

A VISIT TO THE FRONT

"We chose this hour," our Captain explained earnestly, "because naturally we do not wish to expose you more than is necessary. We are going in the trenches opposite the English, and at that hour things are more quiet than at any other time of the day; it is the hour when the English breakfast, and they don't like to be disturbed at their meals."

Villalobar gave me an amused glance. And then we drove away through the darkness of the park—bearded Bavarian sentinels saluting, and a spy in civilian dress emerging from the bushes under the trees, snatching off his hat, and standing stiffly at attention as we rode by and through the great gates.

We went to the hotel, asked to be called at five-thirty—four-thirty our time—and at once retired. When I reached my room and opened the window I could hear the booming of the heavy guns and when I got to bed I discovered that there were two town clocks in Lille within striking distance of each other, and between the ugly booming of the guns and the striking of the clocks it was not easy to get to sleep.

I was awakened by a terrible cannonade, in the midst of which I heard German voices calling to each other across the courtyard which my room overlooked. It was dawn, and, looking out of my window, I saw an aeroplane soaring high overhead and all about it the exploding shrapnel. I could hear the roar of the motor, the whistle and shriek of the shells, and presently to this noise there was added the drumming of *mitrailleuse*. It was weird, there in the silent dawn, in that French provincial hotel. From every window frowsy, sleepy, yellow German heads were thrust out. Two German soldiers were on the roof, one of whom I identified as