

mans in an indescribable and unmentionable state of filth and destruction. The tapestries, curtains, pictures and carpets were slashed and torn and the grand piano, a beautiful instrument, had evidently been broken up by a hand-grenade exploded inside it. These were the least of their excesses. This wanton and malicious spirit of destruction, a spirit of blind, drunken, stupid hatred — for such acts affected nothing of military importance—one found all along the trail of the retreating Germans. The roads through to Spa were at that time in a terrible condition, soft and very badly cut-up by the passage of the enemy's heavy tractor guns and howitzers. The road up the Meuse valley was just a river of mud, and I doubt whether, even at Passchendaele, where our Despatch Riders did such wonderful service, they ever had a more difficult job than keeping up communication between General Headquarters at Montreuil and Advanced G.H.G. at Spa. We were stopped at one time by engine-trouble, and a Canadian Despatch Rider, who came along from the direction of Spa, stopped and helped us. He told us that he had taken a run that morning over the German frontier. He had on his machine a signboard from a German barber's shop, which he had insisted on taking as a trophy. We advised him to keep quiet about it, at any rate for a few days, for we were not to enter Germany until December 13th. In all the villages and towns behind the German lines, at every turn, you were continually met by notices saying "Unterstand 10 Mann", (Shelter for ten men), evidence of the effect of our long-distance bombing raids in the last eighteen months of the war. The line of the valley of the Meuse seemed a series of enormously strong natural positions and only the small initial opposition could have enabled the Germans to get across it so quickly. One could not help thinking that if, at the

beginning, instead of trying to rush infantry up to meet the enemy, a few field companies of engineers had been employed on destructive work on railways, roads and bridges, such work as the Germans so ably carried out in 1918, the enemy would never have got through so far on their rush towards Paris and the coast. The delay would have been too great, their lines of communication too precarious.

Spa we found to be a particularly pretty place, lying in a hollow, surrounded by beautifully wooded hills. It has many fine hotels and pensions and during the greater part of the war was used by the Germans as a convalescent station for their wounded, particularly, I understand, for "gassed" cases, as the air there is very good for the lungs. In the period before the Armistice it had been used as General Headquarters. When we arrived in Spa there were still hundreds of Germans there, officers and men, who were working on the Armistice Commission. It seemed very strange indeed to be moving about the same streets as our late enemies. No salutes were exchanged when we met, except when the Germans took the initiative. In the pension, where I was quartered, the Germans were certainly not popular, and my landlady's outpourings concerning her recent and unwelcome lodgers were long and bitter. They must have been a great change after the wealthy and innocent people she used to take in—in more senses than one—before the war.

The instructions regarding our work in the occupied territory were vague. We were given to understand that the forces of the Allies were to make a demonstration of force on the Rhine and bring home to the German mind the fact that their armies had been completely beaten. But the hopeful aspirations of some of the younger soldiers of being able to playfully shake the "iron heel" over a cowed and submissive civilian population were roughly nipped in the bud