

TO THE READER

IN "The Last Shot," which appeared only a few months before the Great War began, drawing from my experience in many wars, I attempted to describe the character of a conflict between two great European land-powers, such as France and Germany.

"You were wrong in some ways," a friend writes to me, "but in other ways it is almost as if you had written a play and they were following your script and stage business."

Wrong as to the duration of the struggle and its bitterness; right about the part which artillery would play; right in suggesting the stalemate of intrenchments when vast masses of troops occupied the length of a frontier. Had the Germans not gone through Belgium and attacked on the shorter line of the Franco-German boundary, the parallel of fact with that of prediction would have been more complete. As for the ideal of "The Last Shot," we must await the outcome to see how far it shall be fulfilled by a lasting peace.

Then my friend asks, "How does it make you feel?" Not as a prophet; only as an eager observer, who finds that imagination pales beside reality. If sometimes an incident seemed a page out of my novel, I was reminded how much better I might have done that page from life; and from life I am writing now.

I have seen too much of the war and yet not enough to assume the pose of a military expert; which is easy when seated in a chair at home before maps and news despatches, but becomes fantastic after one has lived