

THE RUSSIAN RETREAT

screaming in from the country or, a block or so away, there was a detonation and some façade came rumbling down. But when I think of Brest-Litovsk it will be of dust—dust like fog and thickened with the smoke and twilight—and that strange, wild, creaking stream of wagons fighting through it as they might have fought in the days when Europe was young and whole races of men came pouring over the frontiers.

We started off finally on foot through streets silent as the grave—not a person, not a lamp, not so much as a barking dog, as queer and as creepy as some made-up thing in a theatre. Once we stumbled past a naked and dismembered trunk set up beside a doorway—a physician's manikin that chance or some sinister clown had left there. Once—and one of the strangest sounds I ever heard—behind the closed up-stair shutters of an apothecary's shop, whose powders and poisons were strewn over the sidewalk, a piano haltingly played with one finger.

At last a light, an open door, a sentry—and this was, indeed, theatrical—a lighted room and a long table set with candles, flowers, and wine. The commander of the Sixth Corps had just been decorated with the order "*Pour le mérite*" and he and his officers were dining before taking up the march. He welcomed us in the true Hungarian style, grabbed me by the arms and asked if I was hungry, apologized for their frugal war-time fare, told how splendidly his men had behaved, had a word and a place for everybody, as if we were all old friends.