

BIRDSEYE VIEW OF BRITISH SECTION OF GREAT BATTLEFIELD ON WESTERN FRONT

Fourteen Villages in Flames Seen by Advertiser Correspondent—Story of a Plucky Belgian Girl Trying to Feed Fifty Soldiers as Shells Fell—The Weakness of Words Demonstrated.

By William G. Shepherd (Copyright, 1915, by the United Press; Copyright in Great Britain).

Headquarters of the British Army, Northern France, April 25—(By Mail to New York.)—Lunch in the little Belgian village which this morning has had its first taste of German shellfire wasn't appreciated by me. Three of Gen. French's flying men sat at the table across the way.

"My quarters were blown to bits this morning," said one. "I don't suppose I've even got a comb left."

A worried young woman, dressed in black, came up to us. "I can't give you much," she said. "Madame has gone, and the cook has gone, and the woman who washes dishes has gone, too."

"When are you going?" asked one of the flying men.

"Oh, if more shells fall, I suppose I must go, too," she said. She brought us coffee, rolls and oranges.

"Ah, those oranges," she hissed. They were three weeks old, and they were not, by a hundredth degree, her feelings.

One Girl's Big Task.

She was too busy to stop and talk. At least 50 officers were seated at the great long table and other smaller tables, demanding something to eat. And this one winsome-faced, German-looking Belgian girl, who had stuck to the job, ran around among them with the coffee pot, with bread, cheese and fruit, and to top it all, came into the dining-room at last with a huge bowl of soup, which she had been cooking while doing all her other tasks.

"It's late, but it's good," she said. And so soup was the desert, made by a girl who had stuck to her stove like a soldier sticks to his gun.

A Canadian soldier had seated himself near us. "Everybody in spite of shells," he said in tones that were strangely American. He had seen, from another part of the trenches, German gas fumes. He said they rolled up in clouds. The clouds were many-colored. The men who were laid out turned blue and gasped for breath. Their lungs hurt them. It was like inhaling fire.

Believes It All.

"I didn't use to be so sure of those outrages in Belgium," he said. "But now, by God, I believe it all."

His words rang with a tremendous earnestness. But they seemed as idle as the three words which the girl had used to express her feelings.

We went back to the hospital at 1:30. A minute later the doctor came out, gave orders to the driver, and climbed into the car. We started off, while the doctor ransacked a canvas bag and hauled out some crackers and a can of preserved meat. He had heard officially what happened in the town. Twenty shells had been fired, and then one of Gen. French's British batteries had been ordered to open fire on the German battery, and silence it.

With the long fingers of their shells, the British artillerymen had felt out the German gun, whether the German guns had been blown up or whether they had stopped firing in order to take shelter.

Whether the German guns had been blown up or whether they had stopped firing in order to take shelter, was no known. But the point was that they had stopped. I began to understand, as we sped out of this town, why the Belgians I met revere Sir John French's soldiers, the men who battered Germany because Germany battered Belgium.

The Weakness of Words.

"How is the man whose jaw was shot away?" I asked the doctor. His long, nimble fingers were opening the tin can with the tin opener.

"Pretty bad," he said. "He was sitting up in bed, sipping away at the lower half of his face, with blood all over everything."

"He's an old Belgian merchant," he added, "lived here all his life, with everything quiet and peaceful until this morning. He can't live."

He didn't curse the Germans. Perhaps he knew what the girl and Canadian hadn't known, the weakness of words.

Our auto, after an hour's run, stopped at the foot of a hill. The firing had sounded nearer and nearer as we went along.

"We'll run up this hill and see how it looks," said the doctor. "We can see the whole British line from here."

Ten minutes later we were on the top.

"There's Ostend," said the doctor, "and the English Channel. You can see the white line of the front. Here's Ypres and here's Arras."

First Day of Summer War.

There before us stretched 60 miles of battle line. And, on 15 miles of it, the fiercest and greatest battle in the history of warfare was being fought.

OUTBURSTS OF EVERETT TRUE—BY "CONDO."

"YOU DON'T SEEM TO HAVE—OH, WAIT A MINUTE—WHAT'S THAT RIGHT DOWN THERE? THAT'S NOT ONE YOU SHOWED ME IN A KEY WEST. I WANT YOU GOT THIS ONE IN A KEY WEST? WHAT'S THAT?—YES, I LIKE SOMETHING WILDER. I WANT YOU SHOW ME ANOTHER."

