

FROM THE TRENCHES

The journey started normally. But at New-haven it was startling to see three English travellers turn and rush off the boat at the last minute. It was the first and unforgettable sign of the break-up in our order of life. To take a ticket and start a journey no longer meant the inevitable procession to its end. We were beginning the life of the unexpected ; when event and interruption was to take the place of the decent ordering of hours by convention and system.

On the boat were only men ; older men called up to the colours. Most of them were fathers of families. One man sat in tears over a photograph of his five children spread out before him. Some had lived all their lives in England. " Well, you're an Englishman, at any rate," said the steward to an obvious cockney. But he was French, though he could scarcely speak it. A very old priest was returning, after twenty years, to " die among his soldier children " in a French frontier village—" or perhaps my grandchildren," he corrected, with a faint smile.

As we neared Calais the cloud began to pass.