would say to them, Do let chambers of commerce, or whatever it may be in neutral countries, do their best to make it easy for us to distinguish. Take the case of the *Stockholm*, the Swedish ship, the other day, when it was pointed out what great inconvenience we were causing by detaining that ship, it was also suggested that, in order to avoid detention in future from a Swedish port, there should be some understanding or some means of making it sure to us that the cargo was *bona fide* Swedish cargo and not going to the enemy. That is the sort of thing we welcome. What we ask of them, as we cannot avoid causing inconvenience and in some cases loss, is that they will help us to distinguish by making the distinction of *bona fide* trade and thereby minimize the inconvenience. If, on the other hand, the answer is that we are not entitled to do that, or to attempt to prevent trade through the neutral countries to the enemy, then I must say definitely that if neutral countries were to take that line, it is a departure from neutrality. I do not understand that they do take that line.

The United States Note.

It is quite true that there are things in the last Note from the United States Government which, if we were to concede them, would make it in practice absolutely impossible to prevent goods, even contraband, going wholesale through neutral countries to the enemy. If you were to concede all that was asked in the last Note of the United States, you might just as well give up trying to prevent goods, even contraband goods, going through neutral countries to the enemy, but I do not understand that that is the intention or attitude of the United States Government or of any other Government. After all, I would say this: If there was a war in which a belligerent was entitled to use to the utmost every power, or every fair development of a power, which has been exercised by any belligerent in previous wars, and recognized by international law, that applies to our Allies and ourselves in this war. As to the complaints as to our interference with trade, what has Germany done? She has declared arbitrarily a part of the high seas a war zone, and in that zone continually sunk merchant vessels

without notice or warning, with no precautions for the safety of the crews. She has sown it with mines which sink merchant vessels, neutral as well as belligerent. A neutral vessel is sunk again and again by German submarines without warning, without inquiry as to the nature of its cargo, without regard even to its destination, because they have been sunk when proceeding from one neutral port to another neutral port and not coming to this country at all.

In view of the criticism made to-day upon the action of the British Government and its Allies in interfering with trade, I should ask what would have been said by neutrals if we had done that—if, instead of bringing cargoes into our Prize Courts, bringing in the ship, with the crew perfectly safe, the ship undamaged, the cargo untouched, examining it, in some cases letting it go forward when satisfied that it was not destined for the enemy, even in the worst cases putting it into our Prize Court so that if we had made a mistake there can be a claim for compensation and the whole of the evidence can be examined—if, instead of doing that, we had sunk neutral vessels without regard to the character of their cargoes and without regard to the safety of the lives of an innocent and defenceless crew? With regard to the sinking of merchant vessels in this way, even neutral merchant vessels—so far as I know nothing like the amount of protest has been made by neutral Governments that has been made with regard to some portions of our own procedure, which we believe to be perfectly justifiable in law and which is beyond all doubt perfectly humane.

Food for Civilians.

I understand that Germany justifies her action of that description by saying that it is retaliation upon us for stopping her food supplies, the great case which Germany makes the starting ground for her illegal and inhumane policy being the fact that we detained the *Wilhelmina* early in last February with a cargo of foodstuffs for Germany. Was that the first instance of interfering with foodstuffs destined for the civil population in this war? Before that Germany had sunk two neutral vessels with cargoes of foodstuffs coming to open ports for the civil population in this country. She had requisitioned the food supplies of the civil population in Belgium. I understand that to-day the confiscation goes on in the occupied districts of Poland. Not until, to relieve the starvation of Belgians whose food had been requisitioned by Germany in their own country, a powerful international organization came into force was there protection of the food of the civil population in districts occupied by Germany.

What right has Germany to complain of measures taken to interfere with her food supplies, when from the beginning of this war her armed cruisers, so long as they could keep the sea, sank neutral merchant vessels, with food for the civil population of this country, and in effect treated food where they found it as absolute contraband? That being so, what we say to neutrals is that we are entitled to claim the utmost rights to which we can fairly found a claim upon the recognized practice—the practice which we have ourselves recognized—of other belligerents in previous wars.

The Purpose of the Allies.

Let us also bear this in mind. I do not say that we are exercising these measures of blockade the least bit more for our Allies than for ourselves. If we had no Allies I have no doubt we should have done precisely the same thing, and, as the House says, it is our duty to this country to do it as effectively as possible. But do not let us forget that it is our duty to our Allies as well. We are in this war with Allies, a war forced upon Europe after every effort had been made to find a settlement without war, which could easily have been found, either by conference, as we suggested, or by reference to The Hague Tribunal, as the Emperor of Russia suggested. Prussian militarism would not have any other settlement but war. We are now in this war with our Allies. I say nothing of what the actual conditions of peace will be, because those are things we must discuss with our Allies and settle in common with them. But the great object to be obtained—and until it is obtained the war must proceed—is that there shall not be this sort of militarism in Europe, which in time of peace would cause the whole Continent discomfort by its continual menace, and then, when it thinks the moment has come that suits itself, would plunge the Continent into war.

The whole of our resources are engaged in the war. Our maximum effort, whether it be military, naval, or financial, is at the disposal of our Allies in carrying on this contest. With them we shall see it through to the end, and we shall slacken no effort. Part of that effort is and must remain that, whether it be in the interests of ourselves or of our Allies, in the interests of the great cause—the great transcending cause, which unites us all together, which makes us feel that national life will not be safe and individual life will not be worth living unless we can achieve successfully the object of this war—in that common cause we shall continue to exert all our efforts to put the maximum possible pressure upon the enemy; and part of that pressure must be, and continue to be, doing the most we can to prevent supplies going to or from the enemy, using the Navy to its full power, and, in common with our

Allies, sparing nothing, whether it be military, naval, or financial effort, which this country can afford to see the thing through with them to the end.

APPENDIX IV.

THE RIGHTS OF A SEA POWER.

[The American Note of November 5, 1915, is printed as an Appendix to Vol. XI.]

The Foreign Office issued for publication the following Memorandum addressed to the United States Government in reply to the American Note of November 5, 1915:—

The communication addressed by the United States Ambassador in London to Sir E. Grey on the 5th November 1915 has received the careful attention of His Majesty's Government in consultation with their Allies the French Government, and His Majesty's Government have now the honour to make the following reply:—

2. The first section (paragraphs 3-15) of the United States Note relates to cargoes detained by the British authorities in order to prevent them from reaching an enemy destination, and the complaint of the United States Government is summarized in paragraph 33 to the effect that the methods sought to be employed by Great Britain to obtain and use evidence of enemy destination of cargoes bound for neutral ports and to impose a contraband character upon such cargoes are without justification.

3. The wording of this summary suggests that the basis of the complaint of the United States Government is not so much that the shipments intercepted by the naval forces were really intended for use in the neutral countries to which they were despatched, as that the despatch of goods to the enemy countries has been frustrated by methods which have not been employed by belligerent nations in the past. It would seem to be a fair reply to such a contention that new devices for despatching goods to the enemy must be met by new methods of applying the fundamental and acknowledged principle of the right to intercept such trade.

4. The question whether the exercise of the right of search can be restricted to search at sea was dealt with in Sir E. Grey's Note of the 7th January 1915, and His Majesty's Government would again draw attention to the facts that information has constantly reached them of attempts to conceal contraband intended for the enemy in innocent packages, and that these attempts can only be frustrated by examination of the ship and cargo in port.

Similarly, in Sir E. Grey's Note of the 10th February 1915, it was pointed out that the size of modern steamships and their capacity to navigate the waters where the Allied patrols have to operate whatever the conditions of the weather, frequently render it a matter of extreme danger, if not of impossibility, even to board the vessels unless they are taken into calm water for the purpose. It is unnecessary to repeat what was said in that Note. There is nothing that His Majesty's Government could withdraw, or that the experience of the officers of the Allied fleets has tended to show was inaccurate.

5. When visit and search at sea are possible, and when a search can be made there which is sufficient to secure belligerent rights, it may be admitted that it would be an unreasonable hardship on merchant vessels to compel them to come into port, and it may well be believed that maritime nations have hesitated to modify the instructions to their naval officers that it is at sea that these operations should be carried out, and that undue deviation of the vessel from her course must be avoided. That, however, does not affect the fact that it would be impossible under the conditions of modern warfare to confine the rights of visit and search to an examination of the ship at the place where she is encountered without surrendering a fundamental belligerent right.

Report by Admiral Jellicoe.

6. The effect of the size and seaworthiness of merchant vessels upon their search at sea is essentially a technical question, and accordingly His Majesty's Government have thought it well to submit the report of the board of naval experts, quoted by the United States Ambassador in paragraph 7 of this Note, to Admiral Sir John Jellicoe for his observations. The unique experience which this officer has gained as the result of more than eighteen months in command of the Grand Fleet renders his opinion of peculiar value. His report is as follows:—

> "It is undoubtedly the case that the size of modern vessels is one of the factors which render search at sea far more difficult than in the days of smaller vessels. So far as I know, it has never been contended that it is necessary to remove every package of a ship's cargo to establish the character and nature of her trade, etc.; but it must be obvious that the larger the vessel and the greater the amount of cargo the more difficult does examination at sea become, because more packages must be removed.

“This difficulty is much enhanced by the practice of concealing contraband in bales of hay and passengers’ luggage, casks, etc., and this procedure, which has undoubtedly been carried out, necessitates the actual removal of a good deal of cargo for examination in suspected cases. This removal cannot be carried out at sea, except in the very finest weather.

