

# THE IRRESISTIBLE FORCE HAS BEGUN

## *When Britain Takes Her Turn*

By THE MAN IN SPECTACLES

THE Irresistible Force has begun. Fifty square miles of the Immovable Object has moved. The Battle of the Somme begun on the 49th birthday of Canada at 7.30 a.m., sticks out in the imagination with the same lively hue as the Battle of the Marne. It is the absolute and glorious contrast to the so-called Battle of the Aisne. The Marne was almost an incredible fluke. The Aisne was the beginning of the equally incredible deadlock—so-called. The Somme is the beginning of whatever phase the experts may choose to call it in the evolution of the queerest war that was ever known to a mankind.

The Somme sums up in one day what the British Empire has done in less than two years in perfecting a war machine, fit to strike harder, and, if need be, oftener and with bigger single and immediate results than any of the other war machines in Europe. The bombardments that preceded and accompanied the Battle of the Somme were the most terrific in this war of gigantic bombardments.

But why were these British spending so many shells a minute in such a bombardment? The Germans may have suspected. They had been given advance notice that there would be a big general offensive—somewhere along the line. The general bombardment along the whole British front was part of the plan to keep the enemy guessing as to just where the general offensive might strike. But the German war lords laughed uncomfortably and said the British never would do it on any scale commensurate with the war. The British were far too gentlemanly a nation of warriors to put much faith in high explosives.

So the Germans made themselves believe because for more than a year it was a matter of common observation that the British were not a striking nation on land. It was admitted by even the most optimistic of Britishers, even by the experts, that Britain had no kind of machine for long enough after the war began that could strike back in any such way as the German war lords were smiting the world. Those Germans up from the Rhine had cause to imagine themselves the modern representatives of Thor with his hammer and old Vulcan in his underworld smithy. They had smashed us and we had not smashed back. Two or three times we made a feint of smashing, but it was only popgunnery as compared to the tremendous cataclysms of high explosives that came from the German side.

So there were people—Dr. Dillon and others—who

began to talk about deadlock and stalemate. They said that modern entrenchments could not be blown up by the British artillery in sufficient strength to match what the Germans were blowing up. Sheffield and Birmingham and Newcastle could not catch up on Krupp. The Germans had accumulated too much reserve of materials. The war factories of Germany were too well organized. It was only a few years ago that Krupp von Bohlen was shown through the munition plants of England. He saw—little and much; enough to convince him that England had not learned the business of making great land guns.

And it was believed in Germany that before the leisurely democratic and parliament-haggling Briton could learn this greater game than parliamenteering the war could be won by Germany. The interference of Great Britain on land in a great European war would be only a fleabite at the most. There was to be such speed and intensity and underworld violence about the German conduct of war that no organization of British munition-shops ever could become effective soon enough.

Britain might organize an army—Kitchener's Mob. But that mob would not be effective because it would not be trained and munitioned in time. The war must end in Germany's favour about the time perhaps that the war machine of Britain has been perfected to a point where it could be of no more use for a generation than to be a defunct spectacle. And by the time the Germans had worked their will on Europe the art of war on land, like war on water and war in the air, would have changed again and the British war machine would be scrapped along with the British Empire.

Well, it was all very obvious to the war-lords of the Rhine. And it was almost obvious to some of the pessimists on the Thames and the St. Lawrence. It was a long while to wait. The game of nibbling begun by Joffre and carried out by the British army was a long and tedious game. The deadlock built itself up. And the German machine seemed to

thrive on it. Kitchener's great army was organized. But what could it do. The war, said the experts, would be won not by men but by big guns. England and Kitchener went on believing that after the last big gun had smashed the last trench on either side the war would be won by the side having the greatest number of effective men armed with rifles and machine guns and bayonets and hand grenades to follow up the path blazed by the artillery. England and Lloyd George and Kitchener went on with Joffre believing that the iron mines and coal mines and the mines of British and French labour could be organized on as big a scale as the war organization of Germany; that the machine of Mars in England, added to that in France and Russia, could in a reasonable time be consolidated into a unit that some day would be the Irresistible Force.

And at last the Force has begun to operate. In less than two years Britain has accomplished the unbelievable as she always does. In July, 1916, the British war machine is beginning to be capable of co-operating with the French in forcing offensives. It is no longer a business of holding desperately on to keep the Germans from breaking through as it used to be. It is a programme to dislodge the German underground armies, to drive them out of Belgium and France, to loosen the stranglehold of the Central Empires on Europe, and as soon as possible to transfer the battlegrounds to the region of the Rhine.

We have no idea how long it will take the Allies to bring the Germans to that stage of fighting, or how long the Germans may choose to fight after that backward movement into Rhineland territory has begun. But we do know that in the Battle of the Somme the character of the war has changed. The great initiative now lies with the Allies. The British armies in reserve are strong enough to keep up the wastage in the 1,250,000 men now on the 100-mile British front. And we have reason to believe that the reserve of munitions from both Birmingham and Creusot is great enough to back up the armies. The Allies on the west front have developed momentum—mass in motion. The Germans are no longer able to back up their immense reserves of munitions with men enough to withstand the momentum of the Allies. And in the last stage of the programme of the Irresistible Force we have reason to believe that Britain's land army and Britain's navy and Britain's munition-shops will be the determining factor.

