

**CIHM
Microfiche
Series
(Monographs)**

**ICMH
Collection de
microfiches
(monographies)**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1999

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming are checked below.

- Coloured covers / Couverture de couleur
- Covers damaged / Couverture endommagée
- Covers restored and/or laminated / Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- Cover title missing / Le titre de couverture manque
- Coloured maps / Cartes géographiques en couleur
- Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black) / Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- Coloured plates and/or illustrations / Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- Bound with other material / Relié avec d'autres documents
- Only edition available / Seule édition disponible
- Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin / La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distorsion le long de la marge intérieure.
- Blank leaves added during restorations may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming / Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.
- Additional comments / Commentaires supplémentaires: Continuous pagination.

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- Coloured pages / Pages de couleur
- Pages damaged / Pages endommagées
- Pages restored and/or laminated / Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- Pages discoloured, stained or foxed / Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- Pages detached / Pages détachées
- Showthrough / Transparence
- Quality of print varies / Qualité inégale de l'impression
- Includes supplementary material / Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to ensure the best possible image / Les pages totalement ou partiellement obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure, etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à obtenir la meilleure image possible.
- Opposing pages with varying colouration or discolourations are filmed twice to ensure the best possible image / Les pages s'opposant ayant des colorations variables ou des décolorations sont filmées deux fois afin d'obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below /
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

	10x		14x		18x		22x		26x		30x	
							✓					
	12x		16x		20x		24x		28x		32x	

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

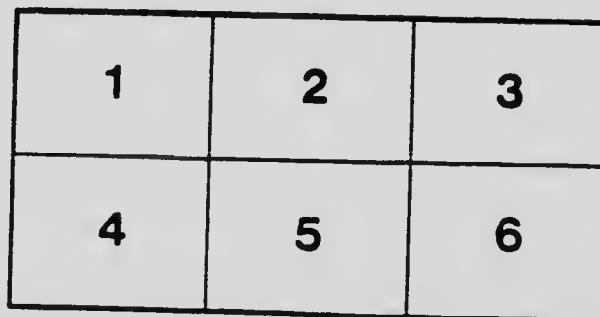
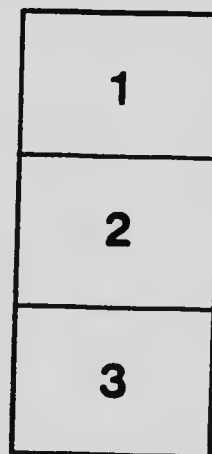
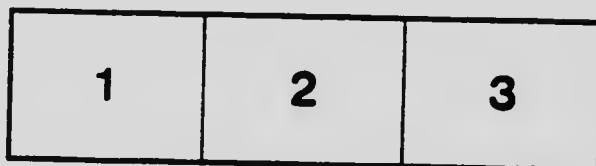
J.J. Talman Regional Collection,
D.B. Weldon Library,
University of Western Ontario

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol \rightarrow (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ∇ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

J.J. Talman Regional Collection,
D.B. Weldon Library,
University of Western Ontario

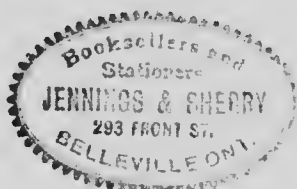
Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole \rightarrow signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ∇ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.

THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR



NO:

50

TORONTO
THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LIMITED

The only full-dress Children's History of the War extant.

At \$1.25 net each Volume.

THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR.

By SIR EDWARD PARROTT, M.A., LL.D.

Dedicated by gracious permission to H.R.H. PRINCE GEORGE.

LIST OF VOLUMES.

- I.—From the Beginning to the Dispatch of the British Army overseas.
- II.—From the Battle of Mons to the Fall of Antwerp.
- III.—From the First Battle of Ypres to the End of the Year 1914
- IV.—The Year 1915.
- V.—The First Six Months of 1916.

In the course of a long review, the *Times Educational Supplement* speaks of the "high level of this admirable work," and describes it as planned "on a scale quite different from anything yet attempted. It is not only a fully-detailed, continuous story, but it aims at providing the reader with the information requisite for a proper understanding of the causes and significance of the war. . . . The story is clearly and vividly given, without being in the least melodramatic. . . . It would be hard to take exception to the temper in which the story is written. . . . It is a sensible plan to put into separate chapters the 'soldiers' stories which illustrate it.'" The work is already recognized as the children's classic of the war, and large numbers of teachers and others have testified to the interest it awakens, and to the enlightenment which it affords. Stirring pictures and illuminative maps and diagrams abound. Readers and friends of weekly part issues have provided the Belgians with a motor ambulance, and are now maintaining ten of the Serbian boys who survived the retreat into Albania in October 1915. A young Britons' League of Help has also been established in connection with the publication.

Whilst written primarily for children, this clearly written and accurate and profusely illustrated picture of events need by no means be despised by the general reader.

Each volume is attractively bound in canvas with coloured frontispiece.

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, Limited,
95/97 King Street East, TORONTO.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW WE PLUGGED UP ZEEBRUGGE HARBOUR.—II.

NOW let us follow the adventures of the block-ships. *Thetis* came first, steaming into a tornado of shell from the great batteries ashore. All her crew, save the handful who remained to steer her in, had by this time been taken off by motor launches. The remnant not only worked the ship, but managed to keep her four guns going. *Thetis* was to show the way to *Intrepid* and *Iphigenia*, which followed. She cleared the string of armed barges which lay at the tip of the Mole for the purpose of defending the channel, but had the hard luck to foul her propeller in a submarine net, and became practically unmanageable.

The shore batteries now began pounding her with an unceasing fire of shells. Finally, she bumped into a sandbank, edged off, and found the channel again; but she was still some hundreds of yards from the mouth of the canal, though in a sinking condition. She immediately signalled to the two following block-ships, and informed them on which side to pass her so as to reach the canal entrance. Then charges below the water line were blown off, and swift motor launches raced up to her and carried off her crew. Her losses were five killed and five wounded. The manner in which the three block-ships worked together was beyond all praise.

Intrepid, smoking like a volcano, and with all her guns blazing, steered straight into the canal. Behind her came *Iphigenia*, so blinded by *Intrepid's* smoke that she went a little wide, and rammed a dredge and barge that lay at the western arm of the canal. She managed to get clear, however, and entered the canal, pushing the barge before her. It was then that a shell hit the steam connections of her whistle, and the

escape of steam which followed drove off some of the smoke, and let her see what she was doing. Lieutenant Bonham Carter, commanding *Intrepid*, placed the nose of his ship neatly on the mud of the western bank, ordered her crew away, and touched off the charges, which blew the bottom out of her. Four dull thumps were heard, and then the engineer who had been in the engine-room during the explosions appeared on deck, and reported that all was as it should be.

Meanwhile Lieutenant E. W. Bellyard-Leake, commanding *Iphigenia*, beached his vessel on the eastern side, blew her up, saw her drop nicely across the canal, and left her with her engines still going in order to hold her in position until she should be well bedded down on the bottom. Aviators afterward reported that the two old ships, filled with concrete, lay across the canal in a V position. On 20th June we were informed by the Admiralty that the success of the blocking operation was greater than had at first been supposed. Twenty-one torpedo boats and destroyers, together with a large number of submarines and numerous other craft, were still penned in the harbour, and were being constantly bombed.

Now I must tell you how the crews of *Intrepid* and *Iphigenia* escaped. A motor launch which had pushed further up the canal lay waiting against the western bank. It darted towards the sinking vessels, and carried off some of the crews. Other men got away in their own boats, and pulled for several miles out to sea before being picked up. Lieutenant Bonham Carter had a wonderful escape. He had sent away his boats, and had prepared a Carley float—that is, a kind of large lifeboat with a floor of grating—by means of which he hoped to keep afloat until he was seen and rescued.

As soon as the float touched the water it set fire to a calcium flare, which might easily have attracted the attention of the German machine gunners, who were only a few hundred yards away. What saved him was the smoke, which was still blowing ashore from the sinking *Iphigenia*. While on this frail float he managed to catch the rope of a motor boat, and was towed for a while, until he was perceived and taken on board. Another officer of *Intrepid* escaped by jumping ashore. He ran along the canal bank to the waiting launch; but as he did so was hit by a bullet from a machine gun. Happily it did not incapacitate him, and he reached the boat, only to be received by a



"We left the Union Jack flying on the Mole."
(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphers.)

sturdy bluejacket, who mistook him for a German and attacked him with a hammer.

As the motor launch from the canal cleared the end of the Mole it saw not far away the destroyer *Warwick*, with Vice-Admiral Keyes on board. The crew of *Warwick* cheered and cheered again as the launch approached the side. While *Warwick* was taking the escaped crews of the block-ships on board, *Vindictive* was being towed away from the Mole by *Daffodil*. She was a sad sight. Her funnels had been shot through and through, and were leaning over as though about to fall. Her decks were a mass of *débris*, and her iron sides were battered and torn by shell splinters. She was almost a wreck; but her stokers worked her up to seventeen knots, and she came out of the fray, terribly bruised and misshapen, but still bearing on her forward funnel the horse-shoe for good luck which the Admiral had presented to her commander.

Let Captain Carpenter tell us himself how his vessel left the Mole :—

“ Just over an hour after *Vindictive* got alongside the position was this :— The blockers had passed on, got to the end of their run, and could do no more; the viaduct had been blown up and the Mole had been stormed; it would have been a needless sacrifice of life for the three boarding vessels to remain alongside the Mole any longer. The signal to withdraw was given by repeated siren calls, and it was not until I was assured that every man that could get off the Mole had reached *Vindictive* that the ship, helped by *Daffodil*, was turned and steered to the north with all speed. She was followed all the way by salvos from the German guns. They had got our range, but not our speed, and fortunately, though the shells seemed to fall around the ships, they missed us. After a short time the ships were clear of danger, owing to the mass of smoke which they left behind them.

“ At daylight we were all very anxious to know how our other ships had fared, because it was practically impossible to see our consorts during the operations owing to the smoke screen. Most of the crew of *Vindictive* thought that *Iris* had been blown up. I was, therefore, especially pleased when we reached Dover to see her steam into the harbour, her crew cheering as she passed on her way to her berth. I have learned since that the people in *Iris* were perfectly certain that *Vindictive* had sunk, and this ignorance of how each ship had fared probably extended to all the various units taking part in the operations. The smoke screens, which were meant to protect us from the enemy batteries and searchlights, also had the effect of hiding us from one another.

“ Every officer and man I saw behaved splendidly.”

The captain then referred to the official report of the affair issued by the Germans, who stated that the harbours had not

How we plugged up Zeebrugge Harbour. 245

been closed, and that the conduct of sea warfare from the coast of Flanders had in no way been interfered with by the British operation. As to this gross lie, Captain Carpenter said that the Germans were suffering "from an extraordinary imagination; but if they ever suggest that *Vindictive* did not get alongside the Mole, I can show them a quarter of a ton of it which fell on my ship, and is here in Dover harbour to-day. I mean to have this piece of Zeebrugge Mole set up as a memorial to the men who have fallen in the fight."

Our loss during the raid was 161 killed, 28 died of wounds, 16 were missing, and 383 wounded—a total of 588 casualties.

* * * * *

Captain Carpenter afterwards told an interviewer that he worked out his plans with the help of a model of the Mole, and that he spent a full six months in making the preliminary arrangements. He showed his visitor a trunk containing a cap, a leather case for binoculars, two pairs of goggles, a broken chronometer, and a roll of tattered charts.

"'Don't shut it for a moment,' I begged.* 'Are these souvenirs?'"

"'Well, just one or two little things of personal interest. Care to see 'em?'"

"'If you don't mind showing them.'"

"'That's the cap I was wearing at the time. It's rather a shabby old thing, but I thought it hardly worth while to put on a good cap for a job of that sort. Good thing I didn't.'"

"'It had been perforated from back to front and from side to side with bullets. In each case the bullet had clearly missed the scalp by the fraction of an inch.'"

"'Just as well,' I agreed. 'Pity to waste a really good cap on a place like Zeebrugge.'"

"'These are my searchlight goggles. Excellent things. You can look right into a searchlight, you know, without the least inconvenience. Makes the beam rather helpful than otherwise. Yes, they got smashed up. And these are my smoke-goggles. They were also smashed.'"

"'You were evidently there. What happened to the binocular case?'"

