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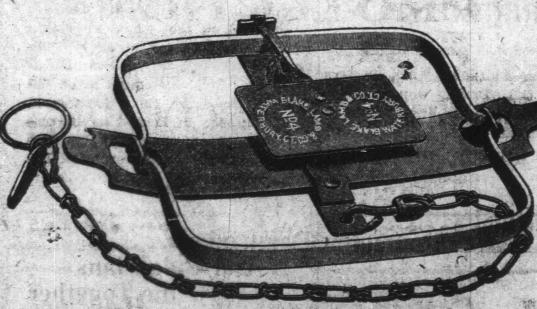
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# Whole Villages Levelled by Fire of French Guns

Correspondent Who Visited Scene Draws Vivid Picture to believe there is an immense army of the Battle of Picardy---So Terrific Was the Deluge of Shells That the Plains Looked as if Played with by Some Uncouth Monster---Cannon Cut Path for seen troops in far greater numbers The French Soldiers.

By FRED PITNEY.

make up a modern victorious offen- half severed by the projecting arm. saw three shells fall on Mount St. came a roar of bursting shells and sive. I crossed the ground captured

Shell Ruined Village

road back there," he shouted.

The picture of the hospital train noise of our motors could be heard remaining untouched. the persistent boom of big guns which

sides to be ready for what ever form inately over the ground. the German welcome might take, an ! from every side the constant unremit-the village was. ting boom of cannon and the furious roar of exploding shells pressed in upon us. The huge semi-circle of the

ried in a small group of military au- tinguished from the fields that sur- got to be time for us to go back. tomobiles down a long straight road round it.

ating car and as it passed us a white | Cleared Way For Troops

lighted streets of Amiens, and saw little collection of red brick cottages. PARIS, Aug. 16-I returned to-day the ambulances pass carrying the As I looked a French shell fell upon from a visit to the French front in wounded from the railroad station to a house facing the church on the the Somme offensive and part of the the hospital. Through a hole in the right. I saw the roof of the house front extending south toward Soissons canvass side of the ambulance an arm crumple and fall in towards the cenfrom the actual scene of present op- in the horizon blue of the French tre, and wondered what had happenerations. It is probable this southern uniforms projected stiffy. No groan, ed. Then slowly and majestically sector will be the next part of the no sound of any kind came from the great plume of a back and dun- the hill and then in the single file at German lines to fall before the meth- ambulance. There was almost no noise colored cloud rose above the steeple odically advancing French forces. of the motor as the car glided through of the church, spread out and settled In this visit I saw all the details of the streets, but in the shadows of the slowly down. And the house

Caught Under Fire. in the first days of the great attack It was though some uncouth mons-ed. I understood then these curious and crept slowly forward into the ter was playing with the plains of gaps in streets, and knew when the centre of the bombardment which the Picardy. As a child plays with sands French soldiers crossed the Somme unremittingly night and day. If you down and rebuilding walls of sand, Mount St. Quentin to bar their prowill lay out a parallelogram thirty and from time to time catching up a gress.

at the north-eastern corner a build- head. And all the time a stupendous is on the northern part of the battleing arc with a chord twelve miles roar pressed in upon us, and by some front, we plodded on from Dompierre high ground before the marsh is reach long and a curve of twenty-six miles, mysterious force pulled us forward through Becquincourt toward the you will have approximately the into the vortex where we could most mathematical centre of battle. The ground covered by the field of battle acutely feel our own minute helpless- day before the French had taken three and the services of the rear that feed ness to stay the resistless tightening thousand yards of German trenches that band of steel and fire. We were north of the Somme, and at the time caught as in the relentless vise of the of our visit shelling was particularly Again, near the front, we halted in a famous "Iron Maiden" of the torture heavy in that region, for the Germans narrow road while an ambulance com-chambers of the inquisition. We were endeavoring to counter attack

back curtain was lifted and a man been on the morning the attack be- Germans, holding them in their lines. with his head bandaged and his arm gan. The trenches were intact, untouched by the fury of the battle, That piece of the arc was a solid "There is a wounded officer on the and the barbed wire entanglements black cloud from which issued from

was still in my mind when I started trenches was a small patch of woods above the deep boom of the cannon. our drive from the north into the where the French Colonel, command- On the south the French were pre- this part of the line, Amiens was the battlefield. We came out of the shell- ing the attack on Dompierre had had paring a road for their soldiers to ruined village, and began to climbate his post of command for the battle. take more ground near Deniscourt gentle slope to the plateau dominating; In forty square miles of territory it the next day, and there also the bomthe Somme and Peronne. Above the was almost the only piece of woods bardment was particularly violent. We

