

Quiet England in War Time

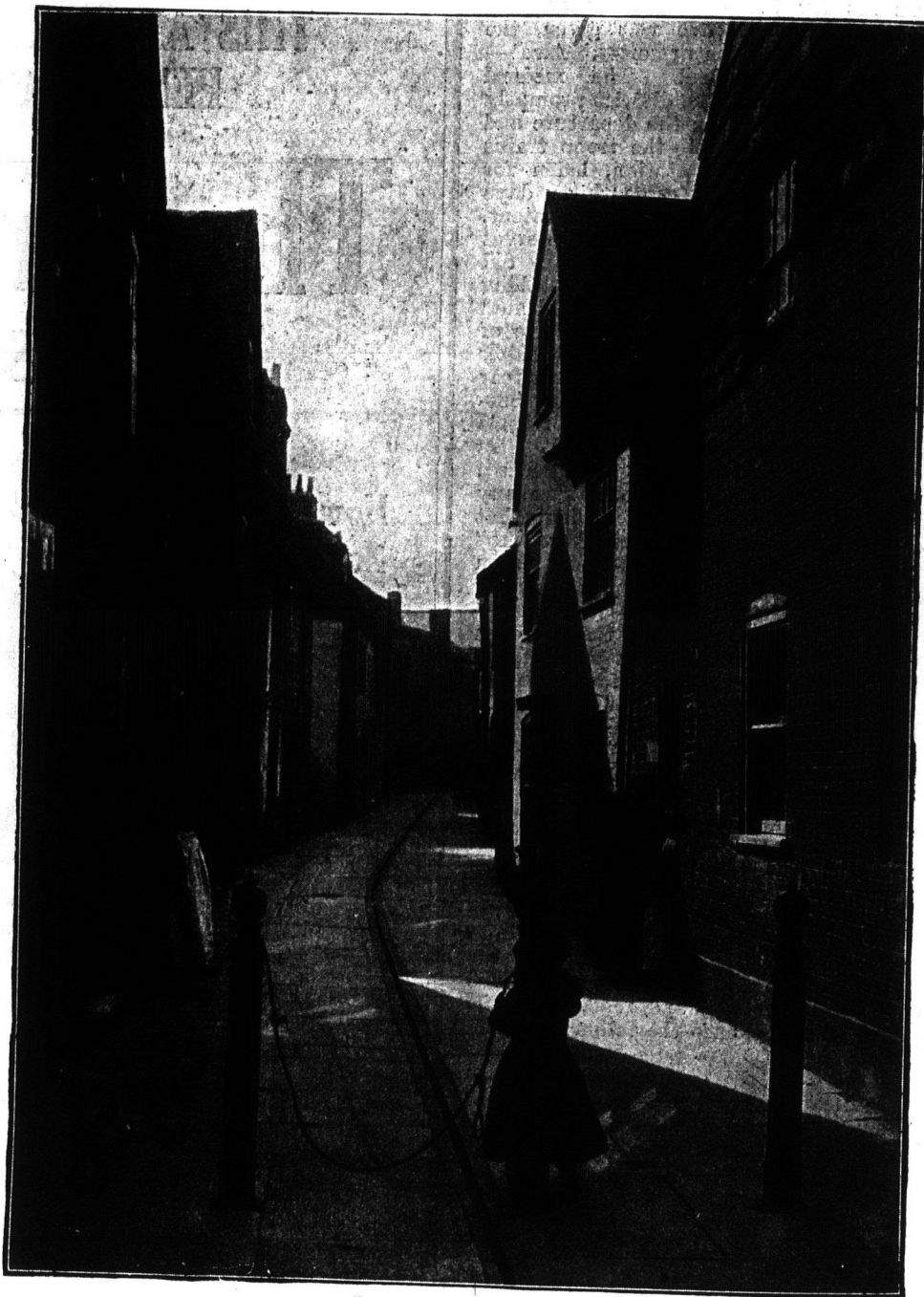
By Aubrey Fullerton

THIS gratifying and steady to us in the busy West to know that in the home-land things still go well and calmly. Even in wartime there is a quiet, peaceful England. It is not England of the cities—of which, naturally enough, one hears most these days—but England of the country parts, away from the Zeppelin raids and labor strikes. Some of the country, such as that of the seaboard counties facing the North Sea, has had its excitements; but in the south and west, rural England is still undisturbed. There, as everywhere, the war is keenly felt, and is being constantly talked about; but it is creating less commotion, and arousing less visible activity, than in those other parts where the atmosphere is almost entirely military and quiet a thing impossible.

There are, for instance, the two south coast counties of Sussex and Dorset, whose

and the character of the people. For this is at once the very heart of rural England and the oldest of it, where the lay of the land and more than a thousand years of history have combined to make a present-day life unlike that of any other part. War-time could hardly mean the same here, under any conditions: but it is particularly interesting to contrast the conditions that we know obtain generally just now with the normal life and habits of these south coast counties that are so near to England's war-cloud and yet so far from its alarming gloom.

Dorset and Sussex are quiet. They are always quiet, always pleasantly restful and comfortable. That is not to say that they are unmindful of the war, or that they have not been touched by it. It is true that the English farming districts have not done as well for Britain's fighting forces as rural Scotland has done, but



In Poole, Dorset

geographical situation gives them a measure of war insurance. One cannot imagine a panic in Dorset like that in York when Scarborough was raided; and while the green fields of Sussex run to only the Channel's width from mainland Europe it is the friendly coast of France, not any enemy land, that fronts them. There is no immediate reason why either Sussex or Dorset should be over-nervous. Between these two seaboard counties is another not so immune from excitement. Hampshire is more directly concerned in the details of war management, for Portsmouth, its capital city, is not only a military stronghold but the headquarters of the British navy. The great admiralty yards at Portsmouth are now constantly filling and emptying of ordnance stores, and the magnificent harbor is alive with navy traffic. Here, if anywhere, is wartime bustle.

Something of this busy interest is reflected, of course, in Hampshire's neighboring counties on either side, but it wears away as one gets into the remoter parts. It is not a matter of location only: there is, besides, the nature of the country itself

they have made a much better showing, proportionately, than the English industrial districts, and have sent away so many recruits that the ranks of farm workers have been very seriously depleted.

Sussex itself has given of its ablest men in such numbers that, as an emergency measure, it has exempted boys over twelve from attendance at public school, in order that they may work on the farms. That is how the war, in a most direct and painful way, has come home to rural England.

The effect has been to accentuate the quietness of the whole countryside. Even in normal times there seemed a comparative scarcity of men, who had a way of being about their farming when one passed through, and now, of course, what seemed to be has become a fact. Things go smoothly enough, but soberly. There is a hush that comes not only from the hills but from the hearts of the people. Yet there is no panic, no disquieting excitement.

It is not to be supposed that these quiet places see nothing of the soldiery, when all the rest of England sees so much

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