

THREE TIMES AND OUT

CHAPTER I

HOW IT STARTED

"ENGLAND has declared war on Germany!"

We were working on a pumphouse, on the Columbia River, at Trail, British Columbia, when these words were shouted at us from the door by the boss carpenter, who had come down from the smelter to tell us that the news had just come over the wire.

Every one stopped work, and for a full minute not a word was spoken. Then Hill, a British reservist who was my work-mate, laid down his hammer and put on his coat. There was neither haste nor excitement in his movements, but a settled conviction that gave me a queer feeling. I began to argue just where we had left off, for the prospect of war had been threshed out for the last two days with great thoroughness. "It will be settled," I said. "Nations cannot go to war now. It would be suicide, with all the modern methods of destruction. It will be settled by a war council — and all forgotten in a month."

Hill, who had argued so well a few minutes ago and told us all the reasons he had for expecting war with Germany, would not waste a word on me now. England was at war — and he was part of England's war machine.