“Further, in a large ship, the greater bulk of the cargo renders it easier to conceal contraband, especially such valuable metals as nickel, quantities of which can easily be stowed in places other than the holds of a large ship.

“I entirely dispute the contention, therefore, advanced in the American Note, that there is no difference between the search of a ship of 1,000 tons and one of 20,000 tons. I am sure that the fallacy of the statement must be apparent to any one who has ever carried out such a search at sea.

“There are other facts, however, which render it necessary to bring vessels into port for search. The most important is the manner in which those in command of German submarines, in entire disregard of international law and of their own prize regulations, attack and sink merchant vessels on the high seas, neutral as well as British, without visiting the ship, and therefore without any examination of the cargo. This procedure renders it unsafe for a neutral vessel which is being examined by officers from a British ship to remain stopped on the high seas, and it is therefore in the interests of the neutrals themselves that the examination should be conducted in port.

“The German practice of misusing United States passports in order to procure a safe conduct for military persons and agents of enemy nationality makes it necessary to examine closely all suspect persons, and to do this effectively necessitates bringing the ship into harbour.”

7. Sir John Jellicoe goes on to say:—

“The difference between the British and the German procedure is that we have acted in the way which causes the least discomfort to neutrals. Instead of sinking neutral ships engaged in trade with the enemy, as the Germans have done in so many cases in direct contravention of Article 113 of their own Naval Prize Regulations,

1909, in which it is laid down that the commander is only justified in destroying a neutral ship which has been captured if—

> (*a*) She is liable to condemnation, and
>
> (*b*) The bringing in might expose the warship to danger or imperil the success of the operations in which she is engaged at the time—

we examine them, giving as little inconvenience as modern naval conditions will allow, sending them into port only where this becomes necessary.

"It must be remembered, however, that it is not the Allies alone who send a percentage of neutral vessels into port for examination, for it is common knowledge that German naval vessels, as stated in paragraph 19 of the American Note, 'seize and bring into German ports neutral vessels bound for Scandinavian and Danish ports.'

"As cases in point, the interception by the Germans of the American oil-tankers *Llama* and *Platuria* in August last may be mentioned. Both were bound to America from Sweden, and were taken into Swinemünde for examination."

8. The French Ministry of Marine shares the views expressed by Sir J. Jellicoe on the question of search at sea, and has added the following statement:—

"La pratique navale, telle qu'elle existait autrefois et consistant à visiter les navires en mer, méthode que nous a léguée l'ancienne marine, ne s'adapte plus aux conditions de la navigation actuelle. Les Américains ont pressenti son insuffisance et ont prévu la nécessité de lui en substituer une plus efficace. Dans les Instructions données par le Département de la Marine américaine, du 20 juin, 1898, aux croiseurs des Etats-Unis, on trouve déjà la prescription suivante:—

> Si ces derniers (les papiers de bord) indiquent de la contrabande de guerre, le navire devra être saisi; sinon, il sera laissé libre, à moins qu'en raison de puissants motifs de suspicion, une visite plus minutieuse paraisse devoir être exigée.[15]

> “Toute méthode doit se modifier en tenant compte des transformations subies par le matériel que les hommes ont à leur disposition, à la condition de rester une méthode humaine et civilisée.
>
> “L’Amirauté française estime qu’aujourd’hui un navire, pour être visité, doit être dérouté sur un port toutes les fois que l’état de la mer, la nature, le poids, le volume, l’arrimage de la cargaison suspecte, en même temps que l’obscurité et l’absence de précision des papiers de bord, rendent la visite en mer pratiquement impossible ou dangereuse pour le navire visité.
>
> “Au contraire, lorsque les circonstances inverses existent, la visite doit être faite en mer.
>
> “Le déroutement est également nécessaire et justifié, lorsque, le navire neutre entrant dans la zone ou le voisinage des hostilités, (1) il importe, dans l’intérêt même du navire neutre, d’éviter à ce dernier une série d’arrêts et de visites successives et de faire établir, une fois pour toutes, son caractère inoffensif et de lui permettre ainsi de continuer librement sa route sans être molesté; et (2) le belligérant, dans son droit de légitime défense, est fondé à exercer une surveillance particulière sur les navires inconnus qui circulent dans ces parages.”

9. The question of the locality of the search is, however, one of secondary importance. In the view of His Majesty’s Government the right of a belligerent to intercept contraband on its way to his enemy is fundamental and incontestable, and ought not to be restricted to intercepting contraband which happens to be accompanied on board the ship by proof sufficient to condemn it. What is essential is to determine whether or not the goods were on their way to the enemy. If they were, a belligerent is entitled to detain them; and having regard to the nature of the struggle in which the Allies are engaged, they are compelled to take the most effectual steps to exercise that right.

10. The United States Note then passes to the subject of the procedure in the Prize Courts, and maintains that Courts of Prize have hitherto been bound, by well-established and long-settled practice, to consider at the first hearing only the ship’s papers and documents and the answers to the standing interrogatories, and to exclude all other evidence unless and until an order has been made for “further proof.” Attention is drawn to the fact that the above practice, which had been followed by the British Prize Courts

for over a century, and also by the Prize Courts of the United States, was changed by the Prize Court rules issued by His Majesty's Government at the outbreak of the present war. Upon this matter His Majesty's Government have to point out that they recognized some years ago that modern conditions had rendered the old rules obsolete, and new rules had been prepared under the guidance and supervision of the late Lord Gorell, whose experience as President of the Admiralty Division of the High Court of Justice rendered him well qualified to deal with the subject. Twenty months' experience of the working of the new rules in the Prize Court has served to show the utility of the changes.

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[15] Navy Department, General, No. 492, "Instruction to Blockading Vessels and Cruisers," paragraph 13.

National Prize Courts.

11. It may further be pointed out that the practice and procedure adopted in Prize Courts are not settled or regulated by international law, but they are determined by each nation for itself. The procedure described in the United States Note was gradually evolved in the British Courts, and though it was adopted by the United States, it has never been followed in the Prize Courts of France or of any other continental nation, nor does the fact that the United States followed the British practice prevent Great Britain or any other of the Allied nations from introducing such changes in the procedure as modern circumstances may call for. International law only requires that the practice in Prize Courts of the belligerent nation should afford a fair hearing to all claims put forward by neutrals, and should enable the Court to arrive at a just conclusion upon the evidence. Subject to that condition, each nation may regulate the practice to be followed in its Prize Courts. As an instance, the recent Italian Decree of 30th May 1915 may be quoted, in Article 6 of which it is enacted that the Prize Court "will draw up rules of procedure for its future guidance." The division of Prize Court proceedings into two distinct phases, the first hearing and the hearing on further proof, under the early British and the American practice, was merely a rule of procedure. Similarly, the exclusion of extraneous evidence until the making of an order for further proof was only a rule of procedure. His Majesty's Government were, therefore, not only at liberty but felt bound to alter these rules so soon as they were advised that the rules were obsolete and might work injustice.

12. The old practice and procedure had become archaic in form, and belonged to days long before the modern improvements in legal procedure were developed—days when, for instance, the parties interested were prevented from giving any evidence as witnesses in actions which affected their rights. The alterations in the Prize Court practice and rules were conceived and made in the spirit of those improvements. The objects with which the old practice was abolished were to prevent delay, to eliminate technicalities, and to enable the parties to prove all the true and material facts, and to place their respective cases fully before the Court.

13. Moreover, it must be remembered that the conditions under which goods are conveyed by sea from one country to another have completely changed. In the days when the old rules were developed the ship's papers were a safe and satisfactory guide as to the nature and destination of the cargo. If the ship's papers had not indicated the true object and purpose of the consignment, the consignee would have been uncertain what to do with the goods when they arrived, and the commercial transaction would have been hampered, for there were in those days no fast mails or telegraph cables by which supplementary information could be conveyed. If there were no ship's papers, or if they obviously were not genuine, it was a ground for condemnation. When there was no reason to doubt them, the Court could safely take the papers as indicating the real transaction. Nowadays the conditions have changed: the papers may outwardly be perfectly genuine and complete, yet they may have been prepared with the express purpose of concealing the real nature of the transaction. These misleading papers would not, however, occasion any difficulty in dealing with the goods on their arrival, because the necessary instructions to the consignee can be conveyed by other means. Consequently the old rule that the papers on board the ship must alone be taken into consideration, and evidence from other sources excluded, is no longer practicable; indeed the system of attributing to the ship's papers the character of final and conclusive proof upheld in the United States Note would encourage shippers of contraband to falsify the papers, as they would thereby ensure absolute immunity from capture. It is in the same way due to change of circumstances that the evidence of the master and members of the crew has ceased to be of much importance in the majority of prize cases; they usually now know nothing of the real destination of the cargo they are transporting, and the more skilfully the despatch of goods with an enemy destination is contrived, the more effectually will it be concealed from those on board.

14. It may be doubted whether any belligerent Government would be ready to forego the right of capture of goods on their way to an enemy in

every case where such destination was not disclosed by the ship's papers or the evidence of those on board the ship. The difficulty which United States naval officers found even as early as 1862 in complying with the old rule is illustrated by the quotation from Lord Lyons' Note of the 22nd April 1863, in connection with the case of the Magicienne, one of the cases which are dealt with in the appendix to this Note, in which he drew attention to the habit of the United States cruisers of seizing vessels on the chance that something might possibly be discovered *ex post facto* which would prevent the captors from being condemned to pay damages.

Increased American Exports.

