

ARMS AND THE MAN

in the war area where one does not see peasant caps and peasant frocks decorated proudly with the insignia of some one of the British regiments.

Then comes talk of the chance of getting a letter home. Half of the men retire to violent wrestles with foreign pens and ink at the table in the rear of the shop : the rest stay yarning.

The letters are always read aloud or left open as a point of honour ; but I had never once to suggest the omission of a line which gave place or date or regimental names. The tradition of the silent war has gone deep. Further, very few either knew or cared where they were or had been. The names meant nothing. Even the sense of time had been lost in the constant occupation and the turning of day into night.

Certainly the letters I saw at that end were far less picturesque than those published in the papers ; but the latter, of course, are a selected number. The traditional "English tongue" learned in the elementary school, with its stiff