# THE SEVENTH PLATOON'S SUB!

By BRITTON B. COOKE

GOOD, workable, non-friction-bearing lieutenants are made, not born, and not all of them are made in heaven. Though really first-class non-com's, on the other hand, are born—and not too often at that, a lieutenant in a Canadian Overseas battalion is the collaborated product of a tailor, an infantry school, the book of the King's Rules, the colonel and his platoon. Than such a product when new—this, of course, does not refer to the men who have won their commissions in France—there is nothing much more to be dreaded, except possibly Beri-Beri, and there is a cure for that. For self consciousness he surpasses a freshly-caught shop-lifter and in quiet assurance he completely eclipses the valedictorian of a ladies' college. He is as obviously greedy for social fame, even a little on account, as a drummer boy blowing smoke-rings for the amusement of the girl in his favourite candy shop, but not nearly so human. He looks fit to like—uniform improves any man, to say nothing of six weeks' drilling—yet he courts personal assault every time he remembers his third eye-brow. His leather-wrapped calves, blushing before the world for the first time since his mother tubbed him, smell of varnish and his "Sam Brown" of harness-dressing, with which and a little garden soil, the batman has been trying, under orders, to do away with the marks of painful newness. His gait is a cross between Jove issuing from the front door of Olympus at noon under the eye of Juno and other Olympian ladies, and the same but a sadder Jove ascending the backstairs of his residential mountain, at a late hour. He is bold and timid, fearless and quaking, condescending and at the same time greatly afraid he will be overlooked. If one could one would not think of him in this state. But it is the tender beginning of a great development of which the finest kind of manly courage is the flower.

"MASTER" MATHERS, of the seventh platoon, in the Eat-'em-alive Battalion, was promoted and transferred to the Send-'em-to-Glory Battalion, so the seventh platoon of the Eat-'em-alive battalion had no lieutenant and rejoiced loudly. The C. O. meantime had written one Charles Fitzmaurice Jones, formerly of Horning's Mills, Ontario, now of Toronto, to report to him if he wanted to be given a real "command" and a gambler's chance of getting overseas and into France, mayhap Germany itself. Charles Fitzmaurice Jones' father owned a snug little tannery up in Horning's Mills and a half interest in a bob-tailed local weekly that has helped pry a Grit into Parliament ever since a Tory was made postmaster up at the back-end of the riding, and Jones' senior had just enough "social" and political standing, one way and another, to require to be placated. Hence Charles Fitzmaurice's commission and the willingness of the Eat-'em-alive's C. O. to appoint him to the command of the seventh platoon in his battalion.

Charles Fitzmaurice was tall, thick and broad. He had a big bull jaw and a nose like a daub of putty on the side of carpenter shop, except that it was brown and hairy—all the Jones' had hair on the ends of their noses. His ears fairly fanned the air in their eagerness to get ahead. His blue eyes had lily white lashes that winked and blinked—as pretty as you please. And he had large, spreading hands like digitated hams, and a ring with a red glass stone in it that his grandfather had found in a pig lately dead by the grandfather's own hand, and treasured as a family ruby. The Eat-'em-alive's C. O. had seen and liked this lumbering soup-bone of a lad and had

added this liking to his sense of duty to Charles Fitzmaurice's father up in Horning's Mills tannery. But the seventh platoon eyed the new lieutenant with only half-clad contempt, came to attention with something like a hiss—it may just have been their heels accidentally scraping the ground—and bode ill time. It spent the first night after Charles Fitzmaurice arrived shredding his character. It called him names one should shudder to recall, and the awful significance it attached to Jones' pale lashes would have blighted any man's life had he known them.

Charles' tailor had "done for" him nicely with Bedford cord breeches and a fitted-in waist that an athletic heifer might have envied. He had rashly blown himself to Strathcona boots before consulting the authorities, but now had to abandon these for leather leggings, which are cheaper and less torturous to get into and out of. His muscles bulged under them. Though thick, Charles Fitzmaurice was not without good lines amidships. Barbered and Greek-boyed, he dared the world to scoff. On his off-afternoons he cruised Yonge Street, and King Street, anchored occasionally in a fashionable tea-hole or a haberdasher's, smoked elegantly and was ready to patronize any pretty woman who felt her eyes irresistibly drawn toward that towering frame.

The seventh platoon formed plans for redeeming its lieutenant, beginning by deliberately and by pre-arranged plans misunderstanding every other order the lieutenant issued. When accused the men looked hurt and stood by one another, even to the non-coms, in claiming they all heard the order the lieutenant had not given. Once or twice these things came under the eye of the colonel and the colonel emitted a few hasty generalizations on keeping up discipline, but all sotto voce and for the benefit of Jones only. At first Jones was highly indignant and "called" his men