15. The contention advanced by the United States Government in paragraph 9 of their Note, that the effect of this new procedure is to subject traders to risk of loss, delay, and expense so great and so burdensome as practically to destroy much of the export trade of the United States to neutral countries in Europe is not borne out by the official statistics published in the United States, nor by the reports of the Department of Commerce. The first nine months of 1915 may be taken as a period when the war conditions must have been known to all those engaged in commerce in the United States of America, and when any injurious effects of the Prize Court procedure would have been recognized. During that period the exports from the United States of America to the three Scandinavian countries and Holland, the group of neutral countries whose imports have been most affected by the naval operations of the Allies and by the procedure adopted in their Prize Courts, amounted to 274,037,000 dollars as compared with 126,763,000 dollars in the corresponding period of 1913. It is useless to take into account the corresponding figures of 1914 because of the dislocation of trade caused by the outbreak of war, but taking the pre-war months of 1914, the figures for 1913, 1914, and 1915 were as follows:—

	Dollars.
1913	97,480,000
1914	88,132,000
1915	234,960,000

16. In the face of such figures it seems impossible to accept the contention that the new Prize Court procedure in Great Britain has practically destroyed much of the export trade of the United States to neutral countries in Europe, and the inference is suggested that if complaints have been made to the Administration of Washington by would-be exporters, they

emanated not from persons who desired to engage in genuine commerce with the neutral countries, but from those who desired to despatch goods to the enemy under cover of a neutral destination, and who found it more difficult to conceal the real facts from the Prize Courts under the new procedure.

17. At this point it would have been opportune to introduce a reply to the contention that appears at first sight to be advanced in paragraph 13 of the United States Note that Great Britain, while interfering with foreign trade, has increased her own with neutral countries adjacent to Germany, but this is rendered unnecessary by the explanation given by Mr. Page at the time that he presented the Note, and since confirmed by a statement given out to the Press at Washington that no such meaning is to be attributed to the paragraph. Moreover, the subject has been dealt with in the Note which Sir E. Grey sent to Mr. Page on the 13th August last, and again in the Note given to the State Department by the British Ambassador at Washington on the 27th December.

The "Common Stock" Theory.

18. The next passage in the United States Note (paragraph 14) relates to the principle of non-interference with goods intended to become incorporated in the mass of merchandise for sale in a neutral country, or as it is more commonly known, with goods intended to be incorporated in the "common stock" of the country. The United States Government urge with some force that trade statistics are not by themselves conclusive in establishing an enemy destination, and that such statistics require careful scrutiny. On the other hand, the mere fact that goods, no matter of what description or in what quantities, are ostensibly destined to form part of the common stock of a neutral country, cannot be regarded as sufficient evidence to prove their innocence or to justify the assertion that any attempt to raise questions as to their ulterior destination is unwarranted and inquisitorial. It is a matter of common knowledge that large quantities of supplies have since the war broke out passed to our enemy through neutral ports. It was pointed out in Sir E. Grey's Note of the 17th July 1915 that it would be mere affectation to regard some of those ports as offering facilities only for the commerce of the neutral country in which they are situated. They have, in fact, been the main avenues through which supplies have reached the enemy from all parts of the world. In the case of goods consigned to these ports the ship's papers convey no suggestion as to their ultimate destination, and every device which ingenuity can suggest, or which can be contrived by able and unscrupulous agents, is resorted to for

the purpose of giving to carefully organized arrangements for supplying the enemy the appearance of genuine transactions with a neutral country. His Majesty's Government cannot bring themselves to believe that it is the desire of the United States Government that traffic of this kind should be allowed to proceed without hindrance.

19. The question whether goods despatched to a neutral port were intended to become part of the mass of merchandise for sale in that country is one of fact. Quite apart from the conclusions suggested by the figures, there is a considerable body of evidence that many of the goods which have been shipped to neutral ports during the war were never intended to become part of the common stock of that country, but were earmarked from the beginning for re-export to the enemy countries. If they had been intended to form part of the common stock, they would have been available for use in that country; yet at one time in the early days of the Allies' efforts to intercept all the commerce of the enemy, when they found it necessary to hold up certain cargoes of cotton on their way to Sweden, it transpired that though the quays and the warehouses of Gothenburg were congested with cotton, there was none available for the use of the spinners in Sweden.

20. Confirmation of the fact that many of the shipments to neutral ports were never intended to become part of the common stock of the country is also to be found in some of the contracts which have come to light since the policy of intercepting all commodities on their way to or from the enemy country was introduced. One of those which have been disclosed is a contract with a firm in Germany for the sale of no less than 50,000 bales of cotton linters at a price which was about double that which linters were fetching in any other country than Germany. The whole quantity was to be shipped to neutral ports. Various shipments made under this contract have been held up, and in all cases the goods were shipped with papers and under conditions which concealed the enemy destination altogether. Sweden is not in normal times a large importer of cotton linters, and it certainly would not be reasonable to maintain that because the ship's papers did not disclose this contract of sale or the enemy destination, shipments of linters under this contract should be regarded as intended to become part of the mass of merchandise for sale in Sweden.

Fictitious Consignees.

21. However sound the principle that goods intended for incorporation in the common stock of a neutral country should not be treated as contraband may be in theory, it is one that can have but little application to the present

imports of the Scandinavian countries. The circumstances of a large number of these shipments negative any conclusion that they are *bona fide* shipments for the importing countries. Many of them are made to persons who are apparently nominees of enemy agents, and who never figured before as importers of such articles. Consignments of meat products are addressed to lightermen and dock labourers. Several thousands of tons of such goods have been found documented for a neutral port and addressed to firms which do not exist there. Large consignments of similar goods were addressed to a baker, to the keeper of a small private hotel, or to a maker of musical instruments. Will it be contended that such imports ought to be regarded as *bona fide* shipments intended to become part of the common stock of the country?

22. Similarly several of the shipments which the Allied naval forces are now obliged to intercept consist of goods for which there is in normal circumstances no sale in the importing country, and it has already been pointed out in a recent decision in the British Prize Court that the rule about incorporation in the common stock of a neutral country cannot apply to such goods. The same line was taken in some of the decisions in the United States Prize Courts during the Civil War.

23. In the presence of facts such as those indicated above, the United States Government will, it is believed, agree with His Majesty's Government that no belligerent could in modern times submit to be bound by a rule that no goods could be seized unless they were accompanied by papers which established their destination to an enemy country, and that all detentions of ships and goods must uniformly be based on proofs obtained at the time of seizure. To press any such theory is tantamount to asking that all trade between neutral ports shall be free, and would thus render nugatory the exercise of sea power and destroy the pressure which the command of the sea enables the Allies to impose upon their enemy.

24. It is, of course, inevitable that the exercise of belligerent rights at sea, however reasonably exercised, must inconvenience neutral trade, and great pressure is being put upon the United States Government to urge the technical theory that there should be no interference at all with goods passing between neutral ports, and thus to frustrate the measures which the Allies have taken to intercept commerce on its way to or from the enemy. It may not be out of place to recall that the position is somewhat similar to that which arose in the United States in the war between the North and the South. All students of international law and military history are aware that the blockade of the Southern States was the most important engine of

pressure possessed by the North, and that it was on the point of being rendered ineffective through the use by blockade runners of neutral ports of access. It is well known that the United States Government took immediate steps to stop such trade, and that the United States Supreme Court extended the doctrine of continuous voyage so as to cover all cases where there was an intention to break the blockade by whatever means, direct or indirect.

Cotton in the Civil War.

25. The configuration of the European coast is such as to render neutral ports the most convenient for the passage of German commerce, and just as it was essential to the United States in the Civil War to prevent their blockade from being nullified by the use of neutral ports of access, so it is essential to the Allied Powers to-day to see that the measures which they are taking to intercept enemy commerce shall not be rendered illusory by the use of similar ports. The instructions issued by Mr. Seward during the Civil War show that he regarded the continuance of the blockade against the Southern States as absolutely vital, and he repeatedly instructed American representatives abroad to assure foreign Governments that, while he was fully alive to the great inconveniences caused by the cutting off of the supplies of cotton from Europe, yet he could not, as American Secretary of State, "sacrifice the Union for cotton." The American representatives in Europe in their published reports again and again expressed the opinion that, whatever might be the policy of the Government, the peoples of Europe would never consent to side with the Power that upheld slavery against the Power which represented freedom. Their opinion was entirely justified by the result, and in fact neither the French nor the English Government took any decided steps towards breaking the blockade, in spite of the tremendous pressure which was brought to bear upon them, and the terrible suffering of the cotton operatives of this country. Indeed, President Lincoln himself acknowledged, in a message to the labouring classes of Manchester, his high sense of the spirit of self sacrifice which they had exhibited in their policy towards America. His Majesty's Government have of course no desire to enter upon any examination of the issues involved in that historic conflict, but no one will question the respect which is due to the determination then shown by the French and British peoples not to range themselves on what they believed to be the side of slavery or consent to action which they held might be fatal to the democratic principle of Government, however great the pressure exerted by commercial interests might be.

26. His Majesty's Government desire to assure the United States Government that every effort is being made to distinguish between *bona fide*

neutral commerce and that which is really intended for the enemy. The task is one of exceptional difficulty, and the statistics show that a great volume of imports intended for the enemy must have passed through adjacent neutral countries during the war. As an instance, the imports of lard into Sweden during the year 1915 may be taken. In that year the total import of lard into Sweden from all sources was 9,318 tons, of which no less than 9,029 tons came from the United States. In the three years before the war, 1911-13, the annual average import of the same article was only 888, of which 638 tons came from the United States. It is difficult to believe that the requirements of Sweden in respect of lard, even when every allowance is made for possible diversions of trade due to the war, could suddenly have increased more than tenfold in 1915. The inference, indeed, is irresistible that the greater part of these imports must have had another and an enemy destination.