Nothing of Village Left ..

increased in violence and intensity A hundred yards beyond the French entire surface of the plateau had been with each yard of progress. Overhead trenches were the remains of the Ger- systematically deluged with shells a long line of twenty-three captive man first line defences. They were by the French in their advance. Cratballoons were guarding the arc and now merely a collection of shell crat- ers twenty feet in diameter lay in vigilantly watching the enemy signal-ers. There was nothing resembling mathematical lines their rims separling to the artillery, while still above a trench among them, but only what ated by twelve inches. It was as if spot in the rear, far away from the them circled and swept the protecting might be a crazy pattern of furrows you covered the top of your dining turmoil. It is east of Amiens that lies ploughed by a drunken farm hand for table with saucers whose edges were the parallelogram in which the vic-We descended, put on steel helme : last year's planting. Of barbed wire only just not touching. for protection against shrapnel burst entanglements there are only a few Meanwhile, as we went forward, the ing in the air, hung gas masks at our broken strands scattered indiscrim- Germans, also suspecting the French

In one place there is the remnant watering the plateau with shells from walked on into battle. We were on the of an armored shelter for a machine across the Somme. Puffs of white was Peronne; on the right Estrees, crete a foot and a half thick lie in us from shrapnel bursting in Sovecourt. Deniscourt, Vermandvil-hopeless confusion while a small sec- air. Suffocating black and yellow Nine. Overhead was the steady buzz cent rains. This was on the edge ing the new French saucer pattern. of wireless in a captive balloon, while of Dompierre and we asked where

"You are in it," we were told.

Level With Ground battle front was towering wall of of what had been the wall of a house. ward Estres and another French solblack and duncolored clouds and it was less than four feet high by dier on horseback crossing a bridge smoke and earth thrown high in the twice as long. On my left was a over a stream near them. A German air. Never did it lighten at any point, row of eight tree drunks standing shell fell not far away and the French but fresh shells fell and rebuilt them. about seven feet high. They had soldiers turned to watch, while the been cut off cleanly as though by a the one on horseback stopped in the All roads from the parallelogram steam saw and the ivy still wound middle of the bridge to watch. When lead into the arc. They approach the around the stumps. That piece of the smoke cloud died down the two on Telephone 312. chord of the arc as sticks of a fan wall and these stumps are what re- the parapet resumed their conversalead down to the handle, and cross-mains of Dompierre. It had been a tion and the horseman went on his ing the chord, spread out again fan- German fortress before July and the way. Two shells fell a few trees wise to touch every point of the first French guns had wiped it out of ex- left near Herbecourt. The next passlistence to save the lives of French ed over the trees. A shell fell on the We came into the battlefield from soldiers. The village is now level border of what had been Dompierre. the north. Leaving Amiens, we hur- with the ground. It cannot be dis- They were closing in on us, and it

to St. Quentin. (Sentences missing.) I have seen battered remnants of In another ten minutes our road With old tools of the Spanish inquisi- many French and Belgian villages left would be cut off. A message sent by tion beginning with thumb screws and after a German bombardment, but the commander of our sector hurried progressively rack and wheel to the never was destruction so complete as up with the measure that the hour iron maiden, whose steel spiked corset that which was wrought by the had come for the regular afternoon is slowly clamped up on the body. Not French cannon preparing the path for bombardment of the plateau by the far from Amiens we were held up at their soldiers. Later in the day I Germans and the polite suggestion a railroad crossing by a hospital train looked down from the heights of Vaux that we had better be a little careful. which went by with all the windows on the former site of Corfu.

