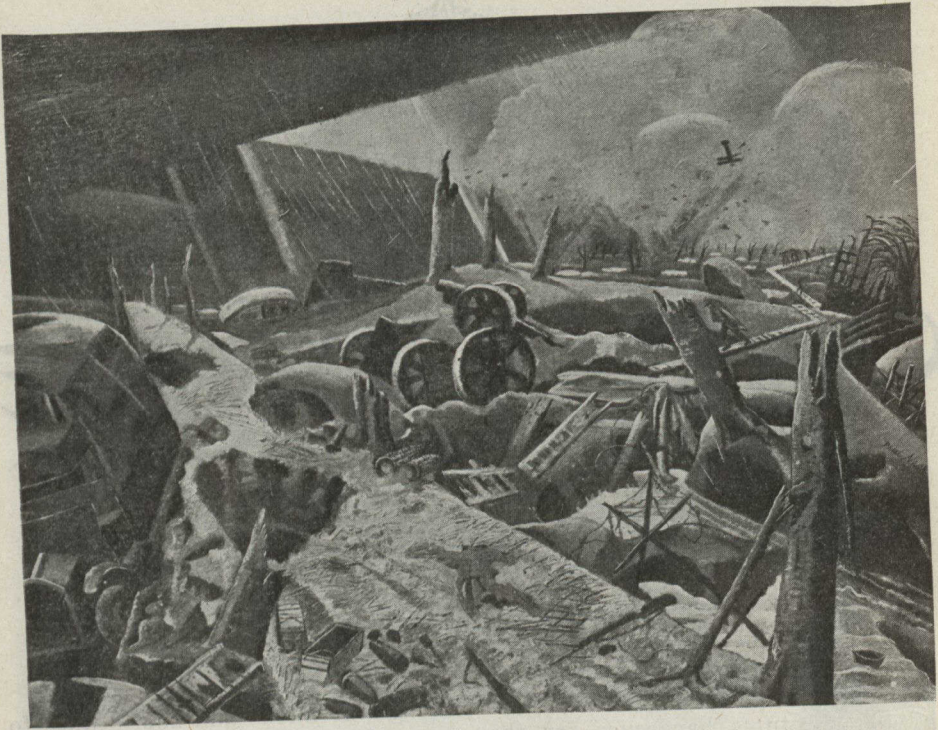




Void

From the War Memorial Painting by Lieut. Paul Nash

of the most significant of all war-pictures, could have been conceived at any earlier date. Quite early in the war it was noticed by one or two acute observers that the breath-taking experiments of the years immediately preceding, the cubism and the vorticism and what not that had seemed so outrageous and even inexplicable to an overwhelming majority of normal human beings, had received at least a partial justification in the actual experience of men, both in what they had before their eyes and in what they felt within themselves. This is but another instance of the connection, causal or otherwise, that is so frequently found to exist between what is apparently unrelated in a given period of civilization. It is disturbing to healthy pluralistic minds but it has to be faced, and, if possible, explained.

The facts in this case are that since the opening of the twentieth century

an unusually rapid development in experimental painting took place in which the dominant characteristic was a preoccupation with abstract form. It is quite plausible to explain this movement as a natural reaction from the realistic traditions of the nineteenth century, a mere swing of the pendulum, which would correct itself in due time, and probably prove not unhealthy as a means of counteracting the deadening tradition of the "story-picture". This explanation would have been accepted as exhaustive by the great majority of those interested anywhere from nine to five years ago. But it was noted that the results of these experiments had a quality entirely different from the formal design of traditional art. They were less abstract by a degree or two, less exclusively intellectual; the mood they expressed was less collected, less clarified; it was sufficiently tepid and confused to be called an emotion. It