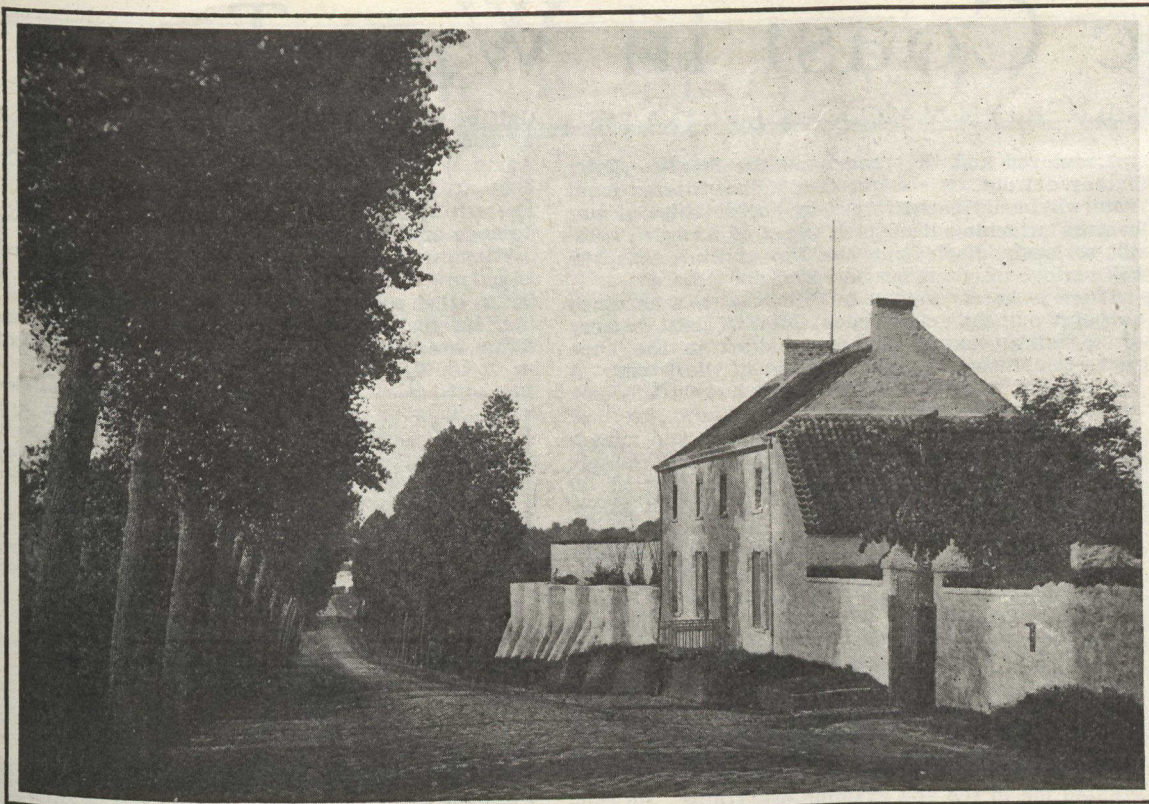




In this house Napoleon had his headquarters prior to the Battle of Waterloo, on June 18th, 1815. Armageddon of 1914 has its centre very close to the battlefield of Wellington and Napoleon.

MEPHISTOPHELES ABROAD

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

MEPHISTO the Great in the third week of August, year of our Lord 1914, when grapes were red and harvests golden, where as yet the binders made in Canada had not reaped—came personally upon the earth by way of Europe. It was a route he knew well. From Moscow to Marseilles and from the Bosphorus to the North Sea was one of his old stamping-grounds. He came by night. His first halting-place was Berlin, hard by to Potsdam, where he found that his imperial Imp Wilhelm the Gravemaker had suddenly taken a train to other parts.

Which was disappointing and presumptuous. "Ah, Faustus!" he muttered. "You have stolen a march on me."

In the shadow of a great church tower he paused a moment to gaze on the dark and troubled city, which it seemed was the model for all civic managements in heaven or earth. He knew that guttural language and those fair-haired German frauleins, those Marguerites and those erudite Dr. Fausts from the universities, the philosophers of 1914, God help them, along with such poets as they had left!

Poor old Goethe was dead and the devil had never seen him since; the poet that first sent him strutting over the stages of the civilized world, beginning in this marvelous Germany. Where could Goethe be?

"Poh!" he laughed. "Goethe died too soon. He really didn't know me. That was only my drawing-room cousin. Ho! The world has been coming along since. Never again would Germany be content with so pleasant a devil."

And as he let his giant bat wings cling to the damp stones of the tower he gnawed out a gnashing, blood-foaming spume of laughter that made the keys of the great organ squeak in their sockets.

This was no place to be. Not here was the great pan-European exposition of civilization. But it was pleasing to linger a moment watching the soldiers go by; meditating that here in the heart of Germany the music and the philosophy and the art and the science of the world had been gathered by that diligent Imp Wilhelm the cosmic dilettante. In this Germany and down yonder on the Danube in Vienna had gathered the Bachs and Handels and Haydns singing glory to God; Beethoven interpreting the heart of God to man; Wagner making the demigods strut to great music; Strauss in that very Berlin Opera finding it necessary to exploit the underworld for a few. Here had lived the poets, Goethe and Schiller, that gave the devil a harder struggle than most of the preachers. Here had been Kant and Schopenhauer and Hegel, the true philosophers that gave place to Nordau and Nietzsche with their pessimism-realism of the abdominal regions. Here had lived the philological crew delving into the roots of language to find that all men are brothers—till Wilhelm the Dilettante told them to shut up or find another trade. And here, likewise, in the good old days of bigotry and mediaevalism had come forth the terrible Luther, that would go to the Diet of Worms in spite of devils on the roofs.