Fixed Neutral Imports.

27. It may readily be conceded that the efforts to intercept enemy commerce passing through neutral countries cannot fail to produce some soreness and dissatisfaction. His Majesty's Government have therefore spared no pains in their endeavour to mitigate the inconvenience which must inevitably be occasioned to neutral traders. In pursuance of this object they are resorting to the policy of ascertaining the total requirements of the country concerned, and intercepting such imports as may be presumed, because they are in excess of those requirements, to form no part of the normal trade of the country, and therefore to be destined for the enemy.

28. The total net imports of a particular commodity by any country in normal times give a satisfactory index to its requirements, and where these are provided for on a generous scale, suitable allowance being made for the commercial dislocation inseparable from a state of war, it is not unfair, after eighteen months of war and in the light of the experience which has now been gained, to invite the Prize Court to regard with suspicion further consignments of any kind of goods of which the imports have already exceeded a figure ample to satisfy the country's requirements.

29. It ought not to be difficult to arrive at a satisfactory understanding with all parties on the subject, as the official statistics afford information not only as to the quantities of particular commodities required by neutral countries, but also of the sources from which they are usually obtained. Arrangements of this nature will be of great service in removing the friction and misunderstanding which now arise, as it will help the commercial

classes in the neutral countries to form an idea of the limits within which their trading operations are not likely to encounter difficulty.

30. The adoption of such a system, although not unattended by difficulty, has been greatly facilitated by agreements made with the organizations which control imports in the neutral countries, as well as by arrangements with some of the shipping lines, and with several of the interests concerned in the import of particular commodities from neutral countries. His Majesty's Government intend to avail themselves of every opportunity which may present itself in order to bring about a more extended adoption of this equitable system.

31. Moreover, the fact that a neutral country adjacent to the enemy territory is importing an abnormal quantity of supplies or commodities, of which her usual imports are relatively small, of which the enemy stands in need, and which are known to pass from that neutral country to the enemy, is by itself an element of proof on which the Prize Court would be justified in acting, unless it is rebutted by evidence to the contrary. Hostile destination being a question of fact, the Court should take all the relevant circumstances into consideration in arriving at its decision, and there seems to be no reason in principle for limiting the facts at which the Court is entitled to look in a case of this land.

The Allied Blockade.

32. The second section of the United States Note (paragraphs 16-24) deals with the validity of the measures against enemy commerce which were embodied in the British Order in Council of the 11th March 1915, and in the French Decree of the 13th March, and maintains that these measures are invalid because they do not comply with the rules which have been gradually evolved in the past for regulating a blockade of enemy ports, and which were summarized in concrete form in Articles 1-21 of the Declaration of London.

33. These rules can only be applied to their full extent to a blockade in the sense of the term as used in the Declaration of London. His Majesty's Government have already pointed out that a blockade which was limited to the direct traffic with enemy ports would in this case have but little, if any, effect on enemy commerce, Germany being so placed geographically that her imports and exports can pass through neutral ports of access as easily as through her own. However, with the spirit of the rules His Majesty's Government and their Allies have loyally complied in the measures they have taken to intercept German imports and exports. Due notice has been

given by the Allies of the measures they have taken, and goods which were shipped or contracted for before the announcement of the intention of the Allies to detain all commerce on its way to or from the enemy countries have been treated with great liberality. The objects with which the usual declaration and notification of blockade are issued have therefore been fully achieved. Again, the effectiveness of the work of the Allied fleets under the orders referred to is shown by the small number of vessels which escape the Allied patrols. It is doubtful whether there has ever been a blockade where the ships which slipped through bore so small a proportion to those which were intercepted.

34. The measures taken by the Allies are aimed at preventing commodities of any kind from reaching or leaving Germany, and not merely at preventing ships from reaching or leaving German ports. His Majesty's Government do not feel, therefore, that the rules set out in the United States Note need be discussed in detail. The basis and the justification of the measures which the Allies have taken were dealt with at length in Sir E. Grey's Note of the 23rd July, and there is no need to repeat what was there said. It need only be added that the rules applicable to a blockade of enemy ports are strictly followed by the Allies in cases where they apply, as, for instance, in the blockades which have been declared of the Turkish coast of Asia Minor or of the coastline of German East Africa.

35. Some further comment is perhaps necessary upon the statements made in paragraph 19 of the United States Note, where it is said that, because German coasts are open to trade with Scandinavian countries, the measures of the Allies fail to comply with the rule that a blockade must be effective. It is no doubt true that commerce from Sweden and Norway reaches German ports in the Baltic in the same way that commerce still passes to and from Germany across the land frontiers of adjacent States, but this fact does not render the measures which France and Great Britain are taking against German trade the less justifiable. Even if these measures were judged with strict reference to the rules applicable to blockades—a standard by which, in their view, the measures of the Allies ought not to be judged—it must be remembered that the passage of commerce to a blockaded area across a land frontier or across an inland sea has never been held to interfere with the effectiveness of the blockade. If the right to intercept commerce on its way to or from a belligerent country, even though it may enter that country through a neutral port, be granted, it is difficult to see why the interposition of a few miles of sea as well should make any difference. If the doctrine of continuous voyage may rightly be applied to goods going to Germany through Rotterdam, on what ground can it be contended that it is

not equally applicable to goods with a similar destination passing through some Swedish port and across the Baltic, or even through neutral waters only? In any case, it must be remembered that the number of ships reaching a blockaded area is not the only test as to whether it is maintained effectively. The best proof of the thoroughness of a blockade is to be found in its results. This is the test which Mr. Seward in 1863, when Secretary of State, maintained should be applied to the blockade of the Confederate States. Writing to Mr. Dayton, the United States Minister in Paris, on the 8th March, he said:—"But the true test of the efficiency of the blockade will be found in its results. Cotton commands a price in Manchester, and in Rouen and Lowell four times greater than in New Orleans. . . . Judged by this test of results, I am satisfied that there never was a more effective blockade." Similar language was used in a despatch to Mr. Adams in London. The great rise in price in Germany of many articles, most necessary to the enemy in the prosecution of the present war, must be well known to the United States Government.

36. Attention is drawn in the same paragraph to the fact that cotton has since the measures announced on the 11th March been declared to be contraband, and this is quoted as an admission that the blockade is ineffective to prevent shipments of cotton from reaching the enemy countries. The reason for which cotton was declared to be contraband is quite simple. Goods with an enemy destination are not, under the Order in Council, subject to condemnation; they are restored to the owner. Evidence accumulated that it was only for military purposes that cotton was being employed in Germany. All cotton was laid under embargo, and its use in the textile factories was prohibited except in very special cases or by military permission. In these circumstances it was right and proper that cotton with an enemy destination should be subjected to condemnation and not merely prevented from passing, and it was for this reason that it was declared to be contraband. The amount of cotton reaching the enemy country has probably not been affected in the least by its being made contraband on the 20th August, as supplies from overseas had been cut off effectively before that date. Even the *Konfektionär*, a German technical paper dealing with the textile industry, admitted in its issue of the 1st July that not a gramme of cotton had found its way into Germany for the preceding four weeks.

Retaliation not Illegal.

37. Before leaving the question of the validity of the measures which France and Great Britain have taken against enemy commerce, reference must be made to the statement made in the 33rd paragraph of the United

States Note that "the curtailment of neutral rights by these measures, *which are admittedly retaliatory, and therefore illegal* . . . cannot be admitted." His Majesty's Government are quite unable to admit the principle that to the extent that these measures are retaliatory they are illegal. It is true that these measures were occasioned and necessitated by the illegal and unjustifiable proclamation issued by the German Government on the 4th February 1915, constituting the waters surrounding Great Britain, including the whole English Channel, a "war zone," into which neutral vessels would penetrate at their peril, and in which they were liable to be sunk at sight. This proclamation was accompanied by a memorandum alleging that the violation of international law by Great Britain justified the retaliatory measures of the German Government owing to the acquiescence of neutrals in the action of this country. The legitimacy of the use of retaliatory measures was thus admitted by the Germans, although His Majesty's Government and their Allies strongly deny the facts upon which their arguments were based. But although these measures may have been provoked by the illegal conduct of the enemy, they do not, in reality, conflict with any general principle of international law, of humanity, or civilization; they are enforced with consideration against neutral countries, and are, therefore, juridically sound and valid.

38. The more abstract question of the legitimacy of measures of retaliation adopted by one belligerent against his opponent, but affecting neutrals also, is one of which His Majesty's Government think the discussion might well be deferred. It is a subject of considerable difficulty and complexity, but His Majesty's Government are surprised to notice that the Government of the States seem to regard all such measures of retaliation in war as illegal if they should incidentally inflict injury upon neutrals. The advantage which any such principle would give to the determined law-breaker would be so great that His Majesty's Government cannot conceive that it would commend itself to the conscience of mankind. To take a simple instance, suppose that one belligerent scatters mines on the trade routes so as to impede or destroy the commerce of his enemy—an action which is illegitimate and calculated to inflict injury upon neutrals as well as upon the other belligerents—what is that belligerent to do? Is he precluded from meeting in any way this lawless attack upon him by his enemy? His Majesty's Government cannot think that he is not entitled by way of retaliation to scatter mines in his turn, even though in so doing he also interferes with neutral rights. Or take an even more extreme case. Suppose that a neutral failed to prevent his territory being made use of by one of the belligerents for warlike purposes, could he object to the other belligerent

acting in the same way? It would seem that the true view must be that each belligerent is entitled to insist on being allowed to meet his enemy on terms of equal liberty of action. If one of them is allowed to make an attack upon the other regardless of neutral rights, his opponent must be allowed similar latitude in prosecuting the struggle; nor should he in that case be limited to the adoption of measures precisely identical with those of his opponent.

