

increased. But its chill was nothing to that cold, slow death of hope that numbed all France. For it became momentarily more apparent that those at the head of affairs were incompetent—that the man upon whom hope had been placed was nothing but a talker, a man of words, an orator, a wind-bag. France, who has usually led the way in the world's progress, had entered upon that period of words—that Age of Talk—in which she still labours, and which must inevitably be the ruin of all her greatness.

For two weeks Lory lay in the improvised German field hospital in that remote village, and made the astounding progress towards recovery which is the happy privilege of the light-hearted. It is said among soldiers that a foe is no longer a foe when he is down, and de Vasselot found himself among friends.

The German doctor wrote a letter for him.

"It will be good practice for my French," said the artless Teuton, quite frankly. And the letter was sent, but never reached its destination. Lory could learn no news, however. In war there are, not two, but three sides to a question. Each combatant has one, and Truth has the third, which she often locks up for ever in her quiet breast.

At last, one morning quite early, a horseman dismounted at the door of the house in the village street, where the hospital flag hung lazily in the still, frosty air.