

HOME FIRES IN FRANCE

NOTES FROM A FRENCH VILLAGE IN THE WAR ZONE

PERHAPS the first thing which brought our boys to a halt, and a long, long look around them, was the age of the place. Apparently it has—the statement is hardly exaggerated—always been there. As a matter of historical fact it has been there for more than a thousand years. On hearing that, the American boys always gasped. They were used to the conception of the great age of “historical” spots, by which they meant cities in which great events have occurred—Paris, Rome, Stratford-on-Avon, Granada. But that an inconsiderable settlement of a thousand inhabitants, where nothing in particular ever happened beyond the birth, life, and death of its people, should have kept its identity through a thousand years gave them, so they said, “a queer feeling.” As they stood in the quiet gray street, looking up and down, and taking in the significance of the fact, they could almost visibly see their minds turning away from the text-book idea of the Past as an unreal, sparsely settled period with violent historical characters in doublet and ruff or chain mail thrusting broadswords into one an-