39. The third section of the United States Note deals with the question of the means of redress which are open to United States citizens for any injury or loss which they suffer as the consequence of an unjustifiable exercise of the belligerent rights of the Allies. The contention put forward in these paragraphs appears to be that there is no obligation on neutral individuals who maintain that they have been damnified by the naval operations of the belligerents to appeal to the Prize Courts for redress, because the Prize Courts are fettered by municipal enactments which are binding upon them, whereas the very question which those individuals wish to raise is the validity of such enactments when tested by the canons of international law.

Facilities for Redress.

40. These arguments seem to be founded on a misunderstanding of the situation, and to overlook all that was said in Sir E. Grey's Note of the 23rd July on this subject. The extract there quoted from the decisions given by Lord Stowell shows that in Great Britain the Prize Court has jurisdiction to pronounce a decision on the very point which the United States Note indicates—viz., whether an order or instruction to the naval forces issued by His Majesty's Government is inconsistent with those principles of international law which the Court is bound to apply in deciding cases between captors and claimants, and is entitled, if satisfied that the order is not consistent with those principles, to decline to enforce it. The jurisdiction of the Prize Court in Great Britain therefore affords every facility to a United States citizen, whose goods are detained and dealt with under the Order in Council of the 11th March, to take his case to the Prize Court and there claim that the order under which the naval authorities have acted is invalid, and that its enforcement entitles him to redress and compensation.

41. In some matters it is true that the Prize Court is bound by the municipal enactments of its own country. It is the territorial sovereign who sets up the Court, and who therefore determines the matters which are incidental to its establishment. His Majesty's Government have already pointed out that each country determines for itself the procedure which its Prize Courts shall adopt; but certainly under the British system—and His

Majesty's Government were under the impression that, in this matter, the United States had taken the same course—the substantive law which the Court applies as between captor and claimant consists of the rules and principles of international law, and not the municipal legislation of the country. If reference is made to the case of the *Recovery* (6 C. Rob. 341), it will be seen that Lord Stowell refused to enforce in the Prize Court against a neutral the British Navigation Laws.

42. Sir E. Grey's Note of the 23rd July was intended to make this point clear, and so far from having intended to "give the impression that His Majesty's Government do not rely upon its soundness or strength," His Majesty's Government wish to lay stress on the fact that the principle that no encroachment should be made upon the jurisdiction and the competence of the Prize Court is one which they regard as vital.

43. Apart from the cases where a question may arise as to the validity of orders or instructions on which naval action was based, circumstances frequently give rise to claims for compensation on behalf of individuals who consider they have suffered unjustly from the exercise of rights *jure belli*, as, for instance, from the delay in releasing their ships or so forth. His Majesty's Government desire, therefore, to repeat what was said in Sir E. Grey's Note of the 10th February, that the British Prize Court Rules give the court ample jurisdiction to deal with any claims for compensation by a neutral arising from the interference with a ship or goods by the naval forces.

44. His Majesty's Government attach the utmost importance to the maintenance of the rule that, when an effective mode of redress is open to individuals in the courts of a civilized country by which they can obtain adequate satisfaction for any invasion of their rights, recourse must be had to the mode of redress so provided before there is any scope for diplomatic action. This is the course which His Majesty's Government have always themselves endeavoured to follow in previous wars in which Great Britain has been neutral, and they have done so because it is the only principle which is correct in theory and which operates with justice and impartiality between the more powerful and the weaker nations. To that principle His Majesty's Government propose to adhere now that they are themselves the belligerent, and that it is against them that the claims are advanced.

Four Civil War Cases.

45. Enquiry has been made into the four cases of the *Magicienne*, the *Don José*, the *Labuan*, and the *Saxon*, mentioned in the United States Note (paragraph 27) as instances during the American Civil War where Her

Majesty's Government put forward, through the diplomatic channel, claims for damages for seizure and detention of British ships alleged to have been made without legal justification. In two of these instances it is said that at the time the demands were made the cases were before the American Prize Courts for adjudication. The cases do, in fact, establish the very proposition for which His Majesty's Government are now contending—viz., that in cases where the Prize Court has power to grant relief there is no ground for putting forward claims through the diplomatic channel. In two of the cases the United States Government themselves discontinued the Prize Court proceedings and admitted the right to compensation, and in the others they maintained the jurisdiction of the Prize Court, and Her Majesty's Government acquiesced.

46. The statements contained in paragraph 31 of the United States Note have led to a careful review of the practice which is now followed in the British Courts with regard to vessels and cargoes which are released. It has been ascertained that in the case of vessels brought in for examination and allowed to proceed without discharging any part of their cargo no dues are charged. Where part of the cargo is discharged and passes into the jurisdiction of the Prize Court, the terms of the release are, of course, subject to the control of the Court, and His Majesty's Government are therefore hardly in a position to give any definite undertaking with regard to the incidence of the expenses and charges which may have been incurred. In general, however, they realize that, in cases where goods are released and it transpires that there were no sufficient grounds for their seizure, no dues or charges should fall upon the owner. The statement that waivers of the right to put forward claims for compensation are exacted as a condition of release is scarcely accurate, but they are prepared to concede that such waivers would be a hardship to the owners of the goods released. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government will abstain from exacting any such undertakings in future, and will not enforce those which have already been given.

47. Attached to the United States Note are voluminous appendices containing lists of various vessels of all nationalities whose cargoes have been examined by the naval forces of the Allies. These lists are a strong testimony to the vigour and effectiveness with which the naval forces are carrying out the measures which the Allies have deemed it necessary to take against the commerce of their enemies. Perhaps the most striking conclusion which can be drawn from these lists is the rapidity with which the vessels are released and the very small amount of loss and inconvenience to which they are, as a rule, exposed.

48. Into the facts of each particular case His Majesty's Government feel sure the Government of the United States will agree that there is no need for them to enter; for the lists comprise only ships dealt with by the British authorities; no corresponding lists are given of those dealt with by the French forces, and a detailed examination of these cases would be of no assistance in explaining the general principles which are being followed and which are common to both the Allies. Furthermore, any discussion of the cases in this Note might prejudice the chances of the claimants of recovering compensation through the Prize Court in cases where they consider that they are entitled to redress.

Alleviation for Neutrals.

49. Finally, His Majesty's Government desire to assure the United States Government that they will continue their efforts to make the exercise of what they conceive to be their belligerent rights as little burdensome to neutrals as possible. Some suggestions have already been referred to in this Note which it is believed would have that effect, and they are quite ready to consider others. For instance, they have already appointed an impartial and influential commission to examine whether any further steps could be taken to minimise the delays involved in the present methods of dealing with neutral vessels. Again, it has been suggested that it would be a great commercial convenience if neutral shippers knew, before they made arrangements for ship-space and for financing their consignments, whether they would be held up by belligerent patrols. A scheme is already in operation which ought to succeed in accomplishing this object. Other suggestions of a like nature might perhaps be made, and the Allied Governments would be prepared to give favourable consideration to any proposal for the alleviation of the position of neutrals provided that the substantial effectiveness of the measures now in force against enemy commerce would not be thereby impaired.

50. His Majesty's Government are of opinion that it is to such mitigations that the Allies and the neutrals concerned should look for the removal of the difficulties now encountered rather than to abrupt changes either in the theory or application of a policy based upon admitted principles of international law carefully adjusted to the altered conditions of modern warfare. Some of the changes which have been advocated would indeed, if adopted in their entirety, render it impossible for the Allies to persist with effect in their endeavours to deprive the enemy of the resources upon which he depends for the prosecution of operations carried on both by land and sea with complete disregard of the claims of humanity: for instance, the practice

of visiting exclusively at sea, instead of in port, vessels reasonably suspected of carrying supplies to the enemy, or, again, the adoption of the principle that goods notoriously destined for the enemy may not be intercepted if they happen to be carried by a neutral vessel, and addressed to a neutral consignee, could not fail to have this result.

51. His Majesty's Government have noted with sincere satisfaction the intimation contained in the concluding passages of the United States Note, of the intention of the United States to undertake the task of championing the integrity of neutral rights. The first act of this war was the unprovoked invasion by the enemy of neutral territory—that of Belgium—which he was solemnly pledged by treaty to protect; the occupation of this territory was accompanied by abominable acts of cruelty and oppression in violation of all the accepted rules of war, atrocities the record of which is available in published documents; the disregard of neutral rights has since been extended to naval warfare by the wanton destruction of neutral merchant ships on the high seas, regardless of the lives of those on board. In every theatre and in each phase of the war has been visible the same shocking disregard by the enemy of the rights of innocent persons and neutral peoples. His Majesty's Government would welcome any combination of neutral nations under the lead of the United States which would exert an effective influence to prevent the violation of neutral rights, and they cannot believe that they or their Allies have much to fear from any combination for the protection of those rights which takes an impartial and comprehensive view of the conduct of this war, and judges it by a reasonable interpretation of the generally accepted provisions of international law and by the rules of humanity that have hitherto been approved by the civilized world.

