

III.

IN Ham, a charming little town, at last we find houses again. Like Noyon, this was a place of refuge where the people of the destroyed villages were collected. But here also the Germans were resolved to make their departure felt: the houses are emptied from cellar to garret. Everything that could not be carried off, like tables and chairs, has been smashed with axes where it stood, or with pickaxes, by gangs of soldiers led by officers. A sort of delirium, a frenzy seized them. Those who saw are still shaken by it . . . Half an hour before they left four lieutenants ran through the streets, firing their revolvers at the house-fronts and breaking the windows with stones.

"Madmen, monsieur," says an old woman again and again.

None the less these old people are willing to do justice to those who have so savagely ruined them. They admit freely that the Germans in no way hindered America's work of provisioning the people, and say that in many cases, on the contrary, they gave it their help. They say that among them was a remarkable number of kindly, benevolent men, who deplored the hardships of war and at times did their utmost to soften them. But the moment they began to talk of their departure all these men, headed by their officers and non-commissioned officers, suddenly became furious madmen. The sound of explosions, the blaze of fires became part of daily life. They egged themselves on