"1-1-1 DON'T KNOW THE LAST THING I CAN REMEMBER IS BEING IN A CLEAR STORE SOME-W-H-E-R-E."

"WHAT YE WANDERING ROUND, BUT HERE ON THE EDGE OF TOWN POP, WHA'S YER NAME? SAYU."

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between the British and Germans. It was the first day of the new summer war. The deep roar of a hundred storms throbbed in the air. We tried to take in the view and its vast significance in one general survey. It was impossible; clouds of smoke, here and there; the thunders of guns. The eyes and ears took them in, but it was all so vast that my mind remained unmoved. It couldn't respond to such a tremendous stimulus. Men were dying in the landscape. I knew. Others were fighting like devils; human life down on that great plain, was being quoted at zero; it was being given away, free. Down there on those checkered farms, along those canals, in the groves; on the roads men were killing with might and main.

"This is the war between Great Britain and Germany that novelists used to write about, and people used to scoff at," said the financier, as he looked over the landscape with his glasses. He had gotten a little bit of the vastness of the scene into his words.

It was not until we began to pick out various points and keep our eyes fixed on them that the sense of the vastness of it all reached me. "I wonder if I can understand what it means if I look at Ypres alone," I calculated to myself.

A Tattoo of Shells.

Ypres, a few miles away from us, was, at first, the most fascinating point. In the sunshine the tall ruin of the Cloth Hall tower gleamed almost white. When I had been in it a week before, it had been only a time-stained wreck. We could see white puffs burst into view around it. They were snaphell shells. They were playing a tattoo on the city. The church spire stood up in the sunshine, the shrapnel clouds played about them, also. Below these three peaks of masonry floated a sea of white smoke. I began to understand. That great town square in beautiful old Ypres was under this cloud of smoke; the houses that line the winding old street were flying about in bits; any minute we might see one of the spires wiped from view like a light going out, or the old tower smashed from its place in the world's small treasury of beautiful architecture.

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Another spot was Poperinghe, six miles from Ypres. Shells flew over it. A huge black cloud came up from the earth in its suburbs. This meant that a German 17-inch shell had burst there. The residents of that town had down, after experiencing all the terrors and the heart-straining that came to the people of the little town we had visited in the morning.

Fourteen Villages in Flames.

"There goes a 'Jack Johnson' into Ypres," said the financier.

We saw the black flash of a German 17-inch shell break near the Cloth Hall tower. Wherever we looked in the half circle of Flanders that spread before us, shells were breaking. We picked out fires. We counted six great clouds of smoke along a stretch of fourteen miles. These were not houses, but villages burning. Far away we could see an intense conflagration—black smoke suddenly burst through the yellow. A great distillery to which the farmers for miles around had brought their grain for many years, was burning.

"That black smoke means that the alcohol tanks exploded," said the doctor. That great distillery fire and the burning villages were also only dots on the huge panorama. Into our foreground flew a British aeroplane, followed by the white puffs of German shrapnel smoke, arranged as regularly in the sky as if they were Chinese lanterns hung on a sloping wire.

"I wonder what Julius Caesar or Napoleon would have thought of this battle," said the doctor, quietly.

System and Tumult.

With our glasses we could make out, ten miles away, a green farm bordered by a wood. Along the edge of the wood ran the German trenches, appearing from our vantage like a strip of sand. Another strip of sand ran through the middle of the farm; they were the English trenches. They were only two short strips of the great line of 400 miles. More than once when we tore our gaze from other spots and watched these trenches, we saw the roar of shrapnel over them. The roar of the British guns which answered the German fire was at times, almost deafening. In the midst of all this tumult was system and order, for war is the most systematic, scientific arrangement of human beings.

From all this great front, wires stretched, covered rods, news hurried, back to one point, to one room, to one table, where a short, sturdy, white-moustached man sat and played his part of the great game of checkers on this vast board of Flanders, with all the fortunes and lives and welfare of millions in his hands, and a page waiting in the history of the world on which would be written how well he had done today's work.

NIGHT MANOEUVRES

Infantry Brigade Will Carry On Outpost Work This Evening.

Tonight, will see London surrounded by a cordon of troops. The infantry brigade is scheduled to carry out its first extensive night outpost manoeuvres.

The volume of the supply of food and equipment from militia regiments to overseas units is another big item that the war has added to the staff's activities.

The number of new officers that have been gazetted since the declaration of war has meant a big increase in the staff work, which transfer of work and equipment from militia regiments to overseas units is another big item that the war has added to the staff's activities.

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