"'Well, that's rather interesting. I had my glasses in my

* Quoted from *The Glory of Zeebrugge*, by Keble Howard. (Chatto and Windus.)

hand most of the time, as far as I remember, and the leather case, of course, was slung at my back. A bullet went right through it, and yet I knew nothing at all about it. Wasn't that rum?' "

" 'The gods apparently want you on earth a little longer. The chronometer went as well, I observe.' "

" 'It did, all in bits; I don't know how or when. Oh, here are my sailing charts.' He unrolled three large charts that looked as if rats had been feeding on them for six months. From each chart huge pieces had entirely disappeared, and what was left looked particularly mangy.

" Captain Carpenter called my attention to the chart of Zeebrugge.

" 'I had mapped out three courses, you see, to allow for the wind and tide. Eventually I came round here, and the tide carried me alongside the Mole—there. Sorry they're in such a rotten state; but the charthouse was a nasty mess—quite chewed up.' "

" Last of all he showed me the flag—the glorious ensign—blackened with smoke and considerably holed. 'We kept it flying all the time,' he explained; 'we thought we might as well.' "

* * * * *

A visit to *Vindictive* showed her a sorry wreck. The great funnels were shell-torn, and the smoke was pouring out at a hundred holes. Only one or two of the famous "brows" by which the men reached the Mole remained intact; the remainder had been smashed and splintered beyond recovery. The false deck, lined with a breastwork of sandbags, was still to be seen, and so were the ruined charthouse, the shell-torn bridge, and the riddled hut in which the flame-thrower was housed. The fighting-top—a circular nest high above the bridge—was completely wrecked. Marines with Lewis guns had been stationed in it, and had done excellent work in shooting down the Germans as they tried to escape into the destroyers under the harbour wall of the Mole. An enemy shell had crashed into that top, and had killed every marine but one.

" Bit knocked about, isn't she? " said the commander.

" Rather a mess," the interviewer agreed.

Yet, knocked about as she was, her work was not yet done. She had still to perform another feat, as you will learn in the

How we plugged up Zeebrugge Harbour. 247

next chapter, and add a final laurel wreath to her crown of glory.

* * * * *

Captain Chater, who commanded the marines of the landing-party, tells us that the sixteen-foot drop from the " brows " to the Mole was the most awkward part of the business, but that the men didn't mind it a bit. " Yelled like mad all the time, and went for the Huns as though the whole thing was a football match. The marines are rather bucked about the show." The time spent on the Mole seemed very short to him, and he was quite surprised when the siren sounded the recall. " Getting back was the worst part. We had scaling ladders and ropes, but the fire was very heavy, and the men wouldn't go without their pals. They insisted on taking everybody, living or dead. You can imagine that that took time. As soon as I got on top of the parapet I lay flat down to see the men off. They thought I was wounded, and tried to pick me up and take *me!* "

* * * * *

Three German destroyers lay alongside the Mole inside the harbour, and all three of them bombarded *Vindictive* at close range. An officer of marines thus describes our attack upon these vessels:—" From the destroyers a number of German sailors swarmed up to attack us; but they found themselves face to face with British bayonets, and with a shout our men charged them. This was more than Fritz could stand. Clearing a space, we dashed to the first vessel, into which we threw some fifty hand bombs. A loud explosion followed, and the last we saw of the destroyer was that she was on fire and sinking. We were unable to reach the other two destroyers, and what became of them we cannot say."

It will interest you to learn that *Brussels*, the late Captain Fryatt's ship, was lying in the harbour when our men landed on the Mole. A young lieutenant who commanded a motor boat said, " When the big ships burst the boom across the harbour, we dodged in under the shell-fire, and let drive at several of the ships we saw inside. At one end of the harbour we saw *Brussels*. Heading for her, I discharged a torpedo right into her, but I could not wait to see her sink."

* * * * *

An engineer officer bemoaned that he and his comrades



The Bottling-up of Ostend: the Vindictive ramming her

(By permission)

This illustration gives a diagrammatic view of Ostend Harbour, and shows all the points at which the where torpedoes were discharged and the wooden piles were destroyed. In the centre of the entrance lying across the channel at an angle, is seen *Vindictive* laden with concrete. Behind is the town, from while the operation was in progress. The fountains of water which are seen in the harbour and in the fountain is seen rising near the stern of *Vindictive* at the moment when a motor launch was taking off

The failure to block the harbour of Ostend as completely as that of Zeebrugge meant that the latter "the obsolete cruiser, H.M.S. *Vindictive*, was sunk between the piers and across the entrance of Ostend the first attack on Ostend. The weather was fine when the start was made, but as the vessels approached eventually discovered at 2.20 a.m., the programme time being 2 a.m.

"Commander A. E. Godsal was in command of the old cruiser, and, with Lieutenant Sir John was approaching the harbour mouth the fire from the shore was so heavy that the three officers took

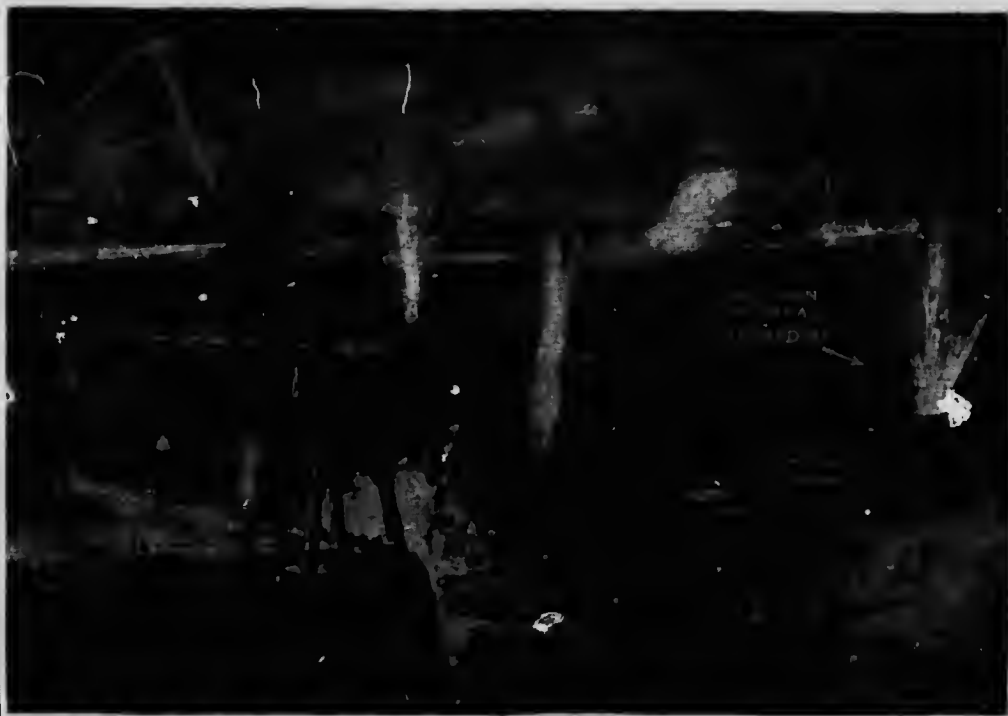
"After swinging the ship into the channel and ramming her stem against the eastern pier, Commander vessel. A shell burst outside the conning-tower, and, it is believed, killed the gallant officer.

"The command then devolved upon Lieutenant Crutchley, who, after ascertaining that *Vindictive*

"The crew jumped into two motor boats, '254' (Lieutenant Drummond, R.N.V.R.) and '276'

"One of the motor boats, with Lieutenant Crutchley, Engineer-Commander W. A. Bury, and thirty-board.

"Motor launch '276' brought off Lieutenant Sir John Alleyne and two ratings."



Stem into the Eastern Pier at the Entrance to the Harbour.
(of *The Sphere*.)

leading incidents of the raid took place. We see the spots at the end of the eastern and western piers to the harbour is one of the daring coastal motor boats which did the deed. Farther up the harbour, which searchlights are seen following the Allied aircraft, which dropped bombs on the harbour works sea on either side of the piers are the result of shells that have fallen short of the target. One such those who had navigated her into her blocking position.

was not effectively sealed until the night of 9th May, when, in the words of the Admiralty announcement, Harbour." *Vindictive* was chiefly manned by the officers and crew of *Brilliant*, who had taken part in Ostend a fog was encountered, and *Vindictive* had difficulty in finding the harbour mouth, which was

Alleyne and Lieutenant Crutchley, stationed himself at the upper steering position. When the vessel shelter in the conning-tower.

Godsal left the protection of the conning-tower and went outside in order better to see the position of the

would not turn any farther, cleared the engine-room and stokehole and blew the charges.

(Lieutenant Bourke, R.N.V.R.), which had gallantly stood by to rescue the men.

eight men of *Vindictive*, was sighted by Admiral Keyes's flagship, *Warwick*, which took the party on

saw nothing of the "show." "I was kept below all the time. The Germans began sending over gas shells, and we, the engine-room officers and artificers, had to work like Trojans with gas masks on." Another officer declared that when the expedition left Zeebrugge fires were blazing all over the place, and that the lock gates of the canal had been smashed by scooters or motor boats. It was low tide, and he saw the water pouring out of the canal into the harbour. This made the handling of the boats very difficult. "Still," he concluded, "we got through, and I would not have missed the experience for a thousand pounds."

* * * * *

On July 11th Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of the Admiralty, exhibited two photographs of the Zeebrugge Canal. These photographs had been taken about a month previously by German aviators, who evidently had made their negatives from a much lower height than was possible for our airmen. An examination of the photographs showed the canal to be completely blocked. The ships were lying right across the entrance. No enemy destroyers had been able to leave the canal. Those which made Zeebrugge their base after the raid had to lie behind the Mole. The First Lord's photographs proved up to the hilt that the Zeebrugge blocking expedition had been completely successful.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHAT HAPPENED AT OSTEND.

I MUST now tell you the story of *Sirius* and *Brilliant*, the block-ships which shifted their course for Ostend when the combined expedition was about fifteen miles from Zeebrugge. Ostend is familiar to many British people, for before the war it was the most fashionable sea-bathing resort of Belgium, and the usual passenger port of entry into that country. The harbour, which was reconstructed in the eighteenth century and largely extended in 1863, has an entrance less than three hundred and fifty feet wide, and is protected by two wooden piers which jut out seaward for about double that distance. There is no solid masonry Mole, as at Zeebrugge. The harbour is connected with the Bruges Canal, and has numerous basins branching off from it. These basins are filled at high tide, and at low tide the water is allowed to escape in order to scour away the sandbanks at the mouth of the harbour. From the top of the New Lighthouse, which stands between six and seven hundred yards inland, there is an extensive view in fine weather. Nieuport, Furnes, and Dunkirk may be seen towards the south-west, Blankenberghe to the north-east, and the towers of Bruges to the east.

The command of the expedition was entrusted to Commander Hubert Lynes. All went well until within half an hour of the attempt to force an entrance into the harbour. The coastal motor boats lighted up the approaches and the ends of the piers with calcium flares, and, as at Zeebrugge, produced a smoke cloud which hid the approaching ships from the enemy. Then the wind shifted, blew back the smoke, and revealed them to the German gunners. *Sirius* and *Brilliant* were close inshore when the wind changed. At once every

piece between Zeebrugge and Ostend began to thunder; the flares were extinguished, and a terrible fire was concentrated on the blocking ships. Before long *Sirius* was in a sinking condition.

In the darkness of night it was difficult to find the narrow entrance to the harbour. The buoy on the Stroom Bank marking the channel had been displaced, and both the ships ran aground. They were forced to sink themselves in the surf at a point about two thousand yards east of the piers. Both ships suffered heavy losses owing to the intensity of the fire, but the survivors were got away in motor boats. Unhappily, they had not succeeded in their enterprise.

* * * * *

Now for the sequel. The British Navy is nothing if not thorough. Officers and bluejackets alike hate to leave a job half done. Zeebrugge had been effectively blocked, but Ostend was still open. Though the Germans did not believe that the daring attempt would be repeated, they made assurance doubly sure by removing the buoy marking the entrance to the channel, and leaving no guiding marks visible. They also cut gaps in the wooden piers to prevent a landing from being made upon them, and took care that destroyers should be in the offing to attack any flotilla that might make another attempt.

Some writers who commented on the unsuccessful enterprise of 23rd April prophesied that the raid would not be repeated, because it would be impossible to surprise the enemy a second time. Never was prophecy more completely falsified. It was just because no one could believe that a second venture would be made that the chiefs of the Admiralty decided to make it. Because it was unthinkable that the enemy should be off his guard a second time, Vice-Admiral Keyes determined upon the attempt. "Fortune helps the daring, but repulses the timid," says an old Latin proverb.

