

Through a Monocle

Our Boys--What Next?

OUR boys are off for "the front." That is exactly where they are off for, unless the war suffers a sudden and wholly unlikely collapse. As I write, there is no indication as to what will be done with the Canadian regiments—that is another of the countless military secrets. But my guess is that, as soon as they can be licked into shape, they will be forwarded to a post of honour. Everything points to the existence of a settled policy on the part of the British Government to hurry every ounce of fighting strength she can collect to the critical points in this terrific land struggle. We did not know when her first expeditionary force went, or how many it contained. We do not know how rapidly it is being supplemented. But we do know that our force has been in action and lost heavily—that the "reservists" are being called out—that the Channel ports are shrouded in secrecy—that there is every indication that the British Government realizes that it is in a battle for the life of the Empire, and that no effort will be neglected which can possibly turn that battle in our favour.

OF course, our hastily assembled regiments will not be sent under fire until they have learned co-operation and the necessary details of drill to make them effective fighters. But the "hurry up" messages from London show that, in a war like this, every day counts; and that good material, like our contingent, will not be allowed to waste itself in idleness when it is so imperatively needed in the unceasing battle in progress. The enormous casualty figures that are coming in are so colossal that we can hardly realize what they mean. The Germans do not spare human life in their effort to win decisive victories. The maw of war was never so glutted with blood. Only by the greatest sacrifices are the Allies able to hold their positions; and this frightful destruction of human "war machines" means that they must be constantly and swiftly replaced if the contest is to continue. It is no case

of waiting to see if they may be needed—more men are needed now than can be got.

THAT our boys will prefer to see active service I know perfectly well. They have enlisted for war. Most of them realize, far better than do those of us who are staying at home, what tremendous issues are at stake in this war; and they have come forward to do real fighting on behalf of the flag, the cause and the country whose safety they see menaced. But it is just as well for us to understand now that, barring an unexpected peace, they will get their wish and find themselves side by side with the embattled troops of Britain, France and Belgium. This will mean costly casualty lists for us to read—and bear. This will mean laconic messages to Canadian homes that a son, a brother, a husband, even a father, has "fallen upon the field of honour." They may not know in what part of the horrible welter of blood that "field of honour" lies. They cannot even imagine their dead as near this or that name on the map. But they will know that they died for their country, as Britons have died before all along this war-swept field of conflict.

UNLESS the war goes early in our favour, I look to see many more men leave from Canada for its tragic scenes. The promptness with which the British Government ceased to trim and twiddle about whether or not it would send an "expeditionary force" to the Continent—whether its treaty obligations would compel it to help France—whether that "expeditionary force," if the "pacifists" would let us send one, would be 120,000 or only 80,000—showed us that it realized that this was no business of standing on the letter of our obligations, but a grim necessity to fight with all our strength for the life of our Empire. Britain is not an outside contributor to this war, nicely weighing "understandings" and "ententes." She is one of the most deeply engaged principals; and she has staked her existence, and all she holds dear, on the outcome of the conflict. That being true, she will rush every man she can into the fight in these first and decisive stages of the con-

lict while it is still possible to win victories—and not merely to cover retreats.

VERY important it is for us to feel the reality and the gravity of the struggle. We simply cannot afford to lose this war. If every man and every dollar in the country must be poured out to win, we must make the sacrifice. Some of us may have felt, to begin with, that the professional army of Britain could quite sufficiently represent us on the Continent; and that all Canada need do would be to supply garrisons for the British ports and so release that army. That was before we fully appreciated the enormous task before us, and the unlimited nature of our risk. Now it is only simple justice to the men who have volunteered to go, upon the theory that they will see actual service, to tell ourselves plainly that they will be under the fire of German guns as soon as they are drilled into efficiency. They should get the full credit of their courage, and their families the full appreciation.

LORD KITCHENER has given the Empire a very plain hint of what it can do, and must do, if the struggle prove a long one. By avoiding conscription and depending upon a professional army, supported by volunteers, we have paralyzed our military arm at the outset of hostilities. That is, we have not been able to put in the field an army at all approaching the strength of the conscript armies which the other combatants have contributed. This is not the time to debate the "pros" and "cons" of that policy. But its effects are with us. And one of the effects is that we have an immense untouched reserve to draw upon which the military nations lack. This is a mighty poor satisfaction to those of us who realize that Britain might have prevented this war if she had had a large army; but we should make the most of our position, be it worthy or unworthy. And to make the most, we should start at once to enlist and drill and equip that reserve. If we have not been able to arrive on the first battle-fields with a military strength to be expected of a first-class Power, let us get ready to arrive on later battle-fields with fresh troops—if the war last long enough for us to get them ready. We can at least pay the trifling insurance premium of getting them ready as rapidly as possible; and we should do this in Canada as surely as in the British Isles.

THE MONOCLE MAN.



BRITISH SOLDIERS LANDING IN BOULOGNE.

One of the pictures of which there is a scarcity owing to the policy of mystery which has covered the transportation of troops from England to France. The waggons are loaded with "floats" for temporary bridges.