

The War Breaks

II

As I have said, I did not take much stock in the first reports of the Hun's exhibition of kultur, because Fritz is known as a clean sailor, and I felt certain that no real sailor would ever get mixed up in such dirty work as they said there was in Belgium. I supposed, too, that the soldiers were like the sailors. But I found out I was wrong about both.

One thing that opened my eyes a bit was the trouble my mother had in getting out of Hanover, where she was when the war started, and returning to France. She always wore a little American flag, and this both saved and endangered her. Without it, the Germans would have interned her as a Frenchwoman and, with it, she was sneered at and insulted time and again before she finally managed to get over the border. She died about two months after she reached St. Nazaire.

Moreover, I heard the fate of my older brother, who had made his home in France with my grandmother. He had gone to the front at the outbreak of the war with the infantry from St. Nazaire and had been killed two or three weeks afterwards. This made it a sort of personal matter.

But what put the finishing touches to me were the stories a wounded Canadian lieutenant told me some months later in New York. He had been there and he *knew*. You could not help believing him; you can always tell when a man has been there and *knows*.