APPENDIX V.

THE CONQUEST OF THE CAMEROONS.

Extract from General Dobell's Despatch.

War Office, 31st May 1916.

The following Despatch has been received by the Secretary of State for War from Major-General Sir Charles M. Dobell, K.C.B., Commanding the Allied Forces in the Cameroons:—

General Headquarters,
Cameroons, 1st March 1916.

My Lord,

I have the honour to forward herewith a summary of the operations carried out by the Allied force under my command, covering the period between the capitulation of Duala, 27th September 1914, and the termination of active operations.

I have, in this despatch, endeavoured to maintain a correct perspective, remembering that our operations in this theatre of war are incomparable in magnitude to those taking place elsewhere. For purposes of comparison I may, however, add that the number of troops of both nations at my immediate disposal at the commencement of the campaign amounted to 4,300 West African native soldiers; on the 21st November 1915, this number had been increased to 9,700, including Indian troops. In these numbers the British and French forces were approximately equal.

As Your Lordship is aware, I have kept the proper authorities informed in some detail as to the proceedings and progress of the troops under my command. These despatches I have endeavoured to forward at intervals of about a fortnight; I do not, therefore, propose to enlarge on such questions as the organization and preparation of the force placed at my disposal, nor the naval measures that were taken in a campaign to which the adjective "amphibious" may be applied in its widest sense. It is perhaps sufficient to state I fully realized, that the conquest of a country which is some 306,000 square miles in area, or roughly one and a half times the size of the German Empire, defended by a well-led and well-trained native force, plentifully supplied with machine guns, was no light task.

2. On my passage from the United Kingdom early in September 1914, I learnt at various ports of call that the operations which had taken place on the Nigerian frontier had not been as successful as had been anticipated, thus confirming my opinion that Duala, the capital and chief port of the Cameroons, must be made my immediate objective. I entertained no doubts as to the ability of the Royal Navy to overcome the difficulties and make a landing at Duala feasible, and my best hopes were realized when I was informed that H.M.S. *Challenger* could force a passage through the sunken wrecks and other obstructions in the Cameroon River, and reach a point 7,000 yards from the town. This was made possible owing to the mine sweeping and other preparatory work which had been carried out by the Royal Navy and Nigeria Marine, under the direction of Captain Fuller, R.N., H.M.S. *Cumberland*.

On my summons for the surrender of the Colony being refused, and after duly notifying the German Commandant of my intention, I ordered a bombardment of the town to commence early on 26th September; this in combination with a land demonstration, made by way of one of the neighbouring creeks, was sufficient to induce the Commandant, on 27th September, to surrender the towns of Duala and Bonaberi, with a small strip of land in their environs. The surrender of Duala secured us a safe and convenient base for the future absorption of German territory; further, the capture of stores, supplies, field guns, and the removal of over 400 German Europeans was a great loss to the German Field Force, whilst the seizure of the large amount of shipping and numerous small craft in the harbour was an inestimable advantage to us.

3. My first object was to consolidate the position already won, and with this object in view an Allied force was allotted the task of clearing the country up to and including the Japoma Bridge, Midland Railway, whilst a British force commenced to make headway towards Maka on the Northern Railway line. Reconnaissances by land and water were carried out with uniformly successful results. I may remark incidentally that neither the climate nor the character of the country favoured the offensive: officers and men were exposed to the most trying conditions; incessant tropical rains, absence of roads or even paths, a country covered with the densest African forest—all contributed to the difficulties with which the troops were faced. Had it not been for the existing railways, which formed a line of advance as well as supply, it is difficult to see how progress could have been made.

The country in the immediate vicinity of Duala is perhaps typical of the greater portion of the Cameroons in which my troops have operated,

excepting beyond Northern railhead where the country becomes open and, on account of its greater altitude, healthier; but all the coast line, and for some 150 miles inland, one meets the same monotonous impenetrable African forest fringed, on the coast line, by an area of mangrove swamp in varying depth. The zone is well watered by numerous rivers, of which the Wuri, Sanaga and Njong present serious military obstacles. Once outside this belt conditions change at once, supplies and live stock are obtainable, and open grass lands are reached; the one unusual geographical feature is the Cameroon Mountain, some 13,000 feet high, which rises abruptly from the sea, its slopes clothed with valuable plantations, and on which the hill station of Buca, the former administrative capital of the Protectorate, is perched.

4. By the first week in October we had made good the country as far as Maka and the left bank of the Dibamba creek. The Japoma railway bridge, 900 yards in length, was broken in two places, but a fine feat was performed by the French tirailleurs in forcing this passage under a galling rifle and machine-gun fire. The Royal Navy and Royal Marine Light Infantry also materially contributed to this success.

I now judged that I could move a force by the Wuri River on Jabassi, so as to secure Duala from any attack from the north-east; a mixed Naval and Military force, supported by armed craft, was organized and an attack was delivered on 8th October. It is regrettable that this operation was not at first successful, difficult country, novel conditions, and the fact that our native troops encountered machine-gun fire for the first time are contributory causes to failure; nevertheless it became necessary completely to reorganize the force and repeat the operation, with the result that Jabassi was taken on 14th October. From this place a force was pushed out to Njamtan, and the country around Jabassi was cleared of the enemy.

My next objective was Edea, on which place I determined an advance should be made from three directions, two by land and one by river. Strong forces were moved from Japoma and by the Njong River to Dehane, thence by a track towards Edea. The third force proceeded by the Sanaga River; the navigation of this river is most difficult, dangerous bars hinder entrance into its mouth and sand banks obstruct the passage up to Edea. The feat performed by Commander L. W. Braithwaite, R.N., in navigating an armed flotilla on the Sanaga was a remarkable one. Thus the combined movement, outlined above, was entirely successful and Edea was occupied on the morning of 26th October. This result had not been achieved without hard fighting, particularly on the part of the force operating by the line of the

railway. It was during the preliminary operations in this undertaking that Lieutenant Child, Director of Nigeria Marine, Commander Gray, and Captain Franqueville, of the French Army, lost their lives through the capsizing of their boat in the surf at the mouth of the Njong River—valuable lives whose losses it was difficult to replace.

5. During the latter half of October the small force under Lieut.-Colonel Haywood was continuously engaged with the enemy on the line of the Northern Railway, but had made such good progress that I was in a position to arrange for an attack on Victoria, Soppo, and Buea. As in previous operations I divided my force, part of which was moved by water to Tiko, part from Susa by Mpundu on the Mungo River, and the third portion supplied by the Royal Navy and Royal Marine Light Infantry moved by sea to Victoria. The opposition met with cannot be described as serious, but the country was very trying to troops; the energy with which our advantage was pushed appeared to demoralize the Germans, and by the 15th November we had secured Buea, with Soppo and Victoria. We inflicted considerable casualties on the enemy whilst escaping very lightly ourselves.

With the double object of striking an effective blow at the enemy and at the same time relieving the pressure on the southern frontier of Nigeria I decided to clear the whole of the Northern Railway of the enemy, and for this purpose concentrated a force at Mujuka, under command of Colonel Gorges, on 30th November. This force gradually fought its way to the North and reached Nkongsamba (railhead), which was surrendered to us on 10th December. It is worthy of remark that we took two airplanes at this place—the first machines that had ever arrived in West Africa. The advance was continued to Dschang, which was occupied on 3rd January, and the fort destroyed; most of the hostile resistance was met with at the Nkam River, but our columns rarely remained unmolested and experienced difficulties in operating in a class of country totally different to that to which they had by then become accustomed. I decided, as soon as the fort at Dschang had been destroyed, that the place should be evacuated and Nkongsamba, with its outpost at Bare, should be our most advanced position. It was unfortunate that we could not continue to hold Dschang, as our withdrawal gave a false impression to the natives and emboldened the enemy. However, with the troops at my disposal I did not feel strong enough to maintain and supply a post 55 miles north of railhead, in a difficult and mountainous country.

6. Early in 1915 the situation was as follows:—

British troops holding Duala, the Northern Railway with Bare, Victoria, and Dibombe (a defended post south-west of Jabassi).

French troops on the line of the Midland Railway up to and including Edea, which place was partially isolated as one span of the first of the two bridges had been destroyed. A detachment at Kribi was protecting that seaport from land attack.

Ships and armed craft of the Allied Navies had visited the whole of the Cameroons seaboard, and had established bases for small craft to patrol the rivers where navigable.

By this time approximately 1,000 male Europeans, only 32 of whom were incapable of bearing arms, had been deported for internment in Europe.

Towards the end of 1914 the French, under General Aymerich, and Belgian troops based on French Equatorial Africa, commenced to make their presence felt in the South and South-East, but my force was separated from them by a distance of approximately 400 miles.

In the North an Allied force was fully occupied in observing Mora and Garua.

At and near Ossidinge a small British force from Nigeria and German forces were in contact.

Notwithstanding the number of troops—British, French, and Belgian—in the country it was impossible at this period to co-ordinate their movements, owing to the vastness of the area over which they were scattered and the impossibility of establishing any means of intercommunication between the various Commanders. Furthermore, it was difficult for me to pursue a very active policy, as it was necessary to maintain comparatively strong garrisons in the places already occupied. Posts on our lines of communications were also absorbing troops from my somewhat depleted force, amongst which sickness was beginning to play its part.