Just so. It was delightful to take a leaf out of Dante's Inferno and have all these "geists" come shuddering up there before him under the shadow of

the old church tower. These were the souls that had yearned over the eternal job of evolving civilization. Blessed be their bones. Some of them had known Napoleon, the greatest grave-digger the world ever knew. All had known France and hated her. They knew England.

Bismarck and Von Moltke—ah, there had been a pair of great builders, too! Blood and iron and consolidations; armies and armaments and labour unions of hell; lyddite, gunpowder, fulminates and



Lord Kitchener, the brains behind the British force in Belgium, and Lord Haldane, former Minister of War.

explosives, acids and anarchies and all the sweet enginery of diabolism upon earth culminating in 1914 Anno Domini under a most pious emperor singing Te Deums on Sunday.

Remembering these, Mephistomagne stretched his cartilaginous corporealism till it enveloped the old church tower like an ivy. And the laugh he gave out sent a mist over the shuddering harvest moon.

Plenty of time yet before lurching forth in his night airship to see what Armageddon might be doing with Wilhelm at the head—where Armageddon a hundred years ago left sixty thousand from half of Europe in a single day of June to sicken the vultures.

And the devil compressed himself to a comfortable human size for a swift tour of inspection over that marvelous civilization machine of Germany

built upon explosives. He felt like a boy seeing a circus go to camp at sunrise. Busy as he had been these years back trying to bolster up the good old doctrine of a literal hell, he had not kept strict tab on how the monarchies of Europe had been making it worth while.

This Germany, with the great model city north-east of the centre, and right at the heart of the huge spider-web of national railways—well, surely she had been busier than the devil these forty years or so, since the other great carnage, when she mingled the blood of French and Germans to make green meadows over there on the border. And this blinking Berlin that at night from the cloud-dromes looked like a dull jewel glistening on the hand of Europe with Paris another—ah! heaven itself knew how much of the diabolus-machine of humanity destruction was focused and nerve-centred right within gunshot of the pious palace at Potsdam.

First of all these railways that grew out of the great streets where the trolleys ran; the devil heard them coughing and clanging and shunting as never they had done since steam began to get lungs and legs of iron. He perched himself like a giant owl on top of a steeple and looked them over; following the strings of red and green lights with their quadruplex ribbons of steel out towards Hanover, Magdeburg and Nordhausen, to Kassel and Frankfurt-on-the-Main, to Strassburg and Cologne; from the edge of Russia to the borders of France they ran, and the coaches of the Kaiser roaring over these webs of traffic to the borderlands of the Slav and the Latin, strung end upon end would reach across Germany.

"Good!" clucked the Owl of Sin. "Very good for trade. But—trade isn't everything. No, no. There was a time in the world when they crucified Christ, another when they burned the martyrs in Europe; and now comes the time when Europe, with its traded railways, says—'Business be damned! Let's have a war. That's what railways are for. Empty the barracks and cram the troop-trains. Change the timetables. Set soldiers in charge of trains. Back up the flatcars and heave up the howitzers that make carrion of humanity in the name of God.' That's good. But"—and the Sin-Owl preened his bat-like pinions—"these imps promised me they could get a million riflemen to the borders of France in two sunsets and another million in two more. I don't believe they're doing it. Something's wrong, Wilhelm. Something's wrong."

KNOWING as a doctor a pulse that the death-machine was not running too smoothly, the devil betook himself to the brains of the railway system, where in a single room spy-eyed war-lordlets see on paper the movements of all the trains in the fatherland, knowing whereabouts any regiment may be on its way to Armageddon.

"Young man," he smoothly said to one of these toy-shifters, "where is the regiment of widow-makers, and why is it not elsewhere?"

The official fell upon his knees.

"Majestat!" he gasped.

"Bah!" sniggered Mephistomagne. "I'm not the Emperor. I used to have horns on my lip. But time has worn them off. Ha! ha!"

Off he went, knowing well that for the space of an hour that staff of experts would be cross-eyed and paralytic from fear, thinking the Emperor had come in disguise.

From there the devil scudded across the city to the headquarters of the General Stabs Gebaude, where one of the great murdering I-ams is the Field-Marshal Von Heeringen the "Geist of Metz." The room was mainly empty. The officers were gone to the front. Von Heeringen, who trembles to one man only—Der Kaiser—had left his "geist" behind; and the geist was playing checkers with 30,000 lead soldiers on a board. The lean, limping spectre of war looked up at the visitor and crumpled into a gasping heap on the floor.

"Mein Kaiser!" he moaned. "Oh, mein Kaiser—!"

The War Over-Lord laughed down his nose like an operatic Frenchman.

"Bah!" said he. "You have him on the brain. Sit up, my boy, and show me what the soldiers are doing at the front!"

The geist shook his head, and pulled himself together with the creak of a skeleton.

"I do not know," he said. "These are only my little lead men. But Mynheer Mephisto—we have five millions under the General Stab, and they are to mix their seas of blood with the French and the Slav on both sides of the Fatherland."

"Good, my son! Europe has been dry too much. That Balkan thing stopped too soon."

"Ah, but the Emperor was not ready, Mynheer. You must not be impatient. Germany was to bide her time. Her day had not yet struck. Napoleon could not die till after Waterloo. Wilhelm der Grosse—ah, he is not to die until—"

The geist of the Field-Marshal gagged as he saw a gleam of infernal ecstasy contort the face of Mynheer Mephisto. He trembled; recognizing—the master of his War Lord, who for some while now had been lonesome to hear down below the rumble of gun-carriages and thunder of hoofs and the impact of terrific armies on the rafters of his dwelling-place.

(Continued on page 16.)