

firm-muscled, and free from all the flabbiness that the East smears upon the weak, had also made him insensitive. It mattered nothing to him that as curio-dealer he was looked down upon by a handful of men he despised. There were others though before whom it would not be so easy to carry himself as jauntily.

The big hull of the liner towered over them as they tossed about in their cockle-shell of a craft. There were traders hurrying up the gangway, and passengers coming down. Somewhere up in the spaces of the main-deck an excited voice said:

"Oh, dad, I should like to go ashore in one of those sampans."

The person addressed, a stout, choleric old gentleman with a white helmet and coloured glasses stirred slightly in his deck chair. The worry and bustle of going ashore seemed to have an effect on one or more of those elaborate illnesses he had come East to combat.

"Don't be foolish, Nina," he said, brusquely. "The launch will be here directly. Can't you see it coming, Mac?"

The tall, dark man who was lounging by the rails said, slowly:

"Yes—it's coming now."

IT edged up silently feeling its way to the bottom of the gangway. The girl leaning over the side was absorbed in watching a family sampan in which an almond-eyed baby played about, securely tied to the mast by a coil of rope, while a couple of fowls clucked in a cage at the bows. Her brown eyes were full of interest, but it was hardly this or any other particular thing that made them glow, nor was it the scent and colour of the East. She stood tapping one of the lower rails with her pointed shoe, and the wind billowed out her blouse of white silk that was cut low at the neck.

"Come along, Nina," said her father, at last, "all the rest are going. I don't believe that confounded steward has brought my dressing-case up from the cabin. . . . Hallo, what's this? Another hotel advertisement?"

Beverley had come up the deck and presented his card.

"No," he said, briskly. "Just a reminder that if you want some rare old china it can be had at that address. I don't want to brag, but we have opportunities of acquiring it that others haven't. We have a buyer continually in the interior, and he knows every bit of pottery that's worth having from Lhasa to Newchwang—"

He went on talking in an extravagant style that was not habitual to him, for just then he particularly wanted to feel at ease. Under the deck-awnings he stood, big and voluble in his white ducks and yachting-cap, a rather cynical smile twisting his lips, as if he were listening to some automatic cheap-jack,

while the girl watched him strangely. He did not once glance at her, though every nerve and fibre of him seemed aware of her gaze. As for Nina, her brain seemed chiefly alive to physical impressions, to the way he had broadened and filled out, to the dark tan of his face, and his careless, aggressive manner.

She stood by the rails as if numbed while her father crushed the card in his hand and passed on. Then, as Beverley came up to her, she said, drily:

"You don't seem to remember me."

"Oh, I think so," he said. "You are Miss Nina Brayne, aren't you?"

"How clever of you to think of the name."

"Not at all," he said, carelessly. "I've got a fairly long memory. I'm not always as grateful to it as now, though."

THERE was something quite pointlessly unreal about his politeness, and it chilled her into reserve. She became very much aware of the space of time that seemed to come down suddenly like a portcullis and shut off everything that was waiting to be said. He at once became part of the surroundings that were strange and alien to her.

"What have you been doing?" she asked, at last.

"Oh, anything," he said, flippantly. "At present if you want any china or old curios, I can fit you out. I don't think I happen to have a catalogue with me."

He felt in his pockets, and there seemed something ironic about his action.

"Mac's here," she said, quickly. "He travelled over with us."

"Naturally."

"It was just by chance he happened to join the same boat. He had to take a six-months' holiday or risk a break-down. I think he's looking after the baggage now."

She glanced over to where the stewards were fussing about with suit-cases and hand-luggage at the head of the gangway.

"Tell him I'd like to see him when he's got any time to spare," he said, abruptly. "He'll know where to find me—at least I gave your father a card. Good-bye for the present. I may happen to see you again before you leave."

There was a sting in his bow, and the cool way in which he sauntered off.

Her face was flushed as she rejoined her father, who was sitting himself in the launch and adjusting his smoked glasses.

"Who was that?" he asked, "you seemed to know him, Nina."

She looked out absently over the strip of dancing water.

"Mr. Beverley," she said, "a friend of Mac's. He came East four or five years ago."

"Beverley," he said, thoughtfully. "Beverley? Ah, yes, I remember. That young man who—well, well, I suppose it's no good raking that up now."

SHE re-arranged her skirts and looked up at the main deck where Beverley was wandering about distributing his cards among the few remaining passengers. He seemed unconcerned and intent upon the matter in hand. In truth, there was a host of impressions busily sorting themselves out in his brain, and combining with that fund of cynicism which most men carry secretly hidden in their soul as a weapon for their own protection. He was struck by the added sincerity and depth that had come into her eyes, and the lack of that provocative coquetry which was once so apparent, but time might have taught her that the most effective art conceals itself.

The sampans were now scurrying towards the shore, and the last passenger had left the decks. Beverley sauntered down the gangway, and slipped into his own boat, lying back in the bows and scribbling a note as they headed towards the shore.

"I must see Mac," he thought. "There's no reason at all why he should try to dodge me."

And when the string band was playing that night in a little cafe overlooking the water, he strolled in and took his seat near the window. He was wondering a good deal how Mac would look, and whether there was any possibility of resuming that close friendship that had knit together their boyhood. The thin mist of his cigar-smoke quickened his vision, and he saw again the two of them in knickers fighting each other's battles doggedly; then at college together breaking the same rules and burning the same allowance of midnight oil frantically just before the exams. came; then again as young men setting out in company for the long struggle, careless of anything till the irony of things brought about the final smash.