7. It was on the 5th January that the German Commander endeavoured to deliver a serious blow to the French force commanded by Colonel Mayer. Two practically simultaneous attacks were made against his force; the first at Kopongo, on the railway, the second at Edea. I had obtained some knowledge of the German Commander's intention, and the post at Kopongo had been slightly augmented, with the happy result that the attack on this point was easily repulsed, but not until the railway and telegraph lines had both been cut and all communication with Edea severed. The troops at Edea had, however, to bear the brunt of a more serious movement. The locality of Edea is by no means easy to defend owing to the proximity of the forest, the

scattered nature of the buildings, and inequality of the ground; but so skilfully were the defences devised, and so good was the French marksmanship, that at the termination of the combat the Germans left on the field 23 Europeans dead and 190 native soldiers killed and wounded. The French loss consisted of 1 European sergeant and 3 tirailleurs killed and 11 tirailleurs wounded. A machine-gun, number of rifles, ammunition and equipment fell into the French hands. It is significant that this was the first and last occasion on which the Germans attempted an operation of this nature on a comparatively large scale.

Towards the end of January, Lieut.-Colonel (now Brigadier-General) Cunliffe arrived at Duala on a mission from Lagos, and as a result of a conference it was agreed that a more active prosecution of the campaign in the Northern Cameroons should be undertaken. I detached Major (now Lieut.-Colonel) W. D. Wright, V.C., a most able officer, from the staff of the British Contingent under my command and placed his services at the disposal of the Officer Commanding the Allied Forces at Garua. I also arranged with Captain Fuller, R.N., for the despatch of a naval field gun to Yola, *viâ* the Niger and Benue Rivers, for eventual use against the forts at Garua.

The early days of February were marked by great hostile activity in the neighbourhood of Northern Railhead. Lieut.-Colonel Cockburn, commanding a battalion of the Nigeria Regiment, had a serious encounter with the enemy at Mbureku on the morning of the 3rd February, resulting in the capture of the hostile camp, a large quantity of small-arm ammunition, and equipment. We were, however, unable to reap the full advantage of our success, as Lieut.-Colonel Cockburn was obliged to transfer his force to the neighbourhood of Harmann's Farm, where the Sierra Leone Battalion was engaged with the enemy. During these two incidents we lost nearly 120 native soldiers killed, wounded, or missing; but, after we had consolidated our position at Bare, the enemy did not follow up the slight advantage he had gained.

Constant activity during February had failed to gain for us any material advantage to the north of the railway, and there were a series of small incidents which culminated in the second attack by our troops on the points known as Stoebel's and Harmann's Farms on 4th March. I regret that this attack was not successful and we lost some valuable lives, including Major (Lieut.-Colonel) G. P. Newstead, commanding the Sierra Leone Battalion, and Captain C. H. Dinnen, Staff Captain, an officer of great promise. The

enemy must, however, have suffered in a similar degree, as it was later found that he had evacuated his defensive position and retired further north.

During February I received valuable reinforcements from French and British West African Colonies, and I was enabled to reconstitute my force and place a more homogeneous unit at the disposal of Lieut.-Colonel R. A. de B. Rose, commanding the Gold Coast Regiment.

8. On the 12th March a mission from French Equatorial Africa, at the head of which was Monsieur Fourneau, Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Moyen Congo, reached Duala. Its object was to invite my co-operation in an immediate advance, in conjunction with the troops under General Aymerich from south-east and east, against Jaunde. Since the occupation of Duala, Jaunde had been transformed into the temporary seat of the Colonial Administration. I fully realized the political and strategic importance of Jaunde, but demurred embarking on such an operation at that moment. It was late in the season and the rains were already beginning, besides which the troops I was able to employ were insufficient to ensure success in the absence of effective co-operation, in the immediate vicinity of Jaunde, by the troops under General Aymerich. Owing to the difficulty of communication it was quite unsafe to count on this. However, in view of the great advantage which would follow an early occupation of Jaunde, I consented to co-operate with all my available strength, and the 20th April was fixed as the date on which an advance should be made from the line Ngwe-So Dibanga, on the Kele River. I consequently entrained a British force, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Haywood, on 7th April, which was to commence a methodical advance in co-operation with the French troops under Colonel Mayer. The forcing of the line of the Kele River and the position at Ngwe, both of which places were obstinately defended, occasioned my troops some losses. I further found it necessary to despatch a force to Sakbajeme to deny the crossing of the Sanaga River at that place to the enemy. It soon became evident that the enemy was withdrawing troops from other and more distant parts of the Colony to resist our further advance.

At midnight 23rd/24th April the blockade of the Cameroons was declared, and every artifice was used to deceive the enemy, and incessant and unremitting activity was maintained by the Royal Navy on the coast line, so as to induce the enemy to believe that disembarkation would be made at a point from which a force could be marched on Jaunde. Campo had been occupied by a Naval detachment, and boat patrol of the river as far as Dipikar was maintained.

The advance from the line already mentioned was subsequently postponed till 1st May, on which date the French and British columns moved forward to make good Eseka and Wum Biagas respectively.

The French advance on Eseka was conducted with some difficulty, as broken bridges denied them the use of the railway line for supply trains. Commandant Mechet, who conducted the advance, successfully overcame all difficulties, and after being seriously opposed at Sende, reached Eseka on 11th May.

Turning to the British advance, on 1st May Lieut.-Colonel Haywood recommenced his march eastwards from Ngwe, and driving in the hostile outposts at Ndupe, on the 3rd May his force was facing the formidable position which the enemy had established on the left bank of the Mbila River at Wum Biagas. We captured the position on 4th May, but not without serious losses in European officers. A warm tribute is due to the bravery and steadiness displayed by our Native troops, and to the pluck and endurance of the European ranks in face of such stubborn resistance.

As previously arranged, the French force at Eseka now moved north and joined the British at Wum Biagas, and Colonel Mayer left Edea to assume command of the Allied expedition. Stores and supplies were pushed forward by road, and a naval 12-pounder gun was despatched to reinforce our artillery.

Owing to the heavy casualties which had occurred in the ranks of the two battalions of the Nigeria Regiment and the inability of Nigeria, owing to the many calls made by General Cunliffe's troops, to supply me with trained soldiers, I decided towards the end of May to establish a training depôt at Duala. The recruits were enlisted in Nigeria, and transferred to Duala for training. This proved a great success, and by its means 536 soldiers were trained and passed into the ranks.

9. On 11th May I received a message from the Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa, which informed me that the progress of the troops under General Aymerich had not been as rapid as expected, and that as neither Dume nor Lomie had been captured, no definite date could be given for the advance from those places. As I realized that the advance on Jaunde, if delayed for any length of time, would be seriously interfered with by the rains, and the sickness among both Europeans and natives, which was already causing me some anxiety, would rapidly increase, I instructed Colonel Mayer to push on with all vigour, in consequence of which he left Wum Biagas on 25th May.

I regret that supply difficulties soon made themselves evident; the country was barren, and with all available carriers and the few motor vehicles at my disposal, at that time only three, I was unable to transport food for Europeans and natives with sufficient rapidity. Handicapped by the almost impenetrable bush and a terrain which afforded many defensive positions, the advance became exceedingly slow. At every turn of the road the advance was met by machine-gun fire, so that during the 25th and 26th May only 5 miles was made good. It took two days to force the enemy from Njok. The enemy evidently had received reinforcements and commenced to interfere with our line of communication, which was peculiarly susceptible to attack, while the long convoys of carriers were singularly prone to panic. I received an appeal from Colonel Mayer for reinforcements, as in addition to other disabilities dysentery had broken out in his force. I sent forward such troops as were available and took measures to obtain more carriers from the West African Colonies.

From 31st May till 4th June Colonel Mayer was held up at a position at Matern which presented more than usual difficulties owing to the swamps, which rendered a turning movement impossible. By the 5th June only 12 miles from Wum Biagas had been made good. About this date Colonel Mayer informed me that owing to sickness, especially amongst Europeans, and to the stubborn resistance of the enemy, he was of opinion that the further advance of his column on Jaunde was impracticable, and he proposed, pending further instructions, to establish himself on the Puge River, where he could await the approach of General Aymerich's troops. I immediately informed the Governor-General of Equatorial Africa of the situation, adding that unless he had recent news of General Aymerich's advance I should be obliged to withdraw Colonel Mayer's force to the line of the Kele River. On 7th June Governor-General Merlin informed me by telegraph that he had received no further news from the Southern Cameroons. I thereupon decided to withdraw our force to the Ndupe River preparatory to holding a line So Dibanga-Ngwe. A serious attack on one of our convoys of 500 carriers, and the consequent loss of food supplies, decided Colonel Mayer to retire without further delay. During the 16th and 17th June our rearguards were harassed, but never broken, and the enemy suffered considerably in his attacks. I deemed it advisable to send forward a reinforcement of the last troops at my disposal so that the pressure on our withdrawal could be relieved; these troops, after leaving Duala on the morning of the 15th June, bivouacked the following day at Ngui, 35 miles beyond Edea, having completed much of the distance in heavy tropical rains. On the following morning, after resuming their march, they reached

Colonel Mayer's column at a most opportune moment during a heavy attack on the rearguard. Not till 28th June did the hostile activity cease, when our posts were firmly established at Ngwe and on the Kele River at So Dibanga. In comparison to the size of our force the casualties were serious, 25 per cent. being either killed or wounded. I regret that this operation was not more fruitful in results, and I fully recognize the fact that Colonel Mayer was not in a position to undertake, single-handed, an advance on Jaunde, but I had hoped that the pressure that was being brought on the hostile forces in the Southern Cameroons would have had the effect of preventing a concentration against us.

