

A VISIT TO THE FRONT

them rude contrivances improvised of boxes and bits of broken mirrors. . . . The Captain motioned to the soldier to come down, and asked me to enter the cupola. I went in, took the soldier's place on the stool, peered through the narrow slit, and there, across the field filled with daisies and cornflowers, and just midway, a great flaming bunch of poppies—there, two hundred yards away, stretched a low white wall of sand bags.

"There are the English," said the Captain. "We are now in the first trenches."

I could see nothing but the low line of sand bags, hear nothing but the shrieking of the shells and the whistling, the humming, the buzzing of the bullets—and the red mass of the poppies blooming between.

. . . And those were the English, only two hundred yards away—the men whose tongue I spoke, whose thoughts I thought, whose traditions, ideals, hopes, I shared, as though they were mine own people. I peered a long time, feeling strange, lonely, home-sick, in the trench where I did not belong. . . .

When we were out of the trenches and had passed again through the deserted village of Wez Macquart, behind through its riddled, empty houses and gardens grown high with weeds and flowers that had sprung up that year with no gardeners to tend them, and had bidden the little Captain good-bye at the door of his hut, we were glad of the shelter of peaceful woods, whose lovely nooks, untroubled by firing, gave no sign of war until we came to a clearing, where under sheds German soldiers were at work making barbed wire.

There was, indeed, a very busy little manufacturing plant in full operation; some of the men were making gratings for the trenches and others were inspecting and