and doors open to catch the least stir-Only a Patch of Dust. ring of the dust laden, superheated Before the war, Curfu was a larger more shells scattered again its dust village than Dompierre. (To-day Dom- and ashes. The "sitting cases," were in the pierre has a piece of wall four feet From Dompierre and Becquincourt doorways, and in bunks on the sides by eight while Curfu is a small red we went to the north bank of the of cars, in tiers three deep, we saw patch of brick dust. From the same Somme on the heights of Vaux, where row on row of feet-no hands, not point I saw the destruction of Mount we had another panoramic view, but bodies, no arms or legs, but only row St. Quentin begin. It, too, was a Ger-this time instead of being in the cenafter row of feet of wounded men. man fortress, and so must fall to tre we were at one side looking across

the gigantic organization that goes to night I could dimly see the Réd Cross longer existed. While I watched

Quentin and three persons disappear- the sharp rapping of mitrailleuses.

miles deep by fifty miles long and put shovelful and throwing it high over- But before we went to Vaux, which ing from just behind the firing line crossed the chord of the arc where to retake the trenches, while on the passed. As it scraped by our cars its the French first line trenches had French kept a barrier of shells on the

> time to time the rapid hammer of Just behind and to the left of the machine guns forcing their stacato great French advance. A few months went on into the fields, following difficult path from shell-holes. The

of bringing up supplies, were busy arc. Ten miles straight into the east gun. Its walls of reinforced con-clouds steamed the sky in front of liers. On the left, Maurepas, Herbe-tion of a flight of steps leads to a clouds rose from high explosive shells, cout. Hill One Hundred and Thirty-cavern filled, with water by the re-tearing up the plateau and destroy-Shells Came Thick

Shrapnel and explosives came al On my right was an angle section ting on the parapet of a trench off to-

> We then turned back and passed Dompierre on the homeward road. Two

The last car of the train was an oper-save the lives of French soldiers. the river to the plateau from which we had just come. The little village aproned surgeon stood in the door From the Vaux heights I could see of Vaux at our feet had passed thru minutely examining the blade of an with glasses across the buckle of the first stages of the battle uninjured, instrument. I remembered the train Somme. A white church with pointed but after the Germans had been driv-

erately shelled Vaux for no apparent village is left. Shells still fall on others were duck hunting in a marsh At this part of the Somme is a wide marsh with a narrow stream meandering through it and low hills rising abruptly from its borders. From here I saw one of the few movements of troops which I observed in all my long trip to all sections of the front.

Troops Well Concealed

The French have their troops so

wonderfully concealed that it is hard as well as the most powerful concen tration of artillery ever known operating in the egion. In visits to other parts of the front I invariably have than one finds them visible on the Somme. The difference is that on the Somme the art of concealment of large bodies of men has been studied to the last detail. But here I saw a regiment going forward to take positions in trenches. They first appeared apparently from nowhere, and I watch ed them through glasses, marching under the cover of a hill; but they soon turned at a right angle to cross intervals of thirty feet and disappear-Not far beyond the crest lay a black

The Moncau Farm

had been waged. The French lines are now well beyond it and the farm remains only a small white spot on the reverse slope of the last piece of ed. Its walls are reduced to powder, and it is now only a name and a touch of white in a vacant field

Clery les close to the river. highest ground of the region is a shining target. To the northward are Hardencourt and Hill 139, the limit of the French part of the offensive.

Behind the Lines.

We left the battle front to go back and study the huge organization that fighting line and made possible the ago when I was on my last visit to centre from which radiated the armies operation. One of the things that most impressed me on this visit, with a certainty of the advance continuing, was that the centre has now been moved eastward, and well to the east. posts of the war. It is on the distant edge of operations. One no longer leaves Amiens to plunge into the fighting line but makes of it a rest tory is organized. It criss-crossed back and forth over this region, covering innumerable miles, in an automobbile, and found every square foot given oved to the purposes of the offensive. This organization is that of a great business and it is conducted on purely business lines by business men I talked to the commander of one big supply station and asked him what he was sending most of to the front for the moment.

(Continued on page 5)

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