The evening of 9th May promised well for the adventure. There was little wind; a light breeze blew from a point or so west of north; the sea was calm, the sky was lead-blue in colour, the stars shone faintly, and there was no moon. Sir Roger Keyes and his staff had prepared a time-table for every stage of the operation, and precise orders had been given for laying a smoke barrage, no matter what might be the direction of the wind. Monitors, destroyers, motor launches, and coastal

motor boats were to co-operate, and French destroyers were to assist. No doubt Rear-Admiral Tyrwhitt's cruisers and the remainder of the Dover forces were so disposed as to prevent the nine German destroyers known to be at sea from interfering with the flotilla. Sir Roger Keyes, in *Warwick*, was to superintend the operations, and Commodore Hubert Lynes, who had directed the previous venture, was to command the forces which were to guide the blocking ship to its last resting-place.

Vindictive, which had played such a gallant part at Zeebrugge, was to be sacrificed in this second attempt on Ostend harbour. She was filled with cement, and was manned by the officers and crew of *Brilliant* and *Sirius*. They had been baffled sixteen days earlier, and they were now eager to redeem their failure.

As the vessels steamed towards Ostend, observers on the deck of the vessel which served the commodore as flagship could only see swift shapes of blackness, destroyers bulking like cruisers in the gloom, motor launches like destroyers, and coastal motor boats like racing hillocks of foam. From Dunkirk came a sudden and brief flurry of gun-fire, announcing that German aeroplanes were on the wing; and over the invisible coast of Flanders flashes of artillery fire rose and fell like summer lightning.

The monitors, anchored in their firing positions far to seaward, awaited the signal to open fire. Clouds of aircraft, bomb-laden, were now hovering above the port. By the side of the huge guns of our batteries in Flanders stood marines waiting to smother the German artillery along the coast, while destroyers patrolled to seaward of the small craft. "There's *Vindictive*," whispered the bluejackets of the monitors, and they turned from their torpedo tubes and guns to gaze at the great black ship, plodding silently to her goal through the streaming smoke. Ahead of her raced a destroyer, which laid a light-buoy to serve her as a guide. The crews of the monitors and the cruisers saw her pass and disappear. She was now in the hands of the small craft, whose mission was to direct her, light her, and hide her in the clouds of their smoke screen. A flare burnt in her slack and rusty rigging, "and that eye of unsteady fire, paling in the blaze of star shells or reddening through the drift of the smoke, watched the whole great enter-

prise, from the moment when it hung in doubt to its final triumphant success."

Vindictive slowly and solemnly made her way towards the light-buoy, and, passing it, steered for a coastal motor boat which had taken station at the position of the Stroom Bank buoy, and was burning a calcium flare to indicate the entrance to the harbour. Four minutes before she reached the coastal motor boat, and fifteen minutes before she was due at the harbour mouth, the signal was given for the guns of the monitors to open fire.

Two motor boats, under Lieutenant Darrel Reid, R.N.R., and Lieutenant Albert L. Poland, R.N., dashed in towards the ends of the high wooden piers and torpedoed them. There was a machine gun on the end of the western pier, but it vanished in a roar and leap of flame. Over the town a gleam of fire appeared high in the air, and sank slowly earthwards. It was a signal that the aeroplanes saw and understood. They were now free to let go their bombs. As the first of them began to fall, shells came whooping in from the monitors far out at sea.

A moment before all was silence; now there was a deafening roar of crashing bombs and bursting shells. The Germans, though they afterwards denied it, had been completely surprised a second time. Up to the moment when the wooden piles of the piers were blown sky-high by the torpedoes of the motor boats, no single shot had come from the land, though occasional star shells had soared up, and for a brief moment had made the darkness as bright as the day.

The smoke-producing craft, manned by officers and men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, were now at work building up a cloud of invisibility for *Vindictive*. The star shells paled, and were lost as they sank in it; the beams of the searchlights seemed to break off short upon its front. The great batteries on shore now opened fire, but their observers were blinded by the smoke from the sea.

For a while there was a tremendous uproar. The coast for miles on either side of Ostend was studded with groups of great guns, each group being known by name to our men, and consisting of pieces from six inches calibre to great naval guns of fifteen inches. Tirpitz, Hindenburg, Deutschland, Cecilia, and the rest were now belching shells at the advancing

vessels, and meanwhile were being assailed by our artillery in Flanders and by our howitzers on the monitors. The aeroplanes were now showering their bombs upon the port, and anti-aircraft guns were searching the skies for them. Star shells shot up and floated down, lighting the smoke banks with a wondrous glow; and those strings of luminous green balls which airmen call "flaming onions" added their glare to the nightmare scene. Through all this blaze and roar of conflict *Vindictive*, unhesitating, unrelenting, sailed slowly through the lighted waters towards her last resting-place.

Fortune now favoured her. A wet sea fog suddenly began to drift landwards; it was cold and clammy, and the rigging of the destroyers showed clinging beads of moisture. So thick was this fog that the star shells and searchlights were no longer visible, and the aeroplanes overhead could no longer see their targets, and had to suspend their bombardment. The destroyers had to turn on their lights and sound their sirens in order to keep in touch with each other.

Vindictive had still some distance to go when the sea fog blotted her out from the sight of her consorts. Motor boats on either side of her burnt Dover flares—dazzling lights that are capable of illuminating many square miles of sea at once; but even these failed to pierce the mingled smoke and fog. *Vindictive* had to put her helm over and grope to and fro to find the entrance to the harbour. Twice in her wanderings she must have passed across it; at the third turn there came a sudden rift in the midst of the fog, and she saw the entrance clear, the piers on either side, and the opening dead ahead. A motor boat, commanded by Acting-Lieutenant Guy L. Cockburn, R.N., immediately raced into the opening under fire that grew fiercer every moment, and planted a flare on the waters between the piers. *Vindictive* steamed over it, and passed on. She was now in the harbour.

At once her agony began. The shore guns found her, and rained shells upon her. Every few seconds she was hit, and new scars were added to the old. Her decks and upper works were wrecked anew, and her hull was holed in a score of places. The machine gun at the end of the pier had been blown up by a torpedo; but there were others at the inshore ends of the piers and on land, and these now converged their fire upon her and drenched her with a torrent of lead. Her after-

control was destroyed by a shell, which killed all the occupants, including Sub-Lieutenant Angus N. MacLachlan, who was in command of it. So fierce and unrelenting was the fire that Commander Godsall, R.N., ordered his officers to take cover with him in the conning-tower.

Through a slit in the steel wall of the conning-tower they perceived that the eastern pier had been breached some two hundred yards from its seaward end. In front, as the gun-flashes lighted up the sky for seconds at a time, they saw the buildings of the town; but elsewhere their eyes only rested on a patchwork of fire and darkness. Immediately after passing the breach in the pier, Commander Godsall left the conning-tower and went on deck to watch the ship's movements, and to shout steering directions to his comrades through the slit in the conning-tower. He now gave the order to starboard the helm. *Vindictive* responded, and laying her battered nose against the eastern pier, prepared to swing her 320 feet of length across the channel.

At that moment a shell from the shore struck the conning-tower. Lieutenant Sir John Alleyne and Lieutenant V. A. C. Crutchley were still within, while Commander Godsall was outside. Lieutenant Alleyne was stunned by the shock. Lieutenant Crutchley shouted through the slit to his commander, but receiving no answer, rang the port engine full-speed astern to help in swinging the ship. By this time she was lying at an angle of about forty degrees to the pier, and seemed to be hard and fast, so that it was impossible to bring her further round.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE LAST VOYAGE OF "VINDICTIVE."

AFTER working the engines for some minutes, but all to no purpose, Lieutenant Crutchley gave the order to clear the engine-room and abandon ship. Engineer Lieutenant-Commander William A. Bury, who was the last to leave the engine-room, switched on the electricity which was to explode the main charges, while Lieutenant Crutchley touched off other charges from the conning-tower. The old ship shuddered as the explosives tore out her bottom plates and bulkheads. She sank for about six feet, and lay upon the bottom of the channel. Her work was done ; her fame was secure.

It is supposed that Commander Godsall was killed by the shell which struck the conning-tower. Lieutenant Crutchley searched the ship, but failed to find either the body of the commander or that of Sub-Lieutenant MacLachlan amidst the chaos of splintered wood and shattered steel. Commander Godsall had commanded *Brilliant* in the first attempt to block up the port ; and, as you know, he and his officers, along with those of *Sirius*, had volunteered for the attempt which had now proved successful.

By this time Engineer Lieutenant-Commander Bury was severely wounded. He had been in charge of *Vindictive's* engines when she attacked Zeebrugge Mole. After that exploit he went to Admiral Keyes, and begged that the four engine-room artificers who had accompanied him on the former occasion should be his companions during the new venture. The Admiral agreed, and to Engineer Lieutenant-Commander Bury and his devoted comrades must be accorded high praise for their gallantry and skill. Two of the artificers were wounded, and one was missing. The coxswain, First-class Petty Officer

J. J. Reed, had been on board *Brilliant* in the former raid, and he had pleaded hard to be allowed to remain with his commander. The rest of the crew had been selected from a large number of volunteers belonging to the Dover patrol.

Petty Officer Reed found Lieutenant Alleyne in the conning-tower still unconscious, and carried him aft under a storm of fire from the machine guns. The wounded officer recovered consciousness, but was again badly hit before he could be got over the side. He fell into the water, but managed to seize a rope and hold on until he was rescued, along with two other wounded men, by a motor launch under Lieutenant Bourke, R.N.V.R.

The remainder of the crew were taken off under a fierce fire by a motor launch commanded by Lieutenant Geoffrey H. Drummond, R.N.V.R. The launch made for *Warwick* with all speed; but during the voyage her bows were shot to pieces, her commander was wounded, and the second in command and a seaman were killed, while several others suffered injuries. When the launch reached the side of *Warwick* she was in a sinking condition. Her occupants were taken on board with all speed, for the destroyer was within range of the forts, and the day was breaking. There was no time to hoist the launch on board; she was destroyed as she lay at *Warwick's* side.

At 2.30 a.m. red rockets whizzed up from *Warwick's* deck to recall the small craft. One by one the launches and motor boats began to appear out of the fog. They had many wounded men on board, and the work of transferring these to the destroyers and reporting the names of the dead took time. It was clear from the reports that all the men had behaved splendidly, and had shown the same cheery discipline and indomitable courage which had distinguished them and their comrades in the Zeebrugge raid.

So with victory crowning its banners the flotilla steamed back to its base. Two officers and six men had made the great sacrifice; two officers and ten men, all of *Vindictive*, were missing, believed killed; and four officers and eight men were wounded. With this light loss Ostend harbour had been blocked—not completely, but enough to embarrass the enemy and prevent him from using it for large craft for many a day to come.

How successful the operation was may be gathered from



Petty Officer Reed rescuing Lieutenant Sir John Alleyne,
(By permission of The Sphere.)

the fact that the enemy at once warned his U-boats by wireless not to return to their bases on the Flanders coast. Of course the Germans made light of the affair. One of their accounts, said to be by an eye-witness, ran as follows:—

“ Suddenly a cruiser, later found to be *Vindictive*, appeared before the entrance of Ostend. Although riddled with holes, new and old—for the injuries which she had received in the attack on Zeebrugge Mole had only undergone the barest repairs—she still appeared navigable, and apparently intended with her last strength to invade the entrance and to sink in front of the lock gates. Now she received such a hail of shells that her breath entirely left her. She struck the piles at the extreme end of the jetty, and there she sank. There she may lie as long as she likes, for she does not interfere with us. . . . Only dead were found on board, while not a plank, rail, or stairway was left. The whole deck was entirely littered with splinters and wreckage. The wheel on the bridge was smashed, and the helmsman lay dead beside it. Here and there were smouldering fires.”

Though the Germans tried to make out that the raid had failed, seamen all over the world knew that for the time being Ostend was closed to big ships, and that the work of removing the obstruction would occupy months. The French admiral, Fournier, spoke the simple truth when he said: “ I consider the recent attack in force against Ostend the finest feat of arms in the naval history of all times and all countries.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

VILLERS-BRETONNEUX AND KEMMEL.