During this period our troops near Northern Railhead were not in a position to undertake any serious offensive action.

10. There was now an unavoidable lull in the operations caused by the rains. I seized this opportunity to send as many British officers and non-commissioned officers as possible to the United Kingdom for a few weeks' rest, and I arranged that most of the native troops from Nigeria and the Gold Coast should, in turn, visit their own Colonies. I managed, however, to send detachments to operate near the Njong and Campo Rivers respectively. A French detachment from Ngwe also carried out a successful reconnaissance in July.

It was on 25th and 26th August 1915, at a conference which took place at Duala between Governor-General Merlin, General Aymerich, and myself, that the plan was decided on by which the Cameroons was eventually conquered.

The fall of Garua, in the north, early in June enabled a British and French force to be set free which could move through the highlands of the Cameroons to the south.

General Aymerich, whose troops were now established at Bertua and Dume, promised definite co-operation, with Jaunde, as before, the objective, whilst a force under Lieut.-Colonel le Meilleur moved parallel to the eastern frontier of Muni, and was to cross the Campo River and move in the direction of Ebolowa. It was also arranged that I should show such activity as was possible from Northern Railhead so as to assist the British force at Ossidinge in its attempt to link up with other troops from Nigeria, and further that a force should land at Campo and move parallel to the northern frontier of Spanish Guinea.

It was unfortunate that Brigadier-General Cunliffe was unable to attend this conference, but all details were communicated to him, and he was asked

to exercise all possible pressure from the north. His rôle was most admirably carried out.

The arrival of the 5th Light Infantry of the Indian Army strengthened my command, and further reinforcements from French West Africa were promised. The General Officer Commanding at Freetown and the Governors of Nigeria and the Gold Coast agreed to send me the carriers I required and to maintain them by monthly drafts. It was thanks to these officers that, in spite of a rather heavy sick roll among carriers, an efficient transport service was maintained throughout. My requirements in motor transport were also met; this service proved invaluable and far exceeded my expectations. Thus by 22nd September preparations were sufficiently far advanced for a move to be made in an easterly direction Many of the earlier operations were a repetition of those which had taken place in May and June, but the general plan differed in so much that I arranged for the British and French lines of supply to be kept distinct, whilst I also determined that Eseka should be made the French advanced base from which operations could be carried forward to the Jaunde-Kribi road, and that our general advance should be carried out by means of parallel columns by road and railway. Our communications needed much repair, including the total reconstruction of a heavy railway bridge and a deviation necessitating considerable labour on earthwork. Many other smaller bridges were broken or destroyed; those on the road were made fit for heavy traffic, those on the railway were practically rebuilt.

The British force, as previously, experienced stiff resistance at Wum Biagas, but on 9th October that place was captured after a lively action, in which the Nigerian and Gold Coast troops once more distinguished themselves. From here we were enabled to send out flanking columns and render some assistance to the French troops who were fighting their way to Eseka. The Kele River, in flood, proved a formidable obstacle, and its crossing somewhat delayed the British flanking columns sent out from Wum Biagas. Sende was occupied by the French on 25th October, and the enemy was driven from Eseka on 30th October. Considerable rolling stock, left behind after our previous advance, was retaken, and proved a valuable addition to our exiguous supply of engines and wagons. By 23rd November, both British and French forces were ready for the final advance, the bush track from Edea to Wum Biagas had been converted into a good motor road, and through railway communication, Duala-Eseka, was nearing completion. There were also over 7,000 carriers employed on such sections of the communications as were still unfit for motor or rail traffic. Dschang Mangas was selected as the primary objective of the British force, whilst the French

were directed to make good the line of the Jaunde-Kribi road. Both forces slightly modified their tactics, and the advance was generally carried out by a main body, with two wings moving on as wide a front as the nature of the country permitted. The method of our advance appears to have entirely disconcerted the enemy and, although he still continued strenuously to resist our advance, it became apparent that his strength was gradually becoming exhausted. Towards the end of November the fighting in and around Lesogs by the troops under Lieut.-Colonel Cockburn was of a very severe nature, but the troops from the Northern Provinces of Nigeria gallantly rose to the occasion and, despite all difficulties of the country, were not to be denied in their endeavour to dislodge the enemy. Much credit is due to these troops and their leaders for the admirable conduct of this operation. Ngung was reached on the 30th November, and, up to this place, every defensive position was disputed by the enemy. On 7th December the advance on Dschang Mangas was continued and both main and flank columns were subject to opposition. A well executed move by a small force of the Gold Coast Regiment, under Captain Butler, V.C., considerably disturbed the enemy; the capture of one of his machine-guns and several thousand rounds of ammunition, in addition to important documents, produced considerable effect. On 17th December the more open and cultivated country was reached and we took Dschang Mangas.

From 26th November onwards the French were fighting their way through very broken country to Mangeles; they had to face determined opposition and lost a considerable number of European and native soldiers, but their tenacity of purpose was rewarded by the capture of Mangeles on 21st December, after intermittent fighting covering a period of five days. The column halted at this place for rest and to establish a supply depôt.

11. I must now indicate the turn that events had taken beyond Northern Railhead. I was informed from Nigeria that the British force at Ossidinge, under Major Crookenden, would be prepared to move on Bamenda on 12th October. I therefore ordered a force consisting of portions of the West African Regiment, 5th Light Infantry, and some artillery, under Lieut.-Colonel Cotton, 5th Light Infantry, to move on Dschang from Bare, also starting on 12th October. Hostile opposition was experienced at Mwu and Nkam Rivers and from an entrenched position at Sanschu. On 6th November Dschang was occupied. On receipt of information that Major Crookenden's force had reached Bamenda on 22nd October I ordered Lieut.-Colonel Cotton to leave a garrison in Dschang and move a force to Bagam to co-operate with Major Crookenden in an attack on that place. The enemy had, however, forestalled us and withdrawn to Fumban, whither we pursued him

after experiencing some difficulty in effecting the crossing of the Nun River. On 2nd December the important centre of Fumban was occupied and an abortive effort of the enemy to retake it was frustrated. Brigadier-General Cunliffe, foreseeing the possibility of obstinate resistance at Fumban, had directed two other small columns to co-operate in our movement on that place. These columns arrived almost simultaneously with that under Lieut.-Colonel Cotton. Major Crookenden's troops then continued their advance under Brigadier-General Cunliffe's direction, whilst I placed garrisons in Fumban, Bana, and Bagam, and the bulk of Lieut.-Colonel Cotton's troops returned to railhead. I was thus enabled to withdraw a small force to move from Nkongsamba to Jabassi and penetrate the Bafia country, where I still believed there were small hostile parties. I also was enabled to detach a force to assist the French column operating from Campo. I think I may consider our operations in the Northern area were entirely satisfactory, and the simultaneous advance of our columns took the heart out of the remnants of the enemy forces in that district. Furthermore, we had established touch with Brigadier-General Cunliffe's columns, which were now converging on the Sanaga River, at a point known as the Nachtigal Rapids. Our losses were slight and the health of all ranks was considerably better than that of the troops fighting in the lower altitudes.

12. Reverting to the operations of the main forces. On receiving information that the British force had arrived at Dschang Mangas, I decided that it would be more advantageous to move on Jaunde direct, rather than await the French advance to the Jaunde-Kribi road. In arriving at this decision I was influenced by the fact that the mind of the native does not understand the meaning nor necessity of delay, and from a political point of view the early occupation of Jaunde appeared to be all important. From 22nd December, the hostile resistance gradually weakened, strongly entrenched positions were abandoned, and on the morning of the 1st January Colonel Gorges entered Jaunde with his force. The enemy appeared to have completely broken under the pressure which he was now experiencing from all sides. Allied troops from the north, troops from French Equatorial Africa and the Belgian Congo commenced to arrive in Jaunde during the first week in January. It is, I think, a remarkable feat that troops that had fought and marched for a period of seventeen months should have converged on their objective within a few days of one another.

The direct effect of the occupation of Jaunde was to relieve all pressure in front of the French force advancing from Mangeles, the Jaunde-Kribi road being reached early in January. British and French forces were moved during the first week in January to Widemenge and in the direction of

Ebolowa *viâ* Olama and Onana Besa crossings of the Njong River. At Koi Maka, Lieut.-Colonel Haywood succeeded in securing the release of officers, non-commissioned officers, civilian and native non-combatants who had been taken prisoners by the Germans at various times during the war; his force, supported by a strong French column, continued its advance on Ebolowa, on which place a second Allied column was also advancing. A French force under Lieut.-Colonel Faucon occupied Ebolowa on 19th January, after experiencing some slight resistance. The definite move of the remnants of the German forces towards Spanish territory now became apparent, and Lieut.-Colonel Haywood proceeded with all despatch to follow them up as far as Nkan, from which place I diverted him *viâ* Efulen on Kribi, in order to clear the western area of stragglers. A British force was also moved to Lolodorf.

Colonel Morisson took command of a strong French force, and, moving towards the Spanish frontier, succeeded in driving the German force in front of him across the Campo River into neutral territory. A similar operation was conducted by the French force which had operated from Campo, so that by the middle of February no Germans were left in the Cameroons, and the conquest of the country had been completed. . . .

C. M. DOBELL,
Major-General,
Commanding the Allied Forces.

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TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Nelson's History of the War Vol. 13* by John Buchan]