

BELGIUM

away, and there seemed to be something preposterous in the fact that it had fallen so close. There had been, there still was, a great puff of brown smoke, and then a shower of dirt and stones right there beside us. Then, the shriek of another shell; it exploded just to our left and a little ahead of us, much nearer. They were shooting at us evidently, having seen the two big grey motors on the exposed hill-top.

"Look out for the third one!" our captain cried.

Look out? How was one to look out? It seemed to me a most stupid, silly thing to say. We sat there in the motor and waited. Nobody spoke. I had a confused recollection of the old superstition of policemen, railroad men, and sailors, that catastrophes come in threes. I was wondering at this, accepting it as a phenomenon at last confirmed by reality. But in the stillness von der Lancken was explaining the way gunners find the range, firing first on one side, then on the other, and then in the middle—*la fourchette*, he said, and striking the finger of his right hand between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand, he illustrated just how the third shell, for which we were waiting, would strike us. I waited in a fascination of suspense. There it was—that shriek, that tearing of heavy cloth. Still the waiting, the suspense. Then Lancken exclaimed:

"Il n'a pas éclaté!"

It was a dud, as the soldiers say. Then another shell exploded in front of us in the field, a little closer to the road. They were finding the range. The Captain at the wheel was backing his car as fast as he could; he backed it down near the caissons under cover of the bank. The shells were exploding all about in that field above us to the right. The artillery horses were bucking and