WHILE our naval forces were exhibiting superb dash and resource in their raids on Zeebrugge and Ostend, and Britain was ringing with the praises of her incomparable seamen, our armies in France and Flanders were passing through a fiery ordeal. The enemy was now in overwhelming strength. The Russian treason had enabled him to bring from forty to fifty divisions, hitherto employed in the East, into play on the Western front, and his Italian victory had given him more than two thousand additional pieces of artillery. With these forces he was staking his all upon a speedy overthrow of the Allies. Though he pretended that he had nothing to fear from America, he knew that the U-boats upon which he was relying had failed to check the constant arrival of transports filled with the very pick of American manhood. Every day saw the American forces increasing in number; every day saw them arrayed on French fields in growing strength, and it was clear that by the fall of the year they would be so numerous that the scale would be turned in favour of the Allies. There still remained a few months during which the enemy had a chance of forcing a decision. He was now devoting his whole energies to the task, and the Allies were being subjected to terrible strain and anxiety.

In earlier chapters of this volume I told you how the enemy struck his first great blow between Arras and Noyon, and endeavoured to separate the French and British armies. Though he forced us to make a long and costly retreat, he failed to reach Amiens and the main railway from the coast to Paris. It was the dogged defence made by the Allies at Villers-Bretonneux which prevented him from attaining his objective, and foiled his plan at the very moment when success seemed certain.

Villers-Bretonneux, now a heap of ruins, has already figured more than once in these pages as the scene of violent struggles. Let me remind you that this large village, in which we formerly had a corps headquarters, stands on a hill some three or four miles to the north of the Luce, a tributary of the Arve, and therefore a sub-tributary of the Somme. Between the Luce and the Somme is a plateau which rises about 150 feet above the water-level, and in some places attains a height of 180 feet. The plateau is a bare rolling countryside of open fields, with two tracts of woodland—the one just north of the Luce being known as the Hangard Wood, while the other, to the west of Villers-Bretonneux, may be called the Villers Wood. This upland between the Luce and the Somme is the last high ground directly in front of Amiens, and upon it the British and French forces joined hands. If the enemy could carry the plateau by thrusting us back at Villers-Bretonneux and working round the Hangard Wood, Amiens would be at his mercy, and the all-important railway would probably be lost to us.

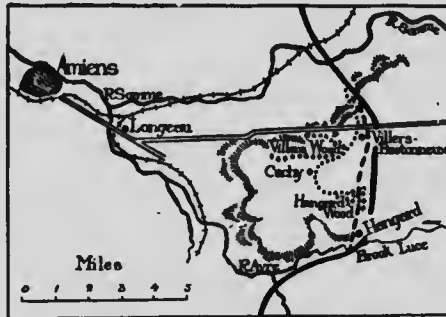
On the Wednesday following the glorious Monday on which we bottled up the harbour of Zeebrugge the Germans made a bold bid for the plateau. Early on the morning of 24th April they flung some eight divisions against the Allied line between the Somme and the Luce. Three of these divisions struck at the British positions to the north and south of Villers-Bretonneux, while a similar force attacked the French round about Hangard, and the remaining two began an outflanking movement on the south. The battle opened with the usual heavy bombardment, which continued from three o'clock until 6.45, when the German infantry began to advance.

The 4th Guards Division, which had lost heavily in earlier fighting, but had been renewed in strength by fresh drafts, together with the 77th Division of Rhinelanders, Westphalians, and Alsations, who had been brought from Russia, and other forces, attacked the British. The initial onset was repulsed along the whole line. Then using Tanks for the first time, the enemy advanced again, and was able to get a footing on the eastern edge of Hangard Wood and also in the ruins of the village. This was by no means the sum total of his success. He carried Villers-Bretonneux, reached the edge of the plateau, and, south of the wood, entered the outskirts of the village of Cachy. If you examine this little map, you will see that the position of the

French had now become perilous. Their left flank was turned, and they were forced to withdraw from Hangard.

East Lancashire, Middlesex, Berkshire, Northampton, West Yorks, and other regiments fought heroically to save the village. They were drenched with fire and poison gas, and suffered terribly. Then out of the mist appeared four or five Tanks, accompanied by dense masses of infantry, who crowded the narrow front, and by sheer weight pressed back our men. In the middle the West Yorks fought with extraordinary courage, but they and other units were obliged to fall back and abandon the place.

The enemy filled the village with men and machine guns, and worked hard to put it into a condition of defence. He had won a real success, and he bade fair ere long to capture the whole plateau, from the western edge of which the main railway between the coast and Paris was only a mile distant. It was clear that once his guns were emplaced on the plateau Amiens would be in deadly peril. We dared not leave him in possession of Villers-Bretonneux; at whatever cost an attempt must be made to recover it.



Map showing attack on Villers Bretonneux.

Up to ten o'clock on the night of 25th April the enemy held on to his gains. At that hour our counter-attack began. The assault was entrusted to the Australians and some British battalions. Happily, the mist which had favoured the enemy on the 24th now came to our assistance: it veiled the moon, and enabled our men to advance unperceived. Three separate forces were sent forward in the attempt to recapture the place. The Australians converged on it from two sides, while Northampton, Durham Light Infantry, and other units swept into the huddle of ruins that once was Villers-Bretonneux.

The troops attacking on the south side went right through the village, and reached the positions which we had held the morning before. Those who advanced on the northern side had a much harder task. The Germans resisted desperately,



When Tank meets Tank : a Battle of

(By permission of The

The first action between Tanks took place near Villers-Bretonneux on April 24th. The result was a our heavy Tanks, which drove them from the field. In the above illustration a German Tank is seen on the the trees British infantry are seen, and to the right, where shrapnel is bursting, German troops are seen machine guns in the rear and at the sides.



Land Cruisers at Villers-Bretonneux.

(Illustrated London News.)

victory for the British Tanks. Six of the enemy machines accompanied his infantry, and were met by some of right in the background; a British Tank in the left foreground is firing at it. Further to the left among advancing. The German Tanks were of a somewhat square design, with a quick-firing gun in front, and

attle of
a of The
It was a
n on the
are seen

and the fire from their machine guns along the railway embankment below the village proved very deadly. Nevertheless, the Australians worked forward in the darkness, and reached a point some five hundred yards short of the flank of the southern force. All through the early morning they held on, though their flank was exposed, and at last fell back some three hundred yards to a defensive position, where they waited while the troops immediately on their left, together with the southern force, were fighting their way through the village. By evening Villers-Bretonneux was again in our hands, and we breathed freely once more.

The fighting was savage in the extreme, and our men were outnumbered; but the Australians did heroic work, and nothing could resist them. As our troops fought their way into the village, batches of prisoners began to surrender, and the remainder of the Germans were forced back to the railway embankment, where for many hours we battled against the nests of machine gunners. Before sunrise the last of them had been routed out, and the village was completely won. It was noticeable that during the struggle the guns of friend and foe were silent. Germans and British were so mixed up in the ruined streets that neither side dared to shell the place, lest they should slay their own men.

The much-talked-of German Tanks came into action for the first time during the second attack on the village. Eyewitnesses said that the enemy Tanks were bigger than ours, and were furnished with large turrets. Some of our Tanks went out to meet them, and a battle of land cruisers followed. One of our Tanks was crippled, but a newcomer knocked out one of the enemy, whereupon the rest made their escape. In other parts of the battlefield our light Tanks did excellent work, and in some cases ran right into clusters of Germans. They were handled with great skill and gallantry, and proved themselves very useful weapons.

During the struggle which I have described we captured between seven hundred and eight hundred prisoners, together with two light guns, some flame-throwers, and twenty-one machine guns. The enemy lost very heavily in dead and wounded, and many of the prisoners were much discouraged. They spoke of the hardships which they had suffered, and complained that they had received no rations for two days. When our men fed them they ate like wolves.

The result of the action was that the enemy completely failed to master the plateau. For the eighth time he had penetrated into Hangard village and wood, and for the eighth time he had been driven out again. He had won the vital point of Villers-Bretonneux, but he had failed to hold it. He had been foiled in the very nick of time.

* * * * *

The scene now shifts to Flanders, where specially fierce attacks began on the morning of 25th April, and continued for two days and part of the third. More than once in these pages I have directed your attention to the group of hills which run from east to west south of Ypres, and form its main buttress of defence on that side. The most easterly of the hills is Kemmel.* Before the war this hill, which rises 512 feet above sea-level, was a place of holiday resort, and was reached from Ypres by a steam tramway. From its top a fine view was formerly obtained of the long avenues of poplars, the red-roofed villages, the neat fields, the church spires, the orchards white with apple blossom, and the old windmills that dotted the flat landscape.

Immediately west of Kemmel rises a second and lower hill, with three summits—the Scherpenburg (“the sharp mound”) on the north, Mont Noir in the centre, and Mont Rouge to the south. None of these summits reach 440 feet. On the top of the Scherpenburg is an old windmill, from which visitors used to watch the panorama of the Ypres battlefield. In March 1915 a group of English officers, including Sir H. Smith-Dorrien, stood watching an attack on the Wytschaete-Messines Ridge, when a young officer appeared and saluted the general. “Who is that boy lieutenant?” asked a bystander. It was the Prince of Wales.

Westward of the triple hill is Mont de Cats, which is about as high as Kemmel Hill. Still further westward the high ground sinks; but in Mont Cassel the highest point of the range rises to 520 feet. A Welsh or a Scottish boy would think these elevations mere hillocks, but in the dead flat country of Flanders they appear as mountains. You know that in modern warfare even a slight elevation in a flat country is difficult to capture, and that its possession is coveted because it gives observation over the surrounding plains. If the enemy could capture the line of hills to which I have referred, he would be master of

* See panoramic view on p. 270.

the narrow strip of country lying between them and the coast of the Channel, and of all the country to the north right up to the Yser. The last little bit of Belgium still remaining in the possession of King Albert's army would then have to be given up, Dunkirk would be uncovered, and the Allies would be forced to retire to the line of the little river Aa.

It was, therefore, necessary that the line of hills should be held at all costs. On the morning of Thursday, 25th April, the enemy began a series of desperate thrusts with the object of carrying Kimmel Hill. For this purpose he struck hard at the village of Dranoutre,* which lies south-west of the hill. He chose this point of attack because it was the junction between the British and French forces. Having carried the place, he pushed up the valley to the west of Mont Kimmel, and at the same time entered Kimmel village. He had now turned the summit both from the east and from the west, and its capture was only a matter of time. The French on the hill made a gallant resistance, and though they were cut off, they held out for seven or eight hours. Surrounded on both sides and overpowered, the few survivors surrendered, and the hill fell into the hands of the Germans. By the morning of Friday, the 26th, they claimed 6,000 prisoners, most of them French.

The capture of Kimmel Hill was a serious blow to the Allies. It gave the enemy an isolated height covered with trees, afforded him good observation to the north, and enabled him to begin a gradual advance westward along the chain of uplands towards the coast. Further, it made the Ypres salient more and more difficult to hold. The enemy now pushed on to the west of Kimmel Hill, and reached the village of Locre, which lies in the depression between that hill and the Scherpenburg. It was now his intention to pinch out the triple hills behind Kimmel, so that he could command the ground south of Poperinghe. If Mont Noir and Mont Rouge could be outflanked, he would be in a fair way to capture Mont de Cats, and by the time that this height had passed into his possession we should have been obliged to give up the northern plain.

The capture of Kimmel Hill forced us to withdraw on the Ypres salient for about two miles, and meanwhile the enemy crossed the Ypres-Comines Canal and carried Hill 60, the

* See sketch map, p. 271.

scene of such fierce fighting during the Flanders battle of 1915-1916. It was, as you know, merely a spoil bank, formed of earth dug out to form the canal; but it was consecrated with the blood of many of our most gallant men, and we yielded it with great regret. Ground was also won at St. Eloi, where the great crater formed by our explosion still yawned.

I want you to examine carefully the little map on page 271. It shows you the 17,000 yards of line held by us on the morning of Monday, 29th. On that day we faced the enemy from the Ypres-Comines Canal to Meteren, as shown in the map. Between the canal and the hamlet of Voormezeele our 21st Division held the line. Beyond the hamlet the 49th Division continued the defence up to the Kemmel Brook. You will notice that our trenches ran through what is called Ridge Wood. From the Kemmel Brook to the base of the Scherpenburg the 25th Division was stationed; and immediately on its right, holding the village of Locre and defending the bases of Mont Rouge and Mont Noir, lay the French. Beyond them were the Australians. You will observe that the village of Locre lay almost in the centre of the Allied line, which I have just described. If it could be captured, the enemy would be almost certain to win the uplands behind.

On the 26th there had been a terrible struggle for Locre. Three times, after a terrible bombardment, the Germans had flung their forces against it, and at the third attempt had entered the ruins of the place. A counter-attack, however, had driven them out, and when the story of 29th April opens the French still maintained their hold on the village. Meanwhile our men, though assailed with a rain of shells and a deluge of gas, had stoutly held on to Ridge Wood and Voormezeele. German attacks on the 27th and 28th had met with no better success, though shells were now falling on fields and villages hitherto untouched by the ravages of war.

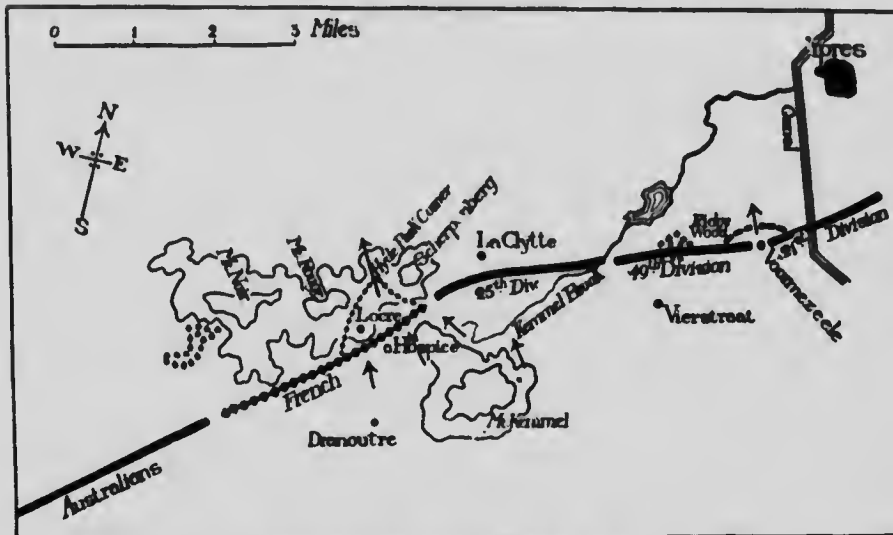
A dense mist shrouded the landscape on the morning of the 29th, when, between half-past five and seven o'clock, the German infantry was launched. Some eleven or thirteen divisions were hurled against the six or seven Allied divisions holding the line. Six enemy divisions were thrust against the French, who were assailed by about eight bayonets to the yard. Following their usual custom, the Germans put all their weight into the first blow. The first attack was made through the



Panoramic View of the Hill Country of Flanders
(By permission of *The Illustrated London News*.)

ruins of Voormezeele, between the 21st Division and the 49th, which was holding Ridge Wood. The enemy carried the village, and reached its northern edge, but could go no further. Lancashire and other troops of the 49th Division held off the enemy all morning, while Yorkshire and South Africans, and others immediately on their right, made an equally fine defence. Four separate attacks were made on the 25th Division, but the advancing waves were destroyed every time.

The fiercest attack was directed against the French left, where divisions of Bavarian and Alpine troops advanced in the



Map showing attack on 29th April.

most determined manner. Early in the morning the Germans made a thrust which pushed the French back through Locre, and brought them to what our men called Hyde Park Corner, the meeting-place of five roads in the depression between the Scherpenburg and Mont Rouge.

A wedge had now been driven for a thousand yards through Locre, and the situation was dangerous in the extreme. The Germans were on the southern slopes of the Scherpenburg, and it seemed as though they would soon be masters of the hills on both sides of the wedge. Had the advance been carried forward for an additional

fifteen hundred yards, disaster might have been our portion. The French, however, fought desperately all day and far into the night. On the 29th Locre changed hands no fewer than four times. At Hyde Park Corner a splendid feat of heroism was performed. A French officer rallied his men and cried, "Follow me, my children." Fixing their bayonets, and dashing forward with hoarse cheers, his Poilus advanced with such determination upon the machine-gun outposts, which were holding the cross-roads, that they turned and fled.

From noon onwards fortune favoured the French. Early in the afternoon counter-attacks began, one of which deserves special mention. A French officer addressed his men thus: "Come on, comrades. Let us take Locre before it is too dark." They responded with cheers, and at their head he led them right through the village, on and on towards Dranoutre, until they were stopped by their own barrage. For the rest of the day the German efforts to readvance were fruitless. The masses brought together for the purpose were smashed to atoms by the French 75's, and by dusk, when the fighting died down, the French had not only regained their old line, but had gone beyond for 1,500 yards. The ground recovered included the Locre Hospice, in the grounds of which Major Willie Redmond lay buried.

The Germans had suffered a disastrous defeat. As a British officer said next morning, "Fritz took the knock yesterday." Our men had played their part nobly. Many of them were young drafts, who were in the firing-line for the first time. Though they were subjected to the fiercest strain, and gas shells fell so fast and thick among them that they were forced to work and sleep in their masks, they "stuck it out" like veterans. We shall probably never know the extent of the German losses from the rifles and machine guns of our men. Some writers tell us that more than 20,000 Germans bit the dust that day. The Leicesters at Voormezele stood like rocks. Still further north, where our men had to stem massed assaults, the same splendid endurance was exhibited. The 25th Division, for example, did not budge a foot, and we are told that their fire resembled a garden hose playing upon the enemy. During the fighting the German airmen followed the example of their British rivals. They flew very low, and as they swooped above our trenches, poured steady streams of bullets into them.

CHAPTER XXX.

LOOKING BACKWARD.

THE victory of 29th April closed the second phase of the great German onset which began on 21st March. Thereafter until 27th May the enemy made no attacks in force. He was busy licking his wounds and preparing for his next great onset. The French, however, gave him no rest. On the 15th they retook a hill south of Dickebusch Lake, and five days later they made an advance which improved their positions between Mount Kemmel and the triple hills to the west.

Let me now briefly sum up the results of the fighting during the forty days of incessant struggle and constant anxiety which had elapsed since March 21st. The first attack was delivered on a fifty-mile front with more than forty divisions, and was preceded by the most terrific bombardment so far known. The blow was aimed at the extreme right of the British army, with the object of driving a wedge between it and the French. Aided by the thick mist, the enemy broke through in that part of the line which we had recently taken over from the French and had not garrisoned in sufficient strength. The result was that the southern portion of our line had to make a long and costly retreat. The stout resistance of our troops farther north saved us from disaster. Finally, the force of the blow slackened, and the arrival of French reinforcements prevented the enemy from reaching any of his objectives, though he came perilously near to them.

When the enemy saw that this thrust was failing, he flung himself on 28th March against Vimy Ridge and the Arras front to the north and south of the Scarpe. In this attack he failed terribly. He broke off the fighting almost at once, and renewed his effort to break through to Amiens both by way of

Albert and to the south of the Somme. Our resistance had now stiffened, and by the end of the first week of April the enemy made no further gains of consequence.

Again he shifted his battle-ground, and on 9th April, between Givenchy and Fleurbaix, flung ten or twelve divisions against the Portuguese, who held the centre of the line. The Portuguese gave way, but on the wings a fine resistance was made. The Lys was reached, and the attack showed signs of petering out in an ever-narrowing salient, which was dangerous to hold and useless to continue. As soon as the Germans perceived that they were fighting in a blind alley, they struck north of the Lys with three or four divisions. At first they were successful: we had to abandon Armentières, and, after a fierce struggle, Bailleul. On 15th April he strove again to break down our resistance at Givenchy, and to cross the La Bassée Canal at Hinges, but only achieved a costly failure. He then made a separate attack on the Belgian army, in the hope of cutting off the Ypres salient at its base. Thanks to the splendid staunchness of the Belgians, the biters were bitten. The Belgians, you will remember, drove the enemy into a flooded area of swamp and morass. The Germans knew the routes across this dangerous region; but in the panic of retreat they missed their way, and were driven into the bogs, where numbers of them were shot down, and 700 were forced to surrender. Besides winning back all the ground lost, the Belgians captured a field gun, ten machine guns, and other booty. They claimed to have killed over 2,000 Germans.

Then came the attacks on the hills which I have described in the former chapter. You know that they ended in complete defeat. The enemy was fought to a standstill: he did not make the smallest progress on any part of the front. On 29th April our soldiers showed all the valour and doggedness of those who fought and died in the First and Second Battles of Ypres. At the end of the day their confidence in ultimate victory was redoubled.

Though the enemy had failed, he had by no means come to the end of his tether. Before the month of May was out he had begun another thrust, which carried him to the right bank of the Marne and gave him ground over which he had advanced and retired as far back as September 1914. We shall read the story of this great but unavailing onset in later chapters.



Caught by the Tide of War: French Refugees from the Lost Villages.

(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Spkers.)

Homeless, in many cases for the second time, whole families were adrift on the crowded roads seeking refuge from the German guns, and sturdy British soldiers frequently gave a lift to the tired children and their mothers.

* * * * * * *

You will be interested to read the letter which the Queen sent to our soldiers during the days of their terrible ordeal. It runs as follows :—

“ To the Men of our Navy, Army, and Air Force.

“ I send this message to tell every man how much we, the women of the British Empire at home, watch and pray for you during the long hours of these days of stress and endurance.

“ Our pride in you is immeasurable, our hope unbounded, our trust absolute. You are fighting in the cause of Righteousness and Freedom; fighting to defend the children and women of our land from the horrors that have overtaken other countries; fighting for our very existence as a People at Home and Across the Seas. You are offering your all. You hold back nothing, and day by day you show a love so great that no man can have greater.

“ We, on our part, send forth, with full hearts and unflinching will, the lives we hold most dear.

“ We, too, are striving in all ways possible to make the war victorious. I know that I am expressing what is felt by thousands of wives and mothers when I say that we are determined to help one another in keeping your homes ready against your glad home-coming.

“ In God's Name we bless you, and by His Help we, too, will do our best.”

To this noble and heartfelt letter Sir Douglas Haig responded in the name of the Army :—

“ The message which your Majesty has sent to the Army and the Air Force, in the name of the women of the British Empire, will inspire with new strength and fresh determination all those brave men from every part of our Empire who, on the battlefields of France and Flanders, are fighting so gallantly for all that they hold most dear. They who with their own eyes daily see women and children homeless, once peaceful villages and towns once prosperous ruined and in flames, are resolved that, come what may, their own loved ones and homes shall not share that suffering.

“ No peril can be too great, no sacrifice too extreme, to save their country from such a fate. Side by side with our gallant Allies, whose wrong we feel as our own, and as our own are determined to set right, we will persevere in the fight against all odds until victory is at last achieved. In this great struggle we are heartened by the love and confidence of the women of the British Empire, to which your Majesty's most gracious message has given such moving expression.”

* * * * * * *

I will conclude this chapter by telling you a strange story. On the Mont de Cats, which looks across to Kemmel and Bail-leul, is a great monastery of Trappist monks, so called because the order to which they belong was founded at a place called

La Trappe, in Normandy. The rule of the order is very severe. The monks cut themselves off from all intercourse with the world, and impose upon themselves a vow of perpetual silence. To this monastery, in the autumn of 1914, came a column of German cavalry. The officer in command kicked open the door of the chapel, and, revolver in hand, looked within. He saw the monks at their prayers, and he observed that not a head was turned at his coming. Impressed by the sight, he strode away, and all that the monks heard was his heavy foot-fall and the clinking of his spurs as he crossed the flagstones. Other bodies of Germans passed; some of them behaved civilly, others in the usual boorish manner. One night, when the enemy had been driven down to Meteren, they left behind them a wounded boy officer, with many ribbons on his breast. He was Prince Max of Hesse, a cousin of the Kaiser. The abbot of the monastery tended him in his last hours, and ere the prince breathed his last he thanked his host for his courtesy, and sent messages to his own people.

That night his body was carried down into the valley, and was buried secretly by the village priest. Some time afterwards the Kaiser sent word to the priest, desiring to know the whereabouts of his cousin's grave. To this message the brave priest replied, "Tell the Kaiser that I will let him know the prince's burial-place when there are no more German soldiers in Belgium, and when restitution is made for the crimes committed against our people."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE THIRD GERMAN OFFENSIVE.

AFTER the heavy defeat which the Germans sustained in Flanders on 29th April a lull of a full month set in. During this time they were making preparations for their third great thrust. Before I proceed to describe the fighting which began on 27th March, let me remind you once more that owing to the collapse of Russia the enemy was able to reinforce his troops upon the Western front, and mass against the Allies far more men than they could put into the field. All these troops belonged to the same nation, and therefore they formed a much more united and solid force than that of the Allies. They were Germans all, while on the Allied side troops of a score or more nations fought together—Englishmen, Scotsmen, Irishmen, Frenchmen, Americans, Portuguese, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, Algerians, Senegambians, and so on: men of widely different race, language, and colour. You can easily understand that the Germans were at a great advantage in having armies composed of men of one nation, speaking the same language, living in the same land under the same government, and having the same general aims and ideas.

In addition to this advantage and to that of superior numbers, they were in a better geographical position than the Allies for taking the offensive. They held what are called the interior lines—that is, they were on the inside of a crescent-shaped front, while the Allies were outside. Roughly speaking, their front from the North Sea to the Vosges resembled the letter **D** turned the wrong way about. Along the upright of the **D** the Germans could mass their troops and send them rapidly to any part of the line which they wished to attack. In order to meet

them the Allies would have to convey their troops round the bulge.

There was still another advantage on which the enemy could count. He had discovered a method of collecting troops for an attack in such a way that they were hidden from the eyes of our airmen. When the attacking forces were secretly assembled in villages thirty or forty miles behind the firing line, the Germans, by means of their excellent system of railways, could keep up a continual flood of troops upon the sector marked out for attack. They could thus begin the battle with a certain number of divisions, and while the Allies were in doubt as to whether the attack was real or only a feint, they could send through the night darkened train after darkened train full of soldiers to the desired places, and as the trains arrived march the men on to the battlefield. In this way they were able to surprise us. They had done so twice already; in the thrust which I am about to describe they surprised us a third time. They attacked in deep, dense masses, so that the force of the blow could be sustained by continual pressure from the rear; and they trained their artillerymen to bring up light pieces and use them almost as part of the infantry.

The first blow was struck on a fifty-mile front, from the Vimy Ridge to the Oise; the second, between La Bassée and Armentières, afterwards extending into Flanders; and the third, between Soissons and Rheims. Perhaps you think that by thus striking blows at widely separated parts of the Allied lines there was no method in the German madness, but you will soon discover your mistake. The enemy argued somewhat as follows: "I have more men than the Allies; I hold the interior lines, and I can strike when and where I please. My armies are composed of men of one nation, controlled by one mind, and I can take my foes by surprise. My best plan is to strike heavily, first at this sector and then at that, a considerable distance away from the former sector. I may not be able to separate the Allied armies, but I shall, in time, break down their defensive system, force them to use up their reserves, and by hitting them constant blows where they least expect them, shake their confidence and break down their determination. By smashing their defensive systems I shall drive them from their trenches and make them fight in the open, where my masses of men can overwhelm them. While doing this I shall keep a large striking



How the British helped to

When the third German offensive opened, the British troops in the line before Rheims were stationed full strength by fresh drafts of young troops from home. The Germans attacked in overwhelming strength for the Aisne. Owing to the nature of the fighting, many small parties of our infantry were cut



ped to
ationed
belming
ere cut

hold the Line before Rheims.

[By permission of *The Graphic*.

on both sides of Craonne. Among them was the 50th Division, which had been recently brought up to strength, and used no fewer than a hundred Tanks. Resorting largely to outflanking tactics, they moved off. The above illustration shows such a party, surrounded but making a determined stand.

force ready to fling against any part of the line where I see a promising opening. I must do all this very quickly, for I have only a few months at my disposal. The Americans are arriving fast, and before the campaigning season is over they will probably be in such force that the scale will be turned against me. So my plan is to strike hard and often at widely separated parts of the line, and wherever I see an opening, push heavy forces against it with the utmost speed."

Now it was just this policy which had succeeded against the Russians. You will remember that the Germans broke through on the Donajetz in 1915, and forced the Russians to make a long and costly retreat. Against the ever-withdrawing battle-front the Germans struck blow after blow, and created salient after salient, which they attempted to cut off. They did not succeed in destroying the Russian armies, but they subjected them to such a terrible strain that the Russian soldiers lost heart, and were no longer keen for the fight. In the end, as you know, they went all to pieces. This result the Germans hoped to accomplish in the West. They believed that repeated blows at different sections of the line would weary and dishearten the Allies, and reduce them to such a condition that they would no longer be able to make an effective resistance.

* * * * * * *

I need not trouble you with an account of the Aisne front upon which the Germans launched their third great attack on 27th May. You will find a full description of it on pages 248-249 of our second volume. On 27th May two armies belonging to the Crown Prince's command were set in motion. One of these armies, the Seventh, under General von Boehm, was assembled in the wooded country north of the Ailette, to which, you will remember, the French withdrew in April. This army was to attack the Ladies' Road between Pinon and Craonne. (See diagram on page 98, Vol. VIII.) On the left of this army lay the First German Army, extending to beyond Rheims. Both armies had been strongly reinforced from the troops with which von Hutier had made his great drive. In all, some forty divisions were detailed for the attack, and on the third day of the battle five more divisions were thrown into the fight.

The long, narrow-topped ridge known as the Ladies' Road is very familiar to you. It is a mere riband of shell-torn sand,

in places only about two hundred yards across, and nowhere more than one thousand yards wide. On either side the ground drops so sharply that infantry half-way up the slope are fairly safe from artillery fire. On the other hand, the defenders of the ridge have no room to manœuvre, and they cannot retreat even for a short distance without losing the crest. I need not remind you of the terrible struggles which have taken place along this famous highway. It is one of the most blood-sodden battlegrounds in all the world. Generals Haig and Smith-Dorrien vainly strove to scale it; but the French bluecoats, creeping forward inch by inch, managed to gain a footing on it in the year 1917. You have not forgotten, I am sure, the terrible scenes which took place at the Dragon's Cave, Malmaison Fort, and the Montparnasse Quarry.*

In the Forest of Pir on the trenches lay on the hills, for most of the ground was too marshy for entrenchments. In this section each side had built blockhouses, and from these they constantly made raids on each other. The kind of fighting that went on resembled frontier warfare in an unsettled country.

At 4 a.m. on the morning of 27th May the enemy flung a terrible barrage, two miles deep, of high-explosive and gas shells, which filled the emplacements of the guns with poisonous vapour, against the six divisions holding the line from the Forest of Pinon to Craonne. The defenders could make no stand against the masses of Germans in gas masks, who soon poured down upon them behind the cover of artificial smoke clouds. They were speedily broken up into groups, fighting to the bitter end in scraps of trench, quarries, or dug-outs. Many of them preferred to die rather than surrender. The battalions holding the Pinon Forest in the valley north of the Ladies' Road could neither be relieved nor reinforced. From the first their position was hopeless. They sent off a carrier pigeon with a message stating that they had fortified themselves as best they could, and would fight to the last. They must have held out for some forty-eight hours, for a second message was received from them at two o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday.

The Ladies' Road was now lost, but a stubborn stand was made between Craonne and Berry-au-Bac, where four British divisions—the 8th, 21st, 50th, and 25th—were holding the line.

* See Vol. VIII., Chapter IX.



The German Advance across the Aisne and the Vesle shown in Various Stages.

By permission]

These four divisions had fought almost continuously for two months in Picardy and Flanders, and had been sent to the Rheims sector for a rest. A certain proportion of them were new drafts, young soldiers without any experience of heavy fighting; nevertheless, as we shall see, they fought like veterans, and in every way proved themselves true Britons of the old dogged breed. Against these weary men—reinforced by untried youngsters from the Home Counties—the Germans flung some twenty-five divisions, supported by some fifteen other divisions in reserve, and by a hundred Tanks, the largest fleet which they had so far sent into action. The rolling plain of Champagne was excellent ground for the advance of these monsters. On Sunday evening our men "stood to" in expectation of an attack, and at one in the morning the bombardment began. It is said that the Kaiser was early on the scene, and that he took up his station in a tower from which he could see the swelling Aisne region and the progress of his troops.

The brunt of the attack fell on the 50th Division, holding the left end of the line. Upon this division the bombardment was heaviest, and against it the enemy sent overwhelming numbers. Our men held on until they were submerged by the gray-green avalanche, and then were forced to retire to their second line. The same fate overtook the French division on the crest to their right, and it, too, was forced to retire. Never for more than a moment, however, did these two divisions lose touch with each other as they retreated towards the river. They were harassed by many low-flying aeroplanes, which swooped down upon them with bombs, and by a withering fire of bullets from machine guns.

The enemy pushed rapidly through Craonne, and made for the bridgeheads on the Aisne. According to their custom, they trickled past the groups of defenders, and cut off many small parties. Meanwhile an attempt was made to blow up the Aisne bridges, but so rapid was the enemy advance that all of them could not be destroyed. Unhappily, some of our officers lost their lives as one of the bridges was blown into the air. Those of our men who made their way to the river found the Germans there before them. The Aisne Canal, which runs parallel with the river, proved a serious obstacle to some of them: they were trapped, and many fell or were forced to surrender. A British-French convoy reached at Maizy the bridge which had not been

destroyed, only to find it in the hands of three or four hundred Germans.

Now I must interrupt my narrative to describe the heroism of a British gunner, and another incident of interest. When the Germans drove down upon his battery he made a dash for the canal, dragging along with him a wounded comrade. He looked about for a means of crossing the water, and saw a boat on the other side. Placing his wounded friend in a bit of cover on the bank, he swam across and brought back the boat under heavy fire. He then helped his wounded friend into it, and some thirty other men swarmed on board. Then began a most tragic passage. Before the other side was reached twenty-nine out of the thirty had been killed; only the heroic gunner, his wounded friend, and another man remained alive. When the boat touched the farther shore their adventures were by no means at an end. Between the canal and the river stretched a small strip of land, crossed and recrossed by barbed wire. The gunner dragged his comrade through the wire, waded with him through the river with the water up to his neck, and finally found safety in a wood. Later on this hero handed over his charge to a field ambulance.

A British motor ambulance convoy of five cars had an exciting adventure while retiring with wounded officers and men. A German patrol suddenly appeared in front of it, and the ambulances were forced to turn right about and return. As they rushed at top speed through the German lines they came to a steep hill. This delayed them, and the Germans nearly caught them up. In the very nick of time, however, some French infantry appeared, and the enemy made off. The ambulances then whirled about, and managed to reach their hospital safely.

During the retreat the roads were thronged with transport of every description, and with long lines of villagers carrying with them such household possessions as they were loath to leave behind. A large number of these poor creatures were stopped by the Germans at Maizy, and were forced to return.

By the morning of the 28th the Allied line had been pushed back beyond the Aisne. Our men and the French were now on what is known as the Tardenois plateau, the watershed between the Aisne and the Marne. It is broken country, not too well provided with roads, and open in the centre—a region of scattered hamlets, large farms, and deep, winding valleys. The



General Henri Joseph Eugene Gouraud.

(French official photograph.)

Known as the "Lion of the Argonne" because of his brilliant work in that region in the early months of the war. He commanded the troops holding the line round Rheims. Further details of his career are given on page 292.

Upper Ourcq flows through it on the western side, where there are a number of great woods, the largest of them being the Forest of Villers-Cotterets. On the south it is bounded by the broad valley of the Marne, which, unlike the Oise, flows through hard, firm-ground. On the northern bank overlooking the flat river plain are a series of heights which give a great advantage to an enemy advancing from the north.

To those of our men who wore the Mons ribbon the western side of the Tardenois plateau was very familiar. During the retreat our troops marched through the Forest of Villers-Cotterets towards the Marne. At Néry, south of the Forest, L Battery won undying fame; and in the same neighbourhood the 4th German Cavalry Brigade was driven back in rout, leaving eight guns in our hands. In the Forest the Irish Guards, for the first time in their history, engaged in serious fighting.

On the 28th the Germans continued their drive towards the south and south-west. There was fierce fighting between the Aisne and its tributary the Vesle,* and the latter stream was crossed in the neighbourhood of Bazoches and Fismes.† At Fismes a British cyclist battalion earned great praise for its dogged resistance. During the retreat French and British were frequently swept together, and fought side by side. In a wood south of the Aisne, for example, a brigade of one of our divisions linked up with part of a French Territorial regiment, composed of men between forty-five and fifty years of age. Young Britons and elderly Frenchmen, shoulder to shoulder, fought to the last. Of the British practically none escaped. The French Territorials who survived were filled with admiration for the heroism of their young allies. It was noticed that on the roads leading to the rear French and British who were wounded but able to walk helped each other along in perfect comradeship.

* Pron. *vale*.

† Pron. *feem*.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TOWARDS THE MARNE.

AT the close of 28th May the Germans summed up the results of the two days' battle. They claimed that the attack of the German Crown Prince to the south of Laon on the north led to a complete success. They said that the French and British divisions there stationed were completely defeated. The Ladies' Road had been carried by storm, and after a tremendous bombardment "our incomparable infantry" at daybreak completely took the enemy by surprise between Vauxillon and Craonne. The Allies, so we are told, offered only a slight resistance, and towards the afternoon, amidst steady fighting, the Aisne was reached between Vailly and Berry-au-Bac. In the afternoon the Aisne was crossed, and the battle was carried into the area which had remained untouched by the war since 1914. The Allies were driven from the fortified wooded heights on the southern bank of the Vesle, and at the close of the day the Germans had captured the southern bank on both sides of Fismes. Some 15,000 prisoners had been taken.

An eleven-mile advance had thus been made, and Soissons had been entered. The old city, with its famous cathedral and great stone mansions, had been fiercely bombarded. On Monday some 1,200 high-explosive and fire-raising shells had been hurled on the place, and now it was a mass of smoking ruins. The French defending the town were worn out with thirty hours of unceasing combat, and were forced to retire to the hills to the west. The Germans, however, could not emerge from the town; for French guns were trained upon it, and every time their troops attempted to leave it they were swept away. Meanwhile, on the Allied right to the north-west of



Panorama from above Chateau-Thierry showing the Tardenois Plateau.
(By permission of *The Sphere*.)

Rheims, a strong stand was being made by the British. It is most important to note that this resistance on the right, along with that made by the French holding the heights immediately to the west of Soissons, proved the salvation of the Allies and the undoing of the Germans.

Four hundred thousand Germans were now overrunning the Tardenois plateau. Look at the map on page 284, and find the little town of Fère-en-Tardenois. You observe that it stands on the Upper Ourcq, and on the railway running from the valley of that river through Fismes to Rheims. It is a small country town with an interesting church and a tenth century castle picturesquely perched on a hill. Its main interest for us, however, lies in the fact that it is the junction of many roads, and that the Germans, making for the Marne, intended it to be their main centre of supply.

On Wednesday morning the enemy's advance guard, supported by machine-gun sections, engineers, armoured cars, and squadrons of Uhlans, came swarming towards the town. Already German aeroplanes were flying low over the place, sweeping the streets with machine-gun fire, dropping bombs, and setting fire to the houses. The troops of a French division which had played a glorious part in the Battle of Verdun were entrusted with the task of holding up the German advance in order to prevent the retreat from becoming a rout. For sixteen hours these gallant fellows resisted the furious and ceaseless attacks of the enemy masses. Though outnumbered by eight to one, they refused to be swept aside. Meanwhile their machine guns and armoured cars played havoc with the German columns, and in this work they were assisted by French aeroplanes, which dropped bombs from a height of a hundred feet or less.

Towards midnight the Germans brought up two fresh divisions, and delivered a general attack on the town. All through the night there was desperate fighting from house to house. At dawn the street crossings were heaped with corpses, and still the enemy was not master of the place. At seven o'clock the sorely tried Frenchmen leaped forward in a counter-attack, which pushed back the Germans some five hundred yards from the entrance to the town. This heroism, however, was of no avail; for an hour later the enemy advanced again in such strength that the wearied defenders, in order to escape capture, were obliged to fall back. They left Fère in perfect order, and before

doing so destroyed everything in it that could possibly be of use to the enemy.

By the morning of Thursday German advance troops appeared on the hills above the Marne all the way from Château-Thierry to the neighbourhood of Dormans—a distance of ten miles. In seventy-two hours they had pushed forward nearly thirty miles, and had created a salient or pocket which was soon to prove a trap of their own making. Now that the Marne has again come into the picture, let me remind you that in September 1914 the Germans crossed the river, and pushed southward for more than thirty miles.

On the fourth day of the battle the pocket which the enemy had created was shaped something like the letter V. The apex of the salient lay on the Marne between Château-Thierry and Dormans; the eastern front ran north-east in front of Rheims; and the western front lay along the highroad from Soissons to Château-Thierry. The advance had been forced to take this curious shape because of the resistance made at Soissons on the west and Rheims on the east. The enemy had carried Soissons, but could not advance from it because the French were holding the heights to the west. Again and again he tried to emerge, but again and again he was driven back with heavy loss. Outside Rheims, British and French troops under General Gouraud were making a most stubborn resistance. It is true that they had to give some ground, but they kept the corner firm. Their commander was a man of rare intelligence and firm will, who had the complete confidence of his men. Before the war he had won a great reputation in French colonial expeditions. In the early days of the great struggle he commanded the Moroccans in the Argonne, and later led the French in Gallipoli, where he was wounded by a shell and lost his right arm. Afterwards he was appointed to lead the Fourth French Army.

Held at the two corners, the Germans advanced in the middle along the line of least resistance, with their faces to the Marne. They thus created a long wedge, capable of being attacked on three sides. A terrible mistake had been made, and the Allies had been afforded an opportunity of which, as you will learn, they took full advantage.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE AMERICANS AT THE MARNE.

BY Thursday, 30th May, the German High Command had discovered that the V-shaped pocket which had been created between the Aisne and the Marne was all too narrow for the safety of the troops within it. If you study the map on page 284, you will easily understand how this pocket came into being. By the evening of 28th May the Aisne had been crossed, and the German line ran from Vauxillon to the Aisne at Vailly, thence eastward to Courcy, north of Rheims. A day later it had advanced to Soissons on the west, and to just outside Rheims on the east. The resistance at these two points held up the advance at the sides, but in the centre it made great headway. The German line on 29th May sagged between Soissons and Rheims, and on the following day, when it had reached and passed Fère-en-Tardenois, it sagged still more. On the 31st, while the Allies still held the Germans in Soissons and in front of Rheims, the Marne was reached, and the salient assumed the V-shape as shown on the map.

The two pivot cities, Soissons and Rheims, have already figured many times in our pages as the scenes of struggle. Soissons, you will remember, was occupied by Sir Douglas Haig's 1st British Corps during the retreat from Mons; but was abandoned on August 29, 1914, and was then seized by the Germans. After the Battle of the Marne the pursuing French and British drove the enemy out of the city and across the Aisne. In January 1915 the Germans attacked again in this region, and won some advantage. So heavy was their artillery fire that the city was cleared of its civilian inhabitants. In March and April 1917, when the Germans were forced to retreat from the Somme, ground was gained in the neighbourhood of Soissons. After the

French successes on the Chemin des Dames in April and May of 1917, and again in October of the same year, the enemy was forced to retire still farther. While inspecting the French defences near Soissons in March 1917 von Kluck received the wound which brought his active career to an end.

You already know * that Soissons is a very ancient town which is mentioned by Cæsar, and was a Roman station of importance in the early days of the empire. Under the Franks it was the capital of Neustria. Probably no city of France has had a more warlike history. Indeed, its story is almost a continuous record of sieges. The shoemaker saint, Crispin, is said to have suffered martyrdom in Soissons in 297; and his successor, St. Sinice, is regarded as its first bishop. In 829, and again in 838, Louis the Debonair was imprisoned in the town by his undutiful sons. Its finest building is the cathedral, which dates from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As you may imagine, it has been much damaged by gun-fire during the present war. In the Place de la République stands a monument erected to the memory of the citizens who were shot by the Germans, when, after a bombardment of four days, they captured the city in October 1870.

Rheims, the other pivot of the Allied defence, is also very familiar to you. Before the war it was a beautiful city, almost as old as France itself. Its great glory was its cathedral, which enshrined memories that French men and women will for ever hold dear. It was the Westminster Abbey of France—the coronation and burial place of kings, queens, saints, warriors, and statesmen. In front of it stood a monument to Joan of Arc, the beloved warrior-maid of France. All round the city, on the hills, are the most famous vineyards of the country. Prior to the war, the vintage time saw peasant men, women, and little children gathering the grapes, and singing and laughing as they threaded the narrow fragrant pathways between the vines.

Such happy scenes are now only memories of the past. A correspondent who visited the city towards the end of April 1918 thus describes its appearance:—

“ As I drove down the long slope from the line of hills dividing Rheims from Epernay, the sun was shining brightly on the wide green plains surrounding the town and lighting up the towers of the cathedral, which stands high above the houses and in the distance looks wonderfully like the chapel

* See page 237, Vol. II.

at Eton as one sees it from the Berkshire meadows. But that is only from far off. When you are close to it, the walls and towers are like the white bones of a skeleton, blackened here and there in disfiguring patches by the flames that long ago cracked and crumbled and ate away the glory of the western façade, through the windows of which on each side of the great rose window you look clear through at the shattered buttresses beyond.

"And yet, after all, the cathedral, like the statue of Joan of Arc in front



The Bravely-held Semicircle round Rheims.

of it, which is intact except for the loss of half her sword, is still standing, and some day may even be restored to its former beauty. This time, in their fresh frenzy of fury, the German gunners managed to spare it. But the town is a town no longer. In a week's bombardment the Germans have done more damage than in the whole previous course of the war. How they contrived not to add to the ruin of the cathedral during those seven days and nights of bombardment is a mystery. The houses all round,



The Blowing up of the Old Stone Bridge

"Suddenly, while the bridge was crowded with advancing Germans, a loud roar was heard. The bridges, however, the enemy got across in great force, and the situation was most perilous. The day, points of passage, and during forty-eight hours of grave anxiety they stopped every attempt to cross."

even those like the Lion d'Or which stand not fifty yards away, are wiped out. Over 50,000 high-explosive shells and thousands of gas shells, and, worst of all, of fire-raising shells, were in that time rained upon an area round the cathedral of about three-quarters of a mile by a mile and a half. . . .

"Practically every house is a ruin, and all their contents are burned. Tottering walls, gaping windows, piles of broken bricks and masonry, and charred beams, and twisted ironwork, and broken glass, and crumbling plaster, some of them still mouldering—that is Rheims. This is what the German has left of an old historical French town, which, when war began, numbered 120,000 inhabitants. . . .

"The Germans have had their way. They have made a wilderness. They have scattered far and wide over 100,000 homeless outcasts. Of the cathedral and the Hôtel de Ville they have left only the walls standing, so



at Château-Thierry on June 1, 1918.

[By permission of *The Sphere*.

bridge had been blown up, and hundreds of men had been hurried into eternity. By means of pontoon however, was saved by the American machine gunners. In sheltered spots they commanded all the

damaged that nothing can ever restore their vanished glory. On the old foundations of the rest of the town a new one may be built; but the former things are passed away, and cannot live again. Cruelly and relentlessly they have smitten the French by defacing one of the most sacred monuments of their religion and some of their proudest memories in stone, and they have no excuse."

Into the pocket between Soissons and Rheims the enemy had thrust 400,000 men, accompanied by that host of vehicles conveying stores and ammunition without which a modern army cannot move. The consequence was that he had not sufficient space in which to manœuvre, and he needed elbow-room badly. Further, by creating this long and ever-

narrowing salient, he had exposed three flanks to the attacks of the Allies. He now might have to fight battles on three fronts, and if the salient could be pinched sufficiently, might find the greatest difficulty in withdrawing his troops without disaster.

Perhaps you wonder why the German generals took this grave risk. They had been balked at the outset by their inability to issue from Soissons and to drive back their foes in front of Rheims. They had pushed between these two places to the Marne; but they believed they could do so without danger, because they were convinced that General Foch was so weak in numbers that he could not attack the apex of the salient in any great strength. In this, as you will learn later, they were woefully mistaken. Foch had all along met their thrusts without calling upon the bulk of his reserves, and during the month of May he had received large reinforcements of Americans. Probably before the end of the month there were nearly a million Americans in France.

So far, the thrust had been to the south and the south-west. It was now time to enlarge the salient, so as to secure more elbow-room. On Thursday, 30th May, the German forces were regrouped, and during the three following days they struck westward, almost at right angles to their former direction. On that day the boundary of the western arm of the salient was the highroad from Soissons to Château-Thierry. Before the night of Sunday, 2nd June, the enemy stood in a great bow, extending from a point about four miles south of Soissons to the Marne, at Château-Thierry. Along the Ourcq they had pushed westward for nearly ten miles.

Study the little sketch map on page 311, and notice the line along which the fighting now raged. A little more than midway between Soissons and Château-Thierry you observe that the little river Ourcq runs westward, crossing the highroad almost at right angles. North of this river you notice that a large area is occupied by the Forest of Villers-Cotterets. Between the northern end of this wooded region and the Aisne at Soissons extends a high, almost treeless plateau. In front of the Forest to the east there is a long ravine with steep sides. Along the bottom of it runs the brook Savières, which unites with the Ourcq at Troesnes.* Between Soissons and the Ourcq the French had taken up a fairly strong position, but between

* Pron. *trons*.

that river and the Marne at Château-Thierry the natural features were not so favourable. The French dug their trenches on a series of low detached heights, which included Hill 163 just behind Passy, and a rather steep bank in front of Torcy.* The main fighting during the three days of the western thrust raged about the villages of Longpont, Corcy, Faverolles, Troesnes, Passy, and Torcy.

For twenty-four hours there was very fierce fighting for the possession of these villages. They were taken and retaken several times—a fact which clearly shows that the Allies were at this time bringing up their reserves. On the Saturday the French completely lost their line, but by Sunday night had recovered most of it. The Germans, however, still retained Faverolles, which stands above the deep ravine in open agricultural land just outside the forest. By 4th June they had been held on this sector, and Faverolles had been recovered.

Now while the Allies are engaged in building up their defensive wall on the west, let us see what was happening at the Marne. I told you in the former chapter that on the morning of Thursday, 31st May, the fourth day of the battle, the Germans appeared on the hills above the river all the way from Château-Thierry to the neighbourhood of Dormans, a distance of ten miles. On that day Americans and French colonial troops were quietly resting in billets south of Château-Thierry. They were at once called upon to defend the three-arched stone bridge which crosses the river at this point. While the American machine gunners covered the bridge, the French colonials made a dashing counter-attack, and drove the Germans back. Nevertheless, as Château-Thierry is cut in two by the river, it was decided to abandon the northern part of the town. The Americans covered the withdrawal of the French infantry with complete success.

The next day, 1st June, at nine o'clock in the evening, the Germans took advantage of the darkness to steal up to the bridge through the suburbs on the west side of the town. As they advanced they flung grenades in front of them, and created a smoke screen which completely shrouded them from view, and made machine-gun shooting very difficult. Meanwhile the town was being subjected to a very heavy bombardment. The bridge was still intact, but had been mined by French engineers,

* Pron. *torsee*.

and could be blown up any moment by the pressure of a hand upon a lever. Across the stream the enemy had flung several pontoon bridges.

The first thousand Germans poured across the stone bridge, and other columns pressed forward along the pontoon bridges. So numerous were the attackers that the Franco-Americans in the southern part of the town were very hard pressed. Suddenly, while the bridge was crowded with advancing Germans, a loud roar was heard. The bridge had been blown up, and hundreds of men had been hurried into eternity. By means of the pontoon bridges, however, the enemy got across in great force, and the situation was most perilous. The day, however, was saved by the American machine gunners. In sheltered spots they commanded all the points of passage, and during forty-eight hours of grave anxiety they stopped every attempt to cross, and prevented the enemy from repairing the old bridges and constructing new ones. The Americans fired tens of thousands of cartridges, and the German losses were very severe. A thousand dead bodies were counted by or near the wrecked stone bridge.

The French colonials were full of admiration for the coolness and courage of their American comrades. The work which they had done showed them to be allies worth having. This was the opinion of all who saw the clean, fine, healthy, and cheerful men who had now come into the war from the other side of the Atlantic. "There is not a shadow of a doubt," wrote a correspondent, "that we shall see them do great things."

Now let us move on to 1st June, when once again the Americans covered themselves with glory. If you look at the map on page 284, you will see, about eight miles to the north-east of Château-Thierry, a place called Jaulgonne. At this point the river makes a great bend northward. This bend is about three thousand yards deep by about two thousand five hundred yards across. The southern or defending side is flat, and is overlooked by high hills on the northern bank. Guns placed on these hills can sweep every part of the flat plain within the bend. Across the bend runs the main railway from Paris to the east. In the middle of it stands a railway station. You can easily understand that the enemy had a far better chance of crossing the river at Jaulgonne than at Château-Thierry.

On Monday, 3rd June, the 175th Regiment attempted to make a crossing. The defenders were ready to receive them. The Germans came down to the water's edge with narrow bridges, so made that they could be thrust forward like extensible ladders. The bridges were supported on small floats, and were sufficiently wide for two men to advance abreast. Some twenty-two of these bridges were flung across the stream. When all was ready, the guns on the northern heights began a heavy bombardment, and a battalion was sent across to form a bridgehead in the station. The battalion crossed the river, gained the horseshoe flat, and at once garrisoned the station with machine guns. Under the cover of rapid fire from this fortified bridgehead it was hoped that the remainder of the regiment would be enabled to get across.

At once the French organized a counter-attack. The only troops available were cavalry, who attempted to rush the station, but were badly cut up by the machine-gun fire of the defenders. A small body of French infantry now tried to work round the station on the right, but it, too, was held up. At this moment a company of American machine gunners arrived. The German fire was mastered, and as it died down the French infantry advanced and captured the bridgehead. Of the thousand men or more who had already crossed the river not more than sixty or seventy survived. A few managed to escape by swimming, and two boatloads reached the northern bank without being sunk. Over a hundred men surrendered. The attempt to establish a bridgehead south of the Marne had failed, and again the Americans had come to the rescue of their French brothers-in-arms.

* * * * *

Before I pass on to describe two other incidents of American pluck and promise, let me remark that the Marne is a name of ill omen to the Germans. You have not forgotten that the first great check which the Germans suffered occurred on the Marne during September 1914. The enemy came sweeping on, driving the Allies before him. They retreated some thirty miles beyond the river, and there knitted up their lines anew. Then it was that von Kluck made the mistake which altered the whole face of the campaign, and led to the long trench warfare which you have followed through so many pages. The Germans thought that the main Allied strength lay in the east of France. They therefore left their western flank open, and began a

diagonal march across the French and British front. The Allies at once moved forward, and engaged von Kluck's forces in front, while a new French army thrust at his flank. The consequence was that the whole German line was forced to retreat to the Aisne and on the heights north of that river dig in. At the Marne, in the year 1914, the enemy had met with disaster; even in the early days of June 1918 it was apparent that once again he would suffer defeat at the same river.

* * * * * * *

On 29th May the news arrived that the Americans had won a small but useful victory at Cantigny, a little town north-west of Montdidier. Again our gallant allies had given proof of their mettle as cool and steady fighters. Early on Tuesday morning, 28th May, our batteries began to smother those of the enemy. After half an hour of this counter-battery work, a bombardment of the German trenches began, and continued for an hour. Then at 6.45 the Americans, on a front of one and a half miles, sprang from their trenches and, under the protection of a rolling barrage, advanced in two steady waves. In the wake of twelve Tanks they crossed No Man's Land for nearly a mile in exactly forty minutes. When the town was reached there were some sharp hand-to-hand encounters; 250 dead were counted, and about 200 prisoners, including five German officers, were taken.

A third example of American prowess occurred at Torcy on Thursday, 6th June. Before I describe this affair let me sum up the main incidents on the Oise-Marne front from 4th June onward. It was on that day that the reinforcements of the Allies began to tell and the tide began to turn. The three areas of violent fighting were west of Soissons and north and south of the Ourcq. Between the Oise and Soissons the enemy made furious attempts to capture Choisy Hill, which lies five miles south-east of Noyon, on the edge of Carlepont Wood. Five times the hill was taken and retaken, and finally it remained in the hands of the French.

Upon the high, treeless plateaus, some six or seven miles wide, that stretch down to the Forest of Villers-Cotterets, the enemy strove hard to push his line westward, and at the same time to break into or get round the Forest. The importance of the village of Villers-Cotterets to the enemy was that the road and railway from Soissons to Paris both passed through it.



The Fatal Marne : the Germans' Second Crossing of the River.
(From the picture by P. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

At Faverolles the Germans were but five miles from the village, but those five miles they never covered.

The first phase of the battle may be said to have ended on the evening of 4th June. According to his custom, the enemy summed up the results of his great effort. He claimed 55,000 prisoners and 650 pieces of artillery. On the 6th the Allies began to get the upper hand. On the east of the salient the village of Bligny, which had been lost, was recaptured and partly occupied by the British 19th Division, composed chiefly of western county and Welsh troops. An enemy attempt on Champlat, to the south of Bligny, was completely broken.

It was on the other side of the salient that the Americans won their success. At the Marne their machine gunners had done the work; at Torcy, some seven miles north-west of Château-Thierry, their infantry proved themselves soldiers of dash and courage. They advanced with steady coolness down the steep bank which I have already mentioned, and pushed through small woods for nearly a mile. On that day the whole Allied line advanced to the outskirts of Château-Thierry. French and Americans fought side by side in capturing the height known as Hill 204 above the old town.

Dark LT. 1001 : 940 : 3 : 200

THE SERBIAN BOYS' FUND.

Already acknowledged \$532.12

SUMS RECEIVED UP TO AUGUST 9, 1917.

Collected by the following:—

Sidney Burch . . . \$1.70	Albert van den Dolder \$0.26	Beatrice Pettit . . . \$0.25
Goldwin Cowan . . . 3.00	Oral Mercer . . . 0.50	Daisy Bell 0.25
Edison Pike . . . 1.00	Kenneth Peper . . . 0.05	Mary Wilkerson . . . 0.25
Nellie Travers . . . 1.00	Sherman Kechn . . . 0.25	H. and L. Dynes . . . 0.20
Madeleine de Blois . 5.25	Madison Kechn . . . 0.25	Jean Green 0.10
Edna Jones . . . 1.75	Viola Erickson . . . 1.50	Ross Almas 0.10
Sent in by Miss Squire on behalf of Pupils and Teacher of S.S. No. 10 6.30	Alex. Stone 5.35	Helen and Harvey Pettit 0.20
Pupils of Stellaville School, Mannville. 6.25	Sent in by Miss E. A. Forsythe as col- lected by her Pupils 14.60	D. and G. Alton . . . 0.10
Sent in by Miss G. L. Clyde, and collected by herself and Pupils 10.00	Ronald Morrison . . 1.00	A. and M. Wood . . . 0.15
Roy Pelkey 4.60	Sent in by Miss M. K. McIlroy as col- lected by her Pupils 2.31	H. and W. Shakespeare 0.15
Sent in by Miss C. L. Macleod for D. and E. Haines 3.20	Sent in by Miss E. M. Macleon, and col- lected by herself and Pupils 7.40	<u>\$3.25</u>
Grace M. Kines . . . 3.30	Miss E. P. Davy . . . 2.00	Mary Miller 1.25
Elmer Peck 4.45	<i>Sent in by Miss Blanshard, and collected by herself and Pupils as follows:—</i>	Arthur Baines 1.30
Arthur Peck 3.25	Miss A. Blanshard . \$1.00	Isabella MacLean . . 1.60
E. McCann 2.00	George E. Wood . . . 0.25	<i>Sent in by Miss I. Sutton, and collected by herself and the following Pupils:—</i>
Norman Smith . . . 3.71	L. and A. Tufford . . 0.25	Miss I. Sutton . . . \$1.00
Clyde Davidson . . . 2.70		F. A. Lewis 1.75
George van den Dolder 0.26		Harold Stanley . . . 1.25
		<u>\$4.00</u>
		TOTAL . \$116.59

Balance from Ambulance Fund	\$1,082.54
Collected by Canadian Readers and Friends	648.71
Collected by Readers and Friends in Great Britain	<u>946.77</u>
GRAND TOTAL	<u>\$2,678.02</u>

Have you done your little bit yet?

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, Limited,
95/97 King Street East, TORONTO.

Recommended by the Department of Education
for Ontario for High School Libraries.

NELSON'S HISTORY OF THE WAR.

By **JOHN BUCHAN.**

With a Preface by the **EARL OF ROSEBERY, K.G.**

IN MONTHLY VOLUMES.

**Cloth Bound, 85 Cents each,
Post Free.**

NUMEROUS MAPS AND PLANS.

"That Mr. Buchan has done his work well is clear on the most cursory perusal, and we have no doubt that the history, when concluded, will long enjoy a permanent reputation as one of the standard authoritative accounts."—**THE BOOKSELLER.**

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.,
77 Wellington Street, TORONTO;
LONDON, EDINBURGH, PARIS, AND NEW YORK.

