

A VISIT TO THE FRONT

moment. But by the irresistible attraction of the subject with which the very atmosphere throbbed, the conversation inevitably veered round to it, as the needle, oscillating an instant, turns unerringly to the magnetic pole. And the Count introduced the topic by saying:

"Si vous autres en Amérique n'aviez pas fourni les munitions aux Alliés, la guerre aurait été finie il y a longtemps."

I decided to end it there and then. I looked at him and said:

"Ne le prenez pas sur ce ton, je vous prie!" He laughed, and we did not discuss munitions of war, nor war at all.

The Crown Prince finished his chat with Lancken after a while, and, seating himself, signed to us all that we might be seated, and beckoned to me to draw up my chair. Villalobar and I then sat on either side of him, and he sent my Count out to see what the news of the day was. His Royal Highness was very amiable. He addressed me in English, with an apology, saying he could not speak the language very well, that he had been out of practise for a long time; but as a matter of fact he spoke it remarkably well, though presently he drifted into French. He told us about his many voyages, especially about his visit to America; and said that he hoped after the war was over to make another visit to America, for he was deeply interested in many of our institutions. He said that it was good of us to have come down to visit his command and that he had tried to arrange a comprehensive itinerary for us, that naturally it was difficult to see everything in the course of one day, but he trusted that we should not find it uninteresting.