

II

AT THE BACK OF THE FRONT: DUNKIRK AND YPRES

IN June, 1915, it was the pride of the Section in Flanders, Section 1, to feel that it had come closer to war than any other division of the American Ambulance. In June, 1916, the point of pride is to know that those first intense experiences have long since been duplicated and eclipsed. The competitive principle does not enter, naturally; the significance is that in this twelvemonth the service of the Americans has been steadily extended and vitalized. And in attempting to express here something of the whole through one of its parts, I need only suggest that the initial adventure in the North, comprehending in a few crowded weeks a fairly full range of experience behind the lines, perhaps still stands as typical and illustrative of all the rest.

In Dunkirk we witnessed, and within our powers tried to cope with, what yet remains, I believe, the most sensational artillery exploit in history. It is remembered that the little cars of the Americans often ran those empty streets, and pursued those deafening detonations, alone. Here, at our base, we shared the life of a town under sporadic, but devastating, bombardment; forward, in Elverdinghe, we shared the life of a town under perpetual, and also devastating, bombardment; still further forward, in Ypres, we be-