The band was playing an airy waltz, and through the open window he could see the lights of a score of ships winking across the water. The soft fingers of the tropic night seemed to touch all things caressingly and lay a spell upon them.

"Well, Phil," said a voice behind him.

He turned round to see Mac standing there, looking uncomfortable and ill at ease, inclined to a forced and exaggerated geniality. It made him stiffen himself unconsciously.

"Well," was all he could say.

They sat down together, and the Chinese boy hurried up with a trap and glasses. The talk that followed was about trivial things, and they watched each other closely as men do who know that their words are divorced from the reality of their thoughts. Mac's thin, dark face had become lined and furrowed, and his eyes were a little restless.

(Continued on page 17.)

# GERMANY'S TASK IN RUSSIA

*Another Optimistic Article Based Upon Sound Military Observation*

By COL. F. N. MAUDE, C.B.

MY last article pointed out some of the difficulties which beset the further progress of the Germans into Russia, as a preliminary for examining the probability of any transfer of considerable forces from Poland into Flanders, dwelling specially on the impossibility of consolidating a hastily reconstructed railway in the time before the coming of the autumn rains. The creation of good roads—it would have to be "creation," because there are no metalled roads in Russia—would be an obvious method of alleviating the situation, but, unfortunately for the Germans, they are in this case also up against physical difficulties equally insuperable under the limitations of time and labour which confront them, because there is no material of any description except timber in the whole theatre of operations, not even gravel in the river beds.

In a somewhat similar case in Baluchistan we had to import our ballast for railways by sea from England, via Karachi—an expedient obviously impossible to Germany at the present time. Even timber for corduroy roads, at best a poor expedient for really heavy traffic, is only available in the immediate vicinity of the forests, for the Germans have no longer any horses to spare for haulage, as the Russians have driven them all before them in their retreat. These are the bed-rock facts in the situation, which people who make war from their arm-chairs consistently overlook, and science without time and labour at its command is as powerless to overcome them as we were in the Crimea more than half a century ago.

## THEN AND NOW.

IT is odd how close is the parallel between the situations then and now. There, too, our progress depended upon the accumulation of siege artillery and ammunition in quantities adequate to level the Russian parapets with the ground, but throughout the long winter the two miles of mud separating the harbour of Balaklava from the base depots delayed all progress till the weather conditions changed, and even then things went slowly

enough; but for each mile we then had to traverse the Germans now must cross almost a hundred.

Little aid, therefore, can be expected by the Germans from any visible means of communication except the railways, and since it takes days to accumulate ammunition enough for a single day's fighting, her further advance can only take place by a series of spasmodic efforts, which can only recur at fixed time intervals, the duration of which the Russians, knowing the extent of damage they inflicted on the bridges and track, can estimate with a considerable approach to accuracy. The German heavy guns must of necessity be divided into groups, because not only would no man in his senses dream of distributing them uniformly, say, one to the mile of front, but because, being dependent on the railways, they must remain in close proximity to them, because the difficulty of lateral distribution from the railway depots remains in any case.

On the days, therefore, when the German guns break out into activity, the Russians, who, being at present unhampered by heavy transport, possess the advantage of mobility, can operate between the flanks of the groups of siege artillery, and then when the necessary pause in the fire of the latter sets in they can press forward again by siege methods and threaten to storm the works by which the siege guns are protected in such a manner that any move or withdrawal of the latter becomes an impossibility. But as soon as the Russian troops arrive in adequate numbers—and sooner or later this superiority must be established—the pressure on the intervals between the siege-gun groups must become so heavy that withdrawal becomes a necessity, and how that withdrawal is to be effected in face of an army which has proved itself superior in all forms of normal fighting—i.e., without the support of heavy guns—is a problem I will leave to the German Staff to settle; and I do not envy them the task.

Of course it is impossible to state with accuracy here in England how long such a condition may endure; but one has only to consider what would

happen if the relative difference in efficiency on the two sides became extreme—i.e., if the Russians were as superior to the Germans in fighting power as, say, the British were to the mutineers in India in 1857, or as superior in numbers as the Allies were over the French after Leipzig, when they simply disregarded the fortresses held by the latter and swept on through the gaps between them on their way to Paris. The idea is the same; the difference lies only in degree.

## RUSSIANS AS FIGHTERS.

THAT the Russians are superior as fighters I maintain, primarily on their exploits last year, and in particular by the extraordinary courage and endurance they displayed in the long-drawn-out series of combats in the Carpathians, where the nature of the ground and climate denied them even the full degree of support in their attacks which their normal complement of field artillery would otherwise have afforded them. And that the Germans fully recognize this superiority I deduce from the fact that they have been compelled to abandon all their previous conceptions as to the value of mobility and to adopt the siege artillery solution as the only practical method of placing themselves on an equality with their eastern adversaries.

They are as well aware of all these points as I am myself, because we all drew our inspiration essentially from the same source, often from the same persons; and in everything they have done since their great offensive broke down last winter I can see only a series of desperate efforts to impress diplomatic opinion by the extent of the temporary and local successes gained. They, the Staff, know quite well that anything approaching a decisive victory is now beyond their reach, and hope only that they may be able to conceal their own material weaknesses by a show of external success. As for the detachment of German armies from the eastern front to reinforce the enemy operating in France and Belgium, that is at present